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IBN KATHIR

SOME ASPECTS OF SCHOLASTIC  
THEOLOGY IN HIS COMMENTARY

A Thesis for the Degree of Doctor  
of Philosophy University of Durham  
ENGLAND

Submitted By:

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

"IBN KATHĪR: SOME ASPECTS OF  
SCHOLASTIC THEOLOGY IN HIS COMMENTARY".

The study purposes to review and analyse the subject. Its object is: (a) to examine Ibn KathĪr's role in scholastic theology and his position among the theologians, (b) to provide the reader with the information extant in the 14th century about an essential branch of Muslim scholarship, (c) to stimulate further interest in scholastic theology and Qur'ānic exegesis.

The first chapter contains the history of the development of tafsīr and scholastic theology.

Chapter two includes the salient features of the biographical details of Ibn KathĪr's life and a list of his works.

Chapter three is concerned with the doctrine of God, the starting point in Muslim theology. God has two aspects: His essence and His attributes. God's essence is interpreted as light which signifies His close relation to man's spiritual and physical needs. God is Transcendental, Unique, Eternal, Omnipresent, Omniscient and Omnipotent. He is everlastingly Unique in His essence and His attributes. God is Living, Powerful, Willer, Speaker, Hearer, and Seer. But all His attributes are different from man's. God's attributes of action embrace and encompass mercy. God's creation, Guidance, and provision of food are the manifestations of His mercy.

Chapter four deals with the existence of angels who play the significant role of mediator between God and man, for the betterment of mankind.

Chapter five examines belief in the Prophets. They are chosen men of God. They are endowed with extra-ordinary qualities. By virtue of their endowed qualities they receive revelation and perform miracles. They possess infallible character.

Chapter six involves the study of the Scriptures. These were revealed to the Prophets. The last scripture is the Qur'ān revealed to the last Prophet, Muhammad.

In chapter seven we find that Predestination is of two kinds: (a) Mubram (settled or confirmed) (b) Mufa'illaq (suspended). The former is for all creatures whereas the latter is especially meant for man. It provides some freedom to man if he works according to God's laws. The limit of this freedom has not been explored.

Chapter eight deals with the Hereafter. It is found that there is a resemblance in the present life, the barzakh, and life after resurrection with regard to pleasures and pains of body and soul. But the methods of reward and retribution are slightly different. Last of all comes life in Paradise and Hell which is described in metaphors. Paradise is assumed to be perfect life, having no signs of worldly sensual pleasure.

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## TRANSLITERATION OF ARABIC WORDS AND NAMES

The following table shows the system which I have followed in transliterating the <sup>letters of the</sup> Arabic alphabet:-

ا (Consonantal) a	ب ..... t
ء ( sound )	ظ ..... z
ا Long vowel :ā *	ع ..... c
ب ..... b	غ ..... gh
ت ..... t	ف ..... f
ث ..... th	ق ..... q
ج ..... j	ك ..... k
ح ..... h	ل ..... l
خ ..... kh	م ..... m
د ..... d	ن ..... n
ذ ..... dh	ه ..... h
ر ..... r	و ..... w
ز ..... z	و ..... ū*
س ..... s	ي ..... y
ش ..... sh	ي ..... ī*
ص ..... s	.....
ض ..... d	.....

(1) For the hamza (ء) I have used no distinctive sign. An apostrophe for it and an inverted apostrophe for the 'ain (ع).

\* Where it is really pronounced long.

(ii) Short vowels: َ (Fatha) a, ِ (Kasra) i and ُ (damma) u

(iii) The final h preceded by a short a is scarcely pronounced and I have mostly left it out eg. Sura, Hijra, where the Arabic spelling would require Surah and Hijrah.

(iv) In internationalised words and names I have used the spelling ordinarily current in English eg. Mecca Medina, Abraham and Jacob etc.

PREFACE

This thesis is intended as a contribution to the study of Islamic Scholastic Theology as expounded in Qur'anic Commentary. It deals in particular with the commentary of Ibn Kathīr. For many years, I had a special interest in studying Ibn Kathīr's work in this field. Ibn Kathīr had the advantage of having access to the works of previous commentators and theologians. Being himself not attached or identified with any particular school, he was in a position to treat with the problems involved with detachment and objective approach. This attitude of his gained for him the respect of divergent schools of theology and gave his work a special place in Qur'anic exegesis. In this thesis, I have tried to draw a comparison between the ideas of Ibn Kathīr and the ideas of commentators and theologians who preceeded him. Further, I have pursued the works of modern theologians (Muslims and non-Muslims) and tried to show in what respect their ideas agree or disagree with Ibn Kathīr's in order to show new developments in this field and to make an assessment of their importance in the field of Islamic theology. As far as is known to the present writer, no full study of Ibn Kathīr, either as a commentator or in general, has previously appeared. Only a few articles have been written about his work in this field. Moreover there is a dearth of comprehensive books on Islamic Scholastic Theology and tafsīr in English and other European languages.

In preparing this study I consulted two editions of Ibn Kathīr's tafsīr; the Beirut edition of 1966 (7 volumes) and the Cairo edition of 1343 A.H. (10 volumes). The latter is interlined by the tafsir al-Baghawī. Comparing the two editions it has been found that the Beirut edition was free of errors and omissions which shows that much care has been taken in its printing. So I have referred to it in the text of the thesis.

Duly observing English usage, I attempted to adhere as closely as possible to the text. But, since Ibn Kathīr's interpretations are lengthy, it was necessary, for the sake of clarity, to depart from this method and to give only a brief rendering of Ibn Kathīr's ideas. In this respect the general principle has been to omit nothing essential to the argument and to make no addition except for the sake of clarity.

The translations of the Qur<sup>ʾ</sup>ānic verses are taken from the translations of A.J. Arberry and M. Pickthall. But the numbering of the verses are according to M. Pickthall's.

For the completion of this study, I am very much indebted to my supervisor, Mt. J.A. Haywood, whose guidance and help have been invaluable. His encouragement was always an inspiration to me to renew my efforts. His critical remarks concerning certain ambiguous terms acted as an incentive. In addition he has been sympathetic in solving my academic problems.

I wish to express my gratitude to Mr. A.M.T. Farūkī whose unfailing kindness, substantive suggestions, and readiness to help has been a great source of satisfaction to me. His constant encouragement stimulated in me the interest and the zest for knowledge. He helped not only by lending his guidance but also by lending his own books. I also wish to thank Professor T.W. Thacker, the Director of the School of Oriental Studies, and members of the staff who helped me in many ways while this work was in progress. Finally my thanks are due to Mr. I.J.C. Foster, the Keeper, and the library staff for the assistance which they accorded, to me.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION.

Theology in Arabic is 'Ilmu-l-'Ilāh, "the science of God". In the Koran and Tradition the term 'Ilm is especially applied to the knowledge of the Koran.\* Paul Tillich in Systematic Theology defines theology thus: (a) A science to know the objective basis of faith in God and divine things. (b) A science to co-ordinate, collect, examine, and analyse things related to matter of faith based on religion. (c) A science to deal systematically and scientifically with the facts and figures of religious phenomena. (d) A science which includes all spiritual activities, social and religious customs of man, his knowledge, concepts and ideas related to his belief. (1)

Theology is subdivided into different classes. One of them is Scholastic Theology ('Ilmu-l-'Aqā'id) which in Islam is based on the six articles of Muslim Creed; the Unity of God, the Angels, the Prophets, the Scriptures, Predestination, and the Hereafter.

Islamic Theology is established to a large extent on the extensive compilations devoted to the exposition of the Koran. This section of religious science, known as 'Ilmu-l-Qur'ān-wal-Tafsīr, together with Traditions forms the ground work of Muslim dogmatic teaching and theological speculation.

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(1) P. Tillich, Systematic Theology, London 1953 vol.1.p16ff. cf. "Theology" by D.S. Adam, in the Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, Edinburgh 1920 vol. 12. p293.

\*The name of the Holy Book is written Koran and Qur'an both.

The story of commentary (tafsīr) (2) is a long and complex one. Moreover many methods of Koranic commentary have been adopted, so as, (a) to provide a clear picture of God's commandments, the Prophet's thoughts, ideas and actions, and the social, ethical, economic, and political system of Islam, and (b) to explain the treasures of terms of literature, wisdom, the unique and astonishing expression, allusion adding to the beauty of the language, stories, similes, symbols, logical argumentations, observation of nature, and all that which the Koran includes.

#### The Need for Commentary.

It was difficult for many Arabs in the early centuries of Islam to understand the unique literary style of the Koran and to grasp its meaning: (a) Its revelation in Arabic does not mean that all Arabs knew all the words and their construction. (b) It is not possible that every writing in a mother tongue may be easily understandable. (c) To understand literature besides knowledge of the language mental faculties equal to those of the writing are necessary. (d) Some verses like; وَالَّذِينَ يَذُرُونَ and وَالَّذِينَ يَضْمَخُونَ having secret meaning needed special interpretation, as knowledge of the language, style and literary taste are not sufficient. (e) The Koran narrates stories and beliefs of Jews, Christians and

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(2) Tafsīr means to disclose an obscure thing, to reveal the meaning perceived by the intellect, to know the significance of strange words and to explain the verses according to the occasion of revelation for easy understanding of the reader. (L.L.)

other religions. Without knowledge of these religions these verses could not be understood. (f) There are in the Koran some arabicised words. It was necessary for the exposition of the Koran to know them. (g) Some Arabic words used in similes and metaphors were so difficult that even the senior companions of the Prophet could not explain them i.e. وَنَاطِقَةٌ قَوْلًا When 'Umar was asked their meaning he replied that we are forbidden to go deep into it.

The Companions of the Prophet had different abilities in their comprehension of the Koran. (a) Few of them were aware of the occasions of revelation. (b) Many of them knew the strange words of pagan literature and their usages and could use them for the exegesis of the Koran. (c) A group of them followed the Prophet like his shadow in order to know the details of the revelation so as to go deep into the spirit of the Koran. (d) Individually some of them were expert in different rites and customs of Arabs, some in rites of pilgrimage, some in marriage customs, and some in method of pre-Islamic prayers. They could understand the verses related to their topic more easily than the others. Hence none of them could perfectly comprehend the whole Koran unless it was explained to them. Moreover there are examples in Tradition that they put historical, spiritual and social questions to the Prophet which he explained.

COMMENTATORS AND THEOLOGIANS

According to the Koran Muhammad is the first commentator. It was his responsibility to interpret the Koran. God says: "And We have revealed to thee the Remembrance that thou mayest explain to mankind that which hath been revealed for them, and that haply they may reflect." (16:44)

The Prophet interpreted the Koran with its own words. The word Zulm occurring in one verse he interpreted with another veṛse; i.e. "Those who believe and have not confounded their belief with wrong (Zulm) for false worship) (6:83) "To associate others with God is a mighty wrong (Zulm) (31:13) Similar to this he interpreted other verses. This means that some parts of the Koran explain other parts. But when the Prophet did not find an explanation in the Koran he did interpret with Tradition. The validity of the hadīth is proved by the Koran. God says: "Whatever the Messenger gives you, take; whatever he forbids you, give over (or abstain from it) (59:7). So interpretation by Tradition is to a Muslim as good as interpretation by the Koran. Thus Companions memorised and wrote down Traditions interpreting the Koran.

During the reign of the first three Orthodox Caliphs there is wide agreement among Muslims that tafsīr by Tradition was carried on. Ibn Taimiya says: that there was scarcely any difference among them as they had the chance to consult trustworthy companions.

(3) 'Umar's role is significant. On the one hand he encouraged

(3) Ibn Taimiya, 'Uṣūl-i-Tafsīr, Lahore 1374 A.H. pp.32ff.

tafsīr and participated in the interpretation of clear verses (muhkamāt). Whenever necessary he quoted and stressed the Prophet's comments. On the other hand he forbade and opposed commentary on some allegorical verses and punished those who made misleading interpretations, 'Umar flogged Ibn Sābigh for his pre-occupation with the exposition of the ambiguous passages of the Koran, because it presented the danger of spreading doubt, misbelief, and heresy. So discord during the time of the companions was almost insignificant.

With regard to the early commentators, Abū Huraira, 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ūd and Ibn 'Abbās must be considered the pioneers of the early Traditionists and Koranic commentators. They enjoyed respect and recognition. Particularly, Ibn 'Abbās who was universally recognised and placed in the highest rank. He was an assiduous collector of Tradition. Ibn Kathīr says that the Prophet prayed for him for insight in tafsīr: "O! God bless him with the understanding of religion and teach him tafsir: "and 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ūd praised him for his excellent explanation of the Koran. (4) 'Umar preferred his interpretation and had a great respect for his scholarship. It is said that he visited Ibn 'Abbās who was suffering from fever, and he have said to him "Your sickness has made us feel disordered."

The consensus of opinion is that written tafsīr existed from the time of Ibn 'Abbās, onwards. Each succeeding generation of leading scholars used tafsir manuscripts and produced new ones. (4) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, - al-Qur'an-al-'Azīm, Beirut 1966 vol.1. p8.

Mingana refers to the quality of his tafsīr thus: "He and his disciples deal with the sense and the connection of a complete verse, and neglect the literal meaning of a separate word. His commentaries are therefore what Christian writers would call more spiritual than literal" (5)

Until 'Uthmān's death there was no discord among the companions in tafsīr. The unhappy incident of 'Uthmān's assassination opened the door of political struggle between 'Alī and Mu'āwiya. After his accession 'Alī shifted the capital from Medīna to Kūfa and Mu'āwiya made Damascus his capital. The party of Successor (التابعون) commentators formed three groups: (a) The companions of Zaid Ibn 'Aslam al-'Adawī remained at Medīna. (b) The pupils of Ibn 'Abbās came to Mecca, and (c) the pupils of 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ūd came to Kūfa. So they set up three different schools after the names of the three cities. Their division also reflected the need of the time to meet the growing demand for knowledge. Nabia Abbott says: "But as the second half of the first century progressed teachers who not only eagerly collected hadīth, but taught some traditions to their pupils, are mentioned in increasing number. Other early groups of religious significance were the preachers and story tellers....The rapid increase in Islamic population, by birth and by conversion, widened the base of public demand for Tradition. In return there was an even

(5) Rev. A. Mingana, Leaves From Three Ancient Qur'āns, Cambridge 1914 p.xxvi.

greater rate of increase in the number of serious students and scholars." (6)

As a result of the battle between 'Alī and Mu'āwiyā, the Khārjites, the first open theological movement in Islam, came into being with a new theological and political ideas. The Khārjites absolutely refused to accept the authority of the rulers as they considered them sinners. A sinner no longer remains a Muslim if he does not repent. They included among sinners; thieves, drunkards, gamblers, and those who did not believe in their ideology. According to them killing sinners, their wives, and their children was lawful, and they will ever remain in Hell. (7) They claimed that any scholar of Islam can hold the office of the caliphate and that the Quraysh had no special distinction. Assuming the criterion was right, it was not clear who was to be judge. They asked clarification of the meaning of Islam and the term 'Imān. They interpreted the Koran with Tradition transmitted by the upholders of their views in order to prove the veracity of the sect and its ideas and to justify their acts. Similarly the supporters of the home of 'Alī interpreted the Koran. So did the supporters of Banū Umayyah interpret the Koran with Tradition and forged stories to prove the legality of their accession, and

(6) Abbott, Koranic Commentary and Tradition, Chicago 1967 ppl4f

(7) It is significant that this sect had good relation with Jews and Christian.

their righteousness and magnanimity of character.

The orthodox felt a great danger in such anti-Islamic interpretation and thought that their religious duty was to explain the truth. They said that to set a rival with God is the only sin which required perpetual punishment. Faith is a single entity and cannot be added to or diminished, and sin cannot weaken it. They disapproved of killing any human being except in defence.

According to Ibn Taimiya the activity of the successors with regard to tafsīr was widely increasing, their efforts to collect Tradition (tafsīr) exceeded that of the companions. Their collection and transmission was mostly oral. Because of dissension every group accepted the tradition with content favourable to their supporters. But the orthodox preferred tradition transmitted from persons not related to any group and also paid attention to the Chain of transmission (ISNĀD) (8).

The epoch of the followers of the successors may be said to have started from the last quarter of the first century of the Hijra. They collected the material attributed to the Prophet, his companions and their successors. In accepting Tradition, they did not differentiate between those three schools of commentary. This impartiality gave impetus to the work and

(8) op. cit., pp. 10ff.

increased its bulk so that their commentaries became voluminous as compared with earlier ones. They included material which the companions and their successors did not dare to include.

In this period according to Wensinck there were discussions on theological problems between the Khārjites and the Murjites, a sect extremely opposed to the former. They were pro-Umāyyad and believed in ignoring the behaviour of the ruler and man's conduct and its consequences. The Khārjites convinced some people who formed different subdivisions. The famous one is the Qādarites. They deny God's absolute decree and say that man is altogether a free agent. Their views were the basis of the movement of the Mu'tazelite, the separatists. (Wāsil bin 'Atā' separated from Hasan Basrī (d.110A.H.). Their chief subjects of discussion were: "the essence of God and theodicy". The views of the Mu'tazelites and the Murjites formed the basis of the Jābarites or Jahmites, named after Jahm ibn Safwān (d.747A.C.), a theologian of Persian descent, and a militant partisan of the 'Alids'. He believed that man has neither power nor will nor choice in deciding his action, no more than an inanimate object. (9)

These sects sought justification of their views from the Koran and Tradition and there seems to be no influence of another

(9) A.J. Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed*, Cambridge, 1932 pp.36-53. See also Stephen's *Concise Encyclopaedia of Arabic Civilization*, Amsterdam, 1959 p. 262.

religion. Grunebaum says: "Any movement, political or theological found its legitimation in the Book. So the study of the text had to go beyond explaining obscure passages; tafsīr explanation was followed by ta'wīl interpretation." (10) Wensinck refers to this thus: "the history of Muslim dogmatism follows a logical course—that is to say, the sequence of the ideas is not foreign origin, but indigenous." (11)

With the advent of the preceding sects four kinds of activity entered the composition of tafsīr; Impartialism, Traditionalism, rationalism and mysticism. Impartialists<sup>are</sup> those who avoided interpreting the Koran by any source but they did not forbid others interpreting it. Goldziher refers to 'Abida ibn Qais (d.72A.H.) who was asked to interpret a verse of the Koran whereupon he said: "Fear God and be firm in belief. For those men have gone who knew the occasions of the revelation of the Koran." (12) Ibn Kathīr refers to Sa'īd bin Musayyab (d100A.H.) and 'Āmir al-Sha'bī(d. after 100A.H.) who when asked about the interpretation of a verse said: "I donot say anything of the Koran." (13) So the role of the Impartialists is negative.

Among Traditionists are counted Sālīm ibn 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar I(d.106A.H.) and Abū Wā'il (D100A.H.) Birkland referring to

(10) Grunebaum, Islam, London 1955 p.87.

(11) op. cit., p. 52.

(12) Goldziher, quoted by H. Birkland, in Old Muslim Opposition Against Interpretation of the Koran, OSLO 1955. p.11.

(13) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.1. p.8.

Ṭabaqāt Ibn Sa'd says that Abū Wā'il opposing tafsīr with personal opinion said "do not sit down with the people of 'a-ra'aita" 'a-ra'aita" (14). The same was the case with their followers of disciples. They accepted Tradition with a mild criticism, preferred weak Tradition over ray' (opinion). So opposition to tafsīr with personal opinion began late in the first century of the Hijra, it strengthened and developed in the second century. Tradition was subjected to criticism<sup>ci</sup>, and brought into line with orthodox doctrine. This continued till the third century or still longer. But tafsīr of Ibn 'Abbās was accepted by all sects without any criticism.

The rationalists are of two kinds: (a) Those who are considered orthodox. They preferred free will over weak tradition, so they were criticised by Traditionists. Their leader was Abū Hanīfa (D150/767). Fadal-al-Rahmān says: "In Irāq, the school associated with the name of Abū Hanīfa and called Hanafī school, developed and was systemized by his two disciples: Abū Yosof (D181/797) and Muhammad al-Shaibānī (D189/805). This school favoured by 'Abbasids....., was most characterised by the exercise of free opinion and became the favourite object of the bitter invectives of Ahl-al-Hadīth in the 2nd/8th and 3rd/9th centuries, since these latter strenuously rejected free opinion (15).

(14) H. Birkland, op.cit., (ref:12) p.10.

(15) F. Rahmān, Islam, London 1966, p.82.

The second main group of Rationalists is the Mu'tazilites, whose opinions were considered heresy. This was the reason why orthodox Traditionist felt also the need of reason to resist them. Birkland says: "There was especially one movement which provoked resistance against tafsīr. That was the Mu'tazilites. Through their dialectical method of interpretation they tried to subject Koranic sayings to their own views. That was not very difficult, but it made the conservative 'Ashāb-al-hadīth aware of the great danger of tafsīr, which in their eyes became more or less identical with dialectics." (16)

Al-Hasan al-Basrī (d.110) is the leader of the mystical movement in tafsīr. Some of his interpretations are derogatory, Birkland refers to them thus: "Thus ra'y in the derogatory meaning of arbitrary interpretation is found as early as in the dogmatic treatise ascribed to al-Hasan al-Basrī" (17) Rāzī also differs with some of his interpretations.

Thus when the preceding movement continued copious increase of different kinds of tafsīr, critical study of its material began in the first half of the second century. Nabia Abbott says: "Tafsīr literature increased steadily through-out the second century, acting and being acted upon by the increasing interest

(16) H. Birkland, op. cit., p.30.

(17) IBID, p. 10. cf. Schacht, The Origin of Muhammadan Jurisprudence Oxford 1950 pp. 74 and 129.

in the dialectical theology which resulted in "new orthodoxies" and in a number of heresies whose originators claimed that their position was based on the Koran as they understood and interpreted it. Critical attention was first centered in the first half of this century on the tafsīr literature already in circulation and culminated in the critical activities of Ibn Juraij, (70-150/689-767) who based his own tafsīr on the work of Ibn 'Abbās. It was also in the first half of the second century that there was emphasis on the classification of tafsīr into four main categories: legalistic tafsīr; linguistic tafsīr; the ~~tafsīr of former~~ <sup>-thodox</sup> of scholars and the tafsīr al-Mushābihāt, which is known only to God." (18) Besides Shāh Wali-Allah (Indian) notes separate commentaries: completely rational, completely mystical and including intonation and recitation. (19)

In the second half of the second century, as previous tafsīr works became more frequently available, the commentaries of the leading scholars began to be classified as "the best" and "the worst" and by implication "the good" or perhaps "the indifferent", the last being as a rule ignored. Among the "best" are included the works of Ibn 'Abbās, Mujāhid.

According to Fadal-al-Rahmān to check all and sundry indulging into tafsīr, the following sciences were developed and their

(18) op.cit., p.112.

(19) Shah Wali Allah, Al-Fawz-al-Kabīr, Karachī 1960 p. 188ff.  
cf. Tāsh Kubrā Zāda, Miftāh-al-Sa'āda, Hyderabad Deccan 1910  
vol.1. p.430 ff.

knowledge for a commentator was considered necessary: "First of all, therefore, the principle was recognised that a knowledge not only of the Arabic language but also of the Arabic idiom of the time of the Prophet was requisite for a proper understanding of the Koran. Hence Arabic Grammar, lexicography and Arabic literature were intensively cultivated. Next, the background of the Koran revelation called 'the occasions of revelation' were recorded as a necessary aid for fixing the correct meaning of the word of God. Thirdly, historical tradition containing reports about how those among whom the Koran first appeared understood its injunctions and statements were given great weight. After these requirements were fulfilled came the scope for free-play of human reason." (20)

In the beginning of the third century Imām ibn Hanbal, the Traditionist, strongly opposed tafsīr. Tāsh Kubrā Zāda mentions that Imām ibn Hanbal said: "Three books; tafsīr, maghāzī, wars, and malāhim, apocalyptic traditions, have no foundation" (21). It seems that he questioned the validity of these subjects. But the study of his Musnad and his accepting Ibn 'Abbās's tafsīr suggests that: (a) it was a literary criticism which meant that these were inconsistent with the methodological rules of the Traditionists. (b) It signifies lack of chain of sound transmitters

(20) F. Rahmān, op. cit., p. 41.

(21) Tāsh, op. cit., pp430 off

(c) His refusal to accept tafsīr means tafsīr with personal opinion, or as an independent science, because it was not a separate science from the hadīth. Birkland says "Ibn Sa'd, it is true, recognised tafsīr when it was identical with hadīth. But in later times the two sciences were kept apart." (22) Imām ibn Hanbal's rejection of Maghāzī and malāhim may also mean their not corresponding to the critical demand. According to him only Tradition corresponds to critical demands.

There were several results of this strong opposition to tafsīr. The interpretation of some sections of the Koran by Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Hishām (D.151 and 213 A.H.), the earlier biographers, could not get recognition of the scholars. Scholars like Abū Hanīfa canalised their energies in jurisprudence and were very cautious in interpreting theological matters. According to Birkland Traditionalism is the reason why practically most of the numerous commentaries from the time before Tabarī have been lost. Tabarī could only reproduce selected pieces from them which received their final form after the time of their author's death. (23)

Up to the beginning of the third century, although tafsīr included different subjects like theology, history, ethics, maghāzī and malāhim, yet it could not get the status of an independent interpretive science of the Koran. Tradition

(22) H. Birkland, op.cit., p.22.

(23) Ibid: p.28.

described by the word haddathā was the only recognised interpretive science of the Koran. According to Birkland for tafsīr's recognition as an independent science credit goes to al-Bukhārī (D·256) "In the Kitāb-al-tafsīr of Koran al-Bukhārī, for instance, not only perfect isnāds introduced by haddathā are found. Introduced by qāla even Mujāhid, 'Ikrima and others are quoted." So does Tirmizī (D·279) in his Jāmi and Muslim (D261) in his Sahīh"(24).

This was the beginning of golden era in the history of tafsīr. This method of interpretation of the Koran was acceptable to all Traditionists, even to Imām ibn Hanbal. Hence with the weakest tradition and athār the Koran could be interpreted.

In the second half of the third century al-Tabarī (D·310) based his work of thirty volumes on the documents on Koranic exegesis of previous centuries. This work shows his labour and the pain which he took in collecting Tradition and explaining the theme of the verses. After Ibn 'Abbās he is considered to be a pioneer in the science of tafsīr and a mine of knowledge. He was a skillful grammarian, Lexicographer and historian, and was acquainted with the theological, legalistic and historical treatises found in the Koran.

His method and order of explanation is as follows: He

(24) Ibid: pp.28 and 31.

interprets the Koran with the Koran, Tradition, Arabic literature, personal opinion and with the Muslim consensus ('Ijmā'), of his age. But sometimes he ignores this order and employs the way which he deems proper. According to Baron Carra de Vaux he interprets with Tradition transmitted by the companions and two successor generations. He mostly ignores the continuity of chain, but accepts only that which is confirmed by 'Ijmā', because 'Ijmā' confirms the degree of reliability of transmitters. Sometimes he ignores 'Ijmā' and uses his opinion instead and mentions Traditions unrecognised by 'Ijmā'. He cites the Tradition with different meanings for interpreting a verse. This conveys derogatory meaning. Theologically this provides food to the orthodox and heterodox. (25) Birkland says "Tabarī omitted or suppressed important traditions. He ignores quoting Tradition from the disciples of Ibn 'Abbās. The family isnād was, however, superfluous to support 'Ijmā' on the eschatological interpretation. Bukhārī can be held to represent the original interpretation." (26)

He attempts to interpret the Koran rationally, therefore, he quotes certain opinions of the innovating speculators and the Mu'tazilites with their refutation by the orthodox dialecticians and then notes his own opinion too in order to stop their impact. But according to Ibn 'Āshūra, he fails badly in reasoning as he

(25) B.C.de Vaux, Les Penseurs De L'Islam, Paris 1923 vol.3 p.365ff

(26) Birkland, The Lord Guideth, OSLO! 1956 pp.9, 21 and 134.

turns to Traditions and repeats them to get support to confirm his views. His reasoning side is weak. It indicates that he is a Traditionist rather than rationalist. (27) Al-Dhahabī says: that al-Tabarī successfully refers to the work of Mutakallimūn and dealing with scholastic theology he goes deep into the fundamentals and refutes the Mu'tazilites' views, but in vain. But generally his description of God, His attributes and actions is a foot-stone for the commentators. His commentary is descriptive rather than logical. It could work as a guide to the reader. (28)

Tabarī lacks creative intellect, rational thinking, ardent curiosity which a scholar, commentator and historian of his standard requires. That is why he is called a Traditionist commentator. The limited originality which is to be found in his work in technical details of the science of the Koran, of the law and the theological matters cannot prove his deep insight and thinking. But his dealing with the subject with every possible science and its comprehensiveness and its popularity among the Muslim and Orientalists has given him outstanding position among Muslim scholars.

Tabarī's contemporary Al-Ash'arī (D320A.H. A.C.(935) is more important in the history of scholastic theology than his

(27) Fāḍil, M. Ibn 'Āshūra; Al-Tafsīr wa Rijāluhū, Tunus, 1966 p. 35.

(28) M.H. Al-Dhahabī, Al-Tarīkh-wal-Mufasssirūn, Cairo, 1961 vol.1. pp.212f, 217ff.

predecessors. He compromised between the rationalizing theologians and the Traditionists. This resulted in the system named after him and accepted by the orthodox. He wrote the commentary, tafsīr 'Abī-al-Hasan, early in the fourth century. This tafsīr is untraceable but his other works based on the Koran and Tradition referring to the 'Ash'rite creed exist:

(a) Maqālāt-al-Islāmiyya which include the subjects on dogmatic theology. The first part deals with the main points of dogmatic theology (ʿilmu-al-Kalām), which he mentions as jalīl, and part two deals with finer points (daqāʾiq). (b) Al-'Ibāna fī Usūl al-Diyāna, deals with the question of vision of God, the problem of the Koran as the uncreated word of God, God's throne and His anthropomorphism, repudiation of Jahmites, predestination, the will of God and eschatology.

Al-Ghazālī (1058-1111) has been regarded as a reformer and a representative of theology. He wrote a commentary in forty vols., but it is not extant now. His works are spread over theology, jurisprudence, philosophy and mysticism. It is because of his ability Ibn Rushd in Fasūl-al-Maqāl says that al-Ghazālī did not follow a particular school in his writing but, "with 'Ash'arism he was 'Asha'rite, with sufism he was a sūfī, and with philosophy he was a philosopher." (29) Al-Ghazālī stood up to solve three problems which the philosophers believe in; (a) that there is no

(29) See J.W. Sweetman, Islam and Christian Theology, London 1967 part 2 vol.2. p.46. He quotes Ibn Rushd's views about al-Ghazālī.

resurrection for bodies, (b) that God knows the universal but not the particular, and (c) the cosmos is ever living.

Al-Ghazālī solves these theological problems with philosophical arguments. In Tahāfut-al-Falāsafa he repudiates the philosophers' hypothesis. He shows that time, rest, motion are accidents, and accidents are created, therefore the cosmos is created. Similarly, he argues for God's knowledge, and His perpetuality. To prove his rationalism he defines tafsīr, kalām, and reasons for the use of kalām thus: "The science of fiqh and commentary on the Koran are the order of food while kalām is like medicine. "Kalām is found in the Koran as persuasive speech appealing to the heart and satisfying to the soul...kalām is a convenient way of answering the fool according to his folly. The use and abuse of this science having thus been disclosed the learned will use 'ilmul-kalām as an expert physician uses a dangerous drug, never using it without occasion or necessity." al-Ghazālī also says that the aim of kalām is to make people know what has been affirmed in the scriptures to save them from deviation, and to seek the truth and will of God. (30) So according to al-Ghazālī it seems that commentary must include mysticism, rationalism, and philosophy.

In the sixth century al-Zamakhsharī (D538/1144) an exponent

(30) Ibid: pp.36 ff., and 46.....

of the Mu'tazilites, founded his tafsīr on philosophical and dogmatic premises. He is a rationalist with excellent ability. He attaches little significance to Tradition. He offers rational interpretation with regard to determinism, createdness of the Koran, denial of God's eternal predicates and strives to gloss over Koranic verses alluding to anthropomorphism.

According to Al-Dhahabī al-Zamakhsharī was the incomparable scholar of his age. His new method of interpretation was quite different from the attempts of his predecessors. In the analysis of theological dogmas he was inspired by Hellenic philosophy which influenced some Muslim scholars in the second and third centuries. He applied his arguments against the 'Ash'arites. (31)

In fundamentals al-Zamakhsharī followed the Mu'tazilites but in non fundamentals he followed Abū Hanīfa as he himself admits. Birkland in The Lord Guideth quoting Goldziher says that Zamakhsharī some-times disagreed with the Mu'tazilites i.e. "according to the principles of the Mu'tazilites the 'isma (إِسْم) of the Prophets appears as a demand of reason...al-Zamakhsharī in his interpretation of the verse (93:7)...he does not, however, reveal any specific Mu'tazilite view...His explanation rests on orthodox Ijmā' and has nothing to do with the Mu'tazilites." (32)

(31) M.H. Al-Dhahabī, op. cit., pp.35off.

(32) Birkland, H. p.30.

His dialectical discussion suppressed direct and easy approach to the Koran. Simplicity in its exposition became out of fashion and instead allegorical tendencies prevailed.

Al-Zamakhsharī was expert in Grammar, Lexicography, rhetoric and language. His commentary (al-Kashshāf) is one of the best as far as the language, Grammar, rhetoric construction and explanation of words and sentences and analysis of theological dogmas are concerned, but "weak in history." (33) The text is concise, often, almost elliptic. The commentator establishes general sense, sequence of ideas...and ignores no point. The orthodox accepted his commentary and his dialectical dealing but they disagreed on the dogmatical point of view. His linguistic reliable explanation and rational attitude divided the commentaries into: traditional tafsīr and rational.

At the end of the sixth century of the Hijra, al-Rāzī (1149/1209), the exponent of the Shāfi'ites and the 'Ash'arites, wrote works on theology. His work on tafsīr<sup>is</sup> called al-tafsīr-al-kabīr, which is a mixture of theology and philosophy.

For the composition of the commentary he consulted all kinds of work and selected ideas with the purpose of repudiating the Mu'tazilites. In his dialectical interpretation he discloses the weakness of the Mu'tazilites' standpoint. To strengthen his

(33) Ibid....p.26.....

explanation he refers to the orthodox view about 300-400A.H. Al-Rāzī's rational attitude enjoyed more recognition of the orthodox than al-Zamakhsharī. But the orthodox studied both commentaries for dogmatic settlement and for rare dialectical terms.

Al-Rāzī's methods of interpreting the Koran are: (a) Tradition, (b) 'Ijmā' (c) ikhtiyār, and (d) reason. (a) He interprets dogmas with sound Tradition and avoids interpreting it with a Tradition of a single authority. In 'Asās-al-Taqdīs he reasons thus:(i) "Tradition transmitted by one man is not genuine but speculation. The interpretation of the Koran by speculation is forbidden. (ii) No man is infallible, and (iii) Tradition of a single authority includes criticism of one companion by another. He considers it forged. (34) Birkland remarks about his tafsīr: "It contains pearls of genuine Old Tradition...It is the natural result of stabilized 'Ijmā". (35) He interprets with 'Ijmā' and Ikhtiyār (choice in Tradition of Ijmā') when he deems necessary. But his popular method of interpretation is reasoning. Sometimes he even prefers reasoning to 'Ijmā' and Tradition.

His application of philosophy in the interpretation of the Koran and its explanation in his other works is simple and

(34) Al-Rāzī, Asās-al-Taqdīs-fī-'Ilm-al-Kalām, Cairo 1935 pl.68...

(35) H. Birkland, The Lord.....pl0.

easily comprehensible. Sweetman says: "He made the abstruge and intricate problems of philosophy so simple that the whole complexity of Plato and Aristotle was simplified." (36). Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī says: al-Rāzī is sharp in his intellect and he faces bewilderment by his raising of doubts on problems which are significant for the support of religion. (37)

Since Al-Rāzī stuffs tafsīr with philosophy and logic, creating a labyrinth of involved issues and sub-issues, the remarks of the scholars differed about its contents. Ibn Taimiya says: "It contains everything except exegesis". Al-Subkī replies: "It contains everything as well as exegesis". Rāzī's contemporary Ibn 'Arabī (D635A.H.) impressed by his theological writing said: "I have seen some of your works, and perceived the power of imagination and thought which God has bestowed upon you." (38) Al-Sārim says that such philosophical commentary was the need of the time.<sup>(39)</sup> Al-Qaisī in Tārīkh-al-Tafsīr says that he realised his mistake of philosophical interpretation of the Koran interpreting the verse 7:54 and said that the Koran is only for guidance and it involves no intricacies. (40)

(36) J.W. Sweetman, op. cit., vol.2. part 2 p17.

(37) Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī, Lisān-al-Mīzān, Hyderadad Deccan 1915 vol. 4. pp.426ff.

(38) Fatah-alla Kollef, A study of Fakhar-al-Dīn al-Rāzī and his Controversies<sup>2</sup> Transoxiana, Beyrout, 1966 p.5. (Translation of Al-Mabāhith-al-Mashraqiyya)

(39) A.S. Al-Sārim, Tārīkh-al-Tafsīr, Lahore pp.64f. and 103.

(40) Qāsim-al-Qaisī, Tārīkh-al-Tafsīr, Baghdād 1966 p.80.

There is the clear influence of al-Ghazālī on al-Rāzī which the latter admits in his works. Al-Rāzī draws most of the theological and philosophical ideas from the former but he disagrees with al-Ghazālī on some problems of fiqh. Al-Rāzī does not give a defence of his method, but it appears to us that a sufficient justification is given by al-Ghazālī. In most difficult cases al-Rāzī turns to the Koran and Tradition and accepts the correctness of Imām ibn Hanbal's position. This is in perfect accord with al-Ghazālī, who admitted the Koran as a last resort.

Al-Rāzī being an 'Ash'arite, sometimes opposed the views of the Ash'arites, assigns wider opinion to the intellect and uses the Mu'tazilites' opinion against them.. In some cases he supports half of the theory of the Mu'tazilites and half of the 'Ash'arites and so takes an intermediate position. Fatahalla Kalāf refers to this thus: (a) "God's speech, in the sense of the meaning of the sounds of the words al-kalām-al-nafsi, (\*\*), is an eternal attribute to God, subsisting in His essence; in this al-Rāzī agrees with the 'Ash'arites. (b) It is not impossible for God to create in something else sounds and words indicating His will. Here al-Rāzī agrees with the Mu'tazilites against the 'Ash'arites only on the basis of Scripture. (41)

(41) Fatahalla Kalāf, op.cit., pp. 115f (\*\*). Kalām is of two kinds al-Kalām -al-lafzi and al-Kalām-al-Nafsi or al-ma'nawī, or al-dhātī. The word lafz indicates utterance and articulation. It is "spoken word" as commonly understood. Kalam, while it means "Speech", (means also "word", is commonly used in both senses. Nafsi may be interpreted "personal" as belonging to the self, Ma'nawī may be translated "ideal" and dhātī by convention may be interpreted "essential."

Al-Baidāwī (D685/1283) based his commentary, Anwār-al-Tanzīl on al-Kashshāf in Grammar and for the explanation of words, on Tafsīr-al-Kabīr for the exposition of the spirit of the Koran, and on al-Mufradāt-al-Rāghib (D.500A.H.) for the explanation of metaphors. He also incorporates a good deal of original material.

Baidāwī deals with all the problems in a more critical manner than any previous commentator, yet at the sametime he is very brief. He gives his opinion and moves on, leaving it to the reader to reach a decision on the interpretation through his own reasoning. But his method of writing being brief, his work is not comprehensive and does not give the reader a clear and accurate idea of the subject which he is dealing with. So the information which he gives is an enigma and requires hard work to understand, even for a scholar who has a good background in history, lexicography, grammar and reading.

Al-Baidāwī's information on theology is significant for he is well versed with the Muslim 'Ijmā' (consensus) up to his time and covers precisely its period of development and establishment and cites selected examples. Therefore it is possible that he could have given us more information about the sources of Ijmā' and tafsīr than al-Rāzī. But Birkland speculates that with al-Rāzī the creative Muslim tafsīr and 'Ijmā' has come to an end. He

discussed early 'Ijmā' and its possibility with quotation of Traditions to confirm his views. So Baidāwī cannot be cited as a final representative in the dogmatical field and historical sources. (42) But if deeply looked into both tafsīr and 'Ijmā' have no end. Besides al-Baidāwī's fame in the logical field cannot be minimized.

In interpreting the science of intonation and recitation, al-Baidāwī cites the readings of Baṣra, Kūfa, Mecca and Medīna. This was one aspect of tafsīr which was not fully dealt with by the previous commentators. Like al-Rāzī, he seldom quotes riwāyāt. He describes his opinions without mentioning them, and tells whose opinion is the best, and refrains from contradictory points.

Historically he is only a late scholar, but he earned respect from the Muslim and Orientalist scholars for his concise and precise way of writing.

After al-Baidāwī, the important figure in scholastic theology is Imām Taimiya (D728A.H.) a reformer and exponent of Traditionist. He wrote the /exegesis of, part of the Koran in which he interpreted theology in a dialectical manner. His other significant works are: (a) Al-Jawāb-al-Sahīh li-man-Baddala Dīn-al-Masīh, and (b) Kitāb-al-Tawhīd. In these works he is inclined towards Tradition but there

(42) H.Birkland, The Lord...pp12, 48 and 136f.

is still a touch of polemic. It seems that he soon realized that the dialectical method is not the solution of the problem, therefore he turned to Traditionism and led a movement to bring people back to the Koran and Tradition, and forced them to leave philosophy and dialectic in solving problems of Scholastic Theology, but adhering to the literal meaning of the Koran and Tradition.

Azad quotes Ibn Taimiya's words thus: "I employed all the methods which philosophy and dialectic had provided, but in the end I realized that these methods could neither bring solace to the weary heart nor quench the thirst of the thirsty. The method nearest to reality was the method provided by the Koran... I came to the conclusion that the attitude adopted by the early Traditionists was sound enough. Tafsīr is the only attitude appropriate to the situation, the attitude of affirmation and belief in them (Koran and Tradition) and suspension of judgment. All the philosophic disquisitions, which our dialecticians have indulged in, are not in conformity with the teaching of the Koran." Similar to this was the attitude of Ibn Qaiyam (43).

The study of different preceding scholars shows that there is always a chance of achieving a better understanding of the Koran and that there is always room and need to discover more. So

(43) A.K. Azād, Tarjumān-al-Koran, London 1962, vol.1. pp.131 and 133.

Ibn Kathīr's role could be considered significant for the following reasons: (i) Because of his critical approach to Tradition. (ii) While, it is true that he draws mostly from al-Tabarī, al-Zamakhsharī and al-Rāzī, yet he incorporates his own original views, (iii) He has full knowledge of Tradition, Grammar, History, Fiqh and other sciences necessary for the interpretation of the Koran, (iv) Although he was a Shāfi'ite yet he had knowledge of other schools of thought and looked impartially at each school. Therefore his commentary could prove to be more useful than his predecessors, (v) He enjoyed a great privilege of having close contact with scholars of different schools of thought, (vi) He supported the Traditionalistic movement of Ibn Taimiya, and was able to assess its merits and demerits, (vii) He views critically the works of the previous writers with the aim of discovering the true meaning of the word of God and getting an insight from them, (viii) His tafsīr encompasses both the literal and figurative meanings, (ix) While recognising the limits of individual judgment he shows respect for the consensus of Islam, (x) The importance of his tafsīr could be considered to be that it was written just after the Crusades when Muslim and Christian thought were influencing each other. It was the need of the time that the Muslim view of theology should be presented in a Traditional and simple way in order that non-Muslims may have a correct view of Islam.

Moreover Ibn Kathīr is also important for his method and order of the interpretation of the Qur'ān. He interprets the Qur'ān with the Qur'ān, tradition, ijma' consensus and, poetry, in order to enhance the beauty of the language and clarify words. But some times he changes the order and employs what he deems appropriate. He gives due consideration to the occasions of revelation, context and authority. In dealing with the chain of authority he considers the order of preference as follows: (a) the orthodox caliphs, (b) Ibn 'Abbās, Ibn Mas'ūd Abū Huraira and Ibn 'Umar, (c) other companions of the prophets, (d) the successors of the companions, and (e) the followers of the successors. But he is very careful in quoting from the last mentioned category. On this order and method he bases his arguments and reasoning, and practically refutes the logic of philosophers, that the Qur'ān should be better understood in the light of the philosophy, which had theory but neglected the facts because of its speculative nature.

He used the views of different schools of thoughts, and did not consider any school to be a perfect authority in legislation and other religious matters. In this way he rejects the finality of any school, because to him man made laws have no permanent value.

He explains the ambiguous verses in different ways. As these verses invite different views, he does not give his decision, but leaves the decision to the choice of the reader. But when dealing

with other verses, in order to clarify the meaning and make it accessible to the minds of the people, he applies jurisprudence as an interpretive science of the Qur'ān, in order to solve their social, political and economic problems. In this way, materially satisfied people may concentrate their attention ~~by~~ grasping the immaterial problems properly.

Ibn Kathīr is one of the rare commentators who included many political, economic, social and moral ideas in tafsīr. He deals with these ideas elaborately perhaps more than any of his predecessors. Thus it seems that he was striving to arrive at definite conclusions concerning the principles of Islam with the object of opening new ways to a full comprehension of the Qur'ān and to assure its jurisdiction and durability as its everlasting feature.

CHAPTER TWO

BIOGRAPHY OF IBN KATHĪR

The aim of this chapter is to give an account of Ibn Kathīr's life and works as found in various sources including his own writings.

His full name was Ismā'īl Ibn 'Umar. The name by which he is usually known is Ibn Kathīr, which was also the name of his grandfather and great grandfather. (1) This may have been his reason for adopting it as a surname. His contemporaries also referred to him by the title (لقب) 'Imād-al-Dīn (The Pillar of the Religion) (2) doubtless as a tribute to his contribution towards religious sciences. His Kunya was 'Abū-al-Fidā (أبو الفداء) (3).

Ibn Kathīr was born in 700/1301 at Majdal, a town to the east of Būsrā in Syria, during the reign of king al-Nāsir Muhammad Ibn Qalāwūn II. (D741A.H.) The opinions of chronologers differ about the date and place of Ibn Kathir's birth. Ibn-al-'Ammād-al-Hanbalī (D1089 A.H.), Hāfiz Jalāl-al-Dīn-al-Suyūtī (D911 A.H.), Ahmad bin Mustafā Tāsh Kubrā Zāda (D962 A.H.) and 'Abbās-al-Azzawī confirm the date of his birth as 700 AH. (4) while the date of his

- (1) Ibn Kathīr, 'Al-Bidāya-wal-Nihāya, Cairo 1358 A.H. vol.14 p.31 Henceforth it will be referred as Bidāya.
- (2) Shams-al-Dīn al-Dhahabī (D1348), Kitāb Tadhkirat-al-Huffāz, Hyderabad Deccan 1958 vol. 4 p. 1504.
- (3) 'Abī-al-Mahāsīn-al-Husainī, Dhyl-i-Tadhkira-al-Huffāz, Damascus 1929 p.57:
- (4) Ibn 'Ammād-al-Hanbalī, Shadharāt-al-Dhahab, Cairo 1351A.H. vol.6. p.331.

birth given in the Encyclopaedia of Islam (5) is 701 A.H. which has also been confirmed by a host of writers such as Qādī-al-Shawkānī (D1250A.H.), Hāfiz Abū-al-Mahāsin-al-Husainī (D765A.H.).

In view of the statement of Ibn Kathīr himself that when his father died in 703A.H. he was only three years old, it seems probable that he was born in 700 A.H. or before. (6)

As regards his place of birth, most of the biographers have not mentioned it, except a few like 'Umar Radā Kahhāla and Hāfiz 'Abū-al-Mahāsin-al-Husainī who have described his birth place Majdal. Brockelmann in the Encyclopaedia of Islam gives his place of birth as Damascus, but does not state the source of his information. After going through the reliable biographers of Ibn Kathīr and his own writings about the place of profession of his father, it seems probable that he was born at Majdal (7).

Ibn Kathīr had reason to be proud of his ancestors. On the one hand, they included prominent literary figures and men of religion. On the other hand, he could claim descent from the distinguished, noble, respected and brave clan of Banū Haṣla of Quraysh.

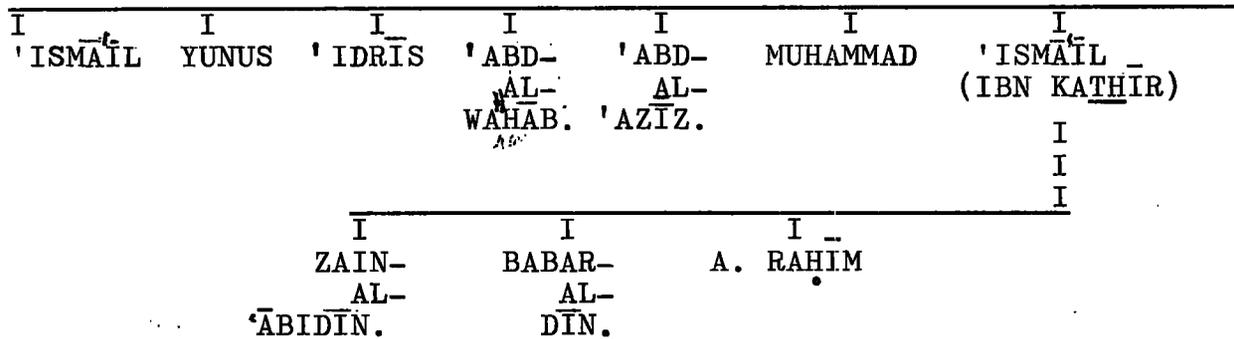
(5) Brockelmann "Ibn Kathīr" Encyclopaedia of Islam (E.K.) London 1927 vol.2. p.393. cf. Al-Shawkānī-al-Badar-al-Tāli', Cairo 1926 vol.1. pl53 and cf. Al-Husainī, op. cit., p:57.

(6) Ibn Kathīr, Bidāya, vol.14. p.31.

(7) 'Umar Kahhāla, Mu'jim-al-Mu'allifin, Damascus 1957 p.283.

His pedigree table which is accepted by most of the biographers is as follows:

DHARA'  
 I  
KATHĪR  
 I  
DAWA'  
 I  
KATHĪR  
 I  
 'UMAR



His father Shahāb-al-Dīn Abū Hafṣ 'Umar bin Kathīr was born in 640 A.H. in a village called al-Sharaqiyūn or Sharaqiyya west of Bu'sra, during the reign of Ayyūbids in Egypt (from 567-648 A.H.). (8)

He came from his village to Bu'srā for his education and settled down with his maternal uncles who belonged to the tribe of Banū 'Aqaba. He read al-Bidāya (9) of the Hanafite school.

(8) Ibn Kathīr, Bidāya, vol, 14 p.31f.

(9) Ibid.

He also learnt "Jumal"-al-Zujājī (D311A.H.) (10) He concentrated on Grammar, Language and Arabic Literature. He learnt by heart many verses of Arabic poetry. He completed his education at Madrasas (SCHOOLS) of BUṣra. He studied under al-Nāwāwī (1233/1277) (11) and Shaikh Taqiyy-al-Dīn-al-Fazārī (D665A.H.) (12) for whom he had a great respect.

After the completion of his studies, he became a teacher and Khatīb in the eastern part of BUṣra and followed the Shāfiʿite school of Thought. He stayed there about twelve years, then he went as a Khatīb to the town of Majdal. He lived there a long time, prosperous and happy with his family, as he preferred to live in a small town.

He was a gifted orator and became so famous that people used to quote him. He was also a poet, and wrote verses of eulogy, elegy and satire. He wrote an excellent elegy on the death of his eldest son Ismāʿīl.

He had two wives. He had five children from the first and a number of children from the second, including Ibn Kathīr, who was the youngest son.

- (10) His full name is 'Abī-al-Qāsim 'Abd-al-Rahmān al-Zujājī, the Grammarian and linguist. He was born in Nahāw-and in the east of Hamadhān. He got education in Baghdād and died there in 311A.H. His book al-Jumal is a highly respected contribution to grammatical studies. It was published in Paris in 1957. For ref: see 'Anbārī's Nudhhat-al-Anbā', Cairo 1294 p.399
- (11) He was a pious man having sharp memory. He was born in 631A.H. and died on 24th Rajab 1230A.H. in Nowa. He was head of Dār-al-'Ashrafiyya. See Bidāya vol. 14 p.279.
- (12) Ibn Kathīr, Bidāya, vol.13 p.197.

Ibn Kathīr's father was greatly attached to his children. But he was intensely fond of his eldest son Ismā'il, when Ibn Kathīr was born his father gave him, (i.e. Ibn Kathīr), his name in order to keep that name alive.

The father of Ibn Kathīr died when Ibn Kathīr was three years old as Ibn Kathīr has described in 'al-Bidāyā-wal-Nihāya.

تَوَفَّى وَوَالِدِي فِي شَهْرِ جُمَادَى الْاُولَى سَنَةِ ثَلَاثِ دَسْجَانَةَ وَكُنْتُ اِذْ ذَاكَ  
صَغِيْرًا وَبِنِ ثَلَاثِ اَوْ نَحْوَهَا لِاَبِي وَرَكْمَةَ اِلَّا اَلْحَلْمَةَ (13)

The exact date of Ibn Kathīr's migration to Damascus is not traceable. But it is assumed that after the death of his father he remained with his mother at Majdal for a few years. At the age of seven his elder brother 'Abd-al-Wahhāb brought him to Damascus. The responsibility of Ibn Kathīr's upbringing fell to his lot, he being the eldest brother and the earning member of the family. He fulfilled all the responsibilities as elder brother and the guardian of the boy. He was very kind, sympathetic and considerate towards Ibn Kathīr in all respects. Ibn Kathīr has described his years of migration and the character of his brother as follows:

ثُمَّ تَحَوَّلْنَا مِنْ اَبْدِهِ فِي سَنَةِ سَبْعِ دَسْجَانَةَ اِلَى دِمَشْقِ صَحْبَةَ كَمَالِ الدِّينِ عَبْدِ الرَّحْمَنِ  
(14) وَقَدْ كَانَ بِنَا شَقِيْقًا وَبِنَارِنِيْنَا شَقِيْقًا .

(13) Ibid vol. 14. p.32.....

(14) Ibid....

According to Ibn-al-'Ammād al-Hanbalī, Ibn Kathīr went to Damascus in 706 A.H. at the age of seven. This totally differs from the date of birth mentioned in his book al-Shadharāt which is as follows:

" ابن كثير ولد سنة سبعمائة وقدم دمشق له سبع سنين سنة ست وسبعمائة  
(15) مع اخيه بعد موت ابيه."

If the statement is accepted to be true then the date of his birth will be 699A.H. and not 700 A.H.

The modern writer Khair-al-Dīn-al-Zarkalī, on what authority it is difficult to say, has described Ibn Kathīr's journey to Damascus as being in the company of his father instead of his brother. He says:

(16) وَأَنْتَقَلَ مَعَ أَبِيهِ إِلَى دِمَشْقٍ سَنَةَ (٥٧٥٤) سِتِّ وَسَبْعِمِائَةٍ."

Ibn Kathīr's first place of residence is given in his own words as follows:-

" قالت وفي هذه السنة كان قدومنا من إمرى إلى دمشق بعد وفات والدك وكان أقول ما سكننا ببيت سبور  
(17) الذي يقال له درب ابن أبي العجاء بالماعة العتيقة عند اللوزيين. ونسأل الأحسن الحاتمة أمين."

Thus it would appear that his brother has no house of his own, but lived in a rented house or in a friend's house.

(15) Ibn 'Ammād: op. cit.,, p. 331.

(16) K.D. Al-Zarkalī, Al-'Aḡlām, Beirut 1954 vol. 1. p.317.

(17) Ibn Kathīr, Bidāya, vol. 14. p.48.

It has been shown that Ibn Kathīr was a descendant of a cultured family and that his brother also was a literary man. His family environment had a great impact on his character. His brother became his first teacher when he began to study the Qur'an under him. The education began in a traditional way with the Qur'an, which he learnt by heart. Next he started studying the principles of Islamic law (Jurisprudence) from his brother. Then he became the pupil of Burhān-al-Dīn (D729 A.H.), the famous scholar of that age. (18) Ibn Kathīr finally completed this branch of law education under Shaikh Kamāl-al-Dīn-al-Zamlakānī (D727 A.H.) (19), who was conversant with Islamic principles and knowledge. Shākir (D1942) confirms this as follows:-

وَقَدْ بَدَأَ الْاِسْتِخَالَ بِالْعِلْمِ عَلَى يَدَيْ اَخِيهِ عَبْدِ الْوَلَدِ ثُمَّ اجْتَهَدَ فِي تَحْمِيلِ الْعُلُومِ عَلَى الْعُلَمَاءِ  
الْكِبَارِ فِي عَصْرِهِ وَحَفِظَ الْقُرْآنَ الْكَرِيمَ وَخَتَمَ حَفْظَهُ ٧١١ هـ وَقَرَأَ بِالْقِرَاءَةِ حَتَّى عَدَّاهُ  
(20) (الدَّوِيُّ مِنَ الْقُرَّاءِ وَتَرْجَمَهُ لَهُ فِي لَهْقَاءِ تَهْمِهِ ."

Ibn Kathīr also says about his early education under his brother:- " (21) فَاِسْتَخَلْتُ عَلَى يَدَيْهِ فِي الْعِلْمِ فَيَسَّرَ اِلَيَّْ اِلَى مِنْهُ اَلْبَسْرَ سَمِعْتُهُ مِنَ الْعَسْرِ )

The authorities differ as to the list of his teachers. The

- (18) His full name was Burhān-al-Dīn Abū 'Ishāq Abrāhām Ibn Tāj-al-Dīn-al-Farāzī (D729A.H.) He was so pious that he rejected every offer of official post. See Bidāya, vol.14 p. 143.
- (19) Ibn Kathīr did not like him because he was greedy of money and official rank. Moreover, he wrote a book repudiating Ibn Taimiya's view of divorce. See Bidāya vol 14 pp40f &131
- (20) Ahmad Muhammad Shākir, 'Umda-al-Tafsīr, Cairo 1958 vol.1. p.17
- (21) Bidāya, vol. 14. p.32.

following are the men who have been referred to by most of the biographers and by Ibn Kathīr in his writings with the addition of the word 'Shaikhunā' before the names especially. Among his teachers in Islamic law were; (i) Kamāl-al-Dīn Abdul Wahhāb (his elder brother), (2) Burhān-al-Dīn, (D729). (22)

Ibn Kathīr learnt by heart "Al-Tanbīh fī-furū' al-Shāfi'iyya (التنبیه فی فروع الشافعیه) written by Shaikh Abū Ishāq-al-Shīrāzī (D746).

In the fourteenth century and earlier it was customary for a student to learn by heart the basic book relating to the branch of education, without which he could hardly proceed to acquire further knowledge.

He was taught principles of jurisprudence (Uṣūl-al-Fiqh) by Shams-al-Dīn Muhammad Ibn 'Abd-al-Rahmān-al-Asfahānī (D749 A.H.), the interpreter of 'Mukh-taṣar' by Ibn Hājib. He also memorised 'Mukh-taṣar' by 'Allāma Ibn Hājib (D746). He had the good fortune to receive his education in Tradition from noted scholars, like

- (22) Ibn Kathīr's references to the names of his teachers along with remarks about their characters and scholarships may be seen in his tafsīr and Bidāya. Tafsīr: Hāfiz-al-Mazī vol.4. p.515 and 602, Al-Dhahabī vol. 2. p. 238, Ibn Taimiya vol.1. p.583 vol.3. p.322 vol. 2.p.238...Bidāya: Hāfiz-al-Mazī vol.3. pp.5 and 8, vol.4. p.194, vol. 6. pp.10, 276, 282, vol.8. p. 326, vol. 9. p.89, vol.11 p.33 and 190 and vol. 14 p.190, 'Abū-Abd Allah-al-Dhahabī vol. 3. p. 127 vol.5. pp.210 and 214 vol.6. p. 282 vol.7 pp.50, 61,72, 129, 141, 142, vol.9. pp. 83 159, vol. 11. p.190, vol.14 p. 190, Al-Zamlakānī vol. 6. pp. 258, 266, 267, 268, 269, 274, 277, and 283, and vol. 14. p.28, Ahmad Ibn Abū Talib-al-Hajjār vol. 6. p.642, Birzālī (D739) vol. 14 p. 135; Ibn Shāhna vol. 14 p.50 and Ibn Taimiya vol.2. p.238, vol. 3. p. 322, vol. 6 p.86 vol. 7. p. 393 vol.11. p. 190 vol. 9 p.155. vol.14 pp 6, 18, 19, 38, 135 ff and 190.....

