

The next verse recounts some other qualities of Allah with regard to the act of nurturing, with the difference that while verse 21 spoke of the bounties of Allah pertaining to the human self, verse 22 speaks of those pertaining to man's physical environment. Since man's being basically has two dimensions, one internal (*Anfus*) and the other external (*Āfāq*), the two verses, in a summary way, encompass all the kinds of blessings that descend on man from Allah.

Among the cosmic bounties, the first to be mentioned is the earth which has been made a bed for man. It is neither soft and fluid like water on which one cannot settle, nor hard like stone or steel that should make it difficult to be harnessed for man's purposes, but has been given a middle state between the soft and the hard for man to utilize it conveniently in his daily life. The Arabic word, *Firāsh* (bed), which literally means 'somethings spread out', does not necessarily imply that the earth is not round, for the great globe of the earth, in spite of being round, appears to be flat to the onlooker, and the usual way of the Holy Qur'an is to describe things in an aspect which should be familiar to an average man, literate or illiterate, city dweller or rustic.

The other bounty is that the sky has been made like an ornamented and beautiful ceiling. The third is that Allah sent down water from the sky. This, again, does not necessarily mean that water comes down directly from the sky without the medium of clouds - even in everyday idiom, a thing coming down from above is said to be coming from the sky. The Holy Qur'an itself, on several occasions, refers to Allah sending down water from the clouds:

ءَأَنْتُمْ أَنْزَلْتُمُوهُ مِنَ الْمُزْنِ أَمْ نَحْنُ الْمُنزِلُونَ ۝

"Did you send it down from the clouds, or did We send it?" (56:69)

وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ الْمُعْصِرَاتِ مَاءً ثَبَّاجًا

"And have sent down from the rain-clouds abundant water." (78:14)

The fourth bounty is to bring forth fruits with this water, and to provide nourishment to man from them.

The first three of these bounties are of an order in which man's effort or action, his very being even, does not enter at all. There was no

sign of man when the earth and the sky already existed, and clouds and rain too were performing their functions. As for these things, not even an ignorant fool could ever fancy that all this could be the work of a man or an idol, or of a created being. In the case of producing fruits and making them serve as nourishment for man, however, a simpleton may, on a superficial view, attribute this to human effort and ingenuity, for one can see man digging the earth, sowing the seed and protecting the plants. But the Holy Qur'an has, in certain verses, made it quite clear that human effort has nothing to do with the act of growing trees and bringing out fruits, for human activity accomplishes nothing more than removing the hindrances to the birth and growth of a plant, or protecting it from being destroyed. Even the water which feeds the plant is not the creation of the farmer - all he does is to make the water reach the plant at the proper time in a proper quantity. The actual birth and growth of the tree, and the putting forth of leaves, branches and fruits is the work of Divine Power, and of no one else. Says the Holy Qur'an :

أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا تَحْتُمُونَ ۝ أَأَنْتُمْ تَزْرَعُونَهُ أَمْ نَحْنُ الزَّارِعُونَ

"Have you considered the soil you till? Is it you that give them growth or We ? " (56:63)

The only answer which man can find to this question posed by the Holy Qur'an is that undoubtedly it is Allah alone who makes the plants grow.

In short, this verse mentions four qualities of Allah which cannot possibly be found in a created being. Having learnt from these two verses that it is Allah, and no one else, who brings man into existence out of nothingness, and provides the means of his sustenance through the earth, the sky, the rains and the fruits, one cannot, if one possesses a little common sense, help acknowledging that Allah, and no one else, is worthy of all worship and obedience, and that the ultimate iniquity is to turn away from Him who made man exist and gave him the means of survival and growth, and to prostrate oneself before others who are as helpless as man. Allah has put man at the head of all His creatures so that the universe should serve him, while he should totally devote himself to the worship and remembrance of Allah and obedience to Him without distraction. But there are men so

given to their indolence and ignorance that they forget the One God, and in consequence, have to serve a billion gods.

In order to rescue men from this slavery to others, the Holy Qur'an says at the end of this verse:

فَلَا تَجْعَلُوا لِلّٰهِ اَنْدَادًا وَاَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ۝

"So, do not set up parallels to Allah when you know."

That is to say, once one has understood that, in reality, Allah alone is the Creator and the Provider, one will have also understood that no one else can be worthy of worship and of being associated with Allah as an equal or rival god.

To sum up, these two verses call men to what is the essential purpose of sending down all the Divine Books and all the prophets - *Tauhid*, or the affirmation and the worship of the one God.

Tauhid is a doctrine which has an all-pervading and radically transforming impact on every sphere of human life, internal as well as external, individual as well as collective. For, once a man comes to believe that there is only One Being who alone is the Creator, the Lord and Master of the universe, who alone is all-powerful and ordains the slightest movement of the smallest atom, and without whose will no one can harm or do good to another - such a man, rich or poor, in joy or sorrow, would always look only towards that One Being, and gain the insight to discover behind the veil of apparent causes the workings of the same Omnipotence.

If our modern worshippers of 'energy' only had some understanding of the doctrine of *Tauhid*, they would easily see that power resides neither in steam nor in electricity, but that the source of all powers is the One Being who has created steam and electricity. To know this, however, one must have insight. The greatest philosopher in the world, if he fails to see this truth, is no better than the rustic fool who saw a railway-train move at the waving of a green flag and stop at the waving of a red flag, and concluding that it was the power of the green and red flags that controlled the movement of the huge train, made an obeisance to them. People would laugh at the rustic, for he did not know that the two flags are merely signs, while the train is actually run by the driver, or, better still, by the engine. A more

perceptive observer would ascribe the function to the steam inside the engine. But he who believes in the One God would laugh at all these wise men, for he can see through the steam, the fire and the water even, and discover behind the appearances the might of the One and Only Being who has created fire and water, and whose will makes them perform their allotted functions.

The Doctrine Of *Tauḥīd* : A source of peace in human life

Tauḥīd, the most fundamental doctrine of Islam, is not a mere theory, but the only effective way of making man a man in the real sense of the term - it is his first and last refuge and the panacea for all his ills. For the essence of this doctrine is that every possible change in the physical universe, its very birth and death is subject to the will of the One and Only Being, and a manifestation of His wisdom. When this doctrine takes hold of a man's mind and heart, and becomes his permanent state, all dissension ceases to exist and the world itself changes into a paradise for him, as he knows that the enmity of the foe and the love of the friend equally proceed from Allah who rules over the hearts of both. Such a man lives his life in perfect peace, fearing none and expecting nothing from anyone: shower him with gold, or put him in irons, he would remain unmoved, for he knows where it comes from.

This is the significance of the basic declaration of the Islamic creed, or *لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ* (there is no God but Allah). But, obviously, it is not enough to affirm the Oneness of God orally; one must have a complete certitude, and must also have the truth always present close to one's heart, for *Tauḥīd* is to see God as one, and not merely to say that He is one. Today, the number of those who can respect this basic formula of the Islamic creed runs to millions all over the world - far more than it ever did, but mostly it is just an expense of breath: their lives do not show the colour of *Tauḥīd*; or otherwise, they should have been like their forefathers who were daunted neither by wealth nor by power, awed neither by numbers nor by pomp and show to turn their back upon the Truth - when a prophet could all by himself stand up against the world, and say: *لَا تَنْظُرُونَنِي كَيْدُونَ فَلَا تَنْظُرُونَ*: "So try your guile on me, then give me no respite" (17:195). If the blessed Companions and their successors came to dominate the world in a few years, the secret lay in

this *Tauhid*, correctly understood and practised. May Allah bless all the Muslims with this great gift!

Verses 23-24

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّمَّنْ
 مِثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِمَّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ۝
 فَإِنْ لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوا وَلَنْ تَفْعَلُوا فَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ
 وَالْحِجَارَةُ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ ۝

And if you are in doubt as to that which we have revealed to Our servant, then bring a Sūrah the like of this, and do call your supporters other than Allah, if you are true. But if you do not - and you never shall - then guard yourselves against the fire, the fuel of which are men and stones. It has been prepared for disbelievers. (Verses 23-24)

The Guidance which the Holy Qurʾān provides to man rests on two basic principles - *Tauhid* (the Oneness of God) and *Risalah* (Prophethood). The two preceding verses (21 and 22) affirm the Oneness of God in presenting certain acts peculiar to Allah alone as a proof; these two verses (23 and 24) affirm the prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ in presenting the word of Allah as a proof. In both the places, the mode of argument is the same. The preceding verses mention certain things which no one could or can do except Allah - for example, creating the sky and the earth, sending down water from the sky, bringing forth fruits with water; and the point of the argument is that since no one except Allah can do these things, no one else can be worthy of being worshipped. These two verses refer to a kind of speech which cannot possibly come from anyone except Allah, and the like of which no human being can ever produce just as the helplessness of man and other creatures in the matter of creating the sky and the earth etc. is a demonstration of the fact that these are the acts of Allah alone, in the same way the helplessness of all created beings in the matter of producing something equal to or resembling the Word of Allah is a demonstration of the fact that this is the Word of Allah alone. Here the Holy Qurʾān challenges all men the world over, those of the

present and those of the future, to produce even a small passage like this, if they suppose it to be the work of a man, for other men may also be capable of accomplishing what one man has achieved. In case individuals should fail in such an effort, the Holy Qur'ān allows them the facility of calling to their aid all possible helpers - they could even hold an international 'workshop' for the purpose. The next verse forewarns them that such a venture would never succeed, and threatens with the fires of hell, for having once acknowledged his inability to produce something to equal the Holy Qur'ān, which is a clear evidence of its being the word, not of man but of a Being who stands above all created things, if a man still persists in his disbelief, he is only seeking a place in hell. The Holy Qur'ān asks men to beware of such a fate.

The Miraculous Qur'ān is a prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ

Thus, the verses, in emphasizing the miraculous character of the Holy Qur'ān, present it as the evidence of the prophethood of Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم and of his truth. No doubt, the miracles of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم are innumerable, each more marvellous than the other, but in mentioning only one of these here - one that pertains to the sphere of knowledge, namely, the Holy Qur'ān - Allah has pointed out that this is the greatest. Even among the miracles of all the prophets عليهم السلام this particular miracle has a special distinction. It has been the way of Allah to show His omnipotence by manifesting some miracles through each prophet or messenger. But each miracle appears with a certain prophet, and ends with him. The Holy Qur'ān, on the contrary, is a miracle which is to survive till the end of time.

As for the phrase : "وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ : "And if you are in doubt," we may remark that the verse employs the Arabic word, *raib* for 'doubt'. According to Imam Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *raib* signifies a kind of hesitation or indecision or suspicion which has no basis, and can therefore be easily overcome with the help of a little reflection. That is why the Holy Qur'ān says that having this kind of doubt (*raib*) is not consistent with being a man of knowledge, even if he were not a Muslim:

وَلَا يَرْتَابُ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ

"So that the people of the Book and Muslims should have no doubt". (74:31)

Similarly, at the very beginning of the Sūrah Al-Baqarah the Holy Qur'an refers to itself as the Book *لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ*: "In which there is no doubt (*raib*).". In the present verse again it uses the word *raib* to say: *وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ*: "if you are in doubt", the implication being that the truths enunciated by the Holy Qur'an are so clear and evident that there is no room for any hesitation or indecision or suspicion to arise except for those who do not possess knowledge.

As for the people who hesitate in accepting the Holy Qur'an as the Word of Allah, and suspect that it is the work of the Holy Prophet ﷺ or of some other man, the verse proposes an easy test - they should produce a passage (a Sūrah) resembling or equalling the Holy Qur'an in order to substantiate their claim; but if they fail, they should finally acknowledge the Holy Qur'an to be undoubtedly the Word of Allah. The Arabic word "*Sūrah*" means a "limited or definite piece"; as a technical term, a *Sūrah* is a passage of the Holy Qur'an which has been set apart from other passages by Divine Commandment (*Wahy*), there being 114 *Sūrahs* in the Holy Qur'an, some long and others very short. The present verse uses the word *Sūrah* without the definite article "*Al*", and hence includes the shortest of the *Sūrahs* in the challenge thrown out to the doubters.

