

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

From Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him, the Messenger peace be upon him, said: "Islam began as something strange and it will return to being strange as it began. So Toobaa is for the strangers."

Reported by Bukhari and Muslim

Ghurabaa

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From the editor

Dr. Fadi Y. Kablawi

1432 years since the migration of the messenger peace be upon him leaving Mecca heading to Madina. Always we hear the focus when remembering the Hijra on the historical part of it with little if any on the wisdom and lessons learned from it.

With the beginning of a new Hijri year one should remember what the messenger peace be upon him and his companions may Allah be pleased with him had to go through to make sure this religion survives and reach the generations to come; to remember all the sacrifices from souls, families, wealth, health and rest that took place and how it should remind us to always ask ourselves what we have done for this Deen.

The challenges we as Muslims facing in this day and age are many, and it is just getting harder; its taking place everywhere from working places, airports, schools, groceries to even neighborhoods.

Muslims, men and women, young and old, educated and uneducated, rich and poor, all must wake up and realize the urgency for change and the need for reorganizing. Everyone must start feeling the responsibility toward this ummah at large, not only live for his desires and inclinations.

If Muslims don't start acting and behaving like people who have the truth, there will be no change in this world to the better. No way to succeed away from the truth. Our religion is the truth. Our book is the truth. Our prophet is the truth. So why are we still showing cowardice and surrender for our challengers and challenges.

This religion did not reach us via fear and humiliation. The honor that Allah subhanahu wa'tala has decreed for this ummah, and the one which this ummah has lost, must be claimed back again if this world wants to live again in peace and justice, safety and tranquility.

You, yes, you I am talking to; everyone who prides himself or herself for being part of this Religion, isn't time for your Religion to be proud of you? But if you are someone who has never been proud to be Muslim, I ask you: why don't you go back to bed?



A Muslim perspective on Christmas

By: Dr. Zeyd Ali Merenkov, M.D

To a Muslim living in the West, the Christmas Holiday period is one of the most stressful times because of the differences in our attitudes towards holidays and celebrations of the status quo. Even in Islamic countries, there can be misunderstandings on these issues with our Christian colleagues. The following essay is my personal attempt at bridging this gap to promote an understanding of the Islamic perspective regarding this topic.

The word Christmas comes from the Old English term Cristes maesse, meaning "Christ's mass." This was the name for the festival service of worship held on December 25th to commemorate the birth of Jesus. There is neither certain information on the date of his birth, nor even on the year. One reason for this uncertainty is that the stories of his birth, recorded in the New Testament books of Matthew and Luke, were written several decades after the event. Those who wrote it gave no specific dates for the events they mentioned.

For several centuries the Christian Church itself paid little attention to the celebration of Jesus' birth. It ranked after Easter, Pentecost, and Epiphany in liturgical importance. The major Christian festival was Easter; the day of Jesus' purported resurrection. Only gradually, as the church developed a calendar to commemorate the major events of the life of Jesus did the celebration of his birth become significant.

Because there was no knowledge about the date of his birth, a day had to be selected. The Eastern Orthodox and the Eastern Rite Churches within the Roman Catholic Church chose January 6th. The day was named Epiphany, meaning "appearance" (i.e. the day of Jesus' manifestation). The Western Church, based in Rome, chose December 25th. It is known from a notice in an ancient Roman almanac that Christmas was celebrated on December 25th in Rome as early as 336 AD.

In the latter half of the 4th century, the Eastern and Western Churches adopted each other's festival, thus establishing the modern Christian 12-day celebration from Christmas to Epiphany. In some places the 12th day is called the Festival of the Three Kings because it is believed that the three wise men, or magi, visited the baby Jesus on that day, bringing him gifts.

Today Christmas is more than a one-day celebration or a 12-day festival. It is part of a lengthy holiday season embracing at least the whole month of December. In the

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A Muslim perspective on Christmas

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United States, the holiday season begins on Thanksgiving Day and ends on January 1st, New Year's Day, a period of about five weeks. Actually, it is also an essential part of the business cycle - definitely the month comprising an important retail period of the year.

Gift giving is one of the oldest customs associated with Christmas: It is actually older than the holiday itself. When the date of Christmas was set to fall in December, it was done at least in part to compete with ancient pagan festivals that occurred about the same time. The Romans, for example, celebrated the Saturnalia on December 17th. It was a winter feast of merry-making and gift exchanging. Two weeks later, on the Roman New Year - January 1- houses were decorated with greenery and lights, and gifts were given to children and the poor. As the Germanic tribes of Europe accepted Christianity and began to celebrate Christmas, they also gave gifts.

Ancient, pre-Christian winter festivals used greenery, lights and fires to symbolize life and warmth in the midst of cold and darkness. The use of evergreens and wreaths as symbols of life was an ancient custom of the Egyptians, Chinese and Hebrews, among other groups. Tree worship was a common feature of religion among the Tectonic and Scandinavian people of northern Europe before their conversion to Christianity. They decorated houses and barns with evergreens on New Year's Day to scare away demons, and they often set up trees for the birds in winter. For these northern Europeans, this winter celebration was the happiest time of the year because it signified that the shortest day of the year - somewhere around December 21st - had passed. They knew the days would get longer and brighter. The month during which this festival took place was named YOL, from which the word Yule is derived. In fact, Yule has come to mean Christmas in some countries.

Thus, many Christians do not realize that much of the celebration of Christmas is actually of pagan origin. The Romans celebrated the Feast of the Invincible Sun on December 25th. The

early church fathers elected to celebrate the birth of Jesus on this date, although there was no particular reason to choose this one. In fact, many Christian scholars contend that Jesus was actually born in summer. This is consistent with the Quranic account that follows, because there is a specific mention of ripe dates falling to Mary (may Allah be pleased with Her) in the Quran (which means): "And shake towards you the trunk of the palm-tree; It will drop upon you fresh ripe dates." [Quran 19: 25]

A common theme to many Christian holidays is their actual pagan origin. It seems that the early church elders elected to keep many of the celebrations already in practice and redefine them in Christian terms, rationalizing them as a celebration of some aspect of their dogma of the life of Jesus. Nowadays, few may remember the reasons for the various customs that they practice.

The fundamental issue for Muslims everywhere is whether or not to celebrate Christmas. Their Christian colleagues may stress the secular aspects of the holiday and need to comply with social customs in order to advance in the society. Many times I have been told to forget Christmas as a religious holiday and just consider it as a social occasion - especially in the United States. In many businesses in the US, it is customary to have a big party for all employees at this time. Failure to participate makes oneself an object of ostracism. One needs to climb the social ladder to optimize one's chances for promotion, etc., and it is difficult to resist the pressure to conform!

Unfortunately, many Westerners feel that we Muslims should celebrate Christmas. They cite the examples of many other non-Christians doing so, including many Jews, Hindus, etc. who join the merrymaking. They find it frustrating that many Muslims will not comply and yield to the social pressure. It is regretful that they do not apply the same standard to themselves. They don't expect us to pressure them to celebrate our holidays nor do we, Muslims, put such pressure on them. After all, we must follow the Quranic verse 2:256 (which means): "There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion..." Yet, some feel that it is their duty to try to force their celebrations on us. In fact, I recently heard from some who consider it an insult that we do not celebrate. For this reason, I ask them: "Did Jesus or any of the other prophets celebrate their birthdays?" Then, what authority do they base this on?

Of course, there is also the problem of the children. They are bombarded with numerous advertisements for toys and are essentially brainwashed so that they should expect something "under the tree" on Christmas Day. One must admit that the brightly lit, multicolored Christmas tree is an attractive sight, made even more tempting when there are numerous wrapped presents underneath it.

To Muslims, each and every thing we do is a part of our worship of the One, Supreme God - nothing is excluded. We do not make any distinction between the secular and the religious. Actually, the English term religion does not convey the all-encompassing nature of the Arabic term Deen. We might be branded as "Fundamentalists," but is there anything else more basic (or "fundamental") than applying our absolute moral code too consistently to everything we do? Isn't that the highest standard?

The basis of our moral code is the Quran, the only intact Revelation, and the strict authenticated observation of those who observed the Prophet Muhammad known as the Hadeeth. In other words, we Muslims follow the example of the Prophet Muhammad. Strictly speaking, for Muslims there are two holidays, the two 'Eeds: Namely, 'Eed al-Fitr - the festival of fast-breaking immediately after the end of Ramadhaan, and 'Eed al-Ad'haa - the festival of sacrifice during the major pilgrimage time. I emphasize that we do not celebrate birthdays (despite all the Western conventions to the contrary) - not even the births of the prophets - including Muhammad, may Allaah exalt their mention.

Muslims hold Jesus, in great respect as one of the greatest prophets. However, they do not celebrate his birth or the birth of any other of the prophets. Although it may seem intolerant to Christians that Muslims do not celebrate or wish them well on their Christmas holiday, it is out of respect to Jesus that we refuse to participate in its practices. We cannot condone practices that in our view misrepresent Jesus and help make him the focus of worship as a god figure. In upon which we base our

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TAFSIR An-Nasr

In the name of Allaah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful

The verses:

Almighty Allaah Says (what means): "When the victory of Allaah has come and the conquest [of Makkah]. And you see the people entering into the religion of Allaah in multitudes. Then exalt [Him] with praise of your Lord and ask forgiveness of Him. Indeed, He is ever Accepting of repentance." [Quran: 110:1-4]

Explanation:

Imaam At-Tirmithi related from Anas Ibn Maalik may Allah be pleased with him that the Messenger peace be upon him once asked a man: "Are you married?" He replied: "No, I swear by Allaah, O Messenger of Allaah! For I have nothing, so how can I marry?" He peace be upon him asked the man: "Do you not have: "Say: 'He is Allaah, the One.'" [i.e., Soorah Al-Ikhlâas]?" The man replied: "Certainly!" He peace be upon him said: "It is (equivalent to) one third of the Quran." Then he peace be upon him asked: "Do you not have: "When the victory of Allaah has come and the conquest [of Makkah]" [i.e., Soorah An-Nasr]?" The man replied: "Certainly!" The Prophet peace be upon him then said: "It is (equivalent to) one quarter of the Quran." `Ubaydullaah Ibn `Abdullaah Ibn `Utbah narrated that Ibn `Abbaas said to him: "Do you know which Soorah (chapter) was the last to be revealed from the Quran?" I replied: "Yes, and it was (what means): "When the victory of Allaah has come and the conquest [of Makkah]."" He said: "You are right." Abu Bakr Al-Bazzaar and Al-Bayhaqi both narrated from Ibn `Umar that he said: "This Soorah was revealed to the Messenger of Allaah peace be upon him during the days of Tashreeq (i.e., the 11th, 12th and 13th of Thu'l-Hijjah) and he peace be upon him knew that it was his farewell address. He peace be upon him called for his riding-camel, and when he had travelled some way on it, he peace be upon him stood and addressed the people with his famous farewell speech.

