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5. Dr. Soroush's Claim: Modern Man Does Not Need Religion

In an article entitled "The root is in water," he raised a discussion on the "admirable and reproachable needlessness of religion." He later added further points to expound the topic in his speech delivered in Montreal, Canada.2 The present chapter is devoted to expound his claim of needlessness of religion.

Exposition Of The Theory

Dr. Soroush raises a question concerning the course taken by mankind in history. In his words, "This is the question: in case we take all mankind into consideration and place their good deeds and merits on one scale and all the vices and evil deeds and demerits on the other, which scale will be heavier?"3

His reply leads to the conclusion that history has proceeded in a positive direction toward piety and religious devotion, the prophets have succeeded in their endeavors, and the substance of prophetic teachings has been firmly established. Following an exposition of the positive development in man's history of piety and religious devotion and raising the claim of needlessness of religion, he avoids the probable critique of his viewpoint, by attempting to answer such questions which may be raised by readers regarding the development of piety:

In case, piety has been further established in the history of man's development, parallel to the developments in history, how is it said that the Western world has entered the Age of Secularism?

He states: "Secularism signifies ignoring religion in all mundane spheres; creating social institutions regardless of religious values, commands and warnings, positively and negatively; lack of hostile confrontation against it; explicit heresy and the intention to eradicate it."4

Following an allusion to the meaning of secularism, he explicitly makes reference to modern man's needlessness of prophetic teachings and states: "What is obvious is mankind's needlessness of prophets and their teachings, revealing that it is as if the relation between men and prophetic teachings

has transformed, and the former domination of prophetic teachings over men has grown more feeble."5

It sounds surprising to claim needlessness of religion in a country in which people's hearts are imbued with the love for religion and the Holy Qur'an. Such claims may lead to offending believers. Thus he proceeds: "At times, it preoccupies the mind and one may surmise that the time for true belief in religion has passed, the prophets have turned into the oppressed, and they are abandoned in history."

If indeed man has happened to have passed the times of firm belief and has arrived at the times of indifference regarding prophetic teachings, if he claims needlessness of them in theory and practice, it may be judged that prophets have left the arena, their triumph has come to an end, and at the time being, the oppressed have failed to fulfill their wishes; the vanquished have confronted their evil end and they have been marginalized in history, and the affairs are in the hands of other masters.6

Consequently, after raising the question of needlessness of religion, he attempts to dispel the doubts and preoccupations entertained by believers by dividing the needlessness into two types, *admirable* and *reproachable*, and proceeds with the statement that modern man's needlessness of religion is of the former type, rather than the latter.

Thus he elaborates on the two types of needlessness: "The point of significance lies in the sense of the term *needlessness* and the significance lies in paying attention to the point. Two senses and two types of needlessness may be taken into consideration: *admirable* and *reproachable* needlessness.

The admirableness or the reproachableness of needlessness lies in the relation established between the seeker and the sought. It is to be noted that the establishment of a number of such relations basically serve to negate them.

Imagine the relation between the physician and the patient. On the one hand, there exist non-physician patients and on the other, there are non-patient physicians. In case the relation happens to be not based on affection, the physician will attempt to establish the relationship on firmer grounds, i.e. he will try to prolong the treatment unnecessarily and keep the patient sick for ever.

Now if there happens to be affection, all the physician's attempts will be directed towards the patient's treatment which equal negate the former relation and make the patient needless of the physician. In other words, the affectionate physician's attempts are directed toward ending the relation between the two, rather than preserve it. The relation between the teacher and the student is of a like nature.

In the establishment of such relations, the teacher basically aims at promoting the status of the student and making him equal to himself, so that the student may become needless of him. ... But *reproachable* needlessness is basically of a different nature: the patient or the student does not tread the right path by paying attention to the teacher or physician and, thereby, makes no use of them, despite ignorance,

sickness, and poverty. On the contrary, the former type of needlessness is not reproachable, but it is

quite admirable."7

As a consequence, the patient's needlessness of the physician after his recovery and the student's needlessness of the teacher following graduation or a teaching position are of an admirable nature. A claim to needlessness of the physician by the patient, and that of the student who has not learned enough from his teacher and guide may be considered to be reproachable.

The patient is in need of the physician as long as he is sick but after his recovery, he does not require the physician's services any further. The student's need for his teacher is of the same nature.

He concludes by saying that man's needlessness is of the admirable type.8

It goes without saying that his claim regarding modern man's needlessness of religion includes needlessness of Islam as well. Special emphasis is placed on needlessness of Islam, since most of his audience are Muslims who believe in the necessity of following the teachings of Islam. Besides, Islam is not even once excluded from his discussion. To establish his viewpoint, he cites Qur'anic verses and traditions.9

Based on the aforementioned points, the said author's discussion on needlessness of religion includes Islam, and our main discussion is about Islam. Therefore, the terms "Islam" and "religion" shall be employed synonymously in this section.

Description Or Judgment

Is Dr. Soroush making attempts toward description or judgment? It is to be noted that at times, we intend to describe modern societies, particularly western countries and the manner of interaction between science and religion in such societies. For instance, explanations are provided for their scientific and industrial advancements.

In describing the historical facts happening in the West, their conjecture that scientific advancements have led to their needlessness of religion is mentioned. Such remarks are made at the price of ignoring the fact that Western societies have incurred damages from Christianity, the Church, and also from not knowing the Islamic faith.

At times, besides providing a description of Western societies, judgments are made regarding them. We intend to answer the following questions:

- Has the West, in its encounter with religion, proceeded on the right path?
- Is the viewpoint of a number of thinkers belonging to secular societies, based on the needlessness of religion, accurate and acceptable?
- Can it be claimed that generally speaking, man's need for perceiving religious teachings has come to

It may be inferred from the material provided by the author that he is not merely trying to provide a historical description of the relationship between mankind and religion, particularly modern man's encounter with religion, but he is further endeavoring to pass judgment and confirm the interconnection between scientific advancement and needlessness of religion. It is clearly reflected in the following statements:

At the outset, he mentions the rise of modern science; 10 then he intends to answer the question whether man is in need of religion despite advancement in the modern world. In this regard, he states: "What is clear is man's needlessness of prophets and their teachings." 11

He does not state that it is modern man's conjecture that in the light of scientific advancement, he has attained needlessness of religion, but emphasizes real and obvious needlessness.

After raising the claim of needlessness of religion, it is suggested that such a claim may disturb believers. 12 Referring to the doubt and the manner by which he provides his answer indicates real and appropriate needlessness, since, inappropriate needlessness will not sound new to many a believer nor disturb them.

The reason is that conjecture of needlessness of religion traces back to the rise of Renaissance and the growth of experimental sciences in the West. It is to be mentioned that in different eras from the Renaissance onwards, such a trend has experienced fluctuations as well.

