

THE ALARM OF DOOMSDAY

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The beginning of the end of human history

THE QURAN IS the final revealed book of God. It was revealed to the last prophet, Mohammad (PBUH) in the first quarter of the 7th century. The basic theme of the Quran is to warn man of God's creation plan, according to which the present world has been built for a limited period of time. A time will come when this world will be brought to an end, then Qiamat, or the Day of Judgement, will take place. All human beings will be resurrected and presented before the Creator of the universe. Then, according to the record of their deeds on earth, their final fate will be decided upon.

The study of the Quran and Hadith tells us that before the end of human history on earth, some clear signs will appear, which will serve as the final warning for man. After the emergence of these signs, God will command the angel Israfil to blow the trumpet. Then, all of a sudden, human history, having passed through its temporary phase, will enter its permanent phase. That is to say, the blowing of the trumpet will mark the end of the phase of action and the beginning of the phase of reward.

The chief signs heralding Doomsday will be the appearance of the following :

- 1) Yajooj and Majooj (Gog/Magog) 2) Dajjal 3) Mahdi
- 4) Masih 5) Climate Change 6) Dukhan (smoke).

Gog and Magog

GOG AND MAGOG have been mentioned in two places in the Quran in verse 94 of chapter 18 and in verse 96 of chapter 21. They have also been mentioned on various occasions in the books of Hadith. (*Sabih* al-Bukhari, *Sabih* Muslim, At Tirmizi, Ibn Majah, Musnad Ahmad). Similarly, we find mention of them in the books of the Bible, e.g. in Ezkiel. In other religious books, such as the Puranas, one of the sacred books of Hinduism, they are also mentioned by the names of Koka and Vikoka. Much has been written about them in commentaries on the Hadith and Quran (*Tafsir*).

However, no consensus has so far emerged regarding Gog and Magog. This being so, it is necessary to reach an opinion which is academically in accordance with the relevant data. In line with this principle, the writer has made an in-depth study of all the data, and has come to certain conclusions which are presented here.

The story of Gog and Magog is not a matter of mystery. It is something which can be understood by the inferential method. Here, avoiding technical discussions, I shall attempt to present an academic picture of my findings.

Application of the names, Gog and Magog

WHO ARE GOG and Magog? Scholars have expressed various opinions. I personally find the opinion of Maulana Anwar Shah Kashmiri (d 1934) the most appropriate, namely, that these terms apply to the nations of Russia, Britain and Germany. He writes: It appears that by Gog and Magog are meant the western European nations. (Faiz al-Bari al Sahih Al Bukhari, vol. 4, p. 23)

The available information on Gog and Magog applies to European nations more than to anything else, and its being mostly in metaphorical language is the reason for this subject having been found difficult to understand. If we keep this fact

in view, it becomes almost certain that it is solely the European nations that are symbolized by Gog and Magog.

The Quran tells us that Noah's ark ran aground on Mount Judi, which is situated on the borders of ancient Turkey. Present day Turkey is now regarded as a part of Europe. When Noah's ark landed here, three of his sons Ham, Sam, and Yafis (Japheth) were with him. Ham and Sam began their new lives in Asia and Africa, while the children of Japheth initially settled in Russia, later spreading throughout different European countries and ultimately to Australia and America. Probably these children of Japheth who settled in Western countries are the people who are referred to as Gog and Magog. There was nothing mysterious about them. Nor were they destined to follow the wrong path. They were men just like any other men. All the situations they faced were all explainable in terms of common natural laws.

The two phases of Gog (Yajuj) and Magog (Majuj)

GOG AND MAGOG have been mentioned in the Qur'an at various points, at one place with reference to Dhul-Qarnayn, (18: 94), and at another without any such reference, (21: 96). A study of these verses reveals that the two phases of Gog and Magog will occur one after another.

It appears that the wall built by Dhul-Qarnayn pertains to the initial phase of Gog and Magog. It remained standing for a very long time and acted as a check to their evil activities.

However, over the years, this wall built by Dhul-Qarnayn disintegrated and then it became possible for the later generations descended from Gog and Magog to cross this boundary and spread out across the outer world. Subsequently, this aggressive race of Gog and Magog was replaced by a more moderate race. This was the second stage, when, passing through various phases, they made uninterrupted progress towards a more advanced civilization.

This latter stage can be divided into two periods: pre-Renaissance and post-Renaissance. It was at this stage that, according to the traditions of the Prophet of Islam, that event took place which was referred to by the Prophet as ‘making a hole in the barrier of Gog and Magog’. Although the wall built by Dhul-Qarnayn was actually a material wall which disintegrated by a natural process after a period of time, the wall mentioned in the Hadith was probably not that material wall but was rather an intellectual barrier. With the destruction of the actual stone wall, Gog and Magog had the opportunity to spread throughout the neighbouring areas, but the destruction of the other “wall” is an event of far greater significance than the former, for this gave Gog and Magog the opportunity to spread out globally. In the words of the hadith, a time will come when “they will eat every thing and they will drink all the water of the world.” (Ibn Majah, *Kitab al-Fitan*). That is to say that they will come to possess the world’s entire resources.

What will happen after the breaking down of the physical barrier erected by Dhul-Qarnayn is recorded in the Qur’an in the chapter entitled “The Cave” (18: 99):

“On that Day, We shall let them surge against each other like waves and then the Trumpet will be blown and We shall gather them all together.”(18:99)

That is, Gog and Magog will surmount ancient geographical boundaries and will interact with the rest of the world in general. The subsequent eating away of all the things and drinking all the water (i.e. using up all the resources) of the world (as referred to in the above-mentioned hadith), relate to the events of the latter phase when, after conquering nature, they would have ushered in the modern industrial age, thanks to which they would have the opportunity for global exploitation.

Chapters 18 and 21 of the Qur’an describe respectively the first and second stages of Gog and Magog. There were apparently three major periods of Gog and Magog: the period of confinement, the age of interaction and the age of science and industrial progress and development.

Gog and Magog were no mysterious community — ‘they were men’ just like anyone else. In ancient times, due to the widespread paucity of economic resources, banditry and violence as a means of survival became rife. Even in Arabia there were such people, known as Sa‘ali-kul-Arab, (Arab dacoits) and Gog and Magog initially belonged to one such group.

The wall of Gog and Magog

IN A TRADITION of the Prophet, we find a reference to the mighty wall that had acted as a barrier between Gog and Magog and the rest of humanity finally giving way, thus giving them the opportunity to wreak havoc on the world at large.

According to this tradition, during the period when Makkah had been conquered and idolatry had been wiped out from Arabia, the Prophet, then living at Madina, had a dream. At that time he was sleeping in the room of his wife, Zaynab bint Jahash (d. 641A.D.). When he woke up, his face had turned red and he said:

“There is no god but God, woe to Arabs, the evil which has drawn near! The barrier of Yajuj and Majuj has been dented today” (Sahib Al-Bukhari, Sahib Muslim, Kitab al-Fitan).

An intellectual barrier

JUDGING FROM THIS tradition of the Prophet and the subsequent history, it seems that ‘barrier’ here does not refer to any physical obstacle, but is rather an intellectual barrier—that of nature worship. The demolition of this belief is symbolized by the physical disintegration of the boundary, after which all the doors of progress and development were opened to Western countries. In consequence, they were able to dominate the rest of the outer world.

In reality, all the potential sources of development were

hidden in nature, the discovery of which led to the birth of Western civilization. These resources had existed in nature from the very outset, but human beings had given nature the status of God and this led to nature worship. Viewing nature as an object of worship, man did not at that time dare to conduct any research into it. But, in the first quarter of the 7th century, when Islam spread the revolutionary belief in the One God, and nature worship was replaced by God worship, nature was no longer held to be sacred. Now nature became something to conquer rather than to worship. This was the starting point of our modern materialistic civilization.

It was by dint of the efforts of the Prophet of Islam that, for the first time in the history of monotheism (*tawheed*), the theoretical phase of this belief reached the stage of revolution. In the 8th year of Hijra, Makkah was conquered and the Ka'ba was rid of all idols. Soon afterwards, monotheism came to dominate the whole of Arabia. Then, after a very short period, throughout almost all of the inhabited world, nature worship fell into abeyance and was ultimately confined to a few far-flung areas.

The real nature of this revolution, established across the world by the Muslims, was religious. The secondary aspect of this revolution which may be called secular, flourished mostly in Europe. The Europeans, now approaching their research into scientific matters in the spirit of secularism, climbed to the zenith of their development. The progress of this second aspect of the Islamic revolution began in Europe subsequent to the Crusades of the 14th century, and its effects continued on into the beginning of the 21st century, when, thanks to its contribution, modern civilization has reached its peak.

What is known as Western civilization is, in actual fact, a secular version of the revolution based on Islamic monotheism. The direct outcome of the task which Islam performed was the removal of nature from its pedestal as an object of worship. This led directly to the initiation of the process of research and investigation into natural phenomena. Initially, this process was

started in ancient Baghdad, Cordova, etc, among Muslims but, after the Crusades, this task was carried out entirely by Europeans. For this reason, the existence of our modern materialistic civilization is generally attributed by historians to the West.

The revolution of the first half of the 7th century was the starting point of a new age of scientific enquiry. The present age has seen the culmination of this process in the form of a scientific revolution. Apparently secular in nature, this present scientific revolution, is, in reality, an Islamic revolution.

The Qur'an, revealed in the first quarter of the 7th century, repeatedly mentions that in contemplating heavenly and earthly phenomena, you will find in them the signs of God. But at the time of the revelation of the Qur'an, these signs of God were not fully exposed: they were hidden in nature. For this reason there was no desired framework within which man could ponder over the Quran. God wished to provide man with such a framework.

The greatest hindrance to this happening was the ancient monarchical system. Imperialism, which ran counter to the scheme of God, had closed the doors to freedom of thought. Therefore, God Himself intervened in human history through the Companions of the Prophet. This, in essence, was not merely a political change: it was the initial stage of the forthcoming scientific revolution. The two big monarchical empires of the Byzantines and the Sassanids were shattered by the Companions of the Prophet, resulting in the establishment of an open atmosphere of scientific research. (21: 18). The same revolutionary event was prophesied in the Bible by an ancient prophet: *He looked and startled the nations. And the everlasting mountains were scattered.* (Habakkuk, 3:6)

Here "the everlasting mountains" means those political 'mountains' which had existed from ancient times in the form of imperial powers. The renowned French historian, Henri Pirenne, (d. 1935) refers thus to the demolition by Islam of this absolute imperialism: *"Islam changed the face of the globe. The*

traditional order of history was overthrown."¹ (Henri Pirenne, *History of Western Europe*, p. 46)

Two aspects of Western Civilisation

FROM ONE POINT of view the west's revelation of the secrets of nature gave expression to the signs of God's creation. From another, more material point of view, the west's discoveries enabled human beings to acquire almost unlimited material power. They were able to convert water into steam by which to power locomotives and to invent automobiles and the aeroplane which were fuelled by petrol, and more recently, television and the internet, thus bringing into existence global means of modern communication.

