بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

يَرْفَعِ اللّٰهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مِنكُمْ

وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ

Allāh exalts those of you who believe and those who are given knowledge to high ranks

Holy Qur'ān (58 : 11)

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2. To advance the cause of better understanding of the Qur'ān and the Ahl al-Bayt's (*'a*) contribution to Islam.
3. To publish English translations of Arabic and Persian works of Muslim scholars.
4. To endeavour to find Islamic answers to questions relating to the contemporary social, political, and moral problems.

* * * * *

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SYSTEM OF TRANSLITERATION OF ARABIC CHARACTERS

CONSONANTS:

ء	'	س	s	ل	l
ب	b	ش	sh	م	m
ت	t	ص	s	ن	n
ث	th	ض	z	هـ	h
ج	j	ط	t	و	w
ح	h	ظ	z	ی	y
خ	kh	ع	'	**Persian Letters**	
د	d	غ	gh	پ	p
ذ	dh	ف	f	چ	ch
ر	r	ق	q	ژ	zh
ز	z	ک	k	گ	g

VOWELS:

Long:	ا	ā	Short:	ـَ	a	Doubled	ـِی	iyy (final from í)
	و	ū		ـُ	u		ـُو	uww (final from ū)
	ی	ī		ـِ	i	Diphthongs:	ـَو	au or aw
							ـَی	ay or ai

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A Probe into the Meaning of *Ta'wīl*

By: Husayn 'Alawī Mehr
Translated by Zahrā Shujā' Khānī

The Etymology of *Ta'wīl*

The word "*ta'wīl*" stems from the Arabic root "*awl*" and means "reference" and "returning a thing to its source of origin".

According to Rāghib Isfahānī who writes in the *al-Mufradāt*:

> "The word *ta'wīl* has been derived from '*awl*' and implies 'referring to the origin' and the word '*maw'il*', also stemming from the same root, refers to the 'place' or 'point' of reference."[1]

He further adds:

> "*Ta'wīl* is 'returning a thing to the purpose for which its creation is ordained' and it can be of two kinds: theoretical *ta'wīl* and applied *ta'wīl*."[2]

Lisān al-'Arab quotes Ibn Athīr in the following words:

> "*Ta'wīl* has been derived from the phrase '*āla al-shay'u ya'ūlu*' and means 'returning to a thing'. It deals with the

relation between the external form of a word and the thing which gives it its sense, without which, the external form of the word would not have taken shape (and its true meaning would never be understood)."[3]

The book *Tāj al-'Arūs* under the discussion on the Arabic verb root word "*fassara*" says:

"*Tafsīr* (interpretation) and *ta'wīl* both imply the discovery and the elucidation of the meaning of a word and *ta'wīl* is relating one of the two probable meanings to a word, based upon the external form of that word."[4]

Dr. Muhammad Husayn Dhahabī says:

"*Taw'īl* has been derived from '*awl*' and means 'reference' and 'return' and is said to have stemmed from the root '*iyālah*', meaning 'politics' (*siyāsah*)."[5]

The author of the *Qāmūs-i Qur'ān* writes:

"*Ta'wīl* is 'causing to return' or 'returning.'"[6]

As per the *Maqā'is al-Lughah*:

"'*āla al-shay'u ya'ūlu*' means 'return'. (The sentence) '*awla al-hukma ilā ahlih: arja'ahū wa raddahū ilaihim*' means '(He) returned the decree to them'; and '*iyālah*' which is also from the same conjugational form (*bāb*) implies 'politics' since it implies the 'turning' of the people towards the politicians while '*āl-i rajul*' refers to a man's subjects and subordinates. And '*Ta'wīl*', too, is from the same conjugational form (*bāb*) which is used to imply the 'destination' or the thing to which something returns."[7]

According to etymologists, the 'returning to the real or original destination' and the 'ultimate fate of a thing' are also some of the meanings implied by the word *ta'wīl*.

Ta'wīl in the Viewpoint of the Exegetes

The word, *ta'wīl* appears seventeen times and in sixteen verses of the Glorious Qur'ān. There is a difference of opinion among the exegetes regarding the meaning of the word *ta'wīl* and nearly twenty meanings have been ascribed to this term from among which more than ten meanings have been mentioned in Suyūtī's *al-Itqān*.

The Various Viewpoints

Although numerous viewpoints exist regarding the term *ta'wīl*, we shall examine only four of those views in the present discussion.

The First Viewpoint:

According to this view, the term *ta'wīl* is synonymous with the term "*tafsīr*" (interpretation) and refers to the explanation (*bayān*) of the Qur'ānic verses. This view belongs to the older school of Islamic scholars and exegetes. The exponents of this view include Fakhr Rāzī,[8] Qurtubī,[9] and the author of the *Tāj al-'Arūs*. According to this viewpoint, *ta'wīl* can be applied to all the Qur'ānic verses since all the verses can be explained and interpreted.

However, this viewpoint is flawed and two of its major flaws are as follows:

a. According to the Glorious Qur'ān, the *ta'wīl* of the metaphorical verses (*āyāt al-mutashābih*) lies only with Allah and "those firmly grounded in knowledge" (*rāsikhūn fī al-'ilm*). In the words of the Glorious Qur'ān: "*But no one knows its ta'wīl except Allah and those firmly grounded in knowledge.*" (3:7)[10]

Therefore, some of the Qur'ānic verses are metaphorical verses whose interpretation and *ta'wīl* cannot be possible at the hands of all the exegetes since the knowledge regarding them

lies only with Allah and 'those firmly grounded in knowledge'(The Prophet and Infallible Imams).

Thus, if the term *ta'wīl* is considered as being synonymous with the term "*tafsīr*", its sense would become applicable to all the verses of the Qur'ān since all the Qur'ānic verses can be interpreted (*tafsīr*) while the Qur'ān has explicitly stated that "*No one knows its ta'wīl except Allah and those firmly-grounded in knowledge*". Based upon this explanation, the above-mentioned verse "no one knows its *ta'wīl* except Allah" would be rendered meaningless since according to this view, all the exegetes, too, should be able to grasp the *ta'wīl* of all the metaphorical verses and it should be possible for all the metaphorical verses - just as is the case of the definitive (*muhkam*) verses - to be understood by all the exegetes.

b. In presenting the second flaw it should be kept in mind that if only the literal meanings of some of the Qur'ānic verses were to be taken into consideration, Allah would need to have a corporeal form, based upon the Qur'ānic verses that mention: "*The All-Beneficent settled on the Throne*" (20:5); or "*And your Lord and the angels arrive in ranks*" (89:22); or "*...the hand of Allah is above their hands*" (48:10); or "*And the earth will glow with the light of its Lord*" (39:69); or "*...His seat embraces the heavens and the earth*" (2:255).

Therefore, keeping in view the abovementioned Qur'ānic verses, if *ta'wīl* and *tafsīr* were synonymous, since the interpretation or *tafsīr* is supposed to remove the veils or the external forms of a word covering the meaning, the mention of things like the "Throne", "seat", "hand" and "the arriving of your Lord" would need to be understood in their literal forms and would therefore call for a corporeal existence for Allah (Immaculate is He and greatly exalted above such a concept).

Based upon these two major flaws, this viewpoint would become very shaky and the contemporary exegetes, too, regard this viewpoint as null and void.

The Second Viewpoint:

According to the proponents of this view, viz. Ibn Taymiyyah, Shaykh Muhammad 'Abduh and Rashīd Rizā, *ta'wīl* is the external and tangible form of the essences and can be witnessed.

This group of scholars endorses its viewpoint with the help of two examples. According to them:

a. The "People of the Book" (*Ahl al-Kitāb*) are fully aware of the qualities and the unique characteristics of the Prophet of Islam (S) during the time of his emergence since those descriptions have been mentioned in their own religious scriptures. And a full recognition of these qualities and an understanding of their meanings and an appropriate awareness regarding them are based on the interpretation (*tafsīr*) of those words. However, the *ta'wīl* of those words is in the form of the external manifestation of the noble Prophet of Islam (S) who has emerged on Divine appointment.

b. When we verbally say that "the sun has risen" (*tala'at al-Shamsu*), the *ta'wīl* of these words is the actual rising of the sun that can be visualized on the horizon.

As the initial proponent of this viewpoint, Ibn Taymiyyah has presented three terms for *ta'wīl*, one belonging to his contemporary scholars and two belonging to the older generation of Islamic scholars:

According to scholars of his period, *ta'wīl* is the conversion of a word from its literal or external meaning to its inner or esoteric meaning based upon certain reasoning.

The two explanations used by the older generation of Islamic scholars to validate their viewpoint are:

1. *Ta'wīl* means the interpretation and explanation of a word irrespective of whether it appears overtly as being suitable or not;
2. *Ta'wīl* is that which is meant by the actual word and if the word "seeking" is used, its *ta'wīl* refers to the actual act of seeking and if the word "informing" is used, its *ta'wīl* again refers to the actual act.

After presenting a few lines of commentary on this subject, Ibn Taymiyyah writes:

"*Ta'wīl* implies those same tangible matters that can be found and witnessed externally whether they belong to the past or to the future. Therefore, the *ta'wīl* of the phrase 'the sun has risen' is the very sunrise that can be witnessed across the horizon."

He further adds:

"This third meaning (which conforms to the existing norms and conditions) is what is meant by *ta'wīl* in the Qur'ān and the revealed Word. Therefore, an understanding of *ta'wīl* is the same as the actual thing in its external manifestation that can be witnessed by man."[11]

A Critical Evaluation

Although this view has been supported by some reasoning it however contains certain flaws some of which shall be discussed hereunder.

a. If *ta'wīl* is exactly the same as the external and tangible manifestation of things, then we also need to keep in mind that a large part of the contents of the Qur'ān like certain concepts fall in the category of contractual realities (agreements) that are intangible in the external world. For instance, the term "*talāq*" (divorce) could not have any actual existence in the external world in the absence of the separation between the husband and

the wife. Similarly, the term "*tahārah*" (ritual purification) does not have any particular external form, and what actually exists in the external world are only acts like "*wuzū'*" and "*ghusl*" or the washing of a part or the entire body, the outcome of which is referred to as "*tahārah*" or cleanliness.

Therefore, as a consequence, many of the Qur'ānic contents would need to be excluded since it would not be possible to apply *ta'wīl* in their case.

b. Moreover, if *ta'wīl* dealt only with external tangible things it would not be possible to apply it in the case of some prescriptive passages containing imperative (*amr* and *nahy*), subjunctive and subjective constructions expressing wish, hope, etc. Since in prescriptive statements and those which signify hope and wish, there is no external action upon which *ta'wīl* can be applied and this same argument applies in the case of all the other prescriptive passages.

c. Another flaw in this viewpoint is that some of the verses of the Glorious Qur'ān speak of the qualities and actions of Allah which also transcend the confines of time, place, and matter that are beyond the comprehension of the human mind. Therefore, if *ta'wīl* in those cases would indicate external tangible things it would become necessary for Allah to have a corporeal existence and carriage. Some of these verses include:

"*The All-Beneficent settled on the Throne* (20:5)"; "*... So whichever way you turn, there is the face of Allah*!" (2:115); "*...And your Lord and the angels arrive in ranks*" (89:22); "*The hand of Allah is above their hands*" (48:10); "*And the earth will glow with the light of its Lord*" (39:69); "*...His seat embraces the heavens and the earth*" (2:255). All these which are considered as the metaphorical verses of the Qur'ān.

If the *ta'wīl* of these verses is the same as their external manifestation, it would call for Allah the Almighty – and We

seek His protection, against such blasphemy – to have hands, feet, eyes, and other faculties just like the rest of His creation!

Therefore, there has to be other meanings to words like the "Throne", "seat", "face", "hands", and "above" which cannot be justified under the meaning of the *ta'wīl* mentioned in the viewpoint of Ibn Taymiyyah and others that cannot be applied to all the Qur'ānic verses.

The Third Viewpoint:

The most prominent contemporary Shi'ite exponent of this view is Ayatullāh Ma'rifat. This viewpoint asserts that *ta'wīl* is the interior aspect (*al-bātin*) of the Qur'ān or, in other words, the interpretation of the external aspect of the Qur'ānic verses is *tafsīr* while knowledge of the esoteric aspect of the Holy Book is *ta'wīl*. This viewpoint has gained considerable popularity among contemporary scholars. However, needless to say, there would be the need for some external proof if we wanted to apply a meaning to a verse which were different from the apparent form or sense of the words.

The main reasoning of the supporters of this view is based on the *riwāyāt* that have been narrated on this subject. They argue that:

Imam Bāqir ('*a*) was once questioned about the meaning of the following *hadith* of the noble Prophet (S) that says: "There is not a single verse in the Qur'ān that does not carry an apparent and an esoteric meaning." To this, the Imam ('*a*) is said to have replied: "*Zahruhū tanzīluhū wa batnuhū ta'wīluhū* (Its surface is revelation and its interior is *ta'wīl*).[12]

This *riwāyat* has referred to the esoteric meaning of the Qur'ān as its *ta'wīl*.

Therefore, if the Qur'ānic verse: "*Say, Tell me, should your water sink down (into the ground), who will bring you running water*?" (67:30) were to be interpreted (*tafsīr*) as meaning that "Allah sent down water from the sky and caused

streams to run on the land as a result of which various kinds of vegetation grow and grant life to all the creation, and that if this water were to sink deep down into the depths of the earth because of the elimination of the impenetrable layer of earth then no instrument or man would be able to retrieve any water", this would be the apparent meaning and the *tafsīr* of the verse.

However, if this same verse were to be explained as: "When the *Hujjah* of Allah or the Imam of the Age ('*a*) goes into occultation from among your midst who then is able to grant you another Imam and *Hujjah* to guide you in your worldly life",[13] this would be the *tawil* of the verse.

From among the exponents of this view, reference may be made from among the ancient scholars to Abū Tālib Taghlabī,[14] and from among the contemporary scholars, Ayatullāh Ma'rifat, the author of the book, *al-Tamhīd fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*"[15] can be mentioned. Ayatullāh Ma'rifat argues that the *ta'wīl* of dreams is also of the same nature with reference to the Qur'ānic verses 6, 21, 36, 37, 44, 45, 100, and 101 from the *Surah Yūsuf*. However, *ta'wīl* has also been explained as meaning the "final outcome of an issue" with reference to the verse 59 of *Surah al-Nisā*, the verse 35 of *Surah al-Isrā'*, the verse 53 of *Surah al-A'rāf*, and the verse 39 of *Surah Yūnus*.[16]

Another application of *ta'wīl* as per the viewpoint of Ayatullāh Ma'rifat is for the "explanation of metaphorical" (*tawjīh al-Mutashābih*), a standpoint applicable only to the metaphorical verses since only metaphorical expressions or any action subject to probability or metaphorical value calls for an elimination of ambiguity in favor of the true meaning.

However, it is noteworthy to mention that the most appropriate meaning of *ta'wīl* according to Ayatullāh Ma'rifat – today considered as a supplementary truth (*haqīqah al-thānawiyyah*) – is that it is the "esoteric meaning of the Qur'ān."

The Fourth Viewpoint (The Viewpoint of 'Allāmah Tabātabā'ī):

According to the supporters of this viewpoint, "the meaning of the term *ta'wīl* in the Qur'ān comprises the truths and realities that can be grasped from the Qur'anic expressions." 'Allāmah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabātabā'ī, the author of the famous *Tafsīr al-Mīzān* was one the primary proponents of this view.[17]

The most important reasoning to support this meaning of the word *ta'wīl* is based upon the Qu'rānic verses in which the term *ta'wīl* has been employed, all of which correspond to this meaning of the term.

According to the supporters of this view, the meaning of the verse: "*But no one knows its ta'wīl except Allah and those firmly grounded in knowledge*" (2:7) or in other words, no one but Allah and those firmly grounded in knowledge are aware of the truths and realities that Allah the Almighty has referred to, is in connection with the metaphorical verses.

In the account of Prophet Moses ('*a*) and Khizr ('*a*), to begin with, Khizr makes a hole into a boat and then slays a boy after which he reconstructs a dilapidated wall while at every step Prophet Moses ('*a*) raises objections to his actions since he does not possess the knowledge of the reality behind these acts. In reply to the prophet's objections, Khizr ('*a*) says:

> "*I will inform you about the ta'wīl of that over which you could not maintain patience.*" (18:78)

And after informing Prophet Moses ('*a*) of the truths behind all his actions, Khizr ('*a*) says:

> "*This is the ta'wīl of that over which you could not maintain patience.*" (18:82).

Another instance in which the term *ta'wīl* has been employed in the Qur'ān is the account of Prophet Joseph ('*a*),

who, when his parents and brothers fall down prostrate before him exclaims:

> "*And he seated his parents high upon the throne, and they fell down prostrate before him. He said: O' Father! This is the ta'wīl of my dream of long ago which my Lord has made come true.*"[18] (12:100)

Then he makes his parents sit on the throne after which everyone, in gratitude for seeing Joseph (*'a*) fall into prostration while he says: "... '*Father! This* (the prostrations that had now taken place) *is the ta'wīl* (reality) *of my dream of long age*".

Moreover, we also have the account of Prophet Joseph (*'a*) and his two fellow-prisoners, one of whom had dreamt that he was extracting the juice from a bunch of grapes while the other had dreamt that he was carrying a basket of bread on his head while some birds were pecking on that bread and who, after becoming aware of the knowledge possessed by Joseph (*'a*), had requested him to explain the meaning of the dreams; in the Qur'ānic words: "*Inform us of its ta'wīl*" (12:36). Prophet Joseph (*'a*) responds with the words: "*Before the meals you are served come to you I will inform you of its ta'wīl*" (12:37) or in other words, "I shall inform you of the true message of your dreams".

Yet another Qur'ānic account in which the term *ta'wīl* has been employed is the story of the King of Egypt's dream. The king asked Prophet Joseph (*'a*) for his view on this dream. In the dream, the king had seen that seven lean cows devouring seven fat and stout cows and seven green being vines sucked up by seven dried ones. He had initially asked all the scholars of Egypt to explain the meaning of his dream and to elucidate its true message, to which they had replied in the words: "(These are) *confused nightmares, and we do not know the ta'wīl of nightmares*" (12:44).

In another instance from the *Surah al-Isrā'*, Allah says:

"*When you measure observe fully the measure,* (and) *weigh with an even balance. That is better and fairer in outcome (ta'wīla)*" (17:35).

In this above verse, the term *ta'wīl* has been employed to refer to a universal truth that is endorsed and verified by this Divine command.

In another verse, Allah says:

"*Do they wait for anything but its fulfillment (ta'wīlah)? The day when its fulfillment (ta'wīluh) comes...*" (7:53)

The term *ta'wīl* here implies the actual manifestation of realities on the Day of Resurrection, albeit not quite like the manifestation of realities in this worldly existence. There is yet another Qur'ānic verse that says: "*You were certainly oblivious of this. We have certainly removed your veil from you, and so your sight is acute today*" (50:22). This verse irrefutably proves that the news brought by the true Prophets and the Divine Books regarding the events of the Day of Resurrection shall not be witnessed by the physical eyes and are not of the same kind as the senses of this physical world, in the same manner as the events of the Day of Resurrection and details regarding the system of that realm, are nothing like the ones of the events of this world and its system. Both the actual events as well as the system that will govern that realm are of a different nature.[19]

In a similar context, we can refer to the Qur'ānic verse (10:39) that says: "*Rather they deny that whole knowledge they do not comprehend and whose explanation has not yet come to them (ta'wīluh)*". Unaware and mischievous elements deny the reality of the Day of Resurrection and its events mainly because they have not accessed their truth.

Therefore, by contemplating on this verse, it becomes clear that *ta'wīl* means 'reaching back to the reality of things' which are mentioned in the Qur'ān and this explanation is

totally commensurate with the etymology of the word *ta'wīl* as well as the explanation elucidated through the Qur'ānic verses.

'Allāmah Tabātabā'ī says:

> "The truth regarding the explanation of the term *ta'wīl* is that *ta'wīl* is a reality and truth that is testified and contained by the Qur'ānic contents, including its religious laws, counsel, and stories. And this applies true to all the Qur'ānic verses, whether definitive or metaphorical."[20]

Another explanation is that *ta'wīl* is not something that can be grasped by the mind through the means of words but is instead a lofty reality that cannot be contained within the framework of words and if Allah Almighty has presented them in the form of words it is out of lack of choice since He wishes to bring the human mind closer to a glimpse of those truths and His words work as parables so that the matter becomes comprehensible as per the level of the receiver since the Qur'ān says:

> "*We have made it an Arabic Qur'ān so that you may apply reason, and indeed it is with Us in the Mother Book (and it is) surely sublime and wise.*" (43:3-4)

Other Qur'ānic verses, too, provide proof to verify this explanation.[21]

A Comparative Study of the Views of Ayatullāh Ma'rifat and 'Allāmah Tabātabā'ī

There are certain similarities and differences between the views of Ayatullāh Ma'rifat (the view of the esoteric aspect of the Qur'ān) and 'Allāmah Tabātabā'ī (the view holding that the Qur'ānic truths are beyond the confines of language) some of which shall be discussed below:

A. Similarities

1. In most cases, both views refer to the same truths that need to be sought out from beyond words and their apparent meanings like the case of the *ta'wīl* of the "dreams" in the story of Prophet Joseph (*'a*), and terms like "sovereign," etcetera.

2. Both views hold that the path to accessing *ta'wīl* is through the language and words of the Qur'ānic verses or, in other words, both believe that the esoteric meanings and truths of the verses should be accessed with the help of the words.

3. Both views believe that *ta'wīl* implies the "hidden" or "esoteric" aspects that are veiled by words.

4. Even though 'Allāmah Tabātabā'ī does not regard *ta'wīl* as the inner aspect of things, there is, however, a consensus between the views of both the scholars as regards the relationship between the overt (*zāhir*) and esoteric (*bātin*) aspects of truths since both views hold that the relationship between the overt and hidden aspects are based on language and indications, the only difference being that 'Allāmah Tabātabā'ī believes that the relationship between the two is based on reasoning and a vertical hierarchy (*marātib-i tūlī*)[22] while Ayatullāh Ma'rifat considers the relationship to be one of a non-evident denotation based on inference (*dilālat-i iltizāmī ghayr-i bayyin*),[23] and both forms of indication are literal in nature.

B. Differences

1. One of the most significant differences between the views of 'Allāmah Tabātabā'ī and Ayatullāh Ma'rifat lies in the form of reasoning of the two scholars. Ayatullāh Ma'rifat bases his reasoning on the *riwāyāt* and particularly the famous *riwāyat* of Imam Baqir ('a) that says: "*Zahruhū tanzīluhū wa batnuhū ta'wīluhū* (Its surface is revelation and its interior is *ta'wīl*). While 'Allāmah Tabātabā'ī considers the criteria for the induction of *ta'wīl* in the Qur'ānic verses to be the Qur'ānic truths that go beyond their apparent meanings.

2. Another difference in the views of the two scholars is over the categorization of the term *ta'wīl*. Ayatullāh Ma'rifat regards *ta'wīl* as the explanation of esoteric aspects (*batn*) of the verses – according to him the most appropriate explanation for *ta'wīl* – which he regards as different from the "*ta'wīl*" of the definitive verses. However, 'Allāmah Tabātabā'ī, on the other hand, considers all cases of *ta'wīl* as reference to the truths and realities that are beyond the realm of mere words which the Qur'ān is replete with, both in the definitive verses or in the metaphorical verses.[24]

Ayatullah Marifats critique of 'Allāmah Tabātabā'ī's View

Ayatullāh Ma'rifat, in volome 3 of his work, *al-Tamhīd fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, endorses the third viewpoint on the meaning of the term *ta'wīl* that has been presented earlier in this discussion and says:

> "The term, *ta'wīl* in its Qur'ānic context has yet another meaning which is the secondary meaning of the term which has been referred to as the *'batn'* or the esoteric aspect, as opposed to the first meaning which has been referred to as '*zahr*' or the apparent meaning."

After presenting and rejecting Ibn Taymiyyah's view, he says:

> "The view of our master, the 'Allāmah Tabātabā'ī, too is the same as Ibn Taymiyyah's view according to which *ta'wīl* is not based on linguistic reasoning."

He then concludes that 'Allāmah's views on *ta'wīl* is the same as Ibn Taymiyyah's view, as *ta'wīl* being the "essence that becomes manifest and can be witnessed".

After citing four different meanings for the term *ta'wīl*, Ayatullāh Ma'rifat adds:

None of these meanings of *ta'wīl* refer to it as the "external manifestation" and there is no lucid (*latīf*) and precise justification for the 'Allāmah's view. It is based merely on gnostical experiences without any rational proof and it is rather uncharacteristic for the 'Allāmah to have held such a view."[25]

A Critical Evaluation

Although it may apparently seem that there are similarities between the views of 'Allāmah Tabātabā'ī and Ibn Taymiyyah, there are however a number of fundamental differences between the two views, two of which shall be discussed below:

Both these scholars have presented different definitions on the term *ta'wīl* since according to Ibn Taymiyyah.[26&27]

All the instances of *ta'wīl* in the Glorious Qur'ān as external manifestation and tangible realities and believes that this is the same principle upon which the Qur'ān has descended. Although the 'Allāmah regards *ta'wīl* as the "truth" and a "return to the truth of things" he however believes there are various forms of returning to the truth and, thus, classifies the *ta'wīl* verses into four categories. According to him:

1. At times, *ta'wīl* is returning to the reality of a thing, like the return of an example (*mithāl*) to the object of comparison (*mummathal*), like the employment of the word *ta'wīl* in several places of the account of Prophet Joseph ('*a*). The Qur'ānic verse mentions:

> "*When Joseph said to his father, 'Father! I saw eleven stars, and the sun and the moon: I saw them prostrating themselves before me.*" (12:4)

This was a dream that Prophet Joseph ('*a*) had seen as a child, which then transformed into a *mummathal* and a reality that manifested as the *ta'wīl* of this noble verse, in which the Glorious Qur'ān says:

"And he seated his parents high upon the throne, and they fell down prostrate before him. He said, 'Father! This is the fulfillment (ta'wīl) of my dream of long ago which my Lord has made come true." (12:100).

The same applies to the *ta'wīl* of the other dreams that have been mentioned in this *surah* of the Glorious Qur'ān, like:

"And we do not know the interpretation of nightmares." (12:44);

"I will inform you of its ta'wīl." (12:45); *"Inform us of its ta'wīl."* (12:36);

"And teach you the ta'wīl of dreams." (12:6);

"And that We might teach him the ta'wīl of dreams." (12:21);

"And taught me the ta'wīl of dreams." (12:101),

All these have appeared in the account of the dreams of the King of Egypt and the two fellow-inmates of Prophet Joseph ('*a*).

2. At times, the term *ta'wīl* is used to indicate the transformation of a thing to its true form and meaning, instances of which can be found in the account of Prophet Moses ('*a*) and Khizr ('*a*), in the acts of Khizr ('*a*) like drilling a hole into the boat, killing the youth, and straightening the dilapidated wall.

Prophet Moses ('*a*) could not comprehend the inner aspects of these acts and he was unaware of their reality and, in fact, had even misunderstood them and, as a consequence, kept on expressing his objections to Khizr ('*a*), until Khizr ('*a*) said to him:

"I will inform you about the ta'wīl of that over which you could not maintain patience." (18:78)

The truth that had prompted the actions of Khizr (*'a*) have been explained in the Glorious Qur'ān in the following words:

> "*As for the boat, it belonged to some poor people who work on the sea. I wanted to make it defective, for behind them was a king seizing every ship usurpingly. As for the boy, his parents were faithful (persons), and We feared he would overwhelm them with rebellion and unfaith. So We desired that their Lord should give them in exchange one better than him in respect of purity and closer in mercy. As for the wall, it belonged to two boy orphans in the city. Under it there was a treasure belonging to them...*" (18:79-82)

Seeking out the truth and the actual aspects of the committed acts of Khizr (*'a*) was the same as the *ta'wīl* of Khizr's (*'a*) acts and, thus, we see that it is not necessary for these real aspects and true forms of a word to have a tangible external manifestation in exactly the same form as its truth and, in fact, it is like using the Arabic word "*zaraba*" (to strike) to denote the intention of "*ta'dīb*" (to discipline), thereby making the act of "*ta'dīb*" the *ta'wīl* of the word "*zaraba*".[28] In other words, the same principle that makes "*ta'dīb*" the *ta'wīl* of "*zaraba*" applies to these Qur'ānic verses and it is not as if the *ta'wīl* of the word "*zaraba*" manifests itself in an actual act of striking that can be witnessed in the same exact form in the external world.

3. Sometimes, the term *ta'wīl* is also employed to describe the condition or situation of something, as it is used in the following noble verse that says:

> "*When you measure, observe fully the measure, (and) weigh with an even balance. That is better and fairer in outcome (ta'wīlā).*" (17:35)

In this verse, Allah has commanded mankind to observe fully the measure and to weigh with an even balance and that that is better and fairer in outcome (*ta'wīlā*).

Therefore, the term "*ta'wīlā*" in this verse is not the same as the external and tangible "measure" or "scales" but it in fact implies that if this "measure" and "even balance" is observed fully, it can lead a society to welfare and economic integrity. Here, the social welfare and the economic integrity is the *ta'wīl* of Allah's commands. Therefore, Allah's commandment urges the "measure" and "balance" to be observed fully while the full observance of "measure" and "even balance" lead to social welfare and economic integrity.

Thus, the *ta'wīl* of the verbal commandment of Allah (in which He says: "measure" and "weigh") is in fact actually the economic integrity and social welfare that have appeared in the form of "weigh" and "measure."[29]

4. Occasionally, the term "*ta'wīl*" is also employed to indicate the manifestation of certain realities. However, not a tangible manifestation that can be witnessed by the physical eye or the sensual or worldly witnessing, but in fact referring to the truths that are of a completely different nature than those of the material and physical realms[30]. This kind of *ta'wīl* has been indicated in the Qur'ānic verses that say:

> "*Do they (the unbelievers) await anything but its fulfillment (ta'wīlah)? The day when its fulfillment comes, those who had forgotten it before will say, 'Our Lord's apostles had certainly brought the truth. If only we had some intercessors to intercede for us...*" (7:53)

In other words, "are the unbelievers waiting for the Divine *ta'wīl* (those truths that shall be manifested on the Day of Judgement)? On the Day that the *ta'wīl* (when the truth of the Divine signs shall become apparent and manifest) and the outcome of actions can be witnessed, those who had forgotten

that Day (with great regret) will say: 'The Divine apostles had brought us the truth; if only we had them to intercede for us'..."[31]

Elsewhere, in the *Surah Joseph* ('*a*), the Glorious Qur'ān mentions:

> "*Rather, they deny that whose knowledge they do not comprehend, and whose explanation has not yet come to them. Those who were before them denied likewise*" (10:39)

In other words, "the *mushrikin* (those who take other lords besides Allah) and the *kuffār* (unbelievers) deny (the true faith and the Qur'ān) about which they are unaware and the *ta'wīl* of what they deny has not yet gained true manifestation and the truth behind the Divine commandment has not become apparent to them; and their ancestors, too, had denied (the Truth) in the same manner.

Conclusion

After presenting the four meanings that have been given for the term *ta'wīl* and after a critical examination and analysis we could say that *ta'wīl* comprises the following fundamental features:

1. The term *ta'wīl* carries within itself the implication of "returning";
2. "Returning" means "coming back to the source of the actual origin" even if it is generally referred to as the esoteric or inner aspect (*batn*);
3. The truth or reality of the word is hidden behind the external form of the word;
4. *Ta'wīl* has a truth and reality (and is not merely mental imagination);
5. There are different kinds of "returning to reality" and the "truth of things", only one kind of which can have an external manifestation;

The different kinds of *ta'wīl* are:

a. Returning to the reality and truth of things through examples and objects of comparison;

b. Retuning of a thing to its real and true form and aspect;

c. Returning to the reality and truth of things by means of a description of its state or condition;

d. The manifestation of a truth or reality (not however a manifestation observable by the physical or corporeal eye).

In any case, if we were combine the meaning of the term *ta'wīl* as indicating the truths of the Qur'ān that lie beyond the confines of words which the Divine Book is replete with, with the etymological explanation of the word *ta'wīl*, i.e. "return", this viewpoint could gain further strength.

A Critical Evaluation of the Viewpoint of Ayatullāh Ma'rifat

Ayatullāh Ma'rifat's viewpoint, too, contains what appear to be certain flaws, some of which are discussed hereunder:

a. Ayatullāh Ma'rifat's description of "*batn*" or the inner or esoteric aspect can only be applied to one kind of verses or the metaphorical verses and the *ta'wīl* of such verses implies the explanation of the metaphors since according to the *riwāyah* of Imam Bāqir ('*a*), the "*bātin*" of the Qur'ān is referred to as the *ta'wīl*, as based upon the Qur'ānic verse that says: "*But no one knows its ta'wīl except Allah and those firmly grounded in knowledge*" (3:7),[32] upon which Ayatullāh Ma'rifat has based his view.

Therefore, the *riwāyāt* pertaining to "*batn*" only include one of the various applications of the term *ta'wīl* in the Glorious Qur'ān which is related to the metaphorical verses. The other cases of the application of *ta'wīl* include the *ta'wīl* of dreams[33], the full observance of "measure" and "even balance"[34], the manifestation and actualization of deeds on the Day of

Judgement,[35] referring to the decrees of Allah and His Messenger (S) in matters of dispute,[36] etcetera.

Thus, the application of the term *ta'wīl* as the "*batn*" or inner aspect of the Qur'ān does not include all its applications.

b. In contrast to some *riwāyāt* relating to "*batn*" that have described *ta'wīl* as the inner aspect of the Qur'ān, there are other *riwāyāt* that have also referred to the inner aspect of the Qur'ān as relating to the models of the manifested signs and personality types.

For instance, Imam Bāqir (*'a*) says: "The external form (*zāhir*) of the Qur'ān relates to the reasons for which the verses were revealed while the inner aspect of Qur'ān refer to the models of the manifested signs and personality types (that would come in the future) and behave like their predecessors.[37 & 38]

c. 'Allāmah Tabātabā'ī critically evaluates this view in the following words:

> "If we were to accept this viewpoint we would also need to concede that there is a contradiction in the verses of the Qur'ān because any kind of "turning towards the esoteric aspect" indicates the presence of verses in the Qur'ān that have been presented in a manner that contradicts their real meaning. As a result, these verses would end up contradicting the definitive verses of the Qur'ān which would evoke *fitnah* (mischief) in *din* (religion), in turn indicating that there are contradictions in the Qur'ānic verses that cannot be resolved unless one were to overlook their overt (*zāhir*) aspects and would make them indicate meanings opposing their apparent forms that would fall beyond the comprehension of the common man."

