

My Ordeal with the Qur'ān
And the God of the Qur'ān

مِحنَتِي مَعَ الْقُرْآنِ وَمَعَ اللَّهِ فِي الْقُرْآنِ

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Preface

TODO:

Introduction

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Chapter 1

My Journey from Doubt to Belief

1.1 The Belief Phase

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1.2 The Test Phase

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1.3 The Whirlwind Phase

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1.4 The Investigation Phase

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1.5 The Breaking-Off Phase

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Chapter 2

The Methodology of Examining the Qur'ān

There are two methods to understand the Qur'ān. They are: The Methodology of Transmission, that gives precedence to revelation over reason, the unquestioning acceptance of the veracity of the text and the inability of reason to comprehend its ultimate aims and objectives, and the Methodology of Reason that gives precedence to reason over revelation and its ability to comprehend the truth without need for reference to the text. For text is the last concern of the mind that is in itself free, independent and believing.

For that reason I will employ, in this book, the Methodology of Reason, that Descartes established at the beginning of the modern age even though he did not always abide by it and in particular in understanding religious texts but manoeuvred, twisted and distorted the neck of Reason to stop the rot that fills Revelation and that which Revelation contains of garbage that diseases minds.

See how this great man compromises for the sake of (divine) text. Descartes wasn't the first to compromise, not at all, and he will not be the last apart from those who believe in Reason and act according to it and trust that which Reason obligates —

and they are few indeed! For (divine) text has such influence and power, few can withstand.

The fundamental principle of the methodology of Reason is impartiality and objectivity and to approach the research with a mind free from prejudice and bias “Bias is Sickness” as they say. In this spirit we must resolutely proceed in studying the Qur’ān and treat it as we would any other scientific research and subject it to examination and analysis and skepticism and rejection and contestation because that is what will make our examination fruitful and profitable and make it of universal benefit.

Applying the methodology of Reason to the Qur’ān is in my view a dangerous and massive event that will shake the earth below the feet of blind faith (Taqlēd) and inertia, and putrid decay. And it something that must be done the for the most extreme cure is cauterization.

The Qur’ān has deep roots in our cultural composition and if these roots are shaken then composition changes to a different composition and destiny changes to a different destiny and people changes to a different people and as a consequence a new generation emerges that wasn’t in the reckoning.

For that reason the first thing I will confront you with in this discourse is that I doubt the Qur’ān and in the god of the Qur’ān and in the teachings of the Qur’ān and in the miraculous nature of the Qur’ān and in the sublime language of the Qur’ān.

I insist on doubt, I embrace it on principle. For doubts — as al-Ghazali says — leads one to the truth. So one who does not doubt cannot look and one who does not look cannot see and one who cannot see will remain in blindness and error.

This is my method in doing the work and this is how I start examining, thinking, reading and reflect until the circumstances lead me to something resembling certainty. That is because what we call the miraculous nature of the Qur’ān and infallibility of the Qur’ān is really only like any human piece of work containing error as well as correctness.

I'm aware of the consequences which I have arrived at but that won't deter me from proving them and broadcasting them and expressing my opinion freely. I know in advance that it will lead to mortal dangers and grave confrontations that I perhaps don't need. But no! For truth deserves to be followed. I will take refuge in a mountain that will protect me from the water (*NB: This is a reference to Noah's son*) as far as I am able and if not then martyrdom is better than I suffer incapacity and weakness to declare what I believe in and what many others besides me believe in, though they are waiting for the spark of light to set alight after that many sparks of light and sparks of light light up the dark tunnel that we are living in. So is there any other way to escape from a path?

As for the reasons that led me to doubt in the Qur'ān, they are because of its contradictions, generalisations, pompous rhetoric, and fecetious phrases that have no meaning. The grammatical and stylistic errors that the classical scholars were at their wits end trying to find explanations. And others, both scientific and historical that I consider the Lord of the worlds above making. Just as the Qur'ān is full of rhetorical explosive charges, verbal bombs, that create such an extreme uproar that ears almost become deaf but after deep analysis and despite what it contains of sweetness and charm and alluring beauty, it is pale, emaciated, little content, lacking substance, bubbles in the air, radiating beams of light like fireworks, except that they soon extinguish and fall to the ground spent, leaving behind it pitch dark.

It is as though it is a bolt of lightening glistening with fury — then fizzles out and it is as though it never shone. (a line from a poem by *Ibn Sina*)

Many of the prose of the masters of eloquence (classical literati) and even the doggrel of soothsayers is better — a thousand times — than many of the Qur'ānic verses that are of nonsensical language, stuffed full of fairy tales, that the Qur'ānic commentators — and strangely, amongst them Mu'tazilites — became masters at dealing with and defending.

There remains another matter and it isn't the last. It is the matter of the indictment of the Qur'ān upon the Qur'ān. For the narrative of the Qur'ān is confused — and how confused — for how abundant is the confusion of the Qur'ān. "The Almighty" said: "And if this was from other than Allah you would have found a lot of contradiction."

The Qur'ān has passed the guilty verdict upon itself! For that which it contains of contradictions goes beyond the limit of 'a lot'. Nay, it is the centre of every disparity and contradiction. The amount of disparities and contradictions in any book in the world has never reached the level of the Qur'ān. Yet despite this they want us to believe that there is no disparity nor contradiction in the Qur'ān. We must ignore the evidence to believe that which does not agree with reason nor with the evidence in the manner of "Believe Allah and disbelieve the stomach of your brother" and if you don't (ignore evidence and reason) then you will see and hear that which will not please you. (NB: Reference to a hadith where someone came to the prophet complaining of his brothers stomach/bowel problem, the prophet said 'give him honey' — but the guy returned saying it has got worse, so the prophet said 'give him honey' this happened twice more — finally the prophet said 'believe Allah and disbelieve the stomach of your brother'.)

I am not calling for the renunciation of religion, for that is a difficult objective, in fact it is a demand that cannot be sought. Because religion for its adherents is sweet nectar and for so long I myself savoured this sweetness until I returned to my senses.

I say I am not calling for the renunciation of religion but am calling for the end to resorting to religion for decisions in all matters and sticking its nose into every tiny matter in the affairs of life. And that (can be achieved) by applying Secularism as a principle both in thought and in life. Secularism is not disbelief, nor is it a call to disbelief as some of its enemies portray it, but it is merely placing a limit to the interference between religion and the state.

Religion is not the execution of the captive, nor the stoning

of the adulterer, nor the chopping of the hand of the thief. Religion, according to secularists, is that which lives in the heart and dwells in the conscience. Believe what you like, but beware of imposing your beliefs on others nor make it into a system for government or life. Religion is for God while the nation is for everyone. That is the slogan of Secularism.

There is nothing inviolable, nothing sacred in Secularism. The only thing that is inviolable and sacred in it is Humanity and the value of Humanity and the freedom of Humanity and respect for the dignity of Humanity. The lack of exploitation of man by another. The unbeliever (Kafir) is not the one who disbelieves in religion. The only unbeliever is the one who disbelieves in Humanity and Human Rights.

For the value of life is Reason. The value of life is Freedom. The value of life is Progress and Development. The value of life is Innovative Vision and expressing it according to what suits the requirements of the time and place. As for disbelief and belief, angel and devil, it (creates) conflict that impedes the development of innovations and the flow of progress in a world of powers and balances of powers and centers of powers.

The thing that most frightens man is to be consigned to the debris of memory. Ruminating over myths and delusions. In a trance over the invisible, and text, and miraculousness and rhetoric and to follow the stories of the garden of Eden and the Houris, and the (verse of) Light and the servant boys (of paradise) and stories of Jinn and tales of Luqman and the like of these stories and tales that for so long fertilized the minds and imaginations, both in the near and distant past but then today lose the bet. (i.e. discover it was all BS)

Chapter 3

The Qur'ān According to the Belief of Muslims

3.1 The Qur'ān is the Speech of God

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3.2 The Qur'ān is the Centre for all Schools of Thought & Opinion in Islam

TODO:

3.3 The Linguistic Beauty was the Qur'ān's Key to the Hearts of the Pre-Islamic Arabs

TODO:

3.4 The Work of the Exegetes (Mufassirin) of the Qur'ān

TODO:

3.5 An Inevitable Revolution

TODO:

Chapter 4

The Miraculous Nature of the Qur'ān

4.1 The Belief of Muslims in the Miraculous Nature (of the Qur'ān)

“Say: ‘If the whole of mankind and Jinns were to gather together to produce the like of this Qur'ān, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they backed up each other with help and support.’” (17:88)

The Qur'ān is indeed a unique book. It is prose and yet unlike prose. It is poetry and yet unlike poetry. It is metered and rhyming and yet it is not like the (standard) meters and rhymes. So what is it then? It is the Qur'ān and that's it!

Perhaps the best description of the Qur'ān is that which the late Dean of Arabic literature, Dr. Ta Ha Hussain said: “The Genres of Arabic expression are poetry, prose and Qur'ān.” For the Qur'ān is not poetry — no! and it is not prose. It is a type of speech that is of a singular nature, unique of its kind. It's Qur'ān! For that reason they (the scholars) are united in the opinion that what is called the miraculous nature of the Qur'ān is its amazing composition.

Miraculousness (al-‘Ijaaz) in the Arabic language comes from “To Make Unable”, in other words it attributes the inability to another and a miracle is called a miracle because mankind is unable to replicate it.

