



# Al-Risala 1990

September

## Science Bears Witness

Maurice Bucaille, who came from a Christian background in France, wrote a book on the Qur'an which was first published in French in 1976. This was later translated into 10 languages, the title of the English version being: *The Bible the Qur'an and Science*.

Dr. Bucaille has shown in this book that the statements of the Qur'an on matters of science are astonishingly accurate when compared with modern findings. Although the Qur'an was presented to the world long before the scientific age, it contains exact descriptions of academic truths which were not discovered until much later. This fact proves that the Qur'an is the creation of a superior mind. It was not in fact, the work of a human author.

Another book by Dr. Bucaille deals with the origin of man and foetal development, that being the main subject of interest to him. He has shown in this book that all the statements of the Qur'an on the origin of man are perfectly in consonance with the results of modern investigation, although the final conclusions were not arrived at until the latter half of the 20th century.

The French edition of this book was published in Paris in 1984. Comprising 220 pages, the English version is titled; *What is the Origin of Man?* (Published by Seghers, 6 place Saint-Sulpice, 75006, Paris).

Dr. Bucaille states in this work that he had been told that the Qur'an was authored by Muhammad, who compiled the scriptures by making certain additions to, or subtractions from the Bible. "I therefore started out with the preconception that the scientific errors contained in the Bible must also figure in the Qur'an." (p. 157)

Moreover, since the period of the revelations to Muhammad dates from 610 to 632 – an age of scientific obscurantism all over the world – a book belonging to that period would necessarily reflect the scientific shortcomings of the age.

However in the course of his research, it occurred to him that although the Qur'an and the Bible had much in common, those scientific errors, which may be found to this day in the Bible, are notably absent from the Qur'an. This so aroused his curiosity that he took up the study of Arabic, at the age of fifty, in order to have direct access to the Qur'an. Then when he had sufficient mastery of Arabic to read the Qur'an in the original, he was able to confirm, astonishingly enough, that whereas the Bible was marred by innumerable scientific errors, the Qur'an was totally free from them.

If Muhammad was actually the author of the Qur'an which, as some would have it, he compiled by drawing on the Bible and contemporary knowledge, then what was the reason for the Qur'an having omitted all those scientific errors to be found in the Bible and still given currency in Muhammad's time? For instance, the Jewish calendar, which follows the data contained in the Old Testament, places the

dates very precisely. The second half of the Christian year 1975 corresponds to the beginning of the 5,736th year of the creation of the world. (This does not of course, tally with the estimates made by modern evolutionists.) Meaningless errors of this sort are nowhere to be found in the Qur'an (p. 15).

The scientific errors in the Bible are so great in number that refuting them is manifestly impossible. Jean Guilton, admitting these errors, writes: "The scientific errors in the Bible are the errors of mankind, for long ago man was like a child, as yet ignorant of science" (p. 152).

This being the state of human knowledge, how did it become possible for Muhammad in his compilation of the Qur'an to omit the errors of the Bible, or the misconceptions prevalent in those time? How was it possible for him to prepare a book which was exceptionally free from all scientific errors? (p. 160) The writer then remarks that this fact is sufficient to prove that the Qur'an is not the creation of Muhammad, but the creation of a supernatural mind: "The history of science leads us to conclude that there can be no human explanation for the existence of these verses in the Qur'an." (p. 188)

This argument to prove the veracity of the Qur'an testifies to the truth of this verse, revealed fourteen hundred years ago in the Quran: "We will show them our signs in all the regions of the earth and in their own souls, until they clearly see that this is the truth. Does it not suffice that your lord is watching over all things?"(41:53).

The Qur'an is not, of course, a book of science in the technical sense of the word. But, as regards the beliefs that the Qur'an seeks to inculcate, it presents the signs of nature as testimony. What is meant here by 'nature'? It is that very same nature which is the subject of study in the field of science.

Nature forms the subject of the Qur'an as well as of science. The difference between the two, however, is that the Qur'an refers to some aspects of nature only by way of argument. Science studies nature as a permanent discipline; whenever the Qur'an makes a reference to nature, it is corroborated by the scientific investigations of modern times. No explanation can be offered for this compatibility except that the Qur'an is the book of God, who knows all visible and invisible things, whose knowledge encompasses, at the same time, past, present and future.

Those who want to have scientific proofs before they will believe in the Qur'an as a book of God would do well to study both of the above mentioned books by Dr. Maurice Bucaille.

