

# THE PEOPLE OF THE BOOK (*AHL AL-KITĀB*)<sup>1</sup> IN THE QUR'ĀN AND ITS CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE: INCLUSIVE OR EXCLUSIVE EXEGESIS (TAFSĪR)

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## Abstract:

This paper aims at debunking the myth that the Qur'ān presents an exclusivist worldview regarding other religions. I will also examine what the concept of *ahl al-Kitāb* denotes in the Qur'anic discourse in terms of the unity of monotheism that combines the Prophets from Adam to Muhammad. I will attempt in this paper to also dissect the linguistic and technical meanings of key concepts related to ahl al-Kitāb.

Thus, the paper will focus on the concept of *kitāb* and *ahl al-Kitāb* and how they have been projected and presented in different parts of the Qur'ān. The paper will also examine whether this Qur'anic attitude to the people of the book can be described as dispensation of one of special relationship in terms of divine and ethical connections among the people of the book. Finally, I will discuss the relevance of the Qur'anic concept of *ahl al-Kitāb* to the contemporary context in terms of inclusion and plurality.

**Key words:** Ahl al-Kitāb, kitāb, tafsir, inclusive, exclusive, people of the Book, thematic tafsir, asbab al-Nuzul

## 1. Introduction

“Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes – from being righteous toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly (*muqsiṭīn*).” (Qur'ān, Al-Mumtahanah 60:8).<sup>2</sup>

The Qur'ān was not revealed in isolation of its socio-political milieu which I think is relevant to the understanding of some aspects of the Qur'ān. This is referred to as *asbāb al-Nuzūl* (causes of revelation). Inasmuch as the Qur'ān has been studied from many perspectives: linguistic and juristic, other areas need further studies and reflection. These areas can include the inter-religious relations between Muslims and the people of the Book in order to highlight the ethical and humanistic values that the books share as they share the same point of departure regardless of some differences in their application. Indeed, the above *āyah* lays and embodies an important Qur'anic foundation that promotes *justice* and *humaneness* in dealing with the

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<sup>1</sup> It refers to the Jews, Christians, and other people of the Book. See Daniel A. Madigan, *The Qur'ān's Self-image*, Princeton and Oxford, Princeton university press, 2001, pp.7, 182-185 and Jane Dammen McAuliffe, *Qur'anic Christians*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp.1-8 and pp.240-246.

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<sup>2</sup> See Al-Ālusi, *Ruh al-Ma'ani*, Beirut, Darul al-Kutub, Vol. 14, pp. 268-269.

entire humanity. This is to emphasise that Islam is not a mere “political nuisance” to the [West] as suggested by Shabir Akhtar, but a world faith of “spiritual fecundity”.<sup>3</sup> He further notes that Muslims Islam is universal and consider it as the primordial faith revealed by God.<sup>4</sup>

In this context, I write this paper to explore in a thematic manner how the Qur'ān presents the relationships between Muslims and the ahl al-Kitāb through the analysis of some relevant exegetical literature of Qur'anic hermeneutics. I will mainly focus on the concept of ahl al-Kitāb in order to demystify the myth that Muslims have an exclusivist worldview. In this paper, I will thus address the linguistic notion of al-Kitāb and how it is used in different Qur'anic passages. I will also propound on the special relationship the Qur'ān has established between Muslims and the and ahl al-Kitāb. Finally, I will highlight the relevance of ahl al-Kitāb today. The methodology I will adopt in this paper is to draw on exegetical literature (mufassirin) in light of the contemporary reality regarding Muslim relations with the so-called “other”. It will also highlight relevant Qur'anic ayāt (verses) and then analyse them in the context of their contemporary significance and relevance in terms of the need of dialogue between Muslims and the people of the Book. The methodology will also include the treatment of the Qur'ān as a cohesive and coherent unit in understanding the phenomenon of ahl al-Kitāb. Thus, I will use the works of both the classical and modern scholars on exegesis.

## 2. Linguistic meaning of kitab

The words of scripture play a foundational role in the faith of Islam. Thus Kitāb (plural *kutub*) has been used in the Qur'ān many times to denote the Qur'ān and other revealed books. Al-Mawaridi's *Arabic Dictionary*<sup>5</sup> defines kitab as an infinitive (*masdar*) and its plural is *kutub* when made definite article it refers to the Qur'ān and other scriptures.<sup>6</sup> Ibn Manzur provides a more detailed meaning of kitab. He defines *kitab* as book, writing, written document, a charter. He also defines it as acts made promulgated on believers to do as a sign of obedience and submission to their Lord and Creator.<sup>7</sup> The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines book as a written narrative, account or record, that we read and find lessons from, as well as a written treatise.