According to 'Allāmah Tabātabā'ī, such an argument would only tantamount to nullifying the verse "*Do they not contemplate the Qur'ān? Had it been from (someone) other than Allah, they would surely have found much discrepancy in it*",

(4:82) while this verse clearly indicates that there are no discrepancies whatsoever (in the Qur'ān). And if one were to suggest that wherever any discrepancies were to emerge among the verses of the Qur'ān they could be resolved by explaining them in a manner that would contradict their overt meanings - which no one but Allah comprehends - the very presence of the (aforementioned) verse would be rendered redundant since such discrepancies are not confined only in relation to the Qur'ān and could, in fact, become applicable to any book, the contents of which are not compatible with each other and could even be full of falsehood but can be explained to mean things that are opposite to the overt forms in order to get rid of such discrepancies. Therefore, an absence of discrepancies in this kind of sense (by referring to some esoteric aspects) does not in any way prove that this Book is of Divine origin and, in fact, it could be possible for anyone to write such a book.

In a nutshell, this holy verse clearly specifies that, firstly, it is possible for the common man to understand the Qur'ān and that every one can contemplate on its verses and, secondly, that there is no verse which contains an esoteric meaning that contradicts its apparent meaning or contains purely poetic or enigmatic aspects.[39]

Notes:

1. Rāghib Isfahānī, *al-Mufradāt*, researched by Nadīm Mar'ashlī, al-Maktabah al-Murtazawiyyah, the word "*awl*", p. 27.

2. *Ibid.*

3. Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, the word "*awl*", vol. 1, p. 264.

4. Zubaydī, *Tāj al-'Arūs*, the word "*fassara*", vol. 7, p. 349.

5. Muhammad Husayn Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufassirūn*, vol. 1, p. 13.

6. Sayyid 'Alī Akbar Qurashī, *Qāmūs-i Qur'ān*, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyyah, 1352, vol. 1, p. 141.

7. Sayyid Hasan Mustafawī, *al-Tahqīq fī Kalamāt al-Qur'an*, vol. 1, p. 174.

8. Fakhr Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, vol. 4, p. 176.

9. Qurtubī, *al-Jāmi' li-Ahkām al-Qur'ān*, vol.4, p. 174.

10. In this verse the knowledge of *ta'wīl* could be attributed to "those firmly grounded in knowledge" only if the letter "*wāw*" in the term "*wa al-Rāskhūn*" refers to the word *ta'wīl*.

11. Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū'ah al-Rasā'il al-Kubrā*, vol. 2, pp. 17-18.

12. 'Ayyāshī Samarqandī, *Tafsīr-i al-'Ayyāshī*, vol. 1, p. 11.

13. Muhamammad Hādī Ma'rifat, *al-Tahmīd fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'an*, vol. 3, p. 28.

14. Jalāl al-Dīn Suyūtī, *al-Itqān*, vol. 4 , p.161, and its translation vol. 2, p. 550.

15. Muhamammad Hādī Ma'rifat, *al-Tahmīd fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'an*, vol. 3, p. 28. He presents another meaning for *ta'wīl* in the metaphorical verses which is the "elimination of any ambiguity". Also see Muhamammad Hādī Ma'rifat, *'Ulūm-i Qur'ānī*, p. 274.

16. *Ibid*, p. 33.

17. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabātabā'ī, *al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, vol. 3, p. 49.

18. As a child, Prophet Joseph (*'a*) had seen in a dream that eleven stars, the Sun and the Moon were prostrating before him. Surah *Yūsuf*, Verse No. 4.

19. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabātabā'ī, *al-Mīzān*, op. cite, vol. 3, p. 30.

20. *Ibid*, vol. 3, p. 23.

21. He has made reference to the verses "*The day when its fulfillment comes*" (7:53), and "*... and whose explanation has not yet come to them*"(10:39) where *ta'wīl* has been added to the Book and the Qur'an thereby arguing that *ta'wīl* relates to all the Qur'anic verses and is not confined merely to metaphorical verses.

22. *Al-Mīzān*, op. cite, vol. 3, p. 64, and also Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabātabā'ī, *Qur'ān dar Islām*, p. 28.

23. Muhammad Husayn Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufassirūn*, op. cite, vol. 1, pp. 30-31.

24. *Al-Mīzān*, op. cite, vol. 3, p. 23.

25. *Al-Tamhīd*, op. cite, vol. 3, p. 30.

26. *Risālah al-Aklīl al-Matbū'ah Zimn al-Majmū'ah al-Thāniyah min Rasā'ilah*, pp. 17-18.

27. *Al-Mīzān*, op. cite, vol. 3, p. 49 and vol. 10, p. 66.

28. *Ibid*, vol. 10, p. 67.

29. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabātabā'ī, *Qur'ān dar Islām*, p. 60.

30. *Al-Mīzān*, op. cite, vol. 7, p. 310.

31. *Ibid*, vol. 8, p. 135.

32. Muhammad Bāqir Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 92, p. 97.

33. Surah *Yūsuf*, Verses 6, 21, 36, 37, 44, 100, and 101.

34. Surah *al-Isrā'*, Verse 35.

35. Surah *al-A'rāf*, verse 53.

36. Surah *al-Nisā'*, verse 59.

37. *Tafsīr al-'Ayyāshī*, vol. 1, p. 11.

38. Besides, the Prophet of Allāh (S) is quoted in the "*Musnad*" of Ahmad bin Hanbal (vol. 1, p. 266) to have prayed for Ibn 'Abbās, in the words: "O Allah! Make him a scholar in

religion and teach him the knowledge of *ta'wīl*". In this *riwāyat*, "*ta'wīl*" means "*tafsīr*" (interpretation) and cannot be taken as the inner meaning of Qur'ān as against its overt connotations.

39. *Al-Mīzān*, op. cite, vol. 3, p. 47.

Pre-Requisites of the Term "Occidentalism"

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It is for many years now that the term "Occidentalism" is being used by many Iranian scholars and writers. The question, however, is: What are these scholars and men of learning referring to, when they use the term "Occidentalism"? Is "Occidentalism" something similar in connotation to "Orientalism" and do our scholars intend to do with the West what the orientalists did with the East and term it as "Occidentalism"?

The truth of the matter – at least as claimed by some orientalists likes Bernard Louis - is that the orientalists believe that what they did for the East, the people of the Orient were unable to do for themselves. Bernard Louis is of the opinion that the Westerners first gained success in knowing themselves and then recognized the "non-Western" or the Eastern identity. According to him, the people of the Orient did not and will never have the ability to know themselves. Although I do agree

that this apparently seems like a rude and baseless claim, let us, however, find out for ourselves, before feeling insulted and losing our minds, what the reasons are, for Louis to have claimed that the West has earned the ability to understand itself as well as others while the East has failed to do so. Moreover, what is it that the West knows about the Orient that the people of the East do not? If we manage to find satisfactory answers to these questions we could perhaps end up much less provoked with such claims of the orientalists, on the one hand, while on the other, we too would succeed in finding appropriate ways for knowing ourselves as well as the West.

However, the question is: What is meant by terms like "knowing the self" and "reaching self-awareness"? Is reaching "self-awareness" merely a prerogative of the West while the rest of the world has been and still is wandering in ignorance? There is absolutely no doubt that the West has discovered its "Western identity" and has been endeavouring to identify and own everything in the world. The modern Western world is grounded in technology and universal politics and the Fauvist man has taken it upon himself to conquer the universe. And this conquest has been of a scientific nature rather than a political or military one. The scientists did not ever follow the colonial power. They, in fact, travelled to every nook and corner of the world much before the political might of the West apparently became the guardian of modern science. Anthropologists conducted various researches on the pre-historic world, and the studies on the historical background of the ancient civilizations of Asia and Africa came to be given the title of Orientalism.

On the other hand, Orientalism considered the chronicled and "future-less" history of the non-Western communities to be the outcome of its own research. To put it in other words, since the Westerners believed that the future belonged to them, they viewed everything "non-Western" as something of the past.

Thus, if Orientalism is considered as the chronicling of a bygone and future-less civilization it would be almost impossible to establish Occidentalism on the same lines. This is because, on the one hand, the West has still not been identified with the past while on the other hand, many communities of the world are actually looking up to it; and in all probability, their own futures have already transpired in the West. In any case, people who yearn for the West or dream of catching up with it could never become occidentalists.

There can be a number of different interpretations on Occidentalism, the simplest being the gaining of knowledge and a familiarity with Western literature, culture, and science. There are many people all over the world who are more or less familiar with Western literature, history, culture, and science. They are acquainted with the West but they do not claim to be occidentalists. No one has ever heard of physicists, political scientists, or researchers on French or German literature calling themselves occidentalists. However, if a European has carried out even a single research on the works of Eastern scholars like Abū Rayhān Bīrūnī or Ferdowsī, he is bestowed with the title of Orientalist. The Europeans of the Renaissance period who studied Greek thought and arts, were not referred to as "Greekologists". They were rather known as "Hellenists" or people who held a fondness for Greek history. Moreover, their successors who began to study the Orient shared no passion for it or at least certainly not to the degree that their forefathers did for Greece.

Although some orientalists were truly inclined towards the Orient and its peoples and went on to study their works, their interest in the Orient was totally different from the interest that the Europeans shared towards Greece and towards Hellenism. Europe viewed Greece as the master and the founder of Western civilization but considered the Orient as a network of sub-paths

that had reached their dead-end, traversing on which would not lead man to anything substantial. Nevertheless, all those who wished to study the history of the West could, and as a matter of fact, need to walk on these "sub-paths" in order to recognize all the conditions, situations, and the challenges that the Western history has encountered alongside its path to "grandeur". It would be important to note that the non-Western world that drew the attention of the West was, nonetheless, passing through a period of lassitude, negligence, and non-creativity. Under such conditions it was quite natural for the Orient to be neglectful of what was happening in the modern world.

Meanwhile, the West became known through its power and its might. In other words, we could say that the first encounters of the Asians and the Africans with the West were in fact with the Western might and domination and, moreover, it was through this might that they found themselves compelled to pay attention to modern science, even though they had hardly recognized its complete importance and significance. Even when the Easterners did find themselves in need of modern science it was an alien need. In other words, they turned to modern science because it was prestigious and dignified to do so and, thus, the East, at its best, only focused upon the fruits of the tree of modern science while totally neglecting its roots.

The world has undergone extreme changes in the past one hundred years but the tendency to imitate continues to persist. Modernity is continually expanding and the underdeveloped world is lamely following this trend, the ultimate destination of which has now become known. There are no separate "Eastern" and "Western" worlds anymore and the world has instead turned into one single entity. In the past four to five centuries the relationship between the modern world and what is known as the "Orient" has been more or less similar to what was briefly mentioned earlier. However, the question is whether it would be

possible for the world to view the West in the same manner as the Westerners viewed the rest of the world and to, thus, establish the concept of "Occidentalism" vis-ā-vis "Orientalism". Apparently, such a thing would only be possible if the people of the Orient changed places with the Westerners of the 18th and 19th centuries! And of course, needless to say, if not absolutely impossible, the chances of such a suggestion to materialize seem to be extremely remote. It could, however, be possible for the West to stride towards decline while Asia and the Orient revived their past glory and discovered new horizons of thought; but in that case a new trend would emerge that would not be a reverse of the current relation of the West with the rest of the world, and the East would not attempt to study the Western world by adopting the methods and approaches used by European and American orientalists.

But why is there a need to enter into such a discussion in the first place? What need do we have for the West and Occidentalism? A scholar once strongly suggested that getting pre-occupied with the East-West issue does not solve any philosophical problems! Taken at its face value, this view holds no credit; but if pondered upon, it could mean that it would be a futile exercise to bother ourselves with the West and in gaining knowledge about it. Perhaps those who question the relevance of knowing the West intend to refute the very existence of the "West" through their question. But if this question were to be answered in a positive manner then things would be completely different.

Nonetheless, the question that still faces us is: "Does knowing the West solve any of our problems?" Before answering this question, positively or otherwise, we need to first find out, through research, as to what our issues are and whether we have any issues to be resolved or not for that matter. Natural needs like food, shelter, and physical health certainly do not

constitute our issues. They only turn into issues when we start attempting to provide adequate answers to those needs. To be able to successfully sort out such issues, we first need to ponder upon their prerequisites and, thus, come across science, technology, and culture. But how are we to achieve the most suitable science, technology, and culture to provide answers to these issues? Where have the present methods of dealing with them come from? Are these methods also not Western in origin? If one were to accept that the dominant science, technology, and culture of the contemporary world are Western in nature, in that case, we cannot afford to say that raising the issue of the West would not solve any problems. If the dominant culture is the culture of the West then we need to admit that our questions about it are not accidental and neither are they meant to provide mere entertainment.

Moreover, since it concerns our lives and our future it would be inappropriate to enquire into the necessity of dealing with this issue or whether it should be left alone. Even if it is said that the present science and technology are the outcomes of human progress and that they do not belong exclusively to either the West or the East, the problem would still remain unresolved since what we need to know, is how and under what conditions can science and technology be acquired and how we could include them into our economic systems.

This question brings us face to face with the modern and developed world. If it would be justified to ask this question then it would not be possible to neglect the study of the West, since we need to recognize our relationship with the modern and developed world, and enquire whether we intend to follow it, or our intention is to absorb its positive aspects and to reject its negative ones. This desire and intention has overshadowed the truth of the matter and has made the advocates of following the West hesitant. These advocates of the West are not aware of the

main problem and issue owing to which they are unable to correctly perceive any other social, cultural, and political issues, as a result of which they inevitably enter into arguments with others. Subsequently, each group insists that its own beliefs and desires are the absolute truth and offer the only way to human liberation and salvation. Knowing the West is neither a pure research project for us, like it was for the Orientalists, and nor is it a mere academic understanding of the West. What is the West after all for it to occupy a place within the realms of our knowledge? In any case, if we managed to identify the nature and the truth of Orientalism we would have taken a positive step in the arena of Occidentalism.

There is no denying the fact that Orientalism is basically a science, but the mere identification of it as a science does not reveal its nature because sciences could be of varying natures. Our general perception of science is that it is unbiased in revealing the reality of things, but in the real world, no branch of science conforms to this definition and Orientalism is no exception. Negligence towards the nature of true science has made the perception of the reality of humanities and social sciences, and particularly history and Orientalism, even more difficult. It is said that the most important characteristic of science is its unbiased nature. But it cannot be refuted that Orientalism was established in order to serve the interests of the colonial power, on the one hand, and to undermine the image of the Orient, on the other. There have also been some people who believe that Orientalism is truly an unbiased branch of science and that any slip on the part of some orientalists does not concern Orientalism per se. With these two apparently opposing views, which are in fact very close to each other in nature, not only would it be impossible to reveal the true essence of Orientalism but it would probably even abort the issue as a whole. Even if someone were to refer to it, an argument over the

benefit of such an enquiry would be raised and questions on its applicability would emerge. Although raising the issue of the West may not help us resolve any problems, it would nevertheless, serve as the basis for a number of other issues. Moreover, if the issue of the West is not dealt with appropriately, many other important and essential issues would remain unresolved.

Now, if Orientalism was merely an unbiased science and not the outcome of colonial conspiracies, what then has been its origin? Why and how did it come into existence and what has been its significance? Would it be possible to say that even the West has been unable to resolve any of its own issues through Orientalism? In other words, were the findings of the endeavours on the part of the acclaimed orientalists of no significance to the West?

Appropriate answers to these questions could perhaps help us perceive the nature of Orientalism, provided we do not get into the argument of Orientalism being an instrument of Western colonialism, political power, and economic dominance. In order to avoid any possible misunderstanding, it should be emphasized that, beyond all doubt, Orientalism has played an instrumental role in the power-play of the West, and perhaps one could say that if not for Orientalism, Western development and dominance would have moved at a much lower pace and would have faced serious difficulties.

However, one should not mix up between the essentials of power and its instruments. Orientalism did not come into existence as a result of the plans outlined by politicians, even though Western politics did pave its path. As a matter of fact, Orientalism is something like anthropology and political science and it can even be compared with physics and mathematics, even though physics and mathematics are concerned with nature while Orientalism focuses on history and culture. If it could be

accepted that the modern world and civilization would not have come into existence in the absence of physics and mathematics it could also be possible to argue that modernity would remain incomplete in the absence of Orientalism. In one sense, the difference between physics and Orientalism is that the science of physics was the outcome of a mathematical perspective of nature whereas Orientalism came into existence by adopting a general Grecian view in order to gain dominance over the historical past of the world outside the 2500-year old history of the Western world.

It could be possible, as per the views of Auguste Comte on sociology - which he considered as social-physics - to refer to Orientalism as the historical physics of the East. The advantage of employing the term "physics" is that it inevitably turns Orientalism into a science. Orientalism is a science, but if too much emphasis is laid upon its scientific nature, it would only end up veiling its other aspects and would eventually turn in, like physics, into a model or paradigm for science. In the same manner that physics is not blamed for the expansionist policies of the West, Orientalism, too, would be considered as being unbiased and unprejudiced. But there are some people who do claim that Orientalism was the product of colonialism and the colonial powers. They hardly pay attention to the fact that in the absence of modern physics and technology, modern economics and politics would not have been born; and even if they did manage to come into existence they would not have grown to such a magnitude. Nevertheless, no one criticizes physics. Nor does anyone scorn the physicists for the dominance of their countries over other nations of the world.

There is no denying the fact that there are more differences between physics and Orientalism than what we have referred to; however, the way Orientalism views the Eastern world is similar to the manner in which a physicist views nature.

It could perhaps be said that it is not appropriate to view human history, civilization, and culture like lifeless objects. Although this objection holds quite valid it has invited a great deal of debate.

Nevertheless, Orientalism came into existence with a more or less objective view of the history of the East and, subsequently, Eastern scholars too wrote their own history keeping in mind the clear-cut rules of Orientalism. Therefore, Orientalism is not an approach adopted by a few unknown and strange writers so that it could be easily discarded and by discarding it, to be freed from the evils and the domination of colonialism because Orientalism is an existing reality along with all its positive and negative aspects. As a matter of fact, it is under the influence of Orientalism that those who get involved in research and propaganda as well as those who are intellectually connected with the developed world, at times, refer to the people of the East as the "dangerous Asian and African brutes that should be destroyed".

Of course, the orientalists themselves have never uttered such statements because, firstly, their pre-occupation with the East had resulted in a kind of an affinity within them just like it does for someone who can never remain indifferent to a language after having spent a lifetime in studying it. And secondly, no orientalist had ever believed that the Orient could prove to pose any kind of a threat to the West. However, now with the emergence of talks regarding the revival of civilizations and cultures, if the East is to be viewed through the eyes of an orientalist, a threat or enmity could possibly be perceived. This new development within the orientalist view - the effects of which are now very clear in the arena of politics - should be taken seriously and perhaps as one of the most important issues of Occidentalism. Of course, this view is rather too ambiguous and our knowledge of Occidentalism is merely confined to a few

of its positive and negative features. For example, we know that Occidentalism is not the flip-side of Orientalism and the manner in which an occidentalist views the West is quite different from how an orientalist views it. Moreover, Occidentalism does not refer to a study of Western culture and literature because that has and is being done by the Westerners themselves. Even if others do join them in their studies, they are only able to do so as assistants and aides. The West does not need us to research on its philosophy, its culture, its literature, and its history. And coming to think of it, even if we do need to research on the West, we can do so only by referring to Western sources. Could this then be termed as Occidentalism?

In our times, too, many great Western philosophers, poets, and cultural elite are more or less well-known throughout the world. No one, however, considers those who are acquainted with such personalities as occidentalists. This is because, firstly, Western culture has turned into a universal one, even though there are some people who for various reasons do not agree with this viewpoint. Secondly, this acquaintance with Western culture has turned into a sort of historical necessity mixed with a kind of a chaotic awareness. To quote an example, as a student of philosophy one is not really expected to study the works of philosophers such as Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Bergson, and Merlo-Ponti in order to "know" the Western world and European history but he is, however, expected to do so because it is part of the curriculum for every student of philosophy, as if to say that it would be impossible to gain knowledge on philosophy without reading their works. Of course, needless to say, no one even becomes an occidentalist by studying such works. While on this point, one may raise an objection as to why a Westerner is referred to as an orientalist even if he has written just a single article on say Fārābī or Ibn Sīnā whereas even if a non-Westerner writes more than a hundred books on the modern

philosophy of Europe and America he does not deserve the title of an occidentalist.

If the response to this objection is that "the Westerners do it better than the non-Westerners who merely imitate the people of the West", the next objection would be questioning if Western historians were more acquainted with the views of Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, Suhrawardī, Nasīr al-Dīn Tūsī, Jalāl al-Dīn Dawwānī, Sadr al-Dīn Dashtakī, Mīr Dāmād, and Mullā Sadrā than even the contemporary Eastern philosophers like Mullā 'Alī Zunnūzī, Mullā 'Alī Akbar Ardakānī etc.! The expectable response to this objection is that "although Hāj Mullā Hādī Sabzewārī knew Ibn Sīnā better than the orientalists, what these Western scholars have done is unprecedented, since prior to their works we only had the history of philosophers and not the history of philosophy". Moreover, even the works of someone like 'Abd al-Karīm Shahristānī, which served as a prelude to the history of philosophy, cannot be considered as the history of philosophy. It is not accidental that the history of our philosophy first came to be written by the orientalists.

At the same time, it should never be perceived that some others compensated for the negligence on the part of our researchers by writing the history of our philosophy. The history of philosophy came into existence as a result of a new approach to language as well as past history. Let us not forget here that the approach to the philosophy of the non-Western world is quite different from the approach to the history of philosophy. For instance, even if an Arab or an Iranian were to write the history of Islamic philosophy, his approach to philosophy would inevitably be different from the approach adopted by the Islamic philosophers.

Based upon the above discussion it can be inferred that neither can those who view the West from a Western point of

view nor can those who have totally distanced themselves from the West ever succeed in being known as occidentalists.

As for the first category, even if they reached the zenith of their knowledge they can at best be considered as scholars and researchers of the West and they would only be regarded as "partners" in Western knowledge and research.

As for the second category no comments are needed. It is also rather irrational to speak of a change of sides between the culture and civilization of the East and the West. It has been said that the future belongs to the East but the future of the East does not mean the perfection of Western science and civilization in the manner in which it has materialized in China, Japan, India, and Iran. It would, rather, need to be a world beyond the Western one. In this new world, too, Occidentalism, in the way it is being projected, holds no place. Does this, therefore, mean that there should be no talk of Occidentalism? Does it mean that there is no need to know and to understand the West? Or does it imply our inability to do so?

Those who believe the concept of the "West" to be a hollow one, a reference to which will never solve any problems, naturally consider knowing and understanding the West as a futile affair because they are of the opinion that the term "the West" does not refer to anything "real". But it would be highly unjustified to consider knowing the West as a worthless exercise. This view is based upon the presumption that the world is a collection of stray elements that are not in any way connected with each other, even though they could impact one another. It, for example, implies that science, technology, politics, philosophy, art, and ethics are not related to each other and they merely impact one another.

If Western history were to be viewed from this paradigm, then science too would need to be regarded simply as science and would not be considered as the exclusive part and parcel of

the history of any part of the world, including the West. The same rule would apply to art, politics, and philosophy. However, this view is quite fragile and lacks the necessary foundation. It cannot be defended and has a very limited number of followers and advocates. Nevertheless, those who consider science, politics, and technology as commensurate symbols of modernity must definitely believe in some sort of relation between these symbols. The West serves as the very means of this relation, which manifests itself in all the above-mentioned symbols.

To know and to understand this point requires an access to sufficient scientific, cultural, and historical information. However, a mere compilation of information does not necessarily result in "knowing" the West. If such a thing were possible, then all those who possessed any information on modern science, technology, and culture would be considered as occidentalists! The West is not something corporeal that can be known through formal knowledge. As a matter of fact, the "West" is a history, or to put it more appropriately, it is a psychological and ethical incident - an event that took place at a particular period of time and expanded further through the course of history. But how are we to accept the West as a history? Can history be divided? Is the present history not a continuation of the history of the past?

Many Westerners claim that the science of gaining dominance over the universe as well as freedom of thought, opinion, and a rational system of living are the gifts of the West to the world. Perhaps the term, "gifts of the West", is somewhat vague, for it then makes it imperative for the West to have existed before knowledge, freedom, and a rational way of living. Now, if it could have been said that we know of a history in which and with which knowledge, rational politics, and freedom came into existence, in such a case, it would not be very difficult to justify and perceive such a term, since it would then be

possible to consider Western history, as claimed by some, to be the very manifestation and the expansion of knowledge and the rational system and not as its source. But has such a thing ever existed in any history? Did the peoples of ancient Iran, China, India, or Egypt know the principles on the basis of which the Western civilization has been built?

These civilizations possessed many qualities that no other civilization possesses, but Western history, too, has certain characteristics that have not been repeated in other histories. It has become important to know these characteristics since Western history has spread throughout the world and because its characteristics are considered to belong to the whole world. The greatest problem faced by the underdeveloped countries is that they are unaware that they have two different pasts. One is their own ethnic past and the other is a vague version of the past of the Western world which simultaneously constitutes the past and the future of such countries. To put it in other words, the underdeveloped countries consider their own history and their past to be the same as that of the history of the West, and at the same time, consider the history of the West as part of their own history.

Moreover, their future is nothing but the past history of the West since the underdeveloped countries are looking forward to materialize the social, economic, and political conditions of what "was" in the West and it could be said that their future is nothing but what the West has left behind. With this attitude in mind, the underdeveloped countries do not know where they stand in human history and where they propose to and where they can go. The East does not intend to know the West merely in order to increase its knowledge but it rather wants to know the West in order to know where it stands. Knowing the West is a necessity and it should not be put in the same category as the other formal branches of knowledge. It is an accepted fact that

gaining knowledge about the West is different from the other formal university courses. Those who do not give any importance to knowing the West consider all branches of knowledge that do not have tangible and measurable benefits, including knowing the West or even philosophy, poetry, and art, as being worthless attempts that only seem to possess entertainment value. With this attitude it would naturally be futile to speak of the West.

However, if the issue were to be discussed differently, the entire situation would then alter. Therefore, instead of questioning the benefits of knowing the West, it would be better to ask ourselves if it would be possible for us to reach anywhere without knowledge of where we are heading towards and why? Is it not that modern science, technology, and politics have come into existence under special circumstances or is it that they can emerge and thrive within any given environment? Apparently, modern science, technology, and politics are the outcomes of a certain attitude towards the world of existence and its Creator and even though this attitude basically stems from the Greco-Christian viewpoint, it has happened to gain grounds in the modern times and during the period of Renaissance, the eighteenth century in particular.

Modern science, technology, and politics emerged and grew in the Western environment. As some people put it, it is the same environment of modernity and a modern way of thinking. However, this statement cannot deny the reality of the West. This is because if modernity is not exactly the same as the West, it is certainly an important aspect of Western history. Thus, at this point in the discussion, it becomes possible to gauge the importance of knowing the West. First of all, the reality of modernity cannot be denied and a study of it cannot be considered as a futile indulgence and even if we do not have a straight and clear definition of the concept of modernity, this

ambiguity does not need to grant us an excuse to avoid entering into any discussion on the subject. Secondly, modernity cannot be related to as an assortment of science, philosophy, politics, and technology. Thirdly, modernity has no special relation with any particular geography and political principles. Fourthly, if the reality of modernity were to be denied it would, in fact, amount to the denial of the existence of human sciences since it is only within the modern world that these sciences have come into existence and they are, thus, related with that world. And an important final point to note is that modernity could only be discussed within the framework of the fields like philosophy, sociology, history, and literature.

Karbalā at a Glance

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The name Karbalā softens the heart and moistens the eyes of anyone with a grain of human conscience.[1] It evokes a feeling of grief and inspiration that has set in motion many a reformatory and revolutionary movement in history, not necessarily limited to Islam and Muslims.[2] It is that spot on Earth where the lips, of even innocent children as young as a 6-month boy, had been forced to remain parched within eyeshot of the fresh flowing waters of the River Euphrates. It is the land where blood triumphed over naked swords. It is the site where victory was announced, not by those who wrought history's most heart-rending tragedy and exulted in wild celebrations but by the severed heads of their victims mounted gruesomely on lances. It is the soil of curative properties[3] and the source of the Planet's most sought after clay tablets for those who believe that Islam – as part of its exaltation of the humbleness of a Muslim before the infinite majesty of the Lord Most High – has prescribed *sajdah* (prostration) on undefiled ground,

preferentially dried mud, rather than on synthetic materials or victuals. It is the tract whose fateful future, according to *ahādīth*, had been foretold by God to some of His prominent prophets, like Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and others in antiquity.[4] It is the place made immortal by Imam Husayn's ('a) heroic stand on the Day of 'Ashūrā (61 AH/680 CE) in defence of justice and humanitarian values when surrounded by the bloodthirsty hordes of evil and oppression. It is not a relic of the past but a permanent barometer between truth and hypocrisy. It beats with the indomitable spirit of immortal martyrdom. It is the city that has recently shot back into international limelight, baffling political analysts, social scientists, economic experts and academic researchers, by hosting with remarkable frequency record gatherings of 5-million plus, unfazed by the terrorist attack that claimed the life of over a hundred devotees on March 2, 2004.

Karbalā translates faith into action; defies political equations defines the parameters of philosophy; promulgates the principles of morality; inspires poets towards reality and demonstrates the art of converting inevitable death into glorious immortality.

Karbalā is thus the rendezvous of the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt, the Blessed Household, so clearly defined by Almighty Allah in the Holy Qur'ān and so explicitly explained by Prophet Muhammad ('a) in the famous ***Hadīth al-Thaqalayn*** that serves as the safeguard from manifest error.

Geographical Features

Geographically, Karbalā is in Iraq or Mesopotamia, the Land of the Two Rivers (the Euphrates and the Tigris) that is considered the cradle of civilization, where mankind took to the tilling of land to grow crops, domesticated animals for varied uses, invented the art of writing, learned how to weave thread

out of cotton wool and subsequently make clothes, designed the wheel to speed up transportation and discovered the benefits of a number of other basic sciences and industries including astronomy and the progress towards urban life. That means it was not an obscure or desolate place when Imam Husayn ('a) stepped on its soil to transform it into an eternally focal point of the world. In its strict topographical definition, the city of Karbalā lies 105 km southwest of the Iraqi capital Baghdad, on the western side of the River Euphrates, 32.61°N, 44.08°E and has a population of around 600,000 that is expected to rapidly expand in view of the current political situation after the downfall of the repressive Ba'th minority regime. The Province of Karbalā that has been reshaped and reduced in size as per the political and administrative expediencies of the rulers is today one of Iraq's 18 provinces, sharing borders with al-Anbār Province on its north and west, Najaf Province on its southwest and Bābil Province (site of ancient Babylon) on its east. However, in terms of historical geography Karbalā is the region between the River Euphrates (*Nahr al-Furāt*), the Arabian Peninsula (*Jazīrah al-'Arab*) and the Syrian Desert (*Bādiyah al-Shām*) at the crossroads of the empires of antiquity such as Akkad, Babylonia, Assyria, Chaldea, and Persia etc.

Karbalā is thus an ancient geographical name that according to modern researchers dates back to the Babylonian era and perhaps predates it. Historians have expressed different views on its etymological roots. Some are of the opinion that Karbalā is derived from the Arabic word '*Kūr Bābil*' to designate a group of ancient Babylonian villages composed of the following regions:

1. Ninevah: Located northeast of Karbalā it was a flourishing place in ancient times. Its remains in the shape of hillocks stretching today from the south of the Hindiyyah

Barrage to the mouth of the River 'Alqamah towards the marshes, are known as the Ninevah Mounds.

2. Ghāziriyyah: A very large area that was cultivated and tilled by the Banī Asad tribe. Today it lies northeast of *Maqām Imām Ja'far al-Sādiq* ('a) and is known as *Arāzī al-Husayn* or the Husaynī Tract.[5]

3. Karbalah: Located southeast of Karbalā.

4. Karbalā: Also called *'Aqr Bābil'* was a village northwest of Ghāziriyyah and its ruins are considered an important historical site.

5. Nawāwīs: Before the advent of Islam this region near Ninevah was a Christian cemetery founded on the burial site of the ancient Babylonians, a fact that is confirmed by pottery pieces that are still unearthed here. Imam Husayn ('a) in one of his famous sermons while moving towards Iraq from the Hijāz said: "I am seeing the winds of the plain ruffling the parts of my body between Nawāwīs and Karbalā."[6]

6. Hīr: Its literal meaning is the one who is supported.

7. Hā'ir:[7] This was a depression or low-lying ground where Imam Husayn ('a) was martyred and where his mausoleum is situated. In 236 AH, the 'Abbāsid caliph Mutawakkil had diverted the river waters to this spot – and ordered tilling of the soil in an attempt to erase any sign of the tomb of Imam Husayn ('a). The water encircled the area – but miraculously did not despoil the tomb. For the onlookers the water was literally wonderstruck (*Hā'ir*; from the root word *Hā'irah* or bafflement) and this is the reason for the subsequent naming of this particular area. Hā'ir was surrounded on the northwest and the south by hillocks in the shape of a semi-circle with the eastern side serving as its entrance, through which pilgrims used to go towards the shrine of Hazrat 'Abbās ('a) located in the area known as *Taff*[8] or coast, since it was on the banks of the 'Alqamah. This area contained the springs of *Sayd, 'Ayn al-Jamal, Qatqatāniyah, Ruhaymah,* etc, attributed to the sentries of the arsenal of the Sāsānid Persian king, Shahpour.

These springs lay behind the trench the Persians had dug as part of defences against the Arab tribes.[9]

Another nearby spring in Karbalā was that of *Shafiyyah* dug by the Banī Asad tribe around which they had built a village of the same name. The reference to this place occurs when Hurr's detachment surrounds the caravan of Imam Husayn ('a) and tries to prevent it from alighting near the River Euphrates to which the Imam's companions say that in such a case they should encamp in one of the villages called *Ninevah*, *Ghāziriyyah* or *Shafiyah*. Another reference to it occurs on the fateful afternoon of 'Ashūrā when Imam Husayn ('a), alone on the battlefield after the martyrdom of almost all his male companions, is deserted at this critical hour by Zahhāk bin 'Abdullāh, with permission, since it seems the latter had entered into a conditional agreement of supporting the cause of Islam only if there were enough men on the side of the Prophet's grandson. Zahhāk turned his mount towards the army of Yazīd, which seeing his intention to desert the Imam gave him way and he saved his life by seeking shelter in the village of *Shafiyah*.[10] This area, also called *'Aqr* had the ruins of a mansion built by the Babylonian tyrant Nebuchadnezzar and was the site of the killing of the rebellious Umayyad governor of Iraq and Khurāsān, Yazīd bin Mihlab in 102 AH.