Owing to this access to the natural sciences which the western countries had, they were able to gain material dominance in the world. One relevant excerpt from the Quran, a verse in chapter no 21 of the Quran, tells of what will happen when Gog and Magog are let loose: They will "swarm down from every hillside, and they spread out, (leaping across every barrier of land and sea)." (21:96) This clearly points to the phenomenon known as modern communications. By their discoveries in Nature the West produced highly improved means of communication which speeded up the sending of messages, human journeys, and the transportation of goods. The discovery of the secrets of nature is something which is difficult for religious people because of their holding everything sacred. That is why Gog and Magog were selected for this purpose. They were secular in the full sense. That is why they had the ability to freely undertake research into nature and unearth its secrets without having any inhibitions about doing so.

The potential of higher realization

ABRAHAM, GOD'S PROPHET, was born in ancient Iraq in the pre-scientific age. The Quran tells us that God showed Abraham His kingdom of the heavens and the earth, so that he might have certainty of faith. (6:76) This observation of the heavens was through divine revelation, in order that he might have full conviction in the truth revealed to him.

The observation of the kingdom of the heavens and the earth—in effect, the observation of creation—brings greater conviction regarding the Creator. But in pre-scientific times such an observation could be achieved only through revelation.

In the present scientific age when through the telescope (1608) and the microscope (1676), direct observation of the universe became possible for man, a much greater degree of conviction was achieved. Now, it has become possible, thanks to human knowledge itself, for everyone to directly see God's signs spread out in the universe and thus have his belief confirmed. The modern scientific revolution has opened a new door which will enable all human beings to realize God. Now, it has become possible for any man to apprehend the evidence of the Creator through direct study and observation of creation. Through this scientific revolution the divine signs revealed to man have made possible the achievement of a high degree of divine realization.

A great number of God's servants have achieved the realization of God, through these signs. However, in this world, alongside good forces, evil forces are always at work. Zoroaster (d. 55 BC) expressed it thus : "The world is a perpetual battleground of good and evil forces."

Indeed, in this next stage of human history, certain powerful minds were born whose ideas were responsible for taking people away from God realization. The Prophet gave a forewarning about this when he stated that a great deceiver would be born in later times who would put people on the wrong path by his

outwardly alluring ideas (some traditions mention 30 deceivers who will appear in the later phase of human history). What is meant by deception? This means, in fact, intellectual misguidance through misinterpretation of religion. In this age this kind of misguidance will become widespread.

The age of the global divine call

ANOTHER ASPECT OF the constructive task to be performed in the final stage of human history is *dawah* work on a global scale. A prediction is made in a hadith about this global *dawah*: "There will be no house, big or small, in which God will not cause the word of God to enter." (Musnad Ahmad, Vol. 6, p.4)

This introduction of the word of God into all the homes in the world will not take place in any mysterious way. It will take place through known channels of global communication. For the first time in modern times, global means of communication have become available to man, making it possible for him to do *dawah* work on a greatly enlarged scale. Prior to the age of the scientific revolution, this had simply not been possible.

In present times, *dajjals* or misguided leaders (known in Christian tradition as anti-Christ) have used modern means of communication to fill the entire world with negative propaganda. The whole world is now living under the shadow of negative thinking. This is the state of affairs which has been called in traditions *fitna dubaima*, the age of utter darkness.

This darkness, actually denoting intellectual darkness, will spread all over the world through the negative use of modern means of communication. A positive use of them would be to spread globally the call of truth. This can take place through the multimedia. One who makes positive use of the multimedia for *dawah* is symbolized as a *Mahdi* or 'a believer' in the hadith, while one who makes negative use of modern communications is symbolized as *dajjal*.

The zenith of the West

THE WESTERN NATIONS set up modern communications after a long and hard struggle. It was but natural that they should receive the lion's share of their benefits. These technological advances, coming soon after their colonization of a major part of the world, gave the whole world the status of a global village. Naturally, the western countries became the masters of this modern world.

Another aspect of this matter was predicted by the Prophet. It is explained metaphorically in a long tradition which tells the story of Gog and Magog. A part of this tradition is as follows:

According to Abu Saeed Khudri, the Prophet of Islam said that Gog and Magog would be unleashed and then they would descend upon the people. As is mentioned in the Quran, they would overwhelm the people from every hillside, leaping across every barrier of land and sea and the believers would retreat to their cities and strongholds, bringing their flocks with them. Gog and Magog would drink all the water of the land; passing a river, they would drink it dry. Then those who came after them would pass by that place and would say, "There used to be water here once." Then one of them would say, "We are done with the people of the earth. Now the people of heaven are left." One of them would shake his spear and hurl it into the sky, and it would come back stained with blood, as a test and a trial for them. (Musnad Ahmad, Vol. 3, p. 77)

A clarification

THIS TRADITION CLEARLY points out the reality which gradually emerged at a global level after the Renaissance in Europe. After that a new phenomenon appeared in the economic world – an “economic explosion.” Control of this development was totally in the hands of western nations. They thus contrived to gain a monopoly over all the material resources of the world. ‘Drinking all the water of the river’ perhaps refers to the world’s resources of petrol. The greater part of these lay in the eastern world but their consumption was largely in the western, industrialized world. That is why western nations took away most of the natural resources of petrol and used them to their own advantage.

The Hadith further tells us that, after drinking all the water on earth, Gog and Magog would direct their gaze upon the sky. This perhaps alludes to different kinds of space rockets. The western nations have at different times sent a great number of rockets into space in search of some planet like the earth. These rockets, equipped with all kinds of sophisticated equipment and cameras failed, despite intensive efforts, to find any earth-like planet in the vastness of space. This hadith clearly describes in symbolic language all these efforts made by the western countries in present times which have changed the world.

According to the traditions, two more events will take place during the age of Gog and Magog. One is the appearance of *Dajjal* or *Dajajela* (plural); and another will be the appearance of a believer as mentioned in *Sabih* Muslim, one of the most authentic books of Hadith. In other books of hadith this believer is called *Mabdi* (the guided one).

The unleashing of Gog and Magog, recorded in the Quran in chapter 21, verse 96, makes it clear that the appearance of Gog and Magog will be according to a great plan of God.

It is a historical fact that the extraordinary spirit produced among the race of Gog and Magog which led to the discovery of the realities of nature never existed in any group in the entire

history of humanity. It was as a result of this that the race of Gog and Magog, by dint of prolonged strenuous effort, were able to produce a scientific and industrial civilization, thanks to which, such great opportunities opened up as had never hitherto been witnessed. *Dajjal* will become a great deceiver only by making negative use of these modern opportunities, while *Mahdi*, or *Masih*, will make positive use of these modern resources. Had these opportunities not existed, neither could deception have been so widespread, nor could the opportunities for God realization and *dawah* work have been availed of to such a high degree.

The approach of Doomsday

ACCORDING TO THE Quran and Hadith, Doomsday will be very near at the time of the appearance of Gog and Magog. A long tradition has been recorded in the books of hadith: "At the time of the appearance of Gog and Magog, Doomsday will be so close, that it could be likened to a pregnant woman whose pregnancy has fully matured, and whose child may be delivered at any time, day or night." (Ibn Majah, Musnad Ahmad).

The appearance of Gog and Magog and the subsequent events are no simple matters. It is, in actual fact, the time for the final call of Truth before the end of human history. Such circumstances will come into existence as will enable the believers to perform the task of calling people to the truth in its most superior form. This will be like the trumpet of *dawah* prior to the trumpet of Doomsday. In such a situation the appearance of the great deceiver would be indicative of man having finally lost any justification for his inhabiting the present earth any longer.

The great event of history

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF world order through the efforts of Gog and Magog is a very great event in human history in terms of its consequences. Through this evolution for the first time in human history, nature has become a major subject of investigation, instead of being an object of veneration. Consequently, all the resources of the earth are being and will continue to be exploited. This has been referred to thus in a hadith: “The earth will deliver all its treasures, leaving nothing inside.” (Ibn Majah, *Kitab Al-Fitan*)

This process of discovering the material secrets hidden in nature is being performed by western scientists, who being secular, are totally indifferent to religious matters, displaying neither a positive nor a negative attitude. But the philosophers and thinkers will use their research for their respective purposes. In this way two groups will be formed – secular thinkers and religious thinkers. After the advent of the age of science, the perverted ideas produced in the world have been the result not of science but of atheism.

The appearance of Dajjal

THE ROOT OF *dajjal* is ‘*dajl*’ which means to deceive. When a metal is given a gold polish to simulate gold, this process of polishing is called *Dajl*. *Dajil* means deceiver. *Dajjal* is the superlative degree, that is, a great deceiver.

In later times *dajjal* has been called the deceiver, because he will act deceitfully. He will indulge in acts of gross misrepresentation of the truth to the people in order to mislead them. Another name for *Dajl* in ideological matters is misinterpretation, i.e. an incorrect or false explanation. *Dajjal* will not wield the sword for this purpose, for people cannot be misled by the sword—only false reasoning can mislead them.

Such acts of *Dajl* have repeatedly occurred in the world. But

the invention of the printing press and the media has enormously increased the scope of *Dajl* which is now unparalleled in human history. *Dajjal* is no mysterious personality. In actual fact, the earlier *dajjal* who could carry out deception on a very small scale has been replaced by a *dajjal* who can do so on a very great scale. It is in fact another name for the negative use of the great opportunities produced in the wake of the discoveries made by Gog and Magog.

The deception (fitna) of the Great Dajjal

THERE IS A hadith which tells us that the words, *ka-fa-ra* (meaning denial) will be inscribed on the forehead of *Dajjal* (*Sahih Muslim, Kitab Al-Fitan*). This shows that the period in which *Dajjal* will be born will be one of denial, of atheism. The evil in earlier times was not denial of God, but was rather that of associating something else with the One God. In earlier times the existence of God was accepted as an axiom. But in present times this axiom is not regarded as valid. Today is the age of atheism, of denial of God.

A study of the Hadith shows that *dajjal* or *dajjaliat* (*dajjalism*) is in fact a phenomenon of the scientific age. In the scientific age for the first time a group of people will deny the truth in the name of reason. They will give the impression that the religious truths cannot pass the test of scientific rationalism.

Then, by the grace of God, an individual will arise—the hajeer—and will put an end to this *dajjali* menace (*fitna*) by using scientific evidence. He will prove the *dajjali* arguments baseless by putting forward superior arguments at the ideological level. (*Sahih Muslim, Kitab al-Fitan*). This event will be the first of this nature in the whole of human history. He will be the greatest witness of the call of truth. That is why his role has been expressed thus in the hadith: “His will be the greatest witness of truth to mankind in the eyes of God.” (*Sahih Muslim*) This great *dawah* event will take place before doomsday.

The *Dajjali* menace is not by its nature a new menace. It is only the culmination of the satanic menace. Satan has always tried to make untruth appear attractive and thus make people deviate from the truth. In the scientific age, this satanic fallacy presented in beautiful words will appear in the form of elegant scientific arguments. (15:39)

Such falsification always requires supportive resources, which, lacking in previous times, now exist in abundance. *Dajjal* is, in fact, that great deceiver who, employing these modern resources, will make untruth appear very attractive by forceful presentation of falsehood, until the advent of a believer who by the special grace of God, will put this *dajjalat* (deception) to an end on an ideological level.

