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Historical Personality of Sayyid Ajall Umar Shams Al-Din,

His place in the Mongol Empire and His Role in Introducing Islam in China

By: Muhammad Imami¹

Abstract:

Sayyid Ajall a descendant of the holy Prophet of Islam emigrated to China after the invasion of Bukhara by the army of Jinghiz Khan. He gained high social position there and offered notable services to the Chinese. From the point of view of historians, he and his son are regarded as the most important factors of the diffusion of Islam in China. This article through four chapters deals with his social personality and his services to China and contains :

¹ . Instructor in Razavi University of Human Islamic Sciences in Mashhad and Ph.D student of Jurisprudence and Foundation of Islamic Law at Ferdowsi University of Mashhad .

- A. His social positions and management
- B. His services to China especially to Yunnan province
- C. The factors of the expansion of Islam in China

1. The role of Sayyid Ajall
2. Kublai Khan's point of view to different religions
3. The Muslims policy and behavior to the Chinese

D. The factors of his achievements

1. The weakness of the Mongols in management and their need for non-Mongols.
2. The Mongols need for non-native managers.
3. Sayyid's high capacity in management.
4. His loyalty and thoughtfulness due to Islamic teachings.

Key terms: Sayyid Ajall, Kublai Khan, China, social, position, services, Islam, management.

Sayyid Ajall Umar Shams Al-Din (1211-1279), a descendant of the holy Prophet of Islam, was born in Bukhara, a part of ancient Iran. During the reign of Jinghiz Khan, he came to China¹. There is no unanimity, either about the exact time of his arrival or how he arrived. Some historians say that since the Mongols put a great emphasis on trade and on commercial relationship between China and Central Asia,

¹ J.J.Sandroz. A History of Mongol Conquest, trans. A. Halat (Tehran: Amir Kabir Publishing Company, 1980), p.242.

Jinghiz persuaded Iranians and Arabs to emigrate to China, and Sayyid Ajall was one of those people who went there and achieved high official ranks.¹ Some other texts suggest that after the conquest of Bukhara some people of that area, guided by this Sayyid, took their way during the Song dynasty along the Silk Road and went as far as China where he could gain an important position² when the Yuan dynasty was established. Still other documents stress that he was captured by the army of Jinghiz and under Ughodai he started to serve the emperor, and in 1279 he was Yunnan's governor general³.

How he arrived in China is not so important as his function and his social activities which are both of high significance. It is certain that after the Mongols conquered Iran and China, they expanded bilateral relations and encouraged Muslims and tradesmen to come to China.

In this article I am trying to introduce Sayyid Ajall, highlighting his personality and position as well as his contribution to the development of China. His role in the expansion of Islam and the factors related to this extension along with his success are also studied.

An equally important point of which Sayyid is a good example, is his tolerance and co-existence with the followers of other religions.

¹. Muhammad Javad Omidvarnia, "Islamic Teachings in China" Central Asia and The Caucasus Review.26(summer,2000),95-115.

². China, comp. Zahra Taheri Amin, (Tehran: Political & International Research Office, 2002), p. 38 .

³. Sandroz, p. 136.

And finally, speaking about him is a good start to expand bilateral relationship between Iran and China, specifically academic and cultural relationship between the two universities of Yunnan and the Razavi University of Islamic Sciences, Mashhad.

Sayyid's Important Official Posts

During his life in China, Shams had important posts and offered noticeable services to the Chinese. Some of his important positions and responsibilities are briefly mentioned in this paper.

As it was said, he had important responsibilities in the Yuan court even from the time he was young. When he was 19, he was appointed as the chief executive of three prefectures of Feng, Jing, and Yunnan. He did his job successfully and his important characteristics, that is, his administrative ability, his truthfulness and loyalty paved the way for higher and more remarkable positions. He also worked as the judge of the court during the reigns of Tiazong and Dingzong.¹ Then he became the chief executive, the inspection commissioner, the pacification commissioner and even the vice prime minister under the reign of Kublai. He also supervised the post-war reconstruction and the financial activities such as taxation and other monetary affairs. He supervised mobilization in some wars of his time and was appointed as

¹. Li Qingsheng, *A Biography of Sayyid Ajall Umar Shams Al-Din*, trans. Li Danhe Yonghong et.al. (-: Yunnan University Press,-),p. 62.

the director of political affairs of the security council, the military commander and the governor general of Yunnan province.

As evidenced by history, he did his duties so successfully in each position that despite the passage of hundreds of years, the people of these localities still remember him with respect. Rashid al-Din Fazlollah, the famous historiographer of the Mongolian era says, "When Kublai came to power, he appointed Sayyid Ajall as his minister. Sayyid did nobody any harm as long as he was alive."¹

Sayyid Ajall's Services to China

During his different responsibilities in China, Sayyid did a lot to make the life of the people easier and to bring peace to the country. Some of his services, of which made his name everlasting in the history, are mentioned in brief:

1. Pacification

Peace is the most important element a governor needs in order to be able to work, and the common people need in order to lead a good life. So Sayyid tried to bring peace to the country.

¹. Rashid Al-Din Fazl Al-Lah Hamadani, Jami'a Al-Tawarikh -A Comprehensive History , ed. Muhammad Ravesh (Tehran: Alborz Publisher,1995), p. 914.

Up to that time and even during the first years of Kublai Khan's reign, the country was divided into several prefectures and each had a ruler of its own; besides, there were several autonomous tribes that were frequently engaged in war among themselves. So the first step that Shams took was to bring peace to the region and made all the tribes and the regional rulers submit to the central government.

2. Establishment of Yunnan Province

With the help of Muslim architects, Sayyid Ajall reconstructed Peking (modern Beijing), which had been damaged by the Mongol invasion.¹ Some sources suggest that during the Mongol era, Peking was called "Khan Balligh" which means the city of the Khan, and it was the capital of the Mongol emperor from 1246 onwards.²

When Shams was appointed the governor, he established Yunnan province – an action unprecedented in history – put an end to the feudal principalities and brought about the unification of the country. Hartman acknowledges this fact and states that this talented Muslim administered the affairs of Yunnan province for six years until the

¹. Igor de Rachewiltz, Papal Envoys to the Great Khans, trans. Masood Rajabnia (Tehran: Tasvir Publisher, 1975), p. 159.

². V.V. Bartold, A Selection of Research Papers "China and Turkistan", trans. Karim Kishavarz (Tehran: Sepehr Publisher, 1979) p. 16.

province of Yunnan was brought under control.¹ He himself named the province Yunnan and actually established its capital Kunming as well as many other cities of the region.

3. Bringing Territorial Integrity

Having established Yunnan, he tried to hammer down the rebellious groups of the region and bring peace and total integrity to China for the first time. Hartman says explicitly, "A Central Asian Muslim named Sayyid Ajall Shams al-Din imposed Yuan rule on the Chinese south western province of Yunnan which has been composed of autonomous tribes. After the Mongols conquered the region, they assigned Sayyid Ajall to bring it into Chinese orbit."²

Compared with the previous rulers of the region, the Yuan dynasty was more successful in the unification of the region and it managed to unify the entire region into a huge empire under Yuan control. According to Li Qingsheng, Sayyid practiced both severity and kindness to promote the national unity and train national officials.³

¹. Hartman, "Muhammadianism in China" The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethnic, 1915, v.8, pp.888-95.

². Morris Rossabi, _"Islam in China" The Encyclopedia Of Religion, 1987, V. 7, P.P 377-90

³. Li Qingsheng, p. 62.

He also appointed talented people in military, social or political positions to help him implement his policy. At the beginning of the Yuan dynasty, there were four social classes – Mongols, Muslims, Han people and Nan people – and other people were regarded as lower. As Charles Scriberson says, "there were four castes altogether and a person's enjoyment of rights and privileges, or lack of it, varied in accordance with the caste to which he belonged."¹ Sayyid abolished this discriminative policy and employed capable men in different positions regardless of their religion, race, nationality or their social layer and indeed it was the most important factor of his success that established his name in history forever.

4. Better Investment

Having brought peace and unity into the region, Sayyid started his reconstruction activities and encouraged the people to work for their country. To solve the problem of drinking water, he reconstructed the Longshouxi canal to bring water into Chagan. Building the Bahe Stone Bridge and the construction of an irrigation system² on six rivers which is a very complete and scientifically comprehensive water project are his other important works which caused his name to be engraved on the stone of history.

¹ Charles Scriberson, The Ageless Chinese, "Yuan" (New York: Library of Conference, 1965), p.258.

² Morris Rossabi, p.381.

All these activities, important for the security and economic development of the region, brought changes to Kunming and gave the region a political, economic and cultural centrality that has remained so until today.

They also inspired people with a spirit of activity which is a fundamental source for further investment and prosperity of the region.

5. Trade Development Inside and Outside China

While trying to promote the economy and agriculture of the region, as a part of a whole policy, Sayyid Ajall expanded the relationship, especially the commercial ties with the Middle East and Central Asia, particularly with Iran and Arab world. Ruling over most parts of Asia, the Mongol rulers, specifically Kublai, welcomed Iranian and Arab scientists, doctors, merchants and other experts¹ who came here and helped develop the area. Abbas Iqbal, the famous Iranian history writer says, "Kublai Khan adapted himself with Chinese, their habits and culture; he chose ancient Peking as his capital and welcomed scholars, craftsmen and other experts to the region. An important affair of this time was the establishment of ties with Muslims and Iranian

¹ .Daryush Ashury, Glimpses of Land, History, Society and Culture of China (Tehran: Asian Culture Document for UNESCO, 1982), p. 36.

merchants.”¹ The line of communication between China and the West was restored which is regarded as another important measure that was taken at that time.² To extend trade inside China, he improved the transportation systems such as extension of roads and waterways, which facilitated this purpose and as Scribnerson suggest, were regarded foremost among Yuan achievements³.

6. Tax Reduction

Sayyid simultaneously attempted to boost the income level of the country and of the government and to reduce the tax that had been levied on the people. This policy helped the people enjoy prosperity and lead a more productive life because they came to realize the value of their work and of the land that belonged to them. He took effective measures to stabilize the region and to reduce taxes in order to let people restore their strength. Li Qingsheng says, “An expert in civil administration, Shams understood the relationship between lightening

¹ . Abbas Iqbal, A History of Mongols From the Raid of Jinghiz to the Establishment of Timour Government(Tehran: Amir Kabir Publishing Company, 1968), p.162.

² . George E. Taylor, "Chinese History," Chamber's Encyclopedia, 1961, V 3 P.P. 449-83.

³ . Scribnerson, p. 262.

the burden on the people and attaining stability in an area.¹ Thus to implement his policy, he decreased the rate of taxation on the people.

7. Introducing the First Banknote

It was during Shams' administration that the first money bill was introduced.² Before this, barter was in vogue and Sayyid introduced to the public the monetary system that was adopted as a basis for the commercial policy of the empire³ for the first time in the history of China. Some documents attribute it to Kublai himself⁴, but because Sayyid was then his minister and the administrator of his monetary affairs, it can be attributed to Shams. Yet, some others relate it directly with Shams al-Din⁵.

These and a variety of other socio-political as well as economic activities, such as expanding of roads, and introducing an efficient postal system⁶ are examples of Sayyid's untiring efforts, which cannot be counted in this article, brought him a notable popularity and everlasting fame in the history of China.

¹ . Li Qingsheng, p. 42.

² . Sandroz, p. 163.

³ . Rane Grousset, *The Empire of Steps*, trans. Abd Al-Hossain Maykadeh (Tehran: Book Trade National Company, 1974)p 490 .

⁴ . *ibid*.

⁵ . Sandroz, p. 163.

⁶ . Hok-lan Chan, "Kublai Khan", *The McGraw-Hill Encyclopedia of World Biography*, 1973, V.9, P.P. 268 -72.

8. Educating and Training Practical Men:

With a high personality and with the aim of revolutionizing the region in all aspects, Sayyid opened the first school¹ in Yunnan province. The reason was that both the emperor and Shams knew the importance of education in the long-term development of the region. Of course, teaching in those schools was based on Confucian instructions which had the most followers at that time. Later Shams built more schools and even in the villages² to let children even from lower classes of the society obtain education, and consequently education was generalized. Before the time of Sayyid, there was no school in the region and as Mahmood Yoosof says, "At the beginning of Yuan dynasty, There was no school and the first school was built in Yunnan which Shams Al-Din inaugurated in 1276 and encouraged children to enter it³." He invited two teachers from among the people to teach. Later on he built some more schools to teach astronomy, history and medicine and he revolutionized education in the region.

As the administrator of Kublai he attempted to invite foreign scholars and experts especially from Iran, the Arab world and Central Asia to

¹ .Yahya Linsong, "Sayyid Ajall Shams Al- Din," *The Construction of China*, 12 (Des.1979), pp.15-19.

² . Qingsheng, p. 730.

³ . Mahmood Yoosof, *The Distinguished Muslims in China*, "Sayyid Shams Al-Din the Noticeable Muslim Politician in the History of China"(Hong Kong:---,2003),p.4.

come to China. Persian doctors introduced new drugs and new kinds of hospitals. A Muslim architect helped to design the capital city Ta-Tu in 1267. The Persian astronomer Jamal Al-Din built an observatory in the capital and provided new astronomical instruments for China.¹ Ismail and Ala Al-Din, two Muslim engineers constructed weapons.

Sayyid also appointed capable officials to back him fulfill his purpose, for he knew that the newly established government was weak and needed the support of the native people to bring peace, unity and stability and to upgrade peoples life and to stabilize the political situation. Local people from different social layers and from different ethnic and religious minorities who were capable and hard-working were installed in several positions. Thus it created a good relationship between the people and Shams. Moreover it was a good way of training practical men for the management of the area.

On the other hand, under Kublai, scientific relation with other parts of the world started. History writing, travel account, and biography writing developed. Prawdin says, "He promoted the science and art. Scholars, painters, architects, and engineers were invited from all parts of the world². Foreign tourists particularly from the Middle East and

1. Morris Rossabi, p.384.

². Michael Prawdin, The Mongol Empire, Its Rise & Legacy, trans. Eden & Cedar Paul(London: Alien & Unwin LTD.,1940),p. 342.

Europe came to China and when they returned home, they reported the situation of the country to other lands. Mention can be made of Marco Polo whose reports are regarded as a source of history for the people of the rest of the world who want to study the condition of China at that time. Literature especially poetry and drama were developed particularly in Chinese language.

Shams' social activities, his training of capable officials, improving economy and investment, opening of schools and expanding of education, the way he treated minorities and the followers of various religions, his tolerance of his opponents and opposite groups, all these worked in favour of the morality and expansion of moral values among the people. Building mosques and temples also persuaded religious teachers and priests to teach religious values.

Shams' Role in the Expansion of Islam

Although Islam entered China far before the time of Shams and even in the first century of the Islamic era, it was not considered as important, nor were the Muslims regarded as a religious minority. It was during his period that a large number of Muslims emigrated to Yunnan¹ and Islam grew to an important minority and Muslims gained their position. From the historical point of view the influx of Islam into

¹ . Linsong, pp. 15-18.

Yunnan began at that time.¹ Now let's have a short look into the factors of the extension of Islam in the region particularly the role that Shams played.

The Factors of Expansion of Islam

As in the case of all events, the expansion of Islam in China has its own factors which are going to be studied here.

1. The Role of Shams

Shams Al-Din himself had an exceptional personality. He was a Muslim and a descendant of the Holy Prophet. He was a statesman and a learned one. He was aware of political and social situations and he knew how to face the existing circumstances. He practiced Islam and at the same time he honored other religions and other ethnic groups too. He built Mosques. He either built a Confucian church² or allowed the Confucians to build temples for their religious observance. He gave Muslims some social positions but did not discriminate and he appointed his officials according to their capabilities and talents regardless of their religion. He and his two sons are regarded as the most important factors of diffusion of Islam in his time. Raphael

¹ . Hartman, p. 381.

² . Qingsheng, p. 55.

Israeli says, "Sayyid Ajall probably did much for the spread of Islam in China, but it is his son Nasir Al-Din who was the governor of Shensi in 1292 that is given the main credit for its spread there."¹

These kinds of behaviour of Shams paved the way for the improvement of Islam and the Muslims' situation. Dollone's quotation in this respect is noticeable. He says, "All the Ahongs² whom were questioned about the subject expressed that Islam was first introduced to the region by Sayyid Ajall Umar Shams Al-Din, the Yunnan governor after the Mongol conquest."³ We can conclude from what has been written or said about him that he played a very important role in the diffusion of Islam in the region. He did his best to the promote Muslims' position without harming others. Meanwhile, under the new proper circumstances, the Muslims were able to promote themselves and enlarge their territorial scope and penetrate into South China.

2. Kublai's View Point to Religions

Generally speaking, the Mongols and their rulers were nomadic, far from leading a settled civilized life. Maybe no other tribe was like them in brutality and toughness, causing death, suffering and

¹ . Israeli, "Al-Sin," Encyclopedia of Islam, 1997, V.9 P.P. 616 - 25.

2. From the Persian term "Akhond"

3 . Raphael Israeli, Muslim in China, A study of cultural confrontation, trans. Hassan Taghizadeh Toosi (Mashhad: Islamic Research Foundation, 1995), P. 119.

destruction in the territories they occupied.¹ This is true in the case of most lands they occupied including Iran, Transoxania, Russia and China. Of course, the situation in China was less severe. But little by little they realized that they could not manage their affairs only by means of military forces. Hence they started employing local popular people and started giving value to the traditions of the people of the conquered lands. On the other hand, they didn't have firm ancestral religious set of beliefs to defend it and to sacrifice themselves for its preservation. Soon after their victory, they adapted themselves to the cultural and religious characteristics of their foreign subjects. Nevertheless, the religions of the people of the occupied lands were not too important for them to make them prejudice. Consequently, they didn't try to impose their own beliefs or any other particular religion on the people² and they tolerated many local religions.

Mongol rulers even adopted various religions in different areas. For instance, of the Mongol Ilkhanid branch ruling Iran and Iraq, Hulaku, Abaqa and Arghoun were Buddhists, but they had good relations with Christians. Likewise, The Mongol policy in Christian areas did not

¹. C.P. Fitzgerald, China, A short cultural History, trans. Ismail Dawlatshahi (Tehran: Scientific and Cultural Publishing Company, 1988), P. 491.

