

AL-RISALA

Submission to God
is the only religion
for both
Man and the Universe

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We are glad to present you with the first issue in English of Al-Risala, published by the Islamic Centre, Delhi. The Islamic Centre was established in 1970 under the auspices of the well-known Islamic thinker and writer, Maulana Wahiduddin Khan. Since then it has devoted itself to constructive efforts at calling people to true faith in God. Its monthly magazine has been coming out in Urdu since October 1976. The Al-Risala we are now launching is the English edition of that parent publication.

Islamic revival is basically revival of Islamic thought. In every age, there is a predominant pattern of thought according to which people's intellectual framework is formed, and according to which communities and nations organize their lives. In ancient times, polytheistic thought was predominant. Then, in the 7th century, the Islamic revolution changed the course of human history. Monotheism came to dominate world thought.

This situation continued for approximately one thousand years. Then things began to change, until another revolution occurred in the modern age. The emergence of new learning in recent centuries has completely changed the human mind. In every branch of learning, new standards have been established. In this way, over the last few centuries, human thought has undergone a radical alteration, and is now based on heresy or, at least, secularism; that is, in all matters human intellect is paramount and life is organized on unrevealed foundations.

Under such conditions, Islamic revival means once again ushering in a new age for man. Just as our predecessors ended polytheism's intellectual dominance and established monotheism in its place, so the task which lies before us is to put an end to thoughts of a heterodox and secular nature and re-establish the dominance of God-oriented thought in its place.

The Islamic Centre seeks to bring about an intellectual revolution of this nature. Without doubt, this is a very difficult task. In fact, there is no task more difficult. But we are taking up this task trusting in God rather than in ourselves. And, as the Prophet Jesus said, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (Matthew, 19:26)

The Message of the Quran

IN THE NAME OF GOD, THE COMPASSIONATE, THE MERCIFUL

Praise be to God, Lord of Creation; the Compassionate, the Merciful; Master of the Day of Judgement. You alone we worship, and to You alone we pray for help. Guide us to the straight path. The path of those whom You favoured: not of those who have incurred Your wrath, nor of those who have gone astray. (Quran, 1:1-7)

It befits man to commence any task in the name of God, his master. God is the source of all mercy and compassion. His blessings are continually descending upon creation. To commence any undertaking in His name is to pray that God, in His infinite mercy, should come to one's assistance and bring one's work to a successful conclusion. This is man's acknowledgement that he is God's servant, and also brings divine assurance of success.

The Quran has a special way of expressing a believer's inner sentiments in the best possible words. The Invocation of God and the opening chapter of the Quran constitute a supplication of this nature. The feelings which are naturally aroused in one after discovering the truth are given the form of words in these lines.

Man's being is a great gift of God. It is so precious to him that he would never exchange his eyes or hands, or any part of his body, for any kingdom of the world. Even this basic gift of God is more precious to man than a kingdom is to kings. Similarly, when man looks at the world around him, he cannot fail to notice God's power and mercy in evidence everywhere. With what care God watches over the world! Everything has been made to fit in with man. This observation shows one that the great cosmic machine cannot be in vain. One realizes that there must come a day when the ungrateful will be taken to task and the grateful rewarded. One spontaneously entreats God in words to this effect: "Lord, You are Master of the Day of Judgement. I have submitted to You and humbly seek Your help; have mercy on me. Lord, show us the path that is, to You, the true path. Enable us to tread the path of Your chosen servants. Help us to avoid the path of those who have gone astray, and the path of those who have incurred Your wrath due to their obstinacy.

God requires His servant to live his life with such feelings and emotions. The opening chapter of the Quran is a miniature picture of such a believer, and the rest of the Quran an enlargement of this picture.

The Cow

Alif, Lam, Mim. This Book is not to be doubted. It is a guide for the cautious, who have faith in the unseen and observe prayer; who bestow in charity a part of what We have given them; who trust what has been revealed to you and to others before you, and believe in the life to come. These are rightly guided by their Lord; these shall surely triumph. (Quran, 2: 1-5)

There is no doubt that the Quran is a book of guidance. But it only guides those who are sincere in their search and anxious to be guided. The search for truth is inherent in man's nature; one only has to discover one's own true nature in order to find the truth. True search and true finding are but initial and advanced stages of the same journey. One who searches for truth unravels the mystery of his own inner self. He becomes one with nature. God helps him in his search; the subconscious yearnings of his nature begin to receive a definite response.

