

The Plain Truth

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Introduction

Islam is not a new religion brought by Prophet Muhammad in Arabia in the seventh century, but only the true religion of Allah re-expressed in its final form. The Koran, then, is a Reminder and the last Warner to the world.

The Koran teaches that the purpose of creation is to demonstrate a collection of signs leading man to the recognition of Allah's Oneness, power and goodness, and then to serve Him and be submissive to His Will. Man is expected through his creative knowledge to discover Allah's will and to follow it.

Because Muhammad was the last Prophet sent to the world, Allah revived through him the same genuine faith, which had been conveyed by all the Prophets. This original Message was corrupted, and split into various religions by people of different ages, who indulged in interpolations and admixture. Allah in the Koran eliminated these alien elements. Muhammad's fundamental Message is to shape one's life on Allah's will only.

The Koran teaches that there is only One God, Allah, He has created everything, from Him we come and belong and to Him we shall return. Allah's eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good, and all of our works are recorded from the first to the last, by the Lord who shall judge both men and nations. Everyone will be judged according to his faith, his intentions, his sincerity and his behavior; this life is not true life but a passage of a very short time. Basically this life is a test.

The people of paradise are those striving to win Allah's pleasure and forgiveness by believing in Allah's Lordship and Oneness without associating with Him any partners, believing in Allah's attributes; believing in all angels, believing in all Allah's Books, believing in all Messengers and Prophets without difference or distinction; believing in the Day of Judgment; believing in fate whether good or bad, and are active in good deeds. On such shall be no fear nor shall they grieve.

Around these important Islamic topics the author explains and elaborates.

Chapter 1

Islam and the wisdom of creation

Allah has revealed in the Koran that His purpose for creating human beings is to worship Him alone:

And I did not create the Jinn and mankind except to worship me... (Al-Dhariyat 56-58).

In Islam man was created from clay, and is thus part of nature. Allah honored and distinguished man from His other creation by breathing His own Spirit into him. This preferential treatment gave man two privileges not made available to the rest of Allah's creation: (1) freedom of choice and (2) creative knowledge. Freedom of choice allows man to make the decision whether or not to worship Allah and submit to His will. Creative knowledge enables man through meditating the universe and observing the greatness of its creation, to think, explore, rationalize, argue the presence of Allah, and then decide whether to submit to Allah - the Creator - in worship or not.

Allah created the universe and decreed upon its components the laws by which the natural order of creation functions. The universe is an independent entity, and it exists upon these laws without any divine intervention, yet it cannot explain its own existence. All creation, animate and inanimate, sings Allah's praises and celebrates His glory. All nature bears witness to His power, wisdom and goodness. The Koran teaches that the universe is in continuous submission to Allah since its creation. The universe praises Him and submits to his Laws, and hence the universe is necessarily Muslim.

The seven heavens and the earth, and all that is therein, glorify Him and there is not a thing but glorifies His praise but you understand not their glorification. Surely He is All-Clement, All-forgiving (Al-Isra', 44).

Only man is not necessarily Muslim, Allah endowed him with the power of making choices, either to submit to the good will of Allah and obey His Law, or choose disobedience.

The purpose of creation then is to demonstrate a collection of signs leading man to the recognition of Allah's Oneness, power and goodness, and then to serve Him and be submissive to His Will. Man is expected through his creative knowledge to discover Allah's will and to follow it.

Nature exists therefore for man to exploit for his own ends, while the end of man himself is nothing else but to serve Allah, to be grateful to him, and to worship Him alone. By recognizing Allah through His formidable creation and submitting to His Will, man will be making peace and harmony between himself and all the other elements of nature. But if he chooses disobedience, he will deviate from the right path and will not be in harmony with the elements of the universe. In addition, he will incur the displeasure and punishment of the Law giver, Allah.

Allah is above the need for man's worship. He does not benefit from man's devotion, nor would he be adversely affected by man's blasphemy. From beginning to end the story of man's existence on earth, is an ordeal, a test. Man's performance in this test determines either his praise and reward or reproof and punishment.

Like other religions, Islam has required acts of worship; but worship in Islam is not limited to rituals. Because Islam is an all-encompassing religion with guidance for all aspects of life, almost every action in a Muslim's life becomes an act of worship if it is done to build a better relationship with Allah. Since man's purpose in life is to worship and submit to Allah, worship in Islam has been defined by Allah Himself in an all-encompassing way. This special uniqueness can also be seen in the fact that most other religions only require formal worship once per week, while Islam requires it five times a day. Even more importantly, all rites of formal worship in Islam are based on divine revelation, while the modes of worship in other religions are a mixture of divine revelation, man-made traditions, opinions of clergymen and religious councils. Additionally, in Islam acts of worship such as prayer and fasting have been described by Allah and his Prophet in such detail that it gives human beings a feeling of assurance that the way they are worshipping Allah is pleasing to Him (1).

The teachings of Islam, since they are divinely revealed, are balanced in all of their aspects. Even though Islam is an all-encompassing way of life, it preaches moderation and rejects extremism. On the one hand, Islam does not teach complete rejection of all worldly pleasures, and on the other hand it does not teach that earthly life is just for pleasure and enjoyment. In Islam, wealth and worldly pleasures can be partaken of in this life as long as they are enjoyed in a way that is in obedience to Allah. However, Muslims are taught to keep in mind that the life hereafter is their ultimate goal, and therefore one should be charitable and not become too attached to worldly things. By maintaining a balance between man's spiritual and physical needs, the teachings of Islam are best suited for the needs of human beings. Since Islam is based on clear guidance from Allah, it rejects all man-made religious excesses, such as certain forms of monasticism where people try to completely reject the world and other forms of extremely self-denial. Islam teaches that human beings have responsibilities at all levels; to other individuals, to their families and to society as a whole. By maintaining a unique balance between the physical and spiritual, and between the individual and society, Islam maintains a balance in all directions (1).

According to Islam every human being, man or woman, is born with a clean state and is equally capable of both good and evil. Since Allah has bestowed free-will on human beings and allowed them to choose between good and evil, they will ultimately be held responsible for their actions. Believing that salvation is based on faith alone reduces human life to meaningless existence. The teachings of Islam strongly emphasize that human beings since their nature is basically good, are capable of positive action in this life, and that the best way to achieve a balanced, happy and fulfilled life is complete submission to Almighty Allah. It is only by worshipping Almighty Allah, directly and without intermediaries, and then makes a reasonable effort to follow His commands that human beings can fulfill their innate nature and purpose of existence.

As revealed by the Holy Koran, mankind is Allah's trustee on earth; and as such the life of this world is a test, not a punishment. Even before Allah created Adam, He

knew that man would sin, however He created him in spite of this. Based on the Koran, Allah has bestowed on human beings a great trust and gave them dignity. The Holy Koran tells us that man was created weak and thus frequently falls into sin. Nevertheless, man is not to think of himself as so evil and corrupt as to despair of Allah's Mercy. As recourse to this, a pious life can only be lived by trusting in Allah since there is no power or strength except through Him. As such spiritual felicity is achieved by a combination of both faith and action. Islam therefore has a positive view of mankind in general, since it teaches that the person in the sight of Allah is the one who is most-Allah conscious.

Islam as a religion therefore does not mean in any way the loss of individual freedom or surrender to fatalism. The person who submits to the Will of Allah, which is a good Will, and obeys his authentic Law, is a sound person and does not lose his freedom. Total Submission to Allah frees the mind from superstitions and fills it with truth. It frees the soul from sin and fills it with goodness and purity. It frees the self from vanity and greed, envy and tension, fear and insecurity. It frees man from subjugation to desires and false deities (idols, men, money, societies, families, power, celebrity, etc...) and unfolds before him the beautiful horizons of goodness and excellence. Submission to the Will of Allah is the best safeguard of peace and harmony. It enables man to make peace between himself and his fellow men, on one hand, and between the human community and Allah on the other. It creates harmony among the elements of nature.

Whatever adversities may befall man in this world, like pain, illness, earthquakes, volcanoes, etc., are not exclusively evil. They are mixed blessings. For some who are harassed by such evils they are punishment for their disobedience or heresy, while for some others they are a reminder, a nudge, to awaken them from their slumber. They also indicate the absolute power of Allah, His ability to deal with His creation in the way He deems just and wise. All that Allah decrees emanates from His compassion, wisdom and justice.

The purpose of Muslims in life is to please their Lord, Allah, by abiding to His laws. As they were taught by the Koran, Muslims believe that this materialistic world is perishable, and what counts are the good deeds they have been ordered to do to themselves, to their families and to others. To them Allah is always there, looming in their horizon. They strive to seek his consent and forgiveness in the Day of Judgment. This is why good Muslims live their lives in strict forwardness. Because Muslims combine materialism with spiritualism while crossing the road of life to the Hereafter, they believe that money and power are not important goals in life. Allah's blessing to Muslims in the form of money and power is but a tool for enabling them to construct the world and inhabit the earth as their sacred book taught them, and not to tyrannize or oppress others. This blessing from Allah is also a test. Would they use it properly as Allah has ordered them to, or they will use it to cause injustice and rise over others?

Allah is the heart of Muslims' purpose and to His blessed will they submit. Muslims believe that conveying the Message of Islam to the world is a great mercy, because by doing so they save people from eternal punishment in Hell fire and guide them to the road of paradise.

If men had not cultivated the habit of contention and obstinacy, they would have found that the parables of the Koran had fully met their difficulties, and they would gladly have obeyed the call of Allah.

We have indeed turned about for men in this Koran every manner of similitude; man is the most disputatious of things (Al-Kahf, 54).

Those who refused to see the many signs of Allah which in this world convey His Message and to listen to the Koran when it came to them will see the consequences fully brought up before them in the Hereafter. Their works are of no avail; their loss is all the greater because they had a misplaced confidence in their own deeds or in the assistance of false protectors. Allah is the only protector; no one else's protection is of any use.

And upon that day We shall present Hell to the unbelievers whose eyes were covered against My Reminder (the Koran), and who could not bear to hear it. What, do the unbelievers reckon that they may take My servants (angels, Messengers, Jesus) as lords, apart from Me? We have prepared Hell for the unbelievers' hospitality.

Say: 'Shall We tell you who will be the greatest losers in their works?

Those whose striving goes astray in the present life, while they think that they are working good deeds.

Those are they that disbelieve in the signs of their Lord and the encounter with Him; their works have failed, and on the Day of Resurrection We shall not assign to them any weight.

That is their recompense – Hell for that they were unbelievers and took My signs and My Messengers in mockery (Al-Kahf 101-106).

People therefore should not miss the path of rectitude and stand penitent to Allah, their Creator, before they are confronted with the retributive punishment and no one can defend them or afford them help.

If Truth is rejected, Truth does not suffer. It is the rejecters who suffer and perish in the end. The Koran teaches that Allah is a witness of all that He has revealed to Muhammad, and enough is Allah Himself to be the witness.

But Allah bears witness to that He has sent down to you; He has sent it down with His knowledge and the angels also bears witness; and Allah suffices for a witness (An-Nisa, 166).

The Prophet was instructed to say to the unbelievers:

Say: 'Allah suffices as a witness between me and you.' He knows whatsoever is in the heavens and the earth. Those who believe in vanity and disbelieve in Allah – those are the losers (Al-Ankabut, 52).

Muslims are given the good tiding that the future is for Islam, which will gain dominance, ascendancy and rule over all other religions.

The Prophet said:

"Indeed Allah gathered up the earth for me so that I saw its East and its West; and indeed the dominion of my Ummah (nation) will reach what was gathered up for me from it."

"This affair (Islam) will reach what is reached by the night and the day; and Allah will not leave a dwelling of brick, nor fur, except that Allah will cause this Deen (religion) to enter it bringing honor or humiliation. Honor which Allah gives to Islam and humiliation which Allah will give to disbelief."

The day shall come when Allah throng from every nation a group of those who rejected His Message and denied His authoritative divine signs. They shall be driven like herds one flock behind the other, until they have all assembled before Him for judgment. Then shall He question them: 'Did you not deny My revelations when you did know their significance, or what else was it that you used to do?' And the Word of torment will be fulfilled against them, and they will be unable to speak to defend themselves.

Upon the day when We shall muster out of every nation a troop of those that cried lies to our signs, duly disposed, till, when they are come, He shall say: 'did you cry lies to My signs, not comprehending them in knowledge or what you have been doing?' And the Word shall fall upon them because of the evil they committed, while they speak naught (Al-Naml 83, 84).

The duty of the Prophet and his adherents was, first, to accept Islam and become themselves shining examples of Allah's grace and mercy as they in fact were, and secondly to recite the Koran to be meaningful to the people. It was not for them to force the Message of Islam on unwilling people: for whosoever is guided, is only guided to his own gain; and whosoever goes astray, is only heading to his own loss, the Prophet was only a spectacle and a warner.'

And I have been commanded to be of those who bow in Islam to Allah's Will, and to recite the Koran. So whosoever is guided is only guided to his own gain; and whosoever goes astray, say: 'I am naught but a warner (Al-Naml 91, 92).

For every people, as for every individual, there is a definite term assigned: their faculty of choice gives them the opportunity of molding their will according to Allah's Will, and thus identifying themselves with Allah's Universal Law. During that term they will be given plenty of rope: after that term is past, there will be no opportunity for repentance. Neither the righteous nor the ungodly can hasten or delay the doom: Allah's Will must prevail. The destruction of a people is not an arbitrary punishment from Allah: the people bring it on themselves by their own choice: for the fixed Law or Decree of Allah, is always made known to them beforehand, and in many ways.

Never a city have We destroyed, but it had a known decree, and no nation outstrips its term, nor do they put it back (Al-Hijr 4, 5).

The time must inevitably come when those who allow themselves to be deceived by falsehood or deliberately break Allah's Law will find themselves in a terrible plight. They will then wish ardently that they had sought Allah's Will and walked in the light

of truth. That time may be early or late – in this life, or at death, or at the Day of Judgment, but it must come. Man should therefore awake to the reality before it is too late for repentance.

The West may go down in an orgy of self-destruction as a victim of its internal contradictions of which the most destructive one is the deification of man. This is bound to happen unless the West re-admits the Oneness of Allah and starts all over to live in accordance with the absolute values and divine norms as revealed in the Koran and reinforced by the Sunnah of Allah's last and final Prophet, Muhammad – peace be upon him.

Chapter 2

The Road to Paradise

In Islam the ultimate objective of man is to seek the pleasure of Allah by living in accordance with the divine guidance as stated in the Koran and the tradition of the Prophet. The Koran clearly states that the whole purpose behind the creation of man was for glorifying and worshipping Allah.

