

- 3) How, then, (will the sinners fair on Day of Judgement) when We shall bring forward witnesses from within every community, and bring thee (O Prophet!) a witness against them? (An-Nisaa: 41)

To sum up, the real mission and purpose of prophecy and prophethood is that, through preaching, admonition, advice, dissemination, greeting and warning, God's chosen messengers, establish a peremptory *hujjat* for man's accountability. The cover term for the entire prophetic activities is bearing witness to the Truth before men or "*shahadat alan-nas.*" And that, too, is the foremost purpose of the advent of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). The Prophet is addressed in the Quran thus:

O Prophet! Behold! We have sent thee as a witness (to the Truth) and as a herald of glad tidings and a warner, and as one who summons (all men) to God by His leave, and as a light-giving beacon. (Al-Ahzab : 45-46)

This means that, like all other Prophets and Messengers of God, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) was a preacher, teacher, moral and spiritual mentor, a warner, a bearer of glad tidings and witness of Truth—though even in these aspects of the prophetic call, each Prophet had his own mark of distinction in any one of these. The truth of the matter, however, is that the loftiest and most distinguished position among all the Prophets is occupied by Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in whom prophethood not only reached its zenith and plenitude, it also ends with his advent. The splendour and magnificence of his prophetic mission is typically distinct and unique, as will be made clear in the sequel.

(To be Continued)



these, it invites them to deliberate over its own signs i.e., its Divinely inspired verses or *Ayat* (literally meaning 'signs' of God, because like signs of God, Quranic verses too turn man's mind to the Almighty). In effect, this means that with the aid of the Quran, full and intense awareness of Absolute Reality springs up to man's consciousness like the memory of a forgotten thing shooting up from the depths of the psyche to the surface of mind.

The upshot of the ideas expressed in the above lines is that, through prophets and revealed books, an external witness for or against men is established. God in His infinite mercy has sent His envoys and books in order to reinvigorate the innate ethical perception of mankind and to facilitate moral choice and motivation. From every community a "Witness", i.e., the prophet sent to them will be brought forth as a prosecution witness on the Day of Judgement (cf. An-Nahl: 84,89 and Al-Qasas :75). Prophet Muhammad (SAW) is told by the Almighty that he is only a "warner" , "a reminder" : 'your task is only to preach'; 'you are not a warden over them.' That is why the vocation of prophethood has been described at many places in the Quran under the wide term of "bearing witness to the Truth before men"—*shahadt-i-haqq*—in this world and in the world-to-come. The following Quranic verses substantiate it fully.

- 1) (Oh!) We have sent unto you an envoy (messenger) who shall bear witness to the Truth before you, even as We sent an envoy into Pharaoh (Al-Muzzammil:15)
- 2)so that the Prophet might bear witness to the Truth before you, and that you might bear witness to it before all mankind. (Hajj: 78)

- 2) O Man! We did not bestow the Quran on thee from on high to make thee unhappy, but only as an exhortation to all who stand in awe of God. (Ta Ha: 1-3)
- 3) Nay, verily, these (revealed messages) are but a reminder. (Abasa :11)
- 4) Thus offering an insight and a reminder unto every human being who willingly turns unto God. (Qaf : 8)
- 5) In this, behold! there is indeed a reminder for everyone whose heart is wide-awake, that is, (everyone who) lends ear with a conscious mind. (Qaf : 37)
- 6) And so, (O Prophet!) exhort them; thy task is only to exhort; thou canst not compel (to believe). (Al-Ghashiyah : 21-22)

Tazakkur and its derivatives are very significant Quranic terms which mean recalling to mind the fundamental truths intuitively recognized and apprehended by the primordial human nature (*fitrah*). In essence, *tazaukkur* pertains to the first stage in the comprehension of divine realities and meanings. It also alludes to the truth that the Quranic teaching is not extraneous or heterogeneous to human nature. It actually reflects the experiences of man's true inner self and it is meant to awaken reminiscences of something already apprehended rather to import anything altogether new. The Holy Quran appeals to all thoughtful persons and men of discernment and comprehension to think and ponder over the outer universe of matter as well as the inner universe of the spirit, as both are replete with the unmistakable signs of the Almighty Creator. Along with