According to Imaam Al-Bayhaqi Ibn `Abbaas said: "This Soorah was revealed, following which the Messenger of Allaah peace be upon him summoned his daughter Faatimah and said to her: "It heralds my death." At this, Faatimah began to cry; but she laughed when he peace be upon him said: "Have Patience, for you are the first of my family who will join me." [Muslim]

Imaam At-Tabaraani related on the authority of Ibn `Abbaas that he said: "When the Soorah: "When the victory of Allaah has come and the conquest [of Makkah]." was revealed, it heralded to Allaah's Messenger peace be upon him that his death was near, and so he peace be upon him intensified his preparations for the Hereafter (by increasing his prayers, fasting, supplicating etc.); after embarking upon this, he peace be upon him said: "The conquest and the help of Allaah have come, and the people of Yemen have come." A man asked: "O Messenger of Allaah! Who are the people of Yemen?" He peace be upon him replied: "A people who are gentle-hearted and moderate in their ways: faith is in Yemen; fiqh (understanding of Islam) is in Yemen." [Al-Bukhaari]

It has been confirmed from Ibn `Abbaas that the Messenger of Allaah peace be upon him said on the day of the conquest of Makkah: "There is no Hijrah (i.e. emigration) after the conquest, but there is Jihaad and Niyah (pure intention) and if you are called upon, then respond to the call." [Al-Bukhaari & Muslim]

Masrooq said: "I heard `Aa'ishah saying that the Messenger

of Allaah peace be upon him would repeat: "Glorified be Allaah and all praise be to Him, I ask Allaah's forgiveness and I turn to Him in repentance." He peace be upon him continued: "Indeed, my Lord has informed me that I will see a sign amongst my people, and He ordered me, if I do see it, to glorify His praises and ask His forgiveness, and I have seen it, (it is): 'When the victory of Allaah has come and the conquest [of Makkah]. And you see the people entering into the religion of Allaah in multitudes. Then exalt [Him] with praise of your Lord and ask forgiveness of Him.

Indeed, He is ever Accepting of repentance.'"" [Muslim] Umm Salamah said: "Towards the end of his life, the Messenger of Allaah peace be upon him would not stand, nor sit, nor depart, nor arrive, without saying: "Most Glorified is Allaah and all praise is due to Him." So I said to him: "O Messenger of Allaah! I have observed you frequently glorifying Allaah and praising Him." He said: "I was ordered to do it." Then he said: "When the victory of Allaah has come and the conquest [of Makkah]..." (to the end of the Soorah)." What is meant by 'the conquest' is the conquest of Makkah. The people of Arabia were slow in answering the call to Islam until the fall of Makkah, then they entered the Religion of Allaah in crowds and within two years, the whole of Arabia became unified in faith and all the tribes of Arabia embraced Islam.

Imaam Al-Bukhaari reported that when Makkah was conquered, delegations from all the tribes of Arabia came to the Messenger of Allaah peace be upon him to declare their allegiance to Islam, while prior to it, they were slow to embrace Islam.

Imam Ahmad narrated on the authority of the neighbour of Jaabir Ibn `Abdullaah may Allaah be pleased him that he (i.e., the neighbour) said: "I once returned from a journey and Jaabir Ibn `Abdullaah came to me and greeted me. I began to talk with him about the disunity of the people and their innovations (in religion). Jaabir then began to cry and said: "I heard Allaah's Messenger peace be upon him say: "Indeed, the people entered the Religion of Allaah in crowds and they will abandon it in crowds." ❖



The Plight of the People of Hell

Hell has various levels and degrees of torment. In some of them, the torment and horror is greater than the others. The people who are to be doomed to enter Hell will be given different levels of punishment according to the deeds they used to do during their worldly life. The worse one's deeds were in the worldly life the lowest one's level will be in the Hellfire and the harder one's torment will be.

Ibn Rajab may Allah have mercy on him said: "Know that the different levels of punishment suffered by the people of Hell will be according to the levels of their deeds for which they entered Hell." He then quoted the evidence for that, such as the words of Ibn 'Abbaas may Allah be pleased with him: "The punishment of those who were extreme in their disbelief and spread corruption on earth, calling others to disbelief, will not be like the punishment of those who did not do such things."

Then Ibn Rajab said: "Similarly, the punishments of the monotheists in Hell will be at different levels, according to their deeds. The punishment of those who were guilty of major sins will not be like that of those who were guilty of minor sins. The punishment may be reduced for some of them because of other good deeds, or for whatever reason Allaah wills..." [At-Takhweef min An-Naar, P.181]

Prophet Muhammad *sallaallaahu alayhi wa sallam* said concerning the people of Hell: "There are some whom the Fire will take up to their ankles, others up to their knees, others up to their waists, and yet others up to their collarbones." [Muslim]

In the long narration of Israa' (the miraculous Ascension of the Prophet peace be upon him to heavens), the Prophet peace be upon him was reported to have seen different scenes of the Hell-dwellers. Among them were:

1- People who used to unjustly eat up the property of the orphans. They have flews similar to those of camels, swallowing red-hot stones and then issuing out of their backs.

2- Adulterers offered tasty fatty meat and rotten smelly one but they make option for the latter. The licentious women were also there hanging from their breasts.

3- People whose heads were being shattered, then every time they would return to their original state and be shattered again without delay. He peace be upon him said: "O Jibreel, who are these people?" He replied: "These are the people whose heads were too heavy (on their pillows) to get up and fulfill the prescribed prayers."

4- People who wore loin cloths on the fronts and on their backs. They were roaming the way camels and sheep roam about. They were eating thistles and Zaqqoom (the fruit of the tree that grows in hell) and white-hot coals and stones of Fire. He peace be upon him asked: "Who are these, O Jibreel?" He replied: "These are the ones who did not pay Zakaat (obligatory charity) from what they possessed, whereas Allaah never kept anything from them."

5- People who had in front of them excellent meat disposed in pots and putrid, foul meat, and they would eat from the foul meat and not touch the good meat. He peace be upon him said: "What is this, O Jibreel?" He replied: "These are the men from your Nation who had an excellent, lawful wife at home and who would go and see a foul woman and spend the night with her (i.e. have illicit relation); and the women who would leave her excellent, lawful husband to go and see a foul man and spend the night with him."

6- A man swimming in a river of blood and he was being struck in his mouth with rocks which he then swallowed. The Prophet peace be upon him asked: "What is this, O Jibreel?" He replied: "This is what happens to those who eat usury."

7- A man who had gathered a stack of wood which he could not carry, yet he was adding more wood to it. He peace be upon him said: "What is this, O Jibreel?" He replied: "This is a man from your Nation who gets people's trusts when he cannot fulfill them, yet he insists on carrying them."

8- People whose tongues and lips were being sliced with knives. Every time they were sliced they would return to their original state to be sliced again without respite. He peace be upon him said: "Who are these, O Jibreel?" He replied: "These are the preachers from among your Nation who used to advise others to do what they themselves don't do..."

9- People who had copper nails with which they scratched their own faces and chests. He peace be upon him asked: "Who are these, O Jibreel?" He replied: "These are the ones who ate the flesh of people (i.e., by backbiting) and tarnished their reputations." [Al-Bukhaari & Muslim] ❖

A Muslim perspective on Christmas

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daily life practices. In addition, the above evidence has shown that many of these practices have no relationship whatsoever to Jesus and instead have pagan origins.

We ask! Do we need to celebrate the winter solstice? Are we afraid that the sun will not come back to us in this cold, dark wintry period? Are the pagan customs of gift giving or the symbols of renewal (such as the evergreens) a necessary reminder for us that spring will come again? Is the materialism in this season, so evident in the West, something worthy of emulation?

The Quran explains the most important things to celebrate. Allaah Says (what means): "So be patient over what they say and exalt [Allaah] with praise of your Lord before the rising of the sun and before its setting; and during periods of the night [exalt Him] and at the ends of the day, that you may be stified. And do not extend your eyes toward that by which We have given enjoyment to [some] categories of them, [its being but] the splendor of worldly life by which We test them. And the provision of your Lord is better and more enduring." [Quran 20:130-131]

To Muslims, Jesus is one of a series of prophets [25 of whom are mentioned specifically in the Quran with the final one, or the seal of them, being Muhammad]. These prophets and messengers were sent to specific groups of people, with the exemption of Muhammad whose message was the final one sent (in the form of a revelation) for the benefit of all mankind. Jesus was one such messenger sent to a particular people, the Jews. Unfortunately, with the exception of the Quran, none of these previous messages were preserved intact. More specifically, we do not have the Gospel or Injeel according to Jesus: Rather, we have a series of writings, most of which were fabricated after the passing of Jesus and principally influenced by Paul.

Many Christian scholars, themselves, would concede that these writings are historically of questionable accuracy and do not represent the views of the early adherents of Jesus. In contrast, the Final Revelation, the Quran, is precisely preserved and consists only of the original Arabic text. Unlike the Christian Bibles (and I emphasize the plurality of versions and differences between them), there are no revisions nor are there versions in other languages of the Quran. Simply put, all Muslims have the same original Arabic text as the Quran.

When I was the Director of Da'wah (religious propagation) activities at one of the Islamic centers in Chicago, I had the opportunity of meeting with many visitors to our center, including missionary students from the nearby Billy Graham headquarters in Wheaton, Illinois. Once, one of their students asked one of the Muslims who had come to Friday prayer, "Do you accept the true teachings of Jesus?" His reply (as all knowledgeable Muslims must answer) was "definitely." The student then asked, "Then you accepted that he died for your sins?" The Muslim replied, "Of course not!" He was not trying to ridicule or goad the student on. On the contrary, he was showing respect to the prophet Jesus as we know him from the Quran itself. This can be very frustrating to a Christian, since he may not be aware of the Islamic perspective of the life and role of Jesus. I want to emphasize that Muslims deeply respect Jesus and his mother, the Virgin Mary (may Allah be pleased with her), and hold them in high esteem. There is nothing disparaging in this Revelation about them.

It is indeed unfortunate that a similar degree of respect is often not shown towards Muslims and the final Prophet Muhammad. Since Muslims respect them so highly, they naturally do not want to perform any acts, which misrepresent them or their purpose or past life. The Christian beliefs have distorted their roles, thus, we as Muslims cannot condone nor should we participate in those practices. I emphasize, it is not out of disrespect to our Christian colleagues that this is done, rather, it is out of respect and love to Jesus and Mary and God Himself that we must refuse!

In conclusion, I pray that we remember what we are really supposed to celebrate (i.e. the praises of The Supreme God) as stated in the Quran (what means): "Do you not see that Allaah is exalted by whomever is within the heavens and the earth and [by] the birds with wings spread [in flight]? Each [of them] has known his [means of] prayer and exalting [Him], and Allaah is Knowing of what they do. And to Allaah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and to Allaah is the destination." [Quran 24: 41-42] ❖

Concepts clarified in the Quran - 1

The role of the Quran in shaping the Muslim personality: The treasures of the Quran are hidden and buried as far as many Muslims are concerned, as they have not yet discovered these precious treasures that Allaah has placed in it. Besides the fact that a Muslim is rewarded for reciting the Quran and applying its rulings, it is also the case that the Quran explains and clarifies the correct way to understand many concepts that people have misperceived or misinterpreted. For example, it expounds upon the reality of the concept of loyalty and disavowal, the concept of worship, the concept of the conflict between the truth and falsehood, and many other concepts which all Muslims must correctly understand and realise.

The great treasures in the Quran: Some people seek to attain the reward of reciting the Quran, others memorise its verses in order to attain the reward of such memorisation, while others recite it to taste the sweetness that the soul feels during this. There are others who recite it in order to search for the lofty manners it calls the people to possess, and yet others who recite the Quran in order to find therein solutions to their social or economic problems. These are all important matters and one must seek to attain all the abovementioned goals and many more, but what is more important than that is for one to recite it in order to extract the great principles that mould the individual's character and aid in correctly nurturing him.

