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Introduction

The Bahá'í Faith proclaims an underlying oneness that binds all major world religions. All are connected through the unity of their originating source, and the similarities in their core teachings. The different relationships between the Bahá'í Faith and many of these religions are explored at various web sites. The relationship between Islam and the Bahá'í Faith has its own particulars. It is affected by the proximity between the two Faiths in both time and geography.

This document [adapted from bci.org/islam-bahai; see it also in Arabic] was established with the hope of promoting a better understanding of the relationship between the Bahá'í Faith and Islam.

Since its inception in the mid eighteenth century, the Bahá'í Faith has been regarded by many, in the region where it started, with mistrust and suspicion. Numerous accusations have been made concerning its origins and its goals and aims. At the very least, it has been belittled as a misguided and insignificant sect of Islam.

The sections of this page present a humble attempt at addressing these issues.

1. How Bahá'ís View Islam

"Blessing and peace be upon Him [Muhammad] through Whose advent Bathá [Mecca] is wreathed in smiles, and the sweet savours of Whose raiment have shed fragrance upon all mankind-- He Who came to protect men from that which would harm them in the world below. Exalted, immensely exalted is His station above the glorification of all beings and sanctified from the praise of the entire creation. Through His advent the tabernacle of stability and order was raised throughout the world and the ensign of knowledge hoisted among the nations. May blessings rest also upon His kindred and His companions through whom the standard of the unity of God and of His singleness was uplifted and the banners

of celestial triumph were unfurled. Through them the religion of God was firmly established among His creatures and His Name magnified amidst His servants."

- Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas, p. 162

Even though the Bahá'í Faith is an independent religion and is not a sect of Islam, we find in the writings of Shoghi Effendi (the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith 1921-1957), much emphasis on the need for Bahá'ís to help correct the many mistaken views about Islam, held by the majority of people in the West:

'There is so [much] misunderstanding about Islam in the West in general that you have to dispel. Your task is rather difficult and requires a good deal of erudition. Your chief task is to acquaint the friends with the pure teaching of the Prophet [Muhammad] as recorded in the Qur'án, and then to point out how these teachings have, throughout succeeding ages, influenced[,] nay[,] guided the course of human development. In other words you have to show the position and significance of Islam in the history of civilization.'

- Shoghi Effendi, (the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith). Lights of Guidance, New Delhi: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 2nd rev. and enlarged edition, 1988, #1664.

'The mission of the American Bahá'ís is, no doubt to eventually establish the truth of Islam in the West.'

- Shoghi Effendi, Lights of Guidance, #1665.

On the importance of the study of Islam to Bahá'ís, the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, said that for 'a proper and sound understanding of the Cause' its study was 'absolutely indispensable.'

- Lights of Guidance, #1903.

The Faith standing identified with the name of Bahá'u'lláh disclaims any intention to belittle any of the Prophets gone before Him, to whittle down any of their teachings, to obscure, however slightly, the radiance of their Revelations, to oust them from the hearts of their followers, to abrogate the fundamentals of their doctrines, to discard any of their revealed Books, or to suppress the legitimate aspirations of their adherents. Repudiating the claim of any religion to be the final revelation of God to man, disclaiming finality for His own Revelation, Bahá'u'lláh inculcates the basic principle of the relativity of religious truth, the continuity of Divine Revelation, the progressiveness of religious experience. His aim is to widen the basis of all revealed religions and to unravel the mysteries of their scriptures. He insists on the unqualified recognition of the unity of their purpose, restates the eternal verities they enshrine, coordinates their functions, distinguishes the essential and the authentic from the nonessential and spurious in their teachings, separates the God-given truths from the priest-prompted superstitions, and on this as a basis proclaims the possibility, and even prophecies the inevitability, of their unification, and the consummation of their highest hopes.

As to Muhammad, the Apostle of God, let none among His followers who read these

pages, think for a moment that either Islám, or its Prophet, or His Book, or His appointed Successors, or any of His authentic teachings, have been, or are to be in any way, or to however slight a degree, disparaged. The lineage of the Báb, the descendant of the Imám Husayn; the divers and striking evidences, in Nabíl's Narrative, of the attitude of the Herald of our Faith towards the Founder, the Imáms, and the Book of Islám; the glowing tributes paid by Bahá'u'lláh in the Kitáb-i-Íqán to Muhammad and His lawful Successors, and particularly to the "peerless and incomparable" Imám Husayn; the arguments adduced, forcibly, fearlessly, and publicly by `Abdu'l-Bahá, in churches and synagogues, to demonstrate the validity of the Message of the Arabian Prophet; and last but not least the written testimonial of the Queen of Rumania, who, born in the Anglican faith and notwithstanding the close alliance of her government with the Greek Orthodox Church, the state religion of her adopted country, has, largely as a result of the perusal of these public discourses of `Abdu'l-Bahá, been prompted to proclaim her recognition of the prophetic function of Muhammad-- all proclaim, in no uncertain terms, the true attitude of the Bahá'í Faith towards its parent religion.

"God," is her royal tribute, "is All, everything. He is the power behind all beginnings.... His is the Voice within us that shows us good and evil. But mostly we ignore or misunderstand this voice. Therefore, did He choose His Elect to come down amongst us upon earth to make clear His Word, His real meaning. Therefore, the Prophets; therefore, Christ, Muhammad, Bahá'u'lláh, for man needs from time to time a voice upon earth to bring God to him, to sharpen the realization of the existence of the true God. Those voices sent to us had to become flesh, so that with our earthly ears we should be able to hear and understand."

What greater proof, it may be pertinently asked, can the divines of either Persia or Turkey require wherewith to demonstrate the recognition by the followers of Bahá'u'lláh of the exalted position occupied by the Prophet Muhammad among the entire company of the Messengers of God? What greater service do these divines expect us to render the Cause of Islám? What greater evidence of our competence can they demand than that we should kindle, in quarters so far beyond their reach, the spark of an ardent and sincere conversion to the truth voiced by the Apostle of God, and obtain from the pen of royalty this public, and indeed historic, confession of His God-given Mission? ...

Indeed, the essential prerequisites of admittance into the Bahá'í fold of Jews, Zoroastrians, Hindus, Buddhists, and the followers of other ancient faiths, as well as of agnostics and even atheists, is the wholehearted and unqualified acceptance by them all of the divine origin of both Islám and Christianity, of the Prophetic functions of both Muhammad and Jesus Christ, of the legitimacy of the institution of the Imamate, and of the primacy of St. Peter, the Prince of the Apostles. Such are the central, the solid, the incontrovertible principles that constitute the bedrock of Bahá'í belief, which the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh is proud to acknowledge, which its teachers

proclaim, which its apologists defend, which its literature disseminates, which its summer schools expound, and which the rank and file of its followers attest by both word and deed.

Nor should it be thought for a moment that the followers of Bahá'u'lláh either seek to degrade or even belittle the rank of the world's religious leaders, whether Christian, Muslim, or of any other denomination, should their conduct conform to their professions, and be worthy of the position they occupy. "Those divines," Bahá'u'lláh has affirmed, "...who are truly adorned with the ornament of knowledge and of a goodly character are, verily, as a head to the body of the world, and as eyes to the nations. The guidance of men hath, at all times, been and is dependent upon these blessed souls." And again: "The divine whose conduct is upright, and the sage who is just, are as the spirit unto the body of the world. Well is it with that divine whose head is attired with the crown of justice, and whose temple is adorned with the ornament of equity." And yet again: "The divine who hath seized and quaffed the most holy Wine, in the name of the sovereign Ordainer, is as an eye unto the world. Well is it with them who obey him, and call him to remembrance." "Great is the blessedness of that divine," He, in another connection, has written, "that hath not allowed knowledge to become a veil between him and the One Who is the Object of all knowledge, and who, when the Self-Subsisting appeared, hath turned with a beaming face towards Him. He, in truth, is numbered with the learned. The inmates of Paradise seek the blessing of his breath, and his lamp sheddeth its radiance over all who are in heaven and on earth. He, verily, is numbered with the inheritors of the Prophets. He that beholdeth him hath, verily, beheld the True One, and he that turneth towards him hath, verily, turned towards God, the Almighty, the All-Wise." "Respect ye the divines amongst you," is His exhortation, "They whose acts conform to the knowledge they possess, who observe the statutes of God, and decree the things God hath decreed in the Book. Know ye that they are the lamps of guidance betwixt earth and heaven. They that have no consideration for the position and merit of the divines amongst them have, verily, altered the bounty of God vouchsafed unto them."

- The Promised Day Is Come, by Shoghi Effendi, p. 108

Let none, however, mistake my purpose, or misrepresent this cardinal truth which is of the essence of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. The divine origin of all the Prophets of God--including Jesus Christ and the Apostle of God, the two greatest Manifestations preceding the Revelation of the Báb--is unreservedly and unshakably upheld by each and every follower of the Bahá'í religion. The fundamental unity of these Messengers of God is clearly recognized, the continuity of their Revelations is affirmed, the God-given authority and correlative character of their Books is admitted, the singleness of their aims and purposes is proclaimed, the uniqueness of their influence emphasized, the ultimate reconciliation of their teachings and followers taught and anticipated. "They all," according to Bahá'u'lláh's testimony, "abide in the same tabernacle, soar in the same heaven, are seated upon the same throne,

utter the same speech, and proclaim the same Faith."

- The Promised Day Is Come, by Shoghi Effendi, p. 107

2. How Muslims view Bahá'ís and the Bahá'í Faith

Obviously opinions will differ with different people according to the extent of one's familiarity with, and knowledge of the Bahá'í Faith. Also, on the extent of one's personal association with Bahá'ís. And here we note that, notwithstanding the very large geographical spread of the Bahá'í Faith, the number of Bahá'ís in the world - except in a few places -, is still very small, and the number of Muslims who have had opportunities to directly know and associate with Bahá'ís, is also very small.

So here we propose a simple idea, for our visitors to think about:

It's an unfortunate fact that a large number of people, especially in the West, have many misconceptions and wrong ideas about Islam and Muslims. The reasons are many for this, including the role of the media and their statistically biased reporting of the negative, with very few positive stories about Islam. But a much more important reason (rather, the most important reason) for this misunderstanding and misinformation, has always (and since the inception of Islam), been the opposition of the Jewish and Christian clergy, and their false accusations and inciting remarks against Muslims and Muslim beliefs, as well as books written by missionaries and influential writers.

And now we see that most of what Muslims know about the Bahá'í Faith at present, is from what other Muslims say, or from what they read in Muslim and other non-Bahá'í sources.

Yet, would it be fair that while Muslims encourage others to learn about Islam and understand it from its own Holy Book, and books written by Muslim scholars, they themselves remain satisfied with what their clergy and others say about the Bahá'í Faith? Without investigating the truth for themselves?

In the Holy Quran we find:

... and say not to any one who offers you a salutation: "Thou art none of a believer!" [4:94]

... "Will ye slay a man because he says, 'My Lord is Allah'?- when he has indeed come to you with Clear (Signs) from your Lord? and if he be a liar, on him is (the sin of) his lie: but, if he is telling the Truth, then will fall on you something of the (calamity) of which he warns you: Truly Allah guides not one who transgresses and lies! [40:28]

O ye who believe! If a wicked person comes to you with any news, ascertain the truth, lest ye harm people unwittingly, and afterwards become full of repentance for what ye have done. [49:6]

3. The Most Recent among the World's Religions

Bahá'ís believe in the Oneness of God. This leads them to believe in the

Oneness of Religion, the "changeless Faith of God, eternal in the past, eternal in the future." In this sense, the Bahá'í Faith is related to all past religions. Its roots however, are in the religion which immediately preceded it, Islam. This relationship is analogous to that between Christianity and Judaism. This has led sometimes to the inaccurate perception of the Bahá'í Faith as a sect of Islam.

Before we go any further, it should be stated that the Bahá'í Faith, unequivocally, and without any hesitation, teaches and asserts the divine origin of Islam. It affirms that the Holy Qur'an is God's revelation, pure and unaltered, and that Muhammad (PBUH) is God's Servant and Messenger and the Seal of the Prophets. People from every religious and ethnic background who embrace the Bahá'í Faith, embrace this belief.

The Bahá'í Faith however, has its own Founder (Bahá'u'lláh), its own holy Books, and its own laws and principles.

The independent nature of the new Faith was first proclaimed during the Conference of Badasht in 1848 when a group of the followers of the Bab (the Herald of the Bahá'í Faith), gathered in the hamlet of Badasht in North East Iran to discuss the nature of their new Faith.

As the new religion first spread in countries predominantly Muslim, many of its followers maintained the strong ties they had with their Muslim families and friends. Objections, however, often arose in those countries to many of the everyday life observances such as marriages and funerals which were conducted according to Bahá'í laws. Because of these objections, Bahá'ís for example were refused burial in cemeteries which belonged to followers of other religions.

Resulting from one such case, the highest religious court in Egypt, confirmed in 1925, the decision of one of the lower courts, and officially declared the Bahá'í Faith as a separate and independent religion which (according to the court) could not be reconciled with what followers of Islam, of the different schools of thought, believe in:

"The Bahá'í Faith is a new religion, entirely independent, with beliefs, principles and laws of its own, which differ from, and are utterly in conflict with, the beliefs, principles and laws of Islam. No Bahá'í, therefore, can be regarded a Muslim or vice-versa, even as no Buddhist, Brahmin, or Christian can be regarded a Muslim or vice-versa."

It follows that both Bahá'ís, and the Islamic court agree that the Bahá'í Faith is not a sect of Islam.

3a. Some New Laws and Features in the Bahá'í Faith

O ye that dwell on earth! The distinguishing feature that marketh the preeminent character of this Supreme Revelation consisteth in that We have, on the one hand, blotted out from the pages of God's holy Book whatsoever hath been the cause of strife, of malice and mischief amongst the children of men,

and have, on the other, laid down the essential prerequisites of concord, of understanding, of complete and enduring unity. Well is it with them that keep My statutes.

Time and again have We admonished Our beloved ones to avoid, nay to flee from, anything whatsoever from which the odor of mischief can be detected. The world is in great turmoil, and the minds of its people are in a state of utter confusion. We entreat the Almighty that He may graciously illuminate them with the glory of His Justice, and enable them to discover that which will be profitable unto them at all times and under all conditions. He, verily is the All-Possessing, the Most High.

- Bahá'u'lláh

While all religions brought principles that can be seen as universally applicable, they varied in their degree of emphasis on different themes. For example Judaism placed much emphasis on the importance of the family and adherence to the law, while Christianity placed a greater emphasis on the theme of love (without diminishing the importance of the law). Love went beyond the family to reach one's neighbor. Through Islam, the warring tribes were united and the concept of nationhood came about. Unity among the believers was encouraged and emphasized.

The emphasis in the Bahá'í Faith has even been greater on the unity and the coming together of all people and all nations as members of one family and citizens of one country.

Bahá'u'lláh wrote:

"It is not for him to pride himself who loveth his own country, but rather for him who loveth the whole world. The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens."

All principles of the Bahá'í Faith revolve around, and work towards this principle of the "oneness of Mankind".

While this theme in its essence in neither new, nor unique to the Bahá'í Faith, there remained many barriers which stood in the way of its implementation and successful realization. Concepts like the "religious uncleanness" of certain peoples and casts for example, stood in the way of this unity. Marriage restrictions among people of different religions was another barrier. Lack of agreement on successorship to the Founders of religion, resulted in factions and sects which often resulted in bloody wars.

Among the new ordinances and teachings in the Bahá'í Faith intended to facilitate the realization of the unity of all people, we find: " . . .

Abstaining from crediting verbal traditions.

Prohibiting the interpretation of the Word of God. (interpretation of the Words and exposition of personal opinion has been one of the greatest means of dissension in the former religions. No clergy.)

Work is Worship. Abolition of seclusion of monks etc., obligatory to work, begging prohibited.

