

UNDERSTANDING THE QURAN

THEMES AND STYLE

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CHAPTER 9:

THE FACE, DIVINE AND HUMAN, IN THE QURAN

The face is the vital and most quintessential part of a person. Biologically, in addition to the forehead, cheeks and chin, it contains the eyes, the nose, the mouth and the ears. This means that the senses of sight, hearing, smell and taste are sited in the face, together with the biological functions of breathing and feeding and the social function of verbal communication.

The face, moreover, plays a most prominent role in non-verbal signalling. Facial expressions supplement and support speech: emotions like happiness, fear, anger, surprise and interpersonal attitudes such as liking/dislike, or inferiority/superiority, are shown on the face. Such organs and functions are effectively gathered in one prominent place at the front of the body. Consequently the face is probably the area most noticed, instantly recognised and the one that identifies a person. Because of the importance and attention given to the face people take special care to clean and beautify their faces.

The face gives a person an identity and affects what others think of his or her personality: 'We categorize one another in terms of personality. There are many different features of the face which affect impressions of personality.' The face of a person also means his/her presence. A person is present above all by virtue of his face, we deal with him mainly through the face, as he 'faces' us, we say in Arabic: 'Never show your face around here again!' His face stands for what he projects himself to be. Thus, we talk of *dhi'l-wajhayn*, the 'two-faced' person. 'Facing' means being active, confronting a situation and dealing with it, as well as taking a specific orientation, direction or course. In Arabic also face, orientation and direction have the same root (w-j-h): *wajh* (face), *wijha* (direction), *ittijah*, *jiha* (orientation, direction). As we shall see in the Qur'an, you 'set your face to', means that you 'take', or 'adhere to' a course; to 'surrender one's face to God' means to follow His teachings wholeheartedly, and go in the direction He ordains. Because of the vital functions of the face as the frontier of the senses and as it stands for the identity and presence of a person, the word in Arabic also stands for his dignity: you honour someone's face, and you act *li-wajhillah* (i.e. for the sake of God, in honour of the Face of God). Accordingly, to

save someone's dignity you may take a face-saving measure; conversely, a person can lose face, in Arabic *araq ma' wajhih* – literally 'spilt out the water of his face', i.e. sold his honour. Because of the prominence and dignity of the face, *wajh* (face)/*wajih* in Arabic means the chief or the dignitary of a community. When the angels told Mary that God was giving her the good news that she would have a son, the Messiah, they said he would be *wajih* – illustrious in this world and the next; one of those brought near to God

3:45

إِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُبَشِّرُكِ بِكَلِمَةٍ مِنْهُ اسْمُهُ الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ وَجِيهًا
فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ

Lo! The angels said: "O Mary! Behold, God sends thee the glad tiding, through a word from Him, [of a son] who shall become known as the Christ Jesus, son of Mary, of great honour in this world and in the life to come, and [shall be] of those who are drawn near unto God.).

By turning your face to someone, you show respect and attention; by turning your face away from them you ignore them. *Aqbal 'alayhi bi-wajhih* (turned to him with his face, i.e. gave him his full attention, welcoming him). Joseph's brothers plotted against him so that their 'father's face might be free for them' i.e. they would have no rival in his care and attention

12:9

اقْتُلُوا يُوسُفَ أَوْ اطْرَحُوهُ أَرْضًا يَخْلُ لَكُمْ وَجْهُ أَبِيكُمْ وَتَكُونُوا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ قَوْمًا صَالِحِينَ

[Said one of them:] "Slay Joseph, or else drive him away to some [faraway] land, so that your father's regard may be for you alone: and after this is done, you will be [free to repent and to live once again as] righteous people!").

On the other hand, we say in Arabic: *asha' 'anhu bi-wajhih* (he turned his face away from him disdainfully); *ughrub 'an wajhi!* (get away from my face!); *shamakh bi-anfih* (turned his nose up arrogantly) and such and such will be done *raghm anfih* (in spite of him, literally with his nose rubbed in the dust).

In the *'adith* we find numerous references to the face, particularly as a reflector of the emotions. The Prophet's face is described in detail and we find such observations as: 'he came with good news showing on his face', 'his face gleamed with joy'; a new convert said to the Prophet: 'your face was the face I hated most; now it is the one I love most'. The Prophet himself is clearly shown to have been keenly observant of, and to have commented on emotions and attitudes that showed on the faces of his companions. We find frequent reference to this, as for instance: 'He saw in my face what was on my mind' and 'He said: "Sa'd's face shows that he has some news"'.

The Qur'an contains numerous references to the face of God and the faces of men which we will study here in this order. We shall see how this theme is connected to the Islamic creed, worship, ethics, rituals, daily life and civilization. The treatment of this theme will in addition throw some light on the language and style of the Qur'an.

The Face of God

The face of God is referred to in the Qur'an twelve times. References to the fact that 'He speaks/says ...' occur many times; reference to someone or something being 'under His eye' occur five times; His being *sami'* (All-Hearing) occurs over forty times and *bathir* (All-Seeing) again over forty times. The faces of the faithful will also have the joy of gazing at Him in the hereafter. This frequency highlights the significance of this subject and, as will be seen later, throws light on a very important feature of Qur'anic style. Expressions that establish such attributes to God or state that He will be seen by the believers in the hereafter became a subject of controversy amongst theologians who were engaged in discussion of 'the religion of *taw'id*'. Those expressions may suggest anthropomorphism, *tihim al-tashbih*. Three standpoints were recognised:

- (i) Those who denied the attributes of God *nafy al-'ifat* on the basis that they would detract from His unity. This is the view of the Mu'tazilites whose stand has been branded by their opponents as that of *ta'til*.
- (ii) The stand of the anthropomorphists which became known as *tashbih/tajsim*.
- (iii) The view of those who took the middle course represented by *ahl al-'adith* (those who base their view on *'adith*) and the Ash'arites. The second stand was dismissed by both Mu'tazilite and Sunnite theologians whose views continued to have followers and gave rise to vigorous discussion in successive generations, and it is their view that we will consider here. However, before we deal with verses that speak specifically about the face of God, let us first cite this verse which governs the views of these theologians, and which is usually cited in dismissing the view of the anthropomorphists.

Arabic The Originator [is He] of the heavens and the earth. He has given you mates of your own kind just as [He has willed that] among the beasts [there be] mates - to multiply you thereby: [but] there is nothing like unto Him, and He alone is all-hearing, all-seeing..

This verse sums up the issues that occupy a great deal of discussion in Islamic theological works. 'There is nothing like Him' sets up God as unique and apart from all created things. 'He is neither a substance (*jawhar*), a composite body (*jism*), nor an accident (*'araḥ*), no place contains Him, nor does He exist in time, He is the first, with nothing before Him, the last, with nothing that can be said to come after Him'. This is the belief of the 'followers of the truth' *ahl al-haqq* (as opposed to *ahl al-tashbih* the anthropomorphists), expressed by Sayf al-Din al-Amidi (d.631/1233) in the chapter on 'Negation of Anthropomorphism', *ibtāl al-tashbih*, in his book *Ghayat al-maram fi-'ilm al-kalam*. *Jism*, *jawhar* and *'araḥ* are three divisions of things brought into being by the Originator, they are *mu'dathat*, and He is not and cannot be like them.