Judgments are passed concerning modern man and no doubts are entertained regarding needlessness of religion, but it is considered as certain and indisputable. As a consequence, attempt is merely made regarding the manner of its exposition, stating: "Now, concerning passing judgments regarding modern societies, we are supposed to distinguish between the two types of needlessness and consider the grounds by which modern man does not require prophetic teachings." 13

His judgment concerning modern man is that they have become needless of religion and their needlessness is *admirable*. According to him, prophetic teachings are so established for people that they have turned into certainties or self–evident truths.

Arguments Substantiating Needlessness Of Religion.

What are the arguments given by the proponents of the theory of needlessness of religion? There are no coherent and systematic arguments, however, he attempts to substantiate his theory through the following arguments:

• Man's intellectual and scientific advancement presents a specific standard for needlessness

- Cites Qur'anic verses and prophetic traditions States teachings have turned into indisputable facts
- Concludes that Prophets' success necessitates modern man's needlessness of religion

Following the clarification of the two types of needlessness, he proceeds to specify the type, stating: "Now in passing judgment concerning modern societies, we are supposed to consider the distinction between the two types of needlessness and reflect on the grounds for modern man's needlessness of prophetic teachings. Is it due to the fact that prophetic teachings are so firmly established in the minds that they have turned into indisputable facts and they are accepted without requiring spiritual guidance.

Modern man is born with such teachings, lives by them and breathes in such atmosphere. Or is it due to the fact that, despite poverty and ignorance, man is indifferent toward them through enmity, godlessness, and opposition toward the Divine? If the latter happens to be the case, there will remain no other alternative but to rue and regret the prophets' failure, but the fact is otherwise."14

In replying to the question whether modern societies' needlessness of religion is of *reproachable* or *admirable* type, he remarks: "If the latter happens to be the case, there would remain no other alternative but to rue and regret prophets' failure, but the fact is otherwise." 15

In other words, if we do not say that *admirable* needlessness of religion is the case, it will necessitate prophets' failure and uselessness of their efforts. But the fact is that prophets' failure is unacceptable; consequently, it is to be concluded that needlessness is the case.

Therefore, prophets' success necessitates modern man's needlessness of religion. Thus he concludes that prophetic teachings are so firmly established in the minds that they have turned into indisputable facts, with which man is born, lives, and breathes in such atmosphere.

Evaluation

The First Problem

The author's claim of prophetic teachings being indisputable for modern man is incomplete. How can such a claim be accepted? Religious teachings cannot be indisputable for people and make them needless of such teachings. As long as one has not learned the primary and secondary articles of faith, he is ignorant of them. As a consequence, everyone is in need of learning. Nobody's learning may lead to other people's needlessness of learning.

Whoever learns something, the point is clarified to him and such clarification does not enter other people's minds, unless they receive education as well. Besides, one may not attain clarity through learning.

The term indisputable is employed to signify what is not in need of reasoning, as it is clearly perceived

by everybody. Such perception does not require reflection, such as, assertion of the difference between days and nights, or the fact that two multiplied by two equals four. If Islamic teachings happen to be quite clear to people, they do not require education, but the problem lies in the fact that such a claim is not acceptable. All Islamic commands are not clear to such an extent.

Many Islamic teachings are based on intellectual and scientific reasoning, some of which may be perceived through reflection, reasoning, and in cases, by making use of results produced by human sciences.

The philosophy of such religious teachings is established through the reflections of intellectuals, and as such, they are not axiomatic or self– evident to everybody. A number of commands also lie beyond human intellect and comprehension, and as a consequence, they may not be perceived through the application of experimental sciences.

The Second Problem

The prophets' standard of success is not their self-evident teachings to mankind, thus the contrary might necessitate their decisive failure. To consider the prophets' triumph or defeat, the goals of their missions are to be taken into account as well. They aimed at

imparting the Divine message to the people of the world, guiding them to spiritual perfection and following Divine commands, and they took great steps in both spheres.

Prophetic missions aimed at liberating mankind from the bondage of authorities other than God, establishing the link between Bountiful God and mankind, and also guiding men toward spiritual growth and attaining moral virtues.

Prophets further aimed at practical objectives rather than scientific goals, they intended to drive mankind to move toward God. The prophets' objective was to make all men, through their missions, proceed on the path toward God as best as possible in all their individual and social spheres of life for good.

Prophets intended to guide a creature who was created willful, capable of choosing guidance or misguidance. The intellect and thought, together with will and volition, are Divine bounties, bestowed on mankind from among different creatures, distinguishing him from animals and angels. The same will necessitates weighing human acts on the Divine scales of justice.

The proper application of such bounties enables man to be worthy of receiving the bounties of Divine and human virtues and growth, as its misuse shall entail everlasting loss, as it is emphasized many a time in the Holy Qur'an. Regarding the same point, it may be said that the standard of their success is proportionate to the manner of impressing such a willful creature and directing him in his thoughts and acts.

On the same basis, we notice that prophets, in their times and thereafter, have achieved great success and have greatly impressed mankind. For instance, the Prophet of Islam (S) was able, thanks to Divine Grace, to open a new chapter in the dark pages of Arab paganism, bestow everlasting life on men at that time, and make that era serve as a guide to the coming generations. It would suffice to take a glance at the great reformers in history to notice prophets' success in this respect. Different historiographers have emphasized prophets' outstanding role, particularly that of the Prophet of Islam (S).

Prophets have elevated stations of innumerable people from lowly states to the zenith of grandeur in their own times and thereafter. The number of Muslims in the last fourteen centuries has been on the rise and history has witnessed the conversion of innumerable ordinary people and also many scholars to the Islamic faith.

They have made the light of Islam shine on their lives and can serve as examples of the success achieved by the Prophet of Islam (S). Why is it that, despite the ever increasing scientific advancement, the rise of different schools of thought, a host of enthusiastic converts turn to embrace the Islamic faith?

Attempts have been made by the global powers' with their political and financial support to depict a dark picture of the pure visage of the Islamic faith and generate pessimism against it for the inhabitants of the globe and provide them with alternatives of other religions. Besides, the regimes of a large number of Muslim countries bear animosity against the dissemination of real Islam in the world.

In such circumstances, the rise in the number of converts to the Islamic faith merely reveals the success achieved by the faith and its original disseminators. The rise and continuity of the Islamic revolution in Iran, despite its entanglements with dilemmas, may also be regarded as the fruit of the flourishing of the Islamic faith in modern times and may serve as an example of success attained by its original founders who inspired such an Islamic movement.

One of the prophets' fundamental objectives was teaching moral virtues and reviving them in societies. Dissemination of such Divine and sacred teachings plays an important role in keeping individuals and societies away from depravity and corruption and assist them in attaining spiritual perfection.