I only created Jinn and man to worship me (Adh-Dhâriyât, 56).

Worshipping in Islam means to testify to the Oneness of Allah in His Lordship, Names and Attributes. To Muslims, life was created as a test, and how well one performs on this test will determine whether one finds a final home in Jannah (Heaven) or Johannam (Hell).

Submitting one's whole self to Allah, the only One God, and the righteousness of deeds are the basic fundamental requirements to protect one's self from the torment of Hell Fire.

The Koran states that true faith is judged by a sincere belief in Allah and man's accountability to Him backed by righteous conduct rather than by mere beliefs or forms. The Koran repudiates the false claims of the people of the Book that they have a special relationship with God (Allah) for they were the children of Abraham; that they were a chosen people with special privileges, and no matter what they did, their high status would remain unaffected. The Koran refuted this false notion and the People of the Book are being reminded that it is through sincere belief and righteous conduct rather than pretentious claims that man can win his Lord's pleasure and achieve ultimate success. The genuine belief in Allah has no meaning unless it is accompanied by belief in all His Prophets for it is through their agency alone that we know Allah's Will and can abide by it in our practical lives. This is especially true of His final Prophet, Muhammad whose Message is universal, and not confined to any particular group or section of humanity. Belief in the Prophet Hood of Muhammad is thus an integral part and a logical corollary of belief in Allah (8).

Surely they that believe (in the Koran), and those of Jewry, and the Sabians, and those Christians, whosoever believes in Allah, and the Last Day, and works righteousness – no fear shall be on them, neither shall they sorrow (Al-Maidah, 69).

In other words, the people of paradise are those striving to win Allah's pleasure and forgiveness by believing in Allah's Lordship and Oneness without associating with Him any partners (son, angels, idols, saints etc...), believing in Allah's attributes; believing in all angels, believing in all Allah's Books, believing in all Messengers and Prophets without difference or distinction; believing in the Day of Judgment; believing in fate whether good or bad, and are active in good deeds. On such shall be no fear nor shall they grieve.

O believers, believe in Allah and His Messenger and the Book He has sent down (the Koran) on His Messenger and the Book which He has sent down before.

Whoso disbelieves in Allah and His angels and His Books, and His Messengers, and the Last Day, has surely gone astray into far error (An-Nisa, 136).

To explain more, the inhabitants of Paradise are those who believe in the unseen, especially Allah who is perceived only in the mind, who recognize all His Prophets and Messengers and they believe in the Hereafter, who duly engage in worship and spend in benevolence of the provisions with which Allah provisioned them, who faithfully believe in all that has been revealed to Muhammad in the Koran i.e. way of life, religious and spiritual virtues, knowledge of the matters of past, present and future e.g., news about the creation of the heavens and earth, botanical and zoological life, the news about the nations of the past, and about Paradise and Hell – and they credit all that had been revealed to those who were sent before Muhammad: Torah, Gospel, Psalm, scrolls of Abraham and the like, and affirm with the eye of faith the certainty of the Hereafter.

Alif Lam Mim (abbreviated letters from the Arabic Alphabet to draw attention to the miracle of the Koran which though written in the people's tongue, cannot be emulated) That is the Book (the Koran), wherein is no doubt, a guidance to the god-fearing who believe in the unseen, and perform the prayer, and expend of that We have provided them; who believe in what has been sent down to thee and what has been sent down before thee, and have faith in the Hereafter; those are upon guidance from their Lord, those are the ones who prosper (Al-Baqarah 1-5).

Those who don't believe in the Oneness of Allah and pride themselves on their works in this life, and think they are acquiring of good by their works, their deeds will be doomed to disappointment, and in the Day of Judgment Allah will attach to them no importance nor shall their pleading be of weight. Their loss is all the greater because they had a misplaced confidence in the assistance of false protectors. Allah is the only protector; no one else's protection is of any use.

Say: Shall we tell you who will be the greatest losers in their works?

Those whose striving goes astray in the present life, while they think that they are working good deeds. Those are they that disbelieve in the signs of their Lord and the encounter with Him; their works have failed, and on the Day of Resurrection We shall not assign to them any weight.

That is their recompense – Hell for that they were unbelievers and took My Signs and My Messengers in mockery.

Say "I am only a mortal the like of you; it is revealed to me that your God is one God. So let him, who hopes for the encounter with his Lord, work righteousness, and not associate with his Lord's service anyone." (Al-Kahf 103-106, 110).

Many people have such a smug sense of self-righteousness that while they go on doing wrong, they think that they are acquiring merit. In Islam all the elements that make for outward show or selfishness as to get some worldly advantage nullify the deed of charity. The charity of the hypocrites, who are in fact seeking some hidden gain for themselves, is not accepted by Allah. The sincere are only those who believe in the Oneness of Allah and worship Him alone and seek His content by doing good deeds. For the acceptance of the righteous deeds in Islam, two basic conditions must be fulfilled: a) the intentions while doing such deeds must be totally for Allah's sake

only without any show-off or to gain praise or fame; b) such a deed must be performed in accordance with the Sunnah of Allah's Messenger, Muhammad, the last of the Prophets and Messengers.

False motives, pretence, deception, and hypocrisy, flourish because people do not take Allah seriously. They treat Him as a jest.

Unbelief takes various forms: 1) denial of Allah and His revelation to mankind through inspired men; 2) a sort of nominal belief in Allah and His Prophets, but one which is partial, and mixed up with racial pride, which does not allow for recognition of any Messengers beyond those of a particular race; and 3) a nominal belief in universal revelation, but so hedged around with peculiar doctrines of exclusive salvation, that deny Allah's universal love for all mankind and all creation. All three amount to unbelief, for they really deny Allah's universal love and care.

Righteousness and true respect for Allah which excludes the worship of anything else, whether idols, sons, or deified men, or forces of nature, or faculties of man, or self – these are the criteria of true worship.

True Muslims and true believers while striving on earth to win paradise in the Hereafter must therefore believe in the following:

1- Belief in Allah's Lordship, Oneness, and attributes.

The seekers of paradise must believe in Allah's God ship; He is the true God and every other so-called deity is false. He is One and has no son or associate in His divinity, His God ship, His names, or His attributes.

Allah is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and all that is between:

He is the Lord of the Heavens and the earth and all that is between them, so worship Him and be patient in His worship; do you know any equal of Him? (Maryam, 65).

Allah is the One, the Eternal, the Absolute, and Purveyor of sustenance for all. No one can comprehend anything of His knowledge nor can anything be known except as He will:

Allah there is no God but He, the Living, the Everlasting. Slumber does not seize Him, neither sleep; to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth. Who is there that shall intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they do not encompass anything of His knowledge except what He wills. His throne extends over the heavens and the earth, the preservation of them does not burden Him; He is the High, the Great (Al-Baqarah, 255).

He is Allah, the only God there is, the Omniscient of the invisible, the hidden and the unseen, and what the bosoms store of thoughts and feelings and what the bosoms forge. He is the Absolute Sovereign, the Source and Trustee of Faith, the Paramount Ruler of the universe. Supreme as He is, He is far above those they incorporate with

Him. He is the Creator who fashions the fertilized ovule-plant and animal-in the point of origin and growth. To Him belong all the unique attributes. All beings in the heaven and on the earth praise His glory and extol His glorious attributes; He is the Almighty, the Wise.

He is Allah, there is no god but He, the Knower of the unseen and the visible. He is the Most Gracious, Most Merciful. He is Allah, there is no God but He, the King, the Holy One, the Source of Peace, the Keeper of Faith, the Guardian, the Almighty, the Subduer, the Sublime. Glory be to Allah above what they associate with Him. He is Allah, the Creator, the maker, the Shaper. His are the most beautiful names. All that in the heavens and the earth glorifies Him. He is the Almighty, the Wise (Al-Hashr 22-24).

Allah's words are the most truthful in conveying information, the most just in ruling, and the fairest in conversation. His words are decisive, irrevocable and conclusive.

The Word of your Lord has been fulfilled in truth and justice (Al-An'aam, 115).

And who is more truthful in His word than Allah (An-Nissa, 87).

The Koran is Allah's word. He literally spoke it to Gabriel who conveyed it to the Prophet, peace be upon him.

Say (O Muhammad) 'the Holy Spirit has brought it down from your Lord in truth (Al-Nahl, 102).

Truly it is the revelation of the Lord of the world brought down upon your heart by the Faithful spirit so that you may be one of the warners, in a clear Arabic tongue (Al-Shu'araa 192-195).

Allah is well above his creatures in His person and His attributes.

He is the High, the Great (Al-Baqarahh, 22).

He is Supreme over His servants, and He is the wise, the All-Aware (Al-An'aam, 18).

Allah is capable of doing anything in the heavens or in the earth, because of His perfect knowledge and power.

Indeed His command, when He desires a thing, is only to say to it 'Be' and it is (Yasin, 82).

Allah is free from weariness and weakness because of His infinite power.

Surely, We created the heavens and the earth and that is between them in six days, and no weariness touched us (Qaf, 38).

Belief in Allah, His names, and His attributes instills in the individual the love and glorification of Allah that result in his performing Allah's instructions and avoiding His prohibitions. These are the means of achieving ultimate happiness in this life and the Hereafter for both the individual and the society.

Whoever, male or female, does righteous deed, while believing, We shall assuredly grant him a goodly life, and We shall reward them according to the best of their deeds (Al-Nahl, 97).

2- Belief in angels and their assignments

The true believer should believe in the existence of the angels. They are honored servants, they do not speak before Allah does, and they act only by His command.

The angels who carry the Supreme Throne of Allah and those around it praise Allah and extol His glorious attributes, and invoke His forgiveness for those who believe in His Oneness saying: 'Our Lord! You comprehend all things in mercy and knowledge, so forgive those who repent and follow your way, and save them from the torment of the blazing Fire! Our Lord, make them enter the Adn (Eden) Paradise which you have promised them – and those who were righteous of their fathers, their wives and their offspring! Verily, you are the All-Mighty, the All-Wise. And save them from the punishment for what they did of the sins, and whomsoever you pardon him that day, him verily, you have taken into mercy. And that is the supreme success.'

Those who bear the Throne, and those round about it proclaim the praise of their Lord, and believe in Him, and they ask forgiveness for those who believe: 'Our Lord, Thou embracest everything in mercy and knowledge; therefore forgive those who have repented, and follow Thy way, and guard them against the chastisement of Hell. Our Lord, and admit them to the Gardens of Eden that Thou hast promised them and those who were righteous of their fathers, and their wives, and their seed; surely Thou art the All-Mighty, the All-Wise. And guard them against evil deeds; whomsoever Thou guardest against evil deeds on that day, on him Thou hast had mercy; and that indeed the mighty triumph (Ghafir, 7-9).

The pagans blasphemously designated the angels as females and related them to Allah as His daughters and so to round off his progeny He has taken up, adopted or begotten a son. In response, Allah says to them:

They say: 'The All-Merciful has taken to Him a son.'" Glory be to Him! Nay, but they are honored servants that outstrip Him not in speech, and perform as He commands (Al-Anbiya' 26, 27).

The angels are Allah's creatures. They are not too proud to serve Him, nor are they ever weary of His service. They celebrate His praises night and day, and they never slacken to do so.

To Him belongs whosoever in the heavens and the earth; and those (the angels) who are with Him wax not too proud to worship Him, neither grow weary. Glorifying Him night and day and never failing (Al-Anbiya' 19, 20).

Angels are concealed from people, so they cannot see them. Allah may show them to some of His servants. The Prophet Muhammad saw Gabriel in his real shape with six hundred wings that covered the horizons (Bukhari and Muslim). Gabriel took the shape of a handsome man when he met Mary and engaged in conversation with her about the coming birth of Jesus. He also came suddenly to the Prophet while he was

among his companions. He looked handsome, with very black hair, and wearing very white clothes. He did not show any trace of long travel. He sat facing the Prophet, his knees to the Prophet's knees, and his palms on the Prophet's thighs and talked with the Prophet about the principles of Islam. The Prophet later told his companions that the man they saw was Gabriel (Bukhari and Muslim).

Angels are assigned certain functions. Among the angels is Gabriel, who is entrusted with revelation. He brings it down from Allah to whomever He wishes among His Prophets and Messengers.

Among the angels is Michael, who is in charge of rain and growth of plants; Israfil, who is in charge of blowing the horn at the time of thunder-bolting and the resurrection; the angel of death, who takes away people's souls at the time of death. Among the angels is the one who is in charge of mountains; and Malik, the keeper of Hell.

Some angels are in charge of the dwellers of paradise.

And the angels shall enter unto them from every gate: 'peace be upon you, for that you were patient. Fair is the ultimate abode' (Ar-Ra'd, 24).

Some angels are in charge of embryos in wombs, others are responsible for protecting human beings, and others are busy recording men's deeds.

When the two angels meet together, one sitting on the right and one on the left, not a word he utters but by him an observer ready (Qaf 17, 18).

Those who believe in Allah and live a pious life based on the principles of the Koran and the tradition of the Prophet, the angels descend on them at the time of their death to reassure them saying: 'Fear not nor grieve, but receive the glad tidings of Paradise which you were promised. We are your guardians here and your defenders and intercessors hereafter, and you shall have all that you ask for - a hospital gift from One Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

Those who have said, 'Our Lord is Allah.' then have gone straight, upon them the angels descend saying, 'Fear not, neither sorrow; rejoice in Paradise. We are your friends in the present life and in the world to come; therein you shall have all that your souls desire, all that you call for, as hospitality from One All-Forgiving, One All-compassionate (Fussilat 30, 31).

Some other angels are in charge of questioning the dead after he is placed in his last abode. Two angels come to him and ask him about his Lord, his religion, and his Prophet. There Allah confirms the pious and true believers with the correct answers. They will answer: my Lord is Allah; my religion is Islam, my Prophet is Muhammad. The wrongdoers however, Allah will misguide them and they will not be able to answer these questions.

Allah confirms those who believe with the firm word, in the present life and in the world to come; and Allah leads astray the evildoers; and Allah does what He will (Ibrahim, 27). The Prophet said:

"Seventy thousand angels pray in the populous house in heaven every day. They never come back to it as long as they live." (Because their turn will never come) (Bukhari and Muslim).

Believing in the angels means appreciating the dignity of Allah, His might and sovereignty. Angels are loved by the believers because they are worshipping Allah in the best possible manner and praying for the believers (2).

