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Chapter 4: Religious Pluralism (Part 2)

To continue the discussion on pluralism, it is appropriate in this session to examine the rational motives behind the rise of religious pluralism and see, apart from the political motives that may possibly be behind this thought, what motivates some to raise this issue with rational and logical motives (at least according to them) and really free from any spite and rancor. In analyzing this issue, we have to say that excluding the political motives, at least two motives for it can be taken into account.

Involvement of the Psychological Factor in the Emergence of Pluralism

The first motive is a psychological one: At the present, almost six billion people are living in the world having different sects, creeds, and faiths. Their inclination to a certain religion, sect and denomination is not out of enmity to the other religions and denial of their rights; rather, most of them have accepted a particular religion and sect merely because they have been born in a certain geographical region and country, and/or their parents have professed the said religion and sect. Many of them are also really devoted and faithful to the ordinances and laws of their respective religion.

Given this explanation, if we believe that all religions apart from Islam are false and those who profess them will be thrown to hellfire, and that among Muslims all schools of thought [madhahib] and sects apart from Shi'ah Ithna 'Ashari Islam are false and all their followers will be thrown to hellfire, then we have to say that with the exception of only twenty million people in the world (and even this number depends on each individual's level of faith and good deeds), the rest who are nearly five billion and eighty million people, are misquided, deviants and dwellers of the hell where they shall be chastised.

Can such a thing be accepted? What is wrong with the blind who merely because of being born in Christian countries, having Christian parents and having accepted Christianity to which they are so much devoted and committed that they ought to incur the divine wrath and chastisement?

This issue is compounded by the fact that even among the Shi'ah 'Ithna 'Ashari Muslims, many are

sinners, transgressors [fasiq] and debauchees [fajir]. They have correct faith but because of their wicked and wrong actions, they will also have to face the divine torment in hellfire. If it is really such, then everybody will be thrown to hell! As the famous Persian proverb says, "Only 'Ali and his pond (of kawthar) shall remain!" That is, in the Hereafter, nobody will remain (in the list of those who will be admitted to paradise) to drink from the Pond of Kawthar!

As such, this psychological issue, which exerts pressure on the mind and spirit of man, annoys him and makes its acceptance difficult, prompts him to think that all are good and people of salvation. Muslims, the Shi'ah 'Ithna 'Ashari in particular, are in truth while the religions of others are also good and rightful. Indeed, some of them are more pious and sincere and more faithful to their respective religions than we are. In any case, the acceptance of multiplicity of religions being correct and rightful relieves man of spiritual trouble and psychological agitation.

The Social Factor in the Emergence of Pluralism

The second factor that perhaps enhances religious pluralism in the mind of individuals is a social one. Throughout history, numerous destructive wars and conflicts had religious and sectarian underpinnings. Human beings have fought with one another and engaged in war, murder and pillage merely on account of religious and sectarian differences. An illustrious and famous example of these wars is the Crusades in which thousands of Christians and Muslims were killed, so much destruction it brought and so much wealth, resources, and facilities were spent in conducting the wars wealth, resources and facilities could have been used for the development and welfare of humanity.

Even today, in one of the progressive countries and in the so-called civilized world; namely, the United Kingdom, we witness bloody conflicts between the Catholics and Protestants. Moreover, in India, Pakistan and some African countries, at the beginning of the 21st century, we still witness religious wars and sectarian conflicts and the subsequent destructions, killing and pillage though these problems could easily be solved. If we believe that both Islam and Christianity are good, both the Catholics and Protestants in truth, and both the Sunni and the Shi'ah on the straight path [sirat al-mustaqim], the ill-tempered Devil's hand called "religious wars" and "sectarian disputes" will be severed from the lap of human society.

By the way, is it not proper that the civilized humankind of today, instead of violent and aggressive attitudes toward faiths and religions, observe coexistence, peace and sincerity, set aside dogmatism and absolutism, treat with respect all religions and creeds, and regard the beliefs and views of others as rightful just like our beliefs? War and conflict is the work of ignorant and uncivilized human beings. The present–day man is supposed to be civilized and intelligent!