(i) Bahā'-al-Dīn Qāsim Ibn 'Asākir (D723A.H.), (2) Hāfiz Shams-al-Din Dhahabī (D748 A.H.), (3) Ibn al-Suwaidī Muhammad Ibn Ibrāhīm (D711) (23), (4) 'Afīf-al-Dīn Ishāq Ibn Yahyā-al-Amadī (D725A.H.), and Ibn Shahna-al-Hajjār (D730) (24).

Ibn Kathīr had also the privilege of being a student of Ibn Taymiyya who was an erudite scholar of Qurānic Sciences. His method of teaching was very impressive and his religious ideas were clear. His religious teaching had a great influence on Ibn Kathīr's religious life. His lectures encouraged in Ibn Kathīr clear thinking in matters of religion. The meaning, explanation and commentary of the Qurān expounded by Ibn Taimiyya in his lectures made a great impact on Ibn Kathīr's mind.

Ibn Kathīr studied under Ibn Taymiyya for a long time and was greatly impressed by his character, dealings, personality and knowledge.

Ibn Kathīr had a great love and honour for his teacher, Ibn Taymiyya. He loved and respected those who had a respect for his teacher, hated those who spoke against him. Taqiyy-al-Dīn-al-Hāfī says that the statement of Ibn Kathīr, Shams-Dīn-al-Hādī and al-Salāh-al-Katabī in favour of Imām Ibn Taymiyya should not

(23) Al-Mahāsīn, op. cit., p. 57. It appears that he is incorrect in referring him as a teacher of Ibn Kathīr, or in quoting the date of death.

(24) See Shadharāt vol. 6. p.153.

be taken into ~~material~~ account <sup>due to</sup> their deep love for him (25) Ibn Kathīr defended him against his opponents especially in the interpretation of the law on divorce. Because of this very notion he shared the risks of his teacher including prosecution and imprisonment and proved that he was a true disciple. He was prepared to give up material comforts in order to save religious principles. One very important lesson which he learnt from Ibn Taymiyya's life was to sacrifice the mortal world in order to defend the religious and spiritual values.

Imām Ibn Taimiyya was a disciple of Imām Ahmad bin Hanbal in the science of law and Ibn Kathīr was a follower of Imām Shāfi'ī like his ancestors. But he was influenced by his teacher's cult and afterwards followed a middle path. But in some cases, especially in the matter of the interpretation of the law on divorce, he was a staunch follower of Imām Ibn Taymiyya.

When Imām Ibn Taymiyya died in prison in 728 A.H. Ibn Kathīr along with his father-in-law went there. When his father-in-law, along with others, gave Ibn Taymiyya the funeral washing and wrapped him in a shroud, Ibn Kathīr uncovered his face, looked at it with love and kissed it as a homage to his beloved teacher. He wrote:- " كنت فيمن حضر جنازة ابن تيمية حافذاً الى الجراح المزي

فلشفت عن وجهه الشريف و نظرت اليه و قبيلته " (26)

(25) Al-Mahāsin, op. cit.,... 57.

(26) Ibn Kathīr, Bidāya, vol.14 p.138.

His deep affection for his teacher took the form of his respect for his grave. Therefore, he was keen to see the grave of his relatives near his teacher's grave. When his mother, Maryam bint Faraj died in the month of Dhū-Qa'da (ذو القعدة) in the same year she was buried in the tomb of Sūfiyya to the east of the grave of Imām Taymiyya. Before his death he (Ibn Kathīr) left a will<sup>i.e</sup> to be buried close to Imām Ibn Taymiyya. (27) (28)

Imām Ibn Taymiyya had three favourite students, Ibn Rashīq, Ibn Qaṣṣam and Ibn Kathīr. Ibn Taymiyya on hearing his Tafsīr praised him as 'Abbās-al-'Azzāwī writes:-

وَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلْ عَلَى تَنْبِيْهِمْ وَكَانَ فِي سِنِّ الشَّبَابِ وَمَدْحِهِ  
كثيْرًا ودرجته على سائر المفسرين (29)

- (27) Nicholson in his literary History of the Arabs, (Cambridge) 1953) on page 463 writes: "Imām Ibn Taymiyya was born at Harran in 1363 A.D. He was himself Hanbalī. He devoted his life to religious reform. A few years later his father fleeing before the Mongols brought him to Damascus, where in due course he received an excellent education. It is said that he never forgot anything which he had once learnt, and his knowledge of theology and law was so extensive as almost to justify the saying A Tradition that Imām Ibn Taymiyya does not recognise is no Tradition. He ended his days in captivity in Damascus. There was a crowd of 200,000 men and 15,000 women that attended his funeral. The principles inspired by Ibn Taymiyya were followed by Abd-al-Wahhāb. John Alden William in his book "Islam" (New York 1962) on page 205 writes: "He spent years in the fortress of Damascus, Cairo and Alexandria for intemperate statements about the 'Ash'arites and for Hanbalī statements on the nature of God which smacked of the old deprecable old anthropomorphism of that school. And he used his confinement to turn out more works attacking and refuting his detractors, until they had him deprived of ink and paper. The blow is said to have killed him within a month."
- (28) She died (728 A.H.) the following night after Ibn Taymiyya, see Bidāya, vol. 14 p.143.
- (29) A. Al-'Azzāwī, History of Irāq, Baghdād 1957 p.196 cf. Abd-al-Ṣamad, Collection of Commentaries of Ibn Taymiyya, Bombay 1954 p.10. & see reference no.22.

Another teacher from whom Ibn Kathir greatly benefited was al-Mazī, the Shaikh of Dār-al-Ḥadīth-al-Ashrafiyya and the author of 'Tahdhīb-al-Kamāl' which is included in "Al-Takmil-fī Marifat-al-Thiqāt-wal-duāfā'ī-wal-Majāhīl" of Ibn Kathīr. Ibn Kathīr spent a part of his life under his supervision. The biographers of Ibn Kathīr are of the opinion that al-Mazī had a soft corner in his heart for him.. This enabled him to attain great depth of knowledge. Jalāl-al-Dīn Suyūṭī remarks"

وتخترج ولازمه وبرع (30)

Ibn Kathīr impressed al-Mazī by his hard working nature and extraordinary brilliance, as he had impressed Ibn Taymiyya and gained his favour. It was due to his cordial relation with his teacher that he was married to his daughter named 'Zainab'. This close association provided him with a chance to consult his teacher informally in the matters of Islamic Studies.

Ibn Kathīr was especially impressed by his ability in the critical study of Ḥadīth. Therefore, he preferred al-Mazī's decision about weak, sound and unacknowledged (Munkar) ḥadīth, wherever he faced difficulty in classifying ḥadīth.

On Friday the 11th of Safar (صفر) in 742A.H. when al-Mazī finished a lesson on Ḥadīth he came home to perform ablution for

(30) Suyūṭī, Dhayl: Tabaqāt-al-Huffāz, Damascus 1929 p.361.

Juma' prayer. But all of a sudden he fell victim to severe stomach pain, assumed a colic but it was an epidemic, and he could not go back to the mosque for prayer. After prayer Ibn Kathīr became aware of his absence and returned home, found al-Mazī shivering with pain and asked him about his condition. Al-Mazī said "Praise be to Allah" repeatedly and then breathed his last.

On Saturday the 12th of Safar 742A.H. the funeral ceremony was attended by a large number of men both public and officials. He was buried to the west of Ibn Taymiyya in the Tomb of al-Sūffiyā near to his wife 'Aīsha bint Ibrāhīm who had died a year earlier (D741.A.H.) She was the best reader and memorizer of the Qurʾān and had a complete knowledge of Tajwīd. She was a scholar of Hadīth and Tafsīr also and had a host of students. (31).

Little is known about Ibn Kathīr's married life from outside sources. No biographer has given any detailed account of it. However, Ibn Kathīr gives a passing reference to his wife in al-Bidāya-wal-Nihayā saying that she was a highly educated and religious minded woman. She studied under 'Umm Zainab-Fātima-bint 'Abbās (D.714A.H.) who was a pupil of Ibn Taymiyya. Ibn Taymiyya

(31) Ibn Kathīr, Bidāya, vol. 14 pp.189 and 191....

has spoken very highly of her. (32) It appears that the relations between husband and wife were excellent and they led a happy life. There is no clear record of his children. Ibn Kathīr is silent on this point. Biographers refer to ~~three~~ sons: (1) Zain-al-'Abdīn, (2) Al-Rahīm and (3) Badar-al-'Dīn-'Abū-al-Baqā', who was a great scholar. One of his sons wrote a Dhayl on his universal history al-Bidāya-wal-Nihāya. (33)

According to the tradition, after the completion of his studies, Ibn Kathīr made an application to the acknowledged religious authorities in order to be given permission to teach religious sciences. He was accorded this permission. Those who acceded to his request were (1) Al-Wānī (D735A.H.) (2) Al-Khatanī (D731 A.H.) (3) Al-Dabbūsī, Suyūtī excludes al-Dabbūsī. (34)

Ibn Kathīr started his career probably as a teacher in al-Madrasa al-Tankaziyya in Damascus. He spent one fourth of his life there. After the death of his teacher al-Hāfiz al-Dhahabī (D748A.H.) whom he sometimes quotes in history especially for the confirmation of his chronological data, he joined Madrasa 'Umm-al-Sālīh' in 748 A.H. (35) and rose to the

(32) Ibid vol.14 p.72.

(33) Al-Azzawī, op.cit., p.196 cf. Ibn Fahd, Luhz-al-Hāz Cairo 187 p.73.

(34) Al-Suyūtī, op. cit., p.361 cf. Ibn Hajar-al-'Asqalānī, al-'Durār-al-Kāmina, Hyderabad Deccan 1348 vol.1. pp373ff.

(35) Al-Nawafī-mānī, Al-Dāris-fī-Tārīkh-al-Madāris, Damascus 1948 vol. 1. pp36f. cf. 'Alī 'Akbar, 'Lughat Nāma, Tahran 1945 p. 342.

the position of Shaikh-al-Hadīth. He served there more than a decade. Later on, he joined Dār-al-Hadīth al-Ashraffiya, (36) but he could not continue there for long as he failed to maintain good relations with the authorities. He joined al-Jāmi'a-al-Umawī as Shaikh-al-Tafsīr wal-Hadīth and continued till the last moment of his life as a successful teacher. He became very popular there both among the officials and the public. The amīr of Damascus, his subordinates and other officials and a large number of the public used to perform Jum'a prayer under his leadership. His daily lectures on Hadīth and Tafsīr were thronged with students and other listeners. (37)

Ibn Kathīr had a large number of distinguished students. The <sup>most</sup> famous among them are (1) Ibn Hajjī (D.782 A.H.) (2) Ibn-al-Hubānī (3) Abu-al-Mahāsin al-Husainī.

Ibn Hajjī is one of the noted historians. He wrote a Dhayl on al-Bidāya-wal-Nihāya in seven volumes. It is counted among the best books of history. He deals with historical events monthly whereas Ibn Kathīr describes events annually. He is clear in ideas and honest in affairs to the extent that he admits to have drawn immense benefit from Ibn Kathīr's work, especially from his Hadīth and history. He acknowledges Ibn Kathīr's authority and criticism

(36) Ibid, p.19.

(37) Ibn Kathīr, Bidāya, vol. 14 p.268.

on Hadīth. He believes that Ibn Kathīr's teaching and companionship were more useful to him than those of other teachers. (38)

The second distinguished student, Hāfiz Abū-al-Mahāsin-al-Husāinī, a famous biographer, was born on Thursday in the month of Sha'ban in 715 A.H. in Damascus. His noted works are: 1) Dhayl al-Tadhkira-al-Huffāz 2) Al-Tadhkira-fī-Rijāl-al-'Ashara, 3) Al-'Urf-al-Dhakī-fī-al-Nasab-al-Dhakī, 4) Al-Iktifā-fī-al-Duafā and 5) Al-Ilmām fī Dakhūl-al-Hamām. He recognises the ability of Ibn Kathīr in Tafsīr, Jurisprudence, Grammar and Criticism of hadīth and the significance of his works.

The third pupil Ibn al-Husbānī was born in Damascus. He began his studies with his father. Then he studied under renowned scholars, Ibn Kathīr being one of them. He wrote Jamī'al-Tafsīr on the pattern of Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr. His Tafsīr is the manifestation of Ibn Kathīr's influence.

An analysis of the achievements of Ibn Kathīr brings home the fact that he was expert in almost all of the religious sciences. The first science he learned was Tajwīd (تجويد) which signifies the science of giving full rights to the words with regard to their pronunciation, intonation and punctuation and to all other rules pertaining to the recitation of the Koran. Ample examples (38) Al-Azzawī, op. cit., p.196f.

are found in Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr which speak of his knowledge of the peculiarities of spelling of words in the Koran, of its variant reading.<sup>5</sup> He quotes the seven acknowledged readers to confirm his pronunciation and correct accent of different passages and marginal instructions i.e. Waqf-Jā'iz, Waqf-Mujawwaz and Wafq Murakhkhas. He has acquaintance with the pauses prescribed in the reading. (39)

In his writings, Ibn Kathīr sometimes deals with vowel points, case ending orthographical signs, (تَشْدِيد) signs of doubling, pronunciation and spelling, and takes interest in discussing them as found in different places in his Tafsīr. To solve them he relied more on examples than on theory. No comprehensive book seems to have been written by him on these subjects. But he has allotted a few pages in his book Fadā'il-al-Qur'ān to express the superiority of the science of intonation and recitation over all other religious sciences.

To prove the significance of this science he refers to verse (73:4) of Sura-al-Muzammil which is usually interpreted as enjoining slow and clear intonation and also refers to the tradition 'Jawwid-al-Qur'ān' transmitted by Ibn Mas'ūd..

For his knowledge and interest in this subject, (40) Dāwī

(39) Ibn Kathīr Tafsīr, vol. 7. pp 142ff.

(40) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol. 7 pp 142f.

in his book Tabaqāt-al-Qurrā' (categories of readers) includes Ibn Kathīr, obviously in error, among the seven readers (Sab'a Qurra') of the first and second century, whereas Ibn Kathīr was born in 700A.H. He can be included among the readers of the 8th century A.H. (41)

Ibn Kathīr was well versed in Arabic Grammar. He tried to explain the meaning of different Arabic words through Grammar by quoting similar examples from the Qur'ān, Tradition, and pre-Islamic and post-Islamic poetry and from other literary works in order to help the reader in understanding the Qur'ān. But he does not always mention the derivation of words from their roots.

He was recognised as a scholarly grammarian by his contemporaries, by later grammarians and scholars alike.

We learn from his universal history al-Bidāya-wal-Nihāya that he was a poet. He composed verses explaining the rise and fall of the rulers, dynasties and kingdoms. His verses on the rise and fall of the 'Umayyads and of the Abbasids and the beginning and end of the Fātimids are revealing. In these few verses he has sketched the characteristics of their reigns and the causes which led to the accession of successive rulers to the throne. He is amazed to find the same name of the first ruler and the last ruler in a dynasty (ie. Marwan I, Marwan the Last). He composed a few

(41) A.M. Shākīr, op.cit., vol.1. Introduction.

verses about the Tartars. He explains how they plundered cities, massacred people, destroyed valuable material and demolished the whole city of Baghdad in the reign of al-Mustansir. However he left no separate dīwān.

Ibn Kathīr had a vast knowledge of Islamic law. He deservedly received praises even from his contemporaries and teachers. A Contemporary and a pupil historian, Abū Mahāsīn-al-Husainī, recognised his authority and the later historian Ibn Taghrī Bardī confirms his opinion. al-Hāfiz-al-Dhahabī has noted his deep knowledge of Jurisprudence. His written work in the subject speaks of his ability and capability. He is equally at home in the principles of Jurisprudence. His work "Takhrīj Mukhtasar Ibn Hājib" is remarkable. It is in no way less important than his book "Adilla-al-Tanbīh" in jurisprudence. In the two books he shows his real insight into the subject.

Ibn Kathīr is a famous traditionist and historian. In his method of writing he is traditionalist first and historian second. He describes pre-Islamic and post Islamic historical events by quoting traditions as far as possible. But he does not accept all the traditions blindly. He separates fabricated and genuine. He uses Jewish material but he believes that according to the Prophet these are of three kinds. (1) Totally true (2) Totally false and (3) Partially true. Yet, he makes

less use of Jewish material than some of his predecessors, such as Tabarī and Ibn Athīr. (42).

He has a good knowledge of historical facts. To him history means the knowledge of records of past people--prophets, saints, scholars, wise men, poets, kings, especially the description of their genesis, rites, customs, their cities, their birth and death. But its purpose is learning lessons from past experience and taking warning and an example from it. Knowledge of all these things if applied in every day life may protect man from harmful things and may thus benefit him.

Ibn Kathīr's important work on universal history is al-Bidāya-wal-Nihāya, an abridgement of Tārīkh Abī Shāhna from the beginning up to 665 A.H. Then, up to 738 A.H. follows al-Birzālī. His style is similar to that of Al-Tabarī, Ibn-al-Athīr, and Al-Birzālī. (43)

Historians and biographers, after studying his work, have praised him as follows. Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān treats him equal to al-Birzālī and Ḥāfiz-al-Dhahabī, the great historians of their times and his teachers. Ibn Nāṣir gives him top position among the contemporary historians.

(42) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr vol. 1. p.8.

(43) Encyclopaedia of Islam, (see Ref. 5).....cf. Al-Dhahabī (see Ref. 2)...

Besides being a jurist, historian, grammarian and Commentator, Ibn Kathīr is also a Muhaddith. It is assumed that he had a sound critical knowledge of Hadīth and could easily sort out sound <sup>weak</sup> (Ṣahīh) (Daʿīf) and un-acknowledged (Munkar) hadīth and was acknowledged an authority in this respect. Basically his fame as historian depended on his work on Hadīth. The critical knowledge of Hadīth and its application in al-Bidāya-wal-Nihāya is the cause of his success and gaining the title of one of the best historians of the past.

His books on traditions show his vast knowledge of Hadīth. His quest for traditions and knowledge related to it is so overwhelming that every subject seems to have been affected by it. Jalāl-al-Dīn Ṣūyūtī describes his criticism of some hadīth transmitted by al-Bazār; for example, the tradition stating that the Prophet Muhammad did not interpret any verse of the Koran by another verse except a few verses meanings <sup>are known</sup> especially revealed to him by Gabriel. The interpretation was mostly by Hadīth. After quoting some examples Ibn Kathīr agrees with al-Bazār's views. But in the interpretation of a few words Ibn Kathīr differs from him and rejects his explanation i.e. 'Falq' (فلق) is a covered well in the Hell (2) غِي دَاتِم are two wells in the bottom of hell. According to Ibn Kathir these two Ahādīth are un-acknowledged.

His critical approach to Hadīth led him to the conclusion

which in some cases was of fundamental importance. Others are personal views which while interesting in traditions are not very important to Muslims in general.

By temperament Ibn Kathīr was equable and he was not at all an extremist in his religious views and attitudes. He was peace-loving and interested in reconciliation. He was a follower of Imām Shāfi'ī but he was so liberal in his attitude to religious sects that he accepted no partisanship of any one sect. Although a Shafi'ite he married the daughter of a Hanafite, al-Mazī; and he often followed Ibn Taymiyya who was a Hanbalite. He accepted the authority of al-Mazī in Hadīth, Ibn Taymiyya's decisions in controversial points and al-Zamlakānī's decisions regarding Miracles. Yet according to Ibn Taymiyya Zamalakānī was a follower of Ibn 'Arabī whose views, related to fundamentals, are rejected by Sunnites. Damascus where he lived was by no means a liberal environment. The inhabitants who had worked together all day, sorted themselves out at the time of prayer and joined the respective sects of the Shafi'ites, and Hanbalites, the Hanefites and the Malakites. The parties were mutually critical and mutually defiant, so their differences were hardened by opposition. It was Ibn Kathīr who attended the meetings of all the sects and settled their differences. Owing to this he was accepted and esteemed by all sects. (44)

(44) Bidāya, vol. 11. p190 and vol.14 pp 138 and 190.

Ibn Kathīr was of the opinion that the people follow the taste of their ruler. If the ruler is greedy the people are greedy, if he is honest, benevolent and righteous the people are honest, benevolent and righteous and so on. He supports his opinion with the examples of Walīd, 'Umar ibn 'Abd-al-Azīz and Sulaimān-ibn-Abdul Mālik. The former <sup>(Walīd)</sup> was fond of buildings so people talked of buildings in their meetings. The second took interest in the Koran, the people did the same. Sulaimān was a lover of marriages, so the number of marriages was a burning point among the people. (45) Perhaps Ibn Kathīr is partly true in his allusion but generally his view is unacceptable as he neglects some important points, i.e. the rule of rites and customs moral, religious, ethical and social phenomena. These are not less effective than the ruler with authority. Mostly these were the cause of mutiny and riots against rulers. Ibn Kathīr's opinion does not accord with history, reason and psychology. He is in favour of the Caliph being from Quraish. This is quite a controversial point. He favours the progeny of 'Alī and finds fault with the Ummayyāds. He is not impartial in his opinion.

Ibn Kathīr had a conciliatory nature, but sometimes he became angry when views contrary to his were expressed. According to Ibn Hajar teaching aroused his feeling and there was exchange of hot words between him and Ibn Qaiyyam. Ibn Kathīr was an

(45) Ibid vol. 9. p.165.

intellectual but not a rationalist, therefore he disliked speculative theology (Kalām) and thought that it was the product of foreign influence. He also thought that Ibn Qaiyyam blamed him for being 'Ash'arite, and questioned him about it. Ibn Qaiyyam answered in a way with a pun "If you have hair from head to foot no one will say that you are an 'Ash'arite (a man of hair) and also no one would believe that you have exasperated Ibn Taymiyya because you cannot make him angry as you have full faith in his interpretation of Ahadīth. Ibn Kathīr did not mention any dispute with Ibn Qaiyyam while writing on him in al-Bidāya-wal-Nihāya. He speaks very highly of Ibn Qaiyyam. If there was any dispute the cause might be the remarks of Ibn Qaiyyam against Ibn Taymiyya which Ibn Kathīr did not like. Ibn Kathīr speaks ill of his teacher Ibn-al-Zamlakānī because he spoke against Ibn Taymiyya and wrote a book opposing his interpretation of the Law of divorce. (46)

Ibn Kathīr also had a good face and witty nature. Ibn Hajar has used words ( حسن المزاج ) good humourer. Hāfiz Zain-al-'Abidīn describes how once Hāfiz 'Alāu-al-Dīn was delivering a lecture. Ibn Kathīr was one of the audience. When Hāfiz, Alāu-al-Dīn finished his lecture he introduced Taqiyy-al-Dīn to Ibn Kathīr and praised Taqiyy-al-Dīn's knowledge of the Koran, Hadīth and

(46) Ibn Hajar, op.cit., p.374.c.f. al-Taghrī-al-Bardī, al-Nujūm-al-Zahira, Cairo 1928 vol.11. p.123....

jurisprudence. Whereupon Ibn Kathīr said, "It seems to me difficult to believe that Taqiyy-al-Dīn ever had any knowledge of the Hadīth, about the use of water (for ablution) made hot by sunshine (ماءٌ شمس)."

Ibn Kathīr lost his eyesight at the age of 73, and died at the age of 74. The occurrence of his death is described thus. In 774 A.H. an epidemic broke out. It continued for about six months and caused the death of about 200 men every day. The scholars who fell victim to it were, Abrāhām Ibn Ahmad-al-Hanafī, Abrāhām Ibn Muhammad al-Yamānī, Ahmad Ibn Rajab al-Baghdādī, Shahāb-al-Dīn Ibn Ahmad-al-Shafi'ī and Hafīz Imād-al-Dīn Ibn Kathīr. In this year a great fire also broke out, as a result of a thunderstorm in the palace of the Sultan during the month of Ramadān. This fire lasted for a number of days and it wrought havoc and destruction of life and property.

Ibn Kathir died in the month of Sha'bān in 774 A.H. According to his will he was buried near his teacher Ibn Taymiyya in the tomb of Sūfia situated outside Bāb-alNaṣr in Damascus. His funeral was attended by a large number of people. One of his students wrote an elegy on his death containing the following:

لَفَقَدَكَ طَلَابُ الْعُلُومِ تَأَسَّفُوا      وَجَادُوا بِدَمْعِ الْاَيْبِيتِ غَزِيرِ  
وَلَوْ نَزَجُوا نَاءَ الْمَدَائِحِ بِالْذَّمَاءِ      لَكَانَ تَمْلِيلًا فَيْكَ يَا ابْنَ كَثِيرِ

WORKS OF IBN KATHIR

A. -- Islamic Jurisprudence (Fiqh)

- (1) Al-Takmīl-fī-Ma'rifa-al-Thiqāt-wal-Du'afā'-wal-Majāhīl.  
5 vol. or Jāmi'-Bain-Kitāb-al-Tahdhīb-wal-Mizān...5 vols.
- (2) Kitāb-al-Ahkām-al-Kabīr.
- (3) Sharah Kitāb-al-Kabīr.
- (4) Kitāb-Ahkām-al-Zakāt.
- (5) Mas'ala-al-Simā'.

B. -- History

- (1) Mukhtasar Tarīkh Kabīr.
- (2) Al-Bidāya-wal-Nihāya..(Universal History)..vol.14.
- (3) Al-Fitan-wal-Malāhim.
- (4) Kitāb-fī-Sīrat-al-Rasūl (Mukhtasar).
- (5) Sīrat-al-Rasūl.
- (6) Sīrat-Abū-Bakar.... (7) Sīrat 'Umar.
- (8) Sīrat-'Umar-ibn-'Abdul-'Azīz.
- (9) Al-Ijtihād-fī-Talab-al-Jihād.
- (10) Al-Kawākib-al-Durārī-fī-al-Tārīkh.
- (11) Tabaqāt-al-Shāfi'iyya.
- (12) Tabaqāt-al-Imād-al-Dīn.
- (13) Al-Wādhī-al-Nafīs-fī-Manāqib-Imām Idrīs.

C. -- Traditions

- (1) Al-Ahkām-al-Ṣughrā-fī-al-Hadīth
- (2) Al-Bahith-al-Hadīth 'Ilā Ma'rifat-al-Ulūm-al-Hadīth.
- (3) Mukhtasar 'Ulūm-al-Hadīth,
- (4) Jāmi'a-al-Masānīd-wal-Sunan-al-Hādī-li-Aqwām-al-Sunan 8  
vols. or Al-Musnad-al-Kabīr..8 vols.
- (5) Fadā'il-al-Qu'rān... (6) Risāla-al-Tawhīd.
- (7) Sharah Sahih Bukhari
- (8) Tartīb Musnad Ahmad.

D. -- Principles of Criticism Traditions

- (1) Takhrīj 'Adilla-al-Tanbīh
- (2) Takhrīj Mukhtaṣar Ibn Hājib.

E. -- Commentary.....

- (1) Tafsīr-al-Qur'an-al-Karīm....10vols.....

CHAPTER THREE  
BELIEF IN GOD

The first article of Islamic Scholastic Theology upon which the structure of religion depends is to believe in God, in His Essence, in His attributes, and in His commands; and to reject direct and indirect partnership with Him. The Koran insists: "there is no God but Allah". The whole system, doctrine, and teachings of Islām revolve around this central point, the Supremacy of God and the Unity of Godhead. From this pivotal point flows the unity of the fundamental facts about nature, man, and life. The purpose of Islām seems to establish balance and to bring about agreement in the relationship of man to God and to the universe through useful adjustment.

God has two aspects (a) His Essence, and (b) His attributes. The attributes belong to His essence as well as to His action. "Those which belong to His essence are: life, power, knowledge, speech, hearing, seeing, and will, and those which belong to His action are: creating, sustaining, producing, renewing, making and so on". (1)

In this chapter we will discuss briefly (a) The Essence of

- (1) JA...Wensinck, "The Muslim Creed" Cambridge 1932 p.188. With regard to God's attributes of actions Ibn Kathīr gives importance to:- 'mercy', sustaining, guidance, creation, and justice. See Tafsīr vol.1. pp33 to 50...

God; (b) His seven Essential attributes; (c) His attributes of actions; and (d) Partnership with Him.

A. THE ESSENCE OF GOD

Essence is described as self, entity, and indispensable element. There is emphasis in the Qur'ān on the need to know the nature and essence of God. If human beings try to understand Him they can easily avoid the pitfall of plurality. Scholars exerted their best efforts in the exposition of the nature of God in order to know Him and to make His idea accessible to the mind of common men.

Ibn Kathīr describes the essence of God in different places with different verses and interpretations. One of the verses which he interprets as showing the essence of God as to be closely related to man's spiritual and worldly life, is the following: "God is the light of the heavens and earth: the likeness of His Light is as a niche wherein is a lamp (the lamp is in a glass, the glass as it were a glittering star) kindled from a Blessed Tree, and Olive that is neither of the East nor of the West whose oil well nigh would shine, even if no fire touched it; Light upon Light: (God guides to His Light whom He will.) (And God strikes similitudes for men, and God has knowledge of every thing." (24:36) According to Ibn Kathīr God's essence is that He is the Light of the heaven and earth. The same expression occurs in the Tradition: "He enlightens the heavens and earth by His Light." In the First Epistle of John a similar version is to be found.

"God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all." (2)

Ibn Kathīr interprets the verse by saying that the glorious allegorical application of Light to God means the Absoluteness of God. 'Nūr' is Light which revealed the hidden things. God (Divine Light) is represented as seated very high to illumine the heavens and earth which allegorically means the main source Who brought them into being. The statement is followed by an example of connecting verses to explain its mysterious meaning as this figurative Light has a layer upon layer of truth. The visible light and the light of the heart, which is the most beneficial thing for both the physical and spiritual worlds, is the reflection of true light i.e. God. But in the physical world the light which is supposed to be the purest thing, has some draw-back (defects) incidental to its physical nature. Firstly, it depends on external sources. Secondly, it is unstable, and temporary, and lastly it is bound to time, space, and limits. But God's light is immeasurable and indescribable. It passes transcendently into regions of spiritual heights unconceived by man's imagination.

Ibn Kathīr states that when the Prophet was tortured by men of Tā'if he said "O! God I take refuge with the Light of Thy countenance which illumines darkness and upon which depends the welfare of the whole universe." (3)

(2) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.5. p.101. and John 1:5.

(3) Ibid: vol. 5. p.101.

To express the closer relationship of Divine Light to human beings, Ibn Kathīr maintains that obedience to God is Light. He also holds that Faith in Islam is a light given to believers. This theological expression is to make clear that God is One and that He is the only source of sustenance and existence. (4)

Imām-al-Ghazālī wrote "Mishkāt-al-'Anwār" in order to interpret Divine Light and its relation to mankind: he says: "God created the creation in darkness, then sent an effulgence (beam) of High Light upon it." (5) Probably he meant, that the creature's light is borrowed from God. According to him it is an uphill task to understand Divine Light that is in "seventy thousand veils of light" which only Prophets can well imagine, therefore he says: "Prophets are the Lamps and so are the learned but the difference between them is incalculable." Ultimately he considers Light an expression of Absolute reality. (6)

Concerning Light Doctor Iqbal's view also supports Ibn Kathīr's interpretation "The teaching of modern physics is that the velocity of light cannot be exceeded and is the same for all observers whatever their own system of movement. Thus in the

(4) Ibid: vol.5. p.101f.

(5) Al-Ghazālī "Mishkāt-al-'Anwār London 1924, Translated by Gairdner pp.54f.

(6) Ibid. He also holds that five faculties of spirits; the sensory spirit, the imaginative spirit, the intelligential spirit, the ratiocinative spirit, and transcendental Prophetic spirit, are symbolised by the Niche, Glass, Lamp, Tree and Oil in verse of Light.cf. Macdonald "Question Drawer" July 1916 vol 6 pp.309-310.

world of change light is the nearest approach to the Absolute. The metaphor of light as applied to God, therefore, must in view of modern knowledge, be taken to suggest the Absoluteness of God".(7) The whole interpretation means sublimity and spirituality of God as has been described in the Gospel: "God is spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." (8)

Ibn Kathīr also expresses the essence of God thus: "God is One and there is no one beside Him. He is the originally self-existent source, Eternal, Deathless, He Himself is Independent and upon Him all depend. He is the only Sustainer. One of His signs is that the heavens and the earth subsist by His command. His unity is external, internal, and numerical. He is the First, the Last, the Onward and the Inward. He is unique in His form and essence. Adoration is only due to Him as all other things are created beings and in no way equal to Him. He is Unique in His wisdom, actions, attributes and person. He is the Absolute Reality wherein all other things proceed and is not restricted to any time, space, and circumstance. He is Etherēal, Majestic, Great and far away from our restricted conception. The correct way to apprehend Him is to believe that He is a powerful living personality not bound to be High, Near, Low and far, but every where in the heavens and on earth. He is nearer to us than our

(7) 'Iqbāl: Reconstruction of Religious thought in Islam" Lahore 1930 p.89.

(8) John: 2:24.

jugular vein. He cares for us. He is unlike created things. He creates things without any precedence and means. By His command things in the heavens and earth cease and exist. He is ever watching, no fatigue over-takes Him. He begets not nor He was begotten. (9)

Confirming Ibn Kathīr, Imām Ghazālī briefly defines the essence of God thus: "He in His essence is One without any partner (shārik). Single without any similar, Eternal without any opposite, Separate without any like. He is One, Prior (qadīm قديم) with nothing before Him, from eternity (abadī) without any end, subsisting without ending, abiding without termination!" (10)

Abū Hanīfa describes the essence of God thus: "Allah the exalted is One, not in the sense of number, but in the sense that He has no partner; He begetteth not and He is not begotten and there is none like unto Him. He resembles none of the created things, nor does any created thing resemble Him. He has been from eternity and will be to eternity with His names and qualities those which belong to His essence as well as those which belong to His actions." (11)

Baidāwī and Zamakhshari seem to prefer the definition of essence of God as stated in the Sura of Unity. Their interpret

(9) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr vol. 1. pp.180 332, 551: vol. 6. p.544 and vol.7. pp.412-413.

(10) R. Macdonald, "Muslim Theology" Beirut 1965 p.300.

(11) Wensinck, op.cit., p.188.

ations slightly differ, but both of them are very logical and brief in their explanations. Baidāwī holds "Say (O Muhammad) He is one Allah" by saying the word Allah is the predicate of He is, and one is a second predicate. Allah is 'eternal' that is, Allah is He on Whom all depend for their needs. He begets not because of the impossibility of His similarity (Homogeneousness). And was not begotten, because of the impossibility of anything happening concerning Him. And equal to Him is not any one. The expression 'to Him', is joined to the word 'equal' and comes before because the chief object of the pronouns is to express the denial. And the reason for using the word 'single' last the subject of the verb, is that it may stand separate from 'to Him'. Baidāwī seems to observe that even grammatical use of the words related to God must show absolute separation between Allah and creature. Zamakhsharī maintains: "Allah is one, Unique in His Godhead, in which no one is partner, and He is the one Whom all seek since they need Him and He needs no body. He begets not, because He has none of His own genus, and so keeps no female companion of His own kind, and consequently the two of them propagate. This is indicated by God's saying, 'How can there be off-spring to Him and He has no female companion.' And He was not begotten. As every created being is an occurrence and has a material body. Allah, however, is ancient, there is no beginning to His existence and and He is not a body. And He has no equal, i.e. no likeness or resemblance. The explanation of this denies the companionship in marriage and female consort. (12)

'Ash'arī's definition of the essence of God is very similar to that of Abū Hanīfa, but he is very brief in his description. He says "God is One, Unique, Eternal, no God at all save Him, and that He has taken to Himself no consort or child". (13) Rāzī follows him in this matter, but he devotes much labour in giving proof of One-ness of God. (14)

Tabarī's description of the essence of God is very similar to Ibn Kathīr's but there is a slight difference in the interpretation of sura 112 on the word 'al-Samad'. Ibn Kathīr attempts to interpret it as <sup>the</sup> central point of the sura whereas Tabarī gives more emphasis <sup>on</sup> other words of the chapter. (15)

The different kind of views expressed about the essence of God provide the idea of great<sup>er</sup> Conceivable Being. Thinkers like Anselm (1033 - 1109), Bonaventure (1221 - 12274), Descartes (1596 - 1650), Leibnitz (1646 - 1716) and Hegel (1770 - 1831), while giving the result of the Ontological argument for the existence of God in the phrase "Think of the . . . . ."

- (12) Al-Baidāwī, Tafsīr (Anwār-al-Tanzīl-wa-Asrār-al-Tamīl, edited H.O. Fleisher vol.2. p.422. Al-Zamakhsharī, Tafsīr, (al-Kashshāf - 'An Haqa'iq-al-Tanzīl Cairo 1318 A.H. Vol.3. p.295 cf. S.M. Zwemer, The Muslim Doctrine of God, New York 1905 p.32ff. and also cf. H. Hirschfeld, New Researches Into The Composition and Exegesis of the Qur'an, London (R. Asiatic Society 1902 p.42.
- (13) R.J. MacCarthy, The Theology of Al-Ashari, Beirut 1953, p.236 (This is a translation of (i) Kitāb-al-Luma': (ii) Risāla-fi-Istihsān-al-Khawd-fi-'Ilm-al-Kalām; (iii) Maqālat, and (iv) Ibāna.
- (14) Rāzī, Tafsīr, (al-Tafsīr-al-Kabīr) Cairo 1324 A.H. Vol 8 p. 529ff.
- (15) Tabarī, Tafsīr, (Jāmi'-al-Bayān,) Cairo 1329A.H. vol.30 p223. cf. Ibn Kathīr Tafsīr, vol.7. p.412. ff.

greatest perfection you can conceive" (16) appear to be completely agreeing with the commentators, so far as the meaning of God's existence is concerned.

God's name in the Qur'ān is Allah. This name existed among Semitic races as far as the three radicals; A.L. and H. are concerned. But it was spelt differently. There had been much speculation and discussion on the word 'Allah' among the Lexicographers and Muslim commentators.

Ibn Kathīr mentions several derivations of the word 'Allah'. Firstly he says its root is 'Ilāh', the past participle form, on the measure of 'Fi'āl', from the word 'ilāh' meaning to worship, to which the article was prefixed to indicate the supreme object of worship. Secondly he deems that it is derived from the root 'lāha' which implied helplessness, concealing, refuge, peak, adoration, and command. Thirdly he assumes that it is changed from 'alāhatun' or 'alihun' the invisible personality adored for the sake of gaining satisfaction, for obtaining needs, and for refuge from miseries and distresses. Fourthly he holds 'walaha' aliha, and ta'allaha meaning vehement grief. Ibn Kathīr mentions both kinds of examples which imply its derivation and which imply the entire independence of the word. Lastly he rejects its derivation and contraction and says, it is a concrete noun used as a proper noun only for God. The same view has been expressed (16) MacGregor, Introduction to Religious Philosophy London 1964 p.102.

by Rāzī. Perhaps the expression of wonder about the word of Allah might have been expressed by human beings, when they could not conceive His greatness, the more they <sup>thought</sup> the more intense became their perplexity and wonder and <sup>they</sup> could not help but to submit to His will. Ibn Kathīr also refutes its derivation from the Hebrew language. The same opinion has been expressed by Rāzī. (17)

Baidāwī considers that it is a derivation from an invented root 'ilāha' signifying to be in perplexity, the mind is perplexed in attempting to picture its conception. He also discusses other possibilities of derivation following Zamakhshari. (18)

The author of the 'Muhīt-al-Muhīt' (محيط المحيطة), a Christian, holds that Allah is the name of the necessary Being. There are twenty different views regarding the derivation of this word. He also describes its derivation from 'ilāha' like Ibn Kathīr.

The word Allah is composed of letters inscribed on the throne in Arabic. Each stroke and curve has its allegorical meaning. This applied only to God. So Abū Hanīfā holds: "As the essence of God is unchangeable, so is His name; and that Allah has ever been the name of <sup>the</sup> Eternal Being." (19)

(17) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol. 1. pp.36-7 cf. Rāzī, Tafsīr, vol.1. p.83-84.

(18) Zamakhsharī, Tafsīr vol.1. pp32ff. and Baidāwī, (Tafsīr) vol. 1. p.4.

(19) Hughes, Dictionary of Islam, London 1935 p.141.

Nābigā and Labīd, pagan poets, used the word "Allah" in the sense of Supreme Diety. Nābigā says: 'Allah has given them a kindness and grace which others have not. Their abode is Allah Himself and their religion is strong.' Labīd says: "Neither those who divine by striking stones or watching birds, know what Allah has created." Ibn Kathīr also cites verses of the pagan poet 'Ruya' in connection with the word of Allah. (20)

According to Ibn Kathīr the Qur'ān points to the use of Allah among pagan Arabs: "Say: Who is the Lord of seven heavens, and the Lord of Mighty Dominion, they will say Allah" (23:86) This is to be found in many verses in the Qur'ān. Nadwī, referring to Nöldeke, says: that the inscription on the ancient Nabateans monument reads: "Allah was known as God, the inscription is Hallah instead of Allah. But mostly the word Allah was linked with the Christian names of the Nabateans Arabs like Zayd-Allāhī and 'Abd-Allahī. (21)

It may also be pointed out that centuries before Muhammad, the Prophet, the Ka'ba was called 'bait-Allah', the house of Allah, the supreme God and not the house of idols. This use was popular among Arabs. But the word Ilah, which was not so popular is supposed to be equivalent to the Hebrew word Elohim used by

(20) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.1. p.36 cf. S.M. Zwemer, op.cit.p.25

(21) \* Ibid: vol.5. p.33. cf. Nöldeke Article on God, Encyclopaedia Britannica vol.1. p.664. \* Nadwī sirat-al-Nabī, Hyderabad, 1968, vol.4. p.248.

the people of the Book for God. Probably the Chaldean and Syrian term *Ilahia*, the Hebrew, *Iloha'* and Arabic '*Ilāh*' are identical.

(22)

At present the word Allah is used for God by all Muslims, Arabic speaking Christians and Jews. But there is a difference as regards its character among the communities. Allah to the Muslims is a proper name applied to the Being, Who exists necessarily by Himself, comprising all the attributes of perfection (L.L.) and it is not a contraction of any other word. Its speaking signifies that it is attached to all attributes ascribed to His essence.

Allah is the name of the essence of God. The attributes of Allah are called '*Asmā' al Sifāt* (اسماء الصفات). In the terminology of the Qurān they are called '*Asmā-al-Husnā* (اسماء الحسنى) the most beautiful names, or excellent names. In the Qurān there are very few attributes mentioned in different chapters. The richest chapter in this respect is '*Ḥaṣḥar*' (the Gathering - no. 59). Ibn Kathīr refers to a tradition reported by Abu Huraira: "God has ninety nine names, one short of a hundred and whoever retains them in his memory will enter Paradise." (23).

This odd number of names of attributes has been accepted by

(22) Ibid. vol. 2. p.57. cf. David. "The New Bible Commentary" Oxford 1955, p.31. and cf. verses 7:179; 17:110; 20:8; 59:24;

(23) Ibid: vol.1. p.36; vol. 3. p.257; vol.6. p.617 cf. *Mishkāt-al-Masā'ibih.*, English Translation by James Robson, Lahore, 1963 vol.2. p. 484.

a host of commentators with the conception that God is one and He loves numbers which are odd and indivisible. According to Ibn Kathīr there is a possibility of the existence of more than the above mentioned number and the number of attributes may be one thousand. Rāzī gives the number of five thousand i.e. one thousand in the Koran, one thousand in tablet preserved, one thousand in Torah, one thousand in Injīl, and one thousand in Tradition. Perhaps it would be a very hard task to pursue such a long list. But there is a rule that whatever the number may be it must be supported by 'hadīth Taufiqī' (حدیث توفیقی), favoured by the Koran and Tradition. Ibn Kathīr mentions ninety nine attributes in chapter 59 and adds two more in chapter 7 and so he makes the total 101, but in both places he never describes 'rabb' the attribute frequently used in Muslim Theology. This attribute is also not mentioned in Mishkāt. (24)

The 'Ash'arites consider that attributes of God are different from His essence; yet in such a way as to disallow any comparison made between God and any other being. These are not 'ain' nor 'ghair' (غیر - عین) not of His essence and not different from it, but, <sup>He,</sup> however, cannot be compared with creatures. Instead of this view, they prefer to keep silence with regard to the eternity of

(24) Rāzī, Tafsīr, vol. 1. p.75ff. cf. Mishkāt vol.2. p.483..

attributes. (25) The Mu'tazilites hold that God is eternal and that eternity is in His essence. On this basis they reject all eternal qualities of God except His eternity, and so the Khawarijite<sup>s</sup>, some Murjites, and some Zaidites favour this conception. They affirm other attributes but not as being eternal. (26)

According to Ibn Kathīr all attributes are eternal; they are an inseparable part of His essence, and cannot be compared with any being. (27) Rāzī believes in the eternity of attributes of God and also remarks that to maintain the sanctity of attributes of God other beings should not be given these names, God must not be called by other names which do not befit Him, God must not be called by names whose meaning is not known. He also says that polytheism of any kind is a violation of the sanctity of Divine names. He also remarks that there must not be improper interpretation of God's attributes. According to Him it seems that the objective of different proper interpretations is to encourage the right understanding of God's attributes. Because the best method of knowing a person is to know him through his qualities and actions. Characteristics elucidate a person. Mere names (are inadequate) unless they are illustrated by the qualities. So also is the case with God. It is rightly remarked in favour of attributes in

(25) MacCarthy, op. cit., p.96. (26) Wensinck: op.cit., p.75.

(27) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr vol. 3. pp.256ff cf. vol.1. p.251.

E.R.E. "that conveying His excellent attributes and functions repudiates the queer doctrine of the namelessness of God, Characteristics of Alexandrian schools of philosophy and also, to some extent the Jewish thought. Philo taught that God was without qualities and incomprehensible in His essence. He was the nameless existing". So to Plotinus God was the One could be described negatively. (28)

Pre-Islamic pagan Arabs knew the name of Allah, but they were unfamiliar with most of His attributes. The <sup>concept or</sup> imagination of His characteristics and actions was strange to them. This may be the reason why the name of Allah is to be found in Arabic poetry while the mention of His qualities is very rare. Perhaps the same is the case with other peoples with respect to the attributes of God. This may be due to lack of knowledge about these qualities.

(28) Mac-Culloch, Article "Nameless God" Encyclopaedia <sup>of</sup> Religions and Ethics, Edinburgh 1920 vol.IX p. 179.

B. SEVEN ESSENTIAL ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.

EXISTENCE:- The first essential attribute of God (\*\*) is related to His existence. To prove God's existence five kinds of arguments are given. Firstly from the general consent of mankind to the existence of God: the proof E Consensus gentium. Secondly from our conception of cause to the existence of a First Cause; the Cosmological proof. Thirdly from the evidence of the order and design in nature to the existence of a Designer: the teleological proof. Fourthly from the conscience to a Moral Law giver: the Moral Proof. Fifthly from the idea we conceive of a perfect Being as necessarily having the real existence of such a Being: the ontological proof. (29)

Concerning the proof E. Consensus gentium, Ibn Kathīr holds <sup>that</sup> such universal belief about the existence of God is the expression of man's nature and not based on rational arguments. He calls it 'fitra' (instinct) or Islam (submission). Beibitz states that it is proved by universal belief in honorific, piacular, and sacramental. Therefore he says "What all men believe to be true must of necessity be true." (30)

To comprehend the Cosmological proof it seems necessary to

\*\* Every attribute or its connection confines God's vision within the limits of the definition of attribute concerned.

(29) J.H. Beibitz, 'Belief, Faith and Proof' (London 1922 cf. p.2.f. G. MacGregor, op. cit., p.100f.

(30) Ibn Kathir, Tafsir, vol.3. p.246, vol.5. p.359 and Beibitz op. cit., p.22.

define 'cause' and 'existence' ('illa and hayā) in order to reveal the difference between 'existence' and 'non existence' and their relation to God's essence.

Cause is defined thus:- Firstly "the totality of the conditions in the presence of which an event happens, and in the absence of any member of which it does not occur. Secondly .... sequence under definite known conditions. Lastly....The connection between facts". So God is the cause without which, the Universe cannot exist. (31) Concerning <sup>His</sup> 'existence' the Ash'arites define as "the state (hāl) necessary to the essence so long as the essence abides; and this state has no cause." (علة) Al-Fudalī interprets every state (hāl or sifa) as a personal state (hāl-i-nafsī) and to him a causeless state subsisting (living) in the essence is a personal quality (sifa-al-nafsiya) by which he meant that the conception of the existence is with the essence but that the essence can be apprehended without it, therefore these are two different entities. The 'Ash'arites assume the existence as the self ('Ain) of an entity in general. So, to them, the existence of God is His self and not an additional quality. In this case they support the view of the Mu'tazilites. (32)

(31) Beibitz: op.cit., pp.5f.

(32) D.B. Macdonald: op.cit., p.319.

Ibn Kathīr interprets the existence for God as self of an entity and a causeless state. So he maintains "God is self subsisting, by Whom all things subsist. He is Eternal. He is subtle (al-Latīf) and sublime in respect of nature of existence. His existence having neither beginning nor end." But he interprets existence for a creature as a half way between entity and non-entity (Mawjūd and non-mawjūd), a caused state, and not self of its essence because the existence appeared later than an essence. For example, take the case of man, Ibn Kathīr says that the body of Ādam was formed from clay of loam moulded, after forty days the spirit was breathed into it which changed the clay into flesh and blood. In Gen. 2:7 ~~it~~ occurs "God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostril the breath of life; and man became a living being". Ibn Kathīr says a soul meaning hearing, sense, seeing, is breathed into a child in the womb after four months which points to an evolution or progress in man's life. He also states that man's body remains even if the life goes out of him. It shows that the body and existence are two separate things. The unity of soul and matter is called existence. No such evolution occurs in God. His life is Absolute life, His Being is Absolute Being while others are contingent and evanescent. (33)

(33) Ibn Kathīr: Tafsīr, vol.1. page 547; vol. 6. page 545.

So it appears; firstly, that the world is composed of bodies (Jism) like essence and accidents ('Akrād, colours etc.) It is a fact that colour cannot live without a body. Their relation is such that if it is tried to separate one from the other both of them will cease to exist. Their need of one another shows their imperfection as independent things. Secondly the world (or composed things) has rest and motion which are two opposite things. Motion completely ends rest and if there is rest motion completely goes away. These are also two equal things and they cannot exercise power over one another because the equal things cannot overthrow each other. Lastly existence and non-existence are contradictory and equal things<sup>and</sup> entities. If there is existence in the world non-existence ceases and if there is non existence then existence ceases. So equal things cannot overthrow each other unless there is a person who can increase and decrease the balance. The permanent overbalance in rest, and motion, existence and non-existence etc. reveals that there is a power which brings change and handles these two things and change their state. Moreover, worldly elements are not independent, so, whatever is not independent is imperfect and whatever is imperfect is originated. Every originated thing needs an originator, the Perfect Being, and that is God. (34).

(34) Ibn Kathīr Tafsīr vol.3 p.68f. and vol.5. p.615 cf. Imām Ghazālī, Kitābi 'Aḥkām-al-Qawā'id, (Translated by A. Faris and named "The Foundation of The Articles of Faith") Lahore 1963 pp.59ff.

Ibn Kathīr seems to hold <sup>that</sup> the universe originated in time and what originates in time cannot exist by itself. So he states if the objects of the universe depend for their existence on themselves then every object is absolute, which is impossible. Moreover, the objects did not come into existence without any cause, as they are in process of coming into existence. This proves that the existence of objects and their coming into being depends on some one different from them, thus it would assert the necessity of an Absolute being which should be uncaused. Now to prove His uncaused state one has to probe into the formula of Imām Ghazālī who says that all the being in the universe are either uncaused or have a cause. So if they have cause, this cause itself will either have a cause, or will be uncaused, as there will be a chain of the cause of the cause. Therefore, (a) either the series will continue on ad infinitum, which is impossible or (b) it will come to an end at last. So the ultimate limit will be the first cause, whose own existence will be uncaused, and that is Allah in the terminology of Islam. God being uncaused is a necessary Being whereas any caused thing cannot at all be a necessary being or originator. (35)

Ibn Kathīr reasons that if a ship ploughs into a river or a sea by itself it can neither reach from one shore to another nor

(35) Ibn Kathīr <sup>Tafsīr</sup>, vol.4.p.113 & vol.5 pp. 315, 356 <sup>and</sup> Tahāfat al-Falāsfa, Lahore 1963 p.90. cf. Sweetman, London 1947 Part 1. vol.1. p.114 and cf. Beibitz, op.cit., p. 54.

can it load and unload by itself. For this purpose it needs a captain. So, how can this big and vast universe run without an originator who must be superior to it in all respects. (36) Similar to this 'Ash'arī states: that cotton cannot change into spun thread without a worker and a woven cloth without a weaver. So, if some one takes cotton then hopes for it to become a spun thread and woven cloth without a craftsman he would be considered witless. Likewise if a man goes into a waste land sits there hoping for clay to change into bricks, and for the bricks to be joined to construct a castle, he would be considered ignorant because he would be waiting for the impossible.(37)

Concerning teleological proof, Ibn Kathīr gives a large number of analogical arguments. Briefly his arguments are thus: (a) The existence of God through the whole of nature, (b) The marvellous signs of the vast diversity in nature are the proof of the existence of the Originator, which appeal to the intellect and intelligence of every human being to believe in one Supreme existing power. Concerning design he states that reflection and splendour or glory of seven storeyed heavens studded with stars and glowing lamps, bring home the idea of the existing power working in them. The wide expanse of earth to lie upon and to walk upon with mountains as stakes fixing it provides an impressio

(36) Ibid: vol.1. p.103f. He gives seven arguments to prove God.

(37) R.J. MacCarthy, 'The Theology of 'Al-Ash'arī' Beyrouth 1953 p.7.

of a creator. The rain comes down from heaven. It fertilizes the land to bring forth corn, vegetables and gardens thick with trees. The rivers and seas where ships plough earning merchandises and in this way serving in no less measure to man than land. Heavens are remote from men in space but very near to him with their beneficial rain. Due to the inter-relation of heavens and earth day and night succeed each other regularly changing in their duration according to the season and latitude of the earth. Night brings sleep as a rest which is an important biological factor in life. By day time ~~all~~ creatures seek food. Plants get starch and sugar from which <sup>they</sup> exist in the atmosphere and thus form living substance (protoplasm) with the help of the sun. The web of nature is so interwoven that no creature is independent in its affairs. This all points to One ever vigilant existing Being. (38)

Ibn Kathīr, refer<sup>r</sup>ing to order in things, states that man originates from a seed which develops into clot, then into a small lump, then into flesh and bones and blood and so on. So he is given all the qualities of life; senses, consciousness and other physical and mental faculties. He develops from childhood to youth, old age, decrepitude and then to decay. This stage by stage development is not caused by man himself. It is a fact,

(38) Ibn Kathīr: Tafsīr, vol. 1.p.100 vol. 7. p.196. cf. Sweetman op.cit., part 1. vol.2. page 11.

that a man at the apex of his physical and mental maturity, if he loses any member of his body or any sensual faculty; like hearing and seeing, he cannot reproduce or make any one of them. It may be treated as a proof that when he is weak he is more incapable to work or to produce anything. He is weaker in his childhood than in his youth and he becomes weaker and weaker in his old age. He cannot bring back childhood, youth etc. Mac-Gregor describes similar proof and adds: "The mechanical structure of a watch exhibiting an intricate adaptation of parts to one another naturally infers that it was constructed by an intelligent being who designed this mutual adaptation to accomplish a certain end" .... But this is what we encounter in the universe. (39)

The moral proof is based on the existence of moral sense; (a) feeling of moral obligation, we feel that we 'ought' to do certain things. It is the choice of moral values, independence of moral action which shows human freedom. (b) It also means purifying the soul. Now it is seen that when we help each other in doing good we find pleasure and obtain benefit whereas when we harm others we feel pain. This pricking of conscience gives us the idea that there is a power which has created this distinction. So God's idea may be considered a permanent underlying psychological impulse. Ibn Kathīr deems it 'instinctive' (40).

(39) Ibn Kathir, vol.5. p.12 and 613, vol.6. p.153; and MacGregor op. cit., p.115 of MacCarthy, op. cit., p.6ff. Tillich, Systematic Theology London 1953 vol.1. p.208 and cf. Beibitz op.cit. p75

(40) Ibid vol.2. pp.471-72 and see also definition of 'tamānu' and taāwun' in chapter 5 "Prophets". p.201.

MacGregor says: "If we recognise the existence of moral law and of object of moral will, the Summum Bonum which is perfect happiness, it becomes necessary to conclude the existence of God in order to maintain the necessary relation between moral law and the Summum Bonum. (the highest good) (41).

The quality necessary to existence is that God must be ancient (Qadīm) from eternity; that there was no beginning to His existence and there was nothing before His existence. Priority and eternity in respect to past time must be established. Ibn Kathīr illustrates "there is nothing before Him and there is nothing after Him. He is ever living. He is living before all and must be surviving all existing things. Everything perishes except His countenance, the law of perishing is applicable to the universe in order to make room for others. Moreover, existence and non-existence are originated things. God being the Originator is in no way perishable like individuals and nations and so on. Perishing and discontinuity is unthinkable about Him (42). Ghazālī says: "God is the First and the Last, the Visible and Invisible, since that of which eternity is established its coming to an end is impossible." (43).

(41) op.cit., p. 123.

(42) Ibn Kathīr: Tafsīr vol.5. p. 306. and vol.6. p.490.

(43) N.A. Fāris "The Foundation of the Articles of Faith" p. 62.

Al-Fudalī says that permanent existence must be established. Because if God were not prior (a) "He would be a thing originated (Hadīth), because there is no medium between the Prior and the thing originated; to everything of which Priority is denied, origin belongs". So if God is originated His originator will also need an originator and so on to eternity and infinity. At last one is to believe in the Maker or Creator and to deny the long circle. He holds: "if God were other than Prior, through being a thing originated. He would have need of an originator. Then the chain would be unavoidable; but both are impossible. So, the originating of God is impossible and His Priority is established; and that<sup>s</sup> what has been sought." (b) He also proves the continuance in God's life as the possibility of any lack joining to Him would mean an originated thing and that would again create a circle of originators. Therefore continuance in God is a must. "If continuance is not necessary in Him, then Priority must be negated of Him. But Priority cannot be negated on account of the preceding proof." (44)

Theologians consider that unity is necessary in God. To prove God's unity, Ibn Kathīr argues that the rule of two supreme powers as partners or absolute has no place in Islam, because there would be neither accord nor constant effectiveness. Importance

(44) Macdonald: op.cit., pp. 323f.

would certainly attach to one or to both of them. For if one of them desires movement of a body or its existence and the other desires its rest or its non-existence, one of three things must occur: firstly the desire of neither is fulfilled, secondly the desire of both is fulfilled, and lastly the desire of only one is fulfilled. Now it is impossible that the intention or the desire of both is carried out, for there cannot be movement or rest or existence and non-existence at one time in a body. So, if the intention of both together is not carried out one must infer the powerlessness of both and the powerless can be neither God nor Eternal. If the intention of only one is carried out, ineffectiveness necessarily attaches to the one whose order is not carried out, and a powerless, so called Supreme Being, can be neither God nor Everlasting. Thus the multiplicity of God is erroneous. Hence the formula proves that the Maker of things is one who is not, <sup>weak and</sup> responsible ~~and weak~~ to any one in His actions. God says " God has not taken to Himself any son, nor is there any god with Him: for then each god would have taken off that he created and some of them would have risen up over others;" (23:91) and "If there were therein gods beside Allah, then verily both (the heavens and the earth) had been disordered." (21:22) (45).

Nasīr al-Dīn Tūsī argues that if there are more than one God

(45) Ibn Kathīr: Tafsīr, vol.5. p.36. He calls this argument 'tamānu' (mutual hindrance). cf. MacCarthy op. cit., p.9.

and they are equal in life, power and will, then they will form their independent worlds, heavens, earth, paradise, hell and rules of punishment and rewards, and that is impossible. Because the dependence of one phenomenon upon another rejects such kind of Divinity. If one is superior to the other then imagining them would require comparing between them in relation to position and grade. This will bring them down to the level of objects of nature. Moreover if they depend upon one another for carrying on their will then weakness may attach to one that will negate his Divinity. (46)

Ibn Kathīr's interpretation also receives support from Al-Fudalī, who says: If Allah had a partner with Him, either they agree on the existence of the world, and in that case one of them would say, "I will cause the world to exist", and the other would say, "I will cause it to exist along with me, so that we may help one another in it" or they would differ, and one of them would say, "I will cause the world to exist by my power," and the other, "I will that the existence be lacking". (47) Their accord would involve the agreement of two printers upon one print, which is impossible. Moreover the impression of the latter would be illogical. If they differ then the one whose will is not carried out is weaker and when weakness is established, he cannot be God.

