

THE QUR'ĀNIC FRAMEWORK OF CERTITUDE IN  
RESPONDING TO RELIGIOUS DOUBTS AMONGST  
MUSLIMS IN THE WEST

BY

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Knowledge and Heritage in Qur'ān and Sunnah Studies

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## ABSTRACT

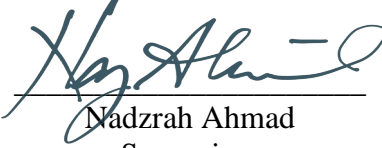
Over the last half-century, millions of Muslims have settled beyond their countries of origin for reasons such as education, employment opportunities, or seeking refuge from injustices and war in their nation-states. This movement of Muslims to the West has resulted in many social, cultural, and religious issues marked by several factors, all of which permeate the development of religious doubt. These factors include acculturation, globalization, secularization, aggressive ideologies like new atheism and evolution, and Islamophobia. As a result, Muslims in the West are increasingly faced with the significant threat, or epidemic, of religious doubt, especially amongst younger generations. It is to the Qur'ān that Muslims look for guidance and certitude, especially when faced with such factors and dealing with religious doubt. This study aims to identify the Qur'ānic framework of certitude in responding to religious doubts among Muslims in the West. This study begins with contextualizing the concepts of certainty, certitude, and doubt. This is followed by an evaluation of the current state of Muslims in the West and the causes of their religious doubts. The most significant causes of religious doubt amongst Muslims in the West identified were moral and social concerns, scientific concerns, philosophical concerns, and trauma through personal experiences. An inductive approach was used to analyze the meanings of the interpretations of Qur'ān, specifically verses related to certainty to establish certitude. This was done through a methodological process of gathering, comparing, and analyzing the discussions of the *mufasssīrūn* in both classical and modern *tafāsīr*. Through this process, four main components of establishing certitude were identified: the *'i'jāz* (inimitability) of the Qur'ān, *al-taddabur* (reflection), *al-'aql* (reason), and *al-fiṭrah* (predisposition). Each component, while general, can be linked to address a specific source of doubt, inculcating an authoritative source of certitude. The *'i'jāz* of the Qur'ān provides certitude through the miraculous nature of the Qur'ān, establishing it as a source of moral authority, addressing doubts motivated by ethical or social concerns. *Tadabbur* forces Muslims to examine the natural world and establish a link through the physical world to the metaphysical Creator, responding to scientific concerns and doubts. *Al-'aql* allows Muslims to uncover the true nature of their origin and purpose, addressing philosophical concerns and doubts. Finally, Muslims are to submit through these *āyāt* (signs) to the Creator by harmoniously embracing their *fiṭrah*, a sign within themselves, instilling certitude while moving away from negative personal experiences as sources of doubt. This study serves as a critical step in finding resolutions to the threats and challenges encountered by Muslims, especially in the West, in preserving their faith and religion. If internalized, this coherent framework, composed of four interrelated components, can respond to the sources of these religious doubts while inculcating an unwavering certitude instilled through the body, mind, soul, and heart.

## ملخص البحث

على مدار العقود الخمسة الماضية، استقر ملايين المسلمين خارج أوطانهم لأسباب متعددة، من بينها السعي إلى التعليم، وفرص العمل، أو البحث عن ملجأ من الظلم والصراعات في بلدانهم الأصلية. وقد أدت هذه الهجرة إلى الغرب إلى بروز العديد من القضايا الاجتماعية والثقافية والدينية، التي أسهمت في انتشار الشكوك الدينية، لا سيما بين الأجيال الشابة. ومن أبرز العوامل التي عززت هذه الظاهرة: التثاقف والعمولة، والعلمانية، والأيدولوجيات المناهضة للدين مثل الإلحاد الجديد ونظرية التطور، إلى جانب تنامي ظاهرة الإسلاموفوبيا. يمثل القرآن الكريم مصدر الهداية واليقين للمسلمين، خاصة عند مواجهة مثل هذه التحديات الفكرية والدينية. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف الإطار القرآني لبناء اليقين، بوصفه نهجًا شاملاً لمعالجة الشكوك الدينية بين المسلمين في الغرب. تبدأ الدراسة بتحديد مفهومي اليقين والشك في سياقهما الفكري، يلي ذلك تقييم للوضع الراهن للمسلمين في الغرب وأبرز أسباب الشكوك الدينية لديهم. وقد حُددت أهم هذه الأسباب في أربعة محاور رئيسية: المخاوف الأخلاقية والاجتماعية، المخاوف العلمية، التساؤلات الفلسفية، والصدمات الناتجة عن التجارب الشخصية. اعتمدت الدراسة المنهج الاستقرائي في تحليل الآيات القرآنية المتعلقة باليقين، بهدف وضع إطار يعزز الثقة والإيمان. وتم ذلك من خلال جمع ومقارنة وتحليل أقوال العلماء في كل من تفاسير المتقدمين والمتأخرين. وأسفر هذا التحليل عن تحديد أربعة مكونات أساسية لترسيخ اليقين: إعجاز القرآن، والتدبر، والعقل، والفتوة. ويمكن ربط كل من هذه العناصر بمعالجة نوع محدد من الشكوك، مما يوفر أساسًا موثوقًا للطمأنينة الدينية. إعجاز القرآن يرسخ اليقين من خلال طبيعته المعجزة، مما يجعله مصدرًا للسلطة الأخلاقية، وبالتالي يعالج الشكوك الناشئة عن القضايا الأخلاقية والاجتماعية. التدبر يدعو إلى التأمل في العالم الطبيعي، مما يعزز الارتباط بين العالم المادي والخالق، ويساهم في إزالة الشكوك العلمية. العقل يساعد في اكتشاف حقيقة الوجود والغاية منه مما يردّ على التساؤلات والشكوك الفلسفية. الفتوة تدفع الإنسان إلى الخضوع للخالق بشكل متناغم مع طبيعته الأصلية، مما يعزز اليقين ويقلل من تأثير التجارب الشخصية السلبية كمصدر للشك. تمثل هذه الدراسة خطوة أساسية في تقديم حلول للتحديات الفكرية والدينية التي تواجه المسلمين، ولا سيما في الغرب، للحفاظ على إيمانهم. ويُظهر النموذج المقترح، إذا ما تم استيعابه، قدرته على مواجهة مصادر الشكوك الدينية، وترسيخ يقين راسخ يشمل الجسد والعقل والروح والقلب.

## APPROVAL PAGE

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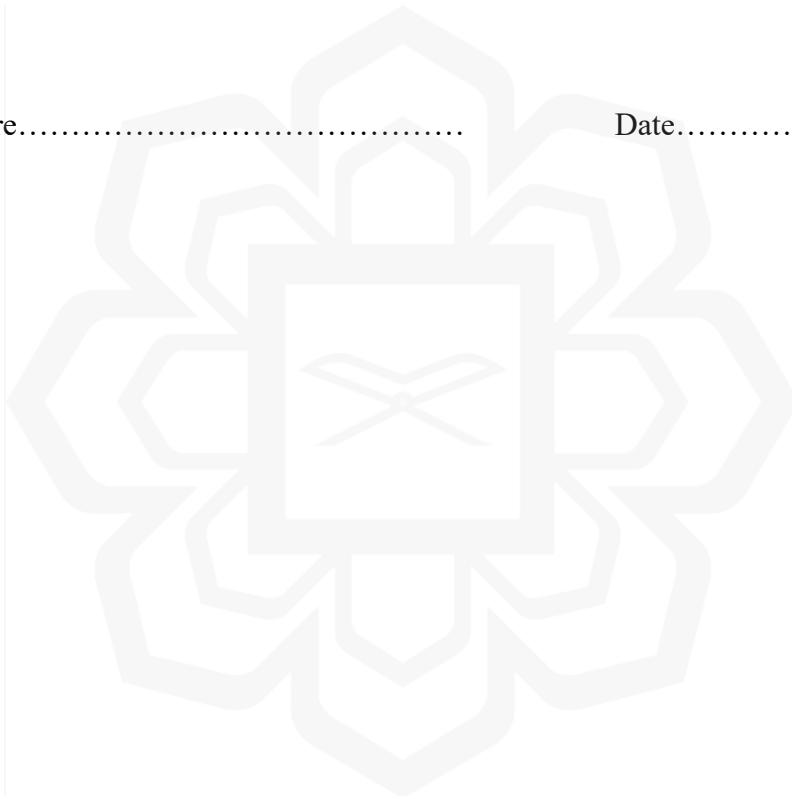
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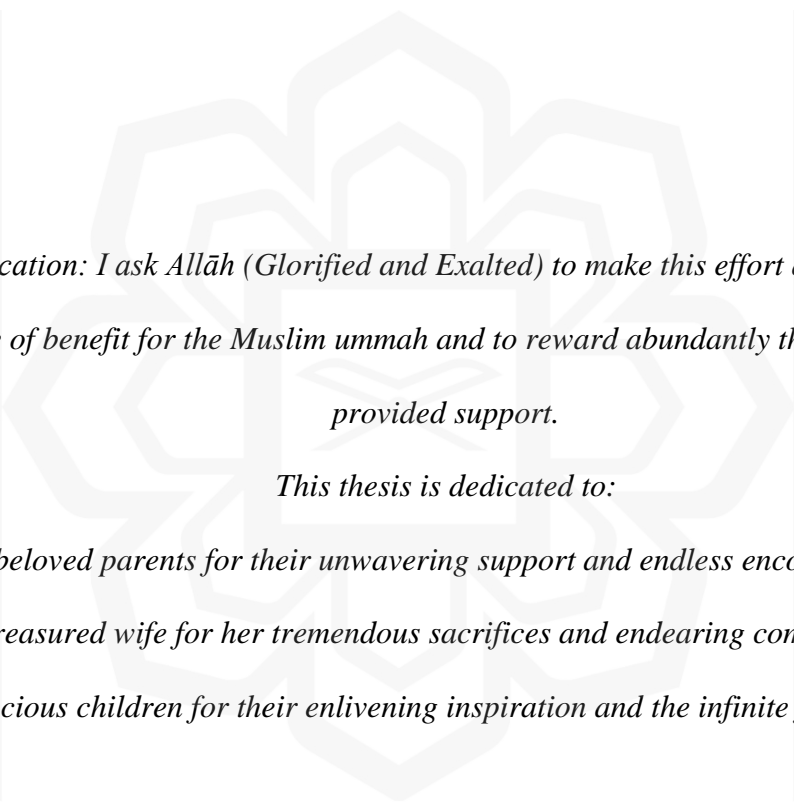
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*Dedication: I ask Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) to make this effort a continuous source of benefit for the Muslim ummah and to reward abundantly those who have provided support.*

*This thesis is dedicated to:*

*My beloved parents for their unwavering support and endless encouragement.*

*My treasured wife for her tremendous sacrifices and endearing companionship.*

*My precious children for their enlivening inspiration and the infinite joy they bring.*

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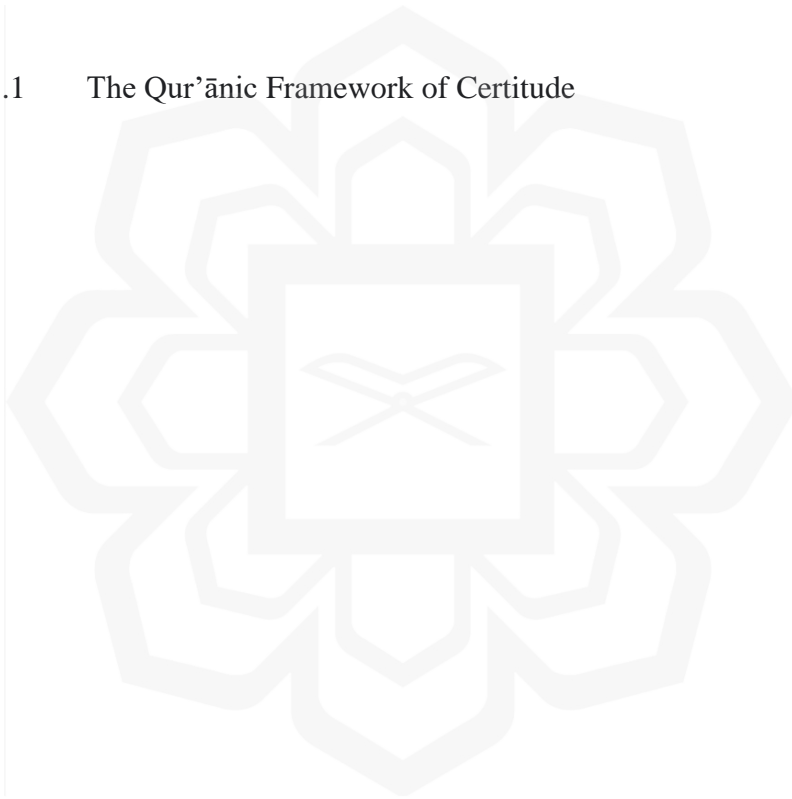
ء	'	خ	kh	ش	Sh	غ	Gh	ن	N
ب	B	د	D	ص	ṣ	ف	F	هـ	H
ت	T	ذ	dh	ض	ḍ	ق	Q	و	W
ث	Th	ر	r	ط	ṭ	ك	K	ي	Y
ج	J	ز	z	ظ	ẓ	ل	L		
ح	ḥ	س	s	ع	ʿ	م	M		

Short Vowels	
ـَ	a
ـِ	i
ـُ	u

Long Vowels	
ا + ـَ	ā
ي + ـِ	ī
و + ـُ	ū

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

There are approximately 30 million Muslims settled in the West today, all with various languages, backgrounds, cultures, and origins.<sup>1</sup> They have chosen to live beyond their countries of origin for reasons including education and employment opportunities or seeking refuge from injustices and war in their nation-states.<sup>2</sup> Although this trend of migration has roots dating back centuries, a substantial number of Muslims have migrated within the last half-century.<sup>3</sup> This movement has resulted in a plethora of social, cultural, and religious issues specific to this population. Contributing to these issues are several factors, all of which permeate the development of a significant consequence, that of religious doubt, which serves as the underlying context of this study. These factors include but are not limited to, acculturation, globalization, secularization, aggressive ideologies like new atheism and evolution, and Islamophobia. It is the Qur'ān that Muslims look to for guidance and certitude, especially when faced with such factors and dealing with religious doubt. It is their source of guidance and truth. Its unwavering claim of certitude cannot be ignored, and solutions potentially lie in further examination. Not only is the content of the Qur'ān exemplary in establishing certitude but the revelation itself can be externally classified to serve the same goal as the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said:

There were none among the prophets but that he was given unique signs to instill faith in humanity. Verily, I have been given the revelation that Allah has inspired in me, so I hope to have the most followers on the Day of Resurrection.<sup>4</sup>

The revelation refers to the Qur'ān, and its power to provide religious certitude is reflected in its potential in that of all faiths; it will have the most followers. Thus, the construct of certitude in the Qur'ān must be identified, allowing for a process that can

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<sup>1</sup> Nigar G. Khawaja, "Acculturation of the Muslims Settled in the West," *Journal of Muslim Mental Health*, vol. 10, no. 1 (July 2016): 3.

<sup>2</sup> Khawaja, "Acculturation of the Muslims," 4.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī, *Saḥīḥ Muslim*, Taḥqīq Nazar bin Muḥammad, (Riyādh, Dar Ṭaybah, 2006), Vol 1, 1, Ḥadīth no. 291.

be implemented to respond to these doubts. This study can be summarized as an identification of the framework of certitude presented in the Qur’ān in response to the religious doubts faced by Muslims in the West.

## 1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

There is an urgent need to address the significant threat of religious doubt faced by Muslims in the West, particularly among younger generations.<sup>5</sup> Muslim religious leaders in the West have noted increases in interactions with Muslims who doubt. Remarkably, some leaders have gone to the extent of labelling it an “epidemic,” classifying doubting faith as the norm rather than the exception.<sup>6</sup> While the data on this issue is still emerging, its significance cannot be overstated. The development of comprehensive approaches to address these doubts is crucial for the future of Islam, especially for young Muslims in the West.<sup>7</sup> An example of a young student named Amin validates this notion. When Amin started having questions about his religion, no answers were provided. His doubt instead was dismissed through simplistic notions attributing them to whisperings of the devil or the absence of critical thinking.<sup>8</sup> This eventually led him to leave Islam altogether. His first method was to ask and seek answers to his doubts in any form, but he failed to receive any support or guidance in response. Unfortunately, Amin's singular example is not an isolated experience.

This is a remarkable contrast to the nature of the Qur’ān. From its opening, it establishes itself as a text that not only contains no doubt but also presents a construct of certitude that extends beyond a simplistic set of arguments. Little research has been done in dealing with the religious doubts of Muslims in the West, and considerably less towards responding to these doubts. Some may argue that to address this issue thoroughly; more research should be undertaken to elaborate on the roots and causes of these doubts. This can be answered in two ways. Firstly, it cannot be delayed as an endemic must be dealt with before it becomes a pandemic. Secondly, with the text of

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<sup>5</sup> Youssef Chouhoud, “Modern Pathways to Doubt in Islam,” Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research (2016), 7.

<sup>6</sup> Chouhoud, “Modern Pathways to Doubt,” 6.

<sup>7</sup> Maria Vliek, “It’s Not Just about Faith: Narratives of Transformation When Moving Out of Islam in the Netherlands and Britain,” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, vol. 30, no. 3 (3 July 2019): 323–44, 330.

<sup>8</sup> Vliek, “It’s Not Just about Faith”, 330.

the Qur'ān aiming to establish certitude in the light of such doubt, it is a logical step that must be undertaken regardless of prior research. The research gap remains in identifying a Qur'ānic framework of certitude in response to these doubts faced by Muslims in the West. This study will attempt to identify the construct of certitude in the Qur'ān in response to the religious doubts faced by Muslims in the West.

### **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- 1) What is the current state of Muslims in the West in relation to religious doubt?
- 2) What are the main components of the formulation of the construct of certitude in the Qur'ān?
- 3) How do these components form a Qur'ānic framework in responding to religious doubts Muslims face in the West?

### **1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

- 1) To explore the causes and consequences of religious doubt amongst Muslims in the West
- 2) To extract and analyze the components of the construct of certitude from the Qur'ān
- 3) To present a framework of these components of religious certitude in response to the doubts faced by Muslims in the West

### **1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The study is significant in that it can provide a framework to respond to the most common causes of religious doubt among Muslims in the West. It serves as a starting point for internal faith and eventually external actions deemed ethical and moral based on that established belief. While certainty can often be seen as establishing the veracity of a specific claim or set of claims, certitude goes beyond that.<sup>9</sup> Certitude is not reached solely through abstract proofs of theoretical discussion, nor is its influence limited to

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<sup>9</sup> Walter Cerf, 'Certainty and Certitude', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 13, no. 4 (1953): 515–24, 520.

those aspects. Instead, it is a practical precursor that motivates and drives our actions.<sup>10</sup> It is a spiritual process necessary for morality and faith, for both action and spirituality. It is the embodiment of the actions of the heart, which in turn is the embodiment of the actions of the body.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, establishing certitude through this study potentially serves dual purposes: externally, as a starting point for a response or solution to the epidemic of religious doubt faced by Muslims in the West, and internally, as an establishment of a spiritual experience that inspires the necessary courage and perseverance to act in this world based on what we believe and value.

## 1.6 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

This study is ambitious in its methodology. Each component of certitude in the Qur'ān could be the subject of an independent research study. This, however, would alter the scope and purpose of this study. It would then be reduced to multiple studies of concepts or components of certitude in the Qur'ān towards eradicating religious doubt, perhaps making it less impactful. This study aims to present a framework of certitude in response to religious doubts. It formulates a path to external certainty and, more notably, internal certitude. These coexisting components complement each other and potentially transform a concept of certainty into a construct of certitude. Another limitation could be seen in the contextual background of religious doubt of Muslims only in the West. This, however, has been done with purpose. Studies have shown that although religiosity levels are decreasing in the West, even amongst Muslims.<sup>12</sup> This lessens the need for such a study in the context of Muslims worldwide and would perhaps be too challenging to be applied successfully. A third limitation could be seen in the limited sample and data available regarding the doubts faced by Muslims in the West. This can be offset, however, with a deeper analysis of the plethora of studies done before and after this process. The process before evaluates how religious doubt originates, and the after refers to studies presenting data on Muslims in the West leaving Islam. The study then, despite these perceived limitations, seeks to provide an analysis of this construct that could be as impactful in its theory as it could be in its application.

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<sup>10</sup> Cerf, 'Certainty and Certitude', 524.

<sup>11</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyyah, *Madārij al-Sālikīn*, (dar al-Hadith, al-Qāhirah: 2013), 757.

<sup>12</sup> Ronald F. Inglehart, *Religion's Sudden Decline: What's Causing It, and What Comes Next?* (Oxford University Press, 2021), 83.

## 1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study will employ an inductive approach by building on previous research discussing the situation of Muslims in the West. A coherent context will be theorized through this inductive research to understand the environment of Muslims living in the West and the factors influencing their identities, beliefs, and practices. A structured evaluation of primary and secondary Western sources on religious doubt will uncover the notions surrounding this construct to identify the main contributors. Once this is achieved, an analytical method will be used to examine the Qur'ān through a multi-dimensional approach. Initially, all concepts and occurrences of certainty and doubt in the Qur'ān will be evaluated by gathering, comparing, and analyzing the discussions of the *mufasssirūn* (Qur'ānic exegetes) in both classical and modern *tafāsīr* (Qur'ānic exegesis) on related verses. This process will comprehensively identify and extract the components of certitude in the Qur'ān and analyze the themes they identify with. This analysis will be done through an examination of these themes in books including but not limited to *Madārij al-Salikīn* by Ibn al-Qayyim, *al-Itqān* by al-Suyūṭī, *Kitāb al-Kashf* by Ibn Rushd, *al-Munqid min al-Ḍalāl* by al-Ghazālī, and *Majmō' al-Fatawā* by ibn-Taymiyyah. Through this methodology, the objectives of this study will potentially be met and contribute to the development of the construct of certitude.

### 1.7.1 Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

The proposed research is primarily library-based and will accommodate qualitative research methods. Inductive, analytical, and interpretive approaches will complement each other in the collection and analysis of data. The concepts of certainty and doubt in the Qur'ān will be examined by collecting data from existing studies and discussions surrounding these concepts. It will also include a surface and contextual analysis of the occurrences of certainty and doubt in the Qur'ān. These concepts have been mentioned in various contexts, and further data will be collected on the most relevant of them in this study through the books of *tafāsīr*.

The study will also make use of historical data and case studies outlining the factors that influence the religious beliefs of Muslims in the West. This data will be collected from Western literature examining Muslims primarily in North America and Western Europe. It will present a background to understand what causes religious doubt.

Several studies will also be evaluated that have presented some of the causes and consequences of religious doubt amongst Muslims in the West. This data will allow us to understand the state of Muslims in the West and the doubts they face.

Finally, to identify the components of certitude to respond to these doubts, the study will utilize and collect relevant data on the Qur'ān from classical and contemporary collections of *tafāsīr* including, but not limited to, al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, Ibn 'Āshūr, al-'Sadī, and al-Shinqīṭī. This will be done through a keyword search of the terms 'doubt' and 'certainty' in all their morphological forms. A comparative analysis of these works uncovering this chapter's depths will help extract all necessary components of certitude. Once these components have been revealed, each will be discussed within the context of the theme they relate to. This will be done by researching the works of scholars such as Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Qayyim, Ibn Rushd, Ibn Abi Duinā, al-Ghazālī, and al-Razī along with orientalist perspectives, when necessary and relevant. Finally, a holistic approach will be taken to develop a framework of these components to attain certitude.

## **1.8 LITERATURE REVIEW**

The nature of this study is multifaceted. It seeks to first develop a context of Muslims in the West concerning their religious doubts. Then, through this lens, it will analyze the construction of certitude as a process in the Qur'ān. Therefore, the literature reviewed will reflect these two major constructs as the study seeks to build upon previous research.

In her study, "It's Not Just about Faith: Narratives of Transformation When Moving Out of Islam in the Netherlands and Britain," Maria Vliek provides an extensive view of the narratives of individuals in the Netherlands and Britain who have moved out of Islam. Its expansive nature is reflected in the depth of the narratives through establishing four central themes. She examines five case studies of individuals who have chosen to leave Islam. She uncovers the motivations outside of the faith that propels these individuals to leave Islam, including political, social, ethnic, and gender-based, usually stemming from negative religious experiences leading to religious doubt.<sup>13</sup> She

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<sup>13</sup> Vliek, "It's Not Just about Faith," 323.

found social-related themes dominant in the Netherlands for reasons to leave Islam, while in Britain, themes of secularization were more prevalent.<sup>14</sup> A large part of the motivation to leave Islam stems from religious doubts. What is most revealing is not her framing of these narratives but the processes of establishing them. This can be directly observed in the response the individuals presented when revealing their religious doubts. Their religious doubts were dismissed repeatedly, often minimized to whispers of the devil or the absence of critical thinking.<sup>15</sup> This research is paramount in expanding on these narratives and providing a contextual background.

A study by Yaqeen Institute, “Modern Pathways to Doubt in Islam,” presents a much-needed reflection on the actual causes of religious doubt faced by Muslims in the West. The study, a blend of qualitative and quantitative, found three core categories of religious doubt: moral and social concerns, philosophical and scientific concerns, and personal trauma.<sup>16</sup> Moral and social concerns include gender roles, sexuality, and historical events.<sup>17</sup> Philosophical and scientific concerns include the theory of evolution, perceived irreconcilability between science and religion, and personal trauma, including both individual and social experiences such as communal judgment and racism.<sup>18</sup> It is a study of paramount importance that needs to be expanded upon further. Its conclusion is deeply impactful in the form of two significant contributions. The first is a realization that religious doubt is a frequently occurring problem for Muslims in the West, even described sometimes as “normal.” Second, it elaborates on the pathways that lead to or contribute to this doubt. The study, however, does not delve into any possible methods of eradicating doubt, thereby helping to set up the current research.

Another study by Yaqeen Institute, “In Pursuit of Conviction: Faith and Certainty,” aims to restore clarity to Muslims and nurture their certainty in the six tenets of faith: God, Angels, Scripture, Prophethood, Afterlife, and Destiny. It presents various pathways to spirituality, including an intellectual experience, a moral experience, a sacred experience, and an understanding of *tawḥeed*, the essence of Faith in Islam.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Vliek, “It’s Not Just about Faith,” 339.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 330.

<sup>16</sup> Chouhoud, “Modern Pathways to Doubt,” 8.

<sup>17</sup> Chouhoud, “Modern Pathways to Doubt,” 11.

<sup>18</sup> Chouhoud, “Modern Pathways to Doubt,” 17.

<sup>19</sup> Zouhair Abdur-Rahman, “Faith and Certainty: In Pursuit of Conviction,” Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research (2019), 14.

Certainty is presented as a spiritual pursuit, as discussed by several traditional scholars of Islam. The study concludes that rather than requiring external validation, the six pillars of faith might present enough evidence for certainty of belief in themselves.<sup>20</sup> What seems to be a circular argument could be understood in relation to the strength of these principles through deep spiritual reflection. However, the pathway to achieve certainty is presented as a somewhat fluctuating analysis of existing proofs and discourse. It serves as an introduction to this subject and must be expanded upon as a deeper understanding of certitude is required.

*The Divine Reality*, a book by Hamza Tzortzis, is a reflection on God and Islam, specifically in the context of the mirage of new Atheism.<sup>21</sup> The author sets to re-establish the kalam cosmological argument for the existence of God and the truth of Islam. After delivering an introduction to Atheism, he goes through several classic arguments, including the Qur'ān's argument for God, the design of the universe, the messenger of God, and the worship of God, all set to finally leading to a transformation of the heart, which reflects the certainty of a believer. It sets itself as a collection of responses and a selection of arguments that partly aim to instill certainty in God and religion in Muslims and non-Muslims alike. It is, in part, a deeply personal reflection, a collection of philosophical arguments, a brief exploration of the Qur'ān, and an invitation to reflect and respond. It does not deal with religious doubts and only sources the Qur'ān as a modal of certainty in a limited fashion.

“Doubt, suspicion, and certainty in the Noble Qur'an” is a stylistic analysis of the preceding terms. The author seeks to distinguish each term through a contextual analysis of their occurrence in the Qur'ān. It concludes that each is used in its absolute place, not allowing for any substitution that serves a distinct linguistic and contextual purpose.<sup>22</sup> The study establishes the distinctiveness of each term by studying the relationship between the three terms. Although this study is primarily linguistic in nature, it still deals with the essence or concept of certainty in the Qur'ān, providing room for further analysis.

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<sup>20</sup> Abdur-Rahman, “Faith and Certainty,” 38.

<sup>21</sup> Hamza Andreas Tzortzis, *The Divine Reality: God, Islam & The Mirage Of Atheism*, (FB Publishing, 2016).

<sup>22</sup> Sahar Fathy Mohamed Hegazy, “Doubt, suspicion, and certainty in the Noble Qur'an: A Stylistic Study,” in *Journal of Scientific Research in Arts*, 3, (2022) 25-91.

“Al-Yaqīn bayna al-Qur’ān wa al-falsafah” is a study of the concept of certainty in the Qur’ān concerning philosophical understandings and contexts. It starts by defining the term certainty through Qur’ān and by philosophers, setting a methodology for the remainder of the study. It examines the focus of the Qur’ān on certainty as an elevated branch of knowledge and then discusses types of certainty. These include an external certainty related to external proofs and an internal certainty, classified as certitude in this study. Certainty can also increase and decrease, likening it to *Imān* or faith.<sup>23</sup> The second chapter deals exclusively with certainty in general philosophy and Islamic philosophy. The pathways to certainty are described as reasoning, material experiences, repeated experiences, and corroborated reports that extinguish any possibility of doubts.<sup>24</sup> It ends with a discussion of certainty in modern philosophy, providing a strong link between the Qur’ān, certainty, and classic modern and Islamic philosophy. However, it does not address doubts directly, nor does it analyze the construction of certainty outside the realm of philosophy.

One of the most extensive studies surrounding the concept of certainty is a book titled *Al-Yaqīn fī al-Qur’ān al-Karīm (Certainty in the Noble Qur’ān)*. It establishes the importance of certainty in the Qur’ān by analysing its occurrence in all forms. It determines that the word *yaqīn* was revealed in the Qur’ān 28 times, in 5 different patterns.<sup>25</sup> This conveys that it is an action or state that a believer should constantly be in that distinguishes them from others. The study also explores the relationship between certainty and knowledge and concludes that it is one of the primary goals of the Qur’ān. It breaks down the concept of certainty into two factions: first, through the belief in a creator, and second, through attaining beneficial and sound knowledge.<sup>26</sup> It concludes with a profound statement that the opposite of certainty is ignorance, not doubt.<sup>27</sup> This implies that certainty may be attained through a specific type of knowledge that eradicates all doubt. This study provides a partial framework; however, it does not analyze the entire construct of certitude nor consider any existing doubts.

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<sup>23</sup> Lawtis ‘Alī Muḥammad ‘Alī, *Al-Yaqīn bayna al-Qur’ān wa al-falsafah*, *Al-Dirasāt al-Islāmiyyah wa al-Arabīyyah lī al-Banāt*, vol. 22, no.1 (2007), 197-265.

<sup>24</sup> ‘Alī, *Al-Yaqīn bayna al-Qur’ān wa al-falsafah*, 245.

<sup>25</sup> Wafā’ bint ‘Abdullāh al-Z’āfi, *Al-Yaqīn fī al-Quran al-Karīm*, (Dar al-Ḥaḍārah: Al-Riyād, 2016), 242.

<sup>26</sup> Al-Z’āfi, *Al-Yaqīn fī al-Quran al-Karīm*, 265.

<sup>27</sup> Al-Z’āfi, *Al-Yaqīn fī al-Quran al-Karīm*, 297.

Finally, perhaps the most relevant study is a PhD thesis titled, “Manhaj al-Qur’ān al-Karīm fī Ta’sīs al-Yaqīn al-‘Aqdī” (The methodology of Qur’ān in establishing religious certainty). The first chapter defines the terms of the study, including certainty and belief through both the Qur’ān and Prophetic hadith. These include absolute truth, faith, knowledge, and death.<sup>28</sup> It also explores words that reflect the meaning of certainty, such as tranquillity, knowledge, wisdom, and intuition.<sup>29</sup> It examines the benefits of achieving certainty, including guidance and success, leadership in this world and the next, and a sound mind. It presents the conditions of attaining certainty as proper understanding, humility, abstaining from speech without knowledge, and following the companions of the last Prophet (Peace and Blessings be Upon Him). Finally, the heart of the study presents certain factors that contribute to attaining certainty including the establishment of revelation, a sound mind, and the inclination of man. This is accompanied by proofs such as a gradual revelation, clarity in relaying knowledge, and the use of strategies and evidence that vary due to the seeker depending on its suitability. The study, however, relies primarily on verses of the Qur’ān. For example, in its discussion of how a sound mind can lead to certainty, about 15 verses of the Qur’ān are referred to. The research is then limited in two ways. The first is that it does not address religious doubt. Secondly, it only limits itself to verses of the Qur’ān and extracting principles or intricacies about the concept of certainty. The proposed study seeks to go beyond that in both ways. First, by analyzing and understanding the context of religious doubt, specifically amongst Muslims in the West today. Secondly, by expanding the sources of discussion of the concept of certitude beyond other verses of the Qur’ān. It is comparable to the proposed study, perhaps only in the singular aspect of semantic and sometimes contextual definitions.

Most previous research surrounding the concept of certainty in the Qur’ān has been limited to the Arabic language. Along with this, certainty has only been explored through the Qur’ān, Hadith, or, in exceptional cases, the study of philosophy. Previous research has also been divided between religious doubt and certainty. Some dealt exclusively with religious doubt, its causes, effects, and consequences, while other studies dealt only with the Qur’ān in the context of attaining certainty through a minimal framework. Surprisingly, it seems that a study has yet to combine both themes to discuss

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<sup>28</sup> ‘Abd al-Hakīm ‘Ubāyd, *Manhaj al-Quran al-Karim fī Ta’sīs al-Yaqīn al-‘Aqdī*, (Phd thesis, The University of Algeria, 2018), 8.

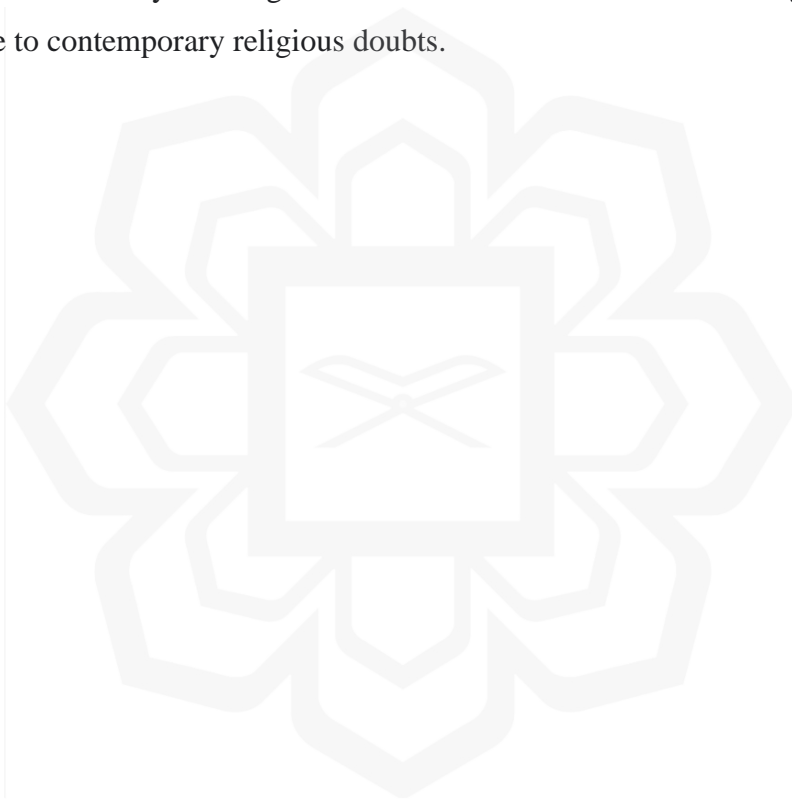
<sup>29</sup> ‘Ubāyd, *Manhaj al-Quran al-Karim*, 44.

the concept of certainty in the Qur'ān in relation to religious doubt. Additionally, the construct of certitude has yet to be specified for research, particularly concerning religious doubt. This is somewhat surprising as the text of the Qur'ān so decisively presents itself without any hesitation, potentially solving the issue of doubts faced by many Muslims. It is a gap that needs to be filled to address these doubts while also contributing to the attainment of external certainty and an internal certitude that can inspire the mind and spirit alike.

A review of the literature reveals several critical gaps in the study of religious doubt and certitude in relation to the Qur'ān, particularly as it pertains to Muslims in the West. Existing research has primarily focused on two distinct areas: the causes and consequences of religious doubt and the concept of certainty within the Qur'ān. However, no comprehensive study has integrated these themes to analyze how the Qur'ān's construct of certainty can address and resolve contemporary religious doubts. This lack of integration is especially significant given the growing challenges faced by Muslims in Western societies, such as secularism, moral relativism, and personal trauma. Moreover, while some studies, such as those by Yaqeen Institute, provide valuable insights into the causes of religious doubt, they fall short of exploring how certitude can be constructed in responding to these doubts. Similarly, research on certitude often focuses solely on deriving principles from Qur'ānic verses without contextualizing them to address modern challenges. This approach limits the applicability of the findings to the lived experiences of Muslims today. Additionally, much of the existing research remains confined to linguistic or philosophical analyses, which, while foundational, fail to provide a holistic framework that incorporates practical applications, current contexts, or theology.

Another significant gap lies in the limited focus on non-Arabic-speaking audiences. Research on certitude has predominantly been conducted within Arabic-language frameworks, making it less accessible to diverse Muslim populations, especially in non-Arabic-speaking Western contexts. This limitation leaves a void in addressing the unique needs of these communities. Furthermore, few studies employ empirical methods to explore how Qur'ānic principles of certainty can be operationalized to resolve doubts stemming from issues like secularism, scientific skepticism, or negative personal experiences.

The current study will address these gaps by analyzing the concept of certitude in the Qur'ān as a response to religious doubts among Muslims in the West. It seeks to integrate the themes of doubt and certitude into a unified framework while contextualizing Qur'ānic guidance to modern doubts. The study will provide a comprehensive framework for the Qur'ān's formation of certitude by broadening the scope of sources and methodologies beyond linguistic and philosophical frameworks. Additionally, the research will be tailored to non-Arabic-speaking audiences to ensure its relevance and accessibility. Finally, it will explore empirical evidence to validate the Qur'ān's approach to resolving doubts and achieving certainty. This study seeks to fill a significant void by offering a unified and actionable understanding of certitude in response to contemporary religious doubts.



## CHAPTER TWO

### CONTEXTUALIZING CERTITUDE

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

In modern contexts relating to the philosophy of knowledge, some have rejected the concept of obtaining absolute certainty.<sup>30</sup> It has been contended that it may be impossible to attain certainty as it stems from our limited perspective and understanding of knowledge.<sup>31</sup> Others, however, have reasoned that the desire to obtain certainty is embedded in the nature of the inquiring mind.<sup>32</sup> It is the aim of our questioning, which is a form of doubt, as the mind seeks clarity and the assurance of truth. There has also always been a link between certainty and religious belief or faith, with certainty often portrayed as a “necessary component” of religious faith.<sup>33</sup> Specifically, this concept is deeply embedded in the philosophy and theology of the Islamic faith through both the Qur’ān and *Sunnah* (Prophetic traditions). These two constructs of the possession of certainty being an intrinsic part of the human mind, along with this necessary requirement for religious faith, confirm its relevance and significance. To identify this construct, it must first be defined in relation to certitude and doubt, and then it can be contextualized to provide a relevant framework.

#### 2.2 THE LEVELS OF *IDRĀK* (PERCEPTION)

Certainty is related to perception and understanding; thus, to actualize the concept of certainty, it should be contextualized in relation to *idrāk*<sup>34</sup>. The word *idrāk* stems from a root that denotes a sense of achievement or attaining a purpose or goal.<sup>35</sup> Technically, it has been defined as attaining an accurate perception of something.<sup>36</sup> However, it is

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<sup>30</sup> Luca Zanetti, ‘The Quest for Certainty’, *Kriterion – Journal of Philosophy* 35, no. 1 (1 March 2021): 71–95, 71.

<sup>31</sup> Zanetti, ‘The Quest for Certainty,’ 72.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> N. K. Verbin, ‘Uncertainty and Religious Belief’, *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 51, no. 1 (2002): 1–37, 2.

<sup>34</sup> Baruch Fischhoff, Paul Slovic, and Sarah Lichtenstein, “Knowing with Certainty: The Appropriateness of Extreme Confidence.,” *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance* 3, no. 4 (1977): 552–64, 552.

<sup>35</sup> Najīb Iskandar Ibrāhīm, *Mu’jam al-Ma’ānī*, 1st ed. (Baghdād: Maṭba’at al-Zamān, 1971), 1335.

<sup>36</sup> Ibrāhīm, *Mu’jam al-Ma’ānī*, 1335.

not always accurate, as many factors influence the level of one's perception. *Idrāk* has five levels.<sup>37</sup> The higher the level, the more precise the perception.

### 2.2.1 *Al-ʿIlm* (Certainty)

The first and highest level of *idrāk* is *al-ʿilm*, often translated as knowledge, but referring more accurately to certainty or knowledge based upon and accompanied by certainty.<sup>38</sup> *ʿIlm* has been defined as the accurate and precise perception of something based upon evidence.<sup>39</sup> Al-Ġhazālī explains that this stage of perception cannot be achieved by simply quoting authoritative texts but rather through an individual's search for the truth.<sup>40</sup> Part of comprehending this level is conceptualizing what actual knowledge or perception is in relation to certainty.<sup>41</sup> Al-Ġhazālī further expressed this notion when he explained that when he seeks *ʿilm*, he must first inquire about the true meaning of knowledge or certainty.<sup>42</sup> That is to say that it would be challenging to identify knowledge unless actual knowledge is defined first. This level also must be established to the point where it is unshakable, no matter how strongly challenged. For example, if someone claimed that two is more than ten and hoped to prove this by changing a stick into a snake, one would adhere to the certainty of two being less than ten.<sup>43</sup> Certainty remains the highest form of *idrāk* and should be sought after by every mind in matters of importance.

### 2.2.2 *Al-Zann* (Dominant Belief)

The second level of *idrāk* is *al-zann*, which is dominant or probable belief.<sup>44</sup> This stage is defined as a lower level of perception than certainty. This is because it may reach high probability but not absolute certainty. There is a chance of being incorrect. It is

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<sup>37</sup> Muḥammad Šāliḥ al-ʿUṭḥayimīn et al., *Explanation of the Three Fundamental Principles of Islaam* (Birmingham: Al-Hidaayah Publ. and Distr, 1997), 2.

<sup>38</sup> Al-ʿUṭḥayimīn et al., *Explanation of the Three Fundamental Principles*, 2.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Tamara Albertini, 'Crisis and Certainty of Knowledge in Al-Ghazālī (1058-1111) and Descartes (1596-1650)', *Philosophy East and West* 55, no. 1 (2005): 1–14, 5.

<sup>41</sup> Albertini, 'Crisis and Certainty of Knowledge in Al-Ghazālī,' 5.

<sup>42</sup> Ghazzālī and Richard Joseph McCarthy, *Deliverance from Error: An Annotated Translation of al-Munqidh Min al-Dalāl and Other Relevant Works of Al-Ghazali* (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 1999), 63.

<sup>43</sup> Ghazzālī and McCarthy, *Deliverance from Error*, 63.

<sup>44</sup> Al-ʿUṭḥayimīn et al., *Explanation of the Three Fundamental Principles*, 37.

also defined as selecting what one may perceive as true with the possibility of another outcome being more accurate.<sup>45</sup> This level does not generate certainty without looking deeply through evidence and reflection. After this process, if deemed correct, it may generate a lower level of certainty. Ibn Kathīr gives the example of the verses;

﴿كَلَّا إِذَا بَلَغَتِ التَّرَاقِيَ﴾

No! When it [i.e., the soul] has reached the collar bones<sup>46</sup>

﴿وَقِيلَ مَنْ سَاقٍ﴾

And it is said, "Who will cure [him]?"<sup>47</sup>

﴿وَوَظَنَّ أَنَّهُ الْفِرَاقُ﴾

And he [i.e., the dying one] is certain that it is the [time of] separation.<sup>48</sup>

He explains that when the soul reaches the collarbone, the dying one has two conclusions: that death is imminent or it is not.<sup>49</sup> Within these circumstances, the individual reflects upon the situation and concludes, with certainty, that it is the moment of separation from this world, also known as death.<sup>50</sup> This process exemplifies *ẓann*, in which the degree of certainty varies before and after evaluating the evidence. Al-Ṭabarī states that *ẓann*, in the context of the verse, refers to the certainty of death.<sup>51</sup> Al-Zarkashī contextualizes that every mention of *ẓann* in the Qur'ān that is preceded by the article *innā* or *annā* (indeed) denotes certainty as it is attained after an evaluation and reflection of the evidence and situation.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Al-ʿUṭhayimīn et al., *Explanation of the Three Fundamental Principles*, 37.

<sup>46</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 75:26.

<sup>47</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 75:27

<sup>48</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 75:28

<sup>49</sup> Ismā'īl ibn ʿUmar ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm: Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, (Riyād: Dār al-Ṭaybah, 1999), 75:26.

<sup>50</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, 75:26.

<sup>51</sup> Abī Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr Al-Ṭabarī: Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān*, 1st ed. (al-Riyād: Dār 'Ālam al-Kutub, 2003), 75:28.

<sup>52</sup> Muḥammad ibn al-Ṭayyib Bāqillānī Suyūfī, *Al-Itqān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān*, (Dār al-Qahramān: Istānbūl, 1978), 1:150.

### **2.2.3 Al-Shakk (Doubt)**

The third level of *idrāk* is known as *al-shakk* or doubt. This stage is defined by an equal possibility of multiple truths or outcomes without concluding that one is greater or more accurate.<sup>53</sup> An introduction through an example is a jar containing only blue and green marbles, each the exact same amount. The chance of selecting a green marble is equal to that of the blue. In this way, it is a matter of seemingly equal outcomes. Contextually, a better example to build upon this would be of an individual waking up in the morning, not knowing what day it is. They believe it to be either Monday or Tuesday, without evidence to choose one over the other. They are now in a state of *shakk*. What's fundamental is that one of the outcomes is correct, but they lack the evidence to deem the truth or are stuck between two pieces of evidence of equal strength, epitomizing the state of *shakk*.

### **2.2.4 Al-Wahm (Delusion)**

The fourth level of *idrāk* is known as *al-wahm*, or delusion. This is defined as the perception of something as the opposite of what it truly is.<sup>54</sup> This is the exact opposite of *ẓann*. The former results in an erroneous conclusion opposite to truth and certainty, while the latter is a lower level of certainty.<sup>55</sup> For example, an individual is adamant that today is Monday, but it is Friday. They are now in a state of *wahm* perceiving that the current day is Monday. This level, although seemingly hopeless, may accept change based on evidence. If the same individual was given proof that today is, in fact, Friday, they may take it as accurate, thereby exiting this level for another.

### **2.2.5 Al-Jahl and al-Jahl al--Murakab (Ignorance and Compound Ignorance)**

The fifth level of *idrāk* can be divided into two sub-categories: *al-jahl*, ignorance, and *al-jalh al-murakab*, compound ignorance. Simple ignorance refers to the inability to reach any conclusion as the individual does not know but is still aware of their ignorance. It is as simple as stating, 'I don't know.' If one were to be questioned about

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<sup>53</sup> Al-ʿUḥayimīn et al., *Explanation of the Three Fundamental*, 37.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Al-ʿUḥayimīn et al., *Explanation of the Three Fundamental*, 37.

the specific number of fish in the Pacific Ocean, they would undoubtedly be in a state of *jahl*, simply not knowing. Compound ignorance is defined as the perception of something opposite of what is true while having internal certitude that it is correct.<sup>56</sup> This is when an individual is ignorant of their ignorance and still believes their perception to be entirely accurate, thus resulting in compounding levels of ignorance.

## 2.3 DEFINING DOUBT THROUGH THE QUR'ĀN AND SUNNAH

The concept of doubt in the Qur'ān and Sunnah has different semantic representations denoting various levels or stages. The words *shakk* and *rayb* have both been used in the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* to denote contextual forms of doubt. Some have concluded that both these words are synonymous in that *shakk* holds the same meaning as *rayb*.<sup>57</sup> Others have distinguished that *rayb* entails a deeper layer of discomfort and confusion beyond *shakk* or simple doubt.<sup>58</sup>

### 2.3.1 Defining *Shakk* (Doubt)

The word *shakk* derives its meaning from the gathering of two things into one.<sup>59</sup> This meaning is suitable as, technically, *shakk* is defined as the gathering of two opposing and contradictory views without the ability to confirm one over the other.<sup>60</sup> *Shakk* may be in regards to the existence of something, or if it is beneficial or not as a whole, or in part of its characteristics.<sup>61</sup> Imām Fakhr al-Rāzī defined *rayb* as similar to *shakk* except that it possesses a connotation of negativity. You may have *shakk* in a person, unaware of their reality or specific characteristics. However, when you have *rayb* of them, it implies a negative connotation in that you think badly of them.<sup>62</sup> *Shakk* is the beginning stage of *rayb*, just as knowledge is the first stage of certainty. A person may have *shakk*

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<sup>56</sup> Al-'Uḥayimīn et al., *Explanation of the Three Fundamental*, 37.

<sup>57</sup> Abī Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ḥaqq ibn Ghālib ibn 'Aṭīyah al-Andalusī, *Al-Muḥarrar al-Wajīz Fī Tafṣīr al-Kitāb al-'Azīz*, 3rd ed. (Bayrūt, Lubnān: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 2011), 4:54.

<sup>58</sup> Ibn 'Aṭīyah al-Andalusī, *Al-Muḥarrar al-Wajīz Fī Tafṣīr al-Kitāb al-'Azīz*, 4:54.

<sup>59</sup> Abū Hilāl al-Ḥasan ibn 'Abd Allāh al-'Askarī, *Al-Furūq Fī al-Lughah*, 2nd ed. (Bayrūt: Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīdah, 1977), 79-80.

<sup>60</sup> Al-'Uḥayimīn et al., *Explanation of the Three Fundamental*, 37.

<sup>61</sup> Al-Ḥusain Ibn-Muḥammad al-Rāgīb al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Mufradāt fī ḡarīb al-Qur'ān*, 6th ed. (Bayrūt: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 2010), 256.

<sup>62</sup> Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn 'Umar al-Rāzī, *al-Tafṣīr al-Kabīr*, 4th ed. (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 2013), 2:106.

in whether it will rain today or not. The cause of this *shakk* could be contradicting evidence, as they may observe part of the sky as clear and part cloudy or because of a complete lack of evidence. In this case, it would not be correct to say that one has *rayb* when evaluating the possibility of rain.

### 2.3.2 Defining *Rayb* (Mistrust)

The root of the word *rayb* comes from a meaning of mistrust or observing something that one dislikes.<sup>63</sup> One may say that they have *rayb* in a person if they observe a quality that they dislike in them.<sup>64</sup> It has also been explained as an uncertainty in the heart accompanied by stress and worry.<sup>65</sup> It extends beyond *shakk* in that *shakk* is usually absolved by evidence that clarifies and leads to certainty, whereas *rayb* may not, either needing more substantial evidence or perhaps never accepting opposition at all.<sup>66</sup> Finally, *rayb*, as opposed to *shakk*, can also denote an aspect of a false claim. Where *shakk* is limited to doubt or an equal assumption between two conclusions, *rayb* can denote an aggressive assertion of a false belief or claim.<sup>67</sup> This is why the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) chose the word *rayb* when he stated,

Leave that which makes you doubt (*rayb*) for that which does not make you doubt (*rayb*).<sup>68</sup>

The believer here is advised to refrain from and leave that which possesses *rayb* for that which does not. The word selected was not *shakk* but *rayb*, giving it a connotation of mistrust towards something potentially harmful. It is also a potent example of the depth and eloquence of the language used in the prophetic *ḥadīth* as a source of divine inspiration.

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<sup>63</sup> Al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 2:106.

<sup>64</sup> Muḥammad ibn Mukarram Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān Al-‘Arab*, 1st ed. (Bayrūt: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1990), 1263.

<sup>65</sup> Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf Abū Ḥayyān, *Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ Fī al-Tafsīr* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Fikr, 1992).

<sup>66</sup> al-Iṣfahānī, 212-213.

<sup>67</sup> ‘Alī Ibn-Ismā‘īl Ibn-Sīda, *Al-Muḥkam Wa-al-Muḥīṭ al-a’zam* (al-Riyāḍ: Markaz al-Turāth lil-Barmajīyāt, 2013): 10:307.

<sup>68</sup> Aḥmad ibn Shu‘ayb l-Nasā’i, *Sunan Al-Nasā’i* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyah, 2005) Ḥadīth 5771.

## 2.4 THE CONCEPT OF DOUBT IN THE QUR'ĀN AND SUNNAH

The Qur'ān is divided into 114 *suwar* (plural of *sūrah*), each with its own name, classification, length, historical context, and unique importance. The term *sūrah* can be defined as a unit of revelation or a literary unit within the Qur'ān.<sup>69</sup> A more technical definition describes a *sūrah* as a part of the Qur'ān comprising an opening and closing consisting of at least three verses or more.<sup>70</sup> Additionally, the *suwar* of the Qur'ān can be classified as Meccan and Medinan.<sup>71</sup> This classification is defined by the Meccan *suwar*, revealed before the Prophet's (peace and blessings be upon him) migration to Mecca, and the Medinan *suwar*, revealed after the migration.<sup>72</sup>

The word *shakk* is found in the Qur'ān fifteen times in various *suwar*. Fourteen are Meccan, while a single verse was identified as being in a Medinan *sūrah*. The usage of *shakk* is spread out between eleven *suwar*, which include *al-Nisā*, *Yunus* (twice), *Hūd* (twice), *Ibrāhīm* (twice), *al-Naml*, *Saba* (twice), *Ṣād*, *Ġhafīr*, *Fuṣilat*, *al-Ṣhura*, and *al-Dukhān*. Except for a single verse in *Sūrah al-Nisā*, all occurrences were in the Meccan *suwar*. The usage of the word *shakk* in the Meccan *suwar* is related to religious doubts in either the existence or status of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted), the revelation of books including the Qur'ān, the religion of Islam and what it calls to, or the prophethood of Muḥammed (peace and blessing be upon him). The single Medinan verse referred not to religious or theological principles but to the crucifixion of Prophet 'Isā (peace be upon him).

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<sup>69</sup> Ali Yunis Aldahesh. "Qur'ānic Surahs' Names: A Study on their Origin and Multiplicity." *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies*, vol. 4, no. 2 (2019): 71.

<sup>70</sup> Muḥammad ibn al-Ṭayyib Bāqillānī al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān*, (Dār al-Qahramān: Istānbūl, 1978), 31.

<sup>71</sup> Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān*, 31.

<sup>72</sup> Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān*, 31.

﴿وَقَوْلِهِمْ إِنَّا قَتَلْنَا الْمَسِيحَ عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ وَمَا صَلَبُوهُ وَلَكِنْ شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ ۚ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِنْهُ ۚ مَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِلَّا اتِّبَاعَ الظَّنِّ ۚ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ يَقِينًا﴾

And [for] their saying, "Indeed, we have killed the Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary, the messenger of Allāh." And they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him; but [another] was made to resemble him to them. And indeed, those who differ over it are in doubt about it. They have no knowledge of it except the following of assumption. And they did not kill him, for certain.<sup>73</sup>

The word *rayb* and its derivatives occur in the Qur'ān thirty-six times. Of those, twenty are Meccan verses, and sixteen are Medinan. These occur in a range of *suwar* numbering twenty-six. While it may be possible to list all the verses and their translations, which enumerate over eighty, a more precise approach will be taken. This will be done by discussing selected verses representing the themes of *shakk* and *rayb*. This way, the extraction of motives, themes, and motifs can be built upon rather than simply providing a list. Five verses will be discussed in this context, each relating to a theme of doubt. These verses will then be outlined to provide a summary and overview of doubt and what motivates it.

