A Comparative Study of Salvation from the Viewpoints of Motahari and Rahner

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Abstract

Among the topics that can play an important role in interreligious dialogue and the relationship between civilizations and cultures is the topic of human salvation. In this article, we argue that salvation and redemption are not exclusive to the followers of a particular religion; rather, the followers of various religions can gain salvation with some conditions, such as the belief in God and moral integrity. With this approach, we can create a constructive dialogue among the followers of different religions, and prevent "the clash of civilizations." From an Islamic viewpoint, followers of other religions who seek the truth but have not been able to find it are considered *innate Muslims*. Comparatively, in Karl Rahner's thought, the followers of various religions can gain divine grace for their moral acts, faith, hope, love of neighbor, charity, and so forth. Rahner calls such people "anonymous Christians." According to these two viewpoints, a wide range of the followers of different religions can gain salvation.

Keywords: Islam, Christianity, salvation, anonymous Christians, innate Muslims, interfaith dialogue.

Introduction

After the resurgence of Renaissance in European countries and the decline of the domination and influence of the Church in the West, and after the decline of religious beliefs among people, especially among the scientists, the truth of religious beliefs was increasingly questioned in the West, and consequently relativism gained momentum. Also, following the sectarian and religious wars, such as the Crusades and the sectarian conflicts within Christianity, some Christian thinkers and theologians attempted to find solutions to end the conflicts, one of which was the acceptance of other faith traditions based on the doctrine of salvation. Indeed, the theory of inclusivism was the result of such circumstances.

Throughout history, various religions, such as Christianity, Islam, and, to some extent, Judaism, have drawn special attention to the salvation of the followers of different religion in order to bring religious people closer together and promote peace and "behavioral pluralism" among them.

In his book *Divine Justice*, Motahari calls the followers of other religions who searched for the true religion of their time but were not able to find it "innate Muslims" or "anonymous Muslims." In Christianity, in the discussion on inclusivism, Karl Rahner puts forward the idea of "anonymous Christians," re-interpreting the fundamental principles of Christianity with regard to the conditions of the modern age. As a result, he accepts the grace of God with regard to the followers of other religions, and even atheists. An anonymous Christian in Rahner's theory of inclusivism is he who lives under Christ's grace through faith, hope, love, and charity but is not aware of this fact (Rahner 1976, 283).

1. Different Attitudes Towards Religious Diversity

Today, we cannot ignore the diversity of religions in human societies. When we discuss the plurality and variety of religions, our question is not whether there is such diversity in the world or not; the main question is what approach we should take with regard to their claims of truth and their legitimacy, as well as their claims about salvation. In response, theologians have proposed various approaches, the most important of which are exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism.

Neo-orthodox theologians such as Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, and Hedrick Kramer proposed exclusivism. Exclusivists believe that liberation, perfection, or whatever is the ultimate goal of religions is found exclusively in one religion; for instance, in Christian theology, Gavin D'Costa believes that Christ is the definitive and authoritative revelation of God, salvation comes from God through Christ alone, and God's salvific will is truly universal. Moreover, God has disclosed himself in Jesus Christ as a God of suffering and redemptive love (D'Costa 1986, 136).

Karl Barth (1886 - 1968) placed "religion" and "epiphany" against each other. In his view, religion is an awesome attempt by man and an appearance and symbol of man's disobeying God. The impossibility of our effort toward redemption is because of the possibility of reconciliation with God; our personal effort to gain salvation is arrogant (Barth 1956, 303).

Karl Rahner, Hans Kung, and Shelter have promoted inclusivism. In this response, Christianity is a manifestation of God's grace and associated with a historical conception of salvation. Based on this assessment of religious plurality, all non-Christian religions are to some extent capable of encompassing God's salvation plan. However, their

role is preliminarily, and the culmination of salvation and grace is found in the Christian tradition. This view emphasizes the dialogue of religions and distinguishes between the truth and salvation. Karl Rahner proposes the idea of anonymous Christians for this purpose. Hans Kung maintains that although those who are outside the Church have not known Jesus (the triune God), they can gain salvation by accepting and acknowledging the Creator God. He emphasizes the transition from the ecclesiocentric position to a theocentric position. In his view, the theocentric position means that God manifested and revealed Himself to man before His manifestation and revelation in Christ (Glyn 1380 Sh, 114-5).

