

CHAPTER FOUR

THE INTERPRETATION OF *SHAJARAT AL-KHULD* AS SEXUAL DESIRE

4.0 INTRODUCTION

The tree is also interpreted as referring to sexual desire. Man has many instincts and desires – so the question is – why was the emphasis placed on sexual desire rather than any man's other instincts?

This means that our research is not concerned primarily with the biology, psychology or sociology of sex, but rather with its philosophy and theology. It explains the sex instinct in man, peculiarly human character and its related to the meaning of *shajarat*. Thus, this research tries to address the perspectives St. Augustine, Imām al-Qurṭubī, St. Thomas Aquinas and Imām Sayyid Quṭb on this topic.

These four thinkers were influenced by traditional and contemporary sources as seen in their opinions and interpretations of the tree as knowledge, as discussed earlier.

Augustine and Aquinas strongly believed that the tree refers to “carnal knowledge” and the resulting sexual desire.

On the other hand, al-Qurṭubī and Sayyid Quṭb emphasized that the tree more appropriately refers to the "unity of knowledge". Sayyid Quṭb mentioned also, although not strongly, that the tree refers to sexual desire.

Thus, we must examine their views thoroughly in this discussion.

As St. Augustine and St. Aquinas both referred to the Bible as their major sources on the discussion of sexual desire, it is not surprising that they have similar views. In order to understand their views on sexual desire, we have to look at their writings, i.e. *Confessions* and *The City Of God* for Augustine and *Summa Theologiae* for Aquinas as well as reference books, by other authors who discussed their views on this topic.

4.1 VIEWS OF ST. AUGUSTINE AND ST. AQUINAS

4.1.1 SEX IN THE BIBLE

Like all ancient literatures, the Bible reflects the sexual attitudes and customs of its time. An examination of the positive view, followed by a look at the negative or pessimistic one, may best summarize the Old Testament outlook: The New Testament attitudes can be seen principally in the point of view of Christ and St. Paul.

In Augustine, the symbolism of the tree is indicative of something more specific - an effort to become like God, to aspire to a knowledge that man had no right to

have, but that according to the tempter was being jealously withheld from man. Such knowledge was never given to man (contrary to Aquinas, H. Gunkel, T.C. Vriezen and others); man also obtains a feeling of deep instinctual attraction to each other.¹

In the Yahwistic tradition, sexual overtones also have been observed in narrative in the exegesis of every age, but there is no indication in the text that the first sin was sexual intercourse. If the Yahwistic editor intended to affirm that the cause of the fall was humanity's first use of its sexual powers, he could hardly have left the story of the creation of woman² untouched, for sexual life is described there as God's final gift to mankind. Through the symbolism of the serpent, however, the Yahwist might have alluded to the Canaanite fertility rites that were alluring Israelites of his own day to sin against God. It is known from archeology that serpent symbolism was used in this cult. If such an allusion was intended, then, the Yahwist was attacking not so much sexual aberrations as the chosen people's rejection of their covenant with Yahweh (God) by an idolatrous worship that included ritual prostitution. The Yahwist, primarily as a concretization of covenant-breaking and only secondarily as signifying sexual sins would have used the serpent, as a symbol of the power of evil, inimical to God and disruptive of human happiness. The woman's giving of the fruit to the man after she had eaten of it,³ indicates that their sin was not simultaneous. Moreover, nakedness⁴ usually caused among Israelites shame and humiliation rather than sexual emotion.⁵ There

¹ George T. Montague, *Understanding the Bible*, p. 77.

² *Genesis* 2.18-25

³ *Genesis* 3.6

⁴ *Genesis* 3.7

⁵ Please refer to *Jeremiah* 13.26; *Ezekiel* 16.37; *Isaiah* 20.4; *Genesis* 2.25, 9.21.

is no doubt, however, that sexual motives played an important role in the Yahwist's reconstruction of mankind's creation and fall.

Based on the Yahwistic tradition, Augustine interpretations the tree as the spiritual knowledge, that is "to become like God", but he also emphasizes that the tree means sexual desire. Augustine and Aquinas both believe that the basic idea in the Old Testament concerning sex is that it is essentially a good thing. God created male and female, blessed them with fertility and saw that all His creation was very good. The two sexes reflected God by filling the earth and subduing it through the exercise of this blessing.⁶

Further, for Augustine and Aquinas, the prophets use sexual ideas as symbolic of the bond existing between Israel and God.⁷ Israel is God's spouse and desertion for false gods is called adultery.⁸

Because of the fertility rites prevalent in Canaan and the many sexual abuses in Israel, it was taught that God had created man and woman in primordial innocence in which no shame resulted from nudity.⁹ In this Yahwist tradition the serpent as a symbol of evil was perhaps taken from antifertility cult propaganda, although the eating of the forbidden fruit is described as part of the creation covenant rather than as a sexual sin. But, as we mentioned earlier, sexual motives played an important role in the fall of man. However, sexual rites were never used in the worship of Yahweh as they were in the ceremonies of pagan cults.

⁶ *Genesis* 1.27-31

⁷ *Hosea* 2.4-23; 11.1-11

⁸ *Isaiah* 1.21, 54.1-10, 62.1-5; *Jeremiah* 2.2, 3.1-5; *Ezekiel* 16, 23

⁹ *Genesis* 2.25

Further, the Hebrew saw the individual as part of society. Hence, a man's sex life was not his alone, but part of the clan or family affairs. Sex was respected as a reverent duty, a fulfillment of the covenant.¹⁰ The rite of circumcision¹¹ was originally an initiation to marriage and family life and became a sign of God's promise of fruitfulness.

In the New Testament, Christ's teaching echoed that of the Old Testament but developed it further. Sex is good in itself. Marriage and birth are occasions for joy.¹² Christ was merciful to sexual sinners.¹³ But on the other hand, adultery and divorce were condemned.¹⁴

Like the prophets, St. Paul used marriage as a symbol of the unity and love between Christ and his church.¹⁵ For him sex in marriage was holy and good. Chastity was related to sanctity¹⁶ to the resurrection and to the present union with Christ and the Holy Spirit.¹⁷ Like Jesus,¹⁸ Paul taught that a celibate dedication to God's kingdom was more excellent than marriage, but also that it was a gift not given to everyone, for some were not able to remain continent.¹⁹ Marriage involved one in the present world and its cares, whereas celibates were freer to serve the Lord and to await His Parousia.²⁰

¹⁰ *Tb.* 6.11-13; 8.5-7 in the LXX.

¹¹ *Genesis* 17. 1-14

¹² *Matthew* 9.15; *John* 2.1-10, 16.21

¹³ *Luke* 7.36-50; *John* 4.7-45, 8.1-11

¹⁴ *Matthew* 5.27-32

¹⁵ *Ephesians* 5.21-33

¹⁶ *1 Thessalonians* 4.3-8

¹⁷ *1 Corinthians* 12-20

¹⁸ *Matthew* 19.10-12

¹⁹ *1 Corinthians* 7.7-9

²⁰ *1 Corinthians* 7.25-38

Finally, because of the previous sexual abuses of his converts Paul often condemned various types of sexual immorality: homosexuality, incest, prostitution and obscenity.²¹

Sex only had meaning in marriage, and misuse of it violated the marriage rights of others.²² The ideal picture was that of Joseph refusing the advances of Puthipar's wife²³ or of Susanna preferring to die rather than to commit adultery. Adultery was repeatedly condemned.²⁴ Rape, loss of virginity while still in father's house and prostitution were repudiated.²⁵ Religious prostitution, common in Canaan was especially wrong²⁶, although many Israelites fell into the practice.²⁷

Other aberrations were condemned; homosexuality and sodomy;²⁸ incest;²⁹ onanism;³⁰ bestiality.³¹ Nudity was considered wrong.³² The sages taught a chaste attitude and caution generally.

Augustine and Aquinas understood that in the Old Testament the purpose of sex was to express love and mutual dependence between spouses and to beget children and rear them in the ways of God's covenant. Sex outside of family life was unlawful. The pleasures of married life were ordered to society's good.

²¹ *1 Corinthians 5; Ephesians 5.3; Colossians 3.5*

²² *Genesis 20.6; Exodus 20.14; Leviticus 18.20 etc.*

²³ *Genesis 39.9*

²⁴ *Wisdom 14.26; Job 31.9-12; Proverbs 2.16; Jeremiah 29.23*

²⁵ *Genesis 34.7; Deuteronomy 22.21; 2 Samuel 13.12; Proverbs 23.27; 29.3; 31.3*

²⁶ *Deuteronomy 23.18-19*

²⁷ *1 Kings 14.24; Hosea 4.14; Amos 2.7*

²⁸ *Genesis 19; Leviticus 18.22; Deuteronomy 22.5; Judges 19. 22-24*

²⁹ *Leviticus 18.8-11; Deuteronomy 27.20*

³⁰ *Genesis 38.8-10*

³¹ *Exodus 22.18*

³² *Genesis 9.22; Exodus 20.26*

Based on these explanations, we see that Aquinas and Augustine had a similar understanding of the way sex was presented in the Bible.

4.1.2 ST. AUGUSTINE'S INTERPRETATION OF *SHAJARAT* AS SEXUAL DESIRE

Augustine was also known as an important contributor to psychology, particularly in connection with the primacy of the will. He contends that an unprejudiced analysis of the biological phenomenon of sex reveals its radical difference from other instincts. It has first a kind of depth that neither thirst nor hunger, nor the need to sleep, nor any desire for other bodily pleasure possesses. The charm of opposite sex, as well as bodily sexual desire, or even lust, all affect man's personal life in a way completely different from other instincts. They have mysterious character, something radiating into man's psychical life, that is shared neither by the desire to eat nor by the pleasure that the satisfaction of this desire procures. Above all, sexual ecstasy goes to the very depth of bodily existence; it has in its overwhelming power something extraordinary, to which terrible bodily pain is alone a counterpart.³³

Apart from its depth, sex possesses an extraordinary intimacy. Every disclosure of sex is the revelation of something intimate and personal; it is the initiation of another into one's secret. In a sense, sex is the secret of each individual; it is for this reason that the domain of sex is also the sphere of shame in its most noble

³³ Gilbert Meilaender (Spring 2001), "Sweet Necessities: Food, Sex and Saint Augustine", *Journal of Religion Ethics*. no. 29, New York, pp. 3-4; Lisa Sowle Cahill (Spring 2001), "Using Augustine in Contemporary Sexual Ethics", *Journal of Religion Ethics*. no. 29, New York, p. 25. Hereafter, this book will be known as *Using Augustine in Contemporary Sexual Ethics*.

sense. This again explains the central position of sex in the human personality. It is a voice from the depths, the utterance of something central and of utmost significance. In and with sex, man in a special sense gives himself.³⁴

A further mark distinguishing sex from other instincts is the fact that it tends toward contact with another person, that it has, so to speak, a dialogistic character. The sexual desire implies a direction toward the sexual satisfaction of the partner. Aiming at something surpassing one's own bodily realm, it has a definite communal character. Closely linked with this is the uniting element in the shared experience of orgasm, rooted in the very nature of the sex act.³⁵

Based on the above characteristics, sex is able to become an expression of conjugal love and to constitute an ultimate personal union. It is not only able to do so, but it is meant to become incorporated into this love; it is destined to serve the mutual offering to which spousal love aspires. Indeed to understand the true nature of sex, its meaning, and its value, one must start with the glorious reality of the love between man and woman, the love that which the Vulgate says: "If a man gave all the substance of his house for love, he would despise it as nothing".³⁶

Just as it is wrong to reduce all types of love to sex as pansexual psychologists attempt to do, it is also erroneous to think that love between man and woman

³⁴ D. Von Hildebrand (1931), *In Defense of Purity: Saint Augustine and Saint Aquinas views*. New York: Garden City, p. 148. Hereafter, this book will be known as *In Defense of Purity*.

³⁵ Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Using Augustine in Contemporary Sexual Ethics*, p. 27.

³⁶ *Vulgate Bible, Ct. 8.7*

differs from other types of love only through its connection with sex. The specific quality of this love is apparent even before one takes note of the sexual instinct.

It is true that spousal love can only exist between men and women. Yet man and woman are not only different biologically and physiologically; they are also different expressions of human nature. The specific feminine and masculine features of human personality show a complementary character. Man and woman are spiritually ordered toward each other, being created for each other³⁷. **Genesis 2.18** had proved "The Lord God said: "It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for man".

In this love, the beloved is more thematic than in any other love, becoming in fact the great human theme. Such a theme expresses itself also in the *intentio unionis*; although common to all categories of love, this assumes in man its highest tension and its furthest extension. The lover longs for union with the very being of the beloved; he longs for a common life, and the requital of his love assumes an incomparable importance.³⁸

Of this spousal and enamored love Pope Pius XII said: " The charm exercised by human love has been for centuries the inspiring theme of admirable works of genius, in literature, in music, in the visual arts; a theme always old and always new, upon which the ages have embroidered, without ever exhausting it, the most elevated and poetic variations".³⁹ Such love, aspiring to bodily union as a specific fulfillment of total union, is a unique, deep and mutual self-donation. If someone

³⁷ D. Von Hilderbrand, *In Defense of Purity*, p. 148.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Pope Pius XII (October 1956), *The Pope Speaks*, ed. M. Chinigo, New York, p. 21.

loves another person with this love, he realizes fully the mystery of bodily union and aspires to it simply because he loves the beloved.

Further, Augustine perceives the true mystery of sex; he perceives its depth, its seriousness and its intimacy. He understands implicitly its ordination to serve the ultimate union in marriage, and the coming to be of a new human being. He is aware of the high value that it embodies as effecting mutual self-donation in wedded love, and as source of pro-creation. He clearly perceives the fearful profanation that every abuse of sex represents, the deadly poison defiling the soul and separating it from God; this is what sexual pleasure generates when treated as its own end. He shrinks from any contact with sex as soon as it is thus isolated and rendered poisonous. He possesses a deep reverence for its mystery, remaining at a respectful distance when not called by divine vocation to enter its domain. His is not a Puritanical or Manichean despal of sex; for him, the conjugal act is neither something lowly, tolerated in marriage for the sake of procreation; nor is it merely a "normal" claim of the body finding in marriage its legitimate outlet.⁴⁰

Augustine understands that an ultimate interpenetration of sex and conjugal love takes place in mutual self-donation; sexual experience is thus not something parallel to love, but is absorbed and elevated by this love. Moreover, Augustine understands that sex belongs in a special manner to God and that he may make such use of it only as explicitly sanctioned by Him. Only with God's express permission may he eat of the fruit of this tree.⁴¹ The awareness of this fact engenders a reverence that pervades his approach to sex even within the marriage

⁴⁰ St. Augustine, *Confession*. Book VI, pp. 131-132, Book X, p. 208

⁴¹ *Ibid.* Book XIII, pp. 323-324

bond. This enables him clearly to understand the sinfulness of artificial birth control, with its irreverent severing of the deep link between the ultimate love union and procreation. He understands the tremendous dignity with which the conjugal act is endowed by marriage's being a Sacrament. This implies that his very love calls for being transformed in Christ. He is aware of the fact that only in Christ and through Christ can he live up to the full glory and depth to which this love by its very nature aspires. Then he called this as the doctrine of Original Sin, which had been made up by Paul. Augustine's doctrine, based on the fall of Adam and Eve, flourished.⁴²

Further, Augustine recognized that the will is a fundamental and universal instinct⁴³, which encouraged Adam and Eve to have good and evil knowledge, as a result of eating the fruit of the forbidden tree. From this knowledge, they know "everything and anything". Augustine believes this kind of knowledge includes eternity, love, pleasure and truth; all power, as if they could be their own good, lapsed to this private good of their own, from that higher and beatific good, which was common to all, and bartering the lofty dignity of eternity for the inflation of pride, the most assured verity for the slyness of vanity, uniting love for factious partisanship, they became proud, pleasure - seeking, deceived, envious. All of this is the "carnal knowledge" that led them into sexual desire after they approached that tree.⁴⁴

⁴² St. Augustine, *The City of God*. Book XIII, pp. 385-389; St. Augustine, *Confessions*. Book XIII, pp. 311-346.

⁴³ St. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*. Book XI, p. 27.

⁴⁴ St. Augustine, *The City of God*. Book XII, p. 380.

Moreover, the sexual desire in this “beginning” of the creation of man had been unblessed, which made Adam and Eve sinful. Because they gained wisdom as a result of this “carnal knowledge”; they had the will and capacity to decide between right and wrong, they distrusted God’s believed Satan’s temptation. Satan had said that Adam and Eve would miss something that would make them more like their beloved master; God did not give them all that they need, God cannot be trusted because He withheld something good from them. The serpent argues: “For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil”.⁴⁵ Adam and Eve know what is right and what is wrong, but they believe Satan’s promise of getting more than God is willing to give if they take the initiative. In a rejection of God’s will, Adam and Eve followed their “carnal knowledge” and their own will; they trusted their own judgment. Therefore, man’s will, love and pleasure led them to have the sexual desire which they had gained from the “carnal knowledge”, which drive them into it.⁴⁶

For Augustine, the sexual desire of Adam and Eve would have been blessed if only they listened to God’s command and not followed their own will over God’s will.⁴⁷ They cannot be like God in spiritual knowledge, although man was created in image of God. Augustine also emphasized that “carnal knowledge” and will of man must be bound to God and certainly not based on man’s will, knowledge, opinions and judgment or the opinions of the society. Man should ask God for His will and knowledge and follow them as expressed in Scripture “You are free to

⁴⁵ *Genesis 3.5*

⁴⁶ Marian Van Court (1995), *Adam, Eve and Evolution: Revised Saint Augustine Script*. New York: Grace Presbyterian Church, pp. 15-16. Hereafter, this book will be known as *Adam, Eve and Evolution*.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*.

eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die".⁴⁸ Man does not have his own way to deciding what is right and wrong; he does not have his own will and wisdom. Man does not "eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil" but should walk in faith with God as before they "ate" from that tree. However, man had knowledge of "everything and anything" i.e. "carnal knowledge" after they approached that tree. Man became wise and had his own wisdom, will, and judgment and had his own carnal knowledge, which led him straight into sexual desire and procreation before the blessing.⁴⁹ This sexual desire made Adam and Eve sinners and led to spiritual death and the separation of God and man.