#### 2.4.1 *Shakk* In The Context of the Prophet (Peace and Blessings be Upon him)

The word *shak* was revealed in one specific context addressing the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) in the following verse:

﴿فَإِنْ كُنْتَ فِي شَكٍّ مِمَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ فَاسْأَلِ الَّذِينَ يَقْرَأُونَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ ۚ لَقَدْ جَاءَكَ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ﴾

So, if you are in doubt, [O Muḥammad], about that which We have revealed to you, then ask those who have been reading the Scripture before you. The truth has certainly come to you from your Lord, so never be among the doubters.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>73</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 4:157

<sup>74</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 10:94.

The usage of the word *shakk* seems to denote a slightly different meaning, not that of the absence of certainty or wavering in one's belief. It has been explained as amazement or astonishment in that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) is being addressed as though he is worried or astonished regarding the differences between the people of the book (Jews and Christians).<sup>75</sup> In a specific way, it is meant to be proof against them as they can verify the truths of the narratives of the Qur'ān through their own revelation and people of knowledge.<sup>76</sup> This is similar to the verse,

﴿أَكَانَ لِلنَّاسِ عَجَبًا أَنْ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى رَجُلٍ مِنْهُمْ أَنْ أَنْذِرِ النَّاسَ وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَنَّ هُمْ قَدَمَ صِدْقٍ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ۚ قَالَ الْكَافِرُونَ إِنَّ هَذَا لَسَاحِرٌ مُبِينٌ﴾

Have the people been amazed that We revealed [revelation] to a man from among them, [saying], "Warn mankind and give good tidings to those who believe that they will have a [firm] precedence of honour with their Lord"? [But] the disbelievers say, "Indeed, this is an obvious magician."<sup>77</sup>

Therefore, the meaning of *shakk* in the previous verse is not the same as in the following verse. It is an exceptional usage of the term to fulfill a specific meaning in the context of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) concerning those who came before him.

#### 2.4.2 *Shakk* in Allāh (Glorified and Exalted)

This verse represents the doubt of many nations that came before in their response to the Prophets that were sent to them as Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) says,

﴿قَالَتْ رُسُلُهُمْ أَفِي اللَّهِ شَكٌّ فَاطِرِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ يَدْعُوكُمْ لِيَغْفِرَ لَكُمْ مِنْ ذُنُوبِكُمْ وَيُؤَخِّرَكُمْ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ۚ قَالُوا إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُنَا تُرِيدُونَ أَنْ تَصُدُّونَا عَمَّا كَانَ يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا فَأْتُونَا بِسُلْطَانٍ مُّبِينٍ﴾

Their messengers said, "Can there be doubt about Allāh, Creator of the heavens and earth? He invites you that He may forgive you of your sins, and He delays you [i.e., your death] for a specified term." They said, "You are not but men like us who wish to avert us from what our fathers were worshipping. So, bring us a clear authority [i.e., evidence]."<sup>78</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf Abū Ḥayyān, *Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ Fī al-Tafsīr* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Fikr, 1992), 10:94

<sup>76</sup> Abū Ḥayyān, *Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, 10:94.

<sup>77</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 10:02.

<sup>78</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 14:10

Al-Ṭabarī relates that the prophets sent to their nations expressed to them that Allāh (Glorified and Exalted), the creator, has a right upon them to be worshipped alone.<sup>79</sup> He invites them to submit to this worship, whereas, in their reply, they challenge the messengers, claiming that they are nothing more than mere humans, questioning why angels were not sent instead.<sup>80</sup> Al-Qurṭubī explains that the initial question posed by the messengers to their people was almost rhetorical, as there should be no doubt in Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) as He is the sole creator and sustainer.<sup>81</sup> This is extended through an invitation to worship and obey Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) since he is the sole creator and sustainer, thereby deserving of that. The proposition is complete with an offer by Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) to exchange their sins for reward, without any additional punishment in this world until their death, nor in the hereafter. The central point of their doubt in this verse is exposed in two parts. The first is their insistence on worshipping or following what their fathers used to do.<sup>82</sup> This blind adherence to their traditions encroaches on their ability to reason and ponder upon the creation and true nature of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted).

Secondly, their doubts are motivated by the lack of proof of the status of these men being prophets and the authenticity of their claims through clear and compelling evidence.<sup>83</sup> They challenged the human nature of the prophets, claiming that it would be more suitable for them to be sent angels.<sup>84</sup> According to them, this would allow them to perceive a true miracle. However, they fail to realize that Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) has sent clear signs and evidence of their claims with each prophet. He chose the prophets among men so that they may relate to the message and then reflect upon it while considering the specific miracle accompanied by each prophet.

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<sup>79</sup> Abī Ja‘far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr Al-Ṭabarī: Jāmi‘ al-Bayān ‘an Ta’wīl Āy al-Qur’ān*, 1st ed. (al-Riyād: Dār ‘Ālam al-Kutub, 2003): 14:10.

<sup>80</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān*, 14:10.

<sup>81</sup> Al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmi‘ li-Aḥkam*, 14:10.

<sup>82</sup> Ismā‘īl bin ‘Umar Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Al-Qur’ān al-‘aẓīm: Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr* (Riyād: Dār al-Ṭaybah, 1999): 14:10.

<sup>83</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Al-Qur’ān al-‘aẓīm*, 14:10.

<sup>84</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Al-Qur’ān al-‘aẓīm*, 14:10.

### 2.4.3 *Shak* and Mocking

The leading proponents and components of doubt are seen in another verse as Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) says:

﴿بَلْ هُمْ فِي شَكِّ يَلْعَبُونَ﴾

But they are in doubt, amusing themselves.<sup>85</sup>

This verse was revealed to the polytheists of Quraish after establishing their proofs of the existence and authority of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted).<sup>86</sup> Instead, they ignored the revelation and were busy in amusement and play, fueled by their doubts. Al-Qurtubī compares this group to a young boy who ignores constant warnings and truths; instead, he continues to act upon what will cause his destruction.<sup>87</sup> Al-Baġhawī says they are in doubt about the Qur'ān revealed to them.<sup>88</sup> Al-Sa'dī relates that they doubt the lordship and worship of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted).<sup>89</sup> Finally, al-Zamakhsharī summarizes it profoundly in that their mocking of God's existence is compounded by doubt and irony. Their doubt is directed towards the existence of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted). At the same time, their irony is subjugated to the amusement of divine speech, resulting in the mockery of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted), the religion, the book, and the Messenger.<sup>90</sup>

### 2.4.4 *Rayb* and the Qur'ān

The intricate depth and eloquence of Qur'ān are further reflected in a similar verse about doubt in the revelation, this time as Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) addresses the disbelievers as He says:

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<sup>85</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 44:9

<sup>86</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 44:9.

<sup>87</sup> Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Qurtubī, *Al-Jāmi' li-aḥkam al-Qur'ān*, (Bayrūt: al-Maktabah al-'Aṣrīyah, 2016), 44:9.

<sup>88</sup> Al-Ḥusayn ibn Mas'ūd Baġhawī, *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl*, (Riyād: Dār al-Ṭaybah, 1989), 44:9

<sup>89</sup> Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Nāṣir Sa'dī, *Taysīr al-Karīm al-Raḥmān fī tafsīr kalām al-Mannān*. (Riyād: Markaz al-Turāth, 2013). 44:9.

<sup>90</sup> Maḥmūd ibn 'Umar Al-Zamakhsharī, *Tafsīr Al-Kashshāf*, 3rd ed. (Bayrūt: Dār al-m'arifah, 2009), 44:9.

﴿وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ﴾

And if you are in doubt (*rayb*) about what We have sent down [i.e., the Qur’ān] upon Our Servant [i.e., Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ)], then produce a sūrah the like thereof and call upon your witnesses [i.e., supporters] other than Allāh, if you should be truthful.

The term used when addressing the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him) was *shakk*, whereas when addressing the disbelievers, the term *rayb* was used. The suitability of using the word *rayb* rather than *shakk* in this verse accentuates the depth and rhetoric of the Qur’ān. It signifies that the disbelievers already rejected, in some form, the revelation without reflecting upon the evidence. These disbelievers intensely deny the truth of revelation, needing a more significant proof or challenge. Their hostility and mistrust are met with an immense challenge by Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) in bringing a *sūrah* like it. This is boldly followed by a substantiating claim that this will never be possible, thereby leaving no exit from this state of *rayb* except to submit or face punishment, as the very following verse states:

﴿فَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلُوا وَلَنْ تَفْعَلُوا فَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ ۗ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ﴾

But if you do not - and you will never be able to - then fear the Fire, whose fuel is people and stones, prepared for the disbelievers.

Similarly, the concept of *rayb* can be observed through an occurrence at the time of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) in which the then disbelievers of Mecca doubted and accused him of falsifying his claim of being sent divine revelation. Despite this, three of the leaders of the polytheists in Mecca, including Abu Jahl, gathered for three nights outside the house of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) to listen to his recitation of the Qur’ān.<sup>91</sup> After those three nights when Abu Jahl was asked his opinion of what he had heard, he confirmed that part of it was unique but concluded with an oath saying, “By Allah, we will never believe in him or accept what he says.”<sup>92</sup>

<sup>91</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm*, 6:33.

<sup>92</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm*, 6:33.

This can be identified as *rayb* in that the truth behind revelation is not sought after but replaced with an accusation and rejection of what he has brought. The context of his rejection was not the substance or content of the Qur’ān, but instead due to his competition with the tribe of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him).<sup>93</sup> After the claim of revelation by the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him), however, there was no way for the polytheists to compete; therefore, they rejected his claim with mistrust and confusion, the essence of *rayb*.

#### 2.4.5 *Rayb* and Hesitation

Another verse reveals a motivation of doubt in Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) as the Qur’ān states:

﴿إِنَّمَا يَسْتَأْذِنُكَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَارْتَابَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ فَهُمْ فِي رَيْبِهِمْ  
يَتَرَدَّدُونَ﴾

Only those would ask permission of you who do not believe in Allāh and the Last Day and whose hearts have doubted, and they, in their doubt, are hesitating.<sup>94</sup>

Understanding the context of this verse is paramount in deriving the source or motivation of the *shakk* of the disbelievers mentioned. This verse was revealed as a reflection of the characteristics of the hypocrite, one that waivers between faith and disbelief or portrays on the outside to be a believer but internally contradicts this.<sup>95</sup> The motivation for doubt here could be seen, on the surface at least, as an unwillingness to commit. These are the individuals who refuse to commit to physical battle with the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him); instead, they make excuses and seek permission to be exempt.<sup>96</sup> Due to a lack of certainty and belief in both the belief in Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) and the authenticity of what the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him) came with, they lack any drive to sacrifice or commit but instead seek excuses to be exempted.<sup>97</sup>

<sup>93</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm*, 6:33.

<sup>94</sup> *Al-Qur’ān*, 9:45

<sup>95</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi’ al-Bayān*, 9:45.

<sup>96</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi’ al-Bayān*, 9:45.

<sup>97</sup> Abd al-Rahmān ibn Nāṣir Sa’dī, *Taysīr al-Karīm al-Rahmān fī tafsīr kalām al-Mannān*. (Riyād: Markaz al-Turāth, 2013). 9:45.

#### 2.4.6 Rayb and the Deception of Satan

The role of Satan and his deception that leads to doubt is portrayed in another verse as Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) says,

﴿يُنَادُوهُمْ أَلَمْ نَكُنْ مَعَكُمْ ۖ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ وَلَكِنَّكُمْ فَتَنْتُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَتَرَبَّصْتُمْ وَارْتَبْتُمْ  
وَعَرَّيْتُمْ الْأُمَاطِيَّ حَتَّىٰ جَاءَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ وَعَرَّيْتُمْ بِاللَّهِ الْغُرُورُ﴾

They [i.e., the hypocrites] will call to them [i.e., the believers], "Were we not with you?" They will say, "Yes, but you afflicted yourselves and awaited [misfortune for us] and doubted, and wishful thinking deluded you until there came the command of Allāh. And the Deceiver [i.e., Satan] deceived you concerning Allāh."<sup>98</sup>

This verse portrays some of the consequences of doubt as it is a dialogue between believers and hypocrites in the hereafter. The hypocrites recognized the call to the truth and, at times, pretended to be with the believers in their praying and fasting. However, they were deceived by Satan, who promised them safety from the punishment and consequences of their actions.<sup>99</sup> They were engulfed in their sins and desires in this world, refusing to repent, thereby leading them to be engulfed by flames as their punishment.<sup>100</sup> They were at times with the believers, with their bodies, but not their hearts nor their intentions, as Satan deceived them to doubt in Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) and the prophethood, and they will remain in their state of deception by Satan until they are thrown into the fire of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted). Similarly, it was confirmed by the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) how Satan starts to create these doubts even in a Muslim as hesitates as he said:

Satan comes to one of you and says, 'Who created so-and-so?' till he says, 'Who has created your Lord?' So, when he inspires such a question, one should seek refuge with Allah and give up such thoughts.<sup>101</sup>

This narration provided both the motivation for doubt and the solution to it. If Satan incites one to question and doubt the creator, the solution would be to seek refuge in the creator from these doubts.

<sup>98</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 57:14

<sup>99</sup> *Al-Ṭabarī, Tafsīr Al-Ṭabarī*, 57:14.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, 57:14.

<sup>101</sup> Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 2nd ed. (Bayrūt: Dār a-Kutub al-Ilmīyah, 2002). Ḥadīth no. 3276.

An encompassing look at the occurrences of the verse containing the words *shakk* and *rayb* leads to recurring themes. The word *rayb* is used more commonly in the Medinan verses, as a more extended time had passed since the original revelation of the Qur'ān, increasing the doubt of the disbelievers accompanied by an accusation of falsehood.<sup>102</sup> Systematically, verses addressing the doubt of the disbelievers can be categorized into four, each addressing a specific doubt. These are doubts in the existence of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted), doubts in the authenticity and miracle of the revelation of the Qur'ān, doubts in the prophethood of Muḥammed (peace and blessings be upon him) and finally, doubt about Islam as a religion and pathway to truth. An interesting observation has also been made in that the word *shakk* occurs in the Qur'ān fifteen times, in eleven *suwar*, both odd numbers. In comparison, the word *rayb* and its derivatives occur thirty-six times in twenty *suwar*, both even numbers. The relationship between these numbers and the words may be explained as *shakk*, represented by an odd number (1), which implies a single meaning of doubt in which there are two seemingly equal possibilities. This is contrary to *rayb*, represented by even numbers (2), because it possesses the meaning of *shakk* plus a connotation of hate, negativity, and accusation.<sup>103</sup>

## 2.5 THE CONSEQUENCES OF DOUBT

Doubt, in many instances, has been described as a disease of the heart. It is revealed in the verse:

﴿فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ فَزَادَهُمُ اللَّهُ مَرَضًا ۖ وَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ۖ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْذِبُونَ﴾

In their hearts is disease (doubts and hypocrisy), so Allāh has increased their disease, and for them is a painful punishment because they [habitually] used to lie.<sup>104</sup>

Al-Sa'dī comments that the disease of the heart includes doubts and desires.<sup>105</sup> The heart is beset by these diseases, leading to an imbalance and an increase in disease. Doubt then gives way to hypocrisy, disbelief, and innovation, whereas the sickness of desires

<sup>102</sup> Wafā bint 'Abdullah Al-Z'āqī, *Al-Yaqīn fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 1st ed. (al-Riyād: Dār al-Ḥaḍārah, 2016), 301.

<sup>103</sup> Al-Z'āqī, *Al-Yaqīn fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 301.

<sup>104</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 2:10

<sup>105</sup> Al-Sa'dī, *Taysīr al-Karīm al-Raḥmān*, 2:10

leads to sins. The result is more punishment and misery, demonstrating the dangerous nature of these two diseases. Al-Ṭabarī delves deeper into the creation of these doubts as he cites another verse in which Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) says,<sup>106</sup>

﴿وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ فَزَادَهُمُ رِجْسًا إِلَىٰ رِجْسِهِمْ وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كَافِرُونَ﴾

But as for those in whose hearts is disease, it has [only] increased them in evil [in addition] to their evil. And they will have died while they are disbelievers.<sup>107</sup>

Each time a new verse from the Qur'ān was revealed, it led the believers to an increase in faith and submission.<sup>108</sup> The ones with the disease of doubt in their heart, however, only compounded this disease because of new injunctions from the Qur'ān. Similarly, there is a distinct correlation between doubt in the heart and hypocrisy, as observed in many verses of the Qur'ān. In a distinct verse, the hypocrites, in some ways, are defined with the exact linguistic definition of doubt, wavering between two states, not knowing which of them to adhere to as Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) describes their state as:

﴿مُذَبذَبِينَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ لَا إِلَىٰ هَؤُلَاءِ وَلَا إِلَىٰ هَؤُلَاءِ ۚ وَمَنْ يُضَلِلِ اللَّهُ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُ

سَبِيلًا﴾

Wavering between them, [belonging] neither to these [i.e., the believers] nor to those [i.e., the disbelievers]. And whoever Allāh sends astray - never will you find for him a way.<sup>109</sup>

Another significant consequence of doubt is related in a hadith in which the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him) described the questioning in the grave for each person as he stated:

You will be asked, 'What do you know about this man (the Prophet (ﷺ) Muhammad)?' Then the faithful believer (or Asma' said a similar word) will reply, 'He is Muhammad Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) who had come to us with clear evidence and guidance, and so we accepted his teachings and followed him. And he is Muhammad.' And he will repeat it thrice. Then the angels will say to him, 'Sleep in peace as we have come to know that you were a faithful believer.' On the other hand, a hypocrite or a doubtful person will reply, 'I do not know, but I heard the people saying something and so I said it.' (the same)."<sup>110</sup>

<sup>106</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 2:10

<sup>107</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 9:125

<sup>108</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 9:125

<sup>109</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 4:143

<sup>110</sup> Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Ḥadīth no. 86.

The words used to describe the one unable to answer are doubtful and hypocritical, thereby once again constructing a link. Doubt is a disease in the heart and leads to hypocrisy and disbelief. The consequences in a person's life are misguidance and deception, while in the hereafter, the punishment of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted).

## 2.6 CERTAINTY AND CERTITUDE

The concept of certainty can be ambiguous, specifically in distinguishing it from certitude. An example demonstrating this ambiguity can be seen in the difference between the claim “It is certain...” and “I am certain.”<sup>111</sup> The first has been called certainty, while the second is certitude. The presence of the first does not necessitate the presence of the second. It could be ascertained that although *it* is certain, based on the principles of mathematics, that the sum of three and two is five, *I* am not certain. Thus, the two propositions are not contradictory because they are two distinct compounds. Simply put, certainty is a proposition based on evidence, and certitude is a state of mind.<sup>112</sup> The first is established through logic, reasoning, or other deductive or inductive methods, while the second reflects the belief of an individual if they accept what is said to be certain. The relationship between the two is logical as certitude is often caused by an acquaintance with certainty and, by extension, the proofs and evidence that establish it. It may also be concluded that certainty is an external state while certitude is an internal one. Certainty is also limited in that it does not include any intuitive truths which are paramount in our lives. For example, if one enters a coffee shop, orders a coffee, and sits to drink, they likely possess the certitude that it will be extremely hot and take caution. This cannot be concluded with certainty alone. Therefore, certainty alone is insufficient when it comes to practice or practical implementations of certain truths.

One of the purposes of the Qur'ān is to alter and influence internal states, leading to external action for the benefit of humankind.<sup>113</sup> This can only be done through certitude, which is precisely why the term certitude has been chosen over certainty. However, they are interrelated, as it can be deduced that the methodology of the Qur'ān

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<sup>111</sup> Walter Cerf, ‘Certainty and Certitude’, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 13, no. 4 (1953): 515–24, 515.

<sup>112</sup> Cerf, ‘Certainty and Certitude,’ 515.

<sup>113</sup> Al-‘Uḥaymīn, *Explanation of the Three Fundamental*, 42.

is to instill this certitude through certainty. This is the symbiotic relationship between the two, which allows it to be a compelling dichotomy. Certitude is an internal state of belief leading to conviction based on or built upon external evidence and proof, also known as certainty.

## 2.7 DEFINING CERTITUDE THROUGH THE QUR'ĀN AND SUNNAH

Certitude, or *al-yaqīn*, has many related meanings, contributing to an encompassing understanding of the term. It has been defined linguistically as the absence of doubt through sound knowledge after contemplating evidence.<sup>114</sup> This definition retains the salient characteristics of the term, and thus, two conclusions may be derived. The first is that the highest level of knowledge one may ascertain is through a tedious search. Secondly, the presence of certitude necessitates the absence of doubt in the heart.

The concept of certitude in the Qur'ān refers to a state of being, internal and external, that is consistent. It is uninterrupted, as any disruption would mean the presence of doubt, thereby negating certitude. It also leads to and precedes action, which is an integral part of the concept. Ibn al-Qayyim and al-Sa'dī give similar and strikingly sound definitions of certitude in the context of the Qur'ān. Ibn al-Qayyim says it is “sound and firm faith that has no wavering, hesitation, doubt or misconception.”<sup>115</sup> Al-Sa'dī concludes that the definition of certitude is complete and sound knowledge that does not possess any doubt and guarantees action.<sup>116</sup> It appears this last definition of certitude is the one that is closest to the usage of the word in the Qur'ān.<sup>117</sup> There does seem to be a minimum level of certitude that a believer must always possess. However, it seems as though the level of one's certitude may increase or decrease. From this, it may be concluded that the concept of certitude is defined as an internal state that stems from external certainty and holds three essential components, which are (a) sound knowledge that possesses no doubt, (b) ensures action based upon that knowledge, (c) and is constant without hesitation or interruption.

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<sup>114</sup> Muḥammad ibn Mukarram Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān Al-'Arab*, 1st ed. (Bayrūt: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 1990), 15/404

<sup>115</sup> Ibn al-Qayyim Al-Jawzīyah, *Risālah Ibn Al-Qayyim Ī Aḥad Ikhwānihi* (Mecca: Dār 'ālam al-fawāid, n.d.), 18.

<sup>116</sup> Al-Sa'dī, *Taysīr al-Karīm al-Raḥmān*, 41.

<sup>117</sup> Al-Z'āfi, *Al-Yaqīn fī al-Quran al-Karīm*, 22.

### 2.7.1 The Levels of Certitude

Certitude itself is known to have levels within it.<sup>118</sup> This is why an individual possessing certitude may still seek higher levels of certitude to reach a level of absolute assurance and tranquillity. This is not motivated by doubt in the heart, but it ascertains an attempt to grow from one level of certitude to another. There are three levels of certitude that are hierarchical. The progression between the levels can be achieved through increased interaction. Each level presents a stage of certitude preceding the prior, resulting in a structured progression. The three stages are certitude through knowledge, sight or physical observation, and experience.<sup>119</sup> The first two stages are represented in *Sūrah al- Takāthur* as Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) says:

﴿كَلَّا لَوْ تَعْلَمُونَ عِلْمَ الْيَقِينِ﴾

No! If you only knew with knowledge of certainty<sup>120</sup>

﴿لَتَرَوُنَّ الْجَحِيمَ﴾

You will surely see the Hellfire<sup>121</sup>

﴿ثُمَّ لَتَرَوْهَا عَيْنَ الْيَقِينِ﴾

Then you will surely see it with the eye of certainty<sup>122</sup>

Knowledge of certitude in the first verses refers to death.<sup>123</sup> The first level of certitude is sufficient here because it is a certainty that no living being would reasonably deny. Therefore, knowledge of it is sufficient. The second level, the eye of certitude, reflects the reality that, at some point, all would see the hellfire with their eyes. The third stage of certitude is revealed in *Sūrah al- al-Hāq* as Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) says,

﴿وَإِنَّهُ لَحَقُّ الْيَقِينِ﴾

And indeed, it is the truth of certainty<sup>124</sup>

<sup>118</sup> Al-Z'āfī, *Al-Yaqīn fī al-Quran al-Karīm*, 22.

<sup>119</sup> Al-Z'āfī, *Al-Yaqīn fī al-Quran al-Karīm*, 22.

<sup>120</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 102:5

<sup>121</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 102:6

<sup>122</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 102:7

<sup>123</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān al- 'Aẓīm*, 102:5

<sup>124</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 69:51

The third level in this verse referred to as the truth of certitude, reflects the revelation of the Qur'ān. It is said to be an absolute truth that must be understood through knowledge, seen with the eye, and experienced in various ways to establish its certitude.

Ibn al-Qayyim defines the first stage of certitude as what is disclosed to the heart to be true without any doubt, as if it were seen by the eyes or experienced.<sup>125</sup> The second is that which is seen with certitude by the eye or sight.<sup>126</sup> The third, which remains the highest stage of certitude, is that which is experienced physically with the absence of doubt entirely.<sup>127</sup> He presents the example of the first as knowledge of a valley containing fresh water. The second is seeing the water with the eye, and the third with drinking the water and consuming it physically.<sup>128</sup>

Ibn 'Āshūr gives the example of Prophet Ibrāhīm (peace and blessing be upon him) as progressing from the level of knowledge of certitude to the certitude of the eye as his example is given in the Qur'ān,

﴿وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ أَرِنِي كَيْفَ تُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ ۗ قَالَ أُولِمَ تُوْمِنُ ۗ قَالَ بَلَىٰ وَلَٰكِن لِّيَطْمَئِنَّ قَلْبِي ۗ قَالَ فَخُذْ أَرْبَعَةً مِّنَ الطَّيْرِ فَصُرْهُنَّ إِلَيْكَ ثُمَّ اجْعَلْ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ جَبَلٍ مِّنْهُنَّ جُزْءًا ثُمَّ ادْعُهُنَّ يَأْتِينَكَ سَعْيًا ۗ وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ﴾

And [mention] when Abraham said, "My Lord, show me how You give life to the dead." [Allāh] said, "Have you not believed?" He said, "Yes, but [I ask] only that my heart may be satisfied." [Allāh] said, "Take four birds and commit them to yourself. Then [after slaughtering them] put on each hill a portion of them; then call them - they will come [flying] to you in haste. And know that Allāh is Exalted in Might and Wise."<sup>129</sup>

Prophet Ibrāhīm (peace be upon him) asked his Lord to show him the process of how he gives life to what is dead, not because he doubted in any way but rather so that he could progress to the second level of certitude.<sup>130</sup> He already had certitude of knowledge of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) and that he is the sole creator but wanted to move to a deeper level through the eye. This one is absolute, does not waiver, and is only second to the certitude of experience.

<sup>125</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Madārij al-Sālikīn*, (dar al-Ḥadīth, al-Qāhirah: 2013), 758.

<sup>126</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Madārij al-Sālikīn*, 758.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, *Madārij al-Sālikīn*, 758.

<sup>129</sup> *Al-Qur'ān* 2:260

<sup>130</sup> Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir Ibn 'Āshūr, *Tafsīr al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, (Tūnis: Dār al-Tūnisīyah, 1969), 3:37-39

Ibn Taymiyyah expands that the first level of certitude may increase and decrease.<sup>131</sup> Certitude through sight and experience is fixed and, once achieved, results in permanent, unwavering conviction.<sup>132</sup> The first stage, however, is knowledge of certitude, which may increase or decrease. He explains how knowledge within the heart leads to action of the heart. He gives the example of a slave of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) that acknowledges with certainty that Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) is the Lord and in control of everything, whatever He wills to will be and whatever He wills not to be wont. This results in internal certitude of the heart in its action of tranquillity and complete reliance upon Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) in all matters. It is a salient example of how certitude is an extension of certainty and is ultimately what is sought to be achieved.

## 2.8 THE CONCEPT OF CERTITUDE IN THE QUR'ĀN AND SUNNAH

Various terms are used synonymously for certitude in the Qur'ān, denoting the encompassing nature of the term. They appear in multiple contexts, serving their own literal and practical purpose. Some, however, are more relevant to the research than others. For example, *Sūrah al-Hijr* ends with the verse,

﴿وَاعْبُدْ رَبَّكَ حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَكَ الْيَقِينُ﴾

And worship your Lord until there comes to you the certainty [i.e., death]<sup>133</sup>

This verse refers to that which is certain, meaning an external source or reality, death.<sup>134</sup> Therefore, referring to it as certainty and not certitude would be more appropriate. The three main terms reflecting the essence of certitude and its meanings in the Qur'ān are *al-yaqīn* (certitude), *al-'ilm* (knowledge), and *al-imān* (faith). The two latter terms can be defined as synonyms of certitude and will be discussed briefly in their contexts. In contrast, the term *al-yaqīn* will be analyzed more deeply through the examples of various verses as it remains the primary term symbolizing the concept of certitude.

<sup>131</sup> Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymīyah, *Majmū' Fatāwā Shaykh Al-Islām Aḥmad Ibn Taymīyah*, 37 vols (Al-Madinah: Wizārah al-Sh'uŏn al-Islāmiyah al-Su'ŏdiyyah, 2004), 3:329-330.

<sup>132</sup> Ibn Taymīyah, *Majmū' Fatāwā*, 3:329.

<sup>133</sup> *Al-Qur'ān* 15:99

<sup>134</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, 15:99

### 2.8.1 Al-‘Ilm (Knowledge) as Certitude

Knowledge as certitude is reflected in the verse,

﴿وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا غَنِمْتُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَإِنَّ لِلَّهِ خُمُسَهُ وَلِلرَّسُولِ وَلِذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ  
وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ إِن كُنْتُمْ آمَنْتُمْ بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا يَوْمَ الْفُرْقَانِ يَوْمَ  
التَّقَىٰ الْجَمْعَانِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ﴾

And know that anything you obtain of war booty - then indeed, for Allāh is one-fifth of it and for the Messenger and for [his] near relatives and the orphans, the needy, and the [stranded] traveler, if you have believed in Allāh and in that which We sent down to Our Servant on the day of criterion [i.e., decisive encounter] - the day when the two armies met [at Badr]. And Allāh, over all things, is competent.<sup>135</sup>

Al-Shanqīṭī, in his tafsīr, explains that the word “know” in this verse refers to certitude, as it does in many instances in the Qur’ān.<sup>136</sup> It is also a context that implies action, further confirming its expressive use for certitude and not just external knowledge as certainty. Similarly, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) confirms this usage as he states,

He who died knowing (fully well) that there is no God but Allah entered Paradise.<sup>137</sup>

Once again, the term ‘knowing’ in this narration refers to more than certainty of accepting information or belief. Like the previous verse, knowing necessitates action and establishing that certainty through internal certitude. The understating of this statement is entrenched in two interrelated concepts. The first is that knowledge, the Qur’ān and Sunnah, when mentioned, do not possess any traits of doubt or hesitation. Second, this knowledge denotes action in that if a person has certitude regarding their belief, then action will be necessary upon that belief if one is able to.<sup>138</sup> Similarly, this connection is reflected in the verse:

<sup>135</sup> Al-Qur’ān 8:41

<sup>136</sup> Muḥammad al-Amīn ibn Muḥammad al-Mukhtār Shinqīṭī, *Aḍwā’ al-bayān fī ṭīqāt al-Qur’ān bi-al-Qur’ān*, (Makkah: Dār ‘Ālam al-Fawā’id, 2015). 8:41.

<sup>137</sup> Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Sahīḥ Muslim, Ḥadīth no. 43*.

<sup>138</sup> Abū Hilāl al-Ḥasan ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-‘Askarī, *Al-Furūq Fī al-Lughah*, 2nd ed. (Bayrūt: Dār al-Āfaq al-Jadīdah, 1977), 73.

﴿فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لِذَنْبِكَ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مُتَقَلَّبَكُمْ وَمَثْوَاكُمْ﴾

So know, [O Muḥammad], that there is no deity except Allāh and ask forgiveness for your sin and for the believing men and believing women. And Allāh knows of your movement and your resting place.<sup>139</sup>

There are two connections made in the preceding verse. The first is a command to know (with certainty) that nothing is worthy of worship except Allāh (Glorified and Exalted). Ibn al-‘Uthaymīn explains that knowledge and awareness of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) is that which causes one to submit to and accept whatever is revealed and to judge by the laws prescribed.<sup>140</sup> This is the essence of certitude. It is to go beyond simply knowing and internally accept that knowledge and live according to it. Secondly, the command to know or attain certainty is followed by a command to action, which is the seeking of forgiveness. This extends the notion of certitude and reveals that certainty (knowledge) comes first, and then, by extension, certitude along with action.<sup>141</sup>

### 2.8.2 Al- *Imān* (Faith) as Certitude

*Imān* refers to acceptance, belief, submission, certitude, and action without doubt.<sup>142</sup> This concept of *imān* is symbolized through certitude in the Qur’ān in many verses for example:

﴿هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِيمَانًا مَعَ إِيمَانِهِمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ جُنُودُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا﴾

It is He who sent down tranquility into the hearts of the believers that they would increase in faith along with their [present] faith. And to Allāh belong the soldiers of the heavens and the earth, and ever is Allāh Knowing and Wise.<sup>143</sup>

It was narrated that the word *imān* here refers to certitude.<sup>144</sup> Similarly, Ibn ‘Abbās explains that Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) sent down the essential pillar of

<sup>139</sup> Al-*Qur’ān*, 47:19.

<sup>140</sup> Al-‘Uthaymīn et al., *Explanation of the Three Fundamental Principles*, 38.

<sup>141</sup> Al-‘Uthaymīn et al., *Explanation of the Three Fundamental Principles*, 42.

<sup>142</sup> Al-‘Uthaymīn et al., *Explanation of the Three Fundamental Principles*, 42.

<sup>143</sup> Al-*Qur’ān*, 48: 4.

<sup>144</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān*, 11:330

belief, that nothing has the right to be worshipped with truth except Allāh (Glorified and Exalted), and when that was met with certitude (faith) by the believers, he increases them in prayer, then fasting, then zakat, then hajj and then completed his favour upon them.<sup>145</sup> This also affirms that *imān* (faith) is composed of three essential factors: certitude in the heart, the sayings of the tongue, and action of the limbs. Similarly, in an authentic narration, the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him), when addressing Abu Hurayrah, told him,

Take away these sandals of mine, and when you meet anyone outside this garden who testifies that there is no god but Allah, being assured of it in his heart, gladden him by announcing that he shall go to Paradise.<sup>146</sup>

In this statement, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) equated the testimony of faith, the most essential part of belief or *imān*, with assurance in the heart, as certitude. A deeper examination of *al-imān* and certitude will follow through a discussion of the importance of certitude.

### 2.8.3 *Al-Yaqīn* (Certitude)

The word *yaqīn* in the Qur’ān occurs twenty-eight times in fifteen different *suwar*. Five of these are Medinan *suwar* (*al-Baraqaḥ*, *al-Nisā*, *al-Mā’idah*, *Luqmān*, and *al-R’ad*), whereas ten of them are Meccan (*al-Naml*, *al-Rūm*, *al-Sajdah*, *al-Jāthiyah*, *al-Mudathir*, *al-Tūr*, *al-Hijr*, *al-Wāqiyah*, *al-Hāqḥ*, and *al-Takāthur*). The derivatives of the word are also included in this analysis as they represent five different patterns of the word. The first two of these are in the present continuous tense, *tūqinūn* (referring to ‘you’ plural), occurring once, and *yūqinūn* (referring to ‘them’ plural), occurring fourteen times. The third derivative is found in a scale *istaf’alā*, implying a request. The fourth form is the noun itself; *al-yaqīn* was revealed eight times. The fifth and final is the form of the ‘doer’ or active participle, occurring five times. Rather than simply listing all the examples, a brief discussion of some of these verses will be provided to help better understand this concept and how it is framed.

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<sup>145</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi’ al-Bayān*, 11:330

<sup>146</sup> Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Saḥīḥ Muslim*, Ḥadīth no. 43.

## 2.9 CONTEXTS OF *AL-YAQĪN* (CERTITUDE) IN THE QUR'ĀN

The purpose of this discussion is not to provide an extensive analysis of the construct of certitude, as this will be the focus of the fourth chapter. Instead, it is to give context and some depth to this concept as to how it is framed in the Qur'ān. Although several verses deal with this concept, repeating themes occur in the address. The most prominent of these are three. Certitude regarding the day of judgment, certitude in the Qur'ān itself as revelation, and the attainment of certitude through contemplation on the creation of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) accentuated through a thought-provoking verse negating certitude.

### 2.9.1 Certitude of the Day of Judgement

Many verses allude to the certitude in the belief and preparation for the day of judgment. In *Sūrah al-Naml*, it was revealed,

﴿الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ﴾

Who establish prayer and give *zakāh*, and of the Hereafter they are certain [in faith].<sup>147</sup>

The derivative of *al-yaqīn* in this verse comes in the present continuous tense, implying that this certitude about the day of judgement is fixed and that there is no doubt regarding it. Establishing prayer and zakat before the certitude in the hereafter also seems to hint at preparation for it. This again established the pillars of faith as belief of the heart, sayings of the tongue, and actions of the limbs.<sup>148</sup>

### 2.9.2 Certitude of the Qur'ān

The concept of certitude has also been emphasized concerning the revelation of the Qur'ān in two ways. Firstly, identifying the Qur'ān itself as a sign of the epitome of certitude as it says,

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<sup>147</sup> *Al-Qur'ān* 27:3

<sup>148</sup> Al-'Uthaymīn et al., *Explanation of the Three Fundamental Principles*, 42

﴿وَإِنَّهُ لَحَقُّ الْيَقِينِ﴾

And indeed, it is the truth of certainty<sup>149</sup>

Ibn ‘Āshūr comments on this verse and explains that truth refers to what is established and firm, and *yaqīn* is that which allows no doubt. The word truth here only describes something complete in its nature. That is to say that of all things that are certain; this remains the most certain of all certitudes. It is a compelling description that enters the third and highest level of certainty through experience. The revelation of the Qur’ān can be experienced and lived, expanding its true nature and making it fit to accept the description of the truth of certitude, which nothing lies above.<sup>150</sup>

Along with the declaration that the Qur’ān itself is a source of certitude, it is also a source of benefit to those who possess certitude. In this way, it is a circular relationship, but the contemplation of a verse allows us to reveal this association in detail as it says,

﴿هَذَا بَصَائِرُ لِلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ﴾

This [Qur’ān] is enlightenment for mankind and guidance and mercy for a people who are certain [in faith].

Enlightenment is defined as the perception of the intellect to realize matters according to their actuality. This Qur’ān was described as a source of enlightenment for people in general because it is a sign to acknowledge the reality of both revelation and life. The extension of guidance and mercy, however, is only for those who have certitude because, without that, they would be unable to benefit from all the knowledge, proofs, and intellect.

### 2.9.3 Certitude Through the Signs of Creation

Thirdly, the concept of certitude is closely intertwined with a deep contemplation of Allāh's signs (Glorified and Exalted) through his creation. This is reflected in many verses, such as:

<sup>149</sup> *Al-Qur’ān*, 69:51.

<sup>150</sup> Ibn ‘Āshūr, *Tafsīr al-Tahrīr*, 27:350.

﴿إِنَّ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَآيَاتٍ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ﴾

Indeed, within the heavens and earth are signs for the believers<sup>151</sup>

﴿وَفِي خَلْقِكُمْ وَمَا يَبُثُّ مِن دَابَّةٍ آيَاتٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ﴾

And in the creation of yourselves and what He disperses of moving creatures are signs for people who are certain [in faith]<sup>152</sup>

One of the greatest methods of seeking certitude is contemplating the signs of creation, as revealed in these verses. The signs of the heavens and earth were referred to in general and not specifically due to their encompassing nature, which demands deep thought and reflection.<sup>153</sup> This is also detailed in several other verses and, therefore, specified to the believers. Secondly, the creation of man and the beasts was mentioned because they are a natural progression from a greater creation to a lesser, at least in size. It is also a reflection of the praise of those who have certitude in the resurrection with the reasoning that if an original creation is established, a re-creation would certainly, through logic, be easier. This confronts the attitude of the disbelievers who have *rayb* or *shakk* in that they deny both creations and refuse to ponder upon the signs in depth. The negation of certitude is another way that the Qur'an builds this concept; as Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) says,

﴿أَمْ خَلَقُوا السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ ۚ بَلْ لَا يُوقِنُونَ﴾

Or did they create the heavens and the earth? Rather, they are not certain<sup>154</sup>

The negation of their certitude here is due to doubt in their hearts. This verse, contextualizing the disbelievers, affirms that they may believe in the lordship of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) in that he is the creator of all. However, they do not possess certitude; rather, they doubt. This is precisely why they refused to submit to His worship or obedience or believe in the messenger or his message.

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<sup>151</sup> *Al-Qur'an* 45:3.

<sup>152</sup> *Al-Qur'an* 45:4.

<sup>153</sup> Abī Muḥammad 'Abd al-Ḥaqq ibn Ghālib Ibn 'Aṭīyah al-Andalusī, *Al-Muḥarrar al-Wajīz Fī Tafsīr al-Kitāb al-'Azīz*, 3rd ed. (Bayrūt, Lubnān: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 2011), 5:79.

<sup>154</sup> *Al-Qur'an* 52:36

## 2.10 THE IMPORTANCE OF CERTITUDE TOWARDS FAITH

The importance of certitude can be seen from the very beginning of the Qur'ān as one of the attributes of revelation itself in the verse,

﴿ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ﴾

This is the Book about which there is no doubt, a guidance for those conscious of Allāh<sup>155</sup>

This verse negates any *rayb* in the revelation, thereby establishing certitude. It is an intrinsic characteristic of the Qur'ān that calls to its importance from its opening. It is the first description and introduction to itself, claiming so boldly that it embodies certitude. Along with this, its purpose is also to instill certitude. This is multifaceted as it was revealed as an example of certainty without any doubt, and it seeks to instill that very attribute in its followers.<sup>156</sup>

﴿هَذَا بَصَائِرُ لِلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ﴾

This [Qur'ān] is enlightenment for mankind and guidance and mercy for a people who are certain [in faith].

Those who retain certitude are praised, and the Qur'ān is said to be a source of enlightenment, guidance, and mercy for them. This is because they will benefit from this certitude, not those who have doubts or hesitations.<sup>157</sup> Al-Bukhārī narrates in his compilation that Ibn Mas'ūd said, "Certitude is the essence of faith."<sup>158</sup> Ibn Hajar explained that if the heart finds certitude, then the rest of the body would follow and display that certitude through righteous actions.<sup>159</sup> As an example, the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him) described individuals that would recite the Qur'ān without faith as he said,

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<sup>155</sup> *Al-Qur'ān* 2:2

<sup>156</sup> Ibn 'Ashūr, *Tafsīr al-Tahrīr*, 15:229

<sup>157</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 11:209

<sup>158</sup> Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Ḥadīth no. 8.

<sup>159</sup> Aḥmad ibn 'Alī Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī, *Fath Al-Bārī Bi-Sharḥ al-Bukhārī*, 4th ed. (Al-Riyād: Dār Al-Ṭaybah, 2011). 1:63.

There will emerge from the East some people who will recite the Qur'an, but it will not exceed their throats and who will go out of (renounce) the religion (Islam) as an arrow passes through the game, and they will never come back to it unless the arrow, comes back to the middle of the bow (by itself).<sup>160</sup>

The consequence of lack of certitude brings out the weakness, or perhaps, absence of faith. The purpose of knowledge in Islam is also to reach a stage of certitude. The verse reveals,

﴿رَبِّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا ۚ إِنَّكُمْ لَمُوقِنِينَ﴾

Lord of the heavens and the earth and that between them, if you would be certain.

Ibn Taymiyyah explains that this verse does not specify exactly what they should be certain of; rather, it is left general. This is because the first of the certitudes should be about the Lord as the creator, as the prophets repeatedly questioned their people if they had doubted the existence of the Creator.<sup>161</sup> Once this has been established, certitude about other realities may be built. This methodology creates conviction and steadfastness, which is precisely one of the purposes of certitude in Islam. This is the same purpose as to why Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) revealed to Ibrahim the signs of the heavens and earth, as he states,

﴿وَكَذَلِكَ نُرِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ مَلَكُوتَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلِيَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُوقِنِينَ﴾

And thus did We show Abraham the realm of the heavens and the earth that he would be among the certain [in faith].

Therefore, the first certitude is that of the belief of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) as the creator of the heavens and earth and everything that exists. This results in submission and deeper internal faith that leads to actions displaying the sincerity of that faith. It is not only a means for steadfastness in faith but also through all of life's difficulties as the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him), used to make the supplication asking Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) for certitude through which he said, "O Allah! Grant us certainty which shall make the afflictions of the world easy for us."<sup>162</sup>

<sup>160</sup> Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Ḥadīth no. 7562.

<sup>161</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū' Fatāwā*, 16:335.

<sup>162</sup> Muḥammad ibn 'Īsā Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmi' al-Kabīr (Sunan al-Tirmidhī)*, 2nd ed. (Bayrūt: Dār al-Risālah al-'Ālamīyah, 2010). Ḥadīth no. 2240.

### 2.10.1 The Relationship Between *al-Imān* and Certitude

The concept of *al-imān* (faith) is central to discussing the importance of certitude. Religious belief or faith is tied directly to the concept of certitude and not certainty. While sometimes they may be based on external evidence or certainty, this does not always have to be true. The uniqueness of the concept of *al-imān* portrays a complete and harmonious relationship between certainty and certitude. Al-Shāfi'ī defined it, through the consensus of the companions of the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him), as words, deeds, and intentions. He extended that one without the other is not sufficient to acquire faith. Al-Bukhārī likewise claimed that it was narrated from over a thousand scholars that faith is words, deeds, and belief.<sup>163</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah also narrated that it was the consensus of the scholars that faith is words and deeds.<sup>164</sup> In referring to faith as being established in the heart through internal belief, the Qur'ān reveals,

﴿أُولَئِكَ كَتَبَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْإِيمَانَ وَأَيَّدَهُم بِرُوحٍ مِنْهُ﴾

Those - He has decreed within their hearts faith and supported them with spirit<sup>1</sup> from Him<sup>165</sup>

Faith also includes the sayings of the tongue and physical actions as established in the verse:

﴿إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَرْتَابُوا وَجَاهَدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۚ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الصَّادِقُونَ﴾

The believers are only the ones who have believed in Allāh and His Messenger and then doubt not but strive with their properties and their lives in the cause of Allāh. It is those who are the truthful.<sup>166</sup>

The description of the believers in this verse extends to an attribute of striving, which can be achieved through both words and actions. Another verse corroborates this as the prayer itself, a ritual involving both words and physical actions of the body, epitomizes faith in its totality as it says,

<sup>163</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū' Fatāwā*, 7:209.

<sup>164</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū' Fatāwā*, 7:330.

<sup>165</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 58:22.

<sup>166</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 49:15.

﴿وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضَيِّعَ إِيمَانَكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ﴾

And never would Allāh have caused you to lose your faith [i.e., your previous prayers]. Indeed Allāh is, to the people, Kind and Merciful.<sup>167</sup>

The believers feared that changing their direction of prayer to Mecca would invalidate their previous prayers, as they prayed in the direction of Jerusalem.<sup>168</sup> As a result, this verse was revealed, comforting them and confirming that their *imān* (prayers) would not be lost and that Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) is the most Merciful. A beautiful narration of the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him) summarizes this concept as he said,

Faith has seventy-odd – or sixty-odd – branches, the best of which is saying La ilaha illa Allah, and the least of which is removing something harmful from the road, and modesty is a branch of faith.<sup>169</sup>

This narration identifies three aspects of faith through the saying of the testimony of faith, the removal of something harmful, and modesty. Each represents one component of the term *imān*. The first words are through the tongue, the second physical action, and the third modesty, which begins as a state of the heart. The importance and relevance of the definition of *imān* is central as it conveys the necessity of establishing certitude and not just certainty. If only certainty were established, then none of the three components of *imān* would have been fulfilled. Once an individual can internalize what they see as certainty and act upon it, it transforms into certitude, which in this context is represented harmoniously through the concept of *imān*.

## 2.11 CONCLUSION

Certainty is the highest form of perception equated with sound knowledge based on evidence and reflection. It is opposed by doubt, which can be divided into *shakk* and *rayb*. The first represents a state between two opposing possible truths with the inability to select one of the other. *Rayb* extends further than this, as it holds a negative connotation of mistrust, confusion, and accusation. Both these terms represent states of doubt through the Qur'ān and sunnah. These states include doubts regarding Allāh

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<sup>167</sup> *Al-Qur'ān* 2:143.

<sup>168</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, 2:143.

<sup>169</sup> Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Ḥadīth no. 35.

(Glorified and Exalted), the Qur'ān as revelation, and the Prophethood of Muḥammed (peace and blessings be upon him). The motivation for these doubts may include a fixation on tradition or culture, arrogance, a refusal to acknowledge evidence, hesitation, an unwillingness to commit, the deception of Satan, and finally, refusing to take heed of warnings and sound reminders, instead resolving to mockery and amusement. The manifestation of this doubt as a disease of the heart reflects upon the consequences of its outcome. It is a notion that remains in the heart yet extends in many forms, including hypocrisy, innovation, disbelief, and misguidance.

Certainty is an external state of evidence or rules that can lead to or be the cause of internal certitude. Certitude extends to three primary levels: knowledge, sight, and experience. Certitude has been equated with knowledge and faith, contextually referring to conviction in the day of judgement, the Qur'ān, and ultimately in Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) through the signs of His creation. Its importance is that it remains the purpose of revelation, the essence of faith, and the guide to righteous actions. Without certitude, there is no faith. It is the essential component of belief, conviction, and action, and it must exist in a Muslim's heart and actions to succeed in this world and the hereafter.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RELIGIOUS DOUBT AMONGST MUSLIMS IN THE WEST

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Religious doubt is not a new phenomenon; it has been linked to numerous societies for hundreds of years.<sup>170</sup> In one of the works of the Greek playwright Euripides, born in 485 B.C., he ponders over his doubt in the existence of God as he remarks, “Verily, it is a great thing to believe in gods that care; it soothes the grief of the believer. Though my secret heart hopes in an intelligent Providence, yet when I look at all the misfortunes of men and their actions, the hope fails me.”<sup>171</sup> Religious doubt has been the subject of study for centuries, with recent scholars even examining its adverse effects on mental and physical health.<sup>172</sup> Religious doubt has been defined as the presence of uncertainty or questioning of religious beliefs. Mere questioning does not always signify religious doubt but, on the contrary, could be a means of establishing deeper faith. Thus, the dual nature of religious doubt has also been outlined in many studies. If doubt leads to or simply was a necessary element in questioning to develop a deeper faith, then it has been seen as beneficial, whereas if it results in the inability to resolve contradictory issues, then the results are detrimental.<sup>173</sup> The religious doubts faced by Muslims in the West today reflect the latter as they go beyond mere questioning or curiosity. They are a potential threat to future generations within the complex challenges faced by Muslims who settle in the West. The context of Muslims in the West must first be examined to evaluate these doubts accurately. Through this, a more profound understanding may be gained in helping to provide relevant and sound methodologies in response to these doubts amongst Muslims in the West.

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<sup>170</sup> Neal Krause and Christopher G. Ellison, ‘The Doubting Process: A Longitudinal Study of the Precipitants and Consequences of Religious Doubt’, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 48, no. 2 (1 June 2009): 293–312, 293.

<sup>171</sup> Euripides, *Ten Plays / by Euripides; Translated by Moses Hadas and John McLean; with an Introd. by Moses Hadas.*, Bantam classic ed. (Toronto, New York: Bantam Books, 1981). 91.

<sup>172</sup> Krause and Ellison, ‘The Doubting Process’, 293.

<sup>173</sup> Krause and Ellison, ‘The Doubting Process’, 293.

### 3.2 A BRIEF HISTORY OF MUSLIMS AND THE WEST

The history of Muslims and the Western world can be marked by three significant encounters between Islam and the West.<sup>174</sup> These encounters have contributed to shaping the current state of Muslims in the West, along with their attitudes towards it. The first significant encounter dates to the expansion of Islam as the early Muslims spread their influence over substantial parts of the Byzantine Empire, Southwest Asia, and North Africa.<sup>175</sup> This encounter generated an assortment of experiences ranging from peaceful coexistence to armed conflict. The influence of Islam during this encounter spread as far as North Africa and into Western Europe. Several European areas came under Islamic control, including Spain, Portugal, and Southern France, until the fall of Granada in 1492.<sup>176</sup> This encounter has caused many to draw a parallel to the expansion of Islam into Europe today, specifically in Eastern Europe, with large populations converting to Islam in Romania, Albania, Serbia, and Bulgaria.<sup>177</sup> Some have labeled this compelling expansion of Islam into Europe as a new Islamic presence.

The second distinct encounter of Islam with the West was during the crusades with Catholic Christianity and, subsequently, the Reconquista.<sup>178</sup> This encounter was defined by the efforts to de-Islamize Spain and eradicate Muslims or subjugate them to the “Christian truths.”<sup>179</sup> The approach taken by Western powers at this time was not one of debate or enlightenment but rather a focus on violent eradication, resulting in the elimination of Muslim presence in Western Europe. Truth, according to these groups, was restored, and sentiments of labelling Muslims through their unbelief allowed the Crusades and Spanish to limit the influence and presence of Islam throughout this region.

The third encounter commenced with the fall of Granada in 1492 and the subsequent Western colonial expansion into Muslim lands.<sup>180</sup> This encounter revealed to Muslims the West as an imperial and conquering presence. Muslims were subjugated,

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<sup>174</sup> John L. Esposito, ed., *The Oxford History of Islam* (New York, N.Y: Oxford University Press, 1999), 602.

<sup>175</sup> Esposito, ed., *The Oxford History of Islam*, 602.

<sup>176</sup> Esposito, ed., *The Oxford History of Islam*, 602.

<sup>177</sup> Esposito, ed., *The Oxford History of Islam*, 603.

<sup>178</sup> Dana Carleton Munro, ‘The Western Attitude toward Islam during the Period of the Crusades’, *Speculum* 6, no. 3 (1931): 329–43, 330.

<sup>179</sup> Munro, ‘The Western Attitude toward Islam during the Period of the Crusades,’ 330.

<sup>180</sup> M. Ali Kettani, ‘Muslims in Spain After the Fall of Granada: Suppression, Resistance, Eclipse, and Re-Emergence’, *Islamic Studies* 36, no. 4 (1997): 613–31, 615.

and their economic resources in their lands were monopolized until after the Second World War. This also allowed conquering Western powers to draw “imaginary lines in the sand,” handing out Muslim territories and dividing the Muslim Empires into fifty nation-states.<sup>181</sup> The dominant ideology during this encounter reflected the “liberation” of Muslims from “backwardness” with an attempt to subvert the influence of Islam and replace it with a secular framework that dominated all institutions, including political, cultural, social, and ideological. This encounter has been identified as a cultural attack or war and, in many ways, is still in progress. Although it is marked by a complex relationship between hegemony, capitalism, secularism, and communism, it can be defined through two distinct features. The first is the dominance and command of world leadership by the United States, further embedded with the creation and support of the state of Israel, leading to a “Judeo-Christian” worldview.<sup>182</sup> The second, arguably a byproduct of the first two encounters, is the migration and settlement of Muslims to Western lands, including but not limited to Western Europe, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada.<sup>183</sup>

These encounters are not without consequences. It displays the turbulent interactions throughout history between Muslims and the West. The first encounter represents an expansion of the influence of Muslims in the Western world, while the second represents a kind of reply against it. The third encounter marks an ideological battle rather than a physical war, as seen in the previous two. This is perhaps the most relevant to this study, framing the background and ideological challenges faced by Muslims in the West. The shift from physical conflict to ideological marks the influence of the Western secular world in which Muslims find themselves today as minorities.

### **3.3 THE CURRENT STATE OF MUSLIMS IN THE WEST**

Historical estimates have placed the number of Muslims currently in Europe at around twenty-five million.<sup>184</sup> Later estimates have put the number of Muslims in Western Europe and the Americas (United States, Latin America, and Canada) at about 17.4

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<sup>181</sup> Esposito, ed., *The Oxford History of Islam*, 603.

