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Who is Steadfast?

The Quran is filled with references to the steadfast. Who are they? Many seem to have different ideas. We need to have a better understanding of the word, steadfast, as it is referred to in the Quran. Realizing the immensity of this task a few verses are singled out and discussed here.

The American Heritage Dictionary defines steadfast as "firmly loyal or constant." This is a good general definition, but the Quran adds some specifics for the believers... "Steadfast are those who: When affliction befalls them, they say, 'we belong to God and to Him we are returning.'" (2:155-156) Hence the Quran defines the steadfast as those who realize that God hands them their destiny.

Regular prayer is also connected with steadfastness. "Seek help through steadfastness and the contact prayers, this is difficult indeed but not so for the reverent." (2:45,153) Therefore, both the contact prayers and steadfastness are some aspect of righteousness.

Another connection made throughout the Quran is the association between steadfastness and perseverance. "Peace be upon you because you steadfastly persevered. What a joyous destiny. (13:24) "We will surely reward those who steadfastly persevere; we will recompense them for their righteous works." (16:96) One can then assume that perseverance gives some longevity to the steadfastness required by God in the Quran.

The Quran requires Submitters to steadfastly persevere through life's many trials and tribulations. "You will certainly be tested, through your money and your lives, and you will hear from those who received the scripture, and from the idol worshippers, a lot of insult. If you steadfastly persevere and lead a righteous life, this will prove the strength of your faith." (3:186)

In conclusion, the steadfast are those who recognize God's involvement in their destiny, pray regularly and persevere.

Senobar Tafazoli

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In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Submitters Perspective

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TRANSLATION vs INTERPRETATION

Today all religions are not much more than various sets of traditions. They have been corrupted to various degree by human ego and inventions for political and economic gain. This is in spite of the fact that all messengers of God came with the same simple message: **There is only ONE God. You shall worship Him alone** (1:14). However, after each messenger, the original message they brought was gradually distorted or buried under complex religious dogma.

While every religion has been corrupted by innovations, traditions, and false, idolatrous doctrines, there may be people within every religion who follow the true message. These are the people who recognize God's absolute authority, and devote their lives and their worship absolutely to God alone. The Quran refers to these people as "Submitters." Thus, there may be Submitters who are Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, or any other faith. These Submitters, collectively, constitute the only religion acceptable to God: **Submission** (3:19, 85).

People who realize distortions in religion and therefore turn to the basics of religion are immediately considered out of line with society. They are also faced with social and economic pressure and adversity. The major part of this opposition comes from people who make a living out of the current state of religion. These religious professionals realize that any purification of religion will likely jeopardize their status and pockets.

Translation of the scripture

God sends down His revelations to us in the tongue of the messengers whom He chooses. This is in order for the messengers to deliver and explain the message to people around them (14:4). For example, the Torah was revealed in Hebrew; the Quran was revealed in Arabic. But, if God's message is universal what about all the other people who speak different languages? Is it fair to them if they do not have an access to the same message? We understand from the Quran that the scripture must be translated in order for everybody to know about God's message and believe in it (26:198-199).

The correct translation of the scripture is crucial in keeping the original message of religion. Unfortunately, it is a human tendency to introduce one's own understanding into a translation. This constitutes a major pitfall in any translation, but in scriptural translation it may have serious consequences if it affects the basic doctrine of the religion. A recommended reading about this subject is the book by Lisa Spray entitled "Jesus: Myth & Message," (Universal Unity, 1992). In her book, Lisa goes into detail about the misinterpretations and distortions in translations of the Gospels.

English Translation of the Quran

The Quran was revealed in Arabic 14 centuries ago. Since then there have been many translations of the Quran into different languages. Many of these translations are in English. Ironically though, none of the translators of the Quran are native Arabic speakers. This is because the Arab Muslims are convinced that the Quran can only be understood in Arabic. As a result, non-Arab Muslims felt intimidated and thus the necessity to learn Arabic. Not only do they seem to overlook that the language is not a barrier to understand the Quran (56:79), but they also forget the fact that there are multitudes of Arabs who do not believe in the Quran. Not surprisingly, most people who study Arabic do not learn it well enough to understand the Quran. What is worse, up until today, there are many Muslims who end up wasting their time by reading the Quran in Arabic without understanding a word of it! Thus, Satan has been successful in preventing the majority of Muslims from studying and understanding the Quran.