Abolition and Prohibition of Slavery.

Compulsory Education of children of both sexes. "

(from the book: Brilliant Proof by Abul Fadl)

In this section we look at a few examples of what might have contributed throughout the ages to what may now be perceived as an atmosphere of separation or division between "believers", and "non believers" (or the "us" and "them" attitude). We also see examples of the Bahá'í teachings related to these topics.

"O ye who believe! truly the pagans are unclean; so let them not after this year of theirs approach the Sacred Mosque. And if ye fear poverty soon will Allah enrich you if He wills out of his bounty for Allah is All-Knowing, All-Wise."

- Qur'an 9:28

"They will swear by Allah unto you, when ye return unto them, that ye may let them be. Let them be, for lo! they are unclean, and their abode is hell as the reward for what they used to earn."

- Qur'an 9:95

"It is not for any soul to believe save by the permission of Allah. He hath set uncleanness upon those who have no sense."

- Qur'an 10:100

"Consort with all religions with amity and concord, that they may inhale from you the sweet fragrance of God. Beware lest amidst men the flame of foolish ignorance overpower you. All things proceed from God and unto Him they return. He is the source of all things and in Him all things are ended."

- Paragraph 144 of the Kitab-i Aqdas

"God hath, likewise, as a bounty from His presence, abolished the concept of "uncleanness", whereby divers things and peoples have been held to be impure. He, of a certainty, is the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Generous. Verily, all created things were immersed in the sea of purification when, on that first day of Ridvan, We shed upon the whole of creation the splendours of Our most excellent Names and Our most exalted Attributes. This, verily, is a token of My loving providence, which hath encompassed all the worlds. Consort ye then with the followers of all religions, and proclaim ye the Cause of your Lord, the Most Compassionate; this is the very crown of deeds, if ye be of them who understand."

- Bahá'u'lláh, The Kitab-i-Aqdas, Paragraph 75

Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch. Deal ye one with

another with the utmost love and harmony, with friendliness and fellowship.

- Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh p. 288

"It is permitted that the peoples and kindreds of the world associate with one another with joy and radiance. O people! Consort with the followers of all religions in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship. Thus hath the day-star of His sanction and authority shone forth above the horizon of the decree of God, the Lord of the Worlds."

- Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 22

"This day are (all) things good and pure made lawful unto you. The food of the People of the Book is lawful unto you and yours is lawful unto them. (Lawful unto you in marriage) are (not only) chaste women who are believers, but chaste women among the People of the Book, revealed before your time,- when ye give them their due dowers, and desire chastity, not lewdness, nor secret intrigues if any one rejects faith, fruitless is his work, and in the Hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost (all spiritual good)."

- Qur'an 5:6

"Do not marry unbelieving women (idolaters) until they believe; a slave woman who believes is better than an unbelieving woman even though she allure you. Nor marry (your girls) to unbelievers until they believe: a man slave who believes is better than an unbeliever even though he allure you. Unbelievers do (but) beckon you to the fire. But Allah beckons by His grace to the Garden (of Bliss) and forgiveness and makes His Signs clear to mankind: that they may celebrate His praise."

- Qur'an 2:221

"O ye who believe! when there come to you believing women refugees examine (and test) them: Allah knows best as to their Faith: if ye ascertain that they are Believers then send them not back to the Unbelievers. They are not lawful (wives) for the Unbelievers nor are the (Unbelievers) lawful (husbands) for them. But pay the Unbelievers what they have spent (on their dower). And there will be no blame on you if ye marry them on payment of their dower to them. But hold not to the guardianship of unbelieving women: ask for what ye have spent on their dowers and let the (Unbelievers) ask for what they have spent (on the dowers of women who come over to you). Such is the command of Allah: He judges (with justice) between you: and Allah is Full of Knowledge and Wisdom."

- Qur'an 60:10

"...ye are at liberty to enter into wedlock as ye wish, that haply by this means ye may exalt the Cause of God." Thus hath the Nightingale sung with sweet melody upon the celestial bough, in praise of its Lord, the All-Merciful. Well is it with them that hearken."

- Paragraph 139 of the Kitab-i Aqdas

"They that are endued with sincerity and faithfulness should associate with all

the peoples and kindreds of the earth with joy and radiance, inasmuch as consorting with people hath promoted and will continue to promote unity and concord, which in turn are conducive to the maintenance of order in the world and to the regeneration of nations."

- Bahá'u'lláh, Tarazat ('Ornaments'), Tablets, p.36

"In every dispensation, there hath been the commandment of fellowship and love, but it was a commandment limited to the community of those in mutual agreement, not to the dissident foe. In this wondrous age, however, praised be to God, the commandments of God are not delimited, not restricted to any one group of people, rather have all the friends been commanded to show forth loving-kindness to every community on earth."

- Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Bahá, 39, pg.81

"In all religious teachings of the past, the human world has been represented as divided into two parts, one known as the people of the Book of God or the pure tree and the other the people of infidelity and error or the evil tree. The former were considered as belonging to the faithful and the others to the hosts of the irreligious and infidel; one part of humanity the recipients of divine mercy and the other the object of the wrath of their Creator... Bahá'u'lláh removed this by proclaiming the oneness of the world of humanity."

- Abdu'l-Bahá, Promulgation of Universal Peace, page 449

3b. An Introduction to the Bahá'í Faith

From the Soc.Religion.Bahai usenet news service

Bahá'í Teachings

Some of the basic principles of the Bahá'í Faith are:

The oneness of mankind

"It is not for him to pride himself who loveth his own country, but rather for him who loveth the whole world. The earth is but onecountry and mankind its citizens."

- Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 250

The oneness of religion

"All these divisions we see on all sides, all these disputes and opposition, are caused because men cling to ritual and outward observances, and forget the simple, underlying truth. It is the outward practices of religion that are so different, and it is they that cause disputes and enmity -- while the reality is always the same, and one. The Reality is the Truth, and truth has no division. Truth is God's guidance, it is the light of the world, it is love, it is mercy. These attributes of truth are also human virtues inspired by the Holy Spirit."

- 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Paris Talks, pp. 120-1

Independent investigation of truth

"Furthermore, know ye that God has created in man the power of reason, whereby man is enabled to investigate reality. God has not intended man to imitate blindly his fathers and ancestors. He has endowed him with mind, or the faculty of reasoning, by the exercise of which he is to investigate and discover the truth, and that which he finds real and true he must accept."

- 'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 291

Religion as a source of unity

"He (Bahá'u'lláh) sets forth a new principle for this day in the announcement that religion must be the cause of unity, harmony and agreement among mankind. If it be the cause of discord and hostility, if it leads to separation and creates conflict, the absence of religion would be preferable in the world."

- 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'í World Faith, p. 247

The evolutionary nature of religion

Bahá'ís view religion as a progressive, evolutionary process which needs to be updated as humanity evolves mentally, socially, and spiritually. Every so often a new Prophet is sent to humanity to update religion to the current needs of mankind. These Prophets bring essentially the same spiritual message to mankind; in a form that meets the needs of the people of Their time. Bahá'ís believe that Bahá'u'lláh has brought an updated message for mankind today.

"There is no distinction whatsoever among the Bearers of My Message. They all have but one purpose; their secret is the same secret. To prefer one in honor to another, to exalt certain ones above the rest, is in no wise to be permitted. Every true Prophet hath regarded His Message as fundamentally the same as the Revelation of every other Prophet gone before Him... The measure of the revelation of the Prophets of God in this world, however, must differ. Each and every one of them hath been the Bearer of a distinct Message, and hath been commissioned to reveal Himself through specific acts. It is for this reason that they appear to vary in their greatness... It is clear and evident, therefore, that any apparent variation in the intensity of their light is not inherent in the light itself, but should rather be attributed to the varying receptivity of an ever-changing world. Every Prophet Whom the Almighty and Peerless Creator hath purposed to send to the peoples of the earth hath been entrusted with a Message, and charged to act in a manner that would best meet the requirements of the age in which He appeared."

- Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, pp.78-9

Harmony between religion, science, and reason

"Religion and science are the two wings upon which man's intelligence can soar into the heights, with which the human soul can progress. It is not possible to fly with one wing alone! Should a man try to fly with the wing of religion

alone he would quickly fall into the quagmire of superstition, whilst on the other hand, with the wing of science alone he would also make no progress, but fall into the despairing slough of materialism."

- 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Paris Talks, p.143

Peaceful consultation as a means for resolving differences

In the Bahá'í Faith, difference of opinion is not squelched, in fact it is encouraged.

"The shining spark of truth cometh forth only after the clash of differing opinions."

- Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Bahá, p.87

However, differences of opinion can be expressed in a way that doesn't humiliate another human being. The Bahá'í principle of consultation requires that an individual be detached from his or her opinions and always be open to the truth, from whoever or wherever it comes from.

"They must then proceed with the utmost devotion, courtesy, dignity, care and moderation to express their views. They must in every manner search out the truth and not insist upon their own opinion, for stubbornness and persistence in one's views will lead ultimately to discord and wrangling and the truth will remain hidden. The honored members (of the consulting body) must with all freedom express their own thoughts, and it is in no wise permissible for one to belittle the thought of another, nay, he must with moderation set forth the truth..."

- Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Bahá, p.88

An international auxiliary language

"It behoveth the sovereigns of the world -- may God assist them -- or the ministers of the earth to take counsel together and to adopt one of the existing languages or a new one to be taught to children in schools throughout the world, and likewise one script. Thus the whole earth will come to be regarded as one country."

- Bahá'u'lláh, Tablet of Bisharat (Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 22.)

Universal education

"Unto every father hath been enjoined the instruction of his son and daughter in the art of reading and writing and in all that hath been laid down in the Holy Tablet. He that putteth away that which is commanded unto him, the Trustees of the House of Justice are then to recover from him that which is required for their instruction, if he be wealthy, and if not the matter devolveth upon the House of Justice. Verily, have We made it a shelter for the poor and needy. He that bringeth up his son or the son of another, it is as though he hath brought up a son of Mine; upon him rest My Glory, My Loving-Kindness, My Mercy, that have compassed the world."

- Bahá'u'lláh, Tablet of Ishraqat (Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p.128)

The elimination of all forms of prejudice

"...again, as to religious, racial, national and political bias: all these prejudices strike at the very root of human life; one and all they beget bloodshed, and the ruination of the world. So long as these prejudices survive, there will be continuous and fearsome wars."

- Selections from the Writings of `Abdu'l-Bahá, p.249

Equality of men and women

"To accept and observe a distinction which God has not intended in creation is ignorance and superstition. The fact which is to be considered, however, is that woman, having formerly been deprived, must now be allowed equal opportunities with man for education and training. There must be no difference in their education. Until the reality of equality between man and woman is fully established and attained, the highest social development of mankind is not possible."

- 'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p.76

The abolition of the extremes of wealth and poverty

"O Ye Rich Ones on Earth! The poor in your midst are My trust; guard ye My trust, and be not intent only on your own ease."

- The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh, p.41

"We see amongst us men who are overburdened with riches on the one hand, and on the other those unfortunate ones who starve with nothing; those who possess several stately palaces, and those who have not where to lay their head. Some we find with numerous courses of costly and dainty food; whilst others can scarce find sufficient crusts to keep them alive. Whilst some are clothed in velvets, furs and fine linen, others have insufficient, poor and thin garments with which to protect them from the cold. This condition of affairs is wrong and must be remedied. Now the remedy must be carefully undertaken."

- 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Paris Talks, p. 151

Universal peace

"The time must come when the imperative necessity for the holding of a vast, an all-embracing assemblage of men will be universally realized. The rulers and kings of the earth must needs attend it, and, participating in its deliberations, must consider such ways and means as will lay the foundations of the world's Great Peace amongst men. Such a peace demandeth that the Great Powers should resolve, for the sake of the tranquillity of the peoples of the earth, to be fully reconciled among themselves. Should any king take up arms against another, all should unitedly arise and prevent him. If this be done, the nations of the world will no longer require any armaments, except for the purpose of preserving the security of their realms and of maintaining internal

order within their territories."

- Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 249

Early History

In May of 1844, a young Persian by the name of Siyyid `Ali Muhammad declared that He was the promised Qa'im of Shi'ah Islam. He assumed the title of The Bab (Gate). The Bab's mission was twofold: He first announced to the people of His native land His own station as an independent Messenger and He also prepared the way for the coming of another Manifestation (messenger) of God, a Prophet who would announce His station soon after The Bab.

The next six years marked a dramatic increase in both the number of persons who became followers of the Bab and in the energy spent by the Shi'ah clergy of Iran to stamp out this new religion. Eventually 20,000 Babis would be put to death for their beliefs. The Bab Himself was imprisoned and was executed in July of 1850.

Many Babis were also imprisoned. Among them was Husayn-`Ali, entitled Bahá'u'lláh (The Glory of God) by The Bab. Imprisoned for several months in 1853 in Tehran and then exiled to Iraq, in the city of Baghdad in 1863 Bahá'u'lláh announced to the world His station as the One for Whom the Bab had prepared the way. The majority of the Babis accepted Bahá'u'lláh's claim and became known as Bahá'ís (the followers of Baha).

Shortly after His declaration, Bahá'u'lláh was again banished, even further from His native land: from Baghdad to Constantinople, and then to Adrianople. Finally in 1867, Bahá'u'lláh was exiled for the last time. He was sent to the prison city of Akka (Acre) in Palestine. He would stay in and around Akka until the end of His life in 1892.

Before Bahá'u'lláh passed away, He appointed His eldest son, `Abdu'l-Bahá, to be the center of His Covenant and the interpreter of His writings. `Abdu'l-Bahá was leader of the Bahá'í Faith until His own passing in 1921. Although He is not considered to be a Manifestation of God like the Bab and Bahá'u'lláh, `Abdu'l-Bahá's decisions are believed to have been divinely guided and His writings (along with the Bab's and Bahá'u'lláh's) are considered a part of the Bahá'í sacred scripture. After being released from the prison in Akka, `Abdu'l-Bahá made several journeys to the West, including a trip to America in 1912.

Recent History and Current Status

`Abdu'l-Bahá stated in his Will and Testament that leadership of the Bahá'í community was to be passed on to his eldest grandson, Shoghi Effendi, who became the "Guardian" of the Bahá'í community after `Abdu'l-Bahá died. Shoghi Effendi led the Bahá'ís until his passing in 1957. It was under Shoghi Effendi's leadership that the Bahá'í Faith spread to all corners of the world. Today there are Bahá'ís in over 200 countries and territories and Bahá'í literature has been translated into over 700 different languages.

Consistent with the Bahá'í principle of independent investigation of truth, according to which no individual Bahá'í may offer an interpretation of the Bahá'í Writings by which others are bound, there is no clergy in the Bahá'í Faith. Bahá'í institutions govern the administrative affairs of the Faith. In each locality, nine-member boards known as Local Spiritual Assemblies are elected annually. At the national level are National Spiritual Assemblies, also consisting of nine members, elected annually by representatives of the Bahá'ís in each country. At the international level is the Universal House of Justice, centered in Haifa, Israel (just across the bay from the prison city of Akka, where Bahá'u'lláh and `Abdu'l-Bahá were imprisoned). The Universal House of Justice also consists of nine members and is elected every five years by members of the National Spiritual Assemblies throughout the world. The Universal House of Justice has final responsibility for overseeing the international Bahá'í community.

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4. Seal of the Prophets

Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but He is the Messenger of God and the Seal of the Prophets.

- Qur'an 33:40

Beseech

God, and let your prayerful attitude and a clean heart guide you to see the meanings in God's words.

The word "Seal" (kha'tam in Arabic), in the verse above, has been interpreted over the centuries to mean the: "Last", "Final", "Seal" (as in a stamp sealing closed a document), "Seal" (as in seal of authority, officiating a document), and a few other meanings along similar lines

of interpretation. Bahá'ís don't object to these possible meanings, and readily believe in the more common interpretation of: (Seal meaning Last), as Muhammad (PBUH) is repeatedly referred to in the Bahá'í Writings. This may at first appear contrary to believing that there is a new religion, but the visitor is invited to read further.