On the other hand the 'All-Hearing, the All-seeing' are two attributes that may suggest anthropomorphism. The Mu'tazilites deny the attributes, *thifat*, and say that they are nothing other than His essence, and that *al-Sami'* and *al-Ba'ir* are names of God like *al-Ra'man* and *al-Ra'im*. The Ash'arites affirm the *'ifat*, and unlike the anthropomorphists, they remain within the bounds set by 'There is nothing like Him,' and say His attributes are fitting for Him alone, and not like those of His creatures: His hearing is not like theirs and His seeing is not like theirs.

As regards expressions involving the face of God, here, again, we find (apart from the anthropomorphists who held it to be a physical face) the Mu'tazilites held that 'the face of God' means God Himself, that it is common in Arabic to use 'the face' and mean the person. On the other hand, the Ash'arites maintained that He does have a face, that His face is an attribute pertaining to His essence *thifat dhat*. Building on the principle of *tanzih/mukhalafatuhu li'l-hawadith* 'that nothing which is applied to a created being should be ascribed to God in the same sense', the Ash'arites consider that – unlike the Mu'tazilites – they have not compromised the meaning of Qur'anic expression, while at the same time, unlike the *mushabbiha*, they have not conceded to the danger of anthropomorphism. Al-Ash'ari summed up the view of *ahl al-hadith* who state on this point: 'We say nothing on the subject except what God Almighty said and what the Prophet (peace be upon him) said. Thus we say: He does have a face, without specifying how.'

Similarly, Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, having summed up the views of the *ahl al-sunna* in general, who believed in the divine attributes without specifying how, and those of the Jahmites, the Mu'tazilites and the Kharijites who

denied the attributes, concluded that the truth lay with those who adhere to what has been uttered in the Qur'an and the *sunna* of the Prophet. The first verse we come across in the Qur'an that talks about the face of God is:

وَلِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ ۚ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

And God's is the east and the west: and wherever you turn, there is God's countenance. Behold, God is infinite, all-knowing..

2:115

According to one opinion this verse was revealed on the occasion of changing the *qibla* (prayer direction) from Jerusalem to Mecca. According to another opinion, it was revealed when some companions reported to the Prophet that they had been on a journey and could not establish the *qibla* at night and realised in the morning that they were praying in the wrong direction; the verse came to reassure them and still applies to those who cannot establish the *qibla* and to travellers when praying.

The Mu'tazilites explain away 'the face' here as 'the direction which He ordained and chose'. We also find that Razi spent a great deal of time in attempting to explain away 'face' concluding that it means: His *qibla*, or mercy or blessing or the way to His reward or pleasure. However, the Qur'an uses *qibla*, not *wajh* for the direction of prayer

2:143-44

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا ۚ وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِي كُنْتَ عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَنْ يَتَّبِعِ الرَّسُولَ مِمَّنْ يَنْقَلِبُ عَلَى عَقْبَيْهِ ۚ وَإِنْ كَانَتْ لَكَبِيرَةً إِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ ۚ وَمَا كَانَ لِلَّهِ لِيُضِيعَ إِيمَانَكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ

قَدْ نَرَى تَقَلُّبَ وَجْهِكَ فِي السَّمَاءِ ۚ فَلَنُوَلِّيَنَّكَ قِبْلَةً تَرْضَاهَا ۚ فَوَلِّ وَجْهَكَ شَطْرَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ۚ وَحَيْثُ مَا كُنْتُمْ فَوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ شَطْرَهُ ۚ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ لَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ ۚ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ

And thus have We willed you to be a community of the middle way, so that [with your lives] you might bear witness to the truth before all mankind, and that the Apostle might bear witness to it before you. And it is only to the end that We might make a clear distinction between those who follow the Apostle and those who turn about on their heels that We have appointed [for this community] the direction of prayer which thou [O Prophet] hast formerly observed: for this was indeed a hard test for all but those whom God has guided aright. But God will surely not lose sight of your faith-for, behold, God is most compassionate towards man, a dispenser of grace. We have seen thee [O Prophet] often turn thy face towards heaven [for guidance]: and now We shall indeed

make thee turn in prayer in a direction which will fulfil thy desire. Turn, then, thy face towards the Inviolable House of Worship; and wherever you all may be, turn your faces towards it [in prayer]. And, verily, those who have been vouchsafed revelation aforetime know well that this [commandment] comes in truth from their Sustainer; and God is not unaware of what they do.).

‘Mercy, blessings,

way to’ would seem forced here; surely the view of those who ‘accept the Qur’anic expression without specifying how’ is more convincing. Moreover, the Prophet said in a *hadith* ‘God puts His face in front of the face of His servant at prayer’. In another *hadith* he said: ‘God turns His face towards a worshipper at prayer as long as he does not turn his face away; if he does so, God turns His face away from him.’ He also recommended that one recite at the beginning of the prayer: ‘I have turned my face to Him who has created the heavens and the earth as one of pure faith and I am not of the idolaters’ 6:79

إِنِّي وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ حَنِيفًا ۖ وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

Behold, unto Him who brought into being the heavens and the earth have I turned my face, having turned away from all that is false; and I am not of those who ascribe divinity to aught beside Him."). It is difficult to accept here that what is meant by ‘to Him’ is merely the direction He chose.

In Arabic someone at prayer is also said to be ‘in front of God’. ‘Wherever you turn, there is the face of God’ is a very powerful statement as it is, showing the significance of the experience of prayer. The ‘face’ certainly has more effect on the believer than ‘direction’. We can say metaphorically or without specifying how that the Qur’an employs the word ‘face’, but linguistically it must be conceded that the metaphor has an effect and its impact must not be overlooked. How can we sacrifice the beautiful expression of ‘the eye of God’ reminding Moses that when he was a baby

20:39

أَن أَفْذِفِيهِ فِي التَّابُوتِ فَافْذِفِيهِ فِي الْيَمِّ فَلْيُلْقِهِ الْيَمُّ بِالسَّاحِلِ يَأْخُذْهُ عَدُوٌّ لِّي وَعَدُوٌّ لَهُ ۚ وَأَلْقَيْتُ عَلَيْكَ مَحَبَّةً مِّمِّي وَلِتُصْنَعَ عَلَى عَيْنِي

Place him in a chest and throw it into the river, and thereupon the river will cast him ashore, [and] one who is an enemy unto Me and an enemy unto him will adopt him. "And [thus early] I spread Mine Own love over thee -and [this] in order that thou might be formed under Mine eye.); or, talking about Noah and his Ark, sailing away ‘under Our eyes’

54:14

تَجْرِي بِأَعْيُنِنَا جَزَاءً لِّمَن كَانَ كُفِرَ

And it floated under Our eyes: a recompense for him who had been rejected with ingratitude.); or saying to Muhammad, at times of hardship, ‘wait patiently for the judgement of thy Lord: surely you are before Our eyes’

52:48

وَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ فَإِنَّكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا ۖ وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ حِينَ تَقُومُ

And so, await in patience thy Sustainer's judgment, for thou art well within Our sight. And extol thy Sustainer's limitless glory and praise whenever thou risest up,)? Awareness of being face to face with God may partly explain the Prophet's statement that in prayer was the delight of his heart, and when the time for prayer came, he would ask Bilal to make the *adhan* for it, saying: 'Give us comfort, Bilal, with it!' In addition, standing before God five times daily with such an awareness is more likely to give prayer the significance the Qur'an attaches to it.

