

BE LIKE ADAM'S UPRIGHT SON

BY

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In the Name of Allah

PREFACE

Praise be to Allah. Peace be to His servants whom He has favored, and those who command what is fair.

What this book introduces is the problem of all Adam's descendants. I have in mind the event of Adam's two sons as related by God - two sons, two styles and approaches in solving problems: One of the two sons seeks to solve a human problem by eliminating the human, and the other holds off his hand - realizing that to eliminate a human is not the right way to solving his/her problem.

But things do not remain what they were. Mankind is coming much closer to a mature appreciation and understanding of the two attitudes as represented in Adam's two sons - after millennia of ignoring the significance of that incident. They start to realize that to restrain oneself from entering a violent cycle is not really an act of cowardice or losing ground. It is not long since humans came to perceive that to hold off one's hand is better, in the long run, that the good it does is more enduring: they begin to see that it is the true evolution, an emergence from the law of primeval life, and going beyond the law of the jungle.

After a long advance in technological development, and drawing on historical experience, mankind seems to realize that seeking to solve problems by violent means leads to

suicide - but what next? It seems they have arrived at a dead-end. They need to explore other alternatives to solving problems - and hence I contribute with this humble attempt. Although it will be a shock to many minds, this book will be no more than a little step on the way, and later works will be much more mature. Let me have the satisfaction that, for the moment, this book will provoke many minds, for it will stir ideas that people had not heard of or imagined to exist.

But, should a human be deaf to the rejuvenating words, to the urge to overcome the cycle of violence, then the awakening will be certain to follow in a different way, in the dire consequences of ignorance - so why not learn our lesson before this happens again!

Now Muslims and Arabs think that there is the problem of Israel: a compelling evidence that things will not be solved without resort to violence. That is what they think; but here come the politicians with a different conclusion: for they, in their tragic situation, have come to realize that violence will not result in a solution for the Israeli problem: you see how they opted for peace with Israel!

But I have a better solution to put forward. Come, Arabs and Muslims! Listen to me! For I have a solution for the problem of Israel and all imperialism.

The problem is not Israel, nor imperialism. The problem is with us - a problem that has descended to us since such a long time, from the time the Muslims lost the way of good guidance.

And this approach I am presenting is really what we have been taught by our Lord: He taught us not to blame our

enemies or even the Devil. He says: "Say: 'It is from yourselves,'" (3:165). Reporting Satan addressing the condemned on the Day of Judgment, the Almighty says in the Qur'an: "I had no authority over you except to call you, but you listened to me: then reproach not me, but reproach your own souls;" (14:22). In addition, the facts of history, and the outcome of things support this analysis. For the skeptics, I may just refer them to the Second Gulf War: We forgot about Israel then, for the ill feelings among us surfaced, and we appealed to our imperialist enemies - and the whole world - to save us from our internal enemy.

And if the events of the past are not enough to open our eyes, then the Qur'an tells us the only way would be for us to wait for the coming events (see 11:122). Are there not among us some individuals who are right-minded, (in reference to the Qur'an's Verse: "Isn't there among you a single right-minded man? " (11:78)). Are there not some who consider realizing peace among ourselves? Are there not some Arabs, and some Muslims, who have enough acumen to settle our own problems peacefully?

You see how we cry out and complain that it is Israel who rejects peace. But I say: "Realize peace among yourselves, and you will see how you win the world's respect, how the world will be eager to win your goodwill! You will see how America will let down Israel and she and Europe will seek to establish good relationships with us - and so will China."

Once we can have peace among ourselves, America will let down Israel, in the same way as it let down Taiwan, and in the same way as Britain let down Hong Kong. It will be then

enough for us to say to Israel: "No, you may not stay here any longer," and they will withdraw from Palestine. But maybe such levels are still beyond comprehension!

I am heralding a new world, a world where no one may be enslaved unless he/she submits to being enslaved.

There is no doubt that we shall come to learn these facts: for it is so decreed by history - that if you fail to learn by observing history and by reflection, then you will learn through ever higher cost and more and more pain for failing to use your hearing and sight.

And the Qur'an keeps urging us to be vigilant: "And how many Signs in the heavens and the earth do they pass by? Yet they turn their faces away from them!" (12:105).

I am here speaking of peace among ourselves: peace in which none of us will lose anything: no land, no position; peace in which every party will be a winner, and will gain the world's respect, and the public will be jubilant.

Do the intellectuals perceive this? I hope it is not true of us what the Qur'an says of certain groups, "Deaf, dumb, and blind;" (2:18). Is it perhaps that we still keep waiting for the hero who appears from somewhere and resorts to violent means to unite us? Are we determined to keep inert until then?

But, even if we are incapable of hearing or seeing, the daylight will be here soon, God's Kingdom will be here imminently, as the Qur'an tells us: "Inevitable comes to pass the Command of Allah: do not then seek to hasten it;" (16:1). The world begins to stretch its limbs before rising, and God's promise will be sure to come true, as we find in this Verse: "Their intention is to extinguish Allah's light by blowing with

their mouths: but Allah will complete the revelation of His light;" (61:8). I really am confident, not just on account of the promise of the Unseen, but also from observing the Signs of this world.

Jawdat Said. Bir Ajam (a village in Southern Syria).
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CONTENTS

SUBJECT	PAGE
PREFACE	2
INTRODUCTION: THE LANGUAGE OF LETTERS AND THE LANGUAGE OF CONCEPTS	15
The Language of Characters and the Language of Concepts	17
Adam's Upright Son and the Sectarian Conflict	21
The Qur'an and History	22
The Arrogant Human	23
 CHAPTER ONE: AUTHORITY AND KNOWLEDGE	25
Specialization and Establishments	25
Knowledge and Work	26
Language and the Preservation of Experience	27
Is Knowledge Power?	30
Authority and Knowledge, Conscious and Subconscious	31
Authority and Physical and Scientific Power	35
The Concept of Change as Put Forward by Prophets ...	38
The Physical Vs. the Intellectual Conflict	40
The Journey of Human Ascent	43
The Prophets and the Freedom of Thought	45
Feeling Secure and Trusting Ideas	46
Abraham and Casting Away the Authority of Fathers ...	48

Justice and Distinguishing the Intellectual from the Physical Conflict	50
Islam and the Principle of 'No Compulsion in Religion'	52
No Obedience Is Due in Disobedience of the Lord	55
The Divine and the Worldly	55
Faith and Injustice	56
Faith and the Way of Adam's Upright Son	58
 CHAPTER TWO: DREADING KNOWLEDGE	 59
How It All Started	59
Adam's Son and the Problem of Mischief	60
The Impact of the Cultural Atmosphere on A Human's Intellectual Ability	 63
Diseases of the Body and Diseases of the Intellect	65
You Are but Men	66
Muslims and the Lessons of History	68
God and Our Image of God	71
Real Existence and What Is in the Souls	72
The Outcome as Criterion	75
Nihilism in Modern Philosophy	76
Long-Term Study of History	78
Then do We Make the Sun Its Guide	80
Reality and the Mental Images	81
Establishing the Right-Minded Life	83
Dreading Knowledge	87
Exiting the Game of the Dominant-Dominated	89
The Qur'an and 'No Compulsion in Religion'	92
Froth and the Beneficial as the Criterion	93
The Qur'an and the Doctrine of <i>Tawhid</i>	94

<i>Tawhid</i> and 'No Compulsion in Religion'	96
Outcome as the Criterion	97
Between Guidance and Misguidance	98
<i>Jihad</i> and 'No Compulsion in Religion'	99
The Result of Confusing Guidance and Misguidance ..	102
Generalizing the Principle of 'No Compulsion'	104
The World and the Doctrine of Pessimism	105

CHAPTER THREE: TWO READINGS OF THE

QUR'AN	107
The Close Links Between the Two Readings	110
The Qur'an's Attitude to Those Who Ascribe Their Failings to God	112
Toynbee and the Way Civilization Proceeds	114
Exploiting Children's Abilities	116
The Impact of Historical Awareness on Humans	118
The Qur'an's Celebration of the Right Historical Attitudes	119
If Studying the Past Is Unpalatable, Then Wait!	120
History and Distinguishing the True from the False ...	120
The Qur'an and History	122
Muslims and History	123
History and the Abrahamic Argument	124
The Sacred Is the Beneficial	126
Immediate Consequences and Deferred Consequences	126
Entering the Temple of History	128
The Way of Bilal and the Way of Adam's Son	130
Bilal and Changing What Is in Souls	131
Despair and Disbelief	133

Madness and Magic Versus Mercy	136
The Prophets and Mercy	137
Some of the Lessons of the Gulf War	138
The Two Readings and Turning Away from Signs	139
The Intellectual Disease and the Intellectual Germs	139

CHAPTER FOUR: ALTRUISM AND THE GREAT

MADNESS	142
Short-Range and Long-Range Consequences	144
Foucault and History	145
The Law of the Better and More Enduring	147
Justice and Equality in Law	148
Transitory Good and Enduring Good	149
Historical Knowledge and Vaccination Against Mischiefs	150
The Obscurity or Concealment of Delayed Consequences	153
Children and Fathers	155
Nay, You Men, But You Love the Fleeting Life, and Leave Alone the Hereafter	156
We Are Still Living an Early Stage	157
Abu Tharr in History	158
The Problem of Understanding	160
The Intellectual Evidence and the Tangible Evidence	162
Our Misunderstanding of the Messenger	163
Indications and Consequences of Suffering	164
Self-Analysis and Review	165
Ignoring the Significance of the Story of Adam's Son ..	167

Mankind Between Rigidity and Change	168
Relativity in Human Life	169
Writing Human History	170
Inquiries into the Issue of Right-Mindedness	171
The Child and Posing Questions	173
Physical Creation and Intellectual Creation	174
Arrogance and Turning Away from God's Signs	175
Changing Rulers and Changing Thought	176
Arrogance and Change	178
Mastering Better Expression	179
The Prophets and Speeding up the Process of Change ...	180
 CHAPTER FIVE: MAN AND HISTORY	 181
Foucault and Nietzsche and History as Reference	181
Man and Change	182
Physical and Intellectual Execution - and Madness	184
The Problem of Language	184
Language and the Outcome	186
Man and the Problem of Language	188
Truth and Falsehood, Versus Outcome	189
Societies and Self-Centeredness	190
The Dialectic of Arrogance and Servility	191
Muslims and Peace Making	192
Right-mindedness and the Goal of Existence	194
Man and the Law of Contradiction	195
The Human Psyche Between Wrong-doing and Piety ...	196
The Prophets and the Sanctity of the Human Spirit	198
Establishing Good Guidance Through Good Guidance	200

CHAPTER SIX: ON THE LESSONS OF THE

EUROPEAN UNION.....	202
History, Remover of Confusion	202
Contemplating the Signs of History	203
Approving of Good Deeds and Rejecting Bad Deeds ...	203
Inattention and the Painful Penalty	204
The European Legacy and the Common Market	205
The Painstaking Progress Towards Attaining the Objective	207
The New Horizon and the Word of <i>al Sawaa'</i>	209
Directing and Exploiting Potentials	210
The Human Between Purifying the Soul and Corrupting It	211
The European Union and Good Guidance	212
Knowledge Before Fortune	214
Man and Subjecting Things	216
History and the Future	217
Despair and Disbelief	217
The Problem of the Relation Between Man and His Fellow-Men	219
The European Union and Being on Equal Footing	220
The Genesis of the European Union	221
The European Union and Sufism	222
Let Us Get Rid of Compulsion, Both Sides of It!	223
Compulsion and Change	224
Words and Meanings	226
The Soviet Union and Compulsion	227
The Metaphysical and Historical Readings of the Qur'an	229

The Story of Jonah's People: A Sample of Historical Reading	231
The West and Meaninglessness	233
The Teleology of Existence	235
The Qur'an and Doubt	237
The End of Heroic Solutions	238
Confusing Ends and Means	239
The Way of the European Union and the Way of the Soviet Union	241
Europe and the Painful Torture	242

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE WAY OF GUIDANCE: THE WAY OF THE PROPHETS AND ADAM'S SON ...245

Civilizations and the Challenge of Demise	245
The Prophets and the Movement of Human Toiling ...	247
Having a Pure Heart, a Guiltless Hand, and a Guiltless Tongue	248
Deviation and Obscurity	250
Disbelief in This World and Disbelief in the Hereafter	251
Dr. Al-Bouti and the Book of <i>Jihad</i>	252
Jonah's People and Escape from Penalty	255
The Historical Progress	257
Man and the Trust of Subjugation	259
The Criterion of Truth and Falsehood	260
Are Good Deeds Equal to Bad Deeds?	261
Killing and Banishing from Home	262
The Way of Right-Mindedness Is the Way of Adam's Son	264
Why Call to the Way of Adam's Upright Son?	266

The Way of Adam's Son and Getting Rid of Vagueness	267
The Way of Truth Is the Way of the Prophets and Adam's Son	269
The Way of Right Guidance and the Way of Democracy	270
The Way of Adam's Son, the Crystal-Clear Way	271
The Levels of Work	272
The Islamic Problem and the Intellectual Challenge ...	272
Truth and Falsehood in the Qur'an and in Our Conception	274
The Prophet, ﷺ, and Intellectual Force	276
Confusing Guidance and Misguidance	279
The Clear Way of Adam's Son	280
The Prophets and Enduring Harm	282
Islam and Eliminating Blind Support	284
The European Union and Thinking Globally	284
The United Nations and Tribalism	285
Children and Acquiring Values	287
Man and the Science of Change	289
Equality and the Elimination of Injustice and Mischief	291
From Supporting Injustice to Facing It	292
Towards Justice and Equality	293
The Qur'an Refers to History as the Source of Knowledge	295

INTRODUCTION

THE LANGUAGE OF LETTERS AND THE LANGUAGE OF CONCEPTS

Here are excerpts from two *hadiths* (Traditions of the Prophet, ﷺ): "Do as Adam's upright son did;"¹ "Be like Adam's upright son."²

Who was addressed in the above two *hadiths*? Why have such texts been totally neglected? And why has the principle put forth in such Traditions been even an object of derision? I say this from actual experience, for when I once proclaimed my adoption of the principle of not stretching my hand to kill, one of the those present stood up, and cried, most emphatically and loudly: "No, by God no! I prefer to enter Paradise with my head high, and my sword raised high!" And this young man expressed an almost unanimous attitude of the Muslim *Ummah*! It is certainly not the other attitude that they uphold - that of Adam's upright son.

¹ Reported by al-Tirmithi in the Part on Turmoil, Chapter on: A turmoil when to be among the sitting is better than to be among those on foot, No. 2195; and Abu Dawud, Chapter on prohibiting to be involved in turmoil, No. 4257. An authentic Tradition.

² Reported by Abu Dawud in the Part on Turmoil, Chapter on prohibiting to be involved in turmoil, No. 4259. An authentic Tradition.

And though you find entire books devoted to analyzing one specific *hadith*, you will not come across any lengthy analysis of the above *hadiths*. But why? Why have such Traditions remained completely ignored - except in collections?

It deserves a whole discipline to be established, devoted to analyzing what the factors are that raise certain statements and lower others in the consideration of people - even statements of the Qur'an or the Traditions of the Prophet, peace be upon him. Certain changes in attitudes and positions must be behind adopting or rejecting ideas - and it is especially critical to bring this under examination when we are dealing with commands and prohibitions in the Qur'an and *Sunnah* (the corpus of all *hadiths*). The culture has a dominant place, sometimes making certain texts completely inoperative.

I did raise this issue before - partially at least, in my Introduction to the book *No, Jury! It is Allah, not the King!* And I wished at the time that some bright readers would dedicate their efforts to bringing the topic to maturity. But things take a very long time to develop.

I keep quoting an incident of the Prophet's, ﷺ, life, when he was saying: "That will be at a time of deficiency in knowledge?" A certain Companion of his, Ziad bin Labid, inquired: "How can knowledge decrease so low, Messenger of Allah? when we instruct our children to recite the Qur'an, and our children will instruct their children to recite it - and it will go on like this until the Day of Resurrection?" "Shame on you, Ziad!" the Prophet said, "I used to take you to be one

of the most profound men of al-Medina! Do you not see that the Jews and Christians keep reading the Torah and the Gospel, but they do them no good?"³

Let us think of Persian, since the Persian language uses the same alphabet as Arabic. An Arab who has not learned Persian does recognize the characters, but he/she does not understand the content. This may serve to shed some light on the issue in hand.

The Language of Characters and the Language of Concepts

I may say that speakers of a language have two levels of dealing with the language: the language of the symbols, or characters; and the language of concepts or referents. And it seems that in the area we are discussing, a fissure, or a rift, exists between the two levels. People read the text of, for instance, the story of Adam's two sons, but fail to appreciate, or even can reject, the purport of the attitude of Adam's upright son.

It may help to think of the time the Messenger, peace be upon him, brought to Quraish's notice the Message he was bearing to mankind: the problem between him and them was not one of language, for Arabic was the mother tongue of both him and them. The dispute was related to their worldview, and putting it right. They had a settled set of concepts and values concerning existence: they would not accept any other

³ A fairly authentic hadith, reported by al-Tirmidhi, in the Chapter on the Dearth of Knowledge, No. 2655; and by Ibn Majah, Chapter on the Upheavals, Section of the neglect of the Qur'an and knowledge, No. 4048.

reference for receiving such worldview, any set of concepts and values except their own.

There is by now some awareness of such levels and systems of reference in different circles. The rudiments of such awareness may be noticed in some people's saying: "If I were born in so-and-so part of the world, I would have embraced their faith," - which is saying: "I would have accepted their worldview and set of convictions. I would also have accepted their understanding of the origin of this universe, its destination, the way to salvation, the sacred texts, and my referents in matters of faith."

This is the basic awareness which anybody may express. Only some who have lost this intuition may contradict it. However, it will prove hard to go beyond the above elementary intuition: it is only those with substantial background in history that can make profounder observations. It is not so easy, for instance, for the common person to observe that even the Qur'an can cease to be the vital factor in shaping our worldview.

Branches of knowledge, including sciences, have their history. The human and social sciences in particular are still in their infancy, and the Muslims suspect such sciences, although they have generally no objection to natural sciences. It maybe that what drives Muslims to be so apprehensive of the human sciences is their suspicion that those sciences will expose that our concepts of the humans, to which we have been assigning Divine status, will prove to be incorrect. If the sources of our concepts about mankind had a Divine source, it is natural that we are worried that any mistake be discovered

in them - but the reality is that the mistakes are not in the Divine part of our concepts, but in concepts which have been creeping and intertwining with them from Muslims' assumptions over the centuries.

We still do not possess solid scientific work concerning how a human, as individual and society, develops a cocoon in which he/she imprisons his/her mind, and assigns to that cocoon all possible sanctity - in a way that they are prepared to die before surrendering the content of their cocoon.

The paradigm that took shape in the Muslim consciousness from the end of the Rashidun (i.e. Righteous) Caliphate and survives until the present does not include such concepts as enjoined by the above *hadiths* about 'Adam's Upright Son', or that of the ebbing of knowledge. Even Ziad, a Companion of the Prophet's, peace be upon him, distinguished for his bright mind, objected: ""How can knowledge decrease so low, Messenger of Allah? When we instruct our children to recite the Qur'an, and our children will instruct their children to recite it - and it will go on like this until the Day of Resurrection?" While the Messenger, ﷺ, was really worried that this condition of benefiting nothing from the greatness of texts would happen to Muslims as it had happened to the followers of the two religions before them. And later generations could not imagine how knowledge could dwindle and recede when we keep reciting the Qur'an, most properly and correctly.

One aspect of this deterioration of comprehension is that Muslims deny that the Bible, in both of its parts, contains any trace of light or enlightenment: scholars confine their efforts

to seeking all the corruption that had crept into that Scripture. This is because we little appreciate Verses of the Qur'an like: "It was We Who revealed the Law (of Moses): therein was guidance and light. By its standard have been judged the Jews, by the Prophets who bowed in Islam to Allah's Will, by the Rabbis and the Doctors of Law. For to them was entrusted the protection of Allah's Book, and they were witnesses thereto;" (5:44); and "And in their footsteps We sent Jesus the son of Mary, confirming the Law that had come before him: We sent him the Gospel: therein was guidance and light, and confirmation of the Law that had come before him: a guidance and an admonition to those who fear Allah;" (5:46). Our human paradigm which we made up long ago throws away these sources most facilely - we can say, most complacently: "Those are the deluded, who have corrupted their Scriptures; while we - we are on the most illuminated Highway of the Source preserved by the Almighty!"

The point I am tackling so far is wondering how a group, a whole *ummah*, can come so low in appreciating texts until they are of no value at all in their hands. But we need to go further and inquire what elements go into producing this attitude, and then consolidating it; and what then can compel people to reconsider their condition. What series of blows and suffering must afflict people until they can begin to grope for an alternative? And how long will such process of awakening take?

Adam's Upright Son and the Sectarian Conflict

We need to observe how the various sects and factions keep quarreling and clashing, in a constant series of clashes - and on one side, to observe the individual who, in the steps of Adam's Upright Son, keeps his/her hands off all this vicious circle - can we find this individual, the right-minded human, in our midst?

It seems that we cannot find, in our consciousness, a place for any other way but this rivalry in mischief and corruption; it seems we have no niche in our consciousness for an alternative - for some individuals proclaiming their dissociating themselves from all these conflicts. Do I have the right to imagine a society that is established on something other than violent means? Established on the Way of Adam's Upright Son?

Can we find, buried in the nooks of books and history, some traces of Adam's son?

If the majority are in the right, about the sword being the only means to supporting truth - then was the Messenger, ﷺ, fanaticizing in the above two Traditions, addressed to Sa'd and Abu Tharr, when he urged both of them to choose the Way of Adam's Upright Son? I say this having in mind the many objections that holding off one's hand is 'against human *fitrah*, or the uncorrupted human nature'.

One thing we do know, that, for the Quraishi people who resisted the establishment of the Islamic Message, it was against their view of *fitrah* to hold back one's hand. That was their level of maturity, and not *fitrah* itself. Another thing one

may understand from the way the Prophet's teaching in the above two *hadiths* were treated, that a text, even as great as the Qur'an or *Sunnah*, is not enough in itself to have a notion get through.

Progress meet with huge obstruction: but at least there is now a chance for study and revelation. We are already in a stage when the basis is almost ready for a solid scientific investigation, and when we learn the lessons of history, and review the numerous samples.

The Qur'an and History

What I am propounding in the present work is a pattern that was realized in history; and, therefore, I would like to examine it as thoroughly as possible.

One thing to note is that the Qur'an mentions ablution for prayer only twice, and the rules of inheritance, i.e. distributing legacy, only twice - but it is very different when we come to the events of history, the conduct of past peoples the *sunan* or laws behind the perdition of peoples, and the recompense of those who did not learn the lessons of history: those who failed to realize that history can indicate the way - that the events of history are, in fact, the reference the Qur'an accepts to ascertain that its affirmations are true.

But how can we regain to history its value as a reference?

The Arrogant Human

It is this conceit of humans: their raising themselves above other humans and the rest of creation which blocks their way to understanding. And it is in fact the way of Iblis, or Satan, the fault which prevented his accepting guidance, and hence his repentance - Instead, he started to challenge both God and humans, including God's messengers - when he asserted, as the Qur'an reports: "I will mislead them;" (4:119) "I will make wrong fair-seeming to them on earth, and I will put them all in the wrong - except Your servants among them, sincere and purified by Your grace;" (15:39) "I will lie in wait for them on Your Straight Way;" (7:16) "If you will respite me to the Day of Judgment, I will surely bring his descendants under my sway - all but a few!" (17:62). Raising oneself, one's race or tribe or denomination or religion, above others is the principle initiated by Iblis: it is to assume that, whether you do good or bad, you are God's favorites: by your mere belonging to a group - to think that it would be you, as a group, and not any other, who are eligible to enter Paradise. It is to claim privileges for yourself that you deny others; it is to refuse to accept to apply to yourselves the law that is applied to others.

What is this grave sin! See how, as the Prophet says, just one drop of arrogance or haughtiness is enough to prevent one from entering Paradise⁴. It was enough as a sin to have Iblis condemned and cursed, as the Qur'an reports: "Then get out

⁴ As reported in *Sahih Muslim*, Chapter on Forbidding Haughtiness and Its Essence; No. 91.

from here; for you are rejected, accursed. And the curse shall be on you till the Day of judgment;" (15:34-35).

By contrast, Adam's Upright Son was free from arrogance - he proved to merit a very high place. He proved to be immune to haughtiness. To be a true servant of God, there is this major test, of not acting from personal inclination, or the dictates of any of God's servants, to slay a human: it is by passing this test that one proves himself/herself qualified to be entrusted with having custody of human life.

CHAPTER ONE

AUTHORITY AND KNOWLEDGE

Specialization and Establishments

Let us look at these Verses of the Qur'an: "Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good;" (3:104) "If a contingent from every expedition remained behind;" (9:122) and "ask of those who possess the Specific Knowledge;" (16:43).

In all three Verses we have a group of specialists, and 'specific knowledge' in the last Verse particularly refers to specialization in any vital domain.

No sophisticated system can work efficiently without professionals and division of labor, and this is a glaring fact in social life. The system here works in many ways like the human body, where the cells, tissues, and organs are each devoted to serving their own subsystem. The professionals as a group belong to an establishment, and, as the Qur'an directs us, we need to consult such establishments to proceed under their direction.

This necessitates a discussion of what groups are entitled to be given authority; and, more essentially, what is exactly the relation between authority and knowledge? And it may be

added that knowledge is partly conscious and partly subconscious.

Once we raise such a question, we are thinking of people of action versus people of thought; or the planner versus the executor, engineer and hand-workers.

Knowledge and Work

We are thinking here of the proper relation between thinking and acting - for any imbalance here results in much corruption. Is it knowledge that controls action, or is it action that has dominance over knowledge? I am more interested in distinguishing between faith and good work, work as an Islamic term, not any work.

In the earliest stages, work comes first, and work results in the accumulation of information and knowledge - very likely unplanned-for knowledge at the beginning: relations between causes and results begin to develop - and, once humans notice such relations, they possess the essentials of good and profitable work. All this is the start of knowledge and science.

The above is true of the earliest stages of work and knowledge. But, with the passage of time, and as knowledge accumulates, it occupies a first position: it is so since, not to take account of past events and activities and their outcome will result in the receding of both knowledge and work.

We may conclude, then, that work was first in the earliest stages, but a reversal of positions must take place as things proceed; for works get more sophisticated and complex; and knowledge and science are required to take note of what is

happening, so that mankind keeps track of experiments and does not forget gained experience.

The above arguments are reflected in the relation between name and bearer of the name. If you trace things back to their origin, you find the bearer of the name, whether concrete or abstract, holds a first place: designations and name come later. In later stages, names and designations come first - you see it in the development of the child, who vocalizes, then learns words, then the referents of words.

We may conclude that knowledge and science cannot be treated independently: for knowledge and science are the condensed outcome of work; and they serve in preserving our experience, so that what proves useless may be eliminated and we keep progressing.

Language and the Preservation of Experience

There was a time when people had no way of recording their experiments and tests, and many experiences were lost: It was only what the human mind stored that was the source, and the human mind forgets, commits mistakes, and dies. Then humankind discovered language, and this enabled them to assign names to things and experiences, and this gave some permanence to experience. Later, when writing was discovered, people had a real reservoir of experience that could remain forever. It is true that people keep making mistakes in their statements, but the mistakes can be corrected, and knowledge keeps expanding. We have by now

a number of sciences devoted to language and its production and usage. We have for instance linguistics and semiotics.

And we have the modern means of transmitting not only words, but images as well. Here again the sounds and sights can be distorted or corrupted, and again we can endeavor to put things right.

We said above that though work was first to come, knowledge and sciences took the first place at later stages. We may add now that with every new science, action must precede theoretical statement, for that is the source of knowledge - in practice. And when we think of the Qur'an and taking lessons from human experience, we find that the Qur'an directs us mainly to examine the accumulated experience: 'see' it says (as in 6:11), but for those who fail to examine what is in existence, let them wait (as in 11:122), for the future will force them to learn about the 'outcome' - though that may take a very long time.

I may say that we have gone some way in understanding this 'pairing' of knowledge and action, and the power of knowledge versus the power of work: this may help us better appreciate the pair mentioned in the Qur'an: "And of every thing We have created pairs;" (51:49). And it can be seen by now that the pair originate from one entity, work: for knowledge was born from work - though it later occupied a first place as science. When something is not yet realized, but expressed verbally, it is still fancy or speculation and not yet scientific.

It helps in perceiving the relation between knowledge and work to analyze the following *hadith* of the Messenger, peace

be upon him: "A believer may not be bitten twice [by a snake or a scorpion] from the same hole;"⁵ In this Tradition of the Prophet's, experience precedes knowledge: an error committed before experience does not contradict faith or knowledge: it is only when error is repeated that it is not acceptable from a believer, for he/she has failed to benefit from past experience. One must be alert enough not to pay twice for the same mistake: this is science and this is faith.

It may be concluded from the above that, though science is born later, it comes first in learning from experience. It may be said that work has dominance when we are dealing with a new domain of knowledge; and science dominates when we are dealing with an old domain of knowledge.

When people do not notice the originating of creation, they assert the priority of knowledge: and this is true in not neglecting the accumulated experience - hence a scholar like al-Bukhari has, in his book *Sahih al-Bukhari*, a Chapter entitled: "Knowledge Precedes Work". At the same time, the Qur'an keeps stressing action, having faith and good deeds paired, as in "On those who believe and work deeds of righteousness Allah Most Gracious will bestow Love;" (19:96).

Once work is a conscious fact, and its outcome is well learned, it develops into knowledge, and work is controlled by science in the case of older domains. When we have no base of science and knowledge, we set out to act, but on the

⁵ Reported by al-Bukhari, in the Part on Good Conduct, the Chapter of: A believer may not be bitten twice from the same hole, No. 5782; and by Muslim, in the Part on Asceticism and Fine Conduct, Chapter of: A believer may not be bitten twice from the same hole, No. 2998.

basis of trial-and-error. And then, after the actual events support what is being done, for a long period, and its outcome is in favor of the action (what the Qur'an terms as what is 'better and more enduring' (as in, 87:17), it turns into science.

We have a pair, essentially reciprocating support of each other, a pair that were born from one origin, as the Qur'an tells us about our own origin: "It is He Who created you from a single person, and made his mate of the same;" (7:189).

Is Knowledge Power?

We need to reflect on this: Is knowledge synonymous with power? And do they both descend from work, which begets both?

What one finds in life is that the scholars are not the politicians, people of authority or power. So, what exactly is the relation between knowledge and power? Let me remind the reader that we have gone some of the way by shedding light on the relationship between knowledge and work, and the way they exchange places, and how each does occupy first position in its own way. We may think for instance of agriculture: crops grew naturally at the beginning; the human observed this, and discovered the law of agriculture: later he/she played his part, and produced crops on the basis of the knowledge he/she had gained. From this we may move to what happens in society: the events of society produce political authority; it is our duty to observe this and learn its law, its *sunnah* in the Qur'an's terminology. Once we arrive at the law of the formation of political authority, we prove to be

scientists; we are in a position to produce the political authority in the same way as we produce plants.

Authority and Knowledge, Conscious and Subconscious

The paradox we are tackling here is that we say that authority and knowledge are synonymous, but we find from observing the reality of things that they are not synonymous, so what is the reality about this? It helps in sorting things out to observe that there are degrees of knowledge and consciousness - we have confirmed knowledge and have probability; and we have the conscious and the subconscious.

Let us focus on the conscious and subconscious. We may do that by reflecting on this Verse of the Qur'an: "Then, by the Lord of heaven and earth, this is the very Truth, as much as you can utter words;" (51:23). Let us focus on what happens when we speak: How does one come to speak? One utters words and phrases unconscious of the process of producing them, but it was not always like this. Let us compare the speaker of the native tongue and the learner of a language foreign to him/her. The learner needs to keep working on the new language: its nouns, verbs and all grammar rules: the negative, interrogative, and so on. And it may be added that an Arab needs to work hard even on his/her own classical Arabic to produce it correctly.

So, we have two situations to compare: the acquiring of a language naturally and subconsciously and the deliberate and painstaking acquisition of a language.

This helps in perceiving that not all knowledge is of one degree. And one may think of more examples to perceive this fully. We may think of a child learning the riding of a bicycle, or of someone learning how to drive a car, or how to type on a keyboard: In all these situations we start consciously and laboriously, but, with continuous practice, things begin to transfer to be subconscious activity - with almost no conscious intervention at all. The Qur'an urges us to reflect on our own processes, as in "As also in your own selves: will you then see? " (51:21).

We may notice the hypocrites: those who declare words of faith at the conscious level, but are not believers at their interior level. This has been taken up in many locations of the Qur'an, the discrepancy between what some people declare and what they believe; here are some examples: "When it is said to them: 'Do not make mischief on the earth,' they say: 'Why only want to make peace! Of a surety, they are the ones who make mischief, but they do not realize it;" (2:11-12) "Is he, then, to whom the evil of his conduct is made alluring to him, so that he looks upon it as good;" (35:8) and "Those whose efforts have been wasted in this life, while they thought that they were acquiring good by their works? " (18:104).

It is this paradox that is behind my decision to write the current book - and behind my writing, some thirty years ago, my book *The Way of Adam's Upright Son*.

Let it be declared outright that we have no clear conception of the law behind the correlation between a human's conscious and subconscious: how we may be sure of

his/her devoting himself/herself to realizing what is better and more enduring.

When we mention politics, we are thinking of power; and when we mention science and knowledge we are thinking of intellectual effort. It may be concluded that it is knowledge and science which one expects to be the means to discovering the law and mechanisms of political authority, and the way it controls us. Once we know such mechanisms, science may have control over power - the same as happened with electricity: For before the reality of electricity and its mechanisms were revealed, it shocked people and sometimes killed them - but we now have control over electricity, and exploit its power to serve our purposes. It is not natural to electricity to serve humans, but humans did succeed in taming and subjugating it.

I do realize the difficulty of introducing a new idea: Thomas Kohn once said: "A new idea will not spread in the generation it was propounded, but perhaps in the next generation." There are few curious individuals, however, who are particularly attracted by commonly neglected ideas. Let us not boast of holding an idea which, not long ago, its progenitor was imprisoned and tormented for.

Yes, it might be rather easy to introduce new ideas in technology, but not for instance in sociology, for example in establishing better relations between authority and knowledge in society. And then, even after an idea is formally accepted, it has the journey of being digested into the deeper and less conscious parts of the minds.

But let us go back from these general observations to authority and knowledge; let us inquire: what is that aspect about authority and knowledge that remains concealed and unheard of? As you see, I am finding a close tie between the conscious and subconscious on the one hand, and knowledge and authority on the other.

In our part of the world, authority belongs rather to the subconscious: we have not digested the new conception of authority, and we live on the old, rather obsolete conception of it.

Democracy, for instance, is little understood in our culture, as a first step before it is widely discussed and then digested and absorbed into the subconscious. Our inherited and practiced conception of authority has no kinship with democracy, and any new attempts at innovation are still brittle and weak.

From this it is not unfair to assert that our knowledge is behind our authority. It is even shallower - had our knowledge gained depth, authority would follow it. It must be a priori knowledge that knowledge is not all one degree of depth: Even Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) needed, as the Qur'an reports, some evidence to have his heart satisfied; we read: "Behold! Abraham said: 'My Lord! Show me how You give life to the dead.' He said: 'Do you not then believe?' He said: 'Yes! but to satisfy my own understanding,'" (2:260) and the Lord did respond and gave him some evidence to consolidate his faith. And we do need a raising of awareness to revive our right-guided thinking (*rushd* in the Qur'an's terminology), which is as good as dead, and has been so for many centuries.

I know I can do no more than bore a hole in that wall, but my hope is that bright young men and women will get through and have their grip on the forces of the world.

So, we move on: What impeded our acquiring knowledge, so that it does not reach the level of certainty? I do affirm that authority moves in the footsteps of knowledge, and is produced by it - in a way that when you see authority unsupported by solid knowledge, then you may conclude with confidence that knowledge has not established itself on certain bases - and once solid knowledge is established, authority will come to adopt it without hesitation.

I imagine the political authority in our part of the world implicitly saying to the scholars: "Do not blame me - blame rather yourselves - for I have no dominance over you. It is rather that your knowledge is still uncertain. If you did acquire certain knowledge, I would be in your service rather than the other way round. See how you are scared of obsolete and revoked authority, for you have not risen to new facts."

Authority and Physical and Scientific Power

Once our scholars get to the roots of knowledge, they will be proud of it; they will never be defeated in the intellectual battle. And to the degree their knowledge is deficient, they will take physical strength to be necessary for supporting knowledge.

It is natural, in consequence, that you, scholars are defeated, for you opt for giving the physical power, rather than knowledge - relinquishing the position where you may

be superior. Until you do, you will live in dread of material power.

You need first to stop and reflect on the real power and authority that knowledge represents: think of the declarations of the prophets and messengers, and their sense of the power of knowledge that they bore; and the Qur'an has a lot of that, as in, "There is an excellent example to follow in Abraham and those with him, when they said to their people: 'We are clear of you and of whatever you worship beside Allah;'" (60:4) "His people disputed with him. He said: 'Do you come to dispute with me, about Allah, when He Himself has guided me? I do not fear the beings you associate with Allah: unless my Lord wills, nothing can happen. My Lord comprehends in His knowledge all things. Will you not yourselves be admonished? How should I fear the beings you associate with Allah, when you do not fear to give partners to Allah without any warrant having been given to you? Which of us two parties has more right to security? Tell me if you know. It is those who believe and do not confuse their beliefs with wrong - that are truly in security, for they are on right guidance.' That was the reasoning about Us, which We gave to Abraham to use against his people: We raise whom We will, degree after degree, for your Lord is full of wisdom and knowledge. - here the Qur'an mentions seventeen prophets, and then adds, - "To them and to their fathers, and progeny, and brethren; We chose them, and We guided them to a straight Way. This is the Guidance of Allah: He gives His guidance to whom He pleases, of His worshippers. If they were to join other gods with Him, all they did would be vain for them. These were the

men to whom We gave the Book, and Authority, and Prophethood: if these descendants reject them, behold! We shall entrust their charge to a new people who do not reject them. Those were the prophets who received Allah's guidance: copy the guidance they received: say: 'No reward for this do I ask of you: this is no less than a Message for all nations;'" (6:80-90).

What I am considering is not less than a revolution in human existence, and in intellectual life, not less drastic than the revolution in astronomy, when the geocentric conception of cosmology was replaced with the heliocentric conception. The astronomical revolution must teach us the possibility of change, very basic change in human intellect, a complete reversal - and our effort must be devoted to a similar reversal in social life. At present, we take knowledge to orbit power and authority - which is an illusion; and we need to reverse this illusion, so that it is realized that authority in fact revolves round knowledge; and the person of knowledge must occupy his/her place accordingly.

But can we trust knowledge as far as that?

The human brain can accept illusions, and an illusion can even be unanimously accepted - this is true, but the real laws of the world outside our brains will go on challenging our folly, for reality does not happen by the dictates of people's desires. And that is why I keep saying: the human mind is not the reference. It is the actual events which are the reference, and it is the actual events which will put us right. It is to history that we must refer, the past events - and that is where the Qur'an keeps directing us: to examine history.

Those who gave the human mind all their trust have discovered their mistake - and they went to the other extreme of declaring the death of man. They have not realized that the human consciousness is another stage of the creative process of the Almighty.

See how the age called the 'Enlightenment' did no more than replace an older idolatry with a newer one. Not noticing the fallibility of the human being, and granting him/her the status of being the referent: they raised him/her to the status of divinity - but the Almighty must not be confounded with His creation, as the Qur'an teaches us: "And there is none like unto Him;" (112:4) and "There is nothing whatever like unto Him;" (42:11).

The Concept of Change as Put Forward by Prophets

It is no small feat getting to the essence of *tawhid* [the Oneness of God], not to confound the Creator with the created: our mind keeps failing us in this.

In both Abraham's inquiry, as reported in the Qur'an: "My Lord! Show me how You give life to the dead;" (2:260) and Moses', "O my Lord! show Yourself to me, that I may look upon You;" (7:143) the Lord directs these two prophets, and us, to refer to the real existence, God's creation. Do not seek to compare God to any of His creation!

The prophets introduced a new conception of the human; they introduced a new law for changing man: to change man, change what is in his/her soul, or mind. This means there was no more need to eliminate the wrong-doer; no more need for

shedding blood: Work for eliminating what is in the soul, not for eliminating man.

It is this what the prophets put forward: Do not confuse eliminating what is in the soul with eliminating the soul.

The soul was now sacred, human life was sacred: why try to eliminate it when there is a way of changing its contents? Why consider eliminating the sick person, when you can get over his/her disease?

It is such a big shift that it is not yet appreciated, and if any doubt it, let them look around and find out for themselves.

Do you find that people have this fact settled in their consciousness? Do we endeavor to treat the disease, or do we wish to see the sick person eliminated?

What our culture teaches, what saturates this culture, is much malice and dark desires - and it all boils down to our failure to understand this simple fact: the possibility of treating what is in the soul, or mind, without the need to eliminate the human.

I like to understand the above conception ushered by the prophets as the 'Great News' mentioned at the beginning of Sura 78, in the Verses: "Concerning what are they disputing? Concerning the Great News, about which they cannot agree. Verily, they shall soon come to know! Verily, verily they shall soon come to know!" (78:1-5). And yet, what the prophets taught is not so far absorbed and digested by mankind. It may be said that the age heralded by the prophets is still yet to come. But that time will come and be realized, as the Qur'an tells us: "And you shall certainly know the truth of it all after a while;" (38:88).

