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Section One: In Search of the Object of Devotion

History of Worship

Believing in a Divine Origin and worshipping Him is one of the oldest aspects of human life. Historical research conducted by archaeologists and anthropologists has revealed that even primitive humans who lived thousands of years before the first civilization was formed had deep religious and metaphysical beliefs, such as belief in divine spirits and life after death. It seems that from the dawn of history humanity has inherently known that they have not been forsaken in this vast existence; rather, they are under the influence and authority of metaphysical entities and powers that preside over their existence and have a part in their destiny.

The drawings discovered in ancient caves, statues and various ornaments that have been found in underground excavations or deep within caves are all testimonies to the existence of various religious beliefs. Moreover, the remains of the dead, the method of their burial, and the existence of animal skulls, weapons, and valuable artifacts alongside the bodies are all proof of the fact that ancient humans, in some way, believed in life after death.

According to Islamic thought, humans innately seek and believe in God; in other words, they have an innate predisposition towards worshipping God and also possess a type of inborn cognition of Him. However, because this cognitive predisposition is not adequate for perfect worship and understanding of God, holy prophets have been appointed among various peoples throughout history in order to perfect this innate guidance and enlighten humankind in theology, self-knowledge, and the relationship between “God, humanity, and the world” and thus bring forth the fruits of human intellect and nature.

The holy prophets have always enjoined worship of the One Divine God—divine meaning that He is superior to and exempt from the natural and material world. Thus, in proportion to the influence that this invitation to worship has fostered in each person, humanity's beliefs in general have been fluctuating between the boundaries of monotheism and polytheism.¹ This fluctuation has resulted in a wide-ranging

spectrum of theological beliefs among earlier nations and societies even after emergence of the prophets.

Naturally, because polytheism [shirk] and idolatry, in contrast to pure monotheist beliefs, have material qualities and effects—such as worship of idols, stones, animals, etc.—it is only logical that historic analysis should come across more signs of these beliefs. Because monotheism is less material, historic analysis should be able to demonstrate the radices of monotheism in human history to a much lesser degree. Even so, this truth does not make “monotheism” insignificant or marginal.

The Perfection and Excellence of Islamic Theology

In any event, for various reasons that are too extensive to include in this exposition, the long history of religion—generally speaking—has been witness to an astonishing diversity concerning religious beliefs and religious customs of various peoples. Apart from monotheist views, the diversity of polytheistic and henotheistic² religions has overwhelmed humanity with its profuseness.

According to Islamic tradition, Islamic teachings in theology and other branches of religious studies, such as eschatology, are the most complete religious teachings at our disposal. Contemplation of the profundity of Islamic theological teachings is enough to prove this claim. Nevertheless, it is obvious that understanding the importance, profundity, and richness of Islamic theology can only be complete when Islamic beliefs are compared with those of other religions and sects, especially mundane religions and beliefs. This comparison, if preformed with contemplation and impartiality, can effectively reveal the excellence of Islamic theology.

A Glimpse of Mundane Religious Theology

There is no reliable and accurate knowledge concerning the religious lifestyle of ancient humans. Research on this subject has its own particular problems. Nevertheless, today, we have acquired some information on this subject through archeological research and analysis of the beliefs and religious ceremonies of contemporary primitive tribes. According to recent findings in archeology and anthropology, there are common elements in most primitive religions that exist with little variation in contemporary uncivilized and primitive tribes.

A common practice among ancient humans was veneration and glorification of various plants and animals. Religious historians term this plant or animal “Totem” and call veneration of these objects “Totemism”. Each of these primitive tribes worshiped a specific totem or group of totems and sometimes worshiped a particular animal that they believed to be one of their ancestors.

They believed that totems had an occult power called “Mana” which made them worthy of veneration and glorification. Therefore, they strongly avoided harming or eating these totems and believed that the spirit within the totem protected them. Sometimes totems were chosen out of fear (lions and snakes for

example) and sometimes beauty and exquisiteness were the grounds for worship (peacocks and gazelles for instance). Totem worshipers endeavored to make themselves resemble their totems.

Other than glorification of plants and animals, various lifeless objects were also sacred; such an object is termed “Fetish”. Fetishes were venerated by various primitive clans and were taken on battles and hunts. Natural fetishes (non-manufactured) such as pebbles, unusual and rare pieces of wood, and meteor stones usually had strange and singular shapes and were considered sources of magical powers. Later, among more advanced peoples who were able to fashion metal objects, worship of manufactured fetishes became common and gradually transformed into a form of idolatry.

Parallel to belief in holy objects, plants, and animals, a kind of “Animism” was prevalent. Animism is the belief that various aspects of nature have independent souls and spirits that can influence human destinies. In addition, wholehearted belief in sorcery and magic and avoidance of specific objects due to the belief that they had occult powers are several other beliefs and customs that were to some extent existent among primitive tribes.

These facts show that affinity and dependency towards a superior power and the inclination to venerate and worship this power has commonly prevailed in a simple and rudimentary manner among ancient humans. However, this primitive feeling and inclination—influenced by factors such as imagination, ignorance, lack of knowledge, fear and insecurity, etc.—manifested itself in the form of the worship of special objects, plants, and animals. In other words, ancient humans were very far from the intellectual maturity they required to receive divine knowledge concerning cognition of the source, administration, and design structure of existence.

Subsequent to prehistoric eras, history was gradually witness to the formation of great civilizations in various parts of the world. In this era, main elements of tribal religions endured, although sometimes they acquired “modern” forms. For example, belief in totems and fetishes, and also idolatry and animism transferred over to newly established civilizations in various forms. As well, these civilizations were the sources of new forms of theism such as polytheism and henotheism.

Ancient Egyptians evolved through all the phases of rudimentary religions, such as totemism and animism, and finally tending towards multitudes of gods, they became absolute polytheists. They regarded the Egyptian pharaohs as the offspring of the Sun and considered them to possess some form of divinity. The erectors of the Egyptian pyramids designated the pharaohs as Sons of Ra (the Egyptian sun god), and built in their names pyramids whose shapes are allegories of the rays of the Sun.

Sun worship was commonplace among ancient Sumerians. The name of their sun god was Shamash. Inanna was their great goddess of cities, plants, and fertility. Each Sumerian god resided at a specific temple where it was worshiped. In addition to belief in multiple gods, the Sumerians also believed in mythological creatures and spirits. In the second age of Sumerian civilization, the Babylonian-Assyrian period, there were numerous gods with similar names.