Prophets played an impressive role and achieved great success in this respect in the history of human life. Modern man, as in the past, is entangled in the snare of ignorance and is in need of teachings emanating from the Divine source.

The Third Problem

If the only reason behind prophets' success be regarded as the self- evidence of their teachings to men, it will necessitate the failure of all the prophets, including the Prophet of Islam (S), in their own times. Emphasizing the issue that modern man, having advanced in science, has attained a state where Islamic teachings have become self-evident to him, will mean a lack of such attainment prior to

modernism.

The self– evidence of prophetic teachings and needlessness of religion were not actualized in the time of the prophets, even that of the Prophet of Islam (S) as the last prophet in the chain of prophet hood. In this case, one should conclude that all prophets suffered final defeat in their time and

did not attain any degree of success, since people in former times failed to regard religious teachings as self-evident. Therefore, if one regards the self-evidence of prophetic teachings as the sole standard for their success and thinks of some solution for the dilemma of their failure, he should revise the theory of modern man's needlessness of religion, rather than commit himself to the same theory.

Presenting A Specific Standard For Needlessness

Presenting a particular standard of piety is the basis of proving man's needlessness of religion. The standard is not clearly stated in the article entitled "The root is in water," but by referring to his views concerning *essential* and *accidental* in religion 16 and a number of issues raised by him in his lecture in Canada, 17 may contribute to its clarification.

In answering the questions raised at the end of the said lecture, he expounded the standard for attaining the stage of *admirable* needlessness of Islam or any faith. The reader's attention is directed to selections of his statements. His answer to the present author's question regarding *admirable* needlessness includes:

Dr. Soroush: We encounter the same point within the same framework in prophetic missions; a prophet may be appointed to his prophetic mission [and] his nation may attain *admirable* needlessness. It is not surprising.

... [As I humbly mentioned, the discussion was based on the minor premise. To you, has it happened or not? Has the world attained the stage of needlessness of religion?] That is all you say. It is not very important. Put the case that it happened, would there be anything wrong with it?

Question: No, by no means. It would have been so good. If the entire world, including the people of the Western and Eastern countries, were like the Prophet of the Islamic faith and acted according to all Divine commands, we would have the best society. There was no need for prophetic teachings, since the fruit of their struggle would already be in hand.

Dr. Soroush: Now put the case that [in the present] nowhere in the world is like that and men are primitive idolaters. What I am driving at is whether we would not be content if man attained such a state? [It is evident that we should be content.] It is excellent and serves as the token of the prophets' success.

Now if somebody told you that a number of societies were like that, would you be discontented because of it? [No] You are expected to be satisfied. You may only say that unfortunately, it is not the case;

otherwise, there would be nothing to worry about. My remarks are not against religion. So, we are not engaged in a religious discussion. It is merely a social discussion regarding whether a number of societies have attained such a state or not.

Question: I do not disagree with you concerning the definitions of the terms *admirable* and *reproachable* needlessness. [The main problem lies somewhere else.] The discussion is whether nowadays, the different countries of the world, such as Iran, the Western and Eastern countries have attained the needlessness of traditions, the Qur'anic message, or Islam as a religion, or a religious body with respect to its diverse dimensions, such as, devotional and social issues? If so, what is the attained percentage?

Dr. Soroush: Yes, this is your question. So, religious issues do not concern us here. In religious terms, *admirable* needlessness is not bad; rather, it is something good. If people have failed to attain to it, we are sorry that they have not. I wish they had. ... So, you agree that *admirable* needlessness is not contrary to religion.

It would be quite good to achieve it. But we are afraid to say that, as you put it, a number of societies have failed to achieve it [i.e. the stage of admirable needlessness]. Well, now I would like to answer this question. I see the problematic issue in the religious thought, which is in the mind as well. You think that by religion, Islamic law (*figh*) is meant.

You say 18 there is no religion when people do not perform their daily prayers. If [people] do not fast, if they drink wine [there is no faith]. That is the way you think. If this is the issue [i.e. if they are considered as standards for piety], I agree with you [i.e. modern man is not needless of religion]. But I do not regard religion in such a manner. That is the problematic issue regarding our thinking in our society.

This manner of thought has descended from the top of the hierarchy. I put the blame on the intellectual leaders. According to them, religion equals the Islamic law (*fiqh*). They consider the society to be religious, if its members observe the Islamic dress code (hijab). When people in Western societies do not follow the Islamic dress code, it is said that they have not attained the needlessness of prophetic teachings.

The prophet is supposed to tell them to follow the dress code. I agree with you regarding this standard [i.e. if we accept the authenticity of your standard] [admirable] needlessness has not been achieved. But I do not agree to your standard, I have an issue to raise in this respect. ... You know, if we agree on the fundamentals [there will be no issue between us, since] those [fundamentals] are of prime importance.

The pivot of my discussion lies in admirable and reproachable needlessness. Firstly, it would be great that a society attained to admirable needlessness. Secondly, there is a standard for attaining to *admirable* needlessness. Beating one's chest [as a part of the mourning ritual], organizing a gathering to remember the martyrs of Karbala, or going on pilgrimage to Mecca and the holy shrines may not serve as standards.

None of them may be considered as standards for piety. The standard is the value of people's honor and good name in that society.

Summary Of The Argument

The material included in the exposition of the standard for *admirable* needlessness of Islamic teachings may be summarized in three premises and a conclusion:

The first premise: Division of needlessness into the admirable and reproachable is true for Islamic teachings as well. Besides, it would be excellent and desirable that a society attained the stage of admirable needlessness of traditions and Qur'anic teachings.

The second premise: The standard for society's admirable needlessness of Islamic teachings is the establishment of the essence of Islamic teachings in society. The essence of Islamic teachings includes belief in propositions such as: man is a respectable creature; it is necessary to protect other people's honor and good name; freedom of mankind is to be respected; justice and its administration are good.

The last statement, quoted herein from his remarks, clearly indicate the first two premises.

The third premise: The essence of Islamic teachings [i.e. the concepts and the propositions mentioned in the second premise] has become self– evident for modern man. The self–evidence of the essence of prophetic teachings for modern man is taken for granted. He states: "My discussion concerns prophetic teachings.

Can it be said that the essence of prophetic teachings, maintaining that man is to be respected, have turned into an indisputable fact?" 19 In another instance, he remarks: "It is quite self– evident to me that basic prophetic teachings, i.e. the essence of their thoughts, lack any opponent or any serious opponent." 20 To confirm his theory, which is based on modern man's needlessness of religion, he writes: "The issue is that prophetic teachings have been firmly established in the historical mentality of mankind." 21 He illustrates the self–evidence of moral virtues and mentions justice and its administration. In the meantime, such illustrations indicate that by the self–evidence of the value of moral virtues, he means the self–evidence of the essence of Islamic teachings.

