

The Only Religion in the Sight of God is Submission (to Him)

What is the right religion according to Quran? As you know there are many so called “religions”, Christianity, ‘Islam’, Judaism, Zoroastrian etc? But Quran does not call these religions, here is how it defines what people call religions

5:48 “To every one of you We have prescribed a law (: a way to a watering place) and a way of life (: an open road). If God had willed He could have made you all one single community, (but He did not,) in order to test you by means of whatever He has given you. Therefore race with one another in doing good works. To God you shall return, all together, and He will then inform you of what you used to differ.”

In this sense then there are many “religions” and as Quran says they are all equally acceptable to God and there is not a final true or ultimate one that all should convert to, and none has any particular superiority over another.

Quran makes it very clear that there is only one religion, one “deen” that is acceptable to God and that religion ,of course, is the ever true religion, religion of all prophets, messengers, angels and nature; self- surrender, submission,- in Arabic “Islam”. It is not merely following a set of rules and regulations and turning your head toward the east or the west or bowing five times a day etc. It is state of being submissive to God, accept God as the ultimate decision maker and sovereign in your life with no hesitation or reservation.

Being true and wholehearted submitter means and will mean peace and tranquility. Which is also another meaning of the word ‘Islam’? Being total submitter means to live life well, it means to live life in a manner that is progressively purified, edified, harmonized, enriched, strengthened and elevated, so that each tomorrow will bring us a step closer to God than today.

Life of course is full of conflicts within and without. In some ways, in every phase of it, it is a battlefield. The struggle of the good against the evil or of the evil against the good is an essential and inevitable fact of human existence. We are constantly faced with harmonies and disharmonies and an object of moral struggle is to overcome disharmonies; either to mend them or to end them. The craving for peace and tranquility is inherent in every human nature, thus every being naturally craves for Islam- for peace and tranquility. Peace, well-being and happiness are three different names of the same state.

Self-surrender then defines the attitude that has peace as its fruit. The fact that submission and self-surrender is only to God is so self evident that in many places Quran does not give the object of surrender- God- it simply says, submit and calls the ever true religion, submission- obviously to God. Submission and surrender to other than God is the ultimate low and illogical. Quran then defines God that we are to submit to. If the conception of God is narrow or false, then the attitude of

submission, far from leading to well being would make life narrow and perverted. Every worshipper assumes the complexion of the object of his worship. The God we are asked to submit is wise, rational and good and His chief traits are love and mercy. The submission to such God implies, in attitude and in action, regulation of our lives. God, according to the Quran is not a dogma, but an ideal and a regulative force of life. God is the guarantee of our highest values. When Quran says that God created man so that he may worship Him- worship in its essential significance- it does not mean verbal praise and begging for benefits, but living in accordance with the will of God. Every right action is then an act of worship. When we are true to ourselves and our families and our neighbors, our life is worshiping because, in fulfilling the ideals of our own nature, we are submitting to the will of God as manifested in our own natures. As God is the truth, then the pursuit of all truth is an act of submission to God, and hence an act of worship.

The attainment of peace and well-being necessitates the creation of harmony within ourselves. Man is endowed with a number of instincts and emotions that are the raw material of life and its driving forces. They are not evil in themselves, because a good God does not create evil. Quran asserts nothing has been created in vain. Human instincts are not to be identified with the devil. Man is not created in original sin inherited from his progenitor, Adam. He is born with the raw material of life and freewill and God shows him the alternatives of actions. His freewill becomes sinful and devilish when any instinct in him becomes selfish and aggressive. All aggression is transgression of the limits prescribed by reason that is the distinctive human faculty granted to man so that he may make his instincts work in subordination to it. Reason in man is the voice of God and submission to reason is submission to God. The only way to achieve internal peace, therefore, is by an act of Submission. It is only when the instincts submit to reason that we achieve peace. Only life of reason and virtue can secure us the peace and happiness that is an instinctive craving of our nature.

The man who thus becomes at peace with himself becomes at peace with his neighbors also. Only the man whose life is guided by reason and virtue is true to his real self. By submitting his desires to the authority of reason, he has not submitted himself to any external authority but to God; and we have a great responsibility since the Quran says God breathed of His spirit into us. Submission to God then, in effect, is not submission to any one but to our own natures designed according to God's laws. The laws of virtue as described in the Quran, limits prescribed by God, are the laws of our well being and happiness. The Quran constantly reminds us

2:187 "... these are God's laws, do not transgress them..."

41:46 "Whoever does good it is for his own soul, and whoever does evil, it is against it..."