### 2.1 The concept of al-Kitab in the Qur'anic discourse

The *Encyclopaedia of Islam* defines ahl al-Kitāb as the possessors of the scripture and that the resultant Muslim terminology denotes the Jews and Christians. The books refer to al-Tawrah (Torah), al-Zabur (psalms) and al-Injil (gospel). The Qur'ān emphasises the fact that the community of early scriptures and the adherents of the new religion of Islam have

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<sup>3</sup> Akhtar, Shabir, *The Qur'ān and the Secular Mind*, New York and Oxon, Routledge, 2008, p.16.

<sup>4</sup> Akhtar, op. cit., p.17.

<sup>5</sup> *Al-Mawarid A Modern Arabic-English Dictionary*, Lebanon, 15<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2021, p. 887.

<sup>6</sup> Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-Arab, Dar al Maarif*, V. 5, pp. 3816-3817.

<sup>7</sup> The word scripture with a capital letter is defined as sacred writings of *the Old and New Testament*. See the *Oxford English Dictionary*, volume XIV, pp.741-743.

commonality in terms of religious, spiritual and moral virtues.<sup>8</sup> In his entry ‘Ahl al-Kitāb’ Oliver Leaman points out that the Qur’ān has varying attitudes towards the people of the book. He seems to suggest that the Qur’anic attitudes towards the people of the Book in the Makkan phase was more positive as compared its attitude in the latter Madinan phase. I will argue in this paper however that it is not a question of change of attitude. Rather, it was a matter of differing circumstances that do not change the main principle of peaceful coexistence with the people of the Book despite some theological differences. On the other hand, Abdu’r Rashid Siddiqui states that that the word kitāb has the following meanings in the Qur’ān:<sup>9</sup>

1. **Revelation of God** to His Messengers as in al-Baqarah: “The Messenger has faith in what has been sent down to him from his Lord, and all the faithful. Each [of them] has faith in Allah, His angels, His scriptures and His apostles. [They declare,] ‘We make no distinction between any of His apostles.’ And they say, ‘We hear and obey. Our Lord, forgive us, and toward You is the return.’” 2:285
2. **Laws as in al-Bayyinah**: “wherein are upright laws” 98:3. Ibn Kathir in this chapter and others refers to the Nasarah (Christians) and Yahud (Jews) as the ahl al-kitāb.<sup>10</sup>

Kitab as divine authority: And it is not [possible] for one to die except by permission of Allah at a decree determined. And whoever desires the reward of this world - We will give him thereof; “*and whoever desires the reward of the Hereafter - We will give him thereof. And we will reward the grateful* (9 Al-‘Imran 3:145).

### 3. **Kitab as revelation:**

“Mankind was [of] one religion [before their deviation]; then Allah sent the prophets as bringers of good tidings and warners and sent down with them the Scripture in truth to judge between the people concerning that in which they differed. And none differed over the Scripture except those who were given it - after the clear proofs came to them - out of jealous animosity among themselves. And Allah guided those who believed to the truth concerning that over which they had differed, by His permission. And Allah guides whom He wills to a straight path” (2:213)

“And [recall, O People of the Scripture], when Allah took the covenant of the prophets, [saying], “Whatever I give you of the Scripture and wisdom and then there comes to you a messenger confirming what is with you, you [must] believe in him and support him.” [ Allah] said, “Have you acknowledged and taken upon that My commitment?” They said, “We have acknowledged it.” He said, “Then bear witness, and I am with you among the witnesses.” (Al-Imran 3:8)<sup>11</sup>

The word kitāb has therefore been used to denote the Book of Allah. However, the word kitāb has also been used to denote divine authority, divine decree among others. The centrality of kitāb in the Qur’anic discourse is very telling. The word *kitāb* itself has been used many times in the Qur’ān not only in describing the Qur’ān alone, but also in reference to earlier

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<sup>8</sup> E.J. Brill, *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Leiden, 1986) vol. 1. Pp. 263-266.

