

Evolutionary Theory of Religious Phenomenon from Islamic Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Since the period of Enlightenment in Europe in the 17th-18th Century, the study of religion gained momentum. Many intellectuals departing from the Scriptural account of religion traced the origin of religion on anthropological, socio-economic, and psychological basis. While all such ir-religious or anti-religious scholars came up with varied conclusions about the origin of religion, they however seemed unanimous about the beginning of religion from lower or crude forms of polytheism to the highest form of Monotheism as witnessed in the contemporary societies or the Abrahamic religions- Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The religion was thought as originating from the worship of natural forces to Ghost worship to Godly worship. This way the conception of the worship of One God was the outcome of man's thinking to understand the affairs of the world and the universe at large. Just as Darwin's advanced human specie is the result of transformation/development of tiny unicellular to multi-cellular beings, so in the opinion of religious evolutionists is the formation of Monotheism from lower forms of religion. In the paper I would be exploring the Islamic Perspective of religion vis-a-vis the evolutionary theories of religion.

1. Introduction

The Darwinian model of biological evolution had its bearing on the evolution of social and cultural aspects of human civilization. What Charles Darwin and his followers conceived of the evolution of human being from lower forms of life to the highest form as we see him (human being) now; many sociologists, historians, anthropologists, and psychologists believed in the same way: the evolution of contemporary religious form of Monotheism in the organized religions as Islam— through the multiple forms of polytheism. Such an evolutionary thesis can be reflected in the works of E.B. Tylor, Sigmund Freud, Herbert Spencer, August Comte, James Frazer, Emile Durkheim, John Lubbock, Grant Allen, etc. which we discussed in the first chapter of this work.

Compensating for the religious temper as found in all the societies— ancient, medieval, and modern, some intellectuals as the influential Rene Descartes presumed that man was everywhere, always and equally rational. This view indicates that religious consciousness was based on rationality, 'mature enough-not a childish rationality as was held by evolutionists. However Giovanni Battista Vico, an Italian philosopher challenged such a view in his work, *The New Science* (1725). In the opinion of Battista rationality is not a self generated phenomenon. It is acquired through multiple phases of history. In other words it is not a constant component of human nature. Human consciousness has evolved in time and space. Thus according to Battista, the proper basis for a science of culture and a metaphysics of mind can be found only in a historical inquiry of the encounters between human consciousness and nature as they occur in different parts of the world at different times and in different situations.

The present human consciousness shouldn't be confused with the past consciousness of humans. It must be borne in mind that the past human problems were unlike the present ones. The responses to the problems were also different from the men who lived and survived those problems. Battista

opines that each stage has its own problems and its responses to those problems are in consonance with the level of rationality achieved by the culture in questions. This position forms the core and kernel of Battista's historicism.

Battista views the cultural changes as the gigantic of the changes taking place minutely and gradually in the individual human beings. These changes though slow and at times unobservable continue to occur in a human being from his birth up to his death. All the stages that come in the way have their own needs, capabilities and preconceptions. And equally each age calls forth the establishment of institutions and values necessary for it to deal with the world as it conceives of it.¹

In religious evolution there is one more interesting figure that is worth mentioned— Robert Neely Bellah, an American Sociologist who authored a voluminous book on religious evolution, *Religion in Human Evolution* that left a deep impression on the religious scholars. R.N. Bellah discusses evolutionary scheme of religion in a different way. Though deeply affected by the Darwin's historical physiology, he seldom conceives the evolution of religion in a linear fashion unlike his predecessors. According to Robert, as societies grow more complex, the religions follow suit, signifying that such transformations are not linear. They are mainly achieved through mutations, and radical structural changes, set to answer the crises and challenges of the time. Religion, according to Robert can be witnessed in all human societies provided we define the term broadly enough i.e. the modes of expression may be different, but the religious tendencies are scattered throughout the human history.

