



AL-ITOQĀN

المجلة الإسلامية
والدراسات
المقارنة

JOURNAL OF ISLAMIC SCIENCES
AND COMPARATIVE STUDIES

VOL. 9, NO. 1, AUGUST 31, 2024





AL-ITQĀN



JOURNAL OF ISLAMIC SCIENCES AND COMPARATIVE STUDIES

VOLUME: 9 NUMBER 1 AUGUST 2024

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eISSN: 26008432

Al-Itqān: Journal of Islamic Sciences and Comparative Studies is an academic, peer-reviewed, and international bilingual (Arabic and English) online and free-accessed journal, published bi-annually (February and August) by the Department of Usul al-Din and Comparative Religion, AbdulHamid AbuSulayman Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University of Malaysia. It publishes articles, research reports, case studies, and book reviews on diverse topics related to issues, problems, and developments in Islamic Thought, Comparative Religion, Philosophy, Social Sciences, the Arts and Humanities.

Website: <https://journals.iium.edu.my/al-itqan/index.php/al-itqan/index>

Email: al-itqan@iium.edu.my

Published by:

IIUM Press, International Islamic University Malaysia, P.O. Box 10, 50728 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia /
Phone (+603) 6196-5014 / Fax: (+603) 6196-6298 / Website: <http://iiumpress.iium.edu.my/bookshop>

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AL-ITQĀN: *Journal of Islamic Sciences and Comparative Studies*
Vol. 9, Issue No. 1, (August 2024) 25-40
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eISSN 2600-8432

DISTORTION OF TRUTH ABOUT ISLAM AND ITS REALITY: SOME REFLECTIONS

*Muhammad Mumtaz Ali**

Abstract: Since the beginning of the 20th century, a respectable number of scholars such as Iqbal, Mawdudi, and Qutb argued that Islam is explained in *al-Qur'ān* with the term *Dīn* which stands for the way of life and worldview. It, therefore, should not be termed as religion in the contemporary sense. To explain this particularly important aspect of Islam a sizeable number of books have been written. Despite this clarification and the truth and reality of Islam, most people, speakers, preachers, scholars, and authors present Islam as a religion in a limited and dogmatic way. This approach to Islam not only limits the scope and place of but also distorts the truth and reality of Islam. This paper using the method of content analysis explores and explains the true and realistic picture of Islam as it is presented in *al-Qur'ān*. For this purpose, the translation of *al-Qur'ān* rendered by Zafar Ishaq Ansari is used. The main goal of this paper is on one hand to explore the real scope of Islam and on the other, to present it in its true and realistic perspective. The intellectual discussion of this work concludes that Islam should not be taken merely as a religion. Rather, it is more than that. It is the Right Way, which Allah (SWT) revealed to His final Messenger, Muhammad (PBUH).

Keywords: Truth, Islam, Right Path, *Dīn*, *al-Qur'ān*.

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Received Date: MAY 14, 2024

Accepted Date: JULY 23, 2024

Published Date: AUGUST 31, 2024

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31436/alitqan.v9i1.284>

Introduction

For the last few hundred years in modern times, Muslim intellectuals and scholars have argued and emphasized that Islam should not be taken as mere religion in its limited sense. Despite several articles and books on this issue, most of the scholars including religious experts and representatives in the contemporary world comfortably use the term religion for Islam. Nowadays many of them emphatically compare Islam with other religions in terms of faith, doctrine, and personal moral behavior. They also argue that Islam is the youngest religion among the world's known religions. They say after Christianity and Judaism, Islam is “one of the most studied religions in the world”.¹

Most scholars focus on religious doctrines when they write about Islam. They compare Islam with other religions and use the phrase ‘Abrahamic Religions’. They do not feel anything wrong when they argue “Islam is as much an ‘Asian’ religion as Hinduism or Buddhism.... Islam is now as much of a worldwide religion as Christianity”.² They do not have a proper understanding of Islam as to understand Islam and they do not refer to the normative source of Islam – *al-Qur’ān*. Many people think that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is the founder of Islam. They think Islam began at the time of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) during the seventh-century Christian Era (C.E.). This is the reason that many scholars comfortably use the phrase ‘before Islam’. They do not realize that Islam began with the beginning of life on this earth as *al-Qur’ān* claims. In this way, the distortion and misrepresentation of Islam at a large scale continues. It is not only the distortion of Truth and misrepresentation of Islam but a disservice to humanity. It is presented as a religion of Muslims. A powerful movement of Islamophobia has been created. Based on the study of *al-Qur’ān* we know that Islam is not a human construct in a sociological sense. Hence, it is obligatory for those who understand the Truth of Islam to explain to others that it was revealed to mankind by the Creator of this universe, Allah (SWT) to guide them. The discussion of this article supports the argument that Islam should be put in its proper perspective of Truth and Reality as the worldview and the comprehensive way of life in time and space contexts.