Further, Augustine also discusses the fit destinies of the two cities, the earthly and the heavenly, for he must first explain, so far as the limits of this fall - men gained carnal knowledge leading them to sexual desire - the reasoning by which men have attempted to make for themselves a happiness in this unhappy life, in order that it may be evident, not only from divine authority, but also from such reasons as can be adduced to unbelievers, which God gives to men and from the substantial fulfillment of it which He will give men as men's blessedness. For the end of men's good is that for the sake of which other things are to be desired, while it is to be desired for its own sake; and the end of evil is that on account of which other things are to be shunned, while it is avoided on its own account. Thus by the end of good, men at present mean, not that by which good is destroyed, so that it no longer exists, but that by which it is finished, so that it becomes complete; and by the end of evil, Augustine mean not that which abolishes it, but

⁴⁸ *Genesis 2. 17*

⁴⁹ Marian Van Court, *Adam, Eve and Evolution*, p. 17.

that which completes its development. These two ends, therefore, are the supreme good and the supreme evil; and as Augustine said, those who have in this vain life professed the study of wisdom have been at great pains to discover these ends, and to obtain the supreme good and avoid the supreme evil in this life. And although they erred in a variety of ways, yet natural insight has prevented them from wandering from the truth so far they have not placed the supreme good and evil, some in the soul, some in the body, and some in both.⁵⁰

Augustine also quotes Marcus Varro statement that there are four things, which men desire, as it were by nature without a master, without the help of any instruction, without industry or the art of living, which is called virtue, and which is certainly learned: either pleasure, which is an agreeable stirring of the bodily sense; or repose, which excludes every bodily inconvenience; or both these, which Epicures calls by the one name, pleasure; or the primary objects of nature,⁵¹ which comprehend the things already named and other things, either bodily, such as health, and safety, and integrity of the members, or spiritual such as the greater and less mental gifts that are found in men. Now these four things-pleasure, repose, the two combined and the primary objects of nature-exist in men in such sort that men must either desire virtue in their account, or them for the sake of virtue, or both for their own sake; and consequently there arise from this distinction twelve sects, for each is by this consideration tripled.⁵²

Augustine also illustrates this in one instance and having done so, it will not be difficult to understand the others. Accordingly, as bodily pleasure is subjected,

⁵⁰ St. Augustine, *The City of God*. Book XIX, pp. 669-670

⁵¹ The *prima nature*, or *πρωτα καὶ θινδιν* of the Stoics.

⁵² St. Augustine, *The City of God*. Book XIX, p. 670

preferred, or united to virtue, there are three sects. It is subjected to virtue when it is chosen as subservient to virtue. Thus it is a duty of virtue to live for one's country, and for its sake to beget children, neither of which can be done without bodily pleasure. For there is pleasure in eating and drinking, pleasure also in sexual intercourse. But when it is preferred to virtue, it is desired for its own sake and virtue is chosen only for its sake and to affect nothing else than the attainment or preservation of bodily pleasure. And this indeed is to make life hideous; for where virtue is the slave of pleasure it no longer deserves the name of virtue. Then virtue is united to pleasure when neither is desired for the other's sake, but both for their own. And therefore, as pleasure, according as it is subjected, preferred, or united to virtue, makes three sects, so also do repose, pleasure and repose combined, and the prime natural blessings, makes their three sects each. For as men's opinions vary, and these four things are sometimes subjected, sometimes preferred and sometimes united to virtue, there are produced twelve sects. But this number again is doubled by the addition of one difference, viz, the social life; for whoever attaches himself to any of these sects does so either for his own sake alone, or for the sake of a companion, for whom he ought to wish what he desires for himself. And thus there will be twelve of those who think some one of these opinions should be held for their own sakes, and other twelve who decide that they ought to follow this or that philosophy not for their own sakes only, but also for the sake of others whose good they desire as their own.⁵³

Augustine also added that Varro then rejects as the first step all those differences, which have multiplied the number of sects; and the ground on which he does so is

⁵³ *Ibid*, pp. 670-671; to know further about this topics, especially in Marcus Varro explanation about 228 sects; please refer to Augustine, *The City of God*. Book XIX, pp. 670-673;

that they are not differences about the supreme good. The supreme good then, is the reason of philosophizing; and therefore that cannot be called a sect of philosophy, which pursues no way of its own towards the supreme good. Thus, when it is asked whether a wise man will adopt the social life, and desire and be interested in the supreme good of his friend as in his own, or will, on the contrary, do all that he does merely for his own sake, there is no question here about the supreme good, but only about the propriety of associating or not associating a friend in its participation: whether the wise man will do this not for his own sake, but for the sake of his friend in whose good he delights as in his own. So too, when it is asked whether all things about which philosophy is concerned are to be considered uncertain, the question here is not what end should be pursued, but whether or not man should believe in the substantial existence of that end, or to put it more plainly, whether man who pursues the supreme good must maintain that it is true good, or only that it appears to him to be true, though possibly it may be delusive—both pursuing one and the same good.⁵⁴

The same may be said of those three kinds of life, the life of studious leisure and search after truth, the life of easy engagement in affairs, and the life in which both these are mingled. When it asked, which of these should be adopted, this involves no controversy about the end of good, but inquires which of these three puts a man in the best position as a man finds it, makes him happy; but lettered leisure, or public, business, or the alteration of these, do not necessarily constitute happiness. Many, in fact, find it possible to adopt one or other of these modes of life and yet to miss what makes a man happy. As it is the supreme good or not,

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 672.

man should be defined. There are two parts in the human nature, body and soul, and makes no doubt that of these two, the soul is the better and by far the more worthy part. But whether the soul alone is the man, so that the body holds the same relation to it. It is neither the soul alone nor the body alone, but both together a pair. And therefore, the highest good, in which lies the happiness of man, is composed of goods of both kinds, both bodily and spiritual. And the primary objects of nature are to be sought for man's own sake and that the virtue, which is the art of living and can be communicated by instruction, is the most excellent of spiritual goods. This virtue, then or art of regulating life, when it has received these primary objects of nature which existed independently of it, and prior to any instruction seeks them all, and itself also for its own sake; and it uses them, as it also uses itself, that from them all it may derive profit and enjoyment, greater or less, according as they are themselves greater or less; and while it takes pleasure in all of them, it despises the less that it may obtain or retain the greater when occasion demands. Now, of all goods, spiritual or bodily, there is none at all to compare with virtue. For virtue makes a good use of both itself and all of other goods in which lies man's happiness; and where it is absent no matter how many good things a man has, they are not for his good, and consequently should not be called good things while they belong to one who makes them useless by using them badly. The life of man, then, is called happy when it enjoys virtue and these other spiritual and bodily good things without which virtue is impossible. This is called happier if it enjoys some or many other good things which are not essential to virtue; and happiest of all, if it lacks not one of the good things which pertain to the body and the soul. For life is not the same thing as virtue, since not every life but a wisely regulated life, is virtue; and yet while there can be life of some kind

without virtue, there cannot be virtue without life. This Augustine might apply to memory and reason and such mental faculties; for this to exist prior to instruction, and without them there cannot be any instruction and consequently no virtue, since virtue is learned. But bodily advantages, such as a swiftness of foot, beauty or strength are not essential to virtue, neither is virtue essential to them, and yet they are good things; and according to philosophers, even these advantages are desired by virtue for its own sake, and are used and enjoyed by it in a becoming manner.⁵⁵ Furthermore, Augustine says, all of these reasons are derived from our first parent (Adam and Eve) who apply and enjoy their own sake rather than God's sake to ensure their virtue and end of life in good and beauty.⁵⁶

They say that this happy life is also social, and loves the advantages of its friends as its own, and for their sake wishes for them what it desires for itself, whether these friends live in the same family; or in the locality; or in the world at large; or in the universe itself as those whom they call gods, and provide as friends for the wise man, and whom man more familiarly call angels.⁵⁷

Augustine added, as man cannot as yet see his good, therefore live by faith; neither have man in themselves have power to live rightly; but can do so only if He who has given faith to believe in His help does help men when men believe and pray. As for those who have supposed that the sovereign good and evil are to be found in this life because of the fall of first men; and have placed either in the soul or the body or in both or to speak more explicitly, either in pleasure or in virtue, or in both; in repose or in virtue, or in both; in pleasure and repose; or in

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 674-675.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 675

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

virtue; or in all combined; in the primary objects of nature, or in virtue or in both; all these have with a marvelous shallowness, sought to find their blessedness in this life and in themselves.

Further, Augustine added that virtue itself, which is not among the primary objects of nature, but succeeds to them as the result of learning - after the first men have the carnal knowledge -, though it holds the highest place among human good things, what is its occupation save to wage perpetual war with vices - not those that are outside of us, but within; not other men's but our own - a war which is waged especially by that virtue which Greeks call *σωφροσύνη*, means as temperance and which bridles carnal lusts and prevents them from winning the consent of the spirit to wicked deeds? For men must not fancy that there is no voice in men, when as the apostle says: "the flesh lusteth against the spirit"⁵⁸ for to this vice there is a contrary virtue, when in the same text says "the spirits lusteth against the flesh". For these two, Augustine says, "Are contrary one to the other, so that you cannot do the things which you would". But what is it men wish to do when men seek to attain the supreme good, unless that the flesh should cease to lust against the spirit, and that there be no vice in men against which the spirit may lust? And as men cannot attain to this in the present life, however ardently men desire it, let men by God's help accomplish at least this, to preserve the soul from succumbing and yielding to the flesh that lusts against it and to refuse men consent to the perpetration of sin. Far be it from men, then, to fancy that while men are still engaged in this clandestine, men have already found the happiness,

⁵⁸ *Galatians 5.17*

which men seek to reach the victory. And who is there so wise that he has no conflict at all to maintain against his vices?⁵⁹

Moreover, Augustine asks, "What shall I say of that virtue which is called prudence? Is not all its vigilance spent in the discernment of good from evil things, so that no mistake may be admitted about what we should desire and what avoid? And thus it is itself a proof that men are in the midst of evils, or that evils are in men; for it teaches men that it is evil to consent to sin, and a good to refuse this consent. And yet, this evil, to which prudence teaches and temperance enables men not to consent, is removed from this life neither by prudence nor by temperance. And justice, whose office it is to render to every man his due, whereby there is in man himself a certain just order of nature, so that the soul is subjected to God, and the flesh to the soul, and consequently both soul and flesh to God—does not this virtue demonstrate that it is as yet rather labouring towards its end than resting in its finished work? For the soul is so much the less subjected to God as it is less occupied with the teachings of God; and the flesh is so much the less subjected to the spirit as it lusts more vehemently against the spirit. So long, therefore as this weakness, this plague, this disease beset men, how should men dare to say that men are safe? And if not safe, then how can men be already enjoying themselves final beatitude? Then that virtue, which goes by the name of fortitude, is the plainest proof of the ills of the life, for it is these ills, which it is compelled to bear patiently. And this holds good, no matter though the ripest wisdom co-exist with it. All of this happened because the first men — our first parent — approached the tree of knowledge. The fall spells all man as the weakest

⁵⁹ St. Augustine, *The City of God*. Book XIX, p. 678

creatures and the image of God was taken out of man.⁶⁰ Thus, God commands the first men not approach of that tree or they would become sinners and impure.⁶¹ This is why God prohibited the first men from approaching that tree.

For Augustine, as soon as Adam and Eve transgressed the commandment, Divine grace forsook them, and they were confounded at their own wickedness; and therefore they took fig-leaves (which were possibly the first that came to hand in their troubled state of mind), and covered their shame; for though their members remained the same, they had shame now where they had none before. They experienced a new motion of their flesh, which had become disobedient to them, in strict retribution of their own disobedience to God, which to Augustine was known as sexual desire. For the soul, reveling in its own liberty, and scorning to serve God, was itself deprived of the command it had formerly maintained over the body. And because it had willfully deserted its superior Lord, it no longer held its own inferior servant; neither could it hold the flesh subject, as it would always have been able to do had it remained itself subject to God. Then began the flesh to lust against the spirit⁶² in which strife we are born, deriving from the first transgression a seed of death, and bearing in our members, and in our vitiated nature, the contest or even victory of the flesh.⁶³

For God, author of natures, not of vices, created man upright; but man, being of his own will corrupted, and justly condemned, begot corrupted and condemned children. For we all were in that one man, since we all were that one man who fell

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* Book XIX, p. 680.

⁶¹ It will be discussed farther in Chapter Six.

⁶² *Galatians 17*

⁶³ St. Augustine, *The City of God*. Book XIII, p. 422. We had discussed it previous in this same Chapter.

into sin by the woman who was made from him before the sin. For not yet was the particular form created and distributed to us, in which we as individuals were to live, but already the seminal nature was there from which we were to be propagated; and this being vitiated by sin, and bound by the chain of death, and justly condemned, man could not be born of man in any other state. And thus, from the bad use of free will, there originated the whole train of evil, which, with its concatenation of miseries, convoys the human race from its depraved origin, as from a corrupt root, on to the destruction of the second death, which has no end, those only being excepted who are freed by the grace of God. All of this happened because our first parents had derived more knowledge, will, wisdom as well as flesh motion known as sexual desire, to corrupt the God's covenant, in wanting to be like their master, by approaching the "Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil".⁶⁴

Therefore, to interpret *shajarat* as a reference to sexual desire is more suitable than to link it to any other human instincts. From that transgression, Augustine introduced and developed the doctrine of Original Sin, which caused death.⁶⁵ Augustine also emphasized that sexual desire is derived from the "carnal knowledge" and spoils all of man's positive nature. Thus, men become weak, corrupt and need God's help and grace in order to be transformed by Christ's salvation.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 422-423.

⁶⁵ To know further about this original sin in Augustine's view, please refer to his *City of God* as well as his *Confessions*.

⁶⁶ St. Augustine, *The City of God*. Book XIII, p. 424.

4.1.3 ST. AQUINAS' INTERPRETATION OF *SHAJARAT* AS SEXUAL DESIRE

In order to understand Aquinas's views of sexual desire which relate to the fall of man, we have to examine his *Summa Theologiae* in its entirety. This is because Aquinas does not discuss that topic in a single chapter.

Genesis 2.18: "The Lord God said: "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him". For Aquinas, the help God makes for man is not for just any sort of work (for other men would be of more help than a woman) but for producing children. In plants, which have no nobler function in life than propagation, the active and passive abilities to propagate are joined at all times. In the higher animals however, there is more to life than that, so the active male and passive female partners mate only at certain times constituting the sort of unity that a plant has at all times.⁶⁷ Aquinas quotes Aristotle when he called the female *a male manqué*'. The particular nature of the active male seed intends to produce a perfect likeness of it, and when females are conceived this is due to weak seed, or unsuitable material, or external influences like the dampness of the south wind. But this is because nature as a whole intends women; and in this sense they are not *manqué*' but intended by God, the author of nature as a whole. The type of subordination in which servants are managed in their master's interests came in after sin; but the subordination seen in households or cities, where management is for the benefit of the subordinates themselves, would have been obtained even without sin. And such is the natural inequality and subordination of women to

⁶⁷ Except for those plants in which individuals are either male or female, and thus one of each is necessary to produce offspring (i.e. fruit).

men, who are by nature more reasonable and discerning. (Some say God should not have produced Eve to be an occasion of sin for Adam), but if God removed from the world everything, which man has made an excuse for sin, the world would be a poor place. What is a general good must not be sacrificed because of some particular abuse, especially since God is powerful enough to turn any evil to good account. Forming Eve from Adam's rib signified companionship, not domination (so not from his head) nor yet subjection (so not from his feet); and it also symbolized the establishment of the church by the sacraments of blood and water flowing from the side of Christ sleeping on the cross.⁶⁸

Further **Genesis 1.27**: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them". Aquinas explains that the principle constituent of God's image in man, mind, is found in both male and female human beings. A secondary image of God as beginning and end of creation is, however, to be found only in male man, the beginning and end of woman; Aquinas quotes St. Paul saying that: "the man is the image and glory of God, and the woman the glory of man, for Adam was not from Eve but Eve from Adam, and Adam was not for Eve, but Eve for Adam".⁶⁹

Genesis 1. 28: "God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it..." Based on this text, Aquinas says, unless there had been reproduction in the state of innocence to propagate the human race, man would have urgently needed to sin (by approaching the tree), seeing it would have brought such good. For among corruptible things, in which only the species

⁶⁸ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*. Part I: God, Chapter 5: Man's Place in Creation, p. 143.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 144.

lasts forever, nature's main aim is the good of the species and its reproduction. Only among incorruptible substances is nature interested in individuals. So man needed to reproduce for the sake for his perishable body; though as regards his imperishable soul man needed nature (or better the author of nature, who alone creates human souls) to be interested in the multitude of individuals for their own sakes. So in the state of innocence reproduction was needed not for the conservation of the species but for multiplication of individuals. In the present state of things, when owners multiply, property must be divided up, and Aquinas quotes Aristotle: "common property breeds discord". But in the state of innocence (Eden) men's wills would have been well enough disposed for them to use their common property in a manner suited to each without danger of discord; as we indeed often see good men doing nowadays.⁷⁰

Based on the above interpretations, Aquinas contends that the principle in the creation of man is for man to multiply, develop and prosper. Men have been created in image of God, with God's commandments. The first men approached the forbidden tree and they became wise and knew anything and everything, which Aquinas referred to as "carnal knowledge". This "carnal knowledge" drove them to having sexual desire in Eden, as they realized that reproduction was the best method for the human race to be "fruitful and multiply".⁷¹

Aquinas added that some early theologians, seeing intercourse besmirched by lust in our present state, thought reproduction would have happened without intercourse in the state of innocence. But this is unreasonable. It is in man's

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 148

⁷¹ St. Thomas Aquinas, *ibid*, pp. 148-149.

nature, like that of other animals, both before and after sin, to reproduce by intercourse, and nature has provided him with the organs needed for the purpose, which Adam and Eve realized after approaching the tree - "then their eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked".⁷² Aquinas continues his words, "in our present state the natural mating of male and female is somewhat disfigured by unbalanced desire, and more of the "carnal knowledge", which derived from the fall of first man, but this would not have happened in the state of innocence where the lower powers obeyed reason. Because animals lack reason, people sometimes say that men become like animals during intercourse, when reason is unable to balance the pleasure and heat of desire. But in the state of innocence nothing would have escaped reason in that way. Yet, the pleasure would not have been any less; in fact it would have been greater given the greater purity of nature and sensitivity of body that men then had. Rule by reason requires not that the pleasure should be less, but that the desire for it should be within reasonable bounds. Men who eat moderately can take as such pleasure in their food as gluttons do, but their desire doesn't wallow in the pleasure. In the state of innocence there would have been no great esteem for sexual abstinence, which we esteem nowadays not because it reduces fruitfulness but because it tempers lust, to which Adam and Eve have been seduced by Evil".⁷³

Therefore, things beyond nature only faith can teach, and for faith as Aquinas says, we need authority. So without God's authority, we can only assert what is in the nature of things. Aquinas added that scripture tells us God created man right, so that his limbs, for example, would obey his properly ordered will. But a

⁷² *Ibid.* Genesis 3.7.