## Giving everything but wanting no worldly return

When the Muslims of Mecca emigrated to Medina, the Prophet told the Ansar of Medina that these Muhajirs were their brothers and sisters; they had left their own properties and families and come to live with them in Medina. "We will give them half of our date groves," the Ansar replied, "and leave half for ourselves." "There is something else you can give them," the Prophet said. "What is that, Prophet of God?" the Ansar asked. "The people of Mecca know nothing of farming and horticulture," the Prophet told them. "You do the work on their behalf and then divide the produce." The Ansar said that they had understood what the Prophet said and would obey him. Jabir says that when the Ansar used to weigh their date crop, they would divide the dates into two portions, one larger and the other smaller. They would put the branches in with the smaller portion. Then they would give the larger portion to the Muhajirs, and keep the smaller one themselves. This system continued until the Conquest of Khyber. When Bahrain was conquered, the prophet wanted to give the land to the Ansar, but they declined the offer saying that the Muhajirs should receive an equal amount first. "That is not possible," the Prophet told them. "In that case you will have to be patient until you meet me in the next world, for after I have gone others will be given priority over you."

## Social Service

*“The best person is one who can be of the greatest service to others.”*

Service to humanity is one of the highest ideals. Just consider that if a man were to exhibit signs of distress before a statue, there would be no incentive that would induce the statue to help him out of his misery. A human being, however who has a compassionate heart, would be greatly moved to see someone in distress; his first impulse would be to do whatever he could to help. Such positive action is the bedrock of social service.

In the words of the Prophet: “The best person is one who can be of the greatest service to others.” This tells us the criterion, according to Islam, by which to judge a man’s virtue. That is, a man should not live for himself alone, but should try as far as possible to benefit others.

According to the Qur’an, a believer is like a tree. What is a tree? A tree is a living, growing thing which offers man the greatest of advantages. A tree, entirely of its own accord, gives benefits to others.

A tree gives people shade. It gives fruit, it gives wood, it supplies fresh oxygen. It lends beauty to the earth. In fact, there are too many benefits to be enumerated. And all these benefits are reaped by man. Indeed, the highest form of service a man can perform is to give benefit to others, unilaterally, without any hope of return, in exactly the same way as the tree does. In this respect, the tree is the best example a man can have in rendering service to others.

In the case of human beings, the benefits of service do not go only to the recipient. The giver also benefits from his own altruism, for when he helps others without any reward, he raises himself to the highest psychological state; he uplifts his soul to a higher plane, thereby building within himself a superior moral character.

To give is also to receive. Being helpful to others is a form of self-elevation. Giving to others brings its own rewards, but there are very few people who base their actions on this valuable moral principle.

## The Culmination

*"Nowhere to run, Nowhere to hide."*

Manuel Antonio Noriega, having seized power in Panama after a military coup, set himself up as Panama's dictator. With his newly acquired power, he accumulated vast fortunes for himself. But his policies enraged America, which in turn sent its army into Panama in December, 1989. General Noriega fled his grand palace to seek refuge in the Vatican embassy. But this piece of strategy did no help him. Under pressure from the USA, the Vatican embassy had to hand over General Noriega to the American soldiers on January 3, 1990. (*The Times of India*, January 6, 1990)

There was a great lesson in that scene of January 3 when, in the dead of night, General Noriega, a defeated man, came out of the Vatican mission, surrendered to the US troops and was instantly handcuffed. He was then sent to the United States to face drug trafficking charges.

According to the AP reporter, he was, in the end, alone. With, family, friends cronies, lovers, money and admiring crowds all, gone, the former strongman had no place to turn.

According to another commentator, General Noriega must have lived his life as if he were in a tunnel – alone on the inside and alone on the outside.

Even the priests who granted him asylum at the Vatican mission had reminded him that he was an unwelcome guest.

For four out of his 10 days inside the embassy , the US soldiers had bombarded him with rock, rap and country music, taunting him with such tunes as "Voodoo Child, your're no good," reminding him he had "nowhere to run. Nowhere to hide."

This story of General Noriega is the story of all men. What General Noriega faced in this world is going to be faced by all men in the next. Finally, every single human being will be taken prisoner and produced in the court of God. The time is not very far off when all the things of the world will fall away from believers and non-believers alike. All men are going to be faced with a situation in which they feel they have nowhere to run and nowhere to hide.

## Salah, but in the Wrong Order

One who performs *salah* (prayer) first and his ablutions afterwards cannot truly be said to have prayed. The *Shari'ah* would class such a man as a rebel rather than a *namazi* (one who says his prayers). Even if all the parts of a prayer are gone through, it is no prayer if the different parts are said in the wrong order. No religious scholar or jurist would accept that true prayer could emerge from such disorder.

True *namazis* throughout the world will invariably say their prayers in the order prescribed, for they are fully aware of the rules and regulations on this subject. The *namazi* knows full well that a prayer which is lacking in order will not be accepted by God.

On an exact parallel with the so-called *namazi*, who gets his *salah* and his ablutions in the wrong order, are those present-day Muslim 'crusaders' who want first to seize power then, later, prepare the minds of individuals for the introduction of the Islamic system. They go about shouting slogans about the establishment of Islamic government without having done any of the necessary preparatory work. They need, however, to stop and reflect upon the method adopted by the Prophet. His way was to impose Islamic law only after a long and laborious struggle to win over the minds and hearts of the people.

