

“This is the Book about which there is No Doubt”:

THE OBJECTIVES OF QURANIC SELF-REFERENTIALITY ^(*)

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this analysis is to analyze the self-referential nature of the *Quranic* revelation, and address *why* such referentiality was necessary. The central premise of this research is that *Quranic* self-referentiality was primarily designed to achieve three objectives: (1) to establish that the *Quran* is indeed revelation (scripture) from God (and not constructed by Muhammad, the product of “sooth-sayings”, etc.), (2) to establish itself in relation to other texts revealed by God, specifically within the Abrahamic tradition (i.e. in the same lineage of the other revealed scriptures – confirmation of that which came before it), and (3) to assert its authority as the final revelation and the seal of the original covenant with Abraham, thereby correcting misinterpretations, distortions, and divisions made regarding previous revelations. These three objectives can be thought of as (1) authorization, (2) legitimization, and (3) culmination.² In this sense, the purpose of *Quranic* self-referentiality is to ultimately establish this revelation on the same/equal plane as the other revelations within the Abrahamic tradition, for only by first establishing itself as “equal” could the *Quranic* text then move on to its goal of critically addressing the receivers of previous revelations (the *Ahl al-Kitab* – People of the Book) on an equal level, and assert itself as the final revelation.

Keywords: *Ahl al-Kitab, Islam, Quran, Self-Referentiality.*

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² “Culmination” is used here, for lack of a better term, to represent the solidification of the Abrahamic tradition through the *Quran* and Muhammad, and the corrections made regarding misinterpretations, distortions, and divisions vis-à-vis previous revelations within the same tradition. This is explained later in the text-proper.

1. INTRODUCTION

This analysis will demonstrate how the revelations were a dialogical process between God – through his messenger – and mankind, within specific contexts (i.e. not a narrative), within which the *Quran* had to legitimize itself. It will begin by first analyzing what textual referentiality is and the nature of self-referentiality within the *Quran*. It will then proceed to address why such referentiality was necessary in order to accomplish the three goals prescribed above. It will conclude by demonstrating how, by using self-reflexivity, the *Quran* was able to establish its legitimacy and assert itself as the final continuation within the same prophetic line as previous scripture. This research draws from numerous different sources, and uses myriad verses from the *Quranic* text itself to support the assertions made. A dual historical and textual methodology is employed in order to explain how the text felt it was necessary to use self-reflexivity based on the particular context at hand.

This analysis does not seek to advance the theological position or argument of any particular tradition, but rather seeks to examine why self-referentiality was deemed necessary from the point of view of the text itself. While most studies on the topic of self-referentiality acknowledge the first two objectives listed above (Wild, 2006; Sinai, 2006; Neuwirth, 2006), they tend to neglect the overriding importance of the third objective, which is arguably the most critical element of the *Quranic* text itself. Let me explain: if the first two objectives – demonstrating that the text is indeed from God and establishing it on an equal stratum as revelations given to previous prophets – were the sole intention of the *Quranic* text, then what was the necessity of this revelation? In other words, if the *Quran* was meant solely as a “confirmation of what came before it”, what makes this revelation unique, or even necessary? Similarly, if this is the only assumed goal, why then does the text go to such great lengths to criticize the previous recipients of God’s word, and seek to steer them toward a different end? In seeking to answer these questions, it is quite possible that the third objective is traditionally disregarded because it wades too deeply into the realm of theological polemics. Therefore, section (3) on “culmination” is primarily derived from my own textual analysis of the *Quran*, situating this objective into the overall calculus of self-referentiality. This being the case, I would like to state again that this study does not seek to advance the theological position of any particular religious tradition, but rather aims to analyze the ultimate meaning behind the self-referential aspects of the *Quran’s* dialogical engagement with man, through Muhammad.

2. BACKGROUND

what is “self-referentiality” and how is the *Quran* “self-referential”?

According to Stefan Wild, a linguistic behavior is self-referential when it speaks about communication while it is being communicated (Wild, 2006). This is precisely the espoused behavior by the *Quranic* text: throughout the duration of the revelations, the *Quranic* text repeatedly refers to itself, as well as the way in which it is being revealed, its composition, etc. In other words, the *Quranic* recitation is preoccupied with the fact that it is being performed in a communicative fashion, and focuses heavily on the communicative process between man and God (through prophets), and the relation between Muhammad's revelations and earlier revelations (Wild, 2006). Daniel Madigan goes further, explaining that the *Quran* is so self-reflexive it should be considered as a text “both itself and about itself” (Madigan, 2001).