⁷³ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*. Part I: God; Chapter 5: Man's Place of Creation, pp. 148-149

properly ordered will tends only to the behaviour appropriate to one's age. So newly born infants would only have had power to move their limbs appropriately to their age, sucking the breast and so on. Weakness of seed or unsuitable material are not the only causes of females being conceived, but also external circumstances such as the direction of the wind or an idea in the mind. And this would have been particularly likely in the state of innocence, when the body was more subordinate to the mind, so that the parent could have decided the sex of the child. The integrated state, in which man was created was a state of our nature, not deriving from the natural constitution of man, but from a gift of God given to human nature as a whole. We know this because its opposite, inherited sin, attaches to nature as a whole and passes from parent to child. When authority is silent we can only believe what accords with nature. Now men naturally learn by sense-experience, so those born in a state of innocence would also have acquired their carnal knowledge over the period of time by discovery and instruction, though without the difficulties we have. And, as infants, they would no more have had mature use of their reason than they had of their bodily limbs.⁷⁴

People who locate Paradise at the equator do so because they think the evenness of day and night produces a temperate climate there, never too cold and never too hot. Aquinas quotes Aristotle's statement "however expressly says that the region is so hot that it is uninhabitable; and this seems more likely, seeing that even countries where the sun never passes directly overhead have excessively hot climates from mere proximity to the sun. In any case, we believe Paradise to be

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

sited in the most temperate locality, whether that be on the equator or elsewhere".⁷⁵

Moreover, Aquinas also explained that natural things tend naturally to goals perceived not by himself or herself but by someone else (namely God). In addition, we animals tend by animal appetite or emotion to goals we perceive with our own senses, tendencies which dumb animals are not free to resist, but which in man are to some extent under reason's control. Finally, as reasoning creatures we can also choose to tend to our own free will to goals presented to us by reason. All these tendencies are not root forms of loving: in nature natural affinity, in the emotions or will a sort of attachment to the good in question as agreeable. The emotion of love is an affective emotion, directly reacting to goodness, rather than an aggressive one, reacting to challenge. Not only our so-called natural abilities to grow and propagate exemplify natural love, but every faculty of our soul, every part of our body, and every created thing. Everything has a built-in affinity for what accords with its nature, which derived from the tree of knowledge that Aquinas referred to as "carnal knowledge". By passion we mean some result of being acted on: either a form induced by the agent (like weight) or a movement consequent on the form (like falling to the ground). Whatever we desire acts on us in this way, first arousing an emotional attachment to it and making itself agreeable, and then drawing us to seek it. The first change the object produces in our appetite is a feeling of its agreeableness: we call this love (weight can be thought of as a sort of natural love); then desire moves us to seek the object and pleasure comes to rest in it. Clearly then, as a change induced in us by an agent,

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

love is a passion; the affective emotion strictly so, the will to love by stretching of the term. Love unites by making what is loved as agreeable to the lover as if it were himself or part of himself. Though love is not itself a movement of the appetite towards an object agreeable. Favour is a freely chosen and willing love, open only to reasoning creatures; and charity - literally, holding dear - is a perfect form of love in which what is loved is highly prized. Aquinas quotes Aristotle saying: "to love is to want someone's good; so its object is twofold: the good we want, loved with a love of desire, and the someone we want it for (ourselves or someone else), loved with a love of friendship. And just as what exists in the primary sense are subjects of existence, and properties exist only in secondary sense, as modes in which subjects exist; so too what we love in the primary sense is the someone whose good we will, and only in secondary sense do we love the good so willed. Friendship based on convenience or pleasure is friendship in as much as we want our friend's good; but because this is subordinated to our own profit or pleasure such friendship is subordinated to love of desire and falls short of true friendship". This is what happened in the story of the first man and first woman whose love fulfilled their will and pleasure and directed them to approach the tree. This is all a result of the "carnal knowledge", which they have as a result of approaching the tree.⁷⁶

Based on his explanations of the Genesis of man in the Bible, St. Aquinas realized that carnal knowledge is the main cause of man having sexual desire but for the first humans the act is not good and blessed because they listened to Satan's word rather than God's command. He also realized the tremendous commitment

⁷⁶*Ibid.* Part II: Journeying to God, Chapter 7: Human Life as a Journey to God, p. 205.

implied in love, a self-donation that cannot be separated from love, from the will to enter into lasting union with the beloved. The will to be permanently united in love results organically from the very nature of spousal love. In sex man gives of himself. The conjugal act involves so deep and radical a self – donation that it itself actualizes the indissoluble union to which spousal love aspires. The becoming “one flesh”, the very nature of this reciprocal gift, clearly presupposes not only love, but also *consensus*, i.e., the solemn will of the spouses to bind them forever. Aquinas based all of this on **Genesis 2. 24**: “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh”.

The role of sex in spousal love extends, however much farther than the conjugal act. It manifests itself in the entire realm of intimacy granted to the spouses in a symphony of effusions of tenderness culminating in this act.⁷⁷ The fact that sexual desire often arises without being embedded in spousal love, and that sex can also, when isolated, exert a tremendous fascination, is no argument against its intrinsic relation to spousal love and to marriage. As a consequence of Original Sin, the sphere of sex can become a pure actualization of concupiscence and assume a completely different aspect. Yet the possibility of abuse and perversion of a thing in no way alters its true meaning and essence of man’s intellect to grasp truth that many are attracted by intellectual activity as a mere display of dexterity or to satisfy pride. Similarly the tendency to isolate sex is no objection against its authentic mission and meaning.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Joseph B. Stanford (November 1999), “Sex, Naturally: An Analysis of Saint Aquinas”, *Journal of Religion and Public Life*. New York: The Institute on Religion and Public Life, pp. 28-29

⁷⁸ Arthur Cushman McGiffert, *A History of Christian Thought*. Volume. II, p. 289.

For Aquinas, sex possesses a tender, mysterious and ineffably uniting quality only when it becomes the expression of something more ultimate, namely wedded love. As soon as sex is isolated and sought for its own sake, its qualities are reversed. The depth, the seriousness, the mystery disappear, to make room for fascinating, exciting and befuddling charm that excludes anything beyond. Wherever sex is encountered in an unlawful form as temptation, there is heard the siren song of lust, with its honeyed poison. The sublime joy of ultimate surrender - touching, chaste, intimate and mysterious - that accompanies sex under other circumstances, is then completely absent. Sex is always extraordinary, but its characteristic extraordinariness assumes diametrically opposite forms. At one time, it is awe-inspiring, mysterious, noble, chaste and free; at another, illegitimate, intoxicating and befogging.⁷⁹

In sex, there is an element of promise, linked with a vague expectation of happiness. This is because complete and satisfying happiness would satisfy all desires and banish all evils and be incapable of passing away. Man's natural resources then are enough to gain for him virtue and the partial happiness that follows virtue in this life; but not man's nor any creature's natural resources are enough to gain for him ultimate happiness. Yet, just as nature provides for man's needs, though denying him the weapons and covering natural to other animals, by giving him reason and his hands to make such things for himself, so too nature provides for man's needs, though denying him the resources to win happiness for himself-an impossibility-by giving him free will to turn to God who can make him happy. Aquinas quotes Aristotle who states, "what our friends enable us to do we

⁷⁹ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*. Part II: Journeying To God, Chapter 11: Living in the World-Moral Virtue, pp. 429-430

have in some sort of power to do". And a nature that can thus achieve utmost perfection, even though needing external help to do it, is of a nobler constitution than a nature that can only achieve some lesser good, even though without external help.⁸⁰ The reasoning creature that with God's help achieves happiness is nobler than the creature lacking reason that is not capable of happiness but by its natural powers achieves some lesser perfection. God alone is happy of his very nature; he alone does not come to happiness by way of some prior activity. It is fitting then that men reach happiness by way of many acts, which we call merits. As Aristotle says, virtuous acts earn happiness as reward. It is not that God's power needs to be supplemented by this human activity, but that this is the fitting way of doing things. Everyone must want to be happy in general, since that is no more than to want one's wants satisfied, and this everyone must want. But not everyone knows in what special state of activity that happiness is to be found, and so in that respect not everyone wants it. Happiness then, regarded in general as our final and complete fulfillment, draws our wills naturally and necessarily; but in its specific aspect: as this or that special activity of this or that power directed at this or that object, it does not draw our wills with necessity. However, to become happy, we must act to achieve that happiness.⁸¹ This is what Eve's carnal knowledge as well as her free will decided to do after she had been seduced by Evil. She knew that Adam will get along with her forever because they are became "one flesh" as God created them. As long as this promise does not tend toward isolated satisfaction, but remains in a reverent submission, awaiting its future as embedded in deep, spousal love, it itself is true. As soon as it is detached

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* Part II: Journeying To God, Chapter 7: Human Life as a Journey to God, p. 181.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* pp. 181-182, to know further Aquinas philosophy of happiness, please refer to his *Summa Theologiae*. Part II: journeying to God, Chapter 7: Human Life as a Journey to God, pp. 182-204

from such love-as when one expects the delights of paradise from sex, as such-the promise becomes a treacherous one.⁸²

Whereas the fascination of isolated sex in its befogging aspects results from "Original Sin" i.e. the fall of Adam and Eve whose approach to the "tree" without blessing from God, and made them desire and understand carnal knowledge; today man is confronted with another deception, viz, the modern approach to sex from a hygienic point of view, as if it were a mere biological need. This amounts to a complete misunderstanding of the sexual sphere.⁸³ Sex is either a hallowed mystery or a mystery of iniquity; it is never a morally neutral need. So intrinsically is sex connected with the moral sphere that as soon as one tries to deprive it of its moral significance, he also deprives it of its extraordinariness. The amoral approach is thus as sinful as the immoral approach; what is more, the former implies a radical blindness to the nature of sex and leads to hopeless boredom.⁸⁴

Those who treat sex as the primary reality that can be understood in it without recurring to spousal love thus fall prey to a fatal error. They are blind both to the nature of love and to the nature of sex. Ironically enough, in trying to reduce everything to sex, they fail to understand the nature of sex itself.⁸⁵

Further, Aquinas explains that there is an important mark distinguishing sex from other instincts and biological appetites, that is the type of finality it involves. This

⁸² *Ibid.* p. 205, to know further about Aquinas philosophy about love, hating, willing, feelings, please refer to pp. 205-219.

⁸³ *Ibid.* Part I: God, Chapter 5: Man's Place in Creation, p. 148

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* Part I: God, Chapter 5: Man's Place in Creation, p. 149.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* Part II: Journeying to God, Chapter 11: Living in the World, pp. 431-432

why he emphasized sexual desire referred to the tree rather than any other instinct. For Aquinas, all instincts, it should be noted, have teleological meaning. They serve as a means for an extrinsic end, and in so doing also fulfill their intrinsic or subjective finality. Instinctive desires tend toward their satisfaction as toward a subjective or experienced end. Thirst, for example, tends toward the satiety offered by drinking. But thirst also serves the body's need for water. The subjective end serves the objective end; one could say that the former is ultimately a means to the latter, as extrinsic to it.⁸⁶

In sexual desire such twofold finality is also found. The subjective, experienced finality tends toward sexual satisfaction; the objective finality is directed towards procreation. When dealing with animals, one can consider sex as an exclusive means for procreation; where man is concerned, the relationships between sex and procreation become subtler and deeper.⁸⁷

Therefore, Christ has endowed marriage with the character of a sacrament, making it something holy and a source of special graces. This confers a completely new dignity on the bodily union. Though marriage is established by *consensus*, it may consummate only by the marriage act, assuming through it the character of strictly indissoluble union. Its essential role in the consummation of the sacrament clearly reveals the dignity to which the conjugal act has been elevated.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* Part I: God, Chapter 6: Running the World, p. 205 & 209.

Moreover, to this sublime union God has confided the coming into being of a new man, a co-operation with His divine creativity. Such deep mystery calls for reverence and awe. It is no accident that God has invested an act of this kind with creative significance. As God's love is the creative principle in the universe, so love is everywhere in creation. Thus there is profound significance in the nexus-at once symbol and reality-whereby, from the creative act in which two become one flesh, both from love and in love, a new human being proceeds. This mystery of the profound link between love and procreation sets forth the gravity of artificial birth control in new light.⁸⁸

The difference between the finality of other instincts and the one linking sex to procreation thus begins to disclose itself. The finality between conjugal act and procreation is superabundant, and not merely instrumental. This becomes clearer in examining the nature of the principle of superabundance and its difference from mere instrumentality.⁸⁹

It cannot be denied that one end of carnal knowledge is to enable man to act; his entire practical life presupposes knowledge. Yet a still more sublime end of carnal knowledge is to enable him to attain the moral perfection and sanctification that is requisite for his eternal welfare. While carnal knowledge of itself has a meaning and value of its own, its relation to the ends it serves has the character of superabundance. Its orientation differs markedly from the instrumentality incorporated into a surgical instrument as a means for operating, or into money as

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* Part II: Journeying to God, Chapter 7: Human Life as a Journey to God, pp. 204-206

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

a means for procuring goods, or into teeth as a means; in superabundant finality, the good serving the end has also a justification and a value in itself.⁹⁰

The conjugal finishes a unique fulfillment of spousal love in mutual offering. The same act, in itself constitutive of the union, is superabundantly the source of procreation. Thus one must speak of procreation as the end of sex in a sense of different from that a mere instrumental finality.⁹¹

Based on Aquinas' discussions of sexual desire, which definitely refer to the interpretation of the tree, we have to note here that Aquinas follows Aristotle in not finding that self-disciplined man is one who struggles to control his unruly emotions with will power, whereas Aquinas' conception of the virtuous man is one in whom the power of love has so permeated the emotions themselves that they have themselves become disposed to ruliness, so that the body itself sympathizes and cooperates with what the whole man feels reasonable and integrated behaviour, which derived from the carnal knowledge that was explored by the first men who approached the tree.

Further, Aquinas emphasized that happiness is another name for God. God is happy by nature; he does not attain happiness or receive it from another. But men become happy by receiving a share in God's happiness, something God creates in them. And this created happiness is a life of human activity in which their human powers are ultimately fulfilled; for the goal of anything is fulfillment in activity. True, to exist is already to live, but to exist is not yet to be happy, excepting in

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* Book I: God, Chapter 4: Creation, pp. 94-96; Chapter 5: Man's Place in Creation, pp. 129-131, 147

⁹¹ *Ibid.* Book II: Journeying to God, Chapter 11: Living in the World-Moral Virtue, p. 431.

