

Introduction

The image of God as presented in the Qur'an is one that speaks of Him in personal terms. God has a personal relationship with every individual. In what follows, we will try to present a detailed account of the attributes of God as portrayed in the Qur'an. Efforts have been made to take every name or attribute of God that is mentioned in the Qur'an into account. Muslims believe that both the meaning and the wording of the Qur'an belong to God and that even slight differences in the letters or the frequency of words are significant.

Therefore, divine qualities are given different terms and are separately introduced even though they may look similar. Moreover, the number of times each quality is attributed to God is registered. It must be noted that sometimes the same term may have been applied to beings other than God, so every verse is carefully studied to find the exact number of cases in which a given quality is attributed to Him. When it was grammatically impossible to differentiate a case as related to God or to someone else, the Qur'anic commentaries were consulted and the view that seemed more plausible was followed.

Certainly, this survey is subject to all types of human mistakes and limitations and therefore, it is hoped that other researchers will complete it. For example, future research must also take into account those verses in which information about God is given, but not directly as a name or attribute of God. For example, there are many verbs that are used in the Qur'an for God and they constitute a very important source for understanding the image of God in the Qur'an.

The other thing that falls beyond the limits of this paper, but will hopefully be dealt with by others, is an elaboration of the concepts attributed to God. For example, when we talk about divine knowledge or divine mercy there are many more details to be learnt from the Qur'an about their nature and functions.

There are different ways of classifying the divine attributes among Muslim theologians. For example, one way of classification is to divide them into the attributes of beauty (*jamal*) and glory (*jalal*). The former includes those attributes that indicate divine perfections in an affirmative way, such as knowledge, mercy and power. These attributes are also called, "*al-sifat al-thubutiyyah*" (the Affirmative Attributes). The latter includes those attributes that describe God in a negative way, that is, by indicating divine freedom from imperfections and deficiencies. Examples are that God is not a body and has no place, God has no

part or partner and He neither begets nor is he begotten.

The other way of classifying divine attributes is to divide them into the attributes of essence and action. Attributes of essence (*al-sifat al-dhatiyyah*) are those attributes that describe divine essence and do not depend on any being other than God Himself, such as power and life. Attributes relating to action (*al-sifat al-fi'liyyah*) are those attributes that describe divine acts and, indeed, inform us of a relationship between God and other beings.

For example, divine creatorship describes a very specific relationship between God and His creatures. This attribute becomes actual when there is something that is created by God. Another example is forgiveness. There must be someone who is forgiven for us to be able to say that God has forgiven. Of course, to create or to forgive depends on certain essential qualities of God.

In what follows, we will try to avoid sophisticated theological discussions and instead, will just classify divine names and attributes that are mentioned in the Qur'an according to their similarities.

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