(46) N.D. Tūsī, *Tasūwwurāt*, Leiden 1950 pp.3ff.

(47) Macdonald: *op.cit.*, p.327.

If they are equal, the existence of a thing will cease when they disagree. Their equal exercise of power will result in two impressors upon one impression." So it stands fast that the God is one". (48)

The existence of the world is proof of the unity of God and that He has no partner in any act and no second cause in action. He is absolutely independent. So, according to Miskawaih it may be said: "Without the one there can be no multiplicity; yet contrariwise; the one can exist without the multiplicity just as the unit exists before all multiplied number". (49)

To prove his view, Ibn Kathīr sometimes interprets by probing into the meaning of the word. In his interpretation of the word al-'Ahad' he rejects any possibility of any one sharing with God. He interprets it as an epithet applicable to God alone, who is independent, unique and one in person and nature. His definition is very similar to Lane's Lexicon: i.e. The one, the sole: He who has ever been one and alone: or the indivisible, or who has no second to share His Lordship nor in His essence nor in His attributes. Ibn Kathīr interprets the word 'Al-Samad' as

(48) Ibid:

(49) Sweetman op.cit., p.105 part 1. vol.1. Referring to unity in vol.2. p.17 he says: "the terms 'Ahad, Waḥid, and Mutawwaḥid, are used for God. They signify according to the expositors, He Who is one in essence, having no like nor peer nor second. He is one in attributes besides whom there is no other. He is utterly simple, insusceptible to division into parts and having no double.

being Absolute, Eternal, that which has no inside or outside organs, solid and perfect light of every one and every thing, and yet besought of all, who lacks nothing and needs nothing to complement Him. He neither eats nor drinks nor has any animal desire. Rāzī interprets that He is the Lord to whom recourse is had in exigencies. (50) Lane says: The Maker that continues or continues for ever, or is everlasting, or originator of every thing, of whom nothing is independent, and whose unity every thing indicates, or one who takes no nourishment or food.

The interpretation of the word al-Samad creates a confusion with regard to the nature of angels. They are heavenly bodies of light, they can neither eat nor drink nor practice any kind of relation. In this respect they may be misunderstood as having resemblance to God, but this shows their weakness, because they sometimes can change their form and can come in the form of man, which indicates their being made of some elements. Some composed things can be invisible so they are of that category. The appearance of angels is narrated in the Bible and the Qur'ān: "The angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness" (Gen. 16:17) and "And an angel of the Lord appeared to them" (Luke 2:9) and "We sent to her our angel, and he appeared before her as a man in all respects." (Qur'ān 19:17). So their not

(50) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr vol.7. pp407ff. and Rāzī Tafsīr vol.8. p. 529.

having animal desire is due to their being out of the stock of such creatures which are devoid of this desire.

Ibn Kathīr in the interpretation of the verse "Originator of heavens and the earth! How could He have a son when He has no spouse" (6:101), "And He hath created everything and He is knower of all things" (6:102) refutes the doctrine of the pagan Arabs who were accustomed to conciliate by sacrifice and worshipped angels, whom they called daughters of Allah. He also repudiates the ideas of the Jews who say Ezra is the son of God. He maintains freedom of God from all human relations which are not supposed to be related to the Creator. (51) According to him any animal relation shows imperfection of a Supreme power. Both human beings and angels are creations of God none of them is worthy to be adorned. Perhaps due to his strict belief in the Oneness of God, he does not allow even metaphorical use of the word son of God as it leads to Polytheism. He repeats his arguments that birth is only possible when male and female belong to one kind, for God has no resemblance to any of His creature, therefore nothing can be attributed to Him.

Rāzī in the interpretation of the verse mentioned above remarks that the reference is to the Arab belief that the Jinn could bring good fortune or ill luck as they had hands in the

(51) Ibn Kathīr: Tafsīr Vol.3. p.72.

transaction of human affairs ~~or~~ to the dualistic doctrine of the Magi who believed in two creators, of evil and of good. (52)

Ibn Kathīr's interpretations leave no space for any sort of anthropomorphism. His view of transcendentalism is orthodox and not allegorical. He expresses his transcendental stand point as follows:- "It is necessary to believe in the words of all the verses of the Qurān and Hadīth, which explain essence of God and His attributes without comparing them to others. This was the attitude of our predecessors." (53)

It shows (a) that it is impossible that God has anything to be measured or He must not be measured, because all measurable things are composed and every composed thing is a body. Every such thing can either be actual (bil-fīʿl) existing or it can be potentially existing (bil-quwwa). When it potentially exists it is at rest. But when it actually exists it has movement which may be, the movement of generation, the movement of corruption, the movement of increasing force (augmentation), the movement of smallness (diminution), the movement of alteration and the movement of transposition, i.e. change of place or part. In every case the movement is a kind of change whether it is in its state, its place or its substance and essence. In this circular

(52) Rāzī, Tafsīr vol.4 p.113. He also ascribes such remarks to the Arabs in the interpretations of verses. 6:90, 91..

(53) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.1. p.551.

or rotary movement if the condition changes but the essence continues it is called 'alteration' (Istihāla) and if the substance changes along with the condition (كَيْفِيَّة) it is called corruption (Fasād). So any such movement or rest cannot be ascribed to God. (54)

'Ash'arī explains why resemblance is prohibited: "If God resembles anything He would have to resemble it either in all of its respects or in one of its respects." The explanation of this quotation is similar to the preceding argument of Ibn Kathīr mentioned in the proof of Oneness of God. The 'Ash'arites declare the transcendentalism of essence but observe silence about attributes, (55) where-as Ibn Kathīr has generalised transcendentalism.

From the word predecessors (سلف) mentioned by Ibn Kathīr it also appears that the Prophet and the consensus of the Muslims has not referred to anthropomorphism, therefore we cannot assign anything that has no existence. Perhaps it may be due to this impression that Ibn Kathīr avoided interpreting some of the verses evidently related to sensual conception of paradise which are completely allegorical. But to understand the correct meanings of the verses it is sometimes necessary to apply 'tashbīh' in the verses not related to God's essence.

(54) Ibid, vol.1. pp437f. and p.551.

(55) MacCarthy: op.cit., pp. 9 and 127.

Apparently Qur'ānic verses support both the ideas (Tashbīh & Tanzīh). God says: "The Jews say: God's hand is fettered. Their hands are fettered and they are accursed for saying so. Nay, but both His hands are spread out wide in bounty", (5:64) "Naught is as His likeness", (42:11) and "His throne includeth the heavens and the earth." (2:255). From these verses it may be concluded that (a) God is corporeal seated on the throne, (b) God is corporeal having hands but not like men, (c) God is conceived <sup>to have</sup> neither ~~has~~ body and nor hands etc., (d) God's attributes are neither identical with His essence nor different, and (e) God's essence is every thing, and it contains all attributes, which are identical to Him.

Ibn Kathīr interprets the word 'yadun' and 'throne' as power. He interprets 'yadun mabsuta' (stretched hands) as generous and 'Yadun Maghlūla) (tied up hand) as non-generous. (56) He seems to believe that the occurrence of such words in the verses is only to make people understand. It does not mean that God is corporeal. He seems to permit <sup>such</sup> metaphorical interpretation.

Daud. Rahbar supports his view thus: there are no fixed rules which say that the 'tashbīh' verses must be interpreted figuratively, and the 'tanzīh' verses literally or vice versa. Since Islam is fundamentally against multiplicity therefore, it is

(56) Ibn Kathīr: Tafsīr vol.1. p.551 and vol.2. p.605.

undoubtedly true that 'tashbīh' is not permitted in any case." (57)

A.A.A.A. F<sup>ay</sup>zee chooses a middle way and says: "Islam chooses a middle way between transcendentalism and anthropomorphism. Extreme transcendentalism signifies complete rejection of the attributes of Allah and crude anthropomorphism will imply likening of God to man. Islam favours a moderate type of transcendentalism." (58) Perhaps he meant that anthropomorphism will make people understand God's power. Robinson is very near to him in his expression about God. He states: "We cannot think or speak of God at all, unless in the language of our human experience. To dismiss all anthropomorphism is to dismiss all possibilities of knowledge of God. Divine personality means the highest category of our experience to interpret of our highest faith." (59).

This may be the reason why the reader finds different terms; like 'kaifiya' (quality) or kaif' (how); 'tashbīh' (likeness) and 'jiha' (direction or side, face), used by a host of commentators in connection with the meeting of God. It shows that the 'umma' adhered to anthropomorphic expression, yet they no longer used terms in the literal sense.

According to Wensinck it seems that the development of the

(57) God of Justice: Leiden 1960. p.XIII.

(58) F<sup>ay</sup>zee A.A.A. "A Modern Approach to Islam" London 1963 p.19.

(59) Robinson, H.W. "The Religious Ideas of the Old Testament", 2nd Edition, London 1964 p.65.

idea of 'tanzīh' gave rise to the idea of 'bilā kaif' (without question) into the principle of 'tanzīh', so as exclude all human likenesses in God. This method has become the orthodox mean between 'tashbīh' and 'Ta'tīl'. It was Ahmad bin Hanbal who invented this term. (bilā kaif) (60).

It is true to say that the idea of tanzīh served a dual purpose; on the one hand, it provided wide scope to discuss God's essence and His attributes, on the other hand, this really saved Islam from the horror of 'tashbīh' in essence and attributes of God. Wensinck states: "Tanzīh a general principle with which to combat the horror of 'tashbīh'. the method <sup>of</sup> tanzīh saved Islam from the strait-jacket of rationalism" (61).

According to the concept of transcendentalism God is altogether different from creatures in character, actions, essence and attributes. His character is unchangable in this world and in the world to-come. But as regards the visibility and invisibility of God there is change as the interpretation of Ibn Kathīr implies. God is not seen here but He will be seen in the Hereafter. He interprets the verse "Upon that day faces shall be radiant, gazing upon their Lord; and upon that day faces shall be scowling, thou mightest think the Calamity has been wreaked

(60) Wensinck op.cit., p.207. Meaning of terms:-

Tajsīm; attributing of a body to God.

Ta'tīl: - Stripping or divesting God of the attributes.

Bilā kaif; without question. Tanzīh; excluding all human likeness from pronouncement regarding the Godhead.

Tashbīh(anthropomorphism) tanzih (transcendentalism).

(61)Ibid. p.231.

on them" (75:21-4) Ibn Kathīr interprets that believers will ~~have the~~ vision of God in the next world. God's vision will be very clear and crystal. He says: that there will be no veil in between God and men of paradise. But he thinks that vision and comprehension are two different things. Therefore he holds that although men will see God yet they would not be able to comprehend Him. It is just like a man who is looking on the moon, yet cannot understand its nature. So, looking towards God does not mean that they will be able to know His nature. He reports that Ibn 'Abbās said to some one that 'the Prophet saw God' then the addressee said 'no vision can grasp Him' then Ibn 'Abbās said God is a light no one can stand it'. So, Ibn Kathīr favours vision and holds that there will be no comprehension. He also maintains that men will have vision and in addition the reward of Paradise. He rejects the interpretation of Mujāhid and 'Abū Sālih who consider vision only as looking towards the rewards and blessings of God. (62).

Ibn Kathīr's view is duly supported by a tradition. "When the people of Paradise have entered paradise, God will say to them: If you have any desire I will fulfill it. They will answer: Have you not made our face bright, have you not made us enter paradise, have you not saved us from Hell? Thereupon God will (62) Ibn Kathīr: Tafsīr vol.3. pp.74-5 and vol.7. p.172.

remove the veil and the vision of their Lord will be the most precious of the gifts lavished upon them. After this the Prophet recited: They who do right shall receive a most excellent reward and a superabundant addition." (63)

Abū Hanīfa affirms the possibility of vision and includes it in the Articles of Faith: "We confess that the meeting of Allah with the inhabitant of paradise will be a reality, without description, comparison or modality." (64)

Al-Rāzī says: "The Last Day holds not only terror, but also for the believers, the fulfilling adoration of the veil being lifted at ('Kashf-al-Tamm'). (65).

For the orthodox's concept of 'without question' (bilā kaif) it may be inferred that God is seen unlike any material being not in a direction or in a place so far as being confronted, nor by conjunctions of the rays of light, nor by a certain definite <sup>EXACT</sup> <sub>LIMITS</sub> between the one who sees and God.

'Ash'arī holds the vision in paradise by the syllogism. "Nothing exists which God cannot show us; God exists therefore He can show us Himself" (66) He also states in 'Kitab al-Luma' that

(63) Wensinck: op.cit., p.64. (64) Ibid. p.130.....

(65) Al-Rāzī: Muḥassal Cairo 1323 A.H. p.138 cf Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr vol.7. ppl70f.

(66) Thomson 'Article 'Ash'ari and his Ibāna The Muslim World, vol.32. no.3. p.244-1944.

the word 'nazira' meaning looking has been mentioned with the face, therefore, it meant "look" of the face; and look of the face is interpreted as seeing, which is the act of the eye which is in the face. "So it is certain that His words "looking" at their Lord mean "seeing", since they cannot mean any of the other kind of "look" (67).

Mu'tazilites entirely reject the vision of God both in this world and in the world to come. Perhaps they think that believing in vision will involve: the assertion of God's corporal production; or assertion of the corporal production of an attribute in Him; or likening Him to a visible creature. Ibn Kathīr's interpretation can easily remove this hypothesis; the vision and the grasp of *physical* thing are two different things, God's vision is just like seeing a light where none will be able to know the reality, and His nature will remain unknown to the people. The splendour of His vision in no way resembles human beings. Sight of splendour is according to the will of God. When human beings cannot grasp it it means it will remain transcendent as it was. This seems an allegory, which may mean blessing of God and His manifestation of splendour. As Ibn Kathīr is against rejection of vision therefore he remarks that Mu'tazilites' notion of rejection is against believers and based on ignorance. (68).

(67) McCarthy op.cit. p.49.

(68) Ibn Kathīr. Tafsīr, vol.3. p. 73...

Favouring the Mu'tazilites' view the author of the Mizān al-Mawāzīn, writes: "Every percipient requires an instrument of perception in order to attain the perfect. For between the perfect and the percipient there must necessarily be some relation, since God cannot have any conjunction, therefore none of His creatures can attain perfection and comprehension of Divine nature." (69)

Imām Ghazālī interprets vision as knowledge and revelation. "For sight is a kind of revelation and knowledge, although it is clearer and more complete than knowledge; And if it is possible to know God without reference to distance or direction, it is also possible to see with reference to distance or direction" (70)

It may be explained thus, the sight of God is the greatest content attainable by man; God is the highest object of knowledge, but the charm of knowledge fades away before the charm of sight. The Material body is a veil, but on this earth, it will help in the next world into the sight of God. He who has not knowledge will not have vision of God. Perhaps knowledge means faith as

(69) St. Clair Tisdail, "Islamic substitutes for the Incarnation" The Muslim world July 1911 p.256 "He refers to Mizān-al-Mawāzīn (pp.12-29) a Persian Work published in Constantinople in 1288 A.H. the book bears no name of the author.

(70) N.A. Fāris, op.cit., p.69.

Ibn Kathīr says: "The sight of the disbelievers does not reach to God." (71)

So the interpretation of vision by reward, knowledge, and light extends the idea of delight and happiness far more superior to this universe.

### KNOWLEDGE

Knowledge is the second essential quality of God. There are different views with regard to this attribute. The Mu'tazilites base their view on the idea that God has no eternal quality. Only His essence is eternal which involves all attributes. If there is any quality that is created. But God's knowledge in their opinion is essence and not a quality. "He is Omniscient as to His nature;...but not through any knowledge," (72) Abū Ḥanīfa holds that God knows by virtue of His knowledge, an eternal quality. (73) He does not like to give knowledge the grade of essence or to separate it from essence as he treats it as a perpetual quality of God. In Imām Ghazālī's words his opinion may be described thus "Although eternal, His attributes reside in His essence." (74)

Ibn Kathīr numbers God's knowledge among the qualities of God which according to him are eternal. So he is in line with

(71) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.7. p.172.

(72) Hughes, op.cit., p.425..... (73) Wensinck, op.cit., p.188.

(74) Tahāfa....p.112...

'Abū Hanīfa, but nowhere in his commentary does he give a definite interpretation of it.

According to Ibn Kathīr the Jahmites refuse God's knowledge. They visualise that God exists in every thing and every where. The foundation of their view is based on misunderstanding the meaning of the verse "He is God in the heavens and the earth; He knows your secrets and your utterance, and He knows what you earn." (6:3). The Jahmites interpreted only the first part of the verse and formed their concept according to it. To repudiate the views of the Jahmites he interprets the verse in three different ways; firstly "He is God, the Lord of the heavens and earth, "This implies that God is the Lord of everything that exists in the heavens and on earth. So these things are not God. Holding this position God knows what men hide and what they publish. Secondly God is He, who knows evident and immanent things of heavens and earth. He knows actions and thoughts of men both in the heavens and earth. Thirdly "God is high above, yet He knows every secret and published thing of the earth. Fourthly he grammatically proves that these two parts are interdependent, therefore, it is possible to infer from one part. Lastly he remarks that all commentators reject the views of the Jahmites. (75).

(75) Ibn Kathīr: Tafsīr, vol.3. pp.6f.

Imām Ghazālī in classifying knowledge gives it the status of a quality inseparable from the essence. He explains: "that to speak of knowledge without a knower, or a knower without something known, is like speaking of one who is wealthy but without wealth. For knowledge, the knower, and that which is known are inseparable just as murder, the murdered, and the murderer are inseparable. The three are inseparable and the one is inconceivable without the other. The possibility of independent existence of a knower without knowledge would also give the idea of the independence of the knower from that which is known." (76)

Imām Ghazālī's example is substantial so far as the imagination of a link between knowledge, knower, and known is concerned, but it fails to account for the idea of perpetual relationship between them and God. For knowledge becomes a quality when a knower gets acquaintance with something just as a murderer becomes a murderer when he murders a man; and similarly in the case of wealth. In case of man, knowledge is an acquired quality, which it is possible to separate from him because he is  
7 subject to death and mental and bodily weaknesses. At birth man has no knowledge and as his body and mind develops so does his knowledge and when his body and mind decays his knowledge

(76) N.A. Farīs op.cit., p.77.

about inanimate objects, therefore it is impossible to imagine that He does not know about animate objects, specially man. More explicitly he says that there are all records in the preserved tablet about the changes occurring in the universe. Records are kept under supervision of angels, but God knows them from eternity. Darkness in this verse has been interpreted as dangers by al-Rāzī and al-Baidāwī. So it gives more clear picture of God's knowledge. (78) Ibn Kathīr in his lengthy interpretation states that God's knowledge is so vast that none can know its vastness. Man must know that not the smallest detail is hidden from His knowledge. Our daily transactions are carried out in His presence. So we must not conceive God as ruling only in heavens, He also rules on earth. He not only knows our thoughts and needs, but also the real worth of all that is behind what we feel. His knowledge is All-pervading All-embracing and He is not beguiled by any. (79).

Ibn Kathīr's interpretations give the clear view that God's knowledge is comprehensive and nothing can escape it whether the thing is great or small, universal or particular, This not only repudiates the pagan concept that even God's knowledge is imperfect or partial, but also refutes the idea of some ancient philosophers

(78) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol., 3 p.31.

(79) Ibid: vol.3. pp34ff.

and of AVICENNA that God knows only the universals, and not the particulars, because the knowledge of the things which are subject to change denotes, a change in God's knowledge. (80)

Ibn Kathīr receives support from 'Ash'arī's cosmological and teleological arguments; like "well made order in the things speak of God's knowledge. If a man lacks knowledge he cannot execute a fine work of craftsmanship. The wonderful order in man's life is the out-come of knowledge." Similar examples have been cited by Sweetman and other writers. So it may be said that God's knowledge extends to every thing seen and unseen, present and future, near and far, in being and not in being, as Ghazālī says: "He knows the creation in its state of existence as existing and He knows the creation in its non-existence as non-existing." (81) Hence it may be said: "Knowledge but not like human knowledge, power, but not like human power," (82) and also "God's knowledge cannot be originated because then there would have to be an origin in another knowledge and so on...Ad-Infinitum

#### WILL AND POWER

These two essential qualities , will and power, are here discussed together because they are so mutually interconnected.

(80) Al-Ghazālī, Tahāfa, p.115.

(81) Sweetman, op.cit., part 2 vol.2. p.315.

(82) Wensinck, op.cit., p.92.

To deal with them separately might create confusion.

Will (Mashī'ah or Irādah) comes prior to the attribute of power (Qudrah) as far as its function is concerned. It subsists in God's essence as one of His attributes.

So far as the Qur'ānic version is concerned the definition of 'Will' may be 'possibilities' (Mumkināt) or two mutual opposites (Mutaqābilāt). God says: "Thou givest the Kingdom to whom Thou wilt, and seizest the Kingdom from whom Thou wilt, Thou exaltest whom Thou wilt, and Thou abasest whom Thou wilt,.. Thou makest the night to enter into the day and Thou makest the day to enter into the night, Thou bringest forth the living from the dead....." (3:36-37 (83))

The possibilities are mentioned together i.e. darkness and light, life and death, honour and dishonour, existence and non-existence, shortness and tallness, and so on, so that there may not be any confusion in their understanding. So will may be defined as an attribute which functions to distinguish something from another. Possibilities also include time, place, and direction.

According to Ibn Kathīr's interpretation it seems that it is impossible for a man to distinguish and decide among possibilit-

(83) See verses 13:27; 16:95; 74:34; 18:28; 49:16.

ies as he is not independent in his will. So, he cannot specify the character of any possibility. In case of man, will appears to signify something directed towards a purpose specially selfish. In God's case there is a will which signifies also purpose which is quite opposite to man, so man's will must not be compared to God's will. Moreover it seems that Ibn Kathīr favours wish (raghbah) for a man instead of will. Macloren favours him "I will" is no word for a man". (84) Macdonald's definition of will also supports Ibn Kathīr's interpretation. "Will is the quality which specifies the possible with one of the things possible to it i.e. thing" (85). For instance, tallness and shortness are possible to Zayd, then 'will' specifies him with one.

The attribute of Power makes an impression on a thing that is capable of existence or non-existence. The connection begins with a non-entity to make it entity or vice versa. According to Ibn Kathīr its connection with man starts from the covenant referred to <sup>in</sup> the verse (7:172) which was taken from the descendants of 'Ādam when he was first created and it will continue till eternity. So God's attribute of Power has two kinds of relation with the things; (a) potential from all eternity

(84) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr vol.4. p.478 and 386f. and Waverly "The New Dictionary of Thoughts" London, no date. p.701.

(85) op. cit., p.330.

(b) accomplished actual, the relation after coming into being. Macdonald calls them 'Sluhī Qadīm' and Tanjīzī bil-fi'l or Hadīth respectively. (86).

According to Macdonald there is division of connection of God's attribute of power which marks six phases with every individual. (a) Connection with the latent (Ta'alluq Qabadī) when the individual is non-existent. (b) Connection of God's grasping before his actual birth (Ta'alluq Haqīqī), real connection. (c) Connection during life time (Tanjīzī bil-fi'l). (d) Special care during intermediary time (Figurative i.e. Majāzī) (e) Relationship after death (Ta'alluq Qabdī). (f) Connection on Resurrection (Ta'alluq Qabadī or Ba'th) (87).

Ibn Kathīr, on the point of classification does not seem to agree with this. He prefers to interpret power as eternal potential power. He illustrates "God is True Sovereign of the Universe. None can disobey or refuse to carry out His order. He forgives whom He wills and punishes whom He wills. He has full and complete grasp on everything. His grasp is true and eternal." (88)

(86) op.cit., p.328...

(87) Ibid. p. 329.

(88) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.1. p.99. and vol.2. p. 71.

Ibn Kathīr's interpretation is supported by the definition of 'Qādir' in Lane's Lexicon "Qādir and Qadīr", may signify the same possessing power of ability. Qadīr has an intensive signification; and signifies he who does what he will, according to what wisdom requires, not more not less; and therefore this epithet is applicable to none but God." (L.L.)

Ibn Kathīr's interpretation refutes the conception of 'karmā' promulgated in some of the Indian Religions, that there is no remission of sins, and that God is Himself powerless to remit and forgive. In his interpretation, to the unbelievers who ask how when the dead are reduced to bones and dust, can they in form of human beings be called to account, Ibn Kathīr retorts that God has full power to collect their bones, so they must not think that they will be left at large and they will not be given life after death. He uses this type of argument very frequently.

'Ash'arī's explanation of God's attribute of power supports Ibn Kathīr's interpretation. He says: that only a powerful being can produce the works of nature. The interwoven work of the vast universe proves that God is Powerful. Moreover eternal living one means a wielder of power if He is not wielder of power He cannot be living. (89)

(89) McCarthy, op.cit., pp.14-15 cf. Klien, W.C., 'Al-Ibānah 'an 'Usul Ad-Diyānah' New Haven, CONNECTICUT 1940 p. 238.

There is potential relation between the will of God and His power. Existence of a thing depends on His will, His intention, and plan. The moment God wills to create a thing it comes into existence. He has power to bring a thing into being or to destroy it. God says: Verily when He wills a thing, His command is 'be' and 'it is'. (36:82) Will specifies and power brings out. Here it seems that power has a connection to possibilities just like will. It is possible that to interpret power and will, <sup>and</sup> it is necessary to posit a cause which gives one of the two possibilities a special character, therefore it may be said that, over and above power, the Eternal has an attribute whose function is to distinguish two mutual opposites. Had there been no such function, the power would have had to be regarded as an adequate principle.

Ibn Kathīr in different places seems to confirm the idea of mutual relation of power and will. He states: If God wills He can ruin their ears and eyes. They have purposely deviated from right path. God is all Powerful if He wills He can punish them and if He wills He can forgive them...."God has supreme will He can exercise His Judgement (Power) about every individual. He is not inert and mute. (90) So, the connection of both will and power is common to possibilities, to the extent that the

(90) see no. 88.

thoughts of the minds which arise in the mind of an individual and characterised by the will of God and brought into existence by His power.

On this point Imām Ghazālī: says: "God wills all His works and nothing exists which does not depend upon, and proceed from His will. His power is equal to coping with both opposites and both times in the same way. Therefore it is necessary that there should be a will which directs His power to one or the other possible thing." (91)

God is considered as ever living and He must also be considered as ever willing, because if He wills nothing, He must have a quality contrary to willing like unmindfulness and aversion. This makes Him similar to man which is impossible. So, it is necessary for an Ever living or existing one to be ever willing.

The creation of universe was by the will of God. If He does not will anything, nothing can proceed from human beings and other creatures, because their acts are due to the will of God.

'Abū Hanīfā described the relation between the acts of God and those of man. He divided God's acts into twelve heads

(91) Faris, N.A. op.cit., pp.70-71.

including 'will' and man's into three. God's will is connected with man's acts in all cases.

HUMAN ACTS.

Obligatory..	Superogatory.	Sins .....	
Resulting From .....	Resulting From .....	Resulting From .....	
Command	.....	.....	
Will	Will	Will	
Desire	Desire	.....	
Pleasure	Pleasure	.....	
Decision	Decision	Decision	DIVINE
Decree	Decree	Decree	
Creation	Creation	Creation	ACTS
Judgment	Judgment	.....	
Knowledge	Knowledge	Knowledge	
Guidance	Guidance	.....	
.....	.....	Abandoning	
Record	Record	Record	(92)

The Mu'tazilites denied that God could ever will a wrong, therefore they say that God knows everything but that He does not actually will everything. This seems to be quite contrary to Ibn Kathir's views ~~who deems~~ that God's power and will are very closely connected. If God wills a thing He has power to do it and no power can stand in His way. Possibly Ibn Kathir finds

(92) Wensinck: op.cit., pp.142.

a little difference between will and power. His view about the significance of will and its close relationship to power is quite similar to the 'Ash'arites who believe that the existence of God's acts without His having them willed would entail weakness in Him. So the will both in good and bad is necessary. This may be looked upon as a retort to the Mu'tazilites who deny God's will in evil.

Hence it is clear that not only God's power is eternal but also his relation to every creature is eternal, even though the creature is not, in the strict sense, in existence.

God's acts are in consistence with His will. His will encircles every possible and impossible thing; good and evil and brings into existence what He wills. It has full similarity in its dealing with possibilities, potential eternal connections and accomplished actual. Everything in this universe and the vague and clear things and ideas which rise in the mind of human beings are controlled both by God's will and power.

The attributes of will and power if taken in a one sided sense, may be misunderstood so as to show that God is despotic and arbitrary, especially the power of bringing low and stripping from wealth. But if in contrast to this, we keep in mind that it is God who also gives honour and wealth, we will realize that God

is complete and perfect in His will and power.

### HEARING AND SEEING

Hearing and Seeing as essential attributes subsist in the essence of God. They are connected with possibilities to distinguish them. They function to reveal the knowledge of things, substance and accident. Because in order to be a knower of objects it is necessary to possess perception by hearing and by seeing.

According to Ibn Kathīr, the connection or relationship (Ta'alluq) of these qualities, starts from the creation of creatures. It began with man from the creation of his essence and then qualities and it continues no matter what changes may occur in him according to time and need. So it may be described<sup>as</sup> 'potential eternal relationship.' (93) But Macdonald calls the connection after existence as accomplished actual. (94) It shows that potential eternal relationship is a permanent and accomplished actual is meant for existence. But we do not realize 'how' (kaifiya) the connection is.

Ibn Kathīr relates that man's actions whether good or bad have form and they will appear in different forms in<sup>the</sup> after life. Similarly man's soul has also form. On this basis he says that God sees everything; the secrets of the world, reflections, of our

(93) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr vol.3. p.249.

(94) Macdonald op.cit., p.333.

minds and hearts, the blood of our veins. He sees past, present, and future, and our actions. For Him material and immaterial, substance and accidents are equal. Similarly God hears the sound of both audible and inaudible things. ~~to do.~~ (95)

To prove God's hearing and seeing, 'Ash'arī in Kitāb al-Luma' reasons thus "One who is living if he be not qualified by some defect which prevents his perceiving audible and visible things when these exist, must be hearing and seeing. Therefore since God is living, since He cannot be subject to any ailment as deafness, blindness and so forth, for ailment proves a temporal production of him who is subject to them. It is certain that God is hearing and seeing." (96)

The Mu'tazilites completely refuse to accept these two attributes of God, as they say: "hearing, seeing' is identical with the meaning of knowledge." (97)

Al-Fudalī refers to two ideas with regard to the explanation of these two attributes. He says: "God hears the essence of Zayd and 'Umar and a wall and He sees them...He hears the sound of the possessor of a sound and sees it, that is sound." Then He states "that belief in them is incumbent upon us because these

(95) Ibn Kathīr Tafsīr, vol.2. p. 287, vol.3. p.75. and vol.6. p.132.

(96) McCarthy, op.cit., pp.14-15.

(97) Klien, op.cit., p.99.

two qualities are connected with every entity. But 'how' (kaifiya) of the connection is unknown to us." He then takes another view which is slightly different from this. He says: "But it is also said that hearing is only connected with sound and seeing with objects of vision." (98)

Ibn Kathīr supports his views, that God sees our actions and hears the sounds of visible and invisible things, in several interpretations. For instance; he says: that Abrahām said to his father "O Father do not worship this (idol) who neither hears nor sees." (99) It shows that it is necessary for God, who is worshipped that He should have perception. For it is useless that man should worship one who does not see that he is worshipping Him. Similarly it is useless to beg supplications of Whom who does not hear.

Ibn Kathīr referring to the verse "No vision can grasp Him, but His grasp is over all vision. He is the All-subtle, the All-aware," (6:103) states that God's power of perception is incomparable to that of man. He says that Lokmān advised his son "O! My son, if there is any good or bad equivalent to one grain of a mustard seed, and though it be in the rock, or in the heavens, or in the earth, surely God is All-subtle and All-knowing." (100).

(98) Macdonald, op.cit., pp. 333, 334, 335.

(99) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.1. pp.45-7.

(100) Ibn Kathīr Tafsīr, vol.3. p.75. cf. vol.5. p.385.

The word 'idrāk' expresses mental awareness and perception. It seems that Ibn Kathīr did not connect the word 'idrāk' only with mental awareness but also included in it seeing and hearing. Thus he tried to prove that although man has perception yet it is imperfect, whereas God's perception is All-embracing and All-encompassing. His instrument of 'idrāk' is pure from matter. It means that God's hearing is not with ears and His seeing not with eyeball.

According to some verses of the Qurān God is wrathful towards the infidels, the existence of wrath is asserted; likewise, it is found that He is satisfied with the believers, the existence of satisfaction is asserted. The wrath and satisfaction are caused through hearing and seeing and knowledge of good and bad action. Then why should not His attributes of seeing and hearing be asserted.

#### GOD'S ATTRIBUTE OF SPEECH.

Speech is the seventh essential attribute of God which subsists in His essence. The Arabic word for speech is 'kalām' which may mean word (lafz) or meaning (ma'nā). According to Ibn Kathīr God's speech in the world is the revealed book; especially the Qurān. The brief description that he gives about it is that "its pen is of light and its writing is light and it is

connected with the throne." He also writes "that the Qur<sup>ā</sup>n is the speech of God written in the Preserved Tablet sent down on the night of decree to the Mighty house, a place in the heavens near the earth." (101)

Perhaps he meant by pen, the word, by writing its meaning, and by its connection with the throne its perpetuality. But in explaining the Qur<sup>ā</sup>n he does not indulge in the argument of its being created or uncreated which remained a burning issue among Muslims. Therefore his definition seems in disagreement with his predecessor theologians.

Abū Hanīfā defines God's speech thus: "The Qur<sup>ā</sup>n is the word of God, it is His inspired word and revelation. It is a necessary attribute of God. It is not God but still it is inseparable from God. It is written in a volume, it is read in a language, it is remembered in the heart, its letters and its vowel points, and its writing are all created, for these are the works of man, but God's word is uncreated. Its words, its writings, its letters, and its verses are for man's needs, for its meaning is arrived at by their use, but the word of God is fixed in the essence of God." (102)

Al-Fudalī defines God's speech thus "Not a word or sound,

(101) Ibn Kathīr, Taf<sup>s</sup>īr vol.7. pp.263-330.

(102) Hughes, op.cit., p. 484.

and far removed from order of preceeding and following from inflection and structure, opposed to the speech of originated beings" and "expression revealed to the Prophet is originated but the quality that subsists in the essence of God is eternal." (103)

Concerning God's speaking to man and the perpetuality of God's speech, Ibn Kathīr illustrates that (a) God did not speak to mortal but through an agent, or from behind a veil or through vision. (b) God has a perpetual power of speech according to the following analogical reasons:- (i) the universe stands firm by God's command. Since He commanded <sup>the</sup> heavens to stand firm they are standing firm and so the universe, otherwise heavens would have fallen down and so the universe. (ii) God's speech is unlimited, therefore it may not run out whereas man's speech is limited and it runs out. So God's speech cannot be considered created as every being has limitation. (iii) Just as God cannot create His will similarly He cannot create His speech in any human being. (iv) God spoke 'Kun' (BE) before the creation of creatures which shows that it is uncreated. Therefore God is eternally speaking. (v) After the annihilation of all creatures God will be alone and will say: I am the king of Kings. Where are wordly kings now? The power lies with God alone. This means that God's speech is not subject to any annihilation. (vi) speech is necessary to God. (vii) God's message is not only

(103) Macdonald op.cit., pp.335-336.

limited in the Qurān but in addition to it God has a vast knowledge with Him. (104) In the Qurān occurs: "Say: Though the sea become ink for the words of my Lord, the sea would be spent before the Words of my Lord are spent, even though We brought the like thereof to help. (18:109) and see (31:27).

Ibn Kathīr receives support from Ash'arī who says "since God's anger is uncreated and likewise His satisfaction and His wrath, why do you not believe that His Word is uncreated". Ash'ari also says: God's word 'be' is uncreated. If the word 'be' is uncreated then why should not the Qurān be uncreated, because the word 'be' was spoken for the creation of the creature and not for the Qurān, and "God sent messengers and revealed His message to them if the word of God was not found except in created form in a created thing there would be no meaning in the limitation of the vehicle of revelation. Some theologians adopted a middle course specially about the question of createdness and uncreatedness of the Qurān, and avoided to indulge in this matter. (105)

If both word and meaning are considered to be from God then it may be supposed that man is only agent to impart and implement

(104) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.1. pp.201, 539, and 366 vol.2. p.60 vol.3. pp246 and 217; vol.4. p.432; vol.5. p214, 255, 395; and 634; vol. 6 ppl07ff. 215; vol.7. pp.263, 330ff.

(105) Klein, op.cit., pp.64-78.

God's speech as Sweetman says: "For Kalām is nothing more than that the speaker does an act by which he gives proof or evidence of what knowledge is in his soul, or by means of which one addressed becomes in the situation of it (knowledge) being revealed to him. And this is an act belonging to the whole of the acts which belong to an agent."(106) So man is a true agent of God.

(106) Sweetman op.cit.m part 2 vol.2. p.108.

C.

ATTRIBUTES OF ACTIONS

AR-RAHMĀN.....AR-RAHĪM

According to Ibn Kathir the two words Ar-Rahmān and Ar-Rahīm are derived from Rahmah (رحمة) the Divine attribute, which means tenderness and mercy comprising the sense which embraces the sentiment of love, compassion, kindness, bounty and favour. It is due to this sense that both words imply 'mercy'. Ibn Kathir draws a difference between them, with regard to their grammatical and general usage among the Arabs. First, both Ar-Rahmān and Ar-Rahīm are adjectives resembling the active participle in meaning termed (الصفات المشبهة) denoting intensiveness. The former is of the form Fa'lān and denotes the greatest quality of attribute and the latter is of the measure Fa'īl and expresses constant repetition and manifestation of mercy. Secondly Ar-Rahmān denotes a passing quality of mercy and Ar-Rahīm indicates that the quality is a permanent distinguishing feature of the person to whom the adjective refers. It is like 'atshān (thirsty) hairān (bewildered), and sakrān (intoxicated) and the second, Ar-Rahīm like 'azīm (great), 'Alīm' (عليم), a person of knowledge and 'hakīm' (wise). Thirdly, though the words are different in measures yet their ultimate

significance and meaning is the same like 'nadmān' (نَدْمَان) and 'nadīm' (نَدِيم). Fourthly, Ar-Rahmān is 'He' whose love and mercy has copiously been revealed in the creation of the universe without any distinction of worthy and unworthy or pious or criminal, and Ar-Rahīm is the merciful God whose mercy is seen in the life Hereafter more than the consequences of the deeds of the creature deserve, especially to believers. Thus Ar-Rahmān includes a degree of love and generosity both for believers and unbelievers and Ar-Rahīm shows constant favour, particularly to the believers, in the Hereafter (107) On this point al-Baidāwī maintains "Ar-Rahmān is a more exalted attribute than Ar-Rahīm; because it not only contains five letter in Arabic, while Rahīm only has four but it expresses that universal attribute of mercy which the Almighty extends to all men, the good and the wicked, believer and unbeliever." (108)

As regards the general usage of these two words among the Arabs, Ar-Rahmān was considered identical to God. Allah of the Arabs and Rahmān of the Christians were not two distinct persons, but names of the One and only God. The Idolators of Mecca disliked this word Rahmān because of their haughtiness and because of its use by the Christians. For this reason Quraish demanded

(107) Ibn Kathīr: Tafsīr, vol.1. p.38f.

(108) al-Baidāwī: Tafsīr, vol.1. p.5cf. Hughes: op.cit., p.532 and also cf. Zwemer, op.cit., p.35f.

the omission of this word in the pact at Hudaibiya. Pagan Arabs also used it as a proper name for God in place of Allah. (109) Musailima, the liar, when he thought very highly of himself he gave himself the name of al-Rahmān and was called Rahmān of Yamāma by his followers. Such practice of comely names is forbidden in Islam except, the word has many meanings. Perhaps such a use of comely names might have been permissible before Islam. Islam permitted the use of these two words Allah and Ar-Rahmān as names of God which served the purpose of extending the idea of the Unity of God to the Christian and idolators, different peoples, who thought of the multiplicity of names, in terms of a multiplicity of personalities. "Say! (unto mankind) Call upon God or Call upon the Beneficent, which-so-ever you call upon, to Him belong the Names of Most bountiful." (17-110) It seems that Al-Rahmān, though denoting an attribute, is more like a proper name and applicable only to God. In the above verse it is used as an alternative to Allah. (110)

Ibn Kathīr's interpretation of the Divine attribute of Mercy is found scattered in his commentary. He gives a detailed

(109) Ibn Kathīr: Tafsīr, ~~op. cit.~~, vol.4. p.359 and vol.6. p.343.

(110) Ibid: vol.1. p.38.cf. Encyclopaedia of Britannica 9th edn. vol.xvi p.549. and Helprecht: "Recent Researches in Bible Land". London 1903. p.149. He states that Doctor Edward Glasse<sup>n</sup>y found an inscription on the monument of Abrahā, the Christian Chief of Companions of Elephāt; in Yaman. (The Sirwah incscription) (A.D. 542) opening with the word "In The Power of The All-Merciful, and His Messiah and the Holy Ghost." )

concept of 'Mercy'. According to him the attribute of Mercy contains beauty of design and action and balance of disposition in all spheres of life. This characteristic works in every creative activity to bring a result of steady perfection, and in order to deepen harmony and order and avoid all sorts of disorders and retrogression. There is no distinction in the provision of mercy what-so-ever. All creatures have their own share according to their wants and so also get their own share to accomplish their needs of life. Even the earth, oceans and animals get a particular quality of their own from the gracious Lord.

As far as strife, disturbance and conflict are concerned, this is because it is a quality of correction and improvement. Moreover every gathering has a counter dispersal and every order has disorder. But this change is essentially constructive and not destructive. It works for improvement and progress and not for deterioration and retrogression. So, in the manner of change, the demands of beautiful construction are accomplished, and adjustment, balance and proportion in nature and matter is continued. So, the construction and destruction is to make the entire world look like an exhibition house, decently arranged to provide more and more happiness. Therefore the storm in the sea, floods in the rivers, the eruption in a volcano and other

changes in the universe are a step towards the construction and production of a beautiful figure. "And of His signs is this: He showeth you the lightning for a fear and for a hope and sendeth down water from the sky, and thereby quickens the earth after her death." (30:24) Previous verses also express the sense mentioned above. (111)

The laws of Mercy continue their work steadily and smoothly without break, change, and alteration. The process of growth and decay are marked stage by stage and run according to a fixed period. Childhood, youth, adolescence and old age are proof of Mercy. The physical and spiritual changes, i.e. passion, enthusiasm<sup>a</sup> and conflict in mind and bodily changes are the manifestation of mercy for perfection, examination and to promote the state of man's life in the Hereafter. This slow motion encourages man to imbibe the beauty of Divine attribute and to affirm his love to God. Ibn Kathir interprets reproduction by two sexes as being due to the mercy of God. For it causes mutual attraction, peace of mind, co-operation, confidence and affection. The family circle broadens and human society extends through the conjugal state between man and woman. This gives the broader outlook of God's mercy. The creation of negative and positive, night and day, darkness and light is not useless, but t

(111) Ibid: vol.5. p.353ff.

provides solace and happiness for mankind. The stability of one state would have brought entire dissatisfaction to humanity. (112)

Al-Rāzī says that the attribute of 'Mercy' favours what is useful to life externally and internally. On the one hand, it arranges necessary things to provide food and nourishment to the body and on the other hand, it gives inward light of intelligence and reason to penetrate into the mysteries of life. But every activity must be guided by patience, the remarkable lesson vehemently preached by Mercy, so as to reap the fruit of actions. "Allah is with those who patiently persevere." (2:153) (113)

In the span of the material world opportunity for amendment is provided. If a man relents God will come forward to forgive him "Do not despair of the mercy of God" (39:53) His tears will wash away his sins and he will feel as if he has never committed sin. In the life Hereafter man will receive recompense for his actions, the attribute of mercy will add something more to his reward. The greater the sin one commits the greater is he in need of compassion and kindly treatment. "Had human beings not committed any sin Allah would have created another creature which would commit sins." (114)

(112) Ibid: (113) al-Rāzī Tafsīr vol.1. pp.75-86, 123ff. vol.2. p. 39.

(114) Ibn Kathīr: Tafsīr vol.1. p.143ff. 145. vol.3. p.136. vol.6. p.100ff.

Physical and spiritual lives are inter-connected in Islam. Perhaps this may be the reason why Ibn Kathīr lays much stress on the interpretation of 'Mercy'. The attribute holds prominence in the Koran and is mentioned in considerable detail. Evil there is in the world, but the sinner must receive proper punishment, see the contrast: "My Mercy encompasses all things" (7:156) (115) The fact is that even chastisement is a manifestation of Mercy, because<sup>s</sup> its object is not to punish but to correct the evil doer and prevent a greater evil.

According to Ibn Kathīr man's shortcomings, weaknesses and anger would have ruined him, had there not been 'Mercy' to stimulate him to develop the quality of forgiveness, to wash away ill will and hatred, and to encourage virtue and goodness in society. The injunctions of kindness must be reflected in man's actions and in his behaviour towards other creatures. Mercy discourages retaliation, except as a safety measure in the interest of security, but within the limits prescribed by Islam. Islam enjoins forgiveness for enemies and not love because it is against the instinct of man (116). Perhaps the<sup>h</sup>love preached by Jesus Christ was forgiveness in disguise in order to maintain the safety of society and to raise the morality of people from the lowest ebb, of degradation. There seems to be a teaching in

(115) Ibid: vol.5. p. 313.

(116) Ibid: vol.2. p.116-117, vol. 3. p.45, 229, 239.

every true religion to formulate and preach correct and practicable laws to save humanity from moral ruin and destruction.

The Divine attribute of Mercy seems to inculcate the sense of despite and hatred in man for sin and not for the sinner. The interpretation gives the idea how to eschew sin and to cure it, just as the physician's profession teaches him all methods of treating disease and not to hate the diseased. Similarly moral teachers act with sympathy and affection. Perhaps the nature of treatment in the revealed religions is the same. Spiritual healers know causes and effects, therefore they teach forbearance, permit lawful retaliation and forbid injustice.

The reason for the abundant meritorius, reference to 'Mercy' in the Koran may be the fact that the Quranic teaching was given, in the first place, to the Arabs, the most revengful of all peoples. Arnold says: "To the heathen Arabs friendship and hostility were as a loan which he sought to repay with interest, and he prided himself on returning evil for evil and looked down on any who acted otherwise." (117)

Ibn Kathīr refers to a Tradition that the world and its blessings are manifestation of one part of mercy. God kept ninety nine percent of mercy with himself to show it on the day of Judgement "My mercy encompasses all" (7:156) God divided His

(117) Arnold.T.H. Preaching of Islam, London 1913 p.43.

mercy into a hundred units. He gave one unit of it to the universe; Jinn, human beings, animals and other creatures got due share from that, because of that they take pity on one another and love each other and their species. God kept ninety-nine units with Himself, which He will exercise on the Day of Judgement." God made 'mercy' compulsory-or-obligatory upon Himself for those who abstain from mortal sins and idolatry" (118) So the creation of man and the universe is due to His mercy and love and God has no selfish end to grind except love.

According to Ibn Kathīr God's 'mercy' starts to accompany man before life and continues in life and after death; in the form of providing means of sustenance and other necessities of life after death in the form of forgiveness. So the relation between man and God is that of love. Therefore to keep it in contact - worship alone does not suffice. Man in return must love God and his very nature demands that he must cultivate this quality in him and practice this in his relations to his fellow beings. Love to man is considered love to God. (119) This is very explicitly described in one Tradition. "On the day of Judgement God will address a particular individual - 'O Son of Adam! I was sick, but you did not attend on me'. Bewildered, this individual will say: 'How is that possible? You are after all

(118) Ibir Kathīr: Tafsīr vol.3. p.229 and 45.

(119) Ibid: vol.1. pp100ff.

the Supreme Lord of all the Worlds, and cannot fall sick'. God will reply: 'Do you not remember that so and so among my servants was ill and lying close to you and you did not turn to him in sympathy. If you had but gone near him, you would have found Me by his side.' In like manner God will address another individual: 'O Son of Adam! I have asked of you a piece of bread; but you would not give it to me'. The individual will ask: "How is that possible? Could God need bread?" and God will reply: "Do not you remember that so and so among My servants had in a moment of hunger asked of you bread and did you not refuse to give it to him? If you had given him food, you would have found Me by his side." Similarly, God will ask another individual, "O Son of Adam! I had asked of you a cup of water, but you did not give it to me." The individual will cry out: "How is that possible. How can God feel thirst?" God will reply: "So and so of My servants who was thirsty, asked of you water, but you did not give it to him. If you had given it to him you would have surely found Me by his side." (120)

Now it is evident that the components of 'Mercy' are: before hand provision of everything that could be needed by man in the world; God's concern for the well being of man both in this world and in the Hereafter; His sympathy to remove man's helplessness and His inclination to deal generously and tenderly with man

(120) Azād, Tarjumān-al-Koran, London 1962 p.74.

and continue His goodness every moment. It is manifest that 'Mercy' involves the teaching of love for all creatures.

AL-RABB

(The Nourisher)

The name of the third attribute of action of God is Rabb. It is frequently used in the Koran. The word may be defined as sustainer and nourisher. In a more comprehensive sense it signifies, to bring up, to rear and nurture some living being, whether a plant or animal or human being through its particular stages of growth according to particular conditions and needs till it attains maturity.

Al-Baidāwī defines the word thus: "Rabb, in its literal meaning, is, to bring up, 'that is, to bring or educate anything up to its perfect standard, by slow degrees, and ~~to~~ as much as the Al-Mighty is He who can bring everything to perfection, the word Al-Rabb is especially applied to God. (121)

Ibn Kathīr's interpretation is as follows: "Rabb means chief master, Reformer and a Being who brings changes in the world according to the requirements and needs of the time. It is

(121) Baidāwī Tafsīr, vol.1. p.6. cf. Hughes: op.cit., p. 521.

specially used for God and its uses for any other than 'Him' is prohibited, but if it is used as an adjunctive it may have a different meaning, i.e.e. Rabb-al-Dār, master of the house; Rabb-al-Māl, possessor of the property; and Rabb-l-Ard, a land owner." (122)

In Muslim theology it occurs in conjunction with other words for God as a mark of great honour and respect, i.e.e. Rabb-l-'Izzat, Lord of glory; Rabb-al-'Ālamīn Lord of the Universe and so on.

The word Rabb besides conveying the idea of fostering, bringing up, or nourishing also imparts the concept of regulating, completing and accomplishing i.e. of the evolution of creatures from the crudest state to that of perfection (L.L.) It is fostering a thing in such a way as to enable it to attain one state after another until gradually it obtains its goal of perfection within the sphere of its capacity. Azād illustrates the term Rabūbiyyah (Providence ربوبية). "To develop a thing from state to state in accordance with its inherent aptitudes, needs and its different aspects of existence and also in a manner affording the requisite freedom to it to attain its full stature." (123)

The definition implies a process slow and tender, with the

(122) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.1. p.43.

(123) Azād: op.cit., vol.1. p.19.

the feature of permanent help, and not help on a temporary basis or for a time being. Therefore any temporary activity, according to Islām, cannot actually be included under this heading. Rabb is one and only for the whole universe, because the interconnected and interdependent system of the world forbids us to believe in more than one God as this will lead to collapse.

Ibn Kathīr in his interpretation treats 'Rabb' just like the name of the essence of God and adds proof for Unity under this heading. He deems that the same person must of necessity be creator of and provider for what exists. Possibly he forms his view from verse (2:22) where 'Rabb' apparently seems to be used as the name of essence. He seems to consider it as a substitute name for supreme power. Perhaps its vast meaning demands this. But it is treated as an attribute of God by a host of commentators. (124)

According to Ibn Kathīr Rabb, the sustainer, provides sustenance so beautifully that everything gets its proper share in time and according to the changing situations. The order for things is in consonance with their shapes and forms. The ants crawl on the earth, the birds fly in the air, the animals run and walk on the ground, fish swim in the water. All of them get their requisite provision in easy instalments for inward and outward growth. Three indispensable elements required for life

(124) Ibn Kathīr: Tafsīr, vol.1. p. 43.

are available in greater quantity in the world than anything else. Elements less important are given in a limited quantity with a due consideration to climate and situation. For instance, the primary requirement of life was air and non<sup>e</sup> can live without it. Air is so profusely available that no corner of the world can complain of its non-existence for a moment as its absence would ruin the whole world. The second requirement is water. It is found in plenty on the entire globe of the earth. Third requirement is food. No one can deny its availability according to the needs. All these are available at every time when a man needs them he can find them and bring them in use. "Verily we have created everything in the right proportion and measure." (54:49). (125)

There are some interpretations of Ibn Kathīr which draw the distinction between the function of Mercy and Providence. In them is attributed that the cause of the creation of things is 'mercy' and that distribution is the function of Attribute of Providence. It is due to 'mercy' that all natural phenomena keep their relation in contact in order to continue supply and the attribute of providence distributes them in accordance with the needs of the creatures. So, the creation of indispensable things like water, air and food might have come into existence because of

(125) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.1. p.100. vol.4. p. 519-520 and vol 6 p.483.

mercy and then its proper utilization is because of providence, which plans and distributes things according to merits, talents and needs with a special care to growth. (126)

But there is an unimaginable close relation between the two attributes. Even the work of providence is beyond man's conception. He thinks about the infinitesimal part of existence that is human life. If he lifts his eyes and casts them upon that vast and grand panorama of existence which includes limitless creatures and countless forms of life that are ever hidden before his eyes, he could not help but wonder.

The attribute not only proceeds to provide for the means which have been created for the physical nourishment of man and elaborate arrangement for the material existence of man but it also caters for good of the development of his internal life through moral teachers. God says: "O! Men worship your Lord who created you and those before you, that ye may have the chance to learn righteousness" (2:21) and also says: "Our Lord is He who gave to each created thing its form and nature, and further, gave it guidance".(20:50) Therefore it appears that everything has been created and ordered as if with one single object to create life and to enable it to attain its fulfilment physically and spiritually, to its utmost capacity.

(126) Ibid: vol.5, p.15. vol.4. p.460 and vol.5. p.366-356.

THE  
AL-HADĪ (GUIDE)

More important than the provision of food is God's Guidance to the inner capacity of His creatures to utilize these means of provision, because without knowledge of their utilization the process of life can easily stop. So, the third attribute is more closely related to 'providence' than to 'mercy'. Its explanation may add to the significance of the previous attributes. Hādī (هَدَى) is derived from 'hidāyah' (هَيْدَايَةٌ) or hudan (هُدًى) which means direction into the right road or into the way of salvation. Hūdā or hidāyah also means rational by reason and irrational by instinct. So it includes instinct, intellect, and reason. Any allusion to the special faculty of man also comes under this word. It is also defined as meaning to investigate objects with inward and outward talents and to allot to it the gift of self direction and a proper role in life. The Divine attribute 'hidāyah' (guidance) in the Koran signifies a guidance of revelation and a mere revelation. Sometimes 'Hidāyah' means revelation when it is used in connection with the Prophets only. But when Prophets and virtuous men are mentioned in certain verses then it means the guidance of revelation, which also includes believers.

The classification of guidance is as follows:-

Firstly, Guidance through instinct, which is present in every being, even in a new born babe; no sooner it comes into this world it begins to cry for food and then, without any external guidance it knows how to suck its food through the nipple. Ibn Kathīr holds that living things are different with regard to their type of creation, but all of them are endowed with this guidance. Trees know how to suck water from the earth, when they grow up their branches to get useful elements from the air. Such is the case with every living thing. "He who vouchsafed unto every thing its creation, then guided it" . (20:50) (127) This natural uniform direction later on functions as a sense perfection especially in animals and then, it is divided into two kinds; internal guidance and external guidance, and is commonly called 'Guidance through senses. It is higher in rank to the first guidance. The outward senses work through hearing, seeing, touching, tasting and smelling, and the inward senses through common sense, formative memory, imagination and fancy, through these factual faculties are to be questioned by God if misused. God says: "Every act of hearing, seeing, and the feeling of heart will be questioned." (17:36) (128)

Thirdly Guidance of the intellect, which has opened for man

(127) Ibid, vol.4. pp.205 and 519f vol.7. ppl78ff.

(128) Ibid vol.4. pp.213, 308.

gates of endless progress and has placed him in the highest place among all creatures. This faculty comes to guide where the senses fail to have access, so as to know the reality without premeditated and rational calculation. Ibn Kathīr holds that the distinction between good and evil is easily made, without rational calculation, if an intelligent man can realise that what he says he must practise. He deals with this faculty under the word 'Aql' (عقل) in the Koran. "Between the sky and the earth indeed there are signs, for a people that are wise. (2:164). "Do you not understand their purpose" (2:76), and "Do you enjoin right conduct on the people and forget yourselves, while you read the scriptures. Will you not understand". (2:44) (129)

Fourthly, rational Guidance, can reach conclusions despite the unknown and the influence of whims by applying formulae and reason. "Do they not earnestly seek to understand the Quran". (47:24) (130)

All these stages of guidance have their well defined limits which cannot be crossed. Instinct makes us aware of the first need of life and provides us with the faculty of striving to accomplish these needs, but it cannot enable us to gain knowledge of the things outside our being. The senses take us far to the

(129) Ibid: vol.1. p.50 and 149f. (130) Ibid: vol.6. p. 322.

limits. The eye sees under certain conditions such as light and distance. If there is no light it cannot see and also if there is great distance it fails to see. Our knowledge, therefore remains imperfect, and then the need for intellect arises, so it may discover knowledge by deductive and inductive reasoning. Reasoning depends on the intellect and knowledge acquired by the senses, so it is also restricted to certain limits beyond which it cannot go. Therefore its function is confined within the limits imposed by the senses. Its knowledge cannot be considered perfect because there are a large number of mysterious worlds which remain unknown to it. It is lost in wonder and can lead human beings nowhere. Moreover it is hardly an effective guide in practical life. Man is very often pressed by emotion and desire. Whenever there is a struggle between reason and emotion the victory is with the latter. Often reason warns us to refrain from fatal acts, yet our emotions persuade us to perform them. The forces of reason cannot restrain us from eating something harmful when we are compelled by hunger, and it cannot control us when we are angry. So we need a higher kind of guidance i.e. guidance of inspiration and revelation. These come where intellect and reasoning fail. Their function is to correct the short-coming of reason. Revelation is the highest form of guidance. It is sent down to prophets and Apostles to

reveal unseen things, to give them power and knowledge to work miracles and to guide people so that their veracity may be established. God says: "Assuredly we sent down Apostles with evidences, and we observe justice". (57:25) Al-Rāzī also affirms Ibn Kathīr's interpretation. (131)

Al-Razi holds that without these different types of guidance it would have been difficult to maintain physical and spiritual values of life. They teach Us the proper use of our faculties. Their co-existence and harmony is perpetual cause of encouragement to man. (132)

It is clear from different interpretations that each type of guidance is bound to certain limits and has certain specific functions to do. The provision of guidance for each creature is different according to its capacity. Man, the apex of creation proceeded from the lowest to the highest. That is why he can attain the spiritual heights and go down to the lowest ebb of degradation if he ignores the instruction of guidance. Every kind of guidance has a strict check over the other. Reason checks the senses as the latter are limited, and can some times create disturbances. Although they are inter-dependent on each other, yet sometimes the senses refuse to accept the power of

(131) Ibid: vol.1. p.50. vol.4. p. 519, vol.6. p. 566ff. vol.7. p.293 to 295 and 302: Rāzī Vol.1. p.162. It appears that every improvement or development in life whether mental or physical is subject to guidance of some kind or some degree.

(132) Rāzī, Tafsīr, vol.1. p.162. 221ff and vol.8. p.380.

the intellect. God's hand continues protecting and vouchsafing. All this is the gift of God and cannot be obtained by labour and fortune. Divine guidance encompasses all mankind without distinction of race.

AL-KHALIQ  
(THE CREATOR)

The use of the Qualities of action is only possible if there is a continuous process of creation. Divine attribute "Takhlīq (تخليق) or "Khalaq" (خلق) is always in function. The name of the Divine attribute of creator is 'Khāliq' (خالق). It signifies a creator of all things in the heavens and on earth. Creation grows by a gradual process, whether material or abstract. Khalaqa (خلق) applies to abstract things and ideas as they grow in our minds, moreover it includes designs and schemes about all things. Creation started from primeval created matter like water and air, dust and other matters prior to which nothing existed and emanated from 'creator', the cause of all causes.