The (scholarly) discipline of the Miraculous Nature (of the Qur’ān) was a discipline that was an innovation in religion. This discipline reached its full maturity in the 4th century of the Hijra when it became independent and grew into a discipline in its own right. Today it’s a fundamental tenet of faith that no-one can dare throw doubt on. Beginning in the 4th century of the Hijra the (discipline) of the Miraculous Nature became indelibly written in stone.

Despite that there were those who cast doubt on this belief, going right back to the first centuries of Islam.

Perhaps the first of these was al-Ja’d ibn Dirham, tutor to Marwan ibn Muhammad the last of the Umayyad Caliphs. For he was the first one to openly express skepticism of the Qur’ān, and refutation of it and rejection of things in it. He said that its eloquence was not a miracle and that people can do the like of it and better than it when no-one had before him had said such as that. Marwan — who was nicknamed the donkey — used to follow his view to the extent that he was linked to him and called “Marwan al-Ja’di”¹.

During the mid Abbasid period this view (that the Qur’ān was not a miracle) spread along with other views of a similar nature, such as the view that the Qur’ān was created as well as its opposition (those who believed it was not created, but eternal — on the “Protected Tablet”). The first to go to great lengths in that was ‘Isa ibn Sabih, known as Abu Musa al-Mirdar, who was one of the Mu’tazilite scholars and amongst the leading ones. He was called the Monk of the Mu’tazilites and differed from the rest of the Mu’tazilites in all of the issues that concern us here. Saying about the Qur’ān that people are able to produce

¹See: Mustafa Sadiq al-Rafī, “The Miraculous Nature of the Qur’ān and the Prophetic Rhetoric.” Page 160.

the like of this Qur'ān as regards eloquence, and composition and rhetorical beauty².

Similar to that (view, that others could produce the like of the Qur'ān) was the view taken by his contemporary, Ibrahim Ibn Sayyar Ibn Hani' al-Nazzam, who expounded many of the works of the philosophers and combined their ideas with the ideas of the Mu'tazilites³. But he differed from his colleagues in 13 matters, while al-Baghdadi increased that number to 21.

If al-Shahrastani labels the areas al-Nazzam differed from his colleagues, "issues", these "issues" become "shameful scandals" in the view of al-Baghdadi! So the 9th issue that al-Shahrastani reproaches al-Nazzam about; becomes "The 25th shameful scandal of his shameful scandals" according to the wording of al-Baghdadi: "His view regarding the miraculous nature of the Qur'ān that it is to do with the fact it predicts events of the past and future, and to do with the the fact it diverted the causes of opposition and prevented the Arabs — by force and incapacitation — from being concerned with (trying to imitate) it, because if he (Allah) let them then they would have been able to produce a Sura (chapter) the like of it in beautiful rhetoric, eloquence and composition" For mankind is able to produce the like of this Qur'ān, but Allah diverted them from doing that and prevented them by placing hinderance and incapacity within them to do so. This is "The View of Diversion."⁴

(NB: In other words al-Nazzam's view was that the miraculous nature of the Qur'ān was NOT that it could not be imitated — in his view it could easily be imitated — but that Allah prevented the Arabs from doing so!)

Now we ask what is the nature of the Miraculousness of the Qur'ān?

The scholars of Arabic — especially the scholars of language and elegant speech — are completely united that the Qur'ān is

²Al-Baghdadi, "The Difference Between the Groups" Page 164-165; and al-Shahrastani, "The Book of Sects and Creeds", 1 / 68-69.

³Al-Shahrastani, 1 / 35-45.

⁴Previous Reference 1 / 56-57.

in itself a miracle. That its miraculousness is in its wonderful composition, in the eloquence of its expressions, the astounding nature of its clear speech, its unique style that is unlike any other style, its captivating verbal impact, that reveals itself in its acoustic structure, and linguistic beauty, and its sublime artistry.

Al-Qadi Abu Bakr (d. 1148) said the nature of the miraculousness of the Qur'ān is in its composition, arrangement, and structure. That it's beyond all types of standard composition in the language of the Arabs, departing from their styles of oration and for this reason they were unable to oppose it. The composition of the Qur'ān had no model to imitate, nor any antecedent to emulate and it's unreasonable (to think) that the like of it could happen by chance. He said: "the miraculousness of Qur'ān is much clearer in some parts while in some parts it is more subtle, and more obscure."⁵

Al-Imam Fakhr al-Din (d. 1210) said the nature of the miraculousness is the eloquence, and unique style, free from all defects.

Al-Zamalkani (d. 727h) said the nature of the miraculousness derives from the composition that's unique to it and is not haphazard. In that its words are finely balanced in construction, in meter and the reason behind the way it's been put together, in meaning. So that every type occurs in the best possible place for its pronunciation and meaning.

And Ibn Atiyya said: The correct (opinion) and the one that laymen and experts are agreed upon in regard to its miraculousness is that it is its composition and the soundness of its meanings, and in the arrangement of the eloquence of its wording. And that is because Allah's knowledge surrounds all things and surrounds all (aspects) of language. So since the organisation of the wording in the Qur'ān is something his knowledge completely surrounds, i.e. each word perfectly suits the one it follows and each meaning is elucidated after another and that

⁵Quoted from the previous reference, p. 122.

is the case from beginning to end of the Qur'ān and man is encompassed by ignorance, bewilderment and perplexity and it is self-evident that no human being encompasses all that, then as a result the arrangement of the Qur'ān is furthest epitome of eloquence and for that reason one destroys the saying of those who claim that the Arabs were able to replicate the like of it or that they were 'diverted' from doing so. The correct (opinion) is that it is not within the ability of anyone ever!⁶

However the scholars disagree about the difference in the degrees of eloquence of the verses of Qur'ān after having agreed it is in the highest forms of eloquence, in so far as you cannot find phrasing that is more suitable nor balanced, to convey that meaning.

Al-Qadi (Abu Bakr d. 1148) takes the opinion of 'negation', meaning negation of there being any difference (in degrees of eloquence). For every word in it is depicted in its highest (form/usage) even though some people are better at sensing it than others.

While Abu al-Qushairy and others take the opinion of 'difference' (in degrees of eloquence), he said: "We do not claim that everything in the Qur'ān is in the highest rank of eloquence."

And likewise others have said: "In the Qur'ān is (both) the Eloquent and the Most Eloquent." This is the opinion taken by Sheikh 'Izz al-Din 'Abd al-Salam who then asked: "Why was the Qur'ān not entirely in the most eloquent form?" Al-Sadr Mawhoob al-Jazari replied to the effect that 'if the Qur'ān had come in that (most eloquent form) it would not be in the usual style of speech from the Lord, combining the Most Eloquent with the Eloquent and so the argument for the miraculous (nature of the Qur'ān) would not be effective. So it came in their usual style of speech to highlight the inability to challenge it and so they can't say, for example: 'You have brought that which we have no ability in its like. Just as it would not be right for a sighted person to say to a blind person: "I beat you by virtue of

⁶All the quotes are taken from the previous reference, p. 133 with some slight edits in wording but not meaning.

my sight.” Because the blind person will say to him: “Your victory can only be valid if I was able to see, and (then you could say) your sight was better than mine. But if I lack the ability to see then how can I make a challenge?”⁷

In any case the Qur’ān is in the eyes of Muslims the Prophet’s greatest miracle. No falsehood in it either before or behind it. “Indeed everything in the Qur’ān is a miracle in respect of the music of its letters, the kinship between its wording, the synchronicity of its words with its expressions, and well-knit arrangement in its resonance and that which it arrives at in regards to composition between the words and the fact that every word intentionally fits its counterpart. As though the weave of each part perfects its picture and completes its objective. Its meanings coalesce with its words as though its meanings are related to its pronunciations and its pronunciations were designed for it, and made to fit its size.”⁸

4.2 What kind of Miraculousness is it?

Now we say: Indeed the belief in the miraculousness of the Qur’ān is no more than a myth amongst myths. Indeed! The Qur’ān is not amongst the secrets of the gods. It doesn’t bear the slightest relation to divine inspiration that takes it outside the (normal) activity of (human) history. It’s a purely human achievement that follows the norms of humanity in strength and weakness, correctness and error, agreement and contradiction, cohesion and disparity, consistency and inconsistency, uniformity and disarray.

The direct result of all that is that the Qur’ān is a very ordinary book. For that reason it is necessary to remove it from its safe refuge, outside Human history and return it to the world of people. After that it will no longer be storehouse for timeless wisdom nor a divine book protected from error that no falsehood can approach it from either front or behind.

⁷The previous reference p. 109.

⁸The previous reference p. 99.

In that way, it and its time and its context become part of the historical process of the area which has witnessed, and continues to witness every day, comparable books that influenced these books and are influenced by it and ignite the interaction between them.

Every star-struck believer, regardless of whether he is from the common people or their elite or even from the elite of the elite, relies (on the belief) that “in the Qur’ān, due to beauty of the words and the splendour of the style especially, no-one can attain the phrases, style and meanings.”⁹

And that challenge, that Allah announced in the Qur’ān for Man & Jinn to bring the like of this Qur’ān,

“Say: ‘If the whole of mankind and Jinns were to gather together to produce the like of this Qur’ān, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they backed up each other with help and support.’” (17:88)

is absolutely true, but it doesn’t apply only to the Qur’ān, it also applies to every great work. For just as Man & Jinn are not able to produce the like of the Qur’ān, likewise they cannot produce the like of that which Plato brought, nor al-Jahiz, nor al-Tawhidi, nor Dante, nor Goethe, nor Shakespear...