God's case. When we speak of leading a life of action or contemplation or pleasure, we mean by life an exercise of our existent powers in some form of fulfilling activity; and this is also the way in which our ultimate goal is said to be eternal life. This is what our first men tried, to fulfill their entire life and pleasures in their ways as long as their activity is in God's covenant. Yet, their activity is leading from their carnal knowledge, which shows forth their sexual desire, wisdom, will, feeling and knowledge. Therefore, all men are bearing their sins. Men have put themselves closer to God through Happiness and true Love. Now this is eternal life: to know you, the only true god.⁹²

4.2 VIEWS OF IMĀM AL-QURṬUBĪ AND IMĀM SAYYID QUTB

4.2.1 AL-QURṬUBĪ AND SAYYID QUTB'S INTERPRETATION OF SHAJARAT AS SEXUAL DESIRE

Unlike Augustine's and Aquinas's concept of sexual desire and human personality, in which they emphasized on the weakness of man, al-Qurṭubī's and Sayyid Qutb's concept is based on the Islamic concept of life, as well as the positive and power aspects of man's knowledge, derived from the teachings of the Qur'ān and the *al-ḥadīth*. Islam is a comprehensive system that does not distinguish between worldly life and the life to come in the sense that they are related to each other. This is the spirit of sacred knowledge or unity of knowledge. According to Islam, man is created to accomplish certain duties in this life (in

⁹² *Ibid.* Part II: Journeying to God, Chapter 7: Human Life as a Journey to God, pp. 176-178

order to be and will be) rewarded or punished in hereafter for what he or she has done in this life. Allah says in *sūrah al-Dhāriyāt* (51): verse 56:

"وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ"

"I have only created Jinns and men, that they may serve Me".

There is a small amount of disagreement between these two scholars in their discussion on the interpretation of "tree" referring to sexual desire. We mentioned in Chapter Three that al-Qurṭubī precisely interpreted the tree to refer to the unity of knowledge, as did Sayyid Quṭb. Al-Qurṭubī did not mention in his exegesis that the tree refers to sexual desire, whereas, Sayyid Quṭb did mention that fact. He believes that the tree refers to sexual desire, after Adam and Eve had been seduced by Satan to approach the tree. After they approach the tree, they became aware that they were naked and had shame. This happening and "tragedy" opened their eyes to the sexual desire between them. However, the Paradise or Eden mentioned in Chapter Two, is a sacred place and not the right place and it was not yet time for them to have that sexual desire. Therefore, God's command to the first man to not approach *shajarat* happened in garden, which refers to paradise or Eden, not the earth. This is based on *sūrah al-Baqarah* (2) verse 35: "We said: "O Adam! Dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden; and eat of the bountiful things therein as (where and when) ye will; but approach not this tree, or ye run into harm and transgression". Thus, in *sūrah al-Baqarah* (2) verse 36, it was after the

fall that the sentence was pronounced: "On earth will be your dwelling place".⁹³

This shows that the command happened in the Garden of Eden.

Imām Sayyid Quṭb also quotes Imām Ḥassan al-Bannā as well as Imām al-Mawdūdī saying: "that all of those commandments of the Qur'ān and guidance of the Holy Prophet show how Islam has tried to restrict the sexual relation to marriage only and to stop all other forms or ways outside this relationship. It has allowed the satisfaction of this natural instinct in a natural way through marriage and raising a family, which is commendable in every way".⁹⁴ But again, in the story of Adam and Eve who are husband and wife, which based on the *sūrah al-Baqarah* (2) verse 35: "We said, "O Adam! dwell thou and thy wife in the garden;...", they should listening to God's command and realize sexual desire by revelation (*waḥy*) from God. But before the permission, which Sayyid Quṭb believes happened on earth, (in addition to the developing and prospering on the earth) they were seduced by Satan. Thus, their sexual instincts caused them to harm themselves.⁹⁵ This is because Adam and Eve separated themselves from the Creator because of their forgetfulness; they should have kept themselves in the unity of knowledge. However, Adam and Eve fulfilled the responsibilities as caliph and by leading all men to the great system of raising the family with deep spirituality, developing the earth and civilizations for the sake of God.⁹⁶ This is because they had been forgiven by God.

⁹³ Imām Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Zilā*. Volume I, pp. 67-71; vol. II, p. 113-119.

⁹⁴ Imām al-Mawdūdī, *op.cit.* p. 143.

⁹⁵ Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Zilā*. Volume I, pp. 75-85; volume II, pp. 123-135

⁹⁶ Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Zilā*. Volume II, p. 143; al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*. Volume III, p. 144

For man to perform his duties on the earth, he has been equipped with the necessary abilities led by his intellect and knowledge, which given by Allah. Besides that he has been given guidance from Allah (s.w.t) through His prophets and messengers from Adam until the last prophet Muhammad (ṣ.'a.w). This means that man is unique among all other creations created by Allah. For that uniqueness he has faith in his or her Creator as well as in the abilities given to him by the Creator to perform his duties on earth. His abilities are based on his nature as a free and responsible human who is able to carry the task he was created for. He has a good physical instrument and a mind that can be used in thinking, comparing and creating, and an emotional dimension as well as a social one that can help him to be a social and caring being.⁹⁷

Thus, the Qur'ān places man in a very respectful position. From the Qur'ān previously discussed in Chapter Two, one knows that man was created in the best form with very high dignity and status. Allah taught Adam, the father of mankind the names of all things, made he and his children the successors of Himself on the earth, created man from the union of the sexes, gave him hearing and sight and created for him all that is on the earth.

Further, the Qur'ān teaches in a very clear way that happiness in this life and hereafter depends on following God's law. One way to ensure happiness among us is to teach our brothers and sisters to keep their knowledge and intellect in the unity of God, the Oneness of God. Allah disallowed our first parents from approaching the "separative knowledge", which will separate creatures from their

⁹⁷ The nature of man and its concept in the Qur'ān are widely discussed in Chapter Two. Please refer to the whole chapter.

Creator. Allah only emphasized that Adam and Eve should approach the “unity of knowledge”, which strengthens man’s faith in the Oneness’ God or *tawḥīd*, ‘amal, *iḥsān*, *taqwā* and *akhlāq* as we mentioned them earlier in Chapter Four.

Al-Qurṭubī,⁹⁸ as well as Sayyid Quṭb, did not interpret the tree to mean sexual desire as Augustine and Aquinas did. This is because, they take the view that the tree approximately and appropriately refers to the unity of knowledge. For them, Islam is religious knowledge, which emphasized performance of his duties based on sacred knowledge, which is taught as guidance from God.

Based on the above explanation, we understand that al-Qurṭubī and Sayyid Quṭb emphasized that; it is very clear that man, as honored creatures, had been taught to guard their future in order to prosper this earth and to have pure descendants. To make their life easier for the sake of God, everything in this universe was created for the benefit of mankind; the sun, the moon, the day, the night, the air, the water, the fruits, the animals and such. All of the names of things had been taught to the first man, Adam as we discussed earlier. Therefore, man is the most honored creation on earth. The wrongful doing, which are occurring at different times, in different place, always committed by mankind against mankind, are obviously derived from ignorance and selfishness and forgetfulness of faith and commitments.⁹⁸

This is what happened to Adam and Eve. Their forgetfulness is their shame, because they both approached the “separative knowledge”, which opened their

⁹⁸ Imām al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi*. Volume 111, p. 133; Saḥāb Muḥammad ‘Alī (1980-83), *Buḥārī Wadīr al-Sik-ul-Uzhiyah*. Volume 2. Asyūt: Jāmi’ al-Asyūt Qism ‘Ilm al-Nafs, pp. 45-47; Aḥmed M. Raba, *Major Personalities in the Qur’an*, p. 44.

eyes to negatives and bad knowledge. However, God forgave them. This means that they both back to the sacred knowledge, i.e. the unity of knowledge. Implied from that, one of man's basic characteristics derived from his nature is forgetfulness. It is very clear that man forgets many things, among which are lessons he or she has learned, actions, knowledge and many other things. Imām al-Qurṭubī as well as Syed Naquib al-Attas explained that "man is also composed of forgetfulness (*nisyān*) and he is called (*insān*) basically, precisely, because having testified to himself the truth of the covenant he sealed with God, which entails obedience of His commands and prohibitions, he forgot (*nasia*) to fulfill his duty and his purpose".⁹⁹

The term "forgetting" refers to the failure to remember or lack of awareness or attentiveness or "the inability to recall a particular piece of information accurately. According to the information processing approach, this may be due to a breakdown in encoding, storing or retrieval of information".¹⁰⁰ Forgetting as part of human memory has been studied with both short term and long-term memory. It has also been discussed in psychology to understand the phenomenon of forgetting. This term will be used in order to deal with the difficulties of life, for example sad events or mistakes in man's life, which can cause him or her a lot of trouble if he or she cannot forget. Therefore, forgetfulness as a natural character is different from the forgetting or the loss of the ability to recall, recognize or reproduce that was previously learned as a result of brain damage. Nevertheless forgetfulness is also the cause of man's disobedience and this blameworthy nature inclines him towards in injustice (*ẓulm*) and ignorance (*jahl*).

⁹⁹ Imām al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi*. Volume V, p. 77; Syed Naquib al-Attas (1990), p. 3.

¹⁰⁰ Crider (1983), p. 60.

On the other hand, mind is needed in man's nature to determine, to make logic and judgment. Allah motivates human beings to use their minds so that they might understand, as understanding is the main task of mind.¹⁰¹ This is why, Allah taught Adam the first man to not approach the tree, which would separate man from his Creator as well as cause man to 'forget' his Creator. To ensure that man had faith in God and his unity of knowledge, man was forgiven and returned to his "normal" nature.

Man is body, soul, mind, heart and self.¹⁰² He or she is in all these concepts together without any separation. Man in his or her normal behavior, follows the indications of his or her mind in most of his or her action, but sometimes he or she follows his or her instincts or habits if he or she did not use his or her intellect before performing any action. It is because man had *nafs*, which mentioned in the Qur'ān as *al-nafs al-Ammārah*¹⁰³, *al-nafs al-Lawwāmah*¹⁰⁴ and *al-nafs al-Muṭmainnah*.¹⁰⁵

According to A. Yūsuf 'Alī "our doctors postulate three states or stages of the development of the human soul: 1) *Ammārah* (*sūrah Yūsuf*), which is prone to evil and if not checked and controlled, will lead to perdition; 2) *Lawwāmah* (*sūrah al-Qiyāmah*), which feels conscious of evil and resists it, asks for God's grace and pardon after repentance and tries to amend; it hopes to reach salvation; 3) *Muṭmainnah* (*sūrah al-Fajr*), the highest stage of all, when it achieves full rest

¹⁰¹ Please refer to *Sūrah al-Baqarah* (2): verse 76 and verse 170; *sūrah Āli 'Imrān* (3) verse: 190.

¹⁰² The term "self" in Arabic "*nafs*" has been used sometimes as a synonym to the soul and for the person itself as a whole without separation between body and soul. Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*. Volume III, p. 112

¹⁰³ Please refer to *sūrah Yūsuf* (12): verse 53 and Imam al-Qurtubi's explanation in *al-Jāmi*. Volume VI.

¹⁰⁴ Please refer to *sūrah al-Qiyāmah* (75): verse 2

¹⁰⁵ Please refer to *surah al-Fajr* (89): verse 27-30.

and satisfaction. Our second stage may be compared to conscience, except that in English usage conscience is a faculty and not a stage in spiritual development.¹⁰⁶

This is why al-Qurṭubī and Sayyid Quṭb mentioned the importance of the sacred knowledge, which leads man in *tawḥīd*, *'amal*, *iḥsān*, *taqwā* and *akhlāq*. Based on this explanation, they both also figure out God's law in man's procreation of the human race. In other words, all aspects of man's life are based on God's law, i.e. the unity of knowledge. They established the Qur'ān as the law of life because only the Qur'ān offers a satisfactory and convincing answer to all of life's questions. Moreover, Islamic education is very comprehensive and embraces all fields of study, it includes the field of marital relationships and provides useful and appropriate sex education to married couples.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ A. Yūsuf 'Alī, *The Holy Qur'ān*. notes 5810, p. 1649.

¹⁰⁷ To know further, please refer to Afzalur Raḥmān (1981), *Quranic Sciences*. London: The Muslim Schools Trust, Imām Sayyid Quṭb, *Fī Zilā*. Volume IV, p. 127; Imām al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*. Volume V, p. 99.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE INTERPRETATION OF *SHAJARAT AL-KHULD* AS TRIBULATION

5.0 INTRODUCTION

Shajarat also refers to the impurity, which relates to sexual desire. This interpretation was discussed in Chapter Four. Therefore, this chapter will focus on the interpretation of *shajarat* as tribulation.

5.1 AUGUSTINE AND AQUINAS VIEWS OF *SHAJARAT* AS TRIBULATION

God's plans, as revealed through prophecy, can give the Christian believer a solid hope for the future. Christianity without a future would not be basic Christianity. In contrast to the eschatology of heathen religions, which often paint the future in foreboding ways, Christianity's hope is bright and clear and offers the basic fact that for a Christian, life to come is better than the present life. In Christianity the future is painted as one of bliss and happiness in the presence of the Lord; a future without the ills that are common to this life. Without prophecy in the scriptures, much of this hope would not exist.

Prophecy exists in nearly every book of the Bible. The earliest mention is in the second chapter of Genesis when God instructed Adam not to eat of the tree. This prophecy was fulfilled in the next chapter when Adam and Eve ate from that tree.

This is the beginning of tribulation. The powerful and positive image of God in the first man - the first prophecy - was damaged because they approached the forbidden tree. As a result, men became sinners and impure. Augustine, Aquinas and Christians believe that it is the carnal knowledge which brought out the weakness of men who follow their wills rather than God's law. God planned that men, with His grace, would obey His laws and multiply fruitfully on the earth. However, the first man had spoiled this plan with the result that all men became sinners and impure.¹

Further, in the New Testament Christians learn of the culmination of one era of God's plan for the human race and see a new era introduced with the establishment of the Christian Church. It is also in the New Testament where Christians learn of the next event in God's plan of redemption for fallen man. No longer are God's people saved through the law of obedience, but now a plan of grace has been enacted and the era of the church is detailed.

For Augustine, Aquinas and most Christians nowadays, the existence and placement of the next step in God's great plan of redemption is the rapture of the church. Moreover, they believe that the future of God's intervention in the world will begin at the rapture² and will include the period of trouble preceding the Second Coming of Christ³ and the establishment of God's kingdom on the earth.

The day of the Lord also includes the millennium kingdom. The entire period

¹ Association of Bible Study (2000), *Introduction to Prophecy Bible Study*. New York: Prophecy Bible Study, p. 1. Hereafter, this book will be known as *Introduction to Prophecy*

² Rapture is the literal, physical "snatching away" of everyone who has placed his or her faith of salvation in Jesus Christ. The word rapture in this context originated from the Latin translation of scripture. We see the rapture in **1 Thessalonians 4. 13-18**. In verse 17 the English phrase "caught up" translates from the Greek word *harpazo*, which means "to seize upon with force" or "to snatch up". Latin translator of the Bible used the word *rapere*, the root of English term "rapture".

³ To know further, please refer to Association of Bible Study, *Introduction to Prophecy*, pp. 23-43

before and after the second coming of Christ will constitute a special divine intervention and rule of righteousness on the earth in a way that is not being experienced in the present age. Joel made it clear that the day of the Lord included the Great Tribulation before the Second Coming. **Joel 2.28** stated, (The day of the Lord) “and afterward, I will pour out my spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions”. He also stated in 3.2 (The nations Judged) “I will gather all nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will enter into judgment against them concerning my inheritance, my people Israel, for they scattered my people among the nations and divided up my land”. The time of restoration of Israel (**Joel 3. 16-21**) following the Great Tribulation is related to the Second Coming and will be fulfilled in the millennium.⁴

In 1 Thessalonians 5. 1-11 Paul presents a large doctrine of scripture, the day of the Lord, which is a time of special divine visitation mentioned often in the Old and New Testaments. Paul stated, “Now brothers, about time and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, “peace and safety,” destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But, you brothers are not in darkness, so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are

⁴ The Millennium refers to the one thousand-year reign of the Messiah here on earth. It is during this time that true believers of Christ will be able to live in peace on earth alongside their King and Messiah. But because God created man with a free will, which been encouraged with man's carnal knowledge derived from the first man, and He wants man to freely choose to worship Him, after the thousand-year period Satan will be released. The deceiver will be allowed to attempt to convince the people of the millennial world that he is worthy of worship. Some will choose to follow, but once again God will step in with His heavenly armies and Satan's uprising will be defeated.

asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleeps at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing”.

Moreover, there is a promise in **1 Thessalonians 4. 14-18** which emphasizes that the Church of Jesus Christ will not have to go through the coming tribulation period; “We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord ever. Therefore encourage each other with these words”.⁵ That is one reason why the Bible calls the rapture ‘blessed hope’.⁶

That passage shows that becoming Christian does not save him from the ordinary tribulations that plague all people from time to time. Church history is full of martyrs who have suffered all kinds of persecution. **1 Peter 4** tells Christians they

⁵ Please also refer to *1 Corinthians 15.51-53*

⁶ *Titus 2.13*

will have to suffer trials in this life, but Jesus specifically said the tribulation is a special judgment of God, one which the churches would not go through.⁷

Based on the above texts of the Bible, Augustine and Aquinas agreed that there is a relation between impurity and tribulation. They both believed that the entirety of men's life derived from the first men's carnal knowledge that drove them into sexual desire, impurity and sin. Thus, their impurity and sins were inherited by all men. Therefore, God sent down His Son, Christ into this world to redeem men's impurity and sins. This entire of men's life is tribulation until men have freed by the grace of Christ and God.⁸ Therefore, tribulation is referring to the judgment of Christ, the result of approaching the forbidden tree.

