

## Surah 2. Al-Baqara

Asad: And He imparted unto Adam the names of all things;<sup>23</sup> then He brought them within the ken of the angels and said: "Declare unto Me the names of these [things], if what you say is true."<sup>24</sup>

Malik: He taught Adam the names of all things; then He presented the things to the angels and said: "Tell Me the names of those if what you say is true?" (Allah did this to show Adam's special qualities of learning and memory).

Pickthall: And He taught Adam all the names, then showed them to the angels, saying: Inform me of the names of these, if ye are truthful.

Yusuf Ali: And He taught Adam the nature of all things; then He placed them before the angels and said: "Tell Me the nature of these if ye are right."<sup>48</sup>

Transliteration: WaAAallama adama alasmaa kullaha thumma AAaradahum AAala almalaikati faqala anbioonee biasmai haolai in kuntum sadiqeena

Khatab:

He taught Adam the names of all things, then He presented them to the angels and said, "Tell Me the names of these, if what you say is true?"<sup>1</sup>

### Author Comments

23 - Lit., "all the names". The term ism ("name") implies, according to all philologists, an expression "conveying the knowledge [of a thing]...applied to denote a substance or an accident or an attribute, for the purpose of distinction" (Lane IV, 1435): in philosophical terminology, a "concept". From this it may legitimately be inferred that the "knowledge of all the names" denotes here man's faculty of logical definition and, thus, of conceptual thinking. That by "Adam" the whole human race is meant here becomes obvious from the preceding reference, by the angels, to "such as will spread corruption on earth and will shed blood", as well as from [7:11](#).

24 - Namely, that it was they who, by virtue of their purity, were better qualified to "inherit the earth".

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If you are true that Allah will never create anyone who is more honourable and knowledgeable than you.

48 - The literal words in Arabic throughout this passage are: "The names of things" which commentators take to mean the inner nature and qualities of things, and things here would include feelings. The whole passage is charged with mystic meaning. The particular qualities or feelings which were outside the nature of angels were put by God into the nature of man. Man was thus able to love and understand love, and thus plan and initiate, as becomes the office of vicegerent. The angels acknowledged 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 qualities which are latent or which he may wish to suppress or conceal, to his own detriment.

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