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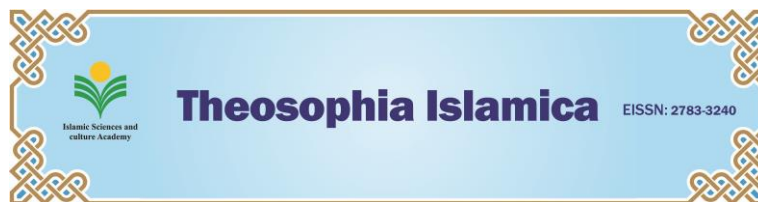
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Outside of Dialogue, there is no Salvation

Mari Jože Osredkar¹ 

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Abstract

The starting point of the reflection is the assertion that to live is to be in a relationship. In society, relationships are built through dialogue, which is particularly evident in communication between religious communities of different religions. The article presents the decision of the Catholic Church for interreligious dialogue at the last Vatican Council (the document *Nostra Aetate*), which was made possible by the development of the doctrine of salvation. A sincere dialogue with those who think differently renews religion and deepens faith. The article concludes with a presentation of dialogical actions between Catholics and Muslims in the world and an outline of the religious situation in Slovenia. There is no salvation outside of dialogue, and dialogue is the most effective means of preventing war and maintaining peace.

Keywords

Interreligious Dialogue, Salvation, Second Vatican Council, Renewal of Religion, Slovenia.

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Introduction

We start this presentation in the name of the Almighty and Merciful God. He is especially Merciful. This gives us Hope in a time of many wars and in a moment of danger that violence escalating into world war, which we do not want. This is the reason why in the Catholic Church we started on the 24 of December 2024 the Jubilee Year of Hope 2025. Pope Francis invites all people to reflect on the divine attribute: that God is Merciful and so, we should keep the Hope.

It is quite clear that violence started in the world with the appearance of human beings. The Bible references the first man, Adam, as he who refuses the will of God. We can say that this was the first act of violence in the chronicling of human history. The murder in the story of Cain and Abel that we read both in the Bible and in the Coran is just the evolution of the act mentioned above. Nevertheless, God was not afraid to create man free. God knew that man would refuse His will, but he created him free and even after the act of violence, God gave him freedom too. Man is both free to kill or to beg the pardon of God. In addition, because we human beings are still in the world, violence is still here, and it seems that violence will remain a fact of our lives until the end of the human presence on the planet. We cannot completely avoid violence. What can we do? We cannot avoid that others are violent, but we can do our best to ensure that we are a little less violent. In this paper, we will be reflecting on what we might do such that our religious communities; our religions and followers will be less violent. In our reflection, we focus on the question, how religion can work to prevent World War III. In seeking answers to this question, we remain within the boundaries of the Christian religion, especially of the Catholic Church.

We know that the Christian Church throughout history provoked a lot of violence. We do not speak just about different wars.

We point also to the conflicts between Christian communities and the excommunications of leaders of Christian churches. The Pope of Rome excommunicated the orthodox Christians, and the Patriarch of Constantinople excommunicated the Pope of Rome. The same story with the Martin Luther followers. A big mistake. However, popes in modern times recognized this mistake and the excommunications were canceled. Therefore, the author of this paper is proud to be Christian. He is proud to be a member of the Church that recognizes the mistakes of the past time, cancels the excommunications and begs the pardon for them.

The Catholic Church does her best not to be violent today, against her members and against the world beyond her. How can she do her best not to be violent? The position of Catholic theology is that violence, especially religious violence, can be avoided or reduced just by dialogue, in fact by interreligious dialogue. In addition, for interreligious dialogue two things are necessary: freedom of religion and respect for others, in fact mutual respect between the partners in dialogue. What exactly does this mean?

In the last Council of the Catholic Church (1963-1965), the Council Fathers proclaimed the *Declaration on Religious Freedom (Dignitatis Humanae)* with which the Catholic Church recognizes completely religious freedom to all human beings. If a member of the Catholic Church wants to become Muslim, he can do it and the Church respects his will, and if a Muslim asks for the baptism in Catholic Church, he can receive it. The Catholic Church respects other religions so much that students enrolled in a Catholic Faculty of Theology are obligated to study the doctrines of other religions with a view to respect them.

Our first thesis, in this presentation, is that good interpersonal relationships prevent violence and thus war. Because the Gospel, as

the constitution of Christianity, places the relationship, or love of one's neighbor, of every person, at the center of a Christian's life, we are convinced that a Christian can do the most for peace in the world by living a radical life according to the teachings of Christ. Theology discusses this subject in the chapter on salvation, so in our article we will extensively describe the development of the doctrine of salvation in the Catholic Church. Our second thesis says that only dialogue can save humanity. Finally, we put forward a third thesis that religious communities are a very important element of human society, which can do a lot to prevent wars through interreligious dialogue.

Catholic documents in the context of the Second Vatican Council encourage believers to have a fraternal relationship with all people. The Christian religion is therefore today a solid foundation for peace in the world. With his peaceful attitude, a Catholic will contribute a stone to the mosaic of peace in the country and between countries. Every religious community has a special role in building peace. However, only in the case when it lives in friendly relations with other communities and when the religious community in society is an equal partner to the political entities in the country. In the case when religion is superior to politics, the religious community will not be a bringer of peace. Likewise, a religious community is prevented from building peace if politics ousts religion from social life. Dialogue in society is the most effective tool for peace. Why? Because living means being in a relationship with others!

1. To live Is to Be in a Relationship

The statement «To live is to be in a relationship» is taken from the relational theory of Guy Lafon (1930-2020). What do we mean by this statement? First, we must say that Lafon was intellectually influenced by following Philosophers and Thinkers: Emmanuel Kant, Henri

Bergson, Martin Buber, Emmanuel Levinas and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. They emphasized the importance of relationships in life. The French theologian placed relationship at the center of his theological thinking (Osredkar, 2020, p. 1014). Let's look at the most important steps in the development of his theological thought.

Dictionaries define theology as the doctrine of God. When we pronounce the word «God», Lafon writes, we first think, without a doubt, of a Supreme Being, transcending man, that is, we first think of an «object». At the beginning of his theological thought Guy Lafon has also called God «a Being»: «God is a Being who can relate to us!¹» (Lafon, 1964, p. 64). It seems that in the beginning of the development of his thought, in terms of talking about God, he was most influenced by Bergson. That is why he defines Him, as we have seen, as a Being who can enter relationship with us. God is, therefore, not yet treated otherwise than as an object. We can imagine many things about Him, but the question always arises in the end: will God correspond to our affirmations? By remaining in this line, we will only come to declare with *some* certainty that God is completely different from what we can imagine of Him. The scientists or theologians thus risk making judgments, or even formulating criticisms, about the objects treated, even when it concerns God. Then, in the sequel, Lafon no longer speaks about God, but about man's relationship² to God. He has committed himself to a new epistemology. Fifteen years after claiming that God is a Being, he writes: «God is not a being, not even the greatest. Neither above nor below being, he is, to speak like

1. «Dieu est un Être qui peut entrer en rapport avec nous.»

2. Guy Lafon, in French language, uses the term «l'entretien» to which he gives a rather special meaning. In our discussion we will use the English word «relationship».

Emmanuel Lévinas, in strict fidelity to the biblical testimony, other than being» (Lafon, 1979, p. 15). The development of his thoughts on God is part of the continuation of this affirmation. The author does not consider God alone, as he would an object and its attributes; he does not pose the question of the existence of God. It is the relationship with God that is important to him. God remains an «object» because we can still talk about Him, but as a theologian, Guy Lafon is not interested in this object being separated from the relationship that binds it to man and man to Him. For him, what happens «between God and men» is essential. By this, he means that man has the capacity to establish a relationship with God. It should be noted here that the French theologian uses the active form, that is, that man can «establish a relationship» with God, only in the first period of his theological thought. Later, he strictly uses the passive form, that man «finds himself in a relationship with God», as we will show below. And this is what he wants to talk about: «It is not a question here of God but of our relationship with God» (Lafon, 1982, p. 82). And this relationship, made up of faith, hope and love, is of the order of desire (Lafon, 1982, pp. 86-90). In short, faithful does not just talk about God; it is much more important that he addresses him in prayer (Lafon, 1987, p. 169). Today, theology, which in the past was defined as the science of God, has become the science of our relationship with God, that is, of faith.

From the book *Le Dieu commun* onwards, for Lafon the word «l'entretien» does not only mean the relationship with God, but also any relationship between humans. Since God is a person and man is a person too, he speaks of interpersonal relationship. In addition to this fact, we find there another step further in the development of Lafon's thought: a man does not enter to relationship but this one is given to him as the gift to «be in this relationship» or, man, as a person, «finds

himself in the relationship»!¹ When a child is born physically into the material world, he simultaneously finds himself in the world of relationships as a person when his mother or someone else addresses him with «you»! In the relationship we start to live as a person, and the relationship helps us to continue our life and to delve deeper into it. More than that, the relationship between humans, as the first experience of the transcendence, is the place where man can have an experience of the relationship to God. This is what Christ tells us when he says: «Whenever you did for any of my people, no matter how unimportant they seemed, you did it for me» (Mt 25:40). This Gospel passage confirms that we can recognize God in the face of every human being. However, lest anyone understand the last sentence in a polytheistic sense, we will put it another way: in relation to every human being, we can recognize the relation to God.

In Lafon's thought, there is the Copernican reversal of a thinking-reality: the relationship is not created by subjects, but subjects are born into the relationship (Osredkar, 2003). Materialist philosophy defines life as the growth and death of body cells, while the Theology of Relationship argues that to live means to be in a relationship. This theology asserts that there is no life outside relationships. A man enters the material world by a union of two cells. He starts to live as a material being. Then a man starts to live as a person when someone, a mother, addresses him as «you», in verbal or non-verbal ways. Called «you», a human being is born as «I», as a person. This personal identity, his existence, can only be maintained when «I», the person, continues to look for «you», that is, «I» interacts

1. Lafon claims that the relationship is given to man as a gift, so he cannot enter into it, and he does not deserve to be in it because he found himself in the relationship.

with the »you«. To call another as you is an ongoing search for »you«. «You» become my responsibility, and «I» in turn, begin to give up myself. Responsibility and sacrifice are key to understanding a relationship. This interpersonal relationship is the first human experience of transcendence (Lafon, 1982, p. 43); therefore, it is possible that a person in this relationship with another man at the same time seeks God and finds himself simultaneously linked to Him through faith. We might say that in relationships with other humans, we can and do experience a yearning for a relationship that goes beyond us.

Thus, to live with everyone means to live with God in faith. In this way, faith gives us life by inviting us to live together, and in the relationship, we can find the beginning and the end of our existence. The relationship is also the beginning and the end of our faith.

2. Relationships in Society Are Built Through Dialogue

The fact is that people speak; we utter words. We communicate with one another, verbally or nonverbally. We express our feelings, desires; in short, what we think, we are able to convey to others. And we take this for granted as something natural, so to speak. Natural in the sense that the ability to communicate has created humanity. This is the essence of our human nature. The ability to communicate continually creates humanity. It sustains our existence. The more this ability develops, the more human we become. Furthermore, this ability makes us like God. The words on the first pages of the Bible, which state that God created man in His own image, should not be understood in terms of physical resemblance. The true image of God is described in the opening lines of the Gospel of John:

«In the beginning the Word already existed; the Word was with God, and the Word was God. From the very beginning the Word

was with God. Through him God made all things; not one thing in all creation was made without him. The Word was the source of life, and this life brought light to people» (Jn 1:1–4).

What is a dialogue? In a similar way to how we introduced a relationship in the first chapter, we can also define dialogue as a situation in which different subjects are found whether they want to be there or not. I can only become aware that I am already there. For example, I cannot decide to enter life; I can only become aware that I am alive. We all find ourselves in a life situation. I was not asked if I wanted to live or not. At one moment, I realized that I was alive. I recognized my belonging to someone. In the same way, we humans found ourselves in dialogue. It is not something that we deserve. Therefore, I can say that the dialogue was offered to us. It is a gift (Osredkar, 2008). But it is up to us whether we will deepen and maintain the dialogue, or whether we will interrupt it.

Robert Petkovšek emphasizes that dialogue is a two-way communication between people who have different, complementary beliefs. A conversation with like-minded people often becomes a monologue. In a monologue, difference disappears. Dialogue, on the other hand, is the acceptance of difference. In fact, we must say that a balance between equality and difference is a condition for dialogue to develop at all. «I» and «you» are equality and difference at the same time, and in dialogue they must be in balance, so that neither of the two different poles has an advantage. In dialogue, neither «I» nor «you» should be at the center; equality and difference must be equal. In other words, «I» and «you» must make space for each other (Petkovšek, 2016).

Branko Klun reflects on dialogue and defines it in the Greek-Jewish-biblical tradition (Branko, 2012). He also emphasizes the diversity and unity of interlocutors in dialogue. According to the Greek

tradition, interlocutors must unify regarding the meaning of words to be able to talk at all. They must share a common intelligence or agree on a common logic. The Greek word *logos* (reason, mind) is the basis of the word *dialogos*, which connects speech (word) and mind. Dialogue itself is said to presuppose the unification of interlocutors, because *dialogos* is based on *logos*. The initiator of philosophical dialogue was the ancient philosopher Socrates, who focused primarily on the interlocutor and wanted to hear and understand his thoughts and arguments. Since there were different opinions about some things, Socrates wanted to reach a common truth with his interlocutor. This openness to the other person, which Socrates showed in the dialogue, is, according to Klun, the foundation of the dialogical relationship. The truth of the thing that Socrates sought in the dialogue with his interlocutor was timeless, universal and unchanging *logos*, the logical structure of the entire reality, which also means the logic of our mind. Socrates' goal in the dialogue was to arrive at a common *logos*, a common truth. However, a common truth is not possible in the confrontation of two different teachings. We will address this fact in the next chapter.

God is the Word; God is communication, and man can find God in every communication, which is the most authentic image of God. Therefore, man is similar to God in the ability to communicate. We can write that the word is the most that man has been given to manage. The word is so great that a person cannot «take back» the spoken word. No one can destroy the word. The word is the most that a person can give to a person, because the word connects us and thus keeps us alive. If we paraphrase the aforementioned words of John the Evangelist, we can write in the beginning there was dialogue! The word is the means of dialogue, the means of communication. We could also say: in the beginning there was a relationship!

3. Catholic Doctrine of the Dialogue

Interreligious dialogue is not just a conversation among different believers. It is much more than an exchange of words, expressions or meanings. In the Catholic Church this is quite clear since the Second Vatican Council, which finished 60 years ago. In that occasion, the Council fathers defined interreligious dialogue as a search for common points in different religious doctrines, religious traditions and religious practices. In fact, they clarified that the interreligious dialogue cannot exist without mutual respect and collaboration.

The person rightfully attributed for the present attitude of the Catholic Church to non-Catholic Christians and non-Christian religions is Pope John XXIII. After his election to the Chair of Peter in 1958, he proposed his idea of recasting Church doctrine with two important points: the inclusion of the Catholic Church in ecumenism and interreligious dialogue efforts. Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli as a diplomatic representative of the Holy See, in the service in Bulgaria (10 years) in Athens (4 years) and Turkey (6 years) met the Christian East and the Islamic world. Without a doubt, this diplomatic experience led him to convening the Second Vatican Council and the Catholic orientation towards ecumenism and dialogue with world religions. He and his successor, Paul VI, championed the institutionalization of the new policies of the Catholic Church.

The document *Nostra Aetate* (Latin: *In our Time*) is the *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to non-Christian Religions* of the Second Vatican Council, officially promulgated in 1965 after the votation in which 2221 Fathers of Council (in total there were 2312) approved the text (Nostra Aetate, 2015). This document is in fact the first in the history of the Church, to examine the «relationship with non-Christian religions» with the objective to construct peace in the world. In this difficult period of humanity, when there is no safe place

in world, where the innocent could be killed, we are extremely sure, that the dialogue and good relationships between religions are the indispensable conditions for our survival.

Inter-religious dialogue in the Catholic Church 60 years after the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council seems to be self-evident. However, it would not have taken place if the Council Fathers had not redefined the understanding of the doctrine of salvation. In this paper, we want to show how interreligious dialogue in Catholic theology is based on a new interpretation of the traditional Catholic doctrine of salvation. Only the new interpretation of the axiom «Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus» has allowed Catholic dialogical activity in the interreligious field. Our presentation of the Catholic Doctrine of the dialogue will be divided into 5 parts. First, we highlight the fact that the Second Vatican Council is the first Catholic assembly, which speaks positively about other religions and non-Catholic Christians. In the next chapters, we will examine Article 16 of the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, which is the heart of Council doctrine of salvation and a key to understand the Catholic conception of interreligious dialogue. The document indicates the transition from ecclesiology of belonging to ecclesiology of communion. In the third part, we will underscore that at the last council the Church no longer had the intention to proclaim itself as the one true church, but to proclaim the kingdom of God, which goes beyond Church boundaries. Then we will make look at the acts of dialogue between Catholics and Muslims in last 60 years and lastly we will reference the religious situation in Slovenia.

3.1. The Search for the Common Points

At the request of Pope John XXIII, the Secretariat for Christian Unity produced the draft of the Cardinal Bea's text in the

draft, initially envisaged as one of the chapters in the *Decree on Ecumenism*, speaks purely on anti-Semitism, thus as the debate ensued it was felt that the text of the general contents should emerge independently. From it arose a council document, which was originally called *Nostra Aetate*. In this paper, the Catholic teaching profession for the first time in its history considered the question of the relationship of the Catholic Church to non-Christian religions. The details of this decree demonstrate its positive evaluation of other world religions and its recognition of the presence of elements of salvation in other religious traditions.

The *Declaration on the Relation of the Church with Non-Christian Religions* begins by describing the unity of the origins of all people, and the fact that they all return to God; hence, their final goal is also one. It describes the eternal questions, which have dogged men since the beginning, and how the various religious traditions have tried to answer them. It mentions some of the answers that Hindus, Buddhists, and members of other faiths have suggested for such philosophical questions. It notes the willingness of the Catholic Church to accept some truths present in other religions in so much as they reflect Catholic teaching and may lead souls to Christ. Part three goes on to say that the Catholic Church regards the Muslims with esteem, and then continues by describing some of the things Islam has in common with Christianity and Catholicism: worship of One God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, Merciful and Omnipotent, Who has spoken to men; the Muslims' respect for Abraham and Mary, and the great respect they have for Jesus, whom they consider to be a Prophet and not God. The synod urged all Catholics and Muslims to forget the hostilities and differences of the past and to work together for mutual understanding and benefit. Part 4 speaks of the bond that ties the people of the 'New Covenant' (Christians) to Abraham's stock (Jews).

It states that even though some Jewish authorities and those who followed them called for Jesus' death, the blame for this cannot be laid at the door of all those Jews present at that time, nor can the Jews in our time be held as guilty, thus repudiating an indiscriminate charge of Jewish deicide; 'the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God'. The Declaration also decries all displays of antisemitism made at any time by anyone. True, the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ; still, what happened in His passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today. The Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures. All should see to it, then, that in catechetical work or in the preaching of the word of God, they do not teach anything that does not conform to the truth of the Gospel and the spirit of Christ. Furthermore, in her rejection of every persecution against any man, the Church, mindful of the patrimony she shares with the Jews and moved not by political reasons but by the Gospel's spiritual love, decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone. The fifth part states that all men are created in God's image, and that it is contrary to the teaching of the Church to discriminate against, show hatred towards or harass any person or people based on color, race, religion, condition of life and so on (*Nostra Aetate*, 1965).

During the preparation of this document, the successor of the» John the Good«, Paul VI, the 19 May 1964 established the Secretariat for non-Christians. Its first head was Cardinal Marella. Paul VI before the release of the declaration *Nostra Aetate* published his first encyclical *Ecclesiam suam*, which presents the Catholic concept of dialogue. Pope Paul VI founded the Secretariat for non-believers, which was headed by Cardinal Franz König. On 22 October 1974,

Paul VI Commission for Relations with the Jews of the Catholic Church joined the Secretariat for Christian Unity. All this work was accomplished with a view to realize a dialogue with non-Christian religions. It is the same for the Church, which realized, 60 years ago, that it had been already in relationships with the world and with other religions in particular. It realized in fact that it had been in relationship with the world even before the last Council, but it did not recognize it. The sign of this recognition is the new positive opinion of others. In *Nostra Aetate*, we can read: The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings that, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men (Nostra Aetate, 1965, para. 2) Text of the book Nostra Aetate and The Church regards with esteem also the Muslims. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all- powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God. Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet. They also honor Mary, His virgin Mother; at times they even call on her with devotion. In addition, they await the day of judgment when God will render their desserts to all those who have been raised up from the dead. Finally, they value the moral life and worship God especially through prayer, almsgiving and fasting (Nostra Aetate, 1965, para. 3)

In fact, the Church document exposes the common values of Christianity and Islam. In the past, it was the opposite. The responsible persons of the Church spoke about differences between Catholics and other religions.

A criterion of Catholic theology after The Second Vatican Council is so that it should be in constant dialogue with the world. In the sense not to expose differences in religions but look for the common points in religions. Theology has a particular competence and responsibility in this regard. Through its constant dialogue with the social, religious and cultural currents of the time, and through its openness to other sciences which, with their own methods examine those developments, theology can help the faithful and the magisterium to see the importance of developments, events and trends in human history, and to discern and interpret ways in which through them the Spirit may be speaking to the Church and to the world (International Theological Commission, 2011, p. 58).

3.2. Evolution of the Doctrine of Salvation

One of the most misunderstood teachings of the Catholic Church is this one: «Outside the Church there is no salvation» (*Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*). Those trying to grasp the meaning of this teaching often struggle with its formulations by various Church Fathers and Church Councils down through history. Of course, to understand the isolated formulation of any Church teaching, one must study the historical context within which it was written. Why was it written? What was going on in the Church at the time? Who was the intended audience? And so on. One must discover how the magisterium of the Church understands its own teaching now. If someone fails to do this and chooses, rather, to simply treat a particular formulation as a stand-alone teaching, he runs the risk of seriously misunderstanding it.

It seems that the further development of the Catholic doctrine on salvation was the decision for ecumenism and interreligious dialogue. One cannot approach the other, people cannot talk on the

same level, and they cannot be in dialogue if someone is hindered to be equal. Dialogue would not be possible if the Catholic Church would insist that there is no chance for salvation outside the Church. Dialogue demands mutual exchange, the equality of everybody involved. It does not presuppose that everybody is the same. To succeed in the ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, it was necessary to abandon the objective understanding of salvation. With this acceptance, Catholic theology recognized the existence and a value of all who are not members of the Catholic Church. In accordance with the document *Nostra Aetate*, the new ecumenical strategy is very cautious. It does not say that other religions are an instrument of «salvation», it just says that «She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men» (*Nostra Aetate*, 1965, para. 2). This is a meaningful remark. The fact of the religious plurality which the Church had to face and plurality which the Church accepted into its doctrine may become positive values if we do not interpret it exclusively as a dialogue with those who are different and foreigners. It does not mean just an apology to the non-believers, but first of all an opportunity of purification of our own identity and our own foundations. Pluralism is a challenge for the Church to distinguish between the foundations and everything that was added from different sources through history.

Pluralism became part of the doctrine of the Catholic Church together with ecumenism and interreligious dialogue at Vatican II. The documents state that the Savior wants the salvation of everybody. Even though the Church is the universal sacrament of salvation and the most distinguished way to salvation, it is possible to gain eternal life outside the Church. The scale for salvation is life according to

someone's conscious: «Those also can attain to salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church yet sincerely seek God and moved by grace strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience.» (Lumen Gentium, 1965, para. 16) One can read in *The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* that «Christ died for all men, and since the ultimate vocation of man is in fact one, and divine, we ought to believe that the Holy Spirit in a manner known only to God offers to every man the possibility of being associated with this paschal mystery.» (Lumen Gentium, 1965, para. 22) Very similar thoughts can be found in the *Decree on the Mission Activity of the Church*: «Therefore though God in ways known to Himself can lead those inculpably ignorant of the Gospel to find that faith without which it is impossible to please Him». (Ad Gentes, 1965, para. 7)

The Catechism of the Catholic Church speaks clearly about the need for positive inter-religious encounters. It sees part of the mission of every Christian to include a respectful dialogue with those who do not ... accept the Gospel. Believers can profit from this dialogue by learning to appreciate better »those elements of truth and grace which are found among peoples [of other religions], and which are, as it were, a secret presence of God (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1992, p. 856).

3.3. Dialogue Is not the End, but Renewal of Religion

We can divide different doctrines of salvation into two groups. In the first group, we put old Chinese philosophy, Hinduism, also Jainism, Buddhism and old Greek philosophy; in these we find the idea of self-salvation. Adherents of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism do not believe in salvation in the sense understood by most Westerners; they do not focus on Hell or Heaven as the result of life. They believe in reincarnation after death. According to this belief,

one's actions allow one to be reborn as a higher or lower being. Eventually, one can escape from *samsara* by attaining the highest spiritual state. Thus, one is able to save himself. In the second group linked to the doctrine of salvation, we put the three monotheistic religions. Belief in One God is connected to the idea of being saved by someone other than the self; and this other is God the Savior.

We thus have two different schools of teaching about salvation. In the first, a man can by himself alone find out the purpose and the goal of his life. The teaching of the second group is based on the dependence on God's mercy. Also in the monotheistic religions, man participates in his salvation: he receives divine revelation, which instructs him how to live, and faithfully following this revelation enables him to be saved by God. In fact, the basic difference from the first group is man's inability to discover by himself the correct way of life. Monotheistic believers need God's revelation, and they willingly accept it as the instructions needed for saving their lives.

Ideologically these two doctrines of salvation give rise to a tension between self-sufficiency and dependence. However, this tension is in fact a reflection of the tension between the «I» and the «other» in human society. They are competing and they are in conflict with each other. This tension could be relieved by paying attention to the already existing relationship between the «I» and the other. That is the proper business of life; let us say the art of life. This fight between the «I» and the «other» is in fact the fight between man and God that has endured since mankind's fall from grace. Man makes God culpable for his own suffering and death and attempts to avoid them. At the same time man attempts to avenge himself by pleading ignorance of God's will. Man searches for God and at the same time he hides himself from Him, much like the first man in the Bible. Once again, this tension could be relieved by paying attention to the already

existing relationship between God and man.

The function of art is to inspire admiration and happiness in the beholder. The highest kind of art is a human life; human life is constituted by relationships, and what could inspire us more than that? Therefore, to live means to be with others. We will try to show how modern Catholic theology considers human salvation in relationship as the art of life. As we said above, a human being cannot live outside of dialogue. It is only in it that one can understand himself, because by belonging to others one becomes «himself». To be in relationship involves especially talking with somebody. To say it in a simple way, it means to pronounce the word «you». The pronounced word you is the guarantee of the existence of the «I». Yet I can only pronounce it when I find myself in relation with you. It should not be said, Until I form a relation with you, but when I find myself in relation with you, or even better, when I become aware that I am already in relation with you. We can say that relationship saves man from nonexistence and brings him to existence. This is the first step of man's salvation in terms of relationship. In addition, as long as he stays in it, he will be saved, he will be alive.

Being in a relationship, one realizes that this dynamic works according to certain rules. One of these rules is that one is simultaneously present to and absent from the other. But this presence and absence alternate in intensity. This is a basic condition of relationship and how it works. The difference between «I» and «you» assures the separate identity of each person; the similarity between subjects assures their closeness. Given this, when they are together, they are still apart, yet when they are apart, they are nevertheless still together. Ordinarily, presence and absence are experienced partially; it is only in the case of death that absence is experienced in its totality and there is no presence. In the case of faith, on the other hand, we

find the extraordinary situation that God and even those who have died are totally absent and totally present to man at the same time even though he is still alive.

It is in the simultaneous alternating of presence and of absence where we can understand the relationship between man and God, called faith. Faith is often imagined by people as «conviction about God's existence», but it is more rightly a relation. Many have an idea about God, many philosophers and wise men speak about God, yet this is not yet faith, because to believe in God means to address God with a personal «you». Faith is the situation wherein I can address God with a personal you. Faith creates a believer in me. And this faith is a gift since I can claim no credit for it. Saint Augustine wrote in his *Confessions*: «I would not have sought you if you had not found me before». What does that mean? Man would not seek God if he did not already believe in Him. It is only when one feels that he believes that one starts seeking God. And as long as one seeks God, one believes. Once one stops searching or one believes that he has found Him, he does not believe any more. When he comes to the awareness of living in faith, he starts seeking God and starts to call Him you, my God. Actually, faith is a relation with a someone whom a man does not know, but he addresses Him with a personal you nevertheless. And when a believer calls him you, god, becomes God. Because God is present in his absence, one can believe also that those persons who are departed can be present while they are absent. So, Christians believe that life after death continues but in a different way. This is the second step of man's salvation in relationship.

The third act of salvation occurs when a believer recognizes God's face in each human person—there is the recognition that relationship with the person includes relationship with God. Each relationship consists of two sides, a theological one and a human one.

Like a sheet of paper with its two sides, the recto is inseparable from its verso. Just as it is impossible to divide them, it is also impossible to separate one's relation with God from one's relation with people (Mt 25:31-46). This union of relation with God and people can be designated by (O)other. Faith then means seeking the (O)other and since we are all in relation, we all need and long for seeking the (O)other and desire to realize the relation with the (O)other. Since relation with people is inseparable from relation with God, the longing for other is essentially a longing for God.

As was pointed out above, faith is a relation with a Someone we do not know. Neither is there a need to know him. The objective of believing is to maintain the relation with the (O)other. That is the key to understand that interreligious dialogue is a realization of faith in God. Even more, we are sure that without interreligious dialogue faith is not real and that, conversely, interreligious dialogue leads into renewal of religion.

3.4. Concrete Examples of Dialogue between Catholic Church and Islam

In spite of everything, the dialogue between the Catholic Church and Muslims is running at several levels and between many participants. We shall treat the events at the macro level (Holy See) and at the micro level (Slovenia). Thus, we shall study the structures for the dialogue with Islam established by the Church and describe important events in this area. At the level of Slovenia, we shall present the history of cooperation between the Catholic and Islamic communities, the present situation and the upcoming trends in these relations.

John Paul II, in 1979, was the second Pope in history who visited Turkey and started the active realization of the dialogue

between the Catholic Church and Islam. In the following year he visited Morocco where on the 19th of August he spoke to 80.000 Muslims and said that Christians and Muslims honor the same God. He went also to Tunis; unfortunately, the murder of monks in Tibhirine, Algeria, in May 1996, stopped short a crucial dialogue, but Pope John Paul II demonstrated his goal of dialogue by an important gesture, that is, his authorization of the construction of the mosque in Rome. He was also the first Pope in history who entered a mosque in Damascus, Syria. The most significant interreligious dialogue act of Jean Paul II was the invitation to the representatives of all world religions to come to Assisi 27 October 1986. They prayed together for peace. These meetings were the results of changes brought about by the Second Vatican Council with respect to interreligious exchange.

Pope Benedict XVI continued the «politic» of Jean Paul II. In his *Message for the XLIV World Day of Peace*, devoted to the theme: *Religious Freedom, the Path to Peace*, he says: «For the Church, dialogue between the followers of the different religions represents an important means of cooperating with all religious communities for the common good. The Church herself rejects nothing of what is true and holy in the various religions. She has a high regard for those ways of life and conduct, precepts and doctrines which, although differing in many ways from her own teaching, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men and women. The path to take is not the way of relativism or religious syncretism. The Church, in fact, proclaims, and is in duty bound to proclaim without fail, Christ who is the way, the truth and the life (*Jn 14:6*); in Christ, in whom God reconciled all things to himself, people find the fullness of the religious life. Yet this in no way excludes dialogue and the common pursuit of truth in different areas of life, since, as Saint Thomas Aquinas says, every truth, whoever utters it, comes from the Holy

Spirit. The year of this document, that is 2011, marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the *World Day of Prayer for Peace* convened in Assisi in 1986 by Pope John Paul II. Pope Benedict organized the memory of that experience.

The speech of Benedict XVI delivered to former students at the University of Regensburg in 2007 was misunderstood, but it provoked fruitful discussion. A month following Pope Benedict's address, 38 Muslim scholars sent a letter in response, and a year later, a second letter (signed by 138 scholars) followed in an effort to find common ground of collaboration between Christians and Muslims. In his turn, Benedict XVI responded to the letter of the 138, opening the way to possible collaboration in various areas. This correspondence became the basis of a forum for dialogue between Muslims and Catholics; the first session occurred in Rome, November 4-6, 2008.

Pope Benedict in fact met personally with important persons from the Muslim world. The 6th of November 2007, he received a visit from Abdallah I, the king of Saudi Arabia. It was the first time that the sovereign of the Arabic country where are found major holy Muslim sites came to the Vatican to a pope. The leaders spoke about interreligious dialogue and about the freedom of Christians in Saudi Arabia. In 2009, Benedict XVI visited Jordan and met prince Ghazi Bin Muhammad Bin Talal, the cousin of king Abdallah II. He was a signator of the letter of 138 Muslims Scholars. In his letter, *Verbum Domini* of November 2010, Benedict expressed the desire to further the relationships of trust between Muslims and Catholics.

Pope Francis immediately after his election in 2013 continued the practice of interreligious dialogue of his predecessors, but in his own way. In his efforts we recognize Saint Francis from Assisi whose name he chose for his pontificate. Like the Poor eight centuries ago, Bergoglio refused to live in the papal palace and, in words and

actions, he shocked a lot of people. Pope John Paul II with the common prayer of representatives of different religions for peace surprised the global public too. He even surprised Muslims when he entered the mosque and prayed with Muslims. The current Pope, moreover, has managed to go a step further. The interreligious attitude of Pope Francis may be illustrated by his speech to the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina in June 2015. He met with leaders of the Muslim, Orthodox, Catholic and Jewish communities gathered in a Franciscan youth center in Sarajevo: Interreligious dialogue is an indispensable condition for peace and a duty for all believers« and he continued: interreligious dialogue cannot be limited merely to the few, to leaders of religious communities, but must also extend as far as possible to all believers, engaging the different sectors of civil society. Particular attention must be paid to young men and women who are called to build the future of this country. It is always worth remembering, however, that for dialogue to be authentic and effective, it presupposes a solid identity: without an established identity, dialogue is of no use or even harmful. I say this with the young in mind, but it applies to everyone.

Pope Francis, on the first days of February 2019, visited the United Arab Emirates and celebrated a public holy mass in the Arabian Peninsula in Abu Dhabi where Sharia law was established. For almost one thousand five hundred years the Eucharist had not been publicly celebrated there. Pope Francis consecrated bread and wine on Muslim holy land. Much more, the Pope prayed for peace there with the Muslims. Before attending the interreligious conference, he told his host, Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, that the Pope was coming as a brother. He expressed his respect to the Muslims. In the year marking the 800th anniversary of the meeting between Saint Francis and the Sultan, Pope

Francis in Abu Dhabi said during an interreligious conference at the Founder's Memorial Building: I am grateful to the Lord for the 800th anniversary of the meeting between Saint Francis of Assisi and Sultan Malek-al-Kamil. I accepted the opportunity to come here as a believer, thirsty for peace, as a brother seeking peace with his brothers. To desire peace, to promote peace, to be an instrument of peace is why we are here (Pope Francis, May 31, 2019). The highlight of the visit is a *Document on the Human Brotherhood for World Peace and Common Coexistence* signed by the Pope with the great Imam, Al Azhar. Let's just focus on one sentence of this document: The pluralism and the diversity of religions, color, sex, race and language are willed by God in His wisdom, through which He created human beings. This divine wisdom is the source from which the right to freedom of belief and the freedom to be different derive. Therefore, the fact that people are forced to adhere to a certain religion or culture must be rejected, as too the imposition of a cultural way of life that others do not accept (Pope Francis, February 4, 2019).

We could easily understand that the Pope and the Imam agreed that God allows some of us to be born as Christians and others to be Muslims! If we accept the plurality of religions in the same way as we accept the diversity of genders, nationalities and races, then we humans can truly give ourselves a disposition toward reconciliation by accepting and respecting all people as we participate in the modern world. That is precisely the purpose of the present Holy Father. He wants all people to be respected and accepted as children of the same God. Theology always responds to the needs of the time (Petkovšek , 2018, p. 237). Pope Francis' thinking is completely in line with the Gospel and Catholic teaching. As a Catholic, one cannot tell a Muslim that they are brothers, and that only a Catholic will go to heaven. It is also impossible to say that a Catholic was born in a Catholic family by

God's will, however, a Muslim was born in a Muslim family by God's mistake. No, the Pope is right, even Muslims are born into Islamic families by God's will. The sentence in the document from Abu Dhabi is essentially the statement of Article 16 of the *Lumen gentium* expressed by other words.

A month after, Pope Francis sent his delegate to Damietta, March 1, 2019. Cardinal Leonardo Sandri, the prefect of the Congregation for the Eastern Church, arrived in Egypt and shared the desire of Pope Francis to make every effort to promote peace and dialogue. For that occasion, the Holy Father wrote a special letter in which he called Saint Francis a «Man of Peace» who taught his religious brothers to say, «Let the Lord give you peace!» (Pope Francis, May 31, 2019) The Pope asked Cardinal Sandri to bring his brotherly greetings to all, Christians and Muslims. In the letter, moreover, he wishes that no one succumbs to the temptation of violence, especially under any religious pretense.

3.5. The Status of Interreligious Dialog in Slovenia¹

The major religion in Slovenia is Roman Catholicism with 1.2 million followers. Eighty percent of the Slovenian Catholic population has traditionally become church members through baptism; however, according to the 2002 census, only 57.8 percent of Slovenians reported being Catholic. Most children of Catholic parents are baptized as infants, but some parents let their children decide to take part in the church rites when they are older. To avoid nominal membership, the Church has begun to request parents' religious preparation for the rite of baptism upon the birth of a child.

1. This text is presented in the journal *Nova prisutnost* 2021, vol. 19, no. 2, pp. 243-254.

Unofficially we can say that there is approximately 70 percent of Catholics in Slovenia.

Christianity has existed in Slovenian territory since the first century CE, when the region was part of the Roman Empire. During the seventh and eighth centuries missionaries from Salzburg (now in Austria) and Aquileia (in modern-day Italy) introduced Christianity to the Slovenes. Christianity was officially established in 745 CE, when Borut, duke of Carantania, converted as a condition of receiving Bavarian protection against invaders from the east. Saints Cyril and Methodius from Macedonia, known as the Apostles of the Slavs, arrived in the region in 866. They translated the Scriptures and liturgical texts into the Slavic language, and a written Slavic culture began. In the tenth and eleventh centuries a network of parishes was formed. Numerous monasteries were built in the twelfth century, and the first two dioceses were established in 1228 and 1461. Slovenia has a large number of churches, which are typically located on hilltops. A great number are pilgrimage destinations, and they are often dedicated to the Mother of God.

Muslims in Slovenia, which comprise 2.4 percent of the population, began emigrating from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, or Macedonia since the mid-twentieth century. Their religious integration into the new cultural environment has been a two-way process of adaptation between immigrants and between Muslims and the local community. The Slovenian state has wished to enable the integration of Muslims following the European integration policy, which promotes multiculturalism and inclusivity. In the early twenty-first century, Muslims in Slovenia are divided into three administratively separate groups. Integration efforts regarding Islamic expressions of faith in everyday life, such as dress, prayer, nutrition, burial, polygamy, and holidays, show that the Islamic Community in

Slovenia, which continues to accept the leadership of the Islamic Community, centered in Sarajevo, and the more recently formed Slovenian Muslim Community intend to create a Slovene Islamic identity. The Association for the Promotion of Islamic Culture in Slovenia, however, wishes to maintain diverse expressions of faith, directed by the members of different Islamic environments. In 2013, the Muslims started to build a mosque in the capital, Ljubljana.

Since the Muslims living in Slovenia have come from the former Yugoslavia, their experience of coexistence is, in spite of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, very different from the one in Western Europe with other Muslims. Upon these experiences, the dialogue and the understanding of Muslims in our country with Catholics as well as with other believers and non-believers should be built.

The possibility for interreligious dialogue until now has not shown any significant attempt to establish exchanges between the Muslim and Catholic communities. We can say that there is no conflict, on the contrary, there is a good collaboration. Nevertheless, both have had to cope with a secularized society where many people are entirely indifferent to religious faith and belief. Muslims and Catholics could therefore offer together some common spiritual values and open new horizons of sensitivity and solidarity to their neighbors. A common dialogue with (post) communist and (post)modern society also could preserve Islamic and Catholic communities from fundamentalist tendencies. Likewise, a dialogue between Catholics and Muslims in Slovenia may permit the participants to discover respect for spiritual treasures and build a peaceful, democratic and pluralistic society in Slovenia. Former Head of the Muslim community in Slovenia, Mufti Nedžad Grabus, is sure that the Islamic cultural and religious center, which the Slovenian Muslim community

is building, will serve to strengthen the bonds of the community and promote dialogue between Muslims and Catholics. Below we will describe some concrete actions of interreligious dialogue in Slovenia.

Saint Francis from Assisi arrived in Egypt in July 1219. Few historical sources report this event, and the details remain unknown. The Franciscan and foreign sources (Ajello, 2011, p. 477) talk about his meeting with the Sultan in Damietta, but the testimonies are not consistent with each other. Biographies of Francis written by Franciscan brothers Thomas Celano, Julian of Speyern, and St. Bonaventure speak of Francis' desire for martyrdom (Melone, 2011). Everyone in turn is of the opinion that Francis approached the Sultan with the desire to receive a martyr's death. Nevertheless, Giordano of Gian, a contemporary of Francis, points out that Francis did not seek martyrdom in the meeting with the Sultan. Bishop Jacob of Vitry¹ (1170-1240), who closely followed the events of the battles at Damietta, wrote the same. A text written in 1220 describes Francis' visit to the Sultan. It mentions that Francis preached the Word of God there, but with little success. Nothing, however, mentions his desire for martyrdom. Beyond any desire of Francis for martyrdom, these commentaries emphasize that Francis promoted a proclamation of peace (Tolan, 2009, p. 27). The description of the Sultan is much more positive in the text of Jacob than in the official biographies of Francis. In any case, all of the above-mentioned authors presented Francis as a man of peace. On the other side, the Crusaders were looking for a solution to the wars to be fought with their arms.

At the initiative of the Order's special *Commission for Dialogue with Islam*, the General Minister of the Order of Franciscans,

1. Italian literature calls him "Giacomo di Vitry, vescovo di San Giovanni d'Acri", because in 1216 he was ordained a bishop of Accra (Akkon), Syria.

Fr. Michael A. Perry, invited Franciscans around the world in a special communique to remember the meeting of Francis and the Sultan through a variety of commemorative events (Perry, 2019). The response has been very encouraging. In 2019, Franciscans organized a number of events that remind us of the encounter of the saint and the sultan eight centuries ago and that evaluate the breadth and depth of interreligious dialogue occasioned by this meeting in 1219. Slovenian Franciscans also joined the celebration. The Slovenian Franciscan *Province of the Holy Cross* and the *Stanko Janežič Institute for Dogmatic, Fundamental and Ecumenical Theology and Religionology and Dialogue*, operating within the Faculty of Theology, organized a scientific conference on the 800 years of cohabitation between Franciscans et Muslims. It took place October 1-3, 2019 in the Franciscan friary at Tromostovje in Ljubljana. The Conference highlighted the event of eight centuries ago and focused on the dialogue between Christians and Muslims in the past and today. The lecturers concentrated on cooperation between Franciscans and Muslims in the past eight centuries. In the sessions on interreligious dialogue, speaking about dialogue was not the most important thing, but creating occasions for dialogue. At the Ljubljana Symposium, nearly half of the participants were Muslim (800 Years of Convivenc, 2019). Christian professors have sought not to speak of Muslims but to speak to Muslims, with all respect. An honest conversation with them means that interreligious dialogue is alive.

Active interreligious dialogue for the Slovenian Franciscans has been mainly because of work and activities of Franciscan fr. Mari Osredkar, who is the head of *The Stanko Janežič Institute for Dogmatic, Fundamental and Ecumenical Theology and Religionology and Dialogue*, which is an integral part of the Faculty of Theology in Ljubljana. His dedication to the actualization of dialogue can be

divided into three levels. On the first level, he talks to Muslims living in Slovenia. They have optimal Islamic identity because the Slovenia state ensures religious freedom (Flisar, 2019, p. 182). He has contact with many believers. His efforts for interreligious dialogue on the first level can be seen in the regular meetings with the Mufti and Imams of the Islamic Community in Slovenia. In places where Islamic imams reside, he organizes meetings between them and Catholic pastors. At these meetings, imams and pastors get to know each other and make plans for how their believers could collaborate at the local level. Knowledge and cooperation are the foundation of dialogue and peaceful coexistence. Good relations can be maintained by even minor signs such as greetings for religious holidays. On the second level, there are the academic contacts of dr. Osredkar with Islamic faculties in Sarajevo, Kutahya (Turkey), and Teheran. Especially he maintains contacts with the Islamic Theological Faculty in Sarajevo, and at his initiative the Faculty of Theology in Ljubljana has concluded an agreement on pedagogical and scientific cooperation. The fruit of this agreement has been a series of lectures given by Professor dr. Nedžad Grabus on Islamic subjects taught as part of dr. Osredkar's master's degree program *Religion and Ethics* at the Catholic Faculty of Ljubljana. This is the first time in the hundred-year history of the Catholic Theological Faculty in Ljubljana that an Islamic expert taught Catholic students in Ljubljana. Osredkar is also affiliated with the Islamic Theological Faculty in Kutahya and Konya. In 2015, through the Erasmus exchange, he lectured for a week to Muslim students at the Islamic Faculty of Theology in Kutahya. In 2019, Professor Ahmed Türkan came to teach Slovenian students at the Faculty of Theology in Ljubljana. On the occasion of his trip to Turkey, Osredkar also visited the Franciscan community in Istanbul. There are several Franciscan communities in this country today, where friars strive for dialogue through the testimony of the Christian life. In

Istanbul and Smirne (Izmir) there are international fraternities, composed of friars from all over the world. Among the various annual activities, there are: The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, exchanges with and visits to Muslims brothers during Ramadan, a permanent formation course on ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, an interfaith prayer meeting in the spirit of Assisi, as well as various activities in the local Church. Collaboration with Shia Muslims from Iran is a special chapter in the efforts for dialogue of dr. Mari Osredkar. With the help of the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Ljubljana in 2015, he began a collaboration with the *Center for Interreligious Dialogue* in Tehran, which operates within the Ministry of Culture of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In December 13-17, 2015 a delegation of the Faculty of Theology in Ljubljana attended a conference on interreligious dialogue focusing on the role of religions in the fight against extremism and violence in today's world. The scientific meeting was organized by the Center for Interreligious Dialogue of Tehran. The delegation was led by dr. Mari Jože Osredkar and its members were dr. Tadej Strehovec, dr. Vojko Strahovnik, dr. Lenart Škof and dr. Bojan Žalec. As part of the conference, the delegation gave lectures at three different institutions. On December 14 was the first academic meeting at the Campus of *Islamic Culture and Relations Organizations*. The delegation was received by the Director of the Center dr. Ali Mohammad Helmi, and the welcoming speech was delivered by the President of this Center, dr. Abuzar Ibrahim. There were five lectures given by two Slovenian professors and three Iranian. Dr. Bojan Žalec presented the problems of Islamism and Islamophobia in Europe in the lecture *Obstacles in the Way of Dialogue and Peaceful Coexistence: Islamism and Islamophobia*, and dr. Tadej Strehovec gave a presentation on *Religion and Family: Two Sources of Ethics*. The Center also introduced Slovenians to the Declaration of the Iranian Religious Leader on Youth Against

Extremism titled *Message of Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei to Youth in Europe and North America*. The Iranian organizers took the Slovenian Delegation to Qum, 100 km away from Teheran, where there is the religious center of Iranian Shi'ism with a large pilgrimage sanctuary. Slovenians were guests of the Dean of the Islamic Research Institute there, and then they went to the University for Religions and Religion Denominations, where two plenary lectures were given by one Iranian and one Slovenian. Dr. Mari Jože Osredkar outlined the foundations and reasons for Catholic interreligious dialogue in a lecture titled *Reasons for Dialogue between Muslims and Catholics Based on Catholic Teaching*. He emphasized that there is no religious freedom and respect for diversity in Islam, so at the theological level dialogue between the Catholics and Muslims is not currently possible, however, future cooperation will be welcome. The fruit of this collaboration was the participation of Iranian theologians at the scientific conference of *800 Years of Coexistence*, October 1-3, 2019 in the Franciscan friary at Tromostovje, Ljubljana. Finally, it should be emphasized that two Iranian students also enrolled in the third level of study at the Faculty of Theology in Ljubljana (Osredkar, 2016). On the third level of dialogue, Osredkar is active in the *Commission for Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue* in the Slovenian episcopal conference and in the *Section for Interreligious Dialogue of the Evangelization and Culture Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of Europe*.

3.6. Outside of Dialogue, There Is no Salvation

The Catholic church cannot survive outside the situation of dialogue nor outside respect for others. It is only in it that position that the Church can understand itself, because by being in dialogue to others one becomes «himself». And even more, to be in relationship involves especially talking «with somebody». To say it in a simple

way, it means to pronounce the word you by words and by acts. The pronounced word you Muslim is the guarantee of the existence of the Catholic. Yet, a Catholic can only pronounce the word you Muslim when he finds himself in relation with Muslims. It should not be said until he forms a relation with Muslims, but »when he finds himself in relation with Muslims, or even better, when he becomes aware that he is already in relation with Muslims. We can say that relationship saves man from nonexistence and brings him to existence, that is, the relationship saves the Catholics from nonexistence and brings him to existence. That means that the dialogue with others assures the existence of the Church. And as long as the Church stays in such a relation, it will be alive.

Interreligious dialogue, also referred to as interfaith dialogue, is about people of different faiths coming to mutual understanding and respect that allow them to live and cooperate with each other despite their differences. Dialogue within religions refers to cooperative and positive interaction between people of different religious traditions, (i.e. faiths) at both the individual and institutional level. Each party remains true to their own beliefs while respecting the right of the other to practice their faith freely.

Interfaith dialogue is not just words or talk. It includes human interaction and relationships. It can take place between individuals and communities on many levels. For example, between neighbors, schools and in our places of work - it can take place in both formal and informal settings. In Slovenia, Muslims and Christians live side by side in the same buildings and they use the same shops, buses and schools. Normal life means that we come into daily contact with each other. Dialogue, therefore, is not just something that takes place on an official or academic level only – it is part of daily life during which

different cultural and religious groups interact with each other directly, and where tensions can be resolved.

Conclusion

The author of this text was recently invited to a round table discussion on the relationship between Christians and Muslims in Slovenia and Europe, which was broadcast by Slovenian national television. At the end, the leader asked him what the future of Christianity and Islam in Europe will be. It is completely wrong to think about the future of a religion or religious community without its relationship to others. If Christians are capable of sincere dialogue with Muslims, Christianity in Europe will be very, very alive. Otherwise, Christianity will abolish itself. The same applies to Islam. If Muslims are capable of sincere communication with Christians, they will preserve their faith. If they are non-dialogical or even violent, they will lose their faith. Dialogue is a tool for peace and a means of survival. Outside of Dialogue, there is no Salvation.

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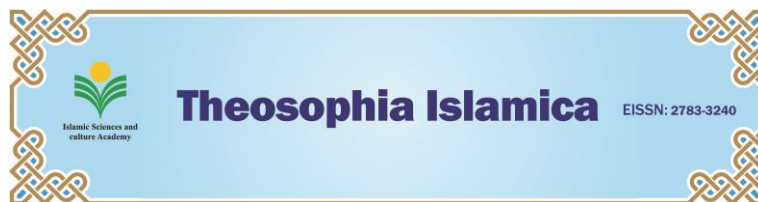
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The Role of Religions in Preventing World Wars

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Abstract

This text examines the complex and ambivalent role of religion in historical and contemporary global conflicts, particularly focusing on the mechanisms through which religions have influenced the prevention of world wars and promoted peace. The global landscape features over 4,500 religions, with Christianity and Islam as the largest. Religions shape moral norms, communal behavior, and both positive and negative social outcomes. While religion is often linked with violence, the relationship is multifaceted. Statistical analyses show religious conflicts may initially appear more intense, but deeper integration of the religious context often diminishes this correlation. Religion can be both a divider and connector in conflicts. Religious leaders and institutions are recognized as “religious diplomats,” offering spirituality-based mediation and reconciliation. The text explores interreligious dialogue (IRD) as a transformative tool, emphasizing pluralism, meaningful conversations, restorative justice, and the importance of listening. Examples include

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cooperation after the 2011 tsunami in Japan and ecumenical initiatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Clergy and lay believers can mitigate conflict and aid reconciliation. Their spiritual authority, ability to mobilize, and unique resources (prayer, forgiveness, scriptural legitimacy) are highlighted, though their impact is difficult to quantify. Faith-based diplomacy is presented as a distinct field, emphasizing the necessity of integrating political and theological approaches. The document acknowledges issues such as the difficulty of measuring religious peacebuilding, the slow pace of change, and the influence of populism, nationalism, and fundamentalism.

Keywords

Religion, War, Peace.

Introduction

Today, there are numerous religions, more than 4500 in some estimates, some of which are stronger and some less influential in society. Dominant religions include Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Buddhism. The largest number of members in the group of religions is Christianity (31% of the world's population), followed by the number of members of Islam (23%), no denomination (16%), Hinduism (15%) Buddhism (7%), while the number of members of Judaism is 0.2% of the world's population. The above religions are based on the distinction between religious norms, rules, beliefs, between good and evil, and on the basis of people's behavior and moral provisions.

Religion has always been at the center of many sociologists who have dealt with its definition and its impact on society, and this has led to two basic sociological approaches to religion, the substantive approach and the functionalist approach. The substantive approach seeks to find a common and distinctive element of all religions, that is, it finds everything that religion is, which no other social phenomenon can contain – namely, people's belief in supernatural beings and gaining a sense of power associated with this supernatural being. It is believed that the substantive approach to religion is characteristic of Western societies because it interprets the elements of religion from a dominantly Christian perspective, while it is difficult to conceptualize the same for contemporary Eastern societies (for religions such as Buddhism).

The functionalist approach studies the functions of religion in society (how it affects individuals, social groups) which are more significant in analyzing the content of religious beliefs and practices than the consequences. Religious consequences are defined beneficial and/or harmful to humans and society, so this approach focuses on

understanding religious events, which result in the interference of politics with religion, the interference of religion with interpersonal relationships, the influence of religion on life views, etc.

It is essential to understand what we mean by religion. There are many approaches and aspects of religion, but for the broader approach, religion can be seen as a set of teachings and holy scripts; religious institutions and clergy; and a set of customs, rites, and beliefs. These three do not necessarily match each other. The pan-European comparative research project the European Values Survey defines religion in five elements: religious belief; religiosity; ecclesial dimension; ritual dimension; and public role of the Church.

Religion and religious beliefs have a positive and negative impact on the entire society. Its goal is to create something good, however, its potential negativity arises from human actions due to strong beliefs "that God wants it that way", that is, they do things "in the name of God". It is believed that every religion preaches goodness, harmonious life among people, respect, unity, love, but there are always groups that do the opposite of the above with the aim of emphasizing their religion as more valuable, and then spread hatred, kill, create discord and violence, and as a justification they find disagreement in religious views that cause religious conflicts, often in the form of wars in which the innocent and powerless suffer.

Religion can be misused in society, and the main cause is cited as negative socio-political influences, which refers to the interference of religious communities in politics and vice versa, especially in countries where there is unrest, wars, conflicts and discrimination against other religious minorities. Religion and religious beliefs also have an impact on society in terms of morality, affecting our views on the world, the upbringing of children in religious families, health, and more. Positive influences relate to good behavior, appreciation of

positive moral values, can have a positive impact on upbringing in families and again in accordance with moral values and recognition of good and evil, or on our health, as believers must adhere to religious rules relating to prohibitions on the consumption of alcohol, tobacco, maintaining hygiene, consuming certain foods or even prohibiting certain food products, especially during holy holidays.

1. Historical Context of Religion and Warfare

Religion has been recognised as a potent tool of peacebuilding efforts by many international peacebuilding organisations. The reason for it is simply understood as more than 80 per cent of the world's population believe in some supernatural being, i.e., they describe themselves as religious (Cox & Alhaji, 2017, p. 1). This self-identification is connected to religious creeds, ideas, institutions, and actors who furthermore shaped societies in history and continue to shape them today. History records multiple religious calls for wars and violence, as "cohesion and identity in contemporary conflict tend to form within increasingly narrower lines than those that encompass national citizenship" (Lederach, 1998, p. 13). Instead of legitimising violent conflicts and atrocities, religion has an ambivalent role as it may offer a tremendously vital resource for peacebuilding. It is indeed "typical in all major systems of religious belief that a specific ethical doctrine on the relationship with the other explicitly or implicitly evolves in relation to values like peace, justice, mercy and forgiveness" (Bokern et al., 2009, p. 1).

In many historical conflicts, religion has been seen as a marker, contributor, or factor of violent conflict. The significance of religious identification has been equally accentuated. However, there is a small number of conflict analysis that go deeper by analysing how religion matters in a given conflict and integrating specific considerations, challenges, and questions pertaining to religion. As a

statistical analysis of 278 interstate and intrastate territorial conflicts between 1946 and 2001 shows, “conflicts involving religion are significantly more intense than other types of conflicts (but) when the relevance of religion to the conflict is incorporated to address the limits of the identity-oriented definition of a religious conflict. the relationship between the involvement of religion and conflict intensity weakens below an accepted level of significance” (Pearce, 2005, p. 349). Pearce explains how religious identity is incorporated for political aims in conflicts, although religious dogmas differ in comparison to the religious narrative in conflicts. International religious organisations and peace institutes have developed such conflict analysis. However, almost every conflict in the world is so specific that generalisation may not only be void of any help, it may even hinder the peacebuilding process. A potent tool for analysing religion’s role in the conflict is proposed by Owen Frazer and Richard Friedli from the Center for Security Studies (CSS) in Zürich (Frazer & Friedli, 2015). They propose to determine whether a particular role of religion in a society is seen through religion as a community, as a set of teachings, as spirituality, as practice, or as discourse and ask critical questions where they determine whether religion acts as a divider or connector in the peacebuilding process.

While the official state supports at least passive secularism, this study considers contemporary time and space as post-secular. Post-secular is “the factual blurring of the boundary between the secular and the religious ,includes a fundamental dimension of power that has often been neglected in recent scholarship (with the) emergence of new forms of community, where the issue is not just the inclusion of the other, but a more complex set of questions concerning the secular and religious sources of authority, legitimacy, and power” (Mavelli & Petito, 2014, p.7).

2. The Role of Religion in Conflict and Peace

Peacebuilding is a holistic approach to positive peace, using many tools and techniques of practitioners in the field. Political science and peace studies stress the differences between conflict management, conflict settlement, conflict resolution, and conflict transformation. Conflict management is a limitation, mitigation, and containment of conflict and is ineffective for the durable elimination of causes of conflict. Conflict settlement concerns an agreement reached by the conflicting parties through negotiations, compromises, and concessions from both sides.

Conflict resolution is more comprehensive and mutual problem-solving. The overall peacebuilding process is called conflict transformation, as it transforms conflict from a violent and destructive one to a positive change. Connecting forces are increasingly visible in this process, while dividing forces decline. Here, the study follows the understanding of John Paul Lederach (2003), who sees conflict transformation as the result of conflict resolution. However, there is still a definitional debate over what these terms mean in the field. This study does not recognise clerics or religious institutions per se as drivers of conflict resolution and transformation, but more as a potential contribution to a positive change. They are seen, according to William Ury's (1981) third side preventing role as providers, teachers, and bridge-builders and resolving the role of healer and sometimes mediator. Interchangeably, the study calls these clerics also religious diplomats, but they do differ from Track I diplomacy, which includes top leaders from the UN, international and regional organisations, governments, and international financial institutions; they are middle-level leaders in Track II diplomacy that includes religious institutions as well as international NGOs, academics and private business. Their role is to hold good offices and offer

conciliation, pure mediation, and problem-solving. However, they can also affect the processes in Track III or the grassroots, where common ground and local initiatives are to be found. Of course, none of these processes is void of political organisation. Many political parties and institutions strictly follow the separation of religion and state, and seldom do they have a formal framework for cooperation. On the level of the European Union, for instance, the European People's Party is "the only political force on the stage of European politics that has a collective sensibility for the religious dimension of society and that has thus developed an official approach for engaging dialogue with religious actors" (Bokern et al., 2009, p. 25), while somewhat the same position of religious dimension may be found in the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, which is an intergovernmental organisation of Islamic states. John Paul Lederach (1998) distinguishes three levels of leadership, which are important for the peace process. On the first level is top leadership, comprised of military, political and religious leaders with high visibility. The focus here is on high-level negotiations led by the highly visible and often single mediator. Track I diplomacy is a formal process that should end in a framework agreement and roadmap for understanding between conflicting parties. This top-down approach is often employed when a ceasefire emerges and when negative peace is reached. The second level is middle-range leadership with leaders respected in various sectors, ethnic and religious leaders, academics and intellectuals, humanitarian leaders, and non-governmental organisations, all of them instrumental for problem-solving workshops (often including facilitation and third-party consultation), training in conflict resolution (which broadens internal skills for reflection on the conflict, dealing with psychological dimension and alternative solutions for conflict resolution), peace commissions and insider-partial teams. They form Track II diplomacy

that provides support and safety and generates ideas for compromises in a vast area of activities with Track I, including interim agreement, unilateral steps for trust-building, comprehensive agreement, implications and follow-ups, decision-making rules and procedures, monitoring mechanisms, and sanctions, but foremost these are actors who have authority to discuss and engage in transitional justice, dealing with the past and reconciliation, and humanitarian issues. The third level is grassroots leadership, i.e., local leaders, leaders of indigenous NGOs, and community developers. They empower the civil society, form local peace commissions, make grassroots training, reduce prejudice, do psychosocial work and deal with post-war trauma. In novel peace studies development, between Track I and Track II, there is Track 1.5, where a focused relationship between the two levels occurs. For the whole system to be two-tyre successful top-down and bottoms-up interplay, there should be a compromise between Track II and Track III with Track I practitioners. Lederach distinguishes top religious leaders and religious practitioners, whereby the former is in Track/Level I and the latter in Track/Level II. Religious leaders have visibility and profile, and “by virtue of their high public office, these leaders are generally locked into positions taken with regard to the perspectives and issues in conflict” (Lederach, 1998, p. 40), which lessens their freedom of activity as “these leaders are perceived and characterised as having significant, if not exclusive, power and influence.” Lederach accentuates the word “perceived” because both domestic and international communities look at their hierarchies as if they would have exclusive power, which is often not the case at hand. However, Lederach finds that key actors in Track/Level II are “positioned so that they are likely to know and be known by the top-level leadership, yet they have significant connections to the broader context and the constituency that the top

leaders claim to represent” (Lederach, 1998, p. 41).

Historical and theological frameworks of peace and active peace-making are strongly accentuated, as these frameworks are often cited among the clerics themselves. Religious leaders on international, national, and local levels are recognised as potent peacebuilders based on their spiritual authority and legitimacy, the capability to reach out to the local population through a broad network, moral and religious teachings, and the aura of the sacredness of peace, as professed by all religions. In the sense of peacebuilding, the role of religion and tools like interreligious dialogue is “a new concept that provides the subfield of the study of interreligious dialogue with a way to link itself both theoretically and practically with the fields of peace and conflict resolution studies” (Merdjanova & Brodeur, 2009, p. 32). More and more peace practitioners globally turn to “a range of action-oriented, religious institutions (such as) Fellowship of Reconciliation, Buddhist Peace Fellowship, Rabbis for Human Rights, World Council of Religions for Peace, American Friends Service Committee, the Sikh Coalition, the Mennonite Central Committee, United Religions Initiative, the Salam Institute, Interfaith Encounter Association, Pax Christi International, and the Community of Sant’ Egidio” (Dubensky, 2016, p. 4). In the complex web of peacebuilding, religious actors may help in healing, and inner peace, forge a path to reconciliation, prevent new violent conflicts from occurring, or at least decrease the role of religion and misuse of religion for that goal. Following Howard Zehr’s model of comparison of justice systems, clergy may help establish restorative justice (Zehr, 2002).

Religious peacebuilding is specific as it directly aims at religious actors and institutions, uses religious ideas and beliefs as resources to answer and transform religious factors or a broader array of factors that contribute to violent conflict, but also to transform

negative peace situations in a society driven by divisions, prejudices, hatred, exclusion, etc. If it is founded on interreligious dialogue, it denotes “all forms of interreligious dialogue activities that foster an ethos of tolerance, nonviolence, and trust” (Merdjanova & Brodeur, 2009, p. 25), where the accent is on dialogue. Specific to religious peacebuilding is also symbolism: “For example, when the public sees religious authorities in a given situation as actually united, peacefully sharing platforms, for instance in the media or public, shaking hands, sitting and laughing together, jointly leading rituals, their behaviour join with their words to send messages of tolerance and peaceful coexistence” (Chiwetalu Ossai, 2019, p. 268). Namely, even the smallest gestures are significant to the public, particularly if the religious leaders have substantial authority in local society (Gopin, 1997, p. 9). Religious peacebuilding practitioners must be aware of this area’s subtleness and nuances, where almost nothing is monolithic but pluralistic and lived religion, with its system of logic, experiences, and views on religion and its specific teachings. This makes religious peacebuilding a particular area of peace studies and requires additional theological and mediatory knowledge (Dubensky, 2016, p. 5). Namely, doctrine and holy scripts are only part of religious tradition. For many laities, it is not a very known or essential part of their religion; it is more religious rituals and practices that change over time and adapt to the circumstances in which people live. Moreover, while religious leaders known nationally or globally are essential for messages of peace, genuine religious peacebuilding is important to grassroots actors or non-elites.

Finally, one must acknowledge that evaluating any peacebuilding process and even less religious peacebuilding efforts is tough. These are not quantitatively measurable and fail to address evaluation questions from major donors. Lederach suggests evaluation be

understood as “a circular mix of design, feedback, and systematisation of learning that emerges from and returns to the work, rather than a tool oriented toward measuring final results” (Lederach, 1998, pp. 147-148).

Mediation is one of the historically most used ways of conflict resolution worldwide and still impacts settling disputes and violent conflicts. It is the “intervention of a third party unfamiliar to the conflict, trustable, unbiased and intending to be neutral” (Horowitz, 2007, p. 51). Mediation is a process where a third party intervenes, helps solve a conflict, and acts as a facilitator, educator, and communicator. Its concretisation depends again on the history of a conflict. However, there are some crucial characteristics of mediation: “It is an extension and continuation of peaceful conflict management; involves the intervention of an outsider into a conflict between two or more states or other actors; is a non-coercive, nonviolent and, ultimately, nonbinding form of intervention; mediators enter a conflict, whether internal or international, in order to affect it, change it, resolve it, modify it, or influence it in some other way; mediators bring with them, consciously or otherwise, ideas, knowledge, resources, and interests of their own or of the group or organisation they represent. Mediators often have their own assumptions and agendas about the conflict in question; mediation is a voluntary form of conflict management. The actors involved retain control over the outcome (if not always over the process) of their conflict, as well as the freedom to accept or reject mediation or mediators’ proposals; mediation is usually an ad hoc procedure only” (Bercovitch & Jackson, 1997, p. 127).

In conflicts containing ethnoreligious identity, mediators might be religious institutions: “Faith-based actors are increasingly becoming involved in ethnoreligious and other conflicts as mediators, and not without success” (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana, 2009, p. 176). There is evidence for religious mediators far in the past: “In the Bible,

Moses is referred to as the mediator between God and men; since the origin of catholic religions, members of the congregations have turned to priests or preachers for intercession as mediators, Puritans, Quakers and other religious communities or sects (in American colonies) usually resorted to these procedures” (Horowitz, 2007, pp. 51-52). Religious mediation is a situation where a religious actor is a mediator, or a religious system of beliefs and teachings is used as a mediating tool. It is mainly seen as a third-party role of a single cleric or a religious organisation. In this sense, the Vatican was a very potent mediator in the 20th century, but history is full of religiously motivated peacemakers and mediators, whether they are clergy, laity, or organisations. Failure to recognise their activity is indeed due to “epistemological perspectives developed by conflict resolution scholars (who) viewed religion either as an instigator of conflict or ignored it altogether because religious issues involved in conflicts cannot be addressed from an empirical or positivist perspective” (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana, 2002, p. 177).

Mediation has a strong presence in major religions. In Christianity, the Holy See has been an essential ally of peace efforts in the Middle East, Latin America, Africa, and beyond. Protestant denominations have also contributed to religious peacebuilding, particularly Quakers, Mennonites, and Puritans. In Islam, there is a practice of *Wisata*, where disputes are solved based on the model explained in Hadiths, following Prophet Mohammad’s ways of problem-solving within Muslim communities and with other religious groups. Traditional Jewish laws evoke compromise and justice (*P’shara*), following the Levite tradition of Aaron, brother of Moses. Their mediations are characterised by: “explicit emphasis on spirituality and/or religious identity; use of religious texts; use of religious values and vocabulary; utilisation of religious or spiritual

rituals during the process; involvement of faith-based actors as third-parties” (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana, 2009, p. 185).

Religious actors should decide how much religious/theological content they should use when mediating. This decision is made according to how much religion contributes to the conflict or how potent religious teachings are for peacebuilding in a divided society. In some cases, mediators would explicitly use spirituality and religious identities, or they may evoke religious creeds or scripts as a basis for mediation. In other cases, only general religious values or symbolic rituals and ceremonies may be used. Applying a religious actor as a mediator is successful only if all sides consider him decent, fair, and trustworthy and if the mediator has enough resources and the right motivation. In multi-religious societies, this presents a challenge, and thus, mediation is done by several clerics from different faiths working as one mediating body. We should examine the reasons why a priest or an imam would do mediation, whether he has an internal motif or was he called by ecclesial or political authorities to act as a mediator, due to their possibilities of secret diplomacy or through regional and global religious dynamics that may impact local peacebuilding efforts. The background driving motif might be important in determining success or reasons for failure in religious mediation. In a novel form of mediation, the religious mediator may introduce a larger amount of spiritual work. In the transformative theory of conflict (TRANSCEND), Johan Galtung suggests the mediator be ignorant of the culture and customs in the local settings, only to foster a dialogue; additionally, he calls for empathy as “the capacity to deeply understand the other at a cognitive and emotional level (as) the mediators’ basic skill” (Horowitz, 2007, p. 61). In that way, a mediator will have less chance to dehumanise the conflicting parties.

Empathy is expected from the clerics, who are educated to identify themselves with particular human beings.

3. Case Studies of Religious Influence in Major Conflicts

During the World War I, religious narratives were often justifying war. Religious leaders in many countries framed the war as a righteous cause supported by God. The clergy in the United Kingdom often portrayed the war as a battle between Christian civilization and German militarism, which they characterized as barbaric and godless. In Germany, some Protestant and Catholic leaders depicted the war as a divine mission to defend German culture and values, aligning it with their understanding of a providential destiny. Both sides used the language of Crusades, comparing their struggles to holy wars, and invoked religious zeal among soldiers and civilians, calling for sacrifices as part of a higher moral purpose. Chaplains played a critical role in providing spiritual comfort to soldiers, often conducting prayers, sermons, and last rites in the trenches. These religious rituals helped many soldiers -cope with the horrors of war and find solace in their faith.

