

WORK

AS ABILITY AND WILL

By

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IN THE NAME OF ALLAH, MOST
GRACIOUS, MOST MERCIFUL

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Praise be to God. May peace be to those who He has favored.

"Our Lord! Accept this service from us: for You are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing" (the Qur'an, 2:127)

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PREFACE

I hesitated long before having this book published, and I procrastinated. Not that the topic raised here is not worth our while, but it was my feeling that what I have to put in the hands of readers was not up to the importance of the issue in hand. Several of the issues I was tackling were not mature enough. But then, as a certain writer said, "If I should wait until the book is quite satisfactory, it would not see light at all." I may say, at the same time, that some aspects of this research were not too bad: they were fairly clear. So, I did take heart and sent the book for publication. I hope the reader sees in the book both its merits and shortcomings.

We have in our part of the world the habit of relying on our subjective impressions in assessing works, and very little on objective criteria. Some will say for instance that this research puts means ahead of causes. But it is not so, for I did not choose to give priority to one aspect, means or ends: it is that to serve the ends, you will need to take care of the means. Arranging things as they should be arranged does the job rightly.

I need also to urge the reader, if he/she finds the book long-winded to take the time to discuss some of the points with people, and see how far they can comprehend and how well they can put the abstract idea to application - for the reader will discover how immature our culture is, even if you speak of those who are supposed to occupy the first line. It may be concluded after such an experiment that so many works of this type must come out and reach our readers before we may be satisfied that they have risen to the level hoped for in this book.

On the other hand, some readers will think that yes, the book does reveal some vitality and value, but it does not go far enough - for instance, in relation to the evidence it presents. Yes, that might be so, but at least it does go some way in presenting the problem and showing the way ahead, and it does support the points presented, at least partially.

Those who do feel the importance of these issues must add much effort, for effort must be expended in both directions, vertically and horizontally: I mean to develop the concept and shed more light on it, and to publicize the concept as widely as possible. Both efforts will help in mobilizing the youth's talents and abilities to perceiving the way out of this wilderness.

It would be a good thing if some find shortcomings or work to match applications and principles; some may discover that the principles presented have not met the right limitations. Such is the work of an author, always amenable to improving upon. It is a mistake to stop that snow ball from keeping rolling.

It must be mentioned here that the work for Islam must keep developing in view of God's laws in the real world - at least it must keep coming closer to those laws rather than acting in disregard of them.

One incident in connection with this is to say that working on the basis of duties will lead to results different from working on the basis of rights. The Messenger, peace be upon him, teaches the Muslim to do what is due on him/her and to pray God for what is their right to obtain. We find in *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sahih Muslim* that the Prophet said: "You will suffer, after I have passed, discrimination, and a way of rule that you find outrageous." "So, what is your command," some of his Companions said, "to those who survive until that time?" "You fulfil that which you are obliged to do," he replied, "and pray God for that which is your right to have."

Changing the perspective will have its impact on people's behavior - I mean whether they focus on their

duties, or neglect that and focus on their rights. Another example is when we focus on the necessity of bringing reform to politicians, without giving attention to bringing reform to society: for this is no more than an application of the principle of which comes first: our duties or our rights.

Another example of reversing a law is people's craving the position of ruler through violent ways. Indeed, many a law have Muslims reversed, despite their good intentions. The straightforward way, deep and sure, to realizing change, the way of educating the public, is almost outside our attention - despite its simplicity and assured outcome.

It may be no wonder with the above considerations that alternative ways are very scarcely put forward at all, neither by leftists nor by rightists: for both camps, with all the sub-groups between them, do not see a way except through insisting on pleading for their rights: a unanimous attitude. And all the groups focus on devising ways to set up the state, without caring for the structure of society; and all believe in violence and compulsion, not persuasion and scientific ways: it is as if there is a common disease that directs all in the way that will lead nowhere.

The common trend in the Muslim world is to stress certain things that seem to go together: pleading for rights with little attention to duties, attaching all the importance to

the state, and choosing force as the means to effecting change. Duties, reforming society, and expanding knowledge are neglected or unthought of. There is something like a unanimous acceptance of the predominant approach, as if it were the most natural way of tackling the Muslim dilemma. The dissenters, and I am one of these few, only speak differently in whispers and in a diffident tone.

So, let this book be an attempt to shed some light on this issue, in the hope that this and similar attempts would rally more supporters. I am aware, at the same time, that when you choose the untrodden paths, you find it much harder to express yourself: it is simply that not enough theoretical and practical research has accumulated to serve your purpose.

We badly need to see a number of well-equipped persons, especially of a practical trend of mind, who are not much lured by methods which seem at first sight as feasible. You will notice how the Qur'an stresses the need for patience when we need to get to the depth of things. Such a big challenge it is when everybody are going in a certain direction, and one chooses a different direction: the most obvious example is when everybody thought it was the sun that orbited the earth, and then it was discovered that it was the earth which orbited the sun. There is in this a telling example of holding most tightly to a wrong conclusion, and

the need to examine and reexamine - and we need to have the courage to reexamine especially when we find that the consequences supposed to emerge do not emerge.

So, let me go ahead to the book, and I pray to God that it is a fruitful effort.

Jawdat Said

27 Ramadan, 1399 A.H.

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CHAPTER ONE

TERMINOLOGY FOR THE PRESENT RESEARCH

The idea of this research is that no successful work may be achieved without sincerity and correctness. When you do not want something to be done, and are not sincere in wanting it to be done, you do not do it; and what you do not know how to accomplish you do not endeavor to do, and if you do try in a way other than the way it needs to be done, you do not accomplish its doing. Let me drive this home through an example, hoping to clarify the meaning of 'sincerity' and 'correctness', (or 'ability' and 'will' of the title): once the basic concept is clear we can appreciate the terminology that discusses the same concept or similar concepts.

We may think of the mother and her sick child. Her wish to see her child cured is evidently a 'sincere' wish -- this is her 'purpose'. We have no doubt that the mother's love of her

child and her wish to see him/her cured is a pure wish: she is for sure not trying to deceive or mislead anybody by having this wish fulfilled: it is pure and perfect sincerity, all focused on seeing her child cured. But when we now think of her knowledge of what brings good health to her child, what exactly may cure him/her, we find the mothers vary widely here. This is definitely different from the mother's sincerity: for the healing of the child some specialized knowledge is required. And this latter specialized knowledge we may call 'correctness', or the 'ability' of the title.

So, let us say that we have an elementary idea of the two concepts to set out towards our research. To be sure we have the starting point, let us put it succinctly:

1. Will (sincerity), is the wish to see something accomplished;
2. Ability (correctness) is to know how to accomplish that which we wish to be realized.

We may support this differentiation by quoting al-Fudail bin 'Iyad, in his comment on the Verse of the Qur'an, "that He may try which of you is best in deed;" (67:2) he describe the work mentioned in the Verse as, "being sincere and correct." Someone asked him, "Can you elaborate on 'sincere' and 'correct'?" "When work is only done for a sincere purpose, it will not be accepted: it must be both

sincere and correct. Sincere means it is done for the sake of God, and correct means it is done according to the Prophet's *sunnah*.¹ This statement of al-Fudail's is referred to by Ibn Taimiyah in more than ten locations of his *al-Fatawa*; and also in his *Kitab al-Nubuwwat*, p. 87; Cairo editions, 1346 A.H.

So, this book is designed to analyze the meaning of 'sincerity' (will) and 'correctness' (ability).

Here is a useful list of several pairs in each of which the first item designates 'will':

1. Sincerity and correctness;
2. "You do we worship, and Your aid do we seek;" (the Qur'an, 1:5);
3. "There is no god but Allah; Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah."
4. Ends and means.
5. Why and how?
6. Justified stimuli and executive ways.
7. The trusted and the professional.
8. The upright and the reliable.
9. Trustworthiness and robustness.
10. The guarding and the knowing.

¹ Ibn Taimiyah, *Kitab al-Ubudiyyah*, p. 32.

11. The masses and the elite;
12. The unconscious and the conscious;
13. Passion and thought;
14. Ethics and science;
15. The heart and the intellect.

Let us elaborate on each of the above pairs:

1. Sincerity (purpose) and correctness (ability)

Ibn Taimiyah wrote in answer to a question about 'considering', 'resolution' and 'intention': "Firm intention is that which exists when acting is bound to take place if one has the ability: for once firm intention exists and adequate ability is there, the work is bound to take place. If the intention exists and so does the adequate ability, while the act does not take place, we may conclude that the intention is not firm: for people do have degrees of intention; and their intention can vary from the quite weak to the most positive.

"When someone intends to do something at a certain time in the future, and does nothing at once, that intention is not enough for the action to take place -- intention must exist at the moment action is due, and must be firm at that moment. Let us add that, from the Islamic perspective, the

firm intention, with such action as one is capable of, is taken to be equal to perfect performance.

"It may be noticed that the Almighty promises, in the Qur'an, reward or punishment, on the basis of just intention, as in, "If any do wish for the transitory things of this world ..." (17:18); and, "To any that desires the tilth of the Hereafter, We give increase in his tilth; and to any that desires the tilth of this world, We grant somewhat thereof, but he has no share or lot in the Hereafter;" (42:20).

"When no action takes place, then the person concerned is merely 'considering' doing that action; for a person may have an inclination, a tendency to do something - which is not the same as the firm intention." (Ibid, p. 747). And he adds elsewhere that an inclination does not entail punishment, if it stops at that. (Ibid, p. 765)

As you see, though Ibn Taimiyah stated about seven centuries back this firm law concerning what causes an act to take place, it is not at all settled in the minds of some modern Muslims. You find the following statement accepted by many: "Sound design does not guarantee attaining the target;" or: "What people take to be causes may lead to their results and may not; the conditions that people take to be necessary may be followed by their outcome and may not - this is because causes and conditions are not what

establishes results. It is the Free Will [of the Lord] that establishes both the causes and conditions as the results and outcome."

It should be mentioned here that when Ibn Taimiyah in the above quotations discusses work and recompense, he is discussing recompense on the Last Day, not in this world, not the social consequences of work. He for instance quotes the following Verses of the Qur'an: "There is no blame on those who are infirm, or ill, or who find no resources to spend (on the Cause), if they are sincere in duty to Allah and His Messenger: no ground of complaint can there be against such as right: and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. Nor is there blame on those who came to you to be provided with mounts, and you said, 'I cannot find any mounts for you,' they turned back, their eyes streaming with tears of grief that they had no resources wherewith to provide the expenses;" (9:91-92).

While what concerns us in this book is attaining results in this world. To perform what you can today enables you to do tomorrow what is not possible to do today; but those who fail to do what they can today, will be still unable to do tomorrow's work.

This is not to take Ibn Taimiyah's statements lightly: for he fully conceives that to have firm will and adequate

ability will necessarily lead to the accomplishment of a task. His proposition has been the basis for us at our age to make our conclusions.

As I see it, what is lacking for Muslims to win success is not on the side of intention, but on the side of ability. Having said this, it must be added that when abilities fail, they leave their impact on the will. I chose the terms of the title to be as close as possible to the term used in the Islamic texts. Here are some examples from the Qur'an: "the wealthy according to his means, and the poor according to his means;" (2:236) "If they had intended to come out;" (9:46) "But the sincere and devoted Servants of Allah;" (37:40) "except any who is permitted by Allah, Most Gracious, and he will say what is right;" (78:38) and "Truly the best of men for you to employ is the man who is strong and trusty;" (28:26).

Malek Bennabi uses these two terms in the context of a mathematical equation or law, while discussing the dynamics of a society; he says:

"A society's sincerity and ability provide the function of a civilization's objectivity and efficiency - that is to say the totality of the moral and material factors required for an individual's progress becomes objective, when he/she are

translated into politics and legislation: they directly represent the world of ideas in the concerned society at the social and moral levels."².

**2. "You do we worship, and Your aid do we seek;"
(1:5)**

Another pair that is akin to the pair 'will, or sincerity' and 'ability, or correctness', are: worship: worshipping God with a sincere heart, as we find the Verse of the Qur'an: "And they have been commanded no more than this: to worship Allah, offering Him sincere devotion, being true in faith;" (98:5); and the other item is 'seeking aid from Him': this happens through acting in harmony with what God has created in the universe: the *sunan*, or laws, and means. True religion is to worship none but God, and to worship Him only by observing what He willed. Seeking aid from God is that a servant of God learns the *sunan*, or laws, and, to employ them for executing God's commands.

As Ibn Taimiyah explains: "No work of a mortal will go through without God's support ... Hence, we are

² Malek Bennabi, *The Problem of Ideas in the Muslim World*, p. 151

commanded to pray: "You do we worship, and Your aid do we seek;" (1:5)³

Ibn Kathir has a fine comment why the word '*na'budu*, i.e. You do we worship' in the first Sura of the Qur'an occurs before '*nasta'in*', i.e. seek help from: "It is put first for 'worship' is the objective, and praying for support is the means to that."

In connection with worship and praying for support, we may divide people into four categories:

1. Those who both worship and pray for support: these are the followers of the straight path;
2. Those who neither worship nor pray for support: these are no better than cattle;
3. Those who worship without praying for support: these neglect the causes on the assumption that they rely on God;
4. And those who seek support but do not worship God.

It may be said of Muslims that at present they on the whole worship God without trying to exploit His laws: the mean He created for the benefit of humans. In contrast, the Western world represents at present the category of those who benefit from the means and laws that God created, enjoying His bounty, without worshipping and thanking

³ *Al-Fatawa*, Vol. 8, P. 76.

Him - Indeed, not many people combine both benefiting from the means and laws and worshipping God, for, as the Qur'an puts it, "But few of My servants are grateful;" (34:13).

We find in *Sahih Muslim* a Tradition of the Prophet's that describes Sura No. 1 (*al-Fatihah*) like this: "The Almighty says: "I have divided prayer in two halves, one belonging to Me and one belonging to My servant, and what My servant prays for will be realized. When he says: "Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds," God says: "Here is My servant praising Me;" when he says: "Most Gracious, Most Merciful, " God says: "Here is My servant sanctifying Me;" when he says: "Master of the Day of Judgment," God says: "Here is My servant glorifying Me;" when he says: "You do we worship, and Your aid do we seek," God says: "This belongs to both Me and My servant; and My servant's prayer will be answered;" when he says: "Show us the straight way," God says: "This belongs to My servant, and his prayer will be answered." (Reported by Muslim in the Chapter on Prayer.)

At the level of nations and peoples, this is clear enough: some employ the means and laws set down by God, but fail to worship Him, and some do the opposite. So, the pious Muslim had better learn how to hold to his/her

worship in addition to putting to use the means and laws set down by God: This will ensure their having the means of establishing God's commands.

3. There is no god but Allah; Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah

It has been mentioned that 'sincerity' is acting for the sake of God, no one else; and correctness is to act in accordance with the teaching of the Messenger, peace be upon him. This statement is referred briefly as 'The Testimony, i.e. There is no god but Allah; Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.' It sums up both objective and means: and sums up the whole of Islam.

A Verse of the Qur'an affirms this: "Say: 'If you do love Allah, follow me: Allah will love you and forgive you your sins;" (3:31).

But this issue bears some discussion: it is generally granted that the only accepted way of worshipping God is by observing and acting upon what He has sent down. But it is not equally accepted when we talk about putting to use God's laws in the universe; for the latter remains vague. What we find in the texts of Islam is that we are commanded to go to the world itself to learn the ways of exploiting its

laws: not to seek such exploitation in the Scripture; and that is so when you are dealing with the physical existence or the social existence. We find this in the Qur'an: "Soon will We show them Our Signs in the regions of the world, and in their own souls, until it becomes manifest to them that this is the Truth;" (41:53)

Let us take for instance our food and drink. It is God Who decides what is permitted and what is prohibited; and the Muslim jurists have discussed this at length. But when it comes to the ways of obtaining our food and drink, and the ways of tapping what the earth can provide, and have the flora and fauna give their produce - all this belongs to that part of enterprise about which the Messenger, peace be upon him, said (as in *Sahih Muslim*, the Chapter on Embellishments), that we are responsible to refer to human experience for things pertaining to our life.

If we consider this issue from the perspective of its place in religion, we find that yes, it does come under what is enjoined by God. But if the question is: Is it something discussed and detailed in God's Book, then no, of course not: it is not in the Qur'an that we find its sources. There is this difference between *shariah* matters which are fully detailed in the Qur'an and *Sunnah*, and things which God directs us to learn through moving about in the world, and examine the

Signs of God in the world and human life. It is unfortunate that some well-intended Muslims take it that to turn to God's Signs in the world and human life is a kind of turning our back to God's Glorious Scripture. We may quote Ibn Taimiyah about that; when he says:

"God willed that He provides His testimony to His servants in two ways, one addressing hearing, and one addressing sight. Those inclined to learn through hearing will listen to God's revealed Verses, and those inclined to learn through visible Signs will observe God's Signs created by Him and placed in the world - and this will lead them to be sure of the truth revealed to the prophets: this is what we are told in a Verse of the Qur'an: "Soon will We show them Our Signs in the regions of the world, and in their own souls, until it becomes manifest to them that this is the Truth;" (41:53)⁴

This is also true of the construction of human communities: for no human community may survive without realizing the necessary laws, or the *sunan* in Qur'anic terminology. And the way to grasping those laws is to move around in the earth and examine the history of other peoples and nations.

⁴ Ibn Taimiyah, *al-Fatawa*, Vol. 14, p. 187 and 189

We need to say a word about the similarity between the establishing and maintaining of societies and the cultivation of crops: communities do not live but according to laws, and crops do not grow but according to laws. However, that does not mean that the laws for one phenomenon are the same as the laws for another phenomenon. We find in the Prophet's, peace be upon him, Traditions one (reported by al-Bukhari) in which he compares the Guidance revealed to him to rain that falls on various tracts of land: some are fertile enough to absorb the rain, and produce grass and plants; some are solid enough to act as reservoirs of water; but some will neither absorb the water to turn it into life-giving plants, nor will they preserve the water for someone to use it. So, the Prophet concludes that some persons are impervious to the Guidance revealed by God to His Prophet, nor would they at least preserve it for the use of more receptive minds.

As for caring for plants, we need to deal with them according to natural laws set down by God; and to behave in accordance with God's will: we need to observe His religious laws and instructions. For the former set of laws we need to refer to the world, and for the second set of laws, we need to refer to the texts revealed by God, to the Scripture and the Prophet's Traditions. There is plenty in the

Qur'an to enlighten us where to find the guidance in both cases: that for instructions on religious matters we refer to the revealed text, and for successful life we refer to the experiences of peoples, past and present, by examining tangible facts and exploring history. Both set of laws are required to examine and observe, but the reader may have noticed that it is this second set of laws and facts that we are concerned with in the present book. We need to be conscious in any situation what exactly is lacking, what kind of law - is it a natural law, a law related to successful life in the world, or is it a law that a believer needs to observe for his/her salvation on the Last Day?

Ibn Taimiyah is again relevant here, when he says: "Not a story told us in the Qur'an but is told so that we learn from it something that will benefit us and bring us some gain - that will be when we find the affinity between what occurs later to what occurred before; that is when we discover that common element in both so that what applied to the previous case may apply to that later one."

4. Ends and Means

We have another pair: ends and the means, which is more or less synonymous with sincerity (will) and

correctness (ability) -- not exactly synonymous, however, for sincerity is a condition of the human who is sincere, while 'end' is that which the human endeavors to attain; the end may be thought of as the ideal towards which sincerity is directed.

As for 'means', it is the proper use of available sources, and they include both objects and ideas, or what the world may provide and what humans may provide; or we may think of it as the material sources and intellectual sources.

Ibn al-Muqaffa' has some useful reflection on this; he says (in his Preface to *Al-Adab al-Saghir*): "Indeed, every creature has some needs, and for every need there is some destination; to reach any destination, there is a right way. As for humans, their destination and their need are: good life in this world, and good life in the Hereafter. For achieving both, one needs to have a sound mind. The evidence of a sound mind is showing vision when choosing things ... Let a person of wisdom be aware that people are equal in their liking that which is right for them, and their dislike of what is harmful - in this the fools and the bright are equal. But beyond this they have diverse traits. One point on which the difference is manifest is that a wise person reflects on that which is harmful to him/her and that which is agreeable to him/her, and will notice that which is most worthy of

securing - when it is pleasurable, or averting - when it is unpleasant: it is that which is more enduring, that which is more permanent."

It is right to give some attention here to the principle of "pragmatism": Some rashly condemn it, unconditionally. This is usual when some condemn a whole set of things, without paying attention to exceptional cases: for when we consider pragmatism we find the principle to be right, and the exceptions to be wrong: I mean that it is right to condemn pragmatism when a profit is transitory and short-lived; but pragmatism is right and sound when it applies to what is good in the long term, what is enduring - the Qur'an does indeed alert us to that when the Lord condemns those who are fond of immediate benefits and neglect deferred profits: "Nay, you men! But you love the fleeting life, and leave alone what will come later; " (75:20-21).

Another mistake that some people commit in this connection is that they take pragmatism or benefits to be synonymous with somebody's selfish pursuit of benefits for himself/herself. But indeed, an individual's benefit, in the long turn, is what lasts longer and is beneficial for the community on a permanent basis: to confine benefit to one individual is a mistake.

5. Why and how?

When you ask 'why?' you are asking about will or purpose, and when you ask 'how', you are asking about ability.

Malek Bennabi has something interesting to say concerning this point. He writes: "History may be viewed as a certain aspect of civilization that is in the process of being realized. It represents the common effort of things, people, and ideas that are available at that particular moment, at exactly the time the work is being done. To justify this prejudice, we need to bring it within comprehension, and that may be done through a process of classification and analysis:

"We need first to analyze history down to its constituent elements. One individual's effort may be regarded at a certain level as one particle of history. To illustrate with the simplest example, we may think of the gardener with the sheaves in his hands, or the soldier with the rifle at his shoulder in battle-field: both are, in the normal conditions, elements in formulating history. The essential thing to note is that any of the enterprises of people like the above, or any others, do constitute elements in the construction of the agent - and in all cases we have the two factors of the human

and his/her tools. More broadly, we may say that, in real terms, no enterprise is translated into accomplishment except within two conditions: How something is done? And why?

"This signifies that a human never engages in action without stimulus and reason, for if he/she fails to see how the task is to be performed it would be an impossible task, or it would be quite meaningless if he/she fails to realize why it is done.

"It would be in vain to define human work in isolation of the practical ways that govern it, or of the stimuli on which it is based."⁵ .

6. The justified stimuli (will) and execution ways (ability):

We refer again to Malek Bennabi. He says: "In the common effort of society the world of things overlaps with both the world of persons and the world of thoughts. It would go without saying that such effort, when quite primitive, must necessarily subsume stimuli on the one hand, and the ways of execution on the other; i.e. stimuli of a moral nature, and technical concepts. In actual terms, one side predominates, and, with reference to such

predominance - which may be discerned in the society's behavior and thinking - one society is distinguished from another.

"A developing society does not merely suffer from the inadequacy of material resources, or things, but also from the scarcity of thoughts. This may especially be noticed in the way it manipulates, most inefficiently, the available material resources - while it fails to find any alternative materials. At the same time, and more especially, it is distinguished with its failure to analyze its problems - it indeed seems to have no desire at all to study those problems.

"From the above abstract discussion we may go on to notice, as the economists who specialize in the third world say, that land is the safe and reliable starting point, for a society to move on from a primary stage to a secondary one, in the way for instance China has been moving since 1951.

"But we find, in this connection, that in the most fertile lands in the world - those of Indonesia and Iraq - the two countries have not been able to start; which is the result of the deep-seated weakness of thought that appears in the political and economic spheres, a paralyzing inertia that is, from a sociological perspective, one of the social and

⁵ Malek Bennabi, *Algerian Horizons*, pp. 161-163

psychological characteristics of the Muslim world at the present time. A sociologist, an economist, or a historian may wish to take up this condition and subject it to analysis each from their own perspective."⁶

7. The trustworthy and the efficient

When you wish to employ somebody, for any job, you consider two things:

1. Will he/she prove to be honest and straightforward in doing the job, without trying to cheat or steal?
2. Is he/she skillful enough in the job we are entrusting him/her with?

I borrow these two terms from Ibn Khaldun. He has the following to say about this:

"A person we hire may be any of four alternatives:

He may be both proficient in the job he is employed to do, and trustworthy in what we entrust to him; he may be neither proficient nor trustworthy; he might be good on one score, not on the other.

"It is not easy to employ the first type: for he is so endowed that he is not available for average people - only

⁶ Malek Bennabi, *The Problem of Thoughts in the Muslim World*, pp. 39-41

the most affluent people can afford to employ him, and they all compete to hire his services.

The second should not be hired by any wise person: he may let you down in either his lack of skill, or in wasting your money in his dishonesty. Whatever he does, he will prove a liability for the employer.

And so we find both the first type and the second either not available for employment, or is not to be considered for the job.

In practical terms, one will have to hire one of the other two types: the trustworthy but inefficient, or the efficient but untrustworthy; and for each there are pros and cons. You will find some people giving weight to one trait, and some giving weight to the other. I would say that the efficient worker should be given priority: one is sure of his ability to do a nice job, and as for his dishonesty, one can take some measures of precaution. To employ an honest person who has no skill is most likely a wrong decision, for the loss involved will not be counterbalanced by his positive trait."⁷

8. The 'upright' and 'exact'

We come across this pair of terms in the science of *hadith*, i.e. the Prophet's Traditions. *Hadith* experts define an authentic *hadith* as: "A *hadith* that is reported by an unbroken line of reporters, each reporter being upright and exact, right up to the end of the line of reporters; and the same *hadith* must not be discordant with more authentic versions, nor characterized with any major failure."⁸ For the reporter of a *hadith* to be accepted, he/she must be 'upright', i.e. to be a sincere believer in God; and he/she must be 'exact', i.e. he is clear-minded, so that he/she does not get things confused or messed up, for he/she has a sound memory.

The reporting of *hadiths* is treated in the same way of testimony before a court, and therefore the two conditions of uprightness and exactness must be met. For support, they cite the Verse of the Qur'an: "and take for witness two persons from among you;" (65:2). That about uprightness; as for exactness, we have the words of the Lord: "so that if one of them errs, the other can remind her;" (2:282).

Let me add here that the Muslim *Ummah* is entrusted with giving testimony, as we find in the Qur'an, "that you might be witnesses over the nations;" (2:143).

⁷ *Muqaddimah of Ibn Khaldun*, Kitab al-Tahrir. Cairo, 1966. P. 330

⁸ *Mukhtasar 'Ilm al-Hadith*, of Ibn Kathir. Cairo, 1936

From which we may go on to say that the Muslims, as an *ummah*, must be characterized with both conditions of a witness: They must be honest before God, and before truth, and they must be able to recognize what is right, what is fair and just.

To give testimony implies that one keeps in track of as many affairs and events as possible, both in terms of time and place: this to ensure that they are 'present' in the world, that they base their testimony on first-hand knowledge. It requires the Muslims as an *ummah* to have a record of human affairs and events, in various locations and over all history; they must keep summing up events and classifying them, so that their testimony is right and proper: this is of course not any individual's duty in particular, but a collective duty.

From the first day of the creation of man, he was entrusted with this mission. The responsibility is quite heavy - but then, have not the angels been commanded to prostrate themselves before the human: this honoring cannot be without its heavy responsibility. Humans must be able to prove that they are qualified to realize justice and suppress the spilling of blood.

9. Trustworthiness and Strength

We find in the Qur'an about Prophet Moses: "Truly the best of men for you to employ is a man who is strong and trusty;" (28:26); and (in a different context): "Indeed I am strong enough for the purpose, and may be trusted;" (27:39).

The pair 'strength' and 'trustworthiness' correspond to 'correctness' and 'sincerity'. As for 'strength', it can refer to physical strength or strength of comprehension, or both. In the first of the two Verses above, the context seems to indicate physical strength; while in the second Verse, it seems that the strength of knowledge is more salient, since in the Verse next to it we have: "Said one who had knowledge of the Book .." But we have in a third location of the Qur'an 'strength' including both senses - I mean: "Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power;" (8:60).

Now, while physical strength is certainly vital, it occupies a second place to strength of knowledge and comprehension. It seems that this is meant when the Lord puts knowledge before the body in the following Verse: "and has gifted him abundantly, with knowledge and bodily prowess;" (2:247). Both forms of strength are meant also in another Verse: "possessors of power and vision;" (38:45) where 'vision' means 'comprehension and far sightedness'.

It may be noted here that though 'ability' and 'will, or purpose' go parallel to each other, they seem to intersect in some situations: this is because sincerity emanates in some sense from the power of comprehension. At the same time, the power of comprehension may be viewed in one sense as a result and in one sense as a cause. You need sincerity to attain ability, and you need ability to secure sincerity. But let us not waste time by inquiring which takes precedence: we need both for a successful work, for both success in this life and in the Hereafter.

10. The 'guarding' and 'knowing':

We find in Sura 12 of the Qur'an: "Joseph said: 'Set me over the store-houses of the land: I will indeed guard them, as one who knows;' (12:55).

Having offered to engage in administration, Yusuf, or Joseph, asserts that he is equipped for it, by having the two traits of guarding and knowing - is not that what you need for one who will be over the treasures of the land? For guarding, honesty and sincerity is implied; and knowing what is needed to be known implies correctness of judgment - and this distinguished Prophet proved to be true to his assertion.

11. The 'base' and the 'apex'

The 'base' of a society is the public, the masses, its main body; the 'apex' is the elite, the intellectual leadership, the group equipped to predict and follow the eventuality, the outcome, of events: it is the group entrusted with putting the society on the right track, especially at times of crises, and when catastrophes hit.

It is in the base that we may find all the astonishing potentials and talents - that will happen only if the base, or the masses, receive the right guidance.

The apex, or leadership, on the other hand, is the source of understanding and competence, the group responsible for the best use of abilities and potentials. You may think of it as the mind in relation to the body.

There is, however, much vagueness and confusion in the Muslim world in specifying who are the leadership of a nation or *Ummah*: they take the political elite to be the leadership. They do not seem to realize that only the intellectual leadership can provide guidance to the *Ummah*, and can put a compass in its hands, to find its way in the mazes of life. And these are hardly to be found among the political regimes.

It is enlightening, and amusing, what Malek Bennabi said under the title of 'The Child and Ideas'; he wrote: "In a society which is preoccupied with 'things', an individual's inclinations follow the same trend - it happened that I asked a child what they offered them in school - meaning of course what kind of education. But the child replied, quite candidly: 'They give us biscuits!' For this child, nothing offered and is worth mentioning but a tangible thing like biscuits."⁹

What the child is here thinking of in connection with what may be offered at school emanates from the same mind-set as that of taking the only leadership worth mentioning to be the political one. It is very unlikely in such an atmosphere to expect an appropriate relationship between 'sincerity' and 'correctness' or between the base and the leadership. When minds are preoccupied with objects, then the individuals will not know how to deal with ideas: they will spontaneously measure ideas with reference to things (biscuits at one level, politics at another). And when thinking is not sound, there cannot be a satisfactory performance of duty on the part of the public. Both the purveyors of Islamic enlightenment and its receivers will show similar ineptness - the result is incalculable loss; and this is what Malek Bennabi goes on to describe: "The human

⁹ *The Problem of Thoughts in the Muslim World*, p. 36

will have here to pay for his/her affiliation to the society:
both nature and the society itself will charge the individual:
the more backward the society, the higher the fine the
individual must endure;" (p. 36).

12. The Conscious Vs. the Unconscious

The conscious and the unconscious may be taken, in one sense, to correspond to sincerity and correctness. The 'unconscious' is the attraction or aversion that one may experience in their mind, without being able to trace such emotion to its source. The 'conscious' on the other hand is something that one is aware of.

To grasp the unconscious is harder than the conscious, especially in connection with the activity of the soul, or with accepting or evading responsibility. To just realize the reality of the unconscious is hard enough, but it is harder to analyze it. Again, we find Ibn Taimiyah to have something penetrating about the unconscious. Discussing it as a phenomenon, he says: "A human may experience various bits of knowledge, may have many purposes, and may have many traits that he/she is unaware of - there is a definite difference between having a trait or quality within the soul and the person's being aware of it: the existence of

something a human is vested with is one thing and being conscious of it is another;"¹⁰.

He elaborates long on this, and has quite a profound understanding of the subconscious and unconscious as a phenomenon; and he refers for comparison to the sense of vision to shed more light on that phenomenon. He does not tackle, as far as I know, this issue from the perspective of the human's responsibility, nor how it comes to develop in the human, nor its significance at the social level. He confines his analysis to this as a phenomenon.

For my part, I would like to point out that no unconscious concept or behavior but was at the conscious level at one time. It transfers from the conscious to the unconscious as a result of the person's forgetfulness or through inspiration: the same as happens in hypnotism. We may add that it is more associated with the stage of childhood. One more thing to note is that what is at the conscious level in somebody transfers to another in whom it settles at the level of the unconscious.

It is helpful in this connection to ponder over the following Verses of the Qur'an: "When it is said to them: 'Do not make mischief on the earth,' they say: 'Why, we only

¹⁰ *Al-Fatawa*, Vol. 16, p. 343

want to make peace!' Of a surety, they are the ones who make mischief, but they do not realize it;" (2:11-12).

And when we discuss changing what is in the soul, this involves both the conscious and the unconscious levels. As Ibn Taimiyah had noticed, the human may or may not be able to bring out what is in his/her subconscious; likewise, for another to uncover that may again be possible or not possible: certain social conditions must be met before even a professional can bring out what is concealed at the level of the subconscious or unconscious. As for the community itself, it certainly can accomplish that task, the task of probing the hidden concepts and values in the human soul, if it is coached on how to do that. Without the necessary skill, it will not be able to do it. Change will happen, at any rate, with or without the community's awareness: change to the better or to the worse. Do not societies and civilizations decline without being conscious of what is happening to their hidden traits and concepts? Indeed, Ibn Khaldun did notice this point - though he did not go to the extent of realizing the possibility of intervening to control change in a society. The idea is of course not that every individual in a society needs to be cognizant of this topic - what is needed is the critical number of persons who are entrusted with protecting society in this domain.