These crusaders maintain, however, that the Islamic way of life can be established only after taking possession of a country and its territory. First they have to annihilate the evil rulers, then they will set up a just leadership. First they have to destroy the cinema houses, then they will stop people from watching movies. First they have to bring about political change, then they will change the thinking of the individual. First they have to get control of the media, then they can use it to communicate the message of Islam.

All these activities come under the heading of 'salah first, ablutions later'. In actual fact, people seldom go against the prescribed form of ritual in observing *salah* because it has continued to be done in a particular order right from the days of the Prophet. But as far as establishment of Islamic government is concerned, there has been no such unbroken tradition. Therefore, the order in which this takes place does not seem to them to be immutable in the way that the ritual of *salah* is. This is in spite of both the *sunnah* of the Prophet and the *Shari'ah* being quite specific on this subject.

Had the precept of 'Power first and preparation of the mind later' been favoured by God, all His prophets would have unhesitatingly followed this rule. But events show that they did not do so, even when the opportunity presented itself.

The Meccans, for example, offered to let the Prophet of Islam rule over them, supposing that the work of *da'wah* he was engaged in prefigured such a goal. (*Seerat ibn Hisham*, vol. 1, p. 315) But the Prophet declined their offer of forming a government. Remaining aloof from power, he continued to strive to enter into the minds of the people through the concepts of monotheism and the Hereafter.

Many centuries prior to this; Moses found himself in a similar situation. He had been sent to the Egyptians, where he presented the call to monotheism before the Pharaoh. He continued to struggle for this cause over an extended period, but the Pharaoh refused to accept this message. Finally he was held punishable in the eyes of God, whereupon he, along with his entire army, was drowned in the sea. The military power of the Pharaohs had come to an end.

Now there was nothing to prevent Moses from coming back to Egypt along with his people and occupying the throne, the palace and all the other vacant seats of power. Then, after seizing this power, he could have started working towards influencing the minds of the Israelites. But Moses eschewed this path completely. In spite of all the opportunities he had for grasping political power, he left Egypt for the Sinai Desert. There he continued his struggle to reform and train the Israelites in a purely missionary way. Only when this work of training had been completed over a period of forty years did the Israelites launch political and military campaigns under the leadership of Moses' successor, Joshua. Then they overpowered the Ghassanids and established their rule over Syria and Palestine.

The modern inventions of radio and television have opened up new opportunities for spreading the word of God. These media certainly provide a very effective and far-reaching means of influencing people's minds. But there are people who say that to put them to proper use, the first prerequisite is the acquisition of power. That is, first seize power, then attempt the conversion of the people through the news and electronic media. They consider that the task of mind preparing itself demands that things should be done in this order. They think that no other order can favour Islam.

But this is only a facade of words behind which there is no valid concept. The truth is that just as the order of ablution in *salah* is unchangeable, so also is the order of mental revolution first and political revolution later. This was the way that a meaningful revolution was brought about in the early days of Islam, and there is no reason for any other method to be used today. Adopting any other policy would be counter productive. This is a matter of recorded experience. For example, General Mohammed Ziaul Haq seized power in Pakistan in 1977 and remained absolute ruler for the lengthy period of eleven and a half years. Immediately after coming into power, one of the many steps he took was to make an Islamist leader, Mahmood Azam Farooqi, the Minister for Information and Broadcasting.

Subsequent to this, a full-scale campaign was launched "to give religious training to the public through the media." But a long struggle ensued without there being even one per cent benefit to show for it. Social conditions in Pakistan continued to deteriorate. A stage came when at the first election to be held in Pakistan in November 1988, after the death of Ziaul Haq, the Pakistani public deserted the Islamists and voted known secularists to central power.



9 September 1990

**Remembrance of God the greatest act of worship.**

Abdullah ibn Abbas once said that he preferred discussing religious knowledge for a part of the night to staying up all night in worship of God.

*(Jami Bayan al-Ilm)*

## Forty Years Later

Nicolae Ceausescu, the communist leader of Romania, was appointed Minister for Agriculture in 1948, finally becoming Romania's President in 1967. He thereupon took all possible steps to consolidate and perpetuate his power, one of these being to make his wife, Elena, Vice President and give all other key posts to his relatives.

Ceausescu crushed all his opponents by force, then he engaged the well-known Romanian poet, Andreau Paumescu to compose a new Romanian anthem in which he (Ceausescu) was described as the most beloved son of the Romanian nation. The words of this anthem were recited all over Romania on different occasions. To make matters worse, the entire resources of the country were being devoted to the enrichment and aggrandizement of this one individual. This was not at all to the liking of the Romanians and, in December, 1989, public antipathy for him erupted like so much molten lava. The army joined with the public in revolting against him, but the confrontation between them and the very large, strong police force which Ceausescu had raised to protect himself, proved costly in terms of human life. Seventy thousand people were killed.