Misunderstandings about Islam

In modern times in the West and elsewhere, Islam has been considered as a religion and religion of Muslims, a human artifact manufactured by human beings based on their

¹ Cornell, Vincent J., *Voices of Islam*, (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Publishers, 2007), p. vii.

² *Ibid.*, p. viii.

perception. Therefore, it is taken subject to evolution towards higher forms. Being religious, it is confined to man's personal and private life, and the secular approach to life is encouraged. The researcher has realized based on his reading of *al-Qur'ān* that this kind of understanding and presentation of Islam is considered fallacious and false and contends forcefully that,

“Islam is not a religion or faith in the modern Western sense, nor is it linked with their sort of power, politics, and state. It cannot be reduced to any of them, though it must include each of them. Even an outside observer, if not some Muslims, can see that: ‘It cannot be repeated too often that Islam is ‘not merely a religion’. It is a total and unified way of life, both religious and secular; it is a set of beliefs and a way of worship; it is a vast and integrated system of law; it is a culture and a civilization; it is an economic system and a way of doing business; it is a polity and a method of governance; it is a special sort of society and a way of running a family; it prescribes for inheritance and divorce, dress and etiquette, food, and personal hygiene. It is a spiritual and human totality, this worldly and otherworldly. Hence, ‘religion and politics are two sides of a single coin in Islam’”.³

If it is taken as a religion, then, al-Attas argues that the Western concept of religion does not...come under the category of revealed religion in the strict sense as applicable to Islam. We cannot accept, to mention a scientific example of categorization of some religions, as revealed religions...For us, it is for the most part a sophisticated form of culture religions, distinguished only by the fact that they claim possession of a revealed Book which, though partly true, nevertheless was not intended nor authorized by that Book to call upon mankind universally in the manner that a revealed religion was called upon to do from the very beginning without need of further ‘development’ in the religion itself and its sacred laws. A revealed religion, as we understand, it is complete and perfect in its adequacy for mankind from the very beginning. *Al-Qur'ān* says that Islam is already made completely and perfect for mankind, and this claim to completion and perfection is substantiated from its very beginning by history. The name Islam was given to the religion from the very beginning just as the name Muslim was given to denote the adherents of the religion from the very start...so Islam...is always relevant, is always adequate, is always ‘modern’ or new, is always ahead

³ Murad, Khurram, *Islamic Movement in the West*, (Islamic Foundation, 1982), p. 28.

of time because it transcends history...and is not subject to the kind of self-searching ‘evolution’ and ‘development’...Since Islam is the religion that transcends the influences of human ‘evolution’ and historicity, the values embodied in it are absolute...Islam has its worldview.⁴

***Al-Qur’ān* on Islam**

In *al-Qur’ān* for Islam, the Arabic word *Dīn* is used which has become an important term and “signifies the way of life, the system of conduct, and the code on which man bases his entire mode of thought and action”.⁵ For Allah (SWT) there is only one *Dīn* - Islam (worldview, system, or the way of life and source of conduct), which is designed and instructed by Allah (SWT), the Creator of the entire universe. Islam is presented in *al-Qur’ān* by Allah (SWT) as the most suitable way of life for mankind. This means two things: *first*, man needs to acknowledge Allah (SWT) as his Creator and Lord and the sole object of obedience and devotion, and *second*, follow Islam as the system of life. In this sense from a pure literal sense, Islam means submission. Hence, man should consciously submit to Allah (SWT) and seek His guidance. This worldview, the way of life, mode of thinking and living is called, Islam. Hence, Islam is presented in *al-Qur’ān* as the *Dīn* which means, in truth and reality, the *Dīn* which is the only *Dīn* that Allah SWT accepts. “The True *Dīn* (Way of Life) with Allah is Islam [*al-Qur’ān*, 3: 19]. “We sent you with the Truth as a bearer of good tidings and a warner!” (*al-Qur’ān*, 2: 119). It means whatever is said about Islam in *al-Qur’ān* it is true.

