Comparative Analysis of the Concept of Religion in modern Western and Islamic Thought

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Abstract:

This research article examines the multifaceted concept of religion in Islamic and Western thought, focusing on the Qur'ānic terminologies of Dīn (a comprehensive way of life), 'Ibādah (total submission to Allah), and Da'wah (the ethical propagation of Islam). In contrast to Western philosophical perspectives that often reduce religion to emotional, psychological, or poetic dimensions, Islam envisions it as an integrated framework encompassing spiritual, social, ethical, and political aspects of human life. The analysis draws upon Western thinkers such as Schleiermacher, Freud, Herder, and Eliade to illustrate how fragmented views of religion have shaped the discourse in Western intellectual traditions. These perspectives are compared with the holistic Qur'ānic approach, which unifies sacred and secular domains under divine sovereignty. The study highlights that reducing Islam to isolated dimensions—ritualism, mysticism, or legalism—fails to capture its comprehensive nature as Dīn. Ibadah transcends rituals, emphasizing spiritual devotion integrated with ethical and societal responsibilities, while Da'wah is presented as a compassionate, wisdom-driven invitation to Islam. The findings underscore the necessity for Muslims to embrace the holistic principles of Dīn, ensuring that Islam remains a relevant and transformative force in the modern world. This research offers a critical framework for reorienting Islamic understanding toward its original, unified essence, enabling individuals and communities to embody the faith comprehensively.

Keywords: Islam, *Dīn*, *'Ibādah*, *Da'wah*, Western philosophy

1. Introduction

This article examines foundational concepts derived from the Qur'ān and Sunnah, specifically focusing on three key themes: *Dīn*, *'Ibādah*, and *Da'wah*. The term *Dīn* is often translated as "religion"; however, its meaning in Islamic discourse differs significantly from the Western and Eastern conceptualizations of religion. In Western

thought, the term "religion" originates from the Latin "*religare*", meaning "to bind" or "to fast." Religion in this context is traditionally understood as a collection of doctrines, rituals, ceremonies, offerings, festivals, and prayer, which is generally straightforward and requires little elaboration. Despite this overarching framework, Western philosophers have highlighted diverse aspects of religion based on their distinct intellectual paradigms. This article consists of three sections. Section one deals with defining religion within the Western intellectual and philosophical paradigm. The second section highlights the definition of religion in the Muslim intellectual tradition. The third section examines religion in the context of the terminologies *Dīn*, '*Ibādah*, and *Da'wah*.

2. Concept of Religion in Western Philosophy

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), a German reformed theologian's perspective on religion centers on the "feeling of absolute dependence," which he identifies as the essence of religious experience. In his seminal works, *The Christian Faith* and *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* (1799), Schleiermacher argues that religion originates not from rational knowledge or moral action but from an immediate and unifying consciousness of the Infinite. He defines this feeling as the awareness of one's relationship to God, emphasizing that religion is fundamentally experiential rather than ethical or intellectual. Schleiermacher critiques reducing religion to ethical laws or metaphysical systems, asserting that theology and ethics are secondary expressions derived from contemplative encounters with the Divine. For him, authentic religion involves a direct consciousness of God as perceived within oneself and the world. His emphasis on emotion serves as a safeguard against formalism, ritualism, and rationalism that dominated religious thought before and after his time.[1]

Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), German philosopher and theologian viewed religion as "sacred poetry," deeply rooted in emotions and imagination rather than abstract rationality. He emphasized its capacity to evoke "reverent wonder," hope, and piety, helping humanity confront the unknown. Herder believed language and mythology—rich in imagery and allegory—were central to religious expression, shaping human understanding of the world. For him, religion was not private belief but a profound, poetic engagement with existence, blending thought, emotion, and cultural narratives.[2] Mircea Eliade (1907-1986), a Romanian historian of religion, sees religion as a myth and argues that myths and religion are inseparable, seeing them as two sides of the same coin. Unlike scholars who view myths as "primitive" and outdated, Eliade believes myths are "true stories" that remain alive within the communities that believe them. These myths explain the origins of humankind and the sacred, involving gods, goddesses, and spirits. For Eliade, myths are not false tales but symbols that reveal deep aspects of reality, which cannot be understood through other means. He also emphasizes the role of rituals in keeping myths alive. Rituals allow believers to re-live myths, preserving their meaning and connection to the sacred. Eliade's view is that religion and myth are *sui generis*, autonomous, and cannot be fully understood outside of their religious context. Therefore, the study of myths without considering their religious foundation diminishes their true significance.[3]

