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TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

Maulana Mohammad Manzoor Nomani's present contribution, along with two of his earlier books—*Islam kiya Hai?* and *Deen-o-Shariat*—, provides a complete introduction to the study of the fundamental teachings of Islam. In these books the Maulana has undertaken to present the basic message of Islam in a form and language that was appealing to the minds of the modern-educated classes and could also be helpful in removing the doubts and suspicions which are raised in the sphere of religious belief and practice, in general, and against Islam, in particular, in the current materialistic context of things. Two of these have already appeared in English under the titles of *What Islam Is?* and *Islamic Faith and Practice*, and the translation of the present one will, it is hoped, mark the fulfilment of a great need. It will make it possible to suggest confidently a set of studies on Islam to anyone who may be wanting to read about it in English for, as far as I am aware, no better and more precise and straightforward exposition of what Islam stands for and demands from its followers is to be found in that language. It is, honestly, a matter of pride and deep gratitude to the Almighty for me that the choice of Maulana Nomani for translating the whole series into English fell upon me.

Maulana Mohammad Manzoor Nomani is too well-known as a writer on Islamic subjects to need an introduction from me. All of his works have been eminently successful and seen a number of reprints. In fact,

A WORD ABOUT THE REVEALER OF THE QURAN¹

It is generally agreed that in the sixth century of the Christian era the whole world was immersed in moral gloom and spiritual torpor. The torch of heavenly guidance had been extinguished. Europe was steeped in the darkness of the Middle Ages. Iran and its dependencies were caught in the tempest of the Mazdakite Movement which had played havoc with the nobler values of life and reduced man into a beast. In India, the Puranic Age was in its prime. By all accounts, it marked the most woeful phase in the long and chequered history of the land. The condition of the other parts of the known world was no less deplorable.

Situated, so to speak, in the heart of the world was the Peninsula of Arabia. Owing to the centrality of its geographical position it was known, in the olden days as the "navel of the world". The whole country was devoid of the light of spiritual guidance, learning and civilization. The sixth century A. D found the Arabs plunged in depravity, perversion and dark idolatry. Instead of one God, innumerable deities and images of stone were worshipped and human sacrifice was prevalent. The House of Ka'aba, built by Prophets Ibrahim (Abraham) and Ismail (Ishmael) with their own hands for the worship of the Almighty, had been turned into a huge idol temple. The law of the jungle prevailed everywhere. There was not even the semblance of a Government. Murder, infanticide and robbery were

¹ These lines were written specially for the English Edition.

the pride of the Arabs. Daughters were buried alive at birth. Social debasement and lewdness had become the rule so that people performed naked the ritual of circumambulation around the Ka'aba. In many tribes the eldest son took the widows of his father as his wives. There was no material well-being either. Many people were driven by poverty to live on carrion and insects.

It was in these circumstances, and in the midst of these people, that a child was born, exactly fourteen hundred years ago¹, at Mecca, in the respectable Banu Hashim family of the Quraish tribe. The child was born an orphan as his father had died while he was still in the mother's womb. The widowed mother brought him up. When he was six years old, the mother, too, died, and, thereafter, his grandfather, Abdul Muttalib took care of him. But Abdul Muttalib's guardianship was to last only for two years. When the child was in the eighth year of his life his grandfather also passed away, and his uncle, Abu Talib, took him under his affectionate protection. The child was named Mohammad which means 'The praised one', i. e., one who is worthy of praise due to his natural disposition, character and attainments.

Education in those days was not common among the Arabs. Very few people knew the art of reading and writing. So Mohammad (Peace and Blessings of God be upon him) also remained unlettered. But he had other special virtues which distinguished him from the other young men of his time. He did not have any of the vices that were prevalent in his city. God had saved him from all bad practices.

1. According to the well-known biographer of the holy Prophet, Qazi Sulaiman Mansurpuri, he was born on April 22, 571 A. D. Incidentally, today, when these lines are being written the date is 22nd April, 1971. Thus, on this day exactly fourteen hundred years have elapsed since the birth of the Sacred Prophet.

As the Prophet grew up he thought of earning his own livelihood so that the burden of his maintenance might not fall on his uncle who already had a large family to support and was not rich. He chose trade, which was the family profession, but due to the paucity of funds he could not set up his own business. He began to work in partnership with others. He provided the labour while they provided the money. Soon his reputation for honesty, sincerity and trustworthiness spread and the people of Mecca gave him the title of *Al-Amin*, meaning 'The trusted one'. Whoever came into contact with him was impressed by his good manners and perfect attributes.

