

Part 3: The Revelation of the Qur'an

General Beliefs of Muslims concerning the Revelation of the Qur'an

More than any other revealed book, especially the Torah and the New Testament, the Qur'an describes the details of the revelation, the transmittance and even accounts of the experience of the revelation. The general belief of Muslims concerning the revelation, based on the Qur'an, is that the text of the Qur'an is the actual speech of God transmitted to the Prophet by one of His chosen angels.

The name of this angel, or heavenly being, is Gabriel or the Faithful Spirit. He transmitted the word of God over a period of twenty–three years to the Prophet. He would bring the divine instructions to the Prophet, who would relate them faithfully to the people using the same words in the form of a verse.

The Prophet thus used the meaning of the verses to call the people to an understanding of faith, of belief, of social laws and of individual duties. These instructions from God to His messenger are known as the Prophecy, or the message; the Prophet transmitted this message without making any addition to or detraction from it in any way.

The View of Contemporary Non-Muslim Writers concerning the Revelation and Prophecy

Most contemporary writers who take an interest in different religions and ideologies adopt the following view of the Qur'an: they say the Prophet was a social genius who appeared to save society from the throes of decline into savagery and to raise it up in the cradle of civilization and freedom.

They claim also that he called men to his own ideas of pure and sincere behavior by giving them a comprehensive religious form and order. They affirm that he had a pure soul and tremendous ambition; that he lived in a particularly dark and ignorant age, where only the law of force and foolish singing of

verse, social chaos and selfishness, stealing, marauding and savagery were to be seen.

They describe how he was troubled by witnessing such things and, sometimes when overcome by the pain of such sights, he would withdraw from men and pass days alone in the cave in the Tihamah mountains; he would marvel at the sky and its shining stars, the earth, the mountains, the sea, the desert and all the precious means placed at the disposal of man by the Creator; he would be grieved at the bad behavior and ignorance of those around him, who had thrown away a life of well-being and happiness for a tormented succession of bestial habits.

This feeling was always present with the Prophet; he bore this pain and vexation up to his fortieth year when, according to these contemporary non-Muslim writers, he formed a plan to save his fellow-men from their miserable state of nomadic wandering, rebellious independence, selfishness and lawlessness.

This plan, called the religion of Islam, was the most suitable one for the times. The Prophet being of pure and sincere character, realized that his chaste thoughts were the Word of God and Divine Revelation which were infused in him through his virtuous nature. His good will and benevolent spirit, from which his thoughts exuded and established peace in his heart, was called the Spirit of Trustworthiness and Gabriel, the angel of revelation.

Furthermore, according to this contemporary view of Muhammad, he perceived the forces of good and happiness in nature as Angels and all the forces of bad as Satan and the Jinn (invisible entities). He called his own task, which he had undertaken according to his own conscience, Prophethood and himself, the deliverer of the divine message.

This explanation, however, comes from those writers who affirm the existence of God or at least some kind of nature-force, and attach a certain importance to the religion of Islam, albeit in the name of just and unbiased assessment.

Those, however, who deny outright the existence of a Creator see Prophecy, revelation, divine duties, reward and punishment, the fire and the garden as mere religious politics, a lie in the name of religion to further one's own ends.

They say that the prophets were reformers who brought about social change in the name of religion. They argued that since men of past ages were drowned in ignorance and superstitious worship the prophets contained the religious order within a framework of superstitious beliefs about the origin of Creation and the day of reckoning in order to further their prospects of reform.

What the Qur'an Itself Says concerning this Matter

Scholars who explain the power of revelation and prophecy using the above explanation, attach great importance to the Science of nature and the visible world, and claim that everything in the world works

according to the laws of nature. They view historical events, right up to the present-day, as the developing and constantly changing face of nature.

Likewise, they view all revealed religions as social manifestations. Thus they would agree that if one of the geniuses of history, like Cyrus, Darius or Alexander, had announced himself as having been chosen by God as an executor of divine commands, their explanation would have been no different than that given above.

We do not intend here to establish the existence of the unseen, of the world beyond the visible world of nature; we are not saying to other scholars or scientists that any one science may only be discussed by remaining within the strict limits of that particular science.

We are not suggesting that the modern sciences which investigate the properties and effects of the material world, (whether or not they be positively or negatively disposed to the creation), do not have the right to enter into an investigation of the metaphysical.

