

Prophethood

2.1 Prophets- The Need for Prophets

Summary of First Series on Monotheism

We will start by establishing the relationship between prophet-hood and the concept of monotheism. In the last series of eight programs our focus was on Islamic creed. We stated that the Muslim creed is that there is no deity but Allah (God) and Muhammad is his messenger. Our focus was on half of the creed; concept of monotheism, the oneness of God, errors in our perception of Him, and the affirmative side (divine attributes) and how they affect our lives.

Muhammad (PBUH) as God's messenger is the second half of the Muslim creed and the focus of this upcoming series. After believing in God it follows that we have to believe in the prophets that communicated Allah's message. We noticed here that the second half of the creed summarizes the whole concept of prophet-hood, even though it only mentions the name of Muhammad (PBUH). The reason for this is simple: Muhammad recognized all prophets that came before him and the Quran asserts this by also recognizing all prophets from Adam to Muhammad. By believing in Muhammad as the last of the prophets it follows that a Muslim must believe in all prophets throughout history.

The second way that this series is relevant to the previous series is in its emphasis on the exclusive lordship of God and the fact that He has infinite knowledge and wisdom. There must be some purpose behind creation and human presence on this planet. As humans, we need to know what our role on earth is and what guidance is needed in order to conduct our lives in accordance to His will. The only source of authentic information would be the revelation of God's message and that can only take place through His prophets.

2.1 Need for Prophets

Host: Granted that we need guidance and a path to follow why do we need prophet-hood to give us this? Why do we not rely on our own minds or our own science and the scientific method?

Jamal Badawi:

There are at least four basic reasons why science can't take the place of prophets. We do not belittle science because each of these subjects have their own sphere. To start with science describes specific facts or phenomena which we call scientific law. These laws are used to predict things that may occur in the future. The kind of information that science give us depends on individual perception. An individual's perception is effected by background, predisposition, and biases. We know that most things that one person believes, as fact, is really only a fact for that individual. Like the saying goes "beauty is in the eye of the beholder." Individual perception is useful but it is incomplete.

The second problem with complete dependence on science, even if our perceptions are accurate, is that science only explains partial aspects of life and can't explain the totality of life. This is an area that we as human beings are very eager to understand. We need a good and all encompassing explanation of the totality of life.

The third difference between science and revelation is that science focuses on the physical phenomenon, matter is real but it is not ultimate reality. Science is incapable of prescribing rules for human life. Science doesn't give answers to the ultimate aim of human life. It doesn't answer questions such as: where did we come from? What is our purpose? What is our destiny? And what is the destiny of the universe?

The fourth difference between science and revelation is that science in itself can't achieve human happiness nor can it inculcate in us a sense of purpose. Science may help us build a material civilization, however, this is not responsive to our true nature. It fails to

address the problems of the mind and the soul. This leads to alienation, anxiety, absence of real happiness, peace and tranquility. It ultimately collapses the entire civilization as we have seen over and over again throughout history. Humans are not only a physical existence or a reflex system. They possess freedom and moral consciousness.

To conclude, science while quite useful should not be deified or worshipped. It is incapable of giving us moral discipline, peace of mind, sense of purpose and balance and final answers to high realities about God or prophet-hood.

Host: Can you elaborate on the concept of revelation and receiving guidance through mystical experience of meditation or contemplation etc? Where does mystical experience fit into Islam?

Jamal Badawi:

As we distinguish between science and revelation we have to also distinguish between a mystical experience and a revelation. There are six basic differences.

First of all, a mystical experience defies expression and can't be transferred from one person to another. It is a sort of personal insight into reality. A genuine prophet receives revelation from God that is not individualized but has to be fully and completely communicated to the people or humanity, as is the case with Prophet Muhammad. In the Qur'an, a verse addresses Prophet Mohammad saying, "O Messenger proclaim the (message) which hath been sent to thee from thy Lord. If thou didst not, thou wouldst not have fulfilled and proclaimed His mission. And Allah will defend thee from men (who mean mischief). For Allah guideth not those who reject Faith." (5:67) This verse shows that it is part of the Prophet's duty to communicate the revelation.

The second difference is that the mystical experience is highly individualized; it is restricted to one person at a time. The

experience depends on the feelings, temperament, subjectivity and bias of the person. Each person can claim that their experience is the ultimate belief or experience. This claim is made by people who hold many contradictory sets of beliefs. So how dependable are these individualized mystical experiences? This is different from revelation in which its very nature comes from God through a genuine prophet. Revelation does not come from a private personal feeling. The Quran emphasizes the generality of the message in the Qur'an "We sent not an apostle, but to be obeyed, in accordance with the will of Allah." (4:64) So the prophet is not speaking of his own accord, he is actually communicating what God commanded him to communicate to the people.

A third distinction is that there is high possibility of extremism and error when depending on individual mystical experiences. This perhaps would explain the existence of so many cults with all kinds of strange beliefs. Where do we draw the line between truth and falsehood? When we talk about divine revelation we are talking about something that is reliable that is free of error. There is no error in God's revelation. Like we discussed in previous sessions, the attribute of divinity precludes the assumption that God would make an error and there cannot be any error on the part of the prophet in accurately transmitting the message.

On the other hand, the only problem that occurs with revelation is not the accuracy of the message but the problem of preservation. Any error that may arise is that of people adding their own philosophical or theological speculation and theory, which in turn changes the original revelation. There is also the problem of not having, in preservation, the original revelation that was given to the prophets. As far as I know, in the history of the major monotheistic religions the only scripture that remains intact is the Quran, which was copied down in writing while Prophet Muhammad was alive. So the errors are not from the revelation given to Muhammad, Moses or Jesus (peace upon them all) but in terms of the message being kept intact in their entirety.

The fourth distinction is that mystical experience is attained by personal effort, discipline and spiritual training. Prophet-hood is not a status that anyone can attain. It can't be attained by personal effort. It is more a gift from God to a select type of persons that are qualified to carry the message to others. It is very important to

realize that a prophetic consciousness is not derived from the prophet himself, it is not dependent upon his own inherited tendencies that may cloud his experience as he receives revelation from God.

The fourth distinction is that the mystical experience is passive and contemplative. A person going through this trance does not want to come back and considers it to be an ultimate goal. In divine revelation the prophet is never passive. Indeed the prophet is anxious to get back to life after receiving the revelation in order to communicate it, teach it and fight against the evil in the world.

A sixth difference is that unlike some mystics, God is not only to be perceived admired and loved but He is to be recognized as Lord, Commander, Guider to whom submission and unwavering commitment are due. Any mystical figure in history would very easily be dwarfed when compared to the towering figures of prophets such as Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad may peace and blessings be upon them all.

Host: We have the clarified differences between science and revelation and between the mystical experience and revelation. What is the definition of the word 'revelation' in an Islamic context?

Jamal Badawi:

In all humbleness and frankness, revelation, which is the communication of the word of God to a prophet, is difficult to explain and comprehend because it defies our conventional way of perception and understanding. Basically, revelation is a form of communication between Allah and His chosen prophet. This can be better explained by roughly comparing our communication process as humans with the communication of the word of God to prophets.

There are four basic elements to the communication process. They are the sender, the receiver, the message and the channel through which the message is communicated. In the matter of faith, the sender is God as the ultimate source of guidance, knowledge and wisdom. The receiver, in this case, is a righteous model human

being, which we will discuss later on. In Islam, a prophet must be righteous, honest and a role model in order to qualify in carrying the message to humanity. The third component is the message itself, which covers a wide variety of subjects but, above all, the knowledge of the unseen. The unseen is the area of knowledge which is not within the realm of science or human perception. It answers questions of how the universe came about, where we go after this life, as well as giving us basic truths about divinity and prophet-hood. It also provides various laws that regulate our life whether it is social, economic or political.

Finally, the channel through which the message is communicated is the area that is most relevant to the question of revelation. The Qur'an says that there are three basic channels of communicating God's message. All of them are summarized in one passage in the Qur'an, "It is not fitting for a man that Allah should speak to him except by inspiration, or from behind a veil (mystical veil), or by the sending of a messenger to reveal, with Allah's permission, what Allah wills: for He is Most High, Most Wise." (42:51) First of all there is no possibility so long as we are still human and on earth that we are in a state where we can communicate with God directly. It is beyond our perception, ability and nature as human beings or even prophets.

This leads to the three ways of communicating His message. The first way is God instilling the inspiration of truth into the heart of the chosen prophet, which in turn causes the actions and words of the prophet to innately follow those that are pleasing to God. The veil is a barrier used by God to address prophets as mentioned in the Quran when God spoke to Prophet Moses on Mount Sinai and again to Prophet Muhammad during his journey and ascension (Miraj). The third form of communication mentioned in the passage is that God may send a messenger to His chosen prophet. This messenger is not a human but one among the angels. In Islam, and I presume in Judaism and Christianity as well, Gabriel is known as the angel of revelation. In fact the Quran says, "Allah chooses messengers from angels and from men for Allah is He Who hears and sees (all things)." (22:75) The Quran also indicates that the notion of a prophet receiving a message or a holy book is not new. In fact, one verse in the Qur'an addresses Prophet Muhammad directly, "We have sent thee inspiration, as We sent it to Noah and the Messengers after him: we sent inspiration to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes, to Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon, and to David We gave the Psalms." (4:163)

To conclude, not all three methods in communicating a revelation were used for each and every prophet. All of them were used with Muhammad. Prophet Muhammad spoke to God through a veil. He received God's words as a revelation through the angel Gabriel (the Quran is the word of God verbatim, Muhammad did not use his own words). He also received revelation in the third form by God inspiring him in knowledge and wisdom, which he then expressed in his own words (separate from the Quran known as the Prophet's traditions). As the last messenger, God chose to use all three methods of communication to give the revelation through Prophet Muhammad.

2.10 Prophethood- The Spread of Islam

Summary of 2.9 "Muslim & Non-Muslim Relations"

Five basic issues were discussed in the previous program. The first was that, as a general rule, the Qur'an establishes that the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims is that of justice, kindness and peaceful co-existence. Second, we said that in addition to this general rule, which applies to all non-Muslims, we find that the Qur'an addresses Jews and Christians as the *People of the Book*. This special status is given to them because of the commonalities that the three faiths have concerning the basic notions of the belief in God, prophet-hood, revelation, basic moral codes of life and the here-after.

Thirdly, within this basic rule that applies to all non-Muslims there are definitely exceptions and the Qur'an specifies them including those in chapter 5 and 60. People who commit hostility and violence towards Muslims can't expect to also have friendship and intimacy with them. On the fourth point, we said that even in these cases the door is not closed to friendship, we quoted in the Qur'an where it mentions that one should inculcate in himself the attitude of forgiveness and tolerance so long as the attitude of violence and hostility of non-Muslims ceases (41:33-35).

Finally, as additional evidence of this attitude of tolerance as documented in the Qur'an we referred to (5:5) in which it shows that the food of the People of the Book; that is the meat slaughtered by Jews and Christian is food that Muslims may partake in. We also said that the ultimate evidence of this tolerance is the fact that in Islamic law a Muslim man is permitted to marry a Jew or Christian but not marry those who are atheists or polytheists. This is a special privilege and the relationship of marriage is the biggest evidence of extension of friendship and peaceful co-existence.

2.10 The Spread of Islam

Host: The claim is often made that “Islam was spread by the sword.” Is there anything in the Qur’an that deals with this issue of compulsion in religion?

Jamal Badawi:

Of course this is a vital topic and the Qur’an, being a complete revelation, doesn’t leave out any aspect of human life. To start with I would like to say that there is not a single verse in the entire Qur’an or in the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) that either encourages or condones compulsion in religion by use of force, pressure or manipulation.

Perhaps the most obvious and self explanatory documentation is found in this following verse, “Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error.” (2:256) This clearly forbids a true Muslim from committing the act of compulsion. The Qur’an also indicates that guidance is not something that we decide on and can give, but instead it is totally in the hands of God. For example the Qur’an says, “If it had been thy Lord’s will, they would all have believed,- all who are on earth! wilt thou then compel mankind, against their will, to believe! No soul can believe, except by the will of Allah, and He will place doubt (or obscurity) on those who will not understand.” (10:99-100) Also we find that the idea or concept on bringing people to account on whether they believed or not is a matter that is not up to us. So only God is the judge and He is the One who can hold people accountable if they believed or not.

The Qur’an is very clear that the mission of Prophet Muhammad and those who follow him and that is simply to convey the message. For example, the Qur’an states, “Thy duty is to make (the Message) reach them: it is our part to call them to account.” (13:40) There are numerous other evidences one can find in the Qur’an, another example, is the verse that says that you (the Muslim) are only a reminder, you are not a guardian over them (paraphrased).

“Those who believe (in the Qur’an), those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Sabians, Christians, Magians, and Polytheists,- Allah will judge between them on the Day of Judgment: for Allah is witness of all things.” (22:17) There are similar statements also that the matter of faith is something that no power on earth can force as it lies in the hands of God when the heart is enlightened and the mind opens to receive the truth. No human effort can bring this about. More specifically compulsion is very clearly condemned in the Qur’an.

Host: If Muslims are forbidden from using force to spread Islam’s message what methods are permissible for the spreading of Islam according to the Qur’an?

Jamal Badawi:

I can give the answer directly from the Qur’an using two relevant verses. The first one applies to all people whether Jews, Christians or others. “Invite (all) to the Way

of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance.” (16:125) As far as Jews and Christians in particular, the People of the Book, we find that the Qur’an makes a special reference to the approach in discussing religious matters with them and sets the criteria to one’s behavior. The Qur’an says, “And dispute ye not with the People of the Book, except with means better (than mere disputation), unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong (and injury): but say, “We believe in the revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you; Our Allah and your Allah is one; and it is to Him we bow (in Islam).”” (29:46) I don’t think I need to add anything more this – these verses are obvious and self explanatory.

Host: Jihad is a word that is used quite often. How do the teachings we have just discussed relate to the concept of Jihad?

Jamal Badawi:

The biggest problem when we discuss the concept of Jihad is that in English the common translation given to it is *Holy War*. To start with, nowhere in the entire Qur’an nor in the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is the equivalent of the term *Holy War* found. I know this may sound startling, but it is true because *Holy War* in English, aside from the connoted meaning that goes with fanaticism and forcing people into a specific faith, when translated into Arabic is *harb muqadasah* and this term never appears in the Qur’an or sayings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). I think it is a very misleading and distorted translation to translate Jihad into Holy War.

The word Jihad in Arabic comes from the word *jahida* or *juhd*, which means to exert, create an exertion of effort, to strive for or to struggle. In that sense the true meaning of the word Jihad, as found in the Qur’an, simply means *to exert effort and to strive or struggle in the path of God*.

In that sense it is ironic like some people say that there is some kind of Pillar of Islam that is Jihad. It is not the fifth or sixth pillar. Jihad is not a pillar of Islam but is the essence of Islam. We said Islam means submission to the will of God. How does one submit? One submits through Jihad; by struggling, striving and exerting effort in order to please God or to follow His commands. So in that sense Jihad is the essence of Islam.

Just to give one documentation where the very term Jihad is used in the Qur’an in reference to striving is “And those who strive in Our (cause),- We will certainly guide them to our Paths: For verily Allah is with those who do right.” (29:69) There are also another passage that says, “O ye who believe! bow down, prostrate yourselves, and adore your Lord; and do good; that ye may prosper. And strive in His cause as ye ought to strive, (with sincerity and under discipline). He has chosen you, and has imposed no difficulties on you in religion; it is the cult of your father Abraham. It is He Who has named you Muslims, both before and in this (Revelation); that the Messenger may be a witness for you, and ye be witnesses for mankind! So establish

regular Prayer, give regular Charity, and hold fast to Allah. He is your Protector - the Best to protect and the Best to help!"(22:77-78) This obviously shows that Jihad is connected with worship and prayers; it shows that any action or struggle that an individual performs for the sake of God is actually within the boundaries of the definition of Jihad.

This doesn't exclude, to be honest, the fact that one aspect of that Jihad might take the form of military encounter for self defense or to fight oppressors. It is erroneous to say it is connoted directly with fighting. Fighting could be one aspect of Jihad but not the totality of it.

Host: Would you mind elaborating a little further on the various levels and types of Jihad?

Jamal Badawi:

There are three levels at which we can discuss Jihad, the struggle in the path of God, as the essence of Islam. The first is Jihad within ones self or at an individual level. The second is Jihad or struggle on a social level. The third is Jihad on the global or universal level.

As far as Jihad on the individual level, the Prophet of Islam himself explained this. When returning from a battle, he told his companions that they were now returning from the minor jihad (struggle) to the major jihad. His men raised their eyebrows because they had just been putting their lives on the line to defend Islam and their land. They asked what the major jihad was and the Prophet responded with *Jihadul Nafs* or the struggle against evil inclinations from within. This means that the very core of Jihad or struggle is against the evil within ourselves and is the cornerstone for any other form of Jihad.