Al-Qur’ān presents Islam as *Dīn*, the way of life that was given to the first Prophet Adam (PBUH) and later to all the Prophets (PBUH) who followed and transmitted it as the most appropriate way of life to all people throughout the ages. “This is a definite Truth from your Lord; be not, then, among the doubters” (*al-Qur’ān*, 2: 147). In this sense, only Islam is universal. According to *al-Qur’ān*, the Book of Allah (SWT), all religions and ideologies are historical, and products of the human mind. Allah (SWT) granted mankind ‘the knowledge of the Truth and clear guidance’ (*al-Qur’ān*, 2: 213). What is this knowledge of the Truth? It is the knowledge of the metaphysical world. Allah (SWT) has granted people *true knowledge* (*al-Qur’ān*, 3: 61) of the metaphysical world to understand the true meaning of Islam and *Dīn*.

⁴ Al-Attas, Syed Muhammad Naquib, *Islam and Secularism*, (Kuala Lumpur: ABIM, 2014), pp. 27-28.

⁵ Mawdudi, Sayyed Abul ‘Ala, *Towards Understanding Islam (Vol. 1)*, (Indianapolis: Islamic Teaching Center, 1979), p. 114.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) being the last of all Prophets and Messengers revived Islam on the Order of Allah (SWT). It is Allah (SWT), Who taught the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) everything about Islam. People and nations are free either to follow him or reject him. *Al-Qur'ān* claims that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) never added anything from his own side. Whatever he communicated was given to him by Allah (SWT). This Truth stands based on sound reasons and empirical and historical evidence. This is the reason that the claim of some people that all religions or ways of life are true and lead to the Path of God is rejected by *al-Qur'ān* as it is not supported by empirical and historical evidence. Hence, the ideology of religious pluralism is criticized in *al-Qur'ān* as the position of liberalism and religious pluralism go against the truth and reality of life and the world so far as the knowledge of *al-Qur'ān* is concerned.

***Al-Qur'ān* speaks about Islam as *Dīn* - The Way of Life approved by Allah (SWT)**

Islam in its literal aspect means submission to Allah (SWT). The one who submits is called a Muslim. So, a Muslim submits unreservedly himself and willingly and consciously acknowledges Allah (SWT) alone as his Lord, Master, and Creator. Henceforth, man is expected to undertake the responsibility to live a life by the guidance that has been granted to him by Allah (SWT) through the process of Revelation, *al-Qur'ān*, which is the last one. All this knowledge is given to man by Allah (SWT). Therefore, this understanding constitutes the core message of all the Prophets (PBUH) who had appeared from the beginning of life on earth among various peoples and in different times and places. According to *al-Qur'ān*, all the Prophets (peace be upon all of them) presented before mankind the same *Dīn* – Islam (the comprehensive way of life). Likewise, every revealed Book, “in whichever language it was revealed, and to whichever people it was addressed, contained the teachings of Islam.”⁶ These teachings are relevant to their time and place. The various schools of thought that had emerged throughout the ages in the name of religion have been subject to the distortion of Islam. Look what has been said in *al-Qur'ān* about the Prophet Abraham (PBUH):

...it is We Who chose Abraham for Our mission in this world, and surely in the World to Come he shall be counted among the righteous (*al-Qur'ān*, 2: 130). Such was Abraham that when his Lord said to him: “Submit,” he said: “I have submitted to the Lord of the Universe (*al-Qur'ān*, 2: 131).” And

⁶ Mawdudi, *Towards Understanding Islam*, p. 242.

Abraham enjoined the same upon his children, and so did Jacob: “My children! Behold, Allah has chosen this Din for you. Remain till death in submission [to Allah] (*al-Qur’ān*, 2: 132). Why were you witnesses when death came to Jacob? He asked his children: “Whom will you submit [serve] after me?” They said: “We shall submit [serve] Your God, the God of your forefathers, Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac, the One God, and unto Him do we submit (*al-Qur’ān*, 2: 133)”.

In the above verses, the Arabic word *Muslim* is used from where the term Islam was derived. This shows that the Prophet Abraham (PBUH) was a Muslim, and he followed Islam and directed his progeny to Islam as the right and true way of life approved by Allah (SWT). In the beginning, mankind followed one single way of life – *Dīn* – Islam as *al-Qur’ān* claims. Later, this state ended, and differences arose. Then Allah (SWT) sent forth the Prophets (peace be upon all of them) as heralds of good tidings for the righteous and as warners against the consequences of evil doing. It is further said in *al-Qur’ān*:

In the beginning, mankind followed one single way. [Later on, this state ended, and differences arose.] Then Allah sent forth Prophets (PBUH) as heralds of good tidings for the righteous and as warners against the consequences of evil doing. He sent down with them the Book embodying the Truth so that it might judge among people in their disputes. And those who innovated divergent ways rather than follow the Truth were none other than those who had received the knowledge of the Truth and clear guidance and they did so to commit excesses against each other. So, by His authority, Allah directed the believers to the Right Way in matters on which they disagreed. Allah guides whomsoever He wills onto a Straight Way (*al-Qur’ān*, 2: 213).