Conclusion: Modern man (inhabiting in societies for whose members the said propositions have become self-evident) has attained needlessness of religion.

Here, he repeats his claim: "What may be clearly noticed is man's needlessness of prophets and their teachings." There, he attributed needlessness of religion to mankind, but here, emphasis is further put on *modern society* and *modern man*, and they are regarded as having attained such a station.

Evaluation Of The First Premise

The authenticity of his argument lies in the authenticity of the three premises, whereas the second premise is fallacious, consequently his conclusion is fallacious. Besides, parts of the first premise seem to be unacceptable.

In the premise, he states: "The division of needlessness into the twain types of admirable and reproachable comes true regarding Islamic teachings. Besides, it would be a desideratum that a society attains the admirable needlessness of traditions and Qur'anic teachings."

Concerning this premise, it may be stated that the principle division of needlessness into the two types of admirable and reproachable is authentic, since the instances for the two types of needlessness is quite evident in the relations between the student and the teacher or the one between the patient and the physician.

Such needlessness may be actualized in the cases of the student and the physician, but needlessness of religion, though it is perceptible, its actualization sounds impossible, since the argument behind needlessness of Islamic teachings may include one of the following, none of which are acceptable:

One: its complete establishment and self-evidence in the mind. The needlessness of Islamic teachings is unacceptable for the same reason (their self-evidence to modern man).23

Two: the complete acquisition of Islamic teachings. If all religious teachings are not self-evident, but a number of individuals have acquired them and have committed them to memory, they do not require further acquisition.

Such argument is unacceptable, since it is evident that all the people of the world have not learned such teachings. It is not true concerning the inhabitants of the areas populated by Muslims, let alone the inhabitants of non–Muslim lands.

Evaluation Of The Second Premise

The fundamental need is to provide a specific standard for piety, as mentioned in the second premise. In this premise, the origin of needlessness is considered to be the self-evidence of the essence of religious teachings (i.e. the value of justice, protection of the honor and good name of individuals, and so on). It is necessary to pay attention to a number of points prior to the presentation of the critique:

By essence of the Islamic faith, the said theorist means its essentials contrasted with its accidents. Reading his article entitled "Essential and accidental in religion," reveals that by "gowhar-e din", he means "dhati-ye din" ("essential to religion") and at times he employs them interchangeably.

For instance, following a detailed exposition of religious accidents and the necessity of distinguishing them from essentials, he summarizes his ideas: "The fourteen points ... are the same as those excellent

accidents which conceal the invaluable essence of religion and in order to discover the essence, there shall be no other alternative but to split the crust."24

The terms "gowhar" and "dhat" are employed synonymously in these passages. In addition to "gowhar," he has employed other terms synonymous with the essence of Islam, such as "pure and naked Islam," 25 "the main message and the nucleus of Islam." 26

He holds that all these terms share the same referent, by which, he means the essential or true Islam, i.e. Islam excluding its accidents.27

The second premise reveals that by the essence of religion, he means moral self-evident concepts such as justice and respect for man. However, he does not claim that self-evidence of such concepts may render man needless of the acquisition of such concepts, but maintains that it is the origin of needlessness of all Islamic teachings.

While asking various questions (some of which are included herein) the present author emphasized that by putting emphasis on performing daily prayers, fasting, observing the Islamic dress code, and a number of other religious requirements, he did not intend to claim that the mere performance and observance of such acts were the most important standards for a religious society, as for instance, if a number of people contented themselves with inattentive performance of daily prayers, they might not be the best of the pious, compared to other people, 28 but the question to be raised is whether it is possible to consider certain requirements for believing in the Islamic faith. The points raised in questioning the said theorist by the present author includes the following:

"It is not claimed that belief in the Islamic faith shall merely depend on performing daily prayers, particularly those performed inattentively. Any individual or society that establishes them is considered to be Muslim, otherwise they will be regarded as unbelievers, even if they happen to be good.

The present writer does not say that belief in the Islamic faith is restricted to such outward practice, but he means that religion introduces certain preliminaries by whose performance and observance, man may attain to higher stations. Belief in the Islamic faith has certain degrees. There are the lowest and the highest degrees in the hierarchy. There exist minimum requirements for a Muslim, without which one may not be regarded as a Muslim.

Therefore, the other side is not to be accused of stating that being a Muslim lies merely in the inattentive performance of daily prayers. On the basis of such premise, we may raise a point. Put the case that there is a society whose members are disbelievers.

Corruption, prostitution, non-observance of the Islamic dress code, drinking alcoholic drinks and promiscuity are common in it. Its members do not establish daily prayers, nor do they fast, nor act upon religious commands.

Is it incumbent upon us to guide this society, attempt to convert them to the Islamic faith, and encourage them to act upon the Islamic commands?29

Taking the aforementioned points into consideration, we evaluate his second premise, in which he states that the society for whose members, concepts such as the value of justice, its administration, and respecting the individual's honor and good name are self-evident, is needless of the acquisition of Islamic teachings.

By this, he may either mean one of the two fallacious statements:

When such concepts become self-evident for a society or individual, other necessary commands and beliefs of the Islamic faith become self- evident. If the said theorist means the same, its fallacy is quite self- evident, since the self-evidence of the value of justice may never lead to the self-evidence of other Islamic teachings for the individual.

One may encounter a Western or Eastern society, ignorant of Islamic teachings, but believing in concepts such as justice and its administration, and pose a question to its members regarding the necessity of establishing daily prayers, fasting, and the manner of their performance, and learn about their total ignorance of such teachings. Apparently, the said theorist does not mean this case, but the following.

In case, he means that the self-evidence of concepts such as the value of justice and its administration renders man needless of other Islamic teachings, one may say that the essence of the Islamic faith lies in the same concepts, and other Islamic commands and precepts are not of the same significance as they may be excluded or substituted.

In fact he means that the essentials of Islamic teachings are the same moral concepts which have become self-evident to modern man. Therefore, there is no need for religion any longer.

Such a theory is fallacious, since it suffers from the following problems:

The First Problem

Religion is not supposed to teach man that promoting justice, acquiring Divine attributes, and approaching Him are good and doing wrong is evil, since such propositions are axiomatic and specimens of the practical intellect's commands.

Divine revelation aims at assisting human intellect theoretically, indicating specific approaches to attain the essence, and on the practical level, fan his inward flames of faith as a meritorious incentive to act in this direction.

Limitations of human intellect and science, and also shortcomings of human epistemic means employed for perceiving the details of the path to guidance and attaining the essence of religion were mentioned above.