Corruption in Religions Exposed

Because of all the corruption and distortions in religions, God has sent a messenger to consolidate the messages delivered by all the prophets, purify them, and unify them into one religion: Submission. This is prophesied in Verse 3:81 in the Quran. The name of this messenger is mentioned 19 times in the Quran, and he is supported by a great sign from God, the mathematical miracle of the Quran based on the number 19. This messenger was Dr. Rashad Khalifa who was killed in January 1990 for advocating the truth, and for exposing the corruption and the idolatry that pervaded the religion of Islam (Submission).

Dr. Rashad Khalifa until his death pointed out and tried to purge away all the corruptions afflicting not only Islam, but also Judaism, Christianity, and other religions. One of Rashad's missions was to translate the Quran into English. He completed his mission by God's leave. The final version of his translation was recently published by the community of Submitters around the world. His translation of the Quran into English from its original Arabic text is free from preconceived and idolatrous interpretations that had crept into the previous translations of the Quran by others. Furthermore, his translation is clear, concise, and in plain English. It is the first translation of the Quran by a person whose mother tongue is Arabic. It easily stands out above other translations in every angle, and shows why God chose him for this particular mission.

English Translations Compared

Let us look into the translation of some of the verses in the Quran by different translators

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in order to compare their work to that of Rashad's. The translators we select are Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall and Abdullah Yusuf Ali since their translations are two of the most commonly used English translations of the Quran. We start our comparison with Verse 22:15 in the Quran.

Verse 22:15 translation by Pickthall:

Whoso is wont to think (through envy) that Allah will not give him (Muhammad) victory in the world and the Hereafter (and is enraged at the thought of his victory), let him stretch a rope up to the roof (of his dwelling), and let him hang himself. Then let him see his strategy dispelleth that wherewith he rageth!

Verse 22:15 translation by Yusuf Ali:

If anyone think that God will not help him (His Apostle) in this world and the Hereafter, let him stretch out a rope to the ceiling and cut (himself) off: then let him see whether his plan will remove that which enrages (him)!

Verse 22:15 translation by Dr. Khalifa:

If anyone thinks that God cannot support him in this life and in the Hereafter, let him turn completely to (his Creator in) heaven, and sever (his dependence on anyone else). He will then see that this plan eliminates anything that bothers him.

Both Pickthall and Yusuf Ali translated the verse similarly. The difference between their translation and that of Dr. Khalifa's is readily apparent. Not only do Pickthall and Yusuf Ali confuse the reader with their translations, but they also give the impression that the Quran contradicts itself since killing oneself is gross sin according to another verse in the Quran (4:29). On the other hand, Rashad's translation is very clear and refreshing for the reader, increasing one's faith in God.

Translation of a scripture may also cause distortion from the basic message of the scripture. The following is an example showing how a translator can be influenced by his preconceived ideas:

Verses 39:44-45 translation by Pickthall:

Say: Unto Allah belongeth all intercession. He is sovereignty of the heavens and the earth. And afterward unto Him ye will be brought back.

And when Allah alone is mentioned, the hearts of those who believe not in the Hereafter are repelled, and when those (whom they worship) beside Him are mentioned, behold! they are glad.

Verses 39:44-45 translation by Yusuf Ali:

Say: "To God belongs exclusively (the right to grant) intercession. To Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth: In the end, it is to Him that you shall be brought back."

When God, the One and Only, is mentioned, the hearts of those who believe not in the Hereafter are filled with disgust and horror; but when (gods) other than He are mentioned, behold, they are filled with joy.

Verses 39:44-45 translation by Dr. Khalifa:

Say, "All intercession belongs to God." To Him belongs all sovereignty of the heavens and the earth, then to Him you will be returned.

When God alone is mentioned, the hearts of those who do not believe in the Hereafter shrink with aversion. But when others are mentioned beside Him, they become satisfied.

