

**Muhammad:
The Seal of the Prophets**

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The Seal of the Prophets

What does it really mean?

لَيْسَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ إِلَّا مَا سَعَى.

A man will earn only what he strives for.

Qur'án 53:39

وَمَنْ جَاهَدَ فَإِنَّمَا يُجَاهِدُ لِنَفْسِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ.

He who strives, strives only for himself. God is all-Sufficient, in need of no one.

Qur'án 29:6

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ.

And those who strive for our sake, We will guide them in our Ways. God is with those who do right.

Qur'án 29:69

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Preface

No one can deny that our beliefs, attitudes, and habits are shaped, to a great extent, by our environment. That is the reason almost all Muslims, Christians, Jews, or Hindus follow the religion of their parents.

What we are told from childhood shapes our beliefs and expectations—indeed our vision of reality. Imagine if you were born to a strong Christian family and were told all your life that Muslims are not “saved” that they worship God in vain, for Alláh is not the true God. Would you have any reason not to believe your parents and pastors?

Let us get closer to home. What would you believe if you were told all your life that the Qur’án predicts the coming of new Messengers after Muhammad? Would you not be more open to the news of the coming of such a Messenger? This book demonstrates that the misinterpretation of a single word—*seal*—has created a bias as towering and unshakable as a vast mountain. As you read, you will see the mountain disappear little by little! Once it is removed, you will discover the most brilliant and splendid jewels—treasures that have remained hidden from almost all Muslims, all because of four letters—*خ ا ت م*—that have been stretched to eternity!

It is certain that some Muslims would wish that those jewels never existed. The thought of a new Messenger after Muhammad is painful to them. Other Muslims will be delighted to discover the hidden treasures. People have always been different and they will always be.

The essence of Islam is submission to the Will of God. This book will test your faith in a way it has never been tested before. Are you ready to face this challenge—to discover your degree of submission to the Will of God?

Muhammad: The Seal of the Prophets rests on two sets of evidence:

- The rules of reason.
- The teachings of the Qur’án.

It applies both of these standards to disclose the true meaning of “the Seal of the Prophets.” It brings to light many verses that, like a jigsaw puzzle, fit perfectly. What can you lose from seeing the Quranic teachings on this topic in a new light? Will your new vision undermine your faith? No! On the contrary, it will strengthen and expand your knowledge and appreciation of God’s most marvelous and majestic Work: the Qur’án.

Unfortunately, as we shall see, some of the Quranic teachings have been misunderstood and misinterpreted by the believers. Is this not the case with all the other sacred Scriptures? Have not the Jews misinterpreted the Torah? Have not the Christians misinterpreted the Gospel? What, then, protects Muslims from making the same mistake? Should we close our mind to new ideas and insights? Should we disregard this message from the Qur’án?

فَبَشِّرْ عِبَادِ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَمِعُونَ الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ أَحْسَنَهُ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَاهُمُ اللَّهُ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمْ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ.

Declare, then, the good news to the servants who hear an utterance and follow the best therein. These are the ones whom God has guided and are endowed with wisdom.

Qur'án 39:17-18

Why have Christians not recognized the divine origin of Islam? If they practice the contents of the preceding verse, if they listen to the message of Islam, will they not discover its divine origin?

What about the differences between the Islamic sects? Why do the Sunnis and Shiites remain divided? Have they studied each other's beliefs with an open mind? Would they remain divided if they followed the rules of justice and reason as taught in the Qur'án?

What religion or sect do most people follow? Is it not the one that their parents follow? If you are a Muslim, ask yourself these questions: "What are the chances that I would be a Muslim if I was born to a Jewish rabbi in Israel, to an Evangelical Christians in Texas, to a Communist in Russia, or to an atheist in China? What are the chances that the Pope would be Christian if he was born to a strict Muslim family in Mecca or to a Hindu family in Bangalore?"

The Qur'án—this most glorious Book of Knowledge and Wisdom—teaches us repeatedly not to accept a set of beliefs simply because our parents believe them:

وَإِذَا تَنَلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ قَالُوا مَا هَذَا إِلَّا رَجُلٌ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَصُدَّكُمْ عَمَّا كَانَ يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤَكُمْ.

And when our clear Verses are recited to them, they say: "This [Muhammad] is only a man who wishes to hinder you from what your *fathers* used to worship." Qur'án 34:43

إِنَّهُمْ أَلفُوا آباءَهُمْ ضَالِّينَ فَهُمْ عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِمْ يُهْرَعُونَ.

Indeed, they found their *fathers* steeped in error. And so they are fast following in their footsteps.

Qur'án 37:69-70 MF

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا أَلْفَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا أَوَلَوْ كَانَ آبَاؤُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ شَيْئاً وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ.

When it is said to them: "Follow what Allah hath revealed," they say: "Nay! we shall follow the ways of our *fathers*." What! even though their fathers were void of wisdom and guidance?

Qur'án 2:170 Y

See also 43:22; 5:104; 11:62, 87; 10:78

In all ages, people have closed their minds and hearts to anything that was contrary to their ancestral beliefs. Why would the people of this age be any different?

وَمَا يَأْتِيهِمْ مِّنْ ذِكْرٍ مِّنَ الرَّحْمَنِ مُحَدَّثٍ إِلَّا كَانُوا عَنْهُ مُعْرِضِينَ.

And no new Reminder [Messenger] from the Most Gracious [God] ever comes who is not rejected.

Qur'án 26:5

Another translation:

No new Reminder from God is ever accepted by people.

Qur'án 26:5

The Qur'án also teaches us that only *we* are responsible for the choices we make. We cannot shift the blame for our failures on others, such as our parents or religious leaders:

وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَىٰ وَإِن تَدْعُ مُثْقَلَةٌ إِلَىٰ جِمْلَتِهَا لَا يُحْمَلْ مِنْهُ شَيْءٌ وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا قُرْبَىٰ.

And no bearer of burdens shall bear another's burden; and if one heavily laden soul calls another to bear his load, nothing of it will be lifted even though he be near of kin.

Qur'án 35:18 MH

See also 39:7; 53:38-39; 39:41, 7

What obstacle do you face when you try to prove the divine origin of Islam to a Christian? Does he not respond with a mountain of theological beliefs and doctrines his parents and pastors have deposited in his heart? Do not all of us carry a similar load? Can anyone claim that he does not carry such a load?

The verses cited from the Qur'án, as well as our experience in teaching our beliefs to the followers of other religions, teach us a lesson we know by spiritual instinct, but are often reluctant to admit: that not a single drop can be added to a cup that is full and overflowing. Therefore, to be fair in our judgment in relation to this deeply emotional issue—the true meaning of “the Seal of the Prophets”—it is absolutely essential that we set aside everything we have learned in the past. ***We must not allow our previous learning to prejudice our mind and heart against the facts presented in this book.*** Like a fair judge or jury member we must begin our search with a pure heart. If we start with preconceived notions, if we persist in accepting as accurate everything we have learned from others, we cannot arrive at the truth.

People in all ages have disliked the truth. Is our age an exception?

لَقَدْ جِئْنَاكُمْ بِالْحَقِّ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَكُمْ لِلْحَقِّ كَارِهُونَ.

We have indeed brought you the Truth, but most of you dislike the Truth. Qur'án 43:78

Each chapter in this book is like a piece of a jigsaw puzzle. To see the whole puzzle, you must postpone your judgment until you have reached the end, when you have examined the remarkable profile of all the pieces of this grand and glorious puzzle—until you have witnessed the revelation of the Qur'án's greatest Mystery. Only then will you be able to decide if this book is based on solid facts or on mere fantasy.

I

Bring Forth Your Proof

هاتوا برهانكم

Qur'án 28:75

This book is written primarily for Muslims. It focuses on a topic that is of paramount significance to them, but has little if any relevance to the followers of other faiths. If you are a Muslim and believe in the “doctrine of the seal,” you will gain much insight from reading *The Seal of the Prophets*. For this is perhaps the most fundamental and far-reaching doctrine believed by virtually all Muslims: that Muhammad is the final Messenger from God.

This book brings to light many Quranic verses that you may not have seen before—verses that at first sight may seem unpleasant and even painful to most believers, because they challenge the most dearly cherished belief among Muslims: that Islam will never be followed by another religion.

This chapter is offered to prepare you for what is to come. It focuses on the following topics:

- How should a true Muslim accept his beliefs: by conformity or by reason. Because of the dominant powers of conformity in religion, most of the chapter is devoted to this topic.
- What does the doctrine of “the Seal of the Prophets” mean, and what are its implications?

Respecting Reason and Knowledge

قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ.

Say: Present your proofs, if you are truthful. (Qur'án 27:64)

Contrary to what many people have assumed, the Qur'án repeatedly encourages us to be objective, to search for truth, and never accept the beliefs of our ancestors without putting them to the test of reason. Let us look at a few references:

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

Without [gaining] true knowledge, do not follow any belief. For your sight, your hearing, and your heart—all of them are accountable [for the things you accept without evidence].

Qur'án 17:36

وَتَقُولُونَ بِأَفْوَاهِكُمْ مَا لَيْسَ لَكُمْ بِهِ عِلْمٌ وَتَحْسِبُونَهُ هَيِّئًا وَهُوَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَظِيمٌ.

You say with your mouths what you have no **knowledge** of, assuming that it is a simple matter, whereas in God's Sight it is extremely serious. Qur'an 24:15

بَلِ اتَّبَعَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا أَهْوَاءَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ.

Yet, the wrongdoers followed their fancies without **knowledge**. Qur'an 30:29

Consider also this amazing verse:

وَمَا كَانَ لِنَفْسٍ أَنْ تُؤْمِنَ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَيَجْعَلُ الرَّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ.

No soul can believe except with God's permission. And He will place a barrier before those who fail to use their mind—their reasoning powers. Qur'an 10:100

What is the punishment assigned to those who fail to reason—to use their mind? According to the preceding verse:

- They will be unable to discern the truth.
- God will place a barrier before them to prevent them from entering His Kingdom.

The following verse alone should awaken every sleeping soul. It shows the grave consequences of failing to reason—failing to use the most precious gift of God to every human being. Consider the regret that the residents of hell express:

وَقَالُوا لَوْ كُنَّا نَسْمَعُ أَوْ نَعْقِلُ مَا كُنَّا فِي أَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ.

They said: If only we had listened [to evidence] or reasoned, we would not be the residents of hell. Qur'an 67:10

Since the consequence of failing to use our mind is so grave, let us see the preceding verse in another translation:

Had we but listened or used our intelligence, we would not be now the companions of the Blazing Fire. Qur'an 67:10

The implication of the preceding verse is clear. Listening with a good heart and using our mind—respecting reason and evidence—is what can save us from the most feared punishment conceivable: living in hell for eternity. We use reason in every aspect of our life except religion. Why do we make an exception? Why do believers follow for thousands of years, without questioning, the beliefs of their ancestors?

Much of the misery in the world comes from conformers who, without thinking, follow the crowds, who in turn follow their leaders who are servants of power and pride. God despises such people, of whatever race, nation, or religion they may be.

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ إِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَابِّ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الصُّمُّ الْبُكْمُ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ.

Do not be like those who say, "We hear, but they listen not." For the worst of beasts in the sight of God are the [spiritually] deaf and dumb: Those who fail to use their mind.

Qur'an 8:21-22

See also 13:19; 10:24; 20:54; 38:29; 21:45

The Qur'an repeatedly refers to believers who refuse to seek true knowledge, who are satisfied merely with suppositions and unfounded assumptions:

وَمَا يَتَّبِعُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ إِلَّا ظَنًّا إِنَّ الظَّنَّ لَا يُغْنِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْئًا.

Most of them follow nothing but conjecture. But conjecture cannot replace the truth.

Qur'án 10:36

See also 6:116; 45:23; 10:66

Our Creator repeatedly asks us to rely on reasoning, and to bring forth evidence for what we claim:

هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ.

Produce your proof!

Qur'án 28:75

This book follows exactly what the Qur'án asks us to do. It presents both logical proofs and Quranic references to prove its points. Will any harm come to anyone from knowing?

رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا.

O my Lord! Increase my knowledge!

Qur'án 20:114

هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ.

Are those who know and those who do not know equal?

Qur'án 39:9

See also 13:16

هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الْأَعْمَى وَالْبَصِيرُ أَفَلَا تَتَفَكَّرُونَ؟

Are those who see and do not see alike? Do you not reflect?

Qur'án 6:50

The purpose of this book is to help you increase your knowledge. The Qur'án is an all-encompassing Book. It refers repeatedly to future Messengers from God. How could a subject of such significance and with such incredible consequences be ignored? No, as we shall see, the Qur'án does not ignore this topic. It is an encyclopedia of all things:

وَتَفْصِيلَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ.

It [the Qur'án] is...a clear exposition of all things.

Qur'án 12:111

مَا فَرَطْنَا فِي الْكِتَابِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ.

We have not left anything out of the Book.

Qur'án 6:38

Will reading *The Seal of the Prophets* in any way undermine your faith in the Qur'án? No, it will do the exact opposite. It will help you to grow further in your faith and your love for God. It will enrich your spiritual life by showing you the many precious gems you have not noticed in that splendid Book. Such a discovery can only enrich and strengthen your faith, can only help you become a rational believer rather than an emotional follower and conformer to the majority. The knowledge contained in this book will have two opposite effects. It will:

- Immensely increase your admiration for the Qur'án
- Diminish your confidence in those who have more respect for tradition than truth, for conformity than for reason—those who are the followers of fancy and supposition:

وَمَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِنْ يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَإِنَّ الظَّنَّ لَا يُغْنِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْئًا.

They have no knowledge and follow nothing except supposition. But supposition is not a substitute for truth. Qur'an 53:28

إِن يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ.

They follow only fancy... Qur'an 10:66
See also 6:116

This book will help you learn to appreciate the Qur'an more than ever before. You will discover that beyond the seemingly simple and often unrelated verses of this mysterious Book lies a vast ocean, filled with countless pearls of knowledge and wisdom that have remained, and continue to remain, beyond the reach of the profoundest thinkers. Only those who descend to its depths can gain a glimpse of those mysteries, only they can behold with wonder and awe the hidden and splendid gems of divine Knowledge.

The Qur'an is perhaps the most progressive Book in declaring that reason and evidence must prevail over conformity, convenience, and blind imitation. Our Creator wants us to be so inquisitive and open-minded that even if we hear some news from an unreliable messenger, we must still investigate the news:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصْحَبُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ.

O ye who believe! Even if an unreliable messenger comes to you with any news, ask him for evidence, lest you accuse some people with ignorance, and later regret your decision. Qur'an 49:6

To come to a sound judgment, the Qur'an asks us to look at various points of view, and then to choose the best. It teaches us to be critical thinkers:

فَبَشِّرْ عِبَادِ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَمِعُونَ الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ أَحْسَنَهُ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَاهُمُ اللَّهُ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْأَلْبَابِ.

Declare the good news to the servants who hear an utterance and follow the best therein. These are the ones whom God has guided and are endowed with wisdom. Qur'an 39:17-18
See also 22:24

Most people—whatever their religion—learn and accept the beliefs of their ancestors just the way they learn their mother tongue. That is why Muslim children have Muslim parents, Jewish children have Jewish parents, Christian children have Christian parents, and atheist children have atheist parents! History shows that when it comes to believing, the powers of conformity and imitation work with remarkable consistency.

Only a minority of believers question their inherited beliefs. The following verses are indeed enlightening:

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُم اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا أُولَٰئِكَ كَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ يَدْعُهُمْ إِلَىٰ عَذَابِ السَّعِيرِ.

If they [non-believers] are told: "Follow what God has sent down." They say: "We rather follow what our fathers are doing." What! Even if it is Satan who is inviting them to the torment of the hell-fire? Qur'an 31:21
See also 10:78

What has been the response of the people to every new Warner God has ever sent?

إِنَّا وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا عَلَىٰ أُمَّةٍ وَإِنَّا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم مُّقْتَدُونَ.

We have found our fathers following a certain way and religion, and we will indeed follow their footsteps.

Qur'an 43:23 NTA

Before reading the next chapter, it is helpful to test your knowledge of the “doctrine of the seal” by responding to the following questions:

- Do you definitely believe that Islam is the final religion from God? If you do, how did you arrive at such a belief?
- Have you ever explored or investigated the meaning of the title “the Seal of the Prophets”?
- What does that title mean to you? And how do you relate it to the belief that Muhammad is the last Prophet?
- Have you ever asked anyone: “What is the connection between the words “seal” and “last”?”
- Do you know the difference between the following Arabic words: “khatam” (seal), and “khatem” (the one who brings to an end)?
- Have you ever wondered why Muhammad’s position is described by “khatam” rather than “khatem”?
- Have you seen or heard any other verse from the Qur’an that declares Muhammad to be the last Prophet?
- Have you ever heard anyone express any doubts concerning the accuracy of this belief: that Muhammad is the last Messenger from God?
- Have you ever seen any Quranic verses that point to the coming of new Messengers from God?

Asking or pondering the preceding questions will enhance your insight concerning this most significant doctrine and prepare you for what is to come.

To benefit from this book, you must be impartial—totally detached from your ancestral beliefs. You must look at the evidence like a judge or a jury member with no preconceived notions.

The Gift of a Good Heart

Who chooses us to be true Muslims?

اللَّهُ يَجْتَبِي إِلَيْهِ مَن يَشَاءُ.

God elects unto Himself whomever He pleases...

Qur'an 42:13

نَهْدِي بِهِ مَن نَّشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا.

We guide whomever We wish of Our servants...

Qur'an 42:52

مَنْ لَّمْ يَجْعَلِ اللَّهُ لَهُ نُورًا فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ نُّورٍ.

He to whom God has not granted a light, will have no light. Qur'án 24:40

يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ.

God guides to His Light whomever He pleases. Qur'án 24:35

اللَّهُ يَهْدِي مَن يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ.

God guides whom He pleases. And He knows better the ones guided. Qur'án 28:56

On what basis does God choose us? On the basis of the degrees we have received from famous theological universities, or on the basis of our spiritual purity and perfection? The Qur'án repeatedly refers to the purity of the heart as a prerequisite for being chosen. If you have the gift of a good heart, if you truly love the truth, you will be one of the chosen ones, even if you do not know a single Arabic word.

The Meaning and Implications of the Doctrine of the Seal

The doctrine of the seal is based on only one verse in the Qur'án. Let us first see that verse and then later, in the succeeding chapters, examine it in the light of the many other relevant Quranic verses.

مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِّن رِّجَالِكُمْ وَلَكِن رَّسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ.

Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but a Messenger of God, and the Seal of the Prophets. Qur'án 33:40

Muslim theologians believe that the preceding verse bestows a special honor on Muhammad not shared with any other Messenger. Just as the Jews believe that Judaism is the *only* true religion, and as Christians consider Jesus the *only* Savior, Muslims believe that the title “The Seal of the Prophets” makes Muhammad the *final* Messenger from God. Is such a belief in harmony with the Quranic teachings? Few believers take the time to ponder the far-reaching implications of this doctrine. They simply accept it and do not think about it. If they did take the time to carefully examine it, they would not accept it so readily. Let us therefore begin with what most believers fail to do. Let us put this doctrine under intense light to see what it really means, and what are some of its broad implications and consequences. The doctrine of the seal implies that:

- God continued to speak to humankind by sending Messengers for a specific span of time in history. The last one of these Messengers was Muhammad, who appeared in the 7th century A.D. The period of His Ministry, which lasted 23 years, marked the crowning point of human history. Because during those years God told humankind everything that He ever wanted to tell them—everything that they would ever need in order to live a life of peace and prosperity for at least the next three to four thousand million years—the estimated lifespan of the sun!
- The Qur'án is the full and final expression of divine knowledge to humankind for all eternity. No other holy Book will ever again be sent to humankind. When Muhammad's life suddenly ended in 632 A.D., so did the Book of divine Revelation and God's desire to speak to humankind.

2

The Perfection of God's Original Plan

Before studying the Quranic verses that relate to the “doctrine of the seal,” let us first put this belief to the test of reason:

Do you not listen to reason? افلا تعقلون؟ Qur’án 23:80

Do you not take heed? افلا تذكرون؟ Qur’án 23:85

Do you not see? افلا يبصرون؟ Qur’án 23:27

“Come now, let us reason together,” saith the Lord. Isaiah 1:18

Consider the religious history of humankind. Since the dawn of history up to the time of Muhammad (a period of about 4,500 years) God spoke at least eight times to humankind through the following great Messengers, named in the Qur’án:

- | | |
|----------|-------------|
| 1. Adam | 5. Abraham |
| 2. Noah | 6. Moses |
| 3. Húd | 7. Jesus |
| 4. Sálìh | 8. Muhammad |

On the average, God sent a new Message to the residents of the earth once in about every 600 years. Why would He then suddenly stop?

In addition to the great Messengers listed, God sent many others:

وَرُسُلًا قَدْ قَصَصْنَاهُمْ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَرُسُلًا لَمْ نَقْصُصْهُمْ عَلَيْكَ.

And [We sent forth] Messengers in the past whose stories We narrated to you, and [other] Messengers whose stories We did not narrate to you. Qur’án 4:164

It is estimated that our sun will continue to shine for three to four thousand million years. Can anyone imagine the condition of human life on our planet even a thousand years from now, let alone 3,000 to 4,000 million years? Would it be fair or reasonable to leave the unnumbered human beings who will live through countless eons and ages without further guidance, without a new revelation of knowledge from God? Can you think of any reason why our loving Creator would suddenly cease to communicate with humankind?

God's Perfect Plan of Creation

Let us now look at the Qur'án to see if it sheds any light on this question, if it justifies such a drastic alteration in God's way of doing things. Several Quranic verses declare that God in His relationship with us has established a **System** or a **Way** that will never change. Consider the following verse:

سُنَّةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ اللَّهِ تَبْدِيلًا.

It is God's Way which has gone before; and you will never find any alteration in God's Way. Qur'án 48:23 MF (Majid Fakhry)

Here is a more fluent translation of the verse:

God's universal System was created in the past. You will never find any alteration in God's System. Qur'án 48:23

What does the preceding verse teach us? That God does not change His rules, laws, or the System that He created. Since the Creator is perfect, everything that He creates must also be perfect from the beginning:

مَا تَرَى فِي خَلْقِ الرَّحْمَنِ مِنْ تَفَاوُتٍ فَارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ هَلْ تَرَى مِنْ فُطُورٍ.

Thou cannot see any discrepancy in the creation of the All-Gracious. Turn thy gaze again: Seest thou any flaw? Qur'án 67:3

The Bible also testifies to the perfection of God's works:

...His works are perfect, and all His *ways* are just. Deuteronomy 32:4 NIV

As for God, His *way* is perfect; the word of the Lord is flawless. Psalms 18:30 NIV

Many believers cite the following verse to show that Islam is perfect. How then can anyone improve or add to perfection?

الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيْتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا.

Today, I have perfected your religion for you, completed My Grace on you, and approved Islam as a religion for you. Qur'án 5:3 MF

Since the Qur'án has an answer to every question, let us first turn to the Qur'án. The Quranic verses show that every religion is perfect **for a specific span of time**. Did the religion that God sent through Moses have any flaws, any imperfections?

ثُمَّ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ تَمَامًا... وَتَفْصِيلًا لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ.

Then we gave Moses a complete Book...that explains everything. Qur'án 6:154

وَكَتَبْنَا لَهُ فِي الْأَلْوَابِ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مَوْعِظَةً وَتَفْصِيلًا لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ...

And We wrote for Him in the Tablets about everything, including counsels and explanation for everything... Qur'án 7:145

If the Book of Moses was perfect, if it explained everything, then why did God reveal the Gospel, and later the Qur'án?

Let us now consider this question from a logical perspective. Perfection exists on two levels: absolute perfection and relative perfection. The first relates to God, the second refers to us. Change and growth are essential elements of relative perfection. Let us consider an analogy. A baby is perfect at birth, and mother's milk is perfect for him. The same child at age four is also perfect. But is milk still a perfect food for him? What God gave to the people of Israel was perfect for them. What He has given to every Prophet has always been perfect for its time. As we have noted, the Qur'an confirms the perfection of the Book of Moses.

The design of creation shows that **growth is an essential feature of perfection**. It adds to the beauty, diversity, and majesty of creation. Imagine if we were born as adults! Imagine being forever deprived of the wonder and the joy of learning new knowledge! Once again the Qur'an comes to our aid:

وَإِن مِّن شَيْءٍ إِلَّا عِنْدَنَا خَزَائِنُهُ وَمَا نُنزِّلُهُ إِلَّا بِقَدَرٍ مَّعْلُومٍ.

There is nothing for which We do not have its store-houses, but We do not send it down except according to a well-determined measure.

Qur'an 15:21

See also 5:101-102

The expression "send down" is used in the Qur'an to refer to the revelation of divine verses. What the preceding verse teaches us is this: God is the absolute and limitless source of all knowledge and wisdom. But only progressively, according to a predetermined measure, does He reveal His knowledge and wisdom.

Let us once again return to this verse:

سُنَّةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي قَدْ خَلَتْ مِن قَبْلُ وَلَن تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ اللَّهِ تَبْدِيلًا.

God's universal System was created in the past. You will never find any alteration in God's System.

Qur'an 48:23

The Arabic word used to show God's universal Way or System of creation is "Sunnah" (سُنَّة). Here is how the dictionary defines this word: norm, rule, law, custom, practice, convention, tradition, mores, line of conduct, mode of life. The core concept in "Sunnah" is repetition—a behavior or custom that is repeated again and again.

Perhaps the best translation of Sunnah as used in the Qur'an is: **a Way of doing things**. The essential requirement of the design of creation—that God will never change His Sunnah—is so significant that, as we shall see, it is repeated several times throughout the Qur'an.

The past is a mirror of God's future "Sunnah." What was His Sunnah for previous generations? To send Messengers one after another:

ثُمَّ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا تَتْرًا...

Then We sent Our Messengers one after another...

Qur'an 23:44

The critical question is this: Why would God suddenly change His Way of doing things in the 7th century A.D.? Why would He suddenly abolish His link with human beings? Why would He suddenly change His well-established "Sunnah" of sending Messengers to communicate with us? Why would He stop "sending down" portions from the "store-houses" of His Knowledge? Depriving human beings of this wondrous grace is not a

minor alteration in God’s “Sunnah” or His Way of doing things. Can a change of a greater magnitude be imagined?

Compare God’s Messengers to school teachers. An essential requirement of a school system (Sunnah) is that children must have a teacher. Suppose a 4th grade teacher says: “My students will not need another teacher.” If asked why, he responds: “They have a perfect book, a perfect teacher, and they have learned everything that is in the book.” Such a claim is comparable to the belief that we have learned from God everything that we will ever need to learn; therefore we do not need any other Teacher.

Once again the Qur’án comes to our aid. It confirms what reason demands. That marvelous Book specifically calls the practice of sending Messengers to us a Sunnah, and then in an unmistakable language, it declares that this Sunnah will not change:

سُنَّةٌ مِّن قَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ مِن رُّسُلِنَا وَلَا تَجِدُ لِسُنَّتِنَا تَحْوِيلًا.

That We have sent Our Messengers before you [Muhammad] is a Sunnah. You will not find any change in Our Sunnah—in Our Way of doing things. Qur’án 17:77

This universal principle—that God’s Sunnah does not change—is also confirmed in Hebrew Scriptures:

What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again...Ecclesiastes 1:9 NIV

Question: What is the most significant “Sunnah” between God and human beings? Can we imagine any “Sunnah,” any rule, or practice more essential than communication between those who love one another? Why would God suddenly abolish this most crucial and celestial Sunnah? God’s Messengers can be compared to a receiver—a telephone or a radio. God is the source of the Messages sent to us. Why would God suddenly stop speaking to us? Why would He abandon His way of communicating with the ones He loves? Why would He suddenly stop sharing His infinite knowledge? Will God never have another Message for humankind? Will He not wish to teach us new knowledge or remind us to live in peace and harmony? Has our Creator run out of words?

وَلَوْ أَنَّ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مِن شَجَرَةٍ أَقْلَامٌ وَالْبَحْرُ يَمُدُّهُ مِن بَعْدِهِ سَبْعَةُ أَبْحُرٍ مَّا نَفِدَتْ كَلِمَاتُ اللَّهِ...

And if all the trees on earth were pens and the ocean (were ink), with seven oceans behind it, yet the Words of God would not be exhausted... Qur’án 31:27

قُلْ لَوْ كَانَ الْبَحْرُ مِدَادًا لِّكَلِمَاتِ رَبِّي لَنَفِدَ الْبَحْرُ قَبْلَ أَنْ تَنفَدَ كَلِمَاتُ رَبِّي وَلَوْ جِئْنَا بِمِثْلِهِ مَدَدًا.

Say: Were the sea to become ink for my Lord’s Words, the sea would be exhausted before the Words of my Lord are exhausted. Qur’án 18:109

Consider this verse:

قُلْ لَوْ أَنَّكُمْ تَمْلِكُونَ خَزَائِنَ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّي إِذًا لَأَمْسَكْتُمْ خَشْيَةَ الْإِنْفَاقِ وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ قَنُورًا.

Say: “If ye had control of the Treasures of the mercy of my Lord, behold, ye would keep them back, for fear of spending them, for man is [ever] miserly!” Qur’án 17:100 Y

Note how Yúsuf ‘Alí interprets the preceding verse:

A fresh argument is now addressed to those who confine Allah’s revelations to a limited circle of men, such as they themselves belonged to. The [Quranic] reference is

to the Jews who could not understand how any Gentiles [non-Jews] could receive revelations and guidance even superior to what they considered their own birthright. But the tendency is widespread in the human race. A particular race, or caste, or a particular kind of culture claims to be the custodian of Allah's Message, whereas it is universal. Allah's Mercy is universal, and He scatters the priceless Treasures of His Mercy broadcast among His creatures. They are not exhausted by spending. It is only the misers who hoard their wealth for fear it would be used up by spending. 'Are you spiritual misers going to keep back Allah's holy Message from the multitude? ***Is that the reason why you deny the advent of the new Teacher***, who comes as a Mercy to all men—to all Creation?' [emphasis added].

Would not the preceding statement apply also to those who confine Alláh's revelations to a limited span of time? Note also this Quranic verse:

وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَبَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ قَرْيَةٍ نَذِيرًا.

If We will, We will send a Warner to every town.

Qur'an 25:51

Everything that pertains to God is infinite. How unreasonable to limit the revelation of knowledge from God to a specific span of time.

A great portion of the Qur'an is the story of previous Messengers. God repeatedly told Muhammad:

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلًا مِّن قَبْلِكَ.

We sent Messengers before you.

Qur'an 40:78

قَدْ خَلَتْ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ سُنَنٌ فَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكذِّبِينَ هَذَا بَيَانٌ لِّلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَمَوْعِظَةٌ لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ.

There have been repeated examples [Sunan] before you. Travel in the land and witness the destiny of those who disbelieved [the new Messengers]. This is a declaration for humankind, and a guidance and admonition for the God-fearing.

Qur'an 3:137-138

Six verses later, we read:

مَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِن قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ.

Muhammad is merely a Messenger, before whom many Messengers have come and gone.

Qur'an 3:144 MF

What does the preceding verse teach us? That Muhammad is like all those who came before Him. In other words, He is a part of the Sunnah, and hence we should not expect anything extraordinary from Him. If the long succession of Messengers were to end with Him, if the Qur'an meant to say that Muhammad's Advent would terminate God's well-established Sunnah of sending new Messengers, would we not be told at the end of the verse, a few words about Muhammad's unique position? Would not the verse declare that: Muhammad is a Messenger like all the other Messengers, except that He is the last one? On the contrary, the verse clearly shows that there is nothing unique about Muhammad, that He is one more Prophet like many others who came before Him. This verse gives us one more clue that the Advent of Muhammad is not the last chapter in the revelation of divine knowledge and wisdom.

Consider also the following verse:

قُلْ مَا كُنْتُ بِدْعًا مِّنَ الرُّسُلِ... مَا أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ.

Say: "I am not a new kind of a Messenger... I am only a plain Warner." Qur'an 46:9

What the preceding verse communicates is this: Muhammad is not an unusual Messenger with a new or unique Mission. There have been many others like Him.

The following verse confirms the same message:

شَرَعَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ الدِّينِ مَا وَصَّىٰ بِهِ نُوحًا... وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ.

He has prescribed for you as a religion what He enjoined on Noah... Abraham, Moses, and Jesus... Qur'an 42:13

If Islam is the same as other religions, and other religions are like each other, why do we have so many of them? Because people are forgetful. They need a new Reminder or Warner, once in a few centuries, to instill hope in their hearts and to warn them of the consequences of worldliness and separation from God. Since every religion is like every other religion, every religion can be both the first and the last religion!

Note also this amazing verse:

سَمَّاكُمْ الْمُسْلِمِينَ مِن قَبْلُ وَفِي هَذَا.

He named you Muslims in the past and [also] in this [age]. Qur'an 22:78

The verse is addressed to Muslims who lived at the time of Muhammad. They are told that they were Muslims, when neither Islam nor they had been born! Obviously the verse has a symbolic meaning. It communicates this message: **True** believers, who may live at any age in history, even if they have never heard the word "Islam" are still considered Muslims. From God's perspective, Islam transcends both the world of time and the world of names. Thus, every religion that has ever appeared or will ever appear, can be called Islam. If this holds true with God's religion, does it not hold true also with the Messengers who establish God's religion? Thus from God's perspective, every Messenger who has ever come or will ever come can be called "Muhammad—the Praised One."

Has God ever said to Muhammad: "We will send no Messengers *after* you"? Is there any verse in the Qur'an that implies even remotely that God will suddenly terminate His past "Sunnah"? No, there is no verse that even remotely alludes to this concept. On the contrary, as we shall see, God promises repeatedly to continue and honor His "Sunnah" or His tradition of sending new Messengers and new Books:

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلًا مِّن قَبْلِكَ... لِكُلِّ أَجَلٍ كِتَابٌ يَمْحُو اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَيُنْبِئُ.

We did send Messengers before you... For every age there is a Book. God removes [from His Book] and confirms whatever [is in His Book] as He pleases. Qur'an 13:38-39

Note this critical passage: "For every age there is a Book..." Long ago God revealed the Hebrew Scriptures. When Jesus came, He removed or changed some of the Hebrew laws (such as the law of divorce), but confirmed others. Muhammad followed the same Sunnah. He introduced new laws, but also confirmed some of the teachings of the Messengers who had come before Him. This is the System that has been in operation

since the dawn of history, and as the Qur'an declares, it will continue for ever. Saying that "For every age there is a Book" is like saying that "There is a book for children when they are nine years of age, another book when they are ten years of age, and so on."

Progressive revelation of knowledge and truth never stops. Consider also these verses:

وَإِن مِّنْ أُمَّةٍ إِلَّا خَلَا فِيهَا نَذِيرٌ.

There never was an "ummah"* without a Warner.

Qur'an 35:24

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا.

In every "ummah" We raised a Messenger...

Qur'an 16:36

See also 13:7

To discern more clearly the meaning of Sunnah, compare the spiritual world with the physical. When God created the universe, He established a System or an Order of things. He set in motion certain universal laws that have never changed. The same also holds true with His *spiritual* System or Order—the One that determines His relationship with human beings. Has God ever changed the natural laws?

Not only God's "Sunnah" is changeless, but also human nature:

فِطْرَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ.

God endowed human beings with a nature. This nature will not change. Qur'an 30:30

If our nature is changeless, and if God's Way of doing things is also changeless, why should the link that connects Him with us ever change? To claim that God will suddenly stop communicating with us is as unreasonable as saying that human beings will suddenly stop speaking with each other!

God's changeless and everlasting Sunnah is so significant that it is emphasized throughout the Qur'an. Note that in the following verse, this *Everlasting Sunnah* is repeated three times in three sentences in almost identical words, with the word "never" repeated twice. No other concept in the Qur'an has received such an emphasis with such a unique structure:

فَهَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا سُنَّتَ الْأَوَّلِينَ فَلَن تَجِدَ لِسُنَّتِ اللَّهِ تَبْدِيلًا وَلَن تَجِدَ لِسُنَّتِ اللَّهِ تَحْوِيلًا.

Do they expect any Sunnah other than the One practiced in the past? *Never* will you find any change in God's Sunnah. *Never* will you find any alteration in God's Sunnah.

Qur'an 35:43

See also 33:38, 62; 10:102; 40:85

Consider how God describes Himself in the following verses:

إِنَّا كُنَّا مُنذِرِينَ... إِنَّا كُنَّا مُرْسِلِينَ رَحْمَةً مِّن رَّبِّكَ...

We are ever warning... We are ever sending [Messengers] as a mercy from your Lord...

Qur'an 33:3-6

The preceding is a translation by two Muslim scholars from Saudi Arabia.* Here is a more literal translation of the preceding passage:

* The Arabic word "ummah," as used in the Qur'an, refers primarily to a group of people with a given religion, such as Jews, Christians, and Muslims. There is no equivalent for this word in English. More about "ummah" later.

We have been a Warner... We have been sending Messengers as a mercy from your Lord.

The preceding verses teach us an important lesson: Sending Warners and Messengers is an evidence of God's grace. Will God ever stop to be graceful? Will there ever be a change in His Sunnah of showing His love to His intelligent creatures by sending Messengers to speak to them?

Although the word "ever" does not appear in the Arabic text, the two translators must have recognized that it is implied because the divine attributes are everlasting.

To conclude: When God designed the universe and created human beings, He did so according to a perfect Plan. Just as the laws that govern the universe remain unchanged, so will the laws that bind us to our Creator.

Spiritual Versus Social and Cultural Teachings

Every Messenger brings two classes of teachings: *spiritual*, and *social*. God's spiritual teachings—His basic Message—do not change from age to age:

مَا يُقَالُ لَكَ إِلَّا مَا قَدْ قِيلَ لِلرُّسُلِ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ.

Nothing is said to thee [Muhammad] that was not said to the Messengers before thee... Qur'án 41:43*

The previous verse declares that Muhammad did not teach anything new, that everything that He said had already been revealed through the Messengers who came before Him. How can this be? If this is the case, why then did God send Muhammad? Compare God's *spiritual* teachings to the human body, and His *social* teachings to the clothes that cover the body. When a new Messenger comes, He replaces the old, worn-out clothes with new ones, but brings back *the same body*—in a youthful form. Because not only the clothes wear out, get dirty, or go out of style, but the body also ages. One reason people reject the new Messengers from God is this: They look at the new clothes, but ignore the body. If they focus on the body, they will recognize all its features. The new clothes often serve as a veil. Negligent people fail to see the real Person behind the veil.

شَرَعَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الدِّينِ مَا وَصَّى بِهِ نُوحًا...

He is giving you the same religion that He gave to Noah... Qur'án 42:13

The following verse alludes to the two sets of teachings. It shows that Muhammad confirmed the everlasting truths of the Torah, but altered some of its laws:

وَمُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَلَا حِلَّ لَكُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي حُرِّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ...

[I have come] to confirm what came before me as taught in the Torah and to make lawful some of the things that were forbidden to you... Qur'án 3:50

* Muhammad-Hasan Khán, Muhammad-Taquí'u'ddín Alhalálí.

* This is how Yúsuf 'Alí interprets Qur'án 41:43:

The gist of God's message, now, before, and for ever is the same...

Let us now compare the Qur'án with the Bible to see if the "Body" is the same in both Scriptures. In relation to *spiritual* teachings, both Books:

- Teach us about God.
- Speak about previous Messengers.
- Instruct us about moral values.
- Encourage us to pray to become more spiritual.
- Inform us about the afterlife.
- Predict the advent of new Messengers.
- Encourage us to have an open and critical mind, and to investigate the truth without depending on our parents.
- Instruct us about God's justice—reward and punishment.

What about their differences? They differ in regard to *social* and *cultural* needs and conditions of the "ummah" for whom they came. Since societies change, so must the social rules that govern them. And since human nature is changeless, the spiritual teachings that guide and govern that nature must also remain changeless.

The differences between great religions relate to the rules of marriage, divorce, burial, the day of rest, holy days, forbidden foods, and dress codes, such as wearing a scarf to cover the hair (24:58). These are not the basics of religion. Would God reject us if we rested on Sunday instead of Friday? Consider the following verse:

لَيْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ جُنَاحٌ فِيمَا طَعَمُوا... وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ.

Those who believe and perform good deeds should not be blamed for what they eat...God loves the charitable. Qur'án 5:93

What about spiritual values? Compare a dishonest Muslim and an honest Christian. Who is more blessed? Of course, the honest Christian. He practices what he believes. But the dishonest Muslim is a hypocrite. He cannot be a Muslim and a hypocrite at the same time.

What about a Muslim woman who wears a veil but is lustful, and a Jewish woman who is chaste. Who is more blessed? The answer is clear. Religion is not about what we wear, but what we are. Violence, cruelty, and wars are instigated by people who delight in the letter of the law, but despise its spirit.

What is the difference between:

- A good Muslim, a good Christian, and a good Jew?
- A mediocre Muslim, a mediocre Christian, and a mediocre Jew?
- A bad Muslim, a bad Christian, and a bad Jew?

Is there any difference? No, in each case, they are identical. Note what the Qur'án teaches:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالنَّصَارَى وَالصَّابِئِينَ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ.

Those who believe [in the Qur’án] and those who follow the Jewish [Scriptures], and the Christians and the Sabians, and those who believe in God and the last day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord. On them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. Qur’án 2:62 Y

Even as far back as the time of Noah, the fundamentals of religion—its spiritual teachings—have remained unchanged:

شَرَعَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الدِّينِ مَا وَصَّى بِهِ نُوحًا وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى وَعِيسَى أَنْ أَقِيمُوا الدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوا فِيهِ.

The same religion has He established for you as He enjoined on Noah and that which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus: namely, that ye should remain steadfast in religion, and make no divisions therein... Qur’án 42:13 Y

Thus religion is never a problem, human beings are—selfish and envious people who draw sharp lines between God’s great religions, divide them into pieces, and then claim that:

لَنْ يَدْخُلَ الْجَنَّةَ إِلَّا مَنْ كَانَ هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَى تِلْكَ أَمَانِيُّهُمْ قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ.

None shall enter paradise unless he is a Jew or a Christian. Those are their [vain] desires. Say: “Produce your proof if ye are truthful.” Qur’án 2:111 Y

How does God respond to those narrow-minded Jews and Christians who claim that only *they* are entitled to go to heaven? His response is:

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

Nay, whoever submits his whole self to God and is a doer of good, he will receive his reward from his Lord; on such shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. Qur’án 2: 112 Y

Historical and Practical Perspective

Let us now examine the “doctrine of the seal” from a historical, social, and practical perspective. Human civilization advanced quite slowly up to the time of Muhammad, yet during that time God sent new Messengers about once in every 600 years—each time providing new instructions for humankind. For centuries the rate of advancement of civilization remained basically on the same level. Then late in the 18th century, the world began to change on a scale never seen before. The rate of change has been accelerating ever since, and no one knows what the future holds. Imagine how much the world has advanced since the time of Muhammad, when owning slave-women was so widely accepted and practiced by the primitive Arabs of Arabia that the Qur’án did not abolish it. The Qur’án refers to such women, but it does not ask the men who owned them to set them free (Qur’án 33:55; 2:221; 23:6; 24:33, 58; 70:30). In fact, slavery remained legal throughout the world until the mid-19th century. Today slavery is considered illegal even in Islamic countries that try to practice the Qur’án to the letter.

Consider also the punishment that should be imposed on thieves (5:38). Do Islamic countries practice the Quranic law? What about the punishment designated for those who commit fornication or adultery (Qur'án 24:2)?

Let us look at a few other Quranic social teachings and laws that have been outdated. One of the pillars of civilization in our time is banking. Banks in Islamic countries thrive as much as they do in Christian countries. Yet the Qur'án prohibits giving or receiving interests on money invested or borrowed (2:275). Polygamy—permitted in the Qur'án—is also abandoned or is being abandoned in many Islamic countries. If some of the Quranic social teachings have already been outdated, how then can that Book meet the social needs of future generations for several thousand million years?

Change is one of the essential features of perfection. Even during Muhammad's brief ministry of 23 years, God changed some of the laws or social teachings of the Qur'án:

Over the years of Quranic revelation, there was a shift from praise to prohibition of strong drink. The earliest reference comes from Muhammad's Meccan years: "We give you...the fruit of the date-palm and the grapevine from which you obtain an intoxicant and good nourishment." After Muhammad moved to Medina, the revelation changed to this: "They inquire from you about intoxicants and gambling. Say: 'In both there is great harm and some benefit, but the harm is greater than the benefit.'" The latest revelation contains still more change: "Intoxicants...are an abomination, the handiwork of Satan. Avoid them altogether." Fazlu'r-Rahman, the distinguished Pakistani scholar, comments on this reversal of revelation: "The use of alcohol was apparently unreservedly permitted in the early years. Then offering prayer while under the influence of alcohol was prohibited...Finally, a total ban was proclaimed."¹

Here are the Quranic references:

وَمِن ثَمَرَاتِ النَّخِيلِ وَالْأَعْنَابِ تَتَّخِذُونَ مِنْهُ سَكَرًا وَرِزْقًا حَسَنًا إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ.