The most important representative of pluralism is John Hick, who, based on two common principles in various religions, concludes that all world religions are legitimate, and their followers can gain salvation. These two common principles are the supreme reality (the common God) and the transformation of human beings from self-centered to God-centered (Hick 1378 Sh, 131).

2. Rahner's Inclusivism

Despite some problems that took place in the relationship between Karl Rahner and the Church, he was one of the official theologians of the Catholic Church. During the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), he was a theological adviser of the council and played a very important role therein. The main concern of Rahner was that theology should solve the problems and difficulties of people, and, unlike some theorists who emphasize the clash of civilizations, he sought to highlight the fundamental similarities between different religions, so that the disagreements and conflicts among them might reduce (Fletcher 2005, 235).

Karl Rahner is a prominent representative of inclusivism in its Christian form, which he developed by employing fundamental

Christian teachings and doctrines and redefining them in a new way. Self-communication of God, uncreated grace, and transcendental theology are among the foundations of his inclusivism.

Rahner strived to uphold God's justice and mercy. For him, God would not be just if He sent to hell those who had no chance to hear the Gospel's message. Rahner regarded exclusivism as against the teachings of the Bible, such as 1 Timothy 2:4, according to which God wants salvation for all. Moreover, Rahner believed that pluralism was a serious threat and source of chaos for Christianity (Rahner 2001, 20).

2.1. Anonymous Christians in Karl Rahner's Inclusivism

The idea of anonymous Christians has a central role in Rahner's inclusivism and is based on such concepts as uncreated grace and self-communication of God, transcendental theology. The theory of Rahner, which is also called "Open Catholicism," begins with an emphasis on the validity and uniqueness of Christianity. In his article *The Essence of Christianity*, Rahner explains his views on the diversity of religions and the relation between Christianity and other religions. He states that Christianity is the best religion and the only valid way of humanity to communicate and relate to God (Rahner 1975, 193-2).

Rahner's research and attempt originates from his Christian thought; for instance, he interprets the doctrine of incarnation to mean that God has shared Himself and communicated with all humans (self-communication of God) (Rahner, 1966, 166). God has given the gift of His existence to humanity, Christians and non-Christians, and by accepting this divine gift all human beings can make it a reality inside them and gain the grace of God. Rahner states that anonymous Christian is the one

who on the one hand has *de facto* accepted of his freedom this gracious self-offering on God's part through faith, hope and love, while on the other, he is not yet a Christian at the social level (through baptism and Church membership of the Church) … [or] the pagan after the beginning of the Christian mission, who lives in the state of Christ's grace through faith, hope and love yet who has no *explicit knowledge* of the fact that his life is orientated in grace-given salvation to Jesus Christ (Rahner 1976, 283).

Moreover, he points to two facts that as the bases of this theory: "First, the possibility of supernatural salvation and of a corresponding faith which must be granted to non-Christians, even if they never become Christian; and secondly, that salvation can only be gained through Christ" (Rahner 1976, 283). According to Rahner, Christianity has a prehistory; before the coming of Jesus, many Israelites and followers of other religions were saved because of their faith. After the emergence of Christianity, there are still people who are not familiar with the Christian faith, such as those who lived before Christ. Therefore, the grace and favor of God, which embraced those who lived before Christ, will embrace them as well.

In fact, from the viewpoint of Rahner, the Spirit of God affects the lives of believers who worship God in other religions even if they do not understand God in Christian terms. As a result, although they do not have a clear Christian faith, they are seeking God consciously or unconsciously (Peterson 1383 Sh, 417). In addition, Rahner states:

How can the Christian believe even for a moment that the overwhelming mass of his brothers not only those before the appearance of Christ right back to the most distant past, but also those of the present and of the future before us, are unquestionably and in principle excluded from the fulfillment of their life and condemned to eternal meaninglessness? He must reject any such suggestion, and his faith is itself in agreement with his doing so. For the scriptures tell him expressly that God wants everyone to be saved

(1 Tm 2:4); the covenant of peace which God made with Noah after the flood has never been abrogated: on the contrary, the Son of God himself has sealed it with the incontestable authority of his self-sacrificing love embracing all men. (Rahner 1974, 391).

As John Hick suggests, perhaps this theory could be the best one for solving the apparent conflict between the absolute Christianity and the provision of salvation for non-Christians (Hick 1378 Sh, 70).

