

Religious Pluralism In The Light Of The Covenants Of The Prophet Of Islam (Peace Be Upon Him)

Muhammad Junaid¹, Dr. Jamil Ahmad Sindhu²

¹(PhD Scholar, Department of Arabic, National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad, Pakistan)

²(Visiting Lecturer, Department of Islamic Studies, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan)

Abstract:

Hazrat Muhammad (Peace be upon him) was a Prophet of Mercy who endeavored to promote peace not only among his followers but also among his Ummah and other religious communities of his time. He guaranteed religious liberty to such people who promised to live in peace with Muslims. Nodoubt, it was his eamest desire that all None-Muslims should embrace the last divine message but if some people believing in earlier religious were not ready to accept Islam, he never forced them to convert. Infact, they were allowed to exist side by side with the Muslimspeacefully. The Holy Prophet (May Allah peace and blessing be upon his entered in to grant them religious liberty. These treaties were concluded with Jews, Christians and even with the idolaters of Makkah, The charter of Madinah, the Truce of Hdaybiyah and treaties with the Jews of Khyber and the Christians of Najran are worth mentioning. These contracts manifest the inclination of the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) towards peace and security, religious freedom and mutual co-existence.

Keywords: Pluralism, Peace, Christianity, Khyber, Najran, Religious freedom.

Introduction

Initially, the word pluralism was defined closely to the meaning of toleration such as the existence of a variety of different people, opinions, or principles within the same society, system, or philosophy.” Historically speaking, this was the need of the West, especially after the Enlightenment Period when people of the West had been scuffling with each other on philosophical grounds with

reference to metaphysical doctrines. Of course, this is the question related to the changing of the worldview, which results in the changing of perspective from the basis, and for this people were not ready. After a long movement, people gathered together to accommodate the other.

Again, another definition includes people of different religions who constitute the way to live together peacefully as, “the principle that people

of different races, religions, and political beliefs can live together peacefully in the same society.” This definition extends the meaning a step ahead by including particularly ‘religions’. Again, the context is the West where religious and political conflicts and contentions were on the way to distrust the mutual living of the people. New Dictionary of Ideas states, “Pluralism derives from the Latin plures, meaning “several or many” and it has formed the central concern of various intellectual traditions through the history of the West.”

The Bible and Exclusivism

Though the concept of pluralism got popularity in the modern West, we observe a different approach in the Bible where an exclusivist approach has been furnished to give confidence and consolation to the followers of Christ. As stated in the Bible, “he who has the Son has life; he who has not the Son of God has not life” (1 John 5:12). In an explanatory note to this verse, New Bible Commentary (21ST Century) wrote, “life and the Son go together. It is impossible to have the one without the other.” Still another verse of the Bible lays more stress that salvation in the hereafter cannot be achieved without faith on Christ. The

Bible reads, “no comes to the Father, but by me.” But amazingly the above cited commentary of the Bible runs without taking account of this exclusivist based verse and similarly ‘the interpreter dictionary of the Bible’ also left the same verse unattended. The reason behind this concealing seems that the Vatican 2 Council was held in 1962 and these dictionaries were published after that.

There are some other sources which reveal vividly that the history of Christianity has a different picture with respect to salvation and exclusivism. In his book, Linwood Urban explains that in the modern period, the concept of salvation changes a lot and an attempt is made to re-examine such verses of the Bible. He writes, “At the center of this reevaluation is the claim that there is no salvation apart from faith in Jesus. Over the centuries this position was accepted without question by the majority of Christians because it seemed rooted in the New Testament and in Jesus’ concept of his ministry; but recent studies have raised doubts about the status and significance of this exclusivist doctrine.”

