



MOHAMMED
IN THE MIRROR OF
ISLAM





ACC No. 20,306 Date.....
Author: Prophet (SAW) Status P.....
D.D. Class.....



NAJAFI BOOK LIBRARY

MUHAMMAD

IN THE MIRROR OF ISLAM

Extracted from the
article of

SEYYED MD. HOSSEIN TABATABAI

IN

**MUHAMMAD THE SEAL OF THE
PROPHETS**

PRINTED BY DARUT TABLIGHIL ISLAMI PRISS
QUM, IRAN



1883

1883

1883

1883

1883

1883

1883

1883

1883

1883

1883

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

IN THE NAME OF GOD, MOST MERCIFUL AND
COMPASSIONATE

ISLAM AND OTHER RELIGIONS · THE SHI'ITE VIEW

by
'Allamah Tabataba'i

Islam is based on two realities: the divine personality of the Prophet Muhammad, who was chosen exactly fourteen lunar centuries ago to deliver God's message and to be the leader of men; and the Quran, a book of divine origin which is the Prophet's enduring miracle and which contains God's words along with intellectual and practical teachings of a universal nature. These two realities must be considered as one of the most important factors in the development and perfection of human

'Allamah Tabataba'i is one of the foremost masters of the traditional and religious sciences and Islamic philosophy in present-day Iran. He is the author of numerous books and articles in Arabic and Persian, among them the monumental *al-Mizan* (The Balance) in Arabic, a Quranic commentary, and the five volume *Usul al-falsafah* (Principles of Philosophy) in Persian. His Shi'ite Islam has been translated into English by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, dean of the Faculty of Letters of Tehran University, and will be published in 1970 in the United States under the direction of Kenneth Morgan of Colgate University. A second work, *The Quran in Islam*, is under translation. The present article appeared under the title "*Muhammad dar Ayinah-i Islam*" ("Muhammad in the Mirror of Islam") in the book, *Muhammad, Khatam-i Payambaran* (Muhammad, the Seal of the Prophets, Husayniyyah-i Irshad, Tehran, 1347/1968), published to commemorate the 1400th anniversary according to the lunar calendar of the prophecy of Muhammad.

life, or rather, they are the most important factor to have manifested itself over the course of fourteen centuries in the faith and practice of hundreds of millions of men, extending its influence deep into every aspect of their society.

It is true that of the world's religions Islam is the youngest and that its followers are fewer in number than the sum of the adherents of other faiths, yet Islam is possessed of certain distinguishing characteristics which sets it apart from other revealed ways. For example, if we refer to the sacred books of Hinduism, and in particular the Veda, we see that the religious teachings presented there are almost exclusively of an ascetic nature and at the same time that they are directed towards a minority of the religion's followers. Thus, the majority of Hindus are excluded from deriving direct spiritual benefit from these sacred books.

Buddhism and also Christianity display with Hinduism the same exclusively ascetic outlook in their teachings. In the case of Christianity this is obvious from the four Gospels and the other basic religious texts. There are no practical injunctions or social laws and moreover philosophy and rational thought are looked upon with disfavor. The Divine Sacrifice and the remission of the sins of mankind are doctrines which reduce the relevance of injunctions concerned with this world

Other religions have either ceased to draw men to themselves, such as Sabeanism and Manicheanism, or else are limited to a particular group of people, such as Judaism.

Thus it is only Islam which gives first importance to rationally demonstrable beliefs and positive individual and social injunctions, as, it is hoped, the present paper will make clear.

The Prime Importance of the Individual from the Point of View of Human Nature

Human nature seeks no more than to perpetuate as far as possible its own existence and to achieve its instinctive desires. If the first step man takes in his development is to

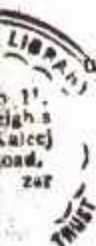
form social groupings, and if he preserves these societies by acting in accordance with their laws — thus surrendering to the same extent a degree of his individual freedom—, it is in order that by depriving himself of one portion of his freedom he gain and benefit from another portion by being better able to provide for his innate requirements and his subsistence.

The first goal of creation is the happiness of the individual; the happiness of society follows upon this. In other words the purpose of creation is the perfection of human nature, and this perfection is realized in the being of the individual, not in the shape and form of society. Thus man is directed towards the formation of social groupings to preserve the individual. For in order that he may realize the fundamental purpose of life — happiness and well-being — it is necessary that he should follow an orderly system of living, a system which inevitably must be social. He must eat, drink, clothe himself, sleep, rest, wed, bear offspring, secure his needs, and through the use of his mind provide the means of his own subsistence.

The Effect of the World View of the Individual upon his Activity

The form and characteristics of this orderly system which man follows in his life is dependent upon his conception of the nature of the Universe and of himself, who is an inseparable part of that Universe. Thus we see that a group of men do not admit the existence of a creator for the world and imagine that the world came into being accidentally and that man is only this material form which comes into existence at birth and ceases to exist at death. These men organize their way of life and rules for living with a view to the material needs of their ephemeral earthly existence, and this alone. They follow a path which can lead to no more than a limited material happiness and well-being.

On the other hand those who accept a creator for the universe and believe that the regulation of the affairs of men of the world is in the hands of "the gods" do not consider 's life to be just this material existence they organize



their way of living in such a way as to attract the favor of the gods and keep away their anger, and in this manner to achieve happiness in life and remain safe from unpleasant occurrences resulting from the gods' wrath.

Again, those who accept the Unity of God and believe that the Universe and all that is in it is governed by One God who is All-Wise and All-Powerful, and that man does not cease to exist at death but lives an eternal life, will organize their lives accordingly, that is, with an eye to assuring felicity in both worlds.

