



Articles Of Faith

By Haji Azmi

**ARTICLES
OF
FAITH**

BY
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Bibliography:

The Holy Quran
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Tenets of Islam
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Questions and Answers on Islam
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FOREWORD

All praise be to Allah SWT Most gracious, Most Merciful.

Last year, Perkim celebrated the 50 anniversary or The Golden Jubilee in November 2010. Ever since involved in the missionary and welfare work over the past 50 years, PERKIM has published many religion books in several languages such as Malay, English, Mandarin, and Tamil, which was distributed for free of charge. These reading books complement PERKIM missionary's work.

The purpose of the religious book is to provide knowledge and information to readers, especially new converts or *Muallaf* which requires instruction and tips on how to express do'a and perform prayer in physical manner and other matters regarding Islam. These books were written in simple language and if needed graphic images were added to describe such as in ablution and sholat. Alhamdulillah from the feedback received, many of them are able to understand and improved their knowledge through this compact book.

Due to its popularity, these books were out of stock and need to be reprinted. Usually it needs to be improved before it can be reprint so that the newly edition will be better.

Our sincere gratitude to the PERKIM missionaries and religious teachers that contribute recommendations to improve the quality and content of these books. Thanks also to publication Unit as the PERKIM's publishing secretariat that was responsible for managing the issuance of PERKIM publications.

I hope that this noble effort publishing of the books and dissemination of Islamic knowledge will be beneficial to all readers, in accordance with the Hadith: "*Anyone who wants the world have to be knowledgeable, those who want the hereafter has to be knowledgeable, and anyone who wants both they have to learn both.*"

Thank You.

TAN SRI DATO' DR ABDUL HAMID OTHMAN
Honorary Secretary General PERKIM

The belief in GOD

"INFORM me in the matter of Islam," said Sufyan, "so that I have no occasion to ask others about it."

The Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. said, "Say, O Sufyan, 'I believe in God'; after which obey the commandments, and abandon the things forbidden."

A Faithful Muslim

This goes to show that one must have belief or faith before one can willingly and with conviction perform the five principles of Islam (*Rukun Islam*), the main commandments, to be a true and faithful Muslim. The first Islamic principle, namely the declaration of Divine Unity ties up with the first pillar of Faith (*Rukun Imān*) that is, belief in Allah.

Upon embracing Islam we declare that there is no God but Allah. During the first part of our prayer we pledge: "Verily my prayers and my deeds, my life and my death are unto God, the Lord of the Worlds."

On our success, we thank God by saying, "All praise be to Allah."

Do we declare, pledge and thank Allah with the conviction that we already knew Him?

To truly know the Divine Being, one has to be convinced in:

- the existence of God.
- the unity of Allah.
- the Divine attributes.

The Existence of God

In all religious books the existence of God is taken as a self-evident truth. The Holy Quran, however, advances several arguments to prove the existence of a Supreme Being who is the Creator and Controller of this universe.

Evidence from the Creation

When man came into being, he found that the earth and the heavens were already there. They were not there by themselves. There must be a creator. And the Creator was revealed with the first revelation to our Prophet:

“Proclaim! (God’s Message) in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher Who **created**.”

—Sura Alaq Verse 1.

Then man observes that the proton in the atom does not function like the neutron; the *durian* does not taste like mango; man himself does not behave like an animal and now man knows definitely that the moon differs in many ways from the earth. And while the moon rotates round the earth, the earth goes round the sun. And so are the other planets and millions of stars. Ours is but one galaxy and there are many other galaxies.

From the above observation, we notice that from the smallest particle to the largest heavenly body, everything is under control and is subject to a law; no one thing interferes with the course of another or hampers it; while on the other hand, all things are helping each other on to attain perfection. Who then is the intelligent Being guiding the universe other than God? The Holy Quran stresses this fact in Sura 36: Verses 38–40.

And the sun runs on to a term appointed for it; that is the ordinance of the Mighty, the Wise. And for the moon We have ordained stages till it becomes again as an old, dry palm branch. Neither is it allowable to the sun that it should overtake the moon, nor can the night outstrip the day; and all bodies float on in a sphere.”

Human Nature

Then man turns to himself and looks into his soul. There is an inner light within each man telling him that there is a Higher Being, a God, a Creator. There is consciousness of the existence of God. However, this inner light varies in intensity with each man. With some, that light shines forth in its full glory, and their consciousness of the Divine presence is very strong. With others, the consciousness is weaker and the inner light more dim; and there are cases in which the inner light has almost gone out. In the case of the atheist who denies the existence of God, he, however, still recognises a

First Cause or a Higher Power. Occasionally this consciousness is awakened in him, and the inner light asserts itself especially in time of distress or affliction. It looks as though, ease and comfort, like evil, cast a veil over the inner light of man, and that veil is removed by distress—a fact to which the Holy Quran has repeatedly called attention like;

“And when We show favour to man, he turns aside and withdraws himself, and when evil touches him, he makes lengthy supplications.”

—Sura 41: Verse 51.

“And when the waves come over them like coverings they call upon Allah, being sincere to Him in obedience, but when He brings them safe to the land, some of them follow the middle course.”

—Sura 31: Verse 32.

Divine Revelation

The clearest and surest evidence relating to the existence of God is afforded by Divine Revelation, which not only establishes the truth of the existence of God but also shows the divine attributes. It is through this disclosure of the Divine attributes that belief in God becomes the most important factor in the evolution of man, since a knowledge of those attributes motivates him to the high ideal of imitating Divine morals which can make man rise to the highest moral eminence.

A good example, in this instance, is the life and struggles of our Holy Prophet Muhammad. A solitary man, he arises in the midst of a nation which is sunk deep in all kinds of vice and degradation. He has no power at his back, not even a man to support him, and without any preliminaries at all he sets his hand to the unimaginable and apparently impossible mission to reform—not only his nation but through it, the whole humanity. All this begins with the first revelation from God.

“Proclaim (God’s Message) in the name of Thy Lord;”

This becomes the Force, the Force Divine; this is also the cause and the cause is Divine and it is on Divine help that its success depends. And sure enough, God has made good His promise as in Sura 24: Verse 55:

“Allah has promised to those of you who believe and do good that He will make them rulers in the earth as He made rulers, those before them. And that He will establish for them their religion which He has chosen for them, and that He will, after their fear, give them security in exchange.”

Main Arguments

These are the three main kinds of arguments with which the Holy Book chiefly deals. The first kind, the arguments drawn from creation, may be called the lower or material experience of humanity; the second, the

evidence of human nature may be called the inner experience of humanity and the third, the arguments based on Divine revelation to man may be called the higher or spiritual experience of humanity.

DIVINE UNITY and DIVINE ATTRIBUTES

BELIEF in the Unity of God or *tauhid* is expressed upon embracing Islam and later at least nine times a day during the five daily prayers when we declare: La illaha ill-Allah – There is no god but Allah.

The Unity of God

The Unity of God, as taught in the Holy Quran implies that God is One in:

- His *zat* or person or essence;
- His *sifat* or qualities or attributes; and
- His *af'al* or works.

His Oneness in His person means that there is neither plurality of gods nor plurality of persons in the godhead.

His Oneness of attributes implies that no other being possesses one or more of the Divine attributes to perfection.

His Oneness in works indicates that none can do the works which God has done or which God may do.

The Nature of God

The nature of God is summed up in Surah *Ikhlas* or Purity (of Faith):

“Say: He is God,
The One and Only; God, the Eternal, Absolute;
He begetteth not,
Nor is He begotten;
And there is none
Like unto Him.”

In this short surah, we are taught to avoid the pitfalls into which men and nations have fallen in trying to understand God. Firstly, we have to note that His nature is so sublime, so far beyond our limited conceptions and the best way in which we can realise Him is to feel that He is a Personality, ‘He’, and not a mere abstract conception of philosophy. He is near us; He cares for us; we owe our existence to Him.

Secondly, He is the One and Only God, the Only One to Whom worship is due. All other things or beings that we can think of are His creatures and in no way comparable to Him.

Thirdly, He is Eternal, without beginning or end, Absolute not limited by time or place or circumstances, the Reality before which all other things or places are mere shadows or reflections.

