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People of the Book: A Juristic Approach

Dr. Mohammad Hossein Mokhtari



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Publisher's Forward

To begin and execute a research is like walking in the path of development and evolvment. When the seeds of the “questions” are planted, in the soil of the mind of the researcher, this phase initiates, and its end is culminated when the result and the outcome of knowledge and wisdom is gained.

Evidently, this end is a new chapter in itself, for growth, and announces beforehand this good news to humans. For the result of all those mental efforts will not only bring the blooming and flowering of talent and all kinds of Blessings to humans, but it also makes the mind of the researcher to ponder and shape new, more questions.

This will produce a great collection of growing plants and flowers for the seeking mind... Those “questions” are in fact, the seeds, which according to the necessities of Time and the strength of the researchers will grow and bloom by themselves. They will make Culture and Civilization to move forward.

In like manner, the increasing rate of transferring oneself from one place to another place and the decrease of the distances will make those seeds travel miles and miles, to

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faraway places, in order to install them inside the curious mind of other seekers. This will bring an amazing diversity and a novelty for another civilization...

It is true then, that the presence of knowledge and a good, capable management will help this project to develop itself and one has to admit indeed, that it has always played an important role...

Al-Mustafa International Publication and Translation Center, because of its global mission, and its special position among the Religious Schools and the colorful human diversity that it has developed inside itself, sees it as a moral duty to procure all the appropriate conditions for any research works, and takes its role in this matter, most seriously. To procure all kinds of necessary grounds, with an excellent management of all the existing possibilities and talents, and to care and protect all its researchers in religious fields; these are the most crucial responsibilities of the Department of Research in this International center.

We dearly hope that by being attentive to all these autonomous scientific movements, and by fortifying all the existing motives, we shall be able to witness the blooming of the Religious Culture in every part of this wide world!

We would also like to show our deepest gratitude and appreciation to the respected Islamic compiler, **Dr. Mohammad Hossein Mokhtari**, in order for you, dear readers, to read and enjoy it!

**Al-Mustafa International
Publication and Translation Center**

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Foreword

The non-stop growth and development of science and civilization in the modern world, the applications of the inventions in human life, the use of developed communication devices as well as the mass media have all removed the distances among cities and countries, widely relating people worldwide within a single framework. Therefore, people are all members of a big global family who are ready to help each other in removing obstacles. They attend various gatherings to cooperate leading to the exchange of ideas between them: a very valuable and precious phenomenon with no record so far in the world, and a product of modern human civilization. This broad range of international relations, together with the increasing scientific and cultural exchanges, economic, financial and diplomatic dealings, and the necessity of continuing the peaceful coexistence in all human societies have all prompted many scholars working on social issues to study and analyze the relations between followers of various religions. This will result in proposing valuable and useful ways to create mutual understanding and cooperation. In addition,

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Islamic researchers with a prospective view have taken huge steps studying the social ties and the ways to strengthen them, especially on the religions' interaction and diffusion with each other. Benevolent Muslim writers from all branches of the religion have intended¹ to inform everyone of the sublime realities of the Islamic social laws in their words and writings, reiterating the orders of Islamic leaders to the global community to create a sense of unity. They also invited² ³everyone to behave with warmth and friendliness, and have good will wherever they are. This way, the world civilization can be emancipated from the chains of political, social, economic and cultural problems and will be transformed to a paved way free from the countless horrible precipices.

The positive interaction between religions, therefore, is one of the most important features required to save the global civilization and to bring about intimacy between human communities. This can be the top priority in all relations in different contexts. Divine religions have all originated from the same source during the diversity of historical periods, having no difference in principles. There are many strong points common in all divine religions, with the aim of cultivating the human kind. God's revelation has given a value and a status to these religions brought to people by the Prophets. Interactions among religions can play a significant role in converging the religions and human societies.

Religions differ in the sense that some religions, due to the circumstances, become concerned with persons and individuals

1. If past tense: have intended, if present tense, use intend.

2. If past tense: also invited, if present, should invite.

3. The text should be kept in the same tense.

rather than paying attention to the social demands. Globalization as a key matter can play a role in the communication of inter-religious achievements since religious values are rooted in human and natural values. Such values function and spread better in a global world. More evident and common topics shared by all religions include human honor, kindness, forgiveness and friendship, peace and benevolence, guidance and so on that might be employed for communicating the achievements of dialogue among religions to the society. Of course, the variety and extent of the number of religions, no doubt, becomes an opportunity for the human community when the dialogue among religions ,the communication and transfer of its achievements might deepen the understanding and insight in the society.

There are also some challenges in this regard: one is globalization in the sense that is the dominance of the Western culture and the disappearance of other cultures. This would prevent the spread of human and natural values to human society. Another challenge is the encounter between religions and science and its aggrandizement which sometimes leads to the rejection of metaphysics. This contradiction also might be resolved. Another basic challenge is the differences in content and principles in different religions. Muslim and Christian scholars in particular have the responsibility to put an end to such differences. The challenge of providing a definition for life is also in view. There is a sharp contrast between the arid definitions provided by the schools of materialism and the ones which are expected by religious scholars.

Additionally, there are the challenging problems like the efforts made by supporters of evil to weaken the light of faith in

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religions, the extremism exercised in the name of religion, as well as the catastrophic conflicts between followers of different religions, and the exploitation of religion for political, material and other ends

Emphasis of the Holy Quran and other religious texts on the necessity and perseverance in dialogue among religions

One of the most significant issues in the contemporary world is the necessity of interaction and dialogue among religions. We live in a space where interaction between human beings is essential for a peaceful co-existence, which leads to the progress of human goals. According to the Holy Quran, dialogue among religions is possible only in the context of logical, rational and theoretical knowledge. This point is an explicit reference to the following Quranic verse:

There is no compulsion in religion. Righteousness is now distinct from error.¹

﴿لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ﴾

Thus, from a Quranic perspective, knowledge and appropriate understanding are introduced as essential for a constructive interaction among religions. Muslim scholars have interpreted this verse and believe that the Almighty God has created human being in the system of creation as free but in the system of legislation, the acceptance of religion has been made obligatory.² Needless to say, this verse is a symbol for freedom in the form of the divine revelation: There is no compulsion in religion «لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ» That is to say human

1. *The Cow*, verse 256.

2. Ayatollah Javadi Amoli, Course on Interpretation of Quran, Sura of *Prophets*.

beings have been created free which is the very ideal for human perfection. Obedience implies freedom. We may talk about the state of human perfection only when he chooses one of the two paths willingly and with interest.¹

The key point, according to Muslim scholars, is that religion did not spread by sword but it was developed by reasoning and thus was a source of guidance in the society. We read in the Holy Quran:

Say: 'people of the book, let us come to a common word between us and you that we will worship none except Allah, that we will associate none with him, and that none of us take others for lords besides Allah. 'If they turn away, say: 'bear witness that we are Muslims.'²

﴿قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُولُوا اشْهَدُوا بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ﴾

In his Tafsir Al-Mizan, Allameh Tabatabai gives this comment: Let us make the word monotheism the pivot of our cooperation and friendship and work hard to spread the monotheistic thought and take measures to implement it.

Existence of religions as a valuable opportunity

Basically, the variety of religions is one of the important opportunities that different religious scholars may use to benefit the society at large. Plurality and variety of religions are an undeniable fact, but the important issue is how to deal with this fact. People need to get prepared to enter the social arena with a

1. Ibid.

2. *The House of Imran*, verse 64.