3- Belief in all Allah's Books

The true believers must believe in all sacred Books sent by Allah to His Prophets. The Message of Allah since Adam until Muhammad is one Message proclaiming the Unity and Oneness of Allah: there is no god worth worshipping except Allah, the Lord of the world. Since the Message of Allah to His servants is universal and is the same, it is obligatory that believers must believe in all Allah's divine books without distinction. Believing in Allah is incomplete and not acceptable on the Day of Judgment if some believe in only certain divine Books and not in all others.

In the Koran Allah severely warned the Jews and the Christians that they must believe in the Koran, the Prophet of Islam and his Message of Islamic Monotheism.

You who have been given the Book (Torah and Gospel) believe in what We have sent down, confirming what is with you, before We obliterate faces, and turn them upon their backs, or curse them as We cursed the Sabbath-men, and Allah's command is done (An-Nisâ, 47).

Surely, those who reject faith (disbelieve in Allah, and in Muhammad as being Allah's Messenger, and in all that which he brought from Allah), their riches shall not avail them, neither their children, against Allah; those are the inhabitants of the Fire, therein dwelling forever (Al-Imran, 116).

The Koran is guidance to the people and the criterion between right and wrong. It is confirming the scripture that was before it and stands as a guardian over it. Thus by means of the Koran, Allah abrogated all the previous revealed books. Allah has also protected the Koran from any mischievous distortion, for the Koran is a proof against mankind till the Day of Judgment (2).

The believer seeking paradise must believe that Islam is the religion Allah has chosen for all His servants. He does not accept any other religion from anyone.

Allah said in the Koran:

Surely, the true religion in Allah's sight is Islam (Al-Imran, 19).

Today I have perfected your religion for you and I have completed My favor upon you, and I have chosen Islam to be your religion (Al-Maidah, 3).

Whoever desires a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted from him, and in the Hereafter he will be among the losers (Al-Imran, 85).

As mentioned in the Koran, among the Books that were revealed are the Torah of

Moses, the Gospel of Jesus, the Psalms of David, the Tablets of Abraham and Moses, and the Glorious Koran.

Allah concluded all Messages with the Message of Muhammad. The Prophet was instructed to proclaim the final Message to all people.

Allah said in His Koran:

Say: "O mankind, I am Allah's Messenger to you all. To Him belongs the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth; there is no god but He. He ordains life and death. So believe in Allah and His Messenger, the unlettered Prophet who believes in Allah and His words. Follow Him so that you may be rightly guided (Al-A'raf, 158).

It was Allah's mercy for His servants that he sent down a book to every nation for its guidance, the glorious Koran however, is the final Book and is suitable to all people at all times until the Day of Judgment.

4- Belief in all Messengers and Prophets

Islam teaches that it is incumbent upon all Muslims to believe in all the Prophets and Messengers of Allah. Believing in Muhammad alone is not enough to attain true belief. It is plain blasphemy in Islam to discriminate between Messengers by accepting some and rejecting others. Allah says in the Holy Koran:

Those who disbelieve in Allah and His Messengers, and desire to make division between Allah and His Messengers, and say, 'We believe in part, and disbelieve in part' desiring to take between this and that a way, those in truth are the unbelievers, and We have prepared for the unbelievers a humbling chastisement (An-Nisa 150, 151).

And those who believe in Allah and His Messengers and make no division between any of them, those We shall surely give them their wages; Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate (An-Nisa, 152).

The Jews do not believe in Jesus or Muhammad. The Christians believe in Moses but not in Muhammad. The Muslims however, believe in Moses, Jesus and all ancient Prophets who came before Muhammad.

Thus, whoever rejects the universal Message of Muhammad rejects the Message of all Messengers, even if he claims that he believes and follows His Messenger.

Genuine belief in Allah has no meaning unless it is accompanied by belief in His prophets for it is through their agency alone that man knows Allah's Will and can abide by it in his practical life. This is especially true of His final Prophet, Muhammad whose Message is universal, and not confined to any particular group or section of humanity. Belief in the Prophet Muhammad is thus an integral part and a logical corollary of belief in Allah. It is obligatory therefore to believe in the Messenger ship of Prophet Muhammad.

Abu Huraira narrated that the Prophet said:

"By Him in Whose Hand Muhammad's soul is, there is none from among the Jews and the Christians who hears about me and then dies without believing in the Message with which I have been sent (Islamic Monotheism), but he will be from the dwellers of the Fire." (Sahih Muslim, the Book of Faith, Vol. 1, Hadith No. 240).

The Jews and the Christians must not cut off a part of their spiritual view by believing in some prophets, angels or divine Books while denying others. People of all preceding religions must also believe in Muhammad and the Koran as a divine Book. The Koran states that whosoever disbelieves in Allah, His angels, all His Books, all his Messengers, and the Last Day has gone far astray.

O believers, believe in Allah and His Messenger (Muhammad) and the Book (the Koran) He has sent down on His Messenger and the Book which He sent down before (Torah, Gospel, Psalms, Pages of Abraham etc). Whoso disbelieves in Allah and His angels and His Books, and His Messengers, and the Last Day, has surely gone astray into far error (Al-Nisa, 136).

Those who deny Allah and that Muhammad is the seal of His Prophets and in all that which he has brought from Allah, neither their wealth nor their progeny shall profit them or afford them help against Allah; they will be companions of the Fire dwelling therein forever.

Those who reject faith, their riches shall not avail them , neither their children, against Allah; those are the inhabitants of the Fire, therein dwelling forever (Al-Imran, 116).

The Koran teaches that those who deny the Koran are promised Hell which is the abode of the damned.

And what of him who stands upon clear sign (the Koran) from his Lord, and a witness (angel Gabriel) from Him recites it, and before it came the Book of Moses, guidance and a mercy. Those (the Muslims) believe in it; but those of the sects (Jews, Christians and all the other non-Muslim nations) that reject it the Fire will be their promised land. So be thou not in doubt of it; it is the truth from thy Lord, yet many among men do not believe (Hood, 17).

Islam is not a sect or an ethnic religion. In its view all Religion is one, for the truth is one. It was the religion preached by all the earlier prophets. It was the truth taught by all the inspired Books. In essence it amounts to a consciousness of Will and Plan of Allah and a joyful submission to that Will and Plan. If anyone wants a religion other than that, he is false to his own nature, as he is false to Allah's Will and Plan. Such one cannot expect guidance, for he has deliberately renounced guidance (3).

Allah says in the Koran:

Whoso desires another religion than Islam, it shall not be accepted of him; in the next world he shall be among the losers (Al-Imran, 85).

Abu Huraira reported: 'Once while a Jew was selling something, he was offered a price that he was not pleased with, so he said, 'No by Him Who gave Moses superiority over all human beings!' Hearing him, a man from the Ansar (the Arabs of Medina who helped and hosted the Prophet and his companions when immigrated from Makkah to Medina) got up and slapped him on his face and said, "You say, 'By Him who gave Moses superiority over all human beings' although the Prophet Muhammad is present among us!" The Jew went to the Prophet and said, "O Abul Qasim (O the father of Al-Qasim [Mohammad's first son]), I am under the assurance and contract of security, so what right does so- and –so have to slap me?" The Prophet asked the other, "Why did you slap him?" He told him the whole story. The Prophet became so angry that the anger appeared on his face, and he said:

"Do not give superiority to any among Allah's Prophets, for when the trumpet will be blown, every one on the earth and the heaven will become unconscious except those whom Allah will exempt. The trumpet will be blown a second time and I will be the first to be resurrected to see Moses holding Allah's throne. I will not know whether the unconsciousness which Moses received on the Day of Tur has been sufficient for him, or whether he got up before me. And I do not know that there is anybody better than Yunus (Jonah) ibn (son of) Matta."(Al-Bukhari).

By this saying of the Prophet he is teaching Muslims not to speak about him in respect and show disrespect to any of the other Prophets and Messengers. He gave the example of Prophet Jonah. His story is mentioned in the Koran. Jonah left his people and ran away from his duty. He was swallowed by a whale and lived in the whale's belly for several days. Then he repented and Allah accepted his repentance. Even this Prophet should not be spoken of in a derogatory manner. He also deserves from the believers full respect and honor as a Prophet of Allah.

Those seeking paradise must believe that Allah has sent to His people Messengers who brought tidings and warning, so that mankind might have no argument against Allah after the Messengers. The first among the Messengers was Adam followed by Idris then Noah and the last is Muhammad, peace be upon them all.

The best among the Messengers is Muhammad, then Abraham, Moses, Noah, and Jesus, son of Mary. It is they who are meant by the following Koranic verse:

And when We took a compact from the Prophets, and from you, and from Noah, and Abraham, then Moses, and Jesus son of Mary. We took from them a solemn compact (Al-Sajdah, 7).

The true believers must believe that all messengers are created human beings who have none of divine qualities of Allah. Allah the exalted said about what Noah said to his people:

"I do not say to you, 'I possess the treasures of Allah. I do not know the unseen, and I do not say I am an angel." (Hud, 31).

Allah directed Muhammad to say:

"I do not say to you I possess the treasures of Allah, nor do I know the unseen, and I do not say to you I am an angel" (Al-An'aam, 50).

And to say:

"I have no power to bring profit or hurt for myself, but only as Allah wills" (Al-A'raf, 188).

The believer must believe that all the Messengers are among Allah's servants. Allah blessed them with the Message and described them as servants, in the context of praising and honoring them.

Allah says about Noah:

You are the descendants of those whom We carried with Noah, he was a truly thankful servant (Al-Isra', 3).

Allah said about Muhammad, the seal of the Prophets:

Blessed be He who sent down the Koran to His servant that He may warn mankind (Al-Furqan, 1).

As for some other messengers, He said:

And mention our servants Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, men of might and vision (Sâd, 45).

And remember Our servant David, who was a mighty and penitent man (Sâd, 17).

And to David, We gave Solomon; he was an excellent and penitent servant (Sâd, 30).

Allah said about Jesus, son of Mary:

He is only a servant whom We blessed and We made him an example to the Children of Israel (Al-Zukhruf, 59).

The Prophet companion Abu Hurairah narrated that the Prophet said:

"Whoever believes in Allah and His Messenger offers prayers perfectly and fasts (the month of Ramadan) then it is incumbent upon Allah to admit him into Paradise, whether he emigrates for Allah's cause or stays in the land where he was born." They (the companions of the Prophet) said, 'O Allah's Messenger! Should we not inform the people of that?' He said, "There are one-hundred degrees in Paradise which Allah has prepared for those who carry on Jihad in His cause. The distance between every two degrees is like the distance between the sky and the earth. So if you ask Allah for anything, ask Him for the Firdaus, for it is the last part of Paradise and the highest part of Paradise, and at its top is the thrown of the Beneficent, and from it gush forth the rivers of Paradise.'" (Bukhari 9/519).

Abdullah ibn Hisham narrated: "We were with the Prophet and he was holding the hand of Omar bin Al-Khattab. Omar said to him, 'O Allah's Messenger! You are dearer to me than anything except my own self.' The Prophet replied, '**No, by Him in whose Hand my soul is, (you will not have complete and perfect faith) till I am**

dearer to you from your own self.' Then Omar said to him, 'Now, by Allah, you are dearer to me than my own self.' The Prophet said, '**Now, O Omar, you are a believer.'**' (Bukhari 8/628).

Believing in all the Messengers of Allah means appreciating Allah's mercy and care for His people for sending them those great messengers to guide them to the straight path. It also means loving and respecting the Prophets because they are Allah's Messengers and His choice among His servants. The Prophets worshiped Allah according to the best of their ability, conveyed his Message to mankind, gave sincere advise to the people, and bore patiently whatever hurt they received (140).

5- Belief in the Day of Judgment

Allah has given Muslims a clear picture of their goal in life, so that they can keep it in front of them at all times. The goal is to desire the Hereafter and strives for it by doing good deeds while at the same time believing in the Oneness of Allah and not associating with Him any partners. Such striving is surely thanked and rewarded by Allah.

And whosoever desires the world to come and strives after it as he should, being a believer – those, their striving shall be thanked (Al-Isrâ', 19).

The believer who wins the pleasure of Allah is that who believes in the Day of Judgment when people will be resurrected and then told to remain in the abode of eternal enjoyment or in the abode of eternal punishment. People will arise from their graves, answering the call of their Lord. They will be barefooted, naked and uncircumcised.

The scales of deeds will be set up on the Day of Judgment. No soul shall be wronged.

And whoso has done an atom's weight of good shall see it, and whoso has done an atom's weight of evil shall see it (al-Zalzalah 7, 8).

Those whose scales are heavy, they are the successful; those whose scales are light, they are the ones who have lost their souls in Hell dwelling forever. The fire will burn their faces, and there they will be gloomy with lips displaced.

For when the trumpet is blown, that day there shall be no kinship anymore between them, neither will they question one another. Then he whose scales (of good deeds) are heavy – they are the prosperers, and he whose scales (of good deeds) are light – they have lost their souls in Gehenna (Hell) dwelling forever, the fire smiting their faces and there they will grin with displaced lips (disfigured). What, were not My verses (the Koran) recited to you, and you cried them lies? (Al-Mu'minun 101-105).

Allah is just as well as generous. To the good, the reward is multiplied ten times. To the evil, the punishment is no more than commensurate with their sin, and even so the door of mercy is always open to those who sincerely repent and show it by their conduct.

Whoso brings a good deed shall have ten the like of it; and whoso brings an evil deed shall only be recompensed the like of it; they shall not be wronged (Al-An'aam, 160).

The believer must believe in the straight path (sirât) set up over Hell. People have to pass over it to reach Paradise. Their speed while crossing it will differ according to their deeds: those excellent in deeds will pass over it as lightning, others as fast as wind, then as fast as birds, then as fast as a running man. The Prophet will be standing on the path, saying: "**Lord, save! save!**" as some people's deeds will fall short. Some of them will cross the path crawling. At both sides of the path there are hooks designed to take whom Allah wills: some are saved but bruised; others are thrown into Hell (Bukhari and Muslim).

Belief in the Day of Judgment is a consolation for the believer for whatever he misses of worldly enjoyment by what he hopes to gain of blessings and reward in the Hereafter. It is also an endeavor to obey Allah and avoid any disobedience to Him for fear of His punishment.

On the Day of Resurrection Allah will assemble the wicked and the righteous to judgment. The righteous Allah will forgive their iniquities and welcome them into Paradise. But those who refuse to recognize Allah and persist in labeling His revelations and signs as falsehood are the inmates of the Fire (Al-Taghâbun 9, 10).