Great works always contain the fingerprints of their authors. It is a part of their identity. So if it is impossible to imitate these fingerprints, then it is also impossible to imitate these works. Each one is a unique weave that has no match in the works of man and thus establishes its character. Despite this each one is not free from flaws and errors and defects that the critic can be aware of. Likewise the Qur’ān. In the work of al-Jahiz and al-Tawhidi is that which far surpasses what is in some of the verses of the Qur’ān, as we shall see, but who dares criticise the Qur’ān?

Indeed the Muslims of the Middle Ages during the Golden Age, had more freedom than Muslims in this time. If not then

⁹Muhammad Abu Zahra, “The Greatest Miracle.”

why does no-one dare, like al-Sarakhsi and Ibn Rawandi and al-Razi, to defame the most holy symbol of Muslims, the valuable of valuables that gives meaning to their existence and bestows on them hope and immortality.

All efforts and active forces in the Islamic world have been enlisted to repel the “Enemies of Allah”. Criticism of Allah’s book has been met with a reception that varies from forbearance & irritation, between insult & vilification and between suppression & temperance, and ‘dealing’ with antagonists ranged between chit-chat & bluster, to finding excuses and haphazard solutions — or as I myself call it, “Patching” (the holes) — to save the word of Allah from the clutches of the deniers, the astray and the ones who lead others astray. Between hitting and slapping, punching and physical eradication, seeking closeness to Allah through the blood of that insolent fabricator of lies about Allah, denier of his signs, so that he be a warning to his like, the forces of the Devil, “and Satan indeed found his calculation true concerning them, for they followed him...” (34:20) them and the seducers. Then they topple into the Fire of Hell all of them together¹⁰. They are the ones who Allah curses, and those who curse, curse them!!

Indeed opposing the Qur’ān was a natural process that arose with the rise of Islam, but the new religion killed it in the cradle, or at least was able to silence it for a while. That was after the astounding victory that it achieved in the Arabian Peninsula and the area surrounding it. Indeed it was such a tremendous breakthrough that it temporarily diverted attention away from that which interplays in it of (opposing) forces and deep contradictions that don’t appear on the surface except in moments of quiet and stability or at the times of fitna.

For that reason it is not strange that this process started anew or returned to the open when the Umayyad dynasty began to disintegrate and draw towards its inevitable end. For indeed Islam injured the pride of many of the leaders of the heretics (Zanadiqa) — and they were the Shu’ubiyyah (*NB: A popularist*

¹⁰Allusion to what is related in Sura al-Shu’araa’ 26:94.

movement against the the supremacy of the Arabs) — and nationalist pride overtook them and led them to fanaticism for the religion of their fathers such as Zoroastrianism and Manichean dualism and hatred towards Islam that ended their glory and destroyed their dreams in lasting and noble life. A group of poets who belonged to “The League of the Mujjan” (NB: *A group of libertine/dissident intellectuals such as Bashar ibn Burd and Abu Nuwas*) joined them, fleeing from the constraints of religion and seeking a life of freedom with no restrictions or regulations.

Then came the Abbasid period where the Shu‘ubiyah movement was active side by side with the Heretical movement (Harkatu z-Zandaqa) and the attacks on Islam intensified and disparagement of its holy of holies — the Qur’ān. And at the head of this movement were poets, satirists, and disaffected thinkers, the most famous of them: Salih Ibn Abdul Quddus, and Abdul Karim ibn Abu al-‘Awjaa‘, and Abu ‘Isa al-Warraq and Bashar ibn Burd, and his adversary Hammad Ajrad, and Iban ibn Abdul Hamid al-Lahiqi, and Ibn Muqaffa‘, and (his son?) Muhammad ibn Abdullah ibn Muqaffa‘, and Abd al-Masih al-Kindi who we shall say a few words about in a bit to show the participation of non-Muslims in the attack on the Qur’ān...

But the most famous of all these without argument is: Abu al-Hussein Ahmad ibn Yahya ibn Ishaq al-Rawandi, and Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakariyya al-Razi, under both of whom the movement of Heretics reached its climax and extent of its maturity and we will discuss now each of them briefly, enough to clarify what we mean.

Ibn al-Rawandi (d. 298H / 910AD)

(NB: *none of his books have survived. What exists are quotes from critics.*)

At first the Dissident Movement, or the Movement of Heretics, was simply a spontaneous individual attitude or libertine outburst or a transient intellectual position, but then this movement began to manifest itself and crystalize with the passing of

time until it became a comprehensive school of thought based on the pillars of reason. It acquired supporters who believed in it and worked to publicise it and disseminate its principles. This movement continued to grow, consolidate and rise until it reached its apex under Ibn al-Rawandi. His view of Prophethood formed the cornerstone of the the barrage on the Qur'ān, by these Heretics, though without that extending to doubt in the existence of Allah who revealed the Qur'ān.

Doubt in Prophethood was the furthest extent that this movement of Heretics achieved in Islam. Then it came to a halt after a violent shake-up in concepts and doctrines grew out of it, in the 4th century (of Hijra) that drew towards it the movements of the concealed ideologies that were influenced by Gnosticism and Esoteric Knowledge and especially those associated with the Shi'ism and the Isma'iliyyah Shi'ism in particular.

Ibn Rawandi was the most famous of the dissenters of the 3rd century of Hijrah, though only a little is known about him, even the date of his birth and death are not known for certain. He was originally a Mu'tazilite (A non-orthodox Sunni School of thought) then recanted and leaned towards Shi'ism and became a bitter enemy to the Mu'tazilites.

He was a vehement believer in Reason, praising it and relying on it in all matters and affairs. Reason, in his opinion, was: "The greatest gift bestowed by God, glorified is he, upon his creation. Indeed it is through it that the Lord and his blessings can be known and by virtue of it that orders & prohibitions, his promises & threats become valid."¹¹ He wrote a book called "The Scandal of the Mu'tazilah"¹² which was a critical analysis of the Mu'tazilite School of thought from the perspective of the Shi'ah al-Rafidah and a reply to the book of al-Jahiz "The Virtue of the Mu'tazilah". But this period did not last long and we see him after that amongst the group of those who the author of the "The Catalogue" (Kitab al-Fihrist, by Ibn al-Nadim d. 995 AD) gives the title "Theologians who manifest Islam, but con-

¹¹Quoted from Dr. Abd al-Rahman Badawi, from "History of Disbelief in Islam" page 202.

ceal heresy.” He was influenced in this by Abu ‘Isa al-Warraaq who was a teacher of his and encouraged him towards heresy.

Ibn Rawandi began his Heretical writings in the latter years of his life, and they are the books that he owes his importance and high status to. Amongst these books is a book where he dealt a massive blow to the Qur’ān. He called it “The Crushing Blow”. It was, as its title suggests, a merciless attack on the Qur’ān.

A third book is attributed to him called the book of “The Emerald” where he refutes the concept of Prophethood in Islam and attacks the belief in the Miraculousness of the Qur’ān. We said that this book is “attributed to him” due to a reference that it’s said it’s attributable to al-Jaba‘iy and goes on to say: “Indeed Ibn al-Rawandi and Abu ‘Isa Muhammad Ibn Harun al-Warraaq the Heretic, also dispute with one another over the book of “The Emerald” each one claiming that it is amongst their compilations as both were in complete accordance in attacking the Qur’ān.”¹³

In the the first and third parts of this book, Ibn al-Rawandi (or Abu ‘Isa al-Warraaq?) presents his opinion on Reason and Religions that depend on Revelation and explains the position on each. He begins his book with Human Reason, praising it and going to great lengths in celebrating the fact that it is the only path to enlightenment. For that reason his opponents must agree with him that Reason is the mightiest thing that man possesses and is the sole refuge to solve problems, indeed! “The prophet bore witness to the high status and majesty of Reason.”¹⁴

So Reason should be used to analyse Prophethood. Either the teachings of the Prophet agree with Reason, and in that case there is no need for it because Reason is in no need of it, or it contradicts reason in which case it is false. For that reason it was necessary for Ibn al-Rawandi to be surprised at

¹²See: The previous reference, page 87, 186 and that which is after it.

¹³Quote from the previous reference p. 112 and 182.

¹⁴Quote from the pervious reference p. 186-187.

the position of Muhammad and wonder; “Why did he bring that which negates him if he was authentic?”¹⁵ For the revelation of Muhammad is in complete opposition to reason. Then, what is the meaning of these obligatory religious injunctions upon the Muslim, such as ritual washing, and prayer and circumambulating around the Ka‘abah and visiting the holy sites?

Regarding that, Ibn al-Rawandi says “Indeed the prophet brought that which contradicts Reason, such as prayer, ritual cleansing from impurity, throwing stones at pillars during Hajj, and walking around a house that cannot hear nor see? Or dashing between two rocky mounds that can neither benefit nor harm. All of this has nothing to do with Reason. So what is the difference between (the hills of) Safa and Marwa and (the hills of) Abu Qubays and Hira? And walking round the (holy) house is no different than walking round any other houses.”¹⁶

Ibn al-Rawandi used the myths of the Brahmans to express his bold views. He used them as the means by which to attack “Divinely revealed” religions and laws (*NB: Since it is easier for Muslims to recognise the superiority of using reason in relation to the claims of ‘divine inspiration’ of others,*) so he could hide beneath this veil his belief (about Islam). He made them as analogies for the (necessity of) Reason and Intellect so that they could be set free of their own accord and express the views and thoughts that naturally occur to them, while attaching it to delusional characters to soften its blows upon the audience.