But the above 'Great News' is not yet reflected upon by people, as the Qur'an- tells us: "Say: 'That is Great News - from which you do turn away!'" (38:67-68). Or it can be in one sense the 'Criterion' of which the Qur'an says: "Blessed is He Who sent down the Criterion to His Servant, that it may be an admonition to all creatures;" (25:1) and "if you fear Allah, He will grant you a Criterion;" (8:29).

We do badly need this 'criterion'. May Allah grant us this criterion by which we can distinguish truth from falsehood, and right guidance from misguidance. It is only then that we can stop shedding blood, having so much malice, and wreaking havoc.

Iqbal used to affirm that he saw things that people did not see. And I feel that I can appreciate that, for I do feel that I can perceive things that others do not perceive. I spent long hours poring over Iqbal's poetry. He used to compose poem after poem about the solidity of the self, and the elements of affirming the self - and also of the secret of effacing the self (especially in his collection: Secrets of Affirming the Self, and the Symbols of Negating It). This must all refer to the Verse of the Qur'an: "Truly he succeeds that purifies it, and he fails that corrupts it;" (91:9-10). It is only he/she who has worked hard and toiled to attain understanding who may appreciate another's understanding.

The Physical Vs. the Intellectual Conflict

What was it that the prophets taught? They did call all humans to 'winning' 'the achievement for all to see', and the 'winning bargain'; so, what is it all about?

They actually set the human free; they introduced a new world when they distinguished between intellectual debate as an alternative to physical conflict - that debate was a better alternative when you seek to produce change in the souls.

Instead of physical challenge, the muscular challenge, they introduced a better challenge, the intellectual challenge. Let us rise above the world of animals, where claws and fangs reign, to a different level - it is the level affirmed in the Verse of the Qur'an: "Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error;" (2:256).

And yet, the 'Criterion' of the prophets is not part of our consciousness, the criterion as referred to in the Verse, "In the past, We granted to Moses and Aaron the Criterion, and a Light and a Message for those who would do right;" (21:48). Things are still vague - we indeed have a long way to go before clarity is realized.

As soon as one realizes that the intellectual conflict is, and must be, distinct from physical conflict, he/she will have entered a new world: he/she will have started to perceive the 'criterion', the 'Balance' as mentioned in another Verse: "And He raised the Firmament high, and He has set up the Balance;" (55:7) and grasped the principle of "Let there be no compulsion in religion;" (2:256). It is a condition for adopting *tawhid* that one separates the physical struggle from that of intellect: physical strength must never be employed for having people embrace faith.

It is those who are defeated in the sphere of thought who are keen to drag people of thought to the physical sphere - and it is the responsibility of people of thought to have the

maturity not to accept this temptation, to keep the two domains completely distinct from each other. Indeed, it is to the degree that people of thought are vague and incoherent, that the others will have some success in charging them with having the intention of physical injury.

A first step is to be clear about the genesis of thought, and the genesis of knowledge, and of faith. One may have very solid faith, and may prove his/her faith in action - but that is no proof that it is a true faith he/she clings to!

It may be noted that an idea is born and develops in a way similar to a human child. At birth it is quite fragile, needing support and care. We have the following debate about the propounding of thought even before humans were created. Let us read about it in the Qur'an: "Behold, your Lord said to the angels: 'I will create a vicegerent on earth.' They said: 'Will You place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood? - while we do celebrate Your praise and glorify Your holy name?' He said: 'I know what you do not know,'" (2:30).

The creation of the human and placing him/her on earth, was clearly for a purpose: this was a new specimen. It baffled all observers, for this new creature has the potential for both doing good and doing evil and mischief - and God did not respond to the angels' perplexity with more than, as the Qur'an tells us: "'I know what you do not know'" which is immediately followed by, "And He taught Adam the nature and names of all things;" (2:30-31).

So, if the angels were not optimistic about the new creation, we must not wonder that many people are

pessimistic about him/her: they have not studied the progress of creation, and have not reflected enough upon this constant process of creation and creativity. Even the *jinn* wondered, as the Qur'an reports: "And we do not understand whether ill is intended to those on earth, or whether their Lord really intends to guide them to right conduct;" (72:10).

The Journey of Human Ascent

But let us come down to our own world. How have the humans responded to this spirit of creativity: Man was taught the names and nature of things (as the above Verses reported), urged to read, and was entrusted with bringing reform to himself/herself: through effecting change and purifying of the soul (in reference to the Qur'an, 91:9), and through observing the actual reality and reflecting on the outcome of events.

The human was provided with this spirit of curiosity, seeking to expand his/her knowledge and understanding, as the following Verses of the Qur'an tell us: "And thus We have, by Our command, sent inspiration to you: you did not know before what was Revelation, and what Faith; but We have made the Qur'an a Light, wherewith We guide such of Our servants as We will; and verily, you do guide men to the Straight Way, - the Way of Allah, to Whom belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on earth. Behold how all affairs tend towards Allah! " (42:52-53). But the human often neglects this potential, and needs to be reminded of it.

You have been enabled, man, to rise to the world of the spirit, for God breathed from His Spirit into you, so do not

retrograde to the world of the law of the body - as you have been enabled to rise to the domain of the spirit through knowledge and understanding. Hold tight to the law of creativity, the spirit, knowledge, and reflection. You will find bright light in history, so do not neglect your history - the history of all humanity. Yes, you rose from being hydrogen, then other elements, then to creatures like the flower and fruit - and here you are: this splendid creature, and you can have your eye on a supreme seat, in the presence of the Sovereign Omnipotent.

One may reflect on the following allegorical debate by Jalal-ul-Din al-Rumi between a woman boiling chick peas, and one of the peas in the pan. "Rejoice, chick pea!" says the woman. "You were once a lump of stuff in the earth, then you ascended to be a blossom of the plant, then you were a pea. And here you are now being boiled to be part of a human being." "Yes, madam," replies the chick-pea, "that is true! Let your fire blaze hotter and hotter, so that I may rise to a higher and higher status."

We may learn from the above story that the way is open for the human to move upwards, from the world of the body to the world of the spirit. It is breaking free from a world, and entering a higher world. This is man's grateful gesture to prove God's Ability. And it is a move from the transitory world to the world of eternity.

The Prophets and the Freedom of Thought

One main purpose of the prophets is to set the human mind free, and to remove any obstacles from its way: this may be noticed in the principle propounded by the Qur'an: "Let there be no compulsion in religion;" (2:256). It is our part, then, your part, young man and young woman, to let your spirit soar free, and do not worry about mistakes, for it will learn from its mistakes.

The prophets introduced ideas not known before them: they really led people to thinking of the unprecedented. One merit of the prophets is that they did not plead for the permission to speak - they just started to speak of the new issues.

They introduced the Criterion, the right-guided way, and they rejected compulsion, physical force, when discussing ideas: this is the essence of the Criterion.

They believed in God, and they believed in the spirit breathed in humans: that once you hold to 'no compulsion in religion', then you are secure: your body, your faith, your land - no matter what your faith might be, this principle protects you, as the Qur'an tells us: "If they withdraw from you but do not fight you, and instead send you guarantees of peace, then Allah has opened no way for you to war against them;" (4:90) and "do not say to one who offers peace between you and them, 'You are not a believer!'" (4:94). It is stepping out of the domain of compulsion to the domain of non-compulsion.

Look around you, and see how this idea fares in the world - but before you do, look at yourself and see that you get it

quite clear and it settles solidly in your heart: if you find that you have not yet absorbed it soundly, and that you still hesitate, then know that faith is not yet settled in your heart, in the same way as the Almighty says of Desert Arabs: "The desert Arabs say, 'We believe.' Say, 'You have no faith; but you only say, "We have embraced Islam," for Faith has not yet entered your hearts;" (49:14).

Is it clear by now that resorting to the physical conflict is a reflection of defeat in the intellectual conflict? It is the same as choosing pre-Islamic ways over faith, and the world of the Revealed Book, the written word.

Nothing is of more concern to me than the removing of this confusion - and this is the meaning of the word Criterion (the *furqan* in the Qur'an).

Feeling Secure and Trusting Ideas

It will help one much to reflect on the debate of Ibrahim (Abraham) with his people (as related in Sura 6, from Verse 80). Once he had grasped the sound conception, and had his straight thought, he felt secure, so that he declared, "Do you come to dispute with me about Allah when He Himself has guided me?" (6:80). This feeling of the certainty of guidance gives a feeling of holding on to a higher world, so that it leaves no apprehension or fear in the heart - this comes from perfect accord between the conscious and the subconscious: and hence Abraham declared the absence of any fear in his heart "I do not fear;" (6:80). It will do us much good to reflect on and analyze Abraham's attitude.

For Abraham did not just say "I do not fear" and leave it at that - he went on to elucidating the grounds for such stance, as the Qur'an reports: "How should I fear the beings you associate with Allah?" (6:81). Who is right to fear? And who is right to feel secure?

Abraham proved to speak and behave in perfect correlation with his ideas and his conviction, all the way and until the end. It is he who challenged the idols and the worship of idols in his community - proclaiming in that connection the great Abrahamic Question; let us look again at the Qur'an: "He said: 'Do they listen to you when you call on them, or do you good or harm?' They said: 'Nay, but we found our fathers doing this, worshipping them, as we do.'" (26:73-74). He lay down the principle and basic reference of benefit and harm - in this sense Abraham was the first pragmatist in history: to deal with things in view of what benefit and injury they can cause; while his adversaries referred to their fathers, as may seen in their declaration: "but we found our fathers doing this, worshipping them, as we do;" (26:74).

Abraham held tightly to the main reference in existence, the law set by God for distinguishing what is right and what is false, as expounded elsewhere in the Qur'an: "Thus Allah shows forth Truth and Vanity. For the scum disappears like froth cast out; while that which is for the good of mankind remains on the earth;" (13:17). This is then the major law that dominates the world: that what is more profitable will be more enduring, and what is less profitable will vanish and disappear, no matter how settled it seems, and how far it

endures in the world. It will go so that what is better will replace it.

Holding on to what is obsolete is idolatrous, worshipping dead ancestors - Abraham was not afraid to discard what is no longer of any use when he said, as the Qur'an reports: "How should I fear the beings you associate with Allah, when you do not fear to give partners to Allah without any warrant having been given to you? Which of us two parties has more right to security?" (6:81).

Abraham and Casting Away the Authority of Fathers

Why Abraham, among all prophets? It is Abraham who called us 'Muslim, those who surrender to God', and it is Abraham who laid down the Abrahamic Argument, as the Qur'an states it: "He said: 'Do they listen to you when you call on them, or do you good or harm? " (26:73).

You will find this principle of 'let the better and more enduring stay' at the root of history, and even at the root of what is permitted and prohibited in *shariah*, as you may see in the following examples from the Qur'an: "They ask you concerning wine and gambling. Say: 'In them is great sin, and some profit, for men; but the sin is greater than the profit;" (2:219) "Intoxicants and gambling, dedication of stones, and divination by arrows, are an abomination, - of Satan's handiwork: eschew such abomination, that you may prosper;" (5:90) and "he allows them as lawful what is good and pure and prohibits them from what is bad and impure;" (7:157). And it is on this basis that the general Islamic principle was

set: "What is always or mostly profitable is permitted, and what is always or mostly harmful is prohibited."

It is also the same principle set down by the Gospel: when Jesus was asked how to distinguish a truthful prophet from a false one, he answered: "You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles?" (Mat. 7:16).

It is this principle, voiced by Abraham, to refer to, and not the way of the fathers: for this is the difference between Abraham and his pagan people. People will keep boasting of their way, but the Qur'an affirms that it is not this that is the measure of correctness, "Not your desires, nor those of the People of the Book can prevail: whoever works evil, will be requited accordingly;" (4:123).

The same was the conclusion the historian Toynbee reached from his review of three millennia of history: that the six most influential personalities have this as their common denominator: they advocated the principle of abandoning the worship of society.

This principle, the Abrahamic principle, is clear enough, but it is not yet adopted by people - they have not matured enough to adopt this principle: the law of benefit and harm as the referent. It is still the way of mankind that each group finds their referent in their forefathers. Arrogance and haughtiness still impede the reaching of one common principle for humankind.

Look for instance at the Security Council. It grants some of its member the right of 'veto'; and this sets this group apart and above the rest of the world: it is virtually saying: "As long

as I am physically stronger than you, I have right on my side - not that I understand better. I refuse a principle that holds all as equal." It is actually a reproduction of Pharaoh's cry when he affirmed, as the Qur'an reports, "I am your Lord, Most High!" (79:24).

Can we then put things right, and put forward a scale that is all-inclusive, applicable to all mankind? This is our challenge.

Justice and Distinguishing the Intellectual from the Physical Conflict

Simply said: People will accept justice and equality as long as they are the weaker party, the oppressed side; but once they have the upper hand, once they look down at others, they will refuse 'Equal Terms' and to be 'on Equal Footing', which is the application to human life of the principle of *tawhid*: they will be outraged when it is said that all are equal, that they must all refer to one scale.

I call on the Muslim to look into his/her own soul - let him/her inquire how just and fair he/she is? It will transpire that one cannot be so unless he/she separates the intellectual conflict from the physical conflict, never allowing the body to take part in the conflict of ideas.

We always have Adam's son to refer to - to see that our behavior accords with our claims: accepting the 'equal terms, being on equal footing' - if one adheres to this, he/she can realize the Verse of the Qur'an: "And they ill-treated them for no other reason than that they believed in Allah, Exalted in

Power, Worthy of all Praise!" (85:8) and he/she walks in the footsteps of the prophets when they said, as the Qur'an states, "We shall certainly bear with patience all the hurt you may cause us;" (14:12), and as another Verse generalizes, "Rejected were the Messengers before you: with patience and constancy they bore their rejection and their wrongs, until Our aid reached them: there is none that can alter the Words and Decrees of Allah;" (6:34).

I do not feel we have gone a long way in affirming the strength of ideas - let those who doubt it look inside and inquire how contented we are that we can win in the intellectual domain: if we are defeated, inside our souls, before we even come out, how can we see ideas flourish and thrive if we are given authority? And no one may say he/she believes in the potential for true ideas to win the day unless he/she allows rival ideas to have their say, to have all their chance to be expressed.

Our history does not display a favorable spectacle of our giving ideas and viewpoints the chance to be expressed freely - we have failed to abide by the Verse of the Qur'an: "Let there be no compulsion in religion;" (2:256).

Let us notice in another Verse: "with patience and constancy they bore their rejection and their wrongs;" (6:34) how the prophets accepted to endure all kinds of injury rather than transform the intellectual conflict to physical conflict.

Yes, the other side will insist on our slipping into physical conflict, and only those who are firmly acquainted with ideas and know their worth will stand firm in abstaining from

getting involved in physical conflict, resisting all the attempts to drag them into it.

Let it be added that to adhere to the sustainability of ideas after one has won the day and is in a position of dominance - that it is even harder to adhere to letting ideas as ideas flourish according to their own laws.

Is it by now clear why I say that the age of prophets is not yet with us - that their call remains in the womb of history, and has not yet come out into light? but it will, and it will thrive. But the point for us is to know exactly where we stand. When the Children of Israel expressed their impatience, Moses' reply was significant, as the Qur'an reports: "They said: 'We have had nothing but trouble, both before and after you came to us.' He said: 'It may be that your Lord will destroy your enemy and make you inheritors in the earth; that so He may try you by your deeds.'" (7:129) And, more generally, another Verse asserts: "Then We made you heirs in the land after them, to see how you would behave;" (10:14). All such ideas are an application of the main law: "Let there be no compulsion of religion;" (2:256).

Islam and the Principle of 'No Compulsion in Religion'

I do realize that mankind has realized great advance in accepting the principle of 'Let there be no compulsion in religion', and it has paid a very high price for at last having this principle settled.

This principle of 'Let there be no compulsion in religion' has been discussed by Toynbee, when he stated: "This principle was propounded by Islam a long time ago, but it took us such a long time to accept it here in Britain." How hard it has proved for the British to accept this principle may be observed in the Irish conflict - but let us not be pessimistic, for the idea is already born, and ideas take a long time to gain strength and solidity. At some stage the more daring and penetrating minds pick up the idea, and start discussing it until it attracts attention, and then it occupies its place in people's minds. Once it is settled, it is no longer discussed, for it is part of people's behavior.

But when we say that the idea of 'No compulsion in religion' is already part of mankind's culture, we must add that it is not settled in people's consciousness yet - you see how fiercely societies resist one's change of his/her conviction.

And when we focus on the Muslim World, we find that this principle is not yet accepted. Yes, the freedom of conviction is prominently there in constitutions, but it is not part of people's consciousness.

Two things go together here: The prevalence of compulsion, and submitting to the oppressors in great humility. Both phenomena are so deeply settled in the subconscious of our part of the world - in a way that the intellect and knowledge perform all kinds of rituals before the dominant throne of base desires. There seems to be no prick of the conscience that this total submission to evil powers is completely dominant.

As for the bearers of the banner of prophets, the callers to justice and fairness, they are weak and scattered: they have no organization or authority that gives testimony in favor of truth and justice - this group are quite unconscious of their responsibility; they certainly do not fulfill their part of warning society, nor opening people's eyes to their past and future. They do not bring to people's awareness the possibility of breaking free from worshipping the wrong-doers and standing for truth.

The least that this group can do is to warn people not to be tools of mischief in the hands of the advocates of privileges in the world. This principle of not being a whip in the hand of the oppressor and the elite is a simple thing to comprehend though not easy to act upon.

Such consciousness must start with history - drawing lessons from history to show that this alternative is better and more enduring. And then we must act to see this alternative - of abstaining from supporting the oppressor and the elite - gain the upper hand.

At present, all the armies of the world teach otherwise: they instruct their troops to hear commands and act upon them before objecting to them: they subdue any inclination to discriminate and have a criterion of distinguishing truth from falsehood: soldiers must act automatically upon commands.

No Obedience Is Due in Disobedience of the Lord

One principle propounded by the prophets is, "No obedience is due in defiance of God's command;"⁶.

It is such a deep idea, which is both most simple and hard to apply. This says that no unconditional acting upon commands is due on anyone: we may call it a Copernican revolution in human behavior!

The Divine and the Worldly

Yes, we are to submit to the Divine, but how to be acquainted with what God wills? We in fact do have evidence to indicate what He wills in the world, under our sight and within our hearing: this we may understand and investigate. In this there are signs of the Divine - through examining the outcome of events, through following up the benefits and losses: statistics come in here. It is in this way that the Unseen, the Divine, is reflected in what is tangible, observable, and calculable.

But we need well-versed scholars who perpetuate the way of the prophets, and tap the earth for its proofs: It is such people who can rescue us from the reigning of doubts and taking things to be meaningless; who may rescue us from a pessimistic worldview.

We need such order of scholars badly. For we do not so far have the Criterion in our hands. This order of scholars will

⁶ As in a Tradition of the Prophet's, peace be upon him, reported by al-Bukhari, in the Chapter on Rulings, Section on obedience to the governor, except in case of disobedience, No. 6725; and by Muslim, in the Chapter on Rule, Section on the obligation of obeying the governors, except in case of disobedience, No. 1839.

make us feel that God is here with us on earth, in the same way as He is in Heaven. When this kind of scholar is with us, we shall sense that God is with us, when we visit the sick, when we feed the hungry, when we direct the ignorant. For Allah is so close that He is nearer to us than the jugular vein. We need some who can provide us with peace, as the following Verses of the Qur'an reports from Ibrahim (Abraham): "It is those who believe and do not confuse their beliefs with wrong - that are truly in security, for they are on right guidance," (6:82); and as another Verse contrasts the guidance from the Lord with the absence of it: "Had it been from other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy;" (4:82). Having the Verses of the Revealed Writ for pointer, we need to keep observing the social system. The Signs of the Revealed Book are there and the Signs of the world are there: and we must get guidance from the Signs of the Scripture to better appreciate the tangible world, and guidance from the tangible world to better appreciate the Scripture.

God has subjected the world to serve humans, so that they exploit it with the power of laws, and the human societies may likewise be controlled by the law of purification and disposing of corruption - all through having their grip on the laws.

Faith and Injustice

Let us look again at a Verse I have quoted before: "It is those who believe and do not confuse their beliefs with wrong

- that are truly in security;" (6:82). It teaches us that peace and good guidance are ensured once we succeed in getting over the confounding of faith and injustice.

Let us as a first step notice that to have faith does not imply that it is the truth that one believes in: one can believe in something true or untrue; can believe in God, or in the oppressor.

And we see in the world how some people can throw themselves in fire, can sacrifice life and property for the sake of their faith - and yet their faith can be erroneous. On the other hand, faith can work for injurious purposes, and it is humans who direct faith to act in constructive or injurious ways. And this brings us to the issue of injustice.

Injustice is the opposite of justice; and justice is to give the two sides of a case the same right, to realize equality. You can realize justice when you give the other party the same right that you give to yourself - this is then the measure: to the degree you treat another as equal to yourself, you are just, and you fall from the level of justice to the degree you fail to give the other the same right as you claim for yourself. I hope the reader will treat this rule with the earnestness that it deserves.

Such insights give one the trust that we are nearer to understanding the mechanism by which society works, that its processes are coming out into light. And when we feel this light, we have peace inside, and peace inside is crucial to realizing good guidance. For having peace means you have overcome fear, and as long as you have fear you are not guided to the straight way.

Faith and the Way of Adam's Upright Son

We may say that for a society to realize faith, faith that is not adulterated with injustice, there is no alternative to upholding the way of Adam's Upright Son.

It is so since for failing to uphold the way of Adam's son, a society will not be merely devoid of rust, but its faith will be tainted with injustice, and such impurity will deprive society of security and guidance.

The alternative to Adam's son is establishing society on injustice, and the absence of security: this is the natural consequence of ignoring the principle of equality. You see how societies which have failed to adopt the principle of equality consist of a chain of oppressed persons and oppressors: if you are stronger, you have more right, and if you are weaker, you submit to the stronger - might is right. It is a long chain of injustice.

And this has been true of the Muslim World after it lost the way of peace. It is a society in which privileges reign supreme.

Please accept my imperfect expression of these vital principles: I am content with just introducing the issue. At least I hope I have given a little more light.

The main thing to remember is that, when we introduce a law, any law, it must apply to all, to us and to others. The alternative is what Jesus Christ described when he said: "All who draw the sword will die by the sword;" (Mat. 26:52).

CHAPTER TWO

DREADING KNOWLEDGE

How It All Started

After publishing my book *The Way of Adam's Upright Son*, thirty years ago [from the date of writing this volume], I felt the need to elaborate it with a second book. I wrote that earlier volume aware of the fact of the need for more mature tackling of its content, but feeling at the same time satisfied that the ideas are put in black and white, and put under people's notice. One thing that urged me to hasten to publish that earlier book was my feeling apprehensive that some turmoil might explode at any moment, and not spare me to write - and hence a chapter that appeared in that earlier book was entitled "For Proclamation, nor for Persuasion". And then, in 1990, I was invited to Sharjah, and the man who invited me said: "It is time you wrote a second book on the same topic, but for persuasion this time, not just for proclamation."

I did feel the need to do so, and had written unorganized ideas; but nothing fit to be brought together into a book. More people, including Abdul-Halim Abu Shuqqah and my sister Laila, kept urging, and I did feel the justification of their exhortation, but I did not feel my ideas to be mature enough.

Then, in 1995, my sister Laila, kept urging me to visit them in Canada, and was more insistent than ever: so, I decided to concede this time, reluctant, but not wishing to disappoint her. One argument of hers was: "You may be able to write the long-awaited sequel to your *Mathhab Ibn Adam al-Awwal*, i.e. *The Way of Adam's Upright Son*."

So, as she was in Damascus, we did set out at last, stopping in Amman for five days, where I had a number of meetings, all focused on this way of Adam's son, and we resumed our trip to Canada, and that was on 7 April, till 17 August, 1995. During my stay I also visited the United States.

One day, my sister had a sheaf of papers in front of me, and said, "Now you must start writing," and I promised to start the next morning.

I did sit to the table very early the next morning, feeling all the weight of this major issue that concerns all humankind: how best to present the attitude of Adam's son, when he refused to be part of the adventure of violence.

Adam's Son and the Problem of Mischief

When I wrote about the way of Adam's Son, I chose this title perceiving that it was not just a problem of Muslims, but

a human problem, from their first existence on earth, to the present, and for some time in the future.

The biggest charge the angels levelled against man, when he was chosen to be viceroy on earth, was that he would 'do mischief and shed blood;' (the Qur'an. 2:30). They could not think of a more serious charge against humans. They did not mention disbelief in God and the Last Day: they went to the 'mother of all evil', the most destructive ritual.

When I speculate about the future, I imagine that this same charge levelled by the angels will be repeated by people in the future, about our time: "How strange were people when they practiced that evil ritual of killing each other," and they will thank God that they got beyond it.

When I came across the ancient Mexican rituals, how they sacrificed many humans, and how they extracted the hearts, still beating - I felt it was worth our while to study this: we really need to reflect on this duality of the humans: their potential for purification and corruption. And the Mexicans we are referring to came many centuries after the prophets. We need to reflect on this episode of the human development because history keeps taking a new shape with every new addition and every new contemplation. Islam itself, Islam in the sense it was taught by all the prophets, will be rediscovered: it will be restudied and reinterpreted - it must be reinterpreted with every new generation, to find in it more light for the new age.

Let us not be distracted by such moot questions as how the angels knew the new creature would be involved in mischief and bloodshed - let us rather focus on God's hinting

that there would be more to the human than meets the eye. It is our real issue: How can we get over the charge of the angels. And a good start is to notice that when God says, as the Qur'an reports, "I know what you do not know;" (2:30) this is immediately followed by, "And He taught Adam the nature and names of all things;" (2:31).

One would have expected so much to have been written about this Verse, "And He taught Adam the nature and names of all things;". Did not God refer to this as the merit Adam had over all creatures? Does it not imply that it is through this ability that mankind will be able to overcome mischief and bloodshed?

It is this amazing ability, through which the human can save and accumulate knowledge that humans can rise and get over the problem of mischief and bloodshed: Unless we appreciate the significance of "And He taught Adam the nature and names of all things;" we cannot fathom man's world and potentials.

And for perceiving the way of Adam's son, we require the means of research and knowledge. As a first step, we need to review what has been realized so far through the ability Adam was granted to give names to things. Is it clear how vital it was to have this talent of conveying experience from one brain to another: first orally and then through the written word? One may imagine how vital this talent is by recalling that it is through this means that the human was enabled to effect the purifying of his/her soul or corrupting it.

It helps us in appreciating these facts to review the painstaking progress of humans, and the great number of

people who died, and those who suffered a great deal to add little by little. It is through this enlightenment from the past that we may extend our vision to the future, and the best we can for the future.

The human efforts for expanding their horizon are really sacred efforts, and it is a mistake to look down at such efforts, in view of the little they achieved so far - Is it not on the basis of what has been achieved that we proceed to more impressive achievements?

The Impact of the Cultural Atmosphere on A Human's Intellectual Ability

It is not how many proofs we may bring to bear on somebody's attitude that bring change to his/her conduct - it is more essentially realizing the conditions needed for a certain notion to have effect in a particular cultural milieu, and the conditions required for a particular individual to reflect on the notion and take it in earnest: so our attention must be directed to the human, what goes on inside him/her.

Our attention must start with the past, so that we may see how our way may be in the future.

The human condition has passed through stage after stage, and to forget that fact, we shall be the losers. Let us notice how insistently the Qur'an keeps reminding us and urging us to be vigilant. It is curious that humans, as the Qur'an tells us, not only may fail to understand - they may resist with all their might the attempt to bring them to understand. It is an interesting line of research: to see how humans may reach a

point when they are no longer capable of understanding: it is a very informative line of investigation in the Qur'an. There are more aspects to this: situations when a human comprehends an issue reversed, and when he/she views the good as bad and the bad as good, as we may notice in the Verse of the Qur'an, the person to whom, "the evil of his conduct is made alluring, to that he looks upon it as good;" (35:8); and when his/her hearing and sight are as good as non-existent: "As to those who reject Faith, it is the same to them whether you warn them or do not warn them: they will not believe. Allah has set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing, and on their eyes is a veil;" (2:6-7). A human may reach a point when he/she is ready to sacrifice himself or others just to keep intact what is in their mind.

I would suggest that the young men and women who are involved in human and social studies, and who are keen on being acquainted with the history of ideas, to look into the Qur'an and see what it has to say on such issues - they will find a lot to include in their research for their theses and dissertations, and they may bring such issues to be understood more fully and thoroughly. It will do us much good to learn how extensively these problems spread, and what impediments prevent them from being revealed.

One observation about human investigation is that people may do admirable work while involved in investigating societies other than theirs, as for instance in revealing how certain societies take the positive to be negative and the negative to be positive, but not when dealing with their own society. There has been some shift of late towards a more

balanced view. It is of course a major topic of the Qur'an's - this self-deception, taken up from the first pages, as in, "When it is said to him: 'Do not make mischief on the earth,' they say: 'Why, we only want to make peace!' Of a surety, they are the one who make mischief, but they do not realize it;" (2:11-12) and later, "If you call them to guidance, even then they will never accept guidance;" (18:57).

Diseases of the Body and Diseases of the Intellect

One may notice that when we read about physical diseases we often wonder if we suffer from them, but not when we read about mental diseases: we take ourselves to be immune to them.

Psychological and cultural studies are still far from coming of age; they are still steeped in illusions and subjective assessments: this is especially true when the researcher is dealing with the culture of his/her own society: it is still habitual with us to play down our own failings, to take them even to be unworthy of investigation; and to view the others' failings as enormous.

It helps one in getting over this drawback to study two different cultures, and to notice how each takes the other to be most deluded and corrupt - to see the followers of different faiths as destined for Hell; while it views itself as close to heaven, more favored by the Lord. An observer from outside the two cultures may be in a better position to reveal the illusions and misconceptions behind others' attitudes. The more we have of such objective studies, the better we begin

to see how the most diverse cultures have very similar traits and conceptions: how really close they are to each other.

For the researcher who has done such investigation, he/she may look again at the Qur'an, and may notice how much attention it gives to the similarity of hearts one finds among cultures - though each takes itself to be far superior to others; and may take the others to be quite base and worthless!

The Qur'an focuses on the Christians and Jews, for they, as the Qur'an describes them, "Both the Jews and the Christians say: 'We are sons of God, and his beloved;'" (5:18). But the same may be said of the Muslim, when he/she looks down at the followers of those two religions with much pride and haughtiness. He/she little remembers that the others view him/her in the same way.

You Are but Men

Members of ethnicities and faiths are inherently incapable of seeing themselves for what they are; it takes a lot of examples for them to see how the other groups are human like them. This attitude of superiority started with *Iblis*, or Satan, who took himself to be superior, since he had been created from fire, rather than clay; besides, he took his understanding to be superior to any other: and the same two sources of pride are still with us, for it is quite wide spread people's boasting of their race and doctrine; and they are prepared to sacrifice money and life for the sake of race and doctrine.

When the Qur'an takes to task those who boast of their special relation to God, saying, as the Qur'an reports, "We are

sons of God, and his beloved;" (5:18), it retorts, "Say: 'Why then does He punish you for your sins? Nay, you are but men, - of the men He has created;'" (5:18): and we may say, in the same logic, do not Muslims undergo crushing torment? How can they be God's favorites? Can we not see that God's laws, His *sunan*, apply to us, as they apply to others? It is true of us, as of the Christians and Jews what the above Verse says, "you are but men, - of the men He has created;". No nation or group may claim to be God's beloved.

It would be really an excellent thing that we have studies developing this Qur'anic concept, "You are but men;" that the Divine *sunnah* has no favorites who may be excluded; that people's claims of superiority are really as the other Verse states, "These are nothing but names which you have devised, - you and your fathers, - for which Allah has sent down no authority;" (53:23).

At the time we mock those who claim that only they are entitled to enter Paradise, we commit the same mistake. We need to write a lot on these meanings, on 'You are but men' and the other Verse, "Not your desires, nor those of the People of the Book can prevail: whoever works evil will be requited accordingly;" (4:123). These words of the Qur'an have been vitiated of meaning, but how? And how can we regain their meaning? We do vitiate words of their meaning and attach to them a different sense from the culture, a sense that suits our convenience. But such distortion does not change the laws of existence: no matter how often we reiterate: "God is on our side;" we shall find that He will cease to support us, and you see how we give each other the utmost pain - for God's law is

inviolable, as the Qur'an says, "But no change will you find in Allah's *sunnah* [law]; nor turning off will you find in Allah's *sunnah*;" (35:43). It is we who must change: calamities and war will keep taking place, and their toll will be higher and higher, until we awake.

Muslims and the Lessons of History

It is true that a human reaches a point when he/she is no longer capable of understanding - but events will come that compel us, or our progeny, to accept the facts.

At present, we disregard the lessons of history - but history acts in such a way that those who ignore it will have to pay the cost: the cost in the form of heavy misfortunes, until the human surrenders in humility. The Qur'an keeps reminding us of the afflictions of past peoples, "yet before them have come to pass many exemplary punishments;" (13:6) and "As also 'Ad and Thamud, and the Companions of the Rass, and many a generation between them. To each one We set forth parables and examples; and each one We broke to utter annihilation for their sin. And the unbelievers must indeed have passed by the town on which was rained a shower of evil: did they not then see it with their own eyes? But they do not fear the Resurrection. When they see you, they treat you no otherwise than in mockery: 'Is this the one whom Allah has sent as a Messenger? He indeed would well-nigh have misled us from our gods, had it not been that we were constant to them!' - Soon will they know, when they see the penalty, who it is that is most misled in path! Do you see such

a one who takes for his god his own passions and impulse? Could you be a disposer of affairs for him? Or do you think that most of them listen or understand? They are like cattle - nay, they are worse astray in path. Have you not turned your vision to your Lord? - how does he prolong the shadow! If He willed, He could have made it stationary! Then do We make the sun its guide;" (25:38-45).

It is curious to note that that the Qur'an mentions the law of inheritance only once, but how often does it mention the principles of people's rise and collapse? And the general principles pertaining to that. How often it mentions Pharaoh, with the pyramids that rise so high; here is an example, "And We sent Moses, with Our Signs and an authority manifest, unto Pharaoh and his chiefs: but they followed the command of Pharaoh, and the command of Pharaoh was no right guide. He will go before his people on the Day of Judgment, and lead them into the Fire: but woeful indeed will be the place to which they are led! And they are followed by a curse in this life and on the Day of Judgment: and woeful is the gift which shall be given to them! These are some of the stories of communities which We relate to you: of them some are standing, and some have been mown down by the sickle of time. It was not We that wronged them: they wronged their own souls: the deities, other than Allah, whom they invoked, profited them no whit when there issued the decrees of your Lord: nor did they add anything to their lot of perdition! Such is the chastisement of your Lord when He chastises communities in the midst of their wrong: grievous, indeed,

and severe is His chastisement;" (11:96-102). The examples abound.

How can we bring history back to our minds? The material is so rich, but without our referring to it and studying it, we shall have to pay the cost again - until God's law becomes a real fact of our consciousness. How long will we persist in vitiating both the Verses of the Qur'an and the Signs of the world, and passing by them like blind and deaf people? The Verses and Signs are ample and numerous.

Can we bring to history its significance? The Verses of the Qur'an must refer to psychological conditions behind the attitudes and behaviors of people, so what are those conditions? What laws connect the behaviors to the outcome?

Should we not follow a historical event to its origins? All this is essential to determine how change may be brought about - for the Qur'an teaches us: "Verily never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change what is in their souls;" (13:11): it clearly indicates that what is in the soul is the source of salvation or perdition.

And peoples are held responsible for what is in the mind, and in the soul. For God does give enough for people to be guided, "all We guided;" (6:84) but some choose the other way, the way to wilderness.

It may help to recall what Ibn Khaldun has said about history:

"[History] seems on the surface no more than the events that occur to nations across years; but in depth it is a profound investigation, a sophisticated interpretation of what comes over the world - relating occurrences to their causes."

God and Our Image of God

People hold false god to be worthy of their worship - and what each one of us holds to be true acts as our god and faith. In the same way as God says of the polytheists, " the deities, other than Allah, whom they invoked, profited them no whit;" (11:101) we hold on to our concepts and values, which prove to do us no good, the same as the pagans' gods did them no good. One's god is what one imagines to be his/her god. For one will act and think in accordance with one's worldview and conception of things. When you see Muslims hold God most highly, they really hold their concepts and values so highly.

I find support for this in the Qur'an. Did not those who were hostile to the Prophet insist on holding on to their thought, as may be noted in the Qur'an's report of them: "'He indeed would well-nigh have misled us from our gods, had it not been that we were constant to them!' - Soon will they know, when they see the penalty, who it is that is most misled in path! Do you see such a one who takes for his god his own passions and impulse? Could you be a disposer of affairs for him?" (25:42-43). To have a faith or ideas, without relating them to outcome, that faith is not different from worshipping an idol: not in designations, but in reality, in the concepts behind the proclaimed faith, and the Qur'an does assert this, "But this thought of yours which you entertained concerning your Lord, has brought you to destruction, and now you have become of those utterly lost!" (41:23) and "another band was stirred to anxiety by their own feelings, move by wrong

suspicious of Allah - suspicious as erroneous as those of pre-Islam people;" (3:154).

What you hold about your God, and about history, guides you or leads you astray - and those who deal with the laws of history and the laws of the world will reap the outcome, whether they believe in God, or in an idol, or in the laws of the universe, and the Qur'an teaches as much, "Of the bounties of your Lord We bestow freely on all - these as well as those;" (17:20). Both those who work for results of this world or the Hereafter will reap what they have sown.

And a society that acts in accordance with God's law will have the right outcome - that is different from abiding by the commands of the revealed doctrine to be saved on the Last Day.

Real Existence and What Is in the Souls

What we hold in the mind, the mental images to which we assign designations, the concepts, and the convictions - that is what is translated into tangible facts. But this immediately leads to a question, or questions: how does what is in the soul come into being? What is our chance of accepting things into our mind or rejecting them? Who is responsible for effecting change to what is in the mind and soul?

On what basis are what is good and what is bad distinguished? For unless we take the outcome of events and behaviors to be the measure of good and bad, they will seem equal, and the Qur'an alerts us to this, "The blind and the seeing are not alike; nor are the depths of darkness and the

light; nor are the chilly shade and genial heat of the sun;" (35:19-21). As you see, the temperatures, from highest to lowest, that the body tolerates, are compared to the conditions of society: the limits beyond which it either is frozen or is blazing.

Are we really so entangled in immediate self-interest that we are blinded to the good relations in society that protect it from decay? Is there some force within us that compels the individual to see a behavior good when it is he/she who performs it, and bad if the same behavior is performed by another?

It must be clear from our discussion so far that it is what we hold in our minds, the concepts, ideas, and values and illusions, that determine our judging something to be good or bad. And this must remind us that the other, too, has his/her mental images, on the basis of which he/she may think sacred what I take to be condemned, and condemned what I take to be sacred.

It is not what we hold in mind to be good or bad that is the real criterion: God has really set down inalienable *sunan*, or laws, and it is those laws that determine what is good and what is bad. As for man, he, as the Qur'an has elucidated, can be one to whom "the evil of his conduct is made alluring, so that he looks upon it as good;" (35:8). We humans are often faulty, but the best among us are those who analyze their behaviors in the light of their outcomes, to put right their mistakes. It may help to remember that one may not see his/her own face without the help of a mirror.

The conclusion must be that a human must not trust his/her own understanding, for subjective understanding keeps leading people astray; nor should one trust what his/eyes see, for the eyes can see mirage as water - it is history and the outcome of things that must be trusted.

The Qur'an relates many historical events, about Moses and Aaron with Pharaoh, about 'Ad, Thamud, and so on - then it comments: "When they see you, they treat you no otherwise than in mockery: 'Is this the one whom Allah has sent as a Messenger? He indeed would well-nigh have misled us from our gods, had it not been that we were constant to them!' - Soon will they know, when they see the penalty, who it is that is most misled in path! Do you see such a one who takes for his god his own passions and impulse? Could you be a disposer of affairs for him? Or do you think that most of them listen or understand? They are like cattle - nay, they are worse astray in path. Have you not turned your vision to your Lord? - how does he prolong the shadow! If He willed, He could have made it stationary! Then do We make the sun its guide;" (25:41-45).

In all the above stories, the Qur'an reviews the conditions of old peoples, how they failed to use their hearing, sight, and understanding.

The idea here is the diversity from culture to culture in their worldview - the difference may reach a point when people can no longer comprehend the others' view: and in all that a human is so sure of his/her own viewpoint. So, how can we help people distinguish right from wrong?

The Outcome as Criterion

It is pondering the outcome of each event that enables one to understand right from wrong and good from bad. And events vary widely, of course, as to the revelation of outcome: in some cases it will be revealed without delay, and in some it will take longer - maybe decades or even centuries; and when the Qur'an says, "To every people is a term appointed" (10:49), the lifetime of a people is not the same as that of individuals. All of this means that our examples must be apt and well-chosen. In the same way as people were mistaken about the movement of planets and stars, they keep erring about the progress of peoples: they may mock prophets and the truth they put forth. Let us notice that after the Lord says in the Qur'an: " Or do you think that most of them listen or understand? They are like cattle - nay, they are worse astray in path" (25:44), He immediately says: " Have you not turned your vision to your Lord? - how does he prolong the shadow! If He willed, He could have made it stationary! Then do We make the sun its guide;" (25:45) - which alerts us to the fact that by pondering the movement and standing of the shade, in relation of this to the sun, it must teach us how movement happens or ceases to happen.