This word has some synonym in the limited sense; firstly Badī, (بدیع) (from Bada'a) which means the Originator of things, according to His own will without any precedence (L.L.) It is used in the Koran for the creation of heavens and earth; lest

anyone should think that these were themselves primeval and eternal. Secondly comes the word Bada'a (بَدَأَ) which denotes the beginning of the process of creation of primitive man (pristine) from earthly matter then breathing the soul into it which implies various processes in its development. Thirdly, 'Fatara' (فَطَرَ) having the same meaning as 'Bada'a' (بَدَأَ). Ibn Kathīr reports from 'Ibn 'Abbās that he heard a Beduin quarreling with another over a well and using the word "I made it" (وَأَنَا فَعَلْتُهُ) (35:i) "Creator of the heaven and the earth" (12:101) (133). It also means 'to cleave' which clarifies the verse "That the heavens and the earth were one place then We parted them". (21:30)

Thus the word 'Khalaqa' along with its syno<sup>n</sup>yms denotes that God is the only creator of the universe and that He deserves praise. This attribute as related to the story of man and the universe, which is very plain and simple to understand, contains his origin, his physical development, his nature and progress in the world, his continuous effort to attain good and eschew evil, and his ultimate destiny. Ibn Kathīr's interpretation reveals the different stages of evolution in the physical and spiritual life of man. God says: "I am going to create a mortal from dust"

(133) Ibid: vol.1. p.281. vol.5. p.357. R. Walzer in Oriental Studies (New studies on al-Kindi Oxford 1963) p.185f says that according to al-Kindi there is no difference in the meaning of إبداع and إبداء. Both mean to make a thing appear out of nothing إظهار الشيء من لیس. It is also evident that God does not need any length of time to create it. لا يحتاج الى مدة لإبداءه. Similarly he says جعل means to make a being (صنع) from nothing (لا شيء).

(38:71, 30:20, 22:5). Three synonymous words i.e. 'Bashar' (البشر) 'Ādam' (آدم) and 'Insān' (الإنسان) occur in the verses. The word Ādam is from 'Udman' (أدنة) meaning 'to mix' therefore Adams means a mixture of all elements of the earth or an extract of clay with all its inherent qualities. Dust may be supposed to be primeval matter created from nothing by God, the cause of all causes. "We made man from dry clay" (15:26), different elements, types of clay as Ibn Kathīr interprets. Hence it may be supposed that man has all minerals in his body in some proportion (134). Perhaps if some elements diminish in the body disturbance occurs. Their proportion is in accordance to the needs of the body.

Moreover difference of colour is due to difference of clay of different colour and climate. But to begin with life, water was necessary. God says: "We made of water everything living." (21:50) According to Ibn Kathīr existence started after the creation of water. Before water the heavens and earth existed, but, not living beings. Thus it seems that it took a long time for life to start. If the relation between clay and water is linked then it may support the theory of evolution according to which all life began in miry clay on the coasts of waters. The attribute of providence which develops a thing stage by stage supports this idea. God says: "God is the creator of everything and

(134) Ibid: vol.5. p.11. Latest chemical researches have proved 105 elements in the body of man.

He is incharge of the welfare of everything" (39:62). Ibn Kathīr interprets that God is creator of all animate and inanimate objects, He is the sustainer and He is possessor<sup>of</sup> all things. The word sustainer in his explanation means that God creates things which take stages to reach perfection, notwithstanding the fact that He has power to create fully grown beings. But He does not do anything like that because in that case His attributes; mercy, providence and guidance of instinct will be of no use. (135) God says: "You will not find a change in our course" (35:43, and 33:62, 17:77). Therefore it is apparent that He has fixed a course for existence which He will not change.

The second stage in the process of creation is 'Breathing of Divine Spirit'. This may be considered a further development in the creation of man which gives him human consciousness. According to Ibn Kathīr man's form was there but there was no consciousness of life. Breathing the soul brought into him all the human faculties and qualities. Where this breath went mud changed into flesh and acquired senses. God says: "Then He made all things good which He created, and He began the creation of man from clay; Then He made his seed from a draught of despised fluid; Then He fashioned him and breathed into him of His spirit; and made for you ears and eyes and heart.. (32:7-9; 38:71;72; 15:29). (136)

(135) Ibid: vol. 1. p.44 vol.6. pp. 105-106.,

(136) Ibid: vol.1. pp. 44ff.

Taswiya' (تَسْوِيَة) means proper allotment of form. The clay remained about forty days in the shape of form without any breath. This shows an evolutionary process.

According to Ibn Kathīr it seems that our daily life is the real manifestation of evolution. We see the development of a seed into a full grown tree, taking place before our eyes and there are other wonderful developments taking place in the universe, then why should man's life be treated as an exception? Ibn Kathīr is very clear about the stages of development in man's life. His views are confirmed by Tabarī and al-Rāzī in their interpretation of verse. (2:30) They hold that gradual change from one stage to another is necessary. (137)

When the Divine attribute 'khalāqa' occurs with the words 'kun' and 'fayakūn', due to a misunderstanding of the sequence, involved, the process of evolution is generally ignored."He created him (Ādam) from dust; then He said to him 'Be' and he was. (3:58; 2:117) Ibn Kathīr interprets this verse as a manifestation of power of God to retort to those who did not believe in the second creation after death. He says that God can create the world within the twinkling of an eye but He does not do so. Ibn Kathīr, in his interpretation, first mentions the creation of the world then he says that God has power to create the universe by word of command only. al-Rāzī says: 'Be - that  
(137) Ibid: vol. 5. p. 604 vol.7. p. 269.

and 'it is' which occurs frequently in connection with the creation of things, should not be understood as having happened in the twinkling of an eye. (138) It seems that he confirms Ibn Kathīr's view. He holds that these two words refer to two independent stages: 'Kun' stands, so to say, for 'Amr' command which is pre-estimation and 'Yakūn' for actual creation and completion. So, the command according to him means that start of the process of creation, and 'Yakūn' the completion of a thing in due course of time as prescribed by God. Ibn Kathīr in explaining verse (2:117) also separates 'Be' and 'it is'. Now the term 'khalaqa' may be applied to the process of creation which starts with the command and shows that there is intermission between the command and completion of a thing. But there is a steady unimaginable process. (139). The Usage of the word 'Amr' in the Koran supports Ibn Kathīr's view (أمر) (i) an order or command, in xcvi:12; or (2) a purpose, design, will, as in xviii: 82; (3) affairs, working, doing, carrying out, or execution of a design, as in lxxxix:5. In many cases some of these meanings run together.

The biologists and geologists observe six stages of evolution in the process of creation. The first stage began from the period

(138) Al-Rāzī: Tafsīr, vol.7. p.115.

(139) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsir, vol.5. p. 634.

when earth was separated out of the molten (liquid) mass of matter, the sun, and took a long time to be fit for life. The second stage began when it became fit for organic matter after a long period. The third stage commenced when it became fit for animal life. In the fourth stage all kinds of animal life started. In the fifth stage some animals began to have their present shape. In the sixth stage man came into existence. Ibn Kathīr also in his interpretation of verse. "When He created you by diverse stages (71:14), describes elaborately the process of development of the earth and other planets and of the universe. (140) He maintains that man is the latest creation of God on earth (2:30)

He reports that the angels' talk to God concerning the creation of 'Adam' (man) was due to the fact that they saw a mischievous creation which did persecution on earth. (141)

In dealing with the Divine attribute of God, Ibn Kathīr adds that God has not only given physical perfection to man but He also gave him spiritual completion. So according to him just after man's birth, God gave him the general category of soul; the instinctive soul, which he states that when God breathed into man His soul, He gave him faculty of distinguishing and power of choosing. Sale also points to this interpretation. So 'Alhamahū (أَلْهَمَهُ) signifies he suggested to him (.L.L.) "And inspired it with conscience of what is wrong for it ~~and what is~~

(140) Ibn Kathīr: vol. 7. p.125.

(141) Ibid: vol.1. p. 121.

~~wrong for it~~ and what is right for it" (91:8)<sup>ikat</sup>, which may be meant God gave him free will, "And showed unto him the two high ways" (90:10) i.e. reason and revelation, good and evil, virtue and vice. Al-Rāzī intimates that intimation by inspiration of good and evil means by making a man know and understand the both. (142)

Now after development in the body and improvement in conscience, he speaks of six stages of spiritual growth:-

(1) The Ammāra (النفس الأمارة), the self which incites to evil. This is the first stage of the 'self' in the garb of beast-like passions where animal impulses predominate. Man's inner self is prone to evil, but he from practicing good and avoiding its influence, tries to get out of its clutches by the Grace of God." I do not exculpate myself. Lo! the (human) soul enjoineth unto evil, save that whereon my Lord hath 'mercy'. (12:53) (143)

(2) The Lawwāma (النفس اللوامة), the self accusing soul, which accuses a man when he deviates from the right path. Due to this, man feels consciousness of evil, and resists it and asks God's help. This usually accuses at the decrease of virtues and increase of evils. But in fact it is the commencement of fear of God and beginning of wisdom; restraint, or guarding one's tongue, hand and heart from evil; so it includes righteousness, piety and good conduct. Spiritual advancement is in progressive, each step

(142) Ibid: vol.7. pp.300-301 sale, the Koran p.447 al-Rāzī Tafsīr, vol.8. p.405 and 410.

(143) Ibid: vol.4. p.33 (144) Ibid: vol.7. p. 167.

makes the next step easier and complete or perfect. (144) "I do call to witness self reproaching soul." (75:2)

(3) The Mulhama (المولحمة), the inspired. This is the stage of inspiration when a man disposes himself to good and virtue, and preserves himself from temptation. He thinks of nothing but obedience to God in all affairs of life. (145) (verse 41:30)

(4) The Muṭma'inna (المطمئنة), the restful soul. This is the stage where evil completely disappears and man rests contented with his Lord. This is the highest spiritual stage, it is full of happiness, delight, and peace. The soul becomes perfect and attains ultimate and complete rule over the body. Its virtues, sincerity, and devotion are granted reward on earth, then feels himself as if he is living in paradise while others look for Paradise in the next world.

(5) Rāḍiah (الراضية), and (b) 'Mardiah (المردية), these may be treated as two separate stages of the soul; the first means man is well pleased with his Lord, and the second that he is pleasing to God. This is a sign of complete and perfect love between man and his Lord. All doors of bliss are open for him. The state of this highly inspired soul is expressed in the Qurān. "But ah! then soul at peace! return to your Lord, well pleased with Him, well pleasing Him." (89:27-20-30). According (144) Ibid: vol.7. p.167. (145) Ibid: vol.6. p.174.

to Ibn Kathīr it is the stage when a man prefers religion at the cost of his life and every temptation. It is in this way that man's soul reaches at the peak of spiritual fulfilment, like man's physical perfection. (146)

All these stages of development are the work of the Divine attribute of 'takhliq' (تخليق) supported by the Divine attribute of providence and mercy. It shows that the desire for perfection is divinely deposited in the nature of man. It appears that God's breathing of His soul into man at his physical perfection, helped him to develop from self consciousness to universal consciousness in order to manifest the Divine attributes, the highest good of human consciousness. Then he attains the exalted office of the vicegerent of God on earth. Because perfection of the soul is the fulfilment of physical, moral, and spiritual requirements. Then for physical perfection may be read (خلق) which involves the exalted standard of character and a wonderful illustration. Lane says: the proper signification of (خلق) is the moral character or the fashion of inner man. This is the real achievement of man. (L.L.)

AL-'ĀDIL

(THE JUST)

The fifth Divine attribute of action is Justice. It contains

(146) Ibid: vol. 7. p.291.

the sense of requital and recompense which is found in revealed and unrevealed religion. Islam points out that reward or chastisement is not arbitrarily imposed by an Absolute God but it is the result of man's own action. One should fear of His being the strict judge and not of His being the capricious tyrant.

This attribute is closely related to the verse "the Lord of the Day of Judgement" (1:3). It also occurs in different places in the Koran. The attribute signifies that God is the final Judge of man's action and possesses justice in the absolute sense of the term. As God is not despotic so He is not so merciful as to ignore every evil. Moreover, the quality and nature of acts is different and so their effect is also different, so the treatment should be different. Similarly the actions differ in their motivation and effect so they demand different treatment. But requital will not be more than the magnitude of a sin and man's ability to bear. God says: "On no soul doth God place a burden greater than it can bear, it gets every good that it earns and it suffers every ill that it earns" and "then anyone who has done an atom's weight of good, sees it! and anyone who has done an atom's weight of evil shall see it." (2:286; and 99:7-8).

Punishment and reward are the radical principles of the ethical code of Islam. Perhaps on this basis Daūd Rahbar refers to Tabrī's interpretation and conceives that Divine love and

mercy are subservient to Divine justice. "And so far<sup>as</sup> the next world, He who includes in the compass of His mercy all, is Rahmān for them in that He treats them all uniformly in His justice and Judgement and does not wrong any one by withdrawing the weight of an atom." (147)

It ~~may~~ be a misunderstanding to say that Justice must punish all defaults and offences, and that it restricts reward to the scale due to actions accordingly. Possibly Justice signifies that all shall have their just recompense, that is to say, that no punishment is severer than that which is proper to the fault, and that no reward must fall short of that which is due. The concession or remission of punishment is not against Justice, nor is the multiplication of remuneration inconsistent with the spirit of God's Justice. God's mercy and His Grace know no bounds. Ibn Kathīr in interpreting Justice holds that God will not punish every offence; to many He will award forgiveness. God's law is such, that He punishes where punishment is necessary for correction, improvement and reformation. According to him Mercy encompasses everything. His view is rightly confirmed by Tabarī. Both of them appear to show Divine Justice as an aspect of Divine Mercy instead of conceiving of Mercy as being subservient to Justice. (148)

(147) Daud Rahbar, God of Justice Leiden 1960 p.43.

(148) Ibn Kathīr: vol. 1. p.432, vol.3. p.228 and vol.6. p.206, see Tabarī Tafsīr vol.9. pp.53ff.

Every human being shoulders some responsibility from his very creation for which he is to be questioned. Wrong operation and misuse of responsibility involves awe and fear, otherwise there is no fear and terror in the Justice of God. Even in that case of recompense it meant ~~for~~ the goodness of man in order to bring balance and conformity in his life. Moreover, it serves the purpose of unity and uniformity upon which the scheme of the universe rests. Should this principle of Justice slacken this material world would be in disorder. (149) This principle is vehemently expressed in the Quranic version and mankind is ordained to adhere to it in all spheres of life and in <sup>the</sup> ethical teaching of Islam it is considered to be one of the cardinal virtues.

There are some limited attributes which apparently seem to imply terror and Greatness of Allah, and Justice and Mercy both seem ineffective. Undoubtedly some pious Muslims in their lives refer freely to these attributes. Fear and terror on the one hand, prick their conscience and make them shun evil and submit in bondage to God. On the other hand, they always expect Mercy and hope from God. It is <sup>a</sup> pity to say that while writing on these pious men most writers ignored the sequence of the verses. They concluded from the fear of these men <sup>that God is Tyrant</sup> and neglected their aspect of hope, in the Koran where ever these attributes (149) Ibid, vol.6., p.486.

occur they are preceded or followed by the attributes of Grace, unity or knowledge. This may be to explain <sup>to</sup> mankind that God has no intention of inflicting cruelty upon them as He pleases but to make man aware that His actions are for the welfare of humanity and to establish the concept that His revenge, indignation, retribution and strong grip depend on knowledge, wisdom, Justice and rectitude. Meaningless wrath and cruelty have no connection with God. God says: "Allah is not in the least unjust to the people." (41:46) ~~The~~ Previous verse informs ~~us of~~ the action of a man "who-so-ever workes good it is for his soul and <sup>so</sup> whoever worketh evil it is against it. " (8:51) (150)

This proves that the God of Islam is perfectly just and absolutely Benevolent; not vindictive or malevolent.

Ibn Kathīr giving further explanation of God's Justice in interpreting verse (8:51) says that it is not possible to ascribe cruelty to God. For further clarification he remarks that God only punishes those who are real culprits and offenders. He does not punish <sup>them</sup> for the sins of others, nor an innocent man. Nor even on the basis of personal relationship, because any personal responsibility cannot be shared in spiritual matters, nor can a "soul carry the burden of another soul. (35:18) God sends

(150) Ibid: vol.3. p.336 and vol.6. p. 181.

messengers, reveals to them books containing commandments. Men are asked to hold fast to the commandments. When they throw them behind their back they are liable to be punished. "Verily strong is the grip of thy Lord". (85:12) This is pure justification, which demonstrates the just God of Islam.

Now coming to the epithets which are interpreted as showing apathy and where justice seems to be of no significance such as the epithet; al-Qahhār (القهار) according to Lane, it is an epithet applied to God, <sup>which</sup> means 'The Subduer' of His creatures by His sovereign authority and power and disposer of them as He pleaseth, for and against their will. This may seem to associate an idea of tyranny with God, but it must be correctly understood with the linked verse. Commenting on this verse Ibn Kathīr interprets it as follows: "All creatures are under Him and are powerless in contrast to Him and constantly need His assistance whereas God requires no help from anyone." (39:4; 13:17). The sequence in the verse imparts to mankind the message of the importance of the unity of God, that He is absolute, Irresistible and Ruler of all. He is free to accomplish His charges and changes that He will to do. There is no partnership at all in His affairs. He forgives again and again. The epithet Al-Mutakabbir (التكبير) means a possessor of pride. It expresses the greatness of God and not the pride which is applicable to human beings. Because in that

case it would imply haughtiness. Zamakhshari defines this epithet as "Supreme in pride and Greatness." (151)

The epithet (الجبار) is derived from (جبر) which means to set bones or to reduce them from a fractured state. As applied to God it may mean the restorer of the poor, or competent or sufficient. (L.L.) Literally it means a bone setter. Ibn Kathir interprets it as 'Great'. (الملك) the sovereign, defined as undisputable authority who is entitled to issue orders and receive obedience and who indeed receives it. (العزيز) the Mighty, expresses the goodness of God, that He can carry out His will without any opposition. Ibn Kathir interprets them as to show the Greatness of God.

There is also the epithet (المتقم) the Avenger, which may imply cruelty on the part of God. "Verily those who disbelieve in the signs of God they shall have severe punishment, and God is Mighty Lord of retribution." (3:6) According to Ibn Kathir it conveys the idea of retribution of one who is guilty. According to Al-Razi it signifies avenging but not revenging. (انتقم منه) meaning I inflicted penalty <sup>upon him,</sup> retributing him, for that which he has done, or I punished. (L.L. & AL Razi) Hence (ذو الانتقام) as an attribute of Divine being, means the inflicter of retribution, able to requite or retaliate; one who <sup>is</sup> ever able to punish, unlike a man

(151) Ibn Kathir vol.6. pp.515ff..Ibid and Zamakhshari, tafsir vol. 3. p. 177.

who could not take action freely. (152)

The ends of righteousness, piety, and equity demand that God must be just even before His being Generous. On the Day of Judgement, this epithet like other epithets will appear in its glory. God's being merciful does not mean that He is incapable of likes and dislikes. He punishes the wicked and rewards the virtuous. Although His loving kindness is infinite, yet it is not to be had at the expense of His justice. As previously described, Ibn Kathīr strongly believes in Mercy but holds that it is shown after Judgement. Al-Rāzī says "Had there been no mercy of God in the world there would not have been any person living, and had there not been fear of doom everyone would have been careless." (153)

Ibn Kathīr also interprets that God's retribution is because of sins, and to do away with impurity, But His punishment is temporary for believers and permanent for disbelievers and idolators, because they reject His greatness and associate partnership with Him. God says: "I am the One Who is most able to dispense with Partnership", "Pride is only my cloak, Greatness is my sheet, whosoever snatches one of them I must punish him." (154) Therefore God's justice without having any mercy will apply to

(152) Ibn Kathīr: vol. 1. p.608f. and Al-Rāzī Tafsīr vol.2. p.392.

(153) Al-Rāzī Tafsīr, vol. 1. pp.122ff. cf. Ibn Kathīr; Tafsīr vol 1. pp.608f.

(154) Ibn Kathīr; Tafsīr vol.6. p.617cf. Mishkāt book 1. ch.1. p11

unbelievers and idolators and not to believers.

The Divine attribute of Justice, so to say, completes the concept of Absolute power. It indicates the natural process of development in man's action, and thoughts and his search for truth and consequences. The first need of man for existence and accomplishment of his actions and thoughts is in the care of providence which he always finds in himself. Because, Divine guidance is necessary to man to know the ways and means of utilizing provision. Then the idea of guidance, Providence and Justice is firmly rooted.

With the development of senses he comes to realise that all of this is due to the mercy of God. After realization of these attributes he cannot help thinking that why there will not be justice subservient to mercy by the all pervading power. Because without mercy providence becomes insignificant, creation becomes ever full of fear and awe inspiring terror. Even the concept of God will not be complete without the concept of Justice but subservient to mercy. This concept is rightly supported by the Epithet of 'Ash-Shakūr' (الشَّكُورُ) applied to God, He who approves, or rewards or forgives, much or largely: He Who gives large reward for small, or few, works He in whose estimation, small, or few, works performed by His servants increase, and who multiplies His rewards to them. (L.L.) (155)

(155) Ibid: vol. 5. p. 581f.

Lane elucidates the conception of God of Islam. He says:  
"Islamic conception of God, I suppose has been misunderstood. Its effect upon the people had been consequently under estimated. The God of Islam is generally represented as a merciless tyrant who plays with humanity as lifeless creatures and has all the powers to exercise in what ever manner He likes. But His gentleness is totally ignored - that belongs to only great strength. The Quran repeatedly mentions loving kindness of God which is the main thought of Islamic teaching. (156-)

D.

PARTNERSHIP WITH GOD

According to Islam Monotheism is considered to be the original form of religion. It was the conception revealed from the beginning to all the Prophets. The study of the past history of religions, nations, and tribes supports this idea and manifests that deviation from this belief was a later invention of man's mind.

Ibn Kathīr holds the view that the profession of the unity of God is in the nature of man. He quotes the verse: "And remember when thy Lord brought forth (or took) from the children of Ādam from their loins, their seed, and made them testify of themselves, (saying): Am I not your Lord? They said, "Yes, we testify, lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection; Lo! of this we were unaware." (7:172) On this ground Ibn Kathīr maintains that nature is unchangeable. Everything has been created with a special nature which it strictly follows. But one common thing in the nature of all mankind is belief in one Supreme Being, and that deviation from this belief is due to Satan and to error. Al-Rāzī holds that the covenant referred to was made with Ādam when he was first created. This refers to every human being when he comes into existence, and human nature itself supports this evidence. And so their interpretations enfold the same significance.

Earlier commentators also agree that faith in one Godhead is in the nature of man. (157)

Azād a modern commentator, also confirms their views thus: "The moment man opened his eyes to the world around him in the very first stage of his history, he was impelled by his very nature and the situation in which he found himself, to believe in the existence in one Supreme Being. It was only at a later stage that his fancy began to create for him, various imaginary forces of nature, to which he thought fit to offer worship". (158)

Ibn Kathīr maintains that with the passage of time when people neglected the teachings of the Prophets they started 'Shirk' which means idolatory, paganism, polytheism, ascribing plurality to God, and associating other things with Him. He also mentions other reasons why men neglected the teachings of the prophets, which are as follows:- (a) "the influence of environments and national rites and customs, (b) the influence of parents, (c) of ignorance, (d) of selfishness, (e) of enmity between nations and tribes (f) pride in race and nationality, (g) respect for prophets and saints beyond the limits of humanity during their life and after their death and attributing to them all sorts of power and knowledge, (h) belief in magic as a harmful and beneficial thing and also belief in astronomy, (1)

- (157) Ibn Kathīr: Tafsīr vol.13. p.246 Al-Rāzī Tafsīr vol.4. pp312ff.  
(158) Azad, Tarjaman-al-Koran vol.1. p.104 cf Seale Muslim Theology London 1964p.20. He refers to Clement and Tertullian who says: "The Father then, and Maker of all things is apprehended by all things, Agreeable to all, by innate power and without teaching. But no race anywhere of tillers, of the soil, or nomads, and not even of dwellers of cities can live without being imbued with the faith of a superior and "From the beginning the knowledge of God is in the dowry of the soul, one and the same amongst the Egyptians, and the Syrians and tribes of Pontus."

belief in natural phenomena as a real source of awe and hope, and a cause<sup>of</sup> benefit and harm to man. (159) But from his different interpretations it appears that he makes parents responsible for all sorts of deviation and then he mentions other reasons. He states that man is naturally disposed to be a faithful believer, only false teachings make him corrupt and spiritually destitute. He ~~says~~<sup>tells</sup> a tradition: "Every child is born to a state of obedience; it is his parents that make him a Jew, Christian, and Magi." (160) This means that the natural faculty with which a child is created is the faculty of knowing God; but the carelessness of parents and influence of environment cause man to deviate.

There are several kinds of Shirk' which Ibn Kathīr mentions. Those mostly agreed upon by the commentators are four; (a) Shirku'l-'ilm, ascribing knowledge to other than God; (b) Shirku'l-'ibāda, offering worship to created things; (c) Shirk'l-qudra or taṣarruf, attributing power to other than God; (d) Shirku'l-'āda, performing ceremonies which signify reliance or trust on others than God.

Concerning Shirku'l-'Ilm' Ibn Kathīr explains: that God alone has knowledge of unseen things. The knowledge of the unseen which the prophets have is not more than that which God had revealed to

(159) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr vol.1. p.101, vol.2. pp.93, 94 vol.3 pp.492 464.

(160) Ibid vol.3.p.246. (110) Ibid. vol.2. pp.76, 77 vol.3. p.25.

them. Their knowledge is called 'al-Ghaibal-Mu'tā', the given knowledge of unseen things. Therefore it cannot be compared with God's knowledge, which is perfect and complete. Every Prophet professed in the scriptures of not having complete and perfect knowledge. Ibn Kathīr states that when the chieftains of Noah's people who disbelieved said to Noah: "Do we believe in you when we see that the most abject among us have followed you? Noah said to them I do not know that they are abject, if you have such knowledge keep it with you, I only say that God knows their hearts and He will reckon with them. Muhammad, the Prophet, was also asked such questions whereupon he ascribed the knowledge of the unseen to God. (161) A tradition reported by 'Ayishah elucidates the interpretation. "The Prophet was troubled in mind, but knew not the truth of the matter till God made it known to him. All who pretend to have a knowledge of hidden things, such as fortune tellers, soothsayers, and interpreters of dreams, as well as those who profess to be inspired are all liars." (162) The Qurān says of God: "The Knower of the unseen, and He discloses not His unseen to any one, save only to such a Messenger as He is well pleased with." (72:26-27).

The false belief in creatures having knowledge of the unseen leads men to the extent of worshipping them. As created

(161) Ibid. vol.<sup>3</sup>p.54(162) Hughes op.cit., p.579 cf. Sell op.cit., p.177.

beings have no knowledge of the unseen therefore man's fancy to worship them on this ground is a fallacy. God says: "And serve God, ascribe nothing as partner unto Him". (4:36)

Ibn Kathīr says it is God's right to be adored and not to ascribe any partnership with Him. He also maintains that in any matter man must not say, that had such and such not been there <sup>he</sup> would not have escaped from harm, because it is a sort of 'Shirk'. He enunciates that no one will agree that his servant should equally share with Him his wealth and property. If this is the case with man, then, how could they ascribe partners with God. Therefore men must know that there is no partner with God, and they must not worship any creature. He states that the idolators of Mecca also regarded angels as the daughters of God, which is a sort of partnership and synonymous to worship, and the same is the case with other man made things and creatures. He remarks that idolators are like a man who takes refuge under a spider's web in order to save himself from rain, or sun, or cold, which he cannot do because the web is the weakest shelter. Had they had knowledge they would not have bound their hopes to creatures. Their state is different from that of the believers who grasp a firm handhold, whose hearts and bodies are turned towards God in His worship and in performing good deeds, whereas idolators' hearts and bodies are in worldly things. They themselves made

made idols which neither move, nor can harm or benefit a creature nor have senses. They can neither create nor raise the dead, The same is the case with the creature, it can do nothing without the will of God. So man should not lower himself and bow down before God's creature instead of God. (163) God says: "The likeness of those who have taken to them protectors, apart from God, is as the likeness of the spider that takes to itself a house; and surely the frailest of houses is the house of the spider, ~~if~~ <sup>if</sup> they ~~but~~ know." (29:41), and "Surely those upon whom you call, apart from God shall never create a fly, though they banded together to do it; and if a fly should rob them of aught they would never rescue it from him. Feeble indeed alike are the seeker and the sought." (22:73)

Belief in the knowledge of creatures and in their worship leads man to shirk-al-tasarruf. That is why idolators used to say "We worship them only that they may bring us near to God" (39:3) They believed in the life hereafter therefore they used to believe in their animate and inanimate Gods as intercessors and say: "These are our intercessors with God". (10:18) Ibn Kathir maintains that intercession of men or of angels whether it is intercession from affection (Shafā'ah bil-mahabbah) or intercession from regard (Shafā'ah al-wajāhah) or intercession from permission (shafā'ah bil idhn) will not be for idolators. Intercession from

(163) Ibn Kathir, Tafsir vol.3. pp. 72 and 73 and 260 vol.4p. 557 vol.5. p.325.

(164) See definition of these three kinds of intercession, Hughes op.cit., p.579 and Sell op.cit., pp.197f.

permission is applicable only to sinners and not to idolators, because they are like a man who stretches forth his hands towards water (asking) that it may come towards his mouth and that will never happen, or like a man who closes his hands after having water in it in order to keep water in his fist which is impossible. So he says their hopes of intercession will not be successful as their Gods cannot help them in this world and the world to come. God says "the likeness of those who disbelieve is as the likeness of one who shouts to that which hears nothing, save a call and a cry; deaf, dumb, and blind they do not understand. (2:171) Therefore they must abandon all these fancies. (165)

Shirk fil'āda, is to keep pace with the firmly rooted customs and rites in the society. In fact in this case man does not believe in these customs and rites, but practises them in order not to earn the ill-will of the society, these at last become a habit and these actions begin to occur unintentionally; like trusting omens, believing in lucky and unlucky days and superstitions, and giving offerings to idols and saints, as idolators (Arabs) used to offer camels for different purposes and also to make a share to idols in their offerings to God. Also giving names to their sons like 'Abd-al-Nabī.

(165) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.1. p.360.

Ibn Kathīr puts forward methods of escaping from all types of 'shirk'. He states that every man must refrain from doing things which have the slightest similarity to any kind of 'shirk' such as naming children like Abd-al-Hārith, Abd-al-Munāf, and 'Abd-al Nabī, <sup>and</sup> building temples over graves. They must not give undue respect to Prophets and saints and all other creatures. Clear verses of the Qurān must be followed and figurative verses must be explained according to the classical meaning of the language. No attempt must be made to go deep into them as this may lead to heretical interpretation. (166) He also seems to emphasise that in order to remain in contact with the truth and escape from idolatory man must acquire knowledge which he classifies thus:- (a) 'Ilmu'l-yaqīn) that is, knowledge by certainty of reasoning, or certainty <sup>of</sup> inference. This refers to our state of mind. This knowledge may be called lower knowledge. (b) 'Ainul-yaqīn, that is knowledge obtained by sense perception certainty of sight. This may also be called second stage of knowledge. (c) Haqq-al-yaqīn, that is the highest grade of knowledge, with no possibility of error, this is the stage where the intellect and the senses cannot reach by any means. It may be termed as knowledge through revelation. Ibn Kathīr says that instead of questioning the knowledge of the Prophets which is of the highest degree, this knowledge must be accepted in order to know the reality and to escape from the pitfalls of plurality. (167)

(166) Ibid: vol.2. p.5. vol.1. p.101. vol.3. p.264; vol.7. p360.

(167) Ibid: vol.7. pp.360, 361 and 109.

CHAPTER FOUR

BELIEF IN ANGELS.

It is incumbent on every Muslim to confess that God has angels who carry out His command and do not disobey Him. They are created of light and are free from carnal desire.

Ibn Kathīr defines angels as heavenly bodies created of pure light and free from worldly desires. They are invisible to human eyes. (1)

To prove the existence of angels, Ibn Khaldūn reports that philosophers and intellectuals admit, and religious men believe in numerous imperceptible and spiritual worlds; the world of senses, the world of ideas, and an invisible world of angels. Metaphysicians call these essence (intellect). According to their logic angels have no corporeality and matter. They are pure intellect where the object of thinking, the thinker and the intellect are one. (2)

The word malak stands for angel, in Arabic. Malak is either derived from the same root malaka which means, power, as angels are supposed to execute the will of God in the universe, or according to Tabarī from alukah (changed to malak) meaning risāla (bearing messages). Angels perform the duties of bringers of God's errands to Prophets. God's message to the angels is the

(1) Ibn Kathīr Tafsīr, vol.1. pp.130f.

(2) Ibn Khaldūn Muqaddimah, (Tran-Rosenthal) London 1958 vol.2. p.421.

manifestation of intention or expression of will for execution and not talk, or conversation, or consultation with them. (3)

Angels are classified into various grades and they are charged with duties accordingly. Firstly, four of them; Gabriel, Michael, 'Isrāfīl, and 'Izrael are supposed to be Archangels. Gabriel is mentioned as a bringer of revelation to the Prophet Muhammad, and to all other Prophets. His name occurs thrice in the Qur'ān; twice in sura 2:97-98, and once in sura 66:4. He is also mentioned by other names like 'holy spirit and powerful spirit. His revelation includes tidings, warning, advice, moral teaching, and punishment. Michael is the angel of rain and growth. He pours down rain by the order of God. Ibn Kathīr states that the Jews once put questions to the Prophet, Muhammad, to testify the veracity of his prophethood. They verified all the answers including Gabriel as a medium of revelation to all the Prophets, whereupon 'Abdallah Ibn Salām embraced Islam. But others said that Gabriel is their enemy, because he brings punishment, therefore they refused to accept Muhammad as prophet. (4) Al-Baidāwī says that it was only 'Abdallah Ibn Sūria (Jew) who objected to Muhammad's intimation that Gabriel revealed the Qur'ān to him. The Jews considered Gabriel an avenging angel, and said that had the Qur'ān been revealed by Michael they might have accepted it.

(5) God says: "Say (O Muhammad) Whosoever is an enemy to Gabriel

(3) Ṭabarī, Tafsīr, vol.1. p.155f.

(4) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr vol.1. pp.230f.

(5) Al-Baidāwī Tafsīr, vol.1. p.74f.

he it is who hath revealed it (the scripture) to thy heart by God's leave, confirming what was before it, and for a guidance and good tidings to the believers. Whosoever is an enemy to God and His angels and His Messengers, and Gabriel, and Michael - surely God is an enemy to the unbelievers." (2:97-98).

'Isrāfīl is the angel who blows the trumpet to end this world and for Resurrection. 'Izraīl is the angel of death. He visits man at the time of his death to take out his soul from the body. God says: "the angel of death is put in charge of you, will take your souls: then shall ye be brought back to your Lord." (32:11) According to Ibn Kathīr Izraīl addresses a believer with these words: - "O! Pure soul come forth to God's pardon and pleasure! then the soul comes out as gently as water from a bag." But, in the case of an infidel the angel of death sits at his head and says: "O! impure soul, come forth to the wrath of God!" And then the Angel of Death draws it out as a hot spit is drawn out of wet wood." (6)

Arch-angels perform their duties successfully, unhesitatingly and co-operatively. They keep the phenomena of nature in contact, because for the growth, life, and death of an object the existence and co-operation of the chain of all related causes is necessary. The co-operation of related causes may be called

(6) Ibn Kathīr Tafsīr; vol.3. p.66; vol.5. p.407.

'tadbīr'. It is assigned to these angels by God to continue the existence of the world.

Ibn Kathīr holds that these angels are mere agents to apply the will of God. Their position is not more than that of a servant. He clarifies his interpretation by giving the meaning of their names. He defines Jibr, Mik, Isrāf, and Izr as 'a'bd, meaning a servant and 'Il as Allah. So these are composed of two words which means servant of God. (7)

Next to these four angels there are supposed to be angels who carry the throne on the Day of Judgement. This refers to the verse "And the angels will be on its sides, and eight will, that Day, bear the Throne of their Lord above them." (69:17) "Those who carry the Throne of God and those around it sing praise to their Lord; believe in Him; and ask forgiveness for those who believe (40:7)", and you will see the angels surrounding the Throne, singing glory to their Lord." (40:75)

According to Ibn Kathīr the Throne is the biggest created

- (7) His interpretation is contrary to Zoroaster who called angels 'Amish-Sapind and recognised them as Demi Gods having female called Yezta just like Hindu Dev. These Demi Gods were six in number, who ruled over 33 out of which every one ruled over thousands. Magians believe in good and evil powers. They have a large number of both types. Angrame, Neyush, or Satan took the place of the dark forces of the Magian known as Ahraman in Zend language. The Aryans styled them Dev. The Greeks styled them as Theos, the Romans Deus. The Greeks also styled them as intellects which are supposed Creators of the world. They used sacrifice in their names and build temples. The Arabs believed in angels as daughters of God. See - Nu'mānī and Nadvī, Sirat-al-Nabī Hyderabad, 1968 vol.4. p556.

object of both earth and heavens, or it means authority. As regards the number of eight, he explains that these are eight categories of angels and the number of every category is equal to the total population of men, jinn, and all other kinds of angels, secondly it means eight lines of angels, and lastly these are angels whose number is not known, who will have the authority on the Day of Judgement by the command of God. In place of these different explanations it seems very likely that he believes in four angels as Archangels. He also interprets that these four will bear the authority on the Day of Judgement. Al-Rāzī interprets that there are eight angels which will hold a position higher than all. But the number of authority (Throne) bearers is four. This view is confirmed by al-Baidāwī and al-Zamakhsharī. But they confirm the supremacy of these four over eight. So they affirm the interpretation of Ibn Kathīr. Their different interpretations seem allegorical, showing the power of God. (8)

Some other angels sing the praise of God, and ask forgiveness for believers. According to Ibn Kathīr God Himself will say to angels to implore for believers because they believed in Him without seeing Him. (9).

Two angels work as recorders of the deeds of men. One of them sits on the right side and records his good deeds and the

(8) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.6. pp.124-125; vol.7. p.103 cf. Al-Rāzī, Tafsīr, vol.8. p.200., cf. al-Zamakhsharī Tafsīr vol.3. p.213 and cf. al-Baidawī Tafsīr, vol.2. p.353.

(9) Ibid: vol.6. p. 126.

other sits on the left side and writes his bad deeds. God says: "two honourable recorders, they know what you do," (82:11-12) "when the two receivers receive sitting on the right and on the left. He utters not a word but there is a sentinel by him, ready (to note it)" (50:17-18). Ibn Kathīr holds that they record man's actions and not his thought. Whatever man tries to conceal and reveal whether it is in day time or at night God knows and these angels also know the works of man which he conceals. (10) Imām Ghazālī also says: "Allah hath angels, beings who know the works of man better than they know themselves." (11)

These two angels are always around a man to protect him and save him from harms and evil. Ibn Kathīr deems that Guardian angels are different from these two recorders. He bases his interpretation on the verse <sup>(13:11)</sup> "He has attendant angels, before him and behind him, watching over him by God's command". (13:11) He says that every man is always surrounded by four angels; two recorders and two guardians. The angels of night are different from angels of day. They come by turn. The angel of the right side is superior to the angel of the left-side. He writes one good ten times more and the angel on the left-side seeks his permission before writing a bad deed of a man. He gets permission after three requests, provided man does not relent. Ibn Kathīr

(10) Ibid. vol.6. pp. 400-401; vol.7. p.234.

(11) Mishkāt-al-Anwār (tran by Gairdner) London 1924 p.54.

increases the number of angels up to 20; ten during day time and ten at night. This interpretation is very similar to al-Tabarī's. On the authority of Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal Ibn Kathīr also interprets that there is one angel and one jinn or devil with every man, even the Prophet was not without them. The angel encourages good deeds and the devil whispers bad deeds. (12) The Jewish idea that heavenly guardians are given to man on certain occasions is slightly different to Ibn Kathīr'. They believed "in travelling two good angels accompany the righteous, and two of Satan's angels accompany the wicked." (13)

Some angels come to righteous people; who believe firmly in God and are steadfast in their belief and good deeds, they encourage them and give them glad tidings on their good deeds. They tell them that due to their patience and steadfastness they will accompany them in life and Hereafter. They come to the virtuous at his death bed and say kind and good words for his better future life. God says: "Verily who say, our Lord is God and further stand steadfast, the angel descends on them, saying: Fear ye not! nor grieve! but receive glad tidings of the Paradise which ye are promised. We are your protectors in this life and the life to come. (41:30-31).

There is a class of angels which come to help the virtuous

(12) Ibid: vol.4. pp.73-74 cf. Ibn Taimiyya; Al-Jawāb-al-Sahīh-li-man-Baddala-Dīn-al-Masīh. Cairo 1905 vol.3. p.61.

(13) Bonsirven' Palestinian Judaism in the Time of Jesus Christ' New York. p.36.... 1964.

in the battle field. Ibn Kathīr interprets that such type of angels descend to fasten courage and give satisfaction to the believers. The leader of these angels is supposed to be one of the Arch-angels; especially Gabriel. He holds that God can defeat an enemy even without fighting. So, according to him angels' help, shown to men is not different from verbal help. Ibn Kathīr concludes that the descending of these angels on Prophets is to show the greatest honour and the highest esteem of Prophets among their contemporaries. It is a lesson to all men to give the Prophet respect that he deserves. This high esteem is due to Prophets only. (14)

The angels that come in the grave and put different questions to man are called Munkir and Nakīr. Ibn Kathīr mentions their names but does not give any detail about them.

The management of Hell and Heaven is run by angels. They will bring people in when they are classed after judgement, in accordance with their degree of good deeds and bad deeds. The disbelievers will be driven in crowds in the worst condition and the believers will be led in companies. The position will be maintained in both Garden and Hell in accordance with the rank. The keepers of Hell will question the residents about the Prophets and their warnings and about the meeting of the Day. Ashamed disbelievers

(14) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.2. pp.108-109; vol.3. p.296..

will confess the Prophets' warnings and so confirm their punishments. The angels of Paradise feel happiness to see righteous men and they will congratulate them and welcome them in the Paradise. They will also pay compliments to every believer. The number of angels of Paradise is not given anywhere in the Qur'ān. Ibn Kathīr describes a limitless number and does not give any specific number.

As regards the angels of Hell their number is nineteen in the Qur'ān. "Above it are nineteen" (74:30) Ibn Kathīr counts nineteen including the head angel of Hell (Mālik). These angels are described as rough, violent, strong, and severe. Ibn Kathīr interprets that this number is an allegory because the number of angels of Hell and Paradise is countless. He narrates that Walīd was impressed by the beauty of the Qur'ān. When 'Abū Jahl knew this he came to him with his followers and said that it was magic. The verse (74:30) was revealed as a retort to him. This number, nineteen, has some pinching remark for 'Abū Jahl. He also interprets that some Jews asked the Prophet about this number whereupon the Prophet said it was nineteen. This is exactly the number in their book. It was an examination. The disbelievers knew the veracity of the Prophet but did not ~~profess~~ Islam. The believers become more firm in belief, as they knew the veracity of answer. Ibn Kathīr refutes philosophers and some commentators who interpret it as ten intellects and nine souls which they cannot describe by arguments. Moreover Ibn Kathīr also

explains that God's works are mysterious and full of wisdom and He knows the correct number. (15)

Al-Baidāwī supposes from the verse nineteen angels, or nineteen ranks, or nineteen classes may be meant. He also holds that there are nineteen faculties in man. Their appropriate use helps man's spiritual advancement and their misuse leads to perdition. These faculties can be taken in place of angels because both of them are source of our development. Al-Baidāwī's view co-here with Ibn Sīnā who states these faculties in his book-al-Najāt as the main source of inner development. (16)

Ḥaqqānī and Yūsuf 'Alī hold that nineteen is a mystic number, they say the number nineteen means seven heavens, seven gates of Hell and five senses. They mentioned other speculations as well. Hughes gives nineteen names of these angels. (17)

A Majid (Indian) in his commentary speculates that the number corresponds to the major nineteen articles of faith which he counts as follows:- the existence of God, the perishability of the universe, the existence of angels, Scriptures, Prophets, Predestination, the Day of Judgement, Paradise, Hell, Prayers, Fasting, Zakāt, Hajj, (five well known prohibitions) Blasphemous

(15) Ibid: vol.6. p.122; vol.7. pp.157ff..... cf. al-Ṭabarī, Tafsīr, vol.29 p.100f.

(16) al-Baidāwī, Tafsīr vol.2. p.269 cf. Wali-al-Rahmān "Psychology of Ibn Sīnā Islamic Culture, Hyderabad Deccan, April 1935 pp.335f.

(17) See A.H. Ḥaqqānī, Tafsīr, Lahore 1957 vol.7. pp.265ff.; A Yūsuf 'Alī, Commentary, Washington D.C.1946 p.1644; Hughes, op.cit., p.15.

speech, theft, murder, calumny, slander, false accusation, and general wickedness. (18)

From all these interpretations it appears that no interpreter is sure of his explanation. Every one has remarked in the beginning and at the end of the verse that only God knows this mystery. According to the content it is clear that God's army is countless and He alone knows its exact number. In the Qur'ān occurs "None know the hosts of thy Lord save Him. This is naught else than a reminder to mankind". (74:31) But, despite differences, all commentators affirm the existence of guardian angels in Hell. In Arabic these are called Zabāniya.

The concept of guardian angels is also found in other revealed religions. There is a reference to angels of Hell in Revelations. "They have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit; his name in Hebrew is Abad'don, and in Greek he is called Apol'lyon". (Ix:11) In Revelations XIV:18, there is an angel who has power over Hell and Revelations XVI:8, angel: has power given to him to scor<sup>h</sup> men with fire! In the Old Testament Dan<sup>el</sup> VII:9-10 also refers to this. \*

According to Muslim Theology angels are supposed to be

(18) A Mājid, Commentary, Karachi 1957 vol.2. p.917.

\* But from their being guardians of Hell it must not be supposed that they also belong to it. The guardian of a prison cannot be one of those who abide therein, so the case is with the angels.

super-terrestrial, incorporeal, real and objective beings, not personified qualities and abstractions. They are faithful servants of God and His trusted messengers and as pure spirits they are absolutely sinless and incorruptible. They are, as unmistakably distinct from God as they are from man. Islam knows no such things as fallen angels, or degraded Gods.

The verse "Solomon disbelieved not; but the devils disbelieved teaching mankind magic and that which was revealed to the two angels in Bābel, Harūt and Marūt" (21:102), refers to Harūt and Marūt and their works. Ibn Kathīr interprets the verse in various ways. Firstly he says that these were two angels endued with the knowledge of good and evil. They forbade men from evil and bade for good. If some one did not listen to them his light of faith vanished and Satan became his companion. Due to the darkness in his heart the wrath of God fell upon him. This interpretation is supported by al-Tabarī who adds that these angels were sent down to test mankind. They (angels) were allowed to teach magic which they continue to do. (19)

But according to the Muslim <sup>e</sup>theology, angels are innocent so, teaching of magic will bring discredit to their character. Ibn Kathīr, to remove this objection, explains that human beings on earth started committing sin. Then the angels re-stated their

(19) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.1. p.250.

their objection, "they will make mischief and shed blood", which proved to be correct. God asked the whole community of angels to select two angels from among themselves to be sent on earth. They selected Harūt and Marūt for this purpose. God created man's desires in them and sent them down with the advice not to do debauchery, drink wine, and shed blood. They could not resist these temptations. So on this basis they were ordered to choose punishment in this world or in the world to come. They preferred punishment in this world, and they were given knowledge of magic as well, which they teach. (20) \*\*\*

This is very similar to Sale's explanation of the verse who says: "the Persian Magi mention two rebellious angels of the same name, now hung up by their feet with their heads downwards, in the territory of Babel" and he also adds "the Jews have something like this, of the angel Shambozai, who, having debauched himself with women, repented, and by way of penance hung himself up between heaven and earth". (21) The similar view is found in the following words:- "And the angels that did not keep their own position but left their proper dwellings have been kept by Him in eternal chains in the ne<sup>g</sup>ther gloom until the judgement of the Great Day." (Judge:6) But Bonsirven explains the Judaic conception

(20) Ibid: vol.1. p.245; This interpretation goes against the fundamental Muslim conception of infallibility of angels. Al-Nasfi in "Aqūid" (Cairo 1321) on p.133. He says that the study of Harūt and Marūt proves that angels (04:34) possess sex, although they do not (cannot) propagate their kind. But they are not to be described with either *masculinity and femininity*.

(21) The Qur'an p.20.

of angels differently to Sale. He says that evil angels came down to earth and had relations with females. Jinn emerged through their union. They harmed men and beast. Evil angels taught disastrous knowledge to men which created gross evil and strife among them. They had both human and angelic qualities. They fulfilled their humanly desires and knew the future. They inflicted disease and other harms on human beings and corrupted their souls by whispering into them. Their teaching of evil knowledge caused much harm to man. (22)

In another interpretation Ibn Kathīr says that Harūt and Marūt are names of two tribes of Jinn or they are substitutes of Satans. Although they are two in number, sometimes a dual number is considered to be equal to a plural. So that it may include Harūt and Marūt and believers in them. They have been mentioned separately so that this may give their knowledge and the knowledge of their teachings. Nevertheless he says that the predecessors assumed them to be angels, but of the category of Iblīs. Therefore if some one objects by saying that since angels are infallible, then how can they teach magic which is a sin, the answer is clear, that these are from the progeny of Iblīs. This interpretation gives the idea that Iblīs belongs to the class of angels which is not acceptable by most Theologians. Moreover it is not confirmed (22) Bonsirven: op.cit., p.39.....

by the commentators like al-Rāzī and al-Baidāwī (23)

Ibn Kathīr on the authority of Ibn Bazī refers the word 'malakain' (two kings) to David and Solomon. Then he attributes creation of magic to men of that age. He says there is no revelation of magic but it means the creation of knowledge. Human knowledge is created. It has both aspects good and evil depending on its use. He holds that God has created all sorts of objects, their use makes them good or bad. The same is true of knowledge. He affirms his explanation by Ibn 'Abbās's interpretation ~~who says~~ that the Jews followed knowledge which Satan used to teach during the days of Solomon. ~~Neither~~ did God send down magic to angels, nor did Solomon blaspheme. The blasphemy is Satan's who taught magic to the people in Babylon, and their chiefs were two men, named Hārūt and Mārūt. (24)

Al-Baidāwī and al-Rāzī, <sup>both</sup> seem very similar to Ibn Kathīr's last interpretation. They say that Hārūt and Mārūt were good men, men of knowledge, science and wisdom and Babylon was an ancient seat of science, magic and astrology. In their opinion to consider them as angels is fable. They explain that the word 'malak' signifies a beautiful man. It has been used for Joseph (25) ~~in the Qur'an~~.

(23) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.1. pp.239-243.

(24) Ibid: pp.234 and 243.

(25) al-Rāzī: Tafsīr, vol.1 p. 427ff. Al-Baidāwī Tafsīr, vol.1.p.76. In modern language it (Malaka) is applied to beautiful man and woman.

Perhaps when the ancient dynasties were in their full glory, Hārūt and Mārūt were men of knowledge ~~and hated evil~~. They were supposed to be heroes in this field and were worshipped like God. Indeed knowledge of anything is a good thing. The evil men who learnt from them used this knowledge as a means of separating a man and his wife. The emphasis on magic is against learning it for evil purposes.

Margoliouth favours the view of Hārūt and Mārūt being men. He writes that Bal'am had two sons named Lannes and Lambres. They were very high sorcerers before Moses, Mārūt is identified with Lambres and Hārūt with Lannes. The identification is not far-fetched to any reader who compares Tālūt with Saūl and Jālūt with Goliath and Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj with Gog and Magog. (26)

Lane's Arabic Lexicon treats the two words; Hārūt and Mārūt; under the root of Hart and Mart, and explains Harata "as meaning 'he rent a thing' and 'Marata', as meaning he broke a thing." According to this it seems that the story of angel, is mere fabrication.

Concerning the explanation of the word sahara (magic), Ibn Kathīr remarks that it includes the following meanings<sup>8</sup>; - to worship stars, to seek help from spirits, to accept power of whim, to seek help from jinn, to fascinate, to bewitch by eloquence, to

(26) Article 'Hārūt and Mārūt' The Muslim World vol.18 p.75.

charm, to befool, to backbite and so on. His explanation is like al-Rāzī's. The word also means turning a thing from a proper manner of being to another manner. (L.L.) Enchanting or fascinating. (Asās-al-Zamakhsharī). Satan in these verses signifies a human being.

From the deep study of Hārūt, Mārūt and Magic, if we follow al-Rāzī and al-Baidāwī then no blame is left on angels. From the attitude of early commentators and Ibn Kathīr's interpretation it appears that they were not highly placed angels. They can be looked upon as low grade angels. (mala'ika sifliyya). Some commentators accept this category of angels. They class them with Iblīs. According to them this type of angel has both capacities of doing good and evil.

But there is a difference between <sup>an</sup> angel and Iblīs with regard to their creation. Iblīs is created of fire whereas angels <sup>are created</sup> of light. The close relation of light and fire is described by Macdonald thus: "light is of the nature of fire and fire of light, They pass into each other. Fire can be purified into light and light obscured to fire." (27) So Iblīs must have been <sup>an</sup> angel; if not, the order to prostrate to Adam did not apply to him. Similarly the category of these angels can be linked with Iblīs.

According to Ibn Kathīr man is <sup>the</sup> apex of creation and he is (27) Macdonald "Angel" Encyclopaedia of Islam. 1936 vol.3.p.190.

more excellent than angels. He argues that man was created as viceregent on earth. He was given knowledge of characteristics and actions of all objects. He mentions Ādam and says that Arch-angels and other superior angels bowed down to him. Ibn Kathīr remarks that only Prophets can be preferred over all the angels, and not all human beings. Al-Tabarī also holds that Arch-angels are superior to all men except Prophets. (28)

Man has reasons to claim preference over angels. Although angels are holy and pure and given power by God, yet they show only one side of creation i.e. praise or obedience to God. They are devoid of sentiments and emotions, love and affection, and free will. In contrast man has both love and sentiments, the correct use of these may lead him to the highest position and their wrong use may drag him to the lowest state. He is endued with will, a power of choosing between right and wrong, whereas angels have no will at all. Man can employ his will in the use of sentiments and through its correct use he can make his fortune and curb his lust and appetite. So, if he is not carried away by temptation he is better than angels otherwise he is the lowest

(28) Ibn Kathir, Tafsir, vol.1. pp.128f. cf. al-Tabarī Tafsīr, vol.1. p.164. There is wide disagreement among the Muslim commentators that whether (a) Prophets are superior to the angels, (b) the messengers of angels are superior to the generality of mankind, (c) the generality of mankind are superior to the generality of angels. Many Sunnites, like Ibn Kathīr, maintain that man messengers are more excellent than angels. They refer to the verse "Lo! God, preferred Adam and Noah and the family of 'Imran above (all His) creatures.(3:33) But with regard to the superiority of the generality of mankind to angels and vice versa, Ibn Kathir leaves the problem undiscussed. The Mu'tezilites say that the angels are superior to the Prophets. They base their opinion on the impeccability of the angels. In this way they leave no room for further discussion on this subject. (See Sall op.cit., p.241 cf Sweetman op. cit., v.1. p.2. p.76. \* The Faith of Islam London 1885.

creature of the earth. God says: "Hast thou seen him who has taken his caprice to be his God?...They are but as cattle: nay, they are further astray from the way. (25:43-44)

Al-Baidāwī comments on the subject thus: "Man rules his appetite, lust and avoids sins, he has more possibilities of being high<sup>r</sup> than angels. (29)

Similarly jinn are good and bad. The revelation is addressed to both men and jinn. So, if man can attain high rank through prayers and by exercise of his will, then Jinn can also attain high status through the exercise of their will and good deeds. Among them are believers and unbelievers. They are liable to punishment for their evil deeds and to reward for good deeds. Ibn Kathīr refers to the purpose of their creation i.e. to worship God, and their being believers. He describes the verses; "I have not created jinn and mankind except to serve Me," (51:56) and "We (jinn) have indeed heard a Qur'ān wonderful, guiding to rectitude We believe<sup>e</sup> in it, and we will not associate with our Lord anyone." (72:1-2). So Jinn can sit with angels by virtue of their good deeds.

Al-Rāzī does not attest that they are believers in Prophets like men, or that the revelation is addressed to them. He holds that in relation to listening to the Qur'ān or accepting the

(29) Tafsīr, vol.1. p.48f..

faith by Jinn the reference is to Jews. In sura Jinn, he remarks that the listeners to the Qur'ān were Jews. He narrates that in that sitting they had their drums with them and after listening to the Qur'ān they surrounded the Prophet. (30) So it seems that he seems to believe in the existence of Jinn as spirits of evil,\* and angels as spirits of good. The word Jinn is supposed to be derived from the verb Jnn which means concealing and veiling or a hidden or far off thing. Perhaps the party of Jinn addressed here meant non Arabs coming from a far off place.

Sir Sayyed holds that there is no existence of angels and jinns or Satan in the universe. These are the names of different elements or senses of men. By angels, he means the senses of touch, taste, smell, sight, hearing and some inner senses. By Satan, he means the faculty of whim and the human soul which is ever prone to evil. (31) His views regarding angels and jinns conflict with the orthodox view.

According to Ibn Kathīr the purpose of believing in angels is to strengthen the idea of the supremacy of God. The Qur'ānic intimation of their working as instrument or link between God and man provides a clear idea of God's power and their submission to His will without any hesitation. This gives the conception that they are created beings and therefore cannot take the place of God.

(30) Al-Rāzī Tafsīr, vol.8. p.221ff.

(31) Ismā'īl, M. 'Maqālāt Sir Sayyed' vol.13. ppl77 to 185. Lahore 63.

\* Who whisper into the heart of the faithful.

They cannot give any benefit or do intercession to man by their will (32). It repudiates the notion of the importance of matter held by some people; because belief in angels shows (or proves) that living beings, animate objects, and matter are influenced by spiritual forces outside their bodies which arrange and organise the world in accordance with the will of God.

Thus every occurrence in the universe comes from God's will that works through His created agencies that are manifest in the various manifestations of nature. Nature has no intelligence but its work shows regularity and mathematical exactitude in every way, therefore we are compelled to say that nature has a mind. This concludes that angels (agencies) act as minds in these unintelligent objects enabling them to present their properties when needed. (33)

It becomes necessary to believe in angels. When we look into the physical world we find the need for the co-operation of external agencies with our outer faculties; eyes see with the help

(32) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr vol.1. pp.132ff. and 232 and several other places.

(33) It is difficult to know the working of these agencies (angels, Satan, and soul) by sight or through knowledge, because it is beyond experimental science. Without belief, its solution will remain the battle field of wisdom, like the complexities of the evolution of matter and the mystery of life and death.

of outer light and ears hear with the help of air, so our inner faculties cannot lead us to any thing good or bad unless they get co-operation of powers existing independently from our inner faculties. These independent powers are linked with man. The power which leads to virtue is called angel and <sup>that</sup> to evil is called devil.

According to Ibn Kathīr by nature evil belongs to such an order of creation which under the law of contrast should go against everything else. If angels show their willingness to obey God and to help man, Satan must refuse to do so. This was the reason why he refused to bow down to man. He arrogantly despised Adam and angels, the angels who bowed down to man. Man's spiritual health depends on the exercise of doing good therefore the existence of an evil force was necessary to remove all sluggishness from him, and make him active. Satan practices evil which keeps man's spirit of good ever vigilant and active. Satan's position is similar to toxins of physical plane. Like toxins Satan introduces himself within man from outside. He acts as an enemy to weaken man's sense of morality and tries to destroy it. He attacks from all sides and takes every advantage of man's every weak point. Sometimes man's good and generous sympathies are used to lure him into the pit of evil. But if man makes his moral nature strong enough, by following the laws of God, he can become immune from all sins.

Creatures are of two kinds; animate and inanimate. Animate creatures are either rational or irrational.. The actions of a rational creature occurs through its intention or will. The will rules over all members of body. It does not ignore principles laid down for the function of things. Similarly inanimate and irrational creatures such as the moon, the sun, and stars also work under the guidance of an agent.

Our souls make changes according to the characteristics of things and their natures. Similarly angels work according to the nature of things. Our souls are intermediaries between our actions and God's commands. Similarly these etheral beings are links between the actions of creatures and God's commands. Accepting the soul as a link between God and man causes no objection or weakness to the authority of God, similarly accepting angels as agents brings no defect or impairment to God's power.

CHAPTER FIVE

BELIEF IN PROPHETS

It is incumbent on every Muslim to profess that God sent Prophets to guide mankind. Some of them are mentioned in the Qur'ān while some others are not. Ādam is the first of the prophets and Muhammad is the last, the most excellent of all.

In this chapter we will discuss in outline (I) Prophets and Apostles ('Anbiā' and Rusul) (II) Superiority of Prophets (III) Divine Revelation and its contents (IV) Miracles and their significance (V) Infallibility of Prophets (VI) Believers and Disbelievers in Prophets.