The Prophet, unlike the theologians, did not hesitate to talk of the 'face of God'. At the height of his persecution in Mecca, he prayed: 'If You are not angry with me I care not about anything else. I take refuge in the light of Your face that dispels the darkness and puts in order the affairs of this world and of the next world ...'

Although 'Wherever you turn there is the face of God' came in the context of prayer, it is still a general statement and reminds those who recall it that God is watching them. This is reinforced by other Qur'anic verses:

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ مَوْلَى الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَأَنَّ الْكَافِرِينَ لَا مَوْلَى لَهُمْ

This, because God is the Protector of all who have attained to faith, whereas they who deny the truth have no protector.47:11

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ۚ يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلِجُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيهَا ۚ وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ ۚ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

He it is who has created the heavens and the earth in six aeons, and is established on the throne of His almightiness. He knows all that enters the earth, and all that comes out of it, as well as all that descends from the skies, and all that ascends to them. And He is with you wherever you may be; and God sees all that you do..

57:4

Verses about the face of God are connected to the sense of *taqwa* which is the mark of true believers and the essence of their awareness of the presence of God. In the same way it is connected to the state of *ihsan* which the Prophet explained as 'to worship God as though you are seeing Him, for if you do not see Him, He sees you'. The numerous verses that talk about God as *sami'* (All-Hearing) and *bathir* (All-Seeing), give the impression of His face being everywhere and are, as we said, connected to the sense of

taqwa and ihsan.

His face is 'everywhere' and at 'all times' while all else perishes in time:

وَلَا تَدْعُ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ ۚ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۚ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ ۚ لَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ

And never call upon any other deity side by side with God. There is no deity save Him. Everything is bound to perish, save His [eternal] self. With Him rests all judgment; and unto Him shall you all be brought back..

28:88

It is remarkable that although the meaning is definitely that everything shall perish except God Himself, we have instead 'except His face', which impresses upon the consciousness of the listener the effect of His majestic face watching over things that have perished, and for this He is the only one worthy of being worshipped. Similarly we read:

كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ
وَيَبْقَىٰ وَجْهَ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ
فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ

All that lives on earth or in the heavens is bound to pass away: but forever will abide thy Sustainer's Self, full of majesty and glory. Which, then, of your Sustainer's powers can you disavow?

55:26-28

Another group of eight verses in the Qur'an talks about doing something 'for the face of God' or 'desiring the face of God':

2:72

وَإِذْ قَتَلْتُمْ نَفْسًا فَادَّارَأْتُمْ فِيهَا ۚ وَاللَّهُ مُخْرِجٌ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْتُمُونَ

For, O children of Israel, because you had slain a human being and then cast the blame for this [crime] upon one another -although God will bring to light what you would conceal;

6:52

وَلَا تَطْرُدِ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْعَدَاةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ ۚ مَا عَلَيْكَ مِنْ حِسَابِهِمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ وَمَا مِنْ حِسَابِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَتَطْرُدَهُمْ فَتَكُونَ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ

Hence, repulse not [any of] those who at morn and evening invoke their Sustainer, seeking His countenance. Thou art in no wise accountable for them-just as they are in no wise accountable for thee -and thou hast therefore no right to repulse them: for then thou wouldst be among the evildoers.;

13:22

وَالَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً وَيَدْرَءُونَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةَ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ

and who are patient in adversity out of a longing for their Sustainer's countenance, and are constant in prayer, and spend on others, secretly and openly, out of what We provide for them as sustenance, and [who] repel evil with good. It is these that shall find their fulfilment in the hereafter;;

18:28

وَاصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْعَدَاةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ ۖ وَلَا تَعْدُ عَيْنَاكَ عَنْهُمْ تُرِيدُ زِينَةَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۖ وَلَا تُطِعْ مَنْ أَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهُ عَنْ ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُهُ فُرْطًا

And contain thyself in patience by the side of all who at morn and at evening invoke their Sustainer, seeking His countenance, and let not thine eyes pass beyond them in quest of the beauties of this world's life; and pay no heed to any whose heart We have rendered heedless of all remembrance of Us because he had always followed [only] his own desires, abandoning all that is good and true.;

30:38-9

فَآتِ ذَا الْقُرْبَىٰ حَقَّهُ وَالْمِسْكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ ۚ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ
وَمَا آتَيْتُم مِّن رَّبًّا لِّيَرْزُقُو فِي أَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ فَلَا يَرْزُقُو عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ۚ وَمَا آتَيْتُم مِّن زَكَاةٍ تُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُضْعِفُونَ

Hence, give his due to the near of kin, as well as to the needy and the wayfarer; this is best for all who seek God's countenance: for it is they, they that shall attain to a happy state! And [remember:] whatever you may give out in usury so that it might increase through [other] people's possessions will bring [you] no increase in the sight of God whereas all that you give out in charity, seeking God's countenance, [will be blessed by Him:] for it is they, they [who thus seek His countenance] that shall have their recompense multiplied!;

76:9

إِنَّمَا نُطْعِمُكُمْ لِوَجْهِ اللَّهِ لَا نُرِيدُ مِنْكُمْ جَزَاءً وَلَا شُكْرًا

[Saying, in their hearts,] "We feed you for the sake of God alone: we desire no recompense from you, nor thanks: and

92:20

إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِ الْأَعْلَىٰ

But only out of a longing for the countenance of his Sustainer, the All-Highest:.

The statement that the believer is doing something for the sake of His face or desiring His face, rather than any other gain, has a powerful effect in encouraging him to do the required act.

It is not surprising that this idea of desiring His face should occur as an encouragement to do something thought to be particularly difficult. An example is the giving of wealth to the needy rather than making money by

exploiting their needs:

فَآتِ ذَا الْقُرْبَىٰ حَقَّهُ وَالْمِسْكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ ۖ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ
وَمَا آتَيْتُم مِّن رَّبًّا لِّيَرْزُقُو فِي أَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ فَلَا يَرْزُقُو عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ۖ وَمَا آتَيْتُم مِّن زَكَاةٍ تُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُضْعِفُونَ

Hence, give his due to the near of kin, as well as to the needy and the wayfarer; this is best for all who seek God's countenance: for it is they, they that shall attain to a happy state! And [remember:] whatever you may give out in usury so that it might increase through [other] people's possessions will bring [you] no increase in the sight of God whereas all that you give out in charity, seeking God's countenance, [will be blessed by Him:] for it is they, they [who thus seek His countenance] that shall have their recompense multiplied!