In the other words, Augustine and Aquinas agreed in referring to the forbidden tree as tribulation. They are of the opinion that this world only thinks it has seen tribulation because of the sins of the first parent who approached the forbidden tree. Men know everything and anything. With this knowledge, known as carnal knowledge men became wise, had their own free will, their own desire, and their own judgment. Thus the first parent damaged the positive and powerful man who had been created in the image of God: men became impure; sinners. Everyone would have to face the tribulation as the result of the first man's of carnal knowledge.⁹ Now Christians readily accept the news that they will rapture before the period of tribulation arrives. Even if Christians don't deserve deliverance from the hour of wrath as stated in **Romans 3.23**, "There is no difference, for all have

⁷ Please refer to the whole *Matthew 24*.

⁸ St. Augustine, *The City of God*. Book XVII, pp. 568-570; St. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*. Part III: The Road to God, Chapter 14: The Life of Christ, pp. 511-513

⁹ St. Augustine, *ibid*; St. Aquinas, *ibid*.

sinned and fall short of the glory of God”, it is not based on merit. It is founded solely on what the Bible says. God deals with people on the basis of grace when people turn to Him in faith as stated in **Ephesians 2.8-9**, “ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift from God-not by works, so that no one can boast”, and this principle includes escape from the tribulation. The contemporary church, with all her carnality, worldliness, and sin, does not warrant escape from the tribulation; but typical of His mercy, God will save people from the wrath to come not because people deserve it but because of His mercy.¹⁰

One of the best promises guaranteeing the Church’s rapture before the tribulation appears in **Revelation 3.10**, “Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth”.

Therefore, Christians believe that tribulation is a necessary step in God’s plan. They must decide to choose Christ or deny Him, in order to gain redemption for the first men’s sins and impurity. As a result of breaking God’s law, men gained carnal knowledge as well as free will and damaged their goodness and powerful image in God.

Actually, there is little argument, little reference and little discussion on Augustine and Aquinas’s writings on the tribulation. They both relate that the tribulation is derived from the fall of the first man who approached the forbidden

¹⁰ Association of Bible Study, *Introduction to Prophecy*, p. 7

tree. Augustine, Aquinas and Christians nowadays believe that this tribulation is a necessary step in God's plan for this world. The tribulation period will ultimately force man to choose or deny Christ. Billions of people will not have the opportunity to live out their normal life span, so amid the tribulations and traumatic events, they will make an eternal decision. The tribulation also provides the people of Israel with the opportunity to fulfill many prophecies that have yet to be completed. Most important of these is "seventy 'sevens'" are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy".¹¹ These events will all be completed with the occurrence of the tribulation. This is because the people of Israel are also the descendants of Adam and also inherited the first men's sin and impurity.¹²

For Augustine and Aquinas, God's judgment via the tribulation, including the importance of a pre-tribulation rapture, as mentioned earlier, can only be fully understood in relation to the significance of the nation of Israel. The entire Bible details two groups of God's people-Israel and the Church.¹³ The New Testament consistently discriminates between Israel and the Church, but we must realize that a belief that God's single plan for history includes these two different peoples does not imply that there are different ways of salvation. When it comes to the issue of eternal salvation there is only one way, since all peoples down through

¹¹ *Daniel 9.24*

¹² St. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Part III: The Road to God, Chapter 14: The Life of Christ, p. 523 & 528

¹³ St. Augustine, *The City of God*, Book XVII, pp. 568-570; St. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Part III, Chapter 14, p. 529.

history descend from a single source-Adam. Christ's saving work is the only way of salvation for anyone, whether they are member of Israel or the Church.¹⁴

Further, Augustine and Aquinas quotes that the Bible teaches, that the tribulation is a time of preparation for Israel's restoration and conversion.¹⁵ While the Church will experience tribulation in general during this present age,¹⁶ it is never mentioned as participating in Israel's time of trouble, which includes the Great Tribulation, the Day of the Lord, and the Wrath of the God. Such a time of judgment does not require the Church, which has not rejected Christ to be present. With the Church in Heaven during the Tribulation, it enables God's focus to be on Israel as His Divine instrument through which He acts.

Moreover, another purpose for the tribulation is that it is a time of God's wrath. The evidence of this is God's judgment upon Christ that is, to free everyone who trusts in Christ and rejects everyone who denies him.¹⁷

Augustine and Aquinas believe that everyone had to face tribulation as the result of man's carnal knowledge. Therefore, everyone should face this tribulation to choose or deny Christ and God, as tribulation is the means by which man, who inherited sin from Adam and Eve, namely Original Sin, will be saved.

¹⁴ St. Augustine, *ibid.* pp. 568-570. St. Aquinas, *ibid.* pp. 511-513; Association of Bible Study, *Introduction to Prophecy*, p. 17.

¹⁵ *Deuteronomy 4. 29-30. Jeremiah 30. 3-11. Zechariah 12.10*

¹⁶ *John 15.18-25. 16.33. 2 Timothy 3.10-13*

¹⁷ St. Augustine, *The City of God*, Book XVII, p. 579. St. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Part III, Chapter 15: Living in Christ, pp. 555.

5.2 AL-QURṬUBĪ AND SAYYID QUTB'S INTERPRETATION OF SHAJARAT AS TRIBULATION (AL-MIḤNAH)

We mentioned earlier that al-Qurṭubī quoted Rabi' al-Anas that *shajarat* referred to tribulation (*al-miḥnah*). Sayyid Qutb did not interpret that tree as *al-miḥnah* but he relates that Adam as caliph has to face *al-miḥnah*. Therefore, we have to examine upon the concept of *al-miḥnah* in both of them.

In the view of al-Qurṭubī, God had warned man not to approach the domain of *al-miḥnah* or tribulation. Al-Qurṭubī was convinced by the argument in the Qur'ān. In his interpretation, al-Qurṭubī was relying on the Qur'anic text, which concludes that from the beginning, man was prepared to take the responsibility of being the successor of Allah on earth. He was prepared for this task, - by being taught by Allah. In *sūrah al-Ahzāb* (33) verse 72 mentions this:

"إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَنْ يَحْمِلْنَهَا

وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا"

"We did indeed offer the trust to the heavens and the earth, and to the mountains; but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof: but man undertook it; he was indeed unjust and foolish"

According to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, the burden of responsibility for the human state was so great that neither the sky nor the mountains would accept it. Thus, it was upon man's shoulders that this heavy responsibility was placed.¹⁸ As Hafez says, echoing the Qur'anic verse:

For Heaven's self was all too weak to bear
The burden of His love God laid on it.
He turned to seek a messenger elsewhere
And in the Book of Fate my name was writ.¹⁹

The very grandeur of the human condition is precisely in that he has both the possibility of reaching a state "higher than the angels" and at the same time of denying God. Being given the possibility of being God-like through the acceptance of the "trust of faith", man can also play the role of a little deity and deny God as such. Therein lays both the grandeur and seriousness of the human condition. Each being in the Universe is what it is. It is situated on a particular level of existence. Only man can stop being man. He can ascend above all degrees of universal existence and by the same token fall below the level of the basest of creatures. The alternatives of heaven and hell placed before man are themselves an indication of the seriousness of the human condition. Man is presented with a unique opportunity by being born in the human state and it is a tragedy for him to fret away and waste his life in pursuits which distract him from the essential goal of his life, which is to save his immortal soul.²⁰

¹⁸ Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1966), *Ideals and Realities of Islam*. 1st published. Great Britain: George Allen & Unwin, p. 25. After this, this book will be known as *Ideals*.

¹⁹ Gertrude Bell translation

²⁰ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Ideals*, p. 26

The supreme symbol of this trust, this precious burden, which God has placed on the shoulders of man, a burden, which if he bears safely grants him eternal felicity, is in Islam the black stone of Ka'ba. There is in Mecca in the house of God a black stone, which is in fact a meteor. In the Islamic tradition, this stone, which fell from heaven, symbolizes the original covenant (*al-mīhāq*) made between man and God. God taught man the name of all the creatures as we are told in the Qur'ān as well as in the Old Testament. This means that God gave man the possibility of dominating over all things for to possess the "name" of the thing means to exercise power over it. Man has the right to breathe the air about him, to eat and drink to satiate his bodily desires, to walk upon the earth. None of these has man created himself. Man is moreover given life and the freedom to accept or deny the Creator Himself. This is in itself a miracle, a part of existence, which can deny Being. We exist and yet there are men who deny Being, the source of all particular existence. Only men can become existentialists. Animals also exist but they are not existentialists.²¹

It is itself a miracle that human existence is given the possibility of denying its own source. But man is given all this and much more in return for something, which God wants of him, and the Black Stone is the symbol of this covenant made between man and God. The idea of the covenant is an aspect of religion often forgotten in modern times, but it is essential in Islam and is of course strongly emphasized in the Old Testament. There, however, the covenant is made between God and the chosen of people, the people of Israel, whereas in Islam it is made between God and man as such not a particular race or tribe.²²

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

Man, by accepting the covenant has in turn certain duties to perform. He has, first of all, to make his intelligence conform to the Truth, which comes from the Absolute, and then to make his will conform to the Will of the Absolute and his speech to what God wants of him. In brief, in return for all the blessings and gifts that God has given man, man must in turn remember his real nature and always keep before him the real goal of his terrestrial journey. He must know who he is and where he is going. This he can do only by conforming his intelligence to the Truth and his will to the Divine Law. A person who does not fulfill his religious obligations falls short in Muslim eyes on the simplest moral plane. He is like a man who has rented a house and refuses to pay the rent. Man has accepted a covenant with God but simply refuses to live up to his side of the agreement.²³

To accept the Divine covenant brings up the question of living according to the Divine Will. The very name of Islam is intimately connected with this cardinal idea. The root "*salama*" in Arabic, from which *Islām* is derived, has two meanings, one peace and the other surrender. He who surrenders himself to the Divine Will gains peace. The very idea of Islam is that through the use of intelligence, which discerns between the Absolute and the Relative, one should come to surrender to the Will of the Absolute. This is the meaning of Muslim: one who has accepted through free choice to conform his will to the Divine Will.²⁴

In a particular sense Islam refers to the religion revealed through the Qur'ān, but in a more general sense it refers to religion as such. Some Muslim sages in fact see three different levels of meaning in the word "Muslim". Islam is actually like

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 27

²⁴ *Ibid.*

a several-storied mountain and everything in it has different degrees and levels of meaning including the concept of "Muslim" itself. Firstly, anyone who accepts a Divine revelation is a "Muslim" in its universal sense, be he a Muslim, Christian, Jew or Zoroastrian. The Islamic point of view did not take into account the Indian religions until historic contact was made with them but this definition would refer to them as well, as Hinduism came to be called by certain later Muslim sages the "religion of Adam". In its first meaning, therefore, Muslim refers to that human being who through the use of his intelligence and free will accepts a Divinely revealed law.²⁵

Secondly, "*muslim*" refers to all creatures of the Universe who accept Divine law in the sense that they conform to the unbreakable laws, which the Western world calls "laws of Nature". In modern times the very logical coherence of the natural world, its order and regularity, have turned many people away from a religious conception of nature as if the presence of God in Nature were manifested only through miracles. The fact that the sun rises regularly every morning and one observes no break in regularity of the natural order was a major argument of eighteenth century and nineteenth century and even by modern rationalist against the Christian conception of the Universe. But this regularity proves in Muslim eyes just the opposite, namely the presence of the Divine Will to which all creatures are subservient and in fact, save for man, have no choice but to follow.²⁶

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 28

A stone has no choice but to fall. The force of gravitation is an expression of the Divine Will on the physical plane, which the stone obeys absolutely so that in this sense it is "*muslim*". It is the Will of the Creator that expresses itself in what is called "laws of nature" in Western thought, and everything in the Universe is in a profound sense Muslim except for man who, because of this free choice given to him as a trust to bear, can refuse to submit to His Will. A tree grows and has no choice but to grow. Fire burns and cannot do otherwise. A pear tree must always bear pears. A tiger must always be a tiger and an eagle an eagle. A noble animal is always noble and a base one always base. It is only man who can be as ferocious as a tiger, as majestic as an eagle or lion, or as lowly as an earthworm. It is only man who can stop being a Muslim in this second meaning of the term "*muslim*", whereas all other beings are "*muslim*" in this sense by virtue of their complete submission to the Divine Will, which manifests itself as "laws of nature".²⁷

Finally, there is the highest meaning of Muslim, which applies to the saint. The saint is like nature in that every moment of his life is lived in conformity with the Divine Will, but his participation in the Divine Will is conscious and active whereas that of nature is passive. All beings in a sense know that they exist; only man knows that he knows and has a conscious knowledge of his existence. It would perhaps be more logical to consider the first meaning of Muslim as pertaining to nature, the second meaning to man who has accepted a revelation, and the third meaning to the saint who not only has accepted revelation but lives fully in conformity with the Divine Will. As such the saint is the conscious, active and intellectual counterpart of the first kind of "*muslim*", that is, nature. Like

²⁷ *Ibid.*

nature, he lives every moment of his life according to the Divine norm but consciously and with free will. He is thus the preserver of nature and its spiritual counterpart.²⁸

Al-Qurṭubī and A. Yūsuf 'Alī agreed with the above discussions. In addition, they explain that the trust is something given to a person, over which he has a power of disposition; he is expected to use it as directed or expected, but he has the power to use it otherwise. There is no trust if the trustee has no power and the trust implies that the giver of the trust believes and expects that the trustee would use it according to the wish of the Creator of the trust and not otherwise.²⁹

Al-Qurṭubī, questions the meaning of the “offer of the trust to the heavens, the earth and the mountains”, where the hypothetical sending down of the Qur’ān to the mountains is mentioned. It is mentioned that such parables are put forth in order to aid men in their reflection. We may therefore take the mountains, earth and the heavens to be symbolic. The mountains stand for firmness and stability: they were created for this quality, and they are always true to that quality. An earthquake or a volcano has to do with movements within the crust of the earth: it has nothing to do with the mountains will. In fact, the mountain has no free will of any kind: there is no question of any trust here. If we take the earth as a whole, as a part of solar system or a compendium of the terrestrial nature we see around us, it obeys the fixed laws of God, and there is no will or trust. If we take the heavens

²⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 28-29.

²⁹ Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*. Volume 1, p. 359; A. Yūsuf 'Alī, *The Holy Qur'ān*, p. 1129 note 3777.

either as celestial space, or as symbolic of the Angels, they absolutely obey God's will and law: they have no will of their own.³⁰

Al-Qurṭubī believes that the trust was related to the meaning of *shajarat* that referred to *al-miḥnah*. Al-Qurṭubī puts *al-miḥnah* into three meanings 1) *al-Khilāfah* or vicegerent, 2) *al-Īmān* or faith and 3) *al-'Ilm* or knowledge. These three categories were related to the responsibility of man as vicegerent, chosen to bear the trust. In order to understand these meanings, we will discuss them in the following section.

5.2.1 AL-MIḤNAH REFERRED TO AL-KHILĀFAH

The heavens, the earth and the mountains, (i.e. other creatures of God besides man), refused to undertake a trust or responsibility. They may therefore, be imagined as happy as they do not have the will with which to make a choice between good and evil. In saying that they refused, we imply a will, but we limit it by the statement that they did not undertake to be given a choice between good and evil. They preferred to submit their will entirely to God's Will, which is All Wise and Perfect, and which would give them far more happiness than a faculty of choice, with their imperfect knowledge. Man was too audacious and ignorant to realize this, and the result has been that man as a race has been disrupted: the evil ones have betrayed the trust and brought punishment on themselves, though the good have been able to rise far above other parts of creation, to be the

³⁰ Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*. Volume 1, p. 362. A. Yūsuf 'Alī, *The Holy Qur'ān*, p. 1130 note 3778;

*muqarrab*³¹, the nearest one to God.³¹ What can be higher than this for any creature?

In addition, the word *hamala* means to undertake, bear and carry (the trust or responsibility) and to be equal to it. This is the ordinary meaning, and the majority of commentators construe so. Nevertheless, some understand it to mean "to carry away, to run away with, to embezzle (the thing entrusted); hence to be false to the trust, to betray the trust". In that case the sense of verses 72-73 in *sūrah al-Ahzāb* (33) would be: "God offered the trust to other creatures but they refused, lest they should betray it, being afraid from that point of view: but man was less fair to himself: in his ignorance he accepted and betrayed the trust, with the result that of some of his race became hypocrites and unbelievers and were punished, though others were faithful to the trust and received God's Mercy". The resulting conclusion is the same under both interpretations.³²

God intended a very high destiny for man, and placed him in his uncorrupted state even above the angels, but in his corruption, he made himself even lower than the beasts. What was it that made man so high and noble? The differentiating quality, which God gave man, was that God breathed something of His own spirit into man i.e. the faculty of God-like knowledge and will, which if rightly used, would give man superiority over other creatures.³³ This meant that man was given the limited choice between good and evil and that he was made capable of

³¹ Al-Qurṭubī, *Ibid*, p. 363. A. Yūsuf 'Alī, *ibid*, note 3779.

³² Al-Qurṭubī, *ibid*, A. Yūsuf 'Alī, *ibid*, note 3780.