Ceausescu always had a helicopter at his disposal, which was ready to fly at any moment from the roof of his vast palace. When it became clear that he could not save his throne, he fled in this helicopter. When he began to fear that it would be shot down, he had it land near a bunker in which he hid himself. However, he was captured at this point and was later shot dead along with his wife Elena, on December 25, 1989, on Christmas Day. The radio announcer at Bucharest, giving the news of the death of this Stalinist socialist and dire enemy of religion, exclaimed, "Oh, what wonderful news. The Anti-Christ died on Christmas Day!" Neither the heavens nor the earth had given him refuge.

This and other incidents of a similar nature occurred in 1989. It seemed that the fortresses so cruelly set up against religion by evil-minded people were being demolished by God one after another.

In the U.S.S.R., religion had officially been eradicated. But social pressures so built up against such stringency that the socialist government of the Soviet Union was forced to announce the reinstatement of religious freedom. The President of the Soviet Union, Michael Gorbachev himself visited the Vatican to meet the Pope. In East Germany, too, religion had been totally wiped out, but, finally, it turned into a great flood and broke open the Berlin wall. This was in the same class of events as Ceausescu being shot dead in spite of all the elaborate arrangements he had made for his escape.

In this way, opportunities to spread the divine message are being directly opened up by God. The most important task therefore for Muslims at the present time is to arrange for books in simple, but scientific language on the Qur'an, *Hadith* and *Seerah* in all the languages of the world and to spread the word of God through them in each and every country.

In recent times Muslims have made strenuous efforts to promote the cause of Islam. But most of their activities have been politically oriented. Now the need of the hour is to make them *daw'ah*-oriented. The man of today is not interested in politicized religion. What he seeks is spiritual religion. He wants his inner urge to find God to be fulfilled. If today Islam is presented to modern man in a simple and natural form, he will recognize it as that which he had eternally sought, driven by his own inner urges.

God has provided all the necessary resources. Now it is the duty of Muslims to arise, and to spread the word of Islam to every town, village and hamlet, to every man, woman and child.

11 September 1990

### Answering criticism without getting angry

A woman of the Banu Asad, whose name was Umm-e-Yaqub, came to Abdullah Ibn Masood. "I hear that you curse the tattooer, and the one who is tattooed," she said. "But I have read the Quran from beginning to end, and have found no mention of this matter. And I bet that even in your household this is being done." "Go to my house and have a look for yourself," Ibn Masood replied. She did so, and could find no sign of any tattoo marks. When she came back, Abdullah Ibn Masood said to her: "Have you not read in the Quran to take what the Prophet gives, and keep away from that which he forbids?" The woman replied that she had. "Well," Ibn Masood said, "this is something that the Prophet forbade."

## The Indispensability of Islam

We have many lessons to learn from a book recently published on modern Japan, which is interestingly titled *Japan That Can Say No*. Its authors are men of distinction in separate fields: Shintaro Ishihara, who has twice been elected to ministerial posts, and Akio Morita, the chairman of the internationally famous Soni Corporation.

An important point made by this book is that however much the USA increases its military strength, it has reached a stage in its economy where it cannot afford to do anything against Japan. This is because the Americans need the Japanese. For instance, if Japan stops selling its micro-chips to the USA the American computer industry will be adversely affected. Even the modern stealth bomber cannot be built without Japanese technology. As the writers put it, "If one doesn't use Japanese semi-conductors, one cannot guarantee precision."

This is the way of the world. Only those may live undisturbed in this world who make themselves indispensable to others. To do this they must demonstrate their ability not only to 'deliver the goods' but to produce goods and a better system of delivery than anyone else in the field. In this way, others become totally dependant upon their excellence. No one can then slight or ignore them.

Japan has proved its worth from the material and economic standpoint. The existence of this 'worth' greatly favours Islam. Just as, because of Japan's exceptional viability, the USA – and other countries – cannot ignore it, similarly the extraordinary viability of Islam from the religious and human aspects, if the world could but know it, will make it impossible for others to ignore Islam.

It is here that Islam has a leading role to play, for just as Japan has proved its viability in material concerns to the point where no one may flout or ignore it, so has Islam to demonstrate its 'viability' in spiritual matters. This form of profitability is actually the monopoly of Islam. It is only in Islam – and not in any other religious or non-religious system – that the welfare and moral uplift of humanity can be adequately promoted.

Today, Islam is telling the world that if you cannot find room in your heart from remembrance of God, you will find neither peace of mind nor solace for the heart; if you do not believe in the concept of one God, you will not be able to explain an otherwise incomprehensible universe; if you do not adopt Islam, you will lose the opportunity of entering into the only religion in the world with established historical credibility.