In this vein and in the name of Reason that he never ceases to praise and extol for a moment, he goes on to attack the Qur’ān in his previously mentioned book “The Emerald”. He reviews in this book the concept of the Miraculousness of the Qur’ān and criticises it ruthlessly, and annihilates the view of the divine origin of the Qur’ān and puts forward a simple, concrete, logical and reasoned view with no ambiguity in it. Convincing the intellect of the human nature of the Qur’ān, refuting those who

¹⁵Quote from the pervious reference p. 84.

¹⁶Quote from the pervious reference 101-102. Abu Qubais and Hira are mountains in Makkah.

say that it is an inspiration from Allah and a revelation from an all-wise and all-knowing entity.

It is also related that Ibn al-Rawandi said — regarding refuting the belief in the miraculousness of the Qur’ān:

“Indeed it is not impossible that one Arab tribe is more eloquent than all the other tribes, and that a group of people in this tribe are more eloquent than (others) in this tribe and one member of this group is more eloquent than this group... and suppose that his eloquence was spread amongst the Arabs... so what is its wisdom upon the non-Arabs who do not understand the Arabic language? What is the proof for them?”¹⁷

And Ibn al-Rawandi mocked the theatrical spectacle of the angels who Allah sent down from heaven during the battle of Badr, to help the prophet. He said, indeed: “They had limited effect, little power, despite their great number and the combination of them and Muslims, they could not kill more than 70 people... And where were the angels during the battle of Uhud when the prophet was skulking in fear amongst the slain? Why didn’t Allah help him in that situation?”¹⁸

It was also related in the book of “The Emerald”, quoting from the book of “The Victory” by al-Khayyat, his saying: “Indeed the Qur’ān is not the speech of a wise god. In it are contradictions and mistakes and passages that are in the realms of the impossible.”¹⁹ As in the theatrical episode of the angels of Badr that we just mentioned.

Then indeed Ibn al-Rawandi finds in the discourse of Aktham Ibn Sayfi better (language) than (the Qur’ān that boasts) “Indeed we have given you the Abundance” (108/1)²⁰ As Ibn al-Jawzi says in his brief allusion to the book of “The Emerald”: “Then he begins with attack on the Qur’ān and claims the existence of linguistical mistakes in it.”²¹

¹⁷Quote from the previous reference p. 87.

¹⁸Quote from the previous reference p. 87.

¹⁹Quote from the previous reference p. 110.

²⁰Quote from the previous reference p. 111.

²¹Quote from the previous reference p. 120.

And before ibn al-Rawandi exploits criticism of the Qur'ān in his book "The Crushing Blow", and Ibn Jawzi has preserved for us copies of this criticism, for amongst the parts that he preserved for us in his book "Al-Muntathim Fi al-Tarikh", from the book of "The Crushing Blow" which has not survived, the following piece: "When (Muhammad) described (in the Qur'ān) Paradise, he said: In it are rivers of laban, whose taste has not gone off, and that is milk, yet no one desires that apart from the hungry. And he mentioned honey that no-one wants at all and Ginger, which is not tasty except as a drink and silk brocade (sundus) which is used as a spread, not as clothes and likewise embroidered brocade (Istabriq) which is a thick/rough type of silk brocade. He said one who imagines himself in Paradise wearing this rough clothing and drinking milk and ginger, will be like a bride in a Kurdish or Nabataean wedding!"²²

Ibn al-Rawandi turns his attention to the Divine challenge to bring the like of the Qur'ān and says: "If you want the like of it in respect of superior speech, we can bring you a thousand like it from the speech of the masters of rhetoric and champions of eloquence and poets and is more fluent in wording and more concisely conveys the meanings, more elegantly rendered and expressed and more beautifully rhymed. An if you are not content with that then we demand from you the same that you demand from us!"²³

(NB: There appears to be a opening quotation mark missing from the original in this next bit, and I'm not sure where it should go.)

Even the Mu'tazilah who reject all Miracles or at least attach no importance to them, still believe in the miracle of the Qur'ān.²⁴ But al-Nazzam, who was the most bold and freethinking of the Mu'tazilite theologians, rejected the miraculous nature of the Qur'ān in regard to its composition, he rejected what was related of miracles of our prophet, peace be upon him, as regards splitting the moon, the pebbles in his hand glorifying

²²Quote from the previous reference p. 133.

²³Quote from the previous reference p. 216.

²⁴Quote from the previous reference p. 119 and 153.

God, the gushing of water from his fingers, to arrive by way of rejection of the miracles of our prophet, peace be upon him, to the rejection of his prophethood.”²⁵

Abd al-Masih al-Kindi (9th Century AD)

This attack on Islam was not restricted to apostate Muslims. No, indeed, non-Muslims entered the ranks, galvanized by the fury of the fierce offensive being waged on the new religion. Perhaps the most famous of these, whose quotes have reached us, was the philosopher Abd al-Masih ibn Ishaq al-Kindi (*NB: Not to be confused with the well known Muslim philosopher also called al-Kindi.*) He was a Nestorian that it is claimed lived in the courtyard of (the Caliph) al-Ma'mun who, no doubt due to his openness towards those who differed from him in views and belief, (*NB: Al-Ma'mun was famous for gathering opposing sects and religions to hear them debate,*) tolerated the ferocious criticism of this Christian who attacked the rituals of Islam and its beliefs, one after another and especially the rites of Hajj.

His views that concern us here are those connected to our topic and his explanation for the effect of the Qur'ān in that “The Nabataeans, the rabble, non-Arabs, the gullible and the ignorant who have no understanding of the Arabic language”, are the only ones who would be duped by the claim of the Miraculous nature of the Qur'ān in respect of its composition.”²⁶

Abu Bakr al-Razi (d. 311H / 923AD)

Al-Razi is the second of the two who, without rival, courageously barged their way over the red line. Many before them hovered close but never quite hit the mark. Either because of their fear or lack of resources. As for al-Razi and before him, Ibn al-Rawandi, they are the indisputable masters of the field. Indeed

²⁵Al-Baghdadi, “The Difference Between the Groups”, p. 132; See also p. 149-150

²⁶Quote from Dr. Badawi, from “The History of Disbelief in Islam,” p. 129.

all those who attempted to reply to them could not match them. Not at all! They were not on their level. They were dwarfs that cannot be compared to either of them. No way! No way!

Each one was a revolutionary, rebellious visionary, who revealed the concealed (thoughts), brought out the pent-up (feelings) and freed the suppressed (minds). They thought the thoughts that were not thought about. No! That were not allowed to be thought about. Each one of them would not accept anything less than making the most holy of holies the object of their criticism, and delving into it to uncover its flaws, and disgrace its myths and illusions. Exposing what it contains of threats, claims and hearsay on account of which man is crushed, and paralyzes his abilities and enslaves him to supernatural powers and invisible entities. To rob and intimidate him like an unsheathed sword hanging over his head, not allowing him any room to move to see what is beyond his nose or know what is going on around him. Thus he must live his life, hostage to the fears, anxieties, whisperings and misgivings that come between him and achieving his best potential. Destroying all his ambitions of self realization and personal freedom.

Al-Razi was a philosopher, doctor and alchemist of the highest order just as he was the pillar of the dissident and heretical movement during his age and the following centuries.

If there was a difference between him and Ibn al-Rawandi then it was in the degree of depth and widening of the details and (his) ability to generate new ideas from old ones, but both believed and relied upon Reason and both base their judgments and conclusions upon Reason. In their opinion, Reason was to the yardstick to measure everything.

If Ibn al-Rawandi, in his heretical and irreligious meditations, worked within a similar atmosphere to that of the Muslim theologians, then: "Al-Razi attacked and criticised the shortcomings of Religion from the perspective of Philosophy."²⁷

In the same way as Ibn al-Rawandi used the Brahmins as a vehicle by which to disguise his views, and to place on their

²⁷Quote from the previous reference p. 127.

tongues what was really in his own mind regarding the invalidation of prophethood and virtues of Reason, al-Razi also did likewise, in that he attributes to it (Reason) not just the (ability to arrive at) ethical behaviour, as Ibn al-Rawandi did, but attributes to it (knowledge) of divine matters also. For he said, indeed we: "Through it (Reason) arrive at knowledge of the Creator, Mighty & Glorified is He."²⁸

This proves that there is no justification for Prophethood as long as Reason is able to lead us to all that is ethical and unethical. In any case Ibn al-Rawandi: "Moved in Theological and Religious field of study, where as al-Razi moved in the Scientific field."²⁹

In summary, there is no doubt that Ibn al-Rawandi blazed the trail, and opened the way, but al-Razi watered it and boarded it with palm trees and beautified it with flowers and scented herbs and raised upon it a lofty edifice.

Al-Razi praised Reason "using language which surpasses that used by the great rationalists of all ages, even in the modern age," as Abd al-Rahman confirmed in his aforementioned book.

By virtue of Reason, man is in no need of Prophethood, nor Religion, nor all the Divine Books and as a consequence; nor the Qur'ān. By virtue of Reason and Reason alone, we can know good from bad and truth from falsehood. There is no authority other than the authority of Reason, nor any belief other than belief in Reason... and if this is its magnitude then we must never minimise its value, nor reduce its status, and never make it a subject when it is the master.