The awakening of sincere yearning within one is an attempt to discern the world of meanings behind the world of forms. When this yearning becomes a discovery, it is transformed into faith in the unseen. That which is initially an urge to submit to some superior power later takes the form of bowing to the Almighty. That which is initially a wish to sacrifice oneself for some greater good later takes the form of spending one's wealth for the cause of God. That, which is initially a questioning regarding the final outcome of life beyond this world, finds an answer in the form of faith in the life to come.

To discover truth is to raise one's consciousness to the level of the Supreme Reality. Those who find truth in this way become complex-free souls. They come to see truth as it really is. Wherever truth is, and whoever is proclaiming it, they immediately recognize and accept it. No rigidity, convention or prejudice can come between them and the truth. God has mercy on people of this nature. His universal order embraces them. They are guided on a sure course in this world. Their final destination will be heaven in the life to come.

Only those who seek the truth can find it. Those who seek shall surely find. On this path, there is no division between seeking and finding.

Second Thoughts

In the 17th century the Church rejected Galileo's theory that the earth revolves around the sun. Now this theory has become an established fact, the Church has had to accept it. But in the 7th century the Church rejected another personality; the Prophet Mohammad, may peace be upon him. His prophethood too has become an established fact, but when is the Church going to accept it?

Galileo (1564-1642) was the great Italian scientist who founded dynamics. It was he who first discovered the importance of acceleration and established the law of falling bodies. He was also one of the first to construct a telescope with which he made several important discoveries. Three hundred and fifty years ago he wrote a book entitled *Dialogue Concerning Two Chief World Systems — Ptolemaic and Copernican*, in which he discussed the two theories concerning our planetary system. In this book, he supported Copernicus in his theory that the earth is round, not flat, and that the earth revolves around the sun, rather than the sun around the earth.

The Roman Church considered this theory to be against Christian doctrine. It is not included in either the Old or the New Testament that 'the sun revolves around the earth: this theory had only been included in the expositions of Christian doctrine compiled by saints on their own. Since the Church believed that the saints' explanations of the Scriptures were as holy as the Scriptures themselves, it declared Galileo a heretic.

The Church had so much power in those days that it set up parallel ecclesiastical courts in various Catholic countries of the European continent, notably Spain and Italy. Galileo's case was brought before an ecclesiastical court, which sentenced him to life imprisonment. This put an end to science in Italy for many centuries. This was the dire consequence of considering the saints' expositions as holy as the divine text.

The Church was able to suppress some scholars, but it was not able to suppress knowledge itself. The scope of the Church's power was limited, whereas knowledge knows no bounds: its roots are spread throughout the universe. The Church's antagonism could not prevent knowledge from growing. Eventually, knowledge gained all round ascendancy over the Church. The power of Rome became past history.

Now the Church had no choice but to accept the new situation. Galileo, whom it had condemned as an apostate, came to be acknowledged as a hero in intellectual circles throughout the world. This episode turned into a stain in the Church's history, a symbol of its unscientific attitude. The Church now had to face the issue which Galileo had faced before. There was no way the Church could restore its integrity without acknowledging Galileo's intellectual status.

In 1980 a special commission consisting of eight members — mathematicians, theologians, and historians — sat to reconsider the question of the earth's position in the solar system. After discussing all the issues at length, the commission agreed that science had conclusively proved that the earth revolves around the sun, and that, without doubt, Galileo had been in the right.

Then, in May 1983, a special meeting was held in the Vatican attended by a large number of historians, Catholic theologians and scientists. Pope John Paul II himself presided over this historic meeting. The Pontiff openly admitted the Church's error and declared Galileo right. He went on to say that "The Church's experience, during the Galileo affair and after it, has led to a more mature attitude and to a more accurate grasp of the authority proper to her." (*Guardian Weekly*, July 29, 1983).

What was the reason for the Christian Church's denial of Galileo in the 17th century and recognition of him in the 20th? The reason was that in the 17th century Galileo was a controversial figure, whereas in the 20th century he has become an established one.

Similarly, the Church has had to deal with another figure: the Prophet Mohammad, may peace be upon him. In the 7th century, the Church denied Mohammad. The reason for this was that at that time, Mohammad was a controversial figure. But now, by the 20th century, he too has become

established. So much scientific and historical evidence has accumulated in support of his prophethood that there are no realistic grounds for denying it. (See: *The Bible, The Quran, and Science* by Dr. Maurice Bucaille).

Then why have the same reasons which led the Church to acknowledge Galileo failed to make it acknowledge Mohammad? The reason is the different nature of the two figures.