². Manoochehr Murtazavi, The Issues of the Ilkhanid Period (Tehran: Agah Publisher, 1992), p.185.

conflict with Christianity.¹ We see a similar phenomenon in Iran and that some of the Mongol rulers converted to Islam. King Muhammad Khodabandeh, King Mahmood Ghazan and Abu Sa'id Bahador Khan are notable in this respect. It is said that the Mongol rulers reputed for their acceptance and patronage, embraced Islam in Persia, and Nestorian Christianity in Central Asia.² It is even said that their conversion to Islam in 1295, disintegrated their large non-Muslim empire, for the Muslim Il-Khans ruling Iran did not obey their great Khan when his decisions were not in accordance with Islamic thoughts. And this resulted in the gradual weakness of the Great Khan.³

Among the Mongol rulers, Kublai is said to be, in spite of his savage background, their most enlightened ruler⁴ and he is more popular in religious toleration. It is said that Kublai was well-known for the toleration of foreign religions. He exempted Buddhist, Taoist, Nestorian and Islamic orders from taxation.⁵ Thus Kublai, though not a Muslim but a convert to Confucian or at least a pro-Confucian as documents claim, honored the followers of other religions and

¹ . ibid. p. 210.

² .ibid.

³ .ibid. p. 271

⁴ . V.L .Livang, China, (London: Machdonald & Co. L T D. __), p. 76

⁵ .Jaroslaw Krejci, The Civilization of Asia and The Middle East, trans. Khosrow Qaderi, (Tehran: Hamshahri Publishers, 2000), p.312.

welcomed central Asians and Muslims to China. He also promoted the relationship between China and Iran. Subsequently, scholars, doctors, astronomers, merchants and ordinary people of the Islamic world emigrated to China and this resulted in the extension of the Muslim society of China. Abbas Iqbal says "The number of Muslims was so great that when they settled in an area, they constructed a new town.¹ They not only settled there but also gained citizenship and were thus no longer regarded as travelers or foreigners.

3. The Role of Muslims Themselves

The policy that Chinese Muslims adopted was another important element that consolidated their position. They took several measures to strengthen their position-getting married with Chinese, adapting Chinese culture, retaining their strong relation to their own traditions, and getting high positions in the government.

Under the Yuan dynasty, a large number of Muslims of different nationalities entered China in a large scale, but they all shared a common point, that their homeland had been invaded by the Mongols, who had previously invaded Iran.

Their homes and properties had been damaged and they had to travel a long way to settle in China.² They were not travelers or visitors but

¹ . Iqbal, p. 162.

² . Feng Jin Yuan, Islamic and Iranian Culture in China, trans. M.J. Omidvarnia (Tehran: Hoda International Press, ----), P.18.

they were thinking of living there forever. So they cemented their relations with Chinese so as to secure their aim.

On the other hand, the Chinese rightly knew that the Muslims' arrival to China was different from that of the Mongols. While the Mongols, inflicted death, suffering, destruction and horror on the occupied lands,¹ the Chinese familiarity and contact with Muslims not only brought wealth, science and technology to China, but also caused better understanding of the western part of the world to Chinese.

Muslims stayed in China and got married to Chinese women and in this way strengthened their relations with them².

Another important effect of the extension of relations between the Chinese and Muslims or the Islamic world was a bilateral understanding and the services that Muslims offered to China were appreciated. Criticizing the Mongol period and enumerating the problems they made for Chinese, Rossabi says, "Neither the Mongols nor the Chinese could deny the Muslims' contribution to China."³ Muslim writers also tried to show the possibility of a peaceful life between Muslims and the followers of other religions.

¹ . Fitzgerald, P. 481.

² . Rossabi, "Islam in China," Encyclopedia of Religion .P.P 377-90.

³ . "Islam in China," Teachings from Islamic Thoughts, 5 (July, 2000), 52-58.

They adapted themselves to Chinese culture and the Chinese way of life while they retained the essence of their Islamic thoughts. They used Chinese names for their children, taught them Chinese and behaved in a Chinese manner of life. Even though they had good position under Yuan, they knew that the Mongols were invaders and finally they would be forced to quit the country sooner or later. So they dealt honorably with the native people of the land.¹

They also held their firm to their Islamic thoughts, traditions, the centre of the Islamic world, and the Islamic government so that when it happened to come to undesirable circumstances, some Muslims returned to the homeland of their ancestors.²

The Factors of Shams' Achievements

Sayyid Ajall was a successful statesman and administrator. Therefore, it is important for us to study and to analyze his success. To look into this fact, several considerations should be mentioned:

1. The Weakness of Mongols in Management and Their Inviting Non-Mongols into the Administration

¹ . Israeli, P. 121.

² . *ibid.*

The Mongols were skillful warriors and good at military affairs. They managed to invade a large number of countries in a relatively short time. Yet, they were not familiar with the principle of civil management and of civilized societies. So they had to benefit from their foreign subjects to help them direct the occupied lands.¹ According to Morgan's suggestion we cannot find any Mongol empire foundation which is originally Mongolian.² Of course, Kublai is regarded as one of the most successful emperors of the Mongols who knew how to deal with people to keep them away from revolting. To some extent, he was familiar with the foundations of ruling over a civilized nation. Yet, he was in need of other persons to help him implement his policy. Many Chinese from different districts as well as numerous non-Chinese were involved in political or social affairs. Many Chinese Muslims are mentioned today among those who offered services to the Chinese civilization and Sayyid Ajjal is an example of this fact.³

¹ . Ashoori, P. 35.

² . David Morgan, The Mongols, trans. Abbas Mokhber (Tehran: Nashre Markaz, 1993), p.134.

³ . Jamal Al-Din Bai Shoo Yee, "The Role of Chinese Muslims in Civilization." trans. Muhammad Ali Hosseini, Meshkat, pp.54- 55 (1998, Spring &summer) pp. 51-63 & Sandro, p. 162 & Marvin, p. 563.

2. The Mongols' Policy in Using Non-Native Managers in Conquered Lands.

Although the Mongols were rough and far from civil conduct and they knew only war, conquest and invasion, little by little they were influenced by the social customs and civil management of the conquered lands and adapted themselves to the new circumstances. Thus their manner of administration was changed. Prawdin says, "But with the spiritual change had gone a change of the costumes. No longer did the Mongol conquerors massacre whole populations, nor did they destroy the towns they took, but instead they owned and administered them."¹ They knew that they could not offer successful administration to the people of the territories they had invaded, so they appointed at least some of their important administrators from among the non-native subjects. They could rely more on them than the native people. Sayyid Ajall was not a native Chinese and he was a person who could be trusted upon. So he was appointed, during the Taizong's period, chief executive of three prefectures² and did his job carefully and was successful in his reconstruction work. He was able to gain the ruler's trust and achieved higher positions. On the other hand since he had a good behavior towards the people and was not a Mongol, people

¹ . Prawdin, p. 323.

² . Li Qingsheng, P. 3.

accepted him and cooperated with him. As a result he became very popular in Yunnan.

3. The Mongols' View of Muslims, Especially of the Sadat

A few decades after the Mongols invaded the Muslim territory, they were greatly influenced by Islamic thoughts so that many important positions were given to Muslims inside the Islamic lands. Of course, this did not happen from the very beginning of the occupation. Before 1250 most key posts were in the hands of the Mongol invaders of Iran, but later certain Iranian Muslims such as Ata Malek Juwainy, Rashid Al-Din¹, Khajeh Nasir and others were appointed to important positions. This policy of using Muslims was practiced more firmly in China, where non-native Muslims were employed especially for monetary affairs and systematizing the taxation, maybe to reduce the Chinese hatred towards the Mongols.²

Another factor that should be taken into consideration is the Mongols' opinions and behavior towards the Sadat (Descendents of the holy Prophet). Even though, when the Mongols invaded Iran, first all the people, regardless of their social layer, were their preys and a lot of people in Samarqand, Herat, Marv and Nishaboor were killed or became homeless, the Sadat very soon regained their respect so that

¹ . Morgan, P. 133.

² . *ibid.* p. 134.

during the conquest of the city of Bukhara which means the centre of knowledge¹, Jinghiz ordered special care to be given to them. Latter Mangoo Qaan during his raid of western Iran ordered his troops not to harm them and Hulaku did the same as well. Of course, there are some reasons for this policy.

First of all, the Mongols generally tried not to injure the sanctities of the people and their common beliefs. And of the revered groups among Iranians were the descendants of the holy Prophet who were called "Sadat". The Sadat who were descendants of the Prophet through his only surviving daughter Hazrat Fatima (SA), the wife of Imam Ali (AS), were of high esteem and honor among Iranians. The torturing of them could harm people's general outlook towards the Mongols and there would be the possibility of revolts against the invaders. Thus the rulers treated them honorably and even gave them high positions in the society.

The second factor was that the idea of sanctity of some people because of nobility of their predecessors can be traced among the Mongols too. Some Mongolian tribes like that of Jinghiz were regarded spiritually of high stock and were greatly honored.² The existence of such beliefs

¹ . 'Ala Al-Din 'Ata Malek Juwayni, The History of Jahan Gusha. (Tehran: Bamdad Publisher, 1943), I, P. 76.

² . Dr. Javad Abbasi, "Sadat in the Mongol Period." History of Islam, 12 (Winter 2003), PP. 75-88.

among the Mongols motivated them to practice it in the conquered lands.

Another probable reason is that many Sadat like Sayyid Ajall as descendants of the household of the holy Prophet, may have been kept away from the political affairs in the pre-Mongolian era of Iran because they didn't support the rulers of the time and were not much involved in conflict with the Mongols. Therefore, the Mongols could rely more on them than those who had a high political position in the pre-Mongolian era of Iran and Transoxiana.

All these factors worked in favor of Sayyid Ajall and instigated the Mongols to look at him respectfully, rely on him and offer him such important positions.

4. Sayyid's High Capacity in Management

He was a capable and talented person. Gradually he got higher and higher positions because of his talent, his kind behavior towards people and the experiences he had acquired in the previous positions. To mention an example of this fact, we can refer to the measures he took when he wanted to start the governorship of Yunnan province.

Before coming to the province, he deeply studied the underlying problems of the region and investigated their solutions. Having arrived he announced a civil governorship and put aside the military reign. Mahmood Yousuf says that when Shams came to Yunnan, the province needed rearrangement of the administrative system. To solve

the existing problems he divided the military affairs from civil affairs and gave the civil affairs to the talented local people and the military ones to the officers.¹ As it was mentioned, he employed local men with practical knowledge regardless of their social class or their religion. At the same time, he consolidated military garrisons to ensure the security of the region. Moreover, this action could satisfy the officers who had to give their administrative posts to the ordinary people. And finally he had a warm relation with ordinary people. Those who wanted to visit him were warmly welcomed. He listened to them and gave them more valuable gifts than what they brought to him.² He also tolerated criticism of his programs and dealt gently with his opponents. Thanks to his natural talent in management, he could satisfy both the people of the region and the Mongol rulers and it brought him proper circumstances to move to higher ranks.³

5. His Loyalty and Truthfulness Due to Islamic Teachings.

Sayyid Ajall is regarded primarily a Muslim than an Iranian from Bukhara. He was deeply influenced by Islamic instructions in which loyalty, truthfulness and keeping one's word, are of the most important value. To give you a gift from Imam Reza (AS), 8th infallible

1 . Mahmood Yousuf, P. 2.

2 . Li Qingshem, P. 24.

³ . Ali Mohammad Sabeqi, "A Commemoration of Sayyid Ajjal Umar Shams Al-Din" Chinese Cultural Events, ____, P. 40-49.

descendent of the Holy Prophet who is buried in Mashhad, let's mention a narration. The Imam quotes from the Holy Prophet (SAWA) who says,

"لا تنظروا الي كثرة صلاتهم وصيامهم وكثرة الحج والزكاة وكثرة المعروف وطننتهم بالليل، انظروا الي صدق الحديث واداء الامانة"

"to evaluate a person who can be trusted on, do not consider his too much praying or fasting, his too much performance of Hajj and almsgiving and his too much good speech or wakefulness during the night (to perform the late night prayer), but consider his truthfulness and honesty." Thus, although worship and prayer are, from the Islamic point of view, so important that the Prophet (SAWA) mentions that:

"الصلاة عمود الدين، فمن تركها هدم الدين"

which means that "prayer is the pillar of the religion and whoever neglects it, will destroy his religion"; nevertheless, it cannot be a means of evaluation of ones truthfulness, loyalty and honesty. But in the case of leaving a social, or monetary task to a person or giving him a high official position, we should consider these aspects of his life

¹. Al-Shaikh Aziz Al-Lah Atarodi, Musnad Al-Imam Al-Reza (Mashhad: Imam Reza International Conference, 1988), I, P. 274.

². Ibn Abi Jomhoor Al-Ihsa'i, Ghawali Al- leali (Qum: Sayyid Al- Shohada Publisher, 1983), I.p.322.

.The holy Prophet also says," The wisest people are the most tolerant to the people¹ .

Shams was a person who had been influenced by Islamic social and political teachings. His Examples were his ancestors; that is, the holy Prophet (SAWA), Imam Ali (AS), Imam Hossain (AS), "the grandson of the prophet" all of whom had been both kind to the people and well-known for their resistance against tyranny, and finally they sacrificed themselves for the sake of justice and defending their ideals and their school of thought. He was taught in the Islamic school of thought in which, man has a high degree of value and serving him is regarded of the best kind of worship. Thus truthfulness and honesty of a person are the means of his evaluation. So Shams did not belong to his own age which was full of corruption, aggression, killing and invasion. He was a student of the school of his ancestors and their socio-political methods were acceptable to him not the current manners of the Mongolian period.

Shams was honest both to the rulers and to the people who could rely on him, so they assigned him important tasks. Also people listened to him, cooperated with him and it is obvious that, as the proverb says, "the best policy is honesty", and a person with such characteristics and positions would be successful in his career.

¹ . Muhammad Baqir Majlesi, Behar Al-Anwar (Beirut: Al-Wafa Institute, 1983), LXXII, p. 53.

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Muhammad (SAWA) in the Bible

Dr. Khalil Ahmad Nasir

The world today looks for rational and historical evidence to prove the truth of a person who claims to be from God. These criteria fully support the truth of our Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAWA).

Rational Test

Rational thinking indicates that the world was in dire need of revelation, of water from the fountain of spiritual guidance, at the time when the Holy Prophet appeared. He led an ideal life, a perfect example to be followed throughout the future. He started his mission against immense difficulties. He and his followers met strong persecution and opposition. But he was protected and helped by God in miraculous ways. Before his death his mission was firmly established all over Arabia and was rapidly spreading to other lands.

He worked miracles. He foretold the future, and his prophecies were fulfilled not only in his lifetime but continue to be fulfilled in our time as well. He brought a teaching which has attracted countless adherents since he appeared. In short, all rational tests prove that the mission of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAWA) was truly from God.

The Historical Test

There is also another test, the historical one, which our present day world requires of a messenger of God. An American Bishop of the Catholic Church once wrote in a nationally famous magazine that the test of history available to all men, all civilizations and all ages can be applied only to Jesus, because (in his opinion) :

There were no predictions about Buddha, Muhammad, or anyone else -except Christ. Others just came and said: "Here I am, believe me". Christ alone steps out of the line and answers: My coming was foretold, even to the smallest detail.

This statement is quite challenging and requires attention. We Muslims believe that Jesus was a true prophet of God. We also accept his advent as having been foretold in the previous scriptures.

But what about Muhammad (SAWA)?

We find that his coming was foretold in clear and precise terms not only by Jesus himself but by Moses and other Biblical prophets as well. In fact it seems from whatever words of Jesus are available to the world, that the bringing of glad tidings of a great coming prophet was one of the chief objects of his mission.

Again and again Jesus said that he was sent to the world only to give as much guidance as the people of his own time could bear. As for complete teaching which would stay forever with mankind, according to the Bible he said:

But the comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. (John 14-26)

Only the prophet of Islam could have fulfilled this prophecy of Jesus. Muhammad (SAWA) was truly sent in his name because he bore testimony to his truth. The Holy Qur'an says:

The Messiah, son of Mary, was a messenger, "surely messengers like unto him had passed away before him" (The Holy Qur'an 5:76)

The Holy Qur'an reports that the angels told Mary:

Surely Allah gives you good news with a word from Him of whose name is the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, worthy of regard in this world and hereafter. (The Holy Qur'an 3:46)

The Holy Prophet testified to the truth of Jesus as a divine and honored Teacher and Prophet, and declared them mistaken and misguided who thought him accursed. The Holy Qur'an described his teachings as "guidance and light." Further elaborating the same prophecy, Jesus has been quoted as saying in the Bible:

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. ... I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. How be it when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak.. and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. (John 16:7-14)

This prophecy clearly lays down that:

1. The Comforter will come after the departure of Jesus.
2. When the Comforter comes, he will reprove the world of sin, truth and justice.

3. He will guide the world into all truth.
4. The book revealed to him will contain no human word.
5. He will foretell things to come.
6. He will glorify Jesus and clear him of all charges.

Now when we take this prophecy point by point, it is unmistakably proven that it applies to none else but the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAWA). He came after Jesus. The Comforter was supposed to reprove the followers of Jesus. Obviously, he could not be a Christian or a Jew. The prophecy must relate to one who would belong to another people but should respect Jesus and promote reverence for him. The Holy Prophet was neither Jew nor a Christian. He was an Ishmaelite. But he defended the honor of Jesus. Thus says the Qur'an:

[The Jews] slew him not, nor crucified him, but he was made to appear to them like one crucified, and those who differ therein are certainly in a state of doubt about it: they have no definite knowledge thereof, but only follow a conjecture; and they did not convert this conjecture into a certainty; on the contrary, Allah exalted him to Himself (The Holy Qur'an 4: 158)

Here the Holy Qur'an specifically says that Jesus was saved from that accursed death designed for him by his enemies. However, they only suspected that they had succeeded in crucifying him. But Allah had not only saved him but admitted him to the circle of His favored ones.

Of the promise, *"He will show you things to come"*, we need only say that no prophet has told the world of things to come as much as has the prophet of Islam.

The prophecy said that *"he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that he shall speak"*. This description can only apply to Prophet Muhammad (SAWA). The New and Old Testaments do not contain a single book in which man's word has not been mixed with God's. The Qur'an is nothing but the word of God from beginning to end. Not a word even of the Prophet is to be found in it.

When Peter appeared before the people of Jerusalem, his words were: *"Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you"*. John starts one of his conversations with *"I, John, who am your brother"*. On the same lines we read the utterances of Philip, James and others in the Bible.

