

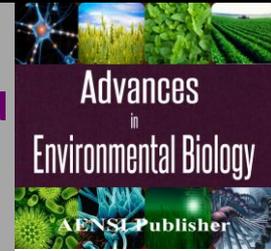


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Unity of Religions Throughout the History of Prophets and its Manifestation in the Apocalypse

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ABSTRACT

The true religion is the One and non-diverse and in spite of whatever the pluralisms of pluralist has claimed in the whole periods of ups and downs of the prophets' invitation it was just the One. However this religion had different edicts and canonical laws and had various names throughout the prophets' history, inwardly its reality was something which is "the One" and whose name is Islam. This reality of the One was completed with appointing of Imam Ali "the commander of the faithful" and his successors by the last prophet (PBUH) that its fruit was satisfaction and contentment of the Great God; and it is which that will traverse the borders of time and place in the apocalypse and it will be represented to people by the capable and mighty hand of the last successor of the Messenger of God (PBUH) and the reformist and savior of the world and his invitation will be broad-based and universal.

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1. Expressing the Issue:

The existence of religions and the prophets appointed prophets that have performed a role throughout periods and different eons is a reality appropriate to contemplation and an undeniable fact.

In the meantime the controversial question is that whether the *raison d'être* of these religions and especially the monotheistic religions and divine revelation has been the realization of a unit goal or not? Or that any of them has inwardly followed a purpose different from purposes of the other religion? And if it is proved that from Adam to the last the target of all Prophets and messengers was just one; this will be followed by a question as to why did not a unit religion whose origin is the realization of a unit target present to people from the early days of the fall of man in the arena of dirt? And why does not it reveal itself to humanity with a name which is Islam itself? In other words how to explain the numerous of religions and the plurality? Is this diversity and pluralism inwardly disputable or unity-bearing?

It must be acknowledged that inner unity of religions is a fact that cannot be ignored. But the fact which must be awaited is a non-achieving reality and has not worn the objective attire! And this non-objective reality is the same as the Word of in which it is mentioned as "The religion of truth": "it is he who has sent His Messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth, that he may uplift it above every religion, though the unbelievers are averse". (Chapter "The Ranks", 9)

2. The geometry of the universe and the system ruling it:

World geometry and geography has been based on an inviolable and inalienable principle. A principle that all prophets' invitation obtains its true concept and meaning toward expressing it; and the philosophy of the creation, purpose of it and existing of phenomena in fact is inextricably associated with the principle.

Basically, the answer to the question why did God begin the creation and what purpose and intention has he followed from creating objects and forming the system of the universe? Can help us grasp more deeply and efficiently and understand the philosophy of sending out the Messengers. Whatever it is deduced from the whole valid Qur'anic sources, documents and proofs is that propositions such as guidance, obedience, submission, knowledge and understanding which is called as "Knowledge of God" are the most important pillars of the philosophy of sending out the Messengers and appointing of the prophets. Prophets have been sent out so that God to be obeyed by obeying their orders. Obedience will approach no path without accompanying of the knowledge and the ultimate purpose of creation will not be provided. Hence it is that in the teaching of the

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infallibles (PBUT) and in the interpretation of the concept of worship it has been emphasized in the noble verse "I have not created Jinn and mankind except to serve me" and the concept of knowledge and recognition of God the Exalted has been mentioned: (Sharif Lāhiji, 2/269) thus in the structure of the universe and overall creation map options like confessing to the unity of God, obedience, knowledge, belief in the Last Day, and reward and punishment is the fundamental principles of creation.

3-1. Sending of the Messengers and the Covenant of the Prophets:

Sending out the Messengers and appointing of the prophets is based on the compact and covenant that God has taken from them. The Holy Quran has mentioned it as "a solemn compact". There it says: "And when we took compact from the Prophets, and from thee, and from Noah, and Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, Mary's son; we took from them a solemn compact". (Chapter "the Confederates" / 7)

Ignorance of the Divine Covenant will cause inefficiency and abortion of the prophets' invitation and their communication; and it will distinguish the border between truth and untruth and faith and blasphemy. But it also must be the belief in all divine prophets and their communicating and must not separate between them and their path and aim; but it also must not be ignored that all of the divine great prophets as they were the efficient communicator and messenger on behalf of God, The Exalted, to the people and at the same time have brought good tidings of the last religion, the advent of the last dignified prophet, and coming of his true successors. And certainly the truth of the discourse is obvious and conspicuous from the explicit text of some verses and narrations.