The second level is Jihad within society. That is the struggle against evil, indecency, oppression and injustice. This is known in Islamic terminology, as it appears in the Qur'an, as *amru bil ma'aruf* and *nahe a'an munkar* that is ordaining the good and decent and forbidding or discouraging all that is evil and indecent. This is considered another jihad because one struggles within the society to try and ordain what is good and discourage what is wrong. Jihad is not 'by the sword' but by the tongue, writing and conviction.

The third level would be the global jihad could mean fighting against oppression and is not limited to one community or area since Islam doesn't acknowledge all the boarders that separate states and countries. Oppression is oppression wherever it is found and Muslims have the obligation to try and fight it and stop it. This is one aspect of the universality of Islam and it may take the form of actual battles only when other peaceful means fail to bring a halt to the violation of basic human rights and freedom of choice.

Host: Historically speaking have these teachings been adhered to by Muslims?

Jamal Badawi:

When you ask a question like that, we have to be perfectly honest and avoid two very common extremes not only when dealing with Islam but whenever the history of any people is discussed. It would be unfair and inaccurate to say that the history of Muslims which extends over 1400 years in all parts of the world including hundreds of millions of people living under all kinds of circumstances have all been nothing but a series of violations of the teachings of the Qur'an and their behavior has nothing to do with it. I think this is just carrying things a little bit too far.

There is another very similar type of extreme if anybody comes and says that the followers of a faith for 1400 years in all kinds of places have nothing but a history of angels and no deviation has taken place is not correct and is dishonest. This applies to any followers of any faith. An example, of this is that no sincere Christian would expect that if one wants to explain Christianity one has to explain the barbarous Crusades, Spanish Inquisition or the fighting going on in Northern Ireland between Protestants and Catholics. Because any sincere Christian will say 'you better go back to the teachings of Christianity and find whether people's behavior measures up to those standards or not.' The same thing applies to Islam and as I said to any other people.

However, suffice to say at this juncture that the details would require a separate series on history. The notion or claim, which is a stereotype, that Islam was spread by the sword is nothing more than a myth. This was deliberately circulated during medieval times and it's stuck till this day. However, it is a claim that no serious and honest modern scholar or historian is accepting or spreading anymore.

Host: When you refer to modern scholars and historians are you referring to Muslims?

Jamal Badawi:

No, not necessarily, in fact this includes many non-Muslim scholars. For example *De Lacy O'Leary* says in his book *Islam at the Crossroad*, "history makes it clear however, that the legend of fanatical Muslims, sweeping through the world and forcing Islam at the point of sword upon the conquered races is one of the most fantastically absurd myth that historians have ever repeated."

Take another famous author, *James Michener* wrote an article in 1957 in *Readers Digest* in which he says "no other religion in history spread so rapidly as Islam... The West has widely believed that this surge of religion was made possible by the sword. But no modern scholar accepts that idea, and the Qur'an is explicit in support of the freedom of conscience."

A very famous scholar on religion, A.S. Tritton, says in his book *Islam*, “the picture of Muslim soldiers advancing with a sword in one hand and the Qur’an in the other is quite false.”

A very well known British historian H.G. Wells says in his book *History of the World* that “Islam flourished because it was the best social and political order the time could offer.”

Another Orientalist, Gibbon, says that the claim that Islam spread by the sword “is a pernicious tenant that has been imputed on Muhammadens the duty of extirpating all other religions by the sword. This charge of ignorance and bigotry is refuted by the Qur’an, by the history of Musilman, Musilman conquerors and by their public and legal toleration of the Christian worship. As early as the sixth year of Hijrah (the migration of the Prophet) the Prophet granted the monks of the Monastery of St. Katharine near Mount Sinai and to all Christians a charter which secured to the Christians all their privileges and immunities and the Muslims were enjoined to protect the Christians, to guard them from all injuries and to defend their Churches and residencies of their priests. They were not to be unfairly taxed, no Bishop was to be driven out of his Bishopric, no Christian was to be forced to reject his religion, no monk was to be expelled from his monastery, no pilgrim was to be detained from his pilgrimage, nor were the Christian churches to be pulled down for the sake of building mosques or houses for Muslims. Christian women married to Muslims were to enjoy their own religion and not to be subjected to compulsion or annoyance of any kind on that account. If the Christian should stand in need of assistance for repair of their churches and monasteries or any other matter pertaining to their religion the Muslims were to assist them.”

Again, like I said, these are non-Muslim historians and scholars that oppose the idea of Islam being spread by the sword. There are many others such as Bernard Shaw the British historian, Arnold Toynbee and many others that say similar things in regards to Islam. Any respectable and serious author can no longer hold to this mythical or legendary claim that Islam was spread by the sword.

Host: Are there any other additional sources that you can share with us to confirm the fact that Islam was not spread by the sword?

Jamal Badawi:

The biggest mix up is that some people thought that the early wars of the Muslims during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the ones immediately after were to compel people to accept Islam. Like I said, the Qur’an doesn’t condone and does not accept that. The wars and battles that were fought were either in self-defense or to remove human tyranny.

An example is the state in which the subjects of the Persian and Byzantine empires were treated. There is historical evidence that indicates that the natives welcomed the aid and the ruling of the Muslims in ending tyranny, persecution and oppression. Some even joined in the Muslim lines to fight against their own religious leaders who

were persecuting them whether they were Byzantine or Persian emperors. This is another area, like I said, that causes some people to think that because the Muslims fought, it must have been to force religion not to remove human tyranny. There are lots of logical and factual information that make it clear that this conclusion is not something that one gets out of thin air.

First of all, the whole notion of compulsion in religion is not only contradictory to the very text of the Qur'an, as we have amply documented, but it is contrary to the very logic of Islam. The very logic of Islam is to surrender or commit, to voluntarily choose to submit to the will of God and follow His commands and His way of life. No power on earth can impose something into one's heart. In Islamic law it is not acceptable for me to force you to believe or die; and by taking away from you the ability to choose you begin to believe. Even a Christian wife of a Muslim should not be bothered and should be allowed to practice her own faith let alone strangers and others.

The second point, to keep in mind, is that a cursory look at the map of the Muslim world today, with a population of nearly one billion all over the world, shows very conclusively that the great majority of Muslims today live in places where conquest or the "sword" has no role whatsoever and are not in the immediate areas where the early wars took place.

An example is the largest Muslim country Indonesia with about 120 million Muslims. One fourth of the population in Russia, about 50 million, are Muslim and are suffering under all kinds of religious persecution, which also applies to other people of other faiths too.

How did Islam spread to Russia and China? Places like central and South Africa contain countries with a majority of Muslims or countries that have substantial minorities and in most of these places the "sword" had no role. In other far away places like the Philippines and Thailand, there is a substantial number of Muslims and Islam spread there by merchants or people who devoted themselves for that particular mission. South America, United States, Canada and Europe, to my knowledge, have people who are converting to Islam everyday. This includes people from among the most educated and religious minded. In all these, where is the sword?

If it is true that Islam was spread by the sword, or military might, how is it that Islam continued to spread much faster at the time of Muslim defeat? One Orientalist said that it is very strange that even at the time of hardship and war on the Muslims, like when the Seljuk Turks and Mongolians conquered Muslim countries, they themselves as conquerors embraced Islam, which is contrary to any logic. Most would say a conqueror imposes his religion but those who invaded the Muslims they themselves became Muslim. There are records in history of some of the highly placed people among the Crusaders who fought against Muslims, under the reason of liberating the Holy land actually ended up embracing Islam. This all shows how little battle had to play with the spread of Islam.

2.2 Prophets- Revelation & Characteristics

Summary of the previous lecture "Need for Prophets"

We started off by answering one question: Why can't we obtain the information that revelation gives through science? Science can give us some information but it is based on individual perception, which can vary. Science explains partial aspects of life but not the totality of life. It can't prescribe rules for our conduct, nor can it answer basic questions like the purpose of creation. Finally, we said that science is incapable of singly achieving human happiness because it is not based on comprehensive knowledge of the totality of human nature and its various assets. True knowledge of human nature is only known by Allah the Creator and revelation recognizes the basic elements of the nature of human existence.

We moved on by comparing mystical experiences and revelation. We agreed that both differ. We can't obtain the same knowledge through divine revelation as we do through mystical experiences. The reason being is that a mystical experience is an individual experience and can't be transmitted to others whereas revelation is a message to a prophet that is conveyed to the rest of humanity. Also, a mystical experience can have errors and they can be extreme whereas revelation must be accurate because it proceeds from God and it can't have errors unless people change the documentation of that revelation after the prophet is gone.

A mystical experience normally comes with some kind of personal effort whereas revelation is a divine gift where the prophet does not choose himself, but is rather chosen by God. Additionally, a mystical experience is passive and is satisfying within itself whereas for a prophet the state of revelation is only a stage in the process of conveying that message to his people and fighting the forces of evil. Finally, God is not to be recognized and then just adored but should have our full submission, unwavering commitment and obedience.

Finally, since science and mystical experiences do not contribute to what a revelation is then we needed to address what a revelation actually encompasses. Basically a revelation is a kind of communication between God and the rest of humanity. Revelation sends a particular type of guidance that reforms the life of people and helps achieve their happiness in this life and the hereafter. This message is conveyed through select human beings who are messengers of God. A crucial passage in the Qur'an (42:51) describes three basic channels of revelation. One is through inspiration: God inspiring the prophet with certain knowledge and truth that he explains to his people. Second, speaking to the prophet in a manner that is different from human speech (we don't know in what form this came) like when God spoke to Moses and Muhammad. Finally the third type is the highest and most important in regards to scripture, is the revelation sent by God through the angel Gabriel to the prophet, who would then communicate the same message as it is to the rest of the people.

2.2 Revelation and Characteristics

Host: Can you elaborate on using the archangel Gabriel as a medium of communication between God and the prophets?

Jamal Badawi:

The angel Gabriel is reported to have appeared in two forms when coming with the message to Prophet Muhammad.

The first, is that Gabriel appeared in the human form as a man teaching and dictating certain passages to the prophet. This is most notably reported in the Qur'an in passage 96 verses 1-5. The verses give narration of what happened the first time that Prophet Muhammad received the revelation. He was meditating in the cave of Hira'a outside of Mecca, when a man came to him (Prophet Muhammad finds out later that it was Gabriel) held him and told him to "Read." The prophet replied, saying that he could not read. As we know, he was illiterate and did not receive an education.

Then the angel, in the form of a man, held him again and told him to read. And the prophet replied that he could not read. Then Gabriel recited the very first revelation of the Qur'an that we still have today in its original wording. In the translation it says "Proclaim! (read!) in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created. Created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood that hangs. Proclaim! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful. He Who taught (the use of) the pen. Taught man that which he knew not." (95:1-5)

This translation uses the phrase "that hangs" which is quite amazing about the original expression used in the Qur'an. The verse that God created man from something that hangs had been a mystery for centuries when trying to translate it and many English translators of the Qur'an made the error of translating it in a variety of ways like "congealed clot of blood" but in fact if we stick to the literal Arabic translation it is something "that hangs." This can be explained very easily through modern science and medicine where the fertilized egg literally hangs on the wall of the uterus. It is amazing that this was revealed 1400 years ago, which helps prove that the revelation was not consisting of Prophet Muhammad's own thoughts and opinions but revelation from God, since humans did not scientifically know this fact until much later on.

There was also another incidence reported in prophetic tradition, this time in the presence of the companions of the prophet, where angel Gabriel, in the form of a human being, came to the prophet and started asking the prophet questions in their presence. The questions Gabriel asked included what the definition of Islam is, what is involved in faith, what is excellence and what is the Day of Judgment. After he left the prophet told the companions that it was Gabriel who came to teach them through the form of a dialogue.

However, the more common form in which Gabriel brought revelation from God to Prophet Muhammad was by coming, without being seen, and dictating verbally to the Prophet the distinct verses and passages of the Qur'an. Then the prophet would recite the passages to the people around him who would then memorize the passages and commit them to writing. It is important to emphasize that this was not a guarded secret. Many of the companions of the prophet, in authentic narrations, reported being a part of or an audience to this process. This is the main reason why the Qur'an, the last scripture, has been preserved in its entirety.

Host: How did the companions know that angel Gabriel exists? How did they testify to his presence or to seeing him?

Jamal Badawi:

First of all there was no physical sight of Gabriel but the physical appearance of the prophet gave the indication that Gabriel was there. Whenever the prophet started uttering the Qur'an during a revelation they noted that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) went through a very spiritual state. They describe that the prophet would be in a state of deep concentration, to the extent that even when the weather was cold it would cause him to perspire. At times he would shiver while under this state of revelation. This was one indication to them that the prophet was undergoing a part of the revelation.

There is also a second indicator, while under that particular state he used to utter verses of the Qur'an, which his companions would in turn promptly write down. The style of the Qur'an is that of God speaking not as a story or narration. God speaks in many parts of the Qur'an such as when He says "Oh you who believe follow the messenger" and is directly addressing the people. So they realize that this was something that Gabriel was dictating to him.

The third indication was a statement made by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) himself. He said that Gabriel comes to him, that he hears something like the sound of a bell and then hears the dictation of the passages of the Qur'an. So all of these indications put together show that without actually seeing Gabriel the prophet actually felt his presence and received the revelation in this manner.

Host: I would like to bring up a very common misconception that we see in Western literature: until very lately it was thought that Prophet Muhammad had epileptic seizures while in a state of concentration while receiving revelation. Can you address this?

Jamal Badawi:

At one time this used to be a popular opinion. Unfortunately, today we find some "scholarly" writings that still support this misconception. I do not claim to be a psychiatrist, but we know from what psychologists tell us that epilepsy is a sort of disease. It is an interruption of the normal function of the brain. The person under an epileptic seizure has convulsions and is not totally conscious and would utter meaningless words and most often would have no memory of what was said. This kind of description has nothing to do with the description of a revelation. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) remembers vividly each and every word that he uttered under that state of revelation. The most significant point is that the Qur'an is available in the same exact words with which the prophet uttered when receiving the revelation. Anyone looking to the Qur'an would definitely know that it is not a meaningless mumbling of incoherent words. The biggest response to what we might call an epileptic assumption on the part of some is the Qur'an itself. Read the Qur'an and see if any person with epilepsy could utter such words that produced a Holy Scripture, which historically impacted the world. It provides guidance in the spiritual, moral, political, economic and social lives of hundreds of millions of people.

I would like to add a couple of observations on this issue concerning epilepsy. If people who raised that issue were atheists, who deny the existence of God and revelation, it might be understandable. But what puzzles me is that many of the scholars who say that a possible explanation of the revelation given to Prophet Muhammad is epilepsy are themselves confessed Jews or Christians. Judaism and Christianity are two major world faiths that are based on revelation. This leads to the question of the use of double standards. No sincere Jew or Christian would ever say the Torah received by Moses was a product of epilepsy. But when it comes to Prophet Muhammad receiving the last revelation- oh then maybe it is not a true revelation from God and so it must be epilepsy!

This leads us to a few straightforward questions. Do you believe in God or not? Do you believe in the unseen or not? If you believe in God and believe that He is capable of conveying His message through prophets to humanity then you believe in the unseen and revelation. So either all prophets were epileptic or they are all genuine prophets receiving their revelation from God.

Host: Let's move to a more fundamental question that addresses the revelation being an inspiration of God to a specific subset of people? Is the divine confined to a set few? Since Muslims believe that prophet Muhammad is the last of the prophets, does this mean that there are no inspirations after him?

Jamal Badawi:

The problem arises in translation; the original word for revelation and inspiration used in the Qur'an is *wahi*. The best response is to refer to the Qur'an itself to show that there are two ways of defining revelation. It can be defined in a general sense of God inspiring or guiding creatures whether human or not and the special second meaning that of communicating scripture or a Holy Book.

In reference to the first meaning, we discover that the Qur'an uses the term *wahi* to inspire creatures to survive. An example of this is the honey bee; "And thy Lord taught the bee to build its cells in hills, on trees, and in (men's) habitations." (16:68) There isn't a scripture given to the bees but it is simply inspiration given to them so that they may survive.