Robert Bellah thinks that the emergence of parental care is "foundational to the growth and development of empathy and ethics, and ultimately religion among humans".² He suggests that the phenomenon of play (action) which he argues could only emerge in a field somewhat protected from natural selection compulsions i.e. parental security during comparatively susceptible early life is also a precursor and pre-

condition for the emergence of ritual, which is crucial for social bonding and community life. Ritual continues as a central, conserved core of religion, even when it seemingly is eclipsed by myth (narrative and the symbolic) and later theology (the conceptual and theoretical). He has identified five stages of religious evolution in human history: religion moved for him from primitive to archaic to historical to early modern to modern. Just as species evolve and eventually transform themselves, so do societies, so do religions. The transformations of society are accompanied by transformation of ritual, of myth, of religion. Frank Byron Jevons in his *History of Religion* terms this analysis as faulty. For him religion is not an organism. It is unlike an animal or a plant. We cannot imagine religion evolving in the same fashion as does an organism. The analogies as employed for example in the metamorphosis of a butterfly out of a caterpillar or what Herbert Spencer sees the frog developing out of a tadpole may sound convincing in the natural sciences, but the same can't be applied in the evolution of religion. Thus to believe in the multiple stages of religion to reach the current form of Monotheism is the misuse of the analogical approach.³

The teachings of Islam as enshrined in Qur'an and the *Sirah* of the Prophet strengthen the basis of primitive/primeval monotheism or *Ur-Monotheism* or in Islamic terminology, *Dinal-Fitrah* among mankind. Qur'an may weigh the polytheistic ideas if present among the primitive men as gross injustice and misguidance of mankind!! God can't be labeled as allowing mankind to wander in utter puzzlement and miscalculations. Nature has only presented itself to man as wonder and awe, not to stare at it helplessly but to seek the signs of its Creator. In the next sub-heading we may try to analyze the teachings of Islam with respect to the evolution of religion.

The position of Islam with respect to the Monotheism as the basis of religion [though not in a comprehensive sense] however is supplemented by the findings of many academic scholars of religion. there is a fairly long list of the scholars who don't subscribe to the idea of the religious evolution— from crude forms to the modern advanced forms of religion; many propound the reverse thesis i.e. the emergence of polytheism [elementary modes of religion] as a deviation from monotheism [highest form of religion]. The prominent intellectuals like Wilhelm Schmidt, Andrew Lang, Don Richardson, etc. can be cited to prove the consciousness of One Supreme God as the basis of religion among human beings from the very beginning.

Wilhelm Schmidt proposes in his magnum opus, *The Origin of the Idea of God* that the humanity in the beginning recognized only one God and He was not represented by images or idols. However with the passage of time humans alienated from such deity and created lesser gods who they thought were active in the mundane world, while the Supreme God in charge of the heavenly affairs at the most. Such deities like Mother goddess, *Bal*, *Tiamut*, *Marduk* [the ancient deities witnessed in history of Middle East] emerged and began to be worshipped by the people. Schmidt tries to establish that there had been a 'Primitive Monotheism' prior to polytheism. Originally mankind acknowledged only one Supreme Creator, who had created the world and governed human affairs from afar.⁴ The belief in One Supreme God has been traced by

Schmidt across the broad areas where the primitive culture is supposed to prevail as the Pygmies of Africa, the Indians of North America, and the Aborigines of Australia.⁵

Andrew Lang laments that the highest conception of God among the most backward races never appeals to the religious evolutionists. He says that the problem has to be accounted for the evolution of the highest conception of God as far as monotheistic conception exists among the most backward races. The problem of religious evolution can't be solved as long as the highest conception of God is would be practically ignored.⁶ The belief in one God, the creator of all that exists can be witnessed among the Central American Mayans. They invoke him as *Itzamna*. The belief in One God prevails among the Mende people of Sierra Leone in West Africa. Believed as the creator of humans and the spirits, they invoked him as *Ngewo*. The ancient people of Babylonia held many polytheistic beliefs, worshipping numerous gods; yet they were seen holding *Marduk* as the Supreme God, above all gods. The Probe Ministry, an International USA based Christian Organization published an online article on Aug, 30, 2004 "The Origin of Man's Religion" detailing the existence of monotheistic characters among the most primitive cultures of the world.