Peace and Security

The Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) was a prophet of peace who always

reconciled with his opponents if they were willing to make peace. He did his best to establish complete peace and tranquility in his city by the covenant of Madina. According to one clause of this covenant, it was concluded:

“And verily the valley (jawf) of yatheib shall constitute an inviolable territory for the parties to this document (sahifsh).”(1)

So the Holy Prophet (upon whom he peace and greeting) wanted to eradicate bloodshed forever in the very beginning after migration. There are some other Prophetic traditions where in Madinah is declared prohibited (haram) like Makkah. For instance, Abu Hurairah (May Allah’s peace and blessings be upon him) narrated” “The Prophet said” I have made Madinah a sanctuary between its two mountains.” (2)

In the character of Madinah, security was guaranteed for the parties signing this Covenant. Its last clause reads”

“Verily whoever goes out (on Military expedition) shall have security and whoever stays in Madinah shall have security, except one who commits oppression and violation of the pledge.(3)

The killing of any citizen of Madinah was prohibited by the following clauses:

“And no believer kills (Yaqtulu) another Believer in retaliation for neither an unbeliever

(kafir) nor helps (Yansuru) an unbeliever against a Believer.(4)

And verily it is not lawful for any Believer, who has accepted the contents of this document (sahifah) and has faith in God and in the last day to give help or protection to any murderer (Muhdith) and verily whoever gives help or protection to such a person, God,s curse and wrath shall be on him on the Day of Resurrection, and no expense or compensation will be accepted from him (i.e from the protector of the murderer to exonerate him)."

It was one of the conditions of this treat that Muslims would punish wrongdoers who would cause disturbance in the society. This clause reads:

"And verily (the hands of pious Believers shall be raised against (every) such person as rises in rebellion or attempts to acquire anything by force, or is guilty of any violation of pledge or excess or attempts to spread mischief among the Believers; and verily their hands shall rise all together against such a person, even if he be son of any one of them."

When the Jews of Khyber surrendered, they came to the Holy Prophet (upon whom he peace and greeting) begging for his forgiveness, that was

granted readily. Their possessions were returned to them and their lands restored to them on condition that one-half of the produce would be paid to the Muslims as tax for their protection. The Holy Prophet (upon whom he peace and greeting) instructed Muadh ibn Jabal not to sway the Jews from their religion but to allow them to practice it as they had done before.(5)

He did not impose any Jizyah on the Jews of al-Bahrayn despite the conservatism of latter and their attachment to the faith of their forefathers.

The Holy Prophet (upon whom he peace and greefing) alsoreconciled with the Jews of BanuGhadiya and BanuUraid and offered them his covenant and protection provided they agreed to pay Jizyah. They were rendered a guarantee of not being forced in to exile.(6)

A pact was concluded with the tribe of Juhainah which resided near the coast of the Red Sea. In this pact it was promised:

"The life and property of the Juhainah tribe shall be safe. Whoever commits an outrage on them or invades them, they (people of Juhainah tribe) shall be helped against him.

A similar guarantee was offered to some other tribes including BanuDamrah,(11) BanuZur'ah and BanuRab'ah.(12) The Prophet of Islann(peace be upon him) also entered in to pact with BanuGhiffar to safeguard their lives and property. This treaty was concluded on the request of a delegation from BanuGhiffar tribe.

The Holy Prophet (upon whom he peace and greeting) had to fight some battles with Makkahan but it were the Quraish of Makkah who compelled him to come in to the battlefield. When he saw that the infidels of Makkah were inclined towards peace, he concluded with their representative Suhail Bin Amr, a treaty known as the "Truce of Hudhaybiah." According to this treaty, it was agreed that there would be peace for ten years.(7)

During this period, every person belonging to the two parties would be safe and secure and no one would revert to warefare.

In the pact of Saqif of Ta'if, the Prophet of Allah (upon whom he peace and greeting) agreed to the proposal that the vellyof Saqif would be declared Haram. The cutting of wild thorny trees there of, hunting there in, oppression, theft and all other evil deeds in it were haram (strictly

prohibited). It was further written in the treaty:

"There shall be no coercion, in so far as their life and property is concerned."

S.T.W. Arnold has acknowledged that the Prophet of Islam (upon whom he peace and greeting) had promised Security to Arab tribes against their enemies on the occasion of Their submission. He had made allusion to the following event;

"Woe is me, for Muhammad" was the cry of one of the Arab tribes on the news of the death of the Prophet, "so long as he was alive, I lived in peace and safety from my enemies."(8)

The Holy Prophet (upon whom he peace and greeting) accepted submission of Arab tribes even without conversion to Islam and promised peace and security to them so long as they remain loyal to Islam. Its consequence was their willful conversion to Islam.

