

one religion is to prove the Truth of all since no such proofs exist. Any affirmation of any religious Truth affirms all religious Truth without exception no matter what form the religion may take.

Any claim to the exclusive possession of a unique truth by any one religion is an error since every expressed Truth assumes its own specific form, and it is impossible that any one form should have a value of correctness that excludes all other forms.

A form, because it is limited to itself, implies that it leaves something outside of itself and this something, in the case of religions, means that that something is other religious forms. This means that no religion can be absolutely distinctive from each other for that would entail the absurd idea of a plurality of unicities or Existences, with each form representing a divinity that has no relationship with each other.

The ideas that are affirmed in one religious form cannot, therefore, fail to be affirmed, in one way or the other, in all religious forms. The more important any particular means of Grace may be, the more certain it is that it will be found in all other orthodox forms in a way that is appropriate to that environment and its people. The Quran directs all Muslims to believe in the Scriptures that precede it. **Does not the Quran state:** "It is He Who revealed to you the Scripture, the Quran, in truth, **confirming what is in hand of the scriptures that went before it.**" A universal Reality **cannot** have only one manifestation to the exclusion of all others since in that case it would **not** be universal.

A religion provides a point of view which is found precisely in the things that make it different to other religions. Every religious form is superior to others in a particular respect. It is this characteristic that provides sufficient reason for the existence of that form. Anyone who speaks in the name of his religion always has this characteristic in mind. This point of view finds its prototype in the Quran. In one place, it states that all the Prophets are **equal**, and in another, it declares that some are **superior** to others. This means that while the Prophets are equal there are **particularities** of each Prophet that make them superior to the others.

Islam, the last of the three monotheistic religions, placed itself at a point of view that was different from Christianity, and actually reduced Christianity to its own point of view in order to integrate it within itself. Hence Islam has been able to integrate Christ into the line of Prophets which extends from Adam to Muhammad (peace be upon all the

Prophets). Islam, like Christianity & Judaism, came into being through a direct intervention of the Divine Will, through Revelation from which monotheism issued. The **equilibrium** between the two Divine aspects of Justice & Mercy constitutes the very essence of the Islamic Revelation. A religion is an integral whole that is comparable to a living organism that develops according to necessary & exact laws. One might call it a spiritual or social organism. It is **not** a construction of arbitrary conventions.

For a Christian, everything depends on the Incarnation & Redemption. Christ absorbs everything, even the idea of the Divine Principle & humanity which becomes His Mystical Body. For a Muslim, all is centered in Allah. The Divine Principle is considered under the aspect of Unity and of Transcendence, is and in the state of abandonment to Him: Al-Islam. The idea of the God-made-Man is at the centre of the Christian doctrine & Jesus is God personified. Islam, however, does **not** give the same predominance to its Prophet (p)...he does **not** absorb everything. It is **exclusively** the monotheistic concept of Divinity that takes the central place in Islam & dominates it throughout.

Christianity has no social application beyond that of the sacraments & the participation of its believers in the Mystical Body of Christ. In the form of the Church it imposes itself on men without attaching them to itself & assigns to them functions that permit them to participate in its inner life. But its laity is still left outside of the church & has a passive role.

For a Muslim, he is his own priest by the mere fact of being a Muslim. He is the patriarch, imam, caliph of his family. Man is himself a unity. He is the image of the Creator whose kalifah he is on earth. His family is also a unity. It is a society within a society, and like the Muslim himself, it is both responsible & submissive. Christians cannot lay claim to this idea of Unity in the same degree as Muslims. In Christianity, God becomes an incarnation & redeems the world. In Islamic doctrine, God affirms Himself by His Unity. He does not become incarnate or redeem the world but absorbs it through Islam. He does not descend into manifestation but projects Himself therein. It is through this projection that Man participates in His glory.

Whereas Islam is a spiritual, religious & social block, the Church is a centre, making a Christian a peripheral being in their religion whereas a Muslim is everywhere a central being within theirs.

In our modern times, we witness a search by the young for a direct, unmediated experience with

God. They try altered states of consciousness, such as drugs. But the human is by definition both a finite & infinite being and **the only sure way of keeping God-realization in focus is through dedicated & faith-filled observance of the forms stipulated by one of the religions.** These traditional codes & forms help to establish the soul in equilibrium socially & emotionally, while theology provides a road map & direction. **Traditions steady & sustain the human spirit.**

Religion translates metaphysical or universal truths into the language & forms of the various religions. These are accessible through faith which is, for the vast majority, the only way they can participate in Divine Truths. **The transcendent Truth, the Reality common to the great religions (as expressed in that grand Quranic verse 5:69), is less accessible to the majority of believers who are often comfortable with the exoteric practices, the rituals of a religion.** For the esoteric, while they participate in rites & observances, they see the need to transcend these forms by fathoming their depths & discerning their universal content. For them, rituals are doorways to be entered in order to reach the Absolute, & not an end in themselves. The esoteric finds the Absolute within the traditions as poets find poetry in poems.