Edward McCurdy who wrote a good deal on Indian religions marked that Indians of the Vedic era recognized One Single Omnipotent Being. He supplements his view through the textual evidence found in Rig Veda, the first important book of Hinduism. He maintains that the gods like *Indra*, *Mythra*, *Varuna*, and *Agni* were simply thought as diverse manifestations of One Supreme God. Ron Williams took a systematic study of Chinese civilization, he confirms that the first phase of early Chinese Civilization was monotheistic. He says that in the early phase of Chinese history, God the supreme ruler was one and indissoluble, incapable of change, having no partners, ruling absolutely alone over all in heaven above and in earth beneath. He did what he willed and no power was able to restrict him and His will was always right. Sameul Marinus Zwemer identified the monotheistic disposition of the Bushmen (the inhabitants of Southern Africa), in addition to the many inhabitants of the Arctic cultures. He states that such people addressed their prayers to a Great Spirit, the all powerful.⁷

2. Islamic Approach

Stephen Langdon of Oxford happens one of the first Western scholars to concede the significance of the moving trend from monotheism to intense polytheism. Langdon took the view that the Sumerians are among the oldest historical civilizations. He counts it unfortunate that the decline of the oldest civilizations as Sumerians is a rapid decline from monotheism to extreme polytheism and wide spread belief in spirits. It is in a very true sense the history of the fall of man. Ali Shariati opines that all religions were based on monotheism before they relapsed into multitheism. He locates the emergence of class distinctions as the underlying cause of multitheism or polytheism. So long as societies were classless, people were knit together through the common belief of monotheism. With the eruption of class divisions people invented multiple gods to distinguish themselves from the rest.⁸

Nonetheless, the current discourse of religious studies has turned its back from many of the claims made by the aforementioned religious evolutionists and the likes, some neo-atheists still echo the same idea. The works and statements of Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens, Lawrence Maxwell Krauss, etc. see the idea of religion as irrational and childish explanation of natural phenomenon with no basis.¹ The titles of books authored by such men are suggestive of the contents in their works. For example Dawkins authored a controversial *God Delusion*, Sam Harris wrote, *The End of Faith*, Christopher Hitchens authored *God is not Great: How Religious Poisons Everything*. Earlier Bertrand Russell in an essay, *Why I Am Not A Christian* (1927) had viewed religion as no useful phenomenon. No religion escapes the judgment of Neo-Atheists. All religions, including Islam are practically useless in their opinion. Just as Bertrand Russell had found nothing substantial in the ethics of Christianity, his followers also see upon the religions as no source of goodness. All such ideas are the natural consequence of subscribing to the theory of religious evolution in the aforesaid manner. Dawkins can be seen quoting Ibn Warraq that even Monotheism is set to subtract its Concept of One God, and become atheism. Dawkins further calls Christianity and Islam as the derivatives of Judaism and the belief in God just a hypothesis on the part of Humans.⁹

Islam least believes in the evolutionary scheme like this. There is hardly any period of human history when the guidance of God has not been delivered through the agency of Prophets. Abul Kalam Azad terms the entire human history as the prophetic history. The Qur'an establishes that messengers have reached every nation, intelligible to the men whom they addressed¹⁰. The message was loud and clear— God is one and everything including ourselves are under His command. This argument of the Qur'an puts the fear and ghost theory as held by evolutionists to test!! The continuous chain of Prophets throughout the annals of human history emphasizes that humans have seldom remained devoid of revelation and hence guidance. It is in this connection that Qur'an calls the prophets in Jewish, Christian, Muslim consideration as forming one family. The privilege is indeed expanded to accommodate all men of faith as one family tree. Islam vociferously declares itself as the primordial religion dating from the first human being, Adam (AS). Islam makes it among the primary requisites to believe in all the prophets before Muhammad (SAAS). The message of all the Prophets has remained all the same. Prophet Muhammad pronounces himself as one of the units of the great canopy of Prophethood. He substantiates his Prophethood through the acknowledgement of the earlier divine revelations as received by the foregoing chain of prophets.