<sup>182</sup> Esposito, ed., *The Oxford History of Islam*, 604.

<sup>183</sup> Esposito, ed., *The Oxford History of Islam*, 604.

<sup>184</sup> Pew Research Center, ‘Europe’s Growing Muslim Population’, *Pew Research Center’s Religion & Public Life Project* (blog), 29 November 2017, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2017/11/29/europes-growing-muslim-population/>

million.<sup>185</sup> Most recently, however, it has been estimated that about thirty million Muslims with various cultures, languages, and backgrounds live outside their country of origin, having migrated to the Western world.<sup>186</sup> Although this migration has seen its roots centuries ago, a substantial number have entered during the last half-century.<sup>187</sup>

The collection of Muslims living in the West is, in many ways, a result and consequence of the three encounters between the West and Islam, especially during the third phase of colonialism. Western expansion into Muslim territory during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries led to, in many ways, the expulsion of Muslims from their lands. This is a significant connection that is often overlooked when discussing Muslims in the West. It provides context and depth to the overly simplified portrayal of Muslims in the West framed through conflict and tension. The motivation for this migration ranges from seeking better educational and employment opportunities to fleeing war and oppression.<sup>188</sup> This movement has resulted in a plethora of social, cultural, and religious issues specific to this population. Several factors contribute to these issues, all of which permeate the development of a significant consequence: religious doubt. These factors include but are not limited to, acculturation, globalization and secularization, and aggressive ideologies like new atheism and Islamophobia.

### 3.3.1 Acculturation

The term acculturation refers to a process that results in “psychological changes produced by cross-cultural engagement.”<sup>189</sup> It is a process through which those who arrive in new countries incorporate the culture, beliefs, norms, and behaviours of the new country while simultaneously holding on to their traditions and values. This form of assimilation can occur on both an individual and communal level. Different strategies have been used to deal with this process, including assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization.<sup>190</sup> Assimilation is when an individual sheds their own culture and

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<sup>185</sup> Esposito, ed., *The Oxford History of Islam*, 603.

<sup>186</sup> Nigar G. Khawaja, ‘Acculturation of the Muslims Settled in the West’, *Journal of Muslim Mental Health* 10, no. 1 (July 2016), 3.

<sup>187</sup> Khawaja, ‘Acculturation of the Muslims’, 4.

<sup>188</sup> Khawaja, ‘Acculturation of the Muslims’, 5.

<sup>189</sup> Khawaja, ‘Acculturation of the Muslims’, 4.

<sup>190</sup> John W. Berry and David L. Sam, ‘Multicultural Societies’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Multicultural Identity*, Oxford Library of Psychology (New York, NY, US: Oxford University Press, 2014), 97–117, 97.

values and immerses themselves entirely into the new society.<sup>191</sup> Integration refers to a merging of both the old and new cultures.<sup>192</sup> Separation is defined as staying within one's own cultural and ethnic group, while marginalization is when there is no association with either the larger society or a smaller homogeneous cultural group.<sup>193</sup>

According to some, assimilation and integration have been referred to as positive acculturation processes, while separation and marginalization are negative. Simply dividing each immigrant into an exclusive category is oversimplification, as multiple strategies may be used during different stages and contexts. For example, one may integrate at the workplace, whereas in their personal life, they may implement a strategy of separation. Other factors such as social support, cultural awareness, and resiliency also play a part in navigating this process.

Although there is limited data and research on Muslim communities and immigrants settled in the West, there are still trends that have been identified through shared experiences. Through a collection of studies of Muslims in Europe, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand, it was found that Muslims tend to use separation strategies when dealing with acculturation.<sup>194</sup> While this strategy allowed people to maintain stronger connections with religious and cultural ethnic groups, it also made assimilation and integration difficult.<sup>195</sup> Along with this, those who did assimilate found greater occupational success and faced decreased levels of discrimination.<sup>196</sup>

Demographics and life stages also play a part in this process, as it was found that older people faced more significant obstacles in integrating. At the same time, children, especially those born in the West, were more integrated and assimilated.<sup>197</sup> However, due to the constant negotiation between an individual's culture and belief system and often opposing new norms, there may be a perceived emotional reaction known as "acculturative stress."<sup>198</sup> This stress has been correlated with increased levels

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<sup>191</sup> Vedran Omanović and Ann Langley, 'Assimilation, Integration or Inclusion? A Dialectical Perspective on the Organizational Socialization of Migrants', *Journal of Management Inquiry* 32, no. 1 (1 January 2023): 76–97, 76.

<sup>192</sup> Omanović and Langley, 'Assimilation, Integration or Inclusion', 76.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Khawaja, 'Acculturation of the Muslims', 6.

<sup>195</sup> Khawaja, 'Acculturation of the Muslims', 6.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Khawaja, 'Acculturation of the Muslims', 6.

<sup>198</sup> Mireille Aprahamian et al., 'The Relationship between Acculturation and Mental Health of Arab Americans', *Journal of Mental Health Counseling* 33, no. 1 (2011): 80–92, 83.

of mental health concerns such as depression and anxiety. It has been shown to be higher among those using a separation strategy.<sup>199</sup> On the other hand, too much integration and immersion into the dominant culture has been seen to increase other harms like substance abuse.<sup>200</sup> Extensive research is still needed to understand this complex process truly; however, its potential impact is clear. It is a process that has a significant influence on the attitudes, beliefs, and psychology of Muslim immigrants.

### 3.3.2 Globalization and Secularization

In the context of a rapidly changing global world stimulated by the accelerated flow of people, ideas, and information, crises of economies, deformation of states, and the pursuit of security and stability have emerged everywhere. Globalization, secularization, the war on terror, and multiculturalism are some of the challenges that are faced by Muslims who leave their lands to settle in the West. It is within this context that Muslims in the West find themselves navigating through ever so precariously.<sup>201</sup> The context of these global citizenship conditions is also a potential example of how macro events affect individual lives through social and psychological security.

Studies of Muslims in the West, including France, the U.K., Canada, Denmark, and Sweden, have shown three major citizenship strategies employed when dealing with these contexts. These three strategies have been identified as retreatism, essentialism, and engagement. The first has been displayed primarily by first-generation Muslim immigrants holding on to the orientation of their parents and grandparents. It is a relatively safe strategy that is based upon an orientalist world of the host society. The second strategy of essentialism is constructed upon and emphasizes the dichotomy between East and West through a base of separateness and distinctiveness. It reflects the insecurity and anxiety of an ever-changing global world through the emergence of distinct identities in strange societies. The third, engagement, is a direct contrast to the first two as it seems to affirm a hybrid experience of multiculturalism in the post-

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<sup>199</sup> Thijs Fassaert et al., 'Acculturation and Psychological Distress among Non-Western Muslim Migrants--a Population-Based Survey', *The International Journal of Social Psychiatry* 57, no. 2 (March 2011): 132-43, 133.

<sup>200</sup> Schwartz Sj et al., 'Rethinking the Concept of Acculturation: Implications for Theory and Research', *The American Psychologist* 65, no. 4, 237-251, 245.

<sup>201</sup> Catarina Kinnvall and Paul Nesbitt-Larking, 'Global Insecurity and Citizenship Strategies: Young Muslims in the West', *Distinktion: Journal of Social Theory* 12, no. 3 (1 December 2011): 271-90, 271.

colonial world.<sup>202</sup> It is classified by openness, mutual recognition, and communication and cooperation in the context of parallel societies.

In the post-colonial world after the Second World War, millions of Muslims from former colonies were admitted into Western Europe, and the defensive strategy was used to settle into new countries. Muslims then were seen as ‘aliens’ who would keep their heads down upon arrival, forced to face the structural mechanisms of exclusion. For example, a first-generation Muslim immigrant to Canada recalls that when the Muslim community first settled in Canada, they wanted to keep to themselves entirely.<sup>203</sup> This strategy is, however, not exclusive to those in the past. A young *hijāb*-wearing student in Bradford explains how she and her six friends offered passersby their still valid tickets during a trip to London. She explains how they were met with fear, with many shaking their heads at them. Her final response was simply to think, “Fine,” and walk off.<sup>204</sup> In this context, the word ‘fine’ denotes a feeling of political retreatism. They were looked to as alien and strange and were not trusted by the local population. They retreated to their own community after being rejected in their attempt to reach out and engage. Some have still chosen to retreat but more subtly when dealing with the contradictions of new societies. A young Muslim immigrant to France explained how he dealt with his religion in the workplace by stating that God does not require him to practice his religion formally while working.<sup>205</sup> He proclaimed that his employer came first and that any prayers during work could be done before bed.<sup>206</sup>

The second stage of essentialism rooted itself as post-war immigrant families began to settle into their new countries. This stage was marked by cultural exclusion and racial discrimination, which led to the promotion of narratives of ‘us’ versus ‘them.’ This resulted in a dominant strategy of community-centered and group-based essentialism. France, for example, insists that religion is but a minor thorn in mainstream society yet refuses to acknowledge the institutionalization of Christianity throughout its society in the forms of traditional habits, rituals, and customs.<sup>207</sup> Muslims

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<sup>202</sup> Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking, ‘Global Insecurity and Citizenship Strategies’, 271.

<sup>203</sup> Rania; Javdani Mustafa, ‘An Investigation of the Identity of First Generation American Muslim Youth Participating in Muslim Students Associations’, *Journal of Muslim Mental Health* 10, no. 2 (Winter 2016), 278.

<sup>204</sup> Mustafa, ‘An Investigation of the Identity’, 278.

<sup>205</sup> Tomas Gerholm and Yngve Georg Lithman, *The New Islamic Presence in Western Europe* (Mansell, 1988), 115.

<sup>206</sup> Gerholm and Georg Lithman, *The New Islamic Presence*, 115.

<sup>207</sup> Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking, ‘Global Insecurity and Citizenship Strategies’, 281.

are then forced to be made aware and accept the secondary status of their religion, leading to such strategies. Similarly, in Sweden, Muslim immigrants have been exposed to the same paradox in which the firm establishment of a secular society is marred by its deeply entrenched Lutheran heritage.<sup>208</sup> Still, the level of engagement and compromise is seen at an institutional and individual level. Dr Mohammad Fazlhashemi, a Professor of Religious Studies at a Swedish University, claims, when commenting on the relationship between men and women in Islam, that conservative and patriarchal interpretations of Islam cannot be regulated in Sweden and Europe.<sup>209</sup>

The strategy of engagement has become more popular as immigrants settle into generations embracing multiculturalism. In Canada, for example, a male Muslim lawyer and politician adheres to his right to be part of the community. When his son was told to return to his country, he thought, "This is my country."<sup>210</sup> While there are still acts of discrimination and anti-Muslim sentiment, those who have taken this strategy have given importance to integration into all parts of society, including politics. Some have even been bold enough to face this discrimination head-on. A young Muslim woman in Denmark explains how a woman entered her bakery expressing her hate for the *hijāb*. She was asked to leave if she did not like it. However, she came back every day regardless.<sup>211</sup> Although this strategy is based on dialogue, engagement, and multiculturalism, it is also evident that a superficial form of multiculturalism is often adopted. This is when the dominant culture and norms are expected to be adhered to by everyone, essentially stating that "if you come to our country, you must do things our way."<sup>212</sup> These three strategies of retreatism, essentialism, and engagement frame the constant struggle of Muslims in the West in the context of an ever-increasing global and secular West. Their state is not stagnant, nor are their circumstances uniform. Thus, each individual, group, or community implement their own strategy for dealing with such stark challenges.

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<sup>208</sup> Ingemar Elander, Charlotte Fridolfsson, and Eva Gustavsson, 'Swedish Muslims and Secular Society: Faith-Based Engagement and Place', *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 26 (19 March 2015), 13.

<sup>209</sup> Elander et al, 'Swedish Muslims and Secular Society, 13.

<sup>210</sup> Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking, 'Global Insecurity and Citizenship Strategies, 283.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>212</sup> Ib Kinnvall and Nesbitt-Larking, 'Global Insecurity and Citizenship Strategies id. 285

### 3.3.3 Islamophobia

The seemingly negative tone of the West towards both Islam and the Muslim world is not a relatively new construct. Many historians traced this negative image back to the religiously motivated attacks by Christian theologians during the Middle Ages against Islam and the Muslims.<sup>213</sup> This was followed by increased attacks on Islam in the context of an evolutionary framework during the Western colonial period. This has transpired into the modern world through a clash of civilizations between the West and Islam based on the threat of the collective and expanding Muslim identity.<sup>214</sup> This, along with the expansion of Muslim immigration to Europe and America, has resulted in the West's need for an indispensable enemy represented often as Islam.<sup>215</sup>

This construct has had significant repercussions for average Muslim populations living in the West as they are increasingly seen through a lens of fear and suspicion.<sup>216</sup> A review of various studies shows, for example, that Muslims in the United States have been facing increased discrimination and seem to be one of the most vulnerable groups.<sup>217</sup> Additionally, in Sweden, Muslim groups, mosques, women and even children have been the subject of several attacks, from threats to physical violence, and even an entire mosque being burned down in 2003.<sup>218</sup> In 2009 alone, almost 200 anti-religious hate crimes against Muslims were reported in just three major metropolitan areas in Sweden.<sup>219</sup>

Muslim women, easily identified by their *hijāb*, seem to be at greater risk. A recent report based on 250 interviews with Muslims found that nine out of ten respondents confirmed that they had experienced religious harassment and hatred.<sup>220</sup> Among this group, almost all women who wore the headscarf verified this as having, at the least, expressions of hate against them in their society.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> W. Shadid and P. van Koningsveld, 'The Negative Image of Islam and Muslims in the West: Causes and Solutions', in *Religious Freedom and the Neutrality of the State*, ed. W.A. Shadid and P.S. van Koningsveld (Leuven/Sterling, VA: Peeters, 2001), 174–95, 178.

<sup>214</sup> Shadid and Koningsveld, 'The Negative Image of Islam', 178.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>216</sup> Khawaja, 'Acculturation of the Muslims Settled in the West', 7.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>218</sup> Ingemar Elander, Charlotte Fridolfsson, and Eva Gustavsson, 'Swedish Muslims and Secular Society: Faith-Based Engagement and Place', *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 26 (19 March 2015), 28.

<sup>219</sup> Elander et al., 'Swedish Muslims and Secular Society', 28.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>221</sup> Elander et al., 'Swedish Muslims and Secular Society', 28.

In Canada, in the Province of Quebec, Asmahan Mansour, an 11-year-old Muslim girl, was ejected from a soccer tournament simply for wearing the *hijāb* (a Muslim headscarf or veil).<sup>222</sup> Similarly, a group of girls were expelled from a martial arts tournament in Montreal for wearing a headscarf.<sup>223</sup> Most recently, the Quebec Federation of Taekwondo insisted on banning headscarves under helmets for all competitors.<sup>224</sup> Along with this, the global war on “terror” has put both Muslim individuals and institutions under constant scrutiny, forcing them to live under a type of physiological incarceration. In 2016, The Inspirit Foundation surveyed young Muslims in Canada and combined the summarized findings with an independent study of over 300 Muslim youth in Canada aged 18 to 34.

The overall study dealt with their experiences in Canada, focusing on their challenges, expectations, and hopes. Even though young Muslims contribute to Canadian society in an exemplary manner, they face higher levels of discrimination and unfair treatment as compared to other young people in Canada.<sup>225</sup> A remarkable 48% of young Muslims reported discrimination that they faced, and almost a third (32%) have experienced religious discrimination in public spaces compared to only 8% of other young people in Canada.<sup>226</sup>

Adding to these hostile complexities is the notion of the emergence of an anti-religious movement referred to as New Atheism.<sup>227</sup> Although this movement is not singular in nature and involves several prominent figures of various backgrounds and stances, it seems to unite on two significant premises: (1) belief in God is not rational, and (2) religion is dangerous and evil.<sup>228</sup> The “new” in new atheism has been identified as not referring to knowledge or arguments that are profoundly new, but rather, it represents their attack on all forms of Islam under the guise of a critique of religion.<sup>229</sup> Book chapters such as “The Problem with Islam,” aggressive hate for the dress of Muslim women and their *hijāb*, and scathing accusations regarding the Qur’ān are all

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<sup>222</sup> Abdullah A. Omar, “Islamic Identity in the Canadian Multicultural Context,” *Cultural and Pedagogical Inquiry*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2012): 26.

<sup>223</sup> Omar, “Islamic Identity in the Canadian Multicultural Context,” 26.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>225</sup> “Young Muslims in Canada: A Story of Challenges, High Expectations and Hope” (Toronto, Ontario: Inspirit Foundation, 2017), 5.

<sup>226</sup> Inspirit Foundation, “Young Muslims in Canada,” 5.

<sup>227</sup> William W. Emilsen, ‘The New Atheism and Islam’, *The Expository Times* 123, no. 11 (August 2012): 521–28, 523.

<sup>228</sup> Emilsen, ‘The New Atheism and Islam,’ 523.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*

examples of their focus on Islam and Muslims citing them as ‘haters of reason.’<sup>230</sup> These sentiments have increased the hostility of the West against Islam and resulted in the deterioration of relations between many Muslims and non-Muslims in the West.<sup>231</sup> It is just another example depicting the struggle of the Muslims in the West to hold on to and often defend their beliefs while being faced with tremendous challenges in society.

It is seemingly evident that the external and internal pressures faced by Muslims in the West are substantial. The nature of their integration and assimilation through a lens of globalization, secularization and islamophobia is highly complex. It could be seen as the grounds to set conflict in identity between a Muslim and adherence to Islam and their integration into a Western society. Within these grounds, the contrast between older and younger generations is also apparent in how they deal with similar issues. First-generation Muslim immigrants are more likely to retreat, and although this still may be prevalent in future generations, their willingness to engage also seems greater. This, however, does not necessarily mean that they are free of pressures but perhaps that they face their distinct obstacles.

Here, there are possibilities for breeding grounds for religious doubt. While the causes of religious doubt may vary and be complex within themselves, the current state of Muslims in the West provides a background to these doubts. Through this background, it is already possible to conceive the roots that permeate the societies in which Muslims live as minorities, giving way to potential doubts. Once the more specific causes of religious doubts are examined, perhaps links may be made. Although additional research is needed, the context through which these doubts are formed and their consequences cannot be ignored.

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<sup>230</sup> Emilsen, ‘The New Atheism and Islam,’ 523.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

### 3.4 CAUSES OF RELIGIOUS DOUBT AMONGST MUSLIMS IN THE WEST

One of the primary concerns amongst Muslim parents in the West is the religious identity of their children.<sup>232</sup> This is a significant concern with the growing nature of ideologies such as secularism, feminism, capitalism, and atheism, all possibly threatening the Islamic identity of Muslims in the West to various degrees. In America, it has been reported that of those raised as Muslims in their youth, over 20% do not identify as Muslims in adulthood.<sup>233</sup> Part of this is explained by Muslims being a minority in the West needing to constantly affirm their beliefs in the context of such opposing ideologies.<sup>234</sup> Although the extent of religious doubt amongst Muslims in the West still needs to be determined through more research, the prevalence of it cannot be ignored. Some religious and community leaders amongst Muslims in the West, including imams and chaplains, have declared it to be an “epidemic”, citing that doubting the faith is not an exception anymore but rather the norm.<sup>235</sup>

It is important to note here as well, when reflecting upon the duality of religious doubt, that the doubt cited and referred to here is not one of mere curiosity that may lead to building faith. Examples of those include simply questioning different aspects of the religion to gain clarity or to inquire if certain practices are based on the faith. In a time when culture is given great importance concerning religion, such inquiries are understandable or perhaps even necessary. Doubts in the context of this study and the subsequent research refer to that which causes an individual to lose overall certainty in their faith, bringing them either to the verge of faith or to leaving Islam altogether.<sup>236</sup> After examining several studies, it seems that the pathways to religious doubt among Muslims in the West are summarized through four major concerns. These have been identified as moral or social concerns, scientific concerns, philosophical concerns, and personal experience and trauma.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> Osman Umarji, “Will My Children Be Muslim? The Development of Religious Identity in Young People,” Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research (March 23, 2020). <<https://yaqeeninstitute.org/osman-umarji/will-my-children-be-muslim-the-development-of-religious-identity-in-young-people>> (accessed 4 September 2023), 3.

<sup>233</sup> Umarji, “Will My Children Be Muslim,” 3.

<sup>234</sup> Rania Javdani Mustafa, ‘An Investigation of the Identity of First Generation American Muslim Youth Participating in Muslim Students Associations’, *Journal of Muslim Mental Health* 10, no. 2 (Winter 2016), 56.

<sup>235</sup> Youssef Chouhoud, ‘Modern Pathways to Doubt in Islam’ (Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research, October 2016), <https://yaqeeninstitute.ca/read/paper/modern-pathways-to-doubt-in-islam>, 7.

<sup>236</sup> Chouhoud, ‘Modern Pathways to Doubt in Islam,’ 7.

<sup>237</sup> Chouhoud, ‘Modern Pathways to Doubt in Islam,’ 8.

### 3.4.1 Moral and Social Concerns

The belief system of Islam incorporates a moral standard based on the sources of evidence, mainly the Qur'ān and the Prophetic hadith or narrations of the final Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him). These make up the two primary sources of Islamic law. The Western norms and ethical values are also based upon their own context and vision. Although there may be times when both these ideological sources agree with each other through overlapping moral reasoning, it is only natural that there will also be instances of dispute, tension, and even contradiction. This is one of the primary reasons that causes Muslims in the West to doubt their Islamic faith.<sup>238</sup> Although it has been argued that some Islamic doctrines agree with Western values and ethics, great emphasis has been placed on potential anxieties within the Islamic and Western frameworks that must be reconciled. This reconciliation, or perceived inability or lack of it, has been identified as one of the primary causes of religious doubt amongst Muslims in the West.

The moral and social causes of doubt in Islam among Muslims often stem from conflicts between Islamic teachings and the cultural norms of Western society. Key issues such as gender inequality, sexuality, and controversial historical events like slavery in Islam can provoke moral doubt as they clash with modern values of equality, justice, and human rights. Additionally, the association of Islam with terrorism, especially through groups like ISIS, further complicates Muslims' sense of moral alignment with their faith. The lack of constructive dialogue between religious leaders and lay Muslims, particularly regarding sensitive topics like gender and sexuality, exacerbates these doubts, leading some individuals to question the validity and relevance of Islamic teachings in contemporary society.<sup>239</sup>

Moral issues often lead to doubt by prompting individuals to question the alignment between their personal values and the religious teachings they follow.<sup>240</sup> For *ex-hijābi* women in Turkey, several factors contribute to this moral ambivalence. One key issue is the inconsistency they observe between religious practices and core Islamic values. For example, women may feel frustrated when those who strictly adhere to

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<sup>238</sup> Youssef Chouhoud, "What Causes Muslims to Doubt Islam? A Quantitative Analysis, Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research (2018), 4.

<sup>239</sup> Chouhoud, 'Modern Pathways to Doubt in Islam, 7.

<sup>240</sup> Merve Küttük-Kuriş, 'Moral Ambivalence, Religious Doubt and Non-Belief among Ex-Hijabi Women in Turkey', Religions 12, no. 1 (January 2021): 20.

religious practices like veiling do not necessarily embody values such as justice and fairness, leading them to doubt the overall religious framework.<sup>241</sup> Additionally, the gendered application of social piety rules, where women are expected to adhere to modesty guidelines while men's actions go unaddressed, can create a sense of injustice. This unequal treatment causes women to question the fairness and validity of these religious norms. Parental and societal pressures regarding modesty and veiling also contribute to feelings of resentment and doubt, particularly when women perceive their personal autonomy as compromised.<sup>242</sup> As they encounter alternative interpretations of religious texts, especially those that offer more gender-inclusive perspectives, many begin to seek ways to reconcile their personal values with religious beliefs. Furthermore, negative experiences in workplaces or social settings, where women feel discriminated against because of their veiling, can lead to broader questioning of the religious and social systems that perpetuate such discrimination.<sup>243</sup> Together, these moral concerns push individuals to search for resolutions, which may involve reinterpreting religious teachings or, in some cases, distancing themselves from the faith altogether.

Specific issues within this category include gender roles and sexuality and certain historical events leading to Islamophobia.<sup>244</sup> Take, for example, one individual's view of the treatment of girls and boys within her own household by her parents. She viewed the treatment of her and her sisters as having more 'limitations' and began blaming the religion for cultural oppression. This led her to question why certain things were permissible and impermissible, such as food and drink, finally having her classify herself as agnostic in faith.<sup>245</sup> Another imam recounts his visits to a Muslim family in which the daughter questioned the Islamic stance on homosexuality. She could not reconcile its condemnation in Islam with her personal views of justice. This led her to doubt God's justice and led her to a pathway to doubt.<sup>246</sup>

Another study of Muslims moving out of Islam in the West due to religious doubt explained the social breakaway. This is when an individual faces socio-religious limitations and impositions enforced upon them, resulting in them breaking away and

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<sup>241</sup> Kütük-Kuriş, 'Moral Ambivalence, Religious Doubt and Non-Belief,' 11.

<sup>242</sup> Kütük-Kuriş, 'Moral Ambivalence, Religious Doubt and Non-Belief,' 13.

<sup>243</sup> Kütük-Kuriş, 'Moral Ambivalence, Religious Doubt and Non-Belief,' 12.

<sup>244</sup> Chouhoud, 'Modern Pathways to Doubt in Islam,' 11.

<sup>245</sup> Chouhoud, 'Modern Pathways to Doubt in Islam,' 9.

<sup>246</sup> Chouhoud, 'Modern Pathways to Doubt in Islam,' 10.

searching for alternatives.<sup>247</sup> In a way, it seems that religion to these individuals was not specifically about the belief in God. Rather, it was seen as a set of restrictive rules that were not enforced in the West's regular or dominant social environment. Activities like drinking, smoking, and gender segregation led to the search for an alternative, which then may prompt doubts about religion, including the existence of God.<sup>248</sup>

A study of Muslims in the Netherlands, for example, revealed that many of the doubts faced by youth occur at young ages, during their teenage years. Many Muslim youth compare their freedoms, lives, and values with those of their Western liberal friends. This results in internal struggles with the self and external struggles with parents in positions of authority. Some of these factors, such as women going out, may stem from cultural practices, not religion. This can be seen as many Muslim youths traced the limitations on their freedoms and tensions with their family upon their parents' adherence to cultural norms and values and not religion. Some have gone to extremes and attempted suicide to resolve such issues and tensions. One respondent explained that after an attempted suicide, tensions ceased, but this eventually led her to doubt the existence of God, not believing that she could be living such a life with God existing at the same time.<sup>249</sup> Many doubts stemmed from socio-cultural issues and were never seemingly addressed.<sup>250</sup> This can lead Muslim youth to redefine their identities by moving away from cultural and religious influences.

The issue of *ḥijāb* as an obligatory dress code for Muslim women has also been the subject of great concern amongst some who started to doubt the faith.<sup>251</sup> Although significant attention has been given to this topic in Western contexts, there are still examples of its prevalence, that is, doubting the Islamic *ḥijāb* or veil, in Muslim-majority nations. A recent study regarding attitudes, religious doubt, and leaving Islamic amongst women who removed the *ḥijāb* in Turkey provides necessary context. In the decade from 2008-2018, the number of Muslim women in Turkey who wore *ḥijāb* remained unchanged from 52% to 52%.<sup>252</sup> However, at the same time, there was an

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<sup>247</sup> Maria Vliek, "It's Not Just about Faith": Narratives of Transformation When Moving Out of Islam in the Netherlands and Britain', *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 30, no. 3 (3 July 2019): 323–44, 337.

<sup>248</sup> Vliek, "It's Not Just about Faith," 332.

<sup>249</sup> Vliek, "It's Not Just about Faith," 333.

<sup>250</sup> Vliek, "It's Not Just about Faith," 332.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>252</sup> Kütük-Kuriş, 'Moral Ambivalence, Religious Doubt and Non-Belief,' 33.

increase in women who did not wear the *hijāb*, a rise in the number of people who identify as atheists or deists, and a change in the attitudes of women regarding unveiling within traditional interpretations of Islam.<sup>253</sup>

Although this group of women who refused the *hijāb* were diverse, their motivations were summarized by two main points. The first of these was simply fatigue from a secular environment. Some responded that after graduation, they could not find jobs due to their *hijāb*, and the only jobs they were hired for provided them no personal opportunity to be successful simply due to their veils.<sup>254</sup> Politics also played a role in some claiming that a formalistic perspective had been formed, in that if one were to observe the *hijāb*, they would be classified as supporters of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP).<sup>255</sup>

The second motivation for the unveiling was deemed to be religious doubt. Not every individual who left the *hijāb* left Islam.<sup>256</sup> Some questioned whether this practice was, in fact, part of the religion or simply cultural. One respondent admitted that although she was a devout Muslim, she was unsure or uncertain whether veiling for women was an obligation or not. After adopting the views of an Islamic reformist theologian, she decided to abandon the *hijāb* but remain a Muslim.<sup>257</sup> Many respondents claimed to have religious doubts before leaving the *hijāb*. Many of them went from a moderate or reformist view of Islam, thereby leaving the *hijāb*, to altogether leaving Islam and rejecting God.<sup>258</sup> Another reflected that after leaving such an intense identity as Islam, she searched for her freedom, simply not caring whether God existed or not.<sup>259</sup> Although technically a Muslim country, the nation of Turkey historically shares many secular values with the West. Evidently, not all that left the *hijāb* left Islam in totality; however, this was a common trend.

Other moral issues based on historical events also played a role in contributing to Muslims' religious doubt in the West. These include topics such as polygamy and

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<sup>253</sup> Kütük-Kuriş, 'Moral Ambivalence, Religious Doubt and Non-Belief,' 33.

<sup>254</sup> 'Employment Discrimination Faced by Muslim Women Wearing the Hijab: Exploratory Meta-Analysis: *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work*: Vol 32, No 3', accessed 1 November 2023, 145.

<sup>255</sup> Kütük-Kuriş, 'Moral Ambivalence, Religious Doubt and Non-Belief,' 33.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> Jhanghiz Syahrivar, 'Hijab No More: A Phenomenological Study', *Journal of Religion and Health* 60, no. 3 (2021): 1969–91, 1975.

<sup>258</sup> Kütük-Kuriş, 'Moral Ambivalence, Religious Doubt and Non-Belief,' 33.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

slavery in Islam, the marriages of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), and issues of terrorism and radical Islam. Set against the backdrop of liberalism, these issues were given significant attention in the West, causing doubt among many Muslims. However, despite this, another recent study examined the exact cause of doubt but differentiating between the actions of Muslims and the Islamic doctrine. Through this, it was found that the actions of Muslims seemingly played a more significant role in the presence of religious doubt amongst Muslims in the West rather than the Islamic doctrine itself.<sup>260</sup> The first four causes of religious doubt were how some insist that there is only ‘one’ way to practice religion, the bad things people do in the name of religion, the intolerance shown by religious individuals, and the nonreligious behaviour of religious individuals.<sup>261</sup> All these four seemingly link to the specific behaviours of Muslims rather than the Islamic principles themselves. It proposes the questions as to what the causes of these doubts are specifically. In the context of religious theology, so far, very little has been explicitly cited as a cause of religious doubt., Greater themes of a lack of exposure to evidence or exposure to contradicting cultural practices seem to be more prevalent in identifying causes of religious doubt. Although it remains complex, it looks as though there may be trends and associations in practical experiences of faith and culture playing a significant role in contributing to religious doubt amongst Muslims, especially younger generations, in the West.

### **3.4.2 Scientific Concerns**

Another prominent matter leading to religious doubt is the perception that Islam is incompatible with science or, at least, the scientific process. The first is the perceived notion that Islam contradicts science in some matters, and the second is that the scientific method is more thorough and trustworthy.<sup>262</sup> This holds especially true for college-aged students in the West.<sup>263</sup> They are susceptible to the critiques of Islam based on scientific research, primarily when these positions are championed by well-known public figures or intellectuals adhering to the trend of “new atheism.”

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<sup>260</sup> Chouhoud, “What Causes Muslims to Doubt Islam,” 7.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

<sup>262</sup> Chouhoud, “What Causes Muslims to Doubt Islam,” 4.

<sup>263</sup> Chouhoud, “What Causes Muslims to Doubt Islam,” 5.

One of the significant issues relating to these concerns is the theory of evolution. Many Muslims who profess religious doubt recall the apprehension they feel when trying to reconcile this theory in an Islamic context.<sup>264</sup> The difficulty of addressing these theological challenges is not just limited to Muslims in the West but also conceived by religious leaders. An imam in America claimed that the theory of Darwinian evolution is one of the “biggest problems we’ve ever had in our intellectual tradition” as Muslims.<sup>265</sup> While acknowledging the challenge it poses to Islamic theology, others seem more sanguine in their outlook, expecting it to be clarified with ease by Muslim scholars in the West.<sup>266</sup> While there is a spectrum of responses to this challenge amongst Muslims and their leaders in the West, it does seem that it is a significant potential cause of scientific-based doubt harboured by some Muslims in the West.

In a recent study of Muslims in America, it was revealed to be the primary concern in the category of scientific-related religious doubt. About 33% of respondents cited the debate over creation versus evolution as being the primary cause of religious doubt over time.<sup>267</sup> This trend extends to communities beyond Muslims in the West into the Arab Muslim world. A study of Arab atheists on Twitter also showed that the most frequent hashtags mentioned by them are related to the theory of evolution.<sup>268</sup> The support for this theory is used as a precise tool to promote religious doubt and attempt to convince others online.<sup>269</sup> It may not be easy to dismiss the challenge completely, nor would it be beneficial to submit to the notion that it is impossible to reconcile with Islamic theology. As one imam concludes, the best approach may lie in the understanding that the theory of evolution can be “modified to fit within an Islamic worldview.”<sup>270</sup>

Expanding further upon the notion of the theory of evolution is a complete critique of the establishment of an Islamic theory compared to what is perceived as the

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<sup>264</sup> Chouhoud, ‘Modern Pathways to Doubt in Islam,’ 12.

<sup>265</sup> Chouhoud, ‘Modern Pathways to Doubt in Islam,’ 12.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid.

<sup>267</sup> Chouhoud, “What Causes Muslims to Doubt Islam,” 7.

<sup>268</sup> Youssef Al Hariri, Walid Magdy, and Maria Wolters, ‘Arabs and Atheism: Religious Discussions in the Arab Twittersphere’, in *Social Informatics*, ed. Ingmar Weber et al., Lecture Notes in Computer Science (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 18–34, 28.

<sup>269</sup> Al Hariri, Walid Magdy, and Maria Wolters, ‘Arabs and Atheism,’ 28.

<sup>270</sup> Chouhoud, ‘Modern Pathways to Doubt in Islam,’ 13.

‘scientific process.’ Claims that science cannot be reconciled with religion and that one is based upon fact while the other is fiction further led to sources of religious doubt.

An exemplification of this notion is seen through the experiences of college students in America and their discussions regarding religious doubt. This is more specific to students majoring in science-based majors like biology and chemistry. Many of them harbour concerns about religion. These concerns, however, do not seem to be specific to any significant aspects of Islam that contradicted what they had learned through science.<sup>271</sup> Instead, they were concerned with comparing the establishment of both. There is a notion that religious education is based on ritualistic traditions that leave students with a superficial understanding of the faith. At the same time, scientific knowledge seems to be based on a systematic and engaging process.<sup>272</sup> This leads students to claim that the latter is more “believable”, reflecting a highly comprehensive system and method. It is essential to differentiate the respondent's experience with religious knowledge and their exposure to the scientific process. The claim is not that Islamic expertise or the process of establishing it is superficial. Instead, it reflects her experience with it. Many who seem doubtful in various studies and circumstances describe their association with religious knowledge as highly ritualistic or cultural.

The tension between Islamic teachings and scientific understanding, particularly in the context of the theory of evolution, serves as a significant source of doubt among Muslims, especially in Western settings. The perception that Islam is incompatible with science, coupled with the more systematic and evidence-based nature of scientific education, especially for college-aged students, exacerbates these doubts. Many Muslims, particularly those studying in science-related fields, experience a disconnect between their religious education and the rigorous, logical framework of scientific inquiry. This gap often leads to the belief that science offers a more reliable and comprehensive worldview compared to the more ritualistic or culturally based understanding of Islam they are exposed to. While religious leaders in the West offer varying responses to the challenge of reconciling Islam with evolutionary theory, the lack of a clear and unified approach to these issues further fuels the perception of a conflict between religion and science. The growing prominence of secular critiques, particularly through the influence of "new atheism," further magnifies this challenge,

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<sup>271</sup> Chouhoud, ‘Modern Pathways to Doubt in Islam,’ 13.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid.

especially online. To mitigate this doubt, a more nuanced and informed dialogue is necessary, one that allows for the integration of scientific insights with Islamic theology in a way that maintains both intellectual integrity and spiritual authenticity. Without addressing these concerns adequately, Muslims, especially the younger generation, risk feeling alienated from their faith, leading to increased doubt and disillusionment.

There is limited exposure to Islamic knowledge in the Western context, whereas institutions are built to promote and convey scientific methodology. Regardless, it remains a primary cause of religious doubt amongst Muslims in the West, especially students. These concerns cannot simply be dismissed, and if they are without adequate response, risk those that do with being labelled as irrational or merely unenlightened.

### **3.4.3 Intellectual and Philosophical Concerns**

Beyond scientific concerns, there also seem to be intellectual or philosophically motivated doubts among Muslims in the West. This is more prevalent once again in college-aged students who are often exposed to critiques of religion both institutionally and socially.<sup>273</sup> In this regard, three main questions or concerns were frequently asked. The first is the proof of the existence of God, the second is the proof of Islam as being true, and finally, the question of theodicy is that if God exists, then why is there evil?<sup>274</sup> A study that aimed to uncover the sources of doubt amongst Muslims in America found that a significant percentage of respondents cited these as their primary purpose of religious doubt. Concerning the uncertainty of God's existence, about 54% reported it to be a source of doubt ranging from a moderate amount to a great deal.<sup>275</sup> A more significant 57% reported that the problem of evil and unfair suffering in the world contributed to religious doubt.<sup>276</sup> It is important to note that often, a respondent may cite more than one reason that contributes to their doubt.

Contributing significantly to this concern is the previously cited rise of the ideology of 'new atheism.'<sup>277</sup> This movement has been promoted by several public figures, including popular scientists, literary figures, and even ex-Muslims. Although

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<sup>273</sup> Chouhoud, 'Modern Pathways to Doubt in Islam,' 13.

<sup>274</sup> Chouhoud, 'Modern Pathways to Doubt in Islam,' 14.

<sup>275</sup> Chouhoud, "What Causes Muslims to Doubt Islam," 8.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid.

<sup>277</sup> Emilsen, 'The New Atheism and Islam,' 521.

the proponents of this movement are a diverse group with varying arguments, their prominent claims can be summarised through two main premises: (a) belief in God is irrational, especially in our age of science and reason, and (b) religion is the source of evil.<sup>278</sup> It has been argued that this movement has not come up with anything essentially ‘new’ philosophically or even scientifically but has resounded with the public through popularising and simplifying old-age ideas with a fervent passion, specifically attacking Islam as an ideology under the guise of attacking religion in general.<sup>279</sup> Books such as *The God Delusion*, *The End of Faith*, and *God is Not Great* all display their hostility not just to extreme forms of Islam but all aspects of the faith through a condemnation verging on racial and cultural supremacy.<sup>280</sup>

Such sentiments seem to raise doubts, as seen in several case studies examining Muslim youth in the West. A young student in Manchester explained his experience with religious doubt from a very young age. These included questions such as the nature of God in relation to the existence of all the violence and wrongdoing in the world, the existence of free will, and finally, the existence of God.<sup>281</sup> However, his doubts were not resolved through sound knowledge or reasoning or, in many ways, not even acknowledged but dismissed as whisperings of the devil in his ear.<sup>282</sup> He continued to seek alternatives through philosophy until finally switching to another extreme, concluding that he is no longer a Muslim but an atheist.<sup>283</sup> This example epitomizes the experience of many youth in the West when dealing with philosophical challenges relating to Islam.

Another young girl in the Netherlands recalls having an ‘Islamic upbringing.’ Although she prayed and believed in it, her image of God was split. Her personal view of God was positive, pleasant, and friendly, but her institutional experience and surroundings gave her a view of a negative and punishing entity. Through time, this led her to meet new people and discuss religion and philosophy, resulting in her doubting the role of religion and God in her life. Eventually, she lost her faith and came to terms with her ‘unbelief’, establishing a new identity based upon that.<sup>284</sup>

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<sup>278</sup> Emilsen, ‘The New Atheism and Islam, 521.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

<sup>280</sup> Emilsen, ‘The New Atheism and Islam, 521.

<sup>281</sup> Vliek, “It’s Not Just about Faith,” 331.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

<sup>283</sup> Vliek, “It’s Not Just about Faith,” 331.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

Even in the context of philosophical motivations of doubt, there seems to be an underlying presence of individual identity. Many younger Muslims may search for or examine their identity through an Islamic lens, and when they are unable to find answers to sometimes genuine concerns, they seek alternatives. Answers to these doubts and questions must be provided so that there is at least an initial process of attempting to counter them with sound theological knowledge.

Intellectual and philosophical concerns often intersect but differ in the ways they contribute to religious doubt among individuals, particularly in the context of Muslims living in the West. Intellectual doubts are typically rooted in the perceived conflict between religious beliefs and the knowledge or reasoning presented by secular or scientific perspectives. These concerns are often triggered by exposure to new ideas, often through formal education or interaction with diverse worldviews, where scientific theories or rational explanations challenge religious teachings. For instance, the theory of evolution can create doubts for Muslims who struggle to reconcile it with the Islamic understanding of creation. Similarly, the scientific method's emphasis on empirical evidence can lead some to question religious truths that rely on faith, revelation, or divine authority. In the Western context, intellectual concerns also stem from the influence of secularism, where the reliance on reason and logic can make religious beliefs seem outdated or irrational.

Intellectual doubts are often more factual or evidence-based in nature.<sup>285</sup> Individuals may question the compatibility of their religious beliefs with scientific advancements or logical reasoning. These concerns are often expressed through the search for rational arguments that either affirm or challenge their faith. If these doubts are not adequately addressed through intellectual engagement or the provision of Islamic scholarship, individuals may feel compelled to abandon their religious beliefs in favour of secular or atheistic worldviews.

Philosophical doubts, on the other hand, are more abstract and concerned with the deeper, existential questions about life, the universe, and human existence.<sup>286</sup> These concerns often focus on the broader meaning and purpose of life, the nature of God, and the problem of evil or suffering. For example, many young Muslims in the West may

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<sup>285</sup> Abu Hamid Muhammad Al-Ghazali, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, 2nd Edition, trans. Michael E. Marmura, 2 edition (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 2002), 9.

<sup>286</sup> Al-Ghazali, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, 11.

wrestle with the question of why a benevolent and all-powerful God would allow suffering and injustice in the world. This issue, known as the problem of evil, is a central philosophical dilemma that challenges religious belief. Similarly, philosophical concerns may center around the existence of God itself—whether the concept of God is logically coherent or whether belief in God can be justified on rational grounds.<sup>287</sup>

Unlike intellectual concerns, which often center on empirical evidence or scientific reasoning, philosophical concerns are rooted in abstract reasoning and moral or existential questions.<sup>288</sup> Philosophical doubts can emerge from exposure to critical thinkers, including those who challenge religious frameworks through philosophical arguments about morality, free will, and the nature of the divine. These concerns can also arise when individuals begin to question the validity of religious narratives in explaining human existence or when they seek to find meaning beyond traditional religious teachings.

#### **3.4.4 Personal Experience and Trauma**

In examining causes for religious doubt, the effect of personal trauma was reported as one of the most frequently cited concerns.<sup>289</sup> This is perhaps because it is related to many of the previous causes through personal experience. It also could be a symptom that marks deeper causes that have not yet been identified. It may also be the most challenging cause to identify because of its intimate nature as it manifests itself through many different means. After examining several case studies, some have concluded that three significant modes capture much of the variation seen in this occurrence. The first two are related to personal experiences, dividing them into prolonged and acute, while the third deals with communal experiences and their effect on the prevalence of religious doubt.

Prolonged personal trauma seems to be a significant source of religious doubt, especially amongst the more vulnerable members of society. This type of trauma can take many forms, such as child abuse, spousal abuse, or other abuse by family, friends,

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<sup>287</sup> Al-Ghazali, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, 11.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid.

<sup>289</sup> Chouhoud, 'Modern Pathways to Doubt in Islam,' 15.

or even community leaders.<sup>290</sup> This is precisely why it seems that women and children tend to be the subject of this trauma more commonly. The frequency with which young women are affected by personal abuse has been repeatedly noted in that most women who seek counsel in crises of faith are provoked by personal prolonged trauma rather than intellection or theological issues.<sup>291</sup> Vliek, in her study of young Muslims ‘breaking away’ from Islam, also cited that religious doubt is often prompted by prolonged trauma or an emotional event. She presents the example of a young Muslim in Britain who was physically abused at a young age and felt ignored by his parents. Partly due to this, he sought to find a new self, eventually deciding that he would not be a Muslim anymore.<sup>292</sup>

Trauma can also be sudden through singular events like illness, the death of a loved one or divorce. Although this may lead to religious doubt, it seems less common as a driving factor. Sometimes, even a sudden emotional event may lead to deepening one’s faith as one searches for comfort in something beyond the physical world. It could also lead to complex cases where multiple factors lead to religious doubt. One example was given of a young Muslim in America in that he was unable to reconcile between free will and divine will.<sup>293</sup> Due to his lack of understanding and conclusion that this was a theological contradiction, he began to doubt the existence of God. However, when he sought counsel and engaged in trying to find answers, he revealed that his brother had recently died in a car accident. This trauma led him to find an ‘acceptable’ means of doubt, masking his inability to process his personal tragedy.<sup>294</sup> This example also portrays the complex nature of religious doubt. It is sometimes masked by superficial factors or caused by multiple issues simultaneously.

One of the most cited causes of religious doubt amongst Muslims in the West remains the experience of communal trauma.<sup>295</sup> In a study of religious doubt amongst Muslims in the West, only 39% of respondents claimed that the non-religious behaviours of supposedly religious individuals did *not* play a part in the presence of their religious doubt.<sup>296</sup> The overwhelming majority then felt that the behaviour of

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<sup>290</sup> Chouhoud, ‘Modern Pathways to Doubt in Islam,’ 8.

<sup>291</sup> Chouhoud, ‘Modern Pathways to Doubt in Islam,’ 9.

<sup>292</sup> Vliek, “It’s Not Just about Faith,” 331.

<sup>293</sup> Chouhoud, ‘Modern Pathways to Doubt in Islam,’ 16.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid.

<sup>295</sup> Chouhoud, “What Causes Muslims to Doubt Islam,” 7.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid.

others has a significant influence on the prevalence of religious doubt.<sup>297</sup> Any religion or ideology almost always has a communal aspect to it, and the experience of individuals in this communal setting sometimes plays a role in how they portray the faith. Unfortunately, if one's experience is overly negative or involves trauma, it can be a reason to doubt the faith and sometimes leave it altogether. These negative interactions are usually in the form of either communal judgment or racism. Often, an individual, either having reverted to Islam or establishing a newfound love of the faith, is judged by others in the community in spaces like mosques or religious gatherings.

An example of a negative experience related to identity is that of a young woman in America who grew up as a Muslim but struggled to find her Islamic identity. She describes feeling 'judged' by others at the mosque regarding her attire and often became the target of criticism.<sup>298</sup> These negative experiences led her to accept an invitation from her grandmother, who was Christian, to attend her church. There, she found love and acceptance through mutual support, without any feelings of judgment. Shortly after, she decided to leave Islam and embrace Christianity.<sup>299</sup>

Similarly, communal racism is another form of this negative trauma that can be experienced by many, resulting in religious doubt. A convert to Islam recalls how he left Islam after two decades of being Muslim in America.<sup>300</sup> He explained that for the first ten years, he experienced continuous racism in the Muslim community but always separated the actions of the Muslims from the teachings of Islamic theology. Eventually, he was unable to sustain this differentiation and finally questioned why Islam was unable to transform such behaviours in the community. This led him to doubt the transformative potential of Islam, which led him to doubt the faith. Eventually, he left Islam, and his wife and teenage children followed soon after.<sup>301</sup> This is a clear example of the distinction between theoretical teaching and the practical implementation of it. It is sometimes possible to distinguish the actions of individuals and the teachings of faith; however, there may be examples in which the former compounds greater influence than the latter. Much of the trauma faced by respondents in various studies seemed to

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<sup>297</sup> Chouhoud, "What Causes Muslims to Doubt Islam," 8.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

<sup>299</sup> Chouhoud, 'Modern Pathways to Doubt in Islam,' 17.

<sup>300</sup> Chouhoud, 'Modern Pathways to Doubt in Islam,' 17.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid.

contradict the religious teachings of Islam. Despite this, it still resulted in religious doubt, driving many to leave the faith entirely.

Personal trauma, whether prolonged or acute, plays a significant role in causing religious doubt, particularly among vulnerable individuals such as women and children. Prolonged trauma, often resulting from abuse or neglect, is a common trigger for doubt, especially when it comes to women seeking counsel in crises of faith. Sudden traumatic events like illness or the loss of a loved one may also contribute, although these can sometimes lead to a deepening of faith as individuals seek solace. The complexity of trauma-related doubt is highlighted in cases where multiple factors, including personal tragedy and intellectual confusion, intertwine.

Communal trauma, particularly negative experiences within religious communities, further exacerbates religious doubt. The behaviour of fellow Muslims, including judgmental attitudes and instances of racism, can lead individuals to question the authenticity and transformative power of their faith. Negative experiences within the mosque or religious gatherings can push individuals toward leaving Islam, as seen in cases of converts or reverts who felt ostracized. In these instances, the dissonance between the teachings of Islam and the actions of its followers led to a profound loss of faith. Overall, the emotional and communal dimensions of trauma are integral in understanding the sources of religious doubt, highlighting the need for support and a more compassionate, inclusive religious community to help address these challenges.

### **3.5 CONCLUSION**

The history of Islam and the West has always been a seemingly turbulent one marked by three distinct phases of Islamic expansion: the military conflict marked by the Crusades, and finally, colonialism and Western hegemony. The final stage, in some ways, is still ongoing with the influx of Muslim immigrants to Western nations, feeling instability, conflict, and economic uncertainty. With this transition, however, Muslims in the West have had to deal with a plethora of issues in trying to sustain and maintain their religious identities.

The current state of Muslims in the West is shaped by a complex history of migration, colonialism, and post-colonial encounters between Islam and Western

societies. With an estimated 30 million Muslims in Western countries, migration has often been driven by the search for better opportunities or the need to escape conflict. However, this movement has introduced significant social, cultural, and religious challenges. These challenges, including the rise of religious doubt, are particularly pronounced among younger Muslims, who are increasingly exposed to Western secularism and critical discourses around faith.

The multifaceted challenges Muslims face—ranging from acculturation and secularization to Islamophobia—have created an environment in which religious doubt is on the rise. This is compounded by generational differences in how older and younger Muslims navigate these challenges. The result is an increase in religious doubt, which can manifest in moral, social, scientific, philosophical, and personal realms.

Many Muslims in the West face a conflict between Islamic teachings and Western values, particularly regarding gender roles, sexuality, and cultural practices. For example, Muslim youth may struggle with Islamic positions on issues like homosexuality or gender segregation, leading to questions about God's justice and the relevance of practices like the *hijāb* (Muslim woman's headscarf or veil). This dissonance can lead to doubts about the validity of religious teachings and personal identity crises.

The tension between Islam and scientific theories, such as evolution, is another major cause of doubt. Secular intellectuals and proponents of New Atheism often argue that science offers more reliable explanations than religious teachings, which some view as outdated or ritualistic. This clash between scientific reasoning and religious belief can deepen doubts, particularly among those less exposed to Islamic scholarship.

For many young Muslims, intellectual or philosophical doubts about the existence of God, the truth of Islam, and the problem of evil are central issues. The rise of New Atheism, which presents belief in God as irrational and religion as a source of evil, has exacerbated these doubts. Without sufficient intellectual engagement or responses to these philosophical challenges, some Muslims, particularly students, may abandon their faith in favour of atheism or other worldviews. Both intellectual and philosophical concerns play crucial roles in the religious doubts experienced by Muslims in the West. Intellectual concerns often emerge from a perceived conflict between religious beliefs and scientific or rational knowledge, leading to doubts about

the validity of religious teachings. Philosophical concerns, however, delve into deeper questions about the nature of existence and the problem of evil, challenging individuals to find a coherent and meaningful understanding of their faith. Together, these concerns represent the different ways in which individuals grapple with the relevance and truth of their religion in an increasingly secular and intellectually diverse world. Addressing both types of doubts requires a multifaceted approach, integrating intellectual engagement with Islamic scholarship and providing philosophical frameworks that offer meaningful answers to life's existential questions.

Personal trauma, whether prolonged (e.g., abuse) or acute (e.g., illness, death of a loved one), is another significant contributor to religious doubt. Individuals who experience abuse or loss may question their faith, particularly when they struggle to reconcile their suffering with the concept of a just and merciful God. Communal trauma, such as racism or judgment within the Muslim community, can also lead to doubts about the faith. Negative experiences in mosques or religious gatherings, including feeling marginalized or judged, can drive individuals to question Islam or leave it altogether.

A combination of intellectual, social, philosophical, and personal factors shapes the rise of religious doubt among Muslims in the West. These challenges are compounded by broader societal issues such as acculturation stress, Islamophobia, and secularism. Addressing these concerns requires both a deep understanding of the complexities of Muslim identity in the West and a concerted effort to provide intellectual, emotional, and community support to those navigating these challenges.

It is interesting, however, to observe trends in these diverse experiences. Firstly, it seems as though many who left Islam considered their religion to be more of a form of cultural baggage rather than an ideology built upon conviction and practice. Several younger Muslims in case studies in Britain, the Netherlands, and America shared the notion that Islam, as established through their parents, was deemed to be a restrictive barrier that often favoured the male gender in their household, giving way to more freedom as compared to females. Parents were often described as cultural rather than deeply religious, with the youth admitting to not just the absence of establishing the religion at a young age but rather the complete lack of understanding or knowledge of it. This is further extended by many respondents citing the behaviour of Muslims as the cause of their doubt rather than issues in the theological aspects of Islam. Communal

judgement, racism, and violent, immoral acts done in the name of Islam all played a significant role in the negative personal experiences of many who were Muslim, leading to religious doubt.

Finally, it also seems as though many of those who did form religious doubt were younger Muslims, often around college age. This is perhaps because they are exposed intensely to secular institutions that inherently challenge and critique religion, especially Islam. This also could be explained by the importance of identity development during this stage of youth or adolescence. As individuals progress through adolescence, outside social influences alter their identity formation. These influences include friends, teachers, classmates, and cultural and religious factors. However, one of the most influential factors in the development of a young person's identity is parental socialization, as there is overwhelming evidence that parents influence a child's identity, behaviour, and beliefs through various methods.<sup>302</sup> Some of these include emulation and modelling, positive reinforcements, engaging in activities with the child, and the provision of personal and social experiences.<sup>303</sup> Many individuals who left Islam were searching for alternative identities and freedoms, and their religious doubt gave them the necessary justification to leave their Islamic identity altogether.

The prevalence and causes of religious doubt amongst Muslims in the West are new subjects and subsequently need a significant amount of additional research. Many of the studies cited were discussed in the context of individual case studies, as this is where the primary focus has been. However, current studies have already established the potential danger of these doubts and identified at a primary level some of their major causes. Although some may believe answers to these doubts or pathways to attain certitude should be found through modern approaches in the context of Islam, it is first vital to examine the existing sources and means of achieving certitude. This will allow a path to not just combating some of these doubts but to prevent future ones as well. The construct of certitude in Islam, specifically through the Qur'ān, is repeatedly established. It is here where the primary focus towards the eradication and prevention

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<sup>302</sup> Jacquelynne S. Eccles, Amy Arberton, Christy Miller Buchanan, Jacobs Janis, Constance Flanagan, and Rena Harold, "School and Family Effects on the Ontogeny of Children's Interests, Self-Perceptions, and Activity Choices," *Developmental Perspectives on Motivation*, vol. 40 (1993): 145.