According to Yāqūt al-Hamawī, when Imam Husayn ('a), encircled by the enemy forces, realised that the name of this land is 'Karbalā', he remarked that this is actually *Karbun wa Balā* (Land of Grief and Affliction).[11]

When the Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Alī ('a), was marching from his capital Kufa towards Siffīn in Syria for battle with the rebel Mu'āwiyah bin Abī Sufyān in 37 AH, he stopped for a while in Karbalā. On being asked the reason he called the place a very significantly great land. The Imam, pointing with his fingers in different directions, said the area over there will one day see a caravan alighting, while the spot over here is the place where their blood will be spilled. When asked by his

companions to elaborate on the identity of the caravan, he replied with tearful eyes: "The Household of Prophet Muhammad (S)."[12]

Other names for Karbalā have also been mentioned in historical and geographical works that are outside the scope of this article.[13]

Among the root words of Karbalā is *Karbalah*, which means leaden-footed or sluggish. A proverb among the Arabs says: *Jā' yamshī mukarbilan*, meaning "he came with sluggish paces". Another proverb says *Karbaltu al-Hintah*, meaning "threshing the wheat to separate grains from chaff". On the basis of these proverbs some have opined that the sluggish nature of this land was the reason for calling it Karbalā, while others have surmised that since the soil was free from both pebbles and jungle, it was named thus. Still others think the name is derived from the edible shrub *"karbal"* that used to grow abundantly in the region.

A group of historians are of the opinion that Karbalā is a compound term of two ancient Assyrian words *"karb"* and *"ilā"* that stands for "Sanctuary of God." A similar attachment of sanctity for the place is observed in the theory of those who believe the root words of this place is neither Babylonian nor Arabic but pre-Islamic Persian derived from the words *"kār"* (work) and *"bālā"* (high), that combined together mean "heavenly work" or more properly "Place of Prayer and Supplication".[14]

Among the views expressed on its etymological roots is the term *"nawā'ih"* from the word *"niyāh"* indicating crying and wailing. It is said that Imam Husayn's ('a) stepping on this land was accompanied by mourning and lamentation.

Dr. 'Abd al-Jawād Kilīd-Dār in his book *History of Karbalā*, writes:

"From the earliest times Karbalā has been known by several names such as: *Ghāziriyyah, Ninevah, 'Amūrā* and *Shātī al-Furāt* (Bank of the Euphrates). It has also been called *Māriyah, Nawāwīs, Taff* (Smoothed Coast), *Taff al-Furāt* (Coast of the Euphrates), *Mashhad al-Husayn* (Place of Martyrdom of Imam Husayn), *Hā'ir, Hir*, etc. The most important name, however, has been *Hā'ir*, a respectable term indicating the sanctity of the place. In Islamic narrations and *fiqh*, special reference has been made to *Hā'ir* and the rites associated with it."[15]

If the Zoroastrian author of *Dabistān-i Madhāhib* is to be believed, during the long Sāsāniān rule over Iraq, some fire temples were built in Karbalā and the place was called *"Mah-Bār-Sur-'Alam"* in their language, meaning a holy place.[16]

Historical works indicate that in the vicinity of ancient Karbalā other villages also existed such as: *'Amūrā, Māriyah, Safūrā*, and *Shafiyyah*. However, after the martyrdom of Imam Husayn ('a) in 61 AH, the land became known as *Mashhad al-Husayn, Madīnah al-Husayn, Buq'atun Mubārakah* (Blessed Area), *Mawzi' al-Ibtilā* (Site of Tribulation) and *Mahall al-Wafā* (Place of Fidelity).[17]

In short, Karbalā grouped several villages and was an important site in Mesopotamia located between the Syrian Desert and the River Euphrates. Pottery unearthed in the region indicates the existence of numerous graveyards around Karbalā dating back to the pre-Babylonian times. The people inhabiting the region were mostly agricultural communities because of the arability of the land and the abundance of water resources. Thus, throughout history Karbalā was an important and flourishing place, especially during the Chaldean era and the days of the Arab dynasty of Banī Lakhm, a Sāsānid vasal state, whose capital was the city of Hīrah (near Kufa). One of the important centres during those days was *'Ayn al-Tamr* and its numerous villages including *Shafāthah*.

Streams of Karbalā

Historical sources speak of numerous streams and water canals crisscrossing the fertile land of Karbalā. These were the result of the frequent flooding of the Euphrates and the irrigation canals dug by different dynasties, but over the course of time almost all of these have dried up except for the Husayniyyah Canal that continues to be a source of blessing for the city of Karbalā. Some of the streams that have ceased flowing but whose traces remain are as follows:

(1) Nahrayn: This forked tributary of the River Euphrates used to flow through ancient Karbalā. Historians dealing with the tragedy of Imam Husayn ('a) have mentioned this twin watercourse as *Nahrayn* or "Two Streams." This term has been used by Abū Ja'far Tabarī in his monumental history, Abū al-Faraj Isfahānī in his *Maqātil at-Tālibiyyin*, Ibn Kathīr in his *al-Badāyah wa al-Nihāyah*, and Ibn Shahr Ashūb in his *Manāqib Al-i Abī Tālib*.

(2) 'Alqamah: This celebrated stream that used to irrigate Karbalā no longer passes through the city today. Mas'ūdī in *al-Tanbīh wa al-Ishrāf* and Ibn Khurdādhbeh in *Kitāb al-Masālik wa al-Mamālik* have mentioned it, saying: "The River Euphrates after passing through Anbār and Hīt splits into two, with one of its branches meandering in the westerly direction towards Kufa where it is called 'Alqamah."[18]

According to the author of *Bughyah al-Nubalā*, in Karbalā the course that the 'Alqamah used to traverse could be traced to the northern side of the mausoleum of 'Awn from where it turned abruptly towards the south to irrigate Ghāziriyyah that was the habitation of the Banī Asad. Ghāziriyyah was thus on its eastern banks while on the west side was the plain or the Husaynī Tract of Imam Ja'far al-Sādiq ('a) that was connected by a bridge. From here the 'Alqamah took a northwest turn bisecting the eastern parts of Karbalā near to the shrine of

Hazrat 'Abbās ('a) and flowing southwest towards the village of Ninevah where it merged with the Ninevah Stream to irrigate the lands along its course including the village of Shafiyyah. The flow of these two streams was rather erratic from here tending to fluctuate in either the westerly or easterly directions until midway between Najaf and Karbalā they converged on Khan al-Hammād from where they flowed towards the east dissecting the Shatt Hindī south of the Baras and Hirqah canals (traces of which are still evident) and separating the region east of Kufa.[19]

The author of *Kibrīt al-Ahmar* writing in 1004 AH quotes from the book *Zīnah al-Majālis* that when the minister Sa'īd bin 'Alqamī heard that Imam Sādiq ('a) addressing the 'Alqamah had reportedly said: "you are still flowing when my great grandfather was deprived of your waters," he ordered the blocking and drying up of this stream, a move that led to the desolation of Kufa since it used to irrigate the lands in that region. In Shaykh al-Tā'ifah al-Tūsī's famous work on supplications from the Infallible Imams titled *Misbāh al-Mutahajjid*, Imam Sādiq ('a) has been quoted as telling his disciple Safwān bin Jammāl: "when you reach the Euphrates, say: *Allāhumma Anta khayru man wufid...*"[20]

Some historians believe that the part of 'Alqamah opposite Taff was a canal dug by a tribesman of the Banī 'Alqamah, a clan of the larger Banī Tamīm tribe descended from Dārim whose ancestor was 'Alqamah bin Zurārah bin 'Adas, hence its naming as *Nahr 'Alqamah* in the second century AH. The historian Sharīf Muhammad Tabātabā'ī also known as Ibn Tuqtuqa in his account of the famous 'Abbāsid minister, Mu'yyid al-Dīn 'Alqamī who later served the Mongol conqueror Hulaku Khan, writes that his ancestor was 'Alqamah who dug the 'Alqamah Canal in Karbalā.

Others like Nuwayrī in his *Bulūgh al-Irab* write that the Euphrates after passing through Anbār splits into two with one branch flowing towards the south where it is known as 'Alqam because of the abundance of colocynth (*hanzal*) plants in the region.[21] The colocynth fruit is often called 'bitter apple' and it is worth noting that any bitter shrub in Arabic is known as 'Alqam, which, according to Nuwayrī explains the naming of the stream as 'Alqamah.

Because of heavy silt accumulated over the years the 'Alqamah was reduced to a trickle by 697 AH/1298 CE, when it was dredged and revived by the Il-Khanid Mongol dynasty that ruled Iran and Iraq, until it ceased to flow by 915 AH/1509 CE due to more silt and gravel.

(3) Ninevah: Among the water courses irrigating the holy land of Karbalā was the Ninevah Stream, that flowed through the Umm al-'Urūq tract towards the southern region of Kroud Abū Hintah after detaching itself from the Euphrates near Hasāsah and 'Aqr Bābil at a point between the northern part of the Hindiyyah Barrage and the southern area of Mūsāyyib. Isolated patches of this waterway are still found and known as 'Arqoub Ninevah. It is said the ancient Babylonians dug this stream after the Assyrians established their capital at Ninevah, which was then called Karbā Ilū.

(4) Ghāzānī: Another canal that flowed through Karbalā was the Ghāzānī that was dug on the orders of the Il-Khanid ruler Ghāzān Khan who revived the flow of the 'Alqamah and brought its course near to the Euphrates. The Il-Khanids made a diversion upstream from the main river and connected it to the canal dug from the Euphrates near Hillah. Since the original course of the 'Alqamah underwent extensive changes it began to be called as Ghāzānī Canal. Ibn Fuwatī recording the events of the year 697 AH/1298 CE writes that Ghāzān ordered the Sādāts

and other notables of Hillah to fund his canal project undertaken by a certain Shams al-Dīn Sakūrji.[22]

(5) Husayniyyah: This canal was built in 941 AH/1535 CE by the Turkish Ottoman conqueror of Iraq, Sulaymān the Magnificent, who seized Iraq from the Safawīd Dynasty of Iran. Longrigg in his book that deals with Ottoman rule over Mesopotamia, writes:

> "Among the objectives of Sultan Sulaymān was to perform pilgrimage to the holy sites[23] in the Euphrates Basin and to carry out development projects on a scale larger than what the Safawīds had done. In Karbalā he saw the difficulties faced by pilgrims because of droughts followed by seasonal floods. In spring the Euphrates would overflow its banks as far as the holy shrines causing inconvenience, and when it receded the thousands of pilgrims had no other recourse except the muddy waters of the wells. He decided to resolve the problem by constructing a dam upriver to prevent floods and contamination of drinking water resources that is still in use today. Simultaneously, he dug a deep canal to ensure constant supply of water to the city and also to irrigate the surrounding orchards and farmlands. This slightly sloped waterway dug over an elevated area was considered by the people of Karbalā as a miracle and blessing of Imam Husayn ('a), and called Husayniyyah Canal. Sultan Sulaymān then performed pilgrimage to the shrine of Imam 'Alī ('a) in Najaf and left for Istanbul via Baghdad."[24]

'Abbās 'Azzāwī calls the Husayniyyah Canal the most important work of Sultan Sulaymān and says, "the canal known as Husayniyyah was originally called Sulaymānī and was a grand success that had eluded the previous rulers including Ghāzān Khan, Shah Ismā'īl and Shah Tahmāsb."[25]

(6) Rashīdiyyah, Rushdiyyah or Rashtiyyah: This was dug by the wife of the founder of the Qājārid dynasty of Iran, Aqā Muhammad Khan. The expenses were entirely borne by the lady from her personal income and it was called Rashidiyyah Canal. Later after the rebuilding of Karbalā following the sacrilegious plunder by the Wahhābīs in 1216 AH/1801 CE, this canal was extended towards the mausoleum of Hurr some 6 miles south of Karbalā through the efforts of Sayyid Kāzim Rashtī [26] and became known as Rashtiyyah, a term that was corrupted to Rashdiyyah.

(7) Hindiyyah: The southern part of the above canal that still flows through Karbalā is known as Hindiyyah, and was built by Nawwāb Asif al-Dawlah the ruler of Awadh in northern India. The famous traveller Mīrzā Abū Tālib Khan Isfahānī writes in this regard:

> "After performing pilgrimage to Karbalā I left for Najaf and reached the city the same day through Hillah. On the way I came across two streams. One was the Husayniyyah Canal built by Sultan Sulaymān a few miles from Karbalā and the second was the Hindiyyah or Asifī Canal, dug on the orders of Asif al-Dawlah. This was wider than the Husayniyyah and the objective of the project was to bring water to the shrine of Imam 'Alī ('a). But so far a million Indian rupees have been spent and the project is still incomplete since the Pasha (governor) of Baghdad, or those who have placed him in the post, instead of digging straight towards Najaf, has made a diversion towards Kufa and other towns. It is still four miles away from Najaf, its original goal."[27]

History of Imam Husayn's ('a) Shrine

When Imam Husayn ('a) arrived in Iraq with his family and companions in 61 AH, Karbalā had neither any population of note nor urban settlement. It was after his martyrdom and

burial in Hā'ir that Karbalā gradually took up the shape of a town. The martyrdom occurred in the place known as Taff. The first person to visit the martyred Imam was 'Ubaydullāh bin Hurr al-Ju'fī who happened to be in the vicinity. On learning of the tragedy he hurried towards Karbalā. The site of the massacre brought torrents of tears to his eyes and he recited the famous elegy (*marthiyyah*) in honour of Imam Husayn ('a).

The Prophet's companion, Jābir bin 'Abdullāh al-Ansārī, relates that he started from Medina along with a group of Muslims on learning of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn ('a). On the 20th of Safar, 62 AH, he reached Karbalā, where he reportedly met Imam Zayn al-'Abidīn ('a).[28] The aged Jābir, who had lost his eyesight, asked his companions to place his hands on the grave of Imam Husayn ('a).

Ibn Qūlawayh writes that after laying the Imam to rest, his grave was marked and a structure erected over it.[29] During the Umayyad rule, armed sentries were posted around the tomb of Imam Husayn ('a) to prevent pilgrims from approaching it.

A narration from Imam Sādiq ('a) reads:

> "Whenever you approach Hā'ir, cross the bridge, take a bath in the Euphrates and set foot on Ghāziriyyah."[30]

From this saying it is clear the 6th Imam has encouraged pilgrimage to Hā'ir and instructed staying in Ninevah or Ghāziriyyah. In *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt* we come across a similar *hadīth* on the authority of Abū Hamzah Thumālī that the staying place for the pilgrims should be Ghāziriyyah or Ninevah, and recommends the taking of bath for visiting the shrine.

Safwān Jammāl quotes Imam Sādiq ('a) as saying: "Whenever you intend to perform the *ziyārah* of Imam Husayn ('a) in Karbalā, stand outside the dome, set your eyes on the tomb then enter the shrine and stand opposite the head (for reciting the *ziyārah*). While leaving, make your exit through the

door that lies towards the feet of 'Alī bin al-Husayn ('a), and approach the *Ganj-i Shahīdān* where the mutilated bodies of the Imam's martyred companions and kinsfolk are buried. Then proceed towards the shrine of Hazrat 'Abbās ('a), stand before the roofed door and recite the *ziyārat*."[31]

This narration indicates that towards the end of Umayyad rule, the tomb of Imam Husayn ('a) had a roofed mosque-like structure shaded by a lote tree. Muhammad bin Abī Tālib writes in *Tasliyah al-Majālis* that during the rule of the Marwānid branch of the Umayyads, a mosque covered the tomb of Imam Husayn ('a).[32]

The defeat of the Umayyads and the coming to power of Abu'l-'Abbās Saffāh as the first 'Abbāsid caliph was a temporary respite from persecution that provided an opportunity, however brief, for increased pilgrimage to the shrine of Imam Husayn ('a). Karbalā subsequently took the shape of a settled population centre.

Hā'ir During the 'Abbāsid Era

The 'Abbāsid caliphs reverted to the repressive policies of their Umayyad predecessors and even outdid them. Hārūn al-Rashīd persecuted pilgrims to the holy shrine of Imam Husayn ('a), cut the lote tree, ploughed the grave area and destroyed the nearby buildings.[33] After the death of Hārūn, the tomb was rebuilt along with the destroyed buildings.

The shrine of Imam Husayn ('a) was, however, exposed to more sacrilege during the tyrannical rule of Mutawakkil (233 to 247 AH/847-861 CE) – the most infidel of the 'Abbāsid kings – as was foretold by the Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Alī ('a). Initially he placed guards around the tomb to prevent pilgrimage and then ordered the destruction of the sacred site followed by ploughing of the area and diversion of the river waters towards the grave. Miraculously, the waters left the grave

dry. He also commissioned armed agents to chase away pilgrims and to ambush those intending to visit the grave of Imam Husayn ('a). In 237 AH, Mutawakkil on hearing that the people of the Sawād – the region south of Kufa till Basra – normally gather in Ninevah for performing the pilgrimage, sent an armed detachment to scatter them. But the people refused to be intimidated. They were undeterred by the caliph's cruel policy of amputating their hands for performing pilgrimage to Karbalā and said even if they were killed to the last man they would never retreat from their resolve to visit the shrine of Imam Husayn ('a).[34]

Mutawakkil was killed in 247 AH/861 CE by his son Muntasir, who discontinued the state policy of persecuting the Prophet's descendants and rebuilt the shrines in Karbalā. He also restored the surrounding buildings and according to 'Allāmah Majlisī, built a vault over the tomb of Imam Husayn ('a). The same year, Ibrāhīm al-Mujāb bin Muhammad al-'Abid, the grandson of Imam Mūsā al-Kāzim ('a) along with his children settled in Karbalā, which now began to take the shape of an urban centre. According to Sayyid Hasan al-Sadr, the first one to take up residence in Hā'ir was Ibrāhīm Mujāb, also known as al-Zarīr al-Kufī. His son Muhammad was the first ever person to take the surname of al-Hā'irī. Ibrāhīm, the ancestor of the *Sādāt Al-i Fā'iz* who still live in and around Karbalā, served as caretaker of the shrine and was buried behind the mausoleum on his death.[35]

In 273 AH/884 CE, the shrine of Imam Husayn ('a) was again destroyed but was rebuilt by the *Dā'ī al-Saghīr* Muhammad bin Zayd of the Hasanid branch of the 'Alawids ruling Tabaristān on the Caspian Sea. He, along with his elder brother Hasan, the *Dā'ī al-Kabīr* carried out the rebuilding of the holy shrines in Najaf and Karbalā in the days of the 'Abbāsid caliph, Mu'tamid. Between the years 279 to 289

AH/890-900 CE, the two brothers erected domes over the holy tombs in both Karbalā and Najaf.[36] The structure raised over the tomb of Imam Husayn ('a) had two doors around which was an walled enclosure covered with roof.

Hā'ir During the Buwayhid Era

In 335 AH/945 CE, Ahmad bin Buwaiyh seized Baghdad as the Amīr al-Umarā, took the title of Mu'izz al-Dawlah, reduced the 'Abbāsid caliphs to puppets and in coordination with his brothers 'Alī 'Imād al-Dawlah and Hasan Rukn al-Dawlah, who were in control of large parts of central and northern Iran, established the Buwaiyhid confederacy over Iraq and most of Iran that was to last for a little over a century. Of Persian stock from Daylam on the Caspian Sea, the dynasty also known as Daylamites, was attached to the Prophet's Ahl al-Bayt ('a). As a sign of his devotion to the tenets of Islam, Mu'izz al-Dawlah ordered the celebration of the feast of Ghadīr Khum (18th Zī Hijjah) for the first time in Iraq in honour of the Prophet's historic proclamation of Imam 'Alī ('a) as his vicegerent on the express commandment of God (Holy Qur'ān 5:67) during return from the Farewell Pilgrimage (*Hajjah al-Widā'*) in 10 AH. He also declared the 10th of Muharram a holiday with public mourning processions to commemorate the tragic martyrdom of Imam Husayn ('a).

Under the Buwaiyhids, Karbalā soon grew into a city and the tomb of Imam Husayn ('a) came to be adorned with a fine cloth around which were placed candlesticks. The next ruler 'Azud al-Dawlah Fana Khosrow enlarged and rebuilt the shrines in Karbalā (and also in Najaf) on a grand scale in 371 AH/980 CE. The historian Ibn Athīr enumerating the services of 'Azud al-Dawlah to the holy cities of Mecca, Medina, Karbalā and Najaf, says that during his era several new structures were added to the mausoleum of Imam Husayn ('a), the dome was

renovated, the whole shrine was embellished and a *zarīh* of teak wood and ivory covered with silken cloth was installed over the tomb. The Hā'ir was surrounded with a fence encompassing some 2400 square meters. 'Azud al-Dawlah, who used to perform annual pilgrimage to the shrine of Imam Husayn ('a), built residential units and markets around the mausoleum and encircled Karbalā with a high wall to protect the city from aggression.[37] Earlier in 368 AH/977 CE, a *riwāq* (arched verandah) and a mosque were added to the shrine by a certain 'Imrān bin Shāhīn of Batīh, who also carried out similar constructions at the shrine of Imam 'Alī ('a) in Najaf to fulfil a vow that brought him a miraculous escape from disaster. These were known as the *'Imrānī Riwāq* and *'Imrānī Mosque*, as confirmed by the scholar Sayyid bin Tāwūs and the North African traveller, Ibn Batūtah. It is the same *riwāq* covering the tomb of Ibrāhīm Mujāb, while the 'Imrānī Mosque that stood until the days of the Safawīds is now part of the courtyard.

Karbalā was thus transformed into a full-fledged religious, cultural and economic centre with all public amenities for the growing number of pilgrims. It became an academic and literary hub producing scholars and poets. Dignitaries desired to be buried in the Hā'ir and the vizier Abū al-'Abbās Kāfī, before his death in 399 AH, requested permission from the 'Alawid custodians to buy a slot for his grave that was granted to him free of charge because of his services to the city and its population.

Ibn al-Athīr relating the events of the year 407 AH/1015 CE, writes that on 14th Rabī' al-Awwal, the canopies and the dome of the shrine of Imam Husayn ('a) caught fire because of the falling of the two great candles.[38] By 412 AH/1020 CE, the Buwaiyhid vizier Hasan bin al-Fazl bin Sahlān al-Rāmhormozī restored it to its original grandeur, and also extended and fenced

the circumference of the Hā'ir, installing four iron doors at the four entrances.[39]

The Buwaiyhids also built the shrine of Hazrat 'Abbās ('a), which has greatly expanded today from its original structure. Perhaps one of the few remaining buildings of the Buwaiyhid era in Karbalā is the inner part of the mausoleum of Hurr bin Yazīd al-Riyāhī, a commander of the enemy forces, who repented, crossed over to the Imam's side along with his son and was martyred by his former comrades-in-arms.

Hā'ir During the Seljuqid Era

The fall of the Buwaiyhid dynasty at the hands of the Seljuq Turks of Central Asia restored the 'Abbāsid caliphate and ended the privileges enjoyed by the holy shrines. After an initial period of persecution of the followers of the Prophet's Ahl al-Bayt ('a), the Seljuqids were gradually absorbed by the culture of the conquered people. In 479 AH Sultan Malik Shah Seljuqī, who from his capital Isfahan ruled a vast empire extending from Central Asia to Syria, decided to visit Karbalā along with his vizier during a hunting trip in Iraq. He performed the pilgrimage to the shrine of Imam Husayn ('a) and ordered construction of a wall around the mausoleum. In the next half-a-century as people felt the freedom to express their suppressed beliefs, pilgrimages increased to the shrine cities of Najaf and Karbalā. In Rabī' al-Thānī 553 AH, even the 'Abbāsid caliph, Muqtafī Billāh, while on his way to Anbār, crossed the River Euphrates and paid his respects at the shrine of Imam Husayn ('a).

Hā'ir During the Il-Khanid Era

In 656 AH (1258 CE), with the fall of Baghdad to the Mongol armies of Hulaku Khan, 'Abbāsid power ended once and for all. The non-Muslim Mongols despite their savage and bloodthirsty reputation and the trail of devastation they had left

from Bukhara till Baghdad while wiping out the Khwarezmshahi dynasty (that had succeeded the Seljuqs in Iran and Central Asia) and the caliphate in Iraq, restrained from desecrating the holy cities and spared southern and most of central Iraq from pillage and massacre, thanks to the diplomatic efforts of the ulema of Iraq's suppressed majority. The celebrated scholar 'Allāmah Hillī citing the reasons for the safety of the cities of Najaf, Kufa, Karbalā and Hillah, has referred to the prophecies of the Commander of the Faithful, Imam 'Alī ('a) – compiled by his father Shaykh Sadīd al-Dīn – on the overthrow of the 'Abbāsids at the hands of a people from the east with rotund faces and narrow eyes.[40] This is corroborated in another contemporary account that says Sayyid Majd al-Dīn Muhammad bin Tāwūs presented his work *al-Bashārah* to Hulaku and won amnesty for the above mentioned cities.[41]

During the first four decades of Mongol Il-Khanid rule, Karbalā and the other cities, although spared of bloodshed and plunder, descended into economic poverty because of the negligence of the Buddhist conquerors towards the welfare of the Muslim people. But for the waters of the 'Alqamah, Karbalā in those days would have turned into a desolate place. In the course of time, due to heavy silt the flow of the 'Alqamah dwindled and the local people lacked the means to dredge this vital waterway.[42]

With the coming to power in Tabrīz of Hulaku's great grandson, Ghāzān Mahmūd (694-703 AH/1295-1304 CE), who converted to Islam, things began to change. After a visit to the holy cities in 698 AH, he ordered the digging of a canal upstream from Hillah to bring water to Karbalā and to irrigate the surrounding lands. Known as the Ghāzānī Canal, the project was carried out by Shams al-Dīn Sukūrji.[43] Ghāzān distributed

large sums of money among the 'Alawids and the residents of the holy cities.

His brother Muhammad Khudā-Bandah Oljeitu (703-715/1304-1316 CE) who succeeded him as the 8th Il-Khan, contributed even more generously to the development of the holy cities and the upliftment of the 'Alawids. These grants became more pronounced after Oljeitu[44] embraced the creed of the Ahl al-Bayt in 1308 CE following a lively debate among 'ulamā of the different denominations of Islam who were outclassed by the rational presentation of facts by 'Allāmah Hillī. After a visit to the shrine of Imam 'Alī ('a) during 1309-10 CE, he declared Shi'ite Islam as the official religion of his dominion of Iran-Iraq, 255 years after the downfall of the Buwaiyhid dynasty and some two centuries before the formal declaration of the same by Shah Ismā'īl Safawī in 1501 CE.

As a result Karbalā regained its lost glory of the Buwaiyhid days and among the literary elite that emerged in this important religious centre mention could be made of 'Izz ad-Dīn Hasan bin Nā'il al-Hā'irī who later settled in Baghdad and wrote the book *al-Tamaghāt*. He was also a poet.[45] Another prominent figure of Karbalā in those days was 'Izz al-Dīn Abū 'Abdullāh Husaynī 'Abdulī, a leading merchant who Ibn Fuwatī says he met in Tabrīz in 707 AH.[46]

During the reign of Sultan Abū Sa'īd (716-726 AH), the last of the Il-Khanids, a feud flared up between the two 'Alawid families of Al-i Fā'iz and Al-i Zuhayk as mentioned by the North African traveller Ibn Batūtah who visited Karbalā in 726 AH.

Hā'ir During the Jalayarid Era

Sultan Uways (1356-1374 CE) carried out extensive works in and around the shrine of Imam Husayn ('a) after dismantling parts of the earlier structure. He was the son of

Hasan Buzurg, the Jalayerid Mongol governor of Iraq, who asserted independence on the collapse of Il-Khanid rule. Uways started construction of the new structure in 767 AH. It was completed in 786 AH by his son Sultan Husayn ('a), who also built the gold-plated *aywān*[47] and further embellished the shrine.[48] Earlier in 767 AH, Uways' governor of Baghdad Khwajah Marjān Uljiyati had sought refuge in Karbalā from the wrath of his master and during his asylum built a beautiful minaret and a mosque behind the shrine of Imam Husayn ('a). He also endowed part of his property in Baghdad, Karbalā, 'Ayn al-Tamr, Rihāliyyah and elsewhere for the maintenance of the mosque and minaret. When Sultan Uways learned about this his anger turned into compassion and with great respect he reinstated Khwajah Marjān Uljiyati as the governor of Baghdad.

Hā'ir During the Timurid Era

The Jalayarids fell before the onslaught of the Central Asian Turkish conqueror, Amīr Timur in 795 AH/1393 CE. Timur endowed lands and villages for the upkeep of the shrine of Imam Husayn ('a), as was his habit of veneration of holy places and respect for the *Sādāt* despite his ruthless reputation against conquered peoples.[49] Karbalā and the Hā'ir continued to host pilgrims during the hundred-year period of instability that followed Timur's death in 807 AH/1405 CE. The city, along with Baghdad and the adjoining lands was taken over by Qarā Yūsuf, the leader of the Shi'ite Qarā Quyunlu or the Black Sheep clan of Turkmen in 812 AH/1410 CE. It is not known what works the Qarā Quyunlu may have carried out in and around the Hā'ir, but the only outstanding feature of this period was the burial in Karbalā of the great scholar Ahmad bin Fahd Hillī in 841 AH/1438 CE. His tomb, east of the shrine of Imam Husayn ('a) a short distance from the *Mukhayyam* (Encampment or *Khaymahgāh* in Persian, Urdu and Turkish), was in an

orchard that has now been converted into a religious school called *Madrasah Ibn Fahd*. The tomb, presently enclosed in a small but beautiful chamber with grills, beside the main road leading towards the shrine, is frequently visited by pilgrims. In 1468 CE another Turkmen clan, the Aq Quyunlu (White Sheep), seized Iraq and lost it 40 years later to the rising power of the Safawīds. Earlier in 858 AH/ 1455 CE karbalā was attacked by the marsh 'Arab chieftan 'Alī al-Musha'sha' who plundered the holy shrines.

Hā'ir During the Safawīd Era

In 914 AH (Oct 1508) Shah Ismā'īl Safawī performed the pilgrimage to Karbalā immediately after capturing Baghdad. He ordered the *zarīh* of Imam Husayn ('a) to be plated with gold, a project that took almost 18 years to complete in 932 AH/1526 CE. 'Abbās 'Azzawī recording the events of 914 AH, writes:

> "The next day (26 Jamādī al-Thānī/October 22), Shah Ismā'īl left (Baghdad) for pilgrimage to Karbalā. He had a golden box built around the tomb of the Chief of Martyrs (*Sayyid al-Shuhadā'*), endowed twelve golden lamps to the shrine, and covered the *riwāqs* with a variety of precious (Persian) carpets. He spent the whole night in prayer and supplication (*i'tikāf*) beside the tomb before leaving the next day for Hillah on his way to Najaf."[50]

During the rule of Shah Ismā'īl's son and successor, Shah Tahmāsb Safawī, the governor of Baghdad was instructed to carry out extensive repairs of the mausoleum of Imam Husayn ('a) by renovating the *riwāqs* and the dome. Shah Tahmāsb also had the tombs of the other martyrs repaired and ordered rebuilding of the Khwajah Marjān Uljiyati Minaret that was later repaired in 1308 AH/1893 CE. by the Ottoman authorities but was pulled down in 1357 AH/1937 CE by Yāsīn Hāshimī, a prime minister of Iraq's British installed monarchy.

Iraq was lost by the Safawīds to the Ottomans in 940 AH/1534 CE and remained in Turkish hands until it was retaken in 1030 AH/1623 CE by Shah 'Abbās I, who carried out extensive repairs and additions to the Hā'ir during his pilgrimage to Karbalā and the other holy cities.[51] The next Safawīd ruler, Shah Safī contributed generously in 1042 AH/1635 CE to the embellishment of the shrine of Imam Husayn ('a) and had a large mosque built near the Hā'ir.

It seems 'Allāmah Majlisī is referring to this very same construction in *Kitāb al-Mazār* where he says: "In my view Hā'ir includes the old courtyard and not those added by the Safawīds, since the courtyard towards the *qiblah* and on the right side has not changed the least while the additions (to the mausoleum) have been on the opposite northern side."

During the 40-year period from 1013-1053 AH, Karbalā was exposed to frequent raids from the Al-i Muhannā 'Arab tribe.

Iraq was lost again to the Ottomans with Sultan Murād IV besieging and attacking Karbalā in 1045 AH/1638 CE, but this did not stop pilgrimages from Iran and contributions by the kings, courtiers and merchants of Iran for the maintenance of the shrine cities. Shah Sulaymān Safawī, who extended part of the northern courtyard, also built the large *aywān* facing it. In 1145 AH/1735 CE, Nādir Shah Afshār defeated the Ottomans, took control of most of Iraq and visited the shrine cities. In 1153 AH/1743 CE, the daughter of Shah Sultan Husayn, the last independent Safawīd monarch (deposed by the Afghans in 1135 AH/1725 CE and subsequently killed), built the shrine's mosque at a great cost.[52]

The heyday of Safawīd rule coincided with the founding in Deccan, India, of the three Shi'ite Muslim Sultanates of Bijapur, Golconda and Ahmadnagar, and their rulers – the 'Adil-

Shahis, Qutb Shahis and Nizām Shahis respectively – used to send large sums for the maintenance of the shrines in Karbalā.

Qājārid Contribution to the Hā'ir

The dome of the shrine of Imam Husayn ('a) was plated with gold thrice by the Qājārid kings of Iran. The founder of the dynasty, Aqā Muhammad Khan, carried out this project in 1207 AH.[53] When the gold began to peel off, his nephew and successor, Fath 'Alī Shah, removed the whole covering and refurbished the dome with a new gold covering.[54] He also installed a silver grill (*zarīh*) over the tomb, while his wife contributed to the gold work on the crest of the two minarets. Following the Wahhābī attack on Karbalā and the plunder of the shrine of Imam Husayn ('a) in 1216 AH/1801 CE, Fath 'Alī Shah, on the persuasion of the scholar Shaykh Ja'far Kāshif al-Ghitā', again embarked on extensive repairs. The whole area of the Hā'ir was rebuilt and the shrine was renovated. After the Wahhābī sacrilege the city's elders set up a self-governing council that resisted the Ottoman siege of 1241 AH/ 1825 CE for 8 months despite violation of the surrounding areas by the Turkish cavalary under Dāwūd Pāshā. In 1257 AH/1843 CE after a bloody fight Najīb Pāshā re-imposed Ottoman rule on Karbalā. In 1274 AH/1860 CE, as borne out from inscriptions, Nāsir al-Dīn Shah Qājār had the dome elevated to a height of 15 meters and plated it with gold. He built the western or *Nāsirī Aywān* and also had the courtyard expanded towards the west thanks to the efforts of the scholar Shaykh 'Abd al-Husayn Tehrānī who arrived in Karbalā in 1276 AH.[55] Half-a-meter high vases of pure gold, studded with precious stones, were installed atop the corners of the hexagonal *zarīh* around the tomb of Imam Husayn ('a) and his son 'Alī Akbar ('a), who lies at his feet. The chamber known as *Ganj-i Shahīdān* housing the graves of the rest of the martyrs was topped with an exquisite wooden

box and enclosed on the southern and northern sides with grills. Years later the *Nāsirī Aywān* developed a crack and by 1309 /1894 it was rebuilt by the Ottoman ruler, Sultan 'Abd al-Hamīd who installed an inscription depicting it as *Aywān-i Hamīdī*.