And from the fruits of palms and vines, you get wine and good nourishment. Surely, there is in that a sign to a people who understand. Qur'án 16:67

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ قُلْ فِيهِمَا إِثْمٌ كَبِيرٌ وَمَنَافِعُ لِلنَّاسِ وَإِنَّهُمَا أَكْبَرُ مِنْ نَّفْعِهِمَا.

They ask you about wine and gambling, say: "In both there is great sin and some benefit for people. But their sin is greater than their benefit." Qur'án 2:219

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ...رَجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ!

O believers, wine and gambling...are an abomination of the Devil's doing; so avoid them that perchance you may prosper! Qur'án 5:90

The Qur'án itself testifies that adaptation to new conditions is part of God's plan.

وَإِذَا بَدَّلْنَا آيَةً مَّكَانَ آيَةٍ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يُنزِّلُ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُفْتَرٍ.

And when We replace a verse with another—and God knows best what He sends down. They say: "You [Muhammad] are but a forger." Qur'án 16:101

مَا نَنسَخُ مِنْ آيَةٍ أَوْ نُنسِئُهَا نَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ مِّنْهَا أَوْ مِثْلَهَا أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ.

Whichever verse We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring instead a better or similar one. Do you not know that God has power over all things [He doeth what He willeth]? Qur'án 2:106 MF

Why would God abrogate some of His laws? Why would some of His verses be forgotten? Note how Yúsuf 'Alí, the noted Muslim scholar, responds to these questions:

What is the meaning here? If we take it in a general sense, it means that Allah's Message from age to age is always the same, but that its form may differ according to the needs and exigencies of the time. That form was different as given to Moses and then to Jesus and then to Muhammad...²

What will the world be like, a thousand years from now, let alone 3,000 million years?

Consider also our spiritual connection to God. Those who love one another speak to one another. If God is the essence and the source of love, how can we ever imagine that He would never again send a Message to His loved ones, who need Him so much and are so desperately dependent on Him? Imagine the number of people who will live on earth in the future for countless ages to come. Will they not need to hear from their Creator? Will not God have anything to say to them—after the passage of one million or one thousand million years? What value is there in silence? How fervently do we look forward to receiving letters from our loved ones? Communication is one of God's most splendid blessings to us. Why would He deprive us of this blessing?

Thus, from purely a practical, social, historical, and logical perspective we can see that the “doctrine of the seal” suffers from serious flaws:

- It implies that God's original Plan or System of creation was imperfect. He changed His Sunnah in the 7th century A.D.
- It disregards this self-evident fact: that the world continues to change; and as the world changes, so must the laws and social teachings that govern its people.
- It is contrary to the character of a loving God to stop speaking to His loved ones.

The next chapter examines the intended meaning of Muhammad's title “the Seal of the Prophets.” It shows how theologians have, without justification, derived the meaning of “finality” from this title.

3

“The Seal of the Prophets” What Does It Mean?

Contrary to what most Muslims believe, the Qur’án does not in any way close and seal the door of knowledge to new Revelations from God. In fact, the Qur’án does just the opposite. Before examining the verses that predict the coming of new Messengers from God, let us first unseal the true meaning of the word “seal” in this chapter, let us first see how and why this word has been misunderstood and misinterpreted by so many believers for so many centuries.

In exploring this subject, the first step is to bring to light the strategies that Muslim interpreters have adopted to derive the desired meaning—the end—from the word “seal.” The light of knowledge will diminish and demystify the awesome powers that theologians have bestowed on this one word among thousands of others in the Qur’án.

The word “seal” both in Arabic and English is used in three ways: as a noun, as an adjective, and as a verb. Let us study each of them.

“Seal” as a Verb

When the idea of closure is *relevant* to a concept, the word “seal” can mean or imply closing, such as sealing an envelope, a bottle, a pipe, even one’s mouth! For instance, it makes sense to say, “I sealed my sister’s mouth” (relevant), but it does not make sense to say, “I sealed my sister!” Similarly, it is idiomatic to say that “God seals the minds and hearts of those unworthy of beholding His glory” (relevant), but it is not idiomatic to say that “God seals a Prophet!” The Qur’án often uses the word “seal” as a verb, but the usage is always relevant to the concept of closure. And most often it points to the kind of people who are unworthy of receiving the gift of guidance:

الْيَوْمَ نَخْتِمُ عَلَىٰ أَفْوَاهِهِمْ.

Today We set a seal upon their mouths.

Qur’án 36:65

خَتَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَعَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِمْ وَعَلَىٰ أَبْصَارِهِمْ غِشَاوَةٌ.

God has sealed their [the deniers’] hearts and hearing, and their eyes are veiled.

Qur’án 2:7

Using the word seal as a *verb* to convey the ideas of closure and secrecy is found also in the Bible:

But you, Daniel, close up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end.

Daniel 12:4 NIV
See also Rev. 22:10

“Seal” as an Adjective

The word “seal” is also used as an adjective, such as “sealed wine” (Qur’án 83:28) or a “sealed bottle of wine.” Once again, the word “sealed” used as an *adjective* may convey the idea of closing, provided it is *relevant* to that concept. We can say, “a sealed envelope” “a sealed bottle of wine,” or “a sealed mouth” but we cannot say “a sealed child” or “a sealed father”! Such usage is not idiomatic.

Most often, the word “sealed” as an adjective points to ownership, authority, and protection. “A sealed document” does not mean a finished document, but one that carries the authority of the person who has placed his seal of approval or authority on it. In this case, it is almost the equivalent of a signature. A company places its seal or “official mark” on a bottle of wine for the following reasons:

- To identify the wine, to indicate who made it.
- To express the uniqueness or distinction of the wine.
- To protect the wine, to prove that the bottle has not been opened, and therefore its contents are genuine.

Consider two bottles of wine, both closed—one with a seal, the other without a seal. The one with the seal has more value, because it carries the “official mark” of the company. Further, the seal proves that no one has opened the bottle.

We cannot close a bottle with a seal! We can close it with a cork and then put a seal on the cork to guarantee and protect its contents. In the United States, there is an organization that tests various products. If a product meets certain standards, it can then carry a label known as: *The Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval*. Nevertheless, since the concept of closing is *relevant* to a bottle, the adjective “sealed” can also convey the idea of closing.

“Seal” as a Noun

We now come to the third usage of the word seal—as a noun—as applied to Muhammad: *the Seal of the Prophets*. Does the word “seal” as a noun point to “closing”? Not at all, unless we stretch our imagination beyond reason. It is neither idiomatic nor meaningful to apply the word “seal” to a human being. Suppose you said: “I am the seal of my brother!” What would that mean? What would others think? Could anyone interpret your statement by saying that you are *the last* brother, that you somehow stopped the birth of new brothers? What if you said: “I am the seal of my neighbors.” Would that mean that you are the last neighbor?

What, then, does the word “seal” as a noun convey? It conveys the ideas of ownership, approval, protection, and authority. “Seal” as a noun means an “official mark” adopted and used to identify a specific person or institution. It is a close equivalent of “signature.” As a noun, “seal” does not point to an action, as it does as a verb. It rather conveys the idea of approval. Consider the following biblical verse, where “seal” is used as a noun:

On Him [Jesus] God...has placed His seal of approval.

John 6:27 NIV

The following definitions from two dictionaries demonstrate the difference between the meaning of “seal” as a *noun* (as used in relation to Muhammad), and as a *verb*.

“Seal” as a Verb—Not applied to Muhammad

The dictionary offers the following meanings:

1. To close an entrance; to close an envelope
2. Mark (a document) with a seal. Example: the treaty was signed and sealed by both governments.
3. Often, *seal up*, close tightly, fasten, shut.

“Seal” as a Noun—Applied to Muhammad

The dictionary offers the following meanings:

1. Official mark, a mark that has a special design and shows the authority of a person or organization. Example: a book stamped with Presidential Seal.
2. Design, stamped on a piece of wax or other soft material, to show ownership or authenticity. The seal of the United States is attached to important government papers.

How does the Qur’án apply the word “seal” to Muhammad? **Only as a noun**. It simply declares Muhammad to be “the Seal of the Prophets:”

...رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ.

[Muhammad is]...God’s Messenger and the Seal of the Prophets. Qur’án 33:40

Saying that Muhammad is “the Seal of the Prophets” is equivalent to saying that He is “the official signature” of God’s great Teachers and Messengers. Such a usage of “seal” does not point to an action. It does not mean that Muhammad *did* something, that He stopped an ongoing process. The Qur’án does **not** declare that Muhammad’s Advent sealed (verb) or terminated the periodic Advent of future Messengers from God. It simply bestows a title on Him.

The use of the word “seal” as a noun in relation to human beings is not idiomatic. But, as we know, God often speaks in symbolic or metaphoric language. And that is how this title is applied to Muhammad.

Since “seal” and “official signature” serve the same purpose, let us now replace one with the other. The substitution will help us become more objective in the way we perceive Muhammad’s title:

Muhammad is...God’s Messenger and “the official signature” of the Prophets... Qur’án 33:40

If “seal” as a *noun* does not convey the meaning of “finality,” how then do Muslim theologians derive such a meaning from it? To achieve their goal, they resort to two distinct methods, which are based on the “principle of association.” Let us now explore both of them.

The first method Muslim interpreters adopt is to replace the meaning of “seal” as a noun (signature) with its meaning as a verb (closing). Yúsusuf ‘Alí—a famous translator and interpreter of the Qur’án—follows this strategy. He writes:

When a document is sealed, it is complete, and there can be no further addition... The Holy Prophet Muhammad closed the long line of Messengers.¹

As we can see, Yúsusuf ‘Alí replaces the meaning of the word “seal” as a noun (signature) with its meaning as a verb (closing). He writes “when a document is sealed [a verb].” The Qur’án does not say that Muhammad “sealed” the Advent of the Prophets. It only calls Muhammad a “seal.” It only bestows a title of honor on Him. As we can see, Yúsusuf ‘Alí derives the desired meaning by taking advantage of “the principle of association.” In our mind, we associate the meaning of “seal” as a verb with its meaning as a noun, although they have entirely different meanings. Since many believers have accepted this kind of reasoning, it shows that this strategy has been quite effective.

The second method Muslim theologians adopt to derive the meaning of “finality” from the word “seal” is to refer to its location on a document. This strategy also derives its strength from “the principle of association.” These theologians state that since the location of a seal (or signature) is at the end of a document, therefore, Muhammad ended the long succession of Prophets! Muhammad Asad—another noted Muslim theologian and interpreter of the Qur’án—prefers to adapt this strategy. He writes:

[Muhammad was] the last of the Prophets, just as a seal (khátam) marks the end of a document...²

Once again the interpreter derives the intended meaning by associating the word “seal” with its supposed location. The preceding line of reasoning suffers from several flaws:

- The prime purpose of placing one’s seal on a document is not to show closure, but rather to confirm its authenticity.
- A seal is not always placed at the end of a document. Sometimes it is placed on the side or on the top! I looked at several old letters carrying a seal. I noted that the seals were placed in different locations.
- A writer can finish a letter, then sign and seal it, but he can always write *new* letters.

What allows or aids these two strategies, or lines of reasoning, to succeed is this: the derived conclusion is what people love to hear! Believers—whatever their religion—want to be told that they are special, and so is their religion. Unfortunately, this human weakness afflicts all of us to some extent. The following prediction applies to the followers of all religions:

The time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.

II Timothy 4:3 NIV

Let us now examine in greater depth the Quranic verse that bestows the title of “the Seal of the Prophets” on Muhammad:

مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِّن رِّجَالِكُمْ وَلَكِن رَّسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ.

Muhammad is not the Father of any of your men, but a Messenger of God and the Seal of the Prophets. Qur’án 33:40

The preceding verse teaches us two concepts about Muhammad:

- It first specifies the one role Muhammad does *not* have.
- It then declares the two roles He *does* have.

First, Muhammad is told that He is *not* the Father of any man. This concept is in harmony with many other verses in which God informs Muhammad that He has a limited responsibility: that His only mission is to deliver God’s Message. The preceding verse declares that Muhammad’s relationship with us is not that of “father-child.” A father must assume many responsibilities for his children. That is not what God expects from His Prophets. The following verses confirm this point:

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَمَنْ اهْتَدَىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ ضَلَّٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا وَمَا أَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِوَكِيلٍ.

Say: “O people, the truth has come to you from your Lord; whoever is well-guided is well-guided only to his own advantage, and whoever goes astray goes astray only to his disadvantage, and *I am not a guardian over you.*” Qur’án 10:108 MF

وَمَا أَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِوَكِيلٍ.

You are not the one to take responsibility for their affairs. Qur’án 39:41

فَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظًا.

We have not sent you [Muhammad] to be their keeper. Qur’án 42:48

مَا عَلَيْكَ مِنْ حِسَابِهِمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ وَمَا مِنْ حِسَابِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ.

You are not in the least accountable for them, nor are they in the least accountable for you. Qur’án 6:52 MF

لَسْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ بِمُصَيِّرِينَ.

Thou are not one to manage their affairs. Qur’án 88:22

See also 5:94; 6:104, 107; 4:79; 6:52; 11:86

After declaring that Muhammad does *not* have the role of a father, God then specifies two roles for Him. His first role, He declares, is that of a Messenger—the One who delivers the divine Message. Many other verses confirm this point:

مَا عَلَى الرَّسُولِ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ.

The Messenger has no responsibility other than delivering the Message. Qur’án 5:99

إِنَّ عَلَيْكَ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ.

Thy duty is but to convey the Message. Qur’án 42:48

فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلَاغُ وَعَلَيْنَا الْحِسَابُ.

Thy duty is only to convey the Message, and Our [God’s] duty is to take account. Qur’án 13:40

فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ.

But if they turn away, thy duty is only to convey the Message clearly. Qur'an 16:82
 فَهَلْ عَلَى الرُّسُلِ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ.

Do the Messengers have any other mission except to convey a clear Message?

Qur'an 16:35
 See also 5:92; 2:272

The second role God assigns to Muhammad is that of a Confirmer—the One who places His seal of approval on Messengers who have appeared before Him to show that they are all rooted in God. Verses that assign this mission or role to Muhammad and to the Qur'an are numerous. They are found throughout that Book:

وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ هُوَ الْحَقُّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ.

That which We have revealed to Thee of the Book is the truth—**confirming** what was [revealed] before it...

Qur'an 35:31 Y
 ...تَصْدِيقَ الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ.

[It is]...a **confirmation** of what came before it. Qur'an 12:111

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الْكِتَابَ آمِنُوا بِمَا نَزَّلْنَا مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا مَعَكُمْ مِّن قَبْلٍ...

O ye people of the Book! Believe in what We have [now] revealed, **confirming** what is [already] with you...

نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَأَنزَلَ التَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ.

It is He Who sent down to Thee in truth, the Book, **confirming** what went before it; and He sent down the Torah and the Gospel. Qur'an 3:3 Y
 See also 6:92; 2:41; 35:31; 5:59; 5:48; 2:29

At the beginning of the Qur'an, God defines a Muslim in this way:

الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِن قَبْلِكَ وَبِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ.

Those who fear God, who believe in the unseen [the spiritual world], who are steadfast in praying, and bestow on others from what we have provided them, who believe in **the Revelation sent down to Thee** [Muhammad], **and sent before thy time**, and those who are certain of the afterlife... Qur'an 2:3-4

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا آمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ... وَالْكِتَابِ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ مِن قَبْلُ.

O believers! Believe in God and His Messenger...and the Book that He revealed in the past. Qur'an 4:136

The Qur'an declares that other Messengers have performed the same role:

وَإِذْ قَالَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَمُبَشِّرًا بِرَسُولٍ يَأْتِي مِن بَعْدِي اسْمُهُ أَحْمَدُ فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ قَالُوا هَذَا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ.

And remember, Jesus, the Son of Mary, who said: “O Children of Israel! I am the Messenger of Allah [sent] to you **confirming** the Torah [which came] before Me, and giving glad tidings of a Messenger to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad.” But when He came to them with clear signs, they said, “This is evident sorcery!”

Qur'an 61:6 Y

الرَّسُولَ النَّبِيَّ الْأُمِّيَّ الَّذِي يَجِدُونَهُ مَكْتُوبًا عِنْدَهُمْ فِي التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ.

...the unlettered Messenger whom they find *mentioned in the Torah and the Gospel*.

Qur'án 7:157

وَقَفَّيْنَا عَلَى آثَارِهِم بِعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنْجِيلَ فِيهِ هُدًى وَنُورٌ وَمُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَهُدًى وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ.

And in their footsteps We sent Jesus the Son of Mary, *confirming* the Torah that had come before him. We sent Him the Gospel, therein was guidance and light, and *confirmation* of the Torah that had come before Him, a guidance and an admonition to those who fear Allah.

Qur'án 5:46 Y

وَمِن قَبْلِهِ كِتَابُ مُوسَى إِمَامًا وَرَحْمَةً وَهَذَا كِتَابٌ مُّصَدِّقٌ...

And before this was the Scripture of Moses as a guide and a mercy. And this is a *confirming* Book...

Qur'án 46:12

...كِتَابًا أَنْزَلْنَا مِن بَعْدِ مُوسَى مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ...

...a Book sent down after Moses *confirming* what came before it...

Qur'án 46:30

Consider also the following verse:

لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي قَصَصِهِمْ عِبْرَةٌ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ مَا كَانَ حَدِيثًا يُفْتَرَى وَلَكِن تَصْدِيقَ الَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَتَفْصِيلَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ.

There is, in their stories, instruction [lessons] for men endued with understanding. It is not a tale invented, but a *confirmation* of what went before it—a detailed exposition of all things, and a guide and a mercy to those who believe.

Qur'án 12:111 Y

What lessons can we learn from the stories of past Messengers? The most significant lesson we can learn is this: Every Messenger was rejected because people found a word in the sacred Scriptures of their religion, misinterpreted and exaggerated that word, and used it as a weapon of denial.

أَفَكُلَّمَا جَاءكُمْ رَسُولٌ بِمَا لَا تَهْوَى أَنْفُسُكُمْ اسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ فَفَرِيقًا كَذَّبْتُمْ وَفَرِيقًا تَقْتُلُونَ؟

Is it not true that whenever a Messenger came to you and spoke contrary to your selfish desire, you showed arrogance towards Him? And did you not kill some of them and accuse others with lying?

Qur'án 2:87

See also 22:3, 8; 21:2

The continuous or periodic appearance of the Messengers—Progressive Revelation of Truth—is based on a Covenant—perhaps the greatest of all divine Covenants. The following verse of the Qur'án (Chapter 3, verse 81) describes this Covenant in the form of a *dialogue between God and His Prophets*:

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ النَّبِيِّينَ لَمَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَحِكْمَةٍ ثُمَّ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مُّصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَكُمْ لَتُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهِ وَلَتَنْصُرُنَّهُ قَالَ أَأَقْرَرْتُمْ وَأَخَذْتُمْ عَلَىٰ ذَلِكُمْ إِصْرِي قَالُوا أَقْرَرْنَا قَالَ فَاشْهَدُوا وَأَنَا مَعَكُمْ مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ.

Here is a translation of the verse in the form of a dialogue (Qur'án 3:81):

***And when God made a Covenant
with the Prophets [He said]:***

God's Promise and His Expectation: I give you the Book and the Wisdom. Then a Messenger [Muhammad] will come to you **confirming** what you already possess. You must believe in Him and give Him support. Do you affirm and **confirm** my Covenant in this matter?

Prophets' Response: We do **confirm** this Covenant.

God: Bear witness that I am with you and will be with you as one of the witnesses.

Then three verses later, God declares the oneness of all those sent or inspired by God:

قُلْ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنزِلَ عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ لَا نَفَرُّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ.

Say: “We believe in God and in what has been revealed to us and has been revealed to Abraham, Isma’il, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes; and in what Moses, Jesus, and the Prophets have received from their Lord. We do not discriminate between any of them, and to Him we submit.”

Qur’án 3:84 MF

As the preceding Covenant demonstrates, God places His “Seal of Approval” on His Prophets, and they in response place their “Seal of Approval” on each other. This is what “the Seal of the Prophets” means.

The “doctrine of the seal” has become the pivotal belief in Islam. It is perhaps the most consequential and far-reaching concept that the human mind can conceive. If this belief is false, which it is, it will lead the believers to deny and persecute every Messenger that God will ever send! How can such a questionable strategy, such a shaky way of reasoning—like “the location of a seal on a letter”—carry such a far-reaching belief with such an awesome weight or consequence? How can it sustain such an incredible claim? Is basing one’s everlasting destiny on such a fragile foundation reasonable? Is this doctrine a fact or a fancy?

إِن يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ...

They [most people] follow nothing but fancy...

Qur’án 10:66

The Quranic evidence undermining this unfounded supposition, this serious misinterpretation of the Word of God, is overwhelming. In order to move on to other topics, the remaining discussion on the meanings of the words used in this verse is placed in the Appendix.

4

The Spiritual Death and Revival of Religion

The evidence presented in the preceding chapter should have dispelled the gloomy clouds that have obscured the true meaning and purpose of the word “seal.” Now that the clouds of misunderstanding are lifted, let us follow the light that God’s most marvelous Book—the Qur’án—sheds on this critical topic. Let us allow that Book to guide us to a genuine understanding of God’s universal purpose, and everlasting and unchanging Plan or “Sunnah” for humankind. The Quranic prophecies can be classified into three categories:

- Those that predict the spiritual death of Muslims and the termination of the lifespan of Islam at a specific time in history.
- Those that predict the advent of new Messengers from God to restore the spiritual life of all peoples, including Muslims.
- Those that predict the coming of a new religion after Islam.

This chapter focuses on the first topic, the succeeding chapters on the second and the third topics.

Spiritual Life and Death

To decode the prophecies that point to the spiritual death of Islam and Muslims, first we need to review a few Quranic verses. The terms “life” and “death” are used in all sacred Scriptures to convey *spiritual* life and death. The pagans, who acknowledged the one true God, were not dead before accepting Islam, yet they were told:

وَكُنْتُمْ أَمْوَاتًا فَأَحْيَاكُمْ.

You were dead, and He gave you life.

Qur’án 2:28 Y

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اسْتَجِيبُوا لِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيكُمْ...

O believers! Respond to God and to the Messenger when He calls you to that which will bestow life on you...

Qur’án 8:24

فَإِنَّكَ لَا تَسْمَعُ الْمَوْتَى وَلَا تَسْمَعُ الصَّمَّ الدُّعَاءَ إِذَا وَلَّوْا مُدْبِرِينَ.

For you cannot make the [spiritually] dead to hear and you cannot make the [spiritually] deaf to hear the call, if they flee [from the truth], turning their backs [rejecting].

Qur’án 30:52

Also 27:80

Similarly, the Jews were not physically dead, yet when they received the light of faith, they were told:

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَاكُمْ مِّن بَعْدِ مَوْتِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ.

Then We raised you up after you had died, so that you might give thanks. Qur'án 2:56 MF

Consider also this verse:

أَوْ مَن كَانَ مَيِّتًا فَأَحْيَيْنَاهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُ نُورًا يَمْشِي بِهِ فِي النَّاسِ كَمَن مَّثَلُهُ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِّنْهَا.

Can he who was dead, to whom We gave life and a Light, whereby he can walk amongst men, be like him who is in the depths of darkness, from which he can never come out?

Qur'án 6:122 Y

See also 18:30; 36:70; 16:21; 17:17

The words “life” and “death” are also frequently used in the Bible to refer to *spiritual* life and death:

...if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death.

Christ (John 8:51 NKJ)

See also John 11:25-26; 6:63; Rev. 22:14

As we shall see, the sacred Scriptures also declare that just as every human being has a life cycle, so does every religion, and that when the “life cycle” of a religion ends, so does the spiritual life of its followers. What then would God do? Would He not try to revive them by sending a new Messenger? Muhammad told the new believers of His time that “Ye were dead, and He [God] gave you life” (2:28). He further predicted that history will repeat itself, that in due time His followers—Muslims—will also lose their spiritual life just as others had lost it before them. What then? Would a loving God remain silent? No, at a precise Hour—determined by His well-established “Sunnah”—He will once again come to their rescue. He will once again send a new Messenger to offer the gift of life to all those who have a desire to receive that gift, to all those who thirst for truth.

The Time Assigned to Islam

The prophecies that refer to the termination of the spiritual life of Muslims are clear and conclusive, but since they undermine the deeply-rooted assumption that Islam will never be outdated or replaced, theologians have felt obligated to distort the meaning of these prophecies in subtle ways. By altering or diluting the meaning of only three keywords, they have been able to completely “neutralize” or “deactivate” prophecies and promises that offer humankind the greatest and most joyous news: the news of the advent of new Messengers from God.

It is absolutely essential to bring to light the precise meaning of those misinterpreted words. They also hold the key to the meaning and purpose of other Quranic verses. What are the three Arabic words related to the lifespan of Islam, as they appear in the Qur'án? They are:

- Ummah (أمة)
- Ajal (اجل)
- Wasat (وسط)

Since the Qur’án often uses the first two words together, let us begin our investigation by examining their meaning as defined in the dictionary:

Ummah

1. A group of people for whom a Messenger is sent.
2. The collective followers of a religion, such as the “Ummah of Islam.”
3. Religion.
4. A group of people, a nation

Ajal

1. A specific length of time; fixed term; appointed time, a span of time that comes to an end or terminates with death.
2. The end of time for something; the end of life, the time to die.
3. Death.

Let us now examine a verse that contains the preceding two words *as traditionally translated*. To help you follow the translation, in each case, the equivalent key Arabic words—“ummah” and “ajal”—are inserted in brackets.

A Translation by Dawood

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلٌ فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَجْلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ سَاعَةً وَلَا يَسْتَقْدِمُونَ.

A space of time [ajal] is fixed for each community [ummah]; when their time [ajal] is come, not for one hour shall they delay, nor can they go before it. Qur’án 7:34

Now compare the preceding translation, which is by Dawood, with one that is faithful to the meaning of the two critical Arabic words:

[Spiritual] death [ajal] is ordained for the followers of every religion [ummah]. And when it is time for them to die [ajal], they [members of the ummah] cannot delay or advance their death [even] for one hour.

Note the vast difference between the two translations. Note how by altering the meaning of those keywords—“ummah” and “ajal”—the translator has completely concealed the true purpose of the prophecy!

How can these meanings be concealed from Arabic-speaking Muslims? Consider the following points:

- Did not the Jews read their Hebrew Scriptures in their mother language? Why then did they reject Jesus?
- Do not many Christian scholars read the Gospel in its original language? Why then do they continue to reject Muhammad?

- Do not Arab Christians read the Qur’án in their mother language? Why do they also reject Muhammad?

History shows that the “authority figures” have always distorted or misinterpreted the passages that threaten or question traditional beliefs—especially the verses that undermine the interests of the establishment. The masses of people trust their “authority figures” and often do not dare to question them. New ideas and insights, contrary to the prevailing beliefs, are quickly suppressed.

Let us continue our investigation of the two critical words—ummah and ajal. Let us examine yet another traditional translation of the same verse (Qur’án 7:34) by another Muslim scholar—Shakir.

A Translation by Shakir

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلٌ فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَجْلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ سَاعَةً وَلَا يَسْتَقْدِمُونَ.

Every nation [ummah] has a term [ajal]; when their term [ajal] comes, they shall not then remain behind for an hour, nor can they go before it.

Again, what does it mean to say that “every nation has a term”? What “term”? How can a nation remain “behind” or “go ahead” of its terms? What is the significance or purpose of such statements? Can you make any sense out of such concepts?

Let us once again compare the preceding translation with one that is faithful to the two critical words:

A specific period of time [ajal] is assigned to the followers of every religion [ummah]. When their end-time [ajal] arrives, it shall not be postponed nor advanced [even] an hour.



As you can see, the preceding translation offers a clear, cohesive, simple, and reasonable meaning. It simply declares that just as every individual has a lifespan, so do the followers of every religion. Obviously, this simple and reasonable message undermines the traditional view that no other “ummah” will ever follow the “ummah of Islam.”

What then have theologians accomplished by altering the meaning of the first keyword: “ummah”? They have managed to distract the attention of the believers from the real issue. They have succeeded in shifting their thoughts from “religion” to “nation.” Instead of saying that every “religion” has a dispensation or a lifespan, the distorted translation declares that every “nation” has a dispensation or a lifespan! How amazing! By altering the meaning of a single word, theologians—who are more loyal to tradition than to the true meaning of the verse—have completely neutralized God’s clear message to Muslims. They have shifted the meaning and purpose of the verse from the spiritual life and destiny of the believers to the secular life and destiny of nations! As translated and interpreted by theologians, the verse has absolutely no relevance to religion. The words in these translations carefully selected by those loyal to tradition have completely concealed the

purpose of the verse: forewarning the spiritual death of Muslims—the ummah of Islam—at a specific Hour in history.

Note how clearly the following verse describes the alterations to the Word of God. It seems it was revealed for this very occasion:

فَبَدَّلَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ قَوْلًا غَيْرَ الَّذِي قِيلَ لَهُمْ.

Those who did not observe justice, altered the Word—changed it into something other than We had told them...
Qur'an 7:162

Altering or taking the Words of God out of their context is not new. In every religion there have been believers who distorted, modified, or diluted the truths that they did not want to see in their Scriptures:

مَنْ الَّذِينَ هَادُوا يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ عَن مَّوَاضِعِهِ... فَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا.

Some of the Jews take words out of their context...so they—except for a few—[find a way] not to believe.
Qur'an 4:46 MF

What can theologians accomplish by distorting the meaning of a word or a verse? They can conceal its true intention or meaning. That is how Christians have concealed the Biblical prophecies about Muhammad. The Qur'an testifies to this fact:

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمْ كَثِيرًا مِّمَّا كُنْتُمْ تُخْفُونَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ.

O people of the Book! Our Messenger came to you to show you from your Scriptures much of what you would conceal.
Qur'an 5:15
See also 5:13

How Does the Qur'an Use the Word "Ummah"?

As we noted, the translators choose a non-religious word, such as "nation" or "community" for the word "ummah." Are they justified? Since it is of prime importance to know the true meaning of every critical word, let us continue our investigation. Let us subject the traditional translation of "ummah" to further tests. Aside from looking at the dictionary, perhaps the best way to learn the meaning of "ummah" is to consult the Qur'an itself to see how it uses this word. Consider the following verse:

كُلُّ أُمَّةٍ * نَدَعَىٰ إِلَىٰ كِتَابِهَا.

Every "ummah" will be called (or invited) by its Book.
Qur'an 45:28

The verse declares that when a new Messenger comes, He reminds the followers of every religion that His Advent fulfills the prophecies of their sacred Book. The Jews were called to test Jesus by the prophecies of their Book. The same holds true with Christians and Muslims. As we can see in the preceding verse, the word "ummah" has no relevance to secular groups. It rather points to *the believers who follow a Book*.

* Jesus declares that He was sent specifically to save the *Jewish Ummat*:

I was sent to the lost sheep [residents] of the house of Israel, and to them alone.

Matthew 15:24 NEB

Now suppose that “ummah” means “nation.” In that case, every nation must have a Book. What “Book” do the Americans have—by which or to which they would be invited? What “Book” do the Indians, the Italians, or the Iranians have? As we can see, the word “nation” has not relevance to the verse.

The following verses further demonstrate that by “ummah” the Qur’án refers to a **group of believers with a specific religion** rather than to secular or political parties.

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ جَعَلْنَا مَنْسَكًا لِيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ.

And to every “ummah,” We have appointed a holy rite (or a house of worship), so that they may mention God’s Name...

Qur’án 22:34

Also 22:67

كُلَّ مَا جَاءَ أُمَّةً رَسُولُهَا كَذَّبُوهُ.

Whenever a Messenger came to its “ummah,” they denied Him.

Qur’án 23:44

وَهَمَّتْ كُلُّ أُمَّةٍ بِرَسُولِهِمْ.

Every “ummah” strived against their Messenger.

Qur’án 40:5

إِنْ أَنْتَ إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا وَإِنْ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ إِلَّا خَلَا فِيهَا نَذِيرٌ.

Thou [Muhammad] art no other than a Warner, and there was never an “ummah” without a Warner.

Qur’án 35:23-24

As we noted, the dictionary lists “religion” as another meaning for “ummah.” The Qur’án confirms this meaning. Consider the following verses. They refer to the believers who have divided the one religion of God (ummah) into sects and denominations:

وَإِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً...فَتَقَطَّعُوا أَمْرَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ.

And this, your “ummah,” is one “ummah”...but they divided their religion [amr*] between one another.

Qur’án 23:52-53

In the following verse also, “ummah” refers to religion rather than its followers:

إِنَّا وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا عَلَىٰ أُمَّةٍ وَإِنَّا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم مُّقْتَدُونَ.

We have found our fathers upon an “ummah” (a belief system or religion), and we are following their footsteps.

Qur’án 43:23

The next verse—which appears twice in the Qur’án—contains both of the critical words—“ummah” and “ajal:”

مَا تَسْبِقُ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلُهَا وَمَا يَسْتَأْجِرُونَ.

No “ummah” can hasten its death [ajal] (or the span of time assigned to it), nor can it delay it.

Qur’án 23:43

See also 15:5

Let us consider one more reference from the Qur’án, which confirms the primary message of this chapter: that Islam has a specific lifespan predetermined by God. The

* The Arabic word “amr” has many meanings, such as command, cause, religion, affair, etc. Here it refers to what God gives us, which is our beliefs. What else can people divide, and have divided, other than their religion?

following verses confirm the same message expressed in the verse we studied earlier (7:34), but with slightly different wording:

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولٌ فَإِذَا جَاءَ رَسُولُهُمْ قُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْقِسْطِ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هَذَا الْوَعْدُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ قُلْ... لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلٌ إِذَا جَاءَ أَجْلُهُمْ فَلَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ سَاعَةً وَلَا يَسْتَقْدِمُونَ.

[God has ordained] for every “ummah” a Messenger [Rasúl]. When their Messenger comes, He treats them with justice, and they are not wronged. They [the skeptics] say: “When will this promise be fulfilled, if you speak the truth?” Say:...Death [ajal] is the destiny of every “ummah.” And when the time assigned to “the ummah” terminates [ajal], they cannot delay it or advance it, [even] one hour. Qur’án 10:47-49

The preceding quotation contains all the critical words we have been studying:

- Ummah
- Ajal

In addition, it contains three other critical words:

- Messenger
- Promise
- Hour

The preceding reference further confirms the view stated earlier that “ummah” refers to the followers of a Messenger from God. But it gives us an extra clue, not found in the one we studied earlier. That clue is expressed in this question: “When will this promise be fulfilled?” The verse states that the death of every “ummah” is linked to a promise. What promise? What would be more reasonable than the promise of the coming of a new Messenger who would come to revive the dying “ummah” at the critical Hour of their death?

Aside from the Quranic usage of the word “ummah,” we can understand the meaning of this word simply by allowing our mind to guide us—by reasoning. As we noted, the interpreters of the Qur’án assume that the verse refers to secular groups such as nations. Does their assumption make any sense? Nations like China, India, Egypt, and Iran have existed for thousands of years. They have offered the world a rich culture. Why should (or would) they disappear as a nation? How would Canada, Australia, or the United States disappear from the face of the earth at a precise hour? Some countries have been conquered repeatedly, and yet they have continued to survive as a nation. Why would this change?

For what reason should every nation or community disappear at a precise point in history? What would the world gain if Saudi Arabia, Argentina, Brazil, or Great Britain disappeared?

If “ummah” refers to the citizens of a country, what about the Muslims who live within non-Muslim nations, such as those living in China and India? Only if the word “ummah” referred to all Muslims, wherever they may live, would the verse make any sense.

Even if we assume that “ummah” means nation, then we would have to include the Islamic nations, for the verse refers to “every ummah.” Thus, we have to conclude that

eventually all Islamic nations will die or disappear. What will happen then? Will God remain silent? Would He not send a new Messenger to revive them?

All these observations lead us to this conclusion: The idea that every nation would disappear or be destroyed at a precise hour in history does not make any sense. But none of the preceding objections apply to the *spiritual* death of the followers of every religion at a precise “hour” in history, when a new Messenger appears upon the earth and declares the end of an Age and the dawning of a new Day!

Let us subject the traditional interpretation of verses 10:47-49 to further tests of reason. The verses that refer to the termination of the life of every “ummah” also predict that the appointed time of their death will arrive at a precise “hour.” There are now over 200 nations and dependencies on earth. Why would we need to know that every one of them will disappear or die at a precise time? What value is there in such a knowledge? But the reverse holds true with this bitter reality: ***at the Hour of the Advent of every Messenger, the previous religion has already been outdated, it has already lost most of its spiritual powers.*** What about ***the followers*** of that religion—its “ummah”? Have they not by then also lost their spiritual life? Did not Muhammad say:

كُنْتُمْ أَمْوَاتًا فَأَحْيَاكُمْ.

You were dead, and He gave you life.

Qur’án 2:28

That every “ummah” eventually faces spiritual death (ajal) is a bitter reality that every one of its members must acknowledge. Does not the state of the world point to the “death” of faith in the heart of humanity? Note what Jesus predicted:

...when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?

Luke 18:8 NIV

Note also this amazing prediction from the Qur’án:

يَا رَبِّ إِنَّ قَوْمِي اتَّخَذُوا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ مَهْجُورًا.

O Lord, my people [Muslims] shy away from this Qur’án.

Qur’án 25:30

Another translation:

My Lord, my people have deserted this Qur’án.

Qur’án 25:30

Is not the time ripe, in our age, for the spiritual revival of humankind? Is not the world already in need of a new Messenger from God who would bring us together, who would bring peace and tranquility to our divided and spiritually impoverished world? Do we not need to hear once again the good news of God’s heavenly blessings and be warned of the consequences of turning away from those blessings?

The termination of the religious cycle or dispensation of one’s religion is the kind of “death” that people have always denied, and it is the kind of death that they need to acknowledge in every age—when a new Messenger comes. Is this denial predicted in the Qur’án? What an amazing Book the Qur’án is! It is all-encompassing:

وَتَفْصِيلَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ.

It is an exposition of all things.

Qur’án 12:111

The Qur’án—this amazing encyclopedia of Knowledge and Wisdom—does predict that this phenomenon will once again repeat itself, **that people will indeed deny their spiritual death**:

وَأَنْ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُونَ قَدِ اقْتَرَبَ أَجَلُهُمْ فَبِأَيِّ حَدِيثٍ بَعْدَهُ يُؤْمِنُونَ.

The time (or lifespan) [ajal] assigned to “them” is approaching its end. What Message after this (other than this) will they then believe? Qur’án 7:185

The preceding verse poses questions such as:

The time of their death is near. Do they believe this?

The time of their death is getting closer. How can they deny this fact?

Who is meant by the words “them” and “they”? The verse is expressed in future tense. Which lifespan had not ended when the verse was revealed? Only Islam’s. **Who are in denial** that their “death” or their “end” is approaching? Only Muslims, who have lived and are living after the verse was revealed. The verse subtly declares this message: “What more does God need to say to convince Muslims that the time assigned to them is nearing an end, and that their spiritual death is getting closer?” The verse is indeed a prophecy. It predicts the prevailing erroneous belief among Muslims: that the spiritual life of their religion as well as their own spiritual lifespan will never cease.

Another Quranic verse confirms the same message:

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ طِينٍ ثُمَّ قَضَىٰ أَجَلًا وَأَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى عِنْدَهُ ثُمَّ أَنْتُمْ تَمْتَرُونَ.

He is the One who created you from clay, then decreed a term or a specific lifespan [for you] and [still another] set term or lifespan that is with Him [is under His control]. But you are doubtful [about this term]. Qur’án 6:2

The preceding verse refers to two terms, lifespans, or deaths. The first “ajal” or “death” is our physical death. What is the other “ajal” that is set or determined by God? We should note that the verse refers to the entire human race, to anyone who was “made from clay.” Muslims do not doubt the clear teachings of the Qur’án. What then do they doubt? That their religion has also a specific term or lifespan, that just as every person dies, so does every religion at a specific time, as decreed by God.

The Qur’án also contains a brief verse that points to a specific term assigned to every Message, but uses entirely different words. This is how Yúsof ‘Alí translates the verse:

لَكُلِّ نَبَأٍ مُّسْتَقَرٌّ وَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ.

For every Message [there] is a limit of time. And soon shall ye know it. Qur’án 6:67 Y

A more fluent translation would be:

For every Message [Naba’] there is a time limit or a specific term. Soon you will know.

The word “Naba’” meaning “Message” or “News” has a religious connotation. This verse clearly confirms the verses we have been studying: that every Message has an “ajal” or a specific lifespan. The prophecy ends with: “Soon you will know.” We should ask: What News will people have a chance to know? The News of the coming of new Messengers

from God. In God's sight the word "soon" has a special meaning. Both the Qur'an and the Bible declare that a day in God's sight is like a thousand years (32:5).

The Meaning of "Ajal"

To bring our discussion to a conclusion, we should not ignore the precise meaning of the other critical word: ajal. As we noted, in predicting the time assigned to Muslims, the Qur'an uses the word "ummah" with "ajal." Once again, in interpreting or translating this critical word, theologians have followed the same course: they have neutralized "ajal" by choosing "safer" equivalents or meanings, such as "a set time" rather than "a specific span of time that ends in death." By their choice of words they have eliminated the most significant meaning conveyed by "ajal": that of death. Few people like to contemplate that they are mortal, that at an appointed hour they will pass away. The idea of death is unpleasant, whether it pertains to their own lives or to their religion. This is especially true if the believers have already assumed that their religion is immortal and everlasting. As we noted, according to the dictionary, "ajal" conveys two interrelated concepts:

- Death
- A specific span of time

It makes no difference which meaning we choose. Can there be "a specific span of time" without "an end"? Death is the end: the dead end!

Although the meaning of "ajal" is quite clear, it is helpful to see how the Qur'an uses it in contexts other than the termination of the lifespan of Islam. In one of its verses (40:67), the Qur'an first refers to the various stages of human life—such as childhood and youth—and then applies the word "ajal" to the final stage, when life ends. The following verses further clarify the meaning of the word "ajal:"

وَلَنْ يُؤَخِّرَ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِذَا جَاءَ أَجْلُهَا.

When the time comes for a person to die [ajal], God will never delay his death.

Qur'an 63:11

يَغْفِرُ لَكُمْ مِّنْ ذُنُوبِكُمْ وَيُؤَخِّرُكُمْ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى إِنَّ أَجَلَ اللَّهِ إِذَا جَاءَ لَا يُؤَخَّرُ لَوْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ.

He may forgive your sins and give you respite for a span of time [ajal]. But when death [ajal] as ordained by God arrives, it cannot be postponed. If you only knew!

Qur'an 71:4

See also 6:60; 22:5

The study of the two critical words "ummah" and "ajal" has been quite instructive. It not only teaches us a critical lesson, but it also makes us aware of a far-reaching consequence:

The Lesson: The unlimited ability of human mind to distort the meaning of simple and clear statements if they fail to fit an expected pattern.

The Far-Reaching Consequence: The incredible and devastating consequences of altering the meaning of even *one keyword*.

In the next chapter, we will study the third critical word the Qur'án uses to predict the limited lifespan of Islam. That word is “wasat”—meaning “middle”—a word that theologians have also distorted to protect their long-held and cherished assumption of finality.

5

The “Ummah” Who Are in the Middle

Prophecies that point to the closing of the Islamic dispensation or lifespan, and the coming of new Messengers from God, are numerous. Let us examine a prophecy that has all of the following features:

- It is addressed specifically to Muslims.
- It calls them an “ummah.”
- It places them in the “middle” of other umam (plural of ummah).

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا.

We [God] selected for you [Muslims] the position of a “middle ummah” so that you may be witnesses upon the people, and that the Messenger [Muhammad] be a witness upon you.

Qur’án 2:143

Here is a fluent translation of the previous verse:

Your position is that of a “middle ummah,” so that you may observe humankind, and Muhammad may observe you.