When 'action' and 'reaction' are discussed, they may be approached from the perspective of the 'conscious' and the 'unconscious': reaction being the result of the unconscious, and action of the conscious. It is not that sincerity exists solely at the level of the unconscious and subconscious - it does come about through the conscious, though it eventually settles in the unconscious. You may notice how most of the Muslim *Ummah* do have sincerely of faith, though without being quite aware of how to turn it to account. And this sincerity is not a defect, by no means a defect - what is a defect is that there are not enough learned people who deal with such issues.

13. 'Emotion' and 'Thought'

This pair of terms, 'emotion' and 'thought', are also helpful in understanding 'sincerity' and 'ability'. When we use the term 'emotion' we are thinking of various inclinations stemming from various factors - some of which we have discussed in connection with the unconscious. Thought is usually used with reference to consciousness and awareness. It may be noted that what belongs to thought in the case of some people belongs to emotion in the case of other people. There is no harm in this. But emotions can be

negative or positive. And even positive emotions need consciousness to guide and direct them - otherwise they may well be deflected to be negative in the heat of the intellectual warfare.

Thought is an abstract noun, based on the action of thinking. Thinking takes place in the mind; and its subject-matter is the world. To carry out thinking is to reflect on the world, and to draw the laws that govern the world.

Muhammad Iqbal says the following in this connection:

"When the Qur'an urges the human to reflect on nature, the first thing it expects as the fruit of this reflection is an awareness of Him Who this nature is a Sign of;"¹¹

What Iqbal is saying here is that the universe is a symbol or a Sign, and the same term 'Sign' is used for the phenomena of the world and the Verses of the Qur'an - hence the Messenger's, peace be upon him, saying: "No prophet but was provided with Signs that were designed to draw those equipped to believe to believe. As for me, the Sign I was provided with is this Revelation which descended upon me: by which I hope to have a larger following on the Day of Resurrection than any of the prophets;" (*Sahih al-Bukhari*).

¹¹ *Reconstruction of Religious Thought*, p. 21 (in the Arabic translation). Cairo, 1955 C.E.

The above Tradition of the Prophet is indicating that such miracles as previous Prophets used to have in support of their call were of a temporary nature: they worked at the time of the particular prophet, not permanently. The miracle of the Qur'an, with which Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, was supported is of a permanent nature. Its truthfulness may be noticed at any time, to the end of time. When the idolaters of the Prophet's time demanded Signs to prove the Prophet's truthfulness, the Qur'an replied that the Signs, or Verses, of the Qur'an itself, are ample evidence, without need for more. Here is an example from the Qur'an: "Yet they say: 'Why are not Signs sent down to him from his Lord?' Say: 'The Signs are indeed with Allah: and I am indeed a clear Warner.' And is it not enough for them that We have sent down to you the Book which is rehearsed to them? Verily, in it is Mercy and a Reminder to those who believe;" (29:50-51).

It is proper to cite an incident related in the Qur'an for comparison and contrast:

"Or take the similitude of one who passed by a hamlet, all in ruins to its roofs. He said: 'Oh! How shall Allah bring it ever to life, after its death?' But Allah caused him to die for a hundred years, then raised him up again. He said: 'How long did you tarry thus?' He said: 'Perhaps a day

or part of a day.' He said: 'Nay, you have tarried thus a hundred years, but look at your food and your drink; they show no signs of age; and look at your donkey; and that We may make of you a Sign unto the people; look further at the bones, how We bring them together and clothe them with flesh,' And when this was shown clearly to him, he said: 'I know that Allah has power over all things;" (2:259).

You see how, when a certain person, from older times, wondered how it was possible for the dead to be resurrected, the proof came in a tangible display: he himself was caused to die, and to remain dead for a hundred years. Then God resurrected him, and showed him a Sign to notice his long death: he saw his donkey, with its bones quite dry and decayed; then it was brought together before the man's eyes and life came back to it.

Right next to this, the Qur'an tells the experience of Abraham:

"Behold! Abraham said: 'My Lord! show me how You give life to the dead,' He said: 'Do you not then believe?' He said: 'Yes! but to satisfy my own understanding.' He said: 'Take four birds; tame them to turn to you; put a portion of the on every hill, and call them: they will come to you flying with speed. Then know that Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise;" (2:260).

As you see, God does not show Abraham the evidence as applied to himself, as in the case of the man in the previous story: he saw how the four birds were resurrected - he did not need the same compelling evidence that that man needed. The same inquiry was made in Prophet Muhammad's, peace be upon him, time and again the response was different. Let us read about that in Sura No. 36:

"Does not man see that it is We Who created him from sperm? Yet behold! He stands forth as an open adversary! And he makes comparisons for Us, and forgets his own origin and creation: he says, 'Who can give life to dry bones and decomposed ones at that?' Say: 'He will give life Who created them for the first time! For He is well-versed in every kind of creation!'" (36:77-79).

The disbeliever who came to the Prophet had a dry bone, and he pinched it between his fingers, to have dust fall before the Prophet, challenging that it would not be possible for God to resurrect it. God did not show the man the miracle of resurrecting the bone into a living creature. He just commented, most laconically, that the man "makes comparisons for Us, and forgets his own origin and creation" (36:78). It is precedent that should suffice a thinking human: if one reflects a little, they will see in their own

creation evidence enough for a later creation. It is as glaring evidence as in the previous instances, but needs careful attention. And it is precedent that is there all the time at any age - for anyone willing to understand. The idea here is that the approaches to evidence vary with the development of human experience - though the topic is the same.

In his book *Heroes*, Thomas Carlyle noticed, in his chapter on Muhammad, peace be upon him, this method of arguing with the disbelievers in the Qur'an; he writes: "When the Quraishi people requested proofs and evidence from Muhammad to prove his truthfulness, he replied: 'Are not you yourselves miracle enough? Did you not come into existence after non-existence?'"

Ibn Abbas (the renowned Companion) put it like this: "The Quraishi people went to the Jews and asked them: 'What evidence did Moses present to prove his truthfulness?' They replied: 'It was the miracle of his rod and his hand changing white for those who watched.' Then they went to the Christians and asked: 'What did Jesus present to prove his truthfulness?' and they replied: 'He healed the born blind, and the leprous, and he revived the dead.' So they went to the Prophet, peace be upon him and said: 'As evidence of your truthfulness, turn this mount of Safa into gold.' The Prophet prayed God to support him with evidence and this

verse was revealed: 'Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day - these are indeed Signs for those of understanding'" (3:190); so that they may reflect on that." (See al-Suyuti's *Asbab al-Nuzul*.)

This may be supplemented with another, perhaps more to-the-point verse:

"Yet they say: 'Why are not Signs sent down to him from his Lord?' Say: 'The Signs are indeed with Allah! And I am indeed a clear warner.' And is it not enough that We sent down to you the Book which is rehearsed to them! Verily, in it is mercy and a reminder to those who believe;" (29:50-51)

14. Morality and Knowledge

This pair of terms, 'morality' and 'knowledge', is used as a substitute for sincerity (or 'will' or 'purpose') and correctness (ability). People seem to take morality as a heavenly gift, with no intervention on the part of consciousness and effort. It is indeed not so, for morality is in fact a value, and it develops as a result of the human's putting in the necessary enlightenment and effort. It is no use waiting for moral behavior to take root in society without dedicating the necessary effort to realize that - As

was elaborated under 'Will as a value developed through human effort'.

A lot of effort must be directed to probing ethics as a resource, as a process synthesized through the application of the relevant laws - until the concept of morality may be said to be brought out of the vagueness that engulfs it at present.

It is a mistake, though quite commonly accepted, to assume that ethics is independent of knowledge and science: the truth is that, in the same way as will is governed by science, ethics is governed by it.

Many assert that science, being objective, has nothing to do with morality. The truth is that morality originates in knowledge and science. It is science which underpins the ethical values, and draws all the proofs from the world around us and human life. Malek Bennabi has something relevant here; he says in his book *The Problem of Ideas in the Muslim World*:

"As science keeps searching for truth, it serves as a promoter of ethics - for it will not tolerate a mistake until it is put right."

In the Westerners' usage, science is held to be neutral, or, as Toynbee puts it: 'Ethically neutral'. But this cannot be right! Science can provide proofs for the necessity of morality, and it has ample evidence to prove it. Indeed,

morality will not be a fact of life until it turns into science. How can morality be a necessity of human life before it acquires the force of science? People commit this mistake when they take a little knowledge and science to be genuine science. Just that something is beyond our conception, it is taken to be science: arguments like this are no justification for condemning science.

When the late Malek Bennabi, may God bless his soul, visited Damascus, a little before he died, I took this up with him. I referred to the statement quoted above from his book; then objected that he did not seem to abide by the rule he himself had set - that indeed he often seemed not to give science a firm place, which is not the position the Qur'an accorded to science. Bennabi did acquiesce in this, and agreed that the Qur'an confers a quite honorable place on science.

Science is the criterion by which truth is distinguished from falsehood; it is the evidence drawn from consequences by which we may distinguish what is right and what is wrong. When we endeavor to find a way out of our dilemmas, this may not be secured through a condemnation of science and knowledge: it is rather by realizing that we have not yet acquired enough science to tackle our problems; what is in our hands is partly scientific and partly

unscientific; or, as the Qur'an puts it, it is partial knowledge, as in the following Verse: "Of knowledge it is only a little that is communicated to you, O men! " (17:85). This is what a certain poet meant when he said:

"Well, be sure, when you claim to be quite erudite,

"That whatever knowledge you have acquired, there is still so much that your mind is unaware of".

When disputes arise, it is science that we turn to for settling the disputes, and nothing else.

15. The Heart and the Mind:

This is our last pair for expressing sincerity (the will) and correctness (ability). In modern writings, we find that the 'heart' is mostly deemed as the store of emotion, sincerity, and enthusiasm. The 'mind' on the other hand, is usually taken to express perception and comprehension. It is especially true of Iqbal that he uses the two terms in the senses we have listed.

This modern usage is not exactly how the Qur'an uses the term 'al-qalb, or the heart': it is in the Qur'an the faculty which is supposed to fulfil the task of perception, reflection and giving assurance to the human. Let us review some relevant Verses of the Qur'an:

"they have hearts wherewith they understand not;" (7:179) "Do they not travel through the land, so that their hearts may thus learn wisdom;" (22:46) "for without doubt in the remembrance of Allah the hearts find satisfaction;" (13:28). As for '*al'aql*, the mind' this word does not occur in the Qur'an, neither as concrete or abstract noun. It is only as a verb that we come across '*akala*', that is, as function or action - which is either activated or neglected by the human.

That thinking is a function has been noticed by Ibn Taimiyah, who said: "Thinking to the heart (or mind) is the same as listening to the ear;"¹².

Ibn Taimiyah was once asked where the 'mind' existed, and he wrote in answer: "It is essentially the thinking power of the human; it is true that the word '*qalb*' is used for this faculty, even in the Qur'an, as in this Verse: "Do they not travel through the land, so that their hearts may thus learn wisdom;" (22:46). However, though '*qalb*' is commonly used to signify that pine-shaped organ, but that is not the only meaning of '*qalb*', for '*qalb*' also refers to the inside of anything. And hence, if thinking is linked to the heart, it is also linked to the brain. It is not far-fetched to say, as many

¹² Ibn Taimiyah, *al-Fatawa*. Vol. 9, p. 308

physicians say, that the 'mind' is located in the brain - and Imam Ahmad is reported to have said this, too;"¹³.

SOME MORE TERMS

More pairs may be found, also referring to our basic pair of the 'ability, or correctness' and 'will, or sincerity'. One such pair is 'the soul' versus 'the temporal': the first referring to the moral, unconscious and emotional aspect; and the latter referring to the scientific world of laws and the conscious.

Instead of the temporal, Bennabi sometimes used 'the social'; the temporal and the social are used by Bennabi to signify correctness, openness to laws, and being alert to the outcome of deeds. On the other hand, he sometimes used 'the conscience' instead of the 'soul' to be contrasted with science. When, for instance, he says: 'The conscience lags behind science', he is saying that sound intentions, or morality, do not fall in step with science - and he uses this in representing the condition of the Western world. We find the same use of this pair in Bennabi's stating: "The Qur'an is scientific, above what the pre-Islamic conscience held;" (see his book: *The Direction of the Muslim World*).

¹³ *Al-Fatawa*. Vol. 9, p. 304.

We have also two terms '*hammad*, i.e. resolute;' and '*hareth*', i.e. gaining the fruit of one's effort': these two terms occur in an authentic *hadith*, i.e. Tradition of the Prophet's, peace be upon him; when he says, "Two of the most truthful names are '*hareth*' and '*hammad*'. The two names are alluding to every human being's being an agent, or actor '*hareth*', and having intentions '*hammad*', i.e. resolutions, on the basis of which they act. The same two names occur in another *hadith*,¹⁴ when the Prophet praises these two names, recommends using the prophets' names, and adds two names highly beloved of the Lord: Abdullah and Abdul-Rahman.

It is no use listing so many synonyms and analogous terms - let us rather penetrate to the core idea. To have many more terms can diffuse attention; on the other hand, once we capture what motivates a human, this will focus the attention. What we are trying to develop in this book is to use the different terms to bring the core idea within the reader's comprehension. It is in this spirit that some more terms will be added. Here are some terms that express sincerity in some way or another:

1. **Objective:** a target or ideal which is designed to stimulate the will.
2. **Intention:** which is related to having a purpose.

¹⁴ Reported by Ahmad in his *Musnad*, Vol. 4, p. 345

3. **Taste:** That 'taste' relates to 'sincerity' is less obvious. Sincerity is something that emanates from the subconscious; taste, on the other hand, is something that one feels but cannot spot its source - from this people say: 'You cannot learn taste from books.' By reflecting on that aspect of taste, we may notice its connection with the will.
4. **Piety** (*al-taqwa* in Arabic): It is not hard to see how 'piety' is closely related to will, for piety means that one is keen to act upon what he/she is commanded to do as a believer, and to avoid what they have been forbidden to do. It goes beyond being cognizant of the system of 'does' and 'do not': it boils down to seeking the pleasure of the Lord.
5. **Culture:** Correctness is a main element in the common use of this term: people do connect it to study and enlightenment. It is, however, only the superficial sense of this term that is usually observed. For as this term is a modern Western concept, and it was there that it appeared and evolved across time, it pertains more to the source and motivation of a human's behavior, rather than their conscious comprehension of the origins of behavior.
6. **Spirit** (*'ruh'* in Arabic). We come across this word in the Qur'an, as in "They ask you concerning the spirit. Say: 'The spirit comes by command of my Lord: of knowledge it is only a little that is communicated to you;'" (17:85.) It

appears that this was God's answer to some query concerning the 'spirit' in the sense of the secret of life. But that the Qur'an does not give an answer here does not imply that humans would not one day understand this secret, with the accumulation of knowledge. The Qur'an is clear elsewhere that people's knowledge and horizons will keep expanding.

Another sense in which '*al-ruh*' is used in the Qur'an is in reference to the Qur'an itself - we read in the Qur'an: "And thus We have, by Our command, sent the spirit (i.e. inspiration) to you;" (42:52); and we find the word used to refer to Gabriel, "With it came down the Spirit of faith and truth;" (26:193).

As for the modern use of 'spirit', when they say, 'the spiritual aspect' - it seems to mean submission to God, asceticism, and devotion to God. This sense is a modern use that again originated in the West.

Malek Bennabi used '*al-ruh*' or 'spirit' as a psychological state, a third element in a trio that includes, beside the spirit, rational thinking and instinct: here again, Bennabi is deriving this concept from Western usage.

7. **Art:** This is a neonate, and it has two different senses. In one sense, art refers to literary works, in their various

manifestations, like poetry and the essay; the visual art; and the dramatic products like acting. This sense is more akin to taste and the will. The other sense (i.e. technical skill), is more akin to correctness or technique. We come across it in statements like: The developing countries are in need of technical (*fanni* in Arabic) capacities, or more technicians are needed in industry. The same sense is used in reference to experts in agriculture, industry, education, etc.

CHAPTER TWO

WORK

1. THE FOUNTAINS OF WORK

A human perceives things according to his/her cultural background and social preconceptions. It is true that a human sees with his/her eyes - but, what the eyes sense has no meaning without the perception that settles in the brain, and that perception is controlled by the individual's community: the human simply receives how to perceive things from their community.

Here is a short story that may be true or untrue, but it will shed light on what I mean here. A Sufi man is said to have left his town to go and worship in the wilderness. On his way, he noticed a bird, blind and with a broken wing. He stood for some time watching the bird: it was a wonder to him how this bird, in its isolation from any other creature, got by its nutrition and water. Not long passed, however,

before a second bird alighted beside the first bird, and fed it in the same way as a mother dove feeds its chicks. The Sufi felt the spectacle to be a kind of lesson meant for him. "Why should I be anxious how I can earn my food?" he said to himself. So, he headed towards a cave. Another worshipper heard of the first Sufi choice, and so he went to him, and said: "What makes you choose to live in this cave?" and the first Sufi narrated his experience. But the other shouted: "What a silly lesson you have learned! Why was it the handicapped bird that attracted your attention so that you decided to follow its example and not the other bird, the bird with a strong body, who feeds the other bird? In this way you will be helping yourself and helping others." The Sufi heeded this advice, left his cave and started some job that might earn him a living.

A traditional Muslim notices the blind bird in this, not the active one. We may notice that the adviser in the story was absent, not an eye-witness, but was able to comprehend the situation rightly - he perceived the depth of the situation, and was able to reflect on the behavior of his companion, and suggest a positive alternative. It is actually a main feature of the Qur'an to direct us to review the conduct of past peoples, and to try to draw the suitable conclusions.

Here is an example from the Qur'an pertaining to this approach: "246. Have you not turned your vision to the Chiefs of the Children of Israel after (the time of) Moses? they said to a prophet (That was) among them: "Appoint for us a king, that we May fight in the cause of Allah." He said: "Is it not possible, if ye were commanded to fight, that that you will not fight?" They said: "How could we refuse to fight in the cause of Allah, seeing that we were turned out of our homes and our families?" but when they were commanded to fight, they turned back, except a small band among them. But Allah Has full knowledge of those who do wrong.

"247. Their Prophet said to them: "(Allah) has appointed Talut as king over you." They said: "How can he exercise authority over us when we are better fitted than he to exercise authority, and he is not even gifted with wealth in abundance?" He said: "(Allah) has Chosen him above you, and has gifted him abundantly with knowledge and bodily prowess: Allah Grants His authority to whom He pleases. Allah cares for all, and He knows all things."

"248. And (further) their Prophet said to them: "A Sign of his authority is that there shall come to you the Ark of the covenant, with (an assurance) therein of security from your

Lord, and the relics left by the family of Moses and the family of Aaron, carried by angels. In this is a symbol for you if ye indeed have faith." (2:246-248). 'Seeing' in contexts like the above (i.e. 'have not turned your vision') like this has been interpreted by commentators on the Qur'an as signifying knowledge, for a hearer can be an observer, and an observer that seems to 'see' and comprehend.

This phenomenon is quite wide-spread: Two persons may enter the same home, but see different things in it: one may notice the paint of the walls, the other may notice the heating system ...

Two persons may enter a bookshop, and each will notice books that are not noticed by the other.

And when people walk along a street, one may notice the mosques, the other may notice the night club; a third may notice shops that sell antiques: each has his/her own interests, and each sees the world differently from others. It is as if we have our physical eyes like everybody else, and other eyes that do the selection: eyes of the mind, that are mentioned in the Qur'an in Verses like: "Truly it is not their eyes that are blind, but their hearts which are in their breasts;" (22:46) and "And how many Signs in the heaven

and the earth do they pass by? Yet they turn their faces away from them;" (12:105).

It is education and socialization that determine what people notice.

And when the Qur'an discusses how eyes select of life's scenes certain aspects and are blind to others, see only what is congenial to them, or what is within their field of specialization - the Qur'an is in this case warning us against this serious failing.

It is the cultural background which enabled one of the two Sufi men in our story to see only the negative aspect, and the other to see the other aspect. Such difference is common among individuals, but it is even more prominent among communities, and it is of course more important to their welfare. If individuals perceive only certain aspects of a situation, aspects which fall within their interests and skills, nations have the same diversity. That a community has a certain direction is not determined by some individuals who see through situations, but the existence of a substantial percentage who have the predominant attitude.

It helps in this respect to reflect on the following Tradition of the Prophet, peace be upon him, when a certain Companion asked him, "Are you saying that we may disintegrate, despite the existence of some upright persons

among us?" "Yes," he said, "if the corrupt ones predominate."¹⁵

Let us before we take up the definition and development of 'work', shed some light on some necessary terms.

A. **Al-taskhir, i.e. 'Subjugation, or exploiting':**

It is asserted in the Qur'an, and seen in practice, that the universe is there to serve man, that this ability to put the powers of the universe in the service of humans increases in proportion to the increase in human knowledge. We find this in the Qur'an, as in the following Verses:

"It is Allah Who has created the heavens and the earth and sends down rain from the skies, and with it brings out fruits wherewith to feed you; it is He Who has made the ships subject to you, that they may sail through the sea by His Command: and He has made the rivers also subject to you. And He has made subject to you the sun and the moon, both diligently pursuing their courses; and He has also made the night and the day subject to you. And He gives you of all that you ask for. But it you count the favors of Allah, never

¹⁵ Reported by al-Bukhari in his *Sahih*, in the Chapter on Turmoil

will you be able to number them. Verily, man is given up to injustice and ingratitude;" (14:32-34).

"And He has subjected to you, as from Him, all that is in the heavens and on earth: behold, in that are Signs indeed for those who reflect;" (45:13).

The Arabic word '*taskhir*' means to have some party do work for free. But is it true that the universe serves a human for nothing?

Yes, it is true that the universe will serve a human for free if the human knows how to address it; the more a human knows how to address the universe the more will be their ability to manipulate the universe. To give orders to the universe, one needs the right language, which is the language of laws. We may actually ascertain how far humans benefit from the production of the earth, the animals, the plants, the minerals, etc. and how that goes parallel to the extent of the humans' comprehension of the laws (or *sunan*, in Qur'an's terminology). The world is quite ready to respond to human commands if we know how to address it. It acts in exactly the way a servant behaves - a servile and obedient servant. But the condition we have mentioned, that of learning about the universe's laws and addressing it in accordance with those laws, is a binding condition. It will not respond if the orders come in any other

way: it will look back silently at the human, giving no response. We have the example of the lock and the right key or code for unlocking it: and the universe behaves in this way.

No matter how well-made a car is, to run it, one needs to have the basic rules. This is also true of other machines, and even agriculture. The trees have always been there to serve the human, and for many trees, the fruit was there to be picked. But after learning about the rules of agriculture, people have had much greater command of growing various plants and getting more and more plants. The same is true of the animals which were first hunted by people, but after learning the ways of dealing with animals, and domesticating them, their uses and ways of putting them to use increased and still increase.

All the above teaches us that, with the increase in knowledge, humans will have a firmer grip on the employment of the powers of the universe, *taskhir*. This has become rapidly more manifest over the last centuries and decades - in the sphere of the material world, though not so evidently in the sphere of the human soul. But indeed, by reflecting on a Verse of the Qur'an as:

"Verily never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change what is in their souls;" (13:11) it

will be obvious that the way is open for humankind to have the same power over the world of human intellect and behavior.

Humans are required to develop their ability in the sphere of human thinking and behavior in the same way as they are striving to have more and more control over the material world. The Qur'an expects us, in connection with back-biting, to develop such repugnance of this sin as we feel disgusted with the idea of eating human dead flesh - let us read about this in the Qur'an: "nor speak ill of each other behind their backs. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Nay, you would abhor it;" (49:12).

It is set up for us as a target in the above Verse that we develop that repugnance for back-biting. And this is supported with the facts of history. For we do find that people feel great repugnance in our civilized condition towards eating human flesh. But, then, the same civilized human has not gone beyond enjoying speaking ill of absent individuals - which shows how lacking in certain levels of civilization people are. It seems that many people find in speaking ill of others a relish that resembles the relish we have at eating well-cooked meat. Let us remember that the primitive human, and quite recently in some parts of the world, felt the same relish at eating the flesh of brother

humans. Which teaches us that, if you now feel great repugnance towards eating human flesh, it is not for your having any special intellectual or ethical privilege, but it is the result of socialization and upbringing. Humankind has paid very dearly for getting us to this level.

It is incumbent on us to imagine the kind of transfer necessary for humans to reach a point when back-biting becomes detesting to us, detestable to the same degree that we hate to eat human flesh. It is a settled thing at present that a human is repelled from eating the flesh of their brother human - no justification makes it less repulsive. And the same must happen in connection with ill-speaking of others. Nor must what one observes about the corruption and decadence of cultures be used as justification for speaking ill of others. I am not trying here to preach or be didactic, but my purpose is to point out the ethical law by which humans may be uplifted. It is to go beyond a level many parts of the world have reached, and to get to a level that very few do realize - it is within our capacity to realize that, for the Lord keeps the way open to new levels of creation, as we may glean from a Verse like this: "and He creates things of which you have no knowledge;" (16:8).

From our discussion so far, we may state that *taskhir*, getting the forces of the world to serve us, comes as a result

of getting acquainted with the Lord's *sunan*, or laws, set down to control His creation. What we have here is the interdependence among three things: the laws of the world, science, and *taskhir*. God laid down laws that may be discovered and put to use; humans need science to discover those laws, and once a law has been discovered, it is possible to put it to use, to employ it to serve the purposes of humankind.

This must show how essential science is for good life. Once a Muslim understands this well, he/she will realize that science is the best witness to the truthfulness of faith in God and the Last Day, that such faith is a necessary thing for proper life on earth. It is no less certain than when science attested to the truth of the law of gravity: people have no doubt, with reference to the law of gravity, that to jump from a high building means inevitable death.

It is with the same force that science will now support the belief in God and the Last Day - history does testify that those who do not behave mindful of the dictates of faith in God and the Last Day are bound to perish in the same way as those who jump from a plane do. It is the same here and there for those who act in defiance of the law laid down by God. Ethics have their laws, and society has its laws. When you live in a society where one cannot feel safe from the

mischief of neighbors, or children have no loyalty for their parents, or when people do not observe the duties and rights laid down by God for people's relations with each other - such society is bound to break up as a result of its violation of the laws of morality, which are the laws set by God for human life. We believe in the truth of God's revelation when He says: "There is no god but He: that is the witness of Allah, His angels, and those endued with knowledge, standing firm on justice;" (3:18). The point here is that in the same way as there is a law of gravity, ethics have their law, and faith has its law. In the same way as those who disregard or violate the law of gravity cannot escape the penalty, those who violate the laws of morality and faith must, with equal firmness, face the penalty of their violation. As for any who doubt the truth of this, their doubts will be dispelled through moving around and inspecting the facts of history - but if we are not the ones who examine the facts of history, then we must read what has been recorded by those who did examine history, and saw things for themselves. The Qur'an says this: "Say: 'You go through the earth and see what has been the end of those guilty of sins;" (27:69).

For having control over things in the world, the key word is based on the active use of the tools of hearing, vision, and intellect. Those who fail to use these organs of

comprehension will not have the forces of the world in their service - indeed the world will look at them coldly and mock them. Had it the power of expression it would have said: "Why should I be at your disposal when you are like me, failing to use the powers given to you, the powers of hearing, vision, and reflection? Was it not this that the Lord granted you to be above the rest of creation?" It is this tripartite system which was bestowed on the human to make of him/her a creature distinguished from the rest of creation. And the Qur'an does mention this when it says: "Then We developed out of it another creature. So blessed be Allah: the Best to create;" (23:14).

The human evidently was entrusted with responsibility that no other creature was given, as is explicitly declared in another Verse of the Qur'an: "We did indeed offer the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains; but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof: but man undertook it - he was indeed unjust and foolish;" (33:72) - 'unjust' if he/she fails to put that to use; 'foolish' if he/she does not perceive its great worth. Hence the insistence in the Qur'an on activating the faculties of hearing, vision, and the mind. One very explicit instance is this: "And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge: for every act of

hearing, or of seeing or of the heart will be enquired in the final determination;" (17:36).

If every individual needs to use that three-part system to be saved on the Day of Judgment, humanity at large needs, at all times, to keep that system alert to attain success in life in this world. Once people awaken the potential of this tripartite system, the laws, or *sunan*, of the universe will unfold before their eyes, and they will come under human control. It may be noted that the more vital part of creation in this connection is the law connected with the human and social soul - you will notice how the Qur'an talks of the laws of nature in only general terms, but discusses the laws of human life in detail. Making history is not mainly founded on having control over the forces of the external world, but on the internal world: that a human focuses on his/her soul.

It helps in grasping this notion to reflect on the following Verses of the Qur'an: "And also in your own selves: will you not then see? " (51:21) "Say: 'It is from yourselves;" (3:165) and "until they change what is in their own souls;" (13:11).

We have not done enough in examining this situation; we have not brought it under the microscope. To really reveal the laws, lying beneath our dilemmas and problems; to know more will put in our hands the ability and will that we need.

I feel that what these words are doing is having a little sapling planted - you see how a sapling is at the early stage of life thin and weak; and yet it has all the zest of life, and is eager to prove its own existence. In the same way, I hope ideas like these you see here grow and take root until we have something better than the discovery of a new continent. What we are trying to do is really more valuable for human life than the discovery of the greatest of continents: it is really the spearhead of the whole of existence. Yes, it is that great, for you may notice how crucial it is to regain the human to the place the Lord willed for him/her, on the day He commanded the angels to prostrate themselves before Adam. I am referring to the great day God created Adam, after He had told the angels, as the Qur'an reports: "I will create a vicegerent on earth;" (2:30).

The angels, however, predicted that that vicegerent '*khalifah*' would do mischief in the earth and would spill blood. They said: "'Will You place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood? - while we do celebrate Your praises and glorify Your holy name;'" (2:30).

As for the *jinn*, they were uncertain about the purpose of having this new creature; they said, as the Qur'an reports: "And we do not understand whether ill is intended to those

on earth, or whether their Lord really intends to guide them to right conduct;" (72:10).

As for Iblis, he gave little importance to the new creature. Seeing that Adam was created from clay, he despised him, and was too disdainful to prostrate himself before him: "Shall I bow down to one whom You created from clay?" he said, as the Qur'an reports (17:61) and he added, "I will surely bring his descendants under my sway - all but a few;" (17:62).

But the Wise Lord declared the limited influence Iblis had over human beings, as the Qur'an reports, "This way of my sincere servants is indeed a way that leads straight to Me. For over My servants no authority shall you have, except such as put themselves in the wrong and follow you;" (15:42-43).

It was a Sign of God's Greatness and Ability this ability given to the human, especially this knowledge given to them, which no other creature, not even the angels had. You may read about that in the Qur'an: "And He taught Adam the nature and names of all things; then He placed them before the angels, and said: 'Tell Me the nature and names of these if you are right.' They said: 'Glory to You: of knowledge we have none, save what You have taught us; in truth it is You Who are perfect in knowledge and wisdom;" (2:31-32).

It is unfortunate, therefore, that, with all this potential granted by God, the human still does not appreciate his/her worth: the potential placed in them by God at the time of their creation still waits to be translated into a realized fact: to be the *khalifah* God obligated them to be, to aspire to the perfection the Lord set for them.

This is not at all how the human lives at present. He/she lives a crisis of confidence in man, and a crisis of belittling the human - contrary to the ordinance set down by God, that the human should have confidence in his/her potentials. What we learn from the Qur'an is an optimistic view of the human, a bright hope in their future: that they would realize that which God knew but the angels did not. Until now, the humans view the human in no better image than that both the angels and *jinn* took to be true of humankind. And we shall not be able to go beyond this gloomy view of the human except with historical study: it is history which exhibits situations in which people succeeded in getting rid of perversion and behaved in the appropriate way, as in the example we mentioned about humans' getting beyond the eating of human flesh to a state of finding that disgusting. It is by learning many facts about God's Signs in the world and human life; through learning the facts of history: from the earliest stages of human life, and the successive stages that

brought the humans to what we see at present ... It is through a study of all this that one may penetrate the thick scales that prevent our comprehension: it is by reviewing the repeated stumbling of the human, and the few achievements that he/she were able to realize: that will bring the scholar to have some perception of the future, and to better appreciate the Verse of the Qur'an: "I know what you do not know;" (2:30) meaning that the human will eventually get over the negative predictions and realize the level God knew him/her to be capable of realizing.

Muhammad Iqbal was one of those who pondered long upon these facts and concepts. He addressed in his poem: **A Complaint**, this prayer to God to guide the Muslims: "Lead them, O Lord, to perceive that which I perceive; and regain to them the alertness of faith;"¹⁶. The response Iqbal imagined to come down from heaven to his complaint was this: "Yes, you have expressed well your complaint, and it is a pathetic story. Well, man, do show God's Ability in what you do."¹⁷.

What Iqbal was trying to do with such poetic composition was to alert the Muslim to the potential lying

¹⁶ see: al-A'thami and al-Sawi: *A Complaint and Response to the Complaint: Iqbal's Philosophy*. Printed in Cairo, 1950. P. 92

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 94

deep in his/her being. Though the Muslim was helpless and weak, the potential was true and part of his/her genes: He/she only needed to tap those hidden abilities.

An example may bring the idea home. Let us think of the ability of reading and writing. Was this ability not hidden inside the human for so many eons of time, until humans awoke to this ability? It is through activating the three faculties of seeing, hearing and thinking that this ability was given a push, and started developing. And when the human started reading and writing, a completely new era opened up before him/her. In the same way, other faculties and potentials, not less crucial than reading and writing, lie in wait to be tapped and manipulated: forces which, once activated, they will take the human being by hand to rise and realize God's Greatness in his/her creation. But nothing may be accomplished without activating the faculties of sight, hearing, and thinking: they are the faculties which will enable the human to rise to a really high place, if activated, or bring them down to the lowest of the low if neglected.

B. See how Allah originated creation (the Qur'an, 29:20)

Let us reflect on the following Verse of the Qur'an:
"Say: 'Travel through the earth and see how Allah originated creation;" (29:20). Let us reflect what is meant by this order to examine how creation was started; how the mountains were built so high on the face of earth, like a wedge that is driven deep in the earth, and rises high above it?