'Anbiā' and Rusul

The Arabic words: Nabī, Rasūl, and Mursal having plural Anbiyā' Rusul and Mursalūm respectively are used to express the prophetic office. These words are differently interpreted by scholars. Nabī is one who is directly inspired by God and commanded to deliver His message to Man. He does not abrogate the teachings of a preceding Rasūl or messenger. A Rasūl or Mursal also delivers God's command to man but he is entrusted with a special mission. Sometimes he may repeal a previous law and introduce a new one in its place, to meet the needs of <sup>the</sup> time. Thus every Rasūl is a Nabī whereas every Nabī is not a Rasūl. The Persian word 'Paghamber' invariably translates these three titles.

The words Rasūl, and Nabī provide the idea that a prophet is a man who receives revelation from God only when he is assigned to preach His message publicly and if necessary to repeal some of the previous laws and rites which are considered unnecessary for the community. So he is called Apostle. For instance; Ibn Kathīr defines 'Rasūl' as one who is given a scripture to enforce rules and laws therein and to repeal earlier unnecessary laws, but 'Nabī' is not necessarily commissioned with a Book, but follows a previous 'Rasūl' (Apostle). (1) His contemporary al-Taftāzānī says "Allah sends an apostle to the people to proclaim His judgement; he is given a Book in contrast to a prophet for 'prophet' is a more general term". (2) Al-Jazā'irī's definition is similar to Ibn Kathīr, but with a slight difference. He defines 'rasūl' (apostle) as a person who receives a law, even if he is not commanded to promulgate it. But at the same time he is also a prophet (Nabī). For 'nabī' revelation is not necessary. Therefore every apostle is a prophet but not every prophet is an apostle. (3) al-Baidāwī defines apostle as a person who receives a revealed Book with miracles confirming his office, where-as 'nabī' who is not 'rasūl' receives no book.

والنبي غير الرسول من الكتاب له  
وتبيل الرسول من ياتيه الملك بالوحي والني يقال له ومن يوحى اليه في المنام

Tafsir

- (1) Ibn Kathīr, |vol.1. p.261 vol.2.p.72; vol.5. p.469. Tafsir, vol.1. p.261; vol.5. p.469. His interpretation of verses 33:40; 2:106; 3:93 gives elaborate distinction between prophet and apostle.
- (2) Al-Taftāzānī (1:783) Sharah'Aqā'id-al-Nasafī Istanbūl A.H.1335 p.35.
- (3) Al-Jaza'iri (Tahir bin Šaleḥ:)al Jawāhir-ul-Kalāmiyya fi 'Idāh-al-Aqāid-al-Islāmiyya. Cairo 1919 p.29.

He also says that God sent the Apostle with a new law 'Shari'ah Mujjaddadeh and the Prophet comes to spread his teaching and ratify previous laws or revelations (li-taqrīr). الرسول من لعنه الله بالشرية محمّدة  
(4) ( يدعون الناس اليها والنبى لجهه ومن لعنه لتقرير شرع سابق كانوا بنى اسرائيل بين موسى وعيسى )

Ibn Kathīr interpreting the verse "and Messengers We have already told thee of before, and Messengers We have not told thee of; " (4:164) reports from Abū Dhar that the total number of Prophets is 124000 and out of them 313 are Apostles (Rusūl). Hughes and Macdonald and a host of Muslim commentators also refer to this number. However, there is a lot of discrepancy about the number of the Prophets. (5)

The names of twenty eight prophets occur in the Qur'ān. Some of them are called 'Ulu-l-'Azam (possessors of purpose), namely Adam, Noah, Abrāhām, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad. They are distinguished with special titles: Adam, chosen of God; Noah, the preacher of God; Abrāhām, the friend of God; Moses the converser with God; Jesus, the spirit of God and Muhammad, the Messenger of God. The reason for their being dignified with special titles

(4) Al-Baidāwī, Tafsīr, vol.1. p.636.

(5) Ibn Kathir, Tafsir vol.2. p.450ff. He also refers to two other ahadīth; one transmitted by Zaid and his teacher Raqqāshī giving the number of Prophets as 8000 and the other by Ahmad ibn Tariq giving the number 8002. According to Ibn Kathīr the hadith transmitted by Zaid and his teacher is weak, but that of Ahmad ibn Tariq is sound. This interpretation has no support from other commentators. Sell and Lane refer to 200,000 and 9000 respectively. They quote no authority concerning their statement. See Sell, Faith of Islam, London 1907 pp. 239f. and E.W. Lane, Selection from the Qur'an London 1879 p.47.

are: firstly, because they are heads of their respective dispensations, secondly, God will permit them to intercede for their followers on the Day of Judgement when the general intercession will begin. (6)

Thus the maximum number of prophets of 124,000 excluding the 313 Apostles, seems justified and necessary in order to implement the teachings of the apostles and to preach their message. It also indicates that the prophets intimated to the people successive revelations of the Apostles which contained laws to cope with the development of the society. The second argument which confirms the interpretation of Ibn Kathīr regarding the superiority of Apostles is that men are asked to listen, to believe and to obey them. The word derived from أَطَاعَ and أَطَاعُوا (to obey and to disobey) like طَاعَ يَطُوع, and طَاعَ يَطِيعُ..and.. عَمَّا يَجُوع is specially used for the Rasūl and God. This distinctive use of the word suggests that there is a difference between the Apostle and Prophet. (7)

Some verses lead to an observation which shows that the distinction between the concept of Apostle and Prophet is inconsistent with the Qur'ānic verses. For instance; God says: "And for every nation there is a Messenger" (10:47). Here 'rasūl' (رسول) is said to have been sent to every nation, which implies

(6) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsir, vol.3. p.49. cf. Hughes op.cit., p.475.

(7) The words obey, obedience, disobey, disobedience occur in the Qur'an about 28 times in connection with the Rasūl and not with the nabī except once obey is used 18 times and disobey 9 times. But once disobey is used with nabī (60:12) This shows the preference of Rasūl over nabī. Hence it may also mean that apostles had a wide circle, and for one apostle there were many prophets to implement that what he receives from God. Their obedience and disobedience involves reward and punishment. But no such reward and punishment is given in case of nabī.

that there is no distinction between an Apostle and Prophet. The context of the verses in which the word 'rasūl' is used, illustrates no different meaning than 'nabī' e.g. 16:36, 17:15-16; 23:44-46; 30:47. The other words which apparently describe the Apostolic function also express a similar significance." God says "And We destroyed no township but it had its warner." (26:208) "Thou art but a warner" (35:22). Similar to this word 'Hād' God says: "Thou art a warner only, and for every folk a guide." (13:7-8) The words shahid (شاهد) and Shahīd (شهِيد) witness are also used to express the prophetic office. God says: "But how when We bring of every people a witness, and We bring thee a witness against these." (4:41) The word 'nabī' (prophet) also expresses the same significance. God says: "And We sent no prophet unto any township but We did afflict its folk with tribulation and adversity that happlly they might grow humble" (7:94). Bashīr and Nadhīr are very closely connected with the the office of prophethood. They are frequently used in the Qur'ān. They show no distinction in the office of Apostle and Prophet. (8)

- (8) It may be noted that 'nadhīr' Mundhir and the verb Nadhar are mentioned one hundred and twenty six times; seventy three times in relation with Muhammad and seven times as God's warning, in the story of Noah six times, of Lut's story four times, for Hud twice, for Saleh once, in dealing with the Jinn once, twenty six times in general and six times unrelated to the concept of God's warning. Bashīr, Mubasshar and bashara occur forty eight times; thirty two cases refer to the Muhammad, six times with God and four times in reference to Qur'ān, twice unrelated to the meaning and four times in general. Similarly the number of words 'nabī' and rasul may be counted as thus: 'Nabī' meaning 'prophet' occurs in

Due to the similar use of different words it seems that the distinction created by some scholars does not correspond to the context of the Qur'ān. Secondly, Abrahām does not seem to have<sup>been</sup> called an Apostle in the Qur'ān whereas he is believed to be one of the greatest Apostles. Thirdly, before the Prophet Muhammad most of the Prophets were sent to different specific

(footnote no 8 continued)

singular and two plural forms, nabīyyūn and anbiyā seventy five times. Nabīyyūn sixteen times, of which three times in Mecca and 'anbiya' five times in Medīna only. In four cases in connection with killing of prophets. i.e. 2:91; 3:112 and 181; 4:155 and in verse 5:20. Moses reminds children of Israel of bounties of God as sending of Prophets from their tribe. In verses 2:61 and 3:21 killing of prophets is mentioned in 3:183, killing of apostle is described. The Jews declared Prophets and Apostles as liar in 2:87 and 5:70. According to Lane's Lexicon, naba'a in several cases is not related to the concept of prophethood, it gives meaning of news, rumour, story, history and the Last Day in 29 times and so on. But in other cases it expresses the meaning connected to prophethood. Naba'a not related to prophethood (for News 2:31 to 33; 66:3; 10:53; for knowledge (unseen) 41:50; 39:7; 35:14-15; 6:60; 16:40; 62:8; 9:94-95; 105-106 and so on. For Judgement Day nineteen times, Mecca: 26:22; 15:49-51; 18:103; 34:4; and in Medina 3:15; 22:72; 66:3; 5:60-65 and for I'lm Ghāib (knowledge of hidden things) 10 times. Rasūl occurs 236 times in singular in forty nine chapters and ninety five times plural in 36 chapters. Total occurrences are 331, perhaps more. Rasūl singular in Mecca 62 times in Medina 174, plural in Mecca 58 times and in Medina 37. Total 331. Mursal is used for messenger of Queen 15:57 and 51:31; angelic messenger to Abraham and Lut 15:61; 77:1; respectively. It occurs 36 times of which twice is singular. Rasul as human messenger sent by God is described twenty one times for Muhammad, for Noah six times, for Yunus once, for Moses eight, for Saleh and Hud twice and for meaning angel of death 19:19 for messenger to Lut 6:61; 7:35-37; messengers to Abraham 11:77-79 81, 83, 29:30-31; for king's messenger 12:50 and for Rūh the Arch-angel sent to Mary. Messenger of revelation 35:1; Messenger 11:69-72, 29:30-31.

communities. Every community had different rites and customs from the other, so many Prophets were sent to different communities in succession. They preached the same fundamental principles but applied the different laws related to the rites, customs and community affairs, as were needed in the community during the age of an Apostle. So it seems that every Prophet was given a Book, whether small or big, and there seems to be no distinction made with regard to the words concerned. God says: "say you: we believe in God and in that which has been sent down on us and sent down on Abrahāh, Ismāel, 'Isaac and Jacob and the Tribes and that which was given to Moses and Jesus and the Prophets, of their Lord;" (2:136). On this point Jeffery says "apparently Muhammad made no special distinction between the two names 'Nabī' and 'Rasūl'. The later theologians made a definite distinction between them, taking 'Nabī' to be <sup>a</sup>word of wider significance than 'Rasūl', the Qur'ān does not support such a distinction. If anything the Qur'ān<sup>ic</sup> evidence would seem to point the other way and suggest that the word 'Nabī' was the narrower term, the Prophet being a special class among the Messengers" (9). He also says that the Prophet Muhammad, never distinguished himself from 'Nabī', he used both titles during his mission. 'Muhammad as he took up his mission claimed both 'Nabī' and Rasūl'" (10) Hence it is

(9) Jeffery, The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ān Broda (India) 1938 p.27...

(10) Ibid: G.A. Perwez in 'Islam a Challenge to Religion' Lahore 1968 on p32ff says: "The word nabi is derived from nabwatun which means an elevated place, it therefore means a person standing on a pedestal; in other words, one who lived in this material world but can also perceive the unseen world beyond, because he is endowed with divine revelation. The function or office of nabī is called nabuwat, i.e. the function of securing Divine Guidance through revelation." He deems rasul identical in meaning to nabi therefore he says: "Nabī and rasūl are two facets of a single entity, or two faces of the same coin. A nabī is also a rasul and vice versa." Nabi is common in Arabic and Hebrew. It is derived from ( نابى ) to be exalted. (L.L.)

supposed that the distinction was made to show the superiority of some Prophets. The theologians introduced this distinction to support the idea of grades among the ~~superiority of~~ Prophets.

### SUPERIORITY OF PROPHETS

According to the Qur'ān it seems that Prophethood is a God given gift, which means that it cannot be achieved by dint of hard work and labour. God says: "God knows every well where to place His Message" (6:123). Ibn Kathīr holds that God knows better the capabilities of men worthy of this status, and He selects the best among men of that age for this position. He repudiates the claim of those people who considered the chiefs of Tāif worthy of prophethood, on the basis of their being wealthy in the days of prophet Muhammad, because for this position honesty of purpose, superiority of morals, manners and virtues are the first and foremost necessities. (11)

Imām Ghazālī in "Ma'ārij-al-Quds" says that the gift of prophethood is superior to that of humanity, just as a human being is superior to an animal. It is a gift specially endowed to the chosen one. It is unobtainable through efforts and investigation. He further says that it is true that men practising austerity (Riyādat رياضة), contemplation and devotion to God, without any

(11) Ibid: vol.3. p.95.

consideration of fame, can acquire the capacity of inspiration, but not to the level of the Prophets. He argues that the prophetic office is not an opportunity or an acquired quality but it is a God given gift, just as to be a man or an angel is not their own choice. It is God's pleasure to make a kind of creature as He wills and to shape him as He likes. Nevertheless hard work and devotion is necessary for prophets as well, in order to be fully equipped to receive the revelation and to prepare themselves for discharging the duties to be entrusted upon them. (12)

Ibn Kathīr's interpretation is also supported by the following verses which show that prophethood is by God's will alone and even that there is no fixation of time and age for its announcement. God says: "That is the bounty of God; He gives it to whom He will, and God is of bounty abounding" (62:4), "Even so We have revealed to thee a spirit of Our bidding. Thou knowest not what the Book was, nor belief; but We made it light, whereby We guide (whom We will) of Our servants" (42:52) "O! John, take the Book forcefully" (19:12), "How shall we speak to one who is still in the cradle, a little child? He said, 'Lo, I am God's servant; God has given me the Book, and made me a Prophet" (19:31-32), and "My Lord give me one of the righteous. Then We gave him the good tidings of a prudent boy". (37:98-99).

(12) Al-Ghazālī, Ma'ārij-al-Quds, Cairo 1927 pp161ff. 15, 45, 3.

But all Prophets are human, they possess all the desires of men but they are superior to men with regard to wisdom and intellect and especially due to their apptitude for receiving revelation. God says of the Prophet Muhammad: "I am only a Mortal the like of you; it is revealed to me that your God is One God," (18:101) "they also say, what ails this Messenger that he eats food and goes in the markets?" (25:8) and so in other verses containing the word bashar. The verses illustrate two aspects of prophets; <sup>On</sup> the one hand, they eat, drink, walk, awake, sleep and marry like men. They are also human and die like men. But on the other hand, they are superior to men because of their innocence, chastity and prophetic office.

Concerning the superiority of Prophets over men, Imām Ghazālī says that man has three kinds of freedoms; freedom of thought, freedom of speech and freedom of action. The three can be good if they are for the sake of God, and can be bad if they are for mere selfish purposes. So, thought or suggestion can be right or wrong, speech can be true or false, and action can be good or evil. To know the reality and to distinguish between these two opposite things is not within the reach of every human being. Only a few selected people can clearly know good or bad, and right or wrong, and impart their knowledge to others. These are Prophets (13). For example, the disbelievers in Noah were

(13) Imām Ghazālī, Ma'āriḥ-al-Quds pp. 146f.

fully engrossed in moral depravity and perversion. Their thinking, saying and actions were below the standard of humanity, but they could not realise this. It was Noah who warned them of the fact. But they did not pay heed to his warning. When he was busy building the ark they ridiculed him and his mission and they could not understand the reason for constructing the ark through argument. So Prophets are better than human beings in these three respects. The preceding example also demonstrates that the standard of knowledge acquired by the sense of perception is much inferior to true knowledge, which the prophets of God, through Divine revelation, have delivered to the world. Therefore one who believes in Divine revelation and acts accordingly shall never be misled.

Human being, in their actions need co-operation. If this mutual co-operation vanishes from society no man could live, nor security of life and property could remain. The principle relating to the safety of property and self is called, in the terminology of Islam, Shari'a. God says: "Help one another to piety and Godfearing; do not help each other to sin and enmity." (5:2). According to Ibn Kathir Shari'a is based on mutual co-operation (تعاون) and mutual hinderance (تأني) which means we should help each other in doing good things, and forbid each other from doing bad things. Through these two attitudes the reformation of society and safety of honour and property are achieved. He also

says that a guide to a bad thing will share the sins of those who commit them due to him. He intimates that, with regard to the uprightness of conduct, prophets are very high. They teach this principle to mankind. (14)

Ibn Kathīr further remarks that Ādam accepted the righteousness of conduct i.e. trust ('Amāna), when offered by God. The trust consists <sup>of</sup> obedience to God, knowledge of good and evil, honesty, keeping promises, truthfulness, good behaviour and lawful livelihood. So it means that man is endowed with moral responsibility. His acts, thought, and conduct are answerable, because, with the trust or moral responsibility a freedom of choice is given which functions as a moral agent. Therefore he who can choose freely must act freely and choose correctly or pay the penalty for his wrong choice. As the generality of men easily forget and are liable to every good and bad action, they are in need of a corrector who must be superior to them in understanding the nature of good and evil. According to Ibn Kathīr this can be only a Prophet. Obedience to him is necessary. (15)

Ibn Kathīr holds that all types of instructions are revealed to the Prophets, and they act as instruments between man and God. Their position as Messengers is just like angels, who work as

(14) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.2. pp.476f.

(15) Ibid: vol.5. pp.522ff.

instruments of creation and invention between God and creatures (Matters of arrangement or management احكام تدبيری), whereas prophets work to unify human beings and reclaim their moral and spiritual life (Matters of obligation احكام تطبیفی). They fill the earth with love and light, and teach distinction between good and evil. Apparently they seem to have no concern with man's external matters, but only with his internal affairs. However, with the reforms of hearts they are also entrusted with the external corrections of man. (16) God says: 'Our Lord! do Thou send among them a Messenger, one of them who shall recite to them Thy signs, and teach them the Book and the Wisdom, and purify them.' (2:129) To Ibn Kathīr "Book" means scripture which contains all laws relating to purity and social life. <sup>\*\*\*</sup> Hikma meant knowledge of religion, teaching of obedience, sincerity of purpose, to refrain from evil and to do good. (17)

According to the verse (2:129) the mission of the Prophets seems to be fourfold; they recite and give to their people the revelation exactly as they receive <sup>it</sup> from God; secondly, they not only transmit the Message, but also interpret, and enunciate the teaching, ~~to~~ which they are commanded to pronounce and expound.

(16) Ibid; vol.1. pp.231f.; vol.2. pp.608ff; vol.4.p.667f; vol.6. p.566; vol.7. p.340.

(\*\*\*) Lane in the Lexicon explains 'Hikmat is primarily what prevents or restrains from ignorant behaviour, but is usually used in the sense of wisdom. It also means knowledge in matters of religion, and acting agreeably therewith; and understanding. (175.) Ibid: vol.1. p.324.

In this respect they become true teachers (Divine Teachers); thirdly, besides illustrating the injunctions of Divine law, they also reveal to the intelligent members of the community the significance of Divine wisdom and knowledge. They encourage them in the depths of the soul and subtleties of the spirit, so that they may further the knowledge of God. On this ground they are known as teachers of wisdom; lastly, they express the knowledge of Scripture and Wisdom by their words, deeds, examples, precepts and practice, so as to raise the moral standard of the people, and purge them of vice and immorality, and make them pious and Godly. God says: "You have had a good example in God's Messenger" (33:21) In this capacity they can be called the Divine Reformers and Law givers. They are representatives of God with a dignified personality of their own.

Of the work of prophets to reclaim, to correct, to guide and to improve condition of people it may be said that this is similar to work of kings, philosophers and intellectuals done for the welfare of humanity. But there is a clear distinction between their motives and purpose which may be described thus: (a) difference of source of knowledge; prophets get direct knowledge from God, whereas philosophers depend on reason. On this point Mehdī related Ibn Khaldūn's views "But the prophet does not ascend to pure intellect through the art of reasoning employed by philosophers.

He simply possesses in an innate ability Fitra, an aptitude istidāq

that enables him to see beyond the veil of sense objects and attain the knowledge of the spiritual world directly". (18) This establishes the superiority of the prophets, and their teaching over all on the basis of the superiority of their knowledge. "We have taught him knowledge proceeding from us". (18:65) Moreover a philosopher's reasoning is liable to be sidetracked, whereas this is not possible in this case of a prophet. (b) Difference of aims and motives; prophets proclaim teaching to win the pleasure of God and the welfare of mankind in both worlds. They are unselfish in their purpose therefore they demand no reward and remuneration for their service. Compared to the prophet all other human beings; philosophers and kings, have selfish ends and give preference to their own pleasure and happiness. (c) Prophets teach obedience to God, but to philosophers obedience to God is of secondary importance. So there is a difference of method in the manner of imparting education. (d) Difference of sayings and deeds; there is hardly any difference between the sayings and deeds of a prophet; but in all other men there can be found differences in sayings and deeds.

In general it seems that prophets give first priority to reform of the heart, this reform also serves the purpose of

(18) Mahdī: Ibn ~~Khaldūn~~'s Philosophy of History, London, 1957 p.86.

reforming society. Al-Rāzī says that Prophets by their preaching bring satisfaction to the community, though while kings also reform, they give priority to the outer peace of the population. Prophets root out evil and immorality without caring for its causes and effects and inculcate goodness of whatever origin it may be, but philosophers and kings think much about causes and effects of evil and spend a lot of time in its explanation. Similarly Prophets give laws for protection of property and the soul for the sake of God and not for increasing the revenue. Prophets announce punishments, or punish people, not for the sake of praise or reward for any position, nor for getting a reward from a worldly power, but to accomplish the duty entrusted by God. The worldly judges do hear disputes and punish people, but for the hope of reward and high position from the ruler. (19)

Ibn Kathīr describing the superiority of the prophets, says they are directly guided by God, the real source of knowledge. The guidance leads them to the straight path which manifests righteousness, virtue and immunity from errors, or in other words they possess perfect moral and ethical values. They are declared chosen men, and through revelation they get the Book, the criterion of right and wrong. So they are authorised to invite the people to the knowledge of God, the unseen, the covenant, and

(19) ~~Muslim vol. 1. p. 407. vol. 1/199~~ Rāzī vol. 6. p. 407. vol. 1/199, The Muslim World vol. 7

good conduct. They follow the footsteps of previous prophets in order to purify the people from corruption, adulteration and idolatory. God commands men to obey them, in order to affirm their leadership, because of their being beneficial to humanity. All men spiritually belong to one community or family. Their love and obedience to God must start from the love and obedience of the prophet, because the prophet is the real source, who can join their link to God through his teaching. So his love is the real test of faith (20). God says: "Say: 'if you love God, follow me, and God will love you, and forgive your sins.'" (3:33-34)

According to Imām Ghazālī the attitude of the prophets is compared, at different times, with other human beings and their actions are observed at various circumstances. They are easily distinguishable from <sup>each</sup> other. They have more sympathy and love for a human being than his father, as they always think of the development of man. (21) On this ground they deserve more respect than any other human being on this earth.

Confessing belief in all Prophets equally Islam shows a cosmopolitan nature. Muslims believe in all Prophets but regard Muhammad as the last of all, and the seal of the Prophets. They pay due respect to all. Edward W. Lane narrates: "It is well worthy of notice that it is not said 'Muhammad is the only

(20) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr vol.2. pp29,333, and 345.

(21) Macdonald, The Doctrine of Revelation, The Muslim World vol 7 p.114f.

Apostle of God'. Islam is more tolerant in this respect than any other religions. Its prophet is not the sole commissioner of the Most High, nor is its teaching the only true teaching the world has ever received. Many other Messengers have been sent by God to guide mankind to the true path. These Prophets taught the same religion that was taught by Muhammad. Muslims pay reverence to all previous prophets, but the only claim of Muslims is that Muhammad was the last Prophet and the seal of the Prophets"(22). Muslims not only believe in the Prophets of Israel but also in the Books revealed to them, which makes their faith as broad as the World.

According to Ibn Kathīr this faith was promulgated and had its full command on believers when the Jews rejected Jesus and the Christians rejected Muhammad and a large number of Arabs rejected all the Prophets. The Magians believed in Zarathustra only. Allah says: "We make no distinction between any of them" (2:136). Moreover he says that to believe in one and reject another and make division among them is not based on any reason given by God but is due to adherence to the traditions of ancestors, pride and bigotry. Ibn Kathīr calls the cosmopolitan nature "the baptism of Allah", (صِبْغَةَ اللَّهِ) which he interprets as the obedience to God, the nature according to which God created man, so hold

(22) E.W. Lane, op.cit., p.LXXXI

fast to the nature i.e. the obedience of God. So 'Baptism' means complete surrender to the will of God. Because the colour of God cannot be but absolute submission to His will. The effect of dye appears in a man who accepts it like the dye of garment; or because it intermingles in the hearts like the dye in the garment. (L.L.) (23)

From the verse (2:136) quoted above we gain the impression that Prophets are equally characterized with prophetic qualities, but in contrast to that we find that there are degrees of ranks among the Prophets, for some of them have been ranked higher than the others. God says; "And those Messengers, some we have preferred above others; some of these are, <sup>those</sup> to whom God spoke, some He raised in ranks" (2:253). Ibn Kathīr, in defending the equality of belief in the Prophets explains that although the verse implies grades among the Prophets, this decision is for God alone. So men are not permitted to exercise their mental faculties in this respect. Their duty is only to express faith in them. To support his view, he reports a hadīth from an unknown authority 'that in a brawl between a Muslim and a Jew, the latter said "I swear by God Who ranked Moses above all Prophets". On these words the former slapped him : "Is Moses higher than Muhammad?" The Jew complained against him to the Prophet, whereupon the Prophet said "Do not grade me above the Prophets." (24)

(23) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.1. p.330.

(24) Ibid vol.1.pp.539f.

Both the preceeding verses probably agree with one another in the sense that the Prophets, basically were equally perfect in moral and ethical values and other gifts necessary for prophetic office. But their qualities appeared according to the will of Allah and the needs of the time. The quality necessary for the time and people, appeared in full force and different modes of procedure were adopted in its application in different ages. For instance, Moses led his followers for forty years fighting with unbelievers but expired before his enterprise ripened. Joshua successfully completed his mission. David became a warrior and Musician of his time. Jesus was given the power to reclaim people who deviated from the right path, (or spiritual path), his mission was preaching alone. Muhammad's mission was two fold; first preaching and then fighting against offenders for defence. So the ranks are according to the manifestations and application of qualities. This does not negate the essence of perfection among prophets.

On the ground of perfection, Ibn Kathīr tries to prove the finality and superiority of Muhammad. He says that after the teaching of a prophet was corrupted, another prophet was sent. With the passage of time, when his teachings were also corrupted, then another prophet followed. In this way the succession of prophets continued. He holds that by probing into the history of prophets, it becomes clear that one prophet followed another

prophet, only when the revealed Book, the guide to law and religion was lost, or corrupted in such a way that it no longer kept the purity of the Word. After the loss of the Book of Abrāhām, the abridgement of which is found in Exodus, the Book of Moses was revealed. To remove the differences of the people the Book of David was revealed. So this process continued, till the Injīl was revealed. When the differences took place in the Injīl the Qur'ān was sent, which is still uncorrupted. In spite of the differences between the followers of the Injīl and Muslims, Ibn Kathīr vehemently emphasises the idea of keeping firm faith in all the prophets and their original teaching, without any impairment. (25)

To prove the finality of Muhammad, Ibn Kathīr, reports a hadith from Musnad Ahmad ibn Hambal that the Prophet said, "My example among the prophets is like a beautiful and perfect house which some one constructs by leaving a vacant place for a brick where he puts nothing. People come and look with pleasure, but remark 'it would have been better if the empty place had been filled in'. So I am among the prophets ~~the prophets~~ the one who filled in the gap. (26) Muhammad Iqbal's statement affirms this interpretation; "This idea of finality is perhaps the most original

(25) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.1. pp.77f.

(26) Ibid: vol.5. p.470.

idea in the cultural history of mankind; its true significance can be understood only by those who carefully study the history of pre-Islamic Magian culture in Western and Central Asia. The concept of Magian culture, according to modern research, includes the culture associated with Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Jewish Christianity, Chaldian, and Sabeian religions. To these creed-communities the idea of continuity of prophethood was essential and consequently they lived in a state of constant expectation. The result of the Magian attitude was the disintegration of old communities and the constant formation of fresh ones, by all sorts of religious adventures. It is obvious that Islam which claims to weld all the various communities of the world into one single community cannot reconcile itself to a movement which threatens its present solidarity and holds forth the promise of further rifts in human society".\*\* (27)

To establish the superiority of Muhammad over other prophets Ibn Kathīr compares his teaching, his life, and his success in mission with them. He begins the comparison from Noah, with whom the <sup>comprehensive</sup> prophetic mission commenced. Noah said; "O my people! there is no error in me, but I am a messenger from the Lord of the

(\*\*) According to Lane's Lexicon the meaning of the word Khātim indicates the closing long line of prophets: "He is not a prophet, but the final Prophet. Khātim is the best of company of men..whence 'Khātim al Nabīyyīn the best of the prophets." (L.L.)

(27) Muhammad Iqbāl Reconstruction...p.120. cf. A.M. Daryābādī Commentary vol 2. p.625.

World. I convey to you the message of my Lord and give good counsel to you, which ye know not." (7:61-62) Noah was incomparably eloquent, the quality necessary for a prophet. Muhammad preached in the same manner and ~~has~~ had unparalleled eloquence. There is a similarity in the treatment, which both of them met from their compatriots. Both of them were mocked, due to the truth, but the mockers of Noah were destroyed and mockers of Muhammad were subdued and truth prevailed. (28)

There is a similarity in the story of the persecution of Sālih and <sup>of</sup> Muhammad. In both cases nine influential members of the tribes conspired to kill them. But their schemes failed and they received the same treatment from God. God says: "And when those who disbelieve plot against thee (O Muhammad) to wound thee fatally, or to kill thee, or to drive thee forth; they plot but Allah [also plots] and Allah is the best plotter" (8:30) "and there were in the city nine persons who made mischief in the land and reformed not" (27:48) (29). With regard to Shu'aib's mission to forbid people from giving short measures and weights, from fraud, from depriving others of their dues, from disorder, from highway robbery, from the worship of idols, from practising detestable things, and from doing anything against conscience. This is similar to Muhammad's mission, but it was carried out in a limited circle. Both Shu'aib's and Sālih's people did not pay any attention to their advice, so they met an unpleasant end, like the people of Noah.

(28) Ibid, Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.3. p.183. (29) Ibid vol.3.p.183.vol. 5. p.242.

There is a similarity between Moses and Muhammad, in that both were law givers and builders of a nation. Moses built a nation, which was small, yet in slavery united in rites and customs, whereas Muhammad built the 'Ummah', including people of different colour, race and nation, and united them in moral spirit. So the Muslim 'Ummah \*\*\* includes Aryans, Arabs and Non-Arabs. Like Korah of Moses's time there were misers in Muhammad's time, who possessed wealth but forgot their responsibility, so they neglected the poor and needy, and spent their wealth on unnecessary and unneeded things. The Prophet dealt with them like Moses, and was more successful than him. (30)

As regards the similarity between Jesus and Muhammad, Ibn Kathīr, mentions that Jesus called for help in time of need. His helpers are named Hawārī due to their white clothes. Similarly the Prophet Muhammad, before migration to Medina and in the battle of the Trench, called for help, the 'Anṣār and the followers stood up to help him. The mockers of Jesus were destroyed and mockers of Muhammad, who drove him from Mecca, were destroyed and subdued and the Prophet returned to Mecca triumphantly. According to Ibn Kathīr, the Prophet Muhammad was more successful in his mission and showed more patience and stamina to accomplish his word. (31)

(30) Ibid: vol.5. pp.298,304f, vol.3. p.186.

(31) Ibid: vol.2. pp42f. vol.2. p.29 and 26; vol.3. p.135, 196f 515ff; 547ff, vol.4. pp.318ff cf. Al-Ghazālī Kitāb-al-Iqtīṣād fī-al-'Iṭīqād, Cairo no date p.91ff.

\*\*\* The Universal 'Ummah of Islam is not to be equated with the concept of nation, which is limited to only a small part of humanity, 'Ummah is Universal.

Ibn Kathīr's interpretation is favoured by the following statement: "A personality so full of wonderful achievements in this respect, as to wrest, even from unfriendly observers, the appellation of that most successful of all prophets and religious personalities" (32) So the success achieved by Muhammad is unexampled in the world.

Interpreting the verses 17:55; 17:79; 3:152; and 34:30 he says that Muhammad was granted five things which were not given to any other prophet; (i) Muhammad is given a high place on the day of reckoning, (2) he will be allowed to intercede, (3) he will receive praise from all, (4) he was allowed spoils of war, (5) he was allowed to worship in every pure place and he enjoys more respect in the hearts of the people. He also says that God took promise from all the prophets to believe in Muhammad, and to enjoin their followers to follow him. (33)

Ibn Kathīr also argues for the superiority of the prophet Muhammad on the basis of the following verse. "You are the best Ummah ever brought forth to men bidding to right forbidding to

(32) Encyclopaedia Britannica 11th edition vol.15. p.898.

(33) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.2. p.126 = Tor Andrae, in Muhammad, the Man and His Faith, (Oxford 1948) in page 185 writes that "Present western writers pay tribute to Muhammad's remarkable leadership genius and characters, christian writers .... refer to Muhammad's single minded devotion, nobility, stature, and uniqueness, the sincerity of his purpose and humanity." cf. also Kenneth Cragg, The Call of the Minaret, London 1956 pp94 and 101 and cf also H.A.R. Gibb, Muhammadanism New York, 1955 2nd edition p.33.

wrong, and believe in God" (3:110), "Thus we appointed you a mid-most Ummah\* that you might be witness to the people" (2:143) and "let there be one nation calling to good and bidding to right, and forbidding wrong" (3:104). Interpreting this verse, Ibn Kathīr holds that the superiority of this 'Ummāh' is due to the superiority of the Prophet Muhammad. Muhammad is <sup>ε</sup>superior to all creatures and the apex of all prophets in receiving respect and honour. His law (Sharī'a) is so perfect that no prophet had the privilege of receiving perfect law like it. The 'Ummāh' became best, by virtue of the moral teaching given by the Prophet the moral knowledge therein helps to eradicate evil and establish good. The Prophet enforced the establishment of moral values in practical manner and established virtues by precept. This is the basis of the superiority of Muhammad. He also says that a prophet whose Ummah is commanded to preach his teaching as long as the Universe exists, has more right to be superior. (34) Asad says: Moral knowledge, according to the teaching of Islam, automatically forces a moral responsibility upon men. A mere platonic discernment between right and wrong, without the urge to promote the Right and destroy Wrong is gross immorality in itself. In Islam morality lives and dies with the human endeavour to establish its victory on the earth." (35)

(34) Ibn Kathīr Tafsīr vol.2. pp89ff.. It may be noted that Ma'rūf, means what is supported by reason and law, and 'Munkir' means what is against reason, law of Islam and abominable and unseemly in character. Wast' means balanced, just <sup>and</sup> equitable (Rāzī and Kashshāf) and so to Ibn Kathīr He also defines Wast' as exalted. (لَا تَسْتَكْبِرُ) (#)

(35) M. Asad, Islam At the Cross Road, Lahore, 1968 p.28.

DIVINE REVELATION AND ITS CONTENTS

Prophets in religious matters are educated through Divine Revelation. God says: "It belongs not to any mortal that God should speak to him, except by revelation, or from behind a veil, or that He should send a messenger and he reveal whatsoever He will, by His leave:" (42:51). In the verse cited above God is described as speaking to man i.e. revelation is sent to man in three ways: firstly by inculcating an idea into the ear, the word Wahy (Revelation) employed here includes its original definition of hasty suggestion, secondly from behind a veil; this signifies ru'ya (dream) its higher form Kashf (vision) and the further higher form Ilham (inspiration), when voices are perceived or expressed in a state of catalepsy (state of suspended consciousness) and lastly when Gabriel, the messenger, is sent with the Divine message to the Prophets, the recipients of message. This is the highest form of revelation. (36) (37)

- (36) Qurtabī, Tafsīr, vol.61 pp.52ff. There is a large number of verses in the Qur'ān related to the subject of revelation. Some verses reveal revelation as a universal fact; revelation to inanimate objects - heaven and earth (41:11-12) (99:5) and of revelation to lower animals (16:68-69). But revelation to man is distinct in nature to these revelations.
- (37) Ibn Kathīr likens the revelation to rain, which pours down on the earth, and flows into different channels, according to their capacities. The rain purifies the air and makes the land worthy to growth and improvement. So the revelation purifies the heart and gives life to it. But there are degrees among men with regard to the acceptance of teaching

According to Ibn Kathīr the highest grade of revelation is revelation to Prophets. They receive from it perfect and true

Cont. (37)

of the prophet. Men who accept the teaching, get benefit and give benefit to others, are like the land which accepts the effect of rain and gives forth produce for the benefit of creatures. He also likens the revelation to pure gold or metals, which are ever useful to human beings. He holds that gold and rain water are pure and beneficial by nature, but sometimes dirt sticks to the former, and scum and froth form upon the surface of the latter, when it mixes with earth reducing their value and effect. So he, in his figurative interpretation, describes dust and scum as suspecting the teaching. He suggests that, as the constant action of water removes froth and fire separates dirt, so the permanent practice and adherence to the teaching will not allow suspicion to enter, and if there is suspicion then it will erase its effects. He elucidates that indulging in doubts has no benefit at all. He holds that evil cannot prevail, goodness and righteousness always prevails. See Tafsir, vol.4. pp.81ff.

knowledge and no suspicion remains in their hearts. He interprets that, before the higher revelation, Prophets get knowledge through a true dream in a state of sleep, and through true vision (al-ru'ya-al-Sāliha) which is a kind of revelation and a part of Prophethood. The Qur'ān also describes the promise of true vision to the believers. (92:26; 10:64) (28) So the first two kinds of revelation will continue even after the termination of Prophethood. Only the last kind of revelation will end with the life of Prophets.

Regarding the Prophets' capacity of receiving revelation Al-Fārābī makes three points: (a) "that the Prophet, unlike an ordinary mind, is endowed with an extraordinary intellectual gift, (b) that the Prophet's intellect, unlike ordinary philosophical and mystical minds, does not need an external instructor but develops by itself with the aid of divine power even if, previous to its final illumination, it passes through the stages of actualization, through which an ordinary intellect passes, and (d) that, at the end, of this development the prophetic intellect attains contact with the active intelligence from which it receives the specifically prophetic faculty." (39)

(38) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.7. pp325ff. and vol.6.p.215. Tillīch says that "the word revelation (revealing veil) has been used Traditionally to mean the manifestation of something hidden which cannot be approached through ordinary ways of gaining knowledge see. Systematic Theology vol.1. p.120. <sup>x</sup>

(39) Rahmān, Prophecy in Islam (London 1955) p.31.

<sup>x</sup> For detailed explanation of true vision, inspiration and revelation see Qurṭabī, Tafsīr, vol.9 pp122ff and vol. 16 pp. 52ff.

When from this first stage Prophets are translated to another sphere, the highest form of revelation, they feel a great strain on <sup>their</sup> mind in this first revelation. They also become full of awe due to the first experience of Divine revelation. (39A) Muhammad Ali says that: "the fear to which the Prophet gave expression was lest he should be unable to achieve the great task of humanity which was imposed upon him." (40) But instead of fear, the prophets know with certainty at the first experience that they had been entrusted with the dignity of prophethood, and were given the task to reclaim the people.

Some writers maintain that Prophets owe or gain nothing through revelation, but that their knowledge is the product of their creative power. M.W. Watt in his essay "Was Muhammad a Prophet" writes: "Prophets share in what may be called 'creative imagination'. They proclaim ideas connected with what is deepest and most central in human experience, with special reference to the particular needs of their day and generation. The mark of the great prophet is the profound attraction of his ideas for those to whom they are addressed." In the same essay he says the Prophet Muhammad was a man in whom creative imagination worked at deep level and produced ideas relevant to the central question of human existence." (41)

(39A) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.7. p.326. (40) Muhammad Alī Manual of Hadīth, Lahore 1920 p.7. (41) Watt M.W., Muhammad Prophet and Statesman Oxford University Press, (London)1961 pp.237 and 240.

His concept of creative imagination does not correspond to the Qur'ānic concept of Prophethood. It is also not accepted by any Muslim community. Moreover, no creative imagination can be equivalent to divine revelation. According to the Qur'ān the Prophets are representatives of God. It is necessary that a representative must represent the words and ideas of whom he represents. God says: "O Messenger deliver that which has been sent down to you from thy Lord;" (5:67) Many expressions similar to this are found in the Qur'ān. This also repudiates what Wensink<sup>6</sup> holds: "Representative of a community or people to which God has sent him". (42) So as they are representative of God their knowledge flows from Him.

According to Ibn Kathīr a Revelation starts with the importance of knowledge; mental, verbal and written. He holds that the education of the Prophets through revelation includes knowledge of things which are undiscernable by the internal and external faculties of man i.e. hidden \*\*\* things; events of the past which are not comprehended through knowledge or by senses; which only writing preserves, like the stories of Mary, Moses and the Prophets; secondly knowledge of future things and life, to the extent given to them by God; thirdly knowledge of

(42) Wensink<sup>6</sup>; op.cit., p.203. For more clarification verses 10:48; 6:38; 23:46; 4:45; 8:75 may be seen.

\*\*\* According to Lane's Lexicon, hidden knowledge (Ghāib) is undiscoverable except by Divine Revelation. The intellect of prophethood, due to its special faculties has the power to grasp the knowledge of hidden things.

things and life relating <sup>to the</sup> present but beyond the range of senses, and lastly knowledge of immaterial things hidden from our eyes like Hell, Heaven and Resurrection. (43)

God strengthens revelation into their hearts. They take no trouble to memorise it and to retain it in their memory. God says: "We shall make thee recite, to forget not, save what Allah wills" (87:6). According to Ibn Kathīr the prophet will not forget anything, except abrogated verses. Al-Ṭabarī also confirms this. Al-Rāzī says that it is a spiritual teaching, that makes a prophet perfect. In the subsequent verses he interprets that, slowly and steadily, everything is made easy for him to bring him close to the purpose of his advent. On the verse "We shall ease thee unto the Easing". (87:10) Al-Rāzī says that it contains an injunction to make a prophet practise to such a high standard of perfection that every good deed may issue from him easily. When a prophet becomes perfect in teaching and practice, he is charged to announce and preach his teachings, without fear and hesitation. Similar to this is Ibn Kathīr's interpretation of verses 75:16-17. (44)

Ibn Kathīr states that a Prophet's teachings (Revelation) cover man's duty towards God and his duty towards his fellow men; commandments, prohibitions, and permissions to humanity. As (43) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.2. pp5, 31 and 139; vol.7. p.325.

(44) Ibid: vol.7. pp.170, 269, and 272. Al-Rāzī, Tafsīr, vol.8. pp.264f and 381f.

regards social and moral rules, he quotes verse 33:53 and says that it teaches moral and social rules necessary to mankind. For instance; prohibition to enter any house without permission, prohibition to join any marriage party and meals without invitation, on being invited not to arrive before the preparation of food is complete, but to arrive at the appropriate time in order to avoid inconvenience and trouble to the host. A guest must leave after finishing his meal and must not indulge in talk which annoys the host. They preach against giving short measures and weight, general form of fraud to deprive people of their rightful dues; causing mischief and disturbance, where peace and order exist, dissatisfaction with upsetting settled life, taking to robbery, literally as well as metaphorically, like forbidding people from worship of God and abusing religion for selfish motives. (45)

According to Ibn Kathir to be considerate for others is the highest virtue. The Prophets impart knowledge as to how to avoid vice and to do good; to behave gently and to have a good character; to eschew evil company; to cherish desire for virtues; to successfully practice the duties entrusted in man by God; to improve mutual relations of sympathy, good will; to love one another and to do away with malice, hatred, and prejudice. They

(45) Ibid: vol.5. pp489ff.

emphasize the importance of life hereafter and instruct mankind to look at the Almighty with hope, awe and reverence. The greatest importance is attached to this aspect. (46)

Ibn Kathīr holds that the fundamental ideas of Prophets underwent no change. The doctrine preached by the previous prophets was handed down to the successors. It continued right down to the time of Prophet Muhammad. God says: "He has laid down for you as religion that He charged Noah with, and that We have revealed to thee, and that We charged Abrahām with, Moses and Jesus: 'establish the religion, and be not divided therein!" (42:13) He holds that religion is one and the same. The difference is only in the branches, as God says, "for each we have appointed a divine law and traced out way." (47)

Ibn Kathīr's interpretation is confirmed by Al-Baidāwī who holds that the religion proclaimed by Muhammad, so far as principles are concerned, is identical with the religion preached by Noah, Abrahām, Moses and Jesus. But these prophets were given laws and ways, in accordance with the requirements and needs of the nations and times. This also affirms the existence of prophets in every nation. (48) This suggests that in accordance with the

(46)Ibid; vol.6. pp.193ff.

(47)Ibid; vol.2. p.71f. 123 and 228 vol.1. p.260.

(48)Al-Baidāwī, Tafsīr, vol.1 p. 636.

development and improvement of society, they introduced minor changes in the rites and customs, but submission to the fundamental doctrine is incumbent on every one in all ages. But there is no compulsion in submitting to the rites and customs of the previous generation, for the successors, as these were liable to change. Laws were only for the present followers and infringement against them is punishable. (49)

On the point of basic principles and Shari'a (law) Ibn Kathir describes how Adam preached a radical principle; to believe in the unity of God, to worship Him, to love mankind and to propagate moral obligation. As for law, he introduced the ways of purification, worship, fasting, pilgrimage, alms giving and social contact necessary, according to the needs of times. In this time marriage with a sister was allowed because it was the beginning of the universe. After Adam, for nearly two thousand years, a succession of prophets continued, who preached the same principle, but possibly there were some changes in the law. Noah, with whom the history of prophets begins, preached the same fundamental ideas but perhaps a different law of marriage. He was rejected, whereupon his people were punished. But after the Deluge, when he

(49) Both al-Razi and Ibn Kathir hold that Prophets were permitted to use force and take all sorts of steps in order to revive the fundamental belief preached by them and to implement social and economic laws given to them. They also say that the Prophet is a warner and not a guide, because that rests with God alone, similarly all Prophets who brought the divine message and preached it were warners and bearers of Glad Tidings. They are guide, in the sense that they show the people the right path. Tafsir vol.6. pp 95 and 566 al-Razi, Tafsir, vol.7 p 382

disembarked from the Ark and settled on land, it was permitted to eat the flesh of all animals. Abrahām, the patriarch, accepted by Christians, Jews and Muslims, was given a law very different from the previous prophets. According to Ibn Kathīr he was commanded to establish the new law of pilgrimage, to clean the teeth, to rinse<sup>out</sup> the mouth, to put water into the nostrils, to cut the moustache, to shave the head, or keep all hair, to comb hair, to cut the nails, to circumcise and so on. The eating of all animals' flesh continued. But Jacob made unlawful the flesh and milk of the camel for special medical reasons. According to his law it was allowed to announce any pleasing diet unlawful. This is not allowed in Islam. His successors followed him till its prohibition came in the Torah. To ~~take~~ slave women<sup>as wives</sup> over wives was permitted in the law of Abraham. Abraham took Hajar over Sarah. But this was disallowed in the Torah later on. It was permissible to marry two sisters at a time in the time of Jacob. He had two sisters at a time in his marriage. But this practice was made unlawful in the Torah. Ibn Kathīr gives a long list of such prohibitions. (50)

Now according to the complicated laws it seems necessary to continue the succession of prophets. Most probably this is due to the<sup>more</sup> inclination of man towards evil than towards goodness. Man quickly forgets the preaching of prophets and follows his petty desires. Moreover change and development in society dazzle his

(50) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.2. pp71.ff. vol.1. pp289ff. vol.2. p.542.

eyes and he cannot make decisions himself and therefore needs a guide. Azad says: "in the beginning man lived a natural and simple contented life. Due to the uniformity of life there was no enmity and hatred which developed with the change in economic life. Society was divided on the basis of interests. With the development of economics polytheism also infiltrated among them. So they always needed a message of truth toward them off the side tracks". (51) Thus this kept the door of prophethood open. That is why a chain of prophets followed one another to show people the right path and to tell them the truth, so that no one should allege his ignorance. God says: "Messengers bearing good tidings, and warning, so that mankind might have no argument against God". (4:165) Therefore the denial of the prophets is the denial of the revelation, or vice versa, and moreover it is the denial of God's love and care and teaching, which are contained in the Scriptures. This is called unbelief, for which prophets are not responsible, because their responsibility is to teach and preach the Truth, (Revelation). Whatever fantastic form and shape it takes in the minds, actions and reactions of man, it must not be questioned by them.

Prophets have a twofold career; as men and as prophets. So their teaching, its durability, and adherence to it may be classified thus: (a) teaching by verbal revelation consisting of the

(51) A.K. Azād: op.cit., vol.1. p.153.

fundamentals of religion and laws related to moral, social and ethical life, and the explanation of laws and basic concepts. These fundamentals remained unchanged from the first prophet to the last and were given to them in succession. As regards the laws, they were liable to change according to the needs of the time to comply with the developed conditions of the society. (b) teaching by inspiration (Ilhām); This is called Hikma. It consists of the explanation of the Scriptures. Adherence to the fundamentals contained in Scriptures and Hikma are ever necessary, but obedience to the laws is only necessary during the days of the prophets and after them provided the laws are not changed. (c) Prophetic exertion (Ijtihād Nabāvī) or knowledge which the prophet acquires by meditation and analogical reasoning. It is based on inspiration. He explains that during the period of their prophethood, prophets get complete idea of coming events. They apply this knowledge to meditation when they are confronted by a critical situation. This is entirely true and beneficial to mankind. It is different from the knowledge of saints and Mujtahids acquired by meditation and analogical reasoning, because they base their knowledge on the Qur'ān and Hadīth, whereas prophets get it by inspiration. Hughes calls this inner inspiration. This inner inspiration is not exclusively an attribute of Prophethood. "So obedience to it is only obligatory when the time requires.

Moreover revelation is sent to the prophets after their exertion (51A) Hughes, op.cit., p.213 He divides revelation; external revelation and internal revelation.

(Ijtihād) to add something more to their knowledge. Their action, followed by revelation, gives the impression that prophets did wrong actions, for which they were rebuked through revelation. It means that they were sinners, and this concept violates the very concept of their innocence. (d) The teaching purely related to human nature. A prophet imparts this, not as part of his duty, but as advice. In this teaching he is not guided at all by God, therefore this has both the possibility of being right or wrong, and has no religious importance at all, and no permanent value. For instance the Prophet Muhammad, during Hajj, for a particular reason, ordered his companions to walk exultingly so that the Quraish might not conceive that the climate of Medīna had weakened them, (b) he suggested changes in warfare in accordance with the time and needs, (c) orders regarding personal habits and national customs like dress, appearance, way of eating and sitting etc. (d) changes in the office, (e) continuation of past ethical stories, (f) following old methods of medical treatment, (g) opinions about agriculture like fertilizing the date trees, which resulted in decrease in date production, whereupon the prophet frankly remarked "you know better worldly affairs than me" As these matters have no religious importance, it is not necessary to follow the prophet in them. (52) -

(52) Ibn Kathīr Tafsīr, vol.6. p.472ff. vol.4. p.359ff.

MIRACLES AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

Ibn Kathīr in agreement with other commentators firmly believes that prophets, by virtue of their connection with the invisible world, and the direct relation with God or through Gabriel, can perform supernatural acts, i.e. miracles (Mu'jiza). He says that Miracles are contrary to the laws of nature. (53) Their occurrence show God's special favour. They occur to assure the truth of the Prophets' teaching, to influence the hearts of unbelievers, and to convince them. Mehdi describes Ibn Khaldūn's view on miracle thus:- "Miracles are acts emanating from the powers that the Prophet possesses, by virtue of his knowledge and office. They are beyond the power of men. Performing miracles is an important sign of prophecy because miracles stand as witnesses to the truth of the claims of a prophet to his office, because they are an instrument which forces men to believe in what he informs them <sup>about</sup> concerning the world beyond the senses and the world to come." (54)

Ibn Kathīr's view can also be confirmed by Professor Pitternger's article on Miracles, wherein he says, miracle is an integral part of Muslim, Christian and Jewish faith. There are theological differences among religious leaders upon which people, since the nineteenth century, have started ~~to~~ <sup>ing</sup> think ~~about~~ how to

(53) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr vol.6. p.468 cf,  
H. Hirschfeld op.cit., p.1.

(54) M.Mehdi, Ibn Khaldūn's Philosophy of History, (London) 1957 p.89 cf. The Muqaddima, London 1958 vol.1. pp.190ff.

to resolve them, instead of shelving them. He discusses the topic under four headings; scientific, philosophical, theological, and historical. As regards the scientific view he states that no scientist can deny the possibilities of such novel events in the world process, divine purpose of their creation, and their effect on the sensitive mind and in the universal process. It is disclosed, the world is full of novelties and varieties. Natural researches are not perfect in the scientific field up to this age and they still require much more study. At present science provides the idea to have faith in contranatural infringement of the law of nature. Giving philosophical proof of miracles he points that the world of genuine novelty consists of genuine theism. Everything is equally supposed to be divine in some respect, because God is immanent in it, and giving energy to every thing with varying conduct. As God is Immanent, so He is transcendent, which means that He is free and unexhausted in His Immanent activity in the creation. In his theological proof he quotes the instance of Jesus Christ's birth. In his historical proof he remarks that miracles have been mentioned in the Scriptures, which means that these are not unnatural wonders. (55) \*\*\*

(55) The Expository Times Jan. 1969 vol. LXXX No.4. published T. & T. Clark (Edinburgh) p.105 (Article Miracle.)

\*\*\* Paul Tillich in Systematic Theology vol.1. p128f. defining a miracle, says "the word 'miracle' according to the ordinary definition, designates a happening that contradicts the law of nature. The original meaning of miracle "that which produces astonishment" or events which create astonishment for a certain time". Miracles cannot be interpreted in terms of a supernatural interference in a natural process.

Ibn Kathīr maintains the occurrence of miracles a matter of astonishment and describes them as signs of prophethood. He makes two types of classification, the first being; (a) external miracles, which are related to material things i.e. changing a staff into a serpent, giving life to the dead, and the gushing forth of water from the fingers (b) internal, which are related to the inner life of man i.e. the purification of hearts. He then goes on to produce a fourfold classification; firstly, miracles which are supernatural and astonishing, like the changing of a staff into a serpent as <sup>performed</sup> by Moses, secondly, an event which by itself is not supernatural and astonishing, but whose unusual occurrence at a special moment in time makes it supernatural, like an unusual gale and rain; thirdly, an event whose time of occurrence is not by itself unnatural or miraculous, but whose way of occurrence makes it supernatural i.e. pouring down rain in response to prayers of the prophets, recovery of diseased persons, the vanishing of a calamity and so on; and lastly, some times neither the event nor its occurrence is supernatural or astonishing but its prediction makes it supernatural, like the prophecies of prophets (victory of Rūm). But in all cases these are in accordance with the condition of the people. (56)

It is evident that the appearance of a miracle is contrary to the law of cause and effect (ILLAT & M'ALUL). It is a

(56) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.4, pp 495f, 500ff; and 549; vol.5. pp 342ff; vol.6. pp.468ff.

temporary breakage of the law of cause and effect, because God wants to impress upon the people the Truth of His prophet. Now according to different interpretations of Ibn Kathīr we may conclude that; (A) Breakage of the law of cause and effect is not only possible but it is a fact, (B) Because we acquire the knowledge of cause and effect and natural laws through experience (C) Whatever knowledge we gain or acquire by experience cannot have the claim of complete wisdom and perfection, therefore, due to this, we cannot argue against the possibility of miracles, (D) Experience or experiment is based on self evidence or on the evidence of those who see or do it, (E) So the basis of a miracle is founded on the testimony of the one who sees it.

Regarding the necessity of miracles Ibn Kathīr says: (a) each and every word concerning a miracle must be examined and assessed, and there must not be any doubt about its transmission, (b) it should enjoy full confidence of the vision of the one <sup>h</sup> who sees it, so that the people may believe it, (c) people may deem it true traditionally, (d) all related signs testify it, (e) it should be according to the tendency of listeners, (f) the basic principle is that people must have faith in the honesty, probity and truth of the prophet. Ibn Kathīr also says that Islamic traditions, which testify the truth of miracles of the Prophet, (57) are so high that no historical doubt could be raised against them.

(57) Ibn Kathīr Tafsīr vol. 4pp500ff, vol.5. p.342f; vol.6. pp. 468ff.

Some may deem miracle and magic on an equal level, so Ibn Kathīr remarks that magic is the fascination of eyes by tricks, without change of state and condition, whereas a miracle is complete change of state and condition for a time. God says: "And lo, it seemed to him, by their sorcery, their ropes and their staffs were sliding;" (20:66), and "Now clasp the hands to the armpit; it shall come forth white without evil. That is a second sign." (20:23) The second difference between them is that magic is an act of man whereas miracle is an act performed by the will of God. Tabrī<sup>a</sup> regards miracles as an argument clarified (Hujjat Mubarhana) and a demonstrating or demonstrated argument or allegation or evidence. (L.L.) The other difference to be noted is that a miracle is for good, whereas magic for evil. The purpose of a miracle is to increase the number of believers and to help them, whereas magic is to misguide. Prophets use their miracle for the welfare of creatures, whereas magicians use magic to serve their own purposes and to inflict trouble and misery upon men. That is why God says: "And the sorcerer prosper, not" (20:69)

#### INFALLIBILITY OF PROPHETS

Prophets, with all their prophetic qualities and divinely adorned character, are men by nature and form. They eat, drink, grow, multiply and act like a human being, but in spite of all they are innocent, in the sense that they are guiltless and do no harm to mankind. There are some verses in the Qur'an which imply

that some prophets, like Ādam, Noah, Abrahām, Joseph, Moses and Muhammad have done some acts which were below their high status, or they intended to do that which seems likely to be included in the category of sin or disobedience. God said to Ādam "And We said: "O Adam! dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden, and eat ye thereof easefully where you desire; but come not nigh this tree, lest ye become wrong doers. Then Satan caused them to slip therefrom and brought them out of that where they were in."

(2:35-36) Ibn Kathīr holds that Satan swore to them in the name of God, that he was their faithful adviser, and cheated them. By swearing in God's name a believer can be easily deceived. Satan told them that God forbade them to eat a particular fruit because it transforms a mortal into an immortal angel or an immortal human. He also says that Satan argued that God forbade them to eat the fruit because it did not suit them at that early age, but after a passage of time there was no longer any good in avoiding eating it. (58)

Most probably they ate the forbidden fruit to attain immortal life so that they would not be separated from the very presence of God, the thing they longed for. Perhaps Ādam was cheated because he could not perceive the nature of Satan. The Qur'ān expresses this sin with the word zulm which does not necessarily imply a wilful sin. Primarily it signifies naqs meaning the making to

(58) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.1. p.138 vol.3. p.154f.

suffer loss or detriment. (L.L.) (59) Ibn Kathīr also interprets that man is made of clay, the nature of which is stead-fastness, patience and also submission, because it is a source or place of growth, so he accepted the influence of Satan but his humble nature brought him back to God and sought forgiveness. (60)

Noah enjoyed the trust that God would not chastise the members of his family, so when his son was drowned he asked God to remove his misunderstanding. God told Noah that He fulfilled His promise of salvation, because salvation is meant only for believers. God says: "And Noah called unto his Lord, and said, O<sup>my</sup> Lord, my son is one of my family, and Thy promise is surely the truth. Thou art the justest of those that judge. He said: O Noah! Lo! he is not of thy family he is of evil conduct." (11:46-47) So, what matters are deed and not pedigree. Al-Rāzī says that he might be the son of Noah's wife from a former husband. (61) Noah's request is genuine, as being a father and prophet. It does not involve any sin.

There are three falsehoods to be attributed to Abrāhām; two of them occur in the Qur'ān and one in Hadīth. God says: (a) "He cast a glance at the stars, and he said, 'surely I am sick'

(59) The inspirer of sin is Satan, this implies that sin is not inherent in the nature of man, is whispered from outside. By nature man is perfectly good.

(60) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.3. p.154, vol.6. p.176.

(61) Al-Rāzī, Tafsīr, vol.5. p.63.

(37:89), (b) They said, 'so, art thou the man who did this unto our gods, Abrahām? He said, 'No, it was this great one of them that did it.' (21:62-63). Ibn Kathīr interprets that (a) Abrahām was indeed sick, (b) he was sick of their worshipping that which is not God, (c) and he will be sick i.e. fall victim to the disease of death. Sale interprets that Abrahām, after observing the stars said: "Verily I shall be sick" confirmed his illness. They easily believed his words due to their faith in superstitions of astrology. (62) Ibn Kathīr's explanation that Abrahām was really sick is favoured by Lane in the Lexicon. On the point of smashing idols, Ibn Kathīr says that when Abrahām was interrogated, he replied the great one had done this, because it felt shame that young ones were ruling in its presence Abrahām replied ironically<sup>to</sup> the unbelievers, that the gods whom they are worshipping can do no harm or give any benefit. Moreover, Abrahām said beforehand that he would do away with their gods. Al-Rāzī reads 'fa'alahū' separately and interprets 'that some doer has done this'. (63) Abrahām took the opportunity to convince them in a better way, therefore he hung the axe on the neck of a great one.

Ibn Kathīr refers to a Hadīth wherein Abrahām advised Sarah to confess herself to be Abrahām's sister. According to

(62) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.6. p.22 and Sale op.cit., p.336.

(63) Ibid: vol.4. p.570 and Al-Rāzī, Tafsīr, vol.6. p.112.

Ibn Kathīr, she was Abrāhām's cousin, so he was correct in his saying. He has not sinned at all. Falsehood is ascribed metaphorically to Abrāhām and not in reality. Moreover, from a religious point of view, one is allowed to use such metaphors. He reports from Ibn Abī Hātim that the three sentences carry therein wisdom, and the welfare of religion. Qurtubī supports his interpretation (64)

Moses saw two men fighting; an Israelite and one Copt. He was approached by the Israelite to save him from the cruelty of the Copt. "Moses struck him with his fist and killed him" (28:15) According to Ibn Kathīr Moses came forward to help the Israelite and not to kill the Copt. Rawlison's statement confirms Ibn Kathīr's interpretation, as he says: "Moses's act was hasty and without intention, it was due to the result of a rash and violent excess of indignation, which goaded him to strike with a force that he did not intend, and produced a result which he did not imagine." (65) The interpretation of verse 26:20 shows that Moses neither intended nor thought of killing a man, so it involves no moral guilt. Moses's using the word 'Zulm' to describe his act also implies that the act was unintentional. God says: "he said, 'my Lord I have wronged myself. Forgive me". (20:16) (66)

(64) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.4. p570f. and Qurtubī Tafsīr vol.13 p.112f.

(65) Ibid vol.5. p.269 and Rawlison: Moses, His Life and Time p.57.

(66) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.5. p.178 and 269.

It is supposed from the following verse that Joseph was inclined towards Potiphar's wife; "For she desired him, and he would have taken her, but that he saw the proof of his Lord." (12:24) Ibn Kathīr, in agreement with Tabarī interprets (12:24) showing that Joseph's intention towards the woman was fear of heart. He also holds that (a) mere intention is not counted unless the act is done, (b) Joseph would have desired her but he ~~saw~~ some signs prohibiting, and illustrating the heinousness of the act, (c) moreover he received guidance from God beforehand. (67)

Lane's Lexicon's translation of verse 12:23 completely removed the wrong impression Rāwadahū means he endeavoured to turn him from a thing and therefore rāwadathu'an nafsihī means she sought by blandishment to turn him from his disdain and make him yield to her. (L.L.) God says: "Now the woman in whose house he was, solicited him, and closed the doors on them. 'Come' she said 'take me', 'God be my refuge', he said. 'Surely my Lord has given me a goodly lodging. Surely the evil doers do not prosper For she desired him and he would have taken her, but that he saw the proof of the Lord." (12:23-24).

We find from the sequence of the verses that the wife of Joseph's master conceived a passion for him, because of his facial reflections, handsome form and good manners. At that time he was <sup>in the</sup> beginning of his youth, unparalleled in his beauty

(67) Ibn Kathīr vol.4. p.20f.

in Egypt, the real cause of attracting the attention of others. So it becomes clear that Joseph was innocent.

As regards the prophet Muhammad, the Holy Qur'an records some verses which seem to criticise the prophet's action like (a) God says: "He frowned and turned away, because the blind came to Him." (80:1-2) Ibn Kathīr explains that 'Abdallah ibn Umm Maktūm used to come to the Prophet to receive religious instruction. He was accustomed to put questions to illustrate a point, so that day coming to the Prophet he started to ask questions and tried to attract the Prophet's attention by coming closer to him. The Prophet was absorbed in speaking to the Arab chiefs about Islam, so he felt the interruption. (68) The writer assumes that an inter<sup>r</sup>uption is disliked by every civilized person and in every civilised society, especially when a man is engrossed in earnest discourse with someone. Possibly it was the Prophet's exertion (Ijtēhād), but this does not show that he was against the poor and lowly, or that he disliked them. In the judgement of the Reverend E.M. Wherry, the Prophet was habitually solicitous for the poor. "Muhammad is justly praised for the magnanimous spirit shown in this passage. Throughout his career we rarely find him courting the favour of the rich or the great, and he was ever ready to recognise merit in the poorest of his followers." (69) The

(68) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.7. pp.211ff.

(69) Reverend E.M. Wherry, Commentary on the Qur'an (London 1896) vol41. page 106.

revelation gave preference to the feelings of a poor believer, with the possibility that his spiritual development may prove more beneficial to the community, and also that he may receive more benefit than the haughty rich.

(b) The Prophet, after <sup>the</sup> battle of Badar, preferred temporal goods over the slaughter of infidel<sup>e</sup> prisoners. God says: "It is not for any prophet to have prisoners, until he hath made slaughter in the land. You desire the good of this world and God desires the world to come" (8:67). The revelation of this verse seems to have been against the decision of the Prophet. Ibn Kathīr holds that the Prophet has the right to kill the infidels or release them after ransom. Secondly he reports that the Prophet said that most of the Banū Hāshim were driven to the battlefield forcibly, and were unwilling to fight, so they must not be killed. The next verse also supports Ibn Kathīr's interpretation. Al-Rāzī's interpretation also confirms Ibn Kathīr's explanation because by Yughkhina fī-al-ard, he means to become strong and over come. Lane also describes this meaning. But he refers to other commentators who mean by the above word, slaughter and killing. Sale also prefers the meaning killing. (70)

Possibly the commentators think that all participants, except two or three, came willingly and were pillars of paganism. Moreover, Holy war is fought for the defence of the faith, in

(70) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr vol.3. pp.345ff. Al-Rāzī, Tafsīr, vol.4 p.387 and Sale op.cit., p.132.

obedience to God's command, and to uproot the offensive forces of evil and to establish peace. This is the reason why we find warrior prophets, and laws related to wars, in the scriptures. The laws of war in the Old Testament; (A) "And when the Lord your God gives it into your hand you shall put all its males to the sword, but the women and the little ones, the cattle and every thing else in the city, all its spoil, you shall take as booty for yourself" (Dt. 20:13-14). "This is what you shall do; every male and every woman that has lain with a male you shall utterly destroy" (Ju 21:11). The very/lenient prophet Jesus Christ also says: "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but the sword." (Matthew: 10:34). Accordingly, we can interpret the verse allowing killing in certain circumstances. The Divine revelation favours leniency but not at all times. The Prophet's exertion reflects his being angelic in character, but human in Judgement. But the Prophet's act is neither disobedience nor sin.

Thirdly the verse "Be not advocate for the traitors," (4:105) reflects that the prophet <sup>may</sup> have favoured, or was in a mood to favour, a person unjustly. The occasion of the revelation of this verse is attributed to many stories as Ibn Kathīr described. But Ibn Kathīr, in agreement with other commentators, explains that the culprit was supported by his clan, who proved him sinless. The Prophet was inclined to favour the culprit on the basis of his

clan's wrong pleading and false telling, but the revelation revealed the truth. Then the decision was taken against the real thief

(71) The Prophet's inclination is based on their misrepresentation so he is not at all involved in any sin. Possibly, in view of their high status they are liable to forgiveness for ever the slightest mistake.

Fourthly it is narrated that the Prophet conducted the burial service of 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy, a hypocrite, which is against the Qur'an. God says: "And never pray for one of them who dieth, nor stand by his grave." (9:84). Ibn Kathir explains that (a) when 'Abdallah ibn Ubayy died, his son came to the prophet with the request for granting him his shirt, so that he may use it as a shroud for his father, and secondly to conduct his burial prayer. The Prophet accorded both requests, inspite of 'Umar's objection to his burial service because of his being an enemy to Islam.

(b) When Abdallah was on his death bed the Prophet paid a visit to ask about his illness. There he requested the Prophet to beg forgiveness from God for him, and also asked for his shirt, so that he may be wrapped in it after his death. But al-Razi says that Ibn Ubayy sent a message with the request for the shirt and the prayer after his death. The prophet granted the request for the shirt but rejected the latter. Al-Baidawi is uncertain about the conduct of the burial service. He holds that the Prophet received

(71) Ibn Kathir, Tafsir, vol.2. pp385f.

the revelation just before conducting the prayer. But Ibn Kathīr says that the revelation came after the prayer. So the Prophet's decision was due to Abdallah Ibn Ubayy's apparent profession of Islam. Therefore it cannot be considered as a sin or disobedience. (72)

There is no mention in the Qur'ān that the Prophet made unlawful what was <sup>made</sup> lawful to him by God. God says: "O Prophet, why forbiddest thou what God has made lawful to thee, seeking the good pleasure of thy wives? (66:1) Ibn Kathīr, relates many stories in connection with this verse. But his central subject, which is also agreed upon by other commentators, is that the Prophet took honey in the house of some of his wives. When he came to the house of the other consorts, 'Āyisha and Hafsa they remarked that the Prophet had taken Maghāfir or honey produced by bees which suck Maghāfir, which smells bad. The Prophet disliked any sort of bad smell, so he believing in their words solemnly promised not to take honey in the future. The Prophet's wives, although of very high character, yet were human beings and subject to the weaknesses of their sex. So the Prophet's decision is in no way wrong or sinful. Revelation proves his innocence. (73)

As regards the verse "Surely We have given thee manifest victory, that God may forgive thee thy former and latter sins, and

(73) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.7. pp50ff.

(72) *Ibid.*, vol. 3 p432

complete His blessing upon thee" (48:1-2). According to Ibn Kathīr the occasion of revelation is related to the true<sup>c</sup> of Hudaibiya containing prophecy of tidings of the manifest victory of Mecca. The Prophet submitted to the will of God and sought forgiveness for his mistakes, which was granted. This was a special favour bestowed upon Muhammad, and not given to anyone else, before, or after Him. This shows his high position as being the ideal prophet. Al-Tabarī holds that this verse was revealed after Muhammad's supplication to God as humble servant to Him to show God's favour. Zamakhsharī refers to the Prophet's marriage to Zainab and Mariya, an event which some commentators have described in chapter 66, and for which the Prophet sought forgiveness, which was granted. But Al-Rāzī maintains that forgiveness of sins means that accomplishment of physical and spiritual rewards patience, steadfastness, rule over the hearts of people and the spreading of Islam. (74)

As regards the word Dān<sup>h</sup> it differs from 'ithm' in being either intentional or committed inadvertence, whereas 'ithm' is peculiarly intentional<sup>on</sup> (L.L.) When used in relation to prophets, it signifies an act of inattention, not blamable in itself, but in<sup>ap</sup>propriate to their status. Bashārat Ahmad translates dhanb as a mistake and says in English, a mistake is not necessarily such a

(74) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr vol.6. pp.327ff. Al-Tabarī, Tafsīr vol.26 p. 43 Al-Zamakhsharī, Tafsīr, vol.3 p.110 Al-Rāzī Tafsīr vol 7 p.533

serious word, used to cast a slur on the character of the man who commits it. It never stands on the same plane as vice and sin. A mistake may be regrettable but there is nothing in it, which deserves condemnation. The Prophet was not all knowing and free from mistakes. In the case of man, if there is anything like perfection, it does not entail complete freedom from mistake. The Prophet was perfect as a man, not as a God. (75)- Ibn Taymīyah asserts that Prophets are completely faultless while dealing with the affairs concerning their prophetic office, they never commit any mistake because they get perfect knowledge of it. Whatever they impart, related to their office it is altogether correct. (76) This means that as man they are liable to mistakes not involving any sin or vice. Jesus Christ's reply to the ruler implies this. The ruler said: "God teacher what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" and Jesus said to him: "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone." (76A)

According to Ibn Kathīr to sin, and to indulge in vice, is against the veracity of the prophetic office. The distinction between the true prophet and a false prophet, or the generality of men, is like the difference between day light and the darkness of night. Prophets are true, simple, honest and do not tell a lie in the affairs of men. So, it is impossible to deem them as

(75) Basharat Ahmad, Dr., The Muslim World vol.20/4 p410. The article is from "The Light" Sept. 1929 (Lahore).

(76) Ibn Taymīyah: Al-Jawāb-al-Sahīh Liman Baddala Dīn al Masīh (Cairo), 1905 vol.4. p.214.

(76A) Luke 18:19.

telling a lie in the affairs of God. They possess a proper manner, pursue the truth, and place trust in God. They never act in an unworthy manner because these are proper only to spiritually low creatures. He emphasises that we must understand them and place our trust in them, and not to judge them by the same standards applicable to ordinary people. (76B) In this connection, he refers to the following verses. "It is not for a prophet to be fraudulent; who so defrauds shall bring the fruits of this fraud on the Day of Judgement," (3:160) "I abode among you a life time before it -- will you not understand?" (10:16)

#### BELIEVERS AND DISBELIEVERS IN PROPHETS

Ibn Kathir reasons for the need for the preaching of the prophets and for asking people to believe in them, these are; the people of the Book took a solemn pledge and oath in the presence of their prophets, to believe in the coming prophets, so they bound themselves. The covenant also applies to all the prophets, because they also promised to carry out their mission; to preach unity without fear and favour, and be ever prepared to serve God in all circumstances.\*\* This is the only way to maintain their dignity and position, because they are responsible for the people, towards whom they have been sent to instruct and to lead. They are liable to be questioned in the Hereafter about their duties in the promulgation of the law of God. Where they have to give full account of the trust and explain how truth was received, assisted, opposed and feared in

(76B) Ibn Kathir, Tafsir vol.2, pp.142ff. vol.3. p.489f. \*\* The responsibility of the Prophets is greater than that of their followers, and they have to follow all the minor details of commandments, whereas the followers need practise the major commandments.

<sup>in</sup> the world. So with respect to belief and disbelief in Prophets, Ibn Kathīr classifies men into three categories; believers, hypocrites, unbelievers. He also describes the different states of their hearts. (77)

He says that believers are distinguished by: (a) their intense love of God and the Prophets, (b) belief in the Unseen things, (c) faith in the Scriptures, (d) faith in the Hereafter, and love of mankind. He holds that the hearts of the believers and their teaching are clear as crystal wherein they ever see the greatness of God. In clarity they are like a tank full of silent, standing, clear and crystal water, undisturbed by the blowing of wind, wherein clear reflection of the sky and the sun, the moon and stars is visible. (78)

The personalities of the believers (the Prophets and receivers of wisdom and knowledge) have been described in a remarkable parable. God says: "For there are stones from which rivers come gushing, and others split, so that water issues from them, and others crash down in the fear of God. According to Ibn Kathīr's interpretation, this alludes to the three grades of the spiritual development of believers, which al-Rāzī explains that, like the highest stage is the gushing of rivers which profusely benefit people. This may be metaphorically described as

(77) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.5. pp.427f.

(78) Ibn Kathīr Tafsīr, vol.5. p.357.

the stage of Prophets. They universally do good and purify people. The others which split, and from which water issues, refer to a comparatively lower stage. This may symbolise the saints, and those who are specially chosen by Prophets to continue their works. They serve within a limited circle. The last which fall, due to the fear of God, may be considered as true and faithful to God, and not beneficial to mankind. (79)

Hypocrites are discernable from the believers. They profess Islam with their lips and pretend to be Muslim. But inwardly they are deep rooted enemies of the Prophet and believers. According to Ibn Kathīr they are of two kinds; (1) Hypocrites in faith; those who reject the prophets and their teaching outright, yet manage to disguise their ideas and belief. God says: "When they meet those who believe, they say, "we believe"; but when they go privily to their Satans, they say, 'we are with you' we are only mocking." (2:14) (11) Hypocrites in practice, those who are not positive and definite about the rejection of faith. They waver to and fro. If they get benefit, they are with the believers and if they do not they are against them. Ibn Kathīr calls them criminals. But he distinguishes those who are weak in faith and oppressed in the hands of unbelievers, and those who are newly converted to Islam, from the hypocrites who are ever changing in their faith. God says: "And among mankind is he who worshippeth Allah upon the very

(79) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.1. p.98. Rāzī Tafsīr vol.1. p.385 Qurtubī \*  
\*\* Ibn Kathīr in agreement <sup>with</sup> Al-Tabarī interprets 'Satan' their chief in unbelief whereas Zamakhsharī and al-Baidāwī interpret rebellious men like devils in habits and unbelief.  
\* Tafsīr, Cairo 1933 vol.1. p.395.

edge -- if good befalls him he is content with it, but if a trial befalls him he turns completely over; he loses this world and the world to come; that is indeed the manifest loss." (22:11)(80)

According to Ibn Kathīr, hypocrites in faith have bartered guidance for error and perception for blindness. He likens their state to a man who kindles fire in <sup>the</sup>dark<sup>ness</sup> of night with the hope to get profit, but before he could see things around and end his perplexity and confusion, the fire goes out suddenly and darkness prevails again. His sight could not see the way ahead. Whether they reject the Prophets overtly ~~and~~ covertly, they are like a man who is blind and cannot see the right path (blind of heart), a deaf man who cannot hear <sup>the</sup>good, and dumb man who cannot speak ~~the~~ truth. So it is unthinkable that a hypocrite could find the way. Hypocrites are of exactly this kind, i.e. those who have lost the correct way, by longing for vice, and denouncing the truth. Ibn Kathīr adds that, just as after a fire only smoke, heat and darkness remains, likewise with hypocrites, after faith fades there remains only suspicion, disbelief and hypocrisy. They can neither see the right path by themselves nor listen to good from others, nor ask them about virtue. (81)

\*\*\* From weak and oppressed, <sup>he</sup>means newly converts, those whose hearts are to be reconciled. The people of Mecca, when they were converted to Islam, a special portion of alms was allotted to them. There is also reference to certain Arabs who came to the Prophet at Medina, and confessed Islam, then if they got worldly benefits, they were content with Islam, but, if they suffered and lost, they preferred to reject the new religion and reverted to idolatry. (80) Ibn Kathīr Tafsīr vol.1. pp83ff. vol4. p.620.

(81) (Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.1.p.90f. Al-Rāzī interprets that hypocrites in belief first professed Islam and later on denounced it. But Tabarī holds that they never confessed Islam.

Hypocrites in practice, being suspicious, are always in fear, confusion and perplexity. They are like a man who goes outside when thunder and lightning burst out of heaven in the darkness, he thrusts his fingers in his ears, against the thunder claps for fear of death. But he cannot save himself from the grip of God. (82).

Ibn Kathīr says that unbelievers in prophets are of two kinds (a) those who completely reject faith in the prophets, and deem themselves right in spreading their own views and in imparting them. They are like the thirsty one, who considers the distant mirage in the desert, a river due to its resemblance to running water. He is filled with joy and runs toward it, but when he arrives there, he is dismayed, because there is no sign of even a drop of water. Likewise unbelievers relish their acts, but they will find these all false and untrue on the Day of Judgement when they will be left empty handed. They are in double ignorance. (Jahl Murakkab) (b) The second category of unbelievers are those who follow blindly without applying their own senses, those who reject the faith. Their state is like a darkness in the depths of the sea, which is covered by waves and clouds i.e. darkness upon darkness. They do not understand where they are being led. Ibn Kathīr illustrates this point with a parable. Some one asked an ignorant man "where are you going?" He replied "I am going (82) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.1...p.96.

with him". Then he again asked "Where is he going?" He answered "I do not know". So as there is billow upon billow in the sea. similarly there are covers on the hearts of the unbelievers. Ibn Kathīr remarks that they are living in a void of ignorance. (83)

Ibn Kathīr categorises hearts according to belief in the Prophets, (a) clear and crystal (b) covered, (c) turned downward, (d) mixed. The bright heart is that of a believer, (b) the covered heart is that of unbelievers, (c) turned downward heart is that of a hypocrite who knows the truth but refuses to acknowledge it (d) mixed hearts are those hypocrites who are undecided in their belief. Faith in the heart is like greenery, which grows by pure water, and similarly, hypocrisy is like a sore wherein puss and blood continue adding till one of them overcomes. (84)

From the study of Ibn Kathīr we conclude that moral and ethical reforms, correction, and development of mankind are important factors for the unity of this world and peace in the life hereafter. This development can be carried out through verbal preaching, writing or the imposition of laws. But the best and most correct method for effective development is, instead of using anyone of the above means, the embodiment of good nature and virtuous qualities in humanity. The personality possessing the highest moral and ethical values may be called the PROPHET By virtue of his office, he receives revelation, performs miracles and is immune from sin.

(83) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.5. p112f. (84) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr vol.1. p.98; vol.5. pp.103f.

Prophets, in all respects provide the idea of the supremacy of God. This may be true if it is said that through them we see God's power and action (\*\*\*) . To understand God and the world, belief in the prophetic office is necessary. ~~and requires priority.~~ Moreover the fountain of religion flows from it. So if belief in prophets is established, then all articles of faith will follow. Confession of belief, in the last Prophet is necessary (85) because of his most perfect life. Moreover his mission is still working. Only his teachings and his example can provide the moral and spiritual values of life.

\*\*\* This does not mean that they are part of God. The following example shows the relation of Prophets to God. "God is like a handsome man and the Prophets are like a mirror, the world is the stand of the mirror. The reflection of God's great power is seen in the actions of the Prophets. In this illustration the handsome man is not part of the mirror, the mirror does not itself contain the man, but reflects his movements." L'Wen Lan, The Correct Foundation of Religion. The Muslim World, vol.9. (1916) p.270.

(85) As regards the individual there is the possibility that he might not have received the message of the Prophet and that he passed his life in ignorance. With regard to this Imam Ghazali says that those who could not get correct education and knowledge of Muhammad and his teaching cannot be punished for not having accepted the message of Muhammad. (D.B. Macdonald The Doctrine of Revelation, in Islam The Muslim World vol.7. (1917) p.113f.

CHAPTER SIX  
BELIEF IN THE SCRIPTURES

The doctrine of Scriptures is one of the pillars of belief. They include commands for spiritual and material guidance from God which the Prophets taught to their people. For this reason it is incumbent on the Muslim to believe in the Qur'ān and those earlier Scriptures which were revealed through the Arch-angel to the Prophets.

The minimum number of Scriptures agreed upon by the Commentators, reaches a hundred and four. Of these, a hundred Scriptures have no specific names and are known as the ṣūhufu'l'anbiyā' (the books or scrolls of the Prophets). They also occur under the name of kutub and Zubur like the Scriptures with distinctive names, i.e. Torah, Zabūr, Injīl and Qur'ān.

The Scriptures were revealed as follows; ten to Ādam; fifty to Seth; thirty to Enoch; ten to Abrāhām; the Torah to Moses; the Zabūr to David; the Injīl to Jesus; and the Qur'ān, the last of all Scriptures, to Muhammad. Ibn Kathīr holds on the authority of Abū Dhar (companion) that ten suhuf were given to Moses before the revelation of the Torah but he mentions no book for Ādam. (1) In the Qur'ān Abraham is the first Prophet to whom is attributed a scroll by name. God says "Surely this is in the ancient scrolls,

(1) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.2. p.453. cf. Article "Correct Foundation of Religion (Trans) by Isaac Mason The Muslim World, vol.9. no.2. p.285.

the scrolls of Abraham and Moses". (87:18-19) This may be the reason why Ibn Kathīr gives no comment on the survival, whereabouts and material of the scrolls of Prophets from Ādam to Abraham. He only alludes to some of the contents of Abrāhām's scroll which he considers to be similar to the fundamentals of the Qur'ān. These may be included in the category of common principles of religion like remembrance of God, endeavour for better future life, and cleanliness. (2).

According to Ibn Kathīr the book attributed to Moses, in the Qur'ān is the Torah, which contained light and guidance. God says: "Surely we sent down the Torah, wherein guidance and light." (5:43) and "Who sent down the Book which Moses brought as a light and guidance to men?" (6:92).

- (2) Ibid; vol.2. p.453 and vol.7. pp.272f. See the Jewish Encyclopaedia, New York, 1901, vol.1. p.93 refers to Abraham's book "a book said to be apocryphal entitled the Testament of Abraham was translated from the Greek original and published for the first time in 1892, at Cambridge, by M.R. James. Ethiopic, Slavonic and Rumanic versions also have been found, and some of them published." A Yusuf, 'Alī also refers to the Testament of Abraham thus:- "There is a book in Greek, which has been translated by Mr. J..H. Box, called the Testament of Abraham. It seems to be a Greek translation of a Hebrew original. The Greek Text was probably written in the second Christian century, in Egypt, but in its present form it probably goes back only to the ninth or tenth century. It was popular among the Christians. Perhaps the Jewish Midrash also refers to a Testament of Abraham. (Commentary page 1725).

There seems to be a difference among scholars as to whether the Torah is the name of the collection of the whole teaching of Moses, or whether it is only the law excluding the covenant. Parrinder holds that "the Jewish Scriptures are referred to generally as the Torah, as the Jews themselves sometimes mean by Torah the whole of their Bible. But as the Pentateuch, the Torah in the first five books of the Old Testament, is more strictly the law as revealed to Moses. (3)

The Jews divided their scripture into three parts: (a) the law (Torah), (b) the Prophets (Nabi'īn), and (c) the writings (kutub). The division was current during the time of Jesus Christ. The Gospel of Luke refers to it thus; "These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that every thing written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and Psalms must be fulfilled." (24:44) In the context of the Qur'ān the reference is both to the law and the covenant. God says: "And when We took covenant with the Children of Israel: 'you shall not serve any save God; and to be good to parents.....'" (2:83) It seems probable that the references to the Book of the Covenant are to Torah, the Original Law. (4) So the Torah may be supposed to be 'the Law' in its original form promulgated by Moses, and acknowledged by Islam as the revealed Book.

(3) G. Parrinder, Jesus in the Qur'ān, London 1965 p.142cf. Manley, G.T.,: The New Bible Hand Book London 1947 pp115ff.

(4) Book 11 Chronicles xxxiv. 30....

The Torah exists under different names and different versions. The identity of any one version is not unanimously accepted by the people of the Book. Jews have different versions of the Old Testament. The Samaritan's version of the Pentateuch is slightly different from that of the Old Testament, the Greek version, the Septuagint, was used by the Jews of Alexandria and the Hellenised Jews who were found in the Roman Empire. There were distinct Latin versions, the Vulgate.

The Zabūr was given to David. It is mentioned three times in the Qur'ān as a single Book of David. God says: "We gave David the Zabūr". (17:55) In the Qur'ān in relation to David it occurs without the definite article 'al' (ال) which signifies any writing or book, or any divine book with which it is difficult to become acquainted. (L.L.), but this is supposed to be a Psalter. In relation to the Prophets it occurs with definite article which implies a special writing. (verse 3:184). Then there is a reference to the wisdom, Hikma, imparted to the Prophets in the sense of scriptures, but it has no established identity with any particular book.

The Injīl was given to Jesus, it signifies a glad tidings. References to Injīl, as a divine book given to Jesus, occur in the Qur'ān eleven times. God says: "And He will teach him the Book, the Wisdom, the Torah, the Gospel." (3:43) "We gave Jesus

the Gospel, containing guidance and light, confirming the Torah which was before it, and guidance and admonition to those who show piety." (5:46-50) (5) Ibn Kathīr holds that it contained truth, explained ambiguous and difficult problems, and was in agreement with the previous books. (6) Ibn Ishāq says: "that in the Gospel in what Jesus brought in confirmation of Moses and the Torah he brought from God." (7)

At present the Injil survives in the form of four Gospels, some acts, letters, and a book of Revelation. Powell reports the reasons for the increase in the number of Gospels thus: "The number of Gospels increased considerably after the time of Christ. The historians of Christianity agree on that. Then the Church at the beginning of the fourth century of the Christian era wanted to select the Gospels which were considered worthy, so it chose the four Gospels; Mathew, Mark, Luke and John." (8).

The last revealed book is the Qur'ān given to Muhammad. The word Qur'ān is derived from Qara'a which mean to read or to recite. Qur'ān means: something to be read, or recited, or proclaimed frequently. Without this distinctive name the Qur'ān

- (5) The other verses like 3:3; 3:58; 5:51; 5:66; 5:72; 5:156; 9:112; 48:29; 57:27; bear the same theme.
- (6) Ibn Kathīr Tafsīr, vol.2. p.585.
- (7) Ibn Ishāq, The Life of Muhammad, (Tran. Guillaume) London 1955 p. 258:
- (8) Article: "The Qur'ānic View of other Scriptures Powell The Muslim World. vol. LX/April 1969 p.97.

has some common names with the Torah, the Gospel and the Zabūr; like Furqān, Kitāb, Zabūr etc. These names express special significance and need of scriptures and the Prophets.

Furqān, the criterion, is originally anything that makes a separation and distinction between truth and falsehood. It also means: proof, evidence, or demonstration. (L.L.) So when this refers to the Qur'ān or Scriptures in general it means to distinguish between truth and falsehood. When it refers to miracles, with which every prophet is endowed, it establishes their distinction from other human beings. God says: "When We gave unto Moses the Scripture and the Criterion, that ye might be led aright," (2:53) "Blessed is He Who hath revealed unto his slave the Criterion." (25:1) In the verse 2:53 the Criterion may also refer to the oral teaching of Moses, which separated right from wrong, or the teaching vouchsafed to him regarding signs and wonders.

Kitāb means writing or written revelation. So it seems that every book was written but with the passage of time its originality was corrupted. Perhaps this may be the reason why Ibn Kathīr never attributes any book to Ādam, as writing seems to have begun later. The epoch of beginning of writing is marked from Enoch. (9)

- (9) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr vol.4. p.467. Enoch was grandfather of Noah. cf. Jeffery: Article "Did Muhammad Know Slavonic Enoch." The Muslim World vol.21. p.313. Enoch is mentioned as inventor of writing.

The Qur'ān is identical to the Injīl and the Torah as regards the confirmation of the teachings of the previous Scriptures. God says: "He has sent down upon thee the Book with the truth, confirming what was before it, and He sent down the Torah and the Gospel aforetime, as guidance to the people, and He sent down the Criterion." (3:2) According to Ibn Kathīr the Scriptures bear testimony upon its being the truth and the criterion and the angels stand witness for it. He puts emphasis on the word ḥaqq and also brings for its support the word burhān and maintains that the Qur'ān is a very clear proof of its truth, accurate, and exact, according to the needs of the time and place. (10)

Ḥaqq signifies suitability to the requirements of wisdom, justice, right, or rightness, truth, reality of fact, or to the exigencies of the case. (L.L.) Burhān is 'the definite,' strongest or most valid, evidence or proof, which is such as even necessarily implies truth, or veracity as to its consequence, or concomitant. (L.L.) Al-Rāzī illustrates that bil-ḥaqq means marking out the right way in the midst of differences which existed prior to it, or to provide a precise account of the teaching of the Prophets, or to be firm in all future circumstances which involve hope or fear, and so it fastens the hearts of believers to stick to the right path. (11)

(10) Ibid: vol.2. pp.3f.

(11) Al-Rāzī; Tafsīr, vol.2. p.390.

The Scriptures of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam brought truth to guide mankind. All of them are mentioned as containing light which manifests guidance, aid, and divine knowledge. Therefore they are seen as belonging to one chain of sacred succession. So to prove the Koran as criterion and that the Gospel and the Torah are not outdated Parrinder explaining the word furqān says: "that the Qur'ān is the Furqān as criterion of truth to make clear what went before. It is not an abrogation of previous Scriptures, but a confirmation and a touch-stone of truth, making clear what they meant." In order to strengthen his argument he refers to the following verses: (a) "Say! Whosoever is an enemy to Gabriel he it was that brought it down upon thy heart by the leave of God, confirming what was before<sup>it</sup>." (2:97) (b) "Surely the Qur'ān relates to the Children of Israel most of that concerning which they are at variance." (27:76), and "So, if thou art in doubt regarding what We have sent down to thee, ask those who recite the Book before thee." (10:94) (12) This seems to indicate that for explaining the Qur'ān previous Books should be consulted and vice versa.

Ibn Kathīr declares that it is one of the characteristics of the Qur'ān that it confirms previous Books and provides guidance and good tidings to the believers. (b) He says that the Jews

(12) G. Parrinder op.cit., ppl44f.

blamed Jesus regarding his birth and the Christians placed him higher than a man due to his miraculous birth, but the Qur'ān declares him chaste and the slave of God. (c) He elucidates that the verse (10:94) is addressed to men who had doubt about the Prophethood of Muhammad. They are advised to see his qualities in the previous Scriptures if these have not been changed. He seems to hold the view that the Qur'ān is a confirmation of Scriptures but he contradicts the view that they are not out-dated. He says that it is necessary to have faith in the Torah and the Injīl, but to follow the Qur'ān and Tradition is sufficient. (13)

The Qur'ān indicates kinds of differences in the Torah and the Injīl. Firstly, difference of interpretation. God says: "We gave them clear signs of the Commands; so they differed not, except after the knowledge had come to them, being insolent one to another." (45:12). A similar reference to this occurs in connection with the Injīl, which marks the misunderstanding and difference of interpretation of the scriptures among their followers. God says: "That is Jesus, son of Mary, in word of truth, concerning which they are doubting." (19:38) Ibn Kathīr interprets that when God gave to Jews clear signs and established truth, they were divided into different groups due to their selfishness and interpreting the Scriptures according to their will. Interpreting

(13) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.1. p231; vol.3. p.529; vol.5. p.254.

the verse (19:38), he refers to the days of Constantine when four sects namely: Jacobites, Nestorians, Israelites, and Aryus differed in interpreting the nature of Jesus Christ which the Qur'an clarifies (14) Ibn Ishāq appears to confirm Ibn Kathīr's interpretation. He Says: "He (GOD) sent down the Criterion, the distinction between truth and falsehood, about which the sects differ in regard to the nature of Jesus and other matters." (15)

Secondly, the Qur'an states that Tahrīf has taken place in the Bible. This means inversion, transposition, and change. God says (a) "So woe to those who write the Book with their hands, then say, this is from God, that they may sell it for a little price; so woe to them for what their hands have written..." (2:79) (b) They change words from their context and forget a part of that whereof they were admonished." (5:13) (c) "And...Christians, We made a covenant, but they forgot a part of that whereof they were admonished." (5:14), and (d) "And there is a sect of them who twist their tongues with the Books, that you may suppose it a part of the Book, yet it is not a part of the Book, and they say; It is from God, yet it is not from God." (3:78)

Ibn Kathīr employs the word, tahrīf, in two senses; (a) the corruption of the scriptures by Jews and Christians by

(14) Ibid: vol.2. pp.450-527; vol.4.pp456f; vol.5. p.254; vol6 p.267.

(15) Ibn Ishāq, op.cit., p.272.

inverting or shifting words, (b) corruption of the existing scriptures by interpretation or change while speaking. He holds that the Jews tampered with the scripture by adding and deducting some words in it. They gave to their hand written scripts the status of Scripture in order to get monetary benefit by attributing them to God. Moreover they omitted the name of the Prophet, signs, and miracles with the result they became victim of God's anger; the Torah was taken from among them by God. Hence it appears that there is not a single word of the original Torah which exists. Ibn Kathīr interpreting the verse 3:78 contradicts his point i.e. that God took the Torah from among them, but he quite rationally deals with the problem and says: when a word is shifted from the context it changes the Scripture and then it changes the correct meaning. Both his interpretations receive support from the opinions of Ibn 'Abbās Wahb bin Munabbah, and Abū Hātim (companions of the Prophet) Ibn 'Abbās holds that the Jews corrupted the scripture by changing words from one place and fixing them in another place, and secondly they misinterpreted the Scripture. Wahb bin Munabbah maintains that the people of the Book misguided men by wrong interpretation and by showing their own writing as the word of God. Abū Hātim declares that the original is uncorrupted, but all that we possess may be supposed to be commentary stuffed with material irrelevant to the Scripture. Ibn Kathīr summing up their statements remarks that the people of the Book concealed the truth and clothed it with falsehood to sell it for a small price.

(16)

(16) Ibn Kathīr: Tafsīr vol. 1. pp.204f.; vol.2. pp.62 and 256.

Imām Shāfi'ī holds that there is both change in the Scriptures and in their interpretation. He says: "People of the Book, who believed in God and in the teachings of His earlier Prophets, but who have changed God's commands and forged falsehood by their tongues mixing it with the truth that God had revealed to them." Tabarī also favours this view. (17)

But Al-Rāzī giving the meaning of tahrīf as to bend something from its natural conditions i.e. changing of vowel, signs, letters in writing or uttering, divides it into four kinds; (A) to change terms of the Torah by other words, (B) false interpretation of text, (C) to pretend adherence to the Prophet in his presence and oppose him in his absence, (D) perverting the precepts of the Torah as beating for stoning. (18) So it appears that Al-Rāzī believes, there is corruption both in words and meaning.

Al-Zamakhsharī believes that there is Tahrīf in meaning rather than in words. He states that it is twisted pronunciation of the word or sentence in order to change <sup>the</sup> sense. He seems to be in line with modern commentators who prefer the view that the corruption is in the explanation rather than the change in the text. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, the first <sup>Indian</sup> Muslim commentator of the Bible draws the conclusion that:- "In the Qur'ān tahrīf means either false interpretation of the passages bearing upon Muhammad or non-

(17) Shāfi'ī's Risāla (Tran: Khaddurī, M. "Islamic Jurisprudence") Baltimore--1961. p.33.

(18) Al-Rāzī Tafsir, vol.1. p.382; vol.2. p.378f and vol.3. p.383.

enforcement of the explicit laws of the Pentateuch. As for the text of the Bible, it had not been altered. No rival text assumed."

(19) But their explanation conflicts with the orthodox view of tahrif.

The people of the Book also express different opinions about the corruption of their books but they are not clear as to what sort of change it was, this makes it difficult to determine what type of corruption the Scriptures underwent. Parrinder says: "the Ebionites, Judeo Christians, had already accused the Jews of corrupting their scriptures." (20) The charge also goes back to Jeremiah, the Prophet, who says: "you have perverted the word of the living God of the Lord of hosts our God." (J 23:26) There seems also to be an allusion in 2 corr. (2:17) to the perversion of scripture.

Muslim minds developed suspicion due to the fact that the Torah and Injil are not written in Hebrew and Aram<sup>a</sup>ic, the languages in which they were revealed. 'Alī says: "the primitive Torah must have been in old Hebrew, but there is no Hebrew manuscript of the Old Testament which can be dated with certainty earlier than 916 AD. Hebrew ceased to be a spoken language with the Jews during or after captivity." "About Injil he says: "The Gospel mentioned in the

(19) Al-Zamakhshari, Tafsir vol.1. pp.222, 310 and 408. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, The Reforms of Religious Ideas, p.78 cited by Parrinder op.cit., p.146 cf. E.M. Wherry, Articles Some unfounded Muslim claims" The Muslim World July 1912 vol.2. p.288 He states Sir. Sayyed's views thus:- "It will be seen thus: that the adulteration of truth with falsehood does not mean that the other words have been added to the text, but it implies simply an admixture of false interpretation with the true one."

(20) Parrinder, op.cit., p.146cf. G,T, Manley, op.cit., pp.115ff.

Qur'ān is not the New Testament. It is not the four Gospels now received as canonical. It is the single Gospel which, Islam teaches, was revealed to Jesus and which was taught. Fragments of it survive in the received canonical Gospels and in some others".

(21) So it shows that whatever people of the Book had, it was either a translation of the Scripture or its commentary. Smith seems to affirm the idea when he draws the difference between revelation and the record of revelation. He considers the Bible as the record of revelation rather than revelation. He also compares the Injīl with Tradition rather than with the Qur'ān. (22)

According to Ibn Kathīr and other commentators it appears that the people of the Book changed some of the laws in the Scriptures before Islam, but suppression of Muhammad's name, his miracles, his signs and mission started after his mission began. So there seems to be no reason why the entire validity of the Books should be repudiated, when, even at present, they possess material related to (a) the nature of God and His attributes, (b) the Historical facts, (c) the moral laws, (d) some prophecies (e) and the teaching for salvation. Moreover there are still in the Books some evidences in support of Muhammad and his mission which commentators cite. If Theologians do not believe in the veracity of the Scriptures they must not quote them, and rely on their genuinessness.

(21) A.Y. Alī op.cit., pp.283 and 287... (22) W.C. Smith Article "Some similarities and Differences Between Christianity and Islam" The Word of Islam 1959 p.52.

The revelation of the Qur'an, the last book, commenced to come down in the month of Ramadān. God says: "The month of Ramadān wherein the Qur'an was sent down to be a guidance to the people, and as clear signs of the guidance and the criterion." (2:185). The verse points out the time, manner, and cause of revelation. Ibn Kathīr explains time in two different ways: Firstly that the whole Qur'an was sent down from the seventh heaven to the first heaven in the month of Ramadān and then it was revealed to the Prophet according to the needs and occasion. Secondly that the first verses of the Qur'an were revealed in this month. He states that all Scriptures were sent down in this month; the Book of Abrāhām on the first, the Torah on 6th, the Psalm on 12th the Injīl on 13th and the Qur'an on 24th. But the Qur'an is distinguished from them in that it was revealed piecemeal in 23 years whereas they were revealed all at once. (23)

He demonstrates the significance of gradual revelation thus:- firstly it is a sign of the superiority of the Prophet, because it shows that God addressed him from time to time through-out a long period. Secondly the gradual process was according to the needs and events of the time in order that the Prophet could explain it satisfactorily to the believers and answer the objections occasionally raised by the unbelievers. Thirdly it was to

(23) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.1. p.380

make it easily practicable and understandable to the believers. Lastly it was to strengthen the hearts of the faithful. He deduces that the quality of the Qur'ān in being in accordance with requirements and circumstances, places it above all other Scriptures. (24)

One of his interpretations regarding the piecemeal revelation is slightly different from one of the verses of the Qur'ān. In the verse occurs:- "The unbelievers say, "why has the Qur'ān not been sent down upon him all at once? Even so, that we may strengthen thy heart thereby, and We have chanted it very distinctly. They bring not to thee any similitude but that We bring thee the truth, and better in exposition." (25:32-33). The verse specially attributes the effects of gradual revelation to strengthen the heart of the Prophet but Ibn Kathīr refers it to the people. Perhaps he deems that it generally can be attributed to them, because they will shoulder the responsibility of preaching of Islam after him.

In conformity (tatbīq) between the verse and Ibn Kathīr's interpretation may be judged under the light of Miskawaih's (D.1030.A.D.) definition of revelation as a superior type of knowledge which gives power, He says: "knowledge for the soul is as food for the body and the perfection of food is that it should

(24) Ibid: vol.1. pp.380f. vol.5. p.150.

preserve the body, perfect its form and make it increase in power." (25) Thus the author draws, from the verse, the conclusion that the provision of strength to the Prophet through revelation implies that it was a spiritual food which provided him with a necessary stimulus and vigour through-out his long arduous career. Moreover the well arranged gradual process of teaching, which is the quality of the Qur'an engendered and developed a superhuman patience, constancy, and firmness in the Prophet and then in his followers. Because of this he was able to carry on his tremendous task to win over the Arabs and through them the world of Islam. Moreover it teaches a very natural lesson, that progress is slow in grades and needs a steady process and the knowledge of God is boundless, and to absorb a portion of it requires time and energy. This was the reason why the occasional questions put forward by people were not dealt with only to meet the present demand but were solved from a general stand-point in order to exercise the greater influence and penetration into hearts and intellect in shaping practical conduct.

Describing the cause of revelation of the Qur'ān, Ibn Kathīr says that it is for the guidance of mankind because it contains clear and crystal arguments which lead a man of intellect to the straight path. The main cause of revelation is to bring unity

(25) Sweetman: op.cit., vol.1. part1 p.173.

among the warring parties, as the teaching of the Prophets are one - for their teaching leads mankind, rejecting mankind's differences regarding the fundamentals of religion. So, bayyināt, according to Ibn Kathīr may be meant not only that the Qur'ān is itself imbued with shining brightness but that it also makes other things bright, clear and light. (26)

As far as respect for the Qur'ān is concerned the believers are commanded to observe silence when it is read. God says: "And when the Qur'ān is recited, give your ear to it and be silent; haply so you will find mercy." (7:204) Ibn Kathīr says that as the Qur'ān contains Guidance and Mercy it requires to be understood and this cannot be obtained unless silence is observed. It seems that silence helps to draw full moral and spiritual benefit. (b) They are commanded to keep away from the company where the Qur'ān is mocked-~~at~~ and laughed at. God says "When you hear God's signs being disbelieved and made mock of, do not sit with them until they plunge into some other talk, or else you will surely be like to them." (4:140) Ibn Kathīr states that those who continue in the company of the mockers of the Qur'ān, after knowing the Qur'ān, they are equal partners with them. The fate of these men will not be different in the hereafter from those unbelievers who laugh at the Qur'ān. When unbelievers get the punishment in Hell the same will be given to their companions. (c) the Qur'ān should be

(26) Ibn Kathīr; Tafsīr, vol.1. p.381; vol.6. pp244f...

touched only by those who are clean. God says: "None but the purified shall touch it." (56:79) According to Ibn Kathīr the Qur'ān must not be touched in the state of impurity. He refers to a Tradition wherein the Prophet forbade the taking of the Qur'ān to a country inhabited by unbelievers, lest it may be disrespected. He also refers to Mu'attā Imām Mālik's Tradition in which 'Umar ibn Hazm was specially order<sup>ed</sup> to touch the Qur'ān only in a state of cleanliness. (27)

According to the context cleanliness seems to mean here purity of body, mind, thought, and intention because only with full sincerity can one achieve the real meaning. In the previous verse the Qur'ān is addressed as the honourable book. So it deserved to receive honour when it is read by men not only purified in body but also in thought and intention, in order to attain real contact with its spirit. Moreover it being the revelation from the Creator of the universe it requires all respect and honour.

Every word and passage of the Qur'ān is respected and honoured on the basis of its being the revealed word of God and complete guidance in every verse. But due to the verse "And whatever verse We abrogate or cast into oblivion, We bring a better one or the like of it" (2:106), a host of Muslim

(27) Ibid: vol.2 p.415; vol.6. pp.336f. p.100, p.101.

commentators interpret that God first ordered several things which were good for the time and which were afterwards annulled. Thus some passages of the Qur'ān have been abrogated by succeeding passages. Ibn Kathīr divides such verses into four kinds:- (a) those where the letter and the sense are both abrogated; (b) those where the sense is abrogated, though the letter remains; (c) Those where the letter only is abrogated, but the sense remains (d) those where the verse has been revoked and another succeeded in its place containing a more strict order or an easier one. This is specially related to lawful and unlawful things. These views are also agreed upon by Tabarī. (27A)

Ibn Kathīr classified this last kind into two i.e. abrogation of laws of previous scriptures which has been described in the chapter of the Prophets, secondly abrogation of the sense of some Qur'ānic verses by succeeding verses. So far as the abrogation of the law of the Qur'ān by a succeeding verse is concerned, Ibn Kathīr mentions only four verses in order to justify his stand. He illustrates that in the beginning of Islam it was that a widow could stay for one year in the house of her deceased husband and mōrn him. This refers to verse (2:240). Later on the duration of mourning was fixed at four months and ten days in the verse (2:234). Secondly Qibla was Bait-al-Maqdas but it was changed to Ka'ba in verse (2:142) Thirdly, the order was that one Muslim might fight ten unbelievers but later on this order was changed. (8:65). Fourthly, the order was that before talking to

(27A) Ibid: vol.1. pp.262ff. cf. Sale op.cit., p. 52.

the Prophet one must give alms but this order was revoked in verses (58:12 and 49:2 and 3). Ibn Kathīr giving the reasons why there is abrogation in the Qur'ān says that: (a) God's will; (b) God's will to examine human beings whether they follow His command or forsake<sup>it</sup>. He states that Jews were always reluctant to accept revocation. They rejected the Injīl because it abrogated some of the laws of the Torah so they rejected Jesus. On the basis of his arguments, Ibn Kathīr rejects any opinion against the law of abrogation. (28)

Now there is no agreement upon the number of abrogated verses. Jalāl-al-Dīn Suyūṭī refers to twenty verses which he says have been acknowledged by previous commentators to be abrogated. He also mentions some commentators who count number up to 200. (29) The seventeenth century commentator Wali-Allah mentions only five verses, whereas Aslam Jirājpurī holds that: "Of a perfect book not even one verse can be annulled." (30) Baljon narrating the modernist's view states: "In general the modernists....are not much pleased with the doctrine of their ancestors: "God's words are too lofty to be abrogated by human opinion." (31)

If the sequence of the Qur'ān is observed then it becomes manifest that it was Jews who were addressed here. (2:106) In

(28) Ibid. (29) Hughes: op.cit., p.520.

(30) Wali-Allah, Al-Fawz-al-Kabīr, Lahore 1960 pp77ff; Baljon "Modern Muslim Qur'ān Interpretation" Leiden 1961 p.49.

(31) Baljon: ibid.

verses(2:90-91),they are shown to be guilty of rejecting the truth, revelation. Their excuse was that they would only believe in the revelation given to Israel. So they rejected the Qur'ān and the Prophet. They raised different questions, but the main one was why the revelation was given to Muhammad and why new laws were revealed. The answer to this question was given to them in the verse "God singles out for His mercy whom He will," (2:105) and the answer ~~for~~ their objection against the new revelation was given in verse 2:106 which reveals that the previous law is abrogated by the will of God.

The word Āya, in the verse may mean message and not a verse of the Qur'ān. According to Muslims Muhammad is the last Prophet and the Qur'ān is the last revealed book. They believe that every Prophet before Muhammad was sent to a special community and his laws were for a specific period and for a community to which he was sent. The law of the Qur'ān is universal and complete, so laws prior to it were partly forgotten and the remaining ones were revoked. Hence there may<sup>be</sup> supposed the abrogation of Jewish law and not abrogation of the verse of the Qur'ān.

Besides the doctrine of abrogation regarding the Qur'ān seems to fail to cope with the reasons. Firstly, the upholders of the doctrine of abrogation do not agree upon the number of abrogated verses. Their difference regarding the numbers shows that their

doctrine is merely based on conj<sup>n</sup>uctures. Secondly it seems that those commentators who could not see the possibility of the application of a verse supposed the verse to be abrogated. Another commentator who could explain the same verse nullified the supposition of his predecessor. Thirdly most of the commentators failed to find any authority from the Prophet to support their view and referred to an unconfirmed Tradition. As no genuine argument is available, therefore it appears difficult to maintain the possibility of the principle of abrogation. Lastly the Qur'ānic law was imposed by degrees. If anywhere there were some new convert to Islam who had the same rites and customs as the Arabs, then in the same way the Islamic law will be promulgated step by step among them. The same steps about the prohibition of wine and gambling etc. will be taken accordingly. Hence what Ibn Kathīr considered to be four annulled verses cannot possibly be counted as abrogated. Moreover if the law of abrogation is considered to be genuine or valid then it would be impossible to treat the whole Qur'an as law, and this would allow every commentator to revoke whatever he likes. Then the whole book would come easily under this law. Perhaps this (principle of abrogation) may be the reason why Halide Edib Adivaz says: "because some part of the Qur'ān were meant for the people who lived some thirteen centuries ago, and some parts were meant for all human beings and for all times. (32)

(32) Ibid: p.43.

The Qur'ān states that it consists of verses which are all of them:- (a) Muhkamāt, God says: "A Book whose verses are set clear, and then expounded..." (11:1) (b) Mutashābihāt, God says: "God has sent down thee fairest discourse as a Book, consimilar in its oft-repeated.." (39:23), (c) Partly Muhkamāt and partly Mutashābihāt, the Qur'ān reads: "It is He Who sent down upon thee the Book wherein are verses clear that are the Essence of the Book, and other ambiguous." (3:6) These three different types of verses seem to be quite contradictory to each other.

Ibn Kathīr explains that by Mutashābihāt is meant similarity between the verses and even the resemblance <sup>in</sup> ~~among~~ the words. Besides they contain a similar subject leading to submission to God, which is repeated without any slightest change. The repetition is to help the digestion of the subject matter. (33) Lane defines Mutashābihāt (derived from Shibh, meaning likeness or resemblance as that which is consimilar or conformable in its various parts, and Mutashābihāt are therefore things like or resembling one another, hence susceptible of different interpretations. (L.L.) So when some verses of the Qur'ān are called Mutashābihāt it may mean that the whole of it is conformable and consimilar in its various parts.

Ibn Kathīr interprets Muhkamāt as meaning well constructed,  
(33) Ibn Kathīr, tafsīr, vol.6. p.87.

excellent in text and perfect in meaning. (34) According to Lane's Lexicon Muhkamāt is derived from hakama, meaning, he prevented, whence ahkama, means he made things firm or stable. So Muhkamāt means ~~that~~ of which the meaning is secure from change and alteration, therefore it may mean that all its verses are clear and decisive.

Ibn Kathīr explains the Qur'ān's consistency in verses which are partly Muhkamāt and partly Mutashābihāt thus:- Muhkamāt, here he means verses having clear meaning, easily accessible to the understanding, containing commandments which forbid that which is unlawful and order that which is lawful and prescribe limits for them. This may refer to the categorical order of shari'a or law easily comprehended by human mind. These are called umm-al-kitāb nucleus of the Book (35). Umm (أُمُّ) signifies the source, origin, foundation, or basis, of a thing, its stay, support or efficient cause of subsistence. Anything to which other things that are next thereto are collected together, or adjoined, ..the main or chief part of a thing; the main body thereof. (L.L.) Hence Umm-al-kitāb may mean the essence of the book, its fundamentals, principal tenets, or central doctrine in consonance with other less clear and less definite passages. The principle elucidated here possibly holds good in all Scriptures in order to explain their indistinct, ambiguous, and figurative passages.

(34) Ibid. vol.3. p.535..

(35) Ibid. vol.2. p.5....

Mutashābihāt, according to Ibn Kathīr, consist of verses in which God took the oath, hurūf muqatta'āt (36) and other ambiguous passages unapproachable to human mind, because by being figurative, they provide an opportunity to hypocrites to exercise their ingenuity about their meaning to fit their purposes. But as these verses contain profound spiritual matter which the general human capacity is inadequate to grasp, therefore their intention can be described as being to create fitna, misleading of the people, or the sowing of dissension, or difference of opinion (L.L.) The hypocrites try to get benefit from the difference of words and mould the meaning according to their desires, which is called ta'wīl i.e. speculation concerning them or reducing one or two senses (L.L.) Ibn Kathīr states that both figurative and clear verses are equally true, there is no difference between them except in the meaning which may be derived from them. As they are intermingled, therefore their meaning can be known to God alone. On this basis he states that practice according to the clear verses is necessary, but in figurative verses only confession of faith is required. (37)

It appears that Ibn Kathīr, in pointing to men of wisdom or

(36) Ibid: vol.1. p.65f. Twenty nine suras begin with different alphabets; some with single alphabet, other with more. These alphabets are given names as Muqatta'at. Ibn Kathīr maintains that these are names of God or they allude to one of the names of God, that is the reason why commentators could not succeed in their interpretation if some of them interpreted, their opinion differed about their significance. Zamakhshari holds that these are only names of suras Kashshaf vol.1. p.84f. The author deems that these alphabets had some significance in Arabia and appeal to the Arabs. Possibly they had some meaning too. They may be considered deep mystic verties or abbreviations standing for words, Arabs used abbreviation in verses. Lahes Lexicon reads The Arabs used fa'a in answer to one who says, wilt thou come? The fa'a in this case means the go thou with us. (L.L.) (37) Ibid; vol.2.pp5ff.

men of perfect knowledge, deems the necessity of knowledge, because through it can the truth be known. It<sup>also</sup> seems that Ibn Kathīr holds that figurative verses must be interpreted in the light of clear verses, so that no susceptibility of meaning may remain, and a clear interpretation may be attached to them. He deems that this is a basic principle which must be followed whenever there is an allegorical verse, so that the interpretation may be in consonance with the fundamental principles of the Book and its spirit. It seems that the division of verses is made so that mankind may exercise their mental capacities to know more and more about God, His attributes, and myst<sup>e</sup>ries of the universe.

It is also a part of Muslim faith in the Scriptures that the Qur'ān is a miracle, in respect of language, teaching and protection, given to the Prophet, Muhammad. It is impossible for any human being to produce anything equivalent to it. Ibn Kathīr sets forth his arguments in this respect thus: Firstly he states that the Prophets were given miracles according to the prevalent custom of the time. During the days of Moses skill of magic was prevalent in the area. Magicians were honoured on the basis of experience and the degree of skill in the art of magic. Moses was given knowledge similar to this, but superior in all respects because of which he overpowered magicians. They were surprised at the demonstration of his knowledge, submitted to Moses and accepted Islam. In Jesus' time expert physicians were spread

all over the area and they could be defeated by any super-human knowledge. So to compete with them Jesus was given miracles like making birds out of dust then giving them life by breathing into them; raising the dead into life by God's permission; and healing the blind and the lepers. At the time of Muhammad the Arabic language was at its peak of development. Poetry, witty sayings, and general daily talk had great eloquence, delicacy, and other beauties of the language. Poets and writers held a very high position in the society. So Muhammad was given the miracle of a book possessing light, eloquence, and all beauties of the language. In the presence of its superhuman qualities of language and light all previous literature faded and was dazzled. (38)

According to Ibn Kathīr, to prove that this book is really from God, the Qur'ān challenged the unbelievers in the verse 2:23, to produce a single sūrah similar to it. But none answered, dared, and picked up courage to produce anything like the Qur'ān. They were even asked to seek help from their shuhadā' which according to Ibn Kathīr means chief, or language experts, or false Gods. According to Lane's Lexicon the word, means one who gives information of what he has witnessed, or one who knows or declares what he knows, or one possessing much knowledge. Al-Rāzī says that shāhid apart from helper also means an Imām or a leader, but but al-Baidāwī defines the word as helper alone. So all of them

(38) Ibid. vol.2. pp.41f..

failed to respond and no scholar could produce anything like it and none will be able to bring <sup>out</sup> like it till the end of the world. Ibn Kathīr holds that the verse is a rebuke to <sup>the</sup> people of the Book and other scholars who thought that the Qur'ān is a humanly made Book. Now Ibn Kathīr declares that their failure to produce a book like it is the miracle of the Prophet. He also maintains that the Qur'ānic announcement that none will be able to produce one like it as long as the world exists adds to the miraculous character of the Qur'ān. This announcement was made both in Mecca and Medina, which were the seat of Arabic language and literature. Ibn Kathīr remarks that the objections of the unbelievers were merely argumentative, refract<sup>o</sup>ry and against their conscience because they were determined in their enmity against the Prophet. So as God is Unique similarly His speech is unique.

(39)

Al-Rāzī affirms Ibn Kathīr's interpretation and declares that the Qur'ān is the greatest miracle of Muhammad. He maintains that those who disbelieve in it are apostate. He mentions the reasons why unbelievers rejected the Qur'ān's miraculous character: (a) due to enmity because it was in the form of a book like Torah, Psalter, and Injīl, (b) due to insolence they demanded other miracles like descending angels and the splitting

(39) Ibid: vol.1. p.104.

of the sky into pieces, (c) they demanded other terrible miracles, like stoning from the sky, or some other form of chastisement on the earth. (40)

Ibn Kathīr then pictures the beauty of the language of the Qur'ān so far as its words and meaning are concerned. He states that a mere look at the Qur'ān reveals the inner and outer beauty of its words and meanings, which the creatures cannot produce. Its words are firm (Muhkam) or confirming and its meanings are mufasssal distinct and clear. It is unparalleled in its words and subject matter. Every word contains eloquence expressing good of this life and the life to-come. Arrangement of words and their usage, proper division of passages, running of diction, beauty of meaning and purity of subject matter is unparalleled. Its charming narrations and continuity of events gives life to the faded hearts. Its brevity is the example of perfection and its explanation and simplicity in discourse is the soul of miracle. Its repetition of things gives the highest pleasure as if there is a rain of pearls. Its repeated recitation does not make ~~to be~~ weary, but adds to the taste, and also helps to discover new meaning, and unending subject matter. This is an exclusive beauty of the Qur'ān which could be known from those who have got the sense, intellect, and zest for knowledge from God. (41)

(40) Al-Rāzī; Tafsīr, vol.1. pp.220ff. (28:48) cf. Maqālāt Sir Syed vol.13.p.103.

(41) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.1. p.105.

Ibn Kathīr in confirming his statement about the beauty, eloquence and style of the Qur'ān refers to the Hanafites' view that the Qur'ān is by itself a miracle, and that it is beyond the capacity of men to produce anything equal to it in style and eloquence. (42)

To establish the proof that the Qur'ān is a miracle Ibn Kathīr reports from Abū Huraira that the Prophet said: "Every Prophet was given a miracle seeing which men professed faith in him. My miracle is the revelation i.e. the Qur'ān. Therefore I expect that my followers will be larger in number than those of other Prophets because their miracle ended with them whereas the Qur'ān will ever remain, seeing this men will ever continue to enter Islam." (43). Now this Tradition can be interpreted as meaning that the Qur'ān possesses beauty of style, eloquence, and teaching. Moreover it is apparent from the text of the Qur'ān and the past and present writings of the scholars that the unbelievers of the Prophet's day did all they could to oppose it and to discredit the Prophet, but in vain, until they were compelled to believe in its miraculous and divine revelation, and in its unique eloquence. So the Qur'ān is itself a miracle and stands on its merits.

With regard to the protection of the Qur'ān God says: "Lo!

(42) Ibid: ....p.106.

(43) Ibid:

We, even We, reveal the reminder, and lo! We verily are its guardian" (15:9) Ibn Kathīr interpreting the verse says that God sent down the Qur'ān and He is responsible for its protection and therefore it will ever remain pure and unchanged. (44)

According to this verse and Ibn Kathīr's interpretation it is obvious that the Qur'ān has retained the purity of the text E.W.Lane, remarks "It is an immense merit in the Qur'ān that there is no doubt about its genuineness. The word of the Lord, came to Muhammad, and he uttered it, and the people wrote it down and committed it to the<sup>ir</sup> memory; and that very word we can read with full confidence that it had remained unchanged through out thirteen hundred centuries." (45)

The verse mentioned may be considered as a prophecy which is fulfilled and stands proof for the truth of the holy Qur'ān . The challenge according to the context was thrown to the unbelievers and the generality of people that the Qur'ān will ever remain safe from destruction. This wonderful fulfilment of prophecy demands that both believers and unbelievers profess the genuineness of the Book. So it may also be considered unique in this respect. GRUNEBaum remarks thus:- "the Qur'ān is Muhammad's evident miracle. Its inimitability has been accepted dogma since the fourteenth century. The uniqueness, 'i'jāz, of the Book is seen

(44) Ibid: vol.4. p.154.

(45) E.W. Lane op.cit., p.96. cf. Wherry's Commentary of the Qur'ān vol.1. p.349; Palmer: The Qur'ān Intro. p.59. Arnold Islamic Faith. p.9. Muir Life of Muhammad, Introduction p.23 B.Smith Muhammad and Muhammadonism p.22 Torry Jewish Foundation of Islam p.21 Hitti, The History of the Arabs. p.123.....

variously in its proph<sup>s</sup>eying of future events, the information about otherwise unknown incidents of the past, the fact that no body rivalled it despite the Prophet's challenge and the unprecedentedness and surpassing excellence of its style." (46)

In proving that the Qur'ān will ever remain pure and uncorrupted Ibn Kathīr also gets confirmation from the record of history. He points that its writing was preserved by the people and that the only difference in its writing was one of reading. It was written on bones, cloth, and paper which were gathered in one volume during the days of Abū Bakr. It was published by law in the whole domain of Islam by 'Uthmān. The companions of the Prophets approved Uthmān's efforts and there was no agitation against him in this respect, even when there was general mutiny against him. (47) Parwez states a slightly different view to Ibn Kathīr<sup>is</sup> thus:- "The version of the Divine Guidance is embodied, exactly in its original form, in the Qur'ān. Rasūl-ullāh had made fool-proof arrangements for its transcription and preservation and before he died it had been fully completed in the form of a book, apart from being memorised by heart by thousands of men". (48)

Now as far as the history of the collection of the Qur'ān is concerned, Tradition is the main source of information. The battle

(46) Grunebaum Essays in the Nature and Growth of a Cultural Tradition (Islam) London 1955.p.86.

(47) Ibn Kathīr: Fadā'il-al-Qurān Cairo 1348 pp.70ff.

(48) Islam A Challenge to Religion, Lahore, 1968 p.4.

of Yamāna, where a large number of memorisers of the Qur'ān were martyred moved 'Umar, so he made a request to Abū Bakr about the collection of the Qur'ān which was acceded to. Zaid Ibn Thābit the writer of revelation was assigned this work. Accepting the responsibility he said: "If I were ordered to transfer a mountain from one place to another it would not have been more difficult for me than this order to collect the Qur'ān." In the time of Uthmān, when Hudhaifa reported to him about the divergencies in the recitation of the Qur'ān and said: "O commander of believers save them before they have discrepancies about the Qur'ān as the Jews and the Christians." Uthmān had got four copies of the book transcribed and distributed in the provinces. And the present Qur'ān is identical with the ~~Suhfa~~ of Ali and Ibn Mas'ūd. (49)

Fadal-al-Rahmān describes the history and collection of the Qur'ān thus:- "During the life time of the Prophet the Qur'ān had been committed to memory by many people and recited in prayers. It was also written down on leaves, bones, parchments and such other material as was available. The entire book was collected together by the first Caliph 'Abū Bakr. The commonly accepted text, however, the...edition, dates from the time of

(49) Ref: no.47. cf. "The Transmission of the Qur'ān". Mingsan<sup>a</sup>, "The Muslim World" July 1917 vol.7. pp223. ff

third Caliph, Uthmān, who on the recommendation of a committee appointed for the purpose and headed by Zaid Ibn Thābit, the faithful servant of the Prophet, also effected the present arrangement of the Qur'ān which, as opposed to the chronological order, is based more or less on the length of suras." (50) These different statements show that the Qur'ān was preserved from the life time of the Prophet.

Apart from the eloquence and style of the Qur'ān Ibn Kathīr seems to include its teaching in the category of miracles. (a) It is easily digestible. (b) The verses begin with God's name. (c) Every matter is supported by reason. (d) Matters are described in greater detail than in the previous Books. (e) It includes all affairs of man's life; spiritual and material. (a) With regard to its being easily understandable, <sup>(51)</sup> its verses are clear and similar to each other. If any one desires to know the truth he will find no difficulty in knowing their significance. (b) Its arrangement begins with God's name, His essence and His attributes are the central theme of the Qurān, other things are subsidiary to Him. Such a beginning reveals that it is the continuation of previous scriptures. It confirms what was revealed before and also tells us that it has come from the same Divine Authority. (c) As far as reasoning is concerned, the Qur'ān reasons that religion is not based on mere belief. These reasons are mostly based on: Firstly

(50) F. Rahmān: Islam p.40.

the inner experience of man, God says: "When some affliction visits mankind, they call unto their Lord, turning to Him." (30:33); secondly, natural phenomena, like the sun, the moon, the lengthening out of shadows; the alteration of day and night, the variety of human colour and tongues; lastly, historical, the Qur'ān reveals that nations are judged, and suffered for misdeeds. To establish the fact the Qur'ān constantly refers to historical instance, and urges mankind to reflect on the past. The examples, stories, and parables described in the Qur'ān give us spiritual and material food for knowledge. In this respect the apparent miracle of the Qur'ān is that it gives past unknown news and supplies us with future news which is proving true. So the Qur'ān serves its purpose to awaken in man the higher consciousness of his manifold relations with God. To strengthen relation with God the Qur'ān proceeds to give the concrete proof of prophethood which connects mankind to God. (d) Ibn Kathīr thinks that all matters related to human life have been described in detail. If anyone is willing to know, he can easily find. These matters were not so comprehensively stated with their causes and effects, in the previous Books. (51)

Ibn Kathīr holds that the purpose of the Qur'ān is to present God in the right perspective, to present principle of cause and

(51) Ibn Kathīr; Tafsir, vol.1. pp. 19, 105ff. vol.5. pp.300ff. 310ff, 353ff 362ff.

effect, to present an appeal to the intellect, and to show the way to lead a good and pious life. It also appears that according to him, the Qur'ān has brought nothing novel which men cannot understand. By referring to these points Ibn Kathīr establishes the superiority of the Prophet and the Qur'ān. Professor Watt seems to favour his view when he says that doubts about the personality of Muhammad may be removed by studying his conduct, personal observation, by hearsay as a matter of common knowledge. For instance, a knower of law and medicine can easily judge books of medicine and law, similarly if a man would like to know what a prophet should be, he should study the Qur'ān and Tradition, then he will know the Prophet and the Qur'ān which is the Highest grade of prophetic calling. (52)

Ibn Kathīr deems that each word of the Qur'an is full of wisdom, which contains such a message that every one could understand and benefit<sup>from</sup>. He explains that, the description of God's qualities, of men's good and bad qualities, and the spiritual world around, provide us with teaching that can keep us away from evil, but only<sup>the</sup> faithful practice it and learn<sup>the</sup> lesson. He refers to the verse: "Perfected is the word of thy Lord in truth and justice" (6:16) and says that there is truth in the news and the command of the Qurān. Command is for good things and

(52) M.Watt, Faith and Practice of Ghazālī London 1953 p.66.

prohibition for evil. It includes that which is perfectly true, just, and real. It has nothing futile, false, and unnecessary, like the poetry which contains praises ~~about~~ women, horses, wine, and self. He states that the Prophet exercises practical conduct to the utmost of his life and power in order to promote humanity, which is a good example for mankind to follow and to enhance wisdom. (53)

Ibn Kathīr states in detail laws to deal with the individual and <sup>the</sup> state. These may be summed up as follows: (a) love must dominate, (b) the rigidity of the law must bend before public exigencies, (c) that there must be a continuous search after justice. (d) that any act must be forbidden if its accomplishment causes more evil than good. This is the reason why no harm is allowed to be inflicted on any man without a just cause i.e. depriving of property, doing other evil, usurping rights, or doing any social and economic harm. He explains that each one of us has a personal responsibility for his own conduct. It is deeds that decide. So he draws the conclusion that the Qur'an is the most excellent code of individual and social ethics. (54)

Ibn Kathīr describes the effect of the Qur'an on the believers thus:- they are constantly in touch with God through adoration, they are attentive both in mind and manner to the signs of their

(53) Ibn Kathīr Tafsīr, vol.1. p.325; vol.2. p.489; vol.5.p437; vol.7. p.6.

(54) Ibid: vol.2. pp.201, 489f.; vol.6. p.566.

Lord, they steadfastly pursue their way, they are tolerant and humble, moderate in all things, and remember the Day of Judgement. They have no worldly and political motives. They shun treason or treachery to God, to mankind, and to themselves. They preach unity of God and mankind. (55)

Viewing the qualities of the Qur'ān as a whole we may refer to weitbrecht: "No bad man could possibly have conceived or promulgated so perfect and stringent (strict, rigid), a code of morals, or one so emphatically announcing the wrath of God upon hypocrisy and sin, as the Qur'ān is and does; and no good man would or could put forward such a work if he was not assured of its divine authority. The Prophet could not possibly, therefore have been an impostor, neither could he have been a mere enthusiast or fanatic, or a self deluded man, or one misled by others, for none of these could by any possibility, have produced a work like the Qur'ān, published in the manner in which it was, and possessing the characteristics it presents; neither could any of the<sup>s</sup> have lived the consistent, blameless, open life that the Prophet did." (56)

Viewing the belief in the Qur'ān, according to Ibn Kathīr it may be said that to Muslims, undoubtedly, the Qur'ān is the word

(55) Ibid: vol.6. pp.192f. and vols. referred in nos 53 & 54.

(56) H.U. Weitbrecht, quotes from "The Habl-al-Matīn" The Muslim World! vol.5. p.200.

of God revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, in Arabic. According to Him: the Qur'ān gave civilization, culture and justice to the uncivilized and unjust, dispelled the darkness of ignorance, declared war against the vices of society and against injustice done by humanity, taught equality, prohibited hoarding, suppressed avariciousness by introducing effective measures of collecting charity and alms, and forbade bloodshed except in defence. The Qur'ān imparted <sup>knowledge about</sup> civil, judicial, and criminal law to meet social, political, economic and ethical situations. It preached religious belief and practice and the forgotten lesson of the Oneness of God. He also believes that Qur'ānic teachings are perpetual. This seems quite true. In this respect Muhammad Iqbal refers to Goethe, who, while making a general review of Islam as an educational force, said: "You see this teaching never fails; with all our system, we cannot go, and generally speaking no man can go, further than that." (57)

(57) Iqbal: Reconstruction..Lahore 1930 p.11.

CHAPTER SEVEN

BELIEF IN THE PREDESTINATION OF GOOD AND EVIL.

It is incumbent on every Muslim to believe that Good and Evil occur by the Predestination and Predetermination of God, the exalted one. All that has been, and all that will be, is determined by God. It is inscribed from eternity on the Tablet Preserved. Some verses reflect that the faith of pious men and their actions were predestined. Similarly the denial of disbelievers and their good and bad actions were also written. The punishment of evils, and the rewards of good deeds, have already been fixed.

Douglas defines Predestination as:- "to arrange beforehand, to propose, to prepare beforehand, to appoint beforehand, and to choose beforehand, and God's purposes regarding the circumstances and destinies of men." (1)

In the Qur'ān, the words; taqdīr, (decree) Qadā (destiny), Qismat (fate or division) and 'mashī'ah (will) express the idea of Predestination. But the words 'Taqdīr or Qadar are generally used to serve the meaning. There is a slight difference between 'qadā' and qadar. According to general usage 'Qadā' signifies a general decree of God, such as that every living thing shall die; where as qadar signifies a particular decree of God, such as that a certain man shall die at a particular time and place, or a particular

(1) Douglas, The New Bible Dictionary, London 1962 p.1024.

Predestination. Thus 'al-Qaḍā' and al-Qadar' may be rendered as the general and particular decree of God; or general and particular predestination or fate and destiny. (L.L.) Mashī'ah means will, portion, destiny, fate, and <sup>si</sup>division. Qisma means fate or division. (L.L.) \*\*\*

Ibn Kathīr takes 'taqdīr' (predestination) in the general sense and divides it into two kinds; settled (mubram) and suspended (mu'allaq). As regards settled predestination, he holds that the rule of action for creature is fixed qualitatively and quantitatively. Therefore none can move forward and cross the limits prefixed. Every object of the universe is bound to work, inwardly and outwardly, in consonance with the conditions assigned to it by natural laws. The conditions may differ from time to time, but they are favourable to all physical and spiritual demands of growth and development. In this predestination, there is no distinction between animate and inanimate objects, and earthly and heavenly bodies, as far as the strictness of law is concerned. God says: "And the sun - it runs to a fixed resting-place; that is the ordaining of al-Mighty, the All-Knowing. And the moon - We have determined it by mansions, till it returns like an aged palm

\*\*\* Seale says: "Qaḍā and Qadar, which are invariably used to describe the doctrine in both speech and writing, standing for predestination or God's eternal decrees regarding human destiny. Qaḍā means deciding, commanding, judging, or discharging an obligation; while qadara means to measure, estimate, or assign, especially by measure (Muslim Theologym London 1964, p.36) Macdonald reviewing the various meanings of the term says: "the overwhelmingly accepted position makes Qaḍā, the universal, general and eternal decree, and qadar the individual development or application of that in time." (Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam pp.199f.)

bough. (36:37 and 38), and "Surely We have created everything in measure." (54:49) (2). Here it seems that the conception of 'taqdir' is linked with the conception of assessment, assignment, allotting a proper share according to certain principles.

As far as suspended predestination is concerned, it is meant specially for human beings. Ibn Kathīr holds that certain good deeds and supplication can increase the <sup>prescribed</sup> provision and add to the length of age. Some good acts can become the cause of a higher grade in heaven, and in contrast, some bad acts may become the cause of the lowest <sup>place</sup> in Hell. On supplication and prayers, God blots out what He wills, and confirms what He wills. It seems that man was given some freedom of choice, therefore he can act independently in certain cases and within certain limits. To prove his point, Ibn Kathīr refers to the verse "God blots out, and He established whatsoever He wills; and with Him is the Essence of the Book" (13:39) Umm-al-Kitāb (the Essence or mother of the Book), may be defined here <sup>as</sup> the original of all Divine decrees. (the Preserved Tablet.) Baidāwī interpreting the same verse, seems to have preceded Ibn Kathīr, as he says that God blots out

- (2) Ibn Kathīr Tafsīr vol.5. p.614f; and vol.6. p.479f. Similarly Husain (Indian) in Quintessence of Islam (Bombay 1958) on page 25, defines Taqdir Mubram thus: "Taqdir means the proper assessment of something and prescribing a certain state or condition of existence for it. Nothing can move outside the limits of fixed state. The planets cannot leave their orbits; the oceans cannot leave their bed; the birds cannot live in water and fish cannot exist inland; the tropical plants cannot be transplanted in the polar regions and the polar bear cannot survive near the equator. That is the destiny ordered by a wise and beneficent Maker. Every thing is equipped for life within its environment, and similarly every environment is so ordered that its products and effects are according to fixed laws, so that there is stable adjustment between the environment and the beings which exist in it and life is not endangered."

sins and evils from the scroll and keeps virtues and good things of a repentant. He also means that God blots out vicious things, or injurious things, and keeps good things. There appears little difference between the interpretation of Baidāwī when he refers to verses "He created everything then He ordained it very exactly" (25:3), and "God changes not what is in a people, until they change what is in themselves." (13:11) In the first verse he holds that man, his form, his memory and intellect are framed according to the will of God. In other verse he seems to believe that it is impossible to go against the will of God, therefore there can be no change in the decree. But in the midst of his interpretation of these verses he does not deny the possibility of free will given to man. Zamakhsharī, the exponent of free will, seems to believe in the settled decree, as he states that pleasure and graciousness will not change anything, and that whatever is written will happen. But Tabarī and Rāzī seem to confirm Ibn Kathīr's view. (3)

There is a concept of destiny, that man, within the limited circle of his life, is the absolute maker of his conduct. He is entirely responsible for his actions, and for the good and bad use of his powers or capabilities given to him by God. The following Tradition, transmitted by 'Ubayy ibn Ka'ab, illustrates the opinion held by the prophet in this connection:- "the most prosper-

(3) Ibn Kathīr vol.4. pp.101-102; vol.5. p.134 Zamakhsharī Tafsīr vol.2. p.136. Baidāwī, Tafsīr vol.13 p.484. Tabarī tafsīr, vol.13. p.115. Rāzī Tafsīr, vol.5. p.209.

ous man is he who becomes prosperous by his own exertions; and the most wretched man is he who becomes wretched by his own actions."

(4)

The view of changing predestination can also be confirmed by some of the authentic Traditions, which show some signs of change and transformation<sup>in</sup> men's mind and memories. The Holy Prophet says: "Every child is born religiously constituted; it is his parents who make him a Jew, Christian, and Magi", such as kid is born perfect but men cut its ear and deface it. (5)

Every man has two kinds of inclinations; one inducing him to bad and forcing him thereto, and the other, prompting him to good and forcing him to do it. In the Qur'ān occurs the verse, "We indeed created man; and We know what his soul whispers within him," (50:16). Ibn Kathīr assumes that there is by turn a whisper of angel and Satan for good and bad acts respectively. (6) From this assumption, the conclusion can be drawn that man has power to decide for good or for bad.

Certain instances also support this view. Once Caliph 'Umar gave double punishment to a man, who was found committing an evil act, and had said in his defence that he was right in doing this because it is decreed by God. A soldier who fought in the battle of Siffīn, enquired from 'Alī, "the Caliph, whether their going to

(4) A. 'Ali, Spirit of Islam, London 1965 p. 492.

(5) Ibn Kathīr, vol.5. p,359 (6) Ibid: vol.6. p.400.

Syria was the decree of God? 'Alī answered: "perhaps you consider predestination to be necessary, and the particular decree to be irreversible; if it were so, then would reward and punishment be in vain, and promise and threat of no account; and surely blame would not have come from God, for the sinner, nor praise for the righteous, nor would the righteous be more worthy of the reward of his good deeds than the wicked, nor the wicked be more deserving of the punishment of his sin than the righteous. Such remarks (savour) of the brethren of devils and the worshippers of idols and of the enemies of the Merciful, and those who bear witness of the falsehood and of those who are blind to the right in their concerns--the giving of choice (to men) and forbidden the putting (of them) in fear; and He hath not laid duties upon men by force, nor sent His prophets to impose His message. This is the notion of the unbelievers, and woe unto the unbeliever in Hell!" The man replied saying: "What is this predestination and particular decree which drove us"? 'Alī answered: The command of God therein and His purpose." The same sense contains the words of Imām Husayn: "Whoever makes his Lord responsible for his sin is a transgressor; God does not make people obey Him against their will, nor force them to sin against their will." (7)

The other view of 'taqdīr' which Ibn Kathīr mentions leaves no room or possibility of choice for man in any case. He brings man into the category of all animate and inanimate objects. According to him it seems that some objects enjoy perpetual rest,

and so in this way they fulfil the duties entrusted to them. God says: "Have We not made the earth as a cradle and the mountain as peg?" (78:3). Other objects are in constant motion, like sun and moon. The minimum course in winter and maximum course in summer have been fixed for the sun, and she cannot disobey the command of God. Similarly the mansions of the moon have been measured. As the rest of the earth and the mountains have some benefits for creatures, similarly the motion of the sun and the moon and other planets have also some benefits. With the rising and setting of the sun days and nights occur. The sun cannot rise at night and the night cannot follow a night. They have to obey the fixed rule. In the same way the destiny of birds and animals have also been fixed. For aquatic animals living and food is fixed in water and dryness will not suit them. For land animals there is everything on the earth. Water is unhealthy for them. (8).

As far as man is concerned, Ibn Kathīr seems to refuse the freedom of choice for him as well. Citing the verse "Magnify the name of the Lord and Most High Who created and shaped, Who determined and guided." (87:1). He explains that God determined the destiny of creatures beforehand and everything is written. He narrates that 'Atā Ibn Rabāh came to Ibn 'Abbās when the latter was

(7) A. 'Alī op. cit. pp.492-493. W.H. Dray said in Determinism "According to socrates every man always chooses what, seems to him best, that no man can set as the object of his choice something that seems evil or bad to him. Plato had much the same view, arguing that no man who knows what is good can possible choose anything else. The Encyclopædia of Philosophy London 1967 vol.2. p.359.

(8) Ibn Kathīr op.cit. vol.5. p.615 and 616.

was drawing water from the well of 'Zamzam' and his clothes were wet. 'Atā told Ibn Abbās that men were talking about predestination and divided themselves into two groups; for and against. Then Ibn 'Abbās read the verse "taste ye the touch of scorching (8:50) and said these are the worst men. Do not attend them when they are sick; do not join their funeral. Ibn Kathīr referring to Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal' states a Tradition that "there are Magi in every nation, and the Magi of my nation are those who deny 'taqdīr'. If they fall ill, do not attend them, and if some one of them dies, do not join his funeral. If there is punishment in the 'umma', the victims will be atheists and those who deny 'taqdīr' (9). Ibn Kathīr referring to an unknown authority states that fifty thousand years, or limitless time, before the creation of man destiny was written. He cites that on the illness of 'Abdallah ibn Sāmit, his son asked for advice, whereupon he said: "Believe in good and evil from God. What is written you must get and what is not written you cannot get at all. (10)

It appears that God's predestined decision is unquestionable; Hence it seems that good and evil, riches and poverty, adversity and prosperity, eminence and lowliness, honour and dishonour, virtue and vice have all been predecided, and man can do nothing to alter them. St. Auḡustine says "God worketh in us both to will and to do." (11)

(9) Ibid vol.6. p.479f. The Prophet says "People will not cease <sup>izin</sup>scrutiny, till they shall say: "Here is Allah, The Creator of all things, but who has created Him". Seale op. cit. p.54. (10) Ibn Kathir, vol.7.p.269 cf Sale op. cit. p.54. (11) See Dray "Determinism" The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy London 1970 vol.2. p.363.

Ibn Kathīr's interpretation is confirmed by a Tradition of Mishkāt-al-Maṣābiḥ in which Ādam states to Moses, that his fall from heaven was predestined: "The Prophet of God said that Adam and Moses debated before God, and Ādam got the better of Moses, who said: Thou art that Ādam, whom God created and breathed into thee His own Spirit, and made the angels bow<sup>down</sup> before thee, and placed thee in Paradise; after which, thou threwest man upon the earth, from the fault which thou didest commit." Ādam replied: "Thou art that Moses, whom God selected for His prophecy and to converse with, and He gave thee twelve tablets, in which are explained all things, and He made thee His confidant and the bearer of His secrets," "then how long was the Bible written before I was created?" Moses said, "Forty years. Then said Ādam: "Didest thou see in the Bible that Ādam disobeyed God? 'yes'. Dost thou reproach me on a matter which God wrote in the Bible before creating me?". (12)

Bukhārī and Muslim mention a Tradition, which refers to men's life span, his sustenance, his sex, the decision about his<sup>i</sup> position in the world, his eternal destiny whether Hell or Paradise, saying that all of these are predetermined. This process is completed when the embryo is in the womb and is gaining hearing, sight, skin, flesh and bones. The scroll is with the angel and nothing is added or subtracted from it. God says "No affliction falls, except it be by the leave<sup>v</sup> of God." (64:11) and "No female bears or

(12) Mishkāt (Tran. by Robson) London 1963 vol.1. p.23 cf. Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.1. p.120 op.cit. p.270.

brings forth, save with His knowledge, and none is given long life neither is any diminished in his life, but it is in a Book." (13) (35:11)

Wensinck cites a Tradition from Muslim which also refers to predestination of Hell and Paradise. "It may be that one of you performs the work of the people of Paradise, so that between him and Paradise there is only the distance of an arm's length. Then his book overtakes him and he begins to perform the work of the people of Hell, the which he will enter." (14)

The other interpretation of verse (13:39) mentioned above, Ibn Kathīr seems to describe as referring to the problem of abrogation, having nothing to do with Destiny. So he says that previous books were for a specific period, and these have been abrogated by the Qur'ān and their order and commandments are no more practicable after the establishment of the Qur'ān. His interpretation also receives support from Baidāwī, Zamakhsharī, Rāzī and Tabarī. (15) Because of this interpretation, it is hardly to be expected that there could be any solution. This gives the impression that man is nothing but a mere tool in the hands of God or a slave to destiny and devoid of all privileges which intellect demands.

(13) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr vol.4. pp 615f. Referring to Bukhārī and Muslim, Ibn Kathīr narrates a large Tradition. cf. Wensinck op. cit. p.54.

(14) Wensinck op.cit. p.55 Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr vol.4. p.103.

(15) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.4. pp.102f and 120 Tabarī, Tafsīr vol 13 p.115 Zamakhsharī, Tafsīr, vol.2. p.136 al Rāzī Tafsīr vol 5 p.209 Baidāwī, Tafsīr vol.2. p.484.

'Ash'arī ~~confirms~~ Ibn Kathir's view thus: "Nothing exists upon the earth, be it good or bad, but that which God wills...good and evil happen according to destiny (Qaḍā) and decree (Qadar) of God for good or evil".(16) The 'Ash'arites give the following reason for their stand: "If man is the causer of an action by the force of his own will, then he should also have the power of controlling the result of that action. (b) If it be granted that man has the power to originate an act, it is necessary that he should know all acts, because a creator should be independent in act and choice. Intention must be conditioned by knowledge. (f) Suppose a man wills to move his body, and God at the same time wills it to be steady, then, if both intentions come to pass, there will be a collection of opposites; if neither, a removal of opposites; (d) if the exaltation (preference) of the first, an unreasonable preference. If man can create an act, some of his work will be better than some of the works of God E.g. a man determines to have faith: now faith is a better thing than <sup>the</sup>reptile (crawling creature), which are created by God. (e) If man is free to act, why can he not make at once a human body? why does he need to thank God for grace and faith.?"(17)

W.H. Dray says: "logic alone suggests that men's wills are fettered, that nothing is really in their power to alter." He supports this thus: "In theology there is the concept of God who is among other things, perfectly good, Omniscient, and Omnipotent and upon whom, moreover, the entire world and everything in it, down to

(17) Sell, op.cit., pp.271f.

(16) Macdonald op. cit., p.295.

the minutest details, are absolutely dependant for existence and character."..."God must know in advance every action that every man is ever going to perform, including of course, every sin he will ever commit. If, this is so, then how, for example, a man can forego those sins which God, when He created the man, knew he would commit. The concise way of expressing this point is to say that: (a) If God knows that a man shall perform a certain act at a certain time, and (b) if <sup>a</sup> man nevertheless <sup>is</sup> able to forgo that act when the time for performing it arrives, then (c) it follows that a man is at least able to confute an item of divine knowledge, whether or not he actually does so. That conclusion, of course, is absurd. The second premise, accordingly must be false if the first is true." (18)

According to the above different statements it seems that everything is predetermined. Muhammad Iqbal indirectly supporting the statements says: "Events do not happen; we simply meet with them. What we call future events are not fresh happenings but things created in unknown space." (19).

Walī-al-Rahmān cites Iqbāl who critic~~ises~~ theologians and says "The theological controversy about predestination is due to pure speculation with no eye on spontaneity of life, which is a fact of actual experience. It is in fact a kind of ~~world~~ materialism, leaving no space for human and even divine freedom."..."Life without a free nature is not life. Transcending this world of quality.

(18) Dray "Determinism" op.cit., pp.360ff.

(19) Iqbāl, Reconstruction....., p.53.

and quantity, it moves from determinism towards freedom." (20)  
It appears most probable that, if the concept of man's freedom is accepted, then it would be possible to prove the justification of the creation of good and evil, Hell and Heaven and the law of punishment and reward.

Coming back to Ibn Kathīr We find that Ibn Kathīr mentions some Traditions which refer to change in predestination. He describes how in a Hajj<sup>a</sup> (pilgrimage) 'Umar was weeping bitterly and praying "O! God if thou hath written sin in my predestination blot it out, You can blot out whatever You like and establish whatsoever You will. "He refers to Shaqīq bin Salma who entreated "O! God efface my name from the list of <sup>the</sup> vicious if it is there, and enlist me among the virtuous. You are almighty, and can do whatever You will." On Shaqīq's authority, he reports that all kinds of acts and speech are written, but words and acts not liable to reward and punishment are effaced. God effaces what He wills, and affirms what He wills. He states that prayers, supplications, good relations with kinsfolk and virtue can efface something from the tablet and increase provision and vice versa. He describes that on the night of power, miseries, troubles and pleasures are written. (21) Referring to Salim who was in prison, he says that he read some verses due to which he could escape from the prison (22).

(20) W. Raḥmān, Article, Iqbāl's Doctrine of Destiny, Islamic Culture, April 1939 vol.13. p.152.(Hyderabad)

(21) Ibn Kathīr vol.4. pp.101, 102, 103 and vol.7. p.38.

(22) <sup>38</sup>vol.7. page. 38.

From these interpretations it seems that man has free will to act but to make things effective is in the hands of God. The decision to efface or to affirm rests with God alone.

The following verse points to free will given to man. "God changes not what is in a people, until they change what is in themselves." (13:11) Ibn Kathīr states that God says: "If the inhabitants of a cou<sup>n</sup>try or a house were doing insolence against Him, but then they leave mischief and obey God, He saves them from punishment and gives them a place under His blessing and provides them with happiness." (23) But the context of the verse reads that it gives limited freedom. Such type of limited freedom is also supported by the 'Ash'arites. It also gives some satisfaction to the 'Mu'tazilites who believe: "that if a man has no power to will or to do, then what is the difference between praising God, and sinning against Him; between faith and infidelity; good and evil; what is the use of commands and prohibitions; rewards and punishments; promises and threats; what is the use of Prophets and books." (24)

Ibn Kathīr refers to other verses, which favour his interpretations regarding the freedom of choice to man. For instance; he says that God sent the Prophet to proclaim His message regarding prohibitions and permissions, and God is Himself witness to it. According to Him, the coming of the Prophet is the main proof of freedom. God says: "And We have sent thee to men a messenger; God suffices for a witness." (4:79) He also refers to the verse "And

(23) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr vol.4. p.75. (24) Sell <sup>p.271.</sup> op.cit. cf. Sweetman vol.2. part 2. p.163.

guided him on the two highways." (90:10) Ibn Kathīr maintains on the authority of the Prophet that God showed man two ways i.e. the way of good and the way of evil, then why does man choose the evil way. An<sup>c</sup>idental interpretation is made by al-Rāzī. (25)

Now, from the Qur'anic verses, it appears that God does not compel anyone to choose one way or another. The Qur'an only points to the way, and leaves the matter of choice to man. God says: "Surely We guided him up on the way whether he be thankful or unthankful." (76:3) But where the will of man has been stated as being subject to God's will, it may be supposed to be subject to divine law. The will of God is itself the law and not an arbitrary thing. God says: "It is not but a reminder unto all things, for whosoever of you who would go straight; but will you shall not, unless God will," (81:28-29). For guidance, revelation from God, and the acceptance of the reminder by men is necessary. If God had not willed revelation, man's choice would have been no where. Revelation pointed to the ways, and gave man a chance to adopt one way or another. Moreover man has the capacity to understand God's order and to obey Him, so he is liable to be judged on the basis of his use of intellect and reason, otherwise it would be difficult to draw the distinction between man and other creatures. But "The term 'good and evil' may be used in different senses.... what concerns us is how they are related to future reward and punishment, but this is not for reason to judge but God's law." (26).

(25) Ibn Ka-thīr vol.2. p.344 vol.7. pp.225-226. and Rāzī Tafsīr, vol.8. p.465.

(26) Seale op,cit., p.25.

A glimpse of freedom of will given to man is found in Iqbal's writing. He says: "that a destiny pre-exists as an open possibility and a reality not as a fixed order of events with definite outline. Man can choose anything out of these possibilities. So he is master of his own destiny. If he is not satisfied with one group of possibilities, he can easily give it up, and choose some other in its stead. This is quite possible, for the destinies of the Lord are infinite." (27)

According to Ibn Kathīr man's destiny depends on the use of his power of intellect, he can create problems and solve them with the help of knowledge, intellect and sense. Therefore his destiny can be considered to be acquired and not congenital (28) Hence it may be said that destiny is man's nature's inward infinite possibilities, which require to be explored. It is changeable if man wants to change it, and God will come to his help: "God changes not what is in a people, until they change what is in themselves" (13:11)

From this it is gathered that man has full freedom to choose and reject a thing. It is undoubtedly true that man enjoys freedom but restricted within certain limits. The type of restriction may be that which Ibn Kathīr has described, i.e. free in his choice of actions, but restricted to certain limits bound by the physical universal laws. Moreover it cannot be said that all possibilities are attainable to man.

(27) Quoted by W. Raḥmān in Islamic culture vol.13. p.151.

(28) Ibn Kathīr Tafṣīr vol.6. pp.321f vol.4. p.75 vol.5. p.172.

Ibn Rushd tries to bring some harmony between both compulsion and freedom. He adopts a middle position to solve the problem of destiny, both related to compulsion and acquirement. He says: "that 'shari'a' is not partisan (not concerned with the difference between two beliefs), but its aim is to reconcile the two, and adopt the middle position, which is the truth of the matter. He describes the solution thus: God created for us powers by which we are able to acquire things which are opposites. But since the acquisition of those things is not completed except by the <sup>con</sup>course of causes which Allah has set to work for us from outside, and the absence of hindrance from acquiring them, the acts relative to building are perfected by two things co-operating, and if this is so, performing the acts attributed to us is completed by our willing and the congruity of the acts which are from without. The action expresses the intention by the ordination of Allah; and these causes which Allah has set to work from outside are not solely the complete causes of what we wish to do or prevent being done, but are rather the causes of our deciding to do one of two alternatives.....And this connection between our acts and causes which are from outside is not the sole connection, but rather between them and the causes which Allah has created in the inside of our bodies and those which do not indwell the body, this is 'Qadā' and 'qadar' (29) And Allah knows these causes, and their consequences, as He is the cause of the existence of these causes

(29) Sweetman: Islam and Christian Theology: London 1965 p.163f.

and therefore the knowledge of these causes is not comprehended except by Allah Himself alone, and so it is He alone Who is the Knower of the unseen reality. Therefore the knowledge of the causes is the knowledge of the unseen, because it is the knowledge of the objects of existence in the future before they exist. Probably he meant to confess faith without probing inaccessible rational enquiries.

Ibn Rushd expresses the view that God is the main cause, other causes are metaphorically called effective (agent) because they owe their existence to God, Who made them effective, and they share with Allah in the creation as agent, like sharing the pen with the scribe. They are said to be causes, just as some times it is said that the pen is writing, when it is clear that the force behind the pen is making it write. To explain or solve this enigma he says: "The human seed gains nothing but heat from the woman and the blood of menstruation, but the creation of foetus and the soul which is its life, only Allah confers. So also the farmer only manures the earth, or improves its tilth, and sows seed in it. But as to the one who confers the creation of the ear of corn, this is Allah. (30)

(30) Ibid: p.166-167. Abū Ḥanīfa in order to show slight freedom of will, tries to draw distinction between God's will and His pleasure. He is not pleased with sin, but He must will it or it could never happen, because He could not be disobeyed against His will. Sin is not in accordance with His preordained decision; not in accordance with His good pleasure, yet in accordance with His ordaining and creating; not in accordance with his help, yet in accordance with His abandoning and His 'ilm; yet not in accordance with His ma'rifa yet in accordance with His writing on the preserved tablet Wansinck op. cit. p.126 Li Wen Lan in 'The Correct Foundation of Religion' (Trans. Osaac, aspm) The Muslim World July 1919 vol.9 on p.287, says If it be asked "If good and evil are predestined, why God has appointed heaven and hell or the respective places where (cont.

Ibn Rushd's views nullify the views of pagan philosophers, who did not believe in some divine power behind human actions. B.B. Warfield says "Several pagan philosophers, such as Epicurus, denied ~~in~~ ~~by~~ the Divine superintendence of human affairs, and this human self sufficiency was echoed by latter day Jews. The Sadducees among them held that there was no such thing as 'fate' and that human actions were not directed according to it, but all actions are in our power, so that we are ourselves the causes of what is good." (31) Now according to Ibn Rushd it seems clear that every action, big or small, that comes to pass in the world is mostly the out-come of God, through every process of the working of nature.

Ibn Kathīr illustrates this point; a man becomes proud over the success of his slightest effort, but when he fails, he becomes distressed and disheartened. Both of these attitudes are moral and ethical diseases. In case of failure, man loses patience and perseverance, and in case of success, he ascribes this success to himself and forgets God. Therefore 'taqdīr' is necessary in order to remind man of God in the moment of his success, and to enhance his courage in the moment of defeat. It reminds him that both success and failures are from God. Pride and boasting, sorrow and grief are futile. The Qur'an appeals to the latent goodness of man to keep patience <sup>and</sup> to continue the struggle. God (30 cont.) the good and evil people go to? "We reply; "Good and evil are of God's fixing; wisdom and freedom are left with men."

(31) Hasting "Article Predestination" Dictionary of Bible, Edinburgh 1902 vol.4 p. 53 cf. Sweetman, op.cit., p.1. vol.2. p.40.

says: "Naught of disaster befalleth in the earth or in yourselves but it is in the Book before We bring it into being - Lo! that is easy for God that ye grieve not for the sake of that which hath escaped you, nor you exalt because of the favours bestowed upon you. (57:22-23) (32)

The Prophet Muhammad used to feel humble at the moment of success, and he did not feel disappointed at the moment of failure, because he knew that time is fixed for all types of consequences. He believed in firmness, and not in disappointment, difficulties and fear of death. God says: "No soul can ever die except by God's leave and at a time appointed" (3:145), say: "Naught befalleth us save that which God hath decreed for us." (9:51), and "say even though ye had been in your houses, those appointed to be slain would have gone forth to the places where they were to lie." (3:153) (33)

Thus it is clear that life and death are in the hands of God. It is He Who issueth decrees and commands, which no one can change. Perhaps this is the reason why believers found vigour and courage in the battlefield. They were not merely silent on the word of 'taqdir' but continued efforts for the application of God's injunctions. They faced difficulties and troubles bravely, as they knew that the time for death is fixed. The Prophet was an example for them, and his teaching was in full harmony with his practice.(34)

(32) Ibn Kathīr Tafsīr vol.6. pp.564-565...(33) Ibid vol.2.p.121....  
(34) Ibid.

Man does only that for which he is created. God says: "Man has only that for which he makes effort. And that his effort will be seen." (53:39). But if the effort is not paid for in this world, then it will be rewarded in hereafter. God. says: "And the latter portion will be better for thee than the former." (93:4) Punishment and reward are for good and bad deeds. For a good deed there is a reward of guidance, and for a bad deed there is a punishment of deviation. God says : "And those who strive in Us, We surely guide them in Our path." (29:69), and "And He misleadth miscrea<sup>n</sup>ts (2:26) (or transgressors) (35).

Now, firstly man can do nothing without the will of God, and secondly, God has given some special privileges to man so that he may comply with His order, depending on his reason and intellect which can bring him either praise or condemnation. He is liable to be questioned for his deeds by other men in this world, and by God in the Hereafter. This is the reason why Prophets were sent to teach men the need for obeying God and carrying out His commands with intention." "Actions shall be judged only by intention." (36)

God comp<sup>e</sup>ls no one to do a bad deed. God says: "Then whosoever will, let him believe, and whosoever will let him disbelieve. (18:29

(35) those who like to go astray, or those who habitually depart from the bounds of obedience, or confirmed sinner and transgressor.

(36) First Tradition of 'Bukhari'.

"Lo! We wrong not mankind in aught; but mankind wrong themselves (10:44). Moreover it is also clear from Ibn Kathīr's point of view that it is disbelief that brings the wrath of God. So it seems that disbelief is the cause of God's punishment. But those who try to understand and have faith in God and do good deeds, God will increase their faith. God says: Lo! those who believe and do good work their Lord guideth them by their faith." (10:9), and "As for those who walk aright, He addeth to their guidance, and giveth them their protection (against evil) (47:16)

In Arabic Khair means wealth, blessing, and ease, and sharr means poverty, trouble, and when the word 'amal' is used with them it means good or bad work, or easy or troublesome work for one and for others. As deeds may be either beneficial or troublesome they are therefore liable to reward and punishment. God says: "And whoso doeth good an atom's weight will see it then, and whoso doeth ill an atom's weight will see it then," (99:7-8).

Viewing these facts, it seems that man's actions are the cause of misguidance, disease, and other harmful consequences. God's action is only to show the effect of man's actions. (37)

Avicenna referring to Sūfis, Prophets, and 'Alī explains 'taqdīr' thus: "To make known the secrets of Predestination is an

(37) Ibn Kathīr Tafsīr vol.7. p.349-351.

act of heresy", (b) It is a mystery "Prophet says: "Predestination is the secret of God do ye not disclose God's secret," Ali says: "It is a hard road do not tread it", "It is a deep sea do not embark upon it," and third time said "It is an arduous ascent: do not undertake it." Hence Avicenna believing in the secrets of Predestination says: (a) It is an obscure problem: because the Hereafter is unseen. (b) Rewards and punishments are unknown. But he says: "God is the cause of its being and its origination in time, that God has knowledge of it and disposes it, and that God wills it to exist. According to him the world is the composition of good and evil forces, and the product of both righteousness and corruption in its inhabitants. So every element will bear the effect. Moreover, explaining reward and punishment, he says: "Reward is the supervening of a certain pleasure in the soul according to the degree to which it achieves perfection, while "punishment is the supervening of a certain pain in the soul according to the degree to which it remains imperfect." So to him, the pleasure of God is perfection, and the anger of God is an imperfection. Logically supporting his argument he says: Good only is purposed, evil is annihilation". So therefore there is a commandment to do good and to refrain from things forbidden. The commandment is the cause of the act happening, which can be known to them, who know that it has some effect useful to them. The prohibition is the cause of abstention from an act for those who are

repelled from wickedness for that reason. He also deems ~~to~~  
~~understand~~ 'taqdīr' as unimaginable, therefore it may be supposed  
that all things related to it may be recondite and obscure. (38)

Despite all that Ibn Kathīr says about predestination he  
apparently feels some reluctance in speaking of it and quotes  
that Ibn 'Abbās once said on the pulpit: that the Prophets said  
"This 'Umma will remain in peace and safety as long as they do  
not discuss the matters of 'Taqdīr' and about the future life of  
children. (39) Possibly these teachings, may be due to the fact  
that any logical discussion about this problem, about the verses  
of the Qur'ān, and the other Scriptures related to the  
subject will carry no fruit. The conclusion, of course, is that  
Ibn Kathīr is of the opinion on this subject, believing both that  
men are free and that all their actions are causally determined.

(38) Arberry A.J. "Avicenna On Theology" Pp.38 to 42 London 1951.

(39) Ibn Kathīr, vol.4. p.295.

CHAPTER EIGHT

BELIEF IN THE LAST DAY AND THE RESURRECTION

It is incumbent on every Muslim to believe in the Last Day and the Resurrection. The conditions of which are such that the eyes have not seen, nor the ears have heard of, nor could a mind conceive. Revelation imparts its knowledge in a language of metaphor and symbol illustrated in a manner of similitude.

The Last Day is supposed to be the end of the whole universe, when all animate and inanimate objects on heaven and earth shall pass away. It also includes belief in all the conditions that will occur after death until eternity. The Muslim says "We believe in God and the Last Day." (2:8)

The use of word of al-ākhirā, the other part, in contrast to al-'ūlā, the first and al-dunyā, the nearer, and the use of al-ākhirā along with al-hayāt in contrast to al-hayāt-al-dunyā signifies the Last Day, or life Hereafter, which includes all events and occurrences that come to pass, from the moment of death till eternity. Also the use of dār-al-ākhirā and dār-al-dunyā agree with the above sense. (1)

Moreover, the Last Day has various names in the Qur'ān, some of these imply Resurrection and Judgement and others signify the

(1) See verses 14:26; 23:33; 29:63; 2:220; 6:3; 16:107; 41:31; 79:25; and for significance and names of the Last Day 7:186, 48:49, 62; 2:7, 10, 44, 25, 278; 1:3, 71; 6:7, 40; 31:34; 40:32; 41:47; 43:85; 78:38; 40; 76:7; 11:100; 81:7; 77:45; 1:1.....

annihilation of the universe. For instance; the Day of Judgement, yawm-al-dīn, (1:3) the Day of Reckoning, yawm-al-hisāb, (60:28), the Day of Separation, yawm-al-fāsl (77:14), the Day of Threat or Promise, yawm-al-wa'īd or maw'ūd, (85:2; 50:20), and the Last Time, al-sā'at-al-akhira, and the Last Day al-yawm-al-akhir.

The word yawm joined with al-ākhir occurs 26 times, signifying the Hereafter, and it is joined with other words more than 20 times to express the nature of the day. Al-sā'a occurs four times to denote the meaning of the end of the universe, with the expression that no one could escape from the effect of the Day, whether men or women, believer or unbeliever. All of them would be caused to die and those liable to account will be raised to life again. (\*)

From these mingled names it seems difficult to differentiate between <sup>different</sup> states after death. But according to Ibn Kathīr's numerous interpretations, the Last Day may be divided into an intermediatery period of Resurrection and Judgement, and then the last abode of Paradise and Hell.

According to Ibn Kathīr death is of two kinds: al-wafāt-al-sughrā and al-wafāt-al-kubrā. It may be explained thus: The spirit, which may be called an atom of light, has a three-fold

(\*) The titles and the contents of Suras 81, 82, 83, 84, and 55 intimate the idea of the Last Day.

relation with the body; when it gives light internally and externally it may be called life, when it stops giving light to external senses for a period of time and continues to give it internally it may be called sleep, which Ibn Kathīr names <sup>as</sup> wafāt-al-sughrā, and when the circulation of light stops internally and externally it is called death, which according to Ibn Kathīr is <sup>called</sup> wafāt-al-kubrā. (2)

Death comes at the time appointed by God. No one can delay it or anticipate it, nor shall it come before or after that time. God says: "It is not given to any soul to die, save by the leave of God, at an appointed time." (3:145) So when death happens it may be considered the beginning of the Last Day for an individual.

As regards the Last Day for the universe, it is described as happening unexpectedly, (3) but the time of its occurrence is known to God alone. God says: "They ask you of the (destined) Hour, when will it come to pass. Say: knowledge thereof is with my Lord only!" (7:187) According to Ibn Kathīr the lesser signs of the approach of the Day are; declining faith among men, usurpation of eminent dignity by the unworthy, increase of immorality, seditions, famine, plague, and all sorts of afflictions in the world. The greater signs are; the sun's rising in the west, the coming of Antichrist, the advent of Christ, the down thrust of land in the Arabian

(2) Ibn Kathīr Tafsīr, vol.1. p.131; vol.3. p.32; vol.6. p96.

(3) See verses 31:34; 7:186; 43:85; 53:58; 41:47; 16:79; 12:107; 22:54; 43:66; 29:53; and so on.

peninsula, and in the East and in the West of the world, the breaking out of fire in Eden, in order to drive them towards one place. It follows them day and night. The appearance of Goğ and Magog, bodily unbalanced creatures. The appearance of the beast of earth (dabbatu-al-Ard) of a strange shape. The appearance of smoke and its constant covering of the sky, staying in the universe for forty days. It will affect both believers and unbelievers. (4) Ibn Kathīr also reports from 'Ubayy ibn Ka'b that the sun ceases to give light suddenly, stars break down, mountains fall on the earth, the earth trembles, men, jinn, and beast will come together, and animals which used to run from men and beast will come near to them. In this state of affairs man will not care even for his dearest thing. At last the earth will split asunder, and so too the sky. There will be nothing but fire every where even in the sea. (5)

Al-Tabarī, al-Zamakhsharī, and al-Baidāwī prefer to interpret the word smoke (al-Dukhān) as the famine which hit Mecca whereas Ibn Kathir prefers to interpret it as a sign of the Last Day. It seems very likely that his interpretation gets support from the context of the Qur'ān. The following verse seems most probably affirming it as the sign for the Last Day. "But watch thou (O! Muhammad) for the day when the sky will produce visible smoke.

(4) Ibn Kathīr Tafsīr, vol.5. pp255ff. 258, and vol 6. pp248ff 251.

(5) Ibid. vol.7. pp 221-2-3 cf. N.T. Revelation! 9 and 12; Psalm of David; 9:16-17; 22:1-2; chapter 49 and 50; Mark 12:18-24; Acts 23; Mathew 22:31-32; Luke 20:27.

That will envelop the people. This will be a painful torment." (44:10-11). According to this version, it appears that the smoke will be visible to human eyes. Ibn Kathīr is also inclined to regard the smoke as referring to the famine which hit Qur'aish before the Hijrah and after. He deems that it was similar to the famine which visited Egypt during the days of Joseph (6).

These signs may be supposed to be prophetic references in metaphorical language, pointing to the horrors of war, which destroy humanity (7), or to other calamities, which are sent sometimes for the punishment of <sup>a</sup>stray people, and sometimes to efface them from the face of the earth.

Ibn Kathīr states that after the complete appearance of these signs, the Last Day will follow, the blowing of the Trumpet by an

- (6) Ibid: vol.6. p.246 cf. Tabarī, al-Zamakhsharī, and al-Baidawī! vol. 25 p.66. vol.3. p.88; vol.2. p.245 respectively.
- (7) The third volume of Bertrand Russell's auto-biography is dominated by the philosopher's constant fear that mankind will destroy itself by nuclear warfare. He says: "It was obvious to me that a nuclear war would put an end to civilisation. It was also obvious that unless there were a change of policies in both East and West a nuclear war was sure to occur sooner or later. The dangers were in the back of my mind from the early 1920's" London 1969. p. The scientific development in biological and chemical warfare is even more dangerous. Evrin, M.S. also expresses similar views to E. Russell's in Eschatology in Islam.\* Moreover, scientists believe that the solar system, based on gravitational attraction will one day come to an end as the sun is gradually losing its heat. When it completely loses its heat, the planets may lose their equilibrium and ~~leave orbit and~~ collide with each other and smash. \* Istanbul 1960 p1ff.

angel, Isrāfīl, who is always ready to accomplish his appointed duty. The sound of the first Trumpet will stun all creatures in heaven and earth, except those whom God spares, but then after the stunning time all creatures will die including angels. But after a short while Isrāfīl will be raised to life, then he will blow the second or the last trumpet, which will bring <sup>to life</sup> the angels and other creatures who are required to give an account of their deeds. Then their reckoning will commence. (8) Ibn Kathīr also refers to three trumpets; the first of terror, second of death, and the third of Resurrection, and judgement. This interpretation is against the text of the Qur'ān. God says: "For the Trumpet shall be blown and whosoever is in the earth shall swoon, save whom God wills. Then it shall be blown again, and lo, they shall stand beholding." (39:68). But he receives support from al-Rāzī, al-Tabarī, al Zamakhsharī, and al-Baidāwī who refer to only two Trumpets. (9)

#### THE INTERMEDIATE STATE.

The interval between the Trumpet of death and the Trumpet of Resurrection is known as Barzakh in the terminology of the Qur'ān. For the individual this period may begin just after his death, but for the universe it begins after the Trumpet of death and it continues to the Resurrection.

(8) Ibn Kathīr Tafsīr vol.6. p.110-111

(9) Ibid vol.5. pp.259, 260 cf Al-Tabarī vol.24 p.21 al-Rāzī vol6 p.422 al-Zamakhsharī vol.2. p.24 and al-Baidāwī vol.2. p.24 respectively.

The word barzakh which denotes this period, occurs thrice in the Qur'an. According to Ibn Kathir it means barrier. He refers to the verse "And there, behind them, is a barrier until the day that they shall be raised up." (23:100) (10) Lane in his Lexicon defines barzakh in the Qur'anic sense as the interval between the present life and that which is to come, from the period of death to the Resurrection, upon which he who dies enters. (L.L.)

Ibn Kathir refers to the similarity between these three worlds; the world, the barzakh, the resurrection and judgement, So far as the punishment and reward are concerned. He explains that God guides believers to piety and tells them to follow His commands and to speak the truth, without confounding truth with vanity. When their hearts accept piety and their tongues speak the truth, then God favours them to do good and forgives their sins. But if they do wrong God will punish them in the shape of misery, trouble, fighting, war, imprisonment, famine, and so on. This worldly punishment includes both physical and mental punishment for some current acts. In the grave, as there is no scope to do good or bad deeds, so there is only punishment for the deeds done in the world, as most of the acts are not punished in the world. (11)

(10) Ibid vol.5. p158 vol.6. p.488 The verses "He set between them a barrier, and a ban forbidden." (25:53), and "Between them a barrier they do not overpass." (55:20), also support Ibn Kathir's definition.

(11) Ibid: vol.5. p 521.

The punishment in the grave is only a mild experience of the punishment to come after resurrection, and is for a temporary period. But reward and punishment after resurrection will be stiff and mighty. God says: "But We shall chastise them twice, then they will be returned to a mighty chastisement." (9:101)(12).

Imām Ghazālī holds that the world of the grave is similar to the world of sleep, so far as mental reward and punishment are concerned. He supports his view with an example. He says that in dreams we see things which exist in our common sense, but watchfulness forbids us to think about them because we consider them as useless thoughts. For instance; a person choleric by nature dreams himself in a jungle where it is summer and a hot wind is blowing. All of a sudden the jungle catches fire. He tries to run away and escape but cannot because he is surrounded, in the midst of bushes. So he is burnt. On the other hand, a man who is cold dreams that he is in a boat in a cold wintry night, running in a river flowing with cold water. The severely cold wind creates waves which turn the boat upside down. He is on the point of drowning, He tries to save himself in this adverse situation, but in vain. So he is drowned, in the dream, and feels severe pain. Hence the rewards and punishments of barzakh are like dreaming with the only difference that after a dream one gets up, whereas in the grave one cannot awake till resurrection. (13)

(12) Ibid vol.3. pp.446f. . . (13) Imam Ghazālī, al-Iqtisād, Ankara 1962 pp.215ff and Katab -al-Madnun Cairo (No date) p.17f. cf. Wali-Allah Hujjat-allah-al-Baligha! Lahore - 1957 p.63.

Ibn Kathīr maintains that the only similarity between the spirit of the dead and the sleeper is that; (a) they are taken from the body, (b) the spirits of the dead and the spirits of the sleepers come to one place, (c) they are introduced to each other, (d) they remain with God until He wills. He sends back the spirits of sleepers but keeps with Himself the spirits of the dead. He refers to the verse: "God takes the souls at the time of their death, and that which has not died, in its sleep; He withholds that against which He has decreed death, but sends back other till a stated term." (39:42) (14). It seems that there is no fixed place for residence of spirits in barzakh, and the same may be said about their dress.

Ibn Qaiyam (751/1350) differs slightly with Ibn Kathīr as he classifies spirits into; punished and favoured. "The punished ones are too preoccupied to visit and meet one another. The favoured spirits are free to visit and confer together on their former life in the world, and on the present affairs of the people of the world" He describes some stories which reveal that the dead appeared to the survivor in sleep and instructed him about several matters. According to him 'this association holds good in the world, in al-Barzakh, in the abode of recompense.' (15)

(14) From Ibn Kathīr: Tafsir! vol.6. pp.96-97.

(15) Kitāb-al-Rūh (translated by Cooke.) Muslim World vol. 25 pp 131 and 132.

From Ibn Kathīr's interpretation it seems that mental pleasure or pain, similar to barzakh begins before death. He reports that when a man is in the pangs of death, angels come to him to take out his soul from the body. They treat believers quite differently. They say to the disbelievers yield your soul. They also say to their souls to come to the hot air, hot water, and hot shades. The soul refuses to come out for fear of doom and love of the world. So it begins to move into the body to escape from them. Then angels smite at the faces of disbelievers and the soul yields and comes out. If it does not yield they pull it out by force as the skin is pulled up from the body. They wrap it in a rough coarse cloth, which they bring with them when they come out to take out the soul. At the moment of the death of a believer, the angels come to him and say O! pure soul in the pure body, come towards the blessings of God and His rewards. They encourage believers by saying that they are going into a permanent abode, they tell them not to worry and think about property and kinsfolk left behind, because to guard them is their responsibility. When the soul yields, they wrap it in a silky cloth, and at the same time they tell it about its beautiful permanent abode. (16)

Just after having in their hands, the souls of both believers and disbelievers, the angels ascend to heaven. The soul of a

(16) Ibn Kathīr; Tafsīr! vol. 3. p.66.-67, 66, 167, 335, 336; vol.4 pp.124, 125, 126; vol. 6. p174; vol.7. pp.239, 244, 289,290.

believer gives forth a fragrance, as if it is anointed with scent. The gates of heaven are opened and it is allowed to ascend up to the seventh heaven. On its way it is greeted by good and pious men. It is allotted earthly paradise, 'Ilīyyūn, which is of different kinds, high and low, and allotted according to the grades of the souls. The souls of the Prophets, martyrs, and good men get seats in accordance with their degrees of virtue and piety. God says: "Nay but the record of the ~~of the~~ righteous is in 'Ilīyyūn (83:18). When the souls of disbelievers are taken to heaven the gates are not opened because they are identified by their awful <sup>bad</sup> smell. They are hated and disliked. The angels are ordered to take them back and lay them in the earthly hell, sijjīn, which is also of different grades and allotted according to the maximum and minimum of sin. God says: "Nay but the record of the evil is in sijjīn." (83:7) (17).

According to Ibn Kathīr, after the unification of the souls with their bodies, the angels; Munkir and Nakīr, who are black, tall, harsh, and squint eyed, visit the grave. Flames come out of their breath and their sound is like thunder claps. They put questions to the dead person concerning his God, his prophet and his other beliefs. The believer will reply, "Our God is Allah and the Prophet is Muhammad whereas the disbelievers will show ignorance. On the basis of their reply they will get facilities <sup>?</sup> in their graves. The place of the believer will be as wide as the reach of his sight, and full of all comfort and ease. The gates

of the garden will be opened to him. Thus he feels the bliss of the Garden and smells the odour of other souls and feels pleasure in meeting them. Then the angels leave them with greetings. The disbelievers are awarded a narrow place. They are given the doom of grave, whereupon they make a hue and cry, which is heard by all creatures except men and jinn. The gates of hell are opened to them and they face its heat. This heat is only a slight wink of Hell. Because of their wrongs, no soul likes to talk to them, or to meet them. They are dressed and treated badly, in contrast to good men. (18)

Ibn Kathīr holds that the punishment of the grave to believers is for their neglecting God's commandment and disobeying Him. He reports that the Prophet, while passing by some graves, saw two men being punished, one for slander and the other for neglecting ritual cleanliness. He maintains that, for believers there is no exemption from this punishment. Ibn Qaiyam confirms this view, and includes a long list of those who are to be punished in the grave, like the liar, the perjurer, the boaster, the fault finder, the inviter to innovation, the thief, the adulterer, the drunkard, the deviator from the prohibitions of God. He also mentions sooth-sayers and astrologers etc. (19)

Ibn Kathīr maintains that repentance, prayers, remembrance of

(18) Ibid: vol.4. pp124 and 125 cf. verses 6:93; 32:21; 11:48,49; 52:45, 46, 47; 56:82 to 96; 89:27 to 30.

(19) Ibid. vol.4. pp.313 and 132; and Kitāb-al-Rūh (tran) op.cit. p 138.

God, charity, and good relations with kinsfolk will lighten the punishment of the grave. He reports from Qatāda that the Prophet said, he saw a believer was being punished in the grave, his ablution came and saved him; a believer was being surprised by devil, the remembrance of God came and lib<sup>e</sup>rated him; a believer was surrounded by the angels of doom, prayer came and saved him; a believer was dying of thirst, his fasting came and offered him water so he got satisfaction; a believer was surrounded by darkness his Hajj and 'umra' came and took him out from the darkness and sent him to the light; and a believer wanted to save his face from a blazing fire, his charity came forward and stood against his face and saved him from the fire. (20)

From Ibn Kathīr's interpretation it may be concluded that invisible things and acts will have special forms in the next world; God will give forms to the acts of human beings in the grave accordingly.

Ibn Kathīr clearly remarks that punishment in the grave is <sup>given</sup> ~~to~~ both body and soul, and it is ~~for~~ both disbelievers and believers who sinned. To strengthen his point he refers to some traditions of the Prophet, one of these is from Ibn 'Abbās. It describes how spirit and body will fight with each other. The spirit will accuse the body of committing sin, and the body will say to the spirit that every thing occurred due to your order and mischief. An

(20) Ibid...

angel will come to decide the matter and make peace between the two. He will say, listen! there is a man with perfect eyesight, but he is lame and unable to walk and move about, and there is another man who is blind, but, he has perfect legs and can move about freely. Both of them are in the garden. The lame says to the blind, "Brother, the garden is laden with fruit, but I have no legs to climb up and pluck it. The blind man says, I have legs, come and sit on my back, I will take you where you wish. So both of them go to the trees and pluck fruit to their heart content. Now tell me who is the sinner? Both body and spirit replied that both of them are equal partners in committing sin. Then the angel will say, now you yourselves have decided. So the body is the ridden and the spirit is its rider. (21)

Ibn Qaiyain confirms this interpretation saying; "The rules of the world are primarily for bodies and secondarily for spirits; the opposite is true of al-barzakh." (22) <sup>Likewise</sup> Muhammad Iqbāl seems to refer barzakh to a mental or spiritual world. "The records of Sufistic experience indicate that barzakh is a state of consciousness characterised by a change in the ego's attitude towards time and space.....a state in which the ego catches a glimpse of fresh aspects of Reality, and prepares himself for adjustment to these aspects." (23)

(21) Ibid: vol. 6 pp. 92 and 142 and 143.

(22) op.cit., p.137

(23) op.cit., p.166.

On the basis of preceding interpretations, the difference between the present world, the world of barzakh, and the world to come may be explained thus: the present world is a mortal world where matter is visible and spirit is hidden. There is no possibility for the spirit to get in touch with worldly affairs. Therefore the body is the main recipient of pleasure and pain, and then it is transmitted to the spirit. In the world of Barzakh the soul is visible and the body is generally hidden. The soul will directly receive punishment and reward, and then transmit it to the body, which will receive this due to its obedience to the soul. But it seems that after Resurrection, when the third world will begin, both soul and body will be visible. Both of them will experience pleasure and pain distinctly from one another.

About the return of the spirit to the body in the grave, Ibn Kathīr states or reasons that a man is in the agonies of death, and the spirit is leaving his body, men are sitting helplessly around him. Angels who are near to him are invisible to them. So if men have power, then why should they let the spirit go? They should turn it back, from the throat, to its original place. Since they are unable to do this, they must know that God alone is able to infuse it into the body, and to return it to the body. So far as the return of the soul to the body is concerned, Ibn Kathīr's reasoning is affirmed by Ibn

Qaiyaim, who also believes in the punishment of both body and soul. But it seems that the connection of the soul is absolutely different from that of when man was alive.

Ibn Qaiyaim reports from Ibn Taimiyya: "It is pointed that the return<sup>is</sup> of a special kind for the questinning, different from the spirit's former attachment to the body in the world."

(24) However, it is clear from different Traditions that it returns to the dust and ashes of the body and hears the voice of men who greet it, who say good-bye to it when they leave. Ibn Kathīr's preceeding interpretation that the grave of a pious man opens, and the grave of a bad man becomes very narrow on him, as if it is grinding his ribs, could also be considered proof of soul's return to the body. So it seems that the spirits are not identical in form, but are quite different from each other as man's bodies are.

#### THE RESURRECTION AND JUDGEMENT

After the expiry of the intermediate period, resurrection will commence. The Jews, the Mago-Zoroastrian, and the Christian all believe in bodily Resurrection. The Jews believe that the body after Resurrection will be the same body as before the Resurrection. The Christian believes that after

(24) Ibn Qaiyaim: op.cit., p.136...cf. Ibn Kathīr: Tafsīr, vol.6 p.539 and vol.4. p.129.

Resurrection the body will become immaterial, and free from the weakness of human beings. Most of the philosophers who believe in God believe in the resurrection of the soul. According to Ibn Kathīr the resurrection will be a bodily resurrection, but the soul will be given a new body similar to the first. His interpretation is confirmed by al-Rāzī and modern commentators. God says: "We, even We, created them, and strengthened their frame. And when We will, We can replace them, bringing others like them in their stead." (77:28) (25)

Ibn Kathīr says that there are some people who do not believe that the body will be reassembled when all its bones and particles have disintegrated and decomposed. They are unable to understand how a dead body will be alive, therefore they surprisingly remark that they hear it from their forefathers, but that they have never seen a man raised to life. So they say that all of these are baseless stories coming down from the past. God says: "Yet those who disbelieve say: when we have become dust like our fathers, shall we verily be brought forth again?" (27:67 also verses 17:50 to 53) (26)

Ibn Kathīr repudiates this objection by analogical arguments; (a) the Creator of Life and death is God, Who brings

(25) Ibn Kathīr: Tafsīr, vol.7. p.187 Al-Rāzī Tafsīr vol.7, p.114f cf. Ismā'il: Maqālāt Sir Syed! vol.13 p.328.

(26) Ibid vol.4. p.195 and vol.5. p.252.

forth the living from the dead and the dead from the living. He has power over a thing, and its opposite. He brings forth trees from the seed and seed from the tree, chicken from the egg and egg from the chicken, men from semen and semen from men, and believers from disbelievers and disbelievers from disbelievers, and He enlivens earth after its death. (27) (b) God created the earth and the heaven without any precedent and after their creation He never felt a need for any repose, therefore He is able to produce men even after death. In this respect man's first creation may be considered to be the most difficult. God created Ādam from dust. From Ādam human generations proceeded. God says: "God is He that created you of weakness, then He appointed weakness and grey hairs." (30:53) (28)

(c) The other proof of the raising of the dead to life, is the barren and unproductive land, which looks devoid of growth freshness, greenery, and grass and is withered up. When God pours down rain on it, this withered land stirreth and swelleth, it flourishes and grows greenery everywhere. It blossoms with flowers and blooms, with trees having different kinds of fruit with different taste. These trees laden with fruit present the beautiful scene of spring. The place which was horrible before, where there seemed no sign of life, now, when it breaths<sup>s</sup> life, it provides satisfaction to the spirit, light to the eyes, pleasure

(27) Ibid. vol.5. p.353..

(28) Ibid: vol.4. p.614 vol.5. p.353 and 616.

to the heart, and exhibits a grandeur of life. This production serves the purpose of provision, for men and their animals. Besides sending down rain from heaven, God also causes water springs to gush forth, and grows gardens of dates and grapes, which men eat. Yet by their own hands these have not grown, that is the working of God, and is due to His blessings. Ibn Kathīr, also reports that once the Prophet was asked whether there is any instance of raising the dead to life in the universe. Whereupon he replied: "Have you not passed through a desolate and dead land which had nothing but dust? then you saw the same place full of greenery and different kinds of fruit? Surely God makes the dead alive." (29)

Ibn Kathīr holds that, when water pours down from heaven, continuously, for forty days, all bodies will rise from their graves, just as grain grows from the earth. He also holds that the whole man's body decomposes, but the backbone remains intact. His form was made on this, and so it will be composed on it again. Part of his interpretation is supported by Ibn 'Abbās who says that the earth and heaven were one piece, there was neither rain nor growth. When God created creatures possessing spirit, He split up the heaven, and send down water, and split the earth and caused it to grow provision. God says: "We have made of water every thing living." (21:30) So it seems that is the matter which

(29) Ibid: vol.4. pp.615, 616 and 617.

no moisture in the dead, this theory is inapplicable to raising the dead to life. (32) From this study it seems that there is no doubt why God cannot give rebirth to the creation. God says: "Say: be ye stones or iron, or some created thing that yet greater in your thoughts! Then they will say WHO shall bring us back to life. Say Who created you at the first." (17:50)

On the basis of the verse "Every soul shall taste of death" (3:185), Ibn Kathīr believes in the death of the whole creature including the soul too, which he seems to regard as a separate entity. Hence he describes the resurrection of the soul after the body. He tells us that, after resurrection of bodies, souls will be called from all parts by the command of God. Wherefrom they shall rise forth like bees and fill the whole space between earth and heaven, and then to repair into their respective bodies. (33)

He gives two descriptions of the soul. Firstly he says that the soul or the spirit is the bidding of God. It is an immaterial substance and not brought into being like the body. It is no use to probe into it, because there is no physical or philosophical method of knowing. As it is from God's command, it would be better to accept the command, instead of investigating the spirit, which is dangerous. Secondly, he says that the spirit which the angel

(32) Ibn Kathīr; vol.4. p.160; Ibn Taimiyya: Commentary Sura al-<sup>Ikhlas</sup> Cairo 1323 A.H. pp.8, 17 and 24...

(33) Ibid: vol.3. p.48...

breaths, just after mixing with the body, adopts good and bad qualities. Either it becomes a satisfied soul, by remembrance of God, or commanding to evil. It circulates into the body like water into the veins of trees. For instance, water gives life to trees. After mixing with trees, water attains special characteristics and loses its originality. Wine made of grapes or fresh water extracted (taken out) from grapes cannot be called real water. Similarly the soul, after mixing with body, cannot be called a superior spirit, nor can it be called soul, naming it thus <sup>because</sup> but is of its origin. Hence ruh, or spirit, in reality, is the root of soul and matter. Soul (nafs) exists by the conjunction of spirit and the body. So soul is the spirit, due to one cause, not because of all causes. (34)

Miskawaih in Al-Fawz-al-Asghar defines Ruh as a thing which is the source of life for an animate object. If it is in the body, then the thing is living, and if it is out of the body then it is dead. Then he seems to support Ibn Kathir's first interpretation, saying: "the things which are found in the body as material form and life are all subordinate to the body and those things which are subordinate to the body are under it, whereas we see and know that the soul orders the body and rules it as a lord or chief. ... The soul does not get power by the strengthening of the body and does not become weak by the weakness of the body ... Therefore the soul cannot be in the body as material form". (35)

(34) Ibid vol.4. p.347 (35) Sweetman, op.cit., p.1. vol.1. p131 and 133.

Wali-Allah (Indian) classifies the soul into two; firstly, airy spirit that is made of vapours of the body and, secondly, real spirit that is ever living. According to him, when the latter breaks its relation with the former, there is death. But he states that just after death it reconnects with the airy spirit. That is why a man in the grave hears, speaks, etc. On this ground he remarks that resurrection is only for airy spirit (36)

In order to prove the immortality of the soul, Kunneth draws a distinction between life and soul. He states that "life is 'unity, movement, continuity, coherence, articulation', and therefore 'the prevailing of the life-values happiness and pleasure in the peculiar sense'. The life-value concentrates itself decisively, however, in the concept of 'soul' which is seen as a ... driving force of all living things as distinct from the inanimate ... The soul means an immaterial factor. Assuming the metaphysical anti-thesis of spirit or soul and matter or corporeality, the soul possesses a higher 'infinite value'. Whereas material things are subject to transience, the immortal soul is not affected by the decay of the body. Secondly, the soul is to be thought of as indestructible. Its immortality rests upon the unified form and indissolubility of its substance. It is indestructible like an atom. Thirdly, the idea of immortality derives from the element of continuity in soul, which extends beyond our bodily existence and has its own existence even apart from the latter. Lastly, the idea of the (36) Wali-Allah, Hujjat....pp.33f.

soul and immortality is evaluated essentially in anthropocentric terms." (37)

According to Ibn Kathīr, after resurrection of both body and soul, mankind will gather together on earth in order to receive reward and punishment. They will be perfect in body, but naked and uncircumcised, as they were at the time of birth. The situation will be so tense, that they would not be liable to think any thing wrong, or look at each other indelicately. But the intensity of the situation does not involve fear. Confirming this point Watt remarks "The conception of a resurrection of Judgment followed by reward and punishment, is present from the very beginning, but that fear of punishment does not seem to have been the main driving motive behind the Islamic religion". (38)

Ibn Kathīr holds that God will appear for giving justice and will say, "O! men and jinn I kept silence till now. I saw your actions and heard your talk. Now you observe silence, your deeds will be read to you. If they are favourable then praise God and if they are against then reproach yourselves. (39) The judgement on these acts will be made through Mizān, which is described as the rule of justice, divine injunction of justice and equity and well balanced polity, so that the smallest action, word

(38) Ibn Kathīr, vol.3. p.49 cf. Watt, M.W. Muhammad, Prophet and Statesman! London 1961 p.28.

(39) Ibid: vol.3. pp.48, 49 and 50; vol.7. pp.246 and 247; 'Ali Y. op.cit., p.832.

(37) W. Kunneth, The Theology of the Resurrection, London 1965 pp.33f.

thought, motive, or predilection is taken into account, and perfect justice is meted out to every one, according to the merit of virtues and guilt of any action. Ibn Kathīr's interpretation is supported by Yūsuf 'Alī thus: "His accounting will be perfect: there will be no flaw in it, as there may be in earthly accountants, who require other people's help in some matters of accounts which they do not understand for want of knowledge of that particular department they are dealing with. God's knowledge is perfect, and therefore His justice will be perfect also; for He will not fail to take into account the most tangible things that determine conduct and character." (39)<sup>A</sup>

Ibn Kathīr appears to deal with the Hereafter in a more advanced manner, because he holds that good reward for good deed is a natural reaction and an inevitable result, and it should flow from a natural sequence. Every object has been assigned a separate quality which produces a distinct result. Therefore God's reckoning must not be considered arbitrary. Besides, the creation of the universe is for the benefit of humanity.

Similarly the assignment of talent and aptitude is according to the role which a being has to play in life. Therefore any harm to humanity, or any action against God's purpose and any misuse of talent must deserve punishment. God says: "What, did you think that We created you only for sport, and that you

would not be returned to us?" (23:115) (40)

(39) Ibid: vol.3. pp.48, 49 and 50; vol.7. pp 246 and 247 'Alī, Y., op.cit., p. 832. (40) Ibid vol.5. pp.44-45.

According to Ibn Kathīr, on the day of judgement, consideration of rank, and wealth will be of no avail. Relations will be cut off, ransom will not be accepted, no soul will bear the burden of , or intercede for another soul. Every one will be busy in his own affairs and will be liable to account for his sins and joys, and reap the fruit of what he sowed in this world. God says: "and beware of a day when no soul for another shall give satisfaction, and no intercession shall be accepted form it, nor any counterpoise be taken, neither shall they be helped." (2:48) Expressing the seriousness of the day and the breaking of relationships, Ibn Kathīr refers to another verse of the Qur'ān. God says: "On the day when a man fleeth from his brother, and his mother and his father, and his wife and his children." (80:34-35) He holds that every one must bear his personal responsibility, because if one bears the burden of another that would be unjust. The same expression is found in the Gospel. "For whatever a man sows, that he will also reap." (41)

Ibn Kathīr holds that there are two kinds of men's records: good and bad, and according to the <sup>men into three categories;</sup> records, he classifies <sup>and</sup> believers, hypocrites, and unbelievers . Believers, according to him are of highest grade, like Prophets, saints, the righteous and martyrs. They will receive their records with their right hand. They feel happy and ask others to read their records. On the basis of

(41) Ibid vol.1. pp.155, 156, 288; vol.5. pp.40, 41; and see Galatians, 6:7.

their records they will be allowed to march to the garden happily, where they will be given places according to their grades. But the martyrs will have four grades among themselves; (a) perfect in faith and bravery, (b) perfect in faith, but little weak in courage, (c) somewhat weak in faith and courage but instantly fall victim to an arrow, (d) who performed both good and bad deeds, but his bad deeds outweigh the good. As regards hypocrites (It includes sinner also) and unbelievers, they will receive their records in their left hands and will feel sorry over that. Ibn Kathīr maintains that the hypocrites' records are of three kinds; (a) those that consist of partnership with God, and this will not be forgiven, (b) those that which consist of negligence of religious practices, and this will be forgiven, <sup>and</sup> (c) those that which contains eating of other's rights that will not be forgiven, unless the victims forgive it. In the explanation of these records men will try to tell lies, but God will seal their tongues and let the members of the body explain what they did. They will cause all their excuses to fail. Moreover, ear, sight, and heart will be questioned. God says: "This day We seal up mouths, and hands speak out and feet bear witness as to what they used to earn." (36:66) and "Lo! the hearing and the sight and the heart of each of these it will be asked." (17:36) (42)

(42) Ibid vol.2. pp.308, 615; vol.5. p.622.

Ibn Kathīr maintains that when God begins giving justice He will ask for individual cases, like killing, and will cause the oppressor to be avenged by the oppressed. In this way no case will escape from God's eye. Even the milk seller who mixed it with water and sold it as a pure milk will have to compensate the buyer. After individual dealing a universal judgement will begin. (43)

Concerning universal judgement Ibn Kathīr says that it is only the practiced association against God and the denial of resurrection that will not be forgiven, because the Hereafter is concomitant with belief in the existence of God.. In all other cases, like negligence of religious practices, God is Merciful. He states that on the day of Judgement God expresses His mercy in His justice by giving ten times more reward for one good, even if a man had only the intention of doing it. But in case of evil the requital will be equal to the deed, and no punishment will fall on intention. He also reports from Ibn 'Abbās that if a man is sincere in Islam, God will forgive him every evil deed he had committed, and requital shall be for good deeds, ten times to seven hundred times, depending on intention. For an evil deed requital is only once, unless God forgives. He also says that there is a possibility that a bad deed may be forgiven. He reports a Tradition that God says: if some one comes with sins full of earth, He will forgive, provided he has not set up compeers to

(43) Ibid: vol.3. p.136, 137 and 138.

God. God says 'who comes one span towards me I put forward one foot towards him, if he comes two feet I come double and if man comes walk<sup>ing</sup>, I will come running. If aman intends to commit sin but out of fear of God he stops committing it God will reward him even for his intention. It appears that goodness is encouraged and ever prosperous whereas badness is inconsistance with the earnest wish to know the truth. (44)

Ibn Kathīr receives supports fom al-Rāzī, who says: "Every one will say, "My people, my people," and the Fire will say, "My due, my due", and the worshipper will say, "My Lord, my Lord," and the Lord will say My worshipper, My worshipper." Man's calling is to seek mercy and the Lord's reply is a sign of mercy. (45)

Ibn Kathīr says that those who deny the resurrection will carry the burden of their actions, which will take the form of living things. These acts will sit on their backs and drive them to Hell. He reports from Marzūq that on the day of resurrection the form of the acts will express its grade and merit. Different kinds of acts will receive their doers saying: "I am your deed, in the world I was your ridden (mount) and now I am your rider. (46)

Naṣīru-d-Dīn Tūsī favours the idea that every visible and invisible thing has a proper form which would appear at a time destined by God. He says: "Every mental idea has its corresponding

(44) Ibid. (45) Al-Rāzī, Muḥaṣṣal, Cairo 1323 A.H. p.139. cf. Religious Studies. Cambridge University Press! October 1968 vol.1. p.59... (46) Ibn Kathīr: Tafsīr vol.3. p.16.

counterpart in the form of prototype (shakhs-i-'aynī) in the world of individual beings (ʿālam-i-juzwī). Thus the prototype of the inverted man (mankūs-ṣirāṭ) is the person whose thoughts are from the life after death (akhira) turned towards matters in this world i.e. unbeliever. The prototype of the man "turned down" hypocrite (maqlūb) would be the man who sometimes directs his thoughts to that world, sometimes to this...And the prototype of the "straight" ṣirāṭ (man) would be the man who treats this world as the life after death ('ayn-i-akhirat) (pious man) and it would be (like) his own life after death, while he turns all his thoughts in this illusory world (rūy-hā-y-i-idāfī) towards one idea. And suh a man will be he who stands before the Eternal God." (47)

Both Ibn Kathīr and al-Baidāwī mention some men who are clearly destined to Hell and cannot win God's favour, and others upon whom God will show His mercy. So far as the unfavoured are concerned, he says that God will not love a man; who lets down his cloth below his feet, swears false oaths voids his free will offering by reproach and injury, the haughty begger and the swearing trader, the poor childless flatterer, the dishonest man, the cheat, the miser, the false and abusive. He includes with them a martyr who fought in order to be extolled by the people, a scholar who learned and taught in order to be called learned, a

(47) op.cit., p.63. (Taṣawwurat...Holland.1950.)

wealthy man who spent so that people might praise his generosity, and a man who linked his pedigree with unbelievers so as to show himself respectable and so is the case with the proud. Baidāwī also refers to all these men and both of them complete the list of ten. There are those, whom God will not speak to, a girl who leaves her parents, a father who separates from his children, a man who puts aside kindness of others, and the debauch-ee will be given an abode in hell, because his acts cause God's anger. (48)

The same is the fate of the man who forbids people to listen to the truth, to understand the Qur'ān. They are like those who neither profit themselves nor allow others to profit. They are like animals that can hear but cannot understand, they are ruining themselves. Therefore he holds that to preach righteousness is necessary. He reports that the devil said to a pious man: "You are doing what your ancestor did i.e. worship, which is useless and brings no respect. So, if you want fame, invent and introduce a new thing in religion and spread it among men. Then see how you will be honoured and remembered every where. The man acted according to the advice of the devil. His innovations spread and were practiced by men. He left the land and asked God for forgiveness. God said: "had there been only your offence it would have been forgiven, but you incited others who practiced.

(48) Ibn Kathīr Tafsīr vol.2. pp.60, 286 and 287 and 532; al-Baidāwī; Tafsīr; vol.2. p.480 cf. Hughes op.cit., p.542.

How can their burden be removed from you. I will not accept your repentance. (49)

Ibn Kathīr reports from Imām Hanbal that there are some people to whom God will speak, like the dumb, the mad, the very old, and those who lived in an age when there existed no teaching of the Prophets. On questioning, the dumb will say "I believed in Islam but I could not hear the teaching," the mad will say "I had no sense to save myself from pollution," the old will say "at the time of receiving knowledge of religion, I was too old to understand" and the man who was not living in the time of Islam, will say that he could not get teaching. Therefore they will be ordered to enter paradise. (50)

With regard to their place in heaven or hell, Ibn Kathīr classified Muslims into three groups; those who deviated from the right path and practiced what was prohibited. They are called those who wronged themselves (Zālim-~~Li~~-Nafsihī). Those who chose a midway and shunned practicing prohibition. They performed obligatory things, but they left some supererogatory work unintentionally and also did some slight disobedience. They performed their duties but rather imperfectly. They are called lukewarm. (Muqtasid) Those who reached farther in their grades. They practiced all obligatory and supererogatory acts, and performed their duties perfectly. They eschewed completely from the

(49) Ibid; vol.2. pp.617, 618 and 622;

(50) Ibid vol.4. p.288.

abominable, vice, and unlawful things and sometimes avoided lawful things, due to fear and suspicion. They are called those who out strip through good deeds, sābiq-bil-Khairāt. Among them he includes Prophets, saints, martyrs, just and generous, kings, and kind believers. Ibn Kathīr reports from Ibn 'Abbās that Sābiq-bil-Khairāt are dwellers of the garden, who will enter into it without undergoing any account. Muqtasid are people of 'A'rāf who will under-go an easy judgement. Zālimun-li-nafsihī are dwellers of Hell, who will be reckoned strictly, and will receive torment in their abode. But both of these categories will succeed in getting abode in the Garden through <sup>ter</sup>incession of the Prophet. (51)

There is a Tradition "that when a man dies his deeds cease, except in these three cases: charity that is performed; knowledge that has been profitable and offspring who pray for him" (52) So it seems that these two classes of people may also get the benefit of these things, if practiced after their death in order to enter paradise. According to Ibn Kathīr the preacher of evil is punished after death because of the deeds of his followers, therefore the dead must get the reward of good deeds practiced by his descendents and followers, and gain God's pleasure, love, grace and mercy.

(51) Ibid; vol. 5. pp 582.

(52) Ibid cf. Evrin; op.cit., p.27.

Significance of Judgement

Ibn Kathīr's preceeding classification of men in the Hereafter is based on ethical and moral values. It seems that according to him, the universal laws cannot completely deal with the standard of acts. Moreover man cannot have satisfactory repayment of his acts due to the short span of his life. Therefore there should be judgement in the Hereafter, where he could get actual repayment of his acts. (53)

Comparing man with all other objects, it is seen that he shares with them in all physical laws. Minerals have free opportunity to develop under these laws and so the human body. He shares with plants growth under the same type of laws. He also shares with animal protection of the species and the hoarding of provision. The law of nature seems to be fully sufficient to cover the range of physical activities. But man's acts of freewill, his consciousness of good and evil and his ability to discriminate between them is not recompensed. This is the only thing which makes man laible to punishment and reward. All other things, having no free-will, are free from judgement.

(53) Maudūdī, in Life After Death! Lahore 1968 2nd Edition, on page 13, says: "the laws that govern the present system of the Universe do not allow an opportunity for unfolding of the moral consequences of human actions. Secondly, the actions of men during their short span of life on earth often have reaction and effects so wide spread and lasting that their full consequences must take thousands of years to unfold and manifest themselves fully, and it is obviously impossible for any person, under the present laws of nature, to attain such a long career on earth."

Bridge -- and Al 'A'rāf

Just after the judgement men will be asked to cross the bridge, ṣirāṭ, which according to Ibn Kathīr is over Hell, sharper than the edge of the sword, thinner than a hair. Prophets, saints martyres, and pious will cross in the twinkling of an eye, or the flashing of thunder. They will reach safe and sound to their destination. But sinners and unbelievers will fall down, the former will receive injuries but the latter will be cut off. But every man who has the smallest light will cross the bridge. The light which every believer gets will help him to cross<sup>over</sup> the bridge. God says: "Upon that day when thou seest the believers, men and women, their light running before them, and on their right hand....." (57:12) (54)

According to Ibn Kathīr after crossing over the bridge they will reach a place called (أرض), which he defines as a wall, midway between paradise and Hell, which prevents the inmates of Hell from entering into Paradise. The wall has a gate in it, inside it will be mercy, and outside it is the punishment. Lane in the Lexicon defines A'rāf as meaning literally, an elevated place or an elevated portion of the earth or ground; al-'A'rāf is applied to a wall between Paradise and Hell, or its upper parts (L.L.) The majority of Commentators like al-Tabarī, al-Zamakhsharī and al-Baidāwī state that it is a veil, spoken of in the verse (47:12)

(54) Ibn Kathīr Tafsīr, vol.3. pp50,51; vol.4. pp478,479,480,612 & op.cit., Macdonald: p.306; Hughes: op.cit., p.544; Sell op.cit. pp260-261.

and a high partition or wall. Al-Rāzī holds that it is a place of knowing the inmates of Paradise and the inmates of Hell. The people of 'A'raf are described as residing above the dwellers of Paradise and Hell, whom they distinguish by their marks, God says: "And the dwellers on the Heights call unto men whom they know by their marks." (7:48) Ibn Kathīr also interprest 'A'raf as a place for (a) the children of infidels, (b) jinn, and (c) those who have equal good and bad deeds, and cannot enter Paradise, because their evil disallows them to enter Paradise and their good to Hell, therefore they will stay for a temporary period on the heights (al-'Arāf) and will cherish the hope of proceeding to Paradise. (55)

Thus it gives the idea that redemption depends on the achievements of the perfect personality through labour during life-time, in order to attain the supreme desire of felicity, bliss, and happiness hereafter. The verse reflects spiritual bliss and ecstasy in the life to-come thus: "We have found that which our Lord promised." (7:44).

#### PARADISE AND HELL

Paradise is usually called by the general name of al-Janna. Eight different words for Paradise occur in the Koran. Because of these words, theologians speculate whether there are eight

(55) Ibid vol.3. p.173; vol..6. p.554. Rāzī. vol.4 p.214f

different Paradises or these are eight different names of one Paradise. Ibn Kathīr explains that these are names of eight different grades in one Paradise. These grades will be allotted to men in accordance with the merit of their virtues, like Prophets, Saints, Martyrs, and pious men. The pleasure and bliss will be different for different categories, in accordance with the grade and growth of the individual. (56)

The name for Hell is Jahannam. It has seven parts. All parts are guarded by angels and for every part there is a separate party who will enter. God says "And lo! for all such, Hell will be the promised place. It has seven gates, and each gate has an appointed portion." (15:14) Ibn Kathīr interpreting the verse says that there are separate portions of Hell meant differently for Jews, Christian, Magians, Muslims and so on. Ibn 'Abbās says that these are seven stages of Hell. Qatāda says that these stages will be given according to the seriousness of acts. The pain and torment will be different for different individuals in

(56) Ibn Kathīr; tafsir, vol.4. p.297; These are different names of Paradise which occur in the Qur'ān:-(a) Jannat-al-Firdaws (Gardens of Paradise) (16:107) (b) Jannat-al-Khuld (Garden of eternity. (25:15) (c) Dār-al-qarār, enduring home (40:39) (d) Jannat-al-eden, Garden of perpetual abode, (9:72). There is a confusion that whether this is celestial Garden which was the dwelling place of Adam and Eve after their creation or the Garden of Eden or Hereafter is a different. (e) Jannat-al-Mawā, the Garden of refuge (32:19) (f) Jannat-al-Na'im, the Garden of delight (5:66), (g) 'Illiyūn (83:19), (h) Dār-al-Salām, the Dwelling of peace (6:127). Ibn Kathīr in vol.6. p.115 says that the garden has different gates with different names in order to distinguish between the entrants. Those who performed regular prayer will enter through the gate of prayer, the generous through the gate of charity, Warriors through the gate of Jihād..

accordance with their grades (57).

Ibn Kathīr briefly describes Paradise and its pleasure and Hell and its torment thus:-the garden beneath which rivers flow, the inmates are clad in the finest raiment, take pleasant food of various kinds, quaff of fountain in which are mixed camphor and other costly essences, and drink celestial wine, milk and honey to their heart's content. They lean on luxurious couches, delighting in the company of virgin hūr, with all qualities of beauty, ie. purity. Moreover they will have their own wives as a reward for their faith. They will praise and thank God for His bounties.

Hell on the other hand, is a pit of immense length, breadth, and depth, full of intolerable flames. Instead of rest and ease, the evil doers, covetous, fraudulent and lazy in performing fundamental duties are tortured with firey chains and beaten with iron bars. Moreover, there are snakes and scorpions, terrifying beyond measure. Instead of tasty food, the inhabitant of Hell are served loathsome provision of thorn trees and boiling water. Their remorse (repentence) and fighting with seducers is futile. They will enter Paradise after getting punishment, aprt from the Idolators. The life of the famished inhabitants of waterless,

(57) Ibid vol.1. p.164, 500, 503 vol.6. p.51, vol.7. ppl80-206,. The allotment of Hell is thus: Jahannam for sinner Muslim (1:72), (b) Lazā for the infedels (Christian) (70:15-16-17) (c) Hutāma, a fire for Jews or Christain (104:4) (d) Sa'īr for devils, descendants of Iblīs, or those who eat property of orphans (4:11) Saqar for Magians, and those who neglect prayer (54:47; 74:44) (f) Jahīm for idolators and Gog and Magog. (2:113) (g) Hāwiya, a bottomless pit for hypocrites (101:7) Paradise has one more division than Hell, to elucidate that God's mercy exceeds His Justice.

shadeless, parched desert is in pungent contrast to the inhabitant of the Garden who are enjoying satisfaction, complete harmony, abundant fruit and shade by perpetual flowing rivers.(58)

Ibn Kathīr's description of both hell and heaven points to: (a) the relation of pleasure and pain to the senses, (b) the presence of consciousness as a common feature in both these worlds, (c) the impact of delight and pain in accordance with the category of acts. It is the difference of states in both these worlds which causes our conjectures in this world to fail to realise delight and torment of life to-come posed by spiritual appraisal. Ibn Sīnā -'s definition of the physical sort of misery and happiness illustrates some sort of similarity between the delight and torment of both world. He says: "Every faculty of the soul has its own particular pleasure and good, its own special pain and evil. For example, pleasure and good as pertaining to the appetite consist in the realization of a congenial sensual state through the senses; pleasure in relation to the choler is the achievement of mastery; pleasure in terms of imagination is the sensation of hope; the pleasure of memory is the reminiscence of agreeable circumstances that happened in the past. Pain in each case is the opposite of the corresponding pleasure. All of these pleasures have one feature in common, that consciousness of agreeable and congenial circumstances, which constitute the good and pleasure of

(58) Ibid; vol.3. p.421, 448, 484; vol.4. p.425, 426,427see also references given in no. 57.

each. What is essentially and really agreeable to each is the realization of a sense of fulfilment which is relatively speaking the achievement in actual of its potential perfection." (5)

But Ibn Kathīr seems to interpret Paradise and Hell in sensual terms. His interpretation of the pleasure of Paradise postulates a sensual heaven and gives the impression that he believes in a literal fulfilment of the Qur'ānic verses. The same applies to his interpretation of Hell. The Qur'ānic verses appear to support the idea, if they are not deeply studied.

Some of Ibn Kathīr's interpretations clearly show that the description of heaven and hell in the Qur'ān in the term of material objects is to make people understand the height of happiness and agony. Ibn Kathīr relates that a man asked the Prophet about the resemblance of Tūbā, a tree of the Garden. The Prophet asked him whether <sup>he</sup> had been in Syria? the man <sup>a</sup>said yes, then the Prophet said that it resembles the walnut tree. The word Tūbā also signifies a good final state. (60) Moreover Ibn Kathīr says that a thing may be described by reference to a similar thing in order to make it properly understood. For instance the description of the throne in the Qur'ān does not mean anything similar to a worldly throne. It symbolises honour and high position. (61)

(59) op.cit., (trn.) p.65... (60) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.6.p523

(61) Ibid. vol.3. p.178.

Apart from association with near relation, and friends, the company of Hūr in Paradise is also mentioned in the Qur'ān. According to Ibn Kathīr hūr signifies, (a) chastity, (b) a thing that is pure and unsullied, (c) heavenly modest maidens or women, with grace and beauty resembling an egg in respect of their white colour, as well as in their closely guarded and protected. The prominent feature of their being good women is their restraining glance, which is valuable virtue of a woman and implies her chastity. (62)

Sale supports Ibn Kathīr's explanation thus: "This may seem an odd comparison to an European; but the oriental thinks nothing comes so near the colour of a fine woman's skin as that of an ostrich's egg when kept perfectly clean." (63)

The word hūr is also conjoined with the word 'īn (رعيث) which according to Ibn Kathīr signifies wide eyes, which he deems a sign of purity and beauty. The word 'īnun is used for both wide eyed men and women. Ibn Kathīr, in the context of his interpretation of hūr and 'īn, refers to the beauty of Joseph the Prophet, which implies that these words do not mean only women but also include pure men. He also appears to mean the

(62) Ibid vol.6. pp.11 and 517. (63) Sale, op.cit., p.335.==The word hūr occurs four times in the Qur'ān.(44:54; 55:72: 56:72 and 52:20) Its singular is 'ahwar which signifies one having eyes characterised by the quality..intense whiteness of the white of the eyes and intense blackness of the black of the eyes. A true and sincere friend and pure and clean intellect (L.L.)

companionship of the soul applied to both sexes. The bliss and companionship is perpetual and everlasting. (64)

Concerning the food and drink of the inhabitants of Paradise and Hell there are different words in the Qur'ān. The words refer to the development and deterioration of taste. The Arabs were familiar with these words. Ibn Kathīr describes the significance of the words: (a) Zanjabil (ginger) of having the flavour which the Arabs esteem very pleasant, (b) camphor (Kafūr) refer to the odour and coldness of the wine, (c) Salsabil signifies beverage, milk, or a smooth drink in which there is no roughness, meaning easy entrance into the throat and river in Paradise. The word literally means: "seek the way or ask the way". (d) Sharāban Tahūra refers to the absolute purity of the beverage, possessing the flavour of ginger and coldness of camphor, tasnim refers to wine (65) but al-Rāzī interprets tasnim as water falling from above, or knowledge of God, which comes from above through the Prophet. He refers to it as being the perfection of the hopes of the people of paradise. (66)

According to Ibn Kathīr the word al-kawthar means (a) a great quantity, (b) the abundant good, (c) a river in Paradise. Al-Tabarī, confirms this interpretation. But al-Zamakhsharī interprets

(64) Ibn Kathīr: Tafsīr, vol.6. p.11. and 517.

(65) Ibid: vol.7. pp.180 and 242.

(66) Ibid vol.7. p.243. Al-Rāzī vol.8.

it as exceeding the bounds in greatness. Al-Rāzī gives 15 different interpretations. They agree on one point, that it is a river in Paradise. The context says that the word must signify goods really given to the Prophet on earth. (67)

Similarly the description of the deadly food for the people of the fire of Hell as al-zaqqūm, a specific tree with small leaves sticking and bitter, and ghassāq, intensely cold drink (unbearable cold fluid). (68)

According to Ibn Kathīr the Prophet addressed the materialistic Arabs with the preceding words because (a) of the use of these words among them, (b) of the practice among them that if they intended to describe the good and evil of a thing they used to bring into light all its merits and demerits, use the specific words and then at the end say, it was pleasant (karīm) or it was unpleasant (Ghair Karīm), the expression of like and dislike. He says that the words referred to for Paradise and Hell occur in the sequence of this significance. Moreover he deems that al-zaqqūm is a symbol of the condition of life in Hell. Similarly pure uncontaminated water, or milk, and honey, unlimited fruit and luxuriat<sup>n</sup> vegetation are symbols of good and pleasant life in the Hereafter. (69)

- (67) Ibid vol.7. pp.385, 386 cf. Rāzī vol.8. p495, Al-Ṭabarī vol. 30p.207f. Zamakhsharī vol.3. p.291. (68) Ibid vol.6. p.17 According to Lane's lexicon Zaqqūm is a dust coloured tree having small round leaves without thorns. It has pungent odour and is bitter and has knots in its stem..the heads of leaves are very foul. (L.L.) (69) Ibid vol.6. pp.530 and 531.

Al-Ghazālī holds; "that behind the description of material happiness portrayed in objects like trees, rivers and beautiful mansions with fairy attendants, lies a deeper meaning; and that the joy of joys consists in the beatific vision of the soul in the presence of the Al-Mighty, when the veil which divides man from his Creator will be rent, and heavenly glory revealed to the mind untrammelled by its corporeal, earthly happiness." (70)

Ibn Kathīr seems to hold that the verses relating to heaven and hell are closely related to the different kinds of personal responsibility and man's free will in worldly affairs. They provide him with the incentive and idea of spiritual development and hatred of its deterioration. These always encourage him to better life because what is in his luck is unknown. God says: "No soul knows what comfort is laid up for them secretly, as a recompense for that they were doing." (32:17) (71)

Naṣīr al-Dīn Tūṣī supports Ibn Kathīr's view. "The information which the Prophet gave on the subject of paradise and hell, describing them in such material qualities was calculated to suit the capacities of the minds of the people at that time....and thus to make ordinary people either develop an inclination towards obedience to God, or abstain from doing wrong owing to the fear of punishment. All this was for the sake of the common good. So

(70) Quoted by Syed 'Ammīr 'Alī op.cit., p.199. (71) Ibn Kathīr vol.5. pp.409, 410 and 411.

that the common people would be more willing and more dilligent in gaining the perfection and virtue of the soul by following those customs, manners, rules, and laws." (72)

Ibn Kathir holds that the verses relating to Paradise and Hell come under the category of Mutashābihāt. He says that it is better for ordinary people to refrain from interpreting them, and also maintains that to probe into their details is not necessary. Hence the material description of the pleasures of heaven and agonies of hell is intended to make people understand the results of thie actions in the shape of similies and metaphors. (73) The metaphors are evidently seen in Ibn Kathir's following interpretation of weather and everlasting spring. The trees laden with fruit will shade the dwellers of paradise perpetually. They will find fruit of different kinds near to themselves equally intheir states of standing, sitting, and lying. Young attendant in attractive dress would be always ready to obey their orders. They will have rivers of milk, honey and water. Whereas the inhabitants of Hell will get dry food to eat and boiling water to drink. (74) God says: "This is the similitude of Paradise which the God fearing have been promised; the-rein are rivers of water installing, rivers of milk unchanging in flavour, and rivers of wine a delight to the drinkers, rivers, too , of honey purified; and therein for them is every fruit, and forgiveness from their

(72) op. cit., p.53.... (73) Ibn Kathir Tafsir! vol.2. pp5 and 6

(74) Ibid vol.6.ppl1 and 515; vol.7. ppl81, 182 and 183.

Lord - Are they as he who dwells for ever in the Fire, such as are given to drink boiling water, that tears their bowels asunder?" (47:15)

Similar similies and metaphors are found in St. John's Revelation about the Hereafter: "Days shall come in which there shall be wine, which shall have each ten thousand branches, and everyone of these branches shall have ten thousand lesser branches, and every one of these branches shall have ten thousand twigs, and in every one of these cluster of grapes, and every one of these grapes being pressed shall yield two hundred and seventy five gallons of wine; and when a mob shall take hold of one of these sacred bunches, another bunch shall cry out, I am a better bunch, take me, and bless the Lord by me." (75)

Ibn Kathīr interpreting the verse (57:21) says that Paradise is not limited to one particular place, but it is as extensive as heaven and earth. It will be given to the righteous. This interpretation also confirms the Qur'ānic metaphorical expression of Paradise. al-Rāzī referring to this verse says that the Prophet was asked if Paradise were as extensive as heaven and earth, where would be hell? Whereupon he replied, where is the night when the day comes? So it seems that al-Rāzī also supports Ibn Kathīr's view of the extensiveness of Paradise. (76)

(75) Quoted by Amir Ali op.cit., p.195. (76) Ibn Kathīr Tafsir, vol.6. p.564. Rāzī vol.8. p.47

The following Traditions of Mishkāt-al-Masābih obviously mark the description of Paradise and Hell, as related to metaphor. The Prophet said: "He who enters Paradise will be in affluent circumstances and will not be destitute, his clothing will not wear out and his youth will not pass away."... "People will enter Paradise with hearts like the hearts of birds. \*\*\* "the Euphrates and Nile are all among the rivers of Paradise." The Prophet was asked of what Paradise was constructed of, he replied, "A brick of gold and a brick of silver with mortar of strong scented musk; its pebbles are pearls and rubbies and its soil is saffron..The trunk of every tree is of gold..Those who are to go to Paradise who die whether young or old will come into Paradise aged thirty and never grow old." The Prophet says about the punishment of Hell, "There will be some to whose ankles the fire will reach, some to whose waist the fire will reach, some to whose collar-bone the fire will reach." Ibn 'Abbas told that the Prophet said "fear God as He ought to be feared, and die only as Muslims," after which he said, "if a drop of (الزقوم) al-zaqqūm were to fall on this world it would corrupt the people's means of livelihood, so what about those whose food it is." (77)

The word Hutama according to the Qur'an means: "the fire of God kindles roaring over the hearts." (104:7), and hablūm-mim-

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hearts of birds signifies with no jealousy, rancour, deceit, or hatred; (b) in trepidation, being on their guard (c) with complete trust, as birds trust God for their food, see Mishkāt-al-Masābih. op.cit., vol.3. pp1198..

(77) Mishkāt-al-Masābih; vol.3. pp.1197ff and 1225.

masad, palm fibre (111:4). To intensify the metaphor, Ibn Kathīr interprets hutama as a fire, which consumes and crushes every thing. Hablūm mim masad is a rope of fire. He says that the wife of Abū Lahab (uncle of the Prophet) will have on her neck a rope of fire in Hell. Ibn Kathīr's interpretation of the verse "And whosoever is blind in this world shall be blind in the world to come." (17:72) shows that the blindness here means spiritual blindness, and not physical blindness. He seems to mean that failure to attain spiritual insight in the world would cause spiritual blindness in the Hereafter, so he maintains (a) the continuity of spiritual state, (b) the importance of man's action and its effect on man's spiritual life, (c) the significance of spiritual life, (d) qualitatively the spirit receives more pleasures and pains. He also says that negligence of remembrance of Gā, and failure to improve the spiritual life, creates narrowness in man's life. (78).

Ibn Kathīr's different interpretations also give the idea that Hell is not a material region, and the gate may mean a way of entrance or a means of approach. Because the word seven is an odd number, and odd words were used as metaphors, the frequent use of the words seven, seventeen, seventy etc. also seem to imply a simile, and a metaphor. It could point to the torment of the senses like sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch and so on. Hell could also mean the defective and diseased soul, whose re-actions

(78) Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr, vol.4. p.330 vol.7. pp289, 368 and 402.

are painful, in contrast with the pleasant reactions of the satisfied soul. Therefore it may be said that the Hereafter constitutes a metaphorical presentation of man's thoughts, designs and actions of this life in the shape of consequences. (79)

According to Ibn Kathīr it seems that man's life is incomplete on this earth. It requires perfection. Perfection is possible only if something follows it, otherwise life becomes meaningless. So he believes that the symbolic treatment in the Hereafter applies to both body and soul. Therefore he says that the continuation of life beyond this life should involve the composition of decomposed and disintegrated particles. The body must be constituted according to the needs of terrestrial existence. It is impossible to express the Hereafter in terms of worldly speech, because the character of the life to-come is entirely different from the present one. The imperfect soul after being meted out due spiritual and physical punishment would move to Paradise. (80)

Ibn Rushd seems to believe in pleasure for the soul only, but in punishment for both body and soul. He says: "According to the learned, the souls connected with them after death are free from carnal desires, then if they are pure from these infirmities, their purification consists in their being freed

(79) Ibid: vol.7. pp157, 158 and 159. (80) Ibid vol.5. pp623 and 635.

from bodily lusts; but in the case of wickedness, the separation increases the evil, because the soul suffers injury from the impurities it has acquired and by their separation from the body their wretchedness is intensified on account of the purification they had lost. Because it is not possible for them to acquire such purification except with the body". (81)

Ibn Rushd also reports three different views with regard to the Hereafter; (a) "the existence beyond this life is identically the same...with only the difference of duration and temporality, that being permanent while this comes to an end. (b) The two existences are distinct; what is imaged by these sensible things is spiritual and that by which it is represented is only for the purpose of explanation. The existence beyond is corporeal, but the corporeality yonder differs from present corporeality, because this is corruptible whereas that is immortal. (c) The soul is immortal,...there does not attach to the return of the soul to other bodies the impossibility which attaches to the return of the body itself. The material of the bodies found here is found to exist subsequently and is changed from body to body... It is not possible that the resemblances of all these bodies should actually exist because their material is one." (82) According to these views it seems that Ibn Rushd believes in spiritual reward and punishment.

(81) Sweetman: op.cit., part 2 vol.2. p.176.

(82) Ibid. p.178.....

Ibn Kathīr interpreting the verse: "Surely those who disbelieve in Our signs - We shall certainly roast them at a fire; as often as their skins are wholly burnt, We shall give them in exchange other skins, that they may taste the chastisement." (4:56) refers to the way of purification. He says that when bodies are thoroughly burnt their feelings are deadened. Then the souls are endowed with the body along with the full sensitiveness till they are purified. (83)

Ibn Sīnā refers to the purification thus: "There is some impediment in the soul which causes it to hate that perfection and to prefer its opposite. Thus, a sickman may sometimes hate a wholesome food and desires an unwholesome food, which is essentially detestable;.....One can be exposed to conditions causing great pain, such as burning or freezing, yet because the senses are impaired the body may not feel any discomfort until the injury is repaired; then it will feel the severe pain." (84)

Ibn Kathīr seems to point to the temporary feature of Hell, he says that the words haqb plural 'ahqāb' is used only for the punishment of fire of hell. They are not used for pleasure and happiness of paradise, therefore he concludes that the happiness is everlasting and ever intensifying whereas hell's pain is temporary. (85) Richard Bell supports Ibn Kathīr's view thus:

(83) Ibn Kathīr Tafsīr, vol.2. pp219-220. (84) op.cit., pp.66-67.

(85) Ibn Kathīr Tafsīr, vol.7. pp.197,199.

"Hell might be taken to imply a kind of purgatory for believers from which they will pass to their reward after being purified from the evil they may have committed." (86)

From Ibn Kathīr's interpretations of the Last Day we conclude that the Last Day will approach after the appearance of certain signs. The intermediary life is similar to a dream in its pleasures and pains. After the Resurrection, judgement is according to deeds. But God will also show mercy and forgiveness. After judgement men are driven to Paradise and Hell accordingly. The happiness in Paradise and torment in Hell are different from those of this world, as the conditions of that world will be quite different from those of this world. So the composition of the body will differ accordingly. But the pleasure and pain will be to both body and soul, but not at all sensual.

(86) R. Bell, Introduction To the Qur'ān, Edinburgh 1958 p.158.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION

In order to have a full view of Ibn Kathīr's role as a commentator and his position among the theologians we have to keep in mind the previous history of the development of theology, the biographical details of his life and the socio-religious problems of his age.

It was the traditional object of theologians to deal with different views and to include as a large a vista as possible. It is the merit of Ibn Kathīr that he steps forward very carefully, scans different views and successfully avoids three basic dangers; (a) creating dissension among Muslims, (b) leaving fundamental problems untouched and unsolved, (c) ignoring to mention with precision relevant significant points.

Owing to the precision and accuracy of his material Ibn Taimiyya considered that he surpassed commentators (1) Moreover some modern theologians consider his tafsīr as having most authentic contents and consider it higher than other commentaries (2).

Chapter one contains the history of the development of tafsīr from the Prophet to Ibn Kathīr. Our examination in this chapter reveals that there will always be a need for the interpretation of

(1) Al-ʿAzzawī: A History of Iraq! Baghdād 1957, p.196.

(2) A.S. Sārim, Tarīkh-al-Tafsīr Lahore 1966 p.107.

metaphors and parables in order to discover more. Ibn Kathīr's role was necessary in order to establish tradition and to introduce a mild type of rationalism.

Chapter two is concerned with the biographical history of Ibn Kathīr's life. We found that he was intelligent and diligent. He belonged to an educated family. It was his family atmosphere that worked as an incentive to his interest in education. The influence of his teachers like Ibn Taimiyya, al-Mazī, al-Dhahabī, who belonged to different schools of thought, was the main reason why Ibn Kathīr developed a reconciliatory nature and adopted an impartial attitude towards different schools of thought

(3) It is also true to say that Ibn Kathīr's adaptability to different subjects owes a great deal to the unfailing kindness of his teachers, yet this does not mean a denial of his personal efforts and intellectual capabilities.

In chapter three we discussed the aspects of God. God has two aspects: (a) His essence, and (b) His attributes. Regarding God's essence, the first interpretation shows Him to be light visualises His Absoluteness, His Transcendentalism and His close relation to man's spiritual and physical regions (4). The second interpretation of God's essence is identical to the orthodox's. God is shown as Omnipresent, Omnipotent, Omniscient, One without a compeer or a rival and consort, everlastingly Unique and

(3) Chapter 2 pp. 34, 37 and 38.ff.

(4) Chapter 3 pp61f.

Eternal. This interpretation includes the essence of all attributes.

Ibn Kathīr's reasoning with regard to the seven essential attributes of God is similar to the 'Ashā'rites, except in the definition of His existence, and His vision and transcendentalism. The 'Ashā'rites defines existence as "the self of an entity" and apply this to the Creator and creatures. Whereas Ibn Kathīr defines existence separately for God and creatures. Existence for God is the uncaused self of an entity, and existence for creatures is the caused self of an entity. (5) Ibn Kathīr describes God's vision thus: "God is invisible to the eyes and incomprehensible to the senses" whereas the 'Ashā'rites says "Nothing exists which God cannot show us; God exists therefore He can show us Himself." (6) The 'Ashā'rites do not mention the type of God's vision. Ibn Kathīr mentions Transcendentalism both in the attributes and essence of God whereas the 'Ashā'rites keep silence in some cases.

As to God's life, He is an uncaused being, He is living, powerful, fatigue and failure do not overtake Him, nor slumber and sleep, nor annihilation and death. The protection of heaven and earth oppresses Him not, The cosmos, its order and design is the proof of God's life.

Knowledge is an essential attribute to God. It subsists in His essence. He knows every thing known comprehending whatever

(5) Ibid p.76f. (6) Thomson W., 'Ashā'irī and his Ibāna, The Muslim World, vol. 32. 1942 p.244.....

happens in the universe. He knows actions and thoughts of creatures in heaven and earth, and evident and immanent things therein. His knowledge is perfect, unoriginated and essential.

Will and Power God is willer of all possibilities that come to be. Nothing happens without His will, good and evil, great and small, profitable or harmful, existence and non-existence, honour and dishonour, success and failure, obedience and disobedience. Whatever God wills, His power brings it into light. His will and power are interconnected. Both attributes are perfect, in other words; God is perfect in His will and power.

Hearing and Seeing, with relation to these two essential attributes. Ibn Kathīr mentions a theory that colour, taste, scent and sound are bodies. This theory was part of the doctrinal belief of An-Nazzām (D845), who adopted it under the influence of the philosophers. (7) Ibn Kathīr seems to have adopted it through studying the Qur'ān, as no where does he appear to have had any connection with the philosophers. Ibn Kathīr himself is silent about this. On the basis of this theory he says that God hears the voices of visible and invisible things and also sees visible and invisible things. So it also appears that every visible and invisible thing has a voice and a body.

Speech. God is a speaker by an unoriginated Kalām, not resembling the speech of creature. By His speech God commands, forbids,

(7) Sweetman, op.cit., vol.2. part 2 p.8....

promises and threatens. His speech subsists in His essence.

PART B. Regarding attributes of actions it is found that Ibn Kathīr strictly believes that God's Mercy encompasses everything. All actions of God like creation, providence, justice, guidance are the manifestations of His mercy, and in every case they are subservient to His attribute of mercy.

PART C. The examination of the idea of partnership with God reveals that the profession of the On<sup>ne</sup>ess of God is in the nature of man. The main cause of straying from this nature is lack of knowledge i.e. 'ilmu-l-yaqīn, 'ainu-l-yaqīn and haqqu-l-yaqīn or the certainty of inference, the certainty of sight and the certainty of perception. Ibn Kathīr recommends that in order to escape from the pitfalls of polytheism and to know the truth, man must struggle to obtain knowledge.

Chapter four gives Ibn Kathīr's views about angels. They are means of connection between God and man. They are subtle (Latīf) and illuminated. They can perform different tasks and come in different forms. Ibn Kathīr classifies them into different categories and assigns different distinctive duties according to the category and status in which they are classed. He points that angels and satan are two different species. He fails to explain this point. However, a deep study of the problem and Baidāwī's views bring home the idea that satan could be included in malāi'ka siffiyya, or lower grade angels. But to consider them

as good and bad powers is entirely against the basic ideas of Islam and rejects their being as entities.

In Chapter five we discussed the Prophets and found that they are human beings, their acts are human acts, their powers are human powers. This does not imply that every human being can become a prophet by doing certain acts. Prophethood is divine selection, therefore the Prophets are rare individuals who possess rare natural powers. They possess an innate ability and aptitude to imbibe knowledge of God's word as revealed to them through angels for the guidance of mankind. Their knowledge consisted of fundamentals and laws. The laws differed and were according to the time and need, but fundamentals were the same. Powell writes: "Yet, the laws of the apostles have varied in some of the practical judgements and minor details which the piety of the souls of the people requires. This is because the practical laws and means of purifying the soul vary according to the conditions of the society and the disposition of the soul. So the laws are at variance with each other in business agreements, in marriage restrictions, in the means of repentance from sins, etc. But religions do agree on the existence of One true God and devotion to Him and the principles of morality. The foundation do not vary with the variety of apostles and nations." (8)

(8) A.J. Powell, The Qur'ānic View of the Scriptures, the Muslim World, April 1969 pp p.96. cf. chapter 5. pp 224 ff

By virtue of their knowledge and particular power given by God miracles emanate from them which stand witness for the truth of their prophetic office. They also possess particular and legalistic wisdom, therefore they are considered as legislators, reformers and statesmen. Above all they possessed impeccable character.

In chapter six we examined the Scriptures. They were revealed to the apostles for the guidance of mankind. Their number varies. The four Scriptures: the Torah, the Psalm, the Injil and the Qur'an exist. All have been changed except the Qur'an. Ibn Kathir believes that the Qur'an is the miracle on account of its protection, language and teachings. Its teachings implies suitability to the requirement of wisdom, (9) justice and righteousness. Its language is incomparable in style and eloquence. It is a miracle in respect of protection of its contents. It is the same as it was in the time of the Prophet. Ibn Khaldun briefly says: "Know that the greatest, the most sublime, and best accredited miracle is the noble Qur'an which was revealed to our Prophet." (10)

Ibn Kathir successfully deals with the problem of the supremacy of the Qur'an. But with regard to the question of abrogation, he maintains that only four verses have been

(9) The Qur'an, indeed, in supporting of its message also appeals to human intellect. The Qur'an admonishes to the study of nature....Baljon, op.cit., p.123.

(10)Hirschfeld, H., op.cit., p.1.

abrogated. This may contradict his basic view that the whole Qur'ān is everlastingly applicable. Modern commentators have taken very serious view of this case, and they are true in their approach that there is no abrogation in the Qur'ān at all. (11)

Predestination. In chapter seven the problem of predestination was examined. Good and evil are predestined by God, only in the case when there is Taqdīr Mubrum (Settled). In this case animate and inanimate objects are bound to work inwardly and outwardly in accordance with God's laws. But in the case of Taqdīr Mu'allaq (suspended), which is related to man only, if man practices certain good deeds and avoids certain bad deeds he can change his destiny, to, a certain limits. But there is no indication to what extent these limits are.

In chapter eight the Hereafter was discussed. It is found that the approach of the last day is known by certain signs, especially after blowing the Trumpet. Just after the end of the universe the intermediate state will begin which will be followed by resurrection and then the life of heaven and hell. According to Ibn Kathīr the difference between the present world, the world of barzakh and the world to-come is as follows. In the present world the body is visible and the spirit is hidden. There is no possibility for the spirit to indulge in worldly affairs.

(11) Baljon, op.cit., p.49.....

Therefore the body is the main source to receive reward and punishment, and then to transmit it to the soul. In the world of the grave the soul is visible and the body is generally destroyed, therefore the recipient of pleasure and pain will be the soul and then elements of the body. After resurrection as both body and soul will be visible therefore both of them will experience pleasure and pain separately. (12)

Concerning God's judgement it is concluded that mankind will be divided into three classes: (a) those who will be allowed to enter paradise without reckoning, (b) those who will be reckoned with leniently, (c) those who will be reckoned with strictly and will be sent to Hell. The believers will come out of the fire after retribution. But the unbelievers and idolators will dwell for ever in the fire. (13)

In the Hereafter man's body would be made in consonance with the terrestrial environment, as the Hereafter is entirely different from this life. So the happiness in Paradise and torment in Hell are different from this world. For instance; in Paradise the companions will be free from physical pollution, and the inhabitants will get fruit similar to the earth, closely resembling it in colour and appearance, but infinitely superior. The treatment in the Hereafter is mentioned in the Qur'an

(12) Chapter 8 pp 332 ff

(13) Ibid pp. 345 ff 352 ff

symbolically, but there is a relation with regard to the feeling of pleasure and pain thus; pleasure and pain are self existing in the subjective mind. Extreme mental pleasure and pain<sup>is</sup> far more rapturous and agonising respectively than physical pleasure and pain. Similarly in Paradise and Hell joy and pain will be mental and therefore more intensive. But, Hell is a temporary abode, whereas Paradise is perpetual. The survival will be in totality and not in part only. So the life Hereafter will be without dimintion<sup>u</sup> of any intellectual and emotional character. Lack of any feeling of love or happiness would mean impoverishment. Hence the personality will exist in its entirety and not only in its abstract and intellectual part. (14)

(14) Ibid pp331,353and 356ff

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