What is Dajjalat

DAJJALIAT IS NOT an evil which will appear all of a sudden. *Dajjalat* is in fact a superlative degree of satanic deception. *Deception* and *Dajl* are almost synonymous in meaning. Deception is common deception while *dajjalat* is deception of a high degree. The Quran tells us that at the very time of man's creation, Satan issued this challenge: "I shall make the path of error seem alluring to them on the earth and shall mislead them all, ..." (15:39). At another point in the Quran, the same threat is expressed thus: "I will surely come upon them from before them and from behind them and from their right and from their left, and then you will find most of them ungrateful." (7:17)

The fitna of ungratefulness

THESE VERSES OF the Quran show that the actual purpose of satanic deception is to make man ungrateful for God's bounty. By employing attractive strategy, Satan will lead man into ungratefulness. If a man is rightly guided, he will lead his life with feelings of gratitude, whereas he would be grievously

misguided if he lead his life in a state of ungratefulness. Satan has always acted thus, but in present times Satan will be able to cause man to deviate on a far greater scale from the path of gratefulness to God. That is why this evil of the present age has been termed *dajjalat* in the hadith.

What is gratefulness? Gratefulness is, in essence, another name for acknowledgement of God's blessings. This grateful behaviour has been desired of man at all times. To show gratefulness for some blessing received from a benefactor is a natural human feeling. But acknowledgement always requires a point of reference, for instance, when you eat anything, your food is a point of reference for acknowledgement. Then you call out, "O God, I am grateful to You for giving me food to eat."

But anyone who has made a scientific study of the whole spectrum of the health-giving qualities of the different foods will be doubly appreciative of any given food item. His feeling of gratefulness will be far greater in intensity than that of one who has no specialized knowledge of food, so that when he utters these words: O God, I am thankful to You for having given me this food, he will do so in superlative terms. Where the layman will only be able to savour the taste of the food, the food specialist will appreciate it on a superior level, based upon his extensive knowledge of dietetics. If the acknowledgement of the former is a simple one, the acknowledgement of the latter will be on a Himalayan scale.

Food for the human being

IN PRESENT TIMES, food has been the subject of much research. In the wake of this research, innumerable factors have come to light, which greatly increase the possibility of the realization of God. This God realization gives rise to the question of how it happened that the food requirements of human beings are abundantly available in the external world well in advance of their needs and in perfect form. The interface between human

requirements and the available food in itself is an ocean of God-realization for the thinking person.

In ancient times food had only one kind of significance – it was something with which to fill one's stomach in order to satisfy one's hunger. This was, no doubt, a great reason for thanksgiving, but the discoveries made in modern times have greatly expanded the point of reference regarding thanksgiving. According to modern research, food is not just something with which to fill the belly; it is rather a means of fulfilling the varied requirements of the body. That is why food is now considered in terms of a balanced diet. That is, a diet with the right amount, proportion and variety of the foods needed for health. According to modern research, a balanced diet is one which contains carbohydrates, proteins, fat, vitamins, mineral salts, and fibre in the correct proportions.

This scientifically formulated balanced diet has provided us with a major point of reference for our feeling of boundless gratitude. If, according to previous information, man knew the importance of food only on an animal level, now with the benefit of modern research, he understands the importance of food and diet on a much higher level. He can now, therefore, greatly intensify his expression of gratitude to his Lord. It is only in this day and age that this addition to the point of reference has been possible. As compared with the findings of the previous centuries, modern science has achieved a great feat. It has for the first time unearthed those hidden realities in nature, which are referred to in the Quran as divine signs. These scientific discoveries have greatly added to the point of reference for man regarding the blessings of God.

Similarly, for the first time it has become possible for man to experience divine blessings of an extremely high degree in many different spheres, causing man's heart and mind to be filled with highly elevated feelings of gratitude to God. Thus it has become possible for modern man to experience the realization of God on a superior plane.

Speech and hearing

FOR ANCIENT MAN speech and hearing were just simple happenings but, in present times, many new discoveries have been made which have shown the extent to which these powers of speech and hearing are a great blessing of God – unique gifts which can induce oceans of gratitude for the benefactor. The uniqueness of this blessing is illustrated by an experiment once carried out by a scientist.

He took a glass bulb, put an electric bell inside, and then sealed its mouth. He then extracted all the air from inside the bulb. The switch of the bell was outside the glass, and when the switch was turned on, one could see the bell ringing but no sound from it could be heard.

Such experiments show that when a person hears the voice of another it is by natural transmission. The voice coming out of the lips of a person creates waves in the air. These waves travel and reach the ear of another person, then that person hears and understands these sound waves as meaningful words by means of extremely complex hearing system. There are a number of provisions in nature which facilitate this unique system of speech and hearing. One who has any knowledge of these modern discoveries of science can have such a deep feeling for his benefactor as was not possible for the man born in the pre-scientific age.

The law of water

IN ANCIENT TIMES too man used to travel by sea and river. And he had the opportunity to thank God for those journeys over water. But in modern times the research on this subject has very greatly added to the point of reference for man to be grateful to God. For instance, what is the law of nature by which the boat sails on the water? Man did not possess this knowledge earlier. In present times vast research in all matters has very greatly

added to human knowledge. According to scientific discoveries it has been revealed that it is the unique law of water which enables boats and ships to sail across vast stretches of water and reach far-off destinations.

This law of water is called hydrostatics, one aspect of which is buoyancy. Buoyancy is the upward pressure by any fluid on a body partly or wholly immersed therein: it is equal to the weight of the fluid displaced.

The sailing of the boat likewise produced within man the feeling of gratitude, but in modern times this discovery of science of the law of buoyancy has greatly added to the point of reference for man in this regard. Now, with this new-found knowledge, when anyone sees a boat or ship sailing at great speed across the water, he is overwhelmed more than ever with feelings of gratitude. This opportunity to demonstrate a high degree of gratefulness has been created by modern scientific discoveries.

Hatred and complaint

THESE ARE ONLY some of the simpler kinds of examples out of the enormous number of modern scientific discoveries that have come to our knowledge. For the first time in human history, scientific discoveries have given believers the great opportunity to know the blessings of nature at a high level and acknowledge their benefactor far more deeply.

The believers had this very great opportunity to be extremely thankful to God, but at exactly the same time, satanic deception caused their thinking to deviate and produced a negative mentality. The entire Muslim world became a prey to hatred and violence. As a result, people became deprived of experiences which could have lead to profound gratitude to and an intense realization of God.

This satanic deception is indeed something of enormous proportions, that is why in the hadith this is called *dajjalism*. How did this *dajjali* come into effect? It became possible because

exactly at the same time as science had revealed divine signs, non-Muslim nations equipped with modern knowledge and technology had conquered Muslims in every field: in particular Muslims lagged behind non-Muslims in educational, economic and political fields. This backwardness on the part of Muslims was due to their own shortcomings, but *dajjal*, using the modern media, told Muslims that it was solely the plots and oppression of other nations that were responsible for their plight. As a result of this *dajjali* (deception), Muslims worldwide became involved in hate and violence campaigns against non-Muslim nations. They failed to make positive use of modern opportunities, either for the purposes of *dawah* or for God-realization. *Dajjali* deception was the reason for this mentality of hatred and the propensity to complain. These non-Muslim nations were our *Madu* (congregation), and hating the *Madu* is forbidden, that is, not lawful in Islam, but *Dajjal* made this act appear attractive and induced Muslims to think that it was exactly in accordance with Islam.

The period of the appearance of Dajjal

THERE ARE A number of traditions about *dajjal* in the books of hadith. These traditions describe certain strange qualities of *Dajjal*, which are taken by people in the literal sense. That is why they are still waiting for the coming of *dajjal* in the shape of one individual; now there is no time left to wait for the appearance of *dajjal*. Now is the time to play one's part in countering deception.

All the attributes of *dajjal* in the hadith are expressed in symbolic language. For instance, this is the wording of one long narration about *Dajjal* in which he will speak with a voice which will be heard in the east and in the west. *Dajjal* will say, 'O my companions, come to me, O my companions, come to me. O my friends, come to me, O my friends, come to me.'

This is indeed the language of symbolism. This does not mean that *dajjal*'s own voice will be of such a high pitch or velocity

that it could be heard worldwide. It was in actual fact a prediction that the appearance of *dajjal* would be in the age of telecommunications. He would be like a common man but, thanks to mechanical communications, it would become possible for him to make his voice travel from one end of the world to the other.

These words of the narration tell us, in actual fact, of the opportunities of this age rather than of the unusual personality of *dajjal*.

The reason for the traditions of the predictions of Doomsday being worded in symbolic language

THE ABSOLUTE CLARITY of the statements in the Quran leave no doubt about the approach of Doomsday. For example, chapter 7, verse 187 says: "The hour will suddenly overtake you." Chapter 29, verse 15 has this to say: "The hour is coming but I choose to keep it hidden, so that every human being may be recompensed in accordance with his labours." Ibn Kathir in his explanation of this verse of the Quran quotes the words of Abdullah ibn Masood, the senior Companion of the Prophet: "God said, 'I have kept Doomsday hidden from all creatures. Had it been possible, I would have kept it hidden from Myself as well.'"

The stand of the religious scholars is that if any tradition contradicts the Quran, the Quran's statements will be held to be true and that particular tradition will be scrutinized. In such a situation, purely from the academic point of view, there is only one option, in terms of explanation, and that is to hold the statement of the Quran to be literally true, while the statement of the hadith should be regarded as being symbolic. There is no other way to end this contradiction.

The negative use of opportunities

DAJJAL WILL ACT negatively in making use of the opportunities available in his times to confuse people. In this way he will cause people's thinking to deviate from God to non-God. This *Dajjalism* will be at work in both secular and religious fields. We give here a few examples to explain this more fully.

The Theory of Evolution

Organic evolution falls into the category of *dajjali* concepts. Charles Darwin (d. 1882) and other biologists discovered that different living species have striking similarities in their physical structure. For instance, take the cat and the tiger. By referring to this similarity, evolutionists have formulated the theory that in the world of biology an evolutionary process has taken place. During this process one kind of species develops automatically into some other kinds of (more developed) species.

This was indeed a very great deception. What is indicated by the similarities between different species is nothing but a variety in the species. That is, although the Creator chose similarity in physical structure for the creation of species, every species was a separate, special creation. The evolutionists' observations evidently indicated variety, but they were fallaciously interpreted to prove the concept of organic evolution.

Apparently this theory does not deny the existence of God. But, in effect, it amounts to making God irrelevant in the whole process of creation. According to the theory of evolution, the whole process of life takes place by natural selection. This concept renders God's role in the creation of life so negligible that there remains no great difference between believing and not believing. In present times, we see that the concept of God has become almost peripheral in practical life. The major reason for this state of affairs is the general acceptance of the concept of evolution.