Many people recite the Quran hastily, or pass over its verses quickly without pondering over their meaning. The Quran is of great importance due to many more reasons than those we mentioned above, and which the Muslims must realise and have clear in their minds. I will try to highlight in this sermon some of these concepts that are instilled in the Quran, so that perhaps we may realise the importance of pondering upon the Quran.

The concept of worship and seeking assistance: If one ponders over the saying of Allaah (which means): "It is You we worship and You we ask for assistance." [Quran 1: 5] He will realise that it means that worship and seeking assistance are exclusively for Allaah, and this is the real essence of servitude to Allaah. One must wonder when he recites this verse, which we do more than seventeen times daily, why worship is designated solely to Allaah, and likewise seeking assistance. This concept must be clear in our minds: that only Allaah is to be worshipped; not wealth, not position, not other people, not man-made laws, or anything else. We must submit our wills solely to Allaah and humble ourselves only to Him. Also, we must seek only His assistance as a sign of perfect servitude because regardless of how powerful human forces are, they remain very limited, while the power of Allaah is ultimate and unlimited as He is the All-Powerful and the Irresistible.

The concept of abiding by the commands of Allaah and hastening to fulfil them: The Quran emphasises on the great importance and the compulsion of adhering to the commands of Allaah and not transgressing or disobeying His command. The Jews were commanded by Allaah to prostrate, as Allaah Says (what means): "...And enter the gate bowing humbly..." [Quran 2: 58] What did they do instead of adhering to this command? They entered on their buttocks and therefore opposed the command of Allaah. Therefore, anyone who tries to alter the commands of Allaah and applies what his desires are dictating to him resembles these people.

Furthermore, one must hasten in fulfilling the commands of Allaah and not act like the Jews did when Allaah commanded them to slaughter a cow; they kept asking for finer details regarding the type of cow to slaughter while slaughtering any cow would have done. Many Muslims follow in the footsteps of these deviants by inventing obstacles that would cause them to not fulfil certain commands that do not happen to coincide with their desires, and this is nothing but following the whispers of Satan.

The concept of being distinct in worship: Muslims must be distinct and not resemble the disbelievers in any of their acts of worship or religious rites. In the early stages of Islam, the Muslims would direct themselves towards Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem in prayer, but they were later commanded to direct themselves towards the Ka'bah in Makkah in order to differ from

the disbelievers.

The concept of people's ranks: Allaah Says (what means): "And it is not your wealth or your children that bring you nearer to Us in position, but it is [by being] one who has believed and done righteousness..." [Quran 34: 37]

Allaah also Says (what means): "...Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allaah is the most righteous of you..." [Quran 49: 13]

It is very important for us to know this rule of how people are measured according to the scale of Allaah. How do people become loftier than others? How does one possess a higher rank than others? What are the criteria used to judge this issue?

The Quran establishes that no worldly matter is of any effect in this regard and that it is solely based on matters related to the religion of Allaah. When Allaah favoured Taaloot and chose him to rule over the children of Israel, they objected and judged the matter with a worldly scale: they protested that he was not rich, as Allaah informs us when He Says (what means): "...They said: 'How can he have kingship over us while we are more worthy of kingship than him and he has not been given any measure of wealth?'" [Quran 2: 247] But Allaah immediately highlights the correct criteria of judging in the very same verse, saying (what means): "He said: 'Indeed, Allaah has chosen him over you and has increased him abundantly in knowledge and stature...'" [Quran 2: 247] Therefore, knowledge and a strong body that enabled him to fight the enemies of Allaah are what made him deserving of this rank, and both these qualities are matters that are connected to the religion: one is knowledge regarding it, while the other is the ability to defend and proliferate it. ❏

'Aa'ishah: the mother of the believers

When the Prophet peace be upon him emigrated from Makkah to Al-Madeenah he was accompanied by Abu Bakr may Allah have mercy on him ('Aa'ishah's father) who had the most knowledge about the Quraysh -- both the good and bad aspects.

He was a well-known honorable merchant to whom people came to seek and gain more knowledge.

'Aa'ishah's mother may Allah have mercy on her was called Umm Rummaan bint 'Umayr bin 'Amer coming from the sons of Al-Haarith bin Ghanam bin Ka'ab, and she was among the first group who embraced Islam. She had been married to 'Abdullaah bin 'Abdul-Asad before she married Abu Bakr, and she had a son from her first husband called At-Tufayl, and she gave birth to 'Aa'ishah and 'Abdur-Rahmaan from Abu Bakr may Allah have mercy on him. She emigrated to Al-Madeenah after the establishment of Islam there. When she died, Abu Bakr may Allah have mercy on him said: "O Allaah! You know best how Umm Rummaan was hurt for Your sake and the sake of Your Prophet peace be upon him."

The Prophet peace be upon him used to entrust 'Aa'ishah may Allah have mercy on her to Umm Rummaan's charge and say: "O Umm Rummaan, be kind to 'Aa'ishah and be mindful of me by this kindness."

In fact, the Prophet peace be upon him used to love the clean and pure household of Abu Bakr may Allah have mercy on him because the man of the house -- Abu Bakr -- was a man who needed no introduction; his character and lineage were not something to inquire about.

The Messenger of Allaah peace be upon him thought about proposing to 'Aa'ishah may Allah have mercy on her for marriage when Khawlah bint Haakim Al-Aslamiah may Allah have mercy on her said to him: "What do you say about marrying 'Aa'ishah the daughter of Abu Bakr?"; he, sallallaahu 'alayhi wasallam then moved his head in the affirmative, saying yes. Then Khawlah went to Umm Rummaan to tell her the news and said: "O Umm Rummaan, you cannot imagine how Allaah has blessed your house!"

Khawlah may Allah have mercy on her said: "The Messenger

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The obligation of differing from the non-Muslims

Allaah, the Most High, has granted the Muslims a comprehensive set of rules (Sharee'ah) that

cover all religious and worldly matters. He made happiness both in this world and in the Hereafter contingent on working according to and adhering to its guidance. Allaah The Most High Says (what means): "Whoever follows My guidance will neither go astray [in the world] nor suffer [in the Hereafter]." [Quran 20: 123] Allaah also Says (what means): "Whoever follows My guidance - there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve." [Quran 2: 38]

This Sharee'ah is the straight and correct way, which is the way of those on whom Allaah has bestowed His Grace such as His Prophets, the sincere, the martyrs, and the righteous. Anything other than this is the way of those who have earned the wrath of Allaah such as the Jews, the Christians and the polytheists. In every Rak'ah (unit) of your prayer, you invoke Allaah to show you the straight path and keep you away from the path of those who have earned His wrath and those who have gone astray. You do this because you recite chapter Al-Faatihah. This recitation in every Rak'ah is one of the pillars of Salaah (the prayer). Therefore, you should reflect on this Du'aa' (supplication), its objectives and its positive results.

First and foremost, it implies following Allaah's Messenger peace be upon him and adhering to the Law of Allaah concerning acts of worship, business transactions, morals and inward and outward manners. It also entails differing from the disbelievers with regard to their specific acts of worship, business transactions, morals, and manners. This is because imitating them outwardly leads to loving them inwardly. Therefore, the Quran and the Sunnah are replete with evidences that command the Muslims to differ from the disbelievers and forbid imitating them in order to keep the Muslims away from all harmful matters. This is because the actions of the unbelievers are false and only for show, their endeavours are misleading and their end is certain destruction. Consequently, all the actions and affairs of a disbeliever are blighted and fruitless. Allaah, Most High Says (what means): "But the disbelievers - their deeds are like a mirage in a lowland which a thirsty one thinks is water until, when he comes to it, he finds it is nothing." [Quran 24: 39]

Allaah also Says (what means): "The example of those who disbelieve in their Lord is [that] their deeds are like ashes which the wind blows forcefully on a stormy day." [Quran 14: 18] Although Allaah has warned us severely against following the way of the disbelievers, He knew that this would happen as His Messenger peace be upon him reported that Allaah has decreed this according to His Knowledge. Al-Bukhaari and Muslim may Allah have mercy on him reported on the authority of Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri may Allah be pleased with him that the Messenger of Allaah peace be upon him said: "You will follow the errors of your predecessors so completely and literally that if they should go into the hole of a lizard, you would follow them." The people asked: "O Messenger of Allaah! Do you mean (by 'your predecessors') the Jews and the Christians?" He peace be upon him replied: "Who else?" Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Messenger of Allaah peace be upon him said: "The Hour will not come until my nation will follow completely and literally the errors of the previous nations." The people asked: "O Messenger of Allaah! Are you referring to (the people of) Persia and the Romans?" He peace be upon him replied: "Is there other than these?" [Al-Bukhaari]

Therefore, Allaah's Messenger peace be upon him reported that his nation will follow the Jews and the Christians, who are the People of the Book, as well as the people of Persia and the Romans. Allaah's Messenger peace be upon him forbade imitating all of them.

Despite the fact that he peace be upon him told us that his nation would imitate the errors of the disbelievers, he peace be upon him also stated that a group of his nation will firmly adhere to the truth until the Hour comes. He peace be upon him also said that Allaah would make it such that the Muslim nation would not unanimously

agree on falsehood. Also, he peace be upon him assured us that Allaah frequently raises certain persons for the

sake of His religion whom He uses and appoints for obeying Him. As a result, it becomes clear from the authentic narrations of the Prophet peace be upon him that there will be a group of people who follow and adhere to his guidance, the religion of Islam. On the other hand, some Muslims will deviate to the doctrines of the religion of the Jews or that of the Christians. Such deviation is made alluring by Satan. That is why a servant of Allaah is commanded to ask Allaah to guide him to the straight path, which is far away from Christianity and Judaism.

The wisdom behind the prohibition of imitating the disbelievers and commanding us differ from them is so clear. This is because imitating them outwardly leads to imitating them inwardly which in turn results in resembling them in their morals and actions. However, being different from them outwardly leads to differing from them inwardly, which in turn leads to being so completely distinct from them that one is rescued from the causes of the wrath of Allaah. Being distinguished also saves one from going astray and leads to being directed to the way of guidance and the pleasure of Allaah.

Today many Muslims, both men and women, imitate the disbelievers in their manners of speaking, dressing, appearance and in so many other areas that time does not allow me to enumerate them. Among these aspects is the shaving of beards and growing moustaches. Allaah's Messenger peace be upon him commanded trimming the moustache and allowing the beard to grow in a generous manner, thus being distinct from the disbelievers who shave their beards and grow their moustaches. Wearing the beard is a symbol of a man's handsomeness and dignity. Therefore, when he becomes old his attraction remains due to the existence of the hair of his beard. In contrast, the one who disobeys Allaah's Messenger peace be upon him by shaving it will have a distorted face devoid of any beauty when he becomes old. The habituation and blind imitation of these people lead them to misjudging a bad thing as good and vice versa. What we say to those people, may Allaah guide us and them, is: You must repent and return to the truth, for returning to the truth is far better than continuing with falsehood. The Sunnah of Allaah's Messenger peace be upon him has become clear to you and you have been commanded to obey and follow in his footsteps.

Allaah Says (what means): "There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allaah an excellent example." [Quran 33: 21] Therefore you have to adhere to his Sunnah and not to change it, despite the great number of Muslims who neglect it.