These two verses touch two of the most critical subjects in

religion: Intercession and idolatry. Both subjects are also very closely related to each other. We understand from the Quran that it is not only wishful thinking to believe that anyone, other than God, can intercede on our behalf to have our sins forgiven or our wishes fulfilled, but it is also setting up partners with God. This, of course, is idolatry, the only unforgivable sin if maintained until death (4:48).

The myth of intercession is one of Satan's most effective tricks to dupe people into idol worship. The majority of Christians believe that Jesus will intercede for them in the Hereafter. Similarly, the majority of Muslims believe that Muhammad will intercede on their behalf. Consequently, these people fall into idol worship without realizing that they are idolizing Jesus or Muhammad (6:22).

The translators of the scripture may become vehicles in spreading Satan's point of view if they are not sincere in worshiping God alone. Their preconceived ideas may then become a driving factor in how they understand a verse and translate it. In the example above, both Pickthall's and Rashad's translations indicate that all intercession belongs to God. On the other hand, Yusuf Ali inserted the right to grant before the word intercession. Even though his insert is in parentheses, it dramatically changed the meaning of the verse, and allowed it to be consistent with the idolatrous view of the majority of Muslims who believe in Muhammad's intercession. Thus, anyone reading Yusuf Ali's translation of the verse and brought up with the concept of intercession may not realize: If all intercession belongs to God, how can Muhammad or any other saint intercede on my behalf?

We learn from the Quran that although all intercession belongs to God, everyone who enters Paradise will be asking God to save his or her loved ones. However, their intercession or wish will not be granted unless it coincides with God's will, namely they deserve to enter Paradise as well (2:255, 20:109).

In Verse 39:45, Yusuf Ali omitted the crucial word "alone" that refers to God from his translation. Instead of the word "alone," he used "the One and Only." However, the expression "When God, the One and Only, is mentioned" is not the same as "With God alone" is mentioned. Because one can mention God, and also mention Jesus or Muhammad. But mentioning God alone indicates that no one else can be mentioned besides Him. It is exactly this idea that makes the idol worshipers upset. Thus, Yusuf Ali could not bring himself to present the truth of the Quran since it did not conform to his belief.

Yusuf Ali altered the meaning of the rest of the verse by inserting the word "gods" in parentheses. Therefore, anyone reading his translation of this verse misses the point about the most important criterion in religion: If you believe in the Hereafter, you should be satisfied with God alone!

Pickthall translated the word "alone" correctly, but he also destroyed the above criterion by inserting his idea in parentheses. The words "whom they worship" give the impression that it is all right to mention Muhammad's name besides God since no Muslim will admit their subtle idol worship of Muhammad.

We learn from the Quran that God is the teacher of the Quran (55:2). If we are sincere, God puts the Quran in our hearts. Thus, no matter how many different translations exist in a certain language, God helps the sincere believers of Him understand the meaning of the verses by either inspiration, or by leading them to the translations that adhere to His true message.

Abdullah Arik

RESPONSIBILITY

A dear friend of mine whose opinion I deeply respect once told me that one of the greatest rights we can have in this life is the freedom of choice: the ability to choose our own way of life or our own religion without any interference and without any restrictions. I agree with his statement about the significance of freedom of choice, but I also feel that there is an inherent responsibility associated with this freedom. This responsibility is to examine, to research, and to carefully scrutinize all the various choices and all the possible consequences that may be related to the action we choose to exercise. For example, if you are suffering or are in pain, you are free to take any medication or consult with any doctor. Before you choose a particular treatment, however, you investigate and examine all the possibilities and choose the appropriate remedy that will serve as the best cure for your pain and suffering.

At the age of nineteen, a sense of uneasiness, confusion, and trepidation became pronounced in my life. This anxiety was caused by a void in my life. A void that I later found to be related to a lack of faith. I told myself that I would examine and explore various religions in order to fill this emptiness. I began with Islam since I was exposed to that religion the most. Although my mother was a devoted believer and encouraged me to follow her path, I did not accept her words on blind faith. I began to read the Quran for myself in search of the many perplexing questions that were occupying my mind and plaguing my life. As I read the Quran, all the questions I had were answered one after another. As soon as I would raise a question, it seemed to be answered in the following verses as I read on. It was magical. It was as if someone knew exactly what I was thinking and would respond to my inquiries with amazing clarity and assurance.