One of the most striking examples of religious influence was the spontaneous Christmas Truce in 1914, where soldiers on both sides celebrated Christmas together, sang carols, and exchanged gifts. This event highlighted the unifying power of shared religious traditions, even amid conflict. Some religious leaders and groups opposed the war, condemning it as contrary to Christian teachings on peace and love. For instance, the Quakers or the Religious Society of Friends) were vocal in their pacifist stance, advocating for nonviolence and offering humanitarian aid instead of supporting the war effort. Pope Benedict XV repeatedly called for peace, referring to the war as a senseless slaughter and proposing peace plans, though

they were largely ignored by the warring nations.

In the World War II, religious narratives in Germany were manipulated to align with the regime's ideology. Although the Nazis were largely secular, they co-opted Christian symbols and rhetoric to appeal to German cultural identity. Some Protestant churches supported the regime, while others resisted (e.g., the Confessing Church). In Japan, Shintoism was used to sanctify the war effort. The emperor was presented as a divine figure, and soldiers were taught to see their sacrifices as acts of devotion to the nation and its divine destiny.

The Allies framed their struggle as a fight for Christian values of justice, freedom, and human dignity against the tyranny of the Axis powers. For instance, U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt often used religious language to rally support, describing the war as a defense of "God's will" for freedom and democracy. Many religious leaders and institutions actively resisted totalitarian regimes, drawing on their faith as a moral imperative. Figures like Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German Lutheran pastor, opposed the Nazi regime, emphasizing the Christian duty to resist evil. Catholic leaders, such as Maximilian Kolbe, opposed Nazi ideology and were martyred for their actions. The Vatican, under Pope Pius XII, provided refuge for Jews, though its role remains debated. In Japanese-occupied territories, some Buddhist monks resisted imperial policies, though others collaborated with the regime. Jewish communities under Nazi persecution clung to their faith as a source of strength. Despite the horrors of the Holocaust, religious practices and beliefs provided hope, and some observed rituals even in concentration camps. Religious services, prayers, and scripture readings provided comfort to families coping with the loss of loved ones. Indian soldiers, recruited for the British army, were allowed to maintain their religious practices during the

war, which helped them endure the challenges of battle. During the war, Pope Pius XII advocated for peace and humanitarian efforts, urging nations to avoid targeting civilians. After the war, the Vatican played a role in supporting post-war reconciliation efforts in Europe. The devastation of WWII inspired greater cooperation among religious communities to promote peace, leading to the establishment of organizations like the World Council of Churches in 1948.

4. Mechanisms Through Which Religion Promotes Peace

While spirituality and religion may be used interchangeably in this chapter, the focus is on religion/spirituality/worldview as a set of beliefs, teachings, institutional frameworks, customs, and behaviours. It is essential to consider and include these traits in any peacebuilding process. Traditionally, it has been done through the concept of intercultural, inter-worldview, and interreligious dialogue (IRD). The dialogue itself is “a way of taking the energy of our differences and channelling it toward something that has never been created before. It lifts us out of polarization and into a greater common sense and is thereby a means for accessing the intelligence and coordinate power of groups of people” (Isaacs, 1999, p. 19).

IRD is defined as a dialogue where “the participants come from different religious backgrounds and gather to talk from their explicitly stated cultural identity lenses to create a better understanding of certain challenges” (Abu Nimer & Alabbadi, 2017, p. 40). The IRD is part of conflict transformation as it aims to transform the conflict from a competitive relationship into a cooperative one based on religious concepts and values (Galtung, 2007; Graf, Kramer, and Nicolescou, 2007; Merdjanova & Brodeur, 2009). It goes beyond secular ideas of societal progress. It allows stakeholders to learn about their and others’ deepest beliefs and fears at the level where a genuine reconciliation

may occur. The focus on IRD is essential because dialogue is a transformative peacebuilding method. It is a safe space for people to surface their assumptions and question their previous viewpoints. The potential of IRD is to build relationships, raise awareness, and contribute to resolving conflicts without advocacy, consultation, debate, or negotiation. Applying this to the classroom is helpful because it teaches teachers and students how to distinguish between dialogue as an engaging learning process and various other kinds of communication with different aims.

In a post-conflict society, traumas run deep. Realization of loss frequently leads to suppression of grief and opens the door to anger, need for justice, and revenge, ending in a Good versus Evil narrative. Albeit challenging, we must strive to accept the loss's reality and reflect so we can find the root causes while acknowledging the enemy's story and facing our own shortcomings. When we, as teachers and students, can memorialize and commit to taking risks by starting a dialogue from tolerance and engagement, we have the opportunity to forgive and establish restorative justice that gives a possibility of reconciliation. When such an approach is applied to the religious background, a lot more commonalities among people of different faiths come up than when the comparison is made on ethnic or national differences. In the IRD case, we do not talk only about reaching an ethnic/national/political goal. Still, we are opening space for personal feelings that make up our religious identities, such as compassion, trust, hope, healing, a sense of community and diversity, and a will to reach out to the other side. IRD has become a spiritual exercise in itself, and active participants have a strong motive for such dialogue based on their religious identity and deeper understanding of it. For example, the Women Believers Association, part of the Interreligious Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina, gathers believers

from all three sides of the 1990s conflict (Orthodox/Serb, Catholic/Croat, Muslim/Bosniak) and emphasizes their traumas and perseverance during and after the war. By employing understanding and compassion for women who were raped or whose families were killed, they overcame the ethnic and religious divides and formed a safe space where they could trust each other and heal their traumas. Based on their work, the Interreligious Council made the first-ever guidebook for clerics to approach and support women victims of war crimes.

When approaching IRD in practice, there are a few points where this dialogue ceases to be a dialogue and becomes a debate or discussion. One is the exclusion tendency, where participants in the “dialogue” believe that only their belief is true and other beliefs are wrong or misleading. Participation in the IRD is motivated by the wish to proselytize and convert. On the other pole of exclusivism is syncretism, where the primary approach is to focus on similarities and unify them into one new religion. Both exclusivism and syncretism are the main ways some stakeholders spoil the IRD. As an antidote to them, pluralism emerges as a method to go beyond listening to others’ doctrine. It considers the importance of faith by focusing on ethical concepts between religions and within religions. Pluralism is not just the diversity of beliefs and/or tolerance of different religions, but rather it is the commitment to engage in meaningful conversations and respond to what is being said in the form of action. For example, after a devastating tsunami hit Japan in 2011, a will to cooperate between Buddhist monks and Christian priests and to help the victims led to substantial theological and dialogical consequences. Many of the clergy who came to help had never previously interacted with those outside their own tradition, and they were trained more to talk than to listen. So they tended to proselytize, even if unintentionally. Listening

is a critical part of chaplaincy and more of a skill than most originally assumed (Michon, 2019, p. 6). The Japanese case shows how crucial constant learning is, even for the clergy and monks. Essential listening skills are unavoidable in the dialogue process, as we learn and understand through listening.

Religion often appears as the identity basis of Middle Eastern parties and movements. It is enough today to look at the entire range of movements that characterize the religious party systems of majority-Islamic countries; Most social science efforts are in determining the role of religion in these conflicts and controversies and the use of religion as the backbone of political and armed struggle. However, such an approach often overlooks the clergy's role in strengthening or weakening such tendencies. Indeed, religion plays a major mobilizing role in many populist movements, but precisely what that role is has not been critically studied in detail within political science. It is recognized as an important response to the perceived threat to traditional values threatened by economic globalization and the uncertainties of rapid technological changes. However, religion has come to be seen as an engine of conflict. The action of the clergy in such political parties, movements, and policies are sometimes of crucial importance because the direct or indirect support of the clergy can strengthen or weaken populism - at all levels. At the same time, religion is usually viewed through three dimensions: "affiliation, measured by church membership; behavior, measured by attendance at liturgies; and belief, measured by commitment to religious values" (McAllister & White, 2007, p. 204).

It is necessary to look at the role of the clergy and lay believers, which will reduce the importance of religion in conflicts, increase the activity of the clergy in peace-making processes; improve the abilities of religious peacemakers and increase the awareness of

political decision-makers about the potential contribution of clergy and religiously oriented peacemakers. Realpolitik decisions often shy away from religious imperatives and view the world in the reductionist political and economic paradigm that existed during the Cold War. For example, the attack on Afghanistan during Eid al-Fitr was an indicator of the lack of interest of the Western powers in the role of religion in political and armed struggles.

The same determinant is needed in ecumenical and interreligious conversations in numerous other areas of the world where populism, nationalism, extremism, and fundamentalism have influenced the development of conflicts and where religion is taken as one of the forms of the identity basis of the warring parties and the war process. Such a basis of conflict can be seen in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Palestine, Israel, Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Nigeria, Kenya, Pakistan, India, Myanmar, Thailand, and many other places. Responsible clergy can play a crucial role in maintaining peace and coexistence there. Faith-based diplomacy (which, in addition to the clergy, includes government officials, civil servants, military officers, and diplomats) may be conceptually new in international relations. However, it is already part of international peacekeeping missions in unofficial diplomacy, and it speaks primarily about reconciliation and conflict transformation, not conflict resolution. In this form of diplomatic effort, peace is not simply the absence of conflict but the restoration of healthy relations between previously warring parties. Namely, the international diplomacy system, although it has a moral foundation, also understands the need for pragmatism in finding reconciliation, while unofficial religious diplomacy is far more demanding in this regard. So far, this branch of international relations and diplomacy is underdeveloped to its potential because it would require a proper integration of transcendent

aspects of religious diplomacies, such as the Islamic notion of hospitality, the Buddhist principle of critical tolerance (giving the other side the right of doubt), the Hindu emphasis on tolerance and inclusiveness as in Gandhi's approach of accepting the enemy, and Christian commands to kiss the enemy, all with the imperative of non-violent response to conflict. The difficulty is then found in the many determinants of canon law in the world religions that justify someone's death, or at least it is interpreted that way.

A religious diplomat must approach such a form of diplomatic action based on spiritual principles and resources. It is the most significant difference between a cleric and a rational diplomat. Their ways of making decisions differ precisely because of the spiritual-rational contradiction. Clerics can pray together, fast, forgive, repent, and find inspiration in the holy scriptures. Such actions are not common even among those diplomats who are practical believers because, in the system of official diplomacy, the spiritual approach does not play a meaningful role. In addition, clerics have a certain spiritual authority that gives them separate legitimacy without necessarily belonging to one of the conflicting parties. A cleric can obtain such legitimacy simply by belonging to a certain religious institution or through the trust instilled by his personal spiritual charisma. To be able to approach the resolution of the religious side of the conflict, such a diplomat must have a pluralistic approach. It means that he must be firmly rooted in his religious tradition, but at the same time, he must know, understand and respect the core of other traditions. A common language cannot be found through pragmatism, as in rational diplomacy, because a religious view cannot be reduced to a common thesis, but a common point of belief in separate theologies must be found and a relationship built based on the acceptance of these positions. An important component of such an

approach is the acceptance of significant and irreparable differences between religions and their theologies; the religious diplomat who cannot accept these differences is unlikely to be able to contribute much. At the same time, those diplomats who accept the approaches of all religious traditions risk the failure of their negotiations. A transcendental approach to conflict resolution is another form lacking in secular diplomacy. Despite their possible suitable mediation and negotiation skills, religious diplomats understand the limitations of human understanding; given their excellent knowledge of the scriptures, they are familiar with human nature and behavior within the spiritual dimensions of human existence. This knowledge can be used exceptionally well in crucial moments of negotiations. For example, the lack of knowledge about the spiritual categories of human existence and the world led in the distant and recent past to the collapse of negotiations between Western diplomats and Eastern stakeholders. Sometimes diplomats made proposals or initiated actions that were deeply opposed to the feelings and worldviews of Muslims. They may not have made these missteps on purpose, but they were undoubtedly unprepared for the spiritual realms of Islam, which in Muslim societies are often as important as rational, secular diplomacy. And finally, religious diplomats have time. Transcendentalism does not include the world's time because the motivation for diplomatic activities and building peace comes from a deep sense of religious calling and is eternal in its essence. All believers are called in the scriptures to follow the same call.

Given that we are rooted in the tradition of secular and rational diplomacy, this approach may seem utopian. Still, today's geopolitical picture of the world is largely marked by religious issues. Therefore, political scientists need increased knowledge about religious structures and laws and the role of the clergy in religious diplomacy.

There are many conflicts in which religion is a significant factor in the identity of one or more communities. For example, the long-standing conflict between India and Pakistan over Kashmir is one example where religion is a critical component of nationalist identities. In this particular case, religious diplomacy accepts a crucial element of Muslim identity, which is that religion and politics are inseparable from the principles of Islam, and with the new Hindu nationalism, a similar thing is happening on the Indian side. Therefore, all participants in peace initiatives must act within a religious framework and must be able to integrate political and theological concepts. In many cases, including that of the Middle East, the will of the national religious elites and their local representatives is not enough to achieve lasting peace; they must be trained in the process of reconciliation, united in independent inter-religious councils, and establish independent observation missions that will primarily monitor the implementation of human rights and quickly warn of difficulties arising at the local level.

In such a process, religious leaders will not only be a significant factor in reconciliation but will feel their genuine involvement in reducing social conflicts, which will rightfully be called the success of religious diplomacy. Considering the longevity of ecclesiastical institutions and the transcendental conception of time, reconciliation between religious institutions and their followers or their influence on social peace may have a more far-reaching perspective than political agreements. As a basic political precondition for this form of diplomatic activity, it is necessary to provide freedom of movement and protection to religious leaders in conflict zones or war zones, i.e., in the public space of society, and to provide protection to shrines, churches, and areas of special religious significance so that they are not destroyed, looted and/or desecrated.

At the global level, the need for religious diplomacy is stronger than ever, and there are already significant steps there through the UN's acceptance of the principle of Dialogue among Civilizations. As a clear counterpoint to Samuel Huntington's often misinterpreted Clash of Civilizations, this was the initiative of former Iranian President Mohamad Khatami in 1997. Instead of conflict, President Khatami recommended dialogue and exchange among academics, students, artists, and athletes to get to know religious traditions, "The other." First of all, this is about the contact between the Islamic world and the Christian West because these two civilizations make up more than half of the world's believers, and peace between religions and stability in the world mainly depend on long-term contact between Islam and Christianity. Most of today's conflicts involve these two religions, which rightly points to the need to discover and support the spiritual core of both religious traditions, which stem from the same source. Religious diplomacy also includes preventive action, although the effectiveness of prevention can never be fully understood, and strong political will is needed. One of the initiatives is the appointment of religious attachés in the regular diplomatic service. They would act as religious diplomats in the most critical areas of the world and thereby partially replace the work of military chaplains, who, in addition to caring for the spiritual well-being of soldiers, must also work on religious diplomacy.

5. Challenges to Religious Peacebuilding Efforts

Finally, one should consider the boundaries of religion-based peacebuilding and its shortcomings and challenges. This way of resolving violent conflicts or maintaining positive peace is a very long, time-consuming, and diverging path. There are many unrealistic expectations from it. There is a problem of agency, whereby it is

difficult to discern in whose name various faith-based organisations act or if the whole religious hierarchy fully supports such a worldview where their respective religious institution gets involved in very practical religion-based peacebuilding. The sincerity of religious actors is of particular concern. Even when peacebuilding efforts succeed, it is challenging to assess their direct impact. That is why the study of religion-based peacebuilding is so heavily tied to political science, peace studies, and sociology, and not only to theological exclamations about peace and conflict.

Approaching any peacebuilding effort should include a strong emphasis on spoilers, i.e., “leaders and parties who believe that peace emerging from negotiations threatens their power, worldview, and interests, and use violence to undermine attempts to achieve it” (Stedman, 1997, p. 5). Spoilers may not be only high-ranking politicians or warring parties, but clergy too when they feel excluded from the peace process or think of it as a betrayal of key values. Some clerics are not spoilers per se but passive in peacebuilding because otherwise, they would be marginalised in their own community, both from religious hierarchy and from the people. Spoilers in religious institutions, furthermore, cannot act without political support or political bias, as partocracy is the leading idea of the political process in many post-conflict societies. International actors have developed a system that gives spoilers many places to act, further strengthening their resistance to positive peace trajectories. Spoilers act after peace has been reached when a comprehensive peace agreement is in place, and everything seems to be normal again. The reason for this is a functional one: “Even if all parties come to value peace, they rarely do so simultaneously, and they often strongly disagree over the terms of an acceptable peace” (Stedman, 1997, p. 7). In the typology of the spoiler, Stedman mentions: “(1) the goal of the spoiler; (2) the intent behind

acts of non-cooperation or aggression; (3) the degree of commitment of the spoiler; (4) the degree of leadership command and control of followers; (5) the degree of unity within the spoiler; and (6) the likely effects of custodian action on the spoiler's willingness to continue aggression, on the other parties to the peace process, and on interested external actors" (Stedman, 1997, p. 17).

Stedman differs between an inside spoiler who "signs a peace agreement, signals a willingness to implement a settlement, and yet fails to fulfil key obligations to the agreement" and uses stealth for that, and outside spoilers who are "parties who are excluded from the peace process or who exclude themselves, and use violence to attack the peace process" (Stedman, 1997, p. 8). In the case of religion-based peacebuilding, every major religious community harbours some spoilers in the process.

Spoilers may come about out of fear from the former adversary, who might take advantage of the peace process in their favour. Others seek power, which is a means to pursue other tangible goals. Stedman differs between limited, greedy, and total spoilers, whereby limited spoilers have "limited goals – for example, recognition and redress of a grievance, a share of power or the exercise of power-constrained by a constitution and opposition, and basic security of followers," total spoilers "pursue total power and exclusive recognition of authority and hold immutable preferences: that is, their goals are not subject to change," while the greedy spoilers are in between and hold "goals that expand or contract based on calculations of cost and risk" (Stedman, 1997, pp. 10-11). These types may change, mainly with political leaders leaving a position. Stedman's influential contribution was challenged by an equally influential proposal from Greenhill and Major, who introduced opportunity structure as a setting where spoilers exist and are rationally acted and

where their achievements are explainable mainly through material benefit rather than strong types of spoilers (Greenhill & Major, 2006). “legitimate” claims and ideas are often complementary with material opportunities, and these spoiler types are mainly complementary.

Conclusion

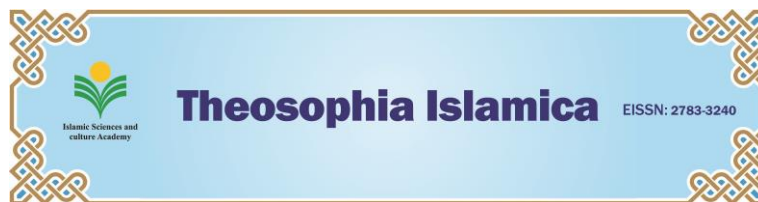
Religions and religious actors have played—and continue to play—both divisive and unifying roles in global conflicts. With growing recognition of faith-based diplomacy and interreligious dialogue, religions can serve as powerful forces for reconciliation, provided their unique characteristics, theological differences, and societal roles are acknowledged and integrated into peacebuilding frameworks.

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Interreligious Dialogue from the Perspective of Islamic Sacred Texts (Necessity, Methods, Policies)

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Abstract

The issue of interreligious dialogue has been seriously examined within Islamic theology since the dawn of Islam. Islamic religious texts have elucidated the rationale, methods, policies, and related topics concerning this dialogue. This research seeks to explore the viewpoint of Islamic sacred texts on the subject of interreligious dialogue. It presents its discussions across six key areas: the necessity of interreligious dialogue, its historical background, the methods and policies of interreligious dialogue, and its topics and implementation, all based on data from Islamic sacred texts. Furthermore, the paper examines Islam's policies regarding the acceptance of religious diversity, respect for religious freedoms, and the creation of an environment for constructive dialogue among religions. The aim of this article is to clarify the position of

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interreligious dialogue in Islam and to offer strategies for international interactions founded on religious and human principles. Ultimately, the findings of the article demonstrate that interreligious dialogue in Islam can play a significant role in reducing tensions and promoting global peace. This research was conducted through a review of data from Islamic sacred texts, utilizing a library-based methodology.

Keywords

Interreligious Dialogue, Sacred Texts, Coexistence, Religions.

Introduction

In today's world, interreligious dialogue is not just a desirable action but an undeniable necessity for the global community. In the past, due to the lack of communication facilities, people were more dependent on tribal communities and their local living environments, having limited contact with other parts of the world. However, today, one of the prominent features of the world is the intermingling of people within this vast global city. Increased migration and advancements in communication technologies demonstrate the essential need for interaction and dialogue among human beings.

Since the majority of the world's population comprises followers of religions, particularly Islam and Christianity, interreligious dialogue has become a more popular phenomenon in the global community than ever before. These dialogues are evident even among the highest religious leaders of Islam and Christianity, such as the meeting of Pope Benedict XVI with Ayatollah Sistani in Iraq and Ahmad al-Tayeb, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Egypt. At lower levels, these dialogues also take place in academic forums.

In this research, we intend to examine the directives of Islamic sacred texts regarding the necessity, methods, and policies of dialogue and interaction with other religions. We will also determine the characteristics of an ideal dialogue from an Islamic perspective. This research holds particular importance because it not only demonstrates that the principle of dialogue and interaction with other religions is affirmed by Islamic sacred texts but also cautions us against extremism and negligence in dialogues. It elucidates the characteristics of a standard and purposeful dialogue from the viewpoint of the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) and his Ahl al-Bayt (A.S.).

This study aims to re-examine the practice (seerah) of the

Prophet of Islam and the Ahl al-Bayt (A.S.) concerning interaction with non-Muslims. It will review the methods and policies governing interreligious dialogue, and even the discussable topics, from the perspective of Islamic sacred texts. This examination will focus exclusively on the teachings of the Quran and the traditions (hadiths) transmitted from the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) and the twelve revered Imams in the Shia school of thought. The main question is: Does the tradition of interreligious dialogue have roots in Islamic sacred texts? And what methods, policies, and topics do these texts suggest for this dialogue?

1. Why Interreligious Dialogue is Necessary from the Perspective of Islamic Sacred Texts

Why should religions engage in dialogue and interaction with one another? Based on interpretations of Islamic sacred texts, interreligious dialogue is a necessity and a fundamental need for human society. The most significant reasons leading to this conclusion include the following:

The Quran directly commands coexistence and the avoidance of division among followers of different religions. This principle is articulated in Surah Ash-Shura, where it states:

«شَرَعَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الدِّينِ مَا وَصَّى بِهِ نُوحًا وَالَّذِي أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ وَمَا وَصَّيْنَا بِهِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى وَعِيسَى أَنْ أَقِيمُوا الدِّينَ وَلَا تَتَفَرَّقُوا فِيهِ»

"He has ordained for you of religion what He enjoined upon Noah and that which We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], and what We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus - to establish the religion and not be divided therein." (Ash-Shura, 13).

In this verse, God explicitly emphasizes the necessity of interaction, tolerance, and the avoidance of division and conflict

among the followers of various prophets, especially between the followers of Moses and Jesus, and the followers of Islam. Therefore, interreligious interaction is a direct command from God to humanity in the Quran.

The global community, especially the modern world, is grappling with unprecedented problems and crises. These are issues that affect all of humanity, regardless of whether they are Muslims or Christians. They are problems that require everyone to collaborate for their resolution, as no single group, country, or region of the world can solve them alone. For instance, if half the people on Earth decide to combat terrorism or global warming, but the other half do not cooperate, these shared problems will naturally remain unresolved. The neglect of a portion of the population concerning these issues inevitably impacts the rest of the world. Addressing these problems demands a collective global determination and action. Therefore, we are compelled to engage in dialogue with each other for a better life and to solidify the global community's resolve to solve common problems. In truth, the global community is like a ship: if it is damaged, everyone will drown. Imam Ali (A.S.) said:

«مَا تَشَاوَرَ قَوْمٌ ، إِلَّا هُدُوا إِلَى رُشْدِهِمْ»

it means: "No people ever consulted together but that they found the right path (to solve their problems)." (Ibn Shu'bah al-Harrani, 1984, p. 233).

When there are shared problems in the world, dialogue allows us to learn from each other's experiences. Muslims might have more experience dealing with religious extremism and can share these insights with Christians. Similarly, Christians might have more experience responding to questions from Satanic cults or anti-God movements. Through this dialogue and interaction, Christians and

Muslims can leverage each other's experiences. When we engage in dialogue, we can benefit from one another's experiences and find better solutions for our common problems. Imam Ali (A.S.) said: *المُسْتَشِيرُ، مُتَحَصِّنٌ مِنَ السَّقَطِ* it means: "He who consults is safeguarded from falling into errors." (Laythi Wasiti, 1997, p. 46)

On the one hand, we know that the very *raison d'être* of religions is belief in God, the promotion of ethics and spirituality, and the pursuit of a wholesome life. These can be summarized as the core teachings of the prophets. These are issues that the divine prophets were tasked with elucidating, and their importance has been repeatedly emphasized in the sacred texts of religions. The Noble Prophet of Islam (PBUH) said: *بُعِثْتُ بِمَكَارِمِ الْأَخْلَاقِ وَ مَحَاسِنِهَا* it means: "I have been sent by God to promote noble moral traits and virtues." (Tusi, 1994, p. 596) This highlights the immense importance and validity of these topics in the divine plan. Unfortunately, today, human societies pay less attention to these issues, and we witness rampant immorality, disregard for human rights, a lack of spiritual focus, and environmental exploitation in human society. If, in religious dialogues, we emphasize the matters stressed in the sacred texts of all religions, we will naturally contribute to strengthening the divine plan for humanity and continuing the path of the prophets.

5- Unfortunately, the current lack of sufficient attention to faith in God, spirituality, ethics, human rights, the elimination of violence, and environmental protection has caused significant harm to human society. We must redirect the global community's focus back to these critical issues. To draw humanity's attention to some of these problems and to inspire collective global resolve, we must leverage all possible resources. One immensely powerful resource for mobilizing this global determination is the assistance of religious leaders. When leaders of various faiths come together and emphasize the importance

of these matters, it will naturally draw the attention of their followers and strengthen their collective resolve. Through this approach, we can lay the foundation for a more successful and ethical religious society, encouraging believers to become better individuals for their communities and for humanity as a whole. Religious leaders play an influential role within their communities, and fostering unified global determination would be impossible without their cooperation and emphasis. If the recommendations of religious leaders align with solving global problems, the world community will be reformed. Conversely, if some religious leaders offer misguided advice to their followers, the reform of the global community will not be possible. The Noble Prophet of Islam (PBUH) said:

«صِنْفَانِ مِنْ أُمَّتِي إِذَا صَلُّحَا صَلُحَتْ أُمَّتِي وَإِذَا فَسَدَا، فَسَدَتْ أُمَّتِي، قَلِيلَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَ مَنْ هُم؟ قَالَ: أَلْفُقَهَاءُ وَ الْأُمَرَاءُ»؛

"Two groups of my community, if they are righteous, my community becomes righteous, and if they become corrupt, my community becomes corrupt." It was asked, "O Messenger of God, who are these two groups?" He replied, "The scholars/ulama and the rulers." (Ibn Shu'bah al-Harrani, 1984, p. 50).

By reviewing history, we can point to specific instances where the mistakes of religious leaders have led to the spread of violence in society, and conversely, where the correct emphasis by religious leaders has helped control violence and extremism.

6- Unfortunately, extremist religious movements within both Islam and Christianity benefit from conflict and tension between religions. When there's a lack of sufficient understanding of each other, these movements can easily spread suspicions and misconceptions. Imam Ali (A.S.) said: "People are enemies of what they are ignorant of." The more ignorant Muslims and Christians are

of each other, the more distant and hostile they feel, allowing extremist groups to further ignite the fires of animosity and division among followers of different faiths. When religions lack sufficient knowledge of one another, misconceptions replace true understanding, and extremists exploit this ambiguous environment to propagate false accusations against other religions, which can be readily accepted. Sadly, due to the incorrect behaviors of some extremist groups and intense media propaganda, erroneous judgments and misperceptions about other religions have formed in the minds of people worldwide. Muslims hold mistaken ideas about Christians, and Christians hold mistaken ideas about Muslims. For instance, Philip W. Sutton and Stephen Vertigans argue that the image of Islam in the West has been portrayed as a "religion of the sword," an image accompanied by stereotypes of "war, aggression, fundamentalism, and terrorism." According to statistical studies conducted by LifeWay Research, affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention, two out of three Protestant pastors in America consider Islam to be a "dangerous" religion. Although this negative image is directly related to the violent actions of extremist takfiri groups like ISIS and Al-Qaeda, it presents a distorted view of Islam. Similarly, an accurate image of Christianity has not formed in the minds of Muslims, and there are also misconceptions in this regard. To prevent this dark atmosphere, we must engage in dialogue with each other to gain a better understanding.

7- One of the dangers threatening our world is the increasing risk of a third world war. Given the existence of weapons of mass destruction and armaments developed with artificial intelligence, such a war could pose an existential threat to humankind. Warmongers are heavily counting on the support of religious followers for their instigations. It is therefore a grave responsibility for religious leaders

to manage the warmongering spirit among their followers through enlightenment and peace-seeking. They must prevent their adherents from falling prey to extremist, warmongering ideologies, all while protecting their followers' security and repelling aggressive enemies. In Islamic culture, there's been a conscious effort to emphasize a spirit of peace-seeking among Muslims wherever possible. God says in the Quran: «وَالصَّلَاحُ خَيْرٌ» "Peace is better." (An-Nisa, 128) And it also says: «يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ادْخُلُوا فِي السَّلَامِ كَافَّةً وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطَوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ» "O you who have believed, enter into Islam (peace) completely and do not follow the footsteps of Satan." (Al-Baqarah, 208). Additionally, in a passage from Sahifa Sajjadiyya, we read: «اللَّهُمَّ وَ» «وَقَفْنَا.. أَنْ نُسَالِمَ مَنْ عَادَانَا: "O God, grant us success... to make peace with those who have shown enmity towards us." (Ali ibn al-Husayn, 1997, p. 188). Imam Hussain (A.S.), in his efforts to enlighten his followers regarding warfare, said: «أَلَا إِنَّ الْحَرْبَ شَرُّهَا ذَرْيَعٌ وَطَعْمُهَا فَطِيعٌ وَهِيَ جُرْعٌ مَتَحَسَّاءٌ... وَ» «مَنْ عَاجَلَهَا قَبْلَ أَوَانِ فُرْصَتِهَا وَاشْتَبَهَاصَ شَرُّهَا ذَرْيَعٌ وَطَعْمُهَا فَطِيعٌ وَهِيَ جُرْعٌ مَتَحَسَّاءٌ... it means: "Indeed, war is a swift evil with a bitter taste and harsh, stinging sips.... Whoever rushes into it before the opportune moment and without insightful effort deserves to harm his people and destroy himself." (Nasr ibn Muzahim, 1984, p. 115). This necessitates that as long as an enemy has not intended our destruction and aggression, and we are not compelled to defend ourselves, we should avoid entering into war and prevent its flames from igniting. Here, the duty of religions to engage in more dialogue, achieve better mutual understanding, and encourage peace in the world becomes paramount. Interreligious dialogue can foster a spirit of peace-seeking within society. Moreover, since dialogue requires interaction and exchange, we naturally gain a deeper understanding of each other. This interaction helps to eliminate false xenophobia, which is one of the primary drivers of war.

8- Religions influence and are influenced by one another, and

many of their teachings share significant similarities. To better comprehend our own religious doctrines, having knowledge of other religions allows us to gain a deeper understanding. The Quran utilizes this approach, as it states: (كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ) "O you who have believed, fasting is decreed upon you as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous." (Al-Baqarah, 183). In the Quran, God utilizes comparative analysis between Islamic teachings and those of other religions in an effort to instill a shared belief. Therefore, we too can benefit from this method to better understand Islamic teachings and solidify them among Muslims. The Gospel is also considered, in a way, a complement to the Torah. Jesus said: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them." (Matthew 5:17-19). Jesus, in a sense, completed the Law of Moses. Similarly, Islam considers itself a confirmation of the Torah and the Gospel. God says in the Quran: وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمُهَيِّمًا عَلَيْهِ And We have sent down to you, [O Muhammad], the Book (the Quran) in truth, confirming that which preceded it of the Scripture and as a guardian over it." (Al-Ma'idah, 48). Therefore, to better understand our own religion, we need sufficient knowledge of other faiths. For this reason, religious leaders and scholars are not exempt from the need for a precise understanding of other religions. And in Surah Ash-Shura, God emphasizes that some of the very commands given to the Prophet of Islam were also previously enjoined upon Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. This resemblance between Islam and religions with divine origins indicates the convergence of religions and their common source. Interreligious dialogue can provide us with a better understanding of other faiths, which can even be beneficial and effective in better understanding our own religion.

2. Historical Course of Interreligious Dialogue during the Time of the Prophet (PBUH) and the Ahl al-Bayt (A.S.)

From the very beginning of Islam, the promotion of dialogue and interaction with other religions was a highly significant issue. These dialogues took place with two distinct approaches. In the religious tradition of the Prophet and the Infallibles (Ma'sumeen), there are numerous references to the texts of previous prophets, including the Torah and the Gospel. Many ethical recommendations from the Prophet (PBUH) and the Ahl al-Bayt (A.S.) are conveyed by quoting earlier prophets like Moses and Jesus. For instance, in hadith texts, there are references to passages from Jesus's Sermon on the Mount, which is an ethical text. Jesus (A.S.) said: « طُوبَى لِلْمُصْلِحِينَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ ، » « أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُقَرَّبُونَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ » "Blessed are those who reconcile among people; those are the closest (to God) on the Day of Resurrection." (Ibn Shu'bah al-Harrani, 1984, p. 501).

The statement by Jesus (A.S.), "Blessed are those who reconcile among people; those are the closest (to God) on the Day of Resurrection," shares a resemblance with Matthew 5:9: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."

The Prophet of Islam and the infallible Imams have narrated hundreds of ethical and mystical teachings from previous prophets, many of which are not found in currently existing sacred texts. These instances indicate that Islamic religious tradition doesn't just recommend verses and narrations from the Prophet and the Ahl al-Bayt; rather, transmitting ethical and mystical content from previous prophets is itself a religious tradition.

The Holy Quran dedicates hundreds of verses to recounting the lifestyles of past prophets, and these prophets are mentioned numerous times. For example: Adam: 25 times, Idris: 2 times, Noah: 43 times,

Hud: 7 times, Salih: 9 times, Lot: 27 times, Abraham: 68 times, Ishmael: 12 times, Isaac: 17 times, Joseph: 27 times, Job: 4 times, Jonah: 4 times, Shu'ayb: 11 times, Moses: 136 times, Aaron: 20 times, David: 16 times, Solomon: 17 times, Elias: 2 times, Elisha: 2 times, Dhu al-Kifl: 2 times, Uzair: 1 time, Zechariah: 7 times, John (Yahya): 5 times, Jesus: 33 times, Jacob: 16 times, Mary: 70 times, 32 of which are direct references. This demonstrates the significant emphasis the Holy Quran places on revisiting the lives of previous prophets. As we know, understanding other religions paves the way for interreligious dialogue. The fact that the Quran contains hundreds of verses about previous religions indicates the Quran's role in facilitating interreligious dialogue.

While Islamic tradition heavily emphasizes interaction based on commonalities, dialogue on points of disagreement has not been neglected. The second common style of academic dialogue, focusing on contentious issues, was highly prevalent in early Islam. These discussions were freely conducted even at the highest levels within the Islamic government. For example, it is narrated that over 20 prominent Christian figures engaged in scholarly dialogue with the Prophet six years before the Hijra (migration to Medina) (Ibn Hisham, n.d., vol. 1, p. 391). The most significant of these dialogues was with the Christians of Najran, when over 60 Christian priests and bishops arrived in Medina and engaged in an extensive discussion with the Prophet of Islam (Ibn Hisham, n.d., vol. 1, p. 575).

Furthermore, the Prophet of Islam engaged in numerous correspondences with the leaders of Christian nations. This included letters to: Najashi, the ruler of Abyssinia (Ethiopia) (Ibn al-Athir, 1965, vol. 2, p. 213). Heraclius (Heraclius), the Byzantine Emperor, and Dughātir, the Bishop of Constantinople (Ibn al-Athir, 1965, vol. 2, p. 211). Muqawqis, the ruler of Alexandria (Ibn al-Athir, 1965, vol. 2, p. 210). He also sent letters

to several other Christian leaders and received responses and gifts from many of them.

After the passing of the Prophet of Islam, numerous dialogues took place between the leaders of the Islamic community. For instance, it's narrated that representatives from Roman lands, led by a Christian guide, arrived in Medina and engaged in a scholarly dialogue with Imam Ali (A.S.) (Tabarsi, 1983, vol. 1, p. 205). Historical sources also provide evidence of dialogues between: Imam Hasan (A.S.) (Tabarsi, 1983, vol. 1, p. 267), Imam Baqir (A.S.) (Kulayni, 1987, vol. 8, p. 122), Imam Kadhim (A.S.) (Ibn Shahr Ashub, 1959, vol. 4, p. 311) with Christians. One of the most significant dialogues was the scholarly discussion held by Imam Reza (A.S.) with leaders of several religions at the court of Ma'mun al-Abbasi (Ibn Babawayh, 1958, vol. 1, p. 154). Additionally, hadith sources recount dialogues between: Imam Hadi (A.S.), the tenth Imam, and a Christian scribe (Qummi, n.d., vol. 1, p. 278), Imam Askari (A.S.), the eleventh Imam, and a Christian physician (Kulayni, 1987, vol. 1, p. 512). It's noteworthy that this style of scholarly dialogue, particularly on points of disagreement, was predominantly common among Muslim elites and the elites of other faiths.

3. Methods of Interreligious Dialogue from the Perspective of Islamic Sacred Texts

If we want to engage in dialogue, we must adhere to the principles and methods of interreligious dialogue. Naturally, not every discussion between followers of two religions can be called "interreligious dialogue." Many discussions can lead to ill-manners, accusations, and insults, which are strongly forbidden in the Quran and Hadith. God in the Quran condemns those who engage in debate without proper methodology, stating: "And among the people is he who disputes concerning Allah without knowledge or guidance or an enlightening

Book." (Al-Hajj, 8). Therefore, from Islam's perspective, not only the principle of dialogue is important, but also its methodology. Some of the most crucial methods emphasized by Islam in interreligious dialogue include:

3.1. Conversation with Wisdom and Admonition

God says in another verse: «ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ» "Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good counsel." (An-Nahl, 125). Dialogue approved by Islam must be based on two principles: admonition and wisdom. Admonition is rooted in goodwill, and naturally, interfaith dialogues should be based on goodwill. Furthermore, dialogue must be founded on wisdom and rationality. Therefore, only dialogues based on wisdom, rationality, and good admonition are approved.

3.2. Good Dialogue

In the Quran, God commands us to speak to people with kind words: «وَقُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْنًا» "And speak to people (non-believers) kindly" (Al-Baqarah, 83). Imam Baqir (peace be upon him) said: «نَزَلَتْ فِي أَهْلِ الذِّمَّةِ» «It was revealed concerning the People of the Book/Covenant (Ahl al-Dhimma)» (Qummi, 1984, vol. 2, p. 320). This noble verse was revealed concerning the manner of interaction with non-Muslims. Not only should we speak to non-Muslims kindly, but even more, we should engage in dialogue in the best possible manner. God says in the Quran: «وَلَا تُجَادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ» «And do not dispute with the People of the Book except in the best manner» (Al-Ankabut, 46). Some dialogues are good, and some are even better. In this verse, God commands that your dialogues with non-Muslims should be conducted in the best possible manner (ahsan). This means we should engage in dialogue with other religions using the best methods. The best

dialogue is one based on logic, mutual respect, ethics, kindness, and tolerance.

3.3. Avoidance of Contention

In Islam, contention and strife (jidal and setizeh-jooyi) are fundamentally considered major sins. In a hadith (narration) from the Noble Prophet (PBUH), we read: « لَا يَسْتَكْمِلُ عَبْدٌ حَقِيقَةَ الْإِيمَانِ حَتَّى يَدَعَ الْمِرَاءَ » "A servant does not perfect the reality of faith until he abandons argumentation (mira'), even if he is in the right." (Shahid Thani, 1989, p. 171). Amir al-Mu'minin (peace be upon him) also says in this regard: « سَبَبُ الشُّحْنَاءِ كَثْرَةُ الْمِرَاءِ » « Excessive argumentation (jadal) and disputation (mira') lead to malice and resentment » (Laythi Wasiti, 1997, p. 281). Therefore, dialogue that leads to contention and strife is not approved in Islam. Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him) says: « الْمِرَاءُ دَاءٌ رَدِيٌّ وَ لَيْسَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ خَصْلَةٌ شَرُّ مِنْهُ وَ هُوَ خُلِقَ إِبْلِيسَ وَ نَسَبُهُ فَلَا يُمَارِي فِي أَيِّ حَالٍ كَانَ إِلَّا مَنْ كَانَ جَاهِلًا بِنَفْسِهِ وَ بغيرِهِ مَحْزُومًا مِنْ حَقَائِقِ الدِّينِ "Disputation (mira') is a terrible ailment. No trait is worse for a person than it. It is the characteristic of Iblis (Satan) and those affiliated with him. No one engages in disputation in any situation except one who is ignorant of their own position and that of others, and is deprived of the realities of religion" (Majlisi, 1983, vol. 2, p. 134). He also said: « الْمُؤْمِنُ يُدَارِي وَ لَا يُمَارِي » "The believer manages (people/situations) with tact and does not dispute" (Daylami, 1988, p. 303).

3.4. Respect for Sanctities

Muslims do not have the right to slander or violate the dignity of a non-Muslim. The Holy Quran prohibits believers from reviling non-Muslims and states: « وَلَا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَسُبُّوا اللَّهَ عَدْوًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ » "And do not insult those they invoke other than Allah, lest they insult Allah in enmity without knowledge" (Al-An'am, 108). Allamah Tabataba'i,

in his Tafsir al-Mizan, states the following regarding this verse: This verse highlights one of the religious etiquettes, by observing which the sanctity of the religious community is preserved and protected from insult, abuse, or ridicule (Tabataba'i, n.d., vol. 7, p. 314). Imam Sadiq stated that: «لَا يَنْبَغِي وَلَا يَصْلَحُ لِلْمُسْلِمِ أَنْ يَقْذِفَ يَهُودِيًّا وَلَا نَصْرَانِيًّا وَلَا مَجُوسِيًّا» "It is not fitting and not permissible for a Muslim to slander a Jew, nor a Christian, nor a Zoroastrian" (Ibn Hayyun, 1965, vol. 2, p. 460). It has also been narrated that when Imam Ali (peace be upon him) heard one of his companions cursing the enemies during the Battle of Siffin, he said to him: «إِنِّي أَكْرَهُ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَكُونُوا سَبَّائِينَ وَلَكِنَّكُمْ لَوْ وَصَفْتُمْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ وَذَكَرْتُمْ حَالَهُمْ كَانَ أَضَوَّبَ فِي الْقَوْلِ وَأَبْلَغَ فِي الْعُدْرِ وَقُلْتُمْ مَكَانَ سَبِّكُمْ إِيَّاهُمْ اللَّهُمَّ احْقِصْ دِمَاءَنَا وَدِمَاءَهُمْ وَأَصْلِحْ ذَاتَ بَيْنِنَا وَبَيْنَهُمْ وَاهْدِهِمْ مِنْ ضَلَالَتِهِمْ حَتَّى يَعْرِفَ الْحَقَّ مَنْ جَهَلَهُ وَتَزْعُمِي عَنِ الْغَيِّ وَالْعُدْوَانِ مَنْ لَهَجَ بِهِ» "I dislike that you be revilers. Instead, if you were to describe their actions and recount their circumstances, it would be closer to the truth and more excusable. It would have been better, instead of cursing them, for you to say: 'O Allah! Preserve our blood and theirs, reconcile between us and them, and guide them from misguidance to the straight path, so that those who are ignorant may recognize the truth, and those who contend with the truth may regret their actions and return to the truth.'" (Nahj al-Balaghah: Khutbah, 206).

5-It's recommended that discussions with non-Muslims be conducted with tolerance. A Christian man once approached the second Caliph and asked him a question. The second Caliph became angry and did not respond. At this point, Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said to him: «لَا تَغْضَبْ يَا أَبَا حَفْصَ حَتَّى لَا يَقُولَ إِنَّكَ قَدْ عَجَزْتَ» "O Abu Hafs, do not be angry, lest people say you became enraged because of your inability to answer" (Ibn Shadadhan al-Qummi, 1984, p. 150). Amir al-Mu'minin said that: «مَنْ غَاظَكَ بِقُبْحِ السَّفَةِ عَلَيْكَ فَعِظْهُ بِحُسْنِ الْجَلَمِ مِنْهُ» "Whoever angers you with their ugly foolishness, then enrage them with your beautiful forbearance towards them" (Laythi Wasiti, 1997, p. 460).

Mufaddal, one of Imam Sadiq's companions, saw Ibn Abi al-Awja sitting near the Prophet's grave (peace be upon him and his family) denying the existence of God. Mufaddal became angry and addressed him furiously. Ibn Abi al-Awja said to him, "Why do you speak this way? If you are a companion of Ja'far ibn Muhammad (Imam Sadiq), he does not speak to us like this, nor does he debate us with arguments like yours. He has heard our words before you, but he has never used foul language with us in conversation, nor has he said anything insulting other than responding to our points. He listens to our words with complete forbearance and composure, and asks us to present whatever evidence we have for our beliefs. Only after we have finished speaking does he begin to speak" (Majlisi, 1983, vol. 3, pp. 57-58). Based on Islamic sacred texts, when engaging in dialogue with non-Muslims, we must do so with wisdom and logic, and in a good, or rather, the best possible manner. This dialogue must be free from contentiousness, insult, anger, and rage.

4. Policies of Interfaith Dialogue from the Perspective of Islamic Sacred Texts

To conduct a standard dialogue, one must observe its policies and do's and don'ts. In Islamic sacred texts, instructions have been given regarding interaction with non-Muslims that can reveal the perspective of the Quran, the Prophet of Islam, and the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) concerning interaction with non-Muslims. The most important of these policies are:

4.1. Respectful Interaction

God has honored and dignified humanity. The Quran emphasizes this, stating: «وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ» "And We have certainly honored the children of Adam" (Al-Isra, 70). This verse makes no

distinction based on the religion, race, or creed of humans. God has bestowed dignity upon "Bani Adam," which includes all people, whether Muslim or non-Muslim. Furthermore, Islamic religious texts advise that if one interacts with non-Muslims, they must treat them with respect. The Prophet of Islam stated: «يَا عَلِيُّ أَكْرِمِ الْجَارَ وَلَوْ كَانَ كَافِرًا» ... "O Ali! Honor your neighbor, even if they are an infidel."... (Shu'ayri, n.d., p. 84). It is narrated that one day, the Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him) was sitting with his companions. At that moment, a group of Jews was passing by, carrying a coffin towards the cemetery. When they came in front of the Prophet (PBUH), he stood up, and his companions also stood. After they had passed, the companions said to the Prophet, "O Messenger of God, he was a Jew (why did you show respect to a Jew)?" The Prophet of Islam replied, "أليست نفساً؟" (Was he not a human being?) (Majlisi, 1983, vol. 78, p. 273).

4.2. Tolerance and Forgiveness

One of the ethical commands in interacting with followers of other religions is tolerance, forbearance, and forgiveness. God in the Quran has commanded: «تُحَذِّرُ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرُ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجَاهِلِينَ» "Show forgiveness, enjoin what is good, and turn away from the ignorant" (Al-A'raf, 199). Mu'ammār ibn Khallād came to Imam Reza (peace be upon him) and asked, "I am a Muslim, but my parents follow another religion. How should I behave with them?" The Imam replied: «فَدَارِهِمَا» "Then treat them kindly, for indeed the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: 'Verily, Allah sent me with mercy, not with disobedience [to parents]'" (Kulayni, 1987, vol. 2, p. 159). When we interact in a multicultural society with people who don't share our thoughts or beliefs, we might be subjected to their envy, insults, humiliation, or injustice. In such situations, our duty is to forgive and forget. God states in the Quran: «وَدَّ كَثِيرٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ

« الْكِتَابِ لَوْ يَرُدُّونَكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ إِيمَانِكُمْ... حَسْدا... فَأَغْفُوا وَاصْفَحُوا » "Many of the People of the Scripture wish they could turn you back to disbelief after your belief, out of envy... So pardon and overlook" (Al-Baqarah, 109). The Prophet's and Imams' approach to interacting with people of different faiths was also along these lines. For instance, a Christian man said to Imam Baqir (AS): « تَوْبَقْرَى » "You are a cow". He (Imam Baqir, peace be upon him) said: "I am Baqir (the splitter of knowledge)." The Christian man said: "You are the son of the cook!" He replied: "Cooking was her profession." The man said: "You are the son of the black, foul-mouthed Ethiopian woman!" He replied: "If you speak the truth, may God forgive her, and if you lie, may God forgive you" (Ibn Shahr Ashub, 1959, vol. 4, p. 207).

4.3. Affection/Love

The most important teaching in Islam is love, and fundamentally, if we want to summarize the entire religion from an Islamic perspective in one word, that word is love. Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him) asked his disciples: « هَلِ الدِّينُ إِلَّا الْحُبُّ » "Is religion anything but love?" (Barqi, 1992, vol. 1, p. 263). Imam Baqir (AS) said: « الدِّينُ هُوَ الْحُبُّ، وَالْحُبُّ هُوَ الدِّينُ » "Religion is love, and love is religion" (Barqi, 1992, vol. 1, p. 263). Therefore, Muslims are advised to extend their umbrella of kindness equally over all people and interact with others, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, with gentleness and love. One of the most crucial commands in this regard comes from Imam Ali's letter to Malik al-Ashtar, where he stated: « وَأَشْعِرْ قَلْبَكَ الرَّحْمَةَ لِلرَّعِيَّةِ وَالْمَحَبَّةَ لَهُمْ وَ اللَّطْفَ بِهِمْ وَلَا تَكُونَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ سَبْعًا ضَارِيًا تَغْتَنِمُ أَكْلَهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ صِنْفَانِ إِمَّا أَخٌ لَكَ فِي الدِّينِ وَ إِمَّا نَظِيرٌ لَكَ فِي الْخَلْقِ » "Instill in your heart mercy for your subjects, and love and gentleness for them. Do not be like a ravenous beast preying on them, for they are of two types: either a brother to you in religion, or a peer to you in creation" (Nahj al-Balaghah: Letter, 53). Imam Ali also

commands Malik al-Ashtar never to miss an opportunity to show kindness to those of different faiths, stating: « وَلَا تَحْقِرَنَّ لُطْفًا تَعَاهَدْتَهُمْ بِهِ وَ » "And never belittle any act of kindness you show them, even if it is small" (Nahj al-Balaghah: Letter, 53).

4.4. Freedom of Expression

In the Quran, God encourages people to listen to different opinions, stating: « فَبَشِّرْ عِبَادِ، الَّذِينَ يَسْتَمِعُونَ الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ أَحْسَنَهُ » "So give good tidings to My servants, who listen to speech and follow the best of it" (Az-Zumar, 17-18). When God commands us to listen to different speeches and choose the best among them, then naturally, the opportunity to hear these speeches must be provided. Therefore, in Islam, the freedom of expression for other religions is not restricted; rather, it is respected and even encouraged so that these words can be heard. Furthermore, from an Islamic perspective, followers of every religion can practice their own rituals and beliefs, and no one can prevent them from doing so. It has been narrated from Imam Kadhimi (peace be upon him): « قَالَ تَجُوزُ عَلَى أَهْلِ كُلِّ دِينٍ مَا يَسْتَحِلُّونَ » He said: "It is permissible for the followers of every religion to do what they deem lawful" (Shaykh Hurr al-'Amili, 1989, vol. 26, p. 158). For followers of every religion, what they themselves consider halal (lawful) and permissible is indeed permissible and allowable. Many instances of free dialogue between the leaders of various religions and the Prophet and his household (Ahl al-Bayt) can be seen, which indicate the freedom of religious discourse in early Islam. Even great Islamic figures would encourage others to ask questions in interfaith dialogue sessions. In a meeting Imam Ali had with Jewish leaders, he said: « اسْأَلْ عَمَّا شِئْتَ يَا أَخَا الْيَهُودِ » "Ask whatever you wish, O brother of the Jews..." (Ibn Shadadhan al-Qummi, 2002, p. 121). And in a meeting with a Christian man, he (Imam Ali) said to him: « يَا نَصْرَانِي أَقْبِلْ عَلَيَّ وَجْهَكَ وَ »

4.5. Equality

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Commander of the Faithful! I am an Arab woman, and this woman is a non-Arab (foreigner)." Ali (peace be upon him) replied: "Indeed, I find no superiority for the children of Ishmael in this public wealth over the children of Isaac" (Thaqafi, 1990, vol. 1, p. 46).

4.6. Security

During times of war and conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims, if some non-Muslims request dialogue, it is the duty of Muslims to provide them with security for dialogue, despite all restrictions and emergency war conditions. They can freely and without any concern enter Islamic lands to engage in dialogue, hear the message, and return to their own place safely. Allah states in the Quran: « وَإِنْ أَحَدٌ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ اسْتَجَارَكَ فَأَجِرْهُ حَتَّى يَسْمَعَ كَلَامَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ أَبْلِغْهُ مَأْمَنَهُ ذَلِكَ » "And if any one of the polytheists seeks your protection, then grant him protection so that he may hear the word of Allah, and then deliver him to his place of safety. That is because they are a people who do not know." (At-Tawbah, 6).

4.7. Kindness and Benevolence

According to Islamic teachings, a Muslim should show kindness and benevolence towards non-Muslims. Allah states in Surah Al-Mumtahanah: « لَا يَنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ أَنْ تَبَرُّوهُمْ » "Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes - from being righteous toward them." (Al-Mumtahanah, 8). One of the Islamic commands is to provide financial aid to needy non-Muslims. In various narrations, assisting or giving charity to non-Muslims is recommended. The Prophet of Islam (PBUH) said: « لَا تَوَدَّ السَّائِلَ ... يَا عَلِيُّ » "O Ali... do not turn away a beggar, even if he is a disbeliever" (Shu'ayri, n.d., p. 84). Abo Nasr said: I presented to Imam

Sadiq (peace be upon him), إِنَّ أَهْلَ السَّوَادِ يَفْتَحُمُونَ عَلَيْنَا وَفِيهِمُ الْيَهُودُ وَالنَّصَارَى "Indeed, the people of Sawad (a region in Iraq) come to us, and among them are Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians. Should we give charity to them?" He replied, "Yes." One of the Islamic injunctions is the payment of Zakat. Muslims are required to spend a portion of their wealth in the way of Allah. One of its expenditures is assisting non-Muslims, who are known in the Quran by the term "Al-Mu'allafati Qulubuhum" (those whose hearts are to be reconciled/inclined towards Islam) (At-Tawbah, 60). This portion of the money should be spent solely on helping non-Muslims, especially those non-Muslims who have misconceptions about Islam. According to the clear statements of jurists, this verse instructs the giving of gifts to non-Muslims, including Christians, Jews, and disbelievers (idolaters) (Tusi, 1967, vol. 1, p. 249). Furthermore, Islamic sources state that if a non-Muslim was unable to work, a stipend would be allocated for them from the public treasury (Bayt al-Mal). It is narrated: An old, blind man was begging. Amir al-Mu'minin (Ali ibn Abi Talib) (peace be upon him) asked, "What is this?" They replied, "O Amir al-Mu'minin, he is a Christian." Amir al-Mu'minin (peace be upon him) then said, "You employed him until he became old and incapacitated, and then you denied him? Spend on him from the public treasury" (Tusi, 1987, vol. 6, p. 293). It is perhaps the first time in history that disability insurance was instituted when Imam Ali (peace be upon him) set a monthly stipend for a disabled Christian. Furthermore, while it's known that everyone in a governing system must pay taxes, the Prophet of Islam exempted monks and priests from paying taxes. In the Prophet's covenant with Christians, it states: « وَلَا يُحْمَلُ عَلَى الرِّهْبَانِ وَالْأَسَاقِفَةِ وَلَا مِنْ يَتَعَبَّدُ جُزْيَةً وَلَا غَرَامَةً. وَأَنَا أَحْفَظُ ذِمَّتَهُمْ أَيْنَمَا كَانُوا مِنْ بَرٍّ أَوْ بَحَرٍ فِي الْمَشْرِقِ أَوْ الْمَغْرِبِ وَالْجَنُوبِ وَالشَّمَالِ، وَهُمْ فِي ذِمَّتِي وَمِثَاقِي وَأَمَانِي مِنْ كُلِّ مَكْرُوهٍ. وَكَذَلِكَ مَنْ يَتَفَرَّدُ بِالْعِبَادَةِ فِي الْجِبَالِ وَالْمَوَاضِعِ الْمُبَارَكَةِ لَا يُلْزَمُهُمْ

«مما يزرعونه لا خراج ولا عُشْر» "No jizya (poll tax) or fine shall be imposed on monks and bishops, nor on those who devote themselves to worship. I shall protect their covenant wherever they may be, by land or by sea, in the East or West, North or South. They are under my protection, covenant, and security from all harm. Similarly, those who devote themselves to worship in the mountains and blessed places shall not be obliged to pay any land tax or tithe on what they cultivate" (Ahmadi Mianji, 1998, vol. 3, p. 758).

4.8. Good Conduct Towards Followers of Other Religions

The great religious figures of Islam consistently strived to combat xenophobia and encouraged Muslim society to coexist and interact with followers of other religions. Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him) told one of his students: «يَا إِسْحَاقُ ... إِنَّ جَالِسَكَ يَهُودِيٍّ فَأَحْسِنْ مُجَالَسَتَهُ» "O Ishaq... if a Jew sits with you, then treat him well" (Ibn Babawayh, 1993, vol. 4, p. 404). The Prophet (peace be upon him) had a Jewish neighbor who fell ill, and the Prophet visited him to inquire about his health: "The Prophet (PBUH) visited a Jewish neighbor of his" (Tabarsi, 1992, p. 359). During the time of the Prophet and the Imams, non-Muslims would easily sit with them and discuss the principles of Islam. For example, the Prophet engaged in a debate with a Jew about prophets (Tabarsi, 1983, vol. 1, p. 40). Furthermore, they even commanded hospitality towards non-Muslim guests. The Prophet (peace be upon him) told Imam Ali: "O Ali! Honor the guest, even if he is a disbeliever..." (Shu'ayri, n.d., p. 84). Imam Ali, when addressing a Jewish scholar, referred to him as "O Jewish brother" (yā akhā al-Yahūd) (Ibn Shadadhan al-Qummi, 2002, p. 121).

Based on the Islamic sacred texts, several policies are outlined for interacting with non-Muslims. These interactions must be founded on respect, tolerance and forgiveness, affection, freedom of expression,

equality, security, and kindness and benevolence. Our conduct towards those of other faiths should be based on the principles of coexistence and good social conduct.

5. Dialogue Topics with Other Religions from the Perspective of Islamic Sacred Texts

Now that we are engaging in dialogue with people of other faiths, what topics can be the focus of our discussions? In the Holy Quran, Allah provides a fundamental directive for dialogue with non-Muslims, stating: « قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ » "Say, 'O People of the Scripture, come to a word that is equitable between us and you...'" (Al 'Imran, 64). In this verse, Allah commands the followers of the People of the Scripture – meaning Christians, Jews, and other religions possessing a divine book – to gather and engage in dialogue. This verse is the most pivotal in the Quran on this subject. Allamah Tabataba'i, in his Tafsir al-Mizan, writes in his interpretation of this verse:

In essence, the invitation is for all of us to agree and unite upon the meaning of a single word. This means acting upon the foundation of that singular word. If Allah, in the Quran, attributes the word to Himself, it is to make us understand that this word is something everyone speaks of and is on everyone's lips. Among us, it is common to say: "People are of one heart and one tongue in this decision," and this implies that they are united in believing, acknowledging, disseminating, and promoting it. Consequently, the meaning of the verse under discussion becomes: "Come, let us all hold fast to this word and join hands in disseminating it and acting upon its requirements" (Tabataba'i, n.d., vol. 3, p. 246).

This verse not only commands the principle of dialogue but also instructs us on what topics we should discuss. It's natural for

religions to have differences and not be identical in all aspects. However, in this verse, Allah asks us to engage in dialogue over common ground. This is a significant point highlighted in the Quran.

In Surah Al-Ankabut, Allah also states: « لَا تُجَادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ ... وَ قُولُوا آمَنَّا بِالَّذِي أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَإِلَيْكُمْ وَإِلَهُنَا وَإِلَهُكُمْ وَاحِدٌ وَ نَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ » "And do not dispute with the People of the Scripture except in the best manner... and say, 'We believe in that which has been revealed to us and revealed to you. And our God and your God is one, and we are in submission to Him.'" (Al-'Ankabut, 46).

Given that dialogues should focus on common ground (كلمه سواء), the question naturally arises: what topics can be considered shared or "common ground"? Humanity, of course, shares thousands of concerns that are equally relevant to Muslims and Christians. Some of the most important topics suitable for dialogue can be categorized as follows:

Given that dialogues should focus on common ground (كلمه سواء), the question naturally arises: what topics can be considered shared or "common ground"? Humanity, of course, shares thousands of concerns that are equally relevant to Muslims and Christians. Some of the most important topics suitable for dialogue can be categorized as follows:

1. Theological Issues:- Spirituality and its role in human life, Belief in One God and monotheistic principles, Responding to Atheism and arguments for the existence of God, Combating Extremism and promoting moderate religious understanding.
2. Ethical Issues: Family, marriage, and divorce, The rights and duties of family members towards one another, Virtues and Vices (moral excellences and flaws), Lifestyle and ethical

living, Social, Economic, and Political Ethics, Ethics of Knowledge and Education, Controlling Anger, finding joy and peace, Suicide and Abortion (ethical considerations).

3. Human Rights Issues: Children's Rights, Eliminating Discrimination against Women, Minority Rights, Supporting Refugees, Care for the Elderly, Assisting the Poor, Sick, and Disabled, Challenges of Artificial Intelligence, Eradicating Poverty and Hunger, Quality Education and Healthcare, Child Rearing, Right to Health, Justice and Eliminating Discrimination, Rejection of Tyranny, Security, Freedom, and Human Dignity.
4. Issues Related to Violence and Conflict: Combating Drug Abuse, Eliminating Violence, Peace and Reconciliation, Preventing War, Combating Terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction, Prohibition of Unconventional Weapons, International Humanitarian Law (Ethics of War), Prisoners' Rights, Security of Civilians in armed conflicts.
5. Environmental Issues: Water Scarcity and over-utilization of natural resources, Environmental Protection and animal welfare, Global Warming, Environmental Pollution, Sustainable Development.

We find numerous instances in the lives of the Prophet (PBUH) and the Imams (A.S.) where they referred to the sayings of past prophets, such as Moses (A.S.) and Jesus (A.S.). They did this to promote principles of faith, ethics, and the foundations of lifestyle, as well as mutual human rights, to advocate for peace and the elimination of violence, and more.

While the Quran heavily emphasizes dialogue centered on common ground, it doesn't neglect academic discussions on points of

disagreement. As mentioned, critical dialogues were very common and conducted freely in the early days of Islam. However, these discussions primarily took place in academic settings and among scholars from both sides.

6. Methods of Interfaith Dialogue in the Contemporary World

In the modern world, communication has taken on new styles and models. Naturally, interfaith dialogues need to adapt to contemporary patterns. Here are some methods that can be considered in today's world:

6.1. Organizing Interfaith Gatherings and Conferences on Common Topics

One of the most common forms of interfaith interaction is the gathering of religious leaders and the holding of interfaith conferences. These types of gatherings have been increasingly frequent in the contemporary era, and continuing this path can lay good groundwork for other interfaith activities. Although the traditional method of such gatherings needs re-evaluation to better utilize their potential, Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: "Whoever consults with people of intellect, will be illuminated by the lights of intellects" (Tamimi Amidi, 1987, p. 442).

6.2. Developing Articles and Books on Common Topics

The esteemed Prophet of Islam said, "Tie down knowledge with writing" (Ibn Shu'bah al-Harrani, 1984, p. 36). One of the capacities for academic interaction in the field of interfaith dialogue is the development of books or articles on shared topics, with the participation of two or more scholars from different religions. In this approach, scholars from each religion would explain the perspective

of their sacred texts and theologians on a particular subject. Since these books are written with the involvement of multiple scholars from different faiths, followers of each religion can not only see their own faith's viewpoint on the topic but also become familiar with the perspectives of other religions. When such a work is published under the imprint of two or more publishing houses or research centers from different countries, it can be jointly distributed among people of various countries or faiths, fostering a better understanding of other religions for readers. Additionally, specialized interfaith journals can be created and published. These journals could be a collaboration between two or more different religions, published with the cooperation of two or more universities from different faiths. Each issue could be dedicated to a specific topic, with scholars from each religion expressing their faith's viewpoint on that subject. These journals should be jointly published in several countries, with the collaboration of academic societies from different religions, and made available to the general public.

6.3. Establishing Academic Programs in Religious Studies at Universities and Seminaries

If we view interfaith dialogue as a specialized field, we need to train experts in this area. The Prophet of Islam (PBUH) said: "Whoever acts without knowledge, what he corrupts is more than what he rectifies" (Barqi, 1992, vol. 1, p. 198). The field of interfaith dialogue requires elite and capable scholars who can disseminate this knowledge within society. Without acquiring these specializations and skills, entering the realm of interfaith dialogue can even be detrimental. Therefore, we need to establish academic programs in interfaith dialogue. These programs would train a generation of professors and researchers capable of holding chairs in interfaith

dialogue and effectively participating in interfaith academic forums.

6.4. Facilitating Interfaith Religious Travel

One of the challenges hindering successful interfaith dialogues is the lack of direct understanding among religions. Perhaps many Muslim clerics have never directly encountered a Christian or a Jew, and many Christian clerics may have never been present in an Islamic gathering or experienced an Islamic way of life. This lack of direct knowledge allows misconceptions, often promoted by media or other sources, to fill the void of truth. To address this, we must facilitate opportunities for religious leaders to get to know each other. This means enabling Christian scholars to closely observe Islamic societies and participate in them, and similarly, for Muslim scholars to be present in Christian communities, engage in direct and friendly dialogue with Christian leaders, and ask each other questions. In the Quran, Allah highlights one of the benefits of travel as understanding truths, stating: « اَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْاَرْضِ فَتَكُونْ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ يَعْقِلُونَ بِهَا اَوْ اَذَانٌ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا » "Have they not traveled through the land, so that their hearts (and minds) may thus learn wisdom and their ears may thus learn to hear?" (Al-Hajj, 46). Facilitating short-term interfaith tours for scholars, creating study opportunities, and faculty exchanges, among other initiatives, can lay serious groundwork for productive interfaith interactions.

6.5. Mutual Support in Humanitarian Crises

As Allah commands in the Quran: "Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes - from being righteous toward them" (Al-Mumtahanah, 8). This means that Allah does not prohibit you from being kind and just towards those who do not fight you for your faith or drive you from your homes. Therefore, if Muslims witness a Christian

community in any part of the world facing war and unrest, or afflicted by floods or other natural disasters and in need of help, it is their duty to rush to their aid and deliver the necessary humanitarian services.

6.6. Formation of a Global Interfaith Union

The Quran instructs us to "cooperate in righteousness and piety" (Al-Ma'idah, 2). In our modern world, we've seen many global and regional unions emerge for collaboration and synergy, from the United Nations to countless regional organizations. However, a significant gap remains: the absence of a global interfaith union. This kind of union would unite religious leaders and respected interfaith non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Its purpose would be to play a vital role in addressing global challenges. It could organize interfaith gatherings at various levels to tackle worldwide issues and issue declarations. Such a union could feature specialized sections for women, youth, leaders, artists, and more, holding annual meetings to foster continuous dialogue and cooperation.

Conclusion

Based on the Islamic sacred texts, interfaith dialogue is a long-standing tradition that has been central to the Holy Quran, the Prophet of Islam, and the twelve Shia Imams since Islam's inception. The early leaders of Islam were well aware of the necessity and importance of coexistence, interaction, and understanding of other religions among their followers. They provided numerous directives for engaging with adherents of other faiths, particularly Christianity and Judaism, emphasizing the crucial nature of such interactions. They strived to foster a public culture of tolerance, dialogue, coexistence, and interaction with other religions within Islamic society. Religious teachings encouraged the principle of dialogue, promoting a good and

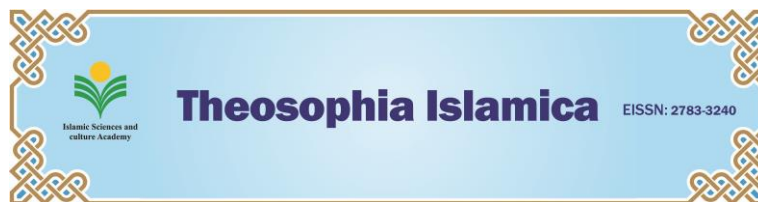
excellent manner of communication while discouraging hostility and insults towards followers of other religions. This laid the foundation for a healthy dialogue among Muslims. In interacting with non-Muslims, several principles were recommended: respect, tolerance and forgiveness, affection, freedom of expression, equality, security, kindness and benevolence, and good social conduct. Furthermore, the Holy Quran explicitly commands dialogue on shared topics and concerns. These subjects can include belief in One God, theology, ethics, human rights, the elimination of violence, and environmental issues. Given the characteristics of today's world, these dialogues can be conducted through organizing interfaith gatherings and conferences, producing books and articles on common topics, establishing interfaith dialogue programs in academic institutions, facilitating interfaith travel for scholars, supporting non-Muslims in humanitarian crises, and forming a global interfaith union.

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Ethics of the Cooperation between Islam and Christianity Based on Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) Model of Dialogue and Second Vatican Council



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Abstract

Today, one important method for overcoming interfaith conflicts is the analysis of historical documents, which can provide a model or a way to prevent future conflicts. This article aims to focus on two significant historical documents that hold promise for improvement and progress among the followers of two major Abrahamic religions: Islam and Christianity. These two historical documents are "The Prophet Muhammad's Letter to the Christians of Saint Catherine's Monastery in North Egypt" and the declaration of the Second Vatican Council, also known as *Nostra Aetate*, which addresses the declaration on the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions from the Vatican's perspective. It appears that the comparison of these two important documents is being undertaken for the first time in this article, seeking to emphasize a

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positive impact among the followers of these two religions, which constitute more than half of the world's population. The research method of this article is based on exploratory, thematic, and descriptive study relying on library research.

Keywords

Ethics, Islam, Christianity, dialogue, prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Second Vatican Council.

Introduction

The past decade's history is filled with examples of human suffering and conflict, which can be attributed to some religious individuals' misunderstanding of religion's role in their lives. However, in any effort to achieve peace and social justice among the world's people, religion cannot be overlooked. Contrary to the predictions of Marx, Freud, Nietzsche, and other Enlightenment theorists who viewed religion as a crutch that would be cast aside with the advancement of scientific knowledge, religion has not only failed to disappear but has also maintained its position. Among just the two main religions discussed in this article (Christianity and Islam), over three billion people still shape their lives (with varying degrees of depth and commitment) around the meaning they find in Christ or the Quran. This reality demonstrates that religion, despite its challenges and misunderstandings, remains a massive and influential force in the lives of a large portion of the world's population¹.

