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News from around the world

QURANIC SOCIETY OF MALAYSIA ESTABLISHED

During a meeting held on May 16, 1993 at the Malaysian University of Science, an organization by the name of Jema'ah Al-Quran Malaysia (Quranic Society of Malaysia) was established. Among the goals of the new organization were to call for the Muslims to return to the Quranic teachings and to contribute to the new revival of true Islam.

A group of people, led by Dr. Kassim Ahmad—a renowned Malaysian writer and thinker, has been elected to run the Society. Dr. Ahmad has written two highly controversial books (in Malay) criticizing the role of Hadith and urging the Muslims to return to the Quran alone. His first book on the subject (1985) was eventually banned by the Government under pressure from the 'Ulama (it was sold out of print). His latest book (1992) summarized and answered all the critics of his earlier book, as well as broadened the scope of the argument.

One of the activities of the Society is publishing a newsletter every other month (also in Malay). A dialogue was held with several visiting scholars in Islamic Studies from the International Islamic University, known with their Malay abbreviation UIA. These professors lectured on "Why the Muslims cannot rely on the Quran alone in practising Islam," and the representatives from the Quranic Society presented the counter-arguments. The whole session was conducted in English, moderated by Br. Syed Akbar Ali. This debate was recorded on video tape. The address of the Society is: 80, Jalan Gajah, 11200 Tanjung Bunga, Pulau Pinang - Malaysia. The phone number is 04-669515 or 04-891155.

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In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Submitters Perspective

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Meaning of Messengership

One of the most intriguing and critical issues facing modern Submitters is that of the role of the messenger. What does it mean to believe that someone is a messenger? How are messengers different from other knowledgeable people?

In the Torah God teaches: "I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their kinsmen, and I will put My words into his mouth; he shall tell them all that I command him. If any man will not listen to My words which he speaks in My name, I Myself will make him answer for it." (Deuteronomy 18:18-19)

God taught us through Jesus who said, "My doctrine is not my own; it comes from Him who sent me. Any man who chooses to do His will will know about this doctrine—namely, whether it comes from God or is simply spoken on my own. Whoever speaks on his own is bent on self-glorification. The man who seeks glory for Him who sent him is truthful; there is no dishonesty in his heart." (John 7:16-18)

God tells us clearly in the Quran: "Whoever obeys the messenger is obeying God." (Quran 4:80)

And "...All (messengers) are (His) honored servants. They never speak on their own, and they strictly follow His commands." (21:26-27)

From these verses it is clear that there is a difference between a messenger and other knowledgeable people because the messenger does not speak on his own. In a sense we can say that he acts as God's mouthpiece. He gives us not his doctrine, but that of God. Isn't that what the word "messenger" implies?

Now obviously messengers, when acting as men, make mistakes like all humans. So how do we know if what they tell us is from God, and thus without question the truth, or if it is their own opinion, which can be incorrect?

I would like to suggest that we look at the mistakes which we know from the Quran that messengers of the past have made. We know that Abraham prayed for forgiveness for his father (60:4) and Noah questioned God about his son (11:46). Muhammad feared the people and did not want to marry the divorced wife of his adopted son (33:37), and he turned away from the blind man (80:1). All of the mistakes mentioned in the Quran were corrected by God while the messengers were alive. We do not have a single example of a messenger who was sent to correct the mistakes of a previous messenger. The messengers come to renew the message after the "followers" of a previous messenger have distorted the message, not because the previous messenger bungled the job.

The message does not come all at once. We see this with the revelation of the scriptures. We also experienced it watching the growth of new understanding and purification as it came through Dr. Rashad Khalifa. We are an incredibly fortunate generation. For the first time in human history we have the words of the messenger as he typed them into the computer. We have the words as he spoke them onto video and audio tapes. We are blessed with the fact that some of the words we have recorded are from earlier stages, thus documenting our growth in understanding of the truth. And we are

blessed to have his final work—the revision of his translation of the Quran which he was working on in the last hours of his life.

Still, there may be those who have doubts. God answers them:

"Are they saying, 'He (Rashad) has fabricated lies about God?' If God willed, He could have sealed your mind, but God erases the falsehood and affirms the truth with His words. He is fully aware of the innermost thoughts." (42:24)

That does not mean that new understandings will not continue to come. This fact was acknowledged by Dr. Khalifa himself in his February, 1990 issue of the Submitters Perspective: "As stated in 3:81 and 46:9, God's Messenger of the Covenant does not bring anything new; everything I receive and pass on to you is already in the Quran. However, the Quran is full of information that is kept by Almighty God for revelation at a specific time."

Our knowledge will continue to grow, Inshallah. But it will do just that, it will grow and expand. It does not make sense that the knowledge God gave to us through one of His manifest messengers would be wrong, and would need to be corrected:

"...can the messengers do anything but deliver the complete message?" (16:35)

Am I saying that the men who are messengers are infallible? Of course not! But I am saying that God is and He will not allow His messengers to contaminate the message with falsehood. In their role as messengers they speak only the truth, the word of God. Remember: "They never

continued

... speak on their own, and they strictly follow His commands." (21:27)

If we believe that Rashad Khalifa was a messenger, we must believe in what came through him. If we do not, do we really believe he was a messenger? Do we really believe he was delivering what God sent?