Whatever has been said by Allah (SWT) about the Messengers, is also the truth. The Prophet Abraham (PBUH) was a Muslim, and this is fact reconfirmed in the following *Qur’ānic* verses:

Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian; he was a Muslim, wholly devoted to God. And he certainly was not amongst those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity. Surely the people who have the best claim to affiliation with Abraham are those who followed him [in the past], and presently this

Prophet and those who believe in him (*al-Qur'ān*, 3: 67-68). They say: “Be Jews,” or “Be Christians.” “Then you will be rightly guided,” Say to them: “No, follow exclusively the way of Abraham who was not one of those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity”. Say: “We believe in Allah, and in what has been revealed to us and to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the descendants [of Jacob] and in what was given to Moses and Jesus and in what the other Prophets received from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and we are [Muslims] those who submit to Allah” (*al-Qur'ān*, 2: 135-136).

In the above verses, it is made clear that the way of life that was followed by the Prophet Abraham (PBUH) was the same which was followed by all other Prophets (peace be upon all of them). A few names of them are mentioned in *al-Qur'ān*. This declaration of *al-Qur'ān* also rejects the claims of pluralism, religious pluralism, and relativism. *Al-Qur'ān* rejects all other ways of life other than Islam as the correct and useful way of life for mankind. It also demonstrates that all the Prophets (peace be upon all of them) who were raised as the Messengers did not oppose each other like philosophers and thinkers but rather conformed to each other. They are identified in *āyāt* as *Muslimūn* (Muslims). This also establishes the truth that the only universal way of life that was approved by Allah SWT for mankind is Islam. Allah (SWT) asked in *al-Qur'ān*: “Do they now seek a *dīn* [new way of life] other than that prescribed by Allah and this despite all that is in the heavens and the earth is in submission to Him – willingly or unwillingly – and to Him all shall return? (*al-Qur'ān*, 3: 83). From this point of view, Islam is neither the youngest religion nor religion as such. “And whose way of life could be better than that of he who submits his whole being to Allah (*al-Qur'ān*, 4: 125).” Whenever any revealed book was referred to people who had knowledge said “We believe in it for it is the Truth from our Lord. Indeed, we were already Muslims (*al-Qur'ān*, 28: 53).” This *āyah* explicitly highlights that Islam is not the name of any religion. Even the term Muslim does not denote only those who follow the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Rather, all the Prophets (peace be upon all of them) and their followers were Muslims. The term Muslim applies to the followers of all the Prophets (peace be upon all of them) as they all followed, practiced, and preached Islam. Look at the following statements of *al-Qur'ān*:

The people of the Book adopted many ways rather than follow the True Way of Islam even after the knowledge of Truth had reached them, and this merely to commit excesses against one another. And ask the People of the Book as well as those who follow no heavenly Book: “Have you also submitted [to Allah]?” If they have submitted to Him, they are indeed on the Right Way; but if they turn away from submitting to Allah, then your duty is merely to deliver the Message. Allah observes the affairs of His servants (*al-Qur’ān*, 3: 19-20).

The fact is that the truth and reality of life and the world are explained by Allah (SWT). Man in this world is an alien. He does not know how to spend his life. Hence, Allah (SWT) taught him through the Prophets (peace be upon all of them) the most suitable way of life that is in line with his nature and suitable for his well-being. This was the reason that from the time of inception of life on earth, every Prophet (PBUH) conveyed the same message, same guidance, same truth, the same way of life – Islam and that all the Prophets (peace be upon all of them) had always been Muslims. This is also the fact that all people throughout the ages who accepted the message of Islam by submitting themselves to the Guidance of Allah (SWT), were Muslims. This is the reason that Allah (SWT) reminds mankind that if they want to know which way of life is correct and universal, they must refer to Him:

And then if they come to believe as you believe, they are under the right guidance; and if they turn away, then quite obviously they have merely fallen into opposition to the Truth. Allah will suffice you for protection against them. He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing (*al-Qur’ān*, 2: 137).

