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In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful  
Meaning of Messengership  

One of the most intriguing and critical issues facing modern Submitters is that of the role of the messenger. What does it mean to believe that someone is a messenger? How are messengers different from other knowledgeable people?  

In the Torah God teaches: “I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their kinsmen, and I will put My words into his mouth, and he shall tell them all that I command him. If any man shall not listen to My words which he speaks in My name, I Myself will make him answer for it.” (Deuteronomy 18:19)  

God taught us through Jesus who said, “My doctrine is not my own; it comes from Him who sent me. Any man who chooses to do His will will know about this doctrine—namely, whether it comes from God or is simply spoken on my own.” (John 17:18)  

God tells us clearly in the Quran: “Whoever obeys the messenger is obeying God.” (Quran 4:80)  

And “…All (messengers) are (His) honored servants. They never speak on their own, and they strictly follow His commands.” (21:26-27)  

From these verses it is clear that there is a difference between a messenger and other knowledgeable people because the messenger does not speak on his own. In a sense we can say that he acts as God’s mouthpiece. He gives us not his doctrine, but that of God. Isn’t that what the word “messenger” implies?  

Now obviously messengers, when acting as men, make mistakes like all humans. So how do we know what they tell us from God, and thus without questioning the truth, or if it is their own opinion, which can be incorrect?  

I would like to suggest that we look at the mistakes which we know from the Quran, and that messengers of the past have made.  

We know that Abraham prayed for forgiveness for his father (60:4) and Noah questioned God about his son (11:40). Muhammad feared the people and did not want to marry the divorced wife of his adopted son (33:37), and he turned away from the blind man (98:1). All of the mistakes mentioned in the Quran were corrected by God while the messengers were alive. We do not have a single example of a messenger who was sent to correct the mistakes of a previous messenger.  

The messengers come to renew the message after the “followers” of a previous messenger have distorted the message, not because the previous messenger bungled the job.  

The message does not come all at once. We see this with the revelation of the scriptures. We also experienced it watching the growth of new understanding and purification as it came through Dr. Rashad Khalifa. We are an incredibly fortunate generation. For the first time in human history we have the words of the messenger as he typed them into the computer. We have the words he spoke on video and audio tapes. We are blessed with the fact that some of the words we have recorded are from earlier stages, thus documenting our growth in understanding of the truth. And we are blessed to have his final work—the revision of his translation of the Quran which he was working on in the last hours of his life.  

Still, there may be those who have doubts. God answers them:  

“Are they saying, ‘He (Rashad) has fabricated lies about God?’ If God willed, He could have sealed your mind, but God fears falsehood and affirms the truth with His words. He is fully aware of the innermost thoughts.” (42:24)  

That does not mean that new understandings will not continue to come. This fact was acknowledged by Dr. Khalifa himself in his February, 1990 issue of the Submitters’ Perspective: “As stated in 3:81 and 469, God’s Messenger of the Covenant does not bring anything new; everything I receive and pass on to you is already in the Quran. However, the Quran is full of information that is kept by Almighty God for revelation at a specific time.”  

Our knowledge will continue to grow, Inshallah. But it will do just that, it will grow and expand. It does not make sense that the knowledge God gave us through one of His manifest messengers would be wrong, and would need to be corrected: “…can the messenger do anything but deliver the complete message?” (16:35)  

I am saying that the men who are messengers are infallible. Of course not! But I am saying that God is and He will not allow His messengers to contaminate the message with falsehood. In their role as messengers they speak only the truth, the word of God. Remember: ‘They never
Messengership

cont'd

speak on their own, and they strictly follow His commands." (2:27)

If we believe that Rashad Khalifa was a messenger, we must believe in what comes through him. If we do not, do we really believe he was a messenger? Do we really believe he was delivering what God sent?