What we are saying is that any explanation they propose must be in accordance with the explanation of society, existence, nature and the cosmos given by the Qur'an. The Qur'an is an authentic document of prophecy and is the basis of all social, metaphysical and scientific discussion; the explanation Of the Qur'an contain proofs against their arguments which we can enumerate and reflect upon. These proofs are connected to different Qur'anic verses discussed below.

According to the explanation of modern non-Muslims and atheists, the Prophet's nature was pure through which came to him the word of God, meaning that the divine system of thought was alive in his own thoughts; the idea of divinity manifested itself in his thoughts because he was pure and holy; it was natural (in the minds Of these Scholars) for prophets to attribute these thoughts to God for, in this way, they ennobled and exalted their own task.

The Qur'an, however, strongly and convincingly denies that it is the speech or the ideas of the prophet or, indeed, of any other man. In chapters 10:38 and 11:13 the Qur'an declares that if it is the word of man then detractors of Islam should produce similar words about every subject treated in the Qur'an, namely, belief in the after-life, morals, laws, stories of past generations and other prophets, wisdom and advice.

The Qur'an urges them to seek help anywhere if they do not realize that it is the word of God and not of man, but adds that even if jinn and man joined forces together they would not be able to produce a Qur'an like it.

In chapter 2:23 the Qur'an challenges those who consider it merely the speech of Muhammad to produce a book similar to it or even just one chapter like it. The force of this challenge becomes clear when we realize that it is issued for someone whose life should resemble that of Muhammad, namely, the life of an orphan, uneducated in any formal sense, not being able to read or write and grew up in the

unenlightened age of the jahiliyah period (the age of ignorance) before Islam.

In 4:82 the Qur'an asks why no inconsistencies or changes appeared in the verses considering that neither the wording nor the meaning of the verses has altered despite being revealed over a period of twenty–three years. If it was the word of man and not the word of Gods then it would have certainly been affected by change like all other things in the temporal world of nature and matter.

It is clear that this challenge and these explanations are not mere empty words of exultation; rather they present the Qur'an for what it is, namely the word of God.

The Qur'an establishes its own miraculous nature in hundreds of verses. This miracle is still unexplained by normal literacy standards used to "grasp" a text. Indeed successive prophets established their Prophethood through similar verses revealed by God.

If prophecy was merely the call of an individual conscience or the inspiration of a pure and sincere soul, then there would be no sense in claiming it as divine proof or seeking help in its miraculous nature as the Prophet, in fact, did.

Some writers interpret the many miracles of the Qur'an in terms of undisguised mockery. When we investigate the subject of their mockery we inevitably discover that the Qur'an means something other than that which they have understood.

It is not our intention to try and prove the miraculous nature of the Qur'an nor to demonstrate the soundness and authenticity of its narration; rather, we would point out that the Qur'an clearly describes the miracles of the past prophets, like Salih, Abraham, Moses and Jesus. The stories related in the Qur'an can only be understood and interpreted in the light of miraculous guidance.

Why, we may ask, if the prophets were mere men, inspired by the purity of their character, was it necessary to establish the existence of this miraculous guidance?

[The Angel Gabriel](#)

According to the explanation of the above–mentioned writers, the prophet referred to his own pure soul as the "Faithful Spirit" or the giver of revelation. The Qur'an, however, does not support this view and names Gabriel as the deliverer of the verses.

God says in chapter 2:97, "**Say (O Muhammad, to mankind): Who is an enemy to Gabriel! for it is he who has revealed (this book) to your heart by God's permission.**" This verse refers to Jews who wanted to know who had revealed the Qur'an to the Prophet.

He replied that it was Gabriel. They said, "We are enemies of Gabriel as he it was who gave us (the tribe of Israel) the laws and legal punishments and as we are enemies to him, we do not believe in the book

which he has brought.”

Thus God replies to them in the verse that Gabriel revealed the Qur'an to the Prophet by God's permission. God further says that the Qur'an is to be believed in, and that it is not the speech of Gabriel. It is important to note that the Qur'an, in the words of the above verse was revealed "to the heart" of the Prophet Muhammad by Gabriel.