The northern side of the shrine was until recently known as the *Riwāq-i Shah* where several Qājārid kings of Iran lie buried. The now fallen dictator Saddam, as part of his chauvinistic campaign to erase any traces of Iranian influence, removed the Qājārid portraits that used to be hung in the corridor. The *aywān* built by Shah Sulaymān Safawī on the northern side was renovated by the Qājārid minister Mīrzā Mūsā in 1281 AH/887 CE and became known as the *Aywān-i Wazīrī*. On the eastern side is the *Riwāq-i Aqā Bāqir* named in honour of the great scholar who is buried there. The southern end of the western or *Ibrāhīm Mujāb Riwāq* leads to the room known as *maqtal* or *qatlgāh* the spot where Imam Husayn ('a) was martyred. This *riwāq* also opens into the courtyard through the *Aywān Ra's al-Husayn ('a),* which is adorned with beautiful tile-work bearing the inscription: "by Ustad Ahmad Jawād Shīrāzī, 1296 AH." The Arabic verses inscribed in the lower part of this *aywān* are the work of the preacher Shaykh Muhsin Abu'l-Hubb in 1305 AH/1890 CE. The frontal or southern *riwāq* houses the tomb of the Imam's loyal childhood companion Habīb bin Mazāher al-Asadī. Construction and repair of the various sections of the holy mausoleum by the Qājārids continued until the Ottoman government stopped it in 1908 CE.

Earlier, a hundred-odd year period from the mid-18th century to the mid 19th century saw the flourishing of the kingdom of Awadh in north India, whose rulers, the Nayshapuri family – *Sādāt* from Iraq who were settled in Khurāsān by Shah Ismā'īl Safawī before their migration to India – contributed greatly to the Hā'ir and the shrines in Karbalā and to

development projects such as the digging of the Hindiyyah Canal by Nawwāb Asif al-Dawlah of Lucknow.[56]

Hā'ir in the Present Era

Repairs and renovations as well as additions to the mausoleum of Imam Husayn ('a) continued after the end of Ottoman rule of Iraq at the hands of the British in 1917 CE. Various people including merchants and religious scholars as well as the Muslim rulers of India contributed efforts towards the holy cities of Iraq. Tāhir Sayf al-Dīn of Bombay, the leader of the Buhrī branch of Ismā'īlī Shi'ites, donated a *zarīh* made of pure silver for the shrine of Imam Husayn ('a). In the late 1930s, through the efforts of Sayyid 'Abd al-Husayn Al-i Tu'mah, Head of the Endowment Department of Karbalā, Iraq's Ministry of Endowments carried out repairs on the western wall and paved the western side of the courtyard with marble from the stocks donated in the 19th century by Nāsir al-Dīn Shah Qājār. Fresh stocks of marble were subsequently sent to Karbalā to replenish the Qājārid storerooms by an Iranian merchant named Sayyid Ahmad Mustafawi.[57]

In 1388 AH/1969 CE, an intricately carved arched wooden ceiling along with massive monolithic columns hewn out of huge marble blocks quarried in Sanandaj to support it, were sent by Iran to Karbalā for erecting the veranda in front of the gold plated *aywān* of Imam Husayn's ('a) shrine.

The courtyard is enclosed by some 65 richly decorated arched chambers, where religious classes used to be held in the old days and which are presently used as the various offices of the shrine. These chambers also contain the graves of scholars and prominent personalities including poets, ministers and kings. The courtyard of the shrine of Imam Husayn ('a) measures 95 x 75 meters and has ten roofed gateways, adorned with fine tile-work, opening into it. These are: *Bāb al-Qiblah,*

Bāb al-Rahmah (on the south), *Bāb Qāzī al-Hājāt, Bāb al-Shuhada, Bāb al-Karāmah* (on the east), *Bāb al-Salām, Bāb al-Sadr* (on the north), *Bāb al-Sultāniyah, Bāb Ra's al-Husayn* ('a) and *Bāb al-Zaynabiyyah* (on the west).

There used to be a small courtyard with exquisite artwork that was demolished in 1368 AH by the then governor of Karbalā 'Abd al-Rasūl Khālisī. Graves dating to the Buwaiyhid era were discovered in this courtyard and the reason for their burial in this place was due to the fact that this was used as a passage by pilgrims going towards the shrine of Hazrat 'Abbās ('a).

Unfortunately, practically nothing has been done for maintenance of the holy shrines by the Iraqi governments that rose and fell with frequency culminating in the 35-year reign of terror of the brutal Ba'th minority regime ever since the British seized Iraq during World War I and installed an imported ruler from the Hijāz as king in Baghdad against the wishes of the Iraqi people in 1921, brutally suppressing the 1920 Revolution that started from Karbalā against foreign rule. Ba'thist rule will be remembered as among the darkest spots in the history of Iraq, especially Saddam's periodic bouts of mass massacres and desecration of the holy shrines that reached its peak in March-April 1991 when the shrines in Karbalā were besieged and bombarded, with a missile creating a hole in the gold-plated dome of Imam Husayn's ('a) magnificent mausoleum. Bullet marks dotting the marble covered walls in the inner chambers of the shrines of Imam Husayn ('a) and Hazrat 'Abbās ('a) still bear testimony to the extensive damage done. The area around and in between the two shrines that was once a labyrinthine locality of shops and residential units was reduced to rubble, and later under pressure from the Islamic sentiments worldwide the bloodthirsty dictator embarked on cosmetic measures to reconstruct the periphery of the outer walls of the two shrines.

Museum

With the downfall of the tyrannical regime – ironically at the hands of its own creator the American Administration – and the election through popular vote of a broad based government, hopes have been raised of due reconstruction on a grand scale of the holy shrines in Karbalā and other holy cities. However, it is too early to properly assess the massive damage done by the Ba'thists to the properties of the shrine and whether or not the museum and the library of the shrine of Imam Husayn ('a) still contain their priceless treasures. There were rare manuscripts of the Holy Qur'ān donated in various ages as well as precious carpets studded with pearls and precious stones. Mostly gifted by the kings and rulers of Iran and India and some other places, the objects in the museum included lamps and chandeliers of solid gold as well as vessels of gold, silver and bronze. The traveller, 'Abbās bin 'Alī al-Makkī (d. 1180 AH/1767 CE), in an account of his visit to Karbalā, writes:

> "I should say that in the shrine of Imam Husayn ('a) are a great number of decorative lamps and so numerous are the gifts and offerings that they unsettle the eye. Their value equals the revenues of a city. Most of these are from the kings and rulers of Persia. A huge brilliantly wrought golden chandelier is suspended from the ceiling over the shrine."[58]

A Brief History of the Shrine of Hazrat 'Abbās ('a)

Hazrat 'Abbās ('a), the valiant brother of Imam Husayn ('a), needs no introduction. The symbol of bravery, honour and loyalty, he was martyred near the banks of the Euphrates on the epic Day of 'Ashūrā while taking water to the thirsty camp of his brother after a heroic fight. *Qamar Banī Hāshim* (Moon of the Hāshimīte Clan) as he was known for his handsome features and stature, he refused to let his parched lips taste a single drop of water while filling the goatskin water-carrier, since children

in the camp were thirsty. He was laid to rest near the site of his martyrdom. A short distance from his shrine are the two spots – preserved for pilgrims – where he lost, first his left hand and then his right hand when ambushed in the palm groves by enemy soldiers hidden behind trees. His tomb is held in special reverence and is known for the miraculous powers that God Almighty seems to have bestowed this immortal Standard-Bearer of Karbalā, who is popularly acclaimed as *Bāb al-Murād* or *Bāb al-Hawā'ij,* meaning the Gateway of Needs.

During history, whoever undertook the construction of the shrine of the Chief of Martyrs, Imam Husayn ('a), has made equal efforts to build the shrine of Hazrat 'Abbās, known by his *kunyah* (agnomen) of Abū al-Fazl. The Buwaiyhid dynasty, famous for its devotion to the Prophet's Ahl al-Bayt, enlarged the shrine of Hazrat 'Abbās ('a) and topped it with a dome. 'Azud al-Dawlah Daylamī spared no efforts in embellishing this shrine and used to hold special commemorative ceremonies every year inside it as well as in the shrine of Imam Husayn ('a). Over the centuries various rulers made contributions and additions to this shrine, but with the coming to power of the Safawīd Dynasty in Iran, the shrine of Hazrat 'Abbās ('a) like the other places of pilgrimage was reconstructed anew. Shah Tahmāsb covered the dome with glazed tiles. Shah 'Abbās I installed a finely carved teakwood box over the tomb and enclosed it with a grill. He also built the *riwāqs*, expanded the courtyard, and donated valuable carpets. In 1153 AH, Nādir Shah Afshār carried out mirror-work in part of the shrine and presented valuable offerings. In 1172 AH an Iranian minister during his visit to Karbalā, replaced the box over the tomb, built *riwāqs* and presented a chandelier.[59]

The Qājārids also greatly contributed to the shrine of Hazrat 'Abbās ('a). Following the Wahhābī pillage of the shrines of Karbalā in 1216 AH/1801 CE, Fath 'Alī Shah spared

no efforts to restore their past glory. He had a *zarīh* of pure silver installed around the tomb of Hazrat 'Abbās ('a) and covered the dome with glazed tile-work.[60]

Meanwhile the rulers of Awadh in what is now the Uttar Pradesh State of India, contributed greatly to the development of the shrines in Iraq. Records speak of hundreds of thousands of rupees received by the ulema and notables of Karbalā for the maintenance of the shrines. Muhammad 'Alī Shah (1837-1842 CE) renovated the shrine of Hazrat 'Abbās and built a gold-plated *aywān*.[61] His son Amjad 'Alī Shah (1842-47 CE) despatched sizeable amounts of money especially after the Ottoman sack of Karbalā in 1843.[62]

In 1221 AH/1806 CE the two minarets of the shrine were covered with beautifully pattened glazed tiles by Sadr-i 'Azam (prime minister), Muhammad Husayn Isfahanī, the ancestor of the Nizām al-Dawlah Family and the Sadrī Family of Karbalā.

Iranian merchant Hāj Shukrullāh had the frontal *aywān* of the shrine of Hazrat 'Abbās ('a) plated with gold in 1309 AH/1894 CE.[63] The facade of the shrine's opening towards the *qiblah* was plated with gold by Ihtirām al-Dawlah, the wife of Nāsir al-Dīn Shah Qājār, while in 1319 AH/1904 CE the Qājārid official Sayyid Hasan Muqtadir al-Saltanah had the western *aywān* plated with gold. Earlier in 1306 AH/1891 CE as borne out by an inscription along with verses in Turkish, the Ottoman ruler, Sultan 'Abd al-Hamīd, built the teakwood roof over the *Bāb al-Qiblah* and its *aywān*.[64] In 1311 AH/1896 CE, Hāj Amīn al-Sultān of Iran provided the clock at the shrine of Hazrat 'Abbās ('a) that was installed by Sayyid 'Alī Qutb.[65] In 1367 AH/1948 CE, Iranian merchant Hāj Husayn Hajjārbāshī paved the floor of the shrine with marble.[66]

In 1375 AH/1956 CE, the dome of the shrine was plated with gold when Makkī Jamīl was the governor of Karbalā. On 28 Rajab, 1385 AH/1966 CE an exquisite zarīh made of pure

gold and silver and studded with precious and semi precious stones was installed around the tomb of Hazrat 'Abbās ('a). This was made in Isfahan through the efforts of Grand Ayatullāh Sayyid Muhsin al-Hakīm of Najaf.

The area of the shrine is 4370 square meters and its eight roofed gateways are named as follows: *Bāb al-Imām al-Hasan, Bāb al-Imām al-Husayn, Bāb Sāhib al-Zamān, Bāb al-Imām Mūsā bin Ja'far* (all four on the western side), *Bāb al-Imām Amīr al-Mu'minīn, Bāb al-Imām 'Alī bin Mūsā al-Rizā* (both on the eastern side), *Bāb al-Rasūl – also called Bāb al-Qiblah – and Bāb al-Imām al-Jawād.* The *riwāqs* enclosing the courtyard contain the graves of kings, scholars, poets and other notables.

Notes:

1. British historian Edward Gibbon (1737-1794) writes: "Even in a distant age and climate the tragic scene of the death of (Imam) Husayn ('a) will awaken the sympathy of the coldest reader." (*The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, London, 1911, vol. 5, pp. 391-2)

2. M. K. Gandhi (1869–1948), lawyer and leader of the non-violent uprising in India for independence from British rule, in one of his famous statements remarked that it was Karbalā and Imam Husayn ('a) that inspired him to struggle against colonialism. "I learned from (Imam) Husayn ('a) how to be wronged and be a winner." In a statement published in *"Young India"*, in 1924, he also said: "I wanted to know the best of the life of one who holds today an undisputed sway over the hearts of millions of mankind... I became more than ever convinced that it was not the sword that won a place for Islam in those days in the scheme of life. It was the rigid simplicity, the utter self-effacement of (Imam) Husayn ('a), the scrupulous regard for pledges, his intense devotion to his friends and followers, his intrepidity, his fearlessness, his absolute trust in God and in his own mission to save Islam."

3. Several sayings from the Infallible Imams confirm this point, which is also substantiated by personal experiences. Imam Sadiq ('a) describes the soil of the grave of Imam Husayn ('a) as a remedy for all ills and has prescribed a special supplication while gathering it (*Man Lā Yahzuruhu al-Faqīh;* Shaykh Sadūq). All jurists are unanimous on the impermissibility of eating sand or soil but this does not apply to the soil of Hā'ir, whose curative properties are beyond any iota of doubt. Shaykh Muhammad Husayn Kāshif al-Ghitā' in his valuable work *al-Arz wa al-Turbat al-Husayniyyah*, has discussed from various angles the reason behind the sacredness of the soil of Karbalā where history's greatest ever martyrdom occurred, and is of the view that God may have decreed certain chemical components in this soil that is the secret behind its curative properties.

4. It is a historical fact that Adam and Noah are buried in Najaf (97 km south of Karbalā), where the graves of the Prophets Hūd and Sālih are also located. Prophet Abraham was born and attained manhood in Iraq before migrating to Canaan, which means he and his offspring and those of the Divine Messengers preceding him were doubtlessly familiar with the land of Karbalā. Islamic texts provide details on how God informed Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and others of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn ('a). According to the book *al-Dam'ah al-Sākibah,* vol. 1 ('Allāmah Muhammad Bāqir Bihbahānī), Abraham while passing through Karbalā suddenly fell from his horse and injured his head. When he beseeched God for knowing the reason behind this seemingly untoward incident he was informed of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn ('a) in this place. Similar accounts have been quoted concerning the other Prophets. During the period of the Babylonian Captivity (597-538 BC) when Nebuchadnezzar settled Israelites in Mesopotamia, two generations of exiles including the Prophets Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel and several other prophets lived and died in what is now Iraq and southwestern Iran, and were without doubt acquainted with Karbalā. Commentators of religious scriptures pointing to the following unexplained passage

in the Old Testament have interpreted it as a reference to Imam Husayn ('a) and the Karbalā tragedy, conceding the fact that the early Jews frequently tampered with heavenly books to distort words and phrases: *"For this is the day of the Lord God of hosts, a day of vengeance, that He may avenge him of his adversaries: and the sword shall devour, and it shall be satiate and made drunk with their blood: for the Lord God of hosts hath a sacrifice in the north country by the River Euphrates."* (Jeremiah 46:10) According to some exegetes of the Holy Qur'ān, when the letters ***Kāf, Hā, Yā, 'Ayn, Sād*** (the opening letters of Surah Maryam) were revealed to Prophet Zacharias he felt heavy grief in his heart and was informed by God of the tragedy to befall the last Prophet's grandson, Imam Husayn ('a) centuries later. It is said that on being told that ***Kāf*** stands for Karbalā, ***Hā*** refers to ***halākah*** or martyrdom of Imam Husayn ('a), ***Yā*** is a reference to the accursed Yazid, the perpetrator of the tragedy, ***'Ayn*** is for ***'atash*** or the thirst of Imam Husayn ('a) and his blessed group, while ***Sād*** signifies ***sabr*** or the exemplary patience of Imam Husayn ('a), he prayed for a son that would also be martyred. He was subsequently blessed with Yahyā (John the Baptist) who was cruelly beheaded by Herod.

5. According to historical accounts, Imam Husayn ('a) on reaching Karbalā had bought the whole area from the Banī Asad.

6. Sayyid bin Tāwūs, *al-Luhūf*.

7. French Islamic Encyclopaedia, "Hā'ir"

8. Hibah al-Dīn Husaynī, *Nahzat al-Husayn*, p. 80.

9. Yāqūt al-Hamawī, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, "Taff"

10. Sayyid 'Abd al-Razzāq Al-i Tu'mah, *Karbalā in History*, pp. 5-6.

11. Yāqūt al-Hamawī, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, vol. 6, p. 195.

12. Ibn Qutaybah Dinawarī, *Akhbār al-Tuwāl*, p. 250. Ahmad bin Hanbal in *hadīth* no. 6840 (*Musnad*, ed. Ahmad Shākir, Cairo), writes: 'Abdullāh bin Nujjayy narrates from his father that while marching towards Siffīn with (Imam) 'Alī ('a) we reached Ninevah,

where (Imam) 'Alī ('a) cried in a loud voice: "O' Abā 'Abdillah! Be patient. O' Abā 'Abdillah! Be patient beside the Euphrates." I asked him: For what? He replied: "Once when I went to the Prophet I saw tears in his eyes and asked him: O' Messenger of Allah (S) what has upset you, why are your eyes moist with tears? He said: "A while ago (the archangel) Gabriel left. He informed me that indeed Husayn ('a) will be killed beside the River Euphrates. Then he (the Prophet) said: Do you like to smell part of his soil (where he will be killed). I said: Yes. He stretched his hand and taking a fistful of soil gave it to me. Then my eyes began shedding tears uncontrollably."

13. Refer for details to *Tārīkh at-Tabarī*, vol. 10, p. 118 & Mas'ūdī's *Murūj al-Dhahab*, vol. 3, where names such as Mariyyah have also been mentioned.

14. Sayyid 'Abd al-Razzāq Hasanī, *Mūjaz Tārīkh al-Buldān al-'Irāqiyyah*, p. 61-62.

15. 'Abd al-Jawād Kilīd-Dār, *History of Karbalā*, p. 23.

16. *Dabistān-i Madhāhib*, printed in Bombay, 1262 AH.

17. Muhammad Husayn Kilīd-Dār, *Madīnah al-Husayn*, vol. 1, p. 14.

18. Mas'ūdī, *al-Tanbīh wa al-Ishrāf*, p. 47.

19. Sayyid 'Abd al-Husayn Kilīd-Dār, *Bughyah al-Nubalā'*, p. 82.

20. 'Abd al-Razzāq Muqarram, *Qamar Banī Hāshim*, p. 121.

21. Muhammad Husayn Kilīd-Dār, *Madīnah al-Husayn*, vol. 2, p. 4.

22. 'Abd al-Razzāq bin Fuwatī, *al-Hawādith al-Jāmi'ah*, p. 497.

23. According to Turkish chronicles when the tomb of Imam 'Alī ('a) appeared in sight Sulaymān dismounted out of respect at the suggestion of one of his ministers, prompting the minister's rival to try to create doubts in the Ottoman Sultan's heart with the seditious words that as the "living caliph" he was more worthy of honour than a person who has long passed away. Sulaymān called for the Qur'ān and

sought guidance from its pages (*istikhārah*). When he opened the Holy Book, the *ayah* where God orders Prophet Moses to take off his shoes on Mount Sinai since he was on hallowed ground (20:12), appeared, making the Ottoman Sultan now to become barefoot as well in honour of Imam 'Alī ('a).

24. S.H. Longrigg, *Four Centuries of Modern Iraq*, Oxford, 1925.

25. 'Abbās 'Azzawī, *Tārīkh al-'Irāq Bayn Ihtilālayn*, vol. 4, p. 36.

26. Among those who undertook great public service in Karbalā, were Sayyid Kāzim Rashtī and Mīr Sayyid 'Alī Tabātabā'ī, the author of *Riyāz al-'Ulamā*. The latter, after the Wahhābī plunder of Karbalā in 1216 AH (1801 CE), requested the Muslim rulers of India to help rebuild the city's infrastructure. The Prime Minister of Haiderabad-Deccan, Sayyid Abu'l-Qāsim Shushtarī titled Mīr 'Alam sent the required money to build a wall around the city to ward off any future encroachment. Sayyid Kāzim Rashtī for his part, appealed to the Iranian merchants and through their contributions extended the Rashīdiyyah Canal to the mausoleum of Hurr.

27. *Masīr-i Tālibī*, pp. 292, 293.

28. Farhad Mīrzā, *Tārīkh-i Qamqām*, p. 495.

29. Ibn Qūlawayh, *Kāmil al-Ziyārāt*, p. 221.

30. *Ibid*, p.253.

31. Muhammad Bāqir Majlisī, *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 97, p. 179.

32. Sayyid Hasan al-Sadr, *Nuzhat al-Haramayn*, p.28.

33. *Ibid*, p. 61.

34. *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 45, p. 397.

35. *Nuzhat al-Haramayn*, pp. 36, 37.

36. Sayyid Hasan al-Amīn, *Islamic Shi'ite Encyclopaedia*, Beirut, 1973, vol. 4, p.182.

37. Ibn Athīr, *Tārīkh al-Kāmil*, Sayyid Muhammad Sādiq Bahr al-'Ulūm, *Salāsil al-Dhahab* (manuscript).

38. Also refer to *al-Muntazam* of Sibt Ibn Jawzī, vol. 7, p. 28. This is also corroborated by the Egyptian historian Ibn Tughrā Bardī (*al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, vol. 4, p. 241) who writes that in 407 AH, the 21st regnal year of the Fatimid caliph, Mansūr, news came from Iraq of the fire in the mausoleum of Imam Husayn ('a) as a result of the accidental falling of candles.

39. *Islamic Shi'ite Encyclopaedia*, Beirut, 1973, vol. 4, p.182.

40. 'Allāmah Hillī, *Kashf al-Yaqīn*, p. 17; Ibn Fuwatī, *al-Hawādith al-Jāmi'ah,* p. 330.

41. Sayyid Ahmad Dāwūdī, *'Umdat al-Tālib*, p. 178.

42. *Al-Aqlām* Magazine, no. 9, 4th year of publication

43. Ibn Fuwatī, *al-Hawādith al-Jāmi'ah,* p. 497.

44. Baptized a Christian and given the name Nicholas by his mother, Oljeitu in his youth converted to Buddhism and later became a Sunni Muslim. In 1307-8, a bitter feud between the Hanafī and Shāfi'ī scholars furiously exchanging accusations of heresy appeared so disgusting to him that he considered converting back to Buddhism. At this moment Oljeitu came into contact with 'Allāmah Ibn Mutahhar Hillī and convinced by his rational arguments accepted Shi'ite Islam (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*). Also refer to *Rawzāt al-Jannāt*, vol. 2, p. 279, Sayyid Muhammad Bāqir Khawānsārī.

45. *Al-Hawādith al-Jāmi'ah,* vol. 14, p. 121,.

46. *Ibid.*

47. Sayyid 'Abd al-Husayn Kilīd-Dār, *Bughya h al-Nubalā',* p.38.

48. *Islamic Shi'ite Encyclopaedia*, Beirut, 1973, vol. 4, p.183.

49. *Tuzukāt-e Timuri* (Persian translation by Abū Tālib Husaynī Turbatī, p. 359), Tehran, 1963.

50. *Tārīkh al-'Irāq Bayn Ihtilālayn*, vol. 3, p. 316;

51. Shah 'Abbās during his visit to the mausoleum of Hurr ordered exhumation of the body of the martyr with the intention to have a blessed souvenir for himself by cutting a piece of the kerchief of Hazrat Fātimah ('a) that Imam Husayn ('a) had wound around

Hurr's fractured head. He found the body remarkably fresh despite the passing of almost a thousand years and the moment he tried to unwound the cloth blood started flowing from Hurr, prompting the Shah to rescind his decision and rebury the martyr with the kerchief of the Prophet's daughter intact around the martyr's head since the Imam had bestowed it as an honour for Hurr and not for any other person, however devoted to the cause of the Ahl al-Bayt.

52. *Tārīkh Karbalā al-Mu'allā*, p. 15.

53. Sayyid 'Abd al-Husayn Kilīd-Dār, *Bughyat al-Nubalā,* p. 76.

54. 'Abd al-Jawād Kilīd-Dār, *Tārīkh Karbalā wa Hā'ir al-Husayn ('a),* p. 262.

55. *Ibid,* p. 224.

56. J.R.I. Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shi'ism in Iran and Iraq – Religion and State in Awadh, 1722-1859.*

57. Muhammad Husayn Kilīd-Dār, *Madīnah al-Husayn ('a)*, vol. 1, p. 44,

58. *Al-Majma' al-'Ilmī al-'Irāqī* (magazine), no. 6, pp. 16-37

59. 'Abd al-Razzāq Muqarram, *Qamar Banī Hāshim,* p. 126.

60. *Ibid,* p. 127.

61. *Ibid,* p. 127.

62. J.R.I. Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shi'ism in Iran and Iraq – Religion and State in Awadh, 1722-1859.*

63. 'Abd al-Razzāq Muqarram, *Qamar Banī Hāshim,* p. 126.

64. *Madīnah al-Husayn* ('a), vol. 2, p. 174.

65. Sayyid Muhsin al-Amīn al-'Amilī, *'Ayān al-Shī'ah,* vol. 42, p. 12. He states that Sayyid 'Alī Qutb was a very learned and pious person of Gnostic disposition from Māzandarān, Iran, settled in Karbalā.

66. Muhammad Husayn Kilīd-Dār, *Madīnah al-Husayn* ('a), vol. 2, p. 175.

A Critical Review of English Translations of the Qur'ān

By: Ja'far Razī Khān

Despite the historical fact that the early Muslim community's stand on the translation of the Arabic text of the Qur'ān was ambivalent, as indeed, the general Muslim attitude remains so to this day, the act of translation may be logically viewed as a natural part of the Muslim exegetical effort. However, whereas the idea of interpreting the Qur'ān has not been so controversial, the emotional motives behind rendering the Qur'ānic text into languages other than Arabic have always been looked upon with suspicion.

This is obvious as the need for translating the Qur'ān arose in those historic circumstances when a large number of non-Arabic speaking people had embraced Islam, and giving new linguistic orientations to the contents of the revelation - as, for instance, happened in the case of the 'New Testament' - could have led to unforeseeable, and undesirable, developments within the body of the Islamic religion itself. (For a brief, though highly useful, survey of the Muslim attitudes towards the permissibility

of translating the text of the revelation to non-Arabic tongues, consult M. Ayoub, 'Translating the Meaning of the Qur'ān: Traditional Opinions and Modern Debates', in Afkar Inquiry, Vol. 3, No. 5 [Ramazān 1406/May 1986], pp. 349). The Muslim need for translating the Qur'ān into English arose mainly out of the desire to combat the missionary effort. Following a long polemical tradition, part of whose goal was also the production of a - usually erroneous and confounding - European version of the Muslim scripture, Christian missionaries started their offensive against a politically humiliated Islam in the eighteenth century by advancing their own translations of the Qur'ān.

Obviously, Muslims could not allow the missionary effort - invariably confounding the authenticity of the text with a hostile commentary of its own - to go unopposed and unchecked. Hence, the Muslim decision to present a faithful translation of the Qur'ānic text as well as an authentic summary of its teaching to the European world. Later, the Muslim translations were meant to serve even those Muslims whose only access to the Qur'ānic revelation was through the medium of the European languages. Naturally, English was deemed the most important language for the Muslim purpose, not least because of the existence of the British Empire, which after the Ottomans had the largest number of Muslim subjects.

The same rationale, however, applies to various schools of jurisprudential thought within Islam or even to renegade groups outside the fold of Islam, such as the Qādiyānis. Their considerable translational activities are motivated by the urge to proclaim what they view as their ideological uniqueness.

Although there is a spate of volumes on the multi-faceted dimensions of the Qur'ān, no substantial work has so far been done to critically examine the mass of existing English translations of the Qur'ān.

Even bibliographical material on this subject was quite scant before the recent appearance of World Bibliography of the Translations of the Meanings of the Holy Qur'ān (Istanbul, OIC Research Centre, 1986), which provides authoritative publication details of the translations of the Qur'ān in sixty-five languages.

Some highly useful work in this field had been done earlier by Dr. Hamidullah of Haiderabad-Deccan in Paris. Appended to the Cambridge History of Arabic Literature Volume 1, Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period (Cambridge university Press, 1983) is a bibliography of the Qur'ān translations into European languages, prepared by J.D. Pearson, as is the latter's article in the Encyclopedia of Islam. It is, however, of not much use to the Muslim.

Since none of the above-mentioned works is annotated, the reader gets no idea about the translator's mental make-up, his dogmatic presuppositions and his approach to the Qur'ān as well as the quality of the translation.

Similarly the small chapter entitled 'The Qur'ān and Occidental Scholarship' in Bell and Watt's Introduction to the Qur'ān (Edinburgh, 1970, pp. 173-86), although useful in providing background information to the Orientalists' efforts in Qur'ānic studies, and translations, more or less for the same reasons, is of little value to general Muslim readers. Thus, studies, which focus on those aspects of each translation of the Qur'ān, are urgently needed lest Western scholars misguide the unsuspecting non-Arabic speaking readers of the Qur'ān. An effort has been made in this survey to bring out the hallmarks and shortcomings of the major complete translations of the Qur'ān.

The early English translations of the Qur'ān by Muslims stemmed mainly from the pious enthusiasm on their part to

refute the allegations leveled by the Christian missionaries against Islam in general and the Qur'ān in particular.

Illustrative of this trend are the following translations:

(i) Mohammad Abdul Hakim Khan, "The Holy Qur'ān: 'with short notes based on the Holy Qur'ān or the authentic traditions of the Prophet, as well as on the old and New Testaments or scientific truth. All fictitious accounts, questionable history and disputed theories have been carefully avoided'" (Patiala, 1905);

(ii) Hairat Dehlavi, "The Koran Prepared, by various Oriental learned scholars and edited by Mirza Hairat Dehlavi. Intended as 'a complete and exhaustive reply to the manifold criticisms of the Koran by various Christian authors such as Drs. Sale, Rodwell, Palmer and Sir W. Muir'" (Delhi, 1912);

(iii) Mirza Abu'l Fadl, Qur'ān, "Arabic Text and English Translation Arranged Chronologically with an Abstract" (Allahabad, 1912).

Since none of these early translations was by a reputed Islamic scholar, both the quality of the translation and level of scholarship are not very high and these works are of mere historical interest.

Later works, however, reflect a more mature and scholarly effort.

Muhammad Marmaduke William Pickthall, an English man of letters who embraced Islam - during official service in Haiderabad-Deccan - holds the distinction of bringing out a first-rate rendering of the Qur'ān in English, "The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'ān" (London, 1930).

It keeps scrupulously close to the original in elegant, though now somewhat archaic, English. However, although it is one of the most widely used English translations, it provides scant explanatory notes and background information. This

obviously restricts its usefulness for an uninitiated reader of the Qur'ān.

Abdullah Yusuf Ali's The Holy Qur'ān: "Translation and Commentary" (Lahore, 1934 37), perhaps the most popular translation, stands as another major achievement in this field. A civil servant by vocation, Yusuf Ali was not a scholar in the classical Muslim tradition. Small wonder, then, that some of his copious notes, particularly on hell and heaven, angels, jinn and polygamy, etc. are informed with the pseudo-rationalist spirit of his times, as for instance in the works of S. Ahmad and S. Amir Ali.

His overemphasis on things spiritual also distorts the Qur'ānic worldview. Against this is the fact that Yusuf Ali doubtless was one of the few Muslims who enjoyed an excellent command over the English language. It is fully reflected in his translation. Though his is more of a paraphrase than a literal translation, yet it attempts represent the sense of the original.

Abdul Majid Daryabadi's "The Holy Qur'ān: with English Translation and Commentary" (Lahore, 1941 - 57) is, however, fully cognate with the traditional viewpoint.

Like Pickthall's earlier attempt, it is a faithful rendering, supplemented with useful notes on historical, geographical and eschatological issues, particularly the illuminating discussions on comparative religion. Though the notes are not always very exhaustive, they help to dispel the doubts in the minds of westernized readers. However, it too contains inadequate background information about the Surahs (chapters of the Qur'ān) and some of his notes need updating.

"The Meaning of the Qur'ān" (Lahore, 1967), the English version of Abul A'la Mawdud'i's magnum opus, the Urdu *Tafhim al-Qur'ān* is an interpretative rendering of the Qur'ān. Apart from setting the verses/Surahs in the circumstances of its time, the author constantly relates, through exhaustive notes, the

universal message of the Qur'ān to his own time and its specific problems. Since the translation of this work done by Muhammad Akbar is pitiably poor and uninspiring, the much-needed new English translation of the entire work is in progress under the auspices of the Islamic Foundation, Leicester.

"The Message of the Qur'ān" by Muhammad Asad (Gibraltar, 1980) represents a notable addition to the body of English translations couched in chaste English. This work is nonetheless vitiated by deviation from the viewpoint of Muslims on many counts. Averse to take some Qur'ānic statements literally, Asad, -a convert from Judaism toIslam- denies the occurrence of such events as the throwing of Abraham into the fire, Jesus speaking in the cradle, etc. He also regards Luqmān, Khizr and Zu al-Qarnayn as 'mythical figures' and holds controversial views on the abrogation of verses. These blemishes apart, this highly readable translation contain useful, though sometimes unreliable background information about the Qur'ānic Surahs and even provide exhaustive notes on various Qur'ānic themes.