In the most ancient religious texts of the Hindu civilization—the Vedas—gods are described in human forms. In its initial form, Hinduism includes the two elements of nature worship and polytheism. The Vedic gods, great and small, were elements and aspects of nature that had gained divinity. The common characteristics of these gods included possessing human forms, compassionate natures, immortality, and lack of individuality. In addition, the followers of Buddha deified him after his death and gradually, many other gods became objects of their worship.

According to the ancient Chinese, the world is under the dominion of “Shangdi” meaning ‘Above Sovereign’. In some narrations, the creation of humanity is attributed to Shangdi. An army of gods governed affairs under the authority of Shangdi because he was too great to attend to the problems of mortal beings. There is no complete list of these gods. A group of the Chinese gods guarded the people’s homes and thus every Chinese house was believed to contain both celestial and worldly inhabitants.

In ancient Greece, polytheism was rampant. Every family had their own god and the fires in their ovens constantly burned in the name of these gods. Offering food to the gods was one of the most prevalent religious ceremonies in people’s homes. In addition to the god that each family had, each tribe, clan, and city worshiped their own specific god. The Greeks’ religious imagination, by extending beyond their own locality, formed the common mythologies and gods of ancient Greece. The Greek people had a god for every aspect of nature and society, worldly and celestial powers, good and evil, various affairs, etc.

In Rome, people believed in numerous spirits—those who lacked a specific form or independent personality. They would beseech some of these spirits for prosperity in agriculture and harvest. Others were venerated and deified within familial circles. There were innumerable official Roman gods who had special priests in government temples and who were worshiped with special customs and rites.

In pre-Zoroastrian Iran, the “Magian” belief was popular. This belief propagated dualism and belief in a god of good and a god of evil. Zoroaster corrected this belief after his appearance and altered the beliefs of Iranians from polytheism towards monotheism.

According to what was said, we can identify a set of religious and ideological principles and elements that are more or less common in all religions described.

As we have established, in these religions, instead of One God, there were numerous gods. Sometimes the number of these gods would increase in proportion to cities, tribes, and even families. Therefore, the theology of these religions must be described as an extreme version of polytheism, which is very distant from pure monotheistic thought.

The incarnations of these gods were natural elements, celestial bodies, various animals, and even particular people and thus were not divine beings but merely aspects of nature.

These gods were subject to much change as a result of social progress, wars, encounters with

neighboring civilizations, etc.; insomuch that at times, following these factors, a god would lose his former glory or a goddess who had no previous status would join the ranks of important and official gods!

Occasionally, a number of gods, who were products of the fantasies and imaginations of their worshipers, would combine and bring about a new god who was an amalgam of the traits and attributes of the previous gods.

Among most peoples, various prevalent mythologies about gods spoke of childbearing, combining, and internal battles among gods! The pinnacle of these mythologies can be found within the ancient Greek civilization, especially in the epics of Homer and Hesiod.

The majority of these gods were not divine and incorporeal beings. In fact, they had humanlike personalities and they were confined by human characteristics and relationships, such as reproduction, marriage, and paradoxically death.

Often, governing the affairs of nature was divided among gods and each one was the custodian of one or several natural processes, such as the wind and rain, and were heeded and beseeched only in their specific domains.

Today it has become apparent to most people that the gods of ancient peoples are in no way worthy of worship and cannot answer our innate longing to worship a divine and holy being. Nevertheless, the prevalence of the worship and veneration of these gods among ancient peoples reveals a fundamental need—the need to worship, venerate, feel dependant upon, and have a link with a superior being—in the depths of our soul; a need that has been fulfilled to perfection by the Islamic religion.[3](#)

Why Theology?

At first, we might see ourselves faced with this fundamental question: “What is the importance and necessity of endeavoring to understand God and what role does this understanding have in our personal and social lives?”

In order to answer this question, we must first recount several issues:

A short reflection upon the individual and social characteristics of the lives of those around us reveals the fact that there is a fundamental difference between the lives of believers and unbelievers.

Additionally, two people who each has a differing view of their God do not live in the same manner.

This is because our belief in God, understanding of God’s traits, and relationship with God—especially when these beliefs become imbued into our souls and we wear the raiment of faith [إيمان]—have a profound effect upon the various aspects of our lives. Humanity’s understanding of their creator influence their motives and causes, desires and ambitions, thought and speech, and actions and behavior. This

understanding gives their lives direction, and it bestows upon them special identities.

Therefore, walking the path of theology and understanding God is not just a scientific endeavor to answer several questions of our inquisitive minds; rather, it is a movement towards choosing a special way of life and manner of living.

Indeed, belief in and love of God has never been an easily overlooked, subsidiary, or inferior issue. Persons who wish to strengthen the pillars of their lives upon the foundation of reason and sagacity would never allow themselves to neglect this matter. Belief in God is a fundamental issue in religious life, and it is not possible to make an informed decision about the best way of life without correct and comprehensive understanding of religious life.

History also supports the importance of theology. As far as historical facts show, enquiry concerning the source of existence and the creator of the world has always been one of the main concerns of thoughtful humanity. Additionally, theological opinions and beliefs, and discussions about existence and God's attributes have greatly helped the general and historical culture of humankind.[4](#)

The Methods of Realizing God

It is befitting that we commence our discussion on the methods of realizing God with two definitions. Two fundamental stages can be identified concerning understanding God:

1. Cognizance of the existence of Allah,
2. Cognition of Divine attributes and actions and the relationship of Allah with humanity and the world.

In the first stage, one realizes that "Allah is". This realization separates one from the ranks of atheists and agnostics, and joins him with the ranks of believers. Next, one enters the second stage, becomes acquainted with God's attributes, and identifies God's relationship with all creatures of the world. This stage consists of an endless path that each believer can only partially traverse depending upon his capacity.

In order to avoid mistaking these two fundamental stages with each other, we will term the first stage "realizing Allah" and the second stage "understanding Allah".

From one perspective, we can place the most important methods of realizing God in three categories: the way of the heart, the way of experience, and the way of reason.[5](#)

1. The Way of the Heart

Sometimes through introspection, without needing logical deduction or empirical observation, humans realize their Creator and thus reach their Beloved by way of heart. The starting point of this path is innate [fiṣṣ] realization of God, which is also called the way of nature [fiṣṣrat]. The advanced stages of

this method pertains to a special group of mystics and illuminated Gnostics; through sincere worship, self-purification, and self-edification, these individuals observe the mighty and beautiful Divine attributes through the vision of their souls.