Galileo was an astronomer; his case was one of astronomical learning. But Mohammad was a prophet; his case was one of divine revelation. This explains the different nature of the two cases. To acknowledge Galileo is to acknowledge a scientific truth alone, whereas to acknowledge Mohammad is to acknowledge a religious truth. For the Church, recognition of Galileo's findings was recognition of an external event which did not affect it in any way. Its own particular structure continued to function as usual. But to accept the prophethood of Mohammad is an event which is directly connected with the structure of the Church. The truth of the matter is that by accepting Mohammad, popedom forfeits its right to exist; the whole edifice of Catholicism falls to the ground.

The Prophet Mohammad taught monotheism, whereas the whole structure of the Church today is based on the doctrine of the Trinity. Mohammad taught that Christ was God's Prophet, whereas the Church has built its creed around the belief that he was the son of God. Mohammad made personal actions the basis of salvation, whereas the Church bases salvation on the doctrine of atonement.

Recognition of Galileo has not changed the Church's religious position. But if the Church were to recognize Mohammad, it would have to deny its position as upholder of the true religion. And who is ready to recognize others when that entails denying oneself? □

There is no more astonishing career in history than that of the founder of this religion (Islam) and scarcely any man has more profoundly influenced the destinies of the world. He was, of course, favoured by circumstances, but he knew how to turn them to his purposes and he faced adversity with the determination to wring success out of failure. While he could not have succeeded in another place or at another time it is tolerably certain that no one else could have succeeded at all.

—E.E. Kellett, in his '*A Short History of Religion*,' (London: 1933), p. 333.

A Happy Ending to the Tragedy of Life

The capital of British India was initially Calcutta. In 1911, King George V announced the transfer of the capital to Delhi. The British architect, Sir Edwin Lutyens (1864-1944) was commissioned to design the new capital. Construction work commenced in 1913, and eventually the magnificent city of New Delhi came into existence.

This was a time when the whole world was being swept by a new political wave: nationalism. Progressive trends in political thought had rendered the colonial system of government untenable. The freedom movement in India was fast gaining momentum. It was apparent that British rule in India would not survive for long. The completion of New Delhi thus coincided with the decline of the British Raj.

After the construction of New Delhi, a French political leader visited India. When he saw the glittering palaces and spacious mansions of the new capital of British India, he expressed his reaction in the following words: “What a magnificent world they built to leave.”

This is not only true of the British in India: it is true of all of us in this world. We come into this world full of desires and aspirations. We exert all our efforts on constructing a “magnificent world” for ourselves on earth. Then, just as our dream world begins to take shape, the angel of death visits us and takes us away from the world we have worked hard to construct, for ourselves. We are then taken to what Arthur Koestler called an “unknown country.”

Life is a tragic story indeed if that is all there is to it. But this world, like everything else in the universe, can only be complete with its counterpart. The counterpart of this world is the hereafter. For those who have forgotten the next world, this life is certainly just a tragedy; but for those who look forward to the life to come, and build for the hereafter in the present life, this world will become an invaluable step towards a new, more successful existence in the next world.

Life is a tragedy when seen without the hereafter. This tragedy can only be given a happy ending with the addition of life to come. □

Careful, Someone may be Listening

There was an astonishing headline in the *Times of India* of December 19, 1982. It ran: *Careful. Uncle Sam may be listening.*

The story behind this headline is that over one million telephone calls and telexes are made from the United States every day. These communications are first picked up at an earth station in Virginia. They are then relayed through a satellite orbiting 2300 miles above the earth. All this happens in less than a second.

This means that every message which is electrically transmitted from the United States reaches the U.S. government before it reaches the intended person. If a secret-service officer wants to know anyone's message, all he has to do is give the person's phone number to the earth station. The communication is then intercepted and automatically recorded.

A person who realizes that the government is listening to his conversation will be very careful what he says. In the same way anyone who is aware of the fact that God hears his every word will be cautious in his speech. When one addresses someone in an inconsiderate manner, one thinks that one is just addressing a human-being, but in fact what one says reaches God first. We should be careful in our speech, for God hears everything we say. □

Charity

Every good act is charity. Your smiling to your brother is charity; an exhortation of your fellowman to virtuous deeds is equal to alms-giving; your putting a wanderer on the right road is charity; your assisting the blind is charity; your removing stones, thorns, and other obstructions from the road is charity; your giving water to the thirsty is charity. A man's true wealth, hereafter, is the good he does in this world to his fellowmen. When he dies, people will say, "What property has he left behind him?" But the angels will ask, "What good deeds has he sent before him?" (*Hadith*)

Tight Rope Walking

One feat that acrobats perform is tight-rope walking. What a perilous journey it is, with the acrobat always in danger of tilting to the right or left and falling to the ground. For this reason, the tight rope walker holds a long bamboo cane in his hands. If his body tilts rightwards, he holds the cane to his left; if his body tilts leftwards, he holds the cane to his right. In this manner he keeps his balance and walks along the rope.