2.2. The Grace of God in Rahner's Inclusivist Theory

In order to prove and provide salvation for non-Christians, Rahner tries to give a new definition for God's incarnation and revelation in Jesus. In his view, the salvation of human beings depends on God's grace, and his definition of grace is based on his particular anthropology and Christology. In his book *Foundation of Christian Faith* on creation, Rahner emphasizes the unity of all created things: the fact that all things, heaven and earth, the realm of the material and the spiritual, are all created by one and the same God and the origin of everything is Him. Moreover, all things, in their variety, proceed from *one cause*; they manifest similarity and commonality and form a unity in its origin, its self-realization, and its self-determination—they form a single world. For Christian theology and philosophy, it is to be taken for granted that the spirit and matter have more in common than they have differences, and a human being is not merely a provisional composite of spirit and matter but is a unity which precedes the differences of its elements (Rahner, 2005, 181-2).

Rahner's theology of grace is built on the foundational belief that God's grace is His self-communication present in the world. He believes, "In Jesus Christ God has communicated himself to us in an absolute and irreversible way" (Egan 1998, 33). He interprets the subject of creation

in such a way that God is present in all human beings in a sincere manner and human nature is the only creature that can freely accept God's self-communication. In addition, the climax of God's self-communication and revelation is the incarnation of Christ. He states that God "assumes by creating" and "creates by assuming," and adds that "God creates the human reality by the very fact that He assumes it as His own. Through God expressing Himself in Christ, He was able to constitute His own history in *the other*—namely, in the human reality—and humans are a result of that expression of God in history" (Egan 1998, 222).

In light of such beliefs, Rahner concludes that humans are the recipients of God's offer of self, and are naturally orientated to Him (Rahner 1983, 40). Rahner describes this intrinsic ability of man to respond to God as a seed with the potential to grow:

> The salvation, which God, of his will to save all men, offers and effectively bestows upon the individual is present now in its first principles and as a seed, which is still undeveloped. (At this stage, it is called justifying and sanctifying grace). In the future this will be brought to its fullness in the form of eternal life (this is called the 'vision of God'). It can only fail to be brought to this fullness if man of his own free will sinfully rejects it. (Rahner 1973:33-34).

Consequently, Rahner believes that religious faith is not merely "internal," and its social form is also necessary. This social form is always manifested in religion, which includes practical beliefs and rituals. Since different religions have different degrees of truth, they also have different degrees of religious law that facilitate the establishment of a proper relationship with God. These religions can also be the mediators of divine grace. The grace of God embraces the followers of all religions in various degrees, but ultimately it is the New Testament that defines the boundary between right and wrong (Peterson 1383 Sh, 417).

2.3. The Role of Conscience and Moral Values in Salvation

In Rahner's theology, salvation requires a response to divine revelation with supernatural faith. The capacity for such a response is provided by grace, which transforms the recipient's consciousness. Rahner believes that man is essentially able to receive God's grace.

> Grace, as the free self-communication of God to his creatures, does presuppose the creature, and this in such possession of its being and its capacities that it can stand in and on itself and bear witness to the glory of that almighty creative power and goodness which was able to say of its works that they were good… That is to say, it must be, to begin with, a being of unlimited openness for the limitless being of God, therefore that being we call spirit… Man therefore is not only capable of hearing a possible word from his hidden God, but in the sense we have explained is also positively expecting it, little as he has the least right to demand it. (Rahner 1974, 392).

According to Rahner, a positive response to the divine self-communication occurs when one freely accepts her own unlimited transcendence. She does this when she freely and genuinely follows her conscience. At this point, one may ask what it looks like to follow one's conscience, and what action this requirement entails? Rahner explains that the demand of conscience necessitates humans to transcend selfishness through acts of faith, charity, and hope, and ultimately through acts of love. Rahner also explains that in the acts of love the other aforementioned virtues are provided. Hence, for Rahner, the basic act in which man morally transcends himself is love of the neighbor (Rahner 1983, 55).

Even in its fallen state, the conscience represents the continuing work of God's Spirit in guiding every individual. He believes:

> We are theologically justified in our definition of saving faith if we take into consideration that the teaching of the Church allows a man

a chance of being saved as long as he does not grievously offend his conscience by his actions. Even if he does not come in the course of his life to an explicit acceptance of the Christian message of faith. However, it must nevertheless be affirmed that a purely natural, metaphysical knowledge of God can never replace faith. On the other hand, the Church today allows for even non-Christians and *atheists* who do not act against their conscience a real chance of supernatural salvation and the *Second Vatican Council* explicitly reckoned on such a possibility (Rahner 1983, 53).