The expression *wahi* is used to express the act of inspiring and guiding good people who are not necessarily prophets. An example of this are the disciples of Prophet Jesus (PBUH) in Qur'an "And behold! I inspired the disciples to have faith in Me and Mine Messenger. They said, 'We have faith, and do thou bear witness that we bow to Allah as Muslims'" (5:112)

It also talks about God inspiring the mother of Moses when she was afraid that the Pharaoh may take him as an infant and kill him in the Qur'an "So We sent this inspiration to the mother of Moses: Suckle (thy child), but when thou hast fears about him, cast him into the river, but fear not nor grieve: for We shall restore him to thee, and We shall make him one of Our apostles." (28:7) Without spending too much time on this, there are other meanings for the word *wahi* for example: in the passage found on (41:12) in the Qur'an it is used in the sense of a command, or to give a sense of informing which is found in this passage (8:12). It is also used to give a subtle sign in passage (19:10). Sometime the word inspiration is used in the evil sense as in (6:112) and

(6:121). However, the special meaning of inspiration or guidance in a sense of scripture through a select prophet is something that is limited to select messengers of God. The final revelation in terms of a Holy Book has culminated in the Qur'an.

Host: Since prophets occupy such a central role in the Islamic faith can you tell us what a prophet is in Islam? The word prophet has been used for centuries in different contexts while giving different connotations. I would like very much if you could elaborate on the concept of prophet-hood in Islam.

Jamal Badawi:

Islamically speaking a prophet is a unique human being selected by God to carry His message and to be a model for His teachings. When comparing the three monotheistic religions (Islam, Judaism and Christianity) we come across two extremes when defining and elaborating on what a prophet is.

The Bible goes to two extremes when defining prophet-hood. One extreme is to deify a pious prophet to the level of God-hood, which is the case with Prophet Jesus (PBUH). The other extreme is exactly the opposite: where major moral sins and cardinal sins, are attributed to great figures whom we all accept as prophets whether we are Muslims, Jews or Christians.

One thing we should emphasize by using the Qur'an to clarify the issue, is that they (prophets) are all humans. There is no question as to the humanity of the messengers. There is nothing that is part human and part divine. There is no half-God half-man. We find an example in the Qur'an where God is addressing Prophet Muhammad "Before thee, also, the apostles We sent were but men, to whom We granted inspiration." (21:7)

Concerning the great prophet about whom there is a lot of controversy- Prophet Jesus- the Qur'an says, "The similitude of Jesus before Allah is as that of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him: "Be". And he was." (3:59) The similarity is that

God who created Adam from neither a mother nor father was able to create Jesus from a mother and not a father.

The third quotation indicates the very fact that prophets are human was one of the underlying reasons why people rejected them, which they should not. An example in the Qur'an, "That was because there came to them apostles with Clear Signs, but they said: "Shall (mere) human beings direct us?" So they rejected (the Message) and turned away." (64:6) The Qur'an also responds to those who think it is quite strange that God should reveal His message through a normal human being. "Is it a matter of wonderment to men that We have sent Our inspiration to a man from among themselves?- that he should warn mankind (of their danger), and give the good news to the Believers that they have before their Lord the lofty rank of truth. (But) say the Unbelievers: "This is indeed an evident sorcerer!" " (10:2) To indicate finally the inconsistency of those who reject the prophet-hood of Prophet Muhammad while believing in the prophets before him the Qur'an says, "No just estimate of Allah do they make when they say: "Nothing doth Allah send down to man (by way of revelation)" Say: "Who then sent down the Book which Moses brought?- a light and guidance to man." (6:91) So it is inconsistent because they believe in Moses but then when it comes to Muhammad they don't believe in him because he is human.

Host: Give us some examples from the Qur'an in talking about humanity; does it refer to them as human or does it infer on them some sort of superhuman qualities?

Jamal Badawi:

The Qur'an is very clear in confirming what was said earlier by giving examples about certain things that humans do. First that they ate and drank: "And the apostles whom We sent before thee were all (men) who ate food and walked through the streets." (25:20) Talking of Prophet Jesus and his mother, may peace and blessings be upon them, the Qur'an says that Christ was no more than a messenger. Many were the messengers that passed away before him. His mother was a woman of truth. Then it says that they both had to eat their daily food. As a basic rule it also says that prophets in general got married and had children with the exception of a few like Prophet Jesus and John the Baptist because he died or was ascended while young. If they had lived on earth maybe they would have married. After all not every human gets married but in general they married and had children; essentially

creating a family. For example in Qur'an it says, "We did send apostles before thee, and appointed for them wives and children." (13:38)

The Qur'an also shows that prophets may suffer agony, disease and difficulty. An example about Prophet Abraham is, "And when I am ill, it is He Who cures me" (26:80) and "And (remember) Job, when He cried to his Lord, "Truly distress has seized me, but Thou art the Most Merciful of those that are merciful." " (21:83) The Qur'an also indicates that a prophet may be killed or die naturally: "We gave Moses the Book and followed him up with a succession of apostles; We gave Jesus the son of Mary clear (Signs) and strengthened him with the holy spirit. Is it that whenever there comes to you an apostle with what ye yourselves desire not, ye are puffed up with pride?- Some ye called impostors, and others ye slay!" (2:87) Also, "Muhammad is no more than an apostle: many Were the apostle that passed away before him. If he died or were slain, will ye then Turn back on your heels?" (3:144) Finally, the Qur'an indicates that a prophet does not control his own destiny: "Say: "I have no power over any good or harm to myself except as Allah willeth." (7:188)

2.3 Prophets- Islamic & Biblical Versions

Summary of Previous Lecture "Revelation & Characteristics"

Two basic areas were discussed in this lecture. One was continuing the discussion concerning the concept of revelation. The main highlight was that the last and most authenticated form of revelation came to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), through the agent angel Gabriel. We know this revelation was dictated to Prophet Muhammad who, without using his own words, uttered the passages of the Qur'an. This is not a guarded secret because it happened often in the presence of many of the companions of the Prophet. It did not happen once or twice, but over the span of over twenty-three years.

The Qur'an, which is the product of these states of revelation, is still available today. We, also, emphasized that no believer can deny a revelation because it is not tangible. After all, divine revelation is the foundation of all monotheistic religions. Anyone who believes in God and His capacity to communicate His will to humanity obviously would have to believe in revelation even though it is not something that can be put in a test-tube. Revelation cannot be discussed under excuses such as hallucinations or epilepsy. They do not share

any characteristics with the characteristics of revelation. The state of epilepsy completely differs from the state of revelation.

Additionally there must be a distinction between the various types of inspiration. Besides the very select and special type of divine revelation, which produces the Holy Books communicated to prophets and messengers of God, there are a few other types that are not limited to prophets. We talked about inspiration that teaches things from nature to survive and an example is given in the Qur'an that discusses how bees survive. Another type is inspiring pious people with certain truths. It is still something that is limited to them personally and not a general message that is expected to be conveyed to the rest of humanity.

Then we started to look into the nature of prophet-hood and what traits are found in prophets. The Qur'an heavily documents the mortal humanity of all the prophets and messengers of God. They are just like you and I with all the various physiological functions. They eat, drink, get sick and die. Yet they, prophets and messengers, are a very select type of people who are role models and examples in belief and behavior to the people.

2.3 Islamic and Biblical Versions

Host: Can we draw a parallel between the concept of prophet-hood in Islam and the Biblical and Judaea-Christian traditional concept of prophet-hood?

Jamal Badawi:

There are similarities but there are also some key differences between the concepts. Some people make very superficial conclusions by saying that the Qur'an talks about the same prophets that are in the Bible and, therefore, Muhammad must have just taken his information from the Bible. It is true, there are similarities between the major monotheistic faiths of Judaism, Islam and Christianity and they definitely have a great deal in common. The notion of believing in God as the ultimate authority in the universe is present throughout all three faiths. Additionally, the general notion of God sending prophets to guide humanity is quite common in the three monotheistic faiths. The concept of revelation and the belief of God inspiring messengers are also accepted in some form or other.

However, there are some differences that are very important to note. One difference in Islam is the *isma* or infallibility of the

prophets. Both scriptures, the Bible and the Qur'an, will be used to clarify. It was previously mentioned that, in the Muslim point of view, the Bible uses two extremes in defining the characteristics of prophets. The first, in the New Testament, is deifying the prophet to the level of God. While the second, in the Old Testament, diminishes the great prophets' moral character by believing that they committed cardinal sins. Muslims do not accept either of these. A previous lecture discussed the question of the deification of humans. This lecture will focus on the fallibility or infallibility of the prophets.

Some of the stories in the Old Testament are very different from the stories in the Qur'an. An example of this is the story of the Prophet Jacob and his father Isaac may peace and blessings be upon them both. In the Old Testament the tradition is that the eldest son inherits his father. The Book of Genesis, chapter 27, says that Esau was the elder son of Isaac and he was the one who was supposed to receive the blessing by birthright. When Jacob received the information that his father was going to bless Esau, he went to his father exploiting the fact that Isaac had weak sight and pretended that he was Esau until Isaac blessed Jacob by the instigation of his mother. Later on Esau and Isaac discovered what happened and said there was no way of changing the event because, even though it was by mistake, Isaac had already blessed Jacob. This story depicts a great prophet, who is adored by Muslims, as a cheater and deceiver who goes to his father and lies to him and pretends to be the other son in order to get that blessing. Islam doesn't accept this story.

The book of Exodus, chapter 32 verses 1-6, describe how Prophet Aaron the brother of Prophet Moses, may peace and blessings be upon them, participated in collecting gold to make the famous golden calf when Moses went for the ten commandments. It depicts a great respected prophet by Muslims as someone who not only supports idolatry, but also participates in it by helping make the golden calf. Again, Islam does not accept this story.

Another is the story concerning Prophet David. The second book of Samuel discusses the incident when Uriah, one of the commanders of the Prophet David, was away in a battlefield. It says that Prophet David, went on top of the king's house and from there he saw a beautiful woman bathing. He inquired about her and was told that this was the wife of his commander. He then sent for her and committed adultery with her. When Uriah came back it depicts Prophet David (PBUH) as a person who played all kinds of tricks to hide the crime that he committed. He asked Uriah to go and wash his feet in his home (in other words to sleep with his wife) in order

for David to hide the fact that he was the one who impregnated Uriah's wife. Uriah being very faithful to his soldiers refused and slept outside the doorstep of his house. When this trick did not work it narrates that Prophet David sent a message with Uriah himself to one of his other commanders, Joab and he asked him to put Uriah in the most dangerous spot in the battlefield so that he is more likely to be killed. Of course, it ended with the slaying of Uriah. Any person who does these types of actions would definitely contradict the concept of what a prophet is as explained in the Qur'an and therefore can never be considered prophets.

In fact there are many more stories like these in the Bible. Another is the famous story of when Prophet Abraham went to Egypt with his wife who was so beautiful that Abraham was afraid that Pharaoh might take her away from him or even kill him. So Abraham claimed that she was his sister and let her go into the house of Pharaoh who tried to approach her and have relations with her. There are similar stories about Prophet Solomon marrying pagan wives and then his heart was inclined towards their gods. All of these descriptions are totally contradictory to the text of the Qur'an as well as to the role, function and perception of who the prophets are.

Host: In what sense is the above view of prophet-hood contradictory to the Qur'an and prophetic tradition?

Jamal Badawi:

The Qur'an, which relays stories concerning all of these prophets, does not have a single passage that attributes such cardinal sins to any of them that really blemishes the moral character of the prophets as we have sited in various places in the Old Testament. In fact the contrary is true. All of these prophets are mentioned with a great deal of adoration and respect. Prophet David and Prophet Solomon are mentioned to be faithful to God. Prophet Jacob is not a deceiver and cheater but a respected messenger of God.

For example, Prophet Abraham is described in the Qur'an as "a man of truth." (19:41) He was also described as "devoutly obedient to Allah, (and) true in faith" (16:120). Prophet Ishmael, the first son of Abraham and grandfather to Prophet Muhammad's great-great grandfather and Isaac was the second son of Abraham and grandfather of all the Israelite prophets, is described as "(strictly) true to what he promised." (19:54) When God mentions Ishmael as being true to his promise we know that the biggest promise is to obey God and to be faithful to Him.

Prophet Moses is described in the Qur'an as *mukhlasan* (19:51) which roughly translates as one who was "specially chosen." As for Prophet Jesus (PBUH), he is given a very tender description: "his name will be Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, held in honor in this world and the Hereafter and of (the company of) those nearest to Allah." (3:45) Prophet Muhammad is described as a model: "Ye have indeed in the Messenger of Allah a beautiful pattern (of conduct) for any one whose hope is in Allah and the Final Day, and who engages much in the Praise of Allah." (33:21) There are many more passages similar to these that glorify the good character and moral conduct of all the prophets. A general description of the prophets is, "These were ever quick in emulation in good works; they used to call on Us with love and reverence, and humble themselves before Us." (21:90) There is always reverence, respect and praise towards all of the prophets in the Qur'an.

Many of the details in the stories in the Bible are inconsistent with the Muslim view concerning the role and nature of the prophets. A prophet is not someone who just communicates the word of God to the people, but he is also a person who exemplifies, through his behavior, moral standards and actions, the message that he preaches. How then can a prophet be an example to his people when he is a liar, a cheater, a drunk and an adulterer?

All of these descriptions are of people who have no moral values. How can a prophet be a model when his heart is inclined to other idols or pagan deities? This is something that is totally inconceivable to Muslims. The Qur'an indicates that the prophets were especially chosen because they were better than the morally pious. In other words if pious people do not commit these major sins that blemish their moral character then definitely the prophets should be above that. To give documentation on this issue we will use three verses from the Qur'an. The first is "Allah chooses messengers from angels and from men for Allah is He Who hears and sees (all things)." (22:75) Since God knows all he would surely chose those who are better than what the stories in the Bible depict. The second verse is "and to all (the prophets) We gave favor above the nations." (6:86) The third verse is "And We made them leaders, guiding (men) by Our Command, and We sent them inspiration to do good deeds, to establish regular prayers, and to practice regular charity; and they constantly served Us (and Us only)." (21:73) So the inspiration was not just by message but also through the knowledge and philosophy represented in the meaning and the actions of the prophets' own lives. This is the essence of the Islamic concept of *isma* or the infallibility of all the messengers of God.

Host: The last lecture emphasized the humanity of the prophets yet now it is explained that prophets are also infallible. How do you dissipate this inconsistency if there is an inconsistency? Is being infallible inconsistent with being human?

Jamal Badawi:

Infallibility is not inconsistent with humanity. If we make the distinction between errors and sins we will be able to shed light on the problem. There are three kinds of sins that will be discussed. The first kind is the sin, which relates to deviation and error in the belief in God. An example of this would be the belief in or worship of other gods. The second type of sin is called the cardinal sin and examples of this are cheating and committing adultery. The last kind of sin comes from unintentional human error in judgment. This doesn't constitute a violation of the basic moral law or the Ten Commandments nor does it reflect any bad intentions on the part of the person.

Using this structure to facilitate the answer to the infallibility of the prophets, Muslims agree that all of the prophets are absolutely infallible with respect to the first and second type of sins. In the first kind of sin, they can't be fallible as far as the communication of the message of God and faith. If the prophet makes an error in conveying the message of God then he is not qualified and he is confusing and leading people astray. A passage in the Qur'an says, "and if the apostle were to invent any sayings in Our name, We should certainly seize him by his right hand, And We should certainly then cut off the artery of his heart: Nor could any of you withhold him (from Our wrath)." (69:44-47) This has a symbolic meaning. No true prophet can fall into an error when conveying the proper pure belief as communicated to him by God; or else God would definitely stop him from making this falsification and leading people astray.

As for the second category of sins, everyone agrees that we are human and we have temptation but we also know that there are some sins that are truly cardinal. To steal someone else's wife and to commit adultery and then cheat to avoid facing this crime is inconsistent and people who are truly pious control themselves enough to not fall into these temptations. Therefore, the select few prophets would never do them.

Then we come to the third category, which consist of errors in judgment that are very minor and usually happen with good intentions. They are not deliberately done. This kind of sin doesn't contradict the infallibility of the prophets because it does not affect

their basic functions as prophets who are the source of revelation and model of human behavior. One example of this third type of sin refers to Prophet Muhammad himself, is in a famous chapter in the Qur'an. The title of this chapter is *Abasa* (He Frowned) and was revealed as a commentary on and a correction of a particular story. The story relayed in the Qur'an is that Prophet Muhammad, in the early days of Islam, was trying to talk to the leaders of the noble tribe of Quraish about Islam. He had a very good reason to focus on them as they were opinionated leaders that many followed. Prophet Muhammad knew that if he succeeds in showing them the path to the One God and has them reject idolatry this would encourage others to follow. Furthermore, he knew that they were involved in the persecution of Muslims, since they were powerful, and if they themselves came to understand Islam perhaps they would become more sympathetic and stop persecuting Muslims. This was a human judgment that anyone would agree has no clear wrong.

