IN THE NAME OF ALLAH

Religious Inquiries

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Sadr (2003, 69-71) discusses metaphorical and literal meaning in lesson ten of his Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence.

It is argued that Islamic social customs can only be fully appreciated when sympathy is given to the context within which they occur (Smith 1998).

Griffel (2009) is a study of the classical Islamic theologian, Abu Hamid al-Ghazali. The study includes both biography and philosophical analysis.

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CONTENT

Love and "Suffering for":
A Shia Perspective on Rene Girard's Theory on Violence and the Sacred

Habibollah Babaei [1]

When we know and recognize one another, our souls join with those of others. This is called *ta'aruf* in the parlance of the Qur'an. *Ta'aruf* increases love and unity, as it decreases violence and enmity. Knowing one another occurs in several ways. One way to know others is to love the same thing that they do. This means that several people will love a similar spiritual being. From the Shia perspective, this is a very important way in which people can understand and sympathize with one another. Sharing a common beloved also creates a loving relationship between oneself and others. Many people come to love one another since they share love for the same being and because their love is directed to the reality of the Truth, which is an all-inclusive reality.

To create a love such as this requires a strong remembrance[2] which comes about through the remembrance of the beloved, one's "sufferings for." Communication based on such love differs widely from the peace that is based on using a scapegoat, as described in Rene Girard's *Violence and the Sacred*.

Keywords: *Ta'aruf*, suffering, scapegoat, violence, sacred.

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2. "And when you finish your rites, then remember Allah as you would remember your fathers, or with stronger remembrance" (Quran 2:200).

Introduction

What is the real cause of violence? What is the best way to control the friction that exists within our communities? These are very complicated questions not only for academic scholars, who take human nature and his essentially violent character into account, but also for theologians and even for prophets themselves in their divine teachings and sacred texts.

The most important question is related to the similarities and differences between human beings on the one hand, and love and hate relations on the other. Does the similarity of human desires lead to conflict between human beings or does this stem from a dissimilarity of the same?

In any case, a second question arises here: what is the best way to control human conflicts in similar or dissimilar settings? Is it possible and permissible to make peace between humans by means of hate and hostility in violent environments (i.e., to fight fire by fire)? Or, is it love and human compassion that produces the power of patience in humans when they attempt to correlate and associate with one another?

In this article, I seek to compare the approach of Shia Islam, with a focus on Allama Tabatabai's thought, and that of Christianity, focusing on Girard's theory on violence and the sacred. In order to do this, it is essential to regard the following issues from both Islamic and Christian perspective: human nature and its potential to create aggression and hostility, love and hate and their respective effects on human relationships, and the role of suffering in comparison to "scapegoating" in the control of conflicts in human societies. Regarding this, I will propose a solution based on a Shia viewpoint to show how it is feasible to make peace and reconciliation between people by means of practicing divine love[1] through remembrance of "suffering for." In

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1. To read more about Divine Love, see Chittick (2013).

contrast to an alternative view, I hope to show how it is possible to create solidarity by means of the formation of love and compassion—not hostility and violence.

Two Approaches to Conflicting Human Nature

To sum up, according to Rene Girard's theory, human violence arises from mimetic desire, which is the basic mechanism of human learning. By imitating each other's desires, people start to desire the very same thing. By desiring the same thing, people become rivals when they reach for the same object if it is available for all at that time (Girard 1977, 148). In the context of imitation, they come to resemble one another when they desire the same things. Imitation erases the differences among different human beings, and inasmuch as people get similar to each other, they want and yearn for the same objects. Yearning for the same things results in a Hobbesian war of all against all (Palaver 2013, 36).

Human desires and their conflicting forces could be compared with Albert Hirschman's view about passions and their potential violence and conflict. When human beings desire the same thing, this enflames human passions that are essentially violent. Thus, it seems impossible to found a social organization on passions and desires. Repressing and harnessing the passions happens only in the procedure of rationalization that transforms passions into interests on which society and community could be founded (Hirschman 1977, 19).

Also, Girard's view on the causes of violence is comparable with Plato's view on the causes of love. The starting point for both views is similarity and dissimilarity: Does love arise from the likeness or from the differences between lover and beloved one (Plato 1366 Sh, 151)? Does similarity cause love or hate?

The same question could be repeated about dissimilarity. Sometimes, it creates love between the beings that are similar while it

often makes them hate one another. Basically, the love relationship is founded on need and poverty. Every lover wants his or her beloved because he or she lacks them. So, love arises from a difference between the beloved and the lover. At the same time, there must be compatibility between the needs of the lover and plentitude of the beloved. From this point of view, love arises from similarity and compatibility.

The same point of similarity and dissimilarity and mimetic desires has been considered in the Qur'an in different words and ways, when it says:

> Do not covet the advantage which Allah has given some of you over others. To men belongs a share of what they have earned, and to women a share of what they have earned. And ask Allah for His grace. Indeed, Allah has knowledge of all things (4:32).

> Do not extend your glance toward what We have provided to certain groups of them, and do not grieve for them, and lower your wing to the faithful (15:88).

> Do not extend your glance toward what We have provided certain groups of them as a glitter of the life of this world, so that We may test them thereby. And the provision of your Lord is better and more lasting (20:131).

> Know that the life of this world is just play and diversion, and glitter, and mutual vainglory among you and covetousness for wealth and children like the rain whose vegetation impresses the farmer; then it withers and you see it turn yellow, then it becomes chaff, while in the Hereafter there is a severe punishment and forgiveness from Allah and His pleasure; and the life of this world is nothing but the wares of delusion (57:20).

The verses mentioned above admit that there is an inclination in man to want what others have, but they advise him to end the conflicts that might arise from needs in which a person imitates others. Nonetheless,

the Qur'an declares that this variety in livelihood has not been created by God for competition and conflict; rather, it is for unity and in order that people benefit from one another. The Qur'an says: "Is it they who dispense the mercy of your Lord? It is We who have dispensed among them their livelihood in the present life, and raised some of them above others in rank, so that some may take others into service, and your Lord's mercy is better than what they amass" (43: 32).

The mention of "taking one another into service" has inspired some Muslim scholars to develop a new theory regarding human conflicts. Using this verse, Tabatabai proposed the theory of "mutual service" – which is a different way to explain human violence.

Tabatabai says that every object may take the form of a tool in the service of man. In fact, man considers other objects as his instrument (Tabatabai 1973, 2: 116-20). This attitude is not limited to inanimate objects; rather, humans view other humans in the same way; that is, as tools in their service. Everyone views other human beings as agents that can provide for their needs.

Human nature, which exploits and uses others and considers them as tools for the satisfaction of its desires, has the potential to create dangerous conflicts between people. It is not because of people's desires to consume others' property, which is Girard's view, but to utilize others themselves. This might lead to slavery. These two approaches differ in the quantity and quality of violence as well. Obviously, the violence that arises from slavery is more risky than that which arises from more than one person desiring the same object. Using an object implies partial ownership of it. This is while the slavery of yesteryears was the ownership of the entirety of the object. The first instance of violence can be resolved by freedom while the other can be controlled by justice.

The very delicate point mentioned by Tabatabai in the interpretation of the verse 3:213,[1] regarding the history of the unity and plurality of God's creation, is that it is impossibe for those who were previously violent to be peaceful without divine succor. If violence arises from human nature—regardless of whether we adhere to the mimetic desire theory or the theory of mutual service—can we expect the same nature to create peace and reconciliation? Tabatabai answers this in the negative. He says that violence, which is rooted in human nature, can only be eradicated from something outside it.

I think that Tabatabai and Girard both look for some transcendent cause for the eradication of conflict amongst humans. Tabatabai finds this in the love for the divine and the spiritual release that this generates, while Girard discovers it in his "divine scapegoat." Despite this similarity, there are serious differences between these two theories.

Now, the following question may be asked: what outside factor can change the man who naturally seeks to create conflicts with the fellow members of his species? What solution can be presented using the theology of Shi'ism? To be sure, the Qur'an gives different instructions to curb violence and control disputes. One important instruction in the Qur'an is to restrain one's anger, to forgive, and to do good: "The pious are those who spend [In Allah's Way] both in prosperity and In adversity; and restrain [their] anger and forgive others; and verily, Allah Does like the good-doers" (3:134).

My goal in writing this article is not to clarify Islam's entire view on the subject of violence and peace. Rather, I only seek to compare

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1. "Mankind were a single community; then Allah sent the prophets as bearers of good news and as warners, and He sent down with them the Book with the truth, that it may judge between the people concerning that about which they differed, and none differed in it except those who had been given it, after the manifest proofs had come to them, out of envy among themselves. Then Allah guided those who had faith to the truth of what they differed in, by His will, and Allah guides whomever He wishes to a straight path."

various views regarding hate, love, scapegoating, and suffering and the respective effects of these views on violence and peace.

Conflicting Solutions

Based on Girard's viewpoint, when violence threatens the communication process, a psychosocial mechanism arises to control violence by means of the killing of the individual scapegoat. The people that were formerly fighting against one another now share a similar goal: the killing of the innocent person who has been chosen as a scapegoat. Former opponents now become friends, as they participate in the execution of hate, violence, and war against a particular enemy (Palaver 2013, 151-53).

Girard calls this the process of *scapegoating*. The person (here, allusion is made to Jesus) who receives this communal violence is a scapegoat, and his death is effective in the generation of peace. When this victim becomes the cause of peace and solidarity he becomes sacred (Girard 1977, 270-71). The history of religions contains many examples of sacred figures who brought peace and reconciliation among different human nations and tribes by sacrificing themselves as scapegoats:

> These innocent people, designated as culpable for the catastrophe, are excluded and killed. This act of collective violence succeeds to unify the community against the victims, and thus brings a halt to the mimetic crisis. At this moment, another metamorphosis occurs: in its death, the scapegoat is transformed from alien and criminal to the savior of the community, and is revered as a sacred person. (Szakoczai 2001, 374)

After having explained Girard's theory, we can turn to some serious questions that arise regarding it. First of all, supposing that the violence of the scapegoat-process ends conflict and creates reconciliation and peace, does this peace last forever? In other words, does it control the new desires and passions that are generated after it? Or, is it something

temporary that only lasts during the time when we all feel the need to kill the scapegoat? How can the killing of a scapegoat in the past create unity between people of the future when desires are changing daily in the modern and post-modern world? Also, do we need a new scapegoat for every new desire in a world such as ours?

The second important question regarding Girard's theory is whether its process of choosing a scapegoat encourages violence or not. The scapegoat process actually encourages the passions of murderers, on the one hand; on the other hand, it leads to violent conflicts over who is the best candidate for the scapegoat. We may not agree with each other regarding who should be killed and be the scapegoat. This difference in opinion regarding the innocent person who must be killed creates new conflicts, particularly when people see others as the minority and themselves as the majority. I feel that the scapegoat theory is an over-simplified one that cannot in any way overcome the complicated clashes that occur between civilizations.

The next question regarding Girard's theory is whether it is really fair. It might be fair to sacrifice one's self for the safety and salvation of others, but how can it be fair to sacrifice others for the self? This point has been considered by Girard:

> One has to make a distinction between the sacrifice of others and self-sacrifice. Christ says to the Father: "You wanted neither holocaust nor sacrifice; then I said: 'Here I am.'" I prefer to sacrifice myself rather than sacrifice the other. (Kirwan 2009, 79)

Although he asserts self-sacrifice and self-giving love, how can I—as a reader of Girard's works—comprehend his insistence on a scapegoat that must be killed?

Due to the abovementioned objections, as well as some other vagueness in Girard's theory, I feel that his view—however important it may be—is inadequate. I agree with Girard in one sense when he

describes human nature as being violent, but I cannot understand his normative approach to the question at hand when he recommends an ultimate scapegoat for the attainment of peace and unity.

I hope to look at Girard's view from a different perspective and also to present an alternative Islamic-Shia approach to the problem of the control violence based on the context of mimeticism or exploitation. However, it is essential to first clarify some preliminary matters concerning the way in which Islamic mysticism and philosophy view the human self.

Two Selves

Murtadha Mutahhari, Tabatabai's prominenet student, divided the human self into two. He used this division to explain the theory of mutual service. One of these two selves must be controlled, and the other developed (Babai 2012). According to his formulation, there exists a *figurative-self* that is unreal. From this, self-egoism emerges. There is also a *real-self* that is the blossoming of the human spirit.[1] Mutahhari believes that the phrase "*I* not *you*" stems from the unreal self and not from the real one. Therefore, if I take the *figurative* self into consideration, which acts as a dividing wall between you and me, I take myself as an object isolated from you. In contrast, if I take the inclusive, real self into consideration, I will associate and empathize with others. Mutahhari asserts that the figurative self—the self that has been confined to the physical aspect of the self—cannot associate with others. On the contrary, the real-self is inclusive and includes other selves as well. Thus, in order to be released from the limited self, it is necessary to be emancipated from the physical boundaries of this self.[2]

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1. Based on this categorization of the self, it can be understood why we, as Muslims, are advised to stand against the self, when Prophet Muhammad (s) says: "Consider yourself an enemy that you must fight" (Majlisi 1983, 67: 64). At the same time, we are urged and recommended to know, respect, and honour the self (Mutahhari 1379 Sh, 223-24).
2. Self-sacrifice, in this view, would be an expanding factor that makes one relational and related to others. To be sure, this form of sacrifice is not an

This is due to the fact that the terrestrial body is limited in its ability to sympathize with others and sacrifice itself for them.

Now, according to a Shia exegesis of Quran 37:107, the "great slaughter" is a reference to the killing of the figurative self and the development of the real self. The real self is in fact the divine self that lies within every human being. In other words, the blossoming of humanity and spirituality requires the killing of selfish desires and the removal of worldly passions from one's self. It demands that we not attach ourselves to the world. According to some commentators of the Qur'an, the dream that Ibrahim (a) was shown did not intend for him to kill his son; rather, the purpose of the dream was for him to kill his carnal soul. This is what is referred to in Islamic mysticism as the *complete annihilation* and paves the way for the development of the divine self (Qaysari 1375 Sh, 617-18).

All human beings can associate with one another when they realize that there are two distinct selves within them: a physical and exclusive self and a spiritual and inclusive self. However, this realization must be accompanied by the blossoming of the real self and the diminishing of the figurative self. In order for the real selves to associate with one another, it is essential to bridge the gaps between them. One of the ways by which the communal and real self can be trained is to understand others. Now, one of the ways by which we can understand one another is to love the same thing and remember the suffering of that beloved.

Ta'aruf or Knowing One Another

The Qur'an asserts: "O mankind, We have created you male and female, and appointed you races and tribes, that you may *know one another*." (49:15). By knowing another person, we recognize him in our minds, feel him in our hearts, and partake in his reality.

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expression of altruistic ethics that holds that, morally, the beneficiary of an action should be someone other than the person who acts. Rather, it is inclusive sacrificial ethics that embraces both the self and others equally.