By studying the lives of devoted believers, it is apparent that many of them have realized and understood their Creator by way of their hearts; their religious faith is a robust tree that is watered from the spring of intuition. As a result of suitable circumstances and absence of impediments, the God-seeking and God-believing nature of many individuals matures and flourishes. These individuals feel the presence of their Lord with their hearts and souls and discover within themselves their deep-rooted dependence on the Divine Origin. Through mysticism, some of these individuals endeavor to lift the veils between themselves and God, which arise through their egocentricity and self-importance, thereby attaining the rank in which they may observe Almighty God through the vision of their souls and thus meet their Lord [liq' allh].

In describing intuition, Mawlānā (Jalāl ad-Dīn ar-Rūmī) has written:

The purity of the mirror is a description of the heart;

The heart which is worthy to display the countenance of the Divine Infinite.

The Divine infinite countenance of the Invisible;

Miraculously shined from the collar of Moses through the mirror of his heart.

The divine countenance of Allah cannot be contained in the heavens;

Nor even in the Empyrean nor in the earth nor in the sea nor in fish.

For these are all limited and countable;

But know that the mirror of the heart has no limit.

Sanctified mystics who have cleansed themselves of all scent and color (ego);

See beauty every moment without pause.

The reflection of no image endures forever;

Except for images both spiritual and mundane that radiate from the heart.

From the time the images of the seven Heavens shined upon the hearts of humans;

Their hearts have been seeking Heaven.

They are superior to the Heavens and the Throne of Allah;

The inhabitants of the true sanctuary of Allah.

They possess many signs from Allah, even so they are absolutely obscure;

What are mere signs; they are in fact united with Allah.[6](#) (Book I)

In addition, Hafiz recites:

There exists no partition between lovers and the object of their love,

You, yourself are your own shroud Hafiz, arise from the midst.[7](#)

A person asked, “O, Commander of the Faithful! Have you seen your Creator?” Amīr al-Mu’minīn[8](#) (‘a)—the originator of mysticism and leader of all mystics—declared in indication of intuitive and inner understanding of God, “Should I worship something that I have not seen?”

The person then asked, “How do you see Him?” The Imam answered: “Eyes do not see Him manifestly, but hearts realize Him through the reality of faith.”[9](#)

Those who have attained this status do not seek their Lord through other methods, such as the way of reason or experience, because they have realized Him with their whole beings; what else could one who has found what he has sought desire? Such intuitive people believe that immersing themselves in the observation of God’s creations or logical reasoning hinders union with the Beloved and appealing to anything but God in order to prove His existence is improper. The condition of this group is similar to what is uttered in the prayer (munājāt) of Imam Hussein (‘a):

“O He whom I worship! When I consider each of the tokens of Your power in order to understand You, the path to union with You grows far... How can I prove Your existence through things that rely upon You for their existence? Is there any being besides you that has a manifestation that is not Your doing, which can manifest You? When have You become hidden that You must need a guide to show me the way to You? And when have You been apart from me to make it necessary that your creations bring me to You? Blind is the eye that does not see You, while You have always been its companion!”[10](#)

When have You left my heart that I must plea for You?

When have You become hidden that I must seek You?[11](#)

Naturally, even though the path of the heart is the most complete method of realizing God, it is not the only method of doing so. The state of many people is such that other methods, for example, contemplation of God’s creations or logical reasoning can benefit them more and thus traveling these paths can help them realize, albeit to a lesser degree, the true Object of Devotion.

Religious Experience

The term religious experience has gained a special place in modern theological discussions in the West during the past two centuries. This term, at least in some narratives, has an absolute relationship with what we entitled “realizing Allah by way of heart”. Of course, in contrast to what western philosophers of religion depict, religious experience is not specific to the presence and manifestation of God; rather, it often happens that the experienter cognizes the presence of a metaphysical being or a person who has a special relationship with God (such as the prophets). In this discussion, we will take a brief glimpse at the subject of religious experience and the debates that it has initiated among various thinkers and philosophers, especially in the western world.

Even though various aspects of the issue of religious experience have been controversial, there is relative unanimity concerning the existence of such experiences. Religious experience is not religion specific; on the contrary, it is observed in various forms among the followers of diverse religions—encompassing Moslems, Christians, Jews, Hindus and Buddhists. Many people attest that in specific circumstances they have felt the presence of God or a divine being. Sometimes these experiences are visual, such as when one sees the visage of holy people—such as prophets and saints [awliyā’ ilāhiyyah]—and sometimes persons go deep into a spiritual and mystical state such that they achieve a form of ecstasy and experience the divine kindness, love, and providence of God. Dreams and spiritual calls are also specific forms of religious experience.

Additionally, gnostic inspiration is considered a form of religious experience. In the higher degrees of these revelations, the individual attains a state of unified mystical knowledge, meaning that the knowledge of the individual loses all attachment—through meditation and severe asceticism, the mystic individual strips all concepts, beliefs, and feelings from his mind to the point that only pure knowledge remains.

When confronted with the definition of religious experience, fundamental questions have arisen within the minds of religious philosophers and theologians: What are the historical factors and cultural foundations for the manifestation of these experiences? Basically, what is the essence of religious experience? Do the extremely diverse religious experiences that are observed among the followers of various religions have a common core? How much does the religious belief of an individual influence his interpretation of his religious experiences? Finally, can religious experience be considered a secure basis for authenticating religious beliefs and customs—including belief in God?

Varying answers to these questions have given rise to diverse viewpoints concerning religious experience. For example, there are disparate interpretations and analyses concerning the essence of religious experience. According to one interpretation, religious experience is a sort of feeling that is attained without the intermediation of concepts and judgments and only through personal cognition. Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768 – 1834), William James (1842 – 1910), and Rudolf Otto (1869 – 1937) are several renowned supporters of this viewpoint. James declared, “I do believe that

feeling is the deeper source of religion, and that philosophic and theological formulas are secondary products, like translations of a text into another tongue.”¹²

In addition, Rudolf Otto believed that there is an aspect of God that reason can comprehend. We can allegorically attribute characteristics such as purposefulness, absolute power, and possession of personal identity to God. Nevertheless, regarding the deeper degrees of God’s essence (meaning God’s Holiness), God cannot be understood by reason; He is indescribable. We must realize the Holiness of God with something beyond reason (such as feeling). According to Otto, this feeling has various forms:

“The feeling [of an awesome secret] may sometimes enter swiftly like a delightful breeze and suffuse the soul with a tranquility derived from the deepest layers of worship. This feeling may transform into a more stable and permanent spiritual state... It may appear suddenly like an eruption from the depths of the soul and be accompanied by intense rapture and tremors, or result in an extremely singular exhilaration, senseless rapture, ecstatic state, and entrancement.”¹³

Schleiermacher believed that the fundamental essence of religion is a sort of feeling of absolute dependence:

“...The essence of religiousness is this: knowledge of absolute dependence, or in other words, knowledge of one’s relationship with God.”¹⁴

Based on this, Schleiermacher extremely opposed the transition and referral of religion to theology, metaphysics, or ethics.