Islam and Christianity are two of the most populous and influential world religions today. These two faiths share many commonalities. Most importantly, they both trace their lineage back to a common ancestor, Abraham, who is considered the spiritual father of these religions, hence their designation as Abrahamic religions. Given this, it's essential for any religious person within these two faiths to strive for greater proximity, especially considering the world's current challenging and tense situation, including the potential for a Third World War. This perspective has drawn many scholars to the subject, highlighting significant reasons for Christian theology to engage with Islamic theology and doctrines. These efforts stem from a desire for deeper insight and the belief that Christianity and Islam

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have much to say to each other. Relevant issues include the conception of God, the God-human relationship, and the formation of religious identity. Dialogue, or peaceful negotiation, is the path recommended by Islam. Islam is founded on the principle of dawah (invitation), which is another term for peaceful negotiation, clearly indicating that violence is completely forbidden in Islam. The Prophet of Islam (PBUH) began his mission—to communicate his ideology to people—by conversing with them, listening to their objections, and trying to convince them of his viewpoint through arguments. In a situation where many people are under the impression that Muslims are close-minded and unwilling to engage in discussions with people of other faiths, dialogue and effective communication based on tolerance, respect, and love are highly constructive. This is particularly true given that the Holy Quran provides very clear guidelines and encouragement for Muslims to participate in interfaith dialogue.

So, as one conflict resolution, for Christians and Muslims in particular, it would seem that there is much room and much need for this kind of dialogue to come to a better mutual understanding and appreciation as demonstrated in Küng's¹ review of the foundations of each faith in his demonstration as follows:

- No peace among the nations without peace among the religions.
- No peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions.
- No dialogue between the religions without investigation of the foundations of the religions. (Küng, 2007: p. xxiii).
- And there will be no life on the earth without Global Ethics

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Starting this process of dialogue from the point of view of a Global Ethic or from the mutual concern for social justice and the promotion of peace seems like a particularly important place to begin because it allows the dialogue to occur between the two faiths at many levels. Accordingly, this essay brings about two important evidences from Islam and Christianity to shed light on the foundation of conflict resolution and peacemaking found in the texts to seek approximation.

The main questions of this article are: "Do historical documents exist to pave the way for interfaith dialogue?" and "Is the ethics of dialogue between Islam and Christianity acceptable based on historical examples?"

The research methods employed in the initial stages of a research project, namely exploratory research and library studies, are utilized when there is limited or scarce existing information or knowledge about a subject. This is a dynamic and flexible approach aimed at gaining insights, discovering trends, and generating initial hypotheses. The examination of the Prophet Muhammad's Letter will also be conducted based on a thematic analysis approach, which can reveal more practical results.

1. Letter of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

Among the letters and treaties sent by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to various leaders, places, and kings, there is a letter addressed to the bishops and Christians of Saint Catherine's Monastery. Based on this letter or covenant, which was written by Imam Ali (AS) on the third day of Muharram in the second year of the Hijra (623 AD) in the Prophet's Mosque in Medina and sealed with the Prophet's (PBUH) seal, one can discern the spirit of ethics, peace-seeking, and the Prophet's dialogue-based way of life. This document, in turn, is considered a masterpiece in defending the rights of religious

minorities. This letter is one of the most documented manifestations of peace, recognized by Muslims, Christians, and Jews, and its original copy is still preserved in the monastery. The text of the letter is as follows:

The Charter of Prophet Muhammad with the Christians of Saint Catherine's Monastery

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

This is a covenant written by Muhammad ibn Abdullah, the Messenger of God, for all Christians. This letter is written by Muhammad ibn Abdullah for all people, to give them glad tidings and to warn them, so that after the Prophet, people will have no argument against God. And God is Almighty and Wise. He wrote this letter for the people of his nation and for everyone who is Christian, whether in the East or West of the world, whether far or near, whether an eloquent Arab or a non-Arab, whether known or unknown. This letter is a covenant for them, and whoever breaks this covenant, and opposes it, and transgresses what has been commanded, has certainly broken the covenant of God, trampled upon the covenant of God, mocked the religion of God, and is deserving of a curse; whether they be rulers or believing Muslims. What is for the Christians is like what is for me, my relatives, my nation, and my friends; they are like my family and my protected people (Ahl al-Dhimmah). We forbid any harm or abuse against them. Therefore, no bishop shall be asked to change his bishopric; no monk shall be forced to abandon his monasticism. Whoever is in a monastery shall remain; whoever is traveling may return. None of their church buildings and places of worship shall be destroyed; nothing belonging to the churches shall be brought into the mosque building and the homes of Muslims. Whoever does so has broken the covenant of God and opposed His Prophet. There shall be no

jizya (poll tax) nor tribute for monks and bishops; and I shall protect them wherever they are; on land or in the desert, in the East or West, in the South or North, they are under my protection and my covenant, and are safe from all evil. Similarly, whoever worships in the mountains or holy places shall also be protected, and do not take tribute or zakat from their produce; do not dispute with them except in the best manner. Whoever opposes the covenant of God and acts contrary to it, has opposed the covenant of God and opposed the Messenger of God. No one who remains steadfast until the end of the world shall oppose this promise until the end of the world.

The history indicates that several important companions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), such as Abu Bakr ibn Abi Quhafah, Umar bin Khattab, Uthman bin Affan, Abu Darda, Abdullah bin Masoud, Abbas bin Abdulmutallib, Zubair bin Awam, Talha bin Abdullah, Saad bin Muaz, Saad bin Ubadah, Thabit bin Nafis, and Zaid bin Thabit, witnessed this letter. This demonstrates that the letter is well-documented (Taheri Akerdi, 2009, p. 72).

It's also reported that the original copy of this agreement, which could be termed the first international treaty, was obtained by Ottoman Sultan Selim and is currently preserved at Saint Catherine's Monastery in Egypt. This treaty has been published on several occasions and in various languages, including in Paris in 1630 AD in Arabic with a Latin translation. It was also published in London in 1655 in Arabic and Latin, and in Egypt on 28 Shawwal 1298 AH (corresponding to September 22, 1881 AD). (Ahmadi Mianji, 1419 AH, Vol. 3, pp. 757-762)

This covenant stands as the first model and historical document of prophetic dialogue, and it is considered one of the most prominent testimonies to the peace-seeking spirit of the Messenger of God (PBUH), which was rooted in dialogue. The serious pursuit of

this letter by international organizations in Islamic countries is strongly anticipated.

1-1. Recipients of the Letter

Regarding which group of Christians this letter was addressed to, there are two well-known possibilities:

1- The Christians of Najran: One possibility is that this letter was addressed to the Christians of Najran in southern Arabia. The Christians of Najran were initially idol worshipers. However, before the advent of Islam, they converted to Christianity through the invitation and miracles of Faymiyun, who was an important Christian leader at that time. They also remained Christian throughout the Prophet's (PBUH) lifetime.

2- Christians of Saint Catherine's Monastery: The second possibility is that this letter was addressed to the bishops and monks residing in Saint Catherine's Monastery in southern Egypt, written near Mount Sinai. Based on the research conducted, it appears that the letter in question is more consistent with the second recipient. In any case, the important point about this letter is that it was a letter of trust requested by the custodians of Saint Catherine's Monastery from the Prophet (PBUH); therefore, the content of the covenant also confirms this.

1-2. Analyzing the Contents of the Letter

To more accurately analyze the provisions of this covenant, it's essential to examine its key terms. This can open a window for drawing conclusions and adapting a model for interactive communication between Islam and Christianity. The examination of this covenant will be conducted using a thematic analysis approach, which can yield more practical and applicable results.

This method, one of the most common approaches to qualitative content analysis, first extracts the main content and theme of each phrase in the letter that contains a core message, in accordance with the research method. Then, by bringing these themes together, the main topics are formed, and their interconnected network is mapped by referencing other propositions present in the text of the covenant.

In this agreement, all seven principles (7 Cs) of effective communication are observable. These are:

1. Clear
2. Concise
3. Concrete
4. Correct
5. Coherent
6. Complete
7. Courteous

This means that by examining the content and themes present in this letter from the perspective of these seven principles of effective communication, it becomes entirely clear that, firstly, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) expressed his promises in a clear and unambiguous manner. Precision in word choice and their consistency with general Christian expressions is evident. Furthermore, the meaning of the themes and words is completely consistent and coherent with the verses of the Quran. The form of address is also entirely polite, encompassing all aspects of effective communication.

1-3. The Principle of Perpetuity of the Contract

The first and last sentences of this covenant/letter are decisive,

and the reasons for this are as follows:

After beginning the letter with the name of God and mentioning His attributes of mercy and compassion, this letter was not exclusively addressed to a specific group of Christians. Instead, its scope was extended to all Christians. This is significant, especially considering that only a specific number of individuals had requested a letter of protection from the Prophet (PBUH).

This is the covenant that Muhammad bin Abdullah - the Messenger of God - wrote for all Christians.¹

As also emphasized at the end of the letter, this covenant is considered enduring and alive until the Day of Judgment. Therefore, this agreement remains valid for Christians until the Day of Resurrection, and its observance is obligatory for all Muslims—whether Arab or non-Arab, noble or captive, rich or poor. Violating this covenant is considered a breach of the covenant and agreement with God:

Any person is alive until the end of this world; should not oppose this promise until the end of the world.²

The result is that the generality of the letter and its perpetuity or eternity are the two main themes of the first and last sentences, which have also attracted the attention of Christians.

One of the most important rules of effective communication is to take the lead in communication in order to gain confidence. Pioneering in sending this covenant to Christians shows prophet's high spirit regarding his mercy to the worlds. The principle of immortality and indisputability of the contents of the letter also fully indicates its

1. Part of the letter

2. Part of the letter

universality. The eternality of the letter speaks of the foresight of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and as if he knew one day terrorist groups in the name of Islam would come to divide and tarnish the image of Islam by assaulting Christians, so he expressed the contents of the letter with great concern, so that first of all, there was a dispute in interaction between the Islamic Ummah¹ and Christians, and secondly, since they are people of the book and under the responsibility of Islam, their blood should be respected and protected.

1-4. The Principle of the International Treaty of This Agreement

One of the main themes of this covenant, after its unique characteristic of permanence, is its nature as a formal international agreement. A crucial point at the beginning of the letter is the interpretation of the word "'ahd" or "covenant," which distinguishes it from merely a letter that typically conveys news or an invitation. When a covenant is made, it becomes legally binding and enters the realm of treaties. Since the provisions of this treaty are international in nature, it can be considered one of the first international treaties in history, concluded 14 centuries ago. This can be a source of pride for Muslims as a manifestation of peace. This covenant is, in fact, considered one of the first international treaties and human rights charters.

Since the word "Peymān" (پیمان), translated here as "treaty" or "covenant," is the infinitive form of a verb in Persian, it effectively conveys the meaning of mutual participation and action by both

1. Ummah is an Arabic word meaning Muslim identity, nation, religious community or the concept of a Commonwealth of the Muslim Believers (أمة المؤمنين ummat al-muminīn)

parties. Therefore, "Peymān" can be understood to mean a bilateral agreement, a mutual vow, or similar concepts, as defined by lexicographers. This aligns with the meaning of the Arabic word "'ahd" (عهد), which has been translated here as "covenant" or "treaty."

1-5. The Principle of Evangelism and Warning (Good News and Admonition) in the Covenant

According to the content of the covenant, its message is both evangelistic (bearing good news) and admonitory (warning). The good news and praise are for Muslims who act upon the covenant of peace and friendship; they will receive its reward. Conversely, this covenant warns against violating its provisions, as its breach is considered a mockery of the agreement, and the violator will be deserving of divine punishment and retribution. Qur'an addresses Prophet Muhammad (PBUH):

We sent you with the truth as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner,
(Fatir: 24)

According to the verse, it seems that the tone of the verse is as warning, that O Prophet! Do your duties; if they accept they will be in the right path; and if they mocked your words, God is powerful and wise in their punishment.

1-6. The Principle of non-excusability and Inviolability

Another important theme of this agreement is its non-excusability; therefore, any attempt to violate this agreement is not allowed. This means that from the legal point of view, as it was said,

this is considered an international treaty, and from the Shari'a¹, jurisprudence and even moral point of view, violating this covenant is considered a crime and a sin because it is also an individual attempt to commit a crime. It is also considered social crime because it distorts the image of Islam. The main question in this section is why the Holy Prophet (PBUH) was so worried about the transgression of this agreement. It seems that the foresight of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) proved that he was aware of the situation that will plague the Islamic society in the future and religious and minority massacres will take place. Therefore, they emphasize the importance of loyalty to this letter.

1-7. The Divinely Curse on the Transgressor of the Agreement

In another phrase of the contract, it is stated as follows:

Whoever breaks the covenant in it, and opposes it, and transgresses what was ordered; Indeed, he has broken God's covenant, violated God's covenant, and mocked God's religion, and he deserves a curse.²

It's noteworthy that this clause of the agreement is repeated three times in the text, and each time, its violation is equated with trampling on the divine covenant and mocking God's religion. The inclusion of such strong warnings seems to indicate the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) concerns. These concerns might have stemmed from the conditions or events of that time, or even from the future (our present world), where such covenants are continually violated.

1. Sharia الشريعة is the fundamental religious concept of Islam—namely, its law. The religious law of Islam is seen as the expression of God's command.

2. Part of the letter

Yes, absolutely. History is indeed full of events that clearly demonstrate the reasons for the Prophet's (PBUH) concerns. Whether it was during the time of some caliphs, which led to the expulsion of Christians from Islamic lands, or the Crusades, which lasted for about 200 years, or insults directed at priests or churches and similar incidents. All these events led to reciprocal behaviors and ultimately created an anti-interactive atmosphere between Muslims and Christians.

It seems that if the followers of all religions throughout history had benefited from this prophetic example and His Holiness's human rights declaration, the history of humanity would not have witnessed so many massacres and genocides. Therefore, an examination of the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) practical life clearly demonstrates the right of the People of the Book to reside in Hijaz and, generally, in other Islamic lands.

1-8. The Principle of Inclusiveness and Religious Contiguity in the Agreement

In a paragraph of this contract, it is stated as follows:

He writes this letter for the people of his nation, and for everyone who is a Christian in the east or west of the world - whether he is far or near, whether he is an eloquent Arab or a stranger, whether he is known or unknown - this letter is a covenant for them.¹

In light of these provisions, the temporal, linguistic, spatial, and human inclusivity in the covenant and trust expressed by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is completely evident. This means that all Christians fall under the responsibility of the Prophet (PBUH) and

1. Part of the letter

the banner of Islam. This covenant is not specific to a particular sect or denomination of Christians, in a particular region or using a specific language, nor does it encompass a distinct nationality. Therefore, physical proximity is not the criterion; rather, intellectual and ideological proximity is what matters.

Therefore, this section of the covenant represents an important chapter of human rights from the perspective of Islamic civilization. It carries an anti-racism message and supports the message of human rights and the rights of religious minorities.

This is precisely the model that Muslims today present in contrast to Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" theory, and even Fukuyama's "End of History" theory; a model deeply rooted in Islamic history.

This analogy demonstrates that in today's world, where we often witness media wars, propaganda, indoctrination, and deceptions that in some ways lead to the formation of a specific type of globalization based on strategic goals (both long-term and short-term), we can, in contrast, theorize a culture and civilization that moves towards a world full of justice and spirituality by highlighting the Prophetic interactive and humanitarian model. This is precisely what pure human natures throughout history have longed for.

Another aspect of this inclusivity is its governmental dimension. This means that even rulers, who hold legal and official power and responsibility, are on equal footing with ordinary individuals. They do not have the right to coerce in their interactions with minorities; rather, their responsibility in this regard is even greater.

Considering such a foundation, the famous saying of Amir al-Mu'minin Imam Ali (AS), the first infallible Imam of the Shi'ites, comes to mind. Fourteen centuries ago, in a letter to Malik al-Ashtar

al-Nakha'i, his governor whom he was sending to Egypt, he stated:

«إِنَّهُمْ صِنْفَانِ إِمَّا أَخٌ لَكَ فِي الدِّينِ وَإِمَّا نَظِيرٌ لَكَ فِي الْخَلْقِ»؛

There are two types of people: either they are your religious brothers, or they are human beings and in terms of creation, they are the same as you (Nahj al-Balagha: letter 53).

Therefore, the theme of temporal, spatial and human inclusiveness along with the theme of religious and intellectual proximity instead of physical proximity is the message of this part of the contract.

1-9. The Principle of Peaceful Coexistence and Prohibition of Harming Christians

It is stated in a part of the contract between the Holy Prophet of Islam and the Christians of St. Catherine's Monastery:

It is for Christians, what is for me, my relatives, my nation and my followers; the same is for them as if they are my relatives and people of Dhimma. We forbid any kind of harassment (from Muslims' side to them).

Based on this article, one of the fundamental principles of human life is revealed: the principle of peaceful coexistence and cooperative peace. The Prophet (PBUH) referred to Christians as Dhimmis (meaning under protection and covenant), considering them dependent on him and akin to his own relatives.

Based on this, just as within a family, its members observe the principles of proximity, and despite the existence of possible differences, in the face of people outside the home, they show themselves united, Christians and Muslims also as two brothers should be together in peace and friendship, and put aside seditious

differences.

According to Islamic law and jurisprudence, the decision of the people of the book to stay in the Islamic land is as follows, that if they are in the territory of the Islamic government they should choose one of these three things:

- 1- Acceptance of Islam
- 2- War
- 3- Adherence to the terms of Dhimma and paying Jizyah.

Jizyah technically refers to a tax, which the Islamic government collects from the people of the book (Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, Sabeits) for their residence in the Islamic country, and immunity from the aggression of others - based on the Dhimma contract.

According to the Qur'an (At-Tawbah: 29), it is not only recommended to take jizya; Rather, it is obligatory, and it was received from the People of the Book during the time of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Therefore, Dhimma means safety and official support, and a Dhimmi¹ non-Muslim is someone who lives in an Islamic country, and has made an agreement with Muslims, to observe their social regulations, and to pay a certain tax as well; And in return, his life and property should be safe. These people are called Ahl al-Dhimma or Dhimmi. (ذمي او اهل الذمة).

As a result, the preservation of life, property, and honor of

1. Adjective form of the word Dhimma which comes before the noun referring to a non-Muslim.

every individual from the People of the Book—and even non-believers—who comes under the responsibility of Islam, is obligatory, just like that of co-religionist citizens. Harming them is forbidden in Islamic law. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) even exempted religious leaders, including monks and bishops, from paying jizya, which can be considered a privilege and an honor for Christian leaders.

1-10. The Principle of Religious and Social Security Based on the Principle of Fraternity

In one paragraph of the contract, it is stated as follows:

No bishop is required to change his episcopate; No monk needs to give up his monasticism; Whoever is in the monastery can stay; Whoever is in trip, turn around; No buildings of churches and Christian businesses should be destroyed, and nothing belonging to the churches should be brought into the building of mosques and houses of Muslims. Whoever does this, has broken God's covenant and opposed His Messenger.

Considering this passage from the contract, which is a translation of the verse "La ikraha fi al-deen «لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ»" (Al-Baqarah: 256) translated as "Let there be no compulsion in religion" some of them, out of ignorance of the history of the Prophet of Islam (PBUH), thought that the Prophet, like the tyrants and tyrannical rulers, acted by force and pressure. It will change people's opinion; But these unchangeable principles - clearly - showed that religion and ritual is not a category that can be propagated with reluctance and compulsion; Especially the fact that in the light of clear reasons and obvious miracles, the path of truth has been revealed from falsehood, and there is no need for these matters.

Based on this, the religion of Islam does not seek to impose an opinion, and it does not want to induce something by force, reluctance, sword, and military power. This topic is so far concerned by religion, which does not even allow a father to pressure his child to change his opinion. It is also clear that this basis is not only related to the People of the Book, and the rule of the honorable verse has not been abrogated; Rather, it is an eternal rule and in harmony with the logic of reason.

On the other hand, in terms of social security, using buildings belonging to religious minorities, confiscating their properties, and trespassing on their properties are considered forbidden, and the sensitivity of this issue politically - especially in the contemporary era - is higher than other times that Islam and Muslims are accused of violence, and sectarianism, murders, and genocides are spread in the name of Islam and the rules of Islam.

Based on this, this part of the agreement is informative and pleasant, and it is due to the existence of these paragraphs that this agreement has become eternal; So that it is still fresh after fourteen centuries.

Therefore, we come to the consonance and honorable verse:

«وَأَعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا»؛

And hold fast to the rope of God, and do not be scattered (Al Imran: 103).

So God the Almighty likes and calls for brotherhood, sympathy and friendship. He does not Like separation and war.

1-11. The Principle of Special Respect for Religious Leaders

In one of the passages of the contract regarding honoring

Christian elders, it is written:

There is no jizya or tax for monks and bishops, and I maintain their duty wherever they are - in the land or desert, in the east or west, in the south or north - they are under my support and covenant. And they are safe from any harm.

This part of the contract overlaps with the seventh and eighth parts - stated - in a way; But it is distinguished because it exempts Christian monks and bishops, who are considered religious leaders of Christianity, from the obligation to pay Dhimma, which is a kind of glorification of the position of religious leaders; Also, he considers them to have the advantage of immunity from all evil and social harms.

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1-12. The Principle of Honoring Christian Holy Places

The phrase from which this principle is derived is as follows:

Anyone who worships in mountains or blessed places is like this; do not take tribute or zakat from their crops.

Respecting and consecrating the holy places of Christians and other followers of the Book, as well as exempting them from paying Dhimma, jizya, tribute and zakat, is one of the important points of this agreement. In some periods of history, it has been observed that after conquering and occupying a nation, holy places were used as stables or storage places for trophies, which according to this passage of the treaty, the lives and property of the residents of these blessed places were respected; In such a way that the preservation of this building has been essential.

In Quran we read:

«وَلَوْ لَا دَفَعَ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَهَدَمْتُ صَوَامِعَ وَبِيَعَ وَصَلَوَاتٍ وَمَسَاجِدُ يُذْكَرُ فِيهَا اسْمُ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا وَلَيَنْصُرَنَّ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَنْصُرُهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ»

And if God does not repel some of the people by means of others, monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques in God's would be destroyed; And God Helps those who help Him; God is strong and invincible.

According to this covenant/text, it is God who preserves holy places; if they were in human hands, people would destroy them. God loves unity, and by mentioning all holy places together in the verse, God favors coexistence among religions.

1-13. Respectful Argumentation

In another phrase of the agreement, attention has been paid to the topic of respectful argumentation and dialogue in facing Christians: Do not argue with them except for something good.¹

This section of the letter is a rendition of Verse 46 of Surah Al-Ankabut (The Spider) from the Holy Quran, which the Prophet (PBUH) utilized in this covenant. Respectful dialogue forms the foundation of a fruitful conversation. Therefore, the meaning of this statement is that the words used when addressing others, as well as during discussions and debates, must be polite. The tone should be friendly, and the content must be well-reasoned. The voice's cadence should be free from yelling, contention, violence, and insults. Similarly, hand gestures, eye and eyebrow movements, all facial expressions, and body language—which typically complement human expression—should also be conveyed in this same polite and

1. Part of the letter

respectful manner.

All these emphases in Islam are because the goal of discussion and dialogue is not superiority or arrogance, nor forcing the other party to change their religion. Instead, the aim is for the impact of words and the influence of speech, ethics, and behavior to penetrate the depths of the other party's soul. The best way to achieve this goal is precisely this Quranic method. Sometimes, if an individual reflects the truth in such a way that the other party perceives it as their own thought—and not the speaker's—they will show flexibility more quickly. This is because humans are as fond of their own ideas as they are of their own children.

According to Quranic verses, there are 14 criteria for a fruitful dialogue:

1. Lack of superiority in conversation and argumentation; (Saba: 24).
2. Demanding proof from the other party; (Al-Anba: 24).
3. Acceptance of the word of truth - for expediency – even if it is unacceptable; (Al-Baqarah: 219).
4. The opportunity to think and reflect on the other side; (Al-Touba: 6).
5. Observance of politeness and moderation in speech and behavior; (Al-An'am: 108).
6. Observance of fairness and not judging everyone with one eye; (al-Rum: 33).
7. Piety in words and a logical conversationalist; (Al-Nahl: 125).
8. Soft, gentle and lenient speech; (Taha: 44).
9. Right speech; (Al-Naba: 38).

10. Not insisting on words or insisting on accepting your opinion; (Taha: 44).
11. Good listening; (Al-Touba: 61).
12. Honorably responding the audience; (Al-Nisa: 86).
13. Generous rejection; (Al-Nisa: 86).
14. Audienceology or enough knowledge on audience. (Ibrahim: 4).

In conclusion, based on a meticulous examination of the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) historical covenant, it's clear that the best model for interfaith dialogue is one built upon love, respect, honor, trust, and brotherhood. All the images we often see today in the media, or similar platforms, that contradict this model, are not authentic to the teachings of Islam and Christianity, nor to any other divine religion.

2. Second Vatican Council Declaration (Nostra Aetate)

In the official document of the Second Vatican Council, a positive and clear stance on Islam and Muslims is evident. The Second Vatican Council in Christianity was a council that transformed the Catholic Church and the world, as well as the Catholic Church's approach to other religions. This council is the twenty-first ecumenical council of the Catholic Church, proposed by Pope John XXIII in 1959 and held four years later, in 1962. Unlike other Christian councils, the Second Vatican Council was not held in an atmosphere of conflict and hostility towards followers of other religions. This council had countless effects, including liturgical (worship), theological, biblical, and social developments, which are incomparable to previous councils. This council opened a new way of thinking for the Catholic

Church. A new approach and perspective towards other religions were adopted, along with acceptance and reconciliation with them.

The Vatican document, for the first time in the history after the rise of Islam, praises Muslims with a respectful view and invites everyone to forget the past and sincerely strive for mutual understanding and work together to preserve and spread the benefits of all. Strive for humanity, social justice, moral values and peace and freedom (Nostra Aetate, 1965, para. 3). Nostra Aetate which is the last document of twelve important documents has 5 parts and in the third article of this document, which most Persian sources mention only this part of the document as the works of this council, we read:

The church also respects Muslims. They worship the one, living and righteous God who is kind and capable and the creator of heaven and earth and who has spoken to humans. Muslims try to wholeheartedly submit to God's unseen commands. Just like Abraham who surrendered to God and Islamic faith is eager to connect itself to Abraham. Although Muslims do not recognize Christ as God, they respect him as a prophet. They also respect Mary, his virgin mother, and sometimes even ask her for help sincerely. Moreover, they are waiting for the Day of Judgment, when God will reward all those who are resurrected on that day after death. Finally, they value moral life and worship God especially through prayer, charity and fasting (NA: 3).

In the appendix of this article you can find the full text declaration and just to briefly elaborate here some lines are pointed out. The Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican, commonly known as the Second Vatican Council or Vatican II, was the 21st and most recent ecumenical council of the Catholic Church. The council met in Saint Peter's Basilica in Vatican City for four periods (or

sessions), each lasting between 8 and 12 weeks, in the autumn of each of the four years 1962 to 1965.

Pope John XXIII called the council because he felt the Church needed "updating" (in Italian: *aggiornamento*). In order to better connect with people in an increasingly secularized world, some of the Church's practices needed to be improved and presented in a more understandable and relevant way. Support for *aggiornamento* won out over resistance to change, and as a result the sixteen magisterial documents produced by the council proposed significant developments in doctrine and practice, notably:

1. *Lumen gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church on "the universal call to holiness"
2. *Apostolicam actuositatem*, a decree on The Apostolate of the Laity
3. *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, a decree On Eastern Catholic Churches
4. *Dei verbum*, the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation emphasized the study of scripture as "the soul of theology"
5. *Sacrosanctum concilium*, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy to restore "the full and active participation by all the people"
6. *Gaudium et spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World concerned the promotion of peace, the gift of self, and the Churches mission to non-Catholics
7. *Dignitatis humanae*, a declaration on religious freedom
8. *Unitatis redintegratio*, a decree on Christian ecumenism
9. *Nostra aetate*, a declaration about non-Christian religions

The council had a significant impact on the Church due to the scope and variety of issues it addressed. Some of the most notable changes were in performance of the Mass, including that vernacular languages could be authorized as well as Latin. (O'Malley, 2008).

2.1. The Relationship with Islam Before the Second Vatican Council

From the beginning of the emergence of Islam in the 7th century AD, Christianity did not have a violent relationship with Islam for about three centuries. They encountered a new phenomenon and needed an opportunity to get to know it. During these three centuries, Christianity was stagnant. The new logic, strong revelation support and dialogue approach in the doctrine of Da'wah¹ were the attractive features of Islam. During this time, Islam covered many lands of the Middle East and even Spain. In the 11th century AD, Pope Gregory VII incited Christian society to confront Muslims by proposing the idea that fighting for a just cause to promote good in society was not only not a sin, but also rewarded. Pope Urban II issued a command for war against the Muslims, and many groups of Christians took up the cross to fight them. Many atrocities and acts of plunder occurred during these wars. For example, in 1099, the Crusaders successfully captured the city of Jerusalem (Bayt al-Maqdis). After the city's capture, the commander of the Christian army wrote to the Pope: "If you wish to know what happened to the enemies who fell into our hands in Jerusalem, know only that our people rode in the Solomonic portico in a sea of Muslim blood, and the blood reached up to the knees of the horses."

It is estimated that more than 70 thousand people were killed

1. Invitation to Islam

in Al-Aqsa Mosque. Crusade War lasted until 1291. Continued From the 13th century to the middle of the 20th century and until the Second Vatican Council, the church's approach towards Muslims was a cultural approach. Although sometimes military or provocative actions were carried out by the Catholic Church, the dominant approach of this period was the cultural approach and the destruction of the image of Islam.

Shortly after the conclusion of the fourth and final term of the Second Vatican Council, on December 8, 1965, Pope Paul VI created a series of commissions in the Organization of Rome to translate the Council's conclusions into Church action. He created two commissions on the issue of Jews and non-Christian religions.

This document is well reflected in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, which is the covenant of the church and believers and was written thirty years after this council. In the case of Jews, Muslims and other religions, the same thing as the instructions of the believers is what the Second Vatican Council stated in this document.

2.2. The Approach of the Vatican to Other Religions in the Contemporary World

The current state of dialogue with other religions in the organization of the Catholic Church is significantly different from the past. The Roman Catholic Church has ambassadors in countries with other religions and accepts ambassadors from them. The Holy See (Vatican) participates in joint conferences and meetings and welcomes religious dialogue projects. Of course, it is possible that in practice, believers of any religion may go against the orders of the elders of that religion or extremes in religious matters. Simultaneously with the holding of the Second Vatican Council and after it, the Roman

Catholic Church made a serious decision to study other religions and opened numerous papal centers and institutes in the field of studying them or strengthened existing centers in this field. One of these centers is the Pontifical Institute of Islamic Arabic Studies (PISAI). This institution, which was opened in Tunisia in 1926 by the African Missionaries Association with the aim of shaping evangelistic activities in the Arab Islamic countries, was transferred to Rome in 1964 and in the context of the Second Vatican Council, and under the patronage of Pope Paul VI, to the title of Interfaith Dialogue Center continued to operate.

2.3. Analyzing the Declaration

Now, as we analyzed the letter of prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to Christians, here we should also do the same to this letter of Vatican to the Christians.

2.3.1. Principle of Communication with God

In the view of Christianity, other religions are rooted in life and complete love for Christ (Lamb and Levering, 2008, p. 397) Christians have reconciled with God through Christ and love Him and other religions also in a different way go to God for guidance. Church also believes other religions are also respect Christianity so this should be mutual. According to the new approach of Vatican, every religion has a ray of light that we should not despise and we should not extinguish it because these religions are serving humans need, or the miracle of Christ's light, which is the truth.

2.3.2. Principle of Respect

Based on the declaration "N.A." (Nostra Aetate), since Muslims respect Christians, Christ, and Mary, this respect should be reciprocated

by Christians.

2.3.3. Principle of Monotheism

Both Islam and Christianity believe in monotheism and the oneness of God. While there are fundamental differences in this regard that are beyond the scope of this discussion, both religions have learned to respect each other. Christians believe that the Trinity signifies "one" triangle, which in their belief is considered a form of monotheism. Nevertheless, Muslims and Christians can come together around a discussion table to discuss common problems, which we will address in the next section (Section 7).

2.3.4. Principle of Dialogue

After nearly 2000 years, Christians are striving to move past historical grievances and adopt an approach based on dialogue. This statement and this approach present a truly unique opportunity for both religions to find common ground and engage in further discussion and exchange.

2.3.5. Principle of Global Awareness

After two millennia, the Vatican has decided to confront modernism and global changes. In the modern era, Christianity has transformed in rapid and unprecedented ways. Ecclesial, biblical, and mystical Christianity are still recognizable, but they've flowed into new combinations and are forming new churches and denominations. Accordingly, this global awareness and respect for Islam are significant due to the fact that Islam is now the world's second-largest religion, and the Christian and Muslim populations constitute over half of the world's population. If these two religions are at peace, it means the entire world can be at peace.

2.3.6. Principle of Global Ethics

In the last sentence of the declaration which we brought at the beginning of this chapter we read:

They value moral life and worship God especially through prayer, charity and fasting (Nostra Aetate, 1965, para. 3).

Based on this section, it's easy to conclude that ethics and spirituality are one of the strong common foundations in both Islam and Christianity, just as similar expressions can be found in the letter of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) which emphasizes ethics in dealing with Christians and their property.

There are many similarities in the realm of ethics among various religions, including Islam and Christianity, meaning that one cannot claim the principle of ethics has two different meanings. However, regarding ethical manifestations, while there are many commonalities, sometimes instances arise where ethical principles might differ. There's no doubt about the historical relationship between religion and ethics, and in every religion, a significant portion of its texts, recommendations, and focuses are dedicated to ethical issues. From this perspective, and from an interfaith standpoint, ethics are an inseparable part of different religions. After the formation of philosophical thought in humanity, these two subjects have raised many issues in philosophical discussions. For a long time, the question of the relationship between these two ideas has attracted many thinkers in both fields, giving rise to diverse viewpoints.

3. Different Types of Interreligious Dialogue

Before we begin this section, it's important to note that, based on various perspectives on the types of dialogue, traditionally, seven types can be extracted from this significant reality:

3.1. Dialogue to Convert

The old approach to interfaith dialogue focused on converting the other person. That is, the goal was to lead people of other faiths to adopt one's own religion and guide the dialogue in that direction. The view of missionaries in the past, who considered themselves righteous and intended to spread their religion, was largely along these lines. Even the presence of many religions in other societies, which found the opportunity to emerge, primarily had the aspect of converting people living in a different culture. This type of approach receives little attention in today's society.

3.2. Dialogue for the Fault Finding

The second approach to interfaith dialogue can involve trying to find an opportunity within the conversation to attack the other party's religion and highlight its weaknesses and shortcomings. This is usually done indirectly. In this method, which is also old and obsolete, individuals attempt to present the weaknesses and ambiguities of opposing religions and the strengths of their own faith, often in the form of polemics. By doing so, they aim to pave the way for the acceptance of their own religion. This approach is essentially a continuation of the previous one (conversion-focused dialogue). However, in a globalized society influenced by current world conditions, religious dialogue no longer addresses such issues.

3.3. Dialogue between Religions in Order to Understand the Cultural Conditions of Different Societies and Religions

In this approach, which can be considered an improved version of the previous two (conversion and polemic), religions strive to view

society from a secular perspective and examine how religion functions as a cultural element. Within any society, there are various cultural components such as language, customs, dress codes, and housing types; religion can be one of these elements. In this type of approach, phenomenological viewpoints typically dominate, evaluating all religions through a secular analysis. The focus here is on investigating what impact a religion can have on society and the ways in which these impacts have manifested.

3.4. Dialogue between Religions to know Strengths and Weaknesses

The fourth approach is based on the premise that to know ourselves, we must know the other. We achieve self-respect only when we show respect for others. This becomes clear when we recognize the nuanced presence of others alongside us.

3.5. Mutual Understanding of Religions from each Other

The fifth approach in interfaith dialogue is mutual understanding of religions. This means that in the dialogue process, we aim to comprehend what the other religion entails and how our own faith fits within that context. Unfortunately, in the relationship between Islam and Christianity, we encounter many instances where our Muslim perceptions of Christianity, and Christian perceptions of us Muslims, are completely different. Through dialogue, we can resolve these misunderstandings.

3.6. Dialogue between Religions to Find the Commonalities of Religions

The sixth approach in interfaith dialogue involves simply

identifying commonalities and differences. This attitude often views the conversation as a raw exchange of information. Both sides acknowledge some shared aspects and some distinctions, superficially attempting to emphasize the commonalities. Unfortunately, many popular religious discussions, including recent ones in our society, often devolve into mutual compliments without yielding any concrete results. In such interfaith dialogues, one side typically affirms what the other says, and vice versa, in an effort to express common ground. They talk and talk, but ultimately, no tangible conclusion is reached. While this type of conversation is an improvement over the previous five, it still falls short. The next type of dialogue is more effective.

3.7. Interfaith Dialogue for Joint Cooperation in Facing Common Problems

The seventh approach that can be very effective and fruitful is planning for cooperation in the contemporary world in the face of human disasters by relying on the basic beliefs of religions. In the current world, many human disasters threaten humanity, for which the interaction of religions can be a cure. Decline of moral values, decline of global ethics, loneliness, aimlessness and emptiness of human being enclosed in technological life, environmental catastrophes, oppression and injustice, disintegration of family, lack of identity all and all, are the consequences of secular life. Religions can present their common solutions to prevent these human disasters in dialogues between themselves with a pragmatic interaction and provide much cooperation for the growth and spiritualization of the troubled humanity of the current era. This type of interreligious dialogue can be the most fruitful interreligious dialogue. Religions should cooperate with each other, interact and sit together to make practical plans and step by step show their important presence in the world society and

actively participate in the era of globalization and have their unique role. (Ayatollahi, 2012).

That is why this article tries to give an ethical model through the seventh type of dialogue which is based on ethical and moral approach which will be discussed in next part.

Conclusion

Based on the preceding chapters, ethics serve as the central and unifying point between Islam and Christianity. Drawing upon the two historical documents mentioned, a global model can be extracted, rooted in ethics and spirituality. This model would encompass love, respect, peaceful coexistence, courtesy, and other dimensions and principles outlined in those documents. In various religions, the ethical system is built upon ontological, epistemological, valueological, anthropological, and theological foundations. To uncover the ethical elements of any religion, it is essential to first identify these foundations and, with an understanding of them, endeavor to analyze that religion's ethics. According to the seventh type of interfaith dialogue discussed in Chapter 4, interfaith dialogue should first focus on finding common ground. Second, it should help to solve shared problems, and ultimately, it should serve God and humanity, who are created in the image of the Almighty.

Appendix

Full Text of the Declaration

Nostra Aetate

<http://jti.isca.ac.ir>

Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to non-christian Religions

Second Vatican Council

October 28, 1965

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Theosophia Islamica

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1. In our day, when people are drawing more closely together and the bonds of friendship between different peoples are being strengthened, the church examines more carefully its relations with non-Christian religions. Ever aware of its duty to foster unity and charity among individuals, and even among nations, it reflects at the outset on what people have common and what tends to bring them together.

Humanity forms but one community. This is so because all stem from the one stock which God created to people the entire earth (see Acts 17:26), and also because all share a common destiny, namely God. His providence, evident goodness, and saving designs extend to all humankind (see Wis 8:1; Acts 14:17; Rom 2:6-7; 1 Tim 2:4) against the day when the elect are gathered together in the holy city which is illumined by the glory of God, and in whose splendor all peoples will walk (see Apoc 21:23 ff.).

People look to their different religions for an answer to the unsolved riddles of human existence. The problems that weigh heavily on people's hearts are the same today as in past ages. What is humanity? What is the meaning and purpose of life? What is upright behavior, and what is sinful? Where does suffering originate, and what

end does it serve? How can genuine happiness be found? What happens at death? What is judgment? What reward follows death? And finally, what is the ultimate mystery, beyond human explanation, which embraces our entire existence, from which we take our origin and towards which we tend?

2. Throughout history, to the present day, there is found among different peoples a certain awareness of a hidden power, which lies behind the course of nature and the events of human life. At times, there is present even a recognition of a supreme being, or still more of a Father. This awareness and recognition results in a way of life that is imbued with a deep religious sense. The religions which are found in more advanced civilizations endeavor by way of well-defined concepts and exact language to answer these questions. Thus, in Hinduism people explore the divine mystery and express it both in the limitless riches of myth and the accurately defined insights of philosophy. They seek release from the trials of the present life by ascetical practices, profound meditation and recourse to God in confidence and love. Buddhism in its various forms testifies to the essential inadequacy of this changing world. It proposes a way of life by which people can, with confidence and trust, attain a state of perfect liberation and reach supreme illumination either through their own efforts or with divine help. So, too, other religions which are found throughout the world attempt in different ways to overcome the restlessness of people's hearts by outlining a program of life covering doctrine, moral precepts and sacred rites.

The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. It has a high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and doctrines which, although differing in many ways from its own teaching, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men and women. Yet it proclaims and is in duty

bound to proclaim without fail, Christ who is the way, the truth and the life (Jn 1:6). In him, in whom God reconciled all things to himself (see 2 Cor 5:18-19), people find the fullness of their religious life.

The Church, therefore, urges its sons and daughters to enter with prudence and charity into discussion and collaboration with members of other religions. Let Christians, while witnessing to their own faith and way of life, acknowledge, preserve and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians, together with their social life and culture.

3. The church has also a high regard for the Muslims. They worship God, who is one, living and subsistent, merciful and almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth,¹ who has also spoken to humanity. They endeavor to submit themselves without reserve to the hidden decrees of God, just as Abraham submitted himself to God's plan, to whose faith Muslims eagerly link their own. Although not acknowledging him as God, they venerate Jesus as a prophet; his virgin Mother they also honor, and even at times devoutly invoke. Further, they await the day of judgment and the reward of God following the resurrection of the dead. For this reason they highly esteem an upright life and worship God, especially by way of prayer, alms-deeds and fasting.

Over the centuries many quarrels and dissensions have arisen between Christians and Muslims. The sacred council now pleads with all to forget the past, and urges that a sincere effort be made to achieve mutual understanding; for the benefit of all, let them together preserve and promote peace, liberty, social justice and moral values.

4. Sounding the depths of the mystery which is the church, this sacred council remembers the spiritual ties which link the people of the new covenant to the stock of Abraham.

The church of Christ acknowledges that in God's plan of salvation the beginnings of its faith and election are to be found in the patriarchs, Moses and the prophets. It professes that all Christ's faithful, who as people of faith are daughters and sons of Abraham (see Gal 3:7), are included in the same patriarch's call and that the salvation of the church is mystically prefigured in the exodus of God's chosen people from the land of bondage. On this account the church cannot forget that it received the revelation of the Old Testament by way of that people with whom God in his inexpressible mercy established the ancient covenant. Nor can it forget that it draws nourishment from that good olive tree onto which the wild olive branches of the Gentiles have been grafted (see Rom 11:17-24). The church believes that Christ who is our peace has through his cross reconciled Jews and Gentiles and made them one in himself (see Eph 2:14,16).

Likewise, the church keeps ever before its mind the words of the apostle Paul about his kin: "they are Israelites and it is for them to be sons and daughters, to them belong the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race according to the flesh, is the Christ" (Rom 9:4,5), the Son of the Virgin Mary. It is mindful, moreover, that the apostles, the pillars on which the church stands, are of Jewish descent, as are many of those early disciples who proclaimed the Gospel of Christ to the world.

As Holy Scripture testifies, Jerusalem did not recognize God's moment when it came (see Lk 19:42). Jews for the most part did not accept the Gospel; on the contrary, many opposed its spread (see Rom 11:28). Even so, the apostle Paul maintains that the Jews remain very dear to God, for the sake of the patriarchs, since God does not take back the gifts he bestowed or the choice he made.² Together with the prophets and that same apostle, the church awaits the day, known to

God alone, when all peoples will call on God with one voice and serve him shoulder to shoulder (Soph 3:9; see Is 66:23; Ps 65:4; Rom 11:11-32).

Since Christians and Jews have such a common spiritual heritage, this sacred council wishes to encourage and further mutual understanding and appreciation. This can be achieved, especially, by way of biblical and theological enquiry and through friendly discussions.

Even though the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ (see Jn 19:6), neither all Jews indiscriminately at that time, nor Jews today, can be charged with the crimes committed during his passion. It is true that the church is the new people of God, yet the Jews should not be spoken of as rejected or accursed as if this followed from holy scripture. Consequently, all must take care, lest in catechizing or in preaching the word of God, they teach anything which is not in accord with the truth of the Gospel message or the spirit of Christ.

Indeed, the church reproves every form of persecution against whomsoever it may be directed. Remembering, then, its common heritage with the Jews and moved not by any political consideration, but solely by the religious motivation of Christian charity, it deplores all hatreds, persecutions, displays of antisemitism directed against the Jews at any time or from any source.

The church always held and continues to hold that Christ out of infinite love freely underwent suffering and death because of the sins of all, so that all might attain salvation. It is the duty of the church, therefore, in its preaching to proclaim the cross of Christ as the sign of God's universal love and the source of all grace.

5. We cannot truly pray to God the Father of all if we treat any people as other than sisters and brothers, for all are created in God's

image. People's relation to God the Father and their relation to other women and men are so dependent on each other that the Scripture says "they who do not love, do not know God" (1 Jn 4:8).

There is no basis therefore, either in theory or in practice for any discrimination between individual and individual, or between people and people arising either from human dignity or from the rights which flow from it.

Therefore, the church reproves, as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against people or any harassment of them on the basis of their race, color, condition in life or religion. Accordingly, following the footsteps of the holy apostles Peter and Paul, the sacred council earnestly begs the Christian faithful to "conduct themselves well among the Gentiles" (1 Pet 2:12) and if possible, as far as depends on them, to be at peace with all people (see Rom 12:18) and in that way to be true daughters and sons of the Father who is in heaven (see Mt 5:45).

NOTES

1. See St Gregory VII, Letter 21 to Anzir (Nacir), King of a. Mauretania: PL 148, col. 450 ff.
2. See Rom 11:28-29; See Vatican Council II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium.

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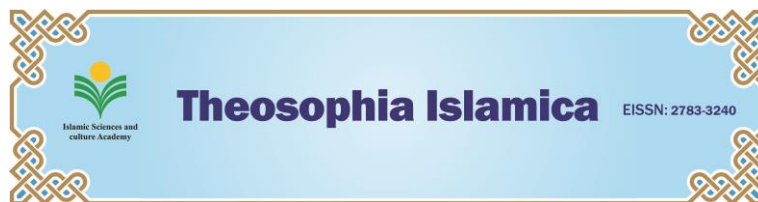
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Jewish-Islamic Scholarly Interaction: The Influence of Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī on Moses Maimonides Regarding Human Characteristics, Faculties, Perfections, and Ranks



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Abstract

Al-Fārābī is a renowned and influential Muslim philosopher who has impacted not only Muslim scholars but also scholars of other religions, among whom Moses Maimonides is one of the most significant. This study, employing an analytical and comparative approach and drawing upon the works of both al-Fārābī and Maimonides, seeks to answer the question of how much Maimonides was influenced by al-Fārābī in the domain of philosophical psychology, particularly regarding human characteristics, faculties, perfections, and ranks. The findings indicate that Maimonides was influenced by al-Fārābī in various areas, frequently citing him and his works as a primary source. However, in many instances, to avoid provoking sensitivity or opposition from his audience,

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he refrained from explicitly mentioning his source, though it is evident that al-Fārābī's works were among his principal references. Furthermore, this study demonstrates that Maimonides was influenced by al-Fārābī not only in the structure of his works but also in his fundamental theories concerning human characteristics, faculties, perfections, and ranks. His conceptual framework and terminology also reflect al-Fārābī's influence, to the extent that the title of one of his major works on faculties, perfections, and moral philosophy was derived from one of al-Fārābī's works.

Keywords

al-Fārābī, Maimonides, Islamic Philosophy, Jewish Theology, Philosophical Psychology, Human Faculties and Perfections.

1. Introduction

Abū Naṣr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Fārābī (d. 339/950), known as the "Second Teacher," was a renowned and influential philosopher of the Islamic world in the fourth century AH. He is widely recognized as the founder of Islamic philosophy, particularly Aristotelian and Peripatetic philosophy in the Islamic world. Al-Fārābī authored numerous works across various philosophical domains, formulating profound and original ideas. While much can be said about his life, works, and thought, this is not the place to delve into these aspects (for more on his life, works, and ideas, see Rudolph, 2012, vol. 1, pp. 526–654; Walzer, 1991, pp. 778–781). A significant issue regarding al-Fārābī concerns his influence on others. He was an immensely impactful scholar whose ideas have been studied and adopted by philosophers from his time to the present. Due to this lasting influence, he was given the title of "Second Teacher" after Aristotle, who was known as the "First Teacher." Notably, al-Fārābī's influence was not limited to Muslim scholars; thinkers of other religious traditions also engaged with his ideas. One of the most prominent among them was Mūsā b. Maymūn al-Andalusī, or Maimonides (d. 600/1204), the Andalusian Jewish scholar known as "Rambam," who holds a distinguished status among Jewish intellectuals and was deeply influenced by Muslim scholars and philosophers, particularly Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (for more on Maimonides' life, works, and thought, see Hyman et al., 2007, pp. 381–397; Epstein, 2009, pp. 251–261).

Maimonides is the most prominent representative of the trend influenced by Peripatetic and Aristotelian philosophy in medieval Jewish philosophical theology.¹ He explicitly identifies himself with

1. It should be noted that medieval Judaism, which primarily thrived in Islamic lands during a period of intellectual and scientific flourishing in the Islamic world, was

the philosophical school (i.e., Aristotelian philosophy) and takes a critical stance against *Kalam* (Islamic theology) and Islamic theologians, as well as the textualist or scripturalist approach (see Ibn Maymūn, n.d., p. 243). This stance, however, can also be seen as an imitation of figures associated with Muslim Aristotelian philosophy, particularly al-Fārābī (Stroumsa, 2003, p. 75).

In his article "Maimonides the Disciple of Alfarabi," Lawrence Berman aptly refers to Maimonides as a "disciple of al-Fārābī" (Berman, 1974, pp. 154–178). Following the publication of this article, this characterization became widely recognized in Western scholarship (see Fraenkel, 2008, p. 106). The popularity and acceptance of this description stem from the fact that Maimonides, within the Jewish intellectual tradition, deliberately sought to follow in al-Fārābī's footsteps. Drawing on his works and ideas, Maimonides endeavored to apply al-Fārābī's theory concerning the relationship between philosophy, religion, theology, and law. Samuel ibn Tibbon, the translator of Maimonides' works from Arabic into Hebrew and an admirer of his thought, once wrote to Maimonides requesting recommendations for philosophical and scientific works that he deemed reliable and authoritative. In response, Maimonides wrote the following regarding al-Fārābī's works:

All of his works are flawless and excellent. One must read and understand all of them because he is a great man. Although the works of Ibn Sīnā [Avicenna] give rise to certain difficulties and

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deeply influenced by the intellectual climate of its surroundings. Consequently, major intellectual trends in Islam found parallels within Judaism. One of the most significant of these was the philosophical movement influenced by Peripatetic philosophers, with Maimonides as its most prominent representative (for an overview of these trends and their key figures, see Jalali, 2011, pp. 19–46).

do not reach the level of al-Fārābī's, Abū Bakr ibn al-Sā'igh (Ibn Bājja or Avempace) is also a great philosopher, and all of his works are of the highest quality. (Sirat, 2000, p. 161)

This letter clearly illustrates al-Fārābī's esteemed position in Maimonides' view, as well as the significance he attributed to his works. Maimonides' deep respect for al-Fārābī's, Ibn Rushd (Averroes), and Ibn Bājja—and to some extent, Ibn Sīnā—is reflected not only in his letter to Ibn Tibbon but also throughout his other writings. It is evident that he derived much of his thought and philosophy from these Muslim thinkers. Beyond this letter, in which Maimonides partially reveals the primary sources of his intellectual framework, he elaborates further on his influences in a brief treatise composed of eight chapters, commonly known as *Shemonah Peraqim* (*The Eight Chapters*). This work, which focuses on moral philosophy, provides additional insight into the sources he engaged with. As we will discuss further, this treatise is profoundly influenced by al-Fārābī's—even its title appears to be derived from one of al-Fārābī's works. In *Shemonah Peraqim*, Maimonides explicitly states that he drew upon a variety of religious sources, as well as both early and later philosophers, and numerous other figures. He further explains that, at times, he incorporated complete passages from well-known books into his works without citing the author or the title. Maimonides justifies this practice by stating that he believed it was preferable to omit the name of the "speaker" (Davidson, 1963).

Thus, Maimonides often sought to conceal his sources from the reader, possibly to avoid provoking any sensitivities. Nevertheless, he mentions al-Fārābī by name in *Dalālat al-Ḥā'irīn* (*The Guide for the Perplexed*) on eight occasions. In only one instance (p. 221) does he refer to him with both his title and honorific, "Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī,"

while in the other seven cases, he refers to him simply as “Abū Naṣr” (see pp. 206, 315, 321, 330, 331, and 534). Of these eight references, the first two (pp. 206 and 221) pertain to Maimonides’ critique of the theologians’ argument regarding the creation of the world and their argument for the existence of God. In these critiques, Maimonides—opposing the theological tradition (*kalām*)—draws upon al-Fārābī’s arguments, citing him as a source to support his position. The remaining five references (pp. 315 [twice], 321, 330, and 331) relate to discussions on the creation versus the eternity of the universe, as well as celestial spheres and stars. In some instances, Maimonides employs al-Fārābī’s phrasing to clarify and interpret Aristotle’s views on the eternity of the universe and to explain the position of the philosophers. In other cases (such as p. 321), he attempts to use al-Fārābī’s statements as supporting evidence for his own theory of the world’s creation, in opposition to the philosophical doctrine of its eternity and pre-existence.

Given this introduction, it becomes clear to what extent Maimonides was influenced by al-Fārābī and how deeply he engaged with his ideas. This influence is evident across various aspects of Maimonides’ thought, from logic to diverse discussions on theology, cosmology, and philosophical psychology. In this study, I examine al-Fārābī’s impact on Maimonides regarding the characteristics, faculties, perfections, and ranks or degrees of human beings.

2. Human Characteristics, Faculties, Perfections, and Ranks

We will now attempt to briefly assess the most significant human characteristics, faculties, and perfections that have acquired theological significance and that Maimonides, drawing inspiration from Muslim thinkers—particularly al-Fārābī—has discussed.

Moses Maimonides, reporting from both early and later

philosophers, categorizes human perfections into the following four groups:

1. Perfection of possessions (*kamāl al-qunya*), which is essentially external to both the body and soul of a person—such as wealth, clothing, tools, and property. Maimonides, reporting from the philosophers, states that one who dedicates their efforts to attaining this type of perfection is pursuing mere illusions and fantasies, gaining nothing substantial, as such perfection does not truly belong to the person's essence.

2. Perfection of physique and form (*kamāl al-bunya wa-l-hay'a*), referring to bodily health, temperament, and the soundness of organs. While this type of perfection pertains to a person's being, it is not considered the ultimate perfection. In other words, it belongs to the human being insofar as they are an animal, rather than in their capacity as a rational human.

3. Perfection of moral virtues, which holds significantly greater importance than the previous two types. However, even moral virtues do not constitute the true ultimate perfection of a human being but rather serve as a preparatory means toward something higher.

4. Perfection of rational virtues (*al-faḍā'il al-nuṭqiyya*), which is the true perfection of a human being. This consists of acquiring intellectual virtues that lead to sound judgments in metaphysics and theology (Maimonides, n.d., pp. 735–737).

All four types of perfection mentioned by Maimonides are also found in the *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity* (*Rasā'il Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*), a work known among the Ismailis in Egypt, to which Maimonides had access (*Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'*, 1995, vol. 4, pp. 62–63). It is possible that he derived these classifications either directly from the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* or from thinkers who shared their views. However, it is crucial to

note that in this particular section, Maimonides was influenced by two of al-Fārābī's works: *Fuṣūl muntaza'a* (*Selected aphorisms* or *Selected chapters*) and *al-Siyāsat al-madaniyya* (*The Civil Polity*). Although al-Fārābī does not explicitly present these four types of perfection together in the same formulation in these two books, the ideas are scattered throughout both works. In particular, the final and highest form of human perfection—regarded by Maimonides as the ultimate goal of human existence—is deeply rooted in al-Fārābī's thought. Indeed, within these two works, one can discern the framework of these four perfections. Al-Fārābī, in *al-Siyāsat al-madaniyya*, discusses perfections that pertain to the essence of a person, perfections external to the self, and those that have a relational connection to the self (al-Fārābī, 1993b, p. 49). He also elaborates on absolute versus relative perfections (ibid., p. 51) and extensively examines the final and ultimate perfection of human beings (ibid., pp. 36, 74).

Furthermore, in *Fuṣūl muntaza'a*, al-Fārābī discusses physical perfection (al-Fārābī, 1993a, pp. 23–24), moral perfection and virtues (ibid., pp. 24, 30), intellectual perfection (ibid., p. 30), as well as the first and final perfections (ibid., pp. 45–46, 97), with the entire work primarily concerned with philosophical psychology and philosophical ethics. Therefore, although it is highly likely that Maimonides derived this fourfold list of human perfections from the *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity*, it is by no means improbable that he also drew them from al-Fārābī's works. It is also possible that he took them from both sources—both the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafā'* and al-Fārābī.

In another passage, Maimonides discusses the *first perfection* (*kamāl awwal*) and the *final perfection* (*kamāl akhīr*) for human beings (Maimonides, n.d., pp. 575–576), terms which are borrowed from al-Fārābī. As mentioned earlier, al-Fārābī also refers to the first and final perfections for humanity in *Fuṣūl muntaza'a*. Both emphasize that the

first perfection pertains to worldly and material matters, while the final perfection relates to spiritual and otherworldly concerns.

Having laid out these preliminaries, we will now briefly consider the most important human perfections, powers, characteristics, and ranks that Maimonides seems to have derived from al-Fārābī and been influenced by.

2.1. Intellect

Among the faculties and perfections that humans possess, particularly in the realm of knowledge, the most important is intellect (*‘aql*). Moses Maimonides places great emphasis on the intellect, its degrees, and various related issues. At the same time, he regards the concept of intellect and its nature as something self-evident and clear, not in need of definition. As a result, he does not provide a formal definition but instead focuses on the importance of intellect and reasoning, as well as its limitations, its various stages, and its relationship to the external world.

Following al-Fārābī, Maimonides considers the human intellect to be the final perfection of humanity (al-Fārābī, 1993a, pp. 45–46, 97). Before the fall of Adam, God bestowed this intellect upon humanity, and it is through this intellect that humans gain the capacity to be addressed by God. It is based on this intellect that humans acquire the ability to distinguish truth from falsehood (Maimonides, n.d., p. 25). From Maimonides’ perspective, it is by virtue of the intellect that the Torah describes humanity as being made in the image and likeness of God (ibid.). In these points, Maimonides is clearly influenced by al-Fārābī, who similarly emphasizes that it is through the intellect that humans acquire the capacity to receive divine revelation and distinguish truth from falsehood (al-Fārābī, 1995, p. 121).

Although Maimonides does not provide a detailed account of the nature of the intellect, he does refer to the connection between the human intellect and the Active Intellect (*al-ʿaql al-faʿāl*), considering the human intellect to be an emanation (*ifāda*) from the Active Intellect (Ibn Maymūn, n.d., p. 282). He also discusses the limitations, degrees, and levels of human intellect. From his perspective, just as human sensory perception is limited to certain things, the intellect also cannot comprehend everything and is restricted to grasping only specific objects. Furthermore, the intellect exists in different degrees and levels, varying from person to person—no individual has the capacity to understand and reason about everything (ibid., pp. 67–72). All these views are directly influenced by al-Fārābī (al-Fārābī, 1995, p. 121).

Following al-Fārābī, Maimonides consistently compares imagination (*khayāl*) with intellect, emphasizing that humans share the faculty of imagination with animals, whereas it is the intellect that distinguishes humans from them. His primary purpose in contrasting the imaginative and rational faculties is to critique the views of the theologians (*mutakallimūn*), whom he accuses of relying on imagination rather than reason or intellect (Ibn Maymūn, n.d., pp. 209–210).

2.2. Ultimate Perfection of Humans

A key issue related to the intellect is that of humanity's ultimate perfection. Following the Islamic philosophers, particularly al-Fārābī, Moses Maimonides considers the final and ultimate perfection of human beings to lie in the intellect's apprehension of intelligibles (*maʿqūlāt*). From their perspective, intellectual perfection is the highest and most significant form of human perfection. As previously discussed, in outlining the fourfold classification of human perfections—derived from Muslim philosophers, especially al-Fārābī—Maimonides identifies the final and true perfection of

humanity as the comprehension of intelligibles and the attainment of intellectual virtues. On this subject, he writes:

True human perfection lies in the attainment of rational virtues (*al-faḍā'il al-nuṭqiyya*), namely, the conception of intelligibles that yield correct opinions in theology. This is the final end (*al-ghāyat al-akhīra*), the one that completes a person with true perfection, belonging solely to him. It grants him eternal existence, and it is through this that one is truly human. Consider each of the three preceding perfections—you will find that they belong to others, not to you. And if they must, according to common opinion, be considered yours, they still belong both to you and to others. However, this final perfection (*al-kamāl al-akhīr*) is exclusively yours; no one else shares in it with you in any way. Let it be yours alone. Therefore, you must strive to attain this enduring perfection and not exhaust yourself in toil and hardship for the sake of others—O you who neglect yourself! (Ibn Maymūn, n.d., p. 737)

Thus, Maimonides defines true humanity as depending on conceiving intelligibles that lead to knowledge of God and the attainment of correct theological views. Accordingly, he explicitly states that neither the possession of worldly blessings nor physical well-being results in ultimate and eternal happiness, nor do moral virtues, religious acts, or spiritual ranks (Maimonides, n.d., pp. 738, 719). What truly leads to human happiness is the comprehension of intelligibles and knowledge of God's essence and His creations—particularly knowledge of the realm of intellects. Elsewhere, when discussing the first and final perfection of human beings, he identifies the final and ultimate perfection as actualizing one's rational faculty, meaning becoming rational in actuality—that is, acquiring knowledge of all beings within the capacity of human understanding. He writes:

And his final perfection is for him to become actually rational, meaning to possess an intellect in actuality. This occurs when one

attains knowledge of everything that is within human capacity to know regarding all existents, in accordance with his final perfection. It is evident that this final perfection involves neither actions nor ethics; rather, it consists solely of opinions derived through contemplation and necessitated by inquiry. (Ibid, p. 576).

From Maimonides' perspective, it is this final perfection—the apprehension of intelligibles—that ensures human survival (ibid). He extensively discusses the ultimate perfection of human beings and the understanding of intelligibles, dedicating the last four chapters of *The Guide for the Perplexed* to this issue. He interprets divine proximity (*al-qurb al-ilāhī*) as the knowledge of God and His providence (*‘ināya*) over existents, or, in other words, as the union with the Active Intellect (Kreisel, 1997, p. 268), which for humans means the actualization of their intellect. Thus, he emphasizes that the intellect is a divine emanation to humans and serves as the bridge between God and humanity. Strengthening this bridge—bringing humans closer to God and attracting His love—is achieved through the actualization of intelligibles, the comprehension of God, His providence, and governance, as well as the understanding of creation. Conversely, weakening this connection results from preoccupying the mind with anything other than God (Ibn Maymūn, n.d., pp. 718–719).

As we have mentioned, Maimonides, in this discussion, is influenced by Muslim philosophers, particularly al-Fārābī. Although he does not explicitly cite his sources, he indirectly acknowledges in several instances that he has adopted these ideas from philosophers (ibid, pp. 735, 737). It is well understood that by "philosophers" in this context, he is referring to al-Fārābī. As previously noted, Maimonides follows al-Fārābī in most of his discussions, especially in philosophical psychology, and in this particular debate, his influence is evident. Al-Fārābī also defines human nature in terms of intellect

and considers human happiness to be fully realized through the actualization of reason. From his perspective, human intellect is not actualized by default; rather, it reaches its full potential through the apprehension of intelligibles. Once this process is complete, a person attains the rank of the Active Intellect and achieves perfect happiness. Al-Fārābī writes:

The rational faculty, through which a human being becomes human, is not, in its substance, an intellect in actuality, nor is it naturally endowed with actual intellect. Rather, it is the Active Intellect that makes an actual intellect, making all things intelligible for the rational faculty. ... By this faculty, one attains the rank of the Active Intellect. When a person reaches this rank, their happiness is fully realized. (Al-Fārābī, 1993b, p. 35)

Therefore, from al-Fārābī's perspective, human happiness is fully realized when one attains the level of understanding intelligibles and reaches the rank of the Active Intellect. He also emphasizes that when a person grasps intelligibles—particularly the comprehension of ultimate causes—they achieve wisdom and attain their ultimate end, which is happiness (al-Fārābī, 1993a, p. 62). It is evident that Maimonides follows al-Fārābī in this view, namely that human perfection lies in the apprehension of intelligibles and in knowledge of God and His actions. However, Maimonides also seeks to reconcile philosophy and religion in this context. Thus, he asserts that just as philosophers have addressed and elaborated on this issue, the prophets have also discussed it and drawn attention to its significance. On this basis, he appeals to the Bible¹ to emphasize that only intellectual perfection is

1. "This is what the Lord says: 'Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches, but let the one who boasts boast about this: that they have the understanding to know me'" (Jeremiah 9:23-24).

true and praiseworthy, whereas other forms of perfection—including moral virtues and those attained through adherence to religious law—are not genuine perfections in themselves but rather preparatory stages leading to the ultimate perfection (Ibn Maymūn, n.d., pp. 737–738).

2.3. Human Composition from Matter and Form

One of the key concepts in philosophical psychology is the composition of humans from matter (*mādda*) and form (*ṣūra*). This composition, in fact, signifies the dual nature of human beings, encompassing both the immaterial and material, as well as the spiritual and corporeal aspects. Regarding this problem, as in many of his other discussions, Maimonides is influenced by al-Fārābī and other Islamic thinkers. He views the material aspect of humans as their dark and shadowy dimension, while their form represents their luminous and spiritual nature. In this, he is deeply shaped by the intellectual milieu of the Islamic world. Maimonides argues that bodies are subject to corruption, decay, and annihilation only due to their material component, whereas their form remains intact and imperishable. Accordingly, every difficulty that humans face, as well as weaknesses in actions, distress, and anxiety, stem from their material nature and have no connection to their intellectual form (Ibn Maymūn, n.d., p. 483; cf. al-Fārābī, 1993a, pp. 26–29).

Furthermore, when a person commits sin or error, it is due to their material aspect; whereas all human virtues are governed by the form. Moreover, a person's understanding of intelligibles, including the comprehension of the Divine, as well as their ability to govern the appetitive (*shahawiyya*) and irascible (*ghaḍabiyya*) faculties and avoid improper actions, all depend on the human form (Maimonides, n.d., p. 484).

Maimonides believes that sensation, feeling, sensory perception, sensory knowledge, and sensory pleasure—especially the sense of

touch—all pertain to matter (Ibn Maymūn, n.d., pp. 419, 403, 417, 485). With the cessation of the material and bodily aspects of human nature and the separation of the human form from matter, many of the intellectual virtues are realized. Therefore, he views matter as a great veil and an obstructive barrier to the perception of intelligibles and a separate, immaterial existence (ibid, p. 490). In contrast, he regards thought and intellect as special faculties of humans that are governed by the human form (ibid, p. 488). Thus, Maimonides sees the material and bodily aspects of humans, along with the imaginative faculty—which, from his perspective, is connected to the body and matter—as a significant barrier preventing humans from reaching their ultimate perfection, which is the apprehension of intelligibles. The more a person can distance themselves from bodily powers and material concerns, the greater their capacity to understand intelligibles and approach their ultimate perfection (ibid, pp. 400–403, 485, 488–490). This idea is precisely the same as that which al-Fārābī discusses in his *Fusul muntazaʿa*. He writes:

This is, indeed, the soul that specifically belongs to the human being, which is the theoretical intellect (*al-ʿaql al-naẓarī*). When it reaches this state, it becomes separate from the body—whether that body remains alive by means of nourishment and sensation or whether its faculties of nourishment and sensation have ceased. For when the intellect no longer requires anything from the senses or imagination in performing its actions, it has transitioned into its afterlife. At that point, its conception of the essence of the First Principle (*al-mabdaʾ al-awwal*) becomes more complete, as the intellect directly engages with its own essence without needing to conceive it through analogy or representation. However, this state is only reached after the prior necessity of relying on bodily faculties and their functions to perform their respective acts. This is the afterlife in which a person beholds his Lord without obstruction

in his vision. (Al-Fārābī, 1993a, pp. 26–29)

2.4. Moderation

One of the distinguishing features and perfections of the human being is moderation (*i'tidāl*), a concept emphasized in Maimonides' philosophical psychology under the influence of al-Fārābī. In the *Mishneh Torah*, Maimonides devotes a discussion to the various tendencies in human nature, the content of which is entirely derived from al-Fārābī's *Fuṣūl muntaza'a*. Like al-Fārābī, Maimonides first acknowledges the existence of diverse inclinations within human beings and, consequently, the different actions that arise from these tendencies and traits. He then asserts that at the extremes of these inclinations lie excess (*ifrāt*) and deficiency (*tafrīt*), both of which must be avoided in favor of the correct path. This correct path—what al-Fārābī refers to as acts of virtue—consists of actions that are balanced and situated between the two extremes of excess and deficiency. Maimonides writes: “The two extremes of excess and deficiency, in all aspects of human character, are not the path of virtue. One should neither pursue them nor accustom oneself to them... The correct path is the precise standard that is balanced in all aspects of human character. It is the trait that, in a balanced way, remains distant from both excess and deficiency and does not incline toward either” (Maimonides, 2000, p. 228).

This point is precisely the one that al-Fārābī emphasizes in *Fuṣūl muntaza'a* and elaborates upon in detail. A portion of al-Fārābī's statement, which is believed to be the reference for Maimonides' above passage, is as follows:

The actions that are virtuous are the balanced actions that lie in the middle between two extremes, both of which are evil: one being excess and the other deficiency. Similarly, virtues are mental states

(*haya'āt nafsāniyya*) and dispositions (*malakāt*) that lie between two states, both of which are vices: one being excessive and the other deficient. For example, chastity is the mean between greed and the absence of any sense of pleasure. One extreme is excessive, which is greed, and the other is deficient. (Al-Fārābī, 1993a, pp. 26–29)

2.5. Civility and Politics

One of the characteristics of human beings, as discussed in Islamic philosophical psychology—particularly in the works of al-Fārābī—and which is essentially influenced by Greek philosophy, is that humans are naturally social beings and, therefore, require community and politics. Maimonides, like al-Fārābī, believes that humans are naturally social and, as a result, need society, which in turn requires law, governance, lawmakers, and rulers. Maimonides emphasizes that human nature necessitates two opposing states. First, human inclinations, desires, and dispositions are so diverse and varied that it seems as though each individual is a distinct species. Second, human nature also demands society, and the nature of human beings requires that they live together in a community. On the other hand, such a society, with all its conflicting inclinations, desires, and dispositions, is impossible without governance. Therefore, humans require law and a ruler (Maimonides, n.d., pp. 415–416, 575–578).