I also often use another example. I ask people if they notice, when they sit in a vehicle that is standing still, and another vehicle moves in the opposite direction, that one is not sure if it is the vehicle they are in which moved or the other, and they say yes, it does happen to them. And then I ask how do they determine which vehicle has moved, and

they say by comparing to something fixed, like a lamp-post. This is also a good example to show how you need to refer to a third, independent object, to measure the situation you are in. This is the way with right and wrong, or good and bad. That third object stands for the yardstick, or the outcome of an event. If people insist on hanging on to their own situation, there will be no escaping the fact that each will insist on their own stances.

As you see, it is such a simple issue, but seems so difficult at the same time. Those who deal with modern philosophy will notice that it feels it is before a solid wall concerning right and wrong, good and bad.

Nihilism in Modern Philosophy

Because people ascribed their worldview to God, the philosophers felt compelled, on discovering the mistakes in their mindset, to declare the death of God. But what died was really the deluded views.

Here is what Foucault says, summarizing and commenting on Nietzsche's philosophy: "History, as Nietzsche sees it, is a lot of base hostilities, and dictated interpretations, supreme accounts with despicable purposes concealed behind them ... It is made up of disconnected incidents, incidental occurrences and lies ... with no relationship whatsoever to revealing the truth ... What is called truth is the history of errors and arbitrary decisions ... and what we call Divine is equally false and deluded ... so

what will be the result if we discover that God Himself (or Truth) is our oldest lie?"⁷.

When I assert that history is a reliable source for knowing truth, I often hear some reply: "How so, when history consists of lies and distortions!" But I say: "No, dear brothers! History is not what the Soviets said about themselves! You see that, after all their bragging, their outcome revealed the truth about their policy. This cannot be camouflaged; truth will come and expose all the lies: and it will not be what the supporters or the adversaries prefer to see; it is as the Qur'an says: 'And Allah has full power and control over His affairs; but most among mankind do not know it;' (12:21)".

And you may extrapolate and say: America is not what the Americans say about themselves, nor their supporters or adversaries - it is what the outcome of their history will reveal about their behavior: though it may take centuries to be revealed.

And the pharaohs - what does history say about multitudes toiling and drudging to build a tomb for a single person! How does that compare with Abraham building the Ka'ba about the same time, to be a safe haven for mankind!

And so on: one may go on to cite the outcome of peoples and dynasties.

So, history is not how Nietzsche saw it, a pack of lies: it is the repository of the creation of God, He to Whom belong the primal origin of the universe.

⁷ Michael Foucault: *A Philosophical Progress*. P. 100.

Let the philosophers see nothing positive in creation; let them insist on seeing no good in the world; let them see nothing but the decadence and bloodshed - and yet, unless you see the development of life, how can you endeavor to bring about reform and improvement!

This may lead us to perceive why the Qur'an pairs despair with disbelief. Pessimists, like Schopenhauer, can see no good or beauty in creation. I think of pessimists like one who sees nothing in a human but its first two years, when it could do nothing to help itself, and when it did not know even how to get rid of its own soiling itself. But this does not sum up a human's life: there is his/her future, his/her striving and accomplishments - and that is much longer than the first two years. And I would say that mankind is still in its childhood, for the human, as the Qur'an says, "By no means he has fulfilled what Allah has commanded him;" (80:23). I see history as moving ahead, and the humans have covered many stages. But if I do very little in making this plain, there will come others who express themselves more effectively.

Long-Term Study of History

I have in mind a specific school of approaching history, the French Annales school of historiography, a 20th century trend, who prefer to take into account long periods of history - since, as we mentioned above, outcomes may take quite a long time to be noticed. It is a mistake, this group asserts, to expect the outcome to appear soon - so that, the longer the period you include in your study, the deeper and more

objective will be your judgment. Let us remember that, when peoples derided their prophets, the latter showed great patience.

Jesus was once asked how people could know the false prophets for what they were, since they would come in lambs' clothing, but inwardly, they would be ravenous wolves. His answer was very brief, but very deep: "You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles?" (Mat. 7:16)

No matter how difficult to draw conclusions, history will remain the reference - we find as much in the Qur'an, when, in Sura 13, V. 11, it states the law of change in history is that it starts with change in souls. And the change in souls comes from pondering events - since events are to be judged by their outcome, their consequences. And then it mentions, in Verse 17 of the same Sura, something relevant: that water falls from the clouds, giving life and growth, but causing also froth - in the words of the Qur'an: "He sends down water from the skies, and channels flow, each according to its measure: but the torrent bears away the foam that mounts up to the surface.;" and the Qur'an relates this froth to the distinction of truth and evil, right and wrong, beneficial and harmful in the progress of history; it states: "Even so, from that ore which they heat in fire, to make ornaments or utensils therewith, there is scum likewise. Thus, Allah by parables shows forth truth and vanity. For "the scum disappears like froth cast out; while that which is for the good of mankind remains on the earth;" (13:17). The Qur'an stresses the use of examples elsewhere as

in, "And such are the parables We set forth for mankind, but only those understand them who have knowledge;" (29:43).

This must remind us of Jesus, who taught people through parables, never without a parable. It is those who have the skill of using examples and comparison who are the best instructors. In fact, nothing is equal to the discovery of a scientific fact but the skill of simplifying it.

Then do We Make the Sun Its Guide

Maybe the example I cite more than any other is about the sun, especially as the Qur'an says, "Then do We make the sun its guide;" (25:54) for I find in the sun an indication that it happens that something might seem the most glaring truth, but turns out to be erroneous: For long eons of time the sun was quoted as the epitome of clarity, indeed from the first day any human looked at the sky - and then, quite recently, it turned out that the sun did not go around us, but we go around it.

The old conviction about the sun was so firmly established that people were ready to die or send others to death to maintain this self-evident fact, and yet it was an error. And it attracted so much publicity because of the trials, defenses, replies and condemnations connected with it.

The Verse sets the sun as a compelling example on how a movement might be mistaken for a different movement.

The lesson that is involved is this: If the sun, which is the perfect example of clarity, can be the object of the biggest

blunder, what among our convictions surpasses the sun in clarity, but may not turn out to be erroneous?

For our present discussion we may say: Should we not learn from the above tangible example not to impose our understanding on others, especially when we have a Verse like, "Let there be no compulsion in religion" (2:256)? Should we not resist any compulsion in imposing views and ideas, no matter how evident they may seem?

It is a mercy that people, or many people, are agreed by now, more or less, to let more interpretations of things exist, side by side, without compelling others to embrace, by force, any particular understanding - maybe the sun has taught them its lesson - that an erroneous way of understanding has the right to survive and be protected - for if you see the other to be in the wrong, remember that he/she takes you to be in the wrong. The idea here is that you are protected so long as you protect the other, even when mistaken.

Reality and the Mental Images

It must be clear that though our feelings, inclinations, and mental images create our attitude towards events and things - those feelings, inclinations, and images have not dominance over the reality of things and events - Indeed, as the Qur'an tells us in, "If the Truth had been in accord with their desires, truly the heavens and the earth, and all beings therein would have been in confusion and corruption;" (23:71): Had those feelings, inclinations, and images had effect on the condition of the world, the world would not be the great place that it is.

We have not learnt what must be learnt from the change in our understanding of the movements of the sun and earth. We may learn, for instance, that, in the same way as people clung to myths about the movement of heavenly bodies, they clung to myths about the rulers - that it is they who make the laws of societies' life, assuming that nations, including thinkers and scholars, have no effect on this phenomenon.

But there is a difference between the sun's movement and history's progress: the sun cares nothing for our feelings and myths, while the ruling individuals and groups are deeply dominated by their nations' ideas - and when those ideas are more or less enlightened and advanced, the ruling parties respond accordingly. It is those who understand the laws of history who have control of the rudder. And this helps those concerned imagine the difficulty for the way of Adam's Son in grappling with the commonly accepted reliance on violence for changing a situation.

How vast the difference is between a world based on understanding and a world of coercion! The fact is that it is when understanding ceases to operate that coercion acts: and when we promote the world of understanding, we must be clear that it is coming out into a superior world, a world of creativity, communication through symbols: from the world of beasts to the human world: a world of bearing the trust, where people communicate through words not punches. It is the world represented in the Qur'an as the world of those who, "[Allah] made them stick close to the command of self-restraint;" (48:26).

Establishing the Right-Minded Life

When we fail to convey our persuasion to another, we usually hasten to say that he/she has failed to get the idea: we often fail to see our own fault in bringing the idea within their capacity. The Qur'an teaches the other way: to look inside, to search for what is wrong with our own soul: Change starts with our souls; and when we fail there, we must admit it, and not reject the task entrusted to us. God has created the world as amenable to human exploitation, and if it fails to serve us, the conclusion must not be that the world cannot be exploited, but that we have not done our part adequately. When we ignore this rule, the result is corruption and bloodshed - the problem is that we find great difficulty in admitting our falling short and our not coming up to the required level - although it must be said that humanity has gone some way in perceiving human imperfection, which is a step in the right direction. This is better than the other alternative: charging the world with not being responsive to exploitation. You see how vast the result is in each attitude: when you assert that things are impossible to change, you feel complacent, and not called upon to do better; while when you see the chance for change, you exert yourself more and look for the points where you had failed to put things right and do better the next time. Yes, things can be impossible with our present ability, but our ability must be developed, and can be developed, and then success will be more accessible.

With this in mind, we may repeat our question: what is a guided, right-minded life? And how can we set out to realize it?

We do have a baseline: Let us be clear that progress can be made towards a well-guided life; that the world has been created in a way that it can always be brought closer to a proper situation; and we also have the Qur'anic law to assist in such approach: that froth goes away, and is replaced by what is more profitable.

I take this to be the law of existence: that the world was not created as the best of worlds and then kept deteriorating - Indeed, the Almighty keeps adding to creation, as the Qur'an tells us, and the world's future is better than its past: froth will vanish, and what is for the good of people will stay and increase.

We may see this in the world starting with primitive creatures, and how creation proceeded to the creation and development of the honored and amazing creature, man - and the Qur'an refers to this in the Verse, "then We developed out of it another and different creature. So blessed be Allah, the Best to create;" (23:14). Those who doubt this must follow the law of creation, from beginning to our own time: how man ate human flesh and then got beyond this, and so on from stage to stage: a very long process. How can one proceed to do his/her best to improve things unless they have this basic principle well-established? We need to have a most vigorous and enthusiastic mind to strive in that direction.

So, let each one of us review their mindset: If one conceives the progress in the past, he/she can imagine

improvement in the future. There will be a higher level for humans in this world: yes, in this world. Let us not misunderstand some *hadiths*, attributed to the Prophet, ﷺ, asserting that things will keep deteriorating to the end of time: On examination, it will be seen that some of those Traditions are not authentic, and some have been misinterpreted.

So, one must stop and make sure that the above principle is well-established: for nothing can be done without this rule.

People have learnt how to overcome many physical diseases, but the Qur'an gives attention to the intellectual and psychological good health.

How can a Muslim work for a religion that is destined to never revive? When our intellectual elite keep citing sayings that inspire despair and a dark future, they must not wonder to see people apathetic, and not inclined to serve a religion that is not destined to have a bright future. When I reviewed the Qur'an to see what it has to say about that I found, "Then anyone who has done an atom's weight of good, shall see it!" (99:7) and "If any think that Allah will not help him in this world and the Hereafter, let him stretch out a rope to the ceiling and cut himself off: then let him see whether his plan will remove that which enrages him!" (22:15) and please notice the mention of 'this world' in the Verse, for it is not confined to the Last Day.

I do realize that I am calling to a new and different world, this right-guided (*rashed*, in Arabic) life: its fundamentals, the conditions for regaining it and protecting it. It is the world Iqbal mentioned when he said:

His vision brings up before him a novel world,

A magnificent existence which he likes to picture:

And when he hears the call of *adhan* [the call to Islamic prayer] in his dream,

His words translate that vision into a graphic body.

Let me add another notion that will help in clearing the way to the right-guided life. At the time the Qur'an was revealed, human life was still based on miracles and wonders, not on solid and steady laws; and then, with the entry of the Qur'an, it was a proclamation that a new era of acting on the basis of laws was to replace the older era based on miracles. This also was perceived clearly by Iqbal, and he took it up not casually, but most deliberately. Those keen on working for Islam must have this firmly in their mind - for experience tells me that many assert their clinging to scientific ways, but then regress to clinging to miracles under the slightest duress: and the way of miracles is a dark wilderness, where the walker has no lights to aid him/her in seeing their way. And we have proved to be quick to revert to the way of miracles and wonders: a researcher can find it in our media, in the writings of our writers, and at different levels. You may wonder to find that even the secularists have not gotten over it - and since they avoid the mention of prophets and godly men, they attribute miracles to their politicians - in the same way as they concoct a Jewish descent for a hated person. And you see in such cases how easily a most admired person is suddenly taken to be a hateful one, and, consequently, an agent for the enemy.

Such a long way we have before us to overcome the many impurities from our environment! If the Lord describes wine and gambling in the Qur'an as filthy things, so how many impurities corrupt our life and thought!

Hence the attention I give to Adam's Upright Son: for his behavior was a practical reply to those who thought man was an epitome of corruption and bloodshed, that he/she was unworthy of being chosen for viceroy. God taught the human as He said, "And He taught Adam the nature and names of all things;" (2:31) which indicated that it was through the accumulation of knowledge that man would be enabled to choose the way of right-minded conduct, and of establishing the right-guided life and society. But we still cling fast to ignorance, and ignore knowledge and science: we dread science for, once it flourishes, it will eliminate our myths and ignorance.

Dreading Knowledge

I am trying to demonstrate that those who have not known knowledge and science dread them: they assume that if their ignorance is eliminated, they themselves will be eliminated: they link this with this.

Let me quote Michael Foucault on 'logos, i.e. discourse or culture': "Where is that culture which seems more respectful of the logos than our civilization? Well, what hides behind this apparent veneration of the logos is fear ... a fear that hides behind this veneration: the manipulation of thought and language is meant to efface the signs themselves: In all the

other societies there is this deep fear of the logos (of knowledge) ... a blind dread against events, against that great uproar and confused discourse.

"To get over that fear, to analyze it within its own conditions, we need to take three decisions that our thought resists at the moment;"⁸.

Why is this fear of knowledge so deep, and in all societies? I see it as the game of master and slave, that this game of the dominant and the dominated is still prevalent everywhere. It is through some shallow knowledge that one can dominate and subdue people, and should knowledge take root, it is the knowledgeable that will have dominance, through knowledge, so that he who dominates may come to be dominated - and that is an unbearable situation from his perspective.

The knowledgeable person, when he/she seeks to put an end to the situation of the dominant-dominated, is not trying to replace the dominant - he/she is seeking to establish equality.

Establishing justice and equality does not just eliminate the condition of dominance, but also the condition of being dominated. He/she is not part of the vicious circle of the dominant-dominated game: he/she endeavors to have the game discontinued.

Does the above reveal the forces behind fear, its game and consequences? It is something like magic that enchants people's eyes so that they do not see the third option - and that

⁸ *The System of Discourse*. Pp. 33-34.

is what they did when they rejected the call of messenger after messenger, as the Qur'an reports: "Alas for My servants! There comes not a messenger to them but they mock him! Don't they see how many generations before them We destroyed?" (36:30-31). We need to bring the situation to a point when people see its vitality and significance.

Exiting the Game of the Dominant-Dominated

There is much to do to change the viewing of history as no more than a condemned chain of agents; and greater corruption replacing the less corrupt. It is equal to disbelief - this desperate view of things, for the Lord says in the Qur'an: "Allah has full power and control over His affairs; but most among mankind do not know it;" (12:21). And we must see it not merely as the miraculous discourse of the Qur'an, but as a fact of history. When the Qur'an says, "Allah has full power and control over His affairs," this must teach us that, though there have been innumerable victims of the failure of understanding, the human will have to learn, as the cost of failure, the game of the dominant-dominated, rises and rises.

The problem is with both parties, in fact. Not only does the dominant person dread being dominated, but the dominated craves to be dominant - history has shown so often the reversal of roles, but this has blinded people to the third option - and it is our task now to get out of this duality to a condition of oneness.

And history teaches us something else: that those who called to this third option were charged with sorcery and

madness - at best, they were stigmatized as idealists and unrealistic.

Yes, there is a vision at the root of this alternative, and Adam's Son had to pay dearly for acting on his vision. Can I now bring into light this ability of Adam's Son of emerging from duality to oneness? Can we demonstrate that he is more than a sorcerer and a loser? Can we make the oppressor and the killer realize that they are losers? The Qur'an describes the other son of Adam's, the killer, as a 'loser' "he murdered him, and became one of the losers;" (5:30) and, on realizing his ignorance, he was regretful (5:31). So, can we make the oppressor realize his/her loss, and bring him/her to be repentant?

I do not take it as impossible to bring people to see sorcery for what it is - on the contrary, I find it feasible, for the world is really impelled, is driven hard, towards realizing it, realizing *tawhid*, Oneness.

When people refuse to consider the third option - for the costs paid so far have not been high enough, then God will have them pay more; history is patient enough to have the cost go higher and higher until the lesson is digested. Adam's Upright Son proved his worth and great merit when he realized that there was a different option, other than responding to killing with killing. And this was the way of the prophets, and those who command what is right. Democracy itself will not be the way of a people unless they get out of the game of reciprocal violence. Please reflect on this, ponder it again and again, for we have no other option but getting over

the game of the god and slave, of man enslaving man, or accepting to be a slave to man.

I thank God that I walk in the light! And yet, I feel concerned: It is not enough that I have found the way, nor is it enough that I expound this way to others - I feel an urgent impetus to disseminate this approach: that Allah knew that man had the ability to get over mischief and bloodshed.

I really hope that this perception will reach the minds of many people - and the day is not far when this hope is realized.

The problem is that we do not have specimens, not even a small number of specimens - but still, I do hope that people will come to understand, and within a reasonable time.

The Qur'an teaches us to have hope, even when dealing with stones; let us look at this Verse: "For among rocks there are some from which rivers gush forth; others there are which when split asunder send forth water; and others which sink for fear of Allah;" (2:74).

Yes, I do trust that change will come to the human soul - it is really entrusted to us, this task. And I believe change will take place, if we apply the conditions of change: and change must take its time.

I remember, after I brought out my first book: *The Way of Adam's Son* [in the mid-sixties], that some of my most intimate friends scolded me badly for, as they said, I was disheartening Muslims. And then, twenty years later, one of them came up and confessed: "Let me tell you that, though I opposed you twenty years ago, I now feel that we have no other way but this."

Yes, we do believe in this approach. But we need to go on elucidating things until guidance and misguidance are distinguished, until confusion is cleared. We need to pick things up from the point in history when we lost our grip on right-mindedness. Let us look at the Qur'an, again.

The Qur'an and 'No Compulsion in Religion'

We have this in the Qur'an: "Let there be no compulsion in religion: Right Guidance stands out clear from Misguidance: whoever rejects Evil and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold, that never breaks. And Allah hears and knows all things;" (2:256).

Let us notice that this Verse occurs immediately after the 'Verse of the Stool'; and the 'Verse of the Stool' (Allah! There is no god but He - the Living, the Self-subsisting, Eternal, ..., 2:255) has always been used by Muslims as an incantation to protect them from evil, so that you find it posted in homes, cars, etc. It is a glorification and celebration of Allah; and the Messenger, ﷺ, has described it as the greatest Verse of the Qur'an⁹; and it is also known that any sin may be forgiven but that of denying, "There is no god but Allah" - in view of the Verse, "Allah does not forgive that partners should be set up with Him; but He forgives anything else;" (4:48). To have "There is no god but Allah," as the last thing one says before death ensures his/her dying as a believer.

⁹ As in an authentic Tradition, reported by Muslim, in the Chapter on Travelers, Section on the merits of Surah of the Cave and the Verse of the Stool, No. 810.

Froth and the Beneficial as the Criterion

When one asserts his/her faith in *tawhid*, and his/her being free from idolatry, they need to examine the reality of their conviction. Being sure that I am in the right is not a proof that I am in the right. We must never tire of saying this - that you need to examine what you say or think against the criterion: if it proves its rightness by the unbiased measure, it is right; if not, then it is froth, of no value.

And the measure I am alluding to is that of the visible consequences of the good and the harmful: (or the froth that is destined to vanish as the Qur'an puts it, 13:17). What is right is that which stays to benefit people, and the froth disappears; in the Qur'an we read: "Thus Allah by parables shows forth Good Guidance and Misguidance. For the scum disappears like froth cast out; while that which is for the good of mankind remains on the earth;" (13:17) and we read: "Not your desires, nor those of the People of the Book can prevail: whoever works evil, will be requited accordingly;" (4:123). We must understand from this that to misunderstand must have its toll. We shall need this rule every time: How to distinguish good thinking from bad thinking? How to distinguish the lamb from the wolf? How to distinguish right-mindedness from misguidance. When we read in the Bible, 'You will know them by their fruits' (Mat. 7:16) - where do we go for 'their fruits'? We go to history. We go to the actual events of life. History will never deem wrong as right; it distinguishes the one from the other with an accurate balance: froth will disappear as of no value, and the beneficial will stay. Yes, we

may be in doubt for some time, when it takes long to distinguish, but the law is in effect, always in effect. And if we do not find in past history enough evidence, if we prove to be too dull to learn, then history is a very patient teacher: It will keep repeating its teaching, with higher prices, until we are ready, humiliated enough, to learn.

The Qur'an and the Doctrine of *Tawhid*

I am saying here that it is history, the events of life, that will reveal and elucidate the meaning of 'There is no god But Allah,' - which is the mainstay of all the prophets' call.

People will not argue with you about the Oneness of God as a basic truth, it is inherent 'a *fitrah* in the Qur'an' in people's being - at least if they reflect on the origin of the cosmos, as the Qur'an reports: "and contemplate the wonders of creation in heaven and the earth, with the thought: 'Our Lord! You have created all this not for nothing! Glory be to You! Give us salvation from Your penalty in the Fire;" (3:191). This is supported by the fact that the Quraish people, those we call unbelievers, admitted this, as the Qur'an tells us, "If you ask them, Who created them, they will certainly say, Allah: how then are they deluded away from the Truth?" (43:87).

This is then one aspect of *tawhid*, and scholars have their different designations for the various aspects. We know of no human who claimed to have created the heavens and the earth - Pharaoh himself claimed no more than having control over Egypt. And since this aspect of *tawhid* is so unanimously accepted, the Qur'an was not revealed to prove this aspect of

tawhid. It was revealed to refute superstition and false deities ('*aljibt*' and '*altaghoot*' in the Qur'an, as in 4:51).

As for '*aljibt*', it is some people's claim that they have some special relationship with God, some favorite place, that they act as intercessors or mediators, who can help people be in communion with God. All imposters who impose on people in religious matters are of this brand: they threaten people that, unless they are obeyed, there will be penalty for the disobedient parties on the Last Day, and calamities will befall them in this world. These imposters do not dominate through tangible means, nor with political or financial force, but through conjuring mysterious powers. And people with no historical knowledge and no experience of life will be subdued with this kind of delusion - we see a reflection of that in the cults of worshipping good people and tombs. This kind of polytheism is mostly characteristic of less developed peoples.

As for '*altaghoot*', it is an individual or group who intimidates people with a fist of iron, or by cutting off their provision - Pharaoh is the prototype of this when he said, as the Qur'an reports, "I will have you crucified on trunks of palm-trees: so you shall know for certain, which of us can give the more severe and more lasting punishment;" (20:71).

For millennia, the above two forms of polytheism remained confused and mixed up: the ruler often claimed divinity, that he/she was related to God, or that he was His son, or a descendant of some heavenly power. But the two forms have more or less taken specialized identities over the

last centuries: the '*taghoot*' often taking an economic identity, and the '*jibt*' taking the identity of media.

***Tawhid* and 'No Compulsion in Religion'**

It is important to know all the above. More important, however, is to see the relation of 'Let there be no compulsion in religion' (2:256) to the '*Ayah al-Kursi*, i.e. Verse of the Stool' which occurs immediately before it. We often say that 'There is no god but Allah' means Islam, obedience, surrender, etc. But for all that to be faith, it must come as a result of conviction and believing. And hence the close connection between the two Verses. In the same way as the second Verse says no compulsion may be the means for having one convert to Islam, no Islam is accepted through compulsion - for faith without real belief is hypocrisy. And even after conviction, one may have fully accepted and believed in what is false.

Not all faith is believing in what is true. You may believe in the True God, but you may believe in the '*jibt*, superstition' or/and '*taghoot*, a false deity': the Qur'an alerts us to this when it says: "Have you not turned your vision to those who were given a portion of the Book? They believe in superstition and false deities," (4:51), "those who believe in vanities and reject Allah;" (29:52), and "will they then believe in vain things, and be ungrateful for Allah's favors;" (16:72).

It is crucial to distinguish one type of faith from the other: for in both cases, an individual may sacrifice life in support of their faith: to sacrifice life and property is not a proof that one believes in what is true.

Outcome as the Criterion

History is the measure; what things result in is the evidence. It is the law of what is froth and what remains (ref. to 13:17) that is the law, for it is an unbiased law: what is froth will disappear, even if it takes long to disappear. Only the beneficial will stay. It means that time is a basic measure for distinguishing right and wrong, the harmful and the beneficial.

Words can be misunderstood; words are symbols and metaphors that refer to the facts. Even 'There is no god but Allah' has an outward meaning, and we need to refer to the facts of life to discern the truth.

This must help us in seeing why the Qur'an gives all this weight to history: the experiences of peoples. And it must open our eyes to the importance of the Signs of the world around us and the world of human life and human soul. The importance of these signs comes from their support of the Verses of Revealed Book. You have the symbols and Signs in the Book, and the tangible signs come and define the former sign, and also put right our understanding of the symbols. And as history progresses, it accumulates more laws, or *sunan* in the terminology of the Qur'an. And the Qur'an has given all the required attention to observing past and present, and even waiting for more signs in the future.

Muslims have not given attention to this, but unless they recognize history and the tangible facts as a source of truth,

they will cling to their mental images more than the outcome of things.

Muslims have not done enough to learn the lessons of 'Ad and Thamud, and - let us add, of the Soviet Union, the EU - as if all that is of no value, as if there are no laws behind events.

Between Guidance and Misguidance

Immediately after 'Let there be no compulsion in religion,' we have, in the same Verse, 2:256, Good Guidance stands out clear from Misguidance'; and this is the rule: to resort to compulsion in religion is misguidance, and to adhere to 'No compulsion' in religion is right guidance.

This moves us one step forward. But let us reflect further: is this confined to one particular religion? Is it confined to religion? Resorting to compulsion is worthy of much psychological and historical research. And we will do no real progress without understanding the human, for he/she is the source of exercising compulsion, and submitting to compulsion.

It is such a fruitful research - to study compulsion versus 'No compulsion', the outcome of exercising the former and the outcome of exercising the latter.

I do realize that I am not qualified to do this research, but all I can do is to stir the appetite of young men and women to go ahead in doing such research. It is exhilarating to me to just detect a solution to the problem of the human, and of what

is in his/her soul, and the problem of changing what is in the minds.

It may be mentioned in passing that the above Verse of 'No compulsion' has been said to be abrogated by the 'Verse of the Sword'. But history does not await the assertions of those who make such assertions.

When I say that yes, guidance has been distinguished from delusion, and stands out clear from delusion, as the Verse asserts, I say this by referring to history, and to human nature, and to the instances of good guidance and misguidance in the human march.

It is by referring to human history that good guidance and Truth may be traced, and that compulsion in religion as the delusion and corruption may be traced - it is in the record of human behavior that this must be discovered.

This is the reliable reference.

It is very little light that the Muslims have drawn from the above Verse of 'No compulsion': they said that the People of the Book (i.e. the Jews and Christians) may not be compelled to convert to Islam. But is that all we can learn from the Verse? It really alerts us to a vital fact: that to bring out the best a human can do, it is through dealing with him/her without any conscious or subconscious resort to compulsion.

***Jihad* and 'No Compulsion in Religion'**

To protect the principle of 'No compulsion' has been the task of prophets: it is this that justifies *jihad* in the way of God: *jihad* in the sense of calling to the way of God; it is to

prevent any resort to violence to have people convert to any faith. And once no compulsion is used, another Verse tells us, "then Allah has opened no way for you to war against them;" (4:90).

Have I done enough to reveal the blessing of adopting 'No compulsion'? Indeed, by embracing this way one protects his/her life and property - he/she has done their share in being treated with justice and the doing of good.

Our first task is to be clear about the link between 'No compulsion in religion' and good guidance. We have two more Verses to help us understand the relation: "Allah does not forbid you, with regard to those who do not fight you for your Faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: for Allah loves those who are just. Allah only forbids you, with regard to those who fight you for your Faith, and drive you out of your homes, and support others in driving you out, from turning to them for friendship and protection. It is such as turn to them in these circumstances that do wrong;" (60:8-9).

We may say, in light of the above Verses, that the society of right guidance is a society which tolerates all kinds of opinions and views and doctrines - all worldviews - except for those who kill people and banish them from their homes because of their convictions: and let me mention again that conviction might be faith in what is right or wrong. In fact, the Qur'an reminds us that people may have faith in a falsehood, as in, "They believe in superstition and false deities;" (4:51) that the source of religion might be God or any other source, as it reports Pharaoh's saying about Moses,

"What I fear is lest he should change your religion;" (40:26) and in another location, "Say: 'O you that reject Faith! I do not worship that which you worship. Nor will you worship that which I worship. And I will not worship that which you have been wont to worship. Nor will you worship that which I worship. To you be your religion and to me mine;" (109:1-6).

It must be understood that the Verse "Allah does not forbid you, with regard to those who do not fight you for your Faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them;" (60:8-9) does not specify what religion one affiliates to; it just mentions the sin of killing and banishing from home on grounds of embracing a certain religion. This is a basic tenet of my approach: anybody who kills on grounds of people's embracing any specific religion, for doctrines in the head, doctrines that do not stimulate the believer to kill or banish from home - that anyone who practices these two wrongs should be dissociated from and be never supported; whereas anyone who abstains from such perpetrations is to be treated with kindness and justice.

What I am stating here is what the prophets practiced, as we find in the Qur'an: "We sent aforetime to the Thamud their brother Salih, saying: 'Serve Allah,': but behold, they became two factions quarrelling with each other. He said: 'O my people! Why do you ask to hasten on the evil in preference to the good?'" (27:45-46). Let us note that the Verse mentions two teams:

One is that of the prophets, who called to worship only God; the second is those who rejected the prophets' call. In

general, we may say: they are the team of right-mindedness and the team of delusion, the team of non-compulsion and the team of compulsion: and the Lord is commanding that we affiliate with the former and break away with the latter.

The two other Verses must also be remembered: "therefore, if they withdraw from you but do not fight you, and instead send you guarantees of peace, then Allah has opened no way for you to war against them;" (4:90) and "if they do not withdraw from you nor give you guarantees of peace besides restraining their hands, seize them and slay them wherever you get them: in their case, We have provided you with a clear argument against them;" (4:91). For we have here in clear terms who among groups we may have the right to fight with clear argument on our side, and who Allah has opened no way to war against.

The Result of Confusing Guidance and Misguidance

I hope I am not being wordy - but I feel how urgent it is to put apart good guidance and misguidance: as long as we confuse them we often practice misguidance assuming that we practice guidance: You see how many Muslims sacrifice their life and property; you see how much bloodshed occurs when the conflict is really between misguidance and misguidance, for both parties believe in coercion. One would conclude that we seem to have completely forgotten the possibility of good guidance and being a right-minded person.

And good guidance (*al-rushd* in Qur'an's terms) is to have people embrace religion without compulsion. It is true that the Muslim World is confused about this - but not completely.

You may observe how the first four Caliphs have been designated as the 'al-Rashidun, i.e. the Righteous' caliphs. No one was honored with this title after them: It is they who acceded to rule without compulsion - while all the rulers after them acceded through compulsion.

And so, in the same way as religion may not happen through compulsion, rule may not happen through compulsion - it will not be well-guided but deluded in this case.

To develop the distinction between guidance and misguidance, our source is history, the Signs of the world and the Signs of human life, the outcome of events and the events of days and years. History keeps moving ahead towards guidance, slowly but steadily. This simple fact relieves us a great deal: the world is not stagnant, nor decaying: it is moving ahead; what was unknown comes to be discovered, as the Qur'an tells us, "He adds to Creation as He pleases;" (35:1) and "He creates other things of which you have no knowledge;" (16:8) for God created man to realize through mankind this greatest of achievements: getting over mischief and corruption and getting over bloodshed: this can be inferred from, "For the scum disappears like froth cast out; while that which is for the good of mankind remains on the earth;" (13:17).

Generalizing the Principle of 'No Compulsion'

Unless one embraces the concept of 'while that which is for the good of mankind remains on the earth;' (13:17) in conceiving existence, the alternative is a pessimistic stance: an attitude that precludes any proactive and constructive endeavor.

When one has understood the Verse, "Let there be no compulsion in religion: Right Guidance stands out clear from Misguidance;" (2:255) he/she should apply it to other areas, like politics: No compulsion in rule, for this distinguishes the way of good guidance from misguidance. And you go on to apply the same principle: No compulsion in ideas and convictions. "Accept this idea or I kill you," must be discarded, and the right alternative is, "Accept this idea for the following evidence; but, if you are not convinced, well, let each do his/her best to elucidate and support their ideas." No one may go in disregard of this by saying: "Unless you accept this idea, I will kill you or banish you from your home."

This is still a problem in the modern world - people are still killed or banished from home for their convictions. But it does not happen without cries of condemnation - and this is a step towards 'No compulsion in religion;' and once it is a predominant principle, then we will have acted according to the principle of all religion belongs to Allah - for, unless religion comes with conviction, it is hypocrisy and not faith.

When we find all the constitutions of the world assert the freedom of conviction, we know that progress has been made

- knowing of course that the application of this principle varies widely. Indeed, the world is compelled to move in the direction of no compulsion: those who have not realized this will have to realize it - circumstances will compel them to comply. This is so for compulsion is of no benefit, and the Qur'an tells us, and history tells us, that what has no benefit must vanish; and only what is good for humans will remain.

Those who hold to right guidance are gaining ground at the expense of the less well-guided; and once more right-minded people come, they will replace the less right-minded: this is another law of God's: the less perfect must give way to the more perfect, the more beneficial to humankind.

History has its rewards for those who act on good guidance, and it is making it more and more difficult for those who reject right guidance; and this is getting clearer and clearer to humans.

The World and the Doctrine of Pessimism

The world is still dominated by the doctrine of pessimism and despair; people still view the world through dark glasses. It is true that right guidance is gaining ground, that the beacons are getting more numerous and glowing in the dark night, but not many people are steadily moving with the assurance of right guidance. It does us a lot of good to see statistics of those who move full of hope and faith, with full conviction that the world is moving towards what is more beneficial.

I turn to God, to provide us with vision, to guide us to chant the tunes of hope, of realizing what He alluded to on the day He created the first human; for we need to feel the solidarity of those who work with hope, having in sight God's Light, which He pledged to complete.

We need effective writers to write about right-mindedness, right-mindedness in rule and in life - to give this all the splendor it needs to bring hope to those who aspire to light. I have in mind the man who is described in the Qur'an as exhorting his people with the words, "O my people! Follow me: I will lead you to the Path of Right;" (40:38). It is the way of Abraham, who pioneered the way of Right.

The Muslims were clear about the time Righteousness was lost: it was lost with the end of al-Rashidun Caliphs. It was like parting forever with the Path of Right; but it was unfortunate that those who described this transfer never discussed it as a human issue: it was enough to believe that it was God's Will, as if human behavior had nothing to do with this. And more generally, so many of our problems are dismissed, or elevated, summarily as being above human endeavor. They may take this as a glorification of God - but the result is invariably treating humans as automatons, without will or part in the shaping of things.

CHAPTER THREE

TWO READINGS OF THE QUR'AN

What I am going to discuss in this chapter is not new to my readers: I have actually taken it up several times; and my book *Until They Change What Is in Their Souls* was devoted to it. What I do here is to approach it from a new perspective: the two possible readings of the Qur'an.

It is possible to read the Qur'an as presenting the events and history as shaped by the Almighty. It is alternatively possible to read the Qur'an as presenting the history of humans and changes to their destiny as the result of their own activity. The difference is vast, and the consequences of one reading are vastly different from those of the other. It may be noted that Muhammad Arkoun asserts, in his book *Pour une critique de la raison islamique*, "History, according to the Qur'an, is the handiwork of God, not humans, including prophets and reformers;" and he quotes some Verses to support this conclusion.

We see how much confusion is involved, and hence my decision to take this up and shed light on it.

Let me start with the Qur'an's referring to acts of creation like procreation and agriculture. Here are the relevant Verses:

"Do you see the seed that you sow in the ground? Is it you that cause it to grow, or are We the Cause;" (56:63-64)

"Do you then see? - the human seed that you throw out - Is it you who create it, or are We the Creators? " (56:58-59).

What happens in reality is that Allah is the One who created crops and trees, and created water and the soil - but it is we who planted and organized the orchard; and it is we who sow the seeds and plow the earth, but it is not we who cause the seeds to grow trees and crops. Again, it is God who created the laws of fertilizing an egg and the shaping of embryos in wombs - but without the mating of a man and a woman there will be no creation of a baby.

This is the rule: It is God who grew crops; it is God who created embryos - but it is the humans who cultivate the land and sow the seeds; and it is the humans who marry and have the semen enter the womb.

Both sides are true: one aspect belongs to God, and one aspect belongs to the human. We need to have this clear. Yes, it is God who created the laws, or *sunan* in Qur'anic terms, but it is humans who have the laws act to serve their purposes. And that is why I say we may read the Qur'an in two ways: some may only notice God's work, and some only man's work. It must be clear that without humans' participation, things do not come to be brought out into existence.

It is good that Muslims reflect on both readings, and teach that to the youth, not only as abstract rules, but applying them again and again - in the same way as we develop their skill with numbers and the alphabet. This will relieve us of much conflict, and even fighting, among factions and sects; and it

will put an end to much rejection of God's Verses, and deification of some individuals.

Without having clear both aspects, both readings, we may well go through the Qur'an benefiting nothing by it - Indeed, what Muhammad Arkoun asserted when he saw human effort as ignored is in the mind of most Muslims - things are quite chaotic in the Muslim culture.

Reviewing the Qur'an, one finds both readings clear in some locations, stressing both God's creation of the *sunan*, and the humans' application of the *sunan*. You find both aspects clear in Verses like, "Because Allah will never change the Grace which He has bestowed on a people until they change what is in their own souls;" (8:53) and, "Verily never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change what is in their own souls;" (13:11).

Blessings given to people, like healthy bodies, wealth, cooperation in righteousness and piety - all such blessings have their laws; and people are obliged to realize those laws and apply them, for the blessings to be granted regularly - for to fail to apply the relevant law, a blessing is withdrawn, and will not be retrieved without people's awakening to their shortcoming and acting accordingly.

In the last two Verses (8:53, and 13:11), God mentioned change that belonged to Him, and change that belonged to people; but the change that belonged to Him is asserted to be contingent on the change to be performed by people - they will have to change things in their own souls and minds, in order for change from God to proceed. This is crystal clear in especially the second Verse, " Verily never will Allah change

the condition of a people until they change what is in their own souls;" (13:11). It is curious to find that, even after that, people have not got the point settled in their conscience: they still wait for God to change what is in their souls.

We must hold fast to this Verse; we should take it to be a key Verse to distinguishing the two readings of the Qur'an; and we need give tests to see how well people have absorbed the purport of the Verse. We are ensnared in trouble after trouble as a result of our confusion about this principle.

The Close Links Between the Two Readings

What we need for lifting the confusion is more effort and education and alerting. Let us observe that there is a close relation between the two readings, in a way that no mention of either but ensures the presence of the other. When you say of a people that God has bestowed upon them wealth, good health, and unselfishness, you are implying that those people did get over the intellectual traits that are associated with poverty, disease and selfishness. And conversely, when you say that God has afflicted a certain people with poverty, disease, cheating, and hatred: you are implying that those people hold in their souls values, convictions, and doctrines that produce such results. In both cases, God will not change a people's condition unless and until they change what is inside their conscience.

We need to go from this to many applications. When, for instance, the Almighty says in the Qur'an, "Say: 'O Allah! Lord of Power and Rule, you give power to whom You

please, and You strip off power from whom You please: You endue with honor whom You please, and You bring low whom You please: in Your hand is all good. Verily, over all things You have power;" (3:26) we find that God only mentions the part that belongs to Him; but, we need to have it settled in our mind that God does not grant royalty haphazardly to somebody, or withdraw it haphazardly from another: only those are given dominance who have realized change in their minds: you see how those who know the *sunan*, and act upon them, enjoy good health, dominance, and well-guided rule; and you see how those who ignore the *sunan* and do not act upon them have the blessings withdrawn, and they have catastrophes hitting them, as the Qur'an says, "But Allah did not wrong them: nay, they wronged their own souls;" (16:33).

And when we read in the Qur'an, "He it is that has strengthened you with His aid and with the company of believers; and, moreover, He has put affection between their hearts: not if you had spent all that is in the earth, could you have produced that affection, but Allah has done it: for He is Exalted in might, Wise;" (8:62-63) we must say: "Yes, it is Allah who has put affection between their hearts, but He did not do that with miracles, but through *sunan*, laws;" and unless we have this link clear life will be dark. When God says to his Prophet, "It is part of the Mercy of Allah that you deal gently with them. If you were severe or harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from you;" (3:159), it asserts that those who practice the law of causing people to have satisfied hearts will not have people break away from them.