Prophethood was al-Razi's overriding concern, he demolished it on the basis that Reason has no need for it. He said: "From whence did you make it necessary that God singled out a people for Prophethood instead of another? Preferring them over (other) people? Giving them evidences and forcing others to be in need of them (in need of these people)? And from whence did you allow in the wisdom of the Wise that he chooses that for

²⁸Quote from the previous reference p. 203.

²⁹Quote from the previous reference p. 217.

them and raises some over others confirming enmity between them, increasing wars and with that annihilate people?”³⁰

We are not so concerned here that al-Razi heaps criticism and abuse on prophethood & prophets, and elaborates in great detail on that. What concerns us is his criticism of Religions, so we can arrive, in that way, at his opinion on the Qur’ān. For that reason we see him turning his attention to “Revealed” Religions and the books they brought which they ascribe divinity to. He analyses them without bias, favouritism, or discrimination. For all of them are of equal importance.³¹

For the disbelief of al-Razi was not aimed at a specific religion without another, in other words it was not aimed at Islam alone. That highlights the objectivity of al-Razi and the soundness of his opinion. For all religions were subject to attack and abuse. For they do not say the same things. They contradict one another despite the fact they claim to come from the same source and (claim) they are free from defect and lies. But how can that be the case when they contain absurdities and contradictions.

Here the adversary poses the question: If religions are as you say, then how can we explain the adherence of the masses to them?

Al-Razi responds to this objection by (saying) that the followers of (the various) religions have taken the religion from their (religious) leaders by way of imitation. They are prevented from questioning or scrutinizing the foundations, and tales are related to them that discourage them from questioning these foundations. Whoever contravenes that is accused of Kufr (disbelief). If the (religious) leaders are asked to prove the truth of what they say they fly into a rage and spill the blood of one who demands that of them.

Then came (a period of) long familiarity, the passing of time, acquaintance and deception of the people by the goat-bearded (clergy) who stand at the front of religious gatherings and shriek

³⁰Quote from the previous reference p. 205.

³¹Quote from the previous reference p. 208-211.

out lies and gibberish while around them the weak-minded men, women and children (listen) until it all roots itself deeply within the people and becomes a predisposition and habitual.³²

Then al-Razi returns to his charge of contradictions in the “Holy” books as proof of their falsity. For the contradiction of religions leads to contradiction of revealed books that brought them. He begins with the Torah and the Qur’ān and the prophetic Hadith and what they contain of anthropomorphic and human-like qualities (of God). He mentions what is in the Torah of putting the fat on the fire so that the Lord can smell its scent. Also how it depicts an image of an old man with white hair and beard. This human-like and anthropomorphic description contradicts impassive and impervious nature of God to things like smells etc... All this announces that God is constructed, fabricated, reacting to things like the rest of creation.

Likewise al-Razi attacks Christianity and its claim of the existence of an uncreated ancient being by the side of God; the Messiah his son, which leads to associating a partner with God. Furthermore how can we reconcile his saying that he came to fulfill the Torah with his abolishing its laws and changing its rulings? Strangely, during his criticisms of Christianity, he did not mention — in the texts we have — the passages in the Qur’ān about corruption of the Gospels.³³

Anthropomorphism and contradictions are not only limited to Judaism and Christianity but also envelop the sayings of the prophet and the Qur’ān... and that is exemplified by what is related from the prophet when he said “I saw my Lord in the best of forms. He put his hand on my shoulders until I felt the cold of his fingertips on my chest.”³⁴ and his saying “Beside the throne by the shoulder of Israfeel, and he will be groaning the groan of a young camel being saddled.”³⁵ (NB: *Israfeel* is the angel who blows the trumpet twice on the Day of Judgment. Once

³²Quote from the previous reference p. 211-212.

³³Quote from the previous reference p. 213-214.

³⁴Quote from the previous reference p. 214. (الْبَدَنُ is the flesh between the nipples.)

to destroy everything and a second time to bring humans back to life and summon them for judgment.)

It's also obvious that many of the verses of the Qur'ān demonstrate anthropomorphism and no-one can deny that apart from the arrogant. For example His saying, mighty and glorified is he: "The Compassionate One is firmly established on the Throne." (20:5) and He also said: "And eight (angels) will carry the Throne of your Lord above them on that Day" (69:17) and His saying: "Those who carry the Throne and those around him..." (40:7) So how can this his make sense, be sound, correct in light of the fact that God is completely and utterly free from all the attributes of the profane as made clear in His — Most High — saying: "There is nothing whatever like unto Him..." (42:11)

Likewise how can we reconcile verses about predestination with others about free-will? And perhaps al-Razi borrowed these questions from the books of Theological Discourse as Abd al-Rahman Badawi noted.³⁶

As for the view that these verses require "Esoteric Interpretation" (Ta'wil) in other words taking them to have a hidden meaning that is not the plain meaning of the words, that was of no interest to al-Razi, he rejected it utterly and paid no regard to Ta'wil, not taking it seriously at all. Because Ta'wil in his opinion and the opinion of his like, was just interpolation and deceitful pretense — or in my own expression: "patching up" — the intent of which was to rescue the text, however one can, and give it an acceptable meaning. For al-Razi and his like approached religions as it appeared plainly in its texts and not as it is (claimed to be) wrapped up in hidden meanings.³⁷

Al-Razi criticised the Qur'ān also on the basis of what it said that contradicted Christianity and Judaism. He said: "Indeed the Qur'ān contradicts that which the Jews and Christians believe regarding the death of the Messiah — upon him be peace.

³⁵Quote from the previous reference p. 214.

³⁶Quote from the previous reference p. 218.

³⁷Quote from the previous reference p. 214-215.

Since the Jews and Christians say the Messiah was killed and crucified, but the Qur'ān says he was not killed and not crucified and that God raised him up to himself."³⁸

Thus does al-Razi use religions and divine books to undermine each other to arrive at the result that they are all false! Because the contradictions between them declares their falsehood in total as long as they claim that they come from the same divine source.

After this attack on all religions al-Razi comments also, saying "Indeed, by God, we are amazed at what you say that the Qur'ān is a miracle when it is full of contradictions. It is the narration of ancient myths, it has no benefit nor is it proof of anything."³⁹

And this is a view that is completely sound, for in the Qur'ān are conundrums and riddles — ambiguities and mysteries, that the greatest scholars of Tafseer until today, haven't been able to arrive at any conclusive conclusions on. Despite all the ink they have spilled, and the efforts they spent in meaningless summations, tedious disputations, and nonsensical prattle with the sole obsession of rescuing a text that cannot be rescued except through sophistry, interpolation, prevarication, nonsense and legends.⁴⁰

³⁸Quote from the previous reference p. 215.

³⁹Quote from the previous reference p. 216 and 218 in two different versions.

⁴⁰Whoever wishes to compose an approximate picture — even if it is not precise — of these prattlers and nonsense-talkers, then let him listen to the recordings of Sheikh Mutawali Sha'rawi, who's voice reverberates all over Arab radio. He explains the Qur'ān with a sharp tongue that erupts like a flood that he uses to delight the masses and ignorant amongst the scholars, while the idiots sitting around him roar out the words: "Allah! Allah!" or "Allah is great! Allah is great!" and grow in zeal and impulsiveness. If they weren't in the mosque in a solemn religious gathering they would fill the world with shouts and clapping as they do at public rallies and I have complete confidence that they don't understand a thing that's going on. This is an example that is emulated by the ignorant amongst the scholars and the religious teachers and preachers and Imams of mosques and the rest of this type. He (Sha'rawi) is regarded by his followers and admirers, to be amongst the greatest (scholars) of Tafseer in this day and age — even a unique phe-

Just as the Qur'ān challenged Mankind and Jinn to bring the like of it, likewise al-Razi challenged the Arab Scholars of eloquence to bring the like of that which is in the book of "Elements" (by Euclid) or Almagest (by Ptolemy) and others. Al-Razi says: "Indeed we demand from you the like of that which you claim we are not able to do,"⁴¹ and with this he threw the burden of proof back to the adversary. In other words with this challenge he showed that the proof itself must lie with the adversary (making the claim), since it is not within the ability of man to bring the same that another man has brought, no matter how great is his ability in copying and perfecting the art of imitation.

Furthermore indeed these books and their like are more useful and of greater benefit than the Qur'ān and all the divine books, because they contain knowledge that benefits people in their livelihoods and situations in the real world, while the Torah, Gospels and Qur'ān benefit nothing. And if one must discuss Miraculousness and Proof then these useful books are more deserving of having such things ascribed to them. In this respect, al-Razi says: "By Allah, if he wanted a book to be a Proof the books like the 'Elements' or 'Almagest' that lead to understanding of the movement of the stars and planets, or the books of logic, or the books of medicine that is of benefit to the body, would be more deserving of being (called) Proof than those (divine books) that are of no benefit or harm."⁴² Meaning the Qur'ān and its like.

In any case I am not the first to present criticism of the Qur'ān. I cannot claim that honour. No! Nor will I be the last, for indeed my work here has precedence, but it differs from that which preceded it in respect of the method of treatment, and in respect of the level and terms and fields of knowledge. But it is

nomenon amongst the phenomena of this age. He is even considered by his pupils to be amongst those who the prophet alluded to in the famous hadith: "Indeed God will send to this Ummah (Nation) at the beginning of every 100 years he who will renew/reestablish their religion for them!"