Followers of all past religions have believed, based on certain verses in their holy books, that their religion would not be followed by any other.

Verses such as this have prevented the Jews from accepting newer revelations:

"Go thy way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end."

- Daniel 12:9

Another verse in the Old Testament says that the law of the Sabbath shall not be broken.

* * * * *

For our Christian brothers and sisters, it was verses such as these below, which lead them to believe that there would not be any revelation after that of Christ:

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

- John 14:6

"Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away."

- Luke 21:33

"In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom

he made the universe. "

- Hebrews 1:1

These and many other verses (see below) that talk about, how only through Jesus (PBUH) we can know the Father, and how His words will never be replaced, were the reason that Christians would not accept any Messenger after Christ.

Going back to the meaning of the "Seal of the Prophets", this verse, and other verses about the completion of religion in Islam, have been interpreted by the majority of Muslims as indication of the finality, not only of Prophethood, but of all revelation. Other opinions and interpretations, including some by Muslim scholars, have argued that since there are many other verses in the Qur'an which explain the endless nature of the Words of God, in addition to other verses and Hadiths (traditions and sayings of the Prophet), which talk about the return of Jesus and the coming of the Mahdi, these opinions, have argued that there may be other interpretations for these verses. Some of these interpretations are mentioned below.

Other verses

Some of these verses were interpreted as indicating finality of revelation in the Bible, and some caused the people to fear and suspect future Prophets:

"Go thy way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end."

Daniel 12:9

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

Bible, Hebrews 1:1-3

'being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the corner-stone,'

Ephesians 2:20

'For all the prophets and the law have prophesied unto John' So the line of prophets is closed.

Matthew 11:13

'And many false prophets shall arise and shall mislead many'

Matthew 24:11

'And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth'

Revelations 11:3

'And the beast was taken, and the false prophet that was with him, who wrought the signs before him by which he deceived them that received the mark of the beast, and those that worship his image'

Revelations 19:20

Disclaimer on Interpretation

The meanings are inexhaustible in the words of God. The Holy Qur'an is said to be loaded (pregnant) with meanings (Hammalatu Ma'ani in Arabic). Let your prayerful attitude and a clean heart guide you to see the meaning in God's words.

[75:16-19]: Move not thy tongue concerning the (Qur'an) to make haste therewith. It is for Us to collect it and to promulgate it: But when We have promulgated it, follow thou its recital (as promulgated): Nay more, it is for Us to explain it (and make it clear).

[3:7]: He it is Who has revealed the Book to you; some of its verses are decisive, they are the basis of the Book, and others are allegorical; then as for those in whose hearts there is perversity they follow the part of it which is allegorical, seeking to mislead and seeking to give it (their own) interpretation. but none knows its interpretation except Allah, and those who are firmly rooted in knowledge say: We believe in it, it is all from our Lord; and none do mind except those having understanding.

[10:39-41]: Nay, they charge with falsehood that whose knowledge they cannot compass, even before the elucidation thereof hath reached them: thus did those before them make charges of falsehood: but see what was the end of those who did wrong! Of them there are some who believe therein, and some who do not: and thy Lord knoweth best those who are out for mischief. If they charge thee with falsehood, say: "My work to me, and yours to you! ye are free from responsibility for what I do, and I for what ye do!"

[17:36-7]: And pursue not that of which thou hast no knowledge; for every act of hearing, or of seeing or of (feeling in) the heart will be enquired into (on the Day of Reckoning).

4a. Oneness of the Prophets

Many passages in religious scripture and other studies of theology hint at the idea that the Reality of the Messengers of God is the same reality,

in as much as, They all came from the same Source, bringing us God's Teachings, and mirroring forth His attributes. In this light, it can be understood for example, how Jesus (PBUH) could also claim that He was the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. Here are some Muslim sources which contribute to such theme:

The same religion has He established for you as that which He enjoined on Noah - the which We have sent by inspiration to thee - and that which We enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus: Namely, that ye should remain steadfast in religion, and make no divisions therein ...- Qur'an 42:13

Say ye: "We believe in Allah, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to (all) prophets from their Lord: We make no difference between one and another of them: And we submit to Allah (in Islam)." - Qur'an 2:136

Anas ibn Malik said,

One day the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, offered his morning prayer and ascended the pulpit. His face was resplendent as the full moon. We asked the Messenger of God to interpret the verse of the Qur'an: "...they are with those unto whom Allah hath shown favor of the Prophets and the saints and the martyrs and the righteous." [4:69] He said, (ama-an-nabiyoona fa-ana...) By the term "Prophets" I am meant, by the term "saints" Ali ibn Abi Talib is meant, by "martyrs" my uncle Hamzah is meant and the "righteous" are my daughter Fatimah and her two sons Hasan and Husayn."

[Bihar'ul-Anwar vol. 7 by Majlesi, cited from Riyaz ul Janan by Fazl'u'llah ibn Mahmood al-Faresi] In this section of the book there are several references based on similar ahadith. Other Shi'ah scholars such as Allamih Kulaini in the book of Kafi and Mohsen Fayz Kashani in Tafseer-e Safi refer to the same set of ahadith with similar interpretations.

Narrated Abu Huraira:

Allah's Apostle said, "Both in this world and in the Hereafter, I am the nearest of all the people to Jesus, the son of Mary. The prophets are paternal brothers; their mothers are different, but their religion is one."

Sahih-Volume 4, Book 55, Number 652:

"The prophets are brothers of different mothers, but their religion is one. Of all men I am the most deserving to be the brother of Jesus Son of Mary, for there was no prophet between me and him."

[Al Hendy, Kanzol 'Ummal, Vol. 17, Hadith No. 1033.]

Salman al-Farsi (RA) narrated that:

I heard the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) saying: "I myself, and Ali

were one light in the hands of Allah fourteen thousand years (14,000) before He created Adam (AS). When Allah created Adam (AS) He divided that light into two parts, one part is me and one part Ali."

References:

- Mizan Al-Ei'tidal, by al-Dhahabi, v1, p235
- Fada'il al-Sahaba, by Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, v2, p663, Tradition #1130
- al-Riyadh al-Nadhirah, by al-Muhib al-Tabari, v2, p164, v3, p154
- History of Ibn Asakir

Also see point 5 in the previous section

Bahá'u'lláh on the Oneness of the Prophets

"The door of the knowledge of the Ancient of Days being thus closed in the face of all beings, the Source of infinite grace, according to His saying, "His grace hath transcended all things; My grace hath encompassed them all," hath caused those luminous Gems of Holiness to appear out of the realm of the spirit, in the noble form of the human temple, and be made manifest unto all men, that they may impart unto the world the mysteries of the unchangeable Being, and tell of the subtleties of His imperishable Essence.

These sanctified Mirrors, these Day Springs of ancient glory, are, one and all, the Exponents on earth of Him Who is the central Orb of the universe, its Essence and ultimate Purpose. From Him proceed their knowledge and power; from Him is derived their sovereignty. The beauty of their countenance is but a reflection of His image, and their revelation a sign of His deathless glory. They are the Treasuries of Divine knowledge, and the Repositories of celestial wisdom. Through them is transmitted a grace that is infinite, and by them is revealed the Light that can never fade.... These Tabernacles of Holiness, these Primal Mirrors which reflect the light of unfading glory, are but expressions of Him Who is the Invisible of the Invisibles. By the revelation of these Gems of Divine virtue all the names and attributes of God, such as knowledge and power, sovereignty and dominion, mercy and wisdom, glory, bounty, and grace, are made manifest.

These attributes of God are not, and have never been, vouchsafed specially unto certain Prophets, and withheld from others. Nay, all the Prophets of God, His well-favored, His holy and chosen Messengers are, without exception, the bearers of His names, and the embodiments of His attributes. They only differ in the intensity of their revelation, and the comparative potency of their light. Even as He hath revealed: "Some of the Apostles We have caused to excel the others."

It hath, therefore, become manifest and evident that within the tabernacles of these Prophets and chosen Ones of God the light of His infinite names

and exalted attributes hath been reflected, even though the light of some of these attributes may or may not be outwardly revealed from these luminous Temples to the eyes of men. That a certain attribute of God hath not been outwardly manifested by these Essences of Detachment doth in no wise imply that they who are the Day Springs of God's attributes and the Treasuries of His holy names did not actually possess it. Therefore, these illuminated Souls, these beautiful Countenances have, each and every one of them, been endowed with all the attributes of God, such as sovereignty, dominion, and the like, even though to outward seeming they be shorn of all earthly majesty.... "

4b. Difference in Station between a Messenger (Rasool), and Prophet (Nabi)

Opinions have differed on whether the word "Rasool" (Messenger /Apostle), and the word "Nabi" (Prophet), are interchangeable. Notwithstanding the fact that Muhammad (PBUH) was both a Prophet and a Messenger, there obviously are differences, at least in definition, between the two words. Some people argue that the term "Seal of the Prophets" does not apply to Messengers, while others have argued that all Prophets by definition, are Messengers as well, which would mean that by sealing prophethood, messengership is also sealed.

Definitions and Clues:

One definition of "Messenger" given, is that a Messenger brings a revelation, a religion. The following verse from the Qur'an is repeated three times, always with the word "Rasool":

"He it is Who sends the Messenger for guidance, with the true religion."

Qur'an 9:33, 48:28, and 61:9

Only a few Individuals mentioned in the Qur'an are called Messengers. In chapter 61 of the Qur'an (Al-Saf), in verses 4,5, and 8, the word "Rasool" is used for Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (PBU Them). All Three were law bearing Messengers with Books and Revelation (Deen).

In the Holy Qur'an, we find many more names of prophets mentioned than of Messengers. Some of these names are, Isaac, Jacob, Ismael, Idris, David, Solomon and many many others (PBU Them all). They were all prophets, and non of Them came with a new religion. It is also interesting to read in the following verse that those who obey the Messenger, will be in the company of the prophets and the saints (who also obey the Messenger):

All who obey God and the Messenger are in the company of those on whom is the grace of God, of the Prophets, the sincere, the martyrs (or witnesses) and the righteous "

Qur'an 4:69

Another definition of the term "prophet" (nabi) is that prophets (such as the minor prophets of Judaism), received their inspiration usually

in the form of dreams:

I (Burayd) said: May my life be your ransom. What is a Messenger, a Prophet and one who is told? He said: A Messenger is one to whom the angel appears and speaks. A prophet is one who sees in his dream. Possibly the Prophethood and Messengership is combined in a single person.

Usul al-Kafi, Book 4,442-4

In the same book(Usul al-Kafi), 439-1 states:

A Prophet is one who sees the angel while asleep, and hears him but does not see the angel while awake. A Messenger is one who hears the voice while awake and sees while asleep, and also with his eyes sees the angel when awake. [see further explanation below]

More to consider:

Allamih Majlesi in Bihar'ul-Anvar Vol 13, p.323 mentions one of the discourses of Imam Ali. In that discourse Ali says: "I am the Commander of the faithful. I am the King among the pious..... I am the Khatam'u-Vasieen [which can be either taken as "The Seal of the guardians and successors", or, as "The Ornament of the Guardians and successors".] and the heir of the prophets and the representative of the God of the worlds."

This Hadith is referred to as the Hadith Nuraniah as is reported by several people such as Ibn Babyih (Sheikh Sadooq) in "Uyoon'ul-Akhbar Ar-Rida".

This tradition of Imam Ali is a very interesting. One must be fair in one's judgment. If we are to take, in this tradition, the term "Khatam" as "the Seal", "the ender", "one who completes", then one is obliged to accept that Ali was "the seal of the guardians, and successors", after Muhammad, Who is the Seal of the prophets. Yet, Shi'ahs believe that after Muhammad there was supposed to be twelve Imams, only the first of Whom was Ali. So, assuming that the term Khatam in Khatam'u-Vasieen must have a similar meaning to the term Khatam in Khatam'u- Nabieen, then one is to question why were there more Imams after Ali. How are we to reconcile the existence of the other Imams, Who came after Ali, based on this interpretation? Let this be food for thought for the possessors of pure heart and open mind.

Let us now examine the meaning of the term Khatam'u-Nabieen from the perspective of Sunni scholars and theologians, so that the seekers of truth obtain a wider spectrum of views for their judgment:

In the commentary of Fat'hol-Ghadeer by Hafiz Mohhades-i-Shokani we find: "All the Ghoraba use KhatEm, while Athim use KhatAm. KhatEm in Khatem'un-Nabeein means the Ender of Prophets, or the

Seal of Prophets, while, KhatAm in Khatam'un-Nabeein means ring and ornament. In essence Muhammad, the Messenger of God, was the Ring or Ornament of (i.e. among) the Prophets, due to His exalted station compared to other Prophets."

The same book quotes from Dorr'ul-Mansoor of Allamih Jallal'u-Din Suyutti, who quotes Ayeshih, the wife of Muhammad, who said: "Say KhatAm-un-Nabeein (i.e. The Ring or Ornament of the Prophets), and never say no prophets shall come after Him (i.e. Muhammad)".

One can find the same references in the commentary of Kashaaf, by Zamakhshari, who says: "Muhammad, the Messenger of God, was called Khatam'u-Nabieen, since, He did not have any male offsprings to inherit prophethood from Him." He goes on and presents a Hadith from Prophet Muhammad who says about His deceased son Abraham (from Marieh, the Egyptian wife of Muhammad): "If my son Abraham was alive, he would have been a Nabi (i.e. He would have become a Nabi after Me.)". However, all of Muhammad's male offsprings die in early childhood, thus, the verse of the Qur'an: "Muhammad is not the father of any man among you...." comes into fulfillment, and Muhammad become Khatam'u-Nabieen, according to the same verse."

Abo'l-Bagha, another trusted Sunni source discusses this issue in his book, "Mofeed", from the same angle, which I will not quote here in order to prevent excessive repetition of the same idea.

It is apparent from what has been mentioned at length, that both Shi'ah and Sunni sources agree that:

- 1- There is a more profound meaning associated with the title Khatam'u-Nabieen:
- 2- Finality of Muhammad's revelation is not implied by this term, mentioned in the Qur'an, the Confederates: (33:40).

Let me close this note with the view of Abol-Fada'il-i Golpayegani, a prominent Bahá'í scholar, from a Muslim background, who, in his book Fara'id addresses the question of Khatam'u-Nabieen as follows: "No wonder if the learned of Islam too, argue against the renewal of revelation from God [like their predecessors, Jews and Christians, who are firmly convinced that their respective religions are the final revelation from God], based on such references as: Khatam'u-Nabeein, or such traditions as: "There shall be no prophet after me....", and by doing so become subjected to a test of faith; and join their predecessors [Jews and Christians]. Not realizing that the purpose of Muhammad in using the term Khatam'u-Nabeein was to suggest the progress of the Islamic nation, and unveil the ascendancy of the station

of the Imams in comparison to the prophets of Israel. It is clear to those who are familiar with the Scriptures of the past, who are aware of the events which are associated with the histories of the nations of antiquity that the prophets of Israel, such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Zechariah, etc... one and all prophesied about the future events according to dreams and visions. And they interpreted their vision or dream as a revelation from God. As a result, the book of these prophets became known as the vision of Isaiah, vision of Daniel, vision of Jeremiah, and vision of Ezekiel. By the same token, if we are to examine this issue from a Christian perspective, the Revelation of St. John is in essence the Dream of John. As a result the term Nabi (Prophet) was given to the ones who prophesied based on visions, or dreams. This usage was solidified during the Jewish and Christians dispensations. However, after the appearance of Prophet Muhammad (Khatam'ul-Anbia), the ender of the prophetic cycle, the era of revelation from God "through the medium of dreams and visions" was ended and a new era of "revelation through direct inspiration" had begun. Viewed from this perspective, we can see that the tradition; "There will be no prophets after me..." was a true statement. -Fara'id, p. 311

* Excerpts from an article written by Kamran Hakim

4c. Renewal of Creation

One way to think of the finality of Prophethood may be, that Muhammad (PBUH), is the Seal of the Prophets until the Day of Resurrection. Whether this means the physical end of the world is discussed further under the topic: Day of Judgment.