It is true that people's part is tiny in comparison with the magnificent outcome, but without that tiny effort no result will be realized.

The Qur'an's Attitude to Those Who Ascribe Their Failings to God

Here is more application of the rule we have presented. The Qur'an says, "Those who give partners to Allah will say: 'If Allah had wished, we should not have given partners to Him, nor would our fathers, nor should we have had any taboos';" (6:148). The polytheists mentioned in the Verse deny any part of theirs in their convictions or practices, asserting that whatever they did was God's doing. So, let us go on in the same Verse to see the Almighty's response:

"So did their ancestors argue falsely, until they tasted Our wrath. Say: 'Have you any certain knowledge? If so, produce it before us. You follow nothing but conjecture: you do nothing but lie;'" (6:148).

It is as you see a most stern and well-supported refutation. One thing the text points out is that they had followed their predecessors in their rejection. It adds that this kind of conception must entail the same afflictions that the predecessors had received. Then the Qur'an challenges them to bring out any evidence for their claim, to have their claim stand out as knowledge - not to speak from just fancies and desires. The scene is crowed in the next Verse: "Say: 'With Allah is the argument that reaches home: if it had been His Will, He could indeed have guided you all;'" (6:149). It is

virtually saying: "If He so willed, God could have controlled your progress, as He controls the huge bodies of the sky; but He had you bear the trust, and you failed to rise up to the trust."

I do not claim to have done enough to have this concept sink into the minds of Muslims. My only hope is that young and believing minds and hearts will get to the depth of this topic and bear the trust, in order to realize God's allusion to what humans can achieve - for that will not be realized except through the effort of humans, as they endeavor to bring change to their souls. For some, the change will not come about except after exceeding and repeated suffering, as the Qur'an teaches us, "Those against whom the Word of you Lord has been verified would not believe - even if every Sign was brought to them, until they see for themselves the penalty grievous;" (10:96-97) and, "They will not believe in it until they see the grievous penalty;" (26:201).

So much effort is needed, not only to absorb all this, but to have courses of training to ensure that the Muslim youth begin to capture the two readings, and put right the erroneous and confused concepts. Can I hope to see mosques as luminaries that illuminate these ignored concepts?

I really see it taking place in the future - and when the way of good guidance is clear, no one can prevent us from forging ahead: light will glow, and good guidance and security will dominate. It will be a realization of Abraham's assertion, as the Qur'an tells us: "Which of us two parties has more right to security? Tell me, if you know. It is those who believe and do

not confuse their beliefs with wrong - that are truly in security, for they are on right guidance" (6:81-82).

Yes, it is coming soon - and people will wonder then how we failed to comprehend this, and for such a long and unhappy time!

When one is lost, one must return to the point he/she started to be lost: and that is what we should do in returning to right guidance. We need to understand how we came to assume that the way to eliminating misguidance must be through more misguidance.

They tell in philosophy this story: A man was looking for something in the ground. Another person came and asked him what he was looking for, and he replied: "I am looking for my keys." "And where did you lose them?" the other man asked. "Over there;" the first man replied, pointing to an area at some distance from where he was searching. "But then," the second man wondered, "why are you searching here if you lost your keys in a different spot?" "Because," the first man replied, "it is dark there, but is well-lit here!"

So, it is true of us that we are not searching for right guidance where we lost it - it does not occur to us to carry the light and search at the right spot.

Right-mindedness, or right guidance is the solution which is the least costly and the most beneficial for more people.

It is in children that we should invest. Their insatiable curiosity must stimulate us to stir them - if we prove to be creative enough for that.

Toynbee and the Way Civilization Proceeds

The renowned historian Toynbee has a relevant notion about the progress of civilization, how it starts and how it collapses; he writes: "Civilization starts with the creative elite, who discover simple solutions that save effort and time, and attain the best results with minimum efforts: they employ for leading the multitude hopeful tunes which bring out the most precious treasures latent in the human soul, to invest them in the best way. When the way is open, the masses, including the children, are ready to exert their efforts, ceaselessly - as long as the balance of effort and harvest shows the ascendance of harvest in comparison with effort. But once this balance is not favorable, when more efforts are needed for less harvest, then efforts begin to relax and dwindle: the public are less willing to exert themselves. Instead of creativity, we have now tedious routine, and the movement slackens. The leadership notices that and, to compensate for the creative tunes, it now uses whips and painful beating. The conclusion is that civilization starts to collapse when the refreshing creative elite is transformed into oppressive elite, which drive people with compulsion and oppression."

Is it not an admirable picture of human relations - when the method of rewards, with its multifold harvest, is replaced with a system of punishments and compulsion?

Exploiting Children's Abilities

Things are so designed that creative ways make a seed produce hundreds of seeds. Exploitation of resources comes in many shapes, and once a method of exploitation is introduced, with more productivity, it abrogates a less productive exploitation. And the best investment is in exploiting children's capacity for comprehension - in introducing ingenious educational methods, with a lot of fun.

Watch the children, and see their amazing zest for play, movement, understanding and creativity. No investment can be more rewarding than this - if only we can put them on the right road. Let us take our cue from the Verses of the Qur'an: "Truly he succeeds that purifies it, and he fails that corrupts it;" (91:9-10) - it is puzzling how we can be so apathetic and hopeless when we have Verses like these in our hands.

I think of our situation in light of our relation to electricity that is now used everywhere in the world, but where are those who know how to manipulate our potentials as we use electricity? And what we need is to discover right-mindedness, to employ the hidden potential of humans. What we need is to understand the human - since the Almighty tells us that though he/she was created in the best of molds, he/she can deteriorate, if neglected, to be the lowest of the low (See 95:4-5). And yes, we mostly see how a child's potential for creativity is hampered and stifled.

Just as people lived for such a long time before agriculture and husbandry of animals came to be part of their life; and just as they lived for such a long time without reading and

writing, and before electricity was part of their life - they now live without right guidance.

Indeed we have not gone, in our part of the world, beyond the aphorism: "A cane is from Paradise;" and we still remember how families said to a teacher, and maybe some still say: "The flesh is yours: leave us only the bones," referring to how much corporeal disciplining of the child must be permitted.

Is it not a pity that we inspire to the child that no knowledge may be implanted without a whip or cane? Instead of conveying knowledge with love, we implant hatred: What is left in the poor schoolchild of passion for science and curiosity? Of zest for prying into the farthest secrets and depths?

This when the most exalted aspect of creation is this eagerness for knowledge - this passion that must be recreated with every new birth!

And let it be added that when all our methods impede a child's creativity and fulfilling his/her potential - we are implying that the way to reform and creativity is blocked, and the only alternative left to him/her is to turn to corruption, destruction, and chaos.

How ironical it is that people are keen to exploit the soil, the crops, and animals, to the utmost possible degree - while they impede human growth: really seeking ingenious way to make him/her desperate - which places them on the way to destruction, rather than construction.

Right guidance includes devising ways to having children set out to unveil the unknown, and handle things in new ways

of creativity: when they have this thirst for the unknown, they will be a ready soil for absorbing the ever-increasing experiences.

It is our duty to devise for the learners interesting methods of presenting sciences and branches of knowledge. This is not requesting what is undoable: it is doable. It is a challenge before human intelligence, especially the educationists. History teaches us that the waste in potential is enormous at the beginning, but, as people proceed, they are more and more economical.

The Impact of Historical Awareness on Humans

Most people grow, reach old age, and die, without having been lucky enough to awaken to the need for self-integration - not having even tasted the exhilarating sense of knowing the past history, and how people went from stage to stage, with the suffering involved in development. The opening of mind to such facts creates a sense of awe at the sanctity of life - and it is not miraculous or sorcery to come to such awareness.

The way is widely open to getting acquainted with the past, and all that used to be concealed from our eyes. By living with the past history, a human is aware of flooding light - he/she will have the pleasure of detecting the magnificent possibilities, and will wonder how we suppressed such vision from reaching us and our progeny; how we insisted on blocking the way to reaching right guidance and dealing on equal footing.

So far, we ignore history as obstinately as we resist an enemy, though it is in following up history that we may sense the splendor of God's renewed creation. Do we not still say that history is no more than so much falsehood and animosity? It is true that we have in history so much bloodshed, on occasion after occasion: but we have also the outcome, the just retribution, of the perpetrators of such deeds.

It is by further study that we come to realize that history corrects itself: how froth vanishes, and only is left behind what is beneficial to humankind.

The Qur'an's Celebration of the Right Historical Attitudes

One thing to notice in the Qur'an is that it celebrates the proper and correct attitude, even when it belongs to one person in a huge civilization; you may see how it registers the behavior of a single man in Pharaoh's family: "A believer, a man from among the people of Pharaoh who had concealed His faith;" (40:28). You may notice how Pharaoh and his followers are ignored, and this one individual is brought into the spotlight.

We have also the story of another believer, "Then there came running from the farthest part of the City, a man, saying: 'O my People! Obey the Messengers: Obey those who ask no reward of you for themselves, and who have themselves received guidance;" (36:20-21). The example of a single person is put on record, that he/she may be a model for later generations.

If Studying the Past Is Unpalatable, Then Wait!

It is true that history registers all human atrocities: but it distinguishes the froth from the beneficial - preserving the beneficial and eliminating the harmful; it distinguishes what is true from what is false: It is the domain where one may view the display of God's *sunnah* of enhancing the better and more ingenious: by reflecting on the past, one is bound to extend his/her vision into the future. Is there not a science of the future now? And how can you see the future without a store of past experience? The Qur'an challenges those who refuse to take lessons from the past to wait for the lessons of the future. For realizing what is true and what is false, the Qur'an accepts history as the reference.

History and Distinguishing the True from the False

We must not imagine that what is in our mind is the truth: truth is the outcome, the eventuality of things, the consequences, as observed in tangible terms.

People are often confused, quite bewildered at the myriad of conflicting claims of what is true - and it ends up with some denying the existence of truth, or falling into despair; but they should not really take any person's imaginings to be the truth - except in so far as their assertions are supported with results and outcome. Nobody is entitled to claim knowledge without that, and the Qur'an admonishes us, "And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge;" (17:36).

So, one's claims are either well supported with outcome, or are no more than surmises and assumptions. And for outcomes, we go to history. Even the Qur'an does that.

What a human mind contains is a huge mass of truths and illusions, correct and incorrect items, all mixed up. So, for those who seek the truth, the measure is history: it is there that truth is distinguished from falsehood. It is so as the Verse we often quote states: that froth vanishes and what is for the good of humans remains. And only history has this characteristic of sifting things, so that falsehood is discarded and what is true remains. But we must be clear here: history is not what people say and write about themselves; for people may say and assert a lot of myths and falsehood, but it is history which comes and distinguishes that from the truth.

No knowledge and no intellect exist without history: unless you refer to history, then what you have is a lot of illusion. And history boils down to the consequences, the outcome of all the disputes and conflicts.

Am I clear enough? Can people get this point?

The rule I am putting forth is so crucial that Allah has accepted this as the criterion for faith in Him, in His prophets, His Scriptures ... All this must be examined with reference to the tangible reality: the tangible reality, what things turn out to be through testing them against tangible real things, is the criterion for deciding what is true and what is false. By starting to use this measure, we shall be on the way of seeing things correctly.

The Qur'an and History

We may have simple observations behind this attention that the Qur'an gives to the ways of past peoples. From our observations of the weather we notice that there are certain temperatures within which our body can survive - that our body cannot survive above a certain degree or below a certain degree. A very simple system. But it all pays to denote that nothing but is controlled by law - and it is the duty of humans to have their observations and statistics to determine what is right and proper and what is detrimental and improper. And, as one works with God's laws, he/she glorifies the Lord, observing His creation. The biggest blunder Muslims fell in has been their ignorance of history - of the outcome of behaviors.

Being humans, like any other humans, Muslims can have correct or incorrect readings of events - but they have no way of making sure what is right without referring to God's creation. The revealed books themselves will not be the source of guidance if people skip over the examination of the *sunan*, i.e. laws, of creation, the outcome of things. Indeed, the Qur'an itself asserts that it is not guidance for everyone, without additional enlightenment, "By it He causes many to stray, and many He leads into the right path; but He does not cause to stray, except those who forsake the path. - Those who break Allah's Covenant after it is ratified, and who sunder what Allah has ordered to be joined, and do mischief on earth;" (2:26-27).

Muslims and History

It has been disappointing to me again and again to see that Muslims take history to be no more than a lot of lies and corruption and cheating - but in reality, history is the lab for testing human behavior; for sorting out what is true and what is false, what behavior brings success and what behavior brings failure.

We do of course find that people invent lies, and are most often deluded and vain about their behavior - but that is not history: history is the revealer of what honesty leads to and what falsehood leads to. But how can Muslims go without knowing anything about history, and therefore do not see the light that sweeps away darkness? It is no wonder, then, that they know nothing but lies and falsehood, and are desperate and malicious. And the way out of this despair is for some to blow things to the skies.

It all emanates from failing to see history for what it is: a temple of the Almighty, a law court which tries people, to bring them to reckoning - what mirage they had clung to and it availed them nothing, as a Verse of the Qur'an tells us, "like a mirage in sandy deserts, which the man parched with thirst mistakes for water, until when he comes up to it, he finds it to be nothing: but he finds Allah ever with him, and Allah will pay him his account;" (24:39) for there is reckoning here in this world before the Day of Judgment.

But we must keep working to have people appreciate the beauty and awe involved in history - to see Almighty's Creation in what they see. I keep hoping that people will come

to what Ibn Khaldun conceived about history when he said, "History is no more, on its surface, than the record of days and peoples ... but, on the inside, it is reasoning and analysis, it is a follow up of creation to its origins; coming to terms with the shaping of events and their causes .. a true gate to wisdom."

Does all the above reveal how the two readings of the Qur'an connect? How history as shaped by people connects to its being shaped by God?

History and the Abrahamic Argument

It is a long way before we appreciate Abraham's call to prayer at Mecca. And it happened at the time the pharaohs were building their pyramids in Egypt: The contrast is striking, for Abraham was laying the foundation for distinguishing truth from falsehood, the beneficial from the harmful. He started with asking his people, as the Qur'an tells us, "What are those images, to which you are so assiduously devoted;" (21:52), and tells us elsewhere, "And relate to them something of Abraham's story. Behold, he said to his father and his people: 'What do you worship?' They said: 'We worship idols, and we remain constantly in attendance on them.' He said: 'Do they listen to you when you call on them, or do you good or harm?' They said: 'Nay, but we found our fathers doing this;'" (26:70-74).

You will notice that the essence of their reply is that they do not discuss things on the basis of the good and harm

involved in them, but on the basis of adhering to the ways of their fathers.

It is not that the fathers were in the wrong - not utterly so. Like any other teacher, we cannot go ahead without drawing on what the previous generations left for us: without them we must go back to the caves and start from there; and without them, we must reinvent the alphabet. Our principle must be that we judge their legacy against the scale of history - and history teaches us that the froth must go away, unregretted; that only is left to remain what is beneficial to humankind.

We may not stop where the ancients stopped, for in that case, we would not go beyond spilling blood, and killing our own children. We would not rise to the level of Abraham's doctrine: for he introduced a way to going beyond offering human sacrifices.

But the point here is how to learn all there is to learn from the ancestors without having them as shackles that hamper our progress? Malek Bennabi put it like this: "I wish the loads over the fathers' backs could be buried with them - rather than having them transferred to our own backs!"

The right thing for people is to learn after offering one hero, to learn distinguishing truth from falsehood - for, if we fail to learn from advice, there will be more and more sacrifices, for God's *sunan*, laws, will go on being enforced, according to the law of the disappearance of the froth and the preservation of what is beneficial - we shall have to learn even if we wait until we give away many thousands of sacrifices. Abraham's rule was put in such a simple statement, as the Qur'an reports it: "Do they listen to you when you call on

them, or do you good or harm?" (26:73): it is the law of the beneficial versus the harmful.

The Sacred Is the Beneficial

I was once asked, "What is sacred?" and I answered, "It is the beneficial." "But is it not the Qur'an which is Sacred?" someone objected. And I replied, "Is not the Qur'an the most beneficial thing, and the best guide?"

This argument of Abraham's is the measure for distinguishing what is true and what is false, exactly as the other Verse says, "Thus Allah by parables shows forth Truth and vanity. For the scum disappears like froth cast out; while that which is for the good of mankind remains on the earth. Thus Allah sets forth parables;" (13:17).

I have no illusions about the quality of my writing: I realize that I am groping in this world, a single voice in the raging but silent world. At the same time, what I am attempting is to establish a new way of thinking, a reference for knowledge and science. And, for that purpose, I keep staring at God's revealed Book, and at the world that He created: Neither will work independently of the other.

Immediate Consequences and Deferred Consequences

Without writing, there would be no history, nor would people have gone beyond their savage phase. And, without the events of the world, the Book would have revealed none of its significance. For understanding, we need to have an eye

on the Revealed Book, and an eye on the events of history - for it is the outcome of behavior that distinguishes the right from the wrong, and truth from falsehood. If we fail to undertake this effort, then let us wait for future events, with higher and higher cost: For Allah will not feel fatigued, and will not change His law, His law which aims to have us change what is in our souls and minds.

Every human senses the immediate consequences of behavior. You see it in a baby's stretching its hand to the fire and learning not to stretch is again. But some of history's consequences take quite a long time; and when this happens, by the time people notice the result they may well have forgotten the cause. Their minds will keep the result severed from the cause, and the Qur'an warns us against severing a link in the chain from the previous link. To have the result severed from the cause leads to denying the law of causality in the world. Behaviorists, like Skinner, discuss this under the rules of delayed results versus immediate results. And Toynbee was alert to the need for studying several civilizations to reach the law of the collapse and disintegration of civilizations. We have very short cycles, at the level of electrons, and we have very long cycles - in the physical world at the level of galaxies, and at human level, at the level of civilizations.

Is it still clear that I am discussing the way of Adam's Son? How can all these concepts be necessary for understanding that way?

History proceeded very slowly at the beginning. Did not the Messenger, ﷺ, tell us that there came prophets with just one follower, and even with not one follower¹⁰?

There were the Egyptian Civilization and the Chinese Civilization, without either being aware of the other. And when people arrived into the New World, the invaders eliminated the previous civilizations, instead of studying them.

But history proceeds now at a very quick rate.

Entering the Temple of History

It should not be wondered at that I elevate history so highly, for the Qur'an itself accepts it a reference and a source of knowledge: with history open to those who can learn the lessons, there is no more need for new prophets. It is as the Qur'an describes it, "Take warning, then, O you with eyes to see;" (59:2); "There is, in their stories, instruction for men endued with understanding;" (12:111). As for those who take history lightly, nothing in the world will cry over their demise: and they will keep offering human sacrifices, and their womenfolk will keep wailing for their dead dears, until they change.

Just see the fortunes they spend on ways that cannot lead to any benefit - fortunes that could have been spent on knowledge and education, on understanding religion, and on any branch of knowledge that prepares one for the Day of

¹⁰ See *hadith* No. 4284 in Ibn Majah, Chapter on Asceticism, Section on the distinction of Muhammad's *Ummah*, narrated by Abu Said al-Khudri; and in Ahmad, No. 3:158.

Judgment, for that will be the day of reckoning, when one has to account for what they did.

The ignorant, those who will not learn the lessons, will be bankrupt on the days of reckoning, in this world and the next: they will have no way of paying back their debts. The biggest debts are not in terms of gold and silver; they are, as the Qur'an puts it, "Truly, he succeeds that purifies it [his soul], and he fails that corrupts it;" (91:9-10): that is the real bankruptcy.

No graver poverty is greater than one's ignorance of history, God's laws in history, and His Signs as observed in the destruction of people - and who, among nations, is more hostile to knowledge than us!

Our dilemma is more serious than being ignorant - for between us and knowledge there stand mountains of complexes - huge blockades that prevent us from reflection and contemplation, and linking things that God obligates us to link. The price that we need to pay is really big, but no knowledge may be gained without that: for at present we do not even see the way open before our eyes.

And, with this amount of ignorance, we cannot but think the worst about God. One would think of our condition as the one described by Noah when he said about his people, as the Qur'an reports, "And every time I have called on them, that You might forgive them, they have only thrust their fingers into their ears, covered themselves up with their garments, grown obstinate, and given themselves to arrogance;" (71:7).

The Way of Bilal and the Way of Adam's Son

I feel a great urge to penetrate to the secret of Bilal. Is he a special creation? The Prophet tells us that when he entered Paradise, he heard the shuffle of Bilal's sandals. I very much wish to sense what was in his mind when he showed that steadfastness and forbearance. I really feel that every white person, enjoying his/her affluence, needs to know Bilal. And I feel that Jalalu-d-Din al-Rumi was looking for Bilal in all his moaning, and so was Muhammad Iqbal in his striving to come close to al-Rumi. This is my feeling when I set out looking for a guide to my soul. If al-Rumi looked for Tabrizi for guide, and then found that it was his own spirit that he had been searching for, I feel I need you, Bilal, to take me by the hand.

Is this not the deepest resurrection - that we conjure up the dead persons' ideas, the enlightenment they left; the understanding and perception they attained?

And Bilal accomplished the renouncement of idols; he got over fear, and was secure inside. Is there someone who has inherited this? Bilal remains for us in the kingdom of the unseen, and we need to bring him to the kingdom of the seen!

Bilal challenged all the philosophies, with the light he bore. But the time has come for what Bilal stood for to come out into light, and be proclaimed in the world, for everyone to learn. Is it not in accordance with God's laws that Bilal did what he did? What he did cannot be impossible for others to achieve. Only the ignorant take Bilal's attitude to stem from inability to do any better by defending himself! Only those

who do not appreciate his faith wish that he suppressed his faith and not proclaimed it!

I feel that better pens than mine need to take up Bilal's experience and analyze it - to bring it within the capacity of most people.

Can the black world learn the meaning of freedom from Bilal? Will they learn the meaning of freedom from that black slave? Is not the brightest of economists he/she who sees real profit where others can see only loss? But has not Bilal seen the profit where others saw only loss? Is there a better winner than Bilal? It is the molding of the human that Bilal discovered, changing what is in the human soul - and he saved so much time and effort: that is Bilal's economy. I see the present world so focused on economy - so here is the economy Bilal can teach us!

The best economy that may be achieved is Bilal's: he saved more time and effort than any other economist; and he invested in the human, in transforming humans.

We have said much about the purpose of creation: attaining and preserving what is better and more enduring, and we can go now another step, and discover how to save time and effort in our attempt to realize what is better and more enduring.

Bilal and Changing What Is in Souls

Things often start in nature before man discovers how to control and manipulate them: This is what happened when humans found fire burning without human intervention, and,

for a long time, they just took a burning piece of wood and tried to keep up the fire burning to use it for their purposes. It was much later that man could strike fire at will, and to have his/her own decision when to strike it. And the same story with electricity. So much time was saved when humans discovered how to control this phenomenon, and subdue it and use it as suits their purposes. It is such a high degree of progress when we learn to use energies without any waste.

But what about bringing changes to the human soul? There is of course the amazing changes the human being underwent, spontaneously and over millennia, and then we deliberately convey all the accumulated change of ten thousand years to the growing child. In maybe five years, the human child absorbs the human experience of ten thousand years. But Bilal proved that the process of change can happen at any stage of life.

I feel I have something about change which has not been discussed before. The Almighty teaches us in the Qur'an, "And He has subjected to you, as from Him, all that is in the heavens and on earth: behold, in that are Signs indeed for those who reflect;" (45:13). This feeling is similar to what Muhammad Iqbal said in a couplet:

No human before me has ever divulged this secret;
No jeweler has ever threaded pearls like me.

What is going round in my mind is similar to the human experience when people brought fire under their control, and struck or extinguished it at will to serve their purposes. And what I am attempting now is to have others, to have many

people, be infected my healthy case: if people get infected with physical diseases, they can be infected with both mental diseases and mental health. All this is acting on God's laws, or *sunan* as the Qur'an puts it.

Despair and Disbelief

It has been a main line of our discussion that creation increases, and that the power of construction has ascendance over the power of destruction. The Qur'an itself tells us that once the truth enters, falsehood disappears, "And say: 'Truth has arrived, and Falsehood perished: for Falsehood is, by its very nature, bound to perish'" (17:81) and, "Say: 'The Truth has arrived, and Falsehood neither creates anything new, nor restores anything,'" (34:49). It is not the law that falsehood comes and truth disappears.

Let us imagine the distance between the two convictions, and their impact on the human; let us imagine how blessing it is to believe, with all our hearts, that once truth enters, falsehood disappears. It is not the same as believing that falsehood is destined to remain forever. From an Islamic perspective, it is the difference between belief and disbelief, between an optimistic attitude and a pessimistic one. And this is what we find in the Qur'an, "Truly, no one despairs of Allah's soothing Mercy, except those who have no faith" (12:87) and, "And who despairs of the mercy of his Lord, but such as go astray?" (15:56).

I do not say that it is an easy condition, this of viewing the world from an optimistic perspective; but the world was

designed like this, from the day the first living creature was created, and up to the human, as the Qur'an tells us, "Then We made the sperm into a clot of congealed blood; then of that clot We made a fetus lump; then We made out of that lump bones and clothed the bones with flesh: then We developed out of it another and different creature: So blessed be Allah, the Best to create!" (23:14). Please do not just say, "I agree to this point," and move on: stop and ponder how you find that reflected in history.

See how one achievement leads to the next, and how hope leads to more hope: this is not taking place haphazardly, but is a reflection of historical progress, a fact of creation.

Look well at the face of the hopeless, and you will see a tragic face, and you will see frustration and a lack-luster look. See how this contrasts with the look of the hopeful, and observe the bright and sparkling eyes.

And we see something else in life: how the desperate sometimes find no outlet but through explosions; instead of saving themselves and others, the only alternative they can think of is destroying themselves together with others.

Can we see the difference between these two individuals? Can we implant it in the mind of the desperate that change does not come through miracles and supernatural events: that it all comes according to laws? Indeed, by merely perceiving the possibility of a solution, even before the solution comes within sight, the human spirit will revive - you will see the human go ahead in all resolution, in a way that nothing may impede him/her.

It is for conveying such insight that the prophets came. It may be observed that the kind of change they called for was quiet and steady - for this is what you expect when progress is based on genuine insight and enlightenment. Contrast that again with the desperate, lurking in the dark, and intent on destruction, for no positive sentiment attaches him to the other.

I do not expect my words to bring about full dawn, but I work to provide the Islamic work with some enlightenment, and to reveal a way that is low in cost, high in output: it saves time and effort, and improves productivity. But much effort will be needed to start our journey on that road.

Two men set me on this road, each in his own way: Muhammad Iqbal and Malek Bennabi. Iqbal expressed it in his poetic style when he said:

"I tear my clothes in my frenzy that you get it, but you don't ...

"I do not blame you - it is just that my madness is not blazing hotly enough."

But truth will come, and falsehood will disappear: it will dwindle until no life is left in it.

It is something like a new explosion that I look for; but not that explosion which brings death and destruction - it is rather like the clean energy that the world is seeking.

Madness and Magic Versus Mercy

When Jalal-ul-d-Din al-Rumi composed his *Mathnawi*, he was involved in self-talk; so were Muhammad Iqbal and

Malek Bennabi - when they set out in search of an issue, though, in the eyes of people, their search is branded as madness. And I feel something like this, in a condition that will be branded as madness. Were not the prophets charged with madness and magic? They were not mad nor magicians, for they did not strive to destroy, as mad people do; nor did they seek to dominate people's minds in a state of frenzy. They were sent as mercy, as the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "I am mercy given to humankind;" ¹¹ which is a paraphrase of the Verse of the Qur'an, "We sent you not, but as a Mercy for all creatures;" (21:107) and mind you: he was mercy for mankind, both those who believed and those who did not believe. And mercy is development, a saving of effort and time; and ensuring a higher yield. The whole universe is created according to the principle of mercy: the better we are acquainted with the law of the universe, the closer we are to mercy and to the quest of the prophets - for prophets call to faith in Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful, the Lord whose Mercy has ascendance over His Wrath.

But can we see this mercy in the universe?

You may walk in the world and watch this mercy that permeates it: the law of life is based on mercy, and the animals' development and care for each other is based on mercy; and motherhood is an embodiment of mercy and compassion - never of toughness and rudeness.

As they themselves declared, the prophets came not to put shackles on humans, but to remove shackles. And we are

¹¹ A fairly authentic hadith, reported by al-Hakem, No. 1/35; by al-Quda'i, in his *Musnad al-Shihab*, No. 1160; and al-Tabarani in his *al-Saghir*, No. 1/95.

obligated to inherit the way of the prophets: we are bound to remove people's shackles and chains, that exist on people's necks, ankles and hands. We are there to spread mercy, to everyone and everywhere, to have mankind come to a state where there are no losers.

The Prophets and Mercy

Is it clear how the prophets' message was one of mercy, and it was transformed at our hands into a message of suffering?

This is what justifies my claim, that I keep repeating, that the time of the prophets, meaning the time when people live by the prophets' message, has not come yet. They came, called for a type of life which was not in existence as an actual fact, and then they went away. But their prediction of how life would be must be realized. Indeed, the world proceeds towards that stage of life whether it wishes it or not: did not the Qur'an always predict that truth must come and have ascendance? That, despite people's corruption, good things were bound to come? And even if our generation declines to uphold it, there will come different people who do?

It can be seen everywhere how the prophets' message is not yet a fact of our life: Do we not compete in doing evil instead of competing in doing what is good? Do we not compete for having privileges each for themselves? But their message is bound to have ascendance, for that is God's Message, and God will have His Doctrine realized and be dominant over all doctrines.

At present, instead of enhancing bringing people together, we sever relations and work to see people estranged. And what about us, we Muslims? Are we not the first to bring pain to each other? Do we not fear each other more than any enemy? Let us think a little of the Gulf War.

Some of the Lessons of the Gulf War

The Gulf War is such a prominent event in our life - it indeed stands apart as a tragedy that stunned people, a major blow that left us too dazed to express our reaction. In a word, it was the element that brought out all our failing to surface - it was a chronic, drawn-out disease inside us that the Gulf War just brought out before our vision.

All the malice and hatred inside were brought out, vented on that war. No room for mercy, or relations, or common lineage, were remembered in that war. It was really a severing of any family relations.

It was the antithesis of the prophets' message. For the prophets taught mercy, and here all mercy was forgotten.

It was true of us what this Verse of the Qur'an describes, "Those who behave arrogantly on the earth in defiance of right - I will turn away from My Signs: Even if they see all the Signs, they will not believe in them; and if they see the way of right guidance, they will not adopt it as the way; but if they see the way of misguidance, that is the way they will adopt. For they have rejected Our Signs, and failed to take warning from them;" (7:146).

Can we learn from that tragedy, as the Qur'an urges us to do, "Isn't there among you a single right-minded man?" (11:78)? Do we have some right-mindedness, enough to open our eyes and let us learn? Is right-mindedness distinguished among us from corruption?

The Two Readings and Turning Away from Signs

Let us reflect on the Verse we have quoted, "Those who behave arrogantly on the earth in defiance of right - I will turn away from My Signs;" (7:146). How does it happen, that God turns away some people from His Verses? How is a human turned away from seeing what is before his/her eyes?

Let us refer to the two readings of the Qur'an. Yes, God does turn away some people, but what has a human done to be turned away from signs before his/her eyes?

God tells us that it is He who causes one to laugh or cry, "That it is He Who grants laughter and tears;" (53:43), but what has a human done to be brought to laugh or cry? What has come over the mind in that case? What is the intellectual event behind the physical event? What is the intellectual action behind mocking God's Signs?

The Intellectual Disease and the Intellectual Germs

We had a chronic disease, and we tried to dispose of it by resorting to a more severe and crushing disease. Is there no way of treating the patient without having to kill him/her?

The problem with us is that we cling tightly to the disease; we really sanctify it.

But when we insist there is no way of disposing of the disease except by disposing of the patient, then we are condemning all of us to death - this is so as long as we cannot distinguish the sick from his sickness. And is it not true that we all bear the same germs?

Or we hold on to the disease as desperately as we defend the patient. They must stay together or go together! But we need to set apart the germ, to detect the disease which overwhelms the intellect: and such diseases are more elusive and mysterious than physical diseases.

Michael Foucault represents this germ like this: "I am not where you search for me; I am here, laughing at you." Truth is not easy to pinpoint!

The germ plays the part of Satan, who is completely invisible, and we see all his mischief without locating him, as the Verse of the Qur'an says, "for he and his tribe watch you from a position where you cannot see them;" (7:27).

There was a group of people, exorcists, who conjured up Devils, and the intellectuals of our age may mock such group, and mock the way they treated persons with psychological disorders. But yet, our intellectuals, with degrees from modern universities are not doing better: yes, we have disposed of some words related to Satan, but we are not more enlightened than our predecessors. Iqbal says of the modern elite, "Satan has taken a long vacation, for the modern intellectuals do his work in treating demonically possessed persons."

While the world has gone a long way in some areas, it is not in how people should be treated. Skinner has something interesting about this: "Had Aristotle, Plato, and Galen been resurrected today, they would not understand one page of modern mathematics, biology, or physical diseases and treatments - except maybe after great effort and pondering. But had Socrates or Diogenes been resurrected and tried to read our books on politics, ethics, and international law, they would have no difficulty in going through them - they would not notice any advance there over the ancient way of understanding."

It is not that topics like ethics and international law are too abstruse to comprehend. It is rather that people adopt an erroneous approach - although persons like Skinner did show advance in that sphere. We may say that some modern philosophers do touch on new areas - not that they are nearly close to the prophets' method. In fact, when something occurs to them that is similar to the teaching of the prophets, they say: "No, that must be madness!"

CHAPTER FOUR

ALTRUISM AND THE GREAT MADNESS

"The psycho-analyst's ability to get to the core of mental disorders," Foucault writes, "is quite limited. Psycho-analysis can deal with some types of 'madness', but not the 'Great Madness.'" And from following up what Foucault has to say, we find that he hints to a kind of altruism, inaccessible to intellectuality and science. He finds that only some poets, and he mentions some names, have broken free from this colossal prison.

Foucault goes on to wonder if this altruism is a real breakthrough in Western culture. He concludes that it represents a genuine experience, unprecedented in history.

This ontological approach does not seem to promise any development, and so progressive philosophers are seeking other ways to develop this concept.

Foucault proves to be in a very small minority of thinkers who have detected this 'Great Madness'; and he goes on to find that related to God¹².

One thing to notice about Foucault's statement is that, in his discussion of the intellectual disease and the physical disease, he points out that the word 'disease' should not mislead us, for we think of the physiological basis of a condition like hysteria, but it is not so when you speak of a disease that afflicts the whole world. This is what he calls the 'Great Madness'.

And I say let us analyze this *hadith*, or Tradition, of the Prophet's, ﷺ, when he says, addressing Abu Tharr: "Break your bow, and cut its string, and hit with your sword at a rock;"¹³. It is an authentic *hadith*, as far as the science of weighing Traditions goes, but it is 'madness' on the level of the Islamic, and the world's, intellectual level, and a great madness really. Have not Muslims treated this *hadith* as non-existent? Have they not treated it as incompatible with the superior status they assign to the Prophet?

I am discussing here the psychological condition for accepting the Messenger's, peace be upon him, Traditions; how the many reporters of *hadith* and commentators never turned to this *hadith* with some attention - I should really discuss the mental conditions under which we receive discourses; what is behind our denouncement of traditions, or

¹² Michael Foucault: *A Philosophical Trip*. 17-18

¹³ An authentic *hadith*, reported by al-Tirmithi, in Chapter 33, on Turmoil, *hadith* No. 2205; and by Abu Dawud, in the Chapter on Turmoil, Section on abstaining from participating in a turmoil, *hadith* No. 4259.

any discourse. It is worthy of discussion, this aspect, but so cryptic and hard to trace.

Another thing to notice about Foucault's piece is his saying that altruism seems outside the discussion of science or intellectual analysis. Such considerations have occupied me for a long time, and I devoted a whole book, *Read*, to that; I said there: "The sense of intellect and science as described by both Muslims and Westerners is not what I find in the Qur'an;" and I proceeded to make an attempt to redefine intellect and science.

It was when I was better acquainted with history and its *sunan* that I realized it was history which distinguished the beneficial from the harmful, that it was history which disposed of the froth and let in the earth what is beneficial to people.

It is easy to overlook this way of judging the events of history - the method of examining events through the perspective of their consequences, as one learns from the Verses, "he said to his father and his people: 'What do you worship?' They said: 'We worship idols, and we remain constantly in attendance on them.' He said: 'Do they listen to you when you call on them, or do you good or harm?'" (26:71-73): Long have people ignored this straightforward rule, and still ignore it.

Short-Range and Long-Range Consequences

The theories of conditioning in learning are a good application of the outcome of behavior, and the reinforcement

of outcome. However, immediate outcome is not the same as delayed outcome: reinforcement becomes harder the more delayed the reward or punishment come. People are often impatient: they do not have the patience to wait for delayed results. It is such a common feature of humans - their preference for immediate results; waiting for long-range consequences requires a kind of awareness that impatient persons do not like. Long ago, the literary artist Ibnul-Muqaffa' observed that one sign of a mature mind is this foresight, willingness to wait for better results. We all wish for what is good for us, what reinforces our attitudes and is advantageous to us, and we detest what is injurious to us and has a negative result on us - the difference, and the merit that better minds have, is accepting a longer wait for a better outcome.

Foucault and History

Foucault does accept the principle of a pragmatic view of history, though not positively enough. He did have his share of nihilism, but only moderately so, not more than the average person in the modern culture. It benefited him, when he got involved in history, that he declared a pragmatic attitude to history. And, as his intellectual biographer observes, when all other methods fail him, he holds to the only method left for him, analyzing history from a pragmatic perspective."¹⁴

¹⁴ See *Foucault: A Philosophical Process*, pp. 110-111.

That Foucault adopts a pragmatic reading of history, with some diffidence, is because he had not got rid of Nietzsche's view of history as no more than a pack of base hostilities, and forced interpretations, that conceal the most despicable of purposes - and that God Himself (or Truth) is the most ancient of our lies.

Such strong language, as seen in representing history as no more than a pack of lies, seems to have dominance over many students of history, who are enchanted by such language, in a way that robs them of seeing history as a scientific endeavor: This group are naturally unable to distinguish right from wrong, the beneficial from the harmful. Even Foucault has not dared to see the importance of history: not that it is the really single reference for getting to truth or getting close to truth. He does adopt, in all diffidence, a pragmatic approach to history - maybe because the word 'pragmatic' is already condemned, for people confuse it with opportunism and selfish self-seeking. Well, yes, it can mean that, for much of history was governed by short-range motives, immediate benefits: but the history of faith must be above that, above immediate and selfish benefits. But it is beneficial when what is beneficial is described in the Qur'an as that which will stay when the transitory and ephemeral goes. It must be shown that the most beneficial conception of God will stay and endure - this is because your conception of God is the basis for the outcome of your endeavor; and when the former is faulty, the outcome will be unsatisfactory, and the Qur'an alerts us to that, as in: "But this thought of yours which you entertained concerning your Lord, has brought you

to destruction, and now you have become of those utterly lost!" (41:23) and, "another band was stirred to anxiety by their own feelings, moved by wrong suspicions of Allah - suspicions due to ignorance;" (3:154).

The Law of the Better and More Enduring

You may see how the sacred is mixed up with the profane, and how we view the beneficial as contaminated - while the more beneficial is what is destined to stay in the earth, and the less beneficial must be abrogated, and must disappear as froth: this is Allah's law. And this applies even at the level of my words - once a better and more beneficial material is introduced, my writing must be displaced with the better material. And if both attempts are equally beneficial, then both will remain.

Iqbal captured the principle clearly in his book *A Revival of Religious Thought*, when he was searching for the criterion for judging any particular culture or religion, and he set the criterion as being the pattern of human that the particular culture or religion produces, and the amount of good that he/she can produce.

I choose to adhere to this - it is the way of the prophets; and I believe that people will have to accept it, maybe they will be forced to accept it.

So far, I have discussed the topic from a historical perspective: what is more beneficial and enduring. But what about the verdict in a special perspective?

I hope it is clear that what is meant in this book, when we speak of the beneficial, is not what brings benefit to just one person, one family, or one group - when its benefit is in relation to a sector of humanity, it will benefit some and bring harm to the majority. Viewing benefit as confined to a group or sector is at the root of the corruption of religions, cultures, civilizations, and the world in general.

Justice and Equality in Law

The concepts and laws we are putting forward must be elaborated and clarified - a law is not a law unless it applies equally to all. Indeed, for people to accept a law, the key point is not how just it is, but how common. People may well acquiesce in to a law no matter how apparently cruel; but they do not endure it or respect it if some individuals are exempted from it - which is what we learn from a Tradition of the Prophet's, "Those before you perished when they let a noble person who committed an act of theft get away with it, but applied the penal law when the thief was weak."¹⁵ It is not just the cause of the perdition of previous civilizations, but the present ones, and those of the future!

Take for instance the Right of Veto in the highest organization of the world: it will bring that organization to collapse. It is built on the brink of a cliff, as long as it gives privilege to some nations and states; as long as it does not recognize the justice that applies to all nations and groups, as

¹⁵ Reported by al-Bukhari.

the Qur'an teaches us, "when you judge between man and man, that you judge with justice;" (4:58).