Fourthly, we must not think of Him as having a son or a father, for that will bring human or animal qualities

into our conception of Him.

Fifthly, He is not like any other person or thing that we know or can imagine: His qualities and nature are unique.

His Qualities

The qualities of Allah are described in numerous places in the Holy Quran. According to *Ilmu Al-Tauhid*, the qualities of Allah are described as:

Wujud which means the Existent; *qidam*, the First without a beginning; *baqa*, the Eternal without an end; *mu-khalafatul hawadith*, the Difference from originated things; *qiamuhubinafsih*, the Self-sufficing; *wahdaniah*, the Oneness in person, qualities and works; *qudrat*, the Mighty without any limbs or gear; *iradat*, He wills all His creations or happenings; *ilmu* He knows without learning or thinking; *hayat*, He lives without life or breath, eat or drink; *sami'*, He hears without ears; *basar* He sees without eyes or light; *kalam*, He speaks without words, voice or language; Allpowerful; All-knowing; Everliving; Allhearing; All-seeing.

His Attributes

His other qualities or attributes appear in His names in numerous parts of the Quran. According to *hadith* there are 99 names of God as related by Bukhari and Muslim from a *hadith* reported by Abu Hurairah:

“The Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. says: ‘Verily, Allah has 99 names, that is, one less than a hundred; whoever recites them, will have a place in heaven’”.

The meaning of the names are being given in the Islamic Herald under the ‘Muslim Names’ series compiled by Encik Shums Tung.

However, for our purpose, it is enough for us to know the attributes in English without the original names in Arabic. In the book, *The Religion of Islam* by M. Muhammad Ali, the attributes are categorised as relating to:

- His person.
- The act of creation.
- His attributes of love and mercy.
- His greatness and glory.
- His knowledge.
- His power and control of things.

His Person

The attributes relating to His person are the One, the True, the Holy, on Whom all depend while He does not depend on any, the Self-sufficient, the First, the Last, the Ever-living, the Self-subsisting.

The Act of Creation

The attributes to the act of creation are the Creator, the Creator of the soul, the Fashioner of shapes, the

Originator.

Of Love and Mercy

The attributes of love and mercy are the Beneficent, the Merciful, the Affectionate, the Loving, the Benignant, the Oft-returning to mercy, the Forbearing, the Pardoner, the Multiplier of rewards, the Author of peace, the Granter of security, the Benign, the Exalter of ranks, the Bestower of sustenance, the great Giver, the Ample-giving.

His Greatness and Glory

The attributes relating to His greatness and glory are the Grand, the Mighty, the Exalted or the High, the Strong, the Supreme, One Who sets things aright by supreme power, the Possessor of greatness, the Great, the Honoured, the Praiseworthy, the Glorious, the Strong, Ascendant over all, the Lord of glory and honour.

His Knowledge

As relating to His knowledge, the attributes are the Knowing, the Wise, the Hearing, the Aware, the Seeing, the Witness, the Watcher, the Knower of hidden things, the Guardian over all.

His Power and Control of Things

The attributes relating to His power and control of things are the Powerful, the One having all things in His

charge, the Guardian, the Keeper, the King, the Greatest Judge. The One Who takes account, the Inflicter of retribution, the Controller of all things.

Certain Acts or Attributes

The other names which are taken from some act or attribute of God mentioned in the Holy Quran are the One Who gives honour, the One Who brings disgrace, the One Who accepts prayers, the One Who raises the dead to life, the One Who records or numbers things, the One Who begins, the One Who reproduces, the One Who gives life, the One Who causes death, the Master of the kingdom, the One Who gathers, the One Who enriches, the One Who grants, the One Who withholds, the One Who guides, the One Who endures forever, the One Who inherits everything.

Taken from the Sense

The rest of the ninety-nine names may be taken from the sense. For instance, God is called *Nur* (the light) in the sense of being the Giver of Light. So are the Patient, the One who directs, the Equitable, the One Who governs, the Majestic, the Just, the One Who abases, the Existing, the One Who brings forward, the One Who puts off, the One Who confers benefits.

Significance of Tauhid

When we have reached the knowledge of the Unity of God, we are saved from committing an unforgivable sin namely, *shirk* or associating God with things or beings in this world or the universe as in Surah 4: Verse 48:

“God forgiveth not that partners should be set up with Him; but He forgiveth anything else, to whom He pleaseth; to set up partners with God is to devise a sin most heinous indeed”

Just as in an earthly kingdom, the worst crime is that of treason as it undermines the very existence of the State, so in the spiritual kingdom, the unforgivable sin is that of treason against God by putting up God’s creatures in rivalry against Him. This is rebellion against the essence and source of spiritual life. But even here, if the rebellion is through ignorance, and is followed by sincere repentance and amendment, God’s mercy is always open.

In the Holy Book too, it is stated that there are three types of *shirk* as in Surah 3: Verse 64

- That we worship none but God;
- That we associate no partners with Him;
- That we erect not, from among ourselves, lords other than Allah.

Idolatory and Nature-worship

Worshipping others besides Allah constitutes idolatory and nature-worship, which is the most heinous form of *shirk*. This includes worshipping stones, idols, trees, animals, tombs, heavenly bodies, forces of nature, or human beings as demigods or incarnations of gods or sons or daughters of god.

Associating of other Things with Him

Associating other things with Him namely to suppose that other things or beings possess the same attributes as the Divine Being is forbidden in Islam. This includes the belief that there are three persons in the Godhead, or that there is the Creator of Evil along with the Creator of Good, or that matter and soul are co-eternal with God and self-existing like Himself.

Men as Lords besides 'Allah

The third form of *shirk* appears in Surah 9: Verse 31:

“They take their doctors of law and their monks for lords besides Allah.”

The meaning of this revelation was explained by the Holy Prophet s.a.w. himself when he was asked by Adiyg ibn Hatim, a convert from Christianity who said to the Holy Prophet that the Jews and the Christians did not worship the doctors of law and the monks. The Holy

Prophet asked him if it was not true that they blindly obeyed them in what they enjoined and what they forbade. Adiyg answered in the affirmative, which shows that to follow the behests of great men blindly was also considered *shirk*.

Another kind of *shirk* is blindly following one's own desires as in Surah 25: Verse 43:

"Seest thou such a one as taketh for his god his own blind passion or impulse?"

Belief in the Unity of God means that true obedience is due to Allah alone and whosoever obeys either any one else, or his low desires, in preference to the Divine commandments is guilty of *shirk*.

In the right perspective

Besides saving us from falling into the unforgivable sin of *shirk*, the knowledge of the Unity of God enables man to see himself in the right perspective in relation to his God, his fellow creatures and the world at large. His mind is free from fear of external influences from animate or inanimate objects, forces of nature and even man-made isms to dominate or exploit man. His fear is to God alone Whom he worships and to Whom he seeks help and guidance. He is free to uplift his own physical, moral and spiritual being.

The belief in ANGELS

IN history and present day news we often come across stories such as these:

- in a country steeped in sin, an illiterate man heard a voice commanding him to read in the name of Allah; and since he recited the Message, eight hundred million people of all races on earth now become the followers of the religion of Allah;
- a small troop of believers fighting a just cause suddenly found armies many times its strength retreating in defeat; and
- in one of the worst air disasters a rescue team found a sole survivor in a thirteen-month old child, flung away from the burning wreckage.

All these happenings are no strange phenomena to those who believe in angels – the second pillar of Islamic faith

Man through the ages has evolved certain conceptions of things supernatural and strange and attributed the happenings to the work of certain beings. Thus in literature we find in the Greek *Illiad* and *Oddysey*, in the Indian *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, such beings as Poseidon, Aphrodite and Zeus; Vishnu, Siva and Krishna and similarly in other old Chinese and Egyptian classics. These beings are portrayed as rescuers of man from the forces of evil as well as bringer of divine destruction.

They are termed as gods and goddesses, devas and deities

Islam, a monotheistic religion would have none of these conceptions. According to the Holy Book and the Hadith of Muhammad, the immediate servant of Allah to carry out His will are the angels. In Surah 66:6 we are told

"Angels, strong and severe, who resist not Allah in that He commandeth them, but do that which they are commanded."