3-2. Seal religion, gospel Prophets:

According to the Quran Jesus has brought the glad tidings of the prophet after him: "And when Jesus son of Mary said, Children of Israel, I am indeed the Messenger of God to you, confirming the Torah that is before me, and giving good tidings of a Messenger who shall come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad." (Chapter "the Ranks" / 6)

In the Chapter of "Victory" in the Holy Quran the attributions of the Holy Prophet, Muhammad (PBUH), and his believers have been provided as they are in Torah and Gospel: "Muhammad is the Messenger of God, and those who are with him are hard against the unbelievers, merciful one to another. Thou seest them bowing, prostrating, seeking bounty from God and good pleasure. Their mark is on their faces, the trace of prostration. That is their likeness in the Torah and their likeness in the Gospel." (Victory/29) Of course the faith and belief of the followers of the religions in the Last Prophet (PBUH) and following their own prophets – that must be fulfilled – must not lead to the denying of the former prophets.

In other words, for the true and righteous followers of the former prophets it is a premise and essential that by respecting all sacrifices, hardships and harshness that their prophets have been incurred in the path of exaltation of religion to have faith in every of them and not to ignore the efforts of any of them. Therefore it has been noted in infallible Imams (PBUT) to the fundamental point that: "know that if anyone denied Jesus son of Mary and confess the legitimacy of the other apostles, it would be like the one who has not faith in the Exalted God." (Kulayni, 2/448) and it confirms this explicit text of Quran that says: "we make no division between any one of His Messengers." (The Chapter; Cow, 285)

Hence the origin of legislating of all revealed and monotheistic religions was to provide a necessary bed for the emergence of the last religion and reappearance of the last dignified prophet that his reappearance will procure the ground of emergence and appearance of the right religion that is the very acceptance of the absolute rule of saints and divine successors especially Imam Ali (PBUH), the commander of the faithful. (Hosseini, 2/687) And taking stand on presenting of the saint of God was various in the event of Qadir not only the highest mission of the prophet but also the highest mission of all divine prophets throughout different times and ages that it was expressed from the Holy Prophet's blessed lips in place of all prophets. However the religion was perfected by presenting the saint of God in the event of Qadir, political movements occurred after the Messenger of God (PBUH) prevented the growth and development of the religion perfected by him and the people faced with a lot of problems in the path of piety.

The sufferings and problems will still continue until the promised day arrive that there is no lie about it and the savior and salvation of all the oppressed of all epochs will reappear. He who is "The True Dawn" (Bohrani, 8/276), the fact "By Time" (Wal 'Asr) (Saduq, 2/656), and is "A near Dawn" (A'meli, 335) that his followers are awaiting lonely. He who will materialize all wishes and desires of the former prophets and in the reins of his power the right religion will salvage its true meaning. But before we represent some useful explanations about the right religion, it seems that we have to look at the beliefs of pluralists of pluralism that have taken a way different to unify among religions and prove it from what we have expressed so far.

4. Exclusivism and inclusivism as the introduction to the theory of religious pluralism:

Prior to bringing up the theory of religious pluralism in Christian theology there was a belief that only those who would gain a happy life and be saved from God's chastisement that have faith in divinity and sacrificed

death of Christ. Therefore those who are disbeliever in this belief, they will be banned to enter the heaven and reach the eternal bliss. (Hosseini-zadeh, 121) In front of the parochial view, inclusivism view emerged.

Inclusivists believed that the honest and righteous followers of other religions will be saved. Since they do not know themselves that they are in fact Christian. In other words Inclusivists and those who acted according to the principles of Christianity made the door of heaven a little bit more open; although they were not Christian, they counted them in paradise-goer and named them so-called obscure Christians. Of course they ordered the absolute rightfulness of Christian religion and the relative rightfulness of other religions. (Khosropanah, 166) John Hick, The philosopher and theologian Christian and the proposer of the theory of multiplying of inclination toward variety in religion which is the very pluralism, was not contented and counted it in a parochial way. He stated: "anyone with any idea can go to heaven provided that they focus on "the right" via one of the religions and dissuade themselves from paying attention to them." (Nabavian, 15) Indeed this view of opening the door of paradise to followers of the other religions demarcated the border between the right and wrong and dualism, trinity, monotheism and polytheism. Worthy to attention that believing in pluralism has an ancient root and its manifestation can be searched and observed in thoughts, opinions and ideas of "Ibn Arabi", renowned mystic of the sixth century.