Disbelief and polytheism boil down to this: inequality among people. In the same way as Foucault took the only right solution to be a pragmatic approach, some Muslim scholars were touching on the same points when they declared that a just state survives even when it is not Muslim - they did perceive, partially at least, the prophets' call and the trend of history - that that is the way to putting human capacities to the best use, and to obtain the best yield.

It is unfortunate that the word 'pragmatism' is abused, and we must endeavor to put things right. The same principle can do all the good if perceived correctly, and can be most injurious if perceived incorrectly.

Transitory Good and Enduring Good

When a thief steals, he/she is seeking what is beneficial for himself/herself - but it is the immediate good and instant pleasure that he/she seeks. His/her mind does not extend to long-range consequences and delayed outcome: Indeed, should something of this sort pass through his/her mind, they would push it aside from their attention. But this person, and all individuals and groups, all civilizations and religions, which do not work for what is more beneficial and enduring, will perish. And it is such a common phenomenon that peoples and civilizations do not perceive this principle. It is something like saying: 'Après nous, le déluge'.

It is such an easy, but also hard, thing to reflect on history - it is easy to miss the outcome of historical events, for, being more related to peoples, it takes sometimes such a long time to come to surface. The fathers behave in a certain way, and the children reap the consequences. It is not strange when Ibn Khaldun said that history seemed, superficially, not more than a chronicling of the occurrences of religions and states, while, at a deeper level it is the stuff of much contemplation and analysis and explanation. How superior this is to Nietzsche's viewing history as a pack of lies, all baseness and despicable stuff. Ibn Khaldun does merit what Toynbee said of his understanding of history: "It is the greatest work of its kind engendered by any mind at any time or any place."

I look at history as a temple, where those who realize its value bow down in reverence! Is it not the reference the Qur'an accepts, the prophets used to support their call? History is our way to elevating humans: We may say this with emphasis since we bear in our memory the many acts of terrorism since the events at the Holy Mosque of Mecca, at the outset of the fifteenth hijra era, the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center, and the list is long.

Historical Knowledge and Vaccination Against Mischief

I view those events differently from how the majority view them. We hear talk of the developing, or backward, countries vaccinating their children against polio and other diseases which used to kill the children or made them

handicapped for life; and that the spread of vaccination has led to a retreat of bacteria and disease - in such a way that they have announced a challenge that the smallpox bacterium existed now only in labs; and they offered a prize to anyone who finds it outside labs. But we remember that not long ago we saw persons with the pustules of smallpox on their faces.

I like to comment on this by saying that those who did those explosions, and still do - Americans, Japanese, Muslims, or whatever, would not have done the explosions if they were vaccinated with historical knowledge, and with a clear and well-connected chain of healthy events.

I am quite positive about this: historical awareness is our means to getting over mischief and wreaking havoc and witnessing bloodshed in the earth - to have enough historical awareness will not leave groups and bands like the Oklahoma Korash group, the Absolute Truth Group which exploded the poison bombs of Japan, the group who raided the Holy Mosque of Mecca, or those who exploded the Reza Shrine of Mashhad - all of these would not have done their terrorist attacks if they had been provided with historical awareness. I am saying that the historical awareness of the progress of mankind is the preventive vaccine against mischief and bloodshed - not just for the young persons who explode bombs and bomb cars in metropolises, but for the big leaders, international and national, who made decisions about starting wars - in the Gulf, Vietnam, Algeria, and all the colonialist and liberating wars: in all these cases, the decision to fight has been based on a lack of historical awareness.

H.G. Wells, in his *Outline of World History*, mentions the meeting of leaders after the First World War, and he describes them as being naïve and ignorant of history - that the boxes of science and history were locked to them.

I am not a historian, but I have read some world histories, and this enabled me to see the world differently.

The Qur'an itself asserts that the past peoples had not risen to the required awareness, and so they fell, one after the other, prey to destruction, as a result for their failure to learn from the events of history.

Iqbal quotes, in his book *Revival of Religious Thought*, examples from the Qur'an related to the conduct of previous peoples, and their outcome, and an exhortation to reflect on that - examples like, "Verily, in this is a Sign: but most of them do not believe;" (26:8) "Never did We destroy a population, but had its warners - by way of reminder, and We are never unjust;" (26:208-209) "Such were the towns whose story We relate to you: there came indeed to them their messengers with clear Signs: but they would not believe what they had rejected before. Thus does Allah seal up the hearts of those who reject Faith. Most of the men We did not find true to their covenant: but most of them We found rebellious and disobedient. Then after them We sent Moses with Our Signs;" (7:101-103) "Thus do We explain the Signs in detail; and perchance they may turn to Us;" (7:174) "We have explained in detail in this Qur'an, for the benefit of mankind, every kind of similitude: but man is, in most things, contentious. And what is there to keep back men from believing, now that guidance has come to them, nor from

praying for forgiveness from their Lord, but that they ask that the way of the ancients be repeated with them, or the Wrath be brought to them face to face;" (18:54-55) "Thus were the populations We destroyed when they committed iniquities: but We fixed an appointed time for their destruction;" (18:59).

The Qur'an lists historical specimens, and then gives the law which applies to those specimens: it affirms people's duty of learning lessons, and taking the right measures to ward off the committing of the same mistakes - all of the problems that prevent peoples from linking causes to results.

The Obscurity or Concealment of Delayed Consequences

People find it easy to put off their mind the delayed outcome of behaviors - a thief does not at all like to face what his behavior may lead to, nor its effect on society. In the same way, those who raid against weaker segments of society and reap some gain have their way of drawing reinforcement for extorting others' possessions; and they certainly disregard the effect of their behavior on establishing the habit of robbing and extortion: they keep careful to avoid recalling that it will eventually lead to their destruction.

We may take the colonizers as an instance in point: they did gain benefits which they enjoyed - and their immediate gain blinded them to the delayed impact of their aggression: their impeding the age of reform, and their blocking the elimination of mischief in the earth.

It have quoted above how Foucault says that the way things happen seems to strongly indicate that there are powers which are keen on concealing the truth through the manipulation and distortion of words and thought. There is, he adds, within his own society, and all societies, a silent dread of unravelling events.

So, what is that silent dread which blocks people's way to coming to terms with the facts of history? It is a deep and powerful scare of losing immediate benefits: and that stands in the way of considering the long-range consequences.

It is a deep scare of facing events which will reveal their short-sightedness. The elites of the world are so keen on warding off, with all their might, the day when the Veto Right is discarded, and all people are deemed as equal. The big powers prefer to enjoy the short-term benefits, and prefer to keep their eyes shut to the approaching demise, and the corruption that spreads everywhere in the world - corruption which people do not realize that a better command of history can overcome.

They do not take into consideration the approaching upheavals, which will do away with the immediate gain, and will, in their stride, bring the wrong-doers lots of curses from the coming days and rising generations, as the Qur'an puts it, "He will go before his people on the Day of Judgment and lead them into the Fire: but woeful indeed will be the place to which they are led! And they are followed by a curse **in this life and on the Day of Judgment**: and woeful is the gift which shall be given to them! These are some of the stories of communities which We relate to you: of them some are

standing, and some have been mown down by the sickle of time. It was not We that wronged them: they wronged their own souls: the deities, other than Allah, whom they invoked, profited them no whit when there issued the decree of your Lord: nor did they add anything to their lot but perdition! Such is the chastisement of your Lord when He chastises communities in the midst of their wrong: grievous, indeed, and severe is His chastisement. In that is a Sign for those who fear the Penalty of the Hereafter: that is a Day for which mankind will be gathered together: that will be a Day of Testimony;" (11:98-103).

Is there not enough reason for us to awaken and link results to their causes? Or we take history to be void of any significance? The world is waiting for us to exploit it through its laws, but shall we rise?

Children and Fathers

It is strange how we are dealing with history! We keep boasting of the history of our fathers: But what about the legacy we are leaving for our children? Will they raise their heads at remembering our achievements? Or will they bend their heads down with the memory of our stupidity? I am not trying to inspire anyone with despair - we have stumbled long, but why not learn our lesson, and stop repeating the same mistakes?

We read in Kalila and Dimna¹⁶ that when the philosopher Bedba was warned by his students against King Debsheem's wrath if he gave him advice, he said: "I am afraid that it will go down in history that the philosopher Bedba was a contemporary of Debsheem, and failed to do his duty of giving him advice and guidance." Bedba was alert to his ethical responsibility even before the scientific knowledge of history, the historical sense, was there.

And what about us? How ingenious our discourse must be to have the right impact on the rising generations!

Nay, You Men, But You Love the Fleeting Life, and Leave Alone the Hereafter

We did talk of the young people who explode places in different parts of the world, and we did talk of world leaders who wage wars: both display a dark state of the self, unilluminated by an awareness of the consequences of events. But what about the intellectuals who live outside history and geography? Do they have some more beneficial alternatives? Or they still live on happy and unhappy recollections? I find them to still cling to short-range aims, love of the fleeting life, as the Qur'an calls it, and they are heedless of the end of things.

I think of them, bearing in mind Verses like, "Nay, you men! But you love the fleeting life, and leave alone the Hereafter;" (75:20-21) and "As to these, they love the fleeting

¹⁶ A collection of fables translated into Arabic by Ibn al Muqaffa', via Pahlavi, from the Indian original, *Pancatantra*.

life, and put away behind them a Day that will be hard;" (76:27).

When we talk of the Last Day, we confine our conception of it to the Day of Resurrection - which is coming; but there is the day of reckoning of this world, which must not be forgotten. But there is in the world the beginning of long-range studies of history.

We Are Still Living an Early Stage

When Malek Bennabi discussed in his book *The Afro-Asian Phenomenon* the phenomenon of colonialism, he said that when some philosophers and churchmen condemned colonialism and the colonial practices, the interested party was able to disregard all such condemnation as long as it did not touch their immediate interests. But Bennabi turned to another kind of condemnation: some economists asserted that the benefits gained through piracy, robbing and extortion, could have been gained, and more could have been gained, in another style, less costly and more humane: the economic analyses were indicating that the international and national output could be increased, for all parties, through a new set of relations that were more humane.

I know I belong to the developing world, where information is hard to obtain, but I believe that studies of this kind have come into being, in the minds of some individuals. Like a new embryo, it is only felt by those individuals, in the way the embryo is first felt by its mother, before anyone has

suspected its existence. And yet, these studies will come out into light, and everybody will admit their existence.

And it is these historical and statistical studies that will overturn all the perspectives.

For the time being, let me inquire for what reason does the Qur'an insist on repeating the story of Moses and Pharaoh everywhere? When the Qur'an says, for instance, "Such were the towns whose story We thus relate to you: there came indeed to them their messengers with clear Signs: but they would not believe what they had rejected before. Thus does Allah seal up the hearts of those who reject Faith. Most of the men We did not find true to their covenant: but most of them We found rebellious and disobedient;" (7:101-102) what do these words allude to? What long chain of events do they condense?

Some prophets and workers in God's Cause died without winning even one proselyte. Did not the Prophet, ﷺ, say of his companion Abu Tharr, "May Allah have mercy on Abu Tharr - he lives alone, dies alone, and will be resurrected alone on the Day of Resurrection"¹⁷?

Abu Tharr in History

Let me turn to Abu Tharr, in the same way as I turned to Bilal. What is this about his loneliness? It is curious to think what kept Abu Tharr absent from notice for many centuries, and what brings him back to the circle of light. Nothing

¹⁷ Reported by al-Hakem, who rated it as 'authentic'; al-Thahabi asserted that the Companion's name in the chain of reporters was missing.

indeed is completely erased from history, which may be gleaned from a Verse of the Qur'an, "And if there be no more than the weight of a mustard seed, We will bring it to account: and enough are We to take account;" (21:47).

But you see at the same time how culture controls history, and how both individual and the community are mostly captives of the culture - in a way that the solid evidence is passed by, and books are neglected, under the influence of culture.

Our best example is the sun, the glaring example for the people's proneness to fall into the grossest mistake: For how many centuries, and millennia, people held to an erroneous idea, that the sun orbited the earth; and it was quite recently that they awoke to the fact that they were in the wrong. Is there something clearer than the sun? And then, it was about the sun that people held on to an erroneous idea, and for such a long time. It was with a resounding revelation that the astronomical fact was revealed and took root, and it paved the way for more discoveries, and in many sectors.

But we are here concerned with people's conception, and with the genesis of understanding and consciousness; the thinking people have not reached a definite answer concerning this. How exactly does understanding take place? Should we give credence to what the mind understands?

Philosophy has not reached this juncture: human understanding, and the power that it engenders.

The Problem of Understanding

This is obviously not the same as understanding the sun's or the electron's movements: for there is awareness; humans understand, consciously or subconsciously, and the result of thinking settles in the soul. It is not an easy thing to see how things come to settle in the soul. Does the newborn have any understanding?

The Qur'an tells us, "It is He Who brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers when you knew nothing: and He gave you hearing and sight and intelligence and affections: that you may give thanks to Allah;" (16:78).

Though people have doubts and are skeptic about the genesis of the human dilemma, it boils down to this - for the moment people fail to understand, they abandon the straight path.

And it has been asserted, and let me say it again, that faith in something does not guarantee its truth.

We have seen that what was in the minds of people concerning the sun does not prove its truth. We should be clear that what we believe can be mistaken: the evidence for something is not in the mind or the heart: not in my mind nor in your mind. It is outside our minds. It is in the outcome of what we take to be true.

Galileo did not have the evidence in his mind - indeed he had to reject his understanding. But the evidence was there: in the earth and in the sky.

In fact, the sun and the earth did not care for what was in Galileo's mind, nor for what he believed to be true: they went

their way. When people have fallacies concerning things, the world does not care for their fallacies: it just goes on according to its laws. Had the world acted upon what people believed, it would have been in great chaos. It is we, humans, who are at last forced to change our understanding to be closer to the truth of the sun, earth, and the moon.

I feel confident enough to assert that people have got it wrong, all along, and that it is the prophets' assertions which represent the correct conception. They did introduce a new understanding of things, but people did not digest the prophets' call, and their legacy to humankind.

And I am claiming that I can revive this call, and reintroduce it into the world.

Did not people hold on to an idea that was opposite to the truth about the sun and earth? Well, and now I say that we are mistaken about the prophets and the Divine Books - and the evidence for our mistaken comprehension is not in our brains, but in the earth, in the actual state of things, in the outcomes.

The evidence for the truth is not in my assertions, or yours; the Qur'an teaches us to say, "it is either we or you are on right guidance or in manifest error;" (34:24). Indeed, both of us can be utterly in the wrong. God does not heed what is in our minds, nor does the Qur'an, or the Prophet, for, as the Qur'an reminds us, "If the Truth had been in accord with their desires, truly the heavens and the earth, and all beings therein would have been in confusion and corruption" (23:71).

The Intellectual Evidence and the Tangible Evidence

Can you imagine how huge the difference is, when you shift the place of evidence, from the mind to the tangible existence? It is a major shift: it is changing what is in the soul, a change in understanding, in the mental images. The change is in the minds, and not in God's laws, the *sunan* of the world, or in history: the fact remains what the Qur'an teaches us, "By the soul, and the proportion and order given to it; and its enlightenment as to its wrong and right - Truly he succeeds that purifies it, and he fails that corrupts it;" (91:7-10).

This is not a change in laws, or *sunan*, for God's *sunan* are not amenable to change, as the Qur'an tells us, "But no change will you find in Allah's *sunnah*: no turning off will you find in Allah's *sunnah*;" (35:43). It is when we have understood a law that we can turn it to account - and it is our succeeding in manipulating something that is the proof of the correctness of our understanding it. When the result turns out to be right and positive, we have given the proof of our possessing knowledge, of the correctness of our comprehension - not only of that tangible situation, but of God's Book and the Messenger's Traditions.

Science and knowledge are not an all-or-nothing thing; they are for ever subject to increase, as one understands from this Verse of the Qur'an: "but say: 'O my Lord! advance me in knowledge;" (20:114). This indicates that we do not learn meanings from words, but it is the meanings that define words.

With our present understanding, we are not followers of the Messenger, peace be upon him - not that we are not doing our best in talking of him and giving him reverence: we are doing that, but what we hold in our souls is not what he taught.

Our Misunderstanding of the Messenger

Our attitude towards the Messenger, peace be upon him, has changed with the change of the image we have shaped of him. And when we assume it is certain persons who are behind our failure, we are again mistaken - for how often have we changed certain responsible figures, but the corruption was still there!

It is not what we speak of that counts: it is that we have ignored certain teachings of the Messenger's - it is really in that he did leave certain teachings which we do not uphold, and assume that it is impossible for him to have said such things. And, even when we do admit the authenticity of those teachings, we evade them by asserting that the teachings were appropriate for his time, but not for our present time. It is in this context that we must comprehend the following Verse of the Qur'an: "Or do they not recognize their Messenger, that they deny him?" (23:69).

We really both know the Messenger and do not know him: We know him, but we misunderstand his teachings: and we are outraged at the mere mention that the Messenger, peace be upon him, could have uttered certain teachings.

But there is a sure way of making people understand. For history will inflict its penalty, and that is a sure way of having

knowledge pass through the minds - and the Qur'an often mentions this fact: "Until, when we seize in Punishment those of them who received the good things of this world, behold, they will groan in supplication;" (23:64) "Don't you see how your Lord dealt with the Companions of the Elephant? Did He not make their treacherous plan go astray? And He sent against them flights of Birds, striking them with stones of baked clay, then He made them like an empty field of stalks and straw, of which the corn has been eaten up;" (105:1-5) and "Don't you see how your Lord dealt with the 'Ad people, - of the city of Iram, with lofty pillars, the like of which were not produced in all the land? And with the Thamud people, who cut out huge rocks in the valley? And with Pharaoh, Lord of the Stakes? All these transgressed beyond bounds in the lands, and heaped therein mischief on mischief. Therefore your Lord poured on them a scourge of diverse chastisements: For you Lord is as a Guardian on a watch-tower;" (89:6-14).

Indications and Consequences of Suffering

For every lack of understanding, there is punishment: and suffering follows upon misunderstanding: suffering, loss, humiliation, and the like.

Such suffering, in its various forms, serves a purpose: it is designed to induce people to reconsider things, to examine the concepts they take to be sacred: the certainties are shaken, together with some illusions and superstitions - and illusions are illusions no matter how we change their designations, and no matter how we cite *hadiths*, i.e. Traditions of the Prophet,

and testimonies from the distinguished scholars of the *Ummah*: they will vanish under the whips of history; and they will not be regretted when they vanish. Do not feel scared, nor worried for the facts from God and His Messenger: It is only the erroneous that will vanish, and the Truth of God and His Messenger will come out intact, a Message of light, peace and goodness.

When God sends His messengers, He commands them to give people good tidings and warnings, and then history comes with its lashes, as a Verse of the Qur'an states, "But how terrible was My Penalty and My Warning;" (54:16). So, shall we heed?

Self-Analysis and Review

We must learn to be flexible in our understanding, and in the notions we hold to be true. It is vital that we acquire this ability of reviewing our concepts, never to hold our understanding as sacred. Were people not mistaken about the clearest thing in existence, the sun? so let us be alert to correcting our conclusions, by referring to history and its events.

Do we not review our information, and check for some mistake, if somebody points to a way as being the right way, then it proves not to convey to our destination?

And we know, and have no doubt, that we are not reaching our destination; there is some mistake. Should we not seek some new interpretation of things other than we have

been referring to so far? This is at least what I am trying to do.

I know that we have been mistaken about Adam's son. How else can it be that we hold on to the opposite approach? Do we not take those who adopt his way as mad? There is some reversal of concepts here, and we must work hard to discover the barriers that block our way to understanding. At least, we must keep reflecting at what happened when mankind discovered their mistake concerning the sun and earth.

It happens that I encounter a situation when I do not even try to put things right. I once spent some time in an Islamic country, and had a judge for a friend. He knew a lot about Islamic law, and about the Qur'an and *hadith*. And one day he said to me, as we sat in the mosque, "What do you think, sheikh, of those people who claim that it is the earth which orbits the sun? Do they not see it is the sun which orbits the earth?"

What hope did I have of making him understand? None, indeed. And all I said was, "Yes, you are right: They have no understanding!" So, what hope do I have of making people understand the story of Adam's two sons? You need a ground from which you set out in establishing debate. When I keep variegating my style and looking at it from all perspectives, it is because of the lack of this ground. It is no wonder that many Muslims think: What is this about a story that is about the earliest of generations? It cannot be of relevance to us!

Ignoring the Significance of the Story of Adam's Son

There is something about our habits of mind, traits like the predominance of desires, unfounded concepts, impatience in intellectual matters, going over the surface of things instead of examining their depth - it is such traits that make us see no significance in the story of Adam's Son. It seems that we respond more to a thinker like Nietzsche, who rocked minds in the nineteenth century: for him there was nothing in history but condemnation after condemnation, and tragedy following tragedy; and the baseness of motives. He glorified violence and power. Like that *sharia* judge, he clung to the past, and would not concede that violence would be a thing of the past. "Are you saying," some people say to me, "that we should sit still, and not defend ourselves?"

It might be curious to relate how a simple, but candid person, said to me in our village: "To this day we do not believe in our heart of hearts that the earth goes round the sun. We just hear everybody say it, and we say it." This was in the nineties of last century. And it helps to see how long our road is.

Some speak from a rational point, and some from a religious point: but both object to this way. The former may say: "Does it seem sensible that one is attacked and does not defend himself? Or to see somebody assaulted and fail to defend him/her?" The latter may say: "What about the Battle of Badr, the Battle of Hunain, and all the other battles?" And some will refer to the fact that both believers and agnostics, all human beings, exercise self-defense. On such occasions I

remember that some people used to say to the Messenger, peace be upon him, "Are you not desperate?"

Mankind Between Rigidity and Change

Is it that we must write many pages and big books about this? What holds people back, once you put forward your idea in clear statements, from accepting it: It is a situation described by the Almighty in the words, "Even if they see all the Signs, they will not believe in them;" (7:146).

Let us not commit the mistake of assuming that this state stays forever: It is really the state of a specific society at a specific time, and in relation with a specific issue. People are held back by a certain complex from responding to a particular issue, for a duration of time. But things have changed, for people have been exposed to many changes in ideas, in a way that the world is more receptive to new ideas. It was not like this in the past: people lived for many centuries with unchanging concepts and beliefs; and when they heard of other people upholding other beliefs and doctrines, they just condemned those beliefs, and merely admitted the fact that the others were barbaric and unenlightened. So, it was sufficient for peoples to divide people into those close to God, and those far from God.

It is such a hard thing to know the real life of humankind: how things started, how there was a time when man ate the flesh of man; and the Qur'an urges us to know, as in, "Travel through the earth and see how Allah originated creation;" (29:20) how things used to be, and how they developed - and

once you follow the process for a long time, you cannot help extending your speculation to the future. No question torments philosophers more than how to distinguish right from wrong: it is still a major challenge, even if not attempted by the celebrated figures: it is philosophy in the sense of what every human has to face. Does not everybody say: "If I were in such and such land, I would have believed so and so;"? And this is philosophy in its widest sense, for it is one step from inquiring how one knows right from wrong. What I hold to be true the other holds to be wrong; and what I hold to be wrong, the other holds to be right. But there is right and there is wrong, as the Qur'an says: "The blind and the seeing are not alike; nor are the depths of darkness and the light; nor are the chilly shade and the genial heat of the sun;" (35:19-21).

Relativity in Human Life

We need to debate on the basis of a point on which we all agree, in the same way as there is a temperature that is suitable for humans, warm water is welcome for all who live in a cold climate, and cold water is welcome for all who live in a hot place.

It is a mistake to debate unless you and the other party admit the existence of things you both agree on, and the Qur'an helps us see this, "nor are [alike] the chilly shade and the genial heat of the sun;;" (35:21) "Nor can goodness and evil be equal;" (41:34). People can see that we endure some hardship in order to gain much greater benefit: hence the law

I often refer to, relying on the Qur'an, the law of the 'better and more enduring'.

Let us make sure that people agree on such essentials - otherwise life will be unbearable, and many will cling to the absurd.

Existence is not absurd; and life and history will go on moving ahead - and yet, human intervention is essential, for otherwise things will take too long, and there will be needless pain and repetition. It is true that we can see in life much malice and treachery and vice; but we can see in it honesty, loyalty, and altruism.

Writing Human History

Affiliated to the United Nations Organization, we find the Security Council, an embodiment of falsehood and dishonesty. But we also find the UNESCO, in which many great projects are executed, many attempts at having a well-guided world take shape, and people are encouraged and helped to have more good guidance. Early on in the UNESCO's history, a project was proposed, in 1946, for writing human history; it was actually started in 1950, and was completed in 1969. Then, twenty years later, they decided to issue a new edition, and the first volume appeared in 1994, in English, and translation into French and Spanish was soon underway. I met the manager of Dar al-Fikr, a celebrated publishing house, and saw him enthusiastic to have it translated into Arabic, which I warmly encouraged.

I regret not having read the first or second editions, for my English is not good enough. I very much would like to see what progress the second edition shows over the first edition. I do realize that history must be written and rewritten again and again.

H.G. Wells wrote his book *Outline of Human History* in the first half of the twentieth century, and wrote in the Preface: "I wish I could see how a book written on this topic after a couple of centuries would be." And this made me think what Ibn Khaldun would think if he had seen Toynbee's *Study of History*!

How long will it be for Muslims to translate the UNESCO's book into Arabic? How big will the edition be? Will Muslims make do with giving their children Ibn Khaldun's name?

Inquiries into the Issue of Right-Mindedness

We must give attention to the issue of right-mindedness, often mentioned in the Qur'an. The believer of the Pharaoh family mentions it, as the Qur'an tells in, "O my people! Follow me: I will lead you to the path of right-mindedness;" (40:38).

One can suspect that right-mindedness is a level not reached by many people, as another Verse hints, "Isn't there among you a single right-minded man?" (11:78). It is a rare thing - Do you notice how only the first four caliphs were accorded the title 'Rashidun'? that no other ruler deserved to be called 'Rashid, or right-minded, or good-guided'?

How was it that we lost the trait of good guidance? Can we be nearer to guidance in the sense referred to in the Verse, "Even if they see all the Signs, they will not believe in them; and if they see the way of right guidance, they will not adopt it as the way;" (7:146).

I keep thinking of the Verse, "Right-mindedness stands out clear from corruption;" (2:256): how are right-mindedness and corruption distinguished, and how are they confused? It is clear in the Verse that humans are responsible to have the right-mindedness and misguidance way set apart.

We are told elsewhere that the *jinn* were confident when they had listened to the Qur'an being reciting of the way of good guidance, "It gives guidance to the right, and we have believed therein: we shall not join in worship any gods beside our Lord;" (72:2) and, in the same Sura, "those who submit their wills - they have sought out the path of right guidance;" (72:14).

The Prophet Moses felt the need to learn good guidance, as the Qur'an tells us in, "May I follow you, on the footing that you teach me something of the right-mindedness which you have been taught;" (18:66).

It is worth all our effort to think of regaining this good guidance, which many generations had despaired of ever regaining.

It is not an option to do without right-mindedness: at one location, the Qur'an sets right-mindedness as the condition for letting an individual have control running his/her own financial affairs, as we see in, "Make trial of orphans until they reach the age of marriage: if then you find sound

judgment, right mindedness, in them, release their property to them;" (4:6).

In a Verse quoted above, we are told that not everybody is enabled to attain right-mindedness: "Those who behave arrogantly on the earth in defiance of right - I will turn them away from My Signs: Even if they see all the Signs, they will not believe in them; and if they see the way of good guidance, they will not adopt it as the Way; but if they see the way of misguidance, that is the way they will adopt. For they have rejected Our Signs, and failed to take warning from them;" (7:146).

As you see, we come round to the degree people are responsible for acquiring guidance, and this is the human side of reading the Qur'an, to see human responsibility for having things happen. We must be clear what part humans are responsible for changing before Allah helps them to change the other side. I do realize that I am posing more questions than giving answers.

The Child and Posing Questions

Everywhere in the world, there is a time when a child pesters his parents and family with questions - it seeks to expand its world; and that lasts for some two years, and then it decreases. The questions are no more posed when the children discover that those who they ask have no answers. They seem to come to the conclusion that the world is a mysterious place, that its secrets and problems are not amenable to solutions.

Physical Creation and Intellectual Creation

What the children gain through their two years of questioning is the whole heritage humankind has accumulated through its ages. One question they pose is "Where have we come from?" They seem to mean in physical terms, but when the question is about the intellectual source of our thought, then it is a really tough question that presses on the mind of the youth, and society.

The parents may say it was God who created us. But this answer leaves more to be said, for the child still wants to know how ideas came to settle in our minds; he/she wants to know the humans' part in shaping ideas.

When the facts concerning safe physical childbirth were discovered, this contributed a lot to protecting the newborn babies from physical diseases. But can we learn the laws of the intellectual process of our ideas, so that we may ward off the intellectual diseases? We no longer accept, when a child dies during delivery, or from malnutrition, to say that it is an act of heaven, that humans have nothing to do about it.

But when we turn to right-mindedness and misguidance, to guidance and aberration, we find things to be so hard - but this can develop and improve until it becomes easy, as happened in the physical sphere.

People used to travel, for most of history, on their feet or on the back of animals. And then, not long ago, they discovered new means of transport - means that were impossible to imagine in the past. It means new ideas were

developing, and that helped people abandon their old ways of transport. Are there not ways that enable us to distinguish right-mindedness from losing the way? In the past we failed to distinguish, but we do not have to go on failing.

In some spheres people have gone ahead. Remember how, in the past, for the transfer of rule from one person to another, people thought of ways like the natural death of the ruler, inheritance, assassination, and overpowering. But some people succeeded in shifting to a different way - and this new way of the circulation of rule has become *the* acceptable way, but not acceptable in some parts. This is worth some good reflection.

Arrogance and Turning Away from God's Signs

I am thinking of the Verse, "Those who behave arrogantly on the earth in defiance of right - I will turn them away from My Signs: Even if they see all the Signs, they will not believe in them; and if they see the way of right guidance, they will not adopt it as the Way; but if they see the way of misguidance, that is the way they will adopt. For they have rejected Our Signs, and failed to take warning from them;" (7:146). From the above Verse one understands that the main barrier that blocks people's way to seeing things is arrogance.

The Verse affirms that all kinds of delusion emanate from one's failure to accept proofs, even when he/she has had direct access to them; not taking the way of right guidance, even when it is open before him/her.

Have I gotten the tip of the string that I need to pull?

The way to transferring authority from one person to the next was for many millennia through inheritance or grabbing by force - and it is still the way in the Muslim countries. But people have found, in other parts of the world, another way - a way in which there is no need for spilling blood and murdering people. Is it something that descended from heaven or grew in the earth? Is it not change in people's conceptions? Is not this one aspect of that part that belongs to humans? Is not that style of transferring authority nearer to right-mindedness?

Do people in the Muslim world view this new way of transferring authority as heretical, a non-Islamic way that must not be considered? Is it not nearer to the style at the time of the Rashidun, the four upright caliphs?

I am endeavoring to have Muslims put their hands on realities that exist before their eyes, but it may seem that I am trying the impossible, trying to bring out that which has been buried too long to be extracted. It might be a mad thing that I am attempting, or it might be looking for keys in the dark.

Changing Rulers and Changing Thought

I attach no importance to a change in rulers, and do not feel excited as many Muslims feel. Let it be noticed how often this change of ruler was done, and nothing changed in our conditions through it.

I have been declaring, for forty years, that change is possible - not through the ways Muslims crave, not through assassination and usurpation, but through love and

persuasion; not through coercion, but through knowledge and peace: Islam abrogated coercion when Allah revealed, "Let there be no compulsion in religion: Right guidance stands clear from misguidance;" (2:256). I now see the way of right guidance, and seek that way as the way; and I see the way of misguidance and abstain from it.

But I see no Muslim who proclaims it, that he will not uphold the way of compulsion and usurpation: that such means are against the way of Islam.

I see no one adopting this, so will it be the way one day in Muslim lands? Will they understand that change through compulsion is not legal in Islam? Will Muslims proclaim that they are against change through compulsion, assassination, and usurpation? Will they learn the lesson from our history, when every attempt to change conditions through this way failed? Is not fourteen centuries enough to learn?

Why is it that others, some non-Muslims, have been able to seek the way nearer to guidance? They are humans, those who understand these things: the law of "Because Allah will never change the Grace which He has bestowed on a people until they change what is in their own souls;" (8:53) applies to them. It is God's law, and a law is not a law if it has favorites; the above is a law that applies to all, believers and non-believers, just and unjust. Of all humans we must be the first to affirm what the Qur'an says, "Nay, you are but men - of the men He has created;" (5:18).

Arrogance and Change

Arrogance is not a trait that distinguishes any group, any religious or ethnic group: it can apply to any individual.

An individual who is arrogant refuses to be like other humans, refuses to have the rules that apply to others apply to him/her.

But let me not fall into the mistake of assuming that once I realize something, then I can make others understand it. I have been working long, and how often my efforts have been frustrated! But I do find causes for reassurance and confidence - I keep striving to devise better ways of approach, easier ways of conceiving these concepts, and helpful examples for digesting ideas. I now accuse myself when I fail to demonstrate and manipulate proofs, the most effective proofs - the easiest and the most stimulating. I have come to the belief that the really enlightened and skillful person has something like the acrobat's skill in conveying ideas.

We should not hope to see people give in so easily: they hold on to what they believe, and are so low in sensing their own mistakes, while they are hypersensitive to others' mistakes: they see the other's mistakes many times magnified. And, in the same logic, when another commits an act of violence, it is a crime, while, when the individual himself commits an act of violence, it is justified and for good reason.

This is true of each one of us: we are so immersed in our behavior that the good may be viewed as bad, and the bad as good. But let us be kind, let us remember how we forgive those we love and how we condemn those we dislike. Let each

one also remember how sentiments and desires have us go to paroxysms of feeling and preposterous behaviors.

Let no one take himself/herself to be above the laws God laid down for existence: we are only humans, creatures of flesh and bone and blood - and to err is human.

Mastering Better Expression

It is a vital skill that we need perhaps to learn from the physician, when he/she treats a patient without cursing him/her or showing scorn or mockery. But it is part of one's mastery of treatment that he/she comes upon creative and excellent styles of communication - it should be so, indeed, for knowledge and a scientific approach need clarity and not humiliation or compulsion.

So far, things are not like this in our culture: we believe in hateful ways, in causing corporeal pain to bring people round to our view - in even torture, killing, and insulting language.

But are we not trying to treat a person who has some shortcoming? Where is our mercy for him/her? We can indeed show compassion, calmness, and patience. It is not that science and knowledge are hateful; it is our ways of presenting them that can be hateful. So, we need to train ourselves to present knowledge and science in a way that they are accessible and in the best spirit - let us beware of seeming to look down upon those we teach, and let us get rid of any scorn or impatience, haughtiness or snobbery.

I do realize how more efficient my discourse could have been had I had clear words and effective examples. But I just hope to provoke some individuals to go on revealing what I have not been able to disclose. Better writers must come up with many examples, effective examples that bring the ideas to stand out most brightly and distinctly.

That you are still with me, dear reader, encourages me; for, as long as one has the curiosity of childhood, he/she will keep seeking for more thorough answers.

The Prophets and Speeding up the Process of Change

I must admit that I am going round and round, that I am beating about the bush - the problem is that we have not developed the most effective style of imparting knowledge.

On a wider scale, change still takes place along its natural laws - there is no perceptible human intervention to speed up history, to learn history's lessons to eliminate unnecessary effort. I hear, though do not understand, how there are ways of speeding up sub-atomic particles for physicists to better study things. There must be ways of speeding up history. But what I do understand, and affirm, is that the prophets came up with a way of speeding up history, which people have not awakened to so far. In fact, philosophers feel ashamed to bring it to light and subject it to analysis.

CHAPTER FIVE

MAN AND HISTORY

Foucault and Nietzsche and History as Reference

Let me remind the reader of Foucault's discussion of the 'Great Madness'; when he says it is possible for the psychoanalyst to understand some types of madness, but it is quite beyond their scope to study the effect of the Great Madness, an area which has not been accessible to science or the human mind. He then links that to essential altruism, which is attained by some rare individuals ... something above and beyond the reach of our Western culture ... that will prove to be the most progressive of all modern types of thought, though it is destined to fail. Biographers who studied Foucault say he himself had joined this very small group of thinkers who have detected this effect of the Great Madness.

How must we understand the above ideas?

One can say that, in the same way as the child inquires about its physical origin, Foucault is inquiring about his intellectual origin: he has developed the ability to question his

own culture. Like the child, he is in the above statements addressing questions.

There has been change in the modern culture, from the day Nietzsche announced the death of God, God in the traditional sense, until Foucault announced the death of man. They are in such announcements declaring that God and man are not the reference, but neither man proved perceptive enough to perceive the referential power God placed in history. This discovery could have led both men to perceive the authority the human is enabled to possess from considering the law that controls human existence: it is through this discovery that the human is enabled to have his/her intervention in the shaping of history and culture - the dialectic of the human and culture: for the human used to shape culture spontaneously, but then he/she found that he/she can contribute to developing culture on purpose, and with human instruments.

Man and Change

There is this small outlet the human begins to notice about the way he/she can intervene in shaping, in changing, what is in himself/herself. It is a major, and new, shift in history, this shift from viewing history as merely shaped by God Alone, to viewing it as shaped by both God and man - and that the first step in shaping history must come from the human being, this being a necessary preliminary to God's part: the human part must come before God's part, as the Verse of the Qur'an teaches us, "Because Allah will never change the Grace which

He has bestowed on a people until they change what is in their own souls;" (8:53). This conception is new in human shistory.

It is humans who develop culture, though culture does shape humans in its turn. Not to notice the part of humans in shaping culture, in adding something new, no matter how little, to culture, brings history to a standstill. Humans make increments to culture which, though tiny, make up for great change in the long range. As the addition is tiny, it can be passed by and neglected - this can bring the most outspoken advocates of freedom, as Skinner has noticed, to rejection and denial. The reaction, for Skinner, is to condition humans: instead of treating them like angels and more than angels, let them treat them like dogs.

Both sides are potentials of the human: he/she can be less than a sheep, the lowest of the low, when he/she fails to exploit the abilities granted to him/her; and can be in the best of molds, when he/she does exploit their abilities, in a way that angels are made to prostrate themselves before him/her.

The problem of providing the human with consciousness and guidance is a historical-philosophical one. But the human *is* beginning to perceive that he/she has his/her part to play, no matter how slow and painful and disappointing the progress is proving to be; but the progress is underway. Very few persons, believers and non-believers, begin to detect that this change to the human beings can be deliberate, and this trend is encountering great hostility. Abdul-Qader al-Jailani perceived that the human can, with all confidence, help others to take the change in their own hands. Hence his saying that, had he been in al-Hallaj's time, he would have taken him by

the hand to safety, for he, al-Jailani, is prepared to take by the hand everyone who stumbled - and hence the many Christians and Jews who participated in his funeral.

Physical and Intellectual Execution - and Madness

When people perceive new horizons, this perception leads to the elimination of hostilities - it turns a bitter enemy into an intimate friend. And when Sufis perceive new horizons, they are overwhelmed, and do not find the right words to express what they have perceived - and their words lead to their physical execution.

Maybe people are no more physically executed for their thought, but intellectual execution is still rampant. How else can we understand this hesitation of Foucault's? When he perceived some of the laws of change in the human, altruism or pragmatism, he appeared diffident and baffled: he could not find the right words to articulate what he had noticed - he merely says: "Only few bright figures in human history have awakened to this altruism." He sometimes calls accepting this principle as a return to grassland, and, in excavating such topics he finds some veins of madness - which must signify in this context vital ideas, which are inaccessible to the intellect and science.

The Problem of Language

The problem is in fact one of language; hence the humanistic philosophies' return to the problem of language.

We may go on to say it is a problem of hearing, sight, and mind: for what is in somebody's mind will not transfer to another's mind without the visual and acoustic signs, and here comes the part of the eyes and ears. We may notice this in the Verses, "The blind and the seeing are not alike; nor are the depths of darkness and the light; nor are the chilly shade and the genial heat of the sun; nor are alike those that are living and those that are dead. Allah can make any that He wills to hear; but you cannot make those to hear who are buried in graves. You are no other than a warner. Verily We have sent you in truth, as a bearer of glad tidings, and as a warner: and there never was a people, without a warner having lived among them in the past. And if they reject you, so did their predecessors, to whom came their messengers with clear signs, Books of dark prophecies, and the Book of Enlightenment. In the end I punished those who rejected Faith: and how terrible was My rejection of them;" (35:19-26). So, we have here, in the above Verses, 'Allah can make any that He wills to hear,': but from our discussion earlier in the book, concerning the two readings of the Qur'an, we must reflect: what is it that the human must change in order to be eligible to having God enable him/her to hear?

Humans have been blessed with the faculty of hearing; but many give a deaf ear to things, and those who fail to listen must be helped to activate this faculty. I do realize that many insist on not giving an ear to what is worth hearing - and as a last means of getting people to listen, there is subjecting them to various types of torment.

What can we do for a person who is warned of stretching his/her hand to fire but let him/her go on until they have the pain of burning? To think that one is distinguished above others, that what gives pain to others does not give him/her pain, must end in their receiving pain until they learn the lesson. We are all human, not more!

From this, we can go on to say: "Do not take drugs, for they will cause you much pain;" and, "Do not break a promise, for though breaking vows might bring you some gain in the short run, you will regret it when you have to live in a society which has no respect for promises and vows!"