- 2) O followers of the Bible! Now (after a long time during which no messenger has come) there has come unto you (this) Our prophet (or envoy) to make the truth clear to you, lest you say, 'No bearer of glad tidings has come unto us, nor any warner' for now there has come unto you a bearer of glad tidings and a warner since God has the power to will anything. (Al-Ma'ida: 19)

From these two Quranic verses it becomes clear that the real purpose and objective of God's envoys and message-bearers has been to establish conclusively and finally man's responsibility to act as God's vicegerent on earth and to follow His guidance in this life, and to leave no scope for excuses on the Day of Judgement. All excuses offered by man for his misdemeanor will be lame and of no avail.

Here the truth may be recalled once again that just as the external motivators and instigators of good and evil have no real power or authority over a human being—they only tempt, tantalize or motivate and inspire—similarly, prophecy and prophethood work as agents of advice and exhortation. That is the reason why at most places in the Quran the function of prophets and message-bearers has been described as heralds of glad tidings and as warners (cf e.g., verse 56 of Al-Kahf). And the oft-used expressions employed for revelation and the Holy Book are *zikhra*, *zikra* and *tazkira*, all derivatives of the root z-k-r meaning 'recalling' or 'reminding'. The following six verses from various Surahs bear this out:

- 1) Behold! it is We Ourselves who have bestowed from on high, step by step, this reminder; and, behold! it is We who shall truly guard it (from all corruption). (Al-Hijr :9)

- 3) (But,) behold, as far those who say, 'Our Sustainer is God' and then steadfastly pursue the right way, upon them do angels descend (saying:) 'Fear not and grieve not, but receive the glad tiding of that Paradise which has been promised to you. We are your friends (or protectors) in the life of this world and (will be so) in the life to come. (Ha Mim As-Sajda: 30-31).

Peremptory Factor/argument for Islam (Itmam-i-Hujjat or Qat-i-Uzr)

Now, we can easily discuss and expound the last point of the first portion of the subject under discussion. We have observed that although the basic internal motivators of evil and good are already given to man in the form of *latifa-i-nafs* and *latifa-i-ruh*, the really decisive grounds for moral and virtuous conduct are the higher cognitive faculties inherently imbued in *nafs*, inner moral sense and power of spiritual apprehension, on the basis of which man is subject to accountability in the Hereafter. On the side of external and objective impelling factors for evil and good, on the other hand, are respectively Satan (including all Satanic forces) and angels (including all invisible heavenly agents). But the decisive and peremptory role here is played by divine revelation, God's envoys and messengers and revealed books. Together, they constitute a peremptory argument from Allah (SWT) for man's accountability, and leave for him no ground for excuse of ignorance on the Day of Judgement. Collectively, affirmation of all these is known as belief in prophecy or prophethood (*iman bir-Risalat*). We read in the Holy Quran:

- 1) (We sent all) Prophets as heralds of glad tidings and as warners, so that men might have no excuse before God after the coming of these Prophets; and God is indeed Almighty, Wise. (An-Nisaa: 165)

one regards as error and sin, unless that person wills to be so guided.

With regard to external tempters and motivators of evil, we all know that they are the friends and progeny of Iblis, from amongst both men and jinns. The Quran explicitly states:

"Indeed, he (Satan) and his tribe (ilk) see you whence you do not see them." (Al-A'raf: 27)

A tradition of the Holy Prophet (SAW), reported by Bukhari, also tells us that like blood that circulates in the whole body, Satan so vigorously influences a man that he almost permeates his entire inner being. In contrast with the all too common knowledge of external agents and motivator of evil, however, what is generally less appreciated is the truth that angels help and provide firmness and strength to true believers in this worldly life. Just like the 'hordes' of Satan who, through their beguiling activity, tempt and motivate a man towards the evil, the pure and holy angels provide inner peace and strength to believers in following the straight path of Islam and in the arduous task of establishing the socio-political order of Deen-i-Islam. Both Allah (SWT) and angels bless and give glad tidings to them, as is borne out by the following verses:

- 1) He it is Who bestows His blessings upon you, with His angels (echoing Him), so that He might take you out of the depths of darkness into light. (Al-Ahzab: 43)
- 2) (When your Lord commanded the angels: ' And give firmness unto those who have attained to faith (with these words from Me): ' I shall cast terror into the hearts of those who are bent on denying the truth...' (Al-Anfal: 12)

(*wasawis*) that he was able to reach the sinner's self; and had it not been for an already-existing evil disposition due to lust, anger, superstition or fanciful ideas, these insinuations would have had no effect whatsoever. This, in effect, means that Satan never forces, nor can he force, anyone to do evil but he tries to entice, or tempt his possible victim. His enticement consists in presenting the immediate superficial ends or tantalizations of this worldly life in such a manner that many people are victimized, most of them temporarily but many permanently. The latter are termed by the Quran as the "friends" or the "party" of the Devil. Iblis or Satan is thus more cunning and artful than strong, more deceitful and contriving than forthrightly challenging.

Similarly, on the other side, no preacher of faith—not even Prophet Muhammad (SAW)—could ever convert any person to the true faith of Islam. And, surely, we cannot possibly think of a better and more sincere preacher than our beloved Holy Prophet (SAW). Therefore, we read in verse 56 of Surah Al-Qasas:

"Verily, thou canst not guide aright everyone whom thou lovest: but it is God who guides whomever He wills; and He is fully aware of all who would let themselves be guided."

According to several authentic Traditions, the above verse relates to the Prophet's inability to induce his dying uncle Abu Talib, whom he loved dearly and who had loved and protected him (i.e., the Prophet) throughout his life, to renounce the pagan beliefs of his ancestors and to profess faith in God's oneness. The Quranic statement, "thou canst not guide aright everyone whom thou lovest" has undoubtedly a timeless import as well; it stresses the inadequacy and inability of all human endeavours to 'convert' any other person, however loving and loved, to one's own beliefs, or to prevent him from falling into what

renders his life an unceasing moral struggle. Man is squarely charged with his efforts to overcome evil because he is unique in the order of creation and has been endowed with highest faculties of head and heart in order to fulfil his mission as God's vicegerent on earth. Moreover, in addition to inner impulses, man does encounter some external agents and prompters both on the side of good and evil. However, the truth that must be appreciated deeply here is that the really decisive role is only of man's own inner decision and choice. That is to say, the real nucleus of initiation and motivation is the subject-self itself. External forces can only partly instigate and motivate either in the direction of virtue and moral probity or in the direction of sin and immorality. Even Satan, the greatest instigator for evil, has no power to force a man to perform an evil deed. Although Satan waylays man from all sides, his machinations fail against really virtuous persons. To be sure, no man is immune from the Devil's temptations—not even the prophets—yet it is within the reach of any true man of faith and will, let alone the prophets, to overcome them. Thus the Quran states:

"Verily, thou shalt have no power over My creatures—unless it be such as are (already) lost in grievous error and follow thee of their own will."
(Al-Hijir : 42)

"Behold, he (Satan, the accursed) has no power over those who have attained to faith and in their Sustainer place their trust." (An-Nahl : 99)

These and some other verses of the Holy Quran clearly assert that Satan cannot force men to commit sin, and will address his erstwhile followers on Day of Judgement thus: 'I had no power at all over you; but I called you—and you responded unto me' (Ibrahim : 22). This shows that the real evil emanates from man's own complex of desires, for Satan makes it clear that it is only by means of insinuations

lauded the role of heart in attaining veridical knowledge. They have done so quite rightly because its paramount importance has also been pointed out by the Holy Prophet (SAW) in one of his oft-quoted sayings. He said, "Verily, just like pieces of iron which get rusty if water touches them, hearts also become rusty". Thereupon, his Companions asked him, "We do polish rusty objects, but how can we polish rusty hearts?" He told them that hearts are polished through frequent remembering of death and reading of the Holy Quran."