In relation to this verse, Fatimah Muradi says that acquaintance is not only the main reason that the various races and tribes were created but also the reason why human beings were divided into male and female (Muradi 1390 Sh). In other words, God created human beings in different forms. He made them male and female and divided them into races and tribes. This He did so that they may come to know one another. Muradi makes very subtle connection between *ta'aruf* and *ma'rūf* in the Qur'an when it says: "O believers, it is not lawful for you to inherit women against their will; neither debar them, that you may go off with part of what you have given them, except when they commit a flagrant indecency. Consort with them honorably; or if you are averse to them, it is possible you may be averse to a thing, and God set in it much good." (4:19)

This "honorable" deal that is advised by the Qur'an comes from *knowing one another.* When we ignore one another it is not possible for us to make an honorable deal. In other words, understanding one another in a perfect manner is the cornerstone of good deal and honorable deal. How is it possible to respect other people when we neglect their humanity and dignity? Thus, it is necessary to find a way to sincerely recognize one another.

To Know One Another Through Loving the Same Thing

One of the best ways to understand others is to understand what they desire and love. According to Imam Ali (a), "The worth of every man is [in accordance with] his love and desires" (*Nahj al-balaghah*, wisdom 81).

So, knowing one another requires us to recognize each other's loves and desires. In addition, knowing each other's loves and desires would be easier if we loved and desired the same thing. In fact, by loving the same thing people would become closer to one another. When people love the same thing they can sympathize with and appreciate others. Practicing this mutual love and loving the same beloved build bridges

between lovers and their common beloved on the one hand, and between one lover and the other lovers on the other.

Put it in other way, loving someone is experiencing their reality. By loving exemplary persons, one is able to experience and participate in their exemplary characteristics. The experience of such characteristics by different people serves as a foundation for their solidarity and gives them a common purpose. In sum, the cause of the unity between the self and others is not only the unique thing being loved; rather, it is also the love itself.

Therefore, coming to understand others by means of loving the same thing they love decreases violence and increases social integration.

Love and Remembrance of "Suffering For"

First of all, it is very crucial to distinguish between *suffering for* and *suffering from*. Suffering for (suffering to attain something) is an existential phenomenon that involves a positive achievement.[1] For instance, the suffering of a mother giving birth is a *suffering for* her beloved child, a fact that makes her suffering meaningful and even wondrous. Although the mother is deprived of something in her *suffering for*, her triumph over suffering is more significant than her loss. Though this pain saps her physical ability, its fruitfulness results in a certain joy within suffering and strengthens the mother in loving and sacrificing for her child (Balthasar 1998, 5: 253). This type of suffering clearly differs from *suffering from* illness or destitution.[2]

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1. In order to learn more about these two kind of sufferings and their respective influence on society, see my article (2010).

2. Suffering for, in my usage, has similarities to (but is not identical with) Moltmann's notion of active suffering: "There is a third form of suffering, active suffering, which involves the willingness to open oneself to be touched, moved, affected by others—and that means the suffering of passionate love" (Moltmann 1972-2002).

Suffering for (for the sake of human dignity), instances of which can be found in the history of martyrs, constitutes a form of instructive suffering, and the memory of this suffering can be constructive for the human community as well.[1] In contrast, both purposeless *suffering from* without *suffering for*, and *suffering for* one's own individual advantage and not for others are destructive for human relationships (Soelle 1975, 69, 75).

Now, since love is the fruit of the remembrance of a beloved a *deep* love could occur through the remembrance of the beloved's suffering. It is worth noting that spiritual love can also result from the remembrance of joy and happiness. Nevertheless, the most powerful form of love is that which results from the remembrance of suffering. In other words, while happiness and joyful passion do play important roles in enhancing the human community, their power cannot be compared with the power of suffering or the memory of suffering—both in terms of creating violence and in terms of establishing solidarity (Babai 2010).

According to several verses in the Qur'an, the remembrance of something, which takes place in one's mind, is distinguished from a profound remembrance of the same, which occurs in one's heart *via* remembrance of a beloved one's compassions, joy and suffering.[2] This depth of remembrance intensifies one's love for the beloved and creates a stronger experience of the beloved's characteristics. In this way, those who engage in this remembrance together come to share a common purpose (Babai 2010).

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1. The sacrifice of self-nourishment for the other can, according to Levinas, be a base of ethics: "Ethics, for Levinas, is not simply the gift of bread to the hungry, not only the nourishment of the other, but the painful loss of my own satisfaction: it is 'an offering oneself that is a suffering'" (Edelglass 2006, 52).

2. The Qur'ān recommends this type of intense remembrance of God: "And when you have performed your holy rites remember God, as you remember your fathers or yet more devoutly" (2:200).

Accordingly, if people constructively remember the sufferings of noble people that they love, such as Imam Husayn (a) or Jesus (a), this can lead to healthy relations between them and others.

The Pilgrimage of Arba'in: An Example of a Community Based on Love

The event of Arba'in (that occurs forty days after the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (a)) is a great annual Shia Muslim gathering. According to certain statistics, it is the largest free food service, in which a great number of people are fed free of charge. In it, a great number of volunteers serve the pilgrims to Imam Husayn's (a) shrine, shattering the records of events of this kind. All this occurs under the imminent threat of terror and violence by Salafi extremists in Iraq. This ceremony commemorates the martyrdom of Husayn ibn Ali (a), the grandson of the Prophet Mohammad (s) who was killed with his seventy-two companions by Yazid in the Battle of Karbala in 61 AH. Millions of people (over 25 millions) from across the world (40 countries) and from different cultures and religions participate in this spiritual occasion for two weeks in the roads between the cities of Karbala and Najaf.

Despite the fact that people remember Imam Husayn's (a) suffering, there is no violence or conflicts. Rather, by remembering his suffering, all conflicts and disputes that existed amongst the Arab tribes vanish, and everyone moves together in the name of Imam Husayn (a) towards his shrine. Not only does the Shia community unite but also peace is made between the Shia and Sunnis, as well as between Muslims and non-Muslims. In loving and remembering Imam Husayn's suffering, the people who take part in the Arba'in pilgrimage create a great community that is based on human brotherhood and in which the differences between Sunnis and Shias and Muslims and non-Muslims disappear.

Thus, the Shias do not prevent Sunnis, Christians, Yazidis, Zorastrians, or non-religious people from taking part in this ritual. The system of communication in the event of Arbain is not founded on

selfish desires and the need to exploit others. Rather, it is based upon self-sacrifice and the desire to serve others. Instead of using others for their own benefit, people want to help them. There is no constant increase in the desire to use others; rather, there is a constant increase in the desire to help others. In other words, there is a serious competition to be the scapegoat, rather than to make others scapegoats. Therefore, in the Arba'in pilgrimage, people can only be divided into two social classes: pilgrims of Imam Husayn (a) and his servants. Despite the fact that the pilgrims to Imam Husayn's shrine come from a variety of economic-social backgrounds—scholars, leaders, politicians, and ordinary people—no one is considered anything other than a pilgrim to his shrine or a "servant of the Imam (a)" at that time.

At first glance, it seems that the more people gather together the more mimetic desires increase. This will lead to an increase in friction within the community. Also, passion that stems from the memory of suffering can result in a great deal of violence. This raises some serious questions; for example: how is it possible for society to be peaceful and loving in this potentially violent and aggressive environment? This paradox is echoed by Iraqis when they write on posters the following slogans: "The love of Husayn unites us," "The love of Husayn brings us together," "Husayn's tribe is more important than other tribes," and also "The love of Husayn is our identity, and to serve his pilgrims is our honor."

Conclusion

The calamities that righteous people have suffered can serve as an excellent basis upon which connections between different nations and traditions that adore them can be established. This is nothing but the "common word" that the Qur'an invites to.[1] The suffering of a beloved

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1. "Say [O Muhammad (s)]: 'O people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians): Come to a word that is just between us and you, that we worship none but Allah, and that we associate no partners with Him, and that none of us shall take others as lords besides Allah. Then, if they turn away, say: 'Bear witness that we are Muslims.'" (Quran 3:64).

common to different nations can serve as a common language that may pave the way for a better understanding between them. Eventually, it will lead to peace and repose. The remembrance of the hardships of a beloved that they suffered for a purpose—in contrast to the nihilistic *suffering from*—enables us to base our solidarity with others on the remembrance of this suffering.[1]

To sum it up, love is more effective than justice and freedom in the creation of affiliation and communication. Justice does not guarantee love and compassion, but love ensures that the rights of the one we love will be respected. At the same time, the relationship of love rejects exploitation and slavery in a society.

Thus, the remembrance of "sufferings for," which leads to love and affection, could be more effective in the eradication of violence and conflicts than the scapegoating process, which is based on hate and enmity. The process of using a scapegoat to control violence is in fact the control of violence by violence, curtailing the sufferings of society by making an individual suffer, and ending a larger war by starting a smaller one. In the creation of a society, spiritual love and sacred affection, as we saw in the Shia tradition seems to be a valuable alternative for what was proposed by Rene Girard.

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The Soul According to Rāmānuja

Abolfazl Mahmoodi [1]

Rāmānuja was the founder of Visistādvaita Vedānta School, which is one of the three main schools of Vedānta. According to Rāmānuja, the soul (cit), Brahman, and matter (acit) constitute the three principal ontological realities. Rāmānuja provides some proofs for the existence of the soul, which are mostly based on self-consciousness. The relationship of the soul with the matter, on one hand, and with that of Brahman, on the other, is similar to that between the body and the soul. Therefore, He is the Soul of souls. Using this idea, Rāmānuja explains God's action, which is the basis of the concept of God's grace and favor within the man. The main traits of the soul according to Rāmānuja are eternity, knowledge, bliss, incomprehensibility, individuation, the distinction from Brahman and other souls, simplicity, and free-will. In its pure state, the soul has these attributes in an unadulterated manner. However, they get contaminated by ignorance and its negative consequences. The emancipation of the soul from samsara depends on the self-recognition and its differentiation from acit or matter.

Keywords: cit, soul, Rāmānuja, acit, self, Visistādvaita Vedanta.

Introduction

Rāmānuja (1027–1137) was the founder of Visistādvaita Vedānta School, which is one of the two main branches of the Vedānta School.

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Vedānta is considered to be one of the six Āstika or orthodox schools of Indian spirituality. Vedānta claims to present, explain, and formulate *upanisadic* thought. Both of its main branches, as well as the subsidiary ones, have presented their own interpretations of the sacred Indian texts, especially the *upanisads*. The most significant representative of the Vedānta School believes in absolute unity. For him, Brahman is the only real being and everything else is merely the result of Māyā or universal illusion and ignorance. Contrary to this school of thought is Rāmānuja's. He believes in a kind of moderate or so-called qualified unity. Moreover, he describes Brahman, the soul (*cit*) and matter (*acit*) as the Truth.

This article attempts to describe Rāmānuja' view regarding the essence of the soul and its attributes. It also includes an analysis of the kind of relationship that exists between the soul and two other realities, one of which is Brahman.

The Proof for the Existence of the Soul

Rāmānuja's arguments for the existence of the soul could be summarized as follows:

1. Statements like "I know" necessitate the existence of the soul.
2. Phrases like "This is my body" indicate the existence of the soul.
3. Ecstatic experiences have nothing to do with the body.[1]

In Rāmānuja's works, we find that self-consciousness is the prime method to prove the existence of the soul. This methodology has been used in a more meticulous way in the works of his master, Yamūna (Rāmānujācārya 2001, II, 2.27, p. 512).

The first two proofs in Yamūna's works go like this: self-understanding, which is stated in some propositions like "I know," quite vividly refer to "I" as the knower or subject of recognition, which is completely different from the body and its organs. The latter are usually

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1. See Smart (1967, 163-64).

expressed in propositions like "This is my body" or "this is my hand." This is similar to objects that are mentioned in statements such as "this is a rock," or "this is a jug."

When I turn my attention away from the external subjects and focus on myself, I will achieve an understanding of my true self that has no connection with my hands, legs, or other organs. These two instances of understanding indicate the presence of two distinct objects: the body, which is no different from other external objects, and the "I." Propositions like "This is my body" demonstrate this distinction as well. Naturally, this is different from expressions like "myself," which seemingly convey a distinction between "the self" and "I," but which such are due to the limitations of language.[1]

Brahman and the Soul

According to Rāmānuja, even though the soul and inanimate matter are real beings distinct from Brahman, they depend upon Him. In other words, in his ontology, he speaks of a kind of simultaneous unity and diversity. He attempts to reconcile the unity-oriented and diversity-oriented verses of the sacred texts and most importantly that of *upanisads*, under a unified order. Thus, his views on the relationship between Brahman and the soul differ from that of Śankara. The latter believed in the unity of Brahman and the soul. He was of the opinion that the relation between the two is like the connection between the soul and its body, the relation between quality and qualified or the one between substance and accident. Along with matter, souls constitute Brahman's body or its states. Thus, Brahman is the Self of selves or the Soul of souls.

> The highest Brahman, having the whole aggregate of non-sentient and sentient beings for its body, ever is the Self of all. (Rāmānujācārya 2001, 349)

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1. See Dāsgupta (1997, 140-41).

> The entire complex of intelligent and non-intelligent beings (souls and matter) in all their different states is real, and constitutes the form, i.e. the body, of the highest Brahman. (Rāmānujācārya 2001, 88)

The allegory of soul and body is the most common example that Rāmānuja used to explain the above-mentioned relationship. He has also used the allegory of the part and whole and also the allegory of the quality and the qualified.

> The individual soul is a part of the highest Self; as the light issuing from a luminous thing such as fire or the sun is a part of that body; or as the generic characteristics of a cow or horse, and the white or black color of things so colored, are attributes and hence parts of the things in which those attributes inhere. (Rāmānujācārya 2001, II, 3, 45, p. 56)

According to Rāmānuja, Śankara's view concerning the innate unity of the human soul with the highest soul or Brahman is as irrational as believing in the identity of the soul and the body (Rāmānujācārya 2001, I, 7, 7, p. 98). He denies this unity even at the time of the separation of the soul from the body in Mokśa, the final spiritual release: "Nor can the individual self become one with the highest Self by freeing itself from Nescience, with the help of the means of the final release. (Rāmānujācārya 2001, I, 7, 7, p. 98)

In his opinion, just as the luminous mass is essentially different from its light, so is Brahman or the highest soul different from *jiva* or the individual human soul, which is a part of the former. On several occasions, Rāmānuja has attempted to establish his view by introducing particular interpretations of some Mahāvakyas—like "*tat twamasi*," (You are Him). These were the most significant arguments of Śankara that he attempted to use to prove the absolute identity. He also holds the idea that the word "Him" in the phrase, "You are Him," refers to Brahman as the cause and creator of the universe and the word "You"

denotes the same reality as the inner self or the controller of the individual selves of *jivas*, which in turn are Brahman's "body" (Bartley 2002, 99). However, if Brahman, whom Rāmānuja usually refers to as Iśvra, controls the self from the inside, wouldn't this lead to determinism? Rāmānuja has answered this objection in his works (Rāmānujācārya 2001, II, 3, 41; II, 2, 3). He says that Iśvra's inner control over us does not rob us of our freedom of will. What is more, the human can execute his free will. This freedom is bestowed upon us by Iśvra. He has not only given us freedom but also helped us to realize our free will. Even his favor to servants is when they ardently wish to be close to him, and his disfavor is due to the sinful inclinations of the humans who have distanced themselves from Iśvra due to their intimacy with worldly pleasures (Dāsgupta 1997, 3: 159-60).