Material Interpretation of history

The exact sciences had simply discovered the realities of nature. This task was performed by physicists with great rigour and objectivity. The realities of nature thus discovered were in actual fact related to the revelation of divine signs in the universe and in human beings. In terms of their nature, their utility was as data in support of modern theology. But exactly the same period witnessed the appearance of secular philosophers and thinkers. They made negative use of the information arising from scientific researches, in that they proceeded to use it to present a purely material interpretation of human history. This line of thought is outlined in Julian Huxley's (d. 1975) book, meaningfully titled, *Religion without Revelation*.

Just as the west were leaders in the physical sciences in the present world, they also became leaders of the world in the interpretation of life. It was as if the task of interpreting both life and the universe could be performed only by the west. The inhabitants of the eastern world had no option but to follow the west.

The ideological task performed by the west was, so to speak, a material interpretation of history. During this period a great number of philosophers and thinkers came to the fore. They and their followers, who subscribed to their ideology, succeeded in influencing the minds of the whole world by making use of the modern media. This has come about due to the misinterpretation of the facts. The reason is traceable to the religious scholars' failure to play any constructive role.

Entertainment Culture

Dajjal undertook this task of deceiving the common man in another way. The new world discovered by science had great potential for guidance for the common man. For the first time it had become possible for man to discover the divine truth at the level of established knowledge, with the better opportunities that existed for God realization. Scientific discoveries made it more apparent that the blessings man had received in this world

were from his Benefactor and must be acknowledged as such. Thereby acknowledging the Benefactor, he could be held deserving of further blessings.

But exactly at the same time, *dajjal* appeared and mislead man into a satanic culture of entertainment, justifying this by invented philosophies. Everyone wanted to fulfill his or her desires right there and then. They forgot that every blessing brings with it responsibilities. And without discharging these responsibilities, man has no right to enjoy these blessings.

In present times, the entertainment culture is in vogue. All that men and women want to do now is enjoy life to the full. The most popular motto of today is: right here, right now.

A great number of books have been written to justify this ideology. One salient name in this field is that of Sigmund Freud (d. 1939) He was a great advocate of such thinking. He wanted to prove that human desires have a crucial role to play in the formation of the human personality. He held that by suppressing desires, one's personality became scarred by repression and the process of psychological growth became distorted. As such, it was necessary to satisfy one's desires freely. Due to this misleading ideology, permissiveness today prevails all over the world and human society has been reduced to a jungle of well-clad animals.

A great fallacy lies hidden in the ideology of Sigmund Freud and other western thinkers of his ilk. They attributed the growth of personality development to the unbridled fulfillment of desires, whereas such development was a product of the human mind. Indeed, it is man's mind which promotes the growth of the human personality. The truth is that in this case the fulfillment of desires is only distraction, and as such is an obstacle to intellectual development.

Dajjali fitna by its nature is not a new evil. It has always existed in the form of satanic *fitna*. What is particular about it is that this fallacious ideology has come to form the basis of a civilization. Finding it very attractive, people in general will

accept it. This will be the ultimate form of the grossly wrong use of modern discoveries. The present age is the age of this same *dajjali* culture.

Dajjaliat, the fitna of religious exploitation

ACCORDING TO A tradition of Sahih Muslim, the Prophet of Islam once observed: "I am more afraid of the *Dajjal* from within than the *Dajjal* from without." This means that the *Dajjal* from within will be more dangerous than the *Dajjal* from without. It is easy to recognize the Dajjal from without but the Dajjal from within will be mistaken for one's well-wisher. He will thus be better able to mislead one than anyone else.

Imam Nawawi (d. 1277) quoted another hadith to explain this tradition: "What I fear more than anything else for my community (*ummah*) is the misguided leaders who will mislead the people." (Sahih Muslim)

'Leaders of the *Ummah*' here means leaders who exploit. To promote their leadership, they utter beautiful words. They mask the irreligious nature of their goals in religious terminology. A great number of people are then misled and rally around them. In short, this is religious exploitation.

The political interpretation of religion

IN THE AGE of the printing press, books which give a political interpretation of Islam have been printed and published on a large scale. For a variety of reasons, these books have become popular. The goal of those who have fallen under the influence of this literature has become, by way of deviation, political revolution. This political interpretation of Islam is based on a dangerous fallacy, i.e. that religion is another name for a "complete system" and that the goal of religion is not just worship of and devotion to God, but is, more importantly, the implementation and enforcement of the civil and criminal laws

of religion. Since the implementation of these laws has never been possible without the possession of power, it is but natural that the possession of power by force has become the overriding goal of these movements. This religious form of politics, when carried into effect, has caused great harm.

For the first time in the present day it has become possible to perform *dawah* work on the basis of scientific arguments or proofs. Through modern communications, the divine message could have been communicated all over the world far more effectively than has been done to date, but this great potential has not been realized, simply because those who had to perform *dawah* work have become engaged in futile political activities. Negative thinking among Muslims, violence, extremism, and an unsympathetic attitude towards others are all the result of a political interpretation of Islam. It is this political interpretation which has given birth to the hate culture among the Muslims.

The fallacy of political interpretation

THIS FALLACY HAS resulted from deviation from the true path of religion. Religion relates basically to the life of an individual and as such it imparts the basic teachings regarding all aspects of life. In other words, these teachings address one's individual life rather than the political system in the external world. One method that was adopted to formulate a political interpretation of religion was to take religious teachings that were meant to be followed in one's own life, at the individual level, and treat them as something to be imposed on the external world. For instance, according to Islam, man ought to act with total fairness in all his dealings (57:25). This teaching, which deals with man's personal life, was changed by giving this verse a political connotation, i.e. if man, had to establish justice everywhere in the world, he was obliged to do so by force. Another Islamic teaching was that man should observe God's commands in his life. This was misrepresented as meaning that a believer was God's vicegerent on earth and, as such, it was his duty—as His deputy—to enforce God's commands here on earth.

The concept of complete religion

ANOTHER BASIS FOR the political interpretation of Islam was the concept of a “complete religion”. “Complete religion” meant that, along with commands on belief and worship in religion, civil and criminal laws must also be enforced together. That is, all the parts of religion must be treated as a whole. Otherwise, adherence to religion would remain incomplete. But the truth is that worship is the real part of religion, while the enforcement of laws is a relative part. That is, the religious part has to be observed in all circumstances by every believer, whereas the enforcement of laws is a societal concern. If society is prepared to enforce laws, that becomes its religious responsibility, but if it is not prepared to do so; the enforcement of laws will remain in abeyance.

The fallacy behind the concept of complete religion is that both the real and relative parts of religion have been given equal status, regardless of the circumstances. This has been the root cause of all evil. In actual fact, the desirability of the real part of religion is eternal in its nature, while the desirability of the social part of the religion depends upon the actual condition of society. Complete Islam for an individual is only that which is required of him according to his capacity.

A political interpretation of Islam was disseminated in the name of implementing the ‘complete Islam’. But as to the practical result of this, it became akin to total deviation from the real Islam. It was a case of totally distorting the reality of Islam in terms of consequences. Of the ensuing evils, the first kind of harm done by the political interpretation of Islam was the changing of the genuine target of the Islamic mission. The real goal, according to the Quran is: “To seek ways to come closer to Him.” (5:35). But according to the political interpretation, the “real” goal of Islam became, on the contrary, to overthrow the existing political regime in order to enforce the “complete Islam” throughout the world.

The second kind of harm done by this interpretation was

that, by adherence to this concept, the nature of social relationships became totally changed. According to Islam, the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims is that of *dayee* (addressor) and *madu* (addressee). But this political interpretation changed this relationship into one of political rivalry. As a result, non-Muslims were no longer considered Muslims' well-wishers, and people to whom the divine message had to be conveyed. They rather became their rivals. In this way, a political culture instead of a *dawah* culture came into existence.

It was as a result of this political interpretation that, throughout the whole world, Islamic action became synonymous with violent action. Activists began their work by employing peaceful means but soon found that overturning the rulers was not possible in this way. Therefore, in order to attain their objectives, they opted for a violent course of action. They even went to the extent of holding suicide bombing lawful. When put into practice, the concept of political revolution thus resulted in nothing but so much hate and violence. Those who came under the influence of this political interpretation engaged themselves in a course of action which was wholly unlawful in Islam, i.e. revolt against an established Muslim government. In the present day, all Muslim rulers have received modern education, and because of this background, although religious in their personal lives, the majority of them have adopted a modern outlook in political matters. This is why the upholders of the political interpretation of Islam insist that since their rulers are not enforcing "complete Islam" in their country, they feel duty-bound to rebel against them, unseat them from power and replace them with such individuals as will enforce complete Islam.

This theory has resulted in a division of the people into two groups—the rulers and the ruled, with Muslims beginning to fight against the rulers of their respective countries. This line of action on the part of the Muslims, in the terminology of Islamic law (*fiqh*) is that of revolt (*kburooj*), which is clearly unlawful (*haraam*) in Islam.

Almost the whole of the 20th century was a period of feverish activity set in motion by this political interpretation of Islam. It was precisely at this moment that the discoveries of science, in the words of the Quran, had made major revelations of the divine signs lying hidden in the universe. The need of the hour was to give the call of truth at a very high level, supported by the discoveries of science. But at that very time, our leaders, under this tragic misapprehension, became embroiled in political activities. As a result, the call of truth could not be given, in spite of all the opportunities to do so having presented themselves at a very high level.

The political extremism of Muslim leaders can be gauged by this example: Syed Jamaluddin Afghani (d. 1897), the leader of the radical political activities of his group in Paris, was asked in 1884 by his disciple, Mufti Mohd. Abduh (d. 1905), why they should not leave this futile task (politics) and engage themselves in peaceful *dawah* work and in the field of education, where there would be many opportunities for such work. Jamaluddin Afghani replied: "You talk of disheartenment." (*Jamaluddin Afghani*, by Mahmood Abu Riyya, Cairo, 1966, p. 50).

This was indeed a grave tragedy resulting from the political interpretation of Islam. There were two negative results of this interpretation: failure to utilize modern *dawah* opportunities and the generation of the culture of hatred and violence in the name of political revolution. The negative result of this political interpretation of religion was that the task of calling people to God was totally stopped.

With very few exceptions, people then became engaged in bringing about "Complete Islamic Political Rule" on the basis of their self-styled interpretation of Islam. This, however, was just not possible according to the law of nature. In this way, trying to achieve something impossible yielded a negative result and that which was fully possible, i.e. peaceful *dawah* work, could not be achieved either.

The requirement of a new prophet

THEN WE HAVE another example which pertains to those who claim that since circumstances have changed in the 20th century, we are in need of a new prophet. By advancing this theory they claimed that their leader was the Prophet of the New age.

This whole matter is based on a fallacy, the reason being that a new prophet is not sent to the world because of the changed situation. The changed situation only establishes the need of *ijtibaad*, rather than the need for a new prophet. Whenever any prophet is sent to the world, it is only for one of two reasons. Firstly, no prophet has been sent to that region and, therefore, due to the absence of prophetic guidance, a prophet has to be sent. Secondly, the teachings of the previous prophets having been subjected to human interpolation, the authentic source of divine religion is not available to man.

