

1. The Inimitability of the Qur'an

Synopsis: The meaning of *i'jaz* (inimitability); [the fact that] it is incumbent on the prophets to perform miracles; [that] the best miracles are those which best resemble the most advanced arts of the time; the Qur'an as a divine miracle; the Qur'an as an eternal miracle; the Qur'an and the [forms of] knowledge; the Qur'an and the correctness of expression; the systems of regulation and legislation in the Qur'an; the precision of expression in the Qur'an; the disclosure of hidden matters by the Qur'an; the Qur'an and its characteristic underlying meanings.

Language usage provides several meanings for the word *i'jaz* (inimitability) and its derivatives. These include: to be unable to do a certain thing, to find that someone is unable to do a certain thing, or to cause someone to be unable to do a certain thing. Hence [using various forms of the word *i'jaz*], we say: "This task a *jaza* so-and-so," meaning that it is beyond that person's ability; and "A"] Zayd," meaning that I found him incapable of doing something or, alternatively, caused him to be incapable of doing it.

In its conventional application, *i'jaz* means that a person claiming a divine appointment proves the truthfulness of his claim by doing things that go beyond the laws of nature and that others cannot accomplish.

However, a miracle is evidence of the truthfulness of the claimant only when it is possible for that person to be truthful in that claim. But, if the truthfulness of his claim is refutable, either by the intellect or by a reliable transmission from a prophet or from an Imam whose inerrancy is well attested, such a miracle cannot be evidence of the veracity of the claim, nor can it be called a miracle as defined by common usage, even if other human beings are incapable of emulating it.

An example of the first basis of refutation is when someone claims to be a deity. The truth of such a claim is unacceptable to the mind, for there are sound proofs which establish its impossibility.

An example of the second basis of refutation is when someone claims to be a prophet after the Prophet of Islam. Such a claim is absolutely false on the basis of definitively reliable transmission from the Prophet of Islam and from his inerrant vicegerents, that his prophethood is the seal of prophecy. When

the claim is unquestionably false, what is the benefit of the evidence brought forward by the claimant? Moreover, it is not incumbent on God, the Exalted, to expose the falsity of such a claim when reasoning has already decided that it is impossible, or when transmitted evidence has established its falsity.

By contrast, it may happen that a person claims a divine appointment and performs a deed beyond human power, yet that deed serves as evidence of his falsity. This was the case with *Musaylima*, who is reported to have spat in a dilapidated well to increase its water; instead, the water that was in it dried up. He is also said to have passed his hand over the heads of the children of Banu Hunayfa and rubbed their palate [as the Prophet had done], but baldness afflicted all the children whose head he had touched, and those whose palate he had rubbed developed a lisp.¹ When the pretender provides this kind of evidence, it is not incumbent on God to expose him, because the evidence itself is enough to give the lie to his pretensions. Moreover, such a thing is not a miracle, according to conventional usage.

Furthermore, as defined by usage, miracles do not include feats of magicians, tricksters, or masters of certain exact theoretical sciences, even if they are capable of things which others cannot accomplish. Nor is it incumbent on God to expose them when it is known that their actions are founded on magic or jugglery or some other natural factors, even if they claim a divine appointment and substantiate it by such acts of magic. This is because the exact theoretical sciences are founded on laws that are well known to the specialists. These laws will inevitably produce their results, provided they are accurately manipulated. Accordingly, the wonders of medical sciences are outside the realm of miracles, for they are actually conditional upon the constitution of the substances, notwithstanding the fact that these are unknown to the layman and, perhaps, to the medical scientists themselves.

It is not inappropriate for God to single out one of His creatures for knowledge of one of these things, even if it were a critical matter beyond the generality of people [because this scientific knowledge has no connection with a prophet's claim to divine appointment]. However, it would be inappropriate if He were to mislead the ignorant by means of their ignorance, and to allow the miracles to be wrought at the hands of an impostor, thus causing people to go astray.

The Necessity for a Prophet to Perform Miracles

It is incumbent on God, the Exalted, to impose moral-religious obligations (*taklif*) on the generality of people. This is a rational conclusion derived from sound rational proofs and explicit rational evidence that establish that human beings, on their path to perfection, are in need of religious-moral obligations in order to attain happiness and success in commerce. Thus, if God does not impose religious moral obligations on them, this would be either because He is unaware of their need for obligation and God is far exalted above this ignorance; or because He desires to prevent them from attaining their perfection [through the performance of these obligations] and this miserliness is inadmissible of the Absolutely Generous One; or because He desires to impose obligations on them, but has no power to do so—and this is an incompetence which is inadmissible of the Absolutely Powerful. Therefore, it is imperative for

Him to impose religious-moral obligations on humankind, and this necessity entails the requirement of a human announcer who would apprise them of the explicit and implicit forms of the religious-moral obligation that "***He who perished [on that day] might perish by a clear proof [of God's sovereignty] and he who survived might survive by a clear proof [of His sovereignty]***" (*Qur'an 8:42*).

Furthermore, this divine mediatorship is an important appointment that inevitably would have numerous pretenders and would be coveted by the vainly ambitious, with the result that the truthful among them might be confused with the false and the deceptive mistaken for a true guide. For this reason it is necessary for the claimant of this mediatorship to establish clear evidence of the truthfulness of his claim and of his trustworthiness in conveying the divine message. This evidence cannot be a normal act that others can perform. It can only be something that exceeds the laws of nature.

A miracle is therefore a way of supporting the truthfulness of the claimant to divine appointment. This is because miracles exceed the laws of nature and therefore cannot be performed without divine providence and empowerment. If the claimant to prophethood were to be false in his claim, the divine empowerment to work miracles would then be a temptation to accept error and a support of falsehood, and this is impossible on the part of the Wise God. Therefore, a miracle wrought by a claimant must be an indication of his truthfulness and a sign of God's acceptance of his prophethood.

The preceding is a continual rule governing such matters, and is accepted without reservation by rational persons. If someone claims to be an emissary of a ruler in matters pertaining to his subjects, and if the subjects are in doubt about the truthfulness of this claim, it is first of all necessary for the claimant to produce evidence supporting his claim. It is further necessary that this evidence should be unequivocal. Hence, if the emissary tells them, "The evidence of my truthfulness is that tomorrow the king will salute me in the special manner he salutes his other emissaries," and if the king knows what has gone on between the emissary and the people, and if, further, the king salutes the emissary at the proper time in the proper manner, the king's action would thus confirm the claimant's mission, and no rational being would be able to doubt this matter. After all, it is inappropriate of a capable king, who protects the interests of his subjects, to confirm a false claimant, when the latter [by putting forward a false claim] wishes to corrupt the subjects.

If such behavior is inappropriate on the part of a rational person, it is impossible on the part of the Absolutely Wise [God]. God, the Exalted, has pointed this out in His noble Book, saying,

And if he [the Prophet] had invented false sayings concerning Us, We assuredly had taken him by the right hand and then severed his life-artery (Qur'an 69:44-46).

These verses mean that "Muhammad, whose prophethood We have affirmed, and whose veracity we have confirmed with miracles, cannot invent false sayings concerning Us. If he were to do that, then We would have taken him by the right hand and severed his life-artery. Thus, Our silence confirms what he says and precludes the insinuation of falsehoods into the sacred law of true guidance. It is incumbent

upon Us to protect the sacred law when it prevails, just as it was incumbent upon Us to protect it at the time of its creation."

But a miracle's validity as evidence of the veracity of a claimant to prophethood depends on the assumption that the intellect can distinguish good from evil. However, the Ash'arites, who reject this assumption and deny that reason is capable of such a judgment, have perforce closed the door on confirming prophethood. This is one of the errors of their doctrine, for their assertion closes the door against confirming prophethood. This is because miracles are evidence of the veracity of prophethood only if it seems improper for the mind that miracles can be wrought by a liar. If the intellect does not see the matter as such, then no one can distinguish the true prophet from the false one.

Al-Fadl b. Ruzbihan has responded to this problem by asserting that, although it is possible for God to do evil, it is however His practice to limit the working of miracles to genuine prophets, so that a miracle cannot be wrought at the hands of a liar; accordingly, the Ash'arite doctrine does not entail closing the door to belief in prophethood. The weakness and incoherence of this response is obvious, however. First, the divine practice mentioned by Ibn Ruzbihan is not one of the things that can be perceived through the senses or discerned by the eye and the ear. Therefore, the only way to knowledge in this matter is through the intellect. If the intellect were unable to differentiate between good and evil, as al-Ash'arī maintains, it would then be impossible for anyone to know definitely about divine practice.

Second, the confirmation of this divine practice depends on our faith in earlier prophets who worked miracles. By having such faith, we would know that the divine practice is to bestow the ability to work miracles exclusively on the veracious. As for those who deny the prophethood of earlier prophets, or doubt them, they have no way of establishing the divine practice affirmed by Ibn Ruzbihan, and thus the evidence of working miracles does not hold for them.

Third, if the intellect equates doing a thing with not doing it, and if it does not pass judgment as to whether this action or inaction is good or evil, what is then to prevent God from changing His practice? After all, He is the Omnipotent who does not have to account for what He does, and thus, He can, if He will, manifest miracles at the hands of a liar!

Fourth, a practice consists of contingent actions, which become a practice after regular repetition. A practice is therefore established over a period of time. Such being the case, what is the proof of the truthfulness of the first truthful prophethood before this practice was established? We will discuss the doctrine of the Ash'arites as we clarify their error.

The Best Miracles Are Those Which Best Resemble the Most Advanced Arts of the Time

A miracle, as explained above, is an occurrence that breaks the laws of nature and which other human beings cannot imitate when a prophet claimant performs it to demonstrate the truthfulness of his claim.