According to another viewpoint, religious experience is a sort of sensory perception and therefore its general attributes are the same as all other sensory perceptions. One of the most prominent advocates of this viewpoint is William Alston. By analyzing the reason that our confidence in the data gathered by our senses is logical, Alston shows that religious experiences are also logical and credible on the same grounds.

A third group believes that alleged religious experiences are experiences that can only be understood through the minds of their owner, based on their beliefs and religious teachings, even though these religious experiences may in truth lack any metaphysical cause. According to this belief, religious experiences are nothing more than the evolution of the experiencer’s prior beliefs and ideology and therefore can be explained using empirical sciences without the intercession of metaphysics.

Regardless of the theoretical discussions and difference of opinions regarding religious experience, the important fact is that religious experience, at least for some contemporary western thinkers, is a doorway to understanding God and His attributes and acquaintance with metaphysical layers of existence. It is a path that does not require theoretical concepts and dry theoretical reasoning, and only utilizes the personal intuition of the experiencer. Today, a number of the most prominent contemporary western religious philosophers (such as William Alston and Richard Swinburne) are occupied with strengthening

the philosophical principles of religious experience and answering the critiques of opposers. [15](#)

The Qur'an and Innate Cognition of God

The Holy Qur'an has used the word *fiṭrat* (nature) in Sūrah Rūm where it has introduced religion as an innate [*fiṭrat*] affair. It seems that Islamic researchers have been inspired by this Qur'anic verse in usage of the term *fiṭrat*:

“So set thy face to the pure religion of Allah; this is the *fiṭrat* (nature) upon which Allah has created the humankind. The creation of Allah is immutable. This is the eternal religion, but most people do not know.” [16](#)

This verse states the fact that religion is an innate attribute and that God has created humanity's essence based upon this attribute. Even though this verse does not explicitly speak of innate realization of God, we may consider it a confirmation of this fact because, if the intent of “religion” in this verse is the primary teachings and pillars of faith in Islam, then surely this includes belief in the existence of God. Another possibility is that the intent of “religion” is submission and humility towards God and worshipping Him. In this case, the verse indicates the innateness of worshipping God and since worship of an unknown being is not possible, innate theism necessitates innateness of the awareness of God's existence.

Another verse that can be cited as a confirmation of innate realization of God is the verse of Mithaq (covenant):

“And when your Lord took from the loins of the children of Adam their seed and made them their own witness, asking that: “Am I not your Lord?” They said: “Yes, we bear witness [to this fact]”—lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection: “Surely we were unaware of this [fact].” [17](#)

What can be briefly understood from the verse of Mithaq is that in one stage of creation, God gathered all the humans who would live in the world from the Beginning until the Day of Resurrection and secured their acknowledgement of His Lordship. The purpose for requesting this confession was that unbelievers and polytheists later could not bring the excuse that they were unaware and ignorant. [18](#)

In addition, in several verses, the Holy Qur'an informs of the fact that the God-perceiving nature [*fiṭrat*] of humans sometimes becomes stagnant and only awakens at critical moments:

﴿فَإِذَا رَكِبُوا فِي الْفُلِكِ دَعَا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ فَلَمَّا نَجَّاهُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ إِذَا هُمْ يُشْرِكُونَ﴾

“And when they embark in a ship they call upon Allah with sincerity, but when they are delivered to land and are saved, then [again] they associate others with Him.” [19](#)

These verses also show that the Qur'an confirms humankind's innate knowledge of the existence of

God.

In addition, among the traditions of the Immaculates, there is mention of the innate ability of humankind to perceive God. For example, in exegesis of verse 30 of S^{ur}ah R^um, Imam B^{aq}ir (‘a) has declared:

فَطَرَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَعْرِفَةِ.

“God has established in the nature of humans understanding of Himself.”²⁰

2. The Way of Experience

Sometimes through accurate observation and meditation concerning the qualities and relations between empiric phenomena one may be guided towards cognizing the existence of God and understanding of His attributes, including Absolute Knowledge, Wisdom, and Power. This method is called the way of experience because it is based upon observation of the natural world and empirical analysis of natural phenomena.²¹ Because of the unique advantages of this method, the Holy Qur’an has special regard towards it and thus in many verses it calls upon humans to contemplate the phenomena of the world around them as genetic [takwⁱⁿ] proofs and signs of God. Some Islamic researchers have developed an argument of the existence of God based upon one aspect of the natural world—the order and discipline prevailing upon natural objects—which is called the argument of design or order [burh^{an} al-na^m].²² The argumentation of order is an obvious example of what we have termed the way of experience.

“Evidential Understanding” in the Qur’an and Traditions

In many parts of the Qur’an, there are verses that describe various natural phenomena, regarding such phenomena as evidence and signs of the existence of God and calling upon humans to contemplate and meditate upon them. Understanding God through the genetic [takwⁱⁿ] signs in Creation, which is a prime example of the experiential method of cognition of God, is sometimes called evidential or extroversive understanding.²³

A number of verses call upon humans to contemplate the genetic [takwⁱⁿ] signs of God. These verses consider the existing order and organization in the world and in humankind a justification and beacon that may guide the wise towards the Divine Origin of the world:

﴿إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَ اخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لَآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي الْأَبْصَارِ﴾

“Surely in the creation of the heavens and earth and in the alternation of night and day there are [convincing] signs for people possessed of minds.”²⁴

﴿وَفِي الْأَرْضِ آيَاتٌ لِلْمُوقِنِينَ وَفِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ﴾

“And upon the earth there are [persuasive] signs for those having sure faith; and in yourselves; so do you not see?”²⁵