In Mecca and belonging to the tribe of the Quraish there lived a lady, a rich widow, called Khudaija. She had her own business and also did trade in partnership with other people by advancing them money. She was very intelligent and possessed a noble character. The Prophet also had done some business for her and she was well pleased with his honesty, justice and high morals. Though the lady was about forty years old and the Prophet was only twenty-five and she also had children from her earlier marriages she wanted to marry him. The marriage between the Prophet and Hazrat Khudaija, thus, took place.

After the marriage the Prophet was released of the need to make a living. He began to devote more and more time to the service of the people, specially the weak and the down-trodden, and to the establishment of peace and order in the land. Life went on like that and people had generally come to love and admire him for his impeccable morals, righteousness and solicitude for the poor till in the fortieth year of his life an extraordinary change came over the Prophet. He was seized

EXISTENCE OF GOD

The entire structure of religious belief and practice is based upon the affirmation of the truth that there is someone who is the Creator of us all and of the whole of the universe, and it is He who is controlling and dispensing the world according to His Authority and Will. Should this starting point of the World of Faith be, itself, rejected by anyone all the things appertaining to religion must appear to him to be nothing but irrationality and superstition.

The question of God's existence is, thus, the fundamental question of religion and any religious appeal or preaching can be addressed only to those who have first accepted this basic reality. But, since it is a fact that the awareness of the existence of God is as natural and instinctive to man as the awareness of his own existence and no special effort or argument is needed to persuade him to believe that there is a God—and it is exactly for this reason that the bulk of the human population has always believed in Him, so much so, that even during the present phase of our history, which is known as the phase of materialism and irreligiousness, an overwhelming majority of men takes for granted the existence of God—the Quran does not pay much attention to this issue, nor it enters into a detailed discussion over it. Nevertheless, by means of an occasional hint or suggestion it has built up a line of reasoning which is quite

sufficient to convince anyone and to produce in his heart faith in the existence of God provided, of course, that he has not taken leave of his senses or shut his mind to everything that may not conform to a fixed idea or a pre-conceived notion.

It should, further, be remembered that the Quran does not enter into polemical disputations in the manner of a logician to bring home the fundamental realities of faith, like the existence of God, which may silence the critic but do not bring satisfaction to his heart. On the other hand, it appeals to the good sense of man, to the basic soundness of his understanding and invites him to ponder over the whole scheme of creation. It tells him to look around, to see the world that is spread on all sides of him, and of which he, too, is a part, and the reality will dawn upon him automatically and he will himself discover the truth that is sought to be conveyed to him. This simple exercise in reflection and study will bring the light of faith to his inner self. Against the background of this brief introduction read the following verses of the Quran :

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفُلْكِ الَّتِي تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ مَاءٍ فَأَخْيَرَ بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ وَتَضْرِيحِ الرِّيحِ وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِينَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ لآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ

Lo! in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the difference of night and day, and the ships which run upon the sea with that which is of use to men, and the water which Allah sendeth down from the sky, thereby reviving the earth after its death, and dispersing all kinds of living beings therein, and in the ordinance of the winds, and the clouds obedient between heaven and earth ; (in all these things that are apparent to everyone) there are signs (of Allah's sovereignty) for people who have sense.

(— II : 164)

After drawing attention to the grand design of the heavens and the earth and to the orderly rotation of day and night, and the sailing of the ships on the high seas, and the rain and its portents and effects, and the regulation of the winds, and the disciplined behaviour of the clouds between the earth and the sky the Quran calls on men to reflect upon them and assures them that if they exercised the normal understanding that had been granted to them they would find all these things proclaiming, silently but distinctly, that whatever they were and in whichever state they were found, they had not come into existence by themselves but were the creation of an All-wise, All-knowing and All-powerful Being. Again, in *Sura-i-Al-A'ram*, it occurs :

إِنَّ اللَّهَ فَالِقُ الْحَبِّ وَالنَّوَى يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَمُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتِ مِنَ الْحَيِّ ذَلِكُمْ اللَّهُ فَانَّى تُؤْفَكُونَ

It is God who causeth the seed-grain and the date-stone to split and sprout. He causeth the living to issue from the dead, and He is the one to cause the dead to issue from the living : That is God, then how are ye deluded away from the truth.

(— VI : 12)

The Quran says that people constantly see that the seed-grain or date-stone is first buried under the earth—neither the seed-grain and the date-stone are possessed of any will or intelligence, nor is the earth—all these things are absolutely dead and inert ; yet, after a few days, the hidden hand of some Unseen Power splits the seed in the bosom of the earth and, then, an excessively soft and delicate shoot grows out of it, and piercing through the hard layers of the earth comes out on the surface to develop into a full grown plant or tree, as the case may be. Now, let them ponder over it and ask themselves who makes the seed split and sprout under the earth, and by whose will does the tiny shoot, which