



DIVINE GRACE AND INTELLECTUAL SELF- REGULATION: RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MORAL VIRTUE AND FORMALISTIC ACTS OF WORSHIP

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Philosophers of religion have shown a range of attitudes towards acts of worship including acceptance, rejection and intellectual reinterpretation, depending on their view of the world, the nature of the divinity under consideration and the way they see the relationships between man and the Divine and between the physical and metaphysical realms. Other relevant factors include their own personal experiences, the era in which they live, and the general objectives of their philosophical systems.

Confusing true worship with false worship

One critic of religious worship was the philosopher David Hume. He believed that an inflated view of God led to man regarding himself as insignificant and to his consequently becoming insignificant before God. This would mean that the relationship between man and God was one of fear and submission – i.e. a slave-master relationship - expressed through ceremony and ritual



rather than moral commitment, with the result that the way to salvation consisted of a formalistic style of religious observance instead of the practice of ethics and virtue.

In fact, Hume actually confused true worship, which establishes a genuine relationship between man and his Creator and imbues him with a moral motive to live a virtuous life, with false worship. The latter is practiced by those who want to be seen by others or by self-deceivers who think they can please God the Most High by performing a few rituals while spreading mischief and corruption on earth and living a life of cheating, plunder, deliberate concealment of the truth and oppression of the innocent.

Hume's problem was that he regarded all acts of worship as being in the second category. Perhaps this was because he had never experienced the first, or because his environment was dominated by the second. Whatever the case, he believed that religious worship desensitized the heart and promoted hypocrisy, ostentation, treachery and falsehood.¹

Attacking religious ritual and ceremony, Hume wrote:

“One would generally be inclined to regard praising God as nothing more than a meaningless ritual, a form of ostentation or a reflection of extreme credulousness and gullibility. We do not need to return to the Dark Ages or travel to remote regions in order to see examples of this retrograde practice”.²

Hume believed that acts of worship which entailed praising the Creator were degrading to the true worth of the Divine, because regarding God as being eager for praise would mean that He experiences human emotion. And – moreover – emotion of the lowest type; that is, a desire to win the plaudits and approval of others.

In this view Hume was influenced by Seneca, who maintained that in order to worship God truly and properly we should know Him, and that any other form of worship would reduce Him to a lowly human condition,

¹ Hume: *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, London, the Fontana Library, 1971, P. 198.

² *Ibid.* Pp. 196-198. Compare the Arabic translation by Mohammed Fathi al Shanaiti, Cairo, Maktabat al Qahirah al Hadithah, 1956, P. 151.



since it is man, not God, who enjoys flattery, gifts, pleas for mercy and intercession.

What Hume and Seneca are saying is not correct. It is actually man who benefits from praising God; God Himself derives no benefit from being praised because He is Free from all wants. Man benefits because praising his Creator makes him personally aware of His bounties and blessings, and this in turn gives him a sense of psychological satisfaction and spiritual peace. Moreover, praising specific Divine qualities such as power, mercy, justice and knowledge gives man an understanding of the value of those qualities, which heightens their significance in his moral subconscious and gives him an example to emulate.

Hume – and this time he was right – says that we should condemn the “mythical” types of worship which demean God – sometimes comparing Him to a human being, at others picturing Him as a Satan-like entity with unpredictable whims and fancies, who exercises His power without wisdom or mercy.¹ God is in fact infinitely superior to such things.

Another thing that belittles – or invalidates – this kind of worship is the fact that “votive offerings associated with most popular superstitions have evil connotations”.² That is, if God is portrayed as possessing human emotions such as a love of gifts and flattery, then He (that is, a god of this kind) might well grant evil requests from people in exchange for votive offerings.

Moral commitment as an aspect of true worship

Immanuel Kant did not regard ritual and ceremony as part of a rational religion. In his view, a purely rational religion was based on morality and only morality and he did not see rituals and other acts of worship associated with the established religions as acceptable alternatives to moral commitment. True worship was an underlying element of good moral behaviour derived from free will and intellectual self-regulation.