<sup>303</sup> Doug Oman and Carl E. Thoresen, "Invited Essay: Spiritual Modeling: A Key to Spiritual and Religious Growth?," *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, vol. 13, no. 3 (2003): 153.

of such doubts should be. That is in identifying the construct of certitude in the Qur'ān, which will be established in the final chapter.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE CONSTRUCT OF CERTITUDE IN THE QUR'ĀN

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The establishment of an unwavering and dramatic inauguration often marks a salient feature of a literary masterpiece. It awakens not just a sense of fluidity and inspiration but a yearning to delve into an arrangement of words that have the potential to inspire both the physical form and the metaphysical being. An opening, then, is paramount in its ability to invoke and inspire. Take, for example, Charles Dickens's provoking opening structure in *A Tale of Two Cities*, which reflects the conflict between generations and classes through the metaphor of the French Revolution.

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way.<sup>304</sup>

Or Orwell's unsettling foreshadowing in *1984*, an opening proving to be as ominous as it is accurate as he writes, "It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen."<sup>305</sup> Perhaps most remarkable is John Milton's intricate and symbolically poetic allusion to man's first disobedience in *Paradise Lost*. It remains an impeccable blend juxtaposing the historical, theological, ethical, and sometimes chaotic relationship between religion and literature, creating a milieu of matter, language, and spirit.

Of Mans First Disobedience, and the Fruit  
Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste  
Brought Death into the World, and all our woe;<sup>306</sup>

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<sup>304</sup> Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*, Unabridged edition (Mineola, N.Y: Dover Publications, 1998), 1.

<sup>305</sup> George Orwell, *1984* (Harper Perennial, 2014), 1.

<sup>306</sup> John Milton and John Leonard, *Paradise Lost* (London; New York: Penguin Classic, 2000), 1.

As remarkable as it is, in the case of Milton, in how a man blessed in his own view with blindness conjures such a prodigiously complex and profoundly visual work, it remains a dwarf to the revelations of literature, in every sense inspired in their claims to be divine. Chapter One of *Genesis*, in both the Hebrew and New Testament, allude to the beginning through their respective openings,

[1] In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

[2] And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

[3] And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.<sup>307</sup>

Then, there is the Qur'ān. An authoritative literary distinction in both *balāgha* (eloquence) and *fasāḥa* (articulacy) that has been the subject of study by scholars of all backgrounds, religions, languages, places, and times. The epitome of its literal mastery is outlined after its opening Surah, *al-Fatiḥa*, a passage that has been analyzed, interpreted, and expanded upon countless. It is followed by its first statement of claim, one that remains as remarkable but has not received the similar attention as the preceding verses. It is in the essential opening that it claims so unequivocally awakening both the mind and soul as it reveals:



Alif-Lām-Mīm<sup>308</sup>

It is an opening in which the very first letters remain the subject of debate as to their meaning centuries after its proclaimed revelation. It is a paradox that represents the uniqueness of this extraordinary work. A scripture that defines itself to be astoundingly clear yet subtly distinguished by such verses whose meanings are perhaps only realized by the One that revealed them. This is followed by an assertion that requires multiple translations, all contributing, not contradicting, to provide some essence of its intended meaning.

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<sup>307</sup> *St. Joseph New Catholic Bible New Testament* (Catholic Book Publishing, 2019), Genesis: 1-4.

<sup>308</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 2:1

﴿ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ﴾

This is the Book! There is no doubt about it—a guide for those mindful  
of Allah.<sup>309</sup>

This is the Scripture in which there is no doubt, containing guidance for  
those who are mindful of God.<sup>310</sup>

This is the Book which contains no doubt; it means guidance for those  
who do their duty [towards Allah (God)]<sup>311</sup>

Thus, the established claim and initial requisite for guidance for those aware of God is that of certainty and then certitude. Certainty reflects an external state of perceived truth, while the latter is an internal state built upon or motivated by the former.<sup>312</sup>

This is vital as the prevalence of religious doubt amongst Muslims in the West has been established thus far in this study through the analysis in the previous chapter. This doubt, as defined and contextualized in the first chapter, can lead to dire consequences for Muslims in the West, including misguidance, innovation, and even disbelief. Having established the primary sources of this doubt as moral and social concerns, scientific issues, philosophical concerns, and negative personal experiences and trauma, the final chapter can seek to identify the construct of certitude in the Qur'ān through this contextual lens.

One of the purposes of revelation is to establish certainty and certitude, as summarized in the first chapter. There should then be a direct connection between uncovering the methodology of the Qur'ān and dealing with religious doubts. This chapter will begin by analyzing the usage of the terms certainty and certitude in the Qur'ān. Specific contexts that assist in building certitude will first be identified. Then, they will be isolated to find those that allow building a connected framework to develop a single coherent construct.

Once the main components have been identified, each one will be expanded upon on its own merit and then through the perspective of the four specific causes of religious doubt. The make-up of each component of the construct will be examined in

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<sup>309</sup> Dr Mustafa Khattab, *The Clear Qur'ān*, 1st edition (Lombard, IL: Message for Humanity, 2016), 2:2.

<sup>310</sup> M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, trans., *The Qur'an*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 2:2-2.

<sup>311</sup> Dr T. B. Irving, *The Qur'an* (Cedar Rapids, IA: Mother Mosque Foundation, 1991), 2:1-2.

<sup>312</sup> Walter Cerf, 'Certainty and Certitude', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 13, no. 4 (1953): 515–24, 524.

all its facets in seeking to build a cohesive paradigm that can work towards a response to religious doubts among Muslims.

The focus will not be primarily on simply explaining any mention or source of certitude in the verses of the Qur'ān; rather, a more detailed approach will be taken in seeking to uncover the true nature of each component. The formulation of certitude should be logically perceived through this text as a response to religious doubt, resulting in the establishment of certitude.

## 4.2 THE DEFINITION AND CONTEXT OF THE QUR'ĀN

The word Qur'ān comes from a linguistic origin, indicating a meaning of that which is recited.<sup>313</sup> A similar meaning is illustrated in the verse:

﴿فَإِذَا قَرَأْنَاهُ فَاتَّبِعْ قُرْآنَهُ﴾

So when We have recited it [through Gabriel], then follow its recitation<sup>314</sup>

Technically, the definition of the Qur'ān has remained consistent in theological discussions of scholars to include a set of specific tenets. It has been defined by al-Suyūfī and others as the speech of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted), in both word and meaning, revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings be upon him), which has been preserved in the *muṣḥaf* (written copy of the Qur'ān), that has reached us by means of an authenticated transmission.<sup>315</sup> The Qur'ān consists of verses known as *āyāt* (singular *āyah*), which literally refer to signs. In the Qur'ānic context, an *āyah* relates to a sign of the existence of God, His creation, ability, divine revelation, and account of history.<sup>316</sup> Consequently, every verse of the Qur'ān is said to be an *āyah*, a sign reflecting the existence of God through His perfected revealed speech. It is also divided into 114 *suwar* (plural of *sūrah*). The word *sūrah* has sometimes been translated as chapter, but this does not provide the most accurate understating, as the result could be

<sup>313</sup> Muḥammad Sāliḥ al-'Uṭaimīn, *Uṣūl Al-Tafsīr*, (al-Qaṣīm: al-Maktaba al-Islāmiyyah, 2001), 8.

<sup>314</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 75:18

<sup>315</sup> Muḥammad 'Abd al-'Azīm. Zurqānī, *Manāhil al-'irfān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān*, [al-Ṭab'ah 3] (Cairo: al-Maṭba'ah al-Fannīyah, 1943), 12.

<sup>316</sup> Al-'Uṭaimīn et al., *Explanation of the Three Fundamental Principles of Islaam*, 84.

confusing.<sup>317</sup> The label *sūrah* then can be explained as a literary unit, or unit of revelation, in the Qur’ān.<sup>318</sup> A more technical definition describes a *sūrah* as a section of the Qur’ān comprising of an opening and closing, consisting of at least three *āyāt* (verses) or more.<sup>319</sup> Although many direct translations of the term *sūrah* have been attempted, the term will be left in its Arabic form untranslated. This is because the term itself is Qur’ān specific, and therefore, “the Arabic term *sūrah* should be retained when translating the Qur’ān into other languages.”<sup>320</sup>

Some scholars have extended the theological definition of the Qur’ān to include two extra characteristics: its recitation is considered worship, and it is a challenge for humankind to produce something similar in nature.<sup>321</sup> This last characteristic reflects a critical concept termed the *i’jāz* (inimitability) of the Qur’ān, through which the construct of certitude is centrally based upon. This could be a potent starting point in any discussion of certitude. The incomparable nature of the Qur’ān implies not just the establishment of a general certainty of all that it includes but instills a sense of certitude in following its commandments. It could address several sources of religious doubt by establishing faith as certainty, thereby preventing future doubts.

#### 4.3 KEYWORD ANALYSIS OF CERTAINTY IN THE QUR’ĀN

The term certainty, certitude, or one of its derivatives occurs in the Qur’ān twenty-seven times, in nineteen *suwar*, in various contexts. This data was obtained through a keyword search on an online Qur’ān corpus for the terms “certainty” and “certitude” in English and the keyword *yaqīn* in Arabic, with all its derivatives returning to the root y-q-n. The table below displays all the occurrences of these terms and their translations, with the key terms highlighted in bold.

<sup>317</sup> Ali Yunis Aldahesh. “Qur’ānic Surahs’ Names: A Study on their Origin and Multiplicity.” *Australian Journal of Islamic Studies*, vol. 4, no. 2 (2019): 71.

<sup>318</sup> Aldahesh, “Qur’ānic Surahs’ Names, 72.

<sup>319</sup> Muḥammad ibn al-Ṭayyib Bāqillānī Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān fī ‘ulūm al-Qur’ān*, (Dār al-Qahramān: Iṣṭānbūl, 1978), 1:150.

<sup>320</sup> Aldahesh, “Qur’ānic Surahs’ Names, 72.

<sup>321</sup> Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Itmām al-dirāyah li qurrā al-niqāyah* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al- ‘Ilmiyah, 1985), 21.

Table 1.1 “Certainty or Certitude” Keyword Occurrence in the Qur’ān

Translation <sup>322</sup>	Āyah	Āyah Number	Sūrah Number	#
And who believe in what has been revealed to you, [O Muḥammad], and what was revealed before you, and of the Hereafter they are <b>certain</b> [in faith].	﴿وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ وَبِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ﴾	4	2	1
Those who do not know say, "Why does Allāh not speak to us or there come to us a sign?" Thus spoke those before them like their words. Their hearts resemble each other. We have shown clearly the signs to a people who are <b>certain</b> [in faith].	﴿وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ لَوْلَا يُكَلِّمُنَا اللَّهُ أَوْ تَأْتِينَا آيَةٌ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ مِثْلَ قَوْلِهِمْ تَشَابَهتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ قَدْ بَيَّنَّا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ﴾	118	2	2
And [for] their saying, "Indeed, we have killed the Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary, the messenger of Allāh." And they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him; but [another] was made to resemble him to them. And indeed, those who differ over it are in doubt about it. They have no knowledge of it except the following of assumption. And they did not kill him, for <b>certain</b> .	﴿وَقَوْلِهِمْ إِنَّا قَتَلْنَا الْمَسِيحَ عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ وَمَا صَلَبُوهُ وَلَكِنْ شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِنْهُ مَا هُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِلَّا اتِّبَاعَ الظَّنِّ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ يَقِينًا﴾	157	4	3

<sup>322</sup> Saheeh International, *The Qur'an - Saheeh International Translation: With Surah Introductions and Appendices*, ed. A. B. al-Mehri (Independently published, 2020).

Then is it the judgement of [the time of] ignorance they desire? But who is better than Allāh in judgement for a people who are <b>certain</b> [in faith].	﴿أَفَحُكْمَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ يَبْغُونَ ۗ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ حُكْمًا لِقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ﴾	50	5	4
And thus did We show Abraham the realm of the heavens and the earth that he would be among the <b>certain</b> [in faith].	﴿وَكَذَلِكَ نُرِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ مَلَكُوتَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلِيَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُوقِنِينَ﴾	75	6	5
It is Allāh who erected the heavens without pillars that you [can] see; then He established Himself above the Throne and made subject the sun and the moon, each running [its course] for a specified term. He arranges [each] matter; He details the signs that you may, of the meeting with your Lord, be <b>certain</b> .	﴿وَاللَّهُ الَّذِي رَفَعَ السَّمَاوَاتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا ۗ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ۗ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ ۗ كُلٌّ يَجْرِي لِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ۗ يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ يُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ بِلِقَاءِ رَبِّكُمْ تُوقِنُونَ﴾	2	13	6
And worship your Lord until there comes to you the <b>certainty</b> [i.e., death].	﴿وَاعْبُدْ رَبَّكَ حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَكَ الْيَقِينُ﴾	99	15	7
[Moses] said, "The Lord of the heavens and earth and that between them, if you should have <b>certitude</b> ."	﴿قَالَ رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا ۗ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّوقِنِينَ﴾	24	26	8
Who establish prayer and give zakāh, and of the Hereafter they are <b>certain</b> [in faith].	﴿الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ﴾	3	27	9

<p>But he [i.e., the hoopoe] stayed not long and said, "I have encompassed [in knowledge] that which you have not encompassed, and I have come to you from Sheba with <b>certain</b> news.</p>	<p>﴿فَمَكَثَ غَيْرَ بَعِيدٍ فَقَالَ أَحْطْتُ بِمَا لَمْ تُحِطْ بِهِ وَجِئْتُكَ مِنْ سَبَأٍ بِنَبَأٍ يَقِينٍ﴾</p>	<p>22</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>11</p>
<p>And when the word [i.e., decree] befalls them, We will bring forth for them a creature from the earth speaking to them, [saying] that the people were, of Our verses, not <b>certain</b> [in faith].</p>	<p>﴿وَإِذَا وَقَعَ الْقَوْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَخْرَجْنَا لَهُمْ دَابَّةً مِنَ الْأَرْضِ تُكَلِّمُهُمْ أَنَّ النَّاسَ كَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا لَا يُوقِنُونَ﴾</p>	<p>82</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>12</p>
<p>So be patient. Indeed, the promise of Allāh is truth. And let them not disquiet you who are not <b>certain</b> [in faith].</p>	<p>﴿فَاصْبِرْ إِنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ ۗ وَلَا يَسْتَحْفِظُكَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُوقِنُونَ﴾</p>	<p>60</p>	<p>30</p>	<p>13</p>
<p>Who establish prayer and give zakāh, and they, of the Hereafter, are <b>certain</b> [in faith].</p>	<p>﴿الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ﴾</p>	<p>4</p>	<p>31</p>	<p>14</p>
<p>If you could but see when the criminals are hanging their heads before their Lord, [saying], "Our Lord, we have seen and heard, so return us [to the world]; we will work righteousness. Indeed, we are [now] <b>certain</b>."</p>	<p>﴿وَلَوْ تَرَىٰ إِذِ الْمُجْرِمُونَ نَاكِسُو رُءُوسِهِمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ رَبَّنَا أَبْصَرْنَا وَسَمِعْنَا فَارْجِعْنَا نَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا إِنَّا مُوقِنُونَ﴾</p>	<p>12</p>	<p>32</p>	<p>15</p>
<p>And We made from among them leaders guiding by Our command when they were patient and [when] they were <b>certain</b> of Our signs.</p>	<p>﴿وَجَعَلْنَا مِنْهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا لَمَّا صَبَرُوا ۗ وَكَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا يُوقِنُونَ﴾</p>	<p>24</p>	<p>32</p>	<p>16</p>

Lord of the heavens and the earth and that between them, if you would be <b>certain</b> .	﴿رَبِّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا﴾ إِنَّ كُنْتُمْ مُوقِنِينَ ﴿﴾	7	44	17
And in the creation of yourselves and what He disperses of moving creatures are signs for people who are <b>certain</b> [in faith].	﴿وَفِي خَلْقِكُمْ وَمَا يَبُثُّ مِنْ دَابَّةٍ آيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ﴾	4	45	18
This [Qur'ān] is enlightenment for mankind and guidance and mercy for a people who are <b>certain</b> [in faith].	﴿هَذَا بَصَائِرُ لِلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ﴾	20	45	19
And on the earth are signs for the <b>certain</b> [in faith]	﴿وَفِي الْأَرْضِ آيَاتٍ لِلْمُوقِنِينَ﴾	20	51	20
Or did they create the heavens and the earth? Rather, they are not <b>certain</b> .	﴿أَمْ خَلَقُوا السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ ۗ بَلْ لَا يُوقِنُونَ﴾	36	52	21
Indeed, this is the true <b>certainty</b>	﴿إِنَّ هَذَا هُوَ حَقُّ الْيَقِينِ﴾	95	56	22
And indeed, this 'Quran' is the truth of <b>certainty</b> .	﴿وَإِنَّهُ لِحَقِّ الْيَقِينِ﴾	51	69	23
We have appointed only 'stern' angels as wardens of the Fire. And We have made their number only as a test for the disbelievers, so that the People of the Book will be <b>certain</b> , and the believers will increase in faith	﴿وَمَا جَعَلْنَا أَصْحَابَ النَّارِ إِلَّا مَلَائِكَةً ۖ وَمَا جَعَلْنَا عِدَّتَهُمْ إِلَّا فِتْنَةً لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِيَسْتَيَقِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ وَيَزِدَّادَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِيمَانًا﴾	31	74	24
Until there came to us the <b>certainty</b> [i.e., death]."	﴿حَتَّىٰ آتَانَا الْيَقِينُ﴾	47	74	25
No! If you only knew with knowledge of <b>certainty</b> ...	﴿كَأَلَّا لَوْ تَعْلَمُونَ عِلْمَ الْيَقِينِ﴾	5	102	26
Then you will surely see it with the eye of <b>certainty</b> .	﴿ثُمَّ لَتَرَوْهَا عَيْنَ الْيَقِينِ﴾	7	102	27

An overview of the *tafsīr* of these verses allows for their division into categories to assess a potential framework for establishing certitude, along with its specific components. Seventeen out of the twenty-seven verses are in the context of either describing or relating to the true believers, those that already possess certainty or a method for them to achieve it. Another seven out of the twenty-seven verses relate directly to the context of those that reject belief, either because they are uncertain in the proofs or confident through their arrogance that it is false. The seventh and twenty-fourth verses in the table refer to death as certainty, while the nineteenth and twenty-third verses refer to the Qur'ān specifically as certainty.

A closer examination reveals that seven verses establish a methodology through the context that positively calls for increasing certitude through specific motivations. These will be the focus of identification and analysis as they can further be categorized into two groups. The first is external means to achieve certitude through the Qur'ān and the physical world; the second is internal means through intellect, reason, and the inner self.

The first component of certitude can be derived the identification of the Qur'ān itself as being a source of certainty through two verses:

﴿هُذَا بَصَائِرُ لِلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ﴾

This [Qur'ān] is enlightenment for mankind and guidance and mercy for a people who are **certain** [in faith].<sup>323</sup>

﴿وَإِنَّهُ لِحَقِّ الْيَقِينِ﴾

And indeed, this 'Quran' is the truth of **certainty**.<sup>324</sup>

The second component is identified through a reflection on the physical world to achieve certainty through the following three verses:

﴿وَكَذَلِكَ نُرِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ مَلَكُوتَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلِيَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُوقِنِينَ﴾

And thus did We show Abraham the realm of the heavens and the earth that he would be among the **certain** [in faith].<sup>325</sup>

<sup>323</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 45:20.

<sup>324</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 69:51.

<sup>325</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 45:20.

﴿اللَّهُ الَّذِي رَفَعَ السَّمَاوَاتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا ۖ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ۗ وَسَحَّرَ  
الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ ۗ كُلٌّ يَجْرِي لِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ۖ يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ يُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ بِلِقَاءِ  
رَبِّكُمْ تُوقِنُونَ﴾

It is Allāh who erected the heavens without pillars that you [can] see; then He established Himself above the Throne and made subject the sun and the moon, each running [its course] for a specified term. He arranges [each] matter; He details the signs that you may, of the meeting with your Lord, be **certain**.<sup>326</sup>

﴿وَفِي الْأَرْضِ آيَاتٌ لِلْمُوقِنِينَ﴾

And on the earth are signs for the **certain** [in faith].<sup>327</sup>

In the first verse, Ibrāhīm (peace be upon him) was shown the signs of the heavens and earth so that he may achieve certitude. This was done by linking the physical world to the metaphysical creator. In the second verse the establishment of the sun, moon, and their fixed movements are signs to attain certitude. Finally, the third verse points to a general proof of signs on earth that lead to certitude. Each verse, in its own way, calls for a reflection upon the signs of creation to be linked to a greater purpose and, essentially, a creator.

The third component of certitude can be identified as reason or intellect through the following verse that questions us about the means of existence, along with its purpose:<sup>328</sup>

﴿أَمْ خَلَقُوا السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ ۗ بَلْ لَا يُوقِنُونَ﴾

Or did they create the heavens and the earth? Rather, they are not **certain**.<sup>329</sup>

This verse forces us to look deeper within ourselves and reason as to how we came to exist, refuting those who fail to reason. It is a call to reason through our intellect, allowing us to make connections and try to establish certitude.

<sup>326</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 69:51.

<sup>327</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 51:20

<sup>328</sup> *Al-Ṭabarī, Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 52:36.

<sup>329</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 52:36

The fourth and final component can be identified as the inner self through the following verse:

﴿وَفِي خَلْقِكُمْ وَمَا يَبُتُّ مِنْ دَابَّةٍ آيَاتٌ لِقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ﴾

And in the creation of yourselves and what He disperses of moving creatures are signs for people who are **certain** [in faith].<sup>330</sup>

It signifies that there is something within us that may lead us to certitude, not just through our creation, as alluded to in the previous verse. This verse can connect with our internal natural state in which we are disposed to search for a greater purpose in our lives.

The four main components then can be classified as external means through the Qur'ān and the created world and internal means, through reason and our internal nature, to achieve certitude. They can be explicitly identified as the miracle, or *i'jāz* of the Qur'ān, the physical creation of this world and linking it with the metaphysical through *tadabbur* (reflection), the *'aql* or intellectual reason that we possess, and our internal predisposition, known as *al- fiṭrah*, that connects us with our purpose and Creator. Each of these four components will be examined both on its own merit and through the context of religious doubt to identify a coherent construct of certitude in the Qur'ān.

#### 4.4 THE FIRST COMPONENT OF CERTITUDE: *I'JAZ* (INIMITABILITY) OF THE QUR'ĀN

The word *i'jāz* is taken from the Arabic root *'a-j-z*, which indicates a meaning of incapability.<sup>331</sup> This refers to what is beyond humankind's capability or means. Humanity's inability reflects upon something greater than the capability or capacity of anything created, resulting in a metaphysical cause or explanation. The word *mu'jizah* (miracle) also comes from the same root and is defined as something that breaks the natural order of what is known, accompanied by an unattainable challenge to be imitated, given to an individual claiming to be divinely guided as a sign of truth.<sup>332</sup> An

<sup>330</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 45:4

<sup>331</sup> S'ad al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī, *Sharḥ Al-Maqāsid* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿilmiyyah, 2010), 5:11.

<sup>332</sup> ʿAḍud ad-Dīn al-Īgī, *Al-Mawāqif Fī ʿilm al-Kalām*, 1st ed. (Damascus: Dār S'ad al-Dīn, 1999).

event or a sign must fulfill six conditions to be considered a *mu'jizah* or metaphysical miracle. These include the following:

- (a) It must have metaphysical properties. If an individual claims their miracle is that they can place their hand upon their head, and others are deemed incapable, it would not be considered a miracle.
- (b) It breaks the natural order of the world of what is known. If this condition is not met, there is no real measure of incapability.
- (c) It remains unchallenged that nobody can produce something like it, and this is the essence of the miracle.
- (d) It is brought by someone claiming divine guidance accompanied by a challenge.
- (e) It must agree with what they claim, for it would not be considered truthful if an individual says they will split the earth, and then the sea splits.
- (f) It should be preceded by a claim as proof of the truthfulness of that claim. If one were to claim that their miracle occurred in the past and then claim prophethood, their claim would be immensely weakened if not abolished entirely.<sup>333</sup>

The preceding definition, along with the six additional conditions, can be applied to the context of the Qur'ān and its claim to be miraculous. Scholars have considered it an ongoing *mu'jizah* that breaks the natural order of the world with its metaphysical nature, brought by the final Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) as proof for the truth of his claim and accompanied by a challenge of inimitability until the end of time.<sup>334</sup>

The specific facets of the *i'jāz* of the Qur'ān have been discussed and debated by scholars since the earliest days as to what exactly constituted its *i'jāz*. Its miraculous literary nature, impact on the hearts of individuals, moral universal laws and truths, knowledge of the past and future, and inimitable nature have all been cited as plausible reasons for establishing its *i'jāz*.<sup>335</sup> Ibn Taymīyah concluded that it was not limited to a single facet. Instead, everything that has been cited towards the *i'jāz* of the Qur'ān is a

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<sup>333</sup> Al-Īgī, *Al-Mawāqif*, 339.

<sup>334</sup> Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī. and Richard Joseph McCarthy, *Kitāb al-bayān 'an al-farq bayna al-mu'jizāt wa al-karāmāt wa al-ḥiyal wa al-kahānah wa al-ṣiḥr wa al-nāranjāt*, Bayrūt: Librairie Orientale, 1958), 45-49.

<sup>335</sup> Al-Bāqillānī, *Kitāb al-bayān*, 45-49.

credible distinction.<sup>336</sup> He cited over fifty evidence and proof of the Qur’ān’s miraculous nature.<sup>337</sup> Fundamentally, most of these can be represented by two main categories: the literary miracle of the Qur’ān and the inimitable nature of the Qur’ān.<sup>338</sup> These will be examined to set a starting point for establishing certitude through the Qur’ān itself.

#### 4.4.1 The Literary Miracle of the Qur’ān

The indication that the Qur’ān itself being the first component of certitude is a testament to its ambition. This is developed through the notion that its revelation alone is sufficient for the establishment of certitude as it boldly retorts:

﴿أَوَلَمْ يَكْفِهِمْ أَنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ يُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَرْحَمَةً وَّذِكْرًا لِّقَوْمٍ  
يُؤْمِنُونَ﴾

And is it not sufficient for them that We revealed to you the Book [i.e., the Qur’ān] which is recited to them? Indeed in that is a mercy and reminder for a people who believe <sup>339</sup>

It reflects once again that the revelation of the Qur’ān suffices to establish certainty and certitude. It could then provide the constructs to develop certainty through conviction in belief in its claims and internalize that very claim through certitude.

The claimed delivery of the Qur’ān to the final Prophet Muhammed (peace and blessings be upon him) is also paramount to this context. It was revealed through an oral means, conveyed throughout twenty-three years, often as a response to direct questions posed to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him).<sup>340</sup> This is observed in several verses:

<sup>336</sup> Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymīyah, *al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīh li-man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ* (Dār al-‘Āsimah, 1999), 428.

<sup>337</sup> Ibn Taymīyah, *al-Jawāb al-ṣaḥīh*, 428.

<sup>338</sup> ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Faraj Darwish, *Lulu’ Wa-al-Marjān Fī Tanbīh ‘alá I’jāz al-Qur’ān* (Dubai: Markaz al-Da’wah wa al-Irshād, 1983), 56.

<sup>339</sup> *Al-Qur’ān*, 29:51

<sup>340</sup> Ḥamd ibn Muḥammad Khaṭṭābī, *Bayān I’jāz al-Qur’ān*, al-Ṭab‘ah al-ūlá (al-Riyād: Dār al-Tawḥīd li al-Nashr, 2018), 21.

﴿وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الرُّوحِ ۗ قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا﴾

And they ask you, [O Muḥammad], about the soul. Say, "The soul is of the affair [i.e., concern] of my Lord. And you [i.e., mankind] have not been given of knowledge except a little."<sup>341</sup>

﴿يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ ۗ قُلْ فِيهِمَا إِثْمٌ كَبِيرٌ وَمَنْفَعٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَإِثْمُهُمَا أَكْبَرُ مِنْ نَفْعِهِمَا ۗ وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ ۗ قُلِ الْعَفْوَ ۗ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ﴾

They ask you about wine and gambling. Say, "In them is great sin and [yet, some] benefit for people. But their sin is greater than their benefit." And they ask you what they should spend. Say, "The excess [beyond needs]." Thus Allāh makes clear to you the verses [of revelation] that you might give thought<sup>342</sup>

The nature of this delivery provides significant background when contextualizing the literary masterpiece for two primary reasons. First, any written or oral work is susceptible to review and editing, thereby improving itself through that process. If a proficient individual were given an hour to write on a specific subject or speak on it without any preparation, there would be some assumed deficiencies. The final product would arguably be much stronger if they were given sufficient time to edit or prepare for this. The Qur'ān was presented without editing, review, or consultation and, with that, has not been found to contain a single linguistic, grammatical, or otherwise error or deficiency in any form at any level.<sup>343</sup> Instead, it has been praised for its harmoniously flowing and intertwined speech while still being sharply concise and accurate, inspiring both the heart and mind.<sup>344</sup> It has been described as a majestic, powerful, solemn speech that cannot be disturbed.<sup>345</sup> Secondly, the Qur'ān was revealed in a non-chronological manner over a period of 23 years. Upon its conclusion, over six thousand verses were placed flawlessly as if the entire process was planned meticulously, considering all the random events and questions that came about.<sup>346</sup>

During the early fourth-century Hijri, notable scholars, including Khaṭṭābī and al-Bāqilānī, outlined the precise nature of this literary miracle in their classical treatises.

<sup>341</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 17:85

<sup>342</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 2:219

<sup>343</sup> Khaṭṭābī, *Bayān I'jāz al-Qur'ān*, 26.

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>345</sup> Mohammad Khalifa, *Sublime Qur'an and Orientalism* (London; New York: Addison-Wesley Longman Ltd, 1983), 24.

<sup>346</sup> Khalifa, *Sublime Qur'an and Orientalism*, 24.

Khataṭābī elucidates this effortlessly with beauty and precision as he explains that speech consists of three distinct components. These include words that bear meaning, the meanings that exist inside words, and the combination of the two through a structured composition.<sup>347</sup> If one contemplates the Qur’ān, one will notice the most perfect form of these three distinct components simultaneously, attesting to the superiority and perfection of its speech. This is not found in any single body of text concurrently, except the words of the Omnipotent, Omniscient, and the One who has perfect knowledge encompassing all and accounted for everything flawlessly.<sup>348</sup>

The Qur’ān generates the most eloquent words in the greatest of arrangements with the most precise meanings. It contains poetic-like compositions with impeccable rhetoric while addressing topics such as the transcendent nature of God, rules, regulations, lawful and unlawful matters, a universal moral code, lost knowledge of the past, and future predictions, all in a harmonious composition expressed through its recitation. Although it may not be as easy to convey the depth of this literary miracle in languages other than Arabic, it is still possible, through examples, to depict some aspects of these features.

#### 4.4.1.1 Word Usage in the Qur’ān

In *Sūrah Yūsuf*, the brothers of the future Prophet Yūsuf (peace be upon him) conjure a plan to abandon their infant brother in the forest out of jealousy and present an excuse to their father that he was taken by a predator. When they returned to their father, they used the phrase *fa-aklahu-al-dh’ibu* (and a wolf devoured him).

﴿قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا إِنَّا ذَهَبْنَا نَسْتَبِقُ وَتَرَكْنَا يُوسُفَ عِنْدَ مَتَاعِنَا فَأَكَلَهُ الذِّبُّ ۗ وَمَا أَنْتَ بِمُؤْمِنٍ لَنَا وَلَوْ كُنَّا صَادِقِينَ﴾

They said, "O our father, indeed we went racing each other and left Joseph with our possessions, and a wolf ate him. But you would not believe us, even if we were truthful." <sup>349</sup>

In this context, some linguists have remarked that a more suitable or eloquent phrase would be to say *iftarasahu al-sab’u* (he was hunted down by a predator), as the nature

<sup>347</sup> Khataṭābī, *Bayān I’jāz al-Qur’ān*, 27.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid.

<sup>349</sup> *Al-Qur’ān*, 12:17

of a wolf is to hunt on its prey, not simply to eat.<sup>350</sup> Khaṭṭābī replies that the verb *iftarasa* comes from a root that means to strike the neck, reflecting the predator's act of killing, and nothing more. The brothers of Joseph, however, claimed to their father that the wolf had completely consumed their brother without any trace. Thus, the verb *akala*, reflecting the meaning of eating completely, is more suitable in this context than *iftarasa*. It is the most appropriate word used for the most relevant meaning, epitomizing the perfect choice of words.<sup>351</sup>

In *Sūrah al-Hāqqa*, it is conveyed that on the day of judgment, the evil one that rejected faith would claim:

﴿هَلَكَ عَنِّي سُلْطَانِيهِ﴾

Perished from me is my authority<sup>352</sup>

It is a realization of powerlessness and the absence of any authority. Some have contested that the verb used, *halaka* (to destroy/be removed), in the Arabic language, is only for tangible things, like wealth or property. The usage here, referring to authority, goes against the eloquence of the language, threatening the claim that the Qur'ān is perfect as a literary text. The verb *dhahaba* would be more appropriate, resulting in a meaning of authority being stripped. Khaṭṭābī once again answers that those making such a claim have not understood the true nature of the verse. He replies that the usage of *dahaba* denotes a possibility that their authority could be restored and that possibly would have been left open.<sup>353</sup> The context, however, is the day of judgment on which all authority other than that of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) will be permanently terminated, thereby proving that the verb *halaka* is more suitable. It expresses that there is no chance of the authority they once possessed to return, resulting in a deeper comprehension of the verse.

<sup>350</sup> Khaṭṭābī, *Bayān I'jāz al-Qur'ān*, 19.

<sup>351</sup> Ibid.

<sup>352</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 69:29

<sup>353</sup> Khaṭṭābī, *Bayān I'jāz al-Qur'ān*, 22.

#### 4.4.1.2 Repetition in the Qur'ān

Not all have accepted the claim that the literary eloquence of the Qur'ān is impeccable. An objection that has been raised is that the presence of repetition weakens the Qur'ān considerably. In *Sūrah al-Raḥmān*, the following verse is repeated thirty-one times in a collection of seventy-eight total verses:

﴿فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ﴾

So which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?<sup>354</sup>

The criticism is that if the Qur'ān claims to be a concise book in which every word and sentence is in its exact place, then this repetition goes against the succinct nature of the text and the Arabic language itself.<sup>355</sup> While it is true that repetition in the Arabic language takes away from the eloquence of a text, it is only if it is without purpose or does not provide any additional meaning.<sup>356</sup> The repetition in this *sūrah* serves an essentially moral and literary purpose as it only occurs after mentioning a specific blessing, each distinct from the other. There is a particular purpose in the repetition of each verse and the times it is repeated. The set of verses below demonstrate this very notion as although they are related, they remind us of different favours of our Lord:

﴿يَخْرُجُ مِنْهُمَا اللُّؤْلُؤُ وَالْمَرْجَانُ﴾

From both of them emerge pearl and coral.<sup>357</sup>

﴿فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ﴾

So which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?<sup>358</sup>

﴿فِيهِمَا عَيْنَانِ تَجْرِيَانِ﴾

In both of them are two springs, flowing.<sup>359</sup>

﴿فَبِأَيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ﴾

So which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?<sup>360</sup>

<sup>354</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 55:13

<sup>355</sup> Khaṭṭābī, *Bayān I'jāz al-Qur'ān*, 30.

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>357</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 55:22

<sup>358</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 55:23

<sup>359</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 55:50

<sup>360</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 55:51

The two sets are not the same. The idea of being grateful for pearls and stones that emerge from the seas is distinct from being grateful for the springs that will be found in paradise for the righteous. This is why the repetition of the verse is not only justified but necessary. Each individual blessing requires gratitude, as the bounties correspond with the suitable gratitude. It also provides a harmonious tone to the *sūrah*, composing a profound connection between the sounds of the words, phrases, verses, and the beautiful meanings that they provide.<sup>361</sup>

#### ***4.4.1.3 The Structure of the Qur'ān***

Some have claimed that the topical structure of the Qur'ān is unorganized, often with multiple topics and ideas gathered in a single *sūrah*. If it were organized by subject matter, each *sūrah* for its own subject, it would have been a more beneficial composition. However, the nature of this claim is weakened when one realizes that the Qur'ān is organized in such a manner purposely. It is fashioned in the most intricate of ways to serve a distinct purpose to further its spiritual benefit. If one *sūrah* confined itself to rules of eating, the other marriage, another spirituality, and other moral issues, then everyone would be fixated and inclined to that specific portion.<sup>362</sup> The interconnection of all these subjects also supports why they should not be isolated. In Islam, spirituality, marriage, eating, prayer, and fasting are all interlinked. Even when a *sūrah* or a set of verses vary in their themes, there is always a distinct connection to be reflected upon and pondered, adding to the depth of its perfection.

The eloquent nature of the Qur'ān has been established by countless scholars over the past and never once successfully challenged to find a mistake, error, or omission. Nothing can be replaced or altered to improve the literary text.<sup>363</sup> This is a remarkable distinction, considering that it was revealed without any alteration or editing to improve itself. Its specific claim to be a literary miracle lies in three distinct features: (1) the selection and placement of every word over their synonyms depicting the connotations of those words as well (2) the perfect blend of being concise and detailed while at the same time being remarkably rhythmic and harmonious literarily, orally, and

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<sup>361</sup> Khattābī, *Bayān I'jāz al-Qur'ān*, 31.

<sup>362</sup> Khattābī, *Bayān I'jāz al-Qur'ān*, 32.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid.

textually, (3) and the perfect harmony between the two powers of emotional and intellect, and spiritually and morality, resulting in a miraculous text that is a persuasive and emotional power of force unable to be altered, disturbed, or overcome by anything.<sup>364</sup>

#### 4.4.1.4 The Authorship of the Qur'ān

One of the ways that the first component was rejected is through an accusation that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) forged the Qur'ān, thereby alleviating its claim to be divine revelation. The disbelievers of Quraysh in Mecca rejected the message, claiming that the Qur'ān was simply a poetic conjecture of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) himself. They claimed it was merely the speech of a human:

﴿إِن هَذَا إِلَّا قَوْلُ الْبَشَرِ﴾

This is not but the word of a human being.<sup>365</sup>

Prophet Muḥammed (peace and blessings be upon him) remains one of the most documented individuals in the world's history, and thus, it is relatively uncomplicated to compare this accusation to historical records.<sup>366</sup> He lived amongst his people for over forty years only to be entrusted with the title of the most honest and trustworthy. He was never witnessed or known to recite or learn a line of poetry, never indulging in sorcery or rhetoric of any source, and known to be of the best manners and characters.<sup>367</sup>

The stylometric analysis of the Qur'ān and the speech of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) proves to be substantially contrasting. His emotional experiences that separate his speech from the Qur'ān and the unequivocally unique and miraculously linguistic nature of the Qur'ān discussed in the first component make it implausible for him to conjure such speech out of thin air.<sup>368</sup> This is confirmed through the verse:

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<sup>364</sup> Mohammad Khalifa, *Sublime Qur'an*, 24.

<sup>365</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 52:34

<sup>366</sup> Chase F. Robinson, 'History and Heilsgeschichte in Early Islam: Some Observations on Prophetic History and Biography', in *History and Heilsgeschichte in Early Islam: Some Observations on Prophetic History and Biography* (De Gruyter, 2015), 119–50, 122.

<sup>367</sup> Montgomery Watt, *Muḥammad at Mecca* (Oxford University Press, 1953), 52.

<sup>368</sup> Muḥammad Taqi Usmani, *An Approach to the Quranic Sciences* (Kitab Bhavan, 2010), 261.

﴿وَإِذَا تُلِيٰ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ ۖ قَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَاءَنَا إِنَّا بِقُرْآنٍ غَيْرِ هَذَا أَوْ  
بَدَّلَهُ ۗ قُلْ مَا يَكُونُ لِي أَنْ أُبَدِّلَهُ مِنْ تَلْقَائِ نَفْسِي ۗ إِنِ اتَّبَعْتُ إِلَّا مَا يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ ۗ إِنِّي أَخَافُ  
إِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّي عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ﴾

And when Our verses are recited to them as clear evidences, those who do not expect the meeting with Us say, "Bring us a Qur'an other than this or change it." Say, [O Muḥammad], "It is not for me to change it on my own accord. I only follow what is revealed to me. Indeed I fear, if I should disobey my Lord, the punishment of a tremendous Day."<sup>369</sup>

Detailed studies have demonstrated this by undertaking a stylometric and statistical analysis of the linguistic style and text of the Qur'an and the speech of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) through his hadith. These collections of studies concluded that an astounding 83% of the words in the Qur'an were not found in the regular speech of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) through hadith in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*.<sup>370</sup> Other significant contrasts include singular and plural forms, frequencies in word lengths, and stylometric classifiers, leading to the conclusion that the two texts must have different authors.<sup>371</sup> Thus, it is implausible that an individual with the character and background of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), along with his changing emotional and sociological state, without any history of prose or poetry or linguistics, would produce such a text, that is beyond even human capability otherwise, over a consistent span of twenty-three years.<sup>372</sup>

#### 4.4.2 The Challenge of the Qur'an

The unwavering challenge that the Qur'an presents from initial verses forms the basis for establishing certitude. This challenge was established in three distinct phases to demonstrate the absolute and eternal uniqueness of the Qur'an.<sup>373</sup> In the first stage, the

<sup>369</sup> *Al-Qur'an*, 10:15.

<sup>370</sup> Halim Sayoud, 'Author Discrimination between the Holy Quran and Prophet's Statements', *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 27, no. 4 (1 December 2012): 427–44.

<sup>371</sup> Halim Sayoud, "Author Discrimination between the Holy Quran and Prophet's Statements," *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 27, no. 4 (2012): 427–44.

<sup>372</sup> Muḥammad Abdullah Draz, *The Qur'an: An Eternal Challenge* (Kube Publishing Limited, 2017), 83.

<sup>373</sup> 'Abd al-Rahmān Jalāludīn Al-Suyūfī, *Al-Itqān Fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'an* (Riyād: Wizārat al-Shuūn al-Islāmiyyah wa al-Daāwah wa al-Irshād al-Sa'ūdiyyah, 2005), 1875.

challenge presented was to produce something like the Qur'ān in its entirety as it was revealed:

﴿فَلْيَأْتُوا بِحَدِيثٍ مِثْلِهِ إِنْ كَانُوا صَادِقِينَ﴾

Then let them produce a discourse like it, if they should be truthful.<sup>374</sup>

This was the first stage of the challenge in which the most eloquent of rhetoricians failed, and thus, it was made easier.

﴿أَمْ يَقُولُونَ افْتَرَاهُ ۗ قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِعَشْرِ سُوْرٍ مِثْلِهِ مُفْتَرِيَاتٍ وَادْعُوا مَنِ اسْتَعْطَمْتُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ﴾

Or do they say, "He invented it"? Say, "Then bring ten sūrahs like it that have been invented and call upon [for assistance] whomever you can besides Allāh, if you should be truthful."<sup>375</sup>

The second stage of the challenge only requested ten *sūrahs* like it; however, once again, it remained unmatched.<sup>376</sup> Thus, it was followed by a final challenge to produce a single *sūrah* like it.

﴿وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُوْرَةٍ مِثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ﴾

And if you are in doubt about what We have sent down [i.e., the Qur'ān] upon Our Servant [i.e., Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ)], then produce a sūrah the like thereof and call upon your witnesses [i.e., supporters] other than Allāh, if you should be truthful.<sup>377</sup>

This was the final stage, and remarkably, not a single individual was able to produce anything akin to the shortest sūrah in the Qur'ān, the 108th Sūrah, al-Kawthar, consisting of only three verses and fourteen words.<sup>378</sup> Within this *sūrah* is an influx of about twenty-seven perfectly placed literary devices and features, four unique words never to be repeated in the entire Qur'ān again, three concise lines mirroring semantically the previous *sūrah*, formulated as a response to an entirely unplanned set of circumstances, with ten letters in each line, depicting the most eloquent of meanings

<sup>374</sup> Al-Qur'ān, 52:34

<sup>375</sup> Al-Qur'ān, 11:13

<sup>376</sup> Al-Suyūfī, Al-Iṭqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān, 1875.

<sup>377</sup> Al-Qur'ān, 2:23

<sup>378</sup> Al-Suyūfī, Al-Iṭqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān, 1875.

in an impeccable harmonious rhythmic structure without sacrificing any depth, all in a single attempt without any training, editing, or knowledge of poetry or semantics.<sup>379</sup> After all this, the simple reply of those who rejected it was:

﴿وَإِذَا تُلِيٰ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا قَالُوا قَدْ سَمِعْنَا لَوْ نَشَاءُ لَقُلْنَا مِثْلَ هَذَا ۖ إِنَّ هَذَا إِلَّا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ﴾

And when Our verses are recited to them, they say, "We have heard. If we willed, we could say [something] like this. This is not but legends of the former peoples."<sup>380</sup>

Thus, the final assertion concluded that no matter how many of the creation gathered to produce anything like the speech of the Qur'ān, they would fail.

﴿قُلْ لِّئِنِ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يَأْتُوا بِمِثْلِ هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ وَلَا كَانَ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا﴾

Say, "If mankind and the jinn gathered in order to produce the like of this Qur'ān, they could not produce the like of it, even if they were to each other assistants."<sup>381</sup>

#### 4.4.2.1 The Inimitability of the Qur'ān

It has been over fourteen centuries, and both Arabs and non-Arabs have been unable to meet this challenge despite several attempts.<sup>382</sup> The Qur'ānic challenge was posed to the Arabs, including the tribe of Quraysh, who considered poetry the greatest form of speech.<sup>383</sup> It was used to document history orally, as evidence for their beliefs, morals, and claims, and the reference of all wisdom for them.<sup>384</sup> Essentially, it was life for them, making up the foundation of everything important in society.<sup>385</sup> Despite their status as the greatest linguists, they were unable to produce anything comparable to the speech

<sup>379</sup> Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, 1875.

<sup>380</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 8:31

<sup>381</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 17:88

<sup>382</sup> Khaṭṭābī, *Bayān I'jāz al-Qur'ān*, 1

<sup>383</sup> Ibn Khaldūn and Bruce B. Lawrence, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History - Abridged Edition*, ed. N. J. Dawood, trans. Franz Rosenthal, Abridged edition (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 58.

<sup>384</sup> Ibn Khaldūn and Bruce B. Lawrence, *The Muqaddimah*, 58.

<sup>385</sup> Muḥammad Taqī Usmani, *An Approach to the Quranic Sciences* (Kitab Bhavan, 2010), 260.

of the Qur'ān.<sup>386</sup> That is why the challenge succeeded unflinchingly, as it was supported immediately by a tremendous contention that nobody would be able to overcome.

﴿فَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلُوا وَلَنْ تَفْعَلُوا فَاتَّقُوا النَّارَ الَّتِي وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ ۗ أُعِدَّتْ  
لِلْكَافِرِينَ﴾

But if you do not - and you will never be able to - then fear the Fire,  
whose fuel is people and stones, prepared for the disbelievers.<sup>387</sup>

The challenge came through the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), who continuously demanded this for over two decades, all while condemning, rejecting, and refuting their religion. The result remained that his enemies and critics drove him out of his city, engaged in military wars against him, attempted to assassinate him multiple times, and defamed him through lies and accusations. However, they were never able to challenge the Qur'ān in any way despite being the most eloquent of Arabs and poets of their time. Humankind has been unable to produce anything like the Qur'ān as their knowledge cannot encompass all the vocabulary and words of the Arabic language, thereby failing to perfect the vessels of meaning and concepts. This incomplete understanding and limited knowledge can only result in an imperfect concoction, no matter how eloquent, when compared to the Qur'ān.<sup>388</sup> The very masters of poetry and eloquence of their time, such as Unayās al-Ġhifārī, al-Walīd al-Mughīrah, and 'Utbah, despite rejecting the claim of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and showing continuous enmity towards him, acknowledge the Qur'ān to be beyond poetry, unexplainable magic, or irrefutable.<sup>389</sup> Their remarks were all unified by the simple notion of inexplicability, marking the uniquely miraculous nature of the Qur'ān. They are then the best of testimonies. Following them in modern times are scholars and specialists in the Qur'ānic and Arabic language, who reiterate that it is no surprise that even the best of Arab writers have never come close to equalling the merit of the Qur'ān.<sup>390</sup> Others have concluded that despite the Arabs being connoisseurs of rhetoric

<sup>386</sup> Khattābī, *Bayān I'jāz al-Qur'ān*, 1.

<sup>387</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 2:24

<sup>388</sup> Khattābī, *Bayān I'jāz al-Qur'ān*, 5.

<sup>389</sup> 'Abd al-Malik Ibn Hishām and Muḥammad Ibn Ishāq, *Sīrat al-Nabī: ka-mā rawāhā Ibn Hishām 'an al-Bukā'ī 'an al-Muṭṭalibī, wa-hiya al-ma'rūfah bi-Sīrat Ibn Hishām : mukhtaṣarah munassaqaḥ mubawwabah fī mujallad wāḥid* (Bayrūt: Dār Rīḥānī lil-Ṭibā'ah wa-al-Nashr, 1965). 2:550.

<sup>390</sup> Edward Henry Palmer, *The Qur'ān* (Oxford: Clarendon press, 1880), 4.

and language, they could not produce a chapter like it, proving that it was not from one of their own.<sup>391</sup>

#### 4.4.2.2 Attempts to Meet the Challenge of the Qur'ān

Some have objected that similar verses like the Qur'ān have already been produced by equalling its rhythmic scheme through a few verses, citing examples such as the poet and self-proclaimed prophet Musaylamah al-Kadhāb.<sup>392</sup> In one of his attempts, he produced a short poem about the frog as he composed the following: “O frog, croak as much as you can croak. Neither do you muddy the water nor do you repel any comer”.<sup>393</sup> It is an example and an attempt devoid of any real substance and has been proven incorrect in its wording and meaning.<sup>394</sup> The only appeal it has to it is that it rhymes but without any care of the significance or correctness of its intended meaning. They are words without benefit and frivolous at best when compared to even the shortest *sūrah* of the Qur'ān. Another example is his poem about the elephant, in which he says,

The elephant! What is the elephant? And what will make you realise  
what the elephant is? It has a long trunk and a unique tail. Because of  
the creation of our Lord, they are not a few in number.<sup>395</sup>

This short poem is nothing more than direct plagiarism of parts of the Qur'ān and still lacks any compelling attributes. The usage of the verb *adraka* (to realize) in Arabic is incorrect rhetorically as such a verb would only be used to refer to concepts that are beyond description and have immense consequences, as used in the Qur'ān in the following examples:

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<sup>391</sup> Sir Hamilton Alexander Rosskeen Gibb, *Islam: A Historical Survey* (Oxford University Press, 1975), 28.

<sup>392</sup> Khattābī, *Bayān I'jāz al-Qur'ān*, 33.

<sup>393</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārikh al-Ṭabari: tārikh al-rusul wa al-mulūk.*: 2. tab'ah (al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1982), 2:276.

<sup>394</sup> Khattābī, *Bayān I'jāz al-Qur'ān*, 33., 33.

<sup>395</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārikh al-Ṭabari*, 2:270-271.

﴿القَارِعَةُ﴾

﴿مَا الْقَارِعَةُ﴾

﴿وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْقَارِعَةُ﴾

﴿يَوْمَ يَكُونُ النَّاسُ كَالْفَرَاشِ الْمَبْثُوثِ﴾

The Striking Calamity –

What is the Striking Calamity?

And what can make you know what is the Striking Calamity?

It is the Day when people will be like moths, dispersed<sup>396</sup>

﴿الْحَاقَّةُ﴾

﴿مَا الْحَاقَّةُ﴾

﴿وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْحَاقَّةُ﴾

﴿كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ وَعَادٌ بِالْقَارِعَةِ﴾

The Inevitable Reality -

What is the Inevitable Reality?

And what can make you know what is the Inevitable Reality?

Thamūd and ‘Aad denied the Striking Calamity [i.e., the Resurrection]<sup>397</sup>

Both examples use this rhetorical device to describe the compelling nature of the day of judgment as grand and profound. Musaylamah, on the other hand, applied this literary device to an animal that is instantly recognizable. Even then, its description is limited to its trunk and tail, resulting in an utterly juvenile rhyme.<sup>398</sup> Both examples of the attempt to meet the challenge lack rhetorical eloquence. This results in the establishment of certitude regarding the true nature of the Qur’ān and, by extension, its content and guidance.

<sup>396</sup> *Al-Qur’ān*, 101:1-4

<sup>397</sup> *Al-Qur’ān*, 69:1-4

<sup>398</sup> Khaṭṭābī, *Bayān I’jāz al-Qur’ān*, 42.

A final objection may be brought in questioning or comparing the miracle of the Qur'ān to other texts in different languages that seem inimitable as works of humans, such as Shakespeare. However, no literary work by any human has been deemed such, including Shakespeare. Although Shakespeare's works are masterpieces, other great writers like Marlowe and Saavedra have often surpassed them.<sup>399</sup> Some have even ranked several other writers above him, such as Johnson, Greene, Dekker, and Peele.<sup>400</sup>

#### 4.4.3 Prophecies in the Qur'ān

Many scholars have constituted the necessitation of prophecies as part of miracles which break the laws of nature, signifying the will of a divine being.<sup>401</sup> For example, Hume cited prophecies as real miracles, thereby admitting proof of revelation.<sup>402</sup> It is not within the capacity of human nature to foresee and foretell future events. Thus, it is a sign that breaks the natural order, confirming a divine mission or authority.<sup>403</sup> Prophecies, then, are a species of miracles. The Qur'ān, in establishing itself as a miracle, in some ways, does not necessarily need to rely upon prophecies or predictions. Indeed, it would add strength to its overall claim, but the unique *i'jāz* of the Qur'ān is a timeless and divine miracle. Being, the final revelation, constitutes proof of its truthfulness from within itself. The Qur'ān alludes to this internally and sets a framework through specific verses. The first can be seen as an indication of the presence of prophecies within the Qur'ān as it states in a set of verses:

﴿قُلْ مَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُتَكَلِّفِينَ﴾

Say, [O Muḥammad], "I do not ask you for it [i.e., the Qur'ān] any payment, and I am not of the pretentious."<sup>404</sup>

﴿إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِلْعَالَمِينَ﴾

It is but a reminder to the worlds."<sup>405</sup>

<sup>399</sup> Clara Calvo, "Shakespeare and Cervantes in 1916: The Politics of Language," 2004, 78–94, 78.

<sup>400</sup> Hugh Craig, 'Shakespeare's Vocabulary: Myth and Reality', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 62, no. 1 (2011): 53–74.

<sup>401</sup> Paddy Jane Mcshane, 'Hume on Prophecy', *Religious Studies* 52, no. 2 (2016): 213–21.

<sup>402</sup> David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford University Press, 1999), 58.

<sup>403</sup> Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 58.

<sup>404</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 38:86.

<sup>405</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 38:87.