However unlike the religious evolution as was championed through such works as *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, *The Golden Bough*, *The Primitive Religion*, *The Future of an Illusion* and *Moses and Monotheism*, *The Evolution of the Idea*

of God, etc. Islam as religion sanctioned by God maintains that humanity received guidance sufficient enough to harmonize one's self with the nature. Quran does recognize the polytheistic practices and beliefs among different periods of human history, but it terms such things as deviation, forgetfulness, negligence on the part of humans. The Quran identifies the corruption and forgery in the original message of prophets. It is in the backdrop of the corruption of the older revelations that the Qur'an was revealed. The Qur'an claims to come with two-fold purposes: first to confirm the true and original message, and second to guard the authenticated message for the time, eternal. The Qur'anic word applied to mark this special position attained by Qur'an is '*Muhaimin*' which is pretty comprehensive in its meaning. It (*Muhaimin*) refers to the one that safeguards, watches over, stands witness, preserves and upholds. The Qur'an as *Muhaimin* preserves within it the teachings of all the former revealed books. Qur'an thus turns out to be a touchstone where the teachings of other revealed books can be tested on the criteria of authenticity. Further Qur'an substantiates the 'Word of Allah' that has remained intact in the previous divine books. It stands as a witness for it bears testimony to the Will of Allah contained in such books; and works to sift the interpretations and commentaries of the people which were mixed with it.¹¹

Now Qur'an as a culmination of the Divine guidance also marks the completion of the Prophethood. It declares in unequivocal terms that there will be no Prophet after Muhammad. The later ages may at the most yearn for thinkers and reformers, but not prophets. Some reputed scholars of Islam as Hammidudin Farahi and Said Nursi view that the most important role of Jesus's arrival was to announce the glad tidings of the coming of the Final Messenger, identified in the person of Prophet Muhammad. Nevertheless Qur'an says unconditionally that Muhammad is not the father of anyone but that he is the messenger of Allah and the seal of the prophets and "Allah has full knowledge of all things". While the Qur'anic exegetes (*Mufasirun*) may interpret the last part of the verse variously, it may be inferred that by this part, Qur'an established that the teachings of Qur'an through the person of Muhammad are sufficient enough to guide the human beings for all times to come. After the pronouncement of Muhammad as the Seal of Prophets, Qur'an announced the perfection of religion (Islam) as well, *This Day have I perfected your religion for you, completed my favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion*¹² The Quranic commentators maintain that this verse is the last one revealed chronologically, thereby marking the approaching end of Muhammad's prophethood in his earthly life, besides closing the doors of Prophethood for all times to come.ⁱⁱ This verse transformed Islam into a universal religion as testified by other verses as, "*Verily this is no less than a message to all the worlds*"¹³. Talking about the progressive revelation from age to age and from time to time in the Qur'anic context, does not mean that God's fundamental laws alter or His stance changes. The prophet can never be imagined to temper with the message revealed to him. He is a man of integrity and responsibility. His Prophets can never be expected to declare

ⁱ New Atheism pitches against religion. It aims to counter and criticize religion for it whirls humanity in fantasy. Neo-Atheists think the indoctrination of children born in religious homes as the continuation of absurd belief in some supernatural authority. The role of religion in politics and education should be resisted tooth and nail.

ⁱⁱ Ibn Rushd, one of the renowned scholars and Muslim philosophers, better known for his book *Tahfatul Tahafat* declares Quran as 'the highest Miracle of Prophet Muhammad.'

their message as the only one way of guidance at the cost of negating the previous revelations. The spirit of endorsement reigns supreme throughout the ministry of all the prophets. The message of a Prophet begins not from a vacuum but that he justifies, strengthens, and supplements his Prophethood by acknowledging the Divine messages of the previous Prophets with clear signs and scriptures from God.