In another verse (26: 193–4) we read that it was transmitted by the Faithful Spirit, "***which the Faithful Spirit has brought down upon your heart.***" ***By comparison of these two verses it becomes evident that it is the angel Gabriel who is meant here by the words, "Faithful Spirit."***

In chapter 81: 19–23 God describes the transmittance of revelation: ***That this is in truth the word of an honored messenger (Gabriel), Mighty established in the presence of the Lord of the Throne, one to be obeyed and trustworthy and your comrade (the Prophet) is not mad. Surely he saw him on the clear horizon.***

These verses show that Gabriel was one of the intimates of God, possessing great power and trust. Again in chapter 40:7 we read, "***Those who bear the power, and all who are around Him, praise their Lord and believe in Him and ask forgiveness for those who believe.***" Such characteristics as belief in God and seeking forgiveness from him are only to be expected from independent, sentient creatures.

In chapter 4: 172–173 we read, ***The Messiah will never disdain to be a servant of God, nor will the favored angels. Whoever disdains His service and is proud, He will gather them all to Himself, then as for those who believe and do good, He will pay them fully their rewards and give them more out of His grace, and as for those who disdain and are proud, He will punish them with a painful doom. And they will not find for themselves besides Allah a guardian or a helper.***

It is clear that although the Messiah, Jesus, and the favored angels do not disobey the commands of God they are, nevertheless, warned of a painful punishment on the day of reckoning if they were to commit a wrong.

The possibility of neglect of their duties or committing wrong action is necessarily dependent on their being sentient beings, possessed of free will and entrusted with the task of transmitting the revelation of God.

Thus we learn from the Qur'an that Gabriel is the Faithful Soul: he is trustworthy and to be obeyed because he is obeyed by angels in his task. An indication of these obedient angels comes in the verse, ***But truly it is a warning—so let whoever will pay heed to it, on honored leaves exalted, purified (set down by scribes) noble and righteous*** (80: 11–16) .

The Angels and the Devils

According to the explanation of contemporary non-Muslim writers, angel is the name given to forces in nature which represent goodness, and happiness and devils are forces in nature representing evil and unhappiness.

What we understand from the Qur'an, however, is that they are beings existing beyond our sense-range, who possess feelings and an independent free-will. To the verses above, (indicating that angels possess independence and free will), may be added many other verses which confirm these same qualities.

The refusal of Satan to prostrate himself before Adam and the dialogue between Satan and God occurs several times in the Qur'an. Satan, after having been expelled from intimacy with God, says in chapter 38:82-83, "***I surely will lead every one of them astray except your sincere slaves among them.***" And God replies "***I shall fill hell with you and with those who follow you, together***" (38:85).

It is clear that punishment can only take place if the punished understand the reason for the punishment. God in chapter 34:20, says in confirmation of Satan's warning to man, "***And Satan indeed found his calculation true concerning them, for they follow them, all except a group of true believers.***"

Likewise, we read in chapter 14:22, "***And Satan said when the matter had been decided: Indeed! Allah promised you a promise of truth; and I promised you and failed you. And I had no power over you except that I called to you and you obeyed me. So do not blame me but blame yourselves.***"

Blame is a matter which can only be associated with those who possess the power of reason and free-will. We quote these verses to show that Satan, like the rest of the angels, is a thinking independent being rather than a force in nature. Just as verses occur in the Qur'an concerning the angels and the devils, there also are verses which clearly and vividly describe the jinn (elemental spirits or invisible beings, either harmful or helpful).

In chapter 46:18 reference is made to those who, invited to believe in Islam, spurn it as just another ancient fable or superstition: "***Such are those in whom the word concerning nations of the jinn and mankind which have passed away before them has effect. Indeed they are the losers.***"

We may understand from this verse that the jinn, the invisible entities, like mankind, live in different nations, pass a period of time in their different societies and finally die.

In the same chapter, verses 29-32 we read, "***And when we inclined toward you (Muhammad) certain of the jinn who wished to hear the Qur'an and when they were in its presence said, Listen! and, when it was finished turned back to their people warning. They said: O our people! Truly we have heard a book which has been revealed after Moses, confirming that which was before it, guiding***"

to the truth and a right road. O my people! respond to God's Summoner and believe in Him. He will forgive you some of your wrong actions and guard you from a painful doom. And whoever does not respond to God's Summoner he can in no way escape in the earth, and you (can find) no protecting friends instead of Him. Such are in clear error.

These verses clearly confirm that the jinn, like men, live in groups, are thinking individuals possessing free will and charged with duties, Moreover, there are other verses dealing with the day of rising which affirms these same qualities in the jinn.