These two phrases, which Rāmānuja has mentioned in two successive sutras of the Vedānta Sutra, indicate how he coordinates God's providence and the free will of human in their deeds:

> Even though the self always has the instruments of action at its disposal - such as the organ of speech and other faculties - it acts when it wants to and stops acting when it so wishes. (Rāmānujācārya 2001, II, 3, 39)

> The activity of the individual soul proceeds from the highest Self as its cause. (Rāmānujācārya 2001, II, 3, 40)

Now, keeping in mind Rāmānuja's emphasis on the identical relation between the *jiva*, i.e. the individual soul, and Brahman, i.e. the highest reality, we may arrive at some conclusions which were coincidently pointed out by Rāmānuja himself. Contrary to Śankara's, he said that although self-knowledge is a prerequisite to the knowledge of Brahman and the attainment of spiritual release, in its true nature, it is not the same as Brahman. So, it is not sufficient in the attainment of the final [spiritual] release.

The other point that must be mentioned is that although *jiva* and Brahman have common qualities, these are not completely similar. Songupta, one of the proponents of this school of thought has mentioned four qualities that are the attributes that *jiva* and Brahman share: (1) inwardness or *pratyaktra*, (2) Consciousness or *cetanatra*, (3) Spirituality or *atmatva*, and (4) agency or *kartrtva*. He also listed four distinctions for *jiva*: (1) being distinct or *anutva*, (2) being an accessory or *sesatva*, (3) being supported or *adheyatva*, and (4) being dependent or *vidheyatva* (Veliath 1992, 132).

For Rāmānuja, the human being consists of three realities. The first is *acit* or matter, which is the bodily dimension of the human being. The second is *cit* or the human's self that is the spiritual and non-material dimension of the human. This is indeed its real nature. Finally, there is the Self of selves or Soul of souls. This is nothing but Brahman, who is the Soul of the universe. These three are all real. Of course, the first two depend on the third one.

The Traits of the Soul

Eternity

Rāmānuja believes the soul is something eternal and immortal. He has proved this based upon his own interpretations of the *Gita* and the *Vedānta Sutra*: "The Self is not produced, since certain texts directly deny its origination; cp. 'the intelligent one is not born nor does he die' (Ka. Up. I, 2, 18)" (Rāmānujācārya 2001, II, 3, 18, p. 541). The Soul is eternal, so it is free from evolutionary changes:

> As the self is eternal—for the reason mentioned—and hence free from evolutionary changes, all the attributes of the insentient (body) - like birth, death, etc.—do not exist (for it), … birth at the beginning of a kalpa … and death (therein) at the end of the kalpa … do not concern the self. (Rāmānujācārya 1969, II, 20, p. 34)

In his commentary on the *Gita*, Rāmānuja has presented some reasons for the persistence of the soul against the body, and Sampat Kumar in his translation of Rāmānuja's work has listed the reasons as follows:

1. The soul does not consist of material elements.

2. The soul has no parts.

3. The soul knows and enjoys the fruits of Karma.

4. The soul is pervasive.

However, the body is mortal because of reasons contrary to these (Rāmānujācārya 1969, 32, note 48).

Though jiva is eternal, it depends upon Brahman. Thus, Rāmānuja describes it—like matter—as the effect of Brahman. However, in his opinion, there is a principal difference between the two, and they cannot be equal. He believes that the material object is created at the beginning of creation. However, he does not say the same about jivas or souls. It should be pointed out that before creation—i.e. when Brahman is in the station of the cause—material objects are in a subtle nameless and formless state in Brahman. In the process of creation, when Brahman moves from the station of the Cause to that of the effect, they emerge from the state of subtlety and intangibility and acquire volume and thickness. This results in their receiving names and forms. Through this process, their innate nature thoroughly evolves. This is why they are considered to be created beings. As for the jivas, it is completely different. Jivas are always present in Brahman and possess natural traits such as Jnāna (wisdom) and ānanda (bliss). Whenever creation is renewed, they combine with the bodies and the sensory organs they contain so that they may function and benefit from the fruits of Karma.

The only change that happens in jiva during the creation process is the contraction and expansion of its knowledge. When they are in the state of deterioration or chaos—i.e. Pralaya—they remain stable and their innate essence does not change.[1]

Knowledge

Unlike Śankara, Rāmānuja does not think that the soul is pure intelligence and knowledge. Rather, he interprets some of the sutras of the *Brahma Sutra* (e.g., II, 3, 19) in a unique manner and citing these sacred scriptures, he says that it knows and is aware but is not absolute awareness nor the absence thereof.

> This Self is essentially a knower, a knowing subject; not either mere knowledge or of non-sentient nature … … on account of Scripture … … For the Khândogya Upanishad…says 'He who knows…he is the Self' (Kh. Up. VIII, 12, 4-5) … and 'for he is the knower, the hearer, the smeller, the taster …' (Pra. Up. IV, 9; VI, 5). (Rāmānujācārya 2001, II, 3, 19, p. 545-6)

Therefore, we can conclude that being a knowing subject is the essential characteristic of the Self (Rāmānujācārya 2001, II, 3, 31, p. 551).

He has explicitly stipulated this fact in his commentary on the *Gita* and especially in the argument for jiva's eternity and the absence of cognition. Hence, knowledge or awareness is not the innate nature of the soul; rather, its intrinsic attribute is that it is a being that knows the objects of knowledge. And this trait is evident to everybody according to one's own testimony. This is something that we can realize from everyday statements like: "I am aware of this tree." The basic trait of this consciousness is that, as soon as it comes into existence, it makes things capable of being an object of knowledge its own substrate of thinking and speech. (Veliath 1992, 129)

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1. See Rāmānujācārya (2001, II, 3, 18, p. 542), Veliath (1992, 129), and Chari (1998, 89-91).

Unrecognizability

Although Rāmānuja defines the soul as self-illuminated and eminent (Rāmānujācārya 2001, II, 3, 30, p. 550) and a being that individuals feel within themselves, he also explicitly says, "It is incapable of being the object of knowledge" (Rāmānujācārya 1969, II, 18, p. 31-32). In his commentary on the *Gita*, he also asserts that the soul is incapable of being known. He also explains in other chapters of this work that because the soul is naturally different from all material objects and has none of their qualities—such as divisibility and penetrability—it cannot be recognized using the tools by means of which material objects are understood. This means that the soul is unrecognizable. (Rāmānujācārya 1969, II, 25, p. 37)

Even so, Rāmānuja considers self-knowledge as one of the necessary requirements of the ultimate spiritual release, which is attained through Jnāna Yoga. For sure, the self-knowledge that he refers to does not take place through a logical definition that uses genus and differentia of the self; rather, it is a direct intuitive experience (*atmanubhava*), by means of which the soul comes to be recognized as the eternal knower and the experiencing subject.

The Oneness or Multiplicity of Souls

According to Rāmānuja, individual souls are different from one another, since they abide in different bodies and experience different things. The evidence for their diversity is the distribution of joy and sorrow. Nevertheless, they are equal to each other in terms of their true essence, which is knowledge and bliss. The differences in their appearances have nothing to do with their essential sameness. The differences are the result of their connection with acita or matter, which causes darkness in the bright and luminous essence of soul or

jiva. This real essence reveals itself only in the final [spiritual] release.[1]

The Soul is Atomic

Rāmānuja, unlike Śankara, does not believe in the omnipresence of soul or self; rather, he believes that it is an atom and a spot that abides solely in the heart.

> The Self is not omnipresent; on the contrary, it is atomic (anu)…Since, scripture says that it passes out, goes away and returns… All this going, etc. cannot be reconciled with the soul being present everywhere. (Rāmānujācārya 2001, II, 3, 20)

> Scripture informs us that the Self abides in a definite part of the body, i.e. the heart. 'For that Self is in the heart, there are a hundred and one veins.' (Rāmānujācārya 2001, II, 3, 25)

It is possible that someone may make the following objection here: if the soul is an atom located in a specific part of the body, how is it connected to the body as a whole and is aware of everything that takes place in it as well as all of the states that it undergoes?

He has tried to answer this question using various allegories. The most common one is the allegory of the torch and the light it emits. The source of light is fixed somewhere, but its light is emitted in the environment around it. So is the atomic soul, which abides in the heart but can experience the whole body by means of its quality of awareness (Rāmānujācārya 2001, II, 13, p. 26). In other words, Jnāna or wisdom contracts and expands. It is limited and contracted in the state of Samsara, but nevertheless is never absent. In the final spiritual release—i.e., the state of Mokśa—awareness attaints its peak. Here, nothing is beyond its reach. Therefore, although jiva is essentially atomic, its awareness is limitless (Hiriyanna 1993, 405).

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1. See Rāmānujācārya (2001, II, 1, 15), Rādhākrishnan (1958, 691-92), and Veliath (1992, 127-31).

Another allegory that he presents is that of sandals. Even though they are only worn by the feet, the comfort of wearing comfortable sandals is experienced by the whole body. Of course, what he says is based on the presupposition that the essence of jiva and its qualities are not the same.

The Simplicity of the Soul

Another quality of the soul is its simplicity; that is, it is not composed of parts. Rāmānuja has discussed this in his commentary on the *Gita* and some other works. In his opinion, jiva is eternal because of its simplicity: "The self is not discerned as [being made up of] many [parts] … therefore the self is eternal" (Rāmānujācārya 1969, II, 18, p. 32).

The Free-Will of the Soul

Like Śankara, Rāmānuja believes in the idea that the soul is a free agent. He argues that if the self or soul did not have free will, then the commandments of the sacred texts will be meaningless. However, he does not believe that this is essential to it; otherwise, it would be an agent of unwillingly acts all the time. Rather, it acts and stops acting when it wants to: "The Self, although always provided with the instruments of action, such as the organ of speech, and so on, acts when it wishes to, and does not act when it does not wish to" (Rāmānujācārya, 2001, II, 3, 39, p. 556).

As was mentioned in the description of the relationship between the soul and Brahman, Rāmānuja thinks of Brahman as the primary agent of human acts, who works as an inward controller. This means that all human actions depend upon the divine will. Without it, they will not be performed. Nonetheless, these actions take place in accordance with the will of the human being as well (Rāmānujācārya, 2001, II, 3, 40).

According to Rāmānuja, even though the soul is a free agent, it does not change. It is fixed, motionless and eternal. Thus, it is essentially

different from all material things and is absolutely unchangeable (Rāmānujācārya, 1969, II, 25, p. 36-37).

The Categories of the Souls

According to Rāmānuja, even though all of the souls are essentially the same, they can be divided into three categories based upon their secondary traits: The first category includes the eternal souls that are never imprisoned in the confines of the material world. They are always in God's presence and are privileged by bliss or ānanda. The second category is for the souls that have been liberated by means of Mukta. They are liberated from the material world by means of wisdom, purity, and virtue. The third includes the wandering soul. This belongs to those individuals who are wandering around in Samsara, due to their ignorance and pride. This last group can be further divided into four sub-groups: superhuman souls, human souls, animal souls, and stagnant souls.

These souls are different from one another because of the bodies they are connected to. They are not essentially different categories. Even the difference in caste and social class is specified due to the same reason; in themselves, they are neither heavenly nor human, neither Brahman nor Śudra (Rādhākrishnan 1958, 2: 695).

The Soul and the Body

According to Rāmānuja, the traits of the soul, which were mentioned, are possessed by jiva in its pure or natural state. However, this pure and unlimited reality gets contaminated with ignorance and material inclinations, due to its connection to the body or acita. This ignorance, which manifests itself in the form of evil deeds, means misunderstanding of the real traits of things. More importantly, when the body is mistaken for the true self and its material qualities, self-recognition is impaired.

One will wander around in the circle of Samsara unless he attains such an understanding by means of the elimination of Karma, which

veils the true nature of the soul. So, although one's true nature is bliss and pure joy, it will experience the suffering and pleasure of the material life. Souls can elevate themselves to the highest spiritual levels. They can also drown in the body, animal life, and sexual pleasures due to ignorance.[1]

Rāmānuja thinks of the relationship between the soul and its body like the relationship between God and His servant or a master and his servant. This is because the soul rules over the body and controls it. This obedience includes the mind and the senses as well.

Rāmānuja defines "body" as any being that is managed by a conscious entity. It also employs and supports the body for its own purpose. Therefore, the relationship between the soul and the body is the relationship of a follower and the being it follows. It resembles the relationship between Brahman and jiva. Also, these two are considered to be the followers and bodies of Brahman (Veliath 1992, 132). In fact, according to Rāmānuja, the soul is the meeting point of matter and the divine. On one hand, Jive is inside the body and connected to it. On the other hand, it is abode of the true Self.

Conclusion

The principal traits of Rāmānuja's view regarding the soul become clear when we compare it with Śankara's ideas. The following are some of the ways in which these two theories are different from one another.

The soul is an indisputable reality. However, it is distinct from Brahman. It is also one of the three ontological realities and is realized through self-consciousness.

The soul and Brahman are not identical. Rather, their relationship is like that of the body and the soul or the whole and its part. Brahman is the Soul of souls and guides them from inside. This is the perspective

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1. See Dāsgupta (1997, 3: 160) and Veliath (1992, 127-31).

from which Rāmānuja advances the notion of *grace*, which is one of the distinctions of the Behakti School.

Although the knowledge of the soul is a necessary prerequisite to the knowledge of Brahman, it is not synonymous to it. Hence, it is not sufficient for the attainment of ultimate spiritual release.

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Mary in Early Christianity and Islam

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This article explores the life and importance of Mary in Islam and Christianity, aiming at clarifying the criteria for which Mary has been revered in each tradition. It will be shown that Mary in Christianity is almost merely important because she was the mother of Jesus, while the Muslim reverence for her is based on her own noble characteristics. From the Muslim perspective, even if Mary had not been Jesus' mother, she would have been a prominent figure and a great example for believers.

Keywords: Mary, Jesus, Christian-Muslim dialogue.

Introduction

As a highly respected figure in both Islamic and Christian traditions, Mary can be a source for reconciliation and can open doors for a more accurate knowledge about her as the mother of Jesus Christ, as well as understanding the position of women in the two traditions.

