



Islam and other Religions: An Analysis

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Abstract

The paper argued that the religion of all Prophets and Messengers was Islam, as a total submission and obedience to Allah alone. Also, it indicates that all other religions beside Islam are manufactured or man-made religions, and are ceased with the advent of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ's mission. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to look at the position of Islam in relation to other religions, with special reference to the clarification of the meaning of some verses of the Qur'an, misinterpreted by some people to validate the continuity and authenticity of some religions (especially Judaism and Christianity) in simultaneous way and cognizant to Islam or what is known as 'religious pluralism' in the modern language.

Keywords: Islam, Religions, Pluralism, Salvation, Misconception, Misinterpretation.

INTRODUCTION

Religion according to Muslim understanding refers to a divine law that enables people with good conscience to attain goodness and happiness in this world and the next with their own desire.¹ Specifically, the perspective of Muslim scholars on the concept of religion, refers to Islam as a religion of all the Prophets of Allah; that is to say, all of them practiced nothing but Islam with the meaning of total submission and obedience to the will of Allah. Taking the linguistic meaning of *al Diin* i.e. obedience and submission, Al Shahrastani, considered Islam to be a religious tradition of all the Prophets of Allah.² In his book *al Din wa al Wahywa al Islam*, Mustapha Abdurrazzaq defined religion as a Divine revelation from the Almighty Allah to His Prophets and Messengers, whom He selected among His servants for the guidance of mankind.³ Therefore, this paper in the following paragraphs, explains Islam as the only accepted religious tradition practiced by all Prophets and Messengers of Allah in the light of Qur'an, Hadith and Muslim understanding.

Islam as the Religion of all Prophets and Messengers of Allah

Islam as a total submission and obedience to Allah alone was the religion of all the Prophets and Messengers of Allah. In real sense, it is also the religious tradition of their followers. On the basis of this, whosoever believes in them since the time of the Prophet Adam (A.S.) to the end or the last of them i.e., Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) is a believer of Islam and is a Muslim. The Glorious Qur'an stated clearly that the religious tradition of all the Prophets of Allah was Islam. It was narrated to us the statement of Prophet Nuh (A.S.) who warned his people for their refusal to accept his call:

¹ Al Manawi, Muhammad Abdurra'uf, *Al TawqifalaMuhimmat al Ta'arif*, DarulFikr, Beirut, Dimashq, 1410A.H, p.168; See also: Al Jurjani, Aliyu Muhammad, *Kitab al Ta'rifat*, MaktabatuLubnan, Beirut, New Edithion, 1985.

² Al Shahrastani, Muhammad Abdulkarim, *Al Milalwa al Nihal*, Dar al Fikr, Bairut Lebanon, 2005, pp.29-30.

³ Abdurrazzaq, Mustapha *Al Din wa al Wahywa al Islam*, Mu'assasatuHindawi li al Ta'limwa al Thaqafah, Al Qahirah, 2013, p.25.

But if you turn away, then no reward have I asked of you, my reward is only from Allah, and I have been commanded to be of the Muslims.⁴

Another instance was revealed in the tongue of Prophet Ibrahim (A.S.) along with many Prophets who were his descendants, such as Prophets Isma'il (Ishmael), Ya'qub (Jacob), and Ishaq (Isaac); Qur'an shows that they all practiced nothing but Islam.⁵ Islam was also the religion of Prophet Musa (A.S.). Qur'an says:

And Musa said: "O my people! If you have believed in Allah, then put your trust in Him if you are Muslims."⁶

On the Bani Isra'il, who were known in the religious history as the children of Prophet Ya'qub (Jacob), Qur'an tells us that they practiced Islam as their religion. It says:

Verily, we did send down the *Tawrah*, therein was guidance and light, by which the Prophets *aslamu* (who submitted themselves to Allah's will), judged for the Jews. And the *Rabbaniyyun* and the *Ahbar*, for to them was entrusted the protection of Allah's Book, and they were witnesses thereto...⁷

Qur'an tells us that Prophet Isa (A.S.) was also a Muslim as stated by the *Hawariyyun*:

Then when 'Isa came to know of their disbelief, he said: "Who will be my helpers in Allah's cause" *Al Hawariyyun* said: "We are the helpers of Allah; we believe in Allah, and bear witness that we are Muslims."⁸

In a more comprehensive way, a verse in *Surah al Shurah* elaborates that all what was revealed to Allah's Messengers was the same religion. Allah says:

He (Allah) has ordained for you the same religion which He ordained for Nuh, and that which We have revealed to you, and that which We ordained for Ibrahim, Musa and 'Isa saying you should establish religion and make no divisions in it. Intolerable for the idolaters is that to which you call them. Allah chooses for Himself whom He wills, and guides unto Himself who turns to Him in repentance.⁹

In his interpretation of the verse quoted above, MalamAbdullahibnFoduye maintains that the meaning of Allah's statement, "You should establish religion" refers to the basic belief systems and total obedience to the laws of Allah. Because the essence of *Tauhid* i.e., Islamic monotheism, remains the same context message to all the Prophets of Allah. Furthermore, MalamAbdullahi noted that although, with some instances in the different modes of observance, all that which they were ordained to practice like prayers, fasting, fulfillment of promises and covenants, maintenance of kinship, as well as all that which Allah prohibited like disbelief, killing innocent people, illicit sexual acts, and others were all commanded under the teachings of the same and one religion i.e., Islam.¹⁰

From the foregoing verses, Islamic brotherhood and true channel of belief has a concrete connection since the time of the Prophet Adam (A.S.) to the last and the final of the Prophets, Muhammad (ﷺ) as indicated in an authentic Hadith by the Prophet (ﷺ) as narrated by Abu Hurairah (R.A.) where Allah's Messenger ﷺ said:

Both in this world and in the Hereafter, I am the nearest of all the people to 'Isa (Jesus) (A.S.), the son of Maryam (Mary). The Prophets are paternal brothers; their mothers are different, but their religion is one (i.e., Islamic Monotheism).¹¹

Thus, a careful assessment from the aforementioned Islamic text revealed that Islam is the true religion of Allah practiced by all the Prophets and Messengers. All other religious traditions bearing different names therefore, linked or not to the

⁴ Qur'an.10: 72. All translations of Qur'anic verses are taken from: Al Hilali, Muhammad Taqi al Din & Khan, MmuhammadMuhsin*The Noble Qur'an English Translation of the Meanings and Commentary*, King Fahad Complex, Madinah, 1427 A.H.

⁵For details see Qur'an.2, *Surahal Baqarah*, from verses 127 to 141.

⁶ Qur'an.10: 84.

⁷ Qur'an.5:44.

⁸ Qur'an.3: 52

⁹ Qur'an.42: 13.

¹⁰IbnFoduye, Abdullahi, *KifayatuDu'afa'i al Sudan fi Bayan Tafsir al Qur'an*, AbdullahiBalarabeSalame (Ed.), (from *Suratu Maryam* to *Suratu al Nas*), Sharikah al Qudus li al Nashriwa al Tauzi', al Qahirah, 2012, p.525.

¹¹ Al Bukhari, Muhammad bnIsmaiel, *Sahih Al Bukhari*, Muhammad Muhsin Khan (Trans.), Darussalam, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 1997, Vol.4, p.409, Hadith No.3443.

previous Messengers, like Judaism and Christianity, Hinduism and African Traditional Religion among others, were all manufactured religions.

Misconception and Misinterpretation of Islam on its Position on other Religions

Different interpretations of the meaning of some Qur'anic verses brought about some notions that Islam validates the continuity of some religious traditions or religious pluralism. Two of these verses which carry almost similar meaning are found in *Suarh al Baqarah*, verse 62, and *Surah al Ma'idah*, verse 69.

Verily, those who believe and those who are Jews and Christians, and Sabians (*Sabi'in*), whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does righteous good deeds shall have their reward with their Lord, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.¹²

And also:

Surely, those who believe, and those who are the Jews and the Sabians and the Christians, whosoever believed in Allah and the Last Day, and worked righteousness, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.¹³

From the content of these verses, some people believe that salvation is not restricted to Islam alone, it can also be achieved through Judaism, Christianity and Sabianism. To them, only two conditions – belief in Allah and the Last Day, and good deed – are required to achieve salvation regardless of religious affiliation. For instance, Abdul'aziz Sachedina, *al Shi'i*, claims that the notion of abrogation to the previous religions before Islam appears to be incompatible with the Qur'anic promise of rewarding those who believe in God and the Last Day and work righteously.¹⁴ Similarly, Abbas Yazdani in his article writes that "There is no verse in the Qur'an that annulled previous religions". He argues that all religions of the world are looking for the same truth and, therefore, are meant to achieve the same truth. According to him, metaphorically, the truth is like a tip of a mountain and religions are like different ways to that tip; some are wider and easy to pass while others are narrower and harder, but all of them will end at the top.¹⁵ Thus, people who concocted this type of belief went to the extent of arguing that whatever kind of a religion one practiced, it can be accepted by the Almighty Allah. This is because according to them, He is the One that will judge among all religions as stated in the Qur'an in *Surah al Hajj* verse 17 (إن الله يفصل بينهم يوم القيامة).