The Qur'an discusses the themes of continuity of the revelation of God, finality of prophethood and completion of religion. It firmly claims to safeguard the essence of the religion revealed to all the predecessor prophets. Quran reprimands the 'People of the Book' (Jews and Christians) for they failed to anchor on to the essence and core of the religion. They should have been strengthened in their faith through the revelation brought by the final Prophet. Instead of seeking ease and spiritual bliss, they repelled Islam that otherwise had come to endorse the preceding revelations with all might. The substitution of fresh revelation through Qur'an was in the best interest of all those who believed. The substitution of one revelation for another aimed at strengthening the faith of believers. However to one's dismay, Jews and Christians who had earlier fought within themselves couldn't succeed in finding the panacea of their adamancy and poor vision in the new revelation of Qur'an. Allah knows best what He reveals (in stages). Say, the Holy Spirit has brought the revelation from thy in Truth, in order to strengthen those who believe, and as a guide and glad tidings to Muslims."¹⁴

Qur'an often exemplifies Abraham as the great ancestor of those among whom Islam was preached i.e. Jews, Christians and Arabs. It explicitly calls Abraham, a Muslim, upright (*Hanif*). The Jews and Christians were held as the inheritors of the Divine Book, and the Prophethood. They were favored over all nations for they were the guardians of the eternal message brought by the prophets. The clear signs of God were revealed to them in the affairs of religion.

Both Jews and Christians were thus Muslims as far as Islam is maintained as a generic term. It was the religion preached from antiquity through such figures as Abraham, Noah, Moses, Jesus, Jacob, David, Elias, John the Baptist, Solomon, Joseph, Isaac, etc., in fact by all the prophets. Qur'an says that some Prophets have been mentioned in the Qur'an but some have not been mentioned to the Prophet. However, as the time elapsed people meddled with the pure message and hijacked its meaning and purpose. The sectarian names cropped up at the cost of unity as was intended by the teachings of the prophets.

Addressing few of the arguments as put forward by evolutionists with respect to religion, only this could be said of any evolution possible in the revealed religion— that the revelations of Allah are sent upon prophets in the wake of circumstances, besides taking into account the outlook and social set-up of the people. However one shouldn't infer from it that Allah planned a journey of monotheism through various stages of polytheism. Revelation comes not through force but through reason and good preaching. Besides, God's revelation shuns not in applying the societal norms to pave a way for betterment and improvisation of the addressees. The prophet

Moses for instance acted upon the subjective mind of the Egyptians as they were taken away by the power of magic. Through the aid of Allah, Moses proved to the people that magic is too small a power before the infinite power of Allah. The intention here was to refine over the awareness of the people through a superior activity. The Qur'an describes the episode as "*Then (Moses) threw his rod, and behold, it was a serpent, plain (for all to see)*".¹⁵ (07:107). The Magicians of Pharaoh had publically challenged Moses to prove his power in the court of Pharaoh. The arrogance of the Magicians was humbled when Moses belittled their magic through his Miracle. On the same pattern the people at the time of Jesus were very fond of medical sciences and healing; he was bestowed with the Miracle of healing people afflicted the diseases like leprosy. Qur'an describes Jesus saying as, *I have to come to you, with a sign from your Lord, in that I make for you out of clay, as it were the figure of a bird, and breathe into it, and it becomes a bird, by Allah's' Leave, and I heal those born blind, and the lepers, and quicken the dead into life by Allah's' Leave, and I declare to you what you eat, and what you store in your houses. Surely there is in a sign for you if you did believe.*¹⁶ In this way, after outplaying the stages of magic and exposure to medical sciences, the human beings reached a stage where they needed epistemological, intellectual arguments, which Qur'an did with excellence. The Qur'an for that reason is the highest miracle of the prophet. Islam has not only completed the chain of the prophets, but has also paved the way for the highest revolution in the fields of epistemology, social order and science as Qur'anic teachings are based on very sound rational and scientific outlines, which can cater the needs of all the people till the day of judgment.