To make use of Divine revelation is to use the expertise of an expert who is totally aware of dimensions, approaches and factors which are of significance in attaining the essence of justice, devotion and guidance. Self-evidence of the value of the essence of religion may not render us needless of understanding the manners of actualization of the essence.

If the Islamic devotional, moral, and social commands are acted upon, man shall be respected, the fragrance of justice shall be in the air, and Divine attributes shall prevail in life. The similitude of Mr. Soroush's theory is that if somebody understood the value of specializing in cardio-vascular diseases, there would be no need to study medicine, since he would have sufficient knowledge to treat such patients.

It is evident that such claim is fallacious. The self-evidence of the value of specializing in cardio-vascular failures may not turn someone into a specialist in that field of study. Islam indicates practical approaches to actualize this ideal through specific commands.

The Second Problem

The said author tries to prove modern man's needlessness of religion. However, his remarks exceed such needlessness as it necessitates that of the predecessors and stands in contradiction to prophetic missions and the Scripture. If he happens to be right in stating that the reason lying behind the appointment of prophets to their missions was to teach man self– evident moral concepts, such concepts are neither required for modern man nor those living in the Middle Ages, since such concepts have always been self–evident to man.

Consulting Plato's (427–347 BCE) *Republic*, and Aristotle's (384–322 BCE) *Nicomachean Ethics* attests the same point. The same is true with the Islamic times. Formerly, such concepts were believed to be of value. The self–evidence of such concepts is not merely known to modern man as a result of modern scientific advancements. Reasonable man is created in a fashion that he may comprehend moral axiomatic propositions.

If you go to the remotest village in Iran and ask an illiterate man whether justice or injustice is good, what answer will you receive? Will he prefer injustice to justice? Does modern man merely perceive the good of justice? Even a child, prior to receiving religious education, may complain if he notices that his parents treat children unjustly and unfairly.

Such issues are regarded as the intelligible of practical reason and they are shared by all humanity. Predecessors could be needless of religion in the same manner as modern men. Consequently, the said author's statement necessitates the futility of prophetic missions by assuming that all they were supposed to do was teach axiomatic propositions.

Besides, appointing numerous prophets with new Scriptures was futile. The utmost duty of the following prophets was to reiterate and remind people of the material imparted by the first prophet, so needless of bringing a new Book.

Besides, the said theory makes all the prophetic missions futile on the part of God, and the prophetic endeavors useless, including the struggles of the last one of them [Mohammad (S)]. Instead of undergoing innumerable unbearable troubles and risking his life many a time for teaching religious precepts and providing the society with Islamic guidance, it would be better if the prophet had asked people regarding the good or evil of justice.

If people confirmed the good of justice, he could perceive that they were needless of Islamic teachings. There was no need for the prophet even to ask people regarding the good of justice, as the value of justice is self-evident to anybody.

In like manner, according to the same theory, the infallible Imams' troubles in the exposition of Islamic commands and the transmission of traditions to Muslims, particularly in the times of Imam Muhammad al– Baqir ('a) and Imam Ja'far al–Sadiq ('a), encouraging their disciples to preserve these traditions and transmit them to the coming generations, tolerating confinements and martyrdoms for the same end, religious scholars' struggles throughout the vicissitudes of the history of the Shi'a for the collection and preservation of such traditions against the damages done by the Imams' enemies have been all in vain.

They could tread an easier path instead of engage in an array of troubles and hardships, they could pause for a moment to notice if people were aware of the virtue of justice and the vice of injustice. If the Imams were completely aware of such issues (certainly they were), they were able to recognize the fact that such people were needless of perceiving other Islamic teachings.

The Third Problem

Limiting the primary and the secondary articles of faith to a number of moral self-evident propositions shall deny many a religious duty and the obligation to act upon them. This issue stands in contradiction to the Holy Qur'an and the traditions narrated from the Prophet (S) and the infallible Imams. Numerous Qur'anic verses emphasize religious duties such as performing salat (prayers), zakaat (poor-due), sawm (fast), and acting upon other religious duties and abstaining from unlawful acts.

There are also many traditions narrated to the same effect. If one claims that the people of a certain society regard the necessity of other people's honor and good name and also the realization of social justice as self– evident, it may be said that they have taken a step closer towards the society ideal to prophets, but it is untrue to say that such a society is needless of perceiving the other Islamic teachings, since it has attained to admirable needlessness, such a viewpoint necessitates no need to believe in Islamic duties and act upon them.

In other words, he is saying that it is possible to be a good Muslim and at the same time abstain from

establishing the prayer (salat), fast (sawm), and perform other duties or commit unlawful acts (e.g. drink wine, abandon the Islamic dress code) or deny the existence of God, Prophethood, Imamate, and resurrection, since:

He takes it for granted that an individual or society becomes needless of other Islamic teachings through acknowledging moral self-evident propositions. The obvious consequence of such an assumption is needlessness of perception and belief in the unity of God, prophetic missions, resurrection, and the secondary articles of faith.

It shall not be necessary to perform the duties in such circumstances, since acting upon the command is secondary to its knowledge.

When the self-evidence of moral concepts causes the individual and the society to attain to admirable needlessness of Islamic teachings, there shall be no need to perceive Islamic teachings and act upon them, since in case one is not aware of a command, he shall not be able to act upon it, and the necessity of acting upon an unknown command shall be regarded as a duty beyond the capacity of the obliged and it would be unbecoming of God to make it obligatory to act upon an unknown command.

In other words, the said theory necessitates that performing a Divinely ordained duty, attaining salvation in this world and the world to come, will result in traversing a short path which leads to needlessness of accepting the primary articles of faith and acting upon the secondary ones.

That path is causing concepts such as justice to become self- evident. When the value of such concepts becomes self-evident to somebody, he shall be exempt from acting upon them.

The Fourth Problem

The said theory provides specimens for the ideas of those who believe in a number of the verses of the Holy Qur'an and disbelieve in others, since the said author accepts the moral self-evident propositions and leaves the rest aside, as God says in the Holy Qur'an:

"Then do you believe in a part of the Scripture and reject the rest? Then what is the recompense of those who do so among you, except disgrace in the life of this world, and on the Day of Resurrection they shall be consigned to the most grievous torment. And Allah is not unaware of what you do." (2:85)

The occasion of sending down this verse was regarding those people of the Book who merely believed in a part of it, but the verse obviously indicates that the command includes the Holy Qur'an as well. When the abandonment of a number of the verses of other scriptures is forbidden and it arouses God's Wrath, such act regarding the verses of the Holy Qur'an shall be forbidden and shall even entail His Wrath more severely.

