

man was first created. There was no time when man was only a living organic entity, then the spirit entered into his constitution to make of him the man we see today.

Neo-Darwinism, and its main advocate, Julian Huxley, have been forced to admit a part of this great fact. In this respect, it admits the uniqueness of man, and his ability to establish human civilization. Nevertheless, neo-Darwinism continues to claim that this unique human being has evolved from the animal kingdom.

It is very hard to reconcile this view of neo-Darwinism which admits the uniqueness of man with the essential concept of evolution advanced by Darwin. Yet all evolutionists adamantly persist with this attitude, giving it false scientific guise. This is only because they try to break away from the Church and whatever view it advances. The Jews have always encouraged and promoted this concept, endorsing it as scientific, because it serves their ultimate goal.

We have already discussed this point when commenting on a similar text in *Sūrah* 7, *The Heights*. It is useful to quote here from those comments:

The total import of Qur'ānic statements that speak of the creation of Adam (peace be upon him) and the start of human life indicates very strongly that this particular creation was given its human characteristic and special tasks at the time of its coming into existence. Evolution in human history took the form of developing these characteristics and gaining further experience in utilizing them. It is not an evolution of existence which suggests, as Darwinism would like us to believe, that a process of evolution of species has reached its climax with the advent of man.

There might have been stages of advanced animals, with one coming after the other, as evidenced by the theory of natural selection. But this is no more than a theory that does not aspire to any degree of certainty, because the estimation of the ages of rocks in geological strata is again a theoretical process. It is the same as estimating the ages of different stars and planets on the basis of the characteristics of their rays. Future discoveries may amend or change these theories.

But even if we were to learn the ages of rocks with absolute certainty, there is nothing to prevent the existence of different species of animals, some of which are higher than others, in different time periods, and that their advancement makes them particularly suited for the prevailing circumstances. Some of them may disappear when circumstances change drastically to make it difficult for the earth to sustain their existence. That does not make it inevitable that these species have evolved one from the other. All the studies and observations of Charles Darwin and those who followed him cannot prove more than that. They cannot say with any certainty that one species evolved from a preceding one, on the basis of fossils and where they have been found. It simply proves that a subsequent species was higher than a preceding one. This can easily be explained as we have already said: the prevailing

circumstances at one particular time allowed the existence of one species. The circumstances subsequently prevailing allowed the existence of another species and the disappearance of the first one.

All this means that the appearance of human beings was independent of other species. It took place at a time when the prevailing circumstances on earth facilitated the existence, development and advancement of this particular type of creation. This is the total sum of the Qur'ānic statements on the creation of man.

The fact that biologically, physiologically, mentally and spiritually, man has unique characteristics is so clear that it has been acknowledged by neo-Darwinists who include a number of atheists. This uniqueness also supports the view that human existence was totally independent of the existence of all other species. It simply has no biological inter-relationship with them.⁷

An Eternal Hostility

The unique method of creation which led to the emergence of man, a creature with its own separate existence, is the fact that God breathed in him of His own spirit. This gives us a totally different picture of man and his 'essential needs' from those of all materialistic philosophies, with all the economic, social and political doctrines they produce and all the concepts and values they advance for human life.

The claim that man is nothing but an advanced animal species that has evolved from lower animals lies at the heart of the concept promoted in the Marxist Declaration that the essential needs of man are: food, drink, shelter and sex. These are certainly the basic needs of animals. Man cannot be given a more degrading position than what this outlook assigns to him. All his rights that are derived from the fact that he is unlike animals, since he has his unique human qualities, are thus denied to him. He is denied his freedom of belief, thought and expression, and his right to choose his profession and where to live, as well as his right to criticize the system of government and its intellectual basis. Indeed he is denied even the right to criticize the party in power, or those who are even less than the party, such as despotic rulers in hateful dictatorial regimes that treat human beings as though they are no more than a flock of sheep. After all, human beings, in materialistic philosophies, are no different from animals from whom they had at one time evolved. All this misery is then ennobled as 'scientific socialism'.