At this point, the objection can arise that the failure of one man or one group of men does not necessarily argue the inability of another man or group in the matter. The Holy Qur'an meets this objection by declaring:

وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

"And do call your supporters other than Allah, if you are true".

The Arabic word used here is *Shuhadā'*, the plural or *Shāhid* which signifies 'one who is present' - a witness is called a *Shāhid*, for he has to be present in the court of law. In this verse, the word *Shuhadā'* refers either to men in general - implying that the doubters could call to their aid any men whatsoever from anywhere in the world -, or specifically to the idols of the disbelievers of Makkah who thought that these blocks of stone would appear on the Day of Judgment as witnesses in their favour.

The next verse foretells that the doubters shall never succeed, even

if they tried with all their individual or collective might, in producing a passage which could resemble the Holy Qur'an. If they should still persist in their denial, the verse threatens them with the fire of Hell, which has already been prepared for such stubborn disbelievers.

The infidels of Makkah, history tells us, were ready to give up their very lives for the purpose of obliterating Islam. In throwing out to them this challenge, the Holy Qur'an gave them an easy chance of accomplishing their purpose, and even hurt their tribal sense of honour by predicting that they would never be able to take up the challenge. And yet not a single contender came up for the trial, which was a clear admission of their helplessness and an acknowledgment of the Holy Qur'an being the Word of Allah. This fact establishes the Holy Qur'an as the evident miracle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Since the challenge still stands, the miracle too lives on, and shall live to the end of the world.

The Holy Qur'an: A living miracle

As for the Holy Qur'an being a miracle, the subject has been thoroughly discussed in scores of books by the greatest scholars in all the ages and in different languages. We may mention a few outstanding ones: *Naẓm al-Qur'an* by *al-Jāhīz*, written in the 3rd century A.H.; *'Ijāz al-Qur'an*' by *Abū 'Abdullāh Wāsiṭī*, written early in the 4th century; a small book, *'Ijāz al-Qur'an*' by *Ibn 'Isā Rabbānī*, written later in the 4th century; a long and comprehensive book, *'Ijāz al-Qur'an*' by *Qādi Abū Bakr Bāqillānī*, written early in the 5th century; the subject has also been discussed at length in well-known books like *'Al-Itqan*' by *Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī*, *'Al-Khasā'is al-Kubra'* by the same author, *'At-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*' by *Imām Rāzī*, and *'Ash-Shifa'* by *Qādi 'Iyad*; more recently still, *'Ijāz al-Qur'an*', by *Mustafa Sadiq al-Rafī'i*, and *'Al-Waḥy al-Muḥammadi'* by *Sayyid Rashīd Riḍā*; and finally *'Ijāz al-Qur'an*' by *Shabbir Aḥmad Uthmānī*. We may, in passing, draw attention to another peculiar quality of the Holy Qur'an that, beside comprehensive and voluminous commentaries, scores of books have been written on different aspects of the Book of Allah and on the innumerable considerations which arise from it.

We cannot provide even a brief resume of all that has been written

on the subject, the literature being so vast. We shall, however, give a few brief indications as to why the Holy Qur'an is held to be a miracle of the Prophet of Islam: صلى الله عليه وسلم

Qualities that make the Qur'an a miracle

(1) The Holy Qur'an is incomparable for its comprehensiveness even among the Sacred Books of the world; on the one hand, it brings to man the ultimate knowledge of a metaphysical order, and, on the other, provides guidance for all the spheres of human life, spiritual or physical, individual or collective. Those who suspect the Book to have been the product of a human agency should remind themselves of the simple fact that it appeared at a time and in a place which offered no facilities for acquiring the kind of education which is necessary for composing such a book - in fact, the Arabs were in those days known as the *Ummiyyūn*, 'the illiterates', and that the Book came through the Holy Prophet ﷺ who could not even read or write, and who had not tried to learn even the arts of poetry and rhetoric on which the Arabs prided themselves. This fact, in itself, is nothing short of a miracle.

(2) The Holy Qur'an is, no doubt, a guidance for all men without any distinction of time or place, but the first to be addressed were the Arabs of the Age of Ignorance. In affirming that no human being could produce even a few verses comparable to its own, the Holy Qur'an did not confine the challenge merely to the richness of meaning and the quality of wisdom, but included the mode of expression as well. Now, the 'illiterates' of Arabia had no pretensions to wisdom or knowledge, but they certainly fancied themselves for their eloquence - to them, the aliens were just 'The Dumb' (*Al-'Ajam*). And some of them were so mad in their hostility to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that, if they could see a chance of hurting him in doing so, they would readily have slit their own throats out of sheer spite. And yet no one came forward to accept the challenge. This helplessness in a contest which should have been easy for a people so gifted with a spontaneous eloquence - does it not argue that the Holy Qur'an is not the word of man, but the Word of Allah? As a matter of fact, the most discriminating among the contemporary Arabs did admit, though in private, that the Holy Qur'an was inimitable; some of them had the honesty to say so in public and some accepted Islam, while others in spite of this

admission, could not give up the ways of their forefathers, or sufficiently overcome tribal rivalries, particularly their hostility to Banū 'Abd Munāf, the tribe of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to embrace Islam.

Ja'āl al-Din al-Suyūti has, in his 'Al-Khasā'is al-Kubrā', reported a number of incidents which illustrate the point. When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the Holy Qur'ān began to attract the attention of people even outside Makkah, the enemies of Islam became worried about the huge crowds that would assemble there for the annual pilgrimage and would be likely to fall under his spell. Their tribal chiefs wanted to find an effective strategem to prevent such a situation from arising, and they referred the problem to Walīd ibn Mughhīrah, the eldest and the wisest among them. To begin with, they suggested that they could tell the pilgrims that the Holy Qur'ān was (May Allah forgive us for reporting a blasphemy) only the ravings of a lunatic. But Walīd could foresee that when the pilgrims heard the Holy Prophet ﷺ speaking with such lucidity and eloquence, they would immediately know that the allegation was not true. Next they thought of dismissing him as a mere poet. But Walid warned them that, an understanding of the arts of poetry being innate in most Arabs, the pilgrims would easily see that he was no poet. Then, they considered the possibility of putting him down as one of the soothsayers. But Walīd feared that they would again discover how false the imputation was, and would only turn against the accusers. In summing up his own impression of the Holy Qur'ān, he said: "By God, there is not a single man among you who knows more about Arabic poetry than me. And, by God, I find in this speech a kind of sweetness and grace which I have never found in the speech of any poet or of any eloquent man." After a good deal of thought, he finally advised them to accuse the Holy Prophet ﷺ of being a sorcerer who employed his black art in separating sons from fathers, and wives from husbands.

Exactly the same was the impression made by the Holy Qur'ān on many other people, who expressed similar views - for example, Nadr ibn Ḥārith, a tribal chief; Unais, the brother of the blessed Companion, Abū Dharr; As'ad ibn Zurārah, another tribal chief, and Qais ibn Nasībah of the Banū Sulaim tribe. Even the vilest enemies of the Holy

Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم like Akhnas ibn Shariq, Abu Sufyān and, of all persons, Abu Jahl himself are reported to have stealthily crept in the darkness of night to the house of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to hear him reciting the Holy Qur'ān, and to have been so entranced by the Word of Allah that they could not tear themselves away from the place till it was dawn. Yet they continued to be stubborn in their denial, for, as Abū Jahl confessed in so many words, they had been successfully vying with the tribe of Banū 'Abd Munāf in all possible virtues, but now that their rivals had produced a prophet, they could not come up with something to match the claim.

In short, the Arabs failed to take up the challenge of the Holy Qur'ān, and admitted their helplessness; nor has any one else succeeded in the attempt since then - all of which goes to show that the Holy Qur'ān can only be the Word of Allah, not of man.

(3) The Holy Qur'ān made many predictions about future events, and things turned out to be exactly as it had declared. For example, the infidels of Makkah were not prepared to believe the prophecy that the people of Rum, or the *Byzantians*, would finally rout the Persians after having suffered an initial defeat. The infidels made it a point of honour, and put a wager on it, but were humiliated to see the prophecy come true before the stipulated period of ten years was over.

(4) The Holy Qur'ān gives a clear account of some of the earlier prophets, of their Shari'ah and of their peoples, and of many historical events since the beginning of the world. Even the best scholars among the Jews and the Christians did not possess such exact information. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, who had never attended a school nor been in the company of a learned man, could not have provided all these details for himself without having received the knowledge from Allah.

(5) Several verses of the Holy Qur'ān disclosed what certain people had tried to keep concealed in their hearts, and they had to confess that this was just what they had been thinking. We shall cite only two instances.

إِذْ هَمَّتْ طَرَفَيْنِ مِنكُمُ أَنْ تَفْسُخَا

"When two of your battalions thought of falling away. . ." (3:122)

and ,

يَقُولُونَ فَخِ انْفُسِهِمْ لَوْلَا يُعَذِّبُنَا اللَّهُ بِمَا نَقُولُ

"They say in their hearts, 'Why does Allah not punish us for what we say?'"

(6) The Holy Qur'ān predicted that such and such men would not be able to do such and such things, and then it turned out that, in spite of having the power, they could not do these things. The Jews claimed to be the 'Chosen of God' and His friends. Since one is always eager to meet one's friends, the Holy Qur'ān asked them to substantiate their claim by wishing for death and for going back to Allah, but at the same time declared: "وَلَنْ يَسْتَوْفُوا أَبَدًا": "And they shall never wish for it" (62:7). Now, expressing a wish for death should not be difficult for anyone, if he wishes to establish his *bonafides*; for the Jews in particular, it would have been an easy way of refuting the Holy Qur'an. But, in spite of all their hatred for the Holy Prophet ﷺ, they knew in their hearts that the Holy Qur'ān was the Book of Allah, and feared that if they told a lie in this matter, they would actually die. And they kept quiet.

(7) When the Holy Qur'ān is recited (in Arabic, of course), it affects in a strange and indefinable way the heart of even a casual listener, Muslim or non-Muslim. History reports many instances of people accepting Islam merely because they happened to be passing by when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was reciting the Holy Qur'ān - such was the case, for example, of the blessed Companion Jubair ibn Muṭ'im.

(8) The best book in the world, if read four or five times, begins to lose its charm even for the most fervent admirer. But the peculiar quality of the Holy Qur'ān, and of it alone, is that the more one reads or recites it, the more eager one becomes to do so again and again. Even among the sacred books of the world, the Holy Qur'ān is unique in this respect.

(9) The sacred books of many religions have been lost or no longer exist in an integral and authentic form. But Allah has promised in the Holy Qur'ān that He Himself will protect this Book, and preserve it against the slightest change upto the end of time. During the fourteen

centuries of the history of Islam, millions of copies, written by hand or printed, have been spread all over the globe as no other sacred book has been. But in this respect the greatest miracle of the Holy Qur'ān is that in all the ages and in all the places where Muslims have lived, there have been millions of people who have known the Book by heart without the alteration of a single consonant or vowel. So, Allah has preserved His Last Book not merely in the shape of written words, but, above all in the hearts of men. Allah is Ever-Living, so will His Word live for ever beyond the interference of created beings.

(10) There is no other book which should comprehend all the forms of knowledge and wisdom in so short a space as does the Holy Qur'ān, fulfilling all possible spiritual needs of man, and providing him with guidance for all the spheres of his internal or external, individual or social activity.