What is beyond doubt is that a miracle can be recognized as such only by specialists in the art the miracle resembles. This is because the specialist is necessarily the most knowledgeable about the peculiarities of his art or craft, and possesses the most adequate grasp of its characteristics. Hence, he can distinguish between what human beings can do and what they cannot. Consequently, the specialists are the ones who more readily believe the miracle. The layman, in contrast, has a wider scope for doubt as long as he is ignorant about the laws of that art, and as long as there is a likelihood that the pretender had made use of laws that are known only to the specialists in that particular field. He would thus be slow to concede its veracity. It is for this reason that divine wisdom has decided that each prophet should perform the kind of miracles that best resemble the known arts of his age, in which there are many specialists among his contemporaries, so that the miracle would be quickly believed and firmly established as evidence [for his claim].

Therefore, it was a divine wisdom that Moses (peace be upon him) should be given the [magical] staff and the [miracle-performing] white hand, for magic was wide spread in his age and there were numerous magicians. For that reason, it was the magicians who most readily accepted his miracles as evidence of his veracity when they saw the staff turn into a serpent and "swallow that which they did falsely show," and then [saw it] returned to its original state.² The magicians saw this and realized that it was beyond the power of their magic, and therefore, they believed that it was a divine miracle. Thus, they declared their faith in the audience of the pharaoh [in which the incident occurred], not caring about the pharaoh's wrath and threats.

Greek medicine was widespread in the time of Jesus (peace be upon him), and the physicians of his time had accomplished wonders. Medical sciences were well established in Syria and Palestine, because these two countries were Roman colonies. Thus, when God sent His prophet Jesus to these two regions, He decided in His wisdom that the proof of Jesus should resemble the art of medicine. Hence, among the miracles worked by Jesus were the raising of the dead and the healing of the born-blind and the lepers. This was because the people in his day knew that such acts were beyond human power and were not based on medicine, and therefore must have originated from beyond the world of natural science.

As for the Arabs, they were distinguished in the art of literary style and were celebrated for the eloquence of their language. They had reached the pinnacle of literary art, to the extent that they used to hold assemblies and gatherings to compete in poetry and oration. A person [competing at these gatherings] was rated by the literary excellence of what he said. Their love for poetry was so great that they selected the seven odes, wrote them with gold water on papyrus, and hung them on the walls of the Ka'ba. Thus, it became the practice to call a person's best poem "his gilded poem."³ Among the Arabs, both men and women were interested in literature. Al-Nabigha al-Dhabyani was the first judge [at the contests for] poets. He used to attend the fair of 'Ukaz: during its season, where a red dome of animal hide would be pitched for him. The poets used to come to him to submit their compositions for his opinion.⁴ It was for this reason that the wisdom of God required that the Prophet of Islam should be

endowed with the miracle of the Qur'an's clarity of expression and eloquence. Thus, the Arabs realized that this was the speech of God, and that in eloquence it is beyond human power. This was acknowledged by all Arabs who were not obstinate.

This is indicated by a narrative on the authority of Ibn al-Sukayt. He asked [the eighth Imam] Abu1 al-Hasan al-Rida (peace be upon him):

Why did God send Moses (peace be upon him) with the [miraculous] staff, white hands, and the power of magic, [whereas] he sent Jesus with the power of healing and Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) with the [power of] speech and oration?

The Imam Abu al-Hasan (peace be upon him) replied:

This is because when God sent Moses (peace be upon him), what prevailed among the people of his time was magic. Thus, he brought them from God something that no one among them could perform, and which rendered their magic null and void; and with that He established the proof for them. And God sent Jesus (peace be upon him) at a time when chronic illnesses had appeared and people needed the medical sciences. Jesus brought them from God something the like of which they did not have, and by means of which he raised them from the dead, and healed the blind and the lepers, with God's leave. Thus, he established the proof for them.

And God sent Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) at a time when the art of oration and poetry was prevalent among the people of his time. Thus, he brought them from God his exhortations and his wisdom, which rendered speeches null and void, and he established his proof for them.⁵

The Prophet performed other miracles besides the Qur'an, such as splitting the moon, the serpent which spoke, and the pebbles which praised God. But the Qur'an is the greatest of these miracles, and the strongest in establishing the proof, for the Arabs, who were ignorant of the natural sciences and the mysteries of the universe, may have doubted these other miracles and attributed them to causes of whose accuracy they were ignorant. The nearest of these causes to their mind was magic, to which they would have attributed these miracles. However, they were not likely to doubt the eloquence of the Qur'an and its inimitability because they understood the techniques of eloquence and comprehended its mysteries. Moreover, those other mysteries were transitory and did not have a lasting effect. In no time they would be come a narrative, transmitted from one generation to the next, and leaving the door wide open for doubt. But the Qur'an is here for eternity, and its miracle is continuous over the generations. I shall discuss, in particular, the miracles of the Prophet, other than the Qur'an, and thereby devote some attention to those among contemporary authors and others who deny them.

The Qur'an as a Divine Miracle

Every intelligent person to whom the call of Islam has reached knows that Muhammad (peace be upon

him and his progeny) announced to all mankind the call to accept Islam, and through the Qur'an, established for them the proof [of the claim to prophethood] and challenged them, with [the Qur'an's] inimitability, to produce its like, even by helping each other in so doing. Then he lowered this and challenged them to produce ten suras [like those in the Qur'an]. And, finally, he challenged them to produce only one sura like it.⁶

Had that been possible, it would have behooved the Arabs--especially those among them who excelled in eloquence--to take up the Prophet's challenge and invalidate his proof by matching it. Indeed, it would have behooved them to counter one sura of the Qur'an and match it in eloquence so as to invalidate the proof of this claimant who was challenging them in their most outstanding skill and their most notable distinction. They would thus have gained a manifest victory, endless renown, and eminence in honor and position. A contest like this would have spared them wars, great expenses, separation from their homeland, and the suffering of hardship and affliction.

But the Arabs reflected on the eloquence of the Qur'an and conceded its inimitability, for they knew that they would be defeated trying to match it. Hence, some of them believed the caller to the truth and submitted to the call of the Qur'an and attained the honor of Islam. Others took the course of obduracy and chose to counter with swords rather than words, and preferred a contest of lances to a contest of eloquence. This incapacity and opposition were the ample proof that the Qur'an was a divine revelation beyond human capability.

Some ignorant non-Muslims have claimed that the Arabs matched the Qur'an and countered it with this proof, and that this contest has been forgotten because of the passage of time. The response to such a view is that this encounter, had it taken place, would have been made known by the Arabs in their gatherings and publicized at their annual fairs and markets. The enemies of Islam would have taken it for [use as] a ballad, chanting it in every gathering, repeating it on every occasion, passing it on to posterity, and guarding it as a litigant would guard his evidence. This would have been more satisfying to them than preserving the history of their ancestors. Yet, although pre-Islamic poetry has filled the books of history and the compendiums of literature, we do not see any trace of this encounter, nor do we hear any mention of it. This is in spite of the fact that the Qur'an challenges all humans--rather, all the jinn and humans--without limiting the challenge to any particular group. This is what God the Almighty says to those [who do not believe in the divine origin of the Qur'an]:

Say: "***Verily though mankind and the jinn should assemble to produce the like of this Qur'an, they should not produce the like thereof, though they were helpers one of an other (Qur'an 17:88).***

Moreover, we see the Christians and the enemies of Islam spending enormous amounts of money to detract from the prestige of this religion and derogue its great Prophet and holy Book. They do this every year, rather, every month. Had they been able to counter the Qur'an, even by matching one sura of it, that would have served as a greater proof for them and a better means of accomplishing their aim; and they would not have needed to spend all this money and exert themselves.

Fain would they put out the light of God with their mouths, but God will perfect His light however much the rejecters of faith are averse (Qur'an 61:8).

On the other hand, a person who deals regularly and deeply with an eloquent text, would, with time, be expected to acquire the ability of matching its style, or coming close to it. This can be observed in everyday life, but does not apply to the Qur'an, for, despite frequent perusal and prolonged study, no one has been able to imitate it to any extent. This proves to us that the Qur'an has a style beyond teaching or learning. Moreover, had the Qur'an been the Prophet's own words and composition, we would have found passages in the Prophet's orations and sayings that resemble it in style and equal it in eloquence. However, the sayings of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) and his orations that have been preserved in writing are characterized by a different style. Had there been among his sayings anything that resembles the Qur'an, it would have been widely transmitted and recorded, especially by his enemies, who wanted to harm Islam by whatever means and device. One more point to add is that customary eloquence has limits which it rarely exceeds. Well versed Arab poets and prose writers specialize in one genre or even two and three. One may excel in *hamasa* (heroic) poetry, for example, but not in love poetry. The Qur'an, by contrast, dwells on numerous subjects and applies many forms of style, and in all this has excelled other writings. This versatility is impossible for human beings.

The Qur'an: An Eternal Miracle

We have seen that belief in prophethood and faith in it are only through the miracles the prophet performs as a proof of his claim. Since the prophecies of earlier prophets were limited to their own times, divine wisdom dictated that their miracles be of short duration, for they were proofs for prophecies that were to serve for a limited time. Therefore, some contemporaries of these prophets were eyewitnesses to these miracles and, hence, these miracles served as evidence for them. Others learned about these miracles by means of eyewitness accounts related without any break in transmission (*tawatur*); [7](#) hence, the miracle served as evidence for these as well.

However, in the case of the eternal Shari'a (sacred law of Islam), the miracle that attests to its truthfulness must be timeless, because if the miracle were limited and of short duration, it would not be observed by those far away. Consequently, if the transmission and reports regarding it were to be disrupted, those living far away would not be able to ascertain its truthfulness. Hence, if God were to impose on such persons the obligation to believe in this miracle, He would be imposing on them an impossible obligation. Imposing an impossible obligation is inadmissible of God. Hence, the final and lasting prophethood inevitably requires a lasting miracle. It is for this reason that God sent down the Qur'an as a lasting miracle so that it would be a proof of the truthfulness of the final and lasting prophethood. It would, as well, be a proof to posterity as it was a proof for those who preceded them. We can conclude two points from what we have said so far.