¹ Ibid. P. 203.

² Kant: *Kritik der Praktischen Vernunft, Werke, Pru., AK., 5:131.*



Kant believed that, unlike established religion, rational religion did not consist of formal acts of worship aimed at generating an internal sense of holiness within ourselves and influencing the Divine Will. This was because, in his view, we humans are unable to claim with any justification that the physical world can have an impact upon the metaphysical world.

This does not imply that we should understand Kant's view of true worship being expressed through moral behaviour as meaning that God needs – or even desires – worship. As far as God is concerned, moral commitment in itself is sufficient and we humans do not need to associate it with acts of worship in our minds.

According to Kant: “If happiness (and let us speak here in human terms) makes God loveable, then obedience to His commands makes him an object of worship”.¹ This is indeed true provided that, as I have already pointed out, we do not understand God as wishing to be glorified as a reward for creating the world, because He did so for objective, not subjective, reasons. God created it because of His generosity, goodness and grace, not because He desires to be honoured², and “those who see the glorification of God as the ultimate goal of creation (provided that we do not understand this anthropomorphically in the sense of a glory-seeking human being), have found that this is probably the best and most suitable language for describing it, because nothing glorifies God more than obeying His commands and being faithful to one's sacred duty – which is the one thing in the world most worthy of esteem and which His Law has imposed upon us”.³

So true worship consists of complying with the Moral Law, which is based on pure practical reason, and not by formal acts of worship such as rituals.

If Kant believed that through the concept of the Supreme Good, which is pure practical reason's final goal, morality would lead us to the True Religion,

¹ Kant: *Kritik der Praktischen Vernunft, Werke, Pru., AK., 5:131.*

² Kant: *Werke, 18:469.*

³ Kant: *Kritik der Praktischen Vernunft, Werke, Pru., AK., 5:131.*



this would imply that all moral obligations are Divine commands.¹ Even so, this does not mean that they are tyrannical injunctions imposed by an external will, they are nevertheless laws that we should recognise as commands from a Supreme Being, because their source is a Morally Perfect Will which is also Omnipotent.² These laws – or obligations – should not be understood as duties towards God, but as obligations we comply with out of respect for God, because God is the Goal of Goals and it does not make sense for a Being of this nature to “require” anything from us. To put it in Qur’anic terms, Kant means that “Allah stands not in need of any of His creatures”. Moreover, the obligation is only an obligation in a human context – that is, it is a duty from one human being to another human being in his capacity as representative of rational humanity, which is an end in itself. God, on the other hand, is the Ultimate Goal and thus free from all needs.

So moral behaviour is a duty in which we respect that which is God’s due, not an obligation which we fulfil towards God along with rites, rituals and ceremonies. It (i.e. moral behaviour) represents true worship in its most exalted form, as distinct from the false worship which turns rites and rituals into a form of idolatry and turns religion into fetishism. By idolatry, Kant did not mean the worship of stone idols. What he actually meant was that pleasing God through rituals, rites and sacrifices without a commitment to good moral behaviour makes God look like an idol.³

The fate of every religion

Kant became so absorbed in the concept of a purely rational religion that he hoped a day would come when religion would free itself from all the rules and precepts of its historical heritage which in the past had brought people together to attain goodness and virtue through a faith that was centred round the Church.

At this point let us take a critical view of some aspects of Kant’s approach and the attitudes of those who – in stressing the historical

¹ Kant: *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, P. 142.

² Kant: *Kritik der Praktischen Vernunft, Werke*, Pru., AK., 5:129.

³ Kant: *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, P. 173.



aspect of religion – see it as a limited, negative and “ephemeral” phenomenon and ignore the fact that history has also shown religion to have a universal, positive and perennial character. This does not mean that Kant was wrong to criticise the Christian religion when it transformed itself into a ruling authority, institution and church and became historically positivist (in the Hegelian sense) while focusing on rites and rituals rather than on personal virtue and having a clear conscience. (At the same time, it also attached greater importance to formal religious observation and the exercise of power and coercion than it did to reason, the individual self and essential truths).