While Prophet Muhammad was talking to them, an old poor blind man by the name of Abu-Allah Ibn Umu Maktub approached the prophet wanting him to learn more about the Qur'an. He kept asking the prophet questions while the prophet was talking with the leaders of Quraish. The prophet again with his human judgment showed minor impatience and frowned at the blind man because the man was already a believer and could wait a little bit while he addressed those who he was trying to guide. Then Gabriel came to him with the chapter *Abasa* (He Frowned) saying, "(The Prophet) frowned and turned away, Because there came to him the blind man (interrupting). But what could tell thee but that perchance he might grow (in spiritual understanding)? Or that he might receive admonition, and the teaching might profit him? As to one who regards Himself as self-sufficient. To him dost thou attend; Though it is no blame to thee if he grow not (in spiritual understanding). But as to him who came to thee striving earnestly, And with fear (in his heart), Of him wast thou unmindful." (80:1-9)

This chapter was a very powerful rebuke towards Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) but still it doesn't accuse him of any moral sins or mistake in belief. It was a simple human judgment with all good intentions but still God shows him that there is wisdom that is higher than human wisdom and that a poor blind person who is a sincere believer is better than a whole bunch of rich powerful unbelievers who are proud and puffed up with pride that they were not listening.

Indeed it is interesting to know that after this incident Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) held this man, Abu-Allah, in great esteem with

love and affection and whenever he would meet him he would say "Welcome to he, for whose sake God rebuked me." This is why many people misunderstand statements made in the Qur'an either commanding great prophets like Abraham and Muhammad or quoting them as they sought the forgiveness of Allah. "So that God could forgive you oh Muhammad what you have done of errors" and they say look this is evidence that these prophets are sinful. This is a very ironic and superficial way of looking at it because though it is an error, it is only an error in human judgment. Also the point that is always forgotten is that a mistake of a prophet is not like the mistake of a common man. Because of the very high standard demanded of a prophet in his morality and behavior then even the slightest mistake is a serious one. Because of their purity no matter how sincere they are they always feel as though they are not doing enough to be worthy of the great honor that God had bestowed up on them (by making them prophets) and so always seek God's forgiveness.

2.4 Prophets- Prophecy, Ingenuity & Miracles

Summary of Previous Lecture "Islamic & Biblical Versions"

The lecture focused on the nature of prophet-hood itself and the basic fundamental characteristics of a prophet. From an Islamic standpoint, there are no extreme characteristics that prophets had as is shown in scriptures prior to the Qur'an. One of those extremes is the deification of a prophet to the status of God or son of God as is the case of Prophet Jesus (PBUH) in the Bible. The Qur'an indicates that there is no half man- half God and there is no God in human form.

The other extreme that was quite clear in the Old Testament is to accuse prophets of committing cardinal sins that weaken their faith and moral character. The Qur'an, the words of God and the last revelation, indicates very clearly that prophets are selected by God because they have the best character and moral behavior for other human beings to use as their guide to living a pious life.

There is a distinction between the sins and they usually fall into three categories. First of all, a prophet can not make a mistake in matters of belief like those attributed to prophets in the Old Testament. They do not have inclinations towards other gods or pagan idols because then they would not be entrusted with the message. Second, a prophet can never commit a cardinal sin or commit any sin that blemishes his basic moral character. For example, a prophet cannot violate the Ten Commandments because

he is the example for the people. The third type of sin, however, is one that a prophet quite possibly could commit. It is to commit minor errors in judgment, which if important even God would correct as was sighted from the Qur'an. On the whole, these are minor mistakes that are mostly unavoidable and usually stem from good intentions. The Qur'an insists that prophets are the best models of piety and guidance for the people.

2.4 Prophecy, Ingenuity and Miracles

Host: Is it implied that every prophet has a prophecy. Is a prophecy necessary for a person to be called a prophet? How does Islam view this?

Jamal Badawi:

A prophecy is different from prophet-hood. A prophecy in itself doesn't make a prophet nor is it a condition for a person to become a prophet. It is a kind of gift that God endows to certain prophets. One doesn't have to be a prophet to receive a prophecy. Many people experience certain levels of prophecies such as having dreams of things that come true in real life. It is not because of their intelligence or their ability but it is something that is endowed on them by God. That is why Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was quoted as saying that if you have these phenomena of seeing dreams come true it is metaphorically equivalent of one fortieth of prophet-hood. Prophecy is only one minor aspect of prophet-hood and doesn't make one a prophet.

Also we find that in the early days before Prophet Muhammad started receiving the revelation of the Qur'an, revelation started with him in the way of dreams becoming vivid and coming true in real life. On the other hand a prophet may be given certain information by God for telling things that are going to happen in the future. This applies to many prophets of the Old Testament as well as Prophet Muhammad. There are many examples in the Qur'an of events and happenings being predicted and then actually occurring. In that sense a Muslim would not reject the notion of prophecy but they don't over emphasize that a prophet is only so because of having a prophecy.

Host: A lot of people claim that a prophet has to be a genius. Some say that the Prophet Muhammad was not what the Muslims claim (uneducated and illiterate) but that he was a genius. How do we relate the concept of ingenuity to prophets from an Islamic stand point?

Jamal Badawi:

If you mean being a genius is that the prophets are intelligent wise people, then there is no question about this. It is consistent with their roles as prophets. They receive the revelation and are supposed to use various techniques and skills so that they may reach people and attract them to the wisdom of the revelation and lead them throughout their lives. In that sense, wisdom and intelligence is a useful tool that the prophet uses in order to fulfill his role and there is no dispute on this question. God chooses people not only because they are pious but also because they have the innate ability and skill set to communicate His message to the rest of humanity.

On the other hand, some people would put it in such away as to exclude the concept of revelation. For those who don't believe in unseen things such as an angel coming with the revelation, then a prophet must be very intelligent, a genius who just with his own mind, can see things vividly and teach people all this wisdom. Islam finds this way of putting it as objectionable not only with respect to Prophet Muhammad but with respect to all the prophets based on two important grounds.

The first reason, goes back to the first lecture in this series, where it is mentioned that one of the main reasons humanity needs prophets is because there is information that is not subject and discoverable through normal sources such as science. The knowledge of the unseen is something that nobody can guess such as what will happen in the life after death, when the world will end, and what signs will lead to that. These are some of the things that no matter how intelligent or wise a person may be they can not really get to the answer on their own. So they need the direct communication from God.

The other reason is even more important. All of those great prophets throughout history, whether they are Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus or Muhammad (may peace and blessings be upon them all), insisted that what they taught was direct revelation from God and was not a product of their own thinking or their own ingenuity. To say that there was no revelation and that the only explanation of the phenomena of prophet-hood is their ingenuity would be to accuse them in a subtle way of lying and cheating when

they say that revelation is not of their own thought. The prophets are intelligent and wise but their wisdom and intellect is not the source of what they taught.

Host: Another manifestation that is sometimes misconceived as a necessity for someone to be a prophet is the performance of miracles. How do Muslims view the idea of miracles and does every prophet perform them?

Jamal Badawi:

When one reviews human history and focus on how people explain things one finds that there is deviation in one extreme or another ("history is written by the victors"). This also applies to miracles as well. We find some people who are so preoccupied with miracles to the point of being superstitious. This would leave the door open for people who want to exploit superstitious people by claiming the ability to cause miracles and magical healing for commercial purposes. This is all done to exploit people's inclination to think of the spiritual and unseen. This is one extreme.

On the other hand some people believe that there is no such thing as a miracle and any talk of them is just superstition. Even when something occurs that is difficult to explain, they refuse to believe that there is no scientific explanation to it. They adopt a 100% rational approach to miracles. This is also ironic because not everything can be explained by science or rational interpretation.

The approach taken in the Qur'an can be understood by using the term (for miracle in the Qur'an) *ayah*. *Ayah* roughly translates to a sign. It is a sign given by God to a prophet in order to show the people his trustfulness and elaborate on an aspect of his claim. Muslims believe in and accept miracles and know that the prophets did actually perform them. The Qur'an tells the story of Abraham and when the people tried to kill him by putting him in a large fire. However, Allah ordered the fire not to burn him. Again we can't explain this scientifically but it did happen and Abraham came out of the fire safely (21:68-69). Also, in chapter 26 verse 63 the Qur'an tells about Prophet Moses parting the sea and saving the Israelites while the Pharaoh and his soldiers drowned. Additionally, the third chapter of the Qur'an discusses the miraculous birth of John the Baptist despite the fact that his mother was barren and both her and her husband Zachariah were advanced in age. In the same chapter verses 45 to 49, the discussion of the most miraculous birth of Prophet Jesus (PBUH) is found. In chapter 17

verse 88 it talks about the most outstanding and perpetual miracle of Prophet Muhammad, which is the Qur'an itself.

On the whole it is important to realize that there were some prophets, not necessarily all, who were given an *ayah* to implore the people, to appeal them and somehow attract their attention to listen. The Qur'an is most positive in clarifying that these miracles are not self produced by the prophets but are given to them by God: "It was not (possible) for any apostle to bring a sign except by the leave of Allah." (40:78)

Host: Can we elaborate more on the importance of miracles in the message of a particular prophet?

Jamal Badawi:

A prophecy is only one aspect of prophet-hood and miracles are another but they are not necessarily the central core of the message that the prophets are preaching. The prophet or messenger of God, as viewed in Islam, is not someone to prophesy or do miracles instead he is a guide. The core of his purpose is to communicate the message given to him by God, to exemplify revelation in his life and to lead people to the right and pious path.

On the terms of its relative importance it is quite safe to say that physical miracles that the prophet produce are more appealing to those with less maturity where the physical attraction makes them think further on the message of the prophet. A more mature person need not emphasize the physical miracle but rather the intellectual and spiritual miracle of the message. The Qur'an indicates that even if the prophets produced the physical miracles they, in themselves, are not conclusive in proving the people the message of the prophet. Two passages in the Qur'an (7:183 and 17:58) will be focused on. The passages convey that in the past physical miracles were given but those who did not believe still rejected the message of the prophet despite the miracles. Not only did they deny but in some cases they also killed the very prophet they had just seen perform the miracles.

During the time of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) people came to him and demanded all kinds of miracles. One passage gives an example of one of these demands. They demanded of him to cause springs to gush from the earth, to cause the sky to fall into pieces on them, to bring God and the angels to them face to face, or if he was a prophet he should have a house made of gold and he should have a ladder that leads up into the sky and he should come back down

with a book they could read. (17:90-93) Even with all of these requests it is obvious that people with this attitude would never be satiated. These verses conclude appropriately by saying ""Say: "Glory to my Lord! Am I aught but a man,- an apostle?"" The Qur'an is telling Prophet Muhammad to respond to these demands by reminding them that he is only a man and that these miracles are not the main point behind his message. Prophet Muhammad had many miracles but the greatest miracle given to any prophet is perpetual and we have it in our hands; the Qur'an. In that sense Muslims don't over emphasize the role of miracles nor do they deny them.

Host: In the Old Testament there are scores of prophets mentioned. How many prophets are mentioned in the Qur'an?

Jamal Badawi:

Those that are mentioned specifically by name are a total of twenty-five. Eighteen of which appear in four successive verses of the Qur'an in: "That was the reasoning about Us, which We gave to Abraham (to use) against his people: We raise whom We will, degree after degree: for thy Lord is full of wisdom and knowledge. We gave him Isaac and Jacob: all (three) guided: and before him, We guided Noah, and among his progeny, David, Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses, and Aaron: thus do We reward those who do good: And Zakariya and John, and Jesus and Elias: all in the ranks of the righteous: And Isma'il and Elisha, and Jonas, and Lot: and to all We gave favor above the nations." (6:83-86) In five other places in the Qur'an the other seven are mentioned. They are Adam, regarded as the first prophet, Hued, Shuaib, Idrees, Thulkifl (believed to be Issaquah) Salleh and finally prophet Muhammad may peace and blessings be upon them all. A total of twenty-five are mentioned by name in the Qur'an and most of them are familiar to the Judaea Christian faiths.

Host: Since they are mentioned in the Qur'an it is taken for granted that Muslims have to believe in them and their existence, but what about other prophets? What is the stand of Muslims towards other prophets outside of the 25?

Jamal Badawi:

When the Qur'an mentioned the twenty-five names it also indicated that these were not the only prophets that were raised to humanity. Indeed the Qur'an says, "and there never was a people, without a warner having lived among them (in the past)" (35:24) the *warnar* in this context is the same as a prophet.

More specifically "to every people (was sent) an apostle." (10:47)

"We did aforetime send apostles before thee: of them there are some whose story We have related to thee, and some whose story We have not related to thee." (40:78) So there are prophets whose names do not necessarily appear in the Qur'an. This I think is quite interesting because some people might wonder why the Qur'an mostly mentions prophets who are raised largely in the Middle East. Does that simply say that the grace of God is limited to the Middle East? Were there prophets elsewhere? Yes there were prophets elsewhere but it is quite clear also that the emphasis on the descendants of Prophet Abraham has good reason because they are the foundation of the three monotheistic faiths that we know of today (Judaism, Christianity and Islam). Those people were much closer to monotheism despite the slight differences among them from other nations who deviated to idolatry or polytheism or other forms of worship; but the Qur'an doesn't say that there is no possibility of other prophets.

In fact in one of my visits to South Africa we went to visit a very primitive, simple Zulu tribe in their own cottages. I was surprised to learn that they also have some believe in a higher God that can't be seen. One wonders if this is from the influence of Islam in Africa or that it's possible they had a prophet in the past of their own, there is no historical record, but perhaps the idea might have come through a genuine prophet of God.

Host: Where do Muslims stand in regards to prophets; whether they are mentioned in the Qur'an or not? Do they just believe in their existence? Do they believe the stories about them literally? Are they just historical lessons? How do Muslims view them?

Jamal Badawi:

The stories are not there just for historical interest. The Qur'an mentions the stories of many of those prophets; sometimes more than once. These stories are told somewhat differently. For those who are familiar with the Bible, it is not just a chronology telling a story as such. The Qur'an discusses the story and at times omits

some minor details while focusing on the lessons that can be learned from studying the history of those prophets. As stated earlier, it is not just for historical interest.

Believing in the prophets is part and partial of being a Muslim. It is documented in the Qur'an that belief in all the prophets is obligatory on every Muslim. It specifically says, "Say ye: We believe in Allah, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to (all) prophets from their Lord: We make no difference between one (prophet) and another of them: And we bow to Allah (in Islam)." (2:136)

According to this citation, a Muslim is obligated to accept and revere all of the prophets. The Qur'an also ties between the belief in the prophets and righteousness to one another. One can't be righteous and reject genuine prophets. An example is "It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces towards East or West; but it is righteousness- to believe in Allah and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Book, and the Messengers; to spend of your substance, out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer, and practice regular charity; to fulfill the contracts which ye have made; and to be firm and patient, in pain (or suffering) and adversity, and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth, the Allah fearing." (2:177)

The Qur'an indicates very clearly that to deny one prophet means that one is denying all of them as "Those who deny Allah and His apostles, and (those who) wish to separate Allah from His apostles, saying: "We believe in some but reject others": And (those who) wish to take a course midway. They are in truth (equally) unbelievers; and we have prepared for unbelievers a humiliating punishment." (4:150-151)

The only qualification that a Muslim would have for accepting a prophet as a genuine prophet is that at least his name should appear in the Qur'an. We are not denying that there might have been other prophets but to be sure of a prophet he must be confirmed in the last revelation of God, which is the Qur'an. The second qualification, this could be discussed in a separate session, is that the Qur'an indicates very clearly that Prophet Muhammad was the last of the prophets, which means that anyone claiming prophet-hood after Muhammad is not a genuine prophet. This second qualification is discussed in detail in a later section.

2.5 Prophets- Finality of Prophethood

Summary of Previous Lecture "Prophecy, Ingenuity & Miracles"

The last lecture continued exploring the definition of prophet-hood in Islam. Five basic points were touched upon. One was the difference between prophecy and prophet-hood. A person is not a prophet because he has a prophecy or the ability to foretell the future. A prophecy is only one minor aspect of a prophet's message. Prophets are basically sent for the guidance of the people.

The second issue was the relationship between ingenuity and prophet-hood. Prophets are intelligent, wise people but this doesn't mean that their teachings are emanating from their own wisdom and thinking because their teachings are direct revelations that are received from God.

The third issue was the relationship between miracles and prophet-hood. Just like prophecies, miracles are one aspect of the message of prophet-hood that should be put in the proper perspective without undermining or over-emphasizing. God has given some prophets certain signs to use in convincing the skeptics. These miracles should not be regarded in themselves as the core essence of the message of the prophets. Even the skeptics who had demanded those miracles didn't believe after seeing them.