The Call of Conscience

According to the explanation of certain modern writers, Prophethood is the rising up of a man from amongst his people in order to undertake social reform in accordance with the call of his conscience. The Qur'an, however, gives a different meaning to the Prophethood. In 91:7-8 we read, "***And a soul and Him who perfected it, and inspired it (with conscience off what is wrong for it and (what is) right for it.*** "

In this verse God demonstrates that each individual perceives from his own conscience and God-given nature the difference between good and bad action; and, that the potential for reform and the bettering of one's self is contained within each person; some listen to their conscience and act correctly while others pay no heed and so act wrongly.

Thus in the following verses of the same chapter God says: "***He is indeed successful who causes it to grow and he is indeed a failure who stunts it.***" If Prophethood manifests itself as a result of the conscience, which everyone possesses, then everyone in theory may become a prophet. God, however, has reserved this duty for certain men only.

Thus He says in chapter 6:124, "***And when a sign comes to them, they say: we do not believe until we are given that which God's messengers are given. God knows best with whom to place His message.***"

The Reality of the Prophet's Mission

We should repeat at this point that we do not intend to prove or disprove here the truth of Islam or the validity of the Prophet's invitation of the people to Islam. Rather, we simply want to state that the second of the modern non-Islamic explanations is also not in accordance with the explanation given in the Qur'an.

According to it, the prophet succeeded in convincing people to believe in a set of superstitions framed in a politico-religious framework; he was aided in this, so they say, by the fact that his own people were tribesmen, having no advanced culture of their own.

In the name of public good and the well-being of society harsh punishments were promised to those who did not obey the religious laws; the Prophet instilled a fear of the Day of Reckoning and promised rewards for those who obeyed.

Thus fervor for the promised paradise and fear of the Day of Reckoning created a society based on a religious foundation.

The history of the lives of other prophets has, for the most part, been lost in time, but the life of the Prophet Muhammad is well documented. Anyone who researches into it will not be left in the least doubt that he had total faith and inner certainty in his mission.

If religious beliefs were mere superstitions or a means to unify and subdue a society, then all the proofs expounded in the Qur'an concerning the hereafter, the existence of a Creator of the World, Divine Unity, His attributes, belief in a prophecy and the reckoning of a man's actions after death would have absolutely no meaning.

[What the Qur'an says about the Meaning of Revelation and Prophecy](#)

The Qur'an clearly states that it is a book revealed to the Prophet and that revelation is a kind of divine utterance beyond the understanding or communication of the material world; revelation is unperceived by sense or intellect but apprehended by other faculties which, by God's will, are present in certain individuals. Through revelation instructions from the unseen are received and their acceptance and implementation is called Prophethood. To clarify this matter we may make the following points.

[Man's Innate Nature](#)

In the beginning of this book we explained that each created entity, whether mineral, plant or animal, is endowed with an inherent force which enables it to develop in accordance with its own innate design and nature.

Thus we read in chapter 20:50, "***Our Lord is He who gave everything its nature, then guided it correctly,***" and again in chapter 87:2-3 "***Who creates, then disposes, who measures then guides.***" We also know that man is not excluded from this general law, that is, he has a direction and an aim towards which he develops, having been endowed with faculties which allow him to fulfill this aim.

All his happiness lies in achieving this aim; his sorrow, grief and misfortune are the result of his failure to achieve this aim. He is guided to this special purpose by his Creator.

As God says in chapter 76:3, "***Indeed, we have shown him the way whether he be grateful or disbelieving.***" Likewise we read in chapter 80:19-20, "***From a drop of seed, He creates him and***

proportions him. Then makes the way easy for him”

Man's Path in Traversing the Road of Life

The difference between the animal and plant kingdoms and man is that the former react according to their inherent knowledge or instinct, while man, also possessing an inherent knowledge, is equipped with an intellect and the capacity to use or recognize wisdom.

Even if man is capable of undertaking a certain action, he weighs the good or the bad, the benefit or harm, contained in that action and implements it only if he estimates that the benefit outweighs the harm.

Thus he follows the instruction of his intellect in every action; the intellect dictates the necessity of an action. The intellect causes one to abandon an act if it is likely to bring with it an unacceptable degree of trouble and hardship; it not only instructs one on the feasibility of an action, but it also takes into account the dictates of sentiment and feeling.

Indeed the perception of sentiment with regard to the relative good or bad in matter is so closely connected with the decision of the intellect as to be considered one and the same thing.

Man as a Social Being

No one would deny that men are social beings who co-operate with each other to better meet their daily needs. We may wonder, however, whether men desire this co-operation from their natural feelings; are they naturally inclined to undertake an action with others and share an interest in something as a social project?