Importance

The Covenant of Madinah concluded between the Muslims.....both the emigrants (Muhajirun) and he the helpers (Ansar).....and the Jews, guaranteed religious liberty to all the citizens of the newly established republic. A clause of this treaty reads;

"And verily the Jews of Banu, Awf shall

be considered as a community (Ummah) the Belivers, for the jews being their religion and for the muslimstheir religion, be one client or original member of the tribe; but whosoever shall be guilty of oppression or violation (of Treaty), shall put to trouble none but his own person and the member of his house (ahl-e bait)."(9)

"The same religious liberty was promised to other Jewish tribes, namely, BanuNajjar, BannuHarith, BanuSa'idah, BanuJusham, Banu Aws, Banu Tha'abah, its branch Jafinah and its clients and BanuShutaibaH."

The negotiation between Johan, the Christian prince of Ailah, are also an instance for the Holy Prophet's (upon whom he peace and greeting) inclinations towards peace and tolerance for other religions. In the first place, Muhammad (upon whom he peace and greeting) addresse to John the following letter:

"Believe, or else pay tribute (Jizyah). Beobedient unto God and to His Apostle" He assured John peace and security in such words: "If you submit, then peace be unto you. "Upon the

receipt of this message John hastened to Muhammad (upon whom he peace and greeting), where he was received with kindness, and having made submission and having agreed to pay tribute of 3000 dinars a year."(10)

The Christians of Najran were highly organized in religious matters. Before the advent of Islam there were even foreign teachers in Najran, such as the Italian priest Gregentius, who had deepened their religious knowledge. They sent a delegation to Madinah, consisting among others, of a bishop and a vicar (second priest), showing their well organized hierarchy. They probably came to Madinah in the hope of converting the Prophet (upon whom he peace and greeting) to Trinitarian religion and the cult of cross. So they had discussions concerning dogma. During the negotiations, it was time to celebrate their mass; they wanted to go their camp for it, but the Prophet had such a high sense of hospitality that he said:

"If you like, you can even pray here in the Mosque."

Historians say, "they turned to the East and prayed: probably they took out their crucifixes also for adoration. The Muslims were looking at them with curiosity there after, they back to continue

discussions. The Prophet gave them replies, which silenced them, and a:ej if you are not satisfied with these reasonable replies, let us refer it to God: let us pray to God to decide forth with and invoke the course of God on the one who affirms the lie from us both on him and his family and children.(11)

This incident is referred to in the following Quranic verses:

"if any one disputes in this matter with thee, now after (full) knowledge hath come to thee, Say: Come! Let us gather together, Our sons and your sons, our women and your women, our selves and your selves: then let us earnestly pray, and invoke the curse of God on those who lie.(12)

Mutual co-Existence:

In the first year of the migration (Hirah) to Madinah, the Holy Prophet (upon whom he peace and greeting) had drawn up a covenant with all the residents of the city known as the "**Charter of Madinah**" (**Mithaq Madinah**). As a matter of fact, it was the manifestation of a pledge for peaceful co-Existence among the followers of different religions. The Holy Prophet (upon whom he peace and greeting) aimed at founding a republic in which all residents would have civil rights. The

first two clauses manifest his endeavours for peaceful co-existence which were as follows:

1. "This is a prescript(Kitab) of Muhammad, the prophet, to operate among the Faithful Believers (Mu'minin) and the submissive to God(Muslimin) from among Quraish and (the people of) Yathrib and those who may be under them and join them and take part in wars in their company."
2. Verily they constitute a political unit(Ummah) as distinct from all the people (of the world).(13)

The Holy Prophet (upon whom he peace and greeting) always preferred peaceful co-existence. Whenever the infidels were ready to cease fighting, he made no bones about accepting their offer. The treaty of Hudaibiyah was obviously unfavourable to the Muslims but it guaranteed peaceful co-existence. That is why, the Holy Prophet (upon whom he peace and greeting) accepted the terms which seemed favourable to the other party, but soon after this treaty was concluded, the following verses were revealed:

"Verily we have given unto thee a clear victory (fathMubin)." (14)

Later on, the events proved that the truce of Hudaibiyah was really a victory for the Muslims. This shows that the Holy Prophet (upon whom he peace and greeting) always preferred peace and drew

up treaties for peaceful co-existence with non-Muslims.