The fourth issue was the question on the number of prophets to walk the earth. The Qur'an, the word of God as revealed to Muhammad, mentions the names of twenty-five prophets most of which are known to the Jewish and Christian faiths. There are a few that are not necessarily mentioned in the Bible, however. Additionally, according to the Qur'an there were many other prophets in different parts of the world in different times whose names do not appear in the Qur'an. And all of these are regarded as prophets of Islam.

Finally, the question was raised about the obligation of the Muslim to believe in all prophets. This belief in the prophets is part and

partial of the statement of Islamic creed. When a person says "I believe that there is no deity but Allah and that Muhammad is his messenger" by mentioning the name Muhammad in fact one is accepting all prophets that were sent before him. This is because to believe in Muhammad one must believe in all the previous prophets leading up to Muhammad.

2.5 Finality of Prophet-hood

Host: What is the main mission and task of a prophet?

Jamal Badawi:

Put in a nutshell, the main mission of a prophet is Islam. A previous lecture under the monotheism section, discusses the word Islam and its meaning. Islam means submitting oneself to the will of God and accepting His guidance and to conduct one's life accordingly. This is the essence of the message of all the prophets from Abraham to Muhammad throughout history, and even before Abraham to Prophet Noah. It follows from this then that all the prophets are regarded as Muslim brothers. In fact, the Qur'an does refer the prophets and their followers as Muslims. They are Muslims in the sense of submitting willingly to the Will of Allah. However, four basic points explore this further by specifying which areas of knowledge are derived from the prophets and their mission.

First of all, a prophet is essentially sent to help us understand more clearly about God and His attributes. This is knowledge that we can't otherwise get by our own means and is essential to provide clarity in our understanding so as not to get mixed up in the realm of philosophy and theology. The proper appropriate knowledge is gained through the prophets. This helps in avoiding divided loyalty by knowing there is only one single creator for the entire universe.

The Qur'an states, "Not an apostle did We send before thee without this inspiration sent by Us to him: that there is no god but I; therefore worship and serve Me." (21:25) Chapter eleven contains several stories about different prophets and all of them are quoted to have said identical words to their people to "worship God, you have no other deity but Him." This shows that this is what unifies the message of all the prophets. The Qur'an also indicates that one can't achieve true servitude to God alone unless one shuns all false

gods. An example is in one verse in the Qur'an, "For We assuredly sent amongst every People an apostle, (with the Command), "Serve Allah, and eschew Evil."" (16:36)

The second basic mission of a prophet is to communicate information about the unseen because this can't be obtained in a lab or by our own thoughts. Life after death, the manner in which life after death is, The Day of Judgment, and the signs of the approach of The Day of Judgment are all matters that have to be communicated to us directly. The Qur'an states, "He (alone) knows the Unseen, nor does He make any one acquainted with His Mysteries,-Except an apostle whom He has chosen." (72:26-27) This clarifies that the unseen is known only by God and only the information He wishes to communicate He makes available to a messenger or prophet.

A third basic function is that a prophet is supposed to show the way, to tell and explain how salvation can be achieved in this life and the hereafter, how to conduct our lives, what pleases and displeases God, what our role on earth and what our position is in the universe at large, where we are going, and what our relationships with one another should be like. These are all things we need guidance in. The Qur'an says, "Mankind was one single nation, and Allah sent Messengers with glad tidings and warnings" (2:13)

The Islamic approach to guidance is not through preaching but instead that guidance is shown through the prophets' way of life. They're lives should exemplify what they preach. This is why the previous lecture discusses the infallibility of the prophets and their high moral characters. They are not just preachers but they are supposed to help people in reaching higher spiritual plateaus. An example of this in the Qur'an mentions the mission of Prophet Muhammad: "Allah did confer a great favor on the believers when He sent among them an apostle from among themselves, rehearsing unto them the Signs of Allah, sanctifying them, and instructing them in Scripture and Wisdom, while, before that, they had been in manifest error." (3:164)

A fourth mission of the prophet, which may sound surprising but is indeed within the Islamic approach of integrating religion into life, is to actually participate in the struggle to establish social justice on earth. The prophets even physically participated in fighting the forces of evil, oppression and exploitation. The evidence of this is shown in the Qur'an: "We sent aforetime our apostles with Clear Signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance (of Right and Wrong), that men may stand forth in justice." (57:25) This shows that a prophet's participation in leading his people to fight evil is part of his mission. These basic four points can be summarized in the fulfillment of the true submission on an individual and collective level.

Host: Does Islam view the prophets as represented in a preferential hierarchy? Does Islam differentiate or distinguish between prophets on any level?

Jamal Badawi:

It depends on what one mean by hierarchy or status; the basic rule is that if a person is making distinctions between prophets on a phonetic or prejudicial basis with the notion of trying to belittle this prophet or that prophet then it is forbidden. From the Qur'an itself we find, "The Messenger believeth in what hath been revealed to him from his Lord, as do the men of faith. Each one (of them) believeth in Allah, His angels, His books, and His apostles. "We make no distinction (they say) between one and another of His apostles." And they say: "We hear, and we obey: (We seek) Thy forgiveness, our Lord, and to Thee is the end of all journeys." (2:285) This verse establishes the basis but within the basic rule of the brotherhood of all the prophets.

If one means distinction in that some prophets played a more important role in the uplifting of their people then surely there is a variation of roles. In the same chapter in the Qur'an it states, "Those apostles We endowed with gifts, some above others" (2:253) God has chosen to give more to one than the other. Even within this general distinction, that God mentions about prophets, there is one term used to describe the characteristic of the prophets in Arabic it is *ululazm*, which translates to *prophets with resolution*. This term appears in "Therefore patiently persevere, as did (all) apostles of inflexible purpose" (46:35) or as did the resolute among messengers or those who suffered most. Many jurists believe that these include five prophets who are all

mentioned in one verse in the Qur'an "And remember We took from the prophets their covenant: As (We did) from thee (Muhammad): from Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus the son of Mary: We took from them a solemn covenant" (33:7) They are regarded to be the great five from among all the prophets. Furthermore within these categories of resolute prophets or the greatest of all prophets definitely the one who played the greatest role among all of them was the very last Prophet Muhammad because of the fact that his message was universal and directed to all humanity to bring them together under the same final scripture, which was given him by God.

It is important, however, to emphasize the distinction on the basis of fanaticism is rejected in Islam. The distinction on the basis of 'my prophet and your prophet' is ironic because there is nothing called 'your prophet and my prophet' for any sincere follower of the previous prophets should regard them as part of one brotherhood. They are all our prophets not mine or yours.

Host: You mentioned the finality of the revelation given to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), some skeptics would ask why is a final revelation needed. Why not perpetual prophets?

Jamal Badawi:

I attended a lecture once in which the lecturer explained how some believe that anyone could qualify in becoming a prophet. Some people take it in a very loose sense. It depends of course on what the logic of Islam is concerning this whole issue of prophet-hood, which in turn explains why a universal and final revelation is needed.

To start with, the bedrock of Islam, the very cornerstone, is the belief in monotheism. There is one creator not even persons within the same god but the absolute One Creator in every respect. In addition to the oneness of God, is the oneness of humanity as the Qur'an emphasizes that all humans originated from Adam and Eve and they were both created from dust. Then there is the one earth that we all share; one universe that is part of the whole system; one basic law that rules the universe that God has established in nature; one basic aim for this humanity in its pursuit in material as well as spiritual progress and it follows that there must also be one

prophet-hood and one mission that all prophets carried throughout history.

If one looks into the history of previous prophets one knows that in many cases a prophet is sent then after a few hundred years another prophet is sent simply because the teachings of the first prophet were either lost, forgotten or somewhat changed.

The other point also is that without having unity people will be tempted to say no 'I follow my prophet. I follow this prophet or that,' whereas all prophets are carrying essentially the same message. It makes a lot of sense that a prophet would be sent to culminate, crystallize and bring together, with the guidance from God of course, the entire essence of divine revelations throughout history through a prophet whose revelation will not be lost or changed. This is found in the case of the Qur'an as the only scripture known in the history of mankind that was written down directly from the mouth of the prophet with substantial documented evidence proving its intactness till this day.

There was a need for a prophet whose mission is not only for his own people (as in the case of all other prophets) but for humanity in its entirety, and a prophet whose mission was not only valid in the time that he was sent but carries within itself elements of flexibility and applicability for all times to come. This whole issue of the various aspects of oneness makes it quite sensible to unite all of humanity at a certain point in time under the same aim, same God and same prophet.

Host: Why did the final revelation and the seal of the prophets appear in the year 600 A.D. why not before or after?

Jamal Badawi:

No prophet or messenger prior to Prophet Muhammad claimed in explicit terms that his message was the last. We find that in both the Old and New Testaments there is always mention of someone to come. Never is there someone claiming to be the final and last prophet. Only in the case of Islam we find that this is documented

from the word of God, the Qur'an, as well as in the words of Prophet Muhammad.

After all, the selection of the proper time is something that has been done by God himself. God chose that time as the most appropriate. If we try as humans to understand why not before or after then it is only our human attempt to understand this and we are not able to judge the wisdom of God.

Four basic points are relevant here. First of all the means of transportation and communication were very difficult in the past. It was not practical to have a prophet who has a great number of followers and have them go all over the world to spread the message. There were degrees of travel, but it wasn't until after the 7th century forward did the extent of movement and contact between people become greater and with modern technology it is becoming much easier to communicate the message.

A second basic reason is the means of writing and preservation of the message. The prophet is a human being; he would live for a few years then die. The only authentic teachings would be something that is preserved scrupulously preferably in writing so that things will not be forgotten or mixed up. There is extensive evidence that the previous revelations given to previous prophets are no longer completely intact. Over the centuries some pieces were lost whether in translation or in actuality. There were various reasons for this as the believers were attacked, persecuted, their Holy Books were destroyed and some people wrote whatever they recalled. There were problems that occurred and everybody readily admits this when one studies history of the various scriptures prior to Islam. With this difficulty it is quite possible that, even though the prophet was honest in communicating what was given to him, the message might have undergone loss or change.

A third possible reason is that whatever remained of the teachings of the prophets prior to Muhammad were often mixed up with philosophical ideas, theological speculation and, at times, with mythology that preceded the mission of these prophets. This made it very difficult for people to sift out the exact words of the prophet.

A fourth and perhaps more important reason is the stage of maturity of humanity. In the past, a prophet was sent then another prophet would come with a slightly modified mission even though it was basically the same. It makes more sense that once humanity reaches a level where a universal general message, which carries the elements of flexibility and applicability, can be given to them. The divine gives the permanent unchangeable laws and the human mind tries its best to interpret them and find detailed and specific applications depending on the need of time and place.

If one looks at all of these four points, one finds that with the advent of Prophet Muhammad ample historical evidence is available that the message given to him was preserved and is intact and has not been mixed up with the teachings of anyone else. We find that the Qur'an is separate from the words of Muhammad when he is not receiving revelation. His word is considered *Hadeeth*, which is a separate book from the Qur'an. The purity of the revelation has been preserved. We also see that within a few years after his death the message of Islam reached nearly half of the known world at that time and today it has reached all corners of the world. The timing was selected by God because there are logical reasons it happened at that particular time.

Host: Is the door of guidance closed since Muhammad is the seal of prophets?

Jamal Badawi:

I think that mixes up the role of prophets with reformers. A prophet is not sent to us to show us where to place the traffic lights or how to collect municipal taxes or how to organize a school board. A prophet gives the broader guidance.

Especially the last message, the message of Islam, is basically a broad guidance that can't be changed with time and place. Of course there are principles and laws of freedom, equality and human brotherhood and so on. Within the framework of Islam it is quite possible for people to be inspired on an individual level. But once the message of the prophet-hood had been completed the revelation was preserved. The Qur'an itself asserts that this is the

final revelation; the most perfect complete and comprehensive code of life. We don't need another prophet for the details. People can work out things and think but if there are problems then comes in the concept of *ishtihad* in Islam by trying to apply the divine law by exerting effort and working it out under certain conditions or a certain period of time.

There is no contradiction between the finality of prophet-hood and continuation of guidance in different lower forms. We are not saying that people won't go off the proper path but when they do they do not need a new prophet since the message is still intact. Historically speaking since the assertion that Muhammad is the last prophet was made in the 7th century of the Christian era there has never been a prophet who can really resemble in any remote form any of the great prophets of the past (Abraham, Moses or Jesus). And there has not been anyone who had a revelation that could be compared in any way with the Torah, Bible or the Qur'an. This in itself is a historical manifestation.

A few examples from the Qur'an about Prophet Muhammad's finality are "Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but (he is) the Messenger of Allah, and the Seal of the Prophets: and Allah has full knowledge of all things," (33:40) and "I am sent unto you all, as the Messenger of Allah," (7:158) and lastly, "This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion." (5:3)

2.6 Prophets- Jesus in the Qur'an (Birth)

Summary of Previous Lecture "Finality of Prophethood"

In the past five sessions the discussion focused on the various aspects of prophet-hood in Islam. The main subjects that were covered are the need for prophets, the description and characteristics of a prophet, the basic mission of a prophet, the infallibility of a prophet and how he should be a moral person and set a good example for his people, the number of prophets that are mentioned in the Qur'an and was concluded specifically with the finality of prophet-hood. That is Prophet Muhammad being the last of all the prophets and messengers of God through whom the entire mission of prophet-hood was brought to its final most comprehensive and complete format.

2.6 Jesus in The Qur'an – Birth

Host: Today's topic is going to be about Jesus the messiah in the Qur'an. What is the extent of coverage given to Jesus' life in the Qur'an? How many times was Jesus mentioned in the Qur'an?

Jamal Badawi:

Well there are at least eleven chapters in the Qur'an where the name of Jesus or mention of him, his birth and life are mentioned. This is nothing extraneous or exterior to the belief of a Muslim. The chapters that contain mention of Prophet Jesus are 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 19, 21, 23, 43, 57 and 61. There are a total of one hundred and fourteen chapters in the Qur'an and eleven of them mention Jesus. This shows the substantiality of Prophet Jesus.

An example is of three chapters and their titles show how much importance is given to this particular person. The nineteenth chapter in the Qur'an is titled after Jesus' mother, *Suraht Maryam* or *Chapter of Mary*. Chapter three is titled after Mary's family and is called *Al'Imran* or *The Family of Imran*. Chapter five is titled *Al Ma'ida* or *The Table* and tells the Islamic version of The Last Supper. So the titles of three chapters in the Qur'an are related in some form or another to the story of Jesus (PBUH) as is presented in the Qur'an.

Host: How is Jesus referred to in the Qur'an? Do they use the name Jesus in the Qur'an?

Jamal Badawi:

Yes, in some verses of the Qur'an it uses the term *Esa*, which is the Arabic equivalent to Jesus. In other places it uses *Al Maseeh*, not as a name, but as a description and title. This usually translates to The Messiah or the anointed from *mash*. They used to anoint great kings with oil (the exact Hebrew translation of the word Messiah is Maseeh) so the word *Maseeh* is a title given him. Both his actual name and his title are found in the Qur'an.

Host: What about the background of Jesus and the conditions at the time of his birth? Does the Qur'an delve into this subject?

Jamal Badawi:

There is some discussion on the environment in which Prophet Jesus was born. Basically the main problems of the time were extreme ritualism, formalism and materialism. This is corroborated in other references. For example, in the Bible, people refer to Jesus dismissing the money exchanges of the temple. The thing that is quite obvious is that the mission of previous Israelite prophets has been misinterpreted by many people to mean that one has to stick to the letters of the law while forgetting the spirit of the law. Just like the notion of an eye for an eye or a tooth for a tooth rather than the spirit of charity at times when it could be more beneficial for all who were concerned. So it was important, just like the case for many previous prophets in the past, that God sends a prophet when there is a fundamental need for change and a fundamental deviation from the previous message.

The miraculous aspect of his birth is somewhat consistent with the kind of reminder that people needed at that time, which is the existence of the spiritual world.

Host: What about Jesus' lineage and does the Qur'an talk about this?

Jamal Badawi:

Yes, in the Qur'an, Prophet Jesus (PBUH) is regarded as one of the descendents of Prophet Abraham. In fact, it is amazing to note that all the famous prophets that emerged from the Middle East are all descendents of Prophet Abraham. The first son of Abraham is Ishmael and the only prophet who came from him is the last Prophet Muhammad. The second son, Isaac, was the patriarch in a sense that all other Israelite prophets were his descendents. The Qur'an clearly implies that Jesus is one of the descendents of Abraham (6:83-85).

More specifically the Qur'an traces Prophet Jesus' lineage to his grandmother, the mother of Mary. She is the wife of Imran. It says that when the wife of Imran became pregnant she vowed to God to devote her child to His service; some interpret that to be the service of the temple. When she gave birth she found that her child was a girl and she named her Mary. At first, she was disappointed,

because according to Jewish law, a girl can't serve in the temple. However she accepted what God blessed her with and prayed to God and asked Him to bless Mary and all her descendents.