This is the method that those who are propagating the message of Islam should adopt in the present day and age. The Muslim world is at present spilt up into two blocks. Some nations belong to one political camp and some to another. This grouping has affected Islamic movements and organizations. They have also joined one camp or the other and support one camp and oppose the other.

This situation is an obstacle to communication of the message of Islam. Islamic movements require the assistance of these Muslim countries. But the price that is being paid for this assistance is that every movement becomes the tool of one political camp or another, doing irreparable damage to the Islamic cause.

Under these conditions, those who preach the message of Islam should adopt the technique of a tight rope walker. Keeping a balance in their relations with both camps, they should continue their constructive work.

Taking the side of one camp against another is certain to involve the preacher in irrelevant, issues. The only way to avoid unrelated issues, and engage wholly in missionary work, is to follow the technique of the tight rope walker. □

Prayer

Prayer is an attempt to move the Prime Mover. Most people in serious trouble instinctively reach for the Hot Line to God called prayer.

Sam Levenson

Religion: A Divine, Not a Social Phenomenon

If nuclear energy is taken to be an American social phenomenon, it will be taken to mean the manufacture of lethal weapons which destroy life. One is bound, in that case, to be opposed to it. But if nuclear energy is taken to be a natural phenomenon, it will be considered on its own merit. It will not matter how America or any other military power uses it. In spite of being opposed to the atom bomb, one will continue to support atomic energy.

No one makes the mistake of thinking of nuclear energy as a social phenomenon of any nuclear power. But there are many who make this mistake in the study of religion. Religion is essentially divine truth. But anthropology usually treats it as a social phenomenon. For this reason, people have formed a mistaken concept of religion. Worst of all, this method of study prevents the student from being able to distinguish between theory and practice. Many people think of the practice of Muslim nations, for instance, as the true Islam. It is this method of study which has led people to write books like *The Dagger of Islam* and *Militant Islam* in recent years. The authors of these books saw that Muslims are habitually “daggers drawn” and militant in their demands. So, according to their concept of religion, they came to the conclusion that these were the features that made up Islam.

But if one thinks of religion as a truth revealed by God and preserved in the text of the Quran and Hadith, then Islam ceases to be a social phenomenon and becomes an ideology. Now one begins to look at Islam in the light of the Quran and Hadith instead of in the light of the practice of Muslims.

If one wishes to understand Islam, one must look at it apart from the Muslims. One must think of it as a divine belief, rather than as a social phenomenon. Only then can an accurate and fair picture of Islam be formed. □

Conversion to God

The sun is nature's laboratory, in which atomic reaction converts into light. Cows are a living laboratory in which grass converts into milk. Trees are also a laboratory of nature, which take in water, minerals and gases and convert them into blossoms and fruits.

God requires man to undergo the same process of conversion as the sun, trees and animals undergo with such perfection. But there is one difference: in other things conversion is an instinctive process, whereas in man it is a conscious one; in other things conversion occurs on a material plane, whereas in man it occurs on a spiritual plane.

Normally, we just observe the outside world, but we should do more than just observe. The Creator of the universe requires us to see His reflection in the mirror of His creation. Facts may enter our minds as information, but we should convert this information into knowledge of God. When we are successful in this world, we should attribute our success wholly to God. When we fail, we should, through our failure, see how helpless man is. When we have cause for complaint against anybody, our inner mechanism should convert resentment into forgiveness and pardon.

Land which converts earth into trees is fertile land: land which does not do this is sterile. So it is with man. Whoever is able to awaken his inner mechanism in such a way that it begins to convert raw matter into sublime matter is a true believer. One whose inner mechanism is unable to do this is a disbeliever. The former can look forward to heaven when he comes before God, whereas the latter can look forward to nothing but hell-fire. □

We cannot deny that the conception of brotherhood in Islam transcends all barriers of race and nationality, a feature which does not characterise any other religion.