It is thus clear that "religion" is the organization of life, and that life lived according to a program is religion. Those who try to separate religion and life and claim that the first of these is only empty formalism are sadly mistaken. It is in view of this that Islam calls the path one follows in life "religion", while it calls the true way the "Straight Path" and the false way the "Deviated" or "Crooked Path". God says: "The curse of Allah is on evil-doers, who debar (men) from the path of Allah and would have it crooked, and who are disbelievers in the Last Day." (Quran VII, 44-45. This and all subsequent quotations from the Quran are from the translation by Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*, New York, 1953).

The Islamic World View

The concept upon which the Prophet of Islam founded his religion is that all of existence has been created by the One God, and that every one of the parts of existence is directed by God towards the perfection and happiness peculiar to that part. Man also, who possesses eternal life, is directed towards the happiness and welfare peculiar to his nature; and this he gains by following the path shown to him by God.

The Holy Prophet addressed his message to natural man, that is, man endowed with human nature and God-given intelligence and will who is not tainted by superstition and blind belief. Such an individual with his God-given primordial nature has the innate capacity and ability to apprehend the

above-described world view. With the slightest reminder he naturally understands that the world in its vastness and grandeur and its perfect arrangement and order is the creation of a transcendent Creator whose infinite Being is the source of every beauty and perfection and who is above all ugliness and evil. He understands that the creation of the world and its inhabitants was not without meaning and purpose; that the life of this world will be followed by another life, and that the good and bad actions of this world will not go unanswered for. And as a result he understands that there must be a way of life peculiarly suited to the needs of man which will enable him to live according to his own real nature.

Islam's choice of natural and primordial man as the object of the religious message has several basic results:

1. The Principle of Equality. The Islamic teachings apply to all individuals. There is no distinction between black and white, man and woman, noble and humble, rich and poor, king and beggar, strong and weak, eastern and western, learned and ignorant, old and young, or between those who are present and those who will come in the future, for all of these share human nature and that which it implies in common. Equality of this sort is limited to Islam; other ways, each in its own measure, have certain discriminatory principles. For example, Hinduism distinguishes in a total manner between Brahmins and non-Brahmins and between man and woman; in Judaism a distinction is made between the children of Israel and the Gentiles, and in Christianity between man and woman. As for secular social systems, in these there is a distinction between subjects of a country and foreigners. It is only Islam which considers humanity as an undiversified whole and has uprooted completely the principle of distinction and discrimination. "O mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! the noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct." (Quran XLIX, 13) "Lo! I suffer not the work of any worker, male or female, to be lost. Ye proceed one from another." (Quran III, 195) That is, male or female, you are all of the same human status.

2. **The Principle of Realism.** In view of the fact that man is provided with the instinct of seeking reality and of discerning between the real and the unreal, the laws and injunctions laid down by Islam are based upon a correspondingly realistic view of things. This can be explained as follows: Although man in his natural activity is stimulated towards his vital goals by feelings and emotions, he in fact sets out after real goals, not illusion and fantasy. The newly born baby who cries in his hunger and reaches for his mother's breast in search of milk desires that which is milk in reality, not the illusion of milk; he cries from real hunger, not from fantasy and imagination. Every individual who strives in the way of achieving his own interests seeks his own **real** interests, not their mental concept. In the same manner when feelings and emotions present certain desires to man, and without being able to take into account his true best-interest stimulate him toward certain goals it is the faculty of discrimination or reason which harnesses and modifies these emotions and shows to man that which is in reality the good and the evil and the rightness and the wrongness of his action.

It is reason, moreover, which forbids the sick person from eating harmful foods although he wishes to eat them; it is reason which prevents man from entering upon dangerous activities, hence depriving him of a large part of his freedom of action; it is reason which is man's single superiority over other animals, and his most important faculty for distinguishing the real from the illusory.

The laws and injunctions brought by the Prophet of Islam are based upon a realistic view of things, not upon the whims and fancies of men. That is to say that man must perform that action which is really and truly in his best interest even if it is against his fancy; and he must avoid that action which he feels like performing but which is not in conformity with his real interests. The case of the religious community is the same: it must accomplish what is truly in its best interest and what is in conformity with its felicity, even though this act may be contrary to its wishes; it must not perform that action which is the wish of the majority of

its members but which is contrary to its true interest.

In the language of the Holy Quran that which is in conformity with reality or with man's true best interest is called "The Truth" (al-haqq). It is the single goal towards which man must direct his endeavor and after which he must strive. "After the Truth what is there saving error?" (Quran X, 33) "And if the Truth had followed their desires, verily the heavens and the earth and whosoever is there in had been corrupted" (Quran XXIII, 71)

An almond nut which is placed in the ground under the necessary conditions will after a few days break its skin, and a green shoot will come forth from its kernel as well as a number of roots which are put forth in various directions; by way of the roots the shoot will take continuous nourishment from the ground and will constantly grow and develop until ultimately it becomes a fully grown almond tree with trunk, branches, leaves, blossoms and fruit.

The sperm of an animal placed in the womb of the female of the species under particular circumstances will assume the form and shape peculiar to itself and by means of the activity peculiar to its species will day by day become larger and more complete until it reaches the limit of its perfection. If we investigate in the same manner all of the creatures of the world one by one it will become perfectly obvious that for each of them there is a way peculiar to itself through which it reaches the limit of its own perfection, and that from the first day of its coming into being it is attracted towards its final end. In its development it never goes astray nor does it change its direction, as if, for example, an almond shoot could develop into a horse or a horse could go to sleep one night and wake up the next morning an almond tree. Rather every creature is guided towards its final goal by means of creation itself, and in traversing this path of development it never falls into error.

The path which has been laid out for each creature leading to its final goal is one which is in conformity with the means and potentialities with which it was provided by its own nature. These means allow it to attract what is of bene-

fit and repel what is harmful and threatens its existence. Chickens eat grain, sheep and cattle feed upon forage, and wolves, leopards and hawks hunt for game, for each is equipped with particular digestive systems which are proper only for particular nutritive substances. In the same way birds defend themselves with their beaks, sheep and cattle with their horns, scorpions and bees with their stings, lions and leopards with their teeth and claws, and deer by flight, for the defensive equipment of each of them is just this. In summary each of these creatures moves in its life towards a particular goal and end. It performs actions in which the equipment provided by its very existence guides it, and the nature of which this equipment determines.