The fairly recent "The Qur'ān: The First American Version" (Vermont, 1985) by another native Muslim speaker of English, T.B. Irving, marks the appearance of the latest major English translation. Apart from the obnoxious title, the work is bereft of textual and explanatory notes.

Using his own arbitrary judgement, Irving has assigned themes to each Qur'ānic *Rukū'* (section). Although modern and forceful English has been used, it is not altogether free of instances of mistranslation and loose expressions. With American readers in mind, particularly the youth, Irving has employed many American English idioms, which, in places, are not befitting of the dignity of the Qur'ānic diction and style.

In addition to the above, there are also a number of other English translations by Muslims, which, however, do not rank as significant ventures in this field.

They may be listed as:

1. Al-Hāj Hafiz Ghulam Sarwar, "Translation of the Holy Qur'ān" (Singapore, 1920).

2. Ali Ahmad Khan Jullundri, "Translation of the Glorious Holy Qur'ān with commentary" (Lahore, 1962).

3. Abdur Rahman Tariq and Ziauddin Gilani, "The Holy Qur'ān Rendered into English" (Lahore, 1966).

4. Syed Abdul Latif, "Al-Qur'ān: Rendered into English" (Haiderabad, 1969).

5. Hāshim Amīr Ali, "The Message of the Qur'ān Presented in Perspective" (Tokyo, 1974).

6. Taqui al-Din al-Hilali and Muhammad Muhsin Khan, "Explanatory English Translation of the Holy Qur'ān: A Summarized Version of Ibn Kathīr Supplemented by al-Tabarī with Comments from *Sahīh al-Bukhārī*" (Chicago, 1977).

7. Muhammad Ahmad Mofassir, "The Koran: The First *Tafsīr* in English" (London, 1979).

8. Mahmud Y. Zayid, "The Qur'ān: An English Translation of the Meaning of the Qur'ān" (checked and revised in collaboration with a committee of Muslim scholars-Beirut, 1980).

9. S.M. Sarwar, "The Holy Qur'ān: Arabic Text and English Translation" (Elmhurst, 1981).

10. Ahmed Ali, "Al-Qur'ān: A Contemporary Translation" (Karachi, 1984).

(In view of the blasphemous statements contained in Rashad Khalifa's "The Qur'ān: The Final Scripture" [Authorized English Version-Tucson, 1978], it has not been included in the translations by Muslims).

Even amongst the Muslim translations, some are representative of the strong feelings of their translators for their particular school.

For example, the Shī'ah doctrines are fully reflected in accompanying commentaries of the following books: S.V. Mir Ahmad Ali, "The Holy Qur'ān with English Translation and Commentary, according to the version of the Holy Ahlul Bait" includes 'special notes from Hāj Mirza Mahdi Pooya Yazdi on the philosophical aspects of the verses' (Karachi, 1964); M.H. Shakir, "Holy Qur'ān" (New York, 1982); Sayyid Muhammad Husayn al-Tabātabā'ī, "*al-Mīzān*: An Exegesis of the Qur'ān," translated from Persian into English by Sayyid Sa'eed Akhtar Rizvī (Tehran, 1980). So far thirteen volumes of this work have been published.

Illustrative of the Barelvi Sunni sectarian stance is "Holy Qur'ān, the English Version of Ahmad Reza Khan Barelvi's Urdu translation," by Hanif Akhtar Fatmi (Lahore, n.d.).

As pointed out earlier, the Qādiyānis, though having abandoned Islam, have been actively engaged in translating the Qur'ān. Apart from English, their translations are available in several European and African languages.

Muhammad Ali's "The Holy Qur'ān: English Translation" (Lahore, 1917) marks the beginning of this effort. This Qadiyani translator is guilty of misinterpreting several Qur'ānic verses, particularly those related to the Promised Messiah, his miracles and the Qur'ānic angelology.

Similar distortions mar another Qādiyānī translation by Sher Ali, "The Holy Qur'ān: Arabic Text with English Translation" (Rabwah, 1955). Published under the auspices of Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad, second successor of the "Promised Messiah" and head of the Ahmadiyyas, this oft-reprinted work represents the official Qadiyani version of the Qur'ān. Unapologizingly, Sher Ali refers to Mirza Ghulām

Ahmad as the "Promised Messiah" and mistranslates and misinterprets a number of Qur'ānic verses.

Zafarullah Khan's "The Qur'ān: Arabic Text and English Translation" (London, 1970) ranks as another notable Qadiyani venture in this field. Like other Qādiyānis, Zafarullah too twists the Qur'ānic verses to opine that the door of prophethood was not closed with the Prophet Muhammad (S). The obtrusion of similar obnoxious views upon the Qur'ānic text is found in the following Qādiyānī translations, too:

(i) Kamaluddin and Nazir Ahmad, "A Running Commentary of the Holy Qur'ān" (London, 1948)
(ii) Salahuddin Peer, "The Wonderful Koran" (Lahore, 1960)
(iii) Malik Ghulam Farid, "The Holy Qur'ān" (Rabwah, 1962)
(iv) Khadim Rahman Nuri, "The Running Commentary of the "Holy Qur'ān with under-bracket comments" (Shillong, 1964)
(v) Firozuddin Ruhi, "The Qur'ān" (Karachi, 1965)

Apart from the Qadiyanis, Christian missionaries have been the most active non-Muslim translators of the Qur'ān. As already noted, origins of this inglorious tradition may be traced back to the anti-Islamic motives of the missionaries.

Small wonder, then that these ventures are far from being a just translation, replete as they are with frequent transpositions, omissions, unaccountable liberties and unpardonable faults.

A very crude specimen of the Orientalist-missionary approach to the Qur'ān is found in Alexander Ross' "The Alcoran of Mahomet translated out of Arabique into French, by the Sieur Du Ryer...And newly Englished, for the satisfaction for all that desire to look into the Turkish vanities" (London, 1649).

In translating the Qur'ān, the intention of Ross, a chaplain of King Charles I, was: "I thought good to bring it to their colours, that so viewing thine enemies in their full body, thou must the better prepare to encounter...his Alcoran."

In the same rabidly anti-Islamic vein are the two appendices in the work entitled as (a) 'A Needful Caveat or Admonition, for them who desire to know what use may be made of or if there be danger in reading the Alcoran' (pp. 406 20) and 'The Life and Death of Mahomet: the Prophet of the Turks and author of the Alcoran' (pp. 395-405).

George Sale, a lawyer brought out his "The Koran, commonly called The Al Koran of Mohammed" (London, 1734), which has been the most popular English translation. Sale's exhaustive 'Preliminary Discourse', dealing mainly with Sira and the Qur'ān, betrays his deep hostility towards Islam and his missionary intent in that he suggests the rules to be observed for 'the conversion of Mohammedans' (q.v.).

As to the translation itself, it abounds in numerous instances of omission, distortion and interpolations.

Dissatisfied with Sale's work, J.M. Rodwell, Rector of St. Ethelberga, London, produced his translation entitled "The Koran" (London, 1861). Apart from hurling all sorts of wild and nasty allegations against the Prophet and the Qur'ān in the Preface, Rodwell is guilty of having invented the so-called chronological Surah order of the Qur'ān. Nor is his translation free from grave mistakes of translation and his own fanciful interpretations in the notes.

E.H. Palmer, a Cambridge scholar, was entrusted with the preparation of a new translation of the Qur'ān for Max Muller's Sacred Books of the East series. Accordingly, his translation, "The Qur'ān," appeared in London in 1880. As to the worth of Palmer's translation, reference may be made to A. R. Nykl's article, 'Notes on E.H. Palmer's "The Qur'ān," published in the Journal of the American Oriental Society, 56 (1936) pp. 77-84 in which no less than 65 instances of omission and mistranslation in Palmer's work have been pointed out.

Richard Bell, Reader of Arabic, University of Edinburgh, and an acknowledged Orientalist produced a translation of the Qur'ān with special reference to its Surah order, as is evident from the title of his work, The Qur'ān translated with a critical rearrangement of the Surahs (Edinburgh, 1937-39). In addition to describing the Prophet as the author of the Qur'ān, Bell also believes that the Qur'ān in its present form was 'actually written by Muhammad himself' (p. vi). In rearranging the Surah order of the Qur'ān, Bell, in fact, makes a thorough mess of the traditional arrangement and tries to point out 'alterations substitutions and derangements in the text.

A.J. Arberry, a renowned Orientalist and Professor of Arabic at the Universities of London and Cambridge, has been, so far, the latest non-Muslim translator of the Qur'ān.

Arberry's "The Koran Interpreted" (London, 1957) no doubt stands out above the other English renderings by non-Muslims in terms of both its approach and quality. Nonetheless, it is not altogether free from mistakes of omission and mistranslation, such as in *Al-i 'Imrān* 111:43, *al-Nisā'* IV: 72, 147 and 157, *al-Mā'idah* V: 55 and 71, *al-An'ām* VI: 20, 105, *al-A'rāf* VII: 157, 158 and 199, *al-Anfāl* VIII: 17, 29, 41, 59, *Yūnus* X: 88, *Hūd* XI: 30 and 46 and *Yūsuf* XII: 61.

N.J. Dawood is perhaps the only Jew to have translated the Qur'ān into English. Available in the Penguin edition, Dawood's translation, "The Koran" (London, 1956) is perhaps the most widely circulated non-Muslim English translation of the Qur'ān. The author's bias against Islam is readily observable in the Introduction. Apart form adopting an unusual Sura order in his translation, Dawood is guilty also of having mistranslated the Qur'ān in places such as *al-Baqarah* II: 9 and *al-A'rāf* VII: 31, etc.

No doubt, the peculiar circumstances of history which brought the Qur'ān into contact with the English language have

left their imprint on the non-Muslim as well as the Muslim bid to translate it. The results and achievements of their efforts leave a lot to be desired.

As we presented our comments about numerous English translations of the Qur'ān available, yet few are very important. Ultimately we are going to introduce, a contemporary famous translation, if any of them, can claim a phrase-by-phrase translation, concurrent with the original text in Arabic, "The Qur'ān with a Phrase-by-Phrase English Translation" by Ali Quli Qara'i is neither prose nor poetry but a unique, mesmerising fusion of both, This edition, from the Islamic College for Advanced Studies (ICAS), does just this. In addition to being of invaluable benefit to readers who understand English only, this method also permits those with even a rudimentary grasp of Arabic to draw nearer to the Qur'ān's inimitable style and lofty message, by following the Arabic text while being guided by the English.

Expertly translated and prepared, this edition of the Qur'ān also makes extensive use of classical commentaries from both Sunni and Shī'ī sources for broader-based understanding.

Major Features of his Translation

A new phrasal approach has been followed in this translation throughout. Each phrase of the translation is placed opposite the corresponding Arabic phrase.

As the principal aim was to provide a translation assisting direct access to the Arabic Qur'ān, the translator has tried, so far as possible, to maintain a formal equivalence between the phrases and clauses of the source and the target text, but the translator has not hesitated to make adjustments when required by the need for intelligibility, clarity and naturalness of expression, so far as permitted by the constraint imposed by the method of "mirror-paraphrasing." These adjustments are of

various kinds and it is not possible to describe all of them here. They involve making grammatical changes, such as those of tense, aspect, voice, person and number; substitution of nouns by verbs and vice versa; making obligatory omissions and additions; and making explicit what is implicit in the source text. At times, they involve adjustments of idiom and syntactical changes. The reader should be aware about the presence of these changes when collating the Arabic text with the translation.

The treatment of Qur'ānic idioms is an important part of the policy followed in translation. Broadly speaking, they fall into three categories. There are some Arabic idioms, which though unfamiliar to the English-speaking audience are not difficult to understand when translated literally. These have been rendered literally. Some idioms are unintelligible when translated literally. These have been paraphrased appropriately so they are understood. Some other idioms yield to an idiomatic rendering in English.

The translation has been carried out according to what appeared to be the most probable among the interpretations mentioned by the commentators. Occasionally the translator has mentioned alternate interpretations in the footnotes when they appeared to be significant. Throughout the course of this translation extensive reference was made to various classical commentaries of the Qur'ān, such as those of Tabarī, Fakhr Rāzī, Zamakhsharī, and Suyūtī among Sunni works, and Tabātabā'ī's *al-Mīzān*, Tabrisī's *Majma' al-Bayān*, and Bahrānī's *Tafsīr al-Burhān* among Shī'ī works.

The translation is based on Hafs' version of the reading of 'Asim, which is the most popular of the readings of the Holy Qur'ān. Some of the alternate readings, where they appeared significant to this translator, have been noted in the footnotes with their translation.

Instances of ellipses in the Qur'ān - which in the context of English means "omission of a word or phrase necessary for a complete syntactical construction but not necessary for understanding"- often go beyond such a description and are not always so evident. These have been indicated in the footnotes.

Cross references have been mentioned under verses in some cases, but a relatively extensive index of subjects, names and terms has been placed in the appendix. Entries, which are not mentioned expressly in the text but are referred to implicitly, as mentioned in commentaries and exegetical traditions, are marked with an asterisk. As the works consulted for preparing the index had made use of copies of the Qur'ān with different systems of numbering the verses, there might be a discrepancy of one or two between the number of a verse as given in the index and its corresponding number in the Arabic text.

Unlike, for instance, major Muslim languages such as Persian, Turkish and Urdu, which have thoroughly exhausted indigenous linguistic and literary resources to meet the scholarly and emotional demands of the task, the prolific resources of the universal medium of English have not been fully employed in the service of the Qur'ān.

The Muslim Scripture is yet to find a dignified and faithful expression in the English language that matches the majesty and grandeur of the original. The currents of history, however, seem to be in favour of such a development. Even English is acquiring a native Muslim character and it is only a matter of time before we have a worthy translation of the Qur'ān in that tongue.

Till then, the Muslim student should judiciously make use of Pickthall, A. Yusuf Ali, Asad, Irving, and Qara'I Even Arberry's stylistic qualities must not be ignored. Ultimately, of course, the Muslim should try to discover the original and not allow himself to be lost in a maze of translations and interpretations.

Book Review:

Ali Quli Qara'i, ***The Qur'ān With a Phrase-by-Phrase Translation***, London: ICAS Press, 2004, 32+942 pp.; ISBN 1 904063 17.

Reviewed by Dr. Hamid Algar

On more than one occasion, the Qur'ān insists on its own irreducible Arabicity: "*Indeed We sent it down as an Arabic Qur'ān in order that you might understand*" (12:2); "*An Arabic Qur'ān, devoid of all crookedness, in order that you might be wary of God*" (39:28). There is, moreover, a vast disparity between the divine word coming from the source of revelation, characterised as it is by a miraculous multiplicity of meanings, and the human word of the translator, who is compelled by the nature of things to make finite choices among a range of possible meanings. If "translation" be taken in the etymologically precise sense of "carrying over" the meanings of speech from one language into another, in a reasonably exhaustive and authoritative manner, there can be no doubt that the Qur'ān is on one level untranslatable. Nonetheless, the attempt to render at least some of its meanings accessible to the

reader (or listener) unacquainted with Arabic is both ancient and legitimate.

One of the earliest essays in rendering the meanings of the Qur'ān in a language other than Arabic, Abū al-Muzaffar Isfarā'inī's *Tāj al-Tarājim fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān li'l-A'ājim*, written in Persian some time in the fifth/eleventh century, reports indeed that Salmān al-Fārsī was given permission by the Prophet — peace and blessings be upon him and his progeny—to "write the Qur'ān in Persian for the benefit of his people (*qaum*)." Isfarā'inī also argues convincingly that verses proclaiming the universality of the Qur'ānic message imply the permissibility, even necessity, of making its meanings available, to the extent that is possible, in languages other than Arabic: "All the intelligent are well aware that the Arabs and those belonging to other peoples who know Arabic are far fewer in number than those who do not know Arabic. It is nonetheless necessary that religion, law and revelation be conveyed to them, and this will not be possible unless the divine commands are translated into a language that is accessible to them."[1] It might additionally be argued that precisely the verses that stress the Arabicity of the Qur'ān point also to the permissibility of translation: The Qur'ān reminds the first audience it addressed that it was revealed *in their language* in order to facilitate *their* comprehension of its message. It follows that this purpose can be attained among non-Arab peoples only by conveying to them the meanings of the Qur'ān in their own languages; the Qur'ān is a book to be understood as well as revered.

The primacy of the Arabic Qur'ān has, however, been maintained at all times. Most early translations of the Qur'ān done

1. Isfarā'inī, *Tāj al-Tarājim fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān li'l-A'ājim*, eds. Najīb Māyil Hiravī and 'Alī Akbar Ilāhī Khurāsānī, Tehran, 1375 SH/1996, I, p. 8.

by Muslim hands (first in Persian and then in Turkish) were intended as aids to the reading and understanding of the Arabic text; imitative paraphrases rather than translations, they closely followed the syntax of the original and were written interspersed between its lines, in a suitably smaller script and sometimes in different coloured ink. Translations by Muslims that distanced themselves from the Arabic syntax and were intended to stand in their own right as renditions of the Qur'ānic meanings were a rarity until recent times.[2]

Most English translations of the Qur'ān done by Muslims have followed the model of autonomous presentation of its meanings; they have been printed separate from the Arabic text and not made subordinate to its distinctive syntax and idioms; at the most, translation and text have been printed on facing pages or in adjoining columns, with the verses spatially coordinated with each other. There are clear advantages to this approach, for it permits a continuous presentation of the text in a linguistic form more or less familiar to the reader, and it is suited to the needs of the student, whether Muslim or non-Muslim but particularly the latter, who has no acquaintance with the Arabic text and neither the means nor the intention to acquire it. On the other hand, such separate presentation may create the illusion of an equivalence, however approximate, between the revealed text and the translation elaborated by a human mind; the English seems to stand in for the Arabic.

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[2] On the history of Qur'ān translation in Persian, see Ahmad Golchin-i Ma'ānī, *Hezār Sāl Tafsīr-i Pārsī*, Tehran, 1342/1963. No general account of translations into various Muslim languages exists; for a partial list, see however Muhammad Hamidullah, *The Qur'an in every language*, Haiderabad-Deccan, 1947.

What Ali Quli Qara'i has accomplished in his deliberately entitled *The Qur'ān with An English Paraphrase*[3] is a revival of the art of translation as an adjunct to the understanding of the original, skillfully adapted to the needs of the English-speaking (or English-reading) student of the Qur'ān. The translation is coordinated with the original, in terms both of arrangement and of idiom. An interlinear English translation, following the model of ancient Persian and Turkish renderings which placed the translation immediately *beneath* the relevant portion of the original, would clearly have been impossible, for Arabic and other languages written in its script run from right to left, and English, from left to right. Qara'i has therefore placed each phrase of his translation *opposite* the corresponding Arabic phrase, on the same page, moreover, not on a facing page. The beginning and ending of each verse are indicated not only by number, but also by indentation, facilitating the measured reading of the translation. As for the problem of idiom, Qara'i rightly distinguishes between three categories: Arabic idioms that although unfamiliar to an English-speaker easily yield their meaning when translated literally; others that are comprehensible when subjected only to slight paraphrasing; and others again that must be totally reworked in order to be understandable. Basing himself on this categorization, he has opted always for the maximum degree of closeness to the Arabic compatible with comprehensibility, thereby coordinating translation with original in the most substantial of ways.

Although Qara'i envisions his translation as a paraphrase of the Qur'ānic meanings, as a tool for gaining access to the original, it must be stressed that his translation reads extremely well even if regular cross-reference to the Arabic not be the purpose of the

[3] An earlier impression of the book, published by the Centre for Translation of the Holy Qur'ān, Qum, bore this title.

reader. Unlike the early interlinear translations in Persian and Turkish where native syntax and idiom were entirely sacrificed to the Arabic they were intended to mirror, Qara'i's paraphrase does no violence to the normal sentence structure of English, nor does it invite the reader to imagine what certain oblique or unfamiliar phrases may mean. As a result, any student of the Qur'ān may consult his rendering with pleasure and profit, even if he does not intend to use it as a bridge to the sublime Arabic original. The language Qara'i has chosen is clear, chaste, straightforward and dignified, distant from both the archaisms and the modernisms that have been affected by other English translators of the Qur'ān.

Translation inevitably involves a modicum of interpretation; this is true even of a literary text, still more of a Revealed one. It is, however, incumbent on the translator always to subordinate interpretation to the primary task of translation; not to impose on the text any personal views he might hold; and, insofar as he draws on sources for interpretation beyond the text itself, to choose those that are most authoritative and to identify them. Qara'i has been successful in all three respects. Wherever the translation needs interpretive expansion for the sake of comprehensibility, Qara'i does what is needed in succinct footnotes; there is no trace of arbitrary personal opinion; and all the authorities upon which he draws in matters of exegesis are the classical commentaries of both Sunni and Shī'ī scholars. For good reason, he accords special weight to the traditions of the Imams of the Prophet's household—may peace and blessings be upon him and upon them. This does not necessarily constitute a distinctively Shī'ī emphasis, for most early Sunni exegeses of the Qur'ān derive, by way of Ibn 'Abbās, from 'Alī b. Abī Tālib ('a), the first of the Imams.

Qara'i precedes his paraphrase of the Qur'ānic meanings with a preface in which he describes not only the method of

translation he has used but also—more importantly—that universal and existential motive which ought to impel man to the study of the Qur'ān: the primordial need to learn of one's origin, nature, purpose of being and destination. It is plain, indeed, that a serious and profound appreciation of the Qur'ānic message has animated the whole of Qara'i's successful labours. We warmly recommend his translation to all with a serious interest in the Qur'ān.

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Book Review:

O No Nonsense

A Critique by Hajj Muhammad Legenhausen of

Logic and Other Nonsense The Case of Anselm and His God

By: Ermanno Bencivenga

Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993

Ermanno Bencivenga is a superb teacher, and in this short book of 132 pages, he excels at teaching us about history, philosophy, logic, the psychology, politics and theology of Anselm of Canterbury and much else along the way. I am blessed to be able to count myself among his former students, and I offer this critique as a token of appreciation for what I learned from him at Rice University when he was there in the early eighties. However, with all due respect, what I offer is a critique, and I find much to criticize—but the criticism should not be confused with any sort of complaint. I'm sure there are points that deserve greater reflection than I can offer here. This compact work is dense with lessons to learn and I recommend it highly.

The book is ostensibly about Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) and his much debated ontological argument; but as the author also tells us, "irony is what the present book is all

about."[1] Indeed, Anselm often seems to be an incidental figure, a mere example by which to illustrate various points Prof. Bencivenga makes about the unity of the self, the political implications of reason, and logic. So, it seems only fair to take advantage of the discussions here to discuss these and related issues, particularly as they pertain to the enterprise of attempting to prove the existence of God. My purpose is to examine some of the issues raised by Prof. Bencivenga and to compare how they appear in the context of medieval Christian and early Islamic intellectual culture. The difference in perspective allows a sort of triangulation that enhances the subtlety of our understanding of the proofs for the existence of God and the theologians who constructed them. Ultimately, however, we are led to reflect as much on contemporary attitudes in philosophy and religion as on their history. For this purpose, I introduce Suhrawardī (1156-1191), who is famous as *Shaykh al-Ishrāq*, the Master of Illumination, as a Muslim counterpart to the Archbishop of Canterbury, St. Anselm (1033-1109), and consider how the points illustrated by Bencivenga with Anselm might be reformulated when attention is also given to Suhrawardī. Both Anselm and Suhrawardī lived during the Crusades, both were involved in religious politics, and both were innovative in their attempts to prove the existence of God.

Prof. Bencivenga's book has four chapters, each headed by a passage from T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral,* which is about another Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Becket (r. 1162-1170). Eliot's play is a psychological study, like Bencivenga's, and it has been criticized for being unfaithful to the history it uses to examine the author's own reflections on doubts and loyalties. Since in this review, my aim is to broaden the scope of the discussion of the issues raised to open a way to the consideration of Islamic philosophy and theology, it may be appropriate to make use of some passages from Goethe's *West-Östlichen-Divan*, which has an irony all its own.

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[1] Fn. 1, p. 91. All subsequent page references will be put in parentheses in the text.

Chapter 1: The Programme

Dort, im Reinen und im Rechten,
Will ich menschlichen Geschlechten
In des Ursprungs Tiefe dringen,
Wo sie noch von Gott empfingen
Himmelslehr' in Erdesprachen,
Und sich nicht den Kopf zerbrachen.[2]

Transcendental Concerns

The book starts off with a reasonable enough question: Why prove the existence of God? More specifically, why should an eleventh century monk bother with such a chore? The author continues that maybe if you didn't know whether something existed or not, like neutrinos, you might start looking for a proof. Really? I think the last thing I'd try to do if I wanted to figure out whether some postulated particles existed or not would be to try to construct a proof for them. What sort of doubts about the existence of particles could one have that would be settled by strict deduction? If we take "proof" in a broader sense, to include induction, inference to the best explanation, and the citation of authorities, one could try to prove that there are neutrinos by an appeal to the writings of experts, or else one could study physics and examine the evidence used to support atomic theory. Nevertheless, one would not attempt a logical proof in order to figure out whether they exist. There are things whose existence one might like to prove rigorously, as one might want to see whether a certain set exists in a given axiomatic theory, but not in order to figure out whether they exist or not, except in some rather exceptional

[2] Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *West-östlicher Divan*, Buch des Sängers, Hegire, (ftp://sailor.gutenberg.org/pub/gutenberg/etext00/8wdvn10.txt):
There, in the pure and in the right,
I want to take the human race
To penetrate into the depths of their origins,
Where they still received from God
Heavenly teachings in earthly speech,
Without breaking their heads over it.

cases, such as in mathematics one might try to prove that prime numbers exist between two very large numbers.

What is the point of constructing logical proofs at all? Usually, logicians and other mathematicians construct proofs in order to gauge the strength of the system in which the proof is carried out. They are interested in finding out whether certain well known theorems can be proven in various systems. Often it is asked what must be added to a given system so that one will be able to prove some desired theorem without getting unwanted results in the bargain. How much of standard set theory can be duplicated in systems that do not have the axiom of choice? In a less technical manner, one might want to test the power of human reason. How much can it prove? Can we prove the existence of the self, of other minds, of the world, of God?

Another reason for the construction of proofs is to give clarity to a theory. Consider Hans Reichenbach's *Axiomatization of the Theory of Relativity.*[3] The point of the proofs this work contains is not to discover the truth of its theorems, but to make use of an axiomatic method to clarify logical features of Einstein's theories.

These seem much more the sorts of questions that would occupy the likes of Anselm or Suhrawardī. They were both interested in particular systems of proof, the systems of philosophical reasoning available to them. Neither of them would have dreamt of using a proof *to find out* if God or the angels or anything else existed. Both inherit a tradition of theological speculation in which proofs for the existence of God have lead to controversy. Between Augustine and Anselm, some seven hundred years have passed during which the Church has employed philosophical reasoning in order to perform various tasks. Anselm wants to push the envelope, to see just how much mileage he can get out of philosophical reasoning. At the same

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[3] Hans Reichenbach, *Axiomatik der Relativistischen Raum-Zeit-Lehre*, (Braunschweig: Vieweg, 1924); trans. M. Reichenbach, *Axiomatization of the Theory of Relativity*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969).

time he wants to use the method of proof to give precision to the concepts involved. Anselm's proof is issued with the excitement of a suppressed glee, as if to say, "Top that!" What is vindicated with the proof is not the existence of God, but the philosophical method of theology (not to mention the acumen of one who has come to be known as the 'Father of Scholasticism'). Suhrawardī, on the other hand, has formulated a philosophical system of his own, a rival to the dominant system of Avicenna. He wants to show that his system has the strength to prove God's existence, and that the proof he can offer is better than what has been offered before. His proof is offered as an alternative to Avicenna's that boasts of superior precision and economy. Again, what is verified is not the existence of God, but the system of thought in which it is demonstrated (and the brilliance of the 'Shaykh of Illumination').

If Anselm has doubts, they are not about the existence of God, but about the limits of the rational faculties. His doubts, however, are not of the usual pessimistic ilk; he suspects that *all* the eternal truths are provable, even the Trinitarian nature of God. Here his faith, much more than Augustine's, seeks intellection with a vengeance.

Today, one might try to offer philosophical reasons for believing in God, the reality of values, numbers, the mind, or other things whose existence has been denied, not to prove that they exist, but to show that it is not crazy to believe that they exist. This is how Alvin Plantinga's version of the ontological argument works.[4] He tries to show that on the basis of plausible premises we can arrive at the conclusion that God exists. He admits that one might question the premises. His proof is not designed to convince the infidel of anything but the rationality of those who profess faith.

Prof. Bencivenga tells us that Anselm wrote for a small circle of friends, all monks. "To do what, if it is going to tell

[4] Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1974b); Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974a), 196-221.

them nothing new? To get where, if they are already there?" (5-6) The proof, however, *is* going to tell them something new—not the content of the conclusion, but that it is provable by reason alone, without any empirical premises. What's the point of this? Prof. Bencivenga considers a couple answers: (1) to obtain intellectual pleasure; (2) to find further cause to thank God Who endowed us with reason by means of which to know him.

Prof. Bencivenga looks askance at the first of these, and suspects that the second only comes into play when there is some challenge to the legitimacy of belief. When belief in God is placed under pressure by atheists, the pious may attempt to vindicate themselves with a clever proof. In other words, Prof. Bencivenga doesn't trust Anselm when he explains his motivation for proving the existence of God, not because he suspects him of lying, but of a kind of dissimulation. On the other hand, Anselm felt no challenge to the legitimacy of his beliefs. There were no atheists claiming that science did away with the need for religion. The crisis of authority during Anselm's day is known as the *Investiture Controversy*, and during the days of his successors—until Becket was murdered in Canterbury Cathedral—there continued to be contests for power between the kings and the popes, the royal courts and the Church courts. None of the participants to these disputes would even think of questioning the existence of God. The idea of a challenge to Church authority coming in the form of casting doubts on the existence of God as imagined by Prof. Bencivenga reflects the late twentieth century tendency to be suspicious of philosophical claims that are used to support the legitimacy of authority, especially religious authority, but this would have been far beyond the horizons of Anselm's understanding.

Prof. Bencivenga reminds us that Kant has shown that we really ought to distinguish empirical from transcendental issues. It is only through empirical knowledge, Prof. Bencivenga claims, that we learn anything "about the world" and are enabled to move "more efficiently in it." (8) Certainly this was not

Kant's own view, for Kant held that non-empirical issues of morality have an important role to play on how we build a community; while Prof. Bencivienga holds that transcendental issues (by which Prof. Bencivenga means *conceptual* issues), are to be solved only by rational reflection; and all this can do is to make us feel better, more at home in the universe, more loved, "whatever." Of course, Anselm can be excused for not reading Kant, while we would have to argue at some length if we would beg to differ. So, we can disagree with Prof. Bencivenga about many points here. First, we could argue about his reading of Kant. Second, we could question the empirical/conceptual split on which Prof. Bencivenga relies, whether it conforms to Kant's view or not. Third, we could try to imagine what Anselm's own position would be on such questions. Let's put aside the first two questions, and ponder the third a bit.

Anselm, unlike Kant, did not have a very optimistic view of experience as a source of knowledge. Experience can only tell us of fleeting temporal affairs, not knowledge of eternal truths. Neo-Platonism, to the extent that it can be found in Augustine, provided the intellectual background in which Anselm did his thinking.

> It is evident, then, that a living substance exists in a greater degree than one that is not living, a sentient than a non-sentient, and a rational than a nonrational.[5]

The cognitive faculties of sentience and intellection are directed toward lower and higher realms of being. Thus, Chapter LXVI of the *Monologion* explains that the nearest approach to the Supreme Being is through the rational mind. Empirical knowledge just doesn't cut it. Prof. Bencivenga, however, seems to think that the danger posed by empirical knowledge is too

[5] *Monologion* in *St. Anselm, Proslogium; Monologium; An Appendix in Behalf of the Fool by Gaunilon; and Cur Deus Homo*, tr. Sidney Norton Deane (Chicago: Open Court, 1926), Ch. XXXI, p. 90, URL=http:// www.ccel.org/ccel/anselm/basic_works.all.html.

much certainty: "[W]e are told [by Anselm] that, if the statements of faith could be proved true by experience, there would be no merit to faith itself."[6] This makes Anselm sound like a latent Kierkegaard, but Anselm's point in the passage cited by Prof. Bencivenga is merely to explain why heavenly rewards for the elect are delayed, and by no means suggests that doctrinal principles could be proved true by experience.

Prof. Bencivenga attributes to Anselm an attitude that emphasizes the independence of practice from theory, but he offers the weakest textual support for this: citations of Anselm's sound practical advice, caution, and insistence on obedience. He is eager to have us see Anselm in this way because he thinks that the need for obedience arises with the realization that theory cannot serve as a guide in practical matters. Prof. Bencivenga insinuates that at some level Anselm realized that transcendental concerns with theology are useless for practical guidance in life, and that's why he insisted on such strict obedience. Where theology cannot guide, obedience can. When Anselm calls for rectitude in truth and justice and the implementation of papal decrees without compromise, Prof. Bencivenga sees in the uncompromising attitude evidence of an unwillingness to apply reason to practical matters. Reason is tolerant, Anselm isn't; so, Anselm confines reason to a theoretical realm where it can pose no threat to the ecclesiastic authorities. Prof. Bencivenga's notion of a compromising practical reason is an anachronism, as is the idea that Anselm would separate the empirical from the transcendental along Kantian lines: "The logical reconstruction of reality is a mere subjective epiphenomenon that is to remain entirely private, entirely apart from the social sphere, and as such is not to raise any trouble." (14-15) For Anselm, this would be one of those ideas about that which cannot be imagined. As Anselm sees things, rationality requires obedience to the will of God, even when we cannot understand the point of what God commands. The Church represents the will of God, for, according to Catholic teaching, the Pope is the vicar of Christ on

[6] Fn. 8, p. 6.

earth,[7] and hence, reason demands obedience to him even as it demands obedience to God.

Boso. What is the debt which we owe to God?

Anselm. Every wish of a rational creature should be subject to the will of God.

Boso. Nothing is more true.

Anselm. This is the debt which man and angel owe to God, and no one who pays this debt commits sin; but every one who does not pay it sins. This is justice, or uprightness of will, which makes a being just or upright in heart, that is, in will; and this is the sole and complete debt of honour which we owe to God, and which God requires of us.[8]

If Prof. Bencivenga should respond that he is merely using Anselm as a manikin on which to try on different styles of his own thought, then he should provide some argumentation in support of his idea that metaphysics has a mere epiphenomenal status with respect to practical affairs. The contrary view, according to which theory, rational reconstructions, and other ideas are interwoven with feeling to motivate activity, is one that has been a constant theme in the neo-Platonist legacy within both the Christian and Islamic traditions. In Shahrazūrī's introduction to Suhrawardī's *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq* (Wisdom of Illumination) he explains:

> You are aware that human perfection consists in the theoretical sciences, that the science of practical wisdom is also theoretical, and that improvement of character is acquired by turning the soul away from distractions and by purifying it from hindrances in order to become perfected.[9]

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[7] The title, *Vicarius Christi*, was first used by Pope Gelasius I (r. 492-496). At times the title was also used by other bishops in an implicit challenge to the authority of the Pope.