Qur’án 2:143

The Arabic word—**جَعَلَ**—often translated “appointed” has several meanings. The dictionary lists the following:

1. To make, to cause to be or become
2. To create
3. To put, to place, to lay down, to position
4. To appoint, to assign

Which of the preceding meanings has the closest relevance to the word “middle”? The third one, because it points to a position. Therefore the verse declares that: We have placed your “ummah” in the middle. ***Your position is in the middle.***

How could Islam be the last religion, but Muslims be a “middle ummah” or an “ummah in the middle”? Obviously, this verse poses a serious threat to a well-established belief held by orthodox Muslims. Once again it is considered the duty of every faithful theologian to find another meaning for this verse! Its true meaning must be somehow concealed. Christians and Jews have used the same strategy to conceal the Biblical references to Muhammad:

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمْ كَثِيرًا مِّمَّا كُنْتُمْ تُخْفُونَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ...

O people of the Book! Our Messenger came to you to show you much of what you would *conceal* from the Book [Bible]... Qur’án 5:15

How do theologians conceal the meaning of God’s word? What would be an effective method to do this? The same method that has been applied to other “undesired” words. The formula does not change: Identify the “problem word” in the verse, then find or create another meaning for it. Once again, that is precisely what the theologians have done! What is the undesired word in the preceding prophecy? It is the word “middle” or “wasat وَسَطٌ” in Arabic. Let us see what this word literally means and review the strategies the theologians have adopted to alter its meaning. The following are the meanings the dictionary offers for “wasat:”

1. To be in the middle (of), to be in the center (of)
2. To put or place in the middle or center of
3. Middle
4. Medium, mean
5. Mediocre, average
6. Moderate
7. Ordinary
8. Centered, midmost
9. Midway, halfway

Another dictionary offers the following meanings for “wasat:”

1. Middle point
2. Mid-point in time (middle of the day)
3. Of mediocre quality
4. Neither good nor bad

On the basis of the preceding lists, is there a reason to reject the *primary* meaning of “wasat,” which is the precise equivalent of “middle” in English? There is none! But accepting the common and literal meaning of “wasat” (middle) would, by itself, undermine or at least weaken the Muslim “doctrine of the seal.” What choices other than “middle” do theologians have? They can choose: mediocre, ordinary, and average. But these are not good choices either. Who wants to be ordinary, average, or mediocre?

There is one meaning, however, that is positive: moderate. Although this is not a plausible interpretation of “wasat”—it is the one many theologians have selected. Some of them have taken a step even further. They claim that since a moderate person does not go to extremes, he is also just. Therefore, they conclude, what God really means by saying that Muslims are a “middle ummah” is that they are a “just ummah”—in their policies, lifestyles, and actions.

A few others, such as the highly trusted scholar, Yúsusuf ‘Alí, have followed a different approach. They have combined two words to represent the meaning of “middle.” They claim that “middle” means “justly balanced.” Is such an interpretation reasonable? First,

none of the words—just and balance—is found in any of the several dictionaries I consulted. Second, what does it mean to be “justly balanced”? Can a person be also “unjustly balanced” or “justly unbalanced”?

The varied choices made by theologians once again prove this point: When people do not like the contents of a verse, they change its meaning to make it fit their own expectations and desire. To see why and how believers alter the Word of God, let us consider an analogy. Suppose you participated in a cycling race. Then at the end of the race you heard the judge say that you finished “in the middle.” But that was not what you wanted to hear. What would you do? Perhaps you would engage in an act of denial, such as: the judge must have had something else in mind. I know I am great. Perhaps by “middle” he intended to say that I am a “fair” person, that I believe in fair competition! That is the strategy some theologians have adopted and promoted. Who would wish, or even dare, to object? People love to listen to leaders who set their religion above all other religions. They love to have justifications for their beliefs, especially if those beliefs make their religion special or unique. This is the secret the religious leaders have discovered to keep themselves in charge and the world divided and in disarray!

Christians love to hear their leaders tell them that Jesus is the *only* Savior—the *only* One who can redeem their soul and lead them to heaven. The same is true with the great majority of the followers of other faiths. Seldom does a believer dare to question the popular beliefs of his ancestors—no matter how irrational they may be.

The following prophecy not only applies to Christians and Jews, but also to Muslims:

For the time will come when they will not stand wholesome teaching, but will follow their own fancy and gather a crowd of teachers to tickle their ears. II Timothy 4:3 NEB

Stating that Muslims are a “middle ummah” is in perfect harmony with all the verses we have studied, especially the ones that declare the following universal principle:

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلٌ.

Every ummah has a lifespan.

Qur’án 7:34

If every ummah has a lifespan, then in due time it must face death. Would God break His covenant of sending new Messengers to teach us an ever-increasing share from the treasure-house of His knowledge? Never would a loving God abandon His servants. According to God’s everlasting Sunnah, death is always followed by the gift of a new life. That is the reason every Messenger has come.

That Muslims are called “a *middle* ummah” in itself shows that God had full knowledge of the widespread belief among them that they are “the *last* ummah.” Otherwise, why would they need to be reminded of their “middle” position in the sequence?

Let us first put the popular interpretation of “wasat” to the test of reason, and then later refer to the Qur’án to see if it confirms the interpretation offered here.

- If God meant to declare that Muslims were either “just, moderate, or justly balanced,” would He not select a specific word to clearly express these attributes? Why would He choose “middle” to mean “just”?

- The words “just” and “moderate” are not always in harmony. Sometimes we must adopt extreme measure to be just. What if Hitler had been treated with “moderation”? Moderation in that case would have been sheer injustice.
- Moderation is a virtue only in certain aspects of human life. For instance, is it a virtue to be “moderate” in virtues, such as justice or honesty? When it comes to virtues, moderation can mean mediocrity. In fact, that is one of the less common meanings of “wasat.”
- Does not the fact that different theologians have selected at least three different meanings for the word “middle” in itself demonstrate that they stand on shaky ground? As we noted, the dictionary does not list “just” or “balanced” even as a distant meaning for the word “wasat.”
- The verse as traditionally translated declares that:

Thus We [God] made you [Muslims] a “just” nation...

Qur’án 2:143

What does it mean to say that: “We made you a just nation”? Did God create or force Muslims to be just? Would not such an assumption imply that God somehow helped the Muslims to be just or moderate, but left the followers of other religions to become unjust or extremists!

- Is there any verse in the Qur’án that confirms such an interpretation?
- Does the history of Islam give us any evidence, any indication that Muslims were either more moderate or more just than the followers of other religions, such as Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, and others?
- Islam is divided into two main sects with radically different beliefs about Muhammad’s successorship. Can both sects be just or “justly balanced” in relation to the most significant issue in Islam: Who were Muhammad’s lawful successors?

The verse that calls Muslims “a middle ummah” (2:143) confirms further the evidence presented earlier to show that “ummah” does not mean “nation.” Muslims are not a nation. They are individuals who believe in Islam and belong to many nations.

Aside from all the evidence presented here to show that “wasat” does indeed mean “middle” simply by studying the concluding words of the verse, we can discern its true meaning. Let us once again examine the verse in three separate clauses:

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا.

- Your position is that of a “middle ummah,”
- So that you may witness humankind
- And the Messenger [Muhammad] may witness [observe] you [to see how you behave].

Qur’án 2:143

Another translation:

We have selected a “middle position” for you, so that you may serve as witness over humankind, and the Messenger serve as a witness [an observing judge] over you.

What does the phrase “that you may witness humankind” imply? What does it ask Muslims to do? It asks them to observe the way people have behaved and continue to behave. It asks them to learn from the lessons of history. Other Quranic verses repeatedly ask us to do this, because history shows us that history repeats itself, that people imitate their ancient ancestors, that they respond to new Messengers just as their ancient ancestors did.

What does the phrase, “so that the Messenger [Muhammad] may witness you” imply? What does it convey to Muslims? It presents them with this warning: “As you Muslims observe the followers of other religions (umam) to learn from the lessons of history, your Messenger will also observe you to see how you will behave, to see if you learn the essential lessons.” The verse is a warning to the believers. It declares this message: Pay attention to the religious history of humankind. Do not be complacent. Do not behave the way the great majority of people have behaved. The same message is repeated in another Quranic verse:

لِيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ شَهِيدًا عَلَيْكُمْ وَتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ.

That the Messenger [Muhammad] may be a witness over you [Muslims], and you be a witness over mankind.

Qur’án 22:78
See also 73:15

Consider also these verses:

وَجَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَمَا كَانُوا لِيُؤْمِنُوا... ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ خَلَائِفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ لِنَنْظُرَ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُونَ.

Their Messengers brought them clear proofs, but they would not believe... Then We made you [Muslims] successors on earth after them, to see how you will behave.

Qur’án 10:13-14

What do the preceding verses teach us? That people have always denied their Messengers. Their minds were so darkened or clouded by tradition that God’s “clear proofs” did not convince them. Are we not their successors? Someday we will be in their position. We will also have a chance to accept or reject God’s new Messengers. Should we not learn from their example? Should we be slave to tradition, or should we acknowledge God’s clear proofs? The verses clearly imply that there will be new Messengers from God. Otherwise why are Muslims told that God will be a witness over them to see how they will behave?

The Qur’án shows that God gives His Messengers a set of specific Missions, such as:

- Confirming the truth of previous Messengers.
- Giving the good news of God’s blessings for the true believers as well as the good news of the coming of new Messengers.
- Warning the people of the grave consequences of rejecting those Messengers.
- Serving as a witness over their followers to observe how they will behave.

The following verse refers to three of those missions:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ شَاهِدًا وَمُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا.

O Prophet! We have sent you as a witness, a bearer of good news, and a warner.
Qur’án 33:45

Jesus also served as a witness over His followers. According to the Qur’án, when God asked Jesus about Christians who had misinterpreted His teachings, Jesus responded:

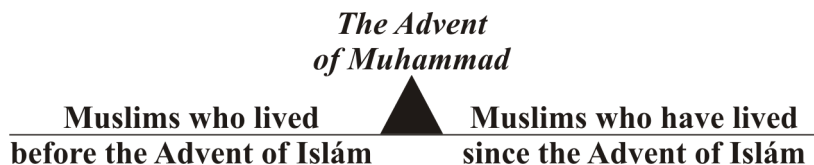
وَكُنْتُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيدًا مَّا دُمْتُ فِيهِمْ...إِنْ تُعَذِّبُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ عَبْدَاكَ.

I [Jesus] was a witness over them [Christians] whilst I dwelt amongst them...If thou punish them, they are thy servants...
Qur’án 5:117-118 Y

The following verse also states that Muslims were given the role of a witness:

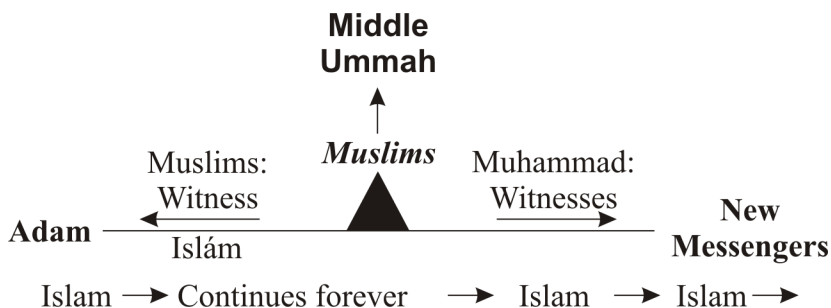
هُوَ سَمَّاكُمُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَفِي هَذَا لِيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ شَهِيدًا عَلَيْكُمْ وَتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ.

He has named you Muslims both before [this age] and in this [age], so that the Messenger will be a witness over you and you will be witnesses over mankind.
Qur’án 22:78



Muhammad: A witness over Muslims who live after the Advent of Islam—to see how they will behave.

Muslims: A witness over all people—Muslims who have lived both *before* and *after* the Advent of Islam—to see how they have behaved and are still behaving



Just as Messengers came to guide “Muslims” who lived *before* the Advent of Islam, so will they also come to guide “Muslims” who live *after* the Advent of Islam. The term “Muslim” is a universal title that the Qur’án applies to the followers of all religions—both to the believers who came before the Advent of Muhammad and the believers who will recognize the Messengers who will come after Muhammad. This concept does not make “Islam” smaller; it makes it greater!

Consider also the following verse:

هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلَائِفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَعَلَيْهِ كُفْرُهُ.

It is He who made you [Muslims] successors on the earth. Therefore, whoever denies [the truth] on him will be his denial. Qur'án 35:39

The preceding verse is addressed to Muslims who are already on the right path. They have not denied the truth. What can Muslims deny except the Messenger who will come after Muhammad? The verse predicts in a subtle way that although Muslims can witness the destiny of past umam (plural of ummah), many of them will not learn the required lesson.

Three verses later, we encounter these concepts:

وَأَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ لَئِن جَاءَهُمْ نَذِيرٌ لَّيَكُونُنَّ أَهْدَىٰ مِنَ الْإِمَامِ الَّذِي جَاءَهُمْ نَذِيرٌ مَّا زَادَهُمْ إِلَّا نُفُورًا... فَهَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا سُنَّتَ الْأَوَّلِينَ فَلَن تَجِدَ لِسُنَّتِ اللَّهِ تَبْدِيلًا وَلَن تَجِدَ لِسُنَّتِ اللَّهِ تَحْوِيلًا.

And they [previous umam] swore by God their most binding oath that if a Warner came to them, they would surely be more guided than any of the umam [that preceded them]. Yet when a Warner [Muhammad] came to them, it only increased their aversion... Do they then expect anything except the Sunnah [a way of behaving] other than the one the umam of the past ages have followed? Therefore you will never find any alternation in God's Sunnah. You will never find any deviation in God's Way [of doing His Work]. Qur'án 35:42-43

When we study the preceding verses, we learn that:

- Muslims are asked to witness the destiny of previous umam.
- However, they will not learn the necessary lessons. Many of them will deny future Messengers.
- The followers of every new religion have sworn that they will not act the way those before them acted.
- However, when a new Messenger came, they acted just like the umam who preceded them. They showed aversion toward the new Messenger.
- Do people—including Muslims—expect to behave differently in the future? Do they think that they will not follow the example of the umam who lived before them?
- No, they will not change the way they respond to God's Messengers, neither will God change His Way of sending Messengers.

The final two verses that follow the preceding ones express both God's patience and justice:

God's Justice

أَوَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ وَكُنُوا أَشَدَّ مِنْهُمْ قُوَّةً.

Have they not travelled in the land to witness the destiny of those who came before them—who were even mightier than they are? Qur'án 35:44 MF

God’s Patience and Justice

وَلَوْ يُؤَاخِذُ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ بِمَا كَسَبُوا مَا تَرَكَ عَلَى ظَهَرِهَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ وَلَكِنْ يُؤَخَّرُهُمْ إِلَىٰ آجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَجْلُهُمْ
فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِعِبَادِهِ بَصِيرًا.

If God were to punish people for the wrong they have done, there would not be a single creature on the surface of the earth. However, God will postpone [their punishment] to an appointed time. And when their appointed time arrives [He will inflict the punishment]. Qur’án 35:45

We should note that the final warning is expressed in the future tense:

وَلَكِنْ يُؤَخَّرُهُمْ إِلَىٰ آجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى.

However, God *will* postpone [their punishment] to an appointed time. Qur’án 35:45

Many Quranic verses declare that divine punishment, as expressed in the preceding verse, is meted out to the people after they have rejected a new Messenger from God. The preceding warning, expressed in a future tense, indicates that the drama of the Advent of a new Messenger and the opposition of the rejecting crowds will once again be repeated and recorded in history.

Human beings tend to think that they are an exception to the rule: that they are open-minded and open-hearted. Psychological studies indicate that people tend to overrate themselves. Have you met a member of a sect who prefers the beliefs of another sect? Have you met devout Shiites who prefer the beliefs of Sunnites, or devout Sunnites who prefer the beliefs of Shiites? Why is it difficult to find such believers? Because people are pleased with what they already have:

مَنْ الَّذِينَ فَرَّقُوا دِينَهُمْ وَكَانُوا شِيَعًا كُلُّ حِزْبٍ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ فَرِحُونَ.

Those who have divided their religion into sects. Each party [sect] is pleased with what they have [believe]. Qur’án 30:32

The sense of self-satisfaction is prevalent among almost all human beings. The idea that we will not act the way previous umam acted is another example of this same tendency. Consider the way Christians have acted toward Islam. Have they shown open-minds and open-hearts, or have they been slaves to traditions—to what their parents and their religious leaders have told them? Have not all umam throughout all ages behaved according to the following verse from the Gospel?

Alas for you...hypocrites! You build up the tombs of the prophets and embellish the monuments of the saints, and you say, “If we had been alive in our fathers’ time, we should never have taken part with them in the murder of the prophets.”

Matthew 23:29-30 NEB

If all umam have always acted in a given way (Sunnah), why would Muslims be an exception to this universal way? Are Muslims the first ummah to believe that their religion is the last one? No, their belief has a history that goes far back before the Advent of Islam. Consider this verse:

وَلَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ يُوسُفُ مِنْ قَبْلُ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ... إِذَا هَلَكَ قُلْتُمْ لَنْ يَبْعَثَ اللَّهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ رَسُولًا.

And Joseph came to you before this with clear proofs... When he died, ye said: Never will God send a Messenger after him. Qur'an 40:34

We should note that the idea of “finality” has also been adopted and promoted by almost all Christians. Consider the following statement from a noted Christian theologian, Dr. James Kennedy:

Moses was the “superstar” of the Old Testament era. All prophets looked to him as the great revealer of God’s will and Word. Yet, Moses gave Israel hope that another great prophet would arise. This prophet [Jesus] would bring God’s *final revelation* to man (Hebrews 1:1-3).¹ Is Jesus your prophet? Do you look upon Him as *the final and ultimate expression of God’s will*, purpose, and character? Have you accepted Him as the source of all truth? This is what is required of us as Christians [Emphasis added].²

Consider also the following verses as translated by a Muslim scholar:

وَأَنَّهُ كَانَ رِجَالٌ مِّنَ الْإِنسِ يُعَوِّدُونَ بِرِجَالٍ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ فَزَادُوهُمْ رَهَقًا وَأَنَّهُمْ ظَنُّوا كَمَا ظَنَنْتُمْ أَن لَّن يَبْعَثَ اللَّهُ أَحَدًا.

...some individual human beings used to take refuge with [depend on] some men of the jinn, so they increased them in perversion. And they thought, as you thought, that Allah will not raise anyone [a single person] from the dead. Qur'an 72:6-7 MF

Here is a more accurate translation of the last segment of the verse:

وَأَنَّهُمْ ظَنُّوا كَمَا ظَنَنْتُمْ أَن لَّن يَبْعَثَ اللَّهُ أَحَدًا.

And they [hypocrite believers of the past] assumed as you [sincere Muslims] also assumed that God will *never* send [or raise] anyone [to be a Prophet]. Qur'an 72:7

In the preceding verse, the Arabic root word “Ba‘th” (بعث) translated as “to raise the dead” has two basic meanings:

- Revive, awaken, raise to life
- Send, raise to prophethood

The word “ba‘th” is often used in the Qur'an in relation to the sending of Messengers:

فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ النَّبِيِّينَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ.

God *sent* Messengers with glad tidings and warnings. Qur'an 2:213 Y

وَمَا كُنَّا مُعَذِّبِينَ حَتَّىٰ نَبْعَثَ رَسُولًا.

We would not punish [a people] unless we have *sent* a Messenger [to them].

Qur'an 17:15

See also 7:103

Let us see verse 72:7 once again:

وَأَنَّهُمْ ظَنُّوا كَمَا ظَنَنْتُمْ أَن لَّن يَبْعَثَ اللَّهُ أَحَدًا.

And they [hypocrite believers of the past] assumed as you [sincere Muslims] also assume that God will never *send* [or raise] anyone [to be a prophet]. Qur'an 72:7

Which meaning, in the preceding verse, is relevant: raising someone to prophethood, or raising someone from the dead? If the subject of the verse was raising the dead, then it would, most likely, refer to people in general. But the verse points to a single person.

Both the selection of the word “ba‘th” and the reference to a single person indicates that the verse points to the sending of a Prophet after Muhammad rather than the raising of a single corpse to life.

Some translations, such as the one by Dr. M.T. Hilali, confirm the translation offered here:

And they thought as you thought, that Allah will not send any Messenger.

Qur’án 72:7 MTH

Who are the “jinns”? They are often, but not always, secretive or double-faced people who mislead the true believers. The verse states that the hypocrite believers called “jinns” tell the sincere believers—called “human beings”—that no Messenger will come after Muhammad.

Further, verse 72:7 is addressed to the Muslims. It declares that some hypocrite believers of the past, such as Christians, assumed, as you Muslims also assume, that no one will be “raised.” The word “raise” does not point to the raising of the dead. Because Muslims *do* believe that the dead will rise. The Day of Resurrection is a major theme of the Qur’án. What many Muslims falsely assume is that never again will God raise even a single Messenger after Muhammad to prophethood. Verse 72:6 is one more reference to the falsehood of “the doctrine of the seal.”

A comparison of the following two verses helps us recognize and confirm the true meaning of the word ba‘th بعث .

قُلْتُمْ لَنْ يَبْعَثَ اللَّهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ رَسُولًا.

You said: Never will God “raise” a Messenger after him.

Qur’án 40:34

وَأَنَّهُمْ ظَنُّوا كَمَا ظَنَنْتُمْ أَنْ لَنْ يَبْعَثَ اللَّهُ أَحَدًا.

They assumed, even as you [also] assumed, that never will God “raise” anyone [a single person].

Qur’án 72:7

The following verse describes the distinctive role of the jinn in misleading their simple-minded followers called “human beings:”

وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيعًا يَا مَعْشَرَ الْجِنِّ قَدِ اسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ مِنَ الْإِنْسِ وَقَالَ أَوْلِيَاؤُهُمْ مِنَ الْإِنْسِ رَبَّنَا اسْتَمْتَعَ بَعْضُنَا بِبَعْضٍ وَبَلَّغْنَا أَجَلَنَا الَّذِي أَجَلْتَ لَنَا قَالَ النَّارُ مُنَوَّاتٌ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ حَكِيمٌ عَلِيمٌ.

And on the Day when He shall gather them all together [saying}: “O company of jinn, you have misled a great many human beings.” Their supporters [their followers] among human beings will say: “Lord, we have profited much from each other and we have attained the term that you assigned for us.” Then He will say: “The Fire is your resting-place, abiding therein forever, except as Alláh wills. Your Lord is truly Wise, All-Knowing”

Qur’án 6:128 MF

Who are the people in the position to mislead people? Are they not the religious leaders? But as the verse declares, the sincere believers (human beings) who are misled by their leaders (jinns) cannot excuse themselves. They are responsible for allowing those leaders to mislead them. As the Qur’án teaches, both groups will find hell to be their home.

Many verses from the Qur'an declare that religious leaders lead people away from true knowledge, especially at the dawning of new Messengers. Consider the following verses:

يَوْمَ يُقَلَّبُ وُجُوهُهُمْ فِي النَّارِ يَقُولُونَ يَا لَيْتَنَا أَطَعْنَا اللَّهَ وَأَطَعْنَا الرَّسُولَ وَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا إِنَّا أَطَعْنَا سَادَتَنَا وَكُبَرَاءَنَا فَأَضَلُّونَا السَّبِيلَا رَبَّنَا آتِهِمْ ضِعْفَيْنِ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ وَالْعَنُتْهُمْ لَعْنًا كَبِيرًا.

The day their faces are turned around in the Fire, they will say: “If only we had obeyed God and the Messenger.” They will [then] say: “Our Lord! We obeyed our masters and our chiefs and so they led us astray. Our Lord! Double their torment and curse them a great deal.

Qur'an 33:66-68

See also 41:29; 34:31-33; 37:27-33

Who are the “masters” and the “chiefs” who can mislead people, including Muslims? Are they not the religious leaders—rabbis, priests, mullas, and imams? Why would they be the ones who mislead the people? Because first, they have the power to do so; and second, they fear the loss of their position. Consider this example: What do you think will happen to a priest or a pastor who proclaims this message in his church: “Muhammad is a true Messenger from God!”? What about a Muslim leader who proclaims this message in his mosque: “We have been wrong! Muhammad is not the last Messenger from God!”?

We should note that the religious leaders are not identical. Some of them shine as the stars of heaven. They are models of justice and wisdom—the living examples of this verse from the Qur'an:

إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ.

Surely the noblest among you in God's sight is the most pious among you. Qur'an 49:13

Other leaders are just the opposite. They generate only prejudice, war, and violence. The Quranic verses are mostly addressed to these leaders. This topic is discussed in more detail later in this book.

To conclude this chapter, let us review the strategies people have used, throughout all ages, to reject their Messengers. The following are among the most common:

- Approaching or interpreting the Word of God—especially the prophecies—with a literal mind.
- Altering or distorting certain Scriptural passages to fit the traditional expectations for the purpose of protecting those in positions of power, such as saying:
 - That “middle” does not mean “middle.” It means “balance” “fairness” or “moderation.
 - That “ummah” does not refer to a religious group, such as Christians or Muslims. It rather refers to a “nation” or a “community” or a group of “undefined people.”
 - That “raise” in verses, such as the one we examined, refers to the raising of the dead, and not to the raising of Messengers.
 - That “seal” means “the end” because people put their “seal” or signature at the end of a letter or document rather than on the sides or at the top!

This is how people have behaved at the dawning of every new Revelation from God (Qur’án 7:162). Evidence or proof cannot triumph over the compelling powers of tradition. The promise of the coming of new Messengers after Muhammad is one of the most emphatic promises God has made in the Qur’án. It shines as brightly as the sun, but alas, its light has been concealed behind the clouds of theological theories and assumptions—so thickly amassed and controlled by religious leaders—that they do not allow the light of knowledge to reach the hearts and minds of the true believers.

6

The Promise of the Coming of New Messengers

Part I

The Quranic verses that contradict “the theory of finality” are numerous. That most glorious Book—the Qur’án—gives us numerous and unmistakable clues concerning the termination of the life cycle of Islam. The verse we are going to explore in this chapter, follows immediately a verse we studied in the previous chapter, namely:

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلٌ فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَجْلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ سَاعَةً وَلَا يَسْتَقْدِمُونَ.

Every “ummah” will encounter [spiritual] death. And when the time comes for them to die, it will not be postponed or advanced even for one hour. Qur’án 7:34

Immediately after declaring the spiritual death of every “ummah”—including Muslims—our Creator gives us the good news. He reassures us that He will not leave us in that grave state—in the grips of death. He promises to send new Messengers to restore and renew our spiritual life. The verse we are about to examine, like some of the verses we have studied, by itself undermines the concept of finality. As expected, theologians have treated this verse as they have treated other similar verses: they have either altered or ignored its message. To make a thorough examination of this verse, let us review and compare two translations, one by a Muslim, the other by a Christian:

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ إِذَا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنْكُمْ يَقُصُّونَ عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِي فَمَنْ اتَّقَى وَأَصْلَحَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ.

Yúsusf ‘Alí

O ye children of Adam! Whenever there [shall] come to you Messengers from amongst you, rehearsing my signs unto you, those who are righteous and mend (their lives), on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. Qur’án 7:35

Rodwell

O children of Adam! There shall come to you Apostles (Rusul) [Messengers] from among yourselves, rehearsing my signs to you; and whoso shall fear God and do good works, no fear shall be upon them, neither shall they be put to grief. Qur’án 7:35

Let me now offer my own translation and later explain why it is more accurate:

O children of Adam! If Messengers come to you from those amongst you! They shall undoubtedly come to recite my verses to you. Whoever is God-fearing and righteous need not have any fear or grief. Qur’án 7:35

The preceding verse declares this message:

O peoples of the world! You should have no doubt concerning the coming of new Messengers. They will come to bring my Message to you. If you are a true believer, you should have no concern. By acknowledging the new Messenger, you will neither experience fear nor grief.

The Qur'án repeatedly declares that fear and grief are destined for the people of hell. Why would people experience fear while in hell? Either from seeing unpleasant and fearful scenes or from wondering how they can ever endure an eternity in hell. Why would people grieve? Because they would remember their negligence and failure to obey God's instructions in the Qur'án. What instructions? That when it comes to choosing one's spiritual destiny, a believer should never follow his parents, mullas, priests, imams, or mujtahids; that a believer should never conform to prevailing beliefs or tradition without using his mind to test an idea, to separate truth from falsehood.

Did you examine the three translations to discern the differences between them? Which one, in your opinion, is more accurate? Perhaps the best way to evaluate them is to search the Qur'án to see if the same combination of words appear elsewhere. Our search will lead us to the following verse:

فَأَمَّا يَا تَبِئْتُمْ مَنِّي هُدًى فَمَنْ اتَّبَعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا يَضِلُّ وَلَا يَشْقَى.

This is how Yúsuf 'Alí translates the preceding verse:

...if, **as is sure**, there comes to you Guidance from Me, whosoever follows My Guidance, will not lose his way, nor fall into misery [emphasis added]. Qur'án 20:123

The critical phrase in the preceding verse is:

فَأَمَّا يَا تَبِئْتُمْ...

As we can see, this is how Yúsuf 'Alí translates it:

If, **as is sure**, there comes to you...

The combination of words in the preceding verse from the Qur'án is somewhat unusual, but not difficult to understand. It is unusual because we do not combine doubt (if) with certainty (as is sure). Why are the two concepts of "certainty" and "doubt" combined? The combination is a literary device. God first uses a conditional clause. He then removes any question or doubt that may come to the reader. He responds to the word "if" with absolute certainty. In effect, He first suggests the possible condition:

If I send you guidance...

He then immediately removes any doubt about the condition by declaring:

It is certain that I will.

In the other verse concerning **future** Messengers (7:35), God uses the same literary device. He declares:

إِنَّمَا يَا تَبِئْتُمْ رُسُلًا

He begins His statement by the word “if” which serves as a question. He then counteracts any doubt raised by the “if” by saying:

يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ

Surely, they [Messengers] will come to you!

To remove any lingering doubts, He responds by using what is known in Arabic as “intensive future tense,” which is a unique feature of that language. The Arabic words used in the Qur’án are:

يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ رُسُلٌ

The preceding words mean:

Of course Messengers shall come to you!

How can anyone doubt the meaning of these words? It is hard to imagine a promise more clear and more emphatic than the preceding.

Once again, translators and interpreters of the Qur’án dilute the meaning of this critical verse in two ways. They fail to show:

- That the verse points to the *future*.
- That the promise is *emphatic*, for it is stated in “intensive tense.”

Other Muslim scholars and translators have also confirmed the concept of an “emphatic future promise” in Qur’án 20:123. The following are a few examples:

Arabic Verse

فَأَمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى
Qur’án 20:123

<i>English Translation</i>	<i>Translator</i>
There shall most certainly come unto you guidance from Me...	(Muhammad Asad) محمد أسد
So there will surely come to you guidance from Me...	(Moulana Muhammad ‘Ali) مولانا محمد علي
So there will surely come to you guidance from Me...	(Shakir) شكير

The context of the verse (فَأَمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى) makes its meaning quite clear. It pertains to a promise God made to Adam and all His descendants. Let us examine that promise:

...فَأَمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِنِّي هُدًى فَمَنْ اتَّبَعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا يَضِلُّ وَلَا يَشْقَىٰ وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَن ذِكْرِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً ضَنْكًا وَنَحْشُرُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَعْمَىٰ قَالَ رَبِّ لِمَ حَشَرْتَنِي أَعْمَىٰ وَقَدْ كُنْتُ بَصِيرًا قَالَ كَذَلِكَ أَتَتْكَ آيَاتُنَا فَنَسِيتَهَا وَكَذَلِكَ الْيَوْمَ تُنْسَىٰ وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي مَنْ أَسْرَفَ وَلَمْ يُؤْمِنِ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِ وَلَعَذَابُ الْآخِرَةِ أَشَدُّ وَأَبْقَىٰ.
Qur’án 20:123-127

...there shall most certainly come unto you [children of Adam] guidance from Me [God], and he who follows My guidance will not go astray, and neither will he be

unhappy. But as for him who shall turn away from My Remembrance [Reminder]—his shall be a life of narrow scope [a life of misery], and on the Day of Resurrection We shall raise him up blind.” [And so, on Resurrection Day, the sinner] will ask: “O my Lord! Why hast Thou raised me up blind, whereas [on earth] I was endowed with sight?” [God] will reply: “Thus it is: there came unto thee Our verses [signs], but thou wert oblivious of them; and thus shalt thou be today consigned to oblivion!” For, thus shall We recompense him who wastes his own self and does not believe in his Lord’s verses. And, indeed, the suffering [that the deniers must endure] in the life to come shall be most severe and most enduring!

A careful examination of the preceding verses reveals the following facts:

- God makes an emphatic promise to Adam’s descendants that He will not leave them without Guidance, without Messengers who would lead them to Him.
- People will have the freedom to deny “God’s Reminder”—the One who comes to remind us of God and His Plan for us.
- Such people must recognize that in the hereafter they will face the consequences of their denial: a life of misery.
- Those who deny God’s Messengers or Reminders are physically sighted, but are spiritually blind.
- When they pass to the next life, they will recognize their spiritual blindness.
- When they ask the reason for their blindness, they will be told: “Our verses came to you, but you ignored them. And now you are also ignored.”
- Those who deny God’s new Messengers waste their lives, they ignore the very purpose for which they come into this world.
- The punishment of the next life is far more severe, because this life ends, the next life endures.

The preceding verses point to a covenant, a promise from God to Adam and His children: that He will never leave humankind without guidance. Can anyone doubt this covenant? If we can doubt this covenant, we can also doubt the same covenant repeated through Muhammad by almost the same combination of words:

A promise to Adam and His children:	فَأَمَّا يَا تَيْبَتِكُمْ مِّنِّي هُدًى	There shall most certainly come unto you guidance from Me...
A promise repeated again through Muhammad:	إِنَّمَا يَا تَيْبَتِكُمْ رُسُلٌ	There shall most certainly come unto you Messengers...

Why do people distort the meaning of the Word of God?

...يُحَرِّفُونَ الْكَلِمَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَوَاضِعِهِ...

...They change the words from their places...

Qur’án 5:41

See also 4:46

A more fluent and free translation of the preceding verse is:

They alter the true meaning of [God’s] words. They take them out of their context.

Why do Yúsunf ‘Alí and other Muslim scholars translate the words “إِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ” in two different ways. In one instance, when it is about the period before Islam, they correctly add the phrase: *as is sure* or *most certainly*. In the other verse, which points to the time *after* Islam, they omit those two or three critical words. And this omission makes all the difference.

The translation by Rodwell, a Christian, is more accurate than the others. It conveys the basic message of the Qur’án accurately. It clearly declares that Messengers will come, but omits the element of emphasis.

Aside from the clarity of the promise, we can discern the meaning of the verse simply by reasoning. When God spoke, when He declared: “يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ رِيسُلٌ” did He have any doubts—as we human beings often do—concerning such a promise with everlasting consequences? Was our Creator not sure that He would send other Messengers to us? Why then did He interject the word “if” in the verse? Here are some possible reasons:

- He used the word “if” as a literary device.
- By using the word “if” He predicted in a subtle way the prevailing doubt among Muslims concerning the coming of new Messengers.
- He wanted to test us in a unique way. (This topic is discussed later in this book.)

Thus by reason alone, we can conclude that the words or phrases such as “as is sure,” “most certainly” “definitely” “without any doubt” or “of course” are embedded in the verse. Only preconceived expectations prevent Muslim translators from being objective in their work—from facing reality.

Even if we accept the traditional translation of this verse, still it contradicts the doctrine of finality, because it would nevertheless point to the *possibility* of the coming of new Messengers.

The Qur’án uses similar words to refer to the coming of past Messengers:

أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنكُمْ يَقُصُّونَ عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِي...؟

Did not Messengers come to you declaring my verses...?

Qur’án 6:130

The two verses are almost identical. One refers to the past, the other to the future.

Let us now compare two similar verses, one about the past, the other about the future.

About the past:

لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ.

A Messenger [Muhammad] has come to you from among yourselves.

Qur’án 9:128

About the future:

إِمَّا [إِذَا] يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنكُمْ.

When Messenger will, of course, come from among yourselves.

Qur’án 7:35

Can there be any doubt that the preceding verse points to the coming of Messengers after Muhammad?

In yet other verses, the Qur'an uses the word "imma" (إِذَا) with an "intensive future tense" to point to a promise linked to a future fulfillment. In the following case, the promise is made to Muhammad Himself:

فَاصْبِرْ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ فَإِمَّا نُرِيَنَّكَ بَعْضَ الَّذِي نَعِدُهُمْ أَوْ نَتَوَفَّيَنَّكَ.

Be patient! The promise of God is true, whether We show you [Muhammad] the fulfillment of some of the promises We have made to them, or allow you to die [before they have been fulfilled].

Qur'an 40:77
See also 6:68

Let us rephrase the preceding verse in today's language:

The fulfillment of what We have promised is inevitable. Some of them will be fulfilled during your [Muhammad's] lifetime, others *after* you have passed away.

As we can see, the verse clearly points to the future. The use of the intensive future tense (نُرِيَنَّكَ) indicates that the fulfillment of the promise made to Muhammad is inevitable. Thus the combined use of the word "imma" (إِذَا) with the "intensive future tense" leads us to the following conclusions:

- The time of the fulfillment of the message will come in the future.
- The promise is absolute, definitive, and unconditional.

One more question: Qur'an 7:35 (إِذَا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ) is addressed to the "children of Adam, but not directly to Muslims. Can anyone claim that Muslims are excluded? God in His wisdom has resolved this question. Just four verses before (7:35), He applies the phrase "children of Adam" to those who worship God in a mosque. Who but Muslims worship God in a mosque?

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ خُذُوا زِينَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ...

O children of Adam! Wear your fine apparel at every mosque...

Qur'an 7:31

Rewards and Punishments Ordained for Those Who Accept or Reject the New Messengers

Did God know that most Muslims would reject or fail to understand the promise of the coming of future Messengers? To respond to this question, we need to see the verse that gives us the preceding promise together with the one that immediately follows it:

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ إِذَا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنْكُمْ يَقُصُّونَ عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِي فَمَنْ اتَّقَى وَأَصْلَحَ فَلَا خَوْفَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ وَالَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا عَنْهَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ.

O children of Adam! If Messengers come to you from those amongst you! They will most certainly come in order to recite My verses to you. Whoever is God-fearing and righteous need not have any fear nor experience any grief. But those who reject our verses and treat them with arrogance will be companions of the Fire to dwell therein forever.

Qur'an 7:35-36

The preceding two verses are obviously interrelated. Verse 35 tells us that new Messengers will definitely come to recite or reveal the Word of God to us. Verse 36 warns the believers who deny the firm promise contained in the previous verse: that God will surely send new Messengers to speak to us.

Obviously, our Creator does not want us to deny His Messengers. But He knows that most believers are as intimately bound to tradition as a baby is to its mother. To liberate these believers from conformity to the opinion of others and the incredible powers of tradition, He appeals to them under the threat of hell-fire. To make sure they consider His threat seriously, He devotes 13 verses to the fearful consequences of denying His new Messengers. Let us look at some of those verses:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا عَنْهَا لَا تُفَتَّحُ لَهُمْ أَبْوَابُ السَّمَاءِ وَلَا يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ حَتَّى يَلِجَ الْجَمَلُ فِي سَمِّ الْخِيَاطِ.

Indeed, those who have denied Our verses and rejected them arrogantly—the gates of heaven shall not be opened for them. They shall enter Paradise only if a camel can pass through the eye of the needle! Qur’án 7:40

The warnings addressed to those who deny God’s new Messengers continue. In the following verses, note the conversation between those who have rejected the new Messengers and those who have accepted them:

وَنَادَى أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ أَصْحَابَ النَّارِ أَنْ قَدْ وَجَدْنَا مَا وَعَدَنَا رَبُّنَا حَقًّا فَهَلْ وَجَدْتُمْ مَا وَعَدَ رَبُّكُمْ حَقًّا قَالُوا نَعَمْ فَاذْنُ مُؤَدَّنٌ بَيْنَهُمْ أَنْ لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ الَّذِينَ يَصُدُّونَ عَنِ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَيُبْغِضُونَهَا عِوَجًا.

The People of Paradise: And the people of Paradise will call out to the people of the Fire: “We have found what our Lord promised us [concerning the Advent of new Messengers] to be true. Did you [also] find what your Lord promised you to be true?”

The People of Hell: They will say: “Yes!” Thereupon a caller from their midst shall call out: “May God’s curse be upon the wrong doers who prevent [others] from following God’s way, and make it [the way] crooked...” Qur’án 7:44-45

Who are the people who prevent others from following the Way of God? In all ages, they have been mostly the religious leaders, who fear the loss of their powers. They are the ones who lose most by acknowledging the new Messengers from God. What do you think will happen to a pastor or a priest who will stand on his pulpit and suddenly declare: “We Christians have been wrong! Muhammad is a true Messenger from God, and we should all become Muslims!”? Will he retain his job for even one day? Would not the same hold true for the Muslim religious leaders if they question an established belief—such as the “doctrine of the seal”? Are they an exception to this rule?

The conversation between those who accept the new Messengers and those who deny them continues:

وَنَادَى أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ أَصْحَابَ الْجَنَّةِ أَنْ أَفِيضُوا عَلَيْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ أَوْ مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ قَالُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ حَرَّمَهَا عَلَيِ الْكَافِرِينَ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا دِينَهُمْ لَهْوًا وَلَعِبًا وَغَرَّتْهُمْ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا فَالْيَوْمَ نَنْسَاهُمْ كَمَا نَسُوا لِقَاءَ يَوْمِهِمْ هَذَا وَمَا كَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يَجْحَدُونَ.

Those who have rejected the new Messengers:

Then the people of the Fire will call out to the people of Paradise: “Pour out upon us some water or part of what Allah has provided you with.”

Those who have accepted the new Messengers:

They will say: “Allah forbids them unto the unbelievers, who took their religion as an amusement and sport, and the worldly life deluded them.” Today, we forget them as they forgot seeing such a Day and used to deny Our verses.

Qur’án 7:50-51

How do we know that the preceding verses do not apply to those who reject Islam? The two verses that follow the preceding verses give us all the clues we need. The first verse speaks about a Book that God will give to humankind in the future, that is, after Muhammad:

وَلَقَدْ جِئْنَاهُمْ بِكِتَابٍ فَصَّلْنَاهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ هُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ.

We have brought them a Book that interprets it [the Qur’án] with [divine] knowledge. A Book [that is] a means of guidance and blessing to those who will believe [in that Book].

Qur’án 7:52

The verse that follows the preceding one provides further clues that the dialogue between the residents of hell and heaven relates to those who reject the Messenger who comes *after* Muhammad:

هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا تَأْوِيلَهُ يَوْمَ يَأْتِي تَأْوِيلَهُ؟

Do they not expect its interpretation [inner meanings] to come on the Day [it is destined] to come?

Qur’án 7:53

What Book? The Book that needs interpretation is the Qur’án, because it contains many difficult or abstruse passages. That is the reason interpreters often disagree with each other concerning the meaning of many Quranic verses. Who would know the true interpretation of those verses? Only the Messengers who are sent by God on a predestined Day or Hour. Can any human being be an infallible or reliable authority? What the verse is teaching us is this: We must not be rigid in interpreting or understanding the Word of God.

The true interpretation of the Qur’án will come from God through His later Messengers. Did not the true interpretation of the Gospel come through Muhammad? Did He not, for instance, reject the doctrine of the Trinity (that God consists of three persons!)? Did not the Qur’án explain to the Jews what they could not understand?

إِنَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ يَفْصَحُ عَلَىٰ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ أَكْثَرَ الَّذِي هُمْ فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ.

Verily, this Qur’án narrates to the Children of Israel most of that in which they differ.

Qur’án 27:76

Consider also the following verses:

وَلَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ يُوسُفُ مِنْ قَبْلُ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ... قُلْتُمْ لَنْ نَبْعَثَ اللَّهَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ رَسُولًا كَذَلِكَ يُضِلُّ اللَّهُ مَنْ هُوَ مُسْرِفٌ مُرْتَابٍ الَّذِينَ يُجَادِلُونَ فِي آيَاتِ اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ سُلْطَانٍ أَتَاهُمْ كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَعِنْدَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كَذَلِكَ يَطْبَعُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ قَلْبٍ مُتَكَبِّرٍ جَبَّارٍ.