This guidance and determination is the same general guidance and determination which the Quran has referred to and attributed to the Creator: "Our Lord is He who gave unto everything its nature, then guided it aright." (Quran XX, 50) "Who createth, then disposeth; Who measureth [i.e., "determineth"], then guideth." (Quran LXXXVII, 2-3).

Obviously, man also, who is one of the species of creation, is not an exception to this general rule. His natural disposition and character show to him the path which he should take in life, and point out and distinguish the duties and responsibilities which he must fulfill. "From what thing does He create him [man]? From a drop of seed. He createth him and proportioneth him, then maketh the way easy for him." (Quran LXXX, 18-20).

Meditation upon this and upon our previous discussion will show that the result of both of these discussions is the same, that is, that correct actions and deeds (those which are in conformity with man's true best interest) — which man must choose by means of his instinct of discerning between the real and the illusory — are the very same actions towards which the nature of man guides him, endowed as it is with its own peculiar equipment. It is thus that the way towards which the Holy Quran invites man, which it has named "the Religion of the Truth", it also refers to as the natural and primordial religion, and it attributes it to creation itself. "So set thy pur-

pose (O Muhammad) for religion as a man by nature upright — the nature (framed) of Allah, in which He hath created man. There is no altering (the laws of) Allah's creation. That is the right religion." (Quran XXX, 30). "By a soul and Him who perfected it, and inspired it (with conscience of) what is wrong for it and (what is) right for it. He is indeed successful who causeth it to grow, and he is indeed a failure who stunteth it." (Quran XCI, 7-10).

From another point of view, since creation is the work of God and since every sort of beauty and appropriateness which is observable in it is the result of His Mercy, that which is appropriate to human nature inasmuch as it determines the actions which man must perform is called "the Will of God". (This is of course the Will of God inasmuch as it ordains laws, guides men in his actions, and holds him responsible for these actions; it is not the same as the Will of God inasmuch as it creates — which can never be disobeyed or violated). Likewise the duties and rules which result from that which is appropriate to man's nature are called "the commands and prohibitions of God". "They [men] have never any choice". (Quran XXVIII, 68).

Since the religion of Islam consists of duties and commands from God, the Creator, and since the person who follows its doctrinal and practical injunctions has submitted himself to the Will of God, in the language of the Holy Quran this religion is called "Islam" ("submission" or "surrender"). "Lo! religion with Allah (is) the Surrender." (Quran III, 19). "And whoso seeketh as religion other than the Surrender (to Allah) it will not be accepted from him." (Quran III, 85).

3. The Principle of Equilibrium between the Material and the Spiritual. The third result of Islam's message being directed at natural man, a result which is indeed one of the great achievements of this religion, is that a middle way is taken between materiality and spirituality. This is in contrast to Judaism which, as can be observed in its Holy Book, the Torah, is not concerned with spiritual matters, and with Chris-

tianity, which on the contrary — according to the explicit saying of Jesus — is not concerned with the material life of this world. Other religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism and even Zoroastrianism, Manicheanism and Sabeanism, which to one degree or another are concerned with spiritual things, have separated the spiritual way from material life, to the degree that the connection between the two has been totally severed. It is only Islam which chooses the middle way and bases itself upon the foundation of primordial human nature.

In explanation the following can be said: All of us see individuals, who in fact make up the majority of men, who throughout their lives have no goal other than material advancement and no thought other than that of bettering their social position, collecting wealth, and enjoying material pleasures. Night and day they exert themselves in providing for their livelihood, and they take not the slightest notice of anything beyond the framework of the fleeting and ephemeral life of the material world.

In contrast to this group there are other men — of course exceedingly few in number — who occupy themselves with meditation upon the nature of the world and on the inconstancy and instability of life. They see that every pleasure is combined with a hundred pains, every joy with a hundred sorrows, every wealth with a hundred cares and worries, and that ultimately every union is followed by separation, every time of well-being by sickness, and every life by death. Moreover, they see that outside of the narrow prison of this world and behind the deceiving mirage of this life there exists an eternal world where nothing of the pains and troubles of this world enter and where happiness and felicity belong to the virtuous and the noble.

As a result of this meditation they cut off all social intercourse and shut their eyes to both the beauty and the ugliness of the fleeting world — within which any sort of gratification of desires one day results in regret and despair. Such men retire into a corner and busy themselves with contemplation from near or from afar of the eternal world and the infinite Beauty and Perfection by which the world is encompassed.

These two groups of men exist today and according to the testimony of history they have always existed. Their existence among men, moreover, is itself the best witness that man in his God-given primordial nature affirms the validity or rather the necessity of traversing both the way of material and of spiritual life. For if man closes upon himself completely the door of social life and with his hands folded abandons all endeavor, he will necessarily be deprived of this life without delay, and so also of the spiritual life. If on the other hand he abandons the spiritual life, with the same stroke he renders ineffectual his own reason and intelligence, the one characteristic which distinguishes man from other animals, and he pretends not to see that he is endowed with the power of discernment between the real and the unreal.

Thus it is that primordial man, possessing as he does the eye of discernment, can never assume a one-sided existence and content himself only with the material or only with the spiritual, for on the one hand without material things life in the material world is impossible and on the other without the spiritual life the innate knowledge and worship of God within primordial man come to nothing.

As has been pointed out, Islam in its teachings has chosen a path which is mid-way between the purely spiritual and the purely material, a path which harmonizes and integrates together these two antagonistic aspects of existence; and in truth, man cannot reach the perfection of self-realization in any other way. This is because, as is completely clear, every one of the species of creation reaches its own perfection and goal of existence by means of its natural and instinctive activity, and the nature of the activity of the species is tied to the nature of the powers and tools with which it is equipped.