By the violation of a law, the law or the legislator does not suffer; God the Lawgiver does not suffer, it is the violator who incurs the penalty of violation. God the

Lawgiver has said He will hand out the punishment as a mercy- as He must- and it is in this sense that the word Avenger is used in Quran, because it would be unfair to the rest of His creatures and a mockery that He issues laws and limits and then let the violators go unpunished, they will necessarily- as they must- suffer the consequences. We are repeatedly reminded in Quran that God is not unjust toward His creatures. Not being unjust means; to make clear the laws, as God has done in Quran and other holy books , to send warners (messengers) as He has done and continues to do , as well as equal and equitable enforcement of His laws, it means both reward and punishment. Those who obey will be rewarded and those who disobey will suffer the consequences. The so called Christian theology; the doctrine of original sin and its atonement by Jesus is repudiated in Quran as not only being irrational and opposed to the fundamental moral order but also as being derogatory to man, to Jesus and to God.

Man is so constituted that he does crave for peace and tranquility and he also does desire to be free. Obedience to perfect ideal can make him free. The wrong doer believes that he is free to break God's laws and he fancies himself that he has asserted his freedom when he has disregarded and broken God's laws. But he fails to understand that by breaking the laws he has really broken himself, he has violated his own soul. Virtue is its own reward and vice is its own punishment. It is said: "the thief steals only from himself".

True religion, submission, then means that man should actively and effectively believe in God as the creator of a rational and moral order in the universe and in human life and as the origin and promulgator of laws which are the laws of preservation of values and maintenance and enrichment of well being. It is his duty to discover God within himself and within the universe. Quran makes it clear that such God exists and can be discovered by observation and by reason, both theoretical and practical.

One might say that the scientist discovers the laws of nature without reference to God. Quran says no matter what they say they too are seeking God and following the laws of God without knowing it. If the scientist proceeds on the postulate that the universe is governed by law and reason and not by chaos and chance, he too has glimpsed the unity of God in His creation. If he continues to deny, his efforts are all wasted. Quran calls these kinds of people 'kaafer', those who are ungrateful and knowingly conceal or deny the truth.

Quran says that belief in God is the true knowledge of reality. Man is a reality seeking being. If he is ignorant about the ultimate origins and ends of life, he is essentially blind. So far as reality is concerned such a man is living in the dark. Truth is light and life, and ignorance is darkness and death. Without the firm faith in God man only gets flashes of truth.

2:20 "The lightening almost takes away their sight; whenever it shines on them they walk in it, and when it becomes dark to them they stand still."

In Quran we find no appeal to supernatural as a basis of belief. Man must outlive his demand for miracles and proceed from nature and reason to God. From worms to the stars he is asked to observe the course of nature and note in it reason as well as beneficence. Let man study the marvelous adaptations of life and the rationale in the working of nature everywhere. As the famous writer noted; “Christian belief bases its religious convictions on the immaculate birth of Christ, but to me every child that is born normally of parents is sufficient miracle for believing in God”. One can proceed from God to nature or from nature to God; whether we ascend or descend it is the same road; as Quran says God is the beginning and God is the end, God is the outer appearance and God is the inner reality. We can start from God as the creator and originator and proceed towards His creation to discover in it reason and goodness; God as the final cause then would be the ultimate explanation of everything. We can start with the study of creation and we find the power and goodness of God immanent in it.

From study of nature to belief in God there is only one step and Quran says no man’s search is complete until he has taken that step, until he has reached God. All truths pushed to their legitimate ends ultimately lead to God. Belief in God makes life real and earnest and gives it a secure foothold. The man in search of truth is really searching for God and the man striving for internal and external harmony is seeking for that peace and tranquility granted by God- if the man is true to himself. The end is the ultimate attainment of harmony by living in tune with the universe; with God whose manifestation the universe is. Understanding the laws of God and submitting to them, thereby regulating, harmonizing, and elevating life is the goal of all life and is true religion. No other religion is true. Thus Quran says that whoever believes in God and directs his whole self in submission to God has attained to truth, such are the people who are freed from fear and grief.

Belief in God, therefore, is not a speculative guess or a mere hypothesis, nor could it be called a dogma. It is question of life and death. Believe and live, or disbelieve and perish. Quran’s rage, God ‘s anger against polytheism or the worshipping of other than God, by whatever name and under whatever pretext, is not the fight of one dogma against another. The pursuit of truth and beauty and goodness is the pursuit of ultimately valid and super-personal realities that are essentially one.

When giving the fundamentals of faith, Quran often couples it with the doing of goods. It means that the mere profession of faith in words or some vague intellectual apprehension is not enough. Faith not resulting in good deeds would be mere opinion incapable of becoming a driving force in action. External observation without internal conviction is of little value. Quran amplifies this by attaching to it some corollaries that must follow from it.

If God exists, He must be nearer to us than anything else including our own selves. This nearness must be a matter of direct intuition and experience. Realization of

contact with God must elevate us and cure all our ills because He is the source of light and life, which must follow into the soul of man that has opened its doors for receiving it. Prayer at its highest, and as Quran says, is the remembrance of God, which means fixing our gaze at the ideal of life and its highest values. The relation of God with man is not one sided, it is reciprocal, as God says in the Quran, “Remember Me so that I may remember you”. The call is heard and responded, even though the mode of hearing and response may not be intelligible to us.