(11) It is not merely a theoretical guidance that the Holy Qur'ān has offered. Which other book, sacred or otherwise, has had such a vast and deep impact on the history of mankind in such a short time? Which other book has brought about such a radical change in the individual and collective life of millions of men within the space of a few years? For when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم departed from this world, Islam had, in spite of all opposition and without the modern media of communication, already established a new order of life all over the Arabian peninsula, and within the next few decades the message of the Holy Qur'ān had reached India on one side, and Spain on the other. Can such pervasiveness be anything but a miracle?

Answers to some doubts

Before we leave the subject, we may also deal with certain doubts which have been expressed with regard to the miraculous nature of the Holy Qur'ān. It has, for example, been suggested that some people, at one time or another, must have taken up the challenge of the Holy Qur'ān, and produced something comparable to it, but their compositions have not been preserved and have not come down to us. But the objection is fanciful. The number of people hostile to Islam

has, in any age, been much larger than that of Muslims, and they have possessed far greater and much more efficacious means of publicity than Muslims ever have. If any seemingly successful attempt had been made to produce an imitation of the Holy Qur'ān, it would not only have been preserved but also been widely publicised. After all, the infidels of Makkah used to bring all kinds of wild and fanatic charges against the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. For instance, they accused him of having learnt all that he taught from the monk, *Buhīrā* whom he had met only once in Syria; or, they imputed the Holy Qur'ān to the authorship of a Roman slave who, being an alien, could not have been a master of the Arabic language and of the characteristically Arab form of eloquence - the Holy Qur'ān itself has reported this calumny. But even they, for all their venom, never pretended to have produced something resembling the Holy Qur'ān. Anyhow, whatever funny or flimsy attempts have been made to match the Holy Qur'an are on record in the books of history. For example, *Musaylama* of Yemen, known as the Great Liar, came out with a string of obscenities as a reply to the Word of Allah, but his own people dismissed them for what they were worth. At a later date, the famous man of letters, 'Abdullāh Ibn al-Muqaffa' thought of trying his wits against the Holy Qur'ān, but soon gave up in despair.¹¹

The point, however, is that if someone had really produced even three or four verses comparable to those of the Holy Qur'ān, the matter could not have gone without being passed down to us at least by the enemies of Islam. Of late a different kind of objection has sometimes been raised. They say that the impossibility of successfully imitating a book does not by itself argue that it is the Word of Allah or a miracle, for poets like Shakespeare or Ḥāfiẓ too have never been imitated successfully. But a miracle is, by definition, something which occurs without the like means having been employed. Every poet or writer in the world, even the greatest, is known to have undergone a

11. A latter-day adventurer has been the Irish novelist James Joyce who congratulated himself on having faced up to the Challenge of the Holy Qur'ān in his "Finnegans Wake". Soon recognized to be at least very funny, this book can already be seen to be going up in a smoke of jokes.

process of education and training in his art, and to have made use of certain means and methods which are humanly possible. But the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, as we have said before, did not even know reading or writing, and was never interested in learning the arts of eloquence. Moreover, it is not merely a question of literary style. In considering the Holy Qur'an as a miracle, we must, above all, take into account the spiritual efficacy and the transforming power it has, and which it has been showing these last fourteen hundred years.¹²

Verse 25

وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرَى مِنْ
تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ، كُلَّمَا رُزِقُوا مِنْهَا مِنْ ثَمَرَةٍ رِزْقًا قَالُوا هَذَا
الَّذِي رُزِقْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَأَتُوا بِهِ مُتَشَابِهًا وَلَهُمْ فِيهَا أَزْوَاجٌ
مُطَهَّرَةٌ وَهُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ۝

And give good tidings to those, who believe and do what is virtuous, that for them there are gardens beneath which rivers flow. Every time they are given a fruit from there to eat, they will say, 'this is what we have been given before'; and they are given one resembling the other. And for them there shall be wives purified; and there they are eternal. (Verse 25)

Verse 24 spoke of the fire of hell which has been prepared to

12. We may conclude this discussion by quoting a passage from the well-known scholar of comparative religion and traditional civilizations, Frithjof Schuon: The superhuman value of a revealed Book cannot be apparent in an absolute fashion from its earthly form, nor from its conceptual content alone; in reality, the Divine and therefore miraculous quality of such a Book is of an order quite other than that of the most perfect dialectic or the most brilliant poetry. This quality shows itself first of all in a richness of meanings - a feature that is incapable of being imitated - and also in what might be called the underlying divine 'magic' which shines through the formal expression and proves itself by its results in souls, and in the world, in space and in time. Only this Divine substance can explain the spiritual and theurgic efficacy of the Qur'anic verses, with its consequences in miraculously rapaid expansion of primitive Islam in the conditions in which it took place, as well as in the stability of Moslem institutions and the extraordinary fruitfulness of Islamic doctrine." ("Dimensions of Islam", London, 1970 page 55).

punish those who do not believe in the Holy Qur'ān; the present verse announces the reward for those who believe.

As for the fruits with which believers will be regaled in Paradise, some commentators say that this concerns only the fruits of Paradise which would be alike in shape, but each time different in taste. Others say that these fruits would resemble the fruits of the earth in shape alone, but their taste would be totally different. Anyhow, the point is that the believers would have a kind of joy in Paradise they had never known before, and that this joy would keep renewing itself at every moment.

Thus, the fruits of Paradise¹³ may share a common name with the fruits of the earth, but they will be of a different nature.

The wives which the believers will have in Paradise, will be clean externally and pure internally - that is to say, free from everything that is physically disgusting like excrement and menstruation, and from everything that is morally disgusting like bad temper or unfaithfulness.

13. We must sound a note of caution here. Our modernists have for some time been quite fond of asserting that in speaking of the fruits of Paradise and its other joys, the Holy Qur'ān has employed only a metaphysical mode of expression in order to suggest spiritual bliss which, by its very nature, is intangible. We do not mean to rule out the possibility or the desirability of analogical or symbolical interpretations of the verses of the Holy Qur'ān. In fact, many authentic Muslim scholars, particularly the Sufis, have made such attempts which have proved to be very illuminating in many ways. But no genuine Sufi has ever claimed that symbolical interpretation (*Itibār*) is the same thing as exegesis (*tafsīr*), or that his own interpretation was exclusively the only valid one. The purpose of analogical interpretation has always been to serve as an aid in spiritual realization or in the elaboration of metaphysical doctrines, and not to negate or oppose the regular mode of exegesis. What our modern exegetes overlook in their zeal and in their simplicity is the obvious fact that if a thing is being used as a metaphor or a symbol, it does not necessarily argue that it does not exist objectively. In allowing for symbolical interpretations, we must carefully remember that since the Holy Qur'ān has spoken of the fruits of Paradise and of similar things, they must have an objective existence, though not a physical one (in the current sense of the word), and even though we have no knowledge as to their nature and state - all of which we can safely leave to Allah Himself. That way lies security, for that is the Straight Path.

The joys of Paradise will also be unlike the joys of the earth in that they will not be short-lived, nor will one have to be trembling with the fear of losing them, for the believers shall live in perpetual bliss for ever.

In giving these good tidings to those who believe, the Holy Qur'an adds another condition - that of good deeds -, for without good deeds, one cannot deserve such good tidings on the merit of *'Imān* (faith) alone. *'Imān* itself can, no doubt, save a man from being consigned to the fires of hell for ever, and every Muslim, even if he is a great sinner, will finally be taken out of hell, once he has undergone a period of punishment. But no one can altogether escape the fires of hell unless he has been doing good deeds defined by the Shari'ah. (Rūḥ al Bayān: Qurṭubi)

Verses 26-27

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَسْتَحْيَىٰ أَنْ يَضْرِبَ مَثَلًا مَّا بَعُوضَةً فَمَا فَوْقَهَا
فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ
كَفَرُوا فَيَقُولُونَ مَاذَا أَرَادَ اللَّهُ بِهَذَا مَثَلًا يُضِلُّ بِهِ كَثِيرًا
وَيَهْدِي بِهِ كَثِيرًا وَمَا يُضِلُّ بِهِ إِلَّا الْفَاسِقِينَ ۝ الَّذِينَ
يَنْقُضُونَ عَهْدَ اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مِيثَاقِهِ وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ
أَنْ يُوصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ ۝

Indeed, it does not embarrass Allah to use as a parable, a gnat or what exceeds it. Now, as for those who believe, they know it is the truth from their Lord; while those who disbelieve say, "What could have Allah meant by this parable?" By this He lets many go astray, and by this He makes many find guidance. But He does not let anyone go astray thereby except those who are sinful - those who break the Covenant of Allah after it has been made binding, and cut off what Allah has commanded to be joined, and spread disorder on the earth - it is these who are the losers. (Verses 26-27)

In the foregoing verses, it was affirmed that the Holy Qur'ān does not admit of any kind of doubt, and that if someone should have a suspicion as to its being the Word of God, he should try to produce even a small Surah comparable to it. These two verses refer to an objection raised by the disbelievers with regard to the Holy Qur'ān, and provide an answer to them. They had been saying that had the Qur'ān been the Word of Allah, it would not have employed contemptible creatures like an ant or a gnat in its parables, for such a thing goes against the sublimity and majesty of Allah, when it would embarrass even a man with some sense of dignity. The Holy Qur'ān points out that when one intends to speak of a detestable thing or person or situation, in a parable, the use of a gnat or something even more contemptible neither transgresses the principles of eloquence or logic, nor does it go against the sense of dignity or modesty, and hence Allah does not feel shy in using such imagery. The Holy Qur'ān also shows that doubts of this kind arise only in the minds of those whom their disbelief has drained of all power to see things in a proper perspective, while such empty misgivings never touch the minds and hearts of true believers.

Qur'ānic Parables: Test and guidance

The Holy Qur'ān proceeds to suggest even a *raison d'être* for the use of such parables: they serve as a test for men. In the case of those who are ready to think and to understand, they become a source of guidance; but for those who refuse to understand, out of indifference or out of a stubborn hostility and denial, they are a cause of greater confusion and misguidance. In elaborating this point, the Holy Qur'ān specifies that these parables throw into confusion only those disobedient and rebellious people who disavow the covenant they have made with Allah, break all those relationships which Allah has commanded them to keep intact, and consequently produce an ever-widening disorder and anarchy in the world.

Who is *fāsiq* ?

The Arabic word used by the Holy Qur'ān in speaking of the disobedient is *Al-fāsiqīn*, its root being *fasaqa* which means 'to go outside or to stray beyond a limit'. In the terminology of the *Shari'ah*, *fisq* signifies 'going beyond the circle of obedience to Allah, or

transgressing the commandments of Allah'. Now, transgression does not stop at being merely disobedient in one's actions, but can sometimes lead to outright denial and disbelief. So, the word *fāsiq* is applied to a disbeliever (*kāfir*) as well - such a use of the word is frequent in the Holy Qur'an. A Muslim who is a habitual sinner is also called a *fāsiq* - this is how the jurists (*Fuqaha'*) ordinarily use the word, making the *fāsiq* a counterpart of the *kāfir* on the opposite side. That is to say, a man who commits a major sin and does not repent, or who insists on committing minor sins and makes it a habit, would be called a *fāsiq* in the terminology of the *Fuqaha'*; on the other hand, a man who commits such sins publicly and openly without being ashamed of it is called a *fājir*. (See Mazharī)

Living by the Covenant with Allah

The Covenant which the transgressors disavow refers to the one that all men made with Allah before any of them came down to the earth. The Holy Qur'an says that Allah brought together the spirits of all men, and asked them: *أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ*: "Am I not your Lord?" And they replied with one voice: *بلى*: "Yes" (7:172). This acceptance and affirmation of Allah as their only Lord and Master requires that men should in no way be disobedient to Him. Allah's books and His prophets come down to the world to remind them of this Covenant, to renew it, and to teach them in detail how to act upon it. Now, those who break this Covenant, how can they ever be expected to learn from the prophets and the books of Allah?