In present times neither of the above-mentioned conditions is valid, considering that a final prophet came in the form of Mohammad ibn Abdullah ibn Abdul Muttalib, who was God's prophet for all time for the entire world, and the teachings of this prophet have been fully preserved. Therefore, there is no need for any other prophet.

There is no doubt about it that circumstances have changed. But what is actually required is that, by the exercise of *ijtibaad*, we must present the teachings of the final prophet of Islam in a manner which is fully understandable to the modern mind, so that people may find his teachings as relevant in the modern world as they were in the past. The change in circumstances only proves the necessity for new *ijtibaad*, rather than the coming of a new prophet.

Mahdi or the Believer

NOW LET US TAKE, the positive character of this age, who has been mentioned in the Hadith as *Mahdi* or the Believer. There is nothing mysterious about this character. This is a known character which can be easily understood when studied under general principles. There are two aspects to the positive role to be played by *Mahdi*, or the Believer. Realisation and *dawah*, i.e. the attainment of superior realization in the light of newly discovered realities, and propagating the Islamic call effectively at a global level by modern means of communication. Both these aspects have been foretold in the Quran and Hadith.

The possibility of attaining superior realization by modern means has already been mentioned in the Quran: "We shall show them our signs in the universe and within themselves, until it becomes clear to them that this (Quran) is the truth." (41:53)

This verse of the Quran was revealed in the first quarter of the seventh century. At that time it was predicted that in the future the hidden divine signs in the universe would be revealed as a result of human discoveries. These signs would establish the veracity of the Quran at the level of human knowledge.

This prediction has become a reality in present times. In this way the initial 50 per cent of the task has already been performed. Now the task or the role of the *Mahdi*, or *believer*, is to learn about these realities and complete the remaining 50 per cent of the task so that the signs of God may become a means of attaining a higher realization of God.

How to recognize Mahdi

HOW CAN WE recognize *Mahdi* when he appears? Mahdi, purely a title, and not a personal name, literally means a 'guided person', that is, a rightly guided person.

From a tradition of the Prophet we learn that *Mahdi* will appear during a time of intellectual darkness (*fitna duhaima*), when everyone will be in the dark as regards the realization of truth. In such an age, the light of the realization of truth can be had by the special grace of God alone, that is, as a gift and not by one's own efforts. In this age of darkness (*fitna*) neither will one be able to find out the truth on one's own, nor will there be anyone to lead one to the truth. In reality, the only source of guidance will be God.

In such an age, when people in general will be deprived of true guidance, *Mahdi*, unlike the others in his environment, will be an exceptionally truly guided person, and that in itself will be sufficient to identify him. *Mahdi* will not claim to be *Mahdi*, nor will any voice be heard from heaven that this person is Mahdi, and that he should be followed. But Mahdi will be an individual of a unique nature, and it is this uniqueness by which he will be recognized.

Fitna Duhaima (An age of utter confusion)

FITNA DUHAIMA LITERALLY means 'pitch darkness'.

Here the question arises as to what reason there could be for this enveloping darkness. Why would people find themselves in a jungle of intellectual darkness and confusion? When we think deeply about it, we find that this will happen when there is a plethora of writers and speakers.

History tells us that this is the first time that there has been any such situation. For the first time in human history, with the advent of the printing press, innumerable books have been

printed and published. Then after the electronic media came into vogue, a whole new world came into existence — radio, TV and the internet. Such great quantities of information of all kinds are being fed into the internet that more than 5000 pages of information are added to it every 5 minutes. There has been a similar exponential increase in printed books.

A tradition has been recorded in different collections of Hadith about a prediction made by the Prophet to the effect that a time would come when the deception (*fitna*) of words, whether written or spoken, would be more dangerous than the sword. This age of the deception of words has already set in in our times. Today, it is the abundance of beautiful words that is the greatest source of misguidance.

How will it be possible to save oneself from this dark deception of words? The answer is to be found in a hadith. The Prophet of Islam observed, “Realization of God is the shield against this *fitna*.” This means that there is only one way to shake off the spell of beautifully deceptive words and that is for man to be possessed with the realization of God. Nothing else can save man from this *fitna*.

Mahdi is, in fact, a realized person. A soul of this kind, by God’s special grace, will be able to penetrate the fallacy of words. He will be one who is able to understand the difference between beautifully deceptive words and valid arguments; who will have the ability to analyze misleading statements in order to see through them to the realities beyond and who will have the gift of precise description of the truth. Because of his great degree of realization, he will save himself from the (*fitna*) deception of words and will help others to save themselves from this deception. It was due to the importance of this role of *Mahdi* that the Prophet of Islam observed: “When *Mahdi* or the believer appears, it is the duty of every believer to support him and to welcome his call.” (Sunan Abi Dawood, *Kitab al-Mahdi*).

This Hadith further tell us that there is nothing mysterious about the appearance of the *Mahdi*, or the believer. Had he been possessed of a miraculous personality, it would be irrelevant to

tell the believers to support him for, if he did indeed have a miraculous personality, he would not need the support of others.

The matter of divine intervention

A TRADITION HAS been recorded in Sunan ibn Majah regarding the appearance of *Mahdi*. One part of it reads: 'God will reform him overnight.' (*Kitab Al-Fitan*, Chapter Khooruj al-Mahdi).

This means that *Mahdi* will appear at a time when the pitch darkness of confusion will prevail throughout the world. In these dire conditions of deception, it will be almost impossible to find guidance by one's own efforts and there will be no institution in this age of general perversion either to help in giving guidance, or in developing the personality of *Mahdi*. The formation of *Mahdi*'s personality will take place only by the direct intervention of God. God will intervene so that through him he will show the right path to His servants. Another Hadith says of *Mahdi*: "His name will be that of mine." 'Name' in this tradition is not in the literal sense. It means that *Mahdi* shall possess the Prophet's attributes.

As we learn from another tradition: '*Mahdi* will be like the Prophet Muhammad in his internal quality rather than in his appearance.'

Mahdi, *not* Hadi

SOME PEOPLE TAKE *Mahdi* in the sense of *Hadi*. Going by this self-styled concept, it is believed that *Mahdi* will be a revolutionary leader who will establish the Islamic political system at a global level. This definition of *Mahdi* is entirely baseless. The truth is that *Mahdi* will be one who has realized God, the *Arif* of the present age. By the grace of God, He will himself realize God and show others the path to God realization. It is a fact that the realization of God is the most supreme and most desirable goal in the eyes of God. This task of showing

people the path to the realization of God will be carried out at a global level. But this task to be performed by the *Mahdi* will have nothing to do with political revolution: it will be directed rather to bringing about a revolution at man's intellectual level, to facilitate man in leading a God-oriented life.

The general perception of *Mahdi* is that his features will be so easily identifiable that, the moment he appears, he will be recognized by the people, and they will start following him in great numbers. But the picture of *Mahdi*, or the believer, given in the Hadith is totally different. According to the Hadith, when *Mahdi* appears, the influential religious leaders will not support him. Moreover, people will throng to *Dajjal* in great numbers, but *Mahdi*, or the believer, will not have many supporters. For this reason, *Dajjal* and his men will feel emboldened enough to oppose him and to indulge in his character assassination. Finally, they will attempt to kill him. But thanks to the special divine succour given by God to *Mahdi*, *Dajjal* and his men will not succeed in their destructive plan.

Thus, people have changed *Mahdi* into *Hadi* and then gone on from there to make the assumption that he will be the world leader of his time, heralding a great political revolution. But according to the Hadith, the path trodden by *Mahdi* will be a path of guidance in the darkness of the misguidance prevailing in the world. Once again, there will be that high degree of realization, at a time when it would have become almost non-existent. *Mahdi*, in short, will discover guidance rather than enforce guidance.

The announcement of truth, rather than the claim of truth

THE PHENOMENON OF *Mabdi* is the phenomenon of the announcement of the truth rather than the claim to have discovered the truth. *Mabdi*, or the believer, will not commence his task by claiming to be a *Mabdi*. It will be purely by the exceptional nature of his task that people will be able to recognize him for who he actually is. The right way to approach this matter is to see *Mabdi* in relation to God. In God's eyes, the actual point worth considering relates to others' perception of *Mabdi* rather than to *Mabdi* himself. Others should recognize the Believer of their time, who has been called *Mabdi* in the Hadith, and then give him the full support he needs to enable him to play the role assigned to him. That is the test to which his contemporaries will be put.

The traditions regarding the *Mabdi*, or *Masih*, and other relevant data tell us in actual fact about a great *dawah* opportunity rather than about the mysterious special quality of one or more individuals. God alone knows who, by His special grace and succour, will be able to play this role. To my way of thinking, 'waiting for the advent of a person' or claiming 'I am that person' are both equally wrong.

It is important to clarify here that describing in principle the issue of *Mabdi*, or *Masih*, is different from claiming for oneself the title of *Mabdi* or *Masih*. An attempt to explain this matter is a purely academic issue, and any knowledgeable person can speak about it. Subsequently, scholars have the right to give their verdict of rejection or acceptance in terms of the reason they put forward. But a claim by anyone to be *Mabdi*, or *Masih*, is something of a different nature and no one has the right to make any such claim.

The case of the Prophet cannot be equated with that of the *Mabdi*, for it is essential for a prophet to begin his mission by laying claim to being a prophet. The case of *Mabdi*, or *Masih*, is quite different in that the identity of the *Mabdi*, or of the one

who played the role of *Masih*, can be known only on the Day of Judgement, after this has been announced by God. This being so, claims to being *Mahdi* or *Masih* are baseless. In any case, how can such claims be verified? In this world there is, in reality, no way of ascertaining the authenticity of such claims. The truth is that being *Mahdi* or *Masih* is not a matter of self-appointment: anyone who regards this as such must be either illiterate or mad.

Mahdi or Masih

ACCORDING TO A certain tradition, we learn that *Mahdi* and *Masih* are two symbolic names of the same personality. There is only one personality to appear during the last stage of human history, who in some traditions is called the Believer, in other traditions the *Mahdi*, and in yet other traditions the *Masih*. This person, being a member of the Muslim community, is referred to as a Believer. In another respect, he is called *Mahdi* (the guided one) because he will discover complete guidance in the age of the darkness of misguidance. Then, in yet another respect, he is called *Masih*, since he will play the same role as performed by *Masih* during the last days of the Jewish Community.

These three words evidently express three different aspects of the same personality, rather than three different personalities.

Two aspects of the scientific revolution

MAHDI, *MASIH*, *DAJJAL*—are in no way mysterious personalities. In actual fact, these roles will emerge in the scientific age. According to the explanation of the Quran, it always happens in the present world that evil with good and good with evil co-exist. (24:11). According to this natural principle, the same happened with the scientific revolution. It also had both minus and plus points. Then it was but natural that two characters should emerge. One is the character who will exploit the negative aspects of the scientific revolution, while the other will be one who makes good use of its positive aspects.