The said author has ignored the interconnectedness of Islamic teachings. Islam is a doctrine possessing limbs and organs like the human body. Man is physically sound and healthy when all the limbs and organs of his body are sound. The limbs and organs may not be individually as efficient as the whole of the body. Undoubtedly, a number of limbs and organs are superior to others, for instance, compared to fingers, the head and heart play a more important role, since the severance of the head results in the loss of human life, but the severance of a finger does not lead to death. In like manner, a number of Islamic commands are of more importance. Placing emphasis on one dimension and ignoring another shall lead to distortions in the Islamic religion.

Islamic commands have been legislated for individual as well as social interests. As expressed by a number of Muslim thinkers, Divine commands are subject to the essential good and evil of acts. Consequently, God Almighty has rendered a number of acts as obligatory or recommended them in accordance with the good derived by committing them.

Likewise, the evil derived from committing certain acts has led to their being regarded as forbidden or disapproved. However, all the good and evil derived from committing certain acts may not be obvious to us. All the good which is Divinely considered for man may not be actualized through the mere self–evidence of a number of Divine Commands, but the actualization may occur through recognizing and acting upon all such Commands and thus attain exaltation.

The holistic outlook requires that perceiving and performing a number of duties does not render us needless of perceiving and performing others. Having respect for others does not render us needless of our daily and nightly prayers.

If our devotions are properly perceived and performed, besides maintaining a spiritual connection with God, continuity of His remembrance, and spiritual growth, they will entail worldly and social consequences and assist in the establishment of desirable social relations.

Citation Of The Qur'anic Verses And Traditions

To express the *admirable* needlessness of religion, the said author seeks assistance from the Qur'anic verses and traditions, but he does not specify whether such evidence serve as the main reason for the authenticity of his claim or it is assumed to be independent, but it may be said that through such evidence, he intends to substantiate his viewpoint.

The reason is that in order to prove the claim that modern man has attained the *admirable* needlessness of religion rather than the *reproachable* one, he begins with an exposition of the two types of needlessness and assumes that they are applicable in the relations between the teacher and the student and also between the physician and the patient.

Then he cites Qur'anic verses and traditions in order to indicate that the relation between the prophet

and the people have been regarded as the same in religious sources, as he says: "In religious teachings, the relation between the prophet and the Muslim community has been likened to the relation between the teacher and the student and also between the physician and the patient.

In the *Nahj al–Balagha* ("The Peak of Eloquence") regarding the description of the Prophet (S), Imam 'Ali ('a), the Commander of the Faithful, says: "[the Prophet (S) is like] a physician who turns around [in his community] practicing medicine gratis, administering salves on wounds enthusiastically and regards the patient's breath of recovery as his reward." 30 We have also heard from the Prophet (S) that, as a teacher, he came to perfect moral virtues.31

It is said in the Qur'an that the Prophet (S) was appointed to teach and purify the souls. 32 Thus the relation between the Prophet and the people, likened to the three relations of the teacher, the educator, and the physician with the student, the apprentice and the patient, are clearly specified in the Qur'an and other sources of Islamic teachings. 33

Citing the Qur'anic verses and the traditions following an expression of the specific characteristics of the relation between the physician and the patient and also that between the teacher and the student indicate that, regarding the relation between the Prophet (S) and the Muslim community, such characteristics are true.

Therefore, people may become needless of prophets if the student and the patient are able to become needless of the teacher and the physician.

Evaluation

Could the above mentioned Qur'anic verse and the traditions confirm the said author's opinion? The answer is negative, because:

First, undoubtedly, the Prophet (S), to some extent, functioned like a teacher and educator, but such resemblance does not necessitate modern man's needlessness of these teachings. Those who are presently aware of Islamic teachings have learned them through prophets and their successors. Those who are unaware of such teachings have to learn them.

So long as they have not learned them, they do not become needless of receiving education. Therefore, no one is needless of prophetic teachings. So long as one does not learn anything per se, he may not learn it. If someone studies and became a physicist, it does not entail that the members of his family and the coming generations may unconsciously become physicists, since each of them requires studying independently.

Secondly, the relation between the physician and the patient suffering from a certain somatic malady is such that the patient may recover and become needless of the physician, but it may be said that in respect of the relation between the prophet (S) and the Muslim community, there is telling evidence

indicating the impossibility of man's needlessness of Qur'anic education, i.e. the diagnosis and treatment of psychic and spiritual maladies and moral education are not as convenient as the treatment and cure of somatic maladies.

Consequently, if thousands of patients suffering from somatic maladies recover each and every single day, thanks to advancements in medical sciences and become needless of physicians, psychic and spiritual maladies are ever on the rise and the need for physicians treating moral maladies in the modern world is felt far more than before.

The other point is that men may look at the infallible religious models and attain a higher level of moral soundness and spiritual growth, but, owing to the persistence of the concupiscent faculty, Satanic temptations, and the moral growth complications on the one hand, and the infallible state of such models on the other, others may never attain the station of such educators; as a consequence, man, as in the past, requires the treatment of such physicians.

Thirdly, a simile never indicates that the thing likened is similar to which a thing is likened. Therefore, to understand a simile, in addition to the recognition of the thing likened and that to which a thing is likened, the point of similarity is to be taken into consideration. The proposition "Ali is like a lion" does not signify that 'Ali has a tail and a mane, but it reveals the similarity between 'Ali's and lion's boldness.

Assimilating the Prophet (S) to a physician or a teacher does not mean that the relation between the prophet and the community is in all respects exactly like the relation between the ordinary teacher and the student, but indicates the similative between the twain in terms of the point of similarity, which is

the prophet's didactic and educational role in the society. In other words, prophets, like teachers, teach men and treat them like physicians. But, is it possible that one day, men become needless of these teachers and physicians? To answer this question, one should probe into other spheres such as theology, anthropology, the shortcomings of science and human intellect, and also the reason lying behind the necessity of revelation.

Fourthly, if the similitude of the relation between the prophet and the community, and the relation between God and His servants resemble the relations between the teacher and the physician and the student and the patient respectively, as mentioned in the verses and traditions, it necessitates a total similitude of such relations in all respects, ignoring the point of similarity, which shall entail the following fallacious consequence:

in respect of ordinary men, not only the student and the patient may become needless of the teacher and the physician respectively, but also the student may attain to a scientific station far higher than that of his teacher.

The patient may not only recover from maladies, but also may become sounder than his former physician. Consequently, ignoring the point of similarity and its overgeneralization necessitates that we

be able to attain some knowledge far above that of the prophets and the Imams, even become needless of learning the Divine sciences and attain a scientific station far higher than that of God.

In terms of moral education, we may also attain an existential and spiritual station far higher than that of the prophets, the Imams and even God, the Lord of the both worlds.

Axiomatic Teachings

The said author, by citing specimens of Islamic teachings that have become self-evident to modern man, follows another route to confirm and reinforce modern man's claim to needlessness of religion. He intends to clarify that today, these teachings have become self-evident; therefore, it is not required to learn them.