And indeed Joseph did come to you with clear proofs, in the past, but you continued to doubt what he brought you. Then, when he died, you said: “No Messenger will God send after him...” Those who dispute with the Word of God without any authority given to them—how God and the [true] believers detest such a response! Thus God places a seal on the heart of every arrogant tyrant. Qur’án 40:34-35

What do the preceding verses teach us? Two critical facts:

- The peoples of the past believed what Muslims believe today.
- They had no authority to claim to have the last word on the Word of God. Yet they claimed, like the Muslims of today, that God will not send another Messenger. Can any believer fairly claim that he is the “authorized” interpreter of the word of God? What if a new Messenger comes with clear proofs from God? Should we dispute with Him and reject Him without having any authority to interpret the Word of God? Who then has the true interpretation of the Qur’án? Only the One who is authorized by God. The One who will come with clear proofs from Him. Who knew the true meaning of the Words of Jesus? Only Muhammad! Only He was the authorized interpreter of the Bible. Why would this rule suddenly change? Should we not, then, leave the doors open? How would a believer, who closes the door to a new revelation of knowledge from God, respond to this question:

أَكْذَبْتُمْ بِآيَاتِي وَلَمْ تُحِيطُوا بِهَا عُلْمًا؟

Did you deny My verses without having true knowledge?

Qur’án 27:84

The following verse further confirms that the true interpretation of the Qur’án will come from God Himself. The word “then” points to a later time—later than the time of the revelation of the Qur’án:

ثُمَّ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا بَيَانَهُ.

Then, its explanation is upon Us.

Qur’án 75:19

Another translation:

Then, it is incumbent upon Us to make it clear.

The question all Muslims should ask is this: “If a new Messenger comes and brings a Book like the Qur’án, should we deny Him because theologians tell us that a “seal” is placed at the bottom of a letter rather than at its side or at the top? Is such a response fair, is it reasonable, is it justified? Is it not the strategy Christians have adopted and used to deny Muhammad? Do they not say that their expected Messenger must come from the sky? Do they not mostly reject Muhammad by misinterpreting their Scriptures? Who presented the right interpretation of the Gospel? Muhammad did. He resolved all their major misconceptions. But do they listen?

The Qur’án presents not only the preceding threats or warnings (7:50-51) to those who deny the new Messengers, but also the promise of the most glorious rewards to those who accept them:

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَا نُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ.

But those who believe [in the prophecies of the Qur'án] and do what is right—We will lay on no one a burden beyond his power—they are the people of paradise, abiding therein forever. Qur'án 7:42

Note this significant point in the preceding verse: “We will lay on no one a burden beyond his power.” What is this “burden”?

- A sense of responsibility for choosing one's spiritual destiny.
- Investigating the news of the coming of the new Messengers without any regard for traditional beliefs held by the majority of other believers.
- Having absolute faith that those who investigate the news of the coming of the new Messengers will be aided and inspired to conform to the Will of God:

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ.

And those who strive in Our [Cause], We will certainly guide them to Our Paths, for verily Allah is with those who do right. Qur'án 29:69

Believers in all religions think that it is up to their religious leaders to tell them what to believe. The previous verse shows that this thought is totally unfounded and unacceptable to God. Those who allow their leaders to see and think for them are not faithful to God. As we noted in the first chapter, God condemns the believers who believe because their parents believe in a given religion. Such believers are building their everlasting destiny on shifting sands. A wave can rise and suddenly flatten everything they have built.

Should you then go to your religious leader and ask him if this book teaches the truth? You are certainly free to do so if you wish. But consider this example before you approach your leaders. Suppose you teach a Christian or a Jew about Islam. You show him the supreme glory of the Qur'án for hours, days, months, and even years. What will happen if he goes to his ministers, priests, or rabbis? What are the chances that they will study the Qur'án with an open mind and a pure heart? What are the chances that they will encourage him to pursue his study of Islam? The chances are not even one in a million.

By God's standards, no one can shift the responsibility for his spiritual choices to others. Your best path is to read and reread this book to see if it makes sense, to see if there are any major flaws in it, and then pray that God will guide you.

Some Muslims, for instance, say that they do not know enough Arabic to understand the Qur'án. Such believers should remember that some of the people who persecuted Muhammad were among the most eminent scholars of their time. They were great linguists, writers, and poets, who knew Arabic better than most Muslim religious leaders of our time.

Some Christians offer the same excuse. They also leave their destiny in the hands of their religious leaders. They assume that Muhammad is a false prophet without ever reading the Qur'án, without ever investigating the supremely distinguished life of Muhammad—the chosen One of God. They also shift the burden of responsibility for choosing their destiny by saying that they do not know enough Hebrew or Greek to know the Bible. They feel they are unable, and remain spiritually unfit, to recognize the supreme splendor of the Qur'án—a Book that reflects God's glory and power as brightly as the sun. Only if

a person was unable to recognize the sun, would he also be unable to recognize Muhammad. Yet the denial continues.

Thus, knowing a language has nothing to do with knowing God’s Messengers. Christians should also remember that the two most prominent religious leaders who rejected Jesus—Annas and Caiaphas—were great Hebrew and Greek scholars. Often “book learning” creates pride, which alters human judgment and prejudices the mind.

فَلَمَّا جَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَرِحُوا بِمَا عِنْدَهُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِؤُونَ.

When their Messengers came to them with [convincing] proofs, **they rejoiced in their knowledge** [displayed pride], and were afflicted with that which they mocked.

Qur’án 40:83

Knowing a new Messenger from God is a matter of heart and soul. It is the fruit of spiritual wisdom, not academic training. This great achievement has no relevance to having a doctorate degree in theology or having command of foreign languages. All the verses of the Qur’án that refer to believers and deniers point to the wisdom of their hearts and souls, not to their knowledge of philosophy, theology, or language. The gift of faith is in God’s hand, not under the command of religious leaders and scholars.

وَمَا كَانَ لِنَفْسٍ أَنْ تُؤْمِنَ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ.

No soul can believe except with God’s permission.

Qur’án 10:100

See also 6:111

If the heart lacks wisdom, if it is afflicted with prejudice or selfish desires, nothing will matter. All the degrees in the world will count as much as zero:

وَإِنْ يَرَوْا كَلَّ آيَةٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُوا بِهَا.

And if they see every [conceivable] sign or evidence, they will not believe [will not be convinced].

Qur’án 7:146

Note the kind of people our Creator especially honors:

وَنُرِيدُ أَنْ نَمُنَّ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اسْتُضِعُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَنَجْعَلُهُمْ أُيُمَةً وَنَجْعَلَهُمُ الْوَارِثِينَ.

We wish to favor the lowly in the land and make them leaders [place them ahead of others] and inheritors [of our blessings].

Qur’án 28:5

What kind of people followed Noah? How did the privileged members of society perceive Him? They said:

مَا نَرَاكَ إِلَّا بَشَرًا مِثْلَنَا وَمَا نَرَاكَ اتَّبَعَكَ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ هُمْ أَرَادْنَا...

We see in thee nothing but a man like ourselves, nor do we see that any follow thee but the meanest among us...

Qur’án 11:27 Y

What kind of people followed Jesus? Privileged people or ordinary and humble people?

As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew [a fisherman] sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, “Follow Me.” So he arose and followed Him. Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors [lower class] and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when

the Pharisees [self-righteous Jews] saw it, they said to His disciples, “Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?”
Matthew 9:9-11 NKJ

Denying God’s Messengers is a grave transgression. No one should take it lightly. It is a matter of being in hell for all eternity. Should any believer allow chance to determine his spiritual destiny in relation to such a serious matter? Because of its prime significance, let us conclude this chapter by examining both God’s promise that He will send new Messengers to us, and the consequences of rejecting or accepting those Messengers. Here is the promise:

اما يأتينكم رسل...

If Messengers come to you, who will definitely come...

Qur’án 7:35

And here is a description of the consequences of denying or accepting these Messengers as stated in another chapter of the Qur’án:

وَسِيقَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ زُمَرًا ۚ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاؤُوهَا فَتَحَتْ أَبْوَابُهَا وَقَالَ لَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنكُمْ يَتْلُونَ عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِ رَبِّكُمْ وَيُنذِرُونَكُمْ لِقَاءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هَٰذَا قَالُوا بَلَىٰ وَلَٰكِن حَقَّتْ كَلِمَةُ الْعَذَابِ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ قِيلَ ادْخُلُوا أَبْوَابَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا فَبِئْسَ مَنُورَى الْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ وَسِيقَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ زُمَرًا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاؤُوهَا وَفُتِحَتْ أَبْوَابُهَا وَقَالَ لَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ طِبْتُمْ فَادْخُلُوهَا خَالِدِينَ وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي صَدَقَنَا وَعْدَهُ وَأَوْرَثَنَا الْأَرْضَ نَتَّبِعُوهُ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ حَيْثُ نَشَاءُ فَنِعْمَ أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ وَتَرَى الْمَلَائِكَةَ حَافِينَ مِنْ حَوْلِ الْعَرْشِ يُسَبِّحُونَ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّهِمْ وَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُم بِالْحَقِّ وَقِيلَ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ.

And the unbelievers shall be driven to Hell in throngs; so that when they have reached it, its gates will be opened and its keepers will say to them: “Have not Messengers from your own people come to you reciting to you the Revelations [verses] of your Lord and warning you against the encounter of this your Day?” They will say: “Yes, indeed!” But the word of punishment has come to pass against the unbelievers. It will be said [to them]: “Enter the gates of Hell, dwelling therein forever. Wretched is the dwelling of the arrogant.”

And those who feared their Lord will be led into Paradise in throngs. Then, when they have reached it and its gates are opened [they will enter it] and its keepers will say: “Peace be upon you; you have fared well, so enter it to dwell therein forever.” And they will say: “Praise be to God who has been truthful in His Promise to us and has bequeathed upon us the land, wherein we are able to settle in Paradise wherever we wish.

How glorious is the reward of those who have practiced [the divine teachings]!” And you will see the angels circling around the Throne proclaiming the praise of their Lord. And it will be justly decided between them and it will be said: “Praise be to God, the Lord of the World.”

Qur’án 39:71-75

7

The Promise of the Coming of New Messengers

Part II

The promise of the coming of new Messengers from God is found in many chapters of the Qur’án. Let us examine a few more references:

لَمْ يَكُنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ مُنْفَكِينَ حَتَّى تَأْتِيَهُمُ الْبَيِّنَةُ رَسُولٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ يَتْلُو صُحُفًا مُّطَهَّرَةً فِيهَا
كُتِبَ قِيمَةً... وَذَلِكَ دِينَ الْقِيمَةِ.

Those who rejected [Islam]—whether they are among the People of the Book [Jews and Christians] or they are among the infidels—will not depart from their ways until there will come to them “Proof”—a Messenger from God, who will recite to them from the Holy Pages in which can be found Books that will lead [them] to the straight Path... That religion leads [them] to the straight Path. Qur’án 98:1-5

What do the preceding verses teach us? They teach us that: those who rejected Islam will continue their rejection until the time when another Messenger will come. At that time they will be offered a new opportunity. Once again they will have a chance to acknowledge or reject the Truth.

To whom do the preceding verses refer? Consider the following clues:

- The verses do not make any reference to Muhammad or to Islam.
- They refer to the way people will behave in a future age or period in history.
- They point to the coming of a Messenger from God, who comes with “Proof.”
- The new Messenger brings Books (Muhammad brought only one Book).
- The verses refer to the promised religion as “*That* religion.” The word “that” points to the future, to a religion other than Islam.

Let us examine another verse, which consists of two parts:

- A rhetorical question.
- The answer to the question.

Let us first study the question:

أَفَمَنْ كَانَ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّهِ وَيَتْلُوهُ شَاهِدٌ مِّنْهُ وَمِنْ قَبْلِهِ كِتَابُ مُوسَىٰ إِمَامًا وَرَحْمَةً.

What if someone comes with clear proofs from His Lord and recites them as a witness from Him, just as the books of Moses were a guide and a mercy [to His people]?

Qur’án 11:17

A more fluent translation of the preceding verse:

[How should the believers respond to] a Messenger who comes with clear proofs from His Lord—a Messenger who recites verses from God as evidence of His divine Mission?

The preceding verse presents a rhetorical question—one that includes the answer. In effect, it asks: How should a Messenger who comes with clear proofs from His Lord be treated? How should the believers respond to Him? Should they deny Him, or should they investigate His Message?

Let us now study the second part of the same verse—which includes the answer:

أُولَئِكَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِهِ مِنَ الْأَحْزَابِ فَالنَّارُ مَوْعِدُهُ فَلَا تَكُ فِي مِرْيَةٍ مِّنْهُ إِنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ.

They [some people] will believe in Him, and whoever denies Him—from whatever group or party [religion] he may be—he has made an appointment with the Fire. Do not entertain any doubt concerning Him. **He is indeed the True One from your Lord**, but most people will not believe [in Him].
Qur'an 11:17

A glance at the second part of the verse makes the meaning of the first part quite clear. Who are “they” who believe in “Him”? “They” are the true believers, the ones with spiritual wisdom, the ones with an open mind and a pure heart, who listen to the new Messenger—the One who comes with “clear proofs from His Lord and recites verses as a Witness from Him.” What about those who deny the new Messenger? They will face the same destiny the deniers have always faced: everlasting residence in Hell-Fire.

Please note the assurance that our loving Creator gives us in order to remove all our doubts concerning the promised Messenger:

فَلَا تَكُ فِي مِرْيَةٍ مِّنْهُ إِنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ.

Do not entertain any doubt about Him. He is indeed the true One from your Lord.

Qur'an 11:17

The concluding words of the verse forebode the dire destiny of the new Messenger. Even though He comes with clear and convincing Proof, even though He recites verses from God—despite all this “most people will not believe Him.” What about the Muslims? Why would most of them also deny such a great Messenger? Because they have already accepted the false doctrine that never again will God send a Messenger after Muhammad. The verse clearly predicts the prevailing belief among Muslims: that even if a Messenger comes with volumes of Scriptures, each of them as splendid, as divine and distinguished as the Qur'an, He will be rejected—perhaps even imprisoned and killed—because He has violated their most fundamental but false belief—their doctrine of “the seal of the Prophets.”

The same message is confirmed again in the following verses:

وَكَذَّبَ بِهِ قَوْمُكَ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ قُلْ لَأَسْتَأْذِنَ عَلَيْكُمْ بِوَكِيلٍ لَّكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ مُّسْتَقَرٌّ وَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ.

And your people [Muslims] denied Him whereas **He is the true One**. Say: “I am not your guardian. For every Message there is a fixed time, and soon you shall know.”

Qur'an 6:66-67

In the preceding verses, God is speaking to Muhammad about His followers. Here are some of the facts He is declaring to the Prophet:

- The promised Messenger is the truth and speaks the truth, yet your people (Muslims) will deny Him.
- Those who deny Him face the consequences of their denial. Muhammad is not responsible for their denial.
- For every Message (which includes the Message of Islam), there is a fixed time. When the new Messenger comes, the time given to Islam will end.
- When this Messenger comes, you will recognize that this prophecy has been fulfilled.

Consider also these verses:

تَنْزِيلُ الْكِتَابِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ مِنْ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ بَلْ هُوَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ لِتُنذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّا أَتَاهُمْ مِنْ نَذِيرٍ
مَنْ قَبْلِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ.

[That is] a Book sent down [revealed]. There is no doubt about it. [It is] from the Lord of the worlds. Or will they say: “He invented it!”? Rather **He is the true One from your Lord**. [He comes] to warn a people to whom no Warner came before you [Muhammad], so that they will be guided. Qur’án 32:2-3

The preceding verses are a prophecy about a Messenger who would come after Muhammad and a Book that will be sent down after the Qur’án. Here are the reasons:

- They refer to two individuals clearly identified as “You” (Muhammad) and “He” (the future Warner).
- They declare that the Warner will come to a people to whom a Warner has not been sent. Muhammad cannot be this new Warner, for the people of Arabia had already received a Warner.
- The phrase “He is the true One” is used several times throughout the Qur’án to refer to a future Messenger.

The following verses indicate that only the Muslims who have true knowledge and true faith will recognize the new Messenger:

وَلْيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَيُؤْمِنُوا بِهِ فَتُخْبِتَ لَهُ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهَادٍ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ.

And so that those who have been given knowledge would know that **He is the true One from your Lord**. Therefore they will believe in Him and open their hearts to Him. God will certainly guide the [true] believers toward a straight path. Qur’án 22:54

وَيَرَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَيَهْدِي إِلَى صِرَاطِ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ.

And those who have been given knowledge, which has come to you [Muhammad] from your Lord, will recognize that **He is the true One**—the One who guides to the Path of the All-mighty, the All-Praised. Qur’án 34:6

Consider also these verses:

وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ هُوَ الْحَقُّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِعِبَادِهِ لَخَبِيرٌ بَصِيرٌ ثُمَّ أَوْرَثْنَا الْكِتَابَ الَّذِينَ اصْطَفَيْنَا مِنْ عِبَادِنَا فَمِنْهُمْ ظَالِمٌ لِنَفْسِهِ وَمِنْهُمْ مُقْتَصِدٌ وَمِنْهُمْ سَابِقٌ بِالْخَيْرَاتِ إِذِنَ اللَّهُ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَضْلُ الْكَبِيرُ.

The One [about whom] We revealed to you [spoke to you] in the Book *is the true One*—who confirms what is before Him [the Qur’án]. God, the all-seeing, is well-informed about His servants. Then We gave the Book [the Qur’án] as inheritance to those servants whom We chose [Muslims]. Some of them wrong themselves; others follow a middle course [are lukewarm]; and still others, by God’s permission, are foremost in good deeds. This indeed is a great blessing [to them]. Qur’án 35:31-32

Let us now review the contents of the preceding verses:

- The verse begins by referring to a specific Figure about whom God has spoken to Muhammad, as recorded in the Qur’án.
- He is called *the true One*.
- We are told that He will confirm what is before Him: the Qur’án.
- When He comes, the ones chosen by God—Muslims—will respond to His call in three ways: Some will wrong themselves by rejecting Him; others will ignore Him or be indifferent towards Him. But a third group—who are true Muslims, the noblest believers—will, by God’s permission respond to His call and recognize Him as the new Messenger. These Muslims are truly blessed.

Súra 10 of the Qur’án refers repeatedly to a “promise.” Before examining that chapter, we should note that the word “promise” is used in relation to the coming of Muhammad:

وَيَقُولُونَ سُبْحَانَ رَبِّنَا إِنْ كَانَ وَعْدُ رَبِّنَا لَمَفْعُولًا.

And they [the true Muslims] say: “Glory be to our Lord. Certainly *the promise* of our Lord is fulfilled.” Qur’án 17:108

Chapter 10, verses 46 to 55 offer many pieces of the “Quranic Puzzle” regarding the coming of a new Messenger from God. Let us briefly review those verses:

- Verse 46: Certain events will happen after Muhammad has passed away.
- Verse 47: Every ummah receives a Messenger.
- Verse 48: People ask: “When will this *promise* be fulfilled?”
- Verse 49 (part I): God is the true Ruler. (He decides when it will be fulfilled.)
- Verse 49 (Part II): (But you should remember that) every ummah has a precise lifespan.
- Verse 50: Punishment is in store for those who do not take this promise seriously. (The advent of a new Messenger is a punishment for those who deny Him, and a blessing for those who accept Him.)

The next verse (10:51) then refers to the coming of a new Messenger:

أَنْتُمْ إِذَا مَا وَقَعَ أَمَنْتُمْ بِهِ.

Is it then, when it has overtaken you, that you will believe in Him? Qur’án 10:51 MF

A simpler translation would be:

When the promise has been fulfilled, will you then accept the One who is promised to come?

The sequence of the verses communicate clearly that they refer to the coming of a Messenger from God at a precise Hour in history.

The unbelievers, who lived during the time of Muhammad, often ridiculed God's promises. They would say: "Let your promises be fulfilled sooner." They wanted to witness them to see if He was right. God's response was that their fulfillment would neither be delayed nor hastened—not even for one Hour. The preceding verse asks the doubters this question: you used to ridicule God's "promise." Will you continue your ridicule, even *after* the promise is fulfilled and the promised One has come?

The next verse (10:52) points to the punishment in store for those who deny the new Messenger:

ثُمَّ قِيلَ لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا ذُوقُوا عَذَابَ الْخُلْدِ هَلْ تُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْسِبُونَ.

Then it will be said to the wrongdoers: "Taste the everlasting punishment. Will you be rewarded except for what you did?"

Qur'an 10:52

The next verse (10:53) once again refers to the coming of the new Messenger:

وَيَسْتَنْبِئُونَكَ أَحَقُّ هُوَ قُلُّ إِي وَرَبِّي إِنَّهُ لَحَقٌّ وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ.

They ask you: "Is He the Truth (the true One)?" Say: "Yes, by my Lord, **He is the true One**, and you cannot prevent Him (from fulfilling His Mission)."

Qur'an 10:53

Verse 10:55 once again confirms the promise:

... أَلَا إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ.

...Indeed, God's promise is true, but most of them [Muslims] do not know [are unaware of the promise].

Qur'an 10:55

The preceding verse once again demonstrates that most people do not know the purpose of these prophecies.

Consider also this verse:

وَأَنْذِرْهُمْ يَوْمَ الْحَسْرَةِ إِذْ قُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ وَهُمْ فِي غَفْلَةٍ وَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ.

And warn them of the "Day of Regret" when God's plan has come to pass, but the people are heedless and will not believe.

Qur'an 19:39

Most interpreters would think that the preceding verse refers to the "Day of Resurrection." But the verse shows clearly that it refers to the way people will respond to God's new Messenger. What did happen when Muhammad came?

- People were negligent concerning their spiritual destiny.
- They did not believe in Muhammad.

Negligence leads to denial. How could anyone be negligent in the next life and refuse to believe? Their feeling in the next life—after being resurrected—would be "regret" for

their failure to respond to God’s call while they had a chance. Thus “the Day of Regret” is another reference to the time of the coming of a new Messenger from God.

One of the most amazing prophecies of the Qur’án are the opening verses of *the Súra of Muhammad*:

الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوا عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَضَلَّ أَعْمَالَهُمْ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَآمَنُوا بِمَا نُزِّلَ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ مِن رَبِّهِمْ كَفَّرَ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَأَصْلَحَ بَالَهُمْ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا اتَّبَعُوا الْبَاطِلَ وَأَنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّبَعُوا الْحَقَّ مِن رَبِّهِمْ كَذَلِكَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ لِلنَّاسِ أَمْثَالَهُمْ.

Those who disbelieve and bar others from the Path of God, He will render their deeds vain. But those who believe and engage in good deeds and believe in what is sent down to *Muhammad*—and *He is the true One from their Lord*—He will remit their sins and will make good the state of their soul. That is because those who disbelieve follow falsehood, whereas those who believe follow *the true One from their Lord*.

Thus does God set forth parables for mankind.

Qur’án 47:1-3

Anyone who reads the preceding verses could not doubt that they refer only to Muhammad. But a careful analysis of their contents shows that they offer double meanings: They may refer not only to Muhammad but also to a *future* Messenger from God.

To discern the two meanings, read the verses with the added words in brackets:

Those who believe [in Islam] and do good deeds and believe in what is revealed to *Muhammad* [concerning the new Messenger]—“and *He* [the new Messenger] is the True One from *their* [the new believers’] Lord”—God will forgive *their* sins and make good the state of *their* soul.

How can we tell that the preceding verses refer primarily not to Muhammad, but to the One who will come after Him? Consider this critical clue concealed in verse 2:

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا...وَأَمَنُوا بِمَا نُزِّلَ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ.

Those who believe...and believe in what is revealed to Muhammad.

It is obvious that the believers—the Muslims—believe in what the Qur’án teaches. Why then does the verse refer to people who “believe” and also “believe in what is revealed to Muhammad”? Is it not reasonable then to assume that the second phrase refers to the believers who accept what is revealed to Muhammad concerning the *new* Messenger—who is identified as “And *He is the true One from their Lord*”? Further, as we noted earlier, the phrase “He is the true One” or “He is the true One from your Lord” is a unique expression the Qur’án uses several times to identify the future Messenger.

Consider still another possibility. What if the name of the new Messenger who comes after Muhammad is also Muhammad—or a combination of names that contains that name? If we accept this possibility, the verse would declare this message:

Those who believe [in Islam] and do good deeds and [also] believe in “Muhammad” [the new Messenger from God]—and *He* is the true One from *their* [new believers’] Lord—God will forgive *their* [the new believers’] sins and make good the state of their soul. That is because those [Muslims] who disbelieve [the prophecies of the Qur’án] follow falsehood, whereas those [Muslims] who believe [the prophecies of

the Qur’án] follow the true One from *their* Lord. Thus God set forth parables for mankind.

Verse 3 gives us further clues. It declares:

Those who disbelieve [insincere Muslims] follow falsehood and those who believe [true Muslims] follow *the true One from their Lord*.

Many Muslims read the Qur’án but they do not truly believe in what they read. Such believers are not true believers. If they face the new Messenger, they will deny Him. What about the true believers? As the verse declares:

They will follow *the true One from their Lord*.

The final words of verse 3 gives us still another clue: “Thus does God set forth parable from mankind.” A parable always has multiple or hidden meanings. Otherwise, why are these verses called a parable? The purpose of using the word “parable” is to draw our attention to inner and hidden meanings of these significant verses.

Just as putting together the various parts of a jigsaw puzzle gives us a better picture of the whole design, so does seeing the related verses in succession. Let us now put together some of the verses that we have studied earlier to see them in succession:

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولٌ فَإِذَا جَاءَ رَسُولُهُمْ قُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْقِسْطِ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هَذَا الْوَعْدُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ قُلْ لَا أَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِي ضَرًّا وَلَا نَفْعًا إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلٌ إِذَا جَاءَ أَجْلُهُمْ فَلَا يَسْتَأْجِرُونَ سَاعَةً وَلَا يَسْتَقْدِمُونَ... وَيَسْتَنْبِئُونَكَ أَحَقُّ هُوَ قُلْ إِي رَبِّي إِنَّهُ لَحَقٌّ وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ.

For every “ummah” there is a Messenger. When their Messenger comes, they will be treated justly, and they will not be wronged. And they say: “When will ‘this promise’ be fulfilled, if you are truthful”? Say: “I have no power to harm or help myself except as God wills.” For every “ummah” death is destined. When the time of their death arrives, it will not be delayed nor advanced... They ask you: “Is He [the new Messenger] the true One?” Say: “Yes, by my Lord! He is the very truth, and you will be unable to prevent Him” [from pursuing His Mission]... Qur’án 10:47-53

The following verse also points to *the future*:

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ فَإِنْ يَكْفُرْ بِهَا هُولَاءَ فَقَدْ وَكَلْنَا بِهَا قَوْمًا لَيْسُوا بِهَا بِكَافِرِينَ.

They [the new Messengers] are the Ones to whom We gave the Book, and Authority, and Prophethood. If these people reject them, behold, We shall entrust their charge to a new People who *will* not reject them. Qur’án 6:89

Consider also this brief verse:

وَإِذَا الرُّسُلُ أَقْبَتْ.

And when the time of [the advent of] the Messengers has arrived. Qur’án 77:11

If you have noticed, most of the prophecies that refer to the coming of new *Messengers* appear in plural—“Messengers” not “a Messenger.” The prophecies that point to the coming of a new *religion* all appear in the singular. They refer to a religion (the Religion of Truth) rather than to religions. This may be a clue that God will send more than one Messenger to establish one religion, just as it happened with Christianity. John the Baptist and Christ were sent to establish one religion: Christianity.

When the prophecies about the Advent of new Messengers are viewed together, they draw a clear picture of God’s plan for the progressive revelation of truth. Unfortunately, Muslim theologians have ignored these prophecies. Instead, they have succeeded in creating a grand Mansion in which almost all Muslims live with pride. What Qur’anic reference supports this mansion? The distorted meaning of a single word: the position of a “seal” on a letter! How? Since a seal or signature is placed at the bottom of a letter, this proves that Muhammad is the last Prophet from God! How incredible! All these clear verses from the Qur’án—predicting the coming of new Messengers from God—are distorted or ignored, but that unfounded doctrine, built on the position of a seal, has been kept alive and turned into a lofty Mansion with a tightly locked door, one that no one can ever open! No, the Qur’án does not close any doors.

Ponder the profound meaning of this amazing verse:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصْحَبُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ.

O ye who believe! Even if an unreliable messenger comes to you with any news, ask him for **clear proof**, lest you accuse **a group of people** with ignorance, and later **regret** your decision. Qur’án 49:6

The preceding verse points in a subtle way to the Advent of a new Messenger for several reasons:

- As we shall see, the Arabic word often translated as “clear proof” is used throughout the Qur’án to refer to the proofs the Messengers present.
- The word “News” is also used in relation to the Prophets and has the same root as the word “prophet.”
- The second part of the verse shows that the issue which requires “proof” is not a personal matter. Because the verse declares that if we fail to ask for proof, we may accuse **a group of people**—such as the followers of the new religion—with ignorance. For instance, many Christians deny Islam without asking for proofs and accuse Muslims with being ignorant or “lost souls.” When do the accusers regret their decisions and become remorseful? After they pass away. Only then will they recognize their foolish denial of truth.
- Why are we given such a command? The verse makes perfect sense only in relation to the News of the coming of new Messengers. Because people throughout all ages, instead of asking for proofs, simply ignore the News of the ones sent by God. To help us overcome this strong prejudice, God instructs us to ask for evidence, even if we think we are wasting our time because the source of the news is unreliable. In other words, the need to investigate is so urgent that we should not dismiss any claim without carefully testing it.

To see the significance of the word “Bayyinih” (بَيِّنَةٌ), used as a verb in the preceding verse (49:6), meaning “clear proof,” let us examine it in the context of several verses, including the ones about the advent of new Messengers:

9:70	<div style="text-align: right; margin-bottom: 5px;">أَتَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ.</div> <p>Their Messengers came to them with clear proofs.</p>
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11:88 11:63 11:28	بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّي. A clear proof from my Lord.
57:25	لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ. Indeed We sent forth our Messengers with clear proofs .
10:13	جَاءَهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ. Their Messengers brought them clear proofs .
10:74	ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِ رُسُلًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِمْ فَجَاءُوهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ... Then We sent after him Messengers to their people. They brought them clear proofs ...
35:25	جَاءَهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالزُّبُرِ وَالْكِتَابِ الْمُنِيرِ. Messengers came to them with clear proofs , with Scriptures and the illuminating Book.
40:22	تَأْتِيهِمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ. Their Messengers came to them with clear proofs .
40:83	فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ... Then when their Messengers came to them with clear proofs ...

The following verses, presented earlier in this chapter, point to **future** Messengers:

98:1-2	...حَتَّىٰ تَأْتِيَهُمُ النَّبِيَّةُ رَسُولٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ... ...Until there will come to them “ clear proof ”—a Messenger from God...
11:17	أَفَمَن كَانَ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّهِ وَيَتْلُوهُ شَاهِدٌ مِّنْهُ... فَلَا تَكُ فِي مِرْيَةٍ مِّنْهُ إِنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّكَ. What if someone comes with clear proofs [verses from God] and recites them as a witness from Him... Do not entertain any doubt concerning Him. He is indeed the true One from your Lord.

To conclude, the Qur’án 49:6 offers four critical clues to show that its content has a unique intention, that the verse refers to **a specific event in the future**:

- Clear proof
- News
- The strong emphasis on a need for investigation
- Accusing a group of people, rather than a given person, with ignorance.

The preceding clues indicate that the verse should serve as a light of guidance to Muslims who would ignore the News of the coming of a Messenger with clear proofs from God. They should not dismiss such a claim because of a false assumption—a speck of speculation (ظَنٌّ) about a single word—seal—that imaginative people have turned into a towering mountain!

8

The Promise of the Coming of a New Religion

In our previous discussions we examined the verses that point to the coming of new Messengers. Still other verses, instead of speaking of new Messengers, refer to the coming of a new *religion* from God. Once again, because of a false assumption, theologians have also altered the meaning of these verses. To see how they have done this, we need to learn the difference between two Arabic words that have similar pronunciations but different meanings:

<i>Word</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
دَيْن (Dain)	Debt
دِين (Dein)	Religion, faith, belief

The word “dein” appears repeatedly in the Qur’án in reference to Islam and to religion in general. Muslim scholars are faithful to the meaning of this word when it refers to Islam or past religions. Let us review a few examples:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ...

It is He Who sent His Messenger [Muhammad] with guidance and the Religion [dein] of Truth...

Qur’án 9:33 MF

Also 48:28

In the following example Yúsof ‘Alí chooses “faith” instead of “religion.” The verse points to our freedom to choose our beliefs:

وَمَنْ يَرْتَدِدْ مِنْكُمْ عَن دِينِهِ فَيَمُتْ وَهُوَ كَافِرٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَأُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ.

Those who renounce their faith [dein] and die in unbelief, their works will bear no fruit in this life and in the hereafter. They will be companions of the fire and will abide therein for ever.

Qur’án 2:217

The following verse is about the freedom of choice:

لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ.

Your religion (dein) is for you, and my religion (dein) is for me.

Qur’án 109:6

See also 40:26; 24:55; 30:30; 30:32; 12:40; 5:77; 6:88-90, 92

Several times the Qur’án uses the following expression:

<i>English</i>	<i>Arabic</i>
Religion of Truth	دِينِ الْحَقِّ

Do Muslim theologians show consistency in translating the preceding words? No, as we may expect, they use double standards. When the expression refers to Islam, they translate it correctly as “the Religion of Truth,” but when it refers to a **future** religion, they translate it as “debt” or “dues” or “just dues”! How amazing! How can their conscience allow them to do this? As we noted, “Dain” means debt, “Dein” means religion. The words sound similar, but have entirely different meanings. What relevance is there between “religion” and “debt”?

Let us now see how two verses with precisely the same expression “دِينِ الْحَقِّ” (Religion of Truth) are translated by Muslim theologians:

About Islam

دِينِ الْحَقِّ: Religion of Truth

<i>English</i>	<i>Arabic</i>
It is He who sent forth His Messenger [Muhammad] with <i>the religion of truth</i> (9:33).	هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ
[Those] who do not profess the true religion (9:29)	لَا يَدِينُونَ دِينَ الْحَقِّ

About a Future Religion

دِينِ الْحَقِّ: Religion of Truth

<i>A Translation by M. Fakhry</i>	<i>Arabic</i>
On that Day Allah will pay them <i>their just dues</i> ...(24:25).	يَوْمَئِذٍ يُوفِّيهِمُ اللَّهُ دِينَهُمُ الْحَقِّ...

<i>A Translation by Yūsuf ‘Alī</i>	<i>Arabic</i>
On that Day God will pay them back (all) <i>their just dues</i> ...	يَوْمَئِذٍ يُوفِّيهِمُ اللَّهُ دِينَهُمُ الْحَقِّ...

Let us now see the preceding verse—about a future religion—in its entirety:

يَوْمَئِذٍ يُوفِّيهِمُ اللَّهُ دِينَهُمُ الْحَقِّ وَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ الْمُبِينُ.

On that Day, God will grant them their “Religion [dein] of Truth.” They will know then that God is the absolute Truth [He is true to His promises]. Qur’án 24:25

The Qur’án asks us to reflect, to reason, and to ponder. Let us follow the guidance of that most glorious Book. Let us ask the traditional interpreters a few questions:

- What does it mean to say that “God on that Day will pay people’s “debt”? What debt? What dues? Can anyone make any sense out of this?
- Why replace one meaning for another? Why replace “dues” for “religion” and “just” for “truth”? Why even choose “dues” for “debt”? Why change the meaning of a well-recognized word—*dein*—in order to confirm an assumption that has survived only because of the prevailing powers of tradition and conformity?

In all Scriptures we find certain expressions, such as “the last day,” “the day of the Lord,” “that day” or “the day of decision.” The Qur’án also has its share of such expressions, like “the Day of Religion,” and “the Religion of Truth.” One of these expressions appears in the first chapter (Súra) of the Qur’án. Let us briefly examine that chapter, which consists of only seven short verses. The following translation of that Súra by Yúsuf ‘Alí is representative of all the others:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ.

In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Praise be to God, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds; Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Master of *the Day of Judgment*. Thee do we worship, and Thine aid we seek. Show us the straight way. The way of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy Grace, Those whose (portion) is not wrath, and who go not astray. Qur’án 1:1-7 Y

The preceding translation is accurate except for one word: Judgment. Verse 4 should read:

مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ.

Master of *the Day of (the) Religion* (Dein).

The previous verses convey two meanings and both are correct: “the Day of Religion” and “the Day of Judgment and separation,” because “the Day of a new religion” is also “the Day of Judgment and separation.” In that day, the believers subject themselves to judgment by the way they respond to the new religion. On that basis they will be divided:

وَقَالُوا يَا وَيْلَنَا هَذَا يَوْمُ الدِّينِ هَذَا يَوْمُ الْفَصْلِ الَّذِي كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تُكَذِّبُونَ.

And they say: “Woe betide us! This is the Day of Religion. This is [also] the Day of Separation, which you would deny. Qur’án 37:20-21

What will happen after the believers and the deniers pass away from this life? They will continue to remain separated from each other. They will join the group they had decided to join in this life.

What will be the ultimate destiny of each group? One group (believers) will be sent to the right, the other (the deniers) to the left. This concept is confirmed both in the Bible and the Qur’án:

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا...أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْمَيْمَنَةِ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِنَا هُمْ أَصْحَابُ الْمَشْأَمَةِ عَلَيْهِمْ نَارٌ مُّؤَصَّدَةٌ.

Those who believe...they are the companions of the Right; but those who disbelieve in Our Signs are the companions of the Left; a fire will close in on them. Qur’án 90:17-20 MF
See also 9:19-20

When the Son of Man comes in his glory...he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world... Then he will say to those on his left, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

Matthew 25:31-41 NIV

If we pay close attention to the first chapter of the Qur'án, we can find further clues to its purpose. We discover that it is not only a prophecy but also a prayer. It is revealed to help us seek God's guidance in recognizing the religion that comes after Islam. When we read that chapter, we offer this request to God:

اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ.

Show us the straight way. The way of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy Grace, those whose (portion) is not wrath, and who go not astray. Qur'án 1:6-7 Y

Question: Why should a Muslim ask God to show him "the straight Way"? Is not a Muslim already on "the straight Way" (6:153)? Who are the people who "go astray"? The verse calls them "ḍállín" (ضالّين). That word points to infidels, to those who have lost their way, who have failed to acknowledge Islam. Why then should a Muslim—who has already been guided—ask God to show him the Way of truth, if he is already on that Way?

How amazing that the Great News of the coming of a future religion should be God's *first* concern and should by itself occupy the *first* chapter of the Qur'án. Since our Creator knows that Muslims—like the followers of all previous faiths—will deny the new religion, He teaches them to pray that they will become worthy of receiving that most glorious gift. The Qur'án teaches us repeatedly that only by presenting a seeking mind and a noble heart to God, and urgently and sincerely praying to Him, will we receive the gift of guidance.

How does God choose the permanent guests for His heavenly Banquet? All the references in the Qur'án point to the heart and the soul, not to a mind crammed with information. Mere knowledge of Arabic and of other foreign languages has no connection with knowing God and His Messengers. God wants only thoughtful, wise, humble, and pure-hearted believers in His Kingdom, not pompous scholars who alter His Word to make it fit their illusions.

The Qur'án uses yet another expression with a similar meaning to refer to the coming of a *future* religion:

The True Religion دِينُ الْقَيِّمِ

ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ (قرآن ١٢:٤٠)

Since the translators do not think that the preceding verse refers to a *future* religion (ignoring the fact that the verse uses the word "that" instead of "this"), they translate the word "dein" correctly:

That is *the True Religion*, but most people do not know [that it is true]. Qur'án 12:40

Let us continue our investigation by examining yet other Quranic verses that speak of the advent of a **future** religion from God:

إِنَّمَا تُوعَدُونَ لَصَادِقٌ وَإِنَّ الدِّينَ لَوَاقِعٌ.

Surely, what you are promised is true. Of course [the promise of the coming of] the Religion shall come to pass. Qur'an 51:5-6

The chapter that contains the preceding promise ends with this warning:

فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ يَوْمِهِمُ الَّذِي يُوعَدُونَ.

Woe unto those who will deny the Promised Day. Qur'an 51:60

Note that the preceding Quranic verse implies that some people will deny the Advent of the promised Day. Only on the Day of Religion—not on the Day of Resurrection or Judgment—do people dare to deny the fulfillment of God's promises. Would not people be seized with fear on the Day of Resurrection? How then would they have the power or the inclination to engage in denial? Would they be so foolish to continue denying God's awesome powers even **after** they have witnessed those powers?

Consider also this verse:

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ الَّذِينَ يُكَذِّبُونَ بِيَوْمِ الدِّينِ.

Woe, on that Day, to those who deny—who deny “the Day of the Religion...” Qur'an 83:10-11

كَلَّا بَلْ تُكذِّبُونَ بِالدِّينِ.

Nay! But you [Muslims] deny the [promised] religion! Qur'an 82:9

As we can see, the Qur'an warns those who deny the advent of “the Day of Religion.” Has the preceding prophecy already been fulfilled? The evidence of its fulfillment is the widespread denial by the masses of Muslims that such a religion and such a Day will ever again come upon the world.

Consider the following verses from Chapter 77 of the Qur'an (Súra of Mursalát, “**Those Sent Forth**”) spoken in the fewest words—in poetic language:

77:1	By the Messengers sent forth one after another.	وَالْمُرْسَلَاتِ عُرْفًا.
77:4	By the verses that separate [believers and deniers].	فَالْفَارِقَاتِ فَرَقًا
77:5	And by the [angels] who deliver a Reminder.	فَالْمَلَقِيَّاتِ ذِكْرًا.
77:6	To [remove] excuses or to warn.	عُذْرًا أَوْ نُذْرًا.
77:7	Surely, what you are promised shall come to pass.	إِنَّمَا تُوعَدُونَ لَوَاقِعٌ.
77:11	And when the Messengers [have come] at their appointed time.	وَإِذَا الرُّسُلُ أَقْبَتُ.

77:12	To what Day has their coming is postponed? لَا يَّ يَوْمٍ أَجَلَتْ؟
77:13	To the Day of Separation. لِيَوْمِ الْفَصْلِ.
77:14	And who understands what the Day of Separation is? وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا يَوْمُ الْفَصْلِ؟
77:15	Woe that Day to the deniers. وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ.
77:16	Did We not destroy the ancients? أَلَمْ نُهْلِكِ الْأَوَّلِينَ؟
77:17	So shall We make the later generations [to experience their destiny]. ثُمَّ نُنْفِئُهُمُ الْآخِرِينَ.
77:18	Thus do We deal with the deniers. كَذَلِكَ نَفْعَلُ بِالْمُجْرِمِينَ.
77:19	Woe that Day to the deniers. وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ.
77:38	This is the Day of Separation. We bring you [Muslims] together with previous umam [then separate the true believers in all religions from false believers]. See also Qur'án 56:49-50. هَذَا يَوْمُ الْفَصْلِ جَمَعْنَاكُمْ وَالْأَوَّلِينَ.
77:39	So if you have any plot, carry it out against Me. فَإِنْ كَانَ لَكُمْ كَيْدٌ فَكِيدُونِ.
77:40	Woe that Day to the deniers. وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ.
77:49	Woe that Day to the deniers. وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ.
77:50	Then in what statement [instructions, prophecies] after this do they [those who read these prophecies] believe? فَبِأَيِّ حَدِيثٍ بَعْدَهُ يُؤْمِنُونَ؟

Muslim theologians have assumed that the preceding prophecies refer to the Day of Resurrection. Let us test their assumption:

- The Súra begins by declaring the good news of the coming of Messengers (verse 1) and a Reminder (verse 5). It then assures us that God's promise will be fulfilled (verse 7): that the Messengers will come at the appointed time (verse 11). Even the title of the Súra—"Those Sent Forth"—confirms the coming of Messengers who will be sent forth by God.
- The prophecies of the Qur'án, including the prophetic verses of this Súra (verses 12, 13, 14, 38) refer to the time of separation—when people are divided into those

who accept and those who deny the new Messengers. For instance, Muslims who continue to believe in the “doctrine of the seal” will try to find other meanings for these and other prophecies of the Qur’án.

- The words “Reminder” and “warn” both are linked in the Qur’án to the coming of Messengers.
- Verse 7 refers to a promise, and verse 11 links an “appointed time” to the “Messengers.” It is clear that the two verses prophesy the coming of at least two Messengers at an appointed time.
- Verses 16, 17, and 18 point to the umam who denied their Messengers in the past and the punishment they received. The Qur’án speaks repeatedly about such umam and their dire destiny.
- Verse 39 describes the bitter enemies of God who plot against His new Messengers. Only in this life and in this world can people oppose God and His Messengers, not when they are resurrected from the dead.
- The final verse—verse 50—shows that many Muslims would doubt the prophecies of this Súra. Devoted Muslims do not doubt or deny the Day of Resurrection, what many of them doubt or deny is the coming of a new religion from God.
- The verse “Woe that Day to the deniers” is repeated ten times—once in every five verses. First, only in the Day of a new Religion can people deny the truth. On the Day of Resurrection, they will be full of fear rather than thoughts of denial. And second, the repetition of this threat points to the enormity of the consequences of the denial and the level of resistance most Muslims would display against these prophecies.