30:38-39

وَيُطْعَمُونَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا
إِنَّمَا نُطْعِمُكُمْ لِوَجْهِ اللَّهِ لَا نُرِيدُ مِنكُمْ جَزَاءً وَلَا شُكُورًا

and who give food - however great be their own want of it - unto the needy, and the orphan, and the captive, [saying, in their hearts,] "We feed you for the sake of God alone: we desire no recompense from you, nor thanks:

76:8-9

Such people, who fear 'a frowning' day at the judgement will be spared the evil and God will recompense them, making their faces 'radiant' in the hereafter when there shall be 'radiant faces gazing at their Lord'

72:22-23

قُلْ إِنِّي لَنْ يُجِيرَنِي مِنَ اللَّهِ أَحَدٌ وَلَنْ أَجِدَ مِن دُونِهِ مُلْتَحَدًا
إِلَّا بَلَاغًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرِسَالَاتِهِ ۚ وَمَنْ يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَإِنَّ لَهُ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدًا فِيهَا أَبَدًا

Say: "Verily, no one could ever protect me from God, nor could I ever find a place to hide from Him if I should fail to convey [to the world whatever illumination comes to me] from God and His messages." Now as for him who rebels against God and His Apostle - verily, the fire of hell awaits him, therein to abide beyond the count of time.) The Prophet teaches the believer to pray to God to 'grant me the joy of looking at Your glorious face'. Thus those who do good deeds in this world 'for the face of God', will be radiant in the next life and they will have the joy of looking at the face of their Lord.

It may be observed that while 'for/desiring the face of God' occurs in the Qur'an in connection with charity, it also occurs as an incentive to patience/enduring with fortitude:

وَلَقَدْ اسْتُهْزِيَ بِرُسُلٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ فَاْمَلَيْتُ لِلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا ثُمَّ اَخَذْتُهُمْ ۚ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عِقَابِ

And who are patient in adversity out of a longing for their Sustainer's countenance, and are constant in prayer, and spend on others, secretly and openly, out of what We provide for them as sustenance, and [who] repel evil with good. It is these that shall find their fulfilment in the hereafter:

13:22

The Prophet is asked:

وَاصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِيْنَ يَدْعُوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْعَدَاةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيْدُوْنَ وَجْهَهُ ۚ وَلَا تَعْدُ عَيْنَاكَ عَنْهُمْ تُرِيْدُ زِينَةَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَلَا تُطِعْ مَنْ اَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهُ عَنْ ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ وَكَانَ اَمْرُهُ فُرْطًا

And contain thyself in patience by the side of all who at morn and at evening invoke their Sustainer, seeking His countenance, and let not thine eyes pass beyond them in quest of the beauties of this world's life; and pay no heed to any whose heart We have rendered heedless of all remembrance of Us because he had always followed [only] his own desires, abandoning all that is good and true.18:28

The joy of seeing the face of God in the next life is an extra reward:

لِّلَّذِيْنَ اَحْسَنُوْا الْحُسْنٰى وَزِيَادَةٌ ۚ وَلَا يَرْهَقُ وُجُوْهُهُمْ قَتَرٌ وَلَا ذِلَّةٌ ۚ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ ۚ هُمْ فِيْهَا خَالِدُوْنَ

For those who persevere in doing good there is the ultimate good in store, and more [than that]. No darkness and no ignominy will overshadow their faces [on Resurrection Day]: it is they who are destined for paradise, therein to abide.10:26

This 'more' has been interpreted as seeing God. The guilty transgressors who deny the day of judgement now will be barred in the hereafter from seeing their Lord

83:15

كَلَّا اِنَّهُمْ عَنْ رَبِّهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَمَحْجُوْبُوْنَ

Nay, verily, from [the grace of] their Sustainer shall they on that Day be debarred;). Seeing God is an issue which traditionally had a place in theological works with the Mu'tazilites denying *ru'yat Allah* (seeing God) since seeing something implies that it is a body, in a place and a special direction. Faced with such Qur'anic references

75:22-23

وَجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ نَّاصِرَةٌ
إِلَىٰ رَبِّهَا نَاظِرَةٌ

Some faces will on that Day be bright with happiness, looking up to their Sustainer;) they attempted to interpret them in such a way as to avoid seeing God. In the case of verses 75:22-23 cited above, they say the believers will look at the reward of their Lord (not at Him), an argument powerfully refuted by the Ash'arites and their followers. In fact the task before the Mu'tazilites was not as easy as they seemed to make it; it is not merely a matter of one or two verses about the face of God and seeing God, but also of many verses about the hand of God, His throne and many acts of God as in

48:10

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُبَايِعُونَكَ إِنَّمَا يُبَايِعُونَ اللَّهَ يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ ۖ فَمَنْ نَكَثَ فَإِنَّمَا يَنْكُثُ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ ۖ وَمَنْ أَوْفَىٰ بِمَا عَاهَدَ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ فَمَن يُؤْتِيهِ اللَّهُ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

Behold, all who pledge their allegiance to thee pledge their allegiance to God: the hand of God is over their hands. Hence, he who breaks his oath, breaks it only to his own hurt; whereas he who remains true to what he has pledged unto God, on him will He bestow a reward supreme.;

2:255

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ ۚ لَا تَأْخُذُهُ سِنَّةٌ وَلَا نَوْمٌ ۚ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۚ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ ۚ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ ۚ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِنْ عِلْمِهِ إِلَّا بِمَا شَاءَ ۚ وَسِعَ كُرْسِيُّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ ۚ وَلَا يَئُودُهُ حِفْظُهُمَا ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْعَظِيمُ

GOD - there is no deity save Him, the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsistent Fount of All Being. Neither slumber overtakes Him, nor sleep. His is all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth. Who is there that could intercede with Him, unless it be by His leave? He knows all that lies open before men and all that is hidden from them, whereas they cannot attain to aught of His knowledge save that which He wills [them to attain]. His eternal power overspreads the heavens and the earth, and their upholding wearies Him not. And he alone is truly exalted, tremendous.;

10:3

إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ۚ يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ ۚ مَا مِنْ شَفِيعٍ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ إِذْنِهِ ۚ ذَلِكُمُ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ ۚ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ

VERILY, your Sustainer is God, who has created the heavens and the earth in six aeons, and is established on the throne of His almightiness, governing all that exists. There is none that could intercede with Him unless He grants leave therefor. Thus is God, your Sustainer: worship, therefore, Him [alone]: will you not, then, keep this in mind?;

39:67

وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ وَالْأَرْضُ جَمِيعًا قَبْضَتُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَالسَّمَاوَاتُ مَطْوِيَّاتٌ بِيَمِينِهِ ۚ سُبْحَانَهُ
وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ

And no true understanding of God have they [who worship aught beside Him], inasmuch as the whole of the earth will be as a [mere] handful to Him on Resurrection Day, and the heavens will be rolled up in His right hand: limitless is He in His glory, and sublimely exalted above anything to which they may ascribe a share in His divinity!;

2:245

مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يُقْرِضُ اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَيُضَاعِفَهُ لَهُ أَضْعَافًا كَثِيرَةً ۚ وَاللَّهُ يَبْسُطُ وَيَبْسُطُ وَإِلَيْهِ
تَرْجِعُونَ

Who is it that will offer up unto God a goodly loan, which He will amply repay, with manifold increase? For, God takes away, and He gives abundantly; and it is unto Him that you shall be brought back.;

89:22

وَجَاءَ رَبُّكَ وَالْمَلَكُ صَفًّا صَفًّا

and [the majesty of] thy Sustainer stands revealed, as well as [the true nature of] the angels; rank upon rank? and

5:64

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ يَدُ اللَّهِ مَغْلُولَةٌ ۚ غُلَّتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَلُعِنُوا بِمَا قَالُوا ۚ بَلْ يَدَاهُ مَبْسُوطَتَانِ يُنفِقُ كَيْفَ
يَشَاءُ ۚ وَلَيَزِيدَنَّ كَثِيرًا مِنْهُمْ مَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ طُغْيَانًا وَكُفْرًا ۚ وَأَلْقَيْنَا بَيْنَهُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاءَ
إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ ۚ كُلَّمَا أَوْقَدُوا نَارًا لِلْحَرْبِ أَطْفَأَهَا اللَّهُ ۚ وَيَسْعَوْنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَسَادًا ۚ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ
الْمُفْسِدِينَ

