"We Muslims have the knowledge that Islam is Allah's final message, the Qur'an His final book and Muhammad His last Prophet."

His Highness the Aga Khan's 1976 Presidential Address, International Seerat Conference, 'Life of the Prophet (sas)' (Karachi, Pakistan) http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/1804/

"Of course, we hold fast by the Qur'an, for it is from the Qur'an that we get the texts which buttress our faith in the ever-watchful eye and sustaining hand of God."

Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah, Aga Khan III's Daily Sketch Interview answer to the question 'Is Religion Something Special?' (London, United Kingdom) http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/10121/

"The only miracle which you have in Islam is the Qur'an."

His Highness the Aga Khan's 1986 CBC Interview (1st) with Roy Bonisteel (Canada) http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/3268/
"Verily, God, the Glorious, the Elevated, has revealed the quintessence of everything in the Noble Qur’an and by God! He has not omitted anything which His servants may need to the extent that no one can say: Would that it had been revealed in the Noble Qur’an, because that has already been revealed."

Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (p)
Usul al-Kafi, Book 2, Chapter 20, Tradition 1

"In the Qur’an is report of the past, information on the future, and wisdom for the meanwhile."

Hazrat Ali
Living and Dying with Grace, Counsels of Hadrat Ali, Thomas Cleary, pp 97

"Certainly the Qur’an is wonderful in its outward form, and its inner meanings are profound."

Hazrat Ali
Nahj al-Balaghah, Sermon 18

"Speak only about what you know. Regarding what you do not know say ‘God knows best’. Verily, a person may single out any verse from the Noble Qur’an (and interpret it wrongly) and may fall down deeper than the distance between the Heaven and the Earth."

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (p)
Usul al Kafi, Book 2, Chapter 11, Tradition 4

"Nine eleven has scarred America, but not just America. It has scarred the Islamic world, and hundreds of millions of devout and practising Muslims for whom the word of the Qur’an is the word of God."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 2002 Ismaili Center Opening Ceremony address (Houston, Texas, USA)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/6245/
"[A]s regards the idea of the divinity of God: a great deal of the Qur'an is taken up with God’s creation, with God’s intimate presence in the world, with the importance of each human being’s relations with the Creator; but only in one chapter -- the chapter on Light -- is the nature of the divinity referred to in a very clear form. Although of course we do not believe that the person of the Creator is a form of light, either in waves or in the minutest association of myriads of points, yet the consequence of the light, as seen in the universe, is the nearest we can imagine or hope to believe about the person of our Creator. This was as far as Islamic theological thought went in the early years after the Prophet’s death."

Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah, Aga Khan III’s undated article ‘Reincarnation or Companionship On High?’
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/1520/

"[T]he Qur'an-e-Sharif, rich in parable and allegory, metaphor and symbol, has been an inexhaustible well-spring of inspiration, lending itself to a wide spectrum of interpretations. This freedom of interpretation is a generosity which the Qur'an confers upon all believers, uniting them in the conviction that All-Merciful Allah will forgive them if they err in their sincere attempts to understand His word. Happily, as a result, the Holy Book continues to guide and illuminate the thought and conduct of Muslims belonging to different communities of interpretation and spiritual affiliation, from century to century, in diverse cultural environments....

"In this context, would it not also be relevant to consider how, above all, it has been the Qur'anic notion of the universe, as an expression of Allah's will and creation, that has inspired in diverse Muslim communities, generations of artists, scientists and philosophers? Scientific pursuits, philosophic inquiry and artistic endeavour are all seen as the response of the faithful to the recurring call of the Qur'an to ponder the creation as a way to understand Allah's benevolent majesty. As Sura al-Baqara proclaims: 'Wherever you turn, there is
the face of Allah.'

"Does not the Qur'an challenge the artist, as much as the mystic, to go beyond the physical -- the outward -- so as to seek to unveil that which lies at the centre but gives life to the periphery? Is not a great work of art, like the ecstasy of the mystic, a gesture of the spirit, a stirring of the soul that comes from the attempt to experience a glimpse of, and an intimacy with, that which is ineffable and beyond being? ...

"It is my sincere hope that this colloquium will bring additional insights to an understanding of the Holy Qur'an as a message that encompasses the entirety of human existence and effort. It is concerned with the salvation of the soul, but commensurately also with the ethical imperatives which sustain an equitable social order. The Qur'an's is an inclusive vision of society that gives primacy to nobility of conduct."

His Highness the Aga Khan's 2003 Address to the International Colloquium 'Word of God, Art of Man: The Qur'an and its Creative Expressions' organised by The Institute of Ismaili Studies (London, United Kingdom) http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/6815/

"[A]t the end of the 17th century and beginning of the 18th, the European Renaissance rapidly advanced in knowledge of nature, namely all those very Ayats of God to which the Qur'an refers when Muslims forgot the Ayats, namely natural phenomenon, its law and order which are the proofs of Divine guidance used in the Qur'an, but we stuck to our rites and ceremonies, to our prayers and fast alone, forgetting the other half of our faith. Thus during those 200/300 years, Europe and the West got an advance out of all proportion to the Muslim world and we found everywhere in Islam (inspite of our humble prayer, our moral standard, our kindliness and gentleness towards the poor) constant deterioration of one form or another and the Muslim world went down. Why? Because we forgot the law and order of nature to which the Qur'an refers as proof of God's existence and we went against God's natural laws.
"This and this alone has led to the disastrous consequences we have seen."

Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah, Aga Khan III’s 1952 letter to H.E. Dr. Zahid Husain, President of Arabiyyah Jamiyyat, ‘What have we forgotten in Islam?’ (Karachi, Pakistan)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/1253/

~~~~~~~~~~ ~~~~~~~~~~ ~~~~~~~~~~ ~~~~~~~~~~ ~~~~~~~~~~

"The Holy Qu’ran’s encouragement to study nature and the physical world around us gave the original impetus to scientific enquiry among Muslims. Exchanges of knowledge between institutions and nations and the widening of man’s intellectual horizons are essentially Islamic concepts. The faith urges freedom of intellectual enquiry and this freedom does not mean that knowledge will lose its spiritual dimension. That dimension is indeed itself a field for intellectual enquiry. I can not illustrate this interdependence of spiritual inspiration and learning better than by recounting a dialogue between Ibn Sina, the philosopher, and Abu said Abu-Khyar, the Sufi mystic. Ibn Sina remarked, 'Whatever I know, he sees.' To which Abu Said replied, 'Whatever I see, he knows.'"

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 1985 Faculty of Health Sciences of the Aga Khan University and Aga Khan University Hospital Inauguration Ceremony address (Karachi, Pakistan)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/3202/

~~~~~~~~~~ ~~~~~~~~~~ ~~~~~~~~~~ ~~~~~~~~~~ ~~~~~~~~~~

"I would also like to quote an infinitely more powerful statement about the unity of mankind, because it comes directly from the Holy Qur’an, and which I would ask you to think about. The Holy Qur’an addresses itself not only to Muslims, but to the entirety of the human race, when it says:

"‘O mankind! Be careful of your duty to your Lord Who created you from one single soul and from it created its mate and from them twain hath spread abroad a multitude of men and women.'"
"These words reflect a deeply spiritual insight -- a Divine imperative if you will -- which, in my view, should undergird our educational commitments. It is because we see humankind, despite our differences, as children of God and born from one soul, that we insist on reaching beyond traditional boundaries as we deliberate, communicate, and educate internationally."

His Highness the Aga Khan’s 2008 ‘The Peterson Lecture’ at the Annual Meeting of the International Baccalaureate (Atlanta, Georgia, USA)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/8435/

Aga Khan: ... the Ismaili movement did not begin as a political movement. What may have begun, as a partial issue -- and it's extremely difficult to establish, because nothing was written at the time, the Qur'an itself was memorised -- but at the time of the death of the Prophet, what was the ingredients of the division between the Shia and the Sunni is not really entirely clear, because all we have today is literature which is based on repetition of what was said, the Hadith in a sense....

Michael Charlton: But in this conflict between the orthodox, who say that the Qur’anic teaching, like Khomeini appears to be saying in Iran, are immutable and even if the majority wishes them to be changed -- they can not be changed because the teaching itself is unchanging and must not be changed -- in that context, between those who think like that and those who think that Islam can not survive unless it adapts, where do you stand yourself?

Aga Khan: I think the question is where you start from. Are you starting from the Qur'an? Are you starting from the Sharia? Are you starting from secular Christian law? Where are you starting from? The Qur'an is not a body of law, and that, I think, is a statement that every Muslim will make. What is referred to today as Islamic law is a compilation of views expressed by law makers who lived well after the revelation of the Qur'an, well after the time of the Prophet. The interesting thing is that in the Qu’ran, for example, a lot of the things which I would refer to as punishment, are punishment as deterrent.
The punishment itself is not the issue at stake. The question is you have got to stop certain things from happening for the good of society. Now if that's the starting point, then I would say a lot of things do not have to be done, which maybe being done today in the Muslim world. That is my position, because I will start from the Qur'an. I will not start from an interpretation made five or six generations after the life of the Prophet. If we're talking about fundamentalism, let's start at the revelation of Islam.

His Highness the Aga Khan's 1979 BBC Radio 4 Interview with Michael Charlton (London, United Kingdom)

---

Aga Khan: ... If you read the Qur'an you will find that a very substantial part of Islam and Islam's teaching has to do with the individual's behaviour in society in totally secular matters -- how you behave in your relations with other people in society, in your business transaction, in your family, in your friends....

Geoffry Barker: Westerners are often appalled by the literal implementation of savage Qur’anic laws which permit, for example, public beheading of adulterers, the chopping off of hands and flogging for breach of alcohol prohibition. How would you as Imam defend these laws? Do you insist on their implementation among the Ismailis Muslims?

Aga Khan: You must be careful not to refer to Islamic law. There is no such thing as 'Islamic law'. There are four basic schools of Islamic law in the Sunni Muslim world, there are several schools of Islamic law in the Shia Muslim world. Our attitude is simply that codes change and that what is important is the purpose behind the code.

I must say that in certain areas of the Muslim world there is a very rigid application ... I am not at all saying that today the Ismaili world would encourage mutilation or flagellation or things like that ... Flagellation, beheading, mutilation, these sort of things, may be a totally temporary aspect which is put forward as maybe a
justification at a time of crisis.

I think you will find that generally speaking the Muslim world will not be going in that direction.

His Highness the Aga Khan's 1979 The Age Interview with Geoffry Barker (Melbourne, Australia)
http://www.nanowisdoms.org/nwblog/10329/

See also: Their Highnesses the Aga Khans III and IV on Ayat al-Nur and the Sura of Light of the Qur'an

See also: His Highness the Aga Khan on interpreting the Qur'an
https://www.facebook.com/notes/nanowisdoms-archive/excerpt/363830926968431

See also: Imams Jafar al-Sadiq and Muhammad al-Baqir on interpreting the Qur'an

See also: His Highness the Aga Khan on the Imam's authority and discretion in interpreting the Qur'an
See also: Their Highnesses the Aga Khans III and IV on Islam’s and the Qur’an’s assent of freedom of individual interpretation


See also: TH Aga Khans III and IV on interpreting the faith: individuality vs formalistic approaches which anchor faith in time


Click here for this post in PDF format.