First, [there is] the superiority of the Qur'an over all other miracles which were accomplished by the past

prophets, and over the other miracles which were accomplished by our Prophet, Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny), because the Qur'an is lasting and timeless, and its inimitability is continuous, to be heard by all generations and to serve as proof through the centuries.

Second, the earlier sacred laws are temporary. What points to the fact that their viability has ended is that the proofs and evidence serving them have ended with the passing of the miracles which confirmed their truthfulness.

Moreover, the Qur'an has another unique characteristic that makes it superior to all the miracles performed by earlier prophets. This characteristic is that the Qur'an is responsible for the guidance of mankind⁸ and for leading them to their ultimate perfection. The Qur'an is the guide that enlightened the uncouth and oppressive Arabs – they who had embraced the worst habits and worshiped the idols, and who were preoccupied with tribal warfare and the vainglorious boasting of the pre-Islamic age,⁹ instead of pursuing knowledge and rectifying their souls. With the Qur'an as a guide, they became, in a very short time, a community significant in its learning and history, and superior in its customs. Whoever studies the history of Islam and probes into the biographies of the Prophet's Companions, who met their martyrdom in his presence, would realize the greatness of the Qur'an in the effectiveness of its guidance and the extensiveness of its influence. Indeed, it was the Qur'an that pulled them out of the abyss of the age of ignorance (*jahiliyya*, the pre-Islamic age) [and brought them] to the heights of knowledge and perfection, and made them be devoted to the cause of invigorating the Shari'a, with no regret about wealth, children, and wives they left behind.

The words of al-Miqdad to the Messenger of God, when the Messenger consulted the believers about setting out for Badr, are a fair corroboration of what we have said:

O Prophet of God, carry out what God has commanded you to do, for we are with you. By God, we shall not say what the Children of Israel said to Moses: "***Go, you and your Lord, and fight. We are slackers here***" [*Qur'an 5:24*]. But we say: "Go, you and your Lord, and fight. Indeed, we are with you as fighters. I swear by the One who has sent you with the truth, if you march us toward Birk al-Ghimad [across the sea]" –by which al Miqdad meant the capital of Abyssinia—"we shall endure it with you until you attain it." The Prophet of God (peace be upon him and his progeny) said kind words to him and prayed for him.¹⁰

Al-Miqdad was only one of the Muslims to express his belief and determination, and to dedicate himself with heart and soul in order to vitalize the truth and destroy associationism (shirk). Many Muslims were of this faith, overflowing with sincerity. Undoubtedly, it was the Qur'an that enlightened the hearts of those who had been devoted to the idols and who had engaged in tribal warfare and pre-Islamic vain-glory. It made them hard on the rejecters of faith and merciful to each other, each of them valuing his companion's life over his own. Hence, by virtue of Islam, the Muslims conquered, in eighty years, more than others conquered in eight hundred. Whoever compares the lives of the Prophet's Companions with those of earlier prophets would realize that therein lies a divine mystery, and that the beginning of this mystery is the Book of God, which shone on the souls and cleansed the hearts and the spirits with a lofty

faith and a steadfast doctrine.

Look at the history of the disciples of Jesus, and at the history of other companions of the prophets, and you will see what their ways were. They abandoned their prophets under adversity and betrayed them for fear of destruction! As a result, those earlier prophets had no power over the oppressors of their time, but used to hide from them in caves and ravines. This is the second attribute that gives the Qur'an merit over all other miracles.

Having learned from the preceding that the Qur'an is a divine miracle of eloquence and style, it should be added that its inimitability is not confined to that. Rather, it is a miracle pertaining to the Lord and a manifold proof of the prophethood of the one to whom it was revealed. It is appropriate for us at this point to present some of these aspects [of the Qur'an's inimitability], however briefly.

The Qur'an and the Forms of Knowledge

The Qur'an states in many of its verses that Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) was unlettered (*ummi*). The Prophet himself mentioned this openly to many of his people and clan members, among whom he had been raised. None of them denied that, and therein lies the definitive evidence of its truthfulness. Although unlettered, he nevertheless included in his Book such elements of learning as to overwhelm the minds of philosophers and baffle the thinkers in the East and the West from the emergence of Islam to this day. This Book shall remain a source of perplexity and bewilderment to thinkers until the Day of Judgment. This, indeed, is one of the greatest aspects of its miraculous inimitability.

Let us concede to the opponents of Islam the fallacy of this claim. Let us assume that Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) was not unlettered. Let us imagine him to have been tutored in forms of knowledge and to have acquired his knowledge of science and history through learning. If all this was true, does it not follow that he must have acquired his learning and specialties from the learned persons of his time, among whom he grew up? Yet we know that among those whom Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) grew up, the majority were idolaters whose beliefs were delusions, and who had faith in superstitions. Others included the people of the Book who obtained their knowledge, history, and laws from the books of the two Testaments, which they attributed to revelation, tracing them back to the prophets. If we were therefore to concede that Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) acquired his knowledge from his contemporaries, does it not follow that his views and his education would reflect traces of the beliefs he had acquired from his teachers and his guides about those books which were the sources of his education and knowledge? On the contrary, we find that the Qur'an is different from the two Testaments in all respects, and that it purifies the two Testaments from the delusive imagination and myths that filled the Testaments and the other sources of education at that time.

The Noble Qur'an deals, in many of its verses, with the attributes of God, the Sublime. It ascribes to Him

the attributes of perfection that are appropriate to His prestige, and exalts Him above the effects of deficiency and contingency. The following are examples of what the Qur'an says:

And they say, "God has taken to Himself a son." ***Be He glorified. No, but whatever is in the heavens and the earth is His. All are subservient to Him. The Originator of the heavens and the earth! When He decrees a thing, He says to it only, "Be!" and it is*** (Qur'an 2: 116- 17). ***Your God is One God; there is no god save Him, the Merciful, the Com passionate*** (Qur'an 2: 163). ***God! There is no god save Him, the Ever living, the Eternal. Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and what ever is in the earth*** (Qur'an 2:255). ***Lo! nothing in the earth or in the heavens is hidden from God. He it is who fashions you in the wombs as pleases Him. There is no god save Him, the Almighty, the Wise*** (Qur'an 3:5--6). ***Such is God, your Lord. There is no god save Him, the Creator of all things, so worship Him. And He takes care of all things. Vision comprehends Him not, but He comprehends [all] vision. He is the Subtile, the Aware*** (Qur'an 6: 102-3). ***Say: "God produces creation, then reproduces it."*** How, then, are you misled? (Qur'an 10:34). ***God it is who raised up the heavens without visible supports, then mounted the Throne, and compelled the sun and the moon to be of service; each runs to an appointed term; He orders the course; He details the revelations, that, haply, you may be certain of the meeting with your Lord*** (Qur'an 13:2). ***And He is God; there is no god save Him. His is all praise in the former and the latter [states], and His is the command, and to Him you shall be brought back*** (Qur'an 28:70). ***He is God, than whom there is no other god, the Knower of the invisible and the visible. He is the Merciful, the Compassionate. He is God, there is no god but He, the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One, the [Giver of] Peace, the Keeper of Faith, the Guardian, the Majestic, the Compeller, the Superb. Glorified is God from all that they ascribe [to Him]!*** He is God, the Creator, the Shaper out of nothing, the Fashioner; His are the most beautiful names. All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Him, and He is the Mighty, the Wise (Qur'an 55:22-24).

Thus does the Qur'an describe the God of the Universe and bear the knowledge which is guided by clear evidence and which accords with sound reasoning. Is it possible that an unlettered person growing up in an ignorant environment will bring forth such lofty knowledge?

The Qur'an, moreover, mentions the prophets and ascribes to them all the good traits appropriate to them, and attributes to them all the glorious deeds which attend the sanctity of prophethood and the righteousness of divine deputyship. The following are examples of these verses:

[And ordain good in this world and in the Hereafter for] those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered Prophet, whom they will find described in the Torah and the Gospel [which are] with them. He will enjoin on them that which is right and forbid them that which is wrong. He will make lawful for them all good things and prohibit for them only the foul (Qur'an 7: 157). ***He it is who has sent among the unlettered ones a Messenger of their own, to recite to them His***

revelations and to make them grow, and to teach them the Book and wisdom, though heretofore they were indeed in error manifest (Qur'an 62:2). And lo! yours verily will be reward unfailing. And lo! you are of a tremendous nature (Qur'an 68:3--4). Indeed, God has favored Adam, Noah, and the family of Abraham and 'Imran above all His creatures (Qur'an 3:33). And when Abraham said to his father and his folk: "Lo! I am innocent of what you worship, save Him who did create me, for He will surely guide me" (Qur'an 43:26-27). Thus did We show Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, that he might be of those possessing certainty (Qur'an 6:76). And We bestowed upon him Isaac and Jacob; each one of them We guided; and Noah did We guide aforetime; and of his seed [We guided] David and Solomon and Job and Joseph and Moses and Aaron. Thus do We reward the good. And Zechariah and John and Jesus and Elias. Each one of them was of the righteous. And Ishmael and Elisha and Jonah and Lot. Each one of them did We prefer above [Our] creatures. With some of their forefathers and their offspring and their brethren; and We chose them and guided them to the straight path (Qur'an 85:88). And We verily gave knowledge to David and Solomon, and they said: "Praise be to God, who preferred us above many of His believing servants" (Qur'an 27: 15). And make mention of Ishmael and Elisha and Dhil al-Kifl. All are from the chosen (Qur'an 38:48). These are they to whom God showed favor from among the prophets, of the seed of Adam and of those whom we carried [in the ship] with Noah, and of the seed of Abraham and Israel, and from among those whom We guided and chose. When the revelations of the All-Merciful were recited to them, they fell down adoring and weeping (Qur'an 19:58).

These are a few of the verses which the Qur'an brought forth to free the prophets from any blemished record and [to establish] their sanctity and to show them in their true holiness, righteousness, and good remembrance.

As for the two Testaments, they, too, mention and describe the prophets, but how they describe them, and to what lowly level do they reduce these godly emissaries! Here are some examples.