There is one example which will make this point clear. In ancient times, the atom was considered the last indivisible particle. So the theory was formulated that “truth is something which is measurable.” But the researches conducted by the German scientist Albert Einstein (d.1955) revealed that the atom could be split, thus producing nuclear fission, i.e. the spontaneous or impact-induced splitting of a heavy atomic nucleus, accompanied by a release of energy.

One aspect of this nuclear fission was that the energy it released was extremely powerful. Some made negative use of this energy, by producing the atomic bomb and the nuclear bomb — the most dangerous of all weapons, because they were so destructive.

But there was a great positive aspect to this nuclear fission. Prior to this development, the atom being regarded as the last unit of matter led to the theory that reality is something which can be observed. And that something which does not come directly under man’s observation is not reality. After the splitting of the atom, this perspective was no longer valid. It was revealed that there are realities beyond the atom which do not come under observation, but which have their own existence. These realities came to be known only through their effects and it was in this way that inferential argument came to be held valid. In scientific circles it was then accepted that inferential argument was as valid as direct argument.

This development had a tremendous impact upon theology. The arguments used by the philosophers and theologians of ancient times to prove the existence of God were based on indirect or inferential argument, for instance, the argument from design. But these arguments put forward by them were rejected by the atheists, who dismissed them as being unscientific. But now science itself, in the wake of atomic fission, has accepted that inferential arguments are scientifically valid. And with that, theology has entered a new phase—a phase in which theological arguments are taken to be as acceptable as any known scientific argument.

Ikhwan-e-Rasool

IN THE LAST phase of human history, the role to be played by *Mahdi*, or *Masih*, will not be a personal feat of a mysterious kind. This will unfold according to the same principle of cause and effect as it did with the previous prophets. For instance, the great historic role performed by the Prophet of Islam had its success ensured by God's granting to him a strong team composed of his own companions. Similarly, to enable *Mahdi*/*Masih* to play his role, God will grant him special support by providing him with a powerful team. Probably it is this team which in a hadith is called *ikhwan-e-rasool* (brothers of the Prophet).

As narrated by Abu Hurayrah, the Prophet of Islam said, 'I want to see my brothers.' The companions of the Prophet said, 'O! Prophet of God, are we not your brothers?' The Prophet replied, 'You are my companions. My brothers have not yet come. They will come in later times.'

There is nothing mysterious about the companions of the Prophet or his 'brothers.' The nature of these two groups can be understood by a study of the Quran and Hadith. The nature of the Prophet's companions can be judged from a verse of the Quran which begins: 'Mohammad is the Messenger of God. Those who are his companions in the true sense...' (48:29) It then goes on to enumerate a number of other noble qualities which they possessed. From this, we infer that the secret of the high degree of faith with which the Prophet's companions were imbued was attributable to the companionship of the Prophet and the training which he imparted to them. In consequence, his companions became 'the best community that has ever been brought forth for the good of mankind.' (3:110).

Ikhwan-e-rasool is also indirectly alluded to in a verse of the Quran which reads: 'We shall show them Our signs in the universe and within themselves, until it becomes clear to them that this is the truth.' (41:53). This verse is in the nature of a prediction that a time will come when the signs latent in nature

will appear and will be a source of higher realization for the seekers after truth. Subsequent events tell us that it is the present scientific age which is referred to here. Indeed, in this age, such facts about the world of nature have come to the knowledge of man as are undoubtedly a source of realization.

Keeping this reality in view, it would perhaps be right to say that the brothers of the Prophet will be those believers who, born in the scientific age, will derive intellectual nourishment from scientific discoveries, and thus attain high levels of realization. These will be the people who will support *Mahdi*, or *Masih*, in the final stage of human history by performing great *dawah* work at the global level.

One example of this matter is the phenomenon of the solar and lunar eclipses. An eclipse is the obscuring of the reflected light from one celestial body by the passage of another between it and the earth. But in the age of the companions of the Prophet in the first half of the 7th century, the eclipses were misrepresented in the current popular tales as subjects of great mystery and superstition. It was only by rising above superstition that the companions of the Prophet learnt the truth about solar and lunar eclipses, i.e. that they were actually the divine signs of the Lord of the Universe — heavenly demonstrations of God's power. Once having accepted this truth, they attained the realization of God. On seeing solar and lunar eclipses, they prostrated themselves before God in prayer and in acknowledgement of His greatness.

In the present scientific age, new discoveries about the solar system have been made by means of telescopic observation. Such information is undoubtedly a source of higher realization. In the light of these new discoveries, when one sees the phenomena of solar and lunar eclipses today, one has that great experience of the realization of God which can move hearts and make our body hair stand on end.

According to modern discoveries, the earth, the sun, and the moon are three astral bodies which are widely different in size but which are so positioned in their orbits in the vastness

of space that they cause the occurrence of solar and lunar eclipses. These can be predicted by mathematical calculation and are clearly visible to the human eye.

The second coming of Masih

IT IS GENERALLY understood that Jesus Christ is alive in the heavens and that he will physically come to the earth during the last days and then kill *Dajjal*. This is believed by the majority of Muslims. But this version is not based on the Quran and Hadith. In different authentic books of Hadith there are about two dozen traditions regarding the coming of Christ. But what should be noted is that in no tradition is it stated that *Masih* will physically come down to earth from the heavens.

These traditions use the words *nuzul* (coming) and *baath* (sent down). But these words do not prove that Christ will come down from heaven to earth in physical form. In the Arabic language *nuzul* simply means 'coming' and not 'coming from heaven'. This is why a guest is called *nazil* that is, 'one who comes'. Similarly, the word *baath* does not denote 'coming down physically from heaven' but rather 'rising' or 'appearing'.

The coming of the role of Masih

THE TRUTH IS that the 'second coming of the *Masih*' means that during the last stage of human history, when *Dajjal* will appear, a person from the Muslim community will rise and fulfill the role of Christ, i.e. he will meet the challenges of *Dajjal* and defeat him. The Hadith mentions the killing of *Dajjal*, but this does not mean physical killing. Rather, it is the 'killing' of the deceptions of *Dajjal* by arguments.

There is nothing new about this. A sizeable number of Muslim religious scholars have accepted the viewpoint — and a number of books have been written in support of this — that *Masih* will not physically come down from heaven. Some of the

religious scholars who support this viewpoint are as follows:- Imam Fakhruddin Ar Razi (d. 1210), Sayed Jamaluddin Afghani (d. 1897), Mufti Mohd Abduh (d. 1905), Sayyed Rashid Raza of Egypt (d. 1935), Shaikh Mahmood Shaltoot (d. 1963), Dr Muhammad Iqbal (d.1938), Maulana Obaidullah Sindhi (d. 1944), Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (d. 1958), Shaikh Mohammad bin Ahmad abu Zahra (d. 1974), Shaikh Mohammad al Ghazzali (d. 1996), etc. (For further details refer to the article titled “The Issue of Approaching Doomsday” published in the monthly *Al Risala*, July, 2008). Of the early scholars, Ali ibn Ahmad ibn Hazm (Spain) (d. 1063) and Shaikh Taqiuddin Ahmad ibn Taymiya (d. 1328), have also held the issue of the coming of Christ from heaven to be controversial.

Obviously, the traditions do not establish it as a fact that *Masih* in person will come down from the heavens. This being so, we are left with the sole option of accepting that, during the last stage, someone from the Muslim community will rise and, in consonance with the prevailing circumstances, will play the role of *Masih*.

The role of *Masih* is neither a matter of achieving some honour, nor is it something mysterious. The role of *Masih* is, in fact, a historical role which has to be played in the later period of the People of the Book. During the later period of the community of Moses, this role was performed by *Masih*, the son of Mary. During the last period, this role will be played by a Muslim who will be a *mujaddid* (a renewer of faith).

The truth is that every community in its initial stage follows the true faith in its true spirit. But, in later stages, when decadence sets in among its members, piety is reduced to an outward show. The role of Christ in this age of decadence is, in fact, to expose this so-called religion as being merely form-based, and to introduce people to the authentic religion based on the true spirit.

What is hypocrisy? This happens when the true spirit of religion is absent and certain outward things are taken as standards of religiosity. This has been expressed by Jesus Christ

in symbolic language: 'Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.' (Matthew, 7:15).

It is a law of nature that in later generations, the inner spirit of religion is replaced by external forms. According to the prediction made by the Prophet on this subject, this law of nature has come into effect among the Muslim community in the full sense today. Now it is common for a certain identity to be maintained in terms of form—and that has become the sole criterion of religiosity. Moreover, fueling pride in religion and community has begun to be considered the very stuff of Islam. Without breaking the conditioning of the people, an impressive display of Islam is being put up, and those who are responsible for this are regarded as national heroes among the Muslims. Community work has been given the status of *darwah* work and those who are engaged in futile political activities are accorded the status of *mujahid* of Islam. Today, such hypocrisy in the garb of Islam has come full circle in the Muslim *ummah*. The role of Masih today is to expose this hypocrisy and present Islam anew to the people in its original form.

The role of Masih

JESUS CHRIST CAME as their last prophet to the Jews, who were at that time practitioners of God's religion. But, the religion they practiced was not, in reality, the revealed faith brought by the prophets. In practice, it had become a religion vitiated by human interpolation. It was then for Jesus Christ to give to his people once again the original message of God.

It would be desirable for the Muslim community to carry out a similar task. According to a Hadith, during the last stage of the Muslim community, almost the same state of affairs will prevail among the Muslims as prevailed among the Jews during the times of Jesus Christ. As such, the same course of action taken by Christ needs to be repeated during that later stage of the Muslim community.

In the words of a Hadith, Islam today has become an alien religion, latter-day interpretations having totally veiled the true religion. What has to be done today is to rid the original religion of human interpolation and to present it to the people in its pristine form. The religion based on man-made interpretations has to be converted back into the original, revealed religion. This will be of incalculable value to both Muslims and non-Muslims.

We learn from the traditions that, during the last stage of the Muslim community, Christ's role will be repeated only when doomsday has drawn very near. Circumstances tell us that with the beginning of the 21st century all the signs of the approaching doomsday have already appeared. From the religious point of view, one sign is that human perversion has gone beyond all limits, thus causing man to lose all justification for being allowed to inhabit this earth created by God. During the last period of the Prophet Noah's time, such conditions prevailed that he felt constrained to pray thus to God: "If You leave any, they will misguide Your servants, and they will beget none but sinners and deniers of truth." (71:27). Given this kind of extreme situation, God destroyed the people of Noah by a great flood. Only a tiny minority who had believed in the admonitions of the Prophet Noah were saved from the general annihilation.

Once again perversion has set in across the world on a vast scale and the words of Noah, "They will beget none but sinners and deniers of truth" have become applicable to the world at large. It is almost certain that soon a flood greater than Noah's flood will engulf the world, totally destroying man and human civilization. That will be the Day of Judgement for all mankind. At that time, all human beings will be produced for the final reckoning before the Almighty, the Lord of the Universe.