Denial of the Hereafter is the denial of Islam even though one may believe in Allah, in the Prophet and in the Koran.

6- Belief in fate whether good or bad

No misfortune or calamity take place on earth but has been pre-destined and committed to writing on a Book long before Allah created mankind. Believers must therefore apprehend that what has befallen them would never have missed them, and so they must not trouble their minds and nurse despair nor exult over the favors Allah has bestowed on them, for Allah detests every boastful who exalts himself unduly and displays inordinate self-esteem.

No affliction befalls in the earth or in yourselves, but it is in a Book, before We created it; that is easy for Allah. That you may not grieve for what escapes you, nor rejoice in what has come to you; Allah loves not any man proud and boastful (Al-Hadîd 22, 23).

No affliction befalls, except it be by the leave of Allah. Whosoever believes in Allah, He will guide his heart. And Allah has knowledge of everything (At-Taghâbun, 11).

Disasters and misfortunes may strike people now and then. All this happens according to the will and plan of Allah. Even when we are allowed the exercise of our own wills, the consequences that follow are in accordance with the laws and plan decreed by Allah beforehand. The righteous man does not grumble if someone else has possessions, nor exult if he has them. He does not covet and he does not boast. If he has any advantages, he shares them with other people, as he considers them not due to his own merits, but as gifts from Allah. Such grace or favor is beyond anyone's own

merits. It is bestowed by Allah according to His Holy Will and Plan, which is just, merciful, and righteous.

7- Good deeds

In Islam righteous deeds are necessary for salvation. Faith is dispensable, but not sufficient. Humans will be admitted to Paradise by their faith and their righteous acts. They have to go together, hand in hand.

For the acceptance of the good deeds, the doers of such deeds must first believe in the Oneness of Allah and worship Him alone without associating with Him any partners (idols, deified men, forces of nature, faculties of man, son...etc) and the intention while doing such deeds must be totally for Allah's sake only without any show-off or to gain praise or fame.

Say: 'I am only mortal the like of you; it is revealed to me that your God is One God.

So let him, who hopes for the encounter with his Lord work righteousness, and not associate with his Lord's service anyone (Al-Kahf, 110).

Many Christian dominations teach that faith in Jesus is enough for salvation. If one accepts Jesus sacrifice on the cross, then he is saved regardless of what he may do afterwards because Jesus has already paid for all his sins. Islam totally disagrees. Faith, doing righteousness, avoiding evil, and continuous repentance are the only ways for salvation. Islam does not accept, nor condone the corrupting influence on the individual as well as the society that can be caused by the idea of a guaranteed salvation.

Islam teaches that Allah is very close to His servants and that He is with them wherever they are and that He hears their prayers and responds to them. Islam teaches that Allah is so closed that He needs no intermediaries to mediate between Him and His servants. Islam does not accept the concept of priesthood and clergy acting as mediators between Allah and humans. Islam teaches that one does not have to confess one's sins to a priest in order to get forgiveness. One can simply confess one's sins to Allah without any human intervention.

Many Jews today still believe that prayers cannot reach Allah and get a response from Him unless the prayer is made at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem. Some even fax their prayers or send it via the internet to Jerusalem so that someone there would take it and put it on the Wailing Wall to reach Allah. Islam teaches that wherever one may be, one can pray to Allah, confess to Allah, seeks Allah's help and forgiveness, and Allah will certainly respond. No human intervention is needed, no special place or time is necessary. Allah is always very close (4).

As the Koran teaches, the responsibility of one's sin is borne by himself and not by another. There can be no vicarious atonement. No soul bearing wrongs shall in any way bear the wrong actions of another. The result of man's efforts will be seen and Allah shall requite him in full for his deeds whether good or bad.

Allah says in the Koran:

Hast thou considered him who turns his back and gives a little, then stopped giving.

Does he possess the knowledge of the Unseen, and therefore he sees?

Or has he not been told of what is in the scrolls of Moses, and Abraham, he who paid his debts in full?

That no soul laden bears the load of another, and that a man shall have to his account only as he has labored, and that his laboring shall surely be seen, then he shall be recompensed for it with the fullest recompense, and that it is He who makes to laugh, and that makes to weep, and that it is He who makes to die, and that makes to live (An-Najm 33-44).

The essence of faith is good deeds. The Koran warns mankind that deeds are the basis on which they are to be judged. The Jews and the Christians claim that no one shall be admitted to Paradise but he who conforms to the Jewish faith or to Christianity. But Allah warned them in the Koran that what they claim is the fancy of their imagination. Allah ordered His Prophet to ask them to produce their evidence if they are truthful.

And they say, 'None shall enter Paradise except that they be Jews or Christians.' Such are their fancies. Say: 'Produce your proof, if you speak truly.' Nay, but whosoever submits his will to Allah (worshipping Him alone), being a good doer, his wage is with his Lord, and no fear shall be on them, neither shall they sorrow (Al-Baqarah 110, 111).

Belief in the Oneness of Allah and good deeds are the only routes to Paradise. Allah says:

And those who believe and do good deeds are the inhabitants of Paradise (Al-Baqarah, 82).

The Prophet said, **"The most common thing which leads people to Paradise is fearing Allah and good conduct, and the most common thing which leads people to the Hell Fire is the mouth (slandering people) and the private parts (using them in unlawful sexual intercourse)." (Tirmizi).**

Obedience of Allah and His messenger is a sure way to Paradise. Allah says:

And whosoever obeys Allah and His Messenger, He will admit him into gardens underneath which rivers flow; but whosoever turns his back, him He will chastise with a painful chastisement (Al-fath, 17).

Allah's Messenger said, **"All of my followers will enter Paradise except those who refuse."** It was asked, 'O Messenger of Allah, who would refuse?' He said, **"He who obeys me enters Paradise and he who disobeys me has refused."**

The deeds Allah wants from His servants are those performed totally for His sake without any show off or for gaining praise or fame. The deeds must be in accordance with the teachings of the Koran and the Sunnah of the Prophet.

When Allah mentions in the Koran those who will enter Paradise, He mentions the god-fearing, not the Muslims who might also commit sins.

But the god-fearing shall be amidst gardens and fountains: 'Enter you then, in peace and security.' (Al-Hijr 45, 46).

Allah also says:

Surely the god-fearing shall be in a station secure among gardens and fountains, robed in silk and brocade, set face to face. Even so; and We shall espouse them to wide-eyed houris, therein calling for every fruit, secure (Ad-Dukhân 51-55).

So who are the god-fearing?

Allah says:

They believe in Allah and the Last Day, bidding to honor and forbidding dishonor, vying one with the other in good works; those are of the righteous (Al-Imran, 114).

Allah also says;

Allah has bought from the believers their selves and their possessions against the gift of Paradise; they fight in the way of Allah; they kill (the unbelievers) and are killed; that is a promise binding upon Allah in the Torah and the Gospel, and the Koran; and who fulfils his covenant truer than Allah? So rejoice in the bargain you have made with Him; that is the mighty triumph (At-Tawba, 111).

Of the godfearing Allah also says:

And those that believe, and do deeds of righteousness- those are the inhabitants of Paradise; there they shall dwell forever (Al-Baqarahh, 82).

Whoever does good deeds, male or female, and is a true believer in the Oneness of Allah, such will enter Paradise and not the least injustice even to the size of a speck on the back of a date-stone will be done to him.

And whosoever does deeds of righteousness, be it male or female, believing – they shall enter Paradise, and not be wronged a single date-spot (An-Nisa, 124).

8- Struggle in the cause of Allah

Allah addresses the believers in the Koran saying: "Shall I guide you to a trade that will save you from a painful torment? It is such that you believe in Allah and His Messenger Muhammad, and that you strive hard and fight in the cause of Allah with your wealth and your lives." If they do so Allah will forgive them their sins and admit them in Gardens under which rivers flow, and pleasant dwellings in Adn (Eden) Paradise.

O believers, shall I direct you to a commerce that shall deliver you from a painful chastisement? You shall believe in Allah and His Messenger, and struggle in the way of Allah with your possessions and your selves. That is better for you, did you but know.

He will forgive you your sins and admit you into gardens underneath which rivers flow, and to dwelling-places goodly in Gardens of Eden; that is the mighty triumph (Al-Saff, 10-12).

The Koran teaches that the successful believers are those who humble themselves in their prayers; who avoid vain talk; who are active in deeds of charity; who abstain from sex except those joined to them in the marriage bond; or the captives whom their right hands possess (captives raised to freedom by marriage); those who faithfully observe their trusts and their covenants; and those who faithfully observe their act of worship and all it entails. These will be the heirs of Allah's mercy and blessings on earth and Hereafter.

The truly believer in Allah - the only God of the universe - should strive to protect his mind from evil thoughts because evil actions begin with evil thoughts; protect his eyes by lowering his gaze and not looking at forbidden things; protect his ears from lewd where there is sin; protect his stomach by eating the lawful food and keeping away from eating the unlawful like usury, carrion, and swine or drinking intoxicants or taking drugs; protect his hand from taking what does not belong to him, or from doing harm to others; protect his legs from taking him to evil and corruption; protect his private parts from unlawful sexual intercourse; protect his wealth by not squandering it or holding on to it too tightly; protect his oaths, witnesses and trusts by not breaching or breaking a contract or pledge knowingly, he should not testify to falsehood or brake his trusts; the believer protect his family and children by keeping them away from the things that corrupt their minds and their souls.

Prosperous are the believers who in their prayers are humble, and from idle talk turn away, and at almsgiving are active, and guard their private parts save from their wives and what their right hands own, then being not blameworthy. But whosoever seeks after more than that, those are the transgressors. And who preserve their trusts, and who observe their prayers. Those are the inheritors who shall inherit Paradise therein dwelling forever (Al-Mu'minin 1-11).

These verses sum up the light of the seven jewels of the Islamic faith: humility, avoidance of vanity, charity, sex purity, fidelity to trust, fidelity to covenants, and an earnest desire to get closer to Allah.

Allah's mercy and blessings may not be for the righteous to see it. It may be in the time of their heirs and successors. But in the life to come, there is no doubt that every

man will see the fruit of his life in the worldly life, and the righteous will inherit heaven, in the sense that they will attain it after their death in the worldly life (3).

Allah made a wonderful bargain with the believers, what they are asked to give is so little, and what they are promised in return is so much. If they believe in Allah and His Messenger, and strive in Allah's cause with their property and their persons, He will forgive them their sins and admit them to Gardens beneath which rivers flow, and to beautiful mansions in Gardens of Eternity.

O believers shall I direct you to a commerce that shall deliver you from a painful chastisement? You shall believe in Allah and His Messenger, and struggle in the way of Allah with your possessions and your selves. That is better for you, did you but know. He will forgive you your sins and admit you into gardens underneath which rivers flow, and to dwelling-places goodly in Gardens of Eden; that is the mighty triumph (As-Saff 10-12).

Those who strive in Allah's cause with might and main, with constancy and determination, shall be the recipient of His mercy and blessings. He will guide them to His way and all the paths leading to it.

As for those who struggle in Our cause, surely We shall guide them in Our ways; and Allah is with the good-doers (Al-Ankabût, 69).

Those who incorporate with Allah other deities (son, angels, saints...etc) shall be denied Paradise. Allah shall exclude them totally from the eternal bliss in time to come and the Fire will be their abode.

...Whoso associates with Allah anything, Allah shall prohibit him entrance to Paradise, and his refuge shall be the Fire; and wrongdoers shall have no helpers (Al-Maidah, 572).

In Islam repentance demolishes and erases all the previous evil deeds provided that the repentant follows the right path sincerely afterwards

The Prophet said:

"The one who repents from sin is like the one who never sinned." (Sahih Al-Jami).

Allah says:

Save him who repents, and believes, and does a righteous deed; those – they shall enter Paradise, and they shall not be wronged anything; Gardens of Eden that the All-Merciful promised His servants in the Unseen; His promise is ever performed (Maryam 60, 61).

The Prophet also said:

"If a person embraces Islam sincerely, then Allah shall forgive all his past sins, and after that starts the settlement of account: the reward of his good deeds will be ten times to seven hundred times for each good deed, and an evil deed will be recorded as it is unless Allah forgives it." (Sahih Al-bukhari, Vol. 1, Hadith No. 40B).

Allah is testing people in the worldly life in order to know who of them have struggled in His cause and those who are patient.

Did you suppose you should enter Paradise without Allah knows who of you have struggled and who are patient? (Al-Imran, 142).

Or did you suppose you should enter Paradise without there had come upon you the like of those who passed away before you? They were afflicted by misery and hardship and were so convulsed, that the Messenger and those who believed with him said, 'When comes Allah's help?' Ah, but surely Allah's help is nigh (Al-Baqarah, 214).

Faith rises and falls, and with it the good deeds. But the believer should never lose hope in Allah because His mercy encompasses all His servants especially if they repent and becomes righteous again.

The Prophet gives us hope. He said:

"Moses asked His Lord, 'Who amongst the inhabitants of Paradise will be the lowest in rank?' Allah said, 'He is a man who will come after the people have entered Paradise and it will be said to him: 'Enter Paradise.' He will say: 'How my Lord? Indeed, the people have settled in their apartments and taken their shares.' It will be asked of him, 'Would you be pleased if there was a kingdom for you like the kingdoms of the earth?' He will say, 'I would be pleased, my Lord.' The Lord will say, 'And for you is the like of that, and the like of it, and the like of it.' He will say after the fifth time, 'I am pleased.' The Lord will say, 'This is for you and ten times like it, and for you is what you desire for yourself and what is pleasurable to your eye.' He will say, 'I am pleased my Lord.'" (Muslim).

This is what Allah has in store for the least of His servants. In addition to the blessedness and comfort the believers will have in Paradise, there is still the greatest honor awaiting them. The Prophet said:

"When the inmates of Paradise enter Paradise and the inmates of Hell enter Hell, the announcer will say, 'O people of Paradise, verily you have a promise with Allah and He wishes to fulfill His promise to you.' They will ask, 'What is the promise? Has He not made our balance heavy (with good deeds), whitened our faces, admitted us into Paradise, and delivered us from the Hell Fire?' Then the screen will be removed and they will look towards Him. By Allah He will not give them a thing more beloved to them and more comforting to their eyes, than the gaze of himself.'" (Sahih al-Jami).

The Prophet also said:

"When a person is dead, his deeds cease except from three: deeds of continuous Sadaqah (act of continuous charity the deceased has made before his death – building a mosque, school, orphanage, public drinking place, hospital...etc); written knowledge with which mankind gets benefit; a pious son or daughter who begs Allah to forgive the sins of their parents." [Sahih Muslim - the Book of Wâsayâ (Wills and Testaments)].