1. The Torah relates, in the first and second chapters of Genesis, the story of Adam and Eve and their expulsion from paradise.¹¹ It mentions that God permitted Adam to eat of all the fruits except the fruits of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And God said to him: "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die" (Gen. 2: 16-17). Then God created from Adam his wife Eve and they were both naked in paradise, for they did not know good from evil. Then the serpent came and guided them to the tree [of knowledge] and enticed them to eat of its fruit and said: "You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:5-6). When they ate from this tree, their eyes opened and they realized that they were naked and they made for themselves loincloths. When the Lord saw them while He was walking in paradise, Adam and Eve hid away from him. Hence, God called out, "Where are you, O Adam?" Adam said, "I heard the sound of thee in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself" (Gen. 3: 11). At that, God

said, "Who told you that you were naked?" (Gen. 3: 12). Having learned that Adam had eaten from the tree, God said: "Behold, man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"—therefore the Lord God sent him forth (Gen. 3:22). Hence, God drove him out of paradise and, at the east side of it, He placed the cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way leading to the tree of life. And, it is mentioned in the ninth verse of the twelfth chapter that the serpent was called Iblis and Satan, who leads the whole world astray.

This is how the revealed scriptures ascribe to the Holy God that He lied to Adam and deceived him about the tree, then was afraid that he would acquire everlasting life and challenge Him in the freedom of His kingdom. Therefore, He drove him out of the garden of Eden. Moreover, the account says that God is a corporeal being who walks in paradise and is ignorant [of] where Adam hid from him; and that Satan, the misleader, advised Adam and brought him from the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge, and helped him understand good and evil.

2. Chapter 12 of Genesis mentions that Abraham claimed before the pharaoh that Sarah was his sister, and concealed that she was his wife. Thus, the pharaoh took her for her beauty and "for her sake he dealt well with Abraham; and he had sheep, oxen, he-asses, menservants, and maidservants, she-asses, and camels" (Gen. 12:16). When the pharaoh discovered that Sarah was Abraham's wife and not his sister, he said to him: "Why did you not tell me that she was your wife? Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her for my wife?" (Gen. 12:19–20). Then the pharaoh returned Sarah to Abraham.

The implication of this story is that Abraham was the cause of the pharaoh's taking his wife as his own, and—God forbid—that Abraham, who is one of the noblest of the prophets of God, should do something even an ordinary person would not do.

3. Chapter 19 of Genesis relates the story of [what happened to] Lot and his two daughters when he went out of Zo'ar and dwelled in the hills. In this story, the elder daughter told her sister: "Our father is old, and there is not a man on earth to come into us after the manner of all the earth. Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may preserve offspring through our father" (Gen. 19:33). Thus, they made their father drink wine that night, and the older girl lay with him. The following night they also made him drink wine, and the younger girl lay with him; and both girls became pregnant. The older girl bore a son and named him Moab, and he is the father of the Moabites to this day. The younger also bore a son, and called him Ben Ammi; and he is the father of the Ammonites to this day. This is what the current Torah ascribes to the Prophet Lot and his daughters, and let the reader reflect on it and make his decision.

4. Chapter 27 of Genesis relates that Isaac wished to bestow upon his son Esau the blessing of the prophethood. But Jacob [his other son], deceived him and made him believe that he was Esau, and offered him food and wine. Isaac ate and drank. Thus, with the help of such tricks and many falsehoods, Jacob was able to obtain the blessing of God. And Isaac told him: "Be lord over your brothers, and may

your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be every one who blesses you!" (Gen. 27:29). When Esau came, he knew that his brother Jacob had usurped the blessing of the prophethood, and said to his father, "Bless me, even me also, O my father!" But he said, "Your brother came with guile, and he has taken away your blessing." Then Esau said, "Have you not reserved a blessing for me?" Isaac answered Esau: "Behold, I have made him your lord, and all his brothers I have given to him for servants, and with grain and wine I have sustained him. What then can I do for you, my son?" Esau lifted up his voice and wept (Gen. 27:35–38).

This usurpation of prophethood: Is it something that makes sense? And does God bestow His prophethood on a deceptive liar, and withhold it from its rightful owner? Could Jacob deceive God as he deceived Isaac, and was God later unable to restore the prophethood to its rightful owner? God is far too exalted for that. Perhaps the intoxication with wine was the reason for writing this nonsense and attributing wine drinking to Isaac.

5. Chapter 38 of Genesis relates that Judah, son of Jacob, committed adultery with his son Er's wife, named Tamar, and that she conceived by him and gave birth to the twins Perez and Zerah (Gen. 38:13–30). Moreover, chapter 1 of the Gospel of Matthew records the full genealogy of Jesus Christ and traces the ancestry of Jesus and Solomon and his father, David, to Perez (who was born from the adulterous act of Judah and his daughter-in-law, Tamar).

God forbade His prophets to be born through adultery. How can anyone ascribe to them a birth through adultery with a woman they were legally forbidden to have! However, the author of the current Torah was unconcerned about what he wrote and said!

6. Chapters 11 and 12 of 2 Samuel note that David committed adultery with the wife of Uri'ah, the believer and warrior for the faith. She became pregnant from this act of adultery, and David feared a scandal. To conceal the matter from Uri'ah, he sent for him and ordered him to enter his house. Uri'ah refused, saying: 'The ark and Israel and Judah dwell in booths; and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field; shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink and lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing" (2 Sam. 11:11). When David despaired of covering up the matter, he kept Uri'ah with him that day and invited him to eat. Uri'ah ate with him and drank and David made him get drunk. In the morning, David wrote to Joab: "Set Uri'ah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, that he may be struck down, and die" (2 Sam. 11:16). Joab did that and Uri'ah was slain, and Joab sent a messenger to David to inform him about it. David thus brought Uri'ah's wife to his house, and she became his wife after her mourning for [Uri'ah] ended. Chapter 1 of Matthew relates that Solomon, son of David, was born of that woman.

Imagine how the writer of this account has transgressed against God, and how these deeds can be ascribed to anyone with a modicum of decency and religious zeal, let alone a prophet of God! And [imagine] how such a tale can be reconciled with the assertion, in the Gospel of Luke, that Christ sits on the throne of David, his father!

7. Chapter 11 of the Book of 1 Kings relates that Solomon had seven hundred wives of high rank, and three hundred concubines. The women turned his heart to other gods. "For Solomon went after Ash'toreth, the goddess of the Sido'nians, and after Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites. So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. . . . And the Lord was angry with Solomon . . . and said, 'I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant'" (1 Kings 11:4–12). Chapter 23 of 2 Kings relates that the tall structures that Solomon built for Ash'toreth, the abomination of the Sido'nians, and for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, and for Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites, were defiled by King Josi'ah, who broke the images and tore down the pillars. He did similar things to all the other structures of the idolaters.

Assuming that it is not necessary for a prophet to be divinely guided against error although the rational proofs do establish this inerrancy—is it reasonably admissible for him to worship idols and build them lofty structures, and then invite people to affirm the oneness of God, and to worship Him? Never!

8. Chapter 1 of Hosea relates that Hosea was the first person to whom the Lord spoke. The Lord said to Hosea, "Go, take to yourself a wife of harlotry and have children of harlotry, for the land commits great harlotry by forsaking the Lord." So, Hosea went and took Gomer, the daughter of Dibla'im, and she conceived and bore him two sons and a daughter (Hos. 1:3). Chapter 3 relates that the Lord said to Hosea, "Go again, love a woman who is the beloved of a paramour and is an adulteress; even as the Lord loves the people of Israel" (Hos. 3: 1–2).

Is this God's way, commanding His prophet to commit adultery and to love an adulteress? Exalted is He above that. It is no surprise that the author [of the Book of Hosea] did not perceive the evil in [such an attribution]. What is surprising is that the civilized nations and modern scholars, who are skillful investigators of the Torah in its current form, and well informed about the myths it contains, can still believe that the Torah is a divine revelation and a heavenly book. Yes, indeed, blind imitation of one's ancestors is like a second instinct, difficult to renounce in order to follow the truth and the reality. God is the Guide, and the Giver of Success.

9. Chapter 12 of the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 3 of Mark, and chapter 8 of Luke relate that, while Christ was speaking to the people, his mother and brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him. But he replied to the man who told him [about it], "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said: "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in the heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matt. 12:46–50).

Consider these words and think of their absurdity. Christ chides his holy and pious mother and forbids her to see him, and he makes light of her and prefers his disciples to her. And those disciples are the ones to whom Christ once said: "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" (Mark 4:41); and [Christ] described their faith as having "the weight of a mustard seed" (Matt. 17:21). These were the disciples whom Christ had asked to spend the night with him when he was attacked by the Jews, but they declined. So when it was made to appear that the Jews detained him, his disciples—all of them—left him

and deserted him, as related in chapter 26 of the Gospel of Matthew. [12](#) Such are the abominable acts which the Gospels have ascribed to them.

10. Chapter 2 of John relates that Christ came to a wedding party, and [at the party] they ran out of wine; but he miraculously produced for them stone jars of wine. Chapter 11 of Matthew and chapter 7 of Luke relate that Christ used to drink wine, that he was even a habitual drinker, "drinking a lot of wine."