On one level, man's needs, feelings and desires cause him to act for his own benefit and without regard for the needs and wishes of others. Man uses every means to fulfill his own needs: he uses every kind of transport to reach his destination; he uses the leaves, stems and fruit of plants and trees; he lives upon the meat of animals and their products, and takes advantage of a multitude of other things to complement his own deficiencies in certain respects.

Can man, whose state is such that he uses everything he finds to his own ends, be expected to respect another human being? Can he extend his hand to another in co-operation and turn a blind eye to his own desire for the sake of mutual benefit?

The answer in the first instance must be no. It is as a result of man's countless needs, which can never be fulfilled by himself alone, that he recognizes the possibility of fulfilling them through the help and co-operation of others. Similarly, he understands that his own strengths, desires and wishes are also shared by others, and just as he defends his own interests so others defend theirs.

Thus, out of necessity, he co-operates with the social nexus and gives a certain measure of his own

efforts to fulfill the needs of others; in return he benefits from the efforts of others in order to full fill his own needs.

In truth he has entered into a market–place of social wealth, always open to traders and offering all the benefits obtained by the collective work of the society. All these factors are placed together in this market– place of pooled human resources and each person, according to the importance society attaches to his work, has a share in these benefits.

Thus man's first nature incites him to pursue the fulfillment of his own needs using others in the process and taking advantage of their work for his own ends. It is only in cases of necessity and helplessness that he lends a hand to co–operate with society.

This matter is clear when we observe the nature of children: anything a child wants he demands in an extreme way; he emphasizes his demand by crying. As he grows older, however, and becomes a part of the social fabric, he gradually puts an end to his excessive demands.

More evidence for the truth of this may be seen when a person accumulates power which exceeds that of others and he rejects the spirit of cooperation and its restrictions of society; such an individual uses people and the fruits of their labors for himself without giving anything back in return.

God refers to the necessary spirit of natural cooperation in society in chapter 43:32, "***We have apportioned among them their livelihood in the life of the world, and raised some of them above others in rank that some of them take labor from others ...*** "

This verse refers to the reality of the social situation in which each individual has a different capacity and different talents: those who are superior in one domain engage the cooperation or employ of others for their eventual mutual benefit.

Thus all members of society are linked together in the ways and wants of the fabric of one single social unit. Those who do not see the obvious necessity of mutual cooperation are condemned by God in chapter 14:34, "***Truly man is surely a wrong–doer, (a tyrant)***" and, in chapter 33:72, "***Indeed he has proved a tyrant and a fool.***"

These verses refer to man's natural instinct which, unless checked, drives him to take advantage of his fellow–men and in doing so to overstep the rights of others.

The Manifestation of Social Differences and the Necessity of Law

Man in his dealings with his fellow men is obliged to accept a social life based on cooperation; in doing so he effectively forgoes some of the freedom enjoyed within his own sphere of work. Merely taking part in a society based on injustice and gaining social differences is not enough to satisfy the basic needs of the average man.

In such a society, taking advantage of the efforts of others leads to corruption and a loss of the original purpose of removing glaring differences between men and bettering their lives.

It is clear that a framework of laws, understood and respected by all, must govern the different members of society. If there are no clear laws governing even the most basic of transactions (like buying and selling), transactions will cease to function correctly.

Laws are necessary to preserve the rights of individuals. The power and wisdom of the Creator, who has guided man towards his well-being and happiness, has also guaranteed the success and happiness of society.

Guidance in the form of social law is mentioned by God in 80: 19–20, "***From a drop of seed He creates him and proportions him. Then makes the way easy for him.***" This making of life easy for him is an indication of the social guidance which he has given to man in the form of laws and instructions.

The Intellect is not Sufficient in Guiding Man towards Respect of the Law

The guidance we are considering here is that which emanates from the wisdom of the Creator; this wisdom has created man and allotted him his goal of well-being just as it has assigned a path and goal to all creation.

This goal of happiness and well-being is the path of self-fulfillment based on correct behavior in a social setting. It is clear that, of necessity, there can be no inconsistencies or shortcomings in the work of the Creator.

If, at times, one cannot discern His aim or it seems hidden from normal perception, it is not through lack of reason or cause on the part of God, but rather that the cause is linked to other causes which obscure the one in question.

If there were no hindrances to a clear perception of the causal chain of events, two given actions would never appear inconsistent or contradictory to the harmony of creation. Nor would the work of the Creator appear (as it sometimes does to those whose perception is hindered by the intricacy of the causal chain of events), inconsistent and imperfect.