The Second Vatican Council (1965-1962), in one of its decrees, stated: "The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to men." At the end of this part, the following advice is given: "Since in the course of centuries not a few quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Moslems, this sacred synod urges all to forget the past and to work sincerely for mutual understanding and to preserve as well as to promote together for the benefit of all mankind social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom" (Thomas 1377 Sh, 112-3).

For Rahner, a non-Christian's following his voice of conscience is like a Christian's response of faith to the gospel: "A genuine act of faith…can be found in an *atheist* as well, given that he is absolutely obedient to the dictates of his conscience and so accepts himself and God, at least unreflectively, in so far as he actually realizes his own transcendence" (Rahner 1983, 58).

In addition, Rahner believes that although all men have been included in God's plan of salvation, there are those who opt out of it: those who refuse to listen to their conscience. If a person is offered a chance to give objective structure and shape to his being (and therefore an opportunity of supernatural elevation) but he rejects this opportunity,

then he is deliberately denying his grace-filled transcendence. It is not possible to have "anonymous faith" when its thematic expression in the Christian belief in revelation is culpably rejected (Rahner 1983, 58-59).

2.4. Love of Neighbor Is Love and Relationship with God
In Rahner's theology, humans are fully realized insofar as they surrender themselves to God. Rahner also saw this surrendering to God to be equivalent to giving ourselves to others. Thus, love is the final fulfillment of the one who comes to realize him/herself in the love of neighbor. This unity between the love of God and the love of neighbor can be tied back to Rahner's belief that all humans express God in a very real and intimate way. If humanity is itself an expression of the Transcendent and Divine, then in loving a human, we love God. Therefore, if we fail to love a human, then we also fail to love God. As a result, Rahner writes, "Whoever does not love the brother whom he sees, also cannot love God whom he does not see, and that one can love God whom one does not see only by loving one's visible brother lovingly" (Rahner 1974, 274).

In his view, this is not to say that non-Christians are able to perform these acts of neighborly love without the help of God; rather, these acts of love are in fact evidence of God's activity in the person. Rahner says:

> This opinion states that wherever man posits a positively moral act in the full exercise of his free self-disposal, this act is a positive supernatural salvific act in the economy of salvation even when its a posteriori object and the explicitly given a posteriori motive do not spring from the positive revelation of God's Word but are in this sense natural. This is so because God in virtue of His *universal salvific* will offers everyone his supernaturally divinizing grace and thus elevates the positive moral act of man… whenever there is a moral commitment of a positive kind in the world and within the present economy of salvation, there takes place also a saving event,

faith, hope, and charity an act of divinizing grace (Rahner 1974, 238-39).

In Rahner's theology, this grace, which leads to human fulfillment, or salvation, must be the *grace of Christ*. Since Christ is the source of the grace received by all, salvation as a response to that grace must inevitably come through him: "For there is one God. There is also one mediator between God and the human race, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself as a ransom for all" (1 Tim, 2:5-6).

Since "anonymous Christians" lack explicit Christian signs, they are not members of the visible church. Even so, since they do share in Christ's grace of which the Church is the sacramental sign, they are in spiritual communion with the Church (Rahner 2005, 314-16). According to Sullivan, "Rahner insists that this means that until non-Christians become so convinced of their obligation to accept Christianity that it would be a mortal sin for them not to do so, their own religion continues to be the way in which God must intend that they express their relationship with him and arrive at their salvation" (Sullivan 1992:172).

Finally, he concludes that non-Christian religions maintain a salvific role in history. Since these non-Christian religions are valid ways to salvation for the majority of the world's population, Rahner finds it possible to be able to locate supernatural elements in them, elements that mediate divine grace. Even so, as Harvey Egan states, "Rahner would have maintained that the *'seeds of the Word'* can be found in these religions and that they, too, in some sense, are a 'preparation for the Gospel'" (Egan 2002, 65). These "seeds" can be found for Rahner in the teachings of non-Christian religions.