In this discussion, Maimonides is clearly influenced by al-Fārābī. In most of his major works, particularly in *Ārā' ahl al-madīnat al-fāḍila wa-muāddātuhā* (The opinions of the people of the virtuous city and its contraries), *Kitāb al-siyāsāt al-madaniyya* (The book of civil polity), and *Fuṣūl muntaza'a*, al-Fārābī addresses this topic, with the central theme of the latter work being the human being, a significant portion of which pertains to society and the necessity of

social life (for example, see al-Fārābī, 1993a, p. 45).

2.6. Human Faculties

Maimonides has a treatise called *Thamāniya fuṣūl* (Eight chapters), which was translated into Hebrew by the translator of Maimonides' works, Ibn Tibbon, under the title *Shemonah Peraqim*. The original Arabic text of *Thamāniya fuṣūl* is not available in Arabic script, but Maurice Wolf translated it into German and included the Arabic text, along with Hebrew script, at the end of his German translation (see Ben Maimon, 1992). Wolf did not include the Arabic text of the introduction to this treatise, which is of great significance, but only provided the text of the eight chapters. However, in his translation, he did include the introduction. Additionally, Herbert Davidson, in his article titled “Maimonides' *Shemonah Peraqim* and Alfarabi's *Fusul al-madani*,” has included portions of the Arabic text of the introduction. In this article, Davidson examines *Thamāniya fuṣūl* and compares it with al-Fārābī's *Fuṣūl muntaza'a*.¹

Davidson has rightly clarified in this article that the content of Maimonides' *Eight Chapters* (*Thamāniya fuṣūl*) is entirely derived from al-Fārābī's *Selected chapters* (*Fuṣūl al-madani*). Likewise, Menachem Lorberbaum has noted that Maimonides' *Eight Chapters* (*Shemoneh Peraqim*) was modeled on and composed based on the ideas in al-Fārābī's *Selected chapters* (*Fuṣūl al-madani*) (Lorberbaum, 2003, p. 177).

1. It is worth noting that an English translation of al-Fārābī's *Fuṣūl muntaza'a* was published by D.M. Dunlop under the title *Fusul al-Madani*, although the correct title is *Fuṣūl muntaza'a* (for more details, see al-Fārābī, 1993a, editor's introduction, p. 10). For the Arabic text edited by Dunlop, along with its English translation, see al-Farabi, 1961.

In the aforementioned article, Davidson compares several passages from the two texts, clearly demonstrating that Maimonides fully follows al-Fārābī in his discussions on philosophical psychology and political thought. In the issues we previously noted, this dependence and influence were also evident in *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn* and *Mishneh Torah*. However, the passages in *Thamāniya fuṣūl* further highlight this influence, particularly concerning certain human faculties, including sensation, desire, and aversion—referred to in philosophy as the "appetitive faculty" (*al-quwwat al-nuzū'iyya*). Before presenting these passages, it is worth noting an important point that Davidson overlooks. This point pertains to the title of Maimonides' *Thamāniyat fuṣūl* and that of al-Fārābī's *Fuṣūl al-muntaz'a*. The suggestion here is that even the title of Maimonides' treatise is derived from al-Fārābī's work. Just as al-Fārābī's treatise lacks a distinctive title and is simply named *Fuṣūl al-muntaz'a* ("Selected chapters"), Maimonides' treatise also does not bear a unique name but is titled *Thamāniyat fuṣūl* ("Eight Chapters"), the "eight" referring to the fact that the treatise consists of precisely eight chapters.

In any case, a comparison of two passages from *Thamāniya fuṣūl* with two passages from *Fuṣūl muntaz'a*—the first concerning the appetitive faculty in humans and the second addressing two types of human character—demonstrates that Maimonides was profoundly influenced by Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, both in his use of technical terminology, which is largely specific to al-Fārābī, and in his fundamental ideas and theories. It can be asserted with confidence that Maimonides directly drew these passages from al-Fārābī's *Fuṣūl muntaz'a*. Given Maimonides' deep admiration for al-Fārābī, as mentioned earlier, this should come as no surprise.

The first passage: On the human appetitive faculty.	
Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, <i>Fuṣūl muntazaʿa</i>	Maimonides, <i>Thamāniya fuṣūl</i> , chapter 1
<p>The appetitive faculty (<i>al-quwwat al-nuzūʿiyya</i>) is that by which an animal inclines toward something, experiences desire or aversion, seeks or flees, prefers or avoids, feels anger or satisfaction, fear or boldness, harshness or compassion, love or hatred, passion or craving, and all other states of the soul. The instruments of this faculty are all the powers that enable the movement of the body and its limbs, such as the strength of the hands for grasping, the strength of the legs for walking, and other bodily functions. (Al-Fārābī, 1993a, pp. 28–29)</p>	<p>The appetitive part (<i>al-juzʾ al-nuzūʿī</i>) is the power by which a person desires or detests something. From this faculty arise actions such as seeking and fleeing, preferring or avoiding something, experiencing anger or satisfaction, fear or boldness, harshness or compassion, love or hatred, and many other psychological states. The instruments of this faculty include all parts of the body, such as the strength of the hand for grasping, the strength of the leg for walking, the power of the eye for seeing, and the power of the heart for advancing or fearing. Likewise, all internal and external organs, along with their faculties, serve as instruments of this appetitive faculty. (Ben Maimon, 1992; see also Davidson, 1963, p. 35)</p>

As is entirely evident from the two passages, Maimonides has taken both the core idea and the key terminology directly from al-Fārābī, making only minimal modifications to the wording. The fundamental term *al-quwwat al-nuzū'iyya* and all the actions that Maimonides cites as examples of its function are identical in expression and wording to those found in al-Fārābī's text. The only difference lies in the elaboration Maimonides provides at the end of the passage, which, in essence, expands upon al-Fārābī's more concise formulation, where the latter merely alludes to additional bodily organs with the phrase *wa-ghayrumā min al-a'qā'* ("and other such organs").

The second passage: The distinction between the virtuous person (<i>al-insān al-fāḍil</i>) and the self-restrained person (<i>al-ḍābiṭ li-naḥsih</i>)	
<i>Fuṣūl muntaza'a</i>	<i>Thamāniya fuṣūl</i> , chapter 1
There is a distinction between the self-restrained person (<i>al-ḍābiṭ li-naḥsih</i>) and the virtuous person (<i>al-fāḍil</i>). The self-restrained person, although performing virtuous actions, does so while still desiring immoral deeds, longing for them, and struggling against his inclinations. His actions oppose the impulses of his disposition and desires, and he performs good deeds while experiencing	Regarding the distinction between the virtuous person (<i>al-fāḍil</i>) and the self-restrained person (<i>al-ḍābiṭ li-naḥsih</i>), the philosophers say that although the self-restrained person performs virtuous actions, he does so while desiring immoral deeds, longing for them, and struggling with his inclinations. His actions oppose the impulses of his nature, desires, and disposition, and he performs good deeds while

The second passage: The distinction between the virtuous person (<i>al-insān al-fāḍil</i>) and the self-restrained person (<i>al-ḍābiṭ li-naḥsih</i>)	
<i>Fuṣūl muntazaʿa</i>	<i>Thamāniya fuṣūl</i> , chapter 1
discomfort in doing so. In contrast, the virtuous person acts in accordance with his disposition and desires, engaging in good deeds while desiring and longing for them. [...] The self-restrained person has excessive and immoderate desires in these matters, contrary to what is prescribed by proper custom, and while he performs acts in accordance with that custom, his desires remain opposed to them. Nevertheless, in many respects, the self-restrained person assumes the role of the virtuous person. (Al-Fārābī, 1993a, pp. 34–35).	experiencing discomfort in doing so. In contrast, the virtuous person follows the impulses of his desires and disposition, engaging in good deeds while loving and longing for them. By unanimous agreement among the philosophers, the virtuous person is superior and more complete than the self-restrained person. However, they also state that the self-restrained person may, in many respects, take the place of the virtuous person, albeit at a lower rank by necessity. (Ben Maimon, 1992; see also Davidson, 1963, p. 36).

As evident from Maimonides' wording, he has quoted this passage from the philosophers—in particular, from the philosopher al-Fārābī. Unlike the first passage, which Maimonides presents in his own words, in this passage, he conveys the distinction between the virtuous person (*fāḍil*) and the self-restrained person as articulated by the philosophers. Given Maimonides' deep admiration for al-Fārābī and his access to al-Fārābī's works, it is clear that he has quoted this

passage verbatim from al-Fārābī's *Fusūl muntaza'a*. Moreover, considering the structure of the *Thamāniya fusūl*, as analyzed by Davidson (1963, pp. 37–40), this framework and its discussions are directly derived from al-Fārābī's *Fusūl muntaza'a*. Taking this into account—along with the two aforementioned passages and Maimonides' discussions on human faculties and perfections in *Dalālat al-ḥā'irīn* and *Mishneh Torah*, as referenced earlier—it becomes evident that Maimonides' psychological views are profoundly influenced by Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī.

2.7. Human Categories, Ranks, and Degrees

In philosophical theology's approach to psychology, humans are examined from various perspectives and can be classified according to different criteria. Relevant to this discussion is the categorization and ranking of individuals in terms of the levels and degrees of the soul and spirit from the perspective of Maimonides, as well as an analysis of his intellectual indebtedness to Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī. Maimonides' classification, which adopts a philosophical approach and primarily focuses on the epistemic and psychological dimensions of the soul, is profoundly influenced by al-Fārābī. This influence will be briefly explored in the present discussion.

As previously stated, Maimonides considers human perfection to lie in the apprehension of intelligibles, which, in his view, are imparted to humans by the Active Intellect. The apprehension of intelligibles is a divine emanation received by humans; however, the extent to which an individual attains them depends on their own capacity and aptitude. This emanation from the Active Intellect is bestowed upon two of the human cognitive faculties. Accordingly, Maimonides classifies humans—particularly distinguished individuals—in terms of their epistemic faculties, specifically the rational (*nāṭiqa*)

and imaginative (*mutakhayyila*) faculties. Based on this classification, eminent individuals capable of receiving this divine emanation are divided into three categories:

1. Prophets: The highest divine gift and emanation are received by the prophets, who possess both the rational and imaginative faculties in their fullest perfection. This divine emanation is bestowed upon both of these faculties in the Prophets.

2. Philosophers (or as put by Maimonides, “scholars adept in theoretical inquiry” (*‘ulamā’ ahl al-naẓar*): In the case of this group, divine emanation is bestowed solely upon their rational faculty and intellectual dimension, with nothing imparted to their imaginative faculty. This lack of emanation may be due either to the scarcity or limitation of what is bestowed upon humans from the realm of intellects or to a deficiency in the individual's imaginative faculty, rendering it incapable of receiving the emanations from the realm of intellects.

3. Statesmen, legislators, priests, and those who experience true dreams: In this group, the emanation of intelligibles is bestowed solely upon their imaginative faculty, while their rational faculty is exceedingly weak. This weakness may stem either from a natural deficiency—where the individual is innately defective in rational faculty—or from insufficient training and practice in the intellectual sciences. Maimonides notes that for some individuals in this category, extraordinary imaginings arise, leading them to believe they have attained a prophetic or quasi-prophetic status. As a result, they experience a profound confusion between true realities and mere fantasies (Maimonides, n.d., pp. 405–407).

Maimonides further divides each of the first two groups into two subcategories, while also recognizing numerous ranks and

degrees among all individuals within the three aforementioned categories. Both philosophers and prophets receive divine emanation in one of two ways: either in a manner that leads solely to their own perfection, without any further effect, or in a way that, in addition to perfecting themselves, compels them to extend this emanation to others—through instruction, authorship, preaching, and guidance. Consequently, without this additional perfection, no scholarly works would be composed, nor would prophets call people to the truth. In fact, it is this *additional* perfection that drives scholars and theorists to teach, write, and develop ideas, and it propels prophets to instruct, invite, and preach—without anything being able to hinder them (ibid., pp. 407–408).

Maimonides' theory can, in fact, be regarded as a form of inference and deduction from al-Fārābī's views and the foundations of his psychological thought. This is because al-Fārābī, in several of his works—particularly in *al-A'māl al-falsafiyya*, *Kitāb al-milla*, *Kitāb al-siyāsāt al-madaniyya*, *Ārā' ahl al-madīnat al-fāḍila wa-muḍāddātuhā*, and *Fuṣūl muntaza'a*—establishes a connection between religion, philosophy, and prophecy. In al-Fārābī's thought, philosophy holds primacy, while religion, in relation to philosophy, occupies a secondary position. As he puts it, religion is “an imitation [representation] and likeness of philosophy” (al-Fārābī, 1992, p. 185; idem, 1991, p. 46).

What distinguishes Maimonides' thought from that of al-Fārābī in this discussion is that al-Fārābī maintains that philosophy receives and conveys knowledge through the rational faculty and intellect, whereas religion receives and conveys knowledge through the imagination in an imaginative form. Consequently, he elevates the status of philosophy—and, by extension, that of the philosopher—above that of religion and the prophet (al-Fārābī, 1992, p. 185). Maimonides,

however, who fundamentally approaches this issue as a theologian (*mutakallim*), while deeply influenced by al-Fārābī's view on the relationship between reason and philosophy, diverges from him slightly in this discussion and modifies his teacher's ideas. Whereas al-Fārābī holds that religious knowledge is acquired exclusively through the imagination and philosophical knowledge solely through reason, Maimonides asserts that religious knowledge is attained through both reason and imagination, while philosophical knowledge is derived purely from reason. As a result, *al-ra'īs al-awwal* ("first headman/ruler") in al-Fārābī's works—who is, in essence, a philosopher (al-Fārābī, 1995, pp. 116–122)—is replaced in Maimonides' thought by the prophet (*nabī*).

Nevertheless, it is important to note that Maimonides, like al-Fārābī, upholds the superiority of the rational faculty over the imaginative faculty. However, what elevates true prophets above philosophers in his view is that they, like philosophers, possess a perfected rational faculty. As a result, they are capable of attaining theoretical knowledge of the same kind as that of philosophers. At the same time, they also possess a perfected imaginative faculty, which grants them superiority over philosophers. In contrast, mere possession of the imaginative faculty and imaginative perceptions—characteristic of the third category of individuals—leads only to illusions and conjectures (Ibn Maymūn, n.d., pp. 410–411).

3. Concluding Remarks

Given the aforementioned points, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. One of the most significant, influential, and impactful Muslim scholars is Abū Naṣr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Fārābī,

who has been referred to as the "Second Teacher" and the "Founder of Islamic Philosophy." Al-Fārābī's influence and impact were not confined to the Islamic world; scholars from other religious traditions were also captivated by his ideas and works and came under his influence. One of the most notable among them was Mūsā b. Maymūn al-Qurṭubī al-Andalusī (Maimonides), a Jewish physician, logician, philosopher, theologian, and jurist, who frequently referenced and utilized al-Fārābī's works and ideas in his own writings.

2. Maimonides, in various aspects of his thought, was influenced by al-Fārābī and certain other Peripatetic philosophers. Notably, in the domain of philosophical psychology, he was influenced by al-Fārābī regarding human characteristics, faculties, perfections, and degrees of human development.

3. Maimonides was influenced by al-Fārābī in various issues concerning human characteristics, faculties, and perfections, including those related to the human intellect and its relation to the Active Intellect, ultimate and final perfection, the significance of rational contemplation and the apprehension of intelligibles, the composition of humans from matter and form, the concept of moderation, as well as civility and politics. Al-Fārābī's impact on Maimonides in these matters is evident not only in the language and methodology of his discussions but also in the structure of his works and, most notably, in his views and theories.

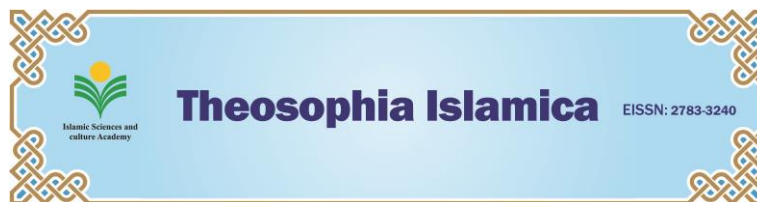
4. Although Maimonides' intellectual indebtedness to al-Fārābī in these discussions is vast—so much so that some scholars have rightly referred to him as a "disciple of al-Fārābī," and in many instances, he can genuinely be considered an "imitator/follower of al-Fārābī"—it must be noted that Maimonides remained fully committed to the Jewish faith. While he is commonly known as a "Jewish philosopher," he was, in reality, not a philosopher in the strict sense

but rather a *theologian*, *mutakallim*, and *defender of the Jewish faith*. Given this, although he broadly adopted al-Fārābī's views, he occasionally diverged from him in certain details when he perceived a conflict with Jewish doctrines. One notable example is his discussion on the ranks and degrees of human beings: whereas al-Fārābī assigns the highest position to the philosopher, Maimonides designates it to the prophet.

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Revisiting the Arguments for the Existence of God: A Comparative Study of Western and Islamic Perspectives



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Abstract

This study employs a descriptive-analytical method and a critical comparative approach to examine, critique, and compare the arguments for the existence of God in Western and Islamic philosophy. The introduction clarifies the meaning of argument and distinguishes it from faith and reasoning. It then outlines key concepts necessary for a deeper understanding of the arguments for God's existence, including the role of Western and Islamic philosophers in shaping these arguments, the distinction between horizontal and vertical arguments in Western and Islamic traditions, and the empiricist and rationalist approaches to these arguments in both intellectual traditions. Following this foundation, the article systematically analyzes four categories of arguments for God's existence: ontological, cosmological, teleological (design), and moral arguments, as presented by Western thinkers. These arguments are then

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examined and critiqued based on the principles of Islamic philosophy. Throughout the discussion, the study highlights how misunderstandings or misinterpretations of key concepts and rational principles unique to Islamic philosophy—particularly in general and special metaphysics—have contributed to certain misapprehensions in the history of Western philosophy regarding arguments for God’s existence.

Keywords

God, Argument, Existence, Quiddity, Necessity, Contingency, Emergence.

Introduction

The entirety of human intellectual endeavor throughout the history of philosophical and theological thought aimed at proving the existence of God has been consolidated and categorized under the well-known framework of "arguments for the existence of God." These arguments can be examined within both Western and Islamic traditions, revealing similarities, differences, and even certain misunderstandings between the two. However, before delving into this comparison, one may first ask: What exactly is meant by argument?

It is clear that anyone who believes in the existence of God—regardless of their personal understanding or interpretation—possesses at least some form of justification for their belief. This justification may, in some cases, be found solely within faith itself (a fideist approach), such that when asked for a reason, the believer merely refers to their faith, responding: "I believe in God because I have faith in His existence." Alternatively, the justification may take the form of an argument or evidence presented by the individual. By argument, however, we do not mean a purely faith-based or doctrinal reason, but rather some form of evidence or indication of God's existence. Examples of such arguments can be found in both Western and Islamic thought, including the argument from miracles, the argument from utility, the argument from religious experience, the argument from need, and the argument from innate disposition (*al-fiṭrah*). However, it seems that these arguments cannot, in the strictest sense, be considered arguments or exact demonstrations, as they are, at best, merely pieces of evidence or indicators of God's existence. While such evidences and indications may indeed lead individuals to believe in God, they do not constitute demonstrative argument in the logical sense. The demonstration (*al-Burhān*) is an argument that, if

composed of sound and true premises (which must either be self-evident and in no need of argument or have already been established elsewhere), necessarily leads to its conclusion. Accepting this conclusion then becomes logically unavoidable, as demonstrative argument produces complete intellectual conviction or certainty (a rationalist approach). By contrast, justifications based on faith and evidentiary arguments lack this level of necessity and force. As we will later see, even teleological (design) arguments and moral arguments, despite being labeled as arguments, share a similar status with mere evidences and indications—although they may exhibit a greater degree of logical rigor in comparison.

Numerous studies, in the form of books and articles, have been conducted on the arguments for the existence of God, making it impossible to recount all their findings here. However, in this paper, we aim to revisit and analyze the major arguments for God's existence—namely, ontological, cosmological, teleological (design), and moral arguments—within both Western and Islamic philosophy. Our approach is primarily comparative and critical, seeking to examine these arguments through a lens of philosophical scrutiny.

To achieve this goal, it is necessary to first consider several key points regarding the general differences between Western and Islamic approaches to the arguments for God's existence:

A. The Role of Western and Islamic Philosophers in the Formation of Arguments for God's Existence

In the history of Western philosophy and theology, the arguments for God's existence are typically categorized into four main groups: ontological arguments, cosmological arguments, teleological (design) arguments, and moral arguments.

The ontological arguments were first formulated in Western philosophy and theology, beginning with the era of Scholastic thought. Later, contemporary Islamic philosophers turned their attention to these arguments, examining and critiquing them. Today, these arguments have found both supporters and opponents in the Islamic world.

Cosmological arguments have been present in both Western and Islamic philosophy from the outset. However, there are profound differences between their Western and Islamic formulations. For example, the explanation of the argument from necessity and possibility—one type of cosmological argument—differs significantly in Islamic philosophy from its Western counterpart. Likewise, the argument from causality, which in Western philosophy and theology is treated as a distinct argument under the broader category of cosmological arguments, does not hold a parallel status in Islamic philosophy. Instead, causality is regarded as a fundamental presupposition for all arguments, as the principle of causality is a necessary condition for any argument, given that the premises of an argument serve as the cause of its conclusion.

Teleological arguments, which are primarily based on the order of the universe, were developed by Western philosophers and theologians, while Islamic philosophers paid little attention to them—despite the fact that numerous examples of such arguments can be found in the Quranic verses and hadiths within the Islamic tradition.

Similarly, moral arguments were entirely formulated by Western philosophers and theologians, and Islamic philosophy did not engage with them.

Nevertheless, there are arguments that are exclusive to Islamic philosophy and have not been explored by Western thinkers, such as

the argument from indigence-based possibility (*al-imbkân al-faqrî*)¹ and the argument of the truthfals (*burhân al-şiddîqîn*)². These arguments primarily developed after Mullâ Şadrâ and were shaped by the two fundamental principles of *Transcendent Philosophy* (*al-ḥikmat al-muta‘aliyah*): the primacy of existence (*aşâlat al-wujûd*) and the gradation of existence (*tashkîk al-wujûd*).³ Additionally, some arguments for the existence of God were put forth by Islamic theologians (*al-mutakallimûn*), most of which fall under the category of cosmological arguments. However, these theological arguments faced serious criticism from Islamic philosophers.⁴

B. Horizontal and Vertical Arguments for God’s Existence in Western and Islamic Philosophies

It is essential to note that in Western philosophy and theology, arguments for the existence of God are often presented independently of one another (“horizontal”). For instance, one philosopher or theologian may propose a cosmological argument, while another offers a different cosmological argument without necessarily building

1. The argument from indigence-based possibility for proving the existence of God was first introduced by Mullâ Şadrâ (see Mullâ Şadrâ, 1981, pp. 35–36), and later Şadraean philosophers further interpreted and refined it.
2. In *al-Ishârât wa-l-tanbîḥât*, Ibn Sînâ presents an argument for the existence of God, which he attributes to the "truthfals" (*al-şiddîqîn*) (see Ibn Sînâ, 1996, p. 102). A more developed version of this argument can be found in the works of Mullâ Şadrâ, later Şadraean philosophers such as Mullâ Hādî Sabzewârî, and neo-Şadraeans like ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’î. Although the argument has sometimes been likened to the ontological argument, it is important to note that the two are fundamentally distinct.
3. To avoid unnecessary elaboration, these arguments have not been addressed in the present discussion.
4. For the same reason mentioned above, these arguments have also not been addressed in the present discussion.

upon the previous one. In contrast, in Islamic philosophy, these arguments are primarily developed in a progressive, interconnected manner (“vertical”). For example, Ibn Sīnā, in *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, claims to present the first philosophical formulation of the “argument of the truthful” (*burhān al-ṣiddīqīn*). Later, Mullā Ṣadrā refines and expands this argument by employing the principles of the primacy of existence (*iṣālat al-wujūd*) and the gradation of existence (*tashkīk al-wujūd*). Subsequently, Mullā Hādī Sabzewārī simplifies the argument by reducing its premises, and later, ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī presents it in such a way that it appears self-evident and primitive.

Given these considerations, tracing the evolution of arguments in Islamic philosophy is essential, as it represents a key distinction between Islamic and Western approaches to proving the existence of God.

C. Empiricist and Rationalist Approaches in Western and Islamic Arguments for the Existence of God

In examining arguments for the existence of God and comparing Western and Islamic perspectives, it is crucial to recognize the differences in their methodological approaches.

The new Western approach to arguments for the existence of God is predominantly empiricist, emphasizing what manifests in human experience. For this reason, most contemporary Western philosophers begin their formulation of arguments for God's existence with sensory perception and empirical premises. A prime example of this is Kant, who was deeply influenced by an empirical perspective. In *Critique of Pure Reason*, he starts with sensory perception, then moves to the faculty of understanding (while addressing the role of imagination within this process), and finally arrives at reason. It may be due to this approach that Western philosophers have been more

engaged than Islamic philosophers in practical philosophical discussions and in applied branches of philosophy—such as political philosophy, moral philosophy, and social philosophy—whose practical dimension distinguishes them from pure philosophy.

In contrast to this approach stands the perspective of Islamic thinkers and philosophers, which is predominantly rationalist. Islamic philosophers, in their works, directly engage with reason, viewing philosophy—and knowledge in its true sense—as an intellectual act concerned with intelligible realities.

The influence of these two approaches is particularly evident in the discussion of arguments for the existence of God. As will be demonstrated in the following pages, Western philosophy appears to exhibit a certain anxiety and perplexity in formulating such arguments.

The dominance of the empirical approach has ultimately led some Western philosophers and theologians to seek merely a *sufficient reason* for proving God's existence, as if the very possibility of presenting a rational argument for God's existence is ruled out from the outset. Instead, they settle for offering a sufficient reason or justification—one that is *subjective* and, at best, serves only to intellectually persuade the subject. In contrast, Islamic philosophy, with its rationalist perspective, emphasizes the necessity of presenting *demonstrative argument* (*al-Burhān*), in which the *objective* dimension is paramount. To this day, it has not abandoned the effort to formulate rational arguments for God's existence.

This may also explain why the argument of the truthful—as previously mentioned—has not drawn the attention of Western philosophers and theologians. The foundation of this argument, which is rooted in the primacy and gradation of existence, is fundamentally

incomprehensible and unprovable through an empirical approach.

For the same reason, the argument of necessity and contingency (*burhān al-wujūb wa-l-imkān*) is understood in entirely different ways in Western and Islamic philosophy. Western philosophers have often interpreted *possibility* either as *probability* (that something could fail to exist) or as *origination* (that something did not exist at one time and then came into being). In contrast, in Islamic philosophy, *possibility* refers to the equipoise of an entity's essence or quiddity with respect to existence and nonexistence.

Similarly, the discussion of causality, which underlies all arguments for God's existence, has been predominantly centered on preparatory causality (*al-'illiyya al-mu'iddah*) in Western thought. In contrast, Islamic philosophy is concerned with complete causality (*al-'illiyya al-tāmmah*), which refers to a true efficient cause that both bestows existence and sustains it.

Having established these preliminary points, we will now proceed to examine and analyze the arguments for God's existence within the Western approach and critique them from an Islamic philosophical perspective.

1. Ontological Arguments

It should first be noted that ontological arguments belong to the category of *a priori* arguments, meaning that they infer the existence of God or the Necessary Being directly and without mediation from the very concept of God—rather than from the characteristics of the external world or created beings.

This category of arguments has been presented in multiple formulations within Western philosophy. Anselm, the originator of the ontological argument, proposed two versions of it, and further

formulations have been put forth by Descartes, Leibniz, Spinoza, Kant, Hartshorne, Malcolm, and others¹ (see Geisler, 2005, pp. 207–238). In this study, however, we will limit our discussion to the two formulations presented by Descartes.²

A. Descartes' First Formulation of the Ontological Argument

1. Whatever is clearly and distinctly understood about something is true.
2. We clearly and distinctly understand that the concept of an absolutely perfect being entails its existence; otherwise, it would lack something (existence) and thus would no longer be absolutely perfect.
3. Therefore, it is true that an absolutely perfect being cannot lack existence.

B. Descartes' Second Formulation of the Ontological Argument

1. Whatever is essential to the essence or definition of a concept must necessarily be affirmed of it.
2. Existence is a logically necessary part of the concept of the Necessary Being; otherwise, it could not be defined as a Necessary Being.
3. Therefore, it must logically be affirmed that the Necessary Being exists.

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1. Kant's classification and formulation of the ontological argument are primarily aimed at critiquing it.
 2. Descartes' second formulation of the ontological argument is somewhat similar to Anselm's second formulation. However, their first formulations of the argument differ from one another.

In Descartes' first formulation of the ontological argument, God's existence is inferred from the concept of *perfection*, while in his second formulation, it is derived from the concept of the *Necessary Being* (Geisler, 2005, pp. 207–208; for Descartes' original text, see Descartes, 1986, pp. 45–46).

The ontological argument has faced numerous critiques, from figures such as Gaunilo, Aquinas, Caterus, and Gassendi to Hume, Kant, Schopenhauer, Findlay, Plantinga, and others (Geisler, 2005, pp. 209–241). However, the most significant criticisms have been put forth by Kant and some contemporary Islamic philosophers, including Ayatollah Javadi Amoli. Below, we will examine these critiques.

a. Kant's Three Objections to the Ontological Argument

In *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant presents a total of three objections to the ontological argument—one directed at its first formulation and the other two aimed at its second formulation.

1. Kant's Critique of the First Formulation of Ontological Argument: Kant argues that existence is not a predicate in the sense that it could be an attribute or perfection affirmed of a subject or thing. Existence is not an additional perfection of an essence but rather a state of that perfection. In essence, existence fundamentally cannot add anything to the concept of an essence. If an essence is considered purely as such, without any additional considerations, existence does not contribute anything to a given essence (for instance, the essence of a hundred-dollar bill, as Kant illustrates) (see: Kant, 1998, p. 567). In reality, no conceptual difference can be conceived between the essence of a real hundred-dollar bill (one that exists) and the essence of an imaginary hundred-dollar bill (which exists only in the mind). As some philosophers have expressed, "If there were a distinction

between a real hundred-dollar bill and a mental one—that is, if adding the concept of existence to a hundred-dollar bill increased its value in any way—then the concept of a hundred-dollar bill would not refer to an actual hundred-dollar bill, and a real hundred-dollar bill would not, in fact, be an instance of a hundred-dollar bill" (Javadi Amoli, 1995, p. 205).

Ayatollah Motahari, in his footnotes on ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī’s *The Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism*, considers this objection to the first formulation of the ontological argument valid and deems it unreliable (Motahari, 2007, vol. 5, pp. 125–128). However, Ayatollah Javadi Amoli does not accept this critique of the first formulation of the ontological argument. He argues: "The concept of existence, regardless of discussions such as the primacy of existence or quiddity, has its own distinct meaning. This meaning, independent of its instantiations or the methods used to identify them, retains its conceptual integrity by primary predication (*al-ḥaml al-awwalī*).¹ Therefore, whenever it is predicated of itself or of a subject containing it, a proposition is formed which, within the framework of primary predication, is necessarily true. This fundamental aspect, which is also

1. Predication is of two kinds: essential primary predication (*al-ḥaml al-awwalī al-dhātī*) and common technical predication (*al-ḥaml al-shā’i‘ al-ṣanā’ī*). Essential primary predication occurs when the subject and predicate are identical both in external existence and in mental conception, as in the statement: "A human is a rational animal." Common technical predication, on the other hand, occurs when the subject and predicate are identical only in external existence but differ in mental conception. An example of this is the statement: "Water is something that boils at 100 degrees Celsius," where the subject (water) and the predicate (something that boils at 100 degrees) are conceptually distinct but refer to the same external reality (Khansari, 1992, Vol. 2, p. 60). Thus, essential primary predication mainly pertains to the realm of the mind and concepts, whereas common technical predication relates to the external world and actual instances.

employed in Anselm's argument as explained earlier, remains immune to Kant's third objection—contrary to what some Muslim thinkers [referring to 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī and Ayatollah Motahari] have assumed" (Javadi Amoli, 1995, p. 206).

Nevertheless, it seems that Kant's objection to the first formulation of the ontological argument is valid: existence is not an attribute or perfection of an essence but merely the fact of having an external instance. If this formulation aims to prove God's external existence and pertains to "common technical predication"—which is indeed its actual intent—rather than remaining solely within the realm of the mind and essential predication, then Kant's objection applies to it.

2. Kant's critiques of the second formulation of the ontological argument: Kant's first critique of the second formulation of the ontological argument is as follows: If we reject both the concept and the existence of a necessary being, we do not encounter any contradiction—just as there is no contradiction in denying both a triangle and its three angles. Contradiction arises only when one is denied while the other is affirmed (quoted in Geisler, 2005, p. 219; for Kant's original text, see Kant, 1998, p. 565). In essence, a predicate is necessary for a subject only if the subject itself exists in the first place. If both the subject and the predicate are negated together, no contradiction arises. In other words, the necessity of attributing a predicate to a subject is contingent upon the condition "as long as the subject itself exists." A predicate can only be ascribed to a subject insofar as that subject exists.

In response to Kant's critique, some Islamic thinkers, such as Haeri Yazdi, argue that Kant failed to distinguish between logical

necessity and philosophical (eternal) necessity.¹ Kant's objection holds only when dealing with logical necessity, where the subject can sometimes be negated or removed. However, if the necessity in question is philosophical necessity—as is the case with the Necessary Being—the negation of the subject is fundamentally impossible. Therefore, Kant's first critique of the second formulation of the ontological argument is not valid (Haeri Yazdi, 2005, pp. 367–369).

Ayatollah Javadi Amoli argues that Haeri Yazdi's response does not effectively counter Kant's critique. Haeri Yazdi's argument merely points out that necessity, in the case of the Necessary Being, must be eternal necessity. However, the ontological argument itself does not seek to establish the eternal necessity of the Necessary Being in the first place. Nevertheless, Ayatollah Javadi Amoli considers Kant's objection incomplete and holds that it does not apply to the second formulation of the ontological argument. He explains: "A conceivable entity whose existence and actuality are either part of or identical to its very concept [i.e., the concept of the Necessary

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1. Necessity, in one classification, is divided into two types: logical essential necessity and philosophical (eternal) necessity. Logical essential necessity applies when a predicate is necessarily attributed to the essence of a subject, but only on the condition that the subject exists—meaning that the necessity holds while the subject exists. For example, in the statement "A human is a writer," the predicate (being a writer) applies only as long as the subject (human) exists, since without the existence of a human, there would be no writer. Philosophical necessity, on the other hand, applies when a predicate necessarily belongs to the essence of a subject without any conditions or qualifications, including the condition of existence. This type of necessity pertains to a subject whose existence is inherent to its very essence and self-sufficient, requiring no external conditions for its existence. Such necessity applies exclusively to the Necessary Being and its attributes—pure, absolute existence without essence and without cause. Examples include: "God is eternally existent," "God is all-knowing," or "God is all-powerful" (see Mullā Ṣadrā, 1981, vol. 1, pp. 157, 186–187; Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 2003, p. 70).

Being]—unlike a triangle or other essentialist concepts—is such that when an essential attribute is predicated of it, denying its existence and actuality of its subject would be contradictory. For this reason, there is no possible way to form a negative proposition by negating its subject" (Javadi Amoli, 1995, p. 200).

In any case, considering the two aforementioned responses—those of Haeri Yazdi and Javadi Amoli—it appears that Kant's first critique of the second formulation of the ontological argument is not valid, and this formulation remains intact.

Kant's second critique of the second formulation of the ontological argument is as follows: Necessity does not apply to existence; rather, it is used only in propositions. Necessity is a logical condition, not an existential one. There is no proposition that is necessarily true in terms of existence. Anything that is known through experience (which is the only means of acquiring knowledge about existing things) could have been otherwise (quoted in Geisler, 2005, p. 219; for Kant's original text, see Kant, 1998, pp. 566–567). In essence, if necessity is merely a logical qualifier, then it follows that the domain of logic and logical propositions is confined to the mind. Consequently, there is no external entity that possesses necessity. The proposition "God is a Necessary Being" must therefore be either analytic or synthetic:¹ If it is analytic, then it remains within the realm of the mind. If it is

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1. A proposition or statement, in one classification, is divided into two types: analytic and synthetic. In an analytic proposition, the predicate is obtained by analyzing the subject and is either inherent in it or identical to it—for example, "A body has extension." In contrast, in a synthetic proposition, the predicate lies outside the essence of the subject or is distinct from it—for example, "A body is heavy." Analytic propositions are independent of experience and are established solely through the principles of the mind or reason, without recourse to experience. However, all synthetic propositions are empirical and can only be verified through experience (Naghizadeh, 1995, pp. 166–167).

synthetic, then it is false—because experience does not reveal necessity in the external world.

It seems that Kant's objection can be addressed by drawing upon certain foundations of Islamic philosophy. There is a distinction between the level of discovery and the level of abstraction. Necessity in analytic propositions is *discovered*, rather than abstracted from them. Before necessity is discovered in analytic propositions, a person finds it existentially within themselves; then, through conceptualization, they recognize it within analytic propositions. Thus, necessity is an existential qualification that is merely uncovered in logic. This perspective also applies to other “philosophical secondary intelligibles” (*al-ma‘qūlāt al-thāniyah al-falsafiyyah*). Furthermore, the proposition “God is necessarily existent” is neither analytic nor synthetic; rather, it falls under the category of “extrinsically predicated from its very core” (*al-khārij al-maḥmūl min ṣamīmih*). To elaborate, in Islamic philosophy, propositions are classified into two types based on one criterion: extrinsically predicated from its very core and predicated through conjunction (*al-maḥmūl bi al-ḍamīma*). In the first type, the predicate is abstracted directly from the very core and reality of the subject, whereas in the second type, abstracting the predicate from the subject requires the addition of an external quiddity to the quiddity of the subject. Extrinsically predicated from its very core propositions, in turn, are divided into two kinds: (1) analytic propositions in Kant’s sense and (2) propositions of philosophical secondary intelligibles, where the predicate is one of these intelligibles abstracted from the very reality of existence. Necessity itself is one such predicate and is no exception to this principle: “The characteristic of this class of attributes [predicates] is that they do not have an instance separate from their subject” (Javadi Amoli, 1995, p. 203).

Given the aforementioned response, Kant’s second critique of

the second formulation of the ontological argument does not hold,¹ and this formulation remains valid.

b. Ayatollah Javadi Amoli's critique of the ontological argument: He argues that the fundamental flaw in the ontological argument is not any of Kant's three well-known objections. Rather, "the core issue in Anselm's argument lies in a fallacy stemming from the conflation of the concept of existence with its instantiation... By distinguishing between existence as predicated in a primary sense (*al-ḥaml al-awwalī*) and existence in a common predication (*al-ḥaml al-shāyi*'), Anselm's error becomes evident... Therefore, Anselm must clarify what he means by 'existence' in the phrase 'If God does not exist.' If he means existence in the primary sense, he is correct—denying the concept of existence to God, who is defined as the greatest conceivable being, results in contradiction... However, if by existence he means instantiation in the common predication, then there is no necessary connection between denying this kind of existence to God and negating His perfection as a concept, and thus no contradiction follows" (*ibid.*, pp. 194–195). In short, in the proposition "The Necessary Existent necessarily exists," necessity applies per se by way of primary predication, but in terms of common predication, the Necessary Existent could, without contradiction, be considered a contingent existent. The real question, then, is how we transition from the conceptual realm (mind) to the external reality (extra-mental existence).

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1. It is worth noting that Kant's second critique, which is based on the claim that necessity has no external existence, not only challenged ontological arguments but also posed difficulties for cosmological arguments in the West. This is because, as will be explained, such arguments primarily infer necessity and a necessary being from the existence of possibility. However, according to Kant, the very notion of a necessary being is incomprehensible, as external necessity itself makes no sense.

In response, it can be argued that humans can transition from the conceptual realm to external reality when dealing with philosophical secondary intelligibles, such as necessity. For instance, the proposition “A triangle has three sides” expresses a necessity in thought that seamlessly extends to external reality—it is impossible to find a triangle with four sides in any place or at any time. Thus, certain mental judgments can indeed apply to the external world. If necessity is established in thought, it likewise holds in external reality. Regarding the concept of the Necessary Existent (*wājib al-wujūd*), which is a necessity in thought, we can also extend this necessity to external reality and affirm its actual existence. In essence, necessity applies both “in thought” and “in reality.” Hence, two conceivable concepts emerge: necessarily nonexistent (*ḍarūrī al-‘adam*), which must not exist in reality (such as a four-sided triangle), and necessarily existent (*ḍarūrī al-wujūd*), which must exist in reality (such as God) (see Ayatollahi, n.d., p. 16).

Ultimately, perspectives on the ontological argument remain divided. In the Western tradition, many individuals continue to disagree on the validity of this argument. Some believe that the ontological argument is clearly fallacious, as one cannot derive a judgment about external reality from the mere analysis of a concept. Others consider the argument valid but contend that the aforementioned formulation may not qualify as a strict “argument,” since one cannot ascertain the truth of its premises without already knowing the truth of its conclusion (Peterson et al., 1997, p. 141). Similarly, in the Islamic tradition, contemporary philosophers have also taken differing stances. Scholars such as Haeri Yazdi and Mohammad Taghi Ja’fari¹

1. While affirming the validity of this argument, Ja’fari replaces the term *ontological argument* (*al-burhān al-wujūdī*) with *argument by necessity* (*al-burhān al-wujūbī*). He holds that the core emphasis of this argument is not on existence (*al-wujūd*) but on necessity (*al-wujūb*); in essence, we arrive at the existence of God through necessity rather than mere existence (as cited in Ayatollahi, 2009, p. 4051).

have accepted the ontological argument, whereas others, including Motahari and Javadi Amoli, have not regarded it as valid.

2. Cosmological Arguments

Cosmological arguments belong to the category of *a posteriori* arguments, meaning that they infer the existence of God not from the concept of God but from some existing reality within the world.

Various formulations of these arguments have been presented by thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Anselm, al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, Aquinas, Scotus, Ockham, Descartes, Leibniz, Wolff, Taylor, and others (see Geisler, 2005, pp. 247–280). However, for the sake of brevity, this discussion will focus solely on the cosmological arguments of Ibn Sīnā and Leibniz, following Geisler's classification in his *Philosophy of Religion*.

A. Ibn Sīnā's Cosmological Argument Based on the First Cause

1. Contingent existents (*mumkin al-wujūd*) exist—that is, entities that have emerged¹ into being must have been brought into existence by a cause; they do not exist independently or necessarily by themselves.
2. Every contingent existent requires a cause for its existence because it cannot account for its own existence.²

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1. As previously mentioned, Western scholars did not fully grasp the meaning of *mumkin al-wujūd* (contingent existence) in Ibn Sīnā's philosophy, and at times they equated it with *al-muḥdath* (*emerging or originated*)—something that was once nonexistent and then came into being. However, *mumkin al-wujūd* refers to that which, by its very nature, is indifferent to existence or nonexistence; it is in a state of potentiality, neither necessitating existence nor nonexistence.
 2. More accurately put, contingent beings cannot prefer existence for themselves. In fact, in Ibn Sīnā's philosophy, the discussion revolves around the "preference (*al-tarjīḥ*) of existence," not the "explanation of existence," and thus, this too is a form of misinterpretation.

3. An infinite regress of existential causes is impossible. While an infinite regress of causes related to becoming, or preparatory causes, may be conceivable, an infinite regress of existential causes is not, since the cause of existence must coexist with its effect.¹
4. Therefore, there must be a First Cause for contingent beings, which is necessarily existent by itself (*wājib al-wujūd bi-l-dhāt*). This First Cause cannot itself be contingent, for if it were, it would also require a cause—leading back to the necessity of a self-existent necessary being. (See Geisler, 2005, pp. 259–260; for Ibn Sīnā's original text, see Ibn Sīnā, 1996, pp. 97–98; also Ibn Sīnā, 1984, pp. 37–42.)

B. Leibnitz's Cosmological Argument Based on the Principle of Sufficient Reason

1. The entire observable world is in a state of change.
2. Anything that changes lacks an intrinsic reason for its own existence.
3. There must be a sufficient reason for everything,² either within itself or beyond itself.

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1. It is worth noting that what Ibn Sīnā—and Islamic philosophy in general—means by the cause of existence is the giver of existence, or God Himself, who grants and sustains the existence of contingent beings at every moment. For such a cause, the notion of an infinite regress is fundamentally meaningless. Ibn Sīnā introduced the impossibility of an infinite regress of existential causes as a preemptive response to potential objections, considering it a didactic argument rather than a strictly ontological one.
 2. As previously mentioned, the "sufficient reason" in Western philosophy pertains to the realm of argument—that is, mental persuasion and a subjective state—rather than an actual, objective reality.

4. Therefore, there must be a cause beyond this world that accounts for its existence.
5. This cause is either self-sufficient or depends on something beyond itself.
6. An infinite regress of sufficient reasons is impossible, for the inability to arrive at an explanation is not itself an explanation; ultimately, there must be a final explanation.
7. There must be a primary cause of the world that has no external reason beyond itself and is its own sufficient reason. (Quoted from Gieseler, 2005, pp. 271–272).

Among the most significant objections raised against cosmological arguments in general are those of Hume and Kant. However, prior to them, Ockham also posed three fundamental questions regarding this category of arguments. Below, we outline these objections:

a. Ockham's Three Objections to Cosmological Arguments

1. An infinite chain of essentially related causes is possible. That is, the regress of simultaneous efficient or originating causes (such as a father causing the existence of a child) is conceivable and poses no issue, although an infinite regress of sustaining causes, if assumed to be simultaneous, is impossible.
2. Causation is defined as the dependence of something's existence or presence on another; therefore, knowledge of efficient causes is solely based on experience.
3. Experience does not reveal the necessity of the connection between cause and effect. (Quoted from Gieseler, 2005, p. 269).

b. Hume's Eight Objections to Cosmological Arguments

1. A finite set of effects leads to a finite cause, as cause and effect must belong to the same category.
2. No proposition about existence can be logically necessary, because the negation or contrary of anything derived from experience is always possible.
3. Whatever can be conceived as non-existent is not necessary in its existence, including the so-called "Necessary Being."
4. If the Necessary Being is defined as "indestructible," then the world itself could also be a Necessary Being. Either the world is necessary, or God is not indestructible.
5. An eternal chain cannot have a cause, as its cause would have to be temporally prior to it. But nothing can precede an eternal chain in time; therefore, an eternal chain is possible.
6. Experience does not reveal a necessary connection between cause and effect. Continuous succession creates a habitual expectation, which we mistakenly interpret as causation.
7. The world as a whole does not require a cause; rather, the whole explains its own parts. Only the parts require causes. While the parts are contingent, the whole is necessary—albeit in a derivative, mathematical sense.
8. Arguments for God's existence only persuade those with a "metaphysical mindset." Most people think pragmatically rather than through pure reasoning. (Quoted from Gieseler, 2005, pp. 273–276. For Hume's original text, see Hume, 2013.)

c. Kant's Seven Objections to Cosmological Arguments

1. The cosmological argument is based on the invalid ontological argument. It abandons the realm of experience and borrows

the concept of the Necessary Being from beyond the empirical domain. This constitutes an invalid leap from the posterior to the prior.

2. Necessity is a mental constraint, not an existential one. Propositions may be necessary, but entities and beings are not.
3. A noumenal cause cannot be inferred from a phenomenal effect. Causality is merely a mental category imposed on reality rather than something that constitutes reality itself.
4. What is logically inescapable is not necessarily real. Thus, a logically necessary being is not necessarily an actually existing being.
5. Cosmological arguments lead to metaphysical contradictions, such as the claim that a first cause must both exist and, at the same time, cannot exist—both conclusions following logically from the principle of sufficient reason.
6. The concept of the "Necessary Being" is not inherently clear or self-evident. It is conceived as something that is entirely unconditioned. However, this very definition eliminates the only possible way such a concept could have any meaning.
7. An infinite regress of causes is logically possible because the principle of sufficient reason merely states that everything must have a reason, with no justification for arbitrarily halting the search for explanations. (Quoted from Gieseler, 2005, pp. 276–278. For Kant's original text, see Kant, 1998, pp. 569–574).

In response to the above objections, the following points can be taken into account:

1. Cosmological arguments are based on the principle of causality and the impossibility of an infinite regress of causes—as well as, in some cases, the principle of sufficient reason in Western

philosophy. However, it is important to note that causality in Western cosmological arguments is typically a form of preparatory causation, which can logically continue infinitely. The infinite regress of preparatory causes is not inherently impossible. In Islamic philosophy, however, things are different. Causality in Islamic cosmological arguments refers to a complete, existence-giving cause, which continuously grants and maintains the existence of contingent beings—entities whose essence is neutral between existence and nonexistence. This type of causality also functions as a sustaining cause and, by its very nature, cannot be subject to an infinite regress. This is precisely why Ibn Sīnā's argument from necessity and contingency has often been misunderstood in the West, where *al-imbkān* (contingency) has sometimes been interpreted as probability and sometimes as temporal origination (*al-ḥudūth*). This Western perspective stems from the dominance of an empirical approach, which contrasts with the rationalist methodology of Islamic philosophers.

2. Philosophers and Christian theologians, like Islamic theologians, interpret possibility as probability or origination (*al-ḥudūth*), considering the world to be originated or incipient (*al-ḥādith*) rather than eternal (*al-qadīm*). In this way, they seek to prevent philosophical and theological difficulties related to divine will from arising. However, in Peripatetic Islamic philosophy, *al-imbkān* refers to the indifference or equipoise of an entity's essence towards both existence and nonexistence, requiring a preferring factor (*al-murajjih*) to determine one over the other. This form of *al-imbkān* is intrinsic to the entity, implying that it always necessitates a cause—ultimately the Necessary Existent. Consequently, Islamic philosophers regard the world as eternal, since divine emanation must be perpetual and without beginning. Through intermediaries such as intellects, universal souls, celestial spheres, and heavenly bodies, they address

issues related to divine will in a different manner, a discussion beyond the scope of this text. Beyond these two perspectives on *al-imbkân*, the doctrine of the primacy and gradation of existence in Mullā Ṣadrā's Transcendent Philosophy advances further, considering the possible or contingent existent to be inherently limited and existentially impoverished. This is because anything that possesses quiddity, is delineated, and can be conceived by the human mind does not have existence as part of its essence.

3. Ultimately, Western philosophers, from the time of Berkeley and under his influence, along with that of certain other empiricist philosophers, replaced *cause and effect* with *sign and signified*. However, it must be noted that argument or reason pertains to the domain of affirmation, whereas causality pertains to the domain of existence. A sufficient reason seeks to persuade the human mind in a subjective rather than objective manner and is not necessarily reflective of external reality. The notion of explanation, which appears in certain Western cosmological arguments, follows a similar logic. On this basis, cosmological arguments can be divided into two periods: the pre-Leibnizian period, which was based on preparatory causality, and the post-Leibnizian period, which was grounded in the principle of sufficient reason and explanation. A key objection to the principle of sufficient reason is that if a reason is provided for each component of the world, then the whole—being nothing other than the sum of its parts—does not itself require a reason. Thus, the world as a whole could have its explanation within itself, allowing the principle of sufficient reason to be denied without leading to contradiction. Furthermore, the principle of sufficient reason is inherently a mental construct and does not resolve the problem of external reality. The God established on the basis of the principle of sufficient reason is ultimately something that cannot, in logical terms and within the

realm of thought, be nonexistent—meaning that God's nonexistence would be logically impossible, though not necessarily actual in external reality. Moreover, the principle of sufficient reason and the arguments based on it fail to account for the necessity present in the actual world, as previously explained, and are fundamentally incapable of grasping it.

Given what has been stated, one may assert: “The objections raised against the argument of necessity and possibility in modern Western philosophy reflect either an incapacity to comprehend the argument itself or the inadequacy of translators in conveying the rational and well-founded reasoning of the theosophical philosophers” (Javadi Amoli, 1374, p. 154).

3. Teleological (Design) Arguments

Teleological arguments, or arguments from design, which are based on order, harmony, purposefulness, governance, and fine-tuning in the world and its beings, belong to the category of *a posteriori* arguments. These arguments infer the existence of God or a designer from the observable order and harmony in the world.

As mentioned at the beginning of this text, Islamic philosophy has not engaged with the argument from design. Fundamentally, such arguments emerged in Christian Western thought and are rooted in natural theology. It is through natural theology that religion becomes separate from the Church, in the sense that natural theologians set aside religious institutions, rituals, and ceremonies, seeking to approach religion through autonomous reason and experience. They claimed that one could infer the existence of God directly from nature and, in pursuit of this goal, employed scientific—rather than philosophical—doctrines in support of religion.

Before presenting a formulation of teleological or design arguments, it is appropriate to consider a few key points regarding these arguments:

1. The argument from design does not pertain to just any kind of order. For instance, a group of balls neatly arranged next to one another or the orderly arrangement of molecules in a crystal may not necessarily require a designer. The order relevant to this argument is the harmony among components that lack awareness of each other and cannot coordinate themselves. In such cases, a designer is needed to establish this harmony, ultimately bringing about a purpose or goal. For example, the coordination among the parts of a machine falls within this category.
2. The order invoked in the argument from design should not be conflated with causality. For instance, the fact that heat causes expansion is a case of causality, not design.
3. The argument from design should not be confused with aesthetics. Something may be aesthetically pleasing without necessitating a designer.
4. Order is of two kinds: artificial (industrial) and natural (ontological). The former pertains to human-made artifacts, while the latter applies to nature. In the Western tradition, the argument from design is often based on analogy—that is, reasoning from the order observed in human artifacts to the order found in nature. This analogy, in turn, relies on an implicit syllogism: two analogous entities must both be the effect of a common cause.

Various formulations of teleological arguments have been presented by thinkers such as Paley, Taylor, Clarke, Tennant, and

others (see Geisler, 1384, pp. 157–172). One of the most recent formulations of the design argument is the "fine-tuning argument" (see Ayatollahi & Shoorvarzi, 2014, pp. 75–78). In this paper, we will focus solely on Paley's formulation.

Paley's Teleological Argument Based on the Watchmaker Analogy

1. A watch demonstrates that it has been designed for an intelligent purpose (i.e., to indicate time).
2. The world exhibits a greater degree of design than a watch, as it encompasses a more intricate craftsmanship, a more complex order, and a wider variety of mechanisms.
3. Therefore, if a watch requires a watchmaker, the world likewise necessitates a greater, intelligent designer—namely, God (cited in Geisler, 1384, pp. 157–158).

Various objections have been raised against this category of arguments by thinkers such as Mill, Russell, Hume, proponents of chance, Kant, Ducasse, and others. Below, we briefly outline some of these objections.

A. Mill's Objection to the Watchmaker Argument: According to Mill, Paley's argument, based on the watchmaker analogy, relies on drawing a resemblance between effects to infer a resemblance between causes. However, the greater the dissimilarities, the weaker the argument becomes. Our recognition of a watchmaker's existence is derived from experience, not from an intrinsic order within the watch itself (cited in: *ibid.*, pp. 159–160).

B. Russell's Evolutionary Refutation: Russell argues that the order and harmony observed in the world can be explained through evolution and the principle of the survival of the fittest, eliminating

the need to invoke design and purpose (cited in: *ibid.*, p. 161; for the original text, see Russell, 2009, p. 589). However, Geisler notes: "There is no logical reason why harmony cannot be the result of both evolution and design" (*ibid.*, p. 161).

C. Hume's Two Skeptical Responses to the Teleological Argument:

1. According to Hume, the deity inferred—at best—from such arguments must, first, be fundamentally different from human intelligence, as human-made artifacts differ from natural ones; second, be limited, since its effect (the world) is finite, and cause and effect must be proportionate; third, be imperfect, as nature contains flaws; fourth, be multiple, as human artifacts are sometimes the product of several individuals; fifth, be male or female, as humans reproduce in this manner; and sixth, resemble humans, since some of God's creations have eyes, ears, and noses.
2. The order in the world could arise either from design or by chance. However, the universe might be the result of chance because it could be both eternal and in motion. Given an infinite number of random occurrences, every possible combination may eventually emerge, and the one best suited for survival would persist—simply because it has no alternative (cited in: Geisler, 2005, pp. 161–163).

D. The View of Chance Advocates: Some argue that the universe could have come into existence purely by chance: even if an immeasurable number of prior random events must occur against the order and arrangement of the world, it remains possible that such order may eventually emerge in actuality. However, one must acknowledge that the probability of such an occurrence is unimaginably remote (Geisler, 2005, p. 168).

H. Ontological Shortcomings in the Teleological Argument from Kant's Perspective:

1. The teleological argument relies on our empirical experience of order and design in the world; however, such experience does not necessarily lead us to a necessarily existent being. If God is merely one link in the chain of beings, then something superior might also exist; and if He exists outside that chain, experience cannot reveal Him to us. Thus, leaping from the cause observed in experience to the cause established by pure reason is a mistaken existential inference.
2. Although the teleological argument is not conclusive, it is valuable because it can point to the existence of a world-maker who, while not perfect in every respect and not a complete foundation for religion, remains majestic (cf. Gissler, 1384, pp. 170–172; see also Kant, 1998, pp. 569–574).

W. Cosmological Issues in the Teleological Argument from Ducasse's Perspective:

1. This argument does not prove the existence of a creator with absolute perfection, as deficiencies, evils, diseases, and similar imperfections also exist in the world.
2. There are instances where designers are inferior to their designs, as seen in the case of the inventor of the microscope.
3. The teleological argument shares the same shortcomings as the cosmological argument. If the world requires a designer, then that designer would also require another designer. Moreover, if, according to the principle of sufficient reason, everything must have a cause, then no ultimate cause can be posited (cf. Gissler, 1384, pp. 172–173).

In response to the aforementioned objections, the following considerations regarding teleological (design) arguments can be highlighted:

1. The first fundamental issue with these arguments is the analogy to human-made artifacts, which lacks a solid foundation. In the case of a watch, experience teaches us that there must be a watchmaker. However, we have no analogous experience regarding nature and its order. Nevertheless, it can still be argued that coordinated parts must have an organizing cause.
2. The second objection is the theory of evolution. It is claimed that atoms and molecules initially existed, which then collided and gave rise to simple entities (single-celled organisms). Through the combination of these entities, complex beings such as plants, animals, and ultimately humans emerged. Evolution itself relies on the survival of the fittest, meaning that entities with greater adaptability persist while those with lesser adaptability naturally disappear. Consequently, nature advances toward complexity through the struggle for survival and natural selection, rendering the need for a designer or organizer unnecessary.

In response to the theory of evolution and in defense of teleological arguments, some have resorted to probability theory. They argue that the likelihood of a multicellular organism—and ultimately a highly organized entity like a human—emerging purely through "blind selection" is so infinitesimally small that it can practically be dismissed.

However, some have critiqued the use of probability theory in this context, raising the following points: (1)

Although the probability of a multicellular organism—and ultimately a highly organized entity like a human—coming into existence may be extremely low and close to zero, it is still not absolutely zero. (2) Probability is meaningful under identical conditions; if conditions change, the probability may also change and become stronger. (3) The number of occurrences is significant in probability; the greater the number of trials, the higher the probability of an event occurring. (4) Probability is a mental construct, and it may not exist as a real factor in the actual world. In other words, for someone who has witnessed the realization of one possible outcome, probability becomes meaningless—it is a certainty for them. (5) If humans were able to fully and precisely understand the causes and mechanisms governing the world through scientific means, probability would lose its significance.

Beyond the aforementioned critiques of probability theory, one might also consider the possibility that atoms and molecules collided countless times without forming any complex structures until, at some point, such a combination did occur, giving rise to composite organisms. The principle of the survival of the fittest then ensured that the most viable organisms persisted. Although this probability is extremely low, over the course of millions of years, such an event could have taken place. Therefore, probability theory alone is insufficient to justify the argument from design.

3. It seems that, rather than focusing on nature itself, a more effective approach in defending the argument from design would be to examine the laws governing nature and infer the existence of an organizer or designer from them. These laws

cannot originate from matter itself but must instead stem from the giver of these laws. The fact that such laws have guided the process of evolution over millions of years, leading to the emergence of highly complex and precise beings, points to an immense intelligence. While proponents of evolution argue that these laws emerged through the evolutionary process itself, it is equally conceivable that God established and sustained these laws.

4. Teleological arguments are more dialectical than demonstrative and logical. In fact, this argument serves as a form of dialectical argument rather than producing demonstrative certainty; one might say it leads more to psychological certainty than epistemic certainty (for definitions, characteristics, and conditions of epistemic certainty according to some Islamic philosophers, see Abbaszadeh, 2019, pp. 397–406; 2023, pp. 343–364). However, for the general public, dialectical argument is often more practical and effective than demonstrative argument. Therefore, the lack of demonstrative value in the argument from design does not negate its dialectical significance—as the Quran itself engages in "the best form of argumentation" when addressing polytheists and others (Javadi Amoli, 1995, p. 236).
5. Teleological arguments, on their own, lack sufficiency without the argument from necessity and contingency (cosmological argument), as they cannot independently establish the existence of a necessary being. In other words, at best, teleological arguments merely demonstrate the existence of an organizer. Therefore, "if the teleological argument is viewed not as an independent argument but as an extension or supplement to the cosmological argument, its explanatory

power increases. If the cosmological argument can validly establish the existence of a necessary being, then it is reasonable to claim that the teleological argument reveals an additional important characteristic of that being—namely, that it is intelligent and conscious" (Peterson et al., 1376, p. 162).

4. Moral Arguments

Moral arguments can also be considered *a posteriori* in a certain sense, as they seek to infer the existence of a lawgiver based on the moral law inherent within human beings.

Various formulations of these arguments have been presented by thinkers such as Kant, Rashdall, Sorley, Trueblood, Lewis, and others (see Geisler, 1384, pp. 157–184). In this section, however, we will focus solely on Kant's formulation.

The Moral Argument based on the necessity of morality:

1. Happiness is an innate desire of all humans.
2. Morality (categorical imperatives of command and prohibition) is a duty for all humans.
3. The unity of these two constitutes the highest good.
4. The highest good is inherently desirable.
5. The unification of duty and innate desire is not possible for a finite human within a limited time.
6. However, the moral necessity of performing certain actions implies their possibility (ought implies can).
7. Therefore, it is morally necessary to assume the existence of God (to make this unity possible) and the immortality of the soul (to make this unity attainable) (Quoted from: Geisler, 2005, pp. 175-176. For further study, see: Naghibzadeh, 1995, pp. 332-335).

In contrast to this category of arguments, some have also employed moral arguments against the existence of God, as seen in the works of thinkers such as Russell, Bayle, Camus, and others (see: Geisler, 2005, pp. 184-188).

Regarding moral arguments, the following points can be considered:

1. Kant himself never presented moral necessity as an argument for the existence of God. As he stated, such a claim is by no means logically necessary; rather, it is practically implied only to make human moral experience meaningful (Geisler, 2005, p. 176).
2. Several criticisms can be raised against Kant's argument: First, the highest good may simply be unattainable. Second, it is unclear whether "ought" truly implies "can". Third, duty and inner inclination might already be reconcilable within this worldly life, for instance, if one identifies duty with hedonism. And fourth, there may be no objective moral law at all, or if such a law exists, there is no necessity for a transcendent giver behind it.
3. At best, Kant's moral argument only implies that one should live as if God exists (Geisler, 2005, p. 177).
4. Before presenting any moral argument for God, the problem of evil (especially moral evil) must first be addressed. Without resolving this issue, the moral argument lacks sufficiency.
5. Like the teleological argument, the moral argument depends on the cosmological argument: Even if one accepts objective moral laws, a theistic argument based on them still relies on a premise borrowed from the cosmological argument—namely, that these laws require causes or explanations (Geisler, 2005, p. 196).

6. Ultimately, one might say: For a theist, the moral argument remains useful in complementing cosmological and teleological arguments. Believers argue that this argument helps resolve another part of the puzzle, as it at least provides a justification for our moral beliefs (Peterson et al., 1997, p. 166).

Conclusion

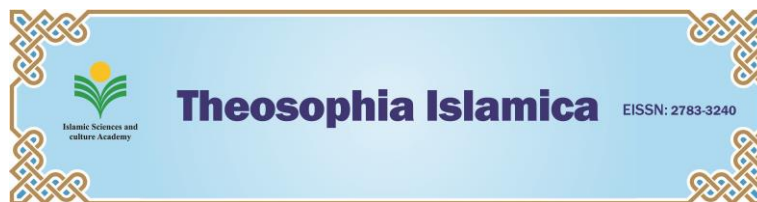
We reviewed, critiqued, and compared the four major arguments for the existence of God in Western and Islamic philosophy—ontological, cosmological, teleological (design), and moral arguments. The key findings expected from this study are as follows:

1. An argument is distinct from both faith and mere reasoning.
2. Historically, both Western and Islamic philosophers have played a significant and parallel role in shaping arguments for the existence of God.
3. In Western philosophy, these arguments are generally structured horizontally and independently, whereas in Islamic philosophy, they are structured vertically and incrementally.
4. Western philosophers tend to adopt an empirical approach, whereas Islamic philosophers primarily rely on rationalism in formulating arguments for God's existence.
5. Ontological, cosmological, teleological (design), and moral arguments have been subject to critique and refinement in Western thought and have also faced serious objections within the framework of Islamic philosophy.
6. Misinterpretations or imprecise understandings of certain rational concepts and principles specific to Islamic philosophers have led to misconceptions in the evaluation and critique of arguments for God's existence within Western philosophy.

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Assessing the Teleological and Natural Versions of the Design Argument for God's Existence

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Abstract

Nowadays, most Christian theologians, in defending theism, put forward the design argument against the arguments of scientists who, by appealing to chance, seek to render God unnecessary in explanation. Over time, the argument from design has been presented under various rubrics and interpretations—sometimes intertwined—in support of theism. It appears that the design argument was initially employed to complement knowledge of God, but over time, it has shifted its focus toward biological and empirical aspects that indicate the order of nature. In the present era, the primary aim of this argument is to defend theism against atheistic theories in the empirical sciences rather than to establish the purposiveness of existence. However, this formulation of the argument from design has not achieved the necessary success in proving God's existence. Therefore, in this study, by elucidating the

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methodology of the empirical sciences and demonstrating the incompatibility of the design argument with this methodology, it becomes clear that one cannot rely solely on the design argument to counter atheism. In this way, it is shown that the intelligent design argument, in rejecting chance, lacks a demonstrative structure and not only fails to prove God but also falls short of establishing anything beyond what atheists themselves propose. Hence, one can draw upon the common ground between theology and science—namely, the metaphysical foundations of science—to advance empirical evidence in favor of theism. Accordingly, by employing a philosophical approach and enhancing the natural argument, this argument can be utilized as a strong proof for the existence of God.

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Introduction

Darwin's theory, by introducing "chance" into the evolutionary system of nature, created a new challenge in both empirical sciences and theology. On one hand, theologians considered this theory to contradict divine agency and creation, while on the other, some scientists viewed chance as evidence of nature's lack of purpose. For this reason, it has become common among scientists and theologians to invoke the theory of intelligent design in defense of theism, arguing that nature requires a transcendent designer. However, some scientists, in rejecting intelligent design, highlight the randomness and blind nature of nature's fine-tuned mechanisms, interpreting this as an absence of divine purpose in natural events. In reality, atheists neither deny natural causality and order nor reject natural purpose; rather, they perceive a contradiction between divine agency and chance in nature. In contrast, theists seek to affirm God's existence by invoking intelligent design and emphasizing the purposiveness of existence, while atheists, relying on chance and randomness, argue against divine purpose in the world. However, it is clear that proving the existence of an intelligent designer first requires establishing the existence of God. In other words, using the design argument to prove the existence of God or a designer is fundamentally flawed. The two aspects of the argument from design have been conflated without considering their distinct applications—teleology and designer represent two different approaches to the argument from design. Today, atheists employ the notions of chance and the blindness of natural processes to refute both interpretations.

In reality, what scientists today mean by "chance" does not imply the absence of an efficient cause. Even atheist scientists acknowledge natural efficient causes, and this form of natural order is universally accepted. The only point of contention is the attribution of

this natural order to a divine agent, which remains a theological challenge to be addressed. Thus, attempting to disprove chance by affirming the principle of causality or attributing these widely accepted efficient causes to an intelligent designer does not constitute a scientific or rational proof for the existence of God. In other words, theologians should seek to establish God's existence through efficient causality rather than final causality. The latter has been rendered obsolete in empirical sciences and does not accurately account for the phenomena of the world. Scientists employ the term "chance" within the methodological framework of empirical sciences, while theologians, in rejecting chance, seek to prove God's existence through the theory of intelligent design, by which they mean the purposiveness of nature. However, both sides misinterpret the underlying issue.

Overall, talk of chance raises the role of natural causes. Chance does not contradict final causality in a way that necessitates refuting chance or proving causality in nature, as final causality is not, in itself, a cause. Rather, teleology is a characteristic of natural beings—it refers to what the essence and distinct existence of each entity entail. Every being in nature has inherent attributes that actualize its potential. Therefore, when discussing teleology, the existence of God must first be established. Thus, there is no need to consider "chance" as a challenge to theism. Aristotelian natural philosophy explained nature through final causality, whereas in modern empirical sciences, "chance" is used as a concept opposing final causality—an application that is not entirely misplaced. Consequently, chance in empirical sciences is not the antithesis of intelligent design, nor does refuting chance prove the existence of a designer. A world that progresses through natural selection and chance can still operate under divine agency. For this reason, presenting

evidence of the fine-tuning of the universe is an ineffective means of proving God's existence. Even atheists acknowledge the fine-tuned aspects of the universe, as they themselves have discovered them. In reality, both scientists and theologians have deviated from their respective methodological frameworks. Scientists, adhering to their scientific methodology, cannot prove or disprove God, nor can the concept of "chance" be used to deny divine existence. Likewise, theologians, by employing empirical methods and citing fine-tuning—despite its implications of purposefulness in nature—cannot thereby prove God's existence. Therefore, these two versions of the design argument must be distinguished from one another to determine which, if any, has the capacity to establish the existence of God.

Among Muslim philosophers, Morteza Motahari sought to distinguish between these two perspectives on the argument from design. He argued that the argument from design pertains to nature and natural scientific relationships, while the argument from guidance, or final causality, implies the purposiveness of the world—one that points to a transcendent cause (Motahari, 1995, p. 104; 1971, vol. 5, p. 84). However, such explanations are insufficient for addressing the deeper challenges of the modern era. Existing articles and books have not adequately demonstrated that order or design is not an empirical matter, nor have they established that if one seeks to defend theism through an argument called the "argument from design," only a philosophical approach to this argument possesses the necessary strength. Thus, in this paper, we aim to examine these two approaches to the argument from design. As a distinguishing contribution from previous interpretations, we propose a philosophical framework that enhances the epistemological foundation of the argument from design in proving the existence of God.