Furthermore, large selections of Qur’anic verses indicate a specific phenomenon and represent it as a sign of the existence of God and His Divine Knowledge and Power. These verses are so extensive that even enumerating a small number of them necessitates much time.²⁶

In compliance with the Holy Qur’an, the leaders of Islam have strenuously emphasized “evidential understanding” of God. For example, in a comprehensive narration addressed to one of his disciples, Imam Sādiq (‘a) stated:

“O Mufāḍal! The first edification and rationale of the existence of God—the Almighty, the Glorious—is the formation, assembly of elements, and systematization of this world. Thus if you deeply and properly contemplate the workings of the world using your intellect and wisdom, you will surely see it as a home in which all of the needs of God’s servants are ready and gathered. The sky has been raised like a ceiling; the earth has been spread like a carpet; the stars have been arranged like lamps; gems have been hidden inside the earth as stockpiles; and everything has been set in its proper place. And humankind is the one who has been bestowed this home and everything within it. All kinds of plants and animals have been prepared to provide their needs and further their interests. All this shows that the world has been created through precise and intelligent quantification, order, proportion, and coordination. It has but one Creator and He is the One who has formed, ordered, and coordinated its elements.”²⁷

3. The Way of Intellect

In this method, the existence of God is proven through premises, principles, and purely logical techniques.²⁸ Philosophical arguments and proofs of the existence of God are clear examples of intellectual analyses proving the existence of God. In comparison with the previous two methods, this method has several unique characteristics that are as follows:

Because of their deep and intricate philosophical nature, many argumentations and logical explanations of the existence of God are not very useful for people who are not acquainted with philosophical discussions.²⁹

One of the advantages of this method is that it can be used in the scientific battle against paradoxes put forth by heretics; in debates, it can reveal the weakness and frailty of the rationales of atheists; and it can answer the challenges of rationalists who accept nothing but logical reasoning.

This method can be effective in strengthening religious faith because if an individual’s intellect bows before a truth, his heart also acquires a stronger inclination toward this truth. Additionally, eliminating

doubt and uncertainty through secure logical reasoning has a great role in preventing loss of faith.[30](#)

In virtue of the unique uses of the intellectual method and the innate inclination of the inquisitive minds of humanity towards profound logical and philosophical discussions, Moslem intellectuals have performed in depth studies regarding intellectual realization of God. Some of these studies have resulted in the establishment of new argumentations regarding the existence of God or refinement of previous argumentations. The most logical argument proving the existence of God is the popular Cosmological Argument.[31](#) This argument has been presented in various forms, one of which we will introduce here:

The Kalam Cosmological Argument

The kalām cosmological argument is based upon several premises. Complete understanding of this argument is not possible without first understanding these premises. Therefore, it is appropriate that we summarily introduce these main premises before we discuss the argument.

a) Definition of “Necessary Being” and “Contingent Being”

Understanding the kalām cosmological argument is only viable through comprehension of the definitions of “necessary being” and “contingent being” and the differences between them. In explanation of these two terms, it can be said that the relationship of an extant object with existence—possessing the quality of being—can only be one of the following:

The existence of the object is necessary such that disunion of the object with existence (in other words its lack of existence) cannot be conceived.[32](#)

The existence of the object is not necessary such that it can be conceived that its relationship with existence be discontinued and it becomes non-existent.[33](#)

The first being whose existence is necessary and cannot possibly be non-existent is called “necessary being”. The second, which can possibly become non-existent, is called “contingent being”.

The following analogy is useful in bringing the issue closer to mind: the relationship of a necessary being and a contingent being with existence is similar to the relationship of sugar and water with sweetness; the sweetness of sugar can never be detached therefore the term “sweet sugar” is meaningless, but water can either be sweet or not. In order for water to become sweet, sweetness must be externally added to it. In addition, the sweetness of water can be taken from it.[34](#)

According to mutakallimūn³⁵ and philosophers, this necessary being is God and all other beings are contingent beings. Therefore proving the existence of a necessary being is the same as proving the existence of God. Sometimes for brevity, instead of “necessary being” and “contingent being” the shorter terms “necessary” and “contingent” are used.

b) The Causality Principle

Another of the premises of the kalām cosmological argument is the Causality Principle. Taking the definitions of necessary being and contingent being into consideration, the description of the Causality Principle is as follows: “All contingent beings require a cause”.

According to this definition, the Causality Principle is a logical and axiomatic clause whose conception is sufficient for conformation and acceptance. A contingent being is a being whose existence is not necessary, in other words, its relationship with existence and non-existence is identical, meaning that it can either be or not be. Therefore, in order to exist, such an object needs a “preferrer” (meaning a detached object that causes the preference of the existence of the first object over its non-existence). This “preferrer” is the cause of the contingent being. Using the analogy of sugar and water it can be said that just as water needs an exterior object to make it sweet. In order for a contingent object to become existent, it also needs an exterior object to bring it into existence; this exterior object is its cause.³⁶

Considering the above discussion there can be derived another characteristic for a necessary being and a contingent being: a contingent being is a being whose existence is dependant upon another being (i.e. the cause), but a necessary being has an independent existence.

c) The Impossibility of an Infinite Regress or Sequence (Tasalsul)

An additional premise of the kalām cosmological argument is the principle of the “Impossibility of an Infinite Sequence”. Sequence means series or a set of objects coming one after the other, but in [Islamic] philosophy, it has a more specific meaning.³⁷ In the current discussion, by sequence we mean a sequence of causes and effects that continue infinitely, never reaching a first cause. To state the matter more clearly, an impossible sequence is a sequence in which object “A” is caused by object “B”, and object “B” is caused by object “C”, and object “C” is caused by object “D”, and so on, without the sequence ever ending. According to the principle of “Impossibility of an Infinite Sequence”, the existence of an infinite temporal causal sequence is impossible.