Apart from political and selfish motives, there are at least two rational motives for the rise and acceptance of pluralism. One is the emotional reason, arguing that it is inconceivable for all human beings to go to hell, while the second one is meant to prevent war and bloodshed. Now, the question is:

Is this the solution to these problems? If we want to prevent religious wars and sectarian conflicts, is the only way to say that all religions are correct and truthful? And if we want to avert innumerable people who have no fault and merely because of some social problems and their views that they have failed to identify the right path which in our view is Islam from going to hell, is the only way to say that the idolatry of the Hindus, the doctrine of Trinity of the Christians and the monotheism [tawhid] of Muslims are all correct and rightful? Is there no other way?

Assessing the Psychological Motive in Presenting Pluralism

In reply, we have to say that regarding the going to hell of all people who have not accepted the Shi'ah 'Ithna 'Ashari Islam, it must be stated that this matter has no validity and Islam does not say so. It is true that we say that the correct school of thought is only one, but people whom we deemed as people of hell and chastisement are the obstinate ones [ahl al-'inad]. That is, although the truth is clear for them, they do not accept it on account of enmity and other motives. If a person failed to identify the truth for whatever reason, the ruling about him is different from that of a person who identifies the truth but does not accept it. The root of this issue is traceable to the discussion on the mentally downtrodden [mustadh'af fikri], weak (or excusable) ignorant [jahil qasir] and culpable (or inexcusable) ignorant [jahil mugassir], which is a discussion on jurisprudence [figh] and scholastic theology ['ilm al-kalam].

The term *mustadh'af* is sometimes applied to the persons who are socially under the dominance of the powerful tyrants, and are deprived of the truth [*haqq*] and their rights [*huquq*]. But the same term is also related to scholastic theology and it refers to a person who, due to weakness in understanding, is deprived of arriving at the correct and right path. Weakness of understanding may be caused by different factors. For example, Islam is never introduced to him and nothing about it reached him; or, it is introduced to him but because of the weakness in understanding, he fails to grasp its proofs; or, he can grasp the proofs but he lives in a society where doubts about these proofs are brought forth which he himself could not answer nor could he consult somebody to clarify those doubts; and many other factors.

Similarly, ignorance of the truth is sometimes culpable ignorance [jahl taqsiri], and at other times, faultless (or excusable) ignorance, and accordingly, the ignorant can be classified into two, i.e. culpable ignorant [jahil muqassir] and weak ignorant [jahil qasir]. Jahil muqassir is applied to a person who in spite of the access to all the facilities and faculties such as intellectual maturity, mental power, social freedom, and access to the information, and others, he has slackened and procrastinated and not gone to conduct research and study about the truth. Jahil qasir refers to the person who, for whatever reason, has no access to the truth and it has not been possible for him to identify it.

Thus, we have actually three types of people:

(1) those who have recognized the truth but do not submit to it because of spite, fanaticism, enmity, and other factors:

- (2) those who do not know the truth but all means to discover it are at their disposal; and
- (3) those who do not know the truth and do not have the means to discover it.

According to the teachings of Islam, as it is obvious, the first group shall be the people of chastisement and dwellers of hellfire. The *jahil muqassir* shall also be punished commensurate to the extent of his fault but he may not dwell in hell forever. The *jahil qasir* who can also be regarded as mentally downtrodden [*mustadh'af*] shall be dealt with peculiarly on the Day of Resurrection as indicated in some traditions. In any case, it is not correct that he shall directly and unconditionally be thrown to hellfire. Therefore, there is no correlation between the belief on the oneness of the true religion and the belief on the overwhelming majority of people on earth as inmates of hell.