Guidance towards the law, whose function is to remove differences and conflict between individuals in society, is not a matter for the intellect since it is this very intellect which causes man to dispute with others. It is the same intellect which incites man to profit at the expense of others and to preserve, first and foremost, his own interest, accepting justice only when there is no alternative.

The two opposing forces, one causing difficulties and one doing away with them, are qualities of man's character; they do not obviously exist in the Creator: the countless daily transgressions and violations of

the law, in effect, all result from those who use their intellect incorrectly; they themselves are the very source of their own difficulties.

If the intellect was truly a means of removing wrong action from society and was itself a trustworthy guide to man's well-being, it would recognize the validity of the law and prevent man from violating it.

The intellect's refusal to willingly accept what is obviously given for the well-being of man is confirmed when we realize that its acceptance of a society based on just laws is only out of necessity. Without this compulsion, it would never accept to know the law.

Those who transgress the law do so for many reasons: some oppose it without fear, because their power exceeds that of the law; others, because they live outside the reach of the law, through deceit or negligence on the part of the authorities; others are able to invent reasons which make their wrong actions appear lawful and acceptable; some make use of the helplessness of the person they have wronged.

All, however, find no legal obstacle in their wrong aims; even if an obstacle appears, their intellect, rather than guiding them to an acceptance of the law, renders the obstacle right and ineffective.

From these examples we are left in no doubt that the intellect, far from controlling, restricting or guiding man merely uses its influence to its own purpose. We must include, therefore, that it is incapable of guiding man towards a social law which guarantees the rights, freedom and well-being of all the members of society.

God says in chapter 96:6-7 "***Indeed man truly rebels when he thinks himself independent.*** " The independence referred to here includes the independence of those who imagine that they can claim their rights through other than the path of legality.

The Only Way to Guidance is that of Revelation

Man, like the rest of creation, naturally seeks his own well-being and happiness as he lives out his life. Since, by his very make-up, he has a variety of natural needs, he has no alternative but to live in society in order to fulfill these needs; his own well-being and search for the fulfillment of his natural character takes place in the wider framework of society's well-being.

Thus the only acceptable pattern of existence, regulated by a comprehensive law common to all people, is the one which guarantees both the well-being of society and of the individual in a balanced and just fashion.

It is also clear that man, like the rest of creation, must endeavor to achieve his well-being and undertake whatever preparation is necessary for achieving this by allowing himself to be guided by his Creator.

It is but a logical next step in our analysis to say that any guidance from the Creator must be towards this comprehensive law, common to all and, at the same time, in accord with the individual's well-being. Intellect is not enough to guide man to the law since it does not always decide in favor of cooperation with others nor in favor of the common good.

The path, the way, which fits perfectly the requirements of man is the way taught by the Prophets and messengers of God. It is the way brought to them by God through revelation and established as undeniably true and valid, by the example of their own lives and their intimate knowledge and contact with God.

The Revelation of the Qur'an

In chapter 2:213, God says, "***Mankind was one community and God sent (to them) prophets as bearers of good news and as warners and revealed to them the book with the truth that it may judge between mankind concerning that in which they differed.***"

Here we understand "one community" to mean a society at peace, its members living without dispute or difference. After a period of time, men differed with one another and as a result God sent the prophets.

Again He says in 4:163-165, "***Indeed We have inspired you as we have inspired Noah ... Messengers of good news and a warning in order that mankind might have no argument against God after the Messenger.***" Intellect alone does not make man accountable to God and this is why he must be awakened to the reality of his inner condition by other means.

The first of the above-mentioned verses recognizes the way of revelation and prophecy as the only way of removing differences between men. The second shows revelation and prophecy to be the complete and absolute proof to mankind of the truth of God's message.

Some Questions Answered

Question: By using the premise that the intellect cannot prevent violation of the law and the wrong action of man in general, you are declaring the necessity of imposing a law or, as you say, "guidance" towards his own well-being; that is, you are demanding that we place our trust in revelation and in Prophethood rather than in the intellect.

The truth is, however, that the laws and instructions of revelation are also ineffective in that they cannot prevent violation of the law, of the Shari'ic law or divine code; in fact, man's acceptance of this code is even less than his acceptance of the civil code. What can you reply to this?

Answer: To point out the way is one thing and to follow it is another. The Creator has taken upon himself to guide mankind to a law under which he can achieve his well-being; He has not taken upon himself to

stop mankind from infringing upon the law nor of compelling men to follow the law.