In our view this would appear to be the fate of every religion when (during times of decadence and decline) its followers forget its true nature and purpose. Some of the prophets were aware of the danger of religion becoming transformed into a system of formalistic rituals and they feared that the influence of *bida'* (heretical innovations) would cause the faith to lose its essential character and begin to see means as ends in themselves, *nawafil* (supererogatory acts, particularly prayers) as *furudh* (obligations) and form as substance.

This was made clear by our Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), though we should understand his warning was against *bida'* with regard to acts of worship, not innovation per se. Indeed, while warning against the former, he called for the Faith to be renewed in matters related to our daily lives. In doing so, his aim was to free religion from its “limited, superficial and ephemeral” historical aspect while ensuring that it retained its perennial, universal and essential truths which are set out clearly in the Qur'an.

Kant's criticism of the historical aspect of the Christian religion can apply to any religion, which will lose its universalist purpose and content if its followers betray it and put their own personal interests first, so that it becomes a priest-ridden institution obsessed with worldly power and embroiled in social, political and ideological strife. Even so, the validity and legitimacy of religion in its original uncorrupted state will not be affected, nor will its noble, perennial and universal character be destroyed. On the contrary, it is wrong to see religion solely as a historical phenomenon and regard all religions as



being the same. While it is undoubtedly the case that they share certain features in common, there are also significant differences between them.

People who fail to recognise this and believe that religion qua religion is a product of historical circumstances mistakenly see the relationship between the Islamic world today and the Islamic Faith as being analogous with the modern West's relationship with Christianity during Europe's Middle Ages and subsequent centuries; that is, they are drawing analogies between the "I" and the "other" and the past and the present. Yet at the same time, they criticise the *qiyas* (analogy) system in Islamic thought. So they are unwittingly applying *qiyas* to situations which are not analogous – West/Christianity and Islamic world/Islam – while criticising *qiyas* as an instrument of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence/doctrine).

I see clear distinctions between Islam and Christianity, both in their view of the world and in the way they interact with it. Despite the fact that Islam –as it openly admits - contains elements of Christianity and the two faiths have one or two features in common, this does not in any way negate the fact that there are numerous differences between them at a range of levels, and it is quite wrong to see Islam in the East as being analogous to Christianity in the West.

While it may be acceptable to apply some of Kant's analyses of Christianity and its history to other religions and recognise that there are points of similarity between them and Christianity – particularly when Kant's analysis is correct – it is not acceptable to apply them across the board. Although some observations apply to both Christianity and non-Christian religions, they should not be blown out of proportion and it would be wrong to jump from one religion to another without reason, clear evidence or historical justification, because a partial similarity is not an identical copy, especially when overall there are more dissimilarities than points in common.

While a Kantian analysis of a specific aspect of Christianity may be valid and that particular aspect may be found in another religion, this does not necessarily mean that the analysis would be valid if it is applied to the same aspect in that other religion, because it may mean something different when seen in a different context.



Reversal of priorities and criticism of religious institutions

While taking these reservations into account, we should now consider Kant's attempt to free religion from its man-made historical baggage which has formed the basis for so much criticism and – by giving priority to acts of worship and ritual rather than moral virtue inspired by intellectual self-regulation - bears little relation to pure rational religion. This reversal of priorities shackles human freedom, despite the fact that man needs to be free in order to practise a religion when it is founded on morality.

This reversal of priorities leads to what Kant calls “false worship” – a practice that seeks to acquire Divine Grace in ways that have nothing to do with morality, since it is based on a formalistic, outward observance and rituals that involve no more than bodily movements.