Assessing the Social Factor in Presenting Pluralism

With respect to the second motive, i.e. wars caused by religious and sectarian disputes, we also have to say that we believe and agree that the followers of the different religions, schools of thought and sects should not fight one another on the ground of religious and ideological differences. Instead, they are supposed to live together peacefully. However, for us to believe in all the religions as true is not the only solution to this problem. Rather, there are other ways, and Islam has offered another solution to it. Firstly, Islam invites both Muslims and followers of other religions to hold intellectual discussions and logical discourses with one another about their beliefs:

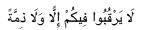
And dispute with them in a manner that is best. (16:125)

Secondly, in practice, in terms of the Muslims' treatment of and dealing with non-Muslims, the latter are also divided into groups:

(1) **Followers of monotheistic and heavenly religions**: Islam gives special treatment to the followers of religions like Christianity, Judaism and Zoroastrianism notwithstanding the distortions of the correct root and essence that have taken place in them, dealing with them with much civility. Their lives, properties and honors are respected; they can put up their synagogues, temples and churches in the Islamic society and worship therein; they may conduct marriage, divorce and other transactions according to their religious laws; similar to such religious taxes as *khums* and *zakat* that Muslims have to pay to the Islamic state, Islam also levies a tax which is technically called "*jizyah*" and in exchange for that, their lives and properties are protected and other social services are rendered to them. In many of the rights, they are equal to Muslims, having no difference at all. We have all heard that the learned and just leader of Islam, 'Ali (*'a*), in reaction to the injustice done to a non–Muslim subject of the Islamic state and Mu'awiyah's army's confiscation of a Jewish woman's anklet, said, "If a Muslim dies out of grief for

this incident, it is not surprising and he cannot be blamed."

- (2) **Contracting unbelievers** [*kafir muʻahid*]: Another group of non–Muslims, the contracting unbelievers are not followers of the monotheistic religions, but on the basis of contract and treaty with the Islamic government, they can live along with Muslims and even within the Islamic society. Of course, their rights, statuses and conditions are not identical; they differ depending on the types of contract they have concluded with the Islamic government, but Islam deals well with this group of non–Muslims, and their lives, properties and honors are protected.
- (3) **Hostile unbelievers** [*kafir harbi*]: The third group of non–Muslims consists of those who, as it is commonly called, are not in any "straight path" [*sirat al-mustaqim*] and are not willing to abide by any sort of agreement or treaty, and if ever they sign a treaty, they will violate it:



They will observe toward you neither kinship nor covenant. (9:8)

Regarding this group, Islam says that if they are not inclined to any kind of discussion and debate and to observe any type of treaty, we have to wage war against them and make them submit by force. Of course, even in this case, Islam does not say that they have to be killed and exterminated along with their descendants. Rather, war must continue until they are ready to condescend and come to their senses and do not incite sedition anymore.

Therefore, in relation with non–Muslims, Islam at the initial stage calls for discussion and debate so as for them to realize the truth through logic and argument and know to whom the right is. In the second stage, even in case of absence of an individual or group's acceptance of it, Islam does not unilaterally wage war against them. It rather invites them to peace and peaceful coexistence.

Historical Account of Islam's Treatment of Non-Muslims

At this juncture, it seems appropriate to narrate an account of the Christians of Najran with whom the Prophet (S) had a reason–based discussion and defeated them, but in spite of that, they did not submit and did not will to become Muslims. The Prophet (S) was ordered by God to invite them to an imprecation [*Mubahalah*] and the following day, they were supposed to meet at a certain place where to curse one another so that whoever was on the wrong side would incur the divine wrath. Initially, the Christians of Najran accepted the imprecation, but when the following day came and they saw that the Prophet (S) came along with his dearest and nearest of kin, viz. his daughter Fatimah, 'Ali, Imam al–Hasan and Imam al–Husayn ('a), they withdrew and did not will to accept the challenge of imprecation. They instead forged a treaty and paid *jizyah* to the Islamic government.

In any case, we can see that to regard as truthful all the religions and sects is not the only way to prevent religious wars and sectarian conflicts. In fact, there are other ways and Islam itself has a logical and very advanced solution to this problem.