Men who do not use God-given cognitive capacities and faculties can only be called worse than cattle inasmuch as animals follow only their instincts and natural drives and are not conscious of the possibility or necessity of higher knowledge and moral choice. Animals do see external things, but they do not perceive them meaningfully as items of articulated and theory-loaded knowledge. If a man does not attain the metaphysical knowledge of the Really Real, it means that he is not really using his internal and external senses. Verse 179 of Surah Al-A'raf reads:

".....And men who have hearts with which they fail to grasp the truth, and eyes with which they fail to see, and ears with which they fail to hear. They are like cattle—nay they are farther astray (even less conscious of the right way)."

Though the people, referred to in this verse, have apparently all the faculties of reason and perception, yet they have so deadened them that those faculties do not work in the real sense and they remain misguided throughout their life and go headlong into Hell.

The External Prompters of Good and Evil

As explained above from the Quranic point of view, the inner denizen of man's self is an arena of a ceaseless struggle between evil and good tendencies. It is this deep-seated moral fact that constitutes the eternal challenge for man and

Latifa-i-Qalb

In addition to the above-mentioned faculties of sight, hearing and moral acumen, Almighty Allah (SWT) has also endowed man with *qalb*, the heart, i.e., the faculty of contemplative intuition and seat or organ of religious apprehension. The 'heart' is indeed ablaze with the *nur* (light) of the love and gnosis of God. It also reflects within itself the reality of all true existents and transcendental truths.

The heart is, so to say, a microcosmic reality which contains within itself the reflection of the entire supersensible Macrocosmos. Whereas *latifa-i-nafs* has been granted the faculties of perceiving, hearing, induction and deduction—the bases of all physical and theoretical sciences—*latifa-i-qalb* has been given the power of inner perception of spiritual verities. Heart, in Quranic epistemology, is symbolically the seat of the true self or repository of soul, of which we may be conscious or ignorant, but which is our true existential, intellectual and so universal centre. Knowledge afforded by heart is totally different from knowledge acquired at the level of *latifa-i-nafs* through external senses and ordinary channels of ratiocination. The heart is, as it were, immersed in the immutability of Being and is, thus, an organ of *ilm-i-ladunni*: knowledge imparted directly by God through intuition and inner perception. It (the *qalb*) is a supersensory organ of cognition in which knowledge of esoteric truths transpires through meditative reflection ('*tafaqquh*' in Quranic terminology). Contemplativity is here stressed more than the sharpness of intelligence. In short, by bestowing upon man the subtle and luminous cognitive faculty of heart, God has conclusively rendered him responsible and accountable for his deeds in the Life after death.

Muslim poets, in general, and mystic poets of Indo-Persia, in particular, have in their poetic compositions

That is to say, on the Day of Judgement one's tongue, hands, feet and skin will bear witness against him as to his actions. It is not what a man will say about himself, or what others say of him, that determines judgement upon him. It is what he is in himself. His own inner personality will betray him or commend him.

The above cited Quranic verses and the brief explanatory notes make the truth crystal clear that man is not, like animals, merely a sentient or instinctive being; rather, he has been made by the Creator into a full-fledged human person—a human being capable of discerning between right and wrong and thus of choosing his way of life. On the basis of this ingrained moral sense, every human being as such is answerable on the Day of Final Reckoning, and is fully liable to punishment or reward. Every individual will have to account for his own deeds personally, and face the trial and the judgement himself. Verse III of Surah An-Nahl reads:

"(Be conscious, then, of) the Day every human being shall come to plead for himself (alone) , and every human being shall be repaid in full for whatever he has done, and none shall be wronged."

