

Part 3: The Message

Islam

As for the message, it is Islam, the religion of God with which He sent Muhammad, Allah's blessings and peace be upon him and his household, as a mercy to humankind.¹ The first and foremost purpose of Islam is the establishment of a relationship between man and his Lord and man's return (*ma'ad*) to God (on the Day of Judgement).

Thus it first related man to the One and true God, to Whom man's untainted native religious intuition (*fitrah*) points. It stressed the Oneness of the true God in order to abolish all manner of artificial deification, so that it made the profession of Divine Oneness (*shahadah*), "There is no God but Allah," its motto.

Since prophethood is the only direct mediation between creation and the Creator, its witness for the oneness of God, the Creator, and its link with the One and true God may be considered as sufficient basis for the proof of Divine Unity (*tawhid*). Secondly, the connection of man with the day of Judgement and the return (*ma'ad*) to God is stressed in order that the only way in which conflicts may be resolved and at the same time Divine Justice established can be found, as we have already seen.

The message of Islam has its own characteristics which distinguish it from all other heavenly messages. It has its peculiar qualities which make it a unique event in history. We shall now discuss briefly a few of these qualities and characteristics.

First, this message has remained sound within the Qu'anic text without becoming subject to any change or alteration (*tahrif*) while other heavenly scriptures suffered alteration and became devoid of much of their content. God the exalted says:

"We have surely sent down the noble recitation (the Qur'an) and We shall surely safeguard it."
(Qur'an, 15:9)

The preservation of the religious and legislative contents of the message is the only means of enabling it

to continue to play its educative role in society.

A message that becomes devoid of its content through loss or alteration, becomes inadequate as a link between man and his Lord. This is because this link is achieved not through mere nominal membership in a religious community, but through interaction with an interiorization of the contents of the message, both in thought and conduct. For this reason the soundness of the message of Islam has been safeguarded by the soundness of the Qur'anic text, which provides the message with the necessary condition enabling it to carry out its aims.

The second characteristic is that the preservation of the Qur'an, both in letter and spirit, means that the prophethood of Muhammad, Allah's blessings and peace be upon him and his household, did not lose the most important argument in proof of its validity. This is because the Qur'an itself as containing the fundamentals of the message and its sacred law, stands as the inductive proof, in accordance with our preceding arguments, of the prophethood of Muhammad and his apostleship. This proof will remain valid as long as the Qur'an itself remains.

In contrast with this fact are other prophethoods, the proof of which is linked to specific, occurrences which happened in a moment and were no more, such as the healing of the blind and the leper. Such occurrences are witnessed only by their contemporaries. With the passing of time and the succession of centuries, such an events loses their primary witnesses. It becomes thereafter difficult if not impossible to ascertain their truth by means of research and investigation. God would not oblige men to believe in or to seek to prove any prophethood whose proof could not be historically ascertained. This is because

“..... God does not burden a soul except with that which He has given it. . .” (Qur'an, 65:7)

If today we rely on our faith in earlier prophets and their miracles, it is because we rely on the reports of the Qur'an.

Thirdly, the mere passage of time, as we have argued, does not diminish the basic argument for the validity of the Islamic message. Not only this, it provides the argument with new dimensions through the growth of human knowledge and man's tendency to study the universe through scientific methods and experimentation. Furthermore, the Qur'an itself preceded modern science in this trend.

It linked its argument for the existence of the wise Creator with the study of the universe and the investigation of its phenomena. It alerted man to the mysteries and benefits that would accrue to him from such an investigation. Even modern man can still find in this book (which was proclaimed by an unlettered man in an ignorant environment hundreds of years ago) clear allusions to the discoveries of modern science.

Thus the British orientalist, A.J. Arberry, Professor of Arabic at Oxford University, said when modern science discovered the role of the wind in plant fertilization, “Camel herdsmen knew that the wind plays a role in the pollination of trees and fruits centuries before European science discovered this fact.”[2](#)

Fourthly, this message has encompassed aspects of life. On this basis it has been able to balance these various aspects. It was able to unify their principles and combine in one perspective the mosque and the university; the factory and, the field, so that man is no longer obliged to live in a dichotomy between his spiritual and material life.

Fifthly, this message is the only heavenly message which was implemented by the messenger, who brought it, and in the process of this implementation, achieved dazzling success. It was able to turn the slogans it proclaimed into realities in the daily lives of human beings.

As the message entered into the stage of implementation, it entered into human history and shaped it; this is the sixth characteristic. The message, furthermore, was the cornerstone in the process of constituting the community which bore it and followed the light of its guidance. Because this message is of a divine origin; constituting the gift of heaven to earth, above the logic of concrete factors and influences, the history of its community was consequently linked to an unknown (*ghaybi*) factor. It has an unseen basis which is not subject to the materialistic considerations of history.

It is therefore a mistake for us to understand our history only in the context of concrete factors and influences. Nor should we consider it as the result of materialistic circumstances, or simply a development in the capacities of production. Such a view of history does not apply to a community whose very being is based on heavenly message. Hence, unless we include this message as a divine reality in our assessment, we cannot understand our history correctly.