How did it start?

How the camels evolved? With their little heads, long necks, their digestive system, and their pads?

Can we trace these organs and systems to the earliest stages when they started, and then follow their stages to the point they have reached?

Societies and languages must also have their stories to tell; nothing but has its own beginning and evolving. And where did laws, systems, and culture start?

The same must be said about the moral progress of humankind. It has had its development until it reached the level it has now.

The Lord directs us in many locations of the Qur'an to leave nothing unexamined, from the atom to the galaxy, from the needle to the rocket, from the affection of man and wife to the mother's compassion - and that includes the social as well as the individual levels.

It must all serve the humans to have control over things, and also to thank the Creator.

We read in the Qur'an, "And He gave you the faculties of hearing and sight and feeling and understanding: little thanks do you give! " (32:9).

That things go in pairs, in human life, and in all creation, concrete and abstract, is pointed out in the Qur'an, as in the following Verse, "And of every thing We have created pairs: that you may receive instruction;" (51:49).

By observing creation, in its change and development, we find that it exists and proliferates through pairs. Only the Creator is One, the One and Only, Who begets not, nor is He begotten, and there is none like unto Him.

Creatures, on the other hand, exist in pairs, and the Qur'an emphasizes this, as in: "Glory to Allah, Who created in pairs all things that the earth produces, as well as their human kind and other things of which they have no knowledge;" (36:36). At the level of the inanimate world we can notice at the level of the atom that it has this quality, consisting of pairs of positive and negative; and so in the world of plants, "With it have We produced divers pairs of plants each separate from the others;" (20:53). Indeed, we know about some of those pairs, but not all.

It is through pairs that new things are born - and, similarly, it is through the clashing of ideas that new ideas are brought into existence: it is by contrasting two ideas that a third is born. And, as you see in this book, practical life is the result of ability and will.

Commenting on the Verse "And of every thing We have created pairs: that you may receive instruction;" (51:49) Ibn Taimiyah says: "'a pair' refers to the equal and identical; and may refer to the antithetical: for there is no creature but has a partner or antithetical: only the Exalted Lord has no partner or associate. In fact, the creature does nothing but as a pair or more; only Allah does things as Single. In the same way Oneness is a necessary trait of the Lord, acting in partnership is a necessary quality of a creature, an inherent quality in them;"¹⁸ .

2. HOW WORK COMES INTO BEING

Let us then trace the genesis of work. What is its source? What is its origin? What does it descend from? What is its definition?

A. Definition of Work

'Work' is effort with a purpose. When movement happens, but without purpose, we do not call it 'work'. When we notice, for instance, the movement of the sun or winds, we do not call that work. Their movement is similar to the flow of a river. We read in the Qur'an, "And the sun runs his course for a period determined for him: that is the decree of Him, the Exalted in Might, the All-Knowing" (36:38). One notices how this is different from a human putting in effort for some purpose: this is work. We read in the Qur'an about such effort in several locations, as in the following two examples:

"Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has Faith, verily, to him We will give a new life, a life that is good;" (16:97); "that He may reward with justice those who believe and work righteousness;" (10:4).

It must be clear that this definition of 'work', as effort with a purpose, is apparent in the title of this book, for when you say that 'work' is 'effort with a purpose', it is not different from our 'ability and will'. Purpose is mostly confined to the human being. If you notice the effort of a human, significant or insignificant, you keep tracing ability and will - for work will not take place without both ability

¹⁸ Ibn Taimiyah, *al-Fatawa*; Vol. 2. P. 36

and will. Inanimate things do have movement, but without will; while a human does not move without will. We are of course excluding such movement as that of a somnambulist.

No movement is conceived without ability; even a tree's branch, for there is some breeze, and that is energy; a leaf falling to the ground cannot happen without ability: it cannot happen without gravity, and gravity is energy. On the other hand, we do not imagine the bough, or the falling leaf, to have will, for the bough did not have the will to move nor did the leaf. But it is not so when you see a walking person - we do realize that he/she cannot have walked without ability: this ability he/she shares with the bough and the leaf. But in the case of the human, we do not imagine him/her to have walked without some purpose and will. He/she walks to realize something. We do not imagine the walking to happen out of purpose alone - no matter how keenly he/she likes to walk, this cannot happen without the person's having the ability to do it. A little baby cannot walk, no matter how much it likes to walk, nor can an invalid, no matter how eagerly he/she desires to walk around. For the rational being, both the ability and will are necessary.

B. The Elements of Work

So far, we have been introducing 'work', and how it emanates from ability and purpose. A question will certainly be in the mind of some readers: is it certain that, once ability and purpose exist, work will take place?

The answer is actually yes: once ability and purpose exist, work is certain to happen (As was demonstrated in the First Section of the First Chapter by quoting Ibn Taimiyah, where he said: "Firm intention is that which exists when acting is bound to take place if one has the ability: for once firm intention exists and adequate ability is there, the work is bound to take place;" a statement which we may need again later). Work will then be in proportion to the two elements, rising with their rise, and falling with their fall; and it will cease to exist, once they stop operating. If ability and purpose reach their maximum degree, work will likewise reach its maximum degree. If one of the two elements decreases significantly or stops operating, then work will suffer proportional decrease, or may actually cease to exist. I hope the reader will give this elaboration its due significance, and not pass it by lightly.

It will be seen that my insistence on these details is justified in view of the crucial points I will be raising on the basis of the present argument. It is no exaggeration to affirm that the present discussion falls at the heart of the dilemma

of the Muslim world, and, indeed, the whole world. It is a significant issue, especially when trying to learn how things start, and how they proceed. We do need to learn how creation started, and especially how God started creating this honored and amazing creature, man; from base clot the human was created, and then the way was opened for him/her to reach the 'best of molds' or the 'lowest of the low' [Ref. to the Qur'an, 95:4-5].

So, yes, I do affirm that the dilemma of the Muslim world begins simply from this pair: ability and purpose. In the same way as the embryo originates in the mating of a sperm and an ovum, work originates in the mating of ability and will - without this mating there could not be good work. It behooves us then to learn about the elements of good work. The Qur'an itself directs us to examine from what we were created, as in the Verse: "Now let man but think from what he is created;" (86:5) which says that we are responsible to know all that is to know about this 'good work', and raises us from failure to success; this may be gleaned from Verses of the Qur'an like,

"Blessed be He in Whose hands is Dominion; and Who over all things has power - He Who created death and life, that He may try which of you is best in deed;" (67:1-2).

We need to do our best to learn about the elements of work, and the way to perfecting it. A first fact is to realize that work stems from ability and purpose, whether it is good or bad - it is the purpose that directs work, not the ability. It is true that purpose needs the ability to carry out what one intends to do, but ability requires direction from the purpose to direct work to be of better quality. This topic bears more pondering.

To our question: will work take place whenever ability and purpose are there? our answer was 'yes'. We cannot imagine work to happen without ability and purpose; nor can work fail to happen once ability and purpose are there. Ibn Taimiyah has something relevant here; he says: "When total love is there together with ability, that will naturally lead to physical movement, and is inevitably displayed in the vocal expression and visible work;"¹⁹.

Before we embark on examining what ability is exactly, and what is purpose, let us be sure that we accept the basic rule absolutely: that no work, not the slightest work, may be imagined to happen without both ability and purpose: a human does nothing without a target, and he/she can do nothing without ability.

¹⁹ *Al-Fatawa*. Vo. 7. P. 541

Your mere rise to shift off the light consists of ability and purpose: you cannot do it without an ability to rise, to stretch your hand, and press the button; on the other hand, there is definitely a purpose: it can be that you feel there is no need for it since the day is brightening; it can be your desire to go to bed, etc. So, can you imagine the effort needed to reinvigorate a society to happen without ability and purpose?

Let us not take lightly the resemblance between the switching on or off of a light and the subjugating or reinvigorating of a society. There is a target here and a target here; and there is some ability, tiny or great, needed to see the target executed. Let me add something here: It is very likely that when a person stretches his/her hand to switch the light on or off, they may be ignorant or not conscious at that moment of the human effort exerted to develop the lamp from its first beginnings all the way until it is what we have today: how electricity was invented, how manufacturers competed to keep the lamp and the electric switch improving and improving. It is very likely that the same person knows nothing or remembers nothing about the time the primitive human lived in caves. He/she might not be aware of the difference between the human when he/she lived in a cave, before even discovering fire, and the human who worked in

the light of lamps. The caveman could have enjoyed the light of a lamp if provided to him, but he could not have made the lamp: and this is the difference between the producer and the consumer.

Many people have the same situation when it comes to seeing the difference between a society which provides a number of security measures to its citizen, and another society which leaves the individual to fend for himself/herself; maybe many of us are not aware of the difference between a society where the good-doer is honored, and the bad-doer is penalized, and another society where people humiliate themselves before the wrong-doer, and the good-doer has to suffer.

We all like to have good lamps lighting our homes, and we also like to live in a society where the human enjoys dignity, and where the individual learns to do what is his/her duty to do. It is of course not possible to enjoy the benefits of having electricity in town without the expertise of professionals and engineers. In the same way, we may not live in the protection of a society where what is right is enforced and what is bad is prohibited - this may not be realized without other kinds of experts and engineers, who know how the society develops, how it functions properly, and how it sustains its existence and progress.

Let me elaborate here about two levels of work which both are based on ability and purpose: the level of switching a lamp off or on, and work at the level of establishing society; or to put it in other words: work at the level of inanimate things and work at the level of humans. Even in the sphere of humans (the *anfus* in Qur'anic terms), there are various levels: there is work at the individual's level, as in the case of one's visiting a neighbor; and work at the society's level, as in a society's pact or agreement with another society. We may view the human relations from another perspective: as in observing that the relationships among individuals rank higher than those of nations: individuals' relationships are not governed by muscular force or the economic status, while the relations of countries are still mostly controlled by such considerations. But behind all the above kinds and levels of work, there is ability and purpose that is in every case proportional to the size and kind of work - for any chance of influencing some work and raising it, we inevitably need to know the relevant ability and purpose. We still need to consider: may we say with confidence that whenever we have control of ability and purpose, we have control of the relevant work? And if yes, can we produce ability and purpose?

It must be clear from our discussion so far that once ability and purpose are there, the human will not stay without action. There is enough empirical and scientific evidence to support this claim. I may not do great work with my examples, but the reader himself/herself may have a better luck with finding examples. I say this because no activity of ours but is governed by this formula, though some of us are better than others in citing examples.

Here is an example that is familiar to all of us, performing pilgrimage to Mecca and the Holy Sites next to it.

People are in connection with this effort of performing *hajj* (i.e. pilgrimage) divided into four categories:

1. A person who has the ability - money and any required thing for travel - but is not free to undertake the pilgrimage trip; so that his/her ability and means remain unused.
2. Another who is impatient to go on this trip, but does not have the means: he/she is also unable to perform *al-hajj*, since he/she does not have the means: i.e. the ability.
3. A third who does not have the ability, but has no desire for the trip: it may not occur to him/her at all to go for a pilgrimage to Mecca: and it goes without

saying that this person will not perform this Islamic obligation.

4. A fourth person who does have the desire to go on the pilgrimage trip (has the purpose), and is capable of performing it (has the ability) - there is no way of preventing this person from performing pilgrimage without depriving him/her of one or the other element. Likewise, it is not possible to have the first, second, or third persons perform the trip unless the first is provided with the purpose, the second with ability, and the third with both ability and purpose. Of course, people vary, vary in degrees that are beyond calculation, as to the amount of desire and ability that they have. We may say, however, that to the extent ability and purpose exist, there will be activity in proportion to them. We may add, though it is a diversion, that we know as believers that when the will is sound, God forgives those who could not make the trip because they did not have the means, as the following Verse of the Qur'an states: "Pilgrimage thereto is a duty men owe to Allah - those who can afford the journey; but if any deny faith, Allah does not stand in need of any of His creatures;" (3:97). Let us remember that the three men who did not have

enough will to come out for the Campaign of Tabuk needed explicit Verses of forgiveness.

It must transpire from the above example that work will take place once purpose and ability are there, and will not take place if either of the two fundamental elements is lacking. The example must also have shown that of the four alternatives, three are negative, leading to no work, and only one is positive. Once the work takes place, we know that both the purpose and ability are there; and if the work does not happen, it means that either one or both are lacking. It is time now to discuss what is missing for good work to take place.

CHAPTER THREE

WILL

We have done enough to lay down the basic principle that no work may exist except on the basis of both of two fundamental elements: ability and will. Our attention must focus now on each of the two elements, to know them as fully and correctly as possible.

1. THE CONCEPT OF WILL

To have purpose or will: is to want something and desire it.

The question jumps to mind at saying this: How can we imagine purpose or will in the human? Is it a kind of organ? Or is it a function? Can it be nonexistent? Well, will or purpose is a function, like vision, smelling, hearing, etc. But if the nose has the sense of smelling, the eye has the function

of sight, so what is the organ which has the will? To understand this, let us focus on the nose, as the organ where smelling takes place. We know that for smelling to happen, particles of the material to be smelled reach the nose; and the human has an inborn instinct to like certain smells and dislike others: that is as long as the sense of smell is not disabled because of some disease. The same applies to the other senses, like tasting, hearing, and vision; maybe the most refined and accurate senses are sight and hearing. We may say the same about the will. When something, good or bad, reaches the mind, it will approve of it or reject it. Will is the function of a human's mind, in distinction of all other animals. In the same way as the smelling sense approves of good odors and desires them, the mind approves of good ideas and desires them. In the same way as the good smell is intuitively approved, the good ideas are intuitively approved. And in the same way as the human's sense of smell may be corrupted: some nations enjoy certain smells that other nations do not enjoy. In the same way one may have his/her purposes corrupted, in a way that he/she relishes wicked ideas and evil deeds. But it is not so with a person whose *'fitrah*; i.e. the inborn inclination towards what is right and good' is still sound, uncorrupted: For such a person, when he/she has to choose between two deeds of

ideas, he/she will choose what is right; in the same way as iron is attracted to a magnet.

The Prophet, ﷺ (peace be upon him), mentions this situation when the '*fitrah*' is corrupted. He says: "No newborn but is born with '*fitrah*'; it is his/her parents who make of him/her a Jew, a Magus, or a Christian;"²⁰.

When an infant is born, it will be upon *fitrah*, in its senses and faculties: in its hearing, vision, smelling, inclinations, and preference for what is good; but, at the same time, it will be open to accept the influence of others and take over what is perverse until it takes it to be good; and the Qur'an does refer to this:

"Is he, then, to whom the evil of his conduct is made alluring, so that he looks upon it as good, equal to one who is rightly guided? For Allah leaves to stray whom He wills, and guides whom He wills. So let not your soul go out in vainly sighing after them: for Allah knows well all that they do! " (35:8).

It is a vital thing for us to understand this *fitrah* as fully as possible: how it can be corrupted or left intact - it is vital because we need to understand how a human may be 'in the best of molds', or may fall to be 'the lowest of the low' [Ref. to Sura 95, Verses: 4-5]. It is a vital thing, and the system is

delicate: there has been put in our hands a heavy trust; and to do justice to it, we need to take things seriously. Behind the senses, there is the most amazing device of all, the mind, the thing that distinguishes the human, and the human is called in the Qur'an: 'another (and different) creature, (23:14).

The mind is created to be unlike anything in creation: this device that can give meaning to what the organs can sense; it can distinguish white from black; distinguish what is allowed and what is prohibited; distinguish the vicious from the virtuous. In the same way as darkness is different from light, and shade is different from the hot sun, a good deed is different from a bad deed.

There is the will inside the human, the faculty by which he/she is attracted to what is good, in a way similar to the pleasure we feel at smelling a good smell, and feel repelled at sensing a bad odor.

This means that if you expose a person with a sound *fitrah*, unblemished by bad influences, to two options, he/she will be able to choose what is better.

It is a good basic element of the human, this *fitrah*; and even when the grown-ups have lost the purity of their *fitrah*, and they have nothing but bickering over things without

²⁰ Reported by Muslim, in the Chapter on Destiny

guidance, we may be sure that a new generation will rise with unadulterated *fitrah*: there will be the hope that there will rise from among them some who will point out the best of options when they are exposed to both good and bad ones: it is good to be sure that this faculty is renewed with every new birth. We may be sure with this that falsehood will not stay in a dominant position: even when it does have the upper hand, we may be sure that this supremacy is not the last word: the way back to what is true will remain open, and truth will always have the chance to be dominant. How else can we explain the spread of religions and the ideas which were opposed by all humans at one time? We may rest assured that history and *fitrah* are on the side of the people of truth.

I must say that while I wrote these pages, I had doubts whether the idea would settle in the minds - but then I thought I must trust the reader's intelligence, and that he/she will fill the gaps, and will recall the many many examples in life which support this notion. Hence the many occasions when I hint to something rather than elaborate.

But it must be clear by now that 'will, or purpose' happens when the mind chooses; and mind here includes parts of the discerning faculties in the human, including vision, hearing and the thinking system: in addition, of

course, to the subconscious which may have a hand in the soundness of purpose, besides influences from childhood and the environment. It may be asserted, however, that, if used properly, the mind is capable of distinguishing, and sifting what is right and what is wrong. The way is open like this to maintaining the freedom of will to preserve the perceiving faculty in the human.

We often hear somebody described as having a determined will, a steel will, and the like. I no longer feel that such terms satisfy my curiosity for full comprehension: I want to know, in full detail, how a 'steel will' evolves, from A to Z; I wish to know how somebody 'lost their will'; how the will weakens, and how it later dies. If we analyze will in a way that indicates how it comes to be stronger or weaker, where and how it originates - it is then that there will emerge in us the desire to preserve will in a scientific and practical way: not through dreams and wishes - definitely not by waiting idly until the will comes into existence. I generally feel reluctant to discuss any kind of activity that we have no means of fathoming and then controlling how it happens or undergoes change - and so having nothing to say but: 'It will be for God to have it happen': unless we have a means of ascertaining the law that controls that activity, to intervene in bringing it on or off, and unless God has put in our hands

the means of having control of that activity. Unless I realize my place as a real agent in having a thing happen, I have no interest in the activity. And this is a common rule: Whenever you wish to arouse someone's will, let him/her realize that aspect where his/her efforts lead to some effect - for their will will not be stirred when they are reflecting on the part where their efforts have no effect.

An important observation is worth mentioning here: there are things which we have no way of detecting how they come to happen, nor does the human's will have anything to influence their happening. I mean there are things which we can perceive that they only happen by God's Will. (More on that in my book: *Until they Change What Is in Their Souls.*)

But, again, what concerns me here are things in which my effort has an impact on things, where I manipulate the causes to see changes in the result.

Here is an example: I do not need to concern myself about the question: Why is it that Oxygen and Hydrogen unite to produce water? Why these two elements and no other elements? But what should concern me is having the ability to make this reaction happen to see how it produces water. Our ability is confined to discovering the natural law and applying the law: this part is vital to us; while how the

cause is followed by the result - that is the creation of the Great Creator; and let others ascribe it to any Power they like. But one thing must be quite clear: God has created the *sunan*, or laws of nature, and these laws are a fact of creation that is not amenable to change or alteration. It is vital to know these facts, not to be confused about the part where we may intervene and where we might not. In my book, *Until They Change What Is in Their Souls*, I elaborated on this subject. What concerns us here is to fathom the genesis of 'will', not to discuss why God had the will originate in such and such causes: for this last point concerns God Alone, and there is no harm in our not having access to that aspect, as our discussion is concerned with knowing how to manipulate that connection between causes and effects.

Will comes into being once the human comes to know of an ideal supported by historical evidence: the sound *fitrah* accepts this ideal and adopts it to be an agent of enhancing and supporting.

Ibn Taimiyah has something useful in this connection; he says, in his comment on the Verse "But the deaf will not hear the call, even when they are warned;" (21:45): "To hear truth," he says, "must lead to accepting it, in the same way as one senses movement, and in the same way as when the

heart realizes something this leads to its response accordingly - to sense the congenial leads to being attracted to it; and to sense what is uncongenial leads to being repelled by the object. To just know that the response has not happened is proof enough that its incentive has not happened."²¹

It is in human nature that people are attracted to truth, and they love it, in the same way as they are inclined to support justice, truthfulness, knowledge, generosity - all the things that Allah calls '*ma'ruf*' in His Scripture. Similarly, they are repelled by falsehood and evil, in the same way as they are repelled by oppression, lying, ignorance, and miserliness, and all that God called '*munkar*'. To love '*ma'ruf*' and honor its models and love them is ingrained in people's *fitrah*. A human may be unable, or feel unable, to do an act of '*ma'ruf*', but he/she will admit the merit of those who do it. People may obey their desires and caprices, which prevents them from acting on the dictates of virtue, but they will nevertheless acquiesce in the superiority of good deeds - at least this is true of most people. This must teach us to be intellectually active, to enable people to act in accordance with what they admit to be superior and upright. It is incumbent on us to do our share to emphasize justice

²¹ Ibn Taimiyah, *al-Fatawa*, Vol. 28, p. 195. Al-Riyadh Edition, 1382 A.H.

and truthfulness as human ideals. It is our responsibility, in addition, to demonstrate how justice, truthfulness, and science can be accepted as the basis for human experience.

2. OF WHAT DOES THE WILL CONSIST?

What does purpose or will consist of? Where does it originate? In other words: If work is bred from a pair, will and ability, from what pair does will descend?

We do know that God created everything from a pair; so, can we say that 'will' descends also from a pair: the human ideal, and the human mind or the mental power? In a way that if the ideal is coupled with the human mental power, with the conditions fulfilled, and no impediments blocking its acceptance, (Some of the conditions of the ideal are: Its clarity without vagueness, visibility and accessibility - and this is often not the case) - that once such conditions are met, then, God willing, the will or purpose will come to light - in the same way as all pairs breed their offspring. As in the world of man and wife, certain conditions must be met for the baby to be born, this is so in the case of the will: that the man and wife are there is only the first condition. We have been taught by our Prophet, in his Tradition, "God has

not sent down a disease but has sent down its cure;"²², never to desist about any ailment, to be sure that the cure is in existence, waiting for humans to discover it.

Let it first be held firmly in the mind that humans are essentially ready to uphold an ideal and have the will to work and sacrifice for it. But the pairing of the human mind and the ideal is essential for the will or purpose to come into being.

In the above paragraphs we have introduced certain things about the will: how it comes into being, and where it originates.

It may be noted here that in case the human does not find an ideal worthy of his/her dedication, then he/she may choose an ideal unworthy of living for or dying for: this may be on account of his/her ignorance, or giving way to their desires. But again, the way is open for us to bring to his/her attention the superiority of the worthy ideal, and to enrich their mind with better consciousness, more knowledge - What else are prophets and reformers and callers to justice for? Yes, there are many who work for tempting people to follow the dictates of their desires, and these are hostile and opposed to the reformers: but that is life, the battle of life, and we are here to work for what is good. The Qur'an

²² Reported in Al-Bukhari, the Chapter on Medical Care

teaches us that once 'the Clear Message' (16:35) is conveyed, and once ignorance recedes before the light of truth, people will choose the truth "But most of them do not know the Truth, and so turn away;" (21:24).

Another thing must be pointed out: that the more evident and visible the ideal is, the stronger the will; the better the human is aware of realizing truth in real life, the more the individual is dedicated to it; and the more one learns about the details of truth and the ideal, and the more the dubious points are clarified, the better he/she is capable of working for truth and sacrificing for it.

I hope by now we are more aware of the will or purpose: I have tried my best to trace it to its origins, to show how it descends from a pair, and how its offspring, good work, comes into being. But we may not leave it here. We need to work more to shed more light on good intention: we are here concerned with good Islamic work, and this cannot come by except with the existence of good intention; and good intention will not take place without the unequivocal manifestation of the ideal, for it to be quite clearly manifested to the human mind. Of course, the more the mind is still upon *fitrah*; i.e. the less it is contaminated with any corrupting elements, the chances for success will be higher. But even after the *fitrahs* of people are spoiled, the chance

for reform is still open. I do realize that many people lose heart when they see many people, under certain circumstance, how most people turn their back to the truth, and how this is naturally picked up by the younger generation - in the way Noah, peace be upon him, put it, as reported by the Qur'an: "they [the disbelievers] will breed none but wicked ungrateful ones;" (71:27). This point will be handled under our discussion of ability. But I must hasten to clarify this doubt in relation with Noah's statement. When Noah says: "they [the disbelievers] will breed none but wicked ungrateful ones;" (71:27), he is not saying that the children are born evil and disbelieving: this is indeed incompatible with God's ways and laws, as for example we find them stated in an authentic Tradition of the Prophet, which says: "Not one newborn but is born bearing *alfitrah*;"²³. Noah, peace be upon him, only meant the culture in which a newborn comes to the world, and which shapes its mind-set - that culture is thoroughly corrupted.

Something also must be said about the experience of Noah, peace be upon him: This experience is cited whenever people wish to defend the failure of the call to Islam, even if, according to them, one has fulfilled all the conditions. But it must be noted in this connection that meeting the conditions

²³ *Sahih Muslim*, Chapter on Destiny

at the level of the individual is not equal to meeting the conditions at the level of society.

I took up this aspect in detail in my book *Until They Change What Is in Their Souls* - where I demonstrated that the Verse "Verily never will Allah change the conditions of a people until they change what is in their souls (and minds);" (13:11) concerns responsibility in this world not responsibility in the Hereafter, and concerns social change and not individual change. And hence, that Noah, peace be upon him, was unable to change his society may not be cited as evidence that Islamic *da'wa* work may not fulfil its objectives, even when purpose and ability are realized. It does not justify our failure. Here are some details about that:

- 1) Noah, peace be upon him, was successful, as viewed in the light of older Prophets - for God did drown all the disbelievers and saved all the believers in the ark. It was a decisive victory for them, and a Sign for all the following generations.
- 2) Abilities vary with the variation of times and ages.
- 3) Surveying the experiences of prophets will bring out a clear phenomenon: That, before Muhammad's, peace be upon him, Message, the enemies of God were destroyed with some disaster; and the Qur'an

discusses this in many locations, as, for example, in this Verse: "Against some, We sent a violent tornado (with showers of stones); some were caught by a mighty blast; some We caused the earth to swallow up; and some We drowned in the water: it was not Allah Who injured and oppressed them: they injured and oppressed their own souls;" (29:40).

With the advent of Islam, things changed. Muhammad's, peace be upon him, triumph over his enemies was not through natural disasters; it was through laws applied by the believers, and victory came at the hands of believers; hence the following comment in the Qur'an:

"But if it had been Allah's Will, He could certainly have exacted retribution from them Himself; but He lets you fight in order to test you, some with others;" (46:4)

Which indicates that Prophethood had risen to a new level. Muhammad, peace be upon him, and his followers, established a new society through the normal efforts of humans. This is an important thing to notice, for by noting it many impediments are removed from our way. We must connect this to Muhammad's, peace be upon him, being a Messenger to all humankind; and was the last and seal of prophets: no one was to have an argument after this Prophet;

no one could say, for instance: "How is it possible for us to triumph over our enemies, when we were not supported with miracles, in the way previous prophets were supported?"

Our system must be that of our Prophet Muhammad, ﷺ (peace be upon him); and this is just one of the things that distinguish him from all the other prophets.

Heaven's support comes more to a group than to an individual; we may see this better in light of the Qur'an's addressing the Messenger, peace be upon him, as in following Verse of the Qur'an:

"whether We show you in this life some part of what We promise them - or We take your soul to Our mercy before that - in any case it is to Us that they shall all return;" (40:77).

As an individual, the Messenger, peace be upon him, is told not to be sure of surviving until he witnessed the defeat of his enemies: he might witness it and might not. But it is not so when speaking of the group, as we see in the following Verse of the Qur'an: "Allah has promised, to those among you who believe and work righteous deeds, that He, of a surety, grant them in the land, inheritance of power, as He granted it to those before them; that He will establish in authority their religion - the one which He has chosen for them; and that He will change their state, after the fear in

which they lived, to one of security and peace: "They will worship me alone and not associate anything with Me;" (24:55). It is the community that is given such a promise, rather than the individual.

It is in self-defense that some cite the story of Noah - it comes in compliance with the attitude of: "It is my duty to strive, but it is not to see success." This, or any similar statement is put forward to assert that it is some external force that is responsible for any shortcoming in Muslims: this relieves them of the need of discussing the pressing problems. What is vital is really to enable the Muslim to see problems in their right perspective.

So, no matter how many old situations we need to raise, our focus must always be on the Muslim's perspective of things and how to deal with problems. I keep trying to remove from the Muslim's way any impediments to free him/her from worry for the wrong reason. For instance, the Muslim does not devote effort to unveiling what it was that led to the failure of Islamic movements in the Modern age. He/she does not seem to realize that any failure has behind it mistakes in conception on the part of Muslim thinkers - he/she seems rather to assume that these thinkers knew all that is there to know - with contented conscience he/she assumes that those persons had met all the conditions for

success that should be met, but they did not succeed: No harm, according to them, since, "We need to do our share, but we do not have to succeed," as a common saying goes: Which is saying that things are not in the hands of workers, but are determined by destiny.

Does this demonstrate to you, dear reader, why I keep harping on the problems which keep hidden, deep in their holes? It is, in plain words, to hunt down the unnoticed factors that hamper the progress of the Islamic movement. This must be one aspect of the heavy burdens and yokes mentioned in the Qur'an (as in 7:157), which impeded their progress towards reviewing their own behavior, and to repent where repentance is required.

It is really one of the major impediments to the Muslims' reviewing and reassessing their previous activity this belief in success being uncertain even when good work is fulfilled and put forward. They assume that we may have been right in every way, but it was God's Will that we do not succeed - for a reason that He Alone knows. No issue is more serious than this in justifying in the Muslim's eyes this view of the origin of failure. This also entails that the Muslim young men and women do not feel the need to specialize in the disciplines that may reveal our shortcomings, and this of course further complicates the dilemma.

I may write and write on this, but indeed I do not feel I can do justice to this issue. All I can claim to realize is shedding some light that stirs this issue and compels some minds to take it up in earnest; it is to rid the Muslim from an attitude of complacency about our endeavors. At present, we seem to assume that there is nothing wrong with our efforts; that we may do things perfectly without reaping the hoped-for results.

Let me repeat and that the discussion in these pages is of the community's efforts and not the individual's. The individual may really do all that can be done without reaping the results. An individual's success in this world is caused, in large part, by the kind of life offered by society and the kind of guarantees and services it provides to individuals. We have an example of this - that the individual will not necessarily be there to witness the harvest of efforts - in a Tradition of the Prophet, peace be upon him, addressed to Adiy bin Hatem

He said to Hatem: "If you live long enough, you will see the unprotected woman travel on her camel from the town of Hirah in Iraq until she comes to the Ka'ba in Mecca without fearing anyone but Allah ... If you live long enough, you will see the Muslims opening up the treasures of Khosrau (the Persian ruler); and if you live long enough, you will see

a Muslim come out with his hands full of gold seeking to give it in charity, and nobody accepting it [because people have no need for it]." Then Adiy added: "I have seen the unaccompanied woman travel from Hirah to the Ka'ba in Mecca, fearing no one but Allah; I was among those who opened up Khosrau's treasures; and those of you who live long enough will see what the Prophet, peace be upon him, said of the man coming out with his hands full of gold, but finding none to accept it."²⁴

There is indeed ample evidence, most compelling evidence, that what befalls Muslims proceeds from their own behavior, as indicated in the Verse of the Qur'an, "Say to them: 'It is from yourselves;'" (3:165) but we need to work more to lift all ambiguity or uncertainty engulfing this issue: to exactly determine the gaps and shortcomings in the Muslims' stance, to have some fine measures, to pinpoint the aspects of our approach where we may do better: that there are things like viruses deep inside us is certain, but we have not brought them under inspection.

At the moment, a Muslim is unable to act with any efficiency since he/she supposes that there is nothing wrong with Muslims and Islamic movements; that any failure that Muslims are encountering stems from some force or entity

²⁴ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Part 5; Chapter on Merits; No. 100. Al-Muniriah press.

external to them: they can easily cite God's destiny, imperialism, the agents in the region, and the like - but not the real factor of some misconceptions of the Muslims concerning their problems.

It is curious how the misconceptions have acquired such solidity and sacredness that nothing may shake them: solidity and sacredness that defy the Qur'an, the laws of the world, and the Creator who has laid down this system according to which not doing one's share must be punished in this world. As things stand at present, to suggest that the leading elite in us have not done what they should have done to perceive things and help us perceive what is wrong with us - to just suggest that this is the crux of the problem arouses such outrage that it is deemed more serious than all hope of getting out of the wilderness. Hence this utter silence concerning self-examination. There is something quite childish about this attitude: Things can happen without any cause in the little child's mind, and Muslims seem to assume that what happens to us has no definite laws that determine how it came about.

But things should not be left like that. We need to shed a revealing light on the false attitude behind which the Muslim hides himself/herself - it is really doing the Muslim world a service to help the Muslim see himself/herself and how

things go: for once they see things for what they are, they will feel ashamed of protecting their self-esteem in this ridiculous way. As long as Muslims bear a lot of false concepts through which they interpret things and on which basis they dream of finding a way out, they will definitely reach nowhere.

But to bring forth what is at present remote, and to shed light where there is darkness, will require a lot of prudence and experience. Let us reflect on the *mu'azzin* (i.e. caller to prayer) who one morning was so late in calling the *adhan* for the dawn prayer that they objected, "What happened, man? You are so late that the sun will be rising in a short while. Your watch must be quite behind." "No," he said. "My watch is never behind. It must be that the sun is rising too early today."

Such failure in self-analysis is of course not confined to the Muslim world. When Vesalius brought out in 1541 a new edition of Galen's Greek book on anatomy, he was amazed that the great Greek physician had committed errors in anatomy that could have been avoided with the simplest dissection of the human body. But that was too much for many to say at that time: Dubois (Vesalius's former teacher) commented: "No, it is not that Galen was wrong, but the human body has undergone change since Galen's time." Will

Durant comments, in his *Story of Civilization*,²⁵: "To this good man, any miracles are possible, but that Galen is wrong is not possible - or that our watch is slow."