Many do not like hearing such 'preaching'. Well, in that case, the Qur'an tells us that many societies failed to keep vows and promises, and neglected justice, but they regretted it, as in, "to whom came their messengers with clear Signs, Books of dark prophecies, and the Book of Enlightenment. In the end I punished those who rejected Faith: and how terrible was My rejection of them!" (35:25-26) and "Now are they but looking for the way the ancients were dealt with? But no change will you find in Allah's way of dealing: no turning off will you find in Allah's way of dealing;" (35:43).

Language and the Outcome

No words act without their consequences. For people keep using words in the way they like; but the real world does not act like this: it does not heed the meanings we attribute to words. Words like Allah, the Messenger, the Book, the Last Day, the unbeliever, the rejectors of the path: these words and

terms are not the reality of things, and the Qur'an reminds us that the evidence is not in the term, when it says, "These are nothing but names which you have devised - you and your fathers - for which Allah has sent down no authority whatever;" (53:23).

The facts are in the outcomes (*'awaqeb'* in Arabic), for outcomes have no favorites. There is no loophole in God's system, in the link between behavior and its consequences, as we are told in the Verse, "And if there be no more than the weight of a mustard seed, We will bring it to account: and enough are We to take account;" (21:47). Imam al-Ghazali has a beautiful expression of the link when he says: "To seek meanings through examining words leads to loss and perdition - it is like one who seeks to go to the west, but is actually moving to the east. The right thing for good guidance is to examine the meanings first, and then to use the right words to express those meanings."

But it will turn out that to determine meanings, our final resort is in the outcome of things; it is the law of the froth (as mentioned in the Verse, "For the scum disappears like froth cast out, while that which is for the good of mankind remains on the earth;" (13:11)) which does not humor us on account of our mental images, and our embellishing the meaning that we uphold. As for those who do not believe all this, they need to examine history; and if they insist on not finding significance in the past, it only remains for them to wait for the future: for God has his laws, and what He promised His Prophets will be realized. The laws will not fail to apply to

both those who act in accordance with them, and those who ignore them.

Some said: God is dead, for God as they imagined Him had died. And some said: Man is dead, for man as they imagined him/her had died. The sense they held of what God is or what man is died - the real existence indicated the falsehood of the concepts they had held in their minds.

That we give sanctity to our mental images will not avail us, as the Qur'an reminds us, "But this thought of yours which you entertained concerning your Lord, has brought you to destruction, and now you have become of those utterly lost;" (41:23) and "another band was stirred to anxiety by their own feelings, moved by wrong suspicions of Allah - suspicions due to ignorance;" (3:154).

Man and the Problem of Language

Man is a historical being - historical in the sense that he/she keeps changing over history. They learn more, and are better acquainted with the laws of existence across time; and they accumulate experience concerning dealing with existence. And it is not possible to transmit that knowledge and sciences and experiences - all that the human learns and accumulates through his/her dealing with existence, except through language. Language is not the facts: it is merely a record, symbols, a metaphorical representation of reality. Even when someone affirms the reality of language, he/she is expressing themselves in metaphorical systems. The one

Reality which is not metaphorical is God, Allah, for the whole existence is a symbol that points to Him.

When some speak of 'realistic' words and 'metaphorical' words, they are talking of relative facts and relative metaphors. This might be in Imam al-Ghazali's mind when he said, "To seek meanings through examining words leads to loss and perdition;" and we should add that to seek to capture meanings in the minds leads equally to loss and perdition. Meanings are imbued in the positive and negative outcome; and outcome are the reference, as affirmed in the Qur'an. That the world has not had this clearly crystalized and elaborated leads to all the conflict that we witness - for each upholds their own view of things, in the form of images they hold in their minds.

But the outcome is not in need of political propaganda. Acting on the basis of outcome is performed without ill-feeling, without malice against others.

Truth and Falsehood, Versus Outcome

From the above it turns out that the problem is not one of language; not even of historical events - it is rather of the outcome which distinguishes between what is true and what is false, what is beneficial and the froth. Let us just find what is more beneficial, and the less beneficial, the froth, will disappear. The Qur'an teaches us that once Truth appears, Falsehood will disappear, as in, "And say: 'Truth has now arrived, and Falsehood perished: for Falsehood is by its nature bound to perish;'" (17:81).

Words not derived from experience, from consequence, are empty words - and you see how people call truth falsehood, and falsehood truth.

We are not living a state of truth, but in confusion; we suffer in proportion to the falsehood we live, as the Qur'an teaches us, "Say: 'the Truth has arrived, and Falsehood neither creates anything new, nor restores anything;" (34:49) - and that failure to live up to what is true is so from our lowest cultural level to the highest in the United Nations. We have not benefited by God's Message to his Prophet.

For those who take this to be false, let them consider the sun and the earth, and what people thought about which orbits the other.

Many assume that the days of ignorance and superstition and myths are gone; that we now live in the light of Islam and civilization: that we have discovered what is there to discover, so that nothing may overturn our concepts.

Societies and Self-Centeredness

Let us remember how difficult it was for people to accept the earth's shape and its rotation. Well, I now think that we are approaching a similar discovery, but it is about the human dilemma - our mistakes in trying to solve man's problems.

Each society seems to assume that it is the center of existence, that all people need to move around it - and if they fail to do so, then force must be used, whenever possible, to have this enforced on them: this assumption in the consciousness of societies is a fact about humans, as the

Qur'an tells us, "Nay, but man transgresses all bounds, in that he looks upon himself as self-sufficient;" (96:6-7).

Any society which takes its ethnicity to signify its intellectual superiority - not that its worth is measured by the degree it is doing good to humanity - is acting in the same way as one who assumes that the sun orbits the earth.

For a most striking example we have the Right of Veto at the Security Council. Like the earth and sun, it stands before our eyes, and it is established on the folly of some nations' assuming that they are the center of the world: I am the stronger nation, and so I represent truth. Remember Galileo when he had to withdraw the fact of the heliocentric principle under threat of dire penalty, and reverted to a geocentric principle.

The Dialectic of Arrogance and Servility

It is good to review the life of the dominant oppressors. As their fortunes are at their highest, they are haughty and looking down. But even at the time of his ascendance, when Nimrud, Abraham's contemporary, boasted: "I give life and give death," - his authority extended no further than a limited area of the world. And Pharaoh's authority is nothing compared with that of those who say today, "I give life and give death;" (2:258). What concerns us in this connection is that those around the arrogant oppressor do not wish such relation to disappear from the earth, or to see the human conception which created such attitude changed - all they

crave is that they themselves, rather than the present oppressor, should be given that status.

It means that both parties have the same frame of mind: neither aspires to seeing the world rid of privileges. But it really must be our objective, to see the world rid of this.

The prophets introduced a principle for removing the chains and shackles of both the arrogant and the servile, but their system is still far above our comprehension - we can understand that the oppressed suffers from his chains, but not the oppressor; though both really move in their heavy chains.

It is a game that can only work with two parties, and the only solution is that we put an end to this game, and have a society in which you are secure to the degree you abide by the law, and to the degree you accept to be equal with everybody else. An individual can break free from the oppressor-oppressed game by applying the principle taught by the Messenger, ﷺ, "No obedience is due in disobedience of the Creator."

How long shall we accept this oppressor-oppressed situation until we learn? How big a fortune must be wasted, and how many ounces of gold, until we decide to withdraw from this game?

Muslims and Peace Making

I do realize how hateful and despicable it is for Muslims to be the first to adopt peace, how they view it as the Great Madness. But can they consider how the conditions will be in the Muslim World if Muslims decided to establish peace

among themselves, if they believed, as a Tradition of the Prophet teaches us, "the best among them [the two adversaries] is he/she who is first to say, 'Peace be to you,'"¹⁸? That it is they and not God who make peace, for Allah will not make the peace until Muslims have in their souls the principles of peace.

For those who find this too hard, I ask them to read again the discussion of the 'two readings'.

I am saying that God keeps us away from the way of peace only because we do not have its principles settled in our consciousness, in the same way as the Verse of the Qur'an says of the way of good guidance, "Even if they see all the Signs, they will not believe in them; and if they see the way of good conduct, they will not adopt it as the Way; but if they see the way of corruption, that is the way they adopt;" (7:146).

Is it not true that we fear each other more than we fear our bitterest enemies? Is it not true that we forget our enemies, and appeal to our enemies when hostilities are evoked among us? Is it not true that our leaders fooled us long about our worst enemies being Israel and America, when it appeared that no enemy could bring us harm without our consent, and without our internecine hostilities?

Who will analyze our diseases? Who will detect the germs inside, which surface from time to time to cause great havoc?

In the same way we have seen the First and Second World Wars as conflict among the arrogant, we have seen the First

¹⁸ Reported by al-Bukhari, in the Part on Good Behavior, Chapter on Immigration, No. 5727; and Muslim, in the Part of Loyalty and Doing Good, Chapter on Prohibiting Breaking up with a Muslim for over three days, No. 2560.

and Second Gulf Wars as examples of the Muslim-Muslim and Arab-Arab Wars.

How will the Veto Right of the Security Council end in the same way as the Empire over which the sun never set ended? How shall we discover that our diseases are more dangerous than America and Israel? I like to think of Israel as the red cloth which is shaken before the bull to stir its wrath, assuming that the red cloth is its enemy and not the matador who stirs it, to have more arrows stuck in its back.

I must keep bringing to light some of the tightly hidden facts about the world, of the mythical principles we have sanctified and given a divine sanctity, attributing them to God and His Messenger - letting some speak in the Name of Allah.

I must keep looking for righteousness, as mentioned in the Verse, "Allah has endeared the Faith to you, and has made it beautiful in your hearts, and He has made hateful to you unbelief, wickedness, and rebellion: such indeed are those who walk in righteousness;" (49:7).

Right-mindedness and the Goal of Existence

It is a human responsibility this embellishing of right-mindedness so that it appeals to people, and to make unbelief and corruption hateful and condemned. But where are the pathologists of souls? I put my hope in the young men and the young women to fill this gap. It is not beyond human capacity, for God does not like to impose on us something beyond our reach.

Does it not occur even to our poets to imagine an alternative way?

Man and the Law of Contradiction

Before we discuss right-mindedness and corruption, we must talk of man, who was created as capable of purifying and corrupting himself/herself, of right-mindedness and wrong-mindedness, of belief and disbelief, as we find in the Verse, "By the soul, and the proportion and order given to it, and its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right;" (91:7-8).

This much is in human nature, as bestowed by the Almighty, and this is what He says in the Qur'an, "Our Lord is He Who gave to each created thing its form and nature, and further gave it guidance;" (20:50). This creation is dual-natured, and I do not recall to have known of anyone who has discussed this dual nature except the talented and ingenious philosopher Muhammad Anbar - the law of duality and opposition in movement; that objects have their opposites in their very nature - that things are dual-sided, implying opposite directions. In the Arabic language, according to Anbar, you find in the root of words the sense and its opposite tied: reverse the letters, and you have the opposite sense, in a way that cannot be haphazard. This leads him to conclude that the whole existence cannot be without a system that controls it.

The Human Psyche Between Wrong-doing and Piety

We need next to think of the built-in nature of the soul and of wrong-doing versus piety. Providing the human with these alternatives is God's creation. It is against the Divine law to attribute one to God to the exclusion of the other; but so many fall in this trap - both among lay people and scholars, distinguished scholars: and this leads to confounding wrongdoing and piety, belief and disbelief, good deeds and sins, Moses and Pharaoh.

It is true that good deeds and bad deeds are from God, and so are wrongdoing and piety - from God in the sense of putting them within human reach. But it is human responsibility to put the soul on the way of wrongdoing or piety: It is the responsibility of society and its creative elite - and that will happen through the proclamation of the alternative ways, not suppressing any creativity. This is the proper relationship between individual and society.

At every juncture, I again feel the need for the two readings of the Qur'an. You keep elaborating and explicating the two readings, and you are then surprised with someone asking: "Is guidance or going astray from God or from a human?"

It is the question which led many to perversion, and it is at this point that some philosophers decide to cling to nihilism.

One way out is to reflect again and again on the Verses of the Qur'an, "By the soul, and the proportion and order given to it, and its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right (and

this act belongs to God), truly he succeeds that purifies it, and he fails that corrupts it! (which belongs to man);" (91:7-10).

Let us not tire of repeating these Verses, and let us invest them with their full meaning - it is the humans who, consciously or subconsciously, provide the individual with the straight path or the dead-end way - and it is what humankind has been engaged in throughout its long history, providing the little child with the way they take to be the right way.

Is it not humans who instill in the child the idea that to change things in the soul, the only way is sometimes to compel people? Is this not what Muslims are saying when they say: "What about the Battles of Badr and Hunain?"

Badr and Huanain in the minds of our people are something like the Pre-Islam Dahes and Ghabra or Basus Battle. It is settled in Muslims' minds that there is no life without mischief and bloodshed. And there is no big difference in their minds between the Prophet's battles and the First and Second Gulf Wars, as if there is no difference between the surgeon cutting the skin for an operation, and the criminal cutting the skin as part of his criminal act.

But if we fail to make people understand, history has its way of conveying its lesson more forcibly, with more and more severe punishments. We MUST come to distinguishing between those who do *jihad* and the *khawarej*, (the renegades who fought against all other Muslims).

As for me, I will keep doing my best to make things clear: I really am sure that the way is open for getting to a more well-guided way. I feel confident I can clear the confusion,

until "Good guidance stands out clear from misguidance;" (2:256) is really translated into clear concepts. At present, guidance and misguidance are not distinguished.

The Prophets and the Sanctity of the Human Spirit

Muslims just do not see the distinction between an action of *jihad* and the action of *khawarej*; they do not realize the conditions for carrying out *jihad*, who may embark on *jihad*, and who may be attacked as target of a *jihad* engagement.

How great the teachings of the Messenger are when he said, "He who fights and dies under an unidentified banner, will die like a non-Muslim."¹⁹

Is not this a serious enough issue? Is it not the human spirit which is involved? Do we not need to determine when it is sinful to eliminate the human life? Did not the Messenger, peace be upon him, warn us, during his Leave-Taking Pilgrimage, not to return to disbelief by killing each other?

But our wrath, and the flagrant injustice among us, and the accumulated malice, all of these blur our vision and inactivate our power of understanding. We are embroiled in the hot and cold conflicts among ourselves. But then, I will never desist from digging in for these facts - we cannot afford to live without bringing that to light. We need to detect the way of the prophets, and to revive it.

Many people in the world believe that the days of revealed religions is gone and done with; and, as for believers, they

¹⁹ Reported by Muslim in the Part on Rule, Chapter on the obligation of keeping with the main body of Muslims at time of turmoil, No. 1848.

have no hope of having that heritage revived at the hands of ordinary humans: they wait for the superhuman al-Mahdi. But we should really revive the prophets' way, to follow their policy.

When I discuss right guidance and misguidance, I find that both sides are covered in the Verse, "Let there be no compulsion in religion;" (2:256), for 'compulsion' is misguidance, in religion or in politics; and non-compulsion, is right guidance, in religion or in politics. To believe in Allah, who commanded non-compulsion, i.e. right guidance; and rejecting misguidance, i.e. compulsion or dictatorship ('*altaghoot*' in Arabic) - that is holding on to the trusted handhold, which may not be severed.

Through establishing and activating the principle of 'non-compulsion', and infusing it with sanctity and significance, by trying to disentangle from it any confusion or incoherence that have clung to it, I will rid humans of compulsion: with all the hatred and malice and indignation that are attendant on it - and replace all that with love and affection, mindful of the Verse, "leave not in our hearts rancor against those who have believed. Our Lord! you are indeed full of kindness, Most Merciful;" (59:10).

Things are so complicated, for we have compulsion deep in our being, and do not find the way to overcome this feeling: we know of no alternative.

Establishing Good Guidance Through Good Guidance

How disappointing it is that the way of right guidance seems impossible in our minds, in a way that to call to that seems mad; to think of applying the Verse, "And they ill-treated them for no other reason than that they believed in Allah, Exalted in Power, Worthy of all Praise!" (85:8) by defying compulsion with non-compulsion, by upholding the way of Adam's Son and Bilal.

It seems to us that it is great loss, that it is futile and even mad, to die in working for right guidance, for countering misguidance and corruption with right guidance - right guidance is no longer an option as long as we cling to countering corruption with corruption. It is paradoxical how it seems to our minds that it is right to establish right guidance with misguidance. It is even more paradoxical that we take our corruption to be guidance while taking others' misguidance as misguidance.

Can some focus on this! In fact, the Almighty did warn us that a human may have his/her action seem nice in their view, so that they take it be good when it is not.

The Qur'an asserts that right guidance stands distinguished from misguidance - but are they? Are they to us? How incapable we seem to comprehend things! It is really enmeshed in our sentiments that, through misguidance, we may establish good guidance. And, since those who believe in this are the vast majority, almost everybody, it is so hard for one to consider the alternative way.

But I address those with rare perception to ponder long and earnestly, to try to see the ways of good guidance and misguidance.

I have often tried to put forward this project - I speak of a way of solving our problems without anyone losing anything: not a king or ruler losing anything, nor a land-owner or financier, and without any armed conflict: a win-win situation for all. I say: "There is no problem insurmountable through peaceful means;" but not once was this approach welcome.

So, we have a long way before us, to get over this obstinate clinging to the way of corruption and utter refusal of the way of right-mindedness.

CHAPTER SIX

ON THE LESSONS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Nothing can bring things within comprehension like real-world examples. And my next example will pose difficulties, but it will prove helpful to meditate on.

History, Remover of Confusion

I go into the following example on the grounds that I take history to be the ultimate reference, that the way the Qur'an itself refers us to is history - for it is history which brings things within comprehension, and removes confusion.

It is history which will sort out what is worthless and what is beneficial, for it is the beneficial which will remain on earth after froth disappears. The merit of history is that it saves time, and spares people many mistakes - and as for those who

insist on ignoring it, there is a limit, for history has the power to force itself on those who ignore it.

I know that we keep hearing of the European Union, but what you will see here is an analysis that you do not come across elsewhere. It is meant to assist Muslims find guidance in these historical facts - though I do not say there will be no better guidance than this; but let us act in compliance with the Verse of the Qur'an, "And how many Signs in the heavens and the earth do they pass by? Yet they turn their faces away from them;" (12:105).

Contemplating the Signs of History

I do realize that many pass historical signs by, but why should I hesitate to refer to this event, when, after much reflection on the events of history, I find this as a most prominent event, an event which was designed and executed with the maximum experience and at the highest cost.

As for those who insist on giving no importance to this event, they only prove their failure to appreciate the events of history, their inability to sort out the beneficial and the harmful, and their insistence to keep absent from the world - in a word, they prove their inability to distinguished good guidance and misguidance.

Approving of Good Deeds and Rejecting Bad Deeds

I am of course thinking of the European Union - it is the unprecedented event that humans have accomplished. Let any

who feel like it make fun of me and say I am enchanted by this unbelieving civilization. But it is our duty really to have the courage to distinguish the right from the wrong.

It will not do to keep approving what we like and rejecting what we dislike. To be guided by our inclinations will make us choose the harmful, and dislike things as worthless when they can be of benefit to us: It is unfortunate, though quite prevalent, this habit of accepting things in their totality or rejecting them in their totality.

Inattention and the Painful Penalty

Those who can detect distinctions are rare, and the result is the sense of loss and despair that we suffer from. But, then, history is there, and will keep charging us higher bills for our inattention - the lesson of the Gulf War is recent enough! On the other hand, history is ready to give its lessons for free, and we only need to heed to it: for if we do not, we shall have to pay a high price for the same lessons.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, alerted us to this when he said, "A believer must not be stung twice from the same hole."²⁰

It would have sufficed to witness one Gulf War, not more, and yet, the lessons keep abounding: Should we not have learnt from one war, when many casualties fell, and many innocent people received bad injuries or were maimed?

²⁰ Reported by al-Bukhari, Part on Good Conduct; Chapter on: A believer may not be stung twice from the same hole, No. 5782; and by Muslim, in the Part on Asceticism and Good Behavior; Chapter on: A believer may not be stung twice from the same hole, No. 2998.

And yet, the Gulf War did have the effect of having many review and analyze the past better than ever; and many sacred beliefs collapsed - it did open our eyes to our failures: the disillusionment reached everybody.

The flood comes and washes away everything, but its water reaches the depth of soil, and the soil is ready to grow new crops. I am not too optimistic at what we have learnt, but we are different; we have gone some steps ahead. And the events of history are not all tragic; some are auspicious.

The European Legacy and the Common Market

Until 1993, the European Union used to be called the Common Market, stressing its objective of increasing profits and warding off loss, in a material sense. They were mindful of the tragic events of their history: the Thirty-year War, the One-hundred-year War, the many religious and sectarian wars - and, if we speak of two Gulf Wars, they speak of Two World Wars, with scores of million casualties, military and civilian.

As you see, the European Union did not descend from heaven as a free bounty; it grew out of the devastation and destruction. It merits writing many books and much analysis. Every aspect of it must be analyzed: its genesis, its present condition, and the speculated situation, though nobody can exactly say how it will develop.

Let us remember how often men like Napoleon and Hitler tried to create union in Europe through compulsion - and they were no better than the peoples mentioned in the Qur'an: 'Ad,

Thamud, Pharaoh, and Nimrud, who destroyed big numbers, but did not realize any unification - We know how the former died in his exile, and the second ended his own life, with fire - it reminds one of the Verse of the Qur'an: "soon will the unjust assailants know what vicissitudes their affairs will take;" (26:227). What remained is their being an example for those who can learn lessons.

Do we have some who look into these events, heeding the Verse, "Verily in this is a Message for any that has a heart and understanding or who give ear and earnestly witness the truth;" (50:37).

High was the price the Europeans paid for their long resorting to compulsion - but they at last learnt the lesson of non-compulsion; through their long following the way of corruption they learnt the lesson of right-mindedness and good guidance; from the destruction caused by the dictators and tyrants they learnt equality, treating each other on the same footing, among themselves, how no one has the right to rise, to assume the status of god, over others.

We need to focus on the equal footing (*al-sawaa'* in Arabic), for it has its history in our culture, and we need to examine how a tyrannical person is tyrannical only when he finds those who he can subdue and they accept to surrender to him. We find it in the Prophet's letter that he sent to the known rulers of his time, including the Verse, "Say: 'O People of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you: that we worship none but Allah;" (3:64). But let that discussion be deferred for the moment, as we are focusing on the European Union.

Let me be sure that I am laying down the main argument here: The European Union is set here as an example of a new perspective, a new way of solving problems without compulsion, without corruption or injustice: where all are winners, and none is a loser: no one losing their rule, or fortune - where all rise together.

And I am not talking of a utopia, not of heaven or metaphysics. All that I am presenting is something that happens before our eyes. I hope people take heed.

The Painstaking Progress Towards Attaining the Objective

I am quite in earnest, for I am striving to have a new world rise into being. And let me add that all that is required is already there, except for our awakening and paying attention.

This is then the crux of our dilemma, how to bring back to ears and eyes the faculty of hearing and seeing. The Qur'an took this problem seriously, and told of a condition when the human is incapable of seeing or hearing or understanding.

But please, do not be desperate. This condition is not permanent, not an indelible fact of human existence - I may not be effective enough; and the rewards and penalties we have already received may not be sufficient for us to wake up. But God has full power and control over His affairs. Let us keep working and laboring to have life come back to the eyes and ears: Yes, the lack of sight and hearing is true, but can be remedied. Our Prophet tells us that God did not send down a

disease, but sent down its remedy. Let us at least pave the way for others, and so, no effort is without its value.

I do not wish to die with all that is in my breast dying with me. How much fatigue did our predecessors endure to give us some rest? So, we need to endure fatigue to help the coming generation have some rest. Let us empathize with our successors, share their care, and be happy for the little that we can do for our partners on this globe.

Let us do what we can for the future, for people that we do not know, for efforts add up, and that is what makes a new world.

My mind goes back to Jalal al-Din al-Rumi: He was a poet, and his vision encompassed the world, and the human psyche, and, in his *al-Mathnawi*, he aspired to revolutionize the way people viewed their world, the whole world. It was poetry, consisting of narratives and analytical pieces, reflections, and roaming. He deviated a lot, but touched on things in a light-hearted and skillful manner. Do not think that he had no impact on you, even if you have not read a line of his poetry. He contributed to the sailing of this ship on which all of us are travelling.

And you may not appreciate Muhammad Iqbal's impact on this world, the present world and the world of the future.

But what am I leaving for the future? I must, however, keep trying, even if many find my voice unpalatable.

The New Horizon and the Word of *al Sawaa'*

I see the world as approaching a new dawn, so we had better get ready for it.

As for the western World, it is ready for this dawn by upholding the word of equal footing, *al-sawaa'*, bearing in mind its long history of corruption and misguidance, and all the suffering it meant for everybody.

The Sufis have a merit here - they are the Muslim group who cared much about the psychological states. In this, they went further than other Muslim groups, who were content with the acts of the body and rituals and appearance - while we know from the Islamic sources that the Almighty cares not for our appearance, but for what is inside our souls: the intentions and drives, our attitudes and good and bad feelings.

It is such a beautiful investigation to explore the human psyche. Here is a good story, mentioned by Jalal al-Din al-Rumi. He recounts how three persons, a Turk, a Persian, and an Arab, all blind, were together when a good man gave them a dinar. They all craved to buy grapes, but its name was different in their tongues, so they started to bicker and wrangle, although they were all insisting on buying grapes. One said: "I want restafil," one said, "I want uzum," and so they all argued hotly. Then a man passed by, and he happened to know all their languages, and when he understood their dispute, he offered to get each what he wanted, so he went and bought some grapes, and then put in each man's hand some of it. They were all satisfied.

It is a humorous story, but al-Rumi wants the reader to see the significance, for funny things may have a deep moral, and that is the point of the story: one may laugh, and give no attention to the deep moral behind the story.

The art of comedy can have a vital part in correcting behavior, but many people just receive the humorous story lightly and enjoy the laugh without reflecting on its deeper significance. In the same way, the pain and hardship of our predecessors must serve to spare us some suffering, and we must be grateful that they endured to lighten our burden. Remember that, without what we learnt from the experience of our predecessors, we would be still eating human flesh.

Directing and Exploiting Potentials

When our Lord puts in our hands stories of past peoples, He is telling us to learn the way of mercy and good guidance, not that of suffering and misguidance - not to suffer twice or many times for the same mistakes. We must have sense enough to get beyond the suffering of past times, for we shall have trouble of our own. We must not pass by stories and historical events without learning lessons. Psychologists teach us that we often waste our ability by bearing weights that are no longer of any use to us: By ridding ourselves of unneeded burden, we can deal with life with more energy, for life has always new worries to encounter. So, what is it that prevents us from doing just that?

The Qur'an urges us to be open to learning lessons, and it says, "Those who behave arrogantly on the earth in defiance

of right - I will turn away from My Signs: Even if they see all the Signs, they will not believe in them; and if they see the way of good guidance, they will not adopt it as the Way; but if they see the way of misguidance, that is the way they will adopt. For they have rejected Our Signs, and failed to take warning from them;" (7:146).

The Human Between Purifying the Soul and Corrupting It

A human can reach a point when he/she benefits nothing by what happens before him/her. This is so for man is prone to descend, as the Qur'an puts it, "to the lowest of the low," (95:5) when, as the Qur'an puts it, "They are like cattle - nay more misguided;" (7:179); but can rise to be, as the Qur'an states, "in the best of molds" (95:4).

So, we have such a challenging task before us: a responsibility in which one works on the steps of the prophets, and it is within human reach, as the Qur'an affirms, "Truly he succeeds that purifies it, and he fails that corrupts it;" (91:9-10).

I am saying that the first step is this: to be sure that this is a human responsibility; that we may not ever despair of our ability to save ourselves and those around us. Bilal is an excellent example of giving oneself our value. The starting point is to get over one's arrogance and conceit: to get to a situation when we practice humility, but never to accept being enslaved.

Many people may say it is a Divine bounty: It is so, but it is a human achievement, at the same time. It is left to humans to change themselves - Yes, Allah has provided us with all the means and tools, has given us examples and specimens. He sent messengers - who demonstrated how change can really be effected. All we need is to be ready: the field (the world) is there before us, the ways are there - all is waiting for the heirs of prophets to go ahead and turn to account the abundance of newborn souls, all with full potential, with all the abilities. But can we fathom the essential composition of this being, this excellent nature?

We shall not succeed unless we proclaim the message in all its force, attaining clear proclamation. We must set as our goal to convey the message in as close degree to good guidance as possible - for it is in this way that we shall have paved the way for those who come after us, so that things are made easier for them.

The European Union and Good Guidance

I am focusing on the European Union because it proved to be a way of solving problems in which all parties are winners, and this is good guidance.

Let us as a preliminary step to this ponder this *hadith* of the Prophet's, "To have two hungry wolves attacking a herd of sheep in their pen will not do worse havoc than the amount of ruin on causes to one's religion through his/her fondness of

fortune and status."²¹ How is fortune so ruinous, when the Messenger, peace be upon him, says in another *hadith*, "Good money is a blessing for the good person,"²²? And how is status so ruinous when it can serve to induce the individual to aspire to noble objectives? Indeed, both fortune and status can be a blessing and can be ruinous: some earn their money through extortion and exploiting others, and through creating much malice and hatred; and some earn their status through compulsion and humiliating others, and through killing some and tormenting others.

Fortune is a fundamental of life, as the Qur'an says, "To those weak of understanding do not make over your property, which Allah has made a means of support for you;" (4:5). It is fortune which is at the base of a people's advancement, and fortune is nothing but hours of people's work, when there is no exploitation or fraud. And high position is a great objective to compete for, when it is sought for public service - not through compelling people, but through winning their hearts, and through their approval and support.

Things are not like this in the Muslim World, but we have a way to changing things, without depriving the wealthy of his/her wealth - let it be noticed how all the prophets, from Noah to Muhammad, without exception, declared, as the Qur'an reports, 'No reward do I ask of you'; for one example, let us review this: "The people of Noah rejected the messengers. Behold, their brother Noah said to them: 'will

²¹ Reported by al-Tirmithi in the Part on Asceticism, *Hadith* No. 2376; and Ahmad, 3:456-457. Al-Tirmithid says in rating it: Fairly authentic.

²² Reported by Ahmad, No. 4:197; and al-Bukhari in his *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, No. 299.

you not fear Allah? I am to you a messenger worthy of all trust: so fear Allah, and obey me. No reward do I ask of you for it: my reward is only from the Lord of the worlds;" (26:105-109). If any are in doubt, let them just review Sura 26. Each prophet, you will find, used this same assertion, 'No reward do I ask of you,'. And Prophet Muhammad declared the same, as another Sura tells us, "Or is it that you do ask for a reward, so they are burdened with a load of debt? " (52:40).

Let us be clear to people, when we are calling to this way, that we have no wish to take any of their fortune - indeed, their fortune will be more, not less.

Knowledge Before Fortune

It is efforts like the Gulf War that were engaged in for fortune: so, let no party deceive us that they act in the name of prophets, for the prophets had not one dinar or dirham in their plan: all they developed and left behind was knowledge and science. So, let that be our objective.

The mistake on our part is that we attached all hope to money, which is an illusion. We are oblivious of the real source of fortune: knowledge and science. It is science and knowledge which purify the human, and when the human is purified, all that he/she comes into contact with will be purified. If, on the other hand, he/she is corrupt, all that he/she comes into contact with will be corrupted.

As for those who doubt these facts, let them examine where our fortune goes, and in whose pockets it ends up?

Therefore I say: "Do not start with focusing on money and fortune: Start where Allah started, invest in souls; spend money to reform souls; spend money to bring hearts together, to purify souls. Let the other have it clear that you have no intention of getting any of his/her fortune, that you would rather see their fortune grow and increase."

It is the purified spirit that we need: not the wish for other people's fortune or status. Let us act like our Messenger, who refused the position of a king when the Quraishi people offered him that.

What have we done to the way of the prophets? How badly have we distorted it? But by working hard on this, we can change things. The mischief or corruption are there, but we must get to their deepest roots, to rid ourselves of them. There are deep motives, mainly arrogance and conceit, which keep people's faces turned from each other.

And the Qur'an keeps turning our attention to the psychological condition, that for changing our tangible conditions, we need to focus on our hidden concepts and attitudes, "Because Allah will never change the Grace which He has bestowed on a people until they change what is in their own souls;" (8:53)

It is so, in both changes to the good or the bad.

It is on this arrogance that we need to focus and probe with the utmost attention, and also on misguidance, for it is this and this that are the source of all evil. We can deal with souls, and change them to the desired conditions.

Man and Subjecting Things

We are dealing with souls all the time, and we keep influencing and being influenced, but how can we do that on purpose? How can we care for this tree until we pick its fruit, without cutting it down or destroying it?

Has not the human discovered how to subdue and exploit electricity? It used to come only as destructive thunderbolts. And how diverse are the uses of electricity now! And how efficiently humans control it!

But if electricity has all this potential, how greater is the human potential! How much good can we reap from tapping and controlling and exploiting this potential!

I raise honeybees. And I well remember how people noticed this excellent stuff produced by the honeybee (bees existed a long time before humans), and thought at first of no way of collecting the bees' honey except by killing them. And then the human learnt how to collect the honey without having to kill the bees - and the killing was stopped.

So, when shall we learn getting the best the human can offer without the need to kill him/her?

Many are wrong about the best way of dealing with man. I know I do not express things very effectively, but I do see a glowing light, a most promising source - I feel there is a solution to the problem of humans that has not been tried.

Remember electricity, how it was, and how it is. And God has given humans the ability to exploit the potential of humans. It is guidance which we must be grateful for.

History and the Future

My intention is to shed a revealing light on this creature, man: How this being was given this authority in the world, made a viceroy, with all that is in the world subjected to them.

It is by examining the past, and the vast advances, unimaginable change over the centuries, that will reveal the possibilities before humans, for God's law decrees that what is froth will disappear, and what is beneficial will stay on earth.

Only those who look well can understand this, as the Qur'an tells us: "contemplate the wonders of creation in the heavens and earth, with the thought: 'Our Lord! You have created all this not for nothing,'" (3:191). Those who take the world to have been created for nothing are ignorant; they walk like blind people - but it is our duty to help them see: our basic duty is to change what is in souls.

Despair and Disbelief

We shall not despair as long as our minds are alert, as long as we remember how things were and how they changed. Let us remember how the Qur'an linked despair to disbelief.

This indicates that to sit idle, to give up hope, is a kind of disbelief. It is people who have no faith that do not examine how things used to be, and what can be done.

And what does the desperate person do? You see how he destroys and explodes. But our Creator is Most Gracious, Most Merciful. So, let those who can come out and bring out

the light go ahead and do it, for God teaches us that once truth is on the scene, falsehood will withdraw. We need to learn the laws of the world to have them serve us.

Men are there to develop the earth and improve it, not to ruin it and destroy it. We have the potential to economize and save time and energy. So, let us not listen to those who wish us to be desperate, who are themselves desperate, and do nothing but mock every move or effort. Once we ignite the flame, the eyes will sparkle, and life will return to hearts. And people will wonder how it was that they spent such a long time unaware of the way out into light.

Each one of us must have seen a desperate patient, and what happened to his/her eyes once the effective medication was administered to him/her. You must have noticed how the new look was fresh and bright, and must have seen him/her have a happy smile. This is what I mean when I speak of the remedy to souls and hearts: it is with the light of knowledge that people will breathe freely - how excellent must their feeling be when they see that the disease has its effective remedy!

A human is led astray when he/she wants to take a shortcut. A human, as the Qur'an tells us, is impatient, "Truly man is to his Lord ungrateful; and to that fact he bears witness by his deeds; and he is violent in his love of what is good;" (100:6-8) and, out of impatience, he/she seeks the easy way.

Seeking the easy way is not a mistake: it is the big challenge for mankind to discover easy ways, and to save time, so that most people enjoy a happier life.

The Problem of the Relation Between Man and His Fellow-Men

The problem rises here, in the relation between one human and another. It must be different from their relation with the world, and we receive the hardships from nature not in the same way as the hardships we receive from humans. Disasters come from nature and come from humans, but our reactions are not the same. We are not angry with nature for the natural disasters: It may be sad for the loss of a person I love. But how different it is when the person I love is killed by a human being!

There is a mistake in a human's dealing with his brother human: It is not clear to a human that compulsion and subjugation are not the best way to getting the best the other can offer - it is not through rising over the other; and that is what the Qur'an discusses under the terms 'good guidance' and 'misguidance', for humans wax arrogant and haughty under this illusion. This is the attitude described in the Qur'an as, "Who is superior to us in strength;" (41:15). It is the illusion that, through subjugation and compulsion, one can get the best out of the other.

This may be better appreciated by again referring to the Verse, "Those who behave arrogantly on the earth in defiance of right - I will turn away from My Signs: Even if they see all the Signs, they will not believe in them; and if they see the way of right guidance, they will not adopt it as the Way; but if they see the way of misguidance, that is the way they will

adopt. For they have rejected Our Signs, and failed to take warning from them;" (7:146).

Have I, in all my long-winded attempts, come closer to shedding light on the Verse, "Let there be no compulsion in religion: whoever rejects evil and believe in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold, that never breaks;" (2:256)? Have I shed at least a ray of light on it? Is it clear that compulsion and violence and haughtiness are incompatible with the way of right-mindedness, and with distinguishing guidance from misguidance? My point is that as long as one's heart clings to compulsion, there is no distinction between guidance and misguidance.

I still have great hope - that guidance will be distinguished from misguidance, and that compulsion is the biggest problem - that to have the folly that God commands the use of compulsion, is thinking the worst about both God and man.

The European Union and Being on Equal Footing

We need to go further by inquiring about this arrogance which blocks one's way to perceiving good guidance and right-mindedness. Let us notice that the Almighty does not say certain people do not perceive the way of good guidance, but He says, "if they see the way of right guidance, they will not adopt it as the Way;" (7:146).

My point is that arrogance and haughtiness block one's way to observing the Signs that happen on earth, not far from us: this failure to notice what must be noticed is mentioned in the Qur'an in Verses like, "And how many Signs in the

heavens and the earth do they pass by? Yet they turn their faces away from them;" (12:105).

The European Union is one of those Signs of the Almighty, and it is an event of human history: We must observe how the Europeans are developing this Union without compulsion, content with being on equal footing and dealing with fairness: no violence, no coercion.

No one is forced to join this Union; all join it of their own accord. In the same way as the Qur'an teaches us, "Let there be no compulsion in religion;" (2:256) the Europeans uphold the principle of 'No compulsion in joining our Union.'

It was not so in the past, for they imagined that unification could be effected through military force, but they reached at last the principle of 'No compulsion': In the same way as compulsion may not be the way in calling people to religion, it may not be the way in politics. Two Muslim countries, Morocco and Turkey, applied to join the European Union, but were declined. But why cannot Muslims have their own call to unification? Why is it not possible?

The Genesis of the European Union

What happened in Europe that we are unable to emulate? We know that the European Union is not something that descended from heaven, nor was it forced by a Hitler or a Napoleon.

I admire this accomplishment. But it will not help us to wish we could do the same, so we need to realize the facts behind their success.

They of course very much desired to gain what is good for them: and all humans wish what is good for them. But the Europeans went a step further: they reflected on the ways they used to follow, ways that proved to be dead ends. They studied the facts, since the futile ways were related to human facts, and they did a lot of statistics. They accepted not vagueness, no hidden secrets. All had to come under the circle of light.

No conspiracies were allowed, no fraudulent ways, no double-dealings. They brought all the elements under investigation, and they took their time to inspect every aspect: You cannot do that as a haughty or conceited party. There is here no 'France above all' or 'Germany above all' - they had the lesson clear that such slogans were slogans of destruction, not of construction: they knew that, instead of that, they needed to work on the principle of 'all for all'.

The European Union and Sufism

I find a religious principle at the core of the European Union. Is not the deepest principle in religion not to take each other for gods beside God? And this is the principle the Europeans accepted and adopted.

It is no light achievement this! To give up, utterly and completely, the doctrine that one of European states was a god - at least not within Europe; it was the word of 'on equal

footing' within Europe. It meant that the culture which had made Hitler and Napoleon was no longer there.

Something of this kind begins to develop in our part of the world. We begin, not too consciously, to detest the culture of having things done through compulsion; we begin to detest that one person brings about unification through compulsion. But we need to do more to get rid of the culture of compulsion, to have the right guidance and misguidance distinguished. We need to work hard to have tyranny stand out vividly, to have compulsion stand out clearly - once we do that, it means we know God, and we comprehend right guidance and the 'the trustworthy hand-hold'.

Let Us Get Rid of Compulsion, Both Sides of It!

One will not have rid himself/herself of compulsion unless he/she gets over compulsion in both senses: in the sense of wishing to compel others, and in the sense of accepting to be subjected to compulsion. This attitude must be utterly dismissed from the heart, as the Qur'an teaches the Prophet, "Let there be no compulsion in religion," (2:256) "You are not one to have control of men's choices," (88:22) and "Will you then compel mankind, against their will, to believe?" (10:99). We must get over this worship of force, on whatever side one happens to be.

To get into the circle of right guidance, you need to get out of the circle of compulsion.

The confusion must be cleared: For people are happy to get rid of the condition of being compelled, but try hard to

move to the other side, to be the side who exercises compulsion: it is the same law of the jungle, of violence. Our call to get rid of compulsion in both senses is in the same spirit as we learn from religion: Give up all idols.