And the Jews say, "God's hand is shackled!" It is their own hands that are shackled; and rejected [by God] are they because of this their assertion. Nay, but wide are His hands stretched out: He dispenses [bounty] as He wills. But all that has been bestowed from on high upon thee [O Prophet] by thy Sustainer is bound to make many of them yet more stubborn in their overweening arrogance and in their denial of the truth. And so We have cast enmity and hatred among the followers of the Bible, [to last] until Resurrection Day; every time they light the fires of war, God extinguishes them; and they labour hard to spread corruption on earth: and God does not -love the spreaders of corruption. Sayyid Quṭb (d. 1965) rightly points out that

arguments were raised about such examples whenever polemics (a strong verbal or written attack on someone or something.) became a favourite occupation, whereas in fact they only follow a pattern of expression common throughout the Qur'an: *taswir* (representation, imagery), which aims at explaining abstract ideas and bringing them nearer to our understanding. It is a consistent pattern that employs concrete imagery and personification. *Tawhid* (the belief in the oneness of God) necessitates complete negation of anthropomorphism; the fact that the Qur'an does not deviate even in this area from its normal patterns of expression is clear

evidence that *taswir* is the basic rule of Qur'anic expression.

We have seen how important the face is in the human experience and how powerful the impact of 'the face of God' is in the Qur'an. Qur'anic expressions are surely meant to have their effect on the mind and soul of the reader/listener; the Qur'an is revealed as guidance for people at large, not as a subject for polemics among scholastic theologians. The effect of its expressions are surely not meant to be denied by philosophers or Mu'tazilite polemicists. The *ahl al-hadith* Ash'arite position is more convincing in accepting the expression 'face of God' as it is, believing that His face is one of his *sifat* (attributes) and accepting the expressions 'His hand' 'He holds' and so on – not cancelling them but merely saying '*bila kayf*' (without specifying how) and understanding them to have meanings fitting for His glory.

In any case, what is said about the face of God in the Qur'an is all-fitting for His glory. 'Wherever you turn, there is the face of God'; it abides for ever when all else has perished with its majesty and bestowal of honour; He is All-Seeing, All-Hearing; seeing His face is the ultimate desire and bliss for the faithful. Unlike the human face in the Qur'an there is no mention in connection with the face of God, of feeding, breathing, cleaning, change reflecting emotions, as we shall see below:

The Originator [is He] of the heavens and the earth. He has given you mates of your own kind just as [He has willed that] among the beasts [there be] mates - to multiply you thereby: [but] there is nothing like unto Him, and He alone is all-hearing, all-seeing..

42:11

The Human Face

The Qur'an abounds with references to the human face in this world and in the next, dealing with such aspects as the grace of God in shaping the face; its vital organs; cleaning the face; the face in worship; as showing the orientation of the character; as reflecting the emotional state; and moral teaching connected with the face. In the hereafter the human face figures prominently as reflecting the emotional and physical state and as showing that the good have been honoured and evil-doers abased. We shall deal with these aspects in this order.

In numerous verses the Qur'an reminds men of the grace of God in shaping them, and providing them with the vital human organs.

He has created the heavens and the earth in accordance with [an inner] truth, and has formed you - and formed you so well; and with Him is your journey's end..

64:3

who has created thee, and formed thee in accordance with what thou art meant' to be, and shaped thy nature in just proportions,

82:7

SAY: "[God is] He who has brought you [all] into being, and has endowed you with hearing, and sight, and hearts: [yet] how seldom are you grateful!"

67:23

SAY: "Who is it that provides you with sustenance out of heaven and earth, or who is it that has full power over [your] hearing and sight? And who is it that brings forth the living out of that which is dead, and brings forth the dead out of that which is alive? And who is it that governs all that exists?" And they will [surely] answer: "[It is] God." Say, then: "Will you not, then, become [fully] conscious of Him-?"

10:31

Say: "Can you imagine what your condition will be if God's chastisement befalls you, either suddenly or in a [gradually] perceptible manner? [But then-] will any but evildoing folk [ever] be destroyed?

6:47

Some were told that He could:

O you who have been granted revelation [aforetime]! Believe in what We have [now] bestowed from on high in confirmation of whatever [of the truth] you already possess, lest We efface your hopes and bring them to an end - just as We rejected those people who broke the Sabbath: for God's will is always done.

4:47

Have We not given him two eyes, and a tongue, and a pair of lips,?

90:8-9

He has created man: He has imparted unto him articulate thought and speech..

55:3-4

In his prayer, the Prophet used to recite: 'My face has prostrated before Him who created it, shaped it and opened up its hearing and sight; blessed be God, the best of creators!' In this *hadith* we notice that the ears are mentioned as part of the face. Those who obstinately reject the truth when it is repeated to them, and close their eyes, ears and hearts to it are said in the Qur'an metaphorically to have become deaf, dumb and blind (2:18 Deaf, dumb, blind - and they cannot turn back., 171 And so, the parable of those who re bent on denying the truth is that of the beast which hears the shepherd's cry, and hears in it nothing but the sound of a voice and a call. Deaf are they, and dumb, and blind: for they do not use their reason.

(6:39 And they who give the lie to Our messages are deaf and dumb, in darkness deep. Whomever God wills, He lets go astray; and whomever He wills, He places upon a straight way.);

(2:7 God; has sealed their hearts and their hearing, and over their eyes is a veil; and awesome suffering awaits them.);

about them the Prophet was told:

[But,] verily, thou canst not make the dead hear: and [so, too,] thou canst not make the deaf [of heart] hear this call when they turn their backs [on thee] and go away,.

27:80

Guidance is seeing and following the right path:

But then, is he that goes along with his face close to the ground better guided than he that walks upright on a straight way?

67:22

Later we shall consider further how reminding men of God's grace in creating and shaping their faces is connected with moral teachings in the Qur'an.

The Islamic ritual of ablution demands of Muslims that they wash their faces a number of times daily when they attend to prayer. This ensures a regime of cleaning and refreshing the face peculiar to Muslims. The believers are told that by enjoining ablution, God 'seeks to purify you, and to perfect His favour to you, so that you may give thanks' (5:6 O YOU who have attained to faith! When you are about to pray, wash your face, and your hands and arms up to the elbows, and pass your [wet] hands lightly over your head, and [wash] your feet up to the ankles. And if you are in a state. requiring total ablution, purify yourselves. But if you are ill, or are travelling, or have just satisfied a want of nature, or have cohabited with a woman, and can find no water-then take resort to pure dust, passing therewith lightly over your face and your hands. God does not want to impose any hardship on you, but wants to make you pure, and to bestow upon you the full measure of His blessings, so that you might have cause to be grateful.)

Purifying oneself in ablution is said by the Prophet to be '*sha^{tr} al-iman*' (half of faith).