We cannot say that the Muslims' problem has come out into light as clearly as this: It is specifically in how clear we are about our problem that brings us face to face with tackling it. This has not happened, for we can still find all kinds of justifications for our behaviors. This has not even come under awareness, and it must come under awareness before we can hope to solve it.

There is no harm in revealing some shortcomings in us, and the new generation's realizing that, in the same way as people before us were not perfect, we are not perfect. It adds to one's worth to treat him/her as a human who has their merits and shortcomings. We must accept this to help our young men and women get along and rise to the new challenges. We must not take this process of noticing shortcomings as an insult or belittling of any human. Let us remember the Tradition of the Prophet, peace be upon him, in which he prays: "Forgive me, Lord, for all my sins: those I did knowingly, and those I did unknowingly; what I did in

²⁵ Vol. VI, p. 871 Simon and Schuster, New York, 1957.

public, and what I did privately; what I did in ignorance

...²⁶

This prayer of the Prophet's must teach us not to raise ourselves above slips and mistakes, knowingly or unknowingly; it must be a great incentive to keep reviewing our behaviors, and to be alert to the occasions when we chose what is erroneous - maybe without being conscious of it.

Having said enough about the merit of admitting our slips and shortcomings, let me try to go one more step in shedding light - at least I hope it will remove one more hurdle from our way. I may take up Dr. Yusuf al-Qaradwi's point in his book: *A Lesson from Our Second Setback: What Caused Our Defeat ... and How Can We Be Victorious?*

Al-Qaradawi analyzes the Setback (i.e. our defeat before Israel in June 1967): he comes to a critical point when he wonders: "Is it a problem of leaders or public?" He discusses the political atmosphere and the awaited Salahu-d-Din (i.e. Saladin). Then he started a new chapter under the title: "The Centrality of Thinking", which title, to say the truth, exhilarated me - it was like a dear thing that you come upon after a long search. In that chapter he said: "For getting out of our wilderness we need *jihad*, and for *jihad* certain

²⁶ Reported by Ahmad bin Hanbal, in his *al-Musnad*, Vol. 4, p. 437

changes are essential, and mobilization is essential; and for change and mobilization we need a believing leadership, and leadership does not appear in an *ummah* that has not realized the conditions for it - all this brings us back full circle to the same beginning: for the *ummah* requires a leadership, and leadership cannot appear without the *ummah*'s realizing the right conditions for it." But, with his mind saturated with the Science of *Usul* (i.e. the Basics of Islamic legal thought), al-Qaradawi goes on to say: "The truth is that there is no going around in circles, and no contradiction. For the required and awaited leader to appear, we need a free land which gives them support; a solid basis which supplies such a leader with strength; and an intellectual current which calls for such a leader and raises in the *ummah* a sense of the vitality of having such a person.

"In this appears the responsibility of the intellectuals and thinkers - the part they need to play in preparing the *ummah*, and mobilizing it for the crucial stage."

Reading the above paragraph, I felt triumphant, for here is this scholar leading us out of the turning round and round in a vicious circle; for al-Qaradawi does indicate the exit - maybe in a more expressive way than any other Muslim thinker. It is a vital addition or stage we would have covered, to learn this lesson of not blaming the political

leaders or the public, and to blame rather the intellectuals and leaders of thought.

It is when you have toiled long and hard in your endeavor to find a way out that you appreciate the above discussion. I do not say that the addition is such a big one, but it is vital: it is an accomplishment which, if well comprehended, is sure to take us from one perspective to a higher and more advanced one.

Al-Qaradawi elaborates further concerning the kind of thinking we need to acquire; and he defines that as: "unrestricted, original, bold, and realistic thought;" and that is the 'genuine thought'. He emphasized the characteristic of 'unrestricted' thought, and elaborated it as being 'original' thinking; and original thinking is thinking that refers to our own *ummah*. But he does remember to affirm that being 'original' must not "mean closing the outlets between us and the world around us; and we must not be intimidated at the hugeness of idols and their custodians everywhere in the world."

It is good thought, what we have above, but we can go one further step. I must make it clear that what I now say is not al-Qaradawi's, though I do admit that his writing helped me go this other step. What I wish to do is to inquire: "If the

critical responsibility is that of the intellectuals and the intelligentsia, how do we go about solving this problem?"

Anyone would say it is for those men and women, the men and women of thought, to say what part they can undertake to fulfil. But the point here is that we do not have such men and women who qualify to be called thinkers: such men and women as we have do not rise to be of a quality that represents a current which may attract a reasonable number of people. We really do not know what distinguishes a man of thought from the rest of people. So, if al-Qaradawi finds the first and major hurdle to be holding the men and women of thought responsible for our deadlock, we may add that the more basic task is for us to admit that we do not have this group as yet.

Maybe for the average Muslim, the Muslim thinkers are there, but some other people are responsible for not taking their thought seriously. And my point here, which I alone am responsible for, is that we do not have such individuals: Muslim thinkers as such. I do realize that the shock must be big enough when we compound the first shortcoming with a further one. And it is not my purpose to create shocks for the young Muslim, but at the same time it is my purpose to make the Muslim realize the seriousness of the situation - it

is my purpose not to let him/her hold on to the present figures as the ultimate thing that we need.

I do realize that the intellectual leaders did give guidance for some part of the road, and my present discussion must add to that. I am mindful at the same time that it must be followed by more advanced thought, for there is no point at which this progress must cease.

It is a grave mistake that many leaders of thought do not make it clear that what thought their listeners and readers can obtain from them is never the end of the road, not the maximum that they can obtain, that it is only a step on the way. In this our old scholars were ahead of us, for they used to say: "Do not mimic us, nor copy Malek nor al-Shafiee nor al-Awza'ee nor al-Thawree: seek original knowledge from original sources, the same way as they acquired it."²⁷

But such exhortations went mostly unheeded, for the opposite current was more influential. You find the Muslim World acting on a policy contrary to the above advice: they not only mimicked Malek, but people of much less caliber.

And that is when the scholars were careful to urge their disciples to maintain the necessary intellectual freedom and development, so you can imagine what happens when the

²⁷ Reported by al-Fulani in his *al-Eeqath*, p. 113; and Ibn al-Qayyem in *A'lam al-Muaqqi'in*, Vo. 2, p. 302, attributing it to Imam Ahmad.

contemporary scholars and thinkers do not make it plain that they are not the end of the road.

Our problem boils down mainly to our ignoring the Signs indicated in the Qur'an as 'the Signs in the regions of the earth and in the souls' (41:53): our ignoring the pivotal part such Signs will play, as the Qur'an alerts us, in corroborating the Signs, or Verses, of the Qur'an. We are not really awake to the fact that the facts of the world are true and reliable sources of knowledge. This must be self-evident, but is it? Is it even in the minds of the leaders of thought in the Muslim World? Do they refer in earnest to the Signs, to the facts, of the world around us, and the world of human life, to draw facts? Why should it be that all the leaders of knowledge and thought related to the Signs of the world and human life are, at this time, from outside the Muslim World?

The first step in this connection is to realize how poorly equipped we are to go about our problems. It is our responsibility to make it plain to the rising generation how ignorant we are - we need to pass this over honestly to help the rising men and women look for knowledge outside our circle. Is it not self-evident that our miserable condition is the result of a miserable level of knowledge? So, let us declare to those who are anxious to bring about a better

condition that it must not be expected to be pinpointed by the present scholars, that it is above their level to find out the problems and solutions.

But I may again affirm my pleasure at that mention of the leaders of thought in al-Qaradawi's study as one of the two sectors he specifies in connection with a major historical event, by pinning any rise in the *Ummah* to the two sectors of leaders of thought and leaders of the political scene.

At least, to have such a title 'Responsibility of the Leadership of Thought' is a revival of the responsibility of scholars and their position in relation to the public and its political leadership. This function of the scholars has really met with much negligence: for Muslim scholars have ceased to compete in acquiring the necessary ability for fulfilling it. We have reached a stage when our scholar often can notice the mote in the other's eye, but not the beam in our own eye. It is an early symptom of the ebbing of knowledge when we enjoy reproaching everyone, which is quite the opposite of what the Messenger, peace be upon him, taught us, reporting his Lord:

"O My servants, what is being recorded is your own deeds, which I calculate accurately, and then bring you to account for them and recompense you accordingly. So, let him/her who finds they have done a good deed praise Allah

for it; but, if they find in their record other than that, let him/her blame none but themselves."²⁸.

This is not our condition at all, for, to blame others rather than blaming ourselves, we are prepared to assert that the sun has changed its course.

To blame oneself is repentance - and it is called self-analysis in modern terminology. Unless one has this ability of discovering his/her own shortcomings and sins, he/she will not be able to repent: see how it worked in the case of Adam and Eve, who succeeded in admitting their sin, as the Qur'an reports: "Our Lord! we have wronged our own souls: if You do not forgive us and do not bestow upon us Your Mercy, we shall certainly be lost;" (7:23). Unless one can repent, he/she cannot put right his/her behavior: and without that one's affairs will not go straight.

It is too tempting for us to find others' faults, but it is equally easy for us to gloss over our own faults. We still seem to assume that the leaders of thought in the Muslim World have done all they need to do, by acquiring all the knowledge they should have learned, and have imparted such knowledge to others, and, after all that, things did not work well.

²⁸ Reported in *Sahih Muslim*, the Chapter on Uprightness

It is the responsibility of the leaders of thought to make things clear, to first examine and fathom the sources of our problems, and then to expound things to the rest of us, including the politicians.

But the Muslim World has not yet come to deal with the world of ideas: it still is obsessed with the world of things and persons. The part that thinking plays, and the part of the thinkers, seem to be lingering in the rear, the same as the poet Abu Tammam assigned to ideas and thinking more than a millennium back, when he said: "It is the sword, not the book, that must have its say." It is no exaggeration to say that what governs our minds is the spirit drawn from the popular legends like that of the hero 'Antarah of the pre-Islamic Arab history.

But we do have material which exhilarates the heart. It is in this connection that I quote here a rather long extract from Muhammad al-Talibi, who wrote, in an essay entitled: "History and the Problems of Today and Tomorrow":

"It might be that the failure of politics in our world, and its passive attitudes on so many occasions, are accounted for by the lack of specialists among us in the issues connected with which we have relations of coexistence or conflict. I did say before that history must be for us a framework for producing political cadres: this is not to say that a statesman

needs to be a historian, for history is, like any major discipline, an occupation that consumes life, leaving no room for anything else. What I rather mean is that a political leader must find around him, in competent historians, and in well-built historical studies, what sheds light before him, enabling him to see his way well, to know how to deal with things and how to speak, and to be successful - not because, as the ancients assumed, he can just pick up ready-made solutions from the past and apply them to the present - this can really lead to catastrophic crises - but because, as the logicians say, to give your judgment concerning an issue, you need to conceive that issue well. And history is a great help in conceiving things correctly. Now, if the above premises are accepted as right, we may go on to say: The failure of present-day politics to maturely address the current problems is, in large part, a failure of the university first of all."²⁹ .

He cites, in supporting his argument concerning the importance of the historical studies in solving our problems, the problem of the Arab-Islamic union; he says about that:

"We have so far failed in solving the most vital problem of our age - I mean the problem of the Arab-Islamic union -

²⁹ Journal of 'Alam al-Fikr', Vol. Five, Issue One, 1974. "History and the Problems of Today and Tomorrow" by Prof. Muhammad al-Talibi, p. 24

since we have not really grasped its dimension; and we have failed in this conception as a result of our lack of appreciating the historical analysis - in a word, we have failed to provide the politicians with the basis that may ensure success in their efforts."³⁰

This kind of approach is very unlike what we are accustomed to. The usual thing is for us take as granted that we know all that is there to know, but it is some mischievous people who contradict our efforts. We do not say that the people we address do not have enough knowledge to find the right way to solving the problem. We have not really offered them the solution, and this seems to be outside our consideration.

And when Prof. al-Talibi says that "the failure of politics today to deal maturely with the affairs facing us is really the failure of the university in the first place;" it means that those who are the source of intellectual matters have failed to appreciate the value and impact of thought: they have failed to unveil as clearly as possible the Signs of the world and human life which shed all the necessary light on truth.

Sayyid Qutb has a relevant essay about the power of the word, i.e. of thought; he says: "There were moments when, in the midst of the bitter struggle which our *ummah* went

³⁰ Ibid, p. 28

through during the previous era, I felt desperate, and, out of my despair, I used to ask myself: "What is the use of writing? What good do all those articles which fill the newspaper columns do? Is it not better to obtain a gun and some bullets, then you get even with the tyrannical leaders? What good can it do to sit at a desk and vent your vexation in words, in stuff that does not get into those heads, while the best thing to do is to shatter those heads? Let me say with honesty that such thoughts used torment me, and fill my soul with gloom and despair - I also used to feel impotent, unable to do anything of value. But, fortunately, those moments did not last long: I used to regain hope in the strength of the word. I used to meet some of those who read an essay of mine, or received some letters from some others, and this regained for me the trust in this tool. I used to think that such persons were setting an appointment with me on something vague in their souls; something they sense to be there, without being clear about it, but they awaited, and were preparing themselves for, and looked forward to with confidence!

"I felt that the writings of the freedom fighters do not all go in vain; that they did awaken some of the sleepers, and stirred some of the dormant people; that, in their entirety, they consisted a current that had its direction - though not

yet clear or definite: but there is no doubt that something was developing from the tips of those pens. But, even so, I used to come again to encounter the voice of despair and gloom. One idea that used to occur to me is: Is not this faith you attach to the strength of the word only the result of inability to do something else? Is it not just duping oneself to give oneself the feeling that one was doing something, and to overcome the feeling of indolence and falling from doing one's duty? It was like this during all the stages of our past struggle - until it was God's will that the new dawn did rise."³¹

The above paragraphs, which were issued in the heat of struggle, must be treated as an essential document that depict the Muslim's condition during a certain stage. It is true, as Qutb, affirms, that to fail to realize the importance of the idea and its vital part will lead to much blame, and it fills the soul with gloom and despair. One will really feel frustrated that he/she is not doing something of value.

How painful is the situation accurately depicted in the above words! That the best expression of faith is not to express yourself in words, that the words, or in fact the ideas behind the words, are no more than the outlet of the helpless

³¹ Sayyid Qutb. *Dirasat Islamiyyah* (i.e. *Islamic Studies*). Third Edition. P. 124.

who have nothing better to do; and that the new dawn was embodied not in words but in what the gun can accomplish ... If things are like that, then it is to the false dawn that we attach our hopes. It is a painful situation well-expressed in the above essay.

It has been a long diversion - I realize that; and it has been because many people still assume that unwavering will and perfect ability may be there, and not lead necessarily to successful work.

3. SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WILL

A. That the will is transmitted through social inheritance

I have written enough about the good or successful work - that it is bred by its parents: ability and will. I have then discussed the will, how it comes to be born, and who its parents are.

Let us now discuss a certain characteristic of the will: that it may be inherited - not inherited in the biological sense, but in the social sense. An individual may inherit the ideal from his/her society; conversely, a society can

deliberately inculcate an ideal in the minds of the children who grow up in it.

A society has its direct and indirect ways, and conscious and unconscious ways, of inculcating the ideals that it upholds into the minds of the children who grow up in it. No society is conceivable without will, and no will is conceivable without an ideal - no matter what kind of ideal. There must be an ideal, a kind of North Star, towards which the will moves. The children grow up idealizing the ideal, even before they realize their value and truthfulness. Their will picks it up and clings to it through social inheritance. All societies transmit to their individuals their ideals - for otherwise the individuals would not live within those societies, nor would they feel estranged when they have to stray from their societies.

Having said that, however, does not mean that what one inherits from his/her society is fixed and inalienable - both communities and individuals can change their purposes, though that is a difficult task: no difficult task is absolutely impossible; change is within human capacity to achieve - once the right laws are applied. To be sure of that, one only needs to review history, for people did effect changes. What humans need to change is to know what is true and what is false, and to know the laws, or *sunan*, of change - and once

they have had command of that they will be able to change. The idea here is that when truth is adopted as an ideal, it will settle until it becomes a legacy that one generation transmits to the next. To reach this stage of having the ideal of truth as an inheritance that descends from one generation to the next is when a substantial number of people understand well the nature of truth and the method of the ideal's inheritance: For this a community needs some individuals who keep monitoring how these things are transferred and correcting their progress whenever there is need for that.

This task seems to be quite absent from the minds in the Muslim World, and that may account for the Muslims' humble position in the world. What descends through social inheritance without monitoring and control can in the same way vanish without anybody being conscious of its disappearance, and this again happens in the Muslim World.

The social inheritance happens more vividly in wills than in abilities, for the individual inherits from his/her societies what to hold as sacred, and his/her purposes, not the abilities - this should be obvious, for the engineer's son/daughter does not become automatically an engineer, nor does a physician's son/daughter a physician, without devoting the necessary time and effort.

I say this for, though in both abilities and will the inheritance factors and the deliberate and personal factors have their part, inheritance has a greater role in inculcating the ideal, while conscious effort has a greater part in developing abilities.

B. The level of will

There is more to say about the level of will. I have discussed above the genesis of will, and I have discussed how it represents the perceptive system in the human. But the question here is: do we say of the basic needs of the human - his/her need for food, drink, marriage, and so on, do we call them aspects of will? Or do we preserve the term 'will' for a different function, superior to such needs?

It may be important to take this up for discussion: one may notice the will as operative at the level of taking your pen in hand to write, for one does not stretch the hand to pick up the pen without some purpose behind it. So, yes, there is will behind this trifle. But, on the other hand, there is will behind an act as momentous as sacrificing one's life for an ideal: this is a will that occupies a pivotal place, so that all the other acts of will operate in serving it. And this is the role of *tawhid* (believing in Only One God) in Islam.

It transpires from the above that there are levels of the will, and here are three levels:

1. A human requires food for subsistence: so, there is will at this level;
2. A human requires marriage to procreate his/her species, and this is another level of will;
3. And a human requires a faith, a primary idea, an ideal, to elevate his/her species.

To seek nutrition and marriage are inborn in the human; but seeking a faith is not as clear as that.

It is true that a human being is a social animal, that the instinct to live in a society is an innate stimulus. But in the same way as there are laws for the body to be nourished properly, and there are laws for marriage to be entered into in a proper way, faith has its laws in order to produce a sound society.

It is true that there is will behind behaviors like eating or marrying, but this is not of concern to us in the present work. We need to focus on the ideal, the will behind embracing religion; accepting the faith of believing in the One God. We may quote in this connection a Tradition of the Prophet's, peace be upon him, in which he says:

"For him who migrates [to Medina] meaning to acquire some material gain, or seeking to marry a certain woman - then let him secure what he has migrated for, and there will be nothing for him beyond that. But he who has migrated for the sake of Allah and His Messenger, then his migration is counted as for Allah and His Messenger."³²

We may say then that the will can be attached to any of many purposes, but the will which is accepted in Islam is a particular will: It is the will that provides the individual with an ideal, and raises him/her above the animal, whose will is confined to seeking nourishment and mating. The human does have a will similar to lower species, but puts it in the service of the higher will, the will of earning Allah's pleasure - hence what we find in the Prophet's Tradition: "To fight with the intention of having Allah's pleasure as superior - that is fighting in the Way of the Almighty Allah;"³³. Let me remind the reader of my saying above that one may attach his/her striving to a defective ideal - and we call it ideal in this case because it is so in the eyes of the particular person - though it is not so in reality. As for the Muslim, his/her ideal is specified by virtue of his/her being a Muslim. Yes, he/she does seek and obtains his/her victuals,

³² *Sahih al-Bukhari*. First Tradition

³³ *Sahih al-Bukhari*; Chapter on Knowledge

in a way that to die because one has of his/her own volition stopped eating is counted as suicide. But at the same time a Muslim is not allowed to hold the desire for food as his/her ideal. He/she does work to earn their sustenance, because it is their duty to earn it. In the same way, it is right to have other ideals, like being loyal to one's nation, homeland, and the like - but one upholds all the above within limits ... To trespass beyond those limits would be trespassing the limits set down by God - in the same way as trespassing the legal marriage to illegal relationships.

We may illustrate the defective will with another Tradition. It was when the Messenger, ﷺ, (peace be upon him), saw some Muslims shouting tribal slogans, like 'The so-and-so family is superior to all!' and he said: "Leave it off; for it is rotten."³⁴.

There is on the other hand a sound will which fits a human's dignity and distinguished value: This is the will taught by Allah, the Almighty; and it is what we discussed under the term '*al-fitrah*': when an uncorrupted *fitrah* is offered the right ideal, it will find it appropriate, and prefers it to other ideals. And even when the *fitrah* is corrupted, much good can be done by demonstrating a proper will and

³⁴ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, in the comments on the Sura 63

sound ideals - This is indeed the way the great religions and good ideals disseminated.

And when we speak here of the sound ideal, we mean ideas which, when upheld by a society, they help it go ahead and up. And this is not the will we need for our everyday activities: It is holding tightly the ideal which organizes life and determines a human's relations with other human beings and with the world at large. It is upholding the principle of appealing to God Alone for mapping out the way of life: this is the essence of the Oneness of God, and turning to God Alone: It is referring to God, and to None else for guiding one's will. As Ibn Taimiyah put it: "It is to worship none but Allah, and not to worship Him except in the way He revealed - This is indeed what 'There is no god but God; Muhammad is the Messenger of God' means."

Another characteristic of the will is that: It mostly comes into being full-grown, not bit by bit. It is true that in some cases a person converts from one faith to another in steps, but it mostly happens by transferring from one faith to another in one giant step, and the transformation appears in all aspects of his/her life. So, this happens in connection with will, but not in ability, not so fast.

We can ascertain this fact by reviewing the conversion of Muslims during the early days of Islam. One finds several

cases of men or women who were non-believers in the morning, and believers in the same evening - and they turned out to be among the most enthusiastic believers. Notice the difference between the light of faith at one switch and the gradual process of one's acquiring some profession, to be a physician or an engineer - this cannot happen in one day or a few days. To master a discipline, one needs to work hard and to put in a lot of effort and patience. The Muslim World admires those who convert to Islam in one step - Well, that is great; but what about the sustained effort of many years for one's faith to have effect in the world? It is good to feel ecstatic when we witness a conversion to Islam, but we should be equally keen to see the qualification needed to do good service to one's faith.

C. The will can be evaluated and measured

We can measure somebody's will against his/her willingness to sacrifice life and money - once you find one prepared to sacrifice his/her life and money for the sake of a certain cause, you can say he/she has reached the highest degree of will. The Qur'an supports this conclusion when it says:

"Only those are Believers who have believed in Allah and His Messenger, and have never since doubted, but have striven with their goods and their persons in the Cause of Allah: such are the sincere ones;" (49:15) and "Allah has purchased of the Believers their persons and their goods; for theirs in return is the Garden of Paradise;" (9:111).

On the other hand, to see someone who is cowardly or mean: cowardly in the sense of being unprepared to go ahead in risking one's life in the cause of the faith he/she professes; or mean in the sense of being unprepared to pay for the sake of the cause he/she professes; he/she is proving to have no deep faith; at the same time, it is *fitrah* to give away life and money in the cause of the faith one upholds.

This measure reveals that the kind of 'will' we are discussing here is not the kind of will attached to trivial, every day, matters - it is rather the will when attached to an ideal: the basic and essential will, for which one may sacrifice life and money: it is so because the ideal is here held to be superior in value to life and money. If the individual is not prepared to sacrifice life and money for the sake of what he/she believes in, then the truest criterion of faith is missing. We often see the opposite, really, that a human holds money and survival as superior to their faith, and the individual is here letting himself/herself be

submissive to purposes other than their faith. The Qur'an says about the latter type: "You will indeed find them, of all people, most greedy of life;" (2:96); and "Say: 'If it be that your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your mates, or your kindred; the wealth that you have gained; the commerce in which you fear a decline; or the dwellings in which you delight - are dearer to you than Allah, or His Messenger, or striving in His cause - then wait until Allah brings about His Command;" (9:24).

We notice that many societies take luxurious life and per capita income, and just preserving physical existence, as their criteria of good life; but the Qur'an does not take these measures to be the right measure of good life. When nations propose a five-year or a ten-year development plan to increase income, that is not accepted by the Muslim, as long as the human's humanity is not realized.

The Qur'an says about this:

"It is not your wealth nor your sons, that will bring you nearer to Us in degree: but only those who believe;" (34:37).

The idea here is not to depreciate the value of economy, nor to neglect the material blessing given by God. It is rather what position we assign to economy in relation to its ethical impact. We must realize the importance of economy, but a doctrine that attaches its view to the farthest horizons (i.e.

Islam), does not take economy as the real destination - for economy does not look beyond the survival of the species, rather than the elevating of the species. It is possible for advances in technology to enable the humankind attain prosperity in the material sense, but it does not automatically help humans to elevate their human aspects. In Islam, wealth is only good in so far as it realizes the human's humanity. Here is a *hadith* (Tradition of the Prophet, peace be upon him) in this connection: "Good money is quite right for a good person;"³⁵; and we may refer to these Verses of the Qur'an: "To those weak of understanding do not make over your property, which Allah has made a means of support for your life;" (4:5); and "Say: 'Who has forbidden the beautiful gifts of Allah, which He has produced for His servants, and the things, clean and pure, which He has provided for sustenance?' Say: 'They are, in the life of this world, for those who believe, and purely for them on the Day of Judgment';" (7:32).

How to view wealth and its possible part in corrupting nations or bringing on their downfall may be seen in another *hadith*:

"By Allah, what I am worried about is not that you suffer poverty ... I am worried that the material wealth will

³⁵ *Musnad of Imam Ahmad*; Vol. 4, p. 197

be within your reach, as it was to previous peoples; that you compete for it, in the same way as the previous peoples competed for it, which will cause your downfall as it caused their downfall;"³⁶

One wonders why this age of ours is still dominated by the same mental situation which predominated when the human was scared of hunger since he/she did not have the technological skill that wards off hunger - why so though the present technological skill guarantees that the human species will not die of hunger - not of the lack of resources, at any rate. If famines hit now, they do not hit on account of the lack of producing enough food - it is rather the moral failure of some fairness in distribution. So, we see that the human has succeeded in economic planning, but has failed to think of having ethical plans.

Therefore, we say that the hunger that today's world faces is not a problem of abilities, but a problem of wills. To restore the balance of wills versus abilities, some sacrifice is required. And the Lord did place in the human psyche this inclination to sacrifice, which may reach the level of sacrificing one's very life, when the ideal which elevates the species requires it, or when a human's dignity is endangered. It may be that we do not at present appreciate the value of

³⁶ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Chapter on War. Al-Muniriyah Edition. Vol. 5. P. 200

this will to sacrifice, to offer what is dear to the individual for the sake of something beyond his/her limits - but there comes a time when it is appreciated. At least we do hear how highly people hold courage, which is one aspect of this ability to sacrifice for the sake of what is dear and superior. This will is a great trait in the human being.

Sacrificing what is dear is such a superior faculty in the human being that, when attached to a great doctrine, it is called '*jihad*'; and there is a widespread idealization of those who sacrifice what is dearest to them in the cause of the superior ideal. It is on account of the superiority of this amazing means, sacrifice, that it must only be confined to promoting human nobility and dignity - it is not to be used for anything but a true ideal: Hence the Prophet's promise of great recompense for those who offer their life for promoting the true ideal: "It is a person who fights to ensure that Allah's commands are held as the highest - that will be counted as fighting in the way of the Almighty Allah;"³⁷. To sacrifice for other causes is to die not in the way of Allah; and it may be as bad as suicide: it is a wasting of this great potential for a false cause - it could be in a way that promotes falsehood and weakens truth. It is, in Qur'anic terminology, a loss of oneself. You meet the converse

situation, in people who stay inert, holding to life, any kind of life; as we see in the following Verse of the Qur'an: "You will indeed find them, of all people, most greedy of life - even more than the idolaters: each one of them wishes he could be given a life of a thousand years: but the grant of such life will not save him from due punishment;" (2:96).

Sacrifice of one's life can also happen for a mistaken cause, as happened to many Germans and Japanese in WWII, and as happened to all nations which believed in their racial superiority: in this way they stirred their subjects to offer sacrifices for the sake of haughtiness and rising over other nations. It may happen of course that the inclination for sacrifice remains idle, as we see in the case of the oppressed peoples, whose *fitrah* has gone west, that they no longer have the will to sacrifice.

The Qur'an condemns both of the last two types of people, the first are termed as the 'haughty' and the second the 'oppressed', and both are combined in the same Verse:

"When angels take the souls of those who die in sin against their souls, they say: 'In what plight were you?' They reply: 'Weak and oppressed we were in the earth';" (4:97)

Both teams' death is classified in the Qur'an as dying for a false cause, while that who sacrifice to ensure that God's

³⁷ *Sahih al-Bukhari*; Chapter on Knowledge

commands are held superior, this is classified as dying in the Cause of Allah.

D. Taking to task those who are devoid of will

Another characteristic of the will is that a person who is devoid of it is blamable, except under certain circumstances that will be elaborated later, in contrast with a person who is devoid of ability, for this latter may be forgiven.

The disbeliever, as well as the hypocrite, are devoid of the will, i.e. upholding the true ideal, with this difference: the disbeliever rejects belief, and declares his/her aversion to it; while a hypocrite claims to uphold belief, while in fact he/she does not embrace it.

By following the Verses of the Qur'an, we find that it condemns those devoid of the will, while it pardons those who are devoid of ability: it really speaks well of the latter, on condition that their will is sound. Let us review some Verses in this connection:

"If they had intended to come out, they would certainly have made some preparation;" (9:46). Here, the Qur'an condemns a certain group for not having the will. More in this type: "Nay! But you do reject Right and Judgment!"

(82:9): this group are described as devoid of belief in religion, and this implies their being devoid of will.

When we turn to those who do have the will but lack the ability, we find the Qur'an excusing them, as in:

"There is no blame on those who are infirm, or ill, or who find no resources to spend on the Cause, if they are sincere in duty to Allah and His Messenger: no ground for complaint can there be against such as do right: and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful;" (9:91); and the above Verse occurs next to:

"And there were, among the desert Arabs also, men who made excuses and came to claim exemption; and those who were false to Allah and His Messenger merely sat inactive. Soon will a grievous penalty seize the Unbelievers among them;" (9:90).

The latter Verse discusses the situation of those who are devoid of will, that they are punishable. And more about those who lack ability:

"Nor is there blame on those who came to you to be provided with mounts, and when you said, 'I cannot find any mounts for you,' they turned back, their eyes streaming with tears of grief that they had no resources wherewith to provide the expenses. The ground is against such as claim exemption while they are rich. They prefer to stay with the

women who remain behind: Allah has sealed their hearts, so they do not know what they miss;" (9:92-93).

The weak may not be blamed, nor the poor, nor the sick, as long as their intention is honest, i.e. if they are intent on doing what is best in support of God and His Messenger - they are sound as far as will is concerned, and they really very deeply wish to do *jihad*, that their tears overflow for missing that wish: we do not need more than their eyes overflowing with tears to ascertain the truth of their intention. About such persons the Prophet, ﷺ, says: "You have left behind, in al-Medina, some people who have been with you, in any valley you have crossed, and in any distance you have covered." "Are you saying that they are with us without leaving al-Medina?" somebody inquired. "Yes, I am," the Prophet said, "for they had a legitimate excuse."³⁸.

The question is then: Under what circumstances is the person with will excused?

When discussing the parents of the will I said: They are the human's mind and the ideal. And it has been expounded that work will not occur without the existence of the will and the ability; and, similarly, the will does not occur unless

³⁸ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Chapter on Jihad

there is the mind and the ideal: should either of these be missing, then there will be no will.

It can be inferred from the above that a person who is without the mental ability is excused. Our scholars used to say: "If He, i.e. God, denies somebody what He has granted others, then what He has ordained is withdrawn (i.e. no longer applicable to that person)." I also explained that the ideal plays in connection with the mind the same role that an aromatic smell plays for the nose. If the nose is healthy, but there is no smell, then no smelling takes place; and if the smell exists, but the olfactory function is defective, there is again no smelling.

From the example we go on to say that if the human has no access to the ideal, or is not endowed with the mental power to understand the ideal, he/she will not be held responsible - he/she is devoid of one of the two fundamental requirements for the coming of the will into being. We may cite several Qur'anic texts in support of this, but here are two:

"nor would We visit Our Wrath until We had sent a messenger to give warning;" (17:15) here, having no access to the ideal, or not being cognizant of the true religion, is taken to be a legitimate excuse for people's not following the true faith.

"On no soul Allah places a burden greater than it can bear;" (2:286). The logic is clear: How would you expect somebody to follow the true faith, the ideal, when he/she has not been endowed with the mental power necessary for perception?

This last notion bears some elaboration: when you say that somebody has not had access to the truth, this can mean either that he/she has not actually been told at all of the truth, or it can mean they have had some notion of it, but not adequate for embracing it (what the Qur'an terms as conveying the clear message).

We know from the Qur'an that someone is not pronounced a 'disbeliever' until 'the clear conveying of message,' or well-expressed representation of the true religion has been carried out. It may be added that it is not for me as individual to say that I have been quite clear and persuasive in presenting religion to somebody, or that I have transmitted the truth and only the truth. I have my limits as a caller, and the receiver has his/her limits to what they can comprehend. What we know for certain is that 'nor is your Lord ever unjust in the least to His servants;' as the Qur'an states (41:46) that not the tiniest detail may be concealed from our Lord; and, as another Verse of the Qur'an says:

"We shall set up scales of justice for the day of Judgment, so that not a soul will be dealt with unjustly in the least. And if there be no more than the weight of a mustard seed, We will bring it to account: and enough are We to take account;" (21:47).

In the same way as the olfactory sense does not create an aromatic odor, that it can only sense such smell if it reaches it, the mind is not responsible for creating the ideal - it is responsible for accepting the true ideal if it is presented to it. And this presentation can come either through the revealed texts, or through signs of the world and human life. I find this stance to be compatible with the evidence of the Islamic faith.