About the Holy Prophet, the Qur'an says:

He does not speak out of his own desire. It is naught but revelation that is revealed. (The Holy Qur'an 53:4-5)

The prophecy had said: *"He will guide you unto all truth"*. Again Muhammad (SAWA) was the only prophet who claimed to have brought a universal and perfect law. The Holy Qur'an says (following the Prophet's fulfillment of the divine commandment (5:67) to declare

Imam Ali ibn Abi Taleb (AS) as his vicegerent at Ghadeer-Khum while returning from the Farewell pilgrimage):

Today We have perfected your religion for you and completed Our favor upon you. (The Holy Qur'an 5:4)

How clearly has the prophecy been fulfilled in the person of the Prophet Muhammad (SAWA) in all of its details. Sometimes an unsuccessful attempt is made to dim the glory of this marvelous prophecy by claiming that this Comforter was the Holy Ghost who came after Jesus to his disciples. One wonders how this claim can be harmonized with the fact that the person foretold in the verses is described with the pronoun "he," which could not possibly refer to a spirit. Then, was not the Spirit of Truth supposed to come only after the departure of Jesus? Should it be then assumed that the Holy Ghost was not with Jesus? Obviously no devoted Christian will accept this assumption. One can also inquire where that truth is which is not found in the New Testament but was later brought by the Holy Ghost.

A Prophet From Thy Brethren

The fact is that before Jesus, Moses had also foretold of a great prophet in clear and precise words. When Moses went to Mount Horeb under the command of God he addressed the Israelites saying:

The Lord thy God will raise unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me, unto him ye shall hearken. (Deuteronomy 18:15)

And again, God's words to Moses:

I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put My words in his mouth and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass that, whosoever will not hearken unto My words which he shall speak in My name, I will require it of him. (Deuteronomy 18:18-19)

It is evident from these verses that Moses foretold a Law-giving Prophet who was to appear after him, and who was to be from among the brethren of Israel. That he was to be a Law-giver and not an ordinary Prophet is obvious from the words "like unto Moses", since Moses was also a Law-giver. The promulgation of "a new Law" means the initiation of a new movement, a new nation. A prophet with a new Law is obviously no ordinary teacher or reformer. He has to present a

comprehensive teaching, incorporating fundamental principles as well as detailed rules.

Was Jesus such a prophet? Was he a Law-giver? Did he bring a new Law into the world to replace an old one? The answer, in his own words according to the Bible:

Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto You, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled. (Matthew 5:17-18)

And the followers of Jesus went so far as to declare:

And the Law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law. (Galatians 3:12-13)

Jesus laid no claim to a new Law; his disciples regarded the Law as a curse. It was the Holy Qur'an which announced from the very outset that:

This is the (complete and perfect) Book, there is nothing of doubt in it. It is a guidance for the righteous. (The Holy Qur'an 2:3)

The prophecy also said that the Promised One was to be raised not from among the Israelites but from their brethren. Muhammad (SAWA) was from the brethren of the Israelites, the Ishmaelites.

It also told that God would put his words in his mouth. The New Testament gospels do not consist of words which God put in Jesus' mouth. They only tell us his story and what he himself and his disciples said and did.

The Holy Qur'an, on the other hand, says:

Say, O Muhammad, I am a man like unto you: Only the word of God comes unto me. (The Holy Qur'an 18: 111)

The prophecy -in the Torah- spoke of "words which he shall speak in My name." Strange as it may seem, there is not a single example of words -in the various Christian Gospels- which Jesus may be said to have received from God with the command to pass them on. The Holy Qur'an, on the other hand, specifically claimed to be the word from God.

The words of the Lord had announced that the Promised One would be a prophet. Jesus, according to the Christian evangelists, did not claim to be a prophet. Matthew reports that he asked his disciples:

"Whom do men say that I the son of man ...?"

*Peter replied that he was the Christ, the Son of the living God.
(Matthew 16:13-16)*

Thus Jesus denied being either John the Baptist or Elias or - according to the Christian Gospels- one of the prophets. Muhammad (SAWA) was proclaimed as not only a prophet -according to the Christian Gospels- but also as "like unto Moses," when the Qur'an said:

*Verily We have sent to you a Messenger, who is a witness over you,
even as we sent a Messenger to Pharaoh. (The Holy Qur'an 73:16)*

In short, one thousand nine hundred years before the advent of the Prophet of Islam, Moses declared that his own Law was, in the divine scheme, not the last Law; that the world was to have a fuller Law later on; and that, for this God would send in the latter days another Messenger of His. This Messenger was to teach all truth; it was he who was to mark the last stage in the spiritual advance of man. The world had to wait for another book and another Prophet.

If, therefore, the Qur'an and the Holy Prophet have come after the Bible and after the Prophets Moses and Jesus, and if they claim to have come from God as guidance to man, their claim must be treated as just and true. It must be taken as the Fulfillment of ancient prophecies. The revelation of the Qur'an was not a gratuitous revelation, a redundancy in the presence of other revelations. Indeed, if the Qur'an had not been

revealed, promises made by God through His messengers would have gone unfulfilled, and the world would have become afflicted with doubt and disbelief.

Divine Light From Paran

The prophecies of the Torah had even led its followers to that part of the world where the great Prophet was to appear. Thus it was said:

And he said, the Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; and shined forth from Mount Paran and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them. (Deuteronomy 33:2)

In this verse Moses is promised three manifestations of the glory of God. The first of these appeared on Sinai in the time of Moses. Time passed. The second manifestation promised in the prophecy was to take place at Seir, a part of the world near where the miracles of Jesus took place. "Rising up from Seir," therefore, meant the advent of Jesus.

The third manifestation of divine glory was to take its rise from Paran, and Paran (Arabic Faran) is the name of the hills which lie between Mecca, the birth place of Muhammad (SAWA), and Medina, the town where he died. According to the Old Testament, Ishmael, the ancestor of Muhammad (SAWA), lived in this part. Thus we have in the Bible:

And God was with the lad (Ishmael): and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran. (Genesis 21:20-21)

Historical and geographical evidence shows that the descendents of Abraham lived in Arabia. All of them held Mecca and the Ka'ba, the house of worship built by Abraham, in great reverence. His son Ishmael first settled in Mecca. Genesis gives the names of twelve sons of Ishmael including two named Tema and Kedar. (Genesis 25:13-16) This is further supported by the testimony of Isaiah where we read:

The burden of Arabia. In the forest of Arabia shall ye lodge, O ye traveling companies of Dedanim. The inhabitants of the land of Tema brought water to him that was thirsty, they provided with their bread him that fled. For they fled from the swords, from the bent bow, and from the grievousness of war. For thus hath the Lord said unto me, Within a year, according to the years of an hireling, and all the glory of Kedar shall fail: And the residue of the number of archers, the mighty men of the children of Kedar, shall be diminished: for the Lord God of Israel hath spoken it. (Isaiah 21:13-16)

This prophetic passage is a picture of the Battle of Badr which took place about a year after the Holy Prophet's migration from Mecca to Medina. In this battle the sons of Kedar, the people of Mecca and the territories around, unable to withstand the fierceness of Muslim

swordsmen and archers, sustained disastrous defeat. God made a handful of men, poorly armed and without provisions, the means of inflicting this humiliation on an army led by experienced generals.

The battles with the Meccans continued against heavy odds until such time that the Prophet Muhammad (SAWA) entered Mecca after a struggle of several years. This was the time when ten thousand Muslims accompanied him. The Holy Prophet declared that the message of God had been completed in the form of the Holy Qur'an. Thus the prophecy of Moses was fulfilled that the Lord would shine forth from Paran with ten thousands of saints, with a fiery Law in his right hand. Thus also the prophecy of Jesus was fulfilled that the spirit of Truth "will guide you into all truth." His fiery Law, the Holy Qur'an, consumed all impurities of flesh and turned the grossest hearts into pure gold.

Could Jesus have fulfilled this wonderful prophecy? He did not rise from Paran. He had only twelve disciples and not ten thousand. Isaiah had spoken of one that fled; the migration of Muhammad (SAWA) is such an important part of Muslim history that the Islamic calendar starts from the very year of migration.

"The Earth Was Full of His Praise"

This advent was also prophesied by Habakkuk several centuries before Jesus. Thus we have:

God comes from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand; and there was the hiding of his power. Before him went the pestilence, and the burning coals went forth at his feet. He stood and measured the earth; he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, and the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting. I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction; and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble. (Habakkuk 3:3-7)

This again shows that the third manifestation mentioned earlier was going to be by one who would appear from the land of Tema and Mount Paran. The earth was going to be full of his praise. It is not a mere accident, then, that the Holy Prophet of Islam was named Muhammad (SAWA), which literally means, the Praised One. Only a man with a name as beautiful as his personality and character could answer to the description of *Habakkuk*. The enemies of Muhammad (SAWA) suffered destruction, pestilence and humiliation of "burning coals" in encountering him in spite of overwhelmingly stronger and larger forces.

Moses died while he was still fighting his enemies. Jesus was put on the Cross –as alleged by Christians. The prophet who beheld and drove the nations asunder, as mentioned by *Habakkuk*, could be, therefore, none else but Muhammad (SAWA). His enemies who looked like "everlasting mountains and perpetual hills" with their immense power were completely routed. Later "the tents of Cushan" and the "curtains of the land of Midian," that is, the land of Canaan then under the Roman Caesar, also found their salvation in surrendering to the servants of the Holy Prophet in the time of that Caesar's successors.

The Prince of Peace

Lets us go on now to *Isaiah*. Here we find many passages about a coming prophet which can be true only of Muhammad (SAWA). We are told of a time when a man will call the nations of the world who would swiftly answer his call and gather around him (*Isaiah*5: 26-30). We are told that the followers of the Promised One will be obliged to take part in wars. We are told that the advent of this prophet will be at a time when even the light will be darkened by the sin and corruption of land and sea. *Isaiah* also tells us that at the time God will turn away His face from the house of Jacob (*Isaiah* 8:13-17).

And then: For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The

Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. (Isaiah 9:6- 7)

The prophecy gives promise of a king who will have five titles:

1. Wonderful
2. Counsellor
3. The Mighty God
4. The Everlasting Father and
5. The Prince of Peace

Was Jesus ever a King? Were the names enumerated in this prophecy ever applied to him? Wonderful he might have been called, because of peculiar birth, but while his deniers regarded his birth as illegitimate, his supporters were in doubt about his ancestry. He gave no exhibition of the might that is mentioned in the above verse. Nor could he be called Everlasting Father, because he himself had mentioned another one coming after him. He neither became king nor could he ever bring peace to the world. He remained oppressed by his opponents until he was allegedly put on the Cross. He could not, therefore, be rightly called the Prince of Peace. He never attained to any government and, therefore, the words, "of his government there shall be no end," have

no meaning in terms of his life. These signs mentioned in Isaiah apply only to the Prophet of Islam.

It was he who had to shoulder the responsibilities of a state, and thus, quite against his will, had to be called king.

Muhammad (SAWA) was Wonderful both in his name and achievements. Jesus, in his parable of the vineyard, speaks of the householder who let his vineyards to husbandmen. These wicked men not only beat, killed and stoned his other servants but also his son. The lord, says Jesus, will come himself, destroy these wicked husbandmen and render the vineyard to those who "shall render the fruits in their seasons." This will be so because:

The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the comer; and this is the Lord's doing, and it marvelous in our eyes.
(Matthew 21:33-44)

This is the way in which the "Wonderful" one had to appear. When the son would be slain, then the other one would be sent who would prove to be the head of the corner. And he would seem "marvelous" in the eyes of Jesus and the whole world.

And about his wonderful achievements we may quote Thomas Carlyle. He writes:

To the Arab nation it was a birth from darkness into light; Arabia first become alive by means of it. A poor shepherd people, roaming unnoticed in its deserts since the creation of the world, a hero-prophet was sent down to them with a word they could believe: see, the unnoticed becomes world-notable, the small has grown world-great, within one century afterward, Arabia is at Grenada on this hand, Delhi on that, glancing in valor and splendor and the light of genius, Arabia shines through long ages over a section of the world. Belief is great, long-living. The history of a nation becomes fruitful, soul-elevating, great, so soon as it believes. These Arabs, the man Muhammad (SAWA) and that one century-is it not as if a spark had fallen, one spark, on a world of what seemed black, unnoticeable sand, but 10, the sand proves explosive powder, blazes heaven-high from Delhi to Grenada. I said, the great man was always a lightning out of heaven; the rest of men waited for him like fuel and then they too would flame.

(Thomas Carlyle in Heroes And Hero-worship)

The second name of the Promised One is Counsellor. This again applied to the Holy Prophet. A nation turned to him for advice. He, in turn, held regular consultation with his people, and made it obligatory on the State to consult the people in all important matters. The Holy Qur'an tells us that his companions sought his consultation regularly.

The prophecy had also described him as mighty God. The Bible has often mentioned the prophets as God himself. (Exodus 7:1 and 4:16)

Whenever a human being is spoken of as a "like of God" it can only mean that he is a manifestation of the Almighty .The Holy Prophet, again, answers the description of the prophecy. There are several references relevant to this in the Holy Qur'an. At the Battle of Badr, the Prophet took a handful of gravel and threw it at the enemy. This proved a signal for a dust storm which discomfited the enemy and contributed to its defeat. Of this, God says to the Holy Prophet:

And thou threwest not when thou didst throw, but it was God who threw. (The Holy Qur'an 8:18)

Again it says:

Verily those who swear allegiance to thee indeed swear allegiance to God. (The Holy Qur'an 48:11)

Thus came the manifestation of mighty God, The Holy Prophet, who was able to subjugate all his enemies in his lifetime and to smash all opposition.

The fourth name in the prophecy is Everlasting Father. Jesus was sent only to the lost sheep of the House of Israel and, therefore, could not possibly have an everlasting character. On the other hand, the Holy

Prophet was referred to in the Qur'an as "bringer together of all mankind". (The Holy Qur'an 34 :29). He was promised that his teaching would abide forever with the people because at the end of days, the Promised Messiah (Imam Mahdi) would appear from among his followers and would revive the teachings of Islam and prove conclusively that the spiritual dominion of the Prophet of Islam was everlasting and there would be no heavenly teachers then except from his followers.

The fifth name in the prophecy is Prince of Peace. Can Jesus be truly called such? He did not become a sovereign in his life. He did not ever gain power to administer forgiveness to his enemies, and therefore, there was not much occasion for him to perform what he preached. On the other hand, the very religion of Muhammad (SAWA) is called *Islam*, meaning peace. As for the performance of peace and forgiveness in Muhammad (SAWA)'s life we have ample evidence.

Through thirteen long and weary years the prophet of Islam and his little band of devoted followers bore with calm dignity and patience the bitterest persecution at the hands of the Meccans. Starvation, flogging, scoffings, humiliations, degradations and outrages of every description were the order of the day. When the Prophet took refuge in Medina, even there he was not left in peace. Over a period of seven years of sustained and brutal persecution the Prophet of Islam appeared suddenly on the heights of Paran, at the head of ten thousand

Muslims, with no battle fought and not a drop of blood shed, when any penalty inflicted upon these Meccans would have been light in comparison to their long record of misdeeds, the Prophet announced, gently and mercifully:

There shall be no retribution exacted from you, you shall all go free.
(The Holy Qur'an 12:93)

Is it the same way that the Christians treated their enemies when they came to power? Who should then be called a true Prince of Peace, Jesus or Muhammad (SAWA)? Jesus could not afford peace to others. His followers were able to afford it, but they did not give it. The Prophet of Islam had the power to punish his enemies but he chose to forgive. Muhammad (SAWA), therefore, was the Prince of Peace of Isaiah's prophecy. It was he again who also attained government and thus could fulfill the last part of this prophecy saying, "Of the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end."

Conclusion

These are just a few of the many prophecies found in the Bible about the advent of that great prophet who was going to lead the world into all truth.

Muhammad was going to be, in the words of Solomon, "*altogether lovely*" which in Hebrew is expressed as *Mahmaddim*. (Song of

Solomon 5: 10-16) He was the fulfillment of the "stone" of Daniel's dream. (Daniel 2:34-35) He was the coming of the lord of the vineyard himself¹ as foretold by Jesus.

True, there are some prophecies about Jesus as well in the Old Testament but it is also a fact that there are many which cannot rightly be applied to him. These could be fulfilled in the person of the one who was coming with a Law and whose mission was to be not just to *"the lost sheep of the house of Israel"* but to the whole world, one who was spoken of by Jesus as the Comforter and Spirit of Truth. The predictions about Muhammad (SAWA) in the Bible are clear and precise.

The door to the Kingdom of Heaven has been opened by the fulfillment of these prophecies. Blessed are those who accept the call of the Lord of Heaven and Earth to enter His Kingdom and receive His communion.

And our last observation is that all praise is due to God, the Sustainer of the Universe.

The Amazing Qur'an

By Gary Miller

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

One thing which surprises non-Muslims who are examining the book very closely is that the Qur'an does not appear to them to be what they expected. What they assume is that they have an old book which came fourteen centuries ago from the Arabian Desert; and they expect that the book should look something like that - an old book from the desert. And then they find out that it does not resemble what they expected at all.

Additionally, one of the first things that some people assume is that because it is an old book which comes from the desert, it should talk

about the desert. Well the Qur'an does talk about the desert - some of its imagery describes the desert; but it also talks about the sea - what it's like to be in a storm on the sea.

Some years ago, the story came to us in Toronto about a man who was in the merchant navy and made his living on the sea. A Muslim gave him a translation of the Qur'an to read. The merchant mariner knew nothing about the history of Islam but was interested in reading the Qur'an. When he finished reading it, he brought it back to the Muslim and asked, "This Muhammad (SAWA) was he a sailor?" He was impressed at how accurately the Qur'an describes a storm on a sea. When he was told, "No as a matter of fact, Muhammad (SAWA) lived in the desert," that was enough for him. He embraced Islam on the spot. He was so impressed with the Qur'anic description because he had been in a storm on the sea, and he knew that whoever had written that description had also been in a storm on the sea. The description of *"a wave, over it a wave, over it clouds"* was not what someone imagining a storm on a sea to be like would have written; rather, it was written by someone who knew what a storm on the sea was like. This is one example of how the Qur'an is not tied to a certain place and time. Certainly, the scientific ideas expressed in it also do not seem to originate from the desert fourteen centuries ago.

Many centuries before the onset of Muhammad (SAWA)'s Prophethood, there was a well-known theory of atomism advanced by the Greek philosopher, Democritus. He and the people who came after

him assumed that matter consists of tiny, indestructible, indivisible particles called atoms. The Arabs too, used to deal in the same concept; in fact, the Arabic word *dharrah* commonly referred to the smallest particle known to man.