If people come to believe does not mean that they are becoming dogmatic. They do not follow myth and illusion but the revealed Book. They are the people who know and understand the Truth, and always refer to the Book of Knowledge revealed by Allah (SWT) for understanding anything. They are termed here in the above *āyah* as believers [who understand]. They are neither blind followers nor victims of ignorance, speculation, and conjecture. They follow Knowledge and Truth granted to them through the process of revelation. There are several *āyāt* which support the above claim:

Say [O Prophet]: “Will you then dispute with us concerning Allah when He is our Lord and your Lord? Our deeds are for ours and your deeds are for you.

And it is Him that we serve exclusively.” Or do you claim that Abraham and Ishmael, Isaac and Jacob and the descendants [of Jacob] were “Jews” or “Christians?” Say: “Who has greater knowledge, you or Allah?” Who does greater wrong than he who conceals a testimony he has received from Allah? Allah is not heedless of the things you do (*al-Qur’ān*, 2: 139-140).

Say: “We believe in [the existence of Allah] Allah and what was revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and to Isaac and Jacob and his descendants, and the teachings which Allah gave to Moses and Jesus and to other Prophets. We make no distinction between any of them; and to Him do we submit (*al-Qur’ān*, 3: 84).”

In the *āyah* the Arabic word *Muslimūn* is used. “And whosoever seeks a way other than this way of submission – Islam – will find that it will not be accepted from him, and he will be among the losers in the Life to Come (*al-Qur’ān*, 3: 85).” Earlier to this it was said: “Recall when Allah took a covenant from the Prophets: “This is the Book and the Wisdom which I have granted you. But should a Prophet (PBUH) come to you confirming what you already possess, you shall believe [understand] in him and shall help him (*al-Qur’ān*, 3: 81).” This means that all Prophets (peace be upon all of them) had been asked to pledge - and the pledge of a Prophet (PBUH) is automatically binding upon his followers- that they would support every Prophet (PBUH) that God sent to preach and establish His *Dīn*, for the cause for which they had been raised. It is useful to point out that the Prophets (peace be upon all of them) before Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) had to take this pledge, and therefore every Prophet (PBUH) announced to his followers the coming of other Prophets (peace be upon all of them) in the future and directed them to support those Prophets (peace be upon all of them) whenever they appeared. It seems significant that there is no mention, either in *al-Qur’ān* or in the *Ḥadīth*, that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was asked to take such a pledge. Moreover, the Prophet (PBUH) neither informed his followers of the advent of any future prophet nor did he direct them to believe in the prophethood of any such prophet. On the contrary, he has been pronounced *khātam al-anbiyā’* [the seal of the Prophets (peace be upon all of them)], meaning the last of them. Several traditions from the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) confirm that he categorically declared that no prophet would come after him.

So, saying, Allah asked: “Do you agree and accept to take up the burden of the covenant?” They answered: “We agree.” He said: “Then bear witness; and I will be with you among the witnesses. Then whosoever shall turn away from this covenant, they are the transgressors (*al-Qur’ān*, 3: 81-82).” Further, it was said: “[O Muhammad], We have revealed to you as We revealed to Noah and the Prophets after him, and We revealed to Abraham, Ismael, Isaac, Jacob and the offspring of Jacob, and Jesus and Job, and Jonah, and Aaron and Solomon, and We gave to David Psalms. We revealed to the Messengers We have already told you of, and to the Messengers We have not told you of; and to Moses Allah spoke directly (*al-Qur’ān*, 4: 163-164).” These Messengers were sent as bearers of glad tidings and as warners so that after sending the Messengers people may have no plea against Allah. God’s purpose in raising the Prophets (peace be upon all of them) was to establish His argument against mankind. God did not want ignorance to have any basis on which to plead that their actions were done in unawareness and that no arrangement had been made to guide man to the Truth.

Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise [Whether people understand it or not] Allah bears witness that whatever He has revealed to you, He has revealed with His knowledge, and the angels bear witness to it too, though the witness of Allah is sufficient. Those who denied this Truth and barred others from the Way of Allah have indeed strayed far away. Likewise, Allah will neither forgive those who denied the Truth and took to wrongdoing nor will He show them any other way save that of Hell wherein they will abide. And that is easy for Allah (*al-Qur’ān*, 4: 165-169).