Let us see what support there is for this in the revealed text. We read in the Qur'an that, when the Almighty commanded that Adam descend to the earth, He said, as the Qur'an reports:

"and if, as is sure, there comes to you guidance from Me, whosoever follows My guidance, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve;" (2:38); and we find, "nor would We visit with Our Wrath until We have sent a Messenger to give warning;" (17:15).

We find in the Qur'an that the Lord says to a certain type of people: "Did not Messengers come to you from among

yourselves rehearsing to you the Signs of your Lord;" (39:71); "Did no warner come to you;" (67:8); and we find "lest you should say: 'There came unto us no bringer of glad tidings and no warner from evil;'" (5:19).

It is in this trend that we find in the Qur'an:

"Soon will We show them Our Signs in the regions of the earth, and in their own souls, until it becomes manifest to them that this is the Truth;" (41:53).

It must be quite evident from all the above that the mind is not responsible to conceive before it is shown the truth: what it is responsible to do is to distinguish truth from falsehood once they are presented to it. There may well be dispute as to whether enough has been presented to the mind to make it responsible - and there is no harm in this argument, nor does it deny the mind's value; it is on the contrary an affirmation of the mind's vital part.

It is the historian who can appreciate the part of prophethood in the ascent of humankind, for it is such a person who is aware of how things come to take shape: how the human mind cannot bring guidance out of nothing, but can choose true guidance once it is presented to it. And this is supported by the Qur'an, when it says:

"and if, as is sure, there comes to you guidance from Me, whosoever follows my guidance, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve;" (2:38).

This states plainly enough that true guidance descends from heaven, is borne by the Prophets, and it is through them that it is conveyed to people. What level humankind has risen through such messages? we see that the modern man's mind is not the same as the ancient's; though the two minds are identical from a physiological perspective.

We are commanded by the Qur'an to examine how creation started, how the human came to comprehend values, and how he/she was before that. We need to trace how the mind is unable to comprehend things which it had not come in contact with; as, for instance, how the ancient mind was unable to comprehend electricity; and then, once the human mind perceived electricity, it was easy to transmit this perception even to little children.

From this we may go on to notice how humankind is still crawling like babies in perceiving how speaking the truth is preferable to lying, how justice is superior to injustice, and how abiding by the law is better than chaos. People may be loyal to the law of their own nation, but there is nothing like a binding law for the various nations: it is still not accepted as a fact even in the minds of most people.

It is crucial to take up this issue and to give it enough attention: to know how creation started, how the human passed from stage to stage; it is important to know what laws applied to the human while he/she passed from one stage to the next. It is important to realize that we have lived to see an age when many people begin to see the possibility of humanity's living under one law and one ideal. The basis for this was really laid down since the Almighty revealed the following Verse of the Qur'an:

"This day have I preferred your religion for you, completed My favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion;" (5:3).

For this verse foresaw a universal era when all humans would be compelled to bring together their ideals, and this will not take place without new theories. All nations of the world must work to coordinate their lives with God's Signs in the world and in human life so that they may realize the appropriate life that is compatible with the human and the faculties and abilities bestowed on him/her - which is not yet a feasible destination until this moment. Iqbal has something relevant here; he says:

"Indeed, the Qur'an used the term '*alwahy*, i.e. inspiration' in the sense of a quality that is common to the whole existence, notwithstanding the diversity of

manifestation it assumes, in view of the development and ranking of existence. One sees in the plant which derives its freshness from rising up in space, the animal which develops a new organ to respond to a change in environment, and the human who draws light from the farthest depths of existence - all of these are manifestations of this inspiration that vary in accordance with the future needs of inspiration, i.e. or the requirement of the particular species. At the infancy of human life, there erupted the spiritual force that we may call 'the prophetic consciousness' - a method of economy in the individual thinking and personal choice: for it provides humans with premade judgments, choices, and styles of action.

"But with the emergence of the mind and the appearance of the faculty of criticism and investigation, life started, as a way of preserving its interests, to suppress the shaping and development of the style of knowledge that did not refer to the mind, for that earlier style was for an earlier stage of human existence when the spiritual power fulfilled the human need. The human is essentially controlled by emotion and instinct. As for the inductive mind, which alone enables the human to be master of his/her surroundings - it is an acquired ability. And once we achieve it, we need to establish it firmly and support it the best we can; and that is

by suppressing any kind of knowledge that does not refer to it. Viewing knowledge from this perspective, we find that the Prophet of Islam stands between the ancient world and the modern world: He belongs to the ancient world with regard to the source of his Message, and he belongs to the modern world with regard to the spirit of that Message.

"From this perspective, life has gained other sources of knowledge, in ways that correlate with the new directions of life ... and from this we may say that the emergence of Islam heralds the birth of the inductive mind.

"It will be noted that prophethood, in its final and most perfect manifestation, implied an indication of the end of prophethood itself, the 'seal of prophethood'. This step implies a deep perception of the impossibility of man's continuing existence with the need for someone to go on directing his/her steps ... that for the human to integrate his/her self-comprehension, they will have to finally rely on their own means.

"That Islam heralded the ending of monasticism, royal dynasties, the Qur'an's continued exhortation of referring to intellect and experimentation, its insistence on pondering upon the facts of the world and reviewing the lives of previous peoples - all of these are various manifestations of the conclusion (i.e. seal) of prophethood.

"The truth is that the Qur'an counts the facts of human life and the facts of the whole universe as sources of knowledge: The Almighty manifests himself in His Signs, in both and equally in our microcosm and in the macrocosm. From this it may be said that any effort or experiment must be measured against its scientific contribution."³⁹

We learn from this long quotation from Iqbal that learning from the experiences of previous peoples has come to consist a vital part of human advance.

We may then return to the accepted and unaccepted excuses of the human: When is a human devoid of will excused? It may be gleaned from the above that with the existence of the mind and the ideal, he/she is not excused. But let me add something else that may be a good thing to ponder.

When God says in the Qur'an: "Those who believe in the Qur'an, and those who follow the Jewish scriptures, and the Christians and the Sabians, and who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and who work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord: and on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve;" (2:62), we may say in the light of this

³⁹ *Muhammad Iqbal, Reconstruction of the Religious Thought in Islam.* (Arabic translation) Cairo: Press of the Committee for Writing, Translation, and Publication, 1955. Pp. 143-145.

Verse that anyone from among the groups listed in the Verse, who believes in Allah and the Last Day and does what is good, has nothing to fear and nothing to grieve for - as long as they have not been enabled to have sufficient access to the ideal. It is to the degree that they have had access to the ideal that they are held responsible.

It must also be said that the responsibility for searching for the truth is not merely that of the individual who stands in need of it, relying on his/her intellectual power - it is equally the responsibility of those who have acquired knowledge of the truth to convey what they have learned to the others. To bring truth to the notice of people is a sacred duty which has not been given its due importance by most people - despite the great importance the Qur'an attaches to this duty, and its condemning the suppressing of truth as a major sin; let us read about this in the Qur'an:

"Those who conceal the clear Signs We have sent down, and the Guidance, after We have made it clear for the people in the Book - on them shall be Allah's curse, and the curse of those entitled to curse;" (2:159).

That you discover something will not be of use unless you publicize your discovery. Reading and writing were discovered many millennia back, but the elimination of illiteracy is a challenge that humankind has not overcome

yet - and this is only at the level of the common illiteracy, not to mention illiteracy at the level of concepts and ideas: the latter is a level distinct from and above the level of learning how to read and write; hence the Qur'an's mentioning those who do read and write without gaining broad intellectual ability: these are described as not knowing the Book except as far as recitation is concerned. (See the Qur'an, 2:78).

And because the mind is provided with the *fitrah* of accepting the ideal once it is presented to it, Islam does not allow believers to use compulsion, as we see in the following Verse of the Qur'an:

"Let there be no compulsion in religion;" (2:256).

There may be some doubts in connection with this topic, so let me elaborate a little:

Most of those who refuse to accept the ideal do so because they have not conceived the ideal at all, or have conceived it only partially; and the Qur'an points this out:

"But most of them do not know the Truth, and so turn away;" (21:24).

We may relate this to the ending of the Qur'an's Opening Sura, where people are divided into three groups: 'those on whom God bestowed His Grace', 'those whose portion is wrath', and 'those who go astray'; or, in other words, a group

who have perceived truth and followed it; those who have perceived truth but declined to follow it; and those who have not perceived the truth.

If that who has found the right path can point it out to those who have not perceived it, then most of those who learn enough about the right path will follow it - it is in fact puzzling that anyone should know the truth and not follow it; but then, God has willed to honor the human by letting him/her decline to follow the truth even after perceiving it: God has given the human the choice, even of declining to follow the right path.

It is in view of the above that I say that the clear presentation is the fundamental and most basic support of the establishment of truth in the world. If we Muslims stop suppressing truth and do this '*albaghu lmubin*'; i.e. the clear proclamation of truth', most people will have the substance on which basis they may make their choice, and most of them will opt in favor of what is true. The supporters of the true ideal must carry out this sacred duty of conveying truth to all humankind in spite of the visible resistance of the supporters of falsehood. And when we do bear truth to the ears of people, we will be acting in according with the Verse: "that those who died might die after a Clear Sign had

been given, and those who lived might live after a Clear Sign had been given;" (8:42).

That the Muslim does prove his/her steadfastness in the work for clear conveying of truth is a challenge that will never result in loss; it is pure gain. But when the Muslim fails to perceive that, he/she opts for the other path, maybe to change things through violence. But he/she may not be aware that by choosing this alternative, they are choosing to be lost in the wilderness, when they meant to go through a shortcut - you see how things stand: It is abandoning the plain and clear road for the rugged and obstructed one.

It is a strange delusion: you see how many find straight and smooth way of clear conveying of truth as most costly and time-consuming, and imagine that they can undertake to endure the other dark and rugged way. How deluded! But we must blame those who know such facts that they have not made things clear to others.

We need to be clear how God provided the human with *al-fitrāh*, and that this Faith is the faith of *al-fitrāh* - and then to work for removing the barriers between the human who is still upon *al-fitrāh* and embracing the religion of *al-fitrāh*.

I am aware that a Muslim who does not realize this approach fully will say it is quite unlikely to remove the hurdles between someone and their *fitrah* - maybe that it is a

quite unattainable quest. From this, I find it necessary here to work hard to lift such hurdles from the way of the concerned Muslim - for I am saying here that the way we are advocating here is simple and smooth. Let us then be careful enough in alerting the Muslim to another relevant point: that when attempting to apply one of God's laws in the world, another law may prove crucial - and, in connection with our present discussion: "Doing what is now doable results in turning what is now undoable to being doable at some stage in future."

Some Muslims quote the Verse of the Qur'an, "On no soul Allah places a burden greater than it can bear;" (2:286) finding in it an outlet for evading responsibility; but they really have not reflected on the result of doing what 'one can bear': For once somebody does what is in their capacity to do today, his/her capacity will be wider tomorrow; a new horizon will be opened to him/her that was not open the previous day. This may be clearest in the sphere of acquiring knowledge: If you learn today what you are able to learn, you will understand tomorrow what you did not understand today. Obviously, knowledge comes in stages, and one does not attain a stage before mastering the previous one. When your target is to master stage 2, and you have not mastered stage 1, then your immediate responsibility is mastering

stage 1. It is a simple principle, but unless we act on it, the problem of the Muslim World is insoluble - you see how the Muslims keep repeating their eternal refrain: "We can do nothing." It is a delusion that has a firm grip on the Muslim mind.

This concept of: "There is nothing I can do;" is both true and false. It is true when the Muslim is talking of the final objectives, the objectives that may be attained after many stages; and it is false because there is something to do today, and without doing today's work today, you cannot do tomorrow's work when tomorrow comes.

After all what we have discussed so far, I may say: A person who has failed to establish a connection between the mind and the ideal, the immediate task is - since the mind is there and the ideal is there - that we do what must be done for lifting the barriers between the mind and the ideal, so that they are connected: and the way to doing this is through the clear proclamation of truth, and not suppressing it- and this task is within the capacity of everyone, though each has his/her level of knowledge and understanding. It must be stressed that connecting the mind and the ideal may not be done by coercion; since, as the Qur'an teaches us, "Let there be no compulsion in religion;" (2:256), in the same way as

there must be no compulsion in marriage - or else, it will be rape and not marriage - and no compulsion in rule.

Those who choose the other approach, the approach of compulsion, are not choosing the right way; and they are not accepted as partners in the social contract - but it is a disgrace that we still practice this way.

Let us think more about '*albalaghu lmubin*:i.e. proclamation of the message as clearly as possible', which is the means to enabling the mind and the ideal to unite, and then, from this union, there will be the birth of the will. And once the will is there, there will be a further union, the union of the will and the ability; and from this union there will come forth the good and accepted work.

This potential for the mind and the ideal to unite is true by virtue of *al-fitrah*; and when this is understood, we perceive the significance of the following Verse of the Qur'an: "And remember Allah took a Covenant from the People of the Book to make it known and clear to mankind, and not to hide it; but they threw it away behind their backs, and purchased with it some miserable gain;" (3:187).

Our failure to undertake the duty of clear conveying of the message exactly reflects our little appreciation of the value of speaking out, and the sin of suppressing truth. It is exactly as the Qur'an describes those who accept some

miserable gain as a substitute for conveying the truth. It is a great pity that we are quite unable to raise the clear conveying of truth to the level our Lord assigns to it when He says in the Qur'an: "Proclaim the Message which has been sent to you from your Lord. If you did not, you would not have fulfilled and proclaimed His Mission. And Allah will defend you from men who mean mischief;" (5:67). This protection promised in the Verse is not just for the bearer of the message, but for the process of mission work and the community of *da'wa* workers - protection from straying, from mischief, and from false charges.

It may not be quite clear that proclaiming the message as clearly as possible provides protection to the person who undertakes this task. And so, people get distracted and turn to something else that they hold to be superior to conveying the Message, since they do not appreciate how the bearing of the True Message does the part of protection (the reader can find more about this in my earlier book, *The Way of Adam's Upright Son*).

Clear conveying of the message is the rescue ship from the ocean of chaos. We may find support for this in the Verse:

"Say: 'No one can deliver me from Allah, nor should I find refuge except in Him, unless I proclaim what I receive from Allah and His Messages';" (72:22-23).

It is indeed the only refuge from hostile parties; nothing but proclamation of the truth provides one with strength, immunity and the ability to forge ahead, as the soft roots penetrate rock. Your words will permeate deep; and you will find no protection but in the proclamation of Allah's words and messages. Umar bin al-Khattab was speaking of this when he sent to Sa'd bin al-Waqqas: "Hold on to justice ... for though it is taken to be soft, it suppresses falsehood more efficiently."

It must be clear, though, that for the clear proclamation of the Message to bear fruit, the person who undertakes to convey it must not resort to a weapon to impose his/her message with force.

Let us notice, too, that when God threatens those who suppress the revealed words, His threat for them is even more serious than the threat against a deserter of prayer; let us read about that:

"Those who conceal the clear Signs We have sent down, and Guidance, after We have made it clear for the People in the Book - on them shall be Allah's curse, and the curse of those entitled to curse - Except those who repent and make

amends and openly declare the Truth: to them I turn: for I am Oft-Returning, Most Merciful;" (2:159-160) and "Those who conceal Allah's revelations of the Book, and purchase for them a miserable profit - they swallow into themselves nothing but Fire; Allah will not address them on the Day of Resurrection, nor purify them: grievous will be their penalty. They are the ones who buy error in place of Guidance and torment in place of forgiveness. Ah! What boldness they show for the Fire! Their doom is because Allah sent down the Book in truth;" (2:174-176).

One needs to examine both sides of this: how scary the threat is for those who suppress truth; and how excellent the results are for carrying out this proclamation of the True Message.

But this issue will need the effort of some researchers to elaborate on the human *fitrah*, and the ideal, and how the two elements get joined, or mate, to produce their seeds, good work. It is those who know enough about human history who realize that the greatest human accomplishments were the outcome of this superior union between the mind and the supreme ideal through the catalyst '*albalaghu lmubin* - the clear proclamation of truth'.

On the other hand, I hope the Muslim looks around him/her and notices the deplorable outcomes of following

meandering ways; how ugly and worse than ugly some of the ways have been. But what such observation must produce is the perception that the following of crooked ways will not lead to better results than those obtained by predecessors who followed such ways before us. I may only pray that God protects Muslims from costly slips.

Must we go further than inquiring beyond the origins of will, its 'parents'? We said much about the superior ideal and the mind, but what do we know about the origins of the ideal and the mind?

All we may say with certainty is that the mind is related to the material world in a way that the science has not yet revealed. But there is no harm if we do not know this - what matters is that we succeed in having the mind do its job the best it can. There is no harm if we do not know how it does that, nor at what stage there happened the breathing of the Spirit in the material substance. We have Verses like:

"and [He] breathed into him something of His spirit. And He gave you the faculties of hearing and sight and understanding;" (32:9).

We do know that it is a *fitrah* of the human mind (It seems reasonable to use '*fitrah*' for human traits and 'nature' for the characteristics of the material things) to perceive the relation between two things; and, being Muslim, the only

relations we admit are between created things - otherwise, we have the One and Only Creator - Allah, with nothing like Him, the Only One, Who "begets not, nor is He begotten, and there is none like unto Him;" (112:3-4).

By using the term '*fitrah*', we direct our minds to creatures, for a creature is never without contrasting and similar individuals: and it is from reflecting on such similar and contrasting things and individuals that the mind can deduce the laws of existence and is driven to turn to the Creator in homage. As for analyzing and comprehending, that does not happen in relation to the Creator, for there is nothing similar to Him - How can our thinking work on the One Who has nothing to compare to Him, and nothing akin to Him - and the mind does not work without comparison: for functioning, the mind works on similarities and comparisons and contrasts, and on drawing conclusions from the relations - and that is confined to creatures. As for the Creator, our duty revolves on remembrance and declaring gratitude for God's bounty; it is glorifying Him.

In both cases, we work on substance that we discover, not create. In both dealing with the characteristics of the inanimate matter or with the mind, we work with characteristics that are there before we thought of them or awoke to them: We think of creatures to manipulate them,

and we think of the Lord to remember Him: but in both cases we are dealing with characteristics that we find, not we bring into being. A sensible human must deal with every element in the appropriate way: He/she deals with the world by manipulating it, and deals with the Creator as the Lord and God to be worshipped, and deals with humans with justice and doing good. No element of these three may be treated as we treat the other.

The human will not prosper until he/she worships God and manipulates the universe, and deals with people with justice: He/she may not be proud in dealing with God, may not take the world for a god, and may not wrong human beings ... To err in any of these spheres entails strict punishment.

Alexis Carrel has something good in this respect, in his book: *Reflections on Man's Behavior* (though he uses 'natural law' for 'God's law'):

"The natural laws are strict and firm ... in a way that no one may fail to obey and get away with it - no matter where he/she happens to be. And the natural laws do not warn before they hit: punishment is as silent as the laws' commands are silent."⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Alexis Carrel. *Reflections on Man's Behavior*. Trans. Into Arabic by Muhammad al-Qassas. P. 23, Egypt Publishers. Cairo.

"Religious ethics imposes principles that are as firm as the laws of life itself. Therefore, to try breaking free from any moral code is equal to disobeying the natural laws. We can see how life - as we can observe - has expressed her reprisal to our disobedience in moving away from us, and her reprisal has been both silent and severe; and persons of insight have sensed the danger.

"As for the races and nations that have failed to perceive the distinction between the permitted and prohibited - they have had to undergo devastation in catastrophes, disintegration and perdition: the retribution has been purely quite natural, for extinction is the fate of those who violate natural laws.

"This inevitable reprisal on the part of life to human error explains the variety of suffering we undergo: the ailing civilization, and the catastrophe of the World War are two inevitable results of violating the sacred natural laws ... unless someone can prevent life from following its vital directions without suffering retribution ...

"A mother's love is, among lower species, short - quite a short term among dogs, but much longer in the case of apes. But when we come to the human, we find that there seems no end to the period of childhood: the little child is in need of receiving care and love, and the mother feels the need to

give love. There is no doubt that the parents, who have been good and took their responsibility of raising their children in earnest, will feel at the end that they have delivered their message perfectly, no matter how humble a place they occupy in society, and no matter how long their life has been. As they suffer the ailments of old age, they can look back with pleasure and serenity, which is nature's reward for all who have obeyed her completely;"⁴¹.

"Motherhood is the woman's natural message. She may not forgo this job without jeopardy ... Nervous and mental disorder is the price she must pay if the circumstances of her life, or her own choice, obstruct her undertaking the function of motherhood..."⁴².

The laws of faith, and the commands and prohibitions of *sharia*, are as firm and binding as the laws of physics and chemistry. We have no more freedom in ignoring them than we have the freedom to jump from the height of one hundred meters... challenging the physical laws, or drinking poison, or challenging the laws of chemistry.

Yes, we can do that, challenge the law; and the mother can suppress her drive to fulfill her motherly function; and the son can maltreat his parents; one can violate all the

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 58

⁴² Ibid, p. 59

prohibitions that God ordained that we avoid doing. Yes, we have the freedom to do all that, but, once you do any of these violations, you do not have the freedom to stop the result to happen. That is why Carrel says concerning the firmness of the law of life: "No one can prevent life from its sustaining its basic directions without undergoing penalty."⁴³

If some doubt that the violation of ethical and religious laws leads to penalties in the same way as the violation of the laws of physics and chemistry does, let them remember that some time ago people had doubts about the laws of physics and chemistry, and these laws were viewed as not so different from magic. But then they acquired sufficient potency and accuracy, and people now accept them with confidence.

The same will come to happen to the laws of morality - they may seem vague or uncertain at present, but they are no less compelling than the laws of physical nature. Laws like 'To wish for the other the same as you wish for yourself'; and 'refraining from backbiting, calumny, and envy' are social laws, as fundamental as the rusting of iron in the physical nature.

⁴³ Ibid, p. 60

4. THE WILL IS THE SPIRIT OF THE *UMMAH*

The Prophet, peace be upon him says, "You will find the believers, in their reciprocal mercy, compassion and affection like the body; for if an organ of the body suffers pain, the whole body will reciprocate with sleeplessness and fever;"⁴⁴.

What we have in the above Tradition is comparing the *Ummah* to a body, in that the body will respond with sleeplessness and pain if any part of it suffers from some ailment. It is worth our while to ponder over this example - for as long as the body is functioning properly, it will not ignore the part which suffers from dysfunction. It must do all it can to restore it to health; and that is done by the dictate of *fitrah*. The physician may be called to assist. If the body fails to take the necessary steps, then it is showing signs of imminent death. It will soon be decomposing into its constituent elements.

Many would insist on asking why the heart beats, why the mind adopts the ideal, and why the bodies of the sky move around each other. But it has been pointed out above that it is no use asking such questions. It has nothing to do with what we need to focus on: the process of utilizing the

forces of the world. A Muslim finds it sufficient to attribute the powers that have been put in his/her service to God's creation and management: that it is the Almighty who determined that the world should have its laws, and granted the human the chance to manipulate those forces through the laws. It is a mistake to dwell on the questions that do us no good. We need to know what elements constitute water, for that helps us in utilizing and using it for the good of humankind. But to ask why it is that water consists of oxygen and hydrogen is not part of the process of utilizing water. The same with the human and the community. We know that the human spirit is there as a result of God's breathing into the human; and the spirit of the *Ummah* is the essence of its life, as brought into being by God's Will. We find in the Qur'an about the breathing of the spirit into the human:

"But He fashioned him in due proportion, and breathed into him something of His spirit. And He gave you the faculties of hearing and sight and understanding: little thanks do you give! " (32:5-9).

And about the *Ummah's* spirit, we find:

"And thus We have, by Our command, sent a Spirit to you: you did not know before what was Revelation and what

⁴⁴ *Sahih al-Bukhari*; the Chapter on Good Manners.

was Faith; but We have made the Qur'an a Light, wherewith We guide such of Our servants as We will; and verity you do guide men to the Straight Way - the Way of Allah, to Whom belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on earth;" (42:52-53).

In the same way as the cells join to compose the living being, individuals join to compose the community. Once they are united under one will, there will emerge the new being, the *ummah*. The life in the cell stimulates it to join another cell, and the emergence of the will stimulates the individual to join another individual, and the community is born. All the individuals in a society bear an ideal, which must be conveyed from one to one ... and this is the proclamation of the message which is ordained by God, as expressed in the Verse:

" by Our command, We sent a Spirit to you;" (42:52).

We may ponder further upon this comparison of the individual body and the *ummah* as a body. An individual feels unable to live separated and isolated from the community, as long as he/she bears the will that unites that community. And, conversely, when an individual is physically part of a community that does not bear the will that he/she upholds, then he/she cannot live in harmony with it. This may remind us of the body's rejecting an organ

transplanted to it except with special arrangements. The body rejects a foreign organ, even when this rejection means the death of the whole body.

This is to demonstrate that the body's spirit is its will; once the will is lost, then the body must die - it decomposes in the same way as the individual body decomposes and reverts to its constituent elements. When the community decomposes, its individuals, having lost the common will, will revert to their primitive interests: struggling to preserve their individual lives, not caring about the development of society. It will be an aggregate of individuals, each unto himself/herself.

Indeed, the community comes into being at the time its individuals have wills that go beyond themselves as individuals and encompass the others - It is then that the society begins to exist as a body; and it is then that it is true of it to apply the Verse of the Qur'an: "To every people is a term appointed;" (10:49). It is when this happens that you imagine an *ummah* with a span of life, like an individual. The bond that brings a society together is a will that unites the individuals: one faith, one aim, one ideal ... An ideal is the spirit of the society. By knowing how the will comes into being, and how it originates, we know how a society

originates, and how to care for its thriving, and how to preserve it from dissolution.

We may then turn to discussing the ideal as a value, and as a construct.

5. THE IDEAL AS A VALUE AND AS A CONSTRUCT

This title calls for some elucidation. What is meant by the ideal as a value?

It is connected with the ranking of wills, how a certain will is deemed as superior to another; how a certain ideal is deemed as superior to another - how a faith is ranked as superior to another, and how the spirit of a certain society is said to be superior to another's.

It is right to rank a certain society's spirit as superior to another if the facts of science and life attest to its being superior; that it is more in harmony with the future and fulfills its role perfectly. Muhammad Iqbal did handle this issue; and one thing he said about it is: "One way to assess the value of a certain prophet is to examine the kind of

character he trained, and to examine the intellectual world that emanated from the spirit of his call."⁴⁵

By comparing and contrasting one person's behavior with another person's, we may distinguish one from the other, and evaluate the value of the ideal that has molded each of the two. And this connects to the unadulterated *fitrah*, which is the element that determines the individual's choice of the best of the ideals, when they are presented to it: it evaluates them on the basis of the kind of human models each ideal has produced.

With the above theoretical premises in hand, we may reflect on Islam, on the kind of human model Islam produces: and this may be displayed with reference to the status assigned to the human, the status God has granted him/her. It is really a status above any that may be found anywhere. I do not say this to raise Islam's value above any other doctrine, but to assert that people's wills will vary in view of the status assigned to them. We have seen the rule set forth by Iqbal in this connection; and it helps to recall the rule set forth by Christ when he said: "You shall know them by their fruits;" (Mat.7:16). This says that you judge ways and systems by their outcome, as the Qur'an states, 18:44.

⁴⁵ *Reconstruction of the Religious Thought*, (in Arabic translation). Chapter on the Spirit of the Islamic Culture. P. 142.

We are discussing will from two aspects:

1. The value of the ideal; and
2. The conditions that must be met by the human in order to have a will that upholds the ideal.

And when we discuss the will we must point out that even if the ideal is at the highest level, it is not enough to bring the will into being: it is so for the other side, the mind, which will embrace the ideal, might not be in harmony with its *fitrah*, or might be governed by a certain desire or whim - for to the degree the mind is in harmony with the *fitrah*, on account of a certain perversion, its acceptance or rejection of the ideal will be realized.

This understanding can be supported with the Verse of the Qur'an, "Allah knows best where, and by whom, His Message is carried;" (6:124) and we should, when understanding the above Verse, think of both the choice of the Messenger, ﷺ, peace be upon him, as an individual who bore the Message to mankind, and the choice of the Arab people as a society, to bear the Message, for the Arabs were, at that time, purer of *fitrah*, less controlled by desires than the contemporary societies, like the Romans and Persians. The latter were less qualified to bear the Message, for they were of the type described in another Verse as:

"For when their messengers came to them with Clear Signs, they exulted in such knowledge and skill as they had, but that very wrath at which they were wont to scoff hemmed them in;" (40:83).

I do realize that this topic calls for further elaboration, for it is closely linked to the will as a construct to be developed. Not many researchers who have discussed the Islamic problem have devoted to this issue the importance that it calls for - they devoted their energy to stressing the importance of the Islamic ideals, in disregard of the human who is required to uphold the ideals; but what I am contending here is that the Verse "Allah knows best where, and by whom, His Message is carried;" (6:124) is stressing the conditions that the individual and the society must have - rather than the condition that the Message must have: It affirms the importance of the existence of certain conditions that a society must have to embrace or reject the ideal.

The fact that individuals and societies vary as to the degree of their embracing the ideal is accounted for by their culture, not by their *fitrah* and natural potentials - that is how we may understand the Verse quoted above, "Allah knows best where, and by whom, His Message is carried;" (6:124). The ability to change what is in the souls also belongs to the sphere of manipulation, the effort required to

transfer oneself or others from worthless ideals to superior ones.

When we tackle the will as a construct, I do not have in mind the bringing of the will into existence, for that is a different issue: What I mean is the technique needed to accomplish what we wish to accomplish; the adequacy of the method which is employed for presenting the ideal to the mind (apart from the quality of ideal): as for the will, it will spontaneously exist once the ideal is presented: the rule here is that the sounder the mind and the clearer the ideal, the absorption of the ideal by the mind is more thorough, and the will is more dedicated. As you see, this has nothing to do with the value of the ideal, but it is related to the system of engendering and preserving the will. Let us shed more light on this through an example:

Two schools teach the same set of textbooks, but there is a distinct difference in their outcome; the acquisition of students in one is superior to the other. This might be on account of the kind of students of one of the two schools; and it may be, on the other hand, on account of the kind of teachers and staff; despite the identity in syllabuses. This may elucidate how some atmospheres are conducive to a better intellectual view.

Let me go back again to the vitality of clear proclamation of the message; and the importance of the group which undertakes to carry out this proclamation in the Muslim World, and upholds the Qur'an as its reference - it is a reference which produced the Prophet's Companions, so what does it produce at our time? This must reveal that what counts is not the reference, but those who supervise its delivery, those who undertake to engender and preserve the will. This can take us a long way to understanding the distinction between what belongs to the ideal and the responsibility of the carrier, how far he/she fulfills their task of delivering the ideal ... It is as you see the difference between the doctrine and its application. If a great doctrine is applied by unqualified persons the result will be disappointing. Those hostile to the doctrine will assert that the shortcoming is in the doctrine - they say for instance: if Islam were truthful, it would have exalted its followers; the believers in the doctrine, on the other hand, assert that the failure must be accounted for by a dominant fate; but both theories are erroneous. The truth is that it is a four-part issue:

1. The doctrine is truthful and the application is also successful: the outcome will be positive, at

the highest level of perfection - this was realized at the hands of the Messenger, peace be upon him.

2. The ideal is false, but the application is good.

This might realize a high level of outcome, though less spectacular than the first - this was realized by Japan and Germany in the period prior to WWII: By the mere success of application, both countries raised their nations' will to the highest degree, as may be attested for by people's sacrificing their lives and fortune to serve their false doctrine: a doctrine of arrogance and haughtiness in the earth and holding themselves as superior to the rest of humankind.

3. A truthful ideal, but the way of application is inadequate. The outcome is poorer than it in the first category. And even the degree of outcome that is observed is not due to any skill in the process of implanting and producing the will - it is rather on account of the inherent strength of the ideal. This is true of Modern Islam and the Muslims; a certain scholar who studied the Muslim situation said: "It is not the Muslims who preserved Islam - it is rather that Islam has

preserved the Muslims." The two perspectives can often be confused: to work for protecting Islam as an ideal, or protecting Muslims, as humans. But it helps in this respect to determine what belongs to the former, and what belongs to the latter. We may notice how Islam itself is set up as target for attack on account of the behavior of its followers - which is an obvious mistake. Equally wrong is defending Islam through defending the Muslims' behavior, or taking the Muslims' behavior as the way to understanding the Qur'an. Positions like this hamper the vital process of self-analysis, and usher many young people in great intellectual confusion.

4. A false ideal and bad application. No society can be established on this basis.

Of course, one can list under each of the four categories a whole range of variation.

The first category will advance fast in the world. The second will create attention and its success will be relative, but does not survive long across history. The third will show its solidity, which it draws from the solidity of the great religions themselves, especially Islam.

And it is this third category which can be put right through reforming the human: it is here that the great conflict revolves; between those who consider the way to putting things right is through developing the ideal itself - and of course there are so many disagreements as to the meaning of development: Is it development that is necessary or a new attempt to understand the real sense of the doctrine; and there are those who assert that the Islamic ideal may not be tampered with, and it may not be subjected to any development - and this group have their disagreements, too, whether the constancy should be confined to the doctrine itself or should extend to history.

I think it is time now to consider the will as a construct, and as reverting in the final analysis to abilities; so, let me discuss this aspect.

CHAPTER FOUR

ABILITY

Maybe it is overdue to take up the issue of 'ability'. It seems that the 'will' has taken up much of our time. But let us ask now: What is ability?

Let us recall the example of the lamp and switching it off. We may think of this example in connection with both will and ability. The ability needed in this case is a muscular one; a person who lacks this ability is unable to switch the lamp off or on, no matter how deep and keen his/her desire might be to have this done. This physical ability, muscular or any other, is necessary for any work.