Here, he makes mention of two points: the establishment of moral concepts and virtues, such as justice and self– evidence of idols made of stone and date. Regarding this point he says: "The prophet of Islam (S) endeavored to desanctify the stone and date idols in the Arabian Peninsula, but it is self–evident to the modern civilized man. As a consequence, men are needless of such teachings."34

Evaluation

From among the whole array of Islamic teachings and commands and the boundless sea of the Qur'an and the traditions, the said author makes mention of worshipping stone and date idols and justice, since he recognizes such commands as self-evident to modern man, regarding it as a support for claiming the *admirable* needlessness of religion, but his conclusions are inaccurate, because:

Firstly, it is insufficient to merely three specimens for such colossal claim. Defective induction may not serve as grounds for a generalized claim. How may one, who endeavors to establish modern man's needlessness of all Islamic teachings, merely suffice to make mention of three or four specimens, from among hundreds of commands and generalize the conclusion to other commands?

How many Qur'anic verses and traditions are devoted to the virtue of justice and the vice of injustice and worshipping stone and date idols whose self-evidence may render man needless of all Islamic teachings?

Besides, all the mentioned instances, excluding idolatry, are among moral self-evident concepts and they were needless of prophetic teachings from the outset, and as mentioned above, the objective of prophetic missions is far higher than teaching moral axioms.35

Secondly, his viewpoint concerning idolatry is deficient and suffers from the following problems:

Worshipping stone idols are common today in many societies. In a number of societies, stone idols fashioned in the likeness of some human or animal limbs and organs, even genitals, are being

worshipped, which were not perhaps of any precedence in the time of the Prophet of Islam (S). Religions such as Buddhism, which have many followers in a number of countries, including West countries, may serve as an example.

The full-scale endeavors of the Islamic faith against idolatry did not merely include abandonment of worshipping stone and wooden idols, but also embraced worshipping an array of idols on different levels, which may be even encountered nowadays among Muslim and non-Muslim, civilized and non-civilized nations, though such idols are not of stone and wood.

Therefore, modern man is badly in need of a religion that struggles against idolatry in its different forms and manifestations. If the self-evidence of the foulness of worshipping stone idols in some societies serves as the standard for all humanity's needlessness of all Islamic teachings, it should be said that Muslims perceived it after a lapse of several decades in the first Islamic century and thereafter, few vestiges of worshipping stone and wooden idols were to be found.

Consequently, the theory in question necessitates that people were needless of religion at that time, rather than attain to needlessness in the 20th century onwards.

Specific Emphasis On Western Countries' Needlessness Of Religion

As stated above, the said author aims at the needlessness of humanity and modern society of Islamic teachings. Besides, he specifically emphasizes Western countries' needlessness of Islamic teachings. He maintains that Western societies have perfectly attained such a level and far precede other countries in this respect.

Prior to resuming our discussion in this regard, it is to be noted that the present writer does not intend to present a detailed discussion on Occidental studies and reveal the Western countries' strong and weak points as well as the merits and demerits of his own society. But we are supposed to take a glance in passing at this point that despite the serious steps taken in our country following the Islamic revolution, we are still taking the initial steps.

It is incumbent upon us to uncover the weak points of our society ceaselessly and persistently and contribute to improving them. For the advancement of our society, we require means such as referring to the history of human life, making use of the experience of other peoples and nations of the world, particularly that of Western countries. But we cannot ignore the fact that Occidental studies entail complications and delicacies.

In such studies, as in the investigation of other phenomena in the world, we have to tread the right and realistic path. One of the points of significance in the accurate perception of a certain phenomenon is to conduct unbiased research, devoid of pessimism, optimism, and prejudice. Islam has recommended us

to study the history of other nations carefully and take lessons in order to improve our history and society.

One who intends to study a phenomenon with the aim to destroy and criticize it, concentrates further on its demerits and deprives himself from focusing on its merits. Au contraire, one who studies a topic with an aim to glorify and defend it, immerses oneself in its merits and unwittingly pays no heed to its demerits. A detailed discussion regarding Occidental studies requires another opportunity, which is beyond the limits of the present work.

The present work aims at presenting Dr. Soroush's viewpoint regarding the Western needlessness of Islam. Evaluating his ideas regarding this topic does not imply ignoring the scientific advancements of the West and the advantages in Westerners' lives.

His words reveal an excessive glorification of Western countries, in such a fashion that he regards them as having attained to such a high level of growth and exaltation that they are needless of Islamic teachings:

Making mention of parts of his discussions at a session held in Canada may reveal the same point:

Question: "We assume that there exist many a shortcoming in our society, in Iran, and indeed it is so and we have to endeavor to dispel them. I would like to request you to disregard our own society for the time being and ask you a number of questions concerning Western societies.

Is there any need at all to struggle in order to revive the Qur'anic teachings, encourage the people in Western societies to convert to the Islamic faith and perform the outward duties such as *salat* ("daily prayers") and *sawm* ("fast") as a phase in practicing one's religion? Is it required to do so?"

Dr. Soroush: "What is meant by the revival of the Qur'an, sir? Does it mean establishing daily prayers? ... Please mention the sense of the term. The revival of the Qur'an means not to defile anybody's good name, to submit to the administration of justice. In other words, such concepts are supposed to be respected.

What is done in practice is another story. Respecting people's good name is not supposed to be subject to question. There should not be any need to teach them these concepts. They may fail to do so in practice, as they do, but it is not open to question. Such concepts are supposed to be self–evident. What are you telling us? You keep on asking us to respect people's good name.

To you, is it well established in the modern society or not? In whatever country might it be? Is it in need of further clarification? Does it require clarification in our society, sir? Our discussion does not concern the point that they are not acted upon in practice. It is not established in theory at all.

That is what I am trying to say. But it has been established elsewhere. If you express them, they say your statements are wearisome. They say we know. We have said and written such things ten times

more than you. Now it is a different story that they presently fail to practice them. Failing to practice may always exist.

My discussion concerns prophetic teachings. The essence of their teachings is that man is to be respected. Have such teachings impressed people in such a fashion that it is not required to discuss the issue?"36

The dialogue reveals that the question precisely concerns the issue whether it is required to struggle in the West to revive the Qur'anic teachings, to disseminate the Islamic faith in the West and encourage Westerners to convert to Islam. His reply to the question is that reviving the Qur'anic teachings and the Islamic faith lie in the self-evidence of the value of certain concepts such as justice and respecting other people's good name, and such concepts are axiomatic in the West.

In other words, as he has already emphasized the issue that people are not in need of Islamic teachings if the essentials of prophetic teachings are known to them. Here he states that the essentials of the prophetic teachings have become self-evident to Westerners. As a consequence, they are needless of Islamic teachings and it is not required to revive the Qur'anic teachings in the West.