﴿وَلَتَعْلَمُنَّ نَبَأَهُ بَعْدَ حِينٍ﴾

And you will surely know [the truth of] its information after a time."<sup>406</sup>

The reference in the third verse indicates that the truth of the content and claims of the Qur'ān will be known after a specific time. Some scholars defined this as the exposure to the reality of every being at their time of end: death.<sup>407</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, however, explained this to mean that the reference to time in this verse is unrestricted, as a sign to observe the fulfillment of prophecies to determine the authenticity of the Qur'ān.<sup>408</sup> The Qur'ān clarifies that the truth of matters in the future are matters of the *ghaib*, the unseen world known exclusively by Allāh (Glorified and Exalted). This knowledge is hidden from His creation, the only exception being those that he chooses from amongst the prophets, as reflected in the verses:

﴿عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ فَلَا يُظْهِرُ عَلَىٰ غَيْبِهِ أَحَدًا﴾

[He is] Knower of the unseen, and He does not disclose His [knowledge of the] unseen to anyone.<sup>409</sup>

﴿إِلَّا مَن ارْتَضَىٰ مِن رَّسُولٍ فَإِنَّهُ يَسْلُكُ مِن بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِن خَلْفِهِ رَصَدًا﴾

Except whom He has approved of messengers, and indeed, He sends before him [i.e., each messenger] and behind him observers.<sup>410</sup>

﴿لِيَعْلَمَ أَن قَدِ أَبْلَغُوا رَسُولَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَحَاطَ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ وَأَحْصَىٰ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عَدَدًا﴾

That he [i.e., Muḥammad (ﷺ)] may know that they have conveyed the messages of their Lord, and He has encompassed whatever is with them and has enumerated all things in number.<sup>411</sup>

The knowledge of the *ghaib* is of two types: relative and absolute.<sup>412</sup> If, at this very moment, one cannot physically observe what is in another country or location without any technological tools, it would then be considered hidden relatively, as others may be able to observe what they cannot. Absolute *ghaib* is that which is hidden from all, reflected in the verse above. It is only known to Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) and sometimes revealed to a prophet to prove his honesty and claims of being divinely

<sup>406</sup> Al-Qur'ān, 38:88.

<sup>407</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*. 38:88.

<sup>408</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*. 38:88.

<sup>409</sup> Al-Qur'ān, 72:26.

<sup>410</sup> Al-Qur'ān, 72:27.

<sup>411</sup> Al-Qur'ān, 72:28.

<sup>412</sup> Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-'Uṭhaimīn, *Uṣūl Al-Tafsīr*, (al-Qaṣīm: al-Maktaba al-Islāmiyyah, 2001), 3.

inspired.<sup>413</sup> Absolute *ghaib* can be seen in examples like knowledge of the exact moment of the death of a soul, the detailed actions and deeds of every individual, and the precise specification of the time of the day of judgment, indicated in the following verse:

﴿يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ السَّاعَةِ أَيَّانَ مُرْسَاهَا ۚ قُلْ إِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ رَبِّي ۚ لَا يُجَلِّيهَا لِوَقْتِهَا إِلَّا هُوَ ۚ ثَقُلَتْ فِي السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ لَا تَأْتِيكُمْ إِلَّا بَغْتَةً ۚ يَسْأَلُونَكَ كَأَنَّكَ حَفِيٌّ عَنْهَا ۚ قُلْ إِنَّمَا عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ﴾

They ask you, [O Muḥammad], about the Hour: when is its arrival? Say, "Its knowledge is only with my Lord. None will reveal its time except Him. It lays heavily upon the heavens and the earth. It will not come upon you except unexpectedly." They ask you as if you are familiar with it. Say, "Its knowledge is only with Allāh, but most of the people do not know."<sup>414</sup>

When the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) was questioned about the moment of the last hour (day of judgment), he was commanded by Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) to acknowledge that this knowledge is essentially unknown to anyone as it is absolute *ghaib*. Even in the famous hadith of Gibrīl, when he was explicitly asked about when the hour is, his reply confirmed that the most honourable of prophets (Muḥammed, peace and blessings be upon him) nor the most honourable angel (Gibrīl) had any specific knowledge of it. When Gibrīl, in the form of a man, asked him about the final answer, he answered, "The one being questioned is not any more knowledge about this matter than he questioner."<sup>415</sup>

The prophecies of the Qur’ān are divided into two categories. The first are those that were fulfilled during the lifetime of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). There are two significant examples of these. The first is the fate of Abu Lahab and his wife, and the second is the Romans' defeat of the Persian empire. The second category is those prophecies that foretold events after the passing of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) in the distant future. Examples include the immense spread of Islam and the miraculous preservation of the Qur’ān.

<sup>413</sup> Marwan Saad Azzubaidi, 'Prophecies in The Holy Qur'an Attesting Its Divine Origin: Ramalan Dalam al-Quran Sebagai Bukti Keasliannya Yang Suci', *Jurnal Pengajian Islam* 16, no. 1 (29 May 2023): 61–72.

<sup>414</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 7:187

<sup>415</sup> Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī, *Saḥīḥ Muslim*, Taḥqīq Naẓar bin Muḥammad, (Riyadh, Dar Ṭaybah, 2006), Ḥadīth no. 8.

#### 4.4.3.1 The Fate of Abu Lahab and His Wife

The 111<sup>th</sup> *surah* of the Qur'ān, *al-Masad*, is entirely about the disbelieving uncle of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), Abu Lahab, and his wife, Umm Jamīl.

تَبَّتْ يَدَا أَبِي هَبٍ وَتَبَّ ۖ مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُ مَالُهُ وَمَا كَسَبَ ۖ سَيَصْلَىٰ نَارًا ذَاتَ هَبٍ  
وَأَمْرَأَتُهُ حَمَّالَةَ الْحَطَبِ ۖ فِي جِيدِهَا حَبْلٌ مِّن مَّسَدٍ ۖ

May the hands of Abū Lahab be ruined, and ruined is he.

His wealth will not avail him or that which he gained.

He will [enter to] burn in a Fire of [blazing] flame.

And his wife [as well] - the carrier of firewood.

Around her neck is a rope of [twisted] fiber.<sup>416</sup>

The context of the revelation of this verse is paramount in its examination. When Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings be upon him) was commanded by his Lord to convey the message and warn against rejecting faith, he gathered the Meccans and conveyed it to them through great cautioning. In the presence of the audience was his uncle, Abu Lahab, who in turn cursed the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and his message. As a result, Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) revealed this *surah*, eternally condemning not just Abu Lahab but his wife as well.<sup>417</sup> The repetition of the ruin of Abu Lahab in the first verse further denotes the affirmation of his fate. The first statement condemns the actions of Abu Lahab, while the second confirms that his fate will be sealed through it.<sup>418</sup> The wife of Abu Lahab used to share his animosity towards the religion of Islam and its followers as she would place upon the path of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) vines and thorns to harm him upon his exit during the darkness before the Fajr prayer.<sup>419</sup>

Consequently, there are two parts to this prophecy. The first is that Abu Lahab and his wife lived many years, according to some narrations, up to nine years after this *surah* was revealed, adhering to the same evil path, confirming the prediction that they would die upon disbelief and immorality.<sup>420</sup> Secondly, neither Abu Lahab nor his wife

<sup>416</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 111:1-5.

<sup>417</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 111:1.

<sup>418</sup> Al-Baghawī, *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl*, 111:1.

<sup>419</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*. 111:5.

<sup>420</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, 111:1-4.

even outwardly attempted to embrace Islam, with an intention to disprove the prediction of the Qur’ān. If either of them had simply tried, then the validation of the claim of the Qur’ān would have been defeated, resulting in an incorrect guess. This, however, was not the case as the Qur’ān is set to affirm all that occurs in the past, present, and future harmoniously without any contradiction or error.

#### 4.4.3.2 The Defeat of the Persians

A second prophecy fulfilled during the life of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), is seen in the opening verse of *surah Rum*:

﴿الْمُ غَلِبَتِ الرُّومُ ﴿۱﴾ فِي أَقْبَلِ الْأَرْضِ وَهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ غَلَبِهِمْ سَيَغْلِبُونَ ﴿۲﴾ فِي بَضْعِ  
سِنِينَ ۗ لِلَّهِ الْأَمْرُ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَمِنْ بَعْدُ ۗ وَيَوْمَئِذٍ يَفْرَحُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿۳﴾ بِنَصْرِ اللَّهِ ۗ يَنْصُرُ مَنْ  
يَشَاءُ ۗ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿۴﴾ وَعَدَّ اللَّهُ ۗ لَا يُخْلِفُ اللَّهُ وَعْدَهُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا  
يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿۵﴾﴾

Alif, Lām, Meem.

The Byzantines have been defeated

In the nearest land. But they, after their defeat, will overcome.

Within three to nine years. To Allāh belongs the command [i.e., decree] before and after. And that day the believers will rejoice.

In the victory of Allāh. He gives victory to whom He wills, and He is the Exalted in Might, the Merciful.

[It is] the promise of Allāh. Allāh does not fail in His promise, but most of the people do not know.<sup>421</sup>

The *surah* opens with an allusion to the true nature of the Qur’ān that contains verses or sections only truly known by Allāh (Glorified and Exalted). The second verse describes the defeat of the Byzantines by the Persians. This is the background to the prediction, essentially. This opening is set within the context of the Byzantine-Persian wars during the early parts of the seventh century. These verses were said to be revealed around 615 CE in Mecca.<sup>422</sup> This was also when the Persian army, led by Shahrbaraz, defeated the Roman army of Heraclius, collapsing the Roman positions in both Syria

<sup>421</sup> *Al-Qur’ān*, 30:1-6

<sup>422</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm*, 30:1.

and Palestine.<sup>423</sup> This defeat reflected the state of the Roman positions during this time as they were shattered and distraught, and their morale weakened significantly.<sup>424</sup> The losses suffered by the Romans were catastrophic, almost leading to the brink of the collapse of the empire. However, it still did not result in the end and complete conquest of the Byzantine Empire.<sup>425</sup> The polytheists of Mecca greatly celebrated this defeat of the Romans, as they compared themselves to the Persians, both not being from the people of the Book.<sup>426</sup> They referred to the similarities between the Romans and Muslims as both having holy Books and affirmed that they would defeat the Muslims in Mecca, just as their polytheistic counterparts had done with the Romans.<sup>427</sup>

A prediction for the subsequent victory of the Romans at this point would go against every form of analysis; however, this is precisely what the Qur’ān prophesied. The weakness of the Byzantine Empire, almost on the verge of collapse, made it an utterly remarkable prediction, especially against the might that was the Persian Empire. The specific timeframe given was in the context of the Arabic term *bid’*, referring to a period between three to nine years.<sup>428</sup> By 622, Heraclius began an offensive warfare against the Persians, leading to a string of victories that built morale and momentum.<sup>429</sup> In 624, he led a significant victory over Sharbaraz, thereby fulfilling the prophecy of the Qur’ān within the referenced timeframe.<sup>430</sup> Although it is possible to infer which specific battle or victory was referred to during this victory, the majority, both historically and within the exergies of the Qur’ān, have agreed upon a fairly consistent narrative.<sup>431</sup> The specific nature of this is also clarified with the final prediction that the day of victory for the Romans will be a great day of rejoicing for the Muslims. This is fulfilled within two contexts. The first is that because the Muslims believed the Romans to be closer to them in belief and faith, adhering to their religious book as well, they

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<sup>423</sup> Michael H. Dodgeon and Samuel N. C. Lieu, *The Roman Eastern Frontier and the Persian Wars (AD 226-363): A Documentary History* (Routledge, 1991), 193.

<sup>424</sup> Walter Emil Kaegi, *Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 90.

<sup>425</sup> Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *The History of Al-Ṭabarī Vol. 5: The Sāsānids, the Byzantines, the Lakmids, and Yemen* (Sunny Press, 1999), 330.

<sup>426</sup> Nadia Maria El Cheikh, ‘Sūrat Al-Rūm: A Study of the Exegetical Literature’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 118, no. 3 (1998): 356–64, 358.

<sup>427</sup> Maria El Cheikh, ‘Sūrat Al-Rūm: A Study of the Exegetical Literature,’ 359.

<sup>428</sup> Maria El Cheikh, ‘Sūrat Al-Rūm: A Study of the Exegetical Literature,’ 360.

<sup>429</sup> Walter Emil Kaegi, *Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 324.

<sup>430</sup> Kaegi, *Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium*, 324.

<sup>431</sup> Nadia Maria El Cheikh, ‘Sūrat Al-Rūm: A Study of the Exegetical Literature’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 118, no. 3 (1998): 356–64, 364.

welcomed their victory over the polytheistic Persians.<sup>432</sup> Secondly, it was affirmed that the victory of the first battle fought by the Muslims against the polytheists of Mecca, the battle of Badr, also took place on the same day they received the news of the Roman victory, fulfilling multiple levels of the prophecy while also adding to its specific timeframe.<sup>433</sup> This is referred to as the promise of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) in the final verse.

#### ***4.4.3.3 The Spread of Islam***

Mecca is located in the midst of bare and rugged mountains, a valley devoid of agriculture. Its primary water source is the well of Zamzam, along with other wells dug by its inhabitants.<sup>434</sup> The message of prophethood was given to Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings be upon him) in the most hostile environments, and only a few accepted his call in the early stages.<sup>435</sup> Members of his clan, Quraysh, and family staunchly opposed him from the earliest of days. Many followers embraced Islam from external locations and backgrounds, thus affirming the universal nature of Islam from its earliest days.<sup>436</sup> The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and his early followers suffered from great persecution in Mecca through physical, mental, emotional, and verbal opposition. However, the power of Islam was evident through their steadfastness and unwavering faith.<sup>437</sup> This then was the context of early Islam. With all the hostility, persecution, and pressure faced by the Muslims, the promise of the Qur’ān maintained that, seemingly against all odds, Islam would prevail over other such ideologies and religions.

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<sup>432</sup> Al-Sa‘dī, *Taysīr al-Karīm al-Raḥmān*, 30:4.

<sup>433</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān*, 30:4.

<sup>434</sup> W. Montgomery Watt et al., ‘Makka’, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* (Brill, 24 April 2012), [https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/makka-COM\\_0638](https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/makka-COM_0638).

<sup>435</sup> Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah al-Nabī*, 164.

<sup>436</sup> Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah al-Nabī*, 164.

<sup>437</sup> Ṣafī al-Raḥmān Mubārakfūrī, *Ar-Raḥeeq Al-Makhtum. The Sealed Nectar: Biography of the Noble Prophet* (Maktaba Dar-us-Salam Publishers., 1996), 141.

﴿هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَىٰ الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ  
الْمُشْرِكُونَ﴾

It is He who sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth to manifest it over all religion, although those who associate others with Allāh dislike it.<sup>438</sup>

The manifestation of truth could have different forms, one of them being the growth of Islam at various points in history. Although it is evident that Islam spread considerably during the time of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), its significant growth only occurred after his passing. The last and final complete *surah* revealed merely months before the passing of the Messenger indicated this future expansion at a time when Islam was still very much limited to Arabia.<sup>439</sup>

﴿إِذَا جَاءَ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ وَالْفَتْحُ ۖ وَرَأَيْتَ النَّاسَ يَدْخُلُونَ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ أَفْوَاجًا ۖ فَسَبِّحْ  
بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ ۖ وَأَسْتَغْفِرْهُ ۚ إِنَّهُ كَانَ تَوَّابًا﴾

When the victory of Allāh has come and the conquest,  
And you see the people entering into the religion of Allāh in multitudes.  
Then exalt [Him] with praise of your Lord and ask forgiveness of Him.  
Indeed, He is ever Accepting of Repentance.<sup>440</sup>

Although most scholars of the Tafsir agree that these verses refer to the opening of Mecca, Ibn Abbas narrates that they also include openings of lands much later.<sup>441</sup> Al-Shinqīti, in his tafsīr, expands that the victory with the help of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) is concurrent with generations of Islam, extending the meaning of the verse to a widespread and consistent expansion and growth.<sup>442</sup> The estimates of the number of Muslims with the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) towards the end of his time vary from 40,000 to more than 90,000; however, the scope is paramount.<sup>443</sup> What began as a single individual sent to deliver a divinely inspired message had already

<sup>438</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 68:4

<sup>439</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, 110:1.

<sup>440</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 111:1-3.

<sup>441</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 111:1.

<sup>442</sup> Muḥammad al-Amīn ibn Muḥammad al-Mukhtār Shinqīṭī, *Aḍwā' al-bayān fī ṭīḥ al-Qur'ān bi-al-Qur'ān*, (Makkah: Dār 'Ālam al-Fawā'id, 2015), 111:1.

<sup>443</sup> Idris El Hareir and Ravane Mbaye, *The Spread of Islam Throughout the World* (UNESCO, 2011), 119.

grown considerably. However, this growth is minimal compared to Islam's predicted and substantial increase.

Within just seventy years, the Muslims extended their rule through astonishing victories against the Byzantium and Persian Empires, through India in the north, and to northern Spain in the Atlantic and west.<sup>444</sup> There are estimated to be over 282 million Muslims in non-Islamic countries, with over 15 million in Europe.<sup>445</sup> In France alone, for example, studies have shown that there have been over 200,000 converts in recent years.<sup>446</sup> It is important to note that this remarkable growth is despite the increasingly negative portrayals of Muslims and Islam in the global media, especially after the event of September 11<sup>th</sup>. Today, Muslims count for almost 2 billion, with over 20 percent of the world adhering to Islam, marking one in every five people.<sup>447</sup> Remarkably, this trend is expected to only intensify with the projection that by 2050, the global Muslim population will rise to almost 3 billion, accounting for over 30% of the world's population.<sup>448</sup> It is evident that Islam, starting with just a single individual in the isolated desert of Mecca within an intensely short period, has fulfilled its prophecy of expansion, growth, and extension over almost all other ideologies and religions during the same period.

Such examples, when analyzed, meet the requirement of prophecy in foretelling an event that would take place accurately, within a particular time, referring to specific entities, all while being very unlikely at the time of their prediction. They are a testament to the accuracy of the Qur'ān add yet another level of its remarkable nature. The last example, the predicted and guaranteed preservation of the Qur'ān, seamlessly lends itself to be an entirely independent marking of the *i'jāz* of the Qur'ān and, as such, will be analyzed independently on its merit subsequently.

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<sup>444</sup> El Hareir and Mbaye, *The Spread of Islam Throughout the World*, 882.

<sup>445</sup> Ra'd Jabbara, *Muslim Minorities*, Tehran, al-Huda Est., 2000, p. 42; see also Jorgen Nielsen, *Muslims in Western Europe*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1992.

<sup>446</sup> Jørgen S. Nielsen, *Muslims in Western Europe* (Edinburgh University Press, 1992).

<sup>447</sup> Ibid.

<sup>448</sup> Benjamin Wormald, 'Muslims', *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project* (blog), 2 April 2015, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2015/04/02/muslims/>.

#### 4.4.4 The Preservation of the Qur’ān

During the increased persecutions faced by the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and the early Muslims in Mecca, an inspiring surah was revealed outlining the revelation of the Qur’ān, prophethood, the promised reward for the believers, and the grave warnings against those who oppose and oppress them.<sup>449</sup> Right from its opening, it invigorates and instills a sense of gratitude and rejoicing in the hearts of the believers as it proclaims:

﴿الرَّءِيسُ تِلْكَ آيَاتُ الْكِتَابِ وَقُرْآنٍ مُّبِينٍ﴾

Alif, Lām, Rā. These are the verses of the Book and a clear Qur’ān [i.e., recitation].<sup>450</sup>

﴿يَوْمَ يَوَدُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْ كَانُوا مُسْلِمِينَ﴾

‘The day will come when’ the disbelievers will certainly wish they had submitted ‘to Allah’.<sup>451</sup>

Immediately, the great virtue of the Qur’ān is realized with a vigour that reminds of its great virtues at blessings, especially during tried times. Then, one of the most promising verses is soon followed, which all but guarantees the preservation of this remarkable book, as the ninth verse reveals:

﴿إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ﴾

Indeed, it is We who sent down the message [i.e., the Qur’ān], and We are indeed Preservers of it.<sup>452</sup>

This is the promise, then, proclaimed in its most emphasized form. There are a total of five linguistic emphases in this single verse alone. It begins with certainty, proceeds with assurance, and ends with a guarantee. The first noun is preceded by a *ḥarf* of emphasis, loosely translated to indeed or surely. Secondly, the pronoun ‘we’ has been chosen in relation to the revelation, thereby confirming the honour and strength of this command. Thirdly, the same *ḥarf* adding emphases to the One that revealed it connects in the same way with the task to preserve it. Its relation is guaranteed as was seen, and

<sup>449</sup> Al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmi‘ li-Aḥkam*, 15:1.

<sup>450</sup> *Al-Qur’ān*, 15:1

<sup>451</sup> Dr Mustafa Khattab, *The Clear Qur’ān, 1st edition (Lombard, IL: Message for Humanity, 2016)*, 15:2.

<sup>452</sup> *Al-Qur’ān*, 15:9

so is its preservation. Finally, the *lām* of *tawkīd*, or emphasis, connects the pronoun “it,” which is the object of guaranteed preservation, the Noble and Glorious Qur’ān, the perfect speech of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted).

This is the claim, then. Its multidimensional proclamation itself is an allusion to the methods of protection discussed by the scholars of the Qur’ān across all spectrums and stages.<sup>453</sup> This also relates to the multidimensional stages of revelation and transmission of the Qur’ān. To grasp the preservation of the Qur’ān across all stages, a background of the stages themselves and their preserved transmission in the context of this verse of the Qur’ān must be realized.

The Qur’ān, as referred to earlier, includes both the oral recitation and the written form in the *muṣḥaf*.<sup>454</sup> Both forms have gone through stages in transmission. It has reached us today in a method known as *mutawātir*, the agreement of such a significant number of reliable, trustworthy individuals that it would be impossible to consider an error or lie or any weakness in any form of its transmission.<sup>455</sup> This constitutes a categorization of two transmission forms: vertical and horizontal. The vertical refers to the duality of transmission of the Qur’ān from Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) from the heavens to the earth, while the horizontal from the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) to his *ummah*.<sup>456</sup> These two distinct stages are paramount to the discussion of its miraculous preservation.

#### **4.4.4.1 The Vertical Transmission of the Qur’ān**

The vertical transmission of the Qur’ān includes two distinct phases. The first phase is the *nuzūl* (descent) of the Qur’ān from *al-Lawḥ al-Mahfūz* (the preserved slate or tablet) to the lower heavens.<sup>457</sup> This phase is what is being referred to in *sūrah al-Qadr* from its very opening:

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<sup>453</sup> Ismail Albayrak, ‘Revisiting the Meaning of the Divine Preservation of the Qur’an: With Special References to Verse 15:9’, *Religions* 13, no. 11 (November 2022): 1064.

<sup>454</sup> Al-‘Uḥaimīn, *Uṣūl Al-Tafsīr*, 1.

<sup>455</sup> Al-‘Uḥaimīn, *Uṣūl Al-Tafsīr*, 1.

<sup>456</sup> Albayrak, ‘Revisiting the Meaning of the Divine Preservation of the Qur’an, 4.

<sup>457</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm*, 97:1.

## ﴿إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةِ الْقَدْرِ﴾

Indeed, We sent it [i.e., the Qur'ān] down during the Night of Decree.<sup>458</sup>

The night of decree in the verse refers to one of the blessed nights of the month of Ramadan. This is the night, according to most scholars, in which the Qur'ān was revealed entirely from *al-Lawh al-Mahfūz* to the first heaven, according to Ibn Abbas and many others.<sup>459</sup> According to al-Zarkashī and others, this transmission aimed to highlight the noble and honourable status of the Qur'ān in the heavens.<sup>460</sup> It was to announce that this was the final and last book, the most honourable of them all, to be revealed to the final messenger to the most honourable of nations.

The second phase is marked by the beginning of revelation from the Angel Gabriel, hearing it directly from Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) and conveying it down to the earth directly to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him).<sup>461</sup> This is what is referred to as the gradual revelation spanning a total of twenty-three years, explained in the verse:

﴿وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الْقُرْآنُ جُمْلَةً وَاحِدَةً كَذَلِكَ لِنُثَبِّتَ بِهِ فُؤَادَكَ ۗ وَرَتَّلْنَاهُ تَرْتِيلًا﴾

The disbelievers also say, 'Why was the Quran not sent down to him all at once?' We sent it in this way to strengthen your heart [Prophet]; We gave it to you in gradual revelation.<sup>462</sup>

This was the gradual revelation according to the consensus of the scholars. Every time a portion of the Qur'ān was revealed, it increased the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) in steadfastness and certainty, protecting him from anxiety and calming his heart.<sup>463</sup> When new developments took place, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) needed information and guidance, thus resulting in a highly effective methodology of transmission with perfect wisdom. Another purpose of this strategy was to show the care of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) towards his Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) as the book was sent down to him according to the situations he faced in both

<sup>458</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 97:1

<sup>459</sup> Ahmad Ibn-'Alī an-Nasā'ī, *Faḍā'il Al-Qur'ān* (Dār at-Taḳāfa, 1980).

<sup>460</sup> Muḥammad Ibn-Bahādur al-Zarkaṣī, *al-Burhān fī 'ulūm al-Qur'ān* (al-Qāhira: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2006).

<sup>461</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*: 96:1.

<sup>462</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 25:31

<sup>463</sup> Al-Sa'dī, *Taysīr al-Karīm al-Raḥmān*, 25:31

Mecca and Medina.<sup>464</sup> It also allowed the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and his companions to ponder the meanings, derive knowledge from it, internalize its context, and truly benefit from it. The role of God in the preservation of the Qur’ān during this stage was undisputed.<sup>465</sup> The use of the pronoun “We” as opposed to “I” when Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) refers to his role in preserving this stage leaves no doubt about the importance of this task. This rhetorical usage magnifies the speaker, Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) himself, as he takes it upon himself to guarantee preservation during this stage to begin with.<sup>466</sup>

Al-Ṭabarī begins by confirming the consensus among the scholars that the word ‘dhikr’ in the verse refers to the Qur’ān, removing any notions of construed interpretations.<sup>467</sup> He clarifies that the primary means of preservation of the Qur’ān is its protection from any falsehood in the means of addition or subtraction from its original revelation. Falsehood here, specifically, refers to the influence of Iblis, thereby making an inter-textual reference for support referring to the following verse:

﴿لَا يَأْتِيهِ الْبَاطِلُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهِ تَنْزِيلٌ مِنْ حَكِيمٍ حَمِيدٍ﴾

Falsehood cannot approach it from before it or from behind it; [it is] a revelation from a [Lord who is] Wise and Praiseworthy.<sup>468</sup>

This sets a primary base for the protection of the Qur’ān at the highest metaphysical levels. The first source of corruption in both the heavens and earth was said to be *Iblīs*, and therefore, Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) guards the Qur’ān from him and his followers. Th’albī adds that the precision of the Qur’ān is such that even a single letter cannot be changed.<sup>469</sup>

The intricacies of this process begin with an examination of the verses immediately preceding in which the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) was accused of insanity by the polytheists of Mecca.

<sup>464</sup> Al-Sa‘dī, *Taysīr al-Karīm al-Raḥmān*, 25:31

<sup>465</sup> Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ibn Ḥalaf Ibn Baṭṭāl, *Sharḥ Ibn Baṭṭāl ‘alā Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Riyad: Maktabah al-Rushd, 2003).

<sup>466</sup> Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, 4th ed. (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyah, 2013), 19:123.

<sup>467</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān*, 25:31.

<sup>468</sup> *Al-Qur’ān*, 41:42

<sup>469</sup> Abu Ishaq Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Tha’Labī, *Al-kashf wa-al-bayan, aw, tafsir al-tha’labi* (Turath For Solutions, 2013).

﴿وَقَالُوا يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِي نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الذِّكْرُ إِنَّكَ لَمَجْنُونٌ﴾

And they say, "O you upon whom the message has been sent down, indeed you are mad."<sup>470</sup>

﴿لَوْ مَا تَأْتِينَا بِالْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ﴾

Why do you not bring us the angels, if you should be among the truthful?"<sup>471</sup>

﴿مَا نُنزِّلُ الْمَلَائِكَةَ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَمَا كَانُوا إِذًا مُنظَرِينَ﴾

We do not send down the angels except with truth; and they [i.e., the disbelievers] would not then be reprieved.<sup>472</sup>

Specifically, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) is accused of being mad or insanity through the possession of *jinn* or, as the polytheists question, why angels were not sent down instead of the Qur'ān.<sup>473</sup> Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) replies that angels are only sent down with truth. The main interpretations of the word truth here agree to mean either the Qur'ān or their punishment and judgement.<sup>474</sup> Al-Tabari reiterates this with his narration in which he explains that the *jinn* complained in their frustration to *shayṭān* (satan) that the doors to the heavens are closed, forbidding them from trying to steal or alter any information or commands sent down. Satan replies that gates to the heavens are locked in two instances: when God sends a sudden punishment to earth or when he is sending his message or a guide to the chosen prophet.<sup>475</sup>

Al-Zamakhsarī specifies the method in which this was done by making a connection between the original verse (15:9) with subsequent verse of the same *surah*:

﴿وَلَقَدْ جَعَلْنَا فِي السَّمَاءِ بُرُوجًا وَزَيَّنَّاهَا لِلنَّاظِرِينَ﴾

And We have placed within the heaven great stars and have beautified it for the observers.<sup>476</sup>

<sup>470</sup> Al-Qur'ān, 15:6

<sup>471</sup> Al-Qur'ān, 15:7

<sup>472</sup> Al-Qur'ān, 15:8

<sup>473</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, 15:8.

<sup>474</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, 15:8.

<sup>475</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 15: 8.

<sup>476</sup> Al-Qur'ān, 15:16

﴿وَحَفِظْنَاهَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْطَانٍ رَجِيمٍ﴾

And We have protected it from every devil expelled [from the mercy of Allāh].<sup>477</sup>

﴿إِلَّا مَنْ اسْتَرَقَ السَّمْعَ فَاتَّبَعَهُ شِهَابٌ مُبِينٌ﴾

Except one who steals a hearing and is pursued by a clear burning flame.<sup>478</sup>

He comments that when Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) sent the Qur’ān or verses with Gabriel to be delivered to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), he sent along with them in the heavens guards that would protect him from the front and back.<sup>479</sup> These watchful guards protected the revelation from any possibilities of distortion, omission, or alterations, especially from Satan, ensuring its safe and accurate delivery to the messenger.<sup>480</sup> This is precisely why there are no deficiencies in the Qur’ān. Similarly, al-Tabari cites that when the *shayātīn* (devils) try to interfere with this process, they are attacked by meteors, as mentioned by the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) in explaining to his companions.<sup>481</sup> This is also a rejection of the initial claim cited in the sixth verse of this surah of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) being insane, possessed by jinn or simply soothsayer. The connections between the jinn and the fortune-tellers and their sources from the eavesdropping from the lowest heaven were cut off, thereby making the validity of this claim false, indirectly rejecting any such accusations.

The intricate connections between themes lead to remarkable connections regarding this protection. The most honourable of angels in the heavens are said to be *ḥamal-al-‘arsh* (bearers or carries of the throne), while some narrations of Ibn Abbas cited that some verses of the Qur’ān, like surah al-Anam, were sent down accompanied by 70,00 angels.<sup>482</sup> Similarly, the most honourable companions were those who were also known as *ḥamal-al-Qur’ān* (the carriers of the Qur’ān), entrusted later to guard the

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<sup>477</sup> *Al-Qur’ān*, 15:17

<sup>478</sup> *Al-Qur’ān*, 15:18

<sup>479</sup> Maḥmūd ibn ‘Umar Al-Zamakhsharī, *Tafsīr Al-Kashshāf*, 3rd ed. (Bayrūt: Dār al-m‘arifah, 2009), 15:9.

<sup>480</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī, *Tafsīr Al-Kashshāf*, 15:9.

<sup>481</sup> Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī, *Saḥīḥ Muslim*, Taḥqīq Naṣar bin Muḥammad, (Riyadh, Dar Ṭaybah, 2006), Ḥadīth no. 5538.

<sup>482</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm*, 6:1.

Qur'ān, similar, in representation but not function, to the angels as mentioned earlier.<sup>483</sup> Nursi extends this by citing reports of an increase in meteors during the time of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), representing the great battle between the angels and the devils, signifying the emphatic protection of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) for this Qur'ān from the earliest of stages.<sup>484</sup> The revelation was sound without anything piercing it, and as it was protected, it has the power to protect the hearts of the believers if they, too, carry and internalize it.<sup>485</sup> Ibn al-Qayyim harmoniously develops this connection by referring to the believer's heart as his throne, thereby extending the connection between the angels, the throne of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted), the Qur'ān, and the hearts of the believers.<sup>486</sup>

Al-Tabari refers to the celestial tablet, *al-Lawḥ al-Mahfūz*, in which the original Qur'ān was stored and protected, further deepening its preservation at every single moment and time as he cites the end of *surah al-Burūj*.

﴿بَلْ هُوَ قُرْآنٌ مَّجِيدٌ﴾

But this is a glorious Qur'ān.<sup>487</sup>

﴿فِي لَوْحٍ مَّحْفُوظٍ﴾

[Inscribed] in a Preserved Slate.<sup>488</sup>

There are two variants of readings here that signify preservation. The first refers to the glorious Qur'ān preserved in the celestial tablet, while the second lends the adjective of preservation to the Qur'ān itself, thereby reading, "It is the glorious Qur'ān protected and preserved in the celestial slate or tablet."<sup>489</sup> Additionally, the specific angel responsible for the entire revelation was known to be Gabriel himself. He is the most honourable of all angels, giving more strength to its protection during this stage. He is described in the Qur'ān as the trustworthy spirit.

<sup>483</sup> Ismail Albayrak, 'Revisiting the Meaning of the Divine Preservation of the Qur'an: With Special References to Verse 15:9', *Religions* 13, no. 11 (November 2022), 14.

<sup>484</sup> Said Nursi, *Lem'alar* (Zehra Yayıncılık, 2002), 340.

<sup>485</sup> Nursi, *Lem'alar*, 340.

<sup>486</sup> Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr Ibn Qayyim, *Kitāb Al-Fawā'id* (Bayrūt: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2002), 21.

<sup>487</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 85:21

<sup>488</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 85:22

<sup>489</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 85:21.

﴿وَإِنَّهُ لَتَنْزِيلُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ﴾

And indeed, it [the Qur'ān] is the revelation of the Lord of the worlds.<sup>490</sup>

﴿نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ﴾

The Trustworthy Spirit [i.e., Gabriel] has brought it down.<sup>491</sup>

﴿عَلَىٰ قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ﴾

Upon your heart, [O Muḥammad] - that you may be of the warners.<sup>492</sup>

It was Gabriel who brought the message down directly to the heart of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). The term upon is used meaning on his heart, signifying an encompassing of sorts that is entirely pure and sound.<sup>493</sup> It is significant to note that until this point, the context of revelation was entirely oral in nature. The entire vertical process, from the preserved tablet to the heavens, to Gabriel, and then to the heart of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) directly, was an oral tradition perfected and preserved at every stage. Therefore, the Qur'ān, the most honourable and purest of messages, was sent down from the purest source (the celestial tablet) by the purest angel (Gibrīl) to the purest heart of Muḥammad (peace and blessings be upon him).

#### **4.4.4.2 The Horizontal Transmission of the Qur'ān**

The early scholars and companions' greater focus on protection was directed towards the vertical transmission of the Qur'ān from above the heavens down to earth. However, significant consideration has also been given to the horizontal stage, consisting of two types. The first is the transmission of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) to his companions, and the second is the written preservation of the Qur'ān to the rest of the *Ummah*.

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<sup>490</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 26:192

<sup>491</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 26:193

<sup>492</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 26:194

<sup>493</sup> Albayrak, 'Revisiting the Meaning of the Divine Preservation of the Qur'an, 15.

#### 4.4.4.3 The Prophet's Transmission of the Qur'ān

The first phase begins by marking the protection of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) himself. At-Ṭabarī and al-Qurtubī cite an ulterior interpretation of verse 15:9 in that what is being protected is the pronoun referring to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him).<sup>494</sup> It is important to note that this interpretation contributes to, not contradicts, the previous one. The protection extends from the Qur'ān to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) himself and is not limited to the former.

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ ۗ وَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴾

O Messenger, announce that which has been revealed to you from your Lord, and if you do not, then you have not conveyed His message. And Allāh will protect you from the people. Indeed, Allāh does not guide the disbelieving people.<sup>495</sup>

The protection in this verse correlates with the protection mentioned in the previous verse.<sup>496</sup> The protection of the Qur'ān is through the protection of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). Specifically, it was explained that Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) will protect the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) from any means that will inhibit both the delivery of the message of the Qur'ān with absolute truth and certainty and the subsequent transmission of the Qur'ān safely and accurately from the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) to his companions.<sup>497</sup> Additionally, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) did not even have to work feverishly to preserve the Qur'ān as Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) protected his heart to be encompassed entirely.

﴿ لَا تُحْرِكْ بِهِ لِسَانَكَ لِتَعْجَلَ بِهِ ﴾

Move not your tongue with it, [O Muḥammad], to hasten with it [i.e., recitation of the Qur'ān].<sup>498</sup>

<sup>494</sup> Al-Qurtubī, *Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkam al-Qur'ān*, 15:9.

<sup>495</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 5:67

<sup>496</sup> At-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 15:9

<sup>497</sup> Al-Qurtubī, *Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkam al-Qur'ān*, 15:9

<sup>498</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 75:16

﴿إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا جَمْعَهُ وَقُرْآنَهُ﴾

Indeed, upon Us is its collection [in your heart] and [to make possible] its recitation.<sup>499</sup>

The extent of preservation was so great that Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) himself took the responsibility of placing the entire Qur’ān upon the heart of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him).<sup>500</sup> Another verse reveals the precise method, in which Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) will cause him to recite and then memorize the entire Qur’ān with utmost accuracy and reliability so that he will never forget.

﴿سَنُقْرِئُكَ فَلَا تَنْسَى﴾

We will have you recite ‘the Quran, O Prophet, ’ so you will not forget ‘any of it’,<sup>501</sup>

Al-Razi mentions that this verse signifies the miraculous preservation of the Qur’ān in two ways. The first demonstrates the remarkable ability Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) bestowed upon the heart of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) to memorize an entire lengthy text without any previous training or exposure. Secondly, as this surah was revealed early in Mecca, it predicts the impeccable nature of the preservation and accurate memorization of the Qur’ān for years to come, affirming the prophecy.<sup>502</sup> Furthermore, the Prophet’s (peace and blessings be upon him) reception of the Qur’ān was either through receiving direct inspiration and revelation in his heart or through listening and memorizing the recitation of Gibril through his transmission.<sup>503</sup> This confirms that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) did not simply rely upon this miraculous imprint of the Qur’ān upon his heart; instead, he worked feverishly to ascertain that he would retain every part of it. He would recite it with Gibril in its entirety and then listen to it to review.<sup>504</sup> This was done twice every year and four times

<sup>499</sup> *Al-Qur’ān*, 75:17

<sup>500</sup> Jalalu’d-din Al-Mahalli and Jalal’d-din Al-Mahalli, *Tafsir Al-Jalalayn* (Dar Al Taqwa Ltd., 2007).

<sup>501</sup> *Al-Qur’ān*, 87:6

<sup>502</sup> Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr*, 4th ed. (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyah, 2013). 31:142.

<sup>503</sup> ‘Abd al-Rahmān Jalāludīn Al-Suyūfī, *Al-Iṭqān Fī ‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān* (Riyāḍ: Wizārat al-Shuūn al-Islāmiyyah wa al-Ḍaawah wa al-Irshād al-Sa‘ūdīyyah, 2005). 1:142–66.

<sup>504</sup> Ahmad ibn Muhammad Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, *Fath al-bari bi-sharh Sahih al-Bukhari* (Egypt: Maktabah Misr, 2001). 9:5.

in his last year before passing, establishing the foundation of the oral authority of the Qur'ān.<sup>505</sup>

The primary duty of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) then was to convey the message that he has been entrusted with. The glorious yet profound responsibility encroached upon him was reflected in the verse:

﴿ يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ ۖ وَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴾

O Messenger, announce that which has been revealed to you from your Lord, and if you do not, then you have not conveyed His message. And Allāh will protect you from the people. Indeed, Allāh does not guide the disbelieving people.<sup>506</sup>

The specific nature and primary form of conveying the message was through conveying the verses of the Qur'ān that were revealed to him. The requisite of the complete delivery of the Qur'ān was placed upon him to fulfil his purpose. Remarkably, this verse is said to have yet another prophecy of the Qur'ān in that Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) guarantees the preservation and protection of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) until he can convey the entire Qur'ān.<sup>507</sup> It was also narrated that before this verse was revealed, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) used to have protection in the form of his companions guarding him; however, after this, he set away with all his guards attesting that Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) has promised to protect him from his enemies and everything else until he has fulfilled his mission to convey the message of the Qur'ān in its entirety.<sup>508</sup> The prophecy was fulfilled because he was protected, even from death, until he conveyed the entire Qur'ān and only passed away after this.<sup>509</sup>

To ensure the maintenance of this horizontal process, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) was commanded to recite the Qur'ān to others frequently in as he was commanded to do so in several verses such as:

<sup>505</sup> Ibn Hajar al-Asqalanī, *Fath al-Bari bi-Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*, 9:5.

<sup>506</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 17:106

<sup>507</sup> Al-Sa'dī, *Taysīr al-Karīm al-Raḥmān*, 17:106

<sup>508</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, 17:106

<sup>509</sup> *Ibid.*

﴿وَقُرْآنًا فَرَقْنَاهُ لِتَقْرَأَهُ عَلَى النَّاسِ عَلَى مُكْثٍ وَنَزَّلْنَاهُ تَنْزِيلًا﴾

And [it is] a Qur'ān which We have separated [by intervals] that you might recite to the people over a prolonged period. And We have sent it down progressively.<sup>510</sup>

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) was then entrusted with the duty to transmit the Qur'ān, which was signified through two channels: he would recite to his companions, and then they would recite back, solidifying their own recitations.<sup>511</sup> A set of three distinguished principles marked this form. The recitation had to be from memory to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and not alone. Finally, it had to be according to the most precise rules of pronunciation and articulation, proving the verification of an immensely unique and accurate method of transmission.<sup>512</sup>

This would also be done through numerous channels. Often, he would recite immediately to groups of his companions entire *suwar* of the Qur'ān that were revealed to him, such as *Surah al-Saff*.<sup>513</sup> This included teaching and reciting the Qur'ān at gatherings at the mosque, during travel, and sermons and prayers.<sup>514</sup> He also explicitly spent time with individuals from amongst his companions, such as Ibn Mas'ud and Ubayy bin K'ab, to teach and listen to them recite the Qur'ān to him.<sup>515</sup> This led to a growing tradition of those who memorized the Qur'ān during the lifetime of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), with his companions having memorized the entire Qur'ān before the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) passed. There were confirmed reports of at least 21-23 individuals from the companions of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) who had completed the memorization of the Qur'ān during the time of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him).<sup>516</sup> The actual estimated number could have been far greater due to the preservation of sincerity, which has implied that many completed such an act in complete secrecy, not to be known by anyone.<sup>517</sup> In addition, thousands of companions had also memorized parts of the

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<sup>510</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 17:106

<sup>511</sup> Muhammad Hassan Jabal, *Wathāqah Naql Al-Naş al-Qur'ānī* (Egypt: Dar al-Sahabah, 2001), 18-19.

<sup>512</sup> Jabal, *Wathāqah Naql Al-Naş al-Qur'ānī*, 19.

<sup>513</sup> Al-Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmi' al-Kabīr (Sunan al-Tirmidhī)* Ḥadīth no. 3309

<sup>514</sup> Jabal, *Wathāqah Naql Al-Naş al-Qur'ānī*, 76.

<sup>515</sup> Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Ḥadīth no. 5049 and 4960.

<sup>516</sup> Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, 1:222.

<sup>517</sup> Abdullah ibn al-Mubarak, *Softening the Heart: Kitāb Az-Zuhd Wa'r-Raqā'iq*, ed. Shoaib Shah, Salim Azhari, and Amanda Morris, trans. Aisha Bewley (Turath Publishing, 2022), 45.

Qur'ān, and if put together, equalled complete recitation of the Qur'ān during the life of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him).<sup>518</sup> Due to this, it has been stated that the mass delivery and verification of the Qur'ān, even just through a specific oral means, during the lifetime of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), was said to reach a level of *tawātur*, defined by the concordant transmission of a text through a large number of confirmed narrators or memorizers, thus deeming their transmission to be precise without the presence of any doubt.<sup>519</sup>

In addition to the oral means of preservation, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) also undertook the responsibility to commence a written transmission of the Qur'ān.<sup>520</sup> The notion of gathering or compiling and writing the Qur'ān has its roots in the Qur'ān through two means. First, the Qur'ān refers to and gives importance to the compilation of the Qur'ān.

﴿إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا جَمْعَهُ وَقُرْآنَهُ﴾

Indeed, upon Us is its collection and its recitation.<sup>521</sup>

Additionally, the reference of the Qur'ān itself in referring to a 'book' has been used as evidence by many scholars that its written compilation into a book or *muṣḥaf* was given importance from the earliest times.<sup>522</sup> The very opening of the second *surah*, refers to the Qur'ān as a book as it states:

﴿ذَلِكَ الْكِتَابُ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهِ هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ﴾

This is the Book about which there is no doubt, a guidance for those conscious of Allāh.<sup>523</sup>

The reference to a book is also connected with the notion of certainty through the absence of doubt in that verse.

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) then instructed his scribes to write down the verses of the Qur'ān on various materials, including bones, clay, and

<sup>518</sup> Muḥammad Zāhid ibn al-Ḥasan Kawtharī, *Maqālāt al-Kawtharī* (al-Maktabah al-Azharīyah lil-Turāth, 1994), 25.

<sup>519</sup> Jabal, *Wathāqah Naql Al-Naṣ al-Qur'ānī*, 90.

<sup>520</sup> Ibn Hajar al-Asqalanī, *Fath al-Bari bi-Sharh Sahih al-Bukhari*, 9:11.

<sup>521</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 75:17.

<sup>522</sup> Martin Nguyen, *Sufi Master and Qur'an Scholar: Ab Ul-Qasim al-Qushayr i and the Lata'if al-Isharat*, Qur'anic Studies Series (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>523</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 75:17.

animal skins.<sup>524</sup> The scribes of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) themselves counted for about 43 or more of his companions, each with distinct roles.<sup>525</sup> From the earliest times, during the Meccan period, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) commanded scribes from amongst his companions to write down and record all that was revealed to him.<sup>526</sup> Although society relied primarily on an oral-based system of transmission, some were literate and studied languages.<sup>527</sup> During the Meccan period, some of the most well-known scribes of the Qur’ān included ‘Abdullāh ibn S‘ad, Ḥanzalah ibn al-Rabī‘, and Shuraḥbīl ibn Ḥasanah.<sup>528</sup> Thus, the Meccan period ensured that the Qur’ān was transmitted not just orally but through a reliable means through the scribes, simultaneously with the revelation of verses.<sup>529</sup>

The Medinan period saw an extension of this excellent documentation, especially as literacy rates grew amongst the Arabs.<sup>530</sup> The most prominent scribes during this period included Zayd ibn Thābit, ‘Uthmān, and Ubayy ibn Ka‘b.<sup>531</sup> There was a detailed, reliable, and precise process of writing down and compiling the Qur’ān during the time of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), much before the first official compilation of Abu Bakr during his caliphate.<sup>532</sup> The entire process of writing and gathering was also frequently reviewed by the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) himself, ensuring the accuracy of such a task. This was done through the companions reciting directly to the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) what they had written, and if anything were erroneous or missing, he would fix it.<sup>533</sup> Thus, it was established to be highly probable, or almost certain, that the entire Qur’ān was written, although not gathered in a single compilation, during the time of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him).<sup>534</sup> Several notable scholars, including Ibn Ḥajar, ‘Izz al-Dīn ibn ‘Abd al-Salām, al-Qaṣṭalānī, and al-Suyūṭī have concluded that the Qur’ān in its entirety was transcribed during the time of the Prophet (peace and

<sup>524</sup> Jabal, *Wathāqah Naql Al-Naṣ al-Qur’ānī*, 88.

<sup>525</sup> Ghānim Qaddūrī Ḥamad, *Rasm al-Muṣḥaf, Dirāsah Lughawīyah Tārīkhīyah*, 1st ed. (Baghdād: al-Lajnah al-Waṭanīyah, 1982), 78.

<sup>526</sup> Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Ḥadīth no. 3004.

<sup>527</sup> Ḥamad, *Rasm al-Muṣḥaf*, 117.

<sup>528</sup> Jabal, *Wathāqah Naql Al-Naṣ al-Qur’ānī*, 161.

<sup>529</sup> Al-Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmi‘ al-Kabīr (Sunan al-Tirmidhī)*, Ḥadīth no. 3086

<sup>530</sup> Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Ibn Ḥanbal and ‘Alī ibn ‘Abd al-Malik Muttaqī, *Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal* (Bayrūt: Al-Maktab al-Islāmī lil-bibā’ah wa-al-nashr, 1969), Ḥadīth no. 2216.

<sup>531</sup> Jabal, *Wathāqah Naql Al-Naṣ al-Qur’ānī*, 165.

<sup>532</sup> Al-Zarkaṣī, *al-Burhān fī ‘Ulūm al-Qur’ān*, 1:238.

<sup>533</sup> Jabal, *Wathāqah Naql Al-Naṣ al-Qur’ānī*, 169.

<sup>534</sup> Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Ḥadīth no. 4986.

blessings be upon him), thereby guaranteeing its preservation from the earliest of times.<sup>535</sup>

After the Prophet's (peace and blessings be upon him) passing, this horizontal process continued through the endless work of his companions. They continued his legacy by developing small schools to teach the Qur'ān, establishing the legacy of the memorizers and records, who numbered in thousands.<sup>536</sup> This led to a diverse and flourishing community of different backgrounds, ages, and cultures, all working together to preserve the Qur'ān. The subsequent collection of the Qur'ān by Abu Bakr (RA) after the events of the battle of Yamāmah, along with the unification of the Qur'ān upon one script during the time of Uthman (RA), has been documented thoroughly to alleviate any hesitations about the preservation of the Qur'ān. Some scholars, like al-Dhahabī, have successfully classified over 18 generations going back to the time of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) in establishing the documented preservation of the Qur'ān through over 700 experts.<sup>537</sup> This remarkable preservation has been alluded to in the following verse:

﴿بَلْ هُوَ آيَاتٌ بَيِّنَاتٌ فِي صُدُورِ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ ۚ وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَّا الظَّالِمُونَ﴾

Instead, it [i.e., the Qur'ān] is distinct verses [preserved] within the breasts of those who have been given knowledge. And none reject Our verses except the wrongdoers.<sup>538</sup>

It is through this that the perfection of the preservation is guaranteed. Al-Razī, however, wisely questions if the protection and preservation of the Qur'ān was guaranteed by Allāh (Glorified and Exalted), then why did the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and the companions work tirelessly to ensure its compilation and transmission in the most perfect of manners. He succinctly answers his own question by explaining that although Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) is preserving it, he has, by extension, given the responsibility to the companions to convey and preserve

<sup>535</sup> Al-Suyūfī, *Al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, 2:387.

<sup>536</sup> Muḥammad ibn al-Ṭayyib Bāqillānī, *Intiṣār li al-Qur'ān* (Bayrūt: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 2004), 152.

<sup>537</sup> Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Dhahabī, *Ma'Rifa al-Qurrā' al-Kibār 'alā al-Ṭabaqāt Wa-al-a'ṣār* (Miṣr: Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadīthah, 1969), 1:24.

<sup>538</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 29:49.

the text through their efforts.<sup>539</sup> Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) motivated or prompted them for this great task.

Al-Zamaksharī compares this with the transmission of previous divine texts in that God did not guarantee their preservation but instead gave that task specifically to those of knowledge, including the *rabbāniyyūn* (priests) and *aḥbār* (rabbis).<sup>540</sup> However, This task failed and led to the corruption of the previous divine books, thereby ensuring that the final revelation, the Qur’ān, was to be preserved until the end of times.<sup>541</sup> Just as Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) preserved the religion and allowed it to spread tremendously, He preserved the final book, ensuring its safety and protection from any corruption.<sup>542</sup> Al-Qurtobī epitomizes this through a very relevant example as he presents a verified narration of an encounter between a then-Jewish man and the caliph Ma’mūn. The man attended a gathering of the knowledge in which the caliph invited him to Islam; however, he refused, citing his adherence to the religion of his forefathers. One year later, however, he returned to the caliph after converting to Islam and was convinced of its truth. When questioned as to what motivated him, he explained that he had taken copies of the Torah and, after making minor additions and deletions, successfully sold them at a *kanīsa* (synagogue) without anyone noticing the changes. He then did the same with copies of the Gospel. However, when he tried this with the Qur’ān, it was caught immediately and unanimously rejected by everyone he encountered. He thus affirmed the remarkable nature of the Qur’ān through its preservation and accepted it as his faith.<sup>543</sup> The extent of this is remarkable as centuries later, even the youngest children who have memorized the Qur’ān can correct the most experienced reciters if they make a mistake.

Al-Razī skillfully likens this notion to the city surrounded and protected by walls. If any of the walls crack, the integrity of the city will be compromised, and its protection will not be possible. Similarly, any deficiency in the protection of the Qur’ān will be evident through non-existent cracks, accentuated in the following verse:

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<sup>539</sup> Al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 19:123.

<sup>540</sup> Al-Zamaksharī, *Tafsīr Al-Kashshāf*, 5:44.

<sup>541</sup> ‘Abdur-Rahmaan bin Ahmad Ibn Rajab, *Rawa’i al-Tafsīr* (Riyāḍ: Dar al-Asima, 2001), 1:603.

<sup>542</sup> Ibn Rajab, *Rawa’i al-Tafsīr*, 1:603.

<sup>543</sup> Al-Qurtubī, *Al-Jāmi’ li-Aḥkam al-Qur’ān*, 6.

﴿بَلْ هُوَ آيَاتٌ بَيِّنَاتٌ فِي صُدُورِ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ ۚ وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَّا الظَّالِمُونَ﴾

Rather, it [i.e., the Qur'ān] is distinct verses [preserved] within the breasts of those who have been given knowledge. And none reject Our verses except the wrongdoers.<sup>544</sup>

The absence of any contradictions or errors in the Qur'ān, then, is a testament to its remarkable nature and perfect protection and preservation. Today, Muslims worldwide effortlessly recite and adhere to a single unified Qur'ān despite their cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and social differences. It remains the one trustworthy source of billions worldwide, perfectly preserved in its original language, understood, acted upon, internalized, and lived, all towards the establishment of *tawhīd*, the unified worship of One true God.

The remarkable nature of the Qur'ān can only be subjected to limited possibilities regarding its authorship. If Prophet Muḥammad (peace and blessings be upon him) did not compose it himself, nor was any human able to and has been able to produce something like it. Its claim to be divine revelation must, at the very least, be considered with thought and attention. This is without even referring to the astounding knowledge it possesses that no individual could conjure over fourteen centuries ago. Adding to these characteristics are the numerous predictions of the Qur'ān spanning decades that have proved to be accurate, with many predictions remaining for the future. The extraordinary ability to retain and memorize the Qur'ān by millions of adults and children of all ages, races, languages, and backgrounds has also led to its remarkable preservation. The language of Arabic itself has remained unchanged, preserved right down to every detailed sound, accent, and meaning, thereby guaranteeing the preservation of the Qur'ān.

The *i'jāz* of the Qur'ān has been established through the central tenets of its literary miracle, its challenge to produce something like it, the prophecies that it contains, and its remarkable preservation. These tenets together establish the first component of certitude in the Qur'ān. It is precisely due to this that the Qur'ān was referred to as certainty itself and a primary source of it. It establishes not just the

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<sup>544</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 29:49.

miraculous nature of the book but points to the supreme nature of the One that revealed it.

This is also why it is considered one of the greatest miracles. While every prophet was said to have been sent to deliver a message, they were also provided with a miracle as proof of the truth of their claim to be divinely inspired.<sup>545</sup> The unique nature of the Qur'ān makes it both a miracle and a message.<sup>546</sup> It is meant to be the final revelation, thus accessible to all and perfectly preserved, as an everlasting sign of a supreme book, sent by a supreme God, to the best of creation, by the best of the angels.

#### **4.4.5 Responding to Moral Doubts Through the *I'jāz* of the Qur'ān**

Although general, the first component of *i'jāz* towards responding to doubt can also be explicitly connected to moral and social concerns as sources of religious doubt. If it is established that this text is divine through its *i'jāz*, then all its moral rules, laws, commands and prohibitions would also be divine and perfect in how they address the creation. Although it may seem overly simplistic, its reasoning is compelling. There is an engrained notion that religion is a precondition for morality in almost every society.<sup>547</sup> The idea that morality is based upon an idealistic secular ideology of the world is only found amongst specific minorities, even in Western liberal societies such as America.<sup>548</sup>

Although the Qur'ān does not contain specific details about Islamic jurisprudence and ritualistic practice, it does maintain great value and importance on universal morality.<sup>549</sup> It establishes moral values pertaining to almost all aspects of life, including being kind to parents, children, and women, honesty in business and dealings, being a dutiful member of society, and even preserving and protecting the environment

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<sup>545</sup> Ali Qazanfari, Abdullah Mir Ahmadi, and Zahra Modarresi Rad, 'Analysis of Al-Manar's View on the Miracles of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH)', *International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding* 8, no. 10 (26 October 2021): 397–408, 403.