The gap between pure rational religion and established, institutionalised religion is at its widest when it comes to rituals and mantras. Here Kant dismisses the latter as an institution “always dominated by worship of the superstitious variety, because it contains no trace of moral principles but only regulatory commands, rules of belief and obligatory actions; these are essentially what it consists of. There are numerous types of institutions of worship (literally ‘churches’) which have a mechanical fetishist or idolatrous tendency to the point where these almost seem to be trying to take the place of any moral values or genuine religion. They are thus very close to real idolatry..... Moreover, their highest principle is obedience to a belief – in the form of enforced subjugation, not the “free veneration” which should be one’s primary feeling towards a moral law. It makes no difference that the number of religious obligations should be few in number, provided that they are compulsory, because what governs the masses is this belief – a belief that deprives them of their moral freedom by imposing obedience to the dictates of the Church (not the religion). It makes no difference whether the constitution of that religious institution (literally ‘church’) is monarchic, aristocratic or democratic. All that matters are the rules and regulations. Whatever form they take they will always be despotic in nature. And when you see the rules of the Faith as part of the Law and the constitution, this means that rule and dominance are in the hands of the priesthood, which has the idea that it can function properly without the



intellect or even – in the last resort – without knowledge, because it is the approved protector and interpreter of the Divine Will and has the sole authority to determine what people should believe. Armed with this authority, it has no need to persuade; all it has to do is issue orders. Moreover, everybody outside this priesthood (without exception – even the head of the state’s political institution) is subject to it, so the religious institution will be the actual ruler of the state – not by force, but through its psychological influence and by pointing out the benefits the state will gain through the absolute obedience to which ‘spiritual regulation’ will condition the minds of the people. However, hypocrisy undermines the moral behaviour and values of those who are subjected to this system, even in they are unaware of the fact, and it trains them to pay only lip service to their civic duties, so that ultimately – like all false principles man embraces – they have the opposite result from the one intended”.¹

Kant believes people are under an illusion if they believe that the way to salvation and absolution is through ritual and ceremony, a belief in dogmas and obedience to the Church.

He believes this is the case because it has no moral content – i.e. that it is a belief that salvation can be attained through means that have nothing to do with moral commitment.

He also believes that they are illusions because they stem from a belief that man has the ability to communicate with the metaphysical world and influence it. In his view this is not an acceptable position because man does not have the faculty to do so.²

Kant concludes that man can have no knowledge of the metaphysical world and that our knowledge is limited to the world of our own tangible experience. This confirms the validity of a new approach to religion, which rejects the type of worship seen in the established creeds in their endeavours to connect the tangible world with “things in themselves”,

¹ Ibid. Pp. 167-8 and Abdul Rahman Badawi, *Falsafat al Din wa'l Tarbiyah 'inda Kant*, Beirut, Al Mu'assasah al 'Arabiyah li'l Dirasat wa'l Nashr, 1980, P. 55.

² Ibid. Pp. 162-3.



since it is impossible to attain a metaphysical objective. This is because man does not possess any faculty that can enable him to perceive that kind of world of essential realities.

A different angle on Christian acts of worship

That Hegel's view of Christian acts of worship was different from that of the theologians can be clearly seen in his attitude to church ritual. He confirmed the statement in the Acts of the Apostles that after Christ's ascension the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles who formed the First Church, thereby fulfilling the Messiah's promise to send an appointee to take his place. Addressing the apostles, the Messiah said: "John baptised with water, but in a few days you will baptise with the Holy Spirit....and when the Holy Spirit has descended upon you, you will attain power and you will be witnesses for me in all of Jerusalem and Judaea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth".¹

Hegel understood from this that the Holy Spirit's descent upon the assembled apostles meant that the reality of Christ became immanent in them and that they had become the bearers of the Holy Spirit, so the Holy Spirit is present in truth in the Church of God.

That Church adopted methods and rituals to assist it in retaining the Spirit and this –according to Hegel - is the origin of Christian worship as a "transition from the finite to the Infinite", from man to God. It is a voluntary action that breathes life into the soul, unlike the old religions, whose forms of worship consisted of involuntary actions incapable of raising the soul above the realm of nature towards the Infinite, because the soul was either emptiness and nothingness or completely immersed in Nature.

Divine Grace: Can it be summoned through worship and prayer?