⁴¹Quote from the previous reference p. 218.

⁴²Quote from the previous reference p. 219.

the duty of the pioneer to always acknowledge those who blazed the trail and opened the way before them. As for the right of the one who went before upon the one who comes after, it is that no-one will deny him other than the arrogant fool. For if the one who comes after had not found assistance and clarification from the one who was before, things would not go right for him and he could not complete his intent, and his efforts would be futile and his aim confounded and thus is the blade blunted and the mind become dull and aspiration fails. “And those who went before are the foremost. They are the ones who will be drawn near.” (56:10-11) (NB: *There is of course irony in that quote from Qur’ān.*)

4.3 The Eloquence of the Qur’ān

We must now ask: Is the Qur’ān really miraculous?

The belief in the Miraculous nature of the Qur’ān does not withstand scrutiny in any way. There are numerous fallacies that surround this belief. We have seen some clear examples of that from Ibn al-Rawandi and Abu Bakr al-Razi and in a little while we shall see many other examples that refute this belief so long as we look impartially and objectively at the issues so we are not swayed by the majority or the prevailing views, for scientific facts are not discovered by voting as in Parliaments no matter how large the number of votes support it.

Miraculousness is of two types in my opinion: Language and Meaning.

As for the Miraculous Language, its conditions are clarity of expression, fluency of wording, being free from complexity, weak composition and disharmony. The speech must have a uniform level of quality, excellence, and perfection.

But miraculous language has no value if it is not accompanied by miraculous meaning. If not then it’s just an arrangement of words cobbled together, good-looking gibberish, meaningless padding. For that reason eloquent speech must have

consistency and symmetry in its ideas and packed with meaning. It must be free from error and contradiction.

But the verses of the Qur'ān are uneven in quality in both language and meaning and this was noticed by the classical scholars as confirmed by al-Suyuti.

Although a large portion of verses are the height of excellence and beauty, another portion of verses fall far below that, while others are weak and flawed.

In the same way ambiguity and riddles envelope a significant number of the verses to the extent that one is confused when trying to understand the intended meaning of this or that verse. While some appear to have no meaning at all, despite the fact that the exegetes (Mufasssirun) and scholars of Eloquence “discovered” a thousand and one meanings.

Indeed the books of (the scholars) of Eloquence are full of chapters that have no meaning and have been contrived simply to provide an escape route and justification for the babble in some of the verses that confront the reader. Using the pretext of delving deeply for the secrets and sublime miraculousness of the Qur'ān.

In my opinion the whole science of Balagha (Eloquence) was contrived in order to defend the Qur'ān. In other words, only for ideological reasons, not to find the truth. Indeed, Ideology is the governing factor in all the treaties of our scholars in this field at the expense of objectivity and scientific methodology.

Finally, in addition to what we see in the Qur'ān of fragmentation and disarray, not to mention blatant scientific mistakes.

So does all that correspond with the belief in the miraculous (nature of the Qur'ān) in any way? Or are there locks on hearts? (Reference to Qur'ān [47:24](#)). This is what we shall investigate now.

The majority of those who studied the Qur'ānic text are not Westerners — if not all of them. They treat it on the basis that it is a holy text. That it cannot be criticised. Since no falsehood comes to it from the front nor the back. The presumption of

its authenticity and infallibility is a prerequisite that places a barrier that comes between us and it. It deprives us of much of the wealth that may accrue from (their study of) it. In that way we close all the doors that were open in front of us before we begin. And nothing remains for us to do in this case, but pour everything we possess of effort into embellishing, and polishing the text and imposing upon it that which is unlikely and defend it — right or wrong — and to “discover” what is in it of hidden treasures and secrets and wisdoms and meanings that boggle the mind and astound the intellect and thus begins the journey of searching for the pearls.

The text may not be more than a collection of bombastic speech that does not mean anything, but the exegete (Mufassir) — with his believing background and generous expectations — presupposes there is the wisdom of the ages in the text, because it is from the a wise all-knowing one. “The Trustworthy Spirit has descended with it, to thy heart so that you may be of the warners.” (26:193-194). I say, if the text didn’t mean anything, then indeed the exegetes ended up seeing everything in it! It became the protected pearl and the hidden jewel. But this is a profoundly bankrupt method of dealing with the Qur’ānic text. It doesn’t reap anything other than hot air and does not result in anything other than waffle, double-talk, concoction, and falsely attributing to the text that which never occurred to its original author at all!

Indeed! The Qur’ān is not amongst the secrets of the gods, it is not connected in any way to divine inspiration that would take it outside historical trends. It is purely a human achievement that complies with human principles. Like all human efforts it is subject to strength & weakness, accuracy & error, agreement & contradiction, cohesion & disarray, consistency & inconsistency, originality & imitation, depth & superficiality, lucidity & brittleness...

The direct result of all that is that the Qur’ān is a very ordinary book. For that reason it is necessary to remove it from its safe and secure refuge, outside Human history and return it to the world of people. After that it will no longer be store-

house for timeless wisdom, nor a divine book protected from error that no falsehood can approach it from either front or behind. In that way, it and its time and its context become part of the historical process and unfolding events. *(NB: This paragraph and part of the last is repeated from the beginning of this chapter.)*

If you read the Qur'ān you will find ample evidence of the Divine Being, acts of worship, exhortations, morals, legislation, injunctions, wisdoms, parables, stories and legends... but you will hardly come across one page where ideas correlate or flow in a connected sequence or follow on from one another, unless the text is recounting the narrative of a story, or establishing a rule, which requires a certain amount of elaboration. But as soon as it finishes, it jumps to another subject that has no connection to it. That is then interspersed with digressions that interrupt the narrative flow leaving it without a point. So our waffling exegetes (Mufasssirun) are forced to come up with a point for it. If they find a point then it is only stumbled across after strenuous excavation that the wafflers attribute to profound wisdom.

There are complete pages in the Qur'ān that are full confusion, as well as offensive words and weak expressions. It contains hollowness, affectation, artifice, fabrication, and ambiguity. Words that have meanings that conflict with one another, making it hard for one to decide which of the two conflicting aspects is the intended one. If that was simply confined to insignificant secondary issues it would be less important, but it extends also to issues of belief and legislation.

Not forgetting, that in addition to these the errors and flaws, the Qur'ān contains contradictions that the eye cannot miss. How much effort the wafflers spent in trying to conceal them and give them strange meanings that they don't have, to make them the epitome of wisdom and sobriety!

In addition to this series of drawbacks that the Qur'ān is packed with and which we shall see detailed for ourselves, is the mixing of the speech of Allah with the speech of man within a single verse. So while the first half of the verse starts off in

the words of the prophet or one of the pious, we find the second half ending in speech that cannot be a human speaking, but must be attributed to Allah. So either this portion has been inserted into the text or the verse is incomplete, half of it being lost, so the scribe completed it — and most of them didn't understand what they were transcribing — according to whatever words came to their minds, repairing the verse and filling its gap. This is despite all that is commonly disseminated about the authentication of the text and close attention to detail during its recording process.

Last but not least, the scholars find very great difficulty in accepting many verses from the “Wise Reminder” (a name of the Qur’ān) due to its complete opposition to scientific facts in the present time. These verses are true as long as science, philosophy, and myths are all approximately one and the same thing. But today the situation has changed and the position has become clear as to the extent of the naïvety of the Qur’ān when we see that it accepted all and sundry of handed-down knowledge of ancient times and then attributed it to the “treasure” of Divine knowledge about the secrets of the universe, life and destiny.

Despite all this they want us to believe that the Qur’ān; “Had it been from other than Allah, they would surely have found therein Much discrepancy” (4:82) but the patching-up of the Wafflers is a guarantor by which every conflict is reconciled and the reply to every objection and bestows on the Qur’ān a fluent, harmonious unity free from defects so they can produce in front of them: “An Arabic Qur’ān without any crookedness” (39:28).

We shall discuss all that in the widest scope possible as well as detailing, clarifying and illustrating as the situation permits so we can open covered hearts and deaf ears and remove the veil over eyes (*NB: Ironic references to the Qur’ān*) that cannot see other than what they want to see, and let loose the tongues so that they do not say anything about the truth except the truth and express nothing but the truth.

In this regard, and whatever our verdict on the Qur’ān, it

does contain bouquets of masterpieces and marvels that the fair-minded — regardless of where their loyalties lie or what their beliefs and convictions are — cannot fail to be moved by them and bow in prostration. But is the whole Qur'ān like that? No and a thousand times no! For indeed these verses and those that surround them are spectrums of light and rings of radiance that captivate the mind, heart and emotions. But because of the ink they caused to be shed, pens they aroused, energies they let loose and passions they stirred — I say because of spot-lights they were put under — these verses hid another portion of verses from sight and cast them into the dark. As a result we only see that which catches the sight and are blind to anything else. But if we remain in this state — whether we realise it or not — we will pass the same verdict on them both and how foolish is that! Thus we would put the dull verses in the same category as the glittering verses and be oblivious to the huge gap between them simply because they share the same name; Qur'ān. Just like one who puts mud (الثرى) in the same category as the Pleiades stars cluster (الثرى) because they share the same root (ث ر ي).

So never think that the whole Qur'ān is of the same quality, cast in the mold of these outstanding verses that we presented in the previous pages — certainly not. These are instances of pearls and gems being found amongst earth and pebbles. Like neighbouring pieces of land with a sprinkling of grape vines here and there while in other places grow poisonous shrubs, gum trees, flowers and date palms between sand dunes that are scattered with weeds, cane stalks, and harmful herbs. Are these the same, for example?