<sup>9</sup> Abdu’r Rashid Siddiqui, *Qur’anic keywords*, Leicester, the Islamic Foundation, 2010, p. 145.

<sup>10</sup> Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur’ān al-Azīm*, Beirut, Dar al-Kutub al-‘Imiyyah, vol.4 pp,503-505.

<sup>11</sup> Madigan, Daniel A. *The Qur’ān’s Self-Image*, Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2001, pp.4-5.

scriptures. 27:28-29) as written material (24:33) as legal documents. The Qur'ān states its comprehensiveness in affirming divine omniscience.

[Pharaoh] said, "Then what is the case of the former generations?" [Moses] said, "The knowledge thereof is with my Lord in a record. My Lord neither errs nor forgets." (Taha, 20:51-52)

### 3. Qur'ān and its special relationship with ahl al-Kitāb<sup>12</sup>

Say: O People of the Scripture! Come to an agreement between us and you: that we shall worship none but Allah, and that we shall ascribe no partner unto Him, and that none of us shall take others for lords beside Allah. And if they turn away, then say: Bear witness that we are they who have surrendered (unto Him) (Al-Imran 3:64).<sup>13</sup>

The issue of interreligious dialogue or understanding is a relevant question in terms of how one tradition has perceived another. Indeed, the role of religion in building bridges has come under more scrutiny than ever. Monotheistic religions that are notorious of being exclusivist in their theology and law are under the pressure to meet the challenge of encompassing secularisation and to provide new interpretations that can accommodate the demands of plurality and new realities. In fact, pluralism suggests acknowledgment and affirmation that various spiritual paths can guide adherents.<sup>14</sup> It is a fact that Islam came after the other Abrahamic traditions and therefore found expression in a world of religious pluralism.

Indeed the faithful, the Jews, the Christians, and the Sabaeans -those of them who have faith in Allah and the Last Day and act righteously- they shall have their reward near their Lord, and they will have no fear, nor will they grieve (Al-Baqarah, 2:62)

The Qur'ān acknowledges revealed books before and critically evaluates the attitudes of some followers of them but never rejected them as completely false. Instead of denying the validity of human experiences of transcendence, Islam recognises and confirms salvific efficacy of such experiences within its monotheistic spirituality and morality.<sup>16</sup> The Qur'ān shares the biblical ethos of Prophets Moses and Jesus, while expressing an inclusive attitude towards the people of the Book through the genesis of Prophet Adam and Eve.

People were one community, and Allah sent (unto them) prophets as bearers of good tidings and as warners and revealed therewith

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<sup>12</sup> The term appears in the Qur'ān about 59 times. See Reynolds, Gabriel Said (ed.) *New Perspectives on the Qur'ān*, Oxfordshire, Routledge, 2011, p.310.

<sup>13</sup> The verse is said to be revealed about Jews, according to other narrations about Christians and others opine for both the Jews and Christians. The verse emphasises monotheism and sincerity in worshipping the Creator as in the three Abrahamic faiths. See Al-Ālusi, vol. 2, pp.185-187.

<sup>14</sup> Sachedina, Abdulaziz, "The Qur'ān and other religions" in McAuliffe, Jane Damme (ed.) *The Qur'ān*, Cambridge et.al. Cambridge University press, 2006, pp.291-295.

the Scripture with the truth that it might judge between people concerning that wherein they differed. And only those unto whom (the Scripture) was given differed concerning it, after clear proofs had come unto them, through hatred one of another. And Allah by His Will guided those who believe unto the truth of that concerning which they differed. Allah guides whom He will unto a straight path. (Al-Baqarah, 2:213).

This is further strengthened the Qur'anic notion of the human's innate nature to distinguish good from bad.

### **3.1 Divine unity and ethical commonality amongst ahl al-Kitāb**

The Qur'anic discourse and Islam generally have accorded the people of the book a special status. Al-Baqarah chapter two of the Qur'ān devotes a major part to discuss the ethical and moral similarity among the people of the Book connecting all of them from Adam through Prophets Abraham, Moses, and Jesus to the Prophet Muhammad.