The *Din* (religion) that God has sent unto humankind is one. It has been sent to every messenger in the same form. However Quran hints at some differences in some superficial matters as, *To each among you have We prescribed a law and an open way. If Allah had so willed, He would have made you all a single people, but (His Plan is) is to test you in what He hath given you: so strive as in a race in all virtues. The goal of your all is to Allah; it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which ye dispute.*¹⁷ One however finds in the light of the verse afore-mentioned that God gave different messengers varying *Shari'ah* (Law/way) and different *Minhaj* (methodologies of religious practice). One should not however interpret the verse under study in an absolute sense. The *Shari'ah* (rules of Worship) given to the multiple prophets was not radically different from the predecessor fellow prophets. The essence of worship has always remained uniform; however the external forms of worship displayed some differences. The Qur'an for example says that the earlier communities of believers were directed to pray and fast, as the Muslims do, though the details and nature of former is different from the latter.

As far as *Minhaj* (method/way) is concerned, God taught diverse methods to His prophets to accommodate the different circumstances. The provision of that method only meant to ease the living in the prevailing circumstances. It won't be wise to think that that the variations in the *Shari'ah* of different prophets owe to the process of evolution i.e. elementary *Shari'ah* of the earlier prophets kept on modifying till the finally-

evolved *Shari'ah* was dawned on the final Last Messenger, Prophet Muhammad. One shouldn't be wonder-struck about the differences in the *Shari'ah* of the Prophets. The differences only imply the different time and space demands.

In fact God commands through His prophets to escort a change in some external forms of worship only to restrict the stagnation in performing the religious obligations. Besides, one discovers with the study of revealed scriptures that the dissimilarity in the *Shari'ah* of the prophets at different annals of history is that God wanted this difference to become a means of testing people. All those who comprehend the true religion, who grapple its spirit and essence, are conscious of the true substance of the different legal prescriptions. They always recognize the Truth and accept it whatever its form be. They show least hesitation in accepting the new ordinances of God in place of the old ones. On the other hand, the ultimate purpose of all the divine religious laws is the accomplishment of goodness and righteousness. This purpose can be achieved only when a man obeys whatever commandment comes from God at a particular time. The proper mode of conduct for people who keep their eyes fixed on this true purpose is to strive for God's good pleasure rather than quarrel about differences in the legal prescriptions of the various Prophets. This is demonstrated when the *Qibla* or direction of worship was changed¹⁸

The differences in the Shariah are there to steer the social affairs of the people that may be affected by a particular social, cultural, historical and topographical milieu. That difference should not be thought as the authenticity for religious pluralism in the absolute sense.

3. Conclusion

The evolutionary theory of religious phenomenon is still holding debate in various corners of the globe. A certain section of humans maintains that religion has no divine origin and that it is the product of man's encounter with the nature. They see no supernatural working in the management of the universe or intervening in the affairs of humanity. They anticipate the erasure of religious beliefs in the light of the rational and scientific evidence. In their view the beginning of religion was the simplest crude thinking, and its conclusion would be the substitution through refined thought i.e. the complete awareness of nature and its happenings. As the age we live in is the age of reason and scientific revolution, the space of religion is shrinking with each new discovery of science. The evolutionary journey of religion thus reaching the highest water-mark i.e. monotheism in itself should pave way for the better system i.e. scientific system.

On the other hand the revealed and mystic literature of mankind speaks in bulk about the religious experience, humans have gone through. Such an experience is too enduring and overriding in the annals of human history that it would be injustice to abandon it as a mere illusion. There seems no reason, as Iqbal recounts that the normal level of human experience be accepted as a fact and the mystical and emotional levels are thought as trash.¹⁹ The most trusted evidence is the testimony of the prophets for they are the only souls who suffer heavily and solely for the welfare of others.

