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Chapter 1: General Principle Precepts

In the Name of Allah, the most Gracious, the most Merciful

We would like to preface our logical researches by stating a number of useful precepts which are indispensable for realizing the reality of religion and its concept, its roots in the human nature, its role in man's life, in addition to recognized knowledge in Islam.

1. Man's Life and Moral Values

We cannot imagine anyone who has some power of reasoning and who still violates and opposes industrial progress; rather, such power leads him to support the technology that brings him comfort and prosperity.

But the problem in this era of mankind's life stems from another position, which is: the West's use of this technology for the benefit of production and distribution while sacrificing ethics and human feelings in order to achieve this goal.

A Call Heard from Afar

During these critical circumstances with regard to any idealistic individual, people who have living consciences and enlightened hearts have started complaining about this status that surrounds man, dismissing the artificial life of the machine. They have felt that man has reached the lowest rung of moral values and that the life of the machine "has made the human energies and values a victim of production and distribution" and does not let him reach happiness at all.

Rather, it leads him to earning money and wealth quickly while, at the same time, it destroys values and principles, rendering them to loss. From this onset, these folks have tried to vest a spiritual outlook on man's life so the material life may be balanced with the moral one.

While blessing the step of these scholars, we would like to remind them that the Holy Quran has described the material life which is empty of spirituality and values as a vision that revolves between

sports, diversion, decoration and boasting and ends up in the multiplication of wealth and offspring. The most Praised One has said.

"Know (all of) you that the life of this world is only play and amusement, pomp, mutual boasting and multiplying, (in rivalry) among yourselves, riches and children. Here is a similitude: Rain and the growth which it brings forth delight (the hearts of) the tillers; soon it withers; you will see it grow yellow; then it becomes dry, and it crumbles away. But there is, in the hereafter, a severe penalty (for the wrongdoers), and [there is also] God's forgiveness and (His) good pleasure (for His devotees). And what is the life of this world but goods and chattels of deception?" (Qur'an, 57:20)

You can see that He, the Praised One, divides material life into five parts as if the latter revolve round these steps:

- 1. Sporting
- 2. Diversion
- 3. Adornment and Beautification
- 4. Boasting
- Accumulation of Wealth and Offspring

Scholars believe that each of these parts occupies a measure of man's lifetime then thrusts to the next part according to the completion of his age and the strengthening of his energies. Perhaps each one of them consumes eight years of one's lifetime; the fifth part continues with him thereafter up to the conclusion of his life and does not part with him till death.

This sacred verse, moreover, compares the life which is empty of values to a green plant the greenness and goodness of which do not last: Soon, the green plant turns yellow from which one is repelled.

The similitude of one who is drowned in the quagmire of matter is like this same plant: One starts his life with greenness and goodness, then he settles in the end as a stench in a deep pit of the earth save one who conjoined his material life with a spiritual life which does not come to a conclusion by his death and the departure of his soul from his body.

The Holy Quran also portrays the material life in another way: It says,

"The unbelievers' deeds are like a mirage in sandy deserts which are parched with thirst [and which he] mistakes for water; until when he comes to it, he finds it to be nothing. But he finds Allah (ever) with him, and Allah will pay him his account, and Allah is swift in reckoning" (Qur'an, 24:39).

Material life, in its freshness, manifests itself as a realistic thing that has elegance and goodness. It lures one just like a thirsty person is lured by a mirage. When he reaches the end of his lifetime, he comes to know that it was nothing realistic with which his heart would feel comfortable.

Human life undertakes the sound path if it interacts with the spiritual side so that religion, values and ethics may assume a lofty status in his life just as his material life has this anticipated status. This reality, that is, one's attitude towards religion, manifests itself if we familiarize ourselves with two matters:

- 1. What is religion? What is its reality?
- 2. What is its role in man's life?

2. What is Religion? What are its Roots in the Human Nature?

Religion does not attempt to take humans back to ignorance and backwardness. Rather, it is an intellectual revolution that leads man to perfection and elevation in all fields. These fields are nothing but its own four dimensions:

- A. Correcting and cultivating ideologies and beliefs from whims and superstitions
- B. Improving social relationships
- C. Abolishing racial and ethnic differences

Man reaches these four goals in the shade of belief in Allah. Such a belief never stops being aware of responsibility, below is the explanation of this statement.