Let us now return to the main discussion and engage in examining, analyzing and criticizing the proofs of pluralism. At the outset, we have to note that, as mentioned earlier, pluralism is presentable in the different areas. Presently, we are examining religious pluralism and we are not dealing with other areas such as political pluralism, economic pluralism and the like, and their validity or invalidity and other aspects are beyond the scope of our discussion.

It is true that in the contemporary period, John Hick is regarded as the founder of religious pluralism and has written many works in this field, but there is no single interpretation of religious pluralism and what it means. There have been different interpretations of it, and at least three ways of interpreting it can be identified.

First Interpretation of Religious Pluralism

The first proposition is that "All religions are an amalgamation of truth and falsehood, and there is no pure truth or falsehood among them." To explain this position, it is advanced that if you study the different religions in the world, you will observe that we have no thoroughly authentic or false religion. There are so many common elements among them. Many laws, beliefs and moral values of a religion are also affirmed by another one. For example, the Qur'an says that "We have also ordained to you whatever we have ordained to the Children of Israel." For example, regarding the issue of retaliation [gisas],1 it explains that "It is the decree that We have set for the Jews and Christians."2

Accordingly, you can also find superstitious issues and wrong beliefs in all religions. Therefore, in all areas of beliefs, laws or moral values, there are truths in the world, but their totality is not found in a single place. Rather, there is a parcel of truth in every religion. For this reason, there is no need for you to abide by and believe in only a particular religion. In fact, you may be a Jew, a Christian, a Muslim, a Buddhist, and others at the same time in the sense of believing in and submitting to the good elements found in each of them.

You can also find positive elements such as peace of mind, concentration, deliverance from the world, and the like in Buddhism in which there is no belief in God. Of course, this proposition has also dogmatic underpinning when it holds that the amalgamation of truth and falsehood in each religion has reached such a proportion that it cannot even be said that one is better than the other but rather they are of the same degree.

This proposition's somewhat moderate tone is that there are both truth and falsehood in all religions but the percentage of truth and falsehood in all of them is not the same as there is difference among them which makes some relatively superior to others. Yet, in any case, none has absolute superiority and all of them have both positive and negative points.

Assessment

In assessing this proposition, first and foremost, we have to state that in view of the same general information about the different religions, every fair-minded person will confirm that it cannot be said that there is no preference among the different religions and that all of them are equal. There are practices and beliefs in some of these religions about which the tongue and pen are ashamed to mention and write. By the way, can worship of such animals as a cow and a dog be treated equal to the worship of God?

Is the creed and belief of the idol-worshippers in India who worship a genital organ and bow down in front of it and of the barren individuals who drink and bode well in its semen equal and the same with the salvation-giving school of Islam which is a set of innumerable excellences and goodness and teaches the worship of the One True God?! At any rate, in our opinion, it is so evident that to talk about the equality and sameness of all religions and claim about the parity of values and to choose any of them is a subject which is not convincing to any rational person.

Secondly, especially according to us, Muslims, who believe in Islam and the Qur'an, such a subject can never be acceptable. We cannot accept a part of the Qur'an while denying another part. To deny a part of the Qur'an is like denying it in totality, no one can regard himself as a Muslim while not accepting a part of the Qur'an. In this regard, the Qur'an says:

What! Do you believe in part of the Book and defy another part? So what is the requital of those of you who do that except disgrace in the life of this world? And on the Day of Resurrection, they shall be consigned to a severer punishment. (2:85)

Elsewhere, it also says:

Those who disbelieve in Allah and His apostles and seek to separate Allah from His apostles, and say, 'We believe in some and disbelieve in some' and seek to take a way in between—it is they who are truly faithless. (4:150–151)

According to us, Muslims, whatever has been conveyed to the people as Islam and the Qur'an from God and His Apostle (S) is thoroughly correct and truthful, and no falsehood and superstition have crept into it:

Indeed it is an august Book. Falsehood cannot approach it, from before it nor from behind it. (41:41–42)

Of course, there is nothing wrong in believing, as we do, in the existence of some elements of the truth in other religions, and it will not create any problem at all. For example, this famous Zoroastrian motto, "Good speech, good thinking, good deed" is a good motto and nobody rejects it. This is especially true in the case of such religions as Christianity, Judaism and Zoroastrianism which have divine origins and are rooted in divine revelation though in our belief, they have suffered from distortions.