The Qur'an also says that Mary was later raised in the care of Prophet Zachariah who was a relative of hers and was the father of John the Baptist (*Yahya* in the Qur'an). She grew up under his supervision. He noted strange things about Mary. Whenever he entered her sanctuary he found that she had lots of food with her and would ask her "Mary where did you get this food?" She would answer "God has provided me with the food." He was very impressed with this very pious and pure girl to the point that he started praying to God to give him a child that was as good and pure as she. It is important to note here that at that time Zachariah was very old and so was his wife. His wife was also barren. The Qur'an continues on telling that later on there was a miraculous birth of John the Baptist or *Yahya*. In fact, the miraculous birth of John the Baptist to a barren mother and very elderly parents was a prelude to another even more miraculous birth that was to take place shortly. This birth is of Prophet Jesus.

The Qur'an says, "Allah did choose Adam and Noah, the family of Abraham, and the family of 'Imran above all people,- Offspring, one of the other: And Allah heareth and knoweth all things. Behold! a woman of 'Imran said: "O my Lord! I do dedicate unto Thee what is in my womb for Thy special service: So accept this of me: For Thou hearest and knowest all things." When she was delivered, she said: "O my Lord! Behold! I am delivered of a female child!"- and Allah knew best what she brought forth- "And no wise is the male Like the female. I have named her Mary, and I commend her and her offspring to Thy protection from the Evil One, the Rejected." Right graciously did her Lord accept her: He made her grow in purity and beauty: To the care of Zakariya was she assigned. Every time that he entered (Her) chamber to see her, He found her supplied with sustenance. He said: "O Mary! Whence (comes) this to you?" She said: "From Allah. for Allah Provides sustenance to whom He pleases without measure." There did Zakariya pray to his Lord, saying: "O my Lord! Grant unto me from Thee a progeny that is pure: for Thou art He that heareth prayer!" (3:33-37)

Host: Did Mary, according to the Qur'an, predict her predicament? Did she know beforehand that she was going to be with child and that child was going to be Jesus and that his status in life was going to be that important?

Jamal Badawi:

According to the Qur'an, she did have some notion or at least an idea of the kind of miracle that was going to take place through her. According to the Qur'an, there is no dispute on the birth of Jesus as a virgin birth. She gave birth before she married Joseph the carpenter. As I said, the way he was born is the most outstanding miracle of Prophet Jesus (PBUH).

The summary of the verses in regards to Jesus, show that at one point Mary was alone in a place secluded from her family and there appeared to her the angel of God in the form of a human being. In the beginning she was scared since she was alone. She implored him not to get near her if he really feared God. He told her not to be afraid, he was not there to hurt her and he was simply coming to bring her the news of the birth of a noble and pure child.

The translation from the Qur'an says, "Relate in the Book (the story of) Mary, when she withdrew from her family to a place in the East. She placed a screen (to screen herself) from them; then We sent her our angel, and he appeared before her as a man in all respects. She said: "I seek refuge from thee to ((Allah)) Most Gracious: (come not near) if thou dost fear Allah." He said: "Nay, I am only a messenger from thy Lord, (to announce) to thee the gift of a holy son." She said: "How shall I have a son, seeing that no man has touched me, and I am not unchaste?" He said: "So (it will be): Thy Lord saith, 'That is easy for Me: and (We wish) to appoint him as a Sign unto men and a Mercy from Us:' It is a matter (so) decreed." (19:16-21) This is how the news of the future birth of Jesus was related to Mary.

Host: Did Mary deliver Jesus in the normal way- was her childbearing and delivery like everyone else? Were there any miracles in this respect again?

Jamal Badawi:

There is no evidence in the Qur'an that the delivery was unusual. The pregnancy was just like any other woman's pregnancy. In fact, the Qur'an talks about Mary suffering the agony of child birth like any other woman. The Qur'an also says that she was very distressed psychologically because she was worried about what her people would think of her and how she was going to explain this virgin birth. She was afraid nobody would believe her. The Qur'an also indicates that something miraculous happened immediately after Jesus was born. Jesus assured and told her what to do when

people asked her these questions. The Qur'an also says that as an infant in her arms he defended his mother against the accusations that were made.

The Qur'an states, "So she conceived him, and she retired with him to a remote place. And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm-tree: She cried (in her anguish): "Ah! would that I had died before this! Would that I had been a thing forgotten and out of sight!" But (a voice) cried to her from beneath the (palm-tree): "Grieve not! for thy Lord hath provided a rivulet beneath thee;" And shake towards thyself the trunk of the palm-tree: It will let fall fresh ripe dates upon thee. "So eat and drink and cool (thine) eye. And if thou dost see any man, say, 'I have vowed a fast to ((Allah)) Most Gracious, and this day will I enter into not talk with any human being'" (19:22-26)

The Qur'an continues, "At length she brought the (babe) to her people, carrying him (in her arms). They said: "O Mary! truly an amazing thing hast thou brought!" "O sister of Aaron! Thy father was not a man of evil, nor thy mother a woman unchaste!" But she pointed to the babe. They said: "How can we talk to one who is a child in the cradle?" He said: "I am indeed a servant of Allah. He hath given me revelation and made me a prophet; And He hath made me blessed wheresoever I be, and hath enjoined on me Prayer and Charity as long as I live; (He) hath made me kind to my mother, and not overbearing or miserable; So peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day that I shall be raised up to life (again)!" Such (was) Jesus the son of Mary: (it is) a statement of truth, about which they (vainly) dispute. It is not befitting to (the majesty of) Allah that He should beget a son. Glory be to Him! when He determines a matter, He only says to it, "Be", and it is. Verily Allah is my Lord and your Lord: Him therefore serve ye: this is a Way that is straight. But the sects differ among themselves: and woe to the unbelievers because of the (coming) Judgment of a Momentous Day! How plainly will they see and hear, the Day that they will appear before Us! but the unjust today are in error manifest! But warn them of the Day of Distress, when the matter will be determined: for (behold,) they are negligent and they do not believe! It is We Who will inherit the earth, and all beings thereon: to Us will they all be returned." (19:27-40)

Host: Does the Qur'an say that Jesus had only a mother and no father?

Jamal Badawi:

Who is Eve's father (the first woman)? Who is Adam's father? If a person doesn't have a physical human father this implies that he is divine or he is God? Then Eve must have been God and Adam must have been God because they both don't have parents! The Qur'an answers this question in one verse, "The similitude of Jesus before God is as that of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him: "Be." And he was. The Truth (comes) from God alone; so be not of those who doubt." (3:59-60) In accordance to this verse, it simply says that God, who was able to create Adam and Eve without a father or mother, can just as easily create Jesus without a father. Indeed we should remember it is not only the birth of Prophet Jesus (PBUH) that is miraculous- but the birth of any human being is miraculous. If we study how the various genetic characteristics are passed on, parents to children, we should view that as a miracle in itself. All we can say is that it is both miraculous and unusual in the case of Prophet Jesus.

The point to remember here is that God isn't bound to follow the same laws that we consider to be laws of nature, because God himself created nature and these laws. He can break the rules whenever He wishes; this of course may not necessarily be the pattern as most of the time there is harmony between what we see as natural laws and the will of God but He has the power whenever He wants to give us certain signs (that break from the norm).

The Qur'an says, "Behold! the angels said: "O Mary! Allah giveth thee glad tidings of a Word from Him: his name will be Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, held in honour in this world and the Hereafter and of (the company of) those nearest to Allah. He shall speak to the people in childhood and in maturity. And he shall be (of the company) of the righteous." She said: "O my Lord! How shall I have a son when no man hath touched me?" He said: "Even so: Allah createth what He willeth: When He hath decreed a plan, He but saith to it, 'Be,' and it is! And Allah will teach him the Book and Wisdom, the Law and the Gospel, And (appoint him) an apostle to the Children of Israel, (with this message)." (3:45-49)

It is obvious from this is that the will of God doesn't need a human medium to create a pregnancy. If He decides it He can just order that a child is born from a virgin. God has various unusual methods in creation and the creation of Prophet Jesus (PBUH) completes the picture. First, was the creation of people without a father or mother, which is the case with Adam. Then there is the creation of a human being from a man's rib (side), which is obviously Eve. Third, there is the normal creation of a human being, both from a mother and a father and that is every one of us. Last, is the creation of a human being from a mother and not a father. This

beautifully completes the various miracles of God, which are all equally important and stunning.

2.7 Prophethood- Jesus in the Quran- Humanity

Summary of 2.6 Jesus in The Qur'an – Birth

The last program began the topic of Jesus (PBUH) in the Qur'an concerning his mission and nature. Four basic points were emphasized.

First, was the extent to which Jesus (PBUH) is mentioned in the Qur'an. Out of the hundred and fourteen chapters in the Qur'an, eleven chapters mention and discuss Prophet Jesus. Some of those chapters discuss Prophet Jesus in detail, while others are brief. There are two specific chapters that discuss the story of Jesus in depth. Chapters 3 and 19 are titled after his mother the Virgin Mary.

The second main point was regarding Jesus' lineage. According to the Qur'an, he is a descendant of the Israelite prophets. In one specific verse, the Qur'an shows that he is from the lineage of Prophet Abraham (PBUH) the same as Moses and Muhammad. The Virgin Mary, the circumstances of her birth, her early childhood and her devotion are also discussed in depth.

The third basic issue discussed was the birth of Jesus (PBUH). The Qur'an is clear that his was a virgin birth. The Qur'an explains the coming of the Holy Spirit or Ghost, which is the archangel Gabriel in Islamic terminology, to give the news to Jesus. Then the discussion touched on the accusations that Mary had to deal with and how Jesus, as an infant, defended her.

The fourth and final point is a question of the father of Jesus. We know his mother but who is the father? Some people make an ironic conclusion that this is proof that his father must be God. According to the Qur'an, the likeness of Jesus is to Adam. God created Adam from clay and said to him 'Be' and he was. And we have shown that God created Adam without a father or mother and that doesn't make him divine. Eve was created from man and that doesn't make her divine. This completed the various aspects of the miraculous creations of Allah, which take different forms.

2.7 Jesus in The Qur'an – Humanity

Host: The Qur'an admits to the miraculous birth of Jesus, but why him?

Jamal Badawi:

Jesus' birth is unique no question about it and every prophet's miracle is also unique. All the miracles given to prophets are similar, but not identical. In that sense, each and every miracle in itself is unique. The various stories in the Qur'an, which have similarities with the Bible, show the miracle of Prophet Abraham. The people

cast him into the fire and yet he came out alive without any scaring. This is unique, but it doesn't make him divine. The miracle of Prophet Muhammad was the Qur'an, which is a perpetual miracle that is still around today. This miracle is unique but this doesn't make Prophet Muhammad divine or supernatural. In this sense, the birth of Christ (PBUH) is also unique.

The point to remember is that the miracles of various prophets are similar, yet unique, because each prophet was given a miracle more suited to the kind of circumstances he was sent to deal with. To clarify, in the days of Prophet Moses (PBUH) the pharaohs were very skillful in the work of magic. When Moses became a prophet, the Qur'an states that God ordered him to throw his cane to the ground. It became a huge snake that swallowed all the trivial magic deeds that the magicians around him cast. That is how they immediately saw it as a sign from God that this person couldn't be a magician but instead is a real prophet. That type of miracle was suited to the circumstances of Moses' time.

By the same token, at the time of Prophet Jesus (PBUH), as historians agree, the people forgot the spirit of the law. They were bent on ritualism and formalism. Actually, there was the argument that the people at that time denied the existence of the world of the spirit. Some used to say that the soul or spirit of anything is in its blood. Some were very influenced by the Greek philosophy of cause and effect and they concluded that God is the first cause. It was needed at that time that God would show that He was above what human philosophers interpreted as the cause/ effect relationship. God is beyond this limited human understanding and myopic view. Given the circumstances of the people at the time of the mission of Prophet Jesus (PBUH) they needed to be reminded of the spirit of the law and the word of the spirit. It was very suitable to have the miraculous birth to remind them that the spiritual word does exist and is crucial.

I would like to conclude this by simply indicating that when we talk about miracles given to the prophets we are not talking about something that is self generated, but rather a divine gift given to the prophet to support him in his message. A prophet or messenger, whether he is Moses, Jesus, Muhammad or Abraham (PBUT) or any other, is not a miracle worker but is the medium through whom God manifested His power and signs to mankind.

Host: The Qur'an sometimes refers to Jesus by the term *kalimah*, which means The Word. If this is how he is referred to in the Bible, then how is it different? What is the difference between the two?

Jamal Badawi:

The Qur'an says that God will give you (Mary) the good news of a word from Him his name is Christ or Messiah the son of Mary (3:43). The difference between the Qur'an and the Bible is the interpretation of term 'word.' There is an essential difference between the theological understanding among the Christians and the Qur'anic usage. The theological interpretation among Christian scholars is that the 'word' here is related to some kind of attribute of God. In fact, refer to the gospel of John in the

very first verse that the word was with God and that the word was God. According to many Biblical scholars this seems to be an influence of Greek philosophy or the Platonic philosophy, which considered the 'word' as divine intelligence. In that sense the 'word' is regarded as one aspect of God or divinity itself.

The Qur'anic understanding of it has nothing to do with this philosophy. In the Qur'an, the term a 'word' from God translates as a *command* from God or *sign* of God. The Qur'an better explains it "For to anything which We have willed, We but say the word, "Be", and it is." (16:40) This means that the word 'be' symbolizes the will and command of God, which is the word of God. All of us have been created by the word 'be.' In that sense, according to the Qur'an, the same term was used to create Jesus, you and I and we are all creatures of God. All of us are words of God because we were created by the command of God. In the Qur'an there are at least twelve places where 'words' of God is used in the plural which shows again that it was not uniquely used for Jesus. All of us are 'a word of God' because we were created by His command.

Host: What is the difference between Islam's understanding of the phrase 'Holy Spirit' with that of Christians'?

Jamal Badawi:

The general understanding of the Holy Spirit is influenced by Greek philosophy, particularly the Platonic ideologies. The gospel of John shows this influence quite extensively. The whole idea of God as the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost is based very closely on this same Greek philosophy that the Spirit of God or the Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost is a component of God.

The Qur'an has two different kinds of expressions for the word *spirit*. The equivalent Arabic word for the word spirit is *rooh*'. In reference to Jesus, in particular we find that the Qur'an mentions that Jesus was a spirit proceeding from God. There is also the expression of Holy Spirit/Ghost and each has a different meaning.

First, let's take what the Qur'an means when it says that Jesus was a spirit proceeding from God. Is it exclusive to Jesus or does it apply to other people as well? The answer is that it applies to all because the word *rooh*' appears in the Qur'an in meanings that relate to the context of the verse. For example in 42:52 the word spirit is used to refer to revelation (the Holy Book) and that it is a *spirit* from God. In 58:22, for example, the spirit is used in a sense of support from God "and strengthened them with a spirit from Himself." It is also used as the secret of life or the source of our spirituality. This is what is referred to in the Qur'an in respect to Jesus (PBUH) as well as to other human beings. Chapter 4 verse 171 mentions the spirit in reference to Jesus. It was also mentioned in a general sense to refer to all human beings because all of us have something of the spirit of God in us. The Qur'an says, "But He fashioned him in due proportion, and breathed into him something of His spirit." (32:9) This refers to the creation of all human beings. This means that every human being derives his spirituality, his instinctive natural feeling of a

connection with his Creator, from the spirit of God that was breathed into him at the time of creation.

The other usage of the term Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit is actually used specifically for archangel Gabriel. He is called *Rooahul Qudoos* which means Holy Spirit or *AlRooahul Ameen* which means Honest Spirit. The Qur'an mentions him as the angel who brought revelation to prophets in the past including Prophet Muhammad.

“We gave Moses the Book and followed him up with a succession of apostles; We gave Jesus the son of Mary Clear (Signs) and strengthened him with the Holy Spirit. Is it that whenever there comes to you an apostle with what ye yourselves desire not, ye are puffed up with pride?- Some ye called impostors, and others ye slay!” (2:87)

“Then will Allah say: "O Jesus the son of Mary! Recount My favour to thee and to thy mother. Behold! I strengthened thee with the Holy Spirit, so that thou didst speak to the people in childhood and in maturity. Behold! I taught thee the Book and Wisdom, the Law and the Gospel and behold! thou makest out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird, by My leave, and thou breathest into it and it becometh a bird by My leave, and thou healest those born blind, and the lepers, by My leave. And behold! thou bringest forth the dead by My leave. And behold! I did restrain the Children of Israel from (violence to) thee when thou didst show them the clear Signs, and the unbelievers among them said: "This is nothing but evident magic.” (5:110)

All of these verses show that *Rooahul Qudoos* is actually referring specifically to Gabriel. According to Islam, Gabriel and all other angels are creations of Allah- they are not part of Him. They are all servants of God just as the prophets are.