Nature of Angels

From the above, we can see the nature of angels. The angels are immaterial beings. Although in the Quran man is stated to have been created from dust and jinn or Satan from fire, nothing is mentioned about the origin of angels or *malaikah*. However, according to a report from Aishah, the Holy Prophet said that the jinn is created from *nar* or fire and that the angels are created from *nur* or light. Thus the angels and the jinns are two different classes of beings.

Although classified as beings, the angels are sexless and are not endowed with powers of discrimination like those of the human beings. Theirs is to obey Allah and do precisely what they are commanded. Unlike man, they have no will of their own. Hence man is superior to the angel. This is evident in Surah 2:34 where the angels were commanded to make obeisance to man:

“And behold, We said to the angels, ‘Bow down to Adam’; and they bowed down; except Iblis (satan). He refused because of pride (of his so-called superior origin) and so he became a disbeliever.”

The above verse also shows the difference between angels and satan or jinn, who has avowed to be the enemy of man as in Surah 35:6

“Verily Satan is an enemy to you: so treat him as an enemy.”

Can angels be seen? Angels are not settlers on earth. They are sent down from heaven. The Holy Quran mentions of the angelic hosts sent to help Muslims were not seen by human eyes. The manner in which Divine message is delivered by the angel is by revealing it to the heart of the Prophet. The dumb can still communicate with the sign language without voice or words. So is a mortal endowed with spiritual faculties.

There are instances in the lives of several prophets especially Muhammad s.a.w. when the angel *Jibrail* or Gabriel was seen by the prophet coming with the Divine revelation, sometimes in the shape of man. This, however, was not seen with the physical eyes but those of the spiritual. There were occasions when Prophet Muhammad received the Divine message while he was sitting among his Companions: yet no one heard the message nor saw the angel.

Angels and Their Functions

Angels are countless in number. To know their functions, the following are the main angels as stated in the Quran and the Hadith.

Jibrail or Gabriel

Chief among the angels, archangel Jibrail is also called *Ruh al Amin* or the Faithful Spirit and *Ruh al Qudus* or the Holy Spirit. Jibrail's main function is to communicate God's message to mortal prophets. He revealed to Adam the twenty-one leaves; taught him the cultivation of wheat, the working of iron and the letters of the alphabet and he took him to the site of Mecca where he taught him the rites of pilgrimage. To Noah, he showed how to build the Ark. He saved Ibrahim from the flame. It was Jibrail who helped Moses to fight against the magicians of Egypt. He was also instrumental in the destruction of Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea. He appeared to Samuel and to Daud to whom he taught the art of making coats-of-mail.

Mikail or Michael

God commands Mikail to look after the universe, the movement of stars and planets and all the galaxies, and the forces of nature. In Surah 2:98, Mikail is mentioned thus.

pens after the trumpet is blown thus:

“Then, when one blast is sounded on the trumpet, and the earth is moved and its mountains, and they are crushed to powder at one stroke; on that day shall the great Event come to pass, and the sky will be rent assunder, for it will that Day be flimsy, and the angels will be on its sides and eight will, that Day bear the Throne of thy Lord above them. That day shall you be brought to Judgement: not one act of yours that you hide will be hidden.”

Raqib and Atid

Raqib and Atid are the names of the angels who record our words as in Surah 50: 17-18:

“Behold, two (guardian angels) appointed to learn (his doings) learn and note them, one sitting on the right and one on the left. Not a word does he utter without being recorded by Raqib and Atid.”

Kiraman and Katibin

While Raqib and Atid record words, Kiraman and Katibin write down the deeds of men, as stated in Surah 82: 10-12;

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Munkar and Nakir

We are told that as soon as the dead is laid in the tomb, two angels namely *Munkar* and *Nakir* would appear to interrogate his deeds in this world and examine his faith with such questions as whom he worships as God; who his prophet is; who his imam is, etc. etc. If he is found to be among the faithful and the righteous, he will be left alone. But if he is an infidel and sinner, he will suffer the punishment of the tomb.

Two other known angels are *Malak Zabaniyah* or the Guardian of Hell and *Malaikat Ridzwan* or Keeper of Paradise.

The number of angels and their other functions are known only to Allah. But from the Holy Quran and Hadith we know that angels:

- strengthen the righteous servants of God;
- give them comfort in trials and tribulations;
- carry out Divine punishment against the wicked;
- intercede and pray for men on behalf of sinners and those on earth;
- help in the spiritual progress of man;
- prompt man to noble deeds; and
- record the deeds of man.

Significance of the Belief in Angels

Man, in his constant war with satan, iblis and jinn or the devils, will find himself confronted with trials and tribula-

tion. Satan will bring physical destruction to man. But in most cases Satan corrodes man from within, bringing down his pillars of faith and crumbling his spiritual being until he becomes an unbeliever.

Often we come across people or experience ourselves a strange illness beyond medical knowledge like the one shown in the film *Exorcist*. This is indeed a grave test to our faith for we are between the Devil and God. Shall we go to Satan or the agents of the devils for help? Or shall we follow the righteous path of God?

To the one who has firm belief in God and angels he will hold on to God's promise as in Surah 41:30

"In the case of those who say 'Our Lord is Allah', and furthermore stand straight and steadfast, the angels descend on them so that they will not fear nor grieve, but receive the glad tidings of the Garden of Bliss which were promised."

The belief in REVEALED BOOKS

There is a Malaysian proverb which says “We live in the womb of conventions and die in the fold of the earth,” meaning we cannot escape from the dictates of customs and institutions of the society in which we live and the guidance of God’s laws or ordinances for the present life and hereafter. And God’s laws and commandments are transmitted to mankind through prophets, apostles and the chosen ones.

The need for Revelations

Man is endowed with the faculty to conquer and harness nature and subdue his enemies. Among God’s creatures, man is the most powerful: even the stern and strong angels have to bow before him. Yet he is a weakling to his self. We have read how Adam and Eve were beguiled by satan resulting in their fall from heaven to earth and satan avowing to be our eternal enemy.

Once on earth, without prior experience and knowledge, Adam was confronted with various difficulties such as acquiring basic physical needs like food, shelter and fending his offsprings. When his children matured, there was the natural biological cycle of man and the question of marriage among his children came to the fore. And satan keeping up his evil deeds pitted Adam’s children—Abel and Caen—against each other. This

ended up with the first death on earth. What is the law against crime and what must be done to the dead body became a problem.

God, the Most Merciful and Forgiving, despite man's constant sins, resolved the above issues and subsequent ones throughout the ages of man through His revelations to the prophet of a particular period. The revelations were then collected into scriptures or holy books which become man's guidance towards the righteous path of life as in Surah 2: 2-4:

"This is the Scripture or Book whereof there is no doubt, a guidance unto those who fear Allah. Who believe in the unseen, steadfast in prayer, and spend of that We have bestowed upon them; and who believe in the revelation sent to thee (Muhammad) and that which was revealed before thee, and are certain of the Hereafter."

The above verses also enjoin every Muslim to believe not only what was revealed to Muhammad *s.a.w.* but also those revealed before him.

Revealed Books

Thus the third pillar of faith is to believe in revealed books namely:-

- *Taurat* or the original Torah of Musa (Moses)
- *Zabur* or the original Psalms of Daud (David)

- *Injil* or the original Gospel of Isa (Jesus)
- *Quran* or *Furqan* and other Books of previous prophets.

All the above books are indicated in the following surahs and verses in the Quran: Surah 3: 3-4

“He hath revealed unto thee (Muhammad) the Book with truth, confirming that which was revealed before it. And He revealed the *Taurat* and the *Injil* as a guidance to mankind; and hath revealed the *Furqan* or Criterion (of right and wrong). Then those who disbelieve the revelations of Allah, theirs will be a heavy doom. Allah is Mighty and Able to Requite (the wrong).

Surah 4: 163:

“Lo! We inspire thee (Muhammad) as We inspired Noah and prophets after him, as We inspired Ibrahim (Abraham) and Ismail (Ishmael) and Ishak (Isaac) and Ya’kub (Jacob) and the tribes and Isa (Jesus) and Lut (Lot) and Yunus (Jonah) and Harun (Aaron) and Sulaiman (Solomon), and unto Daud (David) we gave the *Zabur*.