Chapters 82 and 83 of the Qur’án are also devoted entirely to the coming of a new religion, the Day of a new Religion, and the destiny of the people who deny such a glorious Event. Let us review a few verses from those chapters:

لِيَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ.

On a great Day.

Qur’án 83:5

يَوْمَ يَقُومُ النَّاسُ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ.

A Day people will [have an opportunity to] stand for the Lord of the Worlds. Qur’án 83:6

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِينَ الَّذِينَ يُكذِّبُونَ بِيَوْمِ الدِّينِ.

Woe that Day to those who deny the Advent of the Day of Religion. Qur’án 83:10-11

وَمَا يُكَذِّبُ بِهِ إِلَّا كُلُّ مُعْتَدٍ أَثِيمٍ إِذَا تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِ آيَاتُنَا قَالَ أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ.

Only a sinful transgressor denies it [that Day]. When Our verses [about that Day] are read to him, he says: [these are] “mere legends of the ancients!” Qur’án 83:12-13

كَلَّا إِنَّهُمْ عَنْ رَبِّهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَّمَّحْجُوبُونَ.

Not at all! Surely, on that Day they will be veiled from their Lord.

Qur’án 83:15

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ أَجْرَمُوا كَانُوا مِنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يَضْحَكُونَ وَإِذَا مَرُّوا بِهِمْ يَتَغَامِرُونَ وَإِذَا انْقَلَبُوا إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِمْ انْقَلَبُوا فَكِهِينَ وَإِذَا رَأَوْهُمْ قَالُوا إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ لَضَالُونَ.

The criminals [those who persecute the new believers] would laugh at [make fun of] the [new] believers. And whenever they passed them by, they would wink one to another [in mocking]. And when they returned to their own people [fellow-believers], they would return jesting. And when they saw them [the new believers], they would say: “Indeed, these people have gone astray!”

Qur’án 83:29-32

وَمَا أُرْسِلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ حَافِظِينَ.

They [the new believers] are not sent as watchers or keepers over them [are not responsible for the deniers].

Qur’án 83:33

فَالْيَوْمَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنَ الْكُفَّارِ يَضْحَكُونَ.

Today [in the next life], the [new] believers will laugh at those who denied [the new Religion].

Qur’án 83:34

عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ يَنْظُرُونَ.

They are sitting on their thrones and looking [at the dire destiny of the deniers]!

Qur’án 83:35

هَلْ تُوْبَ الْكُفَّارُ مَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ؟

Are the deniers [of the new Religion] not facing the consequences of their deeds?

Qur’án 83:36

Chapter 82 has only 19 brief verses. Let us examine a few of them:

يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنْسَانُ مَا غَرَّكَ بِرَبِّكَ الْكَرِيمِ؟

O man! What has made you careless about your Lord—the Most Generous?

Qur’án 82:6

كَلَّا بَلْ تُكَدِّبُونَ بِالذِّينِ!

No! [how can this be!] You deny the [new] religion!

Qur’án 82:9

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا يَوْمَ الدِّينِ ثُمَّ مَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا يَوْمَ الدِّينِ.

If you only knew what is the Day of Religion! Again, if you only knew what is the Day of Religion!

Qur’án 82:17-18

يَوْمَ لَا تَمْلِكُ نَفْسٌ لِّنَفْسٍ شَيْئًا وَالْأَمْرُ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلَّهِ.

It is a Day, when no soul shall have any authority over another soul, and the Command on that Day will be in God’s Hand.

Qur’án 82:19

What the preceding verse declares is this: When a new religion comes, people must make a new choice. Everyone is responsible to investigate the News of the coming of the new Messenger.

The new believers must proclaim the great News but they are not responsible for those who reject the News:

وَمَا أُرْسِلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ حَافِظِينَ.

They [the new believers] are not their [the deniers'] keepers—the ones to watch over them. Qur'án 83:33

Muhammad received a similar message:

فَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظًا.

We have not sent you [Muhammad] to be their keeper. Qur'án 42:48
See also 39:41; 88:22; 5:94; 6:104

Further, the time of the coming of new Messengers coincides with the decline of virtues. At that time the previous ummah has already lost its spiritual life:

لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلٌ.

Every ummah has a lifespan. Qur'án 10:49

When a new Messenger comes, once again God takes possession of His religion and begins to rule in the hearts of the true believers—those who thirst for truth.

وَالْأَمْرُ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلَّهِ.

The Command [Amr] on that Day will be God's. Qur'án 82:19

Since the Qur'án sometime uses the word “Amr” in place of religion, the preceding verse can also be translated as:

The Religion on that Day will be God's.

Let us now review *in succession* some of verses of one of the Súra (83) we studied earlier in this chapter:

وَيْلٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ الَّذِينَ يُكَذِّبُونَ بِيَوْمِ الدِّينِ وَمَا يُكذِّبُ بِهِ إِلَّا كُلُّ مُعْتَدٍ أَثِيمٍ إِذَا تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِ آيَاتُنَا قَالَ أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ كَلَّا بَلْ رَأَىٰ عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ كَلَّا إِنَّهُمْ عَنْ رَبِّهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَمَحْجُوبُونَ ثُمَّ إِنَّهُمْ لَصَالُوا الْجَحِيمِ ثُمَّ يُقَالُ هَذَا الَّذِي كُنْتُمْ بِهِ تُكَذِّبُونَ.

Woe, on that Day, to those who deny—who deny “the Day of the Religion.” No one denies that Day except the one who is a sinful aggressor. When our [new] verses are recited to him [concerning these prophecies], he says, “These are only the legends of the ancients.” Far from this! It is their hearts that are controlled [by false legends], by what they have acquired [learned] from others. Far from what they assume! On that Day, they will be deprived of [the glory] of their Lord. Then [after passing away from this life] they [the deniers] shall roast in hell. Then it will be said to them: “This is what you used to deny.” Qur'án 83:10-17

The preceding verses show clearly that the denial takes place in this life, punishment in the next. Only here do people have the freedom and the power to deny the truth. It also refers to false assumptions and legends. Would those false assumptions be other than the assumptions of finality and the denial of the Quranic prophecies that predict the coming of new Messengers and a new religion from God?

The following verses also speak about the people who deny “the religion” and “the Day of Religion:”

فَمَا يُكَذِّبُكَ بَعْدُ بِالدِّينِ؟

What then causes you to deny the [promised] religion? Qur'án 95:7

أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي يُكَذِّبُ بِالدِّينِ؟

Have you seen him who denies the [promised] religion?

Qur'án 107:1

وَكُنَّا نَكُذِّبُ بِيَوْمِ الدِّينِ.

And we used to deny the Day of Religion.

Qur'án 74:46

Consider also the following verses:

ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ... فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ الْقَدِيمِ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَا مَرَدَّ لَهُ مِنَ اللَّهِ يَوْمَئِذٍ يُصَدِّعُونَ مَنْ كَفَرَ فَعَلَيْهِ كُفْرُهُ وَمَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلِنَفْسِهِ يَمْهَدُونَ لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْكَافِرِينَ.

Corruption has appeared in the land and the sea, on account of what men's hands have earned. He will let them taste the consequence of some of their deeds, that perchance they may return... So, set your face towards *the True Religion*, before a Day comes from God—a Day that cannot be turned back. On that Day they will be rent asunder. Whoever disbelieves, upon him shall recoil his unbelief, and whoever does a righteous deed, it is for themselves that they will be preparing a place of rest. He will reward those who have believed and done righteous deeds out of His bounty. Indeed, He does not love the unbelievers.

Qur'án 30:41, 43-45 MF

What do the preceding verses teach us?

- Verse 41 predicts the terrible conditions of our time—war, violence, poverty, injustice, family breakdown, and a decline of moral values.
- Verse 43 prescribes the solution to those global problems. It asks us to “set our faces towards the True Religion,” which God sends to save us from our own ignorance.
- It then asks us to accept that Religion before a day that “cannot be turned back.” That is the awful Day of Judgment every human being must face after his departure from this life.
- Those who reject the new religion will face the consequence of their unbelief.
- Those who engage in the noble deed of accepting the new religion will experience the comfort of living in heaven.
- True believers are those who show their faith through righteous deeds. (Accepting a new Messenger is such a deed.)

The word “dein” appears still in another verse in relation to a future promise:

يَسْأَلُونَ أَيَّانَ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ * يَوْمَ هُمْ عَلَى النَّارِ يُفْتَنُونَ.

They ask: “When will be ‘the Day of the Religion’?” It will be a Day when people will be tested over the fire.

Qur'án 51:12-13

How are people tested at the time of the Advent of a new religion? By the way they respond to an invitation to investigate that religion. “Fire” is a metaphor for testing. The

* The “Day of Religion” is the time when people are tested and judged by the way they respond to a new Religion. In this sense, the Day of Religion is also the Day of Judgment.

following verse from the Bible, like the Qur'an, links the promise of the coming of that "Day" to "fire:"

...for the [promised] Day shall disclose it [people's capacity or motives], because it [the Day] shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall test every man's work.

I Corinthians 3:13

We should note that according to the Qur'an, God brings us into this world to test us, to give us a chance to reveal the quality of our soul. God tests us in this life, and then, in the next life, He will reward us or punish us according to our deeds.

الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا.

He created death and life, that He may test which of you is noblest in deed. Qur'an 67:2

The Quranic chapter that predicts the coming of a new religion from God (in verses 51:12-13), ends with a prophecy concerning the One who brings that religion:

فَوَرَبِّ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِنَّهُ لَحَقُّ مِثْلِ مَا أَنْتُمْ تَنْطِفُونَ.

By the Lord of heaven and earth! He [the Messenger] is the Truth! This [promise or statement] is as certain as your speaking.

Qur'an 51:23

The preceding verse once again proves that people will doubt the coming of a new religion and a new Messenger. God knows that their doubts are rooted in centuries of false expectations, illusions, and dreams. To awaken the sleepers and the skeptics, He reassures them repeatedly. First He swears by Himself (He declares "By the Lord of heaven and earth!"), then He reminds them that even as they do not doubt the sound of their own spoken words, they should likewise *not* doubt the truth of this Most Glorious Promise from their Lord.

Consider also the following unique prophecy. It combines two critical and interrelated concepts to guide us to a deeper understanding of God's purpose:

وَكَذَّبَ بِهِ قَوْمُكَ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ قُلْ لَأَسْتَأْذِنُ عَلَيْكُمْ بِوَكِيلٍ لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ.

Your people denied Him—*He who is the true One*. Say: "I [Muhammad] am not your guardian" [If you reject Him, it is your responsibility]. For every Message [such as the Message of Islam] there is a fixed time, and soon you shall know. Qur'an 6:66-67

As we can see, the preceding verses once again confirm the prophecies of denial. They clearly declare that Muslims will deny the new Messenger, who comes after the "fixed time" assigned to Islam has ended.

In some prophecies, God uses the word "Amr" in place of "Dein" to refer to the coming of a new Religion:

فَتَرَبَّصُوا حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرِهِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ.

Be patient until God brings His "Amr." God does not guide the disobedient. Qur'an 9:24

The word "amr" has several meanings, such as command, decision, and decree. The verse asks us to wait until God brings His "Amr." What does God bring to us through His Messengers except a new Revelation—verses that offer spiritual guidance?

Further, the verse ends with the topic of divine guidance. This also gives us a clue that “amr” refers to religion. What else can guide us to God? We can discern the meaning of “amr” by studying this verse:

فَنَقَطُوا أَمْرَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ زُبْرًا كُلُّ حِزْبٍ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ فَرِحُونَ.

People divided their “amr” among themselves. Each party [sect] is pleased with what they have [with their beliefs].
Qur’án 23:53

Once again we can ask: What can people divide except religion?

The number of prophecies predicting the coming of a new religion is amazing. Why do we need so much reassurance? Because God has full knowledge of the future. He knew that the majority of Muslims would not trust even their own sacred Scripture: the Qur’án. As we can see, despite all the evidence and reassurance, still most Muslims continue to doubt God’s promises. The following verse shows that they will behave as the followers of other religions have behaved in the past:

فَهَلْ يَنْتَظِرُونَ إِلَّا مِثْلَ أَيَّامِ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ قُلْ فَانْتَظِرُوا إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ مِنَ الْمُنْتَظِرِينَ.

Do they, then, expect anything other than the like of the days of those who lived before them? Say: “Wait on, I am also one of those who, along with you, will be waiting.”
Qur’án 10:102

One lesson we can learn from history is that history repeats itself. Have people changed since the time of Noah? Will they once again engage in denial as they did in His time? Note the following prophecy from Jesus concerning the spiritual state of the world at the time of His Return:

As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.
Matthew 24:37

The Qur’án refers repeatedly to people’s way (Sunnah) of responding to God’s new Messengers:

أَفَكَلَّمَا جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ بِمَا لَا تَهْوَى أَنْفُسُكُمْ اسْتَكْبَرْتُمْ فَفَرِيقًا كَذَّبْتُمْ وَفَرِيقًا تَقْتُلُونَ؟

Do you, then—whenever a Messenger brings you what you do not desire—become puffed up with pride accusing some [of them] of lying and killing others? Qur’án 2:87 MF

Consider also this verse:

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ فِي شِعَابِ الْأَوَّلِينَ وَمَا يَأْتِيهِمْ مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ كَذَلِكَ نَسْلُكُهُ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَقَدْ خَلَتْ سُنَّةُ الْأَوَّلِينَ.

And We sent forth Messengers before you to various peoples of the past. No Messenger comes to them that they do not mock. That is how We instill it into the hearts of the sinners. They will not believe in Him, despite the example of those who lived in the past.
Qur’án 15:10-13
See also 36:30

Note this part of the verse 13:

لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ...

They will not believe in *Him*...

Who is the “Him”? If the verse were addressed to Muhammad, it would read: They will not believe in **You**. Consider also these verses:

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِهِ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِهِ وَرَبُّكَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُفْسِدِينَ.

Some of them will **believe in Him**; and some of them will not. Your Lord knows the best those who are the source of mischief. Qur’án 10:40

أَأَنْتُمْ إِذَا مَا وَقَعَ آمَنْتُمْ بِهِ؟

Is it then, when it has overtaken you that you will **believe in Him**? Qur’án 10:51 MF

It is instructive to note that most of the Quranic prophecies predict that people will reject the news of the new Religion. Only one verse speaks about those who acknowledge its advent:

الَّذِينَ يُكَذِّبُونَ بَيَّومَ الدِّينِ.

Those who deny [the advent of] the Day of Religion. 83:11

وَالَّذِينَ يُصَدِّقُونَ بَيَّومَ الدِّينِ.

And those who acknowledge [the Advent of] the Day of Religion. Qur’án 70:26

The numerous verses studied in this chapter, like many others, predict that God’s new Messenger will be once again rejected and most likely persecuted. As we can see, neither God’s “Sunnah” of sending new Messengers changes nor people’s “Sunnah” of rejecting those Messengers!

The Hour

In sacred Scriptures, the word “Hour” is often used to refer to the time of the Advent of great Messengers from God. Christians are quite familiar with the meaning of “the Hour.” Consider the following prophecy from Jesus:

I [Jesus] will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what **Hour** I will come upon thee. Revelation 3:3

Just like the Gospel, the Qur’án sometimes uses the word “Hour” to refer to the time of the coming of a great Messenger from God. The best way to decode the meaning of “the Hour” is to compare the Quranic and Biblical prophecies.

Many Muslims are unaware that the Qur’án confirms the Biblical promises that point to the Return of the Spirit of God (روح الله)* to our earthly domain. Compare the following verses from the two Scriptures:

* Many Christians believe that Christ is the incarnation of God. This belief is obviously false. Both in the Bible and in the Qur’án the word “Lord” is used as an abbreviation for “the Spirit of the Lord.” The title “the Spirit of God” applies to all great Messengers. Muhammad was as much the Spirit of God as was Jesus. The Messengers are not God, but **the Light** of God. The sun does not come to the earth, it sends only its light.

From the Qur'an:

إِنَّ هُوَ إِلَّا عَيْدٌ أَنْعَمْنَا عَلَيْهِ وَجَعَلْنَاهُ مَثَلًا لِّبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ...وَإِنَّهُ لَعِلْمٌ لِّلسَّاعَةِ فَلَا تَمْتَرُنَّ بِهَا...هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا السَّاعَةَ أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمْ بَغْتَةً وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ...وَتَبَارَكَ الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَعِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ.

He [Jesus] is only a Servant whom We blessed and selected to serve as an example [of divine power] to the children of Israel...And He [Jesus] shall be a sign of **the Hour**; do not doubt this...What do they expect except that **the Hour** should come upon them suddenly while they are unaware?...And blessed be He [God] whose is the Kingdom of the heavens and of the earth and all that is between them; with Him is the knowledge of **the Hour**...

Qur'an 43:59-85

إِنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَأْتِيَةٌ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهَا وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ.

The Hour is indeed coming. No doubt about it. But most people will not believe [this Message].

Qur'an 40:59

From the Gospel:

No one knows about that day or **Hour**, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father...Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord* will come...So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an **Hour** when you do not expect him.

Christ (Matt. 24:36-44 NIV)

Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that **day** will close on you unexpectedly like a trap.

Christ (Luke 21:34 NIV)

Compare also the following Quranic prophecies with the preceding prophecies from Jesus:

عَسَى أَنْ يَكُونَ قَدِ اقْتَرَبَ أَجَلُهُمْ فَبِأَيِّ حَدِيثٍ بَعْدَهُ يُؤْمِنُونَ مَنْ يَضَلِّ اللَّهُ فَلَا هَادِيَ لَهُ وَيَدْرُهُمْ فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ أَيَّانَ مُرْسَاهَا قُلْ إِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ رَبِّي لَا يُجَلِّيهَا لِوَقْتِهَا إِلَّا هُوَ ثَقُلَتْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَا تَأْتِيكُمْ إِلَّا بَغْتَةً...عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ.

It may be that the time assigned to them [ajal] is coming to an end. What message other than this will they then believe? Whoever He leads astray, will have no guide. He [God] leaves them [people with closed hearts] to wonder aimlessly. They ask you [Muhammad] about **the Hour**—when will be its appointed time? Say: “The knowledge thereof is with my Lord. None but He will disclose it at the right time. It is the heavy burden of the heavens and the earth. Only suddenly it will come to you...But most people do not know.

Qur'an 7:185-187

The remarkable similarity between the words of Jesus and those of Muhammad leads us to the following conclusions:

- People want to know the time of the Hour.
- The time of the Hour is a secret that neither Jesus nor Muhammad knows.
- Only God has this knowledge.

- In due time God will allow us to recognize the advent of the Hour.
- It will come suddenly.
- Most believers will fail to understand the meaning or the significance of these prophecies.

In the preceding quotation from the Qur’án, the first verse contains several concepts not found in Biblical prophecies:

- It states that the Hour arrives at the end of the time (*ajal*) assigned to “them.” Who are “them”? They are the “umam” or followers of various religions, who expect the arrival of the Hour.
- It further declares that people will deny the termination of the time assigned to them.

Ponder the meaning of the following rhetorical question in the preceding prophecy from the Qur’án: “What message other than this will they then believe?” What does our Creator ask us? A simple question: “What more evidence do you need to be convinced?” Suppose there was ten times more evidence, would that make much difference? Are peoples’ beliefs based on evidence, or on tradition and conformity? Evidence would convince the believers only if their faith—what they believe—was based on evidence. Unfortunately for more than 99.9 percent of the believers, evidence plays little if any part in determining their beliefs. Suppose you were born to a devout Christian family. Would you not be a Christian? Would you not also believe that Jesus was God? This simple fact should make every believer as humble as a little child.

Another obstacle is this: the people of our time are quite skeptical, and rightly so. They have heard so many lies, they do not believe anyone anymore. They do not trust even their own Scriptures. No wonder Jesus said:

...when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?

Luke 18:8 NIV

The sheer volume of evidence from the Qur’án concerning the coming of new Messengers and a new religion from God is astonishing—far more than we would need to be convinced. The evidence for this most glorious News is as massive as a towering mountain. The shaky would-be “evidence” against it is like a straw against a mighty wind. That straw is this one misinterpreted word: “seal.” ***Yet theologians have succeeded in removing that mountain by that single piece of straw!***

People throughout all ages have been conformers. They have preferred to follow someone else—usually an authority figure. They have preferred to flow with the wind rather than walk to the mountainside and dig to discover the countless jewels of knowledge and wisdom stored in their Scriptures.

Let us return once again to the evidence. Ponder the following points. The Qur’án considers Jesus to be a Messenger like Muhammad. Jesus promises to return. The Qur’án confirms the validity of this promise. What conclusion can we draw from the preceding facts? That a Messenger like Muhammad will come again. This is the only conclusion in harmony with the facts presented in both the Gospel and in the Qur’án. Why, then, would anyone doubt the coming of at least one more Prophet—or even countless others—after

Muhammad? Note how clearly the Qur'an predicts the coming of "the Spirit." As stated, Muhammad called Christ "روح الله" meaning "the Spirit of God."

يَوْمَ يَفُومُ الرُّوحُ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ صَفًّا لَا يَتَكَلَّمُونَ إِلَّا مَنْ أُذِنَ لَهُ الرَّحْمَنُ وَقَالَ صَوَابًا ذَلِكَ الْيَوْمَ الْحَقُّ فَمَنْ شَاءَ اتَّخَذَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِ مَآبًا.

The Day when the Spirit [of God] shall arise and the angels shall stand in line... That will be "the Day of Truth." Whoever wishes, let him return to his Lord. Qur'an 78:38-39

Note the last verse once again:

Whoever wishes, let him return to his Lord.

The verse indicates that the new Messenger will come in a way that people will feel free to reject Him. The coming of "the Spirit of God" as it appeared in Christ, and again in Muhammad, is a promise made in both Scriptures. We have absolute freedom to accept or deny this most emphatic promise of God.

The many similarities between the Biblical and the Quranic prophecies are remarkable. Compare and ponder the harmony between the two Scriptures as demonstrated in the following verses:

When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him.

Christ (Matt. 25:31 NEB)

يَوْمَ يَفُومُ الرُّوحُ وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ صَفًّا.

The Day that the Spirit* [the Son of Man] and the angels will stand forth...

Muhammad (Qur'an 78:38 Y)

He [the Son of Man] will separate men into two groups...

Christ (Matt. 25:32 NEB)

إِنَّ يَوْمَ الْفَصْلِ كَانَ مِيقَاتًا.

The day of separation is an event appointed.

Muhammad (Qur'an 78:17 Y)

All the nations will be gathered before him...

Christ (Matt. 25:32 NIV)

فَتَأْتُونَ أَفْوَاجًا.

...and ye shall come forth in crowds...

Muhammad (Qur'an 78:18 Y)

...with a trumpet blast He will send out His angels...

Christ (Matt. 24:31 NEB)

يَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ.

The Day that the Trumpet shall be sounded...

Muhammad (Qur'an 78:18 Y)

* The most common title used by Muslims to refer to Jesus is "Rúh'u'lláh," meaning "the Spirit of God." The Qur'an uses the abbreviated form: the Spirit.

...the celestial [heavenly] powers shall be shaken... Christ (Matt. 24:29 NEB)

يَوْمَ تَمُورُ السَّمَاءُ مَوْرًا.

On that day the Heaven shall reel [stagger, swing]... Muhammad (Qur'án 52:9)

...and all the angels with him [the Son of Man]... Christ (Matt. 25:31 NEB)

وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ صَفًّا.

...and the angels will stand forth... Muhammad (Qur'án 78:38 Y)

Let us conclude this chapter with a few more Quranic verses:

فَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ اللَّهَ مُخْلِفَ وَعْدِهِ رُسُلَهُ.

Never think that God will fail to honor His promise to His Messengers... Qur'án 14:47

هَذَا بَلَاغٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَلِيُنذِرُوا بِهِ... لِيَذَكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ.

Here is a Message for humankind. Let them take warning therefrom... Let people of understanding take heed. Qur'án 14:52

إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَعَدَكُمْ وَعَدَ الْحَقِّ.

God gave you a true promise... Qur'án 14:22

إِنَّ مَا تُوعَدُونَ لَآتٍ وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ.

Indeed, that which you are promised will come to pass and you cannot prevent it.

Qur'án 6:134

إِنَّمَا تُوعَدُونَ لَوَاقِعٌ.

Indeed, what you are promised shall come to pass.

Qur'án 77:7

فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ يَوْمِهِمُ الَّذِي يُوعَدُونَ.

Woe unto those who deny the Promised Day.

Qur'án 51:60

إِنَّمَا تُوعَدُونَ لَصَادِقٌ وَإِنَّ الدِّينَ لَوَاقِعٌ.

Indeed, what you are promised is true. The promise of Religion will indeed come to pass.

Qur'án 51:5-6

9

What is the Difference Between “Rasúl” (Messenger) and “Nabí” (Prophet)?

There is yet another weakness in using the title “the Seal of the Prophets” to prove that divine Revelation ended with Muhammad. The Arabic language has two common words for those sent by God:

Rasúl: Primarily describes the great *Messengers* who establish a new religion, such as Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad. These Messengers are more specifically identified as “the Messengers Endowed With Constancy” (اولوالعزم) (Qur’án 46:35).

Nabí: Primarily describes the minor *Prophets*, such as Isaiah and Daniel, who did not bring a new religion.

It is obvious that a “Rasúl” also has the station or position of a “Nabí,” but a “Nabí” cannot be a “Rasúl.” The two words are, however, interchangeable—one word sometimes—but only rarely—replaces the other. Nevertheless, each word has a *primary* meaning and usage.

The following verses show that the two titles are not identical:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَسُولٍ وَلَا نَبِيٍّ...

We did not send before you either a *Messenger* or a *Prophet*... Qur’án 22:52

وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَالصِّدِّيقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَحَسُنَ أُولَئِكَ رَفِيقًا.

And those who obey God and the *Messenger* [Muhammad] will be in the company of those whom God has favored—such as the *Prophets*, the saints, the martyrs, and the righteous people. What excellent companions are they! Qur’án 4:69

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ مِيثَاقَهُمْ وَمِنْكَ وَمِنْ نُوحٍ وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ...

And [remember] when We took from the *Prophets* their Covenant, and from *you* [Muhammad] and from Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus... Qur’án 33:7

Was Muhammad’s primary Mission that of a Messenger (Rasúl) or that of a Prophet (Nabí)? To know the answer to this question is critical, because the word “seal” is linked to “Prophet,” and not to “Messenger.” If God wanted to tell us that Muhammad was the last Messenger, why then did He link the word “seal” to “Prophet” rather than to the word “Messenger”? The study of the differences between these two titles will shed much light on the “doctrine of the seal.”

The best way to learn the differences between the two titles is to study the Qur’án to see how they are used.

The Messenger of God (رسول الله)

The Official Title and Prime Mission of Muhammad and Other Great Messengers

Let us first see how the Qur'án uses the word "Rasúl" or Messenger, and then later study how it uses "Nabi" or Prophet. The title "Messenger" is used throughout the Qur'án to refer to those who have established a new religion. It describes the "official" title or Mission of those who bring a Message from God to humankind:

الَّذِينَ يُبَلِّغُونَ رِسَالَاتِ اللَّهِ...

Those who deliver God's Messages...

Qur'án 33:39

Consider the following examples:

- | | | |
|-------|---|--|
| 63:1 | We bear witness that you are indeed God's Messenger. | نَشْهَدُ إِنَّكَ لَرَسُولُ اللَّهِ. |
| 73:15 | We have sent unto you a Messenger and a witness over you, just as We sent unto Pharaoh a Messenger (Moses). | إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ رَسُولًا شَاهِدًا عَلَيْكُمْ كَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ رَسُولًا. |
| 72:23 | He who disobeys God and His Messenger. | مَنْ يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ. |
| 73:16 | Then Pharaoh disobeyed the Messenger. | فَعَصَىٰ فِرْعَوْنُ الرَّسُولَ. |
| 58:4 | That you believe in God and His Messenger. | لِتُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ. |
| 58:5 | Those who antagonize God and His Messenger. | إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحَادِّثُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ. |
| 35:25 | Their Messengers came to them with clear proofs, with Scriptures and the illuminating Book. | جَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَبِالْكِتَابِ الْمُنِيرِ. |
| 57:25 | We sent forth our Messengers with clear proofs. | لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ. |
| 64:6 | Their Messengers would bring them the clear proofs. | كَانَتْ تَأْتِيهِمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ. |
| 64:8 | Therefore, believe in God and His Messenger. | فَآمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ. |
| 63:1 | You are His Messenger... | إِنَّكَ لَرَسُولُهُ... |
| 63:5 | Come, that the Messenger of God may seek forgiveness for you. | تَعَالَوْا يَسْتَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ. |
| 63:7 | The Messenger of God. | رَسُولُ اللَّهِ. |
| 64:12 | Obey God and obey the Messenger. If you turn away, Our Messenger's only duty is to deliver the Message. | وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ فَإِن تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَإِنَّمَا عَلَىٰ رَسُولِنَا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ. |
| 48:9 | That you believe in God and His Messenger. | لِتُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ. |
| 48:12 | The Messenger and the believers. | الرَّسُولُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ |

To distinguish the Messengers from the Prophets, God has given the Messengers a unique title. He calls them: “**The Messengers endowed with constancy.**” The purpose of this title is to draw attention to their patience, determination, and constancy in the face of much suffering and rejection. Muhammad was told:

فَاصْبِرْ كَمَا صَبَرَ أُولُو الْعَزْمِ مِنَ الرُّسُلِ.

So endure patiently, as did **the Messengers endowed with constancy.** Qur’án 46:35

The “Prophet” (Nabi نبي)

The Secondary Mission of the Great Messengers

The Qur’án on a few occasions uses the word “Nabi” or Prophet to refer to Muhammad. Surprisingly, the title “the Seal of the Prophets” appears in Súra 33, where the word “Prophet” is linked to Muhammad more than in any other Súra. Is this simply a coincidence, or is there a reason for this? The prime subject of Súra 33 is Muhammad’s married life. This Súra shows that when God wanted to speak about the personal or married life of Muhammad, He used the word Prophet (Nabi). He addressed Muhammad like a father who speaks to his dear son. The word Prophet, as used in Súra 33, expresses a feeling of intimacy between the Creator of the universe and a humble son who obeys Him selflessly. Since the word “seal” appears only in Súra 33, let us examine that Súra in three ways:

1. Study the verses where Muhammad is called a Prophet.
2. Examine how God shifts from one title to another as the subject changes.
3. Review a few more verses from other chapters of the Qur’án, where God calls Muhammad a Messenger.

In Súra 33 and others, the title Prophet is often used when Muhammad, His wives, or the believers are addressed directly, especially in relation to personal matters:

33:6 Personal	The Prophet is closer to the believers than their own selves and His wives are like their mothers.	النَّبِيُّ أَوْلَىٰ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجُهُ أُمَّهَاتُهُمْ
33:28 Direct-Personal	O Prophet! Say to your wives...	يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لَأَزْوَاجِكُمْ...
33:30 Direct-Personal	O wives of the Prophet!	يَا نِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ!
33:32 Direct-Personal	O wives of the Prophet!	يَا نِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ!
33:38 Personal	The Prophet is not at fault regarding what God prescribes for Him.	مَا كَانَ عَلَىٰ النَّبِيِّ مِنْ حَرَجٍ فِيمَا فَرَضَ اللَّهُ لَهُ.
33:50 Direct-Personal	O Prophet! We have made lawful for you your wives.	يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِنَّا أَحْلَلْنَا لَكَ أَزْوَاجِكُمْ.

33:59 <i>Direct-Personal</i>	O Prophet! Tell your wives...	يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لَأَزُوجِكُمْ...
33:45 <i>Direct</i>	O Prophet! We have sent you as a witness, a bearer of good news, and a warner.	يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ شَاهِدًا وَمُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا.
The same pattern appears in other chapters:		
60:12 <i>Direct-Personal</i>	O Prophet! If believing women come to you...	يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِذَا جَاءَكَ الْمُؤْمِنَاتُ.
65:1 <i>Direct-Personal</i>	O Prophet! If you divorce women...	يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ...
66:1 <i>Direct-Personal</i>	O Prophet! Why do you forbid [for yourself] what God has made lawful for you?	يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ لِمَ تُحَرِّمُ مَا أَحَلَّ اللَّهُ لَكَ؟
66:3 <i>Personal</i>	And when the Prophet confided to one of His wives...	وَإِذْ أَسْرَ النَّبِيُّ إِلَى بَعْضِ أَزْوَاجِهِ...
66:8 <i>Personal</i>	On a day when God will not disgrace the Prophet.	يَوْمَ لَا يُخْزِي اللَّهُ النَّبِيَّ.
66:9, 9:73 <i>Direct</i>	O Prophet, stand against the unbelievers	يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ جَاهِدِ الْكُفَّارَ.
9:113 <i>Personal</i>	It is not for the Prophet and the believers to ask forgiveness for...	مَا كَانَ لِلنَّبِيِّ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنْ يَسْتَغْفِرُوا...

The Shift of the Title in Súra 33 According to the Message

Note how God changes Muhammad's title in Súra 33 from "Prophet" to "Messenger of God" according to the roles assigned to Him. Note the consistent use of the word "Messenger" with "God," and the consistent use of "Prophet" without the word "God":

33:28	O Prophet! Say to your wives...	يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لَأَزُوجِكُمْ...
33:29	But if you desire God, His Messenger, and the life to come...	وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُرِيدُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَالْدارَ الْآخِرَةَ...
33:30	O wives of the Prophet!	يَا نِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ!
33:31	Whoever of you obeys God and His Messenger...	وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ مِنْكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ...
33:32	O wives of the Prophet!	يَا نِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ!
33:33	Obey God and His Messenger.	وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ.
33:36	When God and His Messenger have passed a judgment...	إِذَا قَضَى اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ...

33:36	Whoever disobeys God and His Messenger ...	وَمَنْ يَعِصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ...
33:38	The Prophet is not at fault regarding what God prescribes for Him.	مَا كَانَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ مِنْ حَرَجٍ فِيمَا فَرَضَ اللَّهُ لَهُ.
33:45	O Prophet! We have sent you as a witness, a bearer of good news, and a warner.	يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ شَاهِدًا وَمُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا.
33:50	O Prophet! We have made lawful for you your wives.	يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِنَّا أَحْلَلْنَا لَكَ أَزْوَاجَكَ.
33:59	O Prophet! Tell your wives...	يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لَأَزْوَاجِكَ...
33:71	Whoever obeys God and His Messenger ...	مَنْ يُطِعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ...

The Messenger of God (رسول الله)

As we have noted, “the Messenger of God” (رسول الله) rather than “the Prophet of God” (نبي الله) is the official or prime title of Muhammad. The word “Messenger” is not only used to refer to Muhammad but also to all the great Messengers who established a new religion. Because of its prime significance, let us review a few more references in addition to the ones already cited. Please note that none of these relates to the personal life of the Messengers as did the word “Prophet” in Súra 33:

48:13	He who does not believe in God and His Messenger...	وَمَنْ لَمْ يُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ...
48:26	Upon His Messenger and upon the believers...	عَلَى رَسُولِهِ وَعَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ...
48:27	God has fulfilled His Messenger’s vision.	لَقَدْ صَدَقَ اللَّهُ رَسُولَهُ الرُّؤْيَا.
48:28	It is He who sent forth His Messenger.	هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ.
58:8	Disobedience of the Messenger...	وَمَعْصِيَتِ الرَّسُولِ...
58:9	Disobedience of the Messenger...	وَمَعْصِيَتِ الرَّسُولِ...
58:12	If you converse privately with the Messenger...	إِذَا تَاجَسْتُمْ الرَّسُولَ...
58:13	Obey God and His Messenger.	وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ.
58:20	Those who antagonize God and His Messenger.	إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحَادِّثُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ.
58:21	I [God] and My Messengers.	أَنَا وَرُسُلِي.
58:22	He who antagonizes God and His Messenger.	مَنْ حَادَّ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ.
59:4	They opposed God and His Messenger.	شَاقُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ.
59:6	His Messenger...	رَسُولِهِ...
59:6	God confers authority on His Messengers.	اللَّهُ يُسَلِّطُ رُسُلَهُ.
59:7	His Messenger...	رَسُولِهِ...

59:8	His Messenger...	رَسُولِهِ...
60:1	They expel the Messenger.	يُخْرِجُونَ الرَّسُولَ.
9:128	A Messenger has come to you.	لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ.
17:15	We do not punish until We have sent a Messenger	وَمَا كُنَّا مُعَذِّبِينَ حَتَّى نَبْعَثَ رَسُولًا.
65:11	A Messenger, reciting upon you the verses of God...	رَسُولًا يَتْلُو عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ...
61:5	Moses said to His people: "O My people...I am God's Messenger to you."	وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِقَوْمِهِ يَا قَوْمِ... أَنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ.
61:6	And when Jesus said: "...I am God's Messenger to you...giving you the good news of the Messenger [Muhammad] who will come after Me."	وَإِذْ قَالَ عِيسَى... إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ... مُبَشِّرًا بِرَسُولٍ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِي.
61:9	It is He who sent His Messenger.	هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ.
61:11	Believe In God and His Messenger.	تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ.
62:2	It is He who has raised up a Messenger.	هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا.
28:59	Your Lord does not destroy the cities, unless He sends to their mother-city a Messenger.	وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ مُهْلِكَ الْقُرَى حَتَّى يَبْعَثَ فِي أُمِّهَا رَسُولًا.
29:18	The Messenger's sole duty is to deliver the Message.	وَمَا عَلَى الرَّسُولِ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ.
33:21	The Messenger of God [Muhammad] is an excellent Exemplar for you.	لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ.
34:45	They denied My Messengers.	فَكَذَّبُوا رُسُلِي.
36:2-3, 6	By the Wisdom of the Qur'an, you are indeed one of the Messengers...to warn a people, whose fathers were not warned.	وَالْقُرْآنَ الْحَكِيمَ إِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ... لِتُنذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّا أُنذِرَ آبَاؤُهُمْ.
36:30	Woe betide the servants! No Messenger comes to them that they do not mock.	يَا حَسْرَةً عَلَى الْعِبَادِ مَا يَأْتِيهِمْ مِّنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ.
	Another translation:	
	Woe betide the servants! No Messenger will come to them that they will not mock the way they used to mock.	
38:14	They all denied the Messengers.	إِنْ كُلُّ إِلَّا كَذَّبَ الرُّسُلَ.
40:5	Every ummah strived against its Messenger.	وَهَمَّتْ كُلُّ أُمَّةٍ بِرَسُولِهِمْ.
40:22	Their Messengers came with clear proofs, but they disbelieved.	كَانَتْ تَأْتِيهِمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَكَفَرُوا.

40:70	Those who denied the Book and what We sent with Our Messengers...	الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِالْكِتَابِ وَبِمَا أَرْسَلْنَا بِهِ رُسُلَنَا...
40:78	It is not in any Messenger’s power to bring a verse except by God’s leave.	وَمَا كَانَ لِرَسُولٍ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ بِآيَةٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ.
40:83	Then, when their Messengers came to them with clear proofs, they rejoiced [prided themselves] in the knowledge they had.	فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَرِحُوا بِمَا عِنْدَهُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ.
41:43	The same things are being said about you that were said to the Messengers before you.	مَا يُقَالُ لَكَ إِلَّا مَا قَدْ قِيلَ لِلرُّسُلِ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ.
57:19	Those who believe in God and His Messenger...	وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ.
57:21	For those who believe in God and His Messengers...	لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ...

To show that Muhammad’s primary Mission is not one of a Prophet, but that of a Messenger, God spoke the following verse in Súra 33—the same chapter where He calls Muhammad “the Seal of the Prophets”:

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ مِيثَاقَهُمْ وَمِنْكَ وَمِنْ نُوحٍ وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى وَعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ وَأَخَذْنَا مِنْهُمْ مِيثَاقًا غَلِيظًا.

And [remember] when We took *from the Prophets* their covenant, and *from you* [Muhammad], and from Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, son of Mary. We took from them a firm *Covenant*. Qur’án 33:7

Note how clearly, in the preceding verse, God separates *the Prophets* from *the great Messengers* such as: Muhammad, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. What is that Covenant? This topic was covered in *Chapter 3 (The Seal of the Prophets. What Does it Mean?)* Let us review it once again here:

The continuous or periodic appearance of the Messengers—Progressive Revelation of Knowledge—is based on a Covenant—perhaps the greatest of all divine Covenants. The following verse of the Qur’án (Chapter 3, verse 81) describes this Covenant in the form of *a dialogue between God and His Prophets*:

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ اللَّهُ مِيثَاقَ النَّبِيِّينَ لَمَا آتَيْتُكُمْ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَحِكْمَةٍ ثُمَّ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مُصَدِّقٌ لِمَا مَعَكُمْ لَتُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهِ وَلَتَنْصُرُنَّهُ قَالَ أَأَقْرَرْتُمْ عَلَىٰ ذَلِكُمْ إِصْرِي قَالُوا أَقْرَرْنَا قَالَ فَاشْهَدُوا وَأَنَا مَعَكُمْ مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ. Qur’án 3:81

Here is a translation of this verse in the form of a dialogue:

God’s Promise and His Expectation:	I give you the Book and the Wisdom. Then a Messenger [Muhammad] will come to you <i>confirming</i> what you already possess. You must believe in Him and give Him support. Do you affirm and <i>confirm</i> my Covenant in this matter?
Prophets’ Response:	We do <i>confirm</i> this Covenant.
God:	Bear witness that I am with you and will be with you as one of the witnesses.

There are other verses that draw a distinction between the Messengers and the Prophets. The following verse shows that David was a Prophet:

لَقَدْ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَ النَّبِيِّينَ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَأَتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ زُبُورًا.

We bestowed distinctions on some of the Prophets more than others, and We gave David *the Psalms*. Qur'án 17:55

The following verses show that a main Mission of the Prophets is to prophesy or give us a glimpse of God's future plan for humankind:

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا وَإِبْرَاهِيمَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي ذُرِّيَّتِهِمَا النَّبُوَّةَ وَالْكِتَابَ...

Indeed We sent forth Noah and Abraham and assigned **Prophethood** [prophesying] and the Book to their offspring... Qur'án 57:26

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنَّبُوَّةَ.

Indeed We gave the children of Israel the Book, the Command, and the [gift of] prophecy. Qur'án 45:16

When we examine the Books of the Hebrew Prophets—such as David, Daniel, and Isaiah—we find that they contain many predictions concerning the coming of new Messengers from God—such as Jesus and Muhammad.

“Nabí” has the same root as the word “Nubuwat” (نُبُوَّة) which the dictionary defines as: prophecy, forecast, and prediction. “Rasúl” has the same root as “Risálat” (رِسَالَةٌ), which the dictionary defines as: letter, note, message, and epistle. Thus, literally the word “Nabí” refers to the one who prophesies the coming of certain events, among them the coming of new Messengers; and Rasúl refers to the One who brings the Message of a new religion from God.

The following verses offer a few more examples of those who have the position or station of a Prophet:

وَأذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِدْرِيسَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صِدِّيقًا نَبِيًّا.

And mention in the Book Idris. He was a devoted Prophet. Qur'án 19:56

وَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَكُلًّا جَعَلْنَا نَبِيًّا.

We granted him Isaac and Jacob and each We made a Prophet. Qur'án 19:49

Then two verses later, Moses is introduced as both a Messenger and a Prophet:

وَأذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ مُوسَى إِنَّهُ كَانَ مُخْلَصًا وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَبِيًّا.

And remember in the Book, Moses. He was devoted—a Messenger and a Prophet. Qur'án 19:51

Moses Himself was a Prophet, because He predicted the coming of One like Himself—Muhammad*:

And the Lord said to me: “I will raise up for them a Prophet like you [Moses] from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth.” Deuteronomy 18:17-18 NKJ

* Christians believe that the above prophecy refers to Jesus. It may refer to both Muhammad and Jesus.

After referring to Moses as a Messenger and a Prophet, His brother Aaron is introduced as a Prophet:

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ مِنْ رَحْمَتِنَا أَخَاهُ هَارُونَ نَبِيًّا.

And We granted Him out of our mercy His brother—Aaron—a Prophet. Qur’an 19:53

One of the distinguishing marks of God’s Plan for humankind is sending a Messenger to every Ummah:

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولٌ.

[God sends] a Messenger for every ummah.

Qur’an 10:47

Such a promise—sending a Messenger to every ummah—is not however, made in relation to the **Prophets**. There is **no** verse that declares “There is a Prophet for every ummah.” Some ummah (plural of ummah) have received no Prophets; others such as the Jewish Ummah have received many Prophets.