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan in his *'East and West in Religion'* (London, 1933)

A Living Example

On 15th August 1969, India's Independence Day was being celebrated in the Moghul Gardens of Rashtrapati Bhavan, the official residence of the President of India. Mohammad Hidayatullah was, at that time, acting President of the country. In his book of memoirs *My Own Boswell*, (pp. 245-246), he recalls the impressiveness of the occasion, with the escort of the Military Secretaries, aid-de-camps and the President's Body Guard, all in their splendid uniforms. "We made a glittering sight," he writes, and he admits that, "I felt a little pride."

But then, immediately, he was reminded of the entry of Caliph Omar into Syria. When Islamic forces had conquered Syria and Palestine, the Romans offered the surrender of the city of Damascus if the Caliph came to receive it in person. Omer bin Khattab, the second successor of the Prophet Mohammad, set off from Madinah with one camel and one servant. Near Damascus, at Jabiya, he was met by his generals Abu Ubaidah ibn Al-Jarrah and Khalid bin Al-Walid. He stayed there for a few days, and after discussion with the Romans, terms were agreed upon.

After the completion of the agreement with the Romans, Omer set off for Jerusalem. He was wearing rough, simple clothes and riding on a lean camel. People presented him with brand new clothes and insisted that he should forsake his camel for a fine horse of Turkish pedigree. The horse moved off majestically, but Omer alighted after travelling a few yards and asked for his camel back. "Pride is entering my soul," he said, "and the Prophet said that if a man has pride the size of a mustard seed, he will not enter paradise."

When Mohammad Hidayatullah remembered this incident, his attitude changed. The pride which he had felt immediately deserted him. He describes his feelings in these words: "I felt ashamed of myself and put aside the feeling at once and began thinking of other things."

Islam teaches one never to be proud, and to live among one's fellow men in a humble manner, even if one attains some high worldly position. Islam has not only taught this simply as an attractive theory: it has also provided a flawless example of it in history. Thus, Islamic teachings can always be seen to be practical; they are not just fine words.□

Belief in God

God is the source of all goodness. He can be seen everywhere in the universe. His power is evident in the form of light and heat. He converts matter into greenery and flowing water. His glory is made manifest in colour, taste and fragrance. Motion and magnetism are evidence of His strength.

Belief in a God of such perfection is more than just a dogma. It illuminates man's soul and enraptures his heart. If one relishes a delicious fruit, and goes into ecstasy on hearing a tuneful melody, how then can one fail to be moved by the discovery of God, who is the fountainhead of all goodness.

When one truly discovers God, He becomes like a fragrance which one savours, a delicious taste which one relishes, a spectacle which captivates one's vision, a melody which never ceases to thrill. God has created all these exquisite delights: His being is their treasure house. Drawing close to God is like entering paradise. It is like dwelling in a garden of exquisite beauty and fragrance, or being in the neighbourhood of the source of all light. □

(From The Garden of Paradise)

Invited to India to Invite to Islam

The first translation of the Quran was made by order of a Hindu Raja. In 892 A.D. the Raja of Sind, Mahroug, wrote to the Muslim Amir of Mansura, Abdullah Ibn Umer, asking him to send someone who could inform his people of the teachings of Islam. An Iraqi youth, who had been brought up in India and was acquainted with local languages, was in Mansura at that time. The Amir of Mansura sent him to the Raja. He stayed there for three years and, at the Raja's request, translated the Quran into Hindi. He used to read his translation out in the Raja's presence every day. □

Disunity: The Enemy's Weapon

Israel's former minister of defence, Moshe Dayan (1915-1981), wrote in his autobiography, *The Story of My Life*, "The Arabs, disunited and at odds with one another over every issue, big and small, present no threat."

1983 has seen the PLO disunited and at odds with one another. After their expulsion from Lebanon, a large proportion of Palestinians are dissatisfied with Yasir Arafat's leadership. They have united behind Abu Musa in their attempt to dislodge the veteran PLO leader. But Yasir Arafat is not willing to step down. Thus, the Palestinians are split up into two groups and are fighting it out amongst themselves.

Reporting these events, *The Washington Post* has quoted this statement of the Israeli Foreign Minister, Yitzhak Shamir, "I must say that it is good for Israel that there are domestic quarrels, breakups and divisions within the organization of the PLO." In addition, *The Washington Post* has quoted an Israeli defence ministry official as saying that there is a belief in Israel that the increased intensity of the revolt against Mr. Arafat in northern and eastern Lebanon has reduced the number of attacks against Israeli soldiers in the south last week. In the same vein, another official said, "They are busy among themselves, and that is good for us." (*Guardian Weekly*, July 3, 1983).