<sup>546</sup> Qazanfari, Mir Ahmadi, and Rad, 'Analysis of Al-Manar's View, 405.

<sup>547</sup> Ali Ahmed and Mats Hammarstedt, 'The Effect of Subtle Religious Representations on Cooperation', *International Journal of Social Economics* 38, no. 11 (1 January 2011): 900–910, 900.

<sup>548</sup> Ahmed and Mats Hammarstedt, 'The Effect of Subtle Religious Representations,' 900.

<sup>549</sup> Saifullah Bhutto, Abdul Rehman Kaloi, and Hameedullah Bhutto, 'The Holy Qur'ān: A Guiding Source of Morality and Ethics', *Habibia Islamicus (The International Journal of Arabic and Islamic Research)* 4, no. 1 (10 June 2020): 9–14, 9.

and nature surrounding us. It is also a message not specifically for Muslims only but applies to all of humanity, including the creation of *jinn*, as it proclaims:

﴿إِنَّ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِلْعَالَمِينَ﴾

Surely this 'Quran' is only a reminder to the whole world—<sup>550</sup>

The *i'jāz* of the Qur'ān firmly establishes the moral authority of the Qur'ān. It allows for an objective source of morality and ensures that all its rules and laws have been preserved through the Qur'ān in the most perfect of manners. Its lack of errors and contradictions, along with its miraculous literary nature, establish it as a distinguished source. Its inimitable nature also makes it a unique moral authority unmatched throughout history. It is a singular source of all that is good and warns against all evil. Its authority is not a man or individual but the Supremely knowledgeable, just, fair, wise, and omnipotent Being to whom all authority belongs.

The moral authority addressing mankind in the Qur'ān is the Creator, Allāh (Glorified and Exalted). This is why the Qur'ān takes an unwavering position in asserting itself as a moral source. The root of this construct is found in the verse:

﴿إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ  
يُعْشِي اللَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ يَطْلُبُهُ حَثِيثًا وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ وَالنُّجُومَ مُسَخَّرَاتٍ بِأَمْرِهِ ۗ أَلَا لَهُ  
الْحَلْقُ وَالْأَمْرُ ۗ تَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ﴾

Indeed, your Lord is Allāh, who created the heavens and earth in six days and then established Himself above the Throne. He covers the night with the day, [another night] chasing it rapidly; and [He created] the sun, the moon, and the stars, subjected by His command. Unquestionably, His is the creation and the command; blessed is Allāh, Lord of the worlds.<sup>551</sup>

The above verse extends the first component in linking the role of the Creator as a moral authority while also linking certainty with certitude. If the Creator is established through His speech, reflected through the *i'jāz*, then the right of command also belongs to Him alone. Since we are aware of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) as the Creator, we must obey His command, going from certainty (knowing the maker) to certitude

<sup>550</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 81:27

<sup>551</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 7:54

(obeying the maker through actions and words). This is the relationship that it necessitates.<sup>552</sup>

This is also why the subjective opinions humans, including Muslims, are not considered when the Qur’ān establishes moral laws or rules:

﴿وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَلَا مُؤْمِنَةٍ إِذَا قَضَى اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَمْرًا أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِمْ ۗ وَمَنْ يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا مُبِينًا﴾

It is not for a believing man or a believing woman, when Allāh and His Messenger have decided a matter, that they should [thereafter] have any choice about their affair. And whoever disobeys Allāh and His Messenger has certainly strayed into clear error.<sup>553</sup>

A Muslim is not supposed to have any doubts, let alone opinions, about morality when it has been established for them through the Qur’ān and, by extension, the *sunnah* of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him). If the Qur’ān then, for example, establishes wine or intoxicants to be impermissible and hunting and fishing to be permissible and moral through specific contexts, it is not for the Muslims to think otherwise based on their subjective views or feelings. This notion, however, is not negatively authoritative but rather positively liberating. This is because the source of morality is the Allāh (Glorified and Exalted), the Creator, who knows what is best for the creation and thus establishes rules and laws through mercy and justice. This is why the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) described Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) as being “more merciful to His servants than a mother is to her child.”<sup>554</sup>

The role of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) further emphasizes this relationship between *i’jāz and* morality, as he was more than just the medium through which the Qur’ān was related. His character was of the highest moral standard, being an example to all of creation as he is commended in the following verse:

﴿وَإِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ﴾

And indeed, you are of a great moral character.<sup>555</sup>

<sup>552</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm*, 7:54.

<sup>553</sup> *Al-Qur’ān*, 33:36.

<sup>554</sup> Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Ḥadīth no. 5999.

<sup>555</sup> *Al-Qur’ān*, 68:4

The source of this exemplary moral excellence was indeed the Qur'ān, as his character was defined as a personification of the teachings of the Qur'ān.<sup>556</sup> Testaments of his high moral character have been defined over the centuries, historically, with extraordinarily little opposition. This has been established through his status as one of the most honest and trustworthy men in Mecca, leadership, readiness to undergo physical and mental persecutions, and fundamental integrity.<sup>557</sup>

Finally, many of the moral objections of Muslims that harboured doubt in the preceding studies were either about culture and not religious teachings or uncertainty as to what the Qur'ān indeed claims. Suppose one were to examine its *i'jāz*, internalize it, and develop certainty and certitude based upon it. In that case, any moral objections would likely be clarified, and those that remain could be re-examined through a lens of certitude.

Remarkably, the Qur'ān establishes the moral sources of humanity through some of the same components of certitude, such as the *'aql* (reason) and the *fiṭrah*. The basic innate constitution of human beings is evident through the presence of shared ethics and moral principles in society, along with intellectual reasoning, which allows the use of the mind to derive moral and ethical decisions.<sup>558</sup> However, these are always subservient to divine revelation and will never contradict if sound.<sup>559</sup> The role of the *'aql* and *fiṭrah* is to derive morality from the divine source of the Qur'ān and not create its own. If one doubts the source and lacks the *fiṭrah* or reasoning, they may arrive at their subjective view of morality. The miracle of the Qur'ān then establishes the first component of certitude. It works towards eradicating any moral doubts by asserting Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) as the supreme lawmaker that, from His Mercy and Wisdom, deems what is moral and what is not for all His creation. Through all its facets, the *i'jāz* of the Qur'ān is simply proof of that notion.

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<sup>556</sup> Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Saḥīḥ Muslim*, Ḥadīth no. 746.

<sup>557</sup> W. Montgomery Watt, *Muḥammad at Mecca* (Oxford University Press, 1953), 39.

<sup>558</sup> Mohammed Ali Al-Bar and Hassan Chamsi-Pasha, 'The Sources of Common Principles of Morality and Ethics in Islam,' in *Contemporary Bioethics: Islamic Perspectives*, (Springer, 2015), 49.

<sup>559</sup> Al-Bar and Chamsi-Pasha, 'The Sources of Common Principles of Morality and Ethics in Islam,' 49.

#### 4.5 THE SECOND COMPONENT OF CERTITUDE: *AL-TADABBUR* (REFLECTION)

The purpose of the revelation of the Qur’ān extends far beyond its recitation alone as it reminds us that:

﴿كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ﴾

A Book We have sent down to you, Blessed, that they may ponder over its *āyāt* (Verses, signs) and that men endowed with intellects would remind themselves.<sup>560</sup>

This verse immediately proves that the meanings of the Qur’ān must be known and, beyond that, reflected upon.<sup>561</sup> Some verses invoke our sense of reflection, encouraging us to ponder the natural world and our physical environments. These are alluded to as signs, along with the verses that express them, for humanity in the certainty of the Qur’ān and Islam by extension. A compelling exemplification of this notion can be seen in the Prophet’s (peace and blessings be upon him) reflection on the verse:

﴿إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ﴾

Indeed, the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those of understanding.<sup>562</sup>

It was transmitted that the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) spent an entire night praying, not just reciting but reflecting upon this specific verse of the Qur’ān until his beard, clothes, and ground under him were drenched. When the great companion Bilal (may Allah be pleased with him) inquired about the source of this emotion, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) replied,

Should I not be a grateful servant? A verse has been revealed to me tonight and woe to one that reads it without reflecting: “Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those of understanding.”<sup>563</sup>

<sup>560</sup> *Al-Qur’ān*, 38:29

<sup>561</sup> *Al-Qurṭubī, Al-Jāmi‘ li-Aḥkam al-Qur’ān*, 38:29.

<sup>562</sup> *Al-Qur’ān*, 3:190

<sup>563</sup> Muḥammad Ibn-Aḥmad Ibn-Ḥibbān al-Bustī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn-Ḥibbān bi-Tartīb ibn-Balabān*, (Bairūt: Mu’assasat ar-Risāla, 2021). Ḥadīth no. 620.

It is a call to reflect upon signs of the Qur’ān that reflect the physical signs in the created world.

The term analysis of certainty and certitude revealed three structural verses that serve as the basis for this component.

﴿وَكَذَلِكَ نُرِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ مَلَكُوتَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلِيَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُوقِنِينَ﴾

And thus did We show Abraham the realm of the heavens and the earth that he would be among the **certain** [in faith].<sup>564</sup>

﴿وَفِي الْأَرْضِ آيَاتٌ لِلْمُوقِنِينَ﴾

And on the earth are signs for the **certain** [in faith].<sup>565</sup>

﴿اللَّهُ الَّذِي رَفَعَ السَّمَاوَاتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا ۚ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ۗ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ ۗ كُلٌّ يَجْرِي لِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ۗ يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ يُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ بِلِقَاءِ رَبِّكُمْ تُوقِنُونَ﴾

It is Allāh who erected the heavens without pillars that you [can] see; then He established Himself above the Throne and made subject the sun and the moon, each running [its course] for a specified term. He arranges [each] matter; He details the signs that you may, of the meeting with your Lord, be **certain**.<sup>566</sup>

Each verse reflects upon a substructure of this component. The first verse allows for linking the physical world to seek or establish the metaphysical Creator. The second verse establishes proofs of certitude through providence, and then the third through movements. Each will be analyzed in its own subsection, thereby solidifying the third component of certitude in its entirety.

<sup>564</sup> *Al-Qur’ān*, 45:20.

<sup>565</sup> *Al-Qur’ān*, 51:20

<sup>566</sup> *Al-Qur’ān*, 69:51.

#### 4.5.1 Linking the Physical and the Metaphysical

The second component of certitude is established by reflecting upon the verses and connections between the natural, physical world and the metaphysical creator. Prophet Ibrahīm (peace be upon him) was shown the physical world, and he reflected upon it to achieve this link.

﴿وَكَذَلِكَ نُرِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ مَلَكُوتَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلِيَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُوقِنِينَ﴾

And thus did We show Abraham the realm of the heavens and the earth that he would be among the **certain** [in faith].<sup>567</sup>

Al-Ṭabarī relates that in this verse, the realm of the heavens refers to the sun, moon, and stars, while the realm of the earth refers to the mountains, lakes, trees, and every creature on earth.<sup>568</sup> The method of the Qur'ān is to use the physical reality of this world to establish certitude about the unseen reality.<sup>569</sup> If the individual's heart and intellect are clear of doubts and desires, this will result in the achievement of certitude through reflecting upon these signs.<sup>570</sup> This is also reflected in verse:

﴿وَفِي خَلْقِكُمْ وَمَا يَبُثُّ مِنْ دَابَّةٍ آيَاتٌ لِقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ﴾

And in the creation of yourselves and what He disperses of moving creatures are signs for people who are certain [in faith].<sup>571</sup>

This is a general verse that links the creation of mankind in the physical world as a sign for the metaphysical Creator. A deeper reflection will extend this to be applicable to everything around us in the physical world as it states:

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<sup>567</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 45:20.

<sup>568</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 45:20.

<sup>569</sup> Wafā' bint 'Abdullāh al-Z'āfi, *Al-Yaqīn Fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Al-Riyāḍ: Dar al-Ḥaḍārah, 2001), 250.

<sup>570</sup> Al-Z'āfi, *Al-Yaqīn Fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, 250.

<sup>571</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 45:4

﴿إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفُلْكِ الَّتِي تَجْرِي فِي  
الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ مَاءٍ فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا  
وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيَّاحِ وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ  
لآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ﴾

Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of the night and the day, and the [great] ships which sail through the sea with that which benefits people, and what Allāh has sent down from the heavens of rain, giving life thereby to the earth after its lifelessness and dispersing therein every [kind of] moving creature, and [His] directing of the winds and the clouds controlled between the heaven and earth are signs for a people who use reason.<sup>572</sup>

This verse reveals the connection or how to achieve certitude by linking the physical and metaphysical concepts, using reflection and deep consideration. The way to certitude and to know one's Creator, Allāh (Glorified and Exalted), is through His *āyāt*, which are of two types. The first is his revelation as a sign and miracle, as identified in the discussion of the first component of certitude. The second is through the *āyāt* of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) being the physically created signs of God.<sup>573</sup>

Just as it was said that each verse of the Qur'ān represents a *āyah* or sign in itself, the same can be expressed for God's creation, each representing the nature of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) reflected through His perfect names and attributes.<sup>574</sup> The sun, for example, is a sign of the perfect knowledge and determination of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted). If it were to be moved just slightly closer or further from Earth, it would result in its inevitable destruction.<sup>575</sup>

﴿وَالشَّمْسُ تَجْرِي لِمُسْتَقَرٍّ لَهَا ۚ ذَلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ﴾

And the sun runs [on course] toward its stopping point. That is the determination of the Exalted in Might, the Knowing.<sup>576</sup>

<sup>572</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 2:164

<sup>573</sup> Al-'Uthaimīn et al., *Explanation of the Three Fundamental Principles of Islaam*, 47.

<sup>574</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>575</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>576</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 36:38

It is among the signs of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted), with all his might, due to its immense size in our solar system and the benefit of warmth and heat it brings for humanity.<sup>577</sup>

Ibn al-Qayyim further reflects on the marvel of the created world with its perfect composition and organization, signifying the perfect ability of a metaphysical God. He expresses in poignant words that must be left untouched comparing the physical world to a perfectly constructed house in that,

The sky is its roof, raised above the world; the ground is its floor, mattresses, and carpets; well-adapted for the convenience of the dwellers; the sun and the moon are glowing lights above it; the stars are sparkling over it like decorative lamps, signals for the traveller around this world. The minerals and gems stored beneath it are like treasures and hoards, or like well-stuffed storages prepared for any who needs them; the plants in their variety and abundance fulfill man's requirements, the animals in their diversity offer him so many services...<sup>578</sup>

An in-depth examination of just one specific organ of man provides details regarding the methodology of the Qur'ān in establishing this link. Al-Ṭabarī cites the verse about the creation of the eyes as Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) reminds us:

﴿أَلَمْ نَجْعَلْ لَهُ عَيْنَيْنِ﴾

Have We not made for him two eyes?<sup>579</sup>

The purpose of fashioning humans with eyes is for them to observe the evidence of their Creator.<sup>580</sup> Al-Sa'dī adds that they are purposed for beauty and to see beauty from the blessings of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted).<sup>581</sup> Ibn Kathir links this verse back to the Creator in a more authoritative manner. We are allowed to see what is made permissible and impermissible, thereby using our eyes only in the obedience of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted).<sup>582</sup>

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<sup>577</sup> Al-'Uṭhaimīn et al., *Explanation of the Three Fundamental Principles of Islaam*, 47.

<sup>578</sup> Anas Abdul-Hameed Al-Qoz, *Men & The Universe: Reflections of Ibn Al-Qayyim* (Dar-us-Salam Publications, 2000), 253.

<sup>579</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 90:8.

<sup>580</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 90:8.

<sup>581</sup> Al-Sa'dī, *Taysīr al-Karīm al-Raḥmān*, 90:8.

<sup>582</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, 90:8.

The eye, as an organ, has then been placed at the most precise and beneficial point in the head. It has seven layers, each serving a distinct purpose.<sup>583</sup> It consists of about 140 receptors for light, consisting of 7 million cones and 140 million rods, that form the retina, which comprises two distinct spheres with ten layers.<sup>584</sup> It is then an optimal structure explicitly designed to improve images and their sharpness, with photoreceptors at the outermost boundary of the eye signifying that they are established in the most perfect ways.<sup>585</sup> To some, this is a primary example of what is known as an irreducibly complex system, a system that is made up of several complex, interrelated parts working together in perfection; thereby, if any one part were to be removed, it would result in the entire system ceasing to function.<sup>586</sup> Darwin himself confessed that it would be somewhat absurd to conclude or propose that the human eye evolved in this way through random mutations and natural selection, referring to the immense complexities of the nature of the eye.<sup>587</sup> While some biologists maintain that it is possible for the eye to simply have evolved to what we see today, others still consider it implausible if explained only through undirected evolution.<sup>588</sup>

The reference to such wonders of creation is set with purposes, amongst them, to recognize the might and power of the initial Creator.<sup>589</sup> It incorporates a reflection upon the beneficial nature of all that is created in serving a specific purpose, often for humanity.<sup>590</sup> The harmonious nature of the heavens and earth and all within them extends this notion from reflection to ponder deeper connections, which is of the wisdom and purposes of such verses in the Qur'ān itself.<sup>591</sup> The religious significance of the natural world alluded to in the Qur'ān transcends its material reality, serving as a code needed to be deciphered or understood, returning to an immaterial source.<sup>592</sup> This

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<sup>583</sup> Al-Qoz, *Men & The Universe: Reflections of Ibn Al-Qayyem*, 12.

<sup>584</sup> Al-Qoz, *Men & The Universe: Reflections of Ibn Al-Qayyem*, 12.

<sup>585</sup> A. M. Labin and E. N. Ribak, 'Retinal Glial Cells Enhance Human Vision Acuity', *Physical Review Letters* 104, no. 15 (16 April 2010), 4.

<sup>586</sup> Michael J. Behe, *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*, 10th Anniversary ed. edition (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006), 225.

<sup>587</sup> Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. (Ezreads Publications, LLC, 2009), 277.

<sup>588</sup> Latha Christie, *Beyond the Boundaries of Science: Exploring the Cosmic Story* (Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2019), 169.

<sup>589</sup> Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāhī, *Tadabbur-e-Qur'ān: Pondering over the Qur'ān* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2007), 410.

<sup>590</sup> Iṣlāhī, *Tadabbur-e-Qur'ān*, 410.

<sup>591</sup> Iṣlāhī, *Tadabbur-e-Qur'ān*, 410.

<sup>592</sup> Shabbir Akhtar. *The Qur'ān and the Secular Mind: A Philosophy of Islam*. Routledge, 217.

recurring theme of the marvel of creation is meant to reflect on the limitations of human knowledge and thus seek connections between the physical and the metaphysical.<sup>593</sup>

#### 4.5.2 Proof Through Providence

The second verse reflects specifically on what was placed on earth as the Qur'ān maintains:

﴿وَفِي الْأَرْضِ آيَاتٌ لِلْمُوقِنِينَ﴾

And on the earth are signs for the **certain** [in faith].<sup>594</sup>

Ibn Rushd explains this as the establishment of the component of providence, which is based on the finality of all things, specifically when pertaining to man.<sup>595</sup> This component is based on the fundamental notion that all things that exist in the natural world seem to be for the convenience of man.<sup>596</sup> It starts with the essential beginning of observing the nature of the universe around us. This not only allows us to see the component of providence but also reflects inwards to our creation, being much lesser of a feat than the heavens and earth, as the Qur'ān says:

﴿أَأَنْتُمْ أَشَدُّ خَلْقًا أَمْ السَّمَاءُ ۚ بَنَاهَا﴾

Are you a more difficult creation or is the heaven? He [i.e., Allāh] constructed it.<sup>597</sup>

Reflecting on the heavens and all that they contain, from the sun, moon, stars, planets, the tilt and axis of the earth, the provisions of the seasons for the benefit of humans, the sunrise and sunset, the day and the night and their perfect regulated alteration, all give way to the establishment of a perfect Creator.<sup>598</sup> It is a means to remove doubts of any type, and perhaps specifically those related to the natural world and the study of it, also known as science, as Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) questions us the following verse:

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<sup>593</sup> Ahmad Dallal, *Islam, Science, and the Challenge of History* (Yale University Press, 2010).

<sup>594</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 51:20

<sup>595</sup> Muḥammad bin Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī Ibn Rushd, *Kitāb Al-Kashf 'an Manāḥij al-Adilla*, ed. Aḥmad Shams al-Dīn (Bairūt: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 2002), 69.

<sup>596</sup> Ibn Rushd, *Kitāb Al-Kashf*, 69.

<sup>597</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 79:27

<sup>598</sup> Al-Qoz, *Men & The Universe: Reflections of Ibn Al-Qayyem*, 179.

﴿ قَالَتْ رُسُلُهُمْ أَفِي اللَّهِ شَكٌّ فَاطِرِ السَّمَاوَاتِ ﴾

Their messengers said, "Can there be doubt about Allāh, Creator of the heavens and earth?"<sup>599</sup>

The reminder then of the messengers when calling to those that doubt is to connect them to Allāh (Glorified and Exalted), specifically as the creator of the heavens and earth, whose existence is solely dependent on Allāh (Glorified and Exalted).<sup>600</sup> This, then, is evidence for proving the essential basis of certainty to those who doubt, as it links the most obvious physical manifestations of the existence of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted), something that no individual may deny, at least from a perspective of reflection and contemplation.<sup>601</sup> This principle is further expanded upon when reflecting on verses such as:

﴿ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا مِنْهُ ۚ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ  
يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴾

And He has subjected to you whatever is in the heavens and on the earth - all from Him. Indeed in, that are signs for a people who give thought.<sup>602</sup>

In this verse, everything is said to be subjugated on earth for the benefit or use of mankind. Similarly, a more specific set of verses reflects the same idea:

﴿ وَالْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ دَحَاهَا ﴾

And after that He spread the earth.

﴿ أَخْرَجَ مِنْهَا مَاءَهَا وَمَرْعَاهَا ﴾

He extracted from it its water and its pasture,

﴿ وَالْجِبَالَ أَرْسَاهَا ﴾

And the mountains He set firmly

﴿ مَتَاعًا لَكُمْ وَلِأَنْعَامِكُمْ ﴾

As enjoyment [i.e., provision] for you and your grazing livestock.<sup>603</sup>

<sup>599</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 14:10

<sup>600</sup> *Al-Sa'dī, Taysīr al-Karīm al-Rahmān*, 14:10.

<sup>601</sup> *Al-Qurtubī, Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkam al-Qur'ān*, 14:10.

<sup>602</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 45:13

<sup>603</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 79:30-33

The convenience to the servitude for men that is necessary in its nature is set by the maker purposely willing it, as its occurrence by chance is simply impossible.<sup>604</sup> Animals, for example, with some having significant size advantages over humans, have still been subservient to humans without defying their control. Ibn Rushd's reflection on this component is epitomized by his examination of the human body. Through his study and expertise in medicine, he concludes that every organ and part of the human body is fitted to serve its entire physical composition.<sup>605</sup> Every physical, biological component of the body is disposed to the body's function as a whole. This component is necessary to examine and reflect upon the nature of existing objects and their utilities in detail.<sup>606</sup>

As he proceeds, however, he takes a step back to take a step forward. Ibn Rushd brilliantly cites that there are two ways to engage in *tadabbur* to achieve certitude. The first is simply understanding that our existence is created through the discourse above.<sup>607</sup> This is self evident in that we are unable to create anything our selves as the Qur'an confronts:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ ضُرِبَ مَثَلٌ فَاستَمِعُوا لَهُ ۚ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ لَن يَخْلُقُوا  
ذُبَابًا وَلَوْ اجْتَمَعُوا لَهُ ۗ وَإِن يَسْلُبْهُمُ الذُّبَابُ شَيْئًا لَا يَسْتَنْقِذُوهُ مِنْهُ ۗ ضَعُفَ الطَّالِبُ  
وَالْمَطْلُوبُ﴾

O people, an example is presented, so listen to it. Indeed, those you invoke besides Allāh will never create [as much as] a fly, even if they gathered together for it [i.e., that purpose]. And if the fly should steal from them a [tiny] thing, they could not recover it from him. Weak are the pursuer and pursued.<sup>608</sup>

Secondly, the heavens, earth, and everything that is natural are established to be created because they are all entrusted with a specific task. Thus, everything entrusted with a task is shown to be created by something else.<sup>609</sup> The more aware we become of this relationship between how and why things are put together, the more aware we become of our Creator, removing any doubts in between. This is precisely why the Qur'an

<sup>604</sup> Ibn Rushd, *Kitāb Al-Kashf*, 65.

<sup>605</sup> Ibn Rushd, *Kitāb Al-Kashf*, 66.

<sup>606</sup> Ibid.

<sup>607</sup> Taneli Kukkonen, 'Averroes and the Teleological Argument', *Religious Studies* 38, no. 4 (December 2002): 405–28, 407.

<sup>608</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 22:73

<sup>609</sup> Kukkonen, 'Averroes and the Teleological Argument,' 407.

continuously questions us to observe the marvels of creations and their purposes, from the sun, moon, and planets to the camel, bees, and spider, as the poet Labīd ibn Rabī'ah so profoundly expressed:

فَيَا عَجَبًا كَيْفَ يُعْصَى الْإِلَهَ  
 أَمْ كَيْفَ يَجْحَدُهُ الْجَاهِدُ  
 وَفِي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ لَهُ آيَةٌ  
 تَدُلُّ عَلَى أَنَّهُ وَاحِدٌ

Strange it is how God is disobeyed,  
 Or how He is disputed by the *jāhidu* (disputer)  
 And in everything there is a sign  
 To show that He is uniquely One (*Wāhidu*)<sup>610</sup>

#### 4.5.3 Proof Through Movements

The third and final verse that serves as a basis for this component highlights the movements of living things in the natural world:

﴿اللَّهُ الَّذِي رَفَعَ السَّمَاوَاتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا ۖ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ۗ وَسَخَّرَ  
 الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ ۗ كُلٌّ لِّأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ۖ يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ يُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ بِلِقَاءِ  
 رَبِّكُمْ تُوقِنُونَ﴾

It is Allāh who erected the heavens without pillars that you [can] see; then He established Himself above the Throne and made subject the sun and the moon, each running [its course] for a specified term. He arranges [each] matter; He details the signs that you may, of the meeting with your Lord, be **certain**.<sup>611</sup>

The principle that builds this component of certitude is the existence of all living things from non-existence or pre-existence and their subsequent movements.<sup>612</sup> This is signified in another verse of the Qur'ān,

<sup>610</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, 106.

<sup>611</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 69:51.

<sup>612</sup> Ibn Rushd, *Kitāb Al-Kashf*, 65.

﴿أَوَلَمْ يَنْظُرُوا فِي مَلَكُوتِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ وَأَنْ عَسَى أَنْ  
يَكُونَ قَدِ اقْتَرَبَ أَجَلُهُمْ ۖ فَبِأَيِّ حَدِيثٍ بَعْدَهُ يُؤْمِنُونَ﴾

Do they not look into the realm of the heavens and the earth and everything that Allāh has created and [think] that perhaps their appointed time has come near? So in what statement [i.e., message] hereafter will they believe?<sup>613</sup>

This verse reflects upon the existence of all that is natural, organic, and inorganic matter, commanded by providence extending to an indefectible fact seen in the movement of all things, including the universe itself. The universe does not simply move in a random irregular order but rather in a precise, fixed, consistent way reflecting the first mover.

﴿وَالشَّمْسُ تَجْرِي لِمُسْتَقَرٍّ لَهَا ۚ ذَلِكَ تَقْدِيرُ الْعَزِيزِ الْعَلِيمِ﴾

And the sun runs [on course] toward its stopping point. That is the determination of the Exalted in Might, the Knowing.<sup>614</sup>

In contemplating the nature of the celestial bodies and the principles of physics, it can be concluded that this *taqdīr* (determination) stems from the working of an intelligent divine being. Since nature acts and actualizes itself in an intelligent way, without being itself intelligent, it must be inspired by a formal cause or a first mover, being the Creator.<sup>615</sup> If this first principle, or first mover, or creator, did not exist, then no order would exist either.<sup>616</sup> In essence, this is creation. It is represented by the indefectible actuality through which the first mover gives a start to and maintains all movement, keeping all life in the universe in motion.

Ibn Rushd describes this first Mover as the prime mover that is simply indivisible.<sup>617</sup> Although the prime mover sets the first motion in place, the subsequent motions are determined by generating their own more complex motions. The former is a direct cause for all motion, while the first principle produces the latter.<sup>618</sup> Remarkably, this principle extends far beyond the first. While the first allows us to comprehend that

<sup>613</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 7:185

<sup>614</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 36:38

<sup>615</sup> Averroës and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Hawwārī, *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* (Ṣaydā: al-Maktabah al-‘Aṣrīyah, 2005), 185.

<sup>616</sup> Averroës and Hawwārī, *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut*, 185.

<sup>617</sup> Kukkonen, ‘Averroës and the Teleological Argument, 420.

<sup>618</sup> *Ibid.*

the First Maker exists, the second will enable us to see Him as the First Mover. The first tells us that God exists, while the second tells us who He is.

The ones that reject this are addressed in the Qur'ān, specifically being characterised as those that have no knowledge:

﴿وَقَالُوا مَا هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوتُ وَنَحْيَا وَمَا يُهْلِكُنَا إِلَّا الدَّهْرُ وَمَا لَهُم بِذَلِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَظُنُّونَ﴾

And they say, "There is not but our worldly life; we die and live, and nothing destroys us except time." And they have of that no knowledge; they are only assuming.<sup>619</sup>

The reply of those who deny is based upon their rejection of the metaphysical. They assume that there is nothing beyond the physical world and that their death is caused by time. Al-Tabari comments that they assume without any knowledge, and knowledge refers to certainty; therefore, they are uncertain and in doubt.<sup>620</sup> They try to reason then, unsuccessfully, through their question as to why they cannot simply see God as they state:

﴿وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَاءَنَا لَوْلَا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْنَا الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَوْ نَرَى رَبَّنَا لَقَدِ اسْتَكْبَرُوا فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَعَتَوْا عُتُوًّا كَبِيرًا﴾

And those who do not expect the meeting with Us say, "Why were not angels sent down to us, or [why] do we [not] see our Lord?" They have certainly become arrogant within themselves and [become] insolent with great insolence.<sup>621</sup>

This verse refers to them as those who have become arrogant due to their rejection. The proposition that God cannot be seen and, therefore, he cannot exist is reflected from the earliest days through this verse. However, many things in life cannot be seen, and yet we would never doubt their existence, mainly based upon external evidence that forces us to reflect through *tadabbur*. The concept here is the same. The overwhelming nature of the creation of God reflects the creator. The universe's intelligence and complexity are a sign of the First Maker and Mover.<sup>622</sup>

<sup>619</sup> Al-Qur'ān, 45:24

<sup>620</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 45:24.

<sup>621</sup> Al-Qur'ān, 25:21

<sup>622</sup> W. Jay Wood, *God* (London: Routledge, 2014), 29.

Such a reminder reflects the immensely profound yet simple nature of establishing certitude through the signs of creation. One does not need to obtain special training or rigorous philosophical methods. Through a deep reflection internally and then through the external world, we can observe the signs of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) and establish certitude. He has given us all the tools we require, both physical and intellectual, for such a task.

﴿وَاللَّهُ أَخْرَجَكُمْ مِنْ بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ  
وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ ۖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ﴾

And Allāh has extracted you from the wombs of your mothers not knowing a thing, and He made for you hearing and vision and hearts [i.e., intellect] that perhaps you would be grateful.<sup>623</sup>

The preceding verse is an *ayah* in three ways. Firstly, a direct revelation of the Qur’ān indicating its *i’jāz*, as discussed in the first component. Secondly, it substantiates the senses that Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) has provided us with, each one an *ayah*, reflecting the perfect nature of the Creator. Our external senses, the ears to hear and the eyes to see, provide us with an external certainty by observing and reflecting upon the creation in the heavens and earth that surround us. This is then extended to the heart, which is far more than an organ that pumps blood throughout the body. It gives us the ability to internalize what we reflect upon. This is certitude. Then, we are responsible for what we do with these organs, acting upon that certitude for good, as each will testify for or against us on the day of judgment.<sup>624</sup>

#### 4.5.4 The Qur’ān and Scientific Knowledge

This essential concept of observing the signs of the Creator through the natural world has been used to extend a narrative that certitude may be derived through a relationship between scientific knowledge and the content of the Qur’ān. Dr Maurice Bucaille, in 1976, produced one of the first and most influential books on this topic, titled *The Bible, the Qur’ān, and Science*, arguing for scientific miracles in the Qur’ān while pointing

<sup>623</sup> *Al-Qur’ān*, 16:78

<sup>624</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyyah, *Madārij Al-Sālikīn* (al-Qāhirah: dar al-Ḥadith, 2013), 278.

out that the Bible was marred with scientific inaccuracies.<sup>625</sup> Despite the criticism garnered by the book, it remains highly popular and a reference for Muslims around the world.<sup>626</sup>

Western scientists have also been quoted over the years as serving as sources legitimizing the scientific miracles of the Qur'ān. However, their claims have been taken out of context or cited incorrectly. Therefore, upon further examination, it seems that many conclude that there is nothing specifically miraculous about the scientific statements in the Qur'ān.<sup>627</sup> An example of this is the verse of the Qur'ān, alluding to the concept of iron as a substance being sent down.

﴿وَأَنْزَلْنَا الْحَدِيدَ فِيهِ بَأْسٌ شَدِيدٌ وَمَنَافِعُ لِلنَّاسِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ مَن يَنْصُرُهُ وَرُسُلَهُ بِالْغَيْبِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ﴾

And We sent down iron, wherein is great military might and benefits for the people, and so that Allāh may make evident those who support Him and His messengers unseen. Indeed, Allāh is Powerful and Exalted in Might.<sup>628</sup>

The claim substantiates that scientific research has confirmed that iron has been noted to arrive from space, essentially being sent down. The uniqueness of the Qur'ān in establishing this fact has been rejected, citing that centuries before the Qur'ān, ancient Egyptians, Assyrians, and even Babylonians had similar concepts regarding iron being from heaven.<sup>629</sup> Another example discusses the scientific 'miracle' of the Qur'ān about the mountains as having pegs or roots.

﴿أَلَمْ نَجْعَلِ الْأَرْضَ مِهَادًا﴾  
﴿وَالْجِبَالَ أَوْتَادًا﴾

Have We not made the earth a resting place?

And the mountains as stakes? <sup>630</sup>

<sup>625</sup> Stefano Bigliardi, 'Snakes from Staves? Science, Scriptures, and the Supernatural in Maurice Bucaille', *Zygon* 46, no. 4 (2011): 793–805.

<sup>626</sup> Stefano Bigliardi, 'Snakes from Staves? Science, Scriptures, and the Supernatural in Maurice Bucaille', *Zygon* 46, no. 4 (2011): 793–805.

<sup>627</sup> Strange Bedfellows: Western Scholars Play Key Role in Touting 'Science' of the Quran by Daniel Golden Wall Street Journal, January 23, 2002. pg. A.1

<sup>628</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 57:25

<sup>629</sup> N. C. Datta, *The Story of Chemistry* (New York: Universities Press, 2005), 72.

<sup>630</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 78:6-7.

It is evident, however, that this knowledge was already made available in the Old Testament through the ancient Hebrews as it states,

To the roots of the mountains I sank down;  
the earth beneath barred me in forever.  
But you, Lord my God,  
brought my life up from the pit.<sup>631</sup>

The second component of establishing certitude through the Qur'ān should not be limited to an attempt to justify it by agreeing with scientific theories. Attributing the Qur'ān to scientific knowledge of the world and mathematics would be overstepping the bounds, taking it away from its necessary purpose as a method of establishing certitude.<sup>632</sup> This emphasizes the lack of cohesive evidence linking the Qur'ān to modern scientific concepts primarily based on a generalized understanding of specific verses. It does not seem to be the methodology of the Qur'ān to establish certitude through a means like this and, in some ways, limits its scope or takes away from perceived certainty. It may result in a specific danger instead of correlating the enduring wisdom of the Qur'ān with transitory concepts of science in the modern age.<sup>633</sup> This goes against the very nature of the potential establishment of certitude in the Qur'ān in relation to science. The former is a means of attaining certitude, and the latter is inherently uncertain.

#### **4.5.5 Responding to Scientific Doubts Through *Tadabbur***

The second component of certitude established in the Qur'ān is purposely devoid of an inherently protruding scientific form. It is not meant to be mere science, providing a distinct conclusion. Through *tadabbur* of both types of signs, the verses, and the physical world, we can connect the physical to the metaphysical without the limitations of science. Any religious doubts connecting to science then are inherently devoid of this

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<sup>631</sup> Catholic Book Publishing Corp, *St. Joseph New Catholic Bible New Testament* (Catholic Book Publishing, 2019), Jonah. 2:6.

<sup>632</sup> Ibrāhīm ibn Mūsā Shāṭībī and Khālid 'Abd al-Fattāh. Shibl, *Muwāfaqāt*, al-Ṭab'ah 1 (Bayrūt: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1999), 80-81.

<sup>633</sup> Jalees Rehman, 'Searching for Scientific Facts in the Qur'an: Islamization of Knowledge or a New Form of Scientism?', *Islam & Science* 1, no. 2 (1 December 2003): 245–245, 245.

insight. There is, perhaps, then, a connection with what we perceive science to be that forms the basis of these doubts.

In recent years, during times of immense uncertainty, people have been turning to science for certainty, giving rise to a type of fundamentalism expecting science to be certain. This reflects a significant misunderstanding of both terms.<sup>634</sup> Though the uncertainty in science is not necessarily a problem, being unaware of this representation can lead to problems.<sup>635</sup> Uncertainty helps science reach more probable conclusions, allowing it to develop and increase advancements. Hume explained that science is based on induction. Still, inductive reasoning cannot conclude in certainty as it attempts to move from a static or limited set of observations to make conclusions for an unlimited set of observed phenomena beyond records of our memory or testimonies of the self.<sup>636</sup> A more practical example demonstrates this premise. An observer travels to a foreign land to determine the colour of a specific animal and, after an extended period, observes that all cows, for example, are white, thereby leading to the inductive conclusion that all cows are white. This would contradict the existence of black cows, leading to a limited perception of observation and failing to attain certainty, as the possibility of new evidence always exists to undermine the previously held notion.

This is further complicated by perception and the philosophy of observing things.<sup>637</sup> A completely white cat, for example, would be invisible during a heavy snowstorm. However, through empiricism, sensory perception would first be defined as passing light from the object into the eyes, resulting in a visual experience.<sup>638</sup> Descartes' dreaming hypothesis represents precisely this. He presents that it is possible that one may be dreaming at any given moment without the sensory perception to be aware of it.<sup>639</sup> Finally, the scientific process is also complex and non-linear, based on the most accurate evidence available, continuously revised and intertwined through its social context.<sup>640</sup> A significant example of this is the ever-changing nature of our

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<sup>634</sup> Steve Elliott, 'Uncertainty: How It Makes Science Advance' by Kostas Kampourakis and Kevin McCain', *The Quarterly Review of Biology* 95, no. 3 (September 2020): 249–50.

<sup>635</sup> Elliott, 'Uncertainty: How It Makes Science Advance,' 249.

<sup>636</sup> David Hume Edited by Peter Millican, ed., *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 108.

<sup>637</sup> Elliot Sober, 'Empiricism', in *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Science* (Routledge, 2008), 129.

<sup>638</sup> Sober, 'Empiricism', in *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Science*, 129.

<sup>639</sup> Elliott, 'Uncertainty: How It Makes Science Advance,' 10.

<sup>640</sup> Briggs, Charles L., and Daniel C. Hallin. *Making Health Public: How News Coverage Is Remaking Media, Medicine, and Contemporary Life*. London: Routledge, 2016.

scientific knowledge of the COVID-19 virus, including how it spreads, its infection rate, symptoms, and risks, which have all been interpreted in vastly different ways.<sup>641</sup>

A critical limitation of science that is often overlooked is that it deals strictly with the physical natural world that can be observed at some level. This is because the scientific process attempts to discover facts about the world and its laws through observation and reasoning.<sup>642</sup> This means that it is limited to what can be observed, and future observations may alter what was once established through the scientific process.<sup>643</sup> By definition, then, religious miracles, texts, or assertions would be beyond the scope of science, starting with questioning the very existence of God. This is because God, as a transcendent creator, is beyond the means of science as it is inaccessible to empirical investigation.<sup>644</sup> For science, then, to claim any tendencies to inherently justify or postulate a tendency towards the falsity of religion and the establishment of atheism is intellectually contradictory. To conclude, such an assertion, which is unfortunately widespread within the secular intellectual culture of modern science, would be the imposition of an undemonstrated and indemonstrable ideology.<sup>645</sup>

It is inherently meaningful and conducive that science does not produce certainty, as its strength lies in this exact construct. It is dynamic and evolving, which is precisely why it cannot always be accurate or trusted. This is reflected in our perception of science itself. Even in a scientifically advanced society like America, the public's trust or confidence in the accuracy of science has been relatively steady from 1972 to 2012.<sup>646</sup> During this period, between 37% and 43% of individuals indicated that they had great confidence and trust in science.<sup>647</sup> This is precisely why it would not be fitting to attempt to use the framework of science, which is inherently uncertain, to justify a revelation that mandates the requirement and establishment of unwavering

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<sup>641</sup> Julian W. Tang, 'COVID-19: Interpreting Scientific Evidence – Uncertainty, Confusion and Delays', *BMC Infectious Diseases* 20, no. 1 (8 September 2020): 653.

<sup>642</sup> Elliot Sober, 'Empiricism', in *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Science* (Routledge, 2008), 137-138.

<sup>643</sup> Sober, 'Empiricism', in *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Science*, 137.

<sup>644</sup> Brad S. Gregory, 'No Room for God? History, Science, Metaphysics, and the Study of Religion', *History and Theory* 47, no. 4 (2008): 495–519, 500.

<sup>645</sup> Gregory, 'No Room for God? History, Science, Metaphysics, and the Study of Religion,' 500.

<sup>646</sup> Kostas Kampourakis and Kevin McCain, *Uncertainty: How It Makes Science Advance* (Oxford University Press, 2020), 51.

<sup>647</sup> Kampourakis and McCain, *Uncertainty: How It Makes Science Advance*, 51.

certitude. Establishing the certainty of scientific facts through the Qur'ān or the Qur'ān through scientific facts is simply incoherent.

The purpose of this reflection is not to establish specific scientific facts. It is instead to provide a link to the metaphysical creator through the physical world. The uncertain nature of science doesn't negatively correlate with the certain nature of the Qur'ān in any way. Instead, through *tadabbur*, an increased understanding of the physical world that science is so concerned with is established. The Qur'ān, in many ways, promotes the scientific process and encourages us to reflect and examine the nature of the physical world:

﴿ذَلِكَ عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ﴾

That is the Knower of the unseen and the witnessed, the Exalted in  
Might, the Merciful,<sup>648</sup>

﴿الَّذِي أَحْسَنَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقَهُ وَبَدَأَ خَلْقَ الْإِنْسَانِ مِنْ طِينٍ﴾

Who perfected everything which He created and began the creation of  
man from clay.<sup>649</sup>

The perfect and harmonious nature of the physical world also points to a perfect Creator and thus eradicates any hesitations or doubts. *Tadabbur* provides creation with certitude through an increase of faith, removes doubts, and is the key to knowledge and deep awareness.<sup>650</sup>

#### 4.6 THE THIRD COMPONENT OF CERTITUDE: AL-'AQL (REASON)

The third component of certitude was established through the following verses, which complete a sequence of challenges and give profound insight into the connection between the components of certitude in the Qur'ān. This postulation is asserted first by invoking the challenge presented as part of the first component and then through a thought-provoking inquisition, as Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) challenges and questions his creation.

<sup>648</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 32:6

<sup>649</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 32:7.

<sup>650</sup> Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Nāṣir Al-Sa'dī, *Taysīr Al-Karīm al-Raḥmān Fī Tafsīr Kalām al-Mannān* (Riyād: Markaz al-Turāth, 2013), 38:29.

﴿فَلْيَأْتُوا بِحَدِيثٍ مِثْلِهِ إِنْ كَانُوا صَادِقِينَ﴾

Then let them produce a statement like it, if they should be truthful.<sup>651</sup>

﴿أَمْ خُلِقُوا مِنْ غَيْرِ شَيْءٍ أَمْ هُمُ الْخَالِقُونَ﴾

Or were they created by nothing, or were they the creators [of themselves]?<sup>652</sup>

﴿أَمْ خَلَقُوا السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ ۗ بَلْ لَا يُوقِنُونَ﴾

Or did they create the heavens and the earth? Rather, they are not certain.<sup>653</sup>

It begins with a return to the first component regarding the miraculous nature of the Qur'ān. The challenge was presented to produce something like the Qur'ān, but it has not been done yet despite centuries of opposition to the Qur'ān. This verse is followed by a rhetorical question directing humans to use their reason. Al-Ṭabarī comments that the linguistic nature of this verse presents a theme of duality. When the Qur'ān questions if we were created from nothing, it also extends to questions if we were created for nothing.<sup>654</sup> This can be summarized as the origin and purpose of creation.

This component is succinctly different from the second component of certitude in that the former seeks to establish certainty in the creator by reflecting the natural *āyāt* in the creation. In contrast, the latter seeks to establish the actual origin and purpose of creation. Suppose it is composed of the natural order of the universe, and everything in it establishes certainty in the creator. In that case, the extending reflection or logical consequence is to investigate through reason as to its purpose. Such a grand conception should not be based merely on conjecture but through deep reflection based finally upon certainty and leading to certitude. Those who speculate are refuted by the Qur'ān as Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) proclaims:

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<sup>651</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 52:34

<sup>652</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 52:35

<sup>653</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 52:36

<sup>654</sup> Abī Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr Al-Ṭabarī: Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān*, 1st ed. (al-Riyāḍ: Dār 'Ālam al-Kutub, 2003), 52:36.

﴿وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا بَاطِلًا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ ظَنُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ۚ فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ  
كَفَرُوا مِنَ النَّارِ﴾

And We did not create the heaven and the earth and that between them aimlessly (without purpose). That is the assumption of those who disbelieve, so woe to those who disbelieve from the Fire.<sup>655</sup>

The ones that lack certainty rely upon their *ẓann*, the lesser state of doubt, as they reject any purpose while the Qur’ān establishes otherwise in the most opposing sense. If philosophical concerns are leading to doubts amongst Muslims, through a lack of certainty in the existence of the creator with purpose, then the Qur’ān ascertains to eradicate this through an immensely precise and logical postulation inviting all to reflect through *al-‘aql* (reason) and sound logic.

#### 4.6.1 The Origin of Creation

After confirming the inimitable nature of the Qur’ān as established in the first component, a rhetorical inquisition is presented to demonstrate in detail the third component. The subsequent verses appeal to reason and intellect through sound logic, giving the possibilities and purposes of our existence and experiences. It presents three distinct possibilities regarding the nature of existence as being: (1) that we were created from ‘nothing’, specifically, without any agent or cause bringing us into existence, or (2) that if we deny this, then we must evaluate if we have created either ourselves or were simply a cause of that what was also caused. Ibn Hajr explains that it would be impossible to be a creator without a cause of creation and that we could not have been created from nothing. Likewise, it would also be impossible to create ourselves as it is a contradiction for something to exist and be a cause for its existence at the same time. If these two premises are rejected, it results in (3) the establishment of the proof that our existence was caused and came from something, essentially, external in nature, more powerful and greater than us.<sup>656</sup> From this, numerous scholars have derived what

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<sup>655</sup> *Al-Qur’ān*, 38:27

<sup>656</sup> Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī bi-sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Bairūt: Dār al-Ma’rifah, 1969). 8:603.

is known to be the cosmological argument. Everything that has a beginning has a cause, and since the universe indeed did have a beginning, it must have a cause.<sup>657</sup>

Al-Ghazalī expands on this notion, explaining that simply what comes to be must have a cause. This means that once it is determined that it comes to being in time, then it must be dependent on something external, as no physical object can come into existence without being set into motion or rest.<sup>658</sup> This, however, does not apply to God as He transcends time.<sup>659</sup> Essentially, the world is finite and the Creator infinite, having no beginning. This is what is needed to bridge the gap between the two. He continues that the world cannot exist in time unless it has been caused or brought into existence, thereby needing a necessary cause.<sup>660</sup> Some have described a necessary being as something impossible or inconceivable not to have existed or exist.<sup>661</sup> As the world and creation then exist, something necessary must also exist to bring them into existence. More specifically, however, al-Ghazalī defines a necessary being as self-sufficient.<sup>662</sup> This is established in the Qur’ān as Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) describes himself as:

﴿قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ ﴿۱﴾ اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ ﴿۲﴾ لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ ﴿۳﴾ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ ﴿۴﴾﴾

Say, "He is Allāh, [who is] One,  
Allāh, the Eternal Refuge.  
He neither begets nor is born,  
Nor is there to Him any equivalent." <sup>663</sup>

Al-Baghawī defines in this verse “*al-ṣamad*” as the master that nobody is above, the most honourable that is perfect in His honour, greatest in his greatness, and most self-sufficient, most compelling, perfect in His knowledge, and perfect in His wisdom.<sup>664</sup> Al-Qurtobī expands that He is the one that is free from all need, and

<sup>657</sup> İsmail Latif Hacınebioğlu, *Does God Exist? Logical Foundations of the Cosmological Argument* (Istanbul: İnsan Publications, 2019), 188.

<sup>658</sup> Lenn E. Goodman, ‘Ghazali’s Argument from Creation. (I)’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 2, no. 1 (1971): 67–85, 73.

<sup>659</sup> Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali and Safaruk Z. Chowdhury, *The Jerusalem Epistle: A Tract on the Fundamentals of Muslim Doctrine*, Annotated edition (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016), 201-202.

<sup>660</sup> Al-Ghazali and Safaruk Z. Chowdhury, *The Jerusalem Epistle: A Tract on the Fundamentals of Muslim Doctrine*, 201-202.

<sup>661</sup> ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm. Maḥmūd Ghazzalī, *al-Iqtisad fī al-itiqad* (Bairūt: Al Maktabah Al Sharqiyah, 2003).

<sup>662</sup> Imam Al-Ghazali, *Tahafut-Al-Falasifah - Incoherence of the Philosophers* (Adam Publishers, 2007), 146, 182.

<sup>663</sup> *Al-Qur’ān*, 112:1-4

<sup>664</sup> Al-Baghawī, *Ma’ālim al-Tanzī*, 112:2.

everything is in need of Him, that one that is sought after, and does whatever He wills and commands what he wants, and has no deficiencies but is complete and perfect.<sup>665</sup> Al-Tabari concludes this description by saying that He did not come into existence because everyone born comes into existence before not being, but Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) had no beginning and no end.<sup>666</sup>

The relationship between cause and effect is the first step in understanding these verses. God is the cause of all that exists; without Him, there would be no world.<sup>667</sup> Finally, he concludes the absurdity of rejecting such verses by summarizing that the world either must have a cause or must not. If it does have a cause, then that cause also must have a cause. This can then go on *ad infinitum*, which is absurd and would continue forever. However, if the world did not have a cause, then something necessarily has already been proven.<sup>668</sup>

Additionally, in modern physics, Newton's first law states that every object “continues in its state of rest, or uniform motion in a straight line, unless compelled to change that state by forces impressed upon it.”<sup>669</sup> In essence, nothing within this world, or the universe itself as a whole, can move without a cause behind it. Some have argued that this is perhaps not true and does not necessarily lead to this certainty as the universe could have been eternal without a beginning or simply exists without needing a cause. Even if this is accepted, the need for a first cause cannot be rejected, despite the issue with infinite regression or that modern physics agrees that the universe did have a beginning through the Big Bang.<sup>670</sup> The example of a circle on a canvas has been used to demonstrate this, in that even if it had no beginning or end and was endless circular, it still needed an artist to draw it, thereby acting as its external cause.<sup>671</sup>

Ibn Sinā establishes this principle not through the concept of necessity based upon causation but instead contingency. Through the verses (52:34-37), he categorizes

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<sup>665</sup> Al-Qurtubī, *Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkam al-Qur'ān*, 112:2.

<sup>666</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 112:3.

<sup>667</sup> Al-Ghazali, *Tahafut-Al-Falasifah*, 15.

<sup>668</sup> Al-Ghazali, *Tahafut-Al-Falasifah*, 3.

<sup>669</sup> ‘Newton’s Laws of Motion’, Glenn Research Center | NASA, accessed 21 October 2023, <https://www1.grc.nasa.gov/beginners-guide-to-aeronautics/newtons-laws-of-motion/>.

<sup>670</sup> ‘The Big Bang - NASA Science’, accessed 21 October 2023, <https://science.nasa.gov/astrophysics/focus-areas/what-powered-the-big-bang/>.

<sup>671</sup> Dean L. Overman, *A Case for the Existence of God* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 40.

what exists as impossible, contingent, or necessary beings.<sup>672</sup> If something has an essence that precludes its existence, then it is impossible to exist. Contingent things may or may not exist in themselves, but to consider why or why not, then some cause must be present for their existence. Finally, a necessary existence is one that is contingent upon nothing. There is no requirement here to guarantee cause or reason as the circle on the canvas. This is because if it can eternally go back to something other than itself, there is no contradiction. Instead, he questions the sum of all contingent things that ever existed or will exist. The collection is contingent because it's possible. If the whole aggregate is contingent, then it must obey the rules of everything in it in that it must have an external cause.<sup>673</sup> This cannot be impossible or contingent because it would be like what is dependent. Thus, it must be necessary.<sup>674</sup> One may reject the notion that the aggregate of things is contingent as a sum based on the reasoning that it is not guaranteed that the sum of the parts of a whole functions the same as that whole. Therefore, one may argue that the sum of the whole, everything that is contingent, is necessary and not contingent upon anything. No explanation is needed. However, this is precisely what he wishes to derive because the objection is not truly an opposition but a capitulation in that something necessary must exist.<sup>675</sup> He essentially goes back to the purpose and origin of creation, answering the essential question of why something exists. It exists simply because it can; because something is possible.

Paley's classic watchmaker scenario demonstrates this in much simpler terms. He postulates that image if you walk on a path and come across a simple rock. One would essentially think nothing of it, but if they instead came across a perfectly functioning watch, they would seek its maker or the cause that established it to be there.<sup>676</sup> The watch consists of several parts that work together to produce motion and tell time, and it is only coherent or necessary that it was brought about by some external cause: the watchmaker.<sup>677</sup>

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<sup>672</sup> William Lane Craig, *The Cosmological Argument from Plato to Leibniz* (Barnes & Noble Books, 1980), 123.

<sup>673</sup> Craig, *The Cosmological Argument from Plato to Leibniz*, 123.

<sup>674</sup> Toby Mayer, 'Ibn Sīnā's "Burhān Al-Siddīqīn"', *Journal of Islamic Studies* 12, no. 1 (2001): 18–39, 18.

<sup>675</sup> Jon McGinnis, 'The Ultimate Why Question: Avicenna on Why God Is Absolutely Necessary', in *The Ultimate Why Question: Why Is There Anything at All Rather Than Nothing Whatsoever?* (Cath Univ Amer Press, 2011), 66.

<sup>676</sup> T. Ryan Gregory, 'The Argument from Design: A Guided Tour of William Paley's Natural Theology (1802)', *Evolution: Education and Outreach* 2, no. 4 (December 2009): 602–11, 603.

<sup>677</sup> Gregory, 'The Argument from Design', 603.