Islamic concern about relationship to others

The cutting asunder of what Allah has commanded should be joined includes all kinds of relationships -- the one between Allah and His seryant, the one between a man and his parents and relatives, between him and his neighbours and friends, between one Muslim and another, between one man and another. Actually, Islam means fulfilling one's obligations with regard to all these relationships, and this is also the way to follow the *Shari'ah*. Deficiency in fulfilling these obligations produces all kinds of disorder among men, and thus the transgressors end up by being destructive for others and for themselves. It is these, the Holy Qur'an says, who are the losers -- in this world as in the other.

Injunctions and related considerations:

(1) Verse 26 shows if one intends to explain something useful or essential for the spiritual guidance of one's readers or listeners, it is neither sinful nor reprehensible to refer to something which is generally supposed to be contemptible or dirty, nor does it go against the dignity of the writer or the speaker. Examples of the use of such images or parables occur in the Holy Qur'an, the *Hadīth*, and in the writings of the *Sūfīs* and other great Muslim scholars, all of whom have disregarded the habitual idea of modesty or seriousness in the interest of the real object to be attained.

(2) The reference to the disavowing of one's covenant with Allah indicates that the infringement of a contract or agreement made with one's fellow men is a grave sin, which may have the consequence of depriving a man of the ability to do good deeds.

(3) Verse 27 shows that it is essential for us to maintain the relationships which the *Sharī'ah* has commanded us to keep intact, and that it is forbidden to break them. Indeed, religion itself signifies the divinely ordained laws which bind us to fulfil our obligations with regard to Allah (*Huqūqullāh*) and with regard to His servants (*Huqūq al-'Ibād*). According to this verse, the fundamental cause of disorder in human society is the sundering of these relationships.

(4) The Holy Qur'an says that real losers are those who go against divine commandments. There is a suggestion here that real loss pertains to the other world, the loss of this world being too small a thing to be worthy of serious consideration.

Verses 28-29

كَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَ كُنْتُمْ أَمْوَاتًا فَأَحْيَاكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمِيتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ ثُمَّ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ۝ هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ فَسَوَّاهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمَوَاتٍ ۗ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ۝

"How is it that you deny Allah despite that you were lifeless and He gave you life, then He will make you die, then make you live again, and then to Him you will be

returned? It is He who created for you all that the earth contains; then He turned to the heavens and made them seven skies -- and He is the knower of all things." (Verses 28-29)

The earlier verses affirmed the existence and the Oneness of Allah, and prophethood, giving self-evident proofs and refuting the whimsical and false notions of the doubters and the disbelievers. These two verses speak of the blessings which Allah has showered on man, pointing out that all the same there are men who do not recognize the bounty of Allah and persist in their denial -- the suggestion being that if they do not want to take the trouble of considering the arguments which have been advanced by the Holy Qur'ān in the earlier verses, they should, as every man with an undistorted nature must, at least be grateful to their benefactor, for even this would be a way of realizing why they should be obedient to Allah.

The first of these two verses refers to the blessings which are particular to the very being of man -- that is to say, he had no life before Allah gave him existence. The second verse refers to the general blessings which are common to man and other creatures -- firstly, the earth and all that it contains and on which man's life immediately depends, and secondly, the skies with which life on earth is directly related.

Verse 28 begins by expressing surprise at those who insist on being ungrateful to Allah and on denying Him. On the face of it, the disbelievers had never denied Allah but only the Holy Prophet ﷺ, all the same, the Holy Qur'ān equates such a denial with the denial of Allah Himself.

Then, the verse reminds man that once he was "dead" (*amwāt*), or that he had no life. He existed, if at all, in the shape of billions of lifeless particles aimlessly floating; Allah brought them together, made them into a man, and gave them life.

The verse proceeds to warn him that Allah will take away his life, and then give it back to him a second time. This second life refers to the Day of Judgment when Allah will collect the lifeless and scattered particles of each and every man again, and give him a new life. Thus,

the first 'death' or 'state of lifelessness' was at the beginning before man received life from Allah; the second death comes when a man completes the life-span allotted to him; and the second life will be given on the Day of Judgment.

The verse ends by telling man that he will ultimately go back to Allah. This, of course, refers to the Resurrection when all men will rise from their graves, will be assembled for giving an account of their deeds, and be finally punished or rewarded according to what they had been doing in the world.

According to this verse, the chief blessing of Allah for man is life, for without life he cannot profit from any other blessing. This is obvious enough. But the verse counts death too as a blessing. It is so, because physical death is the door to the perpetual life of the other world after which there is no death.

In recounting the blessings which man has received from Allah, verse 29 refers to Allah having created for man "all that the earth contains." This small phrase comprehends all kinds of benefits which accrue to him from the earth and its produce. Then, the verse speaks of the creation of the sky and its division into seven skies or heavens, as they are usually called in English. In this context, the Holy Qur'an uses the Arabic word, *Istawā* which initially means 'to stand upright, to climb', and thence signifies 'to turn or pay attention to something', and, in a wider sense, 'to take a straight and firm decision which nothing can hinder'. The implication here is that Allah being Omniscient and Omnipotent, it was not at all difficult for Him to create the universe, once He had decided to do so.

The life in 'Barzakh'

(The period between death and resurrection)

(1) Verse 28 shows that a man who does not apparently deny Allah, but refuses to accept the Holy Prophet ﷺ as the Messenger of Allah, and the Holy Qur'an as the Book of Allah, would still be counted among those who do not believe in Allah.

(2) Verse 28 mentions only one kind of life which is to follow one's physical death - that is, the life which will begin on the Day of Resurrection - but says nothing about the life in the grave, although

the Holy Qur'ān and *Ḥadīth* explicitly speak of how people will be questioned about their faith in their graves, and will also receive some reward or punishment. Now, this life in the grave is something intermediary (*Barzakh*) between the life which man has in this world and one he will have in the other. In other words, it is a state in between the two, resembling the life one has while dreaming; it can be called a supplement to the life of this world as also a prelude to the life hereafter. In short, this intermediary life is not in itself a distinct entity, and hence need not be mentioned separately.

(3) According to verse 29, everything in the universe has been created for man. It means that there is nothing in the universe from which man does not derive some benefit in one way or the other, directly or indirectly. There are things which man uses physically as food or medicine; other things are useful for him without his knowing it; even poisonous or dangerous things do him some good; even things which are forbidden for him in one of their aspects, may in some other aspect be quite beneficial; finally, almost everything can serve to teach him a lesson or illuminate him in the interest of his life in the Hereafter. The great Sūfī Ibn 'Aṭā' remarks in connection with this verse: 'Allah has created the universe for you so that it should serve you and you should serve Allah. A wise man should thus know that he will certainly get what has been created for him, and should not, in worrying about it, forget the Being for whom he himself has been created' (Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ).

(4) On the basis of verse 29, some scholars have come to the conclusion that since everything in the world has been created for man, it is essentially legitimate (*Ḥalāl*) and permissible (*Mubāḥ*) for man to make use of everything, except the things which have been forbidden by the *Sharī'ah*. So, the use of a thing is to be regarded as lawful so long as the Holy Qur'ān or the *Ḥadīth* does not forbid it.

On the contrary, some other scholars say that the mere fact of a thing having been created for the benefit of man does not argue that it automatically becomes lawful to make use of it. So, the use of everything is essentially unlawful unless an explicit statement in the Holy Qur'ān or the *Ḥadīth*, or an argument based on them establishes the use of a thing as legitimate.

There are still other authentic scholars who have not taken sides in this controversy. Ibn Hayyan, in his commentary 'Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ', points out that this verse does not provide a valid basis for either of the two views, for the letter *lām* in the phrase *خَلَقْنَاكُمْ* : *khalafa lakum* indicates causation, signifying that the universe has been "created for your sake." So, one cannot draw any conclusion from the phrase as to the use of everything being essentially legitimate or illegitimate. The injunction with regard to the legitimacy or the illegitimacy of the use of particular things have been provided elsewhere in the Holy Qur'an and the *Hadīth*, and it is obligatory to follow these injunctions.

(5) Verse 29 shows that the earth was created before the skies, as indicated by the word, *ثُمَّ* : *Thumma* ('then'). Another verse of the Holy Qur'an seems to be saying the opposite: *وَالْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ دَحَاهَا* : "He spread out the earth after this." (79:30) But it does not necessarily mean that the earth was created after the skies. What it actually implies is that although the earth had already been created when the skies came into being, yet a final shape was given to it after the creation of the skies.

(Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, etc.)

(6) According to verse 29, the skies are seven in number. This shows that the opinion of the ancient Greek astronomers and some Muslim philosophers, who used to speak of nine heavens, was no more than a conjecture.

Verses 30-33

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً ۖ قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَآءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ ۗ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ۝ وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَآءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ فَقَالَ أَنْبِئُونِي بِأَسْمَآءِ هٰٓؤُلَآءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰٓدِقِينَ ۝ قَالُوا سُبْحٰنَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا بِآلِآ مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ ۝ قَالَ يَا آدَمُ أَنْبِئْهُمْ بِأَسْمَآئِهِمْ ۝

فَلَمَّا أَنْبَأَهُمْ بِأَسْمَائِهِمْ قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكُمْ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ غَيْبَ
السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَأَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ ۝

And when your Lord said to the angels, "I am going to create a deputy on the earth!" They said, "Will You create there one who will spread disorder on the earth and cause bloodsheds while we, along with your praises, proclaim Your purity and sanctify Your name?" He said, "Certainly, I know what you do not know." And He taught Ādam the names, all of them; then presented them before the angels, and said, "Tell me their names, if you are right." They said, "To You belongs all purity! We have no knowledge except what You have given us. Surely, You alone are the all-knowing, all-wise." He said, "O Ādam, tell them the names of all these." When he told them their names, Allah said, "Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of the skies and of the earth, and that I know what you disclose and what you have been concealing. (Verses 30 - 33)

The preceding verses recounted the general and some of the particular blessings of Allah, and asked man to recognize them and not to be ungrateful and disobedient to his Benefactor. Now, ten verses, beginning with the 30th, tell the story of the father of mankind, Ādam عليه السلام, in continuation of this theme and also by way of illustration. For, blessings are of two kinds - tangible and intangible. Food, water, money, houses, or lands are some of the tangible blessings; while honour, happiness or knowledge are intangible ones. The earlier verses were concerned with blessings of the first kind; these verses speak of those of the second kind - that is to say, how Allah bestowed the gift of knowledge on Ādam عليه السلام, made the angels prostrate themselves before him to show their respect, and gave men the honour of being his sons.

The creation of Ādam عليه السلام

The present three verses relate how Allah, having decided to create Ādam عليه السلام and to make him His deputy on the earth, spoke of it to the angels - seemingly by way of a trial, suggesting that they should

express their opinions in this matter. The angels submitted that they could not understand why men were being chosen to be the deputies, for some of them would shed blood and spread disorder on this earth. They thought that they themselves were more suited to perform this function, as the nature of angels is wholly good, no evil deed can possibly come out of them, they are totally obedient to Allah, and should hence be more capable of managing the affairs of the world. In replying to them, Allah first adopted the mode of authority, and told the angels that they knew nothing about the nature and the needs of deputation on the earth, and that Allah alone was the one to know it fully. The second answer was in the mode of wisdom - Ādam عليه السلام had been given preference over the angels on account of his superiority in the station of knowledge, because in order to function properly as a deputy on the earth one must know the names, the properties and the characteristics of the things to be found there, and the angels had no aptitude for this kind of knowledge.

(1) A question arises here as to why Allah chose to speak of His decision to the angels. Was it merely to inform them? Was it to seek their advice? Or, was it to make them express their opinion on the subject?