To fight with one's friends is to become one's own worst enemy. It is to destroy oneself as one's enemies are always seeking to do. □

Part of someone's being a good Muslim is his leaving alone that which does not concern him. (*Hadith*)

Among the words people obtained from the First Prophecy are: If you feel no shame, then do as you wish. (*Hadith*)

Lest the Scourge of God Should Visit Us

Those who keep milch cattle are faced with a problem: how to preserve the cattle's milk from their calves. In some places this problem is dealt with by tying a thorny piece of wood to the head of the calf. When the calf goes to drink its mother's milk, before it can do so the thorn pricks into the udder, causing the cow to shy away. As a result of this thorn the calf cannot drink its mother's milk.

So it is with the Muslims today. They have been entrusted with a divine message which they are duty-bound to communicate to other nations of the world; but they have brushed aside this duty and have instead picked political and economic quarrels with those they should be addressing with the word of God. They have become worldly rivals of other nations. This politics of confrontation has become a thorn on the face of the Muslim community, which pricks non-Muslims, scaring them away before they can discover the Muslims' true position. Thus an atmosphere favourable to understanding the message of Islam is not allowed to develop. This prevents non-Muslims from seeing Islam in its true perspective.

If we truly believe in the advent of the last day, when people will be taken to account for their actions, then we must shed this thorn. If we do not do this there is a real danger of our being visited by the scourge of God, and having to bear others' sins as well as our own. □

Let him who believes in God and the Last Day either speak good or keep silent, and let him who believes in God and the Last Day be generous to his neighbour, and let him who believes in God and the Last Day be generous to his guest. (*Hadith*)

Be Mindful of God wherever you are, and follow up a bad deed with a good one for it will erase the bad, and behave well towards people. (*Hadith*)

Religion and Scientific Reasoning

Many people are under the impression that religious truths cannot be proved scientifically. But inferring truths from things, as religion does, is the very reasoning which scientists employ in their everyday deductions.

In ancient times, water was just water. Then, in the 19th century, the microscope was invented. When water was looked at under a microscope, it was discovered that water was not just water; it also contained countless live bacteria. In the same way, man used to think that there were no more stars in the sky than those which can be seen with the naked eye. But in modern times, the sky has been examined with telescopes and many more stars than can be seen with the naked eye have been discovered.

These two examples show the difference between ancient and modern times. Modern research has shown with certainty that there are many more realities than man had previously thought when he was limited to the sphere of simple observation. But these new discoveries so excited those who were making them that they made another claim: that reality is that which can be directly observed; that which we can not experience or observe is mere hypothesis, and does not exist.

In the nineteenth century, this claim was made with great enthusiasm. It was most damaging to religion. Religious creeds are based on belief in the unseen; they cannot be directly observed or experienced. For this reason, many people came to think of religion as hypothetical and unreal.

Twentieth century research has completely changed this state of affairs. Advanced study has shown that there is more to life than meets the eye: all the great realities of life lie beyond our comprehension.

According to Bertrand Russell, there are two forms of knowledge: knowledge of things and knowledge of truths. Only “things” can be directly observed: “truths” can only be understood by indirect observation, or, in other words, inference. The existence of light, gravity, magnetism and nuclear energy in the universe is an undisputed fact, but man cannot directly observe these things. He knows them only by their effects. Man discovers certain “things” from which he infers the existence of “truths.”

This change in the concept of knowledge, which occurred in the twentieth century, changed the whole situation radically. Man was forced to accept the existence of things which he could not directly see, but only indirectly experience. With this intellectual revolution, the difference between seen and unseen reality disappeared. Invisible objects became as important as visible objects. Man was compelled to accept that the indirect or inferential argument was academically as sound as the direct argument.

This change in the concept of knowledge has, in the present age, made divine reasoning truly scientific. For instance, the greatest argument for religion is what philosophers call the argument from design. Nineteenth-century scholars, in their zeal, did not accept this reasoning. To them, it was an inferential argument which could not be accepted academically. But in the present age this objection has been invalidated. Nowadays, man is compelled to infer the existence of a designer of the universe from the existence of a design in the universe, just as he accepts the theory of the flow of electrons from the movement of a wheel.