Yet, beliefs and elements of the truth still exist in them. It must be noted, however, that this does not mean that we have to believe also that Islam, like other religions, is an amalgamation of truth and falsehood, and to say that it makes no difference if you are a Muslim, a Jew, a Christian, or a Zoroastrian. Rather, as stated earlier, according to our belief, Islam which God has revealed through the agency of His Apostle (S) is the absolute truth and does not contain an iota of falsehood.

Second Interpretation of Religious Pluralism

The second proposition being advanced among the points and subjects in elucidating religious pluralism is that "All religions are diverse ways leading to the single truth." The first proposition argues that the truths are divided among the different religions and every religion contains only a part of it. The second proposition, however, holds that the truth is not more than one thing and there are various ways to arriving at it which refer to the different religions. For example, there are different passageways to Tehran, and people go to Tehran through various ways from east, west, north, and south. The truth that people are searching for is nothing more than a single thing, but one may arrive at it through various ways such as Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, and other religions.

Like the first proposition, this one has also dogmatic and moderate versions. The dogmatic version maintains that in terms of quality and quantity, all these ways are identical and there is no difference among them. The moderate version is of the opinion that these diverse ways converge at a single point but they have differences in terms of distance, farness and nearness (quantity) and in terms of straightness or curviness (quality). One is a longer route while the other is shorter; one is straight while

the other is curvy. For example, compared to Christianity, Islam is a straight and shorter route, but if one professes Christianity and faithfully observes its ordinances, one will also arrive at the truth.

In a bid to prove and consolidate this second proposition, sometimes poems and parables and allegories in the poems of mystics are cited.

In sum, if the veil of fancy is lifted, the countenance of the Beloved can be seen and "Our words are diverse and different but in reality they are nothing but a description of the same Beautiful Countenance."

Assessing the Second Interpretation

Is this claim acceptable and based on which religious pluralism can be accepted and said that all religions including Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, etc. will draw man toward the truth, perfection and felicity?

To answer, of course in theory and principle, such an assumption is possible. Take for example a circle; its various radiuses lead toward the center and meet at a single point. Yet, can it be proven that the same is true in the case of the existing religions? Through a bit of reflection, it will become clear that the answer to it is negative.

The first issue taken into account in Islam is the issue of monotheism [tawhid] and the acceptance of One and Only God:

Say, 'There is no god but Allah' to attain success.

But the view of Christianity regarding the same issue is this:

Verily, Allah is the third [person] of a trinity.

That is, we have three persons of God. One is the Father who is the main person of God. Another is the Son, while the third one is the Holy Spirit. Some also say that the third person of God is Maryam (Saint Mary). This belief which is technically called Trinity is strongly condemned and confronted by Islam and the Holy Qur'an, regarding as unbelievers those who believe in it:

They are certainly faithless who say, 'Allah is the third [person] of a trinity,' while there is no god except the One God. If they do not relinquish what they say, there shall befall the faithless among them a painful punishment. (5:73)

The Qur'an describes as extremely astonishing the Christian belief in God and that 'Isa (Jesus) is the son of God:

They say, 'The All-beneficent has taken a son!' You have certainly advanced something hideous! The heavens are about to be rent apart at it, the earth to split open, and the mountains to collapse into bits. (19:88-90)

It is indeed a very emphatic description. Belief in the Trinity and that Jesus is the son of God is so corruptive and destructive that as the effect of which the heavens, the earth and mountains are about to be ruined and extinguished. Keeping in view of such descriptions, can it be said that both the belief in the Trinity and belief in monotheism will arrive at the same truth?! One religion (Islam) says that pork is unlawful and filthy while the other says that it is so good and delicious, and there is nothing wrong to eat it. Islam says that alcoholic beverage is the worst of things and a handiwork of Satan, while Christianity says that some wines are the blood of God.