In the first field, I mean reforming ideologies and the creed, we say: A rationalizing individual cannot live without a creed. Not even those who vest upon their method the stamp of apostasy and raise their voices with slogans of atheism can live without a creed as they explain the cosmos and life. Here below, religion's theory about the reality of the cosmos and life is presented for you:

Religion interprets the cosmic reality and all material systems as the masterpieces of a High Existing One Who created matter, formed it and defined it with laws and limits, subjecting it to a system of precision. The Maker is not similar to what He makes; the Giver is not the same as the taker.

It also interprets human life as having come on the cosmic page not randomly, and mankind was not created for nothing. Rather, there is a higher goal for having been created on this planet; a goal arrived at in the shade of the teachings of the prophets and guides who were all sent by the Creator in order to guide His creation.

This is religion's interpretation of the reality of the cosmos, the secret of life. But a materialist tries to interpret the cosmos differently saying:

"The first matter is innately ancient, and it is the one that granted itself systems; it has no purpose, nor does man who lives therein."

In other words, according to the theory of the religious individual, the cosmos has a beginning and an end; its existence came from Allah, Praise to Him, just as its end, under the label of the Return, is also up to Allah Almighty.

But the cosmos, according to the theory of the materialist, lacks the "beginning and the end", that is, he is unable to sketch its beginning or answer these questions: How did it become a reality? How was it made and brought into being? Rather, whenever you ask him, he answers you with "I do not know". He also cannot explain its end and purpose. If you ask him about that, he will answer by saying, "I do not know".

Moreover, this world according to the materialist philosopher is like a pierced manuscript. Leaflets fell from its beginning to its end, tossing it into the frame of ambiguity; therefore, man does not know its beginning or its end. The materialist philosopher is ignorant of the world's beginning and conclusion, and no answer comes out of him save "I do not know".

In order to rephrase the above in a third statement, the three following questions have lingered in man's mind since he distinguished his right hand from the left; and these are:

- 1. Where did it come from?
- 2. Where is it going?
- 3. Why was it created?

These three questions are answered by the religious philosopher with solid answers which will become quite clear in this dissertation, and they are summed up thus. The beginning came from Allah, and the end of the course is Allah, the most Praised One:

"We belong to Allah, and to Him shall we return" (Qur'an, 2:156).

The goal is to be adorned with values and ethical principles, and to be characterized by His Names and Attributes, Praise to Him. But the materialist is unable to answer these questions and does not bring forth anything convincing.

Based on this, we have said that religion has a role in correcting ideologies and doctrines. While making a comparison between the religious ideology and the materialistic system in answering these three questions, one comes to know that intellectual perfection is achieved in the shade of religion because it unveils broad horizons before his mentality and way of thinking, whereas the materialist fills one's mind with ignorance and ambiguity, even leads him to superstitions.

How can the matter grant its own self-systems? Is it possible that a union can be made between the cause and the causation, the doer and the deed, the one who causes and whatever he causes?

This much is relevant to religion's role in the field of correcting ideology and belief.

In the second field, what is relevant to religion nurturing lofty principles for ethics, we say that religious beliefs are regarded as the balance of ethical principles. Adherence to values and to their cultivation never stops being one of the difficulties and pains which man finds difficult to bear except when the spiritual factor facilitates them and removes their difficulty for him, such as sacrificing along the path of righteousness and justice, the safeguarding of trusts and the assisting of the downtrodden.

These are some of the ethical principles the authenticity of which cannot be denied, but embodying them in the society requires pains and faces difficulties, and it follows deprivation of some pleasures. So, what guarantee is there to achieve these principles?

To believe in Allah, the Praised One, and that the implementation of each ethical principle yields a great reward which man earns in the life hereafter, is the best factor for attracting man and making him eager to carry it out and thus be its embodiment during his short life (on earth). Without such a belief, ethics would become shreds of advice and dry admonishments: There is no guarantee that they will be acted upon.