In this regime, he recommended rinsing the mouth, cleaning the nose and ears, three times preferably. Moreover using the toothbrush (*siwak*) is very highly recommended with the daily prayer, or more often as the Prophet did and said: it purifies the mouth and pleases the Lord – in fact one of his last acts on his death-bed was to brush his teeth with the *siwak*. In addition, the effect of ablution will, according to the Prophet, show on the face on the day of resurrection. On that day the Prophet's followers will be called *al-ghurr al-muhajjalin*, (those having whiteness on their foreheads, their wrists and on their ankles) from the effect of performing the ablution.

As observed earlier, a believer in prayer faces God. He is recommended

to recite: 'I have turned my face to Him who created the heaven and the earth as one of pure faith, and I am not one of the idolaters.' All Muslims turn in one direction at prayer, the *qibla*: 'Wherever you be, turn your faces to it' (2:144 We have seen thee [O Prophet] often turn thy face towards heaven [for guidance]: and now We shall indeed make thee turn in prayer in a direction which will fulfil thy desire. Turn, then, thy face towards the Inviolable House of Worship; and wherever you all may be, turn your faces towards it [in prayer]. And, verily, those who have been vouchsafed revelation aforetime know well that this [commandment] comes in truth from their Sustainer; and God is not unaware of what they do.). In congregation each row of worshippers should be straight, with no gaps between individuals. When the Prophet saw a man out of line he said to the congregation: 'you should be in straight lines or else God will make your faces go in different directions'. A Muslim bows down and prostrates his face – the centre of his pride and dignity – before God. We have mentioned earlier the statement which the Prophet recited and recommended the believers to recite in the state of prostration, this position being reserved solely for Him 'who created the face, shaped it, and opened up its hearing and sight', just as the face is turned 'to Him who created the heavens and the earth'. The spiritual orientation of the Muslim is defined in the Qur'an:

AND SO, set thy face steadfastly towards the [one ever-true] faith, turning away from all that is false, in accordance with the natural disposition which God has instilled into man: [for,] not to allow any change to corrupt what God has thus created this is the [purpose of the one] ever-true faith; but most people know it not. AND Set, then, thy face steadfastly towards the one ever-true faith, ere there come from God a Day [of reckoning - the Day] which cannot be averted. On that Day all will be sundered:.

30:30, 43

'Surrendering one's face to God' is the surest sign of *taw'id* and of taking the right course:

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ دِينًا مِمَّنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ وَاتَّبَعَ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا ۚ وَاتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ خَلِيلًا

And who could be of better faith than he who surrenders his whole being unto God and is a doer of good withal, and follows the creed of Abraham, who turned away from all that is false - seeing that God exalted Abraham with His love?

4:125

It is, moreover, the safest stand:

وَمَنْ يُسْلِمْ وَجْهَهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَقَدْ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَى ۚ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْأُمُورِ

Now whoever surrenders his whole being unto God, and is a doer of good withal, has indeed taken hold of a support most unfailing: for with God rests the final outcome of all events.

31:22

Qur'anic teachings about ablution promote personal hygiene and have implications in helping to maintain a social atmosphere of health and cleanliness. There are other Qur'anic teachings relating to moral attitudes in connection with the face or some of its organs. The faces of those who tell lies about God will be seen on the day of resurrection as 'darkened' (39:60 And [so,] on the Day of Resurrection thou wilt see all who invented lies about God [with] their faces darkened [by grief and ignominy]. Is not hell the [proper] abode for all who are given to false pride?). There are repeated references to the grace of God in granting people sight and hearing which, if He were to take away, none could restore. There are traditional prayers said individually or by a leader of a congregation to protect their hearing and sight: 'Grant that we enjoy them as long as you keep us alive!' The gifts of His grace have moral implications:

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ ۚ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا

And never concern thyself with anything of which thou hast no knowledge: verily, [thy] hearing and sight and heart - all of them - will be called to account for it [on Judgment Day]!.

17:36

يَعْلَمُ خَائِنَةَ الْأَعْيُنِ وَمَا تُخْفِي الصُّدُورُ

[for] He is aware of the [most] stealthy glance, and of all that the hearts would conceal..

40:19

The tongue is a gift; believers should speak the truth, 'words straight to the point' (33:70 O you who have attained to faith! Remain conscious of God, and [always] speak with a will to bring out [only] what is just and true -). Those who defame honourable women will be cursed in this world and in the hereafter, and punished on a day when 'their tongues, hands and feet will testify against them as to what they used to do' (24:24 on the Day when their own tongues and hands and feet will bear witness against them by [recalling] all that they did!).

'Believing men and believing women should restrain their eyes from temptation and guard their chastity: that is purer for them' (24:30-1 Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and to be mindful of their chastity: this will be most conducive to their purity - [and,] verily, God is aware of all that they do. And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and to be mindful of their chastity, and not to display their charms [in public] beyond what may [decently] be apparent thereof; hence, let them draw their head-coverings over their bosoms. And let them not display [more of] their charms to any but their husbands, or their fathers, or their husbands' fathers, or their sons, or their husbands' Sons, or their brothers, or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their womenfolk, or those whom they rightfully possess, or such male attendants as are beyond all sexual desire, or children that are as yet unaware of women's nakedness; and let them not swing their legs [in walking] so as to draw attention to their hidden charms And [always], O you believers - all of you - turn unto God in repentance, so that you might attain to a happy state!). Similarly,

the face of the believer should not be used to show an improper attitude:

Do not turn your cheek away from men in scorn: God does not love the arrogant and the boastful.

31:18–19 “And turn not thy cheek away from people in [false] pride, and walk not haughtily on earth: for, behold, God does not love anyone who, out of self-conceit, acts in a boastful manner. “Hence, be modest in thy bearing, and lower thy voice: for, behold, the ugliest of all voices is the [loud] voice of asses...”;

4:36

وَأَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا ۚ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا وَبِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَالْجَارِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْجَارِ الْجُنُبِ وَالصَّاحِبِ بِالْجَنبِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ مَن كَانَ مُخْتَالًا فَخُورًا

AND WORSHIP God [alone], and do not ascribe divinity, in any way, to aught beside Him. And do good unto your parents, and near of kin, and unto orphans, and the needy, and the neighbour from among your own people, and the neighbour who is a stranger, and the friend by your side, and the wayfarer, and those whom you rightfully possess. Verily, God does not love any of those who, full of self-conceit, act in a boastful manner;;

57:23

لَكَيْلًا تَأْسَوْا عَلَىٰ مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا تَفْرَحُوا بِمَا آتَاكُمْ ۚ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ

[Know this,] so that you may not despair over whatever [good] has escaped you nor exult [unduly] over whatever [good] has come to you: for, God does not love any of those who, out of self-conceit, act in a boastful manner –

Conversely, the Prophet said, ‘to smile in your brother’s face is a meritorious act.’