Distinction between Final Cause and Purpose

Aristotelian physics, due to its focus on final causality, lacked the capacity to explain and predict natural phenomena or to account for the past of the universe. In fact, final causality cannot be considered a true explanatory cause in nature. While it may be a desirable concept, it does not necessarily lead to definitive conclusions (Mesbah, 2012, vol. 2, p. 100). Every natural entity functions according to its matter and form, and this operation follows causal relationships in which the efficient cause determines the outcome. Nature progresses in its evolutionary course and moves toward its ends based on causal connections (ibid., p. 106). However, there is no constant correlation between preparatory causes and their effects in the material world, as material causes do not adhere to the principle of cause-effect homogeneity or cognation (sinkhiyya). This is because a preparatory cause does not bestow existence upon its effect but merely provides the conditions for its emergence (Sadra, 1981, vol. 2, p. 210). Similarly, the concept of chance pertains to the role of the efficient cause in nature. Since, in the natural world, all causes merely actualize potentialities and do not possess intrinsic causality, chance does not contradict causation. In essence, true causality does not exist within the realm of nature. Regarding preparatory causes, since no philosophical proof establishes their homogeneity (or cognation) with their effects, and it is not logically impossible for multiple material and preparatory causes to produce the same type of effect, the number and determination of conditions cannot be proven through reason alone and remain dependent on empirical observation (Mesbah, 2012, vol. 2, p. 70). Thus, the theological rejection of chance is misplaced. Theology must align itself with the metaphysical foundations of empirical sciences in order to develop precise arguments in defense of theism.

In other words, purpose or finality is not necessarily aligned with final causality. This is because teleology contradicts causality: if the past determines the future, then the future cannot determine the past. For instance, an apple seed that is planted may fail to grow into an apple due to various external factors. In such a case, the anticipated future event never occurs, and something that never happens cannot determine what is presently occurring (Reichenbach, 2014, p. 230). Similarly, Darwin's theory of evolution demonstrated that nature is explained through causal determinism and natural selection rather than teleological reasoning (Reichenbach, 2014, p. 231). For this reason, we align with scientists who reject final causality, viewing this rejection as a pathway to the verifiability of God's existence and the compatibility of evolutionary theory with divine agency. Thus, without accusing Dawkins of holding an incorrect view regarding the explanation of the external world, we support his assertion of the role of chance in nature. By chance, Dawkins not mean an event without a cause, but rather the absence of a preordained plan governing nature (Dawkins, 2006, p. 91).

We also acknowledge that, given the metaphysical foundations of science, efficient causes determine the course of nature and do not lead to an infinite regress. This perspective aligns with the principles of contemporary essentialism, which initially emerged within the natural sciences and focuses on the existence of essences and essential properties by examining the essence and intrinsic characteristics of a natural kind. It is evident that, according to new essentialism, all transformations in living beings stem from their inherent forms. This approach asserts that the root of necessity and causality in objects, properties, events, processes, and relations in nature is found within the entities themselves, originating from their essence and intrinsic properties. If individuals of a particular kind possess identical

essences and essential properties—properties embedded in their very nature, inseparable from them, and constitutive of their reality—then these essences and essential properties will serve as the foundation of their necessity and causality (Ibid, sections 7-7).

For this reason, philosophers attribute a kind of causality and true agency to the "form" of each entity, considering all of its characteristics to arise from that form. In reality, the agency of natural agents derives from their forms, though conventionally, we attribute it to material agents. However, in a precise sense, the agency of each entity is specific to its form (Obudiyat, 2001, p. 322). Accordingly, causal determinism, as an efficient cause in natural selection, determines the multiple probabilities that are conventionally understood as chance—an idea emphasized by Darwin, who identified these probabilities as governed by natural selection.

Therefore, natural selection and chance are concomitant, with causal determinism or natural selection shaping the various probabilities in nature. As Darwin emphasizes, chance refers to our ignorance of the numerous underlying causes and factors, where only one possibility ultimately prevails in this competition.

Therefore, it is clear that chance does not imply the absence of order or planning; rather, it aligns perfectly with causal determinism in nature, which negates final causes. Likewise, we, as theists and proponents of evolution, also reject final causes in nature while defending purposiveness within it—a purposiveness shaped by natural selection and divine knowledge. In other words, although final causes do not operate in nature, this does not mean that efficient causality in nature proceeds blindly or without purpose.

However, most theists attempt to explain intelligence and purposiveness in nature by negating chance. Yet, disproving chance is

not necessary to establish an intelligent designer; rather, demonstrating intelligence and purposiveness in nature is a step that follows the proof of a designer. Therefore, it seems more appropriate to use the concept of "purpose" rather than "final cause" when explaining natural phenomena. The final cause has been defined as the ultimate perfection that an agent considers in its action or, in other words, as that which the agent primarily and essentially desires. For instance, in discussions on motion, it is said that motion is not inherently desirable for its own sake and is not intrinsic to an entity's nature—nothing seeks motion simply for the sake of moving, but rather for the result and purpose it serves. The first perfection in motion is the motion itself, while the second perfection is what is called the goal of motion (Ibn Sīnā, 1982, p. 328). Thus, the final cause and the purpose of natural phenomena may not always align. This is precisely why empirical sciences do not focus on final causes; instead, they seek to discover and explain phenomena based on actual events in the world. Consequently, deviations from final causes are not considered instances of disorder or irregularity in the framework of empirical science.

However, as evident in Darwin's theory, he not only emphasizes the deterministic order of nature—clarifying the significance of efficient causes and cause-and-effect relationships—but also acknowledges a purposive order in nature.

Thus, it becomes clear that all beings possess a purpose, yet this purpose is not determined by a final cause, nor does the final cause play an active role in the natural process as an external reality. Therefore, if the goal of this argument is to prove the existence of God, it is crucial to determine which concept of order or design should be employed in the minor premise of the argument.

Evaluating the Implications of Darwin's Theory for the Existence of an Intelligent Designer

After Darwin's theory, the teleological and theological design proposed by Aquinas lost its prominence, replaced by an empirical and biological understanding of design and order. It is evident that a teleological interpretation of the design argument easily conflicts with the theory of evolution, as theologians viewed evolution as contradicting the world's purposiveness. From their perspective, evolution resulted from natural selection rather than a final cause, leading them to believe that the design argument was undermined. Thus, if final causality and purposiveness are distinguished from one another, no formulation of the design argument necessarily contradicts scientific theories like Darwinian evolution. The rejection of Aristotelian final causes was indeed a justified transformation within empirical sciences, yet it does not stand in opposition to theism or divine purposiveness. The confusion between purpose and final cause led to theologians' resistance to the theory of evolution. In other words, just as final causes were eliminated from natural explanations after Aristotle, they should also be reconsidered in theological discourse. Only then can the natural arguments for God's existence be revised in alignment with the actual structure of the world, which is shaped by efficient and formal causes.

This explanation clarifies that Darwin's theory empirically and objectively presents two aspects of design and order: first, the role of efficient causality and natural determinism, and second, the purposiveness of nature. Neither of these aspects contradicts the existence of God. Since theologians and atheists alike agree on the naturalistic order and the role of efficient causes in nature, God's existence can still be affirmed. Furthermore, the purposiveness of nature can be framed within a teleological design argument, which

serves as both a theological argument within religious discourse and an argument empirically supported by Darwin's theory. Additionally, by emphasizing the perspective of new essentialism in science, nature can be understood as comprising entities with independent essences, each actualizing itself within its own ontological domain. Through this lens, God's existence can also be demonstrated using the argument of the truthful (*Burhān al-Ṣiddīqīn*), which relies on the external existence of things as a foundation for proving the divine.

That said, Darwin's theory does not contradict the existence of God in a way that necessitates proving purposiveness to affirm divine existence. While Darwin's theory rejected final causes, this rejection does not undermine God's existence to the extent that one must challenge the methodological foundations of empirical sciences to prove God. There is no need to refute chance or establish final causality—rather, the argument from teleological order retains its validity. However, if theologians or scientists perceive Darwin's theory as conflicting with the existence of God, then God should be demonstrated through efficient causality. Theologians often overlook the fact that chance, as used in empirical sciences, does not imply the negation of efficient causality. The concept of chance is opposed to final causality in nature, not to efficient causality or causal determinism, so there is no need to disprove chance in order to argue for an intelligent designer. This misunderstanding arises because theologians regard the purposiveness of nature as evidence for God, while atheists, by rejecting the role of final causes, conclude that nature lacks purpose and is governed by chance—therefore, they argue, God does not exist.

Thus, it is clear that theologians' attempts to negate chance in order to prove God are futile—in fact, they are arguing for something

that is not in dispute. Therefore, if they seek to establish the purposiveness of nature, they must first prove the existence of God. To this day, theologians have not provided complete arguments for the existence of God or an intelligent designer. Their reasoning has either been based on empirical grounds, which are generally accepted by scientists, or they have relied on design arguments. However, the theory of intelligent design has two distinct aspects, just as Darwin's theory can be examined from two perspectives. Talk of a "designer" pertains to natural selection and efficient causality, which are necessary to prove the existence of God. Meanwhile, the discussion of "intelligence" relates to natural evolution, the adaptation of organisms, and their conformity to the evolutionary process, which appears to be goal-directed—an argument supported by teleological reasoning. Even Darwin's theory provides empirical evidence for this notion. Causal determinism and efficient causality in Darwin's theory demonstrate that "natural selection does not yield perfection—only improvements over what came before. It produces the fitter, not the fittest. And although selection gives the appearance of design, that design may often be imperfect" (Coyne, 2009, p. 14).

This aspect of evolution, being dependent on efficient causality in nature, has led some scientists to question the necessity of a creator. However, another issue arises regarding the purposiveness of evolution: do these causal relationships and natural selection occur under a guided and purposeful framework? This question becomes particularly relevant in the broader discussion of evolution, where the notion of intelligence in evolution is debated. As Coyne states, "Advocates of intelligent design argue that this kind of difference requires the direct intervention of a creator" (ibid, p. 36).

Therefore, if we attempt to address the purposiveness of evolution before proving the existence of God, we inevitably try to

establish God's existence by emphasizing purposiveness and rejecting chance. However, if we first prove God through the design argument based on the order in nature, which considers efficient causality, then even Darwin's empirical evidence can serve as a confirmation of the design argument within theology. Otherwise, it would be as if we assume the absence of causality and then try to prove that nature has a cause—by simply emphasizing its purposiveness! Thus, Darwin's theory encompasses two types of design arguments: efficient order and goal-directed order. Both are evident in various examples, yet scientists have generally interpreted the entire concept of intelligent design solely as an argument for the existence of God. More importantly, they have attempted to prove God's existence merely by negating chance. On the other hand, atheistic scientists, relying on empirical methods and the notion of chance, cannot disprove the existence of God, because chance is a feature of empirical sciences, not an inherent characteristic of nature itself. When nature is studied through the lens of efficient causality, how can chance be considered a real, external phenomenon while maintaining the validity of empirical sciences? Chance, in this context, is merely a concept opposed to final causality in nature, making it a theoretical construct rather than an ontological reality. Darwin himself used "chance" to signify ignorance of causes, yet theologians have mistakenly conflated this notion with the absence of efficient causality. Therefore, chance does not negate the intelligence behind natural evolution.

Thus, the theory of evolution presents us with two questions: Why does nature exist? And why does nature operate in this particular way? These two questions correspond to two design arguments—one concerning the proof of God's existence and the other regarding the purposiveness of nature.

Assessing Arguments from Design

When applying either of these two arguments individually, it is essential to define their epistemic scope to avoid using the concept of purposiveness in defending theism and proving God's existence. This prevents direct confrontation with atheistic claims based on "chance." In this regard, the design argument is not aimed at proving an intelligent designer, and the empirical argument from order, when not supplemented by ontological arguments such as the "argument of the truthful," falls short of proving God's existence. Furthermore, the natural order argument holds a higher epistemic priority than the design argument. As a result, if the design argument is employed to prove God's existence, it becomes an ineffective argument for that purpose. That is, it cannot be used to counter atheism arising from scientific theories, since the purposiveness of the world does not, in itself, serve as proof of God's existence or establish an intelligent designer.

William Lane Craig has consistently referred to fine-tuning as evidence of purposeful creation. In essence, theologians emphasize what scientists themselves do not deny, yet they extend these explanations to necessitate an intelligent designer—without providing the scientific community with a compelling argument for this theistic interpretation. When examining one of Craig's arguments regarding fine-tuning and the rejection of chance in the universe's initial conditions, it becomes clear that his reasoning lacks definitive proof:

1. The fine-tuning of the universe's initial conditions is either due to physical necessity, chance, or design and planning.
2. This fine-tuning is neither the result of physical necessity nor chance.
3. Therefore, it must be the result of design and planning.

(Craig, 2003, p.165).

Similarly, Michael Behe, through his concept of "irreducible complexity," attempts to establish a creative and intelligent designer at the pinnacle of the cosmic order. He argues that some biochemical biological systems are irreducibly complex, meaning they cannot be simplified while maintaining their functional integrity. This is incompatible with Darwinian gradual evolution and natural selection (Behe, 2001, p. 189). Although Behe acknowledges Darwinian evolution as a theory that has successfully explained many ambiguities regarding the origin of life on Earth, he ultimately deems it insufficient and ineffective. Drawing upon scientific discoveries from the late twentieth century, he concludes that life is not the product of natural selection but rather the result of intelligent design (Ibid, p. 205).

Therefore, merely affirming the intricacies of creation or challenging scientific theories does not serve theology or theism. Instead, the primary obstacle—the dependence of matter on causality and laws—must be addressed to provide a definitive answer to fundamental questions such as: Why is there something rather than nothing? And why does nature operate in this particular way instead of another? Ultimately, intelligent design must be able to explain the cosmic order within causal relationships; otherwise, just as one can describe patterns of natural order in nature, one could equally argue for disorder. According to proponents of the anthropic principle, the universe is not only devoid of order and intelligent design but is, in fact, becoming increasingly chaotic over time. By establishing an intelligent creator, however, all natural relationships can be explained as both structured and purposeful. This approach eliminates the need for multiple, conflicting explanations, instead uniting the entire cosmos within a single coherent framework—where theism emerges as the only rational option for understanding a unified system. From this perspective, even the apparent disorder in nature is a product of

intelligent causal relationships. While science may classify such phenomena as disorderly, they are, in reality, manifestations of a higher order, as both causality and purposiveness together define a theistic view of nature.

For instance, Dembski and Behe offer a compelling argument in support of theism and the fine-tuning of the universe: Complex systems exist within the organs of living beings, making the likelihood of their emergence by mere chance exceedingly low. The existence of such ordered systems can only be explained through intelligent design, as natural causes are incapable of generating such intricate information (Dembski, 2001, pp. 553–573). However, even atheist scientists acknowledge these findings and evidence, though they attribute them to material nature rather than design. For instance, Richard Dawkins does not reject these arguments outright; instead, he provides scientific explanations for them. He views the theistic perspective as an attempt to fill gaps in scientific knowledge, arguing that as science progresses, these gaps continue to narrow (Dawkins, 2006, p. 121).

This account makes it clear that natural order can serve as a pathway both toward theism and toward atheism. Therefore, efforts to prove God's existence should focus on the philosophical implications of natural order rather than relying solely on empirical observations. Moreover, theology can establish God's existence through philosophical reasoning, not empirical methods. This is because the foundations of empirical sciences are already accepted by scientists, and what scientists themselves acknowledge cannot serve as a common ground for both theists and atheists in debating God's existence. Thus, a theologian asserting the existence of God must offer something beyond these foundational principles to substantiate their claim. Since atheists use the same scientific foundations to argue for the nonexistence of God, one cannot use the very same principles as

evidence for theism without additional reasoning to counter the atheistic interpretation. Since metaphysics is an open field of inquiry, it can be employed by both theists and atheists. Just as empirical sciences, when interpreted through a materialistic metaphysical lens, may deny the necessity of a divine cause, theology can offer metaphysical arguments in favor of God's existence. In this regard, theists align with scientists who reject final causality, seeing this rejection as an opportunity to establish a more comprehensive philosophical framework that integrates God's agency with the theory of evolution. Based on this perspective, a philosophical approach can be developed to foster meaningful interaction between science and theology—one that does not rely solely on empirical evidence but rather integrates scientific findings within a broader metaphysical and theological context.

Enhancing the Natural Design Argument for God's Existence

Since no common law exists externally, apart from the causal relationships inherent in nature, the concept of order or design can only be abstracted from these relationships. Thus, understanding the order of the world depends on human perception, which arises from one's knowledge of nature (Javadi Amoli, 1996, p. 239). However, the question remains: how can this deterministic order serve as proof for the existence of God? This brings us to the discussion of enhancing the design argument—how can this natural order be linked to a divine designer? For within the argument itself, any inquiry into the order inevitably leads back to the material and natural order, and unless we arrive at the existence of a Necessary Being, the existence of God remains unproven.

After outlining the challenges in enhancing the natural version of the design argument, some philosophers argue that a philosophical

approach to improving this argument must be linked to ontological proofs for the existence of God (Javadi Amoli, 1996, p. 241). In other words, if the goal of the design argument is to prove the Necessary Being, its conclusion will not fully align with this objective unless it is supplemented by the argument of the truthful or the argument from contingency and necessity. However, if the purpose is to establish the attributes of knowledge and power in the Necessary Being after affirming its existence, the design argument may, to some extent, suffice (Javadi Amoli, 1996, p. 41).

Hospers also argues that even if the design argument succeeds, it does not prove the existence of a Necessary Being, a First Cause, or even the creation of the world from nothing. At most, it can suggest that the emergence of the world is the result of design and planning, requiring an intelligent and sufficiently powerful being. Therefore, attributing the title of "God" to this designer and organizer (assuming its existence) requires further contemplation (Hospers, 1992, p. 96). Similarly, Kant holds that the design argument can only demonstrate the possibility and occurrence of the world's form, not the existence of its matter. To prove the material existence of the world, it must be established that all things in the world are inherently incapable of creating order and harmony, or that they themselves are, in essence, the effects of a transcendent cause—an argument that requires reasoning beyond the design argument. At best, the argument from design can prove the existence of an architect of the universe, but not its creator (Kant, 1929, p. 529).

Swinburne also does not consider the design argument a definitive proof for the existence of God (Swinburne, 2004, p. 155). In this argument, he assumes the probabilities of God's existence and non-existence to be equal, arguing that any factor increasing one

probability consequently decreases the other. However, rather than relying on religiously internal factors such as miracles and religious experiences, as Swinburne does, a more rigorous approach to order and design should draw upon an inherent faculty of understanding and the principle of comprehension to establish certainty in proving God's existence through this argument. Thus, it is appropriate to say that at this stage, the probability of finding God through the design argument is strengthened—a stage in which human reflection leads to questioning the creator of the laws governing matter, which operate with precision and causality. Ultimately, the general conclusion that "nature requires a designer," when supplemented by the argument from contingency and necessity or the argument of the truthful, leads to the affirmation of a Necessary Being.

Thus, it becomes clear that if order and its cause do not stem from the faculty of understanding, then Hume's argument holds, and we would have no criterion for determining order. However, to establish the validity and credibility of the argument from design, it is necessary to redefine "order" in a way that minimizes ambiguity. If, instead of "order," we use "lawfulness" and take causality—an intrinsic principle of understanding—as the foundation for the lawfulness or causal nature of the world, the objections raised by atheism against this argument will be undermined. This is because the faculty of understanding perceives both order and causality, eliminating the need for prior experience of order to compare with the existing order in the world. In other words, to say that "the world is orderly" is to say that it is explainable and governed by laws. Thus, both premises of the design argument are rational and inherent to human understanding: (1) The natural world possesses order, (2) Every order requires an organizer. Therefore: The world has an organizer.

Even if what is meant is empirical order, it remains a rational concept rather than a conventional one. This is because preparatory causes and inductive reasoning are derived from sensory-rational inferences. Therefore, the empirical nature of the premises in the design argument does not undermine its rational foundation (Ghadardan Gharamaleki, 2004, p. 50). Moreover, if we define order merely as the opposite of chaos and disorder, this reasoning might be invalid, as the world could appear more chaotic than orderly. Thus, to establish a valid instance of order in the design argument, we require an order that is intrinsic to human understanding and not negated by the presence of evil or apparent disorder in the world. Swinburne, for instance, considers order to be more prevalent than disorder in the world (Swinburne, 2004, p. 154). However, his criterion is based solely on observing particulars without generalizing them or considering the role of an active cause in nature.

Thus, unless the faculty of understanding perceives causality, it will not seek numerical and empirical order or the study of nature. Consequently, the first part of the design argument, which demonstrates causal and natural order and falls within the methodological domain of empirical sciences, implies epistemological causality. The second part, which is completed by an ontological argument, draws upon ontological causality. Therefore, if the world were devoid of causality, the understanding would not grasp any causal order, and empirical sciences would neither be reliable nor develop into actual sciences. In reality, comprehending the existence of the world precedes understanding its nature. However, in empirical methodology, we sometimes proceed in reverse when proving God's existence, making the need for a sustaining cause more tangible.

This means that the very act of seeking causes and questioning the existence-giving cause—along with the principle that differentiates between various forms—is what disrupts the supposed equality between the probabilities of theism and atheism. In other words, when we generalize particular instances of empirical order, we naturally seek the cause of this order’s existence. Since natural order, which operates under an active cause, does not terminate in an infinite regress, invoking an infinite regress of natural causes is one of the most flawed responses in proving God’s existence. Thus, the necessity of an existence-giving cause is established in relation to the fundamental comprehension of being and the laws that distinguish objects and materials from one another. As Geisler suggests, the only possible way to validate the ontological argument is to accept that something exists, and once a person can reason that “something exists,” it follows that God exists (Geisler, 2016, p. 225). Therefore, since causal relationships are widely accepted, this shared foundation allows for the proof of God’s existence, demonstrating that natural order leads to God—not merely a teleological order. Furthermore, in the material world, only material agents exist, which themselves require a prior actualizing force. While evolutionary processes can be explained through these natural agents and their study falls within the scope of empirical sciences, the forms that act upon these efficient causes—serving as the principal drivers of evolution—require an immaterial cause. This is because an efficient cause needs a form to actualize itself in order to activate another potential agent. Ultimately, it becomes evident that the misalignment of theistic proofs with the metaphysical foundations of empirical sciences—and an overreliance on final causes—inflicts irreparable harm upon both science and theology.

Conclusion

The method of empirical science is specifically designed for understanding nature and is not in conflict with the existence of God. This is because theology cannot defend theism using empirical methods. In reality, the theory of intelligent design should not seek to interfere with scientific methodology or negate chance, as the scientific method operates within its own domain. Similarly, empirical science cannot use its own methods to prove the nonexistence of God. Chance is a concept relevant to scientific methodology, and theology does not need to refute it.

Therefore, purposeful evolution governs existence, and what determines this purpose is the essence of each material entity and its efficient cause. Even Darwin's empirical evidence, in a way, affirms the purposiveness of evolution. In fact, theologians' opposition to chance has only intensified this debate. Atheists wrongly employ the concept of chance, while they, in fact, reject Aristotle's final cause, which does not inherently negate theism. Theistic scientists, too, must acknowledge the role of chance in empirical sciences, as it is an integral part of the scientific method. Thus, it becomes clear that nature is explained through efficient causes, yet it is not devoid of purpose. The fine-tuning argument provides empirical support for the purposiveness of nature, but it does not establish a supernatural cause. In reality, empirical calculations, observations, and their astonishing implications depend on the essence and form of natural agents, which align with their potential and purpose. A portion of Darwin's theory discusses the influence of natural agents and their competition. Therefore, in reconciling Darwin's theory with theism, these efficient causes must be linked to a final agent to establish the existence of an intelligent designer. In this way, purpose is dependent on both efficient and formal causes, meaning that first, the creator of forms

must be proven. Atheists do not necessarily deny purposes; they simply attribute them to nature. However, theologians, rather than presenting a rational argument, merely emphasize divine purposiveness. As Forrest argues, the intelligent design theory fails to provide a valid argument for the existence of a designer. Ultimately, these two arguments can be aligned by recognizing that the purpose of the world is realized through its efficient and natural order. Thus, they do not contradict each other, and with theological effort using philosophical methods, such a conclusion can be reached. However, deriving this through empirical methods alone seems implausible, as the so-called final cause is not itself a determinant of purpose.

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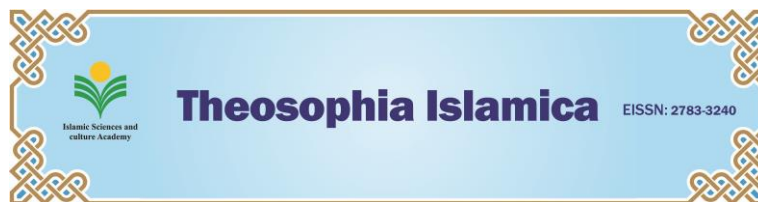
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Thomas Said: “My Lord and My God” A Grammatical and Contextual Assessment of John 20:28



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Abstract

In this article, I briefly examine “The proclamation of the faith of St. Thomas,” where he supposedly refers to Jesus as “his Lord and his God.” The material at hand will analyze the matter through contextual and grammatical viewpoints. By the means of Biblical Greek grammar, it will be elucidated that the claim is baseless as well as contradictory to Jesus’ teachings as recorded in the Bible.

Keywords

St. Thomas, John 20:28, Biblical Greek Grammar, Greek Vocative Case, Jesus' Divinity, Translation Errors.

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Introduction

Very few Bible believing Christians are able to read the Hebrew or Greek texts. Therefore, their understanding of the Bible is in the hands of translators and interpreters of the book. In many cases, as scholars universally acknowledge, translations contain numerous mistakes,¹ perhaps due to misunderstanding of the Hebrew/Greek literature. This deficiency is not limited to modern day translations as ancient Bible scholars faced many of the same challenges when working with the texts. Take the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, as an example. There are many misunderstandings of the Hebrew idiomatic usage of words in this translation. An example is the Hebrew word עַלְמָה (*‘almāh*) in Isaiah 7:14 in both Dead Sea scrolls and Masoretic, which translates into English as "young woman". However, the Septuagint interpreters translated it into the Koine Greek as παρθένος (*parthenos*); that is "virgin" in English. We know that the Hebrew word for "virgin" is בְּתוּלָה (*betulah*) not עַלְמָה (*‘almāh*). The Greek Gospel of Matthew makes the same mistake when quoting from Isaiah, perhaps relying on the Septuagint (1:23).

An effective translation requires the translator to have not only a strong command of both languages but also an understanding of the cultures that shape them. This is especially important when interpreting an ancient text in a modern context. Many examples illustrate this issue, but this article will focus on a specific case: John 20:28, where common Bible translations suggest that Thomas, one of the twelve disciples, referred to Jesus as his "Lord" and "God."

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1. See *The Great Awakening on Temperance and The Great Controversy, Romanism, Protestantism and Judaism* (1878), A series of Lectures, Papers and biographies from the Ablest Advocates of Temperance, and prominent clergymen of the Roman Catholic, Protestant and Jewish Churches. Also see Hoffman (2016).

In what follows, we will present three arguments: the context in which the text is written, the Greek grammar of the passage, and a deeper analysis of the Greek words “Κύριος” and “Θεός,” translated as “Lord” and “God.” These arguments will demonstrate that Thomas did not call Jesus his God. Even if we set aside the context and grammar and assume that Thomas was addressing Jesus as his God and Lord, it would still be extremely difficult to interpret these words as referring to the true God of the Bible—Jehovah, the Creator. This is because the terms “Κύριος” and “Θεός” are also used for beings other than God the Creator.

Let us first read the verse in Greek, with its transliteration and King James translation:

John 20:28:

ἀπεκρίθη Θωμᾶς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ Ὁ Κύριός μου καὶ ὁ Θεός μου.

Apekrithē Thōmas kai eipen auto HO Kyrios mou kai ho Theos mou

And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

John 20:28 in Context

John 20 recounts the events following the crucifixion, when people believed that Jesus had been crucified, killed, and buried on Friday. Mary Magdalene waited for the Sabbath (Saturday) to pass, and early the next morning, she went to the tomb. Finding it empty, she soon saw Jesus standing beside her. He then instructed her to go and tell the disciples that he was still alive.

In the evening of the same day, Jesus suddenly appeared in a house where all his disciples, except for Thomas, had gathered to hide

from the Jewish leaders. Amazed to see him alive, the joyful disciples relayed Jesus' greeting to an initially skeptical Thomas, who refused to believe the news that Jesus was still alive. He said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe" (v. 25).

After eight days, when all the disciples, this time including Thomas, had gathered in the same house, Jesus appeared again and invited Thomas to touch his hands and side, urging him not to doubt. Seeing that Jesus was truly alive, Thomas exclaimed the following problematic verse: "My Lord and my God!" (v. 28). But did Thomas actually call Jesus his Lord and God? Or did he, out of surprise and excitement, simply exclaim, "My Lord and my God?"

Thomas was undoubtedly astonished. Having initially rejected the testimony of the other disciples and insisting that he must touch Jesus himself to believe, his shock at seeing Jesus before him is understandable. However, there are additional reasons to question the common Christian interpretation, including Jesus' own statements, Greek grammar, and the meanings of the words "Κύριός" and "Θεός."

Jesus Rejects His Divinity

There are many instances in the Bible that not only contradict the Trinitarian belief that Thomas referred to Jesus as his God but even refute it in a rather obvious manner, some of which are stated by Jesus himself. Consider the following examples:

- Jesus is Not Good

When someone addressed Jesus as "Good Teacher," he objected to being called "good":

As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to

inherit eternal life?" "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered.
"No one is good--except God alone. (Mark 10:17-18)

Unless we assume that Mark and John disagreed on the identity of Jesus, it is difficult to accept that Jesus would allow Thomas to refer to him as his God without promptly correcting him. If Jesus refused to be called "good," it follows that he would not accept being called God.

- God is not seen

John explicitly describes God as unseen by anyone: "No one has ever seen God" (John 1:18). While there are differences in opinion regarding the translation of the rest of this verse, nearly all translators render the first part similarly (see, for example, NIV, ESV, NLT, KJB, ASV).

- Jesus has God

When Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene, he tells her that he is going to *his God*:

Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" (John 20:17)

- Jesus did not know the Hour

Jesus, perhaps speaking of his second coming, makes a statement that clearly contradicts what one would expect from God. He declares that no one knows the hour—neither the angels nor the Son, but only the Father. Since God is omniscient, Jesus, by his own admission, is not God.

But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. (Matthew 24:36)

“God” and “Lord” in the New Testament

Since "Lord" and "God" are titles, they do not necessarily

denote divinity. The Greek words translated as "Lord" and "God" are *κύριος* (kurios) and *θεός* (theos), respectively. These terms are also used for other beings and can mean "master" and "god." Nevertheless, when they are (in some cases, presumably) used to describe Jesus, Trinitarians have translated them as "Lord" and "God." See the examples below:

- Slave and Master

The student is not above the teacher, nor a servant above his **master** (κύριον). (Matthew 10:24)

It is enough for students to be like their teachers, and servants like their **masters** (κύριος). If the head of the house has been called Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household! (Matthew 10:25)

- Satan, the god of this world:

The **god** (ὁ θεός) of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (2 Corinthians 4:4)

In fact, the Greek New Testament has no exclusive word for "God the Creator," unlike the Hebrew Bible, where "Yahweh" is used exclusively for God.

Vocative Case

It is important to note that, in my opinion, ancient Greek has two distinct types of vocative cases: direct and indirect. These can also be referred to as second- and third-person vocatives or as present and absent vocatives. The choice of vocative form depends on whether the addressee is present or absent in the conversation. This differs significantly from most modern languages, including English, where no such distinction exists.

Note that the third-person case is not a true vocative; rather, it is merely an expression of feeling. However, I refer to it as an indirect—or third-person—vocative because, at first glance, it may appear vocative in translations, though in Greek, it is not considered a vocative at all but simply a way of expressing emotion.

In English, we say: "O my dear," "O teacher," "O sir," "Sir," "Madam," "O people," "O father," and so on. These expressions do not indicate whether the addressee is present or absent in the conversation. However, in Greek, there are two distinct ways to address someone, depending on their presence or absence. If the addressee is not present in the conversation, they will be addressed with an article before the noun, along with an attached suffix. This construction expresses emotion rather than directly calling on the addressee. However, if the addressee is present and actively engaged in the conversation—meaning they are being directly addressed—there will be no article and no suffix attached to the noun. In some cases, a noun in the vocative case may be preceded by the particle $\tilde{\omega}$ (omega) to add emphasis or express emotion. This should not be mistaken for a vocative article. For example:

Examples of $\tilde{\omega}$ + vocative to add an emotional emphasis:

Mark 9:19									
<i>αὐτοῖς</i>	<i>λέγει</i>	$\tilde{\omega}$	<i>γενεὰ</i>	<i>ἄπιστος!</i>	<i>ἕως</i>	<i>πότε</i>	<i>πρὸς</i>	<i>ὑμᾶς</i>	<i>ἔσομαι?</i>
<i>autois</i>	<i>legei</i>	$\tilde{\omega}$	<i>genea</i>	<i>apistos!</i>	<i>heōs</i>	<i>pote</i>	<i>pros</i>	<i>hymas</i>	<i>esomai?</i>
to them	he says	Oh	generation	unbelieving	until	when	with	you	will I be?

I Timothy 6:11									
σὺ	δέ	ὦ	ἄνθρωπε	θεοῦ	ταῦτα	φεῦγε	δίωκε	δὲ	δικαιοσύνην
sy	de	ō	anthrōpe	Theou	tauta	pheuge	diōke	de	dikaïosynēn
you	but	o	man	of God	these things	you flee	you pursue	but (instead)	righteousness

- Examples of direct vocative: noun without an article or a suffix

Matthew 8 tells us that a man with an illness asks Jesus for help by saying, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." In Greek: "Κύριε, ἐὰν θέλῃς δύνασαι με καθαρίσαι." The word *Κύριε* (*kurie*) is a direct call to Jesus, as he is present in the conversation, meaning the man is speaking to him face to face. This is why the noun *Κύριε* (Master, Lord) appears without an article and without a suffix. In contrast, Ὁ Κύριός in John 20:28 is an indirect call on the addressee, following a different grammatical structure.

Matthew 8:2:

A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, "**Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.**"

Matthew 8:2						
Greek	Κ ύ ρ ι ε	ἐ ὰ ν	θέ λ η ς	δύ να σαι	με	κα θα ρί σαι
Transliteration	K y	ea n	thelēs	dynasai	m e	katharissai

	ri e					
Translation	L o r d	if	willin g	you are able	m e	to make clean

Another example:

Luke recounts the story of a man who asked Jesus how he could inherit eternal life. He addresses him by saying, “Good Teacher,” which in Greek is “Διδάσκαλε ἀγαθέ.” The noun Διδάσκαλε (*didaskale*, meaning “teacher”) appears without the article ὁ (omicron) or the suffix ος (omicron sigma).

Luke 18:1:

A certain ruler asked him, "**Good teacher (Διδάσκαλε ἀγαθέ)**, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Because Jesus is being directly addressed here, the man therefore calls him Διδάσκαλε (Didaskale), not ὁ διδάσκαλος (O didaskalos). The same rule applies to “Lord” and “God” in Greek—“Κύριος” and “Θεός.” As we read in Matthew, the man on the cross—supposedly Jesus—calls on God: Θεέ μου (My God).

Matthew 27:46:

About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" Which means "**My God, my God, (Θεέ μου Θεέ μου)** why have you forsaken me?"

According to the above verse, Jesus addresses God directly and calls on Him: "My God" (Θεέ μου, *Thee mou*). As this is a second-

person—or direct—vocative case, neither an article nor a suffix is used. However, in John 20:28, where Thomas says, Ὁ Κύριός μου καὶ ὁ Θεός μου (“Ho Kyrios mou kai ho Theos mou”), the article ὁ and the suffix -ος are present. This is not a vocative statement. However, if one were to assume it is, it would be a third-person—or indirect—vocative, meaning the addressee (God) is not present in the conversation. In other words, Jesus is not the addressee, as he is standing before Thomas and speaking to him.

This is seen again in the following verse, where Jesus directly addresses God as “Father”:

Luke 20:23:

Jesus said, **“Father” [Πάτερ (Pater)]**, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”

This is also a direct vocative, as Jesus directly calls “Father” [Πάτερ (Pater)] without an article or suffix. One final example to conclude the argument is when Jesus, in the Garden of Gethsemane, calls on the Father directly—again without an article or suffix:

Matthew 26: 39:

Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, **“My Father (Πάτερ μου)**, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.”

Conclusion

Thomas used an indirect vocative case—if it can be called a vocative at all—to express his emotions upon seeing Jesus alive. It is natural to exclaim, “Oh my God,” when we are shocked, surprised, scared, or excited. That is the context in which Thomas expressed his excitement, joy, or shock upon seeing Jesus alive after ten days of disappointment and sorrow, having believed the rumors circulating in

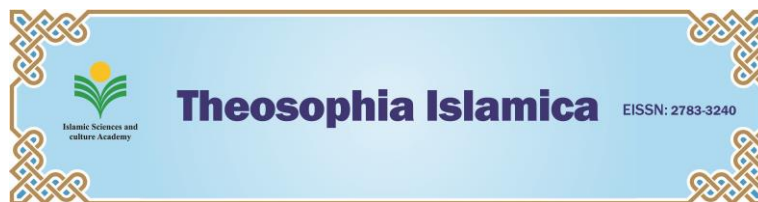
town that Jesus had been killed on the cross. This is what the context suggests. Furthermore, even Greek grammar rules out the assumption that Thomas directly addressed Jesus as his Lord and God (Ὁ Κύριός μου καὶ ὁ Θεός μου—“Ho Kyrios mou kai ho Theos mou”). The nouns (Κύριος and Θεός, Lord and God), preceded by the article ὁ and ending with the suffix -ος, are not in the expected vocative form in Greek. This leaves no doubt that Thomas did not address Jesus as his Lord and God but rather expressed his astonishment. Even if one assumes that Thomas intended to address Jesus by saying, “My Lord and my God,” this does not necessarily imply that he was calling Jesus “God, the true and only Creator,” as the titles Κύριος and Θεός do not inherently carry that meaning. Lastly, Jesus himself left no room for doubt that he was not God on multiple occasions—for instance, he rejected being called “good,” stated that he was going to his God and the disciples’ God, admitted he did not know “the Hour,” and more. All these points confirm that Jesus was not God the Creator.

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Critical Evaluation of the Validity of Religious Experience and Presentation of Patrick McNamara's Solutions



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Abstract

Religious experience, as one of the most prominent states and experiences of human beings, has drawn the attention of both philosophers and scientists due to the justificatory role it can play in the realm of religious beliefs. However, if not properly understood and assessed, it can lead to a form of extremism. Therefore, a precise definition and explanation of all understandings of religious experience will help us properly recognize and validate it. Neuroscientist Patrick McNamara has studied the process of religious experience with a new approach based on neuroscience, distinguishing it from other rival approaches. Grounded in the scientific method, his approach addresses

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crucial questions and challenges that have called into question the validity of such experiences and their role in justifying beliefs. Accordingly, in this article, we seek to properly understand the validity of religious experience, using McNamara's strategies to evaluate and critique it. We will gather materials from McNamara's scientific works and other research, applying rational and analytical methods for a thorough assessment. Finally, we will introduce rational, revelatory, and empirical proof as conditions for the validity of religious experience, emphasizing the limitations and inadequacy of a purely empirical method in appraising such spiritual entities.

Keywords

Religious Experience, Patrick McNamara, Neurology, Cognitive Neuroscience, Self, Soul, Mind.

Introduction

With the spread of the empirical approach to religion in the West, the challenge of rational defense arose. Since the nineteenth century, Christian theologians and philosophers have proposed religious experience as a solution to this dilemma. However, after several centuries and ongoing disagreements in this field, many issues remain unresolved.

By examining the religious experiences of followers of various religions and denominations, as well as different mystical traditions—especially contemporary trends in new spirituality—we encounter several important questions: What distinguishes these experiences from one another? Is there a clear boundary between these mystical states that allows for their proper differentiation? If so, what criteria determine the truth and reliability of the claims in question? Does religious experience, regardless of one's religion or profession, validate legitimacy?

All these questions hinge on understanding what religious experience is and how its validity and legitimacy are determined. This article addresses this issue by reviewing the latest theories and experiments to develop a proper understanding of religious experience, allowing us to take steps toward addressing further challenges. Our perspective on religious experience is broad, encompassing all forms of such experiences without focusing on their specific qualities. The general studies and principles outlined at the end of the discussion pertain to the reality of religious experience itself rather than its quality. Additionally, neurological experiments and the views of Patrick McNamara are incorporated to support the discussion.

It is important to note that our discussion does not encompass

the religious experiences of prophets and imams, as their experiences are characterized by unique qualities and divine elements.

Given the importance of the subject, it is worth noting that many individuals go to extremes by misinterpreting their own religious experiences or those of others. This includes cases where mental disorders, delusions, or misunderstandings of religious concepts lead to false or exaggerated claims. Addressing this issue is crucial, as it allows us to establish methods that can, to some extent, ensure the reliability of religious experience in its broadest sense. In light of this introduction, it is necessary to briefly outline the three aspects of religious experience to provide a more detailed examination of the issue.

Ontologically, religious experience is a phenomenon that has occurred throughout history, with its external existence and validity having been established.

Regarding the psychological aspect of religious experience, it has been explained that various psychological and neurological factors contribute to the occurrence of both healthy and unhealthy religious experiences.

The epistemological aspect of religious experience concerns its causes and validity. The cause of a religious experience is only a small part of the issue, as individuals undergo a wide range of such experiences. These variations include experiences that occur with or without prior presuppositions, differences based on gender, experiences linked to knowledge acquisition and awareness, those grounded in infallibility (purity of nature and inner capabilities), experiences shaped by adherence to religious practices and spiritual transformation, and those induced by illness, drugs, psychotropic substances, or addictive substances.

We briefly examine these causes here, but our main concern is to explain the validity of the experience, not its cause. It is often difficult to discern the cause of experience itself because it is internal. Religious experience, as such, also occurs generally, whether through self-realization or disease. In fact, it is a scientific study that can validate experience; otherwise, anyone could achieve these spiritual states (although the quality of each differs).

It should be noted that regarding the presupposition of creating a religious experience, two important theories—essentialism and constructivism—have been proposed, which are briefly outlined below.

Essentialists claim that there is a shared nature among the religious experiences of people from various origins and faiths, suggesting that all such experiences stem from a common cause. This shared nature is believed to have an external existence, and its conformity with an external reality serves as the basis for the validity of religious experience. Constructivists, on the other hand, reject the notion of a common nature and, consequently, regard religious experience as invalid (Peterson et al., 1991, pp. 22–24).

In evaluating these two rival views in the present discussion, it should be noted that whether one accepts the existence of a common nature and cause of religious experience or not, it makes little difference to the conclusion of this article. In the first step, we acknowledge that some individuals, particularly those who share the same theistic religion (e.g., both being Muslims), may exhibit a common nature, while others may not. In the second step, when examining religious experiences neurologically, such theoretical distinctions become less relevant, as various factors can contribute to the occurrence of these experiences, resulting in different states. Therefore, the assumption of a common nature or cause is not

essential to the core argument of this article. Instead, we will propose a general criterion that can accommodate any theoretical framework.

1. Definition of Religious Experience

In his works, McNamara has incorporated the insights of other theorists to define religious experience, enhancing the depth of his theories. These theorists include Wildman, Pahnke, and William James. According to McNamara's synthesis of various sources, religious experience encompasses a broad range of ultimate experiences that reflect ultimate concerns and generate the most intense cognitive-emotional-spiritual interactions within individuals. Such experiences also have consequences, including the evolution of beliefs, personality change, and existential empowerment (Wildman & Brothers, 1999, pp. 347–418). Religious experiences result from religious practices and occur alongside the transformation of the self (Wildman, 2002, pp. 125–141; Wildman & McNamara, 2008, pp. 212–242; Wildman & Brothers, 1999, pp. 347–418).

The definition they provide is not entirely adequate for addressing all problems and questions. In other words, a more comprehensive and exclusive definition would be preferable to ensure a proper understanding of its subtopics. Thus, religious experience can be understood as an inner experience that arises in an individual with the minimal necessary components of a healthy mind and body to perceive it. The state and outcome of this experience involve religious transformations that lead to the emergence of spiritual guidance and exceptional personal qualities.

According to the general definition of religious experience, it can occur to anyone, with differences arising only in the quality of the experience. Based on this quality, religious experiences can be categorized into three types: the religious experience of a prophet,

known as a prophetic experience, due to the prophet's unique characteristics; the religious experience of a mystic, referred to as a mystical experience, as it occurs to a mystic; and the religious experience of an ordinary person, which is simply termed religious experience in a broad sense, as it involves going through a religious inner state. However, the quality and depth of each person's experience vary significantly, which is beyond the scope of this discussion. Here, we focus solely on the religious experience of ordinary individuals.

There are various perspectives on the relationship between prophetic, mystical, and religious experiences, but given the general and comprehensive criteria of this article, their relationship is understood in terms of generality and particularity.

2. Characteristics of Religious Experience

Typically, what people perceive as the outcome of religious practice is closely linked to what they refer to as religious experience. When an individual engages in sincere religious practice, they encounter states and transformations that, in this context, are identified as characteristics of religious experience. However, in line with our discussion, even individuals without specific presuppositions or prior knowledge may undergo religious experiences—an observation that has implications for both constructivists and essentialists, as briefly mentioned above.

William James, in his research on religious experience, identified several key features, which Pahnke later summarized into nine characteristics. McNamara subsequently added eight more features. Below, we will briefly outline these features, beginning with the nine identified by Pahnke:

1. Unity or a sense of integration within oneself and with others;
2. Transcendence of time and space;
3. Deeply felt positive mood;
4. Sense of sacredness;
5. A noetic quality or feeling of insight;
6. Paradoxicality or the ability to respectfully hold opposing points of view;
7. Alleged ineffability (the experience is felt to be beyond words);
8. Transiency of the euphoria, but
9. Persisting positive changes in attitudes and behavior (Pahnke, 1967).

The following are eight additional features introduced by McNamara:

10. An enhanced sense of personal power or even that one has been specially blessed by God;
11. Enhanced “theory of mind” capacities (these are capacities to accurately guess the mental states and intentions of others);
12. Changes in sexual behaviors (these can be enhanced or dramatically diminished);
13. Changes in reading/writing behaviors . . . most often this manifest as an enhanced interest in writing (In pathological cases, this becomes a form of hypergraphia.);
14. Enhanced awareness and appreciation of music (Despite

the recognition by many religion scholars of deep connections between religious rituals and music, the enhanced appreciation of music as a feature of religious experience itself has been neglected in discussions of religious experience.);

15. Complex visual and metaphoric imagery (These complex visual metaphors are usually related to the sense of noetic insight that accompanies intense religious experiences. The religious ideas are felt as so meaningful that only complex symbolic visual imagery could capture them.);
16. Ritualization (This is the propensity to perform ritual actions when religious experiences are heightened.); and
17. Encounter with God or spirit beings (McNamara, 2009, p.16).

It is worth noting that when a person is on the verge of a religious experience, internal changes occur until they emerge from this state. The description of these changes includes the seventeen features mentioned above. McNamara offers insights into the evolutionary stages of this process; however, we briefly note here that at the onset of religious experience, there is a perceived unity between the actual and ideal self, causing the individual to lose awareness of their surroundings and the passage of time. This state is accompanied by positive emotions, such as an uplifted mood, a sense of insight, and profound depth. The intensity of the experience can be so profound that, in some cases, the individual struggles to articulate or interpret it for others. Although these inner experiences are fleeting in the moment, they can lead to long-term behavioral growth.

On the other hand, due to certain circumstances, an individual may feel chosen for a divine mission, such as leading others—sometimes even through coercion and violence. There have been

numerous instances where individuals claim to read the thoughts of others, though in some cases, this may be a result of indoctrination rather than genuine perception. Ultimately, the most straightforward and evident consequences of religious experience include engaging in religious practices and claiming to have witnessed God or otherworldly beings.

The key point to emphasize here is the inexpressibility of religious experience. Given its characteristics, it is possible that such experiences cannot be fully conveyed in words. The solution, therefore, is to evaluate them within the framework of scientific and revelatory facts, benefiting both the individual who has undergone the experience and others. Intuition itself cannot be directly transmitted and is sometimes entirely ineffable; however, a scientific discussion can still be conducted regarding cognition and its outcomes, as there is no experience from which cognition cannot be derived.

We evaluate religious experience using the three criteria mentioned above. If it withstands rational scrutiny within the rational sciences, aligns with authentic religious texts based on the standard of their transmission, and meets the experimental criterion in the empirical sciences, then the experience is considered valid.

Normally, most people who undergo a religious experience exhibit some or all of these characteristics. However, possessing these characteristics does not, in itself, demonstrate the legitimacy or validity of the experience. An individual may reach this state through sincere religious practice performed with the right intention and method, or it may arise from indoctrination, psychological disorders, or even brain damage. Therefore, a definitive judgment about the authenticity of one's religious experience cannot be made solely based on these traits. To approach a more informed conclusion, we will

outline some of the factors that contribute to the occurrence of religious experiences.

3. Religious Practices and Religious Experience

The best and truest kind of religious experience arises from religious practice. One person, with prior knowledge, may engage in religious practice and attain this state. Another, without any literacy or religious practice, may perceive the ultimate truth solely through a pure life. Yet another may lead a normal or even non-religious lifestyle but, due to the religiosity of their ancestors or divine providence, undergo a subconscious transformation, embracing religion and reporting numerous religious experiences. In all these cases, human actions—even those of one's ancestors—exert a profound influence.

Factors such as the definition of religion, the nature of religious practice, the manner of its performance, and the degree of one's belief in religion and its rituals all contribute to the religious experience derived from religious practice. A Christian mystic and a Shiite mystic both undergo religious and mystical experiences, but do they share the same experience? What about someone who attains a religious experience without any prior training or presuppositions? While the Christian and Shiite mystics reach this state through their respective traditions, the other person arrives at it independently. Ultimately, the criterion for distinguishing and validating these experiences lies in their conformity with reason, revelation, and experience—not in their conflicting perspectives. These three criteria require detailed explanation.

Religious experience is inherently internal and intangible, making it difficult to verify. However, Dr. McNamara's neuroscience of religious experience serves as a powerful tool in this regard, providing valuable confirmation and aiding in a precise understanding

of the subject. Moreover, it helps distinguish between true and false religious experiences in accordance with the third condition.

What can be presented and emphasized as a true religious experience is that it occurs through self-transformation of the soul, as McNamara repeatedly notes in his writings (McNamara, 2009, p. 26). From a narrative and intra-religious perspective, if by religion we mean “divinely bestowed faith” grounded in revelation and divinity—such as Islam—it offers a comprehensive framework for human development and rejects any deviation. This transformation of the soul is primarily initiated through proper engagement in religious practices, whether by oneself or one's ancestors, whose actions manifest in the form of optimistic children receptive to truth and spirituality.

Religion has no purpose other than the transformation of the self and the soul, for individual growth leads to social growth, which in turn serves as the foundation for many spiritual advancements. Without moral, spiritual, legal, and life security in a society, no other form of growth can occur. Such security is attained through the spiritual development of each member of that society. When the soul is transformed and elevated, it results from the very essence of religious experience (McNamara, 2009, pp. 38–39). This statement underscores the significance of religious practice.

The intellectual coherence of this issue has also been established, as human spiritual and religious adherence has always been regarded as the primary path to inner peace. Mentally, one attains satisfactory results as long as they practice religion correctly, but failure ensues when they neglect or misapply it. Therefore, we evaluate the substance of a personal religious experience based on the two criteria of reason and revelation, considering it valid only if it meets both.

Growth and Self-Transformation

Proving the fundamental dimension of human existence—namely, the soul or self—falls beyond the scope of this article. However, for the purpose of discussing religious experience, we assume the existence of this essential aspect of humanity. As previously noted, the cause of religious experience is also beyond our discussion. Whether the soul or the body serves as its source is a separate matter. Here, we are concerned solely with the general validity of religious experience, while nonetheless acknowledging certain foundational principles, such as the existence of the soul.

As noted thus far, one of the most fundamental factors in the occurrence of religious experience is the transformation of the "self" through religious practices. Analyzing McNamara's theories and writings, particularly his work on the neuroscience of religious experience (McNamara, 2009), leads to the conclusion that by "self," he refers to the same concept as the soul in Islamic thought. Drawing on research in Islamic mysticism (Sviri, 2002, pp. 195–215), he illustrates the stages of human spiritual development by citing Qur'anic verses and the terminology of Islamic mysticism. According to the Qur'an, these stages include "for the [carnal] soul indeed prompts [men] to evil" (Quran 12:53), "the self-blaming soul" (Quran 75:2), and "O soul at peace" (Quran 89:27). He asserts that the soul must first be disciplined and reproached before ultimately attaining a state of tranquility and confidence.

Man can foster personal growth by transforming himself, drawing on McNamara's concept of the ideal self or possible selves in this final stage. The human soul aspires to attain this ideal through religious rites, creating a distinction between the present self and the possible self—the divided self. As an "agent" endowed with free will, the human self resolves this disintegration. While we recognize the

unity of thought, consciousness, and self, we often remain unintegrated. Establishing a focal point for unity across all aspects of life is a challenging endeavor—one in which religion plays a vital role (McNamara, 2009, pp. 26–27).

In the early stages of spiritual development, one is more inclined toward evil, but as one progresses, a greater balance emerges, culminating in the complete transformation of the soul at higher levels of perfection. Physically, humans experience uncoordinated internal conflicts. Genetically and neurologically, they possess both positive and negative tendencies, with internal contradiction being a fundamental aspect of human nature. The paradoxical sets of genes within the human genetic system compete for transmission to future generations, contributing to this internal conflict. Through the stimulation of central and peripheral nerves by good or bad actions, neural chemical processes are directed accordingly. Thus, human actions—whether religious or secular—directly influence both physical and spiritual responses, shaping the occurrence of religious experience (H. D., 2006, pp. 8–22).

Thus, this internal discrepancy is an inherent and pervasive process that is difficult to resolve. Religion, however, provides a precise, profound, and long-term means of addressing it. The final step in resolving this contradiction is taken by the self or soul, which accomplishes its mission through the influence of human actions. To overcome internal conflicts, we must exercise our free will and make goal-oriented choices to strengthen our capacity for resolution.

Religious practices strengthen the self by bridging the gap between the current and ideal self, resulting in a unified identity. However, failing to exercise willpower in this way—or using it improperly—leads to a weakened will. McNamara describes the process of narrowing the gap between the current and possible self as

"decentering," a stage in which the old self gives way to the new. Human nature inclines toward negative tendencies in its internal conflicts, making it difficult to sustain a positive transformation. However, religion and religious rites address this challenge by fostering decentering and self-integration. Their impact is far more enduring than that of any other practice (McNamara, 2009, pp. 38–54). Ultimately, the soul seeks perfection, though achieving it is difficult, and religion provides the most effective means of resolving these inner conflicts.

Religious experience emerges both during the process of progress and at the culmination of decentralization. Often, small religious experiences serve as indicators of progress toward the ultimate goal. As decentralization intensifies, emotions and arousal also increase. This is where the characteristics of religious experience, as outlined by Pahnke and McNamara, become relevant. However, if an individual lacks a proper understanding of religion and religious practice and is unable to accurately assess their experience, they may be misled.

But what if a person undergoes a religious experience without engaging in a specific religious practice or as a result of a mental or psychological disorder?

4. Religious Experience of Unhealthy Individuals

Religious experience is one of the few experiences that cannot be easily judged. A person who initially has no belief in religion may undergo a religious experience and subsequently adopt religious practices and beliefs. Conversely, another individual in a similar state may have a similar experience solely due to a psychological disorder. Therefore, making judgments without full knowledge and awareness would be neither reasonable nor fair.

Many individuals claim to have religious experiences but either engage in religious distortions themselves or mislead others with baseless assertions. For example, a person may exhibit religious behaviors due to a neurological disorder or conditions such as epilepsy. In some cases, the individual has not had any genuine religious experience but deceives others through deliberate fabrication. The motivations behind such deception can vary, ranging from political to personal interests. However, regardless of the cause, due to their compromised physical or mental health—and especially their deceptive intentions—their claims of religious experience are invalid.

Therefore, in this section, we will explore the factors contributing to unhealthy religious experiences to distinguish individuals in this category from those with genuine religious experiences. Additionally, these studies can aid those suffering from neurological and mental disorders. We will begin by examining the role of the brain and the nervous system in religiosity to identify the causes of these disorders and the distinction between healthy and unhealthy religious experiences.

5. Anatomy of Brain and Feeling of "Self"

The brain and its neural networks serve as intermediaries in religious experience. Neuroscientific research has identified a specific region in the human brain associated with belief in God and religious experiences, a claim supported by scientific advancements. This topic will be explored in detail here. However, this brain region alone cannot account for all religious experiences; rather, the brain functions as a conduit. Human cognition and complex activities stem from a unique faculty known as the "self" or soul, with the brain and nervous system acting as its instruments. Within the brain, a specific neural

system regulates emotions and their fluctuations. As these emotions develop, the corresponding neural pathways are activated, leading some to mistakenly believe that the entire process originates solely in the brain (McNamara, 2006, pp. 1–3).

Studies show that religiosity, the sense of self, and religious experiences are highly dependent on neural circuits in the brain, and the intensity of these experiences decreases if these circuits are disrupted due to damage. The right temporal cortex and the prefrontal cortex are the two primary brain regions most involved in the occurrence of religious experiences (Craig et al., 1999, pp. 129–178; Feinberg & Keenan, 2005, pp. 661–678; McNamara et al., 1995, pp. 16–23; Miller et al., 2001, pp. 817–821; Seeley & Sturm, 2007, pp. 317–334; Vogele et al., 1999, pp. 343–363). A dementing process can easily disrupt these regions and impair "self" control. The anterior and temporal cerebral cortex receive dense afferent input from the spinal cord and limbic system and exhibit higher innervation of serotonergic and noradrenergic cells in the brainstem. Dopaminergic cell groups in the right prefrontal cortex show a heightened response to stress. Additionally, this cortex, along with the primary motor cortex, plays a crucial role in supporting volition and voluntary actions (Berridge et al., 2003, pp. 69–104). The prefrontal cortex first encodes the intention to move, which is then transferred to the primary motor cortex to initiate movement. The signal is subsequently relayed to the supplementary motor area, followed by processing in the brainstem, lower spinal cord, cerebellum, and basal ganglia to coordinate sequential movements. During this process, cognitive information, emotional experiences (both positive and negative), religious experiences, and memories are carefully processed (McNamara, 2009, pp. 62–64).

Now, suppose that one of these brain regions suffers a physical, mental, or psychological injury or disorder—what will

happen? As long as the areas responsible for processing sensory input and religiosity function normally, all religious emotions, feelings, and experiences remain real and intact. However, even minor damage to the brain or a disruption of the nervous system can interfere with this process, rendering these experiences insignificant. It is evident that when the mechanism facilitating a function is impaired, the function itself cannot operate properly. A more critical point is that only relatively simple disorders can be self-diagnosed by the individual, while more complex conditions require medical evaluation and scientific testing for diagnosis. In relation to this discussion, the third criterion—scientific examination of religious experiences—helps clarify the rationale behind such claims.

Certainly, examining these brain regions and their disturbances can help address many complexities. A person who attains religious experiences with perfect mental health is undoubtedly different from someone who experiences similar states due to external factors such as hallucinations, addiction, brain damage, or other disorders. Therefore, it is crucial to explore this important issue further.

6. Mental Disorders and Religious Experience

Various forms of damage to the brain's nervous system can result in irreparable harm to both the body and the mind. Understanding and addressing these issues is one of the most critical tasks for researchers. Today, neuroscientists, psychologists, philosophers, and experts across various scientific fields continue to study these complexities. A wealth of clinical evidence suggests that disturbances in sensitive regions of the brain can lead to conflicting religious and quasi-religious experiences. This raises an essential question: What happens when a brain region responsible for religiosity is damaged?

Among these conditions is alien hand syndrome, which results

from a disorder affecting the primary motor cortex or the anterior part of the corpus callosum. In this condition, the affected hand moves involuntarily, without the person's consent, or appears to act under an external will (Goldberg, Mayer, & Toglia, 1981, pp. 683–686).

If the frontal lobe is damaged, it may result in environmental dependency syndrome, which deprives the individual of free will and voluntary decision-making. For example, the person may unconsciously attempt to harm themselves without having control over their actions (Lhermitte, 1986, pp. 335–343).

As long as a person remains the source of their own movements, everything functions normally. However, when the limbic system, anterior temporal lobe, or prefrontal cortex is impaired, the individual's actions may appear to originate from an external source. This phenomenon is often perceived as sinister by the individual, as if a second identity or external force is controlling their thoughts and behavior.

These neural circuits also play a role in the occurrence of religious experiences. In addition to contributing to mental disorders, they may also give rise to unhealthy religious experiences. It can be explicitly stated that the relationship between oneself and God can be examined through the brain's neural and cognitive mediation. However, this is not the entire picture; it does not imply that the brain is all-encompassing or that the human soul is negated. Rather, it highlights the role and mediation of neural processes. Addressing differences between religious and non-religious individuals through the lens of religious experience and this neurological perspective may help resolve many conflicts (McNamara, 2006, p. 209).

After a brain injury or temporal lobe epilepsy, patients often experience significant changes in their religious mood. For example,

an individual suffering from such a disorder may claim to have been chosen by God for a special mission—a belief that diminishes after an epileptic episode or with medication (Waxman & Geschwind, 1975, pp. 1580–1586). Some have even reported visions of God. Many of these individuals experience recurrent epileptic seizures accompanied by conflicting religious experiences, with tests indicating the involvement of the right temporal lobe. Additionally, individuals who discontinued their anticonvulsant medication not only suffered epileptic seizures but also reported profound religious experiences, believing themselves to be the Son of God or possessing abilities such as healing or reading others' thoughts. All of these cases suggest that brain damage can lead to altered self-perception and self-esteem (Dewhurst & Beard, 1970, pp. 497–507). Ultimately, it is the self—or soul—that interprets these neurological changes, sometimes leading to misperceptions of reality.

Another example of such cases is individuals with severe mental illness, many of whom experience intense religious delusions, as numerous reports have documented (Huguelet et al., 2006, pp. 366–372; Mohr et al., 2006, pp. 1952–1959). In these patients, dysfunction of the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex and increased activity in the limbic system, particularly the amygdala, are commonly observed (Puri et al., 2001, pp. 143–148; Kasai et al., 2003, pp. 156–164; Kubicki et al., 2002, pp. 1711–1719; Kuroki et al., 2006, pp. 2103–2110).

Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is one of the most detrimental manifestations of religiosity when it becomes pathological. Intrusive thoughts, excessive desires, and repetitive behaviors are characteristic signs of this condition. Studies indicate that a significant proportion of individuals with OCD experience religious obsessions (Tek & Ulug, 2001, pp. 99–108). Research on the orbitofrontal cortex has revealed increased abnormal activity in the subcortical basal ganglia and limbic circuits. Additionally, heightened

activation has been observed in the right temporal lobe and right prefrontal cortex (Fontaine et al., 2007, pp. 621–635).

In frontotemporal dementia, neurodegenerative disorders primarily affect the frontal lobe and anterior regions of the temporal lobe. Before the onset of this condition, individuals often exhibit abnormalities such as apathy, disinhibition, and obsessive behaviors. Like others with neurological impairments, these individuals may also experience sudden religious episodes (Miller et al., 1997, pp. 937–942; Neary et al., 1998, pp. 1546–1554).

Scientists utilize brain imaging techniques to measure how different areas of the brain respond to various psychological and spiritual states. Brain activity requires energy, which depends on glucose and oxygen. As these molecules circulate, the volume and integrity of specific brain regions may increase or decrease. Researchers assess these changes through imaging and experimental methods such as MRI (Newberg et al., 2006, pp. 67–71).

Extensive studies on the religious experiences of both healthy and unhealthy individuals have identified a network response involving several brain regions, including the orbital and dorsomedial prefrontal cortex, the right dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, the ascending serotonergic systems, the mesocortical dopamine system, and the amygdala/hippocampus. In summary, the limbic system, temporal lobes, and right prefrontal cortical regions are all implicated, with particular emphasis on the right temporal lobe—a point on which most researchers agree (McNamara, 2009, p. 127). However, it is important to note that experimental findings, particularly in cognitive science and neuroscience, can be interpreted in various ways. One such interpretation is the perspective presented here in the discussion of religious experience.

Based on the provided data, a network of brain structures is responsible for modulating religiosity and the sense of "self," and these structures are deeply interconnected. The coherence and integrity of this network reflect complex chemical interactions between neurons, highlighting the importance of understanding these processes.

7. The Brain's Chemical Reaction to Religious States

The neurochemicals serotonin and dopamine specifically activate regions of the brain identified as part of the religious circuit. Many hallucinogens stimulate the nerve cells associated with these neurotransmitters, influencing emotional and religious experiences. Since our brains naturally contain these cells, the use of psychedelic substances can induce altered states of consciousness, including spiritual or religious sensations. In a balanced state, the proper regulation of serotonin and dopamine maintains normal brain function. However, various factors—such as hallucinogen use—can lead to heightened activity in key brain circuits, including the limbic system, right temporal lobe, and prefrontal cortex. This overstimulation may result in conflicting religious and anti-religious experiences or even contribute to mental disorders (McNamara, 2009, p. 127).

Beyond the influence of medication or brain injuries, religious practices themselves can also trigger neurological reactions and create religious experiences. In both cases, the brain undergoes complex processes, demonstrating that religious experiences cannot be solely reduced to neural activity. There is another fundamental factor that differentiates these experiences—the "self" or soul—which plays a crucial role. While neurological experiments may help distinguish between the religious experiences of healthy and unhealthy individuals, the evolution of the soul and the legitimacy of a person's

spiritual claims depend on additional factors. Another important consideration is the scientific interpretation of religion, a common approach in scholarly works. This perspective has faced methodological criticism, some of which are valid. Therefore, this article aims to avoid an overly reductionist or scientistic approach, instead adopting a more balanced perspective that integrates both rational and religious considerations.

From our perspective, religious experience alone does not serve as conclusive proof of a person's claims, nor does the mere occurrence of such an experience validate their legitimacy. An individual may attempt to justify their claims by describing mystical insights or intuitions, yet they could be entirely mistaken. Religious experience is inherently an internal phenomenon—comprising feelings, emotions, and intuitions—that may not hold universal validity. Therefore, a religious experience can only be deemed true or false after evaluating the foundational concepts underlying the individual's claims. To determine the legitimacy of such claims, a multi-faceted approach is required. First, philosophy and other related fields are used to assess the logical coherence of the claim. If the claim pertains to divine intentions or religious doctrines, it is examined in light of revelation. Finally, experimental sciences—such as neuroscience and medical assessments—are applied to determine whether the individual experiencing these religious states is physically and mentally healthy. The reason for this rigorous evaluation is the wide spectrum of religious experiences, some of which are authentic while others are influenced by various psychological or neurological factors, as discussed in detail.

A healthy religious experience serves only to support valid and well-grounded rational and scientific arguments; it cannot function as proof for claims that are absurd or based on fallacious reasoning.

Furthermore, this principle applies regardless of whether the experience is demonstrable to the person himself or to others. Accordingly, every religious claim must first be evaluated through rational, revelatory, and empirical reasoning before being considered in light of religious experience. Therefore, merely observing a religious or mystical state does not entitle one to interpret it personally or form impressions based on preconceived notions. If someone without prior religious belief undergoes a religious experience, its significance depends on whether he has subjected his views and spiritual states to the scrutiny of reason and science. Given the vast diversity of its origins, religious experience, in itself, cannot be regarded as a definitive source of inspiration or guidance for practice and belief. Consequently, those who possess religious experiences should not invite others to their sects or orders solely on that basis, as their claims may be rooted in past misconceptions or erroneous assumptions. A person who harbors fundamental misunderstandings cannot properly comprehend his mystical or religious experiences, potentially leading himself or others astray. Thus, religious experience is merely a secondary tool in assessing claims—it is not an inherent or fundamental principle for evaluation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this article can be summarized as follows:

- The discussion focuses on the validity of the very existence of religious experience among ordinary people, rather than its quality.
- The validity of any religious experience is determined by its justification through rational, revelatory, and empirical foundations; otherwise, it holds no value.

- The most fundamental cause of religious experience is the transformation of the "self" or soul as a result of religious practices.
- Ontologically, religious experience is an entity that lends itself to philosophical analysis.
- Psychologically, both healthy and unhealthy individuals undergo religious experiences, with their differences carefully examined. A healthy person primarily attains religious experience through religious practice, whereas an unhealthy person was assessed in detail using various tests related to mental and neurological disorders. Additionally, the role of genetics in religiosity was briefly explored to account for individuals who achieve spiritual states without external influences.
- In the epistemological aspect, the source of religious experience was not addressed due to the multiplicity of possible causes. However, its validity depends on the three factors mentioned above.
- McNamara's definition of religious experience, along with the final definition, is broad and comprehensive, encompassing all types of religious experiences regardless of their quality. It also clarifies the relationship between the three aspects of religious experience: absolute generality, generality, and particularity.
- The characteristics of religious experience were outlined, offering general criteria for determining their validity.
- Dr. Patrick McNamara's new approach has paved the way for a more precise understanding of this issue. He examines the self and the soul in the process of attaining religious

experience, providing a clear explanation of the stages of soul integration. Additionally, he applies the concept of the "self" to the soul within the framework of Islamic mysticism.

- The neurological study of religious experience provided a broader perspective on the subject. By applying this understanding to the stages of self-decentralization and evolution, the process of attaining religious experience was elucidated. During these stages, the right temporal cortex, prefrontal regions, limbic system, and other neural circuits play a key role in processing sensory perceptions and religiosity.
- Based on the nature of the human body, human actions and behavior influence genetics, which in turn affect the central nervous system in the brain. Specific brain regions respond to peripheral nerves in other parts of the body through chemical signaling. As a result of this process, various sensations, including religious commitment and religious experience, are produced.
- Originality and centrality belong to the soul, while the body serves as its instrument. The soul and body undergo changes together, and both can be measured. Although measuring spiritual experiences in humans is highly challenging and often impossible, they can be partially assessed through neurological and physical states.

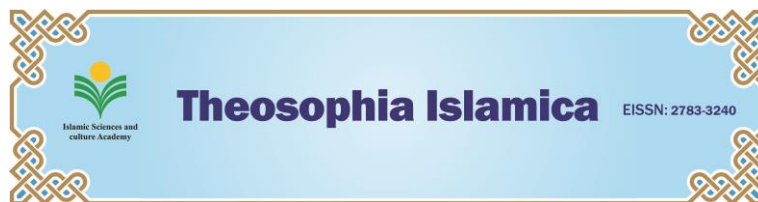
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Critical Review of 'Allama Tabataba'i's View of Intentionality



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Abstract

Intentionality, as a fundamental concept in the philosophy of mind, is essential to understanding how mental states are directed toward objects, concepts, or states of affairs. This article examines the theory of intentionality presented by 'Allama Tabataba'i, with a focus on his Islamic philosophical framework. The research begins by defining the problem of intentionality, which concerns the nature, possibility, and content determination of mental states. We highlight how Tabataba'i's grounding of intentionality in mental existence and immaterial knowledge provides a distinct perspective compared to contemporary naturalistic approaches. The study employs a qualitative, analytical, and

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comparative methodology, examining primary texts from Islamic philosophy, including works by Avicenna, Mullā Ṣadrā, and ‘Allama Tabataba’i, alongside modern Western discussions on intentionality. Through this critical lens, we identify Tabataba’i’s key contributions: the essential revelatory character of knowledge, the abstraction process in content determination, and the inseparable connection between mental existence and intentionality. The research findings reveal that while Tabataba’i’s model offers a metaphysically robust explanation of intentionality, it encounters significant challenges when evaluated in the context of contemporary cognitive science. Critiques include the lack of empirical testability, potential conceptual ambiguity for modern scholars unfamiliar with Islamic metaphysics, and the absence of a clear mechanistic explanation that aligns with materialist paradigms. Nevertheless, the article underscores the innovative nature of Tabataba’i’s approach in bridging classical Islamic thought with modern philosophical discourse. It also suggests potential interdisciplinary dialogues, especially with phenomenological perspectives that similarly emphasize the inherent directedness of consciousness. The findings contribute to a broader understanding of intentionality and open new avenues for future research on the integration of metaphysical and empirical frameworks in the philosophy of mind.