We have investigated above the problem of man's infringement of the law, not to prove that the intellect is deficient or incapable of preventing wrong action but, rather, to show that it usually does not decide in favor of the law or of cooperation with society.

As we have pointed out, the intellect only follows the law out of necessity; if it perceives that obeying the law and restricting one's personal freedom brings less benefit than disobedience, then it will not follow the law nor stop others from transgressing.

The acceptance of the way of the revelation, however, always brings with it obedience to the law. By accepting the code of behavior revealed by the prophets, one entrusts one's judgment to God who, with his boundless power and knowledge, constantly watches over man; only He can reward good deeds or punish bad ones in an absolutely just and unbiased way. God says in chapter 11:40, "***The decision rests with God only,***" and in chapter 99:74, "***And whoever does an atom 's weight of good will see it then and whoever does an atom 's weight of bad will see it then.*** "

Likewise, He says in 22:17, "***Indeed God will decide between them on the day of Rising, Indeed! God is witness over all things,***" and in 2:77, "***Are they unaware that God knows that which they keep hidden and that which they proclaim.***" In 33:52 we read: "***And God is watcher over all things.***"

From these verses it is clear that the divine din of Islam, which has been given to man through revelation, is not capable of preventing transgression of the law any more than the civil law drawn up by men.

The machinery of the civil law appoints officials and employees to control and inspect the action of man and also imposes a system of punishment for his offences; this method only works when the law is strong and the crime is discovered.

The divine din is superior to man-made laws or social orders in that control over man is carried out in a very special way, namely, through the vigil of the angels. Moreover, the divine din obliges in every man and woman to enjoin the right and forbid the wrong. All men, without exception, are instructed to watch over the action of their fellow men and to be guardians of the law.

It is only belief in a divine order which contains and defines action outside the limits of good and bad and within the reality of the Day of Reckoning to come. Most importantly, the Lord of the world and of all the unseen world is aware of man's every action and is present with him everywhere at every moment.

Like the civil codes drawn up by man, there is also in the divine code a corresponding system of punishment for every sin, both in this world and on the day of reckoning after death. Unlike the civil code, however, the divine law guarantees that no man will escape from judgment and punishment, if punishment is warranted.

As proof, the reader is urged to follow what is written in chapter 4: 59, "**Obey God and obey the messenger and those of you in authority**" and, in 11: 71, "**And the believers, men and women are protecting friends one to another; they enjoin the right and forbid the wrong.**"

Likewise, we may study 82: 1–12 when God says, "**Indeed there are guardians above you, generous and recording, who know (all) that you do**" and, also in 34:21, "**And your Lord (O Muhammad) takes note of all things.**"

A Second Question: It has been argued that the intellect does not always decide in favor of respect for the law. Is this not inconsistent with what is contained in the saying of the Imams which states that God has given two proofs to his servants, the outward and obvious one being that of His Prophet, and the inner and hidden one being that of the intellect of man? How are we to understand this statement in the light of how the intellect has been described?

Answer: Without exception, man's intellect is concentrated on securing benefit and avoiding harm. Whenever it accepts to cooperate and share in society's activity, it is, as we have seen above, seeking its own benefit.

This need is often felt by those who wish to profit from others or seek to control others by using their wealth. For such men there is nothing prohibiting them from pursuing their illegal action; their intellect will not decide in favor of the law nor forbid transgression of the same law.

If, however, the source of compulsion (as is understood in the light of divine revelation) is from God, then the effect on man is totally different. God's watching over man's action, His punishment or reward of bad or good action, admits of no negligence, ignorance or incapacity. The intellect, which recognizes the existence of God, cannot refuse the law. It will always decide in favor of that which revelation demands of man.

Thus the intellect of a believing man will recognize the importance of the revelation over any personal matter. God say in 13:33 "**Is He who is aware of the deserts of every soul as he who is aware of nothing;**" and, in 86:4, "**No human soul but has a guardian over it**" and, 74:38, "**Every soul is a pledge for its own deeds.**"

The Path of Revelation is Protected against Mistakes

The path of revelation is part of the Creator's program. He never makes mistakes, neither in His Creation nor in the system of belief and the laws of the shari'ah, which are delineated for man through revelation.