The disbelievers are also imitated in certain acts of worship, such as building up the areas around graves and making them places of visitation and worship. Allaah's Messenger peace be upon him said: "May Allaah's curse be on the Jews and the Christians, for they build places of worship at the graves of their Prophets." He peace be upon him also said: "If any righteous man dies amongst them, they would build a place of worship at his grave and make pictures of him to place therein; they are the worst creatures in the sight of Allaah." These sayings of the Prophet peace be upon him reveal that exaggeration with regard to graves leads to the gravest shirk, or polytheism, which is obvious to everybody. All this is owing to imitating the Jews and the Christians.

Other forms of imitation are celebrating polytheistic and innovated days such as the Prophet's birthday and those of presidents and kings. Celebrating these occasions may be for only one day such as, Mother's Day, Valentine's Day, birth days and so on, but still all these celebrations came to the Muslims from the disbelievers.

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The obligation of differing from the non-Muslims

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In Islam, there are only two days of feasts: the Day of Fitr, or ending the fast of Ramadhaan, and the Day of Adh-haa (sacrifice). Celebrating any day other than these two is Bid`ah (an innovation) in the religion, and imitation of the disbelievers.

Muslims should be mindful of this and not be lured by the great number of Muslims participating in these sinful events. Such people either do not know the ruling of Islam concerning it and celebrate these days due to ignorance, or know the ruling of Islam and celebrate them despite that. The sin of the latter class is of course, much greater. I seek refuge with Allaah from the outcast Satan. Allaah Says (what means): "There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allaah an excellent example for anyone whose hope is in Allaah and the Last Day and [who] remembers Allaah often." [Quran 33: 21] ❖

Islam and fortune telling

Dr. Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips

There are among mankind people who claim knowledge of the unseen and the future. They are known by various names, among which are: fortune-tellers, soothsayers, foreseers, augurs, magicians, prognosticators, oracles, astrologers, palmists, etc. Fortune-tellers use various methods and mediums from which they claim to extract their information, among which are: reading tea-leaves, drawing lines, writing numbers, palm-reading, casting horoscopes, crystal ball gazing, rattling bones, throwing sticks, etc. Practitioners of occult arts, who claim to reveal the unseen and predict the future, can be divided into two main categories:

1. Those who have no real knowledge or secrets but depend on telling their customers about general incidences which happen to most people. They often go through a series of meaningless rituals, and then make calculated general guesses. Some of their guesses, due to their generality, may come true. Most people tend to remember the few predictions that come true and quickly forget the many which do not. This tendency is a result of the fact that after some time, all the predictions tend to become half-forgotten thoughts in the subconscious until something happens to trigger their recall. For example, it has become common practice in North America to publish, at the beginning of each year, the various predictions of famous fortune-tellers. When a survey was taken of the various predictions for the year 1980CE, it was found that the most accurate fortune-teller among them was only twenty-four percent (24%) accurate in her predictions!

2. The second group are those who have made contact with the Jinn. This group is of most importance because it usually involves the grave sin of Shirk (associating others with Allaah), and those involved often tend to be fairly accurate in their information and thus present a real Fitnah (trial and temptation) for both Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Not only is the practice of astrology Haraam (forbidden by Islamic Law), but so are visiting an astrologist and listening to his predictions, buying books on astrology and reading one's horoscope. Since astrology is mainly used for predicting the future, those who practice it are considered fortune-tellers. Consequently, one who seeks his horoscope comes under the ruling contained in the Prophet's statement: "The daily prayers of whoever approaches a fortune-teller and asks him about anything will not be accepted for forty days and nights." [Muslim]

The punishment in this Hadeeth is simply for approaching and asking the astrologist, even if one is in doubt about the truth of his statements. When one is in doubt about the truth or falsehood of astrological information, this entails that he is in doubt about whether or not others know the unseen and the future besides Allaah. This is a form of Shirk, because Allaah has clearly stated (what means): "And with Him [i.e., Allaah] are the keys of the unseen; none knows them except Him." [Quran 6:59] As well as (what means): "Say (O Muhammad): 'None in the heavens and earth knows the unseen except Allaah...'" [Quran: 27:65] If, however, one believes in the predictions of their horoscopes, whether spoken by an astrologist or written in books of astrology, he falls directly into

Kufr (disbelief) as stated by the Prophet: "Whoever approaches an oracle or fortune-teller and believes in what he says, has disbelieved in what was revealed to Muhammad." [Ahmad & Abu Daawood]

Like the previous narration, this one literally refers to the fortune-teller and it is just as applicable to the astrologist. Both claim knowledge of the future. The astrologist's claim is just as opposed to Tawheed (Islamic Monotheism) as the ordinary fortune-teller. He claims that people's personalities are determined by the stars, and their future actions and the events of their lives are written in the stars.

The ordinary fortune-teller claims that the formation of tea leaves at the bottom of a cup, or lines in a palm, tell him the same thing. In both cases, individuals claim the ability to read in the physical formation of created objects, knowledge of the unseen.

Belief in astrology and the casting of horoscopes are in clear opposition to the letter and spirit of Islam. It is really the empty soul, which has not tasted real Eemaan (belief) that seeks out these paths. Essentially these paths represent a vain attempt to escape Qadar (fate). These ignorant believe that if they know what is in store for them tomorrow, they can prepare from today. In that way, they may avoid the bad and ensure the good. Yet, Allaah's Messenger was told by Allaah to say (what means): "... If I knew the unseen, I could have acquired much wealth, and no harm would have touched me. I am not except a warner and a bringer of glad tidings to a people who believe." [Quran 7:188] True Muslims are, therefore, obliged to stay far away from these areas. Thus, rings, chains, etc., which have the signs of the Zodiac on them should not be worn, even if one does not believe in them. They are part and parcel of a fabricated system which propagates Kufr and should be done away with entirely. No believing Muslim should ask another what his star-sign is, or attempt to guess what it is. Nor should he or she read horoscope columns in newspapers or listen to them being read. Any Muslim who allows astrological predictions to determine his actions should seek Allaah's forgiveness and renew his Islam. ❖

'Aa'ishah: the mother of the believers

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of Allaah peace be upon him sent me to seek 'Aa'ishah for marriage." Umm Rummaan may Allah have mercy on her said: "Wait for Abu Bakr, he is coming soon."

When Abu Bakr may Allah have mercy on her came back, Khawlah told him the news and he said: "Is she suitable for him? She is his niece." Khawlah then went back to the Prophet peace be upon him and told him what Abu Bakr had told her, and he peace be upon him said: "Go back and tell Abu Bakr that he is my brother in Islam and I am his, and his daughter is good enough for me." Abu Bakr thought deeply about this and then went to Mut'am bin 'Uday, who had proposed 'Aa'ishah may Allah have mercy on her for marriage to his son Jubayr.

These people were still disbelievers. When Abu Bakr may Allah have mercy on him entered their house, they said: "O son of Abu Quhaafah, we fear that if our son married your daughter 'Aa'ishah, then she would convince him of Islam and we do not want this to happen."

Abu Bakr may Allah have mercy on him did not answer, but on the contrary he was very pleased with that. In this way he was freed of their promise and he could give his full agreement for the blessed marriage.

'Aa'ishah may Allah have mercy on her narrated how she became married to the Messenger of Allaah, sallallaahu "alayhi wa sallam, and said: "The Prophet peace be upon him came to our house, and many people gathered there to meet him. Then my mother came to me while I was playing, she took me to the door where the Prophet peace be upon him was sitting. I was so embarrassed and I melted in shyness. Then my mother put me beside the Prophet peace be upon him and said: "This is your wife, may Allaah bless her for you, and bless you for her." People then left the room, and at that night nothing was slaughtered for me and I was nine years old at that time." Although she was young, she was a mature girl who had reached puberty. People described 'Aa'ishah on her wedding day and said: "She was a nimble, wide-eyed bride, with curly hair and a shiny face."

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The gulf between words and deeds

Speaking true words is a facet of action referred to as the action of the tongue. It is the first tangible deed that someone performs when he announces his entry into Islam: "I bear witness that none has the right to be worshipped except Allaah and that Muhammad is His messenger." But what I mean here, more specifically, is the importance of action as a fundamental value in Islam, in terms of maintaining one's religion and developing the world around us. The indispensability of action, by itself, is a major principle that is supported by hundreds of texts from the Quran and Sunnah (traditions of the Prophet peace be upon him).

The success or failure of an individual, the strength or weakness of a society, and the happiness of this world with salvation in the next life all depend on action. Good deeds are the recognised valuables upon which hinge propitious results in the short and long term. These actions that are deeds of righteousness must fulfil two important conditions:

1. A proper intention (sincerity)
2. Compliance with the Sunnah and the Sharee'ah (Islamic legislation)-also referred to as correctness.

Both of these conditions are addressed in the verse (which means): "[He] who created death and life to test you [as to] which of you is best in deed..." [Quran 67:2] So, goodness of action relies upon two issues: sincerity for Allaah and abiding by the Sharee'ah. The commentary of Al-Fudhayl Ibn 'Iyaadh may Allah have mercy on him on this verse of chapter Al-Mulk (the Dominion) is well known. He said concerning "best in deed": "The most sincere and the most correct." If a deed is done sincerely but is not correct, it is not accepted. Similarly, if it is correct but not done sincerely, it is also not accepted. It is only accepted when it is done sincerely and correctly. I tried to enumerate the number of times that 'righteous deeds' was mentioned in the Quran. These two words were mentioned together about ninety times. The word action or deed when juxtaposed with another adjective other than righteous appears much more often (approximately three hundred times). It is a clear indication of the importance of actions in life. Even in dying, the deed of making an intention is required. This is why Allaah Almighty Says (what means): "...So do not die except while you are Muslims." [Quran 2:132]

In western schools of thought generally, and in America more specifically, a new way of thinking, called 'Pragmatism', has sprung into existence that focuses mainly on work and production. This philosophy holds that real and palpable benefits are the yardstick of knowledge, meaning that real knowledge is that which can be practically applied and not merely theoretical knowledge that is cut off from everyday life.

The Divine praise for action implies disdain for two ways that are not on the path of truth: The first way is of the doer whose deed is not based upon true guidance and who has no knowledge of the divine laws. They are those whose deeds are described as being bad or evil. If the deed is a worldly one, it will not bear the desired fruit because it was not based on the proper vision or on true experience. This meaning is from Allaah, Almighty, when He Says (what means): "[Some] faces, that Day, will be humbled, Working [hard] and exhausted. They will [enter to] burn in an intensely hot Fire. They will be given drink from a boiling spring." [Quran 88:2-5] And (what means): "Say [O Muhammad]: 'Shall we [believers] inform

you of the greatest losers as to [their] deeds? [They are] those whose effort is lost in worldly life, while they think that they are doing well in work.'" [Quran 18:103-104]

Every group that is away from Allaah's path falls under this category. Their worship of Allaah Almighty is mixed with ignorance and falsehood.

Revolutionary schools of thought that do not form their ideas from Divine guidance also fall into this category. They base their efforts and actions on false premises.

Their situation is as Allaah Almighty describes it by Saying (what means): "Those before them had already plotted, but Allaah came at [i.e., uprooted] their building from the foundations, so the roof fell upon them from above them, and the punishment came to them from where they did not perceive." [Quran 16:26]

The most illustrative example of this category in our times is Communism and its philosophical, political and societal roots. Most of its proponents never expected such disastrous results. All of their efforts resulted in harm and they were preoccupied in finding ways to support such a backward system.