A statement of Bertrand Russell throws some light on this matter. In the preface to his book *Why I am not a Christian*, he writes:

“I think all the great religions of the world—Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Islam and Communism—both untrue and harmful. It is evident as a matter of logic that, since they disagree, not more than one of them can be true. With every few exceptions, the religion which a man accepts is that of the community in which he lives, which makes it obvious that the influence of environment is what has led him to accept the religion in question. It is true that Scholastics invented what professed to be logical arguments proving the existence of God, and that these arguments, or others of a similar tenor, have been accepted by many eminent philosophers, but the logic to which these traditional

arguments appealed is of an antiquated Aristotelian sort which is now rejected by practically all logicians except such as are Catholics. There is one argument that is not purely logical. I mean the argument from design. This argument, however, was destroyed by Darwin; and in any case, could only be made logically acceptable at the cost of abandoning God's omnipotence."

Arguing the existence of a designer from design is, as Russell admits, a scientific argument in itself. It is the very argument that science uses to prove anything. Russell then rejects this argument by citing Darwin's theory of evolution. This rejection would only be acceptable if Darwin's theory was itself scientifically established. But scientific research has proved Darwinism to be a mere hypothesis, rather than an established scientific fact. It is Russell's first statement, therefore, concerning the validity of the argument from design that must prevail. His rejection of that argument on the basis of Darwinism is groundless. □

Because of One Vowel

This is how Professor A. J. Arberry has translated Verse 39 of the chapter of the Quran entitled "Pilgrimage":

Leave is given to those who fight because they were wronged—
surely God is able to help them.

It can be seen that he has rendered the verb "to fight" into the active voice, whereas in the original Arabic it is in the passive voice. There is a difference of one vowel between the active and passive forms of this verb. N. J. Dawood has correctly translated the verse as follows:

Permission to take up arms is hereby given to those who are attacked,
because they have been wronged: God has power to grant them
victory.

This translation shows that the Prophet and his companions only fought when they were attacked, whereas Professor Arberry's translation gives one the impression that Muslims took up arms themselves, without provocation from the other side. □

Left Speechless

On February 20, 1980, the Hindustan Times reported an incident that occurred in New Delhi. A three-wheeler scooter rickshaw driver had left his vehicle in a no-parking spot. A traffic inspector warned him on the loudspeaker to remove his vehicle immediately. He heard the warning but, seeing no traffic police in the vicinity, paid no heed; he had no knowledge of the closed-circuit television system, which had only recently been installed. The warning was coming through to him loud and clear, but he ignored it. All this time, the traffic inspector could see what the driver was doing. When he saw that his warning was being ignored, he sent a policeman to apprehend the errant driver. But the driver refused to admit his offence. He denied having parked in a prohibited spot. "I only stopped for a minute to drop a passenger," he protested. "I am just moving on."

There is a new system of traffic control in many cities of the world, a closed-circuit television system much the same as can be seen in most department stores of Europe and America. Television cameras are placed at vantage points on roads. The film is relayed to a control room where, far from people's vision, a traffic inspector surveys the whole scene on a video screen. According to his observations, he directs the movement of traffic through a loudspeaker system. The traffic inspector, sitting in the control room where he cannot be seen, thus sees what is going on on the roads, and also admonishes anyone whom he sees breaking any rule. The drivers who are being addressed over the loudspeaker can hear a voice, but cannot see anyone.

The policeman took him before the inspector in the control room. The driver told the inspector the same story that he had told the policeman. When the inspector saw that the driver was not ready to admit his offence, he played back the whole video recording showing the driver's movements. The driver saw himself approaching in his scooter; he saw himself parking in a no-parking spot; he saw himself alighting from the scooter and walking around in a carefree fashion; he saw himself chatting with some friends; he saw the policeman approaching; then he saw himself starting the scooter, pretending that

he had only parked there for a minute and was on the move. The driver saw the whole sequence of events played back to him before his very eyes.

Up to now, the driver had denied the inspector's allegations. He had plenty of words with which to justify himself. But when his actions were replayed to him on the video, he was stunned into silence. His offence had been proved so conclusively that there was no point in him even admitting it. His silence was sufficient proof of his guilt. In the words of the Hindustan Times reporter, he was "left speechless."

Just as the driver was left speechless on seeing a video recording of his movements, so all men will be left speechless when a recording of their actions on earth is played back to them in the life hereafter. In this world, people do not accept reality. They are called to justice, but they do not heed the call. This situation, however, will not last.

Science has shown that man's words and deeds are imprinted in the cosmos. Such is God's universal recording system. God has arranged for everything man does to be recorded under the order of the cosmos. In the next life, when God brings justice to the world, He will replay this recording. Everyone will see, on a cosmic screen, what he really was and what he was pretending to be; he will see how he was used to oppressing and exploiting others; he will hear the words he used to speak in pretence that he was doing right and was wronging no one.