The profound effect of such *āyāt* reflecting this component was seen from the earliest of times. Jubair ibn Muṭ'im reported that when he heard the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) recite these verses, it caused his heart to fly.<sup>678</sup>

﴿فَلْيَأْتُوا بِحَدِيثٍ مِثْلِهِ إِنْ كَانُوا صَادِقِينَ﴾

Then let them produce a statement like it, if they should be truthful.<sup>679</sup>

﴿أَمْ خُلِقُوا مِنْ غَيْرِ شَيْءٍ أَمْ هُمُ الْخَالِقُونَ﴾

Or were they created by nothing, or were they the creators [of themselves]?<sup>680</sup>

﴿أَمْ خَلَقُوا السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ ۗ بَلْ لَا يُوقِنُونَ﴾

Or did they create the heavens and the earth? Rather, they are not certain.<sup>681</sup>

They were so compelling that it caused Jubair to accept Islam and become a Muslim.<sup>682</sup> Several great scholars and theologians used such *āyāt* in this component to establish certainty in the hearts of others.

Abū Ḥanīfah, when faced with opposing atheist philosophers regarding the establishment of One creator, questioned them about the possibility of a ship on the River Tigris, moving entirely by itself, filling itself with goods, unpacking, then anchoring itself, all continuously without anyone managing it in any way. Their reply was an affirmation of its absurdity, through which he questioned them: if it is not possible for the ship, then what about this world and all its vastness?<sup>683</sup>

Ibn al-Qayyim gives a similar example of a watermill over a river revolving in absolute perfection, with each part measured without fault, presiding over a garden with every kind of fruit measured in perfection and excellence, divided perfectly according to its attributes. He questioned whether such an arrangement of the windmill, the water,

<sup>678</sup> Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Ḥadīth no. 4854.

<sup>679</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 52:34

<sup>680</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 52:35

<sup>681</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 52:36

<sup>682</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, 52:35.

<sup>683</sup> 'Alī ibn 'Alī Ibn Abī al-'Izz, *Shu'ayb al-Arna'ut*, and 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abd al-Muhsin al-Turki, *Sharḥ al-'Aqīdah al-Ṭahāwīyah*, 4th ed (Bayrut: Muassasat al-Risalah, 1992), 1:36.

and the garden would be possible without a compeller or manager behind it, thereby rhetorically comparing it with the nature of our existence and the universe.<sup>684</sup>

#### 4.6.2 The Purpose of Creation

Searching for a purpose in life and questioning where we came from are fundamental human needs and insights.<sup>685</sup> Individuals are constantly searching for answers to derive a meaningful purpose in life. When we fail to find an answer to this general purpose, we link it instead through a search for internal passions, goals, and careers.<sup>686</sup> The Qur'ān, when establishing this component, begins by posing a similar query that speaks to this very search internally in every conscious being.

﴿أَوَلَمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوا فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ ۗ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ  
وَأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ۗ وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ بِلِقَاءِ رَبِّهِمْ لَكَافِرُونَ﴾

Do they not contemplate within themselves? Allāh has not created the heavens and the earth and what is between them except in truth and for a specified term. And indeed, many of the people in the meeting with their Lord are disbelievers.<sup>687</sup>

It encourages reason, first internally within the self and then within the external world, to derive purpose, causality, and the relationship between them.

Consequently, the alternative to establishing a purpose through affirmations is a type of nihilism that concludes that it simply cannot be better for us to continue to live rather than cease to live entirely.<sup>688</sup> Not only is such a notion unjustifiable, but it also goes against studies or neuroscience that determine who we are in affirming that goal-oriented behaviour through finding purpose is associated with high levels of well-being and positive effects.<sup>689</sup> A greater overall purpose is confirmed through the Qur'ān as establishing value of life through our connection with God:

<sup>684</sup> Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr Ibn Qayyim, *Miftāḥ Dār Al-Sa'ādah Wa-Manshūr Wilāyat al-'ilm Wa-al-Irādah* (Riyād: Markaz al-Turāth, 2013), 1:214.

<sup>685</sup> Michaéla C. Schippers and Niklas Ziegler, 'Life Crafting as a Way to Find Purpose and Meaning in Life', *Frontiers in Psychology* 10 (13 December 2019), 2778.

<sup>686</sup> Schippers and Ziegler, 'Life Crafting as a Way to Find Purpose and Meaning in Life,' 2778.

<sup>687</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 30:8

<sup>688</sup> David Matheson, 'The Incoherence of Soft Nihilism', *Think* 16, no. 47 (2017): 127–35.

<sup>689</sup> Heather L. Urry et al., 'Making a Life Worth Living: Neural Correlates of Well-Being', *Psychological Science* 15, no. 6 (2004): 367–72.

﴿وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ﴾

And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me.<sup>690</sup>

Ibn al-Qayyim explains that the worship of God as our purpose is built upon two principles of love and servitude.<sup>691</sup> The heart is void always seeking to fulfill a purpose which can only be fulfilled through knowing God and thereby loving Him.<sup>692</sup> This desire to fulfil such a purpose is embedded and can only be satisfied through this. If one were to seek the entire world and everything it includes, it would not be sufficient to fill this void.<sup>693</sup>

This purpose of creation and worship is seen through our lives through the manifestation of all our actions. It is essentially the purpose of why Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) created life and death as he states:

﴿الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ۗ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفُورُ﴾

[He] who created death and life to test you [as to] which of you is best in deed - and He is the Exalted in Might, the Forgiving -

The *'aql* also shares a role in establishing an intellectual necessity through which we can verify and observe what is true. Everyone would, without a doubt, like to internalize what is true, but there must be a method, above one's thoughts or feelings alone, that justifies our representations of truth and reality.<sup>694</sup> If one is questioned to postulate a truth and then justify that truth, there can only be three possible outcomes. The first is that their proof requires another proof, which in turn requires another proof, leading to an infinite requirement of proofs, concluding this process to be incoherent. The second possibility is to justify each proof through the other in a circular fashion, again leading to an incoherent solution. Finally, the only possibility is that all proofs return to a singular source that does not need to be justified within itself, leading to a first foundation.<sup>695</sup> For any of these possibilities to even be plausible, it would require

<sup>690</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 51:56

<sup>691</sup> Ibn al-Qayyim *Madaarij as-Saalikeen*. 987.

<sup>692</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>693</sup> Ibn al-Qayyim *Madaarij as-Saalikeen*. 987.

<sup>694</sup> Aḥmad Ibn-‘Abd-al-Ḥalīm. Ibn Taimīya and Muḥammad R. Sālim, *Dar ta-‘arūḍ al-‘aql wa-’n-naql*, Aṭ-Ṭab‘a 1, Maktabat Ibn-Taimīya (Ar-Riyāḍ: Jāmi‘at al-Imām Muḥammad Ibn-Su‘ād al-Islāmīya, 1981), 458.

<sup>695</sup> Peter Tramel, ‘Haack’s Foundherentism Is a Foundationalism’, *Synthese* 160, no. 2 (2008): 215–28.

several external justifications in establishing concepts such as truths, beliefs, and meanings. None then lead to certitude and we are reminded of this notion in the Qur'ān:

﴿إِن هِيَ إِلَّا أَسْمَاءٌ سَمَّيْتُمُوهَا أَنْتُمْ وَآبَاؤُكُمْ مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ ۗ إِن يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَمَا تَهْوَى الْأَنْفُسُ ۗ وَلَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ الْهُدَىٰ﴾

They are not but [mere] names you have named them - you and your forefathers - for which Allāh has sent down no authority. They follow not except assumption and what [their] souls desire, and there has already come to them from their Lord guidance.<sup>696</sup>

The Qur'ān while rejecting the assumption of such reasoning, establishes a paradigm through which purpose and meaning can be found and evaluated:

﴿تِلْكَ آيَاتُ اللَّهِ نَتْلُوهَا عَلَيْكَ بِالْحَقِّ ۗ فَبِأَيِّ حَدِيثٍ بَعْدَ اللَّهِ وَآيَاتِهِ يُؤْمِنُونَ﴾

These are the verses of Allāh which We recite to you in truth. Then in what statement after Allāh and His verses will they believe?<sup>697</sup>

The term truth in this verse signifies both truth and purpose and, through the *āyāt*, sets a paradigm with the strongest of proofs and the most meaningful of explanations, all while yielding the greatest of meanings.<sup>698</sup>

#### 4.6.3 Knowledge as a Path to Certitude Through *Al-'Aql*

Attaining certitude through knowledge is a fundamental pursuit in human understanding, and the exploration of *al-'aql* (reason) as the third component of certitude in the Qur'ān provides a profound framework for achieving this. The concept ties the intellectual faculties of human beings to the metaphysical truths established through divine revelation, creating a synthesis that bridges reason, faith, and existential purpose. In this expanded view, reason is not only a means of philosophical inquiry but also a tool to attain a higher level of certainty about the origins and purpose of existence, the nature of truth, and the validity of divine guidance. The Qur'ān encourages reflection and intellectual engagement as pathways to knowledge, consistently appealing to reason alongside revelation. This directive establishes that certitude in

<sup>696</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 53:23

<sup>697</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 45:6

<sup>698</sup> Mahmud al-'Allama Abu l-Fadl Sihab al-Din al- Alusi al-Bagdadi, *Ruh al-ma'ani fi tafsir al-Qur'an al-'azim wa l-sab' al-matani* (Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1994), 45:6.

knowledge is not achieved through blind faith but through active intellectual and spiritual engagement.

For al-Ghazālī, knowledge must be absolute and indubitable, such that it is free from error and deception.<sup>699</sup> He emphasizes that certainty arises only when a thing is so manifest that the mind cannot even entertain the possibility of its falsity. For example, a proposition like "ten is greater than three" should be so evident that even a miraculous event, such as someone turning a stone into gold, cannot undermine the certainty of this knowledge. This highlights that certain truths are irrefutable, and genuine knowledge is free from any potential for error or doubt. Al-Ghazālī argues that the foundation of all knowledge lies in intuitively apprehended first principles—primary truths that are self-evident and beyond doubt.<sup>700</sup> These first principles, for al-Ghazālī, are grounded in the knowledge of God, and it is through this divine knowledge that all other truths are derived.

Al-Ghazālī further develops his view on the relationship between knowledge and certainty, particularly in the context of the knowledge of God. He argues that intellectual knowledge, particularly reason and logical argumentation, is essential for understanding the divine.<sup>701</sup> However, he does not advocate for a purely rationalist approach. Instead, al-Ghazālī emphasizes the compatibility of reason and revelation, asserting that both are necessary for attaining true knowledge. Through intellectual inquiry, one can come to know God, and this knowledge provides the certainty that grounds all other forms of knowledge. Certainty is not simply a product of rational thought; rather, it is a product of a deeper, divine connection that transcends human understanding.<sup>702</sup> In this way, knowledge leads to certainty, not only through intellectual reasoning but also through spiritual and divine revelation.

Ibn Taymiyyah outlines three fundamental ways to strengthen and fortify one's faith and, ultimately, attain true certainty in belief. These ways are rooted in engaging deeply with the Qur'ān, contemplating the wonders of creation, and living out the

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<sup>699</sup> ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm. Maḥmūd Ghazzālī and Richard Joseph McCarthy, *Deliverance from Error: An Annotated Translation of al-Munqidh Min al-Dalāl and Other Relevant Works of Al-Ghazzālī* (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 1999), 7.

<sup>700</sup> Al-Ghazzālī and McCarthy, *Deliverance from Error*, 55.

<sup>701</sup> Al-Ghazzālī and McCarthy, *Deliverance from Error*, 287–332.

<sup>702</sup> Al-Ghazzālī and McCarthy, *Deliverance from Error*, 287–332.

principles of faith through action.<sup>703</sup> According to Ibn Taymiyyah, these three aspects are not merely complementary; they are interwoven and necessary to cultivate a profound, unwavering certainty in one's relationship with Allāh (Glorified and Exalted).

The first way to achieve certainty is by pondering over the Book of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted), the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān is considered the ultimate source of divine guidance in Islam, and there is no substitute for immersing oneself in its verses. Through the Qur'ān, a believer can gain insight into the nature of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted), the purpose of life, and the ultimate reality of existence. Reciting, listening to, and reflecting upon the Qur'ān can deepen one's understanding and strengthen the conviction of the heart. When a person contemplates the Qur'ān's meanings, it brings the truths of faith into sharper focus, allowing the individual to connect emotionally and spiritually with the teachings. The Qur'ān has a transformative power, and it is through its wisdom that a person can experience a profound increase in *imān* (faith) and achieve certainty that goes beyond intellectual belief into an experiential knowledge of Allāh's (Glorified and Exalted) presence and truth. Ibn Taymiyyah emphasizes that nothing increases *imān* more than the Qur'ān because it directly connects the believer with divine wisdom.<sup>704</sup>

The second method is through knowledge of the creation of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted). The natural world, with its intricate beauty and order, clearly reflects Allāh's (Glorified and Exalted) Majesty and Power. When one takes the time to reflect on the universe—its vastness, the complexity of the human body, the precision of the laws of nature, the cycles of the heavens, and the alternation of day and night—it becomes apparent that such phenomena could not have occurred by chance. These signs in the creation point to an all-knowing and all-powerful Creator. In the Qur'ān, Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) repeatedly invites people to look at the world around them as a means to recognize His existence and attributes. This reflection on the magnificence of the world and the natural order leads to a deeper appreciation of Allāh's (Glorified and Exalted) sovereignty and majesty. The more one contemplates creation, the more one is drawn to acknowledge the Creator. As humans, when we reflect on the complexity and

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<sup>703</sup> Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymīyah, *Majmū' Fatāwā Shaykh Al-Islām Aḥmad Ibn Taymīyah*, 37 vols (Al-Madinah: Wizārah al-Sh`uḓn al-Islāmiyah al-Su`ōdiyāh, 2004), 3:330.

<sup>704</sup> Ibn Taymīyah, *Majmū' Fatāwā*, 3:330.

harmony of the world, our hearts are inclined toward awe and reverence for the Creator, thus reinforcing our certainty in Him.

Lastly, Ibn Taymiyyah emphasizes the importance of living out one's faith through action. The basis of this action, however, is knowledge.<sup>705</sup> Knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim, not just the elite or the scholars.<sup>706</sup> This is reflected in the narration of the Prophet:

Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim<sup>707</sup>

This knowledge begins with the essential tenets of faith: belief in God, His angels, His books, His messengers, and the Last Day. A Muslim cannot be considered a believer without this foundational knowledge.<sup>708</sup> Furthermore, Muslims must also be knowledgeable about the basics of worship, such as prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage. Ibn Taymiyyah emphasizes the importance of living out one's faith through action. Certainty in faith is not just a matter of belief; it must be demonstrated in the way we live our lives. When we act according to what we know to be true—by fulfilling our religious obligations such as prayer, fasting, charity, and striving for righteousness—we experience a sense of purpose and peace.<sup>709</sup> The act of worship brings us closer to Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) and strengthens our internal conviction of the truth of our faith. When a believer practices their faith sincerely, they begin to see tangible benefits in their lives—both spiritually and mentally. Worship becomes a source of comfort, and engaging in righteous actions fosters inner peace. Additionally, the certainty from lived faith is often accompanied by a profound connection to the Creator.<sup>710</sup> This experiential aspect of faith can be a powerful testimony to its truth, for when one feels the presence of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) in their life and witnesses the positive impact of their faith, it becomes impossible to deny the veracity of the religion. The more we act upon our knowledge and worship with sincerity, the more our certainty is reinforced. In this way, certainty in faith is not a mere intellectual understanding but a lived experience

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<sup>705</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū' Fatāwā*, 3:330.

<sup>706</sup> Muḥammad Ibn-Abī-Bakr Ibn-Qaiyim al-Jauzīya and Tallal M. Zeni, *On Knowledge: From 'Key to the Blissful Abode' 'Miṭāḥ Dār al-Sa'āda'* (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 2016), 223.

<sup>707</sup> Muḥammad ibn Yazīd Ibn Mājāh, *Sunan ibn Mājāh*, al-Ṭab'ah 1, Maktabat al-Ḥadīth al-Nabawī (Bayrūt: Dār al-Nawādir, 2013), Ḥadīth no. 224.

<sup>708</sup> Ibn-Qaiyim al-Jauzīya and Zeni, *On Knowledge: From 'Key to the Blissful Abode' 'Miṭāḥ Dār al-Sa'āda'*, 223.

<sup>709</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū' Fatāwā*, 3:330.

<sup>710</sup> Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū' Fatāwā*, 3:330.

that encompasses deep reflection, connection with the world around us, and consistent righteous action. By engaging with the Qur’ān, reflecting on the creation of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted), and embodying the principles of faith through action, a believer can achieve certitude—a certainty that transforms the heart and life, bringing one closer to Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) and providing unwavering confidence in the truth of Islam.

Knowledge is not merely an intellectual pursuit but a means to attain certainty, which is essential for the health and stability of the heart.<sup>711</sup> Certainty is the antidote to doubts and uncertainties, providing contentment, peace, and resilience in adversity. Knowledge, especially when tied to faith, leads to spiritual enlightenment and a heart that is steadfast in its devotion to God. Through certainty, a person reaches a state of tranquility and submission to God’s will, understanding that everything that happens, whether perceived as good or bad, is from God’s divine decree. This certainty leads to gratitude, patience, and an unwavering commitment to righteousness. Faith itself is built upon certainty and love.<sup>712</sup> These two elements underpin all righteous actions, whether they pertain to outward deeds or inner states of being. Weakness in certainty leads to weak actions, while strong certainty results in firm and consistent devotion. Certitude, then, can be achieved through the cultivation of certainty and love, which propel one toward good deeds and beneficial knowledge.

#### **4.6.4 Responding to Intellectual and Philosophical Doubts Through *Al-‘Aql***

While intellectual and philosophical concerns can lead to religious doubt, they differ in their focus. Intellectual concerns are typically more grounded in observable facts, scientific reasoning, or contradictions between religious teachings and contemporary knowledge. They often involve questioning specific religious claims or the overall credibility of religious texts when measured against modern scientific understandings. Philosophical concerns, in contrast, are broader and deal with existential and metaphysical questions that might not have clear empirical answers. They involve the

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<sup>711</sup> Ibn-Qaiyim al-Jauziya and Zeni, *On Knowledge: From ‘Key to the Blissful Abode’ ‘Miftāḥ Dār al-Sa’āda,*’ 224.

<sup>712</sup> Ibn-Qaiyim al-Jauziya and Zeni, *On Knowledge: From ‘Key to the Blissful Abode’ ‘Miftāḥ Dār al-Sa’āda,*’ 224.

exploration of meaning, the nature of existence, and the coherence of religious worldviews in addressing life's fundamental dilemmas, like the nature of God and the problem of evil. Philosophical and intellectual doubts experienced by Muslims in the West often stem from exposure to secular or scientific perspectives that challenge religious teachings. Intellectual doubts, primarily rooted in the perceived conflict between science and religion, arise when Muslims are confronted with scientific theories like evolution or the scientific method's reliance on empirical evidence. These challenges can create a sense of dissonance for individuals who feel beliefs are incompatible with modern knowledge or logical reasoning. If these concerns remain unresolved through adequate intellectual engagement or Islamic scholarship, they can lead to a shift towards secular or atheistic worldviews. Together, these doubts reflect a broader shift in the way many young Muslims in the West engage with their faith. To address these doubts, it is crucial to provide both intellectual and philosophical responses grounded in Islamic teachings, as well as a more comprehensive understanding of the faith that resonates with contemporary existential questions. Without such engagement, many Muslims may struggle to reconcile their beliefs with the prevailing secular perspectives, potentially leading them away from their religious identity.

Sentiments of doubt in the existence of God or the labelling of such a belief as irrational are directly challenged through the discussed set of verses in the Qur'ān. It can even be argued that those who deny the existence of the Creator engage in a worldview established through the absence of reason or evidence. The Qur'ān challenges humans to the opposite in using their *'aql* to derive meaning and purpose in life. Even the harshest of critics of theism have failed to establish through certitude that a God does not exist. Dawkins, one of the staunchest proponents of new atheism, concluded that he could not be sure of his conclusion.<sup>713</sup> Such claims then evidently lack certitude, while the Qur'ān instills it in the hearts of those who adhere to their reason. It awakens a sense of origin for humankind by establishing a need and necessity of cause and purpose.

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<sup>713</sup> Paul A. Burchett, 'A Refinement of Bertrand Russell's Celestial Teacup Analogy and Richard Dawkins' "Spectrum of Theistic Probabilities"', *Open Journal of Philosophy* 9, no. 4 (11 October 2019): 493–502.

The third component of certitude, *al-'aql* (reason), is essential in establishing and deepening faith by addressing questions of origin, purpose, and existence through the logical principles outlined in the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān presents challenges and rhetorical inquiries that compel humans to reflect deeply on their creation and purpose. This leads to the conclusion that the Creator must be transcendent, eternal, and self-sufficient. Through these arguments, the Qur'ān confronts doubts and dismisses assumptions rooted in conjecture by providing clear logical postulations that invite humans to use their intellect to derive certainty.

This component of certitude complements the previous ones by moving beyond recognizing signs in the natural world to address the origin and purpose of creation. Through logical reasoning, the Qur'ān argues that the universe could not have emerged without a necessary cause or Creator, establishing foundational principles akin to the cosmological argument. Scholars like Al-Ghazālī and Ibn Sīnā have elaborated on this, emphasizing the contingency of existence and the need for a self-sufficient, necessary being—Allāh (Glorified and Exalted). The Qur'ān also addresses the purpose of creation, a fundamental human inquiry. It emphasizes that existence is not aimless but rooted in divine wisdom. This purpose fulfills the innate human desire for meaning and anchors life in worship and servitude to Allāh (Glorified and Exalted). The heart's yearning for purpose can only be satisfied by knowing and loving Allāh (Glorified and Exalted). This divine connection gives life profound significance and aligns human actions with the ultimate goal of pleasing Allāh (Glorified and Exalted).

Moreover, the Qur'ān eradicates philosophical doubts by encouraging the use of reason to arrive at truth. It critiques baseless conjectures and assumptions while offering a framework of logical certitude through its verses. For example, the Qur'ān rejects infinite regress and circular reasoning by establishing the necessity of a first cause, which must itself be uncaused. Classical examples, like Paley's watchmaker analogy and Ibn al-Qayyim's imagery of a watermill, reinforce the logical necessity of an intelligent Creator. Even modern scientific principles, such as Newton's laws, affirm that motion requires an external cause, further substantiating Qur'ānic arguments.

By challenging doubts and presenting logical pathways to understanding creation and purpose, the Qur'ān uses reason to inspire belief and certitude. It invites reflection, erases confusion, and aligns the intellect with the divine, ensuring that faith

is heartfelt and intellectually robust. Through this, *al-‘aql* becomes a powerful tool for grounding belief, addressing skepticism, and guiding humanity toward ultimate truth.

The third component of certitude is established through reason in the Qur’ān. While the level of depth into this component can vary greatly, its importance lies in forming logical principles through the verses of the Qur’ān that lead to eradicating philosophical doubts. Its actual role, however, does not stop there. It extends far beyond establishing causation and purpose, giving meaning to everything essential in life.

#### 4.7 THE FOURTH COMPONENT OF CERTITUDE: *AL-FIṬRAH* (PREDISPOSITION)

The fourth component of certitude was determined through the final verse relating to certainty concerning our internal state:

﴿وَفِي خَلْقِكُمْ وَمَا يَبُثُّ مِنْ دَابَّةٍ آيَاتٌ لِقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ﴾

And in the creation of yourselves and what He disperses of moving creatures are signs for people who are **certain** [in faith].<sup>714</sup>

Al-Ṭabarī comments on this verse, writing that in our internal nature, within us are signs that show the reality of what we are and what is around us.<sup>715</sup> Al-Ghazālī describes this part of our internal selves as a component of seeking the knowledge of the reality of all things to fill the void in the heart.<sup>716</sup> While he explains that this may be fulfilled through reason, as described in the third component of certitude, it is only a singular step along a greater spiritual path.<sup>717</sup> Beyond the realm of reason is a spiritual nature to humankind that allows them to see the reality of what is within them and the seen and unseen all around them. This is defined by the inner self, the innate predisposition referred to as *al-fiṭrah*. This, then, is the context of the fourth component of certitude classified as the *fiṭrah* in the Qur’ān through the verse:

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<sup>714</sup> *Al-Qur’ān*, 45:4

<sup>715</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān*, 45:4.

<sup>716</sup> Al-Ghazzālī and McCarthy, *Deliverance from Error*, 181.

<sup>717</sup> Al-Ghazzālī and McCarthy, *Deliverance from Error*, 182.

﴿فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا ۚ فِطْرَتَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا ۚ لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ ۚ  
ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ﴾

So direct your face [i.e., self] toward the religion, inclining to truth.  
[Adhere to] the *fiṭrah* of Allāh upon which He has created [all] people.  
No change should there be in the creation of Allāh. That is the correct  
religion, but most of the people do not know.<sup>718</sup>

This verse reflects the notion that humans instinctively perceive the higher power of God without even being called to guidance through revelation, resulting in every individual potentially knowing that their Creator and Lord is Allāh (Glorified and Exalted).<sup>719</sup> The *fiṭrah* has been defined as “the natural inborn inclination of man to worship his Creator before the corruption of his nature by external influences.”<sup>720</sup> Islamic monotheism is thus identified as the religion of the *fiṭrah*, found intrinsically like humankind. Even in modern times, this has been labelled as the ‘God gene,’ expounding that an innate primordial belief in a higher power such as God is hardwired into us or our genes.<sup>721</sup> This is referred to as the *fiṭrah*, an inherent disposition upon which God created humankind.

#### 4.7.1 The Source and Function of *al-Fiṭrah*

The source of this *fiṭrah* is also alluded to in the Qur’ān in the following verse:

﴿وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ ۖ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ ۗ شَهِدْنَا ۚ أَن تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِينَ ۖ﴾

And [mention] when your Lord took from the children of Adam - from their loins - their descendants and made them testify of themselves, [saying to them], "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Yes, we have testified." [This] - lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, "Indeed, we were of this unaware."<sup>722</sup>

Scholars have referred to the phase mentioned in the verse as pre-existence. It is when Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) created Adam (peace be upon him) and then gathered

<sup>718</sup> *Al-Qur’ān*, 7:172.

<sup>719</sup> *Al-Ṭabarī, Jāmi‘ al-Bayān*, 7:172.

<sup>720</sup> Saheeh International, *The Qur’an - Saheeh International Translation: With Surah Introductions and Appendices*, ed. A. B. al-Mehri (Independently published, 2020), 30:30.

<sup>721</sup> Dean H. Hamer, *The God Gene: How Faith Is Hardwired Into Our Genes* (Doubleday, 2004), 6.

<sup>722</sup> *Al-Qur’ān*, 7:172.

from his progeny essentially all of humanity, perhaps like tiny seeds, multiplied like ants, and thus established a proof of His lordship, as they testified in affirmation of this.<sup>723</sup> Through this, he set up a duality of proofs against humankind. The first was an innate predisposition to recognize the monotheistic inclination to worship the unique Creator and Sustainer of all creation, and the second was proof established through the faculty of reason and external evidence.<sup>724</sup>

The prophets that were sent with revelation and proof to all humankind were not sent to conjure faith from nothing. Their role was to reinforce and reawaken the *fiṭrah* innate to everyone, including the disbelievers. That is why the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) was commanded to ask even the disbelievers in Mecca who they believed created them. Their affirmation was Allāh (Glorified and Exalted), but they refused to submit to His commands despite this.

﴿وَلَمَّا سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَهُمْ لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ فَأَنَّى يُؤْفَكُونَ﴾

And if you asked them who created them, they would surely say, "Allāh." So how are they deluded?"<sup>725</sup>

Al-Ghazālī considers this human function as attempting to fill a void or emptiness in the heart, which can only be filled or satisfied by finding the true purpose of life through God. He explains that while reason, logic, and external evidence are important and valuable tools in finding God, the true nature of this search is driven by the *fiṭrah*, opening another level of insight.<sup>726</sup> The *fiṭrah*, however, is susceptible to external influences that can cause it to be altered or deviate from its original state. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said in a narration explaining this point,

No child is born but that he is upon the *fiṭrah* (natural predisposition). His parents make him a Jew, or a Christian, or Magian. As an animal delivers a child with limbs intact, do you detect any flaws?<sup>727</sup>

The *fiṭrah* extends beyond simply being religious or acknowledging God. It seeks to accept natural worship and submission to a singular, unique, powerful, and benevolent Creator as described in the Qur'ān. Thus, even other theistic-based

<sup>723</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, 7:172.

<sup>724</sup> Jalalu'd-din Al-Mahalli and Jalal'd-din Al-Mahalli, *Tafsīr Al-Jalalayn* (Dar Al Taqwa Ltd., 2007), 7:172.

<sup>725</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 43:87

<sup>726</sup> Al-Ghazzālī and McCarthy, *Deliverance from Error*, 182.

<sup>727</sup> Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Saḥīḥ Muslim*, Ḥadīth no. 2658.

ideologies can alter this to different religions and detract from the instinctual *fiṭrah*. As long as the human *fiṭrah* is sound, external proofs such as reason and logic, although still beneficial, are not explicitly required. Still, these external components may be necessitated when exposed to corruption and altered.<sup>728</sup> Knowledge and certitude in God are sometimes achieved effortlessly only by the *fiṭrah*, but other times, they require external components, proofs, arguments, and certainty.<sup>729</sup> This is not to say that the previous components of certitude, as established in the Qur’ān, do not benefit the most convicted believer, as they still build upon this initiative experience by appealing to the power of reason.<sup>730</sup> If the *fiṭrah*, however, is corrupted, then other external proofs are necessary. Ibn Kathir explains this concept when he cites the following verse:

﴿ قَالَتْ رُسُلُهُمْ أَفِي اللَّهِ شَكٌّ فَاطِرِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۖ يَدْعُوكُمْ لِيَغْفِرَ لَكُمْ مِنْ ذُنُوبِكُمْ وَيُؤَخِّرَكُمْ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ۖ قَالُوا إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُنَا تُرِيدُونَ أَنْ تَصُدُّونَا عَمَّا كَانَ يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا فَأْتُونَا بِسُلْطَانٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴾

Their messengers said, "Can there be doubt about Allāh, Creator of the heavens and earth? He invites you that He may forgive you of your sins, and He delays you [i.e., your death] for a specified term." They said, "You are not but men like us who wish to avert us from what our fathers were worshipping. So bring us a clear authority [i.e., evidence]."<sup>731</sup>

He explains that prophets were sent to their nations to revive their innate disposition to know and submit to the one true God. However, instead, what was found in their hearts was doubt and the absence of certitude.<sup>732</sup> Usually, the *fiṭrah* would be enough to inspire a return to this truth; however, it can be overcome with doubt if it is corrupted. Returning to its natural state requires external proofs appealing to divine revelation, reflection upon the physical world, or intellect and reason. The *fiṭrah* is the original truth or source through which truth is known. It is the primary source of certainty and certitude unless it is corrupted.

This is precisely why it is during the most extreme situations and times of desperation that this *fiṭrah* is re-awoken in human nature. The Qur’ān gives the example

<sup>728</sup> Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymīyah, *Majmū‘ Fatāwā Shaykh Al-Islām Aḥmad Ibn Taymīyah*, 37 vols (Al-Madinah: Wizārah al-Sh’uḓn al-Islāmiyah al-Su‘ūdiyyah, 2004), 16:328.

<sup>729</sup> Ibn Taymīyah, *Majmū‘ Fatāwā*, 16:328.

<sup>730</sup> Ibn Taymīyah, *Majmū‘ Fatāwā*, 16:328.

<sup>731</sup> *Al-Qur’ān*, 26:23.

<sup>732</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Al-Qur’ān al-‘Aẓīm*, 26:23.

of a people that board a ship, and upon facing inevitable disaster and death, their primal instinct is to supplicate and call upon God to save them:

﴿فَإِذَا رَكِبُوا فِي الْفُلِكِ دَعَوْا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ فَلَمَّا نَجَّاهُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ إِذَا هُمْ يُشْرِكُونَ﴾

And when they board a ship, they supplicate Allāh, sincere to Him in religion [i.e., faith and hope]. But when He delivers them to the land, at once they associate others with Him.<sup>733</sup>

However, when they are answered, saved from their circumstances, and returned safely to land, they return to disbelief in God and rejection of faith.

Ibn Taymiyyah discusses the pivotal verses that form the basis of the third component, establishing a rational or reasonable component for certitude in God in the context of the *fiṭrah*.

﴿أَمْ خُلِقُوا مِنْ غَيْرِ شَيْءٍ أَمْ هُمْ الْخَالِقُونَ﴾

Or were they created by nothing, or were they the creators [of themselves]?<sup>734</sup>

﴿أَمْ خَلَقُوا السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ ۗ بَلْ لَا يُوقِنُونَ﴾

Or did they create the heavens and the earth? Rather, they are not certain.<sup>735</sup>

He views these verses as serving the fourth component of certitude of *fiṭrah*, as they invoke a rhetorical contemplation in awakening the *fiṭrah* rather than providing a rational argument.<sup>736</sup> The role of rational contemplation is not to instigate the creation of an instinct to achieve religious certitude but to recognize the already embedded reality in the *fiṭrah*.<sup>737</sup> God, then, is the proof rather than what is being proven.<sup>738</sup> Ibn al-Qayyim re-emphasizes this profound allusion in his assertion that the existence of the Creator is a component of certitude itself and is more self-evident than any other

<sup>733</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 29:65

<sup>734</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 52:35

<sup>735</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 52:36

<sup>736</sup> Aḥmad Ibn-'Abd-al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taimīya and Muḥammad R. Sālim, *Dar ta'arūḍ al-'aql wa-'n-naql*, Aṭ-Ṭab'a 1, Maktabat Ibn-Taimīya (Ar-Riyāḍ: Jāmi'at al-Imām Muḥammad Ibn-Su'ād al-Islāmīya, 1981), 3:126.

<sup>737</sup> Ibn Taimīya and Sālim, *Dar ta'arūḍ al-'aql wa-'n-naql*, 3:126.

<sup>738</sup> Ibn Taimīya and Sālim, *Dar ta'arūḍ al-'aql wa-'n-naql*, 8:507.

component used to determine it.<sup>739</sup> This is also reflected in the *āyāt* of the Qur'ān, which pertains as much as, or perhaps more to, spiritual growth than intellectual discussion or reflection.<sup>740</sup>

The essential basis of belief or certitude then does not arise from philosophical debates or rational processes but rather through a natural result of our shared cognitive faculties.<sup>741</sup> Ibn Taymīyah places great importance on this component in distinguishing it from others as a primary objective that is self-evident. He cites impeccably the conversation in the Qur'ān between Prophet Mūsa (peace be upon him) and Fir'aun (Pharaoh), in which the latter questions the former as to who the lord of the worlds is. In his response, Moses asserts that He is the Lord of the heavens and earth if you are amongst those who possess certitude.

﴿قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ وَمَا رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ﴾

Said Pharaoh, "And what is the Lord of the worlds?"<sup>742</sup>

﴿قَالَ رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا ۚ إِنَّكُمْ لَمُوقِنِينَ﴾

[Moses] said, "The Lord of the heavens and earth and that between them, if you should be convinced (have certitude)."<sup>743</sup>

The subject of certitude, however, in this verse, is not explicitly distinguished but instead left to be unqualified, equating it to the absolute or first certainty of all things in life.<sup>744</sup> The corrupt nature of the *fiṭrah* of Fir'aun, altered by greed, arrogance, and a desire for wealth and power, vied him from the divine reality, resulting in the absence of any certitude.

<sup>739</sup> Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah, *Miftāḥ dār al-sa'ādah*, 2:796.

<sup>740</sup> Ibn Taimīyah and Sālim, *Dar ta'āruḍ al-'aql wa-'n-naql*, 8:518,

<sup>741</sup> Helen De Cruz and Johan De Smedt, 'Reformed and Evolutionary Epistemology and the Noetic Effects of Sin', *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 74, no. 1 (1 August 2013): 49–66.

<sup>742</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 26:23.

<sup>743</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 26:24.

<sup>744</sup> Ibn Taymīyah, *Majmū' Fatāwá*, 16:191–93.

#### 4.7.2 The Early Development of the *Fitrah*

An experimental psychologist, Justin Barret, presents the premise that all children are born believers. Although he does not specify a religion, he concludes through numerous studies and experiments that young children intrinsically have insight and recognize a superior creator of this world, often finding purpose where many adults fail.<sup>745</sup> From the early stages of infancy, humans can naturally develop concepts of morality, purpose, numerical quantity, and causality, signifying that these are indeed accurate representations of reality.<sup>746</sup> Simple parent internalization and indoctrination is not a suitable explanation as there seems to be a cohesiveness to this natural predisposition of the belief in something higher, regardless of culture, family, or religious background. Children have seemed to embrace God at a very young age, even in the most unforeseen circumstances. Children, even with staunchly atheist parents, have repeatedly been shown to embrace the notion of God in early childhood.<sup>747</sup> Remarkably, even from the age of five, some have shown to adopt a firm belief in God despite the best efforts of parents to convince them otherwise.<sup>748</sup> Even the most persistent attempts have proven to be less than successful as some, being pushed aggressively towards the rejection of God, concluded that they believed in God at school, but at home, they were atheists.<sup>749</sup>

The knowledge of God instinctively at an early age perfectly represents the *fiṭrah*. Upon hearing a sound, a child casually seeks to look towards the direction of the sound, just as upon seeing a building, seeks the builder of it. They do not need any philosophical argument or scientific evidence for this causality.<sup>750</sup> The natural tendency is to believe in God, while the opposite, represented by atheism, requires a considerable amount of cognitive effort to overturn this disposition. Interestingly, the Arabic word for ‘disbelief’ is *kufr*, meaning literally to cover up.<sup>751</sup> Perhaps then, it may represent, among other things, the sense of covering up this natural disposition of the *fiṭrah* and going against it.

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<sup>745</sup> Justin Barrett, *Born Believers: The Science of Children's Religious Belief* (New York: Atria Books, 2012), 36-38.

<sup>746</sup> Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymīyah, *Naqd al-manṭiq* (Miṣr: Maktabat al-Sunnah al-Muḥammadīyah, 1988), 1:13.

<sup>747</sup> Barrett, *Born Believers: The Science of Children's Religious Belief*, 37.

<sup>748</sup> Ibid.

<sup>749</sup> Barrett, *Born Believers: The Science of Children's Religious Belief*, 37.

<sup>750</sup> Ibn Taymīyah, *Naqd al-manṭiq* 1:13-14.

<sup>751</sup> Marilyn Robinson Waldman, ‘The Development of the Concept of Kufr in the Qur’ān’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 88, no. 3 (1968): 442–55.

This shows how difficult it is to ‘indoctrinate’ a child, as all ideas are not represented equally. It may be easier to confirm a child’s belief in God rather than convince them otherwise, just as it would be difficult to convince them of the delicious taste of broccoli. Children then, it seems, are not simply empty containers waiting to be filled but instead come with an internal disposition, of which the central aspect appears to be an affirmation of a Creator, the One God, as explained by the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him).

#### 4.7.3 The Distinct Nature of the *Fitrah*

The concept of the *fitrah* is also unique in that it goes far beyond the recognition of God. The Meccans at the time of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), although acknowledged God, rejected the *fitrah* in a way. When they were asked as to who created them, they affirmed Allāh (Glorified and Exalted):

﴿وَلَئِن سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ ۗ قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ ۗ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ  
لَا يَعْلَمُونَ﴾

And if you asked them, "Who created the heavens and earth?" they would surely say, "Allāh." Say, "[All] praise is [due] to Allāh"; but most of them do not know.<sup>752</sup>

This is because they approved the Lordship of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) but rejected the worship of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted). These individuals were still referred to as polytheists and had corrupted their *fitrah*. The purpose of sending the final Messenger to them is to instill this natural inclination to worship only the creator. They went against this and used idols to reach God, as it states:

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<sup>752</sup> *Al-Qur’ān*, 31:25

﴿أَلَا لِلَّهِ الدِّينُ الخَالِصُ ۗ وَالَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِن دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ مَا نَعْبُدُهُمْ إِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُونَا إِلَى اللَّهِ زُلْفَىٰ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ فِي مَا هُمْ فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي مَنْ هُوَ كَاذِبٌ كَفَّارٌ﴾

Unquestionably, for Allāh is the pure religion. And those who take protectors besides Him [say], "We only worship them that they may bring us nearer to Allāh in position." Indeed, Allāh will judge between them concerning that over which they differ. Indeed, Allāh does not guide he who is a liar and [confirmed] disbeliever.<sup>753</sup>

They rejected the 'pure' religion that the *fiṭrah* was based upon and sought to reach God through the worship of idols. This establishes the *fiṭrah* as far more than just knowing God, as they knew Him but refused to submit. The *fiṭrah* is Islam—a complete submission to God through the heart, mind, and soul for His worship alone.

Humans then need a purpose far beyond simply knowing God. They are entrusted with establishing the commands of God on this earth, both internally and externally.<sup>754</sup> This is reflected in the verses of when Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) was creating Adam as he refers to him as his *khalīfah*, on Earth:

﴿وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً ۗ قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَن يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ ۗ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ﴾

And [mention, O Muḥammad], when your Lord said to the angels, "Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority." They said, "Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we exalt You with praise and declare Your perfection?" He [Allāh] said, "Indeed, I know that which you do not know."<sup>755</sup>

Adam was also taught the names of everything, including the physical world. Another connection here is made with the physical world and awakening the *fiṭrah* to understand and comprehend the role of humans through God:

<sup>753</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 39:3

<sup>754</sup> Soumaya Pernilla Ouis, 'Islamic Ecotheology Based on the Qur'ān', *Islamic Studies* 37, no. 2 (1998): 151–81, 154.

<sup>755</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 2:30

﴿وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا ثُمَّ عَرَضَهُمْ عَلَى الْمَلَائِكَةِ فَقَالَ أَنْبِئُونِي بِأَسْمَاءِ هَؤُلَاءِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ﴾

And He taught Adam the names - all of them. Then He showed them to the angels and said, "Inform Me of the names of these if you are truthful."<sup>756</sup>

Knowledge, once again, is the core of the human creed. One cannot worship or fulfill their purpose if knowledge is not gained. The *fitrah* also does not guarantee the perfect nature of humans.<sup>757</sup> Adam recognized his own *fitrah* but disobeyed a command of God as he was deceived by Satan.

﴿وَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكُلَا مِنْهَا رَغَدًا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ﴾

And We said, "O Adam, dwell, you and your wife, in Paradise and eat therefrom in [ease and] abundance from wherever you will. But do not approach this tree, lest you be among the wrongdoers."<sup>758</sup>

﴿فَأَزَلَّهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ عَنْهَا فَأَخْرَجَهُمَا مِمَّا كَانَا فِيهِ ۖ وَقُلْنَا اهْبِطُوا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ ۖ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمَتَاعٌ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ﴾

But Satan caused them to slip out of it and removed them from that [condition] in which they had been. And We said, "Go down, [all of you], as enemies to one another, and you will have upon the earth a place of settlement and provision for a time."<sup>759</sup>

Due to this, Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) had given the creation of the human and jinn an entrustment, based on their *fitrah*, that no other creation was honoured with:<sup>760</sup>

﴿إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَنْ يَحْمِلْنَهَا وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا الْإِنْسَانُ ۖ إِنَّهُ كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا﴾

Indeed, We offered the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, and they declined to bear it and feared it; but man [undertook to] bear it. Indeed, he was unjust and ignorant.<sup>761</sup>

<sup>756</sup> Al-Qur'ān, 2:31

<sup>757</sup> Pernilla Ouis, 'Islamic Ecotheology Based on the Qur'ān,' 154.

<sup>758</sup> Al-Qur'ān, 2:35

<sup>759</sup> Al-Qur'ān, 2:36

<sup>760</sup> Pernilla Ouis, 'Islamic Ecotheology Based on the Qur'ān,' 158.

<sup>761</sup> Al-Qur'ān, 33:72

This further highlights the connection between humanity, nature, and the concept of *fiṭrah*. Humans were presented with the opportunity to take on the responsibility of serving a purpose for God, and they accepted this role. In contrast, nature was offered the same chance but rejected it. Therefore, it is essential for humans to preserve their inherent nature, or *fiṭrah*, both internally and in the external world, to fulfill the purpose that God established for them on earth.

Finally, the soul is also connected to the human *fiṭrah* as it was proportioned and given the ability to be purified:<sup>762</sup>

﴿وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا﴾

And [by] the soul and He who proportioned it.<sup>763</sup>

﴿فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا﴾

And inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness,<sup>764</sup>

﴿قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا﴾

He has succeeded who purifies it,<sup>765</sup>

﴿وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا﴾

And he has failed who instills it [with corruption].<sup>766</sup>

Those who adhere to their *fiṭrah*, purify their souls, and keep it this way are successful. On the other hand, the ones that corrupt the *fiṭrah* and the soul, through disobedience and doubts, will fail. This differs from the true nature of the soul. The soul was fashioned to have a choice, but the *fiṭrah* does not have this dual nature. It is essentially sound unless corrupted, as explained by the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him):

<sup>762</sup> Pernilla Ouis, 'Islamic Ecotheology Based on the Qur'ān,' 155.

<sup>763</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 91:7

<sup>764</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 91:8

<sup>765</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 91:9

<sup>766</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 91:10

“No child is born but that he is upon natural instinct. His parents make him a Jew, or a Christian, or Magian. As an animal delivers a child with limbs intact, do you detect any flaws?” Then, Abu Huraira recited the verse, “The nature of Allah upon which he has set people,”<sup>767</sup>

Even in his description of the *fiṭrah*, he likened it to what was found in nature, in a pure animal.

The gift to the soul then was the *fiṭrah*. It is the way for the soul to find its path and purify it.<sup>768</sup> The essential being of humans is that they want to be pure, adhering to this *fiṭrah*. This also opposes the notion of original sin. As the *fiṭrah* recognizes purity, we love to enhance it by worshipping Allāh (Glorified and Exalted).

It is the job of Satan, as he did with Adam (peace be upon him), to corrupt the *fiṭrah* in any way he can. When explaining the true nature of the inner self, Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) explains that any sin would be forgiven, except the gravest of all shirk or associating partners with Allāh (Glorified and Exalted). The one responsible for encouraging this is Satan, through his attempt to corrupt both the natural physical self and the inner self of humans. This is reflected in the following verses:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ ۚ وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا بَعِيدًا﴾

Indeed, Allāh does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills. And he who associates others with Allāh has certainly gone far astray.<sup>769</sup>

﴿إِنْ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَّا إِنَاثًا وَإِنْ يَدْعُونَ إِلَّا شَيْطَانًا مَرِيدًا﴾

They call upon instead of Him none but female [deities], and they [actually] call upon none but a rebellious Satan<sup>770</sup>

﴿لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ آلِهَةً ۚ لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ آلِهَةً ۚ وَقَالَ لِاتَّخَذَنَّ مِنْ عِبَادِكَ نَصِيبًا مَفْرُوضًا﴾

Whom Allāh has cursed. For he had said, "I will surely take from among Your servants a specific portion."<sup>771</sup>

<sup>767</sup> Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Ḥadīth no. 1358

<sup>768</sup> Pernilla Ouis, 'Islamic Ecotheology Based on the Qur'ān,' 156.

<sup>769</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 4:116

<sup>770</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 4:117

<sup>771</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 4:118

﴿وَلَا ضَلَّٰنَهُمْ وَلَا مَنِيْنَهُمْ وَلَا مَرْهَمٌ فَلْيَبْتِكُنْ آذَانَ الْأَنْعَامِ وَلَا مَرْهَمٌ فَلْيَغَيِّرْ خَلْقَ اللَّهِ ۗ  
 وَمَنْ يَتَّخِذِ الشَّيْطَانَ وَلِيًّا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَقَدْ خَسِرَ خُسْرَانًا مُّبِينًا﴾

And I will mislead them, and I will arouse in them [sinful] desires, and I will command them so they will slit the ears of cattle, and I will command them so they will change the creation of Allāh." And whoever takes Satan as an ally instead of Allāh has certainly sustained a clear loss.<sup>772</sup>

The purpose and plot of Satan, then, is leading the pure *fiṭrah* to its corruption, firstly through altering its inner state, and finally even attempting to change the physical and natural creation of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted).

#### 4.7.4 The Therapeutical Nature of the *Fiṭrah*

The concept of *fiṭrah*, the innate human disposition toward goodness, truth, and belief in God, offers a profoundly therapeutic framework for addressing personal doubts, emotional challenges, and spiritual crises. *Fiṭrah* represents an individual's natural inclination toward moral behaviour, understanding of the divine, and alignment with universal truths. In Islamic psychology, this intrinsic disposition forms a cornerstone for a holistic approach to mental and spiritual well-being, addressing the interconnected dimensions of human experience.

One of the core therapeutic features of *fiṭrah* lies in its ability to align individuals with their innate nature.<sup>773</sup> When actions and beliefs correspond with *fiṭrah*, a profound sense of inner peace and harmony emerges.<sup>774</sup> This alignment reduces internal conflicts that arise from living in opposition to one's deeper values, thereby mitigating stress and anxiety. For example, individuals burdened by guilt or regret due to unethical behaviour can find solace in realigning with *fiṭrah*'s moral compass, emphasizing principles like honesty, integrity, and compassion. This realignment resolves inner turmoil and cultivates clarity, self-acceptance, and a renewed sense of purpose.

<sup>772</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 4:119

<sup>773</sup> Yasien Mohamed, 'Fitrah and Its Bearing on the Principles of Psychology', *American Journal of Islam and Society* 12, no. 1 (1 April 1995): 1–18, 11.

<sup>774</sup> Mohamed, 'Fitrah and Its Bearing on the Principles of Psychology,' 7.

*Fitrah* also encourages engagement in spiritual practices such as prayer, fasting, and seeking forgiveness, which serve as both acts of worship and therapeutic tools.<sup>775</sup> Prayer allows individuals to express fears, hopes, and gratitude, fostering emotional relief and resilience even during hardship.<sup>776</sup> Fasting instills discipline and self-awareness, helping individuals develop patience and focus on their relationship with God. Acts of repentance and seeking forgiveness alleviate guilt and shame while forgiving others fosters emotional equilibrium by releasing negative emotions like anger and resentment. These practices collectively reconnect individuals with a higher purpose, addressing feelings of loneliness, despair, and emptiness while promoting hope and emotional strength.

In addition to spiritual practices, *fitrah* emphasizes ethical living, which is essential for cultivating healthy relationships and fostering supportive communities.<sup>777</sup> Adherence to moral principles such as honesty, compassion, and justice nurtures trust and mutual support, strengthening social bonds.<sup>778</sup> Healthy relationships built on these values provide a reliable source of encouragement and understanding, contributing to emotional stability. In contrast, unethical actions often result in guilt, anxiety, and strained relationships, exacerbating psychological distress. By guiding individuals toward ethical behaviour, *fitrah* reduces these adverse outcomes, fostering a sense of integrity and inner peace.

Islamic psychology incorporates *fitrah* into its therapeutic framework, addressing the biological, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of human well-being.<sup>779</sup> This holistic approach recognizes that mental health cannot be isolated from spiritual and ethical considerations.<sup>780</sup> By viewing individuals as multifaceted beings, therapy rooted in *fitrah* addresses the root causes of distress rather than merely alleviating symptoms. For Muslim patients, this culturally and religiously relevant approach enhances the effectiveness of therapeutic interventions, as it resonates deeply with their values and encourages greater engagement in the healing process.

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<sup>775</sup> Mohamed, 'Fitrah and Its Bearing on the Principles of Psychology,' 15.

<sup>776</sup> Mohamed, 'Fitrah and Its Bearing on the Principles of Psychology,' 6.

<sup>777</sup> Ibid.

<sup>778</sup> Mohamed, 'Fitrah and Its Bearing on the Principles of Psychology,' 7.

<sup>779</sup> Muhammed Umaruddin, *The Ethical Philosophy of Al-Ghazzali* (Muslim University, 1962), 23.

<sup>780</sup> Umaruddin, *The Ethical Philosophy of Al-Ghazzali*, 23.

*Fiṭrah* also provides a pathway to overcome personal barriers, negative experiences, and doubts by fostering spiritual, ethical, and psychological resilience. Reconnecting with God allows individuals to access a source of strength and guidance that transcends worldly challenges, instilling hope and enabling perseverance through adversity. Therapy rooted in *fiṭrah* encourages self-reflection and moral growth, transforming negative experiences into opportunities for personal and spiritual development. By integrating *fiṭrah* into therapeutic practices, Islamic psychology offers a comprehensive framework that addresses mental health issues while promoting spiritual and ethical growth. This approach allows individuals to achieve a balanced life characterized by emotional well-being, moral integrity, and spiritual fulfillment. Through its holistic and therapeutic nature, *fiṭrah* helps individuals transcend personal struggles and align with their highest potential, fostering a life of harmony, resilience, and purpose.

#### **4.7.5 Responding to Personal Doubts Through *Al- Fiṭrah***

Throughout human history, spirituality has remained one of the most compelling and integral parts of almost any civilization.<sup>781</sup> It has been a far too dominant and enduring concept to ignore, reject, and classify as a meagre illusion.<sup>782</sup> This extends to the modern world. Even though attitudes and ideologies of materialism and hedonism prevail, there is still a substantial need for spirituality and, by extension, God. Studies as recent as 2010 and 2023 showed that about 84% of the world's population had a belief in God through some form of religious affiliation.<sup>783</sup> Even specifically in the West, fields such as psychology have been assessed to be driven by a neglected spiritual passage.<sup>784</sup> Though not all attempts go through the conception of God, even popular atheists have promoted discussions and concepts of engaging spirituality through meditation and other means to reach heightened and positive states in life.<sup>785</sup> Such a conformed and powerful human drive exemplifies the need for forms of spirituality as an essential human need, with some even perceiving it to be a type of intelligence driving one to the

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<sup>781</sup> Mohammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 33.

<sup>782</sup> Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, 33.

<sup>783</sup> 'The Global Religious Landscape', *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project* (blog), 18 December 2012, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-exec/>.

<sup>784</sup> Carl Gustav Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (United Kingdom: Routledge, 2001), 205.

<sup>785</sup> Sam Harris, *Waking Up: A Guide to Spirituality Without Religion* (Simon & Schuster, 2014).

transcendent.<sup>786</sup> Even in the firmest scientific grounds, such as neuroscience, the limbic system has been connected to the human's spiritual experiences, providing correlations for various spiritual expressions such as rituals and beliefs, concluding that these were instinctual, presenting a sort of divine reality.<sup>787</sup>

If individuals experience personal trauma at young ages, especially in religious contexts, it could then be a cause of the alteration of the *fiṭrah*. Studies of Muslims in the West have shown substantial links between childhood experience and religious doubt. Nurturing the *fiṭrah* seems to lead to less religious doubt. Establishing frequent prayer at a young age was shown to reduce the odds of reporting religious doubts by 33%.<sup>788</sup> Holding traditional beliefs and considering religion vital in one's life also decreased the odds of having religious doubts by 34% and 54%, respectively.<sup>789</sup> Perhaps one of the most relevant findings was that the actual experiences and methods of religious teachings also impacted the presence of doubt. Individuals who experienced harsh religious upbringings and negative personal experiences through authoritarian measures showed an increase in religious doubt in comparison to those who had compassionate experiences while still being classified as authoritative.<sup>790</sup>

The link between the self, personal experiences, and the alteration of the *fiṭrah* is expounded upon through the verse:

﴿وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنْسَاهُمْ أَنْفُسَهُمْ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ﴾

And be not like those who forgot Allāh, so He made them forget themselves. Those are the defiantly disobedient.<sup>791</sup>

The link between knowledge of oneself and knowledge of God is established in an intensely solipsistic manner, conversely linked to the development between the discovery of one's inner *fiṭrah* and the acknowledgement, love, and submission to the one true creator. Muslims should seek to establish and nurture their *fiṭrah* from a very young age. This is a means of protection from religious doubts. The internal heart is

<sup>786</sup> Robert A. Emmons, 'Is Spirituality an Intelligence? Motivation, Cognition, and the Psychology of Ultimate Concern', *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 10, no. 1 (2000): 3–26.