However, it is not the Torah or Pentateuch in the Old Testament, the Psalms and the Gospels in the New Testament, in the present form, that are required to be believed by Muslims. They have been tampered by human hands and no longer remain the original revelations of God.

They have undergone many changes and alterations in the interpretations and translations of the original text. To avoid any bias or prejudice let me quote non-Muslim opinions from much read encyclopedias, on the present form of the Bible which contains the Old and the New Testaments.

Chances of Corruption

A layman has only to trace the development of the Bible in encyclopedias to know how much changes it had undergone. If Pax Britannica is beyond the reach of the man-in-the-street, let me quote from Grolier Encyclopedia. On page 173, under the subtitle, *The Text of Scripture*, it is said that almost the whole of the Old Testament was written in Hebrew except a few passages in Arabic. Further it states:

“The ancient Hebrew writing was different from the square character which had superceded it before the Christian Era. Hebrew was also written without vowels. Both these causes increased the chances of corruption. Far more serious than either is the fact that the text of the Old Testament was standardized about the beginning of the Christian era and thus most of the readings which did not commend themselves to the scribes at this time were suppressed. As the work was done by

men unfamiliar with the very elements of textual criticism, the uniformity of text presented by the Hebrew manuscripts has been purchased by the irretrievable loss of many superior readings.

“That in many cases the Hebrew text is corrupt is demonstrated by the fact that it sometimes violates grammatical rules, by the existence of duplicate passages which vary from each other, and by the obviously superior text often preserved in the Versions into which the Hebrew was translated. Since many centuries elapsed between the writings of several books and the earliest evidence, independent of the Hebrew, it is scarcely open to doubt that in this interval many mistakes crept into the text. Accordingly there is a legitimate function for a judicious use of conjecture in restoring the text where it appears to be corrupt.”

Gospels

On the four Gospels, the first four books in the New Testament which are ascribed to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, Grolier Encyclopedia has the following to say:

“The first three—Matthew, Mark, Luke—stand together an form a striking contrast to the fourth. They are called the Synoptics because they follow the same lines and deal with the narrative from a similar point of view.

Mark is the earliest of the three and gives the story of the life of Jesus in its simplest form. Matthew adapts his narrative for the Jewish readers, and his apologetic aim is to manifest in his constant use of the argument from the prophecy. Luke, on the other hand, being a Greek strives to make his portrait of Jesus appeal to the Greek-speaking world. The fourth Gospel was written thirty years later than the others and is obviously an interpretation of Christ rather than a record of events."

Higher Biblical Criticism

Under the Higher Biblical Criticism, the Grolier encyclopedia states:

"The higher criticism of the New Testament has been occupied with what is called the synoptic problem, i.e. the relations of the three gospels to one another and to their sources, the fourth gospel being considered of much later origin and of a different character. It has also thrown doubt on the unity, chronology and authorship of a number of the New Testament writings."

"The critical methods applied to the Pentateuch, or rather the Hexateuch, were soon afterwards applied to the other books of the Old Testament, with the result that many of these also were found to be composite. Here, again, higher criticism has thrown doubt on the chronology and traditional authorship, as well as on the integrity of the Old Testament."

These doubts are carried over to the present day and

as recent as last Christmas the cover story of Time magazine of December 30, 1974, brought a big question mark with the title "How True is the Bible?"

Non-existence of the Originals

All these would not have happened if the original revelations of God were also preserved in the original languages namely, Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek alongside the translations. But, where are the originals?

The authorised King James version of the Holy Bible in its *Helps to the Understanding of the Bible under the sub-title Ancient Bible Manuscripts* makes the following question and answer:

"The question naturally arises, do any of the original manuscripts of the Bible still exist? The answer is No."

Thus the Bible in the present form is lost to at least eight hundred million people of mankind who had been warned by God in the Quran in Surah 2: 75:

"Can ye o ye (men of faith) entertain any hope that they will believe in you? Seeing that a party of them heard the Word of Allah, and perverted it knowingly after they understood it?"

Again in the same surah verses 78 and 79:

"Therefore woe be unto those who write the Scripture with their hands and then say, 'This is from Allah', that they may purchase a small gain there-

with. Woe unto them for that their hands have written, and woe unto them for that they earn thereby."

Muhammad (s.a.w.) in the Bible

And woe has indeed been on half the mankind when the coming of Prophet Muhammad *s.a.w.* has not been given the proper commentary in the Bible such as in John 16 : 12 and 13:

"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he shall show you things to come."

On both these verses, James M. Gray, D.D., in his *Christian Workers' Commentary on the Whole Bible* states:

"Verses 12 and 13 of this chapter are 'Christ's pre-authentications of the New Testament'. He would leave many things to be revealed for example, and this revelation would be completed after the Spirit came."

Who is "he, the Spirit of truth"? Has he come?

The original text is lost and verification cannot be made now, But the last clause *"for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he*

speak..." refers to none other than the Holy Prophet Muhammad also known as *al-Amin* (the truthful one) who did not speak from himself, but the words of God revealed to him.

Nevertheless, the actual name of Muhammad is mentioned in the Gospel of St. Barnabas 163: 180 thus:

"Jesus answered: 'He is Muhammad, the Messenger of God' ".

Because of the mentioning of the prophesy of the advent of Muhammad, the Gospel of St. Barnabas was condemned by the Church by three successive decrees—the Western Church in 382 A.D., The Innocent I in 465 A.D., and the Gelasius in 496 A.D. Who is St. Barnabas?

Under *Famous Bible Characters, in the King James Version of the Holy Bible, St. Barnabas is described thus:*

"A Levite of the island of Cyprus, and an early convert to the Christian faith. Companion of Paul on his first missionary journey. A man of means, he sold his possessions in order that he might give both himself and his money to God's service. Introduced the new convert Saul of Tarsus to the church at Jerusalem. It is said of Barnabas that 'he was a good man, full of the Holy Ghost and of faith' ".

His grave was discovered in Cyprus in 378 A.D. and his gospel was found lying on his chest—condemned by the Church.

Similar instances of misinterpretation and alteration occur in the Torah supposedly in the Pentateuch of the Old Testament

Happily for mankind especially those who believe only in revealed books as ordained by God, and those who earnestly wanted for the fulfillment of Jesus' saying "*I have yet many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he will guide into all truth,*" the truth has already come after six hundred years of Jesus's saying. The truth is contained in the Quran as in Surah 5:51:

"And unto thee (Muhammad) have we revealed the Book with the truth, confirming whatever Scripture was before it, and a watcher over it. So judge between them by that which Allah hath revealed, and follow not their desires away from the truth which hath come unto thee...."

Thus the above verse shows that after the corruption of the older revelations, the Quran comes with a twofold purpose:

- to confirm the true and original Message and
- to guard it or act as a check to its interpretations.

Surah 5 verses 47 and 50 ordain the People of Gospel and the Law (Torah) to judge only by what God has *revealed*.

Revelation

Surah 42 verse 51 tells how revelation comes to man, thus:

“It is not fitting for a man that Allah should speak to him except by:

- inspiration; or
- from behind a veil, or
- by the sending of a Messenger

to reveal, with Allah's permission what Allah wills: for He is Most High, Most Wise.”

On the three modes of revelation, M. Muhammad Ali, in his book *The Religion of Islam*, explains that inspiration is the inspiring of an idea into the heart as distinguished from a revelation in words which is the revelation proper. This “infusing of an idea into the heart” is technically called inner revelation, and the sayings of the Holy Prophet touching religious matters are in this class. Revelation in this form is common to both prophets and those who are not prophets but men of spiritual insights.

The second mode of God's speaking to man namely “from behind a veil” includes dream, vision and *ilham* i.e. when voices are heard or uttered while the recipient is being neither quite asleep nor fully awake. This form of revelation is also common both to prophets and those who are not prophets and in its simplest form, the dream, is a universal experience of the whole of humanity.

The third kind, which is peculiar to the prophets of God, is that in which the angel Gabriel brings the Divine message in words. This is the message in words. This is the surest and clearest form of revelation and such was the revelation of The Quran to the Holy Prophet. It is the highest and most developed form of revelation and it was in this form that revelation was granted to all the prophets of Allah.