They are so conspicuous of the Ultimate Truth of life that they won't see others obscured of that Truth.²⁰

The entire narrative of Qur'an is saturated with the opposite of what religious evolutionists uphold. Qur'an spots the earliest human beings with Monotheism. The polytheistic or superstitious beliefs held by people have been tagged as degeneration and retrogression. Qur'an identifies the primordial disposition (*Fitrah*) among human beings—humans have an innate tendency to set their face on the true religion. *Fitrah* is that which is instinctive to every human being—a predisposition towards *Tawhid*. If a human being is not indoctrinated externally, he would continue to stick to the true nature. The deviation from the *Tawhid* (that is intertwined with *Fitrah*) is the result of human weaknesses and the blind imitation of others. The child is taught to subscribe to the belief of his parents (in most of the cases), otherwise the innate tendency of the child would always choose Monotheism.²¹

Qur'an argues that Mankind in the beginning was one *Ummah*. It was only after the humans strayed from the true faith that Allah deputed prophets both as heralds of good tidings and warnings.²² Prophet Muhammad (SAW) communicates the following information in *Hadith-i-Qudsi* that Allah created mankind upon the true faith i.e. *Tawhid*. It was the human folly that they fell prey to the whispers of devil who lead them off the straight path. They associated partners with God according to their own whims and desires.

It was in this connection that the Muslim religious scholars and historians analyzed the religious diversity. They discovered the seeds of religious pluralism in man rather than in God. Differences of religions in the eyes of such Muslim historians of religion, owe either to the varying reports of the same phenomenon by the people who witnessed it, or to the insufficient descriptions, or flawed expressions of the phenomenon. On the other hand, human passions, negligence, fantasy, ulterior motives, misrepresentation, and misunderstanding resulted in the proliferation of religions. Besides the alteration of revealed texts through unprincipled expressions and descriptions coupled with the faulty scrutinisation over the veracity of reports, and socio-economic adversities, among others, were the causes of deviation from the true religion of Monotheism preached by prophets through the human existence.²³

Islam with the Prophethood of Muhammad marked the culmination of divine revelations starting from Adam to Jesus and comprehending the entire legacy of Prophethood. It vigorously and unceasingly preached an uncompromising monotheistic creed. It endorsed not only the earlier revelations and the traces of God-consciousness among mankind but equally aimed at perfecting the civil, political, material, legal, and moral codes of conduct. It finalized the contours of *Tawhid* and took monotheism to its logical conclusion. The Qur'an declared Muhammad as the last in the line of messengers and Islam as the final religion for mankind. The Prophet of Islam stands as a bridge between the earlier Prophets and the contemporary populace. Iqbal in his *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* says that as long as source of revelation is concerned Muhammad belongs to the ancient

world, and so far as the spirit of his revelation is concerned, he belongs to the modern world.²⁴

Qur'an that calls itself as *Muhaimin* [Guardian of True Monotheism], shows not the least hesitation in acknowledging that all the Prophets of Allah before Muhammad professed *Tawhid* and invited people to the worship of one God thereby restricting the progenies from the veneration, and obedience to pseudo-gods and evil spirits. Indeed the perfect notion of a singular Being has achieved its final shape in the teachings of the *Qur'an*. The qualities and attributes of Allah have been detailed with their subtle implications for human lives, while the minutest consternations of Polytheism, Monolatry, Henotheism, Pantheism, Trinity, and Dualism have been rendered vague and irrational.²⁵

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad argues that the Torah represented God as vengeful, the Gospel of Jesus signified Him as compassionate. According to Azad, the transition is not meant to discriminate one community from the other or to authenticate the Dualism of Zoroastrians/Manicheans but to expound the attributes of God piecemeal so that it suits people

according to their mental set-up. He says that Qur'an presents both the attributes of retribution and mercy in equal proportions. This reveals the wisdom of Allah in ensuring the steadfastness of people on the path of virtue and righteousness.

As the thought and awareness among human beings continues to improve with respect to nature, so do the greatness of Allah and His attributes unfolds each passing moment. As one cannot deduce that humans have still not reached to the level of higher rationality so cannot we assume that religion has not reached to its maturity. The belief of Monotheism cannot evolve out of the remnants of polytheism as the philosophers or religious evolutionists believe. Only the modes of expression and the rules of worship can evolve in a certain sense. If Buddhism rebelled against the belief of idolism in Hinduism, it shouldn't have degenerated into intense idol worship itself. If monotheism was the last milestone of religious evolution, there should have been no superstition and polytheism presently for a man has entered the scientific age or the age of reason.

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