2.5. Evaluation of Rahner's Inclusivism

The fact that Rahner distinguishes between the legitimacy and truth of one religion and the salvation of the followers of different religions in his theory of inclusivism is admirable, because he tries to prove salvation for non-Christians (pluralism of salvation) by using and redefining the traditional teachings of Christianity such as incarnation, atonement, the uniqueness of the revelation of Christ, the nature of man, the necessity of faith, the work of the Holy Spirit, the primacy of love, and the mission of the Church. In addition, his theory is consistent with the other main tenets of Christianity. In fact, his theory is significantly important and useful in the modern world, which needs interreligious dialogue and mutual understanding and acceptance.

In order to prove salvation for non-Christians, Rahner argues that religious practices, rights, and rituals and faith in God are valid in various religions for salvation and can mediate divine grace. However, this conviction seems to lead to relativism, because the followers of all religions can claim that their religious tradition is the most authentic way to salvation and to mediate divine grace. Since we must avoid relativism, we must be able to provide some criteria to assess the credibility and legitimacy of religious claims such as the criteria suggested by Yandel—coherence and meaningfulness of the religious system, capability of being logically and rationally assessed, conformity of religious teachings to proven scientific facts, and encouraging a moral life (Peterson 1383 Sh, 422; Yandel 1974, 185).

On the other hand, the supporters of the inclusiveness of salvation in any religion can precisely have the same analysis of their religion as Rahner's. A Muslim can also view his religion as the most complete religion and the Prophet of Islam as the one who acquainted mankind

with the most complete revelation or manifestation of God, and consider the followers of other religions "anonymous Muslims." Similarly, a Jew can consider the followers of other religions as "anonymous Jews."[1]

3. Salvation in Islam and Motahari's Viewpoint

The issue of the salvation of non-Muslims in Islamic theology has been examined under the discussions on divine justice, God's mercy, or moral acts of non-Muslims. The main question in these discussions is whether non-Muslims' righteous deeds and moral acts will be rewarded in the hereafter or not. If we answer in negative, how could our answer be compatible with divine justice and mercy? We believe that the theory of inclusivism in the modern Christian theology is, to a great extent, consistent with the content of the Quran and traditions. Moreover, many Muslim theologians and philosophers, such as Motahari, one of the contemporary theologians and philosophers in Iran, have believed in salvation for most of the followers of other religions.

According to Islamic teachings, it is incorrect to judge definitively whether a person will be saved or not, as the destiny of all people depends on God and His grace. In general, when we study the Islamic teachings on the salvation of the followers of other religions, we can conclude that Islam neither accepts pluralism nor exclusivism. Motahari says in this regard: "Islam does not accept the extremist view that only Muslims and only Shiites will be saved. The Qur'an's view is neither consistent with pluralism nor with monopolistic views" (Motahari 1373 Sh, 255).

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1. In this regard, some theologians have suggested the idea of *mutual inclusivism* (Bernhardt 2012, 970).

3.1. Submission to the Truth: The Common Teaching of All Religions

From the viewpoint of Motahari, the common essence of all religions from Adam to the Prophet of Islam is the submission to the truth, which is in fact the meaning of the Arabic word "*islam.*" Among the prophets of God, each prophet confirmed the prior prophets and proclaimed his support for the future ones; the differences between prophets had to do with the conditions of their time and the people to whom they were sent. The call of all prophets was submission to the One God and worshiping Him only. Motahari believes that in fact we never had different divine "religions," but one religion whose main teaching was submission to the truth (Motahari 1392 Sh, 133).

The people of every age must follow the prophet and the religion of their time, and the prophet of Islam was the last prophet, who brought the most complete teachings for the guidance and perfection of humanity. Moreover, with the advent of Islam, the other religions were abrogated. As a result, the people of the present age are to follow the most complete religion of the time—namely, Islam (Motahari 1369 Sh, 42).

However, Motahari believes that, with certain conditions, although many people do not adhere to the true religion of the time, they will still gain salvation and receive the grace of God. He calls these people "innate (*fitri*) Muslims."

3.2. Innate Muslims in Motahari's Viewpoint

In Motahari's viewpoint, the Qur'an teaches that those who have not been able to recognize or reach the truth due to intellectual weakness or other unconducive conditions, without any intentional rejection of the truth, will gain salvation. These people, whom he calls "innate Muslims," are such that if they recognized the truth and the divine

religion of their time, they would accept it without hesitation. Motahari mentions Descartes (the French philosopher) as an example of an innate Muslim. Although Descartes searched for the truth, he could not recognize it. Considering his honest search for the truth, Descartes can be regarded as an innate Muslim, who will gain salvation in the hereafter (Motahari 1369 Sh, 283).