The Holy Prophet (upon whom he peace and greeting) was a staunch believer of peaceful co-existence with followers of different religions. To the Christians of Najran, it was granted that they would be no coercion in the choice of religion. Neither their Judges would be removed from their jobs nor their monks from their monasteries furthermore; he permitted spouses having different faiths to live in a house peacefully. Two clauses of the treaty concluded with the Christians of Najran read:

"If a female Christian is married to a Muslim, it is not to take place without her consent. She is not to be prevented from visiting her Church to pray. She can inquire religious questions from her scholars. A person who prevents his Christian wife from performing her religious rites is opponent of the covenant guaranteed to them and a liar in the sight of Allah." (15)

This clearly manifests the peaceful co-existence of spouses belonging to different religions. It also throws light upon the vision of the Holy Prophet (upon whom he peace and blessings) about a multifarious society.

The Qur'an and Pluralism

After having discussed various dimensions of pluralism, it is pertinent to illustrate some of the verses of the Holy Quran which modernist scholars have differently defined, contrary to traditional approach of the Muslim exegete.

The Holy Quran approves that only Islam is acceptable to Allah. The Quran says, "The religion before God is Islam (submission to His Will). If anyone desires a religion other than Islam never will it be accepted of him; in the hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost."(16)

Dr. Adnan Aslam, in his article, explains this verse in these words, "But the interesting thing here is that the verses that point to an exclusivist attitude in Islam are ambiguous and open to interpretation; they can be interpreted from the perspective of an 'Islamic pluralism' as well as of an Islamic exclusivism."(17)

He elaborates further, "Muslim position is clear. The Muslim does not claim to have a religion peculiar to himself. Islam is not a sect or an ethnic religion. In its view, all religion is one, for the truth is one."(18)

The point here to say is that this verse is not ambiguous; hence not open to interpretation and the practice of the modernists is to turn this verse in

support of pluralism. It is fitting to relate some of the commentaries from traditional point of view.

1. Dr. Mohsin Khan, in his commentary of the Quran, under the above mentioned verse, explains with reference to a Hadith of Bukhari, it is obligatory to have belief in the Messengership of the Prophet (Muhammad, PBUH). "Narrated Abu Hurairah: Allah's Messenger said: By Him (Allah) in Whose Hand Muhammad's soul is, there is none from amongst the Jews and the Christians who hears about me and then dies without believing in the message with which I have been sent, but he will be from the dwellers of the Fire."(19)
2. Amin Ahsan Islahi is also of the same view that after explaining in detail the arguments in support of Islam, neither Jews' religion nor Christians' religion will be accepted before Allah.(20)
3. Maulana Maudoodi while explaining verse 3:70 (then whosoever shall turn away from this covenant, they are the transgressors) says, "The purpose of this statement is to warn the Jews and the Christians that they were desecrating the pledge they

had made to God, and, by disbelieving in and opposing the prophet Muhammad (SAW), they were violating the terms of the pledge made by their prophets. They had become 'transgressors', for they had broken the bond of obedience to God."(21)

Another verse of the Holy Quran is often quoted by pluralists, "Whether they are the ones who believe (in the Arabian prophet), or whether they are Jews, Christians or Sabians — all who believe in Allah and the Last Day, their reward is surely secure with their Lord; they need have no fear, nor shall they grieve."(22)

Dr. Adnan Aslan writes, "Although the Quran explicitly states that those Jews, Christians, and Sabians who believe in God and the Last Day and work righteously will attain salvation. Muslim scholars generally have related salvation of the non-Muslims with the recognition of the Prophet by referring to the overall attitude of the Quran towards non-Muslims. Even if this might be the case, they still maintained that salvation has always possible outside the borders of Islam."(23)

Again such interpretation is just to accommodate the non-Muslim; the question is whether it is their demand to have salvation from the Muslim perspective or is it our own wishful thinking?

Followings are the explanations of the above cited verse from traditional perspective.