The second way is of those who prefer inactivity and comfort. It is the philosophy that is blind to Allaah's ways. In it, one wants all desires to come true without effort or toil. The nature of man in terms of being active and doing things makes the existence of such a group to seem dubious at best. But the fundamental qualities of this group become manifest in different ways, for example, those who persist in following their lusts and desires, or who think that it is sufficient for them to follow a particular slogan or be known by a particular name. On this way are also those who have no goal or aim that they strive for. They are merely prisoners of their circumstances and their daily routines. Their behaviour is not steered by an ideology and their work is not linked to any important mission. They are drowned in work that has no meaning. One of them goes to work to pay off the mortgage on his house. He comes home to sleep, eat and drink only to be able to find the energy to perform his tasks at work! A machine without a spirit is what he has become. The one who is in these circumstances does not even realise the precarious situation that he is in.

Further down in the pit is the Philosophical School that gives no value to the intellect. To them, what is considered by man to be existing is in fact nonexistent. They disbelieve in values. Their aim is to destroy without offering an alternative way. Their goal is to destroy the social structure without having any intention of replacing it with another system. Many are those who complain about the reality that they live in. They strive to destroy the structure of their society without caring for the fact that the supplanting system will be chaos. ❏

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Consistency between the Quran and modern science-1

Cosmology

Cosmology is the branch of astronomy concerned with the origin, structure and evolution of the universe as a whole. Throughout history, science and religion have sought to explain the universe, and often have conflicted in their explanations.

Modern cosmology, which applies particular mathematical relationships and scientific theories in search of an explanation, is mostly a product of the twentieth century. Today's cosmological research is based on a mathematical description of the universe which Albert Einstein developed in the context of his theories of special and general relativity in the early 1900s.

These theories involve a lot of very sophisticated mathematics for a full understanding. Basically, they concern the laws of motion under high speeds approaching the speed of light (special relativity) and the impact of strong gravitational fields (general relativity) applied to the explanation of cosmological phenomena. What is a wonder and an indication of the universality of Islam is that several of the key scientific findings in modern cosmology, according to some scientists, seem to be reflected in the Noble Quran, revealed by Allaah to the Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him, more than 1400 years ago.

These findings are: (a) the 'big bang theory' of how the universe began; (b) the expansion of the universe and (c) relativity of time.

The Big Bang Theory and the Unity of Creation

Most cosmologists today have accepted the Big Bang Theory in describing the origin of the universe. This theory states that the universe began at a single hot, dense point, or 'singularity'. Out of this point developed what is often referred to as 'cosmic soup', a constant interchange between matter and energy with no separation between stars and planets or the heavens and the Earth as we recognise them.

The Noble Quran appears to be consistent with this theory; Allaah Says (what means): "Have those who disbelieved not considered that the heavens and the earth were a joined entity, and We separated them..." [Quran 21:30] This verse clearly describes the initial unity of all creation and subsequent division of the universe into the phenomena we observe. Abdullaah Yusuf Ali, in the notes to his English translation of the twenty first Quranic chapter, points out, that as man acquires more knowledge about the physical world, he is also bound to expand his awareness of the overriding unity in the cosmos. As an example, he cites the discovery of the direct correlation between measurements of sunspot activity and changes in the Earth's magnetic field. There are many other examples in our daily life, including the influence of the moon on the tides and women's monthly cycle, the influence of the Earth's magnetic field on the migration of birds, gravitational and centrifugal forces that keep the solar system bound together in harmony, preventing planets from flying away and crashing into each other.

In essence, the initial unity of creation continues to exist, not in the form of a singularity, but through various bonding relationships that allow multiple forms of creation to maintain their linkage to the initial 'oneness' of the universe.

The Expansion and Structure of the Universe

The Quran points to the continued expansion of the universe in the verse (which means): "And the heaven We constructed with strength, and indeed, We are [its] expander." [Quran 51:47] In 1929, American astronomer Edwin Hubble discovered that the

farther a galaxy was from the Earth, the greater the speed of its outward movement. In fact, he found the movement of a galaxy to be directly proportional to its distance. This means that if a galaxy is ten times as far away as another galaxy, it is moving at ten times the speed.

Based on this discovery, and other observations, scientists have concluded that the universe is expanding. Furthermore, Dr. Haruk Nurbaki, in his book 'Verses of the Koran and Facts of Science', states that the Quran also suggests a structure of the universe which corresponds to modern scientific findings. The Quran states (what means): "[It is Allaah] who created the seven heavens in layers." [Quran 67: 3]

Dr. Nurbaki correlates the reference to the seven heavens with the descriptions of cosmic regions by modern scientists. He states that when one looks at space from Earth, he is surrounded by seven magnetic fields extending into the infinity of space.

These fields consist of (i) the spatial field occupied by Earth and the rest of the solar system; (ii) the spatial field of the Earth's galaxy, the Milky Way; (iii) the spatial field occupied by a 'local cluster' of galaxies to which the Milky Way belongs; (iv) the central magnetic field of the universe represented by a collectivity of clustered galaxies; (v) the band represented by quasars, which serve as 'star hatcheries'; (vi) the field of the expanding universe, represented by the receding galaxies; and (vii) the outermost field of space representing infinity.

The Relativity of Time

Dr. Mansour Hassab-Elnaby, in a paper entitled: 'A New Astronomical Quranic Method for the Determination of the Greatest Speed C', asserts that the Quran establishes a time/space reference system, which is indicative of the relativity of time and the constancy of the speed of light (represented by 'C' in scientific notation).

Albert Einstein used these concepts to establish his well-known 'field equations' which provide the mathematical explanation for the interaction of matter, energy, space and time in the universe. The basis of Dr. Hassab-Elnaby's paper is the Quranic verse (which means): "He arranges [each] matter from the heaven to the earth; then it will ascend to Him in a Day, the extent of which is a thousand years of those which you count." [Quran 32:5]

Thus, the Quran suggests that time is not absolute in the universe, a discovery made only in the early part of the twentieth century. The abovementioned Quranic verse, according to Dr. Hassab-Elnaby, implies a 'cosmic affair' of extremely high speed, making it possible to travel, in one day, the distance the moon travels around the Earth over a period of 1,000 years. The use of the lunar calendar in reckoning Earth time is explicitly stated in the following verse (which means): "...[It is Allaah who made] the moon a derived light and determined for it phases - that you may know the number of years and account [of time]..." [Quran 10:5] Furthermore, Dr. Hassab-Elnaby uses the mathematical relationship given in this verse - one day of 'cosmic reckoning' equal to a thousand years of 'Earth reckoning' - along with established scientific data on the movements of the Earth and the moon to calculate the speed which provides a linkage between the two systems of reckoning time. The resulting speed, he points out, is 299,792.458 kilometres per second, which is exactly, to the decimal point, the speed of light recorded by the United States National Bureau of Standards.

The Quran as Part of Universal Order

The correlation between the findings of science in the past century and the Quran highlights the importance of preserving the written word, emphasised in Islam because it bridges space and time, providing inspiration and verification for those separated from direct contact with the Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him and his companions may Allah be pleased with them. It has also led some scientists to take a closer look at the Quran.

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The Angels and Human Beings - 1

1 - The angels and Aadam peace be upon him:

When Allaah, the Most Exalted, wanted to create Aadam peace be upon him He informed His angels of that. They asked Him the reason behind that, because they knew that the sons of Aadam peace be upon him would cause corruption and shed blood, and they would disobey Allaah and disbelieve in Him. He told them that there were reasons for the creation of Aadam peace be upon him which they did not know. Allaah Says in the Quran (what means): "And [mention, O Muhammad], when your Lord said to the angels, "Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority." They said, "Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?" He [Allaah] said, "Indeed, I know that which you do not know." [Quran 2:30]

Their prostration to Aadam peace be upon him when he was created: Allaah commanded His angels to prostrate to Aadam peace be upon him when He had completed his creation and breathed His soul into him, Saying (what means): "[So mention] when your Lord said to the angels: "Indeed, I am going to create a human being from clay. So when I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My [created] soul, then fall down to him in prostration." [Quran 38:71- 72]

They responded to the command, except for Satan, as in the verse (which means): "So the angels prostrated – all of them entirely. Except Satan; he was arrogant and became among the disbelievers." [Quran 38:73-74]

How the angels taught Aadam peace be upon him:

It is narrated that Abu Hurayrah may Allah be pleased with him said: The Messenger of Allaah peace be upon him said: "Allaah created Aadam in his image (i.e. without progressing through the stages of a normal human, starting from a sperm until the completion of his human formation), and he (Aadam) was sixty cubits tall. When He had created him, He said, 'Go and greet them - a group of angels who were sitting - and listen to how they respond, for that will be your greeting and the greeting of your descendents.' So he said, 'As-Salaamu `Alaykum,' and they said, 'As-Salaamu `Alayka wa rahmat-Allaahi. So they added the words wa rahmat-Allaah." [Al-Bukhaari]

The angels washed Aadam peace be upon him when he died: When Aadam peace be upon him died, his children did not know what they should do with his body, so the angels taught them. Ubayy Ibn Ka'b may Allah be pleased with him narrated that the Prophet peace be upon him said: "When Aadam, died, the angels washed his body with water an odd number of times, then they buried him in a grave with a niche (land), and said: This is the way of the sons of Aadam." [Al-Haakim and At-Tabaraani]

It is narrated in an authentic narration that the angels washed Hanthalah Ibn Abu `Aamir may Allah be pleased with him who was martyred in the battle of Uhud. The Messenger peace be upon him said to his companions may Allah be pleased with him after Hanthalah may Allah be pleased with him was killed: "The angels are washing your companion" - meaning Hanthalah. The companions asked his wife, and she said that he had gone out when he heard the call to Jihaad, and he was in a state of ritual impurity following marital relations. The Messenger of Allaah peace be upon him said, "That is why the angels washed his body." [Al-Haakim and Al-Bayhaqi]

2 - The angels and the sons of Aadam peace be upon him:
The connection between the angels and the descendents of

Aadam peace be upon him is very strong. They are there when a person is created, they guard him/her after he/she emerges into this world. They bring the revelation from Allaah and they watch over people's actions and behaviour. They bring a person's soul forth from his body when his appointed time (of death) comes.