It all begins with the children of Jacob the Israelites (banu Israel) and the bounties God has bestowed on them. The Qur'ān reminds us of how God has freed the Israelites from the persecution they were subjected to under the Egyptian Pharaoh (2:49-54). Then, the Qur'ān mentions the difficulty Prophet Moses had with his mission among the Israelites despite the divine favours showered on them by providing them with all kinds of nutrition. However, they disobeyed by making a calf a deity and transgressing the boundaries.<sup>15</sup>

The Qur'ān blamed them for their disobedience to the Prophet particularly they are a people of the Book who had a revelation to return to namely Torah. Indeed, the covenant they have taken upon themselves was to practise monotheism and kindness to parents, relatives and the poor. In addition, the peoples of the Book are generally commanded to be kind to the entire humanity and to protect lives (2:83-86).

The Qur'ān then points out the absolute necessity of purifying oneself and submit to Allah (Muslim) as the essence of Islām. That submission to the oneness of Allah defies all forms of racism and parochial nationalisms (2:11-115).

The Qur'ān thus connects the story of prophecies with the father of the Prophets Abraham as a model to be emulated because he embodied in him the qualities of unique leadership and fulfilled the divine commandments. Prophet Abraham and his son Ismael renovated and elevated the Holy sites of Makkah (2:124-129). They both asked Allah to make Makkah a place of safety and security for anybody who enters there. Ibrahim prayed that Allah shower His blessings on Makkah. Thus, the peaceful and tranquil path of Ibrahim cannot be rejected except by a foolish person. It is the path that leads to eternal bliss and tranquillity. He passed the

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<sup>15</sup> Sachedina, op. cit., pp.296-300.

beacon of divine guidance to his children who in turn passed to their children until the advent of the seal of the Prophets Muhammad. (2:131-133).

The Qur'ān points to this commonality by stating:

It is translated as: And if they believe in the like of that which ye believe, then are they rightly guided. But if they turn away, then are they in schism, and Allah will suffice thee (for defence) against them. He is the Hearer, the Knower. (al-Baqarah 2:137). Thus Rippin observes the centrality of God in the Qur'ān.<sup>16</sup>

And do not argue with the People of the Scripture except in a way that is best, except for those who commit injustice among them, and say, "We believe in that which has been revealed to us and revealed to you. And our God and your God is one; and we are Muslims [in submission] to Him. (Al-Ankabut, 29:46).

Indeed, the Qur'ān teaches that the people are not monolithic or homogeneous:

They are not [all] the same; among the People of the Scripture is a community standing [in obedience], reciting the verses of Allah during periods of the night and prostrating [in prayer]. They believe in Allah and the Last Day, and they enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and hasten to good deeds. And those are among the righteous. (Al'Imrān, 3:113-114)

But if Allah had willed, they would not have associated. And We have not appointed you over them as a guardian, nor are you a manager over them. And do not insult those they invoke other than Allah, lest they insult Allah in enmity without knowledge. Thus, We have made pleasing to every community their deeds. Then to their Lord is their return, and He will inform them about what they used to do. (Al-An'am, 6:107-108).

The above Qur'anic passage has not limited the idea of dialogue to the Abrahamic traditions but has also included with other faiths or without faiths as long as human commonalities are concerned. Despite the multiplicity of socio-religious communities, the constant message of the Qur'ān is based on the strife for the common good (*khayrāt*)<sup>17</sup>

#### **4. Ahl al-Kitāb according Exegetical Scholars**

Examining the tafsir literature both classical and contemporary is pertinent in order to critically evaluate how the socio-religious and political circumstances may or may not affect

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<sup>16</sup> Rippin, Andrew, *The Qur'ān*, West Sussex, Blackwell Publishing LTD. 2009, p.223.

<sup>17</sup> Kalin, Ibrahim, Sources of Tolerance and Intolerance in Islam: the case of the people of the Book in *Religions*, Volume 2009, Issue 1, 2015, pp.37-38.

the approach of a particular scholar to peaceful co-existence between Muslims and the people of the book. Here, I will highlight the seemingly contradictory verses with the spirit of inclusivism and peaceful co-existence. On verse (2: 62), Ibn Kathir presents two narrations, one that those who followed Prophets Moses and Jesus would have salvation and the other narration is that they would not have salvation if they did not follow Prophet Muhammad the seal of the Prophets.<sup>18</sup> Al-Razi holds a similar opinion in terms of those who followed prophets Moses and Jesus before the advent of the Prophet Muhammad.<sup>19</sup> Al-Shaʿarawi, a contemporary scholar, believes that the above verse states the finality of the prophecy of the Prophet Muhammad and that his message and mission incorporates all the revelations that had come earlier.<sup>20</sup>