Keywords

Intentionality, Content Determination, Knowledge, Mental Existence, ‘Allama Tabataba’i.

Introduction

In the philosophy of mind, our thoughts and mental states are marked with two properties: qualia and intentionality (Jacquette, 2009, p. 195). Intentionality is the abstract relation of aboutness in which thoughts are directed at intentional objects (ibid). Some contemporary philosophers of mind who believe in eliminativism or reductionism ultimately deny these two basic properties (ibid). However, assuming that these are genuine properties of our mental states, questions will arise about their possibility and how they relate to each other. Intentionality as an important mental property is at the heart of debates in the philosophy of mind. The philosophical study of this concept in the contemporary philosophy of mind dates back at least to a half a century ago. It was introduced by philosophers such as John Searle, Fodor, and Putnam.

The problem of intentionality is the second most difficult problem in the philosophy of mind after the problem of consciousness, which was discussed in various dimensions. In fact, it is the other side of the problem of consciousness. Just as it is hard to see how the matter inside our skull might be conscious or its interactions might create consciousness, it is particularly hard to see how the matter inside the skull might refer to or be about something in the external world, or such a reference might arise from its actions and reactions.

Against the naturalization of intentionality and materialism about consciousness, there is the view of Medieval scholastics, Descartes, and Muslim philosophers that consciousness and mental images are immaterial or detached from matter. In their own words, scholastics and Muslim philosophers prove the property of intentionality for mental images, showing that it is essential to them.

Research Background

Research on intentionality has developed significantly since Franz Brentano's (1874) identification of intentionality as the defining characteristic of mental phenomena. Husserl (1913) further advanced the concept by integrating it into his phenomenological framework, emphasizing the directedness of consciousness. In the analytic tradition, John Searle (1983) introduced intentionality as part of his theory of speech acts and the mind, while Fred Dretske (1981) and Ruth Millikan (1984) proposed naturalistic accounts of mental content grounded in biological and causal relations.

While these theories have largely focused on naturalistic and empirical dimensions of intentionality, Islamic philosophers, particularly Avicenna and Mullā Ṣadrā, explored the concept through the lens of mental existence (*wujūd dhihmī*). However, as noted by Shakeri (2010), there has been limited engagement with contemporary issues of intentionality within Islamic philosophy.

Recent works have sought to bridge this gap. Esfandiar, Najafi, and Zakeri (2021) examined Tabataba'i's perspective on intentionality through his philosophical foundations, offering insights into how his metaphysical principles contrast with materialist theories. In another study, Najafi and Esfandiar (2022) analyzed the significance of intentionality in Tabataba'i's thought with reference to causal and final theories of content. These contributions provide valuable groundwork for understanding the distinctive features of Tabataba'i's approach.

The present article not only builds on the foundational work of 'Allama Tabataba'i but also provides a critical perspective on his views in relation to contemporary theories of intentionality. While Western philosophers often ground intentionality in empirical and

causal frameworks, Tabataba'i's reliance on the immateriality of knowledge presents a fundamentally different starting point. Critics may argue that his metaphysical approach lacks empirical testability, a concern commonly raised by proponents of physicalist theories like Dretske and Millikan.

However, the innovative contribution of the present article lies in its systematic integration of Tabataba'i's philosophical insights with contemporary discourse. By contrasting his metaphysical principles with naturalistic theories, we demonstrate the potential for Islamic philosophical perspectives to contribute to current debates about mental representation and content determination. The article further highlights the essential nature of knowledge as inherently intentional, challenging assumptions of reducibility to physical processes.

On this account, the problem of this article consists of two main questions:

1. How is intentionality possible if knowledge is something immaterial or detached from matter?
2. How is the content of our intentional states determined? In other words, how does our consciousness refer to something beyond itself?

Alternatively put, the main questions of the article are the possibility of intentionality and its determination (that is, having particular contents). Our contribution in this article is to look for a new answer to these questions based on 'Allama Tabataba'i's philosophical theories and grounds. Although the answer is close to causal theories of content, there are several ways in which they differ, particularly in that our answer does not reduce intentionality to a natural physical property of the mind, whereas all causal theories seek to make such a reduction. Intentionality is an eminent property of

“knowledge” and “consciousness” as a reality detached from matter, and hence, it has nothing to do with natural physical properties.

1. The Concept of Intentionality

The concept of intentionality is a significant concept in the philosophy of mind. It is about a non-physical property of the mind, which provides objections to eliminativist and reductionist materialistic approaches to the mental. The concept is so significant that Brentano has introduced it as a mark of the mental (Brentano 1995, 92). In the contemporary philosophy of mind, the concept of “intentionality” is used to elucidate the essential characteristic of the mental, by which mental states are directed at or about something (Hickerson 2007, 1). For example, when I believe that Rostam and Sohrab have combatted each other, my belief is about the combat between Rostam and Sohrab. Or when I decide to vote in this year’s presidential elections, my decision is about voting in the elections. Intentionality is a main property of consciousness. According to Husserl, consciousness is always consciousness of something; that is, it always aims at something (Husserl, 1913, p. 84). Husserl further developed Brentano’s notion of intentionality by grounding it within his phenomenological method, emphasizing the intentional structure of experience and the correlation between acts of consciousness and their objects.

The term does not explicitly appear in the work of ancient philosophers like Plato and Aristotle. It was first introduced by Medieval scholastics, and was later deployed and meticulously studied by Brentano, a nineteenth-century philosopher and psychologist, and his students. For Brentano, intentionality is the main characteristic of the mental and our consciousness, which distinguish them from the physical (Brentano 1995, 90-92). The intentional character of the mind allows us to have representations of the world and allows our thoughts

to have contents and to show the actual world. This characteristic even enables our minds to think about things that do not exist (Zalta 1988, 10). Put in a nutshell, intentionality is a property that allows us to have knowledge of the world (Kim, 2010, p. 17).

2. Mental Content and Intentionality

Content is what is represented by our mental representation (Mandik 2010, 31). For example, when I have a general concept or a sensory experience, the concept or experience has a content in the sense that it includes intentional mental circumstances that represent something. In other words, content is what our mental states are about. Mental representations are among the mental states that possess contents. Our thoughts, beliefs, desires, hopes, and fears are about something; for instance, our thought about “John is here” or my belief that “it will rain tomorrow.”

There are various philosophical problems about content. For example, can content be physically explained? Alternatively put, can contentfulness be identified to something physical or is it indeed non-physical?

Another problem is how the particular content of a mental state is determined: Why must a particular thought have such and such a content and refer to such and such a thing? The two questions seem interrelated, since any explanation of content is an explanation of how content is determined.

As for mental content, theories of its nature are called content theories, which aim to account for how an intentional mental content be about something (ibid). Contemporary theories of content tend to be naturalistic; that is, they attempt to explain mental content and its intentionality in natural and physical terms.

On this account, the relation between intentionality and mental content comes to light. In this article, we provide an answer to the question of the possibility of intentionality and determination of the mental content from ‘Allama Tabataba’i’s perspective. The two questions are important in that philosophical efforts in the contemporary philosophy of mind are largely devoted to them, as we can see in the works of philosophers like Fodor, Dretske, Millikan, and others (e.g., see Millikan, 2009, p. 394; Fodor, 1987, p. 97).

3. Mind

A fundamental distinction to identify types of entities is in terms of “mentality” and lack of mentality (Kim, 2014, p. 34). The term “mentality” is used to refer to exactly the creatures (such as animals and human) who have states like anger, pain, and pleasure or have sensory perception, concepts, and propositional attitudes. They are contrasted to physical states and properties that can be explained in physical terms. Accordingly, mentality is the ability to feel, think, and have mental states (Lowe, 2010, p. 6). On this account, the philosophy of mind is a philosophical inquiry into things with mentality in that they have mentality (ibid). In the literature, however, the concept of “mind” is sometimes considered a substance separate from the body (particularly in versions of substance dualism) (Kim, 2014, pp. 36-40), although this approach to the concept of mind is criticized by most physicalists. Accordingly, the *mental* or *mental states* are what characterize humans or any other conscious being and have basic mental features such as qualia or intentionality and are not primarily explainable in physical terms. “Having a mind” might just be thought to be a property or capacity that only human beings and certain evolved animals possess. To say that something “has a mind” is to categorize it as a species that has the ability for certain behaviors and functions

(feeling, perception, memory, learning, argument, consciousness, action, etc.) (ibid, p. 42).

In the final analysis, the mental might be reduced to the physical, might be physically explainable, might be a higher-level physical property of certain living organisms, or might ultimately be a property distinct from physical properties.

In the literature, the distinction is often made between the physical and the mental, rather than the external and the mental. Whenever there is talk of the external world, it often refers to the natural material world that is based on fundamental physical laws and elements. However, Islamic philosophy often adopts a peculiar approach to the mind, not as the soul that is considered one of the two aspects of existence (in double divisions of existence). We should thus address how Muslim philosophers conceive of “mind” and “mental existence” to elucidate the difference between approaches to the “mind” in the two philosophical traditions: contemporary philosophy of mind and Islamic philosophy.

3.1. Mind in Islamic Philosophy

Existence is primarily divided into mental and external (Şadr al-Mutaʿallihīn, 1981, vol. 1, p. 263). Mental existence is contrasted to external existence, where the former is a way of something’s existence, which does not have its expected effects, unlike the latter. Of course, mental existence is comparative; that is, in comparison to the external existence, which it represents, the mental existence has the expected effects, although it has its own effects and excludes nonexistence, and in this perspective, it is a sort of external existence (Tabatabaʿi, n.d.(b), pp. 17, 256). Accordingly, the aspect of being compared to the external reality is deemed essential to the mental existence, and hence mental existence characteristically represents what is beyond it, without

having its expected effects. On this picture, every mental existence necessarily represents “something” (actual or hypothetical).

Accordingly, the mind is not a container of perceptions, and the mental is not what exists in the brain or the head or an immaterial container called the “mind.” Note that “external realm” and “external existence” are identical, and the external realm is constituted by external existences in the sense that when it is said that something exists in the external realm, it does not mean that the external realm is a container for, and an entity beside, other objects, but in fact, the external realm is nothing but those external existences (Sabzawāri, 1990, vol. 2, p. 150). Likewise, when we talk of the mind, we just mean the representational character of mental images. Accordingly, mental existence, as opposed to external existence, is an existence that is characteristically compared to the external realm, and hence, mental existence by character represents what is beyond it, without having its effects.

This clarifies the external character as well: it does not mean what is outside of the human existence (human body or soul), but what has the expected effects. Accordingly, something within the human soul can be external (e.g., a pain we feel), and it cannot be judged as mental merely because of inner existence or being a sort of perception.

4. Knowledge and Mental Existence in Islamic Philosophy and Its Relation to “Intentionality”

Perhaps one of the most evident concepts to us is that of “knowledge,” which consists in clarity or obviousness. When we say, “I know such and such,” it means that such and such is obvious to me. It is a major challenge for philosophical schools of thought to account for the

nature of knowledge and the process through which knowledge is acquired by individuals. Now the question arises: What relation is there between knowledge and the problem of intentionality?

It should be noted that the term “intentionality” does not explicitly appear in Islamic philosophy. However, in debates on mental existence and knowledge, there is discussion about the existence or actualization of epistemic forms in the mind and the way they reveal the external realm, as well as their relational (intentional) nature (Shakeri, 2010, p. 27). In their exploration of general problems of existence, Muslim philosophers divide existence into mental and external. They discuss mental existence to explain the nature of knowledge and demonstrate that knowledge is not merely a relation to the object of perception or a duplicate thereof. Rather, it is through the “meaning” or “concept” of the external that we intend the external existence.

Avicenna’s passages in his *al-Ta’līqāt (Annotations)* imply that the mind has the property of being directed at something, whether it actually exists in the external realm or not (Avicenna, 1983, p. 95). From this perspective, the problem of mental existence as the comparative aspect of our epistemic forms to the external realm (Tabataba’i, n.d.(a), vol. 1, p. 264) is intrinsically tied to intentionality.

Mullā Ṣadrā, in his *al-Asfār al-Arba’a (The Four Journeys of the Soul)*, further developed the discourse on mental existence by introducing the principle of substantial motion (*al-haraka al-jawhariyya*). He argued that knowledge is not a static relation but a dynamic, existential transformation of the knower. For Ṣadrā, mental existence represents the continuous movement of the soul towards higher levels of understanding and knowledge, a process intrinsically tied to the representational and intentional nature of mental forms

(Şadrā, 1981, vol. 3, p. 297). He emphasized that mental images are not merely abstract reflections but real, albeit immaterial, existences that reveal external realities.

Accordingly, the contributions of Avicenna, Mullā Şadrā, and ‘Allama Tabataba’i together provide a coherent framework for understanding knowledge and its intentional character. Avicenna laid the groundwork by introducing the concept of mental existence as a representational reality. Şadrā advanced this idea through his theory of substantial motion, highlighting the dynamic, process-oriented nature of knowing. Tabataba’i later extended these ideas, emphasizing the essential revelatory nature of knowledge and its intrinsic connection to intentionality.

Thus, in Islamic philosophy, knowledge and mental existence are fundamentally intertwined. Mental existence, as conceived by Avicenna, Şadrā, and Tabataba’i, is not merely a passive reflection of external objects but an active, intentional presence that reveals and relates to external reality. This perspective offers a distinct alternative to contemporary materialist approaches to intentionality, which often seek to naturalize mental content within physical and causal frameworks.

5. An Account of Intentionality from ‘Allama Tabataba’i’s Perspective

We can go through certain steps based on ‘Allama Tabataba’i’s theories to infer his explanation of intentionality.

5.1. Theory of Mental Existence

Muslim philosophers distinguish mental and external existences to solve problems of the ontology of knowledge. This is therefore a major problem of Islamic philosophy (Motahhari, 1985, vol. 1, p. 161). We

should first account for the two notions of “mental-external” and “representation.”

A) Mental and External

Mental existence, as opposed to external existence, is a way of something's existence, which does not have its expected effects. Mental existence is a comparative existence; that is, it lacks certain effects in comparison to the external existence it represents, although it has its own effects. Accordingly, mental existence is comparative to, and representational of the external reality, where this representational character is its essential property.

B) Representation

In the case of concepts and mental images, representation is to indicate and display something through a mental concept. The human mind is constantly engaged in making pictures and deriving concepts, whereby it represents its internal and external findings. When faced with a reality, the mind characteristically derives a concept and makes a picture from it (Niazi, 2008, p. 150).

There are two varieties of representation: intrinsic and conventional. The former is when something's essence is such that it has the character of mirroring. That is, its essence displays something else, without this depending on any conventions on our part or being figuratively attributed to this (mental concepts are essential representations of their representata).

Conventional representation is like the representation of words, letters, mathematical signs, signposts, etc. Such representation is based on conventions agreed by people. Although words represent concepts by convention, concepts essentially represent their meanings.

It is crucial to distinguish the two kinds of representation, which implies that mental concepts are not just “symbols” for truths.¹

5.1.1. Formulating the Theory of Mental Existence

As noted above, existence qua existence is primarily divided into mental and external. In his account of mental and external existences, ‘Allama Tabataba’i says: “it turns out that quiddities have mental existences from which their effects do not follow, just as they have an external existence from which the effects follow, and with this it the division of existents into external and mental becomes clear” (Tabataba’i, n.d.(c), 35).

Mental and external existences are by nature (or quiddity) identical. In fact, they are two modes of the existence of one and the same thing. That is, one reality or quiddity exists in two realms: the mental and the externa. This is grounded in the “primacy of existence” (*iṣālat al-wujūd*) and its corollaries, which imply that existence has primacy in that it is identical to the aspect in which the expected effects follow, whereas a quiddity (*māhiyya*) is equally related to having or not having effects. Thus, the quiddity can exist in the two mental and external realms and remain the essence it was.

5.1.2. Nature of Mental Existence and Knowledge

When we gain knowledge of things, their quiddities are obtained by us through mental existence; that is, a quiddity that has another mode of existence that lacks the expected external effects.

1. Representation in the case of epistemic forms and concepts is mere presentation, which differs from judgmental representations that imply judgments about truth and falsity. Negligence of this difference has led to misunderstandings. See Niazi (2008).

This mental existence has effects of its own, and is called “knowledge.” For instance, the mental image of the human being is a mental existence that lacks the effects of an externally existing human being. It should be noted that mental existence is not subsumed under any category because for something to be included in a category, it does not suffice for the defining limit of the thing to be true of it. It must have the external effects as well, and since mental existence lacks the relevant effects, it is not subsumed under any category (Tabataba'i, n.d.(c), p. 36). This is why it is said that the mental quiddity—namely, the quiddity that mentally exists—only has the concept of the relevant categories, period. That is, the mental human being is just the concept of the human being (human as primarily predicated), not its instance.

To recapitulate, the theory of mental existence, as advocated by Muslim philosophers, holds that in the process of knowing the reality, what we grasp is the nature of things, albeit with a different mode of existence (which lacks external effects; that is, mental existence). In other words, our knowledge-by-acquisition of the external reality is our knowledge of the quiddities of things, and the mental and the objective are identical with respect to the quiddity (Tabataba'i, n.d.(c), p. 34).

5.2. Essential Revelatory Character of Knowledge

'Allama Tabataba'i believes that the nature of knowledge is revelatory; that is, it discloses the external reality. It is therefore impossible to conceive the sort of knowledge that is not diaphanous or does not reveal the external realm, as it is impossible to conceive a revelatory or diaphanous piece of knowledge without having anything external that is revealed by it. In his discussion of mental existence, too, 'Allama Tabataba'i notes that since mental existence is by nature

compared to the external reality, it is essentially representational of something beyond it. It is therefore impossible to have mental existence—a representation—without a representum (something that is represented). That is, there must always be an actual or hypothetical external existence that corresponds to our mental image (ibid, p. 38). He writes: “mental existence characteristically represents what is beyond it, without the effects of the representum following from the representation” (ibid).

On this account, mental existence, as opposed to external existence, is always compared to, and representational of, something insofar as it is mental existence; that is, *the comparative or other-directed aspect, or being intentional, is the nature of the mental dimension*. It might thus be said that, for ‘Allama Tabataba’i, the intentionality of mental existence is essential to us, mental existence is always compared to the external, and without such comparison, mental existence goes away. This is what it means for mental existence to represent what is beyond it. Accordingly, mental existence or knowledge has an intentional representational existence, revealing something beyond it.

5.3. Immateriality of Knowledge

In Islamic philosophy, external existence (that has the expected effects) is generally divided into material (attached to matter) and immaterial (detached from matter) (See Ibn Sīnā, Book of Healing, 103; Ṣadr al-Muta’allihīn, 1981, vol. 1, p. 284; Tabataba’i, n.d.(b), p. 86). Material existence is what appears in the background of the primary matter (or *hyle*) and has potentiality (Ṣadr al-Muta’allihīn, 1981, pp. 261-262), while an immaterial existence is not essentially attached to matter and does not involve potentiality. Now the question is: To what kind of existence do our perceptual forms belong? Are our perceptions

material entities that are located in our brains or are they functional properties of our brain? Or are they detached from matter, and material things only count as conditions and predispositions for their actualization (passively, not actively)?

Our answer to this question specifies our approach to the problem of intentionality. Most non-eliminativist philosophers of mind claim that intentionality is something natural and physical (based on materialism about consciousness), but Sadraean philosophers in the Islamic tradition, including 'Allama Tabataba'i, believe that all perceptions are immaterial, maintaining that materialism about consciousness leads us nowhere and suffers from major contradictions. Accordingly, our epistemic forms are non-material realities detached from matter. Now what is the essential property of immateriality? Major philosophers in the Islamic tradition assert that immaterial entities are always present, and are indeed identical to presence, unlike material entities (Ibn Sīnā, 1996, vol. 2, pp. 382-391; Ṣadr al-Muta'allihīn, 1981, vol. 3, pp. 297-300; Tabataba'i, n.d.(c), p. 239). And since presence implies revelation or disclosure, which is identical to knowledge, an immaterial entity has an epistemic existence, and in fact, it is identical to knowledge and revelation. On this account, knowledge can only obtain in the immaterial realm, and only an immaterial entity can be revelatory.

5.4. Grounding Knowledge by Acquisition in Knowledge by Presence

As we noted above, for 'Allama Tabataba'i, knowledge is by nature revelation and disclosure, which are associated with presence. Parts of a scattered entity are absent from each other, even if they are connected, and absence is incompatible with revelation. In contrast, "presence" is an essential property of immaterial entities, and hence,

the nature of knowledge goes back to the presence of the known, which can only occur in the immaterial realm. In other words, as noted in the third step, the knower and knowledge are both immaterial. Accordingly, any piece of knowledge by acquisition, which is indeed to find the concept and image of things by the soul, will be grounded in, and arise from, knowledge by presence.

According to ‘Allama Tabataba’i, given the diaphanousness and revelation of knowledge and perception, it is necessary to arrive at a reality; that is, in the case of any piece of knowledge by acquisition, there is a piece of knowledge by presence. This is because any putative piece of knowledge or perception that has the property of revealing the external reality or the property of diaphanousness must match the external reality without having its expected effects, and thus we inevitably arrive at an entity that has the effects, which it matches. That is, we find the reality through knowledge by presence, from which knowledge by acquisition is derived either directly (what is known by presence without having the expected effects) or indirectly through being manipulated by the perceptive faculty. This is sometimes exemplified by sensory perceptions that exist in senses with their reality, and are obtained by the perceptive faculty, and sometimes by non-sensory perceptions (Tabataba’i, 2008, pp. 80-81). On this account, it is knowledge by presence that turns into knowledge by acquisition by being divested of the expected effects.

5.5. ‘Allama Tabataba’i and Intentionality

Given the four steps outlined above, which are derived from ‘Allama Tabataba’i’s philosophical grounds (although they accord with Mullā Ṣadrā’s views in his Transcendent Philosophy, the essential revelatory character of knowledge in the above terms as well as the grounding of knowledge by acquisition in knowledge by

presence are contributions of 'Allama Tabataba'i in his *Principles of philosophy and the method of realism*), we can formulate the possibility of intentionality and the way in which mental content is determined from 'Allama Tabataba'i's viewpoint as follows.

In response to how intentionality is possible, contemporary philosophers have often tried to naturalize meaning and intentionality in terms of materialism about consciousness or its elimination and analysis (based on physicalism). Nevertheless, 'Allama Tabataba'i rejects the materiality of knowledge altogether, maintaining that all kinds of perception are immaterial. Accordingly, all epistemic forms we possess are detached from matter, and immaterial entities reveal and represent, or are directed at, other things, in virtue of their "presence." To illustrate, note that all of our perceptual forms are detached from matter (even if they might enjoy lower degrees of immateriality), and since immaterial entities are present with their essences, unlike material entities that are not scattered in time and place, and hence they are not absent from themselves, they can be "present" and they can "possess," in which case they reveal and are revealed, where this revelation is the essential character of knowledge. In other words, a substantial immaterial entity is knowledge, knower, and known at the same time, and epistemic forms (if they are believed to be accidents [*a'rāḍ*] and psychological qualities) are knowledge and known by essence.

Knowledge as an immaterial entity is essentially revealing; that is, the epistemic form of what represents cannot exist without what is represented, and the mental existence (what is compared) cannot exist without an externally existing entity (that to which it is compared). In fact, mentality or knowledge has a representational mirroring character, in that it shows something by character. Accordingly, any of our epistemic forms represent, and are directed at,

something. Moreover, since in the process of knowledge by acquisition, the nature of the external existence becomes known to us, the mental existence (representational aspect of the epistemic form) and external existence are identical with respect to their nature or quiddity, and in this way, our epistemic forms become directed at the external reality.

On this account, the first question about intentionality—the question of its possibility—finds a plausible answer: any epistemic form essentially reveals and represents something, where such representation in knowledge by acquisition is grounded in knowledge by presence. Since this epistemic form is immaterial, and it is present to an immaterial substance (the soul), and material entities are essentially present, then their revealing character arises from their essence, instead of being separate from, and attached to, it. In fact, as established in Transcendent Philosophy and endorsed by ‘Allama Tabataba’i, existence is identical to presence, and presence is identical to immateriality and knowledge (Tabataba’i, n.d.(c), pp. 239-240; Šadr al-Muta’allihīn, 1981, vol. 6, p. 340). Accordingly, it turns out that knowledge as immateriality and presence is revelation. In other words, revelation or intentionality are essential to, and necessary for, knowledge, and hence, it is absurd to try to prove it.

The question of the possibility of intentionality of epistemic forms would only arise if they were material entities, since such entities are distinct from each other in the quiddities (or natures) and existences. That is, the question of how intentionality is possible would be a difficult problem on the assumption that knowledge is something material, in which case knowledge and the known would be distinct. This is because such a distinction either in existence or in quiddity would imply that no piece of knowledge could represent any

external existence. This would amount to the denial of knowledge of reality, which is the false sophistry.

A close look at the above analysis yields an answer to the second question as well: How is the content of intentional consciousness determined? Any epistemic form necessarily has its own representum and is conceptually the same as the external entity. For example, the epistemic form of an apple in my mind is the externally existing apple by primary predication; that is, it has its concept. And since any knowledge or perception has the property of revealing the external reality and is indeed an image thereof, we must have arrived at an entity that has the expected effects and to which the form corresponds; that is, we must have grasped the reality through knowledge by presence, from which knowledge by acquisition is derived either directly or indirectly (Tabataba'i, 2008, p. 80). Accordingly, what represents is determined and comes to have a particular content in just the same way in which what is known by presence is determined; that is, it has the same limitations and conditions (quiddity). The answer to the question of how content is determined is thus as follows: mental existence, which has an intentionality toward, and is a representation of, an external existence, is determined in terms of a determination that externally exists.

To see this, we need to distinguish particular and universal concepts. A truly particular concept, either sensory or imaginative, cannot be true of more than one individual instance due to its connection to sensory devices (in sensory concepts) or its dependence on sensory concepts (in imaginative concepts). What determines the content of such concepts, as per the fourth step above, is the external reality that causes the appearance of this concept in our minds in one way or another (which might be an unmediated cause as in sensory concepts or a mediated cause as in imaginative concepts, which

remain in the mind after having been disconnected from the sensory apparatuses and faculties), although the causation is preparatory, rather than genuine, since ‘Allama Tabataba’i believes that the genuine cause of all varieties of knowledge is the imaginal or intellectual truth, to which the soul is identical (Tabataba’i, n.d.(c), p. 244).

The epistemic form of a particular rose in our soul refers to a particular externally existing rose, rather than any other roses or entities, because that epistemic form was derived from an external entity—the particular rose—and conceptually represents that entity (as we explained how this occurs and knowledge by acquisition is formed). In other words, any concept possesses a peculiar content and reports a feature in its representum or reference. This is the truth feature, which is what determines the particular content of a concept.

As for the universal concept, ‘Allama Tabataba’i’s theories imply that perception of universals (that is, quiddity-based concepts) are always preceded by particular perceptions that come from senses or knowledge by presence (Tabataba’i, 2008, pp. 65-66). If this being *preceded* by a perception is considered a kind of causation (even a preparatory sort of causation), then universal concepts will also be determined in terms of their external causes¹ (albeit by mediation of particular concepts). Universal concepts will also involve a content based on their peculiar truth features. Indeed, such features that are grounded in their abstraction from the represented reality determine their content.

We can even say that any concept—whether particular or universal, and whether quiddity-based or non-quiddity-based—comes to have a specific content given how it was (directly or indirectly)

1. See Tabataba’i, n.d., pp. 240-250.

abstracted from its reference—as discussed in the debate in Islamic philosophy on first intelligibles (*al-ma'qūlāt al-ūlā*) and second intelligibles (*al-ma'qūlāt al-thāniya*),¹ and is thus distinguished from other concepts. The content of a concept is determined by the reality from which it is abstracted. If the relevant epistemic form is a universal quiddity, then it represents a specific (species-based) quiddity, and if it is abstracted from a particular external reality, then it represents an individual quiddity (such a concept is abstracted from a particular human person, which represents the individual quiddity of that person).

An objection that might arise here is that this analysis seems to apply only to quiddity-based concepts (“first intelligibles”), whereas a large portion of our concepts and epistemic forms are logical and philosophical concepts, which are not quiddity-based, and thus we cannot say that they are abstracted from particular concepts, which are in turn grounded in the external reality.

We can reply to this objection by scrutinizing how these concepts represent. These concepts might represent the existence aspect; that is, their instances are matters of the reality of existence and pure externality, or they might represent the nonexistence aspect; that is, they are matters of pure falsity, or they might be logical concepts that characterize our mental concepts. Given the following premise, the problem of intentionality in that case can be solved in a similar vein:

The main features of mental existence consist in (i) their representational character, and (ii) failure to have the expected effects.

1. In the fifth article of *Principles of philosophy and the method of realism*, and in *Nihāyat al-ḥikma*, 'Allama Tabataba'i elaborates upon this; see Tabataba'i, 2008, pp. 79-90; n.d.(c), pp. 256-259.

As we see, there are concepts of second intelligibles that represent and do not have the expected effects of their instances.

Accordingly, we can say that second intelligibles are indeed mental existences. The only remaining question is how these concepts relate to their instances, if they do not correspond to them?

The way in which these concepts represent their references is “ostensive and demonstrative.” That is, the concept of cause, for instance, merely demonstrates a manner of existence and indicates the aspect of “that on which something depends,” without having a share of its reality. These second concepts or intelligibles result from an “intellectual operation” on first intelligibles (the quiddities), displaying the external or mental properties and relations of the first intelligibles, which is why their representation of their references is subsequent to the representation of the quiddities. In other words, these concepts represent the external reality by virtue of quiddities, and the way in which their content is determined is grounded in the manner in which they are abstracted from the reality, since each of these concepts has its own truth aspect or feature (based on its abstraction from the external or mental reality), and it is this truth aspect—that is, the feature in virtue of which the concept is true of its instances—that determines the content of the concept.

Concepts are therefore epistemic forms, which essentially reveal and represent. In this way, our answer to the first question (how is intentionality possible?) will be true of these concepts as well. The only difference is that the way in which their content is determined—that is, their reference to a particular thing—is through an intellectual construction or abstraction.

The upshot is that ‘Allama Tabataba’i’s theory of content and

its determination seems to be a sort of causal theory, since he believes that content is determined in terms of the (external-mental or constructed) reality from which it is abstracted.

So far, we have provided an answer to the problem of intentionality about epistemic forms, but what about beliefs, thoughts, doubts, and in general propositional attitudes that are often deemed intentional in the literature?

Many of these are, in terms of Islamic philosophy, cases of knowledge by acquisition (such as beliefs, doubts, thoughts, and impressions), and the above solutions work in their case. In some of these cases that are combinations of various epistemic forms and judgments (such as judgmental beliefs), the overall proposition has an intentionality toward, and represents, its reference or the external reality, in addition to its individual parts, and the way in which it is determined and represents depends on how its parts are determined and how they represent (for instance, “John has come,” “Jones is standing,” and “the red apple is delicious” have different references because the component parts of each—subjects and predicates—have different representations). The intentionality of propositions is determined by what they represent; that is, each proposition has its own intentionality and reference given what it represents (as elaborated in the case of concepts). In other words, the particular content of each proposition is determined by its constitutive concepts and the specific relation between them.

To recapitulate, all of our knowledge by acquisition about sensory and intellectual concepts as well as quiddities, second intelligibles, and various veridical propositions, have an intentionality in the sense of referring to the external reality and having a representational character.

6. Critical Perspectives on ‘Allama Tabataba’i’s View of Intentionality

6.1. Comparative Insights: Islamic and Western Approaches

While ‘Allama Tabataba’i presents a robust, metaphysically grounded account of intentionality, some might argue that his perspective remains distant from contemporary Western discussions, which often seek empirical and naturalistic explanations. For instance, philosophers like John Searle and Fred Dretske emphasize biological and functional explanations of intentionality, contrasting with Tabataba’i’s reliance on immateriality as the essence of knowledge. Searle’s notion of *biological naturalism* suggests that intentionality is rooted in the physical structures of the brain, making it an emergent property of neural processes. In contrast, Tabataba’i’s theory of mental existence, grounded in metaphysical principles like the primacy of existence (*iṣālat al-wujūd*), appears less accessible to empirical methodologies.

The metaphysical assumptions here may limit the applicability of his theory to modern cognitive science. Critics might argue that the lack of engagement with neurobiological perspectives makes Tabataba’i’s view less relevant to fields like cognitive neuroscience and artificial intelligence, where physicalist frameworks dominate. Additionally, the abstraction-based mechanism of content determination might be seen as insufficiently detailed for explaining the complexities of representational states in the human mind.

6.2. Challenges and Potential Weaknesses

- **Empirical Gaps:** Critics may point out that Tabataba’i’s theory relies heavily on metaphysical premises, such as the immateriality of knowledge, which are difficult to reconcile with contemporary neuroscience and psychology. The dominant paradigm in cognitive science views intentionality

as a computational or neural phenomenon, often modeled through connectionist frameworks and symbolic representations. From this perspective, the idea of an immaterial, intrinsically representational mental existence might be seen as philosophically elegant but scientifically untestable.

- **Linguistic Limitations:** The absence of the term *intentionality* in classical Islamic philosophy might make cross-cultural philosophical dialogue more challenging, even if the concept is implicitly present in discussions of mental existence (*al-wujūd al-dhihnī*). Western scholars unfamiliar with the nuances of Islamic metaphysics might find the parallels with concepts like *intentional inexistence* or *representational content* less intuitive.
- **Causal Theory of Content:** Although Tabataba'i's account bears similarities to causal theories of content found in contemporary analytic philosophy, his rejection of material causes for mental representations diverges significantly from the physicalist assumptions of figures like Dretske. Critics might question whether this dualistic orientation adequately addresses the causal connections between mental states and the external world.

6.3. Interdisciplinary Opportunities

Despite the epistemological and methodological differences, Tabataba'i's emphasis on the mind as inherently representational opens the door for engaging with debates in contemporary philosophy of mind. For instance, his views on the abstraction of universal and particular concepts could offer fresh insights into discussions about conceptual categorization in cognitive science. Cognitive scientists

investigating conceptual structures might find the notion of *knowledge by presence* particularly intriguing as an alternative framework for understanding non-symbolic forms of knowledge, such as intuitive or perceptual understanding.

Furthermore, his theory could resonate with phenomenological approaches that emphasize the intrinsic directedness of consciousness, as seen in the work of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty. Exploring such interdisciplinary connections may help bridge the gap between Islamic philosophy and modern cognitive sciences, enriching the discourse on intentionality beyond the boundaries of Western traditions.

Conclusion

With intentionality as a referring characteristic of our mental states, and with the above account of the problem of mental content and possibility of intentionality, as well as the relation between this concept and that of mental existence or knowledge in Islamic philosophy, we can find a way to formulate and answer its relevant problems in the context of ‘Allama Tabataba’i’s philosophy. In fact, mental existence as the way in which knowledge by acquisition is obtained in our minds has a comparative intentional character, essentially representing external existence. Accordingly, representation or revelation is essential to, and inextricable from, mental existence and epistemic forms. Given the peculiar way in which each piece of knowledge by acquisition is abstracted from its representum, the mental content of our knowledge by acquisition will be determined. In other words, the particular truth aspect in the reference of each piece of knowledge determines the content of the relevant concepts or propositions. On this picture, ‘Allama Tabataba’i’s theory is a version of a causal account, according to which the content of a mental state is explained in terms of external causes that engender those states.

However, on this theory, “intentionality” is a fundamental property that is irreducible to physical properties, based on the immateriality of “knowledge.” On this account, contents of concepts and propositions are determined in terms of how they are abstracted from their truth aspects and references.

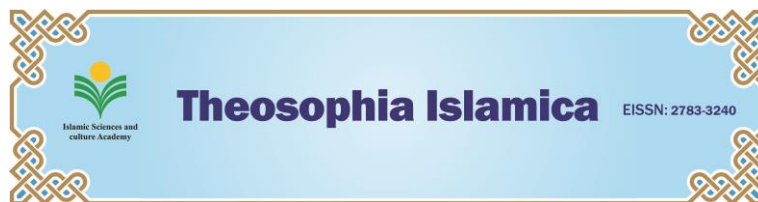
In this critical review, we have examined ‘Allama Tabataba’i’s view of intentionality, which centers on the immaterial, representational nature of knowledge. His philosophical framework offers a profound metaphysical response to the classic problems of intentionality. However, when analyzed through the lens of contemporary philosophy of mind, significant challenges arise, particularly regarding empirical verification and the integration of his ideas with physicalist models. While the metaphysical premises of his theory may limit its engagement with cognitive neuroscience, the conceptual parallels with phenomenological traditions present fertile ground for future dialogue. By engaging with these critiques, scholars can better appreciate the potential and the limitations of Tabataba’i’s contributions to the ongoing discourse on mental content and intentionality.

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A Reflection on Farabi's Practical Philosophy

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Abstract

Farabi's practical philosophy is one of the most significant pillars of his thought, concerning the relationship between knowledge, politics, and human happiness. This article examines Farabi's interpretation of Greek practical philosophy, particularly the ideas of Aristotle and Plato, within the context of Islamic thought. As the founder of Islamic philosophy and the "Second Teacher", Farabi sought to re-read the Greek rational system within the framework of the religious city. By accepting the epistemological and ontological foundations of Greek philosophy, he aimed to create a synthesis between practical philosophy and the Islamic civic system. This research employs a descriptive-analytical method to investigate Farabi's practical philosophy and its relation to the concept of "millah" (religious community). It uses content analysis to examine key concepts such as 'the virtuous city', 'the first ruler', and 'millah' in Farabi's works. The findings indicate that Farabi, by introducing the first

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ruler (the philosopher-prophet), attempts to design a social system where reason and revelation align towards a common goal (the realization of ultimate happiness). In this system, social relations and civic order are organized and depicted based on natural order. Philosophy and 'millah' complement each other as two paths for transmitting rational knowledge and achieving public persuasion within society. The research concludes that Farabi designed an independent system which, although inspired by Greek philosophy, possesses its own distinct logic within his intellectual framework.

Keywords

Farabi, Practical Wisdom, Virtuous City, Happiness.

Introduction

Greek philosophy, alongside its ontology and cosmology which sought to establish a rational system based on human self-reliant perceptions of them, consistently viewed human beings as creatures possessing free will. It strived to determine the path to human happiness and misery. Aristotle provided a rational method for attaining a certain system regarding the world of natural beings. However, concerning a being with free will (human), it's clear that their will cannot be subject to the necessary causal natural order, and rational knowledge about it cannot be attained through experience and induction. Consequently, a rational system cannot be mapped out for it.

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A Reflection on Farabi's Practical Philosophy

What interpretation does Farabi offer of the practical philosophy of Aristotle and Plato? Did his religious perspective manifest itself in the realm of action as well? In other words, despite their differing foundations, Aristotle and Plato believed that human happiness was contingent upon rationality; that is, humans achieve happiness when they possess rational knowledge of beings. Now, the question is: in Farabi's foundational system, how does a human being, in the presence of volitional and non-natural beings, reach that important goal (rational happiness)? Is it possible to provide a system for volitional beings similar to the rational system, so that humanity's path to the ultimate end (rational happiness) can be prepared? Despite the free will of humans in society, how can an individual reach their ultimate end? Plato and Aristotle each provided answers to these questions based on their own ontological and cosmological foundations. What is important for us is to investigate Farabi's answer in his interpretation of Greek practical philosophy within the Islamic world.

The important point is that if someone accepts the fundamentals of Greek thought regarding how humans acquire knowledge and

understanding of the beings in the world, and considers intellectual certainty based on Aristotelian logic as the path to truth, then inevitably, when confronting actions stemming from free human will that are not natural and do not fall under intellectual knowledge, they must choose a path that does not negate the system of theoretical reason concerning the world. Farabi, firstly as an acceptor of the Greek view of self-reliant intellectual thought, and secondly as a thinker nurtured within the framework of religious thought, has actively tried to engage in this area, just as in theoretical philosophy. While maintaining the rational framework of the Greek civil system, he offers an interpretation of it that can be applied to a religious civil system. Similar to the domain of theoretical reason, in the domain of practical reason, he integrates the Greek-rational approach with the fundamental principles of the Islamic world through *ijtihad* (independent reasoning), continuing his tradition of "synthesis" in civil philosophy, just as he did in ontology and epistemology.

Research Aim: Analyzing Farabi's practical philosophy within the context of Islamic thought.

Methodology: Analytical study based on Farabi's works and his reading of the Greek practical philosophical system.

Results:

1. Explaining the role of the First Ruler in the civil system.
2. Clarifying the relationship between philosophy and religion (millahh).
3. Demonstrating Farabi's effort to adapt Greek practical philosophy to the religious order.

Research Innovation: Presenting an analysis of the position of Greek practical philosophy in the formation of Islamic philosophy and its role in the development of Farabi's civil philosophy.

1. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

1.1. Theoretical Framework

This research is founded on the theoretical framework of Farabi's practical and theoretical philosophy, where the civil system and human happiness are examined as the ultimate goals. Within this framework, Farabi strives to present civil philosophy in alignment with a religious structure and a revelatory system. The key principles of this theoretical framework are: Ultimate Happiness and the Rational Order: Human happiness depends on a rational understanding of the order of existence. The First Ruler (philosopher-prophet) is responsible for guiding society towards this happiness. Relationship between Philosophy and Religion (Millahh): Philosophy (certain knowledge) and religion (millahh) (persuasive methods) are two sides of the same coin, both employed to achieve social order and human happiness. Assimilation to God (Tashabbuh bi al-Ilah) and Civil Order: To attain happiness, humans must assimilate to the inherent order of existence. The virtuous city (Madina Fadila) is a reflection of this rational order in the human world. Role of the First Ruler: The First Ruler, who is both a philosopher and a prophet, guides the city through intellectual and revelatory knowledge, and utilizes persuasive tools to educate the people.

2. Rationality and Human Happiness

Farabi identifies the ultimate purpose of human life as reaching perfection and ultimate happiness (سعادۃ قصوی). He asserts that achieving this ultimate happiness is contingent upon rationality (عقلانیت). He believes that just as true knowledge of the world is attained only through certain demonstration, true happiness also depends on true knowledge of the world. In essence, human happiness lies in assimilating to God (تشبه به اله) through intellectual knowledge of the world's existence.

However, two factors complicate the sufficiency of merely theoretical knowledge for human happiness: firstly, that humans possess free will, and their volitions are not part of the natural order of the world; and secondly, that humans are social by nature (مدني بالطبع), and living in a community is essential for them, with their happiness dependent on the happiness of society.

In Farabi's view, just as the natural and ontological order of the world is realized with ultimate coherence and based on causality, human happiness is achieved when the human volitional and civil system is in harmony with the world's ontological and natural order. In other words, ultimate human happiness lies in assimilation to God. If a human gains knowledge of the system of beings in the world, they have assimilated to God in contemplation. And if, in action, they assimilate to the First Existent's action in managing the system of beings in the world, they have become happy.

Farabi explains his framework by stating that the knowledge leading to human happiness (philosophy) encompasses intelligibles known through certain demonstrations. In reality, the path to the highest good and happiness is not possible except through awareness of this knowledge. However, since humans are naturally social beings, achieving happiness is impossible without the cooperation of others. Every individual must inevitably interact with others and seek their perfection within society, in the company of others. Therefore, in addition to its theoretical dimensions, philosophy must also study the rational principles of human actions and virtues (through which happiness and perfection are attained). Yet, the study of voluntary human actions, especially in interaction with other people (in a city or madina), cannot be separated from theoretical knowledge. Instead, it is a branch of and corresponds to it. In both fields of knowledge (theoretical and practical), their goal and purpose are to understand

causes, reasons, and principles. The difference lies in what is being sought: in theoretical knowledge, it's the causes and reasons of existence, while in practical knowledge, it's the causes and reasons of happiness (Al-Farabi, 1991, pp. 46-47).

Farabi posits that the realization of happiness in a city depends on establishing harmony between the natural order and the human social order. Analyzing how this harmony is achieved, he explains: Theoretical science uses the criteria of need and self-sufficiency of beings for their existence to study the world's entities. However, in civil science, the criterion is the service rendered by beings. This means the system studied by civil science begins with a being that is ultimately in service to other beings and holds no authority, then ascends through the higher ranks of existence to a being that possesses unity in all meanings and serves no other being, with all beings under its governance. Farabi believes this same progression exists within the human faculties in the virtuous city (Madina Fadila). In the virtuous city, this progression starts from individuals and groups who hold no authority and ascends to the First Ruler of the virtuous city. This First Ruler, in their capacity as the ultimate governor and one who serves no other being, resembles God and governs the entire city. After the First Ruler, it reaches a being that is spiritual and named the Trustworthy Spirit (روح الامين). Through this spirit, God reveals divine guidance to the First Ruler of the city, and the First Ruler then governs the city by means of this revelation. Therefore, it is truly God who governs the virtuous city, just as He governs the world of beings. God governs the world in one way and the city in another. So, from Farabi's perspective, God is the governor of both the natural world and the human world. He believes there must be proportion and harmony between the two systems (ontological and civil). Just as there is connection and order among the beings in the world, there must be

connection, order, and practical cooperation among the parts of the virtuous city, all functioning as a single entity with a single action for a single purpose. The First Ruler of the city must emulate God's governance of the world to be able to govern the virtuous city in the same way God governs the world through the natural, ontological system. It is clear that the First Ruler can only emulate God if they possess and understand theoretical wisdom, because understanding the natural order of the world has no path other than certain demonstration, and knowledge based on certain demonstration is precisely theoretical philosophy (Al-Farabi, 1995a, pp. 46-47; Al-Farabi, 1995a, pp. 66-68).

3. Characteristics of the First Ruler of the City

In his work *Tahsil al-Sa'adah* (The Attainment of Happiness), Farabi emphasizes the necessity of the First Ruler being a philosopher. He does this by dividing people into two categories: common people (عامي) and elites (خاص), and by analyzing their modes of perception and knowledge. Farabi states that people, in an initial classification, are either common or elite. An elite is someone whose knowledge is based on demonstration (برهان), acquiring knowledge through premises that have reached the highest degree of certainty. This is in contrast to the common people, whose knowledge is based on persuasion (اقناع). The common people are called "common" because their theoretical knowledge relies on what appears to be self-evident (بادي الرأي). That is, the common people's theoretical understanding of the world is the initial, general understanding that comes to their minds without being unique to specific individuals. They have no criterion to prove the truth of their knowledge beyond this initial, shared understanding. Therefore, if someone moves beyond this self-evident understanding and acquires knowledge that is no longer obtained solely through initial, common perception, they are called elite. Farabi believes how

this non-initial understanding is acquired can vary, potentially stemming from induction, sustained effort, experience, and so forth. Farabi emphasizes that the "elite of the elite" (خاص الخواص) is someone whose knowledge is fundamentally *not* based on self-evident understanding at all. In other words, their understanding and knowledge are purely rational (صرفاً عقلی) and based on intellectual demonstrations. Such a person, with such knowledge, must be the First Ruler of the city. The second, third, and subsequent rulers in the human city must be under the leadership of the First Ruler and act towards completing the First Ruler's objectives (Al-Farabi, 1995a, pp. 83-85).

Farabi selects the "elite of the elite" (خاص الخواص) of the city based on the rationality of their knowledge and understanding. He concludes that knowledge itself has various ranks, determined by its degree of certainty, intellectual purity, and minimal reliance on self-evident understanding. The highest rank belongs to knowledge whose results are entirely based on intellectual demonstration, and which allows humans to grasp the intellectual existence of the world's entities (which is the essence of those entities, but their intellectual existence). This knowledge is the chief of all sciences, and other ranks of knowledge possess varying degrees of persuasion, depending on their level of pure certainty and absolute intellectuality.

In Farabi's view, since the ultimate purpose of human life is to achieve ultimate happiness (سعادة قصوى), the best science is the one that leads a person to such happiness. This is the science whose aims and results are entirely based on certain demonstration. Farabi believes that human happiness fundamentally lies in perceiving the intellectual existence of beings. Therefore, the First Ruler of the city is truly the First Ruler only if they possess knowledge of the intellectual existence of beings, are a sage and a philosopher, and all other elites of the city must work towards fulfilling their objectives. He further

states that it's not the case that there's no hierarchy among all those who have reached the level of understanding the intellectual existence of the world's entities. Rather, in his view, if a philosopher, in addition to theoretical knowledge based on certain demonstration, also possesses the ability and power to put theoretical results into practice within the world of human voluntary actions (the city), they are more complete and nobler than someone who lacks such an ability. Such a ruler, who possesses the power and capacity to actualize certain demonstrative knowledge in the city, will guide the people of the city to ultimate happiness. They do this by either teaching demonstrative sciences or by creating persuasive examples with the help of imagination, depending on the intellectual capacity of the citizens. Therefore, in Farabi's exposition, the First Ruler and the Perfect Philosopher are one and the same (Al-Farabi, 1995a, pp. 86-90).

4. Religion (Millahh) and Philosophy in Farabi's Thought

After establishing the ontological unity of the prophet and the philosopher in the role of the First Ruler, Farabi turns to their relationship with the common people. He refers to the First Ruler's actions in fostering belief in rational conclusions among the general populace as "millahh" (often translated as religion or creed). Millahh, in essence, is the process by which the First Ruler educates the city's inhabitants. They employ conventional theoretical and practical opinions to guide individuals in the city toward a specific goal: assenting to rational conclusions. Farabi considers this action synonymous with "religion (din)." His statement is: «هي آراء و أفعال مقدرة بشرائط يرسمها للجمع رئيسهم الأول يلتمس أن ينال باستعمالهم لها غرضا له فيهم أو بهم» "These are opinions and actions determined by conditions, which their First Ruler prescribes for the community, seeking to achieve a specific purpose in or through

their use of these... Millahh and Din are almost synonymous terms" (Al-Farabi, 1991, pp. 43-47).

Farabi explains how the certain conclusions of the First Ruler's knowledge are actualized among the public. He states that the way for these certain results to become real for the public and the people of the city is for the First Ruler to teach them these results. This teaching involves two stages: first, the First Ruler must help the public achieve conceptual understanding, and then guide them to assent to those conclusions. Conceptual understanding can be achieved in two ways: either the public directly comprehends the essence of the concept intellectually, or they form a mental image (an imagined example) that represents that intellectual essence. In the stage of inducing assent, the First Ruler can either provide an intellectual demonstration to create belief in those conclusions in the public's minds, or they can use persuasive methods (through imagination and examples) to generate that assent. Farabi names these two ways of generating assent "philosophy" and "millahh." In his view, if the First Ruler generates assent to rational conclusions among the public by presenting certain demonstration, their work is philosophy. If they bring the public to the stage of assent through persuasion and imagination, their work is millahh (religion). Therefore, it's clear that for Farabi, philosophy and millahh are two distinct paths for generating assent to rational conclusions. The ultimate goal of both is to lead the inhabitants of the city to ultimate happiness.

Farabi considers millahh (religion/creed) to possess both theoretical and practical doctrines, as well as voluntary actions, just like philosophy. He emphasizes that all theoretical and practical doctrines of religion are subordinate to and part of philosophy. He argues that a science (A) becomes a part of another science (B) either when the doctrines of science (A) are without demonstration and are

subsequently proven with demonstration in science (B), or when science (B) encompasses general principles and provides the specific causes for matters in science (A), in which case science (A) would be a part of science (B). Theoretical philosophy provides the demonstrations for the theoretical doctrines of religion. Practical philosophy, on the other hand, provides both the general principles for the practical doctrines of religion and offers the means by which religion, through setting restrictions and conditions for those general principles, determines the conditions and purposes of human actions in society. Therefore, all doctrines of millahh are subordinate to and part of philosophy. Farabi continues by stating that if knowledge of something is demonstrable, then it is included within philosophy. Since philosophy provides the demonstrations for the doctrines of religion (both theoretical and practical), and thus the doctrines of religion become demonstrable, they are consequently incorporated into philosophy (Al-Farabi, 1991, pp. 46-47).

Farabi considers millahh (religion/creed) to be an imitation (محاكي) of philosophy. He sees the work of millahh as creating persuasive assent through the use of examples (مثالات), imagination (تخييل), warning (انذار), and good tidings (تبشير), achieved by establishing laws (نواميس) and other persuasive methods¹.

١. «الملكة محاكية للفلسفة؛ و هما يشتملان على موضوعات بأعيانها و كلياتهما تعطيان المبادي القصوى للموجودات. فإنهما تعطيان علم المبدأ الأول و السبب الأول للموجودات و تعطيان الغاية القصوى التي لأجلها كَوْن الإنسان و هي السعادة القصوى و الغاية القصوى في كل واحد من الموجودات الأخرى؛ و كل ما تعطيه الفلسفة من هذه معقولا أو متصورا؛ فإن الملكة تعطيه متخيلا و كل ما تبرهنه الفلسفة من هذه فإن الملكة تقنع. فإن الفلسفة تعطي ذات المبدأ الأول و ذات المبادي الثواني غير الجسمانية التي هي المبادي القصوى معقولات و الملكة تخيلها بمثالاتها المأخوذة من المبادي الجسمانية و تحاكيها بنظائرها من المبادي المدنية و تحاكي الأفعال الإلهية بأفعال المبادي المدنية و تحاكي أفعال القوى و المبادي الطبيعية بنظائرها من القوى و الملكات و الصناعات الإرادية؛ كما يفعل ذلك أفلاطن في طيمائوس؛ و تحاكي المعقولات منها بنظائرها من المحسوسات مثل من حاكي المادة بالهاوية/ أو الظلمة، أو الماء و العدم بالظلمة؛ و تحاكي أصناف الصناعات القصوى، التي

Therefore, in Farabi's view, philosophy and millahh (religion) are not two separate realities. Instead, they represent the inner and outer dimensions, or, more precisely, the rational and imaginative methods for understanding the intellectual truth of the world's existents. They both strive to apply the world's order to human actions within the city and to create a civil system that conforms to the ontological order, all aimed at achieving ultimate happiness. The First Ruler, Imam, philosopher, and prophet are all one and the same in

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هي غايات أفعال الفضائل الإنسانية، بنظائرها من الخيرات التي يظن أنها هي الغايات؛ و تحاكي السعادات، التي (هي) في الحقيقة سعادات، والتي يظن أنها سعادات؛ و تحاكي مراتب الموجود في الوجود بنظائرها من المراتب المكانية و المراتب الزمانية و تتحرى أن تقرب الحاكية لها من ذواتها. (الفارابي ١٩٩٥ الف، صص ٨٩-٩٠)

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A Reflection on Farabi's Practical Philosophy

"For millah (religion) imitates philosophy; and they both encompass the very same subjects and both provide the ultimate principles of existents. They both provide knowledge of the First Principle and the First Cause of existents, and they both provide the ultimate end for which humanity was created, which is ultimate happiness, and the ultimate end for each of the other existents. **Whatever philosophy provides of these, be it intelligible or conceived, millah provides as imagined.** And whatever philosophy demonstrates of these, millah persuades.

For philosophy provides the essence of the First Principle and the essence of the incorporeal secondary principles, which are the ultimate principles, as intelligibles. Millah, however, imagines them through examples taken from corporeal principles and imitates them with analogues from civic principles. It imitates divine actions with the actions of civic principles and imitates the actions of natural powers and principles with analogues from voluntary powers, virtues, and arts – just as Plato does in *Timaeus*.

It also imitates the intelligibles among them with analogues from sensibles, like someone who imitates matter with the abyss or darkness, or water, and non-existence with darkness. And it imitates the highest kinds of arts, which are the ends of virtuous human actions, with analogues from goods that are thought to be the ends. It imitates the happinesses that are truly happinesses with those that are thought to be happinesses. And it imitates the ranks of being in existence with their analogues from spatial and temporal ranks, striving to bring the imitation closer to their essences." (Al-Farabi, 1995a, pp. 89-90).

their essence, even though multiple names are applied to them (Al-Farabi, 1995a, 92).

Based on this unifying perspective on the truth of philosophy, on the one hand, and his explanation of the inner and outer relationship between philosophy and religion, on the other, Farabi attributes the opposition of some religious scholars to philosophy, or some philosophers to religious teachings, to their failure to grasp the true essence of philosophy and religion. He considers it essential for true philosophers to enlighten those who oppose them (Al-Farabi, 1986, p. 155).

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Farabi also highlights that the precedence of philosophy over religion (millahh) is temporal, not hierarchical. Based on his interpretation of how human knowledge systems develop within a society, he believes that in any human community, given the initial, easy, simple, and general understanding of common perception, the first art form to emerge is one based on words, reflecting immediate, sensory meanings accessible to people. He calls this rhetoric. In subsequent stages, humans advance to meanings without sensory referents and begin to manipulate sensory meanings through imagination, which marks the stage of poetry. From there, they progress to the system of dialectical argumentation and then to the stage of certain demonstration. Therefore, Farabi argues that the precedence of philosophy over millahh is a precedence in temporal appearance, not in rank. The philosopher and First Ruler, having attained the stage of understanding intellectual meanings, then create millahh by using persuasive methods to generate assent in the minds of the public. However, Farabi clarifies which, philosophy or the philosopher, necessarily precedes millahh: Philosophy, as the generation of assent in the minds of the public through certain intellectual demonstration, does not necessarily have temporal precedence over millahh. It is possible for it to emerge in a city *after*

millahh (like in the Islamic world, where philosophy developed after religion). Instead, what necessarily precedes millahh is the First Ruler's attainment of the stage of intellectual understanding of existents *before* the establishment and promulgation of millahh. In other words, Farabi believes that for any philosopher and First Ruler to be able to establish and promulgate millahh (as previously explained), they must first have grasped the intellectual existence of the world's beings and attained theoretical knowledge. Only then does the turn come for millahh. But philosophy itself does not necessarily have temporal precedence over millahh and can follow it. This is because philosophy consists of generating assent to the First Ruler's certain conclusions by providing certain intellectual demonstration (Al-Farabi, 1986, pp. 131-134; Al-Farabi, 1995a, p. 90).

5. Outcomes of Farabi's Civil Philosophy

Farabi's thought leads to significant conclusions regarding the integration of philosophy and religion. On one hand, he states that the elite of the elite in the city understands the intellectual existence of beings, is a philosopher, is the First Ruler, and possesses a millahh (striving to achieve public assent to those intellectual conclusions through examples and persuasion). On the other hand, he refers to Plato and Aristotle as philosophers, and even uses Plato's expressions in his *Laws* and other works as examples of "millahh" (Al-Farabi, 1995a, p. 90). This clearly indicates that Farabi fundamentally views them as religious and Islamic in their essence. This is not a result of an eclectic view of Greek thought and religion. Instead, it stems from Farabi's alignment with the philosophical thought of Plato and Aristotle, a product of his particular perspective on wisdom and millahh. It's not merely influenced by works like the *Theology of Aristotle* (a Neoplatonic text misattributed to Aristotle). Rather, it's Farabi's

adoption of a specific philosophical outlook that necessitates the *Theology* being attributed to Aristotle, even if historically inaccurate. For Farabi, because Aristotle is a philosopher within his philosophical system, the *Theology* must be his work (Davari Ardakani, 2033, p. 11).

Farabi's approach represents the founding and revival of philosophical thought in the Islamic world. As he himself stated, he learned this from the founding masters of the science while studying their philosophy. As he explains in *Kitāb al-Jam' bayna Ra'yay al-Ḥakimayn* (On the Harmony of the Views of the Two Sages) concerning the problem of the eternity or createdness of the world: "A foundation based on a particular method and on utmost correctness and solidity, in whose light religious and divine discourse are clarified" (Al-Farabi, 1984b, p. 103).

In Farabi's view, millahh (religion/creed) fundamentally derives its meaning within the context of the city (madina). If there were no city (i.e., if humans were not social by nature), millahh would have no subject matter. To put it another way: if the domain of human actions lies outside the natural order of the world, and humans are social by nature, and social organization is integral to human ultimate happiness, and happiness depends on understanding the intellectual existence of beings, and the First Ruler must be a philosopher to align the system of human actions in the city with the system of beings in the world, then millahh serves as a tool to generate assent to rational conclusions among the common people through persuasive means. It's evident that if we remove human sociality from the premises of this argument, there would be no basis or need for the existence of millahh. This clearly demonstrates the primacy of theoretical reason and the attainment of the intellectual truth of the world's beings in Farabi's thought, in contrast to the subordinate nature of practical reason, civil philosophy, and consequently, millahh.

6. Millahh (in both its Theoretical and Practical Doctrines) Conforms to the Natural order; It is not Itself a Part of the Intellectual order of the World

In Farabi's terminology, "millahh" (religion/creed) is not considered a separate mode of thought from rational thought. Firstly, because humans are rational (their rationality being based on certain demonstration), they view all existing levels of the world and the city as rational. Secondly, because "millahh" in Farabi's philosophy is an integral part of civil philosophy, there's no ground for separation between them that would lead to Farabi's efforts being labeled as eclecticism or a religious interpretation of philosophy. In his explanation, just as the existence of the First Existent necessitates the emanation of existence to subsequent levels of the chain of beings, so too does the existence of the First Existent necessitate the governance of the virtuous city through revelation via the First Ruler. Therefore, the duality of "millahh" and "philosophy" is baseless, as no science has a duality with its own part. In other words, no science has a duality with another science upon which it depends for demonstration and the provision of general principles. To put it differently, no inner reality has an essential duality with its outward manifestation. This perspective on religion and philosophy is what positions Farabi as the founder of Islamic philosophy and the Second Teacher.

Farabi's unique interpretation of practical philosophy raises a crucial question: Does Farabi's effort to reconcile the differences between Plato and Aristotle, and to establish a perennial philosophy, directly relate to his aim of creating a unified relationship between philosophy and religion? In other words, could Farabi have achieved his desired outcome for the relationship between religion and philosophy without first reconciling the differences between Plato and Aristotle? It seems, as Dr. Davari Ardakani suggests (Davari Ardakani,

2003, p. 133), that the disagreement and fragmentation of philosophical opinions would obstruct any attempt to establish a wisdom unified with religion. If Farabi, on the one hand, considered the conclusions of Plato's and Aristotle's philosophies to be demonstrative and certain, then acknowledging their divergent views (despite their certainty and their revered status as founders of this science) would imply a lack of unity in the conclusions of intellectual syllogisms. This, in turn, would mean that intellectual conclusions lead to a multiplicity of intellectual existences for beings, ultimately resulting in the discrediting of intellect, demonstration, and certainty itself. Furthermore, the reduction and interpretation of religious thought into philosophical thought, amidst the differing views of philosophers, would not have been persuasive, especially to religious scholars.

Was the establishment of civil philosophy essential and necessary for the founding of Islamic philosophy, or did Farabi merely present this philosophy to broaden the scope of philosophical subjects? And why did this approach not appear in his successors? It seems this issue can be evaluated from several angles. One perspective is that although Farabi, by reducing "Millahh" (religious community) to the actions of the First Leader and presenting his persuasive methods for generating conviction in rational conclusions among the public, considered the alignment of the civil system with the cosmic system to be the First Leader's duty, it must be noted that Farabi, as a thinker, did not view the establishment of civil philosophy instrumentally. That is, Farabi's goal in establishing civil philosophy was not merely to pave the way for Islamic philosophy. Instead, it was a necessary consequence of adopting Greek philosophical principles regarding the truth of human existence (being inherently rational and naturally social) to consider the city-state (madina) as the means to achieve ultimate happiness. Another aspect of Farabi's approach is that

while preserving the philosophical dimension of his civil discussions, it's undeniable that the establishment of civil philosophy, given the social conditions of Farabi's religious era and the prominence of beliefs, especially Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), in the Islamic world, facilitated the establishment and survival of philosophy in general. His successors also diligently pursued the path he had prepared, expanding Islamic philosophy. In other words, considering that the position of do's and don'ts (ethics and Fiqh) in Islam has been central and fundamental from its very beginning, and alongside faith in revealed teachings, belief and action have always been presented as two pillars for a believer to attain happiness, with sacred texts, the Prophet's (PBUH) conduct, and the actions of religious scholars fully supporting this claim, Farabi, as the founder of Islamic philosophy, had to provide a fundamental role for the do's and don'ts of religion within his intellectual system.

Based on this, after solidifying the singular embodiment of the city's leader (the perfect philosopher, law-giver, prophet, and Imam in society) by utilizing the First Leader's imaginative faculty to offer persuasive methods for the public, he established the place of Kalam (Islamic theology). On the other hand, by raising the issue of the successor to the First Leader and the derivation and inference of the First Leader's rulings in the absence of the successor's access to the intellectual existence of beings in the world, he established the place of Fiqh within his intellectual system. Therefore, not only did Farabi have to emphasize civil philosophy as a fundamental pillar of Islamic philosophy for its establishment and acceptance in Islamic society, but also the determination of the relationship between practical matters (do's and don'ts) and religion, and their entrustment to religion, guaranteed the survival and growth of philosophy in the Islamic world. Just as Farabi laid the foundation of this system, his successors

in Islamic philosophy entrusted practical matters to legal and ethical scholars, thereby endorsing Farabi's path. Consequently, the position that theoretical philosophical thought holds in the Islamic world, in addition to relying on certain proofs and the support of Islamic sacred texts for rational thought (according to Farabi's interpretation), has been significantly aided by the establishment of civil philosophy and the entrustment of practical aspects to religion.

Another point is that Farabi, first by separating human voluntary actions from the natural order of the world, and second by explaining the identity of "Millahh" (religious community) within the city-state (through the First Leader's creation of persuasive methods under various headings of "do's and don'ts," etc.), introduced the very important discussion of the conventional (i'tibari) nature of do's and don'ts in Islamic philosophy. This discussion has been more or less present in the language of Islamic philosophers under the topic of *ara' mahmouda* (praised opinions) and has recently flourished with a specific interpretation by the late Muhaqqiq Isfahani and Allamah Tabataba'i. The implication of Farabi's theory in explaining the identity of the *Millahh* was the exemplary creation and convention (ja'l va i'tibar), along with warning, encouragement, and other persuasive methods, to achieve conviction in rational conclusions among the public. This means that the basis of rulings related to the sphere of human actions, given that the natural laws of the world do not operate within it, is founded on the First Leader's creation and convention of laws. This is done with the aim of aligning the system of human action with the natural system to achieve ultimate happiness. The creation and convention by the Law-Giver (Shari'), considering that it is in line with the adaptation of the civil system to the natural system, undoubtedly has a specific meaning of conventionality; it is established with a view to the cosmic order and

is not merely a rational convention in the sense of a commitment or contract. Of course, this is a brief reference to the important discussion of the philosophical relationship between theory and practice from Farabi's perspective, which is considered one of the significant outcomes of Farabi's project in founding Islamic philosophy.

A question that seems to arise concerning the First Leader and Farabi's emphasis on his prior intellectual apprehension compared to the "Millahh" (religious community) and philosophy is: Did the philosopher and First Leader himself reach the stage of intellectual apprehension of beings through certain demonstration (burhan yaqini)? How is the prophet's and Imam's apprehension of the intelligible order of beings in the world (which, according to Farabi's explanations in *Kitab al-Huruf*, can precede the stages of philosophy and the "Millahh") achieved without being taught rational demonstrations by another philosopher? It seems that Farabi's view regarding assimilation to the Active Intellect for apprehending the intelligible existence of beings, especially for a First Leader who has not been educated by another philosopher, has provided sufficient grounds for the divisions of discursive wisdom (hikmah bahthi) and intuitive-illuminative wisdom (hikmah kashfi-ishraqi) in Farabi's successors.

Conclusion

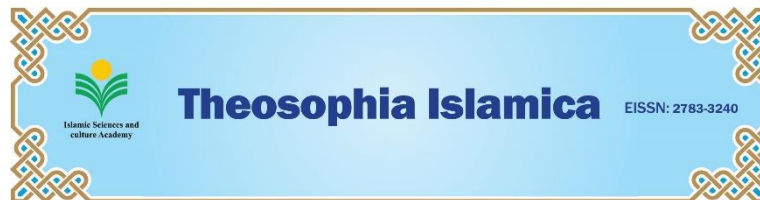
Farabi, much like he offered a unique interpretation of Greek rationalism within his own epistemology and cosmology in theoretical philosophy – thereby paving the way for concepts like a Creator God – also presented a distinct civil philosophy. In this domain, he identified intellectual knowledge as the true "happiness" of humanity. He introduced the Prophet as the philosopher who understands the

world's natural order. This Prophet, in order to regulate human relationships and guide individuals toward that ultimate happiness, strives to convince the general populace of his intellectual findings. He achieves this through methods of analogy, similitude, encouragement, warning, and the establishment of "do's and don'ts." In other words, from Farabi's perspective, the formation of a city (madina) based on rationality is the sole path to happiness. He entrusts its establishment to a perfect philosopher who, in addition to theoretical perfection in intellectual knowledge of the world, possesses the ability to prepare non-philosophers to accept theoretical intellectual conclusions, leading them to happiness through persuasion. Farabi believes that a philosopher with such characteristics is the "Prophet," who serves as the First Leader of the city. His method for achieving his goal is the "Millahh" (religious community) or "religion." Farabi views the Prophet as someone who is knowledgeable about the natural order of beings in the world and has assimilated with the Divine. He has received certain intellectual knowledge from the Giver of Forms (Active Intellect) and has united with it. Subsequently, to align the voluntary system of humans with the intelligible system of natural beings, he has resorted to persuasive methods, creating analogies and intelligible-to-sensible similitudes, thereby guiding individual and social human voluntary systems towards ultimate intellectual happiness. In essence, by founding civil philosophy and offering a specific interpretation of Greek practical philosophy, Farabi sought to align the civil order with the cosmic order. He believed that human happiness lies not only in theoretical knowledge but also in the realization of a social order consistent with the divine order. Therefore, the First Leader, who is both a philosopher and a prophet, is tasked with guiding society toward happiness by utilizing intellectual demonstration and persuasive methods (the "Millahh"). This article demonstrates how Farabi employed Greek philosophy to

legitimize Islamic philosophy and how he elucidated the concept of "Millahh" as an intermediary between philosophy and society. Ultimately, Farabi's view on practical philosophy reflects his endeavor to preserve the Greek rational system within the framework of Islamic thought. By presenting an image of the First Leader as both a philosopher and a prophet, he sees philosophy and religion as working towards a common goal, believing that the alignment of the social system with the natural system is essential for the realization of ultimate human happiness.