One of the important elements that play a central role in the Motahari's innate Muslim theory is the essence of humanity. He believes that all human beings have some knowledge of God in their essential spiritual aspect. Moreover, those who have moral virtues, such as goodness, justice, generosity, and affection, are like God, since moral virtues are manifestations of divine attributes; therefore, such people will be saved if they did not deliberately and intentionally reject the truth (Motahari 1371 Sh, 36). Accordingly, the view of the Qur'an on salvation is that humans can gain salvation and divine grace by their faith in God and the Day of Judgment and by doing righteous deeds (Quran 5:69). Thus, Motahari's inclusivist theory is based on three principles: (1) God does not punish anyone without prior notice or warning; (2) many non-Muslims have no faults in recognizing the true religion of their time; and (3) humans are bestowed with knowledge of God and moral virtues. Considering this, some Western scholars have counted Motahari among the advocators of Islamic inclusivism (Basinger 2002, 55).

3.3. Comparison
Comparing the inclusivist theories of Rahner and Motahari, we find the following similarities and differences:

1. Both thinkers consider their respective religions the true and most complete religion. Rahner believes that the climax of God`s self-communication and grace is the incarnation of Christ and refuses

religious pluralism, which, in his view, leads to relativism. Motahari also believes that the last prophet of God, who brought the most complete religion for humanity, was Muhammad (s).

2. Both Rahner and Motahari distinguish between salvation and truth. They both accept the legitimacy and supremacy of their religion, and then argue for the salvation of the followers of other religions. Thus, although a religion may not be the most complete or the true religion, their followers may reach salvation.

3. Rahner and Motahari try to change the attitude of their co-religionists towards the followers of other religions, promoting religious dialogue and mutual acceptance among people.

4. Both thinkers emphasize knowledge and awareness. For Rahner, an anonymous Christian is someone who believes in God—though not necessarily explicitly—responds to his conscience, and sees the signs of God in creatures. Although such a person is not aware of the Christian religion and its specific teachings, he will receive the grace of God and gain salvation. In the viewpoint of Motahari, innate Muslims are those who cannot recognize the true religion of their time, but they have no fault in that regard. Although such people are not apparently Muslims, they can be saved because of their submission to the truth and their good deeds. Of course, Motahari does not accept atheists as "innate Muslims."

5. Rahner and Motahari both emphasize ethics and moral virtues, Rahner believes that faith, hope, charity, and love are acts of divinizing grace, and love of neighbor is the love of God. Motahari also emphasizes the spiritual aspects of human beings, ethics, moral values, and moral acts. In fact, he considers human moral virtues manifestations of God's attributes.

6. Although both thinkers consider their religions as the true and most complete religion in the beginning, but afterwards, using the fundamental teachings of their respective religions, they try to prove salvation for the followers of other religions.

Conclusion

In contemporary times, after the first and second world wars, one of the most important issues that could bring the followers of different religions together was the discussion of salvation. In fact, although a religion may not be the true and perfect religion, it may include some commonalities with the true religion that enable its followers to gain salvation with certain conditions. For this reason, in Christianity, Karl Rahner proposed the idea of anonymous Christians and the theory of inclusivism; and among Muslims, Motahari developed the idea of innate Muslims and the possibility of salvation for non-Muslims.

Karl Rahner skillfully demonstrated how his theory was consistent with, and based on, the other main tenets of Christianity, such as incarnation, atonement, the uniqueness of the revelation of Christ, the nature of man, the necessity of faith, the work of the Holy Spirit, the primacy of love, and the mission of the Church. Rahner maintained that the grace of God within each individual as well as the individual's response to his conscience, moral acts, love of neighbor, faith, hope, and charity enables non-Christians to gain salvation.

Motahari rejects both exclusivism and pluralism and offers a third solution: the idea of innate Muslims—those non-Muslims who could not embrace Islam because of obstacles that were out of their control. These people had no hostility towards the truth; they would not hesitate to follow the true religion if they recognized it. Because of their submission to the truth and their pure intentions and good deeds, such people will gain salvation. Motahari states that it is not right to exclude

all non-Muslims from salvation and the paradise of God just because they were faultlessly unable to recognize the true religion of their time. It is far from the unlimited and absolute mercy and justice of God that only a small number of human beings gain salvation.

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