During the Eucharist, 3 the priest offers bread and wine to you, saying that once this wine is mixed with your blood, it will become the blood of God! 4 Given these diverse beliefs, rational and mature people, even the children, will understand that these two religions will never end up at the same point. One says that so long as you do not drink wine, you will not become Godly while the other says that drinking the same is a satanic work. Yet, we are still saying that both of them are leading to the same truth! It is evident that it is an unpalatable statement and that it is more akin to fiction and poetry than to the reality unless we also take as identical both God and Satan and say, "You are my goal in going to the Ka'bah and the idol–temple!"

It is indeed not surprising and unexpected that notwithstanding the undeniable facts, some are still insisting on the existence of "straight paths," thinking that in spite of all these apparent contradictions and contrasts among religions, all of them will arrive at the same conclusion. How could Islam which says that "There is God" and Buddhism which holds that "God does not exist" be both true?! How could both 'Ali ('a) and Mu'awiyah, Imam al–Husayn ('a) and Yazid and Shimr ibn Dhu'l–Jawshan5 be both in truth, and to follow any of them means to tread the straight path that leads to the same point?! One is toward the east while the other one is toward the west; one is toward the north while the other one is toward the south, and the two directions are totally opposite to one another and they are two opposing poles. Yet, we are still insisting that all are straight paths leading to the same truth!

O Bedouin! I'm afraid you would not arrive at the Ka'bah because the way you are treading is leading toward Turkistan (and not Mecca)!

In any case, this second interpretation of religious pluralism that all our religions and sects will arrive at

the same destination is of course good and attractive as a poem, but is devoid of reality and truth, and its falsity is more vivid than sunlight.

Third Interpretation of Religious Pluralism

The third proposition for religious pluralism is actually based on a certain epistemological foundation according to which all insensible and non-empirical experiences are meaningless and cannot be negated or posited. Of course, lengthy explanation of this foundation is related to epistemological discussions, but in this volume, what we could say in explaining this foundation is the following:

On the discussion about knowledge and epistemology, some (i.e. the positivists) say that knowledge and gnosis we have are generally divided into two: one category consists of the knowledge and information that can be objectively experienced by the senses. For example, I say that this lamp is switched on. This case can be experienced by senses. Just turn off the switch and everywhere will become dark and nothing can be seen. Again, when you turn on the switch, there will be light everywhere and you will be able to see the things around you. Or, when we say that fire can burn, this claim can be experienced by senses. You place your hand near fire and you will see that it will burn it. This set of cases and knowledge that can be sensed and experienced is said to be true and false, correct and wrong. The way to discover it is also made through experience and senses.

Meanwhile, the other set of our cases and knowledge consists of those that cannot be sensed and experienced. This is the group of things that cannot be objectively and empirically negated and proved, or is said to be devoid of any meaning, or is said to have truth and false, and as such, one cannot give judgment about it. The radical positivists say that this kind of things has no meaning at all and it is like saying that the light of this lamp tastes sour, or that the light of this lamp is the King of England!

Just as these two accounts are meaningless and ridiculous, the same is true in the case of all the non-empirical and imperceptible accounts. Religious accounts belong to this category. Accounts such as "There is God," "God is One and Only," "God consists of a trinity," and "God does not exist" are meaningless and pointless statements, and to dispute about their validity or invalidity is of no use. It makes no difference which statement you will make. Whether you say, "God is One and Only" or "God consists of a trinity," these two accounts in terms of value are perfectly identical because in reality, they have no value, meaning and sense at all. None of them is a garment to be worn, a food to be consumed, and none of our problems in life can be solved by them!

However, regarding the unperceivable and unempirical accounts or the so-called metaphysical, the positivists who are moderate to some extent say that these accounts are not meaningless, but anyway, since they are beyond the scope of human senses and experience, we can neither negate nor posit them. The outcome of this view is a kind of skepticism and relativism. That is, with respect to the unperceivable and unempirical accounts such as religious ones, either we say that we do not know their truthfulness or falsehood, or that their truth or falsehood, correctness or incorrectness differs according

to the difference of times, individuals and societies. All of them are true and false, correct and incorrect at the same time, depending on whose person, which period, society and environment we assess them.