All genuine prayer is not for material or individual benefits or for fulfillment of our lower desires, but for guidance to the right path, it is an aspiration for more light. It is for the improvement of one’s spiritual condition and the spiritual condition of others, so that all may be lifted to the level of those whom God has blessed, and to avoid being dragged down to the condition of those whose spiritual degradation has drawn upon themselves the inevitable retribution called the wrath of God. Those who truly believe in God must, therefore, believe in prayer because a non - responding impersonal absolute is a product of metaphysics and has no place in a truly religious life. Of course Quran does not prohibit us to pray for material things and any prayer to God is a form of worship as it is recognition of His absolute authority. But too often we pray for minor material gains and we want God to change the course of nature for the transient and our individual benefits. If God heard all such prayers, human life and existence in general would be reduced to utter chaos because personal desires are neither consistent in themselves nor do they conform to the course of nature on whose uniformity’s all life is based.

Therefore God has taught us and has prescribed for us the proper prayer, in the first Surah which we repeat in our contact prayers. Here we are taught not to pray for what we consider desirable and for our own selves, but pray for guidance in the right path that leads to the goal of well being. The straight path is further defined as the path taken by those who have been blessed; The test of the rightness of the path is that it leads to the goal and the goal as defined by Quran is the goal of well being or blessedness here and hereafter. Prayer or more properly contact prayer as specifically prescribed for us in the Quran is a means to reach God, contact God, it is the realization of our oneness with God. From this contact and realization we can derive real sustenance. God is the cherisher and the nourisher and the guide, but He can only cherish and nourish and guide us if we keep our vital connection with Him.

We cannot improve upon the prayer that God has given us in Surah one so we should repeat and remember and reflect upon it. It is at once a creed, an attitude towards God and man and the world, and the best way of the realization of our true freedom. It opens with the praise of God, as all praise belongs to God. Of course God does not need our praise, but we are praising those attributes of God whose appreciation would enlighten us and free us from bondage and lift us in the scale of being. We praise Him for being Lord and cherisher and fosterer of all the worlds. We should take absolute comfort in the fact that He is our Lord and our cherisher and fosterer as that should be enough to remove all our worries- He will take care of

us. We should also learn that we too should cherish and foster all the values of life and do not look maliciously and with bad intents at any of God's creation. The aim of life is to fulfill and not to destroy any thing that is real.

When we praise Him as Lord and fosterer of all the worlds, we are declaring the unity of all existence which is united in God. Worlds do not exist apart or indifferent or hostile to one another. In some philosophies and corrupted religions this world is despised as the embodiment of evil and is called God forsaken. The concept of God as Lord and fosterer of all the worlds repudiates the distinction between God favored and God forsaken parts of existence. God has created everything, and God is its Lord and is created for a purpose and the purposes of existence are interconnected. We live in a coordinating and cooperating universe which has received its unity form God. We are asked to cherish and foster all that expresses and embodies unity and harmony. Quran does not conceive of any existence as dead and inanimate. It says all that exists in the heavens and earth praises God in a tongue which man does not understand.

After praising God as Lord and fosterer we praise Him as Beneficent and Merciful and Loving. We should also learn to look at creation and our fellow beings through these angles, show mercy and compassion and care to others. Lest we may think that God by being merciful and compassionate and loving, has no law and forgives everybody we are reminded that He is also the Legislator, the Judge, the Lawgiver.

As the best parents are those who show their love to their children by disciplining them morally, attaching rewards and punishment to good and evil, in order to foster good behavior so that children may grow up more loving and more lovable, so has Divine love instituted the moral order where good and evil produce their natural consequences. If bad actions were always forgiven, they would ultimately destroy the personality of the doer. We are therefore asked to keep in mind this attribute of God that He is Lord of the Day of Judgment. He has instituted the law of compensation and retribution. Quran says that good and evil are weighted minutely in the balance of life; they always produce their effects, however imperceptible and invisible they may be to human eye. But God is not quick to punish in a manner that would signify revenge. Quran says,

35:45 -- "Were God to punish men(immediately) for what they earn, He would not leave on the back of earth any creature, but He respites them till an appointed term..."

God is the soul of our soul, He is the life of our life. We are not involuntary emanation from Him, We are, in effect, organically related as He has breathed of His spirit into us. Quran says, He is nearer to us than our own jugular vein, " He is the light of the heavens and the earth". But light is of no avail without sight; if we do not open our eyes, there is darkness for us, even during the brightness of the midday

sun. Following opinions and conjectures and accepting psychologists' analysis of what is good and what is bad and what is moral and what is immoral will lead to destruction. We need God's guidance. Prayer is the opening of our mental eyes for the reception of God's light into our spirits. When we pray as God has instructed us and when we follow God's book, we are connecting ourselves with the great power house whose currents will bestow untold power and energy, we are turning towards the sun of all suns, the source of all light and all life.

**All praise belong to God
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