Some consider the principle of “Impossibility of an Infinite Sequence” axiomatic and needless of reasoning and others apply various logical arguments to prove it. For example, as an argument to prove this principle it is said:

If we imagine an infinite chain of causes and effects that do not end with a first cause—a cause that is not the effect of another cause—then each of the links in this sequence would depend upon the previous link (which is the cause of the next link) for its existence. Because this characteristic embraces all of these envisioned links, the whole set of links (the whole sequence) would also possess this characteristic. Therefore, the whole sequence in itself would need a separate object external to the sequence that was not caused by something else. An object that originated the links in said chain. This object is the first cause; by considering it, our imagined infinite sequence is converted into a finite sequence.³⁸

In order to understand this principle in a tangible manner various examples are commonly presented. For instance, imagine a rank of soldiers who plan to attack the enemy. Each soldier will only attack on the condition that the soldier beside him attacks first. Therefore, soldier “A” will only attack when soldier “B” attacks and soldier “B” conditions his attack on the attack of soldier “C” and so on. Now, if this is not a finite sequence, which does not end with a soldier whose attack is not conditional, will any attack actually commence? Clearly, the answer to this question is negative. In causal sequences, the situation is exactly similar because the existence of each element depends of the existence of its cause whose existence is also dependant upon the existence of another cause and so forth. Undoubtedly, if this sequence is infinite, basically, it cannot come into existence. Therefore, if we consider a causal sequence of extant objects, it will surely be finite. Such that in the example of the soldiers, if an attack has commenced, we would surely realize that the sequence was finite.

d) The Impossibility of a Circular Cause (Dawr)

A circular cause happens when an object is its own cause through one or several intermediate causes.³⁹ The first form, meaning when an object is its own cause, is called a clear loop [daʿīr al-sarīḥ] and the second form, meaning when an object is its own cause with several intermediate causes, is called a hidden loop [daʿīr al-muʿmar]. Therefore, the conjecture that “A” is the cause of “B” and that “B” is the cause of “A” is a clear loop; and the supposition that “A” caused “B”, “B” caused “C”, and “C” caused “A” is a hidden loop. The impossibility of a circular cause is obvious and self-evident in both forms; because considering the fact that every cause is antecedent to its effect⁴⁰, the causality of “A” regarding “B” necessitates the antecedence of “A” over “B”, and if “B” is the cause of “A” then “B” would be antecedent over “A”. Therefore, “A” would be antecedent over itself.⁴¹ This is a contradiction, because it requires that “A” simultaneously be and not be antecedent to itself.

The Main Argument

Now that we have elucidated these premises, we shall explain the kalām cosmological argument:

There is no doubt that at least one being exists in the whole world about which we can possibly talk or think. That is to say, the set of all existents is not a void set and we are not dealing with absolute nihility, on the contrary, this set indisputably has at least one element. This being is either a necessary being or a contingent being (while no other assumption is possible). In other words, this being is either inherently independent and is not dependent upon any other being for its existence (i.e. necessary being) or it is dependent upon another being for its existence (i.e. contingent being).

If the first assumption is correct, then the existence of a necessary being has been proven and as we have previously stated, this necessary being is God.

However, if the second assumption is correct and the presumed being is a contingent being, according to the causal principle it needs a cause, that is to say its existence indicates the existence of its cause. If its cause is a contingent being—which needs a separate cause—and this sequence of causes goes on

unto infinity, we will have an infinite regress, while as we have previously shown an infinite causal regress is impossible. Another possibility is that the presumed contingent being, with or without intermediate causes, is the effect of a cause which itself has been caused by the presumed contingent being. This possibility is also invalid because it necessitates a circular cause and as we have indicated, a circular cause, like an infinite regress is intellectually impossible.

Therefore, the only remaining possibility is that this contingent being, with or without intermediate causes, has been brought about by a cause, which has not been precipitated by another object. The fact that this cause is not also an effect means that it is inherently independent and needless of others; this being is a necessary being. Thus, the existence of a necessary being has been proven once again.

According to what we have stated, the kalām cosmological argument can be thusly summarized: Undeniably, there is at least one being in the exterior world. If this being is a necessary being, our objective (which is the existence of God or a necessary being) has been proven. If it is a contingent being, considering its need of a cause and the impossibility of an infinite regress and a circular cause, it needs a being whose existence is not the effect of another being. This being is a necessary being (or God).

The Qur'an and the Need of Contingents towards God

As far as we know, the kalām cosmology argument has not been stated in the Holy Qur'an in its philosophic form. Several Qur'anic verses speak of a sort of need and dependency within all beings for God. These verses may be considered an indication of intellectual arguments that are founded upon the dependency of the world of contingents towards a God who is not dependent upon any being. For example, it has been stated in Sūrah Fāṭir:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ أَنْتُمُ الْفُقَرَاءُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ﴾

“O people! You are the ones that have need of Allah; and Allah is the All-sufficient, the All-laudable.”⁴²

Apparently, in this verse “neediness” has a very comprehensive meaning and includes a variety of needs that all beings have towards God, the most important of which is their existential dependency.

Also in various verses, the Qur'an emphasizes the fact that all beings, including humans, have been created and it has reasoned the existence of God—as the creator of the cosmos—in a manner that can be stated in the form of a logical argument. The Qur'an declares in argumentation against unbelievers:

﴿أَمْ خُلِقُوا مِنْ غَيْرِ شَيْءٍ أَمْ هُمُ الْخَالِقُونَ﴾

“Have they been created from nothing or are they [their own] creators?”⁴³

This is what may be extracted from this verse: Unquestionably, all humans have been created and initiated, meaning that they did not exist at one time and then they came into existence. Here we are confronted by several possibilities:

Humans have come into existence without a cause.

Humans are their own creators and originators.

These two possibilities, in all common sense, are obviously invalid and with little thought, their irrationality becomes evident. Therefore, the only logical possibility is that they are creations of a divine entity, transcendent to themselves who is God.

^{1.} – One of the much-discussed issues among historians of religion is the question of whether, historically, monotheism predates polytheism or vice versa? According to religious references, indisputably after the appointment of the first prophet [the prophet Adam], monotheist belief existed among humans and after that, monotheism and polytheism endured in parallel and thus some people were monotheists and others were polytheists.

^{2.} – Henotheism refers to belief in a superior god who has delegated a portion of the affairs of the universe to other gods and goddesses. Polytheism—general meaning intended—also encompasses this belief, but if we use polytheism in parallel to henotheism—with the particular meaning of belief in several gods—then these two definitions may be considered synonymous.

^{3.} – Several recommended references for supplementary reading:

Eliade, Mircea, *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries*, Trans. Philip Mairet. New York: Harper & Row, 1967.

Eliade, Mircea, *History of Religions*, University of Chicago, 1969.

Eliade, Mircea, *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987.

Nass, John B., *The Comprehensive History of Religions*.

Hume, Robert A., *The World's Living Religions*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959.