Allah is compassionate and tends to forgive rather than to punish his servants. With regard to the merit of prayers in forgiving sins the Prophet said:

"Angels comes (to you) in succession by night and day, and all of them get together at the time of Fajr (dawn prayer) and Asr (afternoon prayer). Then

those who have stayed with you overnight ascend to Allah who asks them (and He knows the answer better than they): 'How have you left my slaves?' They reply, 'We left them while they were praying and we came to them while they were praying.' The Prophet added: 'If anyone of you says Āmîn (during the prayer at the end of the recitation of Sūrat Al-Fâtihah (the first chapter in the Koran – the opening) and the angels in heaven say the same, and the two sayings coincide, all his past sins will be forgiven.' (Sahih Al-Bukhari, Vol. 4, Hadith NO. 446).

The Prophet also said:

"Allah ordered (the appointed angels over you) that the good and the bad deeds be written (recorded). If someone intends to do a good deed and he does not do it, then Allah will write for him a good full deed (in his account with Him); and if he intends to do a good deed and he actually did it, then Allah will write for him a reward equaling from ten to seven hundred times, to many more times; and if someone intended to do a bad deed and he does not do it, then Allah will write a full good deed, and if he intended to do it and actually did it, then Allah will write one bad deed." (Sahih Al-Bukhari, Vol. 8, Hadith NO. 498).

In order to summarize the steps needed to win Paradise every Muslim should completely believe in the following principles:

- 1- Belief in one God, Allah.
- 2- Belief in all of Allah's Messengers and Prophets.
- 3- Belief in all the Books sent down to Prophets of Allah. These Books include Pages of Abraham, Psalm of David, Torah of Moses, Gospel of Jesus, Koran of Muhammad. Only the Holy Koran exists in its original form, however.
- 4- Belief in the existence of angels.
- 5- Belief in the Day of Judgment, life after death, Heaven and Hell.
- 6- Belief in the Divine Decree or Predestination, whether good or bad.
- 7- Believing in all previous issues should be crowned by complete adherence to the teachings of the Koran and the Sunnah of the Prophet.
- 8- Struggling in the cause of Allah with possessions and selves.

Believing in one or some of these principles while neglecting others is not considered by Allah as a true faith and He will not accept such kinds of deficient belief in the Day of Judgment.

Chapter 3

The plain truth

Islam is the true religion of all mankind. Islam means the submission or surrender of one's will to the only true God worthy of worship, "Allah", and anyone who does so is termed a "Muslim". The Message of Islam has been given from the time of the Prophet Adam, and renewed through many prophets chosen by Allah to inform humanity of the way leading to the path of rectitude. The fundamental teaching of all prophets was the same: "There is no deity, nor object worthy of worship, except Allah alone." Hence Islam is not a new religion brought by Prophet Muhammad in Arabia in the seventh century, but only the true religion of Allah re-expressed in its final form.

Islam was the religion of the first couple, Adam and Eve. It was also the religion of all the Messengers of Allah who came before Muhammad. According to the Islamic faith, Adam, Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job, David, Solomon, Elias, Moses, Aaron, Jonah, John, Jesus and many others – peace be upon them all – are true Prophets of Allah. They all followed His commands and spread His Message to their fellow men. The Koran considered them as Muslims because they surrendered and submitted themselves to the will of Allah. Therefore, by its broader definition, the people of ancient times who accepted the teachings of their Prophets and submitted themselves to the will of Allah were also Muslims.

As the Koran teaches, Allah provided people through the ages with various divine revelations adapted to certain eras. This explains the diversity and co-existence of the various creeds.

To every one of you We have appointed a right way and an open road. If Allah had willed, He would have made you one nation; but (He willed otherwise) that He may try you in what has come to you. So be you forward in good works; unto Allah shall you return, all together; and He will tell you of that you whereon at variance (Al-Maidah, 58)

Thus, religious diversity is desired by Allah as He gave a specific Message to each people. These divine Messages in the course of history were in one way or another, modified and altered by human hands. So much so, that every successive revelation had to rectify what was wrong and falsified in its predecessor.

Allah reveals in the Koran that He has sent down Holy Books before the advent of Prophet Muhammad, namely the Pages of Abraham, the Tawrah (Torah), the Zabour (the Psalms), and the Injeel (the Gospel). The Pages of Abraham have disappeared and are not to be found in the world literature which exists today. The Psalms, the Torah and the Gospel, though they exist with the Jews and the Christians, have been changed and corrupted in the course of time. What has been left of them are not the original texts but only translations, wherein for centuries many alterations have been made, and are still being made.

A close study of the first books of the Old Testament and the four Gospels of the New Testament reveals that these are the productions of men, wherein some parts of the originals have been mingled with other narratives written by human hands, and the original guidance of the Lord is lost in that quagmire. In addition, it is quite difficult

to understand how parts of the Old Testament dealing with the post-Moses history of the Israelites can be regarded as belonging to the Torah revealed to Moses himself. Likewise, the four Gospels of the Christians are not the original Gospel as it was revealed to Jesus Christ. They are the life-histories of Christ compiled by four different persons on the basis of knowledge and hearsay transmitted to the compilers with certain parts of the original Gospel included in them. To sum up, the original Word of Allah is preserved neither with the Jews nor with the Christians (5).

Many things have been inserted into the former divine Books which are against reality, opposed to reason, and which affront every instinct of justice. There are things which are cruel and unjust, and vitiate man's beliefs and actions. Furthermore, unfortunately, things have been inserted that are obscene, indecent, and immoral. The Old Testament, for example, depicts the Prophet Aaron as an idol maker or idol worshipper, David as adulterer or a man of loose conduct, and the Prophet Solomon as idol maker, idolater, and a man practicing witchcraft.

The Koran purifies Jesus, Aaron, David, Solomon and all other Prophets from all ungodly thoughts and actions. It expressly negates what four gospels affirm concerning the crucifixion, resurrection, and physical sufferings of Jesus at the hands of the Jews. It denies the doctrine of son ship, the incarnation theory, and the theories of transmigration of the souls, and union with Allah. From the beginning to the end, the whole Book is full of wisdom and truth, with nothing unjust, indecent, and misleading in it.

All sacred Books which came before the Koran emphasized the Oneness of Allah and the necessity of worshipping Him alone without associating with Him any partners. The Torah and the Gospel also strongly expressed such obligatory commitment to the Jews and the Christians. But in the course of time the Oneness of Allah had been misinterpreted and had become mixed up with superstitions and had degenerated into magical practices and meaningless rituals. The conception of Allah, the very core of religion, had become debased by the tendency of turning Allah into a being with human shape and passions; by deification of the angels; by the association of other persons with Allah as in Hinduism and Christianity; by making the prophets or some godly persons into incarnations of Allah e.g., Jesus Christ in Christianity, the Buddha in Mahayana Buddhism, and Krishna and Rama in Hinduism.

The Jews considered Uzair (Ezra) the son of Allah, and that Allah belongs to them only. They hurt Moses and rebelled against Allah in certain occasions. After the extinction of the Torah they wrote the Talmud in which the original teachings of the Torah were violated.

The Christians violated the main purpose of creation which is worshipping the One and only God, Allah, by associating with Him Jesus, the son of Mary. Allah stated in the Koran that He is Most-Merciful and forgives all sins if He wills except the grave sin of associating partners with Him. The Christians considered Allah one of three, the father, the son, and the Holy Ghost. They over praised Jesus and considered him the son of Allah. The Christians do not have one Gospel to gather around, but many Gospels differing from one another and most of these Gospels believe in the doctrine of Trinity and associate Allah with Jesus as His son!

Because Allah is Most Merciful to His servants, He willed to send a last warner to the world, a bringer of glad tidings, reminding people of the Day of Judgment and on that Day Allah will not accept associating partners with Him. The Doctrine of Abraham's Law had to be revived. Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, and he worshiped none but Allah alone. Islamic monotheism was his religion. The concept of pure monotheism that had been called out by all ancient prophets had to be re-established before people stand before Allah in the final reckoning on the Day of Judgment.

Mohammad – the last of the Prophets – then came with the Koran, a Book immune to adulteration, a Book that stood the test of time. The Koran is the literal Word of Allah bestowed from on High through the intermediary of the angel Gabriel. The Koran brought teachings incumbent on mankind to follow if they seek forgiveness and Allah's grace in the Hereafter. The Koran was in fact a severe admonition to the world. Its teachings rejected all such irrational theological trends and restored the conception of Allah to its pristine purity as the only Creator, Sustainer and Master of all the creation (5).

The Koran specifically warned mankind against a terrible Day in which they will be subdivided into two groups, one in Heaven and one in Hell. The Koran was the first amongst all former sacred Books that described Hell Fire and its severe torment in frightening details, a terrible Fire that was prepared for atheists, pagans, polytheists, evildoers, and those making corruption in the land. A Fire fully kindled to roast without mercy those who violated the words of Allah in His ancient Holy Books and claimed falsely that these words were from Allah. A fire fiercely kindled to burn the skin and bones of those who set up rivals unto Allah though He alone created them.

In the Koran the Message of Tawhid (Oneness of Allah – Islamic monotheism) is strictly emphasized: there is only One God, Allah, and human beings must answer His call and worship Him alone. This was the quintessential Message revealed to all previous Prophets. The Koran, then, is a Reminder and the last Warner to the world.

Allah ordered Muhammad to say to the whole world, "We Muslims believe in Allah (God), and we believe in all that has been imparted to us in the Koran, and in all that was imparted to Abraham, and Ishmael, to Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes and in the Books given to Moses, Jesus and the Prophets, from their Lord: we make no distinction between one and another among them, and to Allah do we bow in Islam. And he who adopts a system of faith or worship other than Islam, which means submission to Allah's blessed will and His will alone – simply relies on a system of faith and worship which does not stand upon the vantage ground of truth. Such system of faith shall not be accepted from him and in the Hereafter he shall be a great loser.

The Koran confirms what was sent previously and it corrects and rectifies the errors and alterations which had been introduced within earlier Messages.

Allah ordered Muhammad in the Koran to say to all people:

Say: 'We believe in Allah, and that which has been revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that which was given to Moses and Jesus, and to the other Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and to Him we submit (in Islam).

Whoso desires another religion than Islam, it shall not be accepted of him; in the next world he shall be among the losers (Al-Imran, 83-85).

The Koran teaches that there is only One God, Allah, He has created everything, from Him we come and belong and to Him we shall return, everyone will be judged according to his faith, his intentions, his sincerity and his behavior; this life is not true life but a passage of a very short time. Basically this life is a test.

Blessed be He in whose hand is the kingdom; and he is powerful over everything – who created death and life, that he might try you which of you is fairest in works; and He is the All-mighty, the All-forgiving (Al-Mulk 1, 2).

According to Islam, the final destination of mankind is the life hereafter. At the end of time, all human beings will be resurrected and will be held accountable for their worldly life. Lures of this world and its fleeting pleasures often make man forget that the life of the Hereafter is an imminent reality. Many of those who believe in the life to come act and behave as if it belonged to a distant future, and had no relevance to their present activities and mode of living. The Koran repeatedly reminds man that the Hour of Reckoning is not a distant possibility, but very close to man, and could come to pass any moment. The wisest course for man, therefore, is to be always alert and abstains from all forms of sin and impiety, for when the promised Hour comes it will come all of a sudden and without any prior notice.

When the reckoning comes, each soul will stand on its own personal responsibility. No one else can help it. Full justice will be done, and all the seeming inequalities of this world will be redressed:

The day that every soul shall come disputing in its own behalf; and every soul shall be paid in full for what it wrought, and they shall not be wronged (An-Nahl, 111).

All revealed religions are based on this understanding of what life means.

Those who denied Allah and renounced faith have come within the measure of Allah's wrath. Such like persons have earned the curse of Allah and of the angels and of all mankind. Such curse shall follow them like their shadow and beset them on all sides until the Day they are dragged in chains into Hell, confined with shackles and put to the torment which shall not abate nor shall their punishment be put in respite. Allah is one God; no God there is but He, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

Those who disbelieve, and die disbelieving, upon them shall rest the curse of Allah and the angels, and of men altogether, therein dwelling forever (under the curse in Hell) the chastisement shall not be lightened for them; no respite shall be given them.

Your God is One God; there is no God but He, the All-Merciful, the All-compassionate (Al-Baqarahh 161-163).

Hell shall be their Promised Land altogether. Seven gates it has, and unto each gate a set portion of them belongs (El-Hijr 43, 44).

Faith tells us that no amount of opposition from the unbelievers can ever stop Allah's plan. If evil and disbelief exist in the world, we must understand that they are part of the universal plan and purpose of Allah, who is All-Wise and All-Good, but whose wisdom we cannot fully fathom. Allah's will and plan may be above comprehension but will prevail over all things. Therefore, Islam should not be viewed as a rival tradition to Judaism or Christianity. It has to be regarded as the consummation, completion, and perfection of the divine Messages that had been revealed before it.

Allah says in the Holy Koran:

This day the unbelievers have given up all hope of your religion. Yet fear them not; fear only Me. This day I have perfected your religion for you and completed my favor upon you and have chosen Islam as your religion (Al-Maidah, 3).

Allah revealed to Muhammad revelations clear and plain to guide all people out of darkness and superstition of later times into illumination and enlightenment. This was indeed kindness and mercifulness from Allah, the Lord of the Worlds to His servants.

It is He who sends down upon His servant signs, clear signs that He may bring you forth from the shadows into the light. Surely Allah is to you Most Kind, Most Merciful (Al-Hadid, 9).

Allah's favor to mankind was the Light of Islam, so that no race, or people, or community, or group, believe that they have exclusive possession of Allah's Grace, or that they can influence its grant or its withholding. Allah's Grace is free, and entirely controlled by Him, independently of any priests and privileged people. He dispenses it according to His own wise and Holy Will and Plan; and to His Grace there is no limit.

Choosing Muhammad as the last of the Prophets, to bring the last divine Revelation to mankind is to show the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) that they have no power whatsoever over the Grace of Allah, and that His grace is entirely in His Hand to bestow it on whomsoever He wills, for Allah is the Owner of Great Bounty.

That the people of the Book may know that they have no power over anything of Allah's bounty, and that bounty is in the Hand of Allah; He gives it unto whomsoever He will; and Allah is of bounty abounding (Al-Hadid, 29).