Intellectual knowledge proceeds neither from belief nor reasoning. It goes beyond dogma, without ever contradicting it, and finds the infinite Truth that dominates all forms; and religion, by its very nature, contains & transmits this purely intellectual knowledge which lies beneath the veil of dogma & rituals.

Transcendent unity means that the unity of all religious forms must be realized in a purely inward and spiritual way, and without prejudice to any other form. The antagonisms between the various forms cannot affect the one Universal Truth just as opposing colours cannot affect the transmission of one uncoloured light. Just as every colour, by its negation of darkness and affirmation of light, makes it possible to discover the ray that is visible and of tracing this ray back to its luminous source, so do all symbols, forms, dogmas, by their affirmation of Truth, make it possible to follow the ray of Revelation, which is none other than the ray of Intellect, back to its Divine Source.

There is a unity at the heart of religions. More than moral it is theological, but more than theological it is metaphysical, in that it transcends our manifest or material world. It is the loving heart, soft & open, which receives the Truth of Unity. **Transcend your narrow-mindedness!** These words are a multi-religious society's social antibiotic.

The Spiritual Highway has many Lanes

The Transcendent Unity of Religions

The Quran is the only religious text that offers hope to ALL humanity. 5:69: "Those who believe in the Quran, those who follow the Jewish scriptures, and the Sabians & the Christians, any who believe in God & the Last Day, and work righteousness, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve." These are **not** light-hearted words, 'we are all the same' **spiritual drivel.** This reasoning is often put forward on a superficial level to say that 'all religions lead to God.' A simplistic pluralism of that kind misses the point, because it is only through following a religious tradition **all the way to its inner depth** that one reaches the 'transcendent unity.' Unity exists **only** on a transcendental level, **not** on a socio-cultural level.

The religions are different & serve different purposes at the worldly level. It is only when their **esoteric reality** is realized does the unity become apparent. Reality is multi-level & some spiritual thoughts appear to contradict each other at one level. However, when a person comprehends a higher level of reality the **contradictions become reconciled.** The pieces of the Jigsaw fit. To reach the transcendent unity one has **by necessity** to practice **ONE** religion fully. Understanding religion in its profound depth & breadth, makes us feel as though we have made a journey to a place from where we can breathe something of the **Expansive Divine Air** which we all have a yearning for. Let's put an end to the quarrels among some exponents of religions, who feel to prove the **validity** of their religion, they must **disprove** the other religions. It was Gandhi who said, "I'm a Muslim & a Hindu & a Christian & a Jew, so are all of you..." to Hindu protestors outside his home as they chanted, "Death to Jinna! **Death to Muslims!**" He went on to say, "For God's sake, **STOP IT!**" **The Quranic verse is eternally valid.**

Say: O People of Divine Revelation! Come to common terms as between us & you: that we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, lords & patrons other than Allah (Quran 3:64)

The evidence for the transcendent or spiritual unity of religions comes not only from the oneness of Truth but from the oneness of the human race. There is compelling argument for the Unity, not only of Man, but for the Unity of God, a unity that transcends all religions. There is sufficient reason for Man's existence if only because of his ability to think. Humans are the only creatures on earth with the ability to foresee death and to wish for survival. We are the only beings, also, with a fervent wish to question, explore and discover the why of the world, of the soul, and of our very existence. It is our fundamental nature to ask these questions & to seek answers whether through Revelation or through the process of understanding.

Man's distinctive mark, compared to the animal kingdom, is that he has an intelligence that is total in that it is objective & capable of conceiving the Absolute. Man is the reasoning animal. This is true in the sense that reason is the distinctive mark of Man, but reason cannot exist without the Intellect, which is a suprarational intelligence that resides in our will & sentiment. This intelligence is also total. It leads to freedom of will & to generosity of sentiment or of character. Man alone has the capacity of willing into being what is contrary to his instincts or to his self-interest. He alone can both sympathise & empathise with others. He alone is capable of sacrifice & of pity.

Our will gives us the capacity to realize the world around us. This realization is determined by our intelligence. While sentiment is for loving, or feeling, these emotions are also determined by intelligence for Man's objective intelligence determines all that he is and all that he does.

Our intelligence, however, is not sufficient unto itself but has need of nobleness of soul, piety

and virtue if it is to rise above our specific human condition. In fact, **intelligence divorced of virtue lacks sincerity & this lack can limit our horizon**. One must be what one wishes to become. The whole debate regarding Man's capacity to know God resolves itself in the profound statement that it is God who knows Himself in Man. Man alone has the ability to know all that is real & knowable otherwise he would not be the earthly divinity which in fact he is. Why should God, who knows Himself in Himself, wish to know Himself also through Man? Because as a saying of the Prophet (p) tells us: "I was a hidden treasure & I wished to be known; hence I created the world."