Since the *Quran* was revealed piecemeal through a dialogical process over the course of approximately 23 years in differing contexts, it is natural that the nature of its self-reflexivity varied according to situation with which it was presented. This contextual adaptation is demonstrated most clearly through the myriad terms employed by the *Quran* to refer to itself. The text stresses different aspects of itself through the use of different self-reflexive names according to the context at hand: *Quran* (recitation), *kitab* (writing, book), *dhikr* (remembrance; recollection), *naba'* (news), *bushra* (glad tidings), *indhar* (warning), *tanzil* (sending down, revelation), *wahy* (revelation), *maw'iza* (admonition), *mathal* (parable), *hukm* (judgement), *bayyina* (clear message), *qasas* (narration), *adhan* (permission), *hikma* (wisdom), *huda* (guidance), and others (Wild, 2006). These different classifications the *Quran* prescribes for itself are primarily designed to emphasize the particular function of the text within a specific dialogical context (i.e. to a specific audience). As will be demonstrated, the *Quran's* self-referential nature adapts to the specific contexts with which it is faced in order to ultimately accomplish the three aforementioned objectives, which comprise the primary focus of the remainder of this study.

3. ARGUMENT

Objective (1): Authorization

The first categorical objective is that of “authorization”, whereby the *Quranic* text sought to assert its divine origins and simultaneously denounce the assertions that Muhammad was possessed by *jinn* or *Shaytan* (Satan), or that he authored

the revelations, or that the revelations are mere poetics or products of “soothsaying”. Beginning with the denunciation of claim that the revelations are mere poetics or products of “soothsaying”, the *Quran* was aware during the time of its revelation of the prevalence of pre-Islamic poetics throughout Arabia. Conscious of this context, the *Quran* immediately sought to distinguish itself from such practices:

“We have not instructed The (Prophet) in poetry, nor is it meet for him: this is no less than a message and a clear Quran.” (Q 36: 69)

“It is not the word of a poet: little it is ye believe!” (Q 69: 41)

“‘Nay,’ they say, ‘(these are) medleys of dreams! – Nay, he forged it! – Nay, he is (but) a poet! Let him bring is a sign like the ones that were sent to (prophets) of old!’” (Q 21: 5)

Though these verses are found throughout different *Surahs* (chapters) of the *Quran*, they all serve to separate the current revelation – repeatedly referred to self-referentially as “It” – from poetics. Similar verses make the same assertion that Muhammad is not a poet (Q 52: 30), nor is he a soothsayer (Q 52: 29; Q 69: 42), nor is the revelation a product of sorcery (Q 27: 13), nor was he able to have authored the text due to the fact that he was illiterate (Q 29: 48). Similarly, the text goes to great lengths to denounce the allegation that it is the product of Muhammad being possessed by *jinn* or *Shaytan*:

“Or do they say ‘he is possessed?’ Nay, he has brought them the truth, but most of them hate the truth.” (Q 23: 70)

“No evil ones have brought down this (revelation).” (Q 26: 210)

“And (O People)! Your companion is not one possessed.” (Q 81: 22)

“Nor is it the word of an evil spirit accursed.” (Q 81: 25)

The purpose of these specific self-referential verses is to primarily establish what the *Quranic* text is not: crafted by Muhammad, a product of poetics or soothsaying, or the product of possession. Contextually, it can be logically derived from these verses that the revelations were criticized by Muhammad’s audience(s) as being either as a product of his own hand, mere poetry the kinds of like they are already familiar, or simply the saying of a (possessed) madman. The *Quranic* text, however, being aware of this criticism and the dialogical context within which it is interacting, seeks to usurp these accusations by self-referentially addressing those critics directly. After firmly establishing what the revelations are not, the text then moves to elucidate what it is:

“(This is) the revelation of the book in which there is no doubt – from the Lord of the Worlds. Or do they say “he has forged it”? Nay, it is the truth from thy Lord.” (Q 32: 2-3)

“(This is) a message sent down from the Lord of the Worlds. And if the messenger [Muhammad] were to invent any saying in Our name, we should certainly seize him by his right hand, and we should certainly then cut off the artery of his heart.” (Q 69: 43-45)