Given the high respect for her in both Islam and Christianity, she can also be a good ground for interfaith dialogue, as well as an important

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way to fix the place of women in both traditions. The important role of Mary is unknown to many. This paper is a humble effort to investigate the life and importance of Mary in the light of early Christian and Muslim sources. The aim is to clarify the criteria for which Mary has been revered in Islamic and Christian early sources.

Mary in Early Christianity

Given the fact that Christians in different traditions have taken very different attitudes towards Mary, writing about her might have been controversial in the past (Macquarrie 1991, xiii), and it still remains very difficult to talk about Mary in Christianity due to these varieties. Some have esteemed her highly, others have virtually ignored, her but she has had a significant position in the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches.

Christian tradition reckons her the principal saint, naming her variously the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Lady, and Mother of God. Biblical data on the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of Jesus, is naturally found primarily in the New Testament, but also certain passages of the Old Testament as interpreted by inspired writers in the New Testament concern her (New Catholic Encyclopedia, 9: 238). Due to the nature of this brief article, we do not talk about those verses in the Old or New Testament that refer to Mary only through interpretations; rather. We will limit our study to the instances which clearly talk about Mary.

As the primary source among Christians, I will refer to all the instances of Mary being mentioned in the New Testament, because it is mainly from these texts that the doctrine and tradition concerning Mary`s person and mission in the history of salvation has been evolved.

The Gospel of Matthew

Mary is mentioned in Matthew in two types of passages: first, a group of verses that refer to her in the infancy narrative of chapters 1 (16-25)

and 2; Second, Matthean texts that have parallels in Mark. In the first group, Mary is introduced as the virgin mother of Jesus who is engaged with Joseph but not married yet, and the second group which are in 12:46-50 and 13:53-58 do not say anything special about Mary. They just say that Jesus is the son of Mary.

The Gospel of Mark

Chronologically speaking, Mark is the earliest written gospel and a source upon which Matthew and Luke relied for a large portion of their material (Streeter 1927).

Mary and other members of the family of Jesus are mentioned in Mark 3:31-35 and 6:1-6. In chapter 3, we have Mary as a devout mother who is concerned about her son, Jesus.

The Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles

In Luke`s gospel we may distinguish two kinds of passages pertinent to Mary: first, a relatively extensive set of references to Mary in the infancy narrative of chapters 1-2, where she has an important role in the annunciation, the visitation, the birth at Bethlehem, the presentation in the Temple, and the finding of Jesus in the Temple; second, four brief passages in the narrative of Jesus' public ministry. Like Matthew, Luke offers a genealogy of Jesus; and the first of the four ministry passages in a line in that genealogy (3:23) indicates that Jesus is only the *supposed* son of Joseph. The second and the third Lucan Ministry passages have synoptic parallels—namely, Luke 4:16-30 narrating the rejection of Jesus at Nazareth (cf. Mark 6:1-6; Matt 13:53-58); and Luke 8:19-21, pertaining to who constitute the family of Jesus (cf. Mark 3:31-35; Matt 12:46-50). The fourth ministry passage (11:27-28), where a woman from the crowd proclaims the blessedness of Jesus' mother, is peculiar to Luke.

Mary is mentioned only once in the Acts of the Apostles (1:14), in a listing of those who had gathered together to pray in Jerusalem after the ascension and before Pentecost (Brown et al. 1987, 105-6).

Although the Lucan Marian material is more abundant than that of any other New Testament writer, but still they are limited to the stories about the relation of Mary and Jesus. We do not find a passage that talks about Mary's life from an angle other than her motherhood to Jesus.

The Gospel of John

The name Mary never occurs in the fourth gospel, although other women called Mary have been mentioned fifteen times in this gospel. She is very briefly mentioned in this gospel in two scenes: first, where she makes an appearance at the wedding feast of Cana (2:1-11, 12); and second, at the foot of the cross (19:25-27). There are a few other verses that do not have a clear pertinence to Mary but have been said to have some indirect relations to her.

Our study shows that Mary in the New Testament appears as a virgin mother, and a loyal follower of Jesus. Mary, the mother of the Jesus, is primarily a believer who has been with Jesus from his conception, to his birth, his infancy, childhood, and manhood. She remains a believer after his death and is present when Jesus' promise of his Spirit is given at Pentecost. There is no reference to the birth of Mary in the New Testament and neither can be found any details regarding her childhood. Therefore, we can realize that Mary in these texts is always presented as a figure linked and related to Jesus and not an independently looked upon person.

Mary in the Apocrypha

Mary is mentioned in apocryphal texts more abundantly, mainly in the infancy gospels of James and Pseudo-Matthew. We will cover these gospels in this part.

The Infancy Gospel of James (Protevangelium Jacobi)

The image that is presented in this gospel about Mary and her birth is much more detailed than any other source in early Christianity. This gospel offers an answer to the perplexing problem of Mary`s perpetual virginity, since the early scriptures speak of Jesus' brothers. Joseph is presented as a widower, with children by a previous marriage (Barnstone 2005, 383). This solution does not answer the question about the rest of Mary`s life as Joseph`s wife though.

According to this gospel, Mary`s parents (Joachim and Anna) did not have children and they were old and wealthy. They eagerly ask God to grant them a baby; her mother vows to dedicate the baby to the service of God after she is given glad tidings by angels of becoming a mother. When Mary becomes three years old, her parents take her to the temple to fulfill the pledge they had already made. She is respectably received and blessed in the temple by the priests. Now Mary was in the temple of the Lord like a dove being fed, and she received food from the hand of an angel. When she becomes twelve years old, the priests decide to find a ward for her. Zacharias, receiving vision from an angel told them to cast lots and the Lord will show them the one to whom Mary will be the wife. Finally, Joseph is chosen and he receives her as her ward. While Joseph is not with her for a while, Mary hears an angel who calls her: "The Lord is with you, you are blessed among women… you have found favor before the Lord of all, and you will conceive by his word."

After his return, Joseph finds Mary pregnant and becomes mad about it, but an angel appears to him in his dream and says that the one who is in her is from the Holy Spirit; his name will be Jesus, and he will save people from their sins. Joseph is accused of defiling Mary and marrying her secretly after priests receive the news about Mary having become pregnant, but they both exonerate themselves. They drink the water of testing, and they are cleared since their sin did not appear in them. Joseph

takes her to a cave when the son is ready to be born. Joseph brings a midwife for help, but the baby is born miraculously while a great light appears in the cave that their eyes could not bear it. The story in this gospel continues about Jesus, Magi, Herod, Zacharias, and so forth, but Mary is not mentioned anymore (Barnstone 2005, 385-92).

The Infancy Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew

This gospel is a strangely poetic version of the *Infancy Gospel of James*. The sources of the gospel are the *Gospel of James* and also the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas* (Barnstone 2005, 394). Unlike the Gospel of James, we do not find stories about Mary`s birth and parents here. A difference in this gospel with the previous gospel is that this starts right from the pregnancy of Mary. When joseph returns from his nine-month work trip as a carpenter and finds Mary pregnant, he is totally gripped by anguish, but the other virgins who were with Mary during his absence bear witness that she has never been touched by a man, and they assert that she has been addressed by an angel and received food from the hand of the angel in a daily manner. However, Joseph remains skeptical, but an angel appears to him in his dream and tells Joseph about Mary`s purity. The rest of the story is pretty similar to the previous gospel, save here we find Jesus as an infant miracle-maker during their way back to the Land of Judah (Barnstone 2005, 394-97).

Syriac Sources

Syriac materials are of high significance in studying early Christianity, so we need to know the image of Mary in these sources too. In his history book, Tabari bases himself on the Syriac sources. He states that Persians assert that sixty-five years after Alexander seized Babylonia, and fifty-one years after Arsacid rule began, Mary the daughter of Imran gave birth to Jesus, but Christians assert that Jesus was born 303 years after Alexander conquered Babylonia (Tabari 1987, 4:711). Mary was pregnant with Jesus when she was thirteen years old. They also report that Jesus lived thirty-two years and a few days before his

ascension, and that Mary lived six more years after his ascension, altogether over fifty years. Zechariah provided for Mary, and she was engaged to Joseph. Mary and Joseph were cousins and their lineage goes back to David, the prophet (Tabari 2009, 2:91).

The other stories about Mary in the History of *Tabari* are all about her conception of Jesus and his birth. Reading the section of the history of *Tabari* on Mary and Jesus, we do not see any other stories about the life of Mary, save the stories about her conception to Jesus and his birth. Therefore, in this book, like the other texts that we studied, we almost always see Mary beside Jesus and not alone.

Mary in Islam

The image of Mary in Islam is different than that of Christianity in some cases, though there are many commonalities. Some of these differences might be because of the difference between the two theologies regarding the nature of humans.

Mary is the only woman who has been mentioned by name in the Quran. She has always been talked about with the highest reverence in the Quran. She has also been mentioned as *a sign* of God. There is an entire chapter in the Quran (chapter 19) entitled to her. She is mentioned thirty-four times in the Quran, much more than she is mentioned in the Bible. This number is even more than the frequency of the name of her son Jesus. To know the position of Mary in Islam, we will mainly focus on her from a Quranic point of view but will also refer to some historical and hadith sources.

Birth

Unlike New Testament, the Quran talks about the birth of Mary in an outstanding way. The story of Mary is one of the most interesting and amazing stories in the Quran. It starts with the vow that her mother had made to dedicate her child to the God (Q. 3:35). Mary`s parents, Imran

(Joachim in Christian tradition) and Hannah were old and childless for a a long time. God revealed to Imran that they would be given a blessed son who would be able to heal the sick, revive the dead, and who would be an apostle for the Israelites. Imran informed Hannah about this son, and therefore everyone was expecting a son to be born (Makarim-Shirazi 2001, 323). Being given a daughter instead of a son suggests that the promised son is given to them through Mary, because in this way they would have been given a greater honor by having a son without father, a great sign of God (Tabatabai 1995, 3:172). It can also be an indication of the close relationship between Mary and Jesus, as if Mary is the beginning of Jesus (Shomali 2012, 11).

Hannah's promise of making her son a devotee of God was accepted by God in Mary. He made her grow in purity, and Zachariah was assigned as her guardian. Every time that he entered her chamber to see her, he found her supplied with sustenance. He said: "O Mary! Whence (comes) this to you?" She said: "From God: for God provides sustenance to whom He pleases without measure" (Q. 3:37).

Nature

Both, Mary and her Son, Jesus Christ have been introduced as human beings. Believing in Jesus as God has been considered to be an exaggeration in religion by people of the book (Q. 4:171). This is accepted among all Muslims. Indeed, there is no divine person in Islam with the Christian definition of divinity. We find arguments in the Quran about the human nature of Mary and her son. For example, chapter 5, verse 17 of the Quran says: "They are certainly faithless who say, 'God is the Messiah, son of Mary.' Say, 'Who can avail anything against God should He wish to destroy the Messiah, son of Mary, and his mother, and everyone upon the earth?' To Allah belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and whatever is between them. He creates whatever He wishes, and Allah has power over all things.'

And in verse 75 of the same chapter, the Quran says: "The Messiah, son of Mary, is but an apostle. Certainly [other] apostles have passed before him, and his mother was a truthful one. Both of them would eat food. Look how We clarify the signs for them, and yet, look, how they go astray!" indicating that God has no needs, while Mary and Jesus were needy like other people who need food in order to stay alive. In other words, Jesus is an apostle of God like all the other apostles, and the fact that he and his mother ate food shows that they were needy, and being needy is the first sign of being created. Therefore, Messiah has been a *possible existent* and not a *necessary existent*; created, not the Creator; born from another created person named Mary. Any other assumption that suggests their divinity is considered to be exaggeration Tabatabai 1995, 6:73).

Importance

Jesus is considered a significant figure in Islamic thought. He has a great position in Islamic theology, as well as eschatology and morality, but the interesting point is that when his name is mentioned in the Quran, it almost always comes before the name of his mother as *Isa ibn Maryam* (Jesus the son of Mary). He is rarely named alone in the Quran. This can have many messages; one of which is the important position of Mary in the life of Jesus as a great prophet. It can also refer to the Islamic view of Jesus as a human being, and not as the son of God.

Chapter 19 of the Quran has been named after Mary and the third chapter has been named after her family. In what follows, we will present the image of Mary in the Quran, and we will show that her importance in the Islamic point of view is mainly because of her own great spirituality and noble characteristics. Examining all the verses about Mary in the Quran, I have come to a list of virtue that have made her a noble figure according to the Quran:

a) Obedience (66:12)

b) Truthfulness (5:75)

c) Chastity (21:91, 66:11-12)

d) Being purified by God (3:42)

e) Receiving food from God (3:37)

f) Being addressed by angels (3:42)

g) A sign of God for all the nations (21: 91)

h) An exemplar for all the believers (66: 11-12)

i) Being chosen by God above all women (3:42)

j) A dedicated worshiper and fervent in prayer (3:37, 3:43)

k) A true believer in the words and books of the Lord (66: 12)

l) Being the mother of Jesus through a miraculous conception (19: 16-34)

m) Being accepted by God as the first female devotee to God in the temple (3:37)

Considering all these virtues of Mary, we can come to the conclusion that in the Quran Mary is a great pure lady, who has had the advantage of being purified by God. Indeed, the image of Mary in the Quran is pictured as a lady whose sincere worship and submission to God`s will as well as her truthfulness and chastity caused her to reach to a position which is called the position of the people who have been purified by God, and finally she became the mother of one of the greatest apostles of God through a miraculous conception.

The position of getting purified by God is special only to some rare people like great prophets and the people of the household of the Prophet Muhammad (Q. 33:33). Whoever reaches such a great position

would be secure from all impurities and sins in actions and intentions. Indeed, it is the position of being infallible. The reason for this lies in the concept of purification itself, because if there is any impurity in the person`s actions or characteristics, he will not be *pure*, especially when the act of purification is done by God. It is also good to note that purification is one major goal of one's spiritual journey in Islam. The reason behind all the religious laws and other spiritual instructions and prophets' efforts has been to make people pure, so that they gain proximity to God, which is the true meaning of Salvation.[1] People who try to purify themselves by following the right path are called *Mutahhirun,* which means *purifiers*, and they will be greatly rewarded for their determination and efforts in the way of God, but not all of them will be *Mutahharun,* which is the stage of those especially *purified* by God himself. This group will have access to the secrets of divine revelation (Q. 56:80).

I would also like to put an emphasis on Mary as *a role model* for all the believers as she has been introduced that way in Q. 66:2. Assigning a person as a role model indicates that she must be looked at in everyday life in order to get practical lessons from her. In Islam, Mary's significance is mainly because of her own traits and not because of her being the mother of Jesus. Because she can never be an exemplar for others in that. Although being the mother of Jesus is a great honor for her, but this is a result of her great purity and chastity. This is the main difference between Mary`s image in Islam and Christianity. Therefore, Mary is independently important in Islam, and even if she had not been the mother of Jesus, she would have still been an important figure.