After Moses and Jesus, the Jews and Christians became divided into sects and factions through enmity, each with a belief cherished in their minds after their acquaintance with facts well recorded in their Books. Those who have inherited the Book (the Torah and the Gospel) after them were in perplexity about it on account of its present intricate character (3).

The Koran emphasized that the Jews and the Christians should accept the new light, Islam. Allah having revealed His last divine Book, confirming previous revelations, people must accept it in all reverence. Allah's revelation being continuous, all the people are invited to accept its completion in Islam.

In addition to the Arab pagans of the tribe of Quraish, Muhammad came to invite the Jews and the Christians to Islam. Allah commanded him in the Koran to say to the Jews and the Christians (People of the Book) to fear Allah, and believe in

Muhammad's Messenger ship. Because religion with Allah has always been Islamic Monotheism, Muhammad came to invite people of the Book (Jews and Christians) to worship Allah, the One and only God. This one system of faith states and confirms recognition of Allah and His control of destiny; His rightful claim to obedience, reverence and worship and the moral attitude resulting from this belief.

O people of the Book. Now has come to you Our Messenger making things clear to you, after a break in the series of the Messengers, lest you say: "There came unto us no bringer of glad tidings and no warner," But now has come unto you a bringer of glad tidings and a warner. And Allah is able to do all things (Al-Ma'idah, 19).

Allah has revealed the Koran to Muhammad to relate its context of truth to the people in truth, and he who accepts the spirit of truth will have profited his own soul and he who deviates into falsehood will have hurt himself. The duty of Muhammad is only to convey the Message and on Allah is the reckoning. It is not for the Prophet to watch over their folly.

Surely We have sent down upon thee the Book for mankind with the truth. Whosoever is guided, is only guided to his own gain, and whosoever goes astray, it is only to his own loss; you are not a guardian over them (Az-Zumar, 41).

Now there has come to you a Messenger from among yourselves; grievous to him is your suffering; anxious is he over you, gentle to the believers, compassionate. So if they turn their backs, say: "Allah is enough for me. There is no God but He. In Him I have put my trust. He is the Lord of the Mighty Throne (At-Tawba 128, 129).

Allah has sent Muhammad as a warner to all, but he will not be asked about the dwellers of the blazing Fire:

We have sent you with the truth, good tidings to bear, and warning. You shall not be questioned about the inhabitants of Hell (Al-Baqarah, 119).

When Muhammad presented the Koran to the Jews of Medina they refused to accept it although the Torah clearly foretold of the coming of Muhammad, an event which they had always expected. Yet when the prophesy was fulfilled and Muhammad came with the Koran, they refused to acknowledge the truth of his mission and rejected the Koran. When they were told to acknowledge the Koran, they said: 'We only acknowledge what has been imparted to us', and they denied all else when they knew fully well that the Koran was the truth which corroborates the Torah of Moses.

In the Koran Allah called the Jews and the Christians to believe in the Koran - the Book which validates the Torah and the Gospel - before He afflicts them with a malignant fate just as He had cursed those who broke the Sabbath.

You who have been given the Book (Jews and Christians) believe in what We have sent down, confirming what is with you (Torah and Gospel), before We obliterate faces, and turn them upon their backs, or curse them as We cursed the Sabbath – men, and Allah's command is done (An-Nisa, 47).

In the Koran Allah warned the Jews and the Christians that there came to them Muhammad His Apostle after a period of time to make clear to them the facts and to help them abandon imagination and superstitions of later times so that they cannot later on claim innocence and say: 'No one came to us in the capacity of a spectacle and warning.' There he is the Apostle Muhammad in your midst, who has been sent to you all as a Messenger and a warning.

People of the Book, now there has come to you Our Messenger making things clear to you, upon an interval between the Messengers lest you should say, 'There has not come to us any bearer of good tidings, neither any warner.' Indeed there has come to you a bearer of good tidings and a warner; Allah is powerful over everything (Al-Maidah, 15, 16, 19).

In the Koran Allah clearly warned the Christians not to associate with Him in worship other deities. By taking Jesus as His son, the Christians had committed the most heinous sin. Allah is the One and only God, and Jesus although Allah brought him to life without a father, he was just a Prophet sent to the children of Israel who had gone astray after they perverted the words of the Torah to serve their own whims and desires.

Allah forgiveth not that partners should be set up with Him; but He forgiveth anything else to whom He pleaseth; to set up partners with Allah is to devise a sin most heinous indeed (Al-Nisa, 48).

As the Koran teaches, the parable of those who take protectors other than Allah stands similitude exact of the spider who builds to itself a house made of slender filaments or threads spun all round. It may be strong enough to suit its purpose, but it collapses by a wave of the hand, and so the spider's house is indeed the flimsiest of all houses.

The likeness of those who have taken to them protectors, apart from Allah, is as the likeness of the spider that takes to itself a house; and surely the frailest of houses is the house of the spider, did they but know. Allah knows whatever thing they call upon apart from Him; He is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise (Al-Ankabut 41, 42).

The people of the Book should have known the Prophet Muhammad as well as 'they knew their own sons', as their past traditions and teaching should have made them receptive of the new Message. The Jewish Scriptures promised the Jew a Prophet like Moses. Christ also promised a comforter. The people of the Book knew Muhammad to be true and upright, they knew him to be in the line of Abraham. They knew him to correspond to the description of the prophet foretold among themselves; but selfishness induces some of them to act against their own knowledge and conceal the truth.

Those to whom We gave the Scripture (Jews and Christians) recognize him (Muhammad) as they recognize their sons. But verily, a party of them conceal the truth while they know it – (i.e. the qualities of Muhammad which are written in the Torah and the Gospel). (Al-Baqarah, 146).

What, shall I seek after any judge but Allah? For it is He who sent down to you the Book (the Koran) well-distinguished; and those whom We have given the

Book (Torah and Gospel) know it is sent down from thy Lord with the truth; so be not thou of the doubters (Al-An'am, 114).

When Muhammad came to them with the Koran featuring the words of Allah they rejected the Holy Prophet and the words of Allah because they were not searching for truth, but were following their own fancies and desires. They became divided after they have received clear divine evidence.

The responsibility of the people of the Book is greater than that of pagans, because the people of the Book had been prepared for the standard and straight religion by the revelations which they had already received. To be given the faculty of discrimination between right and wrong, and then to reject the truth, is the worst folly which a creature endowed with will can commit. Rejecting the truth must necessarily bring its own punishment, whether the creature calls himself one of the Children of Abraham, or one of the redeemed of Christ, or whether he goes by the mere light of nature and reasons as a pagan (3).

Our whole being should be permeated with Islam; it is not a mere veneer or outward show. People should revere Allah in the manner appropriate to His absolute sovereignty and adhere to Allah's system of faith and worship so that when death comes to them, they will have conformed their will to Allah's blessed will. People should die on the state of Islam with complete submission to Allah.

O believers, fear Allah as He should be feared, and see you do not die except as Muslims (Al-Imran, 102).

O believers, fear Allah, and speak words hitting the mark, and He will set right your deeds for you and will forgive you your sins. Whosoever obeys Allah and His Messenger has won a mighty triumph (Al-Ahzab 70, 71).

Just as in earthly kingdom the worst crime is that of treason, as it cuts at the very existence of the State, so in spiritual kingdom, the unforgivable sin is that of contumacious treason against Allah by putting up Allah's creatures in rivalry against Him. This is rebellion against the essence and source of spiritual life. But even here, if the rebellion is through ignorance, and is followed by sincere repentance, and amendment, Allah's mercy is always open (3).

Many of the Jewish scholars recognized the Holy Prophet's Message as a Message from Allah, e.g., Abdullah ibn Salam and Mukhariq. The latter was a man of property, which he left for Islam. There were also Christian monks and scholars who recognized the Prophet's mission.

In all ages, and among all peoples, Allah sent His Messengers to teach the truth and point the way to righteousness. But the allurements of evil seemed always attractive, and many men preferred their own ways or the ways of their ancestors to the more difficult path of rectitude. This will always happen as long as men succumb to evil.

The unbelievers and polytheists of today find it hard to accept what Muhammad invited them to, but Allah chooses to Himself those whom He pleases, and guides to Himself those who turn to Him. Muhammad's mission is to preach the clear Message

of Islam to the people, but he is not responsible before Allah if they turn their back and reject the last divine Message of Islam.

The Prophet of Islam shall not be able to guide to the path of Allah whom he likes, but Allah guides to His path of rectitude whom He wills and He knows best those who are willing to lift to Him their inward sight.

Thow guidest not whom thou likest, but Allah guides whom He wills, and knows very well those that are guided (Al-Qassas, 56).

In fact, neither the Jews nor the Christians shall be pleased with the religion of Islam until Muslims follow their system of faith. This fact had been known since the dawn of Islam. Allah commanded Muhammad to say to the Jews and the Christians that the guidance of Allah (Islamic monotheism and good deeds) is the only guidance, and should the Prophet be tempted to follow their wishes after the knowledge which has been imparted to him, then he should not expect Allah to maintain him under His guardianship. The Koran mentions that those among the people of the Book, whether Bible or Gospel who read their Book with careful scrutiny in search of the truth shall recognize what really proceeded from Allah and what has been forged by base admixture of false glosses. Such like persons shall comprehend of the truth and accordingly honor the Koran. And he who refuses to acknowledge that the Koran is the truth from Allah shall be the great loser.

Never will the Jews be satisfied with thee, neither the Christians, not till thou followest their religion. Say: 'Allah's guidance is the true guidance.' If thou followest their caprices, after the knowledge that has come to thee, thou shalt have against Allah neither protector nor helper.

Those to whom We have given the Book (Torah and Gospel) and who recite it with true recitation, they believe in it (the Koran); and whoso disbelieves in it, they shall be the losers (Al-Baqarahh 120, 121).

Islam does not teach an exclusive doctrine, and is not meant exclusively for one people. The Jews claimed this for themselves, and the Christians in their origin were a sect of the Jews. Even the modern organized Christian churches cling to the idea of vicarious atonement, which means that all who do not believe in it or who lived before Jesus are at a disadvantage before the throne of Allah. The attitude of Islam is entirely different. Islam existed before the preaching of Muhammad on this earth. The Koran expressly calls Abraham a Muslim:

Abraham was not a Jew, nor yet a Christian; but was an upright Muslim (surrendered to Allah), and he was not of the idolaters (Al-Imran, 467).

The teaching of Abraham (submission to Allah's will) has been and will be the teaching of religion for all time and for all peoples.

The Koran emphasizes the importance of true and genuine faith, which is to be judged by a sincere belief in Allah and man's accountability to Him backed by righteous conduct rather than by mere forms or labels. The Koran repudiates the false claims of the people of the Book that they had a special relationship with Allah for they were the Children of Abraham; that they were a chosen people with special privileges, and no matter what they did, their high status would remain unaffected. In Islam this false

notion is refuted and the People of the Book are being reminded that it is only through sincere belief and righteous conduct rather than pretentious claims that man can win his Lord's pleasure and achieve ultimate success. Genuine belief has no meaning unless it is accompanied by belief in all Allah's Prophets without any distinction between them for it is through their agency alone that people knew Allah's will and abide by it in their daily lives. This is especially true of His last Prophet, Muhammad whose Message is universal, and not confined to any particular group or section of humanity. Belief in the prophet hood of Muhammad is thus an integral part and a logical corollary of belief in Allah (3).

The Koran says in this regard:

If only the people of the Book had believed (in Muhammad) and warded off evil (sin, ascribing partner with Allah), We would indeed have expiated for them their sins and admitted them to gardens of pleasure (in Paradise). And if only they had stood fast by the Torah, the Gospel, and what has (now) been sent down to them from their Lord (the Koran), they would have enjoyed happiness from every side. There is from among them a party on the right course (i.e. they believe in Prophet Muhammad like Abdullah bin Salâm the best and most superior among the Jews at the time of the Prophet, and enjoined Islam), but many of them follow a course that is evil. Say (O Muhammad), 'O people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians)! You have no ground to stand upon unless you stand fast by the Torah, the Gospel and what has (now) been sent down to you from your Lord (the Koran).' And what has been sent down to you from your lord (the Koran) will surely increase many of them in insolence and unbelief; so grieve not for the people of the unbelievers (Al-Maidah 65, 66, 68).

As indicated earlier the religion before Allah is Islam (submission to His will). Yet not until the people of the Book had received divine course and intellectual acquaintance of the truth did they fall in dispute and set themselves at variance. And he who disregards Allah's revelations shall find that Allah is swift in calling to account. Should the Jews and the Christians argue with the Muhammad and maintain their irreverent position by adducing their unfounded reasons, the Prophet was ordered to say to them: 'I have vowed to resign myself to Allah's purpose and will, so have those who follow me.'

The Prophet was also ordered to say to the Jews and the Christians and the Arab pagans, 'Do you also submit yourselves to Allah in Islam?' If they do, they are rightly guided; but if they turn away, the Prophet's duty is only to convey the Message of Islam; and Allah is All-Seer of His slaves.

The Koran says in this regard:

Allah bears witness that there is no God but He, and the angels, and men possessed of knowledge – upholding justice; there is no God but He, the All-mighty, the All-Wise. The true religion with Allah is Islam. Those who were given the Book were not at variance except after the knowledge (Torah and Gospel) came to them, being insolent one to another. And whoso disbelieves in Allah's signs Allah is swift in the reckoning.

So if they dispute with thee, say, 'I have surrendered my will to Allah, and whosoever follows me.'

And say to those who have been given the Book and the common folk (Arab pagans): 'Have you surrendered (to Allah in Islam)?' If they have surrendered, they are rightly guided; but if they turn their backs, your duty is only to convey the Message; and Allah is All-Seer of His servants (Al-Imran, 18-20).

The Christians of today believe - as they are told by their priests - that Christ became a man named Jesus two thousand years ago. "Jesus" means Jehovah, the savior. "Jehovah" is the ever existing God. Jehovah is the name of God used before he became a man. After he became a man, He used the name Jesus. To Christians, Jehovah is the God of heaven sitting on the throne, whereas Jesus is Jehovah becoming a man to be their savior. The Christ into whom Christians believe and to whom they are joined as one is the crucified, resurrected, and exalted God-man, Jesus!

The Christians think that their first birth by their human parents gives them a dying physical body; a corrupted psychological organ (the soul), consisting of the mind, emotion and will; and a spirit that is dead and incapable of contacting God. By receiving Christ as their savior, they are born again. In the first life they are cursed, but in the second they are blessed with God (6).