The Islamic concept of man, based on man's special, distinctive qualities, considers that the basic needs of man are different from those of animals. Food, drink, shelter and sex do not constitute the total sum of his basic needs. His intellectual and

⁷ Sayyid Quṭb, *In the Shade of the Qur'ān*, Vol. VI, pp. 36

spiritual needs are by no means of secondary importance. Faith, freedom of thought, will and choice are also basic needs that must be placed in the same category as food, drink, shelter and sex. Indeed, these other needs are of a higher position, because these are the ones that man needs while animals do not. In other words, these are the ones that emphasize his humanity. When he is denied these, his humanity itself is denied.

Thus, in the Islamic system, freedom of faith, thought and expression, choice and will cannot be denied for the sake of increased production so that food, drink, shelter and sex are provided for humans! Nor is it permissible that moral values, as established by God, not by tradition, environment or economy, be denied in order to meet the animal needs of man.

The two outlooks are essentially different in their evaluation of man and his basic needs. Hence, they can never be reconciled in a single system. It is either Islam or materialistic doctrines with all their oppressive products, including what they call 'scientific socialism'. Indeed 'scientific socialism' is just another sordid product of materialism which degrades man whom God Himself has honoured.

The eternal battle between Satan and man on this earth is one in which Satan tries his best to lead man away from what submission to God alone entails in accepting His faith, concepts, worship, systems and laws. Human beings who submit to God alone, which means they worship Him only, are the ones over whom Satan has no power whatsoever. It is God who says to Satan, as related in this story of creation: *"This is, with Me, a straight way. You shall have no power over My servants, except for those who, having fallen into error, choose to follow you."* (Verses 41-42)

The point which separates those who follow the road to heaven, promised to the righteous, and those who follow the path leading to hell, which is the abode of evildoers, is that of submission to God. This is always referred to in the Qur'ān as worship. The alternative is to follow what Satan paints as fair and thus not submit to God. It should be pointed out here that Satan himself did not deny God's existence or His attributes. So, he did not disbelieve in Him, so to speak. What he did was to refuse to submit to Him. That is the point at issue which sends Satan and his followers to hell.

Submission to God is the central point of Islam. If those who claim to follow Islam submit to anyone other than God in a single rule, whether it relates to faith, concepts, worship, law or moral standards and values, then their claim is worthless. Islam means submission to God alone in all these. Submission to anyone else means sinking back into *jāhiliyyah*. It is not possible to separate this submission so as to make it applicable only to faith and worship, but not to systems and laws. Submission to God must be acknowledged in its totality. Such submission means

worshipping God, in both its linguistic and Islamic senses. It is over such submission that the eternal battle between man and Satan is fought.

Finally we come to what God touchingly says about the righteous: *"The God-fearing shall dwell amidst gardens and fountains. [They are received with the greeting]: 'Enter here in peace and security.' We shall have removed from their hearts any lurking feelings of malice, [and they shall rest) as brothers, facing one another, on couches. No weariness shall ever touch them there, nor shall they ever be made to depart."* (Verses 45-48)

This religion does not try to change human nature or to make mankind a different sort of creation. It acknowledges that in this life people experience malice and grudges. This is part of their human nature which faith does not totally eradicate. It simply works on it to reduce its intensity, and then elevates its domain so that believers love and hate for God's sake only. But in heaven, where their humanity attains its most sublime standard, the very sense of malice and grudge is removed. Here, people experience only pure love and brotherhood.

This is the supreme standard of the people of heaven. If someone finds that it dominates his feelings in this life, then he should look forward to being in heaven in the hereafter, as long as he is a believer. This is the essential condition which gives every action its true value.

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Lessons of History

Tell My servants that I alone am Much Forgiving, truly Merciful; (49)

and also, My punishment is indeed the most grievous suffering. (50)

Tell them about Abraham's guests, (51)

when they went in to him and said: 'Peace.' But he replied: 'We feel afraid of you.' (52)

They said: 'Do not be alarmed. We bring you the happy news of the birth of a son to you who will be endowed with knowledge.' (53)

Said he: 'Do you give me this happy news when I have been overtaken by old age? Of what, then, is your good news?' (54)

They replied: 'That good news we have given you is the truth. So do not abandon hope.' (55)

He said: 'Who but a person going far astray abandons hope of His Lord's

﴿ نَبِيَّ عِبَادِي أَنِّي أَنَا الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴾

﴿ ٤٩ ﴾

﴿ وَأَنَّ عَذَابِي هُوَ الْعَذَابُ الْأَلِيمُ ﴾

﴿ وَنَبَّيْنَاهُمْ عَنْ ضَيْفِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ﴾

﴿ إِذْ دَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ فَقَالُوا سَلَامًا قَالَ إِنَّا مِنْكُمْ وَجِلُونَ ﴾

﴿ ٥٢ ﴾

﴿ قَالُوا لَا تَوْجَلْ إِنَّا نُبَشِّرُكَ بِغُلْمٍ عَلَيْمِ ﴾

﴿ ٥٣ ﴾

﴿ قَالَ أَبَشَّرْتُمُونِي عَلَىٰ أَنْ مَسَّنِيَ الْكِبَرُ ﴾

﴿ فَبِمَ تَبَشِّرُونَ ﴾

﴿ قَالُوا بَشِّرْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ فَلَا تَكُن مِّنَ الْقَاطِئِينَ ﴾

﴿ ٥٥ ﴾

﴿ قَالَ وَمَنْ يَقْنَطُ مِن رَّحْمَةِ رَبِّهِ إِلَّا الضَّالُّونَ ﴾

﴿ ٥٦ ﴾

grace?’ (56)

[Abraham] said: ‘What is your business, you [heavenly] messengers?’ (57)

They replied: ‘We are sent to a guilty nation, (58)

except for Lot’s household, all of whom we shall save, (59)

except for his wife. We have decreed that she should remain with those who stay behind.’ (60)

And when the messengers [of God] came to the house of Lot, (61)

he said: ‘You are unknown here.’ (62)

They answered: ‘No, but we bring you news of that over which they have been disputing. (63)

We are bringing you the certainty [of its fulfilment], for we are speaking the truth indeed. (64)

Depart with your household in the dead of night, with yourself following them in the rear. Let none of you look back, but proceed to where you are commanded.’ (65)

And We made plain the case to him, that the last remnant of those [wrongdoers] will

قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكُمْ أَيُّهَا الْمُرْسَلُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾

قَالُوا إِنَّا أُرْسِلْنَا إِلَىٰ قَوْمٍ مُّجْرِمِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾

إِلَّا ءَالَ لُوطٍ إِنَّا لَمُنَجُّوهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٥٩﴾

﴿٥٩﴾

إِلَّا امْرَأَتَهُ قَدَرْنَا ۖ إِنَّمَا لِمَنِ الْغَابِرِينَ ﴿٦٠﴾

﴿٦٠﴾

فَلَمَّا جَاءَ ءَالَ لُوطٍ الْمُرْسَلُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

قَالَ إِنَّكُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّنكَرُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾

قَالُوا بَلْ جِئْنَاكَ بِمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ

يَمْتَرُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾

وَأَتَيْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّا لَصَادِقُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾

فَأَسْرِبْ أَهْلِكَ بِقِطْعٍ مِّنَ اللَّيْلِ وَاتَّبِعْ

أَدْبَارَهُمْ وَلَا يَلْتَفِتْ مِنكُمْ أَحَدٌ وَامْضُوا

حَيْثُ تُؤْمَرُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾

وَقَضَيْنَا إِلَيْهِ ذَٰلِكَ الْأَمْرَ أَنَّ دَابِرَ

هَٰؤُلَاءِ مَقْطُوعٌ مُّصْبِحِينَ ﴿٦٦﴾

be wiped out by the morning. (66)

The people of the city came [to Lot] rejoicing [at the news of the young people]. (67)

Said he: 'These are my guests: so do not put me to shame. (68)

Fear God and do not bring disgrace on me.' (69)

They replied: 'Have we not forbidden you to entertain any people?' (70)

He said: 'Here are these daughters of mine [to marry], if you must do [what you intend to do.]' (71)

By your life, they were reeling in their drunkenness, (72)

when the blast [of punishment] overtook them at sunrise, (73)

and We turned those [towns] upside down, and rained on them stones of clay. (74)

Surely in this there are messages for those who read the signs. (75)