In this regard, Will Durant, the contemporary historian 1, says, "Had it not been for religion, ethics would have manifested themselves more like economic exchanges, and the goal behind them would have been winning temporal success, so much so that had success and winning been the antitheses of values, they would have swerved from them due to the goal behind them being on the side of non-values. Instead, it is the religious belief that leaves the sense of responsibility in the spirit of man."2

In the third field, which is relevant to firming social relationships, we would like to state in it what we stated in support of lofty ethics. The religious doctrine supports the social principles because the religious person regards them as obligations, and man will by himself be obligated to function according to them and to implement them.

But such principles among those who are not religious are not adhered to except through the imposition of a material force. At that time, the social principles do not enjoy any executive guarantee, and this is observed by those who have witnessed the way of life of materialistic nations that do not commit themselves to a beginning or to an end.

As regarding the fourth field, I mean the abolishment of excessive racial and ethnic differences imposed on the shoulders of the downtrodden through force, authority, enticement, ignorance and the distortion of facts, we say that religion regards all humans as having been created for one purpose. Everyone, as far as the materialist is concerned, is innately and essentially like all other teeth of the comb, and he does not see any sense in discriminating or distinguishing or looking high at some while looking down at

others. Moreover, he sees no sense in the presence of people who are bloated as others perish due to starvation and deprivation.

These are the four fields in which religion plays a role and where it has a clear impact. Is it right, having halted at these amazing impacts, that we should neglect searching for it, placing it in a corner of oblivion?

But there is something quite interesting to which we would like to attract the reader's attention. Not every doctrine using the label of religion is able to create these legacies and be innovative. Rather, these can be handled by any religious doctrine based on reason, one that reaches us through truthful prophets.

It is in such a doctrine that we find motion and life, and it is in an image other than itself that religion becomes superstitious beliefs manifesting themselves in the form of monasticism, negative inclinations and other bad influences which we sense in religious doctrines that have nothing to do with inspiration or with men of a true creed.

When the Western thinker accuses religion of being a factor of backwardness and degeneration, one that opposes progress and ascendance, he aims at such religious doctrines.

There is something else, which is interesting, too. A true creed abolishes the negative differences that are not relevant to logical foundations. As regarding the positive distinctions which are not separate from members of mankind, these are not abolished at all. Just as the fingers of the same hand differ from each other, humans likewise differ with regard to the power of reason, intellect, movement and activity.

The differences that stem from man's own nature are incapable of deletion and alteration, and what religion rejects and deletes from life's sphere are the distinctions that stem out of power and authority.

Up to here, we have come to know religion's true aspects, and it is time now to get to know its roots in man's innate nature.

Religion and Disposition

Believing in the principle and going beyond nature is one of the instinctive matters in which man's creation was kneaded just as were many inclinations and instincts.

I can say that in general, man's realizations are divided into two kinds:

- 1. Realizations that are born out of external factors about man's existence. Without these realizations, mankind would never have become familiar with factors such as physical, chemical and engineering laws.
- 2. Realizations that stem from within man and his disposition without an external factor interfering to inspire them, such as man's self-knowledge, his sense of hunger and thirst, desire to get married at a

certain age and the desire for money and position during periods of his lifetime. These types of knowledge, if you wish you could call them senses, stem out of man's inner self and the depths of his existence. Psychologists claim that the inclination towards a principle falls under this sort of knowledge.

Psychologists believe that the human psyche has four dimensions each of which represents a principle for certain effects:

A. The spirit of exploration and fact-finding: This dimension of the human spirit creates sciences and branches of knowledge. Without it, since it was discovered on this planet, mankind would not have progressed the distance of one inch in sciences and in the exploration of facts.

- B. Love for goodness, the trend towards doing good deeds and for being righteous: For this reason, man finds in himself an inclination towards goodness and righteousness as well as deterrence from evil and corruption. Justice and equity are sought for everyone in general atmospheres and circumstances, whereas injustice and inequity are likewise abhorred. Add to these other actions that everyone describes as either good or evil, finding within the depths of his nature an inclination towards the first and a distancing from the other. This sort of sense is the principle behind values and human ethics.
- C. Man's passion for and relationship with goodness in fields of nature and industry: Precision and good things, artistic paintings and magnificent sculptures, all derive their elegance and goodness from this dimension. Everyone finds within himself a sure love for great gardens crowded with fragrant flowers and tall trees. He also finds in himself an inclination towards nice handicrafts and love for a good–looking human being. All these stem from this spirit with which man's nature is kneaded. At the same time, it creates arts in various fields.
- D. The religious feeling, which is ignited among the youths, at the age of adolescence: It calls man to believe that there is another world beyond this world from which this world derives its existence, and that man, in all his details, is attached to that world and is derived from it. This fourth dimension, which sciences of psychology discovered in the recent century and supported with various tests, is the focus of the Holy Quran even centuries ago. It refers to it in its sacred verses some of which are these:

"So set your face steadily and truly towards the faith: (Establish) God's handiwork according to the pattern on which He has made mankind" (Qur'an, 30:30).