He has stated in his writings so many times: "lest you adhere to a particular belief and disbelieve in others' beliefs! In this case you will sustain a loss. But you will lose the knowledge to the reality of issue. Hence cultivate your inner self so that it would be like a dish for accepting all forms of belief! (Ibn Arabi, Fusus Al-Hekam, 113) He also unveils the belief in the book "Tarjoman Al-Ashwaq" in the form of city like this: people have different beliefs in God, and I am committed to whatever they believe in. (Ibn Arabi, Tarjuman Al-Ashwaq, 194)

It must be noted that there is the latter interpretation of religious pluralism; based on this view that the followers of different religions can live together peacefully. And also by observing the citizenship rights they respect each other's beliefs. (Gulpaygani, 22) this meaning of pluralism is certainly acceptable and religious doctrines corroborate the correctness of it as well.

5. Revocation of laws and not of Religions:

Although some of the criticism of religious pluralism have raised the issue of revocation of religions; (Motahari, 289), what seems to have been revoked here is not only the fact of the religion but also are the laws that in the era of the prophets have come one after another in succession. So from the very beginning of canon religion was only one; but at any point in the history of the prophets it has showed itself in a more complete level and growth in new edicts and more self-made.

In this regard the Holy Quran says: (he has laid down for you as religion that He charged Noah with, and that we have revealed to thee, and that we charged Abraham with, Moses and Jesus: Perform the religion, and scatter not regarding it.) (Chapter "Counsel", 13) Basically the facts like monotheism, belief in prophets and the Last Day are not abrogated. In other words the geometry of creation of the universe and the geography of the galaxy is founded based on these beliefs. Man was created to know the Creator of the universe as oneness and worship him. And the unity and uniqueness of God is the common denominator of invitation of all prophets which is not abrogated.

Thus the general principles ruling over the prophets' invitation from the beginning to the last ones were only one. But because of the new decrees and the level of the audience it has gained a new form and shape in performing. In contrast and as it is said some by revealing the last religion has insisted on the copies of former religions. In this regard Motahari wrote: "certainly this topic had been mentioned in Islam from way back and it is mentioned right now among different classes like an ignorant, a wise person, an illiterate and a literate that whether the good works of non-Muslim people is acceptable or not. If it is acceptable, then what makes it different that the one is Muslim or non-Muslim?" (Motahari, 9/28) the difference of views result from the belief that the true religion was not at any one time over and it is necessary to all to join it. But it seems that the answer to the question of whether religions have been abolished or not depends on considering the difference between religion and the canon.

Religion is fixed (Chapter "Counsel", 13), the laws vary. Religion is the very "Islam" and in general meaning is the very "to submit"; it is fixed in all laws: "The true religion with God is Islam" (Chapter "The House of Imran", 19) it means the spirit of all monotheistic laws is the very monotheism in the realm of belief and practice. But every law is different from the other one: "To every one of you We have appointed a right way (a code of law) and an open road" (Chapter "The Table", 48) and the latter laws abrogates the former ones because laws contain small orders and minors suitable for natural and material dimensions of a human and people individual and ethnic specifications and appropriate to place and time circumstances which are changeable. (Javadi Amoli, 118) That's why Jesus addressed the Israelites and followers of Moses: "And when Jesus came with the clear signs he said, I have come to you with wisdom, and that I may make clear to you some of that whereon you are at variance; so fear you God and obey you me." (Chapter "Ornaments", 63)

So if the Prophet Muhammad is the last prophet of God (Chapter "The Confederates", 40) naturally his law is the last law, because it is the apostle who can bring law and the mission has been completed by coming of Prophet Muhammad. And if we agree that the law of the last messenger of God is the last law, then you must convert to it. Because the former laws not the reality of religion will be abrogated by the last law; if they are not abrogated, the latter law will be useless and canceled. The following tradition from the Prophet of God (PBUH) confirms this discourse: "Allah the Exalted has put my book reigning and ruling over the books of the prophets and abrogating." (Majlisi, 9/292)

Furthermore, due to the distortions that has occurred in the former books it is rational to turn to the new religion.