Islam tells us that without belief in the Islamic concept of man, a system of equality can never be established in society. Without belief in the Day of Judgement, no intellectual basis can exist for the reformation of mankind. Without acceptance of Islamic history, real examples of high moral conduct will not be available.

It is as a living nation, a nation which could persevere for 40 years in spite of all adverse circumstances, that Japan has realized its full potential. In a similar way, it will take a living nation to realize the far greater potential of Islam. But this 'living nation' simply does not exist anywhere at this point in time. For this reason, Islam's potential has likewise remained unrealized in the world of today.

13 September 1990

## Keeping quiet and letting those who are in a position to speak do so

After the death of the Prophet, hypocrisy took root in Medina, and apostasy set in many parts of Arabia and Persia. The renegades made a plot in Nihevand, Iran. "The Prophet has died," they said, "and it was because of him that God used to help the Muslims." The successor of the Prophet, Abu Bakr, gathered the Muhajirs and Ansar together, and told them that these Arabs had ceased to pay what was due to the poor on their camels and goats. "They have renegaded on their faith," he said, "and are now plotting in Nihavand to attack you. They think that you have lost the one who used to entitle you to God's Succour. Tell me what I should do now. I am just a common man, like anyone of you. In fact, I am the least able to bear the burden of the caliphate." Abdullah Ibn Umer says that the companions sat in silence with their heads bowed for a long while after Abu Bakr had spoken. Only then did Umer Ibn Al-Khattab rise and begin to speak: .....

## Facing Up to Challenges

*“The reason for selecting Azharuddin was that he loved facing up to challenging situations.  
And that is a very important ingredient in leadership.”*

One of the news items which appeared in the newspapers of January 6, 1990, was that Mr. Azharuddin had been appointed Captain of the national cricket team by general consent, and that he would lead the Indian team which was going to play in New Zealand. This news appeared strange to cricket enthusiasts, who thought that this honour would go to Srikant, he having recently captained the teams which played in the Sharjah Cup, the Nehru Cup and in matches held in Pakistan.

27 year old Azharuddin, who hails from Hyderabad, is known as a wonder boy, because of his cricketing skills. He is the second youngest player to lead the Indian team, the youngest being Mansoor Ali Khan Pataudi, who captained the team in the West Indies when he was only 21.

What has led Azharuddin to this high position is his ability not to lose courage in the face of stiff challenges. If anything, he faces up to them with greater strength. In December, 1989, during the match held in Pakistan, his test career had initially been in jeopardy, because in the first innings in the Faisalabad test, he had failed to make any runs. He was out at the very start, But in the second innings, he saved his test career by making a century.

According to *The Times of India* (January 6, 1990) report, the Chairman of the selection committee, Mr. Raj Singh Dongerpur, said that “The reason for selecting Azharuddin was that he loved facing up to challenging situations, as was evident on the Pakistan tour; where he was on the verge of being dropped from the first Test. And that is a very important ingredient in leadership.”

This is a world of challenges. Here, only those succeed who have the courage to stand firm and face up to them. The more one possesses this quality, the greater will be one’s chances of success in this world.



## A Wise Piece of Strategy

The world is a testing ground. From the very first day there has been competition among human beings. And this is a state of affairs which is not going to change. It will go on until the very last day. That is because this system of competition is of God's own making. No individual or group has it in its power to change this pattern, however much it may seem desirable to do so.

In this world of competition one can succeed only by having wisdom, and by using it. Whatever the matter in hand, one must try to have an in-depth understanding of it and then proceed accordingly. Only by such a display of wisdom will conditions be created which are favourable to success.

The tale reproduced below is an apt illustration of this point.

There was once a fox who struck up a great friendship with a crane. One day the fox said to the crane, "Come, let's cook a pudding together. And when it is ready, we shall both of us eat it together. You bring some ingredients and I'll bring some." Both of them then brought the necessary ingredients and the pudding was cooked.

When the time came to put the pudding into a dish for eating, the fox immediately produced a flat dish into which he emptied the pudding. The fox started eating and invited the crane to have some too. It was easy for the fox to eat from the flat dish. So he soon finished the entire pudding. The crane with his long, pointed beak was hardly able to eat any at all.

Now it dawned on the crane that the fox had made a fool of him, so he planned a piece of strategy of his own. He asked the fox to prepare the pudding once again. Again all the ingredients were provided by both of them, and the pudding was cooked by both. Now the crane, as planned, immediately brought out a pitcher for the pudding to be emptied into, and this was how he served it up. The crane immediately put his long beak into the pitcher and started eating, all the while inviting the fox to have his share. But now the situation was reversed in favour of the crane. The crane now had his fill, while the fox went hungry.