On verse (Al-Mujadilah, 58:22), Ibn Kathir observes that it was revealed regarding the battle of Badr between the nascent Muslim community of Madinah and the Makkans who were in main polytheist.<sup>21</sup> Ibn ʿAshur gives a more nuanced explanation of the above that it was revealed with regards to those polytheists who made open enmity against the Prophet and the new community and were looking for any opportunity to destabilise it.<sup>22</sup>

## 5. Contemporary Relevance of ahl al-Kitāb

The role of religion in building bridges is under greater scrutiny and pressure than ever before. monotheistic religions accused of being exclusivist in their outlook are under pressure to meet the challenge of all-encompassing secularisation and to provide relevant references that are seen as accommodating of plurality in religious commitments. Islam found expression in a world of religious pluralism. Instead it recognises and confirms salvific efficacy of human experiences of transcendence within the boundaries of monotheistic spirituality and morality. (2:262). Those monotheistic religions before Islam were critically evaluated but not rejected. As Zellentin observes, Qurʾān encourages dialogues with different traditions.<sup>23</sup>

In the context of pluralistic societies, questions of multiculturalism, interfaith and other ecumenical issues have become very pertinent. They may appear new, but Muslims have been dealing with them by making references to the ethical and scriptural imperatives that are foregrounded from within Islamic sources to create “a moral mandate for engaging the (Other)”.<sup>24</sup> The contemporary relevance is also to highlight the fact that the Qurʾanic usage of the notion of ahl al-Kitāb is to inculcate the value of courteous and cordial relations in its adherents’ visa vis the communities of people of the Book. Dialogue is a commendable activity and it promotes goodwill, trust and conviviality.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, the claim that religious engagement

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<sup>18</sup> Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qurʾān al-Azim*, Dar Misra liltibaʿah, vol.1. p.103 .

<sup>19</sup> Al-Fakhr al-Razi (544-604H) *Tafsir al-Fakhr al-Razi*, Dar al-Fikr, Vol.2, pp.112-113.

<sup>20</sup> Muhammad Mutawalla Al-Sharawi, *Tafsir al-Shʿarawi*, Akhbar al-Yawm, Vol.1. pp.369-373.

<sup>21</sup> Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qurʾān al-Azim*, Dar Misra liltibaʿah, vol.5, pp.328-330.

<sup>22</sup> Muhammad Tahir ibn ʿAshur, *Tafsir al-Tahrir wa al-Tanwir*, Tunisia, Dar Souhnoun, vol.11, pp.57-60.

<sup>23</sup> Zellentin, Holger M. “Religious Leaders in the Qurʾān in Dialogue with Christian and Rabbinic Literature” in Neuwirth, Angelika and Sells, Michael A (eds.) *Qurʾanic Studies Today*, London and New York, Routledge, 2016, p.262.

<sup>24</sup> Afsaruddin, Asma, *Contemporary Issues in Islam*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2015, pp.174.

<sup>25</sup> Afsaruddin, op. cit., pp.181.

was more during the Makkan period than the Medinan period is problematic as many Medinan revelations emphasise plurality and inclusion. Notwithstanding, there are commonalities between the three Abrahamic traditions, the Qur'ān will highlight where there are differences especially regarding divinity and nature of Prophet Jesus. Regardless of similarities, there are differences regarding some theological issues.

## 6. Beyond Polemic and Geneses of Dialogue

The medieval period witnessed suspicion between Muslims and Christians. Muslims asserted that Christians and Jews distorted the message of Prophet Ibrahim and thus revelation on one hand. The Christians and Jews claimed on the other that the Islamic doctrine was full of false assertions and deliberate perversions.<sup>26</sup> However, the trend has been changing since the postcolonial era due to the level of communication, information revolution and religious pluralism.