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The Quran's Merciful Perspective on Women in the Three Dimensions of Individual, Familial, and Social Life



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Abstract

This article aims to demonstrate the dominance and prevalence of mercy and compassion over all principles and rulings related to women in the Holy Qur'an. The Qur'anic view of women has always been subject to criticism and evaluation. Numerous verses in the Qur'an address the status of women in Islam. An overall review of these verses shows that mercy and compassion are two overarching principles that permeate all these principles and rulings. This article examines the supremacy of the

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principle of mercy in the Qur'anic perspective on women. This examination is conducted across three dimensions of a woman's life: the individual, familial, and social dimensions. In the individual dimension, the Qur'anic merciful view of women is manifested in the following principles: 1- Equality of men and women in the essence and substance of creation. 2- Shared participation of both genders in the balance of creation, a common human identity, shared servitude as the purpose of creation, similarity in the Divine nature, and shared fundamental human dignity with its various aspects and forms. 3- The value of women's deeds in the Qur'an and their equal status in attaining spiritual ranks are other facets of the Qur'anic merciful view regarding the individual dimension of a woman's personality. In familial roles, the dominance of mercy manifests itself in a different, and perhaps more explicit, way. Examples of the Qur'anic merciful view of women in the familial dimension include: The principle of living together amicably. The introduction of affection and mercy as the fundamental pillars of the family. Emphasis on kindness and the invitation to good even in the most critical of marital relationships. The supremacy of mercy in the social sphere can be clearly seen in the presentation of women as role models for the community of believers. This is demonstrated by women such as Asiya, the wife of Pharaoh, who is introduced as an example of faith, resistance against tyranny, and steadfastness against oppression, and Mary, who is introduced as a model of chastity, purity, and innocence. The totality of these cases indicates that the overall and overarching view of the Qur'an regarding women is a perspective founded on mercy, and all other specific issues must be explained and interpreted in light of this perspective.

Keywords

Status of Women in the Quran, Principle of Mercy (Raḥmah), Mu'āsharah Bi-l-ma'rūf (Kind Companionship), Affection (Mawaddah), and Beneficence (Iḥsān).

Introduction

The concept of Mercy (Raḥmah) in the Qur'an, especially from the perspective of its connection to women, is a multifaceted and deeply rooted concept in Islamic teachings. Mercy or "Al-Raḥmān" (The Most Merciful) is a central theme in Islam that influences interpretations of gender roles and relationships. The Qur'an emphasizes mercy, introducing it as a Divine attribute and a guiding principle for human interactions, including those related to women. This perspective is reflected in both traditional and contemporary interpretations of the Qur'an, and it emphasizes the importance of compassion and mutual understanding in gender dynamics.

Mercy is a foundational and constitutive aspect of Islam that underscores all the teachings and practices of the religion. The concept of Raḥmah possesses key characteristics that define its scope and application within Islamic teachings, especially concerning women: Trans-temporal and Trans-spatial: This concept is not limited to specific historical or social contexts; rather, it is a universal principle that serves as a guide for understanding the Qur'an and the Sunnah (the Prophet's tradition/life). Comprehensiveness (Inclusiveness): The concept of mercy extends to all aspects of life. Emphasis on the Status of Women: This principle also includes the treatment and roles of women, emphasizing compassion, pity/tenderness, and benevolence in interactions related to them

Traditional interpretations of the Qur'an have often been criticized for their patriarchal biases. In contrast, contemporary Muslim feminist interpreters argue for the necessity of achieving a more egalitarian understanding of the Qur'an. These interpreters emphasize that the intrinsic message of the Qur'an, especially the concept of Mercy and equality, must be the main guide in interpreting the status of women.

The Qur'an's teachings on marital relationships highlight the importance of affection and mercy, with women playing a crucial role in providing emotional support and tenderness within the family structure. Scholars interpret the Qur'an's message of mercy as encompassing all creation, advocating for a broad and inclusive understanding that transcends narrow interpretations. "Konsep dan makna islam rahmat .

In marital contexts, the Qur'an encourages mutual respect and understanding, with mercy being a key element in fostering harmonious relationships. While mercy is a central theme in the Qur'an, interpretations of its application to women's roles can vary. Traditional views have often been challenged by modern scholars seeking to align Islamic teachings with contemporary understandings of gender equality. This ongoing dialogue reflects the dynamic nature of Qur'anic interpretation and the enduring relevance of mercy as a guiding principle.

This article investigates the diverse dimensions of the Qur'anic perspective on women, grounded in the concept of *Rahmah* (divine mercy), across three distinct spheres: individual, familial, and social. It demonstrates the pervasive influence of this merciful perspective on all rules, principles, and injunctions governing various aspects of women's lives. Furthermore, the study elucidates the foundational principles governing the lives of both genders, all of which are derived and understood through the exegesis of the Holy Qur'an.

Furthermore, these established rules and principles address the fundamental question of whether Islam's perspective on the two genders is one of absolute equality or nuanced differentiation. It explores whether justice is solely defined by strict parity and, if not, how the inherent differences between the sexes should be addressed.

The significance and necessity of this research are further underscored by the fact that the majority of critiques leveled against Islamic laws concerning women are often framed within the discourse of violence. Islamic laws pertaining to women are frequently condemned as being inherently violent. This accusation is made despite the fact that the rules and principles articulated by the Holy Qur'an regarding women and the various facets of their lives are imbued with the qualities of mercy (*Rahmah*) and compassion (*Rahmaniyyat*). The perception of violence attributed to certain of these injunctions stems from a fragmented and isolated interpretation, neglecting the overarching principles governing these laws. Therefore, it is essential to consider and understand Islamic injunctions concerning women within the framework of these comprehensive rules and principles. Conversely, many engagements addressing these critiques of Islamic laws have focused on defending and explaining the specific points of contention on a case-by-case basis. This approach often leads to a defensive and reactive discourse surrounding the topic of women's status in Islam. Explaining and elucidating Islam's *Rahmani* (merciful) perspective on women offers a different paradigm for thinkers and audiences engaging with Islamic thought. This alternative framework allows for a more impartial and equitable assessment of the perspective on women in Islam and the Holy Qur'an.

1. Conceptualization of *Rahmah* :*Rahmah* in Lexicography

The term "Rahmah" is derived from the root "r-ḥ-m" and encompasses various meanings such as kindness, compassion, tenderness, and empathy, which lead to benevolence and bestowal upon others. Two principal meanings inherent within it are, specifically, tenderness of heart and beneficence (al-Rāzī, 2002, vol. 2, p. 498). Given that attributing "tenderness" to God is not appropriate, it has been stated that Rahmah

from God signifies bestowment and grace. That is, divine Rahmah denotes bestowal and favor, while human Rahmah implies tenderness and affection. Another meaning employed for it is kindness. "Rahmah" signifies the susceptibility of the heart, particularly in the face of harm and deficiencies of others. This feeling motivates an individual to undertake compensatory action. However, when this term is attributed to God, it does not signify a susceptibility of the heart, but rather the effect of that susceptibility. In this sense, when we say that God is Rahman (Most Gracious) or Rahim (Most Merciful), it means that He is the one who compensates for the needs and deficiencies of humankind.

1-1. *Rahmah* in the Terminology of Islamic Scholars

The term "Rahmah" is used in 500 verses of the Holy Qur'an; as God states: "My mercy encompasses all things" and "Our Lord, you have encompassed all things in mercy" (Qur'an, 7:156). This demonstrates the vastness of divine mercy. Scholars and scientists have not usually provided a separate definition for "Rahmah." Jurjānī defined Rahmah as the will to deliver good. 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī defined it as the effusion of blessings and offering everything to its deserved felicity (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1995, vol. 7, p. 27).

"In the Almighty God, there is mercy, not riqqat al-qalb (tenderness of heart), which is a specific conscious effect in humans that causes a benevolent person to treat the object of mercy with goodness and love. This [tenderness of heart] is a physical and material quality from which the Almighty God is transcendent—exalted is God far above that. But mercy in the Almighty God means the emanation (bestowal) of good upon one who deserves good, and to the extent of their desert. And for this reason, it often happens that we perceive punishment as God's mercy and, conversely, His mercy as punishment." (Tabataba'i, 1984, Vol. 5, p. 301).

2. Qur'an's *Rahmani* Perspective on Women in the Individual Sphere

2-1. The Unity of Man and Woman in Creation

The Holy Qur'an, adopting a perspective rooted in Divine Mercy towards both men and women, emphasizes their unity in creation and expresses this subject using influential and respectful language. In contrast to some religions that have presented differences in the creation of man and woman, the Qur'an maintains that both genders were created from a single nature (or essence) and from a single soul. This fundamental unity negates any inherent ontological superiority of one gender over the other, establishing a basis for equality in human dignity and origin.

One of the prominent verses in this regard is verse 1 of Surah An-Nisa (4), which states: "O mankind, fear your Lord who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women." (An-Nisa, 4: 1):

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً.

This verse clearly emphasizes the identical nature of women and men and demonstrates the Qur'an's indifference towards derogatory views on the creation of women. In fact, this uniform view of human creation not only fosters respect for women but also emphasizes shared human foundations.

"[He] created you from one soul; then made from it its mate..."
(Az-Zumar , 39:6) He created you from one soul and from that one soul made its mate.

خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا ...

"It is He who created you from one soul and made from it its mate that he might dwell in security with her..." (Al-A'raf, 7: 189)

And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy.

2-2. Key Points from the Qur'anic Verses Regarding the Creation of Women and Men

The Oneness of the Material and Type of Creation: The Qur'an emphasizes that women and men were created from a single soul and that neither has inherent superiority over the other. This unity in creation forms the basis of human equality in the Qur'an's view. All human beings, both men and women, were created from one soul, and neither is superior to the other. There is no difference in the initial creation of women and men, and only acquired qualities and morals give them distinction.

Negation of Degrading Differences: The Qur'an explicitly emphasizes the negation of unfair views regarding the creation of women. These verses, contrary to theories such as the creation of woman from man's left rib, are not considered correct from the Qur'anic perspective.

The Creation of Woman from the Same Human Substance, Not from an Inferior Material: The Qur'an believes that woman was created from the same substance from which man was created. This point is mentioned in numerous verses, which indicates respect for the status and dignity of women.

A Shared Purpose of Creation: The ultimate purpose of the creation of women and men is to attain the divine station through servitude and obedience to God. This theme is evident in various verses that speak of the creation of humankind.

3. Emphasis on Affection and Mercy in Marital Relationships

3-1. Unity of Man and Woman in Creation: View of Ayatollah Javadi Amoli

The contemporary Muslim exegete, Ayatollah Javadi Amoli, in his commentary on a verse from Surah An-Nisa (The Women), addresses various views regarding the nature and origin of woman's creation. He specifically confronts perspectives that: 1- Consider a woman's nature to be different from a man's. 2- Suggest a woman was created from a part of a man's body. 3- Deem woman's creation to be secondary or derivative. In rejecting these views, he emphasizes that perspectives holding the creation of men and women to be from two independent essences (or substances) lack Qur'anic evidence. Ayatollah Javadi Amoli asserts that only hypotheses related to the single essence (or substance) of man and woman are considered valid (Javadi Amoli, 2007a, Vol. 5, p. 313). This position aligns with the Qur'anic emphasis on both genders being created from a single soul.

The eminent contemporary exegete, 'Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, in his commentary on this verse, also emphasizes the axis of humanity and the shared nature of woman and man, stating that neither of the two has superiority over the other, and both should act according to human principles and in the light of *taqwā* (God-consciousness) (Tabataba'i, 1995, vol. 2, p. 406). Allamah Tabataba'i, in his exegesis of the verse referring to the "Single Soul" (*Nafs Wahidah*), states that the verse refers to Adam and Eve as the parents of humankind, emphasizing that all human beings branched from a single root. He explicitly declares that no difference exists in the status of humanity between man and woman:

“In this verse, [God] intends to invite people to piety (*taqwa*/God-consciousness) and fear of their Lord; people who are united in the original human nature and the reality of being human, and in this

reality, there is no difference between their women and men, their youth and elders, their weak and strong. [God] invites people to perceive this equality regarding themselves so that men do not oppress women, and elders do not tyrannize the youth.” (Tabataba’i, 1995, Vol. 2, p. 404).

3-2. Shared Substance of Creation

According to the verses of the Qur'an, human beings, both women and men, are created from a single primordial substance, namely clay and mud. Verses such as “Indeed, I am going to create a human being from clay” «أني خالق بشرا من طين» (Surah S, (38:71)) and “the best of creators” «احسن الخالقين» (Al momenin(Believers): 23:14) clearly indicate that God created both from the same substance, introducing them as a “source of goodness and blessing.” This oneness of the primordial substance of creation reinforces equality and avoids discrimination and injustice, addressing human relationships based on respect and affection.

Furthermore, the Holy Qur'an has referred to “water” (mā') and “sperm-drop” (nuṭfah) as the primary substance of human creation. Terms such as "mā' mahīn" (despised water) «أَلَمْ نَخْلُقْكُمْ مِنْ مَّاءٍ مَهِينٍ» (Messages(Morsalat) 77: 20), "mā' dāfiq" (gushing fluid) «خُلِقَ مِنْ مَّاءٍ دَافِقٍ» (Tariq: 6), and "nuṭfah amshāj" (mingled sperm-drop) «إِنَّا خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ أَمْشَاجٍ نَبْتَلِيهِ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ سَمِيعًا بَصِيرًا» (Human: 2) are examples of these expressions that refer to the formation of human beings. In various verses, the Qur'an has used the terms “water”, “sperm-drop” , "mā' mahīn" , "mā' dāfiq" , and "nuṭfah amshāj" , «ماء مهين» ، «ماء دافق» و «نطفه امشاج» . Additionally, it uses the term "maniyy" (semen), as stated in the verse: “Was he not a sperm-drop from emitted semen?” «أَلَمْ يَكُ نُطْفَةً مِنْ مَنِيٍّ يُمْنَى» (Qiyameh: 37.) However, in some verses, a sequence is observed, as God states: “It is He who created you from dust and then

from a sperm-drop and then from a clinging clot” هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ «تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ عَلَقَةٍ» (Momin: 67). This statement clearly shows that all human beings are formed from a common sperm-drop.

Shaykh Tusi (Shaykh al-Ta'ifa), in his exegesis, refers to the initial creation of humanity from clay and the subsequent creation of his progeny from semen. He explains that the term "sulālah" (essence or extract) refers to the drops of fluid that originated from that initial semen and formed Adam's descendants (Tusi, n.d., Vol. 8, p. 297). Allamah Tabataba'i also emphasizes that the entire human race originated from Adam and his wife, and that there is no difference in the primordial essence of creation between men and women. Both exegetes reinforce the Qur'anic principle that humanity derives from a unified source, affirming the essential equality and shared nature of men and women at the moment of creation.

The contemporary Muslim exegete, Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi, in his commentary, refers to two main perspectives on the origin of human creation: Some believe the creation of the first human (Prophet Adam, peace be upon him) was from "clay" or a mixture of water and earth. Another group holds that the "water" mentioned in the Qur'an refers to the seminal fluid from which subsequent generations of humans come into being. He states that these two views are, in a sense, complementary, as both emphasize the role of water in creation (whether as a combination of earth and water for the primordial creation, or as seminal fluid for later generations). He also points out that the male sperm (spermatozoa) and the female egg play a vital role in the formation of the first living cell of a human being, which underscores the importance of water (seminal fluid) and the shared origin of creation (Makarem Shirazi et al., 1991, Vol. 15, p. 27).

‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī, in his interpretation of the verses concerning the stages of human creation, points out that the creation

of Adam was from clay, and his progeny is from the sperm-drop. He believes that the comprehensiveness of the verses includes Adam and all his descendants, and this indicates the close connection between human beings in creation and nature (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1995, vol. 15, p. 24).

Therefore, Muslim exegetes emphasize the principle that the primordial substance of human creation is one. This matter clearly emphasizes equality in the creation of women and men, because in this regard, there is no statement that considers the sperm-drop or the creation of women to be different. From the perspective of the Holy Qur'an and the statements of exegetes, it can be concluded that God, in His wisdom and mercy, created the progeny of Adam from a single substance, and this indicates the human equality of women and men. Therefore, one must realize this truth: that the human status of each individual should be measured based on moral and human values, and not based on gender.

3-3. Balance and Proportion in Human Creation

The Holy Qur'an presents the concept of balance and proportion (taswiyah) as one of the main characteristics of human creation, including women. This concept shows that God, in the creation of human beings, both male and female, has acted with precision and harmony, creating each in a balanced and appropriate manner. In the verses "then He formed [him] and proportioned [him]" «ثُمَّ خَلَقْنَا النَّطْفَةَ عَلَقَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْعَلَقَةَ مُضْغَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْمُضْغَةَ عِظَامًا فَكَسَوْنَا الْعِظَامَ لَحْمًا ثُمَّ» (The Believers: 14). and "Who created and proportioned" «الَّذِي خَلَقَ فَسَوَّى» (Supreme: 2). emphasis is placed on the fact that God created man and perfected him. "Sawwā" (He proportioned) means establishing balance in the structure and form of man; in the sense that the various parts of the human body are placed in their best possible positions.

Allamah Tabataba'i explains that the stability and consistency in creation means that every single member of the body of both man and woman has been created in a suitable and commensurate manner (in proportion to its purpose). This responsibility and precision in creation demonstrates the value and coherence of both genders within the created order. In addition, Shaykh Tabarsi (Fadl ibn Hasan al-Tabrisi) points to further dimensions of the concept of "Taswiyah" (giving proportion). He states that the phrase "fa-sawwā" (then He proportioned/balanced) indicates the creation of equilibrium among the different parts of the human body, such as the hands, eyes, and feet, signifying a state of completeness and proper arrangement (Tabarsi, 1993, Vol. 10, p. 720).

4. Proportion and Order in Creation: View of Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi

Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi, by extending the concept of "Taswiyah" (proportion/balance) to the entire cosmic order, especially within the structures of creation, explains that this concept goes beyond the balance of bodily parts. It encompasses the precise order and system in the creation of all beings, particularly human beings.

He states that this comprehensive order can include: 1- The laws governing the cosmos (celestial mechanics). 2- The minute and precise details in human creation, such as the unique fingerprint, which signifies Divine perfection and wisdom in establishing proportion. This interpretation posits Taswiyah as a universal cosmic principle that guarantees harmony in the creation of humanity and the world, and points to God's precise and responsible care in creating every part of existence (Makarem Shirazi et al., 1991, Vol. 26, p. 385).

It is not only the Holy Qur'an that raises the issue of taswiyah and balance; it also employs the expression *aḥsan al-taqwīm* (the best

of forms/perfect constitution), which applies to both women and men, signifying the finest mode of formation, as stated: “We have certainly created man in the best of forms *لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا*” (Qur'an, 95:4). The Muslim exegete Ṭabarsī, in his *Majma' al-Bayān*, interprets *aḥsan al-taqwīm* as the best formation and shaping in terms of the potential for receiving wisdom and intellect (Ṭabarsī, 1993, vol. 10, p. 448).

‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī examines the concept of “beauty of form” (*ḥusn al-ṣūrah*) and explains that this beauty is related to the proportionality of parts and the purpose of creation. From his perspective, this beauty does not denote mere outward appearance; rather, it signifies the suitability of the various bodily organs and parts for performing their specific functions. In fact, he emphasizes that human characteristics must be consistent with the existential goals and missions of humankind (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1995, vol. 19, p. 497).

It is noteworthy that these verses demonstrate that the aforementioned characteristics of creation are not exclusive to a specific group but are applicable to all human beings, both men and women. In other words, what is mentioned regarding creation constitutes gifts and blessings for all of humanity, and there is no documented or definitive superiority between the two human sexes. These noble verses point to the fact that both man and woman are on the same level in terms of balance, proportion, and the beauty of form. Thus, this proportion and balance in creation establishes a foundation for defining the rights and status of men and women in various societies.

5. Shared Human Identity from the Perspective of the Holy Qur'an

The Holy Qur'an explicitly emphasizes the unity and equality of man and woman in human identity, stating that both sexes were created

from a single "Soul" or essence. This concept is reflected not only in the Qur'anic verses but also in the prominent exegeses of Islamic scholars. The main points addressing this issue are discussed below: According to Ayatollah Javadi Amoli, the equality of men and women in humanity does not mean that the soul is divided into male and female halves that are equal; rather, it means that the soul is fundamentally neither masculine nor feminine.

He states: "The human soul is an immaterial reality, and all moral virtues are attributed to the human soul. Therefore, being male is neither a source of honor nor is being female an impediment to dignity. Likewise, affiliation to clans, tribes, and races is neither an impediment to nor a source of [human] dignity" (Javadi Amoli, 2007b, p. 79).

Similarly, Shahid Motahhari writes in his notes: "However, the identity of a woman, like that of a man, is a complete human being. Every human being, whether male or female, shares in their existence two other beings, one male and one female".

The contemporary Islamic scholar, Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi, writes: "Men and women are equal in terms of human nature and its requirements; that is, they are both 'human.' Ultimately, while having a unity of species, they belong to two logical categories or (in common parlance) two sexes. From ancient times, there has been a (albeit rare) theory that did not consider women human and attributed a different nature to them. Islam completely rejects this theory" (Mesbah Yazdi, 2012, p. 269).

The great Qur'anic exegete, Allamah Tabataba'i, affirms this point, stating: "Observation and experience have established that man and woman are two individuals of a single kind and a single essence, an essence that is called 'human.' This is because all the effects that have been observed of humanity in the masculine group have also

been observed in the feminine group (if virtues like generosity, courage, self-restraint, and the like have been seen in men, they have also been seen in women without any difference). Assuredly, the manifestation of the effects of a kind is proof of the realization of that very kind. Therefore, the feminine group is also human. Yes, these two groups differ in terms of intensity and weakness in some shared effects (not in exclusive effects like pregnancy and the like), but the mere intensity and weakness in some human attributes does not invalidate the essential kind in the weaker group, nor does it mean they are no longer human." (Tabataba'i, 1995, Vol. 4, p. 140).

5-1. Islam's Rejection of Discriminatory Theories and Shared Human Attributes

Islam explicitly rejects the outdated theories that did not consider women comparable to human beings and attributed a different nature to them. These views are not only contrary to the teachings of the Qur'an but also contradict the empirical and historical evidence found in various societies, which demonstrates the opposition to such unjust perspectives (Mesbah Yazdi, 2012, p. 269).

5-2. Shared Characteristics and Minor Differences

While men and women share in common fruits, including moral virtues and human characteristics, there may be differences in certain aspects. However, these differences do not signify a difference in human essence. Abilities, weaknesses, and strengths naturally vary, but this variation can by no means lead to the diminution of the human identity or the inherent worth of either sex (Tabataba'i, 1995, Vol. 4, p. 140).

In summary, based on philosophical and religious arguments, it can be stated that man and woman are equal and identical in human essence. This equality holds true in terms of both the soul and human

characteristics, as well as moral virtues. Therefore, any claim of superiority or inequality between them is not only incorrect but contradicts the fundamental principle and basis of human creation. Recognizing this truth will contribute to a better understanding of human rights and respect for the dignity of both men and women in society.

5-3. Shared Purpose of Creation Between Women and Men

The issue of the common goal of creation between man and woman is one of the fundamental points in Islamic teachings, providing a fresh foundation for a deeper understanding of human existence. In this regard, the Holy Qur'an constantly emphasizes that the ultimate purpose of human creation—for both men and women—is the worship and servitude of God. This topic will be examined in detail further on:

6. The Qur'an and the Purpose of Creation

The well-known verse, “And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me” «وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ» (Dhariyat: 56) clearly indicates that the primary purpose of human creation is worship (‘ibādah). This verse not only refers to both jinn and humankind but also signifies the unity of purpose between genders. It is important to understand here that worship can be of two forms: on the one hand, obedience to God's commands, and on the other hand, the expression of humility and submission before God. These two dimensions of worship affect both genders equally.

6-1. Servitude (‘Ubūdiyyah) and Human Perfection

According to Muslim exegetes, complete servitude worship) means that a human being should think of nothing but God and

Absolute Perfection, and in all their actions, should step only on His path. The ultimate goal of humanity is to immerse oneself in the ocean of Divine Mercy, and this path is shared between both sexes (man and woman) (Makarem Shirazi et al., 1991, Vol. 27, p. 12).

Men and women achieve perfection equally through the path of servitude and the performance of Divine duties. Neither is deprived of specific perfections due to their gender, nor does one possess superiority over the other. This point implies an equality in rights and opportunities provided for the advancement and growth of both sexes.

Sharing the ultimate goal is of paramount importance in judging superiority and inferiority among God's creatures. This judgment can be a basis not only for rights and duties but also for natural and developmental capacities. Men and women have equal responsibilities in the worship of God and the following of Divine commands.

However, the balance (or equilibrium) of rights and duties between man and woman differs from the equality (or identicalness) of rights and duties between man and woman. The Holy Qur'an, based on the first part of the verse [referring to the general principle of creation], accepts the balance of rights and duties, and based on the latter part of the verse [referring to specific distributions], rejects the identicalness of rights and duties for men and women.

"If, due to the greater strengths and capabilities that man possesses by nature, he is assigned heavier duties and responsibilities, there is certainly no injustice done in assigning this duty to him. And if, commensurate with man's heavier duties and responsibilities, greater rights and privileges are allocated to him, then again, there is certainly no injustice done in his position of duty, because the balance between rights and duties has been fully observed in his case." (Mesbah Yazdi, 2012, p. 250).

7. Correspondence of Creation (Takwīn) and Divine Law (Tashrī') as a Governing Principle of Gender Rights

7-1. Women's Rights in Islam

According to the verses of the Qur'an, women's rights in Islam are based on several foundations. The first of these is the correspondence of creation and divine law. This means that within the Islamic worldview, since creation is purposeful and the work of a Wise God, it inherently contains a specific plan. Divine law) is designed in accordance with this existing plan of creation. According to this principle, any difference or similarity that exists between the two genders in their creation ultimately plays a role in the established laws and regulations governing their lives. The laws are thus a mirror of the realities established in creation.

According to Muslim thinkers, the rights of men and women are based on two distinct, yet complementary, principles: 1. Equality in Human Rights: From the perspective of human rights, there is no difference between men and women. Both have the fundamental right to participate in determining their own destiny and must participate in various societal fields. This principle affirms the inherent, essential dignity and equality of both genders, rooted in their shared origin (the *Nafs Wahidah*). 2. Difference in Specific Rights (Based on Natural Wisdom) :In some areas, however, natural and biological differences exist which cannot be ignored. Consequently, the establishment of different rights in certain domains is solely a result of Divine wisdom and excellent planning. This differentiation is intended for balance and suitability (similar to *Taswiyah*) corresponding to their distinct natural roles, and does not imply inequality in overall human worth. (Khosropanah, 2017, p. 35).

7-2. Balance in Rights and Duties

Another principle in human rights, including the rights of the two genders, is the balance of rights and duties. This means that if, due to natural abilities and characteristics, heavier responsibilities are placed on men, this does not mean injustice to them and helps to balance rights and duties. Islam does not emphasize absolute equality in rights but emphasizes the necessity of a kind of balance and proportionality in responsibilities and benefits (Mesbah Yazdi, 2012, p. 250).

7-3 The Rights of Women and Men in the Light of Divine Nature (Fiṭrah)

According to the view of 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, the great Qur'anic commentator, the legal and ethical principles of women in the Holy Qur'an are organized in such a way that they consider all aspects of social life. He emphasizes that in the Islamic legal system, equality among individuals is established, but preserving social positions and the influence of each individual in society is also important. In other words, each individual should have rights and benefits commensurate with their influence on the growth and perfection of society.

7-4. The Balance of Rights and Duties in Islamic Law

Islamic laws are structured to distribute the rights of men and women in a balanced and just manner. This principle is codified in the noble verse:

وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِنَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَ دَرَجَةٌ (Surah Al-Baqarah: 228).

"And due to them [the women] is what is similar to that which is upon them [of duties] according to what is reasonable, but the men have over them a degree [of responsibility]."

The Qur'an explicitly emphasizes the reciprocity (near-equality) of rights for women while simultaneously referring to the different degrees and roles of men (due to responsibility).

Allamah Tabataba'i considers this verse a sign of respect for the rights of both groups and explains the meaning of social justice and equality: "What social justice requires and what interprets the meaning of equality is that in society, every right-holder should receive their due right, and everyone should advance to the extent of their capacity and ability, not beyond it.

Therefore, equality among individuals and among classes is solely for the reason that every right-holder receives their specific right, without one right interfering with another, or being neglected or unknown altogether, or being explicitly invalidated due to hostility, domination, or any other motive.

And this is what the phrase: 'And due to them [the women] is what is similar to that which is upon them [of duties] according to what is reasonable, but the men have over them a degree...' refers to, with the explanation just given, as this phrase, while accepting the natural difference between man and woman, explicitly emphasizes their legal equality as well." (Tabataba'i, 1995, Vol. 2, p. 414).

Therefore, social justice means that every right holder receives their due right, and no right should be violated due to power, oppression, or any other negative motive. This concept is well expressed in the verse that emphasizes the rights of women and men. He believes that the difference in rights and duties between women and men is not only unfair but also considers social and natural necessities.¹

7-5. Marital Rights

Continuing the discussion, 'Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī elaborates on

marital rights and emphasizes that the wife's rights over the husband are not limited to the dowry (mahr) but also include the right to maintenance (nafaqah), clothing, housing, and other necessities of life. He also emphasizes the necessity of the husband providing for the wife's financial and social needs and states that even in some matters, such as childcare and breastfeeding, if the wife wishes, she can receive compensation for these services (Tayyeb, 1999, vol. 2, p. 458).

Ultimately, the Qur'anic view of the rights of women and men considers both equality and pays attention to natural and social differences.¹ This approach leads to the establishment of social justice and correctly shows that women's rights are also fully defined within the framework of divine nature (fiṭrah) and social norms. From this perspective, the rights and responsibilities of both parties should be duly considered.

8. Abundance of Similarities and the Superiority of Human Standing

Despite the fact that Islam acknowledges real and fundamental differences between the two sexes, this does not mean that similarities are insignificant. The similarities between the two sexes, and specifically their shared human status, form the basis for many common human rules, laws, and ordinances. The contemporary Muslim exegete, Ayatollah Javadi Amoli, emphasizes that the Holy Qur'an assesses intellectual and practical virtues and perfections based on the status of humanity, and this status transcends gender. Therefore, every human being, whether man or woman, can achieve high spiritual and intellectual degrees if they are on the path of attaining virtues based on human perfections, and in this path, physical differences should not be considered (Javadi Amoli, 2007b, p. 126). In other words, none of the existing reasons can definitively show that

man is superior to woman based on his natural structure, because human values lie in the soul and spirit; therefore, they cannot be attributed solely to physical differences.

8-1. The Primacy of the Soul and Humanity

The central discussion regarding the equality of men and women revolves around the soul (al-naḥs/al-rūḥ) and human essence (māhiyyat al-insān), not the physical body (al-jism) and natural factors (al-‘awāmil al-ṭabī‘iyyah). Based on the emphasis of Ayatollah Javadi Amoli, the human soul is transcendent of masculinity (dhukūrah) and femininity (unūthah). This truth is clearly established through reflection upon the verses of the Qur'an (āyāt al-Qur’ān) and the traditions of the Infallible Imams (riwāyāt al-ma‘šūmīn). In fact, all human virtues (faḍā’il) and perfections (kamālāt) are bestowed upon both genders, as human beings (kawnuhum bashar), and God Almighty has granted both genders the possibility of growth (numūw) and advancement (taqaddum).

While the provided text doesn't explicitly cite a specific work, Ayatollah Javadi Amoli has extensively written and lectured on the topic of women in Islam. Some potential sources for further research include:

Zan dar Ayeneh-ye Jalal va Jamal (Woman in the Mirror of Majesty and Beauty): This book is likely the most relevant source for his views on this topic.

His various commentaries on the Qur'an (Tafsir-e Tasnim is his most extensive Qur'anic commentary).

His lectures and other published works on philosophical and theological topics.

9. Divine Mercy and Shared Human Perfections

God Almighty, in His act of creating humankind (*khalq al-insān*), establishes the foundation for human virtues (*faḍā'il*) and perfections (*kamālāt insāniyyah*) without any regard for gender distinctions (*al-tafāwut al-jinsī*). In every perfection and virtue (*kamāl wa faḍīla*) mentioned in the Islamic faith (*dīn al-Islām*), the emphasis is on humanity (*al-insāniyyah*) and not on gender (*al-jins*). This demonstrates the vastness of divine mercy (*raḥmat Allāh al-wāsi'a*), which allows human beings to utilize all available means (*al-imkānāt al-mutāḥa*) for the attainment of perfection (*al-kamāl*).

Belief in equality in humanity (*al-īmān bi-l-musāwāt fī al-insāniyyah*) does not mean disregarding physical differences (*al-furūq al-jismiyyah*); rather, it means that no one can claim superiority (*al-tafḍīl*) or merit (*al-faḍl*) for themselves based merely on physical differences (*mujarrad al-furūq al-jismiyyah*). In reality, any discussion regarding superiority (*al-tafawwuq*) or inequality (*'adam al-musāwāt*) from a material and physical perspective (*min manẓar mādḍī wa jismānī*) is an error (*khaṭa'*) and should originate from spiritual and metaphysical foundations (*al-mabānī al-rūḥāniyya wa al-ma'nawīyya*). This aligns with the Islamic theological concept of *tawḥīd* (divine unity), which emphasizes the oneness of God and the equal standing of all human beings before Him.

9-1. The Shared Human Fiṭrah of Women and Men in the Qur'an

The theme of human fiṭrah (primordial nature) and its influence on the roles and positions of women and men within Islamic culture is a fundamental aspect of the Islamic perspective on women's human identity. The Qur'an explicitly emphasizes that all human beings are created according to a single divine fiṭrah, indicating a fundamental

equality in the human constitution of both women and men.

The term *fiṭrah* refers to the original, pure, and innate disposition or nature upon which God created humanity. It is the intrinsic inclination toward *Tawhīd* (the Oneness of God) and inherent moral truth. Surah Ar-Rum (30:30) states regarding *fiṭrah*:

«فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَتَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا»...

"So direct your face toward the religion, inclining to truth. [Adhere to] the {*fiṭrah*} of Allah upon which He has created [all] people..."

This verse establishes that the core spiritual and ethical nature is universal among all people (*al-nās*), confirming that the essential human identity and inherent dignity are shared by both genders. This common, untainted *fiṭrah* serves as the ultimate source of equality, transcending secondary biological or social distinctions.

This verse clearly articulates that all human beings, both women and men, are created according to a single, divinely ordained nature. Contemporary Islamic scholar, Martyr Murtada Mutahhari, describes *fiṭrah* as an inherent disposition with which an individual is born at the beginning of their creation, before being influenced by the environment and external factors. This principle of a shared divine *fiṭrah* for both women and men provides an important basis for addressing certain misconceptions regarding the nature of women, such as the notions of inherent sinfulness or being an agent of temptation.

The Holy Qur'an, in narrating the story of human creation and life in Paradise, explicitly states that both Adam and Eve had equal participation in the act and decision to eat from the forbidden tree. The Qur'anic verses use a dual form, indicating both were tempted, such as:

«فَوَسْوَسَ لَهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ»... (Surah Al-A'raf: 20).

"The Satan tempted them both..." (Surah Ta-Ha: 120)

This wording shows that Satan tempted both individuals (Adam and Eve), not just one. This view challenges traditional interpretations that customarily place the blame solely on the woman (as found in some other religious texts) and emphasizes the shared responsibility of both (Mutahhari, 2018, p. 33).

Contemporary Islamic scholars critique theories that portray women as the "source of sin." This view is not only incorrect but also leads to the degradation of women's status. Instead of assigning blame to one party, the Qur'an holds both responsible, emphasizing their equality and shared responsibility within their human fiṭrah.

10. The Qur'anic Principle of Karāmah as a Basis for the Status of Women in Islam

Al-Farahidi, a prominent lexicographer, defines karāmah as purity and freedom from ugliness and vices. Ibn Manzur defines karāmah as honor and nobility, referring to individuals who embody all forms of goodness and virtue as karīm (noble/generous).

Raghib al-Isfahani defines karāmah as good and praiseworthy morals and actions, stating that anything possessing honor can be described as possessing karāmah. (Raghib Al-Isfahani, 1996, p. 707).

‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī, in explaining the difference between takrīm (honoring/venerating) and tafḍīl (preferring/giving precedence), defines takrīm as bestowing a favor and honor that others do not possess, while tafḍīl means superiority over others. (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1995, vol. 13, p. 214).

‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī further categorizes karāmah into two types: inherent (dhātī) and acquired (iktisābī). Both inherent and acquired karāmah are divine gifts, but this gift is sometimes obtained without acquisition, such as the karāmah that angels possess, and

sometimes through acquisition, such as some of the acquired human karāmāt. (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1995, vol. 13, p. 219).

10-1. Inherent and Acquired Karāmah and its Transcendent Nature in the Qur'an

This text delves into the concept of karāmah (dignity/nobility) in the Qur'an, distinguishing between its inherent (dhātī) and acquired (iktisābī) dimensions. It emphasizes the transcendent nature of karāmah, arguing that it is a quality bestowed upon all human beings regardless of gender.

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10-2. Inherent Human Karāmah

Inherent karāmah refers to the dignity that is naturally and innately bestowed upon human beings. This type of karāmah is not within an individual's control and is independent of their actions and efforts. The Qur'an explicitly states: "And We have certainly honored the children of Adam..." (Al-Isrā': 70), which refers to the concept of inherent human karāmah.

Inherent karāmah refers to characteristics and attributes that are inherently and involuntarily embedded in human creation from the beginning. These attributes include: Reason and Speech (‘aql wa nuṭq): The existence of the faculty of reason (quwwat al-‘aql), which distinguishes human beings from other creatures. Various Talents (isti‘dādāt mukhtalifa): Human beings possess diverse capacities for learning and understanding.

Proportionate Form and Upright Stature (qāmat mustawiya wa qawām mu‘tadil): These physical characteristics contribute to the balance and efficiency of the body.

The Quran's Merciful Perspective on Women in the Three Dimensions of Individual ...

10-3. Acquired Human Karāmah

In contrast, acquired karāmah refers to characteristics and values that a person gains through their choices, faith (īmān), and good deeds (a'māl ṣāliḥa).

10-4. The Transcendent Nature of Karāmah in the Qur'an

Human karāmah in the Qur'an is a transcendent quality (amr fārijinsiyyatī) and is not specific to any particular gender. The source of human karāmah, according to the Qur'an and its commentators (mufasssīrīn), is attributed to various human characteristics, such as reason ('aql), material blessings (ni'am māddiyya), and the social environment (al-bī'a al-ijtimā'iyya), which elevate human beings above other creatures. The station of human vicegerency (maqām khilāfat al-insān) is among the implications of their karāmah, as expressed in the verse: "Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority" (Al-Baqarah: 30).

Some commentators, including 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, believe that human karāmah is formed through reason and the ability to think and reason, thus giving humans superiority over other creatures (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1995, vol. 13, p. 217).

10-5. The Role of Reason, Material Blessings, and Piety in Karāmah

Allamah Tabataba'i emphasizes that if intellect ('Aql) is the source of dignity (Karāmah), then man and woman equally share in this dimension of dignity, and therefore, women also possess inherent dignity .

Another perspective in this regard is that material blessings (ni'am māddiyya) are an important source of human karāmah (Ṭabarsī,

1993, vol. 6, p. 262). Specifically, humans differ from other beings in the food chain and life resources. Humans naturally possess the ability to understand and utilize food and can creatively provide for their food and needs. This capacity, compared to other beings that rely on limited resources to meet their basic needs, demonstrates human excellence (faḍl) (Ṭabarsī, 1993, vol. 6, p. 262). These material blessings help humans meet their needs and form social and cultural life. Shaykh Ṭabarsī, in *Majma' al-Bayān*, considers all of these factors as sources of human karāmah. From 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī's viewpoint, the behavior and actions of a woman or man can determine their karāmah based on their piety (taqwā) and faith (īmān).

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Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi, in *Tafsir-e Nemuneh*, states that these characteristics and gifts collectively exist in human beings, and none of them alone can represent human greatness and karāmah. He emphasizes that God's karāmah toward humans is due to the combination of these gifts, and the possibility that "karamnā" (We have honored) refers to material blessings and "faḍḍalnā" (We have preferred) refers to spiritual gifts is close to reality.

10-6. Conclusion: The Synthesis of Inherent and Acquired Karāmah

In fact, human karāmah stems both from their inherent origin, which is bestowed upon them, and from their actions and choices. By utilizing their reason and knowledge, humans can achieve such karāmah. These two dimensions, in the form of a comprehensive image of human karāmah, create a special place for them in human societies.

'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī states: "So, when according to these verses, the actions of each of the two genders, man and woman (whether good or bad), are recorded for them, and there is no advantage for anyone except through piety (taqwā), and considering

that one of the stages of piety is excellent morals (such as faith with its various degrees, and such as beneficial action, sound and mature reason, good morals, patience, and forbearance), then a woman who has a high degree of faith, or is full of knowledge, or has a mature and weighty reason, or possesses a greater share of moral virtues, such a woman in Islam is inherently more honorable and of a higher rank than a man who is not her equal, whoever that man may be. So there is no *karāmah* or advantage except only through piety and virtue" (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1995, vol. 2, p. 407).

Therefore, the most important divine blessing is inherent *karāmah* and nobility (*sharāfat dhātī*), which creates the capacity for transformation and a better life in human beings. However, this matter is of greater importance for women because the birth and upbringing of humans take place in their laps, and the sense of *karāmah* and worth is also transmitted from mothers to children. Islam, as a merciful school of thought (*maktab raḥmānī*), has combated gender discrimination and has honored women as respected human beings, and all the rules and laws concerning humans and women are based on the principle of *karāmah*.

11. The Value of Women's Actions in the Quran

The verses of the Quran clearly indicate the equal value of actions performed by both men and women before God. This principle of equality is emphasized in several verses, highlighting that the reward for righteous deeds is based on faith and good intentions, not gender.

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أَنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيَاتًا طَيِّبَةً (النحل، ٩٧).

“Whoever does righteous work, male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] for the best of what they used to do.” (An-Nahl: 97).

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ نَقِيرًا (النساء ١٢٤).

“And whoever does righteous deeds, whether male or female, while being a believer - those will enter Paradise and will not be wronged at all.” (An-Nisa 4:124).

The Quran emphasizes that the criterion for divine reward is *iman* (faith) and righteous conduct, regardless of gender. This concept directly challenges pre-Islamic Arabian social norms that often devalued women. ‘Allamah Tabataba’i, in his renowned exegesis *Tafsir al-Mizan*, underscores this point, stating that there is no difference between men and women in receiving the reward for good deeds. He criticizes the superstitious beliefs of past societies that considered women inferior to men, asserting that Islam explicitly considers both genders equal and rejects pre-Islamic cultural misconceptions. He cites the following verse:

لَا أُضِيعُ عَمَلَ عَامِلٍ مِنْكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ بَعْضُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْضٍ (آل عمران، ١٩٥).

“...I will not allow to be lost the work of [any] worker among you, whether male or female; you are of one another.” (Aal Imran: 195).

This verse emphasizes that God does not disregard any good deed, whether performed by a man or a woman. (Tabataba’i, 1986, Vol. 5, p. 143).

11-1. The Promise of Paradise and Equality in Reward

The Quran promises Paradise to both believing men and women, emphasizing their equality in divine reward.

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَمَسَاكِينَ طَيِّبَةً فِي جَنَّاتٍ عَدْنٍ وَرِضْوَانٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ (التوبة: ٧٢).

“Allah has promised the believing men and believing women

gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they abide eternally, and good residences in gardens of perpetual residence; but approval from Allah is greater. That is what is the great attainment.” (At-Tawbah: 72).

This verse explicitly states that both believing men and women are promised gardens of Paradise, emphasizing the principle of equality in divine reward. This point is further reinforced by the following verse:

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيَاةً طَيِّبَةً وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ (النحل: ٩٧).

“Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] for the best of what they used to do.” (An-Nahl: 97).

This verse clarifies that both believing men and women are promised eternal gardens and a good life, demonstrating divine justice toward both genders by ensuring equality in reward. Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi, in his *Tafsir-e-Nemune*, comments on the value of men's and women's actions, stating:

“This verse, like many other verses in the Glorious Quran, considers men and women equal before God in attaining spiritual stations under similar conditions. It never considers the difference in gender, the difference in physical constitution, and consequently some differences in social responsibilities as a reason for difference between the two in terms of achieving human perfection. Rather, it places both of them completely on the same level in this regard, and therefore mentions them together. This is exactly like the fact that in terms of administrative discipline, one

person is chosen as the head, and another as the deputy or a member. The head must have more ability or more experience and information in his work, but this difference and hierarchy is never a reason that the human personality and existential value of the head is greater than his deputy or employees... These verses and many other verses were revealed at a time when many nations of the world doubted the humanity of the female gender and considered it a cursed being, and the source of sin, deviation, and death! Many previous nations even believed that women's worship was not accepted before God. Many Greeks considered women an impure being and the work of Satan. Romans and some Greeks believed that women did not have a human soul at all, and therefore the human soul was exclusively for men..." (Makarem Shirazi, 1991 و Vol. 3 p. 223).

12. Equality of Men and Women in Islamic Teachings

Islam presents men and women as equal, as stated in the Quran: مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَى "...whether male or female..." This phrase, used in various contexts, emphasizes that gender is not a determining factor in one's relationship with God or in receiving divine reward. The verse:

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ نَقِيرًا (نساء: ١٢٤) (Al-nisa: 124).

translated as "And whoever does righteous deeds, whether male or female, while being a believer - those will enter Paradise and will not be wronged¹ at all," further reinforces this equality. The addition of "وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ نَقِيرًا" (and they will not be wronged at all) after "فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ" (those will enter Paradise) is significant. The first part indicates that women, like men, will receive reward, while the second part clarifies that there will be no difference between them in

the amount of reward. This concept is reiterated in another verse:

فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ أَنِّي لَا أُضِيعُ عَمَلَ عَامِلٍ مِنْكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ بَعْضُكُمْ مِنْ
بَعْضٍ (آل عمران: ١٩٥).

“So their Lord responded to them, "Indeed, I will not allow to be lost the work of [any] worker among you, whether male or female; you are of one another.” (Al Imran: 195).

This verse explicitly states that God does not waste the deeds of anyone, whether male or female, emphasizing their shared humanity and equal standing before God. ‘Allamah Tabataba’i, in his *Tafsir al-Mizan*, explains this concept, stating that the purpose behind adding "وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ تَبَعًا" is to emphasize that just as women are entitled to reward, they will also not experience any injustice in the distribution of that reward. He further elaborates on the meaning of "بَعْضُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْضٍ" (you are of one another) in verse 3:195, indicating the shared origin and essence of men and women.

Therefore, according to Muslim commentators, virtue and superiority in Islam are determined solely by *taqwa* (God-consciousness/piety) and righteous deeds. A believing woman with higher moral virtues is considered superior to a man who lacks these qualities. This demonstrates the equality of human value in Islam.

13. Women's Attainment of Spiritual Perfection in the Qur'an

This text addresses the possibility of women achieving spiritual perfection (*kamāl ma‘nawī*) from the Qur'an and Islamic teachings perspective, critiquing traditional views that suggest women are inherently incapable of reaching high spiritual levels.

13-1. The Islamic Understanding of Spirituality

In Islam, spirituality refers to the existence of a superior and

influential force in human life. Without accepting such a reality, Islamic spirituality does not begin. Although there is no specific term for spirituality in religious texts, keywords such as faith (īmān), piety (parhīzgārī/taqwā), and adherence to religious precepts (pāybandī be aḥkām dīnī) constitute the spirit of spirituality, and separating them is not possible.

Religion, servitude, and tawḥīd play a fundamental role in the formation of spirituality and enable a person to achieve "ḥayāt ṭayyiba" (good life). According to 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, the concept of "ḥayāt ṭayyiba" means granting a real and meaningful life to the believing person. He states that God honors believing people who perform righteous deeds with a new life, which is distinct from the ordinary life of human beings. This type of life is accompanied by knowledge ('ilm) and power (qudra) and helps the believing person to clearly distinguish between right and wrong. Such a person is freed from attachment to the adornments and deceptive appearances of the world, and their relationship with God becomes lasting and eternal. They seek only God's nearness and pleasure and fear God's distance and wrath, which in turn creates a feeling of a pure and eternal life within them. On the other hand, the lack of spirituality and ḥayāt ṭayyiba can make human life meaningless and empty. In this regard, studying religious texts confirms that God has not made any distinction between women and men in providing opportunities to reach ḥayāt ṭayyiba.

13-2. Refuting Traditional Misconceptions about Women's Spirituality

Martyr Mutahhari, in this context, refers to historically degrading theories that specifically target women's spiritual and metaphysical abilities. Some believe that women will not go to

paradise or cannot reach spiritual and divine stations. In contrast, the Qur'an explicitly states that the reward in the hereafter and nearness to God depend on a person's faith and righteous deeds, not their gender. In this regard, the Qur'an, alongside great and holy men, also introduces distinguished and holy women, which is an example of the spiritual greatness of revelation.

Specifically, in various surahs, the mother of Moses is mentioned as an example of sacrifice and faith, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, is mentioned as a woman who was at a high spiritual level. In Islamic history, we also witness the existence of great and holy women, which demonstrates their spiritual power. These Qur'anic and religious emphases on the equality of women's and men's spiritual abilities demonstrate the importance and high religious values in shaping the spiritual identity of human beings and can be a source for improving social understanding of women's role in religion (Motahhari, 2011b, p. 149).

13-3. Equality of Women and Men in Spiritual Journey

In the spiritual journey (sulūk ma'nawī), there is no difference between women and men. As some scholars have expressed, "Islam in the journey 'from creation to the Truth'—that is, in the movement towards God—does not differentiate between women and men." The differences observed in Islamic teachings are mostly in the field of "the journey 'from the Truth to creation'" and the return from truth to the world of people, in which men, due to some characteristics, have been considered more suitable for performing prophetic duties (Motahhari, 2011b, p. 149).

Despite the existence of differences in some Islamic rules and laws regarding women and men, there is no distinction in achieving spiritual stations. Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi says in this regard: "In

general, if in some Islamic laws, due to physical and emotional differences between women and men, differences are seen in terms of social responsibilities, this does not in any way harm the spiritual value of women, and in this regard, women and men are on the same level. The doors of happiness are equally open to both" (Makarem Shirazi et al., 2003, p. 234).

The Holy Qur'an considers women and men in similar conditions before God and in reaching spiritual stations and does not consider gender difference and physical differences as a reason for difference in achieving human perfection. This view was presented at a time when many nations of the world questioned the human values of women and considered them a hateful being and the source of sin (Makarem Shirazi et al., 2003).

13-4. Views of Contemporary Scholars on Women's Spiritual Potential

Contemporary Islamic scholar, Mutahhari, also points out that "women are worthy of attaining the highest spiritual station and can, in this regard, be ranked alongside men; gender is not an obstacle" (Mutahhari, 2011a, Vol. 5, p. 260). 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī also explicitly states that there is no difference between women and men in reaching spirituality, and the Qur'an has rejected the view that women cannot reach a station of nearness to God like men. This is stated in numerous verses that the reward in the hereafter and nearness to God are not related to gender but depend on faith (īmān) and righteous deeds ('amal ṣāliḥ). For example, if the Qur'an introduces the wives of Noah and Lot as unworthy women, it, in turn, mentions the wife of Pharaoh as a great and high-ranking individual (Mutahhari, 2011a, Vol. 19, pp. 131-133).

These verses and measures show that Islam emphasizes the

equality of women's and men's spiritual rights and responsibilities, and its spiritual consequences are significant and decisive.

13-5. Equality of Women and Men in Spiritual Stations from the Perspective of the Qur'an and Scholars

‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī, in his commentary on verse 97 of Surah An-Nahl , "Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer—We will surely cause him to live a good life...", clearly emphasizes the equality of women and men in achieving spiritual stations. In this verse, a beautiful promise is given to believers who perform righteous deeds, and God has not differentiated between women and men (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1995, Vol. 12, p. 421). ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī considers this verse as evidence for refuting the incorrect ideas of various peoples and nations who traditionally disregard the value and reward of women's actions. For example, in Hindu culture, women's actions are not counted, and in the religious corners of Judaism and Christianity, honor and dignity are attributed to men, and women are introduced as imperfect beings (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1995, Vol. 5, p. 88).

Ayatollah Javadi Amoli, regarding the journey of spiritual stations (sayr maqāmāt ma‘nawī), states: "In this movement (the journey towards God), there is no privilege between women and men, because the true journey in the stages of tawḥīd (divine unity) is the responsibility of humanity, which is free from gender." Even regarding the issue of prophethood (nubūwwah), which is generally specific to men, Mr. Javadi clarifies that although there is a difference between women and men in prophethood and legislative messengership (risālat tashrī‘ī), after the end of prophethood and messengership, both genders are equal from this perspective, and there is no advantage for anyone. Therefore, efforts to exclude women from political, social,

cultural, and economic arenas are not justifiable. He points out that if deprivation from prophethood is considered a deficiency, men, like women, are also deprived of it after the end of prophethood, and this does not mean disregarding women's capacities in other areas (Javadi Amoli, 2007 b, p. 187).

According to Mr. Javadi Amoli, although the division of labor and responsibilities, in terms of implementation, requires observing religious points and necessary precautions, from a spiritual perspective, women are fully alongside men, and there is no superiority in this regard. Women, like men, have the right and competence to participate in social and economic fields (Javadi Amoli, 2007, p. 189).

In conclusion, what is derived from the verses of the Qur'an and the statements of scholars is that there is no difference between women and men in achieving spiritual stations and mystical conduct (sulūk 'irfānī). The main criterion is acting upon Islamic laws and precepts and pursuing the paths of spiritual journeying. Moreover, some theories, especially from Mr. Javadi Amoli, point to the fact that women have more grounds in the path of mystical conduct. He believes that "the ways of human progress and transcendence are different; one is the path of thought (fīkr) and the other is the path of remembrance (dhikr). Women in the path of dhikr and supplication (munājāt), which means heartfelt and emotional connection, if they are not more successful than men, are certainly their equals, and this path is considered a fundamental path." Thus, it can be concluded that in the discussion of spirituality and spiritual stations, not only is the equality of women and men emphasized, but in some mystical approaches, the special abilities of women are also worthy of attention and study.

Contemporary Islamic scholar, Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi,

especially mentions the wife of Pharaoh as a practical example of achieving spirituality. He writes that from the biographies of great women, such as the wife of Pharaoh and Mary (peace be upon her), it can be learned that women can also reach the highest degrees of human perfection. This station may even be higher than some prophets. The Qur'an introduces the wife of Pharaoh as a model of the people of faith and emphasizes her perfection and progress in spiritual positions. With high ambition and a unique perspective, she has no interest in heavenly blessings, and the only thing she asks of God is to be close to Him and dwell in the divine vicinity. She abhors the oppression of her husband and the Pharaohs and tries to be safe from the consequences of their actions (Mesbah Yazdi, 2009, Vol. 1, p. 196).

14. Principles of Divine Mercy Governing Women's Family Roles in Islam

14-1. A Compassionate View of Women in Light of the Principle of *Mu'āsharah bi-l-Ma'rūf*

The Holy Qur'an has an ethical view towards women, and all social and family relationships are based on this. In family relationships, the principle of *mu'āsharah bi-l-ma'rūf* is enjoined upon husbands as the managers of the family. This principle plays a significant role in strengthening family relationships in challenging situations.

14-2. The Importance of *Mu'āsharah Bi-l-Ma'rūf*

The Qur'an has limited any abuse and harassment, and according to the verses, *mu'āsharah bi-l-ma'rūf* must be observed in the behavior and speech of spouses. This is especially important during the time of the revelation of the Qur'an, when some views regarding women were challenging. Even in the present era, perceptions such as male guardianship (*qiwāmah*) and the complexities

of polygamy have created serious challenges.

‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī, in his commentary on the verses related to *mu‘āsharah bi-l-ma‘rūf*, considers the concept of "*ma‘rūf*" to be an action that is accepted in public opinion and is compatible with social culture. He states that this principle is not only an ethical principle but also a legal principle. Especially the verse "And due to the wives is similar to what is expected of them, according to what is reasonable" (Al-Baqarah: 228).

عَلَيْهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي (البقرة: ٢٢٨).

expresses the legitimate rights of wives over their husbands (Al-Baqarah: 228) (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1984, Vol. 2, p. 348).

According to him, the word "*ma‘rūf*" includes the guidance of reason (‘aql), the ruling of Islamic law (ḥukm shar‘ī), moral virtue (faḍīlat akhlāqī), and literary and human traditions: "That action is *ma‘rūf* which is both in accordance with the guidance of reason and consistent with the ruling of Islamic law or the prevailing law in society, and is not contrary to moral virtues, and literary traditions do not consider it contrary to etiquette" (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1995, Vol. 2, p. 349).

14-3. The Universality of Mu‘āsharah Bi-l-Ma‘rūf in Women's Legal and Ethical Matters

This section emphasizes the importance and scope of the principle of *mu‘āsharah bi-l-ma‘rūf* (kind and equitable companionship) in women's family and social relationships from the perspective of Islam and ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī.

The Application of Mu‘āsharah bi-l-Ma‘rūf in All Aspects of Women's Lives. The principle of *mu‘āsharah bi-l-ma‘rūf* also applies to all legal and ethical issues concerning women. In other words, Islamic rulings are based on human nature, and "*ma‘rūf*" means that

which is in accordance with *fiṭrah*, the guidance of reason, the ruling of Islamic law (*ḥukm sharʿī*), and moral values.

Muʿāsharah bi-l-maʿrūf, as a fundamental principle in family relationships, not only helps preserve women's rights but also leads to the creation of health and balance in relationships. The importance of this principle is evident in achieving justice and equality in society and ultimately realizing family well-being.

According to the teachings of the Qur'an, women in the social structure, and especially in the family, enjoy a special position and rights. The Holy Qur'an, by stating the principle of "maʿrūf", provides a specific framework for social relations in which women's rights are emphasized and violence is neutralized. ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī clearly states that the position and rights that Islam has granted to women are unparalleled in history, and this remarkably empowers women in society. The term "maʿrūf" in the Qur'an is mentioned as one of the key principles of social relations, especially in family and marital contexts. This means that any action that is recognized as a good and commendable action in society should be considered in these relationships. This being bound by "maʿrūf" in fact states that human relations should be based on ethics and fairness, and any disrespectful or violent behavior within the framework of this principle is unacceptable.

Therefore, according to ʿAllāmah Ṭabāṭabāʾī, noble Islam "gave a position to women that you will not find such a position for women in any corner of any page of human history, and you will not find a declaration on women's rights like the Qur'an's declaration that says: '...then there is no blame upon you for what they do with themselves in an acceptable way...'" (Al-Baqarah: 228).

[1] Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 1984, Vol. 2, p. 415. (The provided verse

reference (البقره: 234) is not the most direct verse related to mu'āsharah bi-l-ma'rūf between spouses, although it does address appropriate conduct. Verse البقره: 228 is more directly relevant.)

« إِمَّا يَبْلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أُفٍّ وَلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا وَاخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا » (اسراء، آيات ٢٣-٢٤).

"If one or both of them reach old age in your life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them but speak to them a generous word. And lower to them the wing of humility out of mercy and say, 'My Lord, have mercy upon them as they brought me up [when I was] small.'" (Al-Isra', verses 23-24).

15. Qiwāmah (Male Headship)

Qiwāmah in the Holy Qur'an means guardianship and management of family life, and this role is naturally placed upon men. This is while women are equal to men in human rights and benefits, and this equality is defined extensively and beautifully by the Qur'an. In other words, common rights in the principle of creation are an important foundation for marital relations, but the roles and responsibilities of men, due to heavier duties in the family and headship, reach a different degree. This is what has caused differences in marital rights and a degree of advantage for men, and "But men have a degree [of responsibility] over them [women]" (Al-Baqarah: 228).

وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِنَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ (بقره: ٢٢٨).

In conclusion, the Qur'an, by emphasizing "ma'rūf" (what is good and recognized) and establishing human rights for women, not only values their position and status but also explains social justice and respect for mutual rights. These teachings, along with the recognition of natural roles and social responsibilities, clarify the non-

contradiction and simultaneity of women's and men's rights in family life.

The Qur'anic Principles of Raḥmah (Mercy) and Mawaddah (Affection) as Two Pillars of the Family
The foundation of the family is strengthened by two strong and firm principles: mawaddah and raḥmah. The Holy Qur'an says in this regard:

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً
إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ (روم: ٢١).

"And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought." (Rom: 21).

This means that God created spouses for you from yourselves so that you may incline towards them and they may be a source of tranquility and peace for you, and for this purpose, He placed two important and vital principles, mawaddah and raḥmah, between you, one meaning sincere friendship towards each other and the other meaning flexibility, mercy, and forgiveness of each other's mistakes, both of which play a significant role in creating a strong relationship and an unbreakable bond between husband and wife (Javadi Amoli, 2019, Vol. 5, p. 675).

Mawaddah means a wise friendship towards each other, and raḥmah means merciful forgiveness of each other's mistakes. A family without these two principles and pillars does not become a family and does not become strong. Therefore, it is a false assumption that other material factors besides mawaddah and raḥmah can strengthen the foundation of the family. The principle of mawaddah and raḥmah each have their own specific meaning. The principle of raḥmah in the Qur'an is introduced as a major factor in the establishment and

continuation of the family. This rahmah includes two important dimensions: 1) Addressing emotional and natural needs: Spouses should pay attention to each other's emotional needs and respond to these needs with love and kindness. Such behavior strengthens the sense of security and peace in the family. 2) Merciful forgiveness: Because humans are fallible beings, it is necessary for family members to forgive each other's mistakes. This forgiveness, especially in Islamic families, is known as a sign of mercy and compassion in family relationships.

The principle of mawaddah is based on the fact that the formation of a family will not be stable and lasting as long as it is based on instinct. In fact, love and friendship are sometimes based on logic, reasoning, and reason, and sometimes on emotions and instinctive feelings. The strength of these two types of mawaddah is not the same; one is stable, and the other is unstable. Love that is accompanied by the criteria of reason and logic has a strong foundation, but if its criterion is emotion and instinctive feeling, its foundation is weak and shaky. The older the spouses get, the weaker the instinct becomes and the weaker the instinctive mawaddah becomes. As a result, if the family relies solely on it, it will collapse, but if the friendship is based on reason, with the increase of the spouses' age, rational experiences become stronger, and the foundation of rational life becomes stronger. As a result, family members become more intimate and kind to each other (Javadi Amoli, 2019). Therefore, the family intended by the Qur'an is formed based on the two principles of mawaddah and rahmah. In such a family, children grow up who have been nourished by two sources of mawaddah and rahmah, and as a result, they return this upbringing to their parents. Such children become capable of being addressed by such a Qur'anic address that God Almighty says to them: "Whether one or both of

them reach old age [while] with you, say not to them [so much as], "uff," and do not repel them but speak to them a noble word. And lower to them the wing of humility out of mercy and say, "My Lord, have mercy upon them as they brought me up [when I was] small" (Isra: 23-24).

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا ۖ إِنَّمَا يُتْلَعَنَّ عَلَيْكَ الْكِبَرُ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أُفٍّ وَلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا * وَاخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا (الاسراء: ٢٣-٢٤).

"And your Lord has decreed that you not worship except Him, and to parents, good treatment. Whether one or both of them reach old age [while] with you, say not to them [so much as], "uff," and do not repel them but speak to them a noble word. And lower to them the wing of humility out of mercy and say, "My Lord, have mercy upon them as they brought me up [when I was] small" (Isra: 23-24).

A child who is the foundation of the family is one who does not say "uff" to his parents but treats them with noble words and spreads the wing of humility, kindness, and mercy for them.

15-1. The Role of *Rahmah* (Mercy) in Child Upbringing and the Impact of *Mawaddah* (Affection) and *Rahmah* on Family Dynamics

This section examines the role of *rahmah* (mercy) in child upbringing and the impact of the principles of *mawaddah* (affection) and *rahmah* on marital relations and family cohesion from the perspective of the Qur'an.

In a family built on *mawaddah* and *rahmah*, children are nourished by these two sources. Therefore, this type of upbringing leads to the raising of children who can respect their parents in the future and behave with love and courtesy when their parents reach old age.

The Qur'an, in a verse from Surah Al-Isra 23, emphasizes that people should treat their parents well, especially in old age:

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا ۚ إِنَّمَا يُبَلِّغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أُفٍّ وَلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا (الاسراء: ٢٣).

"And your Lord has decreed that you not worship except Him, and to parents, good treatment. Whether one or both of them reach old age [while] with you, say not to them [so much as], "uff," and do not repel them but speak to them a noble word." (Al-Isra 23).

This verse points to the importance of respectful behavior towards parents and attention to them in old age and teaches children how they should treat their parents with love and courtesy.

All laws and regulations between spouses are also based on these two principles. In the Qur'an, God commands men to treat their wives well: "وَعَاشِرُوهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ" And live with them in kindness." (Al nisa :19). This command means positive, loving behavior and respecting the rights and needs of the other party and is based on the concepts of mawaddah and rahmah.

15-2. The Impact of Mawaddah and Rahmah on Family Cohesion

In general, the principle of *rahmah* and *mawaddah*, as fundamental pillars of the family, provide the necessary spiritual and emotional space for the survival of the family. By emphasizing these principles, the Qur'an creates a practical model for family relationships that not only strengthens families but also helps raise children with positive and respectful characteristics.

Based on these teachings, the family is recognized as a dynamic

and powerful unit in society whose power lies in interpersonal and emotional relationships.

حکم من اهله و حکم من اهلها» (النساء: ۱۹).

“A judge from his family and a judge from her family” (An-Nisa’: 19).

الطَّلُقُ مَرَّتَانٍ فَإِمْسَاكَ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ تَسْرِيحٍ بِإِحْسَانٍ» (البقرة: ۲۲۹).

“Divorce is twice. Then either keep her in an acceptable manner or release her with good treatment.” (Al-Baqarah: 229).

16. The Principles of Iḥsān and Ma’rūf in Marital Relations

The principles of ma’rūf and iḥsān are presented as expressions of methods for dealing with crises in marital relationships. These principles not only help improve relationships in difficult situations but are also considered a correct path for managing separations and divorce. In critical situations where the continuation of married life is impossible, the Qur'an especially advises husbands that in this case, "God's command to husbands is that either live together in perfect benevolence and keep the wife, or release her in perfect courtesy and benevolence": "الطَّلُقُ مَرَّتَانٍ فَإِمْسَاكَ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ تَسْرِيحٍ بِإِحْسَانٍ". "Divorce is [permitted] twice; then either retain [them] in an acceptable manner or release [them] with good treatment. (Al-Baqarah: 229)"

This verse states that divorce is only permitted twice, and in this case, either they should keep the wife with good character and kindness or release her in a proper and courteous manner. This concept demonstrates the importance of preserving the dignity and individual rights of both parties.

The principles of ma’rūf and iḥsān are based on the general principle of human dignity (karāmat insānī). In the Qur'an and Islamic teachings, both genders (male and female) enjoy equal human status. Therefore, in all stages of marriage, whether union or separation,

attention to the human dignity of women is essential.

This principle contains two policy guidelines: Non-Abusive Behavior: The Qur'an does not allow a man to treat his wife disrespectfully. This includes behaviors that damage the woman's dignity and self-esteem. Preserving Dignity During Separation: According to this principle, even during separation, respect and dignity for the other party must be observed. This point not only emphasizes the strengthening of the family but also indicates ethical and humane behavior.

16-1. The Principle of Dialogue and Mutual Understanding in Marital Relations

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In crisis situations, the use of dialogue and mutual understanding as a method for resolving problems and conflicts is also noteworthy. This method allows spouses to discuss matters with each other and reach mutual understanding. For this reason, the Holy Qur'an suggests the principle of arbitration (ḥakamiyyah): "an arbitrator from his people and an arbitrator from her people " (Surah An-Nisa (The Women), Verse 35).

وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ شِقَاقَ بَيْنِهِمَا فَابْعَثُوا حَكَمًا مِّنْ أَهْلِهِ وَحَكَمًا مِّنْ أَهْلِهَا إِنْ يُرِيدَا إِصْلَاحًا يُوَفِّقِ اللَّهُ بَيْنَهُمَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا (النساء: ٣٥).

In general, the principles of preserving the family as a divine covenant, mawaddah (affection) and rahmah (mercy), mu'āsharah bi-l-ma'rūf (kind companionship) and iḥsān (benevolence), and fair dialogue influence various aspects of marital relations. The Holy Qur'an introduces these principles as solutions for achieving a healthy and respectful married life and emphasizes the value of human dignity and ethics in relationships. As a result, by observing these principles, a stronger foundation for families can be achieved, and in times of

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crisis, instead of destruction, steps can be taken to build and repair relationships.

الطَّلَاقُ مَرَّتَانٍ ۖ فَإِمْسَاكٌ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ تَشْرِيحٌ بِإِحْسَانٍ ۗ وَلَا يَجِلُّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَأْخُذُوا بِمَا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ شَيْئًا إِلَّا أَنْ يَخَافَا أَلَّا يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ ۚ فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا يُقِيمَا حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا فِيمَا افْتَدَتْ بِهِ ۚ تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلَا تَعْتَدُوهَا ۚ وَمَنْ يَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ (البقرة: ٢٢٩).

"Divorce is twice. Then, either keep [her] in an acceptable manner or release [her] with good treatment. And it is not lawful for you to take anything of what you have given them, unless both fear that they will not be able to keep [within] the limits of Allah. But if you fear that they will not keep [within] the limits of Allah, then there is no blame upon either of them concerning that by which she ransoms herself. These are the limits of Allah, so do not transgress them. And whoever transgresses the limits of Allah – it is those who are the wrongdoers." (Al baqareh: 229).

17. A Compassionate Perspective of the Quran on Women's Social Roles

17-1. Women as Role Models in the Qur'an

In the Qur'an, the concept of a "role model" (الْقُدْوَة) "al-qudwah or الأُسوة al-uswah (is presented as a key component in education and upbringing. Women who are recognized as positive role models in Islamic and human history play a decisive and central role not only in the arenas of faith and practice but also in the social sphere.

The words al-qudwah (الْقُدْوَة) and al-uswah (الأُسوة) in Arabic mean "model," "example," and "leader." In fact, uswah (أُسوة) refers to a state in which a person chooses to follow another, whether in good behavior or bad behavior. The Holy Qur'an says in a verse:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ (الأحزاب: ٢١).

"There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern". (Al-Ahzab, 33:21).

This verse means that the Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him) is an example to follow in behavior and speech. This concept also applies to women, because in Islamic history, worthy women with unique characteristics have been role models for others. Mr. Subhani writes about the importance of the Qur'an's role modeling: "In every subject that the Qur'an speaks about, it tries to introduce the greatest hero of that subject, a hero who can be the best role model for that subject" (Subhani, 2005, Vol. 13, p. 345).

Similarly, Mr. Makarem writes: "We know that the selection of God's messengers from among human beings is so that they can be role models for nations, because the most important and effective part of the prophets' preaching and invitation is their practical invitations. They must be *أُسْوَةُ النَّاسِ* (*uswat al-nas*) [role models for people] and (*qudwat al-khalq*) [exemplars for creation]" (Makarem Shirazi, 1991, Vol. 1, p. 263).