The pious are described as ‘ready to prostrate and praise their Lord’

(32:15 ONLY THEY [truly] believe in Our messages who, whenever they are conveyed to them, fall down, prostrating themselves in adoration, and extol their Sustainer’s limitless glory and praise; and who are never filled with false pride;); they ‘seek bounty from God and His acceptance; their mark is on their faces, the trace of prostration’ (48:29 MUHAMMAD is God’s Apostle; and those who are [truly] with him are firm and unyielding towards all deniers of the truth, [yet] full of mercy towards one another. Thou canst see them bowing down, prostrating themselves [in prayer], seeking favour with God and [His] goodly acceptance: their marks are on their faces, traced by prostration. This is their parable in the Torah as well as their parable in the Gospel: [they are] like a seed that brings forth its shoot, and then He strengthens it, so that it grows stout, and [in the end] stands firm upon its stem, delighting the sowers. [Thus will God cause the believers to grow in strength,] so that through them He might confound the deniers of the truth. [But] unto such of them as may [yet] attain to faith and do righteous deeds, God has promised forgiveness and a reward supreme.). The guilty who disdain to prostrate themselves in this world when they are safe and sound will, on the day of resurrection, be told to prostrate, but they will not be able to, they will stand with eyes downcast, thoroughly humbled (68:42–43 on the Day when man’s very being shall be bared to the bone, and when they [who now deny the truth] shall be called upon to prostrate themselves [before God], and shall be unable to do so: downcast will be their eyes, with

ignominy overwhelming them - seeing that they had been called upon [in vain] to prostrate themselves [before Him] while they were yet sound [and alive].).

We have seen earlier how the face reflects personal emotions and interpersonal attitudes. The following two examples from the Qur'an illustrate this.

First, commenting on the pre-Islamic attitude of some fathers to the birth of daughters rather than sons it says:

When one of them receives news of the birth of a female his face darkens and he is filled with gloom. On account of the bad news he hides himself from men: should he put up with the shame or bury her in the earth? How ill they judge!

16:58–59 for, whenever any of them is given the glad tiding of [the birth of] a girl, his face darkens, and he is filled with suppressed anger, avoiding all people because of the [alleged] evil of the glad tiding which he has received, [and debating within himself:] Shall he keep this [child] despite the contempt [which he feels for it]-or shall he bury it in the dust? Old, evil indeed is whatever they decide!;

43:17

وَإِذَا بُشِّرَ أَحَدُهُمْ بِمَا ضَرَبَ لِلرَّحْمَنِ مَثَلًا ظَلَّ وَجْهُهُ مُسْوَدًّا وَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ

For [thus it is:] if any of them is given the glad tiding of [the birth of] what he so readily attributes to the Most Gracious, his face darkens, and he is filled with suppressed anger:

Second, the reaction of the unbelievers on hearing the Qur'an is described thus:

as it is, whenever Our messages are conveyed unto them in all their clarity, thou canst perceive utter repugnance on the faces of those who are bent on denying the truth: they would almost assault those who convey Our messages unto them! Say: "Shall I, then, tell you of something worse than what you feel at present? It is the fire [of the hereafter] that God has promised to those who are bent on denying the truth: and how vile a journey's end!" ...

22:72

In both examples the face is mentioned first as mirroring the emotion or attitude, followed by another expression of emotion – 'full of gloom' – and attitude – 'they all but assault'.

It should be noted, however, that, compared to the 'adith, where there are numerous examples of the features as a vehicle for emotions and attitudes, the Qur'an has very few examples of this particular type relating to this world, but many (I have counted nearly forty) relating to the hereafter.

The explanation lies in two things. First, the difference in material and style between the Qur'an and the 'adith: by its nature much of the 'adith material is informal and conversational, with a listener perhaps contributing to the discourse with comments and various details at the time, saying, for example: 'As he said this his face reflected his joy or displeasure...'. The Qur'an, on the other hand, is communicated from a higher level, is formal and with no scope for the recipient of the revelation or the listener to comment. Second, treatment of the human features in the Qur'an relating

to this world centres on showing the grace of God in creating and shaping the face and its vital organs – teachings related to physical instructions and moral implications rather than showing emotions and attitudes on faces. The situation is reversed in the hereafter: there is less scope there for talking about creating faces and their organs for life in this world, and no scope for religious instruction. The hereafter is the abode of requital not instruction, honouring or abasing the person. The face – which is the proudest and most visible vehicle for expression of non-verbal communication – shows the effects of this most vividly.

The Human Face in the Hereafter

HAS THERE COME unto thee the tiding of the Overshadowing Event?'Some faces will on that Day be downcast, toiling [under burdens of sin], worn out [by fear], about to enter a glowing fire, given to drink from a boiling spring. No food for them save the bitterness of dry thorns, which gives no strength and neither stills hunger. [And] some faces will on that Day shine with bliss, well-pleased with [the fruit of] their striving, in a garden sublime, wherein thou wilt hear no empty talk. Countless springs will flow therein, [and] there will be thrones [of happiness] raised high,88: 1–13

What is remarkable here is that in giving the news of the day of judgement/ story of the Enveloper, the Qur'an goes straight to the faces of the damned, then the blessed, as if between them they sum up the whole story. It now speaks to people of the result of their life here in the abode of requital. Showing the psychological effect of that requital is evidently very important and will readily appear on the face, the true mirror of the soul – the time being over for repressing or concealing emotions or thoughts.

لِّلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا الْحُسْنَىٰ وَزِيَادَةٌ ۖ وَلَا يَرْهَقُ وُجُوهَهُمْ قَتَرٌ وَلَا ذِلَّةٌ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ ۖ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

For those who persevere in doing good there is the ultimate good in store, and more [than that]. No darkness and no ignominy will overshadow their faces [on Resurrection Day]: it is they who are destined for paradise, therein to abide..

10:26

Their faces are described as 'shining', 'laughing, rejoicing at good news' (80:38–39 Some faces will on that Day be bright with happiness, laughing, rejoicing at glad tidings.); they will be 'joyful, well pleased with their past effort' (88:8–9 well-pleased with [the fruit of] their striving, in a garden sublime,); 'radiant, gazing at their Lord' (75:22–23 Some faces will on that Day be bright with happiness, looking up to their Sustainer;).

تَعْرِفُ فِي وُجُوهِهِمْ نَضْرَةَ النَّعِيمِ

upon their faces thou wilt see the brightness of bliss..

83:24

n the Day [of Judgment] when some faces will shine [with happiness] and some faces will be dark [with grief]. And as for those with faces darkened, [they shall be told:] "Did you deny the truth after having attained to faith? Taste, then, this suffering for having denied the truth!"

3:106

Out of the many examples in the Qur'an that deal with the face in the hereafter there are two instances that mention two types of people whose faces will turn dark, *iswadda/muswadd* (for which English translators inconsistently give 'darkened' or 'blackened'):

And [so,] on the Day of Resurrection thou wilt see all who invented lies about God [with] their faces darkened [by grief and ignominy]. Is not hell the [proper] abode for all who are given to false pride?.

39:60

on the Day [of Judgment] when some faces will shine [with happiness] and some faces will be dark [with grief]. And as for those with faces darkened, [they shall be told:] "Did you deny the truth after having attained to faith? Taste, then, this suffering for having denied the truth!"

3:106

There are two other verses in the Qur'an dealing with one class of people whose faces turned dark in this world: pre-Islamic Arab men, when told that a daughter rather than a son was born to them (16:58 for, whenever any of them is given the glad tiding of [the birth of] a girl, his face darkens, and he is filled with suppressed anger,; 43:17 For [thus it is:] if any of them is given the glad tiding of [the birth of] what he so readily attributes to the Most Gracious, his face darkens, and he is filled with suppressed anger:).