6. *Perfect religion is the concern of all the prophets:*

As it was mentioned earlier all prophets were the herald of the last religion, the religion that its communication has been introduced as the highest duty of the apostle of God (PBUH); and lack of communication will cause non-communication of mission; and all efforts and unhappiness by which the apostle of God (PBUH) has been suffered from during his prophecy periods will be fruitless: "O Messenger, deliver that which has been sent down to thee from thy Lord; for if thou dost not, thou wilt not have delivered His Message" (Chapter "The Table" / 67) in other words the important task weighs down on the shoulder of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and to communicate it he must do his utmost best; moreover with all tasks that he did during the twenty years or more it is not only equal but even it is also superior.

That is why God addresses the last prophet: "Say: I give you but one admonition" (Chapter "Sheba", 46) and that admonition is the very acceptance of absolute ruler of Imam Ali (PBUH), The commander of the faithful and Imams after him that religion was perfected thanks to accepting of their ruling. (Qummi, 2/205)

Certainly the Holy Quran has called people to accept the important task of ruling in some other verses and said: "Surely this Quran guides to the way that is straightest" (Chapter "The Night Journey", 9) and that firmer and stronger way is the very path of God's saints and obeying them. (Hosseini, 1/279)

Whatever has come up the following narrative and the interpretation of verse 45 of chapter "Ornaments" indicates that the acceptance of ruling of the Holy Prophet's household (PBUT) and confession to it next to admission of monotheism and prophecy of the apostle of God (PBUH) are the common factor of invitation of all prophets; and also the acceptance of ruling of the true successors of them has been confirmed more than anything else in all the former prophets' scriptures after monotheism and admission of prophecy of the last prophet. (Hosseini, 1/33 & 34) In the verse 45 of chapter "Ornaments" we read: "Ask those of Our Messengers We sent before thee: Have We appointed, apart from the All-merciful, gods to be served." Certainly this verse which started by posing a question in its context calls another question to mind and that is that how and when has the question and the answer between the Prophet of God (PBUH) and the former prophets posted?

What is noteworthy is that the Quran has been silent in response to this question and referred us to the Holy Prophets' Household according to the verse: "Question the people of the Remembrance" (Chapter "The Bee"/43) (Majlesi, 2/90) following of the verse and in infallibles' narrations there is a tradition of Imam Ali (PBUH), the commander of the faithful: the speaking has been occurred between the apostle of God (PBUH) and the former prophets in the night of Ascension, in the House of Ma'mur, and in the fourth heaven which is their location and all prophets in response to the question of prophet that whether there are any other gods deserve worshipping apart from All-merciful God or not have declared that worshipping is just for All-merciful God and addressed the last apostle: O Messenger of mercy know that we have been appointed as the clan of prophets all together to confess to monotheism, admit your prophecy, and accept the ruling of your successors. (Hosseini, 2/564)

Therefore what deduces from the whole verses and narrations is that the future of human and the fate of all heavenly religions will lead to the adoption of a single religion. The very religion about which was introduced and communicated by the Prophet to the worlds as Islam in the verse "the day of perfecting the religion" (Chapter "The Table"/3).

The very religion about which God, The Exalted, will not consent to accept it as something else. (Chapter "The House of Imran"/85) and the very religion that people will like its sweetness and embrace it in throngs without force and compulsion by reappearance of the savior. (Chapter "Help"/1&2) and they will prepare the ground of realization of this noble verse "It is He who has sent His Messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth, that he may uplift it above every religion, though the unbelievers be averse." (Chapter "The Ranks"/9) And this is the happy ending of the world that the geometry of the universe was founded on it by the divine management from the beginning to the end.

7. *Conclusion:*

The *raison d'être* of appointing of prophets and sending down the apostle in different periods of history had been a realization of the one goal. Although their law was different, the general principles of invitation of prophets that they have call their audiences to monotheism and accepting of the Last Day was just the one not more.

This one goal in fact is establishing the true religion and globalization of Islam. Thus the religion was publicized to people in Qdir Khum by the lips of the Prophet of God (PBUH) and on behalf of all prophets, and in other words it was brought to perfection; however the necessary conditions were not procured to accept it on a large scale and certainly the end of the religions and the future of the human will be decided in such a way that the true religion which is the very Islam will sweep the boundaries of time and place and be global by the last successor of the prophet, that is Hazrat Mahdi (PBUH).

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