“The revelation of this book is from Allah [God], exalted in power, full of knowledge.” (Q 40: 2)

“As to thee, the Quran is bestowed upon thee from the presence of One who is Wise and All-Knowing.” (Q 27: 6)

These verses are examples of the text itself asserting its divine origin, which is a common theme found throughout the revelations, not just within the four verses listed above (see: Q 36: 5; Q 39: 1-2; Q 26: 192; Q 45: 2). The text goes further, challenging listeners to “produce a Surah like thereunto” (Q 2: 23-24), and stating that even if the whole of mankind and *jinn* were to band together try and produce the likes of this *Quran*, surely they would fail (Q 17: 88). These verses are critical because if the origins of the text are divine – and the divine is considered to be infallible and the ultimate authority – then the text would possess divine (absolute) authority: “This is the book about which there is no doubt” (Q 2: 2). Stefan Wild notes the cyclical nature of these self-referential verses as a means of self-authorization: “the message is true because divinity speaks through it, and divinity speaks in this voice because the messenger does not lie [nor is he possessed, as demonstrated in preceding verses]” (Wild, 2006). It is from this self-authorization through self-referentiality that the text then moves to establish itself in relation to previously revealed scripture.

Objective (2): Legitimization

The second categorical objective is that of legitimization, specifically amongst the recipients of previous revelations within the same Abrahamic tradition (the *Ahl al-Kitab* – People of the Book). The ultimate purpose of this objective is to portray the *Quranic* revelations as a continuum within the previously-established and on-going tradition, and to establish Muhammad within the same prophetic line as Abraham, Moses, Jesus, etc. At the time of the *Quranic* revelations, there existed within Arabia a large body of knowledge regarding monotheism: they were familiar with the *Suhuf* (scrolls) of Moses and Abraham, the *Tawrat*

(Torah), *Zabur* (Psalms), and the *Injil* (Gospel) of Jesus at the time of the revelations. Examples such as the surviving poems ascribed to ‘Umayya Ibn Abi Al-Salt testify to the presence in the Arabian Peninsula of a sizable corpus of monotheistic folklore (Sinai, 2006). This preexisting knowledge is also exhibited by the *Quran* itself: the *Tawrat* is mentioned in the *Quran* 18 times, the *Zabur* three times, and the *Injil* 12 times (Albayrak, 2008). This self-awareness of preexistent scripture is an essential characteristic of the *Quranic* text, demonstrating its unique distinctiveness from previous holy texts. This “constant pressure of contextuality with other holy texts”, as Stefan Wild terms it, is significant because it explains the overbearing fixation of the *Quranic* text with legitimization (Wild, 2003). Examples of the text undertaking this process of legitimization are as follows:

“And believe in what I reveal, confirming the revelation which is with you, and be not the first to reject faith therein, nor sell My signs for a small price; and fear Me, and Me alone.” (Q 2: 41)

“We gave Moses the Book and followed him up with a succession of Messengers; We gave Jesus, the son of Mary, clear (signs) and strengthened him with the Holy Spirit. Is it that whenever there comes to you a Messenger with what ye yourselves desire not, ye are puffed up with pride? Some ye called imposters, and others ye slay!” (Q 2: 87)

“It is He [God] who sent down to thee (step by step), in truth, the Book [the Quran], confirming what went before it; and He sent down the Law [of Moses] and Gospel [of Jesus].” (Q 3: 3)

“O ye People of the Book! Believe in what We have (now) revealed, confirming what was (already) with you.” (Q 4: 47)

“O ye who believe! Believe in Allah [God] and His Messenger, and the scripture which He hath sent to His Messenger [the Quran] and the scripture which He sent to those before (him).” (Q 4: 136)

“Allah [God] hath purchased of the believers their possessions and their goods; for theirs (in return) is the Garden (of paradise): they fight in His cause, and slay and are slain: a promise binding on Him [God] in truth through the Law [of Moses], the Gospel [of Jesus], and the Quran: and who is more faithful to his covenant than Allah? Then rejoice in the bargain which ye have concluded: this is the achievement supreme.” (Q 9: 111)

“In the past We granted to Moses and Aaron the criterion (for judgement), and a light and a message for those who would do right – those who fear their

Lord in their most secret thoughts, and who hold the Hour (of judgment) in awe. And this [the Quran] is a blessed message which We have sent down: will ye then reject it?" (Q 21: 48-50)