Host: What negations are there of the divine nature of Jesus in the Qur'an? The Qur'an itself has only denied that Jesus was the son of God and that God was the father of Jesus.

Jamal Badawi:

Some writers don't have a deep understanding of the Qur'an, they quote one verse and they don't relay other verses that relate to the same subject. In fact, what the Qur'an negates is all forms of deification whether it is in the mainstream of Christianity, or those who were regarded as heretics at one point or other in the history of the Church.

For example, the Qur'an states, “And behold! Allah will say: “O Jesus the son of Mary! Didst thou say unto men, worship me and my mother as gods in derogation of Allah.?” He will say: “Glory to Thee! never could I say what I had no right (to say). Had I said such a thing, thou wouldst indeed have known it. Thou knowest what is in my heart, Though I know not what is in Thine. For Thou knowest in full all that is hidden. Never said I to them aught except what Thou didst command me to say, to wit, 'worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord.’” (5:116-120)

The Qur'an also says, "They do blaspheme who say: "(Allah) is Christ the son of Mary." But said Christ: "O Children of Israel! worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord." Whoever joins other gods with Allah,- Allah will forbid him the garden, and the Fire will be his abode. There will for the wrong-doers be no one to help." (5:72)

This chapter continues, "They do blaspheme who say: Allah is one of three in a Trinity: for there is no god except One Allah. If they desist not from their word (of blasphemy), verily a grievous penalty will befall the blasphemers among them. Why turn they not to Allah, and seek His forgiveness? For Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. Christ the son of Mary was no more than an apostle; many were the apostles that passed away before him." (5:73)

Finally, one may recall in our series on Islamic monotheism that the idea of God sending a son to take away the sins of humanity is also negated in the Qur'an in chapter 112, which one of the shortest and most important chapters in the Qur'an. It says, "Say: He is Allah, the One and Only; Allah, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; And there is none like unto Him." (112:1-4) The idea of God having a son and all other forms of deification are very clearly negated in the Qur'an. Muslims believe that Jesus never said anything that implied his divinity.

Host: Why then in the Qur'an, when God speaks about creation and that is exactly the same as The Old Testament, does He say 'We have created? Why does God say We and not I?

Jamal Badawi:

There was an argument that was raised saying that the Qur'an proves the trinity because God says 'We' and, in Arabic, *we* refers to the plural meaning *at least three*. It is well known that in many languages, Arabic and English included, and in The Old Testament the term *we* is used by those in power. For example, historically Kings and Queens and other royalty have used the word *we* when talking of themselves. Of course when God speaks, He's entitled to use this majestic form of the language.

In fact, there are scholars who have studied how many times the word Lord, for example, appeared in the Gospel and how the idea of using Lord in a religious sense to refer to God had been something that came up much later on in Christianity. This takes care of the question of using 'We' as the Qur'an is full of conclusive evidence showing the Oneness and Uniqueness of Allah. Concerning Christ, the Qur'an is filled with evidence that he is a messenger, a prophet and a servant of God.

Host: Is there any way that a Muslim can reconcile himself with the ideas of the son of God or 'Lord' as they are explained in Biblical literature (The New Testament)?

Jamal Badawi:

In all fairness to our Judaea Christian brothers, I cannot answer that question unless I explain, first, how the Bible uses the term *Lord* and the term *son of God*. This might be the most conclusive evidence, not from a Muslim's point of view, but from the Bible itself.

Take the word *Lord*, everybody knows that this term doesn't necessarily mean divine. In England, there are many Lords but no one would say that there are so many Gods there. Lord means *master*. It is believed that this was the exact meaning people meant when they addressed Jesus as Lord in the New Testament.

The second term is the *son of God*. There is ample evidence in The Old Testament that *son of God* is used for a person who is close to God because of his spirituality and faith, but never because of his divinity. The Book of Exodus says that Isreal was called the first born son of God (4:22-23) but nobody says that he is divine. In the psalms of David, David is referred to as the son of God (2:7). In the first Chronicle, Prophet Solomon is also referred to as the son of God (2:10).

Ezra (Uzair in the Qur'an 9:30) is referred to in the Old Testament. He lived in 450 B.C. and was regarded as a *son of God* because of his crucial role, during the Babylonian exile, in recollecting the law of the Torah about a thousand years after Moses. Evidence from The Old Testament itself shows that the term *son of God* was used in a metaphoric sense not necessarily in an exclusive or divine sense.

Even The New Testament uses it in a similar way as The Old Testament. For example the book of Matthew says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God." (5:9) There are similar quotations in Matthew (5:45 and 23:9). In fact, The Old Testament even uses the term *sons of God*. In the book of Job, this term is used as a plural. It is quite apparent that when Jesus (PBUH) used the term *father* to refer to God or *son* to refer to himself, he only meant it in the metaphoric sense. He meant it in the same way that all human beings are *children* of God because we depend on Him and that God is the *father* because he loves and cares for all of us.

Host: Has Jesus personally denied his divinity?

Jamal Badawi:

Actually the verses that have just been quoted from the Qur'an show Jesus denying his divinity. He actually rebuked the people who would develop those philosophical ideas after he is gone. An example is when Satan came to Prophet Jesus and tried to tempt him as it appears in the book of Matthew (4:1-11). Now the question is how can Satan tempt God? This is conceivable if the person who is subjected to temptation is a human being and that is what Jesus spoke of. Also on many occasions Jesus had gone to the wilderness or mountains to pray. Now what does it mean that Jesus is praying? He is praying to someone who is greater than himself. He is praying to his God and Lord and in accordance to the definition of the Trinity this doesn't make sense. Nobody prays to himself so why would Jesus pray to himself if he was God?

In the book of Matthew, Jesus denies any knowledge of the unseen or the last hour (24:36). Again the knowledge of the unseen is definitely one of the divine attributes and if somebody doesn't know the future then he is not God- he is a human being. He may be pious, he may be a messenger, but he is not God.

Additionally, the Gospel of Mark says that when someone ran after Jesus and said 'Good Master' Jesus would reply, *Why do you call me good? No one is good—except God alone.* (10:17- 18) Here this doesn't mean that Jesus is not good but goodness in the absolute sense is a divine attribute and that is not to be used on him. In the Gospel of John, Jesus admits and says that "father is greater than I" (14:28), which is very clear evidence he never meant that he is divine and even denied it and clarified that he is simply a human and messenger of God. That is exactly what the Qur'an, 600 years later, confirms.

2.8 Prophethood- Jesus in the Quran- Mission

Summary of 2.7 Jesus in The Qur'an – Humanity

The previous program clarified the Qur'an's standpoint on Jesus as a *word* or spirit from God. According to the Qur'an, the usage of the *word of God* refers to a command of God; in that sense, all human beings are *words of God* because we are all created by the command of God. The Qur'an does say that Jesus is a spirit proceeding from God. The Qur'an also contains verses that show that all human beings have this spirit proceeding from God in the sense of their spirituality. So, both are used in ways that have nothing to do with the Platonic philosophy or the idea of trinity whatsoever. The term *Holy Spirit*, when used in the Qur'an, is not as the philosophy and theology of the trinity, but rather that it refers to the archangel Gabriel. Angels are creations of God, but not part of divinity.

The Qur'an is very clear on rejecting the argument of Jesus or his mother Mary being deities with God. It also rejects all forms of deification. The trinity is specifically rejected. Any exclusivity regarding Jesus being the son of God is also denied. There are many passages in The New Testament where the term the *son of God* is used similarly to the way the Old Testament uses it (which we referred to). The *son of God* is used to show a *closeness to God*, not as being a part of God.

We concluded with the fact that the notion of deifying Prophet Jesus (PBUH) is something that developed much later on. Reverend Dr. A. B. Bruce, a professor of Divinity (Encyclopedia Biblica) says that in the Gospel of St. Luke, Jesus is called Lord about a dozen times and if you compare that with the earlier Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark we find that he was simply referred to as "Jesus." To quote him on this subject, he says that this is "a fact which seems to indicate the gradual evolution in the belief of his divinity." This again is based on a specialist's analysis of the writing in The New Testament.

A reprint from *The Christian Science Monitor* June 7, 1978 issue says, "Debate over age old Christian creeds on the divinity of Jesus has erupted with an explosiveness that has sent curious theologians looking for explanations. The controversy was

touched off in Britain last year by the publication of a book *The Myth of God Incarnate*. In it a group of prominent Anglican and Presbyterian theologians called for an updating of Christianity by freeing it from definitions of early creeds. Creeds which portrayed Jesus as God incarnate. The second person of the three person in one Godhood, the pre-existent eternal only begotten son of the divine father.” In fact the article goes on indicating that there were lots of protests by many people and yet almost all never read the book. So if the subject is looked at without any prejudice or bias one way or the other, I think we will find that we are more faithful to the teachings of Christ when we go back to his simple decisive words.

2.8 Jesus in The Qur'an – Mission

Host: What does the Qur'an have to say about the scope of the mission of Jesus Christ on earth?

Jamal Badawi:

The Qur'an is very clear on the fact that the mission of Prophet Jesus (PBUH) was explicitly and exclusively to guide the people of Israel. The Qur'an says, “And (appoint him) an apostle to the Children of Israel, (with this message)” (3:49). It also says, “O Children of Israel! I am the apostle of Allah (sent) to you.” (61:6) Also, it discusses the various Israelite prophets saying, “And in their footsteps We sent Jesus the son of Mary, confirming the Law that had come before him.” (5:46) Therefore, the Qur'an is very clear on what the mission of Jesus was, and the information found in The New Testament itself attests to this fact.

Two very explicit quotations regarding Prophet Jesus (PBUH) show the similarity between the Bible and the Qur'an on this point. The Gospel of Matthew tells the famous story of the Canaanite woman who wanted Jesus to cure her daughter. He says, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.” He was very explicit and refused and later on responded because of her faith. (15:24) In Matthew Jesus was giving instructions to the five disciples: “These twelve, Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel.” (10:5-6) Again he is repeating the same principle that he was sent as an Israelite prophet. This is also implied in Matthew with a very similar confirmation (19:28). Indeed one can say that there is no evidence in the three synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, of any clear and decisive statements quoting Jesus that his message is universal and that he was sent for all human beings.

In fact, I would like to make two comments here to avoid any misunderstanding of these quotations. The conclusiveness of the expressions of the words of Jesus as quoted in the Gospels definitely overshadow any claim that was developed much later on. The words of Jesus are more credible than what developed later on when the notion of deifying Jesus gained momentum.

The other observation is though both the Qur'an and the Gospels support that Jesus' mission was to the children of Israel, it doesn't mean that none of his teachings can be valid and applicable for those who are not from the Israelites. In fact, the teachings of

all the prophets are relevant for all time and all people, especially concerning the moral aspects and the knowledge of God. Even though the mission is valid for all time and people, God decided to send one final and universal message with Prophet Muhammad roughly 600 years after Prophet Jesus may peace and blessings be upon them both.

Host: What does the Qur'an have to say about the essence of the mission of Jesus Christ.

Jamal Badawi:

Like all other prophets mentioned in the Qur'an, Jesus' message conclusively was to invite people to know, worship and obey God. A verse in the Qur'an, which combines the essence along with this message, says, "(I have come to you), to attest the Law which was before me. And to make lawful to you part of what was (Before) forbidden to you; I have come to you with a Sign from your Lord. So fear Allah, and obey me." (3:50) One part of Jesus' mission was to confirm whatever remained unchanged of the law of the Torah. Another part was to make lawful to them that which they had made forbidden and restricted by way of punishment. In addition to his mission directed to the Israelites, he emphasizes that God should be feared and obeyed. The Qur'an continues, "It is Allah Who is my Lord and your Lord; then worship Him. This is a Way that is straight." (3:51)

One peculiar thing about Prophet Jesus (PBUH) is that he actually gave tidings and mentioned to his people specifically that there was a prophet coming after him to complete the revelation (61:6). This was interpreted by Christians to be the Holy Spirit. Actually, the verse refers specifically to one of the attributes to Prophet Muhammad, *Ahmmad*, which in English is the *Comforter*.

In the book of Mark it says that "When the Jew asked Jesus what was the most important commandment he answered 'The most important one,' answered Jesus, 'is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, is one Lord.'" (12:29) The Qur'an says precisely this as well.

Host: What are the miracles of Jesus? Does the Qur'an touch upon that?

Jamal Badawi:

Well of course the discussion of the virgin birth as one of the miracles has already been covered. He was also given miracles, like other prophets, to support his mission. The Qur'an states, "And (appoint him) an apostle to the Children of Israel, (with this message): "I have come to you, with a Sign from your Lord, in that I make for you out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird, and breathe into it, and it becomes a bird by Allah's leave: And I heal those born blind, and the lepers, and I quicken the dead, by Allah's leave; and I declare to you what ye eat, and what ye store in your houses. Surely therein is a Sign for you if ye did believe." (3:49) Some of Prophet

Jesus' miracles include healing, bringing people back from the dead, and knowing what people store in their home. But for each of these the Qur'an quotes Jesus as saying 'by Allah's leave' because God gave him this knowledge and ability.

Host: Does the Qur'an mention that Jesus was given a divine book or the Gospel?

Jamal Badawi:

There is always mention, in the Qur'an, of a Holy Book or scripture given to the prophets. The Qur'an mentions specific books like the *Zaboor* (normally interpreted as the psalms from David), the *Suhoof* (leaves of Prophet Abraham) and the Torah. The Qur'an mentions the Gospel as *Al Injeel*, which in Arabic translates to *The Good News*. The Qur'an mentions *Al Injeel* not only once but twelve times in six different chapters.

The Qur'an mentions *Al Injeel* or the Gospel as a book given to Jesus in the context of other Holy Books, it leaves a distinct impression that the Qur'an is not referring to *The Good News* in general but to this specific one given to Jesus. This may sound quite fascinating that most of our Christian brothers believe that the Gospel simply is the biography of Jesus written by the four writers and not necessarily something that was explicitly revealed to Jesus the same way it was to Muhammad or Moses.

I have gone through some references that address a well known problem in Biblical studies called the Synoptic Gospels where they compare the content of the four to find what sources they were drawn from. In one reference they refer to a Gospel called *Que* from which some of the writers of the Synoptic Gospels used as a source of information. This means in accordance to Biblical studies, not Muslim sources, that there was probably a different Gospel from which earlier Gospels were copied. This could possibly be the original Gospel the Muslims believe was given to Jesus.

Let's not forget that there is also the issue of the canonized Gospels. The history of the Church shows that there have been large numbers of Gospels and it was only in the fourth century that the church canonized the four Gospels and the others were burned. It is quite possible from both Christian and Muslim sources that Jesus did have a separate independent Holy book that was unfortunately lost to history.

Host: In The New Testament, the Gospels, is there any evidence as to the prophet-hood of Jesus? Did his contemporaries know he was a prophet?

Jamal Badawi:

There is plenty of evidence. Jesus believed himself as a servant of God, a prophet of God, a messenger of God and his contemporaries thought of him as a prophet. In the Gospel of Luke it says, "In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the

next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem! ‘O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets...’” (13:33-34)

More explicitly even outside of the Synoptic Gospels, from a Biblical point of view, the Gospel of John (which has a lot of problems regarding its author) says, “As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God.” (8:40) So Jesus himself is admitting that he has heard certain truths from God and is conveying it to them. This is definitely a characteristic of a prophet.

As far as the other part of the question about whether his contemporaries thought of him as a prophet: definitely! The book of Luke talks of the visit Jesus made to the town of Nain, which regarded Jesus as “A great prophet has appeared among us.” (7:16)

People knew that he was a prophet. There were other indications such as people thought to lay hands on him but feared him as a prophet. The Gospels are filled with evidence that both Jesus (PBUH) as well as his contemporaries knew that he was a prophet. To theorize that he was hiding that secret definitely has no credibility.

Host: What about the end of his mission? Do Muslims agree with the Christian version of Jesus’ crucifixion and ascension?

Jamal Badawi:

There is very little information available concerning this question therefore I’ll stick to what the Qur’an has to say. Many of the early Christian sects disputed whether it was Jesus or Judah who had been put on the cross.

The Qur’an says, “That they rejected Faith; that they uttered against Mary a grave false charge; That they said (in boast), “We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah.:- but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they killed him not. Nay, Allah raised him up unto Himself; and Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise.” (4:156-158) According to this specific text of the Qur’an, it’s conclusive that Jesus was not the one put on the cross, no matter how commonly believed it may be.