Those [towns] stood on a road that is trodden still. (76)

In all this there is a sign for true believers. (77)

The dwellers of the wooded dales [of Madyan] were also wrongdoers, (78)

and so We punished them. Both these [communities] lived by an open highway,

وَجَاءَ أَهْلَ الْمَدِينَةِ يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾

قَالَ إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ ضَيْفِي فَلَا تَفْضَحُونِ ﴿٦٧﴾

﴿٦٨﴾

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُخْزُونِ ﴿٦٩﴾

قَالُوا أَوْلَمَ نَنْهَكَ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٧٠﴾

قَالَ هَؤُلَاءِ بَنَاتِي إِنْ كُنْتُمْ فَعَالِينَ ﴿٧١﴾

لَعَمْرُكَ إِنَّهُمْ لَفِي سَكْرَتِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾

فَأَخَذْتَهُمُ الصَّيْحَةَ مُشْرِقِينَ ﴿٧٣﴾

فَجَعَلْنَا عَلَيْهَا سَافِلَهَا وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ

حِجَارَةً مِّن سِجِّيلٍ ﴿٧٤﴾

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّمَتَوَسِّمِينَ ﴿٧٥﴾

وَإِنَّهَا لِبَسِيبٍ مُّقِيمٍ ﴿٧٦﴾

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٧٧﴾

وَإِنْ كَانَ أَصْحَابُ الْأَيْكَةِ لظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٧٨﴾

فَأَنْتَقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ وَإِنَّهُمْ لِبِإِمَامٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٧٩﴾

plain to see. (79)

Likewise, the people of al-Ĥijr also denied [God's] messengers. (80)

We have given them Our signs, but they turned their backs on them. (81)

Out of the mountains did they hew their dwellings, leading a life of security. (82)

But the blast [of punishment] overtook them at early morning. (83)

Of no avail to them was all that they had acquired. (84)

وَلَقَدْ كَذَّبَ أَصْحَابُ الْحِجْرِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ



وَأَتَيْنَهُمْ آيَاتِنَا فَكَانُوا عَنْهَا مُعْرِضِينَ



وَكَانُوا يَنْحِتُونَ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا



فَأَخَذْتَهُمُ الصَّيْحَةُ مُصْبِحِينَ



فَمَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ



Overview

This rather long passage refers to some examples of God's mercy and the punishment He inflicts. These include how Abraham was given in his old age the happy news of a son to be born to him, and how Lot and his household, except his wife, were saved from the fate that befell the wrongdoers. They also include a reference to the fateful punishments that befell the people of the Madyan and those of al-Ĥijr.

All these stories occur after an introduction that says: "Tell My servants that I alone am Much Forgiving, truly Merciful; and also, My punishment is indeed the most grievous suffering." (Verses 49-50) Some of them thus confirm what has been said about God's mercy, and some confirm that His punishment is grievous indeed. These stories also refer to what is mentioned at the opening of the *sūrah*, confirming the warning it contains: "Let them eat and enjoy themselves, and let their hopes beguile them. For they will surely come to know [the truth]. Never have We destroyed any community unless divine revelations have been made known to it. No community can ever forestall its term, nor can they delay it." (Verses 3-5) These were examples of cities destroyed by God after they ignored all the warnings they had received. Their punishment only befell them after the time they were given had lapsed. The stories we have in this passage also confirm

what is mentioned earlier in the *sūrah* concerning the angels and their mission when they are sent with God's orders: *"They say: 'You to whom this reminder has been bestowed from on high! You are truly mad. Why do you not bring the angels before us, if you are truthful?' We never send down angels except in accordance with the truth. And then, [the unbelievers] would be given no further respite."* (Verses 6-8)

All this goes to show that the whole *sūrah* is a single unit, with every part confirming the rest. This observation we make in spite of the fact that most *sūrahs* were revealed in parts, with the possibility that later verses were often revealed before earlier ones. Yet the final ordering of the verses of each *sūrah* is made in accordance with divine instructions. Hence, there must be a clear purpose in such order. We have learnt some aspects of the wisdom behind the ordering of verses in the *sūrahs* we have discussed. Each of them appears clearly as a complete and perfect structure. Yet what we say is only a personal point of view, while true knowledge belongs to God alone. We pray to Him to guide us to what is right.