This list is not meant to be comprehensive in nature, but rather exemplary of the prevailing themes and assertions the *Quran* is attempting to portray to its audience. These verses serve to locate the *Quran* within the same revelatory continuum as the Law (Torah; of Moses) and the Gospel (of Jesus) given to previous prophets. The text repeatedly references itself in relation to these previous scriptures, stating it is a "confirmation" of what came before it (Q 5: 48; Q 35: 31) and urging its audience to follow all of God's prophets, of which Muhammad is now a member (Q 2: 136; Q 3: 68; Q 6: 84-86; Q 42: 13). The text goes further, portraying Muhammad as having a similar function to Moses (Q 2: 108; Q 4: 153), the same status as Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Jesus, and other prophets (Q 3: 84; Q 4: 163; Q 33: 7), the "messenger" for whom Abraham prayed (Q 2: 129; Q 2: 151; Q 3: 164; Q 62: 2), and whose future coming was announced by Jesus (Q 61: 6) (Robinson, 2004).

The *Quran* also asserts that all revelation – both itself and preceding scripture – is derived from a singular source, which it terms the "*Umm al-Kitab* (Mother of the Book)":

"By the Book that makes things clear – we have made it a Quran in Arabic, that ye may be able to understand. And verily, it is in the Mother of the Book, in Our presence, high (in dignity), full of wisdom." (Q 43: 2-4)

This *Umm al-Kitab*, also commonly referred to as "*Celestial Kitab*" (Yaman, 2011), is, within this verse, alleged to be in the possession of God alone, but the source from which all revelation is derived. In this sense, the *Quranic* text is presenting itself as part of a succession of divine messages, all of which emphasize the same universal and essential principles derived from their collective source.

Another significant piece of this verse is its emphasis on the *Quranic* revelations utilizing the specific linguistic medium of Arabic. Numerous verses throughout the *Quran* mirror this one in their reference the fact that the revelation is in Arabic (Q 12: 1-3; Q 20: 113; Q 39: 27-28; Q 41: 1-4; Q 42: 7; Q 43: 1-4; Q 16: 101-103; Q 26: 192-201; Q 46: 12; Q 13: 36-37; Q 19: 97). In fact, language is itself an important subject reflected upon within the *Quran*: the text asserts that the diversity of human languages (and races) is a miraculous sign of God, and a sign "*for those who know*" (Q 30: 20-25) (Wild, 2006). But why is this revelation specifically in Arabic, and why does the text focus so heavily on its linguistic medium? The answer most likely lies in the *Quran's* own explanatory

verses regarding the interconnectedness between revelation and its recipients. The text states:

“We [God] sent not a messenger except to teach in the language of his people, in order to make (things) clear to them. Now Allah [God] leaves straying those whom He pleases and guides whom He pleases: and He is exalted in power, full of wisdom.” (Q 14: 4)

According to this verse, specific messengers are sent to specific peoples (whom God chooses) to preach in their specific languages so the revelation can be comprehended in full. In other words, according to Stefan Wild, “in the course of history, God sent each messenger (*rasul*) to a specific people (*qawm*), and this messenger brought the divine message to that people in their language” (Wild, 2006). Similarly, the *Quran* acknowledges that – before Muhammad – no revelation had yet reached the Arabs (Q 34: 44). Therefore, Muhammad is depicted as a prophet sent to a specific people who had yet to receive revelation (warning, guidance, etc.) from God, and the message was conveyed in “clear Arabic” so the people of Arabia could comprehend the message. Seen in this light, then, the self-referential focus of the text on its Arabic linguistic medium can be considered another attempt at legitimization.

Objective (3): Culmination

The third and final primary objective of *Quranic* self-referentiality is that of culmination. Culmination should be viewed as the next logical step within the *Quran's* self-referential voyage to ultimate self-validation. The term culmination is meant to represent the way in which the *Quran* asserts itself as the final authoritative revelation, stresses the unity and linearity of God's revelations in order to address artificial divisions, and goes about correcting the distortions and misinterpretations vis-à-vis previous scripture. The *Quranic* text goes about accomplishing these tasks by addressing the recipients of previous revelation (the *Ahl al-Kitab*) directly, attempting to place itself within the continuum of the previously established covenant with Abraham as the final revelation, and to rectify the distortions and misinterpretations concerning previous revelations that subsequently resulted communal schism. The first topic to examine is the *Quranic* verses directly addressing the divisions between the *Ahl al-Kitab*:

*“Hast thou not turned their vision to those who have been given a portion of the Book [the *Ahl al-Kitab* – People of the Book]? They are invited to the Book of Allah [the *Quran*] to settle their dispute, but a party of them turn back and decline.” (Q 3: 23)*

“Verily this Quran doth explain to the Children of Israel most of the matters in which they disagree.” (Q 27: 76)

“Nor did the People of the Book make schisms until after there came to them clear evidence.” (Q 98: 4)

“We did aforetime grant to the Children of Israel the Book, the power and command, and prophethood; We gave them, for sustenance, things good and pure; and We favored them above the nations. And We granted them clear signs in affairs (of religion): it was only after knowledge had been granted to them that they fell into schisms, through insolent envy among themselves. Verily thy Lord will judge between them on the Day of Judgement as to those matters in which they disagree. Then we put thee on the right way [through this Quran] of religion: so follow thou that (way), and follow not the desires of those who know not. They will be of no use to thee in the sight of Allah: it is only wrongdoers (that stand as) protectors, one to another: but Allah is the protector of the righteous. These are clear evidences [within this Quran] to men, and a guidance and mercy to those of assured faith.” (Q 45: 16-20)

“As for those who divide their religion and break up into sects, thou hast no part in them in the least: their affair is with Allah: He will in the end tell them the truth of all that they did.” (Q 6: 159)

These verses are quite significant, and are worth reflecting upon before moving into the more direct assertions made by the *Quranic* text about specific distortions and misinterpretations among the *Ahl al-Kitab*. The above verses – and others throughout the text – point to the divisions constructed between those who have previously received scripture, specifically emphasizing how the schisms arose *after* having received revelation (i.e. it is not the revelations themselves that divided them, but rather their actions and interpretations). Further, the text self-referentially emphasizes how it itself is a type of “arbitrator”, meant to correct and settle their arguments, and invites them to rectify their disputation. However, despite inviting the disputing parties to arbitration, the *Quran* self-referentially acknowledges that the appeal it is making will inevitably – in some cases – fall on deaf ears, as has happened in the past:

“It is never the wish of those without faith among the People of the Book, nor of the pagans, that anything good should come down to you from your Lord. But Allah will choose for His mercy whom he will – for Allah is Lord of grace abounding.” (Q 2: 105)

“Never will the Jews or the Christians be satisfied with thee unless thou follow their form of religion.” (Q 2: 120)

“We took the covenant of the Children of Israel and sent them messengers. Every time there came to them a messenger with what they desired not – some (of these) they called imposters, and some they (go so far as to say) slay!” (Q 5: 70)

“We have, without doubt, sent down the message [the Quran] and we will assuredly guard it (from corruption). We did send messengers before thee [Muhammad] amongst the religious sects of old: but never came a messenger to them but they mocked him.” (Q 15: 9-11)

“And when there comes to them a Book [the Quran] from Allah, confirming what is with them – although from of old they have prayed for victory against those without faith – when there comes to them that which they (should) have recognized. They refuse to believe in it. But the curse of Allah is on those without faith.” (Q 2: 89)

As these verses demonstrate, the *Quranic* revelations are well-aware of the backlash and denunciations they are likely to receive amongst (some) of the recipients of previous revelations. This being the case, the text directly addresses those with doubt, asserting that God may reveal what he wills to whomever he wills, and if one people reject his signs, he will simply choose another (Q 5: 54; Q 6: 84-89; Q 57: 29). Indeed, the text reveals that God could have made mankind a “single people”, but instead intends to test man in “what he hath given” (Q 5: 48), so he may judge among them.

Although it is not the primary focus of this analysis, it is worth mentioning specific verses that go about directly correcting the specific misinterpretations and distortions made by the *Ahl al-Kitab* in order to then analyze how the *Quran* concludes the objective of “culmination” by asserting itself as the final revelation and the seal of the original covenant.¹ The text criticizes the Jews for their belief that they alone will enter paradise without being able to prove it (Q 2: 111), their claim that Hellfire shall not touch them save for a number of days (Q 2: 80), and their claim that they are favored by God apart from all the rest of mankind (Q 62: 6). There are also distinct polemical condemnations of the Christians, specifically revolving around their concept of Jesus as the Son of God (Q 4: 171), the crucifixion (Q 4: 156-157) and the idea