Man, who is also one of the species of creation, is included in this universal law. He possesses a soul or spirit which was created for infinite and eternal life and which can never undergo corruption or destruction, and he can, through his own worthy activity, reach the goal of perfection, which is higher than any other happiness or felicity. But at the same time his heavenly soul is bound to an earthly body in which his means of activity are placed, and the faculties and powers

with which he employs these means have a certain type of relationship with the body. Furthermore, human nature guides man towards social life and civilization, and without doubt this guidance is in order that man may attain to the goal of life and the perfection of the species. And the perfection and happiness of each creature is unquestionably a perfection and happiness which creation has determined for him in reality; they are not of an illusory nature nor are they of a sort which superstitious thought might delineate. The happiness of a rose bush is that it should occupy itself with its natural growth and bring into being that towards which its vegetable nature guides it, not that it should be placed in a golden vase within an ornate palace.

Therefore, how is it possible that man could arrive at his true perfection and happiness other than by employing the material means at his disposal or other than in a social environment? Islam for its part has made the surroundings of man's material life, which are of a completely social nature and in which all material means are made use of, the background for its program of education. According to the guidance provided by man's primordial nature and innate characteristics it has formulated extensive laws and injunctions concerning man's individual, social, particular and universal actions, which are in turn a complete program for his education and perfection. A portion of these injunctions concern duties which man has towards his God, and include expressions of servitude in the face of His Lordship, poverty and need in the face of His Wealth and Independence, lowliness in the face of His Grandeur, insignificance in the face of His Majesty and Glory, ignorance in the face of His Knowledge, incapacity in the face of His Power, and submission in the face of His Will. Moreover, to the extent possible these expressions have been given a social character, such as the case of the groups which gather for the daily congregational prayers, the larger groups which meet for Friday prayers, and the still larger gathering which takes place at the time of the pilgrimage to Mecca.

A second portion of these injunctions concern duties which man has in social surroundings and in relation with his fellow

man. Of course in these duties, which are the Islamic laws, the sense of responsibility towards God has been taken into account, for man must surrender only to His Will (that is, the requirements of His creation). In other words, all actions must be performed in the shadow of the three basic principles of Islam: Divine Unity, Prophecy, and the Last Day. "Say: O People of the Scripture [Jews and Christians] ! Come to an agreement between us and you: that we shall worship none but Allah, and that we shall ascribe no partners unto Him, and that none of us shall take others for lords beside Allah. And if they turn away, then say: Bear witness that we are they who have surrendered (unto Him)." (Quran III, 64).

From the previous discussion it has become clear that in the religion of Islam the path to be followed in life has been ordered and arranged in such a way that man's social and material life resembles a cradle in which the spiritual life is nurtured. The inner spiritual light of the practicing Muslim is such that all of his individual and social actions contribute to purifying his soul and strengthening its radiance. Although outwardly he is with people, inwardly he is with God, and although he is in the midst of a crowd, he dwells in the spiritual retreat of the divine secret. At the same time that he is running here and there in pursuit of material goals, and is undergoing a series of events both bitter and sweet, pleasant and unpleasant, beautiful and ugly, and in general is involved in the events of the tumultuous external world, his heart is free and exists in a world of tranquillity in which he sees the Face of God wherever he looks. "And whithersoever ye turn, there is Allah's countenance." (Quran II, 115).

A pious Muslim extends his spiritual life into every aspect of his material life. Wherever he is and whatever he is doing he is in contact with God. Everything with which he occupies himself in the material world is a mirror in which he sees God reflected. On the other hand, non-Muslims who turn towards the spiritual life imagine that their natural and every-day life is a veil between themselves and the Truth they are seeking. As a result they are forced to abandon normal life and to assume an unaccustomed manner of living in their quest after

spiritual perfection. Whatever the advantages of such a way, from the point of view of a person who lives a normal life it is a difficult road to follow and one in which to persevere requires an extreme degree of will power. However, the person who follows the spiritual life according to the directives of Islam knows full well that such a way is easier than that of Islam, for such people, by abandoning every-day life, have taken the easy way out and have fled from the difficulty of continual vigil and effort. They have set a barrier in the road towards perfection which creation itself and the means it has put at man's disposal have prepared. Such men have set out on a path of their own fancy, and it is questionable whether they will ever reach the goal which creation has determined for them.

In addition, given that the world and all that it contains are the creation of God and that the phenomena of the world, each according to the measure of its own existence are signs of the Truth and mirrors displaying God, and given that man along with the various conditions which mark his primordial nature is one of these signs, then it is necessary that in the spiritual life (the way of knowledge of self and of God) God be recognized in every situation. All of these mirrors must be utilized in the acquisition of divine knowledge and in the contemplation of God's Beauty, for if this is not the case man will gain nothing more from his labors than an imperfect knowledge or a perfect ignorance.

4. Knowledge and Wisdom from the Point of View of Islam. The person who has made a cursory study of the religions and creeds of the world will have no doubt that the dignity and honor which Islam has accorded to knowledge and wisdom and the extent to which it has encouraged their acquisition is unparalleled in any other religion or ideology, whether revealed or non-revealed. It is the Holy Quran which asks, "Are those who know equal to those who do not?" (Quran XXXIX, 9), and which praises the exalted station of knowledge in the most eloquent manner. And it is the Holy Prophet who has said "The pursuit of knowledge is incumbent upon every Muslim", "Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave" and "Seek knowledge, even unto China." Again, it is

the Holy Quran which commands its followers never to stray from the way of knowledge nor to follow what is only supposed or assumed, and never to accept without deliberation what passes before their sight or crosses their minds, for they will be responsible for their beliefs. "(O man), follow not that whereof thou hast no knowledge. Lo! the hearing and the sight and the heart — of each of these it will be asked." (Quran XVII, 36).