Waiting for Masih

THERE IS A great misunderstanding among the people about the second coming of Christ. They have taken it upon themselves to turn his coming into a great mystery and are waiting for a miraculous personality to come down to them from the heavens. But a study of the Quran and Hadith tells us that neither *Masih* nor any other mysterious personality will appear. Keeping this reality in mind, there is a great fear that the Muslim community may again face the same situation as was faced by the Jews. The Quran tells us that the Jews awaited the coming of the final prophet, but when he came, they denied him (2:89). This was because he did not match up to their preconceived ideas of what a prophet should be like. Given the present situation of the Muslim community, it is greatly feared that they too will keep on waiting for the coming of Christ—rejecting all those who do not live up to their expectations—until *qiyamat* approaches and then nothing but eternal remorse and deprivation will be their lot.

Masih is another name for a reformer of the Muslim Community rather than the title of any mysterious, miraculous personality descending from the heavens. The role of this individual will be similar to the role played by Jesus Christ.



The way to recognize the Mujaddid of the final phase

THERE IS A detailed tradition in the Hadith about the final stage which reads: “At that time nothing will remain of Islam except for its name and nothing will remain of the Quran except for its words, the mosque will be full but deserted as regards guidance.” (Al-Baihaqi).

What is the meaning of this Hadith? Of this later time the Prophet observed: “When Islam began it was alien, and again it will become alien.” This description of the situation shows how

vital it is that the Mujaddid should arrive. But now, the question arises as to what criterion would enable us to recognize the Mujaddid of the final phase. Clearly, he will not be recognized because of his miraculous personality. Rather, there will be two basic signs by which to identify him. These are recorded in the Quran and the Hadith.

When we peruse such traditions, we find that the first identifying feature of the Mujaddid of the final phase will be that, by the special grace of God, he will be able to discover the true religion in its original form. Going beyond the Quran's outward form and all fallacious interpretations of it, he will be able to understand its true message and will thus be able to discover the real spirit of Islam.

That is to say, he will be able to discover the religion of God once again just as it was discovered by the companions of the Prophet. Although having come at a later time, he will be able to find Islam at the same level of realization as that of the Companions of the Prophet.

The second sign by which to recognize him will be as expressed in the Quran in relation to other prophets: "Each messenger We have sent has spoken in the language of his own people." (14:4). This verse gives us a certain criterion by which to recognize a prophet or a *dayee*. "Language" in this verse does not just mean parlance, but covers all those features which are considered necessary parts of a successful means of communication. For instance, clarity and an effective style of speech which will fully address the minds of his contemporaries, etc.

Such a powerful style is never acquired. It is always granted to the person whom God has designated to communicate His religion. If, in spite of this distinctive quality, one is not able to recognize a *dayee*, one may be said to be suffering from intellectual blindness. It was because of this kind of intellectual blindness that people failed to recognize the prophets in the past and denied them.

Realization, not descending from Heaven

ACCORDING TO ONE tradition, the Prophet once observed about the appearance of Christ that he would certainly come. And when he appears, people should recognize him. This tradition of the Prophet shows that recognizing him will be based not on “his descending from heaven but on his personality.” Had his recognition depended upon his physical descent accompanied by angels, he would have been instantly recognised. But, according to the Hadith, the actual issue was simply the recognition of the Messiah without any reference to his miraculously descending from the heavens.

According to a tradition one sign of the Messiah would be that in his time, “God will destroy all the religious groups.” (Sunan Abi Dawood, *Kitab al Malahim* chapter ‘Khurooj Ad-Dajjal’.)

This does not mean the physical destruction of all other religious groups; it refers rather to the destruction of their distorted ideologies. All the evidences of nature favouring the true religion will be revealed through scientific argument at the time of the appearance of the Messiah. And the realities which will come to light as a result of the comparative study of religion will discredit the supposedly logical base of other religions.

This opportunity will be in terms of potential, that is, the religious base of other communities or religious groups will not be destroyed on their own because of these newly discovered evidences. Rather some individual will be required to avail of these evidences, turning the potential into actuality. According to a tradition, this task will be performed uniquely by *Masih*, whereas others will find themselves helpless to perform this task. This will be proof of the identity of *Masih*.

There is a hadith which possibly refers, in symbolic language, to the coming of Christ in the age of aviation (Sahih Muslim, *Kitab Al Fitan*). It says that he will descend near a “white tower” – possibly the control tower of an airport – after which he will enter the city.

Leading the people by means of the Book of God and the Sunnah of the Prophet

ACCORDING TO A tradition narrated by Abu Huraira, the Prophet observed, "How will you feel, when Christ appears among you? Then he will lead you and he will be one of you." Ibn Abi-Zeib said that it meant he would lead people in accordance with the guidance of the Book of God and the Sunnah of the Prophet (*Sahib Muslim, Kitab Al-Iman*).

The greatest sign of the *mujaddid* appearing during the later stage will be that he will revive (the original teachings of) the Book and the Sunnah. It is as if his role during the final period will be that of a *mujaddid* in the complete sense. This will be the highest form of the manifestation of religion after utter intellectual darkness. It will be the sign of his being *Masih* that he will make the original religion, which had become alien, a known religion once again. He will revive the teachings of the Quran and the Sunnah in their original form. This, moreover, indicates the timing of his appearance. It will take place when the real criteria of truth have been lost. At that time the real criteria, i.e. the criteria laid down in the book of God and the Sunnah of the Prophet, will be presented anew to people by Christ.

The killing of the Dajjal

THERE ARE A number of traditions regarding the killing of *Dajjal* in the books of Hadith. The following was recorded by Ibn Majah: "When *Dajjal* sees *Masih*, he will start melting like salt in water and will flee from there. *Masih* will say, 'I have got a stroke for you from which you cannot escape.'"

What has been said in this tradition is in symbolic language. By perusing this we learn that the way to counter *Dajjal* will be to expose him by logical analysis of his fallacies. In this way, Christ will expose *Dajjal* through arguments and those who had

come under the influence of his deceptive words will learn that they were nothing but beautifully misleading words.

Global warming or climatic changes as the preliminary warning Signs of Doomsday

IT IS GENERALLY held that Islam and science are separate from one another, the subject of Islam being different from the subjects of science. But there is one respect in which Islam and science are in total conformity with one another.

And that is, that what science is now making known through its discoveries has already been made known in Islam through revelation. The difference is only that Islam had made predictions about things 15 hundred years ago in the 7th century AD, while science has discovered these same things only in recent centuries and particularly at the beginning of the 21st century.

These predictions include the coming of doomsday, or the end of human history. What is strange about this is that what had been predicted in the Quran and Hadith has only now come to the knowledge of man as facts through scientific observations. Here are a few relevant examples:

Change occurring on the Planet Earth

AT A NUMBER of places it has been recorded in the Quran that before Doomsday certain signs indicating its approach will appear. Here is one of the relevant verses:

“On the Day when the earth shall be changed into another earth, as shall be the heavens, they will all appear before God, the One, the Most Supreme.” (14:48)

The change in the earth that has been predicted in this verse will probably not be a sudden change, but will rather be gradual. Today this is actually happening. It is noteworthy that

extraordinary progress has been made in different fields in the present times, which have enabled man to understand the changes over a period of time, whereas it has not hitherto been possible for man to observe these changes. That is, on the one hand, God will bring about eye-opening changes through advance news of Doomsday, while exactly at the same time He will provide man with modern scientific methods by which he may directly learn about these changes.

By the beginning of the 21st century, scientists all over the world had become unanimous in their warning that the earth was changing rapidly as a result of global warming and climatic changes. According to modern scientific observations, these changes will render our earth uninhabitable by 2050.

Over the last 10 years, many reports have been published by scientists on this subject. Recently, the *American Science Magazine* published one such report by James Hansen (67), a top scientist, who is Director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies in New York. A summary of this report was published in *The Times of India*, New Delhi, on April 9, 2008, under the caption of "Earth in Crisis." According to this report, (p. 35) "we have already reached a dangerous level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere."

The news given by scientists regarding the disturbance of the balance governing the life support systems on earth is based not on theoretical calculations or conjecture, but rather on the information garnered from observations. In our times the latest scientific methods have been employed to enable continuous study and observation on the basis of which these reports have been published in the media. All such information is of a kind which is accessible to anyone with a scientific background.

The appearance of Dabba

CHAPTER NO. 27 of the Quran mentions a sign called *dabba* which will appear before Doomsday. "When God's word is justly carried out against them, We will produce a *dabba* from the earth which will tell them that mankind had no real faith in Our signs." (27:82)

Dabba literally means a creeper. This word has been used in the Quran both for man and animals (chapter 35), i.e. for living creatures. It is most likely a human being and not an animal which is meant here. This means that prior to Doomsday, God will raise a human being who will warn man of God's signs which people had failed to understand, although they were already in existence.

We find different narrations of traditions in the books of Hadith and Tafsir on the subject of *dabba*. From these traditions we learn that *dabba* will be an extraordinary creature. But for a proper understanding of these traditions, we must take them as being symbolic in style. That is why a group of commentators have treated these traditions as such and have opined that by *dabba*, a human being, not an extraordinarily mysterious creature, is depicted. According to these traditions, *dabba* will be a human being like any other. And, by the special grace of God, he will be a means of expressing God's signs. A commentator of the Quran, Al Qurtubi (671 AD), has expressed this opinion: 'Some later exegists have said that it is more understandable for *dabba* to be a human being. He will counter the false ideology of the misguided, so that they may understand and relent', and, in the words of the Quran: "He who was to perish might perish after clear evidence of the truth, and he who was to live might live in clear evidence of the truth." (8:42).

If, judging by this verse of the Quran, *dabba* means a human being who appears at a later period of human history, why is the word *dabba* used for a human being? The reason is traceable to the law of doubt (element of doubt) which finds expression in chapter 6, verse 9 of the Quran:

“Indeed, if We had sent an angel as messenger, We would have made him in the form of a man as well, and would have thus added to their confusion.”

This verse tells us that although God sends His revelations through an angel, the pronouncement of this revelation to human beings is made by a human being. This is done so that, according to the divine scheme, the element of doubt should remain. Had the angel who brought the revelation appeared in his original form to communicate the divine message, the element of doubt would have been affected. Perhaps it is due to this principle of the element of doubt that the Quran has used the word *dabba*. Had the Quran used the word ‘man’, the wisdom of the element of doubt would have been affected.

The role of *dabba*, we are told in the Quran, is that it will appear to reveal the hidden signs of God and, in the language of reason, it will ask man why, in spite of clear signs, he did not believe in God’s signs. The signs referred to in the above-mentioned verse of the Quran are perhaps those which will be revealed during the last phase of human history and which will clearly reveal the truth of the divine religion.

In this way, *dabba* or the *dayee*, appearing during the last phase, will present the final evidence of God to man. After this, one should await only the trumpet of the angel Israfil to be blown to bring about Doomsday.

The predictions in the Hadith about the final phase of human history

THE HADITH TELLS us that a grave *fitna*, *fitna dubaima*, will appear at the end of human history. (Sunan abi Daud, *Kitab Al-Malahim*). This probably refers to a kind of intellectual fog, a state of affairs which materialized after the invention of the printing press, and reached its culmination in the age of the internet. Through the print and electronic media, huge quantities of information have been circulated to all and sundry. Now everyone is living in a

jungle of information. In such a situation, differentiating between truth and falsehood has become so difficult that it is almost impossible without the special support of God.