Their role in the creation of man:

Abu Tharr may Allah be pleased with him said: "I heard the Messenger of Allaah peace be upon him say: 'When forty-two nights are passed, Allaah sends an angel to the nutfah (embryo) and he gives it shape, forming its hearing and sight, its skin, flesh and bones. Then he says: 'O Lord, male or female?' Then your Lord decrees whatever He wills and the angel writes it down.'" [Muslim]

It is narrated that Ibn Mas'ood may Allah be pleased with him said: "The Messenger of Allaah peace be upon him who is the most truthful one, told us: "Each one of you comes together in mother's womb for forty days, then becomes an 'Aalaqah (clot) for a similar period of time. Then he becomes a Mudhghah (chewed lump of flesh) for a similar length of time. Then Allaah sends an angel to him, who is commanded with four things. It is said to him: Write down his deeds, his provision, and whether he is doomed (destined for Hell) or blessed (destined for Paradise). Then the soul is breathed into him.'" [Al-Bukhaari]

The Prophet peace be upon him also said: "Allaah has appointed an angel over the womb, and he (the angel) says, 'O Lord, a Nutfah (embryo from the mixed discharge of male and female); O Lord, an 'Alaqah (clot); O Lord, a Mudhghah (chewed lump of flesh).' And when Allaah wants to decree his creation, he says: 'O Lord, male or female? Doomed or blessed? What is his provision? What is his lifespan?' All of that is written when he is in his mother's womb." [Al-Bukhaari]

The angels guard the sons of Aadam peace be upon him: Almighty Allaah Says (what means): "It is the same [to Him] concerning you whether one conceals [his] speech or one publicizes it and whether one is hidden by night or conspicuous [among others] by day. For him [i.e. each one] are successive [angels] before and behind him who protect him by the decree of Allaah. Indeed, Allaah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves. And when Allaah intends for a people ill, there is no repelling it. And there is not for them besides Him any patron." [Quran 13:10-11]

Ibn `Abbaas may Allah be pleased with him has explained that what is meant by "successive angels" is the angels whom Allaah appoints to guard a person from before and from behind. Then when the decree of Allaah comes, which Allaah wills should befall him, they withdraw from him.

Mujaahid may Allah have mercy on him said: "There is no person who does not have an angel appointed to protect him when he is asleep and when he is awake, from the jinn, other men and savage beasts. None of these come to him, but the angel tells it, 'Keep away!' except for that which Allaah has given permission to befall him."

A man said to 'Ali Ibn Abu Taalib may Allah be pleased with him : "A group from (the tribe of) Muraad want to kill you." He ('Ali) may Allah be pleased with him said: "With every man there are angels guarding him from whatever has not been decreed for him. When the decree comes, they move away from him and let it reach him. Your, fixed lifespan (decreed by Allaah) is a protection for you." [Al-Bidaayah Wan-Nihaayah]

These guardians are sent by Allaah to protect His slaves until the decreed time of death comes to them. ❖

The Ranks of people in the Hereafter - 1

There is no doubt that on the Day of Judgement, people will vary in rank according to their status; they shall be classified according to their deeds and standing.

The first six ranks in the Hereafter are:

1. The messengers with strong Will and Determination (i.e., the Ulil-'Azm) As for the first and foremost rank, it belongs to the five Messengers of Allaah with strong Will and Determination from amongst the Messengers of Allaah, may Allaah exalt their mention, for they are the most honourable of Allaah's creation. They are the dearest to Him and the ones whom He has chosen; they are those upon whom He has sent peace. Allaah Says what means: "And peace upon the Messengers." [Quran 37: 181]

It is sufficient to mention regarding their honour and virtue that Allaah has selected them for revelation and entrusted them with His messages. Allaah has made them intercessors between Him and His creation. Allaah has also favoured them with honourable gifts, such as supernatural occurrences and abilities. Allaah has chosen some of them as a Khaleel, or a close, intimate friend; He has directly spoken to some of them, and elevated others to a lofty rank. Indeed Allaah has rendered them to be the only means to reach Him; how could mankind reach Allaah except through His Messengers? It would have been impossible. Thus, the Messengers are those that have the closest contact with Allaah from mankind.

2. The remaining messengers

The second rank consists of the remainder of the three-hundred and sixty-five (365) Messengers, those who were sent by Allaah to their people with a new message to deliver. The Messenger of Allaah peace be upon him has informed us that the number of Prophets, may Allaah exalt their mention, was one-hundred and twenty-four thousand (124,000), of which three-hundred and sixty-five (365) were Messengers. This is so that Allaah could establish His proof against mankind that they would have no excuse not to worship Him. The seal of all the Prophets and Messengers was Muhammad peace be upon him.

3. Prophets

The third rank consists of the Prophets those who were sent by Allaah to their people but had no new message to deliver. Therefore, this means that Messengers were of different ranks. Some Messengers were favoured by Allaah over others, such as the five of strong Will and Determination as was mentioned above, and these were: Muhammad peace be upon him Ibraaheem (Abraham), Moosaa (Moses), 'Eesaa (Jesus) and Nooh (Noah), may Allaah exalt their mention. These were the finest five of all the Messengers, and the best and most virtuous of these was Muhammad peace be upon him then Ibraaheem Al-Khaleel, then Moosaa Al-Kaleem (i.e. the one whom Allaah spoke to directly), then 'Eesaa and then Nooh, although the people of knowledge differed as to which one of the last two was of a higher calibre. Thus, this makes up the first rank, while the second rank consists of the rest of the three-hundred and sixty-five Messengers, while the third rank consists of the Prophets.

4. Scholars

The fourth rank includes those who inherited the knowledge of the Prophets, may Allaah exalt their mention, as well as their successors. They are those who apply the message propagated by the Messengers of Allaah, may Allaah exalt their mention. These are the people who possess knowledge, act upon it, and call others to it. This is the finest class of mankind after the Messengers and Prophets; it is the class of truthfulness, and Allaah has paralleled these people to His Messengers.

Allaah Says what means: "And whoever obeys Allaah and the Messenger - those will be with the ones upon whom Allaah has bestowed favour of the prophets, the steadfast affirmers of truth, the martyrs

and the righteous. And excellent are those as companions." [Quran 4: 69]

So, this is the next rank after those of the Messengers and Prophets, may Allaah exalt their mention. So who does it include? It includes the scholars who have learnt the Islamic Sharee'ah and taught it to others. This is the rank that follows those of the Prophets and Messengers, may Allaah exalt their mention, and they are undoubtedly their inheritors. People in this category vary in their level of knowledge and their application of it. The question arises: can the term "witness" be conferred to the scholar? The answer is yes, because the scholar is Allaah's witness over His creation. He will bear witness, through the knowledge that Allaah has given him, over Allaah's creation.

Thus, the scholar is referred to as a witness from this perspective. These steadfast affirmers are the ones who are literate regarding the religion, act upon it, teach it to others and are patient with regard to the trials that inflict them due to this; these scholars are of high rank and distinct virtue. There can be nothing better for a person than to be busy with his worldly work during his lifetime, or even be lying in his grave while his limbs have decayed, while having his good deeds increasing. For such a person, good deeds are being added to his record constantly and good actions are being awarded to him from where he would least expect. All this is due to the fact that when the scholar teaches people religious laws and they apply them, he will receive the same reward as they do due to them applying the knowledge that he has taught them. Hence, even if such a person is dead and in his grave, his books and other writings remain a source of reward for him. He procures rewards from them in his grave, despite being a collection of dismembered body parts.

As a matter of fact, even if such a person is preoccupied with worldly matters in his home, the fact that his sound Islamic judgements and knowledge are being circulated among people means that the rewards for this are being inscribed for him in his record of good deeds.

Some may say: 'These are the scholars, but we common people will never get any portion of such rewards.' We say, No! Rather, whoever learns something about the religion and passes it onto those he knows, such as family, relatives, friends, neighbours, colleagues and others, then he is rewarded for this knowledge that he has related. Moreover, he continues to be rewarded for that piece of knowledge he has related for as long as it is passed on.

This demonstrates the great virtue of learning the religion and teaching it to others. It also confirms the necessity of that knowledge being accurate, since if a person relates a fabricated Hadeeth or an erroneous Fatwaa to people, then he continues to receive the sin from it as long as it continues to circulate among others. On the other hand, if he learns and relates sound knowledge, then he will continue to be rewarded for it. It is for this reason that Imaam Ahmad may Allah have mercy on him mentioned regarding the people of knowledge:

"All praise is due to Allaah, who has rendered in between every time interval of Messengers remainders from the people of knowledge. They call the misguided to guidance and they patiently bear maltreatment from them. They enlighten the religiously-blind by virtue of the light of Allaah (i.e., the knowledge that they possess). How many of those whom Satan killed (i.e., killed his soul and spirit), have they brought back to life? How many of the ignorant and misguided have they guided? How excellent is their influence on people, and how repulsive is their people's effect on themselves. They preserve the Book of Allaah from the ignorant who seek to erroneously interpret its hidden meanings; from the distortion of the extremists; and the plagiarism of the fabricators."

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The ranks of the people of the Hereafter - 1

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5. Just rulers

The rank in the Hereafter which follows that of the scholars is that of the just leaders and rulers. It is through them that the roads and paths become safe and the world becomes upright. Through them the weak receive support, the oppressors are humiliated, and the frightened become secure. They are the ones who enact the divine penalties and repel corruption. They enjoin the good, forbid the evil, and implement the Book of Allaah and the Sunnah of His Messenger peace be upon him.

They extinguish the fires of innovations and misguidance. 'Umar ibn 'Abdul Azeez may Allah have mercy in him was one such just ruler. Allaah granted him knowledge and commandment. He ruled with sound knowledge. He governed the people for only years; he assumed leadership in 99 A.H. and was assassinated (through poisoning) two years later, in 101 A.H. Some of his people could not stand him and so they poisoned him, which caused him to die. He was, by the consensus of the Muslims, the fifth of the rightly guided caliphs. In just two years, he accomplished much more than any of the Umayyid caliphs did in many years.

Justice was so widespread that even when charity money was being circulated, there was nobody to be found who was in need of it - there was not a single poor person left and thus the alms were sent back to treasury. Moreover, a shepherd in the desert whose goat had been attacked and eaten by a wolf said: "Something has happened to the chief of the believers (i.e., 'Umar ibn 'Abdul-Azeez)" and after he inquired about it, he found that 'Umar had died that very day. So the people asked him: "How did you know?" He replied: "We have come to know of his justice that is so prevalent that even the wolves no longer attack our flock, so when this wolf attacked, we realised that something must have happened to 'Umar bin 'Abdul Azeez." His justice had even influenced the aggressive animals, who ceased their aggression due to it.

On the other hand, if an oppressive ruler reigns, then even the whales, the scorpions in their burrows, and the other animals curse him, as was mentioned in the prophetic narration where the animals curse the disobedient from the children of Aadam (i.e., people) due to them being the cause of the hindrance of rain. Rainfall ceases from the skies due to the oppression of such governors and rulers.

6. Mujaahideen (those who fight in the Way of Allaah)

The rank that follows the just rulers and governors are those who fight in the way of Allaah. They are the soldiers of Allaah through whom the religion is established, the enemies repelled, and the influence of Islam and its essence protected. The power of the Muslims and the essence of Islam are protected by whom? By the Mujaahideen - they are the ones who fight the enemies of Allaah so that the whole religion becomes solely for Allaah, and so that His word is supreme. ❖

Consistency between the Quran and modern science-1

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Dr. Maurice Bucaille of the French Academy of Science, author of 'The Bible, the Koran and Science', states that "...It comes as no surprise to learn that religion and science have always been considered to be twin sisters by Islam and that today, at a time when science has taken such great strides, they continue to be associated.

Furthermore, certain scientific data are used for a better understanding of the Quranic text. What is more, in a century where for many scientific truth has dealt a deathblow to religious belief, it is precisely the discoveries of science that, in an objective examination of the Islamic Revelation, have highlighted the supernatural character of certain aspects of the revelation." Islam encourages man's search for knowledge to both enhance appreciation of the cosmic order and augment his capability to serve as a representative of Allaah in governing the affairs of the Earth. The Quran seems to call attention to the importance of observing the heavens in this search. It states (what means): "And We made the sky a protected ceiling, but they, from its signs, turned away." [Quran 21:32]

Thus, important evidence seems to be emerging in the modern world that the Quran contains revelation which transcends space and time, forming a part of the cosmic order to guide the path of mankind and strengthen the bond between religion and science.