The Holy Quran categorically refutes the Christian doctrine of vicarious redemption as well as the Jewish idea that "the chosen people"—as the Jews consider themselves—would be exempt from punishment on the Day of Judgement. On that day, nobody would be able to help another, nor will there be any possibility of ransom or intercession, as the Quran says:

"And remain conscious of (the coming of) a Day when no human being shall in the least avail another, nor shall intercession be accepted from any of them , nor ransom taken from them, and none shall be succoured". (Al-Baqarah: 48)

is imbued with moral failings as well as God-consciousness. (Ash-Shms: 7-8)

The connotation of the verb *sawwa* used in the first verse above is that God has endowed human self with inner coherence and with qualities consistent with the functions which it is meant to perform, and thus has adopted it a priori to the exigencies of its terrestrial existence. Moreover, God has implanted a keen moral sense in him: the fact that man is equally liable to rise to great spiritual heights as to fall into utter immorality is an essential and primordial characteristic of human nature as such. In other words, it is this inherent dichotomy of tendencies which gives to every right choice a value and, thus, endows man with moral free-will.

- 3) Nay! I call to witness the Day of Resurrection! But nay! I call to witness the accusing voice of man's own conscience. (Al-Qiyamah: 1-2)

The Holy Quran speaks of three types of human self, or three states or stages of the spiritual development: *Nafs-i-ammara* (Yusuf: 53) is prone to evil, and, if unchecked and uncontrolled, leads to perdition; *nafs-i-lawwama* which feels conscious of evil and resists it, asks for God's grace and pardon after repentance and tries to amend; *nafs-i-mutmainna*, the highest stage of all, when it achieves full rest and satisfaction in obeying divine commands.

- 4) Nay, but man shall be an eye-witness against himself, even though he may veil himself in excuses. (Al-Qiyamah: 14-15)

motivations for moral and spiritual excellence and righteousness. Man's real inner personality thus is an arena of long and perpetual pitched battle between the forces of evil and goodness.

The Basic Grounds for Accountability

Almighty Allah (SWT) has not sent man in this universe without any capacities and potentialities to cope with the inner strife of good and evil. He has been imbued with numerous powers and faculties that help him in fighting out the blind and irrational promptings of evil. First, even the lowest element of his personality—the animal self or *latifa-i-nafs* is equipped with very high capacity for perceiving and hearing and still higher faculties of abstraction and thoughtful reflection. There is a world of qualitative difference between the sensory and mental operations of human beings and brute animals. Logical reasoning through induction and deduction and metaphysical speculation and reflection are only the prerogatives of humans. Secondly, human self has been endowed by Allah (SWT) with a moral sense that discriminates between virtue and vice, between moral rectitude and immorality. That is why man's own inner moral self, *nafs-i-lawwamah* in Quranic terminology, is the most authentic moral judge within. Slightest departure from the path of moral rectitude activates this 'self-accusing soul' and the pricks of conscience are immediately experienced by the evil-doer. The following verses of the Holy Quran categorically state these truths:

- 1) Verily, it is We who have created man out of a drop of sperm intermingled, so that We might try him (in his later life): and, therefore, We made him a being endowed with hearing and sight. (Ad-Dahr: 2).
- 2) Consider the human self, and how it is formed in accordance with what it is meant to be, and how it

which always prompts man to worldly and immoral pursuits. The Quran calls this self '*nafs-i-ammarah*', i.e., the self which is wont to enjoin evil, an expression for the lowest stage in the spiritual growth of man: the stage where low desires and animal passions rule the mind of man and he succumbs to his carnal desires like a brute. Different baser aspects of this self were pointed out by Marx, Freud, and Adler. Every one of them focussed his attention exclusively on one of the urges and desires belonging to the lower human self. Darwin, too, was not entirely wrong in asserting the human biological evolution which is a fact in respect of the natural development of the earthly part of man.