The phrase "God's handiwork" is an explanation for the word "faith" which precedes it, and it clearly indicates that faith, in the sense believing in the Creator of the world and of mankind and that mankind's fate is in His hand, is something upon the acceptance of which mankind is created, and that man is created and made to have within him many inclinations and instincts.

"And [have We not] shown him the two ways [of right and wrong]?" (Qur'an, 90:10).

That is, the Almighty has familiarized man with the path of goodness and with that of evil. It does not

mean that such familiarizing is done through prophets; rather, it is done by the Praised One Himself even if it does not fall within the frame of prophets' teachings. This is so because the Praised One says prior to that verse:

"Have We not made a pair of eyes for him and a tongue, and a pair of lips?" (Qur'an, 90:8-9).

Everything originated from His boons, the most Praised One, when He created man and excelled in doing so.

If this proves anything, it proves that the theory which psychologists discovered is the focus of the inspiration in a very clear way, its conclusion is that religion, as a whole, is something instinctive: It grows as man grows and attains guidance, and it is subject to cultivation and nurturing as is the case with all inclinations and instincts.

3. Role of Religion in Life

It has become clear from what we have started about the reality of religion and its concept that it is something innate within man's nature, but we have to know its role in life, and that it has a significant impact on man's scientific and social life. So that the reader may be familiar with the impact of religion in these vital fields, we would like to point out some of them.

A. Religion: Innovator of Sciences

We are reviewing in this research the extent of impact of both opposing theories (theism versus atheism) about how the world came to be in the discovering of facts and in the examining of the systems prevalent in it, without actually demonstrating bias towards the accuracy of either theory.

Undoubtedly, there are two juxtaposed theories in interpreting and explaining the world, which can never agree with each other on anything, and we will later explain which one of them is accurate. But our focus here is on determining the impact of each of the theories on the perfection and elevation of sciences:

First Theory: It depends on the world, from the atom to the constellation, on the innovation of a great mind, a good existent, an endless might and knowledge; He, in His knowledge and might, invented the world and granted it life.

Second Theory: The world's matter is perpetual. Neither knowledge nor might outside it has any making or influencing on it. Had there been systems, they are the outcome of coincident or such scientific suppositions which all share the statement that a blind and solid matter outpours on itself systems and laws.

We do not want to focus on either of these proposed theories because the truth will be manifested in the coming researches. Instead, we focus on knowing which of these theories urges mankind to investigate,

stirring in his soul the spirit to look into himself.

Should we say that the world of the matter is an endlessly existing thing in its knowledge and power, having invented the matter and applied to it the systems and the laws due to His knowledge and the expanse of His might?

Or should we say that matter remains perpetual and has nothing to do with science and might. Had it had systems and laws, these are the outcomes of chance or of the antitheses that rule over it (over matter)? Is this not the hypothesis of materialist Marxists or something close to it?

Which of these theories bears an impact on the progress and perfection of sciences?

There is no doubt that if one who researches the cosmos is armed with the first theory, he will not find in himself any impetus to investigate or any sense that the world is not separated from systems and orders, and that he has to examine them.

This is the opposite of the researcher who embraces the second theory because chance or the antithesis among the parts of the matter does not produce for sciences the imminent taking place of systems and orders inside the matter so man could look for them. One Who researches the world's systems and examines the facts that prevail in it cannot lean on the study podium unless he believes in the first theory rather than in the other.

This is what we have advocated in the beginning of the research, that is, the religious doctrine creates sciences and encourages investigation.

We have come to this result: Religion, in the sense belief in the world results from knowledge and power (and knowledge *is* power), is a major factor in the progress of human sciences. It stirs in the investigating individual the spirit of diving deeply and in contemplating.