If we believe that Rashad Khalifa was a messenger, we must accept it when he said that his translation was authorized. We must believe him when he said that the following verses referred to him:

These are God's revelations. We recite them to you, faithfully, for you are one of the messengers. (2:252)

And:

I solemnly swear by the galaxy, precisely running in their orbits. By the night as it falls,

And the moon as it breathes,

This is the utterance of an honest messenger. Authorized by the Possessor of the Throne, fully supported. He shall be obeyed and trusted. Your friend (Rashad) is not crazy. He saw him at the high horizon. He is not holding back any news.

It is not the talk of a rejected devil. Now then, where will you go?

This is a message to all the people. For those who wish to go straight.

Whatever you will is in accordance with the will of God, Lord of the universe. (81:15-29)

There is, of course, the danger of falling into idol worship of the messenger, as millions before us have done. This is something we must all watch out for!

Perhaps it will help to ask ourselves what idol worship of God is, defined in the Quran as believing that anyone or anything other than God can help us (see 22:12 and many other verses). Using that definition, someone might try to argue that we believe Rashad Khalifa explained points of the Quran for us with his footnotes and subtitles, and so he helped us.

Actually, God is the one who explains the Quran: "Our Lord, we do not care $You increase our burden. Our Lord, we do not care if you increase the number of our burdens. (34:19)

How does God explain the Quran though? How does He communicate with us? He tells us: "No human being can communicate with God except through inspiration, or from behind a barrier, or by sending a messenger through Their messenger He reveals what He wills. He is the Most High, Most Wise." (42:51)

Did God send a messenger to explain things? If we accept Rashad Khalifa as a messenger, clearly He did: "O people of the scripture, our messenger has come to you to explain things to you, after a period of time without messengers, lest you say, We did not receive any preacher or warners." A preacher and warners has now come to you. God is Omnipresent." (5:19).

We know from his footnote, that Rashad Khalifa was the messenger referred to in these verses.

This whole issue goes back to whether we accept God as the Doer of everything. If we accept this principle that God is doing everything, it follows easily that He explains the Quran through His messenger. It is not the messenger who is doing the explaining, it is God. The messenger is just the means of communication—He is just delivering the message from God to us.

The danger is in forgetting that the guidance is from God and attributing it to the messenger. The messenger does not really guide or explain or purify. Those things happen through him in accordance with God's will. God is the One who guides and explains and purifies.

The most important lesson Dr. Khalifa strove to teach us is that Quran alone should be our source of religious guidance. How does that fit into the present discussion? Aren't we talking about taking information that is in footnotes and appendices, and not in Quran? No, not actually. Anyone who comes to know the Quran as well as Dr. Khalifa will be able to the same understanding that he did because everything he told us is based in the Quran. He was not speaking on his own; remember 2:27.

God has made things easy for us by solidifying that knowledge for us and giving it to us through a messenger. Do we want to undertake the people who did not accept the comfort and security that God gave to them, saying: "Our Lord, we do not care if you increase our burden. Our Lord, we do not care if you increase the number of our burdens. (34:19)

God has made this knowledge easily available to us. Will we say, thank you God, but we do not want your help?

We know that Satan advocates idol worship and pushes it as hard as he can. He has duped millions upon millions into this trap. We must be very careful of it.

However that is not his only trap. God uses the Children of Israel as examples again and again in the Quran. Their problem was not idolizing their messengers, but minimizing and rejecting them. They followed their scholars and their own egos rather than what came through their messengers: "We have taken a covenant from the Children of Israel, and we sent to them messengers. Whenever a messenger went to them with anything they disliked, some of them rejected, and some they killed." (5:70).

We must be equally careful of this trap. Satan has been able to dupe countless intelligent people into worshiping their messenger without recognizing that is what they are doing. He has also duped countless others into rejecting their messenger without realizing they are doing so.

For the victims of either trap, the result is the same:

Why should God guide people who disbelieved after believing?

And after witnessing that the messenger is true, and after solid proofs have been given to them, God does not guide the wicked.

These have incurred condemnation by God and the angels, and all the people.