The purpose of the Revelation in the form of the Book was made clear. It is said: “This is a Book which We have revealed to you that you may bring forth mankind from every kind of darkness into light, and direct them, with the permission of their Lord, to the Way of the Mighty, the Innately Praiseworthy, [to the Way of] Allah to Whom belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth (*al-Qur’ān*, 14: 1-2).” Allah (SWT) further declared: “This day I have perfected for you your *Dīn* [the way of life and the *Sharī‘ah*] and have bestowed upon you My Bounty in full measure and have been pleased to assign for you Islam as your – the way of life (*al-Qur’ān*, 5: 3).” The ‘perfection of *Dīn*’ mentioned in this *āyah* refers to making it a self-sufficient system of understanding of some basic truths and

realities and conduct, and an order of social life providing its own answers to the questions with which man is confronted so that in no circumstance would one need to look for guidance to any extraneous source. The bounty referred to in the statement: “I have bestowed upon you My Bounty in full measure.” is the bounty of true guidance. The statement: “I have been pleased to assign for you Islam as your *Dīn*” means that since the Muslims had proved by their conduct and their striving that they were honest and sincere about the commitment they had made to Allah (SWT) in embracing Islam - the commitment to serve and obey Him - He had accepted their sincerity and created the conditions in which they were no longer yoked in bondage to anyone but Him. Thus, the Muslims were no longer prevented from living in submission to Allah SWT because of extraneous constraints just as no constraints were preventing them from subscribing to true beliefs.

The Name Muslim was given by Allah (SWT)

One can see in *al-Qur’ān* that not only Islam as the way of life was granted by Allah (SWT) even the name Muslim was also given to the Prophet Abraham (PBUH) by Allah (SWT) and to all those who came before and after him and submitted to Allah (SWT).

Believers bow down and prostrate yourselves before Your Lord and obey [serve] Your Lord and do good that you may prosper. Strive in the cause of Allah in a manner worthy of that striving. He has chosen you [for His task], and He has not laid upon you any hardship in *Dīn*. Keep to the faith of your father Abraham. Allah named you Muslims earlier and even in this [Book], that the Messenger may be a witness over you and that you may be witnesses over all mankind. So, establish Prayer, and pay *Zakah*, and hold fast to Allah. He is your Protector. What an excellent Protector; what an excellent Helper (*al-Qur’ān*, 22: 77-78).

Hence, it is logical to say that a Muslim follows Islam and Islam means submission to Allah (SWT) through His Guidance. This submission is conscious with a sound understanding of Islam, life, and the world based on Knowledge granted by the Creator Allah (SWT). Allah (SWT) is giving here witness that Abraham and Ismael were Muslims who wanted their progeny to be Muslim and therefore, they made the following supplication: “Our Lord! Make us [Muslim] submissive to You and make out of our descendants a community that submits [of Muslims] itself to You and show us the ways of Your service [obedience] and turn to us in mercy (*al-Qur’ān*, 2: 127-128).

Al-Qur'ān makes it clear that Allah (SWT) bestowed upon the Prophet Abraham (PBUH) and his offsprings, the Prophet Ishaq [Issac] and Yaqub [Jacob], and each of them. He did guide them to the Right Way as Allah (SWT) had earlier guided the Prophet Noah (PBUH) to the Right Way and of his descendants. Allah (SWT) guided the Prophet Daud [David] and the Prophet Sulayman [Solomon], the Prophet Ayyub [Job], the Prophet Yusuf [Joseph], the Prophet Musa [Moses], and the Prophet Harun [Aaron]. Thus, He rewarded those who did good (*al-Qur'ān*, 6: 84).

Allah (SWT) said: [And of his descendants We guided] Zakariya [Zechariah], Yahya [John], Isa [Jesus], and Ilyas [Elias]: each one of them was of the righteous. [And of his descendants We guided] Ismail [Ishmael], al-Yasa [Elisha], Yunus [Jonah], and Lut [Lot]. And each one of them We favored over all mankind. Likewise, We elected for Our cause and guided onto a Straight Way some of their forefathers and their offspring and their brethren (*al-Qur'ān*, 6: 85-87). Abraham was on the self-same way [as Noah] (*al-Qur'ān*, 37: 83). Through all these messages it was made clear that Islam is the only way of life that is suitable for mankind. It was made clear repeatedly in *al-Qur'ān*. Allah SWT said: “He has prescribed for you the *Dīn* [Right Way] which He enjoined upon Noah, and which was revealed to you [O Muhammad], and which We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus, commanding: Establish this Din [the way of life for the benefit of people] and do not split up regarding it... (*al-Qur'ān*, 42: 13).”