Why Allah discussed Ādam's creation with angels?

As for seeking advice, it is obvious enough that one turns for advice to wise and trustworthy people only when one cannot see all the aspects of a problem clearly, and does not want to depend on one's own knowledge and understanding alone, or when the rights of others are equal to one's own, and they too have to be consulted, as happens in the counsels of the world. Evidently, neither of the two situations obtain in the present case. Allah is the creator of the universe, and knows everything about the smallest particle of dust; He sees and hears everything, apparent or hidden. How can He stand in need of anyone's advice? Similarly, He does not run the universe under the parliamentary system, in which all have equal rights and everyone has to be consulted directly or indirectly. He is the Lord and Master, and all His creatures, be they men or angels, are His slaves - no one

has the right to question Him about His actions, and to ask Him why He did this or why He did not do that: لَا يَسْتَلُ عَمَّا يَفْعَلُ وَهُمْ يُسْتَلُونَ : "He cannot be questioned as to what He does, while they are to be questioned." (21:23)

In fact, Allah did not mean to seek the advice of the angels, nor was there any need for it, but He, in His wisdom, gave a mere statement the form of a consultation in order to teach men the advisability of mutual consultation. After all, the Holy Prophet ﷺ was a messenger of Allah, and all the information he needed in dealing with the affairs of the world could have been conveyed to him by means of revelation, and yet the Holy Qur'an asks him to seek the advice of his Companions, so that the Islamic community should learn this lesson from him and the way of mutual consultation should be established through him. In short, this is the first *raison d'être* of the mode of expression adopted by Allah. (Rūḥ al-Bayān)

The other has been suggested by the Holy Qur'an itself. Before the appearance of man, the angels had taken it for granted that Allah would not create a being who should be superior to them and greater in knowledge - as has been reported in a narration coming down from the blessed Companion Ibn 'Abbās and cited by Ibn Jarīr in his commentary. But Allah knew that He would create a being who would be superior to all other creatures and greater than them in knowledge, and who would receive the gift of divine viceregency. So, Allah mentioned this in the assembly of the angels so that they may disclose what they had been thinking. Speaking according to their own lights, they very humbly submitted that a creature like man who carried within himself a tendency towards evil and disorder and who would not balk even at blood-shed, could not be expected to maintain peace and order on the earth, while they themselves, being free of all evil, and perfect in their obedience and devotion, could perform the function more satisfactorily. They did not mean to raise an objection to the choice which Allah had made, for angels are innocent of such sentiments; they were only being curious, and wanted to know the *raison d'être* of such a choice.

To begin with, Allah gave them a very brief reply - اِنَّزِجْ اَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ :

"I know what you do not know", implying that they are not aware of the nature and the requirements of divine viceregency, which had led them to suppose that only pure and innocent beings could fulfil the conditions necessary for such a responsible position.

Then, Allah demonstrated the truth to them in a vivid form. He gave to Ādam عليه السلام a kind of knowledge for which he alone had been endowed with the proper aptitude, and not the angels. That is to say, He taught him the names, the properties and qualities of all the existents, animate or inanimate. Angelic nature is not capable of such awareness - for example, an angel cannot really experience the pain of hunger and thirst, the tumult of passions, the torment from the bite of a scorpion or a snake, or the exhilaration from an intoxicant. Only Ādam عليه السلام had the capacity to learn such things, and he was taught to know them. Then, there is no indication in the Holy Qur'ān to show that he was taught in privacy, apart from the angels. It may well be that the teaching in itself was open to the angels as well as to him; his nature allowed him to receive it, and he learnt the lesson, while, they were impeded by their own proper nature, and could not. Or, it may be that the teaching did not take an external form at all, but that the Adamic nature was made to carry this particular kind of knowledge within itself without the need of a formal education, just as an infant does not have to be taught how to suck the mother's milk, or a duckling how to swim. As to the question why Allah, being omnipotent, did not change the nature of the angels and make them learn these things, we shall say that the question, in fact, boils down to this: Why did not Allah change the angels into men? For, if their nature had been altered, they would no longer have remained angels, but become men.

In short, through this demonstration Allah made the angels realize how wrong they were in supposing that He would not create any being superior to them in any way, and that they themselves were more suitable for being the viceregents of Allah than Ādam عليه السلام. Since they failed to name the things which Ādam عليه السلام could, they came to see that purity and innocence is not the criterion in choosing a deputy

or viceregent but the knowledge of the things which are to be found on the earth, of the ways of using them, and of the consequences which would follow from such a use.

We can also infer a general principle from the episode - it is necessary for a ruler to know fully the nature, the temperament and the peculiarities of the people over whom he is to rule, without which he cannot enforce justice and order. If one does not know the pain of being hungry, how can one deal justice to the man who has unjustly been kept hungry?

We may also point out that in expressing their opinion, the angels were neither raising an objection, nor being vain and proud, nor asserting their right; it was, on their part, only a humble submission, and an offer of their services. When they found that there was another being who was, with his special kind of knowledge, more suitable for the function, they as humbly acknowledged the fact and withdrew their earlier opinion in saying: *سُبْحَانَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَا إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَلِيمُ الْحَكِيمُ* : "To You belongs all purity! We have no knowledge except what You have given us. Surely, You alone are the all-knowing, the all-wise." In the present context, the phrase, "To You belongs all purity" also has the implication that Allah is free from the charge of having withheld from the angels the knowledge which He gave to Ādam عليه السلام, for, being the all-knowing and the all-wise, He gives to each creature the kind and the degree of knowledge and understanding which He, and He alone, knows to be in consonance with the specific nature of that creature.

Another question which may arise out of this episode is: How did the angels come to know that man would shed blood? Did they possess the knowledge of hidden things and of divine secrets? Or, was it a mere conjecture on their part? Most of the authoritative scholars believe, on the basis of certain *أثر* : 'Āthār' or reports available about the blessed Companions, that it was Allah Himself who had informed the angels on this occasion as to how man would behave on the earth. (See 'Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī'). It is only then that they became curious about the *raison d'être* of man being chosen as the viceregent in spite of his propensity to evil.

Beside demonstrating the superiority of Ādam عليه السلام in knowledge, Allah dispelled the misgivings of the angels with regard to the evil propensities in man by the short and simple answer, **إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ** : "Certainly, I know what you do not know." There is a subtle suggestion here - what makes man fit for viceregency is just the peculiarity which, in the eyes of the angels, made him unfit for this function. For, a deputy or viceregent is needed on the earth just for the purpose of preventing blood-shed and disorder; if there is no possibility of disorder in a place, where is the need for sending there an administrator? Thus, it was the Divine Will and Wisdom that, just as Allah had created beings as innocent and sinless as the angels, or beings as totally evil as Satan and his progeny, or beings like the jinns in whom evil dominated over good, He would also create beings in whom good and evil should be equally mixed, who should try to conquer the evil in themselves and to grow in goodness so as to seek and attain the pleasure of their Creator.

Allah is the creator of the language

(2) This episode, according to Imām al-Ash'arī, shows that language as such has been created by Allah Himself, and not invented by man - its use by different kinds of men has later on produced the many forms of language.

(3) One should note a subtle suggestion here in the use of two words. In asking the angels for the names of things, Allah said, **أَتَشْرُونَ** : "Tell Me"; but in commanding Ādam عليه السلام to do so, He said, **أَقْبِلْهُمْ** : "Tell them." The difference in the mode of expression shows that Ādam عليه السلام was given the rank of a teacher, and the angels that of pupils. It is thus an indication of his superiority over them. Another thing the episode indicates is that an increase or decrease is possible in the degree of knowledge the angels possess, for they were given, through Ādam عليه السلام, at least a primary knowledge about a thing which they did not know before.

Man is the viceregent of Allah on the earth

(4) These verses tell us that a viceregent was appointed to keep order on the earth and to promulgate divine laws. From here we learn the basic principles for the governance of men on the earth. The

ultimate sovereignty in the universe belongs to Allah Himself, as is explicitly stated in many verses of the Holy Qur'an: **إِنَّ الْحُكْمَ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ** : "Judgment belongs to Allah alone" (6:57); **لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ** : "The sovereignty of the skies and the earth belongs to Him alone" (9:116); **وَالْحَقُّ لِلَّهِ وَالْأَمْرُ** : "Verily, His is the Creation and the Command." (7:54)

But He has, in His wisdom, chosen to send His viceregents to the earth for maintaining spiritual and temporal order. Their function is to announce and promulgate divine commandments, to teach men how to abide by these laws, and sometimes even to exercise temporal power as well as spiritual authority under divine guidance. The appointment is made directly by Allah Himself, and is in no sense a reward for the good deeds or the spiritual effort of the individual concerned. There is a total consensus of all the authentic scholars of the Islamic *Ummah* on the doctrine that prophethood is not a thing which one can attain through one's personal effort or on the merit of one's good deeds, but that Allah Himself, in His supreme knowledge and wisdom, chooses certain individuals for acting as His messengers, prophets and viceregents. The Holy Qur'an has explicitly declared it in several verses: **اللَّهُ يَصْطَفِي مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ رُسُلًا وَمِنَ النَّاسِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ بَصِيرٌ** : "Allah chooses His messengers from among the angels and from among men; surely Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing" (22:75); **اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ حَيْثُ يَجْعَلُ رُسُلَهُ** : "Allah knows best whom to entrust with His message" (6:124).

These viceregents receive divine commandments directly from Allah, and then promulgate them in the world. The chain of viceregents began with Ādam عليه السلام and continued in the same way upto the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ .

The Holy Prophet ﷺ was the last Caliph of Allah on earth

(5) The Holy Prophet ﷺ came to the earth as the last viceregent (*Khalīfa*), the last Messenger (*Rasūl*) and the last prophet (*Nabiyy*) of Allah, endowed with certain special qualities peculiar to him which he does not share with any other prophet. We may mention some of these characteristics:

(a) Each of the earlier prophets was sent for the guidance of a particular country or people, and his authority was limited to his jurisdiction alone, - for example, Mūsā and 'Īsā - (Moses and Jesus

Christ (عليهم السلام) were sent to Banī Isrā'īl (the Israelites). But the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been sent for the guidance of all the men and all the jinns, and his authority extends to all the members of the two species. The Holy Qur'ān has declared the universality of his prophethood in these words: **قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيعًا الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَ الْأَرْضِ** : "Say: O mankind, I am the messenger of Allah to you all, of Him to whom belongs the sovereignty of the skies and of the earth" (7:158). A *ḥadīth* of the *Sahīh* of Muslim reports the Holy Prophet ﷺ as having said that he had been made superior to all other prophets in six things. The first of these is, of course, the universality of his prophethood.

(b) Just as the viceregency and prophethood of all the earlier prophets was limited to particular peoples and countries, in the same way it was also limited to specific periods; when the age of one prophet was over, another prophet would come to take his place as the new viceregent. On the contrary, the Holy Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ has been sent by Allah as the last of all prophets; his prophethood is not circumscribed within a specific period, but shall last till the end of time.

(c) It has so happened that the teachings and the Shari'ah of each of the earlier prophets would remain intact for a time, but then gradually people would start deviating from them and distorting them till they became unrecognizable; at this stage Allah would send a new prophet with a new Shari'ah. But the Shari'ah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is to remain alive in its integral form upto the end of the universe. Allah has taken upto Himself the responsibility of protecting the words and the meanings of the Holy Qur'ān:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

"It is We who have sent down the Remembrance (i.e. the Holy Qur'ān) and We are its Protector" (15:9).

Similarly, He has made a special provision for the preservation of the *Ḥadīth* which contains the teachings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that is to say, in spite of all the vicissitudes of time there shall remain till the Doomsday a group of people who will preserve these teachings and transmit them accurately to others, and who will receive help and protection from Allah Himself. Since Allah has ordained the survival

of the Holy Qur'an and the *Hadith*, there is obviously no need for a new prophet or messenger or viceregent and no room for a new *Shari'ah*.