According to the evangelicals so influential in today's America, only "born again" Christians are on their way to Heaven, the Jews and non-born again Christians are however doomed until God calls them forth to be slain at the Battle of Armageddon!

One of the things that must happen before the second coming of Christ is not only the establishment of Israel but also that the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem must be rebuilt on its ancient site. This necessitates destroying the Haram ash-Sharif and the Al-Aqsa Mosque, a matter that is extremely worrying for Muslims.

The 'Born Again' Christians have one goal: to facilitate God's hand to waft them up to Heaven free from all trouble from where they will watch the Battle of Armageddon and the destruction of planet earth.

They think that Jesus will strike those who have ravaged His city in Jerusalem. Then he will strike the armies massed in the valley of Armageddon. Blood will stand to the horse's bridles for a distance of 200 miles from Jerusalem. This whole valley will be filled with war materials, animals, bodies of men, and blood!

Every city of the world will be destroyed – London, Paris, Tokyo, New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago – obliterated!

Born again Christians will have the good fortune to escape all the suffering of nuclear holocaust, because God will cause them to be taken up alive into the Heavens before the Battle of Armageddon takes place, where they will have a grandstand view of everyone else being destroyed! Christ will descend and 'snatch away' his true followers. This belief is not actually any part of the teachings of Jesus, but is based on a couple of verses of St Paul's, namely, First Thessalonians 4:16-17.

It is a strange mix, for most of these 'born again' so-called Christians seem to have a very hearty dislike of Jews. They are only really using them as a means to an end.

Needless to say, they have an extremely hearty dislike of Muslims, who have inconveniently somehow got themselves in the way of the whole thing (7).

This increasingly common form of Christian extremism in The United States had virtually nothing to do with the Christianity people had grown up with. There is a new religious cult that listens to the TV evangelists and gives them millions of dollars each week to expound the fundamentals of the cult.

The insistence that 'born again' Christians are the only righteous persons and that all others who disagree in any detail are unbelievers, and will be condemned to Hellfire, is a very prominent feature of the Christian fundamentalism today.

This doctrine pervades Assemblies of God, Pentecostal, and other charismatic churches, as well as southern Baptist, Independent Baptist, and countless so called Bible Churches and mega-churches. At least one out of every ten Americans is a devotee of this cult.

This emotional movement which is not related to authentic Christianity in the least is brought about by hypnotic fiery sermons and religiously seductive music appealing to simple pious people. Thus it is a simple matter for fascinating preachers, money-grubbing pastors, hypocritical dervishes and cunning traders of religion to take full advantage of the popular relish for esoteric matters, miracles, supernatural performances, inspired dreams and prophecies. It can all too easily be seen that simple pious people can be led into accepting every new fantasy. It all appeals strongly to those who want to feel they are on the 'inside' of a group, with secrets, profound knowledge and revelations (7).

The ugliest intrigues the enemies of Islam have plotted have been to try to lure its followers away from it. The Lord of creation says in the Koran:

And they will not cease from fighting against you till they have made you renegades from your religion, if they can (Al-Baqarah, 217).

In contemporary age, the Muslim community has been exposed to horrendous invasions and aggressive attacks. This invasion began its mission with the Western colonization of the Muslim world. The aim is to entice Muslims to convert to Christianity. This goal was made clear in the North American conference on Muslim Evangelization that was held in Colorado in 1978. Forty studies about Islam and Muslims and how to spread Christianity among them were submitted to that conference, and \$1 billion was allocated for this purpose. In addition, the Zwemer Institute in South Carolina was established to train missionaries to preach Christianity to Muslims.

There is a labyrinth of Christian television evangelists (Evangelist: a person who brings the gospel to pagan people or non-believers) engaged in a massive worldwide well planned, organized onslaught against Muslims in an effort to convert them to Christianity. The organizations engaged in wholesale evangelism (the preaching of the Gospel) are: Trinity Broadcasting Network, Christian Broadcasting Network, Life Outreach International, Trinity Television, Church of the Rock International, 700 Club, AD 2000, Sat 7, Galilean International Films and Television Services, Open doors International and others.

The Christian organizations presently air programs in the United States and 90 foreign countries in order to covert Muslims to Christianity.

In Kenya, the Pope John Paul II and the forces of Christianity vowed to change Africa into a Christian continent by the year 2000 CE. Crosses with red fluorescent lightning were raised on the skyline of Mombassa, and other traditionally Islamic cities. In Mitri (Northeastern Kenya), Muslim youth were invited to a Christian worship center called 'Makkah Center,' which is shaped like a mosque, five times a day. In Mauritania and Somalia, teenagers were given visas and scholarships to America while families were introduced to the West through the satellite dishes and promises of a paradise on earth.

After the invasion of Iraq, two leading evangelical Christian missionary organizations said that they have teams of workers poised to enter Iraq to address the physical and spiritual needs of a large Muslim population. The Southern Baptist Convention, and the Franklin Graham's Samaritan's Purse said their priority will be to provide food and shelter to Iraqis ravaged by recent war, but if the situation presents itself, they will also share their Christian faith in a country that is estimated to be 98 percent Muslim and about 1 percent Christian. Some of the Christian leaders claimed that the doors of Islam are being opened as never before to the presentation of the Christian faith. This statement can be met by posing two questions: how far is Christianity itself accepted in its homeland? And why Islam is considered today as the fastest growing religion in the West and the world at large?

Many attempts have been made by the enemies of Islam to change the meaning of the Koran by adding or deleting certain words or verses, but their efforts ended in failure. They forgot that Allah has preserved His last Book to mankind and provided the means for such preservation. The Koran is not only preserved in books, but also in the minds and hearts of Muslims. Muslims memorize it all by heart and recite it in their five daily prayers; in addition, they read it on daily bases as a form of worship. Violation or adulteration of the Koran is therefore impossible.

The Prophet said:

"The best among you are those who have learnt the Koran and taught it (to others)."

What the Christian fundamentalists must understand is that it is the firm and unshaken belief in the Oneness of Allah and the unswerving confidence in His Mercy and Justice that make a Muslim distinguishable and prominent among non-Muslims. And it is this sound faith in Allah and the sincere attachment to His Holy Koran and the Sunnah of the Prophet that the Christian missionaries have completely failed. All efforts and promises for a better life made by the Vatican and other Christian groups to convince Muslims throughout the world to convert were in vain.

Those who refer to the modern western civilization as a Christian civilization are in fact exposing themselves to the charge of ignorance. It was Islam, and not Christianity, which brought about the western Renaissance, and the modern scientific culture. The current western civilization was in fact born in the Muslim universities of Spain. The Christian church during that time, however, fought against science and

progress for centuries and it was not until it had suffered many defeats in succession and found itself powerless that it signed the truce.

The fact cannot be denied that it was Islam, and Islam alone which roused the world from its death-like sleep in the seventh century, which raised the Arabs as well as the non-Arabs to the highest pinnacle of glory in all realms of human activity – religious, moral, social and intellectual, and which ultimately brought Europe out of the semi-barbarism of Middle Ages and taught her science and philosophy and inaugurated the Renaissance (8).

It is not a secret that Christianity is dying today in the West and in her own homelands. It seems that Christianity is losing ground everyday in proportion to the power which the westerners are gaining. The average European or American knows only one positive religion, and that is the worship of material progress, the belief that there is no other goal of life than to make that very life continually easier. The temple of this religion is the gigantic factories, cinemas, chemical laboratories, dancing halls, electronic works; and its priests are bankers, engineers, scientists, politicians, film stars, industrial barons... etc.

Currently, it looks as if the Christian religion is on its way out in the West! People are leaving the Christian Churches in droves. And these churches even help speed up their demise by entering one compromise after the other with the spirit and fashions of our time. Thus we can see homosexual priests, sex abuse of women, girls, and boys by priests in churches, abortion of children, and virtually no period of fasting any longer. No wonder that a near-majority of the 'faithfuls' – and even some protestant clergy – no longer believe in the divinity of Jesus or life after death. However, this is not the entire picture because there is still much vagabonding and privatized religion around. The Christian religion is seeking new niches for its existence away from the established churches.

While Christianity suffers in this way, the case of Islam is altogether different. Islam was destined since its onset to become a world religion, and to create a civilization which stretched from one end of the globe to the other. A classical Islamic civilization was established during the era of Muslim caliphates, first the Arabs, then the Persians followed by the Turks. Both Africa and India became great centers of Islamic civilization in the 13th century. Muslim kingdoms were soon established in Malay and Indonesia, while Chinese Muslims flourished throughout China.

Islam is a religion for all people from whatever race or background they might be. This is why Islamic civilization is based on a unity which stands completely against racial or ethnic discrimination. Such major racial and ethnic groups as the Arabs, Persians, Turks, Africans, Indians, Chinese and Malays in addition to numerous smaller units embraced Islam and contributed to the building of Islamic civilization. Islam was not opposed to learning from the earlier civilizations and incorporated science, learning, and culture into its own world view, as long as they did not oppose the principles of Islam.

The global civilization thus created by Islam permitted people of diverse ethnic backgrounds to work together and establish various arts and sciences. The environment of freedom the religion made available to non-Muslim minorities made them participate in the intellectual activity whose fruit belonged to everyone. The

religion of Islam was responsible not only for the creation of a world civilization in which people of many ethnic backgrounds participated, but it played a central role in developing intellectual and cultural life on a scale not seen before. For some eight hundred years Arabic remained the major intellectual and scientific language of the world. During the centuries following the rise of Islam, Muslim dynasties ruling in various parts of the Islamic world bore witness to the flowering of Islamic culture and thought. This tradition of intellectual activity was eclipsed only at the beginning of modern times as a result of external domination and weakening of faith. Faith in Islam however, revived more strongly in many parts of the Islamic world now that the Muslims have regained their political independence.

Today, there is not a single country on this globe in which one does not find active Muslims, from Korea to Columbia, from Iceland to New Zealand. Muslims only 1/7th of mankind 100 years ago, now make up 1/5th of the world population. There are now representative mosques in places like London, Paris, Rome, Vienna, Lisbon, Zagreb, New York, and Los Angeles.

This phenomenal growth indicates that Islam is truly a religion from Allah. It is unreasonable to think that so many Europeans and Americans converted to Islam without careful consideration and deep contemplation before concluding that Islam is true. These Europeans and Americans came from all classes, races and walks of life. They include scientists, professors, philosophers, journalists, artists, athletic stars, pastors, ministers, members of the armed forces and Congress, just to name a few.

Any true divine religion must contain as its pillars the authentic literal word of Allah and the Sunnah of the Prophet. People must seek the religion that stands on these pillars. The only religion available today that stands on these pillars is the fastest growing religion in the world – Islam.

Now the wealth of Islamic literature is available in European and English languages. The Koran and the Sunnah of the Prophet have become the most frequently translated and most often recited Books on earth. Those who want to learn about Islam have then no excuse.

Islam being the perfect light of truth and the only accepted religion by Allah is going to prevail. The Koran states:

It is He who has sent the Messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth to make it prevail over all religion, though the unbelievers be averse (At-Tawbah, 33).

Epilogue

All praise be to Allah, we praise Him, seek His help and His forgiveness. We seek refuge in Allah from the evils of our souls and evils of our deeds. He singles out for His Mercy whom He will. One, whom Allah guides, none can lead him astray, and one whom Allah misguides, none can guide him. Allah was gracious to us when He sent a Messenger to purify us, and to teach us the wisdom, though before we were in manifest error. This is Allah's bounty, He grants it to whom He pleases.

I bear witness that there is nothing worthy of worship except Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad - peace be upon him – is His servant and Messenger.

In the name of Allah, the Infinitely Merciful, the Compassionate, the Most High, of knowledge we have none, save what He has taught us. He has graced us with the Koran through the tongue of His honest and true Messenger, Muhammad – peace be upon him – and explained to us what is just and what is unjust; and what is guidance and what is error; and which are acts of obedience and which are sins.

Truly Allah was gracious to the believers when He raised up among them a Messenger from themselves, to recite to them His signs and to purify them, and to teach them the Book and the Wisdom, though before they were in manifest error (Al-Imran, 164).

Muhammad is only a mortal like all people; he was sent by Allah to impart to mankind the knowledge that has been inspired to him. It emphasizes that Allah is only One God, the Creator of the universe. Therefore he who hopes to be welcomed in Allah's heavenly realm and be a recipient of His mercy and blessings will have to work righteousness and never to incorporate with his Creator other deities nor should he invoke besides Him any.

Say: 'I am only a mortal like you; it is revealed to me that your God is One God. So let him, who hopes to encounter with his Lord, work righteousness, and not associate with his Lord's service anyone (Al-Kahf, 110).

All praise is due to Allah for revealing the Koran to Muhammad and has not placed therein any crookedness. He has made the Koran straight and clear to warn the godless of a terrible punishment from Him and to give glad tidings to the believers who work righteous deeds that they shall have a good reward (Paradise), wherein they shall remain forever. And to warn those who say, "Allah has begotten a son". A thing whereof they have no knowledge, nor had their fathers. Mighty is the word that comes out of their mouths. They utter but a lie.

Praise belongs to Allah who has sent down upon His servant the Book and has not assigned unto it any crookedness; right, to warn of great violence from Him, and to give good tidings unto the believers, who do righteous deeds, that theirs shall be a goodly wage therein to abide forever, and to warn those who say, 'Allah has taken to Himself a son' ; they have no knowledge of it, they nor their fathers; a monstrous word it is, issuing out of their mouths; they say nothing but a lie (Al-Kahf 1-5).

The Koran elevated men from the dark pits of worldly life to the high, boundless realm of the spirit; from the humiliation of worshipping false, and usually man-made divinities to the honor and dignity of worshipping the one God - Allah - the only Creator and Sustainer of the universe. The Koran freed men from the oppression and depressions brought about by false religions into the luminous and peaceful climate of Islam.

Because Muhammad was the last Prophet sent to the world, Allah revived through him the same genuine faith, which had been conveyed by all the Prophets. This original Message was corrupted, and split into various religions by people of different ages, who indulged in interpolations and admixture. Allah in the Koran eliminated these alien elements. Since there was to be no messenger after Muhammad, the Koran was preserved word for word so that it should be a source of guidance for all times.

The Koran is a guide to the believers, showing them the right path to righteousness and the road to salvation. Muhammad was therefore sent as a mercy to the world.

And We have not sent you but as a mercy to the world (Al-Anbyiya', 107).

Prophet Muhammad said:

"Surely I am a granted mercy."

