

Fast 28: Belief in all earlier revelation and prophets of all nations

- In the verse quoted in the last Study (ch. 2, v. 136), near the end Muslims are told to say to others regarding the prophets mentioned in that verse: “we make no distinction between any of them”. Making no distinction means to believe in all of them as equally true, equally inspired and raised by God, and equally high and noble in character and morals. The Israelites made a distinction between them when they rejected Jesus, even though he brought the same teachings as Moses and the other prophets of the Israelites whom they honour and accept. But when he pointed out the moral ills of the Jews of his time, and their adherence only to the letter of the law of Moses, their twisting it for selfish material gain, and neglecting its aim and spirit, they rejected him. Christians make a distinction between the prophets by raising Jesus to the level of Divinity and being entirely sinless, while they consider the prophets before him to be not only mortal but having sometimes fallen to the lowest acts of immorality that are possible for any human to commit.
- Since Muslims are required to “make no distinction between any of them”, i.e., any of the prophets of God, it means they also cannot make any distinction between the various nations of the world due to their race, descent or colour. God treated them equally by sending His revelation to all of them through their own prophets, who by race and descent belonged to the nations to which they were sent.
- The fact that the Quran means all prophets of the world, and not just prophets of the Israelites, is also borne out by the following verses:

“Surely We have revealed to you (O Muhammad) as We revealed to Noah and the prophets after him, and We revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and Jesus and Job and Jonah and Aaron and Solomon, and We gave to David a scripture. And messengers We have mentioned to you before **and messengers We have not mentioned to you...**” — ch. 4, v. 163–164

إِنَّا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ كَمَا أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى نُوحٍ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَى إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَعِيسَى وَأَيُّوبَ وَيُونُسَ وَهَارُونَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ وَآتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ زَبُورًا ﴿١١٣﴾ وَرُسُلًا قَدْ قَصَصْنَاهُمْ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَرُسُلًا لَمْ نَقْصُصْهُمْ عَلَيْكَ ...

In ch. 2, v. 136, quoted in the last Study, after naming several prophets whose revelation Muslims believe in, it is said that Muslims also believe in: “what was given to the prophets from their Lord”. Here this is further explained by saying that these prophets consist of all those mentioned in the Quran, in various places, and those not

mentioned anywhere in it. This give Muslims a powerful principle when defining their relationship with other world religions. They can accept certain major figures in the religious history of the world who arose before the Holy Prophet Muhammad, about whom Muslims had no information during his time, as being true prophets. The statement about prophets not mentioned in the Quran occurs in another verse as well:

“And certainly We sent messengers before you (O Muhammad) — among them are those We have mentioned to you and among them are those We have not mentioned to you.” — ch. 40, v. 78

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلًا مِّن قَبْلِكَ مِنْهُمْ مَّن
قَصَصْنَا عَلَيْكَ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّن لَّمْ نَقُصُّصْ
عَلَيْكَ

- The verse ch. 2, v. 136, occurs again in almost the same words in ch. 3, v. 84:

“Say: We believe in Allah and (in) what is revealed to us, and (in) what was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and (in) what was given to Moses and Jesus and to the prophets from their Lord; we make no distinction between any of them, and to Him we submit.”

It is followed immediately by this verse:

“And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will not be accepted from him, and in the Hereafter he will be one of the losers.” — ch. 3, v. 85

وَمَنْ يَبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ
مِنْهُ ۗ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿٨٥﴾

An objection was raised by a non-Muslim friend that this verse is indicating intolerance by Islam towards other faiths.

This objection may be answered as follows. Please look at the preceding verse, quoted above. If that verse had **only** said:

“Say: We believe in Allah and (in) what is revealed to us, and to Him we submit” (i.e., it had missed out the mention of revelation to other prophets)

then no doubt this statement *completely defines Islam*. That is *all* it needed to say! In that case, it could be justifiably objected that when the next verse says “whoever seeks a religion other than Islam ...”, it is showing intolerance towards other faiths.

But this verse has the long, extra insertion about our belief in the revelation to all other prophets and that we make no distinction between the prophets. Therefore what ch. 3, v. 85 means by “whoever seeks a religion other than Islam” are religions who go against the particular teaching. As shown earlier, even before the Holy Prophet

Muhammad arose, the Jews and Christians were already making a distinction between the prophets of the Israelite nation. All other religions were also making a distinction by accepting only their own religious founders as true and rejecting those of any other nation.

Islam came with the teaching that revelation from God came to all nations through their prophets. This teaching establishes the equality of all nations, and belief in all such prophets becomes the basis of peace and mutual respect between followers of different religions. The notion that revelation from God came only to one's own nation, because it is the favourite and chosen one of God, leads to concepts of national superiority over others, and hatred and prejudice against people of other religions and nations. It is such doctrines that will not be accepted by God and they lead to their adherents being losers in the end. "Not accepted by God" means they do not lead to human development but debasement.

So "whoever seeks a religion other than Islam" means whoever follows doctrines which regard certain prophets as false or inferior and look upon other nations, except their own, as rejected by God.

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