Humble Muslims like Bilal and Sumayyah stepped out completely of the domain of compulsion - those who do not appreciate the sweet taste of right guidance do not give Bilal and Sumayyah their worth: they have not experienced the condition of contentment, once you have rejected the resort to force: It is what we learn from Abraham, when he said, as the Qur'an tells us, "'How should I fear the beings you associate with Allah, when you do not fear to give partners to Allah without any warrant having been given to you? Which of us two parties has more right to security? Tell me if you know. It is those who believe and do not confuse their beliefs with wrong - that are truly in security, for they are on right guidance;" (6:81-82).

As long as this idol of compulsion survives in one's heart, contentment cannot settle in the same heart, nor can one hold tight to the secure handhold.

Compulsion and Change

We need to ponder well the problem of compulsion: to compel others or to be compelled by others. It must have no place in our heart: The Messenger, ﷺ, asked a Muslim who was tortured until he uttered the word of disbelief, "How do you find your heart?" "Content with belief," the man said.

"Well, then, if they exercise this again, you may utter what you uttered."²³

It is clear in the above incident that the Prophet did not think that compulsion meant real change, that it was not the way to belief - He did not believe in tyrannical decrees. It is how content the heart was with belief that he advocated. Compulsion reflects utter ignorance, and great loss. Is not this what we learn from the Verse, "Let there be no compulsion in religion;" (2:256)?

The Devil has a role here: He persuades his allies to adopt the policy of killing and compulsion. He turns away their sight from the direction of right guidance as the right way - he implants in their minds instead that compulsion can be the way to establishing good guidance. We still have not rid ourselves of this though more than fourteen centuries of compulsion have passed.

But it is Satan's seduction: Compulsion cannot be but the way of misguidance, the way of the would-be gods, especially in a political context ('*altaghoot*' in Arabic). Have we not had history enough to prove that fourteen centuries of compulsion led to no good, no right guidance? Is it not experience enough? But let us be sure that God will not violate His *sunan* for our sake: Misguidance will not be right guidance, and holding up the false god will not be faith; and the way to right guidance will not be through compulsion.

²³ Reported by al-Baihaqi, No. 8:209; and al-Hakem, No. 2:357.

Words and Meanings

No amount of manipulating words and terms can change God's *sunan*, i.e. laws. People do invest words with different meanings: they practice misguidance, and give it names of faith and Islam - but that will not make of misguidance guidance.

It was not through manipulating words that the Europeans realized change; it was through deciding to give up compulsion and upholding right guidance - that is what realized for them better economic and financial results.

It is not words, but the sense that counts: al-Ghazali thought of this long before Saussure, Chomsky, Heidegger, Searle, and Nietzsche. And no linguist or semanticist who puts the sense of words in words can reveal the truth: they will blunder until they realize that truth is in nothing but in the actual facts of the world.

Yes, words can reflect the facts, but they can reflect their opposites; and they do not have the power to change facts: It is the real facts of the world which put words right, and put right the concepts about God and about the Qur'an: It is investigating the world around us that gives a real sense to the words of God: It is research and observing the facts of the world, and it is the events of history which are our reference.

It is like learning swimming, for no amount of reading will teach you swimming - it is rather going to water and practicing swimming.

When God commands us to go out and learn how creation was started, no one can learn that but by going to the world,

and searching for the origins of creation: No book will spare us this effort.

Let the semanticists and linguists learn the lesson from the believers in revealed Scriptures: let them observe how those believers have all the revealed books, and in all languages, but they avail them nothing.

To change people, and to change their views, let them be in touch with the facts of the world and the facts of life. This is the law that we find in the Qur'an: that what is froth will vanish and what is good will remain: And it is from the actual contact with this law that the Europeans came upon the European Union, and with this they succeeded in doing away with compulsion and misguidance and submission to false gods - since all of this is incompatible with truth, misguidance and worshipping false gods vanished, and only what is better stayed on. This is the law that saved time and effort and fortune. It is the law of the better occupying first place - saving time and money, and minimizing waste. This is what Europe acts upon.

And when we speak of God's laws, those laws care nothing for our names and affiliations: It is those who act in compliance with the laws of the world and history that prosper.

The Soviet Union and Compulsion

Why cannot the Muslim World at least achieve the amount of guidance that the rest of the world has attained?

Why do they not study what happened to the Soviet Union, and what led to its collapse and disintegration?

How can we investigate and analyze if we view history as Nietzsche viewed it, confusing the sacred with the profane? Why do Muslims not learn from Ibn Khaldun's attitude to history?

The Soviet Union failed to get over compulsion, which they practiced for seventy years, but it availed them nothing.

History was there, accessible to those who care to learn its lessons, but the Soviet Union proved too arrogant to learn. The Qur'an tells us of a people who refuse to learn, "If We had sent to you a written message on parchment, so that they would touch it with their hands, the unbelievers would have been sure to say: 'This is nothing but obvious magic;'" (6:7) and, "That they should not believe in the Message; but the ways of the ancients have passed away. Even if We opened out to them a gate from heaven, and they were to continue ascending therein, they would only say: 'Our eyes have been intoxicated: nay, we have been bewitched by sorcery;'" (15:13-15).

Is it some kind of magic that blinded the Muslims, as it had blinded the Soviet Union, so that it was not possible for them to uphold right guidance?

It is not enough to think of ideas that have hold of people's mind, and which will not go away in a short time. We need to think of the underlying sentiment: people's likes and dislikes.

With the long exercise of compulsion in the Soviet Union, that engendered in its peoples deep-seated hatred which no

policies could eliminate. Life lost its taste for them, nor was money helpful.

When the human acts from hatred, he/she cannot act or think rationally - his/her fear and desire for flight from something vague is natural when people are ruled by decrees that they have no hand in making: decrees were made in the absence of the public, though these decrees controlled people's lives.

Their utter loss of trust, thickening and compounding over the years, left no chance of people's opting for preserving the unity of their communities. When the Union started to fall apart, no one had the power of preserving it, though some tried to do that by force. History had said its word: This structure must come to an end!

The right conditions are not impossible to find and realize, but they were just absent from the perspective of the influential people in the Soviet Union.

The Metaphysical and Historical Readings of the Qur'an

Indeed, I am not exactly the first to try to retrieve a human reading to the Qur'an: Ibn Taimiyah used to say sometimes (when arguing with philosophers) that he quoted the Qur'an not to silence the other with the Holy Text, but as logical discourse: logic encountering logic.

One thing to notice about the Qur'an is that there is the Last Day as the Day of Resurrection, after death; but there is

a last stage of events (*'alakhirah'* in Arabic) applied to this world. Take for instance torture, and you find in the following Verse torture in this world and torture in the Hereafter for those who tamper with the Law: "But what is the reward for those among you who behave like this but disgrace in this life? - and on the Day of Judgment they shall be consigned to the most grievous penalty;" (2:85). Not only there is torture in this world and torture in the Hereafter; but, likewise, there is reward in this world, and reward in the Hereafter.

We may look at more Verses, like, "For them there is nothing but disgrace in this world, and in the world to come, and exceeding torment;" (2:114) and, "So We sent against them a furious wind through days of disaster, that We might give them a taste of a penalty of humiliation in this life: and they will find no help. As to the Thamud, we gave them guidance, but they preferred blindness of heart to guidance: so the stunning punishment of humiliation seized them, because of what they had earned;" (41:16-17).

People's thought and deeds have their outcome in life after death, but have their outcome in this world, too, before we go to the Day of Resurrection. There is Salvation on the Day of Resurrection, but there is also salvation in this world.

By retrieving to the Qur'an reading from the perspective of this world, we retrieve its freshness and relevance. Yes, we believe in the Hereafter, but we need also the other reading. I do not say that I am changing the perspective with my discourse, but it is not useless.

The Muslim World will not awaken without the Qur'an - they hold on to it most tightly, and this is a good thing. But our attempt must focus on a reading from the perspective of outcome. What happens at present is that those who believe in this world view the Qur'an with reluctance, as the Qur'an describes them, "When Allah, the One and Only, is mentioned, the hearts of those who do not believe in the Hereafter are filled with disgust and horror;" (39:45).

On the other hand, those who cling to religion can rarely read the Qur'an from the perspective of this world. It is no wonder that a professor in Western universities, like Muhammad Arkoun, does not accept a reference to the Qur'an in the course of debate: He finds that Muslims see only the miraculous aspect of it. Therefore, it will be a long and arduous experience this of transferring to both readings of the Qur'an - to be aware of the penalty in the Hereafter and the penalty in this world. Have not the Gulf Wars, and all the civil conflicts, been lessons enough for us?

The Story of Jonah's People: A Sample of Historical Reading

Let us note that, though Muhammad Arkoun failed to see how the Qur'an could be read from a perspective of this world, he had a very perceptive idea, an idea that he repeated in his books: that Muslims needed a new theology.

It was not possible for him to see how such new theology (by which he meant a new science of '*tawhid*') could be realized, because he did not think but of one reading of the

Qur'an - hence his saying that history, according to the Qur'an, was not shaped by humans but by God.

I do realize that some people have a negative attitude to certain authors who I refer to, but we need to have the ability to go beyond the names, to deal with ideas. In the same way as we may view Ibn Taimiyah as someone from the past, and that we have gone beyond him, this discussion of mine will be something from the past - in the same way as in every age we have a new perspective of the atom, the galaxies, and history.

But let us go back to Jonah's people.

I now urge the reader to read the following Verses from the perspective of this world: "If you were in doubt as to what We have revealed to you, then ask those who have been reading the Book from the Lord: so be in no wise of those in doubt. Nor be of those who reject the Signs of Allah, or you shall be of those who perish. Those against whom the Word of your Lord has been verified would not believe - even if every Sign was brought to them, until they see for themselves the penalty grievous. Why was there not a single township among those We warned which believed - so its Faith should have profited it - except the People of Jonah? When they believed, We removed from them the penalty of ignominy in the life of the present, and permitted them to enjoy their life for a while. If it had been your Lord's Will, they would all have believed - all who are on earth! Will you then compel mankind, against their will, to believe? No soul can believe, except by the Will of Allah, and He will place doubt on those who will not understand. Say: 'Behold all that is in the

heavens and on earth'; but neither Signs nor warners profit those who do not believe. Do they then expect any thing but what happened in the days of the men who passed away before them? Say: 'You wait then: for, I, too, will wait with you.' In the end We deliver Our messengers and those who believe: thus is it fitting on Our part that We should deliver those who believe!" (10:94-103).

When the above text says, " If you were in doubt as to what We have revealed to you", it is addressing people who can understand, by referring to the facts of the world: it is clearly not dictating ideas - not saying, 'Because I am Allah, you must listen and accept;' but saying, 'Watch the heavens and the earth: Do you find them void of meaning, existence for no purpose?'

The West and Meaninglessness

What happens when you view existence as meaningless, void of purpose? It is a common attitude among present-day philosophers, an attitude that has led them to nihilism. A book entitled: *Philosophy for Beginners*, discusses near the end phenomenologists, structuralists, and deconstructionists, and then it provides a cartoon in which Jacques Derrida is trying to remove a wall, with the caption: "Butt at the wall with your head!"

Even a scholar like B.F. Skinner, from whom I learnt a lot, finds aimlessness to be predominant in the world. To him, there is no aim for man, no distinction for the human being. He mocks the ancients who had understood a projectile as

being jubilant when it was hurled, and eager to rush towards its destination - he affirms that the human forges ahead like the projectile, without aim.

I am not hinting that Skinner did not discover great things, or achieved nothing. He did see that the human was shaped by his/her culture; but he could not notice the growth of culture; he took that to be unworthy of serious discussion.

Let us admit that millions of people move like a projectile - but he ignored, or did not realize, that some individuals do not move like projectiles: that they decide to have their impact on the movement of society - and they accomplish their intention. To just ignore the effort of such individuals makes existence seem pointless.

Indeed, Skinner's efforts were huge, and he sustained his effort to the end of his life, when he lived under an oxygen tent - all his exertion could not be justified if existence is pointless. But he plodded and toiled, even against his declared conviction. But his research could not be rewarding if he had no purpose, no target.

B.F. Skinner was asked in an interview about the reward he obtained from his research, and he said: "The best appreciation I obtained in my life came at the tongue of a circus trainer, who trained wild animals. He said: 'We learnt this from your research on reinforcing behavior: that, instead of punishment, we can use rewards, with equal efficiency. We tried your method, and behavior followed by positive stimulus was reinforced. Therefore, we no longer train animals using punishment, but we use rewards with success.'

There is no need now for punishing animals, and learning of this was the most precious appreciation of my research."

It was great pleasure for Skinner to spare animals pain; it was now clear that for educating humans and helping them develop you do not need to resort to punishment. It was exhilarating to Skinner to hear that appreciation. No harm if he still believes that human behavior was the same as the projectile. He does have his lesson to teach, and we need not accept his view of the pointlessness of human existence.

And we realize, besides, that reinforcement through punishment has its part, a very limited part to play, as may be witnessed in certain medicines, poisons and surgery for some people with cancer. But these measures are definitely not the predominant method of reinforcing behavior, and we definitely try to avoid them whenever an alternative is accessible.

That some people with cancer have to take poison, which destroys the disease, but also has dreadful effect on the patient - that does not negate the law of the froth and the beneficial; the progress of existence towards the better.

The Teleology of Existence

One thing that Skinner noted, and it is a most valuable fact, is that our feelings and sensations do not control existence, though they control our personal life - that our impressions are deceptive, as is clear in our interpretation of the movement of the sun and earth: it turned out that the sun cared nothing for our impressions and our convictions. The

Qur'an teaches us this caution, as when it says, "certain it is that either we or you are on right guidance or in manifest error;" (34:24). It is the outcome which will prove who is in the right.

To act in accordance with the purpose of existence is to save time and reap better results, which is what is better and more enduring in Qur'anic terminology. Let some agree and some disagree, although the denier must pay for his/her denial.

I find that the Western Civilization is at this time a barrier to human progress. Even at the level of its best minds, it believes in the pointlessness of existence, and that wastes a lot of effort and time, and decreases the productivity of human effort.

But let us be careful and exact. Some thinkers are really doing admirable work to make a difference - Roger Garaudy, for instance, has dedicated his research and his whole life to retrieving meaning to human existence. He found the world going devoid of meaning, of any objective or aim. Indeed, some of our best minds adopt this negative attitude to existence - Fayez Fauq al 'Adeh, Chief of the Syrian Global Committee, with its headquarters in Damascus, together with his comrades, cite the theories of the Quantum and Uncertainty, and find in those theories a justification to finding existence void of meaning. To advocate this view completely should end in nothing but suicide - at least intellectual suicide, for having no purpose must lead to a complete cessation of all effort.

The Qur'an and Doubt

It was the Qur'an which drove me to all this investigation, when it said, "If you were in doubt;" (10:94). I find in this text a permission, even a command, to have doubt: for doubt will ward off nihilism. We can have doubt, without falling victim to nihilism, and this helps us move on to a better existence, not a worse one.

There are many writers, religious and non-religious, with so many ways of interpreting things. And yet, this Divine Book, the Qur'an, refers us to the facts of the world, the events that happen before our observation. It refers to those who succeeded in solving problems, and those who failed. And it is our duty to look into that, to view the Qur'an as a mediator to reaching those who have succeeded in solving problems, and those who failed, or have not solved them yet - we may be able to bring to their notice the experience of others, in hope of letting them undertake the process of change.

Let me try to state in what connection I have doubt:

I have no doubt that the world is moving ahead towards what is better. The plants were created first, then animals, and the last animal was man. And the human contributed to speeding up creation and saving time. So far, I am speaking of facts, at least in general terms: for to have no basics, then one will fall prey to absurdism and nihilism and sophistry. But next to that, we must have a lot of doubt, so that doubt may stimulate us to distinguish right-minded behavior from erroneous, misguided behavior.

We must aim, by distinguishing right-minded behavior from misguided behavior to avoid the longer way, which consumes too much time and effort, and may lead us to no solution at all. Instead, we are bound to choose the way which takes less time and effort - a way that, when followed, things will be easier and smoother; we begin to notice that we are moving to solution, and reaping better results.

Unless we have doubt, and look back at our present behavior, we shall stay stagnant, wasting our time and life in the way of loss and waste: always frustrated and downcast, without perceiving alternatives.

You will notice that, in the Qur'an, those who kept to their ways without ever looking back and analyzing their conduct, like Thamud, are deemed to have chosen blindness over guidance.

We have no doubts concerning the aims and objectives Muslims and Arabs uphold. But we have big doubts concerning the solutions they choose - I may go on to say: they have no method by which they may find solutions; they are muddled, and they grope in darkness. Why should they hold on to old ways, the ways of compulsion, and the inspired hero, and the national hero - do they not realize that those ways have led us to a solid wall?

The End of Heroic Solutions

The Ottoman State was the last of the states of heroism, but its last heroic and futile efforts appeared in the Battle of the Pyramids (or Embabeh), between Napoleon and the

Mamluks. The first adventurer, Muhammad Ali, came too late to fight with his huge army, huge but without any morale.

And now, with two hundred years separating us from those events, we still cling to Sulaiman's corpse - and in the meanwhile we keep groaning under the weight of humiliating torment: oblivious of what happened in the world, what died, and what was born.

Can the Gulf War be the trigger, which will induce us to part with the ways of compulsion and heroism? Or shall we keep clinging tightly to those corpses? Shall we be jubilant at the bloody revolts, attaching to them our hope, and offering many young men, as sacrifices to the god of war and violence and compulsion? Will our scholars keep silent? Will they condemn in vague terms such waste of life, but urge the youth, in secret, to adhere to that way?

But is it not time that we led the youth to a better way, closer to truth and good guidance? Is it not our responsibility to point out the right way, and illuminate the way for them?

Confusing Ends and Means

It must be clear by now that the way to getting rid of misguidance is through education and guidance - people need to sort out what is right-minded and what is misguided: and that is what we do not possess at present - indeed, it is such a long time since we lost good guidance and right-mindedness, in a way that we no longer hope to retrieve them.

Yes, our aims and objectives remain intact; but it is not so with means: there we do have our doubts. At least, let us start

by being clear when the doubt is in aims and when it is in means.

We agree on targets, like liberating Palestine, uniting Arabs, regaining trust among Arabs and Muslims - but we have doubts about the way such objectives should be attained.

I do not say that some people do not have their problem with aims and objectives, but my concern here is with the other problem: with the way that may enable us to realize our aims. And the ways that lead to attaining aims do count, as we find in the following Verse, "Even if they see all the Signs, they will not believe in them; and if they see the way of right guidance, they will not adopt it as the Way; but if they see the way of misguidance, that is the way they will adopt;" (7:146).

That one loses must point out one's mistake, in the means one has chosen - so we are not charging people of being bad or good, believers or disbelievers: it is a matter of gain or loss.

And one can cite more Verses in connection with this loss and not being on right-guidance, "So be in no wise of those in doubt, nor be of those who reject the Signs of Allah, or you shall be of those who lose;" (10:94-95).

And let me stress again that loss can be loss in this world. Is it not here, in this world, that we spend our life? We must explore what is behind the gain or loss of Arabs and Muslims? They can gain by reaching a pact, like that of the Europeans - no one losing anything, and all gaining by it: with no recourse to violence or compulsion, but surely and securely: it will work even if we start with one country: if we persist, there will be more cooperation; and when two parties are in it, a third will join.

I would like to sit and discuss the problems of the way of right guidance and the way of misguidance: Is it not for this that I write this book?

We must probe what it is that prevents us from achieving something like the European Union? What prevented the Soviet Union from peaceful change, in a way that it disintegrated?

The Way of the European Union and the Way of the Soviet Union

We are trying not be among the losers, the deniers, those who end up bringing destruction on themselves, as the following Verse states, "Those against whom the Word of your Lord has been verified would not believe - even if every Sign was brought to them, until they see for themselves the penalty grievous;" (10:96-97).

We still see nations which break up and disintegrate, as the Soviet Union did, and see nations that unite, as the Europeans did - and we see nations which inflict all kinds of aggression, being averse to the way of right-guidance, and refusing to learn by the Signs of God.

One great achievement is to deal with the revealed discourse of God as we deal with a discourse of this world, the way we deal with a discourse about business: This will help us understand better. If we could use it as a human language, a discourse for enlightening people - about the cost of behavior, with specifics about kind, quantity, cost in effort,

and consumption of time - or against the dollar - calculations like this will make of belief a way to enlightenment, a way of warding off suffering.

When the Almighty says in the Qur'an, " Those against whom the Word of your Lord has been verified would not believe - " (10:96-97) and, "Verily never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change that which is in themselves;" (13:11) we can learn from this that to change a people's condition of gain or loss, the way is to change what is in souls, and the way to changing what is in souls is through getting enlightened about the events that take place in the world, the facts and the way they happened; through the change that took place in a particular land before God changed their condition; through revealing the way of right guidance. We need to explore that way, and to have the boldness to go ahead and follow that road - for without that courage no one can call to following in the steps of the European Union, the Europeans who have been traditional enemies.

There is no going ahead without analysis, and exploring what is behind the mischief and illusion and arrogance - the running after privileges, and refusing to realize the state of equal footing ('*sawaa*' in Arabic) among people, charging others of being worthless, devoid of all good.

Europe and the Painful Torture

I said somewhere that when all fails, when people fail to learn how to solve problems, the only way left is that painful

torture comes and forces them to reconsider things, as a Verse affirms, "Those against whom the Word of your Lord has been verified would not believe - even if every Sign was brought to them, until they see for themselves the penalty grievous;" (10:96-97) and:

"To the Madyan people We sent Shu'aib, one of their own brethren: he said: 'O my people! Worship Allah; you have no other god but Him. Now has come unto you a clear Sign from your Lord! Give just measure and weight, nor withhold from the people the things that are their due; and do no mischief on the earth after it has been set in order: that will be best for you, if you have Faith. And do not squat on every road, breathing threats, hindering from the path of Allah those who believe in Him, and seeking in it something crooked; but remember how you were little, and He gave you increase. And hold in your mind's eye what was the end of those who did mischief. And even if there is a party among you who believes in the Message with which I have been sent, and a party which does not believe, hold yourselves in patience until Allah decides between us: for He is the best to decide.' The leaders, the arrogant party among his people, said: 'O Shu'aib! We shall certainly drive you out of our city - you and those who believe with you; or else you and they shall have to return to our ways and religion.' He said: 'What! Even though we do detest them? We should indeed invent a lie against Allah, if we returned to your ways after Allah has rescued us therefrom; nor could we by any manner of means return thereto unless it be as in the will and plan of Allah, our Lord. Our Lord can reach out to the utmost recesses of things by His

knowledge. In Allah is our trust. Our Lord! You decide between us and our people in truth, for You are the best to decide.' The leaders, the unbelievers among his people, said: 'If you follow Shu'aib, be sure that you are ruined!' But the earthquake took them unawares, and they lay prostrate in their homes before the morning! The men who rejected Shu'aib became as if they had never been in the homes where they had flourished: the men who rejected Shu'aib - it was they who were ruined! So Shu'aib left them, saying: 'O my people! I did indeed convey to you the Messages for which I was sent by my Lord: I gave you good counsel, but how shall I lament over a people who refuse to believe!' Whenever We sent a prophet to a town, We took up its people by suffering and adversity, in order that they might learn humility;" (7:85-94) and: " Those against whom the Word of your Lord has been verified would not believe - even if every Sign was brought to them, until they see for themselves the penalty grievous;" (10:96-97).

Losses come and go, and even the painful torture may have to come again and again - we may see this in Europe, to learn that some suffering may prove insufficient: how many a war happened, and how many people were prone to commit suicide ... but such reality can have its good side, for it causes change: the cultural change is, like geological change, slow but sure. We must be aware, however, that things can be speeded up, to save time through learning the laws, the mechanisms and means of changing what is in the soul - for then, what used to happen spontaneously, can happen on purpose. Is it not possible to ward off cities' devastation? Are

all civilizations destined to collapse? Is suicide an unavoidable event?

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE WAY OF GUIDANCE: THE WAY OF THE PROPHETS AND ADAM'S SON

Civilizations and the Challenge of Demise

Near the end of his book *Study of History*, Toynbee seemed unsure whether there was or was not a civilization which succeeded in responding to the challenge of imminent collapse.

The Qur'an itself seems to hint, for a casual reader, that collapse is inevitable.

Toynbee did wish that the Christian civilization survive, but he was not optimistic. Let us admit that Toynbee did go some steps beyond Ibn Khaldun: the latter had discovered the cycle of a state: its genesis, growth, and then decline and collapse; but Arnold Toynbee discovered the law of civilizations, with help from Goethe's *Faust*: their genesis, growth, expansion, collapse, and disintegration. But there is another aspect of history which Toynbee did not analyze: the phenomenon of prophethood, a cycle that accompanied humanity from the time of Adam, and continued to develop and grow, until it was a law for humankind, a law with clear features that people can follow and investigate.

The cycle I detected does not last for four generations (say 120-150 years) like Ibn Khaldun's cycle, nor as long as the civilization cycle, as put forward and studied by Toynbee, which can survive for over a thousand or several thousands of years, though it may be 'arrested' at any stage of its growth, but it can survive until it completes its circle, like the Egyptian civilization and the civilizations of Mesopotamia (Iraq).

The cycle I observed must bear a different designation - it may be designated 'Human toiling' - for it is essential that its designation should not be confined to any particular civilization or race: human toilsome and constant effort is not confined to any one people or race. It is what is referred to in the Verse, "O you man! Verily you are ever toiling on toward your Lord - but you shall meet Him;" (84:6) and it started from the day referred to in the Verse, "I will create a

vicegerent on earth;" (2:30) and will go on until is realized the Lord's hint, "I know what you do not know;" (2:30) - it is also what many Verses refer to when they end with "He is the end of all journeys;" or "to Whom you shall all be brought back;" (See, for instance 2:285; 36:22) all declaring that what God predicted for the human will be realized, since, as the Qur'an says, "Allah has full power and control over His affairs; but most among mankind do not know it;" (12:21).

The Prophets and the Movement of Human Toiling

This is the cycle I detected, that of human toiling, and I see it through the phenomenon of prophets: from Adam and his two sons, through prophets like Noah and Abraham, and down to Muhammad, peace be upon them all: a chain of prophets that called, one and all, to a new phase of human toiling - until the chain ended in the last link, the Qur'an, which referred man to history, to discover its laws - warning the human that without discovering and acting upon the law of history, he/she must keep receiving the blows of penalty of those who fail to learn.

This movement, heralded by prophets, will keep developing into the future, until God's promise takes shape, when humans will have to submit to the promise declared by all the prophets - until the day people will be compelled to stop blocking the way of Allah, that is, until people proceed to the better option of upholding the word of the equal footing, no more trying to subdue others and enslaving them; and until

they give up their illusion that they can eliminate compulsion with compulsion.

Having a Pure Heart, a Guiltless Hand, and a Guiltless Tongue

People are not yet prepared for this alternative - the allurements of erroneous ways are still pressing hard: the world seems to have no alternative to aggressive ways. Compulsion, referred to in the Verse, "Let there be no compulsion in religion;" (2:256) survives in our souls, and so survives in our life - for unless it is defeated within our souls, it cannot be eliminated from our midst.

It is a failing that settles in the heart, and as long as this problem is having its grip on the heart, right-mindedness will have no chance at all of finding a place in it: What aggression we suffer from is a reflection of aggression that we bear in our soul: the more here, the more there, and we shall not get rid of the visible aggression without dismissing the internal aggression from our soul.

We do need another specialist of the heart, one who can detect this germ of compulsion - unless one accepts the way of Adam's Upright Son, he/she will not be able to dismiss this love of compulsion from his/her heart.

I find this to be the point where the problem has its source and birth.

As long as one finds the other's adopting compulsion to be unpardonable but his/her own compulsion to be nice and justifiable - then his heart still bears the disease - the disease

Abraham was declared by the Qur'an to be free from. It will not do to find fault with those exercising compulsion, while we find it the right measure when we exercise it! And penalty must come to both parties.

The right way is to start with the heart and soul: for when the heart is whole and healthy, the hand and tongue will be free from this failing. Be sure that your heart has nothing left of its malice and hatred, not for a second - and then you will enjoy the blessing of having the sound heart.

How can I, with this effort, erase the mountain-high legacy of malice and hatred adopted as the way to rising and succeeding?

But I must have hope, for this is the prophets' way, their doctrine: it is the sacred area which only people like Bilal and Sumayyah can enter. It is with such persons that the history of Islam was built - while we take it to be a disgrace to behave like that slave: we little comprehend that, without accepting the way of Bilal, Islam has no chance: Do you not see this in the real condition of Muslims?

There are people in our history who we can hold up for models: we may hold up Ahmad bin Hanbal - without going into the particulars of his argument, for it is his revival of Bilal's courage that we need to refer to not the particular dispute. The *Mu'tazilites*, for all their stress of the rational ways, adopted, in dealing with Ibn Hanbal, the way of the *Khawarij*. They indeed did proclaim that a straying ruler must be challenged with the sword.

Deviation and Obscurity

So much confusion blurs our way. Not that things are too difficult to solve, but the sacred and the contaminated are so mixed up that they need all our effort to sort out.

A Verse of the Qur'an does alert us to the possibility of this confusion, "He it is Who has sent down to you the Book: in it are verses fundamental, of established meaning; they are the foundation of the Book: others are allegorical. But those in whose heart is perversity follow the part thereof that is allegorical, seeking discord, and searching for its hidden meaning, but no one knows its hidden meanings except Allah. And those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say: 'We believe in the Book; the whole of it is from our Lord;'" (3:7).

It is our responsibility to demonstrate how turmoil, misguidance, and right guidance can be confused.

I hope to have the doctrine of prophets demonstrated; the toiling of the human, and the trend of history. When I say that the time of the prophets is yet to be realized, I mean that people cannot think, until this time, of rebutting a bad move but with a bad move, tit for tat, while the Qur'an teaches us, "Nor can goodness and evil be equal. Repel evil with what is better;" (41:34) and, "why do you ask to hasten on the evil in preference to the good? " (27:46) - that such a way of responding to erroneous behavior will transform hostility and hatred into love and loyalty: it is evidently not what people uphold and practice.

Instead, anyone can see how we crave bringing harm to each other, how to eliminate not the other's attitude but the

adversary himself/herself. We definitely are not the kind of those who transform hostility to love.

Is it not curious to contemplate how God asserts that the way of doing good cannot be equal to doing bad, "Nor can goodness and evil be equal;" and we affirm that doing bad is really better than doing good?

So, which is mad thinking?

Do we not still assert that compulsion is right guidance, when God says, "Let there be no compulsion in religion: Right guidance stands out clear from misguidance"? (2:256).

What we see in our life is just misguidance eliminating misguidance - and we still say it is the way to establishing guidance!

Disbelief in This World and Disbelief in the Hereafter

I keep recalling the people of Jonah, for they are set up for us in the Qur'an as a model for the possibility of warding off punishment. Unlike Toynbee, I believe that what God knew to be destined to come one day will really come: I am optimistic that God's light will glow through the darkness of history, that it cannot be extinguished - no matter how determined some people are to have it extinguished.

And I see the light in the visible world, not in my belief in the unseen: It is already part of history, and history will give its testimony, despite all those who ignore it, despite all their pessimism. The Qur'an is optimistic, good deeds in it will eliminate bad deeds.

The disease of nihilism and pessimism will lead to despair and disbelief. It is true that the term 'disbelief, or *kufr* in Arabic' is used in connection with the unseen. Yes, it has this meaning, but there is disbelief in connection with the social and worldly existence. In the same way as we speak of penalty in this world and penalty on the Day of Judgment, there is disbelief in connection with this world and disbelief in connection with the Day of Judgment.

Disbelief in connection with this world is falling in the trap of obscurity and doubt. The problem in the Muslim world is that we have charged the word 'disbelief' with such evil meanings, that when anyone is charged with disbelief, especially one who used to be a Muslim, it is justifiable to put him/her to death, and to believe besides that to eliminate such person is an act of devotion to God.

But the Qur'an does not represent 'disbelief' as a cause of putting to death, nor for doing *jihad* against a people.

But we still fight with our words, sending out the charge of disbelief, as a preliminary step to fighting with the sword - and it was started since copies of the Qur'an were raised at the tip of swords in the war between Mu'awiah and Ali. And not far ago, the two combatant armies charged each other with disbelief in the Gulf Wars.

Dr. Al-Bouti and the Book of Jihad

When Dr. Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan Al-Bouti's book, *Jihad in Islam: How to Understand it, and How to Practice It*, was published, I complimented it with the words: "The

Muslim World will not be after this book what it was before it." I did not mean of course that the Muslim World will be a different world overnight. I meant that a man of the caliber of al-Bouti cannot but have his impact when he recalls to mind that disbelief is not a cause for eliminating the soul which is prohibited by God to eliminate, that the book was a major step in bringing reform to the Muslim World.

And when I say 'recall to mind' I mean that it was not something unprecedented that he introduced. It is an Islamic principle, and he merited the compliment.

I have no doubt that good signs exist around us, as the bringing back of this topic to the field of discussion indicates. It indicates an awakening, and some rationalization taking place, and the elimination of some doubts and confusion. For without having this topic cleared, there will be no end to the war among Muslims.

Let anyone capable of investigating this topic do that, and he/she will find enough evidence, as Dr. al-Bouti was able to find. I say with confidence that no Muslim scholar asserts that to rule through insurgence and aggression is a legitimate way of acceding to rule. When scholars dispute, they dispute who among two rebellious parties must be chosen when there is no alternative to them.

But what is unpardonable is that scholars still keep mum about the unmistakable situation, that for regaining right-guided life, the way is not through misguidance, but through right guidance.

Let us hope, however, that with the new enthusiasm in taking up the topic of *jihad* there will be a breakthrough in a

return to the Islamic way of dealing with reviving right guidance.

Al-Bouti's book has the merit of reviving what was neglected for many centuries. Another main topic of the book is giving priority to enlightening people and reviving the Islamic way of life, rather than resorting to violence and misguidance: this is certainly an admirable step towards establishing the fact that the most noble *jihad* is understanding the facts of the Qur'an, for the other *jihad*, fighting, may not be given priority over enlightenment; that fighting is not the task of individuals, but of society, and that it is establishments like the police and judiciary who are responsible for preserving people's rights; that a society takes shape through missionary work and guidance, and it is the society that produces its representative and judges, its police force and ruler; and that the representatives of the public are not to claim people's loyalty through resorting to force, but through education and calling people to the way of prophets.

I am aware that behaviors can be misrepresented, that intentions can be doubted - but there is history, and history never neglects a good deed, no matter how tiny: and this again is in view of the law of 'froth vanishes and what is beneficial remains in the ground.'

I do realize, too, that people do not like you to stir what was pushed out of mention for a long time: they are repelled and they misunderstand. They are often vexed at such revelation; so what is the solution?

One really must go ahead. History will reveal the worthless ideas, and the beneficial ones, and will even teach

us the rule and law that are behind eliminating the harmful and preserving the good: it will teach us the tools and durations according to which history moves, as referred to in the Verse, "Such was the *sunnah*, i.e. law, approved of Allah among those who lived aforetime: no chance you will find in Allah's *sunnah*;" (33:62).

Jonah's People and Escape from Penalty

Jonah's people had the merit of sensing the approaching penalty, and being sensible enough to ward it off by upholding faith.

Can we learn from this, in the Muslim World, to ward off at least some of the humiliation and disgrace and loss? Any effort towards sparing some penalty will be a historical achievement - for history's trajectory goes in the direction of ceaselessly decreasing the number and severity of erroneous attempts: if you can eliminate just one erroneous attempt, then you have done a good service to humankind: it is a major step that merits earning you credit for it. It is a significant achievement - learning from some other party's mistake not to commit the same mistake again: Hence the importance of being alert to the events of history, not to repeat the past's errors; and to be alert to the kind of attempts that take place at the moment, at new levels.

What interests me in history is its general trend, its big law - and I find the world as a developing thing, not static - to view the world as a static thing, or a deteriorating thing, is an un-Islamic attitude, for the Qur'an tells us otherwise, "He adds

to creation as He pleases;" (35:1) and, "and He creates other things of which you have no knowledge;" (16:8) - and, for proof, the Qur'an directs us to the cosmos itself, "So turn your vision: do you see any flaw?" (67:3)

And when the cosmos progresses on its course, it takes no notice of our ignorance - this again is essential to recall; though the human can, and should, realize the trust assigned to him/her; and to have this awareness speeds up the rhythm of history. This must serve the human, since the human is impatient to see things happen, as the Qur'an tells us, "for man is given to hasty deeds;" (17:11), and, "Man is a creature of haste;" (21:37). It is a settled drive of man's to cut out some stages and speed up things - well, if so, here are God's laws in the world, waiting to serve man, for, by employing those laws, he/she may enlist their support to realize what is more beneficial.

It is a habit with us to notice the failures, but the Qur'an puts on record the success of Jonah's people, a standing model, though a singular one: but it must serve as a model that may be developed into a general law.

If the general tone of the world is pessimistic, history teaches us otherwise - let us not accept this stagnation and inertia; let us be creative in our reading of history, in how creative events get more numerous and come at shorter intervals. Let us be creative in finding ways to get rid of the world's despair.

The Historical Progress

It was history that helped me get rid of despair: It proved to be God's way of eliminating the unsuccessful ways, ways that waste time and effort, with little productivity. God abrogates ways that are too costly: it is the system of creation that the cosmos moves towards what is simpler and more merciful, towards what is economical in sources and efforts, with greater productivity. Let others think that too far, but the Qur'an teaches me it is quite at hand, "They see it indeed as a far-off event: But We see it quite near;" (70:6-7).

It is the Devil, as the Qur'an states (17:27), who is fond of wasting - and even when I fail to convey my message in the shortest and most effective statement, I would be guilty of wasting. It is the intellectual superficiality which causes putting in too much effort, with little productivity. It is not the best system of creation to go on like this.

Do we find in our modern world a people who, like Jonah's people, learned the lesson of history, as the Qur'an tells us, "Why was there not a single township among those We warned which believed - so its Faith should have profited it - except the people of Jonah?" (10:98) For such long stretches of time, history put on record a redundant repetition of mistakes, and so it moved so slow - but of late, the human has started to notice the possibility of condensing history. So let us learn to put our questions to history: it teaches us how to be economical, how to save; and demonstrates the outcome of wasting and destroying.

But still some insist on not taking note, on rejecting the facts - and they will bring loss on themselves. This is how it works: If you have doubts, turn your attention to those who passed before you, so have no doubt about the firmness of historical process, as it applied to those before you - but if you still are confused, then the costs, the losses and suffering, of those who fail to learn what history can teach, must be the teacher.

But one can be spared: there are the examples before us, of the many losers, and the winner represented by Jonah's people: they were spared suffering here, in this world.

It is God's will that to bear the trust, to have a hand in determining their destiny, people must learn their lesson from history. It is through what you acquire of knowledge and awareness of what is harmful and what is beneficial: it is in this way that the human has become different from the rest of creation. But let him/her not regress, since he/she has entered the world of right guidance, the world of distinguishing things; let him/her not regress to the world of compulsion. Yes, it is God who put before the human the two alternatives, as the Qur'an tells us, "Will you, then, compel mankind, against their will, to believe?" (10:99) and, "No soul can believe, except by the Will of Allah;" (10:100). So, look at the legacy of those before you: did they deal right with the problem of choice, and the signs of history? Or did they take it for a meaningless mass of facts?

For those who are still in doubt, it does them much good to again review my two readings of the Qur'an: a reading which focuses on God's creation, and a reading which traces

human creativity: how history is the creation of God, but is also the result of human effort. Reflect on these Verses: "If it had been your Lord's Will, they would all have believed - all who are on earth! Will you then compel mankind, against their will, to believe? No soul can believe, except by the Will of Allah, and He will place doubt on those who will not understand. Say: 'Behold all that is in the heavens and on earth'; but neither Sings nor Warners profit those who do not believe. Do they then expect any thing but what happened in the days of the men who passed away before them? Say: 'You wait then: for I, too, will wait with you.' In the end We deliver Our Messengers and those who believe: thus is fitting on Our part that We should deliver those who believe;" (10:99-103).

Man and the Trust of Subjugation

For a capital, for a 'given', see how much has been put under the human's disposal, as the following Verse tells us, "And He has subjected to you, as from Him, all that is in the heavens and on earth;" (45:13).

With this great bounty, and this capacity for subduing the forces of the cosmos, there comes the ability of distinguishing the beneficial from the harmful. So, it is enjoined on the human to know his/her place, and his/her responsibility. So, once you have a glimpse of this light, never let it disappear from your view.

With this ability, a human can review history: Who acted properly? Who had the right attitude to history - and therefore solved problems? Were there people like this, who looked

well and solved problems? Where does the Muslim World stand today?

If the first charge levelled against the human was what the angels said, as the Qur'an reports, "Will you place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood?" (2:30): doing mischief, the utmost mischief is spilling sacred blood, and turning people out of their homes. It is still standing, this charge of the angels - the immigrants in the modern world, according to statistics, are 45 million.

This is mischief that we are witnessing; but what convictions, ideas, and interpretations, are settled in the soul, and which result in these actions? What is the relation between faith and work, between thought and behavior?

The Criterion of Truth and Falsehood

There is a relation between thought and behavior - ideas and thought are corrected through the outcome of behavior. People, believers or non-believers, find it difficult to comprehend the relation of outcome and the part it may play in correcting behavior.

So, the first step is to be acquainted with the laws of existence, whether one attributes them to God or to nature - the essential thing here is to be acquainted with the system.