We have also seen in the example about performing the *hajj*, that both ability and will are involved. We may consider the Verse of the Qur'an: 'pilgrimage thereto is a

duty men owe to Allah - those who can afford the journey;" (3:97). Muslim legislators explained this 'affording' as provision and transport. Both are related to money, and this is a physical ability, and both are related to energy. Energy comes of course in so many forms: electric, mechanical, chemical, etc. and it produces movement, and matter is transformed into energy according to the famous equation: $E=mc^2$, which says that energy equals: mass multiplied by the speed of light squared. And some movement in the world occurs naturally, without intervention on the part of any human behind its occurrence, like the movement of the sun and moon; while some other forms of energy are intended, as is a human's movement. This simple distinction was blurred in the mind of some Sufis, for they saw all their movement to be identical to the movements of the stars and planets. That is in relation with intentions; but we find similar confusion in relation to ability: many people often cannot perceive the difference between the movement of the sun and the moon, which is controlled by determined destiny, and a human's movement, though the individual's will and intention are involved in this movement.

1. HOW COMPLEX IS THE ISSUE OF ABILITY?

We find in the Qur'an: "And He has subjected to you, as from Him, all that is in the heavens and on earth;" (45:13). The verb '*sakhhara*, i.e. subjected' occurs many times in the Qur'an; and the act of '*taskhir*' cannot take place without science and understanding - we can notice how the human is enabled to exploit the forces of nature, and many of its creatures, through the surplus in knowledge that he/she has been granted.

About that surplus in knowledge we read in the Qur'an, in the story of the creation of Adam: "And He taught Adam the nature and names of all things;" (2:31); "Allah, Most Gracious! It is He Who has taught the Qur'an. He has created man: He has taught him speech;" (55:1-4); "Read! And your Lord is Most Bountiful - He Who taught the use of the pen;" (96:3-4).

We also find in the Old Testament: "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me;" (Proverbs, 8:17).

We must when coming across such a text of shining wisdom remember what the Almighty says in the Qur'an about the Torah:

"It was We Who revealed the Law to Moses: therein was guidance and light;" (5:44)

Levels of Ability

It has been said above that in the same way as the human is enabled to move his/her muscles, they have been provided with the ability to understand the laws of matter, and the laws of life and ethics: the human's command of the laws of nature has carried them to the moon, and their command of the laws of life has raised life expectancy to above seventy. But let us add that the human's comprehension of the moral laws will affirm what Allah knew, but the angels did not know, about the human, as we learn from the Verse of the Qur'an:

"They [the angels] said: 'Will You place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood?' - while we do celebrate Your praises and glorify Your holy name?' He said: 'I know what you do not know.'

"And He taught Adam the nature and names of all things;" (2:30-31) from which we may learn that the assigning of names to things, and encoding those names in a written form, are our way to understanding the *sunan*, or laws.

From the above, we may notice the two levels of ability: the physical, and the intellectual; and we need now to elaborate both.

a. The Physical Abilities

Some examples of the physical abilities are the muscular ability, the size of a country's population, and the area of a country; and also the riches buried under its land, like oil and minerals, besides such sources of energy as the waterfalls. We witness at present the heated competence for discovering some renewable sources of energy to forestall the depletion of oil. It may be noted in this connection how huge the sources of the Muslim World are - in size of populations, and the sources of the land - although much of the human and material sources are wasted, for we do not seem to appreciate them or know how to exploit them. It is the rule that without the abilities of the second type, the intellectual ones, you do not know how to exploit abilities of the first type.

b. The Intellectual Abilities

Or we may call these the 'scientific' abilities; for these are the abilities that you need to exploit the physical abilities. And these abilities are becoming more and more vital as time passes, for the physical abilities remain untapped without the intellectual ones.

And this point is a pivotal point of the present book: It is most vital from the author's point to bring to the notice of all those concerned with the Muslim problem that what the Muslim World lacks is not the material ability but the intellectual ability; they are far behind in knowledge and science. How can we hope to achieve any good without exploiting the material and human resources of the Muslim World?

I do realize that it is my responsibility to shed enough light on this point, for once it is quite evident to the Muslim, he/she will rise to do what is necessary to acquire this ability, and to search for it wherever he/she thinks it may be. The backward state of the Muslim World lies in their lingering behind in relation to knowledge and understanding, and this is what I propose to bring to light.

I think I have said enough about the issue I set out to expound: that work will not be realized without ability and will; I have tried to be more explicit by calling the process of securing both sides a kind of union, akin to marriage: in a way that should one side be lacking you may not expect procreation. I have gone some way in elucidating the will; and it is time to do the same with the issue of abilities.

It might seem from our discussion so far that it is an easy issue, that it is accessible for comprehension. But it is not so,

in light of my experience - it is not within the comprehension of the Muslim World.

It can be agreed that the problem of the helplessness of the Muslim World is an alarming one, that it must be of concern to any thinking person in the world. It is worth devoting all the time and effort that are equal to its enormity and importance. I am in my present discussion claiming to be among those who shed light on this issue; and I go to the extent of assuming that those who have tried to solve this problem have not even defined it, to say nothing about solving it. However, let me offer what I have about defining this problem, in hope that the Muslim should move towards working along the suggested lines, instead of trying some acrobatic jumps that disregard all the laws of the world; while all he/she really needs to do is adhere to certain simple duties on a daily basis.

It causes one much frustration when, after putting in all the effort to make it clear to a Muslim that what is lacking for fruitful work in the domain of Islamic rise is more correctness, more science, more ability, rather than more sincerity; but then, after exerting oneself in making this as clear as possible, you hear a word that seems to throw to the wind all the argument and elaboration - you may hear something like: "All that we need is some sincere believers."

It helps to recall the example of performing *al-hajj*, we find those who can perform *al-hajj* but fail to perform it, and we find many who very much want to perform *al-hajj* but do not have the means to do so. It is unjust to deny the existence of the latter group. The Qur'an mentions a group of Muslims who, though most devoutly keen to be with the other Muslims in going out for combating the enemy, were unable to do so, as explained in the following Verse:

"they turned back, their eyes streaming with tears of grief that they had no resources wherewith to provide the expenses; " (9:92). It is quite unfair to hold equal this group and those who were condemned in the same Sura 9 for choosing to absent themselves.

It may be right here to quote a funny story told by Ibn Khaldun in his *Muqaddimah*⁴⁶: "I was inclined to deny the experiences reported by Ibn Battutah of his adventures - I felt they were too strange to believe, and it was quite common to declare disbelief of his narrative. But then the Vizier Fa-ress warned me: 'Beware of denying experiences just on account of their being not witnessed by you personally. For you would be in this behaving like the son of a minister who was imprisoned, and the son knew only the life of prison. This was a minister who was arrested by the

reigning ruler and imprisoned for many years, during which he raised his son with him in the prison. When the son grew to understand things, he asked his father what was that meat they ate, and the father said: "It is mutton, sheep meat."

"And what is sheep, father?" the son asked. So, the minister mentioned all he could he remember about the appearance and facts about sheep. "Are you saying," the son wondered, "that they are of the same kind as the rat?" The father was outraged, and said: "No! There is no similarity at all between sheep and rats!" Then, when they had to mention the meat of camels and cows, the son responded in the same way, and the father denied vehemently. But it was no use: the son had no experience in their prison but of the rats and mice, so he took all the animals to be of the same family like the rat.

"This happens to many people," Ibn Khaldun continues. "They are obsessed with certain exaggerations, meaning to impress others, as was mentioned early on in this book. Let the reader be sure of the basics, and let him/her adhere to that, even when some superficial appearances lead him/her to deny things that are alien to their environment. What happens and what does not happen must be measured

⁴⁶ p. 158. Ed. Cairo, 1966

against the rules of existence, not exactly the rules of rationality."

Malek Bennabi described the same situation in a different way, when he said: "One's intuition would not be sufficient to ward off some obsession that takes hold of his/her mind."⁴⁷.

And he says somewhere else in the same book:

"Even in purely scientific writings, we find this bias which lets the desires and emotions of the human soul trespass on economic problems. We may refer in this context to certain writings of Western economists, which no one would suspect of deviance from pure sincerity or their significance, where we find this bias stand in the way whenever they handle the problem of colonization. You find the researcher write with absolute strictness in the language of facts and figures, and the trend of his research would clearly indicate the huge waste and loss that a certain colony caused to its imperialist power - but he then makes a surprising conclusion: that his country's continued stay in the colonies is necessary, in spite of the loss in the budget. There is no doubt, at this juncture, that the facts of the conscience are in conflict with the scientific facts; and the

⁴⁷ *The Afro-Asian Idea*, p. 53, Cairo. First Edition

result is a biased discourse that colors all kinds of statements and references."⁴⁸.

From such quotations it can be seen how the dominant idea can have control of a human's mind in a way that prevents him/her from comprehending a rival idea, no matter how evident and certain. The above examples show how difficult it can be to move within the same culture from one level to a higher level.

The same difficulties can be noticed when you take two persons from two different cultures. Discrimination against other races has been a main issue in the consciousness of the American white for centuries in a way that the Muslim cannot imagine, having it settled in the latter's consciousness that whites and blacks are equal before God; but the same Muslim still bears some of the complex that the pre-Islam Arab bore when the following Verse of the Qur'an was revealed,

"When news is brought to one of them, of the birth of a female child, his face darkens, and he is filled with inward grief;" (16:58).

So, some of the pre-Islam mentality is still in the Muslim's mind. I say this because it is a fact that one can

⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 41

understand the blockage in another's mind, but may very likely not understand equal blockage in their own mind.

It is this comparing of situations that have things in common that the Qur'an is often alerting the Muslim to, as in,

"If you do marvel at their want of faith, strange is their saying: 'When we are actually dust, shall we indeed then be in a renewed creation?'" (13:5) and "Say: 'Do you think, if Allah took away your hearing and your sight, and sealed up your hearts, who - a god other than Allah - could restore them to you?' See how We explain the Signs by various symbols; yet they turn asides;" (6:46).

Ibn Taimiyah has something relevant here; he says: "The Almighty has not narrated in the Qur'an one single story but to have us learn a lesson, for there must be something that we need to learn for our own good and our need; and a lesson may not be learnt except by examining the common points between one case and the other, and how the two cases share points which justify their having the same outcome. Had there been no common ground between the

opposers of Messengers - like Pharaoh and all those before him - and us, there would be no reason for us to reflect and learn from people that have nothing in common with us; but it is not so, for God the Almighty says:

"Similarly, no messenger came to the peoples before them, but they said of him in like manner: 'A sorcerer, or one possessed;'" (51:52)

and He says: "in this, they but imitate what the unbelievers of old used to say;" (9:30).⁴⁹

This must remind us of a Tradition of the Prophet, peace be upon him, in which he says: "You will be mimicking those that were before you: following their steps span for span, and yard for yard - you will follow in their steps even if they enter a gecko's hole!" "Is it of the Jews and Christians that you mean?" someone asked. "Who else?" he replied.⁵⁰

And in another Tradition, he says: "It will happen, before the days of this world have come to an end, that my *Ummah* will mimic the peoples before them, span for span, and yard for yard." "Are you speaking of the Persians and Romans, Messenger?" someone asked. "Who else?" he replied.⁵¹

⁴⁹ *Al-Fatawa*, Vol. 14. P. 322

⁵⁰ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Chapter on holding tight to Islam's teaching. Al-Muniriyyah Press. Vol. 9. P. 184

⁵¹ *Ibid.* p. 184

This must show that though Muslims hold on to their Islam they are very likely to stumble in the same way as other peoples stumbled; that they may well uphold erroneous concepts and values in a way that they deny the most evident truths and clear signs. And one of these is their assumption that what is lacking for solving the problem of the Muslim World is more sincerity (or will) rather than more ability (or correctness); while Ibn Taimiyah notices most cleverly that "Sincerity (love in his terms) comes in the steps of knowledge (or correctness)."⁵²

The Qur'an keeps pointing out everywhere how people very often challenge self-evident truths, and very clear signs, preferring to hold on rather to predominant concepts and what they take for granted - they just are not ready to examine the truth of such concepts and values, and what supports them. It is enough for them to think that their fathers were unanimously agreed on a certain conviction to take it unquestioningly. They feel they have such a strong wall behind their backs, to which they may lean, and this strong wall is what the fathers held to be true, so that their descendants may trust it, knowingly or unknowingly. And that is enough for people to deny the most obvious and self-evident facts - the American can fall into this, and the

⁵² *Al-Fatawa*. Vol. 10. P. 56

Muslim can, when they are blind to the facts of the world and life. There was no time when the hidden facts came to light as they come out today. And we should have been more aware of this, as the Qur'an is full of the relation of situations and attitudes of past peoples and their dealing with their prophets, and with those who commanded what is just and true. People held on tenaciously to their desires and to the practice of their fathers.

It is certainly a topic that is worth discussing and publicizing, and it is worth tracing how it may be seen in everyday problems. It is especially worthwhile noticing how such intellectual mechanisms are true of many Muslims and many non-Muslims - this challenging of self-evident truths. What I am trying to point out may be well understood in the light of the above rule: Like other people, the Muslims' way to seeing the actual reality for what it is can be blocked, no matter how quite evident the issues might be; and this failure to see the self-evident that confuses ability and will.

2. HOW A HUMAN ACQUIRES ABILITIES

At birth, an infant has the ability to suck at its mother's breast, which is a physical ability. One may not detect any will behind this ability, but there must be will. Soon after, it

will display another ability: the ability to express what it needs in crying: it will not cry if all its needs are met, if it is not in need for food, for cleanliness, for good health, and for proper position: People of experience or specialists will tell you that much. Other abilities will follow, like hearing and sight, and this will be followed by standing and walking. More and more abilities follow each other. That about physical abilities, but it is the same with intellectual abilities. You see how the infant begins to recognize and distinguish between the faces of its mother and siblings, and then begins to make sense of the heard words, until it can use them, and it begins to ask about things that it does not comprehend. We are often surprised how many stages the infant and then the child goes through and beyond as he/she develops - physically, intellectually, and morally.

All the abilities that develop and are acquired follow specific laws. We see how the physical condition keeps improving with more study and understanding - as may be demonstrated with the great decrease in infant mortality. No matter where one grows, he/she must by age twenty be physically fit, if he/she cares to observe the suitable hygienic style.

But the power of understanding is not so simply acquired. Yes, the potential for understanding is in existence

from the time God created things; or rather from before the humans were created. For example, the laws of the atom were there before any human thought of them; and then, after some humans discovered those laws, they understood things that they had not known before. The disease-causing bacteria were in existence before humans learned about them; and then, it was a change in the humans that they discovered the secrets of those bacteria and had the power to control them.

Let us have a deeper look at abilities, by referring to the beginning of creation. We may for that purpose compare the little humans and the little animals. Let us take a little calf, and let us breed it alone, without meeting any of its species, right until it is at mating age. If we now let it return to join members of its species, we shall notice no important difference between this cow and any that had been bred in the company of its species all the time.

But if we imagine the same situation with a human child, if we take a human infant on the day it was born, and somehow raise it away from members of its species, what do you think will be he/she like if we try to reintroduce him/her within a group of humans? He/she will have no language, not any language, and the golden time for learning a language will have passed; and how many of the human

skills will have been lost. It may be assumed really that this human will be less than an animal - animals have their instincts to control their life; while the human being acts upon the heritage that he/she has inherited from past history: things like morality, the meaning of the prohibited and the permitted, the right and the duty, and so on. It may be beyond anybody's fancy to imagine how much a human misses if he/she lives isolated from other humans. In a word, human life is inconceivable without living in a society - not just the people around you, but the human heritage by which one is guided has been developing across the whole progress of humankind. What our immediate society gives us is a summary of the entire knowledge and skills accumulated from the dawn of humanity and up to the present, together with the culture of the particular society. It is amazing to learn that, even the most primitive society, has a huge heritage to teach each of its children. There is no similarity whatever between even a tribesman and a human who was isolated from society from birth.

From all the above, we may conclude that after a human is born, it is society that gives him/her the abilities and the relations with the universe, the humans, and the Creator: he/she is in need of our providing him/her with a summary of the acquired knowledge and skills of the human being - to

provide within a few years the knowledge and skills accumulated with great labor over millennia of years. This process might be most obvious in the sciences: in medicine, astronomy, mathematics, etc. Let us imagine the amount of effort exerted by millions of people to reach the level that is easily acquired by our children: think of sterilization, inoculation, the distances of stars, and the laws of their movement, and think of the symbols used as figures and zero. For all such stages and stations of understanding there are known histories, and how long it took the human to acquire the facts concerning them to the present level of clarity. One may go on speculating about other abilities: the history of starting fire, the cultivation of land, the taming of animals; and then the harnessing of steam and electricity. How much knowledge and understanding lie behind the manufacture of a car or a rocket? And from this we need to move on to thinking about the amount of understanding needed for organizing a society, for developing its culture, and its accepting a certain doctrine.

It must be clear that it is this kind of ability, the intellectual ability, that is of main concern in this book, especially the kind of understanding needed for establishing a society, having a firm knowledge of the laws on which basis a society acquires solidity and solidarity; and the

methods of putting things right in a society, and having control of its progress.

As with the topic of will, we need with the topic of abilities, too, to start with the absolute elements: How they start, who begot them, and so on. We need to be clear about all that, and in this we shall be acting in compliance with God's command that we move about and look at things to discover how creation started, and learn how the intellectual abilities started. We may observe at the outset that animals do not behave through understanding, but on the basis of genetic instincts. Next, we may observe how the children acquire from those around them the norms and values of society; and how, in twenty or thirty years, a human being can learn within his/her domain of specialization, what has taken humankind thousands of years to develop.

From the above phenomenon, we may learn two things:

1. That abilities are slow to develop;
2. That the same abilities that developed over many centuries may be transmitted as a science over a few years.

We need also to find out the descent of abilities from their parents, to identify the pair who begot the abilities. We may hasten to say that the parents of all ability are: the mind and the laws of the universe.

When discussing the human mind, we do not look for its essence, but we look for its function. We find in the Qur'an this about the mind:

"then We developed out of it another and different creature;" (23:14); and "for every act of hearing, or of seeing, or of thinking and feeling in the heart will be enquired into on the Day of Reckoning;" (17:36).

The other component is the domain on which the human mind acts: the events of the universe and the events of human life (in Qur'anic terms: the Signs of the World and the Signs of human life and soul). I am saying that, without getting in touch with the facts of the universe and the events of human history, ability will fail to develop. In the same way as the eye cannot see without light, the mind cannot perform its function without facts from the universe (the Signs of the world in Qur'an's terms) and the events of human history (Signs of human life, or the human soul).

It may be said that the mind and the world interact to produce the ability of understanding.

By its nature, the mind ponders upon the creatures and the events of history and the facts of the universe, and deduces their laws, for nothing of all these events and facts but is governed by laws. It is this relationship that releases abilities. And when those abilities are there, they produce

exploitation of the forces of the world. We can see in the Qur'an how the exploitation, *taskhir*, is a reflection of ability: "And He has subjected '*sakhhara*' to you, as from Him, all that is in the heavens and on earth: behold, in that are Signs indeed for those who reflect;" (45:13).

It was mentioned when we were discussing the ideal that when it is presented to the mind, the latter will perceive it and recognize it, in the same way as the nose senses and recognizes odors. And, in the same way as the mind is one side in acquiring an ideal, it is one side in acquiring the power of understanding: when the events of history and the facts of the universe are presented to the mind, it is in its nature to seek to find out their causes and their laws. It will inquire: "How does this happen, and why?" Ibn Khaldun worked hard at the historical events, the construction of society, its development, expansion, and decline; and he drew out several laws about that. That is why the Almighty Allah commands us to examine the life of the peoples of the past, to draw conclusions about the factors behind their development or disintegration, the factors behind their prosperity or suffering. It is not hard to observe the disintegration of nations, their suffering and successes; but it is much more difficult to find out the causes of all that. There we may notice Ibn Khaldun's advantage - he and the

other scholars of history. It is by such study and discovery of the causes of the events of history that history turns into science, and *taskhir* becomes possible. Unless *taskhir* takes place - as in warding off catastrophes - then history has not reached the level of science.

Now, when we take up this topic, we need to pay attention to two sides: How to reveal the law, the *sunnah*, and how to verify the revelation. We attain the first task by observing how the event takes place, and discovering their causes; and we attain the second quest by being able to control the event, exploit it, and direct it.

We may approach the first task through what our scholars, like Ibn Taimiyah, called 'the orders of existence'. Ibn Taimiyah mentions this in his comment on Verse 3 of Surah 96 of the Qur'an: "Read! And your Lord is Most Bountiful;" where he mentions that there are four orders or levels of existence: physical existence, mental existence, oral existence, and encoded existence (when a human writes by hand). And he adds that the above Verse mentions the first and the last orders of existence. As for the first type of existence 'the material, or physical' it was called by al-Ghazali 'the external existence', since something exists in the world, apart from our awareness of it. A human may come to recognize this existence, and in this case it comes to exist

in the human mind. If he/she expresses this second existence with a word, then this last is an oral existence, when the mouth utters a term that refers to the existence in the mind. And a human may at last use some inscription made by hand, and that is what Ibn Taimiyah called the encoded existence). (The reader may find more about this in Ibn Taimiyah's *al-Fatawa*. Vol. 16, pp 220-280.)

An example may drive the idea home. Let us think of the thunder. It has its external existence, for it happens in the clouds; it has an existence in the human mind; and the human expresses this existence in his/her mind by using the term 'thunder'; and he/she may make a record of this by writing 'thunder' by hand.

And this is what Ibn Taimiyah meant when he mentioned 'read' and 'created'; for the external existence is God's creation, and this created thing is captured by the human mind; and the human expresses what is in his/her mind with an uttered word, and then makes a record of this by writing with the hand.

We may say that both Ibn Taimiyah and al-Ghazali were thinking of the 'oral existence' more than of the law-connected existence.

It is more fruitful to discuss the correlation of the image in the mind and the external existence, to discover the law

according to which things happen and operate. The reader may read more about that in my book *Until They Change What Is in Their Souls* - There I say that it is Allah who has created both the law and its effect; that what we were given access to was the exploitation of the laws on which basis we are enabled to exploit the forces of the universe. This is the sphere to which the human may direct his/her efforts: learning the laws, or *sunan* (i.e. the causes) and turning that to account (exploitation of the laws; *al-taskhir* in Arabic).

When our understanding is identical with creation, i.e. when it correlates with the law operative out there in the world, then the outcome is perfect, i.e. exploitation is realized. And then, to the extent our understanding of the laws (or causes) is less than complete, the exploitation, getting the best out of the forces of the world, is incomplete. The formula is clear here: the test which reveals the degree of understanding is in how fully we exploit the forces of nature. It is unfortunate that people do not admit when the results are not satisfactory that there is lack in their understanding. Muslims say in that case that we fulfilled the requirements for success, but then, for some wisdom of God's, the outcome did not come. But it is not so - a statement like this is only a cover for our ineptitude, and an

evasion of the task of inspection to find out the causes of our failure.

God commands us otherwise: He commands us to examine and reflect on the outcomes: It is outcomes that indicate whether people do or do not understand the topic thoroughly enough. Let us notice that the two terms 'outcome' and 'exploitation' are Qur'anic terms (*'aqibah* and *taskhir*, respectively), that they are the criterion for somebody's or some society's understanding of facts. We should understand this more readily at this time than at any previous time: for we see how scientific advance and the exploitation of things in the world go parallel to the amount of people's command of laws. This is true at the level of nature, but it remains to transfer it to the sphere of society: It is indeed the society that the Qur'an focuses on, when it points out the outcome of past peoples, and commands humans to be alert to the outcome of behavior. We may refer to Verses of the Qur'an like:

"Many were the laws of life that have passed away before you: travel through the earth, and see what was the outcome of those who rejected truth;" (3:137) "Do they not travel through the earth, and see what was the outcome of those before them;" (12:109).

It is such abilities of understanding that the Muslim World needs in its endeavor to revive the Muslim *Ummah*.

Its way is blocked by barriers that stand in the way of comprehending the situation, and, consequently, the Muslims' efforts are in vain. This is what stimulated me in the first place to assert that this is the aspect that is badly required for the Muslim World to proceed with open eyes rather than move blindfold, in disregard of Allah's command - when He urges that we move around to see "how Allah originated creation " (29:20). Most Muslims still think that this endeavor of inspecting the facts of life and history is unrelated to the Qur'an or *Sunnah*; that we are in no need of such activity, since the Qur'an and *Sunnah* are sufficient. But their attitude would have changed if they had reflected on how often and urgently the Qur'an insists on our reflecting on the ways of those who passed before us. It must be said here that our understanding of the Qur'an and *Sunnah* is biased, i.e. tied to certain conditions. Let me explain this: If someone not tied to our background was asked to read the Qur'an, trying to detect the issues which fall under the Qur'an's interest, he/she would be sure, and without much difficulty, to declare that one main focus of the Qur'an is the ways, or *sunan*, of those who existed before, and to notice the Qur'an's directing its reader to ponder upon the laws

which govern the lives of societies. It is a reader who is free from the atmosphere made up by Muslims that may be able to discover that; while for the Muslim burdened with the heritage descending over centuries it is very hard to penetrate to this simple fact - indeed, most Muslims regard such facts as superfluous and unimportant.

This atmosphere or barrier established over the generations is what is what the Qur'an is referring to as 'turning the faces away' as in the Verse, "And how many Signs in the heavens and the earth do they pass by? Yet they turn their faces away from them;" (12:105).

It may be said from all the above that the Muslims' failure to appreciate the importance of these issues may not be accounted for by something in the Qur'an or *Sunnah*, but it has to do with the Muslim: for he/she bears the burdens and shackles that have been building up over the generations, and from the scholars' neglect of these issues.

The Muslim has lost the right perspective towards the Qur'an and *Sunnah* as regards the idea of *taskhir*, the idea of reviewing his/her attitude to discover any shortcoming, and the reexamination of the causes of events. This sense of putting right what is wrong is not part of the Muslim consciousness at present, and hence it is natural that we are unable to get over the error. We most simply or even naively

can say: "We must do our best, but it is not our duty to attain success," which indicates that we have lost consciousness of the law of correcting mistakes. It is that simple, but it is such a heavy obstacle that blocks the way of Muslims. When you hear historians say: "The factors that impede the Muslims' development are erroneous inherited concepts that block the Muslims' way to perceiving what is correct;" we realize that, according to them, the remedy is not through unloading some of the inherited legacy as much as the adding of new concepts.

Hence our example above about a person who is free from the burdens descending across the centuries, and who is more capable of understanding the Qur'an than one who has been burdened with erroneous concepts which impede correct understanding.

You may hear someone protesting here: "How can what you say be right when none among the predecessors said something like what you are putting forward now?"

Well, yes, it may be so; it maybe that our learned predecessors did not point out what is being discussed here. But so what? Were they exposed to the same scientific atmosphere that we experience? Has not science advanced a great deal over the past centuries? Has it not revealed so many facts about the world and human life?

But we suffer from burdens and shackles in the cultural legacy that prevent us from perceiving things for what they are, from observing the light that the Almighty is bringing to the minds of people. This is the point that we should focus on to be released from the burdens and shackles. Indeed, to release people from burdens and shackles is the task that the Messenger of Allah, ﷺ, was sent to accomplish, as the following Verse of the Qur'an points out:

"Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered Prophet, whom they find mentioned in their own Scripture - in the Law and the Gospel - for he commands what is just and forbids them what is evil; he allows them as lawful what is good and pure, and prohibits them what is bad and impure; he releases them from their heavy burdens and from the yokes that are upon them;" (7:157).

This leads us to discuss an important point, related to this assumption of the shackles that impede our expanding our knowledge.

The kind of culture we grow up in, and the kind of education that we receive and share, do not stimulate us to do research, to study things with the necessary enthusiasm, and to endeavor to discover the laws of existence. When you read the work of a certain author, he/she does not seem to indicate to you that his/her study does not exhaust the issue

he/she has set out to investigate; he/she does not seem to urge others to resume and reexamine the points he/she is putting forward, in order to bring out more clarity and accuracy; he/she does not seem to take it for granted that knowledge is always open to expansion and increase. In a word, our author neither exhorts us to do more research, nor does he/she assert (in their general approach and style rather than in direct words) that what they are offering is little.

When we deal with the writings of older scholars, we seem to assume that what they wrote attained perfection, that the universe itself was created from the first moment in its final shape, so that there is no room for increase or development. We seem to assume that the ancients must have said all that there is to say; that they left no matter, big or small, but explored thoroughly, including any law under the sun, or above it. It only remains for us to keep eulogizing them. (Is not this similar to the teacher's inspiring to his/her students that there is no possibility of finding him/her in the wrong, or his/her having less than perfect knowledge?)

Let us hope that the rising generation will be in a better position than us to reveal such diseases, to perceive the fact that our writer inspires his/her readers with indolence and contributes to stifling talents, for they endeavor to enslave the readers' minds.

I am not referring to any one generation or category of people. We may safely generalize, and may find that true of many centuries. And as long as this lasts the path to revealing truth will remain blockaded, as the generations follow each other in mimicking and following blindly. How far we are from the rule that was adopted early on in Islamic history: "Do not seek to determine what is true by those who uphold it; but establish the truth and then judge men in its light."

This locked gate to discerning truth may be said to consider fathers to be synonymous with truth - which is not true, no matter how great those fathers might be. I just stir this topic, the topic of activating the faculty of understanding to solve problems and exploit existing sources - as for hoping to see visible results we may have to wait for those who explode the barriers that stand in our way. And I say honestly that I cannot affirm that such individuals as have this power of stirring the Muslim *Ummah* may be met with in the present generation - we just whisper and lament; that is all.

We toil a lot just to see some of the illusions dispelled. But it is all right: let such efforts be a precedent for the rising generation to really acquire the faculty of

understanding, to have the perception which may enable them to weed the Islamic orchard.

3. THE WILL WAS ABILITY AT ONE TIME

The will comes into being as a result of acquiring the ability to choose the best objective; and ability comes into being as a result of knowing how to reveal the means necessary for realizing the objective. In the same way as God created us from one soul and from this first human created his mate, and then lots of humans were procreated, ability and will are a pair that were one soul before ... and from this pair, a lot of good and successful activity will come forth.

Ability was first, and will came to interact with the ability. Ability to have will is like the ability to smell, and from which the will to smell was generated. The normal sequence is that a human understands then wills: this is the normal order, although the opposite can happen occasionally. In the same way as the unconscious was originally consciousness, the will was generated from a previous ability.

Ability, in the sense of being able to understand better than was possible before, generates the will in the human.

The rule is then that the ability generates will, and the will in turn stimulates one to seek what is right, and to increase what is right. The cycle continues, for the ability, when it increases, contributes to crystalizing the will and solidifying it. And this reciprocal reinforcement continues: ability reinforces will, and will reinforces ability. This helps us understand how things start, and how they proceed. After the process is underway, there can be further advance or a stoppage and retreat.

But we need to shed more light on this regression.

We find in the Qur'an this Verse: "If We grant long life to any, We cause him to be reversed in nature;" (36:68).

The above Verse applies to an individual's organism, but regression may happen to the whole community - it happens when they fail to grasp the *taskhir* relationship, in the Qur'anic terminology, which is expressed outside the Qur'an as a causal or dialectic relationship, between the will and ability. It is when people lose interest in knowledge, or give attention to only certain aspects of knowledge: in this case the will is no longer reinforced by the relevant ability, and it starts to dwindle. Knowledge recedes, and the will recedes as well. About this, the Messenger, ﷺ, says:

"Knowledge does not recede by God's extracting it from the consciousness of people; it recedes when God causes the

death of learned people. And when no learned person is left, people will put up ignorant chiefs, and questions will be addressed to these, and they will give their *fatwas* without knowledge, so that they move blindly and lead their followers to blind behavior."⁵³

We can just look around and see the number of those who are well-intended, who sincerely lament the ebbing of Islamic principles from hearts: they have real pain, but they do not know how they may realize what they crave. This is a widespread phenomenon - that while we deplore the things happening before our eyes, bad things still happen; and we can do nothing about things since they happen because of the lack of knowledge, that is the lack of awareness and the lack of abilities.

I am aware that some people say that the collapse of nations goes with the expansion of knowledge. And that might be true, but the expansion of knowledge in that case is not happening in the essentials. There must be no doubt that some basic knowledge is lost so that it led to the collapse. We must have no doubt that any system that begins to show flaws in its function must have been exposed to a certain failing, nor must we think that the flaw happens despite our full knowledge about its working. This must be clear to

⁵³ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Chapter on Knowledge

grasp - but is it self-evident? I am afraid we fail to apply it where social life is concerned: about the factors that bring nations to decline and perhaps collapse. What is required of us is to discover the aspects of social life which we have passed by, reexamine those aspects, and see where the error lies. No error is indeed worse than saying that an error resulted from knowledge. Let us not be duped by some who have only a smattering of knowledge - certainly not the required amount of it - and are proud of the very little that they have acquired. By submitting to such shallow knowledge, we will be moving from our simple ignorance to complex ignorance, because yes, a little knowledge can be a cause of much ignorance. A tiny taste of knowledge leads the individual to make surmises that are not based on sound science. Let us not imagine that science and knowledge can be the cause of losing our way; it is the opposite indeed - the lack of knowledge. Let us investigate this by analyzing an article that appeared in a UNESCO magazine, *Diogenes* (an article by Mohammad Arkoun, in Issue 19/1972). The author says: "As for the West, we find that they are working hard to free science from De Carte's methodology. At the same time, we find that the advances in linguistics, psychology, history, and anthropology, and, more especially, biology, will render the Marxist doctrine more flexible.

Earnest efforts are being exerted to do away with the false gods who the intellect had been worshipping sincerely, and still sanctify. Instead of dividing science into: (a) a theory that is based on metaphysical assumptions, and (b) application which is left for the engineer and worker - the predominant trend at present is in contrast 'the practical science', i.e. combining theory and application. This new attitude of the mind before itself compels it to review its whole history, not to reject that history haughtily and arrogantly, but to understand that history in a better way - in a way that, for example, it may expound to us how the destiny of the human soul was tied to the predominance of thought, which claimed that it was qualified to justify all facts by referring to some logical and streamlined laws. These efforts aim, however, to pull down the present edifice - for such demolition must happen prior to any positive work, which must take place in the West before anywhere else: I say this because all the Western researchers have not changed their attitude, nor changed their interior: all the advance that has been accomplished in that respect has not touched the essence of the scientific culture; which, in many of its aspects, still preserves the characteristics of the Enlightenment philosophy. The West has not so far taken any decisive action in relation to foreign civilizations. We

notice that, for instance, in connection with Islam, as may be seen the scarcity of Arabic studies in France."