Yes, there is a question which may entertain the reader's mind: There are many groups of advocates of materialism, such as those who discovered the secrets and systems of nature; had atheism hindered the steps of investigation and progress, how could these have reached their discoveries and facts?

The answer is this: The slogans of these individuals, even though they bear the mark of atheism, are only on their tongues; as for their hearts, these beat differently. In other words, they believe deep in heart in the world being subjected to a greater force that applies to it systems and laws, the force that they are about to discover and with which about to become familiar. Had it not been for such certitude and belief in the world being subjected to this force, they would never have believed that matter has systems and orders, and so have the earth and the heavens (sky), what is near and what is far, even the stars and constellations that are deeply located in the cosmos.

Their insistence on discovering the systems stems from the belief in their existence. Both belief and submission do not take place except in the case of one who thinks that the world is subject to a great

force, the one (force) with the knowledge and might. This "force" has created the systems; otherwise, belief in the eternity of the matter and in the wise systems being the product of chance does not mandate any surrender to the existence of the systems in all parts of the world, the near and the far.

In a more clear statement, every discoverer, prior to his discovery, has this particular belief: Every atom in this world, be it living or dead, near or far, contains a law which he wants to discover and to empty into the mold of science. It is then that we ask: Where did this discoverer get such submission and belief that this knowledge has a starting point and a source? What is this starting point?

He may say, "I believe that the whole world is the innovation of a great might that has tremendous knowledge and power and has created the world through its knowledge, ability and wisdom." If he does, he will be accurate in believing that each part of this world has a system because the deed of the one, who has the knowledge, might and wisdom is not separated from the systems where there is no imbalance or disorder.

But he may say, "I believe in the perpetuation of matter, and that solid matter came to have a system in the shade of chance during very ancient times." If so, he will be told that the belief in chance never accompanies surrendering to a system one hundred percent. It is always possible if either there is a system or there is none.

Interpreting 100% surrender to the existence of a system by believing in chance is quite wrong because it is similar to interpreting definite knowledge with something that does not cause sure knowledge but rather mandates only a probability. This is so because belief in chance initiates the probability that there is a system, not surrendering to its existence. Therefore, there has to be surrendering to a cause other than chance, and this is nothing but believing in a feeling and in a power that has interfered to create the world and to bring it into existence.

If you wish, you can pour this statement into a logical mold and say: Every discoverer, before being busy discovering, surrenders to the existence of orders and systems in this world which he wants to discover. This is on the one hand.

On the other hand, the materialist sees the only factor for the appearance of systems is chance. But it is not a factor that brings about submission. Rather, the utmost that it produces is probability, whereas the discoverer bears knowledge with systems: He does not think of the probability that there is a system and an order.

Such submission must be interpreted as a second factor, which is nothing but the world coming to be and is perpetuated due to eternal knowledge and power.

B. Religion: Pillar of Ethics

You have come to know about religion's role in sparking the spirit of investigation in man. But it has

another role in firming ethics and fixing their roots in the society. Here is how:

There is no doubt that upholding ethics and adhering to moral values is not separated from deprivation sometimes and from the abandonment of one's pleasures in other times. It is then that we have to look for the success factor on this battleground.

On the one hand, man is subjected to inclinations and aggressive instincts that do not know a limit, and they want to sin and to attain everything that is pleasurable and suitable, whether it agrees with or opposes ethical values. This is something that is sensed by everyone during many periods of his life.

On the other hand, the human nature inspires the safeguarding of values and the acting upon ethics. This is what educators advocate. It is then that one finds within himself a violent struggle against his inclinations. Therefore, in order for him to succeed in this battle, he needs a factor that tips the scales of the human nature, the nature that inspires the safeguarding of ethics and the acting upon values. So, what is this factor especially during the periods where no one is there to watch over him, when the eyes are asleep, and when one is not asked about what he is doing?

It is here that the religion manifests itself in the form of a strong factor that tips the scales of ethics down and inspires one to act according to values and to curb the reins of instincts. This is so because one who has a religion believes that everything he does in this life, be it good or bad, he will be held accountable for it by Allah Almighty with the strictest and most precise judgment:

"Nor is there (as much as) the weight of an atom on the earth or in the heavens that is hidden from the knowledge of your Lord" (Qur'an, 10:61).

