

1) How Was This Long Life Granted To Al-Mahdi?

In other words, is it possible for a man to live for many centuries, as is the case with the Expected Leader, for the change of the world, whose age must be actually one thousand one hundred and forty years, or fourteen times the average age of an ordinary person who would pass through the phases of life from childhood to old age normally.

The word possibility here has one of the three following meanings, namely. Practical possibility, scientific possibility and philosophical or logical possibility.

I mean by practical possibility that a task is feasible in a manner that enables me, you or a third person to perform it, such as taking a journey across the ocean, reaching the depth of the sea or going to the moon , all of which are practically possible since they have actually been performed by people in one way or another.

By scientific possibility I mean that there are some tasks that neither I nor you nor a third person can practically perform with the means that are accessible to present civilization. However there is nothing in the alterable trends of science which can indicate a justification for the rejection of the possibility of these tasks and their occurrence conforming to certain special circumstances and means.

For example, there is nothing in science that could deny the possibility of travelling to Venus, because all its existing trends indicate the possibility of such a task, although that is still not possible for me or you. Since the difference between going to the moon and travelling to Venus is only one of degree. The latter representing a stage of overcoming some relative difficulties stemming from the fact that the distance is longer. From this we deduce that it is scientifically possible to travel to Venus even if it is still not feasible from a practical angle.

Contrary to that is the idea of travelling to the sun in distant space since it is scientifically impossible, meaning that science would never entertain the possibility of this task, for one cannot assume scientifically or empirically the possibility of inventing that preventive armour that could protect the body

against the heat of the sun which is like an enormous kiln constantly burning with a degree impossible to imagine.

By logical or philosophical possibility I mean that there is nothing in the intellect, conforming to what it knows of previous laws – (preceding the experiment) – that could justify the rejection of a task nor decide that it could not occur.

Say, for example, the grouping of three oranges into two equal parts, this is logically impossible, since the intellect knows – before carrying out such an experiment – that three is an odd number, thus it is impossible to divide it into two equal parts, first it would turn into an even number, which would be a contradiction, which is impossible in logic.

But if a man were to be exposed to fire, or if he were to go to the sun without burning, that would not be impossible from a logical point of view, since there is no contradiction in the assumption that heat does not penetrate into a body of lower temperature from one of higher temperature.

That would only run contrary to the experiment which proved that heat actually penetrates into a body of lower temperature from one of higher temperature until both bodies get an equal temperature.

Therefore, we come to realize that logical possibility has a wider scope than scientific possibility and that the latter is wider than practical possibility.

There is no doubt about the logical possibility of the prolongation of human life for some thousands of years, because that is not impossible from an abstract intellectual point of view, also there is no contradiction in an assumption of this sort, since life as it is understood does not fathom sudden death and no one can dispute this fact.

Also, there is no doubt or controversy that this prolonged life is not possible from the practical aspect, as is the case in going down to the depths of the ocean or ascending to the moon. That is because science with what it owns of modern means and instruments, that were made available by concomitant human experiments, cannot prolong human life for hundreds of years, this is why we find that even those among people who are more eager about life and more able to utilize scientific possibilities can only live to the extent of what is usual.

As far as Scientific possibility is concerned, there is nothing in science, nowadays which could justify the denial of that fact from a theoretical point of view. This inquiry is in reality related to the nature of the physiological interpretation of the phenomenon of old-age and decrepitude among people.

Does this phenomenon indicate a natural law that compels the tissues of the human body and its cells to harden gradually and become less efficient in the performance of their task once they have reached the summit of their growth, until they die at a particular moment, even if we were to isolate them from the influence of some external failure?

Or is this hardening of the bodily tissues and cells and the lack of efficiency in the performance of their physiological tasks a result of their struggle against certain external factors, such as microbes or poison that penetrate the body from an excess in food or from the heavy work that the person might perform or any other factor.

Now this is the question that science has to find an answer to, yet many answers present themselves on a scientific level in this respect.

If we are to consider the scientific point of view that tends to interpret old-age and the weakness that goes with it, as a result of reactions against some external factors, it means that it is theoretically possible, once we have isolated the tissues that compose the body from these influences, to prolong life to the extent of surpassing the phenomenon of old-age and even overcoming it.

On the other hand, if we consider the other point of view which sees old-age as a natural process with regards to the living tissues and cells, it will mean that they bear within themselves the seed of their own ultimate death, once the phase of old-age has been completed.