Latifa-i-Ruh

Diametrically opposed to the above mentioned animal self is that component of man which is his soul or spirit. It is a divine element in man as Almighty Allah has associated it with Himself: "and breathed into him of My spirit" (Al-Hijr: 29, Saad:72) This spiritual element of man totally belongs to the 'realm of Divine directive force' or in Quranic terminology, '*Alam-i amr*' : "Say: the spirit (or soul) is from God's direction" (Al-Aalam: 85). Being strictly of divine origin, it has an inherent, dormant love for, and attraction towards, Allah (SWT), and, consequently, aspires for a communion with Him. In spiritually evolved persons, however, this dormant, tendency becomes very acute and radiates in the form of (as some Sufi Gnostics put it) a "divine spark".

The Internal Strife of Good and Evil

Being a composite of baser animal *nafs* and divine spiritual soul, man can rightly be characterized as a "microcosm" of the whole of being, reflecting and possessing, in the inmost recesses of his selfhood both evil tendencies and higher spiritual aspirations. He experiences within himself lowest drives for evil and vice as well as noblest

of casting doubts on their own objective existence and total ethical nihilism.

An Important Question

At this juncture an important question arises, the right answer to which can explain the logical relation between the Islamic metaphysical beliefs discussed above (i.e., belief in Allah and Hereafter) and the belief in prophethood. The question is : on what basis is man to be judged in the Hereafter; or in other words, on what grounds is man accountable for his deeds on the Day of Judgement?

The most authentic answer to this question, in the light of the Holy Quran, can be very succinctly expressed thus:

Primarily (and essentially), a man is accountable for his deeds on the grounds of natural capacities and higher (spiritual) faculties given to him by Almighty Allah, e.g., power of perception and audition, thought, reflection and intuition—that is to say, the three faculties of *nafs* (self), *qalb* (heart) and *ruh* (spirit or soul).

Secondarily, Almighty Allah has, in His infinite mercy, supplemented the above inherent potentialities of man with heavenly guidance through revelation of books and sending of His Prophets and Messengers, so that men might have no excuse before God on the Day of Judgement: they may not be in a position to plead ignorance. Revelation and prophethood is thus an additional (and external, so to say) factors that make man fully answerable to God for his deeds in the Hereafter. This point, however, calls for a little clarification.

Latifa-i-Nafs

Self or ego is the lowest of all the faculties possessed by man. Considered from this standpoint, man no doubt is only a highly developed animal and belongs to the realm of creation (Alam-i-Khalq). A major part of this self is carnal

who, not knowing or disregarding the ultimate goal and destiny of man, spends his whole life in pursuing worldly means of material sustenance and sexual gratification. Such a man is generally so absorbed in his immediate concerns, particularly selfish, narrow and material gains, that he does not heed the higher ideals and 'end' of life. The Quran allegorically speaks of this man thus:

"But then, is he who goes along with his face close to the ground (literally, prone upon his face) better guided than he who walks upright on a straight way." (Al-Mulk :22)

That is to say, the man who is ignorant of divine guidance sees only what is immediately beneath his feet and is utterly unaware of the direction his path is taking him to: a metaphor of the spiritual obtuseness which prevents a person from caring for anything beyond his immediate worldly concerns, and this makes him resemble an earthworm that "goes along prone upon his face."

Or else, this man is like a kite which, its thin cord having been cut, is entirely under the pressure of winds. Winds may carry it wherever they like. The Holy Quran expresses this very graphically in these words:

"For he who ascribes divine qualities to anything beside God is like one who is hurtling down from the sky—whereupon the birds carry him off, or the wind blows him away onto a far-off place." (Al-Hajj :31)

The net result of this total rejection or ignorance of the divine guidance in respect of the whence and whither of man is that he becomes enmeshed in metaphysical doubts and uncertainties, ending up with wholesale agnosticism and skepticism. The logical end-point of this epistemological skepticism often leads some philosophers even to the extent

man's endeavours on earth. "*Al-dunya*" (the immediate objectives, the here-and-now of life), on the contrary, is not just 'this world' but the lower values, the basal pursuits which appear so tempting that most men run after them most of the time at the expense of the higher and long-range ends. The Holy Prophet (SAW) has elaborated this in one of his moving sermons thus:

'I swear by Allah that all of you will die, just as you go to sleep at night. Then you will all be raised again as you wake up in the morning. Then, surely, you will be judged for the deeds you had been doing. You will get reward for good deeds and punishment for the bad ones. It is either eternal and ever-lasting Gardens of paradise or Hell-fire.' (cf. Sermons of the Holy Prophet reproduced in *Nahjul Balagha*.)