17-2. Exemplary Women in the Qur'an

The Qur'an refers to influential women in history who, with their good deeds and strong faith, have become role models for future generations. Just as the Holy Qur'an introduces the prophets (peace be upon them) as role models for humanity and considers acting according to their methods and traditions necessary, it has also declared some women as human role models and examples. As Mr. Javadi Amoli writes in this regard: "If a person becomes virtuous, he/she is a role model for other people. If he is a man, he is a role model for people, not just men, and if she is a woman, she is again a role model for people, not just women. The Holy Qur'an has clearly stated this point" (Javadi Amoli, 2007 b, p. 153).

Some of these exemplary women include: Mary (peace be upon her): The mother of Jesus (peace be upon him), she is known as a symbol of purity, faith, and submission to the divine will. Her story in the Qur'an is introduced as a model of faith and devotion for Muslim women. As it is stated in the Qur'an:

وَإِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاكِ وَطَهَّرَكِ وَاصْطَفَاكِ عَلَى نِسَاءِ الْعَالَمِينَ
(آل عمران: ٤٢).

"And [mention] when the angels said, 'O Mary, indeed Allah has chosen you and purified you and chosen you above the women of the worlds.'" (Al 'Imran, 3:42).

God Almighty states three advantages for Mary in this example: A: The first advantage is chastity and purity... In the third example, it speaks of a chaste and pure woman who enjoys both the privilege of a high relationship and respects divine rules to the utmost, and for this reason, she is introduced as a role model (Makarem Shirazi, 1999, Vol. 2, p. 308).

The Wife of Pharaoh: Asiya, the wife of Pharaoh, is an example of resistance and faith who made courageous choices in difficult living conditions. She stood against the oppression and cruelty of her husband and believed in God. As it is stated in the Qur'an:

وَضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا لِّلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا امْرَأَتَ فِرْعَوْنَ إِذْ قَالَتْ رَبِّ ابْنِ لِي عِنْدَكَ بَيْتًا فِي الْجَنَّةِ
وَنَجِّنِي مِنَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَعَمَلِهِ وَنَجِّنِي مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ (الترجم: ١١).

"And Allah presents an example of those who believed: the wife of Pharaoh, when she said, 'My Lord, build for me near You a house in Paradise and save me from Pharaoh and his deeds and save me from the wrongdoing people.'" (At-Tarheem: 11).

The wife of Pharaoh is a name that has become proverbial in

history in defense of God's religion and God's messenger and in the fight against the oppression and tyranny of Pharaoh. This woman, despite enjoying material blessings, has become a "model for women" in spirituality and anti-oppression.

Khadija (peace be upon her): The wife of the Prophet of Islam, she was one of the first people to believe in the prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him) and played an important role in supporting him and promoting the religion of Islam. Khadija is known as a symbol of loyalty and standing by her husband in the most difficult circumstances.

17-3. The Social Impact of Female Role Models

These women were influential not only in individual and spiritual realms but also in the social sphere. Female role models in the Qur'an are presented as symbols of contentment (*qanā'at*), sacrifice (*fidākārī*), courage (*shajā'at*), and resistance against oppression and corruption (*ẓulm va fasād*). Through their behavior and actions, they not only influenced their own society but are also recognized as pioneers and social leaders.

Conclusion

Based on the provided text, the key lessons and principles extracted from the Holy Qur'an regarding the status of women are summarized across three main domains: Creation and Human Identity, Family, and Social Roles. These principles emphasize equality, dignity, and the importance of women's agency in both individual and social spheres.

1. Creation, Identity, and Human Dignity (The Theory of Foundational Equality)

The Qur'an, by emphasizing the "Single Soul" (Nafs

Wahidah), presents a fundamental view of gender equality that bases all human worth and rights on a shared humanity.

A) Unity in Creation and Human Essence: Unity in Origin: Both man and woman were created from a single soul (Nafs), which is the basis for inherent equality and mutual respect, and refutes any inherent superiority of one sex over the other. Identical Primordial Essence: The creation of both sexes was from the same primary matter, explicitly rejecting theories that undermine women's status (such as creation from the left rib). Soul Transcends Gender: According to Ayatollah Javadi Amoli, the human soul is an immaterial reality that is neither masculine nor feminine. Moral perfections are dependent solely on human status, not on gender.

B) Shared Spiritual Dignity and Perfection: Equality Before God: Men and women have equal worth in the eyes of God. Only moral attributes determine ultimate dignity and superiority. Shared Purpose of Creation: Both sexes share the ultimate goal of creation, which is the worship and servitude of God, ensuring equal opportunities for spiritual growth. Shared Responsibility in Fall: In the Qur'anic narrative of the fall, the responsibility for the temptation and the decision to eat from the forbidden tree rested equally upon both Adam and Eve.

C) Justice and Balance of Rights: Balance of Rights and Duties: Islam emphasizes the balance and proportionality of rights and responsibilities based on differing gender capabilities, rather than absolute equality (identicalness). This balance is enacted for Divine Justice, not for inequality. Balance and Proportion in Creation: The concept of *Taswiyah* (proportion and balance) in creation demonstrates the equal importance and honor of both sexes in the Divine design.

2. Dimensions of the Family: Islamic ethical principles establish a foundation for the family institution rooted in affection and respect. Association with Goodness: This principle establishes kindness and just treatment as the cornerstone of marital relations, guaranteeing the observance of women's rights within the family. Affection and Mercy: These two concepts are vital for creating a nurturing family dynamic where love, compassion, and forgiveness flourish, positively influencing the upbringing of future generations. Dialogue in Conflicts: In times of dispute, the Qur'an calls upon both parties to engage in mutual dialogue and understanding so that challenges are managed with dignity and respect.

3. Social Roles: The Qur'an considers the social role of women highly important and presents them as key actors in the moral and social arena. Exemplarity: The concept of taking individuals with outstanding moral conduct as models applies equally to women. Exemplary Women: Figures like Mary (symbol of purity and devotion), Asiya (symbol of courage and resistance against oppression), and Khadijah (symbol of loyalty, perseverance, and support) are introduced as prominent examples of faith and social activism. Social Impact: These exemplary women demonstrate courage, sacrifice, and resistance to injustice, highlighting the vital role of women in the development of ethical values and social change.

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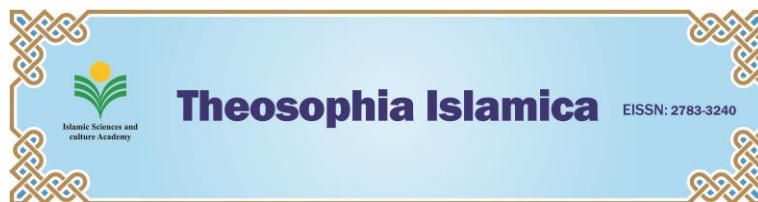
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Fatherhood between Scripture and Society: Examining Religious and External Influences



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Abstract

Fathers today face increasing pressures from work, society, and changing family expectations. In such circumstances, the need for guidance, emotional support, and a redefined sense of responsibility is felt more than ever. This study conducts a comparative textual analysis of fatherhood in the Qur'an, Hadith, and the Bible, integrating Pleck's Involved Fatherhood framework with Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory. Through comparative content analysis of sacred texts, it examines themes such as spouse selection, the wife's role in supporting fatherhood, and external influences on paternal responsibilities. The Qur'an articulates the primary religious and moral duties of fathers, while the Hadith expands these through prescriptive and illustrative guidance. Biblical perspectives are analysed in relation to Qur'anic and Hadith teachings to reveal areas of overlap in paternal ideals as well as

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distinct theological and practical emphases. Findings show that while all three emphasise provision, moral instruction, and emotional engagement, the Qur'an–Hadith relationship uniquely integrates universal theological principles with context-specific behavioural models.

Keywords

Islamic Parenting, Christian Parenting, Fathering in the Quran, Fathering in the Bible, Fathering in Hadith, Bioecological Perspective on Fatherhood.

Introduction¹

The long-term negative consequences of father absence—such as emotional insecurity, behavioral problems, and academic challenges in children—have made the role of fathers a critical issue today (Lee, Pace, Lee, & Knauer, 2018; Cabrera, Tamis-LeMonda, Bradley, Hofferth, & Lamb, 2000). As Pope Francis highlighted, “a society without fathers is a society of orphans” (Catholic News Agency, 2015), emphasizing the profound impacts of absent or disengaged fathers. Historically, fathers were regarded chiefly as financial providers (Mavungu, 2013), yet contemporary research highlights their vital role in fostering children’s emotional, social, and cognitive development. Cabrera et al. (2000) note that evolving family structures, increased maternal labor force participation, and cultural diversity have transformed fatherhood, highlighting the importance of paternal involvement for supporting children’s well-being.

Understanding the consequences of father absence raises a crucial question: what factors influence fathers’ engagement, and how can we foster a more active involvement by fathers?

Fatherhood practices vary widely across cultural traditions, economic circumstances, and neighborhood settings, challenging common negative stereotypes about non-White fathers. Just as masculinities are diverse, so too are fatherhoods: men approach parenting in ways shaped by their family background, economic status, community environment, available support, and levels of stress (Hofferth, 2000).

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This study draws on bioecological systems theory to examine these broader factors, emphasizing how religious, social, cultural and structural contexts collectively shape paternal roles (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; El Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022). Based on these insights, it is reasonable to suggest that educating men, providing social support, and improving economic structures could foster more involved and responsible fathers. Religious traditions further reinforce these responsibilities; Islamic and Christian texts highlight the moral and spiritual value of engaged fatherhood, which will be discussed in detail in this article.

Fatherhood is a fundamental aspect of both Islamic and Christian teachings. The Quran and the Bible offer divine guidance that transcends mere cultural norms, providing a purposeful framework for paternal responsibility. While many cultures emphasize financial provision, these holy scriptures highlight the father's role as a moral guide, mentor, and nurturer, ensuring the holistic development of their children. In a world where many men lack formal parenting education beyond societal expectations, these teachings serve as an invaluable resource, filling the gaps left by cultural traditions. By drawing on these teachings, Muslim and Christian communities—together comprising approximately 3.8 billion people worldwide—can educate and empower fathers, equipping them with the knowledge and responsibility necessary to cultivate stronger, more balanced families rooted in love, wisdom, and faith.

This paper aims to explore the following research questions:

1. What theological principles and prescriptions regarding fatherhood are articulated in the Qur'an and hadith?
2. In what ways do the Qur'anic and Hadith perspectives on fatherhood differ in emphasis, scope, or detail, and how are they complementary or mutually reinforcing?

3. What teachings on fatherhood are found in the Bible, and how do they compare to Islamic sources?
4. How can scriptural models of fatherhood (Islamic and Christian) be applied to contemporary discussions on paternal involvement, family relationships, and child-rearing in both religious and secular contexts?
5. According to Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory, how do cultural, community, and family structures interact with religious ideals to shape fatherhood practices today?
6. How does Pleck's Involved Fatherhood framework align with or diverge from the paternal roles described in the Qur'an, Hadith, and Bible?

This study employs a comparative analytical approach, examining the Quran, Hadith, and the Bible as primary sources to explore the concept of fatherhood. The research involves a systematic review of verses, narratives, and theological interpretations pertinent to paternal roles within both religious traditions. Additionally, scholarly commentaries, sociological research, and psychological studies are incorporated to provide further insights and contextual depth.

Historically, theories of child development and parenting largely emphasized mother-centered perspectives, positioning fathers primarily as financial providers and external figures in child development. Early anthropological and sociological studies reinforced this notion, portraying motherhood as central to caregiving while overlooking the father's role in shaping a child's emotional, social, and moral development (Roopnarine & Yildirim, 2019). However, recent decades have witnessed a growing global focus on paternal involvement, driven by evolving gender roles, workplace equality policies, parental leave reforms, and increased recognition of fathers'

contributions to family well-being (Heilman et al., 2017; Levtoev et al., 2015; UNICEF, 2015).

Efforts to quantify paternal involvement have often been limited by a focus on time allocation rather than the quality of father-child interactions. Pleck's (2010) research marked a shift in focus toward the nature and impact of fathers' engagement, arguing that the amount of time fathers spend with their children does not necessarily correlate with developmental outcomes. His revised framework of involved fatherhood introduced a qualitative dimension, emphasizing warmth, sensitivity, and paternal control (Rohner, 2016; Sorkhabi, 2005).

This article builds upon Pleck's (2010) model of involved fatherhood to analyze paternal roles in Islamic and Christian traditions. This framework initially identified three key dimensions of fatherhood, including positive engagement in activities, which involve direct interaction with the child, such as caregiving, play, and shared activities that promote development; accessibility (availability to the child) and responsibility (Lamb et al, 1985). The framework later evolved to include more qualitative aspects of father-child interaction and focused on positive engagement activities, interaction with the child of the more intensive kind likely to promote development, expressions of affection, and control and monitoring, which encompasses parental supervision, decision-making in the child's life, and guidance in behavioral development.

Additionally, Pleck outlines indirect care, which includes responsibilities that contribute to child-rearing without direct interaction, such as arranging for healthcare, education, and financial planning, as well as process responsibility, which highlights a proactive role in parenting, recognizing and addressing the child's needs rather than waiting for external prompts (Doucet, 2006). This framework is used to classify fatherhood involvement as depicted in

scriptural teachings, examining paternal expectations related to marital relationships, emotional availability, material provision, play, prayer, moral and spiritual guidance, and role modeling. At the conclusion of the study, we will assess how these paternal roles align with or diverge from Pleck's framework.

While Pleck's model provides a structured classification of fatherhood involvement, this study also incorporates the bioecological systems' theories of development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; El Zaatari & Maalouf, 2022) to explore the broader factors influencing fatherhood in religious traditions. This framework shifts the focus from individual father-child interactions to the larger systems that shape paternal roles, emphasizing the religious, cultural, and structural influences on fatherhood.

This approach is particularly relevant in understanding how Islamic and Christian teachings on fatherhood interact with societal expectations, family structures, and government policies. At the most immediate level, the microsystem involves direct father-child relationships, including emotional availability, play, and caregiving. The mesosystem extends to the influence of marriage, spousal support, and religious institutions in shaping a father's role within the family. The exosystem encompasses external factors such as workplace policies, economic pressures, and community expectations regarding paternal involvement, all of which can either support or hinder a father's ability to fulfill his parenting duties. At a broader level, the macrosystem comprises the overarching cultural and religious frameworks that define the father's role, including scriptural guidance on leadership and spiritual upbringing. Finally, the chronosystem accounts for how fatherhood has evolved over time, particularly in response to societal shifts in gender roles and parental responsibilities.

By integrating Pleck's (2010) framework of involved fatherhood to classify fatherhood involvement and Bronfenbrenner & Morris's (2006) Bioecological Model of human development to examine the broader factors shaping paternal roles, this study provides a comprehensive perspective on religious fatherhood. The analysis bridges scriptural teachings with contemporary sociological and psychological insights, allowing for a nuanced understanding of how Islamic and Christian traditions define fatherhood and how external influences such as culture, community, and legal structures impact paternal responsibilities.

The Quran and the Bible both emphasize the essential role of fathers in providing, guiding, and nurturing their children. In the Quran, fathers are entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring their family's well-being (Al-Baqarah 2:233) and imparting moral and spiritual values (Ash-Shu'ara: 214-215). The wisdom of Luqman highlights the importance of ethical teaching and righteous living (Luqman:12-19). Similarly, the Bible calls fathers to raise their children in God's ways (Ephesians 6:4), offering instruction and discipline grounded in wisdom and righteousness (Proverbs 1:8; 4:1-4). The teachings of Jesus further emphasize compassionate fatherhood, reflecting God's loving nature (Luke 11:11-13; Matthew 7:9-11).

Understanding the perspectives on fatherhood in the Quran, Hadith, and Bible, as well as the factors influencing paternal roles, is significantly important. This study enriches scholarly knowledge by examining the religious foundations and teachings that define fatherhood, and by exploring the external influences that shape paternal responsibilities. Due to the scope of this research, the study does not examine government policies or economic factors. Instead, it focuses on how family dynamics—including a man's spouse and extended family—as well as religious communities and prominent

religious figures, impact paternal performance. By analyzing the similarities and differences in these descriptions and considering the role of family and religious influences on paternal responsibilities, this study offers a deeper understanding of the complex and evolving nature of fatherhood within religious and social contexts.

1. The Quranic Perspective on Fatherhood: Key Principles of Involved Fatherhood

In Islamic theology, the concept of fatherhood holds great significance and is rooted in the Quran, the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (S), and the conduct of the Shia Imams. These sacred sources define a father's roles, responsibilities, and moral obligations. The Qur'an establishes the foundational vision of fatherhood in Islam, outlining broad moral, spiritual, and social responsibilities such as provision, guidance, and moral example. The Hadith literature builds upon this foundation, translating these principles into tangible, everyday practices through the Prophet's and his progeny's own words and actions. While the Qur'an offers the overarching framework, the Hadith provides the lived blueprint, making the two sources not only complementary but inseparable in forming a holistic Islamic model of paternal responsibility.

As part of the macrosystem in Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory, a father's religious beliefs shape his sense of accountability, reinforcing his role in both the material and spiritual upbringing of his children (Tong & An, 2024).

The Quran and Islamic teachings recognize the pivotal role of fathers in the procreation and holistic development of their children. The Quran emphasizes the obligation of fathers to ensure their family's material well-being, as illustrated in *Surah Talaq* (65:6), where financial support (*nafaqah*) is mandated even in cases of

divorce. Beyond material provision, Islam underscores the importance of emotional connection and support, with Prophet Muhammad stating, “The most faithful of people is the one who has the best character and is the kindest to his family, and I am the kindest among you to my family”. (*Ibn Bābawayh* (AS), Vol. 2, p. 38, Hadith 109) This guidance encourages fathers to cultivate loving and caring relationships, promoting an atmosphere of trust and affection.

Additionally, fathers are called upon to impart religious and ethical knowledge, teaching their children wisdom and responsibility towards Allah and humanity, as exemplified in the advice of Luqman to his son (Luqman: 13-19). Imam Sajjad (AS), the 4th Shia Imam, emphasizes in his *Treatise on Rights* the father's responsibility in raising children with good morals. He states that a child is a reflection of the father's guidance, both in good and bad deeds. The father must educate the child in proper conduct, guide them toward obedience to God, and be accountable for their upbringing, knowing he will be rewarded or held accountable for his actions.

In Islam, the primary responsibility for raising children lies with the father, as he is considered the head of the household and ultimately accountable for the family's well-being. While the father retains his role as the primary guardian and decision-maker, he may entrust specific responsibilities—such as educational and moral guidance—to the mother, other relatives, or trusted individuals. This structure allows for a more comprehensive approach to child-rearing, while ensuring that the father retains his central role in the child's upbringing and is held accountable for their welfare.

By fulfilling the following obligations, involved fathers foster an environment conducive to the positive development of their children and the strength of the family unit, ensuring the nurturing of well-rounded individuals and future generations:

2. Thoughtful Spousal Selection and Establishing a Positive Marital Relationship: A Foundation for Involved Fatherhood

The concept of fatherhood, as outlined in Islamic teachings, begins even before marriage. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) imparted enduring wisdom in his saying: "تَزَوُّجُوا فِي الْحُسْنِ فَإِنَّ الْعِرْقَ دَسَّاسٌ" ("Marry into good and virtuous families, for lineage has a lasting impact"). This guidance emphasizes that fatherhood starts with the careful choice of a spouse, as the character of a family profoundly affects future generations. By prioritizing integrity and virtue, prospective fathers lay the groundwork for a legacy rooted in foresight and responsibility. From the perspective of Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Systems Theory, the spousal relationship functions within the microsystem, serving as a primary influence on a father's involvement in parenting. As one of the closest interpersonal interactions, it directly impacts a father's ability to fulfill his paternal responsibilities, shaping his level of engagement, emotional availability, and role within the family structure (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

Islamic teachings highlight that a strong and compassionate marital bond is central to effective fatherhood. Imam Baqir (AS) narrates that the Messenger of God (PBUH) said: Gabriel (peace be upon him) counseled me so extensively about women that I thought they should not be divorced except in the case of clear adultery. This narration underscores the esteemed position of women within the family and the respect, dignity, and honor a husband is obliged to show his believing wife. (Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī, 1993, Vol. 3, p. 440)

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasized the right of a child upon their father, highlighting the importance of respecting and honoring the child's mother: "The right of a child upon their father is that... if she is a daughter, he should honor her mother..." (Mohammadi Reyshahri, 2009a). Furthermore, the Quran in Surah An-Nisa (An-Nisa:19)

advises treating one's wife with kindness and fairness, stating: "And live with them (your wives) in kindness. For if you dislike them - perhaps you dislike a thing and Allah makes therein much good." This verse reflects the integral role a harmonious spousal relationship plays in fostering a nurturing family environment, which in turn benefits children.

Research consistently shows that the quality of parents' marital relationship plays a crucial role in child development. Children whose parents experienced consistently poor marital quality exhibited more internalizing and externalizing problems, poorer health, lower math and vocabulary scores, and lower-quality home environments compared to children of parents in higher-quality marriages (James et al, 2022). For mothers, higher satisfaction, reduced conflict, and better communication were linked to secure attachment and less dependency in children, while for fathers, higher premarital conflict and poorer communication were associated with increased child dependency. These findings underscore the importance of a healthy, supportive relationship both before and after the child's birth in promoting positive outcomes for children¹. (Howes & Markman, 1989).

The Supporting Healthy Marriages (SHM) project in the US offered relationship education to over 600 financially disadvantaged couples, focusing on communication, conflict resolution, and relationship enhancement. Evaluations conducted when their children were 12- and 30-months old revealed that participating fathers reported enhanced relationship satisfaction and reduced issues related to

1. Thirty-nine parents (from 20 families) with children aged 1 to 3 years participated in the study by completing assessments of marital satisfaction, conflict, and communication at two points in time: before marriage and 3 to 5 years after the birth of their child.

substance use compared to the control group. Additionally, couple and relationship skills education programs, as seen in studies, had positive effects on co-parenting, communication, and relationship quality (Lundquist et al., 2014; Stanley et al., 2014).

3. Material Provision

The Quran recognizes fathers as providers for their families, emphasizing their responsibility to ensure the material and financial well-being of their children. Fathers are encouraged to strive for sustenance through lawful means and to fulfill the basic needs of their families.

The Quran emphasizes the shared responsibility of parents in nurturing their children, as highlighted in Surah (Al-Baqarah: 233):

"Mothers may breastfeed their children for two whole years, for those who wish to complete the nursing. The father is responsible for their provision and clothing in a fair manner. No soul is burdened beyond its capacity. Neither the mother nor the father should be made to suffer because of their child..."

This verse highlights the complementary responsibilities of both parents in ensuring the child's well-being. While mothers are primarily responsible for nurturing the child through breastfeeding, fathers are tasked with providing the material needs, such as food and clothing, to support this process. The verse also stresses fairness and compassion, ensuring that neither parent is overburdened or harmed in fulfilling their duties, emphasizing the balanced and shared approach to parenting in Islam.

Surah (Talaq: 6) emphasizes the responsibility of fathers to financially support their pregnant ex-wives during the 'Iddah (waiting period in divorce), ensuring they are housed and provided for

according to the father's means. This commandment seeks to prevent the feminization of poverty and alleviate the financial burdens often imposed on women and children during divorce. Additionally, fathers are instructed to avoid causing harm to the mother or child in any way. The waiting period ends upon the woman's delivery, and if she chooses to breastfeed, the father must compensate her. Regarding decisions about the child, the parents should consult one another with respect and courtesy. In practice, however, divorce often breeds animosity between spouses, leading to further harm for the children and exacerbating an already difficult situation.

4. The Importance of Lawful Sustenance in Fatherhood

Although fathers are responsible for providing for their young children, it is impermissible to sustain them with ill-gotten wealth. Imam Sadiq (AS) cautioned: «كَسْبُ الْحَرَامِ يَبِينُ فِي الدُّرِّيَّةِ» (The effects of unlawful earnings manifest in one's descendants.) This teaching underscores the long-lasting consequences of using illicit means for provision. (Al-Kulayni, 1984, Vol. 5, p. 125).

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) stated: «مَنْ طَلَبَ [الرِّزْقَ فِي] الدُّنْيَا ... لَقِيَ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَوَجْهُهُ مِثْلُ الْقَمَرِ لَيْلَةً اشْتَعَفَا عَنْ النَّاسِ وَتَوَسَّعاً عَلَى أَهْلِهِ» (Whoever seeks sustenance in this world to remain independent of others and to provide comfort for his family will meet Allah Almighty on the Day of Resurrection with his face shining like the full moon.) (Al-Kulayni, 1984, Vol. 5, p. 78).

Furthermore, Imam Reza (AS) highlights the obligation of those blessed with wealth to be generous towards their family, stating: «يَنْبَغِي لِلرَّجُلِ أَنْ يُوسِّعَ عَلَى عِيَالِهِ لِئَلَّا يَتَمَنَّوْا مَوْتَهُ» (It is appropriate for a man to be generous towards his family so that they do not wish for his death.) (Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī, 1993, Vol. 2, p. 68).

5. Emotional Availability

One of the most significant responsibilities of fatherhood is the expression of love and affection toward children. Imam Sadiq (AS) narrates a profound conversation between Prophet Musa (AS) and Allah: « قَالَ مُوسَى بْنُ عِمْرَانَ يَا رَبِّ أَيُّ الْأَعْمَالِ أَفْضَلُ عِنْدَكَ فَقَالَ حُبُّ الْأَطْفَالِ فَإِنِّي « فَطَرْتُهُمْ عَلَى تَوْحِيدِي ("Moses, son of Imran, said: O Lord, which deed is most superior in Your sight? Allah replied: Loving children, for I have created them upon My oneness.").

(al-Barqī, 1992, Vol. 1, p. 293) This narration highlights that the love for children is not just a noble act but a reflection of their divine nature, which is inherently inclined toward Allah's oneness. By showing love and affection, fathers fulfill their divine responsibility and create an environment that nurtures their children with compassion, faith, and a deeper sense of alignment with Allah's oneness and divine purpose.

Expressing love to one's child and engaging in acts such as kissing them serves as a tangible demonstration of emotional availability because these gestures convey affection, warmth, and attentiveness. Emotional availability refers to a parent's ability to be present, responsive, and connected to their child's emotional needs. When a father openly expresses love, it sends a powerful message of acceptance and support, fostering a sense of security and trust in the child.

Kissing a child is not merely a physical act but a symbolic gesture of care and bonding. It demonstrates that the parent values and cherishes the child, reinforcing their emotional well-being. Such actions help children feel seen, loved, and prioritized, which are critical components of a nurturing parent-child relationship.

The importance of kindness and love for children is so paramount in Islam that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) equated it

with true faith. He said: «لَيْسَ مِنَّا مَنْ لَمْ يَرْحَمْ صَغِيرَنَا وَ لَمْ يُوقِّرْ كَبِيرَنَا» ("He is not one of us who does not show mercy to our young and does not respect our elders.") (Tabarsi, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 168). Among the various forms of expressing love, special emphasis has been placed on kissing one's children. The Prophet (PBUH) stated: «مَنْ قَبَّلَ وَلَدَهُ كَتَبَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ لَهُ» ("Whoever kisses their child, Allah the Almighty writes a good deed for them.") (Al-Kulaynī, Al-Kafi, Vol. 6, p. 49). Such acts of affection are encouraged as they strengthen the bond between parent and child while simultaneously earning divine rewards.

It is every child's right to be nourished with the love and care of their parents. The absence of affection, whether through neglect or deliberate coldness, can have dire consequences for both the child and the parents. Imam Sadiq (AS) narrated: «جَاءَ رَجُلٌ إِلَى النَّبِيِّ ص فَقَالَ لَهُ مَا « قَبَلْتُ صَبِيًّا قَطُّ فَلَمَّا وَلَّى قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ص هَذَا رَجُلٌ عِنْدَنَا أَنَّهُ مِنْ أَهْلِ النَّارِ » ("A man came to the Prophet (PBUH) and said, 'I have never kissed a child.' When the man left, the Prophet said, 'This man is among the people of Hellfire in our view.'") (Majlisī, 1985, Vol. 13, p. 227). This powerful narration serves as a reminder of the spiritual and moral weight of a father's love, emphasizing that such expressions of kindness are not only crucial for the well-being of children but also for the eternal salvation of parents.

The conversation between Luqman and his son mentioned in the Quran (Luqman: 12-19) indeed demonstrates the love, care, and kindness of Luqman towards his son. Luqman imparts valuable advice and wisdom to his son, using the term "my son" (or "O my son") multiple times throughout the verses, which signifies his affectionate and paternal approach.

While the Quran does not include all of Luqman's specific words to his son, it portrays a conversation imbued with wisdom, care, and guidance. Luqman's advice addresses essential aspects of life,

including devotion to Allah, moral integrity, the avoidance of wrongdoing, and humility. The loving and compassionate nature of their relationship is reflected in the gentle tone of his counsel, as he begins with, 'O my son,' emphasizing the closeness and concern inherent in their dialogue.

Another instance of fatherly love in the Quran is Prophet Ya'qub's (Jacob) deep bond with his son Yusuf (Joseph), a relationship highlighted in Surah Yusuf (12). The Quranic narrative highlights the rich emotional bond between father and son through various events — such as the jealousy of Yusuf's brothers (Yusuf: 5, 8,17) and the tragic incident of Yusuf's apparent loss — which caused Jacob to grieve for years, even to the point of losing his sight. (Al-Inshiqaq: 12). This emotional attachment was not based on superficial or futile reasons, but rather on the exceptional virtues and unique qualities that Jacob recognized in Yusuf (Al-An'am: 12). As a wise and spiritually perceptive father, Jacob saw in his son qualities which set him apart from his brothers. For instance, Yusuf's dream, where celestial bodies prostrated to him (An-Nisa: 12), was a symbol of his future greatness and the special place he held in his father's heart.

In contemporary contexts, such as in Sweden, the principle of emotional availability and caregiving is reflected in parental leave policies, which can be understood within the exosystem of bioecological systems' theories of development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The exosystem includes external structures and policies that shape fatherhood by influencing the conditions under which fathers engage in parenting. Sweden grants fathers parental leave based on the belief that parenting should not rest solely on mothers and that fathers should equally engage in caregiving from birth. By implementing such policies, governments aim to reshape societal attitudes toward fatherhood and encourage men to take on a more active role in child-

rearing. However, despite offering a generous one-year paid leave for childcare, only 5% of fathers have utilized it, leading the government to consider making such leave mandatory to ensure that policy efforts translate into real changes in paternal involvement (Gardner, 2017, p. 114). This reflects how structural interventions alone may not be sufficient to shift deep-seated cultural attitudes toward fatherhood and must be accompanied by broader social and familial acceptance of paternal engagement.

6. Playing with the Child

Fathers' active participation in play during a child's early years plays a pivotal role in fostering their social, emotional, and cognitive development. Research underscores the profound benefits of such interactions, highlighting the importance of nurturing positive and playful engagements. To maximize these advantages, it is imperative for policymakers and practitioners to create initiatives and resources that empower both fathers and mothers to engage meaningfully with their infants, thereby contributing to healthier and more well-rounded development (Amodia-Bidakowska et al, 2020).

Islamic teachings place great emphasis on the value of playing with children as a way to foster love, respect, and emotional connection. It is narrated that whenever the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) returned from a journey and encountered children, he would stop to engage with them. He would embrace some, place others on his back or shoulders, and instruct his companions: "Carry the children and let them sit on your shoulders." The Prophet's playful interactions with his son Ibrahim and Imam Hussain (AS), such as seating them on his knees and kissing them, exemplify his deep affection and the significance he placed on connecting with children through play.

Islamic teachings also highlight the developmental importance of play. Imam Musa al-Kadhim (AS) stated that playful children grow into patient adults, while Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (AS) advised allowing children to play freely until the age of seven (Al-Kāfī, Vol. 6, p. 51, as cited in Mohammadi Rey Shahri, 2009). Play is more than mere recreation; it is a fundamental element of lifelong learning and growth. The Prophet's example—pausing to honor and engage with children and encouraging others to do the same—offers a timeless model for nurturing emotional and cognitive development through the simple yet profound act of play.

7. Praying for Righteous Children

A devoted father's perspective extends beyond the present, considering the well-being of his children long before their conception and into future generations. This foresight is captured in the Qur'anic verse:

“Our Lord! Grant us joy and comfort in our spouses and offspring, and make us leaders of the Godwary.” (Al-Furqan: 74).

This verse reflects the deep anticipation and preparation of the righteous for their descendants, emphasizing a desire for harmony and piety within the family. Similarly, Prophet Ibrahim's supplication highlights this commitment:

“Lord, make me steadfast in prayer, and from my descendants as well. Our Lord, accept my supplication.” (Ibrahim: 40).

The importance of prayers is further underscored by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), who said: “The prayer of a parent for their child is like the prayer of a prophet for their nation.” (Tabarsi, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 282) Additionally, the Prophet (PBUH) stated: “May Allah have mercy on a person who helps their child in righteousness by forgiving

their faults and praying for them in private.” (Al-Majlisi, Vol. 104, p. 98, Hadith 70). This highlights the immense spiritual significance of a parent's supplication and forgiveness for their children.

Imam Sajjad (AS), in his supplication to Allah regarding his children, expressed profound prayers, saying:

“O Allah, favor me by preserving my children, granting them righteousness, and making them a source of benefit for me. Lengthen their lives and increase their years, nurture their young, strengthen their weak, safeguard their health, religion, and character, and grant them well-being in their bodies, faith, and endeavors. Bestow upon them sustenance through me and by my hand. O Allah, make all my children virtuous, pious, perceptive, and obedient to You, loving to Your friends, and hostile to Your enemies. Amen! O Allah, make them affectionate toward me, loving and supportive of me, and steadfast in helping me. Make them obedient to me, not rebellious or defiant, and keep them away from error and opposition. O Allah, grant me success in raising and nurturing them with goodness, and protect me and my children from the harm of the accursed Satan.” (Imam Ali Ibn Al-Husayn, p. 105, Supplication 25).

This heartfelt supplication exemplifies the profound commitment of Islamic parenting to nurturing a child's holistic well-being—spiritual, physical, and emotional. It underscores the sacred responsibility of parents to intercede on behalf of their children through sincere prayer, to cultivate their character through forgiveness and guidance, and to establish a foundation of righteous upbringing that aligns with divine principles.

8. Fathers, the Best Role Models

This element, not explicitly addressed by Pleck (2010), is an addition

by the researcher, drawn from the teachings of the Quran, Hadith, and the Bible. Being a role model encompasses all other concepts—engagement in activities, warmth, and control. Fathers who act as positive role models demonstrate their values through actions, such as showing kindness, fairness, and respect in their interactions. They embody warmth by expressing love, affection, and emotional support toward their children. Moreover, they respond to their children's needs by actively listening, offering guidance, and providing support rooted in their values and life experiences.

Imam Ali (AS) stated, "By Allah, I do not encourage you to do any act of obedience except that I have already performed it myself, and I do not forbid you from any wrongdoing except that I have avoided it before you." (Salih, 1995, sermon 175) This hadith underscores that fathers should lead by example, embodying integrity, humility, and piety, inspiring their children to follow the path of goodness through their actions, rather than just words.

Garbarino (2000), a renowned psychologist and child development expert, emphasizes the spiritual dimension of a father's role as a role model. He argues that the focus should not merely be on a father's physical presence or absence but on how well he fulfills his spiritual purpose, crafting a life story that serves as an inspiring and meaningful example for his child.

9. Demonstrating Justice and Fairness: A Father's Role in Setting an Example

One of the most critical aspects of fatherhood in setting a good role model for his children is manifested in how he demonstrates justice and equality. In Islamic teachings, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) repeatedly emphasized the importance of fairness in treating one's children. Justice between children fosters mutual respect and

strengthens familial bonds while instilling the value of equity in the next generation.

It is narrated that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was once sitting with his companions when he saw a man with two children. The man kissed one child but not the other. Observing this, the Prophet (PBUH) gently questioned the man about his behavior and asked, “Why did you not treat them equally by showing the same affection to both?” This gentle reminder underscores the importance of fairness in all interactions with children.

The Prophet (PBUH) also stated: “Indeed, Allah Almighty loves that you act justly among your children, even in showing affection through kisses.” The significance of fairness extends beyond affection to material gifts. It is reported that the Prophet (PBUH) said, “Be just among your children in giving gifts. If I were to prefer anyone, I would have preferred daughters.” In another instance, a man told the Prophet (PBUH) that he had given a gift to one of his children but not to the others. The Prophet (PBUH) responded, “Fear Allah and act justly among your children.”

These teachings highlight that fairness and equality in all dealings with children are essential for maintaining harmony and earning divine favor. By modeling justice in their actions, fathers not only fulfill their responsibilities but also instill critical values of fairness and respect in their children, setting a strong moral example for them to emulate.

10. Moral and Spiritual Guidance

Fathers are tasked with imparting moral and spiritual teachings to their children. The Quran and hadith emphasize the importance of guiding children on the path of righteousness, instilling values of faith,

honesty, compassion, and justice. Fathers are encouraged to lead by example and to establish a strong moral foundation within the family unit.

Surah Al-Tahrim highlights the responsibility of believers to protect themselves and their families from the consequences of wrongdoing (from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones). Fathers, as the heads of their households, play a crucial role in instilling the fear of Allah, guiding their families towards righteousness, and protecting them from spiritual harm. (Al-Tahrim: 6).

According to a narration from Imam Sadiq (AS), when this verse was revealed, a man from among the Muslims sat down and wept, saying, "I am incapable of protecting myself; now I am also made responsible for my family!"

The Prophet of God (PBUH) said: "It is sufficient for you to command them to do what you are commanded to do and to forbid them from what you are forbidden." (Mohammadi Reyshahri, 2009b).

Elsewhere in the Quran, in surah Ibrahim (Ibrahim :40), the concern of a father in maintaining prayers which is considered as the pillar of faith is mentioned. Here, Prophet Ibrahim voices his concern over his children's faithfulness and their steadfastness in establishing prayers as it "restrains from indecent and wrongful conduct" (Ankabut: 45).

The Quran often cites the story of Prophet Ibrahim as a model of exemplary fatherhood. Ibrahim's unwavering faith, patience, and devotion to God serve as an inspiration for fathers to embody these qualities and transmit them to their children.

Surah Baqarah (Baqarah: 124) beautifully illustrates Ibrahim's fatherly role, depicting his deep concern for the spiritual well-being of his children and future generations. In this verse, after fulfilling a series of divine commands, Ibrahim asks God if His covenant extends

to his descendants. God responds, "My pledge does not extend to the unjust," underscoring that the spiritual responsibility of fatherhood goes beyond immediate needs, focusing on guiding future generations toward righteousness. This exchange highlights Ibrahim's awareness of the broader responsibility he carries not only for his own spiritual growth but also for the well-being of his descendants and society as a whole. It illustrates the importance of a father's role in shaping the spiritual development of future generations.

Surah Al-Isra (Al-Isra: 80) features a profound supplication by Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham), where he asks Allah for steadfastness in his journey: "And say: My Lord! Cause me to come in with a firm incoming and to go out with a firm outgoing. And give me from Thy presence a sustaining Power." This verse emphasizes the importance of spiritual resilience. It highlights that a father's spiritual guidance is most effective when he exemplifies the values he teaches, setting a practical model for his children. Therefore, before guiding others, a father must first focus on his own spiritual development, ensuring that his actions align with the principles he imparts to his children.

Another instance of father's spiritual guidance is seen in Surah Luqman (Luqman:12-19). Although Luqman is not a prophet, his wisdom and teachings have been included in the Quran as a source of inspiration and guidance.

In these verses, Luqman advises his son with profound wisdom and teaches him important principles:

1. *Tawhid* (Monotheism): Luqman instructs his son to worship and associate nothing with Allah.
2. Avoiding *Shirk* (Polytheism): Luqman cautions his son against associating partners with Allah.
3. Accountability for Actions: Luqman teaches his son that even

the weight of a mustard seed's worth of good or evil will be brought forth on the Day of Judgment. He emphasizes that Allah is aware of all actions and is subtle and acquainted with everything.

4. Establishing Prayer and Promoting Goodness: Luqman advises his son to establish prayer, enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong, and remain patient in the face of adversity. He highlights the importance of adhering to righteousness and maintaining perseverance

These verses, among others in the Quran, emphasize the importance of fathers providing moral and spiritual guidance to their children. They highlight the role of fathers in protecting their families from spiritual harm, and adherence to the teachings of Allah, seeking strength and guidance from Allah, and prioritizing enduring good deeds.

The Quran highlights several prophets as exemplary father figures, offering valuable lessons in guidance and moral responsibility. Prophet Adam, as the father of humanity, teaches repentance and divine guidance (Al-Baqarah: 30-39). Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) exemplifies obedience and sacrifice, particularly in his willingness to follow God's command concerning his son (Al-Safat: 102-109). Prophet Ishaq (Isaac) is revered for his righteous lineage (Maryam: 49-50), while Prophet Ya'qub (Jacob) demonstrates wisdom and fairness in managing family challenges (Yusuf: 5-6). Prophet Shu'ayb is known for raising two wise and chaste daughters and choosing Prophet Musa (Moses) as his son-in-law (Al-A'raf: 85, Al-Qasas: 25-28). Prophet Nuh (Noah) remains dedicated to guiding his son despite rejection (Surah Hud: 45-47), and Prophet Lut (Lot) is concerned for his daughters' and community's well-being (Al-Hijr: 71). Lastly, Prophet Muhammad's role in guiding his family spiritually reflects his fatherly responsibility (Al-

Shu'ara: 214). These prophets provide diverse examples of fatherhood, emphasizing spiritual guidance, compassion, and moral leadership.

Each of these prophets provides unique insights into the multifaceted aspects of fatherhood, encompassing traits like obedience to God, sacrifice, resilience, guidance, justice, and care, offering timeless lessons for generations.

11. Naming the Child

An instance of the father's role is guiding the child in spiritual growth is naming him/her as it reflects a father's responsibility to provide a positive foundation for the child's identity. For instance, when Allah gave Prophet Zakariya (AS) the glad tidings of a son, He revealed to him: "O Zakariya, indeed We give you good tidings of a boy whose name will be Yahya. We have not assigned to any before [him] this name." (Maryam: 7). This highlights the divine emphasis on the uniqueness and virtue of a name.

In a narration, Imam Musa al-Kadhim (AS) said: "The first act of kindness a man bestows upon his child is to give them a good name. So, let each of you choose a beautiful and good name for your child." (Al-Hurr al-'Āmilī, 1994, Vol. 21, p. 389) This statement underscores that choosing a meaningful and virtuous name is an initial act of benevolence, shaping the child's sense of self and aligning their identity with values of dignity and righteousness.

12. Reproached Fatherhood in the Quran

In the Quran, narratives unfold to reveal diverse familial relationships, including instances that shed light on challenging or negative interactions between fathers and their children. While the Quran extols the virtues of kind, supportive, and righteous parents, it also presents

accounts of fathers whose actions or attitudes serve as cautionary examples.

Surah Luqman (Luqman:13-19) offers a profound dialogue between Luqman and his son, where Luqman imparts invaluable wisdom. Within this exchange (verse 15), there's counsel for children when faced with parental encouragement toward actions contrary to faith or righteousness. It illustrates the importance of staying steadfast in faith while maintaining respect for parents, even if they deviate from the path of righteousness.

The Quran also touches upon the disappointment some fathers expressed upon the birth of daughters. Surah An-Nahl (An-Nahl: 58-59) conveys the negative reaction some fathers exhibited upon the arrival of a female child, underscoring the need to challenge such cultural biases.

Moreover, Surah Al-Isra (Al-Isra: 31) addresses the reprehensible act of killing children out of fear of poverty, condemning it as a grave sin. The verse underscores the sanctity of life and rebukes the abhorrent practice of infanticide, emphasizing that God provides for both parents and children.

In the story of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) and his father Azar (Maryam: 41-48), there's a depiction of a father (or uncle according to some interpreters) who adamantly rejects the guidance of his righteous son. Azar's disbelief and resistance to accepting the truth conveyed by Prophet Ibrahim serve as an example of familial opposition to faith and righteousness.

According to the Quran, the most important duty of a father is spiritual guidance. This duty is neglected by many fathers especially in today's life. According to a narration in Mustadrak al-Wasā'il (Nūrī, n.d., Vol. 15, p. 164, Hadith 17871), it has been narrated that the Prophet

Muhammad, looked at some children and said, 'Woe to the children of the end of times from the hands of their fathers!' It was asked, 'O Prophet of God! From their polytheist fathers?' He replied, 'No, from their believing fathers who do not teach them what is obligatory, and when their children seek knowledge themselves, they hold them back, content with a little of the world for them. I detest them, and they detest me.'

When juxtaposing this account with verse 46 from Surah Kahf, which underscores that worldly possessions and offspring embellish this temporal life while lasting virtuous acts hold greater favor and promise with the divine, it becomes evident that another hazard for fathers, as highlighted in the Quran, lies in deviating away from the path of monotheism while nurturing their children. Fathers mustn't prioritize worldly pleasures as life's paramount objective; instead, in steering their families, they ought to continually reiterate this fundamental truth.

The examples highlighted in the Quran reflect both the reverence owed to parents in general and, in certain instances, spotlight the dynamics involving fathers specifically. While the Quran stresses the overarching importance of respecting and showing kindness to both parents, particular narratives delve into the nuances of father-child relationships. These narratives offer insight into the challenges, conflicts, and differing beliefs that can emerge within father-child relationships while emphasizing the overarching principles of reverence and righteousness.

13. The Biblical Perspective on Fatherhood

It mentions the absence of fathers in today's societies and adds:

A father possessed of a clear and serene masculine identity who

demonstrates affection and concern for his wife is just as necessary as a caring mother. (Francis, 2016, p. 133)

Two pivotal focal points of our investigation revolve around the significance of paternal roles in the life of children and the impact of religiosity on parenting. The initial emphasis underscores that the absence of fathers is a fundamental factor contributing to family dysfunctionality. This absence significantly impacts various aspects such as suicide rates, juvenile delinquency, behavioral issues, homelessness among children, and increased school dropouts. These outcomes are notably influenced by the lack of paternal presence within the family unit (Freeks, 2017).

The second point is that Parental dedication to religion, particularly during difficult times, often correlates with several positive family outcomes. This includes reduced stress among parents, increased satisfaction in their parenting roles, and improved harmony in marriages (Mahoney et al, 2001). Research suggests that these positive effects are due to parents attributing sacred value to their roles, endowing everyday parenting tasks with spiritual significance. This perspective helps them perceive challenges as more manageable, worthwhile, and rewarding, while also enhancing their ability to adapt (El-Khani & Calam, 2018). In fact, Prophet Ibrahim could go through the test of his son's sacrifice through his monotheistic beliefs (Genesis 22:1-19). Moreover, a man who does not strive to provide for his family is considered as an unbeliever (1 Timothy 5:8) hence, imagine the spiritual status of a man who comes home with his hands filled with grocery bags to make his family happy.

In the Bible, fathers hold a significant role that extends beyond mere parentage. They are portrayed as central figures responsible for modeling Godly character, Disciplining and spiritually guiding with love, protecting the family and providing for its material and spiritual

needs, praying for and blessing children and building family unity. The biblical concept of fatherhood emphasizes instilling moral values and faith in their offspring.

Numerous biblical narratives, such as the story of Abraham and Isaac, Jacob and his sons, or the parable of the prodigal son, illustrate the multifaceted roles of fathers in shaping the lives and destinies of their children. These narratives often highlight the importance of paternal guidance, love, and the transmission of faith and values from one generation to the next. We will deal with each of these fatherly roles, responsibilities and personalities in the following section.

14. Cultivation of a Healthy Bond with One's Wife

Foremost among a father's responsibilities lies the cultivation of a healthy bond with his spouse. Regardless of a father's dedication to his children or the extent of his supportive role, the bedrock of family life hinges upon the strength of the marital relationship. As articulated in Ephesians 5:25 of the Bible, 'Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and sacrificed himself for her,' this verse underscores the paramount importance of a husband's affection and self-sacrifice for his wife. It underscores the pivotal role of conjugal love and commitment in nurturing a thriving and harmonious family milieu.

In Christian teachings, a strong spousal relationship is built on mutual respect, love, and understanding. According to 1 Peter 3:7, husbands are called to honor their wives and treat them with understanding, while wives are encouraged to respect their husbands (Ephesians 5:33). 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 further emphasizes that love should be patient, kind, and free from selfishness or arrogance, reflecting the enduring commitment between spouses. Colossians 3:18-19 defines

love within marriage as selfless, urging wives to submit to their husbands and husbands to love their wives with a sacrificial, Christ-like love. Together, these biblical principles show that a godly marriage, based on mutual love and respect, serves as the foundation for a healthy and thriving future generation.

Research shows the connection between parents' marital quality and their adult children's attitudes toward various family issues, such as premarital sex, cohabitation, singlehood, and divorce. It is suggested that better marital quality in parents is linked to lower support from children for these behaviors in adulthood (Cunningham & Thornton, 2006). Hence, the stronger the marital bond is cultivated between a couple, the more the chances of the adult children of these couples to establish strong families and build a stronger and healthier society.

15. A Father Provides and Protects:

The Bible recognizes the responsibility of fathers to provide for the physical and emotional needs of their families. This includes providing for basic necessities, ensuring a safe and loving environment, and protecting their loved ones. Apostle Paul writes in 1 Timothy 5:8, 'But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.' This verse explicitly mentions the necessity of financially providing for one's family.

16. Emotional Availability

Fatherly emotional support is depicted in Colossians 3:21: 'Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged' (NIV).

This verse echoes the sentiment of nurturing children in a supportive and encouraging manner. It advises fathers against actions

or behaviors that may cause bitterness or resentment in their children, which could lead to discouragement or demoralization. Instead, it emphasizes the role of fathers in fostering an environment of kindness, understanding, and emotional support for their children's well-being and growth.

As stated in the beginning of this article, emotional availability is one of the requirements of involved fatherhood according to renowned psychologists Lamb and Pleck, though it is relatively new compared with mother's emotional involvement (Parker & Wang, 2013). Nevertheless, it is important to note that the practices expected from both mothers and fathers are subject to change and vary from culture to culture (Miller, 2011, p. 1). In societies like those in Scandinavia, men are expected to take parental leave following the birth of a child and share equally in the responsibility of caring for the child, much like mothers. Fatherhood, in this context, sits between a past where men were primarily seen as the family's breadwinners and a present where they are expected to be equal partners in parenting, on par with mothers.

Religious teachings, in contrast, emphasize that emotional provision has long been a fundamental aspect of fatherhood, a role that has been overlooked over the centuries. Today, partly due to feminist movements and the growing emphasis on gender equality, along with shifting expectations for both mothers and fathers, there is a renewed reference to sacred texts by believers of faiths, searching for the right answer. By drawing on these teachings, we can avoid falling into extremes, reviving valuable wisdom that can contribute to the health and well-being of families.

17. Playing with the Child

The Bible does not explicitly mention fathers engaging in play with their children, but it emphasizes principles that encourage joyful,

nurturing, and compassionate relationships between fathers and their offspring. Verses like *Psalms 103:13* highlight a father's tender care, while *Proverbs 17:22* underscores the value of a joyful heart, which can naturally include playful interactions. In *Ephesians 6:4*, fathers are instructed to raise their children with love and balanced discipline, fostering an environment where joy and connection can thrive. Additionally, *Zechariah 8:5* depicts children playing in the streets, symbolizing a harmonious and peaceful community where families are lively and thriving. While direct references to father-child play are absent, these principles affirm the importance of fathers cultivating relationships filled with joy, warmth, and meaningful connection.

18. Praying for and Blessing Children

Fathers are encouraged to pray for their children and bless them with words of affirmation, encouragement, and guidance. In the Bible, we see instances where fathers bless their children and pray for God's favor and protection upon them. For example, Jacob blesses his sons in Genesis 49:28 as the Bible says, 'All these are the twelve tribes of Israel, and this is what their father said to them when he blessed them, giving each the blessing appropriate to him'.

19. Fathers Exemplify Godly Character and Serve as Role Models for Their Children

Fathers are called to exemplify godly character and serve as role models for their children. They are expected to display traits such as love, kindness, patience, humility, and integrity as they need to grasp the significance of their religious practices as it affects their children's inclination to pursue a connection with God (Freeks, 2018, p. 156). Proverbs 20:7 states, 'The righteous who walks in his integrity—blessed are his children after him.'

In Genesis 22:1-19, Ibrahim's incredible test of faith is portrayed. God asks Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac as a test of obedience.

“Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.” (Genesis 22: 2)

Despite the emotional turmoil, Ibrahim demonstrates unwavering faith and obedience to God. This narrative showcases Ibrahim's remarkable patience, submission to divine will, and unwavering faith.

Another instance of displaying faith and patience in a father figure is in the story of Job (Job: 1-42). Job, a righteous man is illustrated enduring tremendous suffering. Despite being a faithful servant of God, Job faces profound loss and affliction, including the loss of his wealth, children, and his own health. People offer unsound advice, questioning why he, an upright man, must endure such hardship. However, Job steadfastly holds onto his integrity, refusing to blame God for his misfortune. His response emphasizes the idea of suffering not as a punishment, but as part of God's larger plan, even though he does not understand the reason behind it. In the end, God restores Job's fortunes, demonstrating his unwavering patience, endurance, and trust in God's righteousness.

While these narratives do not explicitly prescribe a father's role as a model for his children, the interpretation presented here reflects the researcher's exegetical reading of the cited passages.

20. Fathers Discipline and Provide Spiritual Instruction with Love

“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” (Ephesians 6:4)

Fathers are encouraged to nurture and instruct their children in the ways of righteousness. The Bible highlights the importance of fathers teaching their children about God's commandments, values, and moral principles and to discipline them with love with the aim of correction and growth rather than harshness or anger.

King David, known for his devotion to God, expressed his love and spiritual guidance to his son Solomon. In 1 Chronicles 28:9, David advises Solomon, saying:

"And you, my son Solomon, acknowledge the God of your father, and serve him with wholehearted devotion and with a willing mind, for the Lord searches every heart and understands every desire and every thought."

David's guidance to Solomon emphasizes devotion to God, displaying spiritual instruction with love.

Proverbs 13:24¹ underscores the significance of disciplined guidance in parenting. The verse contrasts neglectful leniency with diligent correction in nurturing children. It suggests that refraining from necessary discipline can be detrimental to a child's development, indicating that avoiding correction out of misguided leniency or neglect could harm the child. Conversely, the verse emphasizes that caring parents, motivated by love, demonstrate their affection through conscientious correction and guidance. It stresses that proper discipline, when driven by love, plays a crucial role in shaping a child's behavior and character, reflecting the importance of balanced and caring guidance in parenting.

The Bible emphasizes the importance of fathers fostering unity

1. Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.

and harmony within the family. They are called to provide for their family, prioritize healthy relationships, resolve conflicts, discipline with love, and promote love and unity among family members. Ephesians 6:2-4 instructs fathers not to provoke their children to anger but to bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Psalm 133:1 also states, "Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!" This verse emphasizes the value and desirability of unity within the family.

21. Fatherhood of God¹

The use of filial language to express God's relationship to his people is found in the Hebrew Bible, or what Christians call the Old Testament, and in the New Testament (for Old Testament texts, see Reinhartz, 1999 and Szymik, 2020). In speaking about Old Testament texts of this nature, Stephan Szymik explains that "[t]he biblical depiction of God as Father refers to the image of an Israelite family, which was close to the inspired authors, in which the father had a special place as their parent, provider and educator, but also their guardian and protector (Szymik, 2020, p. 488).

This characterization of the divine-human filial relationship carries through into the much of the Apocryphal literature (Szymik, 2020, p. 489), and into the Bible where Jesus' teachings about God the Father become foundational to New Testament theology of God as Father (Szymik, 2020, p. 486-498). It is important to note at the outset that terminology of God as Father, which appears 125 times in the Gospel of John (Reinhartz, 1999, p. 7), is to be understood metaphorically. Offering three categories of meaning for metaphor, Reinhartz posits that it is

1. This section is written by Dr. Linda Darwish.

the third—that metaphor is a narrative strategy for speaking about something unknown and profound in familiar ways—which points to the meaning of fatherhood in the Gospels. As do Christians the world over, Dickey-Young understands the metaphor of God the Father as “the God who in Christian tradition has been seen primarily as One who relates to the world in intimacy and love” (Dickey-Young, 1999, p. 199).

It is this foundational New Testament theology of divine Fatherhood (though not unique to the Christian scriptures) that stands behind Christian theological articulations of the nature of human fatherhood. While the fatherhood of God is deeply embedded within Christian trinitarian theology, it should not be forgotten that the Bible also contains numerous allusions to feminine language about God’s care, including especially God’s motherly care (see Neuhaus, “While We’re At It,” *First Things*, January 2008, p. 62; see also Dickey-Young).

The analogy of divine fatherhood has also been problematic for some within the church who experienced various forms of abuse by their own fathers. Studies have shown that experiences of abuse have detracted from religiosity (amongst a variety of religions) amongst those so abused (see, for example, Bierman, 2005).

22. Reproached Fatherhood in the Bible

In examining fatherhood in the Bible, there are instances where fathers' actions or inactions had significant consequences on their children. For instance, the story of Eli, a priest in Israel, demonstrates the impact of inadequate parental guidance. Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, behaved wickedly, dishonoring their roles as priests and engaging in immoral conduct (1 Sam 2:12-36). Despite being aware of their wrongdoing, Eli failed to effectively discipline or correct them, neglecting his role as a father and spiritual mentor. Consequently,

God's judgment fell upon Eli and his descendants due to his inability to address his sons' misconduct:

‘Why do you honor your sons more than me by fattening yourselves on the choice parts of every offering made by my people Israel?’
(1 Sam 2:29)

The concept of conditional divine favor is evident in both the Bible and the Qur'an. In 1 Samuel 2:30-33, God revokes His promise to Eli's family due to their corruption, declaring that only those who honor Him will receive honor, while the disobedient will face downfall. Similarly, in Surah Al-Baqarah (2:124), when Prophet Ibrahim asks if his descendants will be granted leadership, God replies: “لَا يَتَّالُ عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ” (“*My covenant does not extend to the wrongdoers.*”). Both passages underscore that divine favor and leadership are reserved for those who uphold righteousness and integrity, highlighting the responsibility and accountability inherent in spiritual leadership.

A father's role is pivotal in shaping his family's spiritual and moral legacy. By embodying integrity and faith, he sets a lasting example for his children. Eli's neglect led to his family's downfall, while Prophet Ibrahim's dedication secured blessings for his descendants.

Another example is King David, revered as a great king, yet his failure as a father is evident in the rebellion of his son Absalom (2 Sam 15:1-12). Absalom sought to overthrow David's kingdom, highlighting the consequences of paternal negligence or flawed guidance.

These biblical accounts underline the profound influence fathers wield over their children and the repercussions of their actions or inactions in shaping their offspring's lives.

23. Practical Suggestions: Mentorship and Community Support in Strengthening Fatherhood

"Help one another in righteousness and piety, but do not help one another in sin and transgression" (Al-Ma'idah: 2).

"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2).

In today's increasingly individualistic societies, many men navigate life in isolation, shaped by the belief that masculinity requires unwavering strength and emotional restraint. Phrases such as "men don't cry" reinforce the expectation that men must suppress their emotions rather than seek support, contributing to higher rates of depression, anxiety, and interpersonal struggles. Within the mesosystem—encompassing family, religious institutions, and community networks—mentorship and social support can help alleviate these challenges. Engagement with experienced fathers, religious mentors, or peer support groups provides practical guidance on fatherhood, marriage, and personal well-being, reducing the risk of crisis-driven parenting and relational breakdowns. The importance of such support becomes clear when considering the impact of paternal mental health on children: fathers experiencing depression or PTSD are more likely to have children who exhibit behavioral problems, including hyperactivity and emotional difficulties, with boys often showing more pronounced effects (Farero et al., 2020). This underscores the need for interventions that support fathers' mental health, not only for their own well-being but also to promote healthier child development.

Religious and community spaces serve as key components of the mesosystem, fostering mentorship and emotional guidance. Within mosques, churches, religious study groups, and family gatherings,

men have access to structured opportunities for meaningful conversations and shared experiences. These interactions bridge the gap between personal struggles and communal wisdom, allowing men to navigate fatherhood with greater awareness and resilience. Religious leaders, including priests, imams, and scholars, play a fundamental role in reshaping cultural narratives surrounding masculinity and fatherhood. Through sermons, study circles, and counseling, they encourage men to express their struggles, engage in their children's upbringing, and redefine masculinity beyond silent endurance. Rather than suffering in isolation, fathers are empowered to actively address personal and familial challenges through wisdom and emotional intelligence.

A practical form of mesosystemic support is the establishment of community-based financial assistance groups. In both Islam and Christianity, men are traditionally seen as primary providers, and financial burdens can become overwhelming stressors in a father's life. Structured initiatives—such as collective funding pools, where a group of men contribute regularly to support those facing financial hardships—offer tangible relief, ensuring that fathers can continue fulfilling their responsibilities without falling into debt or distress. These financial networks not only provide material aid but also reinforce the concept that fatherhood is not an isolated journey, and that strong communities actively support and uplift one another.

24. The Role of a Man's Wife and Family in Supporting Fatherhood

A father's ability to fulfill his role in the family is deeply influenced by the microsystem, which includes his closest relationships, particularly with his wife and extended family. The bioecological systems' theories of development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) highlight

how direct interactions within the microsystem shape an individual's development, meaning that a wife's support, encouragement, and cooperation are crucial in shaping a father's engagement with his children.

Religious traditions assign men the responsibility of leadership within the household, yet their effectiveness in this role is greatly influenced by their wives' support and recognition. When a wife respects, encourages, and enables her husband's involvement in fatherhood, she helps create a stable and nurturing family environment that fosters the spiritual, emotional, and intellectual well-being of their children.

The Quran describes righteous wives as those who uphold their husbands' authority and contribute to maintaining harmony in the household. In Surah An-Nisa (An-Nisa: 34), it states: "So righteous women are devoutly obedient (قانتات)..."

The term "قانتات" (devoutly obedient) signifies not just compliance but a willing acceptance of a husband's leadership in family matters, including child education. This verse highlights that when a wife respects and upholds her husband's role, she enables him to lead the family with wisdom and responsibility. The importance of a wife's support is also emphasized in narrations from the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), who stated:

"A man has a right over his wife: if he calls her, she should respond, and if he instructs her (in a manner consistent with Islamic principles), she should not disobey him, nor answer him with opposition, nor act against his wishes." (Nuri, n.d., vol. 14, p. 243).

However, in many cases, cultural influences have led some women to assume full control over child-rearing, leaving little room for fathers to engage in their children's education and upbringing.

Some women, shaped by their family backgrounds, may view parenting as primarily a maternal duty, unintentionally discouraging their husbands from taking an active role. This can weaken a father's presence in the home and limit his ability to be a spiritual and moral guide for his children. Yet, Fathers play a unique role in their children's lives that is not merely a replication of maternal influence. Research highlights that fathers often contribute distinct forms of engagement, such as promoting independence, risk-taking, and problem-solving skills, which complement the nurturing and protective tendencies more commonly associated with mothers (Paquette, 2004).

A wife's words, actions, and overall attitude can either encourage or discourage a father from actively engaging in his role. Supportive words and gestures that reinforce his confidence in parenting strengthen his commitment to his children, while criticism or discouragement can lead to emotional detachment. Amir al-Mu'minin Ali (peace be upon him), in a letter to Malik al-Ashtar, emphasized the power of encouragement, stating: "Mention them with goodness and constantly encourage them. Acknowledge the important tasks they have accomplished, for remembering their good deeds motivates them to strive further." (Salih, 1995, letter 53) This principle applies within the family as well—when a wife recognizes and appreciates her husband's role in fatherhood, her encouragement reinforces his dedication and deepens his engagement in raising their children.

Some wives may wish for a more involved husband but may find that their spouse has had fewer opportunities to develop parenting skills or confidence in child upbringing. In such cases, instead of taking full control, women can create an environment that encourages shared learning by introducing religious and educational resources. Guiding family discussions toward scripture, parenting principles, or

faith-based education can support fathers in gradually embracing their role while strengthening their spiritual and emotional connection with their children.

However, a father's role in parenting is not solely influenced by his wife. Other close family members, particularly his parents and siblings, may also shape his perception of fatherhood and influence his engagement with his children. In an interview with an Iranian man of Iraqi descent who migrated to Sweden 25 years ago, he shared how his mother and sisters reprimanded him when he changed his son's diaper or clothes, questioning why he was taking on a task traditionally assigned to women. They told him, "Why don't you let your wife do that? That's not a man's job." While I do not seek to judge whether changing a diaper is appropriate for a father, I acknowledge that family opinions on fatherhood acts can induce feelings of shame or guilt, reinforcing traditional gender norms even when a father desires to take a more active role in caregiving. Such influences, embedded within the microsystem, can either support or constrain a father's ability to engage in parenting.

Furthermore, it is essential for mothers and extended family members to allow fathers space to take an active role, even if they make mistakes along the way. Many fathers hesitate to engage in parenting due to fear of criticism or feelings of inadequacy, particularly when they lack experience. Encouraging them to take the lead in spiritual guidance, discipline, and family decision-making can help develop their confidence as fathers. A narration from the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) highlights the importance of not burdening men beyond their ability, stating:

"It is not permissible for a woman to burden her husband beyond his capacity." (Nuri, n.d., vol. 14, p. 242).

This teaching aligns with Quranic principles in Surah Al-Baqarah (Al-Baqarah: 286): "لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا", "Allah does not burden a soul beyond its capacity."

These teachings emphasize a balanced approach to familial roles, where fathers are encouraged to fulfill their responsibilities, but without unrealistic expectations that might lead to stress or disengagement.

Ultimately, a man's wife and family play a significant role in supporting or inhibiting his involvement in fatherhood. A mother who respects, encourages, and nurtures her husband's role as a father creates a home environment where both parents meaningfully contribute to their children's development. At the same time, extended family members must recognize their influence over fatherhood practices and avoid discouraging paternal involvement based on traditional gender expectations. By working together rather than in competition, fathers and mothers can foster a stable, emotionally supportive, and well-balanced family environment, ensuring a healthier and more engaged upbringing for children.

Conclusion and discussion

Examining the roles of fathers in the Quran, Hadith, and the Bible through the combined lens of Pleck's (2010) Involved Fatherhood framework and Bronfenbrenner & Morris's (2006) Bioecological Systems Theory reveals a comprehensive and multifaceted understanding of fatherhood. While modern research on fatherhood often emphasizes the quantitative and qualitative aspects of time spent with children (Shorey, Hong-Gu & Morelus, 2016; Chen et al., 2017; Mirnia et al., 2016), religious teachings offer a more holistic perspective that encompasses spiritual, moral, and familial well-being alongside material and emotional care. These sacred texts promote a model of

fatherhood that goes beyond financial provision and discipline. They highlight the father's role as a moral guide, a source of emotional support, and a stabilizing figure within the family. Although some historical interpretations of fatherhood have embraced patriarchal structures and authoritarian principles, the Quran, Hadith, and the Bible emphasize a model of fatherhood rooted in responsibility, active participation, and compassionate leadership.

Using Bronfenbrenner and Morris's Bioecological Systems Theory to examine religious teachings allows us to gain a deeper understanding of how a father's role is shaped by interwoven social structures. **Microsystem:** This level encompasses a father's direct interactions with his children and spouse. It highlights his role in emotional availability, play, caregiving, and moral education. **Exosystem:** This level addresses external influences like workplace policies, legal frameworks, and societal expectations, which introduce another variable in the extent of a father's involvement. For example, parental leave policies in Sweden demonstrate governmental efforts to encourage paternal participation, though cultural norms ultimately determine the degree to which men utilize these opportunities. **Macrosystem:** This level includes cultural values, religious teachings, and ideological beliefs that form the foundation of a father's sense of duty, leadership, and identity. Religious doctrines emphasize the father's pivotal role in maintaining family stability and moral development, aligning with these broader systemic influences.

My interviews with Iranian immigrant men in Sweden revealed that growing up in a religious household didn't necessarily translate to an inherent awareness of religious duties. Instead, cultural influences often played a more dominant role in shaping their understanding of fatherhood and their sense of responsibility as fathers. These families often operated under a structure where the

father was frequently absent from the home, and the mother was perceived as the primary caregiver and educator. Consequently, these men grew up with the belief that child-rearing and education were inherently maternal responsibilities. This perception persisted until they received formal or informal education that clearly outlined their religious obligations.

The following table illustrates how Pleck's five elements of involved fatherhood align with religious perspectives, highlighting their complementary insights:

Religious Elements of Fatherhood	Pleck's Elements of Involved Fatherhood	Explanation of Alignment
Spouse Selection & Establishing a Positive Marital Relationship	Indirect Care / Process Responsibility	A stable marital relationship supports the child's well-being indirectly. Fathers who take initiative in family matters foster harmony and security within the home.
Emotional Availability	Warmth and Responsiveness	Emotional availability aligns with Pleck's concept of showing affection, compassion, and being attuned to the child's emotional needs.
Material Provision	Indirect Care	Providing financially for the family reflects indirect care, ensuring the child's material needs are met (e.g., food, clothing, medical care, shelter, and education).
Playing with the Child	Positive Engagement Activities	Engaging in play, caregiving, and leisure activities directly promotes

Religious Elements of Fatherhood	Pleck's Elements of Involved Fatherhood	Explanation of Alignment
		a child's development, reflecting positive engagement.
Praying for Righteous Children	Control / Indirect Care	Praying for a child's spiritual well-being reflects moral oversight (control) and indirect care, as it supports the child's growth without direct interaction.
Fathers as Role Models	Positive Engagement Activities / Warmth and Responsiveness	Being a role model involves direct engagement and displaying warmth and responsiveness through ethical behavior and loving care.
Providing Spiritual and Moral Guidance	Control / Process Responsibility	Guiding children morally and spiritually aligns with monitoring their behavior and proactively ensuring ethical instruction and spiritual growth.

In today's landscape, where families lacking a father figure face significant challenges, religious teachings reinforce the father's essential role within the family structure, ensuring that childcare responsibilities are not solely placed upon mothers. Rather than endorsing a "mother-centric" parenting model, these teachings emphasize that fathers bear primary responsibility for moral guidance, financial provision, and active involvement in their children's upbringing. This redefinition of paternal responsibility not only alleviates the heavy burden on mothers but also ensures the stability and structure necessary for a child's holistic development.

Furthermore, fatherhood isn't just limited to raising children; it also shapes a man's individual worth, identity, and sense of fulfillment. The bioecological model illustrates how a father's macrosystem beliefs, such as his religious and cultural values, inform his understanding of what it means to be a father. Embracing the paternal role not only benefits his children but also strengthens his character, discipline, and emotional well-being. In an era where traditional masculinity faces increasing scrutiny, religious teachings on fatherhood offer a stabilizing framework, guiding men toward a balanced, responsible, and active approach to parenting. Rather than portraying fatherhood as a burden, these teachings emphasize its transformative potential, imbuing men with a renewed sense of purpose, belonging, and emotional connection. This profound impact on a father's self-concept can serve as a source of support and guidance for those navigating the evolving expectations of masculinity in modern society (Chereji et al., 2013).

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