Now, modern science has discovered that this smallest unit of matter (i.e., the atom, which has all of the same properties as its element) can be split into its component parts. This is a new idea, a development of the last century; yet, interestingly enough, this information had already been documented in the Qur'an which states:

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

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

Another example of what one might expect to find in an "old book" that touches upon the subject of health or medicine is outdated remedies or cures. Various historical sources state that the Prophet gave some advice about health and hygiene, yet most of these pieces of advice are not contained in the Qur'an. At first glance, to the non-Muslims this appears to be a negligent omission. They cannot understand why Allah would not "include" such helpful information in the Qur'an. Some Muslims attempt to explain this absence with the following argument: "Although the Prophet's advice was sound and applicable to the time in which he lived, Allah, in His infinite wisdom,

knew that there would come later medical and scientific advances which would make the Prophet's advice appear outdated. When later discoveries occurred, people might say that such information contradicted that which the Prophet had given. Thus, since Allah would never allow any opportunity for the non-Muslims to claim that the Qur'an contradicts itself or the teachings of the Prophet, He only included in the Qur'an information and examples which could stand the test of time."

However, when one examines the true realities of the Qur'an in terms of its existence as a divine revelation, the entire matter is quickly brought into its proper perspective, and the error in such argumentation becomes clear and understandable. It must be understood that the Qur'an is a divine revelation, and as such, all information in it is of divine origin. Allah revealed the Qur'an from Himself. It is the words of Allah, which existed before creation, and thus nothing can be added, subtracted or altered. In essence, the Qur'an existed and was complete before the creation of Prophet Muhammad (SAWA), so it could not possibly contain any of the Prophet's own words or advice. An inclusion of such information would clearly contradict the purpose for which the Qur'an exists, compromise its authority and render it inauthentic as a divine revelation.

Consequently, there was no "home remedies" in the Qur'an which one could claim to be outdated; nor does it contain any man's view about what is beneficial to health, what food is best to eat, or what will cure

this or that disease. In fact, the Qur'an only mentions one item dealing with medical treatment, and it is not in dispute by anyone. It states that in honey there is healing. And certainly, I do not think that there is anyone who will argue with that!

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

It is common knowledge that Muhammad (SAWA) had a very difficult life. All of his children died before him except one daughter (Fatema), and he had a wife (Khadija) of several years who was dear and important to him, and who proceeded him in death at a very critical period of his life-after 25 years of blissful married life with him. As a matter of fact, she must have been quite a woman because when the first revelation came to him, he hurried home to confide to her. Certainly, even today one would have a hard time trying to find an Arab who would tell you, "I was so shaken that I hurried home to my

wife." They just aren't that way. Yet Muhammad (SAWA) felt comfortable enough with his wife to be able to do that. That's how influential and strong woman she was. Although these examples are only a few of the subjects that would have been on Muhammad (SAWA)'s mind, they are sufficient in intensity to prove my point. The Qur'an does not mention any of these things - not the death of his children, not the death of his beloved wife, not his fear of the initial revelations, which he so beautifully shared with his wife - nothing; yet, these topics must have hurt him, bothered him, and caused him pain and grief during periods of his psychological reflections, then these subjects, as well as others, would be prevalent or at least mentioned throughout.

A truly scientific approach to the Qur'an is possible because the Qur'an offers something that is not offered by other religious scriptures, in particular, and other religions, in general. It is what scientists demand. Today there are many people who have ideas and theories about how the universe works. These people are all over the place, but the scientific community does not even bother to listen to them. This is because within the last century the scientific community has demanded a test of falsification. They say, "If you have theory, do not bother us with it unless you bring with that theory a way for us to prove whether you are wrong or not."

Such a test was exactly why the scientific community listened to Einstein towards the beginning of the century. He came with a new

theory and said, "I believe the universe works like this; and here are three ways to prove whether I am wrong!" So the scientific community subjected his theory to the tests, and within six years it passed all three. Of course, this does not prove that he was great, but it proves that he deserved to be listened to because he said, "This is my idea; and if you want to try to prove me wrong, do this or try that." This is exactly what the Qur'an has - falsification tests. Some are old (in that they have already been proven true), and some still exist today. Basically it states, "If this book is not what it claims to be, then all you have to do is this or this or this to prove that it is false." Of course, in 1400 years no one has been able to do "This or this or this," and thus it is still considered true and authentic. I suggest to you that the next time you get into dispute with someone about Islam and he claims that he has the truth and that you are in darkness, you leave all other arguments at first and make this suggestion. Ask him, "Is there any falsification test in your religion? Is there anything in your religion that would prove you are wrong if I could prove to you that it exists - anything?" Well, I can promise right now that people will not have anything - no test, no proof, nothing! This is because they do not carry around the idea that they should not only present what they believe but should also offer others a chance to prove they're wrong. However, Islam does that. A perfect example of how Islam provides man with a chance to verify its authenticity and "prove it wrong" occurs in the 4th chapter. And quiet

honestly, I was surprised when I first discovered this challenge. It states:

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

This is a clear challenge to the non-Muslim. Basically, it invites him to find a mistake. As a matter of fact, the seriousness and difficulty of the challenge aside, the actual presentation of such a challenge in the first place is not even in human nature and is inconsistent with man's personality. One doesn't take an exam in school after finishing the exam; write a note to the instructor at the end saying, "This exam is perfect. There are no mistakes in it. Find one if you can!" One just doesn't do that. The teacher would not sleep until he found a mistake! And yet this is the way the Qur'an approaches people. Another interesting attitude that exists in the Qur'an repeatedly deals with its advice to the reader. The Qur'an informs that reader about different facts and then gives the advice: "If you want to know more about this or that, or if you doubt what is said, then you should ask those who have knowledge." This too is a surprising attitude. It is not usual to have a book that comes from someone without training in geography, botany, biology, etc., who discusses these subjects and then advises the reader to ask men of knowledge if he doubts anything.

Yet in every age there have been Muslims who have followed the advice of the Qur'an and made surprising discoveries. If one looks to the works of Muslim scientists of many centuries ago, one will find

them full of quotations from the Qur'an. These works state that they did research in such a place, looking for something. And they affirm that the reason they looked in such and such a place was that the Qur'an pointed them in that direction. For example, the Qur'an mentions man's origin and then tells the reader, "Research it!" It gives the reader a hint where to look and then states that one should find out more about it. This is the kind of thing that Muslims today largely seem to overlook - but not always, as illustrated in the following example. A few years ago, a group of men in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia collected all of the verses in the Qur'an which discuss embryology - the growth of the human being in the womb. They said, "Here is what the Qur'an says. Is it the truth?" In essence, they took the advice of the Qur'an; "Ask the men who know." They chose, as it happened, a non-Muslim who is a professor of embryology at the University of Toronto. His name is Keith Moore, and he is the author of textbooks on embryology - a world expert on the subject. They invited him to Riyadh and said, "This is what the Qur'an says about your subject. Is it true? What can you tell us?" While he was in Riyadh, they gave him all of the help that he needed in translation and all of the cooperation for which he asked. And he was so surprised at what he found that he changed his textbooks. In fact, in the second edition of one of his books, called "Before We are Born" ... in the second edition about the history of embryology, he included some material that was not in the first edition because of what he found in the Qur'an. Truly this

illustrates that the Qur'an was ahead of its time and that those who believe in the Qur'an know what other people do not know.

I had the pleasure of interviewing Dr. Keith Moore for a television presentation, and we talked a great deal about this - it was illustrated by slides and so on. He mentioned that some of the things that the Qur'an states about the growth of the human being were not known until thirty years ago. In fact, he said that one item in particular - the Qur'an's description of the human being as a "*leech-like clot*" (*'alaqah*) at one stage - was new to him; but when he checked on it, he found that it was true, and so he added it to his book. He said, "I never thought of that before," and he went to the zoology department and asked for a picture of a leech. When he found that it looked just like the human embryo, he decided to include both pictures in one of his textbooks. Dr. Moore also wrote a book on clinical embryology, and when he presented this information in Toronto, it caused quite a stir throughout Canada. It was on the front pages of some of the newspapers across Canada, and some of the headlines were quite funny. For instance, one headline read:

"SURPRISING THING FOUND IN ANCIENT BOOK!"

It seems obvious from this example that people do not clearly understand what it is all about. As a matter of fact, one newspaper reporter asked Professor Moore, "Don't you think that maybe the Arabs might have known about these things - the description of the embryo, its appearance and how it changes and grows? Maybe there were not

scientists, but maybe they did something crude dissections on their own - carved up people and examined these things."

The professor immediately pointed out to him that he [i.e., the reporter] had missed a very important point. All of the slides of the embryo that had been shown and had been projected in the film had come from pictures taken through a microscope. He said, "It does not matter if someone had tried to discover embryology fourteen centuries ago, they could not have seen it!" All of the descriptions in the Qur'an of the appearance of the embryo are of the item when it is still too small to see with the eye; therefore, one needs a microscope to see it. Since such a device had only been around for little more than two hundred years, Dr. Moore taunted, "Maybe fourteen centuries ago someone secretly had a microscope and did this research, making no mistakes anywhere. Then he somehow taught Muhammad (SAWA) and convinced him to put this information in his book. Then he destroyed his equipment and kept it a secret forever. Do you believe that? You really should not unless you bring some proof because it is such a ridiculous theory." In fact, when he was asked: "How do you explain this information in the Qur'an?" Dr. Moore's reply was, "It could only have been divinely revealed."!

Although the aforementioned example of man researching information contained in the Qur'an deals with a non-Muslim, it is still valid because he is one of those who is knowledgeable in the subject being researched. Had some layman claimed that what the Qur'an says about

embryology is true, then one would not necessarily have to accept his word. However, because of the high position, respect, and esteem man gives scholars, one naturally assumes that if they research a subject and arrive at a conclusion based on that research, then the conclusion is valid. One of Professor Moore's colleagues, Marshall Johnson, deals extensively with geology at the University of Toronto.

He became very interested in the fact that the Qur'anic statements about embryology are accurate, and so he asked Muslims to collect everything contained in the Qur'an which deals with his specialty. Again people were very surprised at the findings. Since there are a vast number subjects discussed in the Qur'an, it would certainly require a large amount of time to exhaust each subject. It suffices for the purpose of this discussion to state that the Qur'an makes very clear and concise statements about various subjects while simultaneously advising the reader to verify the authenticity of these statements with research by scholars in those subjects. And as illustrated by the Qur'an, they have clearly emerged authentic. Undoubtedly, there is an attitude in the Qur'an which is not found anywhere else. It is interesting how when the Qur'an provides information, it often tells the reader, *"You did not know this before."* Indeed, there is no scripture that exists which makes that claim. All of the other ancient writings and scriptures that people have do give a lot of information, but they always state where the information came from.

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

They could never challenge its authenticity because it really was new! In concurrence with the advice given in the Qur'an to research information (even if it is new), when 'Omar was caliph, he chose a group of men and sent them to find the wall of Dhul-Qarnayn. Before the Qur'anic revelation, the Arabs had never heard of such a wall, but because the Qur'an described it, they were able to discover it. As a matter of fact, it is now located in what is called Darband in the [ex] Soviet Union (in part of the Caucasus Mountain Range in the Republic of Daghestan near the Caspian Sea). It must be stressed here that the Qur'an is accurate about many, many things, but accuracy does not

necessarily mean that a book is a divine revelation. In fact, accuracy is only one of the criteria for divine revelations.

For instance, the telephone book is accurate, but that does not mean that it is divinely revealed. The real problem lies in that one must establish some proof of the source of the Qur'anic information. The emphasis is on the reader. One cannot simply deny the authenticity of the Qur'an without sufficient proof. If, indeed, one finds a mistake, then he has the right to disqualify it. This is exactly what the Qur'an encourages. Once a man came up to me after a lecture I delivered in South Africa. He was very angry about what I had said, and so he claimed, "I am going to go home tonight and find a mistake in the Qur'an." Of course, I said, "Congratulations. That is the most intelligent thing that you have said."

Certainly, this is the approach Muslims need to take with those who doubt the authenticity of the Qur'an, because the Qur'an itself offers the same challenge. An inevitably, after accepting its challenge and discovering that it is true, these people will come to believe it because they could not disqualify it. In essence, the Qur'an earns their respect because they themselves have had to verify its authenticity. An essential fact that cannot be reiterated enough concerning the authenticity of the Qur'an is that one's inability to explain a phenomenon himself does not require his acceptance of the phenomenon's existence or another person's explanation of it.

Specifically, just because one cannot explain something does not mean that one has to accept someone else's explanation. However, the person's refusal of other explanations reverts the burden of proof back on himself to find a feasible answer. This general theory applies to numerous concepts in life, but fits most wonderfully with the Qur'anic challenge, for it creates a difficulty for one who says, "I do not believe it." At the onset of refusal one immediately has an obligation to find an explanation himself if he feels others' answers are inadequate. In fact, in one particular Qur'anic verse which I have always seen mistranslated into English, Allah mentions a man who heard the truth explained to him. It states that he was derelict in his duty because after he heard the information, he left without checking the verity of what he had heard. In other words, one is guilty if he hears something and does not research it and check to see whether it is true. One is supposed to process all information and decide what garbage to be thrown out is and what is worthwhile information to be kept and benefited from at a later date. One cannot just let it rattle around in his head. It must be put in the proper categories and approached from that point of view. For example, if the information is still speculator, then one must discern whether it's closer to being true or false. But if all of the facts have been presented, then one must decide absolutely between these two options. And even if one is not positive about the authenticity of the information, he is still required to process all of the information and make the admission that he just does not know for sure. Although this

last point appears to be futile, in actuality, it is beneficial to the arrival at a positive conclusion at a later time in that it forces the person to at least recognize research and review the facts. This familiarity with the information will give the person "the edge" when future discoveries are made and additional information is presented. The important thing is that one deals with the facts and does not simply discard them out of empathy and disinterest.

The real certainty about the truthfulness of the Qur'an is evident in the confidence which is prevalent throughout it; and this confidence comes from a different approach – "Exhausting the Alternatives."

In essence, the Qur'an states, *"This book is a divine revelation; if you do not believe that, then what is it?"* In other words, the reader is challenged to come up with some other explanation. Here is a book made of paper and ink. Where did it come from? It says it is a divine revelation; if it is not, then what is its source?

The interesting fact is that no one has with an explanation that works. In fact, all alternatives have been exhausted. As has been well established by non-Muslims, these alternatives basically are reduced to two mutually exclusive schools of thought, insisting on one or the other. On one hand, there exists a large group of people who have researched the Qur'an for hundreds of years and who claim, "One thing we know for sure - that man, Muhammad (SAWA), thought he was a prophet. He was crazy!" They are convinced that Muhammad (SAWA) was fooled somehow. Then on the other hand, there is another group

which alleges, "Because of this evidence, one thing we know for sure is that that man, Muhammad (SAWA), was a liar!" Ironically, these two groups never seem to get together without contradicting. In fact, many references on Islam usually claim both theories. They start out by saying that Muhammad (SAWA) was crazy and then end by saying that he was a liar. They never seem to realize that he could not have been both!

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

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

As has already been mentioned, there is much information contained in the Qur'an whose source cannot be attributed to anyone other than Allah. For example, who told Muhammad (SAWA) about the wall of Dhul-Qarnayn - a place thousands of miles to the north? Who told him about embryology? When people assemble facts such as these, if they are not willing to attribute their existence to a divine source, they automatically resort to the assumption someone brought Muhammad

(SAWA) the information and that he used it to fool the people. However, this theory can easily be disproved with one simple question: "If Muhammad (SAWA) was a liar, where did he get his confidence? Why did he tell some people outright to their face what others could never say?" Such confidence depends completely upon being convinced that one has a true divine revelation. For example, the Prophet had an uncle by the name of Abu Lahab. This man hated Islam to such an extent that he used to follow the Prophet around in order to discredit him. If Abu Lahab saw the Prophet speaking to a stranger, he would wait until they parted and then would go to the stranger and ask him, "What did he tell you? Did he say, 'Black.'? Well, it's white. Did he say, 'Morning.'? Well, it's night." He faithfully said the exact opposite of whatever he heard Muhammad (SAWA) and the Muslims say. However, about ten years before Abu Lahab died; a little chapter in the Qur'an was revealed to him. It distinctly stated that he would go to the Fire (i.e., Hell). In other words, it affirmed that he would never become a Muslim and would therefore be condemned forever. For ten years all Abu Lahab had to do was say, "I heard that it has been revealed to Muhammad (SAWA) that I will never change - that I will never become a Muslim and will enter the Hellfire. Well I want to become a Muslim now. How do you like that? What do you think of your divine revelation now?" But he never did that. And yet, that is exactly the kind of behaviour one would have expected from him since he always sought to contradict Islam. In essence, Muhammad (SAWA)

said, "You hate me and you want to finish me? Here, say these words, and I am finished. Come on, say them!" But Abu Lahab never said them. Ten years! And in all that time he never accepted Islam or even became sympathetic to the Islamic cause. How could Muhammad (SAWA) possibly have known for sure that Abu Lahab would fulfil the Qur'anic revelation if he [i.e., Muhammad (SAWA)] was not truly the messenger of Allah? How could he possibly have been so confident as to give someone 10 years to discredit his claim of Prophethood? The only answer is that he was Allah's messenger; for in order to put forth such a risky challenge, one has to be entirely convinced that he has a divine revelation.

Another example of the confidence which Muhammad (SAWA) had in his own Prophethood and consequently in the divine protection of himself and his message is when he left Makkah and hid in a cave with Abu Bakr during their emigration to Medina. The two clearly saw people coming to kill them, and Abu Bakr was afraid. Certainly, if Muhammad (SAWA) was a liar, a forger and one who was trying to fool the people into believing that he was a prophet, one would have expected him to say in such a circumstance to his friend, "Hey, Abu Bakr, see if you can find a back way out of this cave." Or "Squat down in that corner over there and keep quiet." Yet, in fact, what he said to Abu Bakr clearly illustrated his confidence. He told him, "Relax! Allah is with us, and Allah will save us!"

Now, if one knows that he is fooling the people, where does one get this kind of attitude? In fact, such a frame of mind is not characteristic of a liar or a forger at all. So, as has been previously mentioned, the non-Muslims go around and around in a circle, searching for a way out - some way to explain the findings in the Qur'an without attributing them to their proper source. On one hand, they tell you on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, "The man was a liar," and on the other hand, on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday they tell you, "He was crazy." What they refuse to accept is that one cannot have it both ways; yet they refuse to accept is that one cannot have it both ways; yet they need both excuses to explain the information in the Qur'an.