It should be noted that the verb form used in the Qur'anic verses just cited signifies 'becoming or turning' a particular colour (form IX in Arabic grammar books), so what we have is a new colour or degree of it. It is clear from classical Arabic dictionaries and modern usage that to describe someone's face as darkened (*iswadda*) is a figure of speech 'expressive of grief or sorrow or displeasure, occasioned by fear' as in the case of the 'fathers of daughters'. In this world people are never referred to in the Qur'an as having a specific colour (white, yellow, dark, black). Rather, human beings in their totality are described as having a diversity of tongues and colours, which is one of the signs of God for men of knowledge (30:22 And among his wonders is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the diversity of your tongues and colours: for in this, behold, there are messages indeed for all who are possessed of [innate] knowledge!). There is one other example in the Qur'an that mentions the colours of human beings

as an example of the diversity in creation, in this case along with the colours of fruits, mountains, beasts and cattle, again as a sign of God, the pondering of which should lead learned men to regard Him with veneration and awe (35:27–28 ART THOU NOT aware that God sends down water from the skies, whereby We bring forth fruits of many hues - just as in the mountains there are streaks of white and red of various shades, as well as (others) raven-black, and (as) there are in men, and in crawling beasts, and in cattle, too, many hues? Of all His servants, only such as are endowed with [innate] knowledge stand [truly] in awe of God: [for they alone comprehend that,] verily, God is almighty, much-forgiving.).

To continue with the discussion on the faces of the guilty, in contrast with the shining, radiant, joyful faces of the blessed who will rejoice, these are described as covered with dust, overspread with darkness (80:40–41); they will be grieved (67:27 Yet in the end, when they shall see that [fulfilment] close at hand, the faces of those who were bent on denying the truth will be stricken with grief; and they will be told, "This it is that you were [so derisively] calling for!"); with downcast eyes, disgrace covering them, (70:44 with downcast eyes, with ignominy overwhelming them: that Day which they were promised again and...); 'the guilty will hang their heads before their Lord' (32:12 If thou couldst but see [how it will be on Judgment Day], when those who are lost in sin will hang their heads before their Sustainer, [saying:] "O our Sustainer! [Now] we have seen, and we have heard! Return us, then, [to our earthly life] that we may do good deeds: for [now], behold, we are certain [of the truth]!"). The evildoers will be mustered to hell upon their faces, deaf, dumb, and blind (17:97 And he whom God guides, he alone has found the right way; whereas for those whom He lets go astray thou canst never find anyone to protect them from Him: and [so, when] We shall gather them together on the Day of Resurrection, [they will lie] prone upon their faces, blind and dumb and deaf, with hell as their goal; [and] every time [the fire] abates, We shall increase for them [its] blazing flame.) – the proudest part of their bodies will be humiliated; when they closed their eyes and ears and refused to speak out in worship, they were said in the world to have become metaphorically deaf, dumb and blind, and so they will be on the day of judgement. Hot water will scald their faces (18:29 And say: "The truth [has now come] from your Sustainer: let, then, him who wills, believe in it, and let him who wills, reject it." Verily, for all who sin against themselves [by rejecting Our truth] We have readied a fire whose billowing folds will encompass them from all sides; and if they beg for water, they will be given water [hot] like molten lead, which will scald their faces: how dreadful a drink, and how evil a place to rest!), and flames will scorch them (23:104 the fire will scorch their faces, and they will abide therein with their lips distorted in pain.). The exposure of the face, the proudest, and most publicly visible, part of their body, to such treatment is an additional torment (44:48–49 then pour over his head the anguish of burning despair! Taste it - thou who [on earth] hast considered thyself so mighty, so noble!). In this world people are so protective of their faces from any harm; in the hereafter the evildoers will not be able to guard their faces against chastisement (39:24 Could, then, one who shall have nothing but is [bare] face to protect him from the awful suffering [that will befall him] on Resurrection Day [be likened to the God-conscious]? [On that Day,] the evildoers will be told: "Taste [now] what you have earned [in life]!"). Those who consume the wealth of people unjustly, debar them from the path of God and hoard gold and silver and do not spend it in God's cause, their treasure will be heated up in the fire of hell and their foreheads, sides and backs

will be branded with them

9:34

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِنَ الْأَحْبَارِ وَالرُّهْبَانِ لَيَأْكُلُونَ أَمْوَالَ النَّاسِ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَيَصُدُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ
اللَّهِ ۖ وَالَّذِينَ يَكْنِزُونَ الذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ وَلَا يَنْفِقُونَهَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ

O you who have attained to faith! Behold, many of the rabbis and monks do indeed wrongfully devour men's possessions and turn [others] away from the path of God. But as for all who lay up treasures of gold and silver and do not spend them for the sake of God - give them the tidings of grievous suffering [in the life to come]:).

Man has been equipped with such gifts as the eyes, the tongue, the lips, the hands, the feet and has been 'shown the two paths' (90:10 and shown him the two highways [of good and evil]?) of good and evil; it is his responsibility to see that his organs are means of his salvation rather than of his damnation. In the hereafter the tongues of the guilty will testify against them (24:24 on the Day when their own tongues and hands and feet will bear witness against them by [recalling] all that they did!). Their eyes, their ears and their very skins will testify to their misdeeds; they will ask their skins: 'Why did you testify against us?' The answer will be tormenting: 'You did not hide yourselves so that your eyes, and ears and skins could not be made to testify against you; you thought that God did not know much of what you do. It was the thought you entertained about your Lord that ruined you' (41:21-23 And they will ask their skins, "Why did you bear witness against us?" - [and] these will reply: "God, who gives speech to all things, has given speech to us [as well]: for He [it is who] has created you in the first instance - and unto Him you are [now] brought back. And you did not try to hide [your sins] lest your hearing or your sight or your skins bear witness against you: nay, but you thought that God did not know much of what you were doing -and that very thought which you thought about your Sustainer has brought you to perdition, and so now you find yourselves among the lost!").

The faces of the damned will be seen 'darkened ...', but God will deliver the righteous to their place of salvation'

39:60-61

وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ تَرَى الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ وُجُوهُهُم مُّسْوَدَّةٌ ۚ أَلَيْسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لِّلْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ
وَيُنَجِّي اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا بِمَفَازَتِهِمْ لَا يَمَسُّهُمُ السُّوءُ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

And [so,] on the Day of Resurrection thou wilt see all who invented lies about God [with] their faces darkened [by grief and ignominy]. Is not hell the [proper] abode for all who are given to false pride? But God will safeguard all who were conscious of Him, [and will grant them happiness] by virtue of their [inner] triumphs; no evil shall ever touch them, and neither shall they grieve.), 'Those that surrender

their faces to God and do good works shall be rewarded by their Lord; no fear shall come to them, nor shall they grieve,'

2:112

بَلَىٰ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَلَهُ أَجْرُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

Yea, indeed: everyone who surrenders his whole being unto God, and is a doer of good withal, shall have his reward with his Sustainer; and all such need have no fear, and neither shall they grieve.).

The pious person

who spends of his wealth in charity 'for the face of his Lord the Most High,
shall surely be content'

92:20–21

إِلَّا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِ الْأَعْلَى
وَلَسَوْفَ يَرْضَىٰ

But only out of a longing for the countenance of his Sustainer, the All-Highest: and such, indeed, shall in time be well-pleased.), and

فَمَنْ لِلَّهِ عَلَيْنَا وَقَانَا عَذَابَ السَّمُومِ

But forever will abide thy Sustainer's Self, full of majesty and glory..

55:27