Host: In the verse mentioned it is said that the Israelites did not kill Jesus but that he was raised by God to Heaven. What does this mean?

Jamal Badawi:

Going back to the original Arabic it translates, literally, to ‘*God raised him unto Himself.*’ The best way to understand this, without philosophizing, is to stick to the

term *rafa'e* or *raise* as it appears in the Qur'an. This word appears under three different meanings or circumstances in the Qur'an. One, according to some interpreters, is that God raised Jesus in body and soul. This cannot be considered impossible even though it has not been proven scientifically, but God is definitely able to lift Jesus in body and soul.

The second is that the Qur'an uses the term *rafa'e* to refer to taking away the soul but the body would stay on earth, which could possibly mean that Jesus might have died somewhere else. Again we do not have any definite conclusive evidence that this is the correct interpretation. In fact there might be some indirect evidence to this in the Qur'an where God says to Jesus "I am *mutawafika* and raising you" the word *mutawafika* would have two meanings the common one would be causing you to die, the other means completing your mission and then raising you.

The other evidence is that the Qur'an says very clearly and conclusively "every soul will taste death" and Jesus being a prophet and human being would definitely have to taste death. Also, in the verse that I quoted in the first program on Jesus if of Jesus talking to his mother and he says "peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die."

The third meaning that is used in the Qur'an is used allegorically to mean the raising of status of mosques or knowledgeable people. Examples are:

"(Lit is such a Light) in houses, which Allah hath permitted to be raised to honour; for the celebration, in them, of His name: In them is He glorified in the mornings and in the evenings, (again and again)"(24:36),

"So peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day that I shall be raised up to life (again)"!(19:33),

"And We raised him to a lofty station."(19:57), and

"O ye who believe! When ye are told to make room in the assemblies, (spread out and) make room: (ample) room will Allah provide for you. And when ye are told to rise up, rise up Allah will rise up, to (suitable) ranks (and degrees), those of you who believe and who have been granted (mystic) Knowledge. And Allah is well-acquainted with all ye do."(58:11)

These verses show that the term raising/lifting is not necessarily in the physical sense but the lifting of status. These are all possible interpretations as the Qur'an doesn't tell us in a conclusive sense how Jesus was raised. From a practical point of view, had it not been for the Qur'an, it wouldn't really make a difference whether he was crucified or not as many prophets were killed.

Host: What about the second coming of Christ?

Jamal Badawi:

Very briefly speaking there is nothing in the Qur'an that says that Jesus will have second coming. However, there are some Prophetic Traditions (sayings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)) in which he talks about the second coming of Jesus. However, it is quite different from the meaning understood among our Christian brothers and sisters. Jesus will not be coming as God to judge and rule but as a follower of Islam. As we mentioned before, Islam is the faith of all prophets not only of Prophet Muhammad, and Jesus was a Muslim according to Qur'an because he submitted to the will of God. The Prophetic Traditions says that Jesus will come to declare the truth about himself. He will break the cross, which is something he will regard as a pagan symbol or based on mythical ideals that came before Christianity, and has nothing to do with his teachings. Also, towards the end of time, he will fight with the believers against the anti-Christ.

2.9 Prophethood- Muslim & Non-Muslim Relations

2.9 Muslim and Non- Muslim Relations

Host: To all of the viewers of the Islam In Focus program I greet you with the greetings of all of the prophets from Abraham to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) AsalmuAlikum which means peace be upon you. In today's session we will be dealing with the ninth program in the series on prophet-hood in Islam. In the previous series on Monotheism or the oneness of Allah the concluding session focused on the practical application of monotheism on the thinking and life of the Muslim. Likewise in today's program we are starting the concluding portion of the series Prophet-hood in Islam by looking into some of the practical applications of the belief of all prophets on the thinking, the attitude and the actions of the Muslim.

More specifically what is the effect of the Muslim's belief in prophet-hood on his or her attitude towards non-Muslims?

Does the Qur'an contain any instructions on how he/she is to relate to others who are non-Muslims?

Is there any basis in the Qur'an for peaceful co-existence, what is the general rule and what are some of the exceptions concerning this relationship?

Jamal Badawi:

In the Qur'an, we find that the basic general rule between the Muslim and non-Muslim is very clearly spelled out. This is not the only citations, but is one of the key citations; the translation of the meaning reads "Allah forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for (your) Faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: for Allah loveth those who are just. Allah only forbids you, with regard to those who fight you for (your) Faith, and drive you out of

your homes, and support (others) in driving you out, from turning to them (for friendship and protection). It is such as turn to them (in these circumstances), that do wrong.” (60:8-9) There are three important observations on this text.

First, it is clearly stated that as a general rule the relationship between a Muslim and a Non-Muslim is that of justice and kindness or in other words peaceful co-existence. It is obvious, also, that if there is any deviation from that basic rule of friendship and fellowship it is only because of certain exceptional reasons. According to the verses I cited these reasons include people who are fighting others regarding their faith. An exception includes when one is fighting another because of their Muslim faith and trying to obliterate or destroy their religious identity.

The verse mentions the second exception ‘*those who drive you out of your homes.*’ This is specific to those who are engaged in actual violence and hostility against Muslims or those who are supporting others in driving Muslims out of their homes. I don’t think there is any sane person who can extend intimacy and friendship to those who are trying to destroy him/her.

The third observation on this is that there are two key phrases used in this citation, which can be explained further. The words are *tabarohum* and *tuqsitho illaihim*. The second term means to be ‘*just with them*’ so *justice* is one meaning. This means we can’t persecute people, take away their rights or hurt them simply because they are not Muslims. The first term is quite interesting *tabarohum* comes from the Arabic verb *bir* and this word doesn’t just connote justice and kindness it goes beyond that. *Bir* means everything that is good, decent, respectable and compassionate. To clarify that further, we find that in Islamic literature, especially in the Prophetic Tradition, the exact term *bir* is used between a person and his parents. In other words a person is supposed to have *bir* for his parents, which is a lot more than kindness it is a combination of kindness, decency, respect and compassion.

It is obvious then that on the basis of this general rule in the Qur’an any non-Muslim who accepts to have peaceful co-existence with Muslims is to be treated justly and kindly and friendship or fellowship may be extended to him/her. On the other hand it is also obvious and practical to say that those who promote hostility or hatred towards Muslims can’t expect to have this kind of intimacy or friendship.

Host: The verses that we have just been discussing seem to refer to the situation of non-Muslims in general are there are other verses that speak more specifically about the relationship between Muslims and Jews and Christians in particular?

Jamal Badawi:

Yes, there are but first of all lets not forget that the extension of the same justice and kindness as ordained in the Qur’an definitely include Jews and Christians in the verse that I cited before. The verse was general and applies to Jews, Christians and others. But just to satisfy the question over and above this general treatment of non-Muslims we find that the Qur’an calls Jews and Christians by a particular title. In Arabic the title is *Ahlul Kitab* translated literally to *People of the Book*. In fact, I

counted a minimum of twenty nine places in the Qur'an where the term the *People of the Book* is used to refer to Jews and Christians.

Then you may ask what the significance is of the Qur'an singling out Jews and Christians from among all non-Muslims with this particular term. The reason being is the word *Kitab* itself, which means Book, refers to scriptures. The title refers to people whose prophets received scriptures like the Torah and the Gospel. That in itself is the greatest manifestation of the special status given to this group of non-Muslims, Jews and Christians, because they are definitely closer to Muslims than other who disbelieve in God or believe in tribal gods or believe in multiplicity of gods. They are definitely closer because of four basic reasons.

First of all, in all these great faiths Judaism, Christianity and Islam there is one commonality: the belief in God or Allah (which means the supreme creator and sustainer of the universe). Figuratively speaking, the three religions believe in one supreme loving father. There may be differences with respect to issues like the trinity, for example, or Prophet Jesus being God's son, which are not accepted by Muslims and Jews. Again, that doesn't bear on the basic concept of believing in God.

Secondly, in all three faiths there is a belief in prophet-hood and that God sent messengers or prophets throughout history in order to guide humanity, to reconcile them to their creator and to guide them to the path of truth. Of course prophets die, but their message is never dead because the followers carry the message to others. So the death is physical but the messages of the prophets live on.

Thirdly, all three faiths believe in divine revelation and that scriptures are revealed to the prophets in order to guide humanity. Again, there may be differences as to which scripture is relatively more authentic and remains without change versus one that may have incorporated other philosophies and had omissions and additions over time. Yet, the belief in scriptures is common.

A fourth commonality is the belief in the law of punishment and reward, that is accountability, and the hereafter. People in the hereafter will be rewarded or punished depending on their belief and behavior and their compliance with the moral code, which has been echoed by all prophets throughout history, from Adam to the last prophet, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

So in that sense the areas that I described provide for a lot more commonality between Muslims on one hand and Jews and Christians on the other as distinct from atheists or polytheists.

Host: Sometimes the claim is made that there is a verse in the Qur'an, which actually implores or discourages the Muslims from befriending Jews and Christians as a rule? Is this true and if so how does that verse relate to the verses we have been discussing?

Jamal Badawi:

The verse cited earlier, is so conclusive and so clear that this is the general rule. If there is anything else in the Qur'an, it would have to be interpreted under that general rule. It seems that one of the main issues is when things are taken out of context and so would then have opposing meanings.

This reminds me of one verse in the Qur'an that says do not go to prayers when your mind is beclouded. So if you cite *do not approach prayer* (and leave out the rest of the verse) it means one should not pray which is the exact opposite meaning of what the verse intends. If someone says the Islamic testimony '*there is no God but one God*' but instead says *there is no God* and stops then the meanings are completely different. Everything must be taken in the proper context of the verses around it as well as with other supporting verses in the Qur'an.

The verse cited earlier is so clearly that there is no restriction on friendship so long as they do not fall within the exceptions. There is a verse in the Qur'an, in the fifth chapter, which may give the misleading impression that a Muslim is not supposed to befriend Jews and Christians.

Let's look into that verse as well as the following verse that is normally neglected when people quote this verse. This verse appears in Qur'an saying, "O ye who believe! take not the Jews and the Christians for your friends and protectors: They are but friends and protectors to each other. And he amongst you that turns to them (for friendship) is of them. Verily Allah guideth not a people unjust." (5:51) Some people quote this and forget to quote the following verse, which really makes it clear as to which conditions this would be applicable.

The Qur'an goes on to say, "Those in whose hearts' is a disease - thou seest how eagerly they run about amongst them, saying: "We do fear lest a change of fortune bring us disaster." Ah! perhaps Allah will give (thee) victory, or a decision according to His will. Then will they repent of the thoughts which they secretly harboured in their hearts." (5:52)

When we refer to the interpretation of the Qur'an that is tied to the reason for that revelation and the conditions it deals specifically with some of the hypocritical people who were within the ranks of Muslims. These people would claim to be Muslim on the surface however they expected the non-Muslims, who were at the time in conflict with the Muslims, to achieve victory. So they tried to keep this friendship with the non-Muslims secret even though they were fighting and trying to obliterate the Muslims in the hope that if the Muslims are winners then they are accepted as such and if the non-Muslims win they would go back to them as supporters. It is obvious then that what the Qur'an is condemning is this kind of duplicity and hypocrisy.

There is something more important than this also and it goes back to the original words used in the Qur'an. If we refer to the first verse it says don't take Jews and Christians *awlia'a* doesn't necessarily just mean friends actually the closer meaning is what Yusuf Ali (translated the Qur'anic verses above) included as an explanatory term 'protectors.' The word is actually much closer in meaning to protectors than friendship. There are lots of verses in the Qur'an that confirm this meaning of *awlia'a* as protector. This means that one can't depend on the defenses of those who show open hostility towards them.

Finally, maybe I should add the point that this deals with communal relationships when there are Muslims and non-Muslims engaged in hostility (war). It is very ironic, as many Muslim jurists pointed out, that this verse is to apply to every individual Jew or Christian. This is definitely far from the intention behind these verses and contradictory to other instructions that appear in the Qur'an. So in this sense one can't say that this last verse applies to a Jew or Christian who is a decent neighbor, colleague or acquaintance. This is the problem with partial quotations or quotations that are taken out of context.

Host: I wonder if you may take some time to share with us a few more verse from the Qur'an which confirm the statement that friendship and co-existence is a rule in Islam and the restrictions that are placed on this are the exceptions.

Jamal Badawi:

I'll refer to three passages in the Qur'an. The first one states, "O ye who believe! Take not into your intimacy those outside your ranks: They will not fail to corrupt you. They only desire your ruin: Rank hatred has already appeared from their mouths: What their hearts conceal is far worse. We have made plain to you the Signs, if ye have wisdom. Ah! ye are those who love them, but they love you not,- though ye believe in the whole of the Book. When they meet you, they say, "We believe": But when they are alone, they bite off the very tips of their fingers at you in their rage. Say: "Perish in you rage; Allah knoweth well all the secrets of the heart." If aught that is good befalls you, it grieves them; but if some misfortune overtakes you, they rejoice at it. But if ye are constant and do right, not the least harm will their cunning do to you; for Allah Compasseth round about all that they do." (3:118-120) In this passage there is a problem with the translation. What is mentioned here are only concerning the people who are bent on corrupting Muslims, who really envy or have bad feelings towards them and who take any chance to ruin and destroy Muslims. This passage is highly specific and does not relate to the general public.

The second passage instructs Muslims, "O ye who believe! Take not my enemies and yours as friends (or protectors),- offering them (your) love, even though they have rejected the Truth that has come to you, and have (on the contrary) driven out the Prophet and yourselves (from your homes), (simply) because ye believe in Allah your Lord!" (60:1) This again is a reference to those who again harbor aggressiveness towards Muslims and actually participate in driving them out of their homes.

The third and final passage is the verse, which shows again that Muslims should not have intimate relationship with those who are not sincere to God or those who are fighting or offending God, which of course would not apply to any sincere believer regardless of his faith, even if they are friends or relatives. The passage says, "Thou wilt not find any people who believe in Allah and the Last Day, loving those who resist Allah and His Messenger, even though they were their fathers or their sons, or their brothers, or their kindred." (58:22) Then the verse continues on praising the people who refuse to have intimacy with those who offend God or resist God and the truth.

Host: In the exceptions that you have cited is there room for reconciliation?

Jamal Badawi:

There is no question about that, in fact if there is any restriction on friendship and fellowship with any non-Muslim, especially Jews and Christians, it has to be regarded as temporary. Since it is by exception for certain reasons if the reasons are removed then friendship can be extended. We find this very noble rule in the following verse, "It may be that Allah will grant love (and friendship) between you and those whom ye (now) hold as enemies. For Allah has power (over all things); And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." (60:7)

Something that is even more interesting and shows the attitude of Islam towards those who wrong them with the right to defend themselves and their existence but still the appeal to turning evil into good, which would lead to the improvement of the situation. I refer in particular to the following passage, "Who is better in speech than one who calls (men) to Allah, works righteousness, and says, "I am of those who bow in Islam"? Nor can goodness and Evil be equal. Repel (Evil) with what is better: Then will he between whom and thee was hatred become as it were thy friend and intimate! And no one will be granted such goodness except those who exercise patience and self-restraint,- none but persons of the greatest good fortune." (41:33-34) It shows very clearly as Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said that "goodness, is not to be good to one who is good to you, but goodness is to do good to some one who has wronged you."

Host: Now besides the appeals that are made in the Qur'an for charity and forgiveness towards fellow non-Muslims is there anything in Islamic law that corroborates or substantiates this attitude and give practical application for what the Qur'an says?

Jamal Badawi:

There is a verse in the Qur'an, in the same chapter as the passage referred to earlier that provided the restriction on friendship under certain circumstances, which says "This day are (all) things good and pure made lawful unto you. The food of the People of the Book is lawful unto you and yours is lawful unto them. (Lawful unto you in marriage) are (not only) chaste women who are believers, but chaste women among the People of the Book, revealed before your time,- when ye give them their due dowers, and desire chastity, not lewdness, nor secret intrigues if any one rejects faith, fruitless is his work, and in the Hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost (all spiritual good)." (5:5)

In this verse what it really says is that a Muslim is permitted to eat the slaughtered animals of the Jews and Christians. As you know in Islamic law, one is not permitted to eat the same meat if an atheist or polytheist slaughtered it. So this is something that relates to dietary laws that considers the People of the Book closer to Islam and as

such it is lawful to eat their food and especially the meat they slaughter. But perhaps the noblest evidence that there is an attitude of openness and tolerance to followers of other faiths is the question of marriage. According to that very verse, it says that a Muslim man may also marry a Jewish or Christian woman. What could be closer in terms of intimacy and friendship than the noble relationship of marriage of which the Qur'an says, "And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are Signs for those who reflect."
(30:21)