The above case is the opposite of one who is an atheist and who does not believe in any divine book or in accountability, whether in the life of this world or in the hereafter. He does not see in the battle, where the instincts fight and dispute within his own being, any deterrent for violating the limits and ignoring the values other than an element the impact of which is weak. This is called the human nature, which will quickly be defeated by the flood of desires and fantasies. This is tangible, and we need not prolong our discussion of it.

C. Religion: Invincible Fortress in World's Fluctuations

Life on this planet is an ally of labor and exhaustion. One goes through times of happiness and of pain. He loses loved ones and faces trials and tribulations, in addition to other painful experiences of life that split one's back. So, what solace is there as one faces the bitterness of life?

I say that religion is the major solace that turns one into a firm mountain in the face of painful events, unshakeable during afflictions, immovable during calamities. Why is this so? It is due to two aspects.

First: He believes that what happens in the cosmos of good and evil is a manifestation of the will of the

Wise Creator Who does not do anything except with wisdom, and Who does not act except upon an interest: These calamities are bitter outwardly and sweet inwardly, even if one does not sense it as such during the conditions of a tragedy and an affliction, but he will become familiar with it after the covering is removed and the facts become guite clear.

Second: If one perseveres as he faces calamities and welcomes them with an open heart and a shining face, he will be rewarded by the Praised One for his patience, firmness and straightforwardness and for his acceptance of His judgment and destiny:

"Convey glad tidings to those who patiently persevere, those who, when afflicted with calamity, say, 'To Allah do we belong, and to Him do we return.' They are the ones on whom God's blessings and mercy (descend), and they are the ones who receive guidance" (Qur'an, 2:155-157).

It is then that religion manifests itself as a medicine that soothes the pains and alleviates the status of calamities, or perhaps these are even welcomed with a smile and are wholeheartedly accepted. But the materialist in the same situation has no balsam for his life's wounds, has no cure for his disturbances, because he does not believe that beyond the matter there is a world in which all people are gathered, a place where one is rewarded for his perseverance and be awarded prizes for his good deeds.

He believes that the cycle of the cosmos is limited by matter. It starts from it and ends at it. So, he has no choice except to return to it, the solid and blind that it is, one incapable of dressing man's wounds or cheering his spirits.

For this reason, we see how suicide is quite common among such a group of folks during calamities. As for the group that believes in the life to come, in the hereafter, it thinks little of the pain of calamities when they take place. Its members find solace with patience. They anticipate rewards, contrarily to the materialists who think too much of them and who bend before them.

Had it been accurate for us to compare what is rational with what is tangible, emptying the lofty meanings in narrow molds of the senses, we must not be blamed if we say that religion, when one faces painful torrents that split the back and cause an explosion, is like a safety valve in steam furnaces. Their steam increases more and more.

So, had it not been for the safety valve that lets excess steam out, the furnace would explode in the factory and terribly kill and awfully burn people. Our excuse for bringing about an example such as this is that it falls in the category of comparing what is sensible with what is tangible.

4. Recognized Knowledge

The first step towards understanding religion is to be familiar with the recognized knowledge in it.

Realistic religion does not regard every piece of knowledge as sound and reliable. Rather, it requires it to

meet the following conditions:

- a. The definite knowledge that never ceases to be emphatic, rejecting knowledge which comes through presumption, whim or doubt. The most Praised One says,
- "...Do not follow that of which you have no knowledge, for (on the Day of Reckoning) inquiries will be made into every act of hearing or seeing or (feeling in) the heart" (Quran, 17:36).

You can see that this verse rejects all types of knowledge that are outside the frame of sure knowledge. For this reason, many verses condemn the following in the footsteps of fathers and forefathers without seeking a clear proof and without knowledge about it's being sound and effective. The Almighty says,

"Nay! They say, 'We found our fathers following a certain religion, and we follow in their footsteps'. Likewise, whenever We sent someone to warn before you to any nation, the wealthy ones among them said, 'We found our fathers following a certain religion, and we will certainly follow in their footsteps" (Quran, 43:23).

The Quran transmits reports of many of those who advocate misguidance and who will on the Judgment Day bite their fingers out of regret saying,

"On the Day that their faces are turned upside down in the Fire, they will say, 'Woe unto us! Would that we had obeyed Allah and obeyed the Apostle!' And they would say, 'Lord! We obeyed our chiefs and our great men, and they misled us from the (right) path. Lord! Grant them double the penalty and curse them with a very great curse!'" (Qur'an, 33:66-68).