The Relationship of Beliefs in Allah and in the Hereafter

With a little thoughtful reflection one can realize that the Islamic metaphysical belief in the Divine Creator and the eschatological belief in the Hereafter together constitute the total sapiential knowledge of the whence (*mabda*) and whither (*ma'ad*) of man. That is to say, one who upholds these beliefs reflectively and with full consciousness, *ipso facto*, possesses authentic knowledge both about his source or origin and ultimate destiny or destination. The Holy Quran summarizes it in these words:

"Verily we are from Allah and unto Him we return."

As a matter of truth, a man without this absolutely essential knowledge of the whence and whither of humanity is like a passenger, who due to a mishap and head - injury during the journey, neither remembers as to wherefrom he started his journey nor recalls the destination to which he was travelling. One can well imagine the miserable mental plight of that passenger. This exactly is also the plight of one

created in His own image. He then breathed into him out of His own Spirit and made him his vicegerent on earth. In other words, the Holy Quran presents a theomorphic conception of man: he is *homo cum Deo*. The creation of man represents the climax and apex of divine creative process, as the Quran says: "Verily, we created man in the best of moulds, then We debased him (to be) the lowest of the low" (At'teen :4).

Belief in Life Hereafter

The core of this Islamic belief lies in the assertion that the present terrestrial existence of man does not constitute his total life; rather, it is a very short preamble of everlasting life in the Hereafter: a brief preface of the long life-book. Life in this world is merely like a trial or examination period, the reward or punishments of which will be enjoyed or suffered in the Hereafter (*Al-akhira*). Physical death experienced by man in this world does not mean total extinction or annihilation of the individual person; rather, it means transportation from this world to the eternal life in the resurrected world. Immediately after death, the first brief halting station on the way to the Hereafter is *barzakh*, and the ever-lasting life begins after the Day of Judgement or the final accounting of deeds. Resurrection, final reckoning, weighing or scaling of deed-records, torments of hell-fire and joys of the Garden are essential parts of Quranic eschatology which fully elaborate the Islamic belief in the Hereafter. *Al-Aakhira*, the "end" is the moment of truth: "When the great cataclysm comes, that day man will recall what he had been striving for" (Annaziat:34-35) is a typical statement of this phenomenon. It is an Hour when all veils between the mental perceptions of man and the objective moral reality will be rent: "You were in deep heedlessness about this (Hour of self-awareness), but now we have rent your veil, so your sight today is keen" (Attoor:22). Indeed, the essence of the "Hereafter" consists in the "ends" of life (*al-aakhira*) or the long-range results of

(*Hikmat-E-Quran*)

Throne "(Al-Isra:42). Nobody from amongst the creatures shares His substantial essence, attributes, rights, authority and privileges. God cannot be regarded as an existent among other existents. In the metaphysical realm, there can be no democratic and equal sharing of being between the Original, the Creator, the Self-Necessary, and the borrowed, the created, the contingent. The Qurānic condemnation of *shirk* ("assigning partners to God") has its roots firmly in this metaphysical realm and then issues forth in the political and moral fields.