As fervor for the coming millennium has been on the increase among many of our Christian brothers and sisters (with possible implications of the Second Coming of Christ, and the end of the world), we notice to a lesser degree, a parallel increase among some Muslims, of the idea that the Day of Judgment is not very far. They base these beliefs on the appearance of many of the signs of the Day of Judgment, mentioned in the Qur'an and Hadith.

The possible nearness of the Hour, may give more validity to the notion that there is no further need for divine guidance since the world is coming to an end very soon anyway.

Others insist that only God knows the time of the end, and it is quite possible that life on this planet may continue for millennia to come. Many of this second group insist however, that the laws of Islam are valid and appropriate for all people, for all times, and all places. When it is pointed out to them that there have not been any societies or countries which practice the Islamic way of life according to the Shari'a (Islamic

Jurisprudence) for quite some time now, these people insist that Islam will have a second zenith, even as it had its first zenith during the middle ages when the Islamic Khalifate ruled from Spain to the borders of China.

* * * * *

Others still, have argued that according to the Qur'an, and even when (or if) there is a physical end of some kind, creation is cyclically renewed, and as long as creation continues, humankind will always be in need for guidance, in fulfillment of what is known as the eternal Covenant of God, which He established with humanity: that in return for obedience to His laws and teachings, He would not let us go astray. After all, even angels will continue to need guidance according to the Holy Qur'an:

"Say, if there were settled on earth angels walking about in peace and quiet, We should certainly have sent them down from heaven an angel for an apostle."

Qur'an 17:95

* * * * *

Some verses from the Holy Qur'an about the continuation and renewal of creation:

[21.104] On the day when We will roll up heaven like the rolling up of the scroll for writings, as We originated the first creation, (so) We shall reproduce it; a promise (binding on Us); surely We will bring it about.

[29.19-20] See they not how Allah originates creation, then repeats it: truly that is easy for Allah. Say: Travel in the earth and see how He makes the first creation, then Allah creates the latter creation; surely Allah has power over all things.

[50.15] Were We then fatigued with the first creation? Yet are they in doubt with regard to a new creation.

4d. Prophethood is not to Continue in the Same Fashion as was During the Judaic Dispensation

Some hadith (tradition of the Prophet) may indicate, that the sealing of the office of prophethood, is to be understood in the light of the manner of, how guidance was continued in previous dispensations, and how that method was changed in Islam.

Through Muhammad's revelation the office of prophethood was ended. That is to say, no other prophet like those of Judaism (like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Zechariah, etc...) were to appear. Instead Khalifs (according to Sunni terminology), and Imams (according to Shi'ite usage) appeared. The following Sahih Hadith hints at this issue:

Narrated Abu Huraira: The Prophet said, "The Israelis used to be ruled and guided by prophets: Whenever a prophet died, another would take over his place. There will be no prophet after me, but there will be Caliphs who will increase in number."

The people asked, "O Allah's Apostle! What do you order us (to do)?" He said, "Obey the one who will be given the pledge of allegiance first. Fulfill their (i.e. the Caliphs) rights, for Allah will ask them about (any shortcoming) in ruling those Allah has put under their guardianship."

- Sahih Bukhari 4:661 (see Arabic)

This issue may be best understood when we study the historical context and the circumstances of the revelation of verse 33:40. Most importantly, the verse itself should not be taken out of the context of the Sura (chapter) which it is a part of.

The Prophet (PBUH), had adopted Zaid ibn Al-Haritha and treated him as His own son and made him part of His household. The people started calling him Zaid ibn Muhammad. Verses 4 and 5 of the same sura, clearly discourage such practice:

[33:4]

YUSUFALI: Allah has not made for any man two hearts in his (one) body: nor has He made your wives whom ye divorce by Zihar your mothers: nor has He made your adopted sons your sons. Such is (only) your (manner of) speech by your mouths. But Allah tells (you) the Truth, and He shows the (right) Way.

PICKTHAL: Allah hath not assigned unto any man two hearts within his body, nor hath He made your wives whom ye declare (to be your mothers) your mothers, nor hath He made those whom ye claim (to be your sons) your sons. This is but a saying of your mouths. But Allah saith the truth and He showeth the way.

SHAKIR: Allah has not made for any man two hearts within him; nor has He made your wives whose backs you liken to the backs of your mothers as your mothers, nor has He made those whom you assert to be your sons your real sons; these are the words of your mouths; and Allah speaks the truth and He guides to the way.

[33:5]

YUSUFALI: Call them by (the names of) their fathers: that is juster in the sight of Allah. But if ye know not their father's (names, call them) your Brothers in faith, or your maulas. But there is no blame on you if ye make a mistake therein: (what counts is) the intention of your hearts: and Allah is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful.

PICKTHAL: Proclaim their real parentage. That will be more equitable in the sight of Allah. And if ye know not their fathers, then (they are)

your brethren in the faith, and your clients. And there is no sin for you in the mistakes that ye make unintentionally, but what your hearts purpose (that will be a sin for you). Allah is ever Forgiving, Merciful.

SHAKIR: Assert their relationship to their fathers; this is more equitable with Allah; but if you do not know their fathers, then they are your brethren in faith and your friends; and there is no blame on you concerning that in which you made a mistake, but (concerning) that which your hearts do purposely (blame may rest on you), and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.

As people were using the name Zaid ibn Muhammad, the expectation of some was also that he would become His successor, as had been the case the prophets of the children of Israel.

When Zaid divorced his wife, who later was married to the Prophet (PBUH), many people objected to this and expressed their displeasure that He would marry His "son's" divorced wife, verse 33:40 made it clear that Zaid was neither the Prophet's son nor was he or anyone else to be a prophet after Him.

When chapter 33 is read in its entirety, this issue becomes much clearer.

4e. Passages from Bahá'í Writings on the subject

Bahá'u'lláh wrote:

'...how many are those who, through failure to understand its meaning, have allowed the term "Seal of the Prophets" to obscure their understanding, and deprive them of the grace of all His manifold bounties! Hath not Muhammad, Himself, declared: "I am all the Prophets?" Hath He not said as We have already mentioned: "I am Adam, Noah, Moses, and Jesus?" Why should Muhammad, that immortal Beauty, Who hath said: "I am the first Adam" be incapable of saying also: "I am the last Adam"? For even as He regarded Himself to be the "First of the Prophets" - that is Adam - in like manner, the "Seal of the Prophets" is also applicable unto that Divine Beauty. It is admittedly obvious that being the "First of the Prophets," He likewise is their "Seal." .. '

- Book of Certitude *

Notwithstanding the fact that all the Messengers of God were different individuals,

Bahá'ís believe that the Reality of all these Messengers is one and the same in the sense that They all came to reveal aspects of the same Truth, and to help us learn about the one and same God. This is an aspect of the concept of the Oneness of God (Tawheed). In this sense, They were all the beginning and the end as Jesus (PBUH) proclaimed that He was the Alpha and the Omega.

5. Completion of Religion

"This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed My favor on you and chosen for you Islam as a religion."

- Qur'an 5:3

This verse was revealed when the Prophet (PBUH) was on His way back from His last pilgrimage to Mecca (Hujjatu'l Wida'). It is said to be the last verse of the Qur'an to be revealed. It was later included in Suratu'l Ma'ideh (chapter 5) which was originally revealed around the year six or seven AH.

This verse has been referred to as complementary to verse 33:40 which describes Muhammad (PBUH) as being the "Seal of the prophets", in that the two verses support the notion that Islam is the final religion. Verse 33:40 has been addressed in other pages on this site.

As we look at the topic of the completion of religion in the light of the whole Qur'an, we find that religion is described as being completed, in quite a few verses (in addition to verse 5:3).

For instance, we find that God's favor was completed at the time of Abraham, Isaac, and Joseph:

And thus will your Lord choose you and teach you the interpretation of sayings and make His favor complete to you and to the children of Jacob, as He made it complete before to your fathers, Abraham and Isaac; surely your Lord is knowing, wise.

- Qur'an 12:6

We also find that God completed His favor through Moses:

Moreover, We gave Moses the Book, completing (Our favor) to those who would do right, and explaining all things in detail,- and a guide and a mercy, that they might believe in the meeting with their Lord.

- Qur'an 6:154

According to the Qur'an, the completion of the favor is also conditional upon the individual's success in obeying and fearing God:

And from whatsoever place you come forth, turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque; and wherever you are turn your face towards it, so that people shall have no accusation against you, except such of them as are unjust; so do not fear them, and fear Me, that I may complete My favor on you and that you may walk on the right course.

- Qur'an 2:150

Some argue however, that while "completion" of the favor may not be unique to Muslims, "perfection" of the religion is.

This is a matter of interpretation, and it certainly is the prerogative of the translators to have chosen the word "perfected" for the Arabic word "akmaltu". For Arabs (and others familiar with the language) however, while the word

definitely conveys the meaning of perfection, and wholeness, it is also very often used to mean "completion" as we find in verses: 2:185, 2:196, 2:233, and 16:25 among others.

This same theme has also caused followers of other religions to believe that their religion was complete, not only for the duration it was destined, but for all times. For example we see that for the Christians, the favors of God were also completed on humanity through Jesus:

"And ye are complete in Him [i.e. Jesus], which is the head of all principality and power"

- The Epistle to the Colossians, Chapter 2

"Epaphras, who is [one] of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."

- The Epistle to the Colossians, Chapter 4

It is also necessary to remember, that both completeness and perfection are among God's attributes, integral to His Essence (magnified by His name). It would be blasphemous to doubt that any of His actions and doings or favors, would be anything but complete and perfect:

It is Allah Who made out of the things He created, some things to give you shade; of the hills He made some for your shelter; He made you garments to protect you from heat, and coats of mail to protect you from your (mutual) violence. Thus does He complete His favours on you, that ye may bow to His Will (in Islam).

- Qur'an 16:81

Question: If God has always supplied us with all provisions and needs for every journey we have undertaken, does this in any way preclude His aid and assistance in future journeys? Does it preclude the possibility itself of future journeys?

As to the mention of Islam as the chosen religion in the same verse (5:3), it is important to remember that while Islam happens to be the religion of "Muslims", it is also described in numerous verses in the Qur'an as the religion of submission to God, a term much more general, and includes all who submit themselves and will to God.

Let us also take the Qur'an as a whole entity, and remember the verses which explain that there is a set time for every nation and a set book. Let us also remember to examine the verses which tell us that the words of God are endless and can not be encompassed in one book.

Let us not forget either the verses that speak of Messengers to come.

6. Islam. The Religion of Submission to God

If anyone desires a religion other than Islam, never will it be accepted of

him; and in the Hereafter He will be in the ranks of those who have lost (All spiritual good).

- Qur'an 3:85

This translation of verse [3:85] is by the well known scholar ('Abdullah) Yusuf Ali. In his commentary on this verse (note: 418), Mr. Yusuf Ali writes:

"The Muslim position is clear. The Muslim does not claim to have a religion peculiar to himself. 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 the 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 a one cannot expect guidance, for he has deliberately renounced guidance."

Many verses in the Holy Qur'an explain the meaning of Islam as the one religion of God, revealed to all prophets. Islam is not Muhammdanism. It is the religion of submission to God, though it also is by name, the religion of Muslims.

"Take heed that ye do not vacillate in your determination to embrace the truth of this Cause--a Cause through which the potentialities of the might of God have been revealed, and His sovereignty established. With faces beaming with joy, hasten ye unto Him. This is the changeless Faith of God, eternal in the past, eternal in the future. Let him that seeketh, attain it; and as to him that hath refused to seek it--verily, God is Self-Sufficient, above any need of His creatures. "

- Bahá'u'lláh

7. The Best Ummah

"You are the best of the nations raised up for (the benefit of) men; ..."

- Qur'an 3:110

Muslims for centuries rightly claimed this distinction. When the rest of the world rejected God's latest Messenger, the Muslims obeyed God and accepted Him. When the rest of the world was in the dark ages, Muslims ruled from the shores of Spain to the borders of China, during which time, the arts and sciences flourished. and the people enjoyed an atmosphere of relative peace and justice.

Followers of other religions have claimed this same honor as well. The Jews have always called themselves "God's Chosen People". The Qur'an itself speaks of a time when this was the case:

"O Children of Israel! Remember My favour wherewith I favoured you and how I preferred you to (all) creatures."

- Qur'an 2:47

Yet when Jesus (PBUH) came and they refused to accept him, God conferred the honor on the Christians instead:

"Behold! Allah said: "O Jesus! I will take thee and raise thee to Myself and clear thee (of the falsehoods) of those who blaspheme; I will make those who follow thee superior to those who reject faith, to the Day of Resurrection: Then shall ye all return unto me, and I will judge between you of the matters wherein ye dispute."

- Qur'an 3:55

When Muhammad (PBUH) came in fulfillment of the promises of previous religions, to bring new life and new teachings and bring people together in unity, He was rejected by most of the followers of the earlier religions. Those who followed Him became blessed with the new distinction.

As we read the rest of verse 3:110 however, we may understand that this honor and distinction of being the best of nations, rather than being an absolute, is conditional on, or associated with a certain code of conduct:

... you enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong and believe in Allah; and if the followers of the Book had believed, it would have been better for them; of them (some) are believers and most of them are transgressors.

- Qur'an 3:110

The relative nature of this statement, may be further understood in the light of other verses in the Qur'an such as:

"Thus We have appointed you a middle nation, that ye may be witnesses against mankind, and that the messenger may be a witness against you. And We appointed the qiblah which ye formerly observed only that We might know him who followeth the messenger, from him who turneth on his heels. In truth it was a hard (test) save for those whom Allah guided. But it was not Allah's purpose that your faith should be in vain, for Allah is Full of Pity, Merciful toward mankind."

- Qur'an 2:143

The Muslim Ummah can only continue to claim to be the best of nations if it continues to live by the teachings of God.

The purpose of all religion has been to bring people together in love and unity like brothers and sisters. This is stated in beauty and perfection and in the most eloquent speech in this verse:

And hold fast, all together, by the rope which Allah (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves; and remember with gratitude Allah's favour on you; for ye were enemies and He joined your hearts in love, so that by His Grace, ye became brethren; and ye were on the brink of the pit of Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus doth Allah make His Signs clear to you: That ye may be guided.

- Qur'an 3:103

God makes it very clear that He abhors divisions, conflicts, and hatred. A people divided, can not even claim to be followers of the Prophet (PBUH):

"As for those who divide their religion and break up into sects, thou hast no part in them in the least: their affair is with Allah: He will in the end tell them the truth of all that they did."

- Qur'an 6:159

When the Jews were the only ones who believed in the One True God, they were called His chosen people. When the Christians were the only ones who recognized the glory of Christ, they became His beloved. Neither of the two peoples however, continued in their practices, or showed the same devotion and obedience to the teachings as they did in earlier times. For that we read:

"And the Jews and the Christians say: We are the sons of Allah and His beloved ones. Say: Why does He then chastise you for your faults?"

- Qur'an 5:18

God in His mercy, issued warnings to the Muslims, so they wouldn't make the same mistakes:

"And be not like those who became divided and disagreed after clear arguments had come to them, and these it is that shall have a grievous chastisement. On the day when (some) faces shall turn white and (some) faces shall turn black; then as to those whose faces turn black: Did you disbelieve after your believing? Taste therefore the chastisement because you disbelieved. And as to those whose faces turn white, they shall be in Allah's mercy; in it they shall-abide."

- Qur'an 3:105-107

"But the sects disagreed among themselves. Then woe to those who committed evil from the punishment of a painful Day."