³³ Al-Qurṭubī, *ibid*, p. 364-365. A Yūsuf 'Alī, *ibid*, note 3781 & p. 643 note 1968.

forbearance, love and mercy. And in himself, man summed up God's great world: man in him microcosm.³⁴

That man should undertake the God-like attributes (in however small a degree) of will, forbearance, love and mercy, brought him nearer to God than was possible for any other creature of God. This was part of God's Will and Plan, but little did man realize then what a tremendous task he was undertaking or question himself whether he would be equal to it. Moreover, the word *ẓāl ūm* translated as unjust and *jahūl* translated as ignorant are both in Arabic intensive form; as much as to say, "Man signally failed to measure his own powers or his own knowledge". Nevertheless, God's grace came to his assistance. Where man did his best, he won through by God's Grace, even though man's best was but a poor good.³⁵

How did man generically undertake this great responsibility, which made him vicegerent of God? Here comes in the mystic doctrine of a Covenant, express or implied, between God and humanity. Humanity as such has a corporate aspect. Humanity has been given by God certain powers and faculties, whose possession creates on our side special spiritual obligations, which we must faithfully discharge. These obligations may from a legal point of view be considered as arising from implied covenants. In the preceding verse 171 in *sūrah al-A'rāf* (7) a reference was made to the implied covenant of the Jewish nation. Now we consider the implied covenant of the whole of humanity, for the Holy Apostle's mission was worldwide. The covenant is completed in this way. We acknowledge that God is our Creator, Cherisher and Sustainer. Therefore we acknowledge our

³⁴ Al-Qurṭubī, *ibid*, p. 369. A Yūsuf 'Alī, *ibid*, p. 1130 note 3781.

³⁵ Al-Qurṭubī, *ibid*. A. Yūsuf 'Alī, *ibid*, note 3782.

duty to Him: when we so testify concerning ourselves, the obligation is as it were assumed by us; for it follows from our very nature when it is pure and uncorrupted.³⁶

The latent faculties in man are enough to teach him the distinction between good and evil, to warn him of the dangers that beset him in his life. However, to awaken and stimulate him or her, a personal appeal is made to each individual through "the still small voice" within him. This in its uncorrupted state acknowledges the truth and metaphorically swears its covenant with God. There is, therefore, no excuse for any individual to say either that he was unmindful, or that he should not be punished for the sins of his fathers, because his punishment (if any) comes from his personal responsibility and is for his own rejection of faith and the higher spiritual influences.³⁷ A covenant necessarily implies trust, and its breach necessarily implies punishment.

Man's generic covenant, which flowed from his exercising the option given him, choosing will, forbearance, love and mercy, made it necessary that breach of it should carry its own punishment. Breach of it is here classed under two heads: those who betray their trust act either as hypocrites or as unbelievers. Hypocrites are those who profess faith but bring not forth the fruits of faith. Unbelievers are those who openly defy faith, and from whom therefore no fruits of faith are to be expected.³⁸

³⁶ Al-Qurṭubī, *ibid*, p. 373. A Yūsuf 'Alī, *ibid*, p. 393-394 notes 1146-1147.

³⁷ Al-Qurṭubī, *ibid*. A Yūsuf 'Alī, *ibid*, notes 1148.

³⁸ Al-Qurṭubī, *ibid*, p. 382. A Yūsuf 'Alī, *ibid*, p 1131 note 3783.

Those who remain firm to their faith and their covenant will receive the aid of God's Grace; their faults and weakness will be cured; and they will be made worthy of their exalted destiny. For God is Oft-Returning and Most Merciful.³⁹

5.2.2 AL-MI'NAH REFERRED TO AL-MĀN

Based on the above discussions, we know that man had a very heavy responsibility and one has to be very conscious about it in order to be prepared for the most important test man has to face as a responsible creature. Man was appointed by God to be in charge on earth under the supreme authority of God. Our first man, Adam 'a.s was appointed as vicegerent, deputy to God and mankind. Therefore, we have to understand the heavy duty, which we have to carry out according to our responsibility. This is because we, as individuals, will each be held responsible for our actions and we will find the results of our deeds in this life. This is the responsibility of mankind.⁴⁰ He bears this responsibility because he is believer, an intelligent, honored creature taught by God from the time of Adam, "He taught Adam the names of all things (*al-Baqarah* (2) verse 31). This means that if the learning and teaching is not correctly connected back to the main source of knowledge, man will be led to the wrong path and create more problems for mankind.⁴¹

Therefore, man is required to always keep close to God as a loyal servant or '*ābid*. If man denies that he is a loyal servant to God, Satan will lead him to become unbeliever, as well as a slave to his selfish desires such as envy and jealousy,

³⁹ Al-Qurtubī, *ibid*. A Yūsuf 'Alī, *ibid*, note 3784.

⁴⁰ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Ideals*, p.19. al-Qurtubī, *al-Jāmi'*. Volume 1, p. 336

⁴¹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *ibid*. al-Qurtubī, *ibid*.

which then provide strong motivation to commit criminal acts against the teaching of Islam. On the other hand the nature of man's forgetting serves both positive and negative aspects. The positive side of it helps man to cope with the difficulties in his life and enables him to continue his life. At the same time, the forgetting of his duties, promises and commitments as honored creatures and as servants to God will bring him to the wrong path and he will be led by man's enemies.⁴²

Man's responsibility is very heavy. Man was appointed as *khalīfah* to lead and guide mankind to the right path, which is "there is no God only Allah". This is the foundation of faith and worship and the core of Islamic ethics.⁴³ Man's extreme nature and personality, which have very strong effect on his life will control the other side and can lead man to do wrong and become arrogant. Therefore, the most important task of man is to understand the harmony and balance between the systems of human personality that are body, soul, mind, heart and self, which represent and unite all these systems. All the dimensions of man need to be taken care of in order for him to have a stable and balanced personality. If this is not done, he will be led by his selfish desires, powers and Satan to conquer this earth. This is the tribulation that man has to face.⁴⁴

Man is subjected to many influences during his life, mainly from the environment where he lives. In order to keep his nature and faith pure and clean from any environmental and societal effects, he must protect his personality by keeping his faith, thoughts, heart, feelings, knowledge as well as his body, clean and pure by

⁴² al-Qurṭubī, *ibid*, p. 337.

⁴³ *Ibid*. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Ideals*, pp. 19-20.

⁴⁴ Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*. Volume 1, p. 337.

following the teachings of God, which is the only real guidance that protects him from his weakness and enemies.

Based on the Qur'ān, we recognize the people who purify themselves as one of the types of human personality are very well known by their characteristics. The most important and the most honorable characteristic is that Allah loves them as He loves penitent people. It is very motivating to anybody to know in this order to purify their faith by concentrating particularly on the Divine nature itself. For this reason, Islam is based from the beginning to end on the idea of Unity (*Tawḥīd*), for God is One.

Unity is in addition to a metaphysical assertion about the nature of the Absolute, a method of integration, and a means of becoming whole and realizing the profound oneness of all existence. Every aspect of Islam rotates about the doctrine of Unity, which Islam seeks to realize first of all in the human being in his inner and outward life. Every manifestation of human existence should be organically related to the *Syahādah*, which is the most universal way of expressing Unity. This means that man should not to be compartmentalized either in his thoughts or actions. Every action, even the manner of walking and eating, should manifest a spiritual norm, which exists in his mind and heart.

In addition, the aims of the teachings and duties of Islam are to purify believers physically, psychologically, morally, spiritually in all aspects of life. This means that the "cleanliness or purification" is not only to be free from dirt, which can be accomplished by use of soap, shampoo and water. This is the simplest one, and

each individual must be clean in this sense. But the “pure” people, (in addition to being clean and pure in their bodies) are clean in their hearts, wealth, work, thoughts, emotions, morals, manners and all other aspects of life including food and drink.⁴⁵

Therefore, the Five-Pillars of Islam (*arkān al-Islām*), which are presented systematically for the first time in the *Ḥadīth* of Jibril, are relatively simple to carry out and can easily be learned by the Muslim and by those who wish to convert to Islam, in order to purify all aspects of their life.

The first pillar of Islam is to openly proclaim and bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah. This is known as *syahādah* (the act of bearing witness). It may also be called *al-syahādatain* (the two witnessing), because it consists of two separate acts of bearing witness. The first witnessing “There is no god but Allah”, affirms the acceptance of divine reality by the human intellect. As the formal proclamation of divine singularity (*tawḥīd*) it is the creedal equivalent to the ‘knowledge of certainty’ discussed earlier. The second witnessing, “Muḥammad is the messenger of Allah”, affirms one’s submission to God, which is the meaning of the word Islam itself. Here, the human being responds to the Divine Will by acknowledging the Prophet Muḥammad as both the vehicle of the Qur’anic revelation and the paradigmatic Muslim or submitter to God. By stressing the sources of both the theoretical and the practical knowledge of religion (i.e. Allah and the Prophet), the two “witnessing” of the *syahādah* thus reaffirms the complementarities of faith and

⁴⁵ Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi’*. Volume 1, p. 337

practice in Islam.⁴⁶ This first pillar is mainly for the physical, emotional and spiritual purification of individual Muslims. The Muslim who purifies himself is very aware of his nature, his role and his life, which must relate to the teaching of Islam.⁴⁷

The second pillar of Islam is to make the required five prayers each day in the direction of the Great Mosque (al-Masjid al-Ḥaram) in Mecca. These prayers, collectively known as *al-ṣalāt* are performed just before dawn, at noon, at mid-afternoon, just after sunset and in the evening from an hour after sunset to around midnight. In the *Ḥadīth*, prayer is depicted as the quintessential act of submission to God and the main proof of Islam. The central importance given to prayer in Islam is due to the recognition that the performance of *al-ṣalāt* forces the human body to respond to the reality that has been acknowledged by the heart and the tongue of *al-syahādah*. In addition, the essential contrast between the absolute independence of God and the ontological dependency of the human being is reaffirmed in the actions and attitudes of the prayer.⁴⁸

To perform the prayer, the believer must put himself or herself in a state of purity by performing either a ritual ablution (*wuḍūʾ*) or a bath (*ghusl*). The symbolic nature of ablution is illustrated by the fact that either clean water or clean sand (in a situation where water is not found) may be used to perform this ritual. The full bath, in which water is poured over both the body and the head, is needed only in cases of serious committal of sin or after sexual intercourse. In general, the

⁴⁶ Vincent J. Cornell, *Fruit of the Tree of Knowledge*, p. 77.

⁴⁷ Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ*. Volume 1, p. 337.

⁴⁸ Vincent J. Cornell, *ibid*, pp. 77-78.

ablution should be seen as an expression of respect for God's majesty and as a means of preparing the believer for meeting and addressing the Lord and Creator.

The movements of the Muslim prayer are patterned after attitudes of obeisance that were associated in late antiquity with entering into the presence of the great ruler. In these movements also dwells proof of the purity of Muslim faith in God. Furthermore, the act of affirming the intention (*niyyah*) that precedes not only the canonical prayer but all other ritual observances in Islam, and in addition all aspects of life, demonstrates the purity of the Muslim towards the teachings of Islam.⁴⁹ This means that "to purify and clean one" is to "giving away" his heart to Allah.

Moreover, one of the methods mentioned in *sūrah al-Tawbah* (9): verse 103 to purify and clean oneself, is by giving away and spending ones wealth:

"خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيهِمْ بِهَا وَصَلِّ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ صَلَاتَكَ

سَكَنٌ لَهُمْ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ"

"Accept charity out of their wealth, You will cleanse and purify them by means of it".

This means that spending on the needy, the poor and in the ways of co-operation not only purifies the spender but at the same time cleans hostility and hatred from the relationships between people.

⁴⁹ Al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*. Volume II, p. 133.

The third pillar of Islam is meant to purify individuals and societies from greed and feelings of hatred among believers, rich and poor. This tithe, known as *al-zakāt* (the purification) levied on each individual believer. The official level of this tithe, which is set of one-fortieth (2.5 percent) of the value of all liquid assets and income-generating properties in the worshipper's possession, is based on *ḥadīth* text and was confirmed by Muslim scholars following the usage of the Prophet's Companions and their successors. According to the Qur'ān, the tithe may be used to feed the poor, to encourage conversion to Islam, to ransom captives, to relieve debtors of their burden, to help wayfarers, and to support those who devote themselves to the cause of God (*sūrah al-Tawbah: verse 60*). It may also be used to defend of the faith and for any other purpose deemed appropriate by the ruler of an Islamic state.

The fourth pillar of Islam is to observe the month-long fast of Ramaḍān, the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar. This pillar is known as *al-ṣawm* or *ṣiyām al-Ramaḍān* and is seen by Muslims as both a purificatory act of sacrifice and affirmation of ethical awareness. During the twenty-nine or thirty days of the fasting period, the believer must abstain from food, drink, and sex during daylight hours. The Ramadan fast is also a key to heaven because it involves the sacrifice of a person's bodily desires and is performed for the sake of God alone. By also denying himself drink, the believer further ensures that he will feel the sacrifice. The act of Ramaḍān fasting is bridge that links the sacrifice to the larger sense of social responsibility. Inwardly, the believer purifies the body by consecrating it to God. Outwardly, the believer uses the fast to recall the responsibility that must be felt toward his fellow human beings. By undergoing the pain of hunger and thirst

for an extensive yet limited period of time, the believer recalls the pain of the person whose "fast" never ends because his stomach is never free from want.⁵⁰

The fifth pillar of Islam is the pilgrimage to Mecca. This is also called *al-Hajj*. This takes place in the first ten days of the month of *Dhul-Hijjah* and is obligatory for every believer who is physically and financially able to make the journey and perform the prescribed rites. During the entire *Hajj*, the pilgrim must avoid thinking about anything other than the remembrance of God and the rites of the pilgrimage itself. This is because circumambulating the Ka'bah, like the canonical prayer, symbolizes the believer's entry into the Divine Presence. This also means that Muslims have purified themselves physically and spiritually of negative manners to ensure that the *Hajj* will be received by God.

The Five-Pillars of Islam are followed by another group of doctrinal principles known as the Sixth Pillar of Faith (*arkān al-Imān*). These Pillars of Faith are thus associated only with the most primary level of knowledge i.e. *ilm al-yaqīn* (the rational or doctrinal knowledge of truth). Therefore, Muslims who purify themselves are motivated by their faith to act and behave according to principles of Islam. They are clean and pure in their hearts, so they love other people as they love their brothers. They are clean and pure in their bodies, homes, work, words, and food, eating only clean and *ḥalāl* food. In addition, purification in all aspects of life-morally, spiritually and psychologically, will lead to more purification and improvement in all dimensions of their personalities.

⁵⁰ Vincent J. Cornell, *ibid*, p. 84.

Doing all of these things properly and continuously will develop man's faith. However, only denying the responsibility of man's nature as vicegerent will damage this faith. This is because of the nature of forgetting; man's extremely curious nature had led Eve and Adam to disobey God's order. Man had followed his nature, motivated by Satan. Therefore, man has paid the price for that in his life and in the Hereafter. Thus it is very important to man to follow guidance from God in order to be a good human being. However, from the story of Adam and Eve, we understand that man has a chance to correct his mistakes by making repentance. God is always giving man a chance to correct his mistakes. Adam and Eve serve as an example to us. They were the first persons who repented when they forgot God's order and sought God's forgiveness (*sūrah al-Baqarah* (2) verse 37).

Adam and Eve were taught a very important lesson to be learned by later human beings. There is always hope and chance for improvement and correcting mistakes as long as the mistakes were not related to worshipping other things besides Allah the Almighty.

5.2.3 AL-MIḤNAH REFERRED TO KNOWLEDGE

In Islam man is not first of all a "perverted will" who also possesses intelligence but an intelligence, (which leads "naturally" to the assertion of the Divine), who also possesses will and speech.

Intelligence, will and speech are all essentially Divine Qualities. God has as one of His Qualities knowledge, connected to the Divine Intellect⁵¹ and the name *al-'alīm* "he who knows", is one of the Divine Names. God possesses absolute freedom.⁵² Being infinite there is nothing outside of Him to act as an obstacle to His freedom. God is the Infinite and only the infinite is absolutely free. The word belongs to God. It comes from Him, belongs to Him and returns to Him. The qualities of intelligence, will and speech are thus Divine Qualities, which God has given in trust to man, and through them lead man back to Himself.⁵³

Islam takes these three elements, namely intelligence, will and speech, which one might say man has "borrowed" from God, and makes them the basis of the religion, carrying these elements to the most profound and universal level of their meaning. Islam asks, "What is intelligence and what is its real nature?" The real nature of intelligence is ultimately to come to realize that *Lā ilāha ill'Allāh* that is to come to know that in the end there is only one Absolute Reality. It is to realize the absolute nature of Allah and the relativity of all else that is other than He. Moreover, it is only this truth, which the intelligence can know in an absolute sense. Everything else it knows only relatively. On this certainty belongs to the very nature of man. It is only this knowledge, which man can attain with absolute certitude.⁵⁴

⁵¹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Ideals*, p. 19. al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*. Volume 1, p. 323

⁵² Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *ibid*.

⁵³ *Ibid*. al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*, Volume 1, p. 324

⁵⁴ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Ideals*. p. 19. al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi'*. Volume 1, p. 324.

5.3 SAYYID QUTB'S INTERPRETATION OF *SHAJARAT* AS TRIBULATION

In addition, it is clear that Sayyid Qutb also makes a link between the prohibition to approach the tree and the acceptance of man as being vicegerent. For Sayyid Qutb, human creation is special and is superior to every other living and non-living thing that God created. God honored the human above all the rest of creation as stated in *sūrah al-Isrā'* (17) verse 70. Human history began with God honoring Adam by ordering angels to bow before him as stated in *sūrah al-Isrā'* (17) verse 61-62. This indicated human superiority above angels. All other creations whether living or non-living were made subservient to humans. This superiority has continued all through human history because of the special attributes and capacities endowed to the human by God. Human superiority is not based on body size or physical strength because they are other living things which are larger and stronger.⁵⁵

Human superiority is not a right, but a potential that can be developed or neglected. Not every single human individual can claim this superiority. It is achieved by fulfilling certain conditions, which are all subsumed under the concept of consciousness of God (*taqwā*). The most honored among human are those with the most *taqwā*. *Taqwā* is a final common pathway for the four criteria of human superiority, which are almost the same as al-Qurṭubī's discussions as follows:

⁵⁵ Sayyid Qutb, *Fī Zīlāl*. Volume 1, p. 65.