In fact, what he emphasizes here is the Westerners' needlessness of comprehending Islamic teachings. They are needless in theory, but it does not indicate that they are not confronted with complications in practice.

The issue as raised by the said author indicates Westerners' full-scale needlessness of Islamic teachings. His statements were mentioned in the beginning of the chapter (5.6.2. Presentation of a specific standard for needlessness). Therefore, mention will be made of the sentences in question. To present this claim, he takes three steps. In the first step, he states: "A prophet may come and his community may attain to admirable needlessness.

It is not wondrous. ... I am saying whether we are not supposed to be happy to find out that man has really attained to it. Evidently, we are supposed to be happy."

In the next step, he intends to indicate that Western countries are totally needless of the Islamic faith, as he states: "If you are informed that a number of societies are like this [i.e. needless of Islamic teachings], is it supposed to disturb you? [No] you are supposed to be happy about it. ... But we are afraid to say that, as you put it, people in some places have not attained [to such a phase]. Well, now I would like to reply to this question."

The third step is the solution which is provided by him in order to prove his claim. He maintains that the standards for piety are to be altered. When the standards are stated according to his ideas, we shall find out that people in modern societies have attained to a full-scale needlessness of Islamic teachings.

He emphasizes that the widespread of erroneous thoughts and ideas held by Muslim jurisprudents and

intellectual leaders in our society has resulted in presenting inaccurate standards for piety to society. One of the standards is that "when people in a society follow the Islamic dress code, it is said that the people practice the religion. Westerners do not observe the dress code, therefore, it is said that they have not attained needlessness of prophetic teachings."

He clearly states the same point regarding the establishment of salat, abstention from drinking wine, and does not recognize them as standards for piety. Consequently, he concludes that Western societies act against such commands, but they have totally attained to the phase of needlessness of Islamic teachings.

In his discussion, the said author states: "Religion does not exist today in its vulgar sense, as it once used to be. It does not exist in our society either. Even if it exists, you can rarely find it here."37

By *here*, he does not mean Iran, but Western countries, since it is comprehended thus from his speech delivered in Montreal. In his statements, he explicitly, but cautiously, glorifies the West on the grounds that they do not believe in the vulgar version of religion, but he denounces Iranians for their belief in the vulgar form of religion. In other words, he states that contrary to Iranians' religiosity, Westerners' religion is intellectual.

By *vulgar religiosity*, he means practicing religion by performing religious duties, abstaining from unlawful acts, as by *intellectual religion*, he means Islam devoid of commands.

His reply regarding the Western societies' needlessness of religion becomes obvious from the aforesaid points, since his main argument is the presentation of a specific standard for needlessness and also the self– evidence of religious teachings to them, whose critiques have already been mentioned above.

Shortcomings of the intellect and science and also the problems arising from Western irreligiosity have been already mentioned.

- 1. Kiyan (periodical), issue no. 29.
- 2. Dr. Soroush, his lecture and the pursuant questions and answers session held at 25–12–1367 (1988–04–15) at Fatemiyyeh (sa) Mosque in Montreal, Canada. The cases alluded to in the course of the chapter is mainly relevant to the session in question.
- 3. Kiyan, 29, p. 2.
- 4. Ibid. p. 12.
- 5. Loc. Cit.
- 6. Ibid., pp. 12-13.
- 7. Ibid., no. 29, p. 13.
- 8. Ibid. p. 13, where he says: "Now to make a judgment...".
- 9. Cf. the chapter entitled "Citation of Qur'anic verses and traditions."
- 10. Kiyan (periodical), no. 29, p. 12.
- 11. Ibid. p. 12.
- 12. Ibid. pp. 12-13.
- 13. Ibid. p. 13.
- 14. Loc.cit.

- 15. Loc.cit.
- 16. Cf. Sajedi, Abu 'I-Fadl, "Chalesh ya sazesh "challenge or compromise," chapter one.
- <u>17.</u> Dr. Soroush, lecture, questions and answers session, dated 15 March, 1998, held at Fatima (sa) Mosque in Montreal, Canada. It is to be noted that, due to shortage of time and the great number of questions, the present author had to raise one single question concerning admirable and reproachable needlessness of religion. Dr. Soroush's remarks are precisely quoted herein. The words in parenthesis are added by the present author in order to establish nexus among the sentences and or his explanations.
- 18. It is to be mentioned that while asking the question, emphasis had been put on the issue that the only standards for keeping one's faith was not to perform daily prayers and fast during the month of Ramadan.
- 19. Dr. Soroush, lecture, questions and answers session dated 15 March, 1998, held at Fatima (sa) Mosque in Montreal, Canada.
- 20. Ibid.
- 21. Kiyan (periodical), no. 29, p. 14.
- 22. Ibid. p. 12.
- 23. The point was expounded in the critique of the first argument.
- 24. Ibid. p. 18.
- 25. Ibid. no. 42, p. 13.
- 26. Ibid. p. 14.
- 27. For further details, see Sajedi, Chalesh ya sazesh ("Challenge or conspiracy"), Section one: Essential and accidental in religion. The section opens with the meaning of essential and accidental in religion from Dr. Soroush's viewpoint and its requirements. The material incorporated in section one reveals that he distinguishes accidentals from the true Islam (which is considered by him as the essence of Islam). "Performance of daily prayers prevents from perpetrating unlawful and wicked acts." Needless to say that the objective of the present work is not the presentation of such discussion. The value of the performance of daily prayers for the modern man requires another discussion.
- 28. It is to be noted that the attentive performance of daily prayers with due observance of the relevant requirements plays a very significant role in diminishing corruption and immoral acts in society; as the same role is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an, 29:45.
- 29. Dr. Soroush, lecture, questions and answers session dated 15 March, 1998, held at Fatima (sa) Mosque in Montreal, Canada.
- 30. Nahj al-Balagha, sermon 180.
- 31. Bu'ithtu li-uttimmu makarim al-Akhlaq "I was [Divinely] inspired to perfect moral virtues."
- <u>32.</u> "Reciting unto them His Verses and purifying them and instructing them the Book and the wisdom." (Holy Quran, 3:164; 62:2)
- 33. Kiyan (periodical), no. 29, p. 13.
- 34. Kiyan (periodical), no. 29, p. 14.
- 35. A discussion regarding the topic: "Could the self-evidence of moral concepts serve as the basis for the modern man's needlessness of religion?" followed Mr. Soroush's second proposition of the intellect, therefore, there is no need for reiterate it
- <u>36.</u> Dr. Soroush, lecture, questions and answers session dated 15 March, 1998, held at Fatima Mosque in Montreal, Canada.
- 37. Ibid.

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