- Qur'an 43:65

Moreover, dividing the Ummah (community) into sects is even likened to joining partners with God (shirk), as each sect becomes enamored with its own teachings, and a slave to its own doctrine. God tells us:

"Turn ye back in repentance to Him, and fear Him: establish regular prayers, and be not ye among those who join gods with Allah,- Those who split up their Religion, and become (mere) Sects,- each party rejoicing in that which is with itself!"

- Qur'an 30:31-32

How about the political (non-sectarian) disunity and hatred among nations calling themselves Muslim by name, yet because of greed and love for power and wealth, have fought amongst themselves causing wars and bloodshed?:

"Never should a believer kill a believer..."

- Qur'an 4:92

"If a man kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell, to abide

therein (For ever): And the wrath and the curse of Allah are upon him, and a dreadful penalty is prepared for him."

- Qur'an 4:93

So, can we say today that as a nation, the Muslim Ummah, has continued to adhere to the laws of God, remaining worthy of the honor of being the best of nations?

Narrated Sahl bin Sad:

The Prophet said, "Verily! 70,000 or 700,000 of my followers will enter Paradise altogether; so that the first and the last amongst them will enter at the same time, and their faces will be glittering like the bright full moon."

- Bukhari Volume 4, Book 54, Number 470

Prophet Muhammad said:

"...I hope that you would constitute half of the inhabitants of Paradise and I shall explain to you its (reason). The believers among the unbelievers would not be more than a white hair on (the body of a) black ox or a black hair on (the body of a) white ox."

- Sahih Muslim 1.427

"The Apostle of God said: `There will come a time for my people when there will remain nothing of the Qur'an except its outward form and nothing of Islam except its name and they will call themselves by this name even though they are the people furthest from it. The mosques will be full of people but they will be empty of right guidance. The religious leaders (Fuqaha) of that day will be the most evil religious leaders under the heavens; sedition and dissension will go out from them and to them will it return.'"

- Ibn Babuya, Thawab ul-A'mal. Also in Al-Bihar, by Al-Majlisi, Vol 13, Page 155, and in Kanz Al-amal #766

"My people will be divided into 73 sects ... Everyone will go to hell, except one ... the religion which is professed by me and my companions."

- Mishkat Vol. I Chapter 6:2

Narrated AbuHurayrah:

The Prophet (PBUH) said: "The Jews were split up into seventy-one or seventy-two sects; and the Christians were split up into seventy one or seventy-two sects; and my community will be split up into seventy-three sects."

- Kitabul Sunna, Sunan Abu-Dawud (partial collection)[Book 40, Number 4579]

Will there be reformers from within the Ummah who will bring back the lost glory, unite the people, and regain the privilege of being the best of nations?

God tells us in His Holy Book:

"If ye turn back (from the Path), He will substitute in your stead another

people; then they would not be like you!"

- Qur'an 47:38

8. God's Covenant

The word covenant is used in different accounts in the Holy Qur'an to describe many kinds of relationships and agreements.

In many verses for example, we read about God's ancient covenant with mankind, that in return for God's protection, favors and guidance, we need to abide by His laws, live according to His commandments and accept and obey His Messengers.

God's Covenant with Mankind:

"And when We made a covenant with the children of Israel: You shall not serve any but Allah and (you shall do) good to (your) parents, and to the near of kin and to the orphans and the needy, and you shall speak to men good words and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate. Then you turned back except a few of you and (now too) you turn aside."

- Qur'an 2:83

"It is not piety, that you turn your faces to the East and to the West. True piety is this: to believe in God, and the Last Day ... to give of one's substance ... and to ransom the slave, to perform the prayer, to pay the alms. And they who fulfill their covenant ... and endure with fortitude."

- Qur'an 2:177

"..., but He causes not to stray, except those who forsake (the path),- Those who break Allah's Covenant after it is ratified, and who sunder what Allah Has ordered to be joined, and do mischief on earth: These cause loss (only) to themselves."

- Qur'an 2:27

Part of this covenant is to accept God's Messengers:

Certainly We made a covenant with the children of Israel and We sent to them apostles; whenever there came to them an apostle with what that their souls did not desire, some (of them) did they call liars and some they slew.

- Qur'an 5:70

"O children of Adam! When Messengers come to you from among you, who convey my verses, then those who take heed and amend will have neither fear nor regret."

- Qur'an 7:35

Another translation of this verse (by Yusuf Ali) is:

O ye Children of Adam! whenever there come to you messengers from amongst you, rehearsing My signs unto you,- those who are righteous and mend (their lives),- on them shall be no fear nor shall they grieve.

Palmer's translation:

"O sons of Adam! verily, there will come to you apostles from amongst you, narrating unto you my signs; ..."

And another translation:

"O children of Adam! there shall come to you Apostles from among yourselves, rehearsing my signs to you; ..."

All of these translations convey the feeling of inevitability portrayed in the Arabic "imma ya'ti yannakum", a form of the future tense of the verb "to come" used to impart emphasis.

Does this verse include Muslims? It would seem that the term "children of Adam" should be inclusive of all people.

This covenant is established through allegiance to the Messenger, and through obedience to the Teachings He brings:

"Surely those who swear allegiance to you do but swear allegiance to Allah; the hand of Allah is above their hands. Therefore whoever breaks (his faith), he breaks it only to the injury of his own soul, and whoever fulfills what he has covenanted with Allah, He will grant him a mighty reward."

- Qur'an 48:10

God has also made a Covenant with His Prophets:

And call to mind when We took from the Prophets their covenant, and from thee (Muhammad), and from Noah and Abraham, and Moses and Jesus, son of Mary, and WE indeed, took from them a solemn covenant;

- Qur'an 33:8

This covenant with the prophets is explained in this verse:

And when Allah made a covenant through the prophets: Certainly what I have given you of Book and wisdom-- then an apostle comes to you verifying that which is with you, you must believe in him, and you must aid him. He said: Do you affirm and accept My compact in this (matter)? They said: We do affirm. He said: Then bear witness, and I (too) am of the bearers of witness with you. Whoever therefore turns back after this, these it is that are the transgressors.

- Qur'an 3:81-82

9. Al-Qiyamah (The Resurrection)

Muslim Scholars speak of three types of resurrection:

The Minor Resurrection (Al-Qiyamtu'l Sughra) which occurs at the hour of death for each individual, when the soul is released and it is made to discover the worth and recompense of its deeds.

The intermediate Resurrection (Al-Qiyamatu'l Wusta) which pertains to a

specific community, or nation of believers (Ummah), when religion is renewed and spiritual life is regenerated and diffused by the coming of the Messenger.

The Great Resurrection (Al-Qiyamatu'l Udhma) for the whole of mankind which is foretold by all religions as the Day of Judgment, or the Day of God.

It is this third type of resurrection, which is addressed in this page.

The Day of Judgment

The Day of Judgment, Al-Qiyamah, Yawmu'l Deen, (also known as the, Day of the Gathering, Day of Meeting God, the Resurrection, and The Great Announcement), is a major theme, the Grand Promise, addressed not only in the Qur'an, but also in the Scriptures of other major religions. Opinions may have differed on specifics, yet there is a common consensus, that the Day of Judgment is a time of momentous upheaval, and calamity and, to many people, it is the time of the end of the world.

Another notion which many seem to agree on, is that everyone would readily recognize that Day (for how could anyone remain unaware of such a momentous event?)

This is an attempt to examine what different verses in the Qur'an (and some hadith) tell us about Al-Qiyamah. It is also a humble attempt to reconcile what might appear as, differing descriptions of the event (even to the point of contradiction at face value). The focus is on taking the Qur'an in its entirety rather than picking and choosing specific and isolated verses to the exclusion of other verses or ignoring them.

9a. General Signs and Descriptions of the Day of Judgment

From the Qur'an, we may learn that: this event is inevitable, there is a set time for it (no delays), all people would expire (with maybe some exceptions?), then they would be brought back to life (the rise of the dead). We also learn that on the Day of Judgment, God would come with angels at His side, and we would be meeting Him, and judgment would be passed on each individual. We would also have warnings and announcements preceding it, and we learn that Jesus would be one of the Signs of the Hour:

[11:102-7]: In that is a Sign for those who fear the penalty of the Hereafter: that is a Day for which mankind will be gathered together: that will be a Day of Testimony. Nor shall We delay it but for a term appointed. The day it arrives, no soul shall speak except by His leave: of those (gathered) some will be wretched and some will be blessed. Those who are wretched shall be in the Fire: There will be for them therein (nothing but) the heaving of sighs and sobs: They will dwell therein for all the time that the heavens and the earth endure, except as thy Lord willeth: for thy Lord is the (sure) accomplisher of what He planneth.

[69:17]: And the angels will be on the sides thereof, and eight will uphold the Throne of thy Lord that day, above them.

[50:20]: And the Trumpet shall be blown: that will be the Day whereof Warning (had been given). And there will come forth every soul: with each will be an (angel) to drive, and an (angel) to bear witness.

[39:68-69]: "And there shall be a blast on the Trumpet, and all who are in the Heaven and all who are on the earth shall expire, save those whom God shall vouchsafe to live. Then shall there be another blast on it, and lo! arising they shall gaze around them: and the earth shall shine with the light of her Lord."

[7:30]: He will return you (on the Day of Judgment) reverted back to when you were first created. A section guided, and a section will go astray.

[43:61]: And (Jesus) shall be a Sign (for the coming of) the Hour (of Judgment: therefore have no doubt about the (Hour), but follow ye Me: this is a Straight Way.

9b. Can People Miss Such an Event?

With all the clear signs, it may be of interest (though hard to believe) to read that many would not even be aware of what would be happening, (as if dead or in deep slumber):

[19:39]: "Warn them of the Day of Pining (distress) when all matters have been judged, though they would still be unaware of it, and unbelievers."

[30:55-6]: "On the Day that the Hour (of Reckoning) will be established, the transgressors will swear that they tarried not but an hour: thus were they used to being deluded! But those endued with knowledge and faith will say: "Indeed ye did tarry, within Allah's Decree, to the Day of Resurrection, and this is the Day of Resurrection: but ye - ye were not aware!"

[12:107]: "Do they really believe that an all-encompassing punishment by God will not come upon them, or the Hour overtake them suddenly while they remain unaware of it. "

[34:28]: "We have not sent thee (Muhammad) but to the whole of mankind, as a giver of glad tidings and as a warner, but most of mankind still do not know."

9c. The Resurrection

Let us examine the part about the Rising of the Dead, which was one of the points of contention with the unbelievers at the time of the Prophet, as in the verse:

[17:49-51]: "They say: "What! when we are reduced to bones and dust, should we really be raised up (to be) a new creation?"
Say: "(Nay!) be ye stones or iron, "Or created matter which, in your minds, is hardest (to be raised up),- (Yet shall ye be raised up)!" then will they say: "Who will cause us to return?"
Say: "He who created you first!" Then will they wag their heads

towards thee, and say, "When will that be?" Say, "May be it will be quite soon!"

In order to understand how this would happen, and to answer some questions like: what form would these bodies be in? Would people resemble how they were at the hour of their death or as they were in their prime? Would some be old and feeble during the March, while others may be infants and would need to be carried? And what about bodies that might have through the ages been broken down to their elements, and the elements are shared with other bodies or objects?

Can we find clues in the Qur'an itself? Some verses indicate that maybe the rising of the dead has happened in the past as well:

[2:55-6]: "And remember ye said: "O Moses! We shall never believe in thee until we see Allah manifestly," but ye were dazed with thunder and lighting even as ye looked on. Then We raised you up after your death: Ye had the chance to be grateful."

So the question is: Can we allow for the possibility that it is spiritual death which is meant here, or is the physical part in us more important? Indeed there are several verses that allow for this possibility (also that the word "life", may be used in the spiritual sense as well):

[6:122]: "Can he* who was dead, to whom We gave life, and a light whereby he can walk amongst men, be like him who is in the depths of darkness, from which he can never come out? Thus to those without faith their own deeds seem pleasing."

* This verse was in reference to Al-Hamza (R) the Prophet's uncle after he became a Muslim.

[3:169-170]: "And reckon not those who are killed in Allah's way as dead; nay, they are alive (and) are provided sustenance from their Lord; Rejoicing in what Allah has given them out of His grace and they rejoice for the sake of those who, (being left) behind them, have not yet joined them, that they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve."

A similar kind of death, describes the condition of the unbelievers or those who join partners with God (mushrikeen):

[16:20-21]: "And those whom they call on besides Allah have not created anything while they are themselves created; Dead (are they), not living, and they know not when they shall be raised. "

9d. The End of the World

As to the issue of the calamitous destruction of the earth and the end of the world, the falling of the stars, and the fires and the floods; we find that there are many verses which have lead to the common belief

that the physical world would be destroyed as the believers are taken to live in heaven for eternity, and the ungodly, in hell. However, the need arises to reconcile this belief, with verses which may indicate that, rather than the destruction of this earth, there will be a transformation, and that what we picture as living in paradise or in hell, may not of a necessity have to do with the physical destruction of the earth:

[14:48]: "One day the earth will be changed to a different earth, and so will be the heavens, and (men) will be marshalled forth, before Allah, the One, the Irresistible; .."

[11:104-7]: "..The day it arrives, no soul shall speak except by His leave: of those (gathered) some will be wretched and some will be blessed. Those who are wretched shall be in the Fire: There will be for them therein (nothing but) the heaving of sighs and sobs: They will dwell therein for all the time that the heavens and the earth endure, except as thy Lord willeth: for thy Lord is the (sure) accomplisher of what He planneth."

[39:73-4]: "And those who keep their duty to their Lord are driven unto the Garden in troops till, when they reach it, and the gates thereof are opened, and the warders thereof say unto them: Peace be unto you! Ye are good, so enter ye (the Garden of delight), to dwell therein; They say: Praise be to Allah, Who hath fulfilled His promise unto us and hath made us inherit the land* (al-ardh), sojourning in the Garden where we will! So bounteous is the wage of workers."

* the word translated here as land (al-ardh), also can mean "the earth" in Arabic. In the Bible also we read that "the meek shall inherit the earth" (in the latter days).

[39:69]: "And the earth shineth with the light of her Lord, and the Book is set up, and the prophets and the witnesses are brought, and it is judged between them with truth, and they are not wronged."

9e. Meeting God on the Day of Judgment

Al-Qiyamah is also associated with the Time of Meeting God according to the following verses:

[2:210]: Will they wait until Allah comes to them in canopies of clouds, with angels (in His train) and the question is (thus) settled? but to Allah do all questions go back (for decision).

[18:110]: Say: "I am but a man like yourselves, (but) the inspiration has come to me, that your Allah is one Allah: whoever expects to meet his Lord, let him work righteousness, and, in the worship of his Lord, admit no one as partner.

[2:45-6]: Nay, seek (Allah's) help with patient perseverance and prayer: It is indeed hard, except to those who bring a lowly spirit,- Who bear in mind the certainty that they are to meet their Lord, and that they

are to return to Him.

[69:17]: And the angels will be on its sides, and eight will, that Day, bear the Throne of thy Lord above them.

[39:69]: And the earth shineth with the light of her Lord, and the Book is set up, and the prophets and the witnesses are brought, and it is judged between them with truth, and they are not wronged.

[29:23]: Those who reject the Signs of Allah and the Meeting with Him,- it is they who shall despair of My Mercy: it is they who will (suffer) a most grievous Penalty.

The question raised here, is: What does this mean? How do we reconcile all these promises, with what Islam tells us about the nature of God?:

[6:103]: No vision can grasp Him, but His grasp is over all vision: He is above all comprehension, yet is acquainted with all things.

[7:143]: And when Moses came to Our appointed tryst and his Lord had spoken unto him, he said: My Lord! Show me (Thy Self), that I may gaze upon Thee. He said: Thou wilt not see Me,

Indeed when "His Throne doth extend over the heavens and the earth" [2:255], and He is closer to us than our jugular vein [50:16], meaning that He is everywhere, what are we to think of meeting Him when He comes in "canopies of clouds" [2:210], and where would He be coming from?