1. A superior intellect
2. A free will
3. Responsibility and
4. Morality.⁵⁶

The basic potentials are the intellect and will. The sense of responsibility and morality determines the quality of the civilization that is developed; it could be good or bad depending on how well or badly the intellect and will are used. Angels do not have the capacity or the will to disobey God at all and they always do what are told to do.⁵⁷ The *taqwā* of humans is superior to that of the angels because humans have the capacity to disobey; when they choose to obey God they are undertaking a much greater challenge. However, this high position is not for all humans as they can fall to be the lowest of the low (*asfala sāfilīn*), as stated in *sūrah al-Ṭīn* (95) verse 5, and could be worse off than animals as stated in *sūrah al-A'rāf* (7) verse 179 if they do not fulfill the criteria of superiority mentioned above.⁵⁸ In order to understand these criteria, we will discuss them in order:

5.3.1 A SUPERIOR INTELLECT

Intellect is the most important criterion of man's superiority. The other criteria depend on the intellect either directly or indirectly. The superior man's intellect is due to a sophisticated and better-developed cerebral cortex. The human cerebral surface area or mass is proportionately the biggest relative to body size. With limited free will man is accountable and morality enables man to build a social

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

order and a civilization that no other creation is capable of developing. God gave man an intellect that other creations do not have. Many animals have some intelligence and a limited ability to learn. They however, cannot use their intelligence in the creative and purposive way that man uses his intelligence.⁵⁹

The intellect enables man to analyze, understand and learn. Knowledge is the basis for human action. Transmission and growth of knowledge from one generation to the next is the essence of growth of human civilization. Intellect ('*aq'l*') can enable man to get knowledge. Adam's claim to superiority, such that angels submitted to him, was based on the extra knowledge that God gave him. His vicegerancy on earth was based on this knowledge.⁶⁰ Humans are able to extend their intellect in many ways by the invention of machines that carry out intellectual functions sometimes better and faster than man. Man was indeed honored more than other creatures.

Man also has the capability to bear the trust, rather than the angels, earth and mountains. It would seem that the angels, though holy, pure and endowed with power from God, represented only one side of creation. We may imagine them without passion or emotion, of which the highest power is love. If man was to be endowed with emotions, those emotions could lead him to the highest and drag him to the lowest. The power of will or choice would have to go with them, in order that man might steer his own will. This power of will (when used correctly) gives him to some extent mastery over his own fortunes and over nature, thus bringing him nearer to the God-like nature, which has supreme mastery and will.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Refer to *sūrah al-Baqarah* (2): verse 30-34.

We may suppose the angels had no independent wills of their own: their perfection in other ways reflected God's perfection but could not raise them to the dignity of vicegerency. The perfect vicegerent is he who has the power of initiative himself, but whose independent action always reflects perfectly the will of his Principal. Shakespeare (Sonnet 94) expresses the distinction in those fine lines: "They are the lords and owners of their faces. Others but stewards of their excellence". The angels in their one sidedness saw only the mischief consequent on the misuse of the emotional nature by man; perhaps they also, being without emotions, did not understand the whole of God's nature, which gives and asks for love. In humility and true devotion to God, they remonstrate: we must not imagine the least tinge of jealousy, as they are without emotion. This mystery of love being above them, they are told that they do not know and they acknowledge as stated in *sūrah al-Baqarah* (2) verse 32 that it is not their fault (for there is no question of fault) but their imperfection of knowledge. At the same time, the matter is brought to them when the actual capacities of man are shown to them as stated in *sūrah al-Baqarah* (2) verse 31-33.⁶¹

Moreover, God put particular qualities or feelings, which were outside the nature of angels, into the nature of man. Man was thus able to love and understand love, and therefore plan and initiate as becomes the office of vicegerent. The angels acknowledge this. These things they could only know from the outside, but they had faith, or belief in the unseen. And they knew that God saw all-what others see, what others do not see, what others may even wish to conceal. Man has many

⁶¹ Sayyid Qutb, *Fī Zīlā*, pp. 66-68

qualities, which are latent or which he may wish to suppress or conceal to his own detriment.⁶²

5.3.2 FREE WILL

Man has a will that is defined and is limited. This will is subservient to God's authority as stated in *sūrah al-Tawbah* (9) verse 32 as follow:

”يُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يُطْفِئُوا نُورَ اللَّهِ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَيَأْبَى اللَّهُ إِلَّا أَنْ يُتِمَّ نُورَهُ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ

الْكَافِرُونَ”

“Fain would they extinguish God's Light with their mouths,
but God will not allow but that His Light should be perfected,
even though the unbelievers may detest (it)”⁶³

Man is personally accountable for actions done within this limited free will. Other creations of God have no will at all and are therefore not accountable.

Having a free will is an indicator of maturity. Man is the most developed in the order of creation and therefore is honored with free will although, is limited. This is can be likened to the development of the child who is allowed very little free will when young and inexperienced. With maturation, more free will is given until

⁶² *Ibid*, p. 68

⁶³ A. Yūsuf 'Alī, *The Holy Qur'ān*, p. 449, note 1289.

the child matures into an adult who is free to take the full responsibility of independence.

The secret behind God's endowing man with free will was to test man on how well they can use that will. Passing the test would vindicate the superiority of man. Angels, despite their high position in the order of creation, were not given a free will. The fact that angels can not make a mistake and man does, yet humans were given free will indicates the magnitude of honor as well as responsibility that man has to bear.⁶⁴

In the experience of man as an individual and as members of communities, we see examples of good and bad use of human will. The bad alternates with the good such that there is never an extended time when the bad predominates all the time and at all place.

5.3.3 RESPONSIBILITY

Man is entrusted with the "trust" for which he is responsible. The term "trust" is comprehensive and covers good practices ('*ibādah*), faith (*īmān*), the self, the family, the society and the whole eco-system. These responsibilities and "trust" are not just honors; they are obligations that confer honor and dignity if carried out well, but they lead to shame and failure if not discharged properly. Responsibility is meaningless without accountability. Humans must fulfill their trust in order to claim their full humanity.⁶⁵

⁶⁴Sayyid Qutb, *Fī Zilāl*. Volume 1, pp. 67-68

⁶⁵*Ibid*, pp. 68-69.

5.3.4 MORALITY (AKHLĀQ)

Men are superior to many other creatures of God in that they are capable of choosing on their own free will to live a moral life. Humans' ability to choose what is moral and good confers even more honor and dignity when we consider that human have a great potential for evil. Their superior intellect alone enables them to undertake a range of actions that no other creation can even dream of.

Only men can live according to a consistent moral order. Humans can live in societies regulated by a moral code. The sense of right and wrong, good and bad is innate in man and is constantly reinforced by messages of prophets and revelations.⁶⁶

Other creatures do not even have a concept of morality. Their concept of what is good and what is bad is governed by the simple instincts of the need to survive and self-gratification.

Man has attributes that derive from their sense of morality and are not found in other creations: love, loyalty, kindness and compassion. Human emotions unlike those of animals, are moderated by the sense of morality possessed by humans.

Some individual men have exemplified very high levels of morality by seeking to do well even in the most difficult conditions. They are able to put the interests of others before their own interests. The highest level of this morality is to seek the ultimate pleasure of God.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 69.

Based on the above discussions, Sayyid Quṭb mentioned that Adam was the first prophet, an honored creature and the first vicegerent with the heavy responsibilities given by God. We are given specific characteristics and abilities to enable us to do what we were created for, and face the Tribulation.⁶⁷

Therefore, the purpose of Tribulation here is to test the trust of man, which includes his faith and knowledge of Allah the Creator of the Universe. Allah always guides man during his stay on earth. (*Sūrah al-Baqarah* (2) verse 38-39). It is the guidance of Allah, which gives the individual happiness and security. Each individual who follows the guidance of God “shall have neither fear nor sorrow”. However, if an individual refuses the guidance, then he or she will pay the price for that in this life and Hereafter. This is because, man with his strong will, knowledge and power, should know how to manage himself or herself according to revelation from God. Therefore, man should learn from the prophets of the past, referring to revelation. From this, they can face all the Tribulation easier and know that is the test of their trust, faith and knowledge.

In other words, we understand that we should always refer to the unity of knowledge i.e. sacred knowledge, which emphasizes the importance of *tawḥīd*, *‘amal*, *iḥsān*, *taqwā* and *akhlāq* in the life of each individual Muslim.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p. 69.

5.4 VIEWS OF THE STUDY

5.4.1 *SHAJARAT* AS SEXUAL DESIRE

Although only a small percentage of the interpreters such as Imām Sayyīd Quṭb, Ibn al-'Arabī, Imām al-Fakhr al-Rāzī and Dr. Mahmood Zuhdi Hj Abdul Majid place the *shajarat* as the sexual desire of Adam and Eve, this study is also strongly stress that the tree refers to the sexual desire without denying that the interpretation of *shajarat* referred to knowledge also. This is based on the plot and style of *nuṣūṣ* of the Qurān as well as those discussions of the tree.

Furthermore, this is based on Adam as vicegerent as well as God's servant, be loyal to Allah and abstain from the forbidden. This important effort is needed to enable Adam to build the ties of kinship, which develop Adam's generation. Adam and Eve, therefore, are responsible for producing a generation who will obey the Divine Law.

Moreover, the verse in *sūrah al-'A'rāf* and *sūrah Tāhā* directly explain that as soon as Adam and Eve tasted and ate the *shajarat*, their long hidden biological secrets were revealed and they had to use the leaves from the trees in heaven to cover themselves.

This means that the understanding of "eat" used by *mufasssirūn* such as Ibn al-'Arabī is "the actual doing it", Imām al-Fakhr al-Rāzī uses it to mean "not only to eat but whatever method possible" and Imām al-Qurṭubī used it as "taste and enjoy" are all closely linked. This means that the "method of disobedience" in the

Qur'ān is how Adam and Eve disobeyed, enjoyed and tasted their biological secrets and then discovered their disobedience of Allah's prohibition. Furthermore, that incident sparked the realization of Adam's and Eve's biological difference and that its attraction is to be enjoyed.

Furthermore, this study tries to link the idea of the differences between male and female biological constitution to the reason of their creation. In this instance, this study believes that *shajarat* is the basis of knowledge of the human biology and which attracts Adam and Eve towards the reason of their creation. Quoting to Imam al-Qurṭubī's, this study maintains that Adam had yearns for an eternal life because he had discovered that angels do not die till the end of the world. So the angels can give a better service to God. Therefore Adam believed that possession of that knowledge would bring him the same eternity as possessed by Satan. Adam and Eve only discovered that they had been seduced by Satan's persuasion when they realized the real reason for their biological differences. They had not yet received Allah's blessing, but they gained this knowledge earlier as a result of Satan's seduction. The instinct possessed by Adam and Eve made them "impure". At the same time, it reinforces Allah's advice to Adam and Eve that approaching the tree will mean that they would be putting themselves in danger of disobeying Him. This indirectly shows that *shajarat* is more indicative of the understanding of a type of knowledge, which brings birth to the male and female relationship i.e. the sexual relationship.

This is further strengthened with the explanation of both verses explain that Adam and Eve both have sexual organs. However before this time, they were covered

and could not be seen by either Adam or Eve. Resulting from disobedience of Adam and Eve, it is explained that the sexual organs were visible and needed to be covered either by clothes or otherwise. Even though such is the case, they are not told the reason for the existence of the sexual genitals. This is further strengthened with the use of "فَبَدَّتْ لهما سَوَاتِمَهُما" meaning that the sexual organs were revealed to them both and "فَبَدَّتْ سَوَاتِمَهُما" meaning their sexual organs were revealed. This clearly proves that neither of them has neither seen nor realized the existence of their sexual organs. It is only after being encouraged by an inner feeling or instinct that they realize the existence of their sexual organs. In other words, Adam and Eve never did realize the real existence and function of their sexual organs; this realization only happened after their disobedience of Allah's word to stay away from *shajarat*. This study stresses that the main reason of the revelation is closely linked to the inner sexual instinct within Adam and Eve. In other words, a sexual consciousness happened within them.

The relevance of *shajarat* to mean sex is clear as it is closely linked to the main element of *khuld*, which is eternity and everlasting. The opinion of al-Rabi' ibn Anas's that 'one who eat it will cause himself to be impure', "فَإِذَا أَكَلَ مِنْهَا وَقَعَ" strengthened the position of *shajarat* to mean sex. All of these are closely

related to the main debate, *khuld* i.e. eternity. This subject is also clearly explained in verse 22 of *sūrah al-'A'rāf* (7) and verse 120 of *surah Tāhā* (20). Based on these two verses, this study believes that Adam and Eve had been seduced by

Satan to become eternal and to be in power. Thus, they both could prosper on the earth and give the best service to all creatures in that earth. Furthermore, they could perform as the best servants or *'abd* to God.

As a result of trying to achieve both these elements in man, this tree is approximately links them with sex. This is because that sexual desire is the best method of realizing the two main elements to achieve *khulud*, which is eternity by having a line of descendants. Through this method, man will continue to exist and be in power.

It is also closely linked to the reason Allah created man and sent them to earth as the developing element to lead humanity on the earth and thereafter build and prosper. The mistake here is that Adam and Eve fornicated as the result of forgetting Allah's prohibition after Satan seduced them. Their relationship is considered legitimate, as Adam and Eve are married couple. This is explained in verses 35 of *sūrah al-Baqarah* (2) and verse 19 of *sūrah al-'A'rāf* (7).

Nevertheless, the relationship was not yet permitted by Allah but happened because of Satan's seduction. This proves God's warning to Adam and Eve that approaching the forbidden tree would mean to bring harm onto them and that disobedience to Allah's order is "as though" harming them.

To fulfill the reason of Allah's creation, Adam and Eve were sent down to prosper on the earth after the failure of the Jinn. Indirectly, this explains that Adam and Eve's fall is the catalyst for both of them to be sent down to earth.

Based on the above discussion, it is clear that this study is strongly stress the concept of the *shajarat* as the sexual desire and that the nature of disobedience explained as “eating the tree” is actually to mean having a sexual relationship. If that is not the case, there would be no relevance to the term “sexual organs” mentioned in verse 22 of *sūrah al-‘A‘rāf* (7) and verse 121 of the *sūrah Tāhā* (20).

CONCLUSION

CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM INTERPRETATIONS OF THE ETERNAL TREE: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Our thesis is to undertake a comparative study of Christian and Muslim understandings of the eternal tree (*shajarat al-khuld*) mentioned in sacred texts, the Bible and the Qur'ān. For this purpose, we choose St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas to represent Christian views and Imam al-Qurṭubī and Sayyid Quṭb to represent Muslim views.

Based on our study, we have come to several important conclusions. Both Christianity and Islam believe in the spiritual meaning of the tree. In the writings of these four thinkers we encounter interpretations of the Bible and the Qur'ān that refer to such symbolic meanings as spiritual truths and realities, evil and good knowledge, unity of knowledge or sacred knowledge, sexual desire, and tribulation.

Based on the three primary ideas (knowledge, sexual desire and tribulation), the Christian views may be summarized as follows. Both Augustine and Aquinas understand the tree as first of all referring to knowledge. But on the basis of their common Christian faith, they understand that knowledge primarily as referring to "carnal knowledge" as opposed to divine love, blessing and God's grace.

For Augustine who was influenced by Platonist ideas real knowledge is about truth and reality. It is only to be gained through the intellect, the organ of access to the higher world of reality, i.e. the soul, the eyes of mind. The knowledge that is attained through intellect is not speculative and doubtful but rather immediate and certain. This means that Augustine was emphasizing spiritual and physical knowledge in relation to the fall of Adam. Thus, Augustine insisted that God is not the cause of evil. He maintained that God permits evil, but always and only for the sake of a larger good.

Furthermore, the Fall of Man, which is related to the eating of the fruit of the tree, is both an attempt to gain wisdom and the desire to obtain the wisdom in order to become wise, referring to the terminology of the law of Yahweh. The creation of Adam and Eve is the greater creation and at the same time to provide man with greater knowledge. Man can only gain spiritual knowledge by having true faith in God, but man cannot gain that knowledge by himself. Without faith in God, what is in man's possession is knowledge of the flesh. The "forbidden tree" refers to this knowledge of the flesh.

Aquinas believes that the tree symbolizes the choice between good knowledge and evil knowledge, i.e. the choice between divine wisdom and knowledge through reason. But reason has limitations. It can be a source of evil knowledge. It is not the ultimate basis of truth. What is ultimate is the sovereign will of the Creator who made all things and has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. As an Aristotelian, Aquinas accepts the idea that rational knowledge is based on the three operations of the intellect, namely abstraction,

judgment and reasoning. But generally man fails to realize these three functions of the intellect because of his natural inclination to follow "carnal desire or carnal knowledge".