Abraham's Visitors

"Tell My servants that I alone am Much Forgiving, truly Merciful; and also, My punishment is indeed the most grievous suffering." (Verses 49-50) This order to the Prophet (peace be upon him) comes after the reward of God-fearing believers and the punishment of wrongdoers are mentioned. The link is self-evident. But God's mercy and forgiveness are mentioned before the punishment, because they fit in with the grace God has committed Himself to bestow. Sometimes, only the punishment and suffering are mentioned, or they are given precedence in the text, but that is only because there is special need for such treatment.

We are then given an account of the encounter between the Prophet Abraham and the angels sent to Lot. This episode is mentioned several times in the Qur'ān, each time in a different way which fits the context in which it occurs. The story of Lot alone is also mentioned in other places.

For example, Lot's story is covered in *Sūrah* 7, The Heights, and a different account of Abraham and Lot's story is given in *Sūrah* 11, Hūd. In the first we have a denunciation by Lot of the indecent practices of his community, and their reply to him: *"Drive them [i.e. Lot and his household] out of your land, for they are indeed people who would keep chaste."* (7: 82) It also refers to saving him and his household, except his wife who was destined to stay behind with those who were to be destroyed. There is no mention of the angels coming to him or the scheme of his people against them. In the second instance, a totally different layout is given to the story of the angels with Abraham and Lot. There we have more details concerning Abraham and the happy news he was given in the presence of his wife. There is also a mention of his

argument with the angels concerning Lot and his community, which is not mentioned here. Different lines are adopted in the two *sūrah*s in relating the events concerning the angels and Lot. In *Sūrah Hūd* the angels do not reveal their identity to him until his people arrived, and he had pleaded with them to spare his guests, but all his pleas fell on deaf ears. When he despaired of them, he cried out in distress: *"Would that with you I had real strength, or that I could lean on some mighty support."* (11: 80) Here in this *sūrah*, the identity of the angels is revealed right at the outset, while the design of his people against his guests is mentioned later. The point here is not to mention the story as it took place, but the confirmation of the warnings, emphasizing that when angels are sent down, their task is to inflict the punishment, giving people no further respite.

Tell them about Abraham's guests, when they went in to him and said: Peace.' But he replied: 'We feel afraid of you.' They said: Do not be alarmed. We bring you the happy news of the birth of a son to you who will be endowed with knowledge.' Said he: 'Do you give me this happy news when I have been overtaken by old age? Of what, then, is your good news?' They replied: 'That good news we have given you is the truth. So do not abandon hope.' He said: 'Who but a person going far astray abandons hope of His Lord's grace? (Verses 51-56)

In this account some of the details mentioned in other *sūrah*s are left out. The angels greet Abraham with a message of peace as they enter, but he tells them he is apprehensive about them. The *sūrah* does not mention the reason for his fear, nor does it mention that he placed a roasted calf before them, as mentioned in *Sūrah 11, Hūd*. There we are told: *"When he saw that their hands did not reach out to it, he felt their conduct strange and became apprehensive of them."* (11: 70) The point of emphasis here is that God's grace is always bestowed on God's servants, as made clear by His messengers. Hence the details of Abraham's story are of little importance. *"They said: 'Do not be alarmed. We bring you the happy news of the birth of a son to you who will be endowed with knowledge.'" (Verse 53)* The *sūrah* outlines this happy news without much detail of what else took place.

Here also we have Abraham's reply, without mentioning his wife and her intervention in the discussion that ensued: *"Said he: 'Do you give me this happy news when I have been overtaken by old age? Of what, then, is your good news?'" (Verse 54)* First Abraham feels it unlikely that he would be given a son at his old age, particularly with his wife also being old and barren as mentioned in other *sūrah*s. Therefore, the angels remind him of the truth: *"They replied: 'That good news we have given you is the truth. So do not abandon hope.'" (Verse 55)* Abraham immediately returns to his normal hopeful self, stating that he never lost hope of God's grace: *"He said: 'Who but a person going far astray abandons hope of His Lord's grace?'" (Verse 56)*