As has become clear Islam encourages its followers to acquire knowledge with all the powers at their disposal, and in this respect it has designated knowledge of religious jurisprudence or doctrinal sciences, and the injunctions of the religious law (Shari'ah) as mandatory. "And the believers should not all go out to fight [in the holy war]. Of every troop of them, a party should go forth, that they (who are left behind) may gain sound knowledge in religion." (Quran IX, 122).

A point which must be kept in mind is that the capacity of individuals for the comprehension of scientific and intellectual truth varies. There are people who have no talent for logical thought and who, with their simple minds, live in a surrounding of physical labor and on a level of purely material life, while there are others whose thought is logical and who by their very nature take a special joy in comprehending profound concepts and scientific theories. Still others have cut their attention from both thought and physical labor and, having a special aversion for the dark world of matter and its deceiving beauty and fleeting pleasures, find in themselves a particular attraction towards the transcendent world and a peculiar fascination for its lasting and infinite beauty, of which the beauty of this world is only the reflected image. Such men easily comprehend the verities and mysteries of the transcendent world by means of inner illumination.

It is with a view to this diversity, which is clearly visible among men, that Islam instructs each of these three groups in its own terms and language. One group it has taught by means of the external and formal aspect of religion and a second group by way of intellectual demonstration, while the third group it has instructed to struggle against the carnal soul and to purify the heart. In the same way, in the Quran

God has struck a similitude about His Own utterances and expressions: "He sendeth down water from the sky, so that valleys flow according to their measure." (Quran XIII, 17). The Holy Prophet has said, "We prophets have been commanded to speak to men according to the measure of their understandings."

Those among its followers who have not the taste for rational demonstration and who would face the danger of error and deviation if they were to attempt to traverse this path, Islam has charged with no more than the measure of their ability, and beyond the three principles of religion (Divine Unity, Prophecy and the Last Judgment) it only instills them with simple practical injunctions such as commands to do good and prohibitions from committing evil; this type of formulation is found in a great number of Quranic verses and in sayings of the Prophet and the Shi'ite Imams.

Of course in the case of the three principles of religion man in his primordial nature can engage in a simple form of rational demonstration, and hence he will have accepted nothing but definitely proven knowledge. And in fact this method provides him with rational proof of the remaining teachings and injunctions which he has accepted without rational demonstration, for the truth of the principle of prophecy proves in a definitive manner the validity of all of the sayings which have reached us from the Prophet.

The way of rational demonstration — Islam teaches those people who are endowed with sound minds and who have the capacity to comprehend scientific theories and intellectual and logical arguments through logical and rational demonstration. In other words, it guides them towards that which their uncorrupted and reality-seeking primordial nature immediately perceives. It does not first impose upon them its doctrines and beliefs and then defend these by reasoning and proofs.

The Book and the Tradition, that is, the verses of the Holy Quran and the sayings of the Prophet and the Shi'ite Imams — which make clear the meaning and purpose of the

Quranic verses — are full of this type of rational demonstration. In them the Islamic beliefs and doctrines are explained in detail by means of the simplest forms of expression and the most convincing proofs, and likewise, mention is made in them of the general and universal benefits and advantages of the Islamic laws and injunctions.

Obviously, we must not overlook the fact that the meaning of discussion and demonstration of the benefits and advantages of the Islamic laws and injunctions is not that if an individual Muslim or Islamic society in general does not understand a particular injunction, that injunction should be rejected. For as we have already mentioned, these laws were promulgated by means of prophecy, and the proof of the validity of prophecy is a summary proof of the validity of these laws, even if we do not possess the detailed reason for this.

The way of purification of the soul — The third group of men are those who are ready and eager to sever all material attachments and to turn their attention away from the deceiving adornments and illusory desires of this world. Such men are prepared to forget all that is other than God and to close their eyes to every beauty and ugliness and every sweet and bitter experience of this transient and illusory existence. Opening the eye of discernment towards the eternal world, they are prepared to contemplate without the veil of materiality the radiance of the Majesty and Grandeur of God, to traverse the stages of human perfection which must be crossed upon leaving this fleeting life, and to enter into the Proximity of the Divine. With such men Islam converses secretly of the divine mysteries in a language which they alone understand, and thus it guides them from the depths of ignorance to the pinnacle of knowledge and wisdom.

A Possible Criticism and its Answer

A number of orientalist have said that Islamic mystical and metaphysical doctrines have been borrowed from those of India, for Islam in itself is no more than a series of extremely concrete and simple beliefs and sterile forms of worship. The succinct reply to these claims is provided nicely by the words

of the poet: "O Sweetheart, the difficulty is that you're no judge of words."

We, of course, in our answer to this criticism do not wish to defend Islam from the point of view of its mystics and engage in proving the validity and originality in the face of Indian mysticism of the various ways which they have traversed on the spiritual path. In the same way in our discussion of rational demonstration we were not concerned with analyzing and proving the validity of all the books on philosophy written by Muslims, and in our discussion of the way of the formal aspects of religion we did not declare as correct the way of the generality of Muslims whatever it might be. Rather, our goal in this article is limited to a general survey of the original and genuine Islamic sources, that is, the Book and the Tradition, without concerning ourselves with agreeing or disagreeing with the activities and conduct of any particular one of the foregoing classes of men.

The claim of the above-mentioned orientalist is based upon the principle of evolution, according to which the development and perfection of natural phenomena is explained in a scientific manner. This principle has been generalized to include every sort of happening in whatever sphere, even habits, customs and phenomena of an instinctive and innate nature and beyond this, phenomena of a spiritual nature. Thus the root cause of every event is sought in preceding events. According to the same principle it has been said that Islamic laws were borrowed from those of the Romans and Islamic doctrines from the philosophical ideas of the Greeks.