Augustine and Aquinas believed it is "carnal knowledge" that is the basis of Adam and Eve's procreation of the human race. Although, God had commanded them to abstain from the sexual act that is not blessed by Him they had approached sexual desire based on their "carnal knowledge" and free will. Therefore, they became sinners and impure or fallen creatures. Augustine and Aquinas agreed that "The Fall" is the basis of the belief in the Original Sin, which is the bearing of the sin caused by Adam and Eve in consequence of their relationship unblessed by God. These views of Augustine and Aquinas had a great influence on the development of this doctrine in Christianity.

In the case of al-Qurṭubī and Sayyid Quṭb, both maintained there exists an important relationship between faith and true knowledge. But human knowledge with faith can also lead to certainty of spiritual truths.

Imam al-Qurṭubī mentioned that Adam was in possession of knowledge of the true nature of things. His descendants who were given guidance from God through His prophets and messengers inherited his invaluable intellect.

However, human certainty of truths exists at various levels. As received by men and understood with reference to men's psychology, certainty may have several degrees. There is certainty resulting from the application of man's power or judgment and his

appraisal of evidence. This is *'ilm al-yaqīn*, certainty by reasoning or inference. Then there is certainty of seeing something with one's own eyes. This is *'ain al-yaqīn*, certainty by personal inspection. Then, there is absolute certainty with no possibility of error of judgment or vision. This absolute truth is the *haqq al-yaqīn*.

Corresponding to *'ilm al-yaqīn* is that knowledge which is analogous to Aristotle's (as well as Augustine's) concept of intellectual knowledge. It refers to the knowledge that results from human capacity, for example logical reasoning and the appraisal of what the Qur'an calls the clear evidences or *bayyināt* of God's presence in the world. It is also the knowledge that comes from the study of Islam through the Qur'an, the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) i.e. *al-Hadīth*, and books of theology and exegesis.

The second type of knowledge corresponding to the eye of certainty is developed over time under the influence of contemplation and spiritual practice. It broadly corresponds to Plato's and (Aquinas's) concept of the "vision" of the intellect, and refers to knowledge acquired by spiritual intelligence, which Islam locates metaphorically in the heart. From a spiritual perspective the one who holds knowledge of God, who perceives reality in this way, is the true "intellectual". Unlike the scholar, who develops his skills through years of formal study, the spiritual intellectual does not need book learning to apprehend the divine light.

The third, the highest form of knowledge, corresponds to the highest level of consciousness called the "truth of certainty". It is also known as "knowledge by

presence" or '*ilm al-ladunnī*'. This form of knowledge partakes directly of the divine reality transcending both cognitive reasoning and intellectual vision. The "truth of the certainty" refers to that state of consciousness in which a person knows the "real" through direct participation in it, without resorting to logical proofs. In the Islamic perspective, this type of knowledge is associated with God's prophets and messengers, whose consciousness of the truth is both immediate and participatory, because the knowledge on which it is based comes from direct inspiration.

These discussions show that al-Qurṭubī had emphasized a close relation between knowledge and faith, knowledge and certainty and knowledge of the Oneness of God. The knowledge and the truth of the nature of things, given by God to the first man, Adam, is the most basic of His teachings namely *tawḥīd*, the Oneness of God. The knowledge of *tawḥīd*, given to Adam is known as Islam.

In the case of Sayyid Quṭb, he places importance in balancing faith with knowledge and practices ('*amal*'), and the spiritual with the physical. This leads him to emphasize an integration of the traditional (Islamic) sciences and the modern (Western) sciences. For him, all sciences affirm *tawḥīd*. Since Islam is not only a message but also a method and a way of life, knowledge in its wholeness requires the balancing of faith in *tawḥīd* with practices and virtues (*iḥsān*).

In Sayyid Quṭb's view, in accordance with the teachings of *tawḥīd*, Islam can be characterized as the religion of self surrender, the conscious and rational submission of

the contingent and limited human will to the absolute and omnipotent will of God. The type of surrender Islam requires is a deliberate, conscious, and rational act made by the person who knows with both intellectual certainty and spiritual vision that Allah is the Ultimate Reality. Al-Qurṭubī shares this view. For a Muslim who submits to the divine truth has a relationship with God governed by *taqwā*. The concept of *taqwā* implies that the believer has the added responsibility of acting in a way that is in accordance with the three types of knowledge previously discussed.

For Sayyid Quṭb, there was another important ethical concept known as active virtue or *iḥsān*. This concept is specially linked to the concept of justice or *ʿadl*. This connection of virtuous and just forms of action is clearly expressed in one of the most famous ethical verses of the Qur'an: "Verily Allah commands justice (*ʿadl*, the doing of good (*iḥsān*), and giving to one's near relatives; He forbids acts of wickedness, vice (*munkar*), and lust (*bagha*)". The concept of justice was also expanded to include the notion of epistemological truth. Therefore, the epistemological and behavioral complementarity of faith and practice coincides with the moral complementarity of truth and justice.

Furthermore, the concept of Oneness of God is the essential prerequisite for *iḥsān*. *Tawḥīd* as an ethical concept that involves more than anything else the relinquishing of all sense of personal ownership or possession. This is because the affirmation of divine reality that is expressed in the declaration of God's oneness implies the negation of all forms of contingent existence.

Further, for Sayyid Quṭb, the concept of the true knowledge of the tree is the true meaning of happiness that can be found in the proper balance between knowledge and practice. This applies equally to acts that are purely religious in nature and to those that are essentially social. Faith, like speech, is both social and individual. Acts of faith always involve a dialogue either between the worshipper and the object of his worship (i.e. Allah), or between the actor and his fellows in a religious community. It means that faith, which is not expressed in the context of a structured social relationship, is not faith at all. Real faith is based on true knowledge and good practice, which is associated with the ethical dimension of Islamic practices and social relationships.

It is clear that al-Qurṭubī and Sayyid Quṭb are mostly in agreement on the issue of the relationship between knowledge and faith. Their opinions are based on their faith in the unity of God and the teachings of Islam.

On the issue of sexual desire, Augustine and Aquinas strongly believed that the tree refers to "carnal knowledge" and the resulting sexual desire. Augustine and Aquinas both referred to the Bible as their major sources on the discussion of sexual desire; it is not surprising that they have similar views.

Augustine and Aquinas both believe that the basic idea in the Old Testament concerning sex is that it is essentially a good thing. God created male and female, blessed them with fertility and saw that all His creation was very good. The two sexes fulfilled God's Plan by filling the earth and subduing it through the exercise of this blessing.

In the New Testament, Christ's teaching echoed that of the Old Testament but developed it further. Sex is good in itself. Marriage and birth are occasions for joy. Christ was merciful to sexual sinners. But on the other hand, adultery and divorce were condemned.

Augustine understands that an ultimate interpenetration of sex and conjugal love takes place in mutual self-donation; sexual experience is thus not something to love, but is absorbed and elevated by this love. Moreover, Augustine understands that sex belongs to a special manner to God and that man may make use of it only as sanctioned by Him. Only with God's expressed permission can he eat the fruit of this tree. The awareness of this fact engenders a reverence towards sex even within the marriage bond. This enables him clearly to understand the sinfulness of artificial birth control, with its irreverent severing of the deep link between the ultimate love union and procreation. He understands the tremendous dignity with which the conjugal act is endowed by marriage as a sacrament. This implies that his very love calls being transformed in Christ. He is aware of the fact that only in Christ and through Christ can he live up to the full glory and depth to which this love by its very nature aspires. Then he called this as the doctrine of Original Sin, which had been made up by Paul. Augustine's doctrine, based on the fall of Adam and Eve, flourished.

Further, Augustine recognized that the will is a fundamental and universal instinct, which encouraged Adam and Eve to have good and evil knowledge, as a result of eating the fruit of the forbidden tree. From this knowledge, they know "everything and anything". Augustine believes this kind of knowledge includes eternity, love, pleasure and truth; all

power, as if they could be their own good, lapsed to this private good of their own, from that higher and beatific good, which was common to all, and bartering the lofty dignity of eternity for the inflation of pride, the most assured verity for the slyness of vanity, uniting love for factious partisanship, they became proud, pleasure – seeking, deceived, envious. All of this is the “carnal knowledge” that led them into sexual desire after they approached that tree.

Moreover, the sexual desire in this “beginning” of the creation of man had been unblest, which made Adam and Eve sinful. Because they gain wisdom as a result of this “carnal knowledge”, they had the will and capacity to decide between right and wrong. They distrusted God and believed Satan’s temptation. In a rejection of God’s will, Adam and Eve followed their “carnal knowledge” and their own will; they trusted their own judgment. Therefore, man’s will, love and pleasure led them to have the sexual desire, which they had gained from “carnal knowledge”.

For Augustine, the sexual desire of Adam and Eve would have been blessed if only they listened to God’s command and not followed their own will over God’s will. They cannot be like God in spiritual knowledge, although man was created in the image of God. Augustine also emphasized that “carnal knowledge” and the will of man must be bound to God and not based on man’s knowledge, opinions and judgment or the opinions of the society. Man should follow God’s will and knowledge as expressed in Scripture: “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die”. Man does not have the

wisdom to decide what is right and wrong. He should not “eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil” but should have faith in God as before they “ate” from that tree.

Aquinas contends that the principle in the creation of man is for man to multiply, develop and prosper. The first men approached the forbidden tree and acquired “carnal knowledge”. This “carnal knowledge” drove them to having sexual desire in Eden, as they realized that reproduction was the best method for the human race to be “fruitful and multiply”.

Aquinas added that some early theologians, seeing intercourse besmirched by lust in our present state, thought reproduction would have happened without intercourse in the state of innocence. But this is unreasonable. It is in man’s nature, like that of other animals, both before and after sin, to reproduce by intercourse, and nature has provided him with the organs needed for the purpose, which Adam and Eve realized after approaching the tree – “then their eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked”.

Unlike Augustine’s and Aquinas’s concept of sexual desire and human personality, in which they emphasized the weakness of man, al-Qurṭubī’s and Sayyid Quṭb’s concept is based on the Islamic concept of life, as well as the positive aspects of man’s knowledge, derived from the teachings of the Qur’ān and *al-Hadīth*. However, there is a disagreement between these two scholars in their interpretation of the tree as referring to sexual desire. Al-Qurṭubī understood the tree as referring to the unity of knowledge, as did Sayyid Quṭb, but unlike the latter referring to sexual desire as well. According to

Sayyid Quṭb, after Adam and Eve had been seduced by Satan to approach the tree, they became aware that they were naked and felt shame. This “tragedy” opened their eyes to the sexual desire between them. However, the Paradise or Eden is a sacred place and therefore not appropriate for them to realize their sexual desire there.

Sayyid Quṭb also quotes Imām Ḥassan al-Bannā and Imām Mawdūdī as saying: “that all of those commandments of the Qur’ān and guidance of the Holy Prophet show how Islam has tried to restrict the sexual relation to marriage only and to stop all other forms or ways outside this relationship. It has allowed the satisfaction of this natural instinct in a natural way through marriage and raising family, which is commendable in every way”. But again, in the story of Adam and Eve who are husband and wife, they should have listened to God’s command and realized their sexual desire in accordance with God’s revelation. But before God gave them permission, they were seduced by Satan, which Sayyid Quṭb believes happened on earth. Thus, their sexual instincts had brought harm to themselves.

Al-Qurṭubī and Sayyid Quṭb emphasize that man as creature honored by God had been taught to protect this earth and to have pure descendants. Man’s wrongful doing is due to his obligations. This is what happened to Adam and Eve. Their forgetfulness became their shame, because they had approached “separate knowledge”, which exposed them to negative knowledge. However, God forgave them. This means that they both came back to sacred knowledge, i.e. the unity of knowledge, as their salvation.

This is why al-Qurṭubī and Sayyid Quṭb stress the importance of sacred knowledge, which leads man to *tawhīd*, *ʿamal*, *iḥsān*, *taqwā* and *akhlāq*. They also stressed that all aspects of man's life have to be based on God's law.

On the idea of tribulation, these are the views of the four scholars. Augustine and Aquinas agreed that there is relation between impurity and tribulation. They both believed that because of the first couple's carnal knowledge humankind has inherited their impurity and sins. Therefore, God sent down His Son, Christ into this world to redeem man's impurity and sins. A person's entire life is a tribulation until he is saved by the grace of Christ. Everyone would have to face the tribulation as the result of the first man's of carnal knowledge (realization). Therefore, Augustine and Aquinas believe that tribulation is a necessary step in God's plan.

Al-Qurṭubī quoted Rābi' al-Anas's view that the tree referred to tribulation (*al-miḥnah*). Sayyid Quṭb did not interpret that tree as *al-miḥnah* but he did maintain that Adam as caliph has to face *al-miḥnah*. On the basis of the Qur'ān, al-Qurṭubī concludes that from the beginning, man was prepared to take the responsibility of being the representative of God on earth. Man was prepared for this task because he has been taught by God.

Al-Qurṭubī believes that the trust Adam was to undertake is related to the meaning of *al-miḥnah*. For him, *al-miḥnah* is closely related to the ideas of 1) vicegerent, 2) faith and 3) knowledge.

How did man generically undertake this great responsibility, which made him vicegerent of God? Here comes the mystic doctrine of covenant, expressed or implied, between God and humanity. Humanity has been given by God certain powers and faculties, which entail special obligations that must be discharged. These obligations may from a legal point of view be considered as arising from implied covenants. We acknowledge that God is our Creator, Cherisher and Sustainer. Therefore, we acknowledge our duty to Him: when we so testify concerning ourselves, the obligation is as if it were assumed by us; for it follows from our very nature when it is pure and uncorrupted.

The latent faculties in man are enough to teach him the distinction between good and evil, to warn him of the dangers that beset him in his life. However, to awaken and stimulate him, a personal appeal is made to each individual through "the still small voice" within him. This in its uncorrupted state acknowledges the truth and metaphorically swears its covenant with God. There is, therefore, no excuse for any individual to say either that he was unmindful, or that he should not be punished for the sins of his fathers. A person is held accountable for everything he does. A breach of trust implies punishment.

Man has been appointed as caliph with guidance to the right path, which is "there is no God only Allah". This is the foundation of faith and worship in Islam and the core of Islamic ethics. Man has both an angelic and animal nature, but the latter can lead man to do wrong and become arrogant. Therefore, the most important task of man is to understand the harmony and balance that exist between the body, soul, mind, and heart. All the dimensions of man need to be taken care of in order for him to have a stable and

balanced personality. If this is not done, he will live by his selfish desires and seek to conquer the earth with destructive powers. This is the tribulation that man has to face.

It is clear that Sayyid Qutb also makes a link between the prohibition to approach the tree and man's acceptance to be God's vicegerent. For him, man is superior to every other living and non-living thing that God had created. Human superiority is not a right, but a potential that can be developed or neglected. It is achieved by man fulfilling certain conditions, which are all subsumed under the concept of consciousness of God (*taqwā*). The most honored among humans are those with the most *taqwa*. *Taqwā* is a final common pathway for the four criteria of human superiority, namely 1) a superior intellect, 2) a free will, 3) responsibility and 4) morality. These four criteria are also found in al-Qurṭubī.

Intellect is the most important criterion of man's superiority. The intellect enables man to analyze, understand and learn. Knowledge is the basis for human action. Transmission and growth of knowledge from one generation to the next is the essence of growth of human civilization. Intellect can enable man to get knowledge. Adam's claim to superiority, as illustrated by angels submitting to him, was based on the extra knowledge that God gave him. His vicegerency on earth was based on this knowledge. Humans are able to extend their intellect in numerous ways such as by the invention of machines performing human tasks.

Man has a free will that is subservient to God's authority. The secret behind God's endowing man with free will is to test him in the exercise of that will. Passing the test would vindicate the superiority of man. Angels, despite their high position in the order of creation, do not have free will. Free will indicates the magnitude of honor as well as responsibility that man has to bear.

Man has a responsibility to honor the "trust" God has given him. The term "trust" is comprehensive in its meaning, which covers good practices, faith, the self, family, society and the whole environment. These responsibilities and "trust" are not just honors; they are obligations that confer on them honor and dignity if carried out well, but they lead to shame and failure if not discharged properly. Responsibility is meaningless without accountability. Humans must fulfill their trust in order to claim their full humanity.

Men are superior to other creatures of God in that they are capable on their own free will to live a moral life. Human's ability to choose what is moral and good confers even more honor and dignity especially when we consider that humans have a great potential for evil. Their superior intellect alone enables them to undertake a range of actions that no other creation can even dream of.

For al-Qurṭubī and Sayyid Quṭb, the purpose of tribulation here is to test man's fulfillment of that "trust", which includes his faith and knowledge of God the Creator of the universe.

In the light of our present study, it is important for both Islam and Christianity to have a correct understanding of the idea of the forbidden tree. There is a correlation between these understandings and the worldviews of the two religions. A wrong interpretation of the tree would mean Muslims or Christians having negative views of the place and role of man in creation and understanding of such concepts as the origin of creation and man's responsibility to carry the trust of God. All of these are important in determining man's spirituality, morality and faith in Unity of God.

There is another important implication. In an age dominated by science, both religions are being challenged to interpret the tree in the light of contemporary science. This should be the concern of both scientists and theologians. An attempt should be made to reconcile between religion and science. Looking at the four interpretations of the forbidden tree treated in this study clearly shows that an interpretation with the greatest consequences and implication for human life and thought is that of knowledge. This is especially true of Islam. The highest knowledge is the knowledge of God. It is for the sake of the knowledge of God that all other forms of knowledge are sought. Moreover, knowledge of all things other than God such as sexual desire, impurity and tribulation must be conceptually or originally related to the knowledge of God or to the Unity of Knowledge (Sacred Knowledge).