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

an instant exit out of an uncomfortable situation. As a matter of fact, there is a famous story in the Bible that mentions how one day some of the Jews were witnesses when Jesus raised a man from the dead. The man had been dead for four days, and when Jesus arrived, he simply said, "Get up!" and the man arose and walked away. At such a sight, some of the Jews who were watching said disbelievingly, "This is the Devil. The Devil helped him!" Now this story is rehearsed often in churches all over the world, and people cry big tears over it, saying, "Oh, if I had been there, I would not have been as stupid as the Jews!" Yet ironically, these people do exactly what the Jews did when in just three minutes you show them only a small part of the Qur'an and all they can say is, "Oh, the Devil did it. The devil wrote that book!" Because they are truly backed into a corner and have no other viable answer, they resort to the quickest and cheapest excuse available. Another Example of people's use of this weak stance can be found in the Makkans' explanation of the source of Muhammad (SAWA)'s message. They used to say, "The devils bring Muhammad that Qur'an!" But just as with every other suggestion made, the Qur'an gives the answer. One verse in particular states:

"And they say, 'Surely he is possessed [by jinn], 'but it [i.e., the Qur'an] is not except a reminder to the worlds.'" Thus it gives an argument in reply to such a theory. In fact, there are many arguments in the Qur'an in reply to the suggestion that devils brought Muhammad

(SAWA) his message. For example, in the 26th chapter Allah clearly affirms:

"No evil ones have brought it [i.e., this revelation] down. It would neither be fitting for them, nor would they be able. Indeed they have been removed far from hearing." And in another place in the Qur'an, Allah instructs us:

"So when you recite the Qur'an seek refuge in Allah from Shaytaan, the rejected."

Now is this how Satan writes a book? He tells one, "Before you read my book, ask God to save you from me." This is very, very tricky. Indeed, a man could write something like this, but would Satan do this? Many people clearly illustrate that they cannot come to one conclusion on this subject. On one hand, they claim that Satan would not do such a thing and that even if he could, God would not allow him to; yet, on the other hand, they also believe that Satan is only that much less than God. In essence they allege that the Devil can probably do whatever God can do. And as a result, when they look at the Qur'an, even as surprised as they are as to how amazing it is, they still insist, "The Devil did this!" Thanks be to Allah, Muslims do not have that attitude. Although Satan may have some abilities, they are a long way separated from the abilities of Allah. And no Muslim is a Muslim unless he believes that. It is common knowledge even among non-Muslims that the Devil can easily make mistakes, and it would be

expected that he would contradict himself if and when he wrote a book. For indeed, the Qur'an states:

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

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

trouble trying to deal with these questions, he tries to make excuses, saying "Uh... the queen... she has gone to her mother's. Uh... the prime minister... well he died." And eventually he is cured because he cannot deal with the facts. If the psychologist continues confronting him with enough facts, finally he faces the reality and says, "I guess I am not the king of England." The Qur'an approaches everyone who reads it in very much the same way a psychologist treats his myth-o-mania patient. There is a verse in the Qur'an which states:

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

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

this subject in the New Catholic Encyclopaedia. In an article under the subject of the Qur'an, the Catholic Church states, "Over the centuries, many theories have been offered as to the origin of the Qur'an... Today no sensible man accepts any of these theories."!! Now here is the age-old Catholic Church, which has been around for so many centuries, denying these futile attempts to explain away the Qur'an. Indeed, the Qur'an is a problem for the Catholic Church. It states that it is revelation, so they study it. Certainly, they would love to find proof that it is not, but they cannot. They cannot find a viable explanation. But at least they are honest in their research and do not accept the first unsubstantiated interpretation which comes along. The Church states that in fourteen centuries it has not yet been presented a sensible explanation. At least it admits that the Qur'an is not an easy subject to dismiss. Certainly, other people are much less honest. They quickly say, "Oh, the Qur'an came from here. The Qur'an came from there." And they do not even examine the credibility of what they are stating most of the time. Of course, such a statement by the Catholic Church leaves the everyday Christian in some difficulty. It just may be that he has his own ideas as to the origin of the Qur'an, but as a single member of the Church, he cannot really act upon his own theory. Such an action would be contrary to the obedience, allegiance and loyalty which the Church demands. By virtue of his membership, he must accept what the Catholic Church declares without question and establish its teachings as part of his everyday routine. So, in essence, if

the Catholic Church as a whole is saying, "Do not listen to these unconfirmed reports about the Qur'an," then what can be said about the Islamic point of view? Even non-Muslims are admitting that there is something to the Qur'an -something that has to be acknowledged - then why are people so stubborn and defensive and hostile when Muslims advance the very same theory? This is certainly something for those with mind to contemplate - something to ponder for those of understanding!

Recently, the leading intellectual in the Catholic Church - a man by the name of Hans - studied the Qur'an and gave his opinion of what he had read. This man has been around for some time, and he is highly respected in the Catholic Church and after careful scrutiny, he reported his findings, concluding, "God has spoken to man through the man, Muhammad." Again this is a conclusion arrived at by a non-Muslim source - the very leading intellectual of the Catholic Church himself! I do not think that the Pope agrees with him, but nonetheless, the opinion of such a noted, repute public figure must carry some weight in defence of the Muslim position. He must be applauded for facing the reality that the Qur'an is not something which can be easily pushed aside and that, in fact God is the source of these words. As is evident from the aforementioned information, all of the possibilities have been exhausted, so the chance of finding another possibility of dismissing the Qur'an is nonexistent. For if the book is not a revelation, then it is a deception; and if it is a deception, one must ask, "What is its origin"

And where does it deceive us?" Indeed, the true answers to these questions shed light on the Qur'an's authenticity and silence the bitter unsubstantiated claims of the unbelievers. Certainly, if people are going to insist that the Qur'an is a deception, then they must bring forth evidence to support such a claim. The burden of proof is on them, not us! One is never supposed to advance a theory without sufficient corroborating facts; so I say to them, "Show me one deception! Show me where the Qur'an deceives me! Show me; otherwise, don't say that it is a deception!" An interesting characteristic of the Qur'an is how it deals with surprising phenomena which relate not only to the past but to modern times as well. In essence, the Qur'an is not an old problem. It is still a problem even today - a problem to the non-Muslims that is. For everyday, every week, every year brings more and more evidence that the Qur'an is a force to be contended with - that its authenticity is no longer to be challenged! For example, one verse in the Qur'an reads; *"Do not the unbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were joined together, and then We clove them asunder, and made from water every living thing? Will they not then believe?"*

Ironically, this very information is exactly what they awarded the 1973 Noble Prize for - to a couple of unbelievers. The Qur'an reveals the origin of the universe - how it began from one piece - and mankind continues to verify this revelation, even up to now. Additionally, the fact that all life originated from water would not have been an easy thing to convince people of fourteen centuries ago. Indeed, if 1400

years ago you had stood in the desert and told someone, "All of this, you see (pointing to yourself), is made up of mostly water," no one would have believed you. Proof of that was not available until the invention of the microscope. They had to wait to find out that cytoplasm, the basic substance of the cell, is made-up of 80% water. Nonetheless, the evidence did come, and once again the Qur'an stood the test of time. In reference to the falsification tests mentioned earlier, it is interesting to note that they, too, relate to both the past and the present. Some of them were used as illustrations of Allah's omnipotence and knowledge, while others continue to stand as challenges to the present day. An example of the former is the statement made in the Qur'an about Abu Lahab. It clearly illustrates that Allah, the Knower of the Unseen, knew that Abu Lahab would never change his ways and accept Islam. Thus Allah dictated that he would be condemned to the Hellfire forever. Such a chapter was both an illustration of Allah's divine wisdom and a warning to those who were like Abu Lahab.

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

Indeed, the full impact of such a statement can only be felt after careful consideration of the real meaning of such a verse. It is true that many Christians and many Jews have become Muslims, but as a whole, the Jewish community is to be viewed as an avid enemy of Islam. Additionally, very few people realize what such an open declaration in the Qur'an invites. In essence, it is an easy chance for the Jews to prove that the Qur'an is false - that it is not a divine revelation. All they have to do is organize themselves, treat the Muslims nicely for a few years and then say, "Now what does your holy book say about who are your best friends in the world - the Jews or the Christians? Look what we Jews have done for you!" That is all they have to do to disprove the authenticity of the Qur'an, yet they have not done it in 1400 years. But, as always, the offer still stands open! All of the examples so far given concerning the various angles from which one can approach the Qur'an have undoubtedly been subjective in nature; however there does exist another angle, among others, which is objective and whose basis is mathematical. It is surprising how authentic the Qur'an becomes when one assembles what might be referred to as a list of good guesses. Mathematically, it can be explained using guessing and prediction examples. For instance, if a person has two choices (i.e., one is right, and one is wrong), and he closes his eyes and makes a choice, then half of the time (i.e., one time out of two) he will be right. Basically, he has a one in two chance, for he could pick the wrong choice, or he could pick the right choice. Now if the same person has two situations like

that (i.e., he could be right or wrong about situation number one, and he could be right or wrong about situation number two), and he closes his eyes and guesses, then he will only be right one fourth of the time (i.e., one time out of four). He now has a one in four chance because now there are three ways for him to be wrong and only one way for him to be right. In simple terms, he could make the wrong choice in situation number one and then make the wrong choice in situation number two; OR he could make the wrong choice in situation number one and then make the right choice in situation number two; OR he could make the right choice in situation number one and then make the wrong choice in situation number two; OR he could make the right choice in situation number one and then make the right choice in situation number two. Of course, the only instance in which he could be totally right is the last scenario where he could guess correctly in both situations. The odds of his guessing completely correctly have become greater because the number of situations for him to guess in have increased; and the mathematical equation representing such a scenario is $1/2 \times 1/2$ (i.e., one time out of two for the first situation multiplied by one time out of two for the second situation).

Continuing on with the example, if the same person now has three situations in which to make blind guesses, then he will only be right one eighth of the time (i.e., one time out of eight or $1/2 \times 1/2 \times 1/2$). Again, the odds of choosing the correct choice in all three situations have decreased his chances of being completely correct to only one

time in eight. It must be understood that as the number of situations increase, the chances of being right decrease, for the two phenomena are inversely proportional.

Now applying this example to the situations in the Qur'an, if one draws up a list of all of the subjects about which the Qur'an has made correct statements, it becomes very clear that it is highly unlikely that they are all just correct blind guesses. Indeed, the subjects discussed in the Qur'an are numerous, and thus the odds of someone just making lucky guesses about all of them become practically nil. If there are a million ways of the Qur'an to be wrong, yet each time it is right, then it is unlikely that someone was guessing. The following three examples of subjects about which the Qur'an has made correct statements collectively illustrate how the Qur'an continues to beat the odds. In the 16th chapter the Qur'an mentions that the female bee leaves its home to gather food. Now, a person might guess on that, saying, "The bee that you see flying around - it could be male, or it could be female. I think I will guess female." Certainly, he has a one in two chance of being right. So it happens that the Qur'an is right. But it also happens that was not what most people believed at the time when the Qur'an was revealed. Can you tell the difference between a male and a female bee? Well, it takes a specialist to do that, but it has been discovered that the male bee never leaves his home to gather food. However, in Shakespeare's play, *Henry the Fourth*, some of the characters discuss bees and mention that the bees are soldiers and have a king. That is

what people thought in Shakespeare's time, that the bees that one sees flying around are male bees and that they go home and answer to a king. However, that is not true at all. The fact is that they are females, and they answer to a queen. Yet it took modern scientific investigations in the last 300 years to discover that this is the case.

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

In addition to the subject of bees, the Qur'an also discusses the sun and the manner in which it travels through space. Again, a person can guess on that subject. When the sun moves through space, there are two options: it can travel just as a stone would travel if one threw it, or it can move of its own accord. The Qur'an states the latter - that it moves as a result of its own motion. To do such, the Qur'an uses a form of the word *sabaha* to describe the sun's movement through space. In order to properly provide the reader with a comprehensive understanding of the implications of this Arabic verb, the following example is given. If a man is in water and the verb *sabaha* is applied in reference to his movement, it can be understood that he is swimming, moving of his own accord and not as a result of a direct force applied to him. Thus when this verb is used in reference to the sun's movement through space, it in no way implies that the sun is flying uncontrollably through space as a result of being hurled or the like. It simply means that the sun is turning and rotating as it travels. Now, this is what the

Qur'an affirms, but was it an easy thing to discover? Can any common man tell that the sun is turning? Only in modern times was the equipment made available to project the image of the sun onto a tabletop so that one could look at it without being blinded. And through this process it was discovered that not only are there three spots on the sun but that these spots move once every 25 days. This movement is referred to as the rotation of the sun around its axis and conclusively proves that, as the Qur'an stated 1400 years ago, the sun does, indeed turn as it travels through space.

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

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

recognizes and acknowledges such a phenomenon. In an interesting verse it states that when history comes to an end and the Day of Judgment arrives, it will all occurring an instant; and this very instant will catch some people in the daytime and some people at night. This clearly illustrates Allah's divine wisdom and His previous knowledge of the existence of time zones, even though such a discovery was non-existent back fourteen centuries ago. Certainly, this phenomenon is not something which is obvious to one's eyes or a result of one's experience, and this fact, in itself, suffices as proof of the authenticity of the Qur'an.

Returning one final time to the subject of good guesses for the purpose of the present example, the odds that someone guessed correctly about all three of the aforementioned subjects - the sex of bees, the movement of the sun and the existence of time zones - are one in eight! Certainly, one could continue on and on with this example, drawing up longer and longer list of good guesses; and of course, the odds would become higher and higher with each increase of subjects about which one could guess. But what no one can deny is the following; the odds that Muhammad (SAWA) an illiterate, guessed correctly about thousands and thousands of subjects, never once making a mistake, are so high that any theory of his authorship of the Qur'an must be completely dismissed - even by the most hostile enemies of Islam!

Indeed, the Qur'an expects this kind of challenge. Undoubtedly, if one said to someone upon entering a foreign land, "I know your father. I

have met him," probably the man from that land would doubt the newcomer's word, saying, "You have just come here. How could you know my father?" As a result, he would question him, "Tell me, is my father tall, short, dark, fair? What is he like?" Of course, if the visitor continued answering all of the questions correctly, the sceptic would have no choice but to say, "I guess you do know my father. I don't know how you know him, but I guess you do!" The situation is the same with the Qur'an. It states that it originates from the One who created everything. So everyone has the right to say, "Convince me! If the author of this book really originated life and everything in the heavens and on the earth, then He should know about this, about that, and so on." And inevitably, after researching the Qur'an, everyone will discover the same truths. Additionally, we all know something for sure: we do not all have to be experts to verify what the Qur'an affirms. One's iman (faith) grows as one continues to check and confirm the truths contained in the Qur'an. And one is supposed to do so all of his life.

May God (Allah) guide everyone to the truth.

SUPPLEMENT An engineer at the University of Toronto who was interested in psychology and who had read something on it, conducted researched and wrote a thesis on Efficiency of Group Discussions. The purpose of his research was to find out how much people accomplish when they get together to talk in groups of two, three, ten, etc. The graph of his findings: people accomplish most when they talk in

groups of two. Of course, this discovery was entirely beyond his expectations, but it is very old advice given in the Qur'an:

Additionally, the 89th chapter of the Qur'an mentions a certain city by the name of 'Iram (a city of pillars), which was not known in ancient history and which was non-existent as far as historians were concerned. However, the December 1978 edition of National Geographic introduced interesting information which mentioned that in 1973, the city of Elba was excavated in Syria. The city was discovered to be 43 centuries old, but that is not the most amazing part. Researchers found in the library of Elba a record of all of the cities with which Elba had done business. Believe or not, there on the list was the name of the city of 'Iram. The people of Elba had done business with the people of 'Iram!

"Say, 'I exhort you to one thing - that you stand for Allah, [assessing the truth] by twos and singly, and then reflect.....' In conclusion I ask you to consider with care the following:

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

Religious Democracy & Theocracy

By: Dr. Bahram Navazeni¹

Key Words: Government, Religious Democracy, Democracy,
Theocracy

Abstract:

There were different sole and combined forms of government that established and continued in the course of history of human societies. For their differences in basis and sources of legitimacy, two of these forms; democracy and theocracy, have entered into a severe confrontation with each other in both domestic politics and international relations first in Europe's Middle Ages then now in our time and each attempts hard to deny the other's legitimacy and prepares the ground for its collapse.

Because of a long history of Iranian Muslim's struggle against imperialism and despotism and people's keenness for the establishment

of a government based on God's teachings in post Islamic Revolution, there established a combined form of both theocracy and democracy and this combination asserted explicitly in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran. This combination, being not unprecedented, has plenty of examples in the old and contemporary history of Muslims and other religious followers and also were of necessary and enough stability. People insist on implementation of Heavenly guidelines in the private and social life of the community and seek a concrete supervision on this matter.

Introduction

The outbreaks of the late 20th century were especially notable in light of the Western assumption that less developed countries would naturally secularize their politics and culture as they modernized their society and economy. Instead, rapidly developing Iran initiated in 11 February 1979 a religious revolution led by Imam Khomeini. Soon after, an interim government in Tehran gave way to a political form of government in early 1980 that made so many changes in its policies, the most important one was to practice the idea of Islamic Republic in which the government was to wed with religion of the Shi'ite school of Islam indissolubly.

However, there exist different and even contending conceptions as to what form actually it is. Some argue that the form of Islamic Republic is just a "theocracy"² and some others has recognized the

“constitutional theocratic character of the system.”³ Some argue that theocracy as “the kingdom of God on earth” has not been fully realized yet and thus prior to this full realization, theocracy can coexist with any transitory system of human government. This combined form of government is an “ecclesiocracy” that seeks to give the human religious hierarchy absolute control over the political power of a state.⁴ Whereas to another one, theocracy can occur in any society where a powerful religious group or combination of religious groups has/have the decisive voice in a ruling political or judicial system.⁵

On the contrary, some believe that the Islamic Republic is just “one kind among so many democracies”⁶ or “one of the most democratic states.”⁷ Even the US officials who used to oppose the new Islamic system, now admit that there are some democratic characteristics found in there.⁸ There are also others who observe it as a totalitarian, an absolutist autocracy, or even “all clerical oligarchy” and call the Islamic Republic a “clerical regime.”⁹

What I am going to argue here is that on the path of “human development towards perfection” and “human felicity throughout human society”, the Islamic Republic in Iran has brought a kind of mixed or combined form of government that includes the best characteristics of various forms prescribed by “the Islamic principles and norms” and the current practices that may ensure “the active and broad participation of all segments of society in the process of social development,” as explicitly mentioned in its Constitutional Law.