Man denies the truth in this world. He pretends to be in the right. In the next world, however, God will play him a full record of his actions. He will find himself in the same situation as the scooter driver was when he was left speechless. □

An Appeal to Our Readers

Al-Risala Monthly is the organ of a mission whose aim and objectives are to propagate a divine message. This is a voluntary effort. Those who are in accord with these aims and objectives should assist in conveying this divine message to the people around them.

The simplest way to serve this cause is to accept the agency of the magazine in order to disseminate and proclaim this message as widely as possible.

Revival of Past Glory

Mohammad Ali (1878-1931) was a famous Indian Muslim leader. He once had an encounter with a Delhiite painter, who had prepared a painting which he showed to Mohammad Ali in the hope that the leader would buy it. The painting depicted the great Jama Mosque of Delhi, built by the Mughal Emperor Shah Jehan. The mosque is situated on a high foundation. There are flights of stairs leading up to it, on which beggars are a common sight. In this painting, a beggar-woman was shown standing on the steps of the mosque holding a child in her arms.

Mohammad Ali looked at the painting and said, 'I will buy it on one condition; that at the bottom you write the words, 'Her fathers built it.'

This incident shows what has motivated modern Muslim leaders. More than anything, they were longing for their lost glory; all their efforts were directed towards regaining it. They gave their movements the name Islamic revivalism, but in fact, they were only seeking to revive the past glory of Muslims.

This thinking of Muslim leaders in the present century has prevented them from accomplishing any far-reaching, constructive work. Take, for instance, the case of Delhi. At least one hundred large mosques deserted or, at least, neglected—existed in the city. In most cases, sizeable plots of land were attached to these mosques. If they had made these their centres, Muslim leaders could have engaged in constructive efforts at spreading their faith. But instead, their sacrifices were wasted in trying to bring back the political power Muslims had lost. All the opportunities for constructive work which were available went unavailed.

When politically-minded Muslims look at the Great Mosque and Red Fort of Delhi, they are reminded only of their past glory. Muslims who are endowed with missionary spirit, on the other hand, look at such monuments and are filled with a desire to use such places as centres for the missionary work which has been neglected up to now. □

A man could do nothing if he waited until he would do it so well that no one could find fault with what he has done.

Cardinal Newman

AL-RISALA

The Ascendancy of Islamic Thought

Among the prophecies in the New Testament regarding the coming of the Prophet of Islam is this one:

And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword that with it he should smite nations. (Revelations, 19:15)

This means that the religion of the Final Prophet will be supported by the sword of words, not the sword of iron; it will be the ideological ascendancy of Islam which will vanquish nations; the strength of the Prophet of Islam will be words which man utters rather than metals which are extracted from the earth.

This is a great prophecy. It means that the followers of the Final Prophet will never be defenceless or empty-handed. They will, potentially, have supreme might at their command, even when they seem powerless. The secret of the strength of Islam is the ascendancy of its thought, and that is something which can never be taken away from it.

This prophecy was fulfilled entirely during the Prophet's life. The Word of God that was revealed to him had taken most of the known world by storm. Today also the power of the word of God can work wonders, on the condition that the followers of the Prophet convey it as he and his companions did. □

One does not need to speak aloud for God to hear

People asked the Prophet: "Is our Lord close? Can we address Him softly? Or is He distant? Should we address Him loudly?" Then this verse of the Quran was revealed: "When My servants question you about Me, tell them that I am near. I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he calls to Me." Abu Musa says that when some people raised their voices in prayer during a journey, the Prophet said, "Control yourselves, for you are not praying to one who is deaf or absent: you are praying to one who hears and is close. He is nearer to you than the neck of your mount." □

Non-Violence: The Most Powerful Weapon

The freedom movement against British rule in India started in 1857. For the first fifty years, this movement was violent. Then, in 1919, Mahatma Gandhi entered the stage of Indian politics. He determined that the freedom movement in India would be conducted on a non-violent basis.

For the British rulers, Gandhi's non-violent weapon proved to be more deadly than the violence of the "freedom warriors." They possessed the means to put an end to violence with violence, but they did not know how to stem the tide of a movement which was based on non-violence. When this situation became apparent, a veteran British collector telegraphed the Central Secretariat, saying: "Kindly wire instructions how to kill a tiger non-violently."

Most people think that politics entails unending conflict with one's rivals, but real politics is to wear one's opponents down by means of quiet diplomacy, so that they are no longer able to put up a fight. □

The Terms of Agency

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