[8] *Cur Deus Homo*, Ch. XI, 199. Boso was a monk at Bec, Anselm's close friend and a companion on many of his travels. The *Cur Deus Homo* is written as a dialogue between Boso and Anselm.

[9] John Walbridge & Hossein Ziai, *Suhrawarī, The Philosophy of Illumination* (Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 1999), xxxix. Shahrazūri was Suhrawardī's contemporary and biographer.

Much later, this sort of idea was taken up by idealists, and is advocated explicitly by the American idealist, William Ernest Hocking (1873-1966). Hocking argues that "...the *value of any object of attention is nothing other than the entering of that reality-idea into the thought of the object.*"[10] The connection between idea and value enables Hocking to link knowledge with love. Just as religion cannot be reduced to feeling, conversely, love itself has a cognitive component. Love is the working of an idea, a "reality-thought", in experience to find beauty and value. Love and sympathy require cognizance of *another*, and hence the understanding of external reality. Hocking goes so far as to say, "Interest in objectivity, which we have found at the root of all idea-making, is love itself directed to reality."[11] Notice, too, that Anselm sees the intellectual cognizance of God as perfected in love, and he is quite explicit about the practical moral consequences of the living faith that issues from such love.

> Hence, with however great confidence so important a truth is believed, the faith will be useless and, as it were, dead, unless it is strong and living through love. For, that the faith which is accompanied by sufficient love is by no means idle, if an opportunity of operation offers, but rather exercises itself in an abundance of works, as it could not do without love, may be proved from this fact alone, that, since it loves the supreme Justice, it can scorn nothing that is just, it can approve nothing that is unjust.[12]

Likewise, for Suhrawardī, the ascent of the intellect is associated with love, and has practical moral consequences.

> In the proportion that the love mixed with mastery increases, pleasure and affection increase in our world, as does the mutual

[10] William Ernest Hocking, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience: A Philosophic Study of Religion* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press and Oxford University Press, 1912), 130. The revised 1924 edition of this work has been reprinted in Whitefish, MT by Kessinger Publications, 2003.

[11] Hocking (1912), 135.

[12] *Monologion,* Ch. LXXVII, 139.

love of animals. If that is the case here, then what have you to say about the world of true and perfect love and of the pure, perfect dominance that is entirely light and lustre and life?[13]

Suhrawardī presents us with an allegory that also tells of the intricate relation between knowledge and love. In his "On the Reality of Love or the Solace of Lovers," he tells us that the first thing God created was the intellect and that the intellect is endowed with the ability to know God, to know itself, and to know that which was not and then was. From these three abilities there appear Beauty, Love, and Sorrow, respectively. Love becomes exiled from Beauty and returns to it after a long journey. The journey of love is through knowledge of the self and it leads to knowledge of God.[14]

Hocking too, after he argues for an organic relationship between feeling and idea, turns to religious feelings, religious fear and hope, and claims that they are "in part instinctive recognitions of the immediate vital bearing of such idea-possession upon every conceivable human value."[15] He concludes that "It is only by a recovery of 'theoretical' conviction that religion can either maintain its own vitality or contribute anything specific to human happiness."[16]

Prof. Bencivenga points out that Anselm admits that ignorance of theory need not be an obstacle to personal piety. The piety of children is ample testimony to this. Does this not then suggest that Anselm was at some level aware that his theological theories were mere epiphenomena? Not necessarily. Hocking reminds us that the space of the child is no less infinite than the space of the physicist. The child's ideas may be naïve, but the use of them is still the work of reason. Hocking even suggests that children may more easily achieve religious

[13] Suhrawardī (1999), 148.
[14] W. M. Thackson, Jr., tr., *The Mystical & Visionary Treatises of Suhrawardī* (London: Octagon, 1982), 62-75.
[15] Hocking (1912), 137.
[16] Hocking (1912), 137.

understanding because the concepts with which they reason are simpler.[17]

One of Surhawardī's visionary treatises is called, "On the State of Childhood."[18] He explains that the understanding of children is limited, but with the recognition that they need guidance comes true knowledge, and this is the beginning to the spiritual path. Ignorance of theory is no obstacle to beginning the search. Indeed, if the trappings of theoretical knowledge lead one to pride or to indifference with regard to spiritual wayfaring, such knowledge can be an obstacle to piety. On the other hand, the spiritual path is itself a search for knowledge; and although the mystics stress the importance of direct experiential knowledge, it is only natural for this to result in a more theoretical mysticism.

Like Hocking and Suhrawardī, Anselm doesn't see juvenile piety as any reason to deny that it is through the intellect that one best comes to know and love God. Indeed, in the *Proslogion*, Anselm describes another motive for the pursuit of intellectual knowledge of God: it is an element of what we were made for.

> But the rational being cannot love this Being [i.e. God], unless it has devoted itself to remembering and conceiving of it. It is clear, then, that the rational creature ought to devote its whole ability and will to remembering, and conceiving of, and loving, the supreme good, for which end it recognizes that it has its very existence.[19]

Language Tricks

Anselm's responses to Guanilo have seemed confused to most commentators, and Prof. Bencivenga is no exception. Anselm's argument is that if the essence of God is properly understood, it must exist in reality, too, independent of the understanding. Guanilo asks how we can be sure that we really

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[17] Hocking (1912), Ch. VIII.

[18] W. M. Thackson, Jr., tr., *The Mystical & Visionary Treatises of Suhrawardi* (London: Octagon, 1982), 51-61.

[19] *Monologion*, Ch. LXVIII, 131-132.

have God existing in the understanding. Words aren't enough, for that's how Anselm explains the impossible thought on the part of the fool who says in his heart that there is no God. The fool is just toying with words. At the same time, Anselm admits that the essence of God is unknowable. In that case, aren't we all just toying with words no matter whether we tell ourselves that God exists or that He doesn't exist?

Anselm's response to this last difficulty is that there is a sense in which we do not grasp the essence of God. It is beyond us. Yet, in another sense, we do grasp it, as though "through a glass", in the Pauline phrase.[20] We do not have to understand God perfectly in order to make true statements about him and draw correct inferences.

> For often we speak of things which we do not express with precision as they are; but by another expression we indicate what we are unwilling or unable to express with precision, as when we speak in riddles. And often we see a thing, not precisely as it is in itself, but through a likeness or image, as when we look upon a face in a mirror. And in this way, we often express and yet do not express, see and yet do not see, one and the same object; we express and see it through another; we do not express it, and do not see it by virtue of its own proper nature.[21]

As for the issue of how we know that what is in the understanding is more than mere words when we contemplate that than which no greater can be conceived, Anselm appeals to the faith of Guanilo as a Catholic.

> But I say: if a being than which a greater is inconceivable is not understood or conceived, and is not in the understanding or in concept, certainly either God is not a being than which a greater is inconceivable, or else he is not understood or conceived, and is not in the understanding or in concept. But I call on your faith and conscience to attest that this is most false. Hence, that than which a greater cannot be conceived is truly

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[20] 1 Cor. 13:12.

[21] *Monologion*, Ch. LXV, 127-128.

understood and conceived, and is in the understanding and in concept.[22]

The modern critic will object that Anselm is guilty of circular reasoning, because he assumes the existence of the God whose existence he is trying to prove. But Anselm is not really trying to convince the fool that God is. Anselm begins his defense with the quip that although the *Proslogion* was directed against the fool, Guanilo is no fool, but a Catholic speaking on behalf of the fool, and so, he considers it sufficient to answer the Catholic. Anselm is out to show that anyone who thinks that God does not exist is a fool, because he cannot really understand what he is saying and mean it. If he really does understand what he is saying, the phrase *that than which a greater cannot be imagined* succeeds in referring to God, and being what He is, He cannot be a mere figment of the imagination.

Of course, this means that the proof doesn't work unless one already has faith. But Anselm says as much at the end of the first chapter of the Proslogion:

> For I do not seek to understand that I may believe, but I believe in order to understand. For this also I believe,--that unless I believed, I should not understand.

Anselm understands just as well as Frege, Tarski and Carnap that language is often misleading. Some jargon or regimentation may help us avoid the traps into which more ordinary forms of language may lead us. But unlike Frege and his successors, Anselm and Suhrawardi hold that real things may exist merely in the mind, like numbers, or they may exist outside the mind, too. What then of God? Could He exist only in the mind? No, because if He were limited in this way He wouldn't be God. Why can't we say the same thing about a greatest conceivable island? Because then we would be merely toying with words. There is no such thing in the mind or anywhere else.

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[22] *Anselm's Apologetic*, Ch. I, 152.

Of course, the atheist insists that there is no God to be present in the mind and from whose presence there we may infer His necessary existence in the external world, as well. The fact that Anselm presupposes the contrary and the fact that his motto gives priority to faith may lead some to classify him as a fideist. This would be an error. At least, Anselm is not a fideist in the sense in which the term is applied to Kierkegaard or Wittgenstein. He may be forced to admit that proofs can only take us so far, but that does not mean that he holds that the assumptions needed are to be taken on a blind faith without the use of the intellect. It is the intellect that sees that God is truly present in the mind, and not just a jumble of meaningless ideas. In order for the intellect to see this, faith is needed. The absence of faith is an obstacle to the clarity of intellectual vision. Faith is not required because reason stops short; rather, faith is required for the proper employment of reason where proofs are insufficient.

Teaching Rationality

In this section, Prof. Bencivenga mentions more logicians of the twentieth century who echo some of the themes sounded by Anselm regarding the difficulties of improving reasoning, the role of examples in such work, practice, and the impossibility of achieving perfection. These issues are important for Prof. Bencivenga because as he sees it, Anselm is dedicated to a tradition of repetition and imitative obedience while at the same time bing somewhat of a maverick. Prof. Bencivenga is fascinated by this tension. Theory is just an afterthought that gives a sense of order, while practical life is governed by tradition and hierarchy and strict obedience. However, theorizing is itself a practice, and the sort of pedagogy Anselm favours is learning by rote from an example. We are to seek perfection through conformity to an exemplar.

At this point Prof. Bencivenga introduces Ricoeur's "hermeneutics of suspicion." We can never reach perfection, so what's the point of the effort? Anselm and other logicians, Frege, Wittgenstein and others, recommend logic as a way to get

free of the deceptions of language; but if the aim is unattainable, Prof. Bencivenga suggests there may be some more sinister if not diabolical motive at work.

Chapter 2: The Programme Criticized

Mich verwirren will das Irren,
Doch du weißt mich zu entwirren.
Wenn ich handle, wenn ich dichte,
Gib du meinem Weg die Richte![23]

Inflexible Reason

In the preface to the *Proslogion*, Anselm describes his obsession with his logical puzzle, and admits that he thought it might be unattainable, but he couldn't stop thinking about it. His puzzle was: "whether there might be found a single argument which would require no other for its proof than itself alone; and alone would suffice to demonstrate that God truly exists, and that there is a supreme good requiring nothing else, which all other things require for their existence and well-being; and whatever we believe regarding the divine Being." Prof. Bencivenga calls the obsession with this task an addiction. It commands more attention than it is due, being, after all, a mere theoretical reflective pastime. Prof. Bencivenga is not at all sympathetic to the idea that such an obsession might be an expression of piety, described by Hocking as man's basic desire to know reality. Prof. Bencivenga chides Anselm for his deathbed wish—that God might give him a bit more time to solve the problem of the origin of the soul—because he sees him as denying the importance of other activities because of his passion for the intellectual life. The preoccupation with the ontological argument, Prof. Bencivenga notes, distracted

[23] Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *West-östlicher Divan*, Buch des Sängers, Talismane, (ftp://sailor.gutenberg.org/pub/gutenberg/etext00/8wdvn10.txt):
Error wants to entangle me,
But You know how to untangle me.
If I act, if I poeticize,
Give my way the right direction!

Anselm from his prayers. He seems to think that Anselm was a hypocrite. Prof. Bencivenga also notes that Anselm pushed himself to his limits with ascetic discipline while he discouraged this sort of excess in others. He told others never to leave the monastery while he himself found occasion to undertake various journeys. None of this establishes a very strong case against Anselm, and normally we should take a more charitable view.

Prof. Bencivenga, however, takes the tone of the psychoanalyst. He sees layers of subconscious tendencies of which Anselm himself was unaware. Anselm does not use healthy metaphors when talking about reason: binding and force instead of exploration and adventure. Reason is a weapon. The theologian is God's soldier. These are slurs. Anselm's metaphors are no more militaristic than those of other philosophers. However, the attempt to put Anselm on the analyst's couch raises its own questions. What is the purpose of looking for Freudian slips in the writings of an eleventh century theologian? Does it provide us with a deeper understanding of the man or his works? It certainly allows the author to take a position of superiority. There is no need to question one's own attitudes where they conflict with those of an historical character if one is maintaining a clinical interest in a patient. There is no possibility of dialogue.

Fighting for Consistency

Notice that the dialogue with the fool in the *Proslogion* is not really a dialogue—for there can be no reasoning with the fool. So, what's the point? The fool, like some of Anselm's own students, questions the authority of Church doctrine because he can't make rational sense of it. Anselm takes the role of advisor: to give a solution to the logical puzzle while at the same time trying to get the fool to admit that there are things he cannot understand and that the Church knows better. The problem with the fool (*Latin: insipiens*) is not mere stupidity; it is also pride. The fool mocks faith. The therapy begins with the elimination of fallacies and the quest for logical purity that has been annunciated by logicians throughout the ages. But what is

needed to cure the fool according to Anselm's pedagogy is inculcation by example and the proper attitude with which to receive the example.

Anselm's logic is for believers only. It is a fight for the soul of the believer who hears the call of the infidel, does not want to heed it, but has doubts. Theory is not merely a luxurious ornament to faith and practice, feelings and worship, but is a necessary antidote to the doubts that threaten all of these things. When doubt is put to rest, one feels exalted, satisfied, freed from its nagging, justified in one's loyalties. Doubt is frightening because it makes one suspect that things are as one dare not say.

Prof. Bencivenga is as certain of his position as Anselm is of his faith. It is no more possible for Prof. Bencivenga to consider the faith of Anselm a live option than atheism was an alternative faced by Anselm. For Anselm, the fool's position is merely a logical possibility. The fool is a stooge that enables Anselm to explore ways of gaining an intellectual purchase on faith. For Prof. Bencivenga, Anselm takes the position of the fool. There is no point in arguing with him seriously. The point of sparring with him is only to secure what is undeniable from the start, and maybe to be able to put to rest a few nagging doubts of students.

The Consistency of What?

Reason does not tell us what is merely actual. It tells us what is necessary, possible or impossible. To show that something is necessarily true, a *reductio* will suffice; but that does not show how it could *be*—for that, some sort of model or explanation is needed. A fascinating example is given in Anselm's *Epistola de Incarnatione Verbi*.[24] Anselm refutes the view that the Father and the Holy Spirit are incarnate with the Logos by showing that absurdities and impieties would follow. Yet the text breaks off (in the first draft) when trying to show how the orthodox view is possible. Actually, the text breaks off after mentioning a difficulty for the official view that an

[24] See fn. 23, p. 48.

opponent might raise: "either the three persons are the three things, or, if they are one thing, the Father and the Holy Spirit are incarnate." The problem for the logician is how to answer the argument of the opponent. The first disjunct is obviously wrong—tri-theism contrary to Church teaching. How can three persons be one thing yet only one person be incarnate? The answer is clear: a person is not a thing. Persons are incarnate, not things. What we've started doing here, in technical terms, is constructing a model—on behalf of the Catholic who says in his heart "three". But Anselm is after more. In a later draft he says that he wants to prove that *necessarily* only one person can be incarnate. But here, too, what he is after is more than the absurdity of the negation of the supposedly necessary proposition. What is wanted is an understanding of "how it can be so."

Anselm aims at bringing as much of what he knows to be true within the realm of intellectual understanding. His optimism about this project was in sharp contrast with many others in the Church who felt that the human intellect was such a dull instrument that the wiser course was to stick with the simple acceptance of revealed truth. The rhetoric of the theologian is neither a dialogue with a fool (which would be impossible), nor with an infidel (unimaginable), but with the novice who seeks the aid of the master theologian in the attempt to dispel demonic doubts. It is almost as if the theologian plays the role of exorcist: "We have sufficient evidence, then, to dispel the contradiction that threatened us…."[25] Anselm writes because of the solicitous entreaties of certain brethren.

Likewise, Suhrawardī writes reluctantly in response to the demands of students. In every seeker or student, he tells us, there is a portion of the light of God, small or great.[26] He writes to assist such a seeker, but not just anyone who would make inquiry from idle curiosity. For them such teaching would be useless. When Anselm writes about divine light, it is always as

[25] *Monologion*, Ch. XXII, 80.
[26] Suhrawardī (1999), 1.

the seeker peering from afar through the darkness. In any case, both Anselm and Suhrawardī write as teachers and spiritual guides. They address the faithful.

The infidel figures in these discussions with faithful students as those who bring reasoned doubts about the faith. The infidels are not all fools. Consider the remark of Boso:

> Suffer me, therefore, to make use of the words of infidels; for it is proper for us when we seek to investigate the reasonableness of our faith to propose the objections of those who are wholly unwilling to submit to the same faith, without the support of reason. For although they appeal to reason because they do not believe, but we, on the other hand, because we do believe; nevertheless, the thing sought is one and the same.[27]

The infidel is never named as being a pagan, Jew or Muslim. It is a generic infidel whose reasons are brought by the student to be refuted by the master. However, Anselm served Pope Urban II (r. 1088-1099) who called the First Crusade in 1095. Although Anselm does not express much enthusiasm for the crusades, his support for papal authority is absolute. He writes to the Pope in complete submission, *subissis mentis genibus*, mentally bending the knees, or bending the knees of the mind. The mind itself submits to the authority of the Church. In administration, Anselm advocated the use of the carrot over the stick wherever possible as better able to produce the proper spirit of submission.

All of this raises the spectre that reason may be little more than an alternative to the rod, and a much more effective one. This worries Prof. Bencivenga; but the worry is never fully explicated. Is it a worry that reason is dishonoured by using it to serve the Church? Or is it that what is served does not deserve the service? One could argue that reason should not be employed in the service of the Church because of corruption in the hierarchy, irrationality in the dogmas taught, or because one believes that reason should serve some other purposes. As

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[27] *Cur Deus Homo*, Ch. II, 180.

Anselm sees it, the authority of the Church is unquestionable, and if reason cannot find a way to support it, that only shows an incapacity in reason, not any flaw in the Church. For Prof. Bencivenga, on the other hand, it is the authority of reason that is unquestionable, and any service it renders to any other cause can only debase it. He almost takes a pontifical tone as he scolds the theologian for nipping his students' doubts in the bud and never allowing them to blossom into a challenge to Church authority.

The crusaders captured Edessa in 1098 and in the following year, Jerusalem. Forty-five years later, Zangi of Mosul retook Edessa for the Muslims. This led Pope Eugenius III to issue a formal crusade bull in 1145, and the Second Crusade began. Victory over the crusaders was won by Zangi's son, Nūr al-Dīn (r. 1146-1174), who also conquered the rest of Syria and destroyed the Fatimid empire in Egypt through his general Saladin. Saladin then revolted and by 1177 controlled Syria as well as Egypt. By 1183, northern Mesopotamia came under his command, and he placed Aleppo under the governance of one of his teen aged sons, Malik al-Zāhir. During that same year, Suhrawardī came wandering into the city in the most humble of circumstances, and not long after, met the young prince, who became a devoted disciple. Suhrawardī sought to train the prince to become a philosopher king. This, along with his outspoken defense of esoteric and philosophical ideas, won Suhrawardī the enmity of an influential group of 'ulama. They requested Malik al-Zāhir to have him executed; when he refused, they wrote to his father, claiming that if he were allowed to live he would corrupt the faith. In 1187, Saladin had gained victory over Jerusalem, to which Pope Gregory VIII responded by calling the Third Crusade. When the crusaders began to arrive, Saladin needed the support of the 'ulama in Aleppo, and wrote to his son ordering the execution. Malik al-Zāhir did not act, so his father threatened to relieve him of the governorship. The biographer of Saladin reports of the decision to have Suhrawardī killed as follows:

> [Salāh al-Dīn] hated philosophers, heretics, materialists and all the opponents of the Law. For this reason he commanded his son al-Malik al-Zāhir, Prince of Aleppo, to punish a young man called Suhrawardī who called himself an enemy of the Law and a heretic. His son had the man arrested for what he had heard of him and informed the Sultan, who commanded that he be put to death. So he was killed, and left hanging on the cross for several days.[28]

There are conflicting accounts of Suhrawardi's death, which is said to have taken place in 587/1191, when Suhrawardī was thirty-eight years old. Shahrzūrī claims that when Suhrawardī realized Malik Zāhir's difficulty, he chose to be shut in a room and denied food and drink until he should meet his Lord. Afterwards Malik Zāhir is said to have wrought vengeance on the perpetrators, whom he imprisoned and much of whose property he confiscated.

The point of all this history is that philosophical theory and theology can threaten religious authorities, instead of supporting them, even when it proves the existence of God and much else that happens to be favored by those same authorities. Prior to modern times, challenges to religious and political authorities did not take the form of doubts about the existence of God. Suhrawardī's philosophizing theology was seen as threatening because it was! The Master of Illumination was out to overturn both the political and religious status quo. Anselm's philosophizing theology was rewarded with the highest honours the Church can bestow—eventually canonization.

While we're talking politics, what are we to think of Prof. Bencivenga's? He certainly does not see himself, like Anselm, as one who uses his philosophical prowess in the service of the authorities, at least not the any religious authorities. He seems to champion the standard ideals of the Enlightenment: personal

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[28] Baha al-Dīn's biography of Salāh al-Dīn is translated in Francesco Gabrieli's *Arab Historians of the Crusades*, tr. E. J. Costello (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 90.

freedom, individualism, liberation; but appearances may be deceiving.

Logic and Power

In order to illuminate us on the connections between philosophy and politics, Prof. Bencivenga introduces the Frankfurt School. Now, the Frankfurt School has followed a very interesting course through its own history of exile and return, a path from Marxism to liberalism. The Frankfurt School begins its analysis, as Prof. Bencivenga informs us, with a critique of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment promised liberation through reason. Instead, the forms of coercion only became more subtle, a coercion in which reason and philosophy still are often at the service of the authorities, and otherwise, like the members of the Frankfurt School, forced into exile.[29]

Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979) analyzed the relations of logic and power by focusing on the role of dialectic. His analysis of dialectic was in the tradition of Hegel and Marx, although he departed significantly from both of them and added much from Freud. Marcuse tells us that ever since Plato, dialectic is revolutionary. It challenges what *is* with an *ideal*. In contrast, mere deductive logic aims at the elimination of contradictions. Aristotle concentrated on deductive logic and was politically conservative, while Plato emphasized the importance of dialectic and was revolutionary.

Surhrawardī was also revolutionary, in political method very similar to Plato, but instead of contrasting dialectic with deduction, he contrasts intuitive philosophy with discursive philosophy.

> This book of ours is for the student of both intuitive philosophy and discursive philosophy. There is nothing in it for the discursive philosopher not given to, and not in search of, intuitive philosophy. We only discuss this book and its symbols with the one who has mastered intuitive philosophy or who seeks it. The reader of this book must have reached at least the

[29] The Institute for Social Research moved to Geneva, Paris and then New York in 1934, where it became the New School for Social Research.

stage in which the divine light has descended upon him—not just once, but regularly. No one else will find any profit in it. So, whoever wishes to learn only discursive philosophy, let him follow the method of the Peripatetics, which is fine and sound for discursive philosophy by itself. We have nothing to say to such a person, nor do we discuss Illuminationist principles with him. Indeed, the system of the Illuminationists cannot be constructed without recourse to luminous inspirations, for some of their principles are based upon such lights. Should Illuminationists fall into doubt about these principles, they will overcome it by climbing the ladder of the soul. Just as by beholding sensible things we attain certain knowledge about some of their states and are thereby able to construct valid sciences like astronomy, likewise we observe certain spiritual things and subsequently base divine sciences upon them. He who does not follow this way knows nothing of philosophy and will be a plaything in the hands of doubts.[30]

Prof. Bencivenga's position is in favour of dialectic, freedom, and challenging the authorities, but his suggestions in this regard remain vague. In a later book, he takes up issues raised in connection with Anselm, but this time his subject is Hegel. There he rejects the stance of those who defend the establishment, as well as that of those who oppose it by making themselves into "exotic curiosities." Instead, he proposes the articulation of alternatives to the current state of affairs to sharpen the urgency of a "demand for justification,"[31] but there is little more than this sensible general proposal. Perhaps we should hope for another book.

When Prof. Bencivenga describes faith as a means of winning a favourable attitude to the theoretical structure that legitimizes a political hierarchy (60), he claims to be articulating the position of Anselm's enemy, not stating his own view. The infidel critic of Anselm might say that Anselm sought to legitimize himself or his ideas by providing a logical model that

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[30] Suhrawardī (1999), 4.

[31] Ermanno Bencivenga, *Hegel's Dialectical Logic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 107.

shows how things might really be just as the authorities claim they are, and how objections raised against them could be defused.

Prof. Bencivenga suggests that rationalization has liberating functions to play as well as necessitating ones, because it can serve to undermine authority as well as to support it; but at this point, at least, he's not laying his cards on the table. He seems to see liberation as confined to the rejection of authority. The idea that liberation could be found in submission rather than insurrection does not seem to have a place in his thinking, although it seems much more in keeping with the sort of view advocated by Anselm. This is the role of the student: to importunately call the cards of the master. That's how Suhrawardī finally came to write his *Hikmat al-Ishrāq*, after all.

Chapter 3: The Programme Revisited

Im Nebel gleichen Kreis
Seh ich gezogen,
Zwar ist der Bogen weiß,
Doch Himmelsbogen.[32]

Importunate Questioning

One of Anselm's dialogue partners is the importunate Boso. The dynamics of Anselm's discourse becomes clearer by examining the role of Boso: the student (1) questions to remove his own doubts, and (2) questions in order to learn how to answer if such questions should be posed to him. One is reminded of the *advocatus diaboli* (devil's advocate) in the canonization process. The official title of the devil's advocate is

[32] Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *West-östlicher Divan*, Buch des Sängers, Phänomen, (ftp://sailor.gutenberg.org/pub/gutenberg/etext00/8wdvn10.txt):
In the fog the same circle
I see drawn,
Although the rainbow is white,
It is still heaven's rainbow.

Promotor Fidei (Promoter of the Faith).[33] He promotes and protects the faith by raising whatever objections might keep a candidate for sainthood from advancing to this end. Often, this means asking embarrassing questions about people who are very highly revered. Importunity is the method of daring, relentless, repetitive insistence, i.e., nagging. Against such strategies, Prof. Bencivenga gives voice to anti-authoritarian sentiments that wistfully imagine a freedom that might have been procured if only the authorities had not been quite so astute. Would he dare to suggest that if Anselm had been less clever in his answers to Boso, that the Church would have had more trouble imposing its dogmas about the incarnation? Plugging imaginary gaps in ideological defenses is no more effective than arresting those who joke about bombs when passing through airport security checks. It's just part of the propaganda to give the impression that serious steps are being taken to insure that no stone will be left unturned in ongoing efforts to keep our authorities secure. The effective challenges that eventually came to the Church did not breech any weakness in the ontological argument. Aquinas could do that without even being seen as a threat! The effective challenges came when Luther, Calvin and the Anabaptists refused to obey, and won others to the alternative authorities they quickly set up. Even evil thoughts cannot be expelled without putting other thoughts in their place. (69) (Likewise, effective opposition to curtailments of civil liberties justified in the name of the "War on Terrorism" will not occur when security becomes lax, but when political forces become strong enough to implement a better strategy.)[34] So, we may offer this bit of advice for those who consider themselves anti-authoritarians: don't waste your time on theological nit-

[33] Actually, it is anachronistic to speak of the devil's advocate in connection with Anselm, since it was only established as an official part of the processes of determining sainthood in 1587!

[34] This line of thinking suggests that we should expect no more success in the "War on Terrorism" than in the "War on Poverty" or the "War on Drugs". Alternatives have to become viable.

picking—that's like trying to oppose the institution of sainthood by proposing better arguments for devil's advocates.

Prof. Bencivenga is not unaware that he might be doing no more than entertaining himself with his own cleverness. (66) He might be looking for a struggle where in fact there are only what Pierce called "paper doubts." Real doubts have to be, as James insisted, living, momentous and forced,[35] and this only happens when there is a real alternative to the authorities one would challenge. It's not enough to just play with possible narratives and to ask "Why not?" The space has to be found in which such suggestions might be considered more than just the free play of ideas.

Clues

Prof. Bencivenga is sensitive to these sorts of worries, and considers whether theological questions and answers are worth the effort. If it is best to deal with evil thoughts by distracting oneself from them, why not do the same thing with the questions of the infidel and the imbecile? Why try to fight them on their own terms? In his practical advice in letters to others, Anselm cautions against too much wisdom and the poison of the reason of the infidel, yet in his theoretical works, Anselm is captivated by the argument. Is he hypocritical? If not, Prof. Bencivenga appears to be at least suspicious that the doubts in Anselm are real, and *that's* why he goes to such pains with them. Prof. Bencivenga finds evidence for this, again, in importunity. In his prayers, Anselm speaks as though he really would challenge God, the saints, all that is good and holy. Of course, this sort of importunity is part of the piety common to both Christians and Muslims. We find it in the prayers of the Shi'ite Imams and in Sufi poetry, too. It is not a unique factor in the psychological turmoil of Anselm.

Whatever doubts Anselm mentions in prayer or theological discussion, they are still mere paper doubts because

[35] William James, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (New York: Dover, 1956), 2.

they could never get him to leave the Church, for he had no where else to go. He could leave his father after a teenager's quarrel and find refuge in the monasteries. Where could he go, however, with his doubts about the teachings of the Church? He might have gotten depressed or have had a nervous breakdown—even Cartesian doubts may be that effective in the wrong circumstances—but what makes doubts real is association with a live alternative.

Although Prof. Bencivenga finds Anselm an attractive figure on some level, despite their religious-political differences, and although he is fascinated by considering the doubts Anselm may have concealed, he does not reveal anything of his own doubts. He plays the detached role of historian-analyst and never questions his own commitments to freedom, authenticity, or to questioning authority. He sees Anselm as one who might secretly challenge God, saying to Him, "I will call your cards." (77)

There is, however, another clever strategy that Prof. Bencivenga does not discuss, also very effective in shoring up religious authority, another way of treating the predilection for sin: draw the attention of the sinner to lesser sins, steer him from serious challenges to authority by providing opportunity and directing his attention toward inconsequential ones. One can effectively maintain a dress code by occupying potential rebels with violations of minor details. Perhaps this strategy should not be called "clever" or even a "strategy" because the authorities usually seem just as taken in by it as their small fry adversaries.

Prof. Bencivenga, however, suspects that the voice speaking within Anselm's soul is the voice of reason, a voice more amenable to Prof. Bencivenga's own sensibilities, more inimical, as he sees it, towards the Church. The author sometimes sees Anselm as a genius like himself, pushing the outer limits of what might be allowable or possible.(85)

A Perfect Spy

Eventually, Prof. Bencivenga does come out from behind his analyst's mask a little bit, but only as much as the analyst

who mentions that he himself has undergone analysis. He uses a spy novel to introduce the idea that several voices might speak from within a person each with an equal claim to be the "real me." This is a theme that is explored in much of Prof. Bencivenga's subsequent work, as well as a previous book on Montaigne.[36]

Prof. Bencivenga's model of the self is the perfect spy, one with no ultimate loyalties. This self becomes a theatre for different trends, none of which commands ultimate loyalty. There are other views of the self—including religious views—that admit that there might be a theater of different actors competing for attention. But instead of a congeries of actors, religious views typically posit a hierarchy. That means an objective evalutation, and it means taking sides. It means that some of the voices that sound within us are to be given free reign, will others are to be discouraged, perhaps repressed.

Suhrawardī's view of the self is one of the most important features of his philosophy. He begins by emphasizing the immediate presence of the self to itself.

> All that we have enumerated pertains to your you-ness, your reality. You have several names: you are called "soul", as the Supreme Reality in the Noble Qur'ān has declared: "O tranquil soul, Return unto your Lord, well pleased (with Him, and) He well pleased with you." (89: 27-28) It is also called "word", as He says: "Unto Him ascends the good word, raised with righteous deeds." (35:10) *Good words* and *tranquil soul* have the same meaning. Until the soul becomes tranquil, it does not "return unto your Lord"; and until the word becomes good, it is impossible that it "unto Him ascends." It is also called "spirit", as He says: "And a Spirit from Him". (4:171) It is also called "reproaching", as He declares: "No! I swear by the reproaching

[36] Ermanno Bencivenga, *The Discipline of Subjectivity: An Essay on Montaigne* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).

soul". (75:2) It is also called "demanding", as He declares: "Surely the soul bids one to evil." (12:53)[37]

Although the self, according to Suhrawardī has all these various aspects, it is not to be identified with any inner voice or any other mental content. Your apprehension of yourself cannot be by a form or by something added to the self. The self is apparent to itself:

> Therefore it must apprehend its essence due to what it itself is in itself.... There is no other property with it of which being evident could be a state. It is simply the evident itself—nothing more. Therefore, it is light in itself, and it is thus pure light. Your apprehension is not something else posterior to your essence, nor is the capacity for apprehension accidental to your essence. If your essence were assumed to be an identity that apprehends its essence, it would itself be prior to its apprehension and therefore be unknown—which is absurd....
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> Here is another way to express this: You ought not to say, "My ego is a thing whose concomitant is being evident, but that thing is hidden in itself." Rather, it is nothing but being evident and being light.[38]

Despite the luminosity of the self, self understanding requires work. We can be thrown off, for instance, by the "ruse of imagination."[39] One paragraph is worth quoting at length, just to get an idea of how Suhrawardī thinks of the task of gaining self understanding.

Knowledge of the self depends on several things: first, familiarity with the several faculties which are combined in our bodies, five internal and five external.... One should know the

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[37] Suhrawardī, "The Garden of the Hearts," (tr. Legenhausen and Aavani, unpublished) from Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Shihaboddin Yahya Sohravardi Oeuvres Philosophiques et Mystiques, Tome III* (Tehran: Acadġmie Impġriale Iranienne de Philosophie, 1977), 372.