1. Maulana Maudoodi writes, "The context of the verse makes it clear that it is not attempting to enumerate in detail all the articles of faith in which one should believe...the aim of the verse is merely to repudiate the illusion cherished by the Jews that, by virtue of their being Jews, they have monopoly of salvation."(24)
2. Amin Ahsan Islahi expounds that with a little thought one can reach to this obvious point that how is it possible to believe in the Quran without believing in Prophet Muhammad (SAW). He further writes after Prophet Muhammad (SAW), it is out of question that people of the Book will deserve God's blessings. And Prophet Muhammad (SAW) preached openly in vivid words to believe in him. And on this earth, the preserved message of God is only the Quran and outside this there is no right guided way. And only those people will be saved who will remain ignorant to this message.(25)

Literature Review

Believing in the finality of prophethood demands that salvation absolutely depends on believing this final divine message with all its features. The Holy Quran stresses on the respect of other religions and asks its believers for religious tolerance (or religious acceptance) but there is no scope at all of religious pluralism as it

is utterly a methodological device to subvert 'religion as such.'

Research Methodology

This is a unique research. In this research involves God's blessing. It is a detective research. I have used primary and secondary sources and the method of reference in research paper has been kept as a modern research. APA.

Conclusion:

It can be concluded that the Prophet of Islam (upon whom be peace and blessings) was a peace loving personality. He never preferred war to peace. He neither compelled anybody to embrace Islam against his/her will nor the denied religious liberty to followers of any other religion. He concluded various treaties with non-Muslims for peaceful co-existence. The Holy Prophet attitude towards peace, religious liberty and mutual co-existence manifests pluralistic vision of Islam.

References

1. Muhammad Hamidullah, *Majmuah al-wathiq al-Siyasiah* (Beirut: Dar al-Nafa is 1483/1983, P.62 the first written constitution in the world (Lahore, Sha Muhammad Ashraf, 1981).
2. *Sahih-al-Bukhari*, Book 29, Chapter 7, Hadith No. 1869.
3. Muhammad Hamidullah, *Majmuah al-wathiq al-Siyasiah*, the first written constitution in the world P.54.
4. *Majmu al-watha al-Siyasiah*, the first written constitution in the world P.45.
5. Haykal, Muhammad Husein, *The Life of Muhammad* (Kuala Lumpur, Islamic Trust, 1976) P.372
6. Ibn Sad *Tabaqat* (Leiden, 1333 A.H) P.29.
7. Muhammad Hamdiullah, *Majmuah al-wathiq al-Siyasiah*, P.77/ Muhammad Hamidullah, Muhammad Rasulullah (Lahore: Orient Papers and Publishing 1392 A.H) P.72.
8. Arnold T.W, *The preaching of Islam* (Lahore, Shirkat-i-Qalam, 1956) P.41.
9. Muhammad Hamidullah, *Majmuah al-wathiq al-Siyasiah*, the first written constitution in the world P.48.
10. Hughes, Thomas Patric, *a Dictionary of Islam*, (Lahore, Premier Book House, 1964) P.646.
11. Muhammad Hamdiullah, *Majmuah al-wathiq al-Siyasiah*, Muhammad Hamidullah, Muhammad Rasulullah P.103-104.
12. *Ale Imarn* 3:61.

13. Muhammad Hamidullah, *Majmuah al-wathiq al-Siyasiah*, P.59. for English translation consult. the first written constitution in the world P.59.
14. Al Ankaboot 48:1
15. Muhammad Hamidullah, *Majmuah al-wathiq al-Siyasiah*, P.189.
16. Al-e-Imran 03:85
17. Adnan Aslam, "Religious Pluralism," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 1, no. 2 (2011): 44.
18. Abdullah Yousaf Ali, *The Holy Quran Commentary* (Lahore: Muhammad Ashraf Publications, 2006), 150.
19. *Sahih Muslim, The Book of Faith*, Vol: 1, hadith no 240.
20. Amin Ahsan Islahi, *Tadabbur-e-Quran*, Vol. 2 (Lahore: Taj Company, 1997), 37.
21. Ab-ul-A'la Maudoodi, *Towards Understanding Quran*, trans. Zafar Ishaq Ansari, vol: 1, (London: The Islamic Foundation 1988), 269.
22. Al-Baqara 02:62
23. Aslan, "Religious Pluralism," 46.
24. Maudoodi, *Towards Understanding Quran*, trans. Zafar Ishaq Ansari, vol: 1, (London: The Islamic Foundation, 1988), 80.
25. Islahi, *Tadabbur e Quran*, Vol: 1, 232-236.