These orientalist have been mistaken in their judgment in two respects. First, they have considered what is called "mystical intuition" to be of the same order as normal thought and hence they have imagined that the knowledge gained by purification of the soul is a system of poetical thoughts, much as if a poet with his overflowing and creative imagination and his eloquent means of expression could voice such concepts better than a mystic knower of the divine secrets. A similar mistake is made in the case of revelation, which is the celestial perception of prophets and the means of receiving divine

sciences and laws. As a result, the basic source of Islamic doctrine and injunctions is represented as being Greek thought and Roman law. This mistake is perfectly obvious in the discussions carried on about prophecy and the "mode of thought" of prophets. Moreover, the words and utterances which have reached us from the prophets — whether their claim to prophecy be true or not — openly contradict such opinions.

The second mistake is that, even if we accept the theory of evolution as proven and definitely established, this theory must not be taken as providing the reason for the manifestation of an instinctive drive. For, an instinct placed within a species' primordial nature at its creation will be manifested within each individual of that species (provided there be no external impediment), whether or not there is a precedent.

As a case in point it can be said that diversity in food-stuffs and the preparation of sophisticated cuisine was learned by the Arabs from the Persians, but it cannot be said that the Arabs learned how to eat from the Persians. Likewise, it can be said that democratic government with its manifold administrative organizations spread to the East from the West, but this cannot be said about the very act of forming a society and establishing a government.

In our previous discussion it became clear that the way of purification of the soul, that is, the spiritual life and mystical intuition, is innate within the nature of man; once awakened through the necessary groundwork and the removal of obstacles, it will direct man to enter upon the path of spiritual illumination. Hence, religion, which by its very nature is concerned to one degree or another with the transcendent and eternal world, cannot but cause the appearance of certain among its followers who, this hidden urge having been awakened within them, will sever all attachments with this fleeting world full of pain and hardship and with the hope of absolute bliss and serenity will concern themselves with the eternal abode. And in practice also we see that in every one of the world's religions there exists a group enamored of the spiritual life and mystical way.

By comparing the presentation of spiritual matters in the basic texts of the world's religions it can be clearly observed that the texts of Islam have concerned themselves with the description of everlasting felicity and the eternal world more than the texts of other religions. Therefore, the appearance of the way of the purification of the soul within Islam is perfectly natural, without there being the need for any relationship as to its origins with India or with any other place. Furthermore, as history is there to prove, a large number of the companions of Ali (the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet and the first Shi'ite Imam) such as Salman, Kumayl, Rashid, Maytham and Uways were under his direct spiritual guidance and instruction — at a time when Islam had not yet reached India and when there could be no question of contact with Indian thought. The fact that the chains of spiritual initiation (*silsilah*) of practically all of the Sufi orders in Islam reach back to Ali further corroborates this point.

The Difference in Means of Expression between Islamic and other Mysticism

The delicate and refined expressions of Islamic mystical doctrine in contrast to the formulations of other mysticisms, and especially to that of the Indians, has the advantage of elucidating mystical verities within the wrapping of formulations of a more general nature. Hence, everyone is able to profit from them, each in the measure of his understanding. Other mystical ways do not possess this distinction.

It is for this same reason that Islam has been saved from the harmful results which have affected other religions of presenting mystical truths openly and unguardedly. For example, in the case of Indian mysticism, if we study carefully the Upanishads we will see that the doctrine presented there is a precise and extremely profound expression of the Unity of God, but at the same time that it is so bold and explicit that any one who refers to it who is not completely versed in mystical and metaphysical doctrine will consider its marvellously complete formulations as nothing but superstitious prattle, or at the very least he will interpret passages which express the Unity of God in the most sublime manner as being nothing but incarnationism, pantheism and idol worship.

This claim, moreover, is proved by the opinions which many orientalistes who have specialized in Sanskrit have voiced concerning Indian mysticism; for after the tremendous amount of research which they have undertaken in the original Hindu and Buddhist texts they still consider Indian mystical doctrines as nothing but superstition, produced by the minds of men deprived of the advantages of life. And the basic reason for all such opinions on the part of orientalistes is the explicitness and the shocking nature of the bold formulations of these texts.

Further Consideration of the Islamic Message

In the same way that God's creation has placed a particular kind of material life within the reach of mankind and has not discriminated among men but has equipped each of them with equal means, it has also placed the spiritual life, which is hidden behind the veil of material life, within the reach of all men. And in the same way that the perfection of the material life of man lies in the manifestation and actualization of all of his positive and negative actions and deeds — which he performs by means of his body — so also creation has extended the perfection of the spiritual life to include all of these actions and deeds. In harmony with creation, Islam has considered the spiritual life to belong to all men and has made no distinction between them, and likewise it has extended the spiritual life to all the positive and negative aspects of men's lives. It invites men to accept the ties of social life and to act in a positive manner in traversing a determined path. In teaching this way it has had recourse to indications enclosed in the covering of normal and every-day expressions. This is because our verbal formulations are in any case born of the thoughts of the generality of men. We use them in our social and material life in order to facilitate mutual understanding, and by means of them we exchange thoughts and mental concepts. Now mystical and contemplative comprehension, which is rarer than the elixir of life and which throughout history has never found general acceptance, is something completely different from normal human expression. The person who wants to formulate into

concepts the knowledge gained through intuitive and mystical comprehension is like the person who tries to describe by means of words the colors of the rainbow to one blind from birth. And the person who puts contemplative and mystical insights into the mold of words is exactly like the person who carries water from place to place with a sieve.

It is for this reason that Islam has had recourse to symbols and intimations in expressing mystical truths, and has thus remained untouched by the misfortunes which have overtaken other religions.