Far is the sanctity of Christ from this false accusation. Chapter 10 of the Book of Leviticus relates that the Lord said to Aaron: "Drink no wine, nor strong drink, you nor your sons with you, when you go into the tent of the meeting, lest you die; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations. You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean" (Lev. 10:8–11). Chapter 1 of Luke relates in praise of John the Baptist that "he will be great before the Lord, and he shall drink no wine nor strong drink" (Luke 1:15). This and other statements in the two Testaments demonstrate that they prohibited wine-drinking. These are but a few examples of the absurdities and fallacies, errors and inaccuracies, of the existing forms of the two Testaments that are neither congruent with reasoning nor compatible with correct logic. We have presented these to the reader so that he should study them carefully, and let his reasoning and conscience be the judge. Is it possible to surmise that Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) derived his learning, and took the content of his Noble Qur'an, from these absurdities, when the Qur'an is such a repository of lofty knowledge and firm teachings? Moreover, is it possible to maintain that these bizarre books are a heavenly revelation when they tarnish the sanctity of the prophets, as mentioned in those sections we cited above and those we have not? [13](#)

The Qur'an and the Integrity of Elucidation

Every rational person with experience and knowledge about the course of events knows that whoever bases his laws and reports on falsehood and calumny is bound to be self-contradictory and inconsistent. This would be more particularly the case if he embarks upon the numerous important issues of legislation, of human society and doctrine, and of the ethical systems based on intricate principles and firm foundations, and especially so if time passes by while this slanderer is at work. Yes, indeed, he is bound to fall into contradiction and incoherence, whether intentionally or not. This is because such is the requirement of deficient human nature when it is devoid of guidance. It is said in a famous proverb, "A liar does not have a memory."

The Qur'an deals with various matters and expands on them to the extent necessary. It deals with theological issues and with matters treating the prophecies. It has established the fundamentals of knowledge of jurisprudence, of the political and social order, and ethical principles. It also deals with other matters, related to astronomy, history, and the rules of war and peace. It describes celestial and terrestrial existents such as the angels, the stars, the winds, seas, and vegetation, and the animals and human beings. It also treats various parables and reveals information about the horrors of the Day of Resurrection and the place of assembly. In all this, it contains no contradiction, nor even the most minor

inconsistency; nor does it depart from principles that are acceptable to reason and to rational persons. At times, it relates one episode twice or even more [times], yet not the slightest incoherence or contradiction occurs. Take, for instance, the story of Moses. It is repeated several times in the Qur'an; and, in every instance, one finds a distinguishing feature, yet without any inconsistency in its essential signification.

If, further, one were to consider that the verses were revealed intermittently, in segments related to different occasions, one would realize that the Qur'an is the spirit of God's command. This is because lack of continuity entails, by its very nature, discord and lack of uniformity when the parts are put together. But we find that the Qur'an is a miracle in both conditions. It was revealed in intermittent segments, yet was miraculous when it was in that condition; and when it was collected, it attained another miracle. This type of miracle is alluded to in the following verse revealed by God:

Will they not then ponder on the Qur'an? If it had been from other than God, they would have found therein much inconsistency (Qur'an 4:82).

This verse guides people to a thing they discern through their innate disposition, and perceive through their natural instinct, namely, that a person who depends on falsehood and calumny in his call would inevitably be incoherent in his speech and contradictory in his elucidation. Such a thing does not occur in the Book of God [the Qur'an].

The Qur'an followed this course in many of its deductions and arguments. It directs people to heed the judgment of their innate disposition, and refers them to their instinct. This is the most effective way of guidance. The Arabs sensed this rectitude in the methods [of guidance in] the Qur'an, and the knowledgeable in language among them were convinced by that. The words of al-Walid b. al-Mughira, describing the Qur'an, explain this for us. He said, on being asked, by Abu Jahl, to say what he thought of the Qur'an:

What should I say about it? By God, there is no one among you who is more knowledgeable than me in poetry or who is more conversant than me in the rajaz meter of poetry,[14](#) or [in] the odes, or the poetry composed by the jinn. I solemnly declare that it [the Qur'an] does not contain anything that resembles any of this [that I know about]. By God, it is the most refined speech; it demolishes what is inferior to it, and it surely surpasses but cannot be surpassed.

Abu Jahl said, "By God, your people will not be satisfied until you talk about it." To this, al-Walid said, "Then give me time to think about it." After thinking, he said, "This is magic which has been related to him on the authority of someone else."[15](#)

In another version, al-Walid is reported to have said:

By God, I have heard from him a discourse that is neither the words of humans nor of jinn. It is indeed the most refined speech; it has elegance; the loftiest of it is most fruitful, and the basest is most

bountiful. Indeed, it surpasses without being surpassed, and this has not been said by a human being.

[16](#)

One wishes to appreciate [the inimitability of the Qur'an], he should study other scriptures ascribed to divine revelation. You will find them incongruent in meaning, disarrayed in style, neither convincing nor firmly connected. When one examines the two Testaments and the confusion and inconsistencies they contain, the matter becomes obvious and truth becomes evident from falsehood. At this juncture, we will mention examples of the inconsistencies in the Gospels.

1. Chapter 12 of Matthew and chapter 11 of Luke relate that Christ said, "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters" (Matt. 12:31). [In contrast], in chapter 9 of Mark and chapter 9 of Luke, Christ says that "he that is not against you is for you" (Mark 9:50).
2. Chapter 19 of Matthew, chapter 10 of Mark, and chapter 18 of Luke say that some people addressed Christ as "good teacher." To this he replied, "Why do you call me good?; no one is good but God alone" (Mark 10:17–18); whereas, in chapter 10 of John, he is said to have replied, "I am the good shepherd. . . . I am the good shepherd" (John 10:12, 15).
3. Chapter 27 of Matthew says that the two robbers who were crucified with Christ reviled him. Chapter 23 of Luke relates that one of the two criminals who were hung on the crosses railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us." The other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence and condemnation?" (Luke 23:39–40).
4. In chapter 5 of John, [Christ] says, "If I bear witness to myself, my testimony is not true" (John 5:32). In chapter 8 of this Gospel, however, he says, "Even if I do bear witness to myself, my testimony is true, for I know whence I have come" (John 8:14).

These are but a few examples of the inconsistencies and contradictions in the Gospels, despite the fact that they are small in size. There is enough in them for anyone seeking the truth and avoiding fanaticism and obstinacy.[17](#)

The Legislative System of the Qur'an

Anyone who studies history will be aware of the extent of ignorance of people before Islam, and the low level to which their knowledge and morality had sunk.[18](#) Barbarism prevailed among them; raiding and aggression were interminable; the people were inclined toward plunder and were ever ready to rush into searing wars and conflicts. The Arabians had their large share of mythology and uncivilized conduct. No religion united them, and no system bound them together. Inherited customs determined their lifestyle. Idolaters constituted the majority of the population in Arabia. Every clan and tribe had gods whom they worshiped and took as intercessors with God. Swearing by the idols (*anab*) and divining arrows (*azlam*) prevailed among them [cf. Qur'an 5:3, 90], as well as games of chance.[19](#) Games of chance were indeed a source of boasting. Among their other customs was the marrying of widows to their foster sons.

An even more abominable custom was the *wa'd*—the burying alive of their infant girls.[20](#)

These are some Arabian customs in the Age of Ignorance (*jahiliyya*). When the light of Muhammad emerged, and the sun of Islam rose in Mecca, they received enlightenment from the Qur'anic truths and acquired good morality. Hence, they substituted faith in divine oneness for idolatry, knowledge for ignorance, virtues for vices, brotherhood and harmony for dissension and disagreement. Consequently, they became a community with strong bonds, which stretched the wings of its might over the world and raised the standards of civilization in the regions of the earth. According to Muhammad Farid Wajdi, Dourri, one of the old French ministers, has commented as follows:

After the emergence of him [the Prophet], who united the Arab tribes into one nation with one aim, a great nation emerged, whose possessions stretched from the Tagus River in Spain to the Ganges in India, raising the beacons of civilization in all regions of the world. These were the days, in the Middle Ages, when Europe was swathed in the darkness of the ignorance of its peoples.

He then adds:

Of all the peoples of the Middle Ages, they [the Muslims] monopolized the sciences, and it was because of them that the clouds of barbarism in Europe were dispelled, after they had gathered for centuries as a result of the breakdown of order following the barbaric invasions.

Indeed, all this resulted from the teachings of the Book of God, which excels all heavenly books. This is because the Qur'anic legislative system and its teachings conform with manifest truths and sound reasoning. The Qur'an follows the path of justice and avoids excess and neglect. Thus, one observes that in the Opening Chapter ("Surat al-Fatiha"), the Qur'an prays to God, in the words of mankind, for guidance to the straight path: "***Guide us to the straight path***" (*Qur'an 1:6*).

This sentence, though brief and concise in words, has a broad and far-reaching signification. We shall, God willing, explain this when we comment on this noble verse later.

The Qur'an enjoins justice and the middle course in many of its passages. It says:

Lo, God commands you that you restore deposits to their owners, and, if you judge between mankind, that you judge justly (Qur'an 4:58). Deal justly; that is nearer to your duty (Qur'an 5:8). And if you give your word, do justice thereto even though it be [against] a kinsman (Qur'an 6: 152). Lo, God enjoins justice and kindness, and giving to kinsfolk, and forbids lewdness and abomination and wickedness. He exhorts you in order that you may take heed (Qur'an 16:90).

Certainly, the Qur'an enjoined justice, and its teachings are in accordance with moral integrity. Accordingly, it admonishes in many places against miserliness, apprising people of its evil consequences:

And let not those who hoard up that which God has bestowed upon them of His bounty think that

it is better for them. No, it is worse for them. That which they hoard will be their collar on the Day of Resurrection. To God belongs the heritage of the heavens and the earth. God is informed of what you do (Qur'an 3: 180).

At the same time, the Qur'an admonishes against extravagance and squandering and points to their evils:

And be not prodigal. Lo, God loves not the prodigals (Qur'an 6: 141). Lo, the squanderers were ever brothers of the devils. And keep not your hand chained to your neck, nor outspread it widespread altogether, lest you sit down rebuked, denuded (Qur'an 17:28-29).

The Qur'an enjoins perseverance under adversity and forbearance in times of misfortune. It praises the patient and promises them a great reward:

Verily the steadfast will be paid their wages without stint (Qur'an 39: 10). And God loves the steadfast (Qur'an 3: 146).

In addition to this, the Qur'an does not shackle the oppressed person. Rather, it permits him to retaliate against his oppressor in equal measure. This is in order to put an end to corruption and uphold the rule of justice:

And one who attacks you, attack him in the like manner as he attacked you (Qur'an 2: 194).