God says in 72:26–28, **(He is) the knower of the unseen and he reveals His secret to no one except to every messenger He has chosen and He makes a guard go before him and a guard behind him, that He may know that they have indeed conveyed the message of the Lord. He surrounds all their doings and He keeps count of all things.**

From this we understand that the prophets and messengers of God must be infallible both in receiving the revelation and in preserving it against alteration and attack. They are as instruments at the disposal of the Creator's wisdom.

Were they to make an error in receiving or teaching the message of the revelation or be led astray by the whispering of evil persons, were they themselves to commit wrong or deliberately change the message they had to deliver, then the wisdom of God would be unable to perfect its program of guidance.

God confirms in chapter 16:9 that He is in total control of man's guidance by means of his messenger, ***"And God's is the direction of the way, and some (words) do not go straight."***

The Hidden Reality of Revelation

The reality of revelation is hidden from us. What is clear is that the aim of the program of life, outlined for man by the Creator, cannot possibly have been put together by the intellect; there must be another way of understanding, of perceiving, (other than through reflection and thought), by which man learns—of the duties incumbent on him and his fellow—men. This understanding may only be encompassed by the path of revelation.

There are, however, only a limited number of men who possess this kind of understanding since receiving revelation requires an understanding based on purity, sincerity and freedom from all corruption and bad thoughts.

It requires men whose spiritual qualities do not change; men who are psychologically balanced in their judgments and who possess real depth of understanding. It must be admitted that these qualities are rarely to be found amongst men.

The Prophets and messengers mentioned in the Qur'an are men of precisely these qualities. The Qur'an does not mention their number; it only names a few (namely Adam, Nuh (Noah), Hud, Salih. (Methusaleh), Ibrahim (Abraham), Lut (Lot), Isma'il (Ismael, Ishmael), Alyasa' (Elisha), Dhu al-Kifl (Ezekiel), Ilyas (Elias), Yunus (Jonah), Idris (Enoch), Ishaq (Isaac), Ya'qub (Jacob), Yusuf (Joseph), Shu'ayb, Musa (Moses), Harun (Aaron), Da'ud (David), Sulayman (Solomon), Ayyub (Job), Zakariya' (Zacharias), Yahya (John), Isma'il Sadiq al-Wa'd, 'Isa (Jesus) and Muhammad; others are indicated but not named).

We, as ordinary men, do not share at all their qualities and so we cannot taste the reality of their perception. Prophecy, as an experience, remains unknown for us. Moreover, few of the past revelations have reached us and we have only a limited view of the reality which is revelation and prophecy.

It may be that what has reached us in the form of revealed books is exactly as the revelation we are familiar with, that is the Qur'an. Nevertheless, it is possible that other revelations (completely unknown to

us) may have contained information and instructions of which we have no knowledge.

How the Qur'an was Revealed

Qur'anic revelation, according to the Qur'an itself, is an utterance on behalf of God to His Prophet; the Prophet received the speech of God with all his being, not just by way of learning. In 42:5 1–52 God says, ***And it was not to be for any man that God should speak to him unless (it be) by revelation or from behind a veil or (that) we send a messenger to reveal what He will by His leave. Truly He is exalted, wise. And thus We have inspired in you (Muhammad) a spirit of Our Command. You did not know what the Book, nor what the Faith was. But We have made it a light whereby We guide whom We will of our slaves. And truly you surely guide to a right path.***

On comparison of these two verses we discover three different ways of divine utterance. Firstly, God speaks without there being any veil between Him and man. Secondly, God speaks from behind a veil: like the tree on the Tur Mountain from behind which Moses heard God speaking. Thirdly, God's speech is brought to man by an angel who had previously heard the revelation from Him.

The second of the two verses above show that the Qur'an has reached us by means of the third of three possible ways. Again God says in 26: 192–5, "***(A revelation) which the Faithful Spirit (Gabriel) has brought down upon your heart, that you may be (one) of the warners, in plain Arabic Speech,***" and in chapter 2:97 "***Who is an enemy to Gabriel! For it is he who has revealed (this book) to your heart.***"

From these verses we understand that the Qur'an was transmitted by way of an angel named Gabriel, or the "***Faithful Spirit***"; and that the Prophet received the revelation from him with all his being, all his perception and not merely by listening.

The verse says "***on your heart,***" which in Qur'anic terms means perception or awareness. In 53: 10–11 we read, "***And He revealed to His slave that which He revealed. The heart did not lie (in seeing) what it saw;***" and in 98:2 reception of the revelation is indicated as a reading of "***pure pages***" by God's messenger.

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