Revelation is not only universal but also progressive according to the need of time and the development of human brain; attaining perfection in the last of the prophet—Muhammad s.a.w. as in Surah 5:4:

وَهُدًى
وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ

٥٠ - وَلِيُحْكُمَ أَهْلُ الْإِنجِيلِ بِمَا نَزَلَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ
وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا نَزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ

٥١ - وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ

“This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you and have chosen for you Islam as your religion.”

That was the last verse revealed to our prophet.

All religions were from God. But when man started to tamper with the word of God, doubts and differences occur. And these bred sceptics, hypocrites, atheists and unbelievers, bringing more and more woes to the world, instead of bringing unity among mankind under the banner of God.

And those who have been endowed by God the knowledge of Quran, the Holy Book of Truth, they are constantly reminded of the purpose of the Quran as revealed to our Holy Prophet in Surah 16:64:

“And We sent down the Book to thee for the express purpose that thou should make clear to them those things in which they differ, and that it should be a guide and a mercy to those who believe.”

the Quran or Furqan.

“Read! In the name of thy Lord and Cherisher who created:
created man out of a clot of congealed blood. Read!
And thy Lord is most Bountiful. He Who taught (the use of) the Pen. Taught man that which he knew not”.

—Surah 96: 1—5

That was the first Divine Message revealed to Muhammad *s.a.w.* The verses were recited by *Jibrail*, the Archangel, to the Holy Prophet in the Cave of Hira on the night of 17th in the month of Ramadhan (fasting month) during the 41st year of Muhammad's life.

Since that night, henceforth called *Lailatul Qadar*—the Grand Night—for a span of twenty-two years—over 12 years in Mecca and 10 years in Madina, the Divine revelations were delivered to him until 9th Zulhijjah, Hijrah 10. On that date, while performing the *Haji Akbar* or *Haji Wada'*—Farewell Pilgrimage—the last message was revealed to the Holy Prophet:

“This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favour upon you and have chosen for you Islam as your religion”.

—Surah 5: 3

Eighty-one days after this final revelation, the Holy Prophet passed away at the age of sixty-three.

The revelations came piece-meal—verse by verse. There are altogether 6,666 verses although some scholars would say 6,240. Each verse was committed to memory by Muhammad who could not read or write. His Companions and followers however wrote down the verses on date leaves, camel bones and goat skins and the record was testified by the Holy Prophet.

The arrangement of the Quran was a part of the Divine scheme. Under Divine guidance, the verses were

grouped into 114 surahs or chapters of varying lengths. Ninety-two of the surahs were revealed in Mecca while the rest in Madina. The Meccan surahs are thus called *Makkiah* and those of Madina, *Medaniah*.

The Meccan revelations, are mainly on faith in God, monotheism, ethics and life hereafter. The Medaniah is chiefly intended to translate that faith into action through the principles of Islam and Iman (faith), the laws governing Man's deeds and actions while some of the Madina verses dwell on State matters.

In fact, the Quran besides teaching Man of his obligations to God, reveals to him the manner of conduct towards mankind and society. The Holy Book not only abounds in moral teachings but also a wealth of sciences yet to be explored. Al-Quran also shows the way to success in life.

Revealed in Arabic in the idiom of the Quraish tribe, al Quran has a style of its own—neither prosaic or poetic. Some of the verses are in clear and decisive language while others are allegorical. The interpretation of the Quran was done by Muhammad *s.a.w.* himself. When Quranic interpretation evolved into a science by itself, a number of Islamic scholars devoted their lives in translating al-Quran into their own languages.

The Holy Quran covers infinite scope in meaning and interpretation, applicable throughout the ages, in the light of any generation of mankind within the capabilities of mind. A Divine work, yet the Quran is not beyond the reach of the human mind. Should there be unexplained

mysteries in the contents of the Quran, the reason is not that these passages in al-Quran defy reasoning or intellect and understanding but that as some Muslim scholars put it, because the human mind has not reached that sublimity of thought to be able to fully grasp the mysteries of the Holy Book.

During the lifetime of Muhammad s.a.w. al-Quran did not appear in book-form although the contents and surahs had been applied by Muslims in all aspects of their daily lives. After the death of Muhammad, during the Caliphate of Abu Bakar an uprising occurs at Yamamah where Musailamah the Imposter claims himself to be a prophet and starts to spread a new teaching. Abu Bakar orders Muslims to quell the uprising. In the ensuing battle, a large number of *hafiz* who had memorised the Quran fell on the battlefield. Fearing that al-Quran might be lost into oblivion, Saidina Omar urged the Caliph to have it compiled into a book.

The task fell on Zaid ibni Thabit, who had been recording the Divine revelations at the bidding of Muhammad s.a.w. during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet. He was assisted by his former colleagues and also the *hafiz* who had memorised the Quran. All the verses written on stones and bones; leaves and hides were collected and collated. After further verifications a standard written Book came into being in the exact order as the oral recitations during the time of the Holy Prophet.

The Holy Book was then further testified by the four Companions—Abu Bakar, Omar, Othman and Ali and

attested by selected *hafiz* who knew the Quran by heart. All other written documentations were then destroyed.

The Book was then entrusted to the care of Abu Bakar and on his expiry, it was handed to Saidina Omar who in turn bestowed it to his daughter, Hafsah, widow of the Holy Prophet.

In 25 A.H. Huzaifah ibni Al-Juma'an who had just returned from the battlefields in Armenia and Azerbaijan was reported to have told Caliph Othman that he had heard several variations in the recitation of the Holy Quran in several Muslim countries. At once, Caliph Othman ordered the compiler, Zaid ibni Thabit to make several copies of the Holy Quran, so that "there would not arise any differences with regard to the Quran as in the case of *al-Taurat, Zabur* and *Injil*".

Copies of the Quran were then sent to Kufah, Basrah Damascus, Mecca and a copy was left in Madina. The copy in the hands of Othman is known as *Mushhaf al-Imam* or *Mushhaf Usmani*.

Al-Quran has to a large extent contributed a great deal to the Arabic language and characters. Dots and phonetic signs differentiate the various Arabic characters and facilitate reading. With the advent of the Quran, *nahu* or grammar for the language, and *tajwid*, rules for reciting were evolved. In fact, al-Quran, has not only standardise Arabic language and unified Arab cultures but also cements the unity of 800 million Muslims into a world brotherhood of mankind.

Today, although millions of copies have been printed, al-Quran has not lost its originality. Not even a dot or a line has been abrogated in the course of over 1,400 years of its existence.

Malaysia, in a way, helps to maintain the originality of al-Quran by holding the Quran Reading Competitions annually and increasing the number of *hafiz*—those who memorise the Quran by heart. Thus revealing the truth and purity of the Divine words.

“We have without doubt sent down the Message (al-Quran and We will assuredly guard it (from corruption)”

Pillars of Faith, Belief in Prophets

“Man is an animal—a higher animal” so goes the saying. However, the mind in man makes him different from the animal. The mind is the greatest gift that God has bestowed upon man. Tamed and cultivated the mind can control matter, yet subservient to God. Wild and unschooled, the mind is able to master the forces of destruction and turn rebellious to God. Hence, although man is endowed with intellect, he has to be instructed, preached to and shown examples for his upliftment in line with his destiny in this world—to be the vice-regent of God—as in Surah 2:30

It takes a man to guide a man, for a man has emotions and is ever confronted with all kinds of temptations unlike angels. Thus God chose among human beings, men whom He raised as prophets to guide men to attain perfection. But the guidance comes from Him as He warned in Surah 2: 38-39:

“When there comes to you a guidance from Me, then who so follows My guidance, no fear will be on them, nor shall they grieve. But those who reject Faith and belie Our signs, they shall be companions of the fire; and there, they shall abide.”

Who transmits the guidance to us?
All nations of the world were provided with spiritual

guidance through their prophets. Every people, generation or nation has its Messenger as stated in Surahs 10:47 and 35-24. If that Messenger was ignored or rejected, Of His Message was twisted or misused, the Day of Reckoning will come, when perfect justice will be done and the whole Truth revealed..