'Aa'ishah: the mother of the believers

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Whereas Khadeejah may Allah have mercy on her was already a wise and mature woman when she married the Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him 'Aa'ishah may Allah have mercy on her was a spirited young girl who still had a great deal to learn when she married the Prophet peace be upon him. However, she was very quick to learn, for she had a clear heart, a quick mind and an accurate memory. She was not afraid to talk back in order to find out the truth or make it known, and whenever she beat someone else in argument, the Prophet peace be upon him would smile and say: "She is the daughter of Abu Bakr!"

Moosaa bin Talhah may Allah have mercy on him once said: "I have not seen anyone more eloquent than 'Aa'ishah." 'Aa'ishah may Allah have mercy on her became so wise that one of her contemporaries used to say that if the knowledge of 'Aa'ishah were placed on one side of the scales and that of all other women on the other, 'Aa'ishah's side would outweigh the others. She used to sit with the other women and pass on the knowledge that she had received from the Prophet peace be upon him. She was a source of knowledge and wisdom for both women and men long after the Prophet peace be upon him died and as long as she lived. Abu Moosaa may Allah have mercy on him once said: "Whenever a report appeared doubtful to us (the Companions of the Prophet) and we asked 'Aa'ishah about it, we always learned something from her about it."

In addition to being extremely intelligent, 'Aa'ishah may Allah have mercy on her became a very graceful young woman. When she first came to live in the Prophet's household as a young girl, a strong and lasting friendship grew up between her and Sawdah, and Sawdah may Allah have mercy on her took care of her along with the rest of the household. When 'Aa'ishah may Allah have mercy on her grew up, Sawdah, who was by then an old woman, gave up her share of the Prophet's time in favor of 'Aa'ishah and was content to manage his household and be Umm al Mu'mineen 'The Mother of the Believers' -- a title of respect that was given to all the wives of the Prophet peace be upon him which confirmed what the Quran clearly states that no man could marry any of them after they had been married to the Prophet peace be upon him: "The Prophet is more worthy of the believers than themselves, and his wives are (in the position of) their mothers." [Quran 33:6] During the nine years that 'Aa'ishah may Allah have mercy on her was married to Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him she witnessed many of the great events that shaped the destiny of the first Muslim community of Al-Madeenah al Munawarra: It was during the course of their marriage that the direction of the Qiblah was changed from Jerusalem to Makkah, thereby distinguishing the Muslims more clearly from Jews and Christians. It was during the course of their marriage that she must have listened to many of the Jews, Christians and idol worshippers who came not to listen to the Prophet peace be upon him but to argue with him, in the hope that they could find a plausible excuse to justify their rejection of him. It was through exchanges such as these that 'Aa'ishah may Allah have mercy on her learned to distinguish what was true from what was false.

As the prophetic guidance continued to be revealed through the Prophet Muhammad, sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam, 'Aa'ishah's way of life, along with that of all the Muslims, was gradually reshaped and refined. It was during the course of their marriage that drinking alcohol was finally forbidden, it was made clear what food was allowed (Halaal) and what was prohibited (Haraam), it became necessary for women to wear the Hijaab in public and while praying, guidance regarding how to fast was revealed, paying the Zakaat became obligatory on all Muslims and all rites of Hajj were purified and clarified.

In fact, every aspect of life -- from birth to death and everything that happens in between -- was illuminated by the way in which the Prophet peace be upon him behaved. It was this way of behavior (the Sunnah), that 'Aa'ishah may Allah have mercy on her helped to preserve and protect, not only by embodying it herself, but also by teaching it to others. The life of 'Aa'ishah may Allah have mercy on her is proof that a woman can be far more learned than men and that she can be the teacher of scholars and experts. Her life is also a proof that a woman can exert influence over men and women and provide them with inspiration and leadership. Her life is also proof that the same woman can retain her femininity and be a source of pleasure, joy and comfort to her husband.

'Aa'ishah may Allah have mercy on her spent her life with the Prophet peace be upon him until he died in her lap, whereupon she said: "He peace be upon him died between my chest and my neck, then I put his head on a pillow when people became very quiet while I was mourning and suffering deep sadness." ❖

Al-Ahbaash (the Habashis) -1

This is a group that emerged during the last quarter of the fourteenth century AH there emerged a group led by 'Abdullaah al-Habashi, who moved from Ethiopia to Syria, and he moved about in that region until he settled in Lebanon, where he started to call people to his way. The number of his followers increased and his ideas - which are a mixture of the ideas of the Jahamiyyah [a group which misinterpreted the attributes of Allaah], the Mu'tazilah [a philosophical group many of whose ideas differ from those of Ahlus-Sunnah], grave-worshippers and Sufis - began to spread. He supported his ideas by engaging in debates and printing books and leaflets which propagate them.

What has been written and published by this group show that some of their beliefs are as follows (this is not a complete list):

1. With regard to the issue of faith, they follow the school of thought of Al-irjaa' [those who believe that sin does not matter so long as one is a believer] which is condemned in Islam.

It is known that the belief of the Muslims, which was that followed by the Sahaabah, the Taabi'een and those who follow their path until the present day, is that faith is the matter of words spoken by the tongue, beliefs held in the heart and actions done by the body. Belief must be accompanied by submission to the laws of Islam, otherwise that so-called faith is not valid.

There are many reports from the Salaf (the righteous predecessors) which confirm this belief, for example the words of Imaam Ash-Shaafi'i may Allaah have mercy on him: "Among the consensus of the Sahaabah and the Taabi'een and those who came after them, and those whom we have met, is that they say: faith is words, actions and intentions; one of these three will not be complete without the others."

2. They allow seeking help from and seeking refuge with the dead, and praying to them instead of to Allaah. This is major shirk according to the texts of the Quran and Sunnah, and the consensus of the Muslims. This shirk is the same as the religion of the earlier polytheists, such as the disbelievers of Quraysh and others, as Allaah Says (what means): "And they worship besides Allaah things that harm them not, nor profit them, and they say: 'These are our intercessors with Allaah'" [Quran 10:18]

Allaah also Says (what means): "Verily, We have sent down the Book to you (O Muhammad) in truth. So worship Allaah (Alone) by doing religious deeds sincerely for Allaah's sake only. Surely, the religion (i.e. the worship and the obedience) is for Allaah only. And those who take Auliyyaa' (protectors, helpers, lords, gods) besides Him (say): 'We worship them only that they may bring us near to Allaah.' Verily, Allaah will judge between them concerning that wherein they differ. Truly, Allaah guides not him who is a liar, and a disbeliever" [Quran 39:2-3]

Allaah also Says (what means): "Say (O Muhammad): 'Who rescues you from the darkness of the land and the sea (dangers like storms), (when) you call upon Him in humility and in secret (saying): If He (Allaah) only saves us from this (danger), we shall truly, be grateful.'" [Quran 6:63]

Allaah also Says (what means): "And the mosques are for Allaah (Alone), so invoke not anyone along with Allaah" [Quran 72: 18]

Allaah also Says (what means): "Such is Allaah, your Lord; His is the kingdom. And those, whom you invoke or call upon instead of Him, own not even a Qitmeer (the thin membrane over the date stone). If you invoke (or call upon) them, they hear not your call; and if (in case) they were to hear, they could not grant it (your request) to you. And on the Day of Resurrection, they will disown your worshipping them. And none can inform you (O Muhammad) like Him Who is the All-Knowing (of everything)" [Quran 35:13-14]

The Prophet sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam said: "Du'aa' (supplication) is worship." [Abu Daawood Ibn Maajah and others]. There are many verses and prophetic narrations that state the same thing. This indicates that the earlier polytheists knew that Allaah was the Creator and Provider, the One Who brings benefit or causes harm, and they worshipped their gods so that they would intercede for them with Allaah and bring them closer to Him. Thus they committed shirk. Allaah ruled that they were guilty of disbelief and shirk, and commanded His Prophet sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam to fight them until all worship was for Allaah Alone, as Allaah Says (what means): "And fight them until there is no more Fitnah (disbelief and polytheism, i.e. worshipping others besides Allaah), and the religion (worship) will all be for Allaah Alone" [Quran 8:39]

The scholars have written many books on this topic in which they have explained clearly the true Islam with which Allaah sent His Messengers and revealed His Books. They also discussed the religion and beliefs of the people of the pre-Islamic era, and their actions which went against the laws of Allaah. One of the best writers on this topic was Ibn Taymiyyah may Allaah have mercy on him, in his numerous books. One of the most concise of his works is Qaa'idah Jaliyyah fi'l-Tawassul wa'l-Waseelah.

3. In their view, the Quran is not the Word of Allaah in the true sense. It is known from the texts of the Quran and Sunnah, and by the consensus of the Muslims, that Allaah speaks whenever He wills, in a manner that befits His Majesty, may He be glorified, and that the Quran, both its letters and meanings, is the word of Allaah in the true sense. Allaah Says (what means): "And if anyone of the Mushrikoon (polytheists, idolaters, pagans, disbelievers in the Oneness of Allaah) seeks your protection then grant him protection so that he may hear the Word of Allaah" [Quran 9:6]

And also (what means): "a party of them (Jewish rabbis) used to hear the Word of Allaah [the Taurat (Torah)], then they used to change it knowingly after they understood it?" [Quran 2:75]

And also (what means): "They want to change Allaah's Words. Say: 'You shall not follow us; thus Allaah has said beforehand.'" [Quran 48:15]

There are many well known verses that say the same thing. Numerous authentic reports from the Salaf confirm this belief, which is stated in the texts of the Quran and Sunnah - to Allaah be praise and blessings.

4. They think that it is obligatory to interpret the texts of the Quran and Sunnah which speak of the attributes of Allaah, may He be glorified and exalted (i.e., to understand them differently from the apparent meaning). This is contrary to the consensus of the Muslims, from the companions and Taabi'een to those who follow their path until the present day. The Muslims believe that it is obligatory to believe in what is stated in the texts about the Names and attributes of Allaah, without distorting the meanings, denying any of His attributes, discussing the hows and whys or likening any of Allaah's attributes to human attributes. They (the Muslims) believe that there is none like unto Allaah and He is the All-Hearing, All-Seeing; they do not deny any of the attributes with which He has described himself. They do not change the words from their (right) places or belie or deny (or utter impious speech against) His Names or signs. They do not discuss the nature of His attributes, or liken His attributes to the attributes of His creation, because there is nothing that can be compared to Him, and He has no equal or rival. Imaam Ash-Shaafi'i may Allaah have mercy on him said: "I believe in Allaah and in what has come from Allaah as Allaah meant it. I believe in the Messenger of Allaah sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam and in what has come from the Messenger of Allaah as the Messenger of Allaah sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam meant it." Imaam Ahmad may Allaah have mercy on him said: "We believe in it; we do not reject anything that the Messenger of Allaah sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam said, and we do not describe Allaah with more than He has described Himself."