The Qur’an uses yet another word—one that refers to both the Messengers and the Prophets. That word is “Mursalin”—the Sent Ones:

إِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ.

You are indeed one of the Sent-Ones.

Qur’an 36:3

See also 37:122-123

Messenger of God and the Seal of the Prophets رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمُ النَّبِيِّينَ Qur’an 33:40

Let us now study the verse that contains the word “seal” in the context of the verses that follow it:

مَا كَانَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ مِنْ حَرَجٍ فِيمَا فَرَضَ اللَّهُ لَهُ سُنَّةَ اللَّهِ فِي الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ قَدَرًا مَقْدُورًا الَّذِينَ يُبْلَغُونَ رَسُولَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَخْشَوْنَهُ وَلَا يَخْشَوْنَ أَحَدًا إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ حَسِيبًا مَا كَانَ مُحَمَّدٌ أَبَا أَحَدٍ مِّن رِّجَالِكُمْ وَلَكِن رَّسُولَ اللَّهِ وَخَاتَمَ النَّبِيِّينَ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا... يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ شَاهِدًا وَمُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا وَدَاعِيًا إِلَى اللَّهِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَسِرَاجًا مُنِيرًا.

There is no blame on Muhammad in that which God has prescribed for Him. This has been God’s Way concerning [the personal life] of those who came before [Him].

God’s decree is preordained [concerning] those who deliver God’s Messages, who fear none but Him. God suffices [is trustworthy] as a Reckoner. Muhammad is not the Father of any of your men, but [rather] ***the Messenger of God and the seal of the Prophets***. God is aware of everything... O Prophet, We have sent you as a witness, a bearer of good news, a Warner, the One who invites people to God by His leave, and an illuminating Lamp.

Qur’an 33:38-46

What do the preceding verses declare? Here are their main messages:

- Muhammad’s marriages are prescribed by God. He has no choice but to follow what God has planned for Him.

- In relation to such matters, God has treated the Messengers before Him in the same way. No one has the right to question their married life.
- Muhammad's role is not like that of a father who must watch over his children and be their protector and guardian.
- His role is rather to deliver God's Message to the people and to place His seal of approval on the Prophets who delivered God's Message before Him.

After the preceding Message, God assigns a few further roles to Muhammad. He asks Him:

- To serve as a witness over His followers to see how they will behave.
- To give good news to the believers who behave according to the teachings of the Qur'án.
- And to warn the believers who fail to live by their beliefs as well as those who deny Islam.

The verses cited in this chapter indicate that the words "Messenger" (Rasúl) and "Prophet" (Nabí) point to *different* roles assigned to Muhammad. There is no question that Muhammad's *prime* role or mission was *not* that of a Prophet (Nabí), but rather that of a Messenger (Rasúl). Why then is the word "seal" attached to "Prophet" and not to "Messenger"? This is very significant.

The context of verse 33:40 shows that the word "seal" has no connection to being the first Prophet or the last Prophet. When we look at the verses that follow it, we discover that God is describing all the diverse roles or missions He has bestowed on Muhammad. The Qur'án shows clearly that all the Messengers who came before Muhammad had exactly the same missions.

If we study verses 33:38 and 33:39, we learn that the last few words of verse 38 are connected to verse 39:

سُنَّةَ اللَّهِ فِي الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَ [سُنَّةَ اللَّهِ فِي...] الَّذِينَ يُبَلِّغُونَ رِسَالَاتِ اللَّهِ.

This is God's Way concerning [the married life of] those who came before [Muhammad]... and this is [also] God's Way concerning those who deliver God's Messages [after Muhammad]. Qur'án 33:38-39

As we can see, the two verses point to two unchanging practices:

- God has a Sunnah (tradition, custom, law) in relation to the married life of His Messengers.
- God has another Sunnah in relation to the delivery of His Message.

The implication of the two verses is clear: "God has established certain rules or guidelines concerning the married life of His Messengers. He has also established certain rules or guidelines concerning the way He has communicated, and will continue to communicate, with humankind. The rules and guidelines concerning these two practices will not change."

Thus, contrary to what most Muslim theologians have assumed, the widely-quoted verse 33:40, if viewed in its context, ***points to a conclusion exactly opposite to what most Muslims have been led to believe***. It confirms what numerous other verses confirm: ***that God’s universal System of Communication with human beings is a Sunnah or a Practice that will never change***.

Once again, let us review all the missions God has assigned to Muhammad:

1. A Messenger from God.
2. The One who places His seal of approval on the Prophets and Messengers who came before Him.
3. A witness over His followers to see how they will behave.
4. The One who gives good news to true believers.
5. The One who warns the deniers and false believers.
6. The One who invites the people to God, but is not responsible for their response.
7. The One who is the Lamp of guidance for humankind.

Nowhere else in the Qur’án can we find a Súra that assigns so many Missions to Muhammad, except Súra 33, where the title of the Seal of the Prophets is used. The contents of this chapter lead us to these conclusions:

- The context of the title “the seal of the Prophets” proves the exact opposite of what most Muslims are led to believe.
- The many Quranic verses quoted above clearly show that Muhammad’s primary Mission was that of a “Rasúl” rather than that of a “Nabi.” If God wanted to tell us that Islam was the last Revelation from Him, why did He say: “The Seal of the Prophets,” and not “the Seal of the Messengers”?

10

The Messengers' Prime Purpose or Mission

The Qur'an shows clearly that God's prime purpose of sending His Messengers are twofold:

- To warn us of the consequences of our misdeeds and the denial of His Messengers.
- To make us aware of the blessings in store for those who welcome His Messengers and live a saintly life.

Statements like the following are found repeatedly in almost every Súra of the Qur'an:

إِن أَنْتَ إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا وَإِنْ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ إِلَّا خَلَا فِيهَا نَذِيرٌ وَإِنْ يَكْفُرُوكَ فَقَدْ كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ...

You [Muhammad] are only a Warner. We have sent you in truth as a bearer of good news and a Warner. There is no "ummah" to whom a Warner did not come. If they denounce you as a liar, those before them were also denounced... Qur'an 35:23-25

إِن أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ.

I [Noah] am only a clear Warner.

Qur'an 26:115

رُسُلًا مُّبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ لِئَلَّا يَكُونَ لِلنَّاسِ عَلَى اللَّهِ حُجَّةٌ بَعْدَ الرُّسُلِ.

Messengers who bring good news and give warnings, so that people will have no evidence against God [no excuses for misbehaving]. Qur'an 4:165

وَمَا نُرْسِلُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ إِلَّا مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ.

We do not send Messengers except to be bearers of good news and warners...

Qur'an 6:48

A more fluent translation:

Our only purpose in sending Messengers is to give good news and to warn. Qur'an 6:48

Why do we need to be warned? Because of our selfish tendencies and desires. Did these tendencies and desires suddenly disappear in the 7th century, after the Advent of Islam? Will they ever disappear? As we noted:

فِطْرَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ.

God endowed human beings with a nature. The original nature of His creation is unchangeable.

Qur'an 30:30

Why do we need good news? To receive the inspiration to overcome our selfish desires. To remember that God is in charge and has planned a wonderful destiny for each of us, provided we submit to His plan.

هَذَا كِتَابٌ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّسَانِنَا عَرَبِيًّا لِّيُنذِرَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا وَيُبَشِّرَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ.

This is a confirming Book in Arabic to warn the wrongdoers and to serve as good news to those who do good.

Qur'án 12:46

See also 18:2; 48:9

Does the state of the world give us any indication that humans no longer need to hear good news, and receive warnings?

We should note that the preceding verses do not speak about the past. They do not say that God *sent* Messengers or Reminders for a given purpose. They refer to God's everlasting purpose of *sending* Messengers. They speak about His Sunnah (tradition, custom, laws), about His Way of guiding the humankind to their divine destiny.

Further, these verses do not refer to the “completeness or perfection” of a specific religion. They point to our need to be reminded of the consequences of our deeds. Since that need never changes, God's Sunnah of satisfying that need will also never change.

Muslims who deny the need for the coming of new Messengers from God are following in the footsteps of the Jews and Christians:

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمْ عَلَى فَتْرَةٍ مِّنَ الرَّسُولِ أَن تَقُولُوا مَا جَاءَنَا مِن بَشِيرٍ وَلَا نَذِيرٍ فَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بَشِيرٌ وَنَذِيرٌ وَاللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ.

O people of the Book! Our Messenger has come to you after a period of time to make clear to you [what you need to know], lest you should say: “No Bearer of good news or a Warner has come to you.” God has power over everything. Qur'án 5:19

The preceding verse contains a critical message we often overlook:

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمْ...

O people of the Book! Our Messenger has come to you...to make clear to you [or to explain to you]... Qur'án 5:19

What did God explain or make clear to the Jews and Christians? He explained the meaning of their Scriptures. Do the Jews and Christians know the true meaning of the Bible? Certainly not! Similarly, can Muslim scholars claim that they are an exception to the rule, that unlike the Jews and Christians, they know the meaning of their sacred Scripture—the Qur'án? Should they close the door to the Advent of a new Messenger because they know for sure what the word “seal” means? By closing the door, do they not imply that: “God does not have power over everything”?

Consider also the following verse:

فَهَلْ يَنْتَظِرُونَ إِلَّا مِثْلَ أَيَّامِ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِن قَبْلِهِمْ قُلْ فَانْتَظِرُوا إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ مِنَ الْمُنْتَظِرِينَ.

Do they, then, expect anything other than the like of the days of those who came and left before them? Say: “Wait on! I also like you will be waiting. Qur'án 10:102

The preceding verse teaches us this Message: the past is the mirror of the future. The basic pattern of human life will not change. People will once again forget what every Warner comes to help them remember. Today we see a clear fulfillment of the Quranic message. Our world is once again in a desperate need for a Warner like Muhammad, Moses, and Jesus. Can anyone deny this need? Why then should God's purpose of

sending Messengers after the Advent of Muhammad suddenly change? Why should His Sunnah of warning us and giving us good news suddenly stop? Why should verses like the following become invalid for the future?

مَا تُرْسِلُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ إِلَّا مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ.

Our only purpose in sending Messengers is to give good news and to warn. Qur'an 6:48

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا مُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا.

Our only purpose in sending you [Muhammad] is to give good news and to warn.

Qur'an 25:56

As the preceding verses demonstrate, Muhammad's Mission was identical with that of all the Messengers sent before Him. There is not a single verse that bestows a unique Mission on Muhammad. The Qur'an says repeatedly that our Messenger—may peace be upon Him—is sent to bring “good news” and to “warn.” Does it ever say that He is also sent “to bring to a conclusion Alláh's Revelation to humankind? Never! Is there a single verse that says: “The Qur'an is the last Book from God to humankind”? None! Can anyone imagine a subject of greater importance than the news of the termination of this well-established and unchanging Sunnah: that of sending new Messengers or Redeemers to humankind at critical times in history to guide them, give them hope, and to remind them of their divine destiny?

What is the purpose of the Qur'an? To complete the divine Revelation or to remind us of our final destination?

مَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ...إِلَّا تَذْكِرَةً لِّمَن يَخْشَى.

We did not reveal the Qur'an...except as a Reminder to him who fears [God].

Qur'an 20:2-3

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ الْكِتَابَ وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ عِوَجًا...لِّيُنذِرَ بَأْسًا شَدِيدًا مِّن لَّدُنْهُ وَيُبَشِّرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ الصَّالِحَاتِ.

Praise be to God who revealed to His servant the Book...to give grave warnings and to announce good news to the believers—the ones who manifest virtuous deeds.

Qur'an 18:1-2

كِتَابٌ...بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا فَأَعْرَضَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ.

A Book...bearing good news and warning. Yet most of them have turned away and are not listening.

Qur'an 41:3-4

As we can see, God's purpose of both sending Muhammad and revealing the Qur'an is identical: they are both sent to us as Reminders. Compare the following statements:

1. Muhammad's only Mission is to bring good news and to warn.
2. Muhammad's Mission is to bring to an end the Sunnah of sending new Messengers.

Which of the preceding statements has by far a greater consequence? The second one. Why? Because the concept of “bringing good news” and “warning” is not new. We already know that “good news” is for the true believers; warning is for the deniers and the hypocritical believers. This concept is found in all the Holy Scriptures. In fact, “Gospel” means “good news.” All the great Messengers have declared repeatedly that we go to hell

or heaven as a consequence of the quality of our lives, which is determined by these two standards:

- How we respond to God’s new Messengers.
- How we practice our beliefs.

What would be totally unprecedented and, even astounding, is to learn that the well-established and ancient Sunnah of communications between God and His intelligent—but often negligent and forgetful—creatures has suddenly ceased! This concept is so revolutionary, so unreasonable, so unexpected, and so monumental that it would need to be stated in unmistakable language repeatedly and in diverse ways throughout the Qur’án. Because of its novelty, reason would demand that it should have been repeated far more than the concept of saying that Muhammad’s only role is to serve as a Reminder: to warn and to give good news.

Consider how many times the concept of the need for a Reminder or Warner has been repeated throughout the Qur’án. The following are only a few of the many references, in addition to the ones quoted in this chapter: 38:65, 70; 46:9; 48:8; 18:2; 17:105; 18:56; 22:49; 67:26; 71:2; 42:7; 35:24; 79:45; 34:46, 28; 25:1, 56; 29:50.

Many other subjects, such as the story of past Messengers, are repeated many times in the Qur’án. The topic of hell and heaven is mentioned hundreds of times—perhaps on every page of the Qur’án. Why is there not a single statement addressed to Muhammad that says: “You have been sent not only to bring good news and warn, but also to terminate or bring to a conclusion the ancient Sunnah of sending new Reminders or Warners from God”? Why then has the most consequential and far-reaching news that we could ever hear from our Creator not been found anywhere in the Qur’án? Why would the Book that is the encyclopedia of spiritual Knowledge be silent on the most monumental issue imaginable?

تَفْصِيلَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ.

It [the Qur’án] contains an exposition of all things.

Qur’án 12:111

مَا فَرَطْنَا فِي الْكِتَابِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ.

We have not left anything out of the Book.

Qur’án 6:38

Thus we can learn the answer to this question of infinite consequences—the continuation or cessation of divine Revelation—not only from what *is* in the Qur’án, but also from what is *not* in the Qur’án.

The Sunnah of Sending New Warners or Reminders

Contrary to what many believers are led to believe, the Qur’án declares that the Sunnah of sending new Warners will continue indefinitely. Consider these verses:

وَأَفْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ لَئِن جَاءَهُمْ نَذِيرٌ لَّيَكُونُنَّ أَهْدَىٰ مِنَ الْإِحْدَىٰ الْأُمَمِ فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ نَذِيرٌ مَّا زَادَهُمْ إِلَّا نُفُورًا
اسْتَكْبَارًا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَكْرَ السَّيِّئِ وَلَا يَجِيبُ الْمَكْرَ السَّيِّئِ إِلَّا بِأَهْلِهِ فَهَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا سُنَّتَ الْأَوَّلِينَ فَلَن تَجِدَ
لِسُنَّتِ اللَّهِ تَدْبِيرًا وَلَن تَجِدَ لِسُنَّتِ اللَّهِ تَحْوِيلًا.

They swore their most earnest oaths that if a Warner came to them, they would be more rightly guided than any one of the other ummah [plural of ummah]. But when a Warner came to them, it [His coming] only increased their aversion. [They showed aversion] out of arrogance and evil cunning. But the evil cunning will encompass only those who perpetrate it. Then, can they expect anything [else] except the way people acted before? Therefore no change will you find in God's Way of acting. [Again], no alteration will you find in God's Way of acting. Qur'an 35:42-43

What do the preceding verses teach us? They teach us that:

- People throughout all ages have lived under the illusion of being different from those who came before them. They have assumed that if they had lived at the time of the coming of past Messengers, they would not have denied them. But this has been only an illusion, a false assumption. Because when those people faced a new Warner or Messenger from God, they acted just like their forebears.
- They did so out of arrogance.
- They plotted against their Warner, but faced the consequences of their plotting.
- Can those who live in the future—after the advent of Islam—expect a different response toward God's future Warners? Can they expect any treatment other than rejection? Will people's "Sunnah" (tradition or custom) of treating the new Reminders or Warners change?
- No it will not, neither will God's Sunnah of sending His Warners and Redeemers. They will come in the future in just the same way that they have come in the past.

The Sunnah of sending a Warner to *every* ummah is a promise made repeatedly in the Qur'an:

إِنْ أَنْتَ إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا وَإِنْ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ إِلَّا خَلَا فِيهَا نَذِيرٌ.

You are only a Warner. Indeed We have sent you as a Bearer of good news and a Warner. There is no ummah to whom a Warner has not been sent. Qur'an 35:23-24

Why was Muhammad sent? To complete God's Revelation or to warn a people to whom no Warner had been sent?

إِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ... لِنُنذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّا أَنْذَرَ آبَاؤُهُمْ فَهُمْ غَافِلُونَ.

You are truly one of those sent... to warn a people whose fathers were not warned, and so they remain heedless. Qur'an 36:3, 6

رَحْمَةً مِّن رَّبِّكَ لِنُنذِرَ قَوْمًا مَّا أَنَا لَهُمْ مِّن نَّذِيرٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ.

[You are sent] as a mercy from your Lord, to warn a people who had no Warner prior to you, that perhaps they may take heed. Qur'an 28:46

If God could not leave any group of people without a Warner, why would He suddenly change His Way and fail to send even a single Warner to the world for all the ages to come? Thus, as the Qur'an teaches, Muhammad's main mission was to declare the Word of God to a people who had received no Warner or Reminder. This in itself is contrary to the sudden termination of this Sunnah. Why would the need for Warners suddenly cease?

The following verse shows that sending Warners is not simply an event that happened in the past. Rather, it is a Sunnah that will continue into the future:

وَمَا نُرْسِلُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ إِلَّا مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ وَجَادِلَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِالْبَاطِلِ لِيُدْحِضُوا بِهِ الْحَقَّ وَاتَّخَذُوا آيَاتِي وَمَا أَنْذَرْتُهُمْ هُزُوًا.

And We do not [or will not] send the Messengers except as givers of glad tidings and warners. But those who disbelieve [in these verses] dispute with false arguments in order to refute the truth. And they treat My verses and My warnings as a jest and mockery!
Qur'an 18:56

Could not those who “dispute with false arguments” be the same people who deny or dispute with this self-evident truth: that communication between God and human beings will never cease, that humankind will always be in need of Reminders?

The Great News (Qur'an 38:67)

نَبَأٌ عَظِيمٌ

The News of the coming of a new Messenger from God is the greatest and most glorious News. Why would anyone turn away from such News? The coming of a Reminder from God is a reason for great joy; why would anyone engage in denial? The News of the coming of a Redeemer is a reason for hope; why would anyone reject such News? Why would anyone turn away from hope?

وَمَا يَأْتِيهِمْ مِّنْ ذِكْرٍ مِّنَ الرَّحْمَنِ مُحَدَّثٍ إِلَّا كَانُوا عَنْهُ مُعْرِضِينَ فَقَدْ كَذَّبُوا فَسَيَأْتِيهِمْ أَنْبَاءٌ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ.

No new **Reminder** comes [or will come] to them from the Compassionate [God] that they do not [or would not] turn away from Him. Indeed they have denied [the Quranic prophecies]. Therefore there will come to them **the News** of what [of the coming of a new Reminder] they would [or will] mock at.
Qur'an 26:5-6
See also 21:1-5

The preceding verses convey the following messages:

- The people's Sunnah, or their way of life, is to deny the new Reminders—those who remind people of God and the consequences of their choices.
- Once again people will engage in denial as they have done in the past. They will mock at the idea that a new Reminder will come after Muhammad.
- Contrary to their desire, the Message of the coming of a new Reminder will come to them.

What is the News that they will mock?

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا مُنذِرٌ... قُلْ هُوَ نَبَأٌ عَظِيمٌ أَنْتُمْ عَنْهُ مُعْرِضُونَ... أَنْتُمْ أَنَا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ.

Say: I [Muhammad] am only a Warner... Say: **He** [or His advent] is **Great News**, [but] you turn away from **Him**... **I** am only a manifest Warner.
Qur'an 38:65-70

Who is **the Reminder** that people will deny? The One who is “**Great News**” and comes with “**Great News**.” But alas, most Muslims are convinced by their religious leaders that

the “Great News” ended with the advent of Muhammad, that humankind will never again receive any News from the Compassionate—the One who is closer to us than our own heart and soul.

عَمَّ يَتَسَاءَلُونَ عَنِ النَّبَاِ الْعَظِيمِ الَّذِي هُمْ فِيهِ مُخْتَلِفُونَ كَلَّا سَيَعْلَمُونَ ثُمَّ كَلَّا سَيَعْلَمُونَ.

What are they asking each other? About the *Great News*—about whom they have different views. Nay! They will come to know [what or who the Great News] is. Nay again! [In due time] they will know [what the Great News is about]. Qur'an 78:1-5

What does the “disagreement” imply? It implies that some Muslims will welcome the “Great News” while others will engage in denial.

Let us once again remember the following warning from the Qur'an about the “News:”

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا أَن تُصِيبُوا قَوْمًا بِجَهَالَةٍ فَتُصْحَبُوا عَلَىٰ مَا فَعَلْتُمْ نَادِمِينَ.

O ye who believe! Even if an unreliable messenger comes to you with any **News**, ask him for *clear proof*, lest you accuse a group of people with ignorance, and later regret your decision. Qur'an 49:6

The Reminder (Qur'an 72:17)

ذِكْرٌ

Many chapters in the Qur'an predict the coming of a Reminder after Muhammad. Consider the Súra of the Jinn. It begins by referring to some Muslims as the Jinns:

قُلْ أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ أَنَّهُ اسْتَمَعَ نَفَرٌ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ فَقَالُوا إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا قُرْآنًا عَجَبًا يَهْدِي إِلَى الرُّشْدِ فَآمَنَّا بِهِ...

Say: It was revealed to Me that a group of Jinn listened. Then they said: “We have indeed heard a wonderful Qur'an. It guides to the right Path. Therefore we believed in it...” Qur'an 72:1-2

The Súra then divides the Muslims into two groups: the “jinns” and the “humans.” What is their main difference? Many Muslims believe that the jinns are mysterious spirits that roam the universe. But a careful study of the Qur'an shows that they are human beings who keep their beliefs or true motives a secret. They live in two different worlds: one visible to all people, the other visible only to themselves. Many of the jinns are hypocritical believers who use religion as a mask to cover their evil intentions. These are the false believers who have caused many religious wars throughout history. The jinns often rise to positions of leadership, and instill prejudice and hatred in their followers toward their supposed enemies. They need enemies to preserve their power. We find such leaders in all religions. Consider those Shiite leaders who teach the masses of their followers that the Sunnites are their enemies, and the Sunnite leaders who teach their followers to regard the Shiites as their enemies. Who caused the death of over 50,000 mostly civilian Muslims in Iraq? For what reason did Muslims attack each other? How many more were injured, or were left widows, motherless, fatherless, or homeless? Can a true Muslim justify such levels of animosity and violence against his fellow-believers? Are those who cause such wholesale death and destruction be truly considered as human beings? Are they worthy of that title? No, they are jinns in the guise of humans.

With the preceding introduction in mind, let us now study the Quranic prophecies about those two groups of believers:

وَأَنَّهُ كَانَ رِجَالٌ مِّنَ الْإِنسِ يَعُوذُونَ بِرِجَالٍ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ فَزَادُوهُمْ رَهَقًا... وَأَنَّهُمْ ظَنُّوا كَمَا ظَنَنْتُمْ أَن لَّن يَبْعَثَ اللَّهُ أَحَدًا... وَأَنَا مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ وَمِمَّا دُونَ ذَلِكَ... وَأَنَا لَمَّا سَمِعْنَا الْهُدَىٰ آمَنَّا بِهِ فَمَن يُؤْمِن بِرَبِّهِ فَلَا يَخَافُ بَحْصًا وَلَا رَهَقًا وَأَنَا مِّنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَمِمَّا الْقَاسِطُونَ فَمَنْ أَسْلَمَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ تَحَرَّوْا رَشَدًا وَأَمَّا الْقَاسِطُونَ فَكَانُوا لِجَهَنَّمَ حَطَبًا وَالْوُاسِقُونَ اسْتَقَامُوا عَلَى الطَّرِيقَةِ لَأَسْقِينَهُمْ مَّاءً غَدَقًا لِنَفْسِهِمْ فِيهِ وَمَنْ يُعْرِضْ عَن ذِكْرِ رَبِّهِ يَسْلُكْهُ عَذَابًا صَعَدًا.

A group of “human beings” will [or would] seek refuge with a group of “jinns” [will depend on them as their leaders]. They [the group of jinns] increased their perversion [misguided the human beings]. And they [the jinns] assumed, even as you [any sincere Muslim] assumed [followed the jinns’ beliefs], that God will never [again] raise any One [send any Reminder]... And some of us [Muslims] are righteous and some of us are just the opposite [are deviant]... And when we [the righteous Muslims] heard the Guidance [the News of the new Reminder], we did believe in Him. Whoever believes in his Lord [by welcoming the new Reminder] need not fear loss or injustice. Some of us [Muslims] are submitters [are true Muslims], and some of us are deviant. Those who [truly] submit have surely chosen the right Path [have accepted the promised Reminder]. As for those who deviate [from the right Path by denying the new Reminder], they shall be firewood for hell. If they had chosen the right Path, We would have bestowed on them Water [of spiritual life] in abundance. So as to test them thereby. [The coming of a Reminder is a test for people.] And whoever turns away from the Reminder of his Lord [the One his Lord sends] will be afflicted with a severe torment.

Qur’án 72:6-17

Let us now review the contents of the preceding prophecies:

- Muslims are divided into two groups: true believers and pretentious believers. All religions harbor such a diversity of followers.
- Muslims are also divided into leaders and followers.
- Both groups share this belief: God will never again send any Reminder to humankind.
- But generally, in terms of character, there are two kinds of Muslims: righteous, and deviants (or pretenders).
- When the righteous—the true Muslims—hear the call of the new Reminder, they will recognize Him and accept Him. These believers will choose the right Path.
- But the deviant Muslims choose to become “firewood for hell.” Hell-fire is the consequence of their denial.
- If they had chosen the right Path by accepting the new Reminder, instead of becoming firewood, they would have received the Water of Life—the greatest gift God may bestow on humans.
- The coming of the new Reminder is a test for all Muslims. A test always separates people: Some believers succeed, others fail.
- The believers should remember that accepting or rejecting the new Reminder is a serious matter. Anyone who rejects Him should expect a severe torment in hell.

The Consequences of Denying the New Reminders

Since people have always denied the Warner or Reminder sent to them, we should be careful not to allow this Sunnah of denial to continue:

كِتَابٌ...بَشِيرًا وَنَذِيرًا فَأَعْرَضَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ.

A Book...bearing good news and warning. Yet most of them have turned away and are not listening.

Qur'an 41:3-4

What will happen if Muslims believe and practice this doctrine: “that the revelation of Knowledge from God stopped with Muhammad”? The consequences of such a belief are devastating—far beyond human understanding. This false belief will incite and drive Muslims to deny and even persecute, with a clear conscience, the thousands of Messengers or Reminders who will come in the future—in the next three to four thousand million years!

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أَوْ كَذَّبَ بِالْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَاءَهُ أَلَيْسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لِّلْكَافِرِينَ؟

Who, then, is more unjust than one who imputes falsehood to God [calls a true Messenger false], or denies the Truth when it comes to him? Is there not in Hell a dwelling for those who deny [the Truth]?

Qur'an 29:68

See also 30:10

This is how awful the consequences of this false claim and this grand fantasy can be! And yet we can find no reference for it anywhere in the Qur'an.

تَكَادُ تَمَيَّزُ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ كُلَّمَا لَفِيَ فِيهَا فَوْجٌ سَأَلَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَا أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ نَذِيرٌ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ قَدْ جَاءَنَا نَذِيرٌ فَكَذَّبْنَا وَقُلْنَا مَا نَزَّلَ اللَّهُ مِن شَيْءٍ إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ كَبِيرٍ وَقَالُوا لَوْ كُنَّا نَسْمَعُ أَوْ نَعْقِلُ مَا كُنَّا فِي أَصْحَابِ السَّعِيرِ.

It [hell] almost bursts with rage. Every time a new throng is cast into it, its keepers ask them: “Has no Warner come to you?” They will say: “Yes indeed: a Warner came to us, but we denied Him and said: “God did not send down anyone.” You [deniers] indeed committed a grave error. And they will [also] say: “Had we listened or reasoned [used our minds], we would not be among companions of the Fire!”

Qur'an 67:8-10

What can we learn from the preceding verses? Two significant lessons:

- If someone claims to be a Warner from God, we must investigate his claim. We must listen to what he says and carefully examine the evidence he presents.
- We must then use our reasoning powers—the only standard of judging the truth—to see if he is indeed a true Warner.

The Qur'an teaches us repeatedly, as does the preceding verse, that our only guide to Truth is the gift of reasoning that God has bestowed upon us. We must never allow the winds of tradition, conformity to “authority figures” or the voice of the majority to exert any influence in choosing our spiritual destiny.

What harm can come to us from investigating the news of the coming of a Warner? None! What harm can come to us from *not* investigating? The possibility of denying a

true Warner without ever being aware of our grave misjudgment, and the possibility of becoming an inmate of hell for all eternity!

II

Distinctions of the Divine Word

وَمَا كَانَ هَذَا الْقُرْآنُ أَنْ يُفْتَرَى مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ... لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ مِنْ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ.

This Qur'án could never have been produced except by God...

There is no doubt about it. It is from the Lord of the Worlds. Qur'án 10:37 MF

Suppose God sends a new Messenger. How can we recognize Him? Is there a sure way of testing Him and knowing Him? The answer to this question can be found throughout the Qur'án. Let us therefore identify the standards or signs of divine distinction in Muhammad, and then apply those standards to any Messenger who will come after Him. God repeatedly declares that the Qur'án is the most convincing evidence of its divine origin:

قُلْ لَئِنِ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يَأْتُوا بِمِثْلِ هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ وَلَوْ كَانَ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا.

Say: “Were men and jinn to band together in order to come up with the like of this Qur'án, they will never come up with the like of it, even if they back up one another.”

Qur'án 17:88 MF

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِمَّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ.

If you are in doubt as to what We have revealed to Our servant, then produce a Surah similar to it and call upon your witnesses other than Alláh, if you are truthful.

Qur'án 2:23 MF

قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا مَنِ اسْتَضَعْتُمْ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ.

Say: “Come up, then, with a single Surah like it, and call upon whomever you can, apart from Alláh, if you are truthful.

Qur'án 10:38 MF

See also 29:51; 52:34; 28:49; 46:7; 45: 6-8; 3:184; 17:88; 24:49; 37:157; 40:78

True believers, we are told, can recognize the Word of God even as they recognize their own children:

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْرِفُونَهُ كَمَا يَعْرِفُونَ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ.

Those to whom We have given the Book, recognize it [even] as they recognize their [own] children.

Qur'án 6:20

“The Word of God is exalted” (9:40), and has always served as the ultimate evidence of its origin:

فَإِنْ كَذَّبُوكَ فَقَدْ كَذَّبَ رَسُولٌ مِّن قَبْلِكَ جَاءُوا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالزُّبُرِ وَالْكِتَابِ الْمُنِيرِ.

If, however, they accuse you of lying, Messengers who before you brought clear proofs—the Scriptures and the illuminating Book—were also accused of lying.

Qur'án 3:184 MF

How can the Qur'án prove or point to its Source? In judging Islam, we face only two choices, and must select only one of them. We must either believe that Islam is the greatest manmade deception that God has allowed to prevail, and to hold in its grips for centuries the destiny of hundreds of millions of people; or that it is the greatest Revelation of divine knowledge. How can we tell which alternative is true? One way we can do this is to decide if the Qur'án can in any way be the fruit of the Arabian culture—in fact of any culture. This subject is so vast and so significant, it requires an entire volume. Since that is not our intention, let us cover it only briefly.

If the Qur'án is from God, it must manifest definitive signs of distinction. It must be peerless. Since the time of Muhammad, millions of books have been written. What specific features can raise the Qur'án above those books, can make it unique? Consider the following 18 features or marks of distinction. Each of them alone sets the Qur'án apart from and above all those books. Together they portray a peerless profile, unlike any other book:

- Muhammad was “unlettered” and uneducated (7:157), yet He produced a Book that has endured more than a thousand years. How can an uneducated man, living in the most primitive culture, compose even an ordinary work, let alone a Book like the Qur'án?
- How can an ordinary author compose a book that has transformed and guided the lives of billions of believers for centuries? Where has that transforming power come from? With the exception of other great Messengers, like Jesus and Moses, can we find even one example in the entire history of humankind—one human being who has made so much difference in the lives of so many, in so many ways, for so long?

لَوْ أَنْفَقْتَ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا مَّا أَلَّفْتُ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ أَلَّفَ بَيْنَهُمْ إِنَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ.

Had you spent all there is on earth, you could not have joined their hearts together, but God joined their hearts. He is Mighty and Wise. Qur'án 8:63

- How can an uneducated writer produce a book of exquisite beauty, like the Qur'án, without pause or correction? In the history of humankind, there is not even a single example that resembles the revelation of the Qur'án. (Great authors revise their works repeatedly.)
- How can anyone explain this wonder: An uneducated and seemingly ordinary Man (Muhammad) arises, without support from anyone, against the most deeply ingrained belief—idolatry—one held passionately by a most violent and cruel people the world has ever seen, and He succeeds in uprooting this belief within His lifetime? Who gave this uneducated Man the power to accomplish this wonder?
- What motivated Muhammad to arise and undertake such an extremely dangerous and difficult task without support from anyone? Who gave Him this idea? Who inspired Him? Who would put himself and his family in grave danger to teach people that there is only one invisible God?
- How can an uneducated person, like Muhammad, recognize and challenge certain false scientific beliefs of His time—such as the motion of the sun around the earth? Consider these verses:

وَالشَّمْسُ تَجْرِي لِمُسْتَقَرٍّ لَهَا ذَلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ.

The sun flows, but has a fixed place. That is decreed by the All-Mighty, the All-Knowing.

Qur'án 36:38

See also 13:2; 39:5

The preceding verse unveils two mysteries:

- It declares that the sun is a **flowing** mass. At the time of Muhammad, no one could have imagined this fact. Only in recent times with the help of powerful telescopes have scientists been able to unveil this mystery.
- The Quranic verse further teaches that the earth moves around the sun, rather than the sun around the earth. The prevailing view held by great astronomers of the time was just the opposite of what the Qur'án declared. The declaration of this concept appeared so unreasonable to the believers at the time of Muhammad, and for centuries after Him, that they tried to find other interpretations for it.

The Qur'án also disclosed this great mystery:

وَكُلٌّ فِي فَلَكٍ يَسْبَحُونَ.

Everything in heaven floats.

Qur'án 36:40

Once again, only recently have scientists discovered that the universe is expanding. Even the sun, which is a fixed star, not only moves around its axis, it also floats through the universe. How did Muhammad, an uneducated man from a primitive culture, discover these mysteries? Such revelations point clearly to a source beyond human knowledge.

- How can an uneducated person, raised in an idolatrous culture, recognize the fallacy or falsehood of certain beliefs held by the followers of other religions—such as the doctrine of the Trinity (God is one, but three persons!)? See: Qur'án 4:171; 5:72-73. Even in this age of reason and enlightenment, Christians continue to hold on to this utterly unfounded, unreasonable, and indeed blasphemous doctrine!
- How can a person raised in a violent and primitive culture (where people would kill each other for trivial reasons and bury their baby daughters alive) demonstrate respect for religious minorities—such as Jews and Christians—and recognize their freedom of worship? We should remember that even today in almost all Muslim countries, religious minorities do not enjoy the freedom that Muhammad granted them.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالصَّابِئُونَ وَالنَّصَارَى مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ.

Those who believe (in the Qur'án), those who follow the Jewish (Scriptures), and the Sabians and the Christians, any who believe in Alláh and the Last Day, and work righteousness, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. Qur'án 5:69 y

- How can an ordinary human being be so broad-minded, so kind and generous as to make the following statement about a religious minority—the Jews—who broke their covenant with Him and betrayed Him at a critical time in the promotion of His mission:

فَبِمَا نَقَضُوا مِيثَاقَهُمْ لَعَنَّاهُمْ... فَاغْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاصْفَحْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِينَ.

And on account of their violating their covenant, We cursed them...yet, pardon them and forgive; God surely loves those who do good for others. Qur'an 5:13 MF
See also 5:82, 41; 10:37

يَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتِيَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَأَنِّي فَضَّلْتُكُمْ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ.

O children of Israel! Remember My grace upon you. I set you above all the peoples of the world. Qur'an 2:47
See also 2:122; 7:140; 44:32; 45:16

- How can a man raised in a culture steeped in ignorance, prejudice, and injustice proclaim and teach the equality of all Messengers before God, and forbid discrimination against anyone of them?

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَلَمْ يُفَرِّقُوا بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ أُولَٰئِكَ سَوْفَ يُؤْتِيهِمْ أَجْرَهُمْ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا.

But those who believe in Allah and His Messengers and **do not discriminate between any of them**, those He will grant them their rewards. Allah is All-Forgiving, Merciful. Qur'an 4:152 MF
See also 2:136, 285; 3:84

Even today in this age of enlightenment, the followers of many religions, including Christians, proudly proclaim and promote the “doctrine of divine discrimination.” They believe God placed Jesus above all other Messengers. Why? Because He was given a “unique” title: the Son of God!✳ This teaching—the equality of Messengers before God—is so profound that it clearly points to this conclusion: the Qur'an could not have come from the narrow and prejudiced minds of the Arabian people—whatever their beliefs or unbeliefs.

Consider how the religious leaders of our time compete against the leaders of other religions: Christians against Muslims, Muslims against Christians, Jews against Christians and Muslims, and so on. Consider how they look down on each other, and try to find and magnify special weaknesses in their opponents and their beliefs. Now compare the attitude of these leaders with those of Muhammad towards the Messengers who came before Him—such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. How can a man raised in that primitive and inhumane culture demonstrate such a degree of nobility, kindly remember His co-Messengers and honor them—the ones who by commonly accepted and practiced standards would be His “opponents”?

Consider Joseph Smith, who established Mormonism. He grew up in a Christian family and community in the 19th century in the United States. And yet he called all churches, except his own church, “corrupt!” This was his level of tolerance for his competitors, who followed his own religion: Christianity!

Christian leaders and scholars continue to deny Muhammad; they call Him a false prophet and His followers lost souls. Yet Muhammad expressed utter humility toward Jesus. He did not bestow any special title of honor on Himself. He said that He was only a Prophet—a man who had received a revelation from God (41:6; 17:93). But He

✳ “Son of God” is not necessarily a unique title, since the Bible refers repeatedly to all human beings as the “sons of God.”

bestowed on Jesus a title infinitely greater than the Son of God. He called Him: the Spirit of God (روح الله). How amazing! How incredible! Think as long as you wish. Can you identify a title that bestows a greater honor on a person than: the Spirit of God? Once again, this act of nobility alone points to Muhammad's divine origin.

This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. I John 4:2

I bear witness that Jesus Son of Mary is the Spirit of God and His Word...
Muhammad¹

We [God] breathed into her [Mary] of Our Spirit [Spirit of God] and made her and her son a Sign [of God] unto the world. Qur'an 21:91

Let us continue with still other signs of distinction in Muhammad as found in the Qur'an.

- How can an ordinary human being be so generous and kind as to attribute miracles to a stranger—a Messenger who came centuries before Him (Jesus), and even to minor prophets, such as Daniel and Solomon—and yet claim no miracles for Himself? See Qur'an 5:110, 111; 19:29-30; 17:93; 21:79-81.
- How can an ordinary human being be so kind and loving as to place a woman—who had been born centuries earlier—above His own dear daughter or wife? Let us see what the Qur'an declares about Mary, mother of Jesus. Christians who deny Islam are ashamed to acknowledge the honor that the Qur'an has bestowed on Mary. They cannot find any statement in the Gospel that comes even close to the following:

وَإِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاكِ وَطَهَّرَكِ وَاصْطَفَاكِ عَلَى نِسَاءِ الْعَالَمِينَ.

And when the angels said: "O Mary, Allah has chosen you and purified you, preferring you to all womankind." Qur'an 3:42 MF

How amazing! The Qur'an places Mary above all the women who have ever lived, yet Protestants believe she was an "ordinary woman" because the New Testament does not bestow any special honors on her!

- How can a man raised in an idolatrous culture acknowledge that a stranger (Jesus) born centuries earlier was conceived by the Holy Spirit?

قَالَتْ رَبِّ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لِي وَلَدٌ وَلَمْ يَمَسِّنِي بَشَرٌ قَالَ كَذَلِكَ اللَّهُ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ إِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُن فَيَكُونُ.

She [Mary] said: "Lord, how can I have a child when I have not been touched by any man?" Allah said: "Thus Allah creates whatever He pleases. When He decrees a matter, He simply says to it: 'Be,' and it comes to be." Qur'an 3:47 MF

See also 66:12

إِنَّ مَثَلَ عِيسَىٰ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ آدَمَ خَلَقَهُ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ كُن فَيَكُونُ.

Jesus in Allah's Sight is like Adam; He created him from dust, then He said to him: "Be," and there he was. Qur'an 3:59 MF

Many Christians, including bishops, priests, and pastors, who have been exposed to the miraculous conception of Jesus all their lives, fail to believe it. And yet a man

raised in an “atheistic” environment (where people ate their gods!) confirms this doctrine, and tells His followers that it is the truth! How can anyone explain this?

- How can a man born into a primitive culture demonstrate such a degree of tolerance toward the followers of other religions?

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالصَّابِئُونَ وَالنَّصَارَى مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ.

Surely, the believers—the Jews, the Sabians, and the Christians—whoever believes in God and the Last Day and does good deeds shall all have nothing to fear, and they shall not grieve.

Qur’án 5:69 MF

See also 2:62

- How can a man raised in a most violent culture teach these virtues?

وَالَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا ابْتِغَاءَ وَجْهِ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً وَيَدْرُؤُونَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةِ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ.

And those who practice patience for the sake of their Lord [to please their Lord], who pray, who bestow on others, secretly and openly, from what God has granted them, who treat kindly those who mistreat them [counter evil with good]—to such believers belong the blessings of the afterlife.

Qur’án 13:22

وَإِذَا حُيِّئْتُمْ بِهِ فحَيُّوا بِأَحْسَنَ مِنْهَا أَوْ رُدُّوها إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَسِيبًا.

When you are greeted with a greeting, greet in return with what is better than the one you received, or [at least] return it equally. God keeps account of everything.

Qur’án 4:86

لَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاَنُ قَوْمٍ عَلَى أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا...

Do not allow the hatred of a certain group [prejudice] to make you depart from justice...

Qur’án 5:8

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ...وَلَوْ عَلَى أَنفُسِكُمْ أَوِ الْوَالِدِينَ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ...

O believers! Be upholders of justice...even if it be against yourselves, your parents, or relatives...

Qur’án 4:135

وَلْيَعْفُوا وَلْيَصْفَحُوا أَلَا تُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ.

Let them pardon and forgive. Do you not wish God’s forgiveness for yourself? God is All-Forgiving and Merciful.

Qur’án 24:22

ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ السَّيِّئَةِ.

Repel [respond to] evil with that which is better.

Qur’án 23:96

وَلَا تَسْتَوِي الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ.

The good deed and the evil deed cannot be equal. Repel [the evil] with one that is better. Then he against whom you have a grudge will turn into an intimate friend.

Qur’án 41:34

إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنْتَأَقَمُوا.

Surely the noblest among you in God's sight is the most pious among you.

Qur'an 49:13

لِلْفُقَرَاءِ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ الَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَأَمْوَالِهِمْ... وَيُؤْتِرُونَ عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ.

Give to the poor emigrants who were driven out of their homes and possessions... [True believers are those who] prefer such people [poor and homeless] over themselves and give to them even the things they love to have for themselves.

Qur'an 59:8-9

A verse in the Qur'an asks the believers to avoid suspicion (negative thinking), spying on others, and backbiting (49:12). Another verse encourages the believers to confer with each other. How can a man who grew up in an autocratic culture encourage consultation?

وَأْتَمِرُوا بَيْنَكُمْ بِمَعْرُوفٍ.

Confer with each other honorably.

Qur'an 65:6

- How can a man who lived in the 7th century in Arabia recognize the evils of drinking alcohol?

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ... رَجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ.

O believers! Wine [and] gambling... are an abomination of the Devil's doing. Avoid them that perchance you may prosper.