Belief in All Prophets

Although every people, generation or nation has had its prophet, Islam enjoins its followers to believe in all the prophets as ordained by God in Surah 4:152:

“Those who deny Allah and His apostles, and those who wish to separate Allah from His apostles, saying: ‘We believe in some but reject others.’ and those who wish to take a middle course, they are in truth unbelievers; and We have prepared for unbelievers a humiliating punishment.

“To those who believe in Allah and His apostles and make no distinction between any of the apostles, We shall soon give their due rewards for Allah is All Forgiving and Most Merciful.”

According to a *hadith* the number of prophets is 124,000 but the Quran mentions only 26 of them namely, Adam, Nuh (Noah), Hud, Salih, Ibrahim (Abraham), Lut (Lot), Ismail (Ishmael), Ishaq (Isaac), Yaqub (Jacob), Yusuf (Joseph), Shu'aib, Yunus (Jonah), Ayub (Job), Musa (Moses), Harun (Aaron), Daud (David), Su-

- *fatanah*—
intelligent and sagacious; and
- sinless

Miracles

Miracles which occurred during the life of several of the prophets should not be attributed to the powers of the prophets or certain faculties of the prophets, like Musa's splitting the sea and drowning Pharaoh and his army; Yunus' deliverance from the fish's mouth; and Isa'a raising the dead to life, restoring sight to the blind and curing all kinds of ailments. A prophet has to effect a moral and spiritual transformation. In a society "seeing is believing" miracles became just a means to appeal to the reasoning faculty.

The miracle of Islam is the Holy Quran. It has transformed individuals and families; societies and nations. It has awakened the material as well as the moral, intellectual as well as the spiritual being in man.

Prophecy

While miracles are generally the manifestations of the powers of Allah, prophecy gives prominence to God's infinite knowledge which comprehends the future as well as the past and present. Among the prophecies, the triumph of Islam finds a prominent place in the Holy Quran. These prophecies were revealed when Muhammad s.a.w. stood alone against the mighty forces of poly-

Iaiman (Solomon), Zakaria (Zachariah), Yahya (John the Baptist), Elias (Elijah), Dzulkifli (Ezekiel), Elisha, Idris, Uzair, Isa (Jesus) and Muhammad.

In Surah 40:78 Allah revealed to Muhammad s.a.w:
"We did aforetime send apostles before thee: of them there are some whose story We have related to thee and some whose story We have not related to thee."

Attributes of Prophets

What type of beings are the prophets?

Prophets were all human beings since human beings alone could serve as models and become reformers of mankind.

According to Surah 21: 7-8: "... The apostles We sent before thee were men to whom We granted inspiration. Ask the people of the Book if you know not. Nor did We give them bodies that ate no food; nor were they exempt from death."

Besides being human, they are:

- *siddiq*—
truthful and righteous;
- *amanah*—
faithful and trustworthy;
- *tabligh*—
never withhold what has been revealed to them;

theism and idolatry. True to the prophecy, Muhammad s.a.w. succeeded in delivering the message of The Unity of the Divine Being, and in inviting the people of the world to obey this Being and to do good to their fellow men. And thus Muhammad s.a.w. becomes the world prophet as in Surah 25:1:

“Blessed is He Who sent down the criterion upon His servant that he may be a warner to *all the people of the world.*”

unlike his predecessors Nuh, Hud, Salleh, Shu'aib—each of whom was raised to be the prophet “to *his* people” and Musa, was commanded to “bring forth *thy* people from darkness into light” (14:5) and Isa is spoken of as “a messenger to *the children of Israel*”

The Advent of Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. in Ancient Scriptures

The fact that Muhammad s.a.w. is the universal prophet has been foretold in earlier religious scriptures, namely the *Torah* (the Old Testament) *Injil* (the New Testament), Buddhist Scriptures, *Bhavishya Purana* (Hindu Scripture), and *Dasatir* (Parsi Scriptures).

In the Old Testament, under Deuteronomy, 18: 15-18:

“The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethen, like unto me; unto him shall ye harken. According to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb in the

day of assembly, saying. Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more; that I die not. And the Lord said unto me, They have well said that which they have spoken. *I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and I will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him*".

The phrase "from among their (Israelites) brethren" refers to no other than the Ishmaelites i.e. the Arabs who had never had any prophet then. Thus the promised prophet must have been Muhammad s.a.w. who was from among the Ishmaelites, the brethren of the Israelites.

In the New Testament, according to the Gospel of St. John 14:15, 16, 25, 26:

The Prophet Isa said:

"If you love me ye will keep my commandments. And I will pray to the Father and He shall give you another *Parakletos* that he may be with you for ever. These things have I spoken unto you while ye abide with you. But the *Parakletos* which is the spirit of truth whom the Father will send he shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I said unto you."

And in John, 16; 7, 8, 12, 13:

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is expedient for

you that I go away, for if I go not away, the *Parakletos* will not come unto you ... And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin and of righteousness and of judgement. I have yet many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of Truth is come, he shall guide you into all the truth for he shall not speak from himself, but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come."

Parakletos is the word that was uttered by the prophet Isa and not *Perikalutas* which is rendered in English as "Comforter" *Parakletos* which means *Illustrious* or *renowned* is equivalent to the Arabic word *Ahmad*. This fact can further be verified by Surah 61:6:

"And when Jesus, son of Mary, said, O Children of Israel, surely I am the messenger of Allah to you, verifying that which is before me of the Torah and giving the good news of a Messenger who will come after me, his name being Ahmad".

In Buddhist Scriptures which have been translated in many languages, the following is an extract from the Ceylon sources:

"Ananda said to the Blessed One, "Who shall teach us when thou are gone?"

"And the Blessed One replied: "I not the first Buddha who come upon the earth, nor shall I be the

last. In due time another Buddha will arise in the world, a holy one, a supremely enlightened one, endowed with wisdom in conduct, auspicious, knowing the universe, an incomparable leader of men, a master of angels and mortals. He will reveal to you the same eternal truths which I have taught you. He will preach his religion, glorious in its origin, glorious at the climax, and glorious at the goal. He will proclaim a religious life, wholly perfect and pure, such as I now proclaim. His disciples will number many thousands, while mine number many hundreds."

"Ananda said, 'How shall we know him?'"

"The Blessed One replied, 'He will be known as *Maitreya*....' "

The word *Maitreya* means A Mercy and The Blessed One. This fits in well with the reference in Surah 21: 107:

"We have not sent thee O Muhammad, but as a Mercy to all the nations."

In *Bhavishya Purana Parv 3, Khand 3, Adhya 3, Shalok 5-8* of the Hindu Scriptures it is clearly stated that:

"Just then an illiterate man with the epithet of teacher, Muhammad by name, came along with his companions. Raja (Bhoja in a vision) to that Great Deva, the denizen of Arabia, purifying with the Ganges water and with the five things of cow offered sandalwood and paid worship to him. O denizen

of Arabia and Lord of Holies to thee is my adoration. O thou who has found many ways and means to destroy all the devils of the world! O pure one from among the illiterates, O sinless one; the spirit of truth and absolute master, to thee is my adoration! Accept me at thy feet."

In *Dasatir* No. 14 of the Parsi Scripture, the phophecy as to the advent of the Prophet Muhammad is made in clearest terms thus:

"When the Persians should sink so low in morality, a man will be born in Arabia whose followers will upset their throne, religion and everything. The mighty stiff-necked ones of Persia will be overpowered. The house which was built (*Kaaba*) and in which many idols have been placed will be purged of idols, and people will say their prayers facing towards it. His followers will capture the towns of the Persis and Taus and Balkh and other big places round about. People will embroil with one another. The wise men of Persia and others will join his followers."

Finality of Prophethood

With the appearance of the World-Prophet in the person of Muhammad s.a.w. comes the truth of Surah 2: 213:

"All mankind are one single community...."

We have seen how Islam sweeps away all barriers—

geographical, colour, racial—to unify the human race under the banner of One God. A religion brought to perfection whereby one has only to seek in the Quran to find the requirements of the present-day world or for the future generations. For no other religious book has ever claimed thus as in Surah 5 Verse 3 of the Holy Quran:

“This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed on you My blessing.”

With the perfection of religion comes the finality of prophethood for there is no need for another prophet and another religion after the Holy Prophet Muhammad and Islam.