Forms of Governments

Most of the key words commonly used to describe forms of governments, such as monarchy, oligarchy, and democracy, are of Greek or Roman origin. The central question of politics in all these was always the same: the distribution of power among the citizens so that freedom and happiness is best preserved and defined. Plato believed that the object of politics was virtue, and that only a few would ever thoroughly understand the science, which believed to "contemplate all truth and all existence" by which virtue could be attained and only these trained few, then, should rule. To his view the best was the form in which "kings are philosophers" or "philosophers are kings" which could be either monarchy or aristocracy but the fundamental laws of the State will be maintained. To this perfect ideal of "just and good" succeeds different forms of oligarchy, democracy, tyranny after which Plato added "some other intermediate forms of government" but all "these are nondescripts and may be found equally among Hellenes and among barbarians."¹⁰

But his pupil, Aristotle, gave another classification of the forms of government. To him the government "which is the supreme authority in states" could be "in the hands of one, or of a few, or of the many" and based on "the purpose of a state", it may seek either "the common interest" or "the private interest". Accordingly there would be three (not one) "true forms of ... kingship or royalty, aristocracy ... or ... a constitution" and three "perversions" that are "tyranny ... oligarchy,

[or] ... democracy."¹¹ In analyzing various forms of governments of the time, Aristotle, however, came to this notion that "the whole system of government tends to be neither democracy nor oligarchy, but something in a mean between them."¹²

This combination form of government could be seen in the monarchy of Macedonia after the battle against Sparta and Athens (338 BC) and also in Rome that emerged as the strongest state in the Mediterranean after the victory of Hannibal at Zama (202 BC). The Greek historian Polybius, who chronicled Rome's rise, suggested that its constitution was such a success because it was a judicious blend of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. The Romans, a conservative, practical people, showed what they thought of such abstractions by speaking only of an unanalyzed "public thing"--*res publica*--and thus gave a new word to politics.

From then onward various combined or blend forms governments were set up every where in the world. Justinian, the greatest of the eastern Roman emperors, in the 6th century, Charlemagne, king of the Franks, in 800, in later centuries the dynasties of Hohenstaufen and Habsburg and, as late as the 19th century, Napoleon Bonaparte tried to restore the empire though none were succeeded. In the 7th century the Arab Muslims defeated the first of the two great powers of the time and conquered quite many parts of the second in North Africa and Spain. Besides the strong monarchies that gradually developed almost everywhere in the world, various institutions and social classes were to

fill the gap too. The church and the mosque, against enormous odds, had kept the light of religion and learning alive and spread what was left of Roman and Islamic civilization into modern city-states. Military aristocracy called *nobiles* in the Roman fashion and appropriated various late imperial titles such as *comes* (count), *dux* (duke) and *khans* have also effective powers. This dynamism in European society and elsewhere in the world prevented it from setting permanently into this or any other form and pattern even in the most characteristic governmental form of the modern world, the nation-state.

The application of the principle of parliamentary representation together with the concepts of divine, natural, and customary law as a restraint on the exercise of power besides some other fundamental occurrences of the Enlightenment and the Renaissance, the Reformation, the discovery of America and the American and French revolutions caused a new form of government known as modern democracy which is quite different from that of old Greek. The modern democracy repudiated the divine right of kings, the ascendancy of the nobility and the privileges of the Roman Catholic Church. Equality before the law was to replace the system of privileges that characterized the old regimes and judicial procedures were insisted upon to prevent abuses by the king or his administration. By destroying the monarchy, a republic was set up and its centuries-old labours were crowned. Now in the name of rationality, liberty, and equality (fraternity is not a foremost concern anymore), the nation makes the

quest its own. Free election of government bodies under (eventual) universal suffrage, competition for office through organized and permanent parties, freedom of speech and the press, and the rule of law together with greater influence for the working classes, women and foreigners are common in all three basic senses of a form of government either as direct, representative or constitutional (liberal) democracy.

Theocracy, too, derived from two Greek words meaning "rule by the deity", was the name given to political regimes that claim to represent the Divine on earth both directly and immediately. Most governments throughout history and across cultures have claimed to be following their gods' designs or to be legitimated by a divine mandate. The kings in a number of ancient civilizations had been worshipped as gods on earth so, by definition, the king could not be wrong and in a number of others the God's prophets or theologically trained elites were the rulers on behalf of Him and rule by divine right.

As the holy books, archaeologists, and historians show, the ancient Hebrews, Tibetans, and Egyptians lived in theocracies for some of their history. Theocracies are also found within the three great heavenly faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as well as in Hinduism and Buddhism. Some examples are Jesus' message of the dawning of "the Kingdom of God," and not anyone else¹³ or "the fulfillment on Earth of God's will" as the central theme of Jesus' teaching, and his expressly rejection of any collaboration with the

Roman emperor,¹⁴ the community established by the Prophet Muhammad in Medina in 622, and ruled by him until his passing away in 632,¹⁵ the Papal States under various popes whose purpose was to manage worldwide Catholicism, fundamentalism as seen within modern Judaism of Gush Emunim and the Haredim¹⁶, within Christianity of Jehovah's Witnesses, within Protestant Christians of Evangelicals and some political action groups,¹⁷ within Hindu nationalists in India, Sikh radicals in Punjab, and Buddhist militants in Sri Lanka, within Sunni Muslims in the political activities of Muslim Brotherhood. The more important one within the Shi'ite school of Islam is the Islamic Republic of Iran, during, which based upon the teachings of the Ahl-al-Beit retrieved and developed into a politically useful doctrine: the Rule of the Jurist.

Religious Democracy

The form of government in revolutionary Iran is neither a sole theocracy in which people have no say in their political destiny nor a sole democracy in which people's vote can change every thing from the bottom to the top of the political hierarchy whenever they wish. Rather, as the official name of "the Islamic Republic" illustrates, it is a combination of all forms of government previously known especially both these two particular forms: theocracy and democracy and in some parts quite different from both sole of them, if one can find or even imagine.

The characteristic of this combined form of government and the major building block of the Islamic system in Iran, as explicitly stated in several articles of the Constitution and the spirit surrounding it, is based on two pillars. One pillar is that of inspired by Imam Khomeini's notion of the "Absolute Rule of the Jurist" (Velayat-e Motlaqeh-e Faqih) by which the leading cleric has no limitation over society and politics and he is the one last position that can make the decisions to the benefit of all citizens. He is elected by the whole people in referendum like what happened in February 1979 that led to the leadership of Imam Khomeini or by the Assembly of Experts (the representatives of people, mostly clerics) through a popular suffrage of both sexes of 15 years and more like what happened in the nomination of Ayatollah Khamenei in June 1989. The ruling jurist is just one nominee among so many other theologians and according to Shiite tradition, is identified as the representative of the 12th Imam. The latter kind of election is similar to the election of the US president by the Electoral College.

Standing at the top of the political hierarchy as the Supreme Leader and equal with others as per the law, the ruling jurist supervises the three branches of the government. The regular armed forces, the Islamic Guards Corps, the police, and the radio and television network are under his command and he determines the direction of foreign policy and any other whole compassing or general policy. He appoints

the Supreme Judges, has the power to dismiss the elected President, and selects the six jurists of the twelve-member Council of Guardians. The second pillar is the democratic institutions that have been well incorporated in the Constitution. Under section "The Form of Government in Islam," the preamble of the Constitution reads that the "government does not derive from the interests of a class, nor does it serve the domination of an individual or a group." It expressly asserts that:

... Government ... represents the fulfillment of the political ideal of a people who bear a common faith and common outlook, taking an organized form in order to initiate the process of intellectual and ideological evolution towards the final goal, i.e., movement towards Allah [God]. ... The Constitution guarantees the rejection of all forms of intellectual and social tyranny and economic monopoly, and aims at entrusting the destinies of the people to the people themselves in order to break completely with the system of oppression. (This is in accordance with the Qur'anic verse *"He removes from them their burdens of the fetters that were upon them"*).¹⁸

The Constitution devotes Chapter 5 including six articles to "the Right of National Sovereignty and the Powers Deriving there from" and explains the fact that the Iranian people have a lot say in the management of their country and how every one of them is the "master of his own social destiny." The National Sovereignty is considered a

"divine right" dedicated from "Absolute sovereignty" of God "over the world and man" and should never been deprived or subordinated "to the vested interests of a particular individual or group." (Article 56) Separation of Powers into three independent ones of legislature, judiciary, and executive "functioning under the supervision of the absolute religious Leader and the Leadership of the Ummah, in accordance with the forthcoming articles of this Constitution" has been accepted in Article 57. "Direct recourse to popular vote through a referendum," as a function of the legislature, is also anticipated by Article 59 for cases of "extremely important economic, political, social, and cultural matters."

The Islamic Consultative Assembly, as national assembly, is constituted by "the representatives of the people elected directly and by secret ballot (Article 62) and has the power to "establish laws on all matters" (Article 71) and has "the right to investigate and examine all the affairs of the country" (Article 76) including "a vote of confidence" or "a vote of no confidence" to the Council of Ministers (Articles 87-88) and "can interpellate" the Council of Ministers or an individual Minister or even the President. (Article 89) In this way not only the national executive power, but all local governments of provinces, cities, divisions, villages and other officials appointed by the government "must abide by all decisions taken by the councils" (Article 103) "elected by the people of the locality in question." (Article 100)

Democratic concepts such as equality before the law, rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, freedom of belief, conscience, association, assembly and the press, secrecy of communication, recourse to the courts, respect for minority and women's rights, economic development, and social justice are all explicitly expressed in Chapter 3 (Articles 19-43) of the Constitution and several guarantees have been given to succeed. The judiciary as "an independent power" and "the protector of the rights of the individual and society" is one of these important guarantees. Concerning status and duties of the Judiciary, Article 156 reads such:

The judiciary is ... responsible for the implementation of justice, and entrusted with ... investigating and passing judgement on grievances, violations of rights, and complaints; the resolution of litigation; the settling of disputes; and the taking of all necessary decisions and measures in probate matters as the law may determine; restoring public rights and promoting justice and legitimate freedoms; supervising the proper enforcement of laws; uncovering crimes; prosecuting, punishing, and chastising criminals; and enacting the penalties and provisions of the Islamic penal code; and taking suitable measures to prevent the occurrence of crime and to reform criminals.

The concept of "Velayat-e Amr va Imamat-e Mostamir (rule by the leader and the perpetual leadership)," according to the preamble of the Constitution is another such guarantees of those democratic rights in

which an all qualified and trustworthy jurist, recognized as leader by the people, is to "prevent any deviation by the various organs of State from their essential Islamic duties." Article 107 too asserts that the Jurist is an "elected" one either by recognition and acceptance "as marja' " and Leader by a decisive majority of the people" as happened for Imam Khomeini, the founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, or "by the Assembly of Experts" which is also "elected by the people." The Experts are to "review and consult among themselves concerning all the *fuyaha'* (jurists) possessing the qualifications specified in Articles 5 and 109" namely "scholarship ... in different fields of fiqh, Justice and piety ... right political and social perspicacity, prudence, courage, administrative facilities and adequate capability for leadership." (Article 109) The Article adds that "in case of multiplicity of persons fulfilling the above qualifications and conditions, the person possessing the better jurisprudential and political perspicacity will be given preference."

It is true that the Supreme Religious Leader is at the top of the government hierarchy and can make final decisions of general policies but it is only if "in accordance with the ... articles of this Constitution" (Article 57) and after consultation with the Nation's Exigency Council that consists of the heads of the three branches and some other relative cabinet and Parliament members, all Council of Guardians members, and a few more experts (Article 112) to which some heads of different parties and political fractions are added in action. When the revision of

the Constitution comes, as Article 177 expresses, some contents "are unalterable" among them "the Islamic character of the political system; the basis of all the rules and regulations according to Islamic criteria and the religious footing; ... the democratic character of the government; the Velayat-e Amr the Imamate of Ummah; and the administration of the affairs of the country based on national referenda."

In so doing, the government in Iran is quite different from dictatorship or tyranny in which one person or a small group possesses absolute power without effective constitutional limitations. The religious democracy is thus a form of government which links religion and people's beliefs to their will and wishes. There seems no conflict in its dual legitimacy of the Islamic Republic or any juxtaposition between popular sovereignty of the president or parliament and supervision of the ruling jurist. The letter of the constitution asserts on the equality of the two pillars in order to get the goal which is virtue, happiness and as a whole the movement toward God Almighty.

In theory too, as Poul Weber has noted, "there is no reason why a theocracy and a democratic form of government are incompatible--*vox populi, vox dei* ("the voice of the people is the voice of God"),¹⁹ a combination that seems possible and rational for Peter Schmid to conclude that "because Islam is compatible with both secularism and democracy, a religious democracy is in Iran's future."²⁰

The sole democracy is not the best form of government either. That is why you see different types of democratic governments in the world. Even Great Britain and the United States, nations with relatively similar cultures, politics, and economies, have developed significantly different forms of democracy. Besides, many governments today (around 140 out of 191 states) in the most parts of the world claim to be democratic in the ascendant. Numerous authoritarian and totalitarian states, notably the communist nations of the 20th century, had also adopted outwardly democratic governments that nonetheless were dominated by a single authorized party with no opposition. States with Marxist ideologies asserted that political consensus and collective ownership of the means of production (*i.e.*, economic democracy) were sufficient to ensure that the will of the people would be carried out. Moreover, there are some elements still threatening the existence of this democracy: class conflicts muted rather than resolved, nationalism still distorted voters' judgments in matters of foreign policy, demagogues abounded as much as they ever did in ancient Athens, and many politicians were corrupt. Furthermore democracy places high value on the freedom of the individual and generally stresses the self-directed, self-contained, and comparatively unrestrained individual or ego. This characteristic as Alexis de Tocqueville described is a kind of moderate selfishness, disposing human beings to be concerned only with their own small circle of family and friends.

Conclusion

It is right that in some cases (such as Egyptian nationalism,) we may find some unclear forms of government which claimed to establish a true theocratic or democratic form of government but failed to do so, or some tried to use religious rhetoric, symbolism, and values for nationalistic purposes, or religious ideals may be used to win popular support for liberation from foreign domination, from an autocratic ruling elite or to encourage economic renewal, but one can surely find some historical and contemporary examples to support a true combination of different forms of government as the Islamic Republic in Iran was a combination of such ideals and facts.

This form of Iranian government is neither a sole theocracy or ecclesiocracy nor an oligarchy either clerical or financial or military, nor a sole democracy of its any kinds but a political order between them all: the head of the state elected indirectly on a universal suffrage is not a philosopher who claims to know the truth from the false out of any way he can, but he should be a Islamist jurist prudent that obliges himself to explore the Shi'ite cannon law and seek to find the truth out of shari'a and should think and function in the interest of the whole people not himself or any particular fraction. As the people try to elect the best as their rulers, the aristocratic element is also present in this regime. There are lots of legal conditions and qualifications for people's representatives and heads of governmental departments that only part of the well educated and qualified bureaucrats can hold the

official positions. For these reasons, aristocracy, in a more objective sense, means the upper layer of a stratified group. Thus, the upper ranks of the government form - both legally and factually- the political aristocracy of the state. The principles of the constitution distribute the powers and make the government and its rulers constitutional and obliged to uphold the Constitution. This form is thus quite different from any given sole form of government.

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⁴ An interpretation given in 1877 by the Christian scholar J. G. Mueller cited in Gershon Weiler, *Jewish Theocracy* (Leiden: Brill, 1988) p. 16 cited in Stephen Palmquist, *Biblical Theocracy: A Vision Of The Biblical Foundations*, 1993

⁵ John M. Swomley, "Another Theocracy: the Ties that Bind, (Watch On The Right)," Humanist, Nov-Dec, 2001

⁶ Mostafa Kavakebian, *Democracy in System of Juristprudent (Democracy dar Nezam-e Velayat-e Faqih)*, (Tehran: Islamic Propaganda Organization, 1969) p. 32

⁷ Radwan A. Masmoudi, "Struggles behind Words: Shariah, Sunnism, and Jihad," SAIS Review (Summer/Fall 2001) p. 22.

⁸ State Department spokesman Richard Boucher cited in Bill Samii "RFE/RL Iran Report", Vol. 6, No. 29, 14 July 2003.

⁹ H. Tabarzadi, 2 Jun 1999 "If No Action is Taken Today, Tomorrow Will be Too Late." Open letter to the president; Saeed Rahnema, "Clerical Oligarchy and the Question of Democracy in Iran," *Monthly Review*, March, 2001; Paul J. Weber, Robert Wuthnow, eds. "Theocracy," *From Encyclopedia of Politics and Religion*, 2 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1998), pp. 733-735

¹⁰ See Plato, *The Republic*, Translated by Benjamin Jowett, > <http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/republic.mb.txt>

¹¹ Aristotle, *Politics*, Aristotle, *Politics*, Translated by Benjamin Jowett, Book Three, Parts VI ><http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/politics.mb.txt>

¹² Aristotle, *op. cit.*, Book 2, Part VI

¹³ Mark 4:26-29

¹⁴ Mark 12:13-17

¹⁵ David F. Forte, "Understanding Islam and the Radicals," 12 October 2001

¹⁶ Weber, *op. cit.*, pp. 733-735

¹⁷ David C. Leege, "Divining The Electorate: Is there a religious vote? (political campaigning to obtain support by religious groups)," *Commonweal* 20 Oct. 2000; Mark Anderson, "Our Religious Theocracy," ><http://www.american-partisan.com>; Swomley, *op. cit.*,

¹⁸ Quran 7:157

¹⁹ Weber, *op. cit.*, pp. 733-735

²⁰ Peter D. Schmid, "Expect the Unexpected: A Religious Democracy in Iran," *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, Winter/Spring 2003 – Volume IX, Issue 2, p. 181

Understanding Islamic Movements: A Search for an Explanation Freed from the Fallacies of Sociological Reductionisms

Dr. Alev Erkilet

The Islamic revolution in Iran gave way to an enormous amount of sociological study and research. Social scientists all over the world who were deeply interested in the subject matter, tried to conceptualize and explain the phenomenon of "Islamic revolution" in the terms of Western social sciences. They were generally following the tradition of the "positivist paradigm a". According to the classical motto of positivism they tried to know" about this matter. Because this knowledge will give them the ability of foreseeing and controlling the Islamic movements. So in the period after 1979, we witnessed a bloom in the theoretical and practical studies in the realm of the sociology of revolution. Just like the French revolution of 1789, and the Russian and Chinese revolutions of the 20 century, Iranian revolution was one of the greatest breaking points of contemporary history. May be more important than the others because

this was a nearly total negation of the, modernist assumptions. So the West and the westernized social scientists of the Third World were very confused.