It is also sometimes said that moral concepts and things pertaining to good and evil, dos and don'ts have nothing to do with validity or invalidity, truth or falsehood. Such accounts as "One must act justly," "One should not oppress others," "To tell the truth is good," and "It is bad to tell a lie" are feelings, tastes, emotions, and the like. Similar to them is one's color preference, which though a sensible matter has no argumentative and evidential basis and foundation.

At any rate, according to this third interpretation of religious pluralism, the difference among religions and religious accounts is either like the difference between green and yellow about which it cannot be absolutely said that one is an unattractive color while the other is beautiful, but it must rather be said that both colors are good and beautiful, or that in the end, since their reality and essence are not known to us, and presently we cannot discard or accept any of them, we are not supposed to dispute about them. They are the same, and it makes no difference which of them we would believe and abide by.

Assessing the Third Interpretation of Religious Pluralism

In examining this interpretation of religious pluralism, there is no option but to scrutinize and tackle its epistemological foundation. In doing so, initially, we have to bear in mind that in the realm of epistemology, we shall be dealing with the following questions:

- 1. Are the accounts which are not suggestive of perceivable and empirical reality meaningless as the radical positivists claim?
- 2. Can't the accounts consisting of moral values and dealing with good and bad, dos and don'ts be characterized as valid or invalid, and that truth and falsehood are not at stake about them?
- 3. In general, is any knowledge, whether in the sphere of dos and don'ts or in the sphere of is and is-not is relative, and that we have no absolute, fixed and certain account? Or, is it not so and that we can also have certainties both in the spheres of being and ought-to-be?
- 4. With respect to religious knowledge, do we have anything certain, fixed and absolute? Are all kinds of religious knowledge depending on our interpretations and so-called readings? This is the same hermeneutic discussion and hermeneutic interpretation of religious text.

In examining the validity or invalidity of the third interpretation of religious pluralism, the reply to the above questions must be clarified. We shall deal with them in the future discussion, God willing.

- 1. Qisas (literally means retribution or retaliation) in the Islamic jurisprudence is to be executed against a criminal, according to the legal decree, who committed such crimes as murder, amputation of a body limb, or laceration and beating in case the victim or his guardians are seeking retribution in lieu of receiving fine or blood money. [Trans.]
- 2. Srah al-Ma'idah 5:45-48:

"And in it We prescribed for them: a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a nose for a nose, and an ear for an ear, a tooth for a tooth, and retaliation for wounds. Yet whoever remits it out of charity, that shall be atonement for him. Those who do not judge by what Allah has sent down—it is they who are the wrongdoers. And We followed them with Jesus son of Mary, to confirm that which was before him of the Torah, and We gave him the Evangel containing guidance and light, confirming what was before it of the Torah, and as guidance and advise for the God-wary. Let the people of the Evangel judge by what Allah has sent down—it is they who are the transgressors. We have sent down to you the Book with the truth, confirming what was before it of the Book and as a guardian over it."

- <u>3.</u> Eucharist: the central and most solemn Christian liturgy, which is called the Lord's Supper, or Holy Communion in most Protestant churches; the Divine Liturgy in Eastern Orthodoxy; and the Mass among Roman Catholics and some Anglicans. [Trans.]
- 4. The Christian notion of the miraculous transformation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus Christ during the Eucharist is called "transubstantiation"—an idea most elaborately formulated by the 13th–century Italian theologian St. Thomas Aquinas and has been the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church since the Middle Ages. During the 16th century, Martin Luther advanced the notion of consubstantiation as an alternative interpretation of the Eucharist by teaching that Christ is present "in, with, and under" the elements (bread and wine). [Trans.]
- 5. Shimr ibn Dh®'l-Jawshan is the notorious 'Umayyad general who actually murdered Imam Husayn ('a) during the battle at Karbala'. [Trans.]

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