

Masjid Tucson United Submitters International

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Conference *continued*

Amir Kia spoke next on the theme of patience. We must have patience with our families and with those around us. All we can do is resort to patience with those with different beliefs. We know that the heavens and the earth are about to shatter at the thought that God has begotten a son, but we must realize that the heavens and earth were created for those who truly believe so that they might have a second chance. The true believers are a very small minority. If we have patience with differing beliefs, shouldn't we have patience with one another? We are too small to allow little things to divide us. We must keep our level of energy up by supporting each other.

Gurnaib Singh entitled his talk, "God controls everything." There are two categories of control—one for man, another for everything else. Man should use his brain to verify the information he receives, although the majority simply accept what they're told. Gurnaib then gave data on the moon, as representative of the rest of the universe. Especially interesting was the fact that because of their positions in the solar system, the sun and the moon appear to be the same size, and during an eclipse the moon can totally block out the sun. Closer or farther away, this wouldn't work. "The sun and the moon are perfectly calculated." [55:5]

Emily Elkadi talked about cats, and passed on some fascinating facts. The purr sound which cats make is a mystery to man. "...you do not understand their glorification." [17:44] Cats were revered in ancient Egypt. But some cultures view them as representations of Satan, and they were frequently burned with witches. The physical makeup of the cat is interesting. They have excellent sense

of smell and acute hearing. Their ears have 19 muscles to move the ear all around. Their inner ear helps balance for climbing, jumping and landing upright after a fall. Their spines are very flexible for stretching and turning. Their eyes are 7 times more sensitive to light which allows them to see in very low light and a structure in the back of the eye reflects light back, which causes the appearance of the eye glowing in the dark.

Hajj Panel—questions: 1) Difficulty of getting a visa. The answer was to remember God is in control. If He wants you to go on Hajj, He will make things easy for you. 2) Animal sacrifice. You can buy a voucher which guarantees an animal sacrifice which will be canned or frozen and sent to the poor. Some feel strongly that you need to sacrifice your own animal. 22:36. It may come down to what feels right for the individual. 3) Prayer. Traditional Muslims tend to shorten and combine prayers, which end up with the correct number of *rak'as*. You may want to pray in your room as much as possible. 4) A pamphlet telling us what to do? The Saudi government has one which says you do not have to go to Medina.

Carl Skinner reported on a visit to Chris and Linda in England and a meeting there with Jehovah's witnesses. Carl was impressed with Chris' composure and his delivering the message in a simple manner—"a word to the wise is sufficient." God guides those who will to be guided 6:75-79. We only plant the seed; we can't make it grow. He reminded everyone to be humble, not arrogant, be able to say "I'm sorry." Keep calm in group discussions—Satan thrives on personal argument. He suggested striving for better dialogue within our communities, and more dialogue between communities. Four steps to problem solving: 1) identify

the problem; 2) suggest solutions; 3) work out the solutions; 4) have the right attitude.

Daud Watts talked about the mathematical structure to the Quran—that numbers are alive and submitting. He was very excited by the mathematical seminar preceding the conference, and he relayed a personal discovery involving sura 85, verses 21 and 22.

Edip Yuksel talked about critical thinking. He explained how critical thinking starts with asking questions and develops in a free environment. He said our understanding of the Quran is diverse because of our backgrounds, wishes, and agendas, making the communication sometimes difficult amongst ourselves. He suggested that the conference should be used to communicate and discuss our problems, and that we should not take things personally. He warned the community saying that we are not immune from idolizing the messenger, and also that this community will likely repeat history. He was also concerned about what he considered some people's playing with numbers, and suggested that we should develop a criterion to separate "glass" from "diamonds."

Mahmoud Abib's talk was perhaps the high point of the conference. Inviting audience participation, Mahmoud read wonderful verses from the Quran in praise of God, and asked questions from the Quran. Everyone enjoyed the "Zikr" (commemoration). He called this "Interactive Zikr." It was straightforward, concise, and uplifting.