If we believe that Rashad Khalifa was a messenger, we must accept it when he said that his translation was authorized.

We must believe him when he said that the following verses referred to him:

These are God's revelations. We recite them through you, truthfully, for you are one of the messengers. (2:252)

And:
I solemnly swear by the galaxies. Precisely running in their orbits. By the night as it falls. And the morn as it breathes. This is the utterance of an honorable messenger. Authorized by the Possessor of the Throne, fully supported. He shall be obeyed and trusted. Your friend (Rashad) is not crazy. He saw him at the high horizon. He is not holding back any news. It is not the talk of a rejected devil. Now then, where will you go? This is a message to all the people. For those who wish to go straight. Whatever you will is in accordance with the will of God, Lord of the universe. (81:15-29)

There is, of course, the danger of falling into idol worship of the messenger, as millions before us have done. This is something we must all watch out for!

Perhaps it will help to ask ourselves what idol worship is. God defines it in the Quran as believing that anyone or anything other than God can help us (see 22:12 and many other verses). Using that definition, someone might try to argue that we believe Rashad Khalifa explained points of the Quran for us with his footnotes and subtitles, and so he helped us.

Actually, God is the one who explains the Quran: *"Once we recite it, you shall follow such a Quran. Then it is we who will explain it." (75:18-19)*

How does God explain the Quran though? How does He communicate with us? He tells us: *"No human being can*

communicate with God except through inspiration, or from behind a barrier, or by sending a messenger through whom He reveals what He wills. He is the Most High, Most Wise." (42:51)

Did God send a messenger to explain things? If we accept Rashad Khalifa as a messenger, clearly He did: *"O people of the scripture, our messenger has come to you to explain things to you, after a period of time without messengers, lest you say, 'We did not receive any preacher or warner.' A preacher and warner has now come to you. God is Omnipotent." (5:19)*. We know from his footnote, that Rashad Khalifa was the messenger referred to in this verse.

This whole issue goes back to whether we accept God as the Doer of everything. If we accept this principle that God is doing everything, it follows easily that He explains the Quran through His messenger. It is not the messenger who is doing the explaining, it is God. The messenger is just the means of communication—he is just delivering the message from God to us.

The danger is in forgetting that the guidance is from God and attributing it to the messenger. The messenger does not really guide or explain or purify. Those things happen through him in accordance with God's will. God is the One who guides and explains and purifies.

The most important lesson Dr. Khalifa strove to teach us is that Quran alone should be our source of religious guidance. How does that fit into the present discussion? Aren't we talking about taking information that is in footnotes and appendices, and not in Quran? No, not actually. Anyone who comes to know the Quran as well as Dr. Khalifa did will come to the same understanding that he did because everything he told us is based in the Quran. He was not speaking on his own; remember 21:27.

God has made things easy for us by consolidating that knowledge for us and giving it to us through a messenger. Do we want to be like the people of Sheba who did not accept the comfort and security that God gave to them, saying:

"Our Lord, we do not care if You increase the distance of our journeys (without any stations)." They thus wronged their own souls. (34:19)

God has made this knowledge easily available to us. Will we say, thank you

God, but we do not want your help?

We know that Satan advocates idol worship and pushes it as hard as he can. He has duped millions upon millions into this trap. We must be very careful of it.

However that is not his only trap. God uses the Children of Israel as examples again and again in the Quran. Their problem was not idolizing their messengers, but minimizing and rejecting them. They followed their scholars and their own egos rather than what came through their messengers: *"We have taken a covenant from the Children of Israel, and we sent to them messengers. Whenever a messenger went to them with anything they disliked, some of them they rejected, and some they killed." (5:70)*

We must be equally careful of this trap. Satan has been able to dupe countless intelligent people into worshiping their messenger without recognizing that is what they are doing. He has also duped countless others into rejecting their messenger without their realizing they are doing so.

For the victims of either trap, the result is the same:

Why should God guide people who disbelieved after believing, and after witnessing that the messenger is truth, and after solid proofs have been given to them? God does not guide the wicked. These have incurred condemnation by God and the angels, and all the people. Eternally they abide therein; the retribution is never commuted for them, nor will they be reprieved. Exempted are those who repent thereafter, and reform. God is Forgiver, Most Merciful. (3:86-89)

Lisa Spray

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And we rendered the sky a guarded ceiling (21:32)