This becomes clearer when we look at the way she has been introduced in the Quran in the verses I referred to, as we see that God admires her because of her devotion to worship and her chastity and

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1. See Q. 62:2; 2:15; 3:164; 87:14; 91:9.

truthfulness more than any other things in her. But when we look at her in Christian sources, we see that she is almost always being posed in relation to her son Jesus.

Indeed, there is a basic principle in Islam of giving value to people because of their own actions and ethics not only because of their family relations.[1] Therefore, we can observe that seeing Mary`s greatness in her own personality is in more consistency with this principle.

Motherhood

Apostles of God have always been raised from pure families. It is interesting that some prominent figures of prophethood are the fruits of their upbringing by their mothers. The role of the mothers of Moses and Muhammad is highlighted in Islam, while their fathers have not been mentioned as much, though they have also been great and pure men. This shows the importance of the role of the mother in shaping one`s personality. This is more emphasized when it comes to Mary and Jesus, as Jesus did not have a father. Hannah, the mother of Mary, was also a special person, who played a great role in shaping the character of Mary as she vows to dedicate her child to God.

Conclusion

Although many Christians look at Mary more deeply to find messages for their life in her, but studying early Christian sources reveals that Mary in Christianity is almost merely important because she was the mother of Jesus, while the Islamic approach to her is mainly based on her own noble characteristics, so she is revered independently. Mary's special status with God is based on her own sacred characteristics, and not on her being the mother of Jesus. Even if she had not been Jesus' mother, she would have been a great lady in the Islamic point of view,

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1. For example, Noah's son, Abraham's father, the wives of Noah and Lot, and uncle of Prophet Muhammad have been introduced as negative figures, but Pharaoh's wife is mentioned as an exemplar for believers in the Quran.

and this is why she has been introduced as a great example for believers. This can be regarded as the main difference between the Islamic and Christian viewpoints on Mary.

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Clement of Alexandria and His Doctrine of Scripture

Hamed Fayazi [1]

This article discusses Clement of Alexandria's doctrine of Scripture based on the terms "voice" of God, "first principle," and "demonstration" that he uses for Scripture. By studying the usage of these terms and the related passages, it will be made clear that Clement regards Scripture as a vessel of God's voice, favoring what is now called the theory of *verbal inspiration*. Moreover, the divine voice, like the voice of sirens, leaves no choice for the listeners but to submit and follow. This absolute submission is rational, because Scripture is a first principle, whose truth does not depend on any demonstrations. However, those who firmly believe in its truth will find abundant demonstrations in it that will guide them to a better and deeper understanding of its teachings.

Keywords: Clement, verbal inspiration, biblical authority, first principle, demonstration.

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Introduction

Clement of Alexandria (c.150 – c.215)[1], a third-century Church Father and an important Christian philosopher, apologist, exegete, theologian, and mystic, uses three special words for Scripture, by means of which we can unveil his doctrine of Scripture: "voice" (φωνή), "demonstration" (ἀπόδειξις), and "first principle" (ἀρχή). In what follows, we will discuss what exactly the usage of these terms in Clement's works tells us about his doctrine of Scripture, and especially about his understanding of biblical inspiration and authority.

Scripture as the Divine "Voice"

In several places, Clement refers to Scripture as the divine "voice":

> He who believes then the divine Scriptures with sure judgment, receives in the voice of God, who bestowed the Scripture, a demonstration that cannot be impugned. (Stromata II.2)

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1. Clement, born in either Athens or Alexandria, converted to Christianity and traveled a lot to learn from famous Christian teachers. Eventually, he settled down in Alexandria and became a disciple of Pantaenus (d. c.190), who, according to Eusebius, was the head of the Catechetical School of Alexandria (Ecclesiastical History, V.10). Eusebius reports that after Pantaenus, Clement became the head of the Catechetical School and that Origen was among his disciples (VI.6), though these assumptions have come under question by the modern scholarship (Spanneut 2003, 797). In c.202, due to the persecution of Septimius Severus, Clement fled from Alexandria, and took refuge probably in Cappadocia. There is not much information about his life after this, but scholars maintain that he died in Palestine between 211 and 215.

   Clement's extant writings include Proprepticus, an "exhortation" to the Greeks and an apology for Christian faith; Paedagogus, instructing the believers about Christian morals and manners; and eight books of Stromateis or "Miscellanies," which constitute the most important part of Clement's writings. Clement, together with Origen, is a main representative of the early theological school of Alexandria, which, in contrast to the school of Antioch, is noted for its high Christology and its use of allegorical methods of exegesis. For more details on Clement's life and thought, see Osborn (2005) and Spanneut (2003).

In this passage, Clement states the contingency of receiving the voice of God on believing in Scripture. According to him, in order to receive the divine voice, it is necessary to "believe … the divine Scriptures with sure judgment." But what does clement mean exactly by believing the divine Scriptures, and what is it that one has to believe about Scripture to be able to receive the divine voice? Is it enough, for instance, to believe that they are rich sources of wisdom and enlightenment?

Two points in this passage indicate that what Clement means by believing in Scripture is beyond merely regarding it as a good source of wisdom. The first indication is Clement's use of the adjective "divine", which suggests that Scripture is essentially different from human works. The second is his speaking of God as the one who "bestowed the Scriptures," emphasizing again the divine origin of Scriptures. These two points imply that in Clement's thought the belief that leads to receiving the "voice of God" is a firm belief in the divine origin or *inspiration* of Scripture.

Moreover, the dependence of receiving the voice of God on believing in Scripture points to understanding Scripture as the vessel of the divine voice. According to this image, the divine voice is not one and the same entity as Scripture but is contained in it, and whoever faithfully turns to Scripture will receive the voice of God through it.

Such understanding of Scripture does not appear to go in lines with *word-centered* theories of biblical inspiration, because the vessel or the container is different from what it contains. So, if Scripture *contains* the divine voice, there must be an aspect in it that is not divine in itself but functions as the container of the divine aspect. This container aspect is inevitably the verbal aspect of Scripture. However, as we will see in other passages, this initial interpretation of Clement's words needs to be modified.

In another passage, Clement writes,

> Moses, 'the servant who was faithful in all his house,' said to Him who uttered the oracles from the bush, 'Who am I, that You send me? I am slow of speech, and of a stammering tongue,' to minister the voice of God in human speech. And again: 'I am smoke from a pot.' For God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. (Stromata IV.17)

In this passage, Clement quotes Exodus 4:10, then adds a short but interesting comment: "to minister the voice of God in human speech." This short note shows that Clement thinks that Moses initially had a kind of *conceptual theory of inspiration* in mind, based on which God gives only the essence of His message and the concepts He wants to convey, without directing His messengers in the wordings they choose. So, according to Clement, Moses, having this idea in mind, thought that after receiving the divine voice, it was all up to him to convey it in human language. God, however, corrected Moses' misunderstanding: "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak" (Exodus 4:11-12).

This passage is important, because it reaffirms the idea of God's voice contained in the vessel of words. It shows that the divine voice is not in itself verbal and, to reach human beings, it needs to be put in human language. However, this passage and the verses surrounding it indicate that although the divine voice may not have a verbal nature, verbal inspiration of the Bible still has its grounds. True that Moses had received God's voice not in the form of human language, but God did not leave Moses on his own in conveying the divine voice in human words; God promised that He would be with Moses' mouth and teach him what he would speak.

This perception certainly goes with the idea of word-centered inspiration of the Bible, but could it give further information about which word-centered inspiration theory Clement had in mind? Was he a proponent of *instrumental* theory of inspiration, according to which God utilized biblical authors to communicate His words in Scripture just as a writer uses a pen to write? Or, was he an adherent of the *dictation* theory of inspiration, based on which the exact words of Scripture were communicated by God to the biblical authors? Or, did he adhere to the *verbal* theory of inspiration, maintaining that God created the conditions that led the biblical writers to express His message in the exact words that He had wanted? In his book, *Inspiration*, David R. Law sides with the latter viewpoint (Law 2001, 62). He refers to a passage from Clement where he comments on 2 Tim 3:15: "For truly holy are those letters that sanctify and deify; and the writings or volumes that consist of those holy letters and syllables, the same apostle consequently calls inspired of God" (Exhortation to the Heathen IX). As we will see below, there are other passages in Clement's writings that more clearly show his inclination to the theory of verbal inspiration.

In another passage, widely cited, Clement writes:

> He, then, who of himself believes the Scripture and voice of the Lord, which by the Lord acts to the benefiting of men, is rightly [regarded] faithful. Certainly, we use it as a criterion in the discovery of things. What is subjected to criticism is not believed till it is so subjected; so that what needs criticism cannot be a first principle. Therefore, as is reasonable, grasping by faith the indemonstrable first principle, and receiving in abundance, from the first principle itself, demonstrations in reference to the first principle, we are by the voice of the Lord trained up to the knowledge of the truth. (Stromata VII.16)

This passage indicates that Clement regards Scripture and the "voice of the Lord" as essentially one and the same thing. Although he establishes a conjunction between Scripture and the "voice of the Lord" at the beginning of the passage, which, at the first sight, implies that they are two different things, in a closer look, the conjunction seems to be a synonym repetition. This is evident from the use of singular verbs and pronouns in the subsequent sentences for "the Scripture and voice of the Lord," which shows their unity in Clement's mind.

Other more direct evidence is Clement's use of the "voice of the Lord" at the end of this passage, where he says, "[G]rasping by faith the indemonstrable first principle, and receiving in abundance, from the first principle itself, demonstrations in reference to the first principle, we are by the *voice of the Lord* trained up to the knowledge of the truth." Here, Clement is talking about the sufficiency of Scripture in interpreting Scripture; that, in order to understand Scripture, no external source is needed. In this context, Clement introduces the "voice of the Lord" as a source by which "we are … trained up to the knowledge of the truth." It is clear that what Clement means by the voice of the Lord here is nothing but Scripture itself; otherwise, if the divine voice was a separate source, he would have been contradicting himself by introducing a source other than Scripture that can give us knowledge regarding it.

Moreover, in a few sentences later, Clement writes, "[W]e establish the matter that is in question by *the voice of the Lord*, which is the surest of all demonstrations," introducing the "voice of the lord" as a demonstration with which the truth of a statement or an opinion is evaluated. It is obvious here also that Clement is referring to Scripture itself, rather than introducing a new source of knowledge.

This identification of Scripture with the divine voice in this passage lays further emphasis upon the divine origin of Scripture; however, it does not completely accord with the idea of Scripture as the vessel of God's voice, because, as mentioned earlier, a vessel is not the same as

what it contains. However, this is not an inconsistency in Clement's thought; rather, it shows Clement's inclination to the theory of verbal inspiration of Scripture; for him, Scripture reveals God's message by the exact words and in the precise way that God wants; it is like a mirror that accurately reflects the image of what stands in front of it, so much so that whenever people look at the mirror, they usually do not see the mirror, but the images reflected by it. Similarly, just as one may refer to one's image in the mirror and say, "This is me," Clement can refer to Scripture, which he regards to be the perfect signifier of God's voice, as the "voice of the Lord."

The above passage is not only an affirmation of the verbal inspiration of Scripture but could also support the theory of *plenary inspiration* of the Bible: if Scripture reflects God's message so accurately, if it is simply the "voice of the Lord," it cannot contain parts or sections that do not belong to the Lord.

Another passage in Clement's writings reads,

And in general, Pythagoras, and Socrates, and Plato say that they hear God's voice while closely contemplating the fabric of the universe, made and preserved unceasingly by God. For they heard Moses say, He said, and it was done, describing the word of God as an act. (Stromata V.14)

The fact that, according to this passage, Pyhagoras, Socrates, and Plato have heard the voice of God indicates that Scripture is not the only vessel of God's voice, nor is inspiration the exclusive way of receiving it; philosophers have also heard that voice through contemplation. The passage shows that, in Clement's understanding, the divine voice is not only a set of ideas or messages to be communicated in human language; rather, it encompasses the entire creation, embedded in "the fabric of the universe."

The idea, moreover, works as a perfect explanation for Clement's positive attitude toward philosophy. In contrast to Church Fathers like Tertulian who believed in no affinity between philosophy and revelation and called for exclusion of philosophy from theological reflections, basing the latter solely on Scripture, Clement maintained that, though partially, philosophy contained God's truth and prepared the way for His final revelation. The above passage reveals the foundation of this claim: The divine voice is not confined to Scripture; rather, it can be found in the foundation of creation. Therefore, those who contemplate the universe and those who study the passages of Scripture are in fact searching for the same divine truth.

> Clement further writes,
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> Theophrastus says that sensation is the root of faith. For from it the rudimentary principles extend to the reason that is in us, and the understanding. He who believeth then the divine Scriptures with sure judgment, receives in the voice of God, who bestowed the Scripture, a demonstration that cannot be impugned. Faith, then, is not established by demonstration. "Blessed therefore those who, not having seen, yet have believed." The Siren's songs, exhibiting a power above human, fascinated those that came near, conciliating them, almost against their will, to the reception of what was said. (Stromata II.2)

In this passage, Clement draws an analogy between Scripture and the song of the sirens, who, in Greek mythology, were bird-like women who lured sailors with their songs and bewitched everybody that approached them (Room 1990, 277).

The analogy between Scripture, which is the divine voice in Clement's thought, and the song of the sirens indicates the essential authority of Scripture that does not leave any choice for the hearers except for acceptance and submission. Just as the sufficient explanation

for why the sailors were attracted to the sirens is the latter's powerful attraction, the sufficient reason why people believe and follow the divine voice is its essential authority.

Scripture as "First Principle"

In several places, Clement uses the term "first principle" for Scripture:

> He, then, who of himself believes the Scripture and voice of the Lord, which by the Lord acts to the benefiting of men, is rightly [regarded] faithful. Certainly, we use it as a criterion in the discovery of things. What is subjected to criticism is not believed till it is so subjected; so that what needs criticism cannot be a first principle. Therefore, as is reasonable, grasping by faith the indemonstrable first principle, and receiving in abundance, from the first principle itself, demonstrations in reference to the first principle, we are by the voice of the Lord trained up to the knowledge of the truth. (Stromata VII.16)

First principle is a technical term in Greek philosophy and especially in the Aristotelian tradition. Aristotle divides all sciences into theoretical, practical, and productive. The goal of theoretical sciences—unlike practical and productive sciences—is knowing the truth for its own sake, and to achieve this goal *demonstration* is to be used. Demonstration is a kind of syllogism that leads to apodictic knowledge; it is based on premises that are "true, primary, immediate, better known than, and prior to the conclusion, which is further related to them as effect to cause" (Posterior Analytics 1.2).

However, if everything should be known by demonstration, we would be entrapped in an infinite regress, because nothing can be demonstrated unless there are true premises on which the demonstration can be based. But to know the truth of those premises, further demonstrations are needed, which themselves are based on premises that need to be demonstrated, and so on.

