

Introduction

*To things immortal, time can do no wrong,
And that which never is to die, for ever must be young.*

With the passage of time, many great messages have been lost, and those which have survived must be subjected to close scrutiny. How often do we hear and learn a corrupt version of a statement or an event, even if the lapse of time in between was short? It was perhaps for this reason that even Emerson, the famous and comparatively cheerful sage, declared: "*The surest poison is time.*". History has always been haunted by this ravaging and devouring aspect of time.

Ever since man was created, the principle message to him has been that of absolute unity of God, and that all men and women are his slaves. Today, the defaced form of this message is visible in the form of numerous deities, some openly polytheistic, others under the guise of monotheism. The great books revealed to the early Prophets have been victims of profane hands which succeeded even to convert some parts of the sacred texts into the most tasteless and immoral anecdotes and parables. The substance of the original message was deliberately allowed to disappear with a growing number of interpolations.

Humanity today would have had no chance whatsoever to know about the message in its pristine form, had it not been redeemed by the great Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny). Among the hostile people of various shades of faith, some engaged in polytheism while others in dualism and trinity of godhead, his famous simple dictum was: "*Say: There is no God but Allah, and you will be saved*". All gods, made of metal wood or other materials, and those comprising of pious prophets and virtuous men and women, were asked to succumb before one God, Allah, and His Will. He told humanity then, and continues to do so even today, that the eternal message from Allah is that of His absolute unity, and that none be worshipped; not even human desire which lies like a venomous viper in the bosoms.

This great message is enshrined in the Qur'an, the only book of God, which has remained unsullied, untainted, pure and unprofaned. The sure greedy hands of *time could* not destroy the sacrosanct quality of Qur'an, not because it was not tried, – but because Qur'an is inherently incorruptible. It has a style

and form which is inimitable, rendering any change or alteration creeping stealthily into it easily detectable. The transmission of every verse of this great Book has been continuous ever since it left the lips of the Prophet as a revelation from Allah. And then there is the content of the Book, destined to remain an illuminating, ever shining light for those who grope in darkness. Qur'an is irreplaceable.

Our sixth Imam, Ja'far as-Sadiq ('a) has said:

*"Qur'an is living, its message never died. It turns like the turn of day and night, it is in motion like the sun and the moon. It will embrace the last of us, the way it embraced the first of us"*¹

Sadly enough, Muslims have recently initiated a mud slinging match amongst themselves, accusing each other of disbelief in the Qur'an or interpolation. Such an attack from non-Muslims is understandable, because Qur'an stands in a sharp contrast to the corrupted divine texts they hold in their hands. *But why the Muslims?*

Ayatullah Sayyid Abul Qasim al Khui, the great Mujtahid of our era, examines here the subject with an insight singularly his own.

1. Al-Ayyashi

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