<sup>787</sup> Andrew B. Newberg, Eugene G. D'Aquili, and Vince Rause, *Why God Won't Go Away: Brain Science and the Biology of Belief* (New York Ballantine Books, 2001).

<sup>788</sup> Osman Umarji, 'Can Childhood Experiences Predict Religiosity and Doubt in Adults? An Empirical Analysis of Muslims' (Yaqeen Institute, 5 March 2020), 10.

<sup>789</sup> Umarji, 'Can Childhood Experiences Predict Religiosity and Doubt in Adults?,' 11.

<sup>790</sup> Umarji, 'Can Childhood Experiences Predict Religiosity and Doubt in Adults?,' 12.

<sup>791</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 59:19.

always inclined towards Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) and seeks comfort in His worship and through a deep connection. Suppose personal doubts enter the heart, either through negative experiences or misinformation. In that case, the Muslim is to try and re-establish this connection to nurture their faith and protect them from any doubts. If the *fiṭrah*, however, has been seen to be corrupted, then it needs external proof to reawaken it. These proofs can be obtained through either or all of the first three components or a selection. In this way, the components form together to work as a coherent construct and the importance of the *fiṭrah* in igniting certitude while removing doubts.

The *fiṭrah* influences human behaviour by providing an innate inclination towards recognizing and submitting to the Creator, Allāh (Glorified and Exalted).<sup>792</sup> It represents the pure, untainted nature with which every human is born, making them naturally predisposed to accept the truth of Islam.<sup>793</sup> This inherent disposition guides individuals towards good and moral actions, seeking inner peace and aligning with religious teachings.<sup>794</sup> However, external circumstances and upbringing can influence and potentially alter this natural state.<sup>795</sup> Despite these influences, the *fiṭrah* suggests that humans have an intrinsic tendency to return to their original, pure state of faith and righteousness.<sup>796</sup>

It is a fundamental element in Islamic psychology that guides the character and nature of human personality.<sup>797</sup> *Fiṭrah* encompasses the spiritual dimension of the Self, which includes the heart, intellect, and soul. It is seen as a system that binds these elements into a unified entity, ensuring harmony and alignment with Islamic teachings. The actualization of the *fiṭrah* is observed through behaviours and actions that reflect faith, worship, and ethics. When individuals follow their *fiṭrah*, they achieve inner harmony and alignment with the divine law, whereas deviation from *fiṭrah* leads to discord and spiritual disarray.<sup>798</sup>

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<sup>792</sup> Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, Bilingual edition (Bitton, England: The Book Foundation, 2005), 230.

<sup>793</sup> Ali Muhammad Bhat, 'Human Psychology (Fitrah) from Islamic Perspective', *International Journal of Nusantara Islam* 4, no. 2 (21 August 2016): 61–74.

<sup>794</sup> Bhat, 'Human Psychology (Fitrah) from Islamic Perspective,' 61.

<sup>795</sup> Muḥammad Yūsuf Mūsá, *Falsafat Al-Akhlāq Fi al-Islām* (Cairo: Maktabā wa-Matba'a Muḥammad Ali Subayh wa-Awladūh, 1953).

<sup>796</sup> Bhat, 'Human Psychology (Fitrah) from Islamic Perspective,' 61.

<sup>797</sup> Sohaimi Abdul Aziz, 'Fitrah Criticism: An Islamic Psychological Approach', *Journal of Islamic Studies, Prince of Songkla University* 6, no. 1 (2015): 1–10, 1.

<sup>798</sup> Abdul Aziz, 'Fitrah Criticism: An Islamic Psychological Approach,' 1.

Finally, the therapeutic potential of the *fiṭrah* lies in its ability to offer a comprehensive, culturally sensitive, and spiritually grounded approach to mental health. By aligning individuals with their innate disposition toward goodness and belief in God, *fiṭrah*-based therapy promotes inner peace, ethical behaviour, and spiritual fulfillment. It empowers individuals to take control of their lives, guiding them toward mental well-being and spiritual growth while overcoming personal doubts and negative experiences.

#### 4.8 CONCLUSION

The fourth chapter explored the multidimensional framework of certitude in the Qur'ān, which addresses critical moral, social, philosophical, and spiritual doubts. It focuses on the Qur'ān's unique capacity to affirm its divine origin and provide a comprehensive guide for addressing both internal and external uncertainties. By examining the concept of *i'jāz* (inimitability), the role of *tadabbur* (reflection), the use of reason (*'aql*), and the significance of the *fiṭrah* (innate disposition). The chapter highlights how the Qur'ān provides clarity and certitude in navigating life's complexities. Each component contributes to a deeper understanding of the Qur'ān's moral and metaphysical foundations, reinforcing faith and offering essential responses to doubts in a modern context.

The first component discusses how the concept of *i'jāz* (inimitability) of the Qur'ān addresses moral and social doubts about Islam by affirming its divine origin, which guarantees its moral rules, laws, and commands are perfect, universal, and objective. The Qur'ān transcends human subjectivity, offering a liberating morality rooted in Allāh's (Glorified and Exalted) mercy and justice. Certainty in Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) as the Creator leads to certitude in obeying His commands, with the Qur'ān's unparalleled literary excellence and lack of errors reinforcing its authority as a moral guide. The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) exemplified the Qur'ān's teachings through his high moral character, demonstrating its practical application. Many moral objections stem from cultural misunderstandings or ignorance of Qur'ānic teachings, which can be resolved through its *i'jāz*. These elements align with divine revelation, deriving moral principles rather than creating them, ultimately establishing Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) as the supreme lawgiver and responding to moral doubts.

The Qur'ān establishes a second component of certitude that transcends scientific limitations, connecting the physical and metaphysical through reflection (*tadabbur*). Science, inherently uncertain and dynamic, operates within the bounds of the observable natural world, making it unsuitable for addressing metaphysical or religious questions, including the existence of God. Attempts to justify religious truths solely through science are incoherent, as science's evolving nature precludes absolute certainty. While modern society often seeks certainty in science, this expectation misunderstands its purpose. Science relies on induction, which cannot yield absolute conclusions and is subject to change with new observations, as demonstrated by evolving knowledge of phenomena like COVID-19. Moreover, sensory perception and empirical methods have inherent limitations, further complicating claims of scientific certainty. The Qur'ān acknowledges the value of science for understanding the physical world and encourages reflection on creation as a means of linking it to the metaphysical Creator. It emphasizes that the harmony and perfection of the universe point to a transcendent and perfect Creator, fostering faith and eradicating doubts. *Tadabbur* enhances understanding, deepens faith, and provides certitude, demonstrating the complementary relationship between scientific exploration and spiritual reflection.

The third component highlights how the Qur'ān addresses doubts about God's existence by emphasizing the use of reason (*'aql*) to derive meaning and purpose in life. It presents that denying the Creator is rooted in a lack of evidence or logical certitude, as even prominent atheists like Dawkins admit uncertainty in their stance. The Qur'ān, on the other hand, fosters certitude by awakening a sense of origin, causation, and purpose in humankind. Through its verses, it establishes logical principles that respond to philosophical doubts and provide deeper meaning to essential aspects of life.

The fourth component explores the enduring human need for spirituality and its foundational role in civilizations, including modern materialistic societies. Despite shifts towards materialism and hedonism, spirituality remains essential, with studies showing that most of the global population believes in God. The *fiṭrah*, an innate human disposition toward recognizing and submitting to Allāh (Glorified and Exalted), serves as a core element in Islamic psychology, influencing moral behaviour, inner peace, and alignment with divine teachings. However, external experiences, particularly negative ones, can alter the *fiṭrah*, leading to doubts. Nurturing *fiṭrah* from a young age—through

practices like prayer and compassionate religious upbringing—protects against doubts and promotes faith. The *fiṭrah* also acts as a therapeutic tool, fostering psychological well-being, spiritual fulfillment, and ethical living. For individuals whose *fiṭrah* has been corrupted, external proofs and Islamic principles can help reawaken it, restoring harmony and alignment with divine guidance. Integrating *fiṭrah* into therapy offers a holistic approach that addresses mental, spiritual, and ethical dimensions, providing culturally relevant and effective solutions for overcoming personal doubts and fostering growth.

The Qur’ān’s construct of certitude through these four components is a profound response to the challenges posed by moral, scientific, philosophical, and spiritual uncertainties. The Qur’ān establishes its authority as a divine guide through its inimitable nature, while its call to reflection bridges the physical and metaphysical realms. Its emphasis on reason and nurturing the *fiṭrah* demonstrates its holistic approach to human understanding and well-being. It also underscores the timeless relevance of Qur’ānic teachings in fostering certainty, addressing doubts, and guiding individuals toward spiritual, moral, and intellectual fulfillment. By integrating these principles, believers can navigate a world of evolving challenges with clarity and confidence grounded in the construct of certitude of the Qur’ān.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **ATTAINING CERTITUDE THROUGH THE FOUR COMPONENTS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

Religious doubt is a significant phenomenon among Muslims in the West, shaped by unique socio-cultural and intellectual challenges, including secularism, materialism, and Islamophobia. These factors, coupled with the philosophical and intellectual pressures of a predominantly secular environment, have contributed to an increasing sense of uncertainty among Muslims navigating their faith. Despite the growing prevalence of this issue, there remains a lack of comprehensive frameworks that address these doubts from an Islamic perspective, mainly through the lens of the Qur'ān. This study sought to fill this gap by exploring the Qur'ānic concept of certitude as a response to religious doubt, providing theoretical insights and pathways toward its formulation.

The Qur'ān offers a profound epistemological framework for achieving certitude, addressing moral, intellectual, philosophical, and emotional dimensions of doubt. However, traditional interpretations often fail to contextualize these teachings to the modern challenges faced by Muslims in the West. This study aimed to bridge this divide by integrating classical Islamic scholarship with contemporary theological, linguistic, and empirical methodologies. It emphasizes the relevance of Qur'ānic guidance in countering skepticism while ensuring its accessibility for diverse audiences, particularly non-Arabic speakers. A theoretical framework can then be established from the results of this study and presented in response to these doubts.

#### **5.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study provides a comprehensive framework for addressing religious doubts among Muslims in the West through the Qur'ān's concept of certitude. This framework acknowledges the socio-cultural and intellectual pressures unique to the Western context, such as secularism, materialism, and Islamophobia, which often amplify doubt. By contextualizing Qur'ānic teachings to address these challenges, the study bridges

classical Islamic scholarship with contemporary discourse. It highlights the relevance of the Qur'ān's principles in confronting modern skepticism while broadening the scope of research by integrating theological, linguistic, and empirical methodologies. By validating the Qur'ānic approach through empirical evidence, the study contributes to theoretical understanding and solutions for mitigating religious doubts.

The theoretical framework that stems from this study can be presented within three contexts. The first context relates to the causes and consequences of religious doubt amongst Muslims in the West. The second refers to establishing the components of certitude in the Qur'ān. The third joins the previous two in establishing how the Qur'ānic framework of certitude responds to some of the causes of religious doubt. Each component of certitude, while general, can be linked to address a specific source of doubt, inculcating an authoritative source of certitude.

The first context of the theoretical framework focuses on the sources of religious doubt. Findings related to the first context of the cause of religious doubt found four primary sources of religious doubt amongst Muslims in the West. The first were moral and social doubts connected to gender roles and equality, historical events and laws like polygamy, and freedoms and limitations like the dress code for women. The second source was scientific-related doubts like the theory of evolution, the study of biology, and its link to ideologies such as atheism. The third source was intellectual and philosophical, such as proof of the existence of God, the existence of evil, and the truth of Islam. Finally, the fourth cause was found to be the personal experience of Muslims in dealing with abuse, tragic events, or communal trauma.

The second context of the framework focuses on establishing certitude in the Qur'ān. Findings related to the second context concluded that out of twenty-seven verses of the Qur'ān relating to certainty, seven seem to develop a methodology to increase certitude through specific motivations. These were further categorized into two groups consisting of four total components. The first is external means to achieve certitude through the *i'jaz* of the Qur'ān and *tadabbur* of the physical world. The second is internal means through *al-'aql* intellect or reason and the *fitrah* or inner self.

The first component of certitude can be derived through *i'jaz* of the Qur'ān itself as being a source of certainty through the verses:

﴿هَذَا بَصَائِرُ لِلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ﴾

This [Qur'ān] is enlightenment for mankind and guidance and mercy for a people who are **certain** [in faith].<sup>799</sup>

﴿وَإِنَّهُ حَقُّ الْيَقِينِ﴾

And indeed, this 'Quran' is the truth of **certain**.<sup>800</sup>

The second component is identified through *tadabbur*, a reflection on the physical world to achieve certainty through the following three verses:

﴿وَكَذَلِكَ نُرِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ مَلَكُوتَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلِيَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُوقِنِينَ﴾

And thus did We show Abraham the realm of the heavens and the earth that he would be among the **certain** [in faith].<sup>801</sup>

﴿اللَّهُ الَّذِي رَفَعَ السَّمَاوَاتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا ۖ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ۗ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ ۗ كُلٌّ يَجْرِي لِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ۗ يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ يُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ بِلِقَاءِ رَبِّكُمْ تُوقِنُونَ﴾

It is Allāh who erected the heavens without pillars that you [can] see; then He established Himself above the Throne and made subject the sun and the moon, each running [its course] for a specified term. He arranges [each] matter; He details the signs that you may, of the meeting with your Lord, be **certain**.<sup>802</sup>

﴿وَفِي الْأَرْضِ آيَاتٌ لِلْمُوقِنِينَ﴾

And on the earth are signs for the **certain** [in faith].<sup>803</sup>

<sup>799</sup> Al-Qur'ān, 45:20.

<sup>800</sup> Al-Qur'ān, 69:51.

<sup>801</sup> Al-Qur'ān, 45:20.

<sup>802</sup> Al-Qur'ān, 69:51.

<sup>803</sup> Al-Qur'ān, 51:20

The third component of certitude can be identified as *'aql*, or reason, through the following verse that questions us about the means of existence, along with its purpose:

﴿أَمْ خَلَقُوا السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ ۗ بَلْ لَا يُوقِنُونَ﴾

Or did they create the heavens and the earth? Rather, they are not **certain**.<sup>804</sup>

The fourth and final component can be identified as the *fiṭrah*, or inner self through the following verse:

﴿وَفِي خَلْقِكُمْ وَمَا يَبُثُّ مِنْ دَابَّةٍ آيَاتٌ لِقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ﴾

And in the creation of yourselves and what He disperses of moving creatures are signs for people who are **certain** [in faith].<sup>805</sup>

The table on the subsequent page summarizes these four components collectively.

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<sup>804</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 52:36

<sup>805</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 45:4

Table 2.1 The Four Components of Certitude in the Qur'ān

Component of Certitude	Translation <sup>806</sup>	Āyah	Āyah Number	Sūrah Number
Component 1: The Qur'ān (External)	This [Qur'ān] is enlightenment for mankind and guidance and mercy for a people who are <b>certain</b> [in faith].	﴿هَذَا بَصِيرَةٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ﴾	20	45
Component 1: The Qur'ān (External)	And indeed, this 'Quran' is the truth of <b>certainty</b> .	﴿وَإِنَّهُ لِحَقِّ الْيَقِينِ﴾	51	69
Component 2: Reflection (External)	And thus did We show Abraham the realm of the heavens and the earth that he would be among the <b>certain</b> [in faith].	﴿وَكَذَلِكَ نُرِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ مَلَكُوتَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلِيَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُوقِنِينَ﴾	75	6
Component 2: Reflection (External)	It is Allāh who erected the heavens without pillars that you [can] see; then He established Himself above the Throne and made subject the sun and the moon, each running [its course] for a specified term. He arranges [each] matter; He details the signs that you may, of the meeting with your Lord, be <b>certain</b> .	﴿اللَّهُ الَّذِي رَفَعَ السَّمَاوَاتِ بِعِزِّ عَمْدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ وَسَحَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ كُلٌّ يَجْرِي لِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ يُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ بِلِقَاءِ رَبِّكُمْ تُوقِنُونَ﴾	2	13
Component 2: Reflection (External)	And on the earth are signs for the <b>certain</b> [in faith]	﴿وَفِي الْأَرْضِ آيَاتٌ لِّلْمُوقِنِينَ﴾	20	51
Component 3: Intellect or Reason (Internal)	Or did they create the heavens and the earth? Rather, they are not <b>certain</b> .	﴿أَمْ خَلَقُوا السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ ۗ بَلْ لَا يُوقِنُونَ﴾	36	52
Component 4: The Inner Self (Internal)	And in the creation of yourselves and what He disperses of moving creatures are signs for people who are <b>certain</b> [in faith].	﴿وَفِي خَلْقِكُمْ وَمَا يَبُثُّ مِنْ دَابَّةٍ آيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ﴾	4	45

<sup>806</sup> Saheeh International, *The Qur'an - Saheeh International Translation: With Surah Introductions and Appendices*, ed. A. B. al-Mehri (Independently published, 2020).

The third context establishes the framework through all three components. The first component of certitude, *i'jaz* of the Qur'ān, was determined through the literary miracle of the Qur'ān, its challenge to produce anything similar to it, the prophecies it contains, and its remarkable protection and preservation. This allowed the establishment of the Qur'ān as a moral authority, responding to sources of moral and social concerns. The second component of certitude, *tadabbur*, was determined by linking the physical and metaphysical, proof through providence, proof through movements, and a brief discussion on the Qur'ān and scientific knowledge. This allowed for a distinct separation between the Qur'ān and science while at the same time using the physical signs of the world around us to establish certitude. The third component of certitude, *al-'aql*, was determined through the origin and purpose of creation. This allowed for the establishment of reason in the Islamic process, helping to alleviate intellectual and philosophical doubts. The fourth component of certitude, *al-fītrah*, was determined by its internal innate source, specifically through early development and self-awareness. This allowed the countering of negative personal experiences by awakening the inner *fītrah* and connecting to Allāh (Glorified and Exalted), helping to overcome personal doubts and negative experiences through self-awareness and increased awareness of God. The following table summarizes the three contexts of the framework of certitude in the Qur'ān.

Table 3.1 The Three Contexts of the Framework of Certitude

The First Context: Sources of Doubt	The Second Context: Component of Response	Description	The Third Context: Role in Certitude
Moral and Social: Gender roles (equality) Historical Events (polygamy) Freedom and Limitation ( <i>hijāb</i> )	<i>I'jāz</i> (Miracle of the Qur'an)	The Qur'an's linguistic perfection, profound wisdom, scientific accuracy, and transformative impact which remain unparalleled.	Provides undeniable proof of divine origin, reinforcing faith and certainty. Establishes the Qur'ān as a moral authority.
Scientific and Ideological: Evolution Biology Atheism	<i>Al-Tadabbur</i> (Reflection)	Reflection on the Qur'an, natural phenomena, and the intricacies of existence to uncover divine signs.	Encourages reflection with the physical world, strengthening conviction through thoughtful engagement.
Intellectual: Existence of God Truth of Islam Existence of Evil	<i>Al-'Aql</i> (Reason)	Using intellect to evaluate evidence, understand logical arguments, and recognize consistency in Islamic teachings.	Aligns faith with reason, ensuring belief is both rational and spiritually sound.
Personal Experience: Abuse Tragic Events Communal Trauma	<i>Al-Fiṭrah</i> (Innate Nature)	The innate human inclination toward recognizing truth, believing in a Creator, and pursuing meaning in life.	Helps to overcome personal doubts and negative experiences through self-awareness and an increased awareness of God.

The Qur'ān provides a comprehensive framework to attain certitude by addressing moral, scientific, intellectual, and personal doubts. Through the four components of *i'jāz*, *tadabbur*, *'aql*, and *fiṭrah*, it offers a multifaceted approach that aligns divine revelation with human intellect, reflection, and innate disposition. The inimitability of the Qur'ān (*i'jāz*) establishes it as a moral authority, transcending human

subjectivity and providing universal principles rooted in Allāh's (Glorified and Exalted) justice. Reflection (*tadabbur*) bridges the physical and metaphysical, encouraging deep contemplation of creation to foster faith and eliminate doubts about divine existence. Reason (*'aql*) ensures the intellectual coherence of Islamic teachings, affirming the Creator's role in establishing purpose and meaning. Lastly, the innate human nature (*fiṭrah*) anchors individuals to spiritual truths, countering doubts and providing a therapeutic path to mental and emotional well-being. Together, these components form an interconnected system that nurtures faith, promotes understanding and eliminates doubts. By integrating these principles into one's life, the Qur'ān addresses the complexities of modern challenges and guides humanity toward certitude, spiritual growth, and alignment with divine wisdom.

Overall, this theoretical framework integrates the themes of doubt and certitude into a cohesive model that addresses both the causes and solutions to religious doubt. It emphasizes the relevance of Qur'ānic teachings in navigating modern challenges while providing practical pathways for Muslims in the West to strengthen their faith. Through its multidimensional approach, the framework offers a balance between theological principles and contemporary contexts, ensuring its accessibility and effectiveness for diverse audiences.

### **5.3 DISCUSSION OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

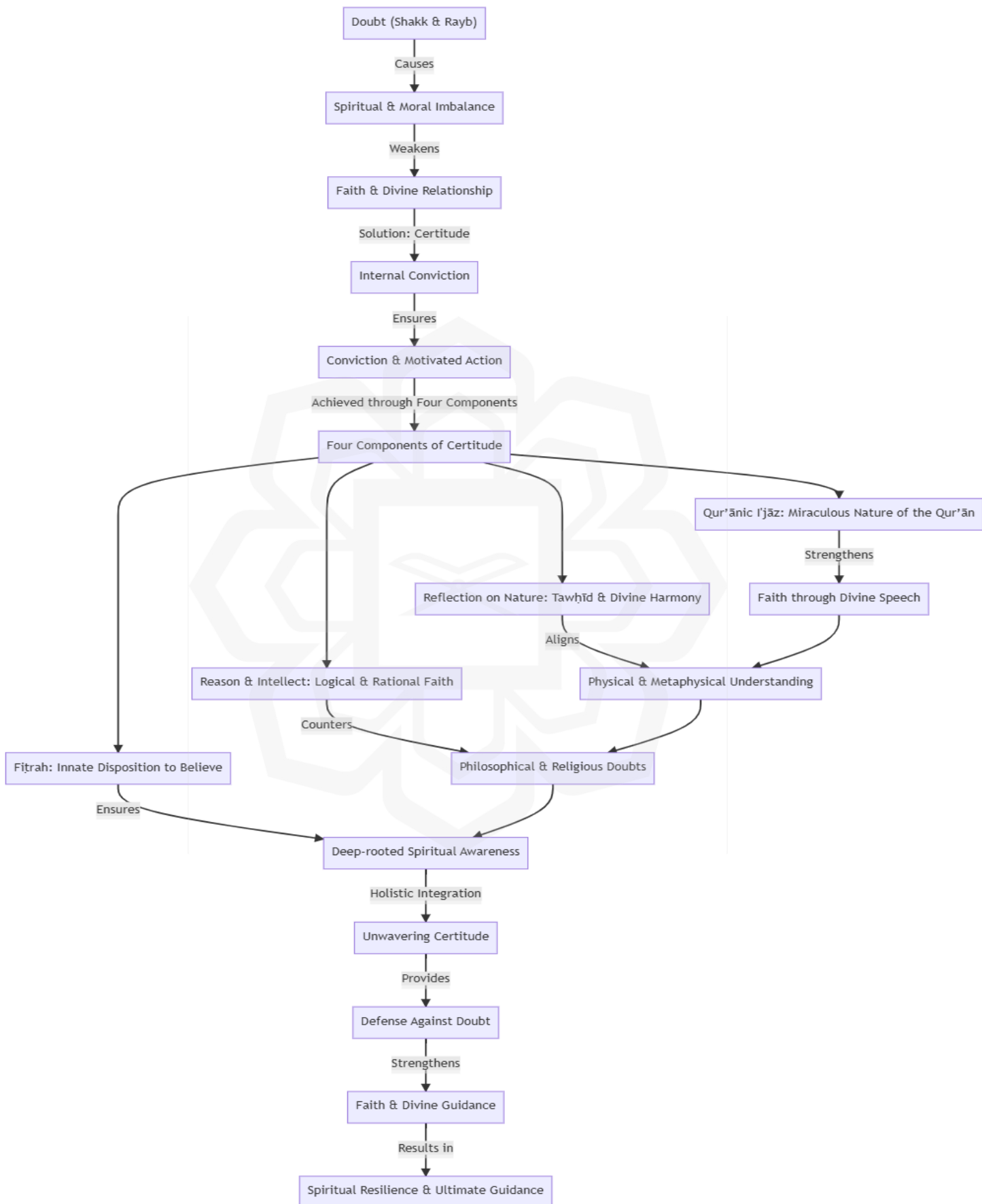
Doubt is a profound disease of the heart, leading to destructive consequences in this life and the hereafter. Qur'ānic verses link doubt to hypocrisy, disbelief, and deviation, emphasizing that persistent doubt when unchecked, compounds and deepens. Scholars like Al-Sa'dī and Al-Ṭabarī explain that this spiritual ailment escalates when the heart resists divine guidance, leading to moral imbalance and misguidance. The hypocrite, marked by indecision and wavering, epitomizes the linguistic and spiritual essence of doubt as described in the Qur'ān. Doubt undermines faith and renders individuals vulnerable to misguidance. This ailment disrupts one's relationship with divine truth, reinforcing the need for faith grounded in certitude.

Certainty and certitude, though interrelated, are distinct yet crucial in Islamic epistemology and spiritual practice. Certainty refers to external, evidence-based propositions, while certitude represents an internal state of unwavering belief. Certitude

ensures conviction and motivates action, distinguishing it as more impactful in personal and communal faith practices. The Qur'ān aims to instill certitude by providing certainty, fostering a symbiotic relationship between external evidence and internal conviction. Certitude is defined as firm faith devoid of doubt, necessitating consistent action and enduring commitment. This internal state integrates sound knowledge, unwavering belief, and active practice. The presence of certitude is vital for a believer's spiritual resilience and alignment with divine guidance.

The Pathway to Certitude in Islam illustrates the transformation from doubt (*Shakk & Rayb*) to spiritual resilience and ultimate guidance. Doubt leads to spiritual and moral imbalance, weakening one's faith and divine relationship. The key to overcoming doubt is establishing certitude (*yaqīn*), which fosters internal conviction and ensures conviction-driven action. Certitude is developed through four key components: Qur'ānic *I'jāz*, which highlights the miraculous nature of the Qur'ān; Reflection on Nature, which strengthens belief in divine unity (*Tawhīd*); Reason & Intellect, which counters philosophical and religious doubts; and *fiṭrah*, the innate human disposition toward faith. Each of these components reinforces belief—the Qur'ān strengthens faith through divine speech, reflection on nature aligns physical and metaphysical understanding, reason counters doubts, and *fiṭrah* ensures deep-rooted spiritual awareness. When these elements integrate holistically, they result in unwavering certitude, which serves as a defense against doubt, strengthens faith and divine guidance, and ultimately leads to spiritual resilience. This structured process shows how faith can be fortified through intellectual, spiritual, and innate faculties. The flowchart on the succeeding page displays a visual representation of the complete framework.

Figure 1.1 The Qur’ānic Framework of Certitude



The first component of the Qur'ānic framework of certitude establishes the connection between the content of the Qur'ān and its miraculous nature. This is not limited to poetic speech but extends to its profound meanings, each verse being a miracle itself. It is a revelation so remarkable that it would take perhaps several, if not hundreds, of dissertations in any given language even to get a sense of the scope of its i'jāz. The effect of the Qur'ān further protrudes concerning the concept of faith:

﴿إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُهُ زَادَتْهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ﴾

The believers are only those who, when Allāh is mentioned, their hearts become fearful, and when His verses are recited to them, it increases them in faith; and upon their Lord they rely -<sup>807</sup>

It increases their faith, which was contextually defined as belief in the heart, sayings of the tongue, and actions of the limb.<sup>808</sup> It then affects the heart, mind, body, and soul, even if one cannot first comprehend or understand its discourse. The i'jāz of the Qur'ān is a starting point for certitude, and the challenge of the Qur'ān to produce something like it is its conclusion. The succession of the verses concerning the challenge and the negation of the capability to produce anything like the Qur'ān establishes this notion. It concludes with a natural succession of granting glad tidings to the believers who accept this component of certitude and then build upon it.

﴿وَبَشِّرِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ كُلَّمَا رُزِقُوا مِنْهَا مِن ثَمَرَةٍ رِّزْقًا قَالُوا هَذَا الَّذِي رُزِقْنَا مِن قَبْلُ وَأَتُوا بِهِ مُتَشَابِهًا وَهُمْ فِيهَا أَزْوَاجٌ مُّطَهَّرَةٌ وَهُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ﴾

And give good tidings to those who believe and do righteous deeds that they will have gardens [in Paradise] beneath which rivers flow.

Whenever they are provided with a provision of fruit therefrom, they will say, "This is what we were provided with before." And it is given to them in likeness. And they will have therein purified spouses, and they will abide therein eternally<sup>809</sup>

<sup>807</sup> Al-Qur'ān, 8:2

<sup>808</sup> Al-'Uṭaimīn et al., *Explanation of the Three Fundamental Principles of Islaam*, 42.

<sup>809</sup> Al-Qur'ān, 2:25

Good tidings in the verse are conveyed to those who believe, constituting certainty established firstly by the *i'jāz* of the Qur'ān. It is not limited to this description as those who believe with certainty follow that with righteous deeds, shown through sayings and physical actions, defined by certitude, thereby removing doubts and establishing a determined faith.

The method of the second component is not to provide technical information about the world itself. The tools to obtain this have been supplied through our intellect, continuously alluded to in the Qur'ān. The method is seen in the purpose of this revelation or *āyāt* in establishing certitude. The source of revelation, as discussed in the first component, is also critical in its connection with the second. If one is conscious of who is speaking, then the interpretation of the speech can be much more adequately reasoned.<sup>810</sup>

The purpose of the Qur'ān is to establish the significance of the *tawhīd*, or the oneness of God, through his singular source of power, beauty, harmony, and perfection reflected in the natural world. Science is an extension used to interlock these intricacies and not object to them. It is simply a tool used in the ever-changing pedagogy of knowledge and theorizing states of the natural world through this hierarchical lens of the Creator. Any objections through science or religious doubts based upon it are simply incoherent as its nature is not to deal with the metaphysical but rather the physical natural world. An elaboration of the senses and a greater perspective allows for the reflection of this component and its potency in developing certitude through the natural world and order of the verses in the Qur'ān. In essence, they are *āyāt* revealing *āyāt*. In the context of the sublime creation, each sign or miraculous verse reflects another *āyah* or sign in an interrelated concept. There can be no contradiction between the Qur'ān and any scientific objections or doubts if there is awareness of the purposes of the *āyāt* of the Qur'ān established firstly, through certainty in the first competent, then by a more profound certainty through the second, all while considering the uncertainty of the limited physical capabilities of science.

The third component of reason is reflected in the *āyāt* of the Qur'ān, not just because it answers how with such certainty, but also why. It appeals to the mind, reason,

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<sup>810</sup> Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi' and Said Nursi, *Spiritual Dimensions of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's Risale-i Nur* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008).

intellect, and logic in establishing the third component of certitude. It is a beautifully established principle in several verses of the Qur'ān, not only with the potential to respond to the presence of any philosophical or religious doubts amongst Muslims in the West but also establishing so compellingly the depths of certitude.

The understanding and nurturing of the *fiṭrah* is essential and the basis of the fourth component. It may also lead to the highest level of certitude, with all other external components simply building upon it. With only peripheral claims to rely upon, there would only be an external circulatory set of claims or circumstances defined by an infinite regress.<sup>811</sup> There are internal components then that are necessary that remain primordial concepts, not in need essentially of external proofs. The *fiṭrah*, then, is precisely that. It holds a central place in understanding certitude and the innate human inclination toward the recognition of God, as explained through Islamic theological perspectives. It represents an intrinsic awareness of the divine and a fundamental orientation toward monotheism. This disposition is divinely ingrained in every human being, serving as a primary source of certitude and spiritual awareness.

Though the *fiṭrah* suffices for basic spiritual awareness, reason and logic are supplementary tools to strengthen faith, particularly when the *fiṭrah* is clouded by doubt or external corruption. The Qur'an underscores this interplay between spiritual and rational dimensions through reflective questions, which prompt humans to recognize the divine reality within themselves and in the natural world. This approach emphasizes that God's existence is self-evident and does not rely solely on intellectual proof. *Fiṭrah* is often reawakened in moments of extreme circumstances. Individuals instinctively turn to Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) for help in desperation or imminent danger. This innate response reveals the primal depth of the *fiṭrah*, which surfaces despite previous suppression or neglect.

Prominent scholars like Al-Ghazālī and Ibn Taymiyyah assert that certitude rooted in *fiṭrah* transcends intellectual processes.<sup>812</sup> While reason and logic provide valuable insights the *fiṭrah* represents the most fundamental and self-evident level of belief. Its role is not to create faith but to affirm the truth that is already embedded within human nature. In essence the *fiṭrah* serves as the origin and sustainer of human

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<sup>811</sup> Ibn Taymīyah, *Naqḍ al- manṭiq*, 1:13-14.

<sup>812</sup> Ibn Taymīyah, *Naqḍ al- manṭiq*, 1:13-14.

spirituality. It grounds the individual's quest for meaning and connection with the divine, forming the core of religious certitude and universal recognition of Allāh's (Glorified and Exalted) existence. While external proofs and rational arguments enhance faith, preserving *fiṭrah* is essential for maintaining spiritual authenticity and alignment with the divine truth.

These four components, individually and holistically, set a path toward responding to doubt and establishing certainty and certitude. These four components of certitude should not be taken in isolation from each other as an inherent theme connects them all. They are all *āyāt* of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted). Every verse in the Qur'ān is an *āyah*.

﴿الرَّءِىَ تِلْكَ آيَاتِ الْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ﴾

Alif, Lām, Rā. These are the *āyāt* (signs, verses) of the clear Book.<sup>813</sup>

﴿إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ﴾

Indeed, We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'ān that you might understand.<sup>814</sup>

Essentially, all the components of certitude revert to the first. The *i'jāz* of the Qur'ān is intrinsically an *āyah* of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) that provides certainty through His speech and certitude through an increase of faith in the heart. Subsequently, specific *āyāt* compels us to examine the natural world in establishing a link through the physical world to the metaphysical creator. This is followed by an examination through reason to find purpose in the natural world we reflect upon. Finally, we are to submit to these *āyāt*, to the creator, by harmoniously embracing our *fiṭrah*, an *āyah* of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) within all of us.

There also is a profound connection between the four components and our existence. Each one appeals to a distinct sense or sensory organ. The literary miracle of the Qur'ān instils deep reflection and harmony in the soul of humanity, curing it of any doubts or diseases. Reflection upon the physical world comforts our eyes through beauty and harmony and our minds through reason. Finally, our hearts find the tranquillity they desperately seek through the *fiṭrah*. It is the perfect blend of the

<sup>813</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 12:1

<sup>814</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 12:2

physical and metaphysical, leading towards the eradication of doubts, the establishment of certainty, and, finally, certitude.

This, instinctively, is faith. It is the reality that arises from the heart through feeling and emotion, the tongue through belief and saying, and the limbs through physical action.<sup>815</sup> Faith is not merely a belief in the absence of evidence, thought, or feeling. It is the expression of the self entirely, arising from the approach and character of an individual. The ones who are certain are the ones who are guided. This is not circular reasoning, as the ones who possess the sincerity to inquire about the truth will be blessed with certitude. This is opposed by *shakk* and *rayb*, a state as cynical as it is distrustful, seeking neither knowledge nor understanding. The pathway to certitude is sincerity and knowledge, and the internalization of knowledge increases certitude.

Our time has been defined as the genuine age of criticism, in which modern man has been rendered incapable of experience due to suspected liabilities of illusion.<sup>816</sup> Religious doubts, particularly in a Western context, are a product of this environment. Moral and social concerns, scientific and philosophical concerns, and trauma through personal experience summarize the four primary sources of religious doubt among Muslims in the West. The Qur'ān establishes a coherent system composed of four interrelated components to eradicate these doubts while instilling an unwavering certitude in the body, mind, soul, and heart. While general, each component can be linked to address a specific source of doubt and inculcate a definitive source of certitude.

This is vital, especially for the millions of Muslims living as religious minorities in the West. They face societies that are decreasing in their overall religiosity with waves of uncertainty in the form of *shakk* or *rayb*. There is a need more than ever for certainty and certitude. The four components represent a singular construct that can be internalized. On a surface level, doubts will be reduced if the *fiṭrah* is awoken internally through either each or a combination of the first three components. The *i'jaz* of the Qur'ān is a means to establish certainty through the Qur'ān itself on the most basic of levels. This can extend to the highest level of certainty, and internalizing it provides profound certitude. Through *tadabbur* and the use of the 'aql, the eyes, ears, mind,

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<sup>815</sup> 'Alī ibn 'Alī Ibn Abī al-'Izz, *Shu'ayb al-Arna'ut*, and 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abd al-Muhsin al-Turki, *Sharḥ al-'Aqīdah al-Taḥāwīyah*, 4th ed (Bayrut: Muassasat al-Risalah, 1992), 1:462.

<sup>816</sup> Mohammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 1.

body, heart, and spirit of the Muslim may be inspired, resulting in a metaphysical connection and harmonizing the *fiṭrah*. A renewed reading of the stark opening verses of the second *surah* of the Qur’ān establishes the impact of this construct. It is now that the verses are revisited, not just as claims, but *āyāt*.

Certitude holds a foundational role in the Qur’ān, being one of its defining attributes from the outset. The Qur’ān emphasizes that it is free from doubt and provides guidance for those conscious of Allāh. This establishes certitude as both a characteristic of revelation and a goal for believers to attain. Certitude, as praised in the Qur’ān, enlightens, guides, and offers mercy to those who possess it, ensuring that they benefit spiritually and practically. Islamic tradition underscores that certitude is the essence of faith, as exemplified in the words and actions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him). Certitude ensures that faith is not superficial but deeply rooted in the heart, guiding righteous actions and steadfastness in belief. Without certitude, faith weakens, leading to hesitations and potentially the absence of genuine belief.

Certitude serves as a defence against life’s challenges, offering believers the strength to persevere through hardships with unwavering trust in Allāh. The Prophet's supplication for certitude highlights its importance in alleviating worldly afflictions. It also plays a vital role in knowledge and understanding, beginning with belief in Allāh as the Creator and extending to conviction in divine guidance and the signs of creation. Certitude transforms external certainty into internal faith, fostering submission and sincere actions that reflect one’s belief.

Certitude solidifies faith, which comprises words, deeds, and intentions. It ensures that belief extends beyond intellectual acknowledgment to actions and states of the heart. The Qur’ān and Sunnah emphasize that true faith is marked by conviction, demonstrated through sincere speech, righteous deeds, and a firm inner state. This relationship is evident in the verse describing believers as those who do not waver and strive with their wealth and lives for Allāh’s cause. Certitude, therefore, harmonizes internal conviction with external actions, completing the essence of faith.

Through this framework, the Qur’ān establishes a coherent system composed of four interrelated components in response to the primary sources that fuel religious doubt amongst Muslims in the West. Each component, while general, can be linked to address a specific source of doubt, inculcating a definitive source of certitude. This framework

responds directly to the sources of religious doubt and has the potential to categorically instill an unwavering certitude in the body, mind, soul, and heart.

#### 5.4 IMPACT OF THE STUDY

The impact of this study is significant, offering a comprehensive framework that addresses the sources of religious doubt among Muslims in the West and presents a multifaceted approach to restoring certainty and faith. The four components outlined—*i'jāz*, *tadabbur*, *'aql*, and *fiṭrah*—work together to counteract the challenges posed by intellectual, moral, scientific, and personal doubts, helping Muslims reconnect with their faith in a rapidly changing, often secularized world.

The first component emphasizes the *i'jāz* (inimitability) of the Qur'ān, which underlines its unique status as a divine revelation that transcends human subjectivity and offers objective, universal moral laws. This component can restore confidence in the Qur'ān's authority, especially when doubts arise regarding its moral and social relevance. This component offers a foundation of divine certainty by establishing the Qur'ān as a moral guide rooted in Allāh's (Glorified and Exalted) justice and mercy, free from human imperfections. This is especially crucial for Muslims who face skepticism rooted in societal misunderstandings or cultural misinterpretations of Islamic teachings.

Incorporating the Qur'ān's call for *tadabbur* (reflection), the second component fosters a complementary relationship between science and spirituality. It addresses the limitations of science in answering metaphysical questions and encourages reflection on the natural world to connect it with the Creator. This component is particularly impactful for Muslims in the West, who are often confronted by a secular, scientifically driven worldview. The study reinforces that the Qur'ān does not oppose scientific exploration but encourages contemplation of creation, leading to a deeper understanding of the divine and enhancing faith.

The third component highlights the role of reason (*'aql*) in cultivating certitude, appealing to the rational faculties of the mind to resolve philosophical and existential doubts. The Qur'ān provides a coherent and logical framework for understanding the existence of God and the purpose of life, which can help Muslims overcome doubts

arising from atheism, agnosticism, or philosophical skepticism. This intellectual approach not only strengthens faith but encourages believers to engage with their religion in a more thoughtful and reasoned manner. Given the exposure many Muslims have to secular or atheistic viewpoints, this component offers a robust intellectual defence of Islam and its teachings.

The fourth component, *fiṭrah*, emphasizes the intrinsic human disposition toward spirituality and submission to Allāh (Glorified and Exalted). The *fiṭrah* is the natural state of the human heart, and when nurtured, it serves as a core source of certitude. The study underscores the importance of protecting and developing this innate disposition from a young age, as it directly impacts one's spiritual health, ethical behaviour, and overall well-being. By restoring and harmonizing the *fiṭrah*, individuals can overcome personal doubts and align themselves more closely with divine guidance. This component also highlights the therapeutic role of the *fiṭrah*, offering a path to psychological and emotional healing in the face of doubt.

Integrating these four components provides a holistic and systematic approach to overcoming religious doubt. This theoretical framework offers practical contexts for Muslims to engage with their faith on multiple levels—morally, intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally. It is particularly significant for Muslims living in the West, where religious skepticism and uncertainty are prevalent. The study's framework can be a valuable resource for parents, educators, and religious leaders, offering tools to guide Muslim youth and minority communities toward stronger faith and certitude.

By providing a comprehensive, interconnected system of certitude, this study presents a viable solution to the growing concerns of doubt among Muslims in the West. It encourages believers to approach their faith from a place of intellectual curiosity, spiritual awareness, and emotional sincerity.

This holistic approach offers a critical resource in combating religious uncertainty, helping Muslims navigate the challenges of modernity while maintaining a deep and meaningful connection to their faith, specifically in two ways: externally and internally. Externally, it fills the research gap in addressing religious doubts faced by Muslims in the West. It also serves as a starting point for a response or solution to the epidemic of religious doubt faced by Muslims in the West. Internally, it works as a preventative measure against the affliction of religious doubt for current and future

generations of Muslims in the West. An establishment of a spiritual experience that inspires the necessary courage and perseverance to act in this world based on what we believe and value. This study serves as a critical step in finding resolutions to the threats and challenges encountered by Muslims, especially in the West, in preserving their faith and religion (stability). If internalized, this coherent construct, composed of four interrelated components, can respond to the sources of these religious doubts while inculcating an unwavering certitude instilled through the body, mind, soul, and heart.

This study significantly impacts addressing and preventing religious doubts among Muslims in the West. Providing a comprehensive framework rooted in Qur'ānic principles identifies and addresses the root causes of doubt rather than merely responding to individual misconceptions. The study emphasizes the Qur'ān's timeless applicability, connecting its teachings to the modern challenges Muslims face in secular Western societies. It adopts a holistic approach by systematically addressing moral, scientific, philosophical, and personal concerns, offering a pathway to strengthen internal faith and conviction. Particularly impactful for young Muslims, the study provides tools to equip them with intellectual, spiritual, and innate resources to navigate challenges confidently. It also empowers educators, religious scholars, and community leaders to implement preventative measures to instill certitude within the Muslim community.

## CONCLUSION

This study sought to identify the construct of certitude in the Qur'ān towards responding to religious doubts among Muslims in the West. The first chapter provided a background to the study. It presented four research questions and objectives to define the concept of certitude, understand the current state of Muslims in the West in the context of the doubts they face, identify the main components of certitude in the Qur'ān, and finally establish the method by which to construct a coherent construct of certitude.

A review of the literature revealed that although studies have dealt with, in some way, the notion of certainty in the Qur'ān, they have been somewhat generalized, focusing primarily on theoretical examinations of the concepts in the Qur'ān. A coherent framework for establishing a singular construct with interrelated components, specifically toward responding to or preventing doubts, has not been observed thus far. This was then established as the focus of the current study.

The second chapter set out to contextualize the concepts of certitude and doubt in the Qur'ān. The levels of perception first provided background on where these terms lie in the overall framework of knowledge and understanding. The two primary expressions of doubt in the Qur'ān were identified as *shakk* and *rayb*, with the former being defined as the gathering of two opposing views without the ability to confirm one over the other, while the latter, as a deeper form of mistrust laced with negative connotations. The primary relations of doubt in the Qur'ān were linked to the existence of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) himself, along with the truth of the Qur'ān, exemplified through notions of hesitation and mocking, significantly influenced by the deception of Satan. The consequences of these doubts were also evaluated as misguidance, innovation, and disbelief.

The notion of certainty reflected an external state achieved through examining evidence, while certitude reflected an internal state, often stemming from the former. The experiences, or levels of certitude, were also identified as certitude through knowledge, sight, and physical experience. The concept of certitude in the Qur'ān extended its meaning to include knowledge, faith, and certainty. Its contexts, or subjects, were found to be certitude of the day of judgement, the Qur'ān, and the signs

of creation. Finally, certitude was also found to be linked deeply to faith, essentially acting as its main component, proving its immense importance.

The third chapter examined the background and current state of Muslims in the West and the direct and indirect factors contributing to religious doubt. The indirect factors were found to be, but not limited to, acculturation, globalization and secularization, and islamophobia. All these led to the permeation of an environment in which Muslims were minorities faced with great ideological dilemmas which could potentially give birth to religious doubt. The more direct sources or causes of religious doubt, through the evaluation of studies of Muslims in the West, were determined to be, but not limited to, four primary sources. These included moral concerns, scientific concerns, philosophical concerns, and negative personal experiences.

Examining the relationship between the first two chapters through key findings is interesting. Both the sources of doubt in the Qur'ān from the first chapter and those affecting Muslims in the West in the second chapter are related. *Shakk* in Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) corresponds with the philosophical doubts, which include the existence of God. *Shakk* in the Qur'ān, the primary source of knowledge in Islam, may correspond with scientific concerns faced by young Muslims, represented by the lack or seemingly weak process of knowledge in religion. It was also evident that a link may be made between *rayb* and the overall sentiments of Muslims that face religious doubts in the West. Case studies revealed that they were often not coming from positions of simply not knowing but deep mistrust of key religious tenets, including the belief in Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) and the Qur'ān. This is why the consequences of *rayb* are seen in some that doubt, leading them to innovation, misguidance, and even disbelief.

Their doubts can also be classified as a lack of certainty and not certitude. If religious doubts are external and thereby question the external sources of evidence and knowledge in Islam, there cannot even be discussions of internal certitude. It is now comprehensible why a lack of certitude directly leads to a lack of faith. Certitude is linked to faith, as both are primarily internal processes. The Qur'ān, from its initial revelation, proves to be timeless through such an analysis. Most of the sources of *shakk* and *rayb* presented in it correspond directly to those faced by Muslims in modern Western secular societies as minorities. It can be assumed that the solutions, or the establishment of certainty and then certitude, would also be found through the Qur'ān

from the earliest times but applicable to all. This was the exact purpose of the fourth and final chapter.

The fourth chapter explicitly identified the four main components of the construct of certitude in the Qur'ān. They were distinguished to be the miracle or *i'jāz* of the Qur'ān, the physical creation of this world and linking it with the metaphysical through *tadabbur*, the *'aql* or intellectual reason that we possess, and our internal predisposition, known as *al-ḥiṭrah*,

The first component of certitude, *i'jāz* of the Qur'ān, was determined through the literary miracle of the Qur'ān, its challenge to produce anything similar, the prophecies it contains, and its remarkable protection and preservation. This established the Qur'ān as a moral authority, working towards eradicating moral and social concerns.

The second component of certitude, *tadabbur*, was determined by linking the physical and metaphysical, proof through providence, proof through movements, and a brief discussion on the Qur'ān and scientific knowledge. This allowed for a distinct separation between the Qur'ān and science while at the same time using the physical world as a source to find a metaphysical Creator.

The third component of certitude, *al-'aql*, was determined through the origin and purpose of creation. This allowed for the establishment of reason in the Islamic process, helping to alleviate philosophical doubts.

The fourth component of certitude, *al-ḥiṭrah*, was determined by its internal innate source, specifically through early development and self-awareness. This allowed the countering of negative personal experiences by awakening the inner *ḥiṭrah* and connecting to Allāh (Glorified and Exalted), helping to overcome personal doubts through self-awareness and increased awareness of God.

The connection between the first and fourth chapters is also profound. Certitude in the Qur'ān in the first chapter was equated with the Qur'ānic concepts of knowledge, faith, and certainty. Similarly, each of the four components of certitude is related directly to one or more of these three concepts. The concept of knowledge as certainty in the Qur'ān corresponds with *al-'aql* as a component of reason. Knowledge is gained through reason and the stimulation of the intellect. It also removes *rayb* or hesitation, one of the consequences of doubt both in the Qur'ān and amongst Muslims in the West.

The concept of certainty in the Qur'ān corresponds with the component of *tadabbur*, which leads to the internal certitude of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) through the external signs of creation. The concept of faith in the Qur'ān also corresponds to the component of the *fiṭrah*, as that is where faith is primarily sourced from. Finally, all three concepts, including certitude, correspond with the *i'jāz* of the Qur'ān, as it is the source of all either directly or indirectly. Furthermore, all these concepts orbit the notion of a knowledge that is said to be the great of all: knowledge of Allāh (Glorified and Exalted). The Qur'ān and its *i'jāz* is a means to know better the One that revealed it. *Tadabbur* of the physical world and signs are a means to know the One that created it. The *'aql* is a means to use our reasons to find our origin and purpose, connected to Allāh (Glorified and Exalted). Finally, the *fiṭrah* is a means to know the One that instilled us with it through our natural states. It is also in this state that we are expected to return to Him upon.

The Muslims facing religious doubts must establish a path to know Allāh (Glorified and Exalted). If the *fiṭrah* is still pure, then it may be enough. If it is corrupted, the other three components work to re-awaken it through our senses of reason, sight, and reflection. That is the summary of the framework established through this study. Its objectives have been met in that it defined the concept of certitude, examined the sources of doubt, identified the components of certitude, and presented a framework for responding to doubts and developing certitude.

There are two significant reasons for meeting these objectives. The first is that it may be used in response to the many doubts faced by Muslims in the West. Its context here is paramount. It was not meant to be a study to respond on a micro-level to every misconception or misguidance faced by Muslims in the West, nor was it meant to answer every inquiry. That would be to focus on the symptoms. Its purpose was to uncover the roots of the epidemic and then provide a starting point for eliminating those roots.

The second significance of this study is in using it as a framework not just to respond to doubt but to prevent it. The results and connections between the last three chapters are profound in allowing this. As it was found that many of those who face doubts are young Muslims, the framework provided can be used as an instrument to provide them with certitude before the onset of any doubts. It can then be used to

implement preventative measures to instill certitude and, if done correctly, protect from future doubts.

The identification and internalization of this construct then are paramount for the Muslims who may face waves of ideological attacks to instil doubts and threaten their internal certitude. Perhaps the most poignant example of this in the Qur'ān is that of Mūsa (peace be upon him). He flees from the oppressive pharaoh and his army, who have subjugated and enslaved *Banī Isrā'īl* (the children of Israel). They approach the end of their road, stalked by a dominating military that is as cruel as it is powerful. The mountainous waves of the Red Sea beseech them while the monstrous army behind engulfs them. This is when *Banī Isrā'īl* concedes as Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) reminds us of their narrative in the Qur'ān:

﴿فَلَمَّا تَرَأَى الْجَمْعَانِ قَالَ أَصْحَابُ مُوسَىٰ إِنَّا لَمُدْرَكُونَ﴾

And when the two groups saw one another, the companions of Moses said, "Indeed, we are to be overtaken!"<sup>817</sup>

The simple response of Mūsa (peace be upon him) epitomizes certitude in all its factions.

﴿قَالَ كَلَّا إِنَّ مَعِيَ رَبِّي سَيَهْدِينِ﴾

[Moses] said, "No! Indeed, My Lord is certainly with me; He will guide me."<sup>818</sup>

The fruit of certitude is transforming the spirit of heart and body. It inspires us with courage and instills within us the necessity to act upon what we truly believe in. Without certitude, there is no faith. Without faith, there is no purpose. In essence, it delivers us from darkness to light in the realm of our temporary world and eternally in the hereafter. Its inspiration is through the final Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him), his guidance and personification, stemming from the true source of illumination: the Glorious, Honorable, and Eternal revelation, the Qur'ān. It provides certainty, determining eternal success for those who embark upon its unparalleled path of certitude.

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<sup>817</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 26:61

<sup>818</sup> *Al-Qur'ān*, 26:62

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

The study is far from exhaustive in responding to religious doubt as it serves only as an introduction or starting point. Religious doubt is an epidemic that is growing amongst Muslims in the West, and solutions are needed. Each source of doubt must be examined further through future research. For example, if Muslims doubt the Qur'ān specifically, then more research can be undertaken to discover the nature of this doubt. It may be related to the transmission of the Qur'ān, its content of it, its application of it, or any such notions. Then, the specific component of the *i'jaz* can be developed to respond to such doubt. Similarly, each component of certitude must be expanded upon independently in future research. This approach can also produce more direct links and correlations, developing an encompassing framework that could be valuable for Muslim youth and minorities, as well as those responsible for their growth.

Exploring the concept of *i'jaz*—the miraculous nature of the Qur'ān and its linguistic, literary, and intellectual dimensions—can be critical in responding to these doubts. By studying and understanding the intricate features that have led to the Qur'ān's enduring impact, scholars can better equip the Muslim community with responses that reaffirm faith in the divine origin and preservation of the Qur'ān. This can be particularly important in light of the challenges posed by modern skepticism and the rise of secular ideologies that question the validity of religious texts.

In parallel, future research must also focus on the components of certitude that foster stronger religious belief, such as the key factors that nurture faith among Muslims, especially in the West. These factors could be intellectual, emotional, or spiritual and may vary depending on the individual's background, education, or exposure to alternative worldviews. Understanding these components in greater depth can help develop a more holistic and supportive framework to guide Muslim youth and minorities in their religious journey. Additionally, such research could offer practical tools for those responsible for nurturing faith, such as parents, educators, and religious leaders, providing them with the knowledge and resources to address better the doubts that young Muslims face today.

Future studies could develop comprehensive and tailored solutions that meet the spiritual, intellectual, and emotional needs of Muslims in the West by further examining the sources of doubt alongside the pathways to certainty. This strategy

would enhance the well-being of individual believers and cultivate stronger, more resilient Muslim communities. These communities would be better equipped to navigate the complexities of living in a pluralistic society while maintaining a profound and meaningful connection to their faith.

For now, this study hopes to foster a starting point for a deeper connection with Allāh (Glorified and Exalted) by linking certitude to the Qur'ānic principles of *i'jāz*, *tadabbur*, *'aql*, and *fiṭrah* while reaffirming the Qur'ān's enduring relevance and authority. Doing so responds to existing doubts and strengthens Muslim identity and faith, paving the way for a more resilient and grounded community in the near and distant future.

Without certitude, faith remains incomplete and vulnerable to doubt. Certitude allows one to internalize certainty, transforming it into profound belief and practical application. This connection underscores that faith is not static but dynamic, requiring continuous nurturing through certitude. As such, certitude is not merely a characteristic of belief but its driving force, ensuring a harmonious balance between knowledge, conviction, and action in a believer's life.

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