Qur'an 5:90 MF

In the United States alone, every year about 17,000 people are killed by drunk drivers. How many millions of lives have been destroyed by alcohol? The horrible consequences of drinking far exceed those of narcotic drugs.

- Muhammad has been accused of waging war to promote Islam. The Qur'an shows that this is not true. If we put all the Quranic verses about war together, we discover that Muhammad engaged only in defensive wars. Those who accuse Muhammad of aggression, focus only on specific verses. If we treat the Gospel the same way, we can also accuse Jesus with aggression. Did Jesus not say:

Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.

Matt. 10:34 NIV

All the Quranic verses concerning war must be viewed in the light of other related verses. Consider this verse:

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُفَاتِلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ.

And fight for the cause of God **against those who fight against you**, but transgress not the limits [do not initiate hostilities]. God loveth not those who transgress the limits.

Qur'an 2:190

The preceding verse teaches two principles:

- Muslims must fight against those who fight against them. Nowhere in the Qur'an are Muslims asked to spread their religion by force.
- The believers should not pass the limits set by God.

The following verse defines those limits:

وَجَزَاء سَيِّئَةٍ سَيِّئَةٌ مِّثْلُهَا فَمَنْ عَفَا وَأَصْلَحَ فَأَجْرُهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الظَّالِمِينَ.

The punishment for an evil is an evil like it, but he who pardons and makes reconciliation, he will be rewarded by God [for his magnanimity]. God does not like the unjust. Qur'an 42:40

What are the implications of the previous law? Suppose a man murders someone's child. The parents of that child can impose death sentence on the murderer. This is justice. But if they choose to forgive, they will receive blessings from God. Therefore, it is to their advantage to forgive and reconcile with the wrongdoers rather than try to get even and remain hateful for life. This verse alone shows that Islam is not a religion of aggression and repression, but rather of justice and mercy. This concept is totally incompatible with the accusation that "Islam is the religion of the sword."

The primitive people of Arabia were quite aggressive. They wanted to prevent the spread of Islam and would not hesitate to kill the new believers. Muslims were asked to subdue such violent people, otherwise they could not even survive much less teach their religion.

How were Muslims told to spread their Faith? The Quranic verses show that God would not force anyone to believe in Him. On the contrary, He appeals to our mind and heart to inspire us to place Him first in our lives. How amazing that the One raised in that inhumane and violent culture teaches His followers to promote Islam through kind and gentle words:

ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ.

Call [the people] to the Way of your Lord with wisdom and kind admonition. And debate [or dispute] with them in the best way [kindly and reasonably]. Qur'an 16:125

وَلَا تُجَادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ.

And do not dispute with the people of the Book unless you do so in the best way [gently and kindly]. Qur'an 29:46

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ.

There is no compulsion in religion. Verily the right Path has become distinct from the wrong path. Qur'an 2:256

How should Muslims speak with Jews and Christians who are unfair and unkind? To them they should say:

أَمَّا بِالَّذِي أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَأُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ وَإِلَهُنَا وَإِلَهُكُمْ وَاحِدٌ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ.

We believe in what God has revealed for us and what He has revealed for you. Our God and your God is one, and to Him do we submit. Qur'an 29:46

How amazing! Muhammad encouraged His followers to show common links between Islam, Christianity, and Judaism by reminding that they all believe in the same God. Today Christian theologians are writing books to show that Allāh is not the God of Christians and Jews! Muhammad promoted unity; Christian leaders who have been exposed to the Word of God promote disunity and prejudice.

How can a man raised in a culture of ignorance and prejudice, demonstrate such a degree of tolerance, wisdom, and kindness?

We could go through the Qur'án and ask a hundred other questions—questions that would point to a source beyond the Arabic culture—in fact even beyond the thinking of the greatest minds of our time. Suppose you were traveling through the deserts of the Arabian Peninsula where you saw nothing but sand, thorns, and simmering heat. Then suddenly you witnessed a garden of exquisite beauty decked with the most splendid fruits and flowers. What would you think? That is how an impartial witness would perceive the Qur'án. The chance that the most brilliant minds of those living in Arabia, or any other country, could produce a book as majestic, magnificent, and profound as the Qur'án is one against infinity. It is an absolute impossibility.

If the Qur'án is so distinct and distinguished, why then its divine origin is not acknowledged by the followers of other religions, such as the Jews and Christians? Why then some of the most brilliant minds fail to find any distinctions in the Qur'án? Instead of beholding its beauty and basking in its wonders, instead of seeing a splendid garden, crowned with celestial fruits and flowers, why do they see only a desert covered with thorns and wild vegetation?

Once again, the Qur'án resolves this paradox. It declares, as does the Bible, that the honor of discovering God's glorious treasures, hidden in His Word, is bestowed only on those who meet certain *spiritual*—not scientific or academic—requirements or standards. Never does the Qur'án or the Bible refer to academic training or knowledge of languages as a requirement for knowing God and His Messengers.

إِنَّهُ لَقُرْآنٌ كَرِيمٌ فِي كِتَابٍ مَكْنُونٍ لَا يَمَسُّهُ إِلَّا الْمُطَهَّرُونَ تَنْزِيلٌ مِّن رَّبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ.

This indeed is the Noble Qur'án, wrapped in mystery. No one can touch it except the pure [in heart]. It is a Revelation from the Lord of the worlds. Qur'án 56:77-80

God conceals His face behind the “veils of glory.” He is wrapped in mystery. Only the pure heart can lift the veil and discover His beauty and grandeur:

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Christ (Matt. 5:8 NKJ)

It is not easy to have true faith. The disciples of Jesus had pure hearts, yet they needed help to know their Messiah:

وَإِذْ أَوْحَيْتُ إِلَى الْحَوَارِيِّينَ أَنْ آمِنُوا بِي وَبِرَسُولِي قَالُوا آمَنَّا وَاشْهَدْ بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ.

And when I (God) inspired the disciples of Jesus to believe in Me and My Messenger (Jesus), they said: “We believe and testify that we are Muslims—those who submit to God.” Qur'án 5:111

Jesus Himself testifies that He chose His disciples. He, by God's grace, revealed His glory to them. Thus knowing the truth depends on one's *spiritual*, not mental capacity. Not everyone who calls himself a believer—a Muslim, a Christian, or a Jew—is a true believer.

Our value in God's sight has nothing to do with our academic accomplishments. Teaching at a famous university or writing a popular book about Islam is a worldly honor. Who deserves to go to heaven? Graduates and professors of famous

universities? No, heaven accepts only the pure in heart and the humble in spirit who also manifest “spiritual wisdom” in choosing their destiny—such as listening to the voice of reason rather than to the loudest voice. God’s standards are often contrary to our standards. Who receives a greater share of God’s blessings: the lowly, or the proud and the powerful?

وَنُرِيدُ أَنْ نَمُنَّ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اسْتُضِعُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَنَجْعَلَهُمْ أَئِمَّةً وَنَجْعَلَهُمُ الْوَارِثِينَ.

We wish to favor the lowly in the land and make them [spiritual] leaders and the inheritors [of our blessings]. Qur’án 28:5

Why are the lowly blessed? Because they do not have inflated egos. The gates of heaven remain closed also to the hypocrites—the believers who never miss their prayers or fasts, who go to mosque every day, read the whole Qur’án every two days, but are fanatical in their beliefs—the believers who give their lives to take innocent lives. In recent times, these fanatics have undermined the glory and honor of Islam in the eyes of the world. They have also caused many Muslims to abandon their faith and even deny the existence of God. No wonder God predicted that the believers would abandon the Qur’án:

يَا رَبِّ إِنَّ قَوْمِي اتَّخَذُوا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ مَهْجُورًا.

O Lord! My people have abandoned this Qur’án. Qur’án 25:30

As there are standards for academic achievements, so are there standards for spiritual honors. If you had authority, would you offer a doctorate degree to anyone who wants it? If not, why then should God bestow the greatest honor—knowing Him and His Messengers—on people who know the Bible and the Qur’án like the palm of their hands, but are spiritually as primitive as a mouse or a monkey (Qur’án 7:166)—individuals who are so biased, so selfish, they cannot pass a simple spiritual test even in relation to their loved ones? Why should God give the honor of living in heaven for all eternity to a Muslim scholar who knows “the letter” of the Qur’án or to a Christian scholar who knows “the letter” of the Bible, yet each of them is as far from the “spirit” of those Scriptures as the earth is from the heavens? Why should He bestow this honor on a renowned professor of Biblical studies at Dallas Theological Seminary or a distinguished professor of Islamic studies at Al-Azhar University, with minds filled with theology, philosophy, and language, but with hearts equally filled with pride, selfishness, and prejudice?

لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لَّا يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ لَّا يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ آذَانٌ لَّا يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا أُولَٰئِكَ كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلَّ هُمْ أَضَلُّ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْغَافِلُونَ.

They have hearts, but do not understand; and they have eyes, but do not see; and they have ears, but do not hear. They are like cattle, or rather are even more misguided. They are the heedless ones. Qur’án 7:179 MF

إِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَابِّ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الصُّمُّ الْبُكْمُ الَّذِينَ لَّا يَعْقِلُونَ.

Worst in God’s sight are the [spiritually] deaf and dumb who do not understand. Qur’án 8:22 MF
See also 62:5

أَفَمَن يَعْلَمُ أَنَّمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِن رَّبِّكَ الْحَقُّ كَمَنْ هُوَ أَعْمَىٰ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ.

Is he who knows that what is revealed to you from your Lord is the truth, like he who is blind? Indeed, only the people of understanding take heed. Qur’án 13:19

See also 7:166, 179; 8:22; 17:41; 28:50; 62:5; 22:46; 63:4

The great honor of being a true believer is granted only to the righteous—those who practice all the virtues the Qur’án teaches. Who then is a true Muslim? Only God knows for sure. Yet He has given us the standards of being a true believer. He has told us about the efforts we must make and the virtues we must acquire in order to become worthy of this honor.

God gave us a mind and a heart. Our success at any task depends on our desire and our efforts to allow these two gifts to do their work as God designed them. What would happen if a pilot failed to follow the established rules of flying? What, then, are the virtues that allow our mind and heart to work as God intended? Let us examine a few:

The Virtues of the Heart

- **Humility**—freedom from self-glory. When we believe that “we know and we know that we know,” we close our heart to new knowledge. Knowledge is a precious gift from God, but if it is not crowned with humility, it leads to pride. It then serves the opposite purpose for which it was intended. The bridge turns into a wall. We should note that both Jesus and Muhammad were rejected by some of the greatest religious leaders and scholars of their time.
- **Thirst for truth**—the desire to grow, to learn, and to seek new knowledge. Would God guide a person who locks himself in a closet of ignorance and conformity?
- **Purity of heart**—from prejudice, selfish desires, worldliness, lust, injustice, greed, and any other blemish. God does not and would not live in a contaminated soul.
- **Spiritual independence**—detachment from previous learning, freedom from relying on “inherited beliefs” and the influence of “authority figures:” priests, rabbis, mujtahids, imams, as well as one’s parents. The Qur’án repeatedly condemns the believers—whatever their religion—who follow a particular path only because their parents follow that path:

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا أَلْفَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا أَوَلَوْ كَانَ آبَاؤُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ شَيْئاً وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ.

When it is said to them: “Follow what Allah has revealed,” they say: “We would rather follow that which our fathers believe.” What, even though their fathers understood nothing [did not use their mind] and were not rightly guided!

Qur’án 2:170 MF

قَالُوا أَجِئْنَا بِتِلْكَ آيَاتِنَا عَمَّا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا وَتَكُونُ لَكُمُ الْكِبْرِيَاءُ فِي الْأَرْضِ؟

They said [to Moses]: “Have you come to us to turn us away from that [faith] in which we found our fathers, so that sovereignty may be yours in the land?”

Qur’án 10:78 MF

See also 5:104, 11, 62, 87

What if you fail to depend on your own judgment? What if you fail to depend on your own God-given gifts? What if you say to yourself: “I am not competent to judge the

message of this book. I will let my parents, mulla, or imam decide for me.” Now suppose you stand before God’s angels on the Day of Judgment and you say: “My parents and religious leaders misled me. Do not blame me!” Do you think your plea will be accepted? If you do, read these verses:

وَبَرَزُوا لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا فَقَالَ الضُّعَفَاءُ لِلَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا إِنَّا كُنَّا لَكُمْ تَبَعًا فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُعْتَدُونَ عَنَّا مِنْ عَذَابِ اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ
قَالُوا لَوْ هَدَانَا اللَّهُ لَهَدَيْنَاكُمْ سَوَاءَ عَلَيْنَا أَجْرُنَا أَمْ صَبْرُنَا مَا لَنَا مِنْ مَحِيصٍ.

And when they will all appear before God, the lowly [the followers] will say to those who considered themselves great [the leaders]: “We were indeed your followers. Can you do anything to save us from God’s punishment?” They [the leaders] will say: “If God had guided us, we would have guided you. Whether we rage or show patience [it makes no difference], there is no way to escape.”

Qur’an 14:21

See also 28:63

To emphasize the significance of spiritual independence, constantly ask yourself: “Why have so many Christians and Jews failed to recognize the divine origin of Muhammad?” Then say to yourself: “What happened to them can also happen to me. If they are captives of their religious leaders, I also can be a captive of *my* religious leaders.”

- **Relying on God and praying persistently for His guidance.** Many Quranic verses declare that without God’s permission, we cannot be guided:

وَمَا كَانَ لِنَفْسٍ أَنْ تُؤْمِنَ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَيَجْعَلُ الرَّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ.

It is not for any soul to believe save by the leave of God. And He lays His wrath on those who do not reason.

Qur’an 10:100

The purpose of praying is to ask God to make us worthy of knowing Him and of attaining His presence.

- **Taking time for your soul.** Can you feed yourself without taking time to eat? The Qur’an teaches that only those who make an effort are guided:

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ.

And those who strive for Our sake, We will certainly guide them to Our ways. Verily God is with the righteous.

Qur’an 29:69

The Virtues of the Mind

Let us now look briefly at the virtues of the mind. The Qur’an asks us repeatedly to think, to ponder, to reason, to understand, and to dig out the facts before deciding. Consider the three critical words in the following verses:

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ... لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ... لِقَوْمٍ يَذَّكَّرُونَ.

In that [concept] there is a sign for a people who *reflect*...a people who *understand* [who reason]...a people who are *mindful*.

Qur’an 16:11-13 MF

What do the preceding virtues encompass?

- **Reflecting requires:** analyzing, questioning, pondering.
- **Understanding requires:** reasoning, depending on evidence, refusing to distort the facts.
- **Being mindful means:** remembering that our everlasting destiny depends on how we use our mind, on the decisions or the choices we make in this life. Being mindful is recognizing that what we think, say, or do has consequences. Only those who allow the light within their soul to guide them are mindful, only they can see the truth:

أَفَمَنْ يَعْلَمُ أَنَّمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ الْحَقُّ كَمَنْ هُوَ أَعْمَىٰ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ.

Is he who knows that what is revealed to you from your Lord is the truth, like he who is blind? Indeed, only the people of understanding [the wise] take heed.

Qur'án 13:19 MF

The Qur'án refers repeatedly to those who follow “supposition” “fantasy” “conjecture” “assumption” or “illusion” without knowing. It speaks about the people who accept as fact suppositions or assumptions that have no roots in reality:

وَمَا يَتَّبِعُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ إِلَّا ظَنًّا إِنَّ الظَّنَّ لَا يُغْنِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْئًا.

Most of them follow nothing but conjecture. Surely conjecture avails nothing against the truth.

Qur'án 10:36 MF

See also 10:66

The Arabic word the Qur'án uses is: zann (ظَنٌّ). Based on the Quranic verses, we can define “ظَنٌّ” as a belief that seldom, if ever, is rooted in reality, but people accept it and live by it because it is popular. Examples of illusions, assumptions, or fantasies popular among Christians:

- Christ is the only Savior.
- Christ is both a man and God.
- God is one but three persons.
- Only Christians go to heaven.

Examples of illusions popular among Christians concerning Islam:

- Islam is not a religion of peace, but of war.
- Muslims are generally violent.
- Allah is not the God that Jews and Christians worship.

What about Muslims? Do they also cherish illusions? The Qur'án clarified the misunderstandings or illusions people had about past religions. But it presented new questions or puzzles that can be resolved only by future Messengers from God.

Muslims, like the followers of all other religions, have also imagined and accepted as fact certain beliefs that are contrary to the clear teachings of the Qur'án. Two illusions stand out among all others:

- In making critical choices, such as choosing a religion, one must conform to the views or beliefs of authority figures rather than his own God-given gifts. This book has referred repeatedly to this illusion and exposed its fallacy.
- Islam is the last religion—this concept is so serious with such grave consequences, it should be called: “the Grand Illusion.” The verses quoted in this book prove that the Qur’án—an encyclopedia of spiritual knowledge—is not silent on this issue. But, as demonstrated, Muslim scholars have resorted to every strategy imaginable to change or conceal the Quranic verses that contradict their Grand Illusion. They have imagined (fantasized) that at the passing of Muhammad, God suddenly became silent!

Who planted the seed of this illusion, and how was it nourished? A long time ago, a Muslim theologian imagined (ظَنَّ) that “seal” means “the end.” He felt good about his fantasy, because it gave his religion a special status among all other religions. He shared his fantasy with others. They also loved it and praised him for his genius. The idea spread like a wildfire. It burned and destroyed every trace of evidence against it. The reasoning and perceptive powers of people grew numb. They stopped thinking and asking questions. If anyone dared to raise a question, he was silenced. They told him: “How dare you question what the greatest scholars in Mecca, Damascus, or Cairo have believed?” Thus the seed of independent thinking was quickly suppressed.

The age of technology has transformed the planet, it has removed all the barriers to communication. The mullas, imams, and mujtahids cannot control the flow of new ideas any longer. Just by pressing a few keys, an entire body of knowledge can be transferred across the planet. What an amazing age!

Enlightened believers cannot be kept slaves to authority figures anymore. The young people do not have to submit to past generations who accepted everything they were told by the man on the pulpit. I hope many books will be written to refute the evidence presented in this book! The clash of ideas will stir the thoughts. Only then can the believers know the truth:

فَبَشِّرْ عِبَادِ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَمِعُونَ الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ أَحْسَنَهُ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَاهُمُ اللَّهُ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمْ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ.

Declare the good news to the servants who hear an utterance and follow the best therein. These are the ones whom God has guided and are endowed with wisdom.

Qur’án 39:17-18

Let us conclude this chapter with a question:

- How would you respond to a new Messenger who produces many volumes of Scriptures as splendid as the Qur’án without any pause or correction?
- How would you respond to a new Messenger as great as Moses, as distinguished as Jesus, and as splendid as Muhammad? Would you deny Him, call Him a deceiver, even persecute Him because a religious leader—a mujtahid, an imam, or a mulla—said: “No Prophet will ever come after Muhammad, because people put their seal or signature at the end of their letters or documents”? If you find this hard to believe, once again read the following statement by Muhammad Asad, one of the great scholars of the Qur’án. His interpretation of the word “seal” is the foundation upon

which Muslims have come to the conclusion that the door to divine Revelation has been closed forever. He declares:

[Muhammad was] the last of the Prophets, just as a seal (khátam) marks the end of a document...²

Now suppose you accepted the popular view expressed by Muhammad Asad and you rejected the new Messenger who has come with mountains of evidence to prove His claim. And then on the Day of Judgment you are asked: “Why did you reject the new Messenger who manifested all the signs of greatness as they appeared in Muhammad and other Messengers?” How would you respond? Would you say: “I thought my religious leaders knew the truth and would guide me to that truth”? And if you were told: “You were given a mind to think for yourself, and were asked repeatedly in the Qur’án not to depend on others. Why then did you fail to use your own mind?” How would you defend yourself? What response would you give? It may be helpful to think of that response and write it down here:

أَفَمَنْ كَانَ عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّهِ وَيَتْلُوهُ شَاهِدٌ مِّنْهُ وَمِن قَبْلِهِ كِتَابُ مُوسَىٰ إِمَامًا وَرَحْمَةً ۗ فَلَآ تَكُ فِي مِرْيَةٍ مِّنْهُ إِنَّهُ
الْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّكَ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ.

What if someone comes with clear proofs from His Lord and recites them as a witness from Him, just as the Book of Moses was a guide and a mercy [to His people]?...Do not have any doubt about Him. ***He is the true One from your Lord. But most people will not believe in Him.***

Qur’án 11:17
See also 22:8

12

Why and How Has the World Been Divided by Religion?

The Qur'an repeatedly asks us to use religion as a means of unity and condemns those who use it for an opposite purpose:

إِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُونِ وَتَقَطَّعُوا أَمْرَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ.

Truly, this, your umma [religion] is one religion, and I am your Lord. Therefore worship Me. But they divided their “amr” [religion] among themselves. Qur'an 21:92-93

أَقِيمُوا الدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوا فِيهِ

Live by the religion [of God] and do not make it a means of separation. Qur'an 42:13

The prime purpose of religion is to bring love, unity, and harmony to the heart of the world. Why is it serving an opposite purpose? Why has it divided the world? Belief in God must lead to peace and joy; why is it breeding war and violence? The root cause of all these negative forces is prejudice, which comes mostly from a lack of true knowledge.

How has religious prejudice captured and enslaved the heart of humankind, and how can it be defeated and destroyed? This chapter gathers together the prime pieces of the “puzzle of religious prejudice.”

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ تَفَرَّقُوا وَاخْتَلَفُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْبَيِّنَاتُ وَأُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ.

Do not be like those who became divided and differed with each other after the clear proofs came to them. For such people a grave torment is in store. Qur'an 3:105

فَاخْتَلَفَ الْأَحْزَابُ مِنْ بَيْنِهِمْ فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا...

But the sects differed with each other. So woe to those who do wrong... Qur'an 43:65

وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ فَاخْتَلَفَ الْأَحْزَابُ مِنْ بَيْنِهِمْ فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ مَشْهَدِ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ.

God is truly your Lord and my Lord. Therefore, worship Him. That is a straight path. But the parties differed among themselves. Woe to those who do not believe in the “spectacle” [the awesome appearance] of the Great Day [of the Lord]. Qur'an 19:36-37

لَا تَكُونُوا... مِنَ الَّذِينَ فَرَّقُوا دِينَهُمْ وَكَانُوا شِيَعًا كُلُّ حِزْبٍ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ فَرِحُونَ.

Do not be... of those who split up their religion and became sects, each group rejoicing in what they had [believed]. Qur'an 30:31-32

To reach our destination, we must first overcome the obstacles—level the ground—and then build a new civilization—a civilization based on absolute and unconditional cooperation between all nations, religions, and races. Unless the followers of the world's great religions recognize how and why they have become separated, the world will

remain in spiritual darkness. Let us bring to light the strategies that the forces of separation have used to divide us. Let us see why they have planted the seeds of superiority and prejudice throughout all ages in the hearts and minds of humankind. Let us learn how prejudice is produced and, like genes, passed from one generation to another. The worst enemy of darkness is light. We should strive to expose the secret ways through which prejudice—this worst enemy of the human race—works in the dark spheres of ignorance to capture and control the hearts and minds of the masses.

Religion must be a positive force in the world. It must bring people together, yet it has often been used as an instrument of separation, violence, and war. This is due largely to the popularity of ‘the theology of superiority, separation, and denial.’ Against the winds of reason and the spirit of the Scriptures, this theology stands like a straw, yet it has endured and persisted because it continues to fuel the flame of this human weakness: I am better than you are because I carry ‘the right’ label. The label can be religion, race, gender, wealth, or membership in an exclusive club. This theology also thrives because it appeals to people's fears. It teaches them to keep to themselves, and not to associate with outsiders in a true spirit of respect, equality, and love.

This sense of superiority and fear is the seed from which every form of prejudice sprouts and spreads. The seed endures because it needs no nourishment from within, nor any effort to grow. Like a parasite, it sustains itself at the expense of others: I am better not because I am better, but because you are inferior! I am wonderful not because I am wonderful, but because you are terrible! This common illusion lies at the root of countless wars; it has caused untold pain and suffering throughout all ages. The same illusion has also contributed to the denial of God’s Messengers.

Let us now see how theologians have created and sustained the theology of superiority, separation, and denial. Jewish theologians have accomplished this purpose by emphasizing that they are God's chosen people. Should we take that title of honor literally? Cannot that honor apply to anyone who responds to the divine call? Are we not all one people created by the one Creator who loves us all equally? Jesus said, "Many are called but few are chosen" (Matt. 20:16). Any soul that walks humbly with God is the chosen one, whatever its race or religion.

Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Romans 3:29

...God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right. Acts 10:34-35

As we noted, Muslim theologians have built their theology of superiority, separation, and denial on a single word! They have selected from the Qur’án a word with multiple meanings, and interpreted it in such a way to demonstrate that Muhammad’s Revelation is so complete, so perfect, that God will never again send another book after the Qur’án, or a Messenger after Muhammad. Muslim theologians simply misinterpret or ignore the Qur’án's repeated references to the principle of progressive revelation: the emphatic promise of the periodic renewal of religion by future Messengers.

Christian theologians have promoted the theology of superiority, separation, and denial in a number of ways; but their strategy is more elaborate. One strategy has been to select and popularize exclusive titles for Jesus, and consistently avoid others. Which titles have

they selected? "Savior," "Redeemer," "Lord," and "Son of God." And which titles have they consistently avoided? "Prophet" and "Messenger." Let us put this selectivity to the test. Both the Old and New Testaments refer to Jesus as a Prophet like Moses:

"And the Lord said to me:...'I will raise up for them **a Prophet like you** from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him."
Deut. 18:17-18

For **Moses** said, "The Lord your God will raise up for you **a Prophet like me**...Indeed all the prophets...have foretold these days."
Acts 3:22-24

What is it to be "like" someone else? Consider this analogy. Can we say an orange is like an apple, or like a banana? No, they are different. Can we say an orange is like a grapefruit or a tangerine? Yes, they are alike. Christian theologians place Jesus far above Moses, and in so doing, place Christians above Jews. Some Christian theologians may compare Moses with Paul and Peter. Others may place Him a little higher, but not much. If Jesus is the sun, they might say, then Moses is a light bulb or perhaps a chandelier! But how can Jesus be so great and Moses not so great, and yet be like each other?

Jesus never claimed to be superior to Moses. In fact, He saw Himself like another Moses:

...had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me...
Christ (John 5:46)

This statement can make sense only if there are fundamental similarities between Jesus and Moses. If we know all the things that distinguish Moses, that set Him apart from ordinary people, then we can apply those same standards to Jesus and hence recognize Him. Consider another example. If a jeweler knows all the properties of gold, he can recognize it wherever it may be found. If Jesus was gold and Moses was brass, the preceding statement would not hold true. But if the two are identical, there is no room for misjudgment, and no excuse for anyone to reject or downgrade either of the two great Messengers. This is why God has placed His Spirit in **all** His great Messengers. They differ only in the degree of revealing that Spirit to humankind—always measured to human capacity.

Words carry immense powers. They acquire special meanings and distinctions just by the way they are used. After a while, those unique usages wear the robe of reality, and finally become reality itself. That is how our perception of the words Savior and Redeemer have gained their unique status, and risen above Messenger, Mediator, and Prophet. According to *The Dictionary of Bible and Religion*, "God is known throughout the Old Testament as the author and giver of salvation. God alone is Israel's Savior."¹ Consider these verses:

Turn to me and **be saved**, all you ends of the earth; for I am God...
Isaiah 45:22

I am the Lord God...there is no **Savior** besides Me.
Hosea 13:4

Put your hope in...my **Savior** and my God.
Psalms 43:5

O Lord, my Rock and my **Redeemer**.
Psalms 19:14

Does it make any difference if the Savior is God or if He is Jesus? Did Jesus not speak the Word of God? Is God less of a Savior than Jesus? Why then are the words Savior and Redeemer not applied to Moses, the Law Giver, who founded a new faith, just as Jesus

did? Who was the "Savior" when Jesus spoke? **God.** "By myself I can do nothing..." (John 5:30), declared the Son of Man.

In His time, Jesus was recognized as a prophet:

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?"
The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."

Matthew 21:10-11

They were all filled with awe and praised God. "A great prophet has appeared among us," they said.

Luke 7:16

He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. Luke 24:19

In none of the several dictionaries I consulted was Jesus introduced as an example of a prophet. The examples of prophets provided were: Jeremiah, Isaiah, Paul, and Muhammad. Similarly, in none of the thesauruses I consulted were "savior" and "redeemer" followed by "prophet" as a synonym. *Webster's New World Thesaurus* lists 45 synonyms for "Christ." It does not list the word "prophet." Some of the synonyms it offers for "prophet" are seer, oracle, soothsayer, clairvoyant wizard, sorcerer, predictor, forecaster, prognosticator, diviner, fortuneteller, weather forecaster, meteorologist, astrologer, and horoscopist.

Have you ever heard anyone say, "**the prophet** Jesus Christ"? Have you ever heard Christian theologians say, **the Savior** Moses? I have never heard those combinations. Again the word prophet eliminates Jesus' uniqueness, but Savior sets Him apart and above any other divine Messenger. The idea behind both words is the same. Both a Prophet and a Savior receive instructions from God to save people from sin and lead them to the light of knowledge and truth. But theologians have fashioned two meanings out of them. Prophet and Savior do not describe two "fruits"; because fruits are too much alike. It is hard to prove an apple is better than an orange. The example must be the kind that proves superiority, such as a light bulb and the sun, brass and gold, or glass and diamond.

Nelson's Bible Dictionary, authored by Christian scholars, defines Prophet as "a person who spoke for God and who communicated God's message courageously to God's Chosen People—the nation of Israel."² As we can see, Christian authors set aside the word Prophet exclusively for Jewish prophets.

Christian theologians have not been satisfied with "exclusive titles." They have gone far beyond that. They claim Jesus is not a mere Redeemer. He is God Himself! How astounding! How incredible! The Qur'án condemns this belief as sheer blasphemy.

Another strategy some Christian theologians use to set Jesus apart from the Founders of the other great religions, such as Moses, Noah, and Abraham, is to imply that the age of grace began with the Gospel; anyone who wants the grace of God must be Christian. They also associate forgiveness of sins to Jesus, as if it did not exist before. Were not the Jews saved by the grace of God? Were they not guided and redeemed by the One called in Exodus "the Lord God, merciful and gracious...abounding in love...and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin"? (34:6-7).

Would God withdraw His best from anyone? As a parent, would you not give your best equally to all your children? Is God less loving than loving parents? If Moses did not save people from sin, what then did He do? Was God less forgiving at the time of Moses? Would He not allow the sincere disciples of Moses to draw as close to Him as He would allow the sincere disciples of Jesus? Was God less gracious during the time of Moses? Did He like the Jews who lived at the time of Moses less than the ones who lived at the time of Jesus?

The bias against other religions is so strong that many eminent Christian authors do not make an exception even about the Jewish Faith on which Christianity stands. Consider the following statement from Dr. Billy Graham, the best known evangelist of our time. Here he quotes another eminent Christian—C.S. Lewis—to express his attitude about non-Christian Faiths:

...all religions are really a preview or perversion of Christianity.³

Consider also the following statements from Dr. James Kennedy, one of the most influential theologians of our time, and David Hunt, a popular Christian author:

The teachings of other religions are against those of Christianity, in things that really matter.⁴

Of course Christ's claim, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man comes to the Father except by me" (John 14:6), is the strongest possible rejection of all other religions as Satanic counterfeits.⁵

When it comes to comparison, the Jews refuse to even compare Moses with Jesus. By their standard, Jesus does not even count as a fruit. They reject Jesus for this reason: extreme literal-mindedness.

Another strategy Christian theologians have used to promote the theology of superiority and separation is to look for specific verses that may confirm their theories. They could not have found or written a verse more ideal than this one:

I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.
Christ (John 14:6)

This may be the most widely quoted verse from the Gospel. But why is it quoted so often? Because it sets Jesus apart from any other person in history. How many times have you heard the other verse, the one that likens Jesus to Moses? I sometimes listen to Christian radio or television stations. I do not recall hearing that verse even once. Both of those passages are the Word of God. Are some words of God, about the same topic, better or more accurate than others? Why then is one verse repeated so often, the other ignored?

Each of the other great Manifestations or Messengers of God has also declared that His way is the truth. Why do theologians not acknowledge this fact? Have you ever seen any quotations on this theme in any Christian book? Would not acknowledging this truth weaken their theories of superiority? Note how the idea of "I am the way" is repeated by so many Messengers or great Teachers in so many ages:

This is the way [to God]; walk in it. Isaiah 30:21

I am the way, the truth and the light.⁶ Zoroaster

I am the way and the truth and the life. Christ (John 14:6)

Just this path, there is no other. Buddha

Follow me: this is the right way [to God]. Muhammad (Qur'an 43:61)

Christian theologians also use the following verse as a means of teaching exclusiveness:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* John 3:16

The preceding statement is the absolute truth. God gave Jesus the honor of bestowing "eternal" or spiritual life on those who followed Him. What about Jesus' unique title "His only begotten Son"? The Bible calls all human beings children of God. What then makes Jesus the only Son? The answer lies in this question: Which matters more? To be a physical or a spiritual son of God? Surely the spirit is infinitely superior to body. It is far more glorious to be a spiritual than a physical child of God. "The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing," Jesus declared. (John 6:63). Therefore, the true significance of that title is spiritual, not physical. Since the Spirit of God is one, all divine Messengers can be called "God's Son."

A literal mind tends to think in physical terms. Constantly it violates St. Paul's instructions that spiritual truths must be discerned spiritually:

The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because **they are spiritually discerned**. I Corinthians 2:14

So when the literal mind thinks about "the only Son," it considers only the physical birth of Jesus. As it is said, "If the greatness of Jesus is due to having no father, then Adam and Eve must be even greater, for they had neither father nor mother."

Suppose you have two loyal and noble friends. Their spirits are filled with love and compassion. What would happen if you ignored their character, and focused on some of their physical features? Let us assume that one of them has blue eyes, the other brown; and one has dark skin, the other light. What would happen if you started talking to people about these visible differences? You will find a receptive audience, especially if one of those two came from their town, state, or country. People are by nature literal and visual minded. They can relate far more readily to something they can see: a word, a sentence, or a picture. Anything concrete and visible attracts and retains their attention. Theologians have taken advantage of this human weakness and played their game of superiority with astonishing skill.

Give Jesus any title you wish. The ultimate question is this: can anyone be greater than the Spirit of God? That is who Jesus was. That is the title that Muhammad bestowed on Him. In the light of this knowledge, it does not matter what other titles you apply to Him. No one can be greater than the Spirit of God.

As you may have noticed, the prime purpose of this discussion is to draw your attention from the literal to the spiritual, from the shell to the pearl, from the letter of tradition to

* This statement was very likely written by John about Jesus. The expression "the only begotten Son" belongs to John, not Jesus.

the Spirit of Truth, and from one verse to the universe of knowledge unveiled by God. If you succeed in this one purpose, then everything will become as clear to your soul as the sun. If you pass through the veils of words and enter the ocean of inner meanings, you will discover many precious pearls—infinite riches beyond your expectations.

It was this transformation from literal to spiritual that turned the closed-minded, traditional and fanatical Saul into St. Paul—the great apostle of Jesus. Here is how a Christian author describes this transformation:

When Saul regained his sight, his world of black and white was gone forever. Saul the bigot had become Paul the apostle of God's grace. He had stepped into God's light and into a world of living color. There were no more narrow prejudices; all mankind was one in Jesus Christ. No more petty regulations; Paul saw the much wider duty of love. No more ceremonial restrictions; only the life of the Spirit counted now.⁷

Words have awesome powers. One word—king—could have prevented Saul from becoming Paul. That one word has been so powerful; it is still preventing the people of Israel from acknowledging the divine station of Jesus. How incredible!

The following story demonstrates the difference between two monks, one concerned with the letter of the law, the other the spirit of the law:

Two monks on a pilgrimage came to the ford of a river. There they saw a girl dressed in all her finery, obviously not knowing what to do since the river was high and she did not want to spoil her clothes. Without more ado, one of the monks took her on his back, carried her across and put her down on dry ground on the other side.

Then the monks continued on their way. But the other monk after an hour started complaining, "Surely it is not right to touch a woman; it is against the commandments to have close contact with women. How could you go against the rules of monks?"

The monk who had carried the girl walked along silently, but finally he remarked, "I set her down by the river an hour ago, why are you still carrying her?"⁸

The principle of being attracted to surface meanings explains not only the conception and birth of "the theology of superiority and separation" but also "the theology of the denial of new Messengers from God." Both theologies thrive on people's tendencies to see surface differences and to ignore inner similarities. They also thrive on people's desire for a sense of superiority, and their instinctive tendency to fear and avoid the unknown or the outsider.

The theologies of superiority, separation, and denial require the believers to disregard the universal principles that govern our relationship with God. They condition the mind to sacrifice the spirit that gives life to a word at the altar of the letters of that word. They teach people to place fear over curiosity, security over courage, to downgrade the worth of reason and understanding, and to sacrifice God's universal love and justice at the altar of the theology of exclusive salvation and personal superiority over outsiders.

This game of superiority and denial is played almost entirely by words, for they have infinite potential for abuse. As stated, Muslim theologians have, by a single word, built and "sealed" their illusive castle of finality and perfection for their faith.

The most common way of building the theologies of superiority, separation, and denial is to *forget, ignore, or explain away* what fails to fit. Schools of theology are built on selected letters and words rather than on the Spirit of the Scriptures. One word has the potential to divide all the peoples of the world. No wonder we are told "the letter killeth" (II Cor. 3:6). It has literally resulted in the death of millions in religious wars.

The desire to prove the superiority of one's own school of theology over the others has also resulted in the degradation of the worth of reason in religion. We hear again and again that we must accept Jesus Christ by faith, but seldom by reason. That is how theologians can get away with anything they wish to tell people to believe, anything that their fancy desires. They say God is just, yet at the same time they believe that for thousands of years He ignored or allowed the Chinese, the Indians, and the Arabs to be delivered to hell by false prophets, who taught in the name of God.

Noted philosopher Bertrand Russel has written a book called, "*Why I Am Not a Christian?*" Virtually all his objections are based on a literal understanding of the Bible as it is still taught in most churches and seminary schools. Many sincere people turn away from religion for the same reason. When reason is restored to religion, then the faith of many will be restored. Believing in God and religion will become more like believing in science. Reason is the essence of both science and religion, except that religion moves beyond science into the realm of love.

As demonstrated again and again, when we wear a spiritual lens, we see everything in perfect harmony and balance. We see a spirit of oneness, reason, equality, and love. But as soon as we change the spiritual lens into a literal, everything falls apart. We see only separation, superiority, prejudice, and contradiction. It is amazing how much difference this one change of perspective can make. It proves, beyond any doubt, the absolute truth behind this brief verse: "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (II Cor. 3:6).

The theology that has resulted in the denial of every Messenger of God is promoted by the same strategy: selecting and repeating specific passages while ignoring others—those that contradict traditional views and expectations. How many times have you heard Christian theologians say, "When our Lord Jesus Christ comes *as a thief*"? I have never heard that statement. But why not? Why is this prophecy ignored? Is it less valuable or less accurate than the ones that point to His coming from the sky? Christ used numerous parables—such as the arrival of the Bridegroom at midnight (Matt. 25:1-13) to demonstrate the manner of His return. Why are those parables not linked to His coming like a thief? Did not Paul say that the *day* of the Lord will also come like a thief in the night (I Thess. 5:2)? Why then are these points ignored or de-emphasized, but the prophecy about heavenly descent is frequently repeated and glamorized?

As time passes, the images of reality created by the theology of superiority, separation, and denial become so familiar to the believers that for them they finally become reality itself. The images are then revered and worshipped as idols of truth.

Today the world is divided by prejudice generated from ignorance and misunderstanding. More than ever before, we need to generate understanding, harmony, and unity among the followers of God's great religions. What can diminish the prevailing prejudice? Recognition of the oneness of religion as declared throughout the Qur'an and the Bible.

قُلْ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنزِلَ عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ... وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَالنَّبِيُّونَ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِّنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ.

Say: “We believe in God and what has been sent down to Abraham... Moses, Jesus, and the Prophets. We do not see any difference between them, and for Him we are Muslims [we submit to the will of God].”
Qur’án 3:84

What do the preceding verses teach us? This incredible lesson: All Messengers are one and all religions are one. How can they be one? They all come from God and teach the same Message: Submission to the Will of God. Anyone who fails to submit to the Will of God has gone astray. Only those who submit to the Will of God are blessed—acceptable before God. At one time such believers were called Jews, at another they were called Christians, and then later Muslims. If another Messenger comes, His true followers will also be “Muslims” although they may not carry that label (Qur’án 28:52-53). Thus not only Abraham was a Muslim, but all true believers in all ages—the past or the future. This principles of oneness is a most glorious Message of the Qur’án. It can come only from the Mind of God. It has the power to gather the followers of all religions together and to unify them. It can turn war and violence into peace and prosperity.

The following verse further declares that the essence of religion is submission to the Will of God.

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ... فَإِنْ حَاجُوكَ فَقُلْ أَسْلَمْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّهِ وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَنِ.

Verily, religion before God [in God’s sight] is Islam... Therefore, if they dispute with you [Muhammad], say: “I have submitted myself to God and so have those who followed me.”
Qur’án 3:19-20

A true Christian recognizes and acknowledges Muhammad. A Jew who truly knows Moses can also see the divine origin of both Jesus and Muhammad. A person who recognizes the sun will recognize it even if it dawns from the west or the south. If the believers of any religion fail to recognize Muhammad, then they have not truly recognized their own Messenger.

الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ هُمْ بِهِ يُؤْمِنُونَ وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ قَالُوا أَمَّا بِهِ إِنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مُسْلِمِينَ.

Those to whom We have given the Book [true Christians and Jews] do believe in the Qur’án. And when it is recited to them, they say: “We believe in it. It is the truth from our Lord. We were before it [the revelation of the Qur’án] already Muslims.”

Qur’án 28:52-53

For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me...
John 5:46

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَسْتُ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ تُتَمِيمُوا التَّوْرَةَ وَالْإِنْجِيلَ.

Say: O People of the Book, you shall not be guided until you observe the Torah and the Gospel.
Qur’án 5:68

Where then does prejudice come from? It comes from taking a verse out of its context to alter its true meaning. Consider this verse:

وَمَنْ يَبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ.

Whoever follows a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted from him, and in the hereafter he will be one of the losers. Qur'án 3:85

If we accept the clear teachings of the Qur'án that “every ummah has a specific lifespan” and “every age has its own Book,” we can readily understand the meaning of the preceding verse. Islam came to influence primarily a specific segment of society for a specific period of time. Those who heard the Message of Islam had a responsibility to investigate it and accept it. This verse has no relevance to the future, to the countless terms, “ajals” that will come in the future. We should note that Jesus made a similar statement. Christians cite His Word to show that only He can save:

No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6 NIV

The most convincing evidence for the divine origin of the Qur'án is both its contents and its language. They are inseparable. From a Book written by an ordinary Man—an illiterate merchant from a most primitive culture—about the most profound issues concerning human life and purpose; a Book that has been tested for more than a thousand years; a Book that has served as a charter or constitution for millions of believers for centuries; we should expect many blunders, false predictions, unfounded claims and assumptions, egotistical statements, and contradictions. Yet we see none of those in that most glorious gift from God. Is this not a living and ever-enduring miracle for every impartial seeker of truth?

The Qur'án repeatedly confirms the oneness of religion and shows that the word “Islam” not only refers to a specific religion but also to all religions. All divine Messengers were Muslims. As the Qur'án teaches:

إِبْرَاهِيمُ...كَانَ حَنِيفًا مُسْلِمًا.

Abraham was true in faith...[He was] a Muslim. Qur'án 3:67

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ دِينًا مِّمَّنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ وَاتَّبَعَ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا.

Who can be better in religion than one who submits his whole self to God, does good, and follows the way of Abraham the true in faith? Qur'án 4:125 Y

ثُمَّ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ أَنْ اتَّبِعِ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ...

Then We revealed to you [Muhammad] saying: “Follow the religion of Abraham...” Qur'án 16:123

We draw lines of separation and superiority, but from God's perspective, all religions are one and all true believers follow that one religion:

إِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ.

This, your religion is one and I am your Lord. Qur'án 21:92

Another translation:

You are the followers of one religion and I am your Lord.

Thus if Abraham was a Muslim, so will any Prophet who will come after Muhammad. He can claim to be both the first Messenger from God and the last one. No wonder Jesus said that He was the First and the Last:

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.

Revelation 21:6 NIV

Divisive religious leaders in all religions have created veils and thick clouds through their imaginative powers. These clouds are preventing true believers from seeing the mirror image of their own Messenger or Redeemer in the founders of the other great religions. The clouds of illusions are preventing the light of knowledge from reaching the hearts and minds of humankind.