When Moses (PBUH) asked God to appear for Him, He "appeared / manifested Himself" (tajalla) to the mountain instead, and the mountain turned to dust for it couldn't withstand this tajalli .

[7:143]: Thou wilt not see Me, but gaze upon the mountain! If it stand still in its place, then thou wilt see Me. And when his Lord revealed (His) glory to the mountain He sent it crashing down. And Moses fell down senseless. And when he woke he said: Glory unto Thee! I turn unto Thee repentant, and I am the first of (true) believers.

* * * * *

The above verses would imply our incapability of seeing God. On the other hand, there are other verses in the Qur'an, which may give us clues as to how it may still be possible to meet our Lord:

[48:10]: Surely those who swear allegiance to you (Muhammad) do but swear allegiance to Allah; the hand of Allah is above their hands. Therefore whoever breaks (his faith), he breaks it only to the injury of his own soul, and whoever fulfills what he has covenanted with Allah, He will grant him a mighty reward.

[8:17]: So you (Muhammad) did not slay them, but it was Allah Who slew them, and you did not smite when you smote (the enemy), but it was Allah

Who smote, and that He might confer upon the believers a good gift from Himself; surely Allah is Hearing, Knowing.

[4:80]: He who obeys the Messenger, obeys Allah: But if any turn away, We have not sent thee to watch over their (evil deeds).

The Prophet also addresses this in the following Sahih Hadith: "man ra'ani faqad ra'al Haqqa" which means: "If you have seen Me you have seen Haq [God]." This Hadith can be found in Bukhari vol. 4 p. 135, Moslem vol. 7, p. 54, etc...

Notice that the term "Haq", which is both one of the 99 Names of God and an Attribute of God in the Qur'an.

9f. Is There a Set Time for Al-Qiyamah to Happen?

The Qur'an gives us hints about the timing of all this, and about the Closeness of the Hour. Many Muslims have recently been expressing their belief, that these events may in fact come in the not too distant future. Paralleling this, there has been a lot of talk in many of the Christian circles as well, about the coming millennium. What we concentrate on here, are the verses in the Qur'an:

[78:1-5]: Of what do they ask one another? About the great event, About which they differ? Nay! they shall soon come to know
Nay! Nay! they shall soon know.

[42:17]: It is Allah Who has sent down the Book in Truth, and the Balance. And what will make thee realize that perhaps the Hour is close at hand?

In fact the following verse tells us that: "the beginnings thereof have already come":

[47:18]: Await they aught save the Hour, that it should come upon them unawares? And the beginnings thereof have already come. But how, when it hath come upon them, can they take their warning?

In fact, as early as in the days of Moses (PBUH):

[20:15]: Surely the hour is coming-- I am about to make it manifest-- so that every soul may be rewarded as it strives:

In addition to the verses in the Holy Qur'an, there are many traditions and hadiths, and sayings of the Imams (RA), and also, Muslim scholars, which have contributed to our common ideas of the signs of the "Hour". Many of them make us wonder (according to verse 47:18 above) whether these things are already upon us:

The Apostle of God said:

There will come a time for my people when there will remain nothing of the Qur'an except its outward form and nothing of Islam except its name and they will call themselves by this name even though they are the

people furthest from it. The mosques will be full of people but they will be empty of right guidance. The religious leaders (Fuqaha) of that day will be the most evil religious leaders under the heavens; sedition and dissension will go out from them and to them will it return.' .."

Ibn Babuya, Thawab ul-A'mal.

The Prophet (SAW) also said:

"... I hope that you would constitute half of the inhabitants of Paradise and I shall explain to you its (reason). The believers among the unbelievers would not be more than a white hair on (the body of a) black ox or a black hair on (the body of a) white ox."

Sahih Muslim 1.427

9g. Some Other Signs Associated with the Day of Judgment

The Return of the Jews to the Holy Land:

Another event that has traditionally been linked to the Day of Judgment, both in the Judeo-Christian traditions and in the Qur'an, is the Return of the Jews to the Holy Land as we may learn from the following verses:

[17:104]: "And We said unto the Children of Israel after him: Dwell in the land; but when the promise of the Hereafter (wa3'dul akhirati) cometh to pass We shall bring you as a crowd gathered out of various nations."

[59:2]: "He it is Who caused those who disbelieved of the followers of the Book (Jews ?) to go forth from their homes at (till) the first banishment (Li awalil hashr-till the first gathering) you did not think that they would go forth, while they were certain that their fortresses would defend them against Allah; but Allah came to them whence they did not expect, and cast terror into their hearts; they demolished their houses with their own hands and the hands of the believers; therefore take a lesson, O you who have eyes! "

[17:4]: "And We decreed for the Children of Israel in the Scripture: Ye verily will work corruption in the earth twice, and ye will become great tyrants*." "

*A literal translation is: Ye will then after (thumma) ascend (ta'lunna) to a great height (or station).

Acceptance of Islam by Followers of Other Religions:

In the opening verses of the chapter 98 in the Holy Qur'an (Al-Bayyina), we read:

"Those who reject (Truth), among the People of the Book and among the Polytheists, were not going to depart (from their ways) until there should come to them Clear Evidence,- An Messenger from Allah, rehearsing scriptures kept pure and holy: Wherein are laws (or decrees) right and straight."

Qur'an 98:1-3

One of the more obvious and straightforward possible interpretations of this verse, is that people of the previous religions (prior to Islam), including the Jews and Christians and those who worship multiple gods, would continue in their ways of non-belief and resistance to Islam, until clear evidence is presented to them. This "Clear Evidence" is explained in the next verse as taking the form of a Messenger from God, with books and new laws ("An Messenger from Allah, rehearsing scriptures kept pure and holy: Wherein are laws (or decrees) right and straight").

Today we see that people from every imaginable religious background, --whose ancestors had for more than thirteen centuries resisted Islam--, have as they accept the Bahá'í Faith, finally come to accept the Qur'an as the true word of God and Islam as His religion, and would give their lives for the love of the Prophet (PBUH), thus fulfilling the promise in the opening verses of Chapter 98.

9h. Calls, Announcements and Warnings. The Trumpet Blasts

These momentous and earth shaking events, which in many ways are calamitous (specially for the unbelievers), are to be preceded by warnings and announcements and soundings of the trumpet:

[50:41-2]: And listen for the Day when the Caller will call out from a place quiet near,- The Day when they will hear a (mighty) Blast in (very) truth: that will be the Day of Resurrection.

Who would be this Caller, and where is this place that is quite near?

In the past, the call came from the Messenger:

[3:193]: "Our Lord! we have heard the call of one calling (Us) to Faith, 'Believe ye in the Lord,' and we have believed. Our Lord! Forgive us our sins, blot out from us our iniquities, and take to Thyself our souls in the company of the righteous.

[8:24]: O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and the messenger when He calleth you to that which quickeneth you, and know that Allah cometh in between the man and his own heart, and that He it is unto Whom ye will be gathered.

[34:28]: "We have not sent thee (Muhammad) but to the whole of mankind, as a giver of glad tidings and as a warner, but most of mankind still do not know."

Part of the warning is to bring people back to the religion of God, to the Straight Path*, after they have divided themselves into factions and sects which, "disown each other and curse each other" [29:25].

The Straight Path, which is narrower than a hair and sharper than a sword is explained in this verse:

[6:161]: Say: Lo! As for me, my Lord hath guided me unto a straight path, a right religion, the community of Abraham, the upright, who was no idolater.

It may be of interest that in the very first sura of the Qur'an (the opening chapter, Al-Fatiha), the word "Deen" which translates to religion, creed, faith, is used to tell us about the "Day of Judgment" (Yawmul Deen).

A warning to precede the penalty, is indicative of God's mercy and justice:

[11:117]: Nor would thy Lord be the One to destroy communities for a single wrong-doing, if its members were likely to mend.

[20:134]: And if We had inflicted on them a penalty before this, they would have said: "Our Lord! If only Thou hadst sent us a messenger, we should certainly have followed Thy Signs before we were humbled and put to shame."

* * * * *

The following verses also, talk about sending a Messenger, an Apostle before the chastisement.

[17:15]: Whoever goes aright, for his own soul does he go aright; and whoever goes astray, to its detriment only does he go astray: nor can the bearer of a burden bear the burden of another, nor do We chastise until We raise an apostle.

[28:59]: Nor was thy Lord the one to destroy a population until He had sent to its center a messenger, rehearsing to them Our Signs; nor are We going to destroy a population except when its members practice iniquity.

Another way to see this may be argued, that if we have eyes to recognize the calamities and the suffering, and the disunity and contention all around us, we might ask ourselves if there has been a warning that we neglected to heed.

Dates in Prophecy

While prophecies have not been in themselves sufficient proof for all people, as each individual sees in them what he/she wants to see, the prophecies associated with the time (date) of the coming of the Promised One may be of interest to some readers.

In the book of Najm'us-Saghib, Haji Mirza Husayn-i Noori a Shi'ite scholar and commentator writes:

"At the time of the revelation of this verse ("li-kulli ummaten ajal") which suggests that for every nation a term has been established, they asked the Messenger of God what is the term for the ummah of Islam,

and He replies: "If my people were truthful they remain for one day. If they degrade, half a day will they last."

-Najm'us-Saghib p. 87 (This Hadith also appears in vol. 13 of Bihar'ul-Anwar of Allamah Majlesi.)

In the Qur'an some verses indicate that sometimes, by a day, a 1000* years is meant:

"And they will bid thee hasten on the Doom, and Allah faileth not His promise, but lo! a Day with Allah is as a thousand years of what ye reckon."

- Qur'an 22:47

Other verses in the Qur'an indicate that a day could be 50,000 years, but so far in history, religions have come at a more frequent rate, and while the essential teachings of all religions are eternal in nature, other laws concerning social relations have usually required changes on a more frequent basis.

The Shi'ite Muslims believe that divine guidance continued through the twelve Imams. The twelfth Imam whom they believe to have gone into "occultation"

only to return at the end of time as the Mahdi, (or Al-Qa'im, or Sahibul Zaman), disappeared in the year 260 A.H. Based on the hadith above, and many other sayings of the Imams and some verses of the Qur'an, some Muslim scholars, and some schools of thought such as the Shaykhis, speculated that the year 1260 A.H. would be the year of the coming of the Promised One.

As stated earlier, prophecies don't mean much for those who don't believe (or want to believe). It is equally true that anybody can come up with virtually any set of numbers, still for the interested reader a few more time prophecies are examined.

Regarding the verse:

"Keep up prayer from the declining of the sun till the "darkness of the night" and the morning recitation; surely the morning recitation is witnessed."

- Qur'an 17:78

Some interpret this verse as: keep up the tenets/laws/ shari'a (represented here by "prayer") until the "darkness of the night", ("Ghasaqul-layl" in Arabic). The Abjad* value of "Ghasaqul-layl" is 1260.

* The ABJAD system of calculation, assigned a number to each letter of the Arabic alphabet. Words represent numbers in this system.

Another verse in the Qur'an which may hint to the time of the coming

of the Mahdi is verse 32:5

"He orders the Affair from the heaven to the earth; then it will ascend to Him: in a day the measure of which is a thousand years as you count"

One of the Muslim scholars (Maulana Muhammad Ali) comments on this verse:

"Al-Amr or the Affair is the Affair of Islam, and its ordering or regulation from heaven to earth means that it comes from heaven and will be established firmly on earth. Then we are told that it will ascend to God in a day, the measure of which is a thousand years. As regards the period of its firmness, we are told in a hadith that it will retain its purity for three centuries: ..."

But a calculation of the Abjad value of "Al-Amr" comes up with the number 272. Most sources tell us that Muhammad(PBUH) was born in 570 A.D. These sources also state that He was forty years old when He received first Revelation (610 AD). Sources such as encyclopedias tell us that Hijra (migration to Madina, beginning of the Islamic calendar) started in 622 (i.e. Revelation was 12 years before Hijra). So if one subtracts 12 from 272 one ends up with 260. The Affair, thereafter reverts to the Hand of God "in a day the measure of which is a thousand years as you count". (1260?)

It may also be of interest to observe that the number 1260 is mentioned in the Bible as well, as in Zoroastrian prophecies.

Some other Islamic traditions containing references to the year 1260 A.H.

Among the many references in the works of Muhyi'd-Din Al-Arabi, are the following: "The ministers and upholders of His Faith shall be of the people of Persia." "In His name, the name of the Guardian precedeth that of the Prophet." "The year of His Revelation is identical with half of that number which is divisible by nine [2520]." (i.e. 1260)

In a tradition ascribed to the Imam Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, it is likewise recorded: "In Ghars the Tree of Divine guidance shall be planted." (Ghars which means planting, is numerically equivalent to 1260 in the Abjad system).

Imam Ja'far, son of Muhammad, when questioned concerning the year in which the Qa'im was to be made manifest, replied as follows: "Verily, in the year sixty His Cause shall be revealed, and His name shall be noised abroad."

Christians also await the Second Coming of Christ. In Matthew 24, verse

3 we read:

"As He sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?" One of the explanations He gave them in reply was in (verse 15): "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand)."

This is in the eighth chapter of the Book of Daniel.

Based on this (and other chapters of the Bible, and other prophecies), several Christian groups and denominations waiting for the second coming of Christ, calculated the date of the Return of Christ to the year 1844 A.D.

The year 1844 A.D. in the Gregorian calendar was the year 1260 A.H.

10. Rejection of the New Religion

"Do men think when they say `We believe' they shall be let alone and not be put to proof?"

- Qur'an 29:2

It has always been the wont of people to reject the new Messengers of God, and the Religions they bring. This has happened to every Messenger:

"Ah! Alas for (My) Servants! There comes not a messenger to them but they mock him!"

- Qur'an 36:30

"But if they reject you, so indeed were rejected before you apostles who came with clear arguments and scriptures and the illuminating book."

- Qur'an 3:184

".. and every nation purposed to seize their Messenger and argued falsely, (thinking) thereby to refute the Truth. "

- Qur'an 40:5

It should be worthwhile to contemplate on the reasons why this has been the case, notwithstanding the clear evidence presented by the Messengers, and notwithstanding the fact that in most cases, the followers of the earlier religions, were fully expecting the coming of the new Messenger, and were ardently praying to God to hasten His advent.

When we study the sacred books of all religions, and specially the Qur'an (and also to some extent the history books), we begin to see patterns and find clues to the reasons for such rejection and opposition. Hopefully, becoming aware of these reasons, and understanding them, would help us avoid making the same mistakes, which we condemned the generations of old for.

One of the reasons for this rejection, may have been the fear of being misled by a false prophet (dajjal or anti-christ).

This issue has been addressed in a different section on this web site.

The point which needs to come across, is that we should not let such fears prevent us from searching for the true Messenger. We should not "throw the baby, out with the bath water" as the saying goes.

People have rejected the Prophets and Messengers of the past when they (the people) failed to pass God's tests of their belief, (and failed to even recognize that they were being tested):

"Do men think when they say `We believe' they shall be let alone and not be put to proof ?"

- Qur'an 29:2

At the time of Noah (PBUH), people (including members of His own family) were tested in their belief, when time after time, the promised flood did not come and was delayed. This kind of test, of delay, or non-fulfillment of promise or prophecy (known as bidA' in Arabic), caused many followers of many Prophets to waver in their faith and to reject the Prophet or Messenger of their time.

At the time of Moses (PBUH), people failed a different test when they did not want to accept Him because He had killed a man prior to receiving the Revelation of God. When Moses came unto Pharaoh to deliver the divine Message, Pharaoh said to Him:

"And you did that deed of yours which you did [killed a man], and you are one of the ungrateful. He said: I did it then while I was of those unable to see the right course; "

- Qur'an 26:19-20

At the time of Jesus (PBUH), the greatest test was that His mother was not married at the time she carried Him. And one test at the time of Muhammad (PBUH), was when some people stopped following Him when He changed the direction of the Qiblah.