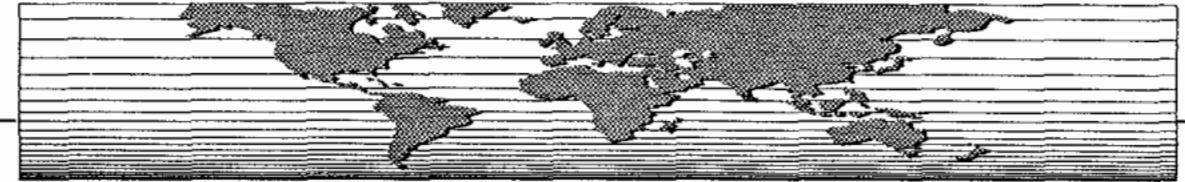
Reports on the conference and the presentations will be continued in the coming issues, God willing.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Submitters Perspective

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Learning to Communicate: Another of God's Gifts

Perhaps one of the least appreciated, and most taken for granted gifts which God, Most Gracious, has provided us with is the gift of language. Until very recently there was almost unanimous agreement among specialists in the field that children's ability to learn to communicate was just a simple learning process and that there was nothing mysterious, innate or extraordinary about it. It was believed that young children learn to speak their mother tongue the same way, for example, that they learn to tie their shoelaces: by observing, imitating, practicing, being corrected and adjusting their performance to match adult performance.

Beginning in 1953, Noam Chomsky (MIT) and others did extensive studies in the area of children's language acquisition. These studies revealed a number of aspects of the language learning process in children that simply could not be explained by the prevailing theory that acquisition of language was just another routine learning process. Here are some of those puzzles that called into question the tradition "learning by imitation" view of language development:

1. All children learn the basic structure and vocabulary of their mother tongue in a fairly brief period of time. Scientists agree that this is a tremendous task to achieve, and that in accomplishing it, the child masters a complex, rule governed system. Yet studies also show that chil-

dren with an IQ as low as 50 are able to master this complex task, albeit more slowly than children with normal (above 70) IQ levels. If language acquisition were really a normal learning process, the child would certainly need a much higher IQ and surely those who do not have it would be unable to learn their mother tongue. This of course, does not happen and every child, except in special cases of mental illness, quickly learns to speak his or her mother tongue, seemingly effortlessly.

2. The second interesting fact about language acquisition is that the system of knowledge that children come to possess as adult speakers is "underspecified" in the input on which the learning takes place. This is sometimes called the 'logical problem' of child language acquisition. How do we come to know so much based on such impoverished input? For example, children come to learn not only what is a possible sentence in their language but also what is not. They are not provided with examples of what they can't say and yet the system of knowledge that they develop includes such knowledge.

3. Another fact that any theory of language acquisition must contend with is that the process proceeds largely without overt correction of ungrammaticality on the part of adult caregivers. Although, adults like to think that they "teach" their children language, the fact of the matter is that children are rarely corrected for ungrammatical utterances. Adult attention is instead focused on the truth value

of what is said or possibly word-choice. Even when overt grammatical correction does occur, it is more often than not ignored by children who continue to say it their way until their own mental grammar is modified to yield the adult-like utterance. The acquisition process seems to proceed along the lines of: hypothesis, test hypothesis, change hypothesis. Of course this process is not one that the child is consciously aware of or in control of.

4. Children learn language under greatly varying circumstances and yet with roughly the same result. In some cultures children are never addressed by adults, in some cultures they interact verbally with adults on a regular basis. The point is that despite these cultural differences in terms of children's verbal interaction, the child will learn the language of the community into which he or she is born.

5. First language acquisition takes place between the ages of 2-5 and the ability seems to change in late childhood. If it indeed were a normal learning process we should be able to learn a new language as adults almost as easily as when we were children and once again this is simply not the case. This suggests that there is a critical period for the development of human communication, just as there is for other genetically determined systems of knowledge in the animal kingdom.

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