¹ These verses are worth mentioning because without these specific corrections, the *Quran* would lack a type of unique authoritative claim. In other words (as stated earlier in the text-proper), it is this correction of distortions and misinterpretations which subsequently resulted in division, and the setting of man back on the correct path that is the overall *raison d'être* of the *Quran*.

of the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) (Q 5: 73-75). While the *Quran* accepts the special humanity of Jesus (the fact that he was a prophet), it strictly denies his divinity with such verses as (Q 4: 171) and (Q 5: 73-75). These more polemical verses are meant to correct the People of the Book who have, according to the *Quran*, distorted their previous scriptures/revelations by their own hands, then claiming it is from God (Q 2: 79).

Following the criticism of the *Ahl al-Kitab* for diving religion into “sects” and the verses directly addressing incorrect interpretations and subsequent distortions made to previous revelation, the *Quranic* text then moves to complete the objective of “culmination” by declaring itself as the fulfilment of the original, linear covenant made with Abraham (Q 2: 40-41), who was neither a Jew or a Christian but rather practiced *islam* (submission)¹ (Q 2: 135-140), and declares Muhammad as the “seal” of the prophets within this tradition (Q 33: 40), thereby establishing itself as the final revelation. This idea of “culmination” is reverberated throughout the text in different ways:

“And strive in His cause as ye ought to strive, (with sincerity and discipline). He has chosen you, and has imposed no difficulties on you in religion: it is the cult of your father Abraham. It is He [God] who has named you muslims,² both before and in this [the Quran]; that the messenger may be a witness for you, and ye be witnesses for mankind!...” (Q 22: 78)

“Indeed this, your religion, is one religion, and I am your Lord, so worship Me. And (yet) they divided their affair among themselves, (but) all to Us will return.” (Q 21: 92-93)

“O People of the Book! Now hath come unto you, making (things) clear unto you, Our messenger, after the break in (the series of) our messengers, lest ye should say: “there came unto us no bringer of glad tidings and no warner (from evil)”: but now hath come unto you a bringer [Muhammad] of glad tidings [the Quran] and a warner. And Allah hath knowledge over all things.” (Q 5: 19)

“Say: “O People of the Book! Ye have no ground to stand upon unless ye stand fast by the Law, the Gospel, and all the revelation that has come down to you

¹ A small “i” is used in this context to convey the literal meaning of *islam* as submission, not the organized religion referred to as *Islam*.

² Similarly, a small “m” is used in this context to convey the literal meaning of *muslim* as one who submits, not an adherent to the established religion of Islam (Muslim).

from your Lord [including the Quran].” (Q 5: 68)

These verses serve to establish the *Quranic* revelations not only within the original covenant begun by Abraham, but at the helm of the tradition, with Muhammad as the final prophet. By depicting the linear nature of the original covenant with man, the *Quran*, self-referentially, is proclaiming itself to be part of a succession of divine scriptures within the same revelatory tradition as those given unto Abraham, Moses, Jesus, etc. It contends that it is man who divided religion into sects, and that this *Quran* is a mercy from God designed to set man back on the correct course, and that those who truly follow God will believe in “*the whole of the Book [revelation]*” (Q 3: 119).

4. CONCLUSION

This analysis has sought to demonstrate that the foremost intentions of *Quranic* self-referentiality were authorization, legitimization, and culmination. The interconnected nature of these three objectives is paramount: each one depends upon the others to validate their own individual assertions and intentions. Authorization was achieved through the text differentiating itself from poetics and “soothsayings”, establishing that Muhammad was not the author of the text nor was he possessed by *jinn* or *Shaytan*, and demonstrating that the origins of the text are divine and therefore from the highest authority. Legitimization was achieved through the self-referential connections made between the *Quranic* text and previous revelations. Similarly, the establishment of Muhammad within the same prophetic line as previous prophets such as Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Noah, etc. served to legitimize the messenger of the revelation. Lastly, culmination was achieved through the establishment of the *Quran* as the final revelation (and therefore Muhammad as the final prophet) and the correcting of misinterpretations and distortions made regarding previous revelations, and the subsequent resulting communal divisions. It is through the utilization of self-referentiality that the *Quranic* text is able to establish the authority and legitimacy needed in order to assert itself as the culmination of the Abrahamic tradition, thereby sealing God’s covenant with mankind.

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