Muhammad s.a.w. appeared some six hundred years after the prophecy of Jesus. It is now nearly fourteen hundred years after the advent of Muhammad without any other prophets.

Belief in Life After Death

Of the six Pillars of Faith in the religion of Islam, the belief in God and the belief in Life after Death are the principal ones. But in the same way that Muslims believe in God although they cannot see Him, we are also required to believe in Life after Death, although no dead man has ever come back to tell us his story.

However in the Quran, in Surah 23: verses 99 and 100, and in many other chapters and verses, God has revealed to us what happens to those who have refused to believe:

“Until, when death approaches one to them, he says, ‘My Lord, send me back [to life], so that I may do right in that which I have left undone.’ By no means. It is a mere word that he speaks. And behind them is a barrier (*barzakh*) until the day they are raised up.”

From these two verses we can see that:

- there is continuity of life immediately after ‘death’:
- the period spent in the grave is an intermediate one,—between death and resurrection:
- the life hereafter is eternal unlike the life on earth which is transitory, as a preparation for the higher life;
- the fruit of our actions or deeds on earth is accordingly shown to us immediately after death; hence

the need to live a virtuous life.

Physical & Spiritual Development

Thus our life is a continuous development of our physical and spiritual being. The Holy Quran has indicated the three stages of physical development namely the stages of dust or clay, embryo and birth. There are also three stages of spiritual development which can also be identified with the physical one thus:

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT	STAGES	SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT
dust	preparatory	death
embryo	formative	grave
birth	developed	resurrection

We all know that we were created from dust or clay like our forefather, Adam. The clay contains the elements with which we will be moulded. This is the preparatory stage of our physical development. Surah 23:12 states:

“Verily, We created man from the product of wet earth.”

Verses 13 and 14 of the same Surah further indicates the formative stage of physical development thus:

“Then We placed him as a drop (or seed) in a safe lodging. Then We made the drop a clot; then We made the clot a little lump; then We fashioned the

little lump bones; then We clothed the bones with flesh....”

Birth

And finally the verse shows us the fully developed human being in a new form, unlike the dust from which he was created:

“...and then We developed out of it another creature. So blessed be Allah, the Best of Creators!”

In this developed stage, we are endowed with a body, a soul and mind, or in other words, physical and spiritual being and intellect. This is the most critical stage of our development for whatever physical action we commit on our fellow creatures and how we react to situations in this life on earth have a certain bearing on our spiritual development, which is very essential for the next step in our life as in verse 15 of the same Surah:

“After that, at length you will die.”

Death

Death, like the dust in our physical development is only the beginning stage into a higher life. The fruits of our deeds in this world is immediately known to us as indicated by the spiritual experience of the evil one taken by death in verses 99—100 of Surah 23 at the beginning of this article.

Thus the virtues and vices we committed during our life on earth become, as it were, the elements for the next formative stage of our spiritual development—the grave or the intervening *barzakh*—like the embryo in the mother’s womb during the physical development.

Grave

According to a Hadith transmitted by Bukhari and Muslim, Muhammad, s.a.w. is reported by Abdallah bin Umar, as saying, “When a person dies, his abode among the inhabitants of paradise will be shown to him morning and evening if he is to be one of them; but if he is to be one of the inhabitants of hell, his abode among them will be shown him. He will be told that this is his abode to which God will finally raise him on the day resurrection.”

We have only a glimpse of the happening immediately after death—the reward and the punishment in the grave but there are yet many secrets beyond our perception like Surah 32:17:

“No person knows what is kept hidden from them of joy as a reward for what they used to do.”

Resurrection

What resurrection means can be gauged from the various names under which it is referred to in the Holy Quran, namely:

yaum al-qiamah	— the day of the great rising
al-sa'ah	— the hour
yaum al-akhir	— the last day
al-akhirah	— the future life
yaum ad-din	— the day of requital
yaum al-fasl	— the day of decision
yaum al-hisab	— the day of reckoning
yaum al-fath	— the day of meeting
yaum al-jam'	— the day of gathering
yaum al-khuluq	— the day of abiding
yaum al-khuruuj	— the day of coming forth
yaum al-ba'th	— the day of being raised to life
yaum al-hasrat	— the day of regret
yaum al-tanad	— the day of calling forth
yaum al-taqhabun	— the day of manifestation of osses
al-qariah	— the striking calamity
al-qhashiyah	— the over-whelming calamity
al-sakhhah	— the deafening calamity
al-tammah	— the predominating cala- mity
al-haqqah	— the great truth
al-waqi'ah	— the great event.

Thus resurrection refers to a general destruction and a great awakening. The Holy Quran gives some vivid revelations on this great event in the following verses,;

which are found in the chapter entitled "The Awakening".

"He (the sceptic) asks 'When is the day of Resurrection' When the sight is dazzled, and the moon becomes dark, and sun and moon are united. On that day man will cry: 'Where can I run away to?' Alas! There is no place of refuge.... Some faces on that day will beam in brightness and beauty looking towards their Lord; and some faces on that day will be sad and dismal knowing that there will be made to befall on them some great calamity.'"—
Surah 75: 6-25

"And the book (of deeds) shall be put forward, then you will see the guilty fearing on account of what is in it, and they will say, 'Ah! Woe to us! What a book this is! It does not leave out a small (deed) or a great one, but records them all.'"—Surah 18:49

"And the measuring out on that day will be just; then as for those whose measure of good deeds is heavy, they shall be successful. And as for those whose measure of good deeds is light, those it is that have made their souls suffer loss."

Thus this world could be likened to an examination hall where we are constantly being tested and the result will be shown immediately after death. And the basis of the tests is our deeds.

And how does God weigh our deeds? Through the intention behind the deeds.

I have touched on life immediately after death in the grave and the resurrection when our deeds on earth will be put on the 'balance' and a just reward will await us. Now I would like to dwell on life in heaven and hell, the two forms of life after death, according to the Holy Quran and the Hadith.

"These will be companions of the Right Hand (those nearest to God). They will be amidst thornless lotus trees and tall trees with flowers and fruits piled one above another (like the banana), with spreading shades and gushing water and fruit in plenty, unrestricted by season nor out of supply. And on thrones raised high. We have made their companions grow into a new creation, pure and virgin of youthful age and loving temperament. All these blessings are reserved for the Companions of the Right Hand."

—Surah 56: 27-38

It must be noted that the words of the Quran should not be taken literally, rather figuratively or metaphorically. The description of the heaven, the drink and food, the trees and streams, even our body and faculties in the Hereafter have spiritual values which no human language can adequately express without adopting symbolic terminology.

According to a Hadith transmitted by Bukhari the Holy Prophet said, "Allah says I have prepared for My righteous servants what no eye has seen and no ear has heard, and what the mind of man has not conceived." Furthermore, Ibn Abbas is reported to have said, "In Paradise there are no foods of this life except the names."

The Resurrection brings a new life and a new order of things, a new heaven and a new earth. Our ideas of space and time on this earth cannot be applied to the next life. That also goes with man-woman relationship in the Hereafter. There is no sensuality nor suggestion of procreation in Paradise. In fact one can paint the exact picture of what the blessings in Heaven and the punishments in hell are as in Surah 32: 17:

"No person knows what delights of the eye are in store for them as a reward for their good deeds."

Dwellers of Paradise

Generally those whose good deeds outweigh the bad ones will have a place in Paradise. There are four classifications of people according to various spiritual experiences gained in this life, namely:-

the prophets who taught and led mankind; lovers of truth who upheld it with their person, influence and resources; the witnesses who testified to the truth either by martyrdom, the tongue of the true preacher, the pen of the devoted scholar or the life of

the man devoted to service; and the good people who led ordinary lives but always in righteous way, these will be bestowed with the Grace of God and united in a beautiful fellowship thus as in Surah 4:69:

“All who obey God and the Apostles are in the company of those on whom is the Grace of God—the prophets, the sincere, the witnesses and the righteous: and what a beautiful fellowship they make.”

and again:

“The righteous will be amid gardens and fountains of clear flowing water. Their greetings will be ‘Enter ye here in peace and security. And we shall remove from their hearts any lurking sense of injury. They will be brothers, joyfully facing each other. There, no sense of weariness shall touch them, nor shall they ever be asked to leave.