Tarqif, Husa'n, *Shn-e b' Adiy-e Buzurg* (Introduction to the Great Religions), Simat Foundation and Cultural Institute, Qum, AH 1372.

Hikmat, 'Al' Asghar, *Tarikh-e Adiy* (History of Religions), Ibn S'n Publications, Tehran, AH 1345.

Zarr'n K'b, 'Abdul Husa'n, *Dar Qalamruw-e Vijd'n* (In the Domain of Conscience), Sur'sh Publications, Tehran, AH 1357.

^{4.} – From long ago, Islamic philosophers [mutakallim'n] have emphasized two main principles that demonstrate the necessity of endeavoring to know and understand God.

Countering probable loss: Any wise person accepts the probability that they might be punished if they do not abide by religious teachings. Because reason demands the prevention of harm—albeit by possible punishment—it is absolutely necessary that humans inquire into the existence of God and His attributes so that if God truly exists and the call of the prophets is true, they can free themselves of divine punishment by following the divine teachings.

Necessity of thanking one's benefactor: There is no doubt that the many gifts and blessings that we enjoy have been given to us by a benefactor. Furthermore, logic dictates that we thank our benefactors. Because thanking others is not possible without first knowing who they are, reason demands that we endeavor to understand our true benefactor—i.e. God.

^{5.} – It must be mentioned that this and similar classifications are categorized by taking into account the general methods that we realize God. However, if we consider the personal and individual attributes of these methods, it must be said that all persons are unique, and realize and understand their creator in their own distinctive way. According to this perspective, there are innumerable ways of realizing and understanding God.

^{6.} – آن صفای آینه وصف دل است صورت بی منتها را قابل است

صورت بی صورت بی حد غیب ز آینه دل تافت بر موسی ز جیب
 گرچه این صورت نگنجد در فلک نی به عرش و فرش و دریا و سمک
 زانکه محدود است و معدود است آن آینه دل را نباشد حد بدان
 اهل صیقل رسته‌اند از بو و رنگ هر دمی بینند خوبی بی درنگ
 عکس هر نقشی نتابد تا ابد جز ز دل هم بی عدد هم با عدد
 تا نقوش هشت جنت تافته است لوح دل‌شان را پذیرا یافته است
 برترند از عرش و کرسی و خلا ساکنان مقعد صدق خدا
 صد نشان دارند و محو مطلق‌اند چه نشان بل عین دیدار حقایق
 ((دفتر اول))

7. میان عاشق و معشوق هیچ حایل نیست تو خود حجاب خودی حافظ از میان برخیز -

8. - Amr al-Mu'min (meaning Commander of the Faithful) is the title of Imam 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (a). [trans.]

9. - Nahj ul-Balaghah, Sermon 179.

10. - The Prayer (du'a) of the day of 'Arafah.

11. - کی رفته‌ای ز دل که تمنا کنم ترا کی بوده‌ای نهفته که پیدا کنم ترا -

12. - William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, New York: The Modern Library, 1902, p. 44.

13. - Reason and Religious Belief ('Aql wa I'tiqadi Dān), p. 42.

14. - F. Schleiermacher, The Christian Faith, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1928.

15. - Several recommended references for supplementary reading:

Peterson, Michael, et al, Reason and Religious Belief, Oxford University Press, chapter 2.

Proudfoot, Wayne, Religious Experience, University of California Press; Reprint edition, 1987.

Wainwright, William J., Philosophy of Religion, 2nd ed., (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1999), chapter 7, pp. 120-141.

16. - Sūrah Rūm 30:30. (The Qur'anic translations in this book are derived from the Arbery translation of the Holy Qur'an.)

17. - Sūrah A'rāf 7: 172.

18. - The verse of Mithaq has an immensely profound content and thus exegetes have interpreted it differently: Some believe it means that before creation of the natural world, God gathered all humans in another world—the world of Dharr—where He exposed His Lordship unto them. According to another interpretation, this verse speaks symbolically and states the fact that all humans, in the essences of their beings, possess a sort of personal—not general—and inherent—not acquired—awareness of God.

19. - Sūrah 'Ankabūt 29:65; also see: Sūrah Luqmān 31:32, and Sūrah Nā' 16:53-54.

20. - Kulān, Uṭṭī-e Kāfī, vol 1, p. 13.

21. - By calling this method experiential, we do not mean that it is free of all rational reasoning; rather, we mean that one of the basic rudiments of this method is observation of natural phenomena.

22. - Because the “argumentation of order” has been extensively discussed in previous textbooks we will refrain from discussing this argument.

23. - It must be said that there are several opinions regarding the interpretation of evidential understanding [shenākht-e yeh'] which have been derived from the Holy Qur'an. Some regard it as a preliminary to forming a rational argument—similar to what was said in explanation of the argumentation of order—concerning the existence of God and His Knowledge and Wisdom. According to another interpretation, the Qur'anic verses that call upon humans to contemplate natural phenomena, merely remind us of our innate understanding of God and have no significance other than notification and expunging neglect. The third opinion asserts that these verses are stated as a better disputation against polytheists; those who wrongly believe that their false idols and gods have a role in various worldly affairs and do not have a correct understanding of the Divine Unity of God. (For more information see: 'Allamih Abū'ab, Al-Maẓn, vol 18, p. 154; Miṭb Yazd, Education in Beliefs [māzish-e 'Aq'iid], vol. 2-1, p. 68; and Javād, mul, Explanation of the Arguments of God's Existence [Tabyān-e Barāhān-e Ithbāt-e Khud], p. 43.)

24. - Sūrah 'Imrān 3: 190.

25. - Sūrah Dhāriyāt 51:20-21. Also see: Sūrah Baqarah 2: 164; Sūrah Jāthiyah 45:3-6; Sūrah Yūnus 10: 100-101; and Sūrah Ibrāhīm 14: 10.

