

Sura 5, al-Maidah (The Repast), Madina 112

The Quran's Text and Yusuf Ali's Translation:

وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمُهَيِّمًا
عَلَيْهِ ... up

5:48. To thee We sent the Scripture in truth, **confirming the scripture that came before it, and guarding it in safety**;

[Ali's comments: - 759. After the corruption of the older revelations, the Quran comes with a twofold purpose: 1. to confirm the true and original Message, and 2. to guard it, or act as a check to its interpretation.

The Arabic word **Muhaymin** is very comprehensive in meaning. **It means one who; - safeguards, - watches over, - stands witness, - preserves, and - upholds.**

The Quran safeguards "the Book", for it has preserved within it the teachings of all the former Books. It watches over these Books in the sense that it will not let their true teachings to be lost. It supports and

upholds these Books in the sense that it corroborates the Word of God which has remained intact in them. It stands a witness because it bears testimony to the Word of God contained in these Books and helps to sort it out from the interpretations and commentaries of the people which were mixed with it: what is confirmed by the Quran is the Word of God and what is against it is that of the people. (R).]

... فَاحْكُم بَيْنَهُم بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ عَمَّا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ

...

so judge between them by what God hath revealed, and follow not their vain desires, diverging from the truth that hath come to thee.

... لِكُلِّ جَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَمِنْهَاجًا...

To each among you have We prescribed a **Law and an Open Way.**

[760. **Law:** *shirat*, rules of practical conduct. **Open Way:** *Minhaj*. The finer things which are above the law, but which are yet available to everyone, like a sort of open highway. The light in verses 44 and 46 though laws and rules may take different forms among different People.]

... وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً ...

If God had so willed, He would have made you a single people,

... وَلَكِنْ لِّيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ ...

but (His plan is) to test you in what He hath given you: so strive as in a race in all virtues.

|| 761. By origin mankind were a single people or nation: 4:1, and 2:213. That being so Allah could have kept us all alike, with one language, one kind of disposition, and one set of physical conditions (including climate) to live in. But in His wisdom, He gives us diversity in these things, not only at any given time, but in different periods and ages. This tests our capacity for Unity (Wahdaniyat) still more, and accentuates the need of Unity and Islam.]

762. Men are wont to make conflicting claims regarding Allah, the ultimate destiny of man, and other questions of vital importance. No matter how vehement and eloquent the proponents of false doctrines might be, their efforts will prove fruitless and it will be indisputably clear on the Day of Judgment as to who entertained false notions and who cherished the truth. (Eds).

763. The Days of Ignorance were the days of tribalism, feuds and selfish accentuation of differences in man. Those days are really not yet over.

It is the mission of Islam to take us away from that false mental attitude, towards the true attitude of Unity.

If our Faith is certain (and not merely a matter of words). Allah will guide us to that Unity. **]]**

... إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ

The goal of you all is to God ;

it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which ye dispute.

[[See **Amatulla's interpretation of this verse as an endnote at the bottom.]]**

Transliteration *Wa anzalna_ ilaikal kita_ba bil haqqi musaddiqal lima_ baina yadaihi minal kita_bi wa **muhauminan** 'alaihi fahkum bainahum bima_ anzalalla_hu wa la_ tattabi' ahwa_ 'ahum 'amma_ ja_ 'aka minal haqq(i), **li kullin ja'alna_ minkum syir'ataw wa minha_ ja_(n)**, wa lau sya_ 'alla_hu laja'alakum ummataw wa_hidataw wa la_kil liyabluwakum fi ma_ a_ta_kum fastabiqul khaira_t(i), ilalla_hi marji'ukum jami'an fa yunabbi'ukum bima_ kuntum fihi takhtalifu_n(a).*

Muhammad Asad's Translation:

5:48 And unto the [O Prophet] have We vouchsafed this divine writ, setting forth the truth, **confirming the truth of whatever there still remains of earlier revelations and determining what is true therein** (note 64). **Judge, then, between the followers of earlier revelation in accordance with what God has bestowed from on high** (note 65), and do not follow their errant views, **forsaking the truth** that has come unto thee.

Unto every one of you have **We appoint a [different] law and way of life** (note 66). And if God has so willed, He could surely have made you all one single community: but [He willed it otherwise] in order to test you by means of what He has vouchsafed unto you. **Vie, then, with one another in doing good works!** Unto God you all must return; and then He will make you truly understand all that on which you were wont to differ.