What the above author imagines is that he is breaking free from De Carte's methodology; while all he has done is to generalize that methodology, for it is no more than extending the methodology adopted in the world of nature (*alafaq* in Qur'anic terms) to the world of souls, i.e. human behavior and mind. It just emphasizes that the evidence of science lies in its outcomes, *al-'aqibah* in Qur'anic terms, as in the Verse: "But the fruit is eventually for righteousness;" (20:132).

This kind of evidence may also be noticed in Jesus's reply when they asked him how they may recognize truthful from false prophets, and he replied: "You shall know them by their fruits;" (Mat. 7:16). Is it a pragmatic principle? Yes, but for the long term. This is pointed out in the Qur'an, to plan for the long run: "you prefer the life of this world; but the Hereafter is better and more enduring;" (87: 16-17).

Being better and more enduring is enough evidence for something's being superior; so call it whatever you like to call it, 'pragmatism', 'instrumentalism', or any other designation - though we like to use the designation used by the Almighty in the Qur'an 'what is better and more

enduring', which is saying that something is worth accepting when it is better and more enduring.

And it gives one satisfaction that science is expanding and revealing more evidence from the natural world and the world of the humans, in accordance with the promise given by the Lord in the Qur'an:

"Soon will We show them Our Signs in the regions of the earth and in their own souls, until it becomes manifest to them that this is the truth;" (41:53).

The idea here is that faith in God and the Last Day is scientific: it is even the pinnacle of science; and the evidence is that a person who believes in God and the Last Day is the one who produces - in this world - what is better and more enduring. Once we demonstrate that yes, this category of people are the ones who put forward work which is better and more enduring, then we will have presented evidence that no one can refute. And I am saying that the Signs of the world of nature and the human life indicate that that category is the better and more enduring. I say this is true, but of course it still remains to cite enough evidence from the natural world and the world of human life to prove this: this will require so much effort, sustained effort and investigation, and it will require much pondering about the creation of heavens and the earth.

All the Qur'an urges us to do is to reflect on the facts that fall under our sight and hearing; it is from there that we draw evidence concerning faith in Allah and the Last Day.

It is true that there is in Islam much reliance on the unseen, but the unseen has its evidence in the world around us: we may not confound the world of the unseen 'the world of *ghaib*' and metaphysics, since the latter, as the West uses it, is something that is not supported by hard evidence, nor is it governed by a law. And we, Muslims, are commanded not to believe in something that is not supported by evidence, nothing that does not have its basis in an established law. It may be sufficient in this respect to quote Ibn Taimiyah's saying: "The Almighty makes it evident that a law, or *sunnah*, is not subject to change or modification; and a *sunnah* refers to something that happens or is done on a later occasion in the same way as it happened or was done on an earlier occasion, when the two occasions share the same characteristics;"⁵⁴

This notion is based on the Verse of the Qur'an:

"Such was the *sunnah* of Allah among those who lived aforetime: no change you will find in the *sunnah* of Allah;" (33:62).

⁵⁴ *al-Fatawa*. Vol. 13. P. 20

It is unfortunate that many Arab writers have adopted this term of 'metaphysics', in the Western sense, which implies things that are not governed by law, and not subject to scientific study and rigor, not unlike their adoption of 'science' in the Western sense, which affirms that 'science is ethically neutral'. It is a blunder and delusion in both cases - of what value is science if it does not lead us to what is better and more enduring, and unless it increases human dignity and honor?

When abilities deplete, then wills will start to decrease, too. And we have this situation taking place in the modern Muslim society, where some begin to replace the original wills with alien ones: it was so at the beginning, and it is happening again - as we find it described in the Qur'an: "if you revert to your faulty ways, We shall revert to Our punishments;" (17:8); and, "Such was the *sunnah* of Allah among those who lived aforetime: no change you will find in the *sunnah* of Allah;" (33:62).

When, on the other hand, people respond to Allah's law, then things move towards well-guided ways; that is because, as the following Verse asserts,

"What can Allah gain by your punishment, if you are grateful and you believe?" (4:147).

A question that may occur to some is this: Is it possible to provide someone with a will before ability?

For an answer, let us notice that the ability to acquire a will is not synonymous with the ability to have the means to act in accordance with the will - though both are ability. A human does have the ability to acquire the will before he/she is able to conceive its justification and the means required for realizing it. From this perspective, we may say that humankind were granted the ability to have the will of the ideal before they realized its truth and the feasibility of realizing it. This may be supported by the following Verse from the Qur'an:

"Soon will We show them Our Signs in the regions of the earth and in their own souls until it becomes manifest to them that this the truth;" (41:53).

The word 'truth' in the above Verse refers in a general way to the ideals of religion: including belief in God and the Last Day, the call to equality and fairness among people, the universal principle - and all the principles advocated by religion: and these are principles that people adopted and embraced before they had acquired the ability to perceive their justification on the basis of science - that is, on the basis of the signs termed in the Qur'an as 'the Signs of the world of nature and the human life and soul'. People were

granted these principles and values before they had acquired the means to realizing them, for abilities develop gradually, over time.

You may observe the child in this connection; for the child absorbs the ideals and the moral code - for he/she has the ability to absorb them, though not yet capable of perceiving their correctness and truth, and without knowing the evidence behind them.

This is true of humanity, too. God revealed His Guidance, so that people may uphold it, and so that it acts on every generation in proportion to their level of knowledge and science.

When God tied the evidence for religion with the Signs of the natural world and the world of the souls, it indicated that humanity had reached a level of maturity at the time of revelation, in a way that the proofs for religion were no longer from the domain of the unseen. It is true that religion has items from the unseen, but their proofs come from the world of the observable world, the world of nature and that of the souls. That is how religion is fit for all time and all places: it directs us to the signs of the world and the world of souls.

It helps in this respect to notice that the sense of 'science' has been expanding and acquiring more clarity; it extends its dominion over wider and wider domains.

In the past, people perceived the evidence of scientific propositions as not tied to outcome, contrary to the Qur'anic approach; it was rather tied to intellectual deduction. Things have changed in a positive way, for the evidence is now tied to outcomes, to the consequences of an event or phenomenon: it means a change in scientific direction. Many people are still unaware of this change - they still assume that science is still tied the Aristotelian deductive logic.

But things are no longer so: the scientific proof that a proposition or assumption is true is the outcome: whatever is better and more enduring is scientific.

Even the subject of belief in the Last Day is presented in the Qur'an on the basis of outcome; any belief that leads to better and more enduring outcomes is closer to truth. It is on this basis that the Almighty says in the Qur'an: "If you are suffering hardship, they are suffering similar hardship; but you have hope from Allah, while they have none;" (4:104). This Verse is saying that both a believer and an unbeliever will feel pain, but a believer has the advantage of awaiting from God what the unbeliever does not await; it is saying that, as long as faith will render good consequences, which

may be observed even in this life, then there is no science superior to this. Let us also reflect on the following Verses:

"Then, by the Lord of heaven and earth, this is the very truth, as much as the fact that you can speak intelligently to each other;" (51:23); "And such are the parables We set forth for mankind; but only those understand them who have knowledge;" (29:43).

Once judging an event has been tied to outcome, belief in the Last Day has become a scientific fact, whose effects may be observed in daily life: which is the essence of the empirical science, identical with the results of many empirical facts, whose proof is tangible enough to be accepted, though some reflection is needed to get to these facts. From this, when we reflect on a Verse of the Qur'an like:

"it is those who do not believe in the Hereafter, that are in real penalty, and in farthest error;" (34:8) we may see its truth not in the domain of the unseen, but in this world, in the hearts of people who live on this earth: by observing what tranquility and peace faith grants to believers, and how it alleviates much of the hardship and psychological agony and delusion - all the symptoms that a disbeliever in Allah and the Last day Suffers.

By tying the measuring of an event to its outcome, belief in the Last Day has attained the same status as the empirical facts have; add to this that while the experimental scientific assumptions are tested in a lab, with tubes and other apparatus, the domain of testing the Hereafter is the wide world and the historical events, where the consequences of activities are recorded.

And when we adopt the outcome of things and activities to be the proof for scientific conclusions, it becomes necessary for any human society to keep wakeful and alert to all the historical events; to be aware, as the Qur'an put it, of 'how creation started' as in the Verse "Say: 'Travel through the earth and see how Allah originated creation;'" (29:20).

To fail to do that will lead the society to suffer the consequences of its ignorance.

But, one may ask, of what value is all this inquiry?

Well, we should imagine how huge an advantage we gain when faith is presented in the same way as geography or astronomy or chemistry or physics - when faith becomes a science: when we **know** there is no god but God, as the Qur'an teaches us:

"Know, therefore, that there is no god but Allah;" (47:19); and "There is no god but He: that is the witness of

Allah, His angels, and those endowed with knowledge, standing firm in justice. There is no god but He, the Exalted, the Wise;" (3:18).

When religion is considered on the basis of outcome, it follows that accepting religion takes place with reference to its outcome: people will accept it in the same way as they accepted the outcomes of scientific investigation, and that in all domains; people have no complexes about the person or the time or the place connected with the unfolding of the scientific fact - they will not refuse to accept a scientific fact because it was put forward by other than their favorites. Such approach must happen in the Muslim World, so that it can enter the world *de nouveau*, bearing in hand the Islamic guidance which is verifiable with scientific evidence. It must acquire the exactness of chemistry, which was one day a kind of sorcery, and then occupied its place as one of the most accurate sciences.

On the other hand, belief in the revealed religion must come to be a scientific necessity that a human cannot do without, since faith will be accompanied by its evidence drawn from the events of history, the outcome of past and present things, and the predictions for the future, which is indicated in a Verse of the Qur'an which says:

"And you shall certainly know the truth of it all after a while;" (38:88).

It is not a simple issue, that one can dispose of very easily. To have this topic first revealed and then for it sink deep in minds requires strenuous efforts and investigation, which is unfortunately not a feature of the Muslim life. It has not yet settled in the Muslim's conscience that studies of this sort, and the results of such studies, are what modern technology awaits to put itself in the service of the ideal, in order that major studies are conducted to support its truth, and bring it out to the domain of science.

Civilization is really a prelude for the rise of the ideal, i.e. the religious doctrine. The renowned historian Arnold Toynbee perceived this, when he considered that the Roman Civilization, with what accompanied it: the Roman peace, the great roads, its sophisticated establishments - that was all, according to Toynbee, the prelude for the Christian idea to emerge and move on, for the missionary used those same Roman roads, secured by the Roman peace, to disseminate the idea, reaching even Rome, which was soon to become the center of the church.

4. THE LATENT MORAL ABILITY

When you burn wood, oil, or when the atom is split, a material energy ensues; they have energy - and, in the same way, the human has his/her moral energy.

Einstein added a fourth dimension, time, to the three known dimensions; but a historian like Toynbee added two dimensions to the known dimensions of existence: he added near the end of his study of history: life and ethics.

Toynbee says: "How has this book come to be written? And why do people study history? The author of this book [Toynbee] has his personal answer: the historian writes a book like this in response to a call from God to study God's creation with the intention of knowing the Almighty [Let me, J. Said, add that the Almighty calls on humans to move around and study creation, as in the Verse of the Qur'an: "Say: 'Travel through the earth and see how Allah originated creation';" (29:20).] To have a purpose in life gives the historian, as it may give any other person, a cause to rejoice.

"The historian can observe things from just one among the numberless angles of observation. It distinguishes the historian as a contributor to human heritage that he/she puts forward an image of the creation of the Creator, in the incessant movement of creation; but that image, because of the historian's own and personal experience, comes within a framework of six dimensions ...

"Within the perspective of the historian, the material world revolves around the center within a four-dimensional framework, the time-space dimensions; and the historian perceives in addition life on our globe as moving in a circular movement within a five-dimensional framework of life/space/time ... and can perceive the human soul soaring to a sixth dimension, with the Divine breathing; it moves, to the extent that was bestowed upon it of the spiritual liberation⁵⁵, towards its Creator or away from Him. If we are right in conceiving in history a reflection of the Creator's creation, in history's incessant movement, we shall not be amazed to find that the virtual force operative in the historical movement takes place within the human minds, whose internal tendency to respond to the impact of history occurs in accordance with the historical circumstances of the particular individual who receives those circumstances: it is unavoidable that the drive of curiosity will reinforce the receptiveness to the lessons of history; but this curiosity will

⁵⁵ From other writings of Toynbee's it appears that he means by this expression a human's liberation from his/her impulses, his/her breaking free from the stimuli towards perversion, cruelty, and hostility; and acquiring the stimuli of forgiveness, selflessness, and love: in a word, moving from bestiality to humanity [Jawdat Said].

not be stirred unless one perceives most vividly and overwhelmingly the process of social change;"⁵⁶.

Toynbee is saying above that people's will remains latent and inactive until they perceive the correct way to realizing that will - it is then that the will may set out, and the universal system gets into motion, in response to the sixth dimension, the same as the Qur'an calls 'a different creature,' in the Verses:

"We created man from a quintessence of clay; then we placed him as a drop of sperm in a place of rest, firmly fixed; then We made the sperm into a clot of congealed blood; then of that clot We made a fetus lump; then We made out of that lump bones and clothed the bones with flesh; then We developed out of it a different creature. So, blessed be Allah, the Best to create!" (23:12-14).

In the same way as the understanding faculty may be used to exploit the material world, we need to employ it for establishing a moral-guided life; and the way this life is established must be defined until it is crystal clear.

This much is perceived by the historian in his/her tracing of the dynamics of the world of souls, which we are

⁵⁶ Arnold Toynbee, Somervell's *Abridgement of the Study of History (Arabic Translation)*. Vol. 4. Ch. 44. P. 233. 2nd Ed. Cairo, 1965

commanded by God to do by investigating the ways of those before us.

Was it likely for any human before the discovery of writing to imagine what this faculty would do to humankind? With the acquisition of reading and writing, the human acquired a new memory, without which it was not possible for humanity to march ahead. Before this faculty was ushered a human's experience died with his/her death; but after it, ideas, expertise, and experiments acquired permanence, and a human is unable to march ahead without the accumulation of experience and experiments.

It was said above that a human's abilities are not the product of his/her generation; he/she rather sits upon mountains of all the experience accumulated over all the past generations: and this was made possible because of the emergence of this faculty of reading. It is the potential ability to which Muhammad Iqbal alluded in the debate he imagined between God and a human, in which the Almighty said: "Prove God's Ability in your creation;"⁵⁷.

But let us now turn next to the ability that people take to be impossible to happen: human's transfer to a different level, by tapping the potential abilities in him/her, from the stage which the angels expected to the stage which was only

known to God, the potential ability planted in them, and about which Allah said to the angels:

"I know what you do not know;" (2:30).

In the same way as the abilities of exploiting material energies develop and rise, the same thing must happen to the abilities of exploiting the intellectual ability; indeed, the physical abilities will not become a blessing for the human development and progress unless development takes place in the domain of psychological abilities; hence we find the Almighty say in the Qur'an: "It is not nor your sons that will bring you nearer to Us in degree: but only those who believe and work righteousness;" (34:37).

The present world cannot use numbers except in connection with the calculation of energy and income; it has not advanced much in the skill of measuring spiritual and intellectual advance. It is a mistake to keep measuring progress with reference to material income; unless the human discovers the measures of spiritual progress, he/she will be unable to exploit this important aspect of the human entity - though it must be admitted that it has not acquired the accuracy of material studies. The more humans advance in understanding this domain, the more we shall be

⁵⁷ *Iqbal's Philosophy*, (in Arabic), by al-A'thami, p. 94

cognizant of the importance of childhood: the enormous potential that may be tapped if the right environment exists.

We must stress here the necessity of distinguishing what belongs to the ability and what belongs to the will: confusion happens because none of the two factors exists without the other's existence: abilities reveal the importance of wills, and wills induce the search for abilities. It is when you have the ability to distinguish right from wrong that impels you to seek what is right; and it is your will to do what is correct that drives you to work for acquiring the abilities that are necessary for realizing that will. In other words, your ability to distinguish the unjust and just drives you to seek what is just, and your choosing what is just that stimulates you to strive to acquire the abilities which secure justice and perpetuate it.

I hope we all give this concept the importance that is due to it. I say this because the more fully we have ability, in both domains of matter and spirit, the better we shall be in a position to grasp the best ideal for the human being; and the abilities will be, once this is realized, a means for pinpointing the ideal. In the same way, the wills give the incentive to striving to acquire the abilities - for unless the will is there, what will make the human endeavor to gain abilities?

Once this is well perceived we can appreciate why the Qur'an blames wills if the person does not strive to acquire the available abilities, and, on the other hand, it blames the abilities if the person does not perceive and recognize the correct ideals. In blaming wills, we find the Qur'an say:

"If they had intended to come out, they would certainly have made some preparation therefore;" (9:46).

Which is saying that, had the will been there, the ability would have been obtained 'where there is a will, there is a way'. An ancient Arabic aphorism is harping on the same concept; it says: "Had you been really in love, you would have come upon the right plan for attaining your quest." What mostly happens around us is that when people fail to find the needed abilities, they hasten to assume that more faith is required - this is not completely wrong, for when the will, or having a definite purpose, is there, it must stimulate one to seek the means: the necessary abilities for attaining results, once the conditions are met and no obstacles intervene. But that should not deflect us from the more usual procedure: that abilities act to discover truth and what is correct, to reveal the right ideal, which results in wills.

Abilities play the part of revealing good wills. In other words, sincerity leads to seeking what is right, and what is right brings on sincerity and develops it. From this we can

see how when the Muslim World proves its failure to acquire the required abilities and means, when faith 'the will' is there, it becomes an easy target for anyone who so likes to charge its societies of being without faith (and some go as far as charging these societies of being as far from Islam as the *Jahiliyyah* 'pre-Islam idolater' people - that they are devoid of the will and ideal.) In the same way, when the Western world fails to attain the wills while the abilities abound, it may be said: If there were a true ideal, nearer to truth than theirs, they would have gotten the means to realizing it, with all their sophisticated abilities and understanding. These doubts will occur, for, at a first glance, it will seem that nothing can detain the realization of an ideal, if it really exists. But, by some reflection, it must be noticed that, though the general rule may be realized, the results may not come by because the right conditions are not met, and the barriers stand in the way of the wills - the exercise of abilities and that the workers are mindful of the will may be hampered and deactivated.

This topic may be further understood by referring to Malek Bennabi, when he says: "Europe, which believed that it had been chosen by providence to take in hand the destiny of humanity, took from the age of Bocaccio, when civilization was being sucking its first milk from the Arabic

culture - a fact which it later denied most easily ... but one European said something different about the source of this civilization; I mean Gustave Le Bon, when he came to conclude his research about the Arabic Civilization like this - and it was on a sad note that he ended it:

"The reader may inquire: What drives the scholars at this time to deny the role of the Arabs? Was it not their duty to rise above religious fanaticism?

"The truth about this is that our apparent independence of thought is just an optical delusion, for the truth is that we are far from being free about certain things. There were various complexes, complexes related to bigotry against Islam and its men, and these have accumulated over many centuries until they are part of our organic structure."⁵⁸.

The above text is an indirect, though clear enough, declaration of the attitude of the European civilization towards the Muslim World, since the beginning of the imperial period. It is indeed similar to the attitude of the Muslim World itself, in contrasting itself with Europe and its products and ideas, for this world also takes itself to be the sole receptacle of God's bounty and blessing.

Well, it is time to ask myself am I already discussing the real issue itself? Or am I still beating about the bush?

We know what the problem is: It is about the work for Islam, and how it may be crowned with success?

And as work requires for attaining success both ability and will, then does the Muslim World have both? And if both are there, do the conditions for success exist to the required level, and have we made sure that no obstacles impede the realization of target?

In a nutshell, I may say: the Muslim World does have enough will to start - that much can be confirmed concerning the will. As for ability: it does have a huge reservoir of material and human abilities - and yet it has a dangerous lack in the domain of the understanding ability. This, in a few words, is what I wish to communicate to those concerned about the Muslim world; and if I succeed in making that clear enough, I consider that my mission is already accomplished. If the bewildered and confused youth realizes this notion, they will move in great earnestness towards acquiring the power of understanding what they have not understood - and this will put them on the way to overcoming their feeling of loss and anxiety. We badly need to investigate how we may approach our problem; to make sure indeed whether the problem may be unraveled; or is it perhaps complicated by other factors?

⁵⁸ *Direction of the Muslim World*, p. 43. First Edition (1959)

5. ANOTHER WAY OF DEFINING ABILITIES

Correctness is revealing the right relationship - relationship between the Creator and the human, relationship among humans, and relationship between the human and nature (the world with its components: inanimate matter, plants, and life). Let us elaborate a little:

1. Relationship between the human and the Creator (a servant and the Creator).

It is as articulated in the Verse of the Qur'an: "And I have not created the jinns and men, except that they should serve and worship Me;" (51:56); and, "so serve Allah, offering Him sincere devotion. Is it not to Allah that sincere devotion is due?" (39:2-3).

2. Relationships among people (justice and compassion)

As articulated in the Verse of the Qur'an:

"Allah commands justice, the doing of good;" (16:90); and, "and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to piety;" (5:8).

3. A Human's relationship with the world (Exploitation):

The Qur'an states: "And He has subjected to you, as from Him, all that is in the heavens and on earth: behold, in that are Signs indeed for those who reflect;" (44:13).

The right approach to revealing the appropriate relationship is to apply one's intellectual power, the understanding faculty of the human. This again is supported by the Qur'an, where we find:

"for every act of hearing, or of seeing or of understanding of the mind will be enquired into;" (17:36).

It may suffice for the practicing Muslim to reflect on the Verses of the Qur'an that I listed so far; but if he/she, or anyone, wishes to see more evidence, let them refer to Allah's Signs in the world around us and in the realm of human life and the human soul and mind, to find a verification of what is being stated here: for Allah's Signs in the world and in the world of human life support the Verses of the Scripture.

Indeed, it is an injunction of the Qur'an's that the Muslim does his/her best to be acquainted with Allah's Signs in the tangible world around them, and the world of their own

souls. Here is one example, a Verse of the Qur'an which enjoins this effort,

"Many were the ways and facts of life that have passed away before you: travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those who rejected truth;" (3:137).

It thrills me indeed to see the Muslim who perceives the importance of the three categories of relations, as presented in Allah's Book. It is a heartening sign to have this enlightenment, but I am advocating here the next step, that one be among those who endeavor to demonstrate in their own behavior God's Signs in the world and the souls. This indeed is the noble endeavor, the work of the godly, who followed in this the work of the messengers. It is imperative, young Muslim, to be foremost in studying the facts of the world around you and the world inside, rather than letting that be the field of just those who exploit those domains for perverted relationships and short-term targets.

The Muslim must not hesitate to go ahead in exploring God's Sign, as they are displayed in the ever-expanding creation in this world of ours. I am not claiming that I am presenting those Signs in this book - all that I am doing is to urge the Muslim to study the sciences related to the tangible Signs and take up the responsibility of acquiring them. And even when many Muslims have acquired all the accessible

knowledge of the tangible Signs, he/she should not have the illusion that our, or the others, acquired knowledge amounts to more than a little of the vastness of God's knowledge. We were reminded by our Prophet that all that Moses and al-Khader knew was nothing more, in contrast with God's knowledge, than a bird's pecking at the sea. That is why the Qur'an says: "of knowledge it is only a little that is communicated to you, O men! " (17:85). Having said this, we should remember, on the other hand, that Allah opens the way for the human to acquire more and more knowledge, as we see elsewhere in the Qur'an: "say: 'O my Lord! advance me in knowledge;" (20:114). Knowledge and science are of such nature that the more you acquire, the more they seem to expand; and this also was pointed out by the Qur'an:

"Say: 'If the ocean were ink wherewith to write out the words of my Lord, sooner would the ocean be exhausted than would the words of my Lord: even if we added another ocean like it, for its aid;" (18:109).

CHAPTER FIVE

APPLICATIONS

1. Does the Muslim World have a Will

My answer, as the reader remembers, is yes. It does have the will; it has faith: it aims at having the Islamic doctrine implemented in actual life, that people live in accordance with the commands of the Almighty.

Can we express this will of the Muslims in numbers - for, as they say, once you are capable of discussing a case numerically, you have certainly attained some command of it. I may say with assurance that should we ask the Muslims whether they choose to be governed by the Qur'an or by any other constitution - on condition that the question and their response are exercised without their being intimated or pressurized - their choice would be the Qur'an and nothing else. We can make sure of this observation by inquiring, and doing some personal statistics in whatever establishments

are open to us: in schools, universities, villages, factories, barracks, etc. The rate will vary, of course, but the majority will choose the rulings of the Qur'an. This is not saying that this conclusion will remain static over time, and anyone may observe this. For instance, had one made these statistics fifty years back, the result would have been different from the current time. And if one does the study fifty years later, the result will perhaps be different. But, on the whole, the actual situation leads us to conclude that the required will is there, at least among the majority: We may say, with assurance, that there is a capital of will that is sufficient for setting out.

There is no need to inquire about the source of this will - even though it is worthwhile to make such inquiry; the will must not come or disappear haphazardly, without our intervention. We really must probe this, and have the ability to develop it. I did touch on this in connection with 'proclamation', how to make sure that the ideal reaches most clearly every individual; I also said something about this when I discussed 'will' as a value and as an application.

We do find that many Muslims are prepared to lay their lives and offer their money for the sake of God and for His religion; we find this in the case of the masses, among women, and very old people. Such observation gives one the bright impression that there is much good in this *Ummah*. I

must admit here that this last notion is not absolute, that any researcher may decide to challenge my conclusion, since not many Muslims would be prepared to sacrifice their lives and money in the way of God. I do agree that those who are ready to sacrifice life and wealth in the way of God are a small minority: if we were to ask everyone in the *Ummah* to offer this sacrifice, the result would be similar to that of conducting a referendum about adopting or not adopting the Qur'an's rulings. You may find that the majority do declare their support for adopting Islam, but we may not find the majority to be ready to lay down life and wealth for the sake of God. So, is this a problem of ability or will? Do these people need a boost of ability or will?

Here is my answer. If those who vote to choose Islam as the ruling system were, say, 70%, and those who prove ready to lay down life and money for the sake of God were less than 1% of those; then we should ask those 69 who are unwilling to sacrifice all in the way of God: What holds you back from offering life and money for Allah? You will find perhaps 60% of them have proved unwilling to sacrifice because it was unclear to them that such big sacrifice of both life and money will act to produce the target that they wished - it is not that they did not care to see Islam applied. In other words, these people do not know the way which, if

they were to offer both life and property for, God would grant them the outcome they craved.

It may be evident by now that, as far as I can perceive things connected with the Muslim dilemma, Muslims' lagging in offering what is dear for the sake of Islam is not on account of their lacking the will for giving away: it is rather that they do not know the way which would pay if money and life are offered.

I hope the reader does not take such points lightly. We need to know the reason for people's holding back from offering what is precious for the sake of their ideal. Is it lack of will? Or is it little comprehension of how to realize the objective? I am saying that had the Muslim known how to realize what we all wish, then he/she would be more willing to offer both money and life.

We need to distinguish what is caused by comprehension - which is mostly ignored, but I want to examine it most intently - for ignoring this leads to many and diverse consequences, which I hope to elaborate, at least partially.

People wonder also: Is it so in God's law, or *sunnah*, that we offer our lives and money for His sake and then He does not grant us victory? Does not the Qur'an assert that 'the outcome is best for the righteous' (28:83) and 'it was due from Us to aid those who believed,' (30:47)? Were we not

promised to be granted victory or martyrdom, while we see the martyrdom but not victory?

So, we must not be hard on people: It is not in the nature of things, nor in the nature of the human, to stand by an ideal that would not attain victory. When the Muslim does not see the way to victory, then his/her will does not suffice in itself to attain victory - wishes are not enough! God has set down laws for victory, as for anything else, and to fail to act upon those laws means that no victory will be attained. Did not the Muslims fail to attain victory on the day of Uhud when they failed to act upon this law? And the Qur'an was firm enough when it declared it was their own shortcoming that led to their defeat: "Say to them: 'It [the catastrophe] is from yourselves;" (3:165).

This must teach us that to achieve our goals, will is not sufficient; you will find everyone express their wish to see victory and achieving the goal - but something else is required before success is achieved: the way to attaining it. There is a great imbalance in the Muslim consciousness here, a huge bias in favor of wills, even when there must be no doubt in minds that what is missing is abilities in the first place. You still hear it uttered most readily: "What we lack is faith, the will - not the ability." It was clear enough in the writings of those who analyzed the defeat in the June 1967

war, for they focused on wills, and ignored the ability. They would assert that the *Sahabah* (the Prophet's Companions) were granted victory for no reason but their firm faith. Such shallow reading of events leaves a bad effect on the souls of the youth: it often implants it in their consciousness that for victory all that is needed is sincere faith, not being more aware than the enemy of all the factors and professional skills that are required for victory. When we relieve the rising generation of the task, the heavy burden, of arduous study, we fill their minds with the notion that what is needed for coming to grips with our dilemma is not diligent and earnest study of the human affairs, and the events of the present and the past, but being full of faith. And the young Muslim feels that he/she is already full of faith, and that for earning faith they do not need to move around and investigate, nor for studying the experience of past peoples, across history - they most likely take such efforts to be a waste of time in futile research.

You see what is happening to the listener to such preaching: we are raising the feeling to its highest level, but discrediting the knowledge badly needed by the Muslim World, the power of better understanding, for overcoming present dilemmas.

What the younger generation in the Muslim World needs is to bring most clearly to their attention that to show slackness in acquiring the knowledge and science that we need badly is a great social sin, which they should endeavor to get over; they need us to help them get out of the state of stagnation, in which they even do not seem to realize their enormous error, when they fail to acquire the basics of knowledge which are needed for having command of the *sunan* of directing society.

Another problem is that the Muslim youth have not been instructed about the specific sciences and branches of knowledge they need to master in order to bring about change to the situation of the Muslim World. It must be pointed out to them that the first concern of theirs must be effecting change in themselves. This is a 'given' a priori that one should take care of before going any step in trying to help others. You need to acquire the knowledge and kind of science which enables you to bring change to what is in Muslims' souls and minds, for it is such change that will produce change in their condition. Let me not give names of sciences, for it is not the designations that matter - it is rather what the acquired knowledge enables us to do in actual life. This should not prevent us from realizing that we need basically two things; to realize:

1. What needs to be changed; and
2. how change might be realized.

The first refers to the ideal that we need to choose or put right; and it is to this end that the efforts of the Muslim leadership have been directed: by defending Islam, or disentangling and eliminating what does not belong to it.

As for the second target, no significant effort has been exerted to attain this: the specific way we need to follow so that change may be realized.

Why, one would wonder, have not the good intentions of Muslims produced the required abilities? My approach in this book indicates that what restrains Muslims is their lacking the required abilities, not the required will. I hope this much is clear enough by now.

It has also been indicated that the will drives a person to develop the necessary ability - and I have cited in this connection the Verse of the Qur'an:

"If they had intended to come out, they would certainly have made some preparation therefor;" (9:46).

This is true in a general way. But that may leave the reader baffled; he/she may inquire: Is not there some contradiction here? You assert that Muslims have good will, and assert that the will drives one to develop or procure the

ability - and then you assert that what the Muslims lack is ability! Do you not see that some explanation is necessary?

Well, yes, I do agree that this point calls for more explanation and demystifying. It does call for elaboration. So, let me try to elucidate the situation in points:

First: That for will to produce ability, some conditions must be met. Think of the mother and her will towards her child: no one doubts how excellent her will towards him/her is. And if you think in terms of the child's good health: we know without any doubt that she wishes the best health for her child; but we know that she may be unaware of some simple hygienic rules, and that her ignorance may cause certain diseases to her child - in fact some mothers can be so ignorant that they may cause serious health problems to their children. She is acting in light of her little light, but it does not occur to her to seek some more knowledge - certainly not reading and investigating.

I think of the Muslim World like this, about its caring for its social health. It is content with the little it knows about preserving social well-being, without having the least suspicion that there are subtle scientific facts that are coming to light and that such facts may raise our awareness, for otherwise we continue to move like a blind-folded person.

Here is another example from real life. We sometimes see in our part of the world a crippled child crawling, depending mainly for movement on his/her hands, for he/she has polio. At the same time, there is a center for giving vaccines against polio, for free; and the personnel there are just waiting for families to bring their children to be injected with the vaccine. But that child's parents, with all their love and good will towards their child, did not have the rudiments of awareness to get their child vaccinated.

How do you explain this situation? Will anybody say that the mother did not care for the good health of the child? Will it occur to anybody to accuse the mother of being without maternal sentiment? It is certainly more reasonable to account for this situation by the lack of comprehension, despite all the good will, and despite the parents' genuine love for their child and great desire to see him/her in perfect health. It is evidently the parents' not having knowledge, not having scientific facts about what should be done, that is behind their erroneous behavior. Even if you say that the will is a real factor here; i.e. if you say that the parents' not having their child vaccinated is due to their lack of trust in the vaccination - even in this case we may not say that the problem is in not wishing the good of the child, but it is in not knowing what is best for him/her, or at least the

ambiguity of the steps required of them; or, as with many families, their faith that it is sufficient to trust God and His protecting their child. It is most crucial that we analyze such situation, and come up with the various probable factors.

When we affirm that the parents' behavior is attributable to one of three causes: their total ignorance; the ambiguity in their mind as to the benefit of the required measures; or their feeling content with God's protection, so that this trust makes it unnecessary to seek human measures - we may help the Muslim by first eliminating the first and second alternatives, the ignorance and the ambiguity; and, as for the third, we need to put right the Muslim's idea of trust in God and relying on His help (*tawakkul* in Islamic traditional usage), by pointing out that it is not enough to rely on God's help without taking the right measures accessible to human endeavor.