[26.](#) – Verses that emphasize specific phenomena as signs can be categorized into several groups. Verses regarding the domain of human life are as follows:

1. The general order in the human genesis: *Sūrah Jathiyah* 45:4; and *Sūrah Rūm* 30:20.
2. The order of development of the sperm and egg in the uterus: *Sūrah ‘Alī ‘Imrān* 3:6; *Sūrah Infijr* 82:6–7; *Sūrah Taghībun* 64:3; *Sūrah Ghfir* 40:64; *Sūrah ‘Ashr* 59:24; and *Sūrah Nū‘* 71:13–14.
3. The human cognitive system: *Sūrah Na‘* 16:78.
4. Linguistic and racial differences: *Sūrah Rūm* 30:22; *Sūrah Ffir* 35:27–28.
5. Human livelihood: *Sūrah Ghfir* 40:64; *Sūrah Isr’* 17:70; *Sūrah Jathiyah* 45:5; *Sūrah Ffir* 35:3; *Sūrah Rūm* 30:4–5; *Sūrah Saba’* 34:24; *Sūrah Yūnus* 10:31; *Sūrah Naml* 27:64; *Sūrah Mulk* 67:21; *Sūrah Anf’l* 8:26; *Sūrah Baqarah* 2:22, 2:172; and *Sūrah Dhariyāt* 51:58.
6. The system of sleep: *Sūrah Rūm* 30:23; *Sūrah Naml* 27:86; *Sūrah Furqān* 25:47; *Sūrah Naba’* 78:9; and *Sūrah Zumar* 39:42.
7. Clothing and beautification: *Sūrah A’raf* 7:26; *Sūrah Na‘l* 16:14, 16:81.
8. Residence: *Sūrah Na‘l* 16:80.
9. Marriage: *Sūrah Rūm* 30:21; *Sūrah Sha‘r’* 42:11; *Sūrah Ffir* 35:11; *Sūrah Najm* 53:45; *Sūrah Qaymah* 75:39; *Sūrah Na‘l* 16:72; *Sūrah La‘l* 92:3; *Sūrah Naba’* 78:8; and *Sūrah A’raf* 7:189.

[27.](#) – For more information, see: *Nahj ul-Balaghah*, sermon 186; *Shākh ‘Adāq, At-Taw‘d*, vol. 2, chap. 2; and *‘Allamah Majlisī, Bi‘r al-Anwār*, vol. 3, pp. 61, 82, 130, 152.

[28.](#) – By naming this method intellectual, we do not mean that it is based only on the intellect; rather, we mean that logical premises and methods are implemented.

[29.](#) – This is not contradictory to the “generality” of the intellectual method; because by generality we mean relative generality as opposed to idiosyncrasy. In other words, this method is not specific to any single person; rather, numerous people can take advantage of it.

[30.](#) – This method is especially useful for those who are deprived of inner intuition and spiritual observation of Almighty God. According to *Ma‘īn*:

چشم اگر داري كورانه ميا ور نداري چشم، دست آور عصا
آن عصاي حزم و استدلال را چون نداري دید، مي كن پيشوا

If you have [spiritual] eyes, come not blind;
And if you have no eyes, lay hold to a cane.
The cane of wisdom and reasoning;
Whilst you have no sight, make your guide.
(Book III, pp. 275, 276)

[31.](#) – There are two main forms of this argument: the modal form and the temporal form. The form described in this text is the temporal *kalām* cosmological argument, which is based upon the fact that the universe has a beginning in time. [trans.]

[32.](#) – In more simple terms, a necessary being is a being that cannot possibly fail to exist. In contrast, a contingent being is a being that can fail to exist. In other words, we can imagine its inexistence. [trans.]

[33.](#) – Notice that there is no other possible case, because the only other assumption is that the existence of the object is impossible. This assumption is exempt from our discussion because an object whose existence is impossible can never become existent, while this discussion concerns existent objects. In other words, our categorization only covers extant objects.

[34.](#) – Of course, as it has been discussed in technical Islamic philosophy regarding necessity, the necessity of the existence of a necessary being is an “eternal necessity”, while the necessity of sweetness for sugar is an “inherent necessity”. According to this, there is a discrete difference between the example of sugar and sweetness and our discussion.

[35.](#) – Those who practice *kalām* are known as *mutakallimīn*.

[36.](#) – Here by cause, we mean a being that causes the existence of another being (i.e. the effect). In philosophical discussions, this cause is called “Efficient cause”.

[37.](#) – According to philosophers, in order for a sequence (regress) to be impossible it must meet these three conditions.

There must be an infinite number of elements in the sequence

The elements of the sequence must all exist simultaneously (temporal)

The existence of each element must be based upon the previous element. That is, each element must be caused by the previous element (causal).

Therefore, a finite sequence of causes and effects (for not meeting the first condition), an infinite sequence of numbers or an infinite sequence of events taken place from Creation until now (for not meeting the second condition), and an infinite set of objects that do not have a causal relationship such as an infinite line of people (for not meeting the third condition) are not [philosophically] impossible.

[38.](#) – This argument has been presented by [Fārībī](#). By reflecting upon its content, it is clear that with minor alterations, it can be used as an argument proving the existence of a necessary being. Among Moslem philosophers, other arguments have also been presented proving the impossibility of an infinite regress, such as the argument of “Extremity and Centre” ([ʿarāf wa Wasāʿ](#)) and the argument of “Conformation” ([Taʿbīq](#)). Complete accounts of these argumentations can be found in most books on Islamic Philosophy.

[39.](#) – It must be said that circularity is not limited to circular causes; rather, it is conceivable in other areas such as definition or reasoning. If definition “A” is defined using definition “B” and definition “B” is defined using definition “A”, we would have a “circular definition”. Similarly, if we use statement “A” to prove statement “B”, while statement “B” is proved using statement “A”, we would have a “circular argument”. Obviously, a circular definition of a term or a circular argument attempting to prove a statement would not be successful in attaining the purpose of the definition or reasoning.

[40.](#) – Of course it should be noted that the antecedence of a cause in respect to its effect is not “temporal” rather, it is “essential”. If we assume that the impact of a rock was the cause for shattering a window, there is no time interval between impact of the rock (cause) and the window shattering (effect); even so, we can say that impact of the rock antecedes the window breaking. Meaning that until the rock impacts upon the window, the window will not break. (However, the opposite is not true; in other words, it cannot be said that until the window breaks, the rock will not impact upon it.) This example somewhat elucidates the meaning of essential antecedence of a cause over its effect.

[41.](#) – This is because the relationship of “antecedence” possesses the attribute of “transitivity”. In explanation, a relationship is transitive if “A” and “B”, and “B” and “C” are related, then “A” and “C” are also similarly related. For example, if “A” is greater than “B” and “B” is greater than “C”, then “A” is greater than “C”. However, the relationship of “doubleness” is not transitive, because if “A” is double “B” and “B” is double “C”, “A” is not double “C”.

[42.](#) – [Sūrah Fūr](#) 35:15.

[43.](#) – [Sūrah ʿAr](#) 52:35.

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