Aristotle himself is aware of this problem. He writes, "It is impossible that there should be demonstration of absolutely everything; there would be an infinite regress, so that there would still be no demonstration" (Metaphysics 4.4). This forms the basis of Aristotle's theory of indemonstrable "first principles," which are self-evident and need no further explanation.

But what is the nature of the knowledge that reaches the first principles if it is not demonstrative knowledge? Aristotle's response to this question is *intuition*: "[T]here will be no scientific knowledge of the primary premises, and since except intuition nothing can be truer than scientific knowledge, it will be intuition that apprehends the primary premises" (Posterior Analytics 2.19). Intuition is not an outcome of any demonstration or syllogism; it is a simple grasp of a form or an idea, whether that idea is outside the material world or is embedded in the primary substances (Guila 2009, 8-9).

Clement incorporates these philosophical concepts to his doctrine of Scripture, but in order to better understand why he resorts to these concepts in the first place and what exactly he means by them, it is necessary to take into account his historical setting. In Clement's time, proto-orthodox Christianity was faced with challenges from two major opponents: Pagan thinkers, who criticized the supremacy that Christians had given to faith over reason; and Valentinian Gnostics, who distinguished between faith and *gnosis* and maintained that the former is for the common people whereas the latter is reserved for the elite. Moreover, there were simple Christian believers who held that faith alone is sufficient and rejected any further philosophical or mystical endeavors for deeper understanding of the truth (Lilla 2005, 118-19).

Having this background in mind, it becomes clear why Clement refers to Scripture as a "first principle": He seeks to respond to pagan thinkers, who regard Christian faith in Scripture as irrational. In

response to them, Clement introduces Scripture as a first principle and faith as the intuition which is the means for knowing first principles.[1] Employing these concepts, Clement claims that Christians' adherence to Scripture is not abandoning rationality in favor of revelation; rather, it is completely in accordance with the basic standards of any rational belief system where there are first principles grasped by intuition and further truths derived from those principles by means of demonstration. The only difference is that Christians' intuition or faith has been able to grasp a transcendent first principle, which others have failed to grasp. Thus, Clement believes that "grasping by faith the indemonstrable first principle" is "reasonable" (Stromata VII.16).

Moreover, based on the same idea of Scripture as the first principle, Clement is able to meet the Gnostic challenge. If Scripture is the first principle, then believing in it is the first step in the way of acquiring further knowledge of the truth. Therefore, gnosis is not extraneous to the faith of simple believers; rather, it is the fruit of that faith, and it is from that simple assent to the authority of Scripture that any deeper understanding of the truth starts. Only those who start from this basic faith in Scripture and follow the abundant "demonstrations" that they receive from it will be "trained up to the knowledge of the truth" (Stromata VII.16).

The idea of Scripture as the first principle, moreover, has a message for those simpleton believers who regarded the basic faith in Scripture as sufficient: Scripture is the first principle and we must have faith in it, but first principles are to be the foundations of the truths that are to be further discovered. Those who regard their simple faith in Scripture as

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1. It should be noted here that apart from this meaning for "faith," Clement uses this term for two other meanings as well: (1) the firm conviction of mind about the conclusion of a scientific demonstration, and (2) the inclination of some believers to simply accept the teachings of Scripture without further attempts to acquire a deeper understanding. See Lilla (2005, 119).

sufficient, will be deprived of the deeper knowledge of the truth—the *gnosis*.

Scripture as "Demonstration"

Another term used by Clement for Scripture, which is apparently inconsistent with the use of "first principle" for it, is "demonstration":

> For we may not give our adhesion to men on a bare statement by them, who might equally state the opposite. But if it is not enough merely to state the opinion, but if what is stated must be confirmed, we do not wait for the testimony of men, but we establish the matter that is in question by the voice of the Lord, which is the surest of all demonstrations, or rather is the only demonstration; … so, consequently, we also, giving a complete exhibition of the Scriptures from the Scriptures themselves, from faith persuade by demonstration. (Stromata VII.16)

As a solution for this apparent inconsistency, some scholars have suggested that Scripture being the first principle means that what Scripture says is self-evidently true and there is no need for any demonstration to prove it. However, knowing that the sayings of Scripture are true does not necessarily mean knowing the true meanings of those sayings. Thus, there needs to be an exegetical investigation based on the accepted truth of Scripture to find the true and deep meaning of Scripture through demonstrations that are based on, and provided by, Scripture itself as the first principle of this study (Lilla 2005, 137-38).

Other scholars believe that the discrepancy cannot be resolved unless "demonstration" is understood not in its technical Aristotelian sense but in its original meaning in Greek language. Thus, they suggest that in these contexts the meaning of demonstration should be understood as close to "manifestation" (Guila 2009, 198-99). In this sense, demonstrations provided by Scripture are the divine

manifestations contained in Scripture, and, coming from God, they are self-evident truths—first principles that need no technical "demonstrations." In this way, calling Scripture a first principle and speaking of it as a demonstration basically denotes the same idea.

It seems, however, that the former explanation is more fitting to the context of the above passage, in which Clement is trying to explain the right theory of interpretation. Clement criticizes those "heretics" who "will not make use of all the Scriptures, and then they will not quote them entire, nor as the body and texture of prophecy prescribe. But, selecting ambiguous expressions, they wrest them to their own opinions" (Stromata VII.16). Clemet believes that the right interpretation of Scripture is rather "in establishing each one of the points demonstrated in the Scriptures again from similar Scriptures" (Stromata VII.16). Seen in this context, it appears that the demonstrations Clement speaks of in the above passage and in the previous one (where he writes, "Therefore, as is reasonable, grasping by faith the indemonstrable first principle, and receiving in abundance, from the first principle itself, demonstrations in reference to the first principle") are not so much the self-evident divine manifestations, but the different Scriptural passages that can provide the premises and exegetical "demonstrations" used to shed light on the ambiguous passages of Scripture and reveal its deeper meaning.

Conclusion

In this article, we tried to extract Clement of Alexandria's doctrine of Scripture based on three special terms that he has used for Scripture: "voice" of God, "first principle," and "demonstration." Through studying the usage of these terms, we showed that Clement regards Scripture as inspired by God and a vessel of His voice. Although the divine voice contained in Scripture is not in itself of a verbal nature, God oversees the choice of the words in such a way that what becomes Scripture would convey God's voice precisely as He wants. As such, the divine voice

contained in Scripture has such authority that, like the voice of sirens, leaves no choice for the listeners but to submit and follow.

This absolute submission and adherence is far from being irrational, because Scripture is self-evidently true; it is a first principle that calls for faith. Those who firmly believe in its truth will find abundant demonstrations in it that will guide them to a better and deeper understanding of its truth.

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Human Freedom and Moral Responsibility In The Light Of Theistic Beliefs

Qudratullah Qurbani [1]

Theistic and atheistic beliefs respectively play a fundamental role in the definition of man's free will and moral responsibility, so far as they can determine the nature, quality, and quantity of human's freedom. After believing in God, the belief in a revealed or a non-revealed religion and the manner in which God's attributes are interpreted play an essential role in the definition of free will. In fact, the nature of our understanding of some of God's attributes—such as His knowledge, power, will, creation, and sovereignty—as well as His relation to human beings can impact the way we envision the quality and quantity of man's free will. In revealed religions, God is introduced as the personal and all-powerful being, who is the real creator of humans, and humans are considered His creatures, servants, and vicegerents. Human free will and moral responsibility is defined in the light of such a theistic perspective.

Keywords: God, revealed religions, divine attributes, free will, moral responsibility.

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Introduction

The idea of God is of the most important concerns of a human's mind. This is true to such an extent that it impossible for the mind to completely ignore this issue. In fact, atheists also agree with the fact that their greatest intellectual problem revolves around the concept of God. Following this, the most significant of questions for them concerns the existence of God. So, the atheists who present some of the strongest arguments for the rejection of God's existence also confess that they are always concerned about the idea of God. In fact, this preoccupies their minds more than anything else. John Paul Sartre, the French atheist philosopher, is a good example of this general rule. He confesses that the idea of God was of one of his incessant concerns. Hence, some thinkers say that Sartre's works point to his long battle with the idea of God that is natural to man (Huse 2004, 162). The reason the theist emphasizes the existence of God and the atheist stresses His non-existence is the important consequences that a belief or disbelief in Him has on a human's life and the way he thinks. The belief in God, introduces a being into man's life that impacts all the aspects of his life and its virtues. This is because the belief in the existence of God imposes some social, religious, individual, and moral rules and obligations upon man. So, if God exists it means that the human being is not absolutely free; rather, he is responsible for his actions and must answer to God for them. In other words, the belief in God fundamentally restricts human freedom and creates many responsibilities—including moral ones—for him. Believing in God, in fact, casts a shadow on human existence and restricts his freedom. This shadow is removable only by rejecting the existence of God. Sartre says that the human tendency to believe in the existence of God is the result of his desire to be like God (Mosleh 2005, 181). Dostoyevsky also believes that the existence of God limits human freedom. Following this, he says that everything is permissible if there is no God (Mosleh 2005, 182).

On the contrary, disbelieving in God also has some very grave consequences. This is because in this ideology, since the existence of a god or gods is rejected, man is considered an independent and free being with no limitations; that is, he has absolute freedom and is not responsible before anything other than himself. He can live just as he wants. In this approach, the idea of God is considered to have been made by the human mind who wants to be like a god.

Therefore, the first consequence of adhering to the theistic viewpoint is the limitation of human freedom and increase of his moral responsibility. Conversely, the main result of the atheistic point of view is absolute human freedom and the rejection of any kind of moral responsibility. The importance of these two viewpoints lies in the kind of meaning of life that a human acquires based upon them. On the other hand, according to divine religions, the outcome of human deeds and actions are realized in this world and the hereafter. Therefore, keeping in mind the outcome of an action, a human being does not allow himself to perform any action, since he dreads the outcomes of moral vices. In the atheistic outlook, since there is no belief in the hereafter and the human does not consider himself religiously responsible for his actions, he is free to do anything as long as there are no social laws and obligations.

So, the belief in God or the disbelief in Him fundamentally determines the nature of human freedom and moral responsibility in so far as the meanings freedom and ethics can change depending on whether theistic or atheistic belief is adopted.

In this paper, an attempt has been made to show what effect the belief in God has on our ideas regarding human freedom and moral responsibility, and how our definitions of God and His attributes determine the meaning of our freedom and moral responsibility. This paper shows how the belief in God and His attributes defines human

freedom and moral responsibility and argues that without theistic thought, it is impossible to speak of comprehensive morality.

The Effect of the Belief or Disbelief in God

After the belief in God or gods, the most significant problem is the identity of God or the gods, as it can define the way we think about freedom and moral responsibility. The above-mentioned question can be stated in the following manner: do we believe in the personal God of the revealed religions, the God of the natural theology of some western philosophers, or the gods of non-revealed religions like Buddhism, Hinduism, and so on? The importance of this question stems from the fundamental differences between the God of revealed religions and the gods of non-revealed religions or natural theologies. The reason for this is that the nature of God plays a significant role in the definition of God's relation to man. Then, the nature of this relation, in turn, determines the function and place of God and man in the whole system of being. In particular, it helps delineate man's moral duties and rights.

In monotheistic religions—like Islam, Christianity, and Judaism—God is described as a personal, unique, and glorified being that is absolutely distinct from humans and the world and is a unique deity. He is the creator and guardian of the whole system of being. All things, including the world and the humans that inhabit it depend on Him. In these religions, God is introduced as having infinite power, knowledge, and perfection, and as being the real creator and preserver of all things (See McGrath 2013, 2:398, 418-425; Unterman 2006, 39-45; Hilli 2007, 37-41). In Islam, for example, He is perceived as a personal and exalted God who neither is in everything, nor is everything in Him. At the same time, He is a God other than nature and humans and has infinite perfections and virtues. And, it is impossible that there be a god other than Him (Hilli 2007, 37-69).

On the contrary, the gods of non-revealed religions have a unity with the natural world. This leads to a kind of pantheism in which infinity

and unity is not one of essential attributes of the divine. Some of the most important properties of non-revealed gods are their plurality and their susceptibility to change in different temporal and spatial situations. Moreover, they mostly have anthropomorphic attributes according to the unlettered human beings' understanding of the nature of these attributes. In this case, for example, it is possible to speak of the different ideas of God within Hinduism, who is sometimes called "Brahman," occasionally "Vishnu," and often "Shiva." The Brahman or *the Absolute*, which is not a person or even a universal spirit, is the source of the phenomena in the universe and is their intrinsic and essential principle, and also transcends them. In Hinduism, there are some tendencies like Ishtadu (personal selective divinity) in which everyone chooses his own god but does not reject the truth of other gods. Each person orients himself to his own god and considers other gods to be its servants (Hinnells 2009, 535-36, 661-62). This kind of thinking is not able to determine a substantial relation between them and other humans. The result of such a view of God is imbibed with anthropomorphic properties; that is, God is pictured as having human attributes and is therefore unable to control the totality of human relations. In particular, human freedom and moral acts fall outside of His jurisdiction.

Also, in the view of some modern western philosophers, God is defined in a subjective and humanistic manner. As a result, the idea of God is humanistic in nature and depends upon how modern man understands and interprets Him. In this regard, the viewpoints of Descartes, Kant, and Hegel are significant. Descartes, for example, tries to demonstrate the existence of God using his subjective and methodic reasoning, ontological certainty, and clear and distinct ideas. The result is a philosophical God who is not similar to the God of Christianity (Descartes 1997, 287-88). This method was exceedingly used by Kant when he sought to prove the existence of God based on the moral

foundations that are responsible for, and give meaning to, human moral responsibilities, like the existence of the hereafter that gives meaning to human ethical responsibilities and consequently his salvation. According to Kant, morality, so far as it depends on the idea of the freedom of man, does not require a being who rules over him and does not need any other motivation save a rational law. In other words, man does not need religion in any way whatsoever in order to achieve his moral objective, and his practical faculty is enough (Kant 1996, 49). Keeping in mind human limitations and defects, Kant had no choice but to finally accept God as the final end of existence in order to guarantee the outcome of human morals in the Hereafter (Kant 1996, 268-69). In fact, Kant's rational approach to morality and God leads to the negation of the conception of a divine God and replaces Him by a humanistic and rational God. In this approach, the identity of God varies according to the way that we define Him. Most of His attributes are defined based on our requirements and social functions, and, thus, this conception of God is temporally and spatially subject to change. This leads to religious relativism, pluralism, and subjectivism. One of the important moral results of such a view about God is the complete dependency of morality and divinity on human will and understanding. Therefore, human freedom can be unlimited and there is no restriction on his moral acts save social laws and obligations. Humans can define the meaning of their moral responsibilities based on their desires and tendencies. On the other hand, in this subjective approach, the roles of God and humans are reversed, and God becomes a servant and the human turns into His master; that is, God and the divine affairs are understood and their functions are determined according to a human subjective perception. Consequently, such a God has no dominion over human freedom and moral responsibility.