Verily, those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Sabians, and the Christians, and the *Majus*, and those who worship others besides Allah; truly, Allah will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection. Verily, Allah is over all things a Witness.¹⁶

They also claim that one of the reasons for the revelation (Asbab al Nuzul) of Qur'an.4, *Surah al Nisa'*, Verse: 123, which says that there was a kind of argument between Muslims and people of the Book (Jews and Christians) in which everyone claims exclusiveness as related by Imam Al Tabari,¹⁷ Ibn Kathir and many others. The people of the Book proudly said to Muslims that "Our Prophet came before yours and our Book was revealed before yours, therefore we are the best in the sight of Allah." As such, Muslims replied to them that, "We are the best in the sight of Allah because, our Prophet was the final of all the Prophets and our Book abrogates all the previous ones." Then the Almighty Allah revealed that:

It will not be in accordance with your desires, nor those of the People of the Scripture, whosoever works evil, will have the recompense thereof, and he will not find any protector or helper besides Allah.¹⁸

Imam al Tabari related that there were different opinions with regards to the meaning of the statement "your desires" in the verse. Does the meaning go to Muslims or not?¹⁹ These are some of the reasons used by some people that Islam approved religious pluralism.

¹² Qur'an.2: 62.

¹³ Qur'an.5: 69.

¹⁴ Sachedina, Abdulaziz, "The Qur'an and Other Religions", *Journal of Religious Ethics*, June, 2006, p.302. available at <https://www.researchgate.net/publication>

¹⁵ Yazdani, Abbas, "The Culture of Peace and Religious Tolerance from an Islamic Perspective", *VERITAS*, University of Tehran, Iran, No.47, 2020, pp.163-166.

¹⁶ Qur'an.22: 17.

¹⁷ Al Tabari, Muhammad Jarir, *Jami' al Bayan fi Ta'wil al Qur'an*, Ahmad Muhammad Shakir (Ed.), Mu'assasah al Risalah, 1st Edition, 1420/2000, Vol.9, p.229.

¹⁸ Qur'an.4: 123.

The Position of Islam on Other Religions

However, majority of Muslim exegetes explain that the verses (Quran.2:62 and 5:69) describe the natural way of the Almighty Allah in dealing with all nations, whether the previous ones or the forthcoming to the Day of Judgment.²⁰ Imam al Tabari added that the meaning of 'whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day' refers to the believers among the people of the Book and Sabians, who live and died as believers up to the arrival of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). He further related that after he accepted Islam, Salman al Farisi (R.A.) asked the Prophet (ﷺ) about the position of those people who died among the people of the Book without having any contact with the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ)'s mission. Then, the Almighty Allah revealed the verse (Qur'an.2:62).²¹ That is to say, the verses (Qur'an.2:62 and 5:69) referred to earlier nations before the coming of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), who were righteous and obedient, they will receive their rewards for their good deeds. Also, it will be the same for those who follow the Prophet (Muhammad ﷺ). They shall acquire eternal happiness and shall neither fear from what will happen in the future nor become sad for what has been lost in the past, as in the Tafsir of IbnKathir.²²

Therefore, after the coming of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) all other religious functions were ceased except that of him. And that is why in one of his authentic traditions narrated by Abu Hurairah, he said, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said:

By the One in Whose Hand is the soul of Muhammad, no one among this nation, Jew or Christian, hears of me then dies, not believing in that with which I was sent, but he will be one of the people of the Fire.²³

As for the interpretation of the verse Qur'an.4:123, according to Muslim exegetes, this verse shows that religion is not accepted on account of wishful thinking or mere hopes. The only accepted religion in the sight of Allah relies on the actual belief in the heart and which appears to be truthful through actions.²⁴ It is not only when one utters a claim to something that he attains it merely on account of his claim. It is not true that every person who claims to be on the truth is considered as such, merely on account of his words, until his claim gains merit with proof from Allah. Therefore, the subsequent two verses supported the argument of Muslims that:

And whoever does righteous good deeds, male or female, and is a believer, such will enter Paradise and not the least injustice, even to the size of a *Naqir*, will be done to them. And who can be better in religion than one who submits his face (himself) to Allah; and he is a *Muhsin* (a doer of good). And follows the religion of Ibrahim, the *Hanif*, (Monotheist). And Allah did take Ibrahim as a *Khalil* (an intimate friend)!²⁵

Now from the above verses, the mere claims of exclusiveness by each religion are subject to the acid test of its compatibility to the religion of the Prophet Ibrahim; who was described in another place that:

Ibrahim was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but he was a true Muslim *Hanifa* and he was not of the *Mushrikin*. Verily, among mankind who have the best claim to Ibrahim are those who followed him, and this Prophet and those who have believed. And Allah is the *Wali* (Protector and Helper) of the believers.²⁶

From the above, one can now say that Muslims wholeheartedly believe Islam as a total submission and obedience to the will and commandments of Allah and was and still is the only accepted religion in the sight of Allah and also it was the religion practiced by all His Prophets and Messengers as discussed above. It is clearly stated in the Qur'an that:

Truly, the religion with Allah is Islam...²⁷

Consequently, any religion other than Islam is regarded as null and void and will not be accepted on the Day of Judgment and that is why in another verse of the same *Surah*, the Almighty Allah says:

And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted of him, and in the Hereafter, he will be one of the losers.²⁸

Therefore, this indicates that adhering to any other religion today beside Islam is not accepted and trashes to rubbish all one's religious observances in the Hereafter. More interestingly, in his book *Nasa'ihUmmatulMuhammadiyah*,

¹⁹Al Tabari, *Jami' al Bayan fi Ta'wil al Qur'an*, p.229.

²⁰AliyuRida, Muhammad Rashid, *Tafsir al Mannar*, al Hai'at al Misriyyah, al Ammah li al Kitab, 1990, vol.1, p.278.

²¹Al Tabari, *Jami' al Bayan fi Ta'wil al Qur'an*, Vol.2, p.155.

²²IbnKathir, Abu Al Fidalsma'il, *TafsirIbnKathir*, Abridged by Safiur-Rahman Al Mubarakpuri, 2nd Edition, Maktaba Darussalam, Riyadh, 2003, Vol.1, p.247.

²³IbnHajjaj, Muslim AbulHussain, *Sahih Muslim*, Nasiruddin al Khattab (Trans.), Huda Khattab (Ed.), Maktaba Darussalam, Riyadh, 2007, Vol.1, p.243, Hadith No.153.

²⁴ IbnHajjaj, Muslim AbulHussain, *Sahih Muslim*, Nasiruddin al Khattab (Trans.), Huda Khattab (Ed.), Maktaba Darussalam, Riyadh, 2007, Vol.1, p.243, Hadith No.153.

Shaykh Uthman bn Foduye explains that considering the authenticity or validity of any other religious tradition other than Islam in the contemporary world, such as Judaism, Christianity and polytheism among others, is an act of disbelief. In fact, he shows that whoever hesitates or doubts in taking them as unbelievers becomes an unbeliever himself.²⁹ This statement was further mentioned by him in another book, *Nur al Albab*.³⁰ This is very clear that practicing any other religion beside Islam after the coming of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is disbelief as appears in the Qur'an.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Islam in the meaning of total submission and obedience to the Almighty Allah, the Creator, was the religious tradition of all His Prophets and Messengers. All other religious traditions linked or not to the previous Prophets and Messengers, are null and void in the Day Judgment. The paper argued that the so-called interpretation of some verses of the Glorious Qur'an, to pave way for religious pluralism or salvation in other religions (especially Judaism and Christianity), are misconceptions and misinterpretations, contradict the actual teachings of Islam. Majority of Muslim exegetes explain that the verses describe the natural way of the Almighty Allah in dealing with all nations, whether the previous ones or the forthcoming to the end of this temporal world. In other words, the goodness mentioned by the Qur'an about the Jews and Christians, refers to the earlier nations before the coming of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), who were righteous and obedient, they will receive their rewards for their good deeds. Also, it will be the same for those who follow the Prophet (Muhammad ﷺ). Allah knows the best.

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