This has led to self-reflection and the gradual demolition of “defences”<sup>27</sup> creating an atmosphere of dialogue and exchange of views on commonalities across difference. The continual reference to the prophet of Abraham indeed emphasises the significance of dialogue and conversation with the people of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.<sup>28</sup> In fact, the divine message/revelation/book or *wahy* in Arabic connects the different revealed prophecies and socio-religious communities in terms of universalistic ethical principles.<sup>29</sup> That the People of the Book were given a special status is not only a Qur'anic proclamation, but also affirmed in several treatises signed by the prophet Muhammad after his migration to Medina in 622. “The “Medinan Treatise” (sahifat al-madina), recognizes the Jews of Banu ‘Awf, Banu al-Najar, Banu Tha’laba, Banu Harith, and other Jewish tribes as distinct communities: “The Jews of Banu ‘Awf are a community [ummah] together with Muslims; they have their own religion, properties and lives.”<sup>30</sup> ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab, the second caliph of Muslims, has given a similar assurance of protection and security (aman) to the people of Jerusalem when he took the city in 623: “In the name of God, the Merciful and Compassionate! This is the safeguard granted to the inhabitants of ‘Alia [Jerusalem] by the servant of God, ‘Umar, commander of the faithful. They are given protection of their persons, their churches, their crosses ...”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Watt, W. Montgomery, *Islam and Christianity Today*, Oxon, UK, Routledge, 1983, 2008, p. 4.

<sup>27</sup> Watt, op. cit., p.5.

<sup>28</sup> Kalin, Ibrahim, Sources of Tolerance and Intolerance in Islam: the case of the people of the Book in *Religions*, Volume 2009, Issue 1, 2015, p.39 .

<sup>29</sup> Kalin, op. cit., pp.40-41.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pp.56-57.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., pp.57.



## 7. Conclusion

The word *kitāb* (p. *kutub*) is at the foundational level of the Qur'anic discourses. At the same time, the Qur'ān recognises other books of divine nature that preceded it. Thus, the Qur'ān has emphasised in its different discourses the significance of dialogue with the people of the Book regarding monotheism (tawhid), shared human values and common ethical grounds between the people of the Book in order to promote common human values of compassion, humanity, love and service to people.

The general principles of the Qur'ān should be differentiated from the specific rulings with regards to the people of the Book due to political reasons detached from the teachings of the Qur'ān and the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad.

The Qur'anic discourse on the people of the book is based on dialogue, mutual understanding regarding common ethical principles as people of the book share the same primordial divine guidance and the Qur'ān has come to re-establish that after the passage of many prophets and messengers. Thus, polemical and exclusivist tendencies will not augur well in this pluralistic society. The Qur'ān does not claim novelty in the divine dealings with the creation and especially human race. Rather, it confirms again and again connection to the chain of divine revelations from Prophet Adam through to prophets Abraham, Moses and Jesus to Prophet Muhammad the seal of the prophets. However, the Qur'ān will rectify any innovations surrounding monotheism and socio-moral probity.

And they did not appraise Allah with true appraisal when they said,  
" Allah did not reveal to a human being anything." Say, "Who  
revealed the Scripture that Moses brought as light and guidance  
to the people? You [Jews] make it into pages, disclosing [some of]  
it and concealing much. And you were taught that which you knew  
not - neither you nor your fathers. "Say," Allah [revealed it]." Then  
leave them in their [empty] discourse, amusing themselves.  
(Al-An'ām, 6:91)

Thus, the Kitāb can be fairly characterised as foundational in Islam. It delineates the nature of the sacred text and the relationship of Islam to other monotheistic religions.<sup>32</sup>

And [mention] when Jesus, the son of Mary, said, "O children of  
Israel, indeed I am the messenger of Allah to you confirming what  
came before me of the Torah and bringing good tidings of a messenger  
to come after me, whose name is Ahmad." But when he came to them  
with clear evidences, they said, "This is obvious magic." (Al-Saff,61:6).

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<sup>32</sup> Madigan, Daniel A. *The Qur'ān's Self-Image*, Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2001, pp.90-95

They are not [all] the same; among the People of the Scripture is a community standing [in obedience], reciting the verses of Allah during periods of the night and prostrating [in prayer]. They believe in Allah and the Last Day, and they enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and hasten to good deeds. And those are among the righteous. (Al-‘Imran, 3:113-114)

Therefore, it is important to consider the causes of revelation for some verses and differentiate between the clear-cut Qur’anic message and specific rulings on specific issues. I think the current situation of the Covid-19 has made it more compelling the need for more understanding among the Abrahamic traditions. It has indeed exposed fragilities and vulnerabilities within communities and societies. In fact, it has brought to the fore the need to explore theological and religious significance in terms of pastoral care of practical theology in times of crises such as the pandemic that has ravaged the world.

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