Surah 15: 45-48.

Again, it is our deeds that decide our life in the Hereafter, The Holy Quran states in Surah 43: 72-74:

“This will be the garden or which you are made heirs for your good deeds in life. You shall have therein abundance of fruit, from which you shall have satisfaction. The sinners will be in the Punishment of Hell to dwell therein for ever.”

However, in Islam, the greatest sinner has the opportunity to redeem himself in this life by repentance, for God

is Most Merciful and Oft-Forgiving and He promises in Surah 39: 53-54:

“Say: O my servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the Mercy of God: for God forgives all sins: for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. Turn ye to your Lord in repentance: bow to His will, before the penalty comes to you: after that ye shall not be helped”

Life in Hell

When death overtakes sinner before they repent, they will become the denizens of Hell,

“And verily, Hell is the promised abode of them all! To it are seven gates: for each of these gates is a special class for sinners.”

Surah 15: 43-44

Every man’s Hell will take its shape according to his evil deeds ensuing from his atheistic belief or polytheism, hypocrisy, base passion and evil practices, oppression of the innocent, sensuality and iniquity or vicious activities.

Seven words are used in the Quran for Hell and commentators apply the meaning of these words to seven different stages of life in Hell, namely:

- **Jahim** – intense heat produced by leaping flames of fire;

- **Saqar** – the excessive heat melting everything;
- **Laza** – sweeping flames of fire;
- **Jahannam** – deep pit;
- **Hutama** – that which crushes and grinds everything to powder;
- **Sa'ir** – blasting fire; and
- **Hawlah** – bottomless pit.

Like the heaven or paradise described in symbolic terms so is hell. A man's Hell is within his own heart as in Surah 104: 4-9:

“He will surely be cast into the crushing fire; and what shall cause thee to understand what the crushing fire is; It is the fire kindled by Allah which rises from the hearts, verily rising over them like a vault on outstretched columns.”

What punishment awaits those who disbelieve in God and the sinners? Surah 22: 19-22 states;

“Those who deny their Lord, for them will be cut out a garment of Fire and over their heads will be poured out boiling water. With it will be scalded what is within their bodies as well as their skins. In addition, there will be maces of iron to punish them. Every time they wish to get away from it all, they will be forced back therein, and (it will be said unto

them) 'Taste you the penalty of burning!'

As for their drink and food, the Holy Quran states:

"The tree of Zaqum. We have truly made it an ordeal to the wrong-doers. It is a tree that springs out of the bottom of Hell-fire: the shoots of its fruits-stalks are like the heads of devils: Surely they will eat of it and fill their bellies with it and then they will be given a mixture of boiling water to drink."

Surah 37: 62-67

Several verses in the Quran state that sinners will have chains around their necks symbolic of those who were slaves of their lusts and those who were not capable of independent thinking. Some will be in scorching wind and scalding water with no food except the filthy wash of their wounded bodies or thorns which will neither nourish them from hunger while some will be clothed in shirts of pitch.

The torment or punishment in hell is continuous. When any part of the body loses its sensitiveness, fresh skins will be substituted so that they will be constantly subject to pain. This is indicated in Surah 4:46:

"Those who reject Our signs. We shall soon cast Them into the fire as often as their skins are roasted through. We shall change them for fresh skins so that they may taste the torments. For God is Mighty, Wise."

Such is the contrast in life after death that we now see how important is every deed of ours in this world toward God and His creatures. While the promise of reward in Paradise persuades us to aspire towards a higher spiritual life, the punishment in Hell deters us from evil deeds and baser forms of life. It is our deeds in this world that decide our abode in the next for;

“Every man’s deed have We fastened on his own neck. On the Day of Judgement We shall bring out for him a scroll which he will see spread open. Read your own record: only you, you alone on this day make out an account against you.”

Surah 17: 13-14.

Belief in TAQDIR (PREMEASUREMENT)

Often we come across people who are filled with despondency after encountering their first failure in life. When they are asked why they did not make a fresh effort they would reply, “**Ah! Sudah nasib!**” “It’s my fate!”

True Muslims believe in **Taqdir** as ordered by Allah.

Those who believe in Fatalism are not true Muslims. Fatalism, as we all know, asserts that all human activities have been predestines. This is in direct conflict with what we have been discussing in the past issues of Islamic Herald namely that man is accountable for his deeds. Fatalism denies the freedom of will in man, thus dampening all enthusiasm for progress, besides destroying morality.

There are several verses in the Holy Quran which give the meaning of **taqdir**. Surah 25: verse 2 states:-

“He Who created every thing, then ordained for it a measure (taqdir)”

This is further explained in Surah 36: 38-40 thus:

“And the sun runs its course for a period determined for it: that is the taqdir (law) of the Mighty and the Knowing. And as for the moon, We have measured for it stages till it returns like the old and withered palm leaf. It is not permitted to the sun to catch up the moon, nor can the night outstrip the day: each floats in its own orbit according to law.”

From the above verses we can see that God created the universe and all the things in it with a certain measure (taqdir) for a certain purpose. To achieve that purpose a certain law has to be obeyed, the law which is commonly known as the law of Nature. For example in the solar system, if the sun tilts a bit from its position, some planets might be burnt up while others might freeze.

Likewise, man, as a part of the universe, has been created with a function to serve and has been endowed with certain faculties and capabilities related to that function.

To enable man to discharge his various functions, God has endowed him with the necessary capabilities as in Surah 95:4:

“We have indeed created man in the best of moulds.”

With this best of moulds, he is to conquer nature; to elevate himself morally and spiritually through his dealings with his Creator and seek purity in life.

For his conquest of nature, God has bestowed him intellect. In our lifetime, we have seen ourselves how man uses his intellect to probe into the unknown laws of nature that enable him through modern science to land on the moon. While man rejoices over his materialistic benefits, he still needs guidance to keep the peace among his fellow creatures on earth as well as to uplift his moral and spiritual being.

This guidance is provided by God through His books of revelations, in particular the Holy Quran in Surah 5: 16-18: we read:

“O People of the Book! There has come to you Our Apostle, revealing to you much that you used to hide in the book (Torah and Bible) and passing over much (that is now unnecessary): There has come to you from God a new light and a clear Book, wherewith God guides all who seek His good pleasure to ways of peace and safety, and leads them out of darkness, by His will unto the light—guides them to path that is straight.”

Going back to the people in despair over their first failure in life mentioned at the beginning of this article, they should not commit unislamic acts. They should analyse themselves or open themselves to self-criticism.

To a true Muslim, failure and success like misfortune and prosperity are mere opportunities to exercise his dormant capabilities. Now that we know that we have been created with a certain measure (taqdir) for a certain purpose, when we meet failure, we should ask ourselves, “Have I gone beyond my capabilities or taqdir?” For in Surah 2:286, it is stated that:

“On no soul does God place a burden greater than it can bear.”

We should also ask “Have I transgressed the law (**taqdir**) ordained by God for me in performing my functions. From these simple questions we might be able to figure out what actually is our function or our own specific purpose, for which we have been created in this world. Knowing our specific purpose in this universe will help us to pursue our ambition in the right direction. We can only

know this after several trials and tribulations. The world has produced many great men who succeeded through their very failures.

In fact, between misfortune and prosperity, the latter is a more severe form of trial. The Quran warns us that it is prosperity and plenty that often turn man away from God and Surah 64: 15 keeps reminding us that:-

“Your riches and your children are only a trial; but in the presence of God is the highest reward.”

Taqdir which recognises freedom of human will makes a man responsible and accountable for his deeds. It makes man the ruler of the universe, harnessing the forces of nature to the service of man, bringing peace on earth and promoting love between man and his fellow beings. Together with the belief in Allah, Angels, Prophets, Scriptures and Life after Death we are also ordered by Allah to believe in **Taqdir** or Premeasurement. These beliefs constitute the Pillar of Faith or **Iman** essential for every muslim. Thus concludes the series with a reminder from Surah 35:8:

“Is he, then, to whom the evil of his conduct is made alluring, so that he looks upon it as good (equal to one who is rightly guided?) For God leaves to stray whom He wills, and guides whom He wills. So let not your soul go out sighing after them: for God knows well all that they do!”