This is what the Qur'ān is like. It is — as we mentioned before and as we shall see in more detail — not on one level of quality, brilliance or splendour. But contains the poor as well as the rich and all that lies in-between that. Such a mixture of things that it is very difficult for the mind to see how to reconcile them. But they are reconciled by force and coercion and when concoction and waffling (of the mufassirin) gets involved in sewing together the tears, mending the cracks and plugging the holes, some of

them easy to accomplish and some so intractable they require huge effort and resources and some are enigmatic mysteries as though the mind was fettered by them. We shall remove from you your covering, oh reader, so that your vision tomorrow will be sharp! (NB: Ref to Qur'ān [50:22](#)) And tomorrow is near for he who envisages it! (NB: Ref to a line of poetry that has become a saying.)

1. Look at this wonderful pearl where the Qur'ān describes uncovering the secrets of the wrong-doers and exposing their affair in front of God who makes their body-parts speak on the day of Judgment. So that they bear witness against them about what they have committed of sins that they thought have been brushed under the carpet, never to return but they were recorded and able to articulate the truth:

“On the Day that the enemies of Allah will be gathered together to the Fire, they will be marched in ranks. At length, when they reach the (Fire), their ears and their eyes and their skins testify against them as to what they used to do. They will say to their skins: “Why are you bearing witness against us?” They will say: “Allah who makes everything speak has made us speak: He created you for the first time, and to Him you are returned. You did not hide yourselves lest your ears and your eyes and your skins should bear witness against you, but you thought that Allah did not know much of what you did. But this thought of yours which you did entertain concerning your Lord, has brought you to destruction, and (now) have you become of those utterly lost!” ([41:19-23](#))

So if this is a “divine” masterpiece and is of inimitable style, the like of which cannot be achieved — and that is true, then is it possible to achieve the same as this “human” masterpiece by al-Jahiz? (781-868) which he states in his unique and delightful style, in his book; “Squaring the Circle”, which overflows with style, eloquence, clarity and illumination:

“Nay why do their sayings concern you or or their dispute weigh upon you? Those of understanding and who speak from knowledge, know that the abundance of your width detracts from the height of your stature and what shows of your width absorbs what shows of your height. Although they differ about your height, they agree about your width, and since they spitefully concede to you a part and unjustly deny from you a part, you have gained what they conceded, while you stand by your claim regarding what they didn’t concede. I swear that the eyes make mistakes and the senses lie and there is no conclusive verdict other than that given by intellect and no true enlightenment except by way of the mind since it is the rein for the limbs and the measure for the senses.”⁴³

One cannot mention the princes of speech without mentioning Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi (923–1023). For he wrote comprehensive works, and on his tongue wisdoms gushed forth and deep meanings swarmed, yet his age deprived him the acclaim he deserved. I present to you here this text which is from the beginning of (his book) “Enjoyment and Conviviality” in which he describes the world, in the most briefest of ways, so full of meaning and in concise expressions as though he is describing his burning soul and faltering fortune:

“Indeed this fleeting (world) is beloved, its luxury sought after, and a place amongst those of high council is solicited by any means and manner. For this world is sweet and verdant, delectable and lush. He who is timid, his task will be arduous, while he who’s pressing is passionate, his coming and going will advance continually, while he who is held captive by his expectations, his hardship will be long and his misfortune great, while he who’s greed and desire are inflamed, his impotence and deficiency will be exposed.”⁴⁴

⁴³“Squaring the Circle”, edited by Charles Pellat, p. 5.

Badi' al-Zaman (al-Hamadani) (967-1007) was intricate just as al-Jahiz and al-Tawhidi were (*NB: Their work had layers of meaning*), he was a master at delighting (the reader), words in his hands were obedient and compliant, redolent with fragrance and aroma, diffusing the scent of perfume. A great deal of his work has reached us that one never finishes contemplating. They are no less excellent and eloquent than many of the verses of the "Reminder of the Wise" (The Qur'ān). But many of the readers take it (the writings of al-Hamadani) for granted. Let us read this beautiful artistic piece where he describes his hunger during a year of famine in Baghdad, and how all his hopes of obtaining food evaporated, and he ended up with nothing but pain and grief. He uses the (fictional character) 'Isa ibn Hisham to relate it:

"Isa ibn Hisham related to us and said: I was in Baghdad the year of famine year, and so I approached a group, huddled like the stars of Pleiades, in order to ask something of them. Amongst them was a youth with a lisp in his tongue. He asked: 'What do you want?' (*NB: Qur'ānic ref to 20:95.*) I replied: 'There are two conditions in which a man prospers not; that of a beggar wearied by hunger, and that of an exile to whom return is impossible.' The boy then said: 'Which of the two gaps would you like me to fill first?' I answered: 'Hunger, for it has become extreme with me.' He said: 'What would you say to a loaf of bread on a clean table, picked herbs with sour vinegar, fine almonds with strong mustard, roast meat ranged on a skewer with a little salt, brought to you now by one who will not procrastinate with promises nor torture you with waiting, and who will afterwards follow it up with golden goblets of grape? Is that preferable to you, or a large company, full cups, variety of dessert, spread carpets, brilliant lights, and a skilful minstrel

⁴⁴"Enjoyment and Conviviality", edited by Ahmad Amin and Ahmad al-Zayn, Cairo, p. 13.

with the eye and neck of a gazelle? 'If you don't want this or that, then what do you say about some fresh meat, river fish, fried aubergines, the wine of Qutrubul, freshly harvested apples, a soft bed on a high apartment, opposite a flowing river, a bubbling fountain, and a garden with streams in it?' 'Isa ibn Hisham related: So I said: 'I am the slave of all three (options you have given me).' The boy said: 'And so am I their servant, if only we had them!!' I said: 'May God not bless you! You have revived desires which despair had killed, then you snatched away the object of its relish?!'"

Can you see this captivating beauty that the Qur'ān does not have a monopoly over? Al-Jahiz, al-Tawhidi, Badi' al-Zaman and many other greats of prose and poetry such as Ibn Muqaffa', Abu Nuwas, Abu al-'Ala al-Ma'arri from the classical literati and al-Mazini, al-Rafi'i, al-Aqqad, and Ta Ha Hussein from the moderns — they and their like have left us masterpieces that are as good as — if not better, at times, than some of the verses of the Qur'ān. They left us a massive legacy full of profound wisdoms and clear signs (*NB: Ref to the words for 'clear verses' in the Qur'ān*). But which one of them claimed that he is speaking under heavenly inspiration or that he encompasses the secrets of the Divine?

So the Qur'ān as we have mentioned previously is not on one level of quality. On the contrary it is characterised by mediocrity, banality, weakness, disarray, fragmentation, confusion, ambiguity, and disclaimers alongside excellent verses that exhibit majesty, greatness, eloquence, cohesion, clarity and complete accountability. The exegetes were at their wits end in trying to explain this phenomena and so embarked on desperate efforts to ignore them and push them out of the spotlight so that we wouldn't come upon any of them during the discussions about eloquence, rhetoric, beauty, marvels, linguistic artistry of the others that adorn the Qur'ān.

They focussed on the masterpieces in books about miraculousness of the Qur'ān and used them to illustrate it in every chapter, section and page — almost in every line — of their forced books, whether appropriately or inappropriately, until ears were sick of them and the mind was bored of them. Indeed the degree that the spotlight was concentrated on some verses was equalled by the degree that another portion of verses were swept under the carpet. They imposed an invisible barrier around them, so that attention skips over them swiftly and lightly leaving no time for pondering or contemplation.

All our readings of the Qur'ān are readings done as acts of worship that only increase blindness upon blindness each time more is committed to memory and the tongue perfects recitation. It is not a recitation that involves analysis, critique, understanding or penetrating appraisal.

Yes, indeed the exegetes were hard pushed to explain these verses and create ways out for them. They ignored them whenever citing examples (of eloquence) and resorted to their “contortion” every time they came across them in their writings and forcing them to encompass meanings they didn't encompass in order to preserve its (the Qur'ān's) integrity.

They were the knights in shining armour, ever present, never tiring of a challenge, never finding it too burdensome to come up with a reply, never letting any objective defeat them, never letting weariness weigh them down. They were standing by the door answering every visitor. The students of Hermeneutics can find fertile ground and expansive pasture, amongst them, to support their analytical theories. You know them by their signs (Qur'ānic reference). They are people of waffle, carriers of the the incense. Some of them went to such absurd extremes that they became a laughing stock. They “discovered” amongst the confusing, bewildering, fluctuating, disordered, disturbed, incomprehensible, contradictory verses, eloquent nuances and sublime connotations that are too subtle for the ordinary mind, that escape people's understanding and challenge the intellect to the extent that no-one can fully perceive them other than

those ‘firm in knowledge’ (ref to Qur’ān) — even if they can perceive them!!

Give me a lunatic and I will unearth pearls, jewels and timeless gems of wisdom from his speech.

They were able to extract meaning from that which had no meaning, they never found it hard to make the barren fertile, the mute articulate, incoherence eloquent and every old man into the prime of his youth. In their hands everything is brilliant and fluid, excellent and magnificent and hence comes from Heaven. Even if it is a thorn, bitter gourd, deadly poison or the like of such scourges.