Knowledge, if it originates from tools of the senses, the heart or the mind, is considered as recognized. The most Praised One says,

"It is He Who brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers, when you knew nothing, and He made for you hearing and vision and hearts (so) that you may offer thanks (to Allah)" (Qur'an, 16:78).

Both hearing and vision symbolize tools of the senses. The hearts denote reason and sound intellectual realization. Any realization outside the frame of these tools is not to be relied on.

The reason for relying on these two tools, the senses and the mind, as being among the tools of knowledge is due to their being more accurate and to the result they produce being greater. Other tools on which people who are sick in the heart rely are not to be relied on. For these tools of knowledge there are divisions and branches that are all explained in the science of "theory of knowledge".

Yes, there is a question that forces itself here: If following in the footsteps of the fathers and forefathers as well as their traditions is contemptible, why has Islam permitted it in the field of knowing the practical branch rulings? Every Muslim is entitled to derive his sect in the branches and rulings from an imam and

a scholar of jurisprudence. Is this not imitating these imams and scholars as the unbelievers used to do to their forefathers?

The answer to this question is clear. If one derives the rules from the skilled jurist who specializes in his field, he does not do so through contemptible imitation, that is, referring to someone else and imitating him without evidence. This is so because when a person who does not have certain knowledge refers to a man of knowledge and follows in his footsteps, he does so through evidence.

Such is the tradition of all men of wisdom in all fields. If one is ignorant about a craft, he refers to a craftsman who is familiar with it. If one is ignorant of medicine, he will refer to an experienced doctor, and so on. All this applies to branch matters.

As for principle matters, they are root matters, and the issue in their regard revolves round either absolute confirmation, as is the case with theologians, or absolute denial, as is the case with materialists. Following does not apply to them, for there is too little shared amount of knowledge to be relied on, and what is superfluous is rendered to the specialist. Each theologian or materialist claims to be a specialist in his science.

Because of what we have indicated, man has to delve deeply into principle issues without making an ideology as support and evidence.

5. Higher Branches of Knowledge in Islam

Islam urges familiarity with three matters from among various topics, considering them to be important for a seeker of reality.

Knowledge of the Cosmos and of Nature

The Holy Quran enthusiastically emphasizes this knowledge that it should be attained; the Almighty says,

"Say: 'Behold all that is in the heavens and on earth" (Qur'an, 10:101).

He also says,

"Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of night and day there are, indeed, Signs for men of understanding" (Qur'an, 3: 190).

A religious person has no option other than studying nature and delving into its depths according to his background and ability.

Man's Knowledge of His own Self

It is one of the necessities of knowledge which the Almighty stresses just as He stresses its precedent. He, the most Praised One, has said,

"We will soon show them Our Signs in the (furthest) regions (of the earth) and in their own souls, until it becomes manifest to them that this is the truth. Is it not enough that your Lord witnesses all things?" (Qur'an, 41:53).

Traditions have supported each other with regard to the importance of knowing the *nafs*, the self, and that through getting to know it and knowing all nature in which he lives, man gets to know his Lord.

Knowledge of History

The Quran emphasizes knowledge of history since such knowledge provides morals and admonishments. The most Praised One says,

"In their stories there is instruction for men endowed with understanding" (Qur'an, 12:111)

and

"... so relate the tales [to them], perhaps they may reflect" (Qur'an, 7:176).

These are the topics that Islam recommends to anyone who wishes to sense the facts and reach the reality in order to become familiar with it. One Who shuns these branches of knowledge is obstructed from knowing Him, the most Praised One, and from knowing His cosmic orders.

6. Why do we look for the existence of Allah, Praise to Him?

Before we focus on the causes of knowing Him, the most Praised One, and the evidences for His existence, we would like to answer a question that quite often is made by the youths, and it is derived from the plots of the materialists, especially the Marxists, in Islamic circles.

The outcome of the question is this: The research in what is beyond the matter (metaphysics) has no connection to life, and it is not one of the topics that fall within the frame of life which man lives during various phases of his lifetime, from his adolescence to youth to the age of maturity then to old age.