Surah Ikhlas and many other verses of the Holy Quran most categorically emphasize the oneness and absoluteness of God Almighty:

Say: 'He is one God: God the Eternal, the Uncaused (Absolute) Cause of all being. He begets not, and neither is He begotten; and there is nothing that could be compared with Him. (Al-Ikhlās)

And say: 'All praise is due to God, who begets no offspring, and has no partners in His dominion, and has no weakness, and therefore no need of any aid'—and (thus) extol His limitless greatness (Al-Isra: 111)

.....He allots to no one a share in His dominion and rule.(Al-Kahf: 26)

Almighty Allah (SWT) has created the Universe with a purpose and for a definite period of time. The creation of the Universe is a serious affair, not a sport or triviality: "And We have not created the heavens and the earth and what is therein purposelessly—that is the opinion of those who reject (God) or who are ungrateful" (As Saad: 27; Aal-e-Imran: 191). The non-ultimacy of nature itself proves its destructibility and the Quran tells us that God in His wisdom has created the myriad form of existents for a finite duration of time (only known to Him). At the pinnacle of God's multi-layered creations appears man whom Allah (SWT)

Supreme Creator, in the life hereafter (*akhira*) and in prophethood and revelation. However, what is generally not realized is the fact that these three doctrinal beliefs are very deeply and logically related and, taken together, constitute an indivisible organic unity. Let us try to examine very briefly and schematically the real import of these beliefs and the nature of their mutual relationship.

Belief in Allah

Keeping aside philosophical controversies and theological intricacies, the quintessential claim of belief in Allah is that the entire realm of being and the whole terrestrial cosmic complex is neither eternal nor ever-lasting. Rather, it is both contingent and perishable. In itself, it has no warrant for its own existence and it cannot explain itself. However, there is one such Being as has neither beginning in time nor an end—*Allah*, the proper name for God. It makes no difference whether one calls Him *Allah* or *ar-Rahman* (The Merciful). He is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe and of man, and, particularly, the giver of guidance for man and the supreme judge of his conduct. God's existence can be brought home to those who care to reflect, so that it not only ceases to be an 'irrational' or 'unreasonable' belief but also becomes for them the Master-Truth. He is all-enveloping, literally infinite, and He alone is infinite, absolute and eternal. All else carries in the very texture of its being the hallmark of its finitude and creatureliness. He is the personification of all good attributes like power, majesty and knowledge etc., in the utmost degree. In the very nature of the case, there can be only one God, for whenever one tries to conceive of more than one, only one will be found to emerge as the First and God has said, "Do not take two Gods (for) He is only One" (An Nahl : 15); "God bears witness that there is no God but He" (Aal-e-Imran : 18) "Say (O Muhammad!) if there were other gods besides Him, as these people assert, they would all (necessarily) seek their way to the (one) Lord of the

(*Hikmat-E-Quran*)

THE OBJECTIVE AND GOAL OF MUHAMMAD'S PROPHETHOOD IN THE LIGHT OF THE HOLY QURAN

Dr. Israr Ahmad

(Translated into English by: Dr. Absar Ahmad)

We Muslims believe that Hadrat Muhammad (SAW)—the best of all human beings—was not just one of the many Prophets, but he was the 'seal of prophets' (*khatam an-nabiyyeen*); he was not just one of the numerous Messengers of Allah (SWT), he was the last and final Messenger (*aakhir ur-rusul*). Prophecy or prophethood not only ends and comes to a close with him, it achieves its final plenitude, consummation and culmination in him. This means that the Arab Prophet (SAW) represents the completion and climax of all earlier prophetic missions: fulfilment and full blossoming of all antecedent authentic Divine revelations. Seen in this perspective, it becomes absolutely certain that whereas the objective and goal of Muhammad's prophethood cannot be different from those of all other prophets, it must necessarily reflect the characteristics of completion and full realization. And this by itself confers on him a distinct and special place in the galaxy of noble prophets. It is, therefore, clear that in order to understand the objective of Muhammad's prophethood we must first understand, as enunciated by the Holy Quran, the general objective of all prophets. Only then can we attempt to understand the distinctive nature of the goal and intent of Muhammad's (SAW) prophethood.

THE AXIAL PURPOSE OF PROPHETS

Three Doctrinal Beliefs

It is common knowledge that Islam comprises three foundational metaphysical beliefs viz *Tawheed*, *Ma'ad* and *Risalat*; in other words, belief and faith in Allah as the one