[38] Suhrawardī (1999), 80-81.

[39] Suhrawardī, "The Garden of the Hearts."

composition and division of one's parts, because they are all his army and his servants. Some of them are like demons, and some are like angels. Some are like beasts, and some are like birds. In some there is benefit, and in some, harm. If he does not recognize their benefits and harms, he will become imprisoned by them. The body, which is like a city, shall be ruined. Second, one should govern these enumerated faculties so that one rules over them and they are ruled. Third is to know one's self, whence one has come and whither one is going. From time to time one should bring one's self to one's own world. He should join that world so that he may increase his life, as the Messenger, Peace be with him, bids: "Keep the connections of the womb[40] so you may prolong your life." This means that keeping the connections of the womb lengthens one's life. This report has an exterior and an interior. Its exterior is that he who keeps such connections will have a long life. The womb is suspended from the divine throne, as it is said, "The womb is suspended from the throne." In another place he said, "The womb is a branch of the Merciful."[41] So, when one comes to recognize oneself, so that the desire for one's own world does not allow one to become preoccupied with this world, one will endeavor to join that world so that one keeps the connection of the womb, and when he keeps the connections of the womb, life is increased. Since this rank is to be achieved through righteous deeds, righteous deeds become like a mount which one rides toward the Truth. The self becomes a good word, as is reported in the Qur'ān, Honoured is He who said: "He raises to Himself the good word and the righteous deed." (35:10) Fourth is voluntary death, and this is acquired when the external and internal faculties are governed. Whenever one wants, they are arrested and stilled, as, for example, some of the faculties are arrested and stilled during sleep, so in wakefulness, they become submissive and dormant. When this occurs, the body stops its

[40] The expression, translated literally here, is used for keeping on good terms and visiting one's relatives.

[41] The Arabic words for womb (*rahim*) and mercy (*rahmah*) are derived from the same root.

work, and comes to rest in its own world, as the Messenger, Peace be with him, says in this regard: "My eye sleeps, but my heart, never." Khwājah Ḥakīm Sanā'ī,[42] may Allah have Mercy on him, says:

O Friend! Die before your death, if you desire life,
For Idris,[43] with such a death, reached paradise before us.

I have also composed two couplets in this regard:

If before your natural death you die,
Rejoice for you've won eternal paradise;
But if you've not given this task your best try,
Lament, for you've become your own sacrifice.[44]

By contrast, Prof. Bencivenga presents us with a view of the soul as shifting patterns of meaning and identity with no ultimate coherence, no *telos*, no *logos*, just vague patterns of actions stitched together into something between chaos and coincidence. Prof. Bencivenga quotes the spy novelist, le Carrg: "In the beginning was the deed. Not the motive, least of all the word." (83)

Damning Reason

Prof. Bencivenga has presented three views of Anselm's motivations for proving the existence of God, all of which he finds flawed: not (1) entertainment, because it is too serious; not (2) police work, because too risky; and not (3) subversion, because it is too "earnest" (i.e., too pious?). So, Prof.

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[42] The celebrated Sufi poet from Ghazna, Abū al-Majd Majdūd bin Adam, and author of the *Hadīqat al-Haqīqah* (*The Garden of Truth*), d. c. 1131.

[43] Idris is Enoch of the Old Testament (Gen. 5:24, Hebrews 11:5). He is said to have initiated the art of writing, and other sciences. His name derives from the same root as the word for lesson. It is said that Izrael, the Angel of Death, visited Idris in human form. Idris requested a taste of death, so Izrael took his soul out of his body and then returned it. Then Idris asked to see hell and heaven. When he saw heaven he asked to stay, and God commanded Izrael that since he had already tasted death, he might be allowed to remain in heaven.

[44] Suhrawardī, "The Garden of the Hearts", 393-395.

Bencivenga suggests that Anselm had conflicting and confused motives. The question of intention, or motive, according to the author, reduces to mere patterns of overt actions. In a note Prof. Bencivenga forces Anselm into his own Procrustean bed and in doing so sketches a rather unseemly picture of the religious significance of intention and virtue. He baldly states that intention must be either what one declares or else be reducible to overt behavior. Although most religious traditions would deny that these are the only alternatives, the author does not seem inclined to conceive anything greater.

Regardless of what one thinks of Prof. Bencivenga's views of the self and intention, it probably is true enough that Anselm had mixed motives. Anselm must anticipate and guard against Boso's questions put forth on behalf of the infidel, just as Guanilo sought to play the part of defense for the fool. Anyone who plays the devil's advocate is in danger of going over to the devil's side. Everyone who considers more than one side of an argument will find themselves with mixed motives. But that does not make us into double agents. It does not mean that there can be no underlying cohesion, ordering and division of labour among the voices. It certainly does not entail hypocrisy. Prof. Bencivenga paints a picture that seems much too radical for the description of the Archbishop of Canterbury at the turn of the 11th to 12th centuries.

Despite his doubts about any ultimate "I" and his alternative proposal of conflicting inner voices, Prof. Bencivenga has no trouble reassuring us that his own sympathies lie with Marcuse: "I too, despise logic as an instrument of domination,... but then I find consolation in the thought that it's not so easy to play with fire." (88-89) What is Prof. Bencivenga really doing here? He is confessing his loyalties after he has told us that his model of the human soul is Pym, the character in the spy novel who has no loyalties, who betrays all the loyalties he declares. So, should we believe him? Or should we not rather take his description of the perfect spy as a confession, and take his anti-authoritarian stance as a

deception, and, of course, as a self-deception, too? After all, the perfect spy is always sincere at the moment of whatever it is he is asserting. The assertion becomes a lie because that sincere voice is so easily replaced by another contrary one. No doubt the author himself would advise us to drop the concept of deception and accept that all the conflicting voices may be sincere—each tells its own truth; but if there is no direction in terms of which to put the conflicting voices in some sort of order, we are left with a cacophony that threatens the meaningfulness of each voice.

Clearly, Prof. Bencivenga identifies on some level with Anselmo d'Aosta, the Italian scholar and logician appointed to a position of respect in an English speaking environment. The identification is so strong that we fear that what is being presented as being about Anselm is really more autobiographical than meets the eye. The psychoanalyst, like Freud, ends up telling us more about himself than about his patient, let alone the human psyche. Perhaps we should take the identification with Anselm more seriously. The author does show us his cards in the guise of Anselm, but it is only one aspect among others.

Irony is what this book is all about, its author tells us. Irony is a revealing and concealing. It is a rhetorical method by which hints are given at the same time that there is an explicit denial. It is never entirely clear whether the one who uses irony is fully aware of the implications of what he is saying. The classic example of irony is the Socratic profession of ignorance. At the same time that he professes ignorance, he hints that he knows that the knowledge of which others boast is a sham. The Socratic use of irony occurs in the course of his dialectic, the careful use of question and answer that leads to deeper understanding.

Irony, is no mere jumble of voices; it is not mere punning or postmodern cleverness. Irony requires one to make a point by saying one thing and in another sense denying it, so that the listener with sufficient understanding can grasp the subtlety of the sense in which the point is true, and the aspect in which it is

not. What is needed for an appreciation of irony is an intuitive sense of the aspects. Irony does not provide a mere contradiction. It is dialectical, or, as Suhrawardī would say, illuminative.

The invitation given by Suhrawardī (so common in the mystical tradition of Islam) to die before one dies is ironic. You are to die, but not to die. You are to deny the self, but remain yourself. The dialectic, as in the Platonic tradition, is oriented toward light. It is not a mere holding together of alternative narratives, but requires climbing the ladder of the soul while recognizing what is higher and what is lower.

Irony is also political. It is an affront to the authorities who make false claims to knowledge. It contrasts mere argumentation, mere rhetoric, with the dialectic that brings the wisdom needed to establish justice. Likewise, Suhrawardī's invitation to intuitive philosophy is one that challenges the authorities who lack illuminative wisdom. Suhrawardi's political vision is consummately Platonic. When Plato seeks to distinguish dialectic from mere rhetoric, he puts his point in the form of a proportion: "Sophistic is to legislation what beautification is to gymnastics, and rhetoric to justice what cookery is to medicine."[45] In each case, there is a contrast between what offers mere appearances and what really provides the object sought. Here, however, rhetoric is contrasted with justice instead of dialectic. Justice, however, is what rhetoric attempts to give the appearance of, while it is really only achieved through dialectic, just as beautification gives the appearance of the strength that is really achieved through gymnastics. Justice here has two aspects. There is the justice of treating one's object of enquiry fairly, doing justice to the topic, and there is also justice in the political sense. The two are not unrelated, for the just ruler is one who is able to do justice to the practical issues that arise in governance; and in training to become philosopher kings, five years of the study of dialectic follows ten years of the study of mathematics.

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[45] *Gorgias*, 465c.

Chapter 4: That, Than Which a Greater Cannot Be Thought

Ist es möglich! Stern der Sterne,
Drück ich wieder dich ans Herz!
Ach, was ist die Nacht der Ferne,
Für ein Abgrund, für ein Schmerz!
Ja, du bist es, meiner Freuden
Süßer, lieber Widerpart!
Eingedenk vergangner Leiden
Schaudr ich vor der Gegenwart.[46]

Upper Bounds

Here Prof. Bencivenga introduces another genius, logician and intellectual spy: Alan Turing. Turing committed suicide in 1954 under pressure from the British government after "hormone treatment" for his homosexuality. Prof. Bencivenga treats him as if he were persecuted for challenging authority with his unorthodox logical theories. Once again, we find the author projecting something from his own psyche onto the historical figure—not quite his own autobiography, but a projection, nonetheless, of his own fancy.

Anselm explains his motivation for the proof with the Augustinian slogan: *Fides quaerens intellectum,* faith in search of an understanding. Prof. Bencivenga rejected that excuse in the first chapter on the grounds that the stated aim was

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[46] Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *West-östlicher Divan*, Buch des Sängers, Wiederfinden,
(ftp://sailor.gutenberg.org/pub/gutenberg/etext00/8wdvn10.txt):
It is possible! Star of the stars,
To press you again against my heart!
Oh, what sort of an abyss, what sort of pain
is the night so far away?
Yes, it is you, my joyous,
sweet, dear counterpart!
Recalling past sufferings,
I shudder before the present.

impossible, and that's what started him off looking for alternative motives. Then I commented that unreachable aims might still provide adequate motivation. The quest for perfection is not dulled by knowing in advance that it is not to be attained. However, aside from all this, Prof. Bencivenga's arguments for the futility of Anselm's task fall short. Prof. Bencivenga argues from the unknowability of the essence, but all Anselm is after is understanding of lesser truths of faith, and orientation on the path toward what lies beyond our abilities.

Another comparison with Turing can help us see this point. Both Turing and Anselm were concerned with upper bounds, with what is not computable and the *Entscheidungs problem* and with that than which a greater cannot be imagined. Turing's result could undermine a formalist philosophical theory of mathematical truth, but Anselm's result, if it led one to realize that God is inconceivable, would only make the religious ideology, according to Prof. Bencivenga, more unassailable. The idea here is that an inconceivable God cannot be proven not to exist. However, there are plenty of ways to undermine a religious ideology aside from casting doubts on the existence of God. The first significant blows to Catholicism came from those who raised doubts about the authority of the Pope, not from those who doubted the existence of God. Prof. Bencivenga considers this sort of point for a few seconds, but dismisses it with the excuse that Anselm counsels thinking of nothing but God.[47] The counsel on meditation, however, is clearly besides the point. Support for the Church by no means is made more secure by demonstrating ineffability! Indeed, when we look through religious histories, it seems that often those who were the greatest rebels, Eckhart, Ibn 'Arabī, Pseudo-Dionysius, etc., were also some of the most prominent heretics and were persecuted by the religious authorities. Certainly, Prof.

[47] Fn. 10, p. 99.

Bencivenga knows this as well as we do, so why the subterfuge? The whole idea that one is doing something liberating and revolutionary by questioning the existence of God only began to dawn on human awareness around the time of Voltaire, and atheistic ideologies only challenged the authority of the Church and its allies in the 19th century! Needless to say, none of these challenges had anything to do with ineffability. Furthermore, Prof. Bencivenga presents the religio-political situation too simplistically, as if the guys with the white hats in his film are always the forces of revolutionary atheism and the bad guys are always the ecclesiastical authorities.

What Prof. Bencivenga, following Marcuse, says about reason, could also be said of religion, i.e., that it can be used to support the establishment or to rally revolutionaries. There is a significant theological reading of Church history that sees the message brought by the prophets from Abraham to Muhammad (peace and salutations to him and his progeny and to all of them) as essentially challenging the powers that be.[48] Certainly, theology can be challenging or supportive of both religious and political authorities. Anselm's theology was supportive of the Pope at the same time it was a challenge to the King of England.[49] Perhaps Anselm could have been more critical of papal authority without playing into the hands of Henry I. Maybe he was a victim of his historical circumstances so that it

[48] For example, see Walter Wink, *Powers That Be* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), Richard A. Horsly, *Jesus and Empire* (Augsburg Fortress, 2002). The theme of the revolutionary character of the message brought by the prophets is also a recurrent theme in the works of Imam Khumaynī and Shahid Mutahhari.

[49] Despite all his emphasis on obedience to papal authority, however, "Anselm's second exile (1103-1106) ended in a compromise reached in Normandy between the king and the archbishop: Henry relented on the issue of lay investiture of the clergy, and Anselm allowed payment by an English bishop for temporalities of his see." James A. Weisheipl, "Anselm" in Mircea Eliade, *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (Provo: MacMillan, 1995).

was really unimaginable for him that there could be moral and religious reason to question the authority of the Pope. At that time, the major form of corruption in the Church (aside from violations of celibacy) was simony. Urban II was seen as a reformer who sought to protect the religious authority of the Church from worldly corruption that came in the form of a variety of methods by which the secular authorities sought to coerce the Church for venal purposes.

For Prof. Bencivenga, however, obedience to and intellectual support for the Church is seen as stultifying human potential, submitting to authoritarian power structures and repressing libidinal vitality. Perhaps his dismissive attitude toward the authority of revelation should not be faulted any more than Anselm's supportive attitude toward the authority of the Pope. Given the political legacy of the Church since the French Revolution and it's legacy of intolerance for creative thinking at least since Bruno's being consigned to the flames in 1600, it is only natural for Western intellectuals to find it unimaginable that human beings might be able to display their revolutionary potential in devotional expressions, in sermons and exhortations better than through audacious theorizing. On the other hand, perhaps there is an element of self-deception in Anselm's not being able to conceive there being anything wrong with launching a crusade against an unknown enemy.

Prof. Bencivenga notices that if God were as inconceivable as Anselm sometimes admits, there would be no point trying to prove His existence. So, he returns to his refrain: What is the point of trying to prove the existence of God? In order to understand Anselm's proof better, and why Anselm did not consider it invalidated by divine ineffability, we should consider what Anselm meant by inconceivability. As we saw above, in his *Monologion*, Anselm tells us that God is inconceivable and He isn't. It's a matter of *precision*. He is not

precisely conceivable; but He is imprecisely conceivable. Imprecise conceivability is enough of a foothold to launch the ontological argument. So, we might draw a lesson from this, that if one uses one's God given reason, an imprecise conception ought to be enough to lead one to certain conclusions, and if it doesn't, then it would seem that one is a fool, or playing the fool.

Similarly, Suhrawardi explains how the incompleteness of knowledge of God does not prevent one from knowing God:

> It has been related that all the prophets, saints and angels, upon whom be Peace, finished their litanies with these two or three words: "Glory to You! We did not know You as You should be known; Glory to You! We did not worship You as You should be worshipped." It is said that there is an angel whose glorification is like this: "Glory to You, whose creatures have no way of knowing You." The purport of these words is this, that no one can know Him as He is. However, everyone can obtain some knowledge to the extent of his capability and spiritual rank, and to the extent he has traveled the spiritual path he can attain some rank in Presence....
>
> Whoever comes to know himself to the extent of his capability will have a share in the knowledge of the Supreme Reality. The more he mortifies himself, and the nearer he come to perfection, so too, his knowledge will increase. This is exemplified by the way the sun shines into each house proportionately with its aperture.[50]

If even an imprecise knowledge is still knowledge, and one really ought to draw the implications that are within reach from such knowledge, is Anselm playing the fool when he fails to consider the implications that might follow from an imprecise notion that there is something wrong with mobilizing Christendom against the Muslims about whom precious little is known between Rome and Canterbury? Could such considerations amount to anything more than paper doubts for Anselm? The judgement is to be left to God alone, and it may be

[50] Suhrawardi, "The Garden of the Hearts," 376-377.

improper for us even to speculate about what is in the heart of another. Nevertheless, the act of failing to oppose war may be damnable even if the actor is not.

Prof. Bencivenga has given us reason to suspect that when we argue in support of principles that we cannot imagine could be otherwise, this indicates that there are other factors at work. With regard to Anselm, the motivating factors are at once intellectual satisfaction, support of the Church, and subversion. None of these is the entire story, but each plays a part. It seems, however, that the story is truer of the author than of Anselm, except that the institutions for which the author has worked are not those of the Church but of secular universities. With regard to Anselm, I have suggested another set of motivations: his teleological religious metaphysics, his educational aims, and his support of *philosophical* theology. I do not mean to dismiss entirely the political concerns discussed by Prof. Bencivenga, although I do not see these as being as central as he does.

Whatever the motives we find in the work of Anselm, what is most important for Prof. Bencivenga's argument is that there are a multiplicity of occasionally conflicting factors at work. This multiplicity of factors is especially relevant when we consider the controlling beliefs of one's ideology. One's identity is not to be understood through a transparent introspection of one's own real motives, because the self is only understood by listening to the several voices within that evidence themselves in the patterns of our actions. This makes Prof. Bencivenga sceptical about attributions of hypocrisy and self-deception, for such attributions seem to assume a privileged core of the self which one may betray in word or deed.

Against the inner theater of the absurd sketched by Prof. Bencivenga, we may contrast the view of the self expounded by Suhrawardī. The competing voices within are formed by the various sorts of light and darkness that are mixed within us, but these actors form a hierarchy, at the head of which is the pure light of simple awareness. Like Prof. Bencivenga, we can grant that often none of the inner voices of the conflicting aspects of

our personalities can establish any claim to speaking for the true self or inner identity.

Self-deception remains possible for one who accepts Prof. Bencivenga's idea of the self, even if not in the form of a transparent true self pretending to be something it is not. First, the very failure to recognize the variety of psychological factors at work within one which Prof. Bencivenga decries is a form of self-deception. Secondly, one's actions may pattern themselves in such a way as to suggest motivating factors outwardly denied by the dominant inner voice. For example, we may tell ourselves that we are not racists while our actions refute our words. Suhrawardī would no doubt urge that self-deception is to be removed by undertaking the spiritual quest, submitting oneself to the sort of discipline with regard to which Anselm counseled moderation. Perhaps, however, more is needed. Fasts and prayers are not by themselves sufficient to bring to light the manner in which one's actions may contribute to enmity or oppression, although we may hope that through spiritual exercise one will find sufficient motivation to examine oneself in regard to such issues. "No one who seeks His court will perish; neither will He disappoint the hopes of him who stands before His door."[51]

Mothers of Invention

When we look for patterns in our actions, however, mere regularity can no more suffice as an indication of characteristics of the self than it can suffice for a theory of causality. Regularity theories are notorious for their inability to weed out coincidence. In both intentionality and causation one needs to consider not just the facts, but what would happen in counterfactual situations. Suhrawardī writes:

> Errors may also occur when the actual is taken to be potential, or vice versa; when something essential is taken to be accidental, or vice versa; or when beings of reason and intellectual predicates are taken to be concrete—such as when

[51] Suhrawardī (1999), 162.

> someone hears that "Man is a universal" and thinks that its being a universal is something predicated of it as a concrete thing by virtue of its being described by humanity; or when a thing's image is taken in place of the thing itself; or when a part of a thing's cause is taken in place of the cause; or when in *reductio ad absurdum* a thing that is not the cause of the negation of the conclusion is taken to be so.[52]

To understand the motives behind the proofs, we do better to look at how they figured in actual historical disputes than to search for mere regularities. On a more personal psychological level, the theologian pursues proofs and seeks to shore up reason within the Church in order to strengthen the Church, in order to assist in its reform, finding ways to remove its inconsistencies, irrationalities, unreasonablenesses, and to gain understanding. The thirst for understanding cannot be denied. What else is the appeal of philosophy?

> We cannot, even if we would, prevent ourselves from thinking about the frame and principles and destiny of our lives; and we believe that the right use of reason brings us nearer truth, not farther away from it. Thus philosophy itself may be said to be founded upon a belief, a belief expressed long ago by Socrates, that "the unexamined life is not worthy to be lived by a man."[53]

Prof. Bencivenga seems to be drawn to a more Freudian interpretation of intellectual play as a form of searching for the mother by the child, but religion has its own myths about the original quest, and the home whose refuge we seek. These myths or allegories also have philosophical versions in Plato, and in the Neoplatonists the story of Odysseus often was taken as an allegory for the soul's homeward journey. Suhrawardi is also famous for his philosophical allegories, one of which is

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[52] Suhrawardi (1999), 33-34.

[53] William Ernest Hocking, *Types of Philosophy*, 3rd ed. (New York: Sharles Scribnere's Sons, 1959), 6.

called "A Tale of Occidental Exile",[54] and his spiritual geography has been studied extensively by Henry Corbin.[55]

Like Suhrawardī, Anselm writes of exile. In the Proslogion, Anselm prays:

> O Lord, my God; I do not know thy form. What, O most high Lord, shall this man do, an exile far from thee? What shall thy servant do, anxious in his love of thee, and cast out afar from thy face? He pants to see thee, and thy face is too far from him. He longs to come to thee, and thy dwelling-place is inaccessible. He is eager to find thee, and knows not thy place. He desires to seek thee, and does not know thy face. Lord, thou art my God, and thou art my Lord, and never have I seen thee. It is thou that hast made me, and hast made me anew, and hast bestowed upon me all the blessing I enjoy; and not yet do I know thee. Finally, I was created to see thee, and not yet have I done that for which I was made.[56]

Suhrawardī is more upbeat about the human condition. "Those who follow the path shall consummate what God hath written for them in the primal inscription."[57] At the end of his allegory of exile, he writes:

> I was in the midst of this tale when my condition changed and I fell from the air into a low place among a people who were not believers. I was as a prisoner in the region of the occident. There remained with me a pleasure, however, I am unable to explain. I moaned and wailed out of regret at being separated, and that comfort was a dream that quickly passed.
>
> May God save us from the captivity of nature and the bonds of matter. Say, 'Praise be unto God! He will show you his signs, and ye shall know them; and thy Lord is not regardless of that which ye do.' And say, 'God be praised! But the greater part of

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[54] W. M. Thackson, Jr., tr., *The Mystical & Visionary Treatises of Suhrawardi* (London: Octagon, 1982), 100-108.

[55] See, for example, Henry Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977)

[56] *Proslogion*, Ch. I, 3.

[57] Suhrawardi (1999), 158.

them do not understand.' And prayers upon His prophet and his family all.[58]

Although man is fallen, cast into exile, this is no cause for despair. All of spiritual wayfaring is a trek homeward. It is also what Muslims refer to as the "greatest jihad",[59] the struggle against the self, and for Suhrawardī, this involves a gradual process by which successively more primitive levels of the soul are conquered or liberated, brought into consciousness and subject to the will, a will that obliterates itself in the light of divine will.

Prof. Bencivenga reassures us that in the sort of struggle described by Anselm (and Suhrawardī), we are not to worry because "no one is going to get hurt" (102), since we are not really dealing with God or any other basic reality, but merely with the limits of our own understanding. This begs the question against the seriousness of the quest. It is a post-Kantian attitude, at any rate unavailable to Anselm. As for no one getting hurt, didn't Becket get murdered in the Cathedral precisely because of the same sort of loyalty to the Church against the powers of the state advocated by Anselm as a result of his own religious quest?

Secondly, Prof. Bencivenga tells us that reason is always stumped when dealing with God because of the peculiar logic of the Trinity. This is an area where Islam displays a more rationalist strain than Christianity, but only above a certain rather sublime level. Below that, both are in pretty wide agreement about how to use philosophical theology to approach some sort of understanding of God, man and the world and their relations. Prof. Bencivenga makes much of the never ending

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[58] W. M. Thackson, Jr., tr., *The Mystical & Visionary Treatises of Suhrawardi* (London: Octagon, 1982), 107-108.

[59] This term is derived from a narration attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (S), according to which after returning from a battle he commented that they were returning from the lesser jihad and that the greater *jihād* still remained. When asked what was meant by the greater *jihād*, he (S) replied that it was the *jihād* against the self. The narration can be found in *Wasā'il al-Shī'ah*, Vol. 15, *bāb* 1, p. 161, no. 20208.

character of the quest, but the same is true of all intellectual pursuits, physics no less than philosophy. There is no coming to the end of it.

Prof. Bencivenga also proposes that the ontological argument might be a way of letting off steam. (103) If reason seems incapable of providing a justification for faith, the ontological argument might help by showing why, by showing that it is due to its own weakness that reason that cannot assure us of the existence of anything more than a something than which a greater cannot be conceived. Reason either backs up dogma, or is insufficient to oppose it. Prof. Bencivenga sees the ontological argument's characterization of God in terms of the incapacity of our abilities to conceive as implicitly inviting the reply that the proof tacitly assumes limits to reason that throw its own validity into question.

Philosophy has put pressure on religion ever since Plato raised doubts about Homer's depiction of the gods. When Christianity came to confront Greek thought, the first reaction was to condemn philosophy as a pagan. Paul sees the worldly wisdom of the Greeks as potentially undermining the Christian message: "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power."[60] In time, some Christians began to see human wisdom as a divine gift, not to be deplored but employed in His service. Few have been as optimistic in this regard as Anselm. Among Christian theologians today there are still those who suspect that reason would empty faith of its power, while others adhere to a reconciliation of reason and faith. The fideist position is susceptible to attack from those who see it as an admission that there is no good reason to accept faith. Reconciliation, however, can be approached from various directions. Anselm sees reason as lending its strength to faith to provide answers to hypothetical infidels. In recent years, however, philosophers have become more sensitive to the limits of reason. This has given encouragement to theologians who

[60] NIV (1 Cor. 1:17).

think they have discovered that reason does not have teeth sharp enough to harm faith.

All of these trends can be found in the Islamic world, too. There are Muslim fideists who suspect that philosophy is nothing more than worldly cleverness opposed to divine revelation. Among Muslim *philosophers*, however, reason is seen as a divine light. If it is weak, it is because we have not followed it sufficiently, or because we have restricted it to the crutch of mere discursive reasoning. If reason undermines the literally interpreted faith of the masses, it is because it reveals a truth deeper than what they are prepared to understand. Suhrawardī, like Avicenna and many other Muslim philosophers, cautions that his books should not be allowed to fall into the hands of the ignorant.

Contrary to the opposition some theologians have mounted against philosophy, there is also a religious motivation to win whatever prestige has been accorded to the philosophical tradition to the service of religion. Christians have often revered the philosophers as sages, despite admitting that they were pagans. Among Muslims, efforts to view the pagan Greek philosophers as covert monotheists has been especially strong (and continues through the present day), and one of the foremost exponents of this view has been Suhrawardī.[61] In his introduction to *The Philosophy of Illumination*, Suhrawardī writes:

> Do not imagine that philosophy has existed only in these recent times. The world has never been without philosophy or without a person possessing proofs and clear evidences to champion it. He is God's vicegerent on His earth. Thus shall it be so long as the heavens and the earth endure. The ancient and modern philosophers differ only in their use of language and their divergent habits of openness and allusiveness. All speak of three worlds, agreeing on the unity of God. There is no dispute among them on fundamental questions. Even though the First

[61] See John Walbridge, *The Leaven of the Ancients: Suhrawardī and the Heritage of the Greeks* (Albany: SUNY, 2000).

> Teacher [Aristotle] was very great, profound, and insightful, one ought not exaggerate about him so as to disparage his master. Among them are the messengers and lawgivers such as Agathadaemon, Hermes, Asclepius, and others.[62]

So, another motivation for employing philosophical method in service of religion may be to win the veneration that has been accorded to the philosophers for religion. Furthermore, one may claim with Suhrawardī that there is a *sophia perennis* that is expressed in both religion and philosophy, although the Catholic Church only came to advocate its own version of the doctrine of a *philosophia perennis* long after Anselm.[63]

The Law of the Jungle

Prof. Bencivenga starts off with the reasonable observation that the greatest danger to any ideology is posed by a rival ideology that can perform the same functions. However, one can only doubt the seriousness of the suggestion that Bruno's infinite universe posed just such an alternative and that it was right around the corner from Anselm. Four hundred years is hardly just over the horizon. What was literally just over Anselm's horizon was Islam, not modernity. Rational theology, however, was not employed in the confrontation with Muslims to challenge their beliefs—instead, the Crusades continued, and wildly distorted ideas about Islam gained currency throughout Europe. Theology was used to boost morale behind the monastery walls, and to help maintain the impression that Christian culture was as rational and philosophically prestigious as that of the infidel.

For Prof. Bencivenga, however, the intellectual heroes to compete with and then supercede the theologians would be scientists rather than Saracens. He tells a peculiar tale of the liberating social consequences of the spread of scientific ideas.

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[62] Suhrawardī (1999), 3-4.

[63] The doctrine was made official by Pope Leo XII in his Encyclical "*Aeterni Patris*" (1880), in which it was claimed that the *philosophia perennis* finds expression in the works of Thomas Aquinas, who explicitly rejected Anselm's ontological argument.

Untold is how scientific authority came to abstain from religious or political aspirations to leave the political forces more rapacious than ever. Prof. Bencivenga's own aspirations are not so apolitical. He dreams of how the scientists will eventually "cross a threshold" and "force the political and administrative powers to constantly rewrite directions..." (110). In the real world, however, scientists (and philosophers) tend to support whatever politics are dominant. When have the scientists ever led an insurrection, instigated some reform, or taken any other significant political action? Notable individuals can be found, but as a group, they tend to be disappointing. The most politically active group in the university is the student body, not the faculty. When someone like Noam Chomsky does appear, he is castigated by the media as an aberration. Of course, the European intelligentsia have always been more political than the American. Generally, however, scientists are confined to offering expert advice about how best to protect the interests declared by the politicians. Whatever religious commitment is found among government officials or corporate executives, far from providing any constraint on injustice, seems to be subverted for worldly ends. The religion that remains with them often seems little more than a talisman to give them confidence and apocalyptic visions.

Prof. Bencivenga sees Anselm as someone who is dedicated to keeping things unchanging—the ultimate conservative. This is unfair. Surely, Anselm saw the flaws of administrators, the petty corruptions and treacheries as well as the revolutionary. Indeed, his attachment to the pope may have been due in large part to his hopes in the reforms for which the pope was known as a staunch advocate. The disagreement between Anselm and the revolutionary would be more about method. Should one support rebellion against the secular authorities, or seek to bring about change by preaching, exhortation and by spreading the wisdom that comes with philosophical exercise?

The book ends with a prayer. It is a prayer more sarcastic than ironic, but ignoring any acerbity, it is not an altogether bad prayer. Let us join the author in prayer, confess to God that our understanding is faulty, although "this pale, confused grasping is some reflection of You" and because of how pale and confused it is, we can continue to strive and pray, and be nourished by whatever "tension, and encouragement, and hope" You may grant us. And instead of the cinematographic "fade to black" with which the author closes, we might pray with Suhrawardī, "Remove us from Your wrath to Your Mercy, from our darkness to Your light!"[64] Praise be to Allah, the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden. Peace and benedictions upon Your prophet, Muhammad, and his folk, all of them.

Appendix 1: The Logic of an Illusion

After all these ruminations over its motivation, a few words, at least, should be given to an examination of the proof. There has been much controversy over how Anselm's ontological argument should be interpreted. Some have argued that when he restates his proof in response to Guanilo, he is actually giving a different proof. There have also been a number of different formulations of Anselm's arguments that employ the tools of modern logic.

Here, instead of focusing on Anselm's argument, I would like to consider Bencivenga's interpretation of the argument. Bencivenga's version is very similar to Plantinga's. While Anselm asks whether that than which a greater cannot be conceived has objective existence or merely mental existence, Plantinga and Bencivenga ask whether such a being exists merely in some possible world or exists in the actual or real world. Formally, it doesn't really make much difference, for we could just limit the set of possible worlds to two: the actual

[64] Suhrawardī, "The Tablets of 'Imad," (tr. Legenhausen and A'wānī, unpublished) from Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Shihaboddin Yahya Sohravardi Oeuvres Philosophiques et Mystiques, Tome III* (Tehran: Acadġmie Impġriale Iranienne de Philosophie, 1977), 195.

world and the mental world. Still, we must not forget that Anselm had no inkling of the possible worlds of contemporary modal logic; and even if he had, it is not the modalities of possibility and actuality on which his proof turns, but the modalities of mental and external existence.

The key to Plantinga's ontological argument is that once you admit the possibility of a maximally great being, that is, the existence of a maximally great being in some possible world, this implies its existence in all the other worlds, too.

Strictly speaking, this implication does not hold in every system of modal logic. It requires a system, such as S5, in which possible necessity implies necessity. This point is overlooked by both Plantinga and Bencivenga. A system of modal logic other than S5 would seem more appropriate for dealing with constructions of the imagination that we want to allow to be conceivably necessary, but not actually necessary. Defenders of Plantinga would sidestep this objection with the excuse that it is reasonable to use S5, and Plantinga's aim is only to show that from reasonable premises it is reasonable to deduce the existence of God.

Instead of questioning the suitability of S5 for the formulation of his version of the ontological argument, Plantinga admits that the argument he gives would not be accepted by a persistent atheist who could argue that a maximally great being is not even possible, that is, he admits that one of the argument's crucial premises might be considered dubious. Again, he retreats to the claim that the proof only shows that it is reasonable to deduce the existence of God from reasonable premises. The atheist will respond that even if it is granted that it is reasonable to think that a Necessary Being is possible in some sense, it is not clear that it is reasonable to think that a Necessary Being is S5-possible. To show that, one would have to show that it is reasonable to believe that there is a Necessary Being. By itself, Plantinga's ontological argument does not accomplish this.

As Bencivenga analyzes the argument, however, what makes one of its premises reasonable makes the other unreasonable. The argument depends on assumptions that will be rejected by transcendental realists and transcendental idealists; and he sees no alternative to these two positions, and hence, the argument is to be rejected. Of course, the Kantian terminology does not fit well with the way Anselm saw the problem, but the anachronism serves to underscore the fact that what Bencivenga seems to be presenting here is not so much an analysis of Anselm's argument, but a statement of his own reasons for doubt.