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) considered religion a mass neurosis that would presumably dissipate in modern times, especially with the help of Psychologists.[4] In Freud's view, as civilization progressed and scientific knowledge increased, the psychological need for

religion would diminish. He suggested that once humans could understand the world through reason and psychoanalysis, they would no longer require the "illusion" of religious belief to manage their unconscious anxieties. George Santayana (1863–1952) was a Spanish-American philosopher sees religion as a poetic expression of human ideals, portraying life's nobility, discipline, and sanctity through allegory rather than literal truth. He values rituals as central to religion, criticizing Protestantism for overemphasizing belief. For Santayana, God represents humanity's highest aspirations, not a real being, and true immortality resides in life's enduring values. Religion's role is to create an imaginative, harmonious world that inspires the soul, offering beauty, strength, and serenity amidst life's challenges.[5]

Rudolf Otto summarizes religious experience as the encounter with "the Holy." This "Holy" is described as fascinating, transcendent, and beyond human comprehension, a form of sacredness that invokes awe. It also carries a sense of sensuous sanctity, a feeling of the divine that is both mysterious and deeply moving.

Finally, another German philosopher, Paul Tillich defines religion as the ultimate concern of man. Tillich makes three points: (1) humans are ultimately concerned with the Ultimate, or God, (2) this concern is directed at concrete things, and (3) the Ultimate is revealed through symbols, not concrete things themselves. Tillich insists that statements about God are symbolic and critiques literal interpretations of religious symbols. His theology focuses on the idea that ultimate concern should be the foundation for all human actions and endeavors.[6] This definition tries to cover all those aspects which are mentioned earlier in terms of ritual ceremonies, etc. So here you have a variety of definitions of religion. And each one focuses on one or the other aspect of what they think is religion.

The various thinkers presented in this discussion offer diverse perspectives on the nature of religion, each emphasizing different aspects of religious experience, expression, and understanding. Friedrich Schleiermacher focuses on religion as a "feeling of absolute dependence," positioning it as a deeply personal, experiential awareness of the Infinite. Johann Gottfried Herder views religion as "sacred poetry," rooted in emotions and imagination rather than rationality, emphasizing the importance of cultural and emotional expression. Mircea Eliade connects religion to myth, seeing both as inseparable and timeless, while Sigmund Freud reduces religion to a psychological illusion or neurosis, something that will fade as human understanding advances. George Santayana and Rudolf Otto, though differing in their approach, both emphasize the ineffable and poetic dimensions of religious experience, with Otto focusing on the encounter with the "Holy" and Santayana viewing religion as a symbolic expression of human ideals. Paul Tillich, in his theology, elevates religion as "ultimate concern," where the pursuit of the Ultimate—whether God or other symbols—should shape human actions and endeavors. Each thinker, therefore, highlights a different dimension of religion—emotional, symbolic, intellectual, cultural, and practical. These varied views underscore the complexity of defining religion and the difficulty of reducing it to a single category. Considering these diverse perspectives, an important question arises: How do Muslims define religion, and how does this understanding differ from the Western approach to defining religion? This inquiry invites an exploration of the underlying principles, cultural contexts, and historical factors that shape these differing perspectives. What are

the primary influences that inform the Muslim concept of religion? How do these perspectives align with or challenge Western notions? The next section examines these questions, offering a detailed analysis of the Muslim approach to defining religion and the key areas where it diverges from Western interpretations.