(d) Contrary to the case of all the earlier prophets, the prophethood and viceregency of the last of them, Muḥammad ﷺ, is not limited to a particular period, but is to continue upto the end of time, and those who succeed him for the preservation of spiritual and temporal order in the world, are to be, not the viceregents of Allah, but the viceregents of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his deputies. A *hadith* reported by al-Bukhārī and Muslim both says:

كانت بنو إسرائيل تسوسهم الأنبياء ، كلما هلك نبي خلفه نبي وانه ،
لأنبي بعدى وسيكون خلفاء فيكثرون

"The Israelites were governed by their prophets. When a prophet died, another would come to take his place. And beware, no prophet is to come after me. Of course, there will be my deputies (*Khulafā'*), and there will be many of them."

The issue of Caliphate after the Holy Prophet ﷺ

(e) Allah has ordained that after the Holy Prophet ﷺ his *Ummah*, or the Islamic community, shall as a body enjoy the privilege which has been that of the prophets عليهم السلام. That is to say, the *Ummah* as a collective body has been declared to be innocent and under the special protection of Allah Himself, so that it will never unanimously agree upon a doctrinal error or a deviation, and hence any decision which has been arrived at in religious matters through the consensus of the *Ummah* is to be regarded as manifestation of Divine Commandment. That is why the consensus of the *Ummah* has been accepted as the third source of the *Shari'ah*, the first two being the Holy Qur'an and the *Hadith*. For the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has himself said, "My *Ummah* shall never collectively agree upon error." And we have already referred to another *hadith* which tells us that no matter how much the world has changed or how indifferent people have grown to the Truth, there shall always remain in the Islamic *Ummah* a group of people who will defend and preserve the Truth, and who will finally win.

(6) Since it has been ordained that the Islamic *Ummah* as a body

shall never go wrong, the responsibility of choosing a deputy to the Holy Prophet ﷺ has also been entrusted to it. Now, for the governance of the earth the legitimate way is that the *Ummah* should select a *Khalīfah* who, once chosen, would solely be responsible for the maintenance of spiritual and temporal order. And it is also possible that there should be a single *Khalīfah* for the whole world.

The first to succeed the Holy Prophet ﷺ as his deputies were the First Four Great *Khalīfahs*, known as *al-Khulafā' al-Rashidūn* (or the rightly-guided ones, commonly translated as the 'Orthodox Caliphs'), and the *Khilafāt* order functioned according to the proper principles upto the end of their time. So, their decisions are not merely temporary judgments, but have a permanent legislative value, and carry an authority in their own degree, for the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said, *عليكم بسنتي و سنة الخلفاء الراشدين*: 'Follow my way steadfastly, and the way of the rightly-guided *Khalīfahs*.'

After the age of the rightly-guided *Khalīfahs*, different rulers appeared in different regions, but none of them can be described as a *Khalīfah* of the whole Islamic community in the proper sense of the term, though they may be called the *Amīrs* of particular regions. When it became practically impossible for all the Muslims of the world to agree upon one man as their *Khalīfah*, and it became customary to have a separate *Amīr* for each region, people accepted the principle that the man who had been chosen or acknowledged by the majority of the Muslims in a country, should be called the *Amīr* of that country. The basis for this procedure has been provided by the Holy Qur'an itself: *وَأْمُرُهُمْ شُورَىٰ بَيْنَهُمْ*: "And they conduct their affairs by mutual consultation" (42:38).

The modern legislative assemblies are a form of mutual consultation, with the difference that they are quite free to make whatever laws they like according to their own opinion, while an Islamic legislative assembly, its members and their *Amīr* all shall be bound by the law which Allah has sent us through the Holy Prophet ﷺ. There are certain specific conditions for the membership of an Islamic assembly as well as for the choice of an *Amīr*. And, most

important of all, laws must be made within the bounds of the basic principles laid down by the Holy Qur'ān and *Sunnah*, the authority of which the assembly cannot have the right to question.

Let me give a brief summary of the whole discussion. The verses which tell us of how Allah informed the angels about his intention to send a viceregent to the earth, provide us with some of the fundamental principles of the governance of man:-

- (a) The sovereignty of the skies and of the earth belongs to Allah Himself.
- (b) The function of promulgating the Commandments of Allah on the earth is performed by a viceregent who is at the same time a messenger of Allah and His Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم .
- (c) The chain of such viceregents ends with the Holy Prophet ﷺ , for he is the last Messenger and Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم .
- (d) Now the function of viceregency is performed by the deputies of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم .
- (e) Such a deputy (*Khalīfah*) is to be chosen by the *Ummah* or Islamic community.¹⁴

14. (1) Some Modernists have zealously taken to the habit of interpreting these verses as implying that man as a viceregent of Allah is required to make a 'progress' in 'Science' - that is, in the empirical study of physical phenomena; a so-called 'Muslim' translator of the Holy Qur'an has even had the temerity to translate the name 'Ādam' by the English word 'Man', thus denying the existence and prophethood of Ādam عليه السلام . In order to dispel such grave errors and distortions of word and meaning, let us point out that the 'names' which Allah taught to Ādam عليه السلام do not refer merely to the chemical or biological or psychological properties of things and men, but to their essential qualities and aptitudes - we are using the word 'essential' in the technical and metaphysical sense of the word in which it was originally used in the West too. Maulana Ashraf Alī Thānavi adds in his 'Bayān al-Qur'ān' that the knowledge of the 'names' even includes a knowledge of the injunctions of the Sharī'ah as to the distinction between the lawful and the unlawful. Then, there are many great Sūfīs who maintain that Ādam عليه السلام was given the knowledge of 'the names of Allah' - not of all the divine names in detail, of course, for it is not possible for a created being to comprehend the Infinite, but of divine names in a summary form. This interpretation

Verse 34

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ أَبَى
وَاسْتَكْبَرَ وَكَانَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ ۝

And when We said to the angels: "Prostrate before Adam!" So, they prostrated, all but Iblis. He refused, and joined the infidels." (Verse 34)

The episode recounted in the foregoing verses has shown how the angels came to learn that Adam عليه السلام was superior to them in so far as he possessed the forms of knowledge necessary for the function of

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has been advanced by as authentic a commentator as Qadi Thanauallah of Pānīpat in his 'Tafsīr al-Mazhari'. In the explanation of this subtle point we may say that every thing that exists reflects some divine attribute, which in its turn is a manifestation of a divine name; thus, divine names are the essential principles or roots of all things, and one who knows divine names does also know things in their inner natures.

(2) With regard to the question of the viceregency of Allah, we cannot pass over a very serious distortion of the authentic doctrine which has been introduced by the Modernists and seems to be growing in currency. Under the influence of Western Humanism, and specially in their indifference to doctrinal matters, the Modernists have come to identify the prophet and the father of mankind, Ādam عليه السلام totally with the biological species called 'man', and have made out as if every individual member of this species, unconditionally and without any qualifications, is born to be a viceregent of Allah. The error has been promoted by a thoughtless misreading of *Sufi* metaphysical texts and *Sufi* poetry. What our Modernists have never cared to learn is the concept of degrees and their distinctions. The Sufis, no doubt, often speak of 'man' as being the viceregent of Allah, but what they are actually referring to is not a biological organism or species, but '*Al-Insān Al-Kāmil*', 'the Universal Man' - a term which the orientalisks have wrongly rendered as 'the perfect man', thus introducing ethical implications in the sphere of pure metaphysics. In the writings of the Sufis, prose and poetry both, 'Man' also stands for 'the Total and Essential Reality of man' (*Al-Ḥaqīqah al-Jāmi'ah al-Insāniyyah*). Now, the Universal Man par excellence is the Holy Prophet ﷺ this is the first degree of "manhood" to which belong the *Aulia'* (Men of Allah or the great saints) and those rulers who dealt justice according to the *Sharī'ah*.

Then, there are lower degrees pertaining to the pious and the virtuous Muslims down to the lowest degree where stand people who are sinful, yet, being Muslims, can hope for salvation. Allah alone knows best as to

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divine viceregency, while they themselves did not, nor did the jinns. Now, Allah willed to manifest this superiority in a visible and concrete form. So, He commanded the angels to prostrate themselves before Ādam عليه السلام in his honour. They obeyed except Iblis or Satan who, in his pride, refused to do so.

If we go by the words of the Holy Qur'ān, the command was given to the angels alone, but, in excepting Iblis from those who obeyed, the text also suggests that the command was given to all the created beings that existed at that time and possessed understanding, including the jinns as well as the angels. But the Holy Qur'ān mentions the angels alone, because when superior beings like the angels were required to show their respect for Ādam عليه السلام, inferior creatures like the jinns must, it goes without saying, have been ordered to do the same.

Angels prostrate before Ādam

(1) In this verse, the angels have been commanded to prostrate themselves before Ādam عليه السلام. Another verse of the Holy Qur'ān tells us that the parents and the brothers of Yūsuf (Joseph) عليه السلام on reaching Egypt, prostrated themselves before him (12:100). Evidently such a prostration cannot have been intended as an act of worship, for worshipping anyone other than Allah is an act of association (*Shirk*) and infidelity (*Kufr*), and hence cannot possibly be allowed by any

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who belongs to which degree; below the degree of the blessed Companions one can never speak with certitude. If we allow ourselves to associate viceregency with an ordinary Muslim, it would only be viceregency, so to say, by reflection, just as the 'Īmān of every Muslim is only a reflection of the 'Īmān of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Any way, the necessary condition of receiving even a faint reflection of viceregency and "Manhood" is that one should be a Muslim, for, as the Holy Qur'ān has explicitly declared, 'Allah shall not now accept any faith except Islam.' As for attributing viceregency of "Manhood" to common man as such is concerned, it can at best only be viceregency, to use Aristotelean terms, in potency and not in act - it cannot be effective unless it is actualized through a total submission to the *Sharī'ah* and a strenuous spiritual effort and waiting upon the grace of Allah. In fact, the highest excellence open to man now is to be in word and deed and thought a perfect follower of the *Sunnah*, the way of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

Shari'ah. So, it appears that in the days of the ancient prophets prostrating oneself before somebody must have been just an act of courtesy or a way of showing one's respect, and enjoyed the same value as we do in our own days things like a simple greeting, a hand-shake, the kissing of hand, or standing up in someone's honour. Imam Al-Jassās has said in his *Ahkām al-Qur'ān* that it was permissible in the *Shari'ah* of the earlier prophets عليهم السلام to prostrate oneself in honour of one's elders, but that the *Shari'ah* of the Holy Prophet ﷺ has forbidden gestures like prostrating oneself, or bowing down very low or standing with one hand placed on the other in the manner of the *Salāh* before someone, all of which may suggest an act of worship, and has allowed only greeting (*Salām*) and hand-shake as a gesture of courtesy or respect.

It is easy to understand the *raison d'être* of such a prohibition. Association, infidelity and the worship of anyone other than Allah are things which in their nature go against the very principle of *Īmān* (faith), and cannot therefore be tolerated by any *Shari'ah*. There are, however, certain acts and gestures which are not in themselves acts of 'association' or infidelity, but may, on account of the ignorance or indifference of people, become a prelude to 'association' and infidelity. So, the *Shari'ahs* of the earlier prophets did not forbid such acts in an absolute manner, but prevented them from being used as the instruments of 'association' and infidelity. For example, making pictures of living things is not in itself an act of 'association' or infidelity, and was hence permissible in the earlier *Shari'ahs*. In speaking of how the jinns used to serve Sulayman عليه السلام (Solomon) the Holy Qur'an itself says: *يَعْمَلُونَ لَهُ مَا يَشَاءُ مِنْ مَحَارِبَ وَتَمَاثِيلَ* : "They made for him whatever he liked - places of worship, and pictures." (34:13) Similarly, prostrating oneself before somebody as a gesture of respect was permissible in the earlier *Shari'ahs*. But gradually the practice opened the way to 'association' and infidelity on account of people's ignorance and thoughtlessness, and even caused grave distortions in the *Shari'ahs* of different prophets, which had to be rectified by other prophets and other *Shari'ahs*.