The seventh point we wish to make is that the effect of this message was not limited to the task of building a community. It rather went beyond it to become an effective power in the world throughout history. Fair minded European scholars have admitted that the Islamic cultural push was the power which awakened Europe from its slumber and guided it to its new course.

The Prophet Muhammad, Allah's blessings and peace be upon him and his household, who came with this message, (which is our eighth point) must be distinguished from all other prophets in the way he presented his message. This is because the message itself was the last divine dissertation; thus he declared that his was the final prophethood.

The idea of the seal of prophecy rests on two arguments. The first is a negative one based on the fact that no Other prophet, had appeared since on the stage of history. The other is a positive one, asserting the continuity of this final prophethood, across the ages. It is important to observe that the negative argument has held true for the fourteen centuries which followed the appearance of Islam, and will continue to do so for all time to come.

The fact that no other prophethood has since appeared on the stage of history does not mean that prophethood has lost its role as one of the foundations of human culture. Rather it is because the final prophethood came as heir to all the messages expressed by the long history of prophecy. It also contained all the perennial values proclaimed by earlier prophetic messages, not the transient values

which surrounded the long evolution of that history. It therefore became the authoritative norm capable of withstanding the test of time with all the factors of novelty and evolution it had brought.

“We have sent down to you the Book in truth, confirming that of the scriptures which was revealed before it and safeguarding it ...” (Qur'an, 5:48)

The ninth point we wish to make is that divine wisdom, which had sealed prophethood with Muhammad, decreed that he should have vicegerents (*awsiya'*) who would carry the burdens of spiritual leadership (*imamah*) and temporal authority (*khilafah*) after the end of prophethood. They are twelve imams appointed by clear texts (*nass*) from the Prophet, peace be upon him and his household, in many authentic traditions (*ahadith*), on whose authenticity all Muslims have agreed.

The first is the Commander of the Faithful 'Ali (Amir al-mu'minin), son of Abu Talib, then his two sons al-Hasan and al-Husayn, respectively. Husayn was followed by nine of his descendants, in the following order: his son 'Ali as-Sajjad (the Prayerful); then his son Muhammad al-Baqir (penetrator of divine knowledge); followed by his son Ja'far as-Sadiq (the Truthful); then his son Musa al-Kazim (the Serene One or one who conceals his anger); followed by his son 'Ali ar-Rida (the one contented with God) then his son Muhammad al-Jawad (the Magnanimous); then his son 'Ali al-Hadi (the guide to truth); followed by his son Hasan al-'Askari and the last, Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Mahdi (the rightly guided one).

Finally, during the occultation (*ghaybah*) of the twelfth Imam, peace be upon him, Islam has referred the people to the jurist-scholars. Thus it opened the gate of *ijtihad*, that is to say, the discovery of legal judgements, on the basis of the Book, (the Qur'an) and *sunnah* (prophetic practice).

Al-Fatawa al-wadihah is an example of personal effort (*ijtihad*) in the discovery of the ordinances of the Islamic *shari'ah* (sacred law) with which the seal of the prophets, God's blessings be upon him and the noble guides, his pure descendants, was sent. I began writing this brief treatise on the fundamentals of religion on the twenty-seventh day of *Dhu'l-hijjah*, 1396 and completed it on the afternoon of the tenth day of the sacred month, Muharram, 1397.

We finished writing the last lines while sorrow was wringing the heart and tearing the soul. Today we live the day of 'Ashura', commemorate the martyrdom of the eternal hero of Islam, Imam Husayn, son of 'Ali, peace be upon them both, who sacrificed his precious-blood on this day. This he did in order for us to stand firm on the path of The Revealer (*al Mursil*), The Messenger (*ar-Rasul*) and The Message (*ar-Risalah*).

He faced death with his soul and all his loved ones with unequalled courage. All this he did in defence of the Message and the establishment of its standards, for the protection of the wronged ones and the alleviation of the sufferings of those who are tormented on earth. He fell along with the elect of his household and companions at the hands of reprobates, in defence of Islam and Muslims everywhere and in every age.

He died in defence of a community where reprobates wished to deprive it of its will and to freeze its revolutionary conscience and its sense of its own existence. The Master of Martyrs stirred its conscience with his blood and by his courageous stand revived its will, and with his calamitous death rekindled its great feelings.

To you; O' my master, Abu 'Abdillah, (al Husayn) I present the divine merit (*thawab*) of this treatise. With the copious flow, of your precious blood you have preserved the lofty edifices of thought: With the power of your stirring voice, the Message reached us sound and fragrant with the blood of martyrs, with your blood and the blood of your children throughout history. I seek guidance from God alone, He is our refuge "To God do we belong and to Him shall be our return."

1. See Qur'an, 21:107. (Translator's footnote)

2. In this he refers to God's words: And we have sent the winds as fecundators. (Qur'an, 25:22)

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