Looking into what is beyond the matter, there are higher existents stripped of matter and of its rules, such as the angels, the minds and the souls, etc. Above them all is the One Who created them and created all worlds, what is material and what is immaterial. This question is of no practical use in life even if it is proven with a thousand proofs. So, spending time on these researches hinders a youth from carrying out his necessary functions.

The answer to this question becomes obvious after reviewing what we have already stated. You have come to know that religion has a strong role and a great influence on the perfection of sciences. It also secures manners and is their best pillar, even a security for carrying out the proper laws. It is an invincible fortress on fluctuating occasions.

If it has such a great impact on our scientific, moral and social life, turning away from it and staying busy with something else is a great loss for humanity. What the materialist individual prattles about, that is, looking for religion and for metaphysics has nothing to do with life, is a lie told about the religion and a statement which lacks verification.

Yes, what we have stated about the role of religion and its impact on vital aspects of man is one of the concerns of the true religion that goes along with science and with ethics and does not oppose them. As regarding the various creeds that are attributed to inspiration and to the heavens with lies and falsehood, they are outside the fold of our research.

Avoiding Possible Harm

There is a spiritual factor that urges us to research these issues which are outside the frame of matter as well as material things. There is a large group of reformers, men of ethics, who have sacrificed themselves along the path to reform and cultivate the society, becoming the victims of the process of elevating it (morally and spiritually). They followed each other during the span of centuries and epochs. They invited the human communities to believe in Allah, Praise to Him, and in His attributes of perfection.

They claimed that He has imposed roles on His servants, that life does not stop at death, and that death is not its end or the last phase of it. It is, rather, a bridge on which man crosses from one abode to another, from an incomplete life to a complete one. Anyone who performs his roles and obligations will receive the most generous rewards. As for those who oppose and who are haughty, they will receive the greatest retribution.

This has been heard by people in this life from men of inspiration and reform. These were not accused of being liars or fabricators. Rather, the marks of truthfulness were visible throughout their lives, actions and statements. At this juncture, the thinking human mind prompts one to look into the truth of these men's statements in order to avoid any probable or perceived harm to which their statements refer.

The statements of these men are no less than telling an ordinary person about the swift harm or the defrayed one in the temporal life. So, you find the rational individual demonstrating interest when he is told so, examining its existence so he may avoid the harm about which he is warned.

This has been relied on by scholars of logic in proving the need to look for the knowledge about Allah, Praise to Him, necessitating this research in order to avoid probable or perceived harm.

Knowing Allah and Thanking the Originator of Blessings

Undoubtedly, man is drowned in his life in blessings. These blessings surround him since his early childhood up to the end of his life. Nobody can deny it.

On the other hand, reason sees it as too little to just thank the One Who grants the blessings. Such thanking is not true except after knowing Him.

Both these matters necessitate looking for the Grantor of blessings who has overwhelmed man with blessings, flooding him with them. Getting to know Him through research is a response to the call of reason and to its admonishment to thank this Grantor. Such thanking branches out of knowing Him.

These are the three aspects (religion's role in life, avoiding a probable harm and the necessity to thank the Grantor of blessings after knowing Him) to which we referred as a whole and which stimulate man to research the knowledge about Allah, and to be interested in it more than in anything that intrudes on his material life.

Those who shun these issues do so for spiritual reasons with which the researcher is familiar, for there is no doubt that knowing Allah and believing in Him are matters that are not separated from commitment to restrictions and limits in life, as well as adherence to the ethical and social rules, and to carrying out individual functions.

All this does not oppose the absolute freedom and licentiousness sought by the materialists and those who follow their tracks. Denying religions and principles is not self-denial. Rather, it is a flight from the securities, commitments, restrictions and limits. The latter oppose man's licentious inclination that sees nothing in life essentially other than pleasure.

Here we come to the conclusion of the precepts which we wanted to bring about in order to explain the concept of religion and its roots in the human nature, its role in man's life and the need to know Allah, the most Blessed, the most Exalted One. Statements chase them about proofs for the existence of the Creator who created this existence.

- 1. Actually, Will Durant was born on November 5, 1885 and died on November 7, 1981. He was contemporary of the compiler. Tr.
- 2. Will Durant, Pleasures of Philosophy, p. 478.

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