A Brief Consideration of the Spiritual Path

It may possibly be imagined that the claim that Islam has expounded the mystical way by means of intimations and symbols is unfounded and amounts to chasing false ghosts. However, sufficient meditation upon Islamic teachings and formulations, and a weighing of these against the agitated and ecstatic states of the Islamic mystics, will prove the opposite and will show that hidden within themselves and by allusion these teachings elucidate all of the stages of perfection which are traversed on the mystical way, although a true and detailed comprehension of these states is only possible through mystical intuition.

The travellers on the spiritual path, who as a result of their natural and primordial readiness have surrendered their hearts to the infinite Beauty and Perfection of the Truth, worship God only out of love, not out of hope for reward or fear of punishment, for to worship Him in order to gain Paradise or to avoid hell is in fact to worship that very reward and punishment in place of God.

As a result of the divine attraction which has engulfed their hearts, and more particularly as a result of having seen that God has revealed the verse "Therefore remember Me, I will remember you" (Quran II, 152) and hundreds of other Quranic verses where the remembrance of God is spoken of, wherever and in whatever state they happen to be the mystic travellers are occupied with His remembrance "Such as remember Allah, standing, sitting and reclining." (Quran III, 191). And

when they hear the messages of the Beloved, "Lo! in the heavens and the earth are portents for believers" (Quran XLV, 3), "And there is not a thing but hymneth His praise" (Quran XVII, 44), and "And whithersoever ye turn, there is Allah's countenance" (Quran II, 115), they understand that all existent things are mirrors, each displaying the unique Beauty of the Truth in accordance with the possibilities of its own being. Other than their quality of being mirrors they have no existence in themselves. Hence such men look to every phenomenon with love and eagerness, and have no object other than to contemplate the Beauty of God.

And when they hear God's messages "O ye who believe! Ye have charge of your own souls. He who erreth cannot injure you if you are rightly guided" (Quran V, 105) and "Thou, verily, O man, art working towards thy Lord a work which thou wilt meet (in His presence)" (Quran LXXXIV, 6), they understand that by the nature of creation itself they are bound within the framework of their own souls, and other than the way of their souls there is no road open to them to reach God. Whatever they see or find in the expansiveness of the world they see and find in themselves. It is here that man understands that in fact he is cut off from all places and things and other than he himself and his God there is no one else. Even if such a person is in the midst of a hundred thousand people he is alone, and if others see him in the midst of a crowd, he sees himself in a spiritual retreat far away from everyone else, no one being with him but God. It is then that he looks at himself and sees all things within himself, and he understands that he himself is also only a mirror in which the unique Beauty of God is manifested, and that he has nothing but God. When he has remembered God in this fashion and has cleansed his heart and emptied it of vanity and frivolity, the remembrance of God becomes firmly fixed within his soul and he enters among the ranks of the people of certainty (*al-yaqin*) and God's promise, "And serve thy Lord till the inevitable (*al-yaqin*) cometh unto thee" (Quran XV, 99) is fulfilled. The doors of the kingdom of the heavens and the earth open to him and he sees that all things are possessed absolutely by God. "Thus did We show Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and the earth that he might be of those possessing certainty." (Quran VI, 76).

The person endowed with such a vision will behold the three stages of Divine Unity. First the Unity of God in His Acts will be revealed to him. He will see with certainty that it is God who directs the Universe and all that it contains, and that the innumerable causes and agents which are at work in the world, whether theirs be the activity of free will or of necessity, are all painted upon the canvass of creation by His all-powerful Hand. Cause and effect and the relationship between the two — each is brought into being and executed by the One. "And unto Allah belongeth the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth." (Quran XLV 27).

Secondly the Unity of God's Names and Qualities will be disclosed to him and he will see without intermediary that every quality of perfection which appears in the world, and likewise every quality of beauty and of majesty, whether life, knowledge, power, might, grandeur or whatever, is a glimmer from the infinite Source of Light which is the Truth, and that these qualities shine forth through the variegated windows which are the existences of things with the distinctions they possess. "Allah's are the fairest names." (Quran VII, 180).

Finally in the third stage of Divine Unity he will behold that all of these varied qualities are the manifestation of an infinite Essence and that in reality each of them is identical with every other and all are identical with the Essence Itself. "Say: Allah is the Creator of all things and He is the One, the Almighty." (Quran XIII, 16).

The Superiority of Islam in the Doctrine of Divine Unity

The above are the three stages which the lovers of the Truth in the various religions of the world pass through. When they begin their travel on the way of spiritual perfection they take these stages to be their final goal. Islam, however does not limit itself to these stages but delineates a goal for its followers which is even higher and which surpasses the goal formulated in the text of any other religion. For, it does not stop at negating all limitations from God and

considering Him as infinite and transcendent over all qualification, but it goes so far as to negate from Him this very quality of Infinity (since every quality [even that of Infinity] cannot help but "qualify" and so limit that to which it is attributed) Hence the Divine Essence is considered as transcending all names and designations and even as transcending this very description. The sixth Shi'ite Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq, according to a tradition which is quoted by al-Kulayni in the book *Usul al-kafi*, has deduced this stage from the following verse of the Holy Quran: "Say (unto mankind): Cry unto Allah, or cry unto the Beneficent, unto whichsoever ye cry (it is the same). His are the most beautiful names." (Quran XVII, 110). However, since further elucidation of this doctrine would mean that we must enter a philosophical discussion which is not in keeping with the nature of the present article, for the present we must leave this aside.

Sanctity in God

The followers of the path towards perfection from the beginning of their journey until the point where they reach final peace witness a great deal which must remain hidden from the eyes and hearts of the earth-bound inhabitants of the material world, and a consideration of these states and stations would be beyond the scope of the present article. What is important here is the question of sanctity in God (*wilayat-i ilahi*).

