

Chapter 14

Truth is victorious, never untruth. Truth is the way; truth is the goal of life, reached by sages who are free from self-will.

-- The Mundaka Upanishad III.1.6

We should not be ashamed to acknowledge truth and to assimilate it from whatever source it comes to us, even if is brought to us by former generations and foreign peoples. For him who seeks the truth there is nothing of higher value than truth itself; it never cheapens or debases him who reaches for it but ennobles and honors him.

*-- Yaqub ibn Ishaq al-Kindi
Muslim Philosopher (870 CE)*

We had covered a lot of ground but I wanted to discuss everything that had been bothering me. As Samuel made his way back to his chair, I considered my next topic.

“There is another very important issue that I think we should discuss.” I said as Samuel took his seat.

“What is that?”

“Well, civilizations change as conditions change, like, for example, when the Bible was written things were a lot different than they are today.”

“Of course they are,” he agreed.

“So as things changed, as civilization progressed, God spoke, or sent a new revelation to people; to the Jews through Moses and to the Gentiles through Jesus. Later, it seems that he sent a new message to the Arabs through Muhammad. Each message was designed to meet the spiritual needs of the people at that time. And yet today, most religions teach that this great Deity has delivered Its last revelation to mankind. It seems like we’ve decided that we have things just the way we want them so we have chosen to silence God!”

“It does seem like that’s the case. Christians believe that the Bible is God’s final word. The Jews believe it is the Torah

and the Muslims believe it is the Koran. Christians teach that Jesus was the last prophet and the Muslims believe that Mohammad was the last and that God will not offer a new revelation,” he said.

“That’s what I mean. But how can that be? Who are we to silence God? Who are we to say that God cannot speak to this new generation in a language that they can understand? Who is to say that God will not show Itself in a fresh revelation, consistent with the former revelations, but in a way familiar to the way people communicate and think today; a message for this generation, who is facing the problems and challenges that are unique from previous generations? We have much more information upon which to base our decisions. This new availability of information has greatly impacted our world. The fact that we are experiencing such a globalization of business and social interaction has affected the way we view the world. Many of the mysteries of the universe and our own world have been solved through science. We see the world differently and we approach religion differently. As we have already discussed, some of the messages from God were directed specifically to the people living at the time these ancient documents were written. So, it seems consistent that we might experience that same kind of unique communication today.

“My point is, if God spoke to those people so long ago, then why couldn’t God speak again? It just seems like we are trying to silence God,” I insisted.

He leaned back in his chair.

“All religions teach that God still speaks to people. I guess it’s true that Judaism, Islam and Christianity don’t believe that there will be another major revelation. But, like you said, who are we to silence God?

“As you know, in the 1940’s archeologists uncovered the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi scriptures. As these are interpreted and deciphered, there’s no telling what we will discover from those ancient texts if those who are involved in the interpretation are allowed to release that information to the

public. Through these kinds of discoveries, God may reveal new and exciting things. Like you said, God may even introduce a new prophet. This prophet might proclaim the same, consistent message as earlier prophets, but do it in a way that communicates more efficiently with today's population, faced with today's challenges. New revelations might even come through science."

"But if that happens how can we know whether these new revelations are from God or humans?" I asked.

"If the message is consistent with what we have learned about God from nature, then we are probably safe in concluding that it's from God. The Almighty might use any method It chooses to converse with us. We should always be open and sensitive to the voice of God. We should never think that God is finished with us. If God wants to speak, God will."

"I have to agree. Religious folks call that progressive revelation. As we progress as a civilization, the revelation might also progress."

"Exactly," he said, "otherwise, religion can grow stale and seem outdated, even irrelevant. Truth, and religious truth in particular, should never be outdated. It is only by reassessing all theories, both religious and scientific, and analyzing all theology that we can ensure that they meet the standard of truth."

It was about ten-thirty. The sun was out in full strength so the deck was getting warm. We decided to go for a walk and find some shade.