## Indirect Gain

The World Cup football matches, held in Italy in June 1990, were telecast in India by Doordarshan. According to an advance estimate of the cost, the coverage was going to mean an expenditure of about Rs. 1 crore for Doordarshan. (*The Times of India*, June 16, 1990).

Ostensibly, this was going to be a very one-sided bargain, with Doordarshan doing all the spending and receiving nothing in return. But the estimate did not tell the whole story, for Doordarshan finally made a profit of Rs. 2 crores out of their coverage – a highly profitable venture!

By investing Rs. 1 crore, Doordarshan earned Rs. 3 crores. The gain, however, was indirect. How, in such an undertaking, did Doordarshan manage to make such a profit, when there could be no direct gain from the viewers? The answer is through advertisements. Whenever a programme of general interest is being telecast, advertisements, paid for by various companies, are flashed on the screen from time to time, generally for the duration of a few seconds each. These advertisements are charged for at very high rates, and are one of the greatest sources of income for Indian television.

The average individual is generally aware only of such benefits as can be directly accrued, and hardly ever comes to know of methods of indirect gain. Such a superficial grasp of affairs can never bring any great success in life. The really wise person is always on the look-out for indirect ways of making a profit, because that is so often more rewarding than direct earning. Some undertaking, to all appearances, are actually no-profit ventures, because there is no obvious, direct advantage in them. Yet indirect yield is frequently far greater than that of a venture which offers direct gain.

This is a very useful formula in life, and those who know its secret will be the ones to achieve the greatest success. Having an eye only for direct gain will never carry one to any great pinnacle of success.

## Sleep – A Blessing

*In modern times sleep has been studied scientifically, and is considered to be of such importance that an association has been formed in New York called the 'Association of Professional Sleep Societies.' The scientific journal brought out by this group is called – appropriately enough – Sleep.*

One of the American experts on sleep, Dr. James A. Horne, has carried out scientific research and collected a considerable amount of data on the subject. His report was originally published in the *New York Times* and was reproduced in brief in the *Times of India* (January 24, 1989) under the heading, 'Sleep – if you want to be creative.' The new findings seemed to support the view that one primary function of sleep is to "repair the cerebral cortex from the wear and tear of consciousness. "

It is a common experience for a man who has worked throughout the day to feel tired by the evening. The day's activities having created tension in his mind, he goes to bed in a dispirited state. But after a few hours of sleep he wakens up to find himself fresh and energetic once again. He is once again able to play a full part in life's struggle. He has become a new man.

Man gains this new life through sleep. Sleep renovates his mind to make it fresh. In the absence of this system, the human machine would soon go out of gear and be rendered useless.

17 September 1990

### Not mentioning anyone with scorn

The Prophet was with Aisha in her chamber. In the course of conversation, she made fun of her co-wife, Safia, and ridiculed her dwarfishness. On hearing this, the Prophet's countenance altered. "You have uttered something which would pollute the colour of the sea were it to be mixed in its waters," he said to her.

## The Concept of Islam

According to the Qur'an, the message addressed to humanity by each of the Prophets in turn did not vary. It remained the same in essence, namely, that there was only one God and that the people must worship Him alone.

What is the meaning of 'one God'? It means that, of all beings, He is the greatest, and should, therefore, be the object of man's awe. Indeed, if man ponders over God's creation, he will be thrilled to the very core of his being. Such an experience necessarily generates a sense of sanctity, this being attributable to something which is mysteriously great, which is above and beyond human imagination. This feeling finds expression in worship. That is when man surrenders himself to that Great Power. For him, Allah is the one and only God. There is no deity save Him, nor is there any partner in His godhead.

Belief in the true God is the source of all virtue: belief in false gods is the source of all evil.

## The Root Cause of All Evil

To believe something to be sacred when it is not so is the root of all evil. In religious terminology, this amounts to polytheism. Polytheism must be regarded as the greatest injustice, or *zulm*. *Zulm* in Arabic means, literally, the putting of something in the wrong place, in this case, the assigning of a value to something which does not merit it. *Shirk* (another Arabic word similar in meaning to *zulm*) is the greatest wrong, for it implies a reverence for things which are not, in reality, sacred or worthy of worship. It accords to non-gods the place which is the supreme prerogative of the one God.

The greatest harm in this iniquitous practice is that it changes man's focus of worship. He begins to revere such beings as are unworthy of reverence. The result is that man is deprived of the only support that he has in the universe. He is unable to have the sustenance of divine blessings. And one who is denied divine blessings in this world is denied them likewise in the next. Because no other power save that of God can give these blessings to man.

The loss to mankind affects not only the eternal life, but also our temporary stay here on earth. In ancient times man held many non-sacred things to be sacred, with the result that he continued to suffer the deprivation of God's succour for many centuries.

The concept of polytheism gave birth to many odd beliefs and spawned a whole series of superstitions. For instance, lightning was taken to be a god's fiery wand. When the sun or moon went into eclipse, it was supposed that some malign force was at work, or that some deity had been beset by the powers of darkness, and so on.