It also permits the heir of the willfully slain to punish the killer:

Whoever is slain wrongfully, We have given power to his heir, but let him not commit excess in slaying (Qur'an 17:33).

By seeking moderation and prescribing rectitude, the Qur'an combines a good system for the life of this world and for the next, and provides what puts the former to right and ensures happiness in the latter. For, it is the Great Law; the Prophet brought it [so] that, with it, mankind would attain happiness [in this world and the next]. Its laws are not entirely worldly, with no regard to the hereafter, as is the case with the current version of the Torah. The latter, despite its large size, is devoid of any reference to the Day of Resurrection; nor does it inform [its followers] about the next world, where good and evil deeds will be recompensed. On the contrary, the Torah says clearly that obedience to God results in wealth in this world and power over people through their subjugation, while disobedience and falling in the eyes of the Lord lead to death and loss of wealth and power.

On the other hand, the laws of the Qur'an are not entirely otherworldly, failing to organize worldly affairs, as in the case of the Gospel. Qur'anic law is a complete legal system, which looks after the good in this life as well as in the one to come. Thus, it teaches:

Whoever obeys God and His Messenger, He will make him enter Gardens underneath which

rivers flow, where such will dwell forever. That will be the great success. And whoever disobeys God and His Messenger and transgresses His limits, He will make him enter Fire, where such will dwell forever; his will be a shameful doom (Qur'an 4: 13–14). And whoever does good [worth] an atom's weight will see it then. And whoever does ill [worth] an atom's weight will see it then (Qur'an 99:7–8). But seek the abode of the hereafter in that which God has given you and neglect not your portion of the world, and be you kind even as God has been kind to you, and seek not corruption in the earth; lo, God loves not corrupters (Qur'an 28:77).

In many of its verses, the Qur'an urges people to seek knowledge and to observe one's duty to God, while allowing them to enjoy the pleasures of life and all that is good:

Say: "Who has forbidden the adornment of God, which He has brought forth for His bondmen, and the good things of His providing?" (Qur'an 7:32)

The Qur'an frequently calls people to the worship of God, and urges them to ponder those of His signs that are connected with revelation and creation. It invites human beings to reflect on what they observe in the horizons and in themselves. Yet, it does not limit itself to the path which leads man to God: It also deals with the other aspects of his life that bind him to his fellow humans. Thus, it makes it lawful for him to engage in trade:

God permits trading and forbids usury (Qur'an 2:275), and orders him to honor his promises:

O, you who believe! Fulfill your undertakings (Qur'an 5: 1).

It commands marriage, which, alone, ensures the survival of the human species: And marry such of you as are solitary and the pious of your slaves and maidservants.

If they be poor, God will enrich them of His bounty. God is of ample means, aware (Qur'an 24:32). Marry of the women who seem good to you, two or three or four; and if you fear that you cannot do justice [to so many], then one [only] (Qur'an 4:3).

It commands men to deal kindly with their wives and take care of their needs; it commands all people to act rightly toward their parents and kindred, and toward all Muslims—indeed, toward all humankind. Thus, the Qur'an says:

But consort with them in kindness (Qur'an 4: 19). And the [women] have rights as obligations similar to those [of men] in kindness (Qur'an 2:228). And serve God. Ascribe nothing as partner to him. [Show] kindness to parents, and to near kindred, and the orphans, and the needy, and to the neighbor who is not of kin, and the fellow-traveler and the wayfarer and [the slaves] whom your right hand possesses. Lo, God loves not such as are proud and boastful (Qur'an 4:36). Be thus kind even as God has been kind to you, and seek not corruption in the earth; lo, God loves not corrupters (Qur'an 28:77). Lo, the mercy of God is nigh to the good (Qur'an 7:56). And do

good. Lo, God loves the beneficent (Qur'an 2: 195).

These are but a few examples of the teachings of the Qur'an in which moderation is enjoined. They made it obligatory for all members of the community to enjoin what is right and admonish against what is wrong, without restriction to any particular group or specific individuals. By legislating this conduct, the Qur'an opens the door wide for its teachings to spread, and breathes in them the spirit of life and continuance. It makes every member of the family and the neighborhood a guide for the rest and a guardian over them; rather, it makes every Muslim a guide and watchman over all other Muslims, to lead them to the straight path and restrain them from committing acts of injustice and corruption. Accordingly, all Muslims are individually obligated to convey the Qur'anic ordinances and implement them. Can anyone imagine any thing stronger and more effective than this army? Rulers exercise their will over their subjects with the power of their armies, but it is obvious that these armies cannot keep close watch over the subjects in all places and at all times. How great is the difference between the army of Islam and the armies of the rulers!

One of the teachings of the Qur'an that has been most consequential in uniting the word of Muslims and consolidating their ranks is the tenet of brotherhood among all classes of Muslims, and the repudiation of all distinctions except those of knowledge and godliness (*taqwa*). Thus, the Qur'an says:

Lo, the Noblest of you, in the sight of God, is the best in conduct (Qur'an 49: 13). Say [to them, O Muhammad]: "Are those who know equal with those who know not?" (Qur'an 39:9).

The Prophet once said:

Verily, God, the Exalted and Glorious, has honored those who were servile during the Age of Ignorance (pre-Islamic period). Through Islam, God removed the haughtiness of the Age of Ignorance and its vainglorious custom of boasting of kinsfolk and noble descent. Today, all the people, be they white, black, Qurayshite,²¹ Arab or non-Arab, are seen to be descendants of Adam. And, assuredly, God created Adam from clay, and the people most beloved by God on the Day of Resurrection are the most obedient and most godly among them.²²

He also said:

The excellence of all learned persons over all other people is similar to my excellence over the lowliest among you.²³

Hence, Islam allowed Salman the Persian to advance, through the purity of his faith, to the extent of becoming a member of the Prophet's household (*ahl al-bayt*), whereas it humbled Abu Lahab, the Prophet's uncle, for his rejection of faith.

The Prophet of Islam did not pride himself over his people because of his clan, noble descent, or any of the other things that were generally considered a reason for self-esteem in his time. Rather, he called

the people to believe in God and the Day of Resurrection, and to affirm oneness of God and unity among the people. It is for this reason that he gained power over a community that used to pride itself on noble lineage with hearts full of dissension and hypocrisy. Consequently, he influenced its character in such a way that he eliminated false pride and arrogance, to the point that a wealthy person of high lineage would give his daughter in marriage to a poor Muslim, even though [one] of a lowly descent.[24](#)

This is the way of the Qur'an in its guidance and teachings. It seeks the interest of the individual as well as the welfare of society, and has imposed such laws that would guarantee all this, some of them related to this world and others to the hereafter. With all this, can a rational person doubt the prophet hood of the man who came with this great sacred law, particularly when he considers that the Prophet of Islam grew up among an uncivilized community that had no knowledge of these teachings?

The Precision of Expression in the Qur'an

The Qur'an deals with a large number of varied topics, from theology to the branches of knowledge; from genesis to the return for the final judgment; from metaphysical subjects, like the spirit, the angels, *Iblis*, and the jinn, to worldly subjects, like astronomy, the Earth, history, and the lives of earlier prophets and what took place between them and their communities. It also deals with proverbs, proofs, and ethics; the rights of the family; politics and the public order, and laws of war; divine decree and predestination; the acquisition of responsibility for one's actions and free will; the forms of worship; human transactions; the laws of marriage and divorce; religious and moral obligations; legal penalties and laws of retribution; and so on. In all these subjects, the Qur'an brought lasting truths that will never lose their perfect applicability and relevance, nor become open to criticism in any respect; nor can falsehood come to them from before them or behind them [cf. Qur'an 41:42]. Those are things which are normally beyond human achievement—particularly if someone grew up in an ignorant community that had no knowledge of religious truths or any other areas of learning.

Accordingly, we find that, whoever writes on a theoretical subject, the error of many of his views will become obvious not long after his work is completed. This is because the longer that theoretical subjects are researched the clearer do the facts become. Later generations discover things which are different from those established by their predecessors. As the saying goes, reality is the offspring of research; and, indeed, the predecessors have left so much for later generations to discover. Because of this, we find that the books of ancient philosophers, and of the researchers and theoreticians who came after them, became the object of criticism of subsequent generations, to the extent that some of the things that the earlier generations believed to be absolute evidence turned out, after critical evaluation, to be delusions and fantasies.

But the Qur'an, despite its numerous objectives and exalted meanings and the passage of time, has not been found wanting in anything that makes it vulnerable to criticism and objection, except for those fallacies of some presumptuous individuals, who regard what they say as criticism. We shall turn to these and expose their fallacious assumptions, God willing.

Information about Hidden Matters in the Qur'an

In a number of places, the Qur'an gives information about some important issues connected with future reports and events. Unquestionably, all the things it foretold were proved correct, diverting in no way from reality. This is, evidently, information about concealed matters, which cannot be communicated except through revelation and prophecy. One of the verses that told about the hidden future is God's saying:

And [remember] when God promised you one of the two bands [of the enemy], that it should be yours and you longed that [a band] other than the armed one might be yours. And God willed that He should cause the Truth to triumph by His word, and cut the root of the rejecters of faith (Qur'an 8:7).

This verse was revealed concerning the battle of Badr. In it God promises the believers to give them victory over their enemy and to eradicate the rejecters. This was promised the believers though they were few in number and badly equipped, to the extent that the only rider among them was al-Miqdad [who had a horse]-or maybe it was al-Zubayr b. al-'Awwam-whereas the rejecters of faith were numerous and well equipped. Indeed, the verse describes their enemy as the "armed one," and the believers were afraid to fight them. But God willed "that He should cause the Truth to triumph by His word." Thus, God fulfilled His promise to the believers, and gave them a victory over their enemy and cut the source of the unbelievers.

In another verse, God says:

So proclaim that which you are commanded, and renounce the idolaters. Lo! We defend you from the scoffers, who set some other god along with God. But they will come to know (Qur'an 15:94-96).