This last example must have thrown more light on our topic; it must be clear that the issue is not as simple as we used to think - that it is not so simple as the will enters and the ability comes into being. For the will to beget ability, certain conditions must be met and certain obstacles must be removed. My endeavor is focused on this, for when it is realized in the Muslim World, the good will can beget the desired results. Once this notion is fully comprehended, you

will not hear people say: "He has no sincerity," or "no faith," - you will hear them say: "His will is deactivated by the lack of the conditions required for its being productive." Let it be added, too, that when we do not really have a criterion for distinguishing what is beneficial from what is harmful, it is natural that the Muslim has doubts, suspicions, and fear - to see him/her shrinking from every new thing, even when the new thing is propitious for us. It may be said in connection with the above example about vaccination that I know from direct observation in my village and similar villages that their inhabitants are skeptic about vaccination, for they suspect that this process can be just a way to cause them intentional harm - that is because people who have been living through bad and manipulative conditions are suspicious all the time; and every new event seems to them to indicate malicious intentions, as long as there is no criterion except that of the inherited habit of suspecting the worst.

But the more a human knows about God's *sunan*, and acts upon them, the freer he/she will be from the pessimistic attitude and shying away from any new thing - instead, he/she will proceed in life with an open mind, and for good reason.

This situation is true of the Muslim World - you may notice how Muslims are skeptic about any study or trend, for they see in any such attempt a design against us, intended to cause us mischief. Any survey of the Islamic writings and debates would reveal how negative the Muslim reaction is to others' studies and seminars: and it is no wonder as long as the Muslim writers and speakers have not developed their objective criteria; they merely act on impulses that are controlled by subjective attitudes, and that is a common phenomenon of people who develop many phobias generated by ignorance.

As for the other nations' reaction to such attitudes in the Muslim World, it can be a reaction of pity and compassion; or it can be in certain sectors a reaction of condemnation and conviction. And the way to overcoming such negative attitudes is only through a widening of the Muslim's horizon, so that he/she may put right their attitude to the issues we encounter; to deal with such issues with enlightenment and knowledge.

Second: Another element that paralyzes the Muslim's will, and prevents it from producing the fruit expected of it is the Muslim's view of destiny '*al-qadar*'. This topic is so complex and intricate that it merits a full-scale analysis to reveal the extent of inertia which stems from the above

view. It may be noticed here that, according to the Muslim, his/her will does not come about through his/her effort, but it is implanted directly by the Almighty Lord; and, evidently, when the Muslim attributes his/her will to God's Will, in disregard of his/her own effort, the effort is made pointless: the Muslim does not feel called upon to exert himself/herself. It is not too hard to follow this topic so far; but it is hard when we go from there to generalizing the rule, or to specifying who fall under this category, those whose understanding of this topic hampers any positive effort on their part. And that is not confined to the Muslim masses, but it includes the leadership. It is in deploring this that Sayyed Qutb says in his book *This Religion*: "There is a fundamental fact about the nature of this religion ... a simple and elementary fact, but despite its simplicity, it is often ignored and even forgotten. And, from this forgetfulness, a serious and far-reaching error happens in viewing this religion. It is this: that some imagine - since this religion is a revelation from God - it must act in people's life in a magical and mysterious way, regardless of humans' condition."

So yes, I have no doubt that the Muslim wishes, in all sincerity, to see the Islamic doctrine and the Islamic *Sharia* implemented in real life. But this will, this honest wish,

remains a wish in the heart, without inducing any real thought or action - since this religion, being a revelation from God, it must act in a magical, mysterious way, regardless of the human condition.

A great amount of attention must focus on this topic. As long as the human basic role in realizing our objectives remains weak, the good intentions and the will will remain unproductive; they will not stimulate the individual to strive and develop the necessary abilities.

Watch the Muslim: how he/she feels there is nothing he/she is called upon to do in supporting their religion but to offer his/her life and money. He/she must feel proud and complacent, which leaves no room for mature thought; he/she certainly does not feel the need for any further effort - Is there something to offer better than my offering my life and money? It is a situation that eliminates, from their perspective, the need for advance and seeking more maturity, and it precludes any attempt at criticism and improvement. The individual little perceives that the admirable readiness he/she displays can be attained by children or elderly individuals, without helping them acquire any reasonable ability to solve problems: they certainly are not equipped to find solutions.

Thirdly: One more thing that hampers the Muslim's will from producing its fruit is his/her understanding of "how Allah originated creation;" (the Qur'an, 29:20); and this factor is related to the preceding one, though from a different perspective. It is that the Muslim, as a result of his/her inherited cultural scale, as it has been developing across centuries, views the universe apart from the causes behind the visible events and their development. He/she does not seem to be aware that there are laws that govern the events of the world; nor does he/she reflect on the immediate and indirect factors which brought about the situation which they are living through. Nor even is there in the Muslim's mind any clarity about the links that bind past to present to future - and the solution he/she accepts is to attribute, in all calmness, what happens to the High and Able Lord; it pleases him/her to announce their not having any active part, since things are all in the Hand of God - and you hear it in their devout quoting the Islamic supplication: "There is no might or power except with Allah;": a misquoted trust in God's all-encompassing Power, though we admit the greatness of the above principle - it certainly must not be the pretext for the Muslim's weakness and submission to events: though it is invaluable when it invokes God's support as uttered by the proactive Muslim.

I have been trying over the last pages to assert that the Muslim does have the necessary will, but what is needed is to direct this will in the right direction, in order for the will to produce its outcome: to result in endeavor, going ahead in acquiring the needed abilities. This reading of the dilemma would place the Muslim on the way to finding solutions rather than denying him/her any will, the will that he/she feels he/she does have in abundance. What is it we are trying to raise? What is it that we are trying to develop? And how to develop it? This, dear sincere and believing young men and women is what I wish for you, and wish you to acquire.

2. Color Blindness

It is useful to remember how some people are color blind, so that they are unable to distinguish certain colors: This physical color blindness is useful to remember when we think of the intellectual blindness that some people are afflicted with - when one suffers this kind of blindness, he/she fails to comprehend issues and events in their wider frame; it is what we find some Verses of the Qur'an discuss, like the following:

"and on their eyes is a veil;" (2:7); "We have thrown veils on their hearts, so they do not understand it, and

deafness in their ears;" (6:25; 17:46) "eyes wherewith they see not, and ears wherewith they hear not;" (7:179).

Our sight cannot sense this intellectual disease, for it does not come under our field of vision. In the same way as our eyes cannot see in the dark, nor can see what is beyond a certain limit of the electro-magnetic field, the intellect has its own limits of perception - though I admit it is a commonplace notion that I am stating here. For instance, an immature person may feel this incapacity of perception when they encounter the feature of repeated concepts in the Qur'an; while the Almighty says about this feature:

"See how We explain the Signs by various symbols: that they may understand;" (6:65).

It is not so far-fetched, this notion; but we, Muslims, have intellectual color-blindness, in a way that we fail to comprehend many ideas that do fall within human perception; it is as the Qur'an puts it: "Truly it is not their eyes that are blind, but their hearts which are in their breasts;" (22:46).

I do know that the Muslim receives a shock when he/she hears such a statement: it has long settled in his/her consciousness that the blindness of minds is reserved for unbelievers, as if the Muslim has immunity against this disease - for no reason but that he goes under the banner of

Islam ... It may be said that this very naivety is the most obvious demonstration of the blindness of minds (or of hearts, as the Qur'an puts it).

The Muslim is very often prepared to part with his/her money and life as a sacrifice in the way of God, but he/she is certainly unable to determine the right way for the sacrifice to produce a constructive result - and this, of course, leaves the Muslim in great perplexity, and he/she moves in great blunder. And this is not confined to the simple followers and commoners: it is more striking when we notice it in the minds of the elite who are equally ignorant of the enlightened ways of offering the lives and property of those willing to offer both.

When the self-assured come to this junction, they show great confusion; and they waste a lot of precious abilities and resources - not out of bad intention or lack of sincerity, but out of this blindness in their perception, when they fail to see how problems may be solved.

You may think of a very strong and muscular person, who is also a devout worshipper of God and very eager to see the Islamic cause supreme - but is ignorant of Judo or any similar fighting sport - and if this man enters the arena against a most stubborn disbeliever, but who is an expert in this fighting skill: who do you think will be triumphant? The

result of such combat is obvious, no matter how painful. Good will and superior intentions tumble easily here before the actual skill. Does the Muslim World reflect on such situations: All their behavior leads one to say that they do not notice this. But they really need to understand this fully and admit it, too. But, let me say it again: that a believer who has not developed the skill of Judo is still a believer, a believer who has not learnt the skill that he was in need of when he went to the arena.

We must be more accurate in our diagnosis of what exactly the Muslim is in need of: Is it really faith and will? Or are there certain abilities in understanding and skill that they have not developed - or is it perhaps the lack of physical abilities? Any mistake in diagnosis will lead to bad consequences. But let me point out two points:

First: The Muslim's mixing up ability and will, faith (*Iman* in Islamic terms) and Islam - and here we take faith to be the will, and Islam to be the ability. Ibn Taimiyah has focused on distinguishing faith and Islam.

In general, Ibn Taimiyah has found the two terms to be used interchangeably, but when you focus on each you notice the differences. You find for instance, the distinction, in Sura 49 of the Qur'an, when it says: "The desert Arabs say: 'We believe.' Say: 'You have no faith; but you only say,

'We have submitted our wills to Allah,' for faith has not yet entered your hearts';" (49:14).

In view of the above, we may say that a certain person can be a perfect believer, quite prepared to offer his/her life and property in the way of God; but he/she may not have the intellectual qualification to be a judge or a *mufti* - nor is he/she qualified to fill a position that is restricted to an adequate minimum - and the whole *Ummah* is responsible to see fulfilled. Of course, the responsibility of each is different: the more ability, the more responsibility. It is on such considerations that I take the young to be more to blame when they do not rise to attain the level required of them in this particular age.

The issue of distinguishing the Believer and the Muslim is long and complicated. I only mentioned Ibn Taimiyah's analysis on account of its brevity; and because he puts forth a rule for solving the knot of this controversy. A believer can be a Muslim, apparently, but having no real faith, as the Almighty mentioned about the Desert Arabs, in the above-quoted Verse (49:14). On the other hand, a person can be a believer without observing the rulings of Islam: we do see many who are so sinful that they observe none of the Islamic rulings; some others are not careless about Islamic rulings, but, when they fail to apply some of the rulings, this is for a

legitimate excuse: one can be so poor, for instance, that he/she is not eligible to pay *zakat* or to perform *al-hajj*. And when a Muslim fails to perform Islamic obligations, he may still have faith in his/her heart: About this particular issue, there have been endless disputes; many sects argued long about those points, and went sometimes to extreme lengths in their conflicts. Most of us know the *khawarej* (literally: the dissenters, or maybe the deserters), who take committing a sin to warrant deeming the sinner to be an apostate; the *Mu'tazilites*, who take the sinner to be neither a believer nor a disbeliever, to be in-between; and the Sunnah group, who deem a sinner to be a believer, despite his sin: no believer, in the Sunni school, is categorized as a disbeliever on account of a sin. And the sub-sects are so numerous that one feels bewildered trying to list them. Ibn Taimiyah expatiated and discussed at length on all such sects and directions. My only comment on all this is that the enthusiastic young men hold nowadays to the view of the *khawarej*, unawares, and they do that out of their eagerness, and out of their impatience to see Islam in its superior place, and not for a deliberate choice of the *khawarej* views.

Let me add here an essential remark: that charging someone with disbelief or hypocrisy for a specific sin is only engaged in in a generic way, without applying this to a

specific person. You see for instance, in the Prophet's, ﷺ, *hadiths*: here are two examples: "To refer to a fortune-teller or a soothsayer, believing what he says, is to disbelieve in the Message revealed to Muhammad;"⁵⁹; "To swear by other than God is to commit idolatry;"⁶⁰.

This is generic, meaning that when we know of a specific person having committed this sinful deed, we do not charge him/her with disbelief. We also find among the scholars of different schools of jurisprudence some who give a sentence of execution on a person who insists on not performing the regular prayer, but, even those dispute among themselves, is he to be executed on the basis of a ruling of disbelief, or is it is a *hadd* (a God-specified penalty), or a state policy? And all are agreed that the above sentencing or rulings are for this world; that the perpetrator will be left to God to decide what is to become of him/her on the Day of Judgment.

We have more in this connection. Sheikh Rashid Rida, in the course of commenting on the following Verse of the Qur'an: "If any fail to judge by the light of what Allah has revealed, they are Unbelievers;" (5:44), reports this: "Hakim bin Jubair asked Said bin Jubair about the three Verses

⁵⁹ *Musnad Ahmad*, Vol. 2. P. 429

⁶⁰ Reported by al-Tirmidhi, the Chapter on Vows

(5:44, and the following) ending in "If any fail to judge by the light of what Allah has revealed, they are Unbelievers;" "If any ..., they are wrong-doers;" and " If any .., they are iniquitous" (respectively); and then Hakim added in his question: 'Some people claim that these Verses were revealed to the Children of Israel [i.e. to the Jews] and not to us [so what do you say?]. Said bin Jubair said: 'Why do not you read the Verses before this and after this?' Then he added, 'Indeed, they were revealed to us.' "Then - Hakim adds - I met Muqassim, Ibn Abbas's maula [freed slave] and asked him about the same Verses of Sura 5; I said: 'Some people claim that they were revealed to the Children of Israel and not to us.' And he said: 'They were revealed to the Children of Israel, and revealed to us; and what was revealed to them and to us, then it applies to both them and us.' And then I went to see Ali bin al-Hussein and asked him the same question, after mentioning my asking Said and what he had replied. So, Ali replied: 'Yes, he is right. But the disbelief mentioned in the Verses is less than the major disbelief, and the wrong-doing is less than the major wrong-doing, and the iniquity is less than the major iniquity: it is less than idolatry.' Then - Hakim adds - I remet Said bin Jubair and told him what Ali had said; so Said turned to his

son and said: 'What do think now of Ali bin al-Hussein?' 'I think he is far superior to both you and Muqassem.'"

Sheikh Rashid Rida concludes: "The idea here is that not to rule in accordance with God's command, or to choose some other ruling rather than His, which is essentially what is taking place, is not to be described as 'disbelief' in the sense of abandoning Islam; it is rather committing one of the most enormous sins."⁶¹

Another relevant point, and it is a point of dispute too, is this: Is faith subject to increase and decrease?

We may say that those who say faith is subject to increase and decrease mean that 'will' is an all-or-nothing action: this is noticed for instance when someone embraces Islam in one step. Umar for instance, and Hamza converted like this; their will underwent a complete reversion, and at one go; no one had a doubt that their conversion was a complete transformation in their character. What remains after that is one's learning more about the rulings of Islam. But the mere decision of embracing Islam is a one-step decision: one is henceforth prepared to submit to God in any command of His. On the other hand, a new Muslim is usually not aware of all of Allah's commands, though he/she

⁶¹ Rashid Rida, *Al-Manar Commentary on the Qur'an*. Vol. 6. P. 404. First Edition. 1331 A.H.

is quite willing not to hesitate in acting upon any obligation that proceeds from God: his/her faith is full. This is not to say that faith is not subject to increase or decrease; but it means that faith happens fast, faster than Islam, and, on the other hand, it settles more firmly than Islam. We must add also that, beyond what has been said, not all believers have the same depth of faith: there is a correlation between faith and Islam, in a way that the more knowledge one acquires, the deeper his/her faith will be - and the more anxious to know the truth and the more willing to act upon what is true.

Another aspect that may be confused in the Muslim's mind, in relation with ability and will is that God commands us to embrace both parts of His Doctrine: to embrace faith, to have the right will, and to have sincerity by acting to win His favor; and, on the other hand, to acquire knowledge, to be prepared, to have insight, to have understanding, to reflect on God's Signs in the world as a whole, and especially in the world of the soul and mind, by moving about in the world and being acquainted with the ways of the peoples before us. God commands that we should be sincere in worshipping Him Alone, but He also commands that we go and examine the facts of the earths, to study the laws of life, and the conduct of the peoples before us. And yet, these two commands, sincerity and correctness are not equally

observed by the Muslim: yes, a Muslim may well be ready to act upon a Verse like: "Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power;" (8:60), whatever little they actually do in response to the above verse. But he/she does not feel motivated to do anything in compliance with Verses like:

"Say: 'Travel through the earth and see how Allah originated creation;'" (29:20); "Say: 'Travel through the earth and see what was the end of those who rejected Truth;'" (6:11).

In other words, a Muslim feels uneasy, and has a sense of guilt, when he/she does not prepare the available strength for encountering the enemy; but feels no prick of conscience at all when he/she fails to do research in the earth to examine the outcome of the past peoples.

It does not seem to occur to the Muslim's mind to move about and examine how the nations are faring; how their behavior may be good or bad, and to study their happy and miserable outcome; and to examine the causes, both immediate and long-range, of all that. It is such examination that condenses all the experiences of the world - and it fulfils at the same time God's commands.

It must be clear by now that what the Muslim needs to fulfil is the power of comprehension rather than faith, or the

will - though it is otherwise in the Muslim's perspective, for we keep hearing in the Muslim world assertions like: "What is lacking in the Muslim world is faith," which is equal to saying that we do not find in the Muslim world those who are ready to offer their lives and property in the way of Allah. But I say the actual reality does not support this claim, for there are quite a number of Muslims who are prepared to offer both money and life in the cause of God - but you can only find quite few Muslims, very very few, who devote many years to a diligent and sustained study of the problems of our age, at the highest level of learning.

There are of course some, only some, Muslim thinkers who do have a reasonable background about the facts of the world and human life: the problem, however, is that leaders of the youth do not acknowledge the merit of those thinkers - they simply dismiss them as having minds 'contaminated' with non-Islamic sources.

It is unfortunate that the leaders of Islamic groups, who are the link between the ingenious thinkers and the common people, still bear all the negative factors which had led the Muslim World into its times of stagnation, what the Prophet, peace be upon him, called 'the bowel' (i.e. when the Muslim World is so broken and defeated that many nations will be competing in robbing its goods, like a group of persons

encouraging each other to help themselves to a meal in a bowl). One thing must be clarified in the mentioned *hadith*, a point that has remained mysterious: the Prophet, ﷺ, accounts for the feebleness which hits the Muslim World some time in the future (the future of the Prophet and his Companions), that the main factor for that is Muslims' clinging to life and their horror of death. This cause-effect link certainly soothes the Muslim, for he/she finds the *hadith* to define what the Muslim World lacks is clearly faith, sincerity and a readiness to give away. Well, yes, but let us make a distinction between two attitudes: one who is surely meant in the *hadith* of the 'bowl', the Muslim who is not prepared to offer his/her life out of not giving the Hereafter due value; and another who is unwilling to sacrifice his/her life since he/she says to himself/herself: Why sacrifice what is so precious if it does not help in changing conditions? It is not the same, for the latter Muslim can be quite sincere, and if he/she cannot see the point of sacrificing their life and money, they may be justified in their decision: it is actually pointless to sacrifice money and life for no purpose. We all know that people have different views concerning what is worth offering life for. Some Muslims are so desperate that they think it is justifiable to bear arms and kill those who they take to be disbelievers, that by doing that, they are

acting in accordance with Allah's decree, and by failing to do so, they are not being obedient to God and His Messenger. This is certainly a faulty comprehension of the right approach to sacrificing life and money. When Islam extolled such sacrifice, it certainly was not in the sense of sacrificing life and money for any cause; sacrifice is not an end in itself: it is necessary to examine what conditions Islam stipulates for a sacrifice that Islam blesses. By ignoring the conditions for laying down their life, or for misconception of those conditions, any sacrifice will not help in realizing the worldly results we all crave: seeing the Muslim community occupying its honorable place, and having a solid and well-established society.

By taking the worldly consequences of our efforts into consideration, we may put right our concepts. This is because when the Muslim communities act properly upon God's commandments, the outcome must come. If they fail to come, it is not right to say: "We did things as they must be done, and we met the conditions, but it just did not turn out right; something incomprehensible to us happened that hampered the realization of outcome." This view of things prevents people from an analysis of their behavior, and from pinpointing the mistakes in their action and conduct. This

particular knot must receive all the attention, so that we just come to terms with what really blocks our progress.

Let us remember what has been emphasized, that the recompence in the Hereafter is connected to intention, while the outcomes of behavior in this world is connected with correctness: and that both factors can be and must be realized together. This last notion may not be obvious enough. It really is inseparable from understanding the Islamic dilemma, and really understanding the dilemmas of the age in which we live. By attaining such comprehension, we may be sure that the Muslim does understand our problem. Let me, however, not deceive myself into believing that with a book like this I may raise the Muslim to the level of the facts, the level of the signs of the world and the human soul that have been revealed. No, I must be aware of the real size of the problem, and the long way that must be covered to rise to the level of grasping the real facts. We must, however, keep alerting people to the results of research at least, even when we cannot convey to them all the evidence and proofs - this will, at least, place in their hands what challenges the predominant ideas, so that they have the material to review what has always been said to them.

Let us at least put forward the basic idea of a new trend, and then, hopefully, there will be some hard-working Muslims who put in the necessary effort to seek the evidence for the suggested idea. What we find at present is that there are thousands of anxious young Muslims who are quite prepared to offer their life in the cause of Islam - and who actually sacrifice their lives. But, by contrast, quite few of them work hard to understand the facts of the world and human experience. I may go on to say that there is not one person in the Muslim World who is among the first authorities in the sciences of the world and human experience. All those who discover the facts of the world and human experience are from other parts of the world, not the Muslim World. You see how, for the bright Muslim who does cite the conclusions about the world and the human character, the utmost he/she does is to cite the work of others to support his/her view. This situation indicates that the Muslim World as a whole no longer exercises the process of thinking, and relies on others for this process - there was a time when it was the opposite: there was a time when all those who exercised thinking and searching for the facts of the world and human experience were from the Muslim World. But this rotation is part of God's law, as the Qur'an says: "Such days of varying fortunes We give to men

and men by turns;" (3:140). God's law entails that anybody or any society which loses control of themselves loses control of history: and history will not give up obeying their dictates until they lose control of themselves.

I hope all the above makes it clear that what is mainly missing in the Muslim World is better ability, not more will: we have seen enough Muslims prepared to sacrifice life and money for Islam, but where are the Muslims with suitable ability? Let us add by the way that this dilemma is not confined to the Muslim World; it is rather a problem of the Third World. I do address my book to the Muslim youth, for they identify themselves as Muslim, and they are eager to live up to their being servants of the Almighty Lord. But, as Toynbee observes, by having a broad view of the human of this area, the Muslim World, or the field of study of the Muslim civilization, we find the problem to be more or less the same - for both who crave to see the Islamic life resumed or those who wish to transform this society to a Western or at least to a modern style of life, without reference to Islam. So, this indicates that what is lacking in both cases is not more sincere will, but more understanding: this is so since what impedes a human's progress is the culture he/she derives from his/her place of the world, and the culture is more or less the same for both: those who cling to Islam

with all its glorious history, and those who affiliate with nationalism or socialism, or any similar affiliations - all have the good of their nations at heart, despite all the differences in detail; they all wish to see this part of the world occupy an honorable place and wish it to be prosperous and victorious. But how well are they equipped with the means necessary for realizing their ideals? Let us remember that none of the above affiliations but has offered its own martyrs; but, at the same time, none has proved its ability, its tangible ability to solve our problems; their understanding of the various aspects of our dilemma, and the know-how of how to approach such aspects is definitely inadequate. Maybe the Muslim does not like my including here the non-Islamic-minded: we have normally seen him/her not take into consideration other affiliations. He/she does not like to consider the common ground between the practicing Muslim and other members of our part of the world, although it pays to know how similar our shortcomings are - for that would enable us to sit with others and work together. But let me not push this any further: let me remind the Muslim that he/she has proved his/her inability to solve our biggest problems - the problem of Palestine for instance, and that our inability has been exposed before all the nations of the world. At the same time the Muslim can speak vociferously of the failure

of others, and, instead of confessing his/her own inability to solve the same problem, hastens to affirm that the visible failure of others is caused by not adopting an Islamic approach. It would do the Muslim good to remember that, at least, the others have tried to tackle the Palestinian problem, but failed to come up with a solution; so, to refuse to try tackling the burning problems of our part of the world and to blame others for not consulting Islam is quite disgraceful.

We may say, then, that the Muslim fails even to admit that the existence of this big fact must be accounted for by another fact: that the Muslim does not understand the problem, for it is natural that as long as one does not even perceive the existence of a problem, he/she will not see the need to endeavor to seek a solution: as long as the Muslim does not see the error for an error, he/she will keep holding to it, for no alternative comes into view. It is only after he/she perceives what is really lacking that the Muslim may first admit his/her shortcoming and the need for seeking a correction: he/she will get over the complex of challenging the facts. I hope this point is clear enough: the major difference between one who cannot bear to have any one point out his/her shortcoming or error, and one who admits, of his/her own accord, what is lacking and what is wrong with him/her. It is such a major shift, to be able to admit the

error; and the Qur'an alerts the Muslims to have this ability of noticing their own mistakes, when it says: "Even thus were you yourselves before, till Allah conferred on you His favors;" (4:94). This victory over one's internal weakness is a real achievement: it is really the beginning of all external victories. The real beginning is here: to be able to shatter the barriers inside one's mind and soul. It is genuine liberation.

It is really breaking free from worshipping the calf inside, as the Qur'an puts it: "now look at your god, of whom you have become a devoted worshipper: we will certainly melt it in a blazing fire and scatter it broadcast in the sea!" (20:97).

I do not mean to charge Muslims with idolatry, but my purpose is to help the Muslim notice the shift in concepts and value. We really need to effect a change in our view of problems, and the problem I am tackling here is that of will and ability. And the change I hope to bring about is to enable the Muslim to realize that what we mainly lack is in abilities and not in wills. If some feel that what I am working hard to examine is already known to them, then let them thank God for it, and let them forget what I say. Let me work with the less sophisticated and learned, for there are those who need to understand the ABC of things!

3. Ability and Will from a Sharia and Sufi Perspectives

In Islamic tradition, we contrast two groups, the *faqih*s (scholars of Islamic legislation and rulings), and the Sufis. The latter identify themselves as the 'people of the will, or sincerity', and they designate the Sufi learner as the '*murid*, i.e. the searcher for the Truth'. To them, the illiterate, the most ignorant, can ascend to a supreme level of sincerity and will. I find this a very good application of our theoretical discussion of the will: it indicates that the will can rise to a very high level even in the illiterate and the children, both female and male, as may be attested by their willingness to offer their money and life. It may be added that the Sufi can go through shortcuts to reach some of the highest levels of sincerity and will in great strides. This cannot work for the *faqih*: for learning the principles and applications of the Islamic law, there is no way but devoting many years of hard and sustained study. I do know that each group utter depreciating terms in representing the other group, but let us not go into that at this moment, for the antagonistic attitudes are not of our concern: it does arouse many Muslims to compare the *faqih* and the Sufi. They object that a Sufi can get so much engrossed in the will and sincerity that he/she

no longer can distinguish God's Will in the sense of having things happen as they do happen in the universe, and His Will in the sense of His decrees that believers to abide by. The outsider to the Sufi orders says that this worshipper, the Sufi, mixes up the two senses of Will, in a way that whatever happens, even when it denotes disbelief or is an enormous sin, is, according to extreme Sufis, an expression of God's decree, and is, therefore to be accepted and approved. To many scholars the extreme Sufis are seen not to distinguish the 'enjoined and obligatory' from the 'prohibited'. This might be true of some Sufi sub-groups, like the '*hululis*'. To the rest of Muslims, the line must be quite sharp between the two wills: You cannot buy wine and say 'I buy it with good intention'. In a similar logic it may be said that it is Allah who created both believer and disbeliever, as may be observed in the Verse of the Qur'an: "Is it not His to create and to govern?" (7:54) But He certainly approves of Faith and not of disbelief. The latter sense of Will may be observed in the Verse: "When they do anything that is shameful, they say: 'We found our fathers doing so', and 'Allah commanded us thus': Say: 'Nay, Allah never commands what is shameless: do you say of Allah what you do not know?' (7:28). One may follow this up and find terms like '*amr*, i.e. command' and '*khalq*, i.e. creation' in the

Qur'an in either of the two senses of Will: God's Will in the sense of nothing happening in the universe but by His Will; and the other sense: that God 'Wills, i.e. decrees' that something must be done, that it is an obligation, or must not be done: it is prohibited.

Here is an example: In the Verse: "Forbidden (Ar. *Hurrimat*) to you for food are dead mead, etc...." (5:3) the word '*hurrimat*' is here legislation, meaning that God prohibits believers from eating the flesh of dead animals; while in the Verse: "And We ordained that he refused (Ar. *harramna*) suck at first;" (28:12), it is the other sense of '*harrama*', that it was God's Will that something was not to happen, and nobody of course can make something happen in that case.

We may think of the Sufi and the *faqih* attitudes from a different perspective. When the Muslim World deteriorated culturally, its decline was reflected in the Sufi's going to a more eccentric extreme, and the *faqih*'s going to a more rigid extreme. This is because the Sufi used to have some time before some element of exercising the conscious will, and so was mindful, partially at least, of the purposes of religion, and so did abide by the teachings of legal scholars to some extent; and the *faqih* used to be some time before mindful of the principles of *shariah*, also to some extent. This was so

until things deteriorated in the last few centuries - and the result was that the Sufi lost the restraint, and the faqih lost any flexibility or ability to reason and reflect. A third remark to add is that the Sufi puts worship first; while the *faqih* is mostly engrossed in learning the contents of inherited books, and may have some interest in logic and philosophy. Ibn Taimiyah has good distinctions to contribute on this situation; he writes: "When our (Muslim) worshippers lose restraint, they are closer to Christians; and when our scholars lose restraint, they are closer to Jews." That is because the Christians are ignorant of the right path, and so, they err on the side of ability: they misbehave out of ignorance. The Jews, on the other hand, are cursed: that is to say, their corruption is on the side of will; their intentions are mostly corrupted, for they misbehave knowingly.

4. Lack of Ability and Lack of Will from the Sharia Scholar's and the Politician's Perspectives

We have tried to elucidate both the ability and the will, and how either or both might be less than is required for successful action. It has been stressed, too, that the main lack in the Muslim World is in ability. Even so, we find those concerned with putting things right focus on will and

sincerity - which is strange, as it is the other fundamental of successful action that is lacking, that of ability. You may notice this mistake in the work of both parties, the workers for Islam, and the politicians: the former work on better expression of the faith, and the latter search for new sources of will.

And when the two sides clash, each chooses to attack the lack of will in the other, not the real shortcoming, that of ability. You see the workers for religion charge their adversaries of heresy or even apostasy; they are also quick to charge people of disbelief. They would in this case be falling in the same mistake of the Inquisition.

For some reason, people are apprehensive of seeking to acquire abilities, and it is equally strange that those who endeavor to develop their skills and knowledge are thought to be of weak faith, or that more skills might mean less faith - this might be easily observed by anyone who reviews the progress of thought in the Muslim World.

The same observation is true in the sphere of politics. Politicians rarely find their rivals' or adversaries' lack to be in ability: they hasten, almost automatically and routinely, to condemn the other's will and intentions. And I don't feel called upon to think of many examples in this connection; for they are too numerous to miss. By just giving some time

to the media, which have expanded everywhere to an extraordinary size and effect, one can notice how they overflow with this kind of material: nothing is civic about the way politicians criticize each other, in most cases at least - You rarely come across a discussion of the other's little skill or knowledge, or his/her committing a mistake - and who is free from committing mistakes. No, criticism goes directly to condemning the other's will and intention. Maybe it is so when our supply of knowledge is little, and so people focus on intentions.

This way of convicting others comes easy, for to find fault with another's knowledge or scientific findings requires evidence and a thorough grasp of the domain under discussion. Not so charging others of disbelief or treachery, for it requires no more than uttering some words, or a volley of words.

This is really the situation in societies where thoughts and concepts have lost their intrinsic value. And when condemnation is directed against intentions, this will lead to a lot of bad consequences. Some are these: Conviction is much more painful when one is sure of his/her sincerity, whether as worker for faith or for politics, and the other is finding fault with that very sincerity; the former loves God and His Messenger, and is ready to offer all in his/her

possession in the cause of God, and the latter knows for sure that he/she is sincere in his/her love of his/her country and people - it is out of the question that he/she may betray them or sell them away. Therefore, a charge against intentions, whether in connection with religion or politics, cuts a deep wound. You may even notice this mistake in small groups, where their main concern may be exposing the double-faced persons, rather than focusing on stimulating and supporting those who give them loyalty. No wonder then that you notice the withdrawals, breakups, dismissals; and hence also the banning of certain writings, and strict censorship. It all reminds one of the Inquisition, when the least suspicion led to the heaviest sentences. This may be a lesson to perceive that lack of ability is certainly the way to a destruction of societies.

There is more about condemnation on the basis of intention, i.e. sincerity/lack of sincerity. Those who choose this way rely on a person's loyalty and sincerity as the only consideration, giving little attention to whether or not the particular person does have the necessary abilities or/and skills. The result is the deterioration of quality and the creation of lots of obstacles. The competition will not be in the acquisition of abilities and skills, but in how to win the

approval of dominant persons - it is not coming to the causes of problems, but creating more complications.

When we are dealing with physical abilities, abilities relating to dealing with tangible things, it is not too hard to confess our shortage - indeed, the most erudite are the most willing to confess their limitations; while, on the other hand, the ignorant are in no way anxious how much they have yet to learn. Indeed, Ibn Taimiyah expressed well the attitude of all those who have learnt enough of Allah's Signs in the world and the human souls; he wrote: "You will notice that all those who lose the right path and follow dubious alleys are quick to level charges of disbelief against each other; while those of solid knowledge point out mistakes rather than charging with disbelief."⁶²

Well, it is time to conclude. I have taken up a number of burning problems, but have merely touched on them, and they may not be appreciated by people with little knowledge - they really are for people with substantial provision of understanding, not just a repertoire of items and terms. So, I urge the young men and women to develop the abilities that our societies need to overcome their problems. So, I must put all my hope in this group: they have the time and good health, so let them do what they are required to do.

It only remains for me to turn to God, Lord of the Worlds, and offer Him my thanks.

⁶² *Mukhtarat Ahmad al-Sa'di*, p. 76