The principle of “unity in diversity” prevails in the entire universe. God’s Messengers are one Spirit—the Spirit of God. They differ only in “the intensity of their Revelation.” Consider this example. We receive the light of the sun at various levels of intensity—between sunrise and noon, or between winter and summer. Although our perceptions of the sun differ at various times, yet the sun remains changeless. Our perceptions do not change nor affect the sun. That is the only difference between God’s great religions.

The Spirit that has spoken to us is both the First and the Last. There is no other Spirit.

I am he; I am the first and I am the last.

Isaiah 48:12 NIV

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”

Revelation 1:8 NIV

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.

Revelation 21:6 NIV

...besides Me there is no savior.

Isaiah 43:11 NKJ

Thus from a spiritual perspective, Muhammad was both the First and the Last Messenger from God. The same title applies also to the Messengers who will come after Him. They also can claim to be both the First Messenger from God and the Last One. Thus, from God’s perspective, even if Muhammad has said that He was the last Messenger from God, still the word “last” would not close the door to new Revelations from God. Jesus is Moses and Muhammad, and Moses and Muhammad are Jesus. One Spirit spoke through many human figures at different times in history.

شَرَعَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الدِّينِ مَا وَصَّى بِهِ نُوحًا... وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى وَعِيسَى أَنْ أَقِيمُوا الدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوا فِيهِ.

The same religion has He revealed to you as He enjoined on Noah... and that which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, saying: Observe the Faith and do not divide yourselves into factions.

Qur’án 42:13 Y

وَلَمَّا جَاءَ عِيسَى بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ قَالَ قَدْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَلِأُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي تَخْتَلَفُونَ فِيهِ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ هُوَ رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ فَاخْتَلَفَ الْأَحْزَابُ مِنْ بَيْنِهِمْ فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْ عَذَابِ يَوْمِ الْيَوْمِ.

When Jesus came with clear proofs, He said: “I have come to you with Wisdom to clarify to you some of the concepts about which you differed. Therefore fear God and obey Me. God is, indeed My Lord and your Lord; worship Him. This is the straight Path.” But the sects differed with each other. Woe to the unjust—the punishment of painful Day awaits them.

Qur’án 43:63-65

13

This Life is a Test

Why did God create us?

الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا...

He who created life and death to test you to see who among you is noblest in deed.

Qur'an 67:2

What happens after we say: "I believe"?

أَحْسِبَ النَّاسُ أَنْ يُتْرَكُوا أَنْ يَقُولُوا آمَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُونَ.

Do people think that they will be left alone simply by saying: "We believe!"? Will they not be tested?

Qur'an 29:2

Our role in this world is like the role of a captain in charge of a ship. We have two choices:

- Either to abandon our role and allow the winds of chance to carry us in random directions.
- Or to take charge of our spiritual destiny by listening to the voice of reason.

Taking charge, or leaving the course of our destiny to others—our parents, religious leaders, relatives and friends—is the ultimate test of our lives.

Where does evil come from? Either from a mind that is ***closed***, or from a heart that is ***contaminated*** by prejudice, selfishness, ignorance, and apathy.

A test always involves freedom of choice. You have the choice of listening to the evidence presented here, or allowing the "winds of chance" to take charge of your destiny. The purpose of this book is twofold:

- Its first and foremost purpose is to encourage you to be open to the ***News*** of the coming of a new Messenger from God by remembering this verse:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنْ جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوا.

O believers! Even if an unreliable person comes to you with a News, ask him for ***clear evidence***.

Qur'an 49:6

- The second purpose of this book is to help you realize that the difference between a true Messenger from God and a liar is so vast that any believer with a critical mind and a pure heart can readily tell one from the other. As the Qur'an teaches:

اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ.

God is the Light of the heavens and the earth.

Qur'an 24:35

Is not God's Word the mirror of His Light? What about a liar and deceiver? Is there any light in him? No, he is absolute darkness. Therefore, if you could **not** tell the difference between light and darkness, or between day and night, you would also **not** be able to tell the difference between the divine and the deceptive.

What will happen if you close your heart to the News of the coming of a new Messenger? You will reject the Light of God without knowing it. Why? What will happen if you shut yourself in a closet? Will you be able to see the light outside? Closing your mind and heart to the News of the coming of a Messenger from God is like stepping into a closet, shutting your eyes, and going to sleep! You may wake up, step out, and discover that it is midnight. The sun has set, and so has the light of your life—your freedom to choose your everlasting destiny.

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ وَنَبَلُّوكُم بِالشَّرِّ وَالْخَيْرِ فِتْنَةً وَإِلَيْنَا تُرْجَعُونَ.

Every soul shall taste death. [But before that] We test you by “evil” and “good.” And then you return to Us. Qur’án 21:35

Ponder the meaning of these verses:

إِنَّهُ لَقُرْآنٌ كَرِيمٌ فِي كِتَابٍ مَكْنُونٍ لَا يَمَسُّهُ إِلَّا الْمُطَهَّرُونَ تَنْزِيلٌ مِّن رَّبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ.

This indeed is the noble Qur’án [the Word of God], contained in a Book, wrapped in mystery: That only **the** [spiritually] **pure** can touch. It is a Revelation from the Lord of the worlds. Qur’án 56:77-80

Blessed are **the pure** in heart: for they shall see God. Matthew 5:8

Read the Qur’án a hundred times and try to find any verse that declares: “This is the noble Qur’án contained in a Book, wrapped in mystery, that only the greatest scholars in Arabic and theology from Mecca, Cairo, Damascus, Baghdad, Bahrain, Beirut, Karachi, Tihnan, and Kuwait can touch”?

What about those who have the greatest number of followers? What about the most prolific of authors? What about those who have received the best grades from recognized universities? Scholars, religious leaders, and famous theologians may be even less able to unwrap the divine mysteries, because their minds are dominated by their previous learning, based on what other theologians told them to accept as the absolute truth. Have you ever heard of any Jewish or Christian scholars or religious leaders who have become Muslims? Theological knowledge or book learning is perhaps the greatest obstacle between God and man. It closes and crystallizes the mind. As the Qur’án declares, only **the pure in heart** can unwrap the mysteries of the Qur’án. You yourself may be such a believer without being aware of it! Why give your everlasting destiny to a “heart” you do **not** know rather than to a heart you **do** know—**your own heart?**

تَبَارَكَ...الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا.

Blessed...is He who created death and life to test you to see who among you is noblest in deed. Qur’án 67:1-2

14

The Dialogue Between Religious Leaders and Their Followers

What does God expect from those in positions of wealth and power? Are they as accountable as others or more? One of the laws of justice is this: We are accountable to God according to our capacities and opportunities.

وَلَا نُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا...

We will not burden a soul beyond its power...

Qur'án 23:62

For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.

Christ (Luke 12:48 NKJ)

How much difference a president, a king, a great scholar, or a religious leader can make in the destiny of humankind? Are not such people more accountable to God than others? ***The leaders who abide by the rules of justice, kindness, courage, wisdom, and self-sacrifice receive boundless blessings from God.*** They shine like jewels on the crown of the Kingdom. But such leaders are seldom found. They are as scarce as gems. Similarly, the leaders who fail to live by divine virtues deserve—and will receive—punishment proportionate to their powers and the opportunities they have to make a difference.

Both the Bible and the Qur'án, as well as the records of history, testify that those in positions of power—especially the religious leaders—have been the first to reject and persecute God's great Messengers. Are the leaders of this age—secular or religious—different from those who have lived in the past? Will they act differently? Is there any reason to believe that people change from age to age, that the people of our time are gentler and kinder than those who lived in the past? The severe warnings addressed in the Qur'án to those in positions of power indicate that people—both leaders and their followers—will once again behave just like their ancestors.

Nevertheless we should recognize that individual differences are great. Some leaders live by the rules of justice, others follow only the dictates of fantasy and self-interest. These are the leaders—whatever their religion—that the Qur'án especially addresses, and warns them of receiving severe punishment if they mislead their followers.

The Qur'án refers several times to a dialogue between those in “positions of power and authority” and “ordinary people” who look up to their leaders as their spiritual guides. It presents a warning to the leaders and the followers of all religions. The dialogue takes place in the next life, and it usually goes this way: those who put their trust in their leaders blame them for misleading them. The leaders respond in two ways. They say to them:

- We are *also* afflicted. What can we do? We are powerless even to help our own souls.
- You did not have to listen to us. It was your fault—a weakness in your soul—that allowed you to listen to us without using your mind.

The denial of truth in all ages can be traced to a single link:

- The rich, the proud, and the powerful are pleased with their life of comfort and ease.
- Ordinary people—the poor and the middle class—do not have enough self-trust to think that they can tell the difference between the divine and the deceptive. Further, searching for truth and using one’s mind requires effort. It is much easier for them to let those in the positions of power to tell them what they should believe.

This has been a deadly and dangerous combination throughout all ages—the worst imaginable. Never have those sent by God been welcomed by people, ready to listen to them with receptive hearts.

The Qur’án teaches us repeatedly that hell is the permanent home for those who reject God’s Messengers. Let us now review one of the dialogues between ordinary people and their spiritual leaders after they pass away from this life and encounter the everlasting torment:

يَقُولُ الَّذِينَ اسْتَضَعُّوا لِلَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا لَوْلَا أَنْتُمْ لَكُنَّا مُؤْمِنِينَ قَالَ الَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا لِلَّذِينَ اسْتَضَعُّوا أَنْحُنُ صَدَدْنَاكُمْ عَنِ الْهُدَى بَعْدَ إِذْ جَاءَكُمْ بَلْ كُنْتُمْ مُجْرِمِينَ... بَلْ مَكْرُ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ إِذْ تَأْمُرُونَنَا أَنْ نَكْفُرَ بِاللَّهِ وَنَجْعَلَ لَهُ أَنْدَادًا.
Qur’án 34:31-33

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The followers tell their leaders: 	<p>لَوْلَا أَنْتُمْ لَكُنَّا مُؤْمِنِينَ.</p> <p>If you had not prevented us, we would be among the believers.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The leaders respond: 	<p>أَنْحُنُ صَدَدْنَاكُمْ عَنِ الْهُدَى بَعْدَ إِذْ جَاءَكُمْ بَلْ كُنْتُمْ مُجْرِمِينَ.</p> <p>Did we prevent you from Guidance after it came to you? No, you yourself were ungodly [and are guilty of denial].</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The followers respond to their leaders: 	<p>بَلْ مَكْرُ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ إِذْ تَأْمُرُونَنَا أَنْ نَكْفُرَ بِاللَّهِ وَنَجْعَلَ لَهُ أَنْدَادًا.</p> <p>It was rather your plotting night and day, when you ordered us to disbelieve in God and set up rivals to Him.</p>

The Qur’án continues:

وَأَسْرُوا النَّدَامَةَ لَمَّا رَأُوا الْعَذَابَ وَجَعَلْنَا الْأَغْلَالَ فِي أَعْنَاقِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا هَلْ يُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ؟

And each of the two groups [leaders and their followers] will conceal their regrets [for their failure during their earthly life], when they behold the torment. We will put shackles round the necks of the unbelievers. Should they not face the consequences of their deeds?

Qur’án 34:33

The Qur’án concludes with this verse:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِي قَرْيَةٍ مِّن نَّذِيرٍ إِلَّا قَالَ مُتْرَفُوهَا إِنَّا بِمَا أُرْسِلْتُمْ بِهِ كَافِرُونَ.

Never did We send a Warner to a city who was not denied by the privileged people [those who enjoyed wealth, prestige, and power]. Qur'án 34:34

Súra 37:27-39 presents a similar dialogue between the followers and their spiritual leaders while they are facing their punishment in hell. Another exchange appears also in Súra 40:47-52. In this Súra God warns both groups that no excuses for their actions will be acceptable:

يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ الظَّالِمِينَ مَعذِرَتُهُمْ وَلَهُمُ اللَّعْنَةُ وَلَهُمْ سُوءُ الدَّارِ.

The Day when no excuses will profit the wrongdoers [the deniers]. The curse will be upon them and the worst dwelling for them. Qur'án 40:52

After passing away from this life, those who have been misled will be extremely angry at those who misled them—whether they were leaders or ordinary people. They will say to God:

رَبَّنَا أَرْنَا الذَّنِينَ أَضَلَّانَا مِنَ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسِ نَجْعَلُهُمَا تَحْتَ أَقْدَامِنَا لِيَكُونَا مِنَ الْأَسْفَلِينَ.

Our Lord! Show us those who led us astray, whether they were jinn [deceptive leaders] or human beings [ordinary people], that we may trample them under our feet, that they may be counted among the lowliest of creatures. Qur'án 41:29

Súra 43:22-25 once again condemns the believers who follow their fathers blindly, who reject God's Warners because of their conformity and lack of courage to be different. That Súra once again singles out those privileged people of society who benefit from the status quo and fear change.

These warnings should awaken all faithful believers—whether they are Muslims, Christians, or Jews—to the fact that they should not be complacent concerning their everlasting destiny. That destiny is God's most precious gift to them. They should not give away that gift to anyone—their parents, religious leaders, Bible scholars, Quranic scholars, professors of theology, or renowned authors. They should also give no weight to what the majority of people believe, and how they behave. According to the Qur'án, everyone is accountable to God to use his mind to reason and to judge based on the evidence.

The spiritual history of mankind shows that the believers in all religions have consistently failed to learn and practice this simple and even primordial lesson! In this age of enlightenment, why do Christians—two billion of them—continue to reject Islam? Have their religious leaders allowed them to know the truth? Have Jewish leaders allowed their followers to recognize Jesus and Muhammad? Will Muslim leaders act differently? Will they allow their followers to recognize the future Messengers?

To conclude: Taking charge of your destiny according to the explicit teachings of the Qur'án, or submitting your destiny to others—especially those in positions of power and authority—is the ultimate test of your everlasting life. Do not take this test lightly! Do not allow anyone else to take this test for you!

Appendices

Appendix I

A Second Glance at the Meaning of “the Seal of the Prophets”

Since this is such a critical topic with profound implications, let us continue our study of the word “seal” to see if it can sustain the traditional claims made for it. When we hear or see a word or an expression frequently, we often fail to discern its true meaning. Repeated exposure to a stimulus desensitizes the mind. One way to unseal or disclose the true meaning of the word “seal” is to replace it with its closest equivalent: signature. What is the difference between a seal and a signature? Do they not serve basically the same purpose?

As stated, the word “seal” in the phrase “the Seal of the Prophets” is used as a metaphor. When we interpret a metaphor, we enjoy some degree of freedom. But our interpretation must be reasonable; otherwise it will lead us astray. Suppose Muhammad was called: “the Signature of the Prophets.” What meaning would that expression convey? Suppose we found the following statements in the Gospel:

- Jesus is the signature of the Law.
- Jesus is the signature of the Torah.
- Jesus is the signature of Moses and the Prophets.

In the preceding examples, did the word “signature” bring the concept of “finality” to your mind? It takes a long stretch of imagination to connect the word “signature” with the word “final” or “last.” And yet that is what many Muslim theologians have done.

What, then, do the preceding examples seem to imply? They bring to mind two concepts: “approval” and “oneness.” If we say that Jesus is the “signature” of the Hebrew Prophets, the statement implies that He is given the power and the authority to sign for them, or in place of them; that Jesus’ Word is their Word, and that they are one in purpose and authority, for they can sign for each other.

Since the question of “the Seal of Prophets” is so fundamental, let us consider one more example. Suppose ten mayors meet to consult about their cities. Then they select and call one member: the “seal (or signature) of the mayors.” Would that title imply in any way that the selected member is the last mayor? What then would that title imply? That the one selected has the trust of all mayors, that his signature represents their signatures and is as valid as every other signature.

What then does the title “the Seal of the Prophets” imply? It implies that all previous Messengers have placed their seal of trust and approval on Muhammad, that He represents them, that His voice is their voice, that His soul is stamped with the seal of

their trust, and their soul is stamped with the seal of His trust. The “seal” communicates messages such as:

- We are all one.
- One God sent us.
- We may have different names, but we have one “seal” one “signature” one “official mark.”

Some verses of the Qur’án lend support to this meaning. The way the words “Islam” and “Muslims” are used in the Qur’án demonstrates that although God’s great Messengers have different names or identities, they are in essence one Messenger. The Qur’án, for instance, considers Abraham a Muslim (3:6), and bestows the same title on Christians. The following verse indicates that God inspired the disciples to recognize Jesus, and they responded by saying that:

أَمَنَّا وَآشْهَدُ بِأَنَّنا مُسْلِمُونَ.

We believe, and you bear witness that we [Christians] are Muslims. Qur’án 5:111

Abraham appeared long before Muhammad. How then could He be a Muslim? By being spiritually one with Muhammad, by teaching the same religion He taught—with the same signature. Abraham taught the one religion of God—the same religion that Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad taught. They were all Muslims—the ones who submitted to God. Did not Jesus say: “Without Him [God] I can do nothing” (John 5:30)? Jesus was, therefore, a Muslim, so is every believer who submits to God and depends on Him—whatever his religion may be called!

Consider the following Quranic verse. In essence, it states that Jesus was the seal of the Law of Moses:

وَقَفَّيْنَا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِم بِعِيسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْإِنْجِيلَ فِيهِ هُدًى وَنُورٌ وَمُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرَةِ وَهُدًى وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ.

And in the footsteps of the prophets caused We Jesus, the son of Mary, to follow, **confirming** the Law which was before him. And We gave him the Gospel with its guidance and light, **confirmatory** of the preceding Law; a guidance and warning to those who fear God.

Qur’án 5:46 Y

Being “confirmatory of the preceding Law” is the same as being “the seal of the preceding Law.” Some western scholars, who specialize in Islam, have confirmed this view. Consider the following statement from one Islamic scholar about the view of another scholar:

Montgomery Watt suggests that the reference to Muhammad as “the seal of the Prophets” meant that he confirmed previous Prophets, not that he was the final legitimate one.¹

We should note that we can attain true faith only when we submit our will totally to God’s Will—we accept our destiny with full gratitude, no matter how difficult our life is. That is the true meaning of “Islam”—a “religion” taught by all the great Messengers of the past, and the one that will be taught by all future Messengers for ages to come. This is why we are told:

وَمَنْ يَبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ.

If anyone desires a religion other than Islam (submission to God), never will it be accepted of him.

Qur’án 3:85 Y

This is also the reason Jesus said:

No one comes to the Father except through Me.

John 14:6 NIV

There is one religion “Islam” and one Redeemer—one great Spirit—who in each age adopts a new Name. Sometimes that Spirit was called Moses, in another age Jesus, and in another time Muhammad.

A Study of Two Arabic Words: Khátam and Khátim

Let us once again look at the Arabic word for “seal.” If we check the English translations of the Qur’án, we find that they are unanimous in translating the word “khátam” into “seal.” In this case, the unity of thought among translators is a blessing. It does not create one extra obstacle to overcome. Many words have multiple meanings. The dictionary offers the following *primary* and *related* meanings for “khátam”—the Arabic word for “seal” as a noun:

- Ring
- Stone placed on a ring
- Official mark or seal (to show that a letter or a document is authentic)

The preceding are the primary and related meanings for “khátam.” As we can see, they all show some degree of connection to a ring. Let us now put them together, like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, to see if they convey a unified message. What is the prime purpose of wearing a ring with a ring stone that portrays an image, a name, a mark, or a message? To show loyalty to a person, a principle, an organization, or a belief system. What is the main purpose of placing a seal—an official mark—on a document? To show that it is authentic, that the one who has put his seal or signature of approval on it confirms its authenticity. A document without a signature does not carry much weight. The signature serves two main purposes:

- It identifies the person who produced the document.
- It confirms the accuracy and authenticity of its contents.

Arabic language has two words with identical spellings, but different pronunciations.

<i>Word</i>	<i>The Primary Meaning</i>
<u>Khátam</u> (خَاتَم)	An official mark (seal)

Khátim (خَاتِم) The one who ends or terminates
a given action or process

The title bestowed on Muhammad is khátam (خَاتَم), not khátim (خَاتِم).

Question: If God wanted to make Muhammad His final Messenger, why did He choose the first word (khátam) with several meanings, and not the second (khátim) with one clear and common meaning? This simple choice of a word would have lent some credibility to the “doctrine of the seal.” It would have made it more believable. Yet I have never heard anyone mention this point. Why is such an obvious and relevant question ignored? By a little change of pronunciation, our Creator could have added much weight to this doctrine. If Muhammad had been called “the Khátim of Prophets” (the one who ends) rather than “Khátam,” (the one who serves as a signature), there would be little need for this discussion. Why then did God *not* choose Khátim—a word that conveys a clear and undisputable meaning—a word that, if it were used, would convey this message: Muhammad is the One who puts an end to the coming of Minor Prophets from God.

Appendix II

A Second Glance at the Meaning of “Ummah”

Let us once again examine the word “ummah” as used in the Qur’án:

مَا تَسْبِقُ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلَهَا وَمَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ.

The death of an ummah is neither hastened or delayed. Qur’án 23:43

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلٌ فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَجَلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ سَاعَةً وَلَا يَسْتَقْدِمُونَ.

For every “ummah” a fixed period of time is determined. And when that period ends, it will neither be postponed nor advanced [even] one hour. Qur’án 7:34

See also 10:47-49

Another translation of the preceding verse:

The death of every ummah is inevitable. The determined time of their death will not be delayed or advanced even one hour.

Why should the Qur’án speak of the death of “every ummah” so many times? What is the purpose of this message? Do such verses refer to the death of every nation or the *spiritual* death of the followers of every religion at an appointed time? Do they point to the disappearance of nations and secular communities, or the termination of the “life cycle” (dispensation) of past religions at the dawning of a new religion? Which meaning makes more sense?

Let us ask those who claim that “ummah” in these verses means “nation” or a “secular community” a few questions. What relevance would the death of “every nation” or a “secular community” have to the mission of Muhammad? And why should a nation or a particular community die or disappear at an appointed time—a time so precise that it cannot be advanced or postponed even one hour? Suppose it were possible for every nation or community to die. What benefit would be gained by this? What purpose would it serve? But when we consider the other meaning—that is, when we recognize that the verses regarding the death of every ummah refers to “the life cycle or dispensation of every religion,” and the word “ummah” points to “a specific group of people to whom a Messenger is sent”—all the Quranic references about this topic begin to glow with meaning. Like the pieces of a puzzle, they fall into their places.

Compare the physical world with the spiritual. Does not the sun dawn at a precise hour to awaken the sleepers and to bring the glad tidings of a new day? In the same way, when spiritual darkness surrounds the people of the world, God sends His Light of Knowledge to awaken the sleepers. Without that Light, we live in darkness, we are spiritually dead. What was the spiritual state of the Jews at the time of Jesus? And why did Jesus come? Did He not call the unbelievers “dead”?

Another disciple said to him, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” But Jesus told him, “Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.” Matthew 8:21-22 NIV

Why then did God send Jesus?

I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. John 10:10 NIV

I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. John 5:24 NIV

Our spiritual life depends on God’s Messengers, even as our physical life depends on the sun:

Because I live, ye shall live also. John 14:19

He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. John 11:25

...if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death. John 8:51 NKJ
See also John 6:33, 47-51

Likewise, were not the Jews, Christians, and pagans spiritually dead when Muhammad came? Did He not come to revive them? Did He not tell them that:

وَكُنْتُمْ أَمْوَاتًا فَأَحْيَاكُمْ.

You were dead, and We made you alive. Qur’án 2:28

At the precise Hour when God’s great Messengers declare their Mission, people must submit to their call, otherwise, from God’s perspective, they fall from grace—they count as the dead. This is the reason we are repeatedly warned that:

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلٌ.

Death is destined for every ummah. Qur’án 7:34

Can the Jews claim that they are an exception to this rule? What about Christians or Muslims? No, the Qur’án makes no exception. It does not exclude any ummah. It declares that at a precise Hour *every* ummah will and must face the same dire destiny: death.

Consider also this verse:

كُلَّ مَا جَاءَ أُمَّةً رَسُولُهَا كَذَّبُوهُ.

Whenever a Messenger came to its ummah, they denied Him. Qur’án 23:44

First, what would be the spiritual state of the people who deny their Messenger? Would they be spiritually dead or alive? Second, if every “ummah,” without exception, denied its Messenger, why would Muslims be an exception? Is there a reason to believe that they will act differently?

Did not all the previous umam [plural of ummah] find a reason to reject their promised Messenger? Do not the Jews still expect their Messiah to come as a powerful king? Do not Christians expect their Redeemer to descend from the sky? Is it not reasonable to think that Muslims, like all previous ummahs, would also search for a reason to justify their rejection of their promised Messenger? Is it not reasonable to think that they too would follow the example or “the Sunnah” of the followers of previous faiths? Would

they not also look for a word in their Scripture—the Qur’án—that would give them a reason to deny and even persecute the One who will come to lead them to the “True Religion”—the Religion promised repeatedly in the Qur’án?

What verse could arm Muslims against that Religion? What word would they use to discredit their promised Messenger? Would it be any word other than the “seal”? Has not that word gained and amassed awesome powers? Has it not concealed the many prophecies that contradict the distorted meaning of that word as fashioned by the minds of interpreters who wish to believe that their religion is special—superior to all other faiths? Is this not the Sunnah that the religious leaders of all religions have practiced and continue to follow?

What is the spiritual state of our world? Is it spiritually alive? Let us disregard the state of the world at large. Let us focus only on the state of Muslim countries. How many died or were disabled in the war between Iran and Iraq? It is estimated that there were one million casualties. How many thousands of Iranian Muslims were killed and tortured by other Muslims, by a government that claims to rule by the laws of Islam? Did not Iraq, an Islamic country, attack Kuwait, another Islamic country? Did not the people of Lebanon fight against each other? How many thousands of Muslims were killed by the Syrian government during the reign of Asad? What about thousands who have been killed and tens of thousands who have been persecuted in the Sudan? How many Muslims are being killed today by their brothers in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan? The number of Muslims killed in Iraq by other Muslims surpasses 50,000. Should we not follow our Prophet’s Sunnah? Did Muhammad—peace be upon Him—ever fight against His own followers? Did He ever kill or hurt a single Muslim?

وَمَنْ يَقْتُلْ مُؤْمِنًا مُتَعَمَّدًا فَجَزَاؤُهُ جَهَنَّمُ خَالِدًا فِيهَا وَغَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَلَعْنَهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُ عَذَابًا عَظِيمًا.

If a man kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell, to abide therein for ever, and the wrath and the curse of Alláh are upon him, and a dreadful penalty is prepared for him.

Qur’án 4:93 Y

See also 5:32-33

What about the Muslims who engage today in systematic terror, believers who have caused the people of the world to associate the words “violence and terror” with Islam—the religion of peace and brotherhood? Even Palestinians who live in a small territory are at war with each other! Are not these events the fulfillment of this prophecy from the Qur’án:

يَا رَبِّ إِنَّ قَوْمِي اتَّخَذُوا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ مَهْجُورًا.

O Lord, my people [Muslims] shy away from this Qur’án.

Qur’án 25:30

Another translation:

My Lord, my people have deserted this Qur’án.

Qur’án 25:30

Is not the time ripe for the advent of a Messenger from God who would bring peace to the warring nations? Is not the time ripe for the coming of a Messenger who would bring life—inner joy and peace—to the followers of all religions? Is not the time ripe for the advent of a religion that would unite Sunnites and Shiites? Is not the time ripe for a Messenger who would revive all past religions? Would a loving God witness human

suffering, but remain silent for countless ages to come? Would He abolish His Sunnah of sending new Messengers and new Books in every age?

لِكُلِّ أَجَلٍ كِتَابٌ.

For every age there is a Book.

Qur'an 13:38

سُنَّةَ مَنْ قَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ مِنْ رُسُلِنَا وَلَا نَجِدُ لِسُنَّتِنَا تَحْوِيلًا.

That we have sent Messengers before you [Muhammad] is a Sunnah. You will not find any change in Our Sunnah—in Our Way of doing things.

Qur'an 17:77

Appendix III

A Second Glance at the Meaning of the Word “Middle” (وسط)

What does the following verse mean?

Qur’án 2: 143 ... جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا

1

Does it declare that:

- We have placed your “ummah” in the middle.
 - Your position is in the middle

2

Or does it declare that:

- We have made you a just ummah.
- We have made you a moderate ummah.

As we noted, many Muslim scholars claim that when God called Muslims a “middle ummah” (أُمَّةً وَسَطًا), He meant to say, an ummah that:

- Follows the rules of justice.
- Practices the rules of moderation—it does not deviate to the left or to the right.

One way we can test this concept is to study the words the Qur’án uses to express the concept of justice and moderation. The following are the verses I discovered:

فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا بِالْعَدْلِ وَأَقْسِطُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ.

Bring them together in justice and be equitable, for God loves the equitable. Qur’án 49:9

لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا... لِيَقُومَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ.

We have sent forth Our Messengers...so that people might act equitably. Qur’án 57:25

...رَبِّكَ الْكَرِيمِ الَّذِي خَلَقَكَ فَسَوَّاكَ فَعَدَلَكَ.

...Your Lord the Most Generous who created you, fashioned you perfectly, and gave you due [balanced] proportion. Qur’án 82:6-7

As we can see, the words used in the Qur’án to indicate justice and moderation are عدل and قسط, and not وسط.

Aside from the evidence presented earlier in this book concerning the true meaning of the word “middle” (وسط), there is a practical way to discover its true meaning and intention. If we assume that God did *not* use the word “middle” to state or predict the position of “Islamic ummah,” but rather to declare their distinction in practicing the two virtues of “moderation and justice,” then His judgment or prediction must have come true in the lives of the believers. For we have over 1400 years of history to test this judgment or prediction, to see if Muslims as a whole have lived up to these standards.

From the time Muhammad received His Revelation from God up to His death, a period of 23 years, Muslims lived exemplary lives. Not only did they declare their faith in the new religion, but also they demonstrated their faith in deeds. They remained united and obedient to the Prophet. For their devotion and loyalty, they deserved and received the highest praise:

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ...

You are the best ummah that was brought forth to humankind.

Qur’án 3:110

Muslims reached the crest of glory and honor during the lifetime of Muhammad. But what about after Him? Did they remain on the same path? Did they continue to be united as true brothers and sisters in faith? Did they manifest moderation and justice in their lives? History testifies that even before the Prophet was buried, pride and lust for power divided the believers. What was the first and foremost challenge they faced? Choosing a leader and supporting him with full devotion. Did they succeed? Did they demonstrate the level of nobility worthy of true believers? No, on the contrary, what they did was, and continues to be, a cause of shame for all believers. Those who had served Muhammad together as friends, suddenly turned into bitter foes. They desecrated the trust they had received: one religion under on God. They violated God’s command and ignored His grave warning:

And be not like those who have formed divisions, and fallen to variance after clear proofs have come to them. These! A terrible chastisement doth await them.

Qur’án 3:105 R

How amazing! Believers who were intimate with the Prophet, who had witnessed His greatness and glory, could not peacefully resolve a question that would determine the destiny of Islam forever. They chose to divide the one religion of God, like a child who breaks a precious toy into pieces.

Let us now ask the critical question: Can the virtues of “moderation” and “justice” truly describe the believers who could not settle the most fundamental principle in their religion: Who should be their leader? Do friends who turn into enemies and do not hesitate even to murder one another deserve to be called moderate or just?

For the sake of brevity, let us ignore the early history of Islam, and move to the present. But before doing this, we should recognize and acknowledge the contributions of Islam—despite many shortcomings from the believers—to world civilization. No fair-minded person can deny the glory and greatness of Islamic Empire during the Middle Ages.

What about the recent times? Let us glance at the events of the last two centuries and see what grade Muslims can fairly receive for those two virtues: moderation and justice.

What is the most conclusive sign of justice in a society?

- The way the majority treats the minorities under its power.
- The value a society places on human life.

Let us therefore focus on these two standards and see to what extent Islamic nations have observed them in recent times:

- Millions of Muslims allowed themselves to serve as enemies during the brutal reign of Saddam in Iraq. He took advantage of sectarian prejudice and used Muslims to torture and kill one another. Many thousands of believers killed and tortured each other as bitter enemies!
- Half a million Muslims were killed in a war between Iran and Iraq. The total number of casualties is estimated to be over a million.
- Muslims in Iraq attacked another Muslim country (Kuwait) without any justification. United States, not Islamic countries, intervened to defeat Saddam.
- Talebans killed thousands of their fellow-believers in Afghanistan and suppressed especially Muslim women and girls in the name of Islam. They also destroyed a significant work of art in their country.
- During the reign of Hafiz Assad of Syria, Muslims killed thousands of Muslims who disagreed with Assad.
- Khomeini and his successors executed and tortured tens of thousands of Muslims in Iran. They committed all these atrocities in the name of Islam! Despite vast reserves of oil in Iran, under the Islamic regime thirty percent of Iranians are living in poverty.
- Al-Qaida caused the death of over three thousand non-Muslims and Muslims during their attack on the Twin Towers in New York. Instead of condemning this violent act, most Islamic countries preferred to remain silent.
- Muslims in Pakistan are providing a haven of safety for Bin Laden and a few of his supporters, who have caused the death of several thousand innocent people, both Muslim and non-Muslim, not only in America but also in Asia, Europe, and Africa.
- The two sects of Sunnites and Shiites have been fighting in Iraq and killing and torturing each other in large numbers after the fall of Saddam.
- Muslims have undermined the peace and security of Lebanon—a country that served as a model of peace and tranquility.
- Even Palestinians have been at war with each other!
- A survey by the World Health Organization on violent civilian deaths shows that over 150,000 Muslims—innocent men, women, and children—were killed by other Muslims between March 2003 and June 2006. Have you ever heard a Jew, a Buddhist, a Hindu, or a Zoroastrian killed by a fellow believer because of his religious beliefs, because he belonged to another sect? Can anyone claim that Muslims are either just or moderate as compared to the followers of other

religions? Do these statistics show that, as Yúsunf ‘Alí claims, Muslims are called a “middle ummah” because they are “justly balanced”?

Let us now look at the other standard of justice. How have Muslims treated the religious minorities who have lived amongst them? Consider the following examples:

- The government of Sudan has caused the death of over 200,000 innocent people in Darfur and uprooted two and a half million people from their land. The sight of homeless, starving, and sick people of all ages, as they are shown on television, touches the heart of every compassionate believer. The United Nations—not Muslims—have been aiding the refugees.
- During the reign of Khalifs of Islam—‘Abdu’l-Aziz and ‘Abdu’l-Hamid—Muslims murdered hundreds of thousands of defenseless Armenians, including women and children. (Armenians claim that the number of people murdered was about half a million.)
- In the 19th century, Iranian Muslims, at the command of their religious leaders, tortured and murdered over 20,000 Bahá’ís, including women and children. Persecution of Bahá’ís in Iran was repeated a second time during the reign of Islamic Theocracy of Khomeini. Properties of tens of thousands of Bahá’ís were confiscated or set on fire. Over 200 of their leaders and active members were executed. Tens of thousands left or escaped their country and are now living as refugees in Western countries.

The Qur’án asks us to teach our faith by example. Muslims extremists have been doing exactly the opposite of what they are asked. What about the majority of Muslims who have played no part in recent acts of violence? Have they gathered in large numbers to demonstrate their displeasure with these acts? No, for the most part, they have preferred to remain silent! Only a few have had the courage to speak out, and they have received little if any support from the majority of their fellow-believers. Speaking out and demonstrating peacefully is the least that the believers throughout the world can do to exonerate their Faith, yet they have failed to do even the least.

The preceding examples of political and religious dissent, persecution, cruelty, war, violence, and especially the wholesale execution of innocent Muslims by Muslims demonstrate utter contrast between the believers who lived during the life of Muhammad and those who have inherited that glorious trust: Islam, the religion of peace and submission to God.

Does the Qur’án predict the deviation of Muslims from their faith? Yes, the following verse predicts the dire destiny of the believers, a prediction that in itself totally contradicts the concepts of “moderation and justice:”

وَقَالَ الرَّسُولُ يَا رَبِّ إِنَّ قَوْمِي اتَّخَذُوا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ مَهْجُورًا.

The Messenger declared: O Lord! My people have abandoned this Qur’án.”Qur’án 25:30

Another translation by Majid Fakhry:

The Messenger says: “Lord, my people have taken this Qur’án as a thing to be shunned.”

The preceding verse proves that God had full knowledge of the future. The examples cited point clearly to the remoteness of Muslims from the Quranic teachings. Question: Can the believers who deviate from the Qur’án be at the same time just and moderate?

As we noted, history shows that the greatest cruelty has been inflicted by Muslims on their spiritual brothers and sisters. Many Muslims consider Israel the greatest enemy of Islam. Let us pose a question seldom if ever asked: How many Muslims have been killed by the Jews? The answer is quite disturbing! For every Muslim killed by Muslims in wars with Israel, probably one hundred Muslims have been executed by their own governments! If we pass beyond executions and include also Muslims killed by Muslims in wars, the ratio rises to 1 in 500! How many Muslims have been executed by other “umam,” such as Hindus, Jews, Zoroastrians, Buddhists, and Christians? Have you ever heard about one Muslim who was executed by the United States government? Millions of Arab Muslims live in Israel. Have you ever heard about one believer who was executed by Israeli government? Yes, many have been killed in clashes or wars, but not even a single Muslim has ever been executed by Israeli government—the country perceived by many believers to be the greatest enemy of Islam!

To settle the question of “justice and moderation,” let us pass beyond war and violence, and look at another significant dimension of life: wealth and poverty. Have the Islamic nations with vast reserves of oil practiced the principle of “justice and moderation” in distributing their wealth? As we know, some Islamic countries are decked with magnificent castles, while other Muslims are living in poverty, deprived of the essentials of life.

Let us bring this discussion to conclusion by raising once again the original question. When God addressed Muslims saying:

جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا...

Did He mean to say:

You are a middle “ummah”

Or did He mean to say:

You are a just and moderate “ummah”?

In the light of the facts presented in this book, each of us is accountable before God to decide the true meaning of “middle” (وسط) with a conscience crowned with courage and justice.

فَبَشِّرْ عِبَادَ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَمِعُونَ الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ أَحْسَنَهُ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَاهُمُ اللَّهُ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمْ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ.

Give, then, the glad tiding to [those of] My servants who listen [closely] to all that is said, and follow the best of it, [for] it is they whom God has graced with His guidance, and it is they who are [truly] endowed with insight! Qur’án 39:17-18 MA

Appendix IV

Literal and Spiritual-Minded Believers

Literal-minded believers see the surface meaning of words; spiritual-minded believers discern their inner meanings. Literal-minded thinkers see the box; spiritual-minded thinkers search for and discover the treasures within the box. To illustrate this point, let us examine two verses:

أَفَغَيْرَ دِينِ اللَّهِ يَبْتَغُونَ وَلَهُ أَسْلَمَ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ طَوْعًا وَكَرْهًا... وَمَنْ يَبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ.

Do they [people] seek any [system of belief] other than the Religion of God, while [they see that] all creatures in heavens and on earth submit to Him?...Anyone who desires a religion other than Islam [submission to God], it will never be accepted from him.

Qur'an 3:83, 85

How would surface thinkers interpret the preceding verses? They would most likely say that they close the door to the coming of new Messengers in the future. Are they justified in arriving at this assumption? Consider the Messengers who came before Muhammad. Could they not all make the same statement? Was any religion other than Judaism accepted during the Mosaic dispensation? Was any religion other than Christianity accepted during the Christian dispensation? Did not Jesus say: "No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6)? Could not the next Messenger also repeat the same message?

From God's perspective, cannot Islam be both the first and the last religion from the beginning of time to the end of time?

Compare each of the previous religions to a chapter in the first volume of an encyclopedia of knowledge. Consider Islam as the last chapter in that first volume. As the "seal of the Prophets" Muhammad placed His signature of approval on all the chapters that preceded it. The Qur'an was the last chapter in that first volume. Cannot God start another volume with a new chapter? Did He not declare that:

لِكُلِّ أَجَلٍ كِتَابٌ.

For every Age there is a Book.

Qur'an 13:38

Did history stop in 612 A.D. (ten years before the Hegira), when Muhammad was called to declare the dawning of a new Age to humankind? Can there not be many future ages, for ages to come? Have we not already entered a new age in human civilization? Has not the world changed in the last two centuries more than it had changed since the dawn of history?

Can anyone claim that God cannot start another cycle of communication with humankind in this new age of rapid change, when the world has suddenly turned into a village? Can anyone claim that He cannot send a new Book and a new Messenger to bring us new treasures of knowledge? Can anyone claim that our Creator will not write another Book, will not begin a new volume with a new chapter? Cannot all the previous and future volumes together be called: **Islam**—the progressive encyclopedia of spiritual knowledge? **Is not Islam—submission to God—God’s everlasting religion?**

Since God asks us to reason, to think, and to understand, let us see why every age must have its own Book:

- First, people need to be reminded periodically of God’s involvement in human affairs.
- Second, as a new age dawns and the world changes, the laws that govern the people who live during that age must also change.
- Third, change and growth are a sign of the perfection of the original design of creation. A new Book in every age is a response to the changing needs of the time; it is a divine Sunnah that will never be abolished. Could God speak more clearly than to declare:

لِكُلِّ أَجَلٍ كِتَابٌ.

Every age has its Scripture.

Qur’án 13:38 D

سُنَّةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ اللَّهِ تَبْدِيلًا.

God’s universal System was created in the past. You will never find any alteration in His System.

Qur’án 48:23

سُنَّةَ مَنْ قَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ مِنْ رُسُلِنَا وَلَا تَجِدُ لِسُنَّتِنَا تَحْوِيلًا.

That we have sent Messengers before you [Muhammad] is a Sunnah. You will not find any change in Our Sunnah—in Our Way of doing things. Qur’án 17:77

Why does the Qur’án apply the word Islam to the religions that preceded it? Is it not God’s purpose to expand our vision of the meaning of that word? To fully appreciate this concept, **we must be spiritual-minded**. A letter-minded Muslim focuses only on the letters of his religion—I, S, L, A, M. The spiritual-minded believer focuses on the spirit **behind** the letters. He uses the following verses to unlock or unseal the true meaning of “Islam” and “Seal:”

وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ دِينًا مِمَّنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ وَاتَّبَعَ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا.

Who can be better in religion than the one who **submits his whole self to God**, and follows the way of Abraham, the true in faith?

Qur’án 4:125

شَرَعَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الدِّينِ مَا وَصَّى بِهِ نُوحًا...إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى وَعِيسَى.

He [God] has established for you **the same religion** He enjoined on Noah...Abraham, Moses, and Jesus.

Qur’án 42:13

If Islam is the same religion that God enjoined on previous Prophets, could we not conclude that the religion that comes **after** Islam would also be the same religion as

Islam? Could we not also conclude that **there is only one religion**—Submission to God—which appears under new names again and again in every age as long as the sun endures?

As stated, the first chapter of the Qur’án is a prayer for seeking divine guidance. A believer—a Muslim—is already on the straight Path. Only by failing to recognize the dawning of the Day of a new Religion from God will he become one of the lost, will he grope in the darkness of disbelief and denial.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ.

In the name of God, the most gracious, the most merciful. Praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds—the most gracious, the most merciful. Master of **the Day of Religion**. Thee do we worship, and thine aid do we seek. **Guide us to the straight Path**—the Path of those on whom Thou has bestowed Thy grace, and not those who receive Thy wrath, neither those who have been lost. Qur’án 1:1-7



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

Without [gaining] true knowledge, do not follow any belief. For your sight, your hearing, and your heart—all of them are accountable [for the things you accept without evidence]. Qur’án 17:36

وَمَا كَانَ لِنَفْسٍ أَنْ تُؤْمِنَ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَيَجْعَلُ الرَّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ.

No soul can believe except with God’s permission. And He will place a barrier before those who do not use their mind—their reasoning powers. Qur’án 10:100

وَمَا يَتَّبِعُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ إِلَّا ظَنًّا إِنَّ الظَّنَّ لَا يُغْنِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْئًا.

Most of them follow nothing but conjecture. But conjecture cannot replace the truth. Qur’án 10:36

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا أَوَّلُوا كَانِ الشَّيْطَانُ يَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَى عَذَابِ السَّعِيرِ.

If they [non-believers] are told: “Follow what God has sent down.” They say: “We rather follow what our fathers are doing.” What! Even if it is Satan who is inviting them to the hell-fire? Qur’án 31:21

See also 10:78

فَبَشِّرْ عِبَادِ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَمِعُونَ الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ أَحْسَنَهُ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَاهُمُ اللَّهُ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمْ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ.

Declare the good news to the servants who hear an utterance and follow the best therein. These are the ones whom God has guided and are endowed with wisdom. Qur’án 39:17-18

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