These verses were revealed in Mecca in the early days of Islam. The circumstances of their revelation have been explained in a tradition reported by al-Bazzaz and al-Tabari, as related by Anas b. Malik, who said that they were revealed when the Prophet was passing among some people of Mecca. They taunted him behind his back, saying, "This is the person who claims that he is a prophet and that Gabriel supports him."²⁵ Thus, the verses spoke about the triumph of the Prophet's mission, and said that God shall give him victory, and shall defeat the unbelievers who had opposed him and mocked his claim to prophethood, and had treated him contemptuously. This was at a time when no one imagined that the Quraysh would decline in power and lose its authority, and that the Prophet would be able to defeat them.

A similar verse is God's saying:

He it is who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth, that He may make it conqueror of all religions, however much the unbelievers may be averse (Qur'an 61:9).

Still another prophecy is God's saying:

The Romans have been defeated in the nearer land,²⁶ and they, after their defeat, will be victorious (Qur'an 30:2-3).

What this verse prophesied happened within less than ten years. Thus, the Byzantine monarch was victorious, and his army entered the land of the Persians.

Another prophecy is God's saying:

Or they say: "We are a host victorious?" The hosts will all be routed and will turn and flee (Qur'an 54:44-45).

Thus, God informed [the Prophet] about the defeat which was to be incurred on the rejecters of faith, that they shall disperse and their dominion shall be suppressed.

This prophecy was fulfilled on the day of Badr, when Abu Jahl spurred his horse and raced it to the front line, saying, "We will gain a victory over Muhammad (peace upon him and his progeny) and his companions." But God destroyed him and his troops, and clarified the truth and raised its beacon and promoted its message. Hence, the rejecters of faith were routed, and the Muslims triumphed over them at a time when no one even imagined that 313 men, without equipment, and with only one or two horses and some seventy camels, would defeat a large and well-equipped horde. How could that handful of people overcome such a large number so that their power was scattered like ashes blown by the wind, if it had not been for the command of God, the accuracy of the prophecy, and the truthfulness of the intentions?

Another verse of this type is God's saying:

The power of Abu Lahab will perish, and he will perish. His wealth and gains will not exempt him. He will be plunged into flaming fire, and his wife, the wood-carrier, will have around her neck a halter of palm fiber (Qur'an 111:1-5).

This verse discloses the information that Abu Lahab and his wife shall enter the Fire. In other words, it foretells that they shall die without accepting Islam, and this is what actually happened.

The Qur'an and the Mysteries of the Creation

The Qur'an speaks, in more than one of its verses, about the order of the universe, the laws of nature, the celestial bodies, and other subjects that could not be understood at the beginning of Islam, except through divine revelation. Although some of these laws were known to the ancient Greeks and other nations of that time that had had prior experience with the sciences, the Arabian Peninsula was far from knowing about them. Moreover, some of the things which the Qur'an informed about did not become known till after scientific learning had advanced and discoveries multiplied. This type of information

abounds in the Qur'an and we shall treat them in our exegesis of the relevant verses, God willing.

The Qur'an was judicious in disclosing these matters. It disclosed them when it was appropriate to do that, and alluded to them when that was more commendable. The reason is that some of these matters were hard to accept for the minds of the people of that time; therefore, it was prudent that they should be alluded to in a way which would become clear for the people of future ages, when science would have progressed and discoveries would have proliferated.

One of the mysteries that were uncovered by the Qur'an, and to which later scholars drew attention, is contained in the following verse:

And the earth have We spread out, and placed therein firm hills and caused each thing to grow therein, well proportioned (Qur'an 15: 19).

This passage points to the fact that everything that grows in the earth has a specific weight. It has been established lately that each species of vegetation is made up of particular parts, each with a specific weight. If any change of weight were to occur in the parts of the plant, it would become a different organism. Furthermore, the proportional relationship between the various parts of a single plant is so minute that it is impossible to measure them accurately even with the most sophisticated equipment known to man.

One of the strange mysteries to which the Qur'an has alluded is that some species of trees and plants need pollination through the wind in order to blossom. In this regard, God the Exalted says:

And we send the winds [for] pollination (Qur'an 15:22).

Although the early exegetes of the Qur'an understood the word *līqa* ("pollination") in this verse to mean "carrying," which is [indeed] one of its meanings, and, accordingly interpreted the holy verse as "the winds carrying the clouds" or "the rain which the clouds carry," the indications are that this is not the main purport of the verse, particularly since the winds do not carry the clouds but drive them from place to place.

The correct way to view this verse, as based on the scientific discoveries made by botanists, is that it conveys an intricate mystery that the ancients were unable to fathom--namely, that trees and plants need pollination in order to blossom. This pollination occurs by means of the wind, as it happens with apricots, pine nuts, pomegranates, citrus, cotton, grains, and so on. Thus, when the pollens mature, the sacs open up, and they are scattered in the air, carried by the winds, then falling randomly on other buds.

God, the Exalted and Glorified, also points out that the law of coupling is not limited to animals; it applies as well to plants of various species. He says:

And of all fruits He placed therein two spouses [male and female] (Qur'an 13:3). Glory be to Him who created all the sexual pairs, that of which the Earth grows, and that of which they know not!

(*Qur'an* 36:36).

Among the unknown things that were unveiled by the Qur'an is the movement of the Earth. In this respect, God, the Almighty, says:

[It is God] who has appointed the Earth as a cradle (*Qur'an* 20:53).

Note the subtle way that this verse alludes to the movement of the Earth, which did not become clear until many centuries later. It describes the Earth figuratively as a cradle, in which an infant is rocked gently in order for it to go to sleep comfortably and peacefully. In the same way, the Earth is the cradle for human beings, suited to them in its rotational and revolutionary motions. And just as the movement of the cradle is intended for the growth of the infant and its repose, so are the Earth's daily and yearly motions intended for nurturing mankind, or, rather, all animals, plants, and minerals.

The verse alludes to the Earth's motion in an implicit, rather than an explicit, way because it was revealed at a time when the consensus of human opinion was that it was motionless, to the degree that this was regarded as an imperative that was not open to doubt.²⁷

Among other unknown things that the Qur'an disclosed fourteen centuries ago is the existence of another continent. In this respect, God, the Exalted and Glorified, says:

[God,] Lord of the two easts, and Lord of the two wests (*Qur'an* 55: 17).

This noble verse perplexed Qur'anic exegetes for many centuries. They suggested numerous interpretations for it. Some said that the verse refers to the rising and setting places of the Sun and the Moon. Others ascribed them to the change in the rising and setting angles of the Sun and Moon across the seasons. What should be obvious, however, is that the verse alludes to the existence of another continent on the other side of the Earth, where the rising of the Sun corresponds to its setting on our side. This may be construed from the following verse:

Ah, would that between me and you there were the distance of the two easts [i.e., two horizons]-an evil comrade (*Qur'an* 43:48).

What is to be understood from this verse is that the span between the two easts is the longest perceptible distance. Accordingly, it is incorrect to understand it as the rising place of the Sun and the Moon or as the angle of their apparent passage across the seasons, because the distance between those is not the longest perceptible distance. Thus, it must refer to the distance between the East and the West. In other words, the setting of the Sun on one part of the globe coincides with its rise over another part. The verse therefore points to the existence of that other part of the globe that was not discovered until several hundred years after the revelation of the Qur'an.

Accordingly, the verses that mention the East and the West in the singular refer to the direction, as in God's saying:

To God belong the East and the West, and whithersoever you turn, there is God's Countenance
(Qur'an 2: 115);

whereas the verses that use these words in the dual form are intended as an allusion to the existence of a continent on the other side of the Earth. The verses that use the words in the plural form refer to the East and the West in accordance with the surfaces of the globe, as shall be explained later.

Another unknown thing to which the Qur'an alludes is the roundness of the Earth.

God says:

And we caused the folk who were despised to inherit the eastern parts of the land and the western parts thereof (Qur'an 7: 137). Lord of the heavens and of the Earth and all that is between them, and Lord of the sun's risings (Qur'an 37:5). But nay! I swear by the Lord of the east [the rising-places] and the west [the setting-places] that We are able to substitute a better than they; we shall not be outstripped. (Qur'an 70:40).

These verses indicate that the Sun rises and sets over the Earth at more than one point, therefore implying that the Earth is round. Accordingly, the rising of the Sun over any part of the globe coincides with its setting over the other. Hence, the existence of numerous east and west is evident. It is neither an affected expression nor an arbitrary statement. Al-Qurtubi and others have attributed the east and the west to the changes in the Sun's angle to the Earth as it rises and sets on different days of the year. But this is an oversubtle explanation that is not borne out, for the Sun does not have fixed points of rising so that God may swear by them; rather, they vary according to the regions of the Earth. It is therefore imperative that the reference be to the successive risings and settings that result from the spherical shape of the Earth.

The narratives reported from the guided Imams of the Prophet's family, as well as their supplications and speeches, contain passages which point to the spherical shape of the Earth. Among these is the following statement reported from the Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (peace be upon him):

A man accompanied me who used to perform the evening prayer after dark and the dawn prayer before dawn, whereas I used to perform the evening prayer when the Sun had set and the dawn prayer when the dawn became evident to me. The man asked me: "What prevents you from doing what I do? The Sun rises over some people before it does over us, and sets for us as it rises over other people." I replied: "Because it is our duty to pray when the Sun sets for us and when the dawn breaks for us, and it is their obligation to pray when the Sun sets for them."²⁸

The man based his view on his knowledge of the various risings and settings of the Sun, which result from the spherical shape of the Earth. The Imam, for his part, confirms him in that, but also reminds him of his religious obligation.

Similarly, in another tradition, the Imam al-Sadiq says, "However, it is your duty [to determine] your east and your west."