3. Defining religion in Muslim thought

Defining religion in Muslim thought involves three primary perspectives. These perspectives offer a nuanced understanding of religion, rooted in Islamic theology, philosophy, and practice. Each perspective emphasizes different aspects, from spiritual devotion to societal duty, shaping the Muslim conception of religion in unique and interconnected ways. The first perspective sees religion as the performance of the rituals that Islam considers obligatory for its adherents. Anees Ahmad, vice chancellor of Riphah International University, Islamabad and the scholar of comparative religion summarizes that this perspective held by some Muslims, and they view religiosity primarily in terms of the performance of rituals, such as prayer (Salah), fasting, almsgiving (*Zakah*), and pilgrimage (*Ḥajj*). In this view, an individual who fulfills these religious obligations is considered religious, regardless of their behavior in other areas of life. For instance, a person may neglect familial responsibilities, act unjustly, or ignore personal appearance, yet their completion of religious duties is seen as a sign of piety. This perspective emphasizes external acts of devotion over other ethical or familial responsibilities. This approach represents one interpretation of religiosity within the Muslim community.[7]

The second perspective is largely influenced from to the *Ṣūfī* Islam. Sufism, often described as the mystical dimension of Islam, emphasizes a deep spiritual connection with God through practices that foster self-purification and inner peace. It is characterized by its focus on the esoteric aspects of Islam, aiming to transcend the material world and achieve a direct experience of the divine. Ṣufism integrates various practices and teachings that contribute to personal and communal spiritual growth, offering solutions to both individual and societal challenges. Below are key aspects of the Sufi dimension of Islam. Sufism involves practices such as *ḍhikr* (remembrance of God), meditation, and other spiritual exercises aimed at cleansing the heart and soul from negative traits like envy and greed.[8] The practice of Sufi turning, as exemplified by the Whirling *Dervishes*, is a form of meditative movement that symbolizes the remembrance and contemplation of God, transforming ordinary spaces into sacred ones.[9] This notion of Islam is often criticized due to the subjective nature of transcendent or spiritual experiences. Consequently, every individual develops their own way of practicing Islam, which has led to the emergence of various *silsilas* or chains of spirituality. There is no absolute concept of spirituality or transcendence, as a spiritual encounter is inherently personal. For instance, a person who recites certain names of Allah over a specific period and in various ways may one day claim to have had a vision. They might assert that this vision revealed a profound truth to them. However, such experiences remain personal and individual, and it is this unique encounter that defines spirituality.

A third group of Muslim thinks that Islam is a matter of implementation of legal punishments, particularly *Ḥudūd* and *Sharī'ah* laws. Therefore, they think if they succeeded to have some political success, and occupy a land or a state, their sole aim is to declare that state as an Islamic State and implement their punishment like whipping

and stoning to death, then in their view Islam has been applied and implemented. This approach is manifested in Afghanistan by the Taliban government, and through the efforts of Islamization in number of countries. he implementation of the legal punishments is a complex and debated aspect of Islamic law. Some argues that the implementation of legal punishments in Islam is considered a compulsory aspect, as it upholds *sharī'ah* law aimed at maintaining truth and justice, with specific punishments outlined for various offenses to protect public interest and deter crime.[10] Some argues that the enforcement of Islamic law, indicating that while the implementation of legal punishments is a significant aspect of Islamic jurisprudence, its application can vary based on historical and contextual factors, reflecting complexities in practice.[11] There are also some who argues that the implementation of Islamic legal punishments is not compulsory in all circumstances. It depends on the readiness of suitable societal conditions; if these conditions are unfavorable, punishments may be converted to proportionate punitive measures instead of strict enforcement.[12] Another aspect of defining Islam is influenced from secular notion of religion, in which religion is seen as a private matter and exclude it from public sphere of life.[13] In conclusion, defining religion within Muslim thought is a multifaceted endeavor, shaped by diverse perspectives that reflect theological, mystical, and legal dimensions. Each perspective, while valuable, offers an incomplete understanding when viewed in isolation. The ritualistic perspective prioritizes external acts of worship but often neglects the ethical and holistic responsibilities Islam advocates. The *Ṣūfī* perspective, with its focus on spirituality and transcendence, enriches individual experiences but may lack a unified framework that addresses collective societal duties. The legalistic approach emphasizes the implementation of Sharī'ah and *Ḥudūd* but can risk reducing Islam to a system of punitive measures, detached from its broader spiritual and ethical goals. Additionally, the secular notion of religion, which privatizes faith and excludes it from the public sphere, contrasts sharply with the comprehensive view of Islam as a *Dīn*—a complete way of life.[14]

These interpretations, though significant, reveal a crucial gap in understanding religion through a Qur'ānic lens. The Qur'ān presents concepts such as *Dīn* (a complete system of life), '*ibādah* (devotion that encompasses all acts of obedience to Allah), and *Da'wah* (the mission to convey and practice faith collectively). These terminologies go beyond the fragmented perspectives outlined above, advocating a balanced integration of spiritual devotion, ethical conduct, societal responsibility, and universal outreach.

4. Defining religion in the light of Qur'ānic terminologies

This section aiming to redefine religion in light of the holistic terminologies of *Dīn, Ibadah, and Da'wah*. This approach seeks to unify the individual and collective dimensions of faith, addressing the limitations of the existing perspectives while grounding the discussion in Qur'ānic principles.

4.1.Religion as *Dīn*

The Qur'ān uses the term *Dīn* over 85 times to convey a comprehensive system of life, not merely religion. Unlike the limited notion of *mazhab*, *Dīn* encompasses spiritual, ethical, and societal dimensions. The Qur'ān explicitly defines Islam as the true *Dīn* in verses such as:

$$\text{الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا۔}^{15}$$

> This day have I perfected your din for you, completed My favor upon you,
> and have chosen for you Islam as your din (way of life).

The term "religion" in Arabic is translated as mazhab. The Qur'ān never uses the word mazhab, nor does it is used in *Ahādīth*. The primary sources of Islam, the Qur'ān and *Ahādīth*, used the word used is *Dīn*, for religion instead of mazhab. The Hadith mentions that *Dīn* has pillars and involves doing *naṣīḥa*[16] (well-wishing) and other acts, but never refers to mazhab. Therefore, the verse makes it clear that *Dīn* is now complete and has the capacity to address any challenges. Another meaning of the word "*Dīn*" is the Day of Judgment (مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ), and another meaning is the legal aspects of Islam. In the Qur'ān, it says:

$$\text{الزَّانِيَةُ وَالزَّانِي فَاجْلِدُوا كُلَّ وَاحِدٍ مِنْهُمَا مِائَةَ جَلْدَةٍ ۔}^{17}$$

> The woman and the man guilty of adultery (or fornication) flog each of
> them with a hundred stripes.

This refers to the implementation of the prescribed punishment. Therefore, *Dīn* also includes those punishments that Allah has prescribed. Anees Ahmad emphasized that there are two possible reasons behind the limitation of the Qur'ānic terminologies. He noted:

> First, the communication of knowledge in our part of the world, the subcontinent, is not from a single source. We have received information directly from individuals with direct access to the Arabic texts of the Qur'ān and Arabic literature. Second, we have also relied on translations in languages like Persian and Turkish, through which Islamic understanding reached us. In Persian, the term *mazhab* is used for Islam, which started being adopted in our context. In Arabic, *mazhab* refers to a particular interpretation of *Dīn*, like how we use the term Maslak. Therefore, when we say *mazhab* Malik, *mazhab* Abu Hanifa, *mazhab* ibn Taimiya, or *mazhab* Imam Jafar, it refers to the specific interpretation given by a scholar based on their approach. So, *mazhab* refers to *masalik*, not to *Dīn*. It is the totality, not just a particular approach or interpretation.[18]

This is the primary reason why the term *mazhab* is often used conventionally, despite its much narrower meaning. In contrast, *Dīn* has a broader, more comprehensive meaning that encompasses all aspects of life. The Qur'ān refers to Islam as *Dīn*—a complete way of life. Additionally, the Qur'ān uses the term *Dīn* to convey concepts that can be interpreted as corporate or social responsibility. The Qur'ān states:

$$\text{وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّى لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ لِلَّهِ۔}$$

> and keep on fighting against them until mischief ends and the Way
> prescribed by Allah prevails)."

This indicates that *Dīn* is not limited to rituals and ceremonies but encompasses broader responsibilities and objectives. Dīn also encompasses governance and statecraft. The Qur'ān states:

إِنِ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ ۚ أَمَرَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ۔ [19]

> All authority (Sovereignty)to govern rests only with Allah. He has commanded that you serve none but Him. This is the right way of life (*al-dīn al qayyim*), though most people are altogether unaware".

In Islam, *