Eternally they abide therein: the retribution is never commutated for them, nor will they be reprieved. Exempted are those who repent thereafter, and reform.

Q.1: Muhammad, Most Merciful.
3:88-89

Lisa Spray

And we rendered the sky a guarded ceiling (21:32)

The human being has a tendency to take everything granted. One example of this is the atmosphere that we have come to rely on to provide the air we breathe, among many other things. When we stop and reflect on the fact that one of the most famous verses in the title of this article, we realize how fortunate we are. We know now that, following God's precise design, the earth's atmosphere blocks out all the harmful short wavelength, high-frequency photons, shielding us from the potentially deadly effects of ultraviolet, X-rays, and gamma rays.

Life on earth has evolved beyond a protective blanket of air. Without it, we would hardly last a day, for the influx of high-energy photons (primarily from the sun) would prove lethal. We find almost no high-energy photons in our local environment, and must go beyond the upper atmosphere to encounter these.

All of us should count ourselves fortunate to have an atmosphere that protects us from the electromagnetic waves that would otherwise destroy us. The most important part of this protection consists of the shield against ultraviolet waves, which the sun produces, in great amounts. This atmospheric shield arises from one of the most famous and least understood of all molecules, ozone.

A molecule consists of two or more atoms held together in a single unit. The air that we breathe consists mainly of oxygen molecules (oxygen atoms linked together in pairs, hence the notation O2), and nitrogen molecules (pairs of nitrogen atoms, or N2). These molecules provide some protection against streams of ultraviolet radiation from the sun (and much less important) from other astronomical objects. Although some ultraviolet photons will disappear when they strike oxygen and nitrogen molecules, most would penetrate the atmosphere and strike the earth's surface, were it not for the ozone layer.

Ozone is a relatively rare type of molecule, formed when three oxygen atoms link together (O3) rather than in pairs. Not much attention would be paid to ozone, were it not for the fact that ozone molecules prove remarkably efficient at absorbing ultraviolet photons. By means of this efficiency even a relatively tiny number of ozone molecules, high in the stratosphere, is sufficient to remove almost all the ultraviolet radiation that streams toward the earth.

The One who made the earth habitable for you and the sky a structure...

Ozone molecules are formed from oxygen atoms that are broken apart by the high-energy ultraviolet photons. Some of the individual oxygen atoms recombine to form O3 (ozone) rather than O2 (oxygen molecules).

Not even an atom's weight is out of your Lord's control, be it in the heavens or the earth...

stratosphere, is sufficient to remove almost all the ultraviolet radiation that streams toward the earth.

The One who made the earth habitable for you and the sky a structure...

Ozone layer is a region in the earth's stratosphere—between 7 and 30 miles above the surface. It absorbs much of the harmful ultraviolet radiation from the sun. Ultraviolet radiation is one of the causes of skin cancer. Other types of atoms and molecules in the atmosphere screen out X-rays and gamma rays that reach to the atmosphere.

As if this protection from harmful radiation was not enough, God in His mercy and wisdom allows selected waves to pass through the atmosphere. These waves are not harmful to living organism but instead are of great value to the day-to-day life on earth. Examples are the radio waves, sometimes subdivided into "microwaves" (the same ones used in microwave ovens) and "ordinary" (longer wavelength) radio photons. Today's daily lives would have been quite different without this phenomenon. The television, radio, radar and satellite technologies are just a few examples of today's progress in technologies gained through these wavelength photons. God with His grace taught the humans to harness all this.

He taught Adam all the names (He imparted this important event and to the angels, saying, "Give me the names of these, if you are right.” (2:31)

All this, and much more, have been established for the inhabitants of earth by God, for the purpose of distinguishing those among you who would do better... (6:73)

J. B. Chaudry

Mark Your Calendar

God willing, the next year’s International Conference of United Submitters will be held on June 24-25, in Vancouver, BC, Canada. Details will be given in the coming issues of the Submitter ESL. It will be an important event and to meet submitters from all over the world.