2) According to a tradition, the Prophet of Islam said that Doomsday would not take place until *haraj* had exceeded its limit. People then asked what *haraj* was. The Prophet replied, "Killing, killing and more killing." (*Sahib Muslim, Kitab Al-Fitan*)

When the Prophet of Islam came to the world during the first quarter of the 7th century, modern weapons had not yet been invented. It was unthinkable at that time that killing and bloodshed could ever become rampant. This has become possible only in the present days, when weapons of mass destruction have been manufactured and it has become possible to kill on a mass scale. As such, we find that in present times innumerable incidents of killing and bloodshed are taking place on a daily basis. This state of affairs is an indication that Doomsday has come very close. It is proof enough of the veracity of this prediction that it was made a long time ago when the present kind of bloodshed and violence was totally unthinkable.

3) According to one tradition, the Prophet of Islam said that the time was soon to come when the river Euphrates would produce a treasure of gold. This prediction in the Hadith clearly refers to petrol, which is called liquid gold in present times. This has been discovered in huge quantities in the Middle East. This was unthinkable during the times of the Prophet of Islam. Today this prediction has undoubtedly been fulfilled. This event is another sign that *qiyamat* is no longer far off. Doomsday, heralded by the above-mentioned signs, will, according to the creation plan of God, bring the first phase of human history to an end. The post-Doomsday phase will then commence.

4) According to another tradition, the Prophet of Islam mentioned ten indicators which would signal the approach of Doomsday. These are also set forth in the Quran. An important one is recorded in verses 10 and 11 of chapter 44: "Watch out for the day when the sky brings out plainly visible clouds of smoke (*dukhan*) that will envelop the people. This will be a

painful punishment.” This particular prediction has been fulfilled in very recent times in Europe.

On April 14th 2010 a volcano erupted all of a sudden from beneath the glaciers in Iceland, an island in the north Atlantic about 200 miles south east of Greenland. So much ash was emitted that it spread throughout the greater part of Europe’s atmosphere. Darkness enveloped the entire region. From European cities about 30,000 flights had been operating on a daily basis. But because of this eruption more than half of these flights had to be grounded. Due to this natural calamity the air companies suffered losses of \$200 million daily. Not only in Europe but in other countries also many activities were seriously affected. This volcanic eruption continued with increasing intensity for about a week and has been erupting intermittently with varying intensity till very recently. A natural calamity with such severe repercussions has occurred for the first time in known human history.

It is entirely possible that the ash thrown up by the volcanic eruption in Iceland is the smoke which was predicted in the Quran and hadith. History shows that probably other signs, as are mentioned in the Hadith, have already appeared. The sign of *dukhan* is probably the last but one sign. The final sign which is going to appear is perhaps the rising of the sun from the West. The Angel Israfeel will then blow the trumpet at some point.

According to the above-mentioned verse of the Quran, the “painful punishment” does not mean the punishment of Doomsday. It means rather the punishment for which the term “lesser punishment” has been used in the Quran (21:32). According to the Quran, the greater punishment is the one which will be meted out after the trumpet has been blown by the Angel Israfeel at the time of Doomsday. But before this, warnings will come in the form of lesser punishments, so that people may heed the warnings and reform themselves. Global warming, scarcity of water, greater frequency of earthquakes, floods, *dukhan* (smoke), etc, are in the nature of lesser punishments. Now, circumstances tell us that the last hour has come for man to take heed, before it is too late for him to reform himself.

5) According to a tradition, the Prophet of Islam said, "There will be a very great occurrence in future, that is, a huge house will be burnt. This will surely happen." Let us look at the wording of this Hadith. This is not about burning a common house; it is rather about the burning of a very big structure, the like of which did not exist in ancient times. This prediction is perhaps about the event which took place on September 11th 2001, in New York, USA, where the famous World Trade Centre, built in 1970-72, once stood. With its 110 stories, it was Himalayan in stature. It was just not possible to demolish it or burn it by ordinary methods. On September 11th 2001, two airplanes were hijacked and then crashed at great speed into the World Trade Centre. As a result, there was a big explosion, and the entire building was reduced to ashes. Many factors were required for such a happening to take place. For the first time in human history these factors had become available to man. In such a situation, the fulfillment of this unique prediction in the 21st century is a certain sign that the hour of Doomsday has come very close.

6) According to another tradition, the Prophet of Islam said, 'Qiyamat will take place only when there is no one left to remember God.' This hadith does not mean that the people will stop taking God's name. Rather what is meant here is the remembrance of God, at the level of realization, as we find from the Quran. (5:83) According to the Quran, "those who believe love God most" (2:165), and "stand in awe of none but God." (9:18), "True believers are those whose hearts tremble with awe at the mention of God." (8:2) But when such people are not to be found on earth as acknowledge God's greatness in the real sense of the word, then we may take it that Doomsday has come very close.

Man's existence and everything that has been given to him are all gifts from God. Hence, not acknowledging God for all His blessings is no simple matter. Such a state of affairs means that people are partaking of God's blessings to the fullest possible extent, but they do not acknowledge their Benefactor. When such a state of affairs prevails on earth, it means that man has totally lost any justification for his being given any

further opportunity to inhabit this world. In present times, this prediction has been fulfilled. Today there is no dearth of people who recite the name of God by way of lip service. But such people have no value in the eyes of God. So far as remembering God in the real spirit is concerned, there will be very few people on the earth who will come up to the desired criterion.

One clear proof of this is that with the advent of the age of the printing press and with the increased frequency of public speaking, Muslims have been engaged in great activities. But we do not find people who are immersed in the remembrance of God. People are rather basking in community pride than living in the Glory of God. We do not find any mention of the Glory of God in the real sense in the speeches and writings and in the activity of present-day institutions. The reason is that people have discovered the greatness of the community, but they have failed to discover the greatness of God. In such a situation, it is but natural that their lives should be devoid of the remembrance of God's Glory.

7) The signs of the approach of Doomsday – One of the signs of the approach of Doomsday as told in a Hadith is that in this age the word of Islam will enter all homes, whether big or small. (*Musnad Ahmad*, Vol. 6, p. 4) Actually this means that the word of Islam will enter every home whether one likes it or not.

How will this event take place? In the age of the computer, it has become totally comprehensible. For the first time in human history it has become possible for practically every home and office to have a computer. All kinds of information are being posted on the Internet on different websites and now at any place in the world, in any office or home, one can access complete information regarding Islam in one's own language. The entry of the word of Islam into every home means potential entry and not actual entry. Undoubtedly as far as potential entry is concerned, the word of Islam has entered every home.

Global warming or divine warning

SCIENTISTS FROM ALL over the world are repeatedly emphasizing that global warming is the greatest danger of present times. Both print and electronic media inform people daily of this perilous situation.

Reports based on the findings of international scientists, such as “Doomsday Not Far” (*Hindustan Times*, December 8, 2007) and an Indian TV programme, ‘Five Years to Doomsday’, telecast on December 20, 2007, warned that climate change is now turning into climate disaster. As a result, the day is fast approaching when human beings, regardless of where they are living, will no longer be able to inhabit the planet earth.

As we all know, there are huge ice caps at both the north and south poles. These are vast reservoirs of cartinas fresh water, but are now melting at an alarming rate. Also there are huge, mountain-top glaciers, the gigantic storehouses of drinking water — which, as a consequence of global warming, are likewise rapidly melting and their stored water is draining off into the oceans through the rivers.

This is going to result in two unbearable situations. On the one hand, very soon the level of water in the seas will rise, inundating/flooding coastal cities such as Calcutta, Bombay, Chennai, etc. On the other hand, the non-coastal areas will suffer from an intolerable water shortage. It is predicted by some scholars that the shortage of water will become so acute that even a third world war might take place over this issue.

The rivers are always full of water, because the ice in the mountains keeps gradually melting the whole year round and this water continuously comes to the rivers through tributaries. But when all this ice get melted, naturally the rivers will run dry. And all their fresh water will be mixed with the salty water of the ocean. The ocean will be full of water but, being too salty, it will be fit neither for irrigation nor for drinking. The situation prevailing will be somewhat like that portrayed by Samuel

Coleridge in his poem 'The Ancient Mariner': "Water, water everywhere nor any drop to drink"

God's prophets have constantly told us that the present world will not be eternal, that it is perpetually on its countdown, and that a time will come when its term will expire and it will come to its end. All the scientific evidence tells us that this countdown is approaching its final number.

The scientists of the 20th century discovered the law of entropy and concluded that the world's energy is continuously on the decrease, and that this process cannot be reversed. Therefore, it is certain that after a fixed period of time the present world will come to its end. Now the scientists of the 21st century have told us, according to their researches, that the time for the end of the present world has come very close. It could even be a mere 10 to 20 years.

All these revelations which are being covered in the media under the heading of 'global warming' are in fact 'divine warning'. This is a declaration by the Creator that, according to His plan, this period of the world has come to its end. According to this plan, the first phase has expired. Now the time is not far away when the present world will be replaced by its second phase. The first phase, meant purely as a test for mankind, was temporary. The second phase will be for the result of that test, and it will be eternal.

In the present world, man has been given freedom of action. This is not because he deserves freedom on account of his general prowess: it was allotted to him temporarily for the purpose of testing him. It was meant to see who makes the proper use of freedom and who misuses it. According to the system of nature, the record of every man and woman is being prepared. This record will be presented before the Creator in the next stage of life. Those whose records show that they made proper use of their freedom "will find a place in Paradise where they will live eternally." (Quran) They will be accorded by their Creator a place where they will lead an eternal life of comfort and happiness. On the contrary, those whose record shows that they misused

their freedom will be consigned by their Creator to Hell where, in the words of Jesus Christ: "There will be wailing and weeping for all eternity." (Matthew 13:42).

Now the time has finally come for all men and women to arise from their slumber. By engaging themselves in introspection they must reform themselves. They must make the attainment of a successful life in the next phase of life their sole concern. Every man and woman must know that the chance they have been given in the present world is the first and last chance. No other chance awaits them. Global warming tells us that the point of no return has already been reached. Let us avail of this opportunity before the time is up. After this, no one will be given any further opportunity to come back to the present world. Nor will there be any opportunity in the next world to atone for one's misconduct or be rewarded for the belated performance of worthy deeds.

Conclusion

THE HISTORY OF religion tells us that from the time that God created man He has been sending prophets for man's guidance. The age of the prophets was the age when the knowledge of reality was transmitted at the level of revelation. This process continued until the age of the modern scientific revolution. Now, the reality, which was being presented to man at the level of revelation, has become a proved fact to the ultimate extent at the level of human knowledge. In this way for the first time in human history the divine book, the Quran, and human knowledge are totally in consonance with each other. This has made it possible to find the truth at the level of full conviction and realization, leaving no margin of doubt. All that is left to happen now is for Doomsday to take place and Almighty God to come directly into man's view. Now, the final time has come for all human beings to awake and arise. Those who do not awake today will be awakened by the trumpet of Doomsday, but that awakening will be of no avail to anyone.