I was suddenly overcome with an overwhelming sense of freedom and happiness. My fear was replaced with joy and exhilaration. The void in my life had now become filled. I became a devoted Muslim and a submitter to God. Practically over-

night, my life was changed. I gave up all the actions that violated God's commandments and replaced them with actions glorifying God. In return, all the burdens, worries, and preoccupations that I had were lifted from my consciousness. I was suddenly relieved of the tremendous weight that I knew I would have to carry throughout my life. It was as if I was climbing up a very steep mountain carrying a heavy load on my shoulders. When I looked at the peak of the mountain and thought about the long journey ahead, I would become scared, discouraged, and sometimes even thought I would never make it to the top. As soon as I became a believer, I felt a sense of security and protection. I knew I could not only make it up that steep mountain but I could run up and down its steep paths many times. While the road that I used to follow came to an end, I embarked upon a new road, a new journey, a new life. I was cured by the healing powers of the Quran.

"You shall not accept any information, unless you verify it for yourself. I have given you the hearing, the eyesight, and the brain, and you are responsible for using them." (17:36)

The revelations of God were so overwhelming and so convincing that I did not need to explore other religions in order to confirm my beliefs. After all, what other book can you read that will lead you to completely change your lifestyle forever in a matter of a few days.

People may wonder how I can be certain that I chose the right path when it is the only path I explored. I respond to this inquiry by reciting an example of a woman who is suffering from a terrible disease and who is in constant pain every time she moves a part of her body. The pain is beyond description—it is agonizing. Everyday, every hour, every second she must live with this pain and the pain gets worse each day. If one day, after years of research, a medicine is discovered that will cure her disease, end her pain, and eliminate her suffering, will she take the medicine or continue to seek other cures? Most definitely, her search will be over. Her suffering has ended.

As human beings, most of us are fortunate to be endowed with the gift of eyesight, hearing, and intellectual capacity. Unfortunately, many of us have taken these senses for granted. For example, despite the overwhelming proof that can be verified in the Quran through examination, billions of people have blindly chosen to follow religions and practices that contradict the logical nature of human existence. The reason for this is simple. These people have not exercised the responsibilities associated with their freedom of choice. They have neglected to use their God-given senses of reason and perception to examine and study their own religion as well as other possible religions. Since these people have neglected their responsibility, God has sealed their hearts and minds: they will never understand.

While those who scrutinize, explore, and sincerely search to find the right path are attracted to one religion that eliminates their problems and worries, those who accept words on blind faith end up following different religions and practices that merely cover up their problems. They think that they are strengthening their faith but little do they know that their souls are slowly deteriorating and are becoming weaker and weaker. It is as if they are given a hollow pill, a placebo, and are told that their pain will go away and their disease will be cured. Psychologically this hollow pill may work and their pain may be temporarily relieved but the real problem, the disease, will continue to eat their bodies away. There will come a day when they realize that they have been deceived, and on that day it will be too late: their bodies will be feeble, their faith will be weak, and their souls will be malnourished and deprived.

If you are going to devote your whole life to the practice of one religion, it is essential that you carefully examine all the possibilities and fulfill the responsibility that is associated with your freedom of choice. If you do this, God willing you will embark upon the same path that I did. You will choose Islam as your way of life.

Amir Ki

Eds note: We invite you to submit your article comments on any related subject to Submission

7th Annual International Conference of United Submitters August 28 - 30, 1992, Tucson, Arizona.

* GOD WILLING *

Please let us know your plans to attend the Conference ASAP. Attendance to the Conference is by invitation only. Registration fees are: for individuals and \$152 for families, which include hotel accommodations and meals. If you would like to be a speaker, please inform us. Checks should be made payable to ICS, P.O. Box 43476, Tucson, AZ 85733. God willing, we look forward to seeing all of you.