5- They deny that Allaah is above His creation. The belief of the Muslims, as indicated by the verses of the Quran, the narrations of the Prophet sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam, sound human nature and clear common sense is that Allaah is above His creation, over His Throne, and nothing at all of His creatures' affairs is hidden from Him. Allaah Says (what means): "and then He rose over (Istawaa) the Throne (really in a manner that suits His Majesty)". [Quran 7:54] - this phrase appears seven times in the Quran.

Allaah also Says (what means): "To Him ascend (all) the goodly words, and the righteous deeds exalt it (i.e. the goodly words are not accepted by Allaah unless and until they are followed by good deeds)" [Quran 35:10]

Allaah also Says (what means): "And He is the Most High, the Most Great" [Quran 2:255]

And also (what means): "And to Allaah prostrate all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth, of the moving (living) creatures and the angels, and they are not proud [i.e. they worship their Lord (Allaah) with humility]. They fear their Lord above them, and they do what they are commanded" [Quran 16:49-50].

Many authentic narrations have been narrated from the Prophet sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam on this topic, for example: the story of the Mi'raaj (ascent into the heavens), which is authentic, when the Prophet sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam passed through the heavens one by one, until he reached his Lord, Who brought him close or called to him, and enjoined fifty prayers upon him, then he kept going back and forth between Moosaa may Allaah exalt his mention and his Lord. He came down from the presence of his Lord to Moosaa may Allaah exalt his mention, and Moosaa may Allaah exalt his mention asked him, "How many (prayers) have been enjoined upon you?" When he sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam told him, Moosaa may Allaah exalt his mention said, "Go back to your Lord and ask Him to reduce them." So he sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam went back up to his Lord and asked Him to reduce them.

Abu Hurayrah may Allaah be pleased with him said: the Messenger of Allaah sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam said: "When Allaah created His creation, He wrote in a Book which is with Him, above the Throne: 'My Mercy prevails over My wrath.'" [Al-Bukhaari and Muslim] Abu Sa'eed Al-Khudri may Allaah be pleased with him that the Prophet sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam said: "Do you not trust me, when I am the trustee of the One Who is in the heaven?" [Al-Bukhaari and Muslim] The Prophet sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam said: "The Throne is above water, and Allaah is above the Throne, and Allaah knows what you are doing." [Ibn Khuzaymah and Abu Daawood]

The Prophet sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam said to the slave-girl, "Where is Allaah?" She said: "In heaven." He said: "Who am I?" She said, "You are the Messenger of Allaah." He said: "Set her free, for she is a believer." [Muslim]

This is the pure belief which was adhered to by the Muslims: the companions may Allaah be pleased with them, and those who have followed them in truth until the present day, praise be to Allaah. Because of the great importance of this topic and the fact that so much evidence more than one thousand verses and prophetic narrations-points to it, the scholars have devoted books to it, e.g., Abu 'Abdullaah Ath-Thahabi in al-'Alu li'l-'Aliy al-Ghaffaar, and Ibn Al-Qayyim in Ijtima' al-Juyooth al-Isaamiyyah.

...will continue in the next issue Inshallah

Ruling on celebrating Christmas

By Shaykh Ibn Uthaymeen

Ibn Taymiyyah said in his commentary on the verse (which means): "And [they are] those who do not testify to falsehood..." [Quran 25:72]: As regards the festivals of the polytheists, they combine confusion, physical desires and falsehood. There is nothing in them that is of any religious benefit, and the instant gratification involved in them only ends up in pain. Thus they are falsehood, and witnessing them means attending them. This verse itself praises and commends (those who do not witness falsehood), which has the meaning of urging people to avoid taking part in their festivals and other kinds of falsehood. We understand that it is bad to attend their festivals because they are called 'falsehood'. It indicates that it is Haraam (prohibited) to do this for many reasons, because Allaah, The Most Exalted, has called it 'falsehood'. Allaah Almighty condemns the one who speaks falsehood even if no one else is harmed by it, as in the verse forbidding *Thihaar* [a form of divorce in which the man says to his wife "You are to me like the back of my mother"], where He Says (what means): "... And indeed, they are saying an objectionable statement and a falsehood..." [Quran 58:2]

Allaah Almighty also Says (what means): "... So shun the abomination of idols, and avoid false statement..." [Quran 22: 30] So the one who says or practices falsehood is condemned in this fashion. Anas Ibn Maalik may Allah be pleased with him said: "The Messenger of Allaah, peace be upon him came (to Madeenah) and they (inhabitants of Madeenah) had two days in which they would (relax and) play. He peace be upon him said: "What are these two days?" They said, "We used to play (on these two days) during the Jaahiliyyah (pre-Islamic period)." The Messenger of Allaah, peace be upon him said: "Allaah has given you something better instead of them: *Yawm Al-Adh-ha* ('Eed Al-Adh-ha) and *Yawm Al-Fitr* ('Eed Al-Fitr)." [Abu Daawood]

This indicates clearly that the Prophet, peace be upon him definitely forbade his Ummah (Muslim Nation) to celebrate the festivals of the disbelievers and he strove to wipe them (non-Islamic festivals) out by all possible means. Indeed, the Prophet, peace be upon him went to great lengths to command his Ummah to be different from the disbelievers in many issues that are permitted and in many ways of worship, lest that lead Muslims to be like them in other matters too. This being different was to be a barrier in all aspects, because the more different you are from the people of Hell, the less likely you are to do their acts.

The Hadeeth (Prophetic narration): "Every people has its festival, and this is our festival" [Al-Bukhaari & Muslim] implies exclusivity that every people has its own festival, as Allaah Almighty Says (what means): "For every nation there is a direction to which they face (in their prayers)..." [Quran 2: 148] and "... To each among you We have prescribed a law and a clear way..." [Quran 5: 48]. This implies that each nation has its own ways. The letter "to" in "to each" implies exclusivity. So if the Jews have a festival and the Christians have a festival, it is just for them, and we should not have any part in it, just as we do not share their *Qiblah* (direction of prayer) or their laws.

One of the conditions set out by 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattaab and agreed upon by the Prophet's Companions and by all the Muslim Jurists after them is that those of the People of the Book who have agreed to live under Islamic rule (Ahl Al-Thimamah) should not celebrate their festivals openly in Daar Al-Islam (lands under Islamic rule). If the Muslims have agreed to prevent them from celebrating openly, how could it be right for the Muslims to celebrate them? If a Muslim celebrates them, is that not worse than if a non-Muslim does so openly? The only reason that we forbade them to celebrate their festivals openly is because of the corruption involved in them, because of the sin or symbols of sin. In either case, the Muslim is forbidden from sin or the symbols of sin. Even if there was no evil involved apart from the non-Muslim feeling encouraged to celebrate openly because of the Muslim's actions, how can a Muslim do that? The evil involved (in their festivals) will be explained below, Allaah willing.

In the chapter entitled "on the abhorrence of entering the churches of Ahl Al-Thimamah on the occasion of their New Year and other celebrations" Al-Bayhaqi reported the following Hadeeth:

"Umar said: "Do not enter upon the polytheists in their churches on their feast- days, for the Wrath (of Allaah) is descending upon them." He also said: "Avoid the enemies of Allaah on their festivals." It was also reported that 'Abdullaah Ibn 'Amr said:

"Whoever lives in the land of the non-Arabs (non-Muslims) and celebrates their New Year and their festivals, and imitates them until he dies in that state, will be gathered with them on the Day of Resurrection." He mentioned - and Allaah knows best - the one who lives in their land, because at the time of 'Abdullaah Ibn 'Amr and the other Companions, they used to forbid open celebration of non-Islamic festivals in the Muslim lands, and none of the Muslims imitated them in their festivals; that was possible only when living in the lands of the non-Muslims.

'Ali Ibn Abu Taalib refused to even acknowledge the name of their festivals which were exclusively theirs, so how about actually celebrating them?

Ibn Al-Baghdadi said: "It is not permitted to attend the festivals of the Christians and Jews. Ahmad also stated this, and his evidence for that is the verse (which means): "And those who do not witness falsehood..." [Quran 25: 72]. He said: "The Muslims are to be prevented from entering upon them in their synagogues and churches."

Greeting the non-Muslims on Christmas and other religious holidays of theirs is Haraam, by consensus, as Ibn Al-Qayyim said in *Ahkaam Ahl Al-Thimamah*: "Congratulating the non-Muslims on the rituals that belong only to them is Haraam by consensus, as is congratulating them on their festivals and feasts by saying: 'A happy festival to you' or 'May you enjoy your festival,' and so on. If the one who says this has been saved from disbelief, it is still forbidden. It is like congratulating someone for prostrating to the cross, or even worse than that. It is as great a sin as congratulating someone for drinking wine, or murdering someone, or having illicit sexual relations, and so on. Many of those who have no respect for their religion fall into this error; they do not realize the offensiveness of their actions. Whoever congratulates a person for his disobedience or *Bid'ah* (innovation) or disbelief exposes himself to the Wrath and Anger of Allaah."

Congratulating the non-Muslims on their religious festivals implies that one accepts or approves of their rituals of disbelief, even if one would not accept those things for oneself. But the Muslim should not accept the rituals of disbelief or congratulate anyone else for them, because Allaah Almighty does not accept any of that at all, as He Says (what means): "If you disbelieve - indeed, Allah is Free from need of you. And He does not approve for His servants disbelief. And if you are grateful, He approves it for you..." [Quran 39: 7] And (what means): ". . . This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favor upon you and have approved for you Islam as religion. . . ." [Quran 5: 3]. So congratulating them is forbidden, whether they are one's colleagues at work or otherwise.

If the non-Muslims greet us on the occasion of their festivals, we should not respond, because these are not our festivals, and because they are not festivals which are acceptable to Allaah. These festivals are innovations in their religions, and even those which may have been prescribed formerly have been abrogated by the religion of Islam, with which Allaah sent Muhammad, peace be upon him to the whole of mankind. Allaah Says (what means): "And whoever desires other than Islam as religion - never will it be accepted from him, and he, in the Hereafter, will be among the losers..." [Quran 3: 85] It is Haraam for a Muslim to accept invitations on such occasions, because this is worse than congratulating them as it implies taking part in their celebrations.

Similarly, Muslims are forbidden to imitate non-Muslims by having parties on such occasions, or exchanging gifts, or giving out sweets or food, or taking time off work, etc., because the Prophet peace be upon him said: "Whoever imitates a people is one of them." [Abu Daawood]

Ibn Taymiyyah said: "Imitating them in some of their festivals implies that one is pleased with their false beliefs and practices, and gives them the hope that they may have the opportunity to humiliate and mislead the weak." Whoever does anything of this sort is a sinner, whether he does it out of politeness or to be friendly, or because he is too shy to refuse, or for whatever other reason, because this is hypocrisy in Islam, and because it makes the non-Muslims feel proud of their religion.

Allaah Almighty is the One Whom we ask to make the Muslims feel proud of their religion, to help them adhere steadfastly to it, and to make them victorious over their enemies, for He is the Strong and Omnipotent. ❖

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A LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

In my name, and my family name at Middle East Fashion, I would like to offer my sincere congratulations to my Dear friend Dr. Kablawi, for another great accomplishment in establishing this rich magazine to our Muslim community in South Florida, which adds another bright light of knowledge, and to enrich us and feed our souls with the best Islamic teaching and education. At the same time, I would like to call on all brothers and sisters to extend the hands of good to support this Islamic publication with every way possible, in order for it to continue giving, growing and reaching every house with the name of Allah, then the support of the good hearts, minds, and hands.

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