Could God not have prevented Moses from killing a man. or brought up Jesus of a known father, or sent the floods on time for Noah's people? Yet, if it were made easy to recognize the Messenger and to believe, how then are the sincere who strive in the path of God, to be distinguished from the unbelievers?

Yet another reason that caused the rejection of the Messengers, was that it was hard for the people to see someone from amongst themselves, like themselves in many ways, someone they have known since childhood, without earthly authority or wealth or special powers, lay on them such an extraordinary claim:

"And they say: What is the matter with this Messenger that he eats food and goes about in the markets; why has not an angel been sent down to him, so that he should have been a warner with him?"

"

- Qur'an 25:7

Not only that, but laws and rituals cherished by people for a long time were changed and abrogated much to the dislike and resentment of the people, leading them to revile and persecute and even kill many of God's Messengers and Prophets:

"That whenever there comes to you An Apostle with what ye yourselves desire not, ye are puffed up with pride Some ye called impostors and others ye slay."

- Qur'an 2:87

All believers should recognize that "Verily God doeth whatsoever He willeth, and ordaineth whatsoever He pleaseth.", and yet all His laws and ordinances are only for our own protection and benefit, and when he changes them, He does so for our own good, as he stands in no need for any of His creatures.

"None of Our revelations Do we abrogate or cause to be forgotten, But We substitute Something better or similar:"

- Qur'an 2:106

One of the most serious causes ever for such rejection, vilification and persecution of these Essences of purity, and Conveyers of God's Will, has been the rejection and the opposition of the priests, the clergy, and the divines of the previous religions, to the new Light and the new Message.

Whether for power or for lust for leadership, or out of ignorance and failure to understand the verses of God, they always condemned the new Messenger, heaped atrocities upon Him, and did all that was in their power to discredit Him and cause Him pain and suffering. Their positions of leadership on the one hand, and the ignorance of the masses, their blind loyalty and obedience on the other, caused the multitudes of people to fall into the abyss of disobedience to God, and like unsuspecting sheep allowed themselves to be lead to the wilderness of error:

"Oh our lord ! Indeed we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones, and they misled us from the way of God."

- Qur'an 33:67

"But if you obey most men in the land they misled thee."

- Qur'an 6:116

The priests and clergy took upon themselves the interpretation of the allegorical (mutashabihat) among the verses of God even though it is clearly forbidden to do so:

"He it is Who has revealed the Book to you; some of its verses are decisive, they are the basis of the Book, and others are allegorical; then as for those in whose hearts there is perversity they follow the part of it which is

allegorical, seeking to mislead and seeking to give it (their own) interpretation. but none knows its interpretation except Allah, and those who are firmly rooted in knowledge say: We believe in it, it is all from our Lord; and none do mind except those having understanding."

- Qur'an 3:7

"Move not thy tongue concerning the (Qur'an) to make haste therewith. It is for Us to collect it and to promulgate it: But when We have promulgated it, follow thou its recital (as promulgated): Nay more, it is for Us to explain it (and make it clear)."

- Qur'an 75: 16-19

"Nay, they charge with falsehood that whose knowledge they cannot compass, even before the elucidation thereof hath reached them: thus did those before them make charges of falsehood: but see what was the end of those who did wrong! Of them there are some who believe therein, and some who do not: and thy Lord knoweth best those who are out for mischief. If they charge thee with falsehood, say: "My work to me, and yours to you! ye are free from responsibility for what I do, and I for what ye do!"

- Qur'an 10:39-41

"And pursue not that of which thou hast no knowledge; for every act of hearing, or of seeing or of (feeling in) the heart will be inquired into (on the Day of Reckoning)."

- Qur'an 17:36-7

They misunderstood the meanings and caused the people to go astray. It was the priests of pharaoh's court who fought Moses, and the rabbis who rejected Christ and conspired to have Him killed. It was the priests of the Ka'bah, the scholars and missionaries of Christianity, and the rabbis who stood against the truth of Islam reaching the congregations, by their preaching against it and distorting its teachings in their books. How careful must we be today, not to fall in the same traps and make the same mistakes, specially when we learn of the warnings by the Prophet (PBUH):

Abu Sa'id al-Khudri reported Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) as saying: You would tread the same path as was trodden by those before you inch by inch and step by step so much so that if they had entered into the hole of the lizard, you would follow them in this also. We said: Allah's Messenger, do you mean Jews and Christians (by your words) "those before you"? He said: Who else (than those two religious groups)?

- Sahih Muslim, Hadith 6448

Related to this, is the issue of imitating the parents and the forefathers, and adhering to a particular religion solely through inheriting it.

Sincere followers of any religion should be able to truthfully answer questions

like these: " Would we have still found and followed this religion, had we been born to different parents in a different part of the world? Would I have been a follower of this religion, if I had been taught differently all my life, or if I never had a chance to hear about it? Does God's mercy include followers of other religions who never had a chance to hear about my religion?

People rejected the Messengers for many other different reasons. They objected to things which did not fit their own standards. They argued about words and grammar, weighing the Book of God with their own balance when in reality everything should be weighed according to It. They objected when the signs were not literally fulfilled according to their limited understanding. The Jews rejected Christ when He did not rule with a rod of iron or come from an "unknown place" like they had been expecting. They mocked Him with a crown of thorns because they were expecting a king to lead them into salvation and victory against their enemies.

People rejected the Messengers when they didn't understand their parables and metaphors or their references to spiritual realities, like references to Their relationship to God, such as when Jesus (PBUH) claimed to have come from heaven, or the references in some hadiths to Muhammad's (PBUH) Light being the first thing that God created, or His night journey to the seven heavens, ...etc.

Indeed many are the objections of the people and their reasons for rejecting the Messengers and Prophets of God. The sincere seeker of the truth would do well to consider the answers to two questions:

If we are not constantly vigilant, is it not possible that we would repeat the same mistakes of the people of the past who oppressed and persecuted every Messenger of God, and by so doing deservedly subjected themselves to His wrath and punishment?

Were those people successful, in suppressing the Will of God and stopping the progress of His Religion, or did their actions actually help promote it?

Investigation and Search

There may be as many reasons for choosing one's religion or creed as there are people on this planet. For some, it may be a personal attraction to the social teachings of a specific religion, or to the rites and rituals. For others, the reason may be rational arguments and proofs, and for others still, a heartfelt conviction as a result of a feeling which they know is true, or a vision or a dream. All roads can lead to God. We all come from God, and unto Him do we return [2:156, 96:8, 53:42]. Each individual may choose their own road, and what might constitute proof for some, may be of no interest to others. No matter which criteria we apply however, to be honest to oneself, an individual needs to apply the exact same criteria to other religions, as they would to their own.

One particular way, or reason for choosing religion, may not be pleasing to God however: and that is to blindly imitate and follow in the footsteps of others;

or to merely inherit the religion without consciously choosing it for oneself:

"When it is said to them: "Come to what Allah hath revealed; come to the Messenger": They say: "Enough for us are the ways we found our fathers following." what! even though their fathers were void of knowledge and guidance?"

- Qur'an 5:104

"When they do aught that is shameful, they say: "We found our fathers doing so"; and "Allah commanded us thus": Say: "Nay, Allah never commands what is shameful: do ye say of Allah what ye know not?"

- Qur'an 7:28

Points to Reflect on Concerning Claims and Proofs

Maybe one point we can start from, is the notion that God in His mercy, would not send a Messenger to people without proofs, or without credentials and testimony. He would not expect people to obey any claimant that comes along, nor would He punish them for not following a Messenger, without first supplying them with the proofs they need:

"How far from the grace of the All-Bountiful and from His loving providence and tender mercies it is to single out a soul from amongst all men for the guidance of His creatures, and, on one hand, to withhold from Him the full measure of His divine testimony, and, on the other, inflict severe retribution on His people for having turned away from His chosen One!"

- Bahá'u'lláh, Book of Certitude, p.13

It should therefore be only natural for people to expect, or to look for proofs before they would consider any claim.

In fairness, we should examine (at least in part), the reasons which drew people in the past to accept and believe in the Prophets and Messengers we have come to know, and Whose authority we recognize. We should also remember that They were all initially rejected and denied, and therefore we should also examine the reasons for such rejection and denial, but that is a different (though related) issue.

On the one hand, we should be able to recognize that just as the sun stands in no need of proof other than itself, so it is that, when we get to know about the life and deeds of the Prophets and Messengers of God, we recognize that Their Proof lies also in Themselves. On the other hand, because of our preconceived ideas, we do need some proofs even before we allow ourselves to learn about Them . So what are some of the criteria we employed in accepting the Messengers of the past?

One of the traditional proofs, has been the Teachings, (Sayings or Writings) brought to us by the Founders of past religions. What we may call the "Book". According to the Holy Qur'an, it is all the proof that's needed:

"Is it not enough for them that We have sent down unto Thee the Book?"

- Qur'an 29:51

"We did send messengers before thee, and appointed for them wives and children: and it was never the part of a messenger to bring a sign except as Allah permitted (or commanded). For each period is a Book (revealed). Allah doth blot out or confirm what He pleaseth: with Him is the Mother of the Book.: Whether We shall show thee (within thy life-time) part of what we promised them or take to ourselves thy soul (before it is all accomplished),- thy duty is to make (the Message) reach them: it is our part to call them to account."

- Qur'an 13: 38-40

Although unlettered in the sciences of religion and theology, and with only the basics of education in calligraphy and sports required of the children of nobility in early nineteenth century Persia, Bahá'u'lláh left a legacy of tens of thousands of pages for the interested investigator to examine.

During the forty years of imprisonment and exile, Bahá'u'lláh, wrote over a hundred volumes in both Persian and Arabic, of what Bahá'ís consider to be divine revelation. Many of His Writings have been translated to over eight hundred different languages. Many of these are available in bookstores and over the Internet for the interested reader to examine.

Another criterion or clue, which may help in the search, has to do with knowledge of the unknown. The Qur'an tells us that the knowledge of the unknown is confined to God, though He also confers this knowledge on His chosen Messengers:

"He (alone) knows the Unseen, nor does He make any one acquainted with His Mysteries,-: "Except a Messenger whom He has chosen: and then He makes a band of watchers march before him and behind him,

- Qur'an 72:26-7

"This is part of the tidings of the things unseen, which We reveal unto thee (O Messenger!)"

- Qur'an 3:44

"We did send messengers before thee, and appointed for them wives and children: and it was never the part of a messenger to bring a sign except as Allah permitted (or commanded)."

- Qur'an 13: 38

When we study Bahá'u'lláh's life, and His Writings, we see that, not only did He fulfill prophecies concerning the Promised One of all religions, but He foretold numerous future events on various subjects ranging from historical events which have in fact already come to pass, such as the

fall of kings and emperors (who at the time, were at the height of their power and glory), to scientific discoveries and inventions which we now have come to witness. These are recorded in His Writings of the second half of the nineteenth century, samples of which are also available on the Internet.

Besides looking for the truth in the words and actions of one who claims to be a Messenger of God, we can also see if this person fulfills prophecies in the previous religions. It is part of God's covenant with the Prophets that the people are told to expect a Prophet or Messenger to follow, and are given the tools to examine and verify His claims.

Before Moses (PBUH) was born, the pharaoh was warned by the priests, and that's why he ordered the killing of the new born males among the Hebrews. When Christ (PBUH) was born, the Magi had been searching the skies for signs of His coming because it was promised in their own religion that He would come. John the Baptist also knew of the nearness of His appearance and gave his own life to prepare the people for His coming. As to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), right before His appearance, Ruzabeh the Persian (Salman Al-Farisi) was in the service of four consecutive teachers, each upon the hour of his death, sent him to the next until the last one told him that after taking care of his burial, Salman should set his foot toward Hijaz, giving him the glad tidings that finally, he would behold the face of the Beloved in that blessed land.

In the case of Bahá'u'lláh, His Herald was the Bab. The Bab, and 20,000 of His followers, within the span of six years, gave their lives as a testimony to the truth of the dawning of the Day of the coming of the Promised One of all religions. Their stories can be read in the pages of the book *The Dawn Breakers*.

Other prophecies from previous religions, which are fulfilled in the Bahá'í Faith are numerous and many and are beyond the scope of this site (at this time). They range from fulfilling exact dates foretold in the Holy Books, to descriptions of the places, physical attributes, genealogy, years of ministry and other events which would take place, such as that of the return of the Jews to the Holy Land.

Continuing with the Holy Qur'an, we read in the opening verses of Chapter 98 (Al-Bayyina):

"Those who reject (Truth), among the People of the Book and among the Polytheists, were not going to depart (from their ways) until there should come to them Clear Evidence,- An Messenger from Allah, rehearsing scriptures kept pure and holy: Wherein are laws (or decrees) right and straight."

- Qur'an 98:1-3

One of the more obvious and straight forward possible interpretations of this verse, is that people of the previous religions (prior to Islam), including the

Jews and Christians and those who worship multiple gods, would continue in their ways of non-belief and resistance to Islam, until clear evidence is presented to them. This "Clear Evidence" is explained in the next verse as taking the form of a Messenger from God.

Today, people from every imaginable religious background whose ancestors had for more than thirteen centuries resisted belief in Islam, have as they accept the Bahá'í Faith, finally come to accept the Qur'an as the true word of God and Islam as His religion, and would give their lives for the love of the Prophet (PBUH).

Another proof invested in the Messengers of God, is the creative power of the words issued from Their blessed mouths. By this is meant that, certain concepts which were not formulated before they were brought into being through the Word of God, take a life of their own and become realities. Concepts such as global society, world citizenship, equality of the sexes, racial equality, (all common and household words and concepts, very familiar to us now as we approach the closing years of the twentieth century), were very radical and new in the middle of the nineteenth century Middle East, when Bahá'u'lláh proclaimed them as truths for all people to recognize.

Related to this theme, is the concept of the infusion of new life during the coming of the Divine Springtime in a way analogous to the physical spring. When the snow melts, and the heavy rains fall, destructive floods come rushing down and wash away what is in their path, but then the plains and the meadows become full of verdant growth and beautiful flowers. Another analogy is to compare the new religion, to the rising of the sun of a new day. When the sun of the new day rises, it sheds its warmth and light and life giving energy on all things alike. Even the plants which are indoors or in the shade partake indirectly of its bounties. Similarly we see in history that the rise and fall of the great human civilizations seems to have followed, or paralleled the rise and fall of the religions which influenced them.

Today, there can be no denying the unprecedented changes, sometimes glorious and sometimes catastrophic, the likes of which have never been witnessed, in all the kinds of societal, economic, technological, scientific, moral, and political aspects of our lives. The changes we've experienced in such a short time since the last century, are like nothing that has ever been recorded in our collective history. It behooves any just and fair minded seeker to find out for their own curiosity, the cause of such changes.

All past religions had the potential to unite the world. For countless centuries however, and for the majority of the people, going on a few days' journey to the next city or village on horse back, was the extent of their travel and knowledge of other cultures and societies. The oneness of mankind would have been an ideal, or a concept for the books or the imagination. When the time came in God's plan for the coming together of all nations, and Bahá'u'lláh proclaimed that "the world is but one country, and mankind its citizens", we were then given the tools wherewith to bring this to reality. For

example, in addition to, and to a higher degree of change than the industrial revolution ever brought to our world, the new communication revolution is making the world smaller every day. Evidences of the coming together of nations in commerce and science and education, are manifest and clear. Their inter-dependence in the field of economy is obvious, and our awareness of what goes on around the world just as it happens, is unprecedented. It may be of interest to the reader to know that the very first telegraph ushering this revolution, was sent by Mr. Morse on the day of the Declaration of The Bab in May of 1844. Its text was: "What hath God wrought?" The world has never been smaller than it is today.