Kant did not endorse the idea that Divine Grace can be summoned through worship and prayer. And on the same basis as he denied that the "world of things in themselves" affected the "world of tangible

¹ *Acts of the Apostles*, 1:5-8.



phenomena”,¹ so too did he deny that the “world of tangible phenomena” affected the “world of things in themselves”.² He also rejected the validity of prayer.

One should perhaps not attach too much significance to his attitude to prayer, because prayer is the most essential element of worship and he had previously rejected acts of worship (ritual and ceremony) in general – a view which must inevitably apply to prayer as well.

However, he offers some new observations which we should examine. For example:

1. He claims that a person who prays assumes that God exists in a personal sense, while in his (i.e. Kant’s) view there is no evidence to support this.
2. When that person declares his desire before God, this reveals a contradiction, because he is declaring it before a Being who – it is assumed – does not need hidden feelings to be declared openly, since He is All-Knowing.

We should, however, point out that Kant does attempt to establish a sense in which prayer is valid, not in the sense of its influencing God or that it is a moral duty towards the Creator or gives Him pleasure, but merely because it awakens a person’s moral sense – that is, that when a person prays the only influence he exerts is upon himself, through consciously impelling himself towards moral commitment by summoning up the notion of God.

Despite this, however, Kant rejects the validity of words and speech as vehicles for prayer and insists that inner intention is sufficient.³

To sum up, he rejects the position of the proponents of Divine Grace and the validity of prayer on the grounds that they maintain the human and metaphysical worlds have an influence on each other. A purely rational religion in his view is a religion in which there is no prayer, ritual or

1 That is, he denies that the metaphysical world has any influence on the physical world.

2 That is, he denies that the physical world has any influence on the metaphysical world.

3 Kant: *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, P. 182 ff.



ceremony, since it is essentially the implementation of the laws of morality. Moral behaviour derived from performing an obligation decreed by and for the intellect is the “true” form of worship, while submission to rituals, ceremonies and the rules of the Church destroys human freedom because it does not comprise any moral values.¹

Emile Boutroux notes that in the second edition of his book “Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone” Kant insists that he does not intend to destroy Church worship completely. A faith of that sort can always be useful as a tool of an intellect-based faith and for this reason we may legitimately retain it, but we need to purge it of anything that might undermine that role or threaten to imbue it with an intrinsic value.²

Prayer is a valid activity

The attitude of those who deny the validity of acts of worship – particularly prayer – may best be described as “unscientific”. The Kantian view is definitely wrong; there can be no doubt about this whatsoever, because Kant denied the relationship which exists between the metaphysical (or Divine) world and the natural world of which man is a part. This is an intellectually unsustainable position, because Kant had no first-hand knowledge of the Divine world and was therefore not in a position to judge the nature or existence of that relationship or whether the two worlds were able to influence each other.

And since that first-hand experience did not - and does not – exist as far as man is concerned, the relationship must of necessity be based upon belief rather than pure reason or science.

Kant ought therefore have regarded this question as a matter of faith, or at least taken a neutral position on it, because his rejection entailed a judgement that it was beyond the powers of reason, science and worldly knowledge to sustain. Hence to reach such a conclusion is inconsistent not only with the pure reason espoused by Kant himself, but also with scientific

¹ For further details see *Al 'Aql wa ma ba'd al Tabi'ah – Ta'wil Jadid li Falsafatay Hume wa Kant*, Mohammed 'Uthman al Khasht, Cairo, Maktabat Ibn Sina, 1990.

² Boutroux; *Falsafat Kant* (La Philosophie de Kant), P. 380.



knowledge in its natural, mathematical sense., since science has no experience of metaphysics and is unable to judge whether it affects the natural world or whether it is an illusion or reality. Moreover, it has no first-hand knowledge of the natural world in its entirety and it is therefore unqualified to give an opinion about its essential nature; it is only familiar with a part of it, which is limited to the earth and its environment, and it has not even reached the stage of understanding everything about the part that it knows.