Since the Holy Prophet ﷺ is the last of all the prophets and messengers of Allah, and his *Shari'ah* is the last of all *Shari'ahs* and is

to remain valid upto the end of time, Allah has, in order to protect it against all distortion, stopped every chink through which 'association' or idolatry could possibly enter. That is why this *Shari'ah* has strictly forbidden all those practices which had at one time or another served as a means towards 'association' or idol-worship.

For example, making pictures of living things has been totally banned; prostrating oneself before somebody, even as a mark of respect, has been forbidden; it is not permissible to offer one's *Salah* (prayer) at those hours of the day which the infidels had reserved for worshipping their gods, for even this slight and external correspondence might lead to 'association'; and, according to a *Ḥadīth* reported by Muslim, one is not allowed to call one's slave an "*abd*", nor is a slave allowed to call his master a "*rabb*" - the words respectively signify "a slave" and 'one who gives nurture', and are as such harmless, but they can be misconstrued, and may mislead ignorant slaves or helpless and subjugated people into the worship of their masters: hence the prohibition.

With regard to the question of prostration, we may add that, according to some authentic scholars, *Salāh*, the basic form of Islamic worship, comprises of four kinds of actions - standing upright, bowing, sitting down, and prostrating oneself; the first two of these, standing up and sitting down, are actions which one habitually does in the course of one's daily chores, and which one also performs as acts of worship in the course of a *Salāh* (prayer), but the other two, bowing down and prostrating oneself, are actions which one does not go through as a matter of habit, and which are characteristically associated with *Salāh* (prayer) and *'Ibādah* (worship); hence it is that the Islamic *Shari'ah* has identified them with acts of worship, and forbidden the Muslims to bow down or prostrate themselves before anyone other than Allah.

Given that the Holy Qur'an itself speaks of prostration as a mark of respect, one would wish to know on what grounds it has been affirmed that the Islamic *Shari'ah* has forbidden this practice. As to this question, we may point out that several well-known narrations coming down to us from the Holy Prophet ﷺ through quite a large number of his blessed Companions, are there to establish that

prostrating oneself before somebody as a mark of respect is unlawful (*harām*). To cite only one such narration, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that, if he could allow people to prostrate themselves before anyone other than Allah as a mark of respect, he would have commanded wives to prostrate themselves before their husbands. This clearly shows that prostration as a mark of respect is absolutely forbidden, and no allowance can, in this respect, be made in favour of any created being. We may add that the *Ḥadīth* we have just referred to has come down to us through twenty Companions, while, according to Tadrīb al-Rawī, the famous book on the fundamentals of the science of *Ḥadīth*, a Tradition which has been reported by only ten Companions is called *Mutawātir*, and enjoys the same authority in the matter of injunctions as the Holy Qur'ān.

(2) The Holy Qur'ān describes Iblīs or Satan as an infidel. His infidelity does not arise from disobedience in his action, for, according to the *Sharī'ah*, giving up an obligation in practice is only a sin and a transgression, and does not constitute infidelity. Iblīs became an infidel, because he had defied and challenged a divine commandment, and had, in refusing to prostrate himself, virtually said that, in his opinion, Ādam عليه السلام was not worthy of it.

(3) Iblīs had attained such a high degree in science and knowledge that he was called *Tā'ūs al-Malā'ikah* : "The Peacock Among the Angels." How did he, then, come to commit such a suicidal error? Some scholars say that it was because of his pride and vanity that Allah took back from him the wealth of knowledge and understanding, and hence he came to act like an ignorant fool. Others have suggested that his error was due to self-love and ambition. The famous commentary, 'Rūh al-Bayān' resolves the question by quoting a line of verse in Arabic which shows that once the aid of Allah has been withdrawn from a man, he can no longer save himself from sins, and all the effort he makes only serves to push him farther and farther into misguidance. May Allah, in his mercy, save all of us from such a fate! The commentary draws from it the conclusion that one should not be vain about one's learning or one's deeds or even about one's *Īmān* (faith), for *Īmān* is valid only if it lasts till one's final breath and into the first stage of one's journey to the other world.

Verses 35-36

وَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكُلَا مِنْهَا رَغَدًا حَيْثُ
 شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ۝
 فَأَزَلَّهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ عَنْهَا فَأَخْرَجَهُمَا مِمَّا كَانَا فِيهِ وَقُلْنَا
 اهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَ
 مَتَاعٌ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ ۝

And We said, "O Ādam, dwell, you and your wife, in Paradise, and eat at pleasure wherever you like, but do not go near this tree or you shall join the transgressors." Then, Satan caused them to slip from it, and brought them out of where they had been. And We said, "Go down, you all, some of you enemies of some; and on the earth there will be for you a dwelling place and enjoyment for a time." (Verses 35 - 36)

This is a continuation of the story of Ādam عليه السلام . When his superiority over the angels and his fitness for the role of viceregent had been announced to the angels and been acknowledged by them, and Iblis had been condemned as an infidel and expelled from Paradise on account of his pride and his defiance of divine authority, Ādam and Ḥawwā عليها السلام (Eve), his wife, received a command from Allah to live in Paradise and enjoy its blessings. But they were also instructed not to eat the fruit of a particular tree. Now, having been disgraced because of Ādam عليه السلام , Iblis or Satan had an account to settle with him, and as soon as he got the opportunity, he tricked them into eating from this tree. Because of this error on their part, they too were ordered to leave Paradise, and to go down and live on the earth. They were at the same time warned that their existence on the earth would no longer be full of perpetual bliss as it had been in Paradise, but that there would be dissension and enmity among men, their progeny, which would spoil the joy of earthly life.

Since these events took place after Ādam عليه السلام had been created and the angels had been commanded to prostrate themselves before him, some scholars have concluded from it that the creation of Ādam عليه السلام and the prostration of the angels took place somewhere outside Paradise, and that he was sent there later on. But the words of the Holy Qur'ān do not exclude the other interpretation that both the

events took place in Paradise, but that he had not been told at that time where he was to live, which was done later.

When Ādam and Ḥawwā عليهما السلام were sent to live in Paradise, they were allowed to eat whatever they liked 'at pleasure' - the Arabic word in the text being '*Raghadan*', which signifies provision for which one does not have to work, and which is never exhausted nor falls short. Thus, their life was totally free from all care.

They were commanded not to go near a certain tree - which was an emphatic way of asking them not to eat its fruit. The tree has not been given a specific name either in the Holy Qur'ān or in the *Hadith*. Some commentators say that it was wheat, others say that it was a fig-tree or a grape-vine. But it is not really necessary to make specific what the Holy Qur'ān has left vague. (See Qurtubi) ¹⁵

According to the Holy Qur'ān, it was Satan who 'caused them to slip' (*azallahumā*). It clearly shows that the error and disobedience of Ādam and Hawwā عليهما السلام was not of the kind which technically constitutes a sin, but arose out of a misunderstanding produced by Satan. They ate the forbidden fruit, because Satan had cleverly deceived them. ¹⁶

A question arises here as to how Satan got into Paradise for seducing Ādam and Hawwā عليهما السلام, when he had already been expelled from there for refusing to prostrate himself. There are many possible ways in which he can have played his trick. Possibly he never

15. Even the Bible does not name the tree. As to the apple being the fruit concerned, it is only a popular misunderstanding arising from the fact that the Latin word "*Malum*" means an "apple" as well as a "sin, or evil."

16. We may note that in the previous episode the Holy Qur'ān used the name Iblīs - a word which comes from the root Balas, 'to be disappointed', and hence signifies "one who has lost all hope of receiving the grace of Allah." In the present episode he has been called *Al-Shayṭān* - a word which comes from the root *Shatn*, "to be far away", and hence signifies "one who has been removed far away from the mercy of Allah." Iblīs is a proper name, while *Shayṭān* is the name of a genus. When the Holy Qur'ān speaks of *Al-Shayṭān*, it always refers to Iblīs. But the common noun *Shaytan*, or its plural *Shayaṭīn* refers to the genus, which includes men and jinns both. It would be interesting to add that the root *Shayt* means 'the excess of anger and rage', and may possibly be the basis of the word *Shayṭān*.

met them, but planted the suggestion in their minds from afar - a thing which Satan can always do, and of which we have a specimen in the work of the hypnotists. It is equally possible that Satan, being one of the jinns whom Allah has given certain unusual powers denied to man, assumed the shape of a snake or of something else, and thus succeeded in entering Paradise. Perhaps it was because of this disguise that Ādam عليه السلام did not remember Allah's warning that Satan was his enemy. According to the Holy Qur'ān, Satan assured them on oath that he was one of their well-wishers (7:21). It apparently suggests that he did actually meet them, and speak to them face to face.

The Holy Qur'ān says that Satan **فَأَخْرَجَهُمَا**: "brought them out" of the state in which they had been living. In actual fact, they were 'brought out' under a divine command, but since Satan served as a means and as an intermediary, the action has been attributed to him.¹⁷

In commanding Ādam and Hawwā عليها السلام to go down from Paradise, Allah also said, **بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ**: 'Some of you (shall be the) enemies of some.' If Satan had not been turned out of the skies till then, he is included in this address, the implication being that the enmity between Satan on the one hand, and Ādam and Hawwā' عليها السلام and their progeny on the other, would continue on the earth too. But if Satan, as some scholars maintain, had already been expelled, then the addressees are Ādam and Hawwā' عليها السلام and their progeny; the implication would now be that Ādam and Hawwā' عليها السلام would have to undergo a double punishment, firstly that of being banished from Paradise, secondly that of seeing enmity arise among their children which must make life unpleasant for parents. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

They were also told that the earth would be a temporary dwelling-place for them, and that they would have to leave it too, which also meant that they would not find real peace of mind there.

Ādam and Hawwa in Paradise

- (1) In allowing Ādam and Hawwā عليها السلام to eat at pleasure, and

17. The words of the Holy Qur'ān do not in the least imply that Satan had any power whatsoever to act on his own. So, any Manichean dualism is totally out of the question.

in forbidding them to go near the tree, Allah used, according to the text of the Holy Qur'ān, the verbs for the dual number, thus including both in the address. But in asking them to live in Paradise Allah did not address both of them, but said: أَنْتَ وَزَوْجِكَ : "You and your wife." This form of address yields two legal principles: (a) the husband is responsible for providing a dwelling-place for his wife (b) for the purpose of dwelling the wife is dependent on the husband, and she must live in the house in which her husband lives.

(2) In this context the Arabic word *'uskun* (live) suggests that their stay in Paradise was to be temporary, not permanent which is a usual condition for the ownership of a house. Allah did not say that Paradise had been given to them, but only asked them to live there, for Allah knew that certain things were going to happen on account of which they would have to leave this dwelling-place. Moreover, the right to 'own' a dwelling-place in Paradise is earned through *Īmān* (faith) and good deeds, which one can acquire only after the Day of Judgment. The *Fuqahā'* (jurists) have derived from it the principle that, if a man asks someone to live in his house, the other man does not thereby acquire the ownership of the house nor the right to a permanent stay. (Qurṭubī)

(3) In allowing Ādam and Hawwā عليها السلام to eat at pleasure, Allah used the verb for the dual number, and said: "كُلَا" meaning 'eat both of you'. This indicates that in the matter of food the wife is not subservient to her husband, but can eat whatever she needs or likes, as can the husband.

(4) Allah also allowed them to eat from wherever they liked. This shows that man has the right to move freely from one place to another according to his needs or wishes.