Going back to the notion that a Messenger's proof is "His own Self", we see that, just like for people who are endowed with sight, the sun stands in no need for further proof, so should it be for a true Messenger of God.

The life and times of Bahá'u'lláh, we find recorded in great detail (particularly due to the proximity in time), in many books by both Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í authors. Again, the reader is encouraged to read about Bahá'u'lláh and ascertain for themselves what kind of a man He was, whether or not He lived by the teachings He brought, whether His knowledge was earthly and acquired, or innate and inspired. Thousands of people, foe and friend alike, met Him and their impressions are extensively documented. All who met Him had strong impressions. Those who loved Him spoke of His compassion and love, His fairness and courage, His suffering, simplicity of life, abandonment of all earthly comfort and wealth, and His awe-inspiring majesty. His enemies who went to see Him and failed to recognize His station, still came back with fantastic tales and extraordinary theories of sorcery, and of psychological manipulation:

"Then did We send up after them Musa and Haroun to Firon and his chiefs with Our signs, but they showed pride and they were a guilty people. So when the truth came to them from Us they said: This is most surely clear enchantment!"

- Qur'an 10:75-76

"And when there came to them the truth they said: This is magic, and surely we are disbelievers in it."

- Qur'an 43:30

"And when men are gathered together they shall be their enemies, and shall be deniers of their worshipping (them). And when Our clear communications are recited to them, those who disbelieve say with regard to the truth when it comes to them: This is clear magic. Nay! they say: He has forged it. Say: If I have forged it, you do not control anything for me from Allah; He knows best what you utter concerning it; He is enough as a witness between me and you, and He is the Forgiving, the Merciful."

- Qur'an 46:6-8

The Relationship between the Messengers and God

While all humans are created noble:

"Then He fashioned him and breathed into him of His Spirit; and appointed for you hearing and sight and hearts. Small thanks give ye!"

- Qur'an 32:9

Prophets are not like you and me. About Muhammad (SAW), we read:

[21:107] And We have not sent you but as a mercy to the worlds.

and,

[68:4] PICKTHAL: And lo! thou art of a tremendous nature.

[68:4] SHAKIR: And most surely you conform (yourself) to sublime morality.

The Prophets represent God on this earth:

He who obeys the Messenger, obeys Allah: But if any turn away, We have not sent thee to watch over their (evil deeds).

- Qur'an 4:80

Surely those who swear allegiance to you do but swear allegiance to Allah; the hand of Allah is above their hands. Therefore whoever breaks (his faith), he breaks it only to the injury of his own soul, and whoever fulfills what he has covenanted with Allah, He will grant him a mighty reward.

- Qur'an 48:10

So you did not slay them, but it was Allah Who slew them, and you did not smite when you smote (the enemy), but it was Allah Who smote, and that He might confer upon the believers a good gift from Himself; surely Allah is Hearing, Knowing.

- Qur'an 8:17

Prophets are paternal (?) brothers:

As received from AbuHurayrah in saHih al-bukhari, "Allah's Messenger (pbuh & hf) said, "Both in this world

and in the Hereafter, I am the nearest of all the people to Jesus, the son of Mary. The Prophets are paternal brothers; their mothers are different, but their religion is one."

- Sahih Al-Bukhari book 4, no:652,

Would this explain the meaning of the spiritual "Sonship" of Christ? And all Messengers?

Bahá'u'lláh on the misunderstood concept of the Divinity of the Prophets (when God speaks through Them):

Either thou or someone else hath said: "Let the Surih of Tawhid be

translated, so that all may know and be fully persuaded that the one true God begetteth not, nor is He begotten. Moreover, the Babis believe in his (Bahá'u'lláh's) Divinity and Godhood."

O Shaykh! This station is the station in which one dieth to himself and liveth in God. Divinity, whenever I mention it, indicateth My complete and absolute self-effacement. This is the station in which I have no control over mine own weal or woe nor over my life nor over my resurrection.

O Shaykh! How do the divines of this age account for the effulgent glory which the Sadrah of Utterance hath shed upon the Son of Imran (Moses) on the Sinai of Divine knowledge? He (Moses) hearkened unto the Word which the Burning Bush had uttered, and accepted it; and yet most men are bereft of the power of comprehending this, inasmuch as they have busied themselves with their own concerns, and are unaware of the things which belong unto God. Referring to this, the Siyyid of Findirisk hath well said: "This theme no mortal mind can fathom; be it even that of Abu-Nasr, or Abu-'Ali Sina (Avicenna)." What explanation can they give concerning that which the Seal of the Prophets (Muhammad)--may the souls of all else but Him be offered up for His sake--hath said?: "Ye, verily, shall behold your Lord as ye behold the full moon on its fourteenth night." The Commander of the Faithful (Imam Ali)--peace be upon him--moreover, saith in the Khutbiy-i-Tutunjiyyih: "Anticipate ye the Revelation of Him Who conversed with Moses from the Burning Bush on Sinai." Husayn, the son of Ali--peace be upon him--likewise saith: "Will there be vouchsafed unto anyone besides Thee a Revelation which hath not been vouchsafed unto Thyself--A Revelation Whose Revealer will be He Who revealed Thee. Blind be the eye that seeth Thee not!"

Similar sayings from the Imams--the blessings of God be upon them--have been recorded and are widely known, and are embodied in books worthy of credence. Blessed is he that perceiveth, and speaketh the pure truth. Well is it with him who, aided by the living waters of the utterance of Him Who is the Desire of all men, hath purified himself from idle fancies and vain imaginings, and torn away, in the name of the All-Possessing, the Most High, the veils of doubt, and renounced the world and all that is therein, and directed himself towards the Most Great Prison.

O Shaykh! No breeze can compare with the breezes of Divine Revelation, whilst the Word which is uttered by God shineth and flasheth as the sun amidst the books of men. Happy the man that hath discovered it, and recognized it, and said: "Praised be Thou, Who art the Desire of the world, and thanks be to Thee, O Well-Beloved of the hearts of such as are devoted to Thee!"

Men have failed to perceive Our purpose in the references We have made to Divinity and Godhood. Were they to apprehend it, they would arise from their places, and cry out: "We, verily, ask pardon of God!" The Seal of the Prophets--may the souls of all else but Him be offered

up for His sake--saith: "Manifold are Our relationships with God. At one time, We are He Himself, and He is We Ourselves. At another He is that He is, and We are that We are."

Aside from this, why is it that thou didst not mention those other stations which the Abha Pen hath disclosed? The tongue of this Wronged One hath, many a day and night, given utterance to these sublime words: "O God, my God! I bear witness to Thy unity and Thy oneness, and that Thou art God, and that there is none other God but Thee. Thou hast everlastingly been sanctified above the mention of any one but Thee and the praise of all else except Thyself, and Thou wilt everlastingly continue to be the same as Thou wast from the beginning and hast ever been. I beseech Thee, O King of Eternity, by the Most Great Name, and by the effulgences of the Daystar of Thy Revelation upon the Sinai of Utterance, and by the billows of the Ocean of Thy knowledge among all created things, to graciously assist Me in that which will draw Me nigh unto Thee, and will detach Me from all except Thee. By Thy glory, O Lord of all being, and the Desire of all creation! I would love to lay My face upon every single spot of Thine earth, that perchance it might be honored by touching a spot ennobled by the footsteps of Thy loved ones!"

By the righteousness of God! Idle fancies have debarred men from the Horizon of Certitude, and vain imaginings withheld them from the Choice Sealed Wine. In truth I say, and for the sake of God I declare: This Servant, this Wronged One, is abashed to claim for Himself any existence whatever, how much more those exalted grades of being! Every man of discernment, while walking upon the earth, feeleth indeed abashed, inasmuch as he is fully aware that the thing which is the source of his prosperity, his wealth, his might, his exaltation, his advancement and power is, as ordained by God, the very earth which is trodden beneath the feet of all men. There can be no doubt that whoever is cognizant of this truth, is cleansed and sanctified from all pride, arrogance, and vainglory. Whatever hath been said hath come from God. Unto this, He, verily, hath borne, and beareth now, witness, and He, in truth, is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed.

- Epistle to the Son of the Wolf p.41-44

When I contemplate, O my God, the relationship that bindeth me to Thee, I am moved to proclaim to all created things "verily I am God"; and when I consider my own self, lo, I find it coarser than clay!

- The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, by Bahá'u'lláh, p. 234 (note 318)

Every one who hath turned aside from Me hath clung to his own idle words, and therewith voiced his objections to Him Who is the Truth. Gracious God! Such references as have been made to Divinity and Godhead by the holy ones and chosen ones of God have been made a cause for denial and repudiation. The Imam Sadiq hath said: "Servitude is a substance, the essence of which is Divinity." The Commander of the Faithful (Imam Ali) answered an Arab, who had questioned him concerning the soul, as follows: "The

third is the soul which is divine and celestial. It is a divine energy, a substance, simple, and self-subsistent." And further he--peace be upon him--said: "Therefore it is the Most Sublime Essence of God, the Tree of Blessedness, the Lote-Tree beyond which there is no passing, the Garden of Repose." The Imam Sadiq hath said: "When our Qa'im will arise, the earth will shine with the light of her Lord." Likewise, a lengthy tradition is attributed to Abi-'Abdi'llah--peace be upon him--in which these sublime words are found: "Thereupon will He Who is the All-Compelling-- exalted and glorified be He--descend from the clouds with the angels." And in the mighty Qur'an: "What can such expect but that God should come down to them overshadowed with clouds?" And in the tradition of Mufaddal it is said: "The Qa'im will lean His back against the Sanctuary, and will stretch forth His hand, and lo, it shall be snow-white but unhurt. And He shall say: `This is the hand of God, the right hand of God, that cometh from God, at the command of God!'" In whichever manner these traditions are interpreted, in that same manner let them also interpret that which the Most Sublime Pen hath set down. The Commander

of the Faithful (Imam Ali) hath said: "I am He Who can neither be named, nor described." And likewise He hath said: "Outwardly I am an Imam; inwardly I am the Unseen, the Unknowable." Abu-Ja'far-i-Tusi hath said: "I said to Abi Abdi'llah: `You are the Way mentioned in the Book of God, and you are the Impost, and you are the Pilgrimage.' He replied: `O man! We are the Way mentioned in the Book of God,--exalted and glorified be He--and We are the Impost, and We are the Fast, and We are the Pilgrimage, and We are the Sacred Month, and We are the Sacred City, and We are the Kaaba of God, and We are the Qiblih of God, and We are the Face of God.'" Jabir hath said that Abu-Ja'far--peace be upon him--spoke to him as follows: "O Jabir! Give heed unto the Bayan (Exposition) and the Ma'ani (Significances)." He --peace be upon him--added: "As to the Bayan, it consisteth in thy recognition of God--glorified be He--as the One Who hath no equal, and in thy adoration of Him, and in thy refusal to join partners with Him. As to the Ma'ani, We are its meaning, and its side, and its hand, and its tongue, and its cause, and its command, and its knowledge, and its right. If We wish for something, it is God Who wisheth it, and He desireth that which We desire." Moreover, the Commander of the Faithful (Imam Ali)--peace be upon him--hath said: "How can I worship a Lord Whom I have not seen?" And, in another connection, he saith: "Nothing have I perceived except that I perceived God before it, God after it, or God with it."

- Epistle to the Son of the Wolf p.111-114

11. Proof and Prophecy

Bahá'ís and Muslims both believe in the Oneness of God, and so it should not be surprising for believers in the oneness of God to see the commonality of many of God's teachings in most religions. All religions came to help us learn

about God, and about His Will and Plan. They all came to teach us how to live with one another in peace and brotherhood, and how to better ourselves.

One theme that is common among most religions is the promise of redemption, renewal of religion and salvation, through the coming of a Promised One, to "fill earth with justice as it has been filled with tyranny", (or in Christian terminology, to establish God's Kingdom on earth, as it is in heaven). Each group has called this Promised One by a different name: "Al- Mahdi" (the Guided One), "Al-Qa'im" (the One who Rises), "Sahibul Zaman" (Lord of the Age), Lord of Hosts. Muslims are also promised the return of Jesus (PBUH), as do Christians also await the second coming of Christ. Other religions also await their own Promised One, Whom they know by other different names.

All religions also, warn of false prophets. They warn of the "Dajjal" (the Liar, the one who misguides). They warn of the anti-christ (see below).

So how does one distinguish between the truth and falsehood? Are we left on our own to find out? Would it be better to play it safe and reject all claimants?

What should be obvious is that, the very fact that we are warned of false prophets, should tell us that the True One is surely to come, (albeit it would not be easy to recognize Him). Otherwise, if we weren't admonished to believe in such glad tidings, or if the signs and proofs were to be so clear and obvious, the false ones wouldn't think that they had a chance to impersonate Him falsely. They wouldn't even try, because we would not be expecting anyone to come in the first place.

God says that as long as we make an effort to seek His guidance, His mercy will protect us from being misguided by others:

"And (as for) those who strive hard for Us, We will most certainly guide them in Our ways; and Allah is most surely with the doers of good."

- Qur'an 29:69

When Christ warned His disciples about false prophets, He (PBUH) also provided them with a criterion to help them distinguish between the truth and the sayings of those false prophets:

"Beware of false prophets ... Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."

(Matt. 7:15-20)

Similarly, we see in the Holy Qur'an:

"Seest thou not to what God likeneth a good word? To a good tree; its root firmly fixed, and its branches reaching unto heaven: yielding its fruit in all seasons."

- Qur'an 14:24

Antichrist

This may be a surprise to many, but these quotes below are the only references in the New Testament to the antichrist. A careful look reveals that these verses don't talk about a specific Evil Individual or Entity, but rather calls an antichrist anybody (and all) who deny the divine origin of the Christ Spirit and His Message:

John I (2:18-23): Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: (but) he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.

John I (4:1-3): Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

John II (1:7) For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

12. Seeking the Truth

But, O my brother, when a true seeker determineth to take the step of search in the path leading to the knowledge of the Ancient of Days, he must, before all else, cleanse and purify his heart, which is the seat of the revelation of the inner mysteries of God, from the obscuring dust of all acquired knowledge, and the allusions of the embodiments of satanic fancy. He must purge his breast, which is the sanctuary of the abiding love of the Beloved, of every defilement, and sanctify his soul from all that pertaineth to water and clay, from all shadowy and ephemeral attachments.

He must so cleanse his heart that no remnant of either love or hate may linger therein, lest that love blindly incline him to error, or that hate repel him away from the truth. Even as thou dost witness in this day how most of the people, because of such love and hate, are bereft of the immortal Face, have strayed far from the Embodiments of the divine mysteries, and, shepherdless, are roaming through the wilderness of oblivion and error.

That seeker must at all times put his trust in God, must renounce the peoples of the earth, detach himself from the world of dust, and cleave unto Him Who is the Lord of Lords. He must never seek to exalt himself above any one, must wash

away from the tablet of his heart every trace of pride and vainglory, must cling unto patience and resignation, observe silence, and refrain from idle talk. ...

- Book of Certitude by Bahá'u'lláh, p.192

Independent Investigation. A Prerequisite for All Seekers of Truth

The following verses need no comment or introduction:

"O ye who believe! If a wicked person comes to you with any news, ascertain the truth, lest ye harm people unwittingly, and afterwards become full of repentance for what ye have done."

- Qur'an 49:6

"A believer, a man from among the people of Pharaoh, who had concealed his faith, said: "Will ye slay a man because he says, 'My Lord is Allah'?- when he has indeed come to you with Clear (Signs) from your Lord? and if he be a liar, on him is (the sin of) his lie: but, if he is telling the Truth, then will fall on you something of the (calamity) of which he warns you: Truly Allah guides not one who transgresses and lies!"

- Qur'an 40:28

"and say not to any one who offers you a salutation: 'Thou art none of a believer!'"

- Qur'an 4:94

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