So the deniers' position is "unscientific" – even if they may claim the contrary – because they issue judgements about the whole of existence, while they only have actual knowledge of a part of it, while those who take the opposite view base their position on faith and a conviction in their hearts that it is true.

There can be no doubt that the heart is capable of making judgements and it is also certain that the believers' position is based their experiences vis-à-vis their Creator, so it is therefore completely legitimate. At the same time, however, Kant was right when he said that religion is essentially compliance with the Moral Law, and that moral behaviour represents the highest degree of worship of the True God.

Do acts of worship in Islam aim to influence Allah the Most High?

In contrast to the philosopher Kant, we find that acts of worship in Islam are not designed to have an impact on the metaphysical world; first and foremost, they have a moral purpose. The Qur'an says: "**Establish regular prayer; for prayer restrains from shameful and unjust deeds**" (*Al 'Ankabut*, 45), while the Messenger (PBUH) said: "As for him whose shameful and evil deeds are not restrained by prayer, Allah has only made him stray further from the right path".¹

Islam condemns those who pervert acts of worship from their essential moral purpose and it stresses that a person's inner intention is central to determining whether an act of worship is true or false. Acts of worship are

¹ Narrated by al Tabarani in *Al Mu'jam al Kabir*, Part 11, P. 55, and al Qadha'iy in *Misnad al Shihab*, Part 1, P. 306.



not merely rituals, ceremonies and bodily movements; they are essentially spiritual action aimed at “rebuilding” the soul and its relationship with the cosmos by establishing man’s spiritual links with the Divine as the source of his moral values and conscience and as the standard setter for his ideals of Truth, Justice, Knowledge, Mercy, etc. which are the names of Allah. This is summed up in the *Hadith* of the Prophet (PBUH): “Model your morality on the morality of Allah” – i.e. “model your morality on the morality of Allah insofar as it is within the power of human beings to do so”.¹

Worship of the One God as Islam’s ultimate goal

Worship of the One God is Islam’s ultimate goal and the point at which all things in existence converge.² Hence worship is not limited merely to prayer, *zakat*, fasting and the Hajj; it is a system in which every movement, every feeling and every thought can become an act of worship if its goal is the “Face of Allah”. It encompasses the whole of life itself and even the act of thinking is a form of worship. The Qur’an says: “Do they not reflect in their own minds? Not but for just ends and for a term appointed did Allah create the heavens and the earth, and all between them” (*Al Rum*, 8). The quest for the laws of creation and how the universe began is also a form of worship; according to the Qur’an: “Say: Travel through the earth and see how He did originate creation” (*Al ‘Ankabut* 20). The acquisition of knowledge, whether religious or secular, is also a kind of worship; indeed, it is the best kind of worship: “Say: O my Lord! Advance me in knowledge” (*Ta Ha*, 114). Moreover, the Messenger (PBUH) said: “The search for knowledge is an obligation binding upon every Muslim, male and female”,³ and “Whosoever travels along a path in search of knowledge, Allah will ease his path to Paradise”⁴. Work is also worship: “And say: Work. Allah will observe your work, and His Messenger and the Believers” (*Al Tawbah*, 105). The Messenger (PBUH) regarded a person “who works to feed his family as being like one who engages in jihad for the sake of Allah”. It is reported

¹ Al Fakhr al Razi: *Al Tafsir al Kabir*, Part 7, P. 60.

² Hegel: *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, New York, Dover Publication, P. 356.

³ Narrated by Ibn Maja. Al ‘Iraqi reports a corrected version from some scholars. Though Ahmed says it is weak, this *Hadith* is strengthened by the fact that its sense is corroborated.