When the travellers on the spiritual path reach the stage of Divine Unity and enter into the proximity of God, they let go totally of what they had possessed up to that time, for they have come to know that everything belongs to God. They give up the false claim of "owning" things and of being independent in this ownership. It is then that an indescribable tranquillity and repose comes over them and they are released absolutely from all pain, fear and sorrow "Lo! those who say: Our Lord is Allah, and afterward are upright, the angels descend upon them, saying: Fear not nor grieve, but hear good tidings of the paradise which ye are promised. We are your protecting friends in the life of the world and in the Hereafter." (Quran XLI, 30-31). "Lo! verily the friends

of Allah [those who possess sanctity, *wilayah*] are (those) on whom fear (cometh) not, nor do they grieve." (Quran X, 63).

It is at this point that worldly joys, sorrows, successes and failures appear to them as all the same, and having found a new existence they view the world and all that it contains in a new light. "Is he who was dead and We have raised him unto life, and set for him a light wherein he walketh among men, as him whose similitude is in utter darkness?" (Quran VI, 123). And in the end they and everything they possess belongs to God, and God to them: "Whoso is near to God, God is nigh unto him."

Conclusion

From our discussion it has become clear that the spiritual life in Islam is wider in its scope and more profound in its depth than what is found in other religions, for, as we have explained, Islam in its breadth has laid down detailed guidelines for all of the possible situations of human existence, whether as regards this world or the next; and in its upward flight and its depth it aims at a goal beyond that of other creeds.



CONTENTS

Islam and other religions	1
The prime importance of the individual from the point of view of Human Nature	2
The effect of the world view of the individual upon his activity	3
The Islamic World view	4
1 - The principle of Equality	5
2 - The principle of Realism	6
3 - The principle of Equilibrium	9
4 - Knowledge and wisdom from the point of view of Islam	14
A possible criticism and its answer	17
The difference in means of expression between Islamic and othr Mysticism	20
Further consideration of the Islamic message	21
A brief consideration of the Spiritual Path	22
The Superiority of Islam in the Doctrine of Divine Unity	24
Sanctity in God	25
Conclusion	26

IN THE NAME OF GOD

Islamic Educational Centre

(Darut-tabligh-e-Islami)

General office IRAN-Ghum tel : 2233



Darut-Tabligh-e-Islami ?

In the following please find a brief introduction to Darut - taqligh- e -Islami and its aims and activities .

Darut tabligh is a newly established Islamic educational centre , located in the city of Ghum 144 Kilometers south of Teheran , the capital of Iran . Ghum has been known throughout history as a great Islamic educational centre . In the city there are half a dozen colleges and institutions devoted solely to Islamic education and training . Some of these schools have a record of 700 - 800 years of contribution to the cause of Islam .

Every year thousands of young Muslims join these colleges for education and training in Islamic ideology . Among about 5000 students studying in different institutions in this city , there are many from other neighbouring countries , e . g . Afghanistan Pakistan and Iraq .

In recent years the progress of Muslim community and educational institutions in the city of Ghum have been subject to many changes and improvements (Under supervision of his holiness AYATULLAH (Al-Mofti) SAYYID MUHAMMAD KAZEM SHARIA-TMADARY) The aim of these changes is to bring about a reform in the educational procedures of these schools and introduce more upto-date facilities in order to satisfy the demands of our new generation without compromising the basic elements of Islamic institutions . Despite many forms of problems and obstacles . much progress has been made .

One of these new developments is the creation of DARUT TABLIGH-E-ISLAMI . Darut tabligh is entirely devoted to the teaching and training of our future Muslim scholars . It is a non-

AFI BOOK LIBRARY

Managed by Masooman Welfare Trust (R)

Shop No. 11, M.L. Heights,

Mirza Kaleej Baig Road,

Soldier Bazar, Karachi-74400, Pakistan.

profit, non-political and non-governmental institution.

its budget is coming through the individual contribution by devoted Muslims as their religious duesa etc. Such generous contribution which is traditional in Iranian Muslim society, makes it possible for Darut-tabligh not only to admit students without any tuition fees but also to provide them with a monthly stipend sufficient, at least for a part of their needs. Among other improvements is the addition of foreign languages like English and Urdu in the curriculum.

The library of Darut-tabligh is one of the fastest growing educational establishments in Iran. Every year thousands of books, new and old, and in many different languages, are being added to the library by direct purchases and or through donations by individuals and organizations.

One of our endeavours is to create an inter-cultural relations board with many other Islamic educational movements, institutions and individual scholars throughout the Muslim world.

We believe that such cultural exchange among different Muslim communities is of prime importance for homogenizing the development and progress in Islamic ideology in contemporary world.

We are eager to receive any of your publications in any language. In return we would be very glad to send you our publications.

For correspondence you may use any of the five languages, ARABIC, PERSIAN, TURKISH, and ENGLISH AND URDU.

Thanking you and invoking the blessings of God upon you and all those who serve Islam sincerely

Department of Publications.

(Darut tabligh - e - Islami)

Ghum-IRAN

ACC No..... Date.....
Section..... Status.....
D.D. Class.....
NAJAFI BOOK LIBRARY

Due date

Due date	

یہ کتاب آپ کے پاس امانت ہے۔ اسے پڑھیں، اس کی حفاظت کریں اور
بروقت (اوپر درج آخری تاریخ تک) واپس کریں۔ تاخیر کی صورت میں جرمانہ ادا
کرنا ہوگا۔ نجفی لائبریری سوہرا بازار کراچی فون: 7211795



**ENGLISH PUBLICATIONS OF
DARUT TABLIGH AL ISLAMI,
QUM ' IRAN.**

- 1 - Thought for Christians .
- 2 - Islam Versus Cepitalism & Marxism .
- 3 - Mohammad in the Mirror of Islam .
- 4 - Hussein in the Mirror of Islam .
- 5 - Reality Versus Absurdity .
- 6 - Mohammad and his teachings (im press)
- 7 - The right of wives in Islam . (» » »)
- 8 - Hussein and his movements . (» » »)

GRATIS

FREE GIFT OF NO
COMMERCIAL VALUE.