One of the premises employed in Bencivenga's reconstruction of the argument is the following (with his numbering):

(11) If *Y* thinks of *Z*, then *Z* is an object *Y* thinks of.

From this, Bencivenga informs us, it would not take much convincing to accept this:

(12) If *Y* thinks of *Z*, then *Z* is an object existing in a world *Y* thinks of.

Once we accept (12) we can move on to something like Plantinga's version of the ontological argument. So, Bencivenga stops at (11). He claims that a transcendental realist should not accept (11), because we can think of all sorts of absurdities that are not objects that exist in any possible world at all. A transcendental idealist, however, can accept (11), but for him *Z* will be nothing more than an *intentional object*, an object embedded in some experience and reference to which occurs in opaque contexts.

Bencivenga presents his version of Anselm's argument as a reductio, where the assumption to be proven absurd is: that than which a greater cannot be thought does not exist in the real world, and the contradiction to be derived is by using (12) to establish that in some possible world *w*, that than which a greater *cannot* be thought (designated as *X*) does exist, while at the same time proving that in *w* something greater than *X can* be thought, namely, something that exists in all worlds. Now,

Bencivenga tells us that there is no real contradiction here if we are only dealing with intentional objects because such objects cannot be detached from the experiences of thinking about them in such a way as to derive logical contradictions about them. Hence, Anselm's reductio fails. We should have to think of the objects of thought realistically for it to succeed, but we already saw that (11) requires us to take a transcendental idealist view of the problem.

Bencivenga's sympathies lie with the transcendental idealist. Anselm, on the other hand, cannot be properly understood by means of this sort of classification; but it seems fairly clear that he is thinking realistically enough about *X* to allow the derivation of a contradiction from the supposition that *X* does not exist.

Anselm would not accept (11). This is clear from his response to Guanilo. Just because we can think of a greatest possible island does not make it an object of which we think. It is a mere play of words. So, if Anselm doesn't adhere to a principle like (11) or (12), how is he to establish that there is an imaginable world in which *X* exists? This is precisely the point at which Plantinga gives up and makes the following admission:

> Hence our verdict on these reformulated versions of St. Anselm's argument must be as follows. They cannot, perhaps, be said to *prove* or *establish* their conclusion. But since it is rational to accept their central premises, they do show that it is rational to *accept* that conclusion. And perhaps that is all that can be expected of any such argument.[65]

Of course, Anselm wanted more than a proof that it is rational to accept the conclusion that God exists. He did not want to equivocate between the transcendental idealist and transcendental realist conceptions of objects of thought, and he did not want to rest his case on the mere plausibility that a maximally great being possibly exists. Recall that Anselm appeals to the faith of Guanilo as a Catholic.[66] The God who

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[65] Plantinga (1974a), 221.

[66] *Anselm's Apologetic*, Ch. I, 152.

exists in the mind of one who truly understands Him is not a mere intentional object.

Likewise, Suharwardī proves the existence of God by inviting us to reflect on being itself. These reflections lead to various proofs that being in itself is necessary. Often Suhrawardī refers to pure being as a pure light. Like Anselm's proof, Suhrawardī's proofs will not convince the stubborn atheist. The atheist will deny that there is any such thing as pure being. Suhrawardī, like Anselm, appeals to the faith of his reader. However, while Anselm appeals to the Catholicism of Guanilo, Suhrawardī appeals to a specifically philosophical faith, a rational insight that being itself must have reality if anything is to be real. This is not faith as opposed to intellection, but an exalted notion of intellection as including divine intuitions into the nature of reality.[67]

Suhrawardī seeks to prove the existence of Necessary Existence in order to show how philosophical reflection can enable us to prove Necessary Existence on the basis of rational insight about pure being. The proof is offered not to find out whether God exists, but to show how the intellect can arrive at a philosophical understanding of existence. So, we return to the original question of Bencivenga's book: Why prove the existence of God if you already claim to know it? Anselm's own answer is that he is seeking understanding. He is seeking a specific type of understanding, a philosophical understanding. His description of the divine essence, which admittedly cannot be known in itself, takes the *via negativa*. Anselm is careful to describe the divine essence not as maximal greatness, but as that than which a greater can*not* be conceived. Philosophical reflection on this entirely negative description of divinity—assuming on the basis of faith that it does refer to something with at least mental existence and is not a mere jumble of words—reveals that it exists, by means of a *reductio ad*

[67] See Muhammad Legenhausen, "The Proof of the Sincere," *Journal of Islamic Philosophy*, Issue number 1, volume 1, Fall (2003), URL = http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/journal/is-01/Ms-Leg.doc

absurdum argument. In other words, Anselm has proved that a negative characterization of divinity is sufficient to derive existence, and necessary existence, at that, given the assumption provided by faith that the description refers to a possible object. That is no small feat, even if it disappoints those who mistakenly sought a way to use the force of logic to coerce the atheist to admit the existence of God.

Appendix 2: Esoteric Doctrines

Prof. Bencivenga's little book ends with a little appendix of two pages on hermeneutics. First, I will review his position and how it stems from what he has elaborated about the nature of the self, and the idealism-realism controversy, and then I will sketch the implications of our criticism of his views of the self for the issue of interpretation.

According to Bencivenga, there is no authentic self. It is pointless to try to interpret a text by getting at what the author really meant, because the author is a congeries of motivations, intentions, dispositions and tendencies, etc., among which none can be singled out as the genuine article. Quine famously quipped: "Meaning is what essence becomes when it is divorced from the object of reference and wedded to the word."[68] So, if we transfer Bencivenga's view of the soul to that of the meaning of a text, we wind up with a hermeneutics according to which there text has no authentic meaning of its own, but displays a multiplicity of attitudes and tendencies. Indeed, the analogy between textual meaning and human essence would suggest that although Bencivenga's treatment of hermeneutics is confined to a mere short appendix to a book about the soul and its ironies, there is a recurrent pattern in the author's theory of the soul that is also found in much postmodern hermeneutics. Just as the postmodernists minimalize the importance of the author for the meaning of a text, and, furthermore hold that the forever shifting meanings of a text depend on what can be read into it, Prof.

[68] Willard Van Orman Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," in *From a Logical Point of View* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 22.

Bencivenga claims that the human personality is likewise a shifting heap of meanings. In fact, we are led by a footnote to another essay by the author[69] in which there is a clear shift from doubts about there being a unique meaning of a text to doubts about a person having a unique meaning in mind when an utterance is made.

Prof. Bencivenga contrasts an idealist approach to hermeneutics, in which meaning is, at least in part, the construction of the interpreter, and a realist approach, in which meaning is out there just waiting to be discovered. Although he tends to favour the idealist position, he concedes that traditional esotericism provides "an interesting compromise between (what I perceive as) the essential multiplicity of any test on the one hand and a persistently realist attitude on the other." (124) As the author sees it, when conflicting meanings are found in a text, the realist must conclude that only one was truly meant by the author, and the other is deceptive. To the contrary, in Bencivengian hermeneutics, nothing can be deceptive.

The esotericism we find in Suhrawardi[70] does suggest a compromise: we can allow multiple conflicting readings, but we can also allow a distinction between deceptive and sincere meanings. For Suhrawardī, as for Bencivenga, the soul contains a multiplicity of often conflicting factors. This is because the soul has various levels, some of which are more noble than others. Suhrawardī's legacy to Islamic philosophy is largely based on his principle of *gradations* (*tashqīq*) in the light he employs for both the intellect and being. This does not, however, mean that any pattern of behaviour or utterance can be

[69] Ermanno Bencivenga, "A New Paradigm of Meaning," in *Looser Ends, The Practice of Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 62-79.

[70] See Ian Richard Netton, *Allah Transcendent: Studies in the Structure and Semiotics of Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Cosmology* (London: Routledge, 1989) for a discussion of Suhrawardi's esotericism and that of a number of other Muslim thinkers. Also see John Walbridge, *The Wisdom of the Mystic East: Suhrawardī and Platonic Orientalism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2001).

taken as a true reflection of any of these layers of the soul. To have good reason for an attribution one must be able to understand how the pattern fits into the hierarchy of the dynamic radiances of the soul.

When we look at Suhrawardī's outlook on texts, both his own texts, and those of other, we also find the presumption of a graduated multiplicity of meanings. However, this does not mean that deception falls off as useless. To the contrary, deception plays an important role in the way texts are written. The author must be cautious about the writing of a text because it may fall into the wrong hands. The audience for whom the author writes includes the elite he hopes to instruct, as well as the base souls who are not able to understand such instruction properly. With this in mind, the author offers texts that intentionally have a deceptive apparent meaning: the allegory. Layers of meaning are woven into a text with multiple intentions: (1) the intention of putting off those who, like Anselm's *insipiens*, allow pride or other vices to prevent them from submitting to the Truth; (2) the intention of guiding the novice who has gained familiarity with the symbols used, and can employ this knowledge as a key to gain entry to the philosophical meaning of the allegory; (3) the intention of guiding the adept by placing clues in the text that invite him to forge beyond the philosophical theory presented to the insight that illuminates it. Suhrawardī's major philosophical text itself, *The Philosophy of Illumination*, though not an allegory, is steeped in multivalent symbols.

In order to discriminate between what is intended and what is not, and what is intended as deceptive or as dissimulation, one must understand the text and its author. It is not enough to speak in generalities or to rest content with feelings of won insight and high emotion. The acceptance of multiplicity and apparent paradox do not imply that the realist's aim of an objective science must be abandoned. The characteristics of the objectivity sought are: (1) the interpretation given should assist one who is sufficiently

talented to attain a deeper understanding of the text, and hence, the interpretation should be set forth as a course through which understanding is gradually deepened; (2) the levels of meaning that are posited should be made explicit in an interpretation to the extent possible, or at least some indication should be given in the interpretation of how to grope toward deeper levels of meaning; (3) what is apparent in the text, its exoteric aspect, must be understood for its surface value and then related to its esoteric meanings in a systematic way; so that (4) the soundness of the interpretation should speak for itself.

Interpretation is educational in a double movement. The interpreter seeks to be educated by the text to be interpreted, and in producing an interpretation, the interpreter seeks to guide others. Among the pedagogical tools are the layering of meaning, the use of tropes such as irony and metaphor, dissimulation, and a sort of deception, perhaps even lying. All of these might be found in a text interpreted and in the interpretive text, as well. No interpretation is final. It invites others to the text it interprets, as we invite our readers, again, to study *Logic and Other Nonsense.*

Bibliography:

Descriptive Bibliography of 'Allāmah Ja'farī's Works

By: Karīm Fayzī

The late 'Allāmah Muhammad Taqī Ja'farī was born in Tabriz in 1923. He had learned how to read and write from his mother even before he started school and so began his education from fourth grade. Indeed, his academic progress was wonderful from the very beginning.

After elementary school, Muhammad Taqī began to study at the Islamic seminary, and then moved to Tehran and later to Qum, where he studied under some of the outstanding religious scholars of his time. His mother's illness made him return to Tabriz, where he attended Mīrzā Fattāh Shahīdī's classes. It was Shahīdī who spotted his talents and encouraged him to leave for the Najaf School of theology in Iraq.

Muhammad Taqī Ja'farī spent 11 years in Najaf and learned from great scholars. His progress was so spectacular that he soon attained the greatest degree of jurisprudence – *ijtihād* – while only 23 years old.

His life was quite difficult at that time, for the only income he had was the allowance he received from the seminary. He

had to work and study at the same time to manage his simple, austere life.

His first book, *The Relationship between Man and the Universe*, which he wrote when he was in his late twenties, was indicative of his budding genius. The book, which concerns physics and philosophy, implies how important learning about modern science and analyzing and criticizing it was to its writer. His style of criticism, however, was that of a young, Islamic academician who had been trained by the best Islamic scholars of his time. Of course, the fundamentals of Islamic civilization and development were also influential.

When Ja'farī returned to Iran, he continued to study the new waves of thought that were rapidly spreading through the intellectual society. He undoubtedly approved the basic idea of intellectualism, which was what had drawn him from traditional thoughts to study modern ones; the study that dominated his 60-year academic career.

As an explorer of anthropological domains, Muhammad Taqī Ja'farī endeavoured to discover mankind accurately, so he began by practically showing value for human beings, and presenting the highest of moral values and constructive patterns in his behaviour. Maybe it was his moral excellence that helped him accomplish so much in a rather short period of time – the 'Allāmah wrote many books on a vast variety of fields, the most prominent of which are his 15-volume *Interpretation and Criticism of Rūmī's Mathnawī*, and his 27-volume *Translation and Interpretation of the Nahj al-Balāghah*. These two major works of Ja'farī contain his most important thoughts and ideas in fields like anthropology, sociology, moral ethics, philosophy and gnosis.

Ja'farī never withered from his ideals and no fashion or ideological trend could distract him. Despite all the

philosophical issues on his mind, he always insisted on upholding ideals like duty, responsibility, and commitment.

As a Jewish woman recalls:

"Some years ago, we had a legal problem, and there was nothing we could do about it. We needed help, but since we were Jews, it was hard to find someone to trust. Then we thought of asking 'Allāmah Ja'farī to help us. We went to his house. He welcomed us quite warmly. He put a lot of time into carefully studying our case. He felt we might be treated unjustly, so he wrote a letter to the judicial officials, which helped a great deal to solve our problem."

After a long fruitful life of free-minded intelligent research, 'Allāmah Muhammad Taqī Ja'farī passed away on November 15 1998, and was buried in Dār al-Zuhd located inside the Holy shrine of Imam Rizā ('a) in Mashhad

One of his characteristics was his belief that fields like knowledge and thought are truly unfathomable; that is the only thing that can account for the 'Allāmah's amazingly vast set of works – aesthetics, philosophical analysis, knowledge, artistic analysis, cognition and mental reception.

An Alphabetical List of 'Allāmah Ja'farī's Works

1. *Afarinesh wa Insān* (*Creation and Man*)

This book includes issues entitled Creation as Seen in Religions (which consists of a history of creation from religious, philosophical and scientific points of view); Living Beings on Earth (an explanation of the rise of man in the universe); Objectiveness in Creation (based on Islamic guidelines); Man and the Motivating Factor of History as seen in Different Schools of Thought; and Islam and Social Relationships, where the 'Allāmah first presented his theory of the four relationships. The book is, in fact, a report of the existing scientific viewpoints

concerning the identity and history of mankind from the religious and scientific points of view.

2. *Akhlāq wa Madhhab* (*Ethics and Religion*)

This book concerns the origins and ways of ethics in the past (in India, Egypt, Persia, etc.), under such titles as Ancient Frameworks of Ethics, A Study of Ethics in the Present, A Definition of Ethics and many other topics concerning the relationship between religion and moral ethics throughout history.

3. *Az Daryā beh Daryā* (*From Sea to Sea, An Index to the Mathnawī*, 4 vols.)

Rūmī's *Mathnawī*, consisting of over 28,000 verses, has been published in a variety of versions by several scholars like Reynold Nicholson, Badī' al-Zamān Foruzānfar, Jalāl Humā'ī, Muhammad Ramazānī, and this diversity has led to difficulties in finding verses. On the other hand, the lack of an index to the verses which was user-friendly and prepared by those who had themselves written interpretations to the verses inhibited readers' understanding Rūmī's various viewpoints.

Owing to these problems, although the 'Allāmah was busy writing his interpretation of the *Nahj al-Balāghah* and following up his other activities, he began the tedious task of compiling the index with the help of some of his students, most of whom were young. Eleven years later, the 4-volume series was ready. In an era during which scientific software had not yet become widespread in Iran, *From Sea to Sea* allowed one to find any verse of the *Mathnawī* quite easily and systematically. The book covers every verse of the *Mathnawī* in alphabetical order, and will be an everlasting part of the 'Allāmah's legacy, on which he spent many tiring hours from 1971 through 1982.

4. *Al-Amr Bayn al-Amrayn* (*The Middle Course between Two Extermes*)

'Allāmah Ja'farī's first book, which was written in Arabic while he was studying in Najaf, it includes, in fact, notes from Ayatullāh Sayyid Abū al-Qāsim Khuī's class on fatalism and free will, and with the opinions for and against provided, it has a speculative theology aspect.

5. *Barrasī Fiqhī wa Huqūqī Tarh-i Genome Insānī* (*A Fiqhī and Legal Study of the Human Genome Project*)

As cloning is vastly developing in techniques and technology, there is increasing concern and alarm about it all over the world. This book includes 'Allāmah Ja'farī's answers to questions on the religious and legal aspects of the issue. Also available in English and the title of *The Human Genome Project.*

6. *Barrasī wa Naqd-i Bargozideh Afkār-i Russell* (*A Study and Critique of Selected Thoughts of B. Russell*)

Bertrand Russell has, to a certain degree, influenced the world of thoughts, and several Iranian students and scholars were attracted to his ideas on religion, moral ethics, society and history. In 1963, 'Allāmah Ja'farī decided to study and criticize his thoughts on various subjects.

7. *Barrasī wa Naqd-i Kitāb-i Sargodhasht-i Andishehhā* (*A Study and Critique of the Adventures of Ideas*)

The Adventures of Ideas is one of Alfred North Whitehead's most important works. Whitehead (1861-1947), English scientist and philosopher, was also Bertrand Russell's teacher. 'Allāmah Ja'farī has presented useful ideas on Whitehead's thoughts on history, thought, and origins of philosophical thinking.

8. *Barrasī wa Naqd-i Nazariyyāt-i Falsafī Hume dar Chahār Mawzū'-i Falsafī* (*A Study and Critique of David Hume's Thoughts on Four Philosophical Issues*)

In this book, 'Allāmah Ja'farī has presented his thoughts on four philosophical issues as seen by David Hume – the ego (or character), what there is and what there should be, the law of causality, and thoughts and abstract concepts.

9. *Dar Mahzar-i Hakīm* (*In the Presence of the Sage*)

A collection of questions on God, life, human beings, the universe and many other topics presented to 'Allāmah Ja'farī by a great number of research students. The 'Allāmah's constructive answers point out many of the factors and causes of today's developments or degradations. The comparison of Western and Eastern societies is one of the book's most interesting parts.

10. *Falsafah-ye Dīn* (*The Philosophy of Religion*)

During the 1990s, when religious analyses became popular – with, however, mostly Western points of view – 'Allāmah Ja'farī decided to clarify the existing dark points by beginning his discussions on the philosophy of religion, and by studying the historical, psychological and philosophical roots of religion from the sociological and epistemological aspects. The topic "external and internal religion" and its legal implications a significant part of this book, for the 'Allāmah has pointed out over 100 legal/intellectual principles which can only arise out of religion.

11. *Falsafah wa Hadaf-i Zandegī* (*The Philosophy and Aims of Life*)

The lack of a clear meaning and framework for life in today's societies made 'Allāmah Ja'farī to write this book, in which he defines real life, and provides its many aspects from

various points of view. The interesting parts of this book one proving the original significance of life and its internal and external basis.

12. *Farhang-e Pishrow wa Farhang-e Peyrow (Pioneer Culture to the Rescue of Mankind)*

In this book, the issue of culture nears its ultimate solution – having studied the definitions given for culture in dictionaries and encyclopedias all around the world, 'Allāmah Ja'farī presents a novel, appropriate thesis. This book published in English with the title *Pioneer Culture to the Rescue of Mankind.*

13. *Hayāt-i Ma'qūl (Intelligible Life)*

Based on a lecture 'Allāmah Ja'farī delivered as a supplement to his article on "The Aim of Life". The book begins with a discussion of purely natural life and intelligible life, which is mostly based on the discussions presented in Volume 8 of *Translation and Interpretation of Nahj al-Balāghah.*

14. *Huqūq-i Bashar az Didgāh Islām wa Gharb (Human Rights from Islamic and Western Viewpoints)*

Also available in English, this book makes a comparison of the human rights in social/legal basics of the West and those in Islam. As well as introducing the correct roots and origins of human rights, 'Allāmah Ja'farī points out details that have been ignored by the UN Charter of Human Rights and led to social and political problems in the current world. He does, however, consider 80 per cent of the human rights as in accordance with proven laws and principles.

15. *Hikmat-i Usūl-i Siyāsī Islām (Islam's Political Philosophy)*

A translation and interpretation of Imam Alī's ('a) Document of Instructions to the Governor of Egypt, Mālik Ashtar, this book takes a comprehensive look at the principles of Islamic politics. It focuses on the fundamentals of intellectual

political rule and human management in Islam, pointing out the necessary qualities of an Islamic ruler and comparing the prerequisites of governments in Islamic civilizations with those of other civilizations. In fact, it may be called a comparative research of international politics.

16. *Ideal-i Zandegī wa Zandegī Ideal* (*Ideals of Life and the Ideal Life*)

This book originated from a research on the aspects and horizons of constructions in human life and human-constructing lives, which was presented first as a lecture in 1968 at Tabriz University. It was one of the 'Allāmah's many studies on the phenomenon called life and its identity, as a resistance against the waves of nihilism. The topics originality and sacred value of life and the importance of upholding the flag of life must be of top priority for the one who intends to read this book.

17. *Imam Husayn ('a) Shahīd-i Farhang-i Pishrow Insāniyyat* (*Imam Husayn ('a), the Martyr of Human Pioneer Culture*)

Experts and scholars of the 'Ashūrā tragedy believe that this is one of the best books written on the Karbalā event and the character of Imam Husayn ('a). The 'Allāmah's meticulous chronology of the Imam's life and the focus the book puts on the human development of the Imam's movement from aspects such as sociology, sense of duty, human rights and aesthetics has brought about new discussions which led to the compilation and publication of a sequel to the book after his decease, which included his lectures on this matter.

18. *Insān dar Ufuq Qur'ān* (*Man as Seen in the Qur'ān*)

This book combines anthropology with religion and faith in order to present man's moral picture. The Reality of Man in the Qur'ān; Innate Nature and Eternal Life, the Innate Nature and the Human Ego, Image of the Believer in the Qur'ān and many others have been discussed. The second part of the book

includes a social system, for 'Allāmah Ja'farī considers the society as a combination of humans.

19. *Irtibāt Insān wa Jahān* (*The Relationship between Man and the Universe*)

The 'Allāmah wrote and published this first book of his when he was in his late twenties. It is a philosophical/physical research which shows his new attraction toward physics and philosophy. The original title of the book was *The Change in Physical Mass in Man's Philosophical Cognition, from Ancient Times to the Twentieth Century*.

20. *Jabr wa Ikhtiyār* (*Fatalism and Free Will*)

The three chapters of this book – entitled "A Look at Fatalism and Freedom from the Natural Aspect", "A Look at Fatalism and Freedom from the Metaphysical Aspect", and "The Side Effects of Fatalism and Free Will" – are related and still separate. The 'Allāmah has also discussed the characteristics of will, the difference between tendency and will, the difference between will and decision, fate and many other issues.

21. *Mabd' A'lā* (Supreme Source)

This book includes about 30 quintets which were the result of 'Allāmah Ja'farī's poetic talent during his youth. The subjects concern man, the universe, life and original human beliefs. The second part of the book is a sermon-like explanation of the ideological-philosophical poems in the previous part.

22. *Majmū'ah Maqālāt*

A collection of several major articles and treatises, the topics include: Descartes' Reasoning Why God Exists, The Aim of Life, An Introduction to the Philosophy of Possession; Motion and Change; Motion and Change as Seen by the Qur'ān; Science at the Service of Man, The Relationship between Science and the Truth, Science and Gnosis as Seen by Ibn Sīnā;

Science in Islam, Hope and Expectation; and Physics and Metaphysics.

23. *Manābi' Fiqh (Jurisprudential Sources)*

This book contains 'Allāmah Ja'farī's jurisprudential thoughts on topics such as cleanliness, slaughtering animals, paying religious dues, allowed and forbidden norms of animal meat, laws concerning animals, punishments for robbery, a comparison of human rights in Islam and the West, juvenile delinquency in Islam, and answers to some medical questions.

24. *Musīqī az didgāh Falsafī wa Rawānī (Music from a Philosophical and Psychological Viewpoint)*

Beginning with a comparison of music with poetry, painting, calligraphy and some other art forms, this book attempts to find the roots of music and its potential connection with human life, presenting novel theories on the identity and nature of music. A discussion of the legal and historical aspects of music is the final part of the book.

25. *Mawlawī wa Jahān-Bīnīhā (Mawlawī and Ideologies)*

A highly academic, ideological book which studies Rūmī's knowledge and viewpoints in connection with schools of thought such as Buddhism, Platonic ideas, Kant's thoughts, Descartes' viewpoints, Realism, Hegel's dialectic ideas and Existentialism.

26. *Nihāyah al-Idrāk al-Wāqi'ī bayn al-Falsafah al-Qadīmah wa al-Hadīthah (Peak of Actual Perception between the Ancient and Modern Philosophies)*

Soon to be published for the first time, this book, also decorated with 'Allāmah Ja'farī's beautiful *naskh* handwriting, is a profound analysis of a philosophical issue concerning true recognition and knowledge in classical and modern philosophy,

both of which have discussed how far the wonderful human mind can progress.

27. *Niyāyesh Imam Husayn ('a) dar Sahrāy-i 'Arafāt* (*Imam Husayn's Supplication on the Plain of 'Arafāt*)

This book is an Islamic text concerning praying supplicating with true purity to God. The 'Allāmah's beautiful style makes his account of Imam Husayn's ('a) words on the Plain of *'Arafāt* (during Hajj) find a novel, more effective aspect, opening new doors to its hidden meanings. The Arabic version of the book is entitled *On the Wings of the Spirit*.

28. *Payām-i Khirad* (*The Message of Wisdom*)

A collection of 'Allāmah Ja'farī's lectures abroad. The titles are: The Punishment for Theft in Islam – a Discussion based on Imāmiyyah Jurisprudence and the Philosophy of Law, Pleasure in Ibn Sīnā's Philosophy; The Fundamentals of Human Rights in Islam, Survival in the 21st Century; The Right to Human Dignity; A Look at the Classification of Philosophies and the Philosophy of the Human Rights; Justice and the Motivation of Power in Survival; The State of Research in the Humanities (Past, Present and Future); Abrahamic Religions and universality and Dialogue between Religions; Modernism and Innovation as Hume Sees It.

29. *Al-Rizā' (Rules of Suckling Infants)*

This is a jurisprudential book concerning the laws of suckling children, which 'Allāmah Ja'farī wrote when he was still studying jurisprudence in Najaf. Also published in Najaf, the book consists of the 'Allāmah's notes from Ayatullāh Sayyid Abū al-Qāsim Khuī's class.

30. *Seh Shā'ir* (*Three Poets – Hāfiz, Sa'dī and Nizāmī*)

A discussion about three cornerstones of Iranian literature: Hāfiz, Sa'adī and Nizāmī Ganjawī, focus in on their thoughts.

While confirming that all three poets were of exquisite literary value and talent, 'Allāmah Ja'farī studies and criticizes their philosophical viewpoints. Special attention is given to Nizāmī, whom the 'Allāmah regarded as one of the pillars of Iranian literature. The philosophy, mysticism and moral ethics included in Nizāmī's poetry is analyzed from a moral-ideological aspect, and the anthropological viewpoints in books like *Haft Peykar* (Seven Bodies) are discussed. It is quite apparent that the 'Allāmah regards Nizāmī Ganjawī as having a moderate, realistic point of view.

31. *Shenākht az didgāh 'ilmī wa Qur'ān* (*Knowledge in Science and the Qur'ān*)

This book consists in fact of volumes 6 to 8 of the 'Allāmah's monumental work on the *Nahj al-Balāghah*. Philosophical, moral have been discussed from a logical point of view on this innovative book.

32. *Shenākht-i Insān dar Tas'īd-I Hayāt-I Takāmulī* (*Evolutionary Elevation Man*)

This book is one of 'Allāmah Ja'farī's best and most profound works on anthropology. It mainly concerns man in the domain of "what there is and what there should be," and since it presents a study of ancient and modern schools of anthropology, the book also has a psychological aspect.

33. *Ta'abbud wa Ta'aqqul dar Fiqh-i Islāmī* (*Worship and Wisdom in Islamic Jurisprudence*)

Published for the first time in 1994 on the occasion of the 200th birth anniversary of Shaykh Murtazā Ansārī, this book concerns worship and wisdom in Islamic thoughts, intelligence as seen in Islamic *hadīth* and harmony between the intellect and Islamic tenets. As 'Allāmah Ja'farī sees it, the rules of Islamic worship are applicable forever, and time can help discover the intellect-based aspects of the tenets.

34. *Ta'āun al-Dīn wa al-'Ilm (Harmony between Religion and Science)*

The gulf that seemingly occurred between science and religion with the rising of modern philosophies could not have been original, for the relationship between science and religion is more based on collaboration rather than confrantation. That is the main point this Arabic book attempts to prove based on historical documents and *hadīth*. In fact, this book of the 'Allāmah's is a scientific and philosophical analysis that science and religion have always moved side by side throughout history.

35. *Tafsīr wa Naqd wa Tahlīl Mathnawī (An Interpretation and Critique of Rūmī's Mathnawī)*

This 15-volume series is an encyclopedic study of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's thoughts, comparing the great mystic poet's ideas with the facts of today's world. Not limited to Rūmī's Gnosis, the book is a comprehensive research of great academic value – a study of modern psychological viewpoints as well as the development of social thoughts in the West along with quotations from outstanding figures like Hugo, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Planck, Einstein, and Balzac. It provides an excellent basis for analysis. The most eminent quality of this book is its relating the humanities to Islamic knowledge, and also focusing on the basic philosophical issues the East and West share in common – "common human culture," as the 'Allāmah called it.

36. *Tahlīl Shakhsiyyat–i Khayyām (An Analysis of Khayyām's Personality)*

Years ago, when a group of intellectuals believed Khayyām's rubā'iyyāt (quartrains) were nihilistic, there was also another point of view that Khayyām was not the father of negative doubt, and calls for further study. In this book, 'Allāmah Ja'farī presents a different, much more intelligent viewpoint of the historic adventures of Khayyām and the three

Khayyāms of history. The 'Allāmah sees him as a theist poet whose work requires realistic analysis and criticism.

37. *Tahqīqī dar Falsafah-ye 'Ilm* (*A Study of the Philosophy of Science*)

In this research, 'Allāmah Ja'farī presents 32 discussions on the definition of science, how sciences separated from philosophy and hundreds of other novel philosophical issues. The book also discusses the distinctions between sciences and the new classification of obvious theorems based on an "essential true" framework.

38. *Takāpuy-e Andishehhā* (*The Exploration of Thoughts,2 vols.*)

A collection of interviews 'Allāmah Ja'farī had with foreign scholars, both Muslim and non-Muslim, the topics range from religion, moral ethics, mysticism and philosophy to history, literature and the arts. 'Allāmah Ja'farī's high academic state brought visits from various scholars and thinkers from all over the world since 1961. The firmness of his thoughts, which made other viewpoints flow more easily, is quite eminent in this book.

39. *Tarhī barāy-i Inqilāb-i Farhangī* (*A Plan for Cultural Revolution*)

This pocket-size book consists of two parts – plans and ideas on Cultural Revolution and Bertrand Russell's philosophical world. It is a combination of issues on culture, psychology and philosophy. It also presents the psychological viewpoints 'Allāmah Ja'farī has on the cultural revolution.

40. *Tarjamah Kāmil-i Nahj al-Balāghah* (*A Complete Translation of the Nahj al-Balāghah*)

The 'Allāmah wrote the preface to this book during the last days of his life, when he was abroad. Experts consider it one

of the best translations ever of the *Nahj al-Balāghah*, for the 'Allāmah was extremely proficient in both Arabic language and literature.

41. *Tarjamah wa Tafsīr-i Nahj al-Balāghah* (*Translation and Interpretation of the Nahj al-Balāghah*)

This valuable 27-volume book includes most of the fundamental basics of Islam and the humanities from a dynamic, innovative aspect. The book covers topics from philosophy to politics, from moral studies to sociology, from psychology to literature, from poetry to methodology. The book is like an intelligent encyclopedia in which anyone can find the answers to his/her own question on anthropology or ideology.

42. *Tawẓīh wa Barrasī Musāhabah Russell-Wyaat* (*A Study and Critique of the Russell-Wyaat Dialogue*)

This philosophical/social book is a judgement of the dialogue between Bertrand Russell and Woodrow Wyatt, criticizing his thoughts on theology, moral ethics and philosophy with deduction and analysis. Doubts and being doubtful are among the issues discussed in this book.

43. *Wijdān* (*Conscience*)

Conscience in the stormy ocean of the human character has been explored from moral, historical, psychological and religious aspects, and it is concluded that conscience reflects the voice of God, and is necessary as long as man exists.

This book considers conscience from various aspects, revealing novel points about it. Its innovative interpretations open new doors to moral ethics, solving many of the unknown about conscience. The English version of the book is also available.

44. *Zibāyī wa Honar az Didgāh Islām* (*Aesthetics and Art in Islam*)

Art has been written about in great volume, but 'Allāmah Ja'farī has considered it from the Islamic point of view in this

book, discussing the internal and external effects of art and presenting a philosophical, ideological definition of beauty – particularly the observable kind.

45. *'Awāmil Jadhdhābiyyat Sukhanān-i Mawlawī* (*What Makes Mawlawī's Words So Fascinating*)

This book presents 25 factors – such as complete knowledge of the universe, harmony between the material and the spiritual, using the language of metaphors, innovation and modernism, love for telling eh truth – that make Rūmī's words so fascinating. The book ends with eight advantages of Rūmī's *Mathnawī* as seen by Hakīm Sabzewārī, the well-known Iranian poet.

46. *'Ilm wa Dīn dar Hayāt-i Ma'qūl* (*Science and Religion in Intelligible Life*)

Focusing upon a historical discussion of science, the book consists of three parts. The first concerns science and knowledge seen in Islam. In the second part, science and knowledge is studied from a Qur'ānic point of view, and we see from which aspects the Qur'ān supports scientific progress. The third part of this book includes a very brief history of mathematics, physics, astronomy and medicine in Islamic civilization. One of the characteristics of the book is a list of Islamic scholars of botany, mathematics, astronomy, physiology, mining, medicine, geography and many other fields.

47. *'Irfān-i Islāmī* (*Islamic Gnosis*)

An explanation of gnosis from a truly original Islamic point of view has been presented in this book, and various aspects of today's views are discussed from the eye of dynamic, positive gnosis. The book includes topics entitled Gnosis and Discipline, Gnosis and Work, Gnosis and Science, Gnosis and Religion, Gnosis and Ethics, and Gnosis and Music. The English translation of the book is also available.