Further, it was repeated: “For it is We Who chose Abraham for Our mission in this world, and surely in the World to Come he shall be reckoned among the righteous”. Such was Abraham that when his Lord said to him: “Submit,” he said: “I have submitted to the Lord of the Universe”. And Abraham enjoined the same upon his children, and so did Jacob: “My children! Behold, Allah has chosen this Din [Right Way] for you. Remain till death in submission [to Allah]. Why, were you witnesses when death came to Jacob? He asked his children: “Whom will you serve [obey] after me?” They said: “We shall serve [obey] Your God, the God of your forefathers, Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac, the One God, and unto Him do we submit” (*al-Qur'ān*, 2: 130-133). From a careful reading of *al-Qur'ān*, it becomes clear that Allah SWT did not present Islam as a dogmatic religion as understood in the contemporary world. It is presented beyond any doubt as the Right Way of life.

Islam as the Right Way

Islam is always presented in *al-Qur'ān* as the Straight Way or the Right Way. The only Right Way for cultural, civilizational, and sustainable development from Allah (SWT) is Islam. If

people follow Islam in its totality, it will guide and help them to achieve cultural, civilizational, and sustainable development. It is said in *al-Qur'ān* repeatedly. At the beginning of *al-Qur'ān*, one can see several references to this truth and fact. We are taught to supplicate for the Right Way: “Direct us on to the Straight Way, the way of those whom You have favored (*al-Qur'ān*, 2: 142).”

There are many places in *al-Qur'ān* addressing the Right Way as a reminder for the benefit of people, society, government, and state. Why does this reminder appear again and again in *al-Qur'ān*? It is made clear that for good and successful living in peace and harmony with prosperity and happiness, human beings are in dire need of Allah (SWT)'s Guidance. It is also made clear that the East and the West; the heavens and the earth all belong to Allah (SWT), and it is He Who guides whomsoever He wills onto the Straight Way. However, it does not mean that we do not need to work for this. We need to supplicate consciously and work for the Right Way then only we will be guided to the Right Way (*al-Qur'ān*, 2: 150). Allah (SWT) through the Right Way directs us in matters on which we may disagree with each other. “Allah guides whomsoever He wills onto a Straight Way (*al-Qur'ān*, 2: 213).” In another place, it is said in *al-Qur'ān* that Allah (SWT) teaches us the Right Way as He has full knowledge of everything (*al-Qur'ān*, 2: 282). Allah (SWT) assured us: Whoever holds fast to Allah, will certainly be guided to the Straight Way (*al-Qur'ān*, 3: 101).

It is also clearly reminded that the Right Way stands distinctly from the wrong way. Now it is up to us to follow either the Right Way or wrong. People all are at liberty. In all matters of life, they are free to choose any line of thinking and action. There is no compulsion: “The Right Way stands clearly distinguished from the Wrong (*al-Qur'ān*, 2: 255).” Hence, Allah (SWT) guides people who struggle for the Straight Way (*al-Qur'ān*, 4: 68). Allah (SWT) does not direct the wrongdoers to the Right way. Allah (SWT) does not set the deniers of the Truth on the Right Way (*al-Qur'ān*, 2: 264) because He has made His Signs clear to every one of us. Now it is for us to recognize what is right and what is wrong. If we fulfill this condition, then we are guided to the Right Way (*al-Qur'ān*, 1: 6, and 3: 103). What matters to us and needs to be accepted? The Truth and Reality of life and the world. There are still many people who do not understand the importance of the Truth and Reality of life and the Right Way as shown by Allah (SWT). Due to their ignorance and arrogance, they do not take these matters seriously and follow the Right Way. They assume that they can think and design the Right Way:

These are the ones who have purchased errors in exchange for guidance. This bargain has brought them no profit and certainly, they are not on the Right Way (*al-Qur'ān*, 2: 16). Those who have refused to follow the Way of Allah resemble cattle; when the shepherd calls them, they hear nothing except shouting and crying; they are deaf, dumb, and blind, and so they understand nothing (*al-Qur'ān*, 2: 171). And whoever exchanges faith for unbelief has surely strayed from the Right Way (*al-Qur'ān*, 2: 108).