How can this revolution be explained in terms of the one-dimensional evolutionary process? Since the very beginning of sociological thought, Comte, Spencer, Durham, Durkheim Marx and others preached an assumption of historical evolution in which religion becomes a minor and dominantly personal belief that has no social outcome. The Iranian revolution of 1979 was a real challenge to the classical positivist explanations. Because in Iranian revolution Islam was not only a motive of action but at the same time a set of economic, political and social principles which must be institutionalized in the social realm. Positivist sociology tried to confront this challenge by explaining the birth rise of and participation to Islamic movements by the help of psychological, economic and modernist reductionisms.

1) *Psychological Reductionism*: This approach puts forward a thesis of psychopathology. This group of theories stemming from Gustavo Le Bons' (psychology of Masses 1979) and Eric Hoffers' (*The True Reliever* 1988) negative attitude towards mass movements, assume the homogeneity of motives of the participants. According to them, mass movement is a phenomenon based on an unconscious self-hatred (disgust): on a hopeless need for belonging and on a psychological weakness. The participants of social movements are people who can

not be able to Live in harmony with the society. They cannot belong to any meaningful social group. They are marginals in the psychological sense. Roberta Ash (1972:21) says that, this set of theories a ways try to humiliate the social movements_and their participants. Because, according to Charles Tilly (1970:50), they see it as a matter of responsibility, as a matter of honor or shame. But the assumption of "the homogeneity of motives" is falsified many times and the explanations based on responsibilities and intentions are not appropriate for comparative analysis.

2) *Economic Reductionism*: This group of theories stemming from Marxist assumptions try to explain Islamic movements in terms of class struggle, urban poverty or any similar economic factor'. For example when they are dealing with 1979 Islamic revolution, they say that the main force of the street demonstrations were "the ones that have nothing to lose but their chains', the most poor of the slum people or_unemployed lumpen proleteriati (Üşür 1992: 5) etc. They try to show that ulema were motivated by their economic losses or couldn't break the mental framework of small bourgeoisie (Muaddel 1992: 199-200). But this Marxist style of reductionism is falsified by the data about the participants of Islamic movements. First of all, the participants and demonstrators were not coming from a unique or narrow social strata. Not only in Iran but also in Turkey and Egypt data about the leaders and participants of Islamic movements show us that they are not

economically marginal individuals. On the contrary they are highly educated, urban and middle class people who have a lot of things to lose (Şaylan 1987: 80-81 _ Dökmeciyan 1992: 120-121; Halliday 1992: 17). So, what is the main cause that can be able to motivate these people whose vested interests lie in the statu quo which they strive to change? This is the main problem to which economic determinism can not answer.

3) *Modernist Reductionism*: Modernist reductionism also has more than one version. Some of them try to explain the existence of Islamic movements as a reaction to speedy modernization (Keddie 1992: 97-98). Others explain it as the inability of the modernizing elite ill differentiating the several problem areas from each other and their inability to absorb them in more stable general frameworks (Eisenstadt 1966: 131). The main problem of modernist reductionism is that it defines Islamic movements as derivative of and dependent on the modernization process. According to them, if the modernization process was successful no Islamic movement will appear on the scene. This approach denies the continuity of Islamic movements from the very beginning of Islamic history. It also attempts to deny its basic structural existence. So then how can we explain the existence of and participation to the Islamic movements? How can we do it without falling into the fallacies of this or that version of sociological reductionism?

An Alternative Explanation about the Genesis of and Participation to The Islamic Movements:

Our first assumption about Islamic movements is that they are not secondary or derivative social phenomena newly innovated in a reactive manner to the modern conditions. In other words, they are not the undesired child of modernism. On the contrary, they are the result of the main values and principles of the Qur'an. The Qur'an have many verses that give social, economic and political responsibility to the believers. We can define them as the "ideological aspects of Islam." At certain times and at certain places where these aspects are prohibited (by internal interventions or by occupation of foreign military/political forces) or Islam is pushed out of the social life, there arises a crisis of legitimacy in the minds of the believers. According to my idea, Islamic movements stem just from this crisis. So, we can say that Islamic movements are the expressions of the opposition of masses of people whose beliefs are driven out of the social system (Erkilet 2004: 22-23). The important point here is that, what is driven out of the system is the beliefs, not the people themselves as some explanations of class struggle maintain. It is not a matter of vertical mobility (up or down); it is a matter of religious legitimacy. And at every time and place where this happens, some kind of Islamic movement arises. So, our explanation rests on internal factors, to the basic requirements of the religion itself. Not on the outer psychological, economic etc. factors. The outer conditions may affect the specific form and course

of the movement at hand; but they are not the factors that gave them birth. So, every Islamic movement is old as the belief itself; and is new in the specific form it takes at an exact time and place. For example, the movements may take radical or mild forms; take the form of a legal (Refah Party in Turkey) or illegal party, a Sufi opposition (African resistance of Osman dan Folio, Ami Abdulqadir, Sunusi's and others), or an organization (Ikhwan al-Muslimin), an association, or *waqf*. Some of these various movements focus on a change in one or two aspects of social life, others demand a total change in the society some are reformist; some are revolutionary. But, they all were generated from common base; namely from the Qur'an and the Sunneh (in its Sunni and Shi'ite versions).

Of course, the outer factors and conditions have an affect on the development of the movement. They may be so harsh and cause a cassation or decline or total disappearance of this specific movement. But it does not mean that any other movement will not arise from the previous one. And every time the main teams which come before us are jihad (Qur'an LX: 24) and Shahadah or martyrdom. Believers are obliged to remove the obstacles; at least to try to remove them with their "lives" it is not an "end" in the modern meaning of the term; on the contrary it is a fresh beginning with magnificent gifts from the God, Allah (Qur'an IX: 111; XXII: 58-59) (the theme of Shahadah). These two main themes can be found in the Ideological framework of the contemporary Islamic movements. This is not a matter of chance; it

is a continuity stemming from the main values of the religion. These same themes are repeated again and again during the time of Prophet Muhammad (SAWA), in the case of the Tragedy of Karbala, in the case of modern Islamic movements and especially in the case of the Islamic Revolution in Iran.

As we have emphasized before, there is a strong trend of opposition to the illegitimate political power in the nature of Islamic ideology; this trend has been sophisticated in the Shi'ite tradition, especially the doctrine of *Ghaibah* or occultation of the 12th Imam. Till the return of the Last Imam a perfect justice is impossible in the world. This idea of injustice is very important for a society's readiness for change but not sufficient. One more aspect is necessary for total change: A change in the mentality of waiting for the Imam without doing anything, especially without struggling with injustices. This means that we must "now" and here do something to facilitate the formation of a "just" society (Imam Khomeini, 1984:115-116; 1991). This transformation made possible by Imam Khomeini's both traditionalistic and innovative interpretation of Shii legacy. This interpretation gave the necessary momentum to the Islamic movements in Iran. This ideological background was the *sine qua non* of the revolution. Besides this we must mention some other facilitating factors like the autonomy of *ulema* which is nearly totally absent in the Sunni world); their success in organization; Ali Shariati's transformatory influence on the intellectuals educated in secular and modern schools (Alger 1988:99):

the wildness of the pressure of the Shah's regime; the support of small tradesman to the Islamic movement financially and actively and the general pressure of the government over Carsick; the widespread demands of political participation; foreign domination which legitimates the anti-imperialist emphasize of the Islamic movements etc. All these facilitating factors, coming together with the revolutionist essence of the Shii doctrine (and Islamic doctrine in general) made possible the total participation of Iranian people to the revolutionary process.

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ISLAM AND PLURALISM

Asghar Ali Engineer

Today's world is fast becoming pluralist with variety of religions, languages and cultures in one country particularly due to fast developing processes of modernization, liberalisation and globalisation. Also, feudal socio-economic and socio-political structures have either crumbled or crumbling very fast in the third world also of course with certain exceptions. In the past there was no concept of civil society at all and the state was all powerful. The subjects people did not enjoy any rights, they had to discharge only duties towards the state. The modern democratic state, on the other hand, has to concede well defined rights to the citizens. The civil society has its own autonomy in a democratic set up and the notion of human rights has acquired great significance.

The notion of human rights is quite fundamental to a society which is pluralistic. All religious, linguistic and cultural groups should enjoy well defined rights and should not live at the mercy of the state or the majority community. Thus it will be seen that the notion of civil society is very fundamental to the modern pluralist society.

Here it is important to examine, from the theological perspective, what is the attitude of Islam towards pluralism? Does Islam approve of pluralism or promotes a monolithic society? Also, when we talk of pluralism, are we referring to political pluralism or religious and cultural pluralism? As far as this paper goes we are referring to religious and cultural pluralism though political pluralism has its own importance, it is very seminal for religious and cultural pluralism. If one goes by the Qur'anic pronouncements Islam not only accepts the legitimacy of religious pluralism but considers it quite central to its system of beliefs. There are very clear statements to this effect. First we will refer to the verse 5:48 in this respect. The verse goes as follows: "*Unto every one of you We have appointed a (different) law and way of life. And if Allah had so willed, He could surely have made you all one single community: but in order to test you by means of what He has given you. Vie, then, with one another in doing good works! Unto Allah you all must return; and then He will make you truly understand all that on which you were wont to differ.*"

This is very seminal statement in favour of religious and legal

pluralism. Many classical as well as modern commentators have commented on this significant verse. The most significant and operative part of this verse is *"Unto every one of you have We appointed a (different) law and way of life."* The term 'every one of you' obviously denotes different communities. Every community - obviously religious or religio-cultural community - has its own law and its own way of life (*minhaj*) and it attains its spiritual growth in keeping with this law and way of life of its own. The term *shir'ah* or *shari'ah* signifies, literally, "the way to a watering place" (from which men and animals derive the element indispensable to their life), and in the Qur'an to denote a system of law necessary for a community's social and spiritual welfare. The term *minhaj* on the other hand, denotes an 'open road' that is a way of life. (See Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, Gibraltar, 1980, PP-153)

Thus it will be seen that the prophets of Allah sent to different communities (*ummah*) gave laws and indicated way of life to their people in keeping with their genius and that which could ensure their spiritual and material growth. This is further emphasised in the next part of the verse i.e. *"And if Allah had so willed, He could surely have made you all one single community"*. It was not difficult for Allah to make entire mankind one community. But Allah graced us with pluralism as it adds richness and variety to life. Each community has its own unique way of life, its own customs and tradition, its own law.

But these laws or way of life should be such as to ensure growth and enriching of life, howsoever different and unique they might be.

This verse has also another important dimension. It leads to what some scholars like Shah Waliyullah and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad from India have described as the concept of wahdat-e-Din i.e. unity of religion. The earlier part of this verse (5:48) says, *"And We have revealed to thee the Book with the truth, verifying that which is before it of the Book and a guardian (muhayman) over it."* This is also very significant pronouncement and most modern in its approach. The Qur'an has thus come to vouchsafe for what was revealed earlier to different communities through their prophets. The shari'ah, the law and the way of life may be different as we have discussed above, but the essence of all religions - Din - is the same. All religions are based on the revelation from Allah. The Qur'an has come to be guardian of earlier truth revealed through other scriptures.

This is inclusive approach and is very vital for acceptance of the religious order. The laws, the ways of life, may differ and yet *Din*, the divine essence, the divine truth, is the same. It is reflected in all religions and in all spiritual traditions.

The Qur'an has named several prophets and the list of prophets in the Qur'an is illustrative, not exhaustive. Thus more faith traditions could be included in the list of those mentioned by the Qur'anic

commentators.

This verse also makes a very significant statement: *"It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West, but righteousness is the one who believes in Allah, and the Last Day, and the angels and the Book and the prophets, and gives away wealth out of love for Him to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and to those who ask and to set slaves free and keeps up prayer and pays the poor rate; and the performers of their promise when they make a promise, and the patient in distress and affliction and in the time of conflict; and these are they who keep their duty."* 2:177

Thus the above verse proves beyond any doubt that the real aim of the Qur'an is to produce an ideal human person who is virtuous, is sensitive to others suffering and hence spends of his wealth on the needy, on setting slaves free, taking care of orphans, is true to his word and is patient in times of distress and conflict. And only such persons are truly *muttaqun* i.e. God conscious and keepers of their duty to Allah.

The Qur'an does not take narrow sectarian view. Its view is very broad humanitarian and its emphasis is not on dogmas but on good deeds. And it strongly condemns evil deeds which harms the society and humanity at large. In this respect also it makes no distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims. Thus the Qur'an says in 4:123: *"It will not be in accordance with your vain desires nor the vain desires of the*

people of the Book. Whoever does evil, will be requited for it and will not find for himself besides Allah a friend or a helper." Thus no one, Muslim or the people of the Book, can claim any exception from this law of Allah; one who does good will be rewarded and one who does evil will be punished. Elsewhere the Qur'an states, *"So he who does an atom's weight of good will see it and he who does an atom's weight of evil will see it."* (99:7)

The Qur'an is very particular about freedom of conscience and freedom of conscience is key to pluralism. The Qur'an clearly states that there is no compulsion in religion (2:256) and maintains that all children of Adam are honourable (17:70). It does admit of inter-religious dialogue but with decorum: *"And argue not with the People of the Book except by what is best, save such of them, as act unjustly. And Say: We believe in that which has been revealed to us and revealed to you, and our God and your God is One, and to Him we submit."* (29:46)

The Qur'an lays great stress on unity of humankind. It says in 2:213, *"Mankind is a single nation. So Allah raised prophets as bearers of good news and as warners, and He revealed with them the Book with truth, that it might judge between people concerning that in which they differed. And none but the very people who were given it differed about it after clear arguments had come to them, envying one another. So Allah has guided by His will those who believe to the truth about which they differed."*

This whole verse is suffused with the spirit of pluralism and freedom of belief and conscience. According to this verse entire mankind is one but different prophets in their given situations come with revealed scriptures to guide them or warn them and thus, depending on their specific situation, different ways of life emerged. But then people start differing from each other and envying one another instead of respecting each others specificity and this people get divided. That is not the purpose of divine guidance. Allah guides those who believe to the truth about which they differed.

The theme of oneness of humankind is repeated in the Qur'an in different ways. We are told that all human beings have been "*created of a single soul*" (4:1); again that they are all descended from the same parents (49:13); still again that they are as it were dwellers in one home, having the same earth as a resting place and the same heaven as a canopy.

Apart from oneness of humankind the Qur'an also lays stress on racial, linguistic and national identities. These identities are projected as signs of God. "And of His signs", the Qur'an says, "*And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your tongues and colours. Surely there are signs in this for the learned.*" (30:22) Thus diversity is projected by the Qur'an as sign of God and hence to be respected. Different identities are for recognition and hence necessary. In the verse 49:13 it is said, "*O mankind, surely We have created you from a male and a female, and made you nations and*

tribes that you may know each other." Thus national and tribal or for that matter other identities are necessary for knowing each other and it should not lead to any conflict. Thus different identities are product of national and tribal diversities and play a useful social role. Thus the Qur'an clearly accepts the legitimacy of diversity.

It also makes it clear quite forcefully that all places of worship should be respected and protected. The Qur'an states, "And if Allah did not repeal some people by others, cloisters, and churches, and synagogues, and mosques in which Allah's name is much remembered, would have been pulled down." (22:40) It is significant that Qur'an maintains that be it church or synagogue or mosque, Allah's name is much remembered in these places. No single religious place is being privileged in this respect. Thus here too religious pluralism is stressed. The Prophet of Islam when he migrated from Mecca to Medina found himself in a pluralist situation. There was religious as well as tribal diversity. He not only accepted this diversity but legitimised it by drawing up an agreement with different religious and tribal groups and accorded them, through this agreement, a dignified existence and rights of their own. this agreement is known in history of Islam as Misaq-i-Madina.

It begins thus:

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate!

This is writing of Muhammad the Prophet between the believers and Muslims of Quraysh and Yathrib (Madina) and those who follow them

and are attached to them and who crusade along with them. They are a single community distinct from other people."

This agreement can be called the constitution of Madina and it was definitely a milestone which sought to lay the foundation of a new political and religious culture. What is significant to note in this agreement is that all together - Muslims of Quraysh from Mecca, Muslims of Madina belonging to the tribes of Aws and Khazraj and Jews belonging to different tribes - together constituted a single community. The agreement was also quite democratic in spirit. The Holy Prophet did not claim to be the ruler of this community. The emigrants (*Muhajirs*) were, in fact, treated as a clan, and the Prophet was their chief, and there were eight other clans with their chiefs. If the Constitution is a good evidence at this point, he was only marked off from other clan chiefs on two counts: firstly that for the group of believers i.e. Muslims he was a Prophet and whatever was revealed to him was binding on the believers; secondly, the Constitution states that 'whatever there is anything about which you differ, it is to be referred to God and to Muhammad'.

The modern democratic civil society cannot become a strong stable and prosperous conflict free society unless religious diversity or pluralism is accepted as legitimate way of life.

It is for the Islamic political theorists of today to develop new political theories which are in keeping with the Qur'anic injunctions and sunnah on one hand, and takes the realities of modern world, on the other.

There need not be any sharp contradiction between the two. The concept of civil society which respects autonomy of a citizen and his/her religious, cultural and political rights does not, as shown above, in any way, contradict to the Qur'anic injunctions. Human rights respect the dignity and freedom of conscience of every individual. The Qur'an clearly states that all children of Adam have been honoured (17:70). This of course includes right to live with dignity. We must enter the 21st century with a creative and critical mindset which, while adhering to the Qur'anic values, enables us to live freer life and life of full dignity while, at the same time, accepting the dignity of the other. The Qur'an, accepted, fourteen hundred years ago, the Christian other and the Jewish other with full dignity and respect for their beliefs. It was later accepted to the Zoroastrians and even Berbers.

It is interesting to note that the words '*kafir*' and '*mushrik*' have definite historical connotation and should be used with great caution and restraint. Only those who refuse to accept truth in any form and negate good (*ma'ruf*) completely and advocate *munkar* (evil) would qualify as *kafirs* and those who refuse oneness of God and associate partners with Him will qualify as *mushrik*. And, it is also important to note, even *kafirs* and *mushriks* would have civil rights as long as they do not cause any disturbances in society and maintain peace. The freedom of conscience cannot be taken away from any human person, whatever his or her beliefs. Thus it will be seen that Islam does not come in the

way of promoting a pluralist civil society ensuring dignity and freedom of conscience to all.