This polytheistic concept of sanctity proved highly advantageous to religious leaders, who developed the accompanying superstitions into a whole set of 'religious' beliefs. Through these, they began to exploit people by making them believe that they (the religious leaders) were intermediaries between God and man. They included the idea that to please them was, indirectly, to please God.

The greatest benefit of all was reaped by the kings. Exploiting this mentality which had been conditioned in the people, they developed the concept of the God-king. In any society, the king is the richest and most powerful. He is distinguished, too, in many other respects from the common people. Taking advantage of this distinctive status, the kings instilled it into the minds of the people that they were superior to common men, that they were, in fact God's representatives on earth. Some said that they were a link between God and Man. Others went further and pretended to be incarnations of God on earth. As such, they were supposed to possess supernatural powers. They managed in consequence to wield absolute power over their subjects.

*The Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1984) says in its article on Sacred Kingship:

At one time, when religion was totally connected with the whole existence of the individual as well as that of the community and when kingdoms were in varying degrees connected with religious powers or religious institutions, there could be no kingdom that was not in some sense sacred. (16/118).

When the ancient concept of polytheism invested the rulers with a sacred status, not one, but two great evils found their way, simultaneously into society. The evil that power brings had reached its zenith. As Lord Acton (1834-1902) puts it, "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely." If the public could not change rulers who ostensibly ruled as the vicegerants of God on earth, or who posed as His incarnations, how were they even to think of deposing them in a secular context in order to be rid of their oppression?

This political evil, which the French historian, Henri Pirenne, has termed 'Imperial absolutism', became a permanent obstacle in the way of all progress. It was only when Islam broke the power of these ancient empires that it became possible to unlock the doors to human progress. Henri Pirenne's book, *History of Western Europe*, provides an informative study on this subject:

The gist of Henri Pirenne's thinking is that the ancient Roman Empire, which was spread over both sides of the Red Sea, had closed the doors to all human progress by imposing a strict curb on freedom of thought. Without this kind of absolute imperialism being brought to an end, freedom of thought could not have been achieved. When the human mind is shackled and cannot work in a free atmosphere, no beginning can be made to human progress.

The writer also includes Persia as being guilty of such imperial absolutism. And we must remember that these two empires held sway over the entire inhabited world of the time. Under imperial rule, no one had the right to think independently if this ran counter to the official tenets of imperialism. This is why,

after such a long period of intellectual suppression no real beginning could be made on scientific enquiry. Scientific thought was simply not to be countenanced throughout the empires of Persia and Rome.

It was only when the Prophet and his companions broke these imperial powers – with as little bloodshed as possible – that freethinking was legitimatised, and the vast gates of progress were thrown open to humanity.

20 September 1990

### Care in what one says

Umer Ibn Abdul Aziz was asked what he thought about the Muslims who had slain and been slain in the Battle of Siffeen. "Thank God that he kept my hand from spilling any blood on that day," he replied. "I do not want to pollute my tongue with it either."



## Nature and Science Speak about God

### 5

Isn't it preposterous to believe that this mathematical exactness in the universe developed on its own? An aspect of the wisdom and significance found in the universe which is worth pondering upon is that it has such potentialities as may be exploited by man whenever the need arises. For instance, let us take nitrogen. Human beings and animals would die of starvation if our diet did not contain nitrogen compound. Each puff of air may contain 78% nitrogen, but no nutritive plant will grow without an interaction between nitrogen and the soil taking place, and there are only two ways that soluble nitrogen can be mixed with the soil to fertilize it. One of them is by the typical bacterial process. Certain bacteria, which live in the roots of leguminous plants such as peas, beans, alfalfa and peanuts, assimilate atmospheric nitrogen and convert it into a compound of nitrogen. When the plant dries up, some part of this compound remains stored in the soil. Another form of fixed nitrogen, nitric acid, occurs naturally in the atmosphere when lightning discharges. The action of electrical energy on the atmosphere, which dissociates nitrogen and oxygen molecules, allows the free atoms to form nitric oxide and nitrogen dioxide, and this nitrogen compound is brought down by rainfall to our fields. The amount of nitrate obtained from nitrogen by this means according to one estimate, is five pounds per acre of soil, in each year. This quantity is equal to 30 pounds of sodium nitrate.<sup>1</sup>