[Asad's comments: 66: The expression “every one of you” denotes the various communities of which mankind is composed. The term ‘**shirah**’ signifies, literally, “the way to a watering-place” (from which men and animals derive the element indispensable to their life), and is used in the Quran **to denote a system of law necessary for a community’s social and spiritual welfare**. The term ‘**minhaj**’, on the other hand, denotes an “open road”, usually in an abstract sense: that is, “**a way of life**”, **The term ‘shirah’ and ‘minhaj’ are more restricted in their meaning than the term ‘din’**, which comprises not merely the laws relating to a particular religion but also the basic, unchanging spiritual truths which, according to the Quran, have been preached by every one of God’s apostles, while the particular body of laws (Shirah or shariah) promulgated through them, and the way of life (minhaj) recommended by them, varied in accordance with the exigencies of the time and of each community’s cultural development. **This “unity in diversity”** is frequently stressed in the Quran. Because of the universal applicability and textual incorruptibility of its teachings – as well as of the fact that the Prophet Muhammad is “the seal of all prophets”, i.e., the last of them – the Quran represents the culminating point of all revelation and offers the final, perfect way to spiritual fulfillment.

This uniqueness of the Quranic message does not, however, preclude all adherents of earlier faiths from attaining to God’s grace: for – as the Quran so often points out – those among them **who believe uncompromisingly in One God and the Day of Judgment and live righteously “need have no fear, and neither shall they grieve”**. 67 I.e., “in order to test, by means of the various religious laws imposed

on you, your willingness to surrender yourselves to God and to obey Him" (Zamakhshari, Razi), "and thus to enable you to grow, spiritually and socially, in accordance with the God-willed law of evolution" (Manar VI, 418 f).

68 Lit., "inform you of that wherein you used to differ" (cf surah 2, note 94). Thus, the Qur'an impresses upon all who believe in God - Muslims and non-Muslims alike - that the differences in their religious practices should make them "vie with one another in doing good works" rather than lose themselves in mutual hostility.

64 The participle muhaymin is derived from the quadriliteral verb haymana, "he watched [over a thing]" or "controlled [it]", and is used here to describe the Qur'an as the determinant factor in deciding what is genuine and what is false in the earlier scriptures (see Manar VI, 410 ff).

65 Lit., "judge, then, between them...", etc. This apparently applies not merely to judicial cases but also to opinions as to what is right or wrong in the ethical sense (see note 55 above). As is evident from the mention of the "followers of the Gospel" in the preceding verse, and of the Torah in the earlier passages, the people spoken of here are both the Jews and the Christians. **]]**

Muhammad Pickthall's Translation:

And unto thee have We revealed the Scripture with the truth, **confirming whatever Scripture**

was before it, and a watcher over it. So judge between them by that which Allah hath revealed, and follow not their desires away from the truth which hath come unto thee. For each, We have appointed a divine law and a traced out way. Had Allah willed He could have made you one community. But that He may try you by that which He hath given you (He hath made you as ye are). So vie one with another in good works. Unto Allah, ye will all return, and He will then

[Amatulla's comment on 5:48] God commands the Prophet to judge followers of other religions using the truth revealed in the Quran. At the same time, the next verses acknowledge clearly that God has given followers of earlier Scriptures different ways (shirah) and different rituals (Minhaj), indicating that **those differences are acceptable.**

However, deviation from the 'truth' set forth in the Quran is not acceptable. Therefore, it is extremely important to know the difference between the 'truth' and the different ways (shirah) and different rituals (Minhaj) of a religion that are different from the fundamental 'truth.'

I do not see any inconsistency in these two types of expressions: the 'truth' is the core moral law of God, or 'din' in Arabic means the goal of a religion (or compliance with the God given 'nature' or 'God's nature' see 30:30). There could be different ways to that 'truth' or goal. The ultimate truth (huq) is God and His moral laws set in reality.

The ways and rituals could be acceptably different as they are God-given to the followers of different Scriptures at different times in history and in different communities with different cultures.

Important ideas are that the differences we see among ourselves and followers of other religions and Scriptures are superficial. Only God knows what exactly is in one's heart and what his intention is. God has the exclusive right to settle these issues and judge people in the Hereafter and not here.

Therefore, believers should be humble, keep their minds open to the truth, and apply these principles in life.]