THE CONSPIRACY OF THE WEST AGAINST ISLAM: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

INTRODUCTION

Allah (SWT) has assured us in the Qur'an that He is the best Protector, the best Guardian and the most Merciful of all merciful. (Qur'an 2:257; 3:150). Islam is under siege in the contemporary world. Siege is a war tactics, an offence and an attack. In the repertoire of war, both as strategy and tactics, to be under siege is to be hemmed in. It connotes a situation whereby the enemy has surrounded the frontiers, the access has been blocked and there is no coming in and no going out. It is meant to snuff out the enemy unless he (the General) or they (the city and its people and all) are ready to

surrender. It is either they are enslaved or in most cases they are eliminated. In the alternative, they have to fight back. It is a dire situation!

Apparently, a formidable force hems in the besieged. In most cases it is not a single enemy. Enemies come together in their various forms. Different armies or their states conspire to see the end of a common enemy, to neutralize its forces, to remove or reduce the menace, which it has constituted to them. Conspiracy therefore is a strategy, a preconceived plan to execute on the terrain, as tactics on grounds, in the execution of the war. So, if the battlefield manifests the siege, which is the tactics, the war headquarters of the besieging army/armies conceive the plan, the conspiracy, which is the strategy. And in the *Clausewitzian* tradition, "the battle... the bloody solution of the crisis, the effort for the destruction of the enemy's forces, is the first born son of war" (0 *Sullivan and Miller Jr* 198:52).

The war itself, in *Clausewitz's* own phrase, "is politics through other means" (*Clausewitz* 1963:494).

This incursion into strategic analysis is to accentuate the gravity of the problem at hand. If we can agree that Islam is under siege, then we will have to agree that we are in a war situation. And if there is a conspiracy, it means we are not talking about a single enemy but about many. And their method must be manifold.

The question that follows is who are the enemies, the West, who conspire, to do what, against Islam? What threats does Islam constitute to what interest or interests (of theirs) to warrant this gang up? What are the methods used in this conspiracy and how do they execute the plan? What are the implications of the siege? Is Islam in a position to lift the siege? In one word, if Islam is under attack, it means Islam is on the defensive. What (war) tactics are required to lift the siege, (the attack)? Is Islam doing the right thing, in the right way? Does Islam appreciate the precariousness of its situation? Who are the generations and the decision-makers in this situation? Are the people carried along? These are the issues to be addressed in this discourse.

THE CONDITION

It was Napoleon Bonaparte, the French General who once said that God is on the side of the better battalion. How can we explain the siege that Islam is under? Historically, as the Qur'an has declared, the Truth has come in the advent of Islam, falsehood has collapsed, as it is bound to (*Qur'an* 3:80). The phenomenal success of Islam in all lands and climes gradually, through time, ended up with the condition, in various Muslim lands, of their outright defeat by the enemies who hitherto had cringed "in the face" of the might of the valiant Muslims. When the Muslim Arabs marched out in hordes immediately after the Prophet's (SAWA) death in mid 7th century, the whole world jittered. Great empires collapsed one after another under the waves of Muslim armies,

in Persia (*Qadisiyya*, 635; Ctesiphon, 637), in Chaldea and Mesopotamia (635), in Egypt (Alexandria, 641) in the Maghrib (*Qayrawan*, 670; Western Maghrib, 704-711, Spain, 711). In these places and other various places the conquests of Islam led to the establishment of Muslim rule and Islamic law. In the words of Professor Gibb, the spread of Islam led the way to a new integration of peoples and cultures (Gibb 1975:3). Soon after, the cracks appeared in the center of the Islamic Empire starting early in the Battle of *Siffin* (It seems we cannot escape the military analogy). *Siffin* symbolized the clash, as Malek Bennabi puts it, of the Qur'anic spirit -represented by Imam Ali (AS)- with the *Jahiliy* spirit -represented by Mu'awiya the son of the Prophet's archenemy Abu Sufiyan. In any case, as Islamic civilization flourished in various Muslim lands, an almost imperceptible internal decay developed. Dynasties were formed, mutual antagonism, rivalry and unhealthy competition flourished.

The Muslims lost sight of the *elan*, the very dynamism of their call that had seen them triumph over others. Muslims, as it were, rested on their oars, the sea ride slowed down, Muslims neglected their arsenal, they took their enemies for granted.

To borrow the phrases of the Father of sociology, Ibn khaldun, the Muslims like city dwellers became effete population luxuriating in their achievements until the hordes of primitive tribes descended on them. Islam has, for centuries, had to grapple with this problem.

The Crusades, from late 11th century marked the beginning of formidable attempts by Christendom (the Christian West) to offset the Muslim dominance of the world. It was an invasion, it was a siege and it was effected by a gang-up of all Christendom in a conspiracy against Islam. It is in the career of a Muslim Sultan and General that we can appreciate the enormity of this problem for the Muslim world. It is also in this one Muslim's leadership that we can encompass the commitment needed by Muslims from their leaders to offset the menace of the West. Lane-Poole has captured the gravity of the daring and determination of the West in the treatment of the career of *Salahuddin al-Ayyubi* (*Saladin to the Christian West*). A quote from this account is illustrative of our point:

In 1096 the first Crusade began its eastward march; in 1098 the great cities of Edessa and Antioch and many fortresses were taken; in 1099 the Christians regained possession of Jerusalem itself. In the next few years the greater part of Palestine and the coast of Syria, Tortosa, 'Akka, Tripolis, and Sidon (1110) fell into the hands of the Crusaders, and the conquest of Tyre in 1124 marked the apogee of their power. It was the precise moment when a successful invasion from Europe was possible. A generation earlier, the Seljuq power was inexpugnable. A generation later, a Zengi or a Nur-ed-din, firmly established in the Syrian seats of the Seljuqs, would probably have driven the invaders into the sea. A lucky star led the preachers of the first Crusade to seize

an opportunity of which they hardly realized the significance. Peter, the Hermit and Urban II chose the auspicious moment with sagacity as- unerring as- if they had made a profound study of Asiatic politics. The Crusade penetrated like a wedge between the old wood and the new, and for a while seemed to cleave the trunk of Mohammadan Empire into splinters (Lane-Poole 1968:163-164).

Starting with *Salahudin al-Ayyubi*, and followed by other valiant Muslim warriors after him, the Christian successes were reversed; The Second Crusade (1130) was defeated, the Third (1189) was defeated as the "Siege of the Besiegers"; the Children Crusade (1212) ended in disaster. The Hungarian-led Crusade (1217) was a failure, even the crusade led by Frederick the Great (1228) still was a failure. In 1239, the Crusade led by the king of Navarre was defeated, so also did the one led by King Louis IX of France (1249) end in disaster (Lane - Poole 1968; 163-165, 173; 174; 209-211; 218; 225-229; 230,31, 231,239, 256).

One great fall-out of the Crusades was the realization by Christendom of the profound literary, cultural and scientific achievements of the Muslims. They learnt from and borrowed ideas from the Muslims. The contact of the West with the East inspired in Christendom the determination to improve itself. No less a phenomenon than the Renaissance was inspired by this contact between Islam and Europe (Izetbegovic 1999: 143).

It must be realized that Christendom did not give up on its hope of undermining Islam. Following the defeats of the West in the Crusades, Islam passed through a doldrum. But even in the century of the final defeat of the Crusaders, the Ottoman State was founded (1299). By the next century, the Ottoman Empire had become a formidable power. With its conquest of Constantinople in 1453, the Ottoman Empire had established itself astride Europe by mid-15th Century. In fact, for the next three centuries after its founding, (14th to 16th Centuries), the Ottoman Empire became the "Menace of Europe" and in fact, "the present Terror of the World" (Lewis 1974:198-199). The Turks became 'Infidel Turks' to Europe and the embers of enmity grew between the East and the West. Just as it happened to Islamic Empires before it, the Ottoman Empire was soon to rest on its oars. Internal decadence set in and for the next three centuries (17th to 19th Centuries), the great Ottoman Empire decayed. And this decadence culminated in its defeat (in war) in early 20th century in the First World War. So, internal decadence attracted external aggression (*Oluwatoki 2001 :29*).

It must be noted that the West that was defeated by Islam in the Crusades learns its lessons. Inspired by the achievements of Islam, it turned inward, went through the Renaissance and then through the Enlightenment. At the Age of Reasoning, and discarding the predominance of religion, this West came out with superiority of

scientific and technological knowledge.

It was this west, this Christendom that now took the shape of imperialism to conquer the world. It was in the 19th century at the height of the decadence of the Ottoman Empire. By 1830, Colonialist France had occupied Algiers (*Abun-Nasr 1973:311*) and the height of it was the Balfour declaration (1917) that promised Palestine to the European Jews (or more properly the raciest Zionists) for the creation of a supposedly 'National' Home for them. In 1948, the illegal Zionist entity, Israel was declared and since then the Palestinian Question had become the Arab-Israeli conflict. So, through imperialism, colonization and then neo-colonialism the World of Islam had been besieged by Christendom, which for centuries had been the underdog. The great lesson of all this is that the Muslims has fallen into a condition that made them vulnerable. This, in the words of Malek Benabbi, is "colonisability". In other words, a people are colonisable only if they have put themselves in the condition.

II THE CONSPIRACY AND ITS CORRELATES

I am sure we have established the Conspiracy of the West against Islam. What remains is to enumerate the various manifestations of this conspiracy. Apart from the military efforts, which failed woefully (*Oluwatoki 2001: 16*), other areas of the manifestation of the conspiracy are in the following:

EDUCATION

Through colonization the West attempts to acculturate the Muslims by way of its education system, which plays down the Islamic principles and inculcates Euro-American ethos. This is one avenue through which the West has created the westernized elite in various Muslim countries who have become vanguards of European cultural penetration into Muslim lands. Just like it happened in many colonies, this education, to start with, started and ended with the three R's - writing, reading and arithmetic. It was a restricted education but through the Missionaries, it was meant to be an instrument of conversion to Christianity and a means of creating a Europeanized and later Americanized natives. It is perhaps the strongest weapon of the West.

2. LEGAL SYSTEM

In various Muslim lands where the West had a foothold, it eroded the legal Principles of Islam by the abrogation of the aspects of the penal Justice of the *shari'ah* and imposed its own, criminal code. It has always grudgingly allowed the civil aspect of the *shari'ah*. This erosion of the *shari'ah* is systematically aimed at a neutralization of the all-pervading influence of Islam in the Muslim life. With its (western) education and the inculcation of its civilization, the West presents anything western as best. Its man-made law with all its natural deficiencies is supposed to be superior. And with all its contradictions and its unabashed protection of the power that is and the establishment,

canon law is imposed on Islamic law. The problems associated with this imposition are the sources of contention in many Muslim lands today.

3. FINANCIAL SYSTEM

Since the ultimate aim of imperialism is creating the enabling environment for the development of capitalism, colonization is the highest level of imperialism. The main thrust is integrating various parts of the World into world capitalism. Usury and profiteering are main features of capitalism, and they are a negation of the Islamic financial system. After the era of the monopolistic practices of the oligopolies (The multinational corporations), we are now in the era of globalization where the frontiers of states are brought down to allow for the penetration of transnational capital. It is the 'conspiracy' of the transnational elite of the West with their collaborators in other parts of the world to concentrate the greatest part of the wealth of the world in the hands of the smallest part of the population of the world. AB Robinson points out, the Human Development Report 1992 has more than illustrated the perpetual imbalance that is created by the contradiction between neo-liberalism and polyarchy (American brand of democracy specially meant for the Third World. Actually, the report shows that the richest 20% of the world population receive 82.7% of the world's total- income. The poorest 20% of the world population receive 1.4% of the world total income. This is coupled with the

widening gap between the haves and the have-nots in the individual countries. Nothing can negate Islamic social organization more than this (Robinson 1996: 340-341). The Muslims have been victims like others. Suffice it to say that this economic imperative informs western intervention in various parts of the World since the 19th Century. Throughout the latter half of the 20th century, the West endeavored to entrench its financial system in Breton Wood institutions - the World Bank, International Monetary Fund etc. Globalization is its apogee in the 21st century.

4. INFORMATION

Starting with the Radio, then the Television, then the Cinema, then the Computer and now with the Internet, Information Technology has succeeded in transforming the so-called global village into the global sitting room. Events from the remotest parts of the world are reported to you instantly through the tube. So also are cultural influences in all ramifications passed on to you and your wards, challenging age-long values and practices and jeopardizing important institutions? One big target of this instrument is in the area of dressing (especially for women), drinking, (of alcohol), gambling and a myriad of other distinct cultural values on which Islam put much premium. The rate at which the West disseminates vices to the youth and even to all and sundry is alarming. In the tabloid, on the television, in the cinema and now on the internet, readers, viewers and browsers are free to 'suck in'

into their system, such daunting negative influences like violence, pornography, drinking (of alcohol), gambling and a host of others. All these are taken for granted. But the fact is that the media of communication make the individual subscriber almost helpless. Communication has also afforded the West a press war on Islam especially in the area of spreading negative reportage on the Faith. We are all familiar with the negative connotation given to "fundamentalism" as an attribute of Islam and its movements.

5. NEO-COLONIALISM

On the political plane, countries of the West led by the USA continue to predominate in Muslim countries where they could influence policies, executing development projects and affecting the lives of Muslim peoples. Saudi-American relations are illustrative of this. Any Muslim state where this Euro-American domination has been resisted has been dealt with out-rightly through invasion, military bombardment, regime change and other means. Or such states become targets of negative propaganda. Illustrative of this point are Imam Ayatollah Khomeini's Iran, Iraq, Nasser's Egypt, Libya, Afghanistan, to mention but a few.

6. PALESTINE

Palestine remains the quintessence of Western conspiracy against Islam and an eternal indictment of the West in its double play. In the execution of the first World War, Britain (the then World Greatest Power), promised the Arabs independence if they would fight against the Ottoman Empire, their overlords. This promise applied as well to Palestinian Arabs (Muslims and Christians). At the same time and in Western characteristic double-face, Britain promised the European Jews the creation of what it called a Jewish National Home in Palestine. This was in 1917 (Hence, the 1917 Balfour Declaration). This promise, it must be noted, was given in response to the pressure of International Zionism, which was the response of the Jews in the Diaspora to the inhuman treatments they have had from Europe, the West. So, the inadequacy of the Judeo-Christian civilization, the failure of Christendom to be its brother's keeper must be ameliorated by denying Islam, the Muslim peoples, their own rights.

III CONSEQUENCE AND CAUSE

The consequence of the two centuries of Western domination of the Muslim peoples; subjugation of their lands and onslaught on their cultural values is very obvious. The Muslims have lost confidence in themselves. They erroneously attribute the successes of the West to science and technology. They succumb to the temptation and the trapping of materialism, which is the cardinal philosophy that drives

Western civilization. They fall for the unrestrained freedom entrenched in individualism and liberal democracy, which promises capitalist prosperity through the economics of the free market. The Muslims began to doubt the superiority of their Islamic culture and the profound achievements of their Islamic civilization in the sciences, in literature, in politics, in military strategy, in family relations, in social cohesion and in collective effort. More devastating is their helpless acquiescence to the Westphalian nation-statism jettisoning once and for all the universal state of Islam. This consequence has been grave and it has demobilized the Muslims, deadening their sinews so much that they seem not to know what to do.

Yet, the seriousness of the situation is such that it has imposed on the Muslims the need to wake up to the cause of Allah for their own sake. It is a call for Jihad in the cause of Allah. Muslims need to wake up to their duty to defend their stronghold from the formidable attack of the West. This cause should be on all fronts. The Education system in all Muslim lands should be consciously guided by a policy that sets out to create true Muslim educated citizens who are mindful of their responsibilities to Allah. Education is a serious matter. It is a cardinal principle of socialization. Through education, the cultural values of a people are transmitted down the generations. Any people that neglect education and allow the dissemination of just any ideas to its youth is gravely endangered. Muslims cannot afford to be despondent. Islam

has always put a great premium on education. The present generation is being careless by leaving the education of its younger generation to whatever comes up from its adversaries.

The *shari'ah* should be entrenched in all Muslim lands as the supreme law. There is a need to be cautious in those states like Nigeria, where a substantial part of the population is Muslim, but where anti-Islamic sentiments are strong from the Christian members of the population. But we cannot give up the struggle until the rights of the Muslims to their own legal system within the purveyors of the Constitution are realized.

Muslims should endeavor to entrench their own Islamic financial system. They should showcase the possibility of running an interest-free banking system. The *JAIZ* endeavor is a step in the right direction in Nigeria.

Islam and Muslims must of necessity exploit the possibilities inherent in Information Technology. Every Muslim must be computer literate and participate actively in the dynamic world of Information Technology. The cyber-world is open to everybody. Muslims should harness its potentials to further the cause of Islam, disseminate Islamic ideas and ideals and promote Islamic cultural values.

Muslims should conscientiously participate actively in politics. This they should do with a mind to better the lots of the people, to show that through their attitudes Islamic precepts of governance are possible. In any case, Muslims must be empowered politically and economically to be able to withstand the problems inherent in neo-colonialism and the questionable "promotion of democracy", which is the vogue in the world today. There is no gain saying it that the USA is actually promoting 'polyarchy' in its so-called promotion of democracy (Robinson 1996).

Muslims have it as an obligation to identify with the Palestinian Arabs who have been under siege of West-supported and West-sponsored Zionism since 1917. This is a problem we cannot afford to abandon to our Arab brethren. They are divided well enough. The West has put a strong wedge in the Arab line of resistance. Moreover, Muslims all over the World have the duty as an *Ummah* to do something about the Question of Palestine. It is a task that must be done! If all Muslim peoples in all lands will let their governments know that they are serious about the Question of Palestine, these governments will consider the Question in their respective foreign policies.

CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to establish the fact of the conspiracy of the West against Islam in the military, education, legal, financial, information, and national political and international political systems. We have also tried to proffer solutions to these problems for us as Muslims to regain our dignity and lift the siege, which has been used to hem us in. Like *Salahuddin al-Ayyubi* before us, all that we need is a "Siege of the Besieger". Doing this we shall triumph and regain our freedom. But it requires dedication, determination and diligence. We should remember, "Allah does not change the condition of a people unless and until they changed the condition of their souls". In the same vein, *"Allah does not change His blessing that He has bestowed on a people until they changed what is in their souls"* (Qur'an 8:53).

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