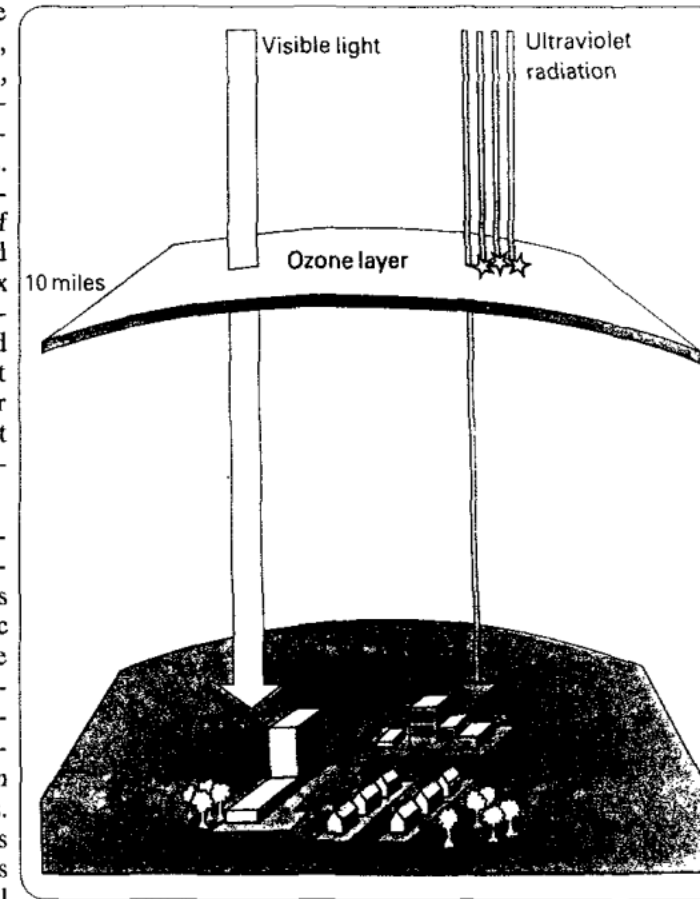
The human being has a tendency to take everything for granted. One example of this is the atmosphere that we have come to rely on to provide the air we breathe, among many other things. When we stop and reflect on the Quranic verse used in the title of this article, we realize how fortunate we are. We know now that, following God's precise design, the earth's atmosphere blocks out all the harmful short wavelength, high-frequency photons, shielding us from the potentially deadly effects of ultraviolet, X-rays, and gamma rays. Life on earth has evolved beneath a protective blanket of air. Without it, we would hardly last a day, for the influx of high-energy photons (primarily from the sun) would prove lethal. We find almost no high-energy photons in our local environment, and must go beyond the upper atmosphere to encounter these.

All of us should count ourselves fortunate to have an atmosphere that protects us from the electromagnetic waves that would otherwise destroy us. The most important part of this protection consists of the shield against ultraviolet waves, which the sun produces in great amounts. This atmospheric shield arises from one of the most famous and least understood of all molecules, ozone.

A molecule consists of two or more atoms held together in a single unit. The air that we breathe consists mainly of oxygen molecules (oxygen atoms linked together in pairs, hence the notation O₂), and nitrogen molecules (pairs of nitrogen atoms, or N₂). These molecules provide some protection against streams of ultraviolet radiation from the sun and (much less important) from other astronomical objects. Although some ultraviolet photons will disappear when they strike oxygen and nitrogen molecules, most would penetrate the atmosphere and strike the earth's surface, were it not for the ozone layer.

Ozone is a relatively rare type of molecule, formed when three oxygen atoms link together (O₃) rather than in pairs. Not much attention would be paid to ozone, were it not for the fact that ozone molecules prove remarkably efficient at absorbing ultraviolet photons. Because of this efficiency even a relatively tiny number of ozone molecules, high in the

Ozone layer is a region in the earth's stratosphere—between 7 and 30 miles above the surface. It absorbs much of the harmful ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun. Ultraviolet radiation is one of the causes of skin cancer. Other types of atoms and molecules in the atmosphere screen out all X-rays and gamma rays that reach to the atmosphere.



As if all this protection from harmful radiation was not enough, God in all His mercy and wisdom allows selected waves to pass through the atmosphere. These waves are not harmful to living organism but instead are of great value to the day-to-day life on earth. Examples are the radio waves, sometimes subdivided into "microwaves" (the same ones used in microwave ovens) and "ordinary" (longer wavelength) radio photons. Today's daily living would have been quite different without this phenomenon. The television, radio, radar and satellite links are just a few more examples of today progress in technologies gained through these wavelength photons. God with His grace taught the humans to harness all this.

He taught Adam all the names then presented them to the angels, saying, "Give me the names of these, if you are right." (2:31)

All this, and much more, have been established for the inhabitants of earth by God... for the purpose of distinguishing those among you who would do better... (67:2)

Ijaz Chaudry ENGLAND

Mark Your Calendar

God willing, the next year's International Conference of United Submitters will be held on June 24-26, in Vancouver, BC, Canada. Details will be given in the coming issues of the Submitters Perspective. Start making your plans to attend this important event and to meet submitters from all over the world.