On the contrary, in theistic religions, we encounter the unique, infinite, exalted, and stable God, who is infinitely greater than the human being, who is created by Him. So, man's encounter with God in

the divinely revealed religions is extremely different from his encounter with Him in religions that are not divinely revealed. In later religions, humans play a role in the formation of the nature of gods. Also, the quantity and activity of these gods are based on human needs and wishes. So, humans can define, reinterpret, and change their freedom and moral responsibility by themselves. This is because such ideas about the divine depend on myths, a human understanding of God, and a subjective interpretation of natural and supra-natural causes. Therefore, these do not play an affective role in the limitation of human free will. In the eyes of some modern western philosophers, as was previously mentioned, God is defined in an imperfect manner, since His attributes are understood anthropomorphically. Therefore, such a god cannot introduce laws and rules for humans. In the theistic approach, however, man is subordinated to God, whose sovereignty encompasses everything, including humans. Here, the human's free will and moral responsibility has a very different meaning from the two previously mentioned views.

Approaches to Divine Attributes and Their Effects on Other Areas of Thought

Another very important problem is how the human being understands and interprets the nature and attributes of God, since the way divine attributes are interpreted clarifies their relations with human action. In fact, the *essential attributes* of God—such as knowledge, power, and life—and His *attributes of action* introduce a God having certain virtues that determine His relation to human attributes and actions. In this case, there are clear differences between revealed and non-revealed religions and philosophies. Meanwhile, there are different theological interpretations amongst the adherents of revealed traditions, as is the case with Islam and Christianity.

In theistic religions, like Islam and Christianity, God is considered to be infinite, absolutely perfect, omniscient, omnipotent, eternal,

living, pre-eternal, dispenser, clear-sighted, and the creator of all things, including the world and human beings. Now, we will first explain theoretical and practical monotheism and then an attempt will be made to explain their different categories. Divine unity is divided into three categories: the unity of the essence, the unity of attributes and the unity of acts. The unity of the essence states that God has no parts, and that there is no other than god beside Him. This kind of unity negates any kind of materiality, composition, and corporeality from God. It also refutes all forms of idolatry (Saidimehr 2002, 1:75; Hilli 1997, 39-41). The unity of sttributes describes the multiplicity of God's attributes conceptually and demonstrates their external unity with the essence of God and with one another. In other words, the essence of God is conceptually different from his numerous attributes but is one with them in the external world. The unity of divine actions also delineates the relation of the human being with God. It clarifies the belief that the only real agent in the world is God and that there are no actions except those performed by Him. In fact, the unity of divine actions not only relates all acts to God, but also negates the idea that actions can be independent from God in any manner whatsoever. Therefore, all actions—such as creation, nourishment, and sovereignty—stem from God, and all other agents in this world are really only manifestations of God's agency (Saidimehr 2002, 1:100-5).

Here the following question may be posed: if all acts are God's, then how can we still believe that some actions belong to humans and that they are performed freely by them? Also, how is it possible for humans to be morally responsible for their actions?

In order to answer this question, it is necessary to point out that there is a kind of agency in which actions are simultaneously ascribed to God and the human being – albeit at two different levels; that is, although all human actions are ascribed to them, they are ultimately the actions of God, because God has willed that humans do some of their acts freely

and without any compulsion. This is harmonious with human freedom and moral responsibility. In fact, if there was no jurisdiction within which humans could act freely and there were no means for humans to use to perform their voluntary actions, it would be meaningless to speak of their freedom and moral responsibility. So, since God is the only real agent in the world, He wants human to act freely and to choose good or bad on their own. Thus, it is in the light of divine justice and wisdom that their freedom and moral responsibility makes sense.

Consequently, this monotheistic approach can define the meaning of our freedom and moral responsibility. There is a specific relation between God and humans in which their practical and theoretical boundaries are restricted by the light of divine unity, and their freedom and moral responsibility find their proper meaning under the auspices of the same. However, if our understanding of the divine unity is deficient, it can lead to certain erroneous conclusions. We can find similar theories to this in the beliefs of some Islamic denominations, such as the Mutazilites, who believed that although God has absolute power and knowledge over all things in the world, His power and agency do not encompass a human's volitional actions, because if human actions are really only God's, it is meaningless for Him to send prophets and reward or punish people for their actions (Sheikh al-Islami 2008, 154-58). This religious tendency emphatically introduces man as being free. Nevertheless, it has two problems. First, practical human experience indicates that there are many restrictions and defects upon him. Second, if we exclude human acts from the realm of divine agency, it forces us to accept the fact that the God is deficient and finite. So, God would not really be God. Consequently, it is possible to conclude that absolute human freedom is incompatible with objective facts and is rationally impossible.

Another aspect of monotheistic thinking is the *practical divine unity*, in which our relation to God is determined. Practical unity explains how

we should act in relation to God, and can be divided into different categories such as worshiping, seeking help, obeying, loving, and trusting in God. The *unity of worship* means to completely devote oneself to God and to consider Him as the only thing deserving of worship. The *unity of supplication* implies that we only ask God for help; *unity of love* implies that we consider God as the only thing truly worthy of being loved; *unity of trust* means that God is the only thing that should be trusted by man; and according to the *unity in obedience*, man should only obey the true God (Gulpaygani 2011, 1: 93-100). It seems that the practical divine unity delineates certain duties for humans by means of which their moral freedom and responsibility become meaningful. The reason for this is that, according to this belief, humans must perform their religious duties, and they are responsible before God and others, as well as before themselves. So, based upon this view, there is no absolute freedom or moral irresponsibility. This is because humans are the servants and creatures of God, who has defined their freedom and moral responsibility based on their monotheistic thought.

On the contrary, if we do not adhere to the unity of divine acts and rather maintain that humans are not created by God, then this implies that humans are not restricted and obliged by the divine agency and will; therefore, it would be impossible to determine the boundaries of their freedom and moral responsibilities save through the social obligations, which are relative and subjected to alteration.

In addition to the above-mentioned cases, there is also a close relation between divine attributes and human attributes, which affects our understanding of freedom and moral responsibility. In non-revealed religions and some modern western philosophies, a number of God's attributes are considered to be finite and deficient. These ideologies do not ascribe absolute attributes—such as omniscience, omnipotence, infinity, absolute creation, and nourishment—to God. Whitehead and

Hartshorne, two adherents of Process Theology, consider some of God's attributes to be subject to change and therefore defective (Barbour 2006, 158-60). This leads to the idea that God is deficient, which, in effect, would be a negation of God.

According to theistic religions, like Islam and Christianity, God has many positive and negative attributes. The positive ones are divided into two categories: essential and active attributes. Essential attributes—such as unity, eternity, life, and simplicity—indicate those of God's attributes that are ascribed to Him without taking into consideration His relation to other beings. On the contrary, His active attributes (or attributes of action)—like creation, will, nourishment, sovereignty—find meaning only in relation to the world and humans. Since human beings possess such attributes to a certain degree, the way we view God's attributes can define and determine the nature and meaning of our own freedom and moral responsibility. For example, some religions consider God's attributes as being finite, while other religions consider them to be infinite. Also, some religions negate some attributes of God, such as His creation of the world, His omnipotence, or His omniscience. Such approaches to God's attributes can change the way one envisions man's relation to God. In this case, there are some attributes of God which play a more important role in defining human's freedom and moral responsibility. Attributes like omniscience, omnipotence, divine will, and creation are more related to human acts. If these attributes are considered to be finite, then God will not have sufficient knowledge, power, and control over the world and humans. Then, there will be some realms that fall out of His control. So, the human being is freer, since he falls outside of the jurisdiction of God's power, knowledge, and will. Also, some Muslim theologians, like the Mu'tazilites, believe that the jurisdiction of God's attributes does not encompass human acts. Consequently, from the Mutazilite point of view, the grounds for absolute human freedom and the need for moral

laws—such as the need for being morally good in one's dealings with others—is completely based on human reason, not on religious teachings.

On the contrary, if we say that divine knowledge, power, and will are absolutely infinite, then it will imply that God knows everything about the world and human actions, and has the power to do anything in any circumstance. In this case, some Muslim and Christian theologians and philosophers maintain that God knows universals, not particulars. Moreover, some other philosophers reject God's knowledge about the events of the world and human acts before they occur; that is, there is a kind of qualitative and temporal limitation upon God's knowledge. Such interpretations of God's attributes do not allow human knowledge, power, and will to act freely. Consequently, they lead to absolute determinism, which is supported by some theistic theologians, like Ash'arites in Islam, and by some other philosophers (Sheikh al-Islami 2008, 217-20). In this way of thinking, the whole realm of existence—including the human being—is considered to fall under the sovereignty of God's knowledge, power, and will. Any kind of human agency in the world and in relation to human actions is negated. The origin of this view is some of verses of the Quran in which God is introduced as the absolute agent of all things (Quran 2:282; 64:11; 57/4; 3/29/ 31/34). In fact, in this viewpoint, divine agency is considered to be absolute, leaving no room for human agency.

On the other hand, if it is believed that although God has some infinite attributes, like knowledge, will, and power, His will has allowed humans to do some actions on their own, human freedom will not fall outside the jurisdiction of God's will; rather, it falls under the command of the divine will. Therefore, human free will stems from God's will. According to this point of view, it can also be said that—although God has eternal knowledge of all things, regardless of whether they occur in the past, present, or future—His infinite knowledge does not contradict

the freedom of human actions. Also, although God has power over everything, His power does not apply to impossible things, without this limiting His power in any manner. Also, His power is not opposed to human power (Hilli 2007, 98-105). In this outlook, all human attributes, such as will, knowledge, and power, are considered to fall under the divine will. Therefore, they are neither rejected completely nor considered to be unrestricted. Rather, all human qualities, including will, power, and knowledge, are restricted by God's infinite wisdom, power, and will. Most of Shiʿite Muslim philosophers and theologians have supported this viewpoint. They believe that humans are not absolutely free and not absolutely compelled; rather, their freedom and compulsion is relative and limited (Kashefi 2007, 268-69).

There are, in addition, some other important points of view regarding attributes such as creation, nourishment, and sovereignty. If God is the Creator, Caretaker, and Absolute Ruler of the world and the human beings that inhabit it, then humans will be His creatures and servants and fall under His dominion, always in need of divine power to preserve their existence. Human free will has meaning only in so far as God permits. He is a creature of God and nothing else. Also, he falls under the dominion of the divine laws. Therefore, his first responsibility is to recognize God, worship Him, and also respect other creatures. Most of the adherents of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism believe in such an idea.

On the contrary, if God is not considered as the creator, dispenser, and ruler of the world, this view can affect the nature of the relation of human beings with God. In some ancient religions, such as Greek religions, God is considered as the creator of the world and humans, but not as their ruler, dispenser, and preserver. Also, according to some Asian religions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, God does not interfere in the world and human actions, and He has no concern with human deeds. This view leads to the conclusion that human beings are

not created by God and do not fall under His dominion and hegemony. Therefore, they are free to do everything, without being morally responsible before anyone or anything but society or government.

The Nature of the Relation Between God and Man

The definition of God and the delineation of the relation between Him and man play an important role in understanding man's free-will and his moral responsibility. We may ask: Do divine power, knowledge, and will govern humans or vice versa? Is man the servant of God or vice versa?

An attempt to answer these questions may lead to a proper definition of God and determine the actual relation between man and God. In fact, the manner in which we understand God's attributes has a profound effect on this problem. In theistic and revealed religions, since God has unlimited attributes, like power, knowledge and will, and is considered to be the real creator of the world and humans, man has two very significant relationships with God. First of all, he is God's creature and servant. Second, God has placed him as His vicegerent on the earth. In this viewpoint, human free will and moral responsibility has meaning only in so far as God desires that he choose his salvation or misery freely and by means of his power of reason and knowledge. So, free will and moral responsibility are means by which man makes spiritual progress. They are not aims in and of themselves. Most of the teachings of Islam, Christianity, and Judaism are related to the above-mentioned points. There are some verses in the Quran and the Bible that point to the human being's prominent place as servant and vicegerent of God and the most noble of all creatures.

On the other hand, according to some non-divine religions, some modern philosophers, and many natural scientists God is not the creator of mankind. This viewpoint is advanced by the biological theories of scientists and philosophers like Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche who consider God to be the product of human moral intellect. According to

these ideologies, there is no real God who rules over humans and their actions. Rather, the idea of God is the outcome of human myths, naturalistic philosophies, or scientific hypotheses. The consequence of such views is the introduction of a God who is made by human beings and has anthropomorphic attributes. His attributes and qualities are subject to change based on human desires. In fact, according to such a view, God is the servant of human beings. The nature of human understanding and the requirements of human beings determine the function of God. So, the result of such a manner of thinking is that human thought rules over God and that man is absolutely free. Consequently, all types of moral responsibility are negated. In this ideology, humans are only limited by social and political laws; that is, individually, man is absolutely free and has no moral responsibility. However, since he lives in a society and the incorrect use of his freedom may hurt others, there is no choice but to restrict his freedom by means of social rules.

Here, it is necessary to point out that some Muslim and Christian mystics are of the opinion that all things other than God are unreal phenomena—like shadows—and that only God really exists. Other beings exist only in the shadow of God's existence. A shadow has no independence and identity without the thing of which it is a shadow. It is difficult to define human free-will if we adhere to this view, unless it is understood as being a manifestation of the divine will. In this viewpoint, man's moral responsibility is to go to the mystical journey that leads to the understanding of this reality, and, following this, to guide other people to the same verity.

Conclusion

Human beings seek immortality and use all of their characteristics, including free will, in order to achieve this goal. The main problem, however, is that man is faced with a being, called God, who has restricted all his desires and freedom. A human's picture of God is the

only thing that can delineate his own identity and characteristics such as free will, knowledge, and power. Sometimes God is depicted by humans anthropomorphically. In this case, human freedom increases and his moral responsibility decreases. This is a picture that is introduced by non-revealed religions and by some modern philosophies of the west. However, this understanding of God is false and lacks the ability to explain the real identity of God, His attributes, and the divine agency in the world and its connection with human acts. It can be said that relativism, absolute moral pluralism, and nihilism are the results of this kind of thought.

The importance of the theistic way of thinking about God is that it uses revelation to understand God, since human knowledge is limited in nature. The outcome of such an outlook is the proper recognition of God's attributes and the establishment of a real relation with the infinite, exalted, powerful, and omniscient God. As a result, the human who is His creature, servant, and vicegerent tries to spiritually travel towards Him by means of his intellect, knowledge, and free will. Also, he considers himself responsible before God and His creatures. So, in this approach, free will and freedom are instruments for the spiritual journey of human beings, and moral responsibility prevents humankind from wrong-doing.