Universal truths or ideas have to provide the foundation of any religion & have to be capable of being understood & assimilated by all men. **Dogmatism of religious ideas arises when an interpretation results in a paralysis of that understanding**. This paralysis can negate the intellectual potential of ideas by giving them an absoluteness which only the whole Truth can possess. Dogma is like a point in a circle that contradicts every other point & point of view. A speculative view of ideas, on the other hand, is only one element in the circle which by its very form indicates continuity. This view includes the entire circle & the Truth in its entirety. Whereas **dogma is exclusive & breeds prejudice, speculation is inclusive & encourages tolerance**.

However, religious exclusivity, or dogma, is perfectly legitimate when it is taken in the sense that it provides an individual viewpoint & that this limitation is necessary for each specific religious Truth. This individual viewpoint must be accommodated in every path that leads to a spiritual goal.

The issue of unity & diversity in religions can be converted into two spiritual types: **esoteric & exoteric**. Simply stated, the exoteric deals with the different forms and rituals that are used in religious expression while the esoteric knows & accepts that all religions are alike in heart & in essence. The push & pull of religious beliefs, of the exoteric versus the esoteric, explains the attitude of each spiritual type towards the other. Someone of one religious belief is **unable** to share the conviction of another & is **unable** to honour the other since it would betray the Truth as they see it.

The Absolute Unity that is God defies

visualization or even description. However, through religion & religious beliefs people have tried to know God. To reach Him through **exoteric** means such as prayers & rituals. The relationship between exoterism & esoterism can be equated to the relationship between form & spirit. For esoterism to exist in a religion it must be integrated with a particular religious manner or form which would involve numerous elements of the religious society such as the inner and outer circles of a brotherhood, where the latter might be unaware of the real esoteric nature of the organization & may only be involved in the outward forms, the rituals, of the religion.

The esoterist is concerned with knowledge that goes beyond ritual & the Intellect is not Reason. While Reason proceeds through language & joins the knower with the known, the Intellect identifies the knower with what he knows causing one to become the other. Meister Eckhart, the German theologian/philosopher, wrote, "There is something in the soul that is uncreated & uncreatable...this something is the Intellect." The Intellect is intuitive and it is the Intellect that gives men the realization of the Supreme Being which appears in all religions and constitutes the esoteric point at which they are all united.

The exoteric aspect or form of a religion is what is often used for the conversion of others to your point of view. It can be an all-invading autocracy that rejects entirely any esoterist consideration of the Unity of God & is rooted in a belief system defined by dogma or prejudice.

Since we should love God with all that we are, we should also love Him with our Intelligence, which is the best part of us. Intelligence is not a feeling but something infinitely greater, and the word **love** as used in the relationship between God & Man must **not** be understood in a purely sentimental sense. Knowledge brings about the most perfect union between Man & God since it appeals to what is already divine in man, namely the Intellect. This supreme mode of the love of God is, by far, the highest human possibility & no person can willfully ignore it without sinning against God.

This metaphysical plane of the human mind is **not** a superfluous thing. It is necessary for man's salvation. There are many "*religious people*" who view intellectuality as being opposed to meritorious action &

therefore dangerous to one's salvation. Intelligence can actually be viewed by some as satanic & can be spoken of as "intellectual pride" as if this were a contradiction in terms. They often **exalt "childlike" or "simple" faith** which can be respected when it is spontaneous & natural but **not** when it is affected or false.

The argument for the spiritual unity of religions is that if God were on the side of any religious form, the persuasive power of this form would be such that no person of good faith would be able to resist it. While no proofs exist to support any claim by any one religion to a unique/exclusive Truth, belief in one religion & not in another can be justified by relative means such as historical, philosophical, spiritual, or sentimental proofs.

The application of the word "**infidel**" to civilizations that are older than Christianity, with the exception of Muslims, and which have every spiritual & historic right to their beliefs & every right to ignore the Christians, demonstrate the perverse nature of the Christian claims with regard to other religious forms. The Western mentality, in its positive qualities, is entirely of a Christian essence. It does not have the power to change such deep-seated heredity. No one can set aside this mental formation. Even those Westerners who consider themselves free of any religious attachment retain some remnant of the Christian point of view. Given this, it is not surprising that the opinions about Islam are similar among Western Christians, even among those who pride themselves with being free of any Christian belief.

But prejudices against other religions can be seen as necessary since the pursuit of individual salvation needs the denial of the truth of other religions. If God has not given theoretical proofs of the various religious dogmas it is because such proofs are inconceivable and nonexistent and for anyone to demand them, as unbelievers do, is a contradiction. If such proofs do exist, they do so as Divine Revelations which serve as a vehicle for the action of Grace, Grace being the only sufficient and fully valid reason for believing in a religion.

The Divine Will has distributed the **One Truth in different** forms & to **different** humanities. Quran 16:36 – "We certainly sent into every nation a messenger..." Implicit in every religious form is the absolute proof of its Truth. To prove the Truth of

God certainly sent into every nation a messenger.

Quran 16:36

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