In his morning and evening supplications, the Imam Zayn al-'Abdin (peace be upon him) has said:

And for each one of them [night and day], He has fixed a definite extent and span of time, and has caused each of them to pass into its companion, and has caused its companion to pass into it,²⁹ to a certain measure for the sake of the worshipers.³⁰

The Imam (God's blessings be upon him) intends, with this elucidation, to define something not yet discerned by the minds of that age, namely, the roundness of the Earth (since this notion was beyond human comprehension, because it was not yet discovered by the intellect). He, who was an Imam, knowledgeable with the methods of elucidation, used this subtle method of referring to this matter. Had he, in contrast, been bent on describing what ordinary people could see—namely, the lengthening and shortening of day and night, with each of them alternately taking hours from the other—he would have limited himself to the first phrase, "and has caused each of them to pass into its companion." He would have had no need for the second phrase, "and has caused its companion to pass into it." Therefore, the second phrase must have been added to indicate that the passing of the one into the other is conditioned on the opposite taking place concurrently. This is how the sentence should be understood, for the second phrase, as can be seen from the phrasing of the sentence, is grammatically in the circumstantial form (*haal*). It is this which indicates that the sentence points to the spherical shape of the earth as well as to the fact that the passing of the night into the day, as observed by us, for instance, necessitates the passing of the day into the night for other people [in another region of the Earth]. Had it not been the Imam's mission to allude to this significant point, there would have been no need for the second phrase; it would have merely been a repetition of the first. In discussing the inimitability of the Qur'an, we have confined ourselves to these few aspects. They are sufficient evidence that the Qur'an is a divine revelation, beyond human accomplishment.

Further proof that the Qur'an is a divine revelation is given by the fact that it was the only schooling for the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali b. Abi Talib (peace be upon him), whose eloquence is such that skilled scholars boast of being able to understand his discourses, and profound researchers imbibe from the ocean of his knowledge. Consider his orations in Nahj al-Balaghah. Whenever he addresses an issue, he leaves nothing for others to add to it, so much so that those who are not acquainted with his biography would imagine that he had spent his life investigating that subject and researching it. There is no doubt that his erudition and knowledge are linked with revelation and originate from its illumination, for anyone who knows the history of the Arabian peninsula, and especially the Hijaz, would never entertain the idea that this knowledge could have been received from any source other than divine revelation. Indeed, it has been said, in praise of Nahj al-Balaghah, that "it is below the Speech of the Creator, but above the speech of human beings."

Rather, I would reiterate, and say that 'Ali's testimony to the inimitability of the Qur'an, coming from a

person like him, who was a master of eloquence, and proficient in the esoteric sciences and other branches of knowledge, is in itself proof that the Qur'an is a divine revelation. Certainly, his testimony in this matter could not have stemmed from ignorance and deception. How can that be possible when he was the master of eloquence and lucidity [in speech], and the man to whom all Islamic sciences go back, he being the excellent epitome of learning? Surely, his opponents as well as his supporters have acknowledged his exceptional faculties. Furthermore, it is not possible to believe that his testimony was a false one, driven by the worldly motives of political or material advantages. How can that be when he was the beacon of asceticism and godliness? He turned away from the world and its adornments, and he rejected the leadership of the Muslims because it was offered to him on the condition that he would follow the example of the two Shaykhs [Abu Bakr and 'Umar, the first and second Rightly Guided caliphs]. He was the one who would not placate Mu'awiya by allowing him to remain temporarily in his sinecure, though he was fully aware of the consequences of deposing him. Consequently, and necessarily, his testimony of belief in the inimitability of the Qur'an must have been genuine, in conformity with his real feelings, and arising from his true faith. And this is reasonable, veritable, and desirable.

1. 'Izz al-Din ibn al-Athir, Al-Kamil Fi al-Ta'rikh, ed. C. J. Tornberg, 13 vols. (Reprint ed., Beirut: Dar Sadir and Dar Beirut, 1965–67) vol. 2, p. 362.

2. For this narrative, see Qur'an 7:107–118 and 26:32–49.–Trans.

3. Al-Hasan ibn Rashiq al-Qayrawani, Al- 'Umda fi Mahasin al-Shi'r wa Adabihi, ed. Muhammad Qarqazan, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifa, 1988) vol. 1, p. 206.

4. Louis Cheikho, Shuara 'al-Nasraniyya Qabl al-Islam, 2d ed., 2 vols. (Beirut: Catholic Press, n.d.) vol. 2, p. 640.

5. Kulayni, al-Kafi, vol. 1, pp. 388–89.

6. For this narrative, see Qur'an 17:88, 52:34; 11:13; and 2:23; 10:37.–Trans.

7. For a definition of tawatur, see note to the author's preface to the first edition.Trans.

8. There is no doubt that the Qur'an was revealed as a guide to all humanity, although God, in His perfect wisdom, revealed it in the language of a particular community, namely, Arabic. Hence, anyone who regards the Qur'an as the guide should understand its message in his own language. However, in rendering the message of the Qur'an in another language, it is necessary that its meanings be accurately conveyed in translation. Three important matters should be kept in mind in order to translate the Qur'an into another language:

The ostensible sense of the language as it is understood by the learned tradition of the Arabic usage;

The judgment of naturally guided reason;

The interpretation of those who were endowed with inerrancy, such as the Prophet and the Imams.

Moreover, the translator should avoid personal opinions attributed to some commentators, because such exegesis will necessarily render the translation as based on personal opinion. If the above prerequisites are adhered to in the translation, then the translations should be made available in the language of the peoples who will benefit from its guidance.

9. The reference here is to a genre of poetry, or argumentation, known as fakhr (boasting), in which a person boasts of his ancestry, his tribe, and his own achievements and belittles those of his opponents. This genre survived, especially in poetry, long after the establishment of Islam.–Trans.

10. Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabar , Ta'rikh al-Rusul wal-Muluk , ed. M. J. de Goeje, 15 vols (Leiden: Brill, 1882–1902) vol. 3, p. 1300.

11. Biblical quotations in this translation are from The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha, rev. and enl. std. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).–Trans

12. Compare this with the Qur'anic narrative of the event surrounding the crucifixion in 4: 154–59, which actually criticizes Jews for violating their compact and rejects their claim to have killed the Messiah themselves.—Trans
13. Many of these absurdities are cited and discussed in Balaghi, Huda; Balaghi, Al-Rihla al-Madrasiyya (Karbala: Mu'assat al-A'lami lil-Matbu'at al-Hadithat, n.d.); and Abu al-Qasim al-Musawi al-Khu'i, Nafahat al-Ijaz (Najaf: al-Matba'at al-'Alawiyya, 1923).
14. Al-rajaz is a common meter employed in Arabic poetry, though it is considered inferior to other classical meters.—Trans.
15. Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. Janr al-Tabari, Tafsir al-Tabari: Jami' al-Bayan 'an Ta'wil al-Qur'an, ed. Mahmud b. Muhammad Shakir, 29 vols. (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, n.d.) vol. 1, pp.
16. Qurtubi, Tafsir, vol. 19, p. 74.
17. For more details, see Balaghi, Huda, vol. 2, pp. 17–18, 30–34; Balaghi, Al-Rihla al Madrasiyya; pp. 1–200; Khu'i, Nafahat.
18. The reference here is to the Arabs of Arabia before Islam.—Trans.
19. Games of chance were played with arrows without heads and feathers, for stakes of slaughtered and quartered camel s.—Trans.
20. Mahmud Shukri al-Alusi, Bulugh al-Arab fi Ma 'rifat Ahwal al- 'Arab, ed. Muhammad Bahjat al-Athari, 3 vols. (Cairo: Dar al-Kitab al-'Arabi, n.d.) vol. 2, p. 52; vol. 3, pp. 43, 54.
21. The Quraysh was the tribe of the Prophet Muhammad, and the dominant tribe in Mekka at the beginning of Muhammad's prophetic mission.—Trans.
22. Muhammad b. Ya'qub Kulayni, Al-Furu' min al-Kafi, vols. 3–7 of Kulayni Al-Usul min al-Kafi, ed. 'Ali Akbar al-Ghaffari, 8 vols. (Tehran: Maktabat al-aduq, 1957–1961) vol. 5, pp. 340–41.
23. Al-Jami' al Sahih bi-Sharh al-Minawi (Beirut: al-Ma'arif, 1981), vol. 4 p. 432.
24. One example of this was the marriage of the daughter of Ziyad b. Labid—who was one of the noblest members of the tribe of Banu Biyada—to Juwaybir, a Muslim, who was short, ugly, needy, and destitute, and a repulsive black person. See Kulayni, Al-Furu : vols. 3–7 of Kulayni, al-Kafi, vol. 5, pp. 340–43.
25. Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, Lubab al-Nuql fi Asbab al-Nuzul (Tunis: Al-Dar al-Tunisiyya lil-Nashr, 1981) p. 163.
26. "Romans" (Ar.: al-Rum) is the name which medieval Arabs gave to the peoples and lands of the Byzantine Empire. It derives from the fact that Byzantium was still officially the East Roman Empire.— Trans.
27. The astronomer Galileo dared, a millennium after the Hijra, to prove the rotational and revolutionary movements of the earth. His contemporaries abused him and persecuted him until he came close to death. And in spite of his venerable position and his rights as a scientist, he was incarcerated for a long time. As a consequence, European scholars kept secret those discoveries of theirs which were against the age-old myths of their day, because of fear of the Roman church. See Hibat al-Din Muhammad al-Shahrastani, Al-Hay 'a wa al-Islam, 3rd ed. (Najaf: Matba'at al-Adab, 1965) p. 90 n
28. Hurr al-'Amili, Wasa'il, vol. 2, pt. 1, p. 131.
29. A paraphrase of a recurrent passage in the Qur'an, e.g., Qur'an 22:61, "That is because God makes the night to pass into the day and makes the day to pass into the night."—Trans.
30. 'Ali b. al-Husayn Zayn al-'Abidin, Al-Sahifa al-Sajjiidiyya al- Kamila , ed. 'Ali Ansaryan (Damascus: Al-Mustashariyya al-Thaqafiyya lil-Jumhuriyya al-Islamiyya al iraniyya, n.d.) p. 39.

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