⁴ Narrated by Muslim.



that some people came to the Prophet (PBUH) and among their number was an ascetic man much given to worship. The Prophet (PBUH) said: “Who is that?” They said: “A man who has dedicated himself to worship”. He (PBUH) replied: “And who supports him?” They said: “We all do”. Then the Prophet said: “All of you are better than he is”. Another man given to worship came (on another occasion) and he (PBUH) said: “Who feeds him?” They replied: “His brother”. Then he (PBUH) said: “His brother is more genuinely devout than he is”.¹

Even the act of slaking one’s desires is a form of worship, provided that it is within the limits of the law. Some people once said to the Prophet (PBUH): “O Messenger of Allah: Can it be that a person feels physical desire and there is a reward in it?” He replied: “Are you not aware that if he satisfies it in an illicit way he will bear the burden of it? Similarly, if he satisfies it in a legitimate way, he shall receive a reward”.² The Prophet also mentioned the case of a man receiving a reward when he raises a morsel of food to the mouth of his wife, and it is reported that he (PBUH) said: “What a man spends on his family is charity. And a man receives a reward for the morsel he raises to the mouth of his woman”..... “In the morsel he raises to his wife’s mouth there is a reward for her husband, who has striven for her sake”.

Worship in Islam is not only an act performed by human beings. It also applies to the whole of Creation. Islam states that the universe is in a state of worship of Allah, the Lord of Creation. However, what distinguishes man from other creatures is the fact that he worships Allah of his own free will and choice. (Though he also worships Allah in another way without having the freedom to choose, in the same manner as the rest of the universe does). The Qur’an says: “All creatures in the heavens and on earth have, willing or unwilling, bowed to His will, and to Him shall they all be brought back” (*Āl ‘Imran*, 83), and: “Seest thou not that it is Allah Whose praises all beings in the heavens and on earth do celebrate, and the birds (of the air)

¹ For further details about the Islamic view of work supported by evidence from the Qur’an and the Sunnah, see Imam Mohammed Abu Zahrah: *Tandhim al Islam li’l Mujtama’*, Cairo, Dar al Fikr al ‘Arabiyy, 1976, particularly P. 187 and the following pages.

² Narrated by Muslim.



with wings outspread? Each one knows its own (mode of) prayer and praise. And Allah knows well all that they do” (*Al Nur*, 41).

So the Qur’an asserts that in one way man worships Allah in the same manner as the rest of His creatures and has no choice in the matter. However, in another way – or from another angle - he worships Allah of his own free will and choice if he so wishes. It is this that distinguishes him from the rest of Creation. The Qur’an confirms that man enjoys the freedom to choose when it says: “Let him who will, believe, and let him who will, disbelieve” (*Al Kahf*, 29). If a person declines to worship in this way, he will be a deviant from the “universal system of worship” and he will be required to return to the fold and re-establish his harmonious relationship with the cosmos within which he lives.

As Islam sees worship of the One God as the ultimate goal, Hegel concludes that – like Eastern religions in general - it (i.e. Islam) deprives man of his essential self. However, he is quick to point out that this “deprivation” does not reach the point of total “extinction” as is the case with Hinduism or Buddhism, because even if man has been deprived of his essential self, that self is still alive, active and striving in the world in its endeavours to suppress its worldliness and worship the One God¹.

The reality of Islam is the reverse of the way Hegel sees it. It does not “steal” the essential self in any way whatsoever, because it emphasises that man is an independent personality. He bears full responsibility for his actions and his worship of the One God is not an attempt to dissolve his own self in the Divine. Islam states that Allah is above all things and makes a clear separation between the Divine Self and the human self. So in separating the two selves, how can it be accused of depriving man of his essential self?

When Hegel considers acts of worship in Islam, he only refers to *zakat* and fasting. His view of fasting is correct; he sees it as a human effort to free man from his bodily attributes and eliminate the distance between the finite individual human body and Allah, the Absolute, the Infinite. He

¹ Hegel: *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, P. 357.



regards *zakat* as man's attempt to free himself from a selfish attitude towards his personal possessions¹.

However, Islam does not see the soul as limited to physical, bodily attributes and personal possessions; in fact it is above such elements as race and birth.²

Islam is a revolution that seeks to liberate man from the limits of his personal attributes and channel his attention towards the Absolute. It has only one goal – knowledge of the One God – and sees the Infinite as a condition for the existence of the finite³.

¹ Ibid. P. 356.

² Idem.

³ Idem.