



The Understanding of Religion and its Effects on their Followers

Hojjatolah Javani

Associate Professor, Department of religions and Mysticism Faculty of Theology, Alzahra University, Tehran, Iran

Abstract

What kind of relation would there be among understanding of religions and actions of the followers? What are effects of religious understanding and men's social, economic, cultural and political sphere? What are the impressions of religions on people's life? As a matter of fact, it seems that there is a very complicated interaction among the kind of understanding of religion and all aspects of man's life. One might consider social, personal, mental and emotional aspects of understandings of religions. As a matter of fact, social thinkers and philosophers and religious researchers have different views as to the effects of the quality of religious contemplation and actions of men. Karl Marx has considered effect of religion harmful for masses but Durkheim hold that religion brings solidarity and coherence and stability and order for human society. Max Weber speaks of relation of religion and economy. While Erich Fromm proposes humanitarian and dispute gods. He believes that these two kinds of gods have had very different effects on man's individual and social life

Key words:

Religious factor, Understandings religions, religion and economy, religion and society, men's behaviors



Introduction

What are the impressions of religions on people's life? It might be one of the very important questions in the study of religions. As a matter of fact, it seems that there is a very complicated interaction among the quality of understanding of religion and its effects on all aspects of man's life. Generally speaking, many people think that there is a one kind of understanding of religions. They do not pay attention to the variety of religious concepts and their impressions on man's life. But what are those religious understandings? What are socio-political effects of religions on sphere of men's society? One who starts to speak as to practical results of religions, he or she would appeal to the matter of interpretation of sacred texts. So one needs to enter into hermeneutics of religious texts as well

History

The question of effects of religion on man's life has been proposed by many thinkers and researchers since centuries ago.

Hegel a famous Western philosopher was on the view that man's vision of god would have impressions on men's relations. He proposed Judaism as an example. Old Testament, he says, envisage a very hard or serious god. He punishes people hardly when they commit sins. According to Hegel this picture of god would definitely impress men's interactions and relations. On the other hand, he envisages god of Christianity as merciful and very kind. This vision of god would bring kind and merciful effects in relations of people (Hegel, 1394 HSH,: 46). Karl Marx (1818-1883) envisaged role of religion in people's life negative. He holds religions has exploited me. They have prepared ground for higher class of the society to use from capitals of lower or deprived classes (Fisher, 1388: 42). Religion, he says, has acted as an opium to make deprived people calm so that they do not suffer from their pains. Those pains and suffering which have been brought for the society through exploitations of human and natural sources by superior class or brogues (Hamilton; 1377: 145). Max Weber proposes that religion had a profound effect on economic situation of the society. He mentions influence of the Protestant ethics on capitalism. He brings a relation among religion and economic position of society (Weber,1374: 87). Durkheim has paid to social functions of religion in detail. He expressed that religions bring social stability and coherence and unity. He emphasized on social order and unity but he did not mention any social problems and disorders. He did not propose role of religion on social disestablishments. He never expressed role of religion as a protestant element against current positions of societies (Vilaime, Paul,1377: 24). Mohammad Iqbal Lahori proposed negative role of Sufism on Muslim world. He holds that Sufi teachings has stopped development and growth of Muslim communities. (Iqbal,1367: 140). Ali Shariati who was a social thinker in recent Iran expressed that Shiite thoughts were so practical and active but during centuries it stopped from going forward since its paradigms has been changed. (Shariati,1386: 120). All of the above mentioned have proposed influence of religions. on societies. Soroush also holds that Sufism or Sufi understanding of Islam has not conformity with development. Sufi teachings, he says, are serious barrier in the way of economic development. They urge people to avoid of worldly life and to be contentment. Accordingly, Sufi tenets are not in agreement with today's very dynamic sphere (Soroush, 1372: 347).



Main Discussion

But the main problem which deserves to be discussed is the matter of religions or interpretations of religions. In other word, do religions bring happiness and social welfare or cause harmful effects on man's societies? Or it is quality of exegesis of sacred books which causes welfare or disasters of human communities? It seems that many persons have not considered differentiations among religions and the interpretations of them.

If we define religion as a complex of sacred text and traditions of their founders, then after the death of the founders the followers would begin to understand religious texts. So various understandings would be appeared. What is the reason of these different concepts of religious texts? Why a lot of interpretations such as theological, verbal, philosophical, historical and aesthetic have appeared? It might be happened based of different cultural and social states of the societies. It is also a hermeneutics matter as well. The main idea which is to be discussed is the influence of different understandings of religions on social actions or practices.

According to many studies regarding the types of understanding religions and their effects on societies, one might reach to following conclusions. It should be mentioned that here the results of radical interpretations of religious tenets are presented as follows.

1. Radical interpretations of religious texts. This approach would envisage god as a violent and rigid beings. Hegel holds to believe to a violent and aggressive god would led to violent behavior among men (Hegel, 1394: 89). Radical groups do not moderate with others. They negate them and starts conflicts as well.
2. Xenophobia. one of the results of religious radicalism is xenophobia. The followers of religious sects find others as their enemies.
3. Social isolation. As a matter of fact, some radical groups fall in religious selfishness. The holy Quran has mentioned story of some Jewish and Christians persons who considered themselves as friends of god. (5: 18).
4. Radical asceticism and lack of economic growth. It is to be mentioned that there would happened a static economic position in the radical ascetic sects. They do not progress since they are not much motivated to engage in social and economic affairs too.
5. Religious slavery and exploitation. According to the Quran many clergymen have exploit people during the man's history and being considerd as a kind of god (٩ :٣١). They used from people's capitals and exploited them in the name of religion. The history of religious feudalism in the Middle ages is a clear proof as well.
6. Contravention of women's' rights. It is evident that women's' rights are violated during centuries. Some interpreters of religions make an exegesis so that they would deprive women from their rights. To some researchers it is an eclectic interpretation, i.e. mixing social beliefs with religious law (Said zadeh,1380: 349). But it should be mentioned that there is not a unique authoritative interpretation of the Quran in regard to human rights and so on and so forth (Yazdi,1380: 772).

One might refer to fundamentalism as a model of interpretation of religions. Generally speaking, it might be used to describe a distinct kind of religious movements in the



twentieth world (Davis, 1396:268). Movements which are against modernity (Fundamentalist groups try to divide society into two categories. They divided men of the world as believer and nonbeliever or pagan. They separate women from social affairs. They resist against merits of modern world. They hold to their unique right for interpretation religion (Moradi, 1390; 134).

But there are positive exegeses of religious texts which would result to useful things in men's societies.

1. **Man's perfection.** According to Erich Fromm, there are two kinds of interpretations of religions: humanitarian and authoritarian ones.

According to him each and every religion which activate men's powers and flourish his capitals would be a humanitarian religion. So each religion which has control on men and people worship god because of fear not love to him would be authoritarian one. He says that function of authoritarian religion is not suitable since it would alienate men (Yinger, 1380: 178). Fromm consider social function of religion as a satisfactory agent and an instrument for social control. He holds that history of religion reflects history of spiritual flourishing of men (Fromm, 1384 HSH: 16). Accordingly, from a psychological interpretation religious understanding might lead to calm of men.

2. **Religion and meaning.** Weber says that religion gives meaning to man's life. He says religion give an explanation of the world to men which help him to overcome hopelessness and frustration surprised. (Shojaii Zand, 1388: 163). So there is a meaningful relation among interpretation of religion and human's life.

3. **Unity of followers of Religions.** According to Zimmel it is only in the area of religion which all powers of individuals would be realized without any rivalries among the believers. As Jesus Christ says there is place for everybody in god's house. So followers of religions might be united and work together too (Zimmel, 1388 HSH :271).

4. **Pragmatism.** According to Durkheim a kind of religious interpretation might infuse a spirit of more actuality. Religion gives men more power to endure difficulties of life and to overcome them. So a religious man consider himself superior than ordinary misfortunes and troubles since he has elevated to a superior human position (villaine, 1377HSH: 25).

5. **Religion and liberty.** Alexis de Tocqueville understood important role of religion to produce democracy. He proposed political aspect of religion and revealed its anti-tyranny impressions. He paved the way for a social religion. He replied to those who thought that religion would retreat from social life by advent of modern and democratic society (villaine, 1377 HSH :18).

Conclusion.

A review on main ideas of some sociologists and Muslim thinkers and researchers indicates that there are strong relations among the quality of perception of religions and individual and social life of their followers. That is to say, one kind of percepts of



religions would led to inferiority and backwardness of a society. One might find historical evidences and examples as well. On the other hand, there are many facts which imply on living and dynamic percept of religions and its impressions on human life. A humanitarian understanding of religion will bring a society which would put emphasis on kindness among people, pluralism love towards human beings, moderation, growth of economy and universal peace.



Sources

Holly Quran.

Iqbal, Mohammad, the Reconstruction of Islamic Thought in Islam, New Delhi, Ketab Bhavan 1994.

Davis, Grace, Jameh e Shenasi Din, tr. into Persian by Parvaneh e Movafaqi va Nader e Sanati, Tehran, Jameh e Shenasan, 1396 HSH.

Fisher, Mary. Pat, din dar Qarn e Bist va yekom, translated into Persian by Marziyyeh e Solaymani, Tehran, Nashr e Elm, 1388.

Fromm, Erich, Shariat e masih va chand Maqaleh e digar, a Persian Translation of The Dogma of Christ and other Essays on Religion, Tehran, Morvarid, 1384 HSH.

Hamilton, Malcom, Jameh e Shenasi Din, tr. Into Persian by Mohsen Salasi, Tehran, Tebyan, 1377 HSH.

Hegel, Fred rich, Esteqrar e Shariat dar Mazhab Masih, translated into Persian by Baqer Parham, Tehran, Moasseseh e Entesharat e Agah, 1394 HSH.

Moradi, Behrooz, Daramadi bar Jameh e Shenasi Din, Tehran, Jamehe shenasan, 1390 HSH.

Said zadeh, Sayed Mohsen, Nazariyyeh e Quran dar bare e Mosavat e Znan va Mardan, in Hoqoq e bashar az Manzar e Andishmandan, ed. by Mohammad Basteh Negar, Tehran, Enteshar, 1380. HSH.

Shariati, Ali, Tashayyo e Safavi va Tashayyo e Alavi va Tashayyo e Safavi, 8th edition, Tehran, Entesharat e Chapakash va Bonyad e Farhangi Dr. Ali Shariati, 1386

Shojaii Zand, Alireza, Jameh e Shenasi Din, Tehran, Nashr e Nay 1388 HSH

Soroush, Abd al karim, Farbah tar az Ideology, Tehran, Serat, 1372 HSH

Weber, Max, Akhlaq e Protestan va Roh e S armayeh dari, tr. into Persian by Abd al Masood Ansari, Tehran, Samt, 1371 HSH.

William, Jean-Paul, Jameh e shenasi Din, tr. into Persian by Abdalrahim Gavahi, Tehran, Moasseseh Farhangi Entesharati Tebyan, 1377 HSH.

Yazdi, Ibrahim, Barkhi Ekhtelaf Nazarha beyn e Shaeq va Gharb dar zamineh e Hoqoq e Bashar, Hoqoq e bashar az Manzar e Andishmandan, ed. by Mohammad Basteh Negar, Tehra, Enteshar, 1380 HSH.

Yinger, Milton, Din va Niyazha ye Fard, a Persian translation of "religion and Individual Needs, translated into by Gholahosayn Tavakkoli, in Din va chashm andaz ha ye no, Qom, Bostan e Ketab, 1380 HSH.

Zimmel, Georg, Maqalati dar bareh e Din, tr into Persian by Shahnaz Mosamm Parast, Tehran, Nashr e Sales, 1388 HSH.