Allah (SWT) cleared everything beyond any doubt and provided proof for the existence of both the Right Way and the Truth and Reality of life. It is declared in *al-Qur'ān*: “O people! A proof has come to you from your Lord, and We have sent down to you a clear Light (*al-Qur'ān*, 4: 174).” Allah (SWT) will surely admit those who understand Him and hold fast to Him to His mercy and bounty and will guide them on to a Straight Way to Himself (*al-Qur'ān*, 4: 175). Further, it was remarked that there has come a Light from Allah (SWT), and a Clear Book through which Allah (SWT) shows, to all of us who seek to please Him, “the paths leading to safety. He brings them out, by His leave, from darkness to Light and directs them on to the Straight Way (*al-Qur'ān*, 5: 15-16).” So, that we make our present and future safe “...take heed of your ultimate future and avoid incurring the wrath of Allah (SWT). Know well that one Day you shall face Him. Announce good tidings to the believers [people of understanding] (*al-Qur'ān*, 2: 223).”

Allah (SWT) warns us to beware of Him for to Him is the ultimate return (*al-Qur'ān*, 3: 28). Allah (SWT) wants to make all this clear to us and to guide us to the right way of doing things, which the righteous have followed in the past (*al-Qur'ān*, 4: 26). Whatever Allah (SWT) has said is true then it is our responsibility to understand it and follow it sincerely with total devotion and consciousness (*al-Qur'ān*, 3: 95) but some people who follow their lusts would like to drift us far away from the Right Way (*al-Qur'ān*, 4: 27). Evil forces and Satan seek to make us drift far away from the Right Path (*al-Qur'ān*, 4: 60).

Repeatedly, Allah (SWT) mentions in *al-Qur'ān* about Islam as the Right Way, Straight Way, and Right Path: You are not responsible for setting these people on the Right Way; Allah sets on the Right Way whomsoever He wills (*al-Qur'ān*, 2: 272); Say: “People of the Book! Why do you hinder believers from the Way of Allah, seeking that they follow a crooked way, even though you yourselves are witness to its being the Right Way? (*al-Qur'ān*, 3: 99)”; Have you not seen those to whom a portion of the Book was given? They purchased errors for themselves and wish that you too lose the Right Way? (*al-Qur'ān*, 4:

44); Do you want to lead those to the Right Way whom Allah let go astray? (*al-Qur'ān*, 4: 88); Whosoever of you disbelieves [fails to understand] thereafter has indeed gone astray from the Right Way (*al-Qur'ān*, 5: 12).

Finally, Islam is also presented in *al-Qur'ān* as the Way of Allah (SWT): Those who have faith [correct understanding based on true knowledge] fight in the Way of Allah (*al-Qur'ān*, 4: 76); So, [O Messenger], fight in the Way of Allah (*al-Qur'ān*, 4: 84); Do not, therefore, take allies from them until they emigrate in the Way of Allah (*al-Qur'ān*, 4: 89); Believers! [people of understanding] when you go forth in the Way of Allah, ascertain and distinguish...are not the equals of those who strive in the Way of Allah with their possessions and their lives (*al-Qur'ān*, 4: 94-95); He who emigrates in the Way of Allah will find in the earth enough room for refuge and plentiful resources. And he who goes forth from his house as a migrant in the Way of Allah and His Messenger, and whom death overtakes, his reward becomes incumbent on Allah (*al-Qur'ān*, 4: 100); And whoever disbelieves in Allah, in His angels, in His Books, in His Messengers and the Last Day, has indeed strayed far away. Allah will neither forgive nor show the Right Way to those who believed, and then disbelieved, then believed, and again disbelieved, and thenceforth became ever more intense in their disbelief (*al-Qur'ān*, 4: 136-137); ...for their barring many from the Way of Allah (*al-Qur'ān*, 4: 160).

Conclusion

The intellectual discussion, which is presented in this paper based on an exploration of selected *Qur'ānic* verses, concludes that Islam should not be taken merely as a religion. It is more than that. Why did Allah (SWT) identify and highlight Islam as the Right Way? To make it clear and clear. Allah (SWT) said in *al-Qur'ān*: “There has now come to you a Light from Allah, and a Clear Book through which Allah shows to all who seek to please Him the paths leading to safety. He brings them out, by His leave, from darkness to Light and directs them onto the Straight Way (*al-Qur'ān*, 5: 15-16). At other places in *al-Qur'ān*, it is mentioned that despite the powerful faculties of man, he is bound to follow the Right Path shown by Allah (SWT) for the betterment of people, society, and the entire humanity. The empirical realities of the world are witness to this fact of life. The race for the production and purchase of weapons by super and lower of the world demonstrates the truth revealed by Allah (SWT) that: Indeed, man is in total loss except those who have faith [correct understanding about Allah (SWT)] and do righteous deeds and counsel each other to hold on to truth and counsel each other (*al-Qur'ān*, 103: 2-3).

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