I say: If we take this point of view into consideration it should not mean that there is no flexibility in this natural law, rather the assumption of its existence shows that it is in fact flexible, Since we find in our everyday life, in addition to what has been found by scientists through the experiments that they carry out in their laboratories, that old – age as a physiological phenomenon has no fixed time, since a man can be very old and yet possess tender limbs, with no trace of old- age appearing on him as has been mentioned by some doctors. Moreover some scientists take advantage of this flexibility and prolong the life of some animals by a hundred times their natural age, by creating certain circumstances and factors that delay the process. of old-age.

Thus it has been proved scientifically that this process can be postponed, by creating specific circumstances and factors, even if this experiment has not been carried out by science on a particular complicated creature such as the human being, owing to the difference in the difficulty of carrying it out on the human being and other organisms.

This means that, from a theoretical point of view, science, with all its alterable orientations, has never had any objection to the prolongation of human life, whether old-age has been interpreted as the product of a struggle and close contact with some external influences, or as a result of a natural process of the cells and tissues that leads them towards their death.

Thus we deduce that the prolongation of human life and its survival over many centuries is possible logically as well as scientifically but it is still impossible from a practical angle, and that nevertheless scientific progress has a long way to go before realizing this possibility.

In light of what has been discussed we shall deal with the age of al-Mahdi (peace be upon him) and what has been surrounding it of wonder and surprise.

Thus we notice that since the possibility of this prolonged life has been confirmed both logically and scientifically, science is in the process of gradually transforming the theoretical possibility into a practical one. There is no room left for wonder except the remoteness of the probability that al-Mahdi might have preceded science in this transformation, before that the latter could have, in its evolutionary course, reached the standard of actual capacity for such a transformation, which would make him equal to that person who had preceded science in discovering the cure for cancer.

The question now is – How could Islam which determined the age of the Expected Leader – have preceded science in the field of this transformation?

The answer is that this is not the only field in which Islam preceded science. Has the Islamic *shari'ah* (revealed law) as a whole not come before science and the evolution of human thought by many centuries? Did it not promulgate certain symbols that submitted plans to be put into practice, which man could achieve only after hundreds of years of his independent activity?

Did it not formulate certain regulations perfect in wisdom, the secrets of which were realized by man only after a certain length of time? Did the Divine message not reveal mysteries about the universe, that could never have occurred to people's minds, which science came later to confirm and support?

So, if we are convinced by these facts why then should we regard as too much that the sender of this message – the Exalted – anticipates science in determining the age of al-Mahdi?

Here I mentioned only those aspects of precedence that we can notice in a direct manner, we can also include the aspects of precedence mentioned in the Divine message, for example, when it informs us about the night journey which the Prophet undertook from al-Haram Mosque to al-Aqsa Mosque. If we are to understand this journey within the frame of natural laws, we will find that it shows that these laws were utilized in a way that science could achieve only after hundreds of years.

Therefore, the same Divine knowledge which enabled the Messenger (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his progeny) to undertake this fast motion before science could achieve it, has also enabled his designated successors to have a prolonged life before science could realize such a project.

Certainly, this prolonged age that Allah, the Exalted, has bestowed on the Expected Saviour may seem rather strange, if it is considered within the limits of the everyday in people's lives and what has been achieved by the experiments of scientists. But is the decisive and transformative role which has been prepared for this Saviour not strange within the limits of the ordinary in people's lives and what they have experienced of historical evolution?

Has he not been entrusted with the task of changing the world and rebuilding its civilization on the basis of justice and truth? Why should we disapprove if the preparation of this great role is characterized by strange and unusual aspects, such as the prolongation of the Expected Leader's age? For this remoteness of those aspects and their unusual aspects, however great they are, cannot surpass the

remoteness of the great role that has to be achieved on the appointed day?

Therefore, if we approve the validity of that unique role from a historical angle in spite of the fact that there has never been in the history of humanity a role similar to it, why should not we also approve that prolonged age which is still unique in our ordinary life?

I wonder if it is a coincidence that only two individuals should carry out the task of emptying human civilization of its corrupt elements and rebuilding it, which means that they must have been of an excessive age many times superior to our ordinary lives. The first is Nuh (Noah) who had assumed his role in the humanity's past. The Qur'an mentioned that he had lived among his people for nine hundred and fifty years. His role was to reconstruct the world after the Great Flood.

The other one is al-Mahdi, who is to assume his role in the future, who has lived among his people until now for more than a thousand years. It has been ordained that he will reconstruct the world on the appointed day.

Why then should we accept Noah, who must have reached a thousand years at least, and yet reject al-Mahdi?

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