Muhammad's fundamental Message is to shape one's life on Allah's will only. The Koran he brought illuminated the lives of Muslims with its eloquent Message of uncompromising monotheism, human dignity, righteous living, individual responsibility, and social justice.

The light of Islam eradicated man-worship, and polytheism in all its forms, and created a firm faith in the Unity of Allah. Islam taught human beings that their Lord Allah is One and Only. He has no partners, no wife, and no son, and that there can be no compromise on the unity of Allah. Those who acknowledged only a 'God-incarnate' or a 'son of God' as their spiritual guide were told by Islam that a human being like themselves having no pretensions to Godhead could become the vicegerent of Allah on earth. Islam taught humanity that people of all races, all colors, and all ethnicities are perfectly capable of attaining faith in the One and Only God, Allah. Those who worshipped powerful personages as their gods, were made to understand that their false lords were merely ordinary beings and nothing more.

Muhammad - peace be upon him - destroyed idolatry in Arabia; raised woman from the status of a chattel to complete legal equality with man; effectually stopped the drunkenness and immorality which had till then disgraced the Arabs; made men in love with faith, sincerity and honest dealing; transformed tribes who had been for centuries content with ignorance into a people with the greatest thirst of knowledge; and for the first time in history made universal human brotherhood a fact and principle of common law.

Islam stressed the point that no person could claim holiness, authority, or overlordship as his birthright, and that neither was anyone born with the stigma of untouchability, slavery or serfdom on his person.

Islam taught human beings that they are all brothers and sisters created from a single pair of a male and a female. It was Islam which inspired the thoughts of the unity of mankind, equality of human beings and real freedom in the world. Islam is not the monopoly of one race or a certain linguistic group. Islam has taught humanity that Allah is absolutely just and Merciful and that He will never punish one person for the sins of others.

Islam showed the path of spiritual evolution, moral emancipation, and attainment of salvation through active participation in the practical affairs of the world in which we live.

Muhammad taught that Allah's eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good, and all of our works are recorded from the first to the last, by the Lord who shall judge both men and nations.

Islam is the only religion that has truly enabled human beings to fulfill their humanity. Many principles of good behavior, culture and civilization, purity of thought and deed owe their origin to Islam. The social laws which Islam legislated have infiltrated deep into the structure of human social life, and the basic principles of economics which Islam taught have ushered in many a movement in world history and hold out the same prospect for the future. A copy of the Koran was found in the possession of Thomas Jefferson the main founder of the American constitution.

Allah declared in the Koran that Muslims as true believers in Islamic monotheism, and real followers of Prophet Muhammad and His Sunna, are in fact the best people ever raised up for mankind. They proclaim the Message of Islam to the people in order to show them the true road to Paradise and thereby save them from the eternal punishment in the Hell-fire.

You are the best nation ever brought forth to men, bidding to honor, and forbidding dishonor, and believing in Allah. Had the people of the Book believed (in the Koran), it were better for them; some of them are believers, but the most of them are ungodly (Al-Imran, 110).

The Koran teaches that Allah is the protector of those who have faith in Him only. He guides them out of darkness into light, whereas those who deny Him and disbelieve in Him, their helpers are false deities and false leaders: from light they lead their followers forth into the depths of darkness. Such-like persons shall be the inmates of Hell fire, to dwell therein for ever.

Allah is the Protector of the believers; He brings them out from darkness into light. And the unbelievers – their protectors are Tâghût (false deities and false leaders), that bring them out from light into darkness; those are the inhabitants of the Fire, therein dwelling forever (Al-Baqarah, 257).

Islam is the submission to Allah's blessed Will and Plan. Muhammad taught that religion with Allah is Islam. Islam is the only religion that will be accepted by Allah on the Day of Judgment. It is the religion of pure monotheism taught by all the inspired Books and all Prophets and Messengers who came before Muhammad. If any

one wants a religion other than that, he is false to his own nature, as he is false to Allah's Will and Plan. Such one cannot expect guidance, for he has deliberately renounced guidance

Whoso desires another religion than Islam, it shall not be accepted of him; in the next world he shall be among the losers (Al-Imran, 85).

The present life is but the joy of delusion. The true source of light in the world of reality is Allah. Allah is the sight of the believers with which they see, the hearing with which they hear, the foot with which they walk, and the hand with which they grasp. He who cuts himself off from the light of Allah is in utter darkness indeed.

...And to whomsoever Allah assigns no light, no light has he (Al-Nur, 40).

A life of ease and plenty is nothing to boast of. Whatever man has been given is an enjoyment of the life of this world and its adornment, and its temporal and mundane things, whereas all that is in the heaven's realm affords eternal happiness and surpassing pleasure. Yet people or cities or civilizations grow insolently proud of such things. There were many such in the past, which are now mere names! Their very sites are deserted in most cases, or buried in the debris of ages. But Allah is Merciful and Just. He does not destroy or degrade a people until they have had full opportunities of turning in repentance to Him.

Whatever thing you have been given is the enjoyment of the present life and its adornment; and what is with Allah is better and more enduring. Will you not understand? (Al-Qasas, 60).

Let not the wicked think that because Allah, out of His infinite grace and mercy, grants people respite, therefore the retribution will be slow in coming. When the time comes according to Allah's plan and will, the retribution will come so swiftly that the ungodly will be surprised and they will wish they could get more respite. On the great Day of Reckoning, let it not be supposed that, because there will be millions of souls to be judged, there will be any delay in judgment as in a human tribunal. It will be a new world; it will be as it were in a twinkling of an eye.

And thou shalt see the sinners that day coupled in fetters, of pitch their skirts, their faces enveloped by the Fire, and Allah may recompense every soul for its earnings; surely Allah is swift at the reckoning (Ibrahim 49-51).

Allah is not intent on punishment. He created man virtuous and pure; he gave him intelligence and knowledge. If in spite of all this man deviates from the right path and goes against Allah's Will, yet Allah's forgiveness is always open to him if he will take it. It is only when he has made his own will blind and changed his own nature or soul away from the beautiful mould from which Allah formed it, that Allah's wrath will descend on him. When once the punishment comes, there is no turning it back. None of the things which he relied upon – other than Allah – can possibly protect him.

Allah changes not what is in a people, until they change what is in themselves. Whosoever Allah desires evil for a people, there is no turning it back; apart from Him, they have no protector (Al-Ra'd, 11).

Whosoever strives in the cause of Allah, he strives to save his own soul, for Allah is absolute and is free of all needs from all creation.

Whosoever struggles, they do so for their own souls; for Allah is Free of all needs from all creation (Al-Ankabut, 6).

Non-Muslims who embrace Islam and sincerely believe in the Oneness of Allah and in Messenger Muhammad and work righteous deeds, Allah will forgive any evil in their past, purify any tendencies towards evil which they may have inherited from the past, and help to the attainment of a future based on the best of what they have done rather than on the poor average of their merits. The atonement or expiation is by Allah's Mercy, not by their merits or the merits or sacrifice of anyone else.

And those who believe, and do righteous deeds, We shall surely acquit them of their evil deeds, and shall recompense them the best of what they were doing (Al-Ankabut, 7).

Had Allah willed, He would have induced all people domiciled on earth to believe and conform to His system of faith and worship. But it is not for any person to believe except by His leave. Believing in Allah is a divine grace; He gives it to whomsoever He wills.

And if thy Lord had willed, whoever is in the earth would have believed, all of them, all together. Would thou (O Muhammad) then compel the people, until they become believers?

It is not for any soul to believe save by the leave of Allah; and He lays abomination upon those who have no understanding (Yunus 99, 100).

Those who deny Allah and do not acknowledge His Apostle's mission shall their hopes be doomed to disappointment. The deniers of Allah and the slanderers of Islam should have feared Allah as He should be feared. They should have known that Allah knows the thoughts in their breasts and the secrets of their hearts. They should have known that to Allah belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth, and unto Him all matters are returned. They should have known that every soul shall taste of death and unto Allah they shall be mustered. On that day all people shall be paid in full their wages. Whosoever is removed from the Fire and admitted to Paradise, shall win the triumph. On that day the Chastisement will not be lightened for the enemies of Allah, and they shall have no helpers. They will carry the yoke of their iniquities and disbelief, and their abode shall be Hell, an evil cradling.

It is only the people who ignore Allah's signs that will find themselves in despair and suffering. Allah's Mercy is open to all, but if any reject, they must suffer.

He chastises whom He wills, and shows mercy to whom He wills, and unto Him you shall be returned. You are not able to frustrate Him either in the earth or in heaven; and you have not apart from Allah, either protector or helper (Al-Ankabut 21, 22).

And who does greater evil than those who forge against Allah a lie? Those are they that have lost their souls; they without doubt will be the greatest losers in the world to

come. But those who believe and do righteous deeds, and have humbled themselves unto their Lord they shall be the inhabitants of Paradise, therein dwelling forever. The likeness of the two parties is as the man blind and deaf, and the man who sees and hears.

No man knows what the morrow may bring forth. No one knows what he will earn tomorrow, and in what land he will die. The Day of Reckoning may come today or tomorrow or when we least expect it. People should set their face to the right religion before there come from Allah the Day which no one can avert. A Day when no father can avail aught for his son or a son can avail aught for his father. Each will have his own burden to carry before Allah. On that Day men shall issue in scatterings to see their works, and whoso has done an atom's weight of good shall see it, and whoso has done an atom's weight of evil shall see it. Those who reject faith or incorporate with Allah other deities the consequence of their infidelity will rebound back on them. And those who believe in Allah and work good deeds, they simply pave the way for a blissful abode in heaven.

As we have seen, the descriptions of Hell in the Islamic Scripture are clear and graphic, as are the descriptions of the people who deserve their fate therein. Any person who believes in Allah - the only God of this universe - and in the Day of Judgment must be motivated to at least not to be of the people thrown inside. The best, and really only way of avoiding this fate is to seriously search into the true religion Allah has mandated for all humanity - Islam.

...And say to those who have been given the Book (Jews and Christians) and the common folk (Arab pagans): 'Have you surrendered?' (submit themselves to Allah in Islam). If they have surrendered they are rightly guided. But if they turn their backs, thine it is only to deliver the Message; and Allah sees His servants (Al-Imran, 21).

The truth (Islam) has come from Allah to the world through Muhammad, the seal of His prophets. He who chooses to follow the path of rectitude shall only profit his own soul, and he who chooses to stray shall only harm his own soul, the Prophet is not to watch over their folly.

Say: 'O men, the truth has come to you from your Lord. Whosoever is guided is guided only to his own gain, and whosoever goes astray, it is only to his own loss. I am not a guardian over you (Yunus, 108).

The Prophet of Islam shall not be able to guide to the path of Allah whom he likes but Allah guide to His path of rectitude whom He wills, and He knows best those who receive guidance.

Thou guidest not whom thou likest, but Allah guides whom He wills, and knows very well those that are guided (Al-Qasas, 56).

Muhammad's duty is but to proclaim the Message. The Koran says:

It is only for the Messenger to deliver the Message; and Allah knows what you reveal and what you hide (Al-Maidah, 99).

Muslims guard themselves by following Islamic monotheism and all that Islam orders them to do. No hurt can come to them from those who stray, for the return of all people is to Allah then He will tell them about all that which they used to do.

Allah says in the Koran:

O believers, look after your own souls. He who is astray cannot hurt you, if you are rightly guided. Unto Allah shall you return, altogether, and He will tell you what you were doing (Al-Maidah, 105).

Delivering the Message of Islam was originally the responsibility of the Prophet, but after he was gone, proclaiming the Message became the duty of Muslims around the world. All people should know the Message as it was originally received. And who is more worthy of being listened to than one who calls men to Allah, works righteousness, and says, 'I am of those who bow in Islam'?

And who speaks fairer than he who calls unto Allah and does righteousness and says, 'Surely I am one of the Muslims'? (Fussilat, 33).

Islam teaches that there is no compulsion in religion, so belief cannot be forced on anyone. Man is free to believe or disbelieve in Allah. Belying the Message of Islam by non-Muslims is not of significance to Muslims because in the end all people will die and be accountable to Allah and each person will bear the burden of his or her disbelief. What really matters to Muslims is to proclaim the Message of monotheism to all people then leave them to consider the greatness of the Message, or plunge in vain discourse.

The disbelievers however, must take all the terrible consequences which are prefigured in the Fire of Hell. Its flame will completely enclose them like a tent. Ordinarily there is water to quench the heat of thirst, but in Hell the only drink will be like molten brass, thick, heavy, burning, sizzling. Before it reaches the mouth of the unfortunates, drops of it will scald their faces as it is poured out.

Say: 'The truth is from your Lord; so let whosoever will believe, and let whosoever will disbelieve.' Surely We have prepared for the evildoers a fire, whose pavilion encompasses them; if they call for succor, they will be succored with water like molten copper, that shall scald their faces – how evil a potion, and how evil a resting place (Al-Kahf, 29).

It is my prayer that Allah will forgive us all for our ignorance and guide us to the path leading to Paradise.

Those whom Allah wills to guide He opens their breast to Islam; those whom he wills to send astray He makes their breast close and constricted as if they had to climb up to the skies where the pressure is reduced and the oxygen gets less and less that they can hardly breathe. Thus Allah put the wrath on those who deny Him and refuse to believe.

Allah says in the Koran:

Whomsoever Allah desires to guide, He expands his breast to Islam; whomsoever He desires to lead astray, He makes his breast narrow, tight, as if he were climbing to heaven. So Allah lays abomination upon those who believe not (Al-An'am, 125).

The Prophet said:

"If Allah wants to do good to a person, He makes him comprehend the religion of Islam (i.e. the Koran and the Sunnah of the Prophet). I am just a conveyer, but the grant is from Allah. (And remember) that this nation (real followers of Islamic monotheism) will remain obedient to Allah's orders (i.e. following strictly Allah's Book the Koran and the Prophet's Sunnah) and they will not be harmed by anyone who will oppose them till Allah's order is established (Day of Judgment)." (Sahih Al-Bukhari, vol.1, Hadith No. 71).

All praise is due to Allah the Lord of the universe who gives the best reward to the God-fearing and the great loss to the transgressor. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, He has no partner or son and possesses real sovereignty. I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger; the seal of the prophets, the giver of good tidings and warnings, and the leader of the God-fearing. May Allah bless him, his family, his companions, and those who follow them till the Day of Judgment.

I have conveyed the Message without alteration or deviation, may Allah be the witness.

There is no better than ending my book with the Koranic verse:

This is a Message to be delivered to mankind that they may be warned by it, and that they may know that He is One God, and that all possessed of minds may remember (Ibrahīm, 52).

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