1. Lyon, Buckman and Brady, *The Nature and Properties of Soils*.

Both these sources have proved inadequate in meeting the nitrogen requirements of man, for fields which are repeatedly cultivated over long periods eventually run short of nitrogen. Hence the practice of crop rotation by farmers. Owing to an increase in population and intensive cultivation at the beginning of the present century, a general deficiency of nitrogen compound began to make itself felt and man appeared to be heading for a prolonged period of famine. It is strangely significant that, at such a critical time, we discovered the method of artificially preparing this compound from the air. One of the several different essays in this field entailed the artificial causation of thunder and lightning in the atmosphere. A force of about three lakhs horsepower was applied to cause this phenomenon, and, as had been estimated, a small amount of nitrogen was thus produced. Man, with his God-given wisdom, had marched one step forward. It was ten thousand years after the dawn of human history that methods had been invented to convert nitrogen gas into fertilizers. This invention placed man in a position to produce this essential part of his nutrition himself, without which, he would surely have died of starvation. It is inspiring to think that, for the first time, throughout the entire history of the earth, man had discovered a

solution to the problem of food scarcity at the exact point in time when it was about to cause ultimate disaster to the human species. Many other significant aspects of divine wisdom and purpose are immanent in the universe. All that has so far been revealed by scientific enquiry is quite imaginably nothing in comparison to the facts which still await discovery. Be that as it may, whatever little, comparatively speaking, man has discovered of nature is still too vast in scope to be covered by the present volume. In fact, any attempt on the part of man to list and describe divine blessings would be inadequate. No matter how comprehensive the description may be, the moment our tongues and pens stop moving, we begin to feel that all we have done is delimit rather than describe. Indeed, no account of divine wisdom as manifested in the universe would be complete, even if all knowable facts were to come to light and all human beings, equipped with all of the resources available in the world were to join together in describing them.

And if all the trees in the earth were pens, and the sea, with seven more seas to replenish it, were ink, the writings of Allah's words could never be exhausted. Mighty is God and wise.<sup>1</sup>

Anyone who has attempted to make an exhaustive study of the universe will admit that there is no element of exaggeration in these words from the divine scripture. They are just a plain, unembroidered expression of the truth.

In the last few pages, we have referred to the wonderful organization, meaningfulness and extraordinary wisdom which manifest themselves in the universe. The antagonists of religion will no doubt concede that these are facts, but they will insist on a different interpretation of their significance. They do not glimpse even fleetingly, an Organizer and Sustainer in this universe. On the contrary, they hold that life on earth and the existence of the universe are simply chance occurrences. As T.H. Huxley puts it:

Six monkeys, set to strum unintelligently on typewriters for millions of millions of years, would be bound in time to write all books in the British Museum. If we examined the last page, which a particular monkey had typed, and found that it had chanced, in its blind strumming, to type a Shakespeare Sonnet, we should rightly regard the occurrence as a remarkable accident, but if we looked through all the millions of papers the monkey had turned out in untold millions of years, we might be sure of finding a Shakespeare Sonnet somewhere amongst them, the product of the blind play of Chance. In the same way, millions of millions of stars wandering blindly through space for millions of millions of years are bound to meet with every kind of accident; a limited number are bound to meet with that special kind of accident which calls planetary systems into being.<sup>2</sup>

1. Quran, 31: 27.

2. Quoted by Sir James, *The Mysterious Universe*, pp. 3-4.

But one of the greatest of our contemporary physicists, Sir. Fred Hoyle, asks if it is at all possible that chance could operate on such a large scale, and answers emphatically in the negative. As he puts it in his book, *The Intelligent Universe*:

‘The Universe, as observed by astronomers, would not be large enough to hold the monkeys needed to write even one scene from Shakespeare, or to hold their typewriters, and certainly not the wastepaper baskets needed for the rubbish they would type.’

None of our sciences up till now has unearthed any such “chance occurrence” as could have accounted for such a great, meaningful and permanent phenomenon as the universe. Of course, there are certain random happenings which do explain certain aspects of nature. For instance, a gust of wind sometimes carries away pollen grains from a red-coloured rose and, with them, pollinates the stigma of a white-coloured rose. This cross pollination produces pink-coloured roses. But such an incident is only a minor event in the entire existence of the rose. Its continued presence under specific conditions in this universe, and its wonderful adaptation to the whole physical system of the rest of the world, can never be fully understood simply by ascribing these things to a random flow of air. The term ‘chance occurrence’ expresses one facet of the truth, but as an explanation for the existence of the universe and its processes, it is patently absurd. According to Professor Edwin Conklin, a biologist at Princeton University, ‘The probability of life originating from accident is comparable to the probability of the Unabridged Dictionary resulting from an explosion in a printing shop.’<sup>1</sup>

1. *The Evidence of God*, p. 174.

(To be continued)

24 September 1990

### **One who has no hate in his heart will enter heaven**

The Prophet was sitting with some companions one day. "There is a person coming here down from the mountains who is one of the companions of paradise." the Prophet said. The companions immediately saw someone appearing on that path. They greeted him, and told him that the Prophet had described him as one of the companions of paradise. "What do you do that is so special?" they asked. "Nothing in particular," he replied. "All I can say is that I hold no rancour in my heart towards any Muslim."