



688 The expression “every one of you” denotes the various communities of which mankind is composed. The term *shir`ah* (or *shai`ah*) signifies, literally, “the way to a watering-place” (from which men and animals derive the element indispensable to their life), and is used in the Qur`ān to denote a system of law necessary for a community’s social and spiritual welfare. The term *minhāj*, on the other hand, denotes an “open road,” usually in an abstract sense: that is, “a way of life.” The terms *shir`ah* and *minhāj* are more restricted in their meaning than the term *dīn*, which comprises not merely the laws relating to a particular religion but also the basic, unchanging spiritual truths which, according to the Qur`ān, have been preached by every one of God’s apostles, while the particular body of laws (*shir`ah* or *sharī`ah*) promulgated through them, and the way of life (*minhāj*) recommended by them, varied in accordance with the exigencies of the time and of each community’s cultural development. This “unity in diversity” is frequently stressed in the Qur`ān (e.g., in the first sentence of [2:148](#), in [21:92-93](#), or in [23:52](#) ff.). Because of the universal applicability and textual incorruptibility of its teachings – as well as of the fact that the Prophet Muḥammad is “the seal of all prophets,” i.e., the last of them (see [33:40](#)) – the Qur`ān represents the culminating point of all revelation and offers the final, perfect way to spiritual fulfilment. This uniqueness of the Qur`anic message does not, however, preclude all adherents of earlier faiths from attaining to God’s grace: for – as the Qur`ān so often points out – those among them who believe uncompromisingly in the One God and the Day of Judgment (i.e., in individual moral responsibility) and live righteously