The basic problem of the human experience is the spilling of blood and doing mischief: nothing is more serious than the unjustified spilling of blood. But some people give themselves the right to spill blood, and not only take it as

justifiable to spill blood, but take it to be an act of devotion - although they cannot refer to a criterion in that.

The Qur'an tells us that doing good cannot be equal to doing bad, "Are the blind equal with those who see? Or the depths of darkness equal with light?" (13:16).

Are Good Deeds Equal to Bad Deeds?

We refer to our sensations and nerves to measure things: but that is not a reliable measure, as some people's sensation tells them it is hot, and some people's sensation tells them it is cold. How may we distinguish truth and falsehood?

The measure, as was mentioned above, is that the true is what is more beneficial and more enduring - what is good for more people is nearer to truth than what is good for less people - we have seen how some people take the best to be what gives benefit to even one person - were not the pyramids of Egypt built with efforts beyond measure each for just one person?

We have, in the Qur'an, illustrative examples of those who did mischief and spilled blood; here is an example: "After this it is you, the same people, who slay among yourselves, and banish a party of you from their homes [we have here both killing and banishing from home]; assist their enemies against them, in guilt and rancor, and if they come to you as captives, you ransom them, that it was not lawful for you to banish them. Then is it only a part of the Book that you believe in, and do you reject the rest? But what is the reward for those among you who behave like this but disgrace in this life? -

and, on the Day of Judgment they shall be consigned to the most grievous penalty. For Allah is not unmindful of what you do;" (2:85).

Killing and Banishing from Home

It may be concluded that spilling blood and banishing from homes are the utmost mischief; but, of course, there are many minor acts of injury: there is backbiting, mocking, and the like.

And killing and banishing from home have been common among humans for such a long period, as the following Verse tells us, "And the unbelievers said to their Messengers: 'Be sure we shall drive you out of our land, or you shall return to our religion.' But their Lord inspired this message to them: 'Verily We shall cause the wrong-doers to perish;'" (14:13) and: "The leaders, the arrogant party among his people, said: 'O Shu'aib! We shall certainly drive you out of our city - you and those who believe with you; or else you and they shall have to return to our ways and religion.' He said: 'What! even though we do detest them?'" (7:88).

And when Waraqah bin Nawfual saw the Prophet, ﷺ, soon after receiving the first revelation, he said to him, "I wish I could be on your side when your people banish you from home." "Are they going to banish me?" he asked. "Yes, no

one came with something like what you come with but was targeted with hostility." ²⁴

And we see how many millions of people immigrate, in the modern world, by force, or in fear for their life.

We all know that polytheism is a sin that may not be forgiven, and the penalty for it will be on the Day of Judgment. But as for killing and banishing from home, they are, according to the Qur'an, the two sins that may not be tolerated in the Muslim community: the perpetrator may not continue to live in the Muslim community.

We need badly to specify who is justified to put to death, and in what circumstances it may be exercised? Many give themselves this right, and that is how guidance gets confounded with misguidance, and belief in dictatorship gets confounded with belief in God.

The Prophet, ﷺ, says: "What is allowable is clear, and what is prohibited is clear; but between them there are doubtful cases;"²⁵. But when one has power, it may seem to him that nothing is prohibited to him/her; and if one is weak, then nothing is permitted - not even to think or talk.

And when darkness reigns, then people go blindly under whatever slogan comes their way - no wonder, in this case, that a Nietzsche thinks history to be nothing better than the folly of follies.

There is a way, however. One can opt for not staining his/her hand with blood, and not letting his/her tongue be

²⁴ Reported by al-Bukhari, in the Part on the Start of Revelation, Chapter on How Revelation first came to the Messenger, ﷺ, No. 3; and Muslim, Part on Faith, Chapter on How Revelation to the Messenger, peace be upon him, first started, footnote No. 160.

²⁵ Reported by al-Bukhari, Part on Safeguarding one's faith, No. 52; and Muslim, in the Part on 'Musaqat', i.e. Participated cultivation of land, Chapter on accepting the permissible and eschewing the dubious, No. 1599.

contaminated with false compliments for those who spill blood; and we can guard our hearts, so that they are free from spilling the love of spilling blood - when we genuinely hate spilling blood, from our hearts: It is then that we have a clear conscience.

It is a sound heart, that which is free from any wish for blood. Adam's Son attained this: his hand was clear of blood: and this is the answer to our question about distinguishing truth from falsehood. It is those who follow in the steps of Adam's Son who have a clear record: Those who no one can say there is blood on their hands.

I understand Islam and the Qur'an as not allowing to spill the blood of anyone who does not direct his/her weapon at others. I see this in light of the Verse, "if they withdraw from you but do not fight you, and instead send you guarantees of peace, then Allah has opened no way for you to war against them;" (4:90).

If you like to enter under the covenant of the Qur'an, and its security, then opt for peace, and that is your protection, for your life, your money, your life and your safety on the Day of Judgment. You will have a sound heart, and your tongue and hand will be free from dirty ways.

The Way of Right-Mindedness Is the Way of Adam's Son

We have in the way of Adam's Upright Son the way to ward off getting involved in a fatal conflict - As the Qur'an

prohibits the killing of a soul except for a legitimate reason, "Those who do not invoke, with Allah, any other god, nor slay such life as Allah has made sacred, except for just cause;" (25:68).

When you see two persons in deadly quarrel, you may have doubt as to whose soul is the sacred soul which is protected by *sharia*; but you do not have doubt if you see a person being the victim of murder, if that person refrains from stretching his/her hand to kill the other: He/she is following Adam's Son in this behavior.

We see in this that one can choose not to be either member of a deadly conflict; he/she can have the situation evident enough for all to see. The other can choose to follow a murderous behavior, but I can choose to refuse to have the same behavior: let the other party choose to kill, if they insist, but they cannot make of me a murderer: that is not up to them.

We may refer for such reasoning to Verses like, "to hold back their hands from fight but establish prayers and spend in regular charity;" (4:77) and, "Nay, do not obey him: but bow down in adoration, and bring yourself closer to Allah;" (96:19) and the *hadith*, "A Muslim will remain within the bounds of his faith, unless he/she is involved in spilling sacred blood."²⁶

Does this help you in understanding the other *hadith*, "Follow Adam's Son," and, "Hit your sword against a rock to

²⁶ Reported by al-Bukhari, in the Part on Blood Money, in the prelude to hadith No. 6469.

break it [rather than being involved in fight with other Muslims];"²⁷

Does this seem the right approach to Muslims, to hold back one's way when a general state of uproar is around? Or does it seem mad to restrain one's hand?

I hope we have gone some way in distinguishing right guidance from misguidance.

Why Call to the Way of Adam's Upright Son?

I choose to adhere to the way of Adam's Son, as I find it in the Verse, "If you stretch your hand against me, to slay me, it is not for me to stretch my hand against you to slay you: for I do fear Allah, the Cherisher of the worlds;" (5:28) rather than claiming to be more knowledgeable about the revealed texts and find a more involved way of interpreting the text. I choose to be on the safe side, and not to spill blood, referring to some *fatwa*. I choose to adhere to the sacred area where my blood must not be spilled.

I find this attitude to be a solid launching pad, from which I can address the whole world. Anyone may choose to kill me, but no one can make of me a murderer! It is a solid enough position, and well illuminated.

Let my hand be perfectly pure, in all aspects.

²⁷ Reported by al-Tirmithi, in the Part on Turmoil, Chapter no. 33, *Hadith* No. 2205; and Abu Dawud, in the Part on Turmoil, Chapter on Prohibiting rushing at time of turmoil, N. 4259: an authentic *Hadith*.

The Way of Adam's Son and Getting Rid of Vagueness

This world of Adam's Son ensures peace and security: it gives one great tranquility. And, mind you, history is going in this direction.

Let those who comprehend this argument adhere to the way of right-mindedness, and not let go of it for a moment. It is the position which ensures for one the sacredness of their life; and protects them from fighting under a blind banner - one will be here in the safety of a Verse like, "O you who believe! Save yourselves and your families from a Fire;" (66:6).

There is no dearth of Islamic texts to help one see the right side. Let one insist on not being one of two fighting parties, for yes, things can be confused in this case, and the situation will be a cause for doubt. But not when the killing intention is on one side only.

Here is a text that helps. The Messenger, peace be upon him, once said: "Should two Muslims confront each other, each raising his sword, then both the killer and the killed will be thrown in Hell." Some of his Companions said: "We understand about the killer; but what about the killed?" "He was intent on killing his adversary," he answered²⁸.

Can you think of a reason why Muslims have mostly ignored the above authentic *hadith*?

²⁸ Reported by al-Bukhari in the Part on Faith, Chapter on, "If two parties among the believers fall into a quarrel," *Hadith* No. 31; and by Muslim, in the Part on Turmoil, Chapter on Should two Muslims meet with their swords drawn against each other, No. 2888.

They seem to find a clearing of their doubt in another text, which they also do not get right - I mean the Verse, "If two parties among the believers fall into quarrel, you make peace between them: but if one of them transgresses beyond bounds against the other, then you all fight against the one that transgresses until it complies with the command of Allah; but if it complies, then make peace between them with justice, and be fair: for Allah loves those who are fair and just;" (49:9).

The above Verse discusses really the situation of a group who has fallen into misguidance, and, unless they revert to the straight path, the legitimate authority must force them. The misguided side is here confronted by the party who have assumed their ruling position in the legitimate way.

Let no one be used as a gun in the hand of others; let us rather adhere to Bilal's way: This is the way of right guidance. Beware of being on one side of a conflict among misguided sides: let your heart cling to the right-minded way. Remember what the Messenger, ﷺ, said, in a kind of farewell speech: "Beware of falling into disbelief after I pass away, by falling on each other's necks with swords;"²⁹.

I am resisting a kind of thinking that has been around for many centuries, but the Qur'an exhorts us to think again and again, in many locations. Let us remember that when falsehood has been around for a very long time, it does not turn into truth in this way. We must take this in earnest: It

²⁹ Reported by al-Bukhari, in the Part on Faith, Chapter on: Listening to scholars, *Hadith* No. 121; and by Muslim, in the Part on Faith, Chapter on The meaning of the Prophet's, peace be upon him, saying: 'Do not fall after me into disbelief, etc.', *Hadith* No. 65.

must transpire that all the bewildering problems of the Muslim World, appearing again and again, are caused by this insistence on realizing good guidance through corruption, by contradicting the commands of religion to realize religion - was this not the justification of *alkhawarej*: it is really the meaning of the word *khawarej* (*kharaja* in Arabic means: to step out, i.e. to leave the right way). Has it occurred to you that, with the prevalent understanding of Islam, we identify with the *khawarej*? Is not their main feature that they justify realizing a correct situation through a false means?

The Way of Truth Is the Way of the Prophets and Adam's Son

The right establishment is that built by the guiltless hand, the way the Messenger, peace be upon him, built society: not one person was killed for more than half the duration of his message. Why do we forget that? Do you not see how pure and free from mischief the Prophet's way was?

Do we not always speak of following in the steps of the Messenger? Let us not fall instead in the trap of the other side, those who are described in the Qur'an as, "if they see the way of right conduct, they will not adopt it as the way; but if they see the way of misguidance, that is the way they will adopt;" (7:146).

It is hard, but feasible, this way. Let us reflect on stories of the Qur'an which give us steadiness, "All that We relate to you of the stories of the messengers - with it We make firm your heart" (11:120).

We are bound, obligated by the Qur'an, to remind each other of the way of truth, as in "join together in the mutual teaching of Truth, and of patience and constancy;" (103:3).

The Way of Right Guidance and the Way of Democracy

Let us contemplate these two Verses: "took this Qur'an as a thing abandoned;" (25:30) and "if they see the way of right conduct, they will not adopt it as the way; but if they see the way of misguidance, that is the way they will adopt;" (7:146). How far are we from the right guidance as taught in Islamic texts, and from the way of democracy which history has developed in its progress towards improvement? For democracy may be taken to be an achievement, realized in spite of all those who tried to halt history's progress towards what is better.

But what is it that impedes Muslims' progress to right guidance or democracy? Why should much of the world go ahead of us towards right guidance and democracy, when the Qur'an teaches us, "if they see the way of right conduct, they will not adopt it as the way; but if they see the way of misguidance, that is the way they will adopt;" (7:146)? Why should we just stand envying those who have gone ahead of us? Do we have no right-minded individuals to pull us out of our darkness?

We can see the facts, but cannot see the law behind them. Why is it that we are ready to sacrifice our life in the way of

misguidance, rather than choose the way of right guidance, or even democracy? What irresistible force holds us back?

It may be noticed that neither the Islamic-minded, nor the modernist, have the insight to adopt the way of right guidance or the way of democracy: both suffer from the same disease, the same conviction. So, what is behind that?

You see how incapable both parties are of conducting debate, how each takes the other to be a deadly enemy; and yet, they let the same disease afflict them. So, what idea involves both?

The Way of Adam's Son, the Crystal-Clear Way

I do see the alternative, the way outside the game, the sound heart, and the guiltless hand: it is the way of Adam's Son.

It is not to extend my hand to kill. And let others choose their way. This is the way I choose, and if the other chooses to stain his/her hand with blood, it will be his/her own sin. They will learn, even though I might have been eliminated in the meanwhile. What concerns me is to have a sound heart and a guiltless hand. My very thought does not accept to be guilty of crime. I believe in God and the Day of Judgment.

And I endeavor to have even the ground beneath my feet uncontaminated and free from aggression.

But let us inquire: What drives a human to violence and murder?

The answer is clear: he/she resorts to kill when he/she cannot see any other way; they will not seek that way if they see a way without violence and killing.

The Levels of Work

If we go back to the story of Adam's two sons, we find that the one who chose to commit murder was the one who failed in his work: the one whose sacrifice was rejected. We learn from Islam that for work to be accepted it must be both for good intention, and to be correct work.

I devoted a whole book to *Work as Ability and Purpose*; and gave examples that bring the idea within comprehension. Here are two examples:

1. The mother, who is most well-intended towards her child; but, because of her ignorance of the principles of hygiene, she may cause her child serious handicap, if not its death. This is the first situation: Good intention without correctness;
2. Correctness without good intention: A physician who knows the principles of hygiene, and know what brings the patient good health, but has no good intention towards the patient, and so may recommend what does not heal him/her.

The Islamic Problem and the Intellectual Challenge

I find the Islamic problem, as handled by both camps, the Islamic-minded and the national-minded, to be of the second

category. Let us not charge either party of bad intentions: We have no doubts there; but I do have doubts concerning the way they understand the way to solution. Although they are well-intended, their ideas and style and approach are so inadequate.

They are, one and all, of very little confidence in their ability to be winners in the intellectual battle: this is a common denominator, involving all parties. So, we must focus on this, for without getting this problem cleared, we shall not be able to go to the next point. For a proof, one may notice that they refuse to be involved in intellectual challenge.

Their aversion to being involved in intellectual debate cannot be without deficiency in their confidence that their ideas will be met favorably by others: this is the drawback, and it requires our probing both the religious-minded or the agnostic or secular-minded. They lost confidence: perhaps in the ideas that they uphold, or in man, or in both - otherwise how would you understand their reluctance to enter the intellectual arena? Why should they turn to the physical conflict instead? Why do they resort to coercion in matters of faith?

This is a common denominator among all the groups: it is the intellectually defeated who resorts to the physical battle. They all seem to assume that, should people be left to themselves, they would not choose to accept the doctrine.

Let us then show patience in the intellectual arena, as to abandon it and choose instead the physical arena surely indicates one's defeat in the intellectual sphere.

It is not unlike the physician who has no cure for his/her patient, and decides to get rid of this situation by putting the patient to death. Do we not condemn such physician?

Let us then show some skill as physicians of the social drawbacks of society.

Truth and Falsehood in the Qur'an and in Our Conception

Our dilemma may be summed up in our assuming that: Should truth and falsehood be given equal chances, it is falsehood which will win, and truth will be defeated.

It is fair to make this conclusion about the predominant position in the Muslim World: how can we otherwise understand this attitude of insisting that truth should not stand face to face with falsehood, on equal footing.

But it is a deplorable attitude, this lack of confidence in truth. It is not a position that the laws and facts of history support; nor is it a position that the Qur'an supports. Go to the Qur'an and review it, and see what status it assigns to truth - when for instance it says: "And say: 'Truth has now arrived, and falsehood perished: for falsehood is by its nature bound to perish,'" (17:81) "Nay, We hurl the Truth against falsehood, and it knocks out its brain, and behold, falsehood perishes;" (21:18), and "Say: 'Verily my Lord casts the mantle of Truth over His servants - He that has full knowledge of all that is hidden.' Say: 'The Truth has arrived, and falsehood neither creates anything new, nor restores anything,'" (34:48-49).

And the Qur'an promises triumph to God's prophets and the believers, "We will, without doubt, help Our Messengers and those who believe, both in this world's life and on the Day when the witnesses will stand forth;" (40:51).

It is true that, though the Qur'an insists it is the Truth which will come out victorious, what we see in the real world is that this victory is not so clear. For many, this quick review gives them the impression that it is truth which is defeated across history; and hence their pessimistic attitude - a philosopher like Nietzsche feels justified in his conclusion that history might be summed up as a chain of base hostilities and forced and low values, dictated under compulsion, for the most wicked purposes. Even a man like Toynbee seemed unsure that civilizations could stand the test when they face the spiritual challenges that come their way. But I view history in a different way, that transcends the limited perspectives and short and scattered terms.

A human life is short, and it has no room enough for the historical development. But history itself encompasses the entire progress of humankind: from the time humans ate human flesh, and offered human sacrifices, until they are very different from that - it is by now established, more or less, that a human may not be killed for his/her thought.

Except perhaps in the Muslim World. To have someone brought for trial, and to be given a death sentence, just on account of the ideas he/she bears - this may happen only in the Muslim World. The rest of the world finds this unacceptable. Only the Muslim World is still prepared to wage war to have people convert to our religion - they do deny

that they will bring somebody, try him, and have him executed for his beliefs - but they approve of such trial and execution in their hearts.

But history is a patient master, and it has its own way of instructing: and the cost it charges will force people to change their attitudes.

Let us not pass by this issue of the intellectual defeat. It is unacceptable that we think that should truth and falsehood be given equal chances it is falsehood which will come out victorious. Such assumption is thinking the worst about God, about Truth, and about man. To think of the cosmos as built on such bases is a very serious mistake: it plays indeed a direct part in the mischief and bloodshed that thrive in the world. For after accepting this major defeat, all kinds of evil and doubts find their way to minds. I do not know if the reader has noticed this reverse relation between enlightened thought and violence: that the higher the thinking of humans and the more enlightened, the less one is confident of the use of violence - and the more he/she will feel the need to brush it away from our life. And, conversely, the more one is hopeless about the ideas he/she bears, the less he/she believes that they will be accepted by people, without enforcing them on their minds - and hence their clinging to using physical force and violence to have their ideas conveyed.

The Prophet, ✠, and Intellectual Force

It is not so difficult for each one to review their own position. But the rule is that if one believes that the ideas of

disbelief will predominate over faith, then the prediction will prove self-fulfilling: their ideas will really be defeated, with or without the resort to physical force. The truth is that any kind of thinking that does not have the inherent strength to have ascendance without the support of physical force is of no value: it is worthless and will not survive. On the other hand, strong thought will win the day without the support of physical strength. For evidence, one may notice how the Messenger, ﷺ, and his Companions, were not allowed to use any force but the intellectual force - and they went like this all the way, until their society was established, and the rule was in their hands, without any use of physical strength.

Why should this fact be so absent from our minds when it is a very clear historical fact? You see how distorted the history of Islam becomes without this fact.

The Messenger, peace be upon him, was able to prove, in every way and from every perspective, that truth could prove itself, without the support of physical force. He proved, without the shred of doubt, that the society of right-mindedness would succeed in practicing right guidance, uncontaminated with compulsion; and that rule can be reached without any amount of violence. It was the purest possible situation: not one idolater was killed during this long period, not on purpose and nor by mistake. Not one of the tortured Muslims defended himself/herself, by trying to assassinate their torturer, or even hit them.

Is it weakness? This is not true, recalling the pre-Islam period, when no one succumbed to aggression without retaliation. What the Messenger, peace be upon him, and his

Companions did was to set down the distinction between right guidance and misguidance: they realized that an intellectual conflict must not be contaminated with recourse to force.

The Muslims lost this distinction - that the intellectual conflict must not be contaminated with physical force; and down to our own day, the Muslims suffer from this defeat. They still bear weak ideas which cannot withstand confrontation in the intellectual arena. If Muslims say I am exaggerating, what holds them back from choosing the same road used by their Prophet Muhammad? restraining all violence, banning all recourse to force - all the way until the society of right-minded rule is established, all with nothing but pure thought and guiltless hand.

Maybe the best Muslim minds get this message, and maybe not. If not, then history has a way of compelling the minds to understand, whether they like it or not - and only after paying a very high cost, in our case in the amount of violence that prevails.

I say this since all the appearances indicate that even those who can see the way of right-mindedness and the way of misguidance choose the way of misguidance: they have no hope for truth to win without recourse to force. But this which Muslims take to be impossible was the way the first Muslims, with the Messenger, ﷺ, for leader, did very successfully. But for some time now, Muslims have lost all confidence in thought - although in this they are not standing for faith; and faith cannot be accepted through resort to force, as the Qur'an affirms, "Let there be no compulsion in religion;" (2:256).

Confusing Guidance and Misguidance

When many Muslims assume that faith cannot be but Faith in absolute truth, they commit a major error. It is not so, for faith can be contaminated: truth can be contaminated with falsehood, and faith can be contaminated with disbelief. Reflect well on this, and seek help from Verses like, "It is those who believe and do not confuse their beliefs with wrong - that are truly in security, for they are on right guidance;" (6:82).

We need to set down a decisive division between establishing truth with force, and truth which produces force. Religion which permits establishing society and rule through force, through violence and intrigue, is not the same as religion which prohibits establishing society through force and violence, and prohibits reaching rule through assassinations, intrigue and treachery. This must be clear: for we can see how a society ruled through compulsion is not dominated by representatives of truth but by the mightier.

Should this not be clear in minds, then the law of the jungle will be confounded with God's System, and faith in God will be confounded with faith in the false deity, or *taghoot*, who may be given absolute obedience in place of God; (referring to the Verse, "Right guidance stands out clear from misguidance: whoever rejects the false deity and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold;" (2:256).

This distinction is not yet established in our midst: we do not perceive the difference between right guidance and misguidance, the law of the jungle and the law of justice. And

as long as we confuse this and this, all our efforts are in vain, wasted effort.

The Clear Way of Adam's Son

One need not be an erudite scholar to adhere to the way of Adam's Upright Son. Adam's Son not only refrained from murder when it would be a positive crime, but from murder when it could be in self-defense. This is clear in his statement in the relevant Verse, "If you stretch your hand against me, to slay me, it is not for me to stretch my hand against you to slay you: for I do fear Allah, the Cherisher of the worlds;" (5:28). The Messenger, peace be upon him, was referring to this when he said, "Follow the way of Adam's Son;"³⁰ In another hadith, the Messenger affirms that "The best of martyrs is Hamzah, and, besides, a man who stands before an unjust ruler, commanding him of adhering to Truth, and forbidding him of acts of falsehood, so that the ruler puts him to death;"³¹. You see that the Prophet is asserting that this man is the best of martyrs not for killing another, but for being killed just for offering advice.

If the reader is still in doubt, please let us start with a point which is not subject to doubt - that to be killed without wishing to kill the other, is to die in innocence. Let us review again some of the relevant texts: the Qur'an says: "those who were told to hold back their hands from fight, but establish

³⁰ Reported by al-Tirmithi in the Part on Turmoil, Chapter on: The report about the turmoil to come, *Hadith* No. 2195; and Abu Dawud, in the Part on Turmoil, Chapter on prohibited rushing during turmoil, *Hadith* No. 4257; an authentic *Hadith*.

³¹ Reported by al-Hakem, 3:195; an authentic *Hadith*.

regular prayers and spend in regular charity;" (4:77) and, "Nay, do not obey him: but bow down in adoration, and bring yourself closer to Allah!;" (96:19) the Messenger says, "Be patient, Yaser's family, for we shall meet in Paradise;"³²; we have the Verse, "Rejected were the Messengers before you: with patience and constancy they bore their rejection and their wrongs, until Our aid reached them: there is none that can alter the Words and Decrees of Allah. Already you have received some account of those Messengers;" (6:34). And let me add the Verse reporting the messengers' saying to their peoples, "We shall certainly bear with patience all the hurt you may cause us. For those who put their trust should put their trust on Allah;" (14:12).

All the above illustrates the prophets' way of showing patience before injury, and not retaliating - and this is clearest in the way of the last prophet, Muhammad: it is the way of prophets, no matter how utopian or most unrealistic some represent it to be.

It is most decisively the way of Messenger Muhammad, peace be upon him, and he sustained it for thirteen years, without one instance of violation. And his Companions adhered to this way most steadily. So, we have before us a very clear way.

They will remain a luminary for all mankind in adhering to the unsullied truth, trusting ideas without the least resort to arms: no force was admitted on their part but that of thought. They succeeded most prominently in proving the power of

³² Reported by al-Hakem in his *al-Mustadrak*, *Hadith* No. 3:383; in *Kanz al-'Ummal*, through a different chain of reporters, from al-Hareth and al-Baghawi, in the Part of Uthman; also reported by Abu Nu'aim and Ibn 'Asaker.

thought - that thought can, on its own, achieve all it set out to achieve. There is glowing light in this, light that will remain for all who seek guidance. No matter how well-intended or ill-intended parties try to disguise or gloss over their accomplishment, it is an eminent precedent, perfect historical precedent for all to review, as the Verse of the Qur'an represents such situations, "Their intention is to extinguish Allah's Light by blowing with their mouths: but Allah will complete the revelation of His Light, even though the unbelievers may detest it;" (61:8).

The Prophets and Enduring Harm

If there is a need for more support, one may turn to the Qur'an, for it has put on record the same 'unrealistic' and 'utopian' attitude to be true of all the prophets, one and all, from the first until the 'sealing' of prophethood.

There is more than enduring injury, sometimes death, and refraining from self-defense: there is their only 'crime'. Here is an example: "Woe to the makers of the pit of fire, fire supplied abundantly with fuel: Behold! They sat over against the fire, and they witnessed all that they were doing against the believers. And they ill-treated them for no other reason than that they believed in Allah, Exalted in Power, Worthy of all Praise!" (85:1-8). Or take Pharaoh's magicians: When he threatened to maim their hands and feet and crucify them, they said, as the Qur'an reports: "For us, we are but sent back to our Lord: But you wreak your vengeance on us simply because we believed in the Signs of our Lord when they

reached us! Our Lord! pour out on us patience and constancy, and take our souls unto you as Muslims who bow to Your Will!" (7:125-126). The same is when the Qur'an teaches us, in debating with the People of the Book, to say, "O People of the Book! Do you disapprove of us for no other reason than that we believe in Allah, and the revelation that has come to us and that which came before us?" (5:59).

You see how careful the Qur'an is about specifying the point of the whole conflict: what it is that causes all the malice of people against prophets and believers. It is the straight way - to be clear about the point of argument, before one tries to pronounce who is in the right and who is in the wrong. It is un-Islamic to hasten to judge just on account of somebody's ethnicity; and this goes well with human inherent nature: we insist on knowing who is just and who is unjust.

Islam is careful to eliminate the pre-Islamic attitude of hastening to support one side - and it does it in a decisive way. It gives all the necessary attention and space to establishing the principle: you do not support an unjust party, even if he/she happens to be a relative, and no matter how close your relation is. Here are some examples: "let not the hatred of some people in once shutting you out of the Sacred Mosque lead you to transgression and hostility on your part;" (5:2) "O you who believe! Stand out firmly for Allah, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to piety;" (5:8) and, "O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be against rich or

poor: for Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts of your hearts, lest you swerve, and if you distort justice or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well-acquainted with all that you do;" (4:135).

Islam and Eliminating Blind Support

Islam was clear in setting down the right principle for giving allegiance and support. The Messenger, peace be upon him, once said: "Support your brother, whether doing wrong or being victim of wrong." One of those present wondered: "Yes, we understand supporting him when he is being victim of wrong: but what about when he is perpetrating wrong?" "It is by holding back his hand from wrong!"³³

This must have been especially curious (as you see it in the Companions' wonder) since it was a reversal of the pre-Islamic principle, well-expressed in their poetry - that when the call of a tribe rises, all will rise to support, unquestioningly. But the Prophet spoke most firmly and decisively.

The European Union and Thinking Globally

Do not take it lightly, the transfer of law from referring to the tribe, then to the nation, then to the world. It a major development, a radical change that reflects a deep cultural

³³ Reported by al-Bukhari, in the Part of Acts of injustice, Chapter on: Support your brother, whether doing wrong or being victim of wrong, *Hadith* No. 2312; and by Muslim, in different wording, and a different chain of reporters, in the Part on Loyalty, Chapter on: Supporting a brother, whether doing wrong or being victim of wrong, *Hadith* No. 2584.

change. And it may be here that the Arabs and Muslims were held: Their allegiance sticks with the tribe and the nation - even to the nation their allegiance remains weak, let alone their allegiance to Islam or the world. This may shed more light on my stressing the European Union as a new phenomenon in the world. But mind, I do not take it to be the end of the road - it is a stage, and it must be followed by more stages. For the Europeans have not risen to viewing the human history to be their history, and the basis for the cultural advancement of all mankind: this must be the real goal.

I suspect that the Muslim does not like this representation: he/she will say that they are internationally-minded - but with his/her tribe as leading and dominating the world. A Muslim is definitely not adapted to being just a human, like any other human.

And there is a further step. For even after adjusting to the idea, one needs to absorb it until it sinks deep down until it controls one's behavior: this happens when even one's subconscious believes in the idea. The idea of a global view of humanity is still very recent, anywhere in the world, and it will take a lot of work until it is solid enough to direct people's practical life.

The United Nations and Tribalism

But even at the United Nations, where you hear a lot of gibberish about justice and fairness, what actually works is the tribal law - it is sufficient to cite the Veto Right as the cardinal tribal right: it is the right of the mighty, not the

support of justice and standing for man: the Veto Right cannot be compatible with human rights - had human rights been in force, it would have cancelled the Veto Right.

I have hints and observations, but a topic like this must be the basis for study and analysis - there is real need for revealing the genesis of this, and how it works. Unless such culture takes root, then the tribal idea will continue to work and have its deep roots: and it will lead to endless conflicts.

Tribes have been there for hundreds of thousands of years, while multi-tribal societies are rather new, for they appeared no more than ten thousand years ago.

The change has been natural and slow: it was when the human discovered agriculture that he/she needed to meet with a big number of people. It was with the advent of agriculture that big aggregations of people met at the fertile banks of rivers.

We need to be acquainted with the successive stages of creation, from its earliest start. When people violate human rights nowadays, they do not feel the need to invent justification for that: humans refuse to realize that they have the duty of refraining from aggression against the right of others.

There is a big claim of democracy, though in practice we find a lot of behavior that is completely incompatible with democracy. Some of what happens in the modern world is worse than that of the tyranny of the ancient world.

That is to say there is the written law, and there is the law that is unwritten, nor even uttered, but transferred to the new generation through practice, through the actual behavior of

the adults. It is good that anyone can now follow this or any human phenomenon, for nothing is beyond the reach of research. When you like, you can trace things to their last detail.

Children and Acquiring Values

It is good, for starting to understand human behavior to start with the Verses, "By the soul, and the proportion and order given to it; and its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right, - Truly he succeeds that purifies it, and he fails that corrupts it!" (91:7-10). It indicates that the process of purifying and corrupting is a human task. I did discuss this before, for it is necessary to draw some support from the Divine Writ - to put people's hearts at rest that we are on the side of the Lord, not trying to take any step unapproved by the Almighty.

Another thing, of equal or more importance - important because God treats it as most important, is to give first priority, and use as basis for God's rulings: to keep our sight and hearing active, most active, and to keep attentive to what happens around us. In this connection, we notice how the Arab child, any Arab child, becomes an Arab, in culture and tongue, so long as he/she sees no other culture; and this is true of the Chinese, the Brahman, and any child of any ethnicity, language, or faith.

During the first two or three years, and even before he/she starts to talk, the child learns the conscious behavior, and the language of emotion - the Qur'an itself refers to this when it

says: "When it is said to them: 'Do not make mischief on the earth,' they say: 'Why, we only want to make peace!'" (2:11); and "In their hearts is a disease; and Allah has increased their disease: and grievous is the penalty they incur, because they are false to themselves;" (2:10). We must understand 'In their hearts is a disease,' as meaning: erroneous values. This is not a genetic failing - though it is acquired before the child learned to read and write, before it acquired language, before going to school - it started from the time it was in the cradle, with the mother's child-talk, and the talk of other family members. From them he/she learns, with great attention, and what they taught pours directly into his/her subconscious: the values of civilization that had taken thousands of years to reach his/her nest, are now imparted within three or four years. All the values come, mingled with angry tones and loving tones.

It is in this way that the little child learns what is sacred, and what evokes the family's anger if violated. Whenever he/she stretches his/her hand, the child looks into our faces to see our reaction. The deepest values which control our behavior are transmitted in this way, and they leave deep lines in his/her character. That is what it means to socialize through conformity.

It is hard for that deep conditioning to evaporate later in life - it is subconsciously acquired, and keeps dominating life.

More comes later, for, as the child begins learning the language, he/she begins to discover, with astonishment at first, the discrepancy between what the family members say

and what they do. He/she learns to lead a strange double life: the life of talk and the life of action.

We keep warning people to accept the scholars' statements, not their behavior. But how miserable is such life, in which you take it for granted that the respectable scholar leads two contradictory lives.

No wonder, then, that the child learns intrigue and deception as basic facts of life - that the straightforward - in both religion and politics - are simply naïve. And later, as the child learns what is in books, he/she finds superior values, but he/she does not see this in his/her teachers' behavior: he/she finds the opposite.

This is the kind of world we live in. It is not life which is complicated: it is we who have made it complicated, and transformed God's Bounty into a curse. Things should not be really so obscure.

Man and the Science of Change

Can my words open some tiny windows towards a solution? It is not a really hopeless situation. It is feasible to come out with simple and economical solutions, for interrupting the vicious circle.

Let us remember how for millennia people had the erroneous idea of the movements of the sun and earth, taking the sun to be orbiting the earth: were they not prepared to have people killed just to preserve this idea? And did they not attribute it to God and His Scripture? I see this in the light of Verses like, "There is, in their stories, instruction for men

endued with understanding. It is not a tale invented, but a confirmation of what went before it - a detailed exposition of all things, and a Guide and Mercy to any such as believe;" (12:111).

You see how much change is needed in the way we think, in changing what is in the souls; but the science of going about such change is still in its earliest stages - we still work in this domain in a way similar to the way people dealt with physical diseases before germs were discovered. Remember how bad things were then, and remember how more successful medicine became after the germs were discovered.

Why is it, then, that the intellectual problems have not realized some success?

Pasteur did great work in his lab in the way physical diseases are contracted. But how far have we gone in revealing the factors behind the development of the what is in the souls and minds?

I do realize that it is mysterious, but it is not so blocked: there are some rays of light to illuminate how thought and concepts get transmitted and implanted.

If we grasp this process, then we can monitor and direct what happens in the sphere of thought and concepts: we can expose it to strong light - I do not say I have the power to do that, but I can point out the way society implants ideas, without the adults' perceiving, nor the child of course, how they are being transmitted.

We know we transmit to the new generation our intellectual shortcomings, but it is a quite different, and unexplored world, to have a chart of how this takes place.

There has been some admirable work in a sphere like cosmology, and we keep hearing of more and more startling information about the billions of light years of the universe. Likewise, in the sub-atomic world we keep hearing of more and more discoveries and details. But what about the soul? Have we gone beyond the most elementary data?

Equality and the Elimination of Injustice and Mischief

In one word, I assume that, to get over injustice and hypocrisy, what we need is to realize that the law that applies to all humans is one and the same, in the same way as the same law applies to the movement of all sub-atomic particles and the galaxies.

Change will have taken place if people realize, or if someone can make it plain to them, that a sin is a sin, whether committed by others or by us, as the Qur'an affirms, "Not your desires, nor those of the People of the Book can prevail: whoever works evil, will be requited accordingly. Nor will he find, besides Allah any protector or helper;" (4:123).

The kore factor in dealing with the psychological problem is that one accepts to have the same rule apply to them as to the others; not to assume that one should have privileges.

Can this be the basis for behavior? I suspect that this rule of accepting equality and claiming no privilege for oneself will not be applied without accepting the way of Adam's Son.

For my part, let me assure you that I adhere to this rule - so can we lay down this principle: that everyone of us accepts to

let the other have the same right as he/she has - no matter what religion the other upholds, or if he/she has no faith?

From Supporting Injustice to Facing It

The real issue is not to protect your society from being aggressed against by others, but to prevent your society's aggressing against others, its having privileges over others - this is really the turning point where all civilizations collapsed.

People will agree, when they are weak, sick, and poor, to having justice established, to the rule of no one having privilege over others - but how will it be when one is rich and strong, when he/she is wary of having his position change?

Let us do our best in urging people not to support their society when it acts under the dictates of its desires and inclinations - when it acts by the principle of those who proclaim, as the Qur'an reports, "Who is superior to us in strength?" (41:15), those whose punishment was, as another Verse states, "We destroyed generations before you when they did wrong: their messengers came to them with Clear Signs, but they would not believe! Thus do We requite those who sin! Then We made you heirs in the land after them, to see how you would behave!" (10:13-14).

Reflect on the above Verse, and see how it may remind us of the sun and earth, which orbits which - how people may get things wrong for such long centuries. You see how many peoples fell there as against one success - that of Jonah's people!

I hope I am not being pessimistic, as those were pessimistic who I mentioned above when reviewing the lifespan of civilizations. To pass this test is not impossible, but all the failures indicate that humankind is still very immature - when they, one and all, cannot think of others but in terms of some looking down upon some, or exchanging this rising above each other.

A Muslim is proud of his/her great past: that it was the Muslims who introduced right guidance into the world - well yes, that is true, but we think of that now when we do not seem to have the means of reviving right guidance; when we have chosen instead rising above others, and breaking promises - when we do not even hear a call to right guidance.

Towards Justice and Equality

But we have seen enough failure to awaken and learn the lesson. We have tried rising above others enough to see where this has led us. Are there no right-minded individuals to call for the alternative way?

Can we not see what the Europeans have done? At least they have overcome any rising above each other, and admitted that they are all humans and so are all equal.

Yes, they had paid dearly for it, but they did admit their history, and did not turn their backs to history.

Can we learn from them? Can we learn from Jonah's people? Why cannot we do this simple linking of causes and results? Causes and results in our past and other people's past?

The problem with Adam, as the Qur'an says, was forgetting what must be remembered, "but he forgot, and We found on his part no firm resolve;" (20:115). So, will we remember?

How to remember?

The way is to review history; and the Qur'an urges us not to forget, "We had already, beforehand, taken the covenant of Adam, but he forgot, and We found on his part no firm resolve;" (20:115) "Such were the towns whose story We thus relate to you: there came indeed to them their messengers with Clear Signs: but they would not believe what they had rejected before. Thus does Allah seal up the hearts of those who reject faith. The men We did not find true to their covenant: but most of them We found rebellious and disobedient;" (7:101-102) and, "All that we relate to you of the stories of the messengers - with it We make firm your heart: in them there comes to you the Truth, as well as an exhortation and a message of remembrance to those who believe. Say to those who do not believe: 'Do whatever you can: we shall do our part; and wait! We too shall wait.'" (11:120-122).

The Almighty gives great importance to history, recommending it as one of the most important sources of knowledge, as a great educator. When one is skeptical, or when one feels his/her resolution failing, then let him/her turn to history to draw solidity. But if some will still not listen, then there is another rule which applies to them, "Do whatever you can: we shall do our part; and wait! We too shall wait;" (11:122).

The Qur'an Refers to History as the Source of Knowledge

The Qur'an refers to history and the events of life as the source of knowledge: we are urged to watch the conflict of the arrogant and those who command what is just and fair.

Keep this in mind. Do not neglect history: for those who keep it in mind draw resolution, and those who forget it have their resolution flag and weaken. Did you hear this before? Even if it sounds unprecedented, listen to it, and reflect on it again - you need that to have resolution and firmness.

The events of our predecessors provide believers with exhortation and remembrance; while he/she who fails to learn from the experience of past peoples will have to pay the cost again. God is always there, to have people pay the cost, no matter how long it takes them to learn.

How can we have the young men and women of the Muslim World be acquainted with history? History is proceeding along its way; for many millennia it has gone along this way, as the Lord willed. It has all the enlightenment we need, and it can teach us to save time and cost - by not repeating erroneous experiments.

So, to that the human must direct his/her attention.

Not giving history its due importance has brought the Western philosophy and thought to nihilism, sophistry, and absurdism: to believing that there is no truth to seek to understand - and hence their announcement that God is dead, and then that man is dead. So only nihilism remains before them, though in various degrees; and nihilism calls for a

standstill, absolute motionlessness - since there is no right guidance and no misguidance, and since all history is a pack of falsehoods. Should the idea of meaninglessness have control of the mind, one would turn into a criminal.

The human mind is unreliable, while history is reliable, since history does not proceed in compliance with human desires.

And history has its targets, and so the Qur'an takes it to be a source of knowledge - not only that: It is the evidence which the Qur'an accepts as testimony for its truthfulness. Let humans recognize what importance history represents, for if they refuse to refer to the records of history, they will have to heed the active history, the live events, which will force the human to cope with and adjust his/her life to history.