(5) Allah did not want them to eat the fruits of a certain tree, but as a precautionary measure He commanded them not to approach it even. It is from here that the *Fuqahā'* have derived one of the basic principles of Islamic law, which requires that the things or actions which are likely to serve as means to sin or as its instruments are equally forbidden. That is to say, there are certain things which are

not forbidden in themselves, but when there is a danger that in making use of them a man would become involved in an unlawful activity, they too have to be forbidden.

The Prophets are innocent of all sins

(6) As we have seen here, Ādam عليه السلام had been forbidden to eat the fruit of a certain tree, and had also been warned against the machinations of his enemy, Satan, and yet he had eaten the forbidden fruit. It is seemingly a sin, while the Holy Qur'ān, the *Ḥadīth* and rational arguments too establish the innocence and sinlessness of all the prophets. There is an absolute consensus of the four great Imams of Islamic law and of all the authentic scholars on the doctrine that each and every prophet is innocent of and protected against all sins, major or minor. Some people have suggested that prophets are not protected against minor sins, but the majority of authentic scholars does not agree with this opinion. (Qurṭubī) It is necessary for prophets to be thus protected, because they are sent down to be the guides of men - if a guide can go against the commandments of Allah and commit a sin, major or even minor, people would no longer be ready to trust his word or deed. If one cannot have trust and faith even in the prophets, how can the work of spiritual guidance be possible? Hence the necessity of prophets being sinless.

The Holy Qur'ān does, however, relate certain incidents which tend to suggest that a certain prophet committed a sin, and drew upon himself the displeasure of Allah. The story about Ādam عليه السلام eating the forbidden fruit is one such instance. According to the consensus of the authentic scholars, in all cases a prophet comes to commit an error through a misunderstanding or just forgetfulness, and it is never a deliberate and wilful transgression of divine commandment. As is well-known, a *Mujtahid* is one who possesses the necessary qualifications for finding out through analogical deduction the rule for a case regarding which no specific commandment is present in the Holy Qur'ān or the *Ḥadīth*; if he makes a mistake in determining the rule, he still receives a reward from Allah for having made the effort. The mistake made by a prophet is always of this nature, or is due to oversight and hence pardonable, and cannot be called a 'sin' in the technical sense. Moreover, a prophet, being under the protection of Allah, can never

show oversight or forgetfulness in things which are directly concerned with his prophetic and legislative function, but only in personal matters. (See al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ)

The station of the prophets, however, is so exalted, that even a little oversight on the part of a great man is considered to be a great error. That is why such slips on the parts of certain prophets have been described in the Holy Qur'ān as 'sins', and Allah has shown his displeasure too, although they are not 'sins' in their nature.

As for the error committed by Ādam عليه السلام commentators have advanced several explanations:-

(a) A certain tree was pointed out to Ādam عليه السلام as being forbidden. But it was not this particular tree alone that was intended, but all the trees of this kind. The *Ḥadīth* too relates a similar case. Holding a piece of silk and some gold in his hand, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that those two things were forbidden to the men in his *Ummah*. Obviously the ban does not apply to these very pieces of silk and gold alone, but to silk and gold as such. But it is quite possible for someone to imagine that only the particular pieces which the Holy Prophet ﷺ held in his hand were forbidden. Similarly, Ādam عليه السلام thought that the prohibition applied only to the particular tree which had been pointed out to him. Satan exploited this misunderstanding, and assured him on oath that, being a well-wisher, he could never advise him to do something which was wrong or harmful, and that the forbidden tree was quite different, and not the one from which he was asking him to pluck a fruit.

(b) Satan may have suggested to Ādam عليه السلام that the prohibition was valid only upto a period after he had been created, just as infants are denied heavy food till they have grown up, and that since Ādam عليه السلام had now grown stronger, the ban too had been lifted.

(c) It is equally possible that, when Satan told him that if he ate this fruit, the eternal bliss of Paradise would be guaranteed for him, Ādam عليه السلام forgot the prohibition. This verse of the Holy Qur'ān seems to give credence to such a possibility: "فَنَسِيَ وَلَمْ نَحْذَرْ لَهُ عَزْمًا": "Adam

forgot, and We did not find him steadfast." (20:115)

Anyhow, the essential point is that \bar{A} dam عليه السلام did not deliberately and wilfully disobey Allah; all that he did was an act of oversight or the kind of mistake which a *Mujtahid* can make. The error was not, properly speaking, a sin, but \bar{A} dam عليه السلام being so close to Allah, and in view of his station of a prophet, even this lapse was regarded as very serious, and described as a 'sin' in the Holy Qur' \bar{a} n. But the Holy Qur' \bar{a} n tells us that when he repented and prayed for pardon, Allah forgave him.

Verses 37-39

فَتَلَقَىٰ آدَمَ مِنْ رَبِّهِ كَلِمَاتٍ فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ التَّوَّابُ
الرَّحِيمُ ۝ قُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا فَمَا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى
فَمَنْ تَبِعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ۝ وَالَّذِينَ
كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ۝

Then Adam learnt certain words (to pray with) from his Lord; so, Allah accepted his repentance. No doubt He is the Most-Relenting, the Very-Merciful. We said, "Go down from here, all of you. Then, should some guidance come to you from Me, those who follow My guidance shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve. As for those who disbelieve, and deny Our signs, they are the people of the Fire - they shall be there forever." (Verses 37-39)

\bar{A} dam's prayer to Allah

The earlier verses have related how \bar{A} dam عليه السلام came to commit an error through the seduction of Satan, and how he was commanded to leave Paradise and to go down to the earth. He had never experienced the displeasure of Allah before, nor heard such words of reproach. He could not bear it, and in the tumult of remorse at once wanted to beg humbly for pardon. But he was also afraid that by being importunate he might draw on himself more displeasure. Then, being a prophet, he knew Divine Majesty as ordinary men cannot. So, the fear and the awe dumbfounded him, and he could not utter a word. But Allah knows what passes through men's hearts, and He is also the

Most-Merciful and the Most-Generous. Seeing the agony of remorse in Ādam عليه السلام, Allah accepted his repentance, and his grace taught him the words of a prayer so that he could beg for pardon.

Thus pardon was granted to Ādam عليه السلام but Divine wisdom had all the same its own plans in sending him down to the earth - for example, starting through his progeny a new species, man, to be placed between the angels and the jinns; submitting men to the injunctions of the *Shari'ah* by giving them the power of choice, however limited; instituting divine viceregency among them, and promulgating among them the prohibitions and the commandments of the *Shari'ah*, so that this new creature may be capable of making a spiritual progress and of attaining a station denied even to the angels. Allah had announced these purposes even before creating Ādam عليه السلام, when He said to the angels: **إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً** : "I am going to create a deputy on the earth." (2:30)

Descension of Adam was not a punishment

That is why the command for Ādam عليه السلام to go down to the earth was not withdrawn even when he had been pardoned: only the mode was now altered. Earlier the command had been given in the mode of authority, and the sending down to the earth intended as a punishment: hence the reference to the enmity among men. Now, it was in the mode of wisdom, and the sending down to the earth, an honour - the honour of viceregency. Hence the reference to things viceregency involves. In commanding Ādam and Hawwā عليها السلام and their progeny to live on the earth, Allah told them that He would be sending down to men His guidance - that is, the injunctions of the *Shari'ah* - through revelation, and that those who follow it faithfully shall be free from sorrow and anxiety - in other words, they shall not have to grieve about any loss in the past, nor to worry about some misfortune in the future.

In speaking of how Allah taught Ādam عليه السلام the words of a prayer so that he could offer his repentance properly, the Holy Qur'ān uses the word *Talaqqa*, which means 'accepting and welcoming a person or thing eagerly', and thus indicates his attitude in receiving the phrases. (See *Kashshāf* and *Rūh al-Ma'ānī*)

As to what these phrases were, different things have been reported from different Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, but the generally accepted report is that of the blessed Companion Ibn 'Abbās, رضى الله عنه according to which these phrases are just the ones which the Holy Qur'an cites in a different place: رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنفُسَنَا وَإِنَّ لَنَا مِنَ الْغَيْرِ رَبَّنَا "Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and have mercy upon us, we will surely be among the losers." (7:23)

The Arabic word for repentance is *taūbah* which means 'a return'. So, *taūbah* is not merely an emotional attitude as the English word, 'repentance' seems to suggest. The word *taubah* is used with reference to Allah as much to men. When the word *taubah* is employed in case of a man, it signifies a necessary combination of three things:

- (a) Acknowledging one's sin as a sin, being ashamed of it and feeling remorseful.
- (b) Giving up the sin altogether.
- (c) Making up one's mind firmly never to indulge in it again.

If any one of these three elements is missing, the *taubah* is not genuine. Thus, it is not enough for one's salvation merely to utter the words of repentance, unless the words are supported by remorse for the sins committed in the past, abstinence from them in the present and determination of not giving way to them in the future. So much for the use of the word *taubah* with reference to man.

In the present passage, the Holy Qur'an uses the word with reference to Allah, and the phrase concerned literally signifies 'Allah returned to Adam'. It means that Allah again turned to him with His mercy and grace, and accepted his *taubah*.

Injunctions and related considerations :

(1) Asked as to what a man should do if he happens to have committed a sin, several great scholars and Sufis have been saying that he should do exactly what his first parents, Ādam and Hawwā عليهم السلام did - that is, he should be sincerely ashamed of his deed, make up his mind never to indulge in it again, and pray to Allah for His pardon as

they had: "رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنفُسَنَا وَإِن لَّمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ" "Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and have mercy upon us, we will surely be among the losers." (7:23) The prayer of Mūsā (Moses) عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام was of the same nature: "رَبِّ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي فَاغْفِرْ لِي" "My Lord, I have wronged myself. Forgive me." (28:16) And when Yūnus (Jonah) عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام made a mistake, he too prayed: "لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ" "There is no God but You. Pure are you. I have certainly become one of the unjust." (21:87) (See Qurtubī)

(2) As we have seen in the previous verses, the Holy Qur'an attributes the error of judgment to Ādam and Hawwā عَلَيْهِمَا السَّلَام both by using the verb *azallahuma* which indicates the dual number and thus means that Satan 'caused both of them to slip.' In recounting how Allah commanded them 'to go down' to the earth, the Holy Qur'an again uses the verb for the plural number, thus including Hawwā عَلَيْهِمَا السَّلَام in the command. On the contrary, in speaking of the *taubah* (repentance) of Ādam عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام and the acceptance of his *taubah* by Allah, verse 37 mentions him alone, and, employing the verb for the singular, leaves out Hawwā عَلَيْهِمَا السَّلَام. Even in other places, the Holy Qur'an attributes the error to Ādam عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام alone - for example, وَعَصَىٰ آدَمُ رَبَّهُ: 'Ādam disobeyed his Lord.' (20:121)

A possible explanation for the omission of Hawwā عَلَيْهِمَا السَّلَام in such a context is that Allah wants woman to be kept hidden from prying eyes, and, in order to provide a cover for her, has not referred to her explicitly while speaking of sin and divine wrath. But when it comes to the question of *taubah*, the prayer which Allah taught to Ādam عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام employs a verb in the plural number - "Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves", and thus the Holy Qur'an leaves no room for the supposition that the error of Hawwā عَلَيْهِمَا السَّلَام was not pardoned, or that she did not offer repentance. Moreover, woman being inclusive to man in most situations, it was not necessary to mention her specifically every time the story was told. (Qurtubī)

(3) The Arabic word *Taubah* signifies much more than the English word 'repentance'; similarly, the words *Tā'ib* and *Tawwab* mean much more than simply 'one who repents.' Imam Al-Qurtubī says that the word *Tawwāb* is used with reference to Allah as well as to man.