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The Necessity of Inter-Religious Dialogue and Its Philosophical and Dogmatic Obstacles

Jafar Morvarid [1]

In this paper, the need for interfaith dialogue in the contemporary world has been emphasized in the light of the rise of ISIS and other *takfiri* movements. This necessity has been understood both by political and religious authorities in the Shiite world and by Christian religious authorities. It will be shown that the central message of all Abrahamic religions is theism; that is, the worship of God and justice as opposed to egotism or self-worship. Then, it will be explained how, in the context of interreligious dialogue, relativism as opposed to realism is a main philosophical barrier, and exclusivism as opposed to inclusivism tends to be a major dogmatic barrier.

Keywords: interfaith dialogue, theism, relativism, exclusivism.

The Chaotic Situation of Abrahamic Religions Today

The contemporary historical situation requires Abrahamic Religions to reinterpret religious identity and religiosity. The extremist *takfiri*

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movements and ISIS, simultaneously, threaten humanity, spirituality, and religiosity in the contemporary world. The experience of *takfiri* movements has proved that in the pluralistic and inter-connected modern world, it is impossible to live a religious life unless various religious movements support one another. An ethical and religious life is possible only within the framework of an organized and secure society, which has been the target of Takfiri movements.

The dangerous situation today demands that religious people practically attempt to cooperate with one another. At the same time, they must try to redefine their theological and philosophical notions.

There are two examples of this way of thinking in the Islamic world amongst the Shia of the Middle East. The first is the view of Ayatollah Sistani, a religious authority for the Shia world and the main political-spiritual leader of the Shias of Iraq. The other is the view of Ayatollah Khamenei, another religious authority and the major political-spiritual leader of the Iranian Shias. The latter is manifested in Ayatollah Khamenei's letter to the youth in western countries.

Ayatollah Sistani not only considers Sunnis as the brothers of the Shias but their "selves" (Sistani n.d.). Apart from that, he also believes that Izadis are a God-seeking minority, whose fundamental rights need to be supported by Shias.

Ayatollah Khamenei started a dialogue with the youth in western countries and invited them to learn about Islam from its primary and authentic sources:

> My second request is that in response to the wave of pre-assumptions and negative propaganda [against Islam], try to acquire a direct and first-hand knowledge of Islam … I do not urge you to accept my understanding or any other understanding of Islam. I only

> want you not to allow others to inform you of this dynamic and
> influential reality [Islam] through their dirty agendas and goals.
> Learn about Islam through the primary and authentic sources. Get
> acquainted with Islam through the Qur'an and the life of the Great
> Prophet (of Islam). (Khamenei 1394 Sh)

It is clear that the idea here is to introduce oneself to others not to
prove the correctness of one's ideas or the incorrectness of others'
views. This can lead to the coexistence of religions, which one might
claim is essential today if we want to last until the end of time. As
Allamah Jawadi Amuli puts it:

> In my opinion, until this world is as it is, there will never be only
> one particular religion. It is in the Hereafter that people will know
> the truth, and they will be directed towards it. Thus, in this world,
> while things are as they are, we would always see a multiplicity of
> religions. (Javadi Amoli 1393 Sh)

One can take these views as contemporary examples of religious
dialogue in Iran—something that has surfaced in the aftermath of the
current hostile environment. One such example is a dialogue between
Islam and Christianity and the forming of a society called Safa Khanah
(literally, "the House of Happiness") in the multicultural and multi-
religious city of Isfahan during the first decade of the twentieth century
(Hasani 2014).

Around 1320/1920 (Shabani 2007), Rukn al-Mulk, the governor of
Isfahan, with the support of the political jurist of the time, Hajj Agha
Nurullah Isfahani (Qasemi 1996), decided to establish Safakhaneh in
Isfahan (Najafi 2011, 88-90). After this resolution, the famous
theologian of the time, Agha Muhammad Ali Hasani, known as Daʿi al-
Islam, was chosen to carry out this task. This person was a graduate of
jurisprudential school of the well-known jurist, Aqa Muhammad Taqi
Najafi, and the philosophical school of Akhund Kashi and Jahangir

Khan Qashqa'i in Isfahan. Besides having complete proficiency in English, Arabic, Hebrew, and Urdu, he had a thorough knowledge of Persian literature.

Upon the establishment of Safakhaneh in Isfahan, there were detailed dialogues between the Muslims and Christians of the time (Najafi 2004, 36-35). These dialogues were published lithographically in *al-Islam* monthly—the first religious publication in the early years of the twentieth century (Najafi 2004, 117).

On the other hand, and in the Christian World, a recent statement *Who Do We Say That We Are: Christian Identity in a Multi-Religious World* (World Council of Churches 2014) has paved the way for the further redefinition of the boundaries between various religions:

> 1. Human beings live in a world of many different faiths, different religions. In truth this has always been so, but developments throughout the twentieth century and now into the twenty-first, facilitating speed of communication and travel, together with changes in the political order and large scale migration have brought home to many this reality in a way that they would not have previously imagined, or perhaps even desired. Such realisation of the religious plurality of our world can provoke a variety of reactions among Christians. These can include wonder, challenge, hostility, embarrassment, puzzlement, self-questioning and fear. (World Council of Churches 2014, 1)

> 2. Jesus once asked his disciples the question: "Who do you say that I am?" (Mark 8.29 and parallels). Today, mindful of the religiously plural contexts in which Christian life and witness is set within our world, we ask of ourselves: "Who do we say that we are?" Christians in every age have implicitly asked this question, for it is the point of deep self-reflection where, taking seriously the contemporary needs of witness and mission, we discover whose we are and whom we serve. Our answer to this question both reflects and guides the way

we live out our unique religious identity and calling. (World Council of Churches 2014, 1)

10. So in responding to the challenges offered to us by other faiths and their peoples, …, we are also rethinking, re-interpreting and reformulating the understanding of our own faith in a way that is congruent with the tradition of Christian self-reflection and theological development that has existed since the very beginnings of Christianity. This is, of course, a mutual process, and just as Christians may be transformed by their encounter with the religious other, so authentic interreligious engagement may also pose to such others challenges which can lead to transformation. (World Council of Churches 2014, 4)

42. "We cannot point to any other way of salvation than Jesus Christ; at the same time, we cannot set limits to the saving power of God ... We appreciate this tension, and do not attempt to resolve it" [San Antonio Statement, CWME, para. 26 and 29]. We see Christ as a specific saving gift to all creation, not a replacement for or denial of God's presence and power through many other means. Christ embodies God's generosity toward humanity. Christians point toward this event as their hope, not toward Christianity as the source of salvation. Christians are called to testify to this hope. "We need to acknowledge that human limitations and limitations of language make it impossible for any community to have exhausted the mystery of the salvation God offers to humankind... It is this humility that enables us to say that salvation belongs to God, God only. We do not possess salvation; we participate in it. We do not offer salvation; we witness to it. We do not decide who would be saved; we leave it to the providence of God. For our own salvation is an everlasting 'hospitality' that God has extended to us. It is God who is the 'host' of salvation" [*Religious Plurality and Christian self-understanding*, WCC, 2005]. (World Council of Churches 2014, 12)

Abraham, the Father of the Abrahamic Religions

The Qur'an and Justice:

In sacrificing his son Ismail (a), Ibrahim (a)—the father of Abrahamic religions—displayed his reliance on God and his obedience to Him. Instead of worshipping the self, he chose to worship God. If we do not accept fideistic interpretations of people like Kierkegaard and rationalistic interpretations of this event, we can still conclude that the reliance on God and the abandonment of selfishness is in the true essence of all monotheistic religions. We see this reliance on God in the prophets that came after Ibrahim (a), such as Musa (a), Isa (a) and Muhammad (s).

It is because of such an approach that the Holy Qur'an recognizes and approves of the cultural and ethnic pluralism amongst various nations. It defines the purpose of this religious multiplicity as the mutual understanding of different ethnicities and races:

> O mankind! Indeed we created you from a male and a female and made you nations and tribes that you may identify yourselves with one another. Indeed the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most God wary among you. Indeed Allah is all knowing, all aware (Qur'an 49:13).

> And, it also calls for a unified message among the Abrahamic Religions:

> Say, "O People of the Book! Come to a word common between us and you: that we will worship no one but Allah, and that we will not ascribe any partner to Him, and that we will not take each other as lords besides Allah." But if they turn away, say, 'Be witnesses that we are Muslims' (Qur'an 3:64).

The phrase "a word common to us" implies that the Qur'an, the Torah and the Bible all invite to a common *idea*, which is monotheism (Tabataba'i 2003, 3:390).

Piety and the fear of God are the real distinctions of man. They help him achieve his real happiness, which is an eternally blissful life in the proximity of the mercy of his Creator. The one and the only way to reach the felicity in the Hereafter is piety, which, in the light of the felicity in the Hereafter, guarantees a blissful life in this world (Tabataba'i 2003, 18:488).

The Holy Qur'an speaks of a "united community" and describes the prophets (a) as the people who promise this community with the rewards of the Afterlife and threaten them with the punishments of the same.

> Mankind were a single community; then Allah sent the prophets as bearers of good news and as warners, and He sent down with them the Book with the truth, that it may judge between the people concerning that about which they differed, and none differed in it except those who had been given it, after the manifest proofs had come to them, out of envy among themselves. Then Allah guided those who had faith to the truth of what they differed in, by His will, and Allah guides whomever He wishes to a straight path (Qur'an 2:213).

Prophethood is a divine mission. It is a movement that seeks to spread the Divine Word and the reality of religion amongst people. It implies changing human society. This also entails the change of individual human being's lives. This means that their ideas, morals, and actions change. The result of such a change is that these humans attain their real dignity. This is nothing but their real humanity in whose form they were created.

Again, when a community is changed and the social climate is made righteous, freedom and success will be achieved. Thus, man will have naturally evolved. Every individual is given the freedom to benefit from the advantages of life that are the outcome of his way of thinking.

However, when the community as a whole is harmed, he is deprived of his freedom. In the end of the above verse, all of the things mentioned previously are summarized in Islam—the submission to God Almighty and humility to His unseen power. The prophets collectively and individually invite humanity to accept what man naturally wants to accept, i.e. monotheism (Tabataba'i 2003, 3:392).[1]

Abraham was the father of all the Abrahamic Religions, and justice is at the heart of his message. His descendants are his just successors, and the reign and territory of God does not include the ruthless:

> And when his Lord tested Abraham with certain words, and he fulfilled them, He said, 'I am making you the Imam of mankind.' Said he, 'And from among my descendants?" He said, 'My pledge does not extend to the unjust.' (Qur'an 2:124)

God orders us to be just, even to the ruthless. He asks his believing servants to be fair, because it is closer to piety. The Qur'an says:

> O you who have faith! Be maintainers, as witnesses for the sake of Allah, of justice, and ill feeling for people should never lead you to be unfair. Be fair; that is nearer to God wariness, and be wary of Allah. Allah is indeed well aware of what you do. (Qur'an 5:8)

By saying, "To you your religion and to me my religion," the Qur'an instructs us not to commit violence when we confront infidels. Hence, it shows the fundamental difference between Islam and infidelity.

> In the Name of Allah, the All beneficent, the All merciful. Say, "O faithless ones! I do not worship what you worship, nor do you worship what I worship; nor will I worship what you have worshiped. nor will you worship what I worship. To you your religion and to me my religion." (Qur'an 109)

The Qur'an invites human beings to form a moderate community in which violence is prohibited and moderation is commendable.

After having clarified the current status of world religions and the genealogy of the Abrahamic Religions, I shall now briefly explore the obstacles of theological dogmatism and the philosophical obstacles to interreligious dialogues.

Philosophical Impediments to Religious Dialogue

The intellectual history of humanity began with a struggle between realism and relativism. In his thesis *The Unity of Virtue with Knowledge* Socrates argues that the only way to nurture good ethical traits in a society and to achieve happiness in this way is by means of knowledge about what is truly ethical. Consequently, he concluded that the Sophists, who adhered to relativism, were the greatest enemies of ethics.

In a different panorama, relativism is also the enemy of ethics: there is a mutual correlation between relativism and violence. To the same extent, there is a mutual relation between realism and tolerance (Popper 1994).

Relativism rejects the inter-subjective aspect of reality that is shared between various minds, because it does not believe in a reality independent of them; hence, it refuses the possibility of any dialogue based on common axioms. Every person is confined to his own culture and cognizance. In such an environment, dialogue between two people is as unlikely and far-fetched as a dialogue between two completely different worlds. It will be impossible to understand and solve problems. What is more, it will be impossible to compare two distinct solutions. If one cannot understand the solutions available, how could one choose the one that is the best?

An essential condition for the possibility of dialogue is the recognition of realism and the existence of inter-subjective realities, but not necessarily the ideal Platonic facts. Only then can there be a dialogue. On the contrary, if realism is denied, it will open the door to violence. When we are unable to resolve disputes through reasoning and epistemic facts based on inter-subjective realities and axioms, objectivity will be replaced by violence and bullying.

In contrast to the Sophists, Socrates spoke of dialogue and considered it his divine duty in the Delphi temple to deny any type of dogma by means of dialogue. In this way, real knowledge, i.e. permissible and justified beliefs, would be attained. Most of his early exchanges, following his rational assessments, often led to his uttering the phrase "I don't know" (Benson 1992). In fact, the sentence "I do not know" has eased the transition from violence, which stems from egocentrism, to tolerance, which stems from theo-centrism. This is harmonious with these verses of the Holy Qur'an"

> They have taken their scribes and their monks as lords besides Allah, and also Christ, Mary's son; though they were commanded to worship only the One God, there is no god except Him; He is far too immaculate to have any partners that they ascribe [to Him]! (Qur'an 9:31)

> Say, "O People of the Book! Come to a word common between us and you: that we will worship no one but Allah, and that we will not ascribe any partner to Him, and that we will not take each other as lords besides Allah." But if they turn away, say, "Be witnesses that we are Muslims." (Qur'an 3:64)

> Thus, one of the prerequisites of religious dialogue is the rejection of sophistic relativism and the acceptance of Socratic realism.

Theological Impediments to Religious Dialogue

The traditional idea that salvation is exclusively reserved for the followers of a specific religion is a serious hindrance to religious

dialogue. According to exclusivist views, the beliefs of the adherents of other religions are false. What is more, they will not attain eschatological salvation (Aijaz 2014, 77-88). In the exclusivist point of view, salvation only belongs to a specific religion; therefore, exclusivist perspectives tend to make dialogue impossible. Any dialogue between religions must be based on the assumption that there are two identities and two horizons, different but equal. In the exclusivist perspective, dialogue turns into a monologue, and the inter-subjective argument is nullified. Consequently, the rejection of an inter-subjective argument paves the way for violence.

Conclusion

The formation of multi-religious societies in which no particular religion is dominant has forced intellectuals and theologians to reconsider the issue of salvation and to clarify their stances on it. Previously, religions did not take each other very seriously. However, theologians have realized that in the pluralistic world of this era, religions need to be united and that this unity cannot be achieved without overcoming those philosophical and theological problems and doctrines that previously separated religions (Smith 1981).

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