For Heaven cannot stand up on its own except with the help of the one-eyed, the lame, the scrawny and every decrepit moronic dim-wit. Repent to the dim-wits, for indeed they hold the keys to Heaven!

The judgment of the critic becomes defective the stronger is his faith (in that which he is analysing/critiquing), until he only sees in the Qur’ān what he wants to see and is blind to what he doesn’t want to see. If you expose to him the extent of the flaws in the Qur’ān and the abundance of contradictions and his handling of them, he will fume and seeth with rage, and insult and curse. He will block his ears to you as he has blocked his mind and make the most vile accusations against you. Woe to you, for you have come to create Fitna and turn him away from his religion unless Allah makes him steadfast and blesses him with the blessing of strong faith.

Watch how he will block his ears as though saying “This is a manifest lie” (24:12) as the people of Noah did when he said — speaking to his lord;

“And every time I have called to them, that Thou mightest forgive them, they have (only) thrust their fingers into their ears, covered themselves up with their garments, grown obstinate, and given themselves up to arrogance.” (71:7)

And this is what the Polytheists of Mecca did, so the Qur'ān said to them:

“Had we sent down unto thee (Muhammad) (actual) writing upon parchment, so that they could feel it with their hands, those who disbelieve would have said: This is naught else than mere magic” (6:7)

Woe upon woe to he who utters a single word of criticism against the truth of Islam and what a catastrophe and calamity of calamities if this criticism harms a single word of the Qur'ān. So I wonder what is the difference between us and what we see today and between the people of Noah and the polytheists of Mecca?⁴⁵

In summary, those who prattle on about the Qur'ān, heaping praises on it, raving about its eloquence and sublime beauty, filling the world with clamour about the miraculousness of the Qur'ān, and that it is the ‘Greatest Miracle’⁴⁶ of the Qur'ān only cite the amazing and excellent (verses) that grace the Qur'ān and which form the basis of the magic of the Qur'ān. Their attention was poured on selected verses where there is no doubt about their eloquence and height of excellence and beauty.

⁴⁵Perhaps you have heard of the ministerial crisis in Kuwait and the demand for the dismissal of the Minister of Awqaf. Why? Because of the issue of a new edition of the Qur'ān containing some unintentional mistakes, which will send the minister to Hell on a day when no intercession will be had except one who has taken a promise from Allah. The printing mistakes came to light while he was minister — ‘Perish his hands!’ — and appeared in a number of copies — May Allah humiliate him, he has brought a terrible thing, the heavens almost shatter, the earth split, the mountains collapse that he allowed the book of God to have flaws enter it and didn’t prevent or avoid it — may God destroy him. He thought it was a trivial matter. He didn’t see it — Woe to him! — as a grave, serious, obligation. So return him to Allah — him and his like — for that is more pure and fitting. If he desists not then he and his like will burn long in the Fire of Hell. And none shall come to the Merciful, except as a slave, and each one will come to him on the Day of Judgment alone! (NB: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/335404.stm)

⁴⁶The name of a book by Muhammad Abu Zahra that is extolled by the masses — nay, by the select and the select of the select.

But how many of them didn't turn their attention to the weak and poor (verses) of the Qur'ān of which we shall give examples of shortly, and if they did turn their attention to them, they undertook the task of polishing, refinement and improvement in order to repair their defects and cover their flaws so that they leave their hands as protected gold nuggets or hidden pearls befitting the Lord of Might and Majesty — the Cleaver of day-break (ref to Qur'ān) until the Day of Judgment!

Eloquence is composing words in such a way that they correspond to the meanings and embellish them with radiance. Eloquence is not simply to address people according to what they understand. Eloquence is to raise them up to reach your objectives by clarifying them in ways that make (people) comprehend everything you want to enlighten them with.

Addressing people according to their mentality and understanding, sacrifices meaning, depth and comprehension. It gives precedence to a loose meaning over a precise and complete meaning. It distances what is said from its objectives. Thus it is the job of the literary master to aspire for something higher through his artistic expression and not to resort to facile speech.

But we find many verses of the Qur'ān are vague and based on ambiguous, imprecise concepts that do not deliver clarity of underlying meaning, because the words in them lack precision and accuracy and some more like puzzles and quizzes.

For precise language helps mold precise ideas, while ambiguous language confuses the mind and muddles one's thinking. For that reason, if we want speech to be eloquent, then we must fulfill the condition of clarity and transparency and effectiveness to reach the ear in the most beautiful language and most lucid speech not to mention soundness of meaning, being error free and having no contradictions. It does not befit the writer of eloquent speech that his meanings should be disordered or contradictory or to make mistakes in wording and meaning.

Amongst the things that contribute to clarity are candour,

conciseness, soundness, using moving words without being too abstract. Using short sentences without overstatement and having preference for subtlety over coarseness. Avoiding padding, obscureness, concoction, and using words with multiple meanings and in particular words that have contradictory meanings.

Clear, eloquent speech must also have all its parts linked with each other and flow harmoniously and in succession and sequence with each other part. It should not jump from one sentence to another before fully dealing with and completing its components. This means each sentence should carry the same seed as the following sentence and the following sentence concludes and completes the previous sentence. In this way each part flows naturally from each other part, aesthetically unified, coalescing and integrated as if they were a solid cemented structure (ref to Qur'ān.)

In short: Eloquence (al-Balagha) is from al-Buloogh which means to reach and in relation to our subject here it is for the meaning to reach those for who it was intended. The crux of the matter is reaching the meaning and arriving at it. However, the meaning only becomes apparent if it has been demonstrated clearly and likewise it is not clear when it has not been demonstrated well. So whenever it (the meaning) is hidden or abstruse then the speech has lost its purpose and becomes just babble with no use or benefit behind it.

Now, after this short tour round the subject of Eloquence and its conditions and the difference between eloquent speech and speech that is not eloquent we are justified in asking: What is the position of the Qur'ān in all this? What is its degree of eloquence in it? Is it on one level of eloquence or is there a disparity between its verses? What is the degree of this disparity? This is what we shall discuss in the following section.

4.4 Where is the Eloquence of the Qur'ān?

There are red lines that all Muslims who study the Qur'ān do not allow themselves to cross. None of them start from zero. On the contrary they start off with absolute faith in His words — Exalted is He!

“Indeed it is a Book of exalted power. No falsehood can approach it from before or behind it: It is sent down by One full of wisdom, worthy of all praise.” (41:41-42)

And His saying:

“Do they not then ponder on the Qur'ān? Had it been from any other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy.” (4:82)

So falsehood cannot creep into the Qur'ān in any way just as it is free from discrepancy. These two unassailable principles are not open to discussion. We can also add a third verse that emphasises the infallibility and inviolability of the the Qur'ān:

“Say: ‘If the whole of mankind and Jinns were to gather together to produce the like of this Qur'ān, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they backed up each other with help and support.’” (17:88)

Would that I knew how a person can analyse the Qur'ān in an objective, dispassionate, independent way when his hands are tied by these three verses? Remove these shackles and you will immediately see that falsehood has indeed found its way into the Qur'ān, just like any human accomplishment. That it resounds with contradictions and all types of disparity. That it is possible to bring the like of it and even better than it also.

Remove the covering from your eyes and and free yourselves from restrictions. ‘But to whom are you singing your Psalms to Oh David?’ (NB: Arabic proverb, i.e. ‘Will anyone listen?’) No one wants to risk playing with fire, it simply doesn’t enter the mind and if it does, then it can’t entertain it, and if it does entertain it then it cannot act upon it. Nay, even those who are beset by doubts about the soundness of the Qur’ān do not dare declare their true opinion. If they do then they do it apologetically and behind a veil (Qur’ānic ref.) — a thousand and one veils.

Thus he who wants to know their views about this, must use a level of ingenuity and intelligence that would enable him to bring out the suppressed in their writings and reveal the repressed by reading between the lines. As I said previously, they don’t want to play with fire, choosing health and desiring peace, instead. As for me I love playing with fire and there will be many more after me. It is fire that burns out the blemishes on gold, and destroys all spots and stains. If you aspire for something higher, you must live dangerously!!

4.5 Disorder in the Distribution of Topics

TODO:

4.6 Ambiguity in the Qur’ān

TODO:

4.7 Obscurities of the Qur’ān

TODO:

4.8 Weakness of the Qur'ān

TODO:

4.9 Contradiction is the Distinguishing Feature of the Qur'ān

TODO:

4.10 The Qur'ān and Science

TODO:

4.11 Everything in the Qur'ān is from God

TODO:

4.12 Verses that Have no Meaning

TODO:

4.13 The Rhymed Prose of the Qur'ān and the Rhymed Prose of the Soothsayers

TODO:

4.14 The Qur'ān and the Belief in the Unseen

TODO:

4.15 Barbarism of the Qur'ān

TODO:

Chapter 5

God in the Qur'ān

Introduction — The Existence of God and the non-Existence of a Likeness

TODO:

5.1 Attributes of God in the Qur'ān

TODO:

5.2 God and the Devil

TODO:

5.3 God the Compassionate the Merciful

TODO:

5.4 God is Near and Answers

TODO:

5.5 God is the Best of Sustainers

TODO:

5.6 There is no Help Except from God

TODO:

5.7 God Crams Himself into Everything

TODO:

5.8 God is the Conqueror over his Slaves

TODO:

5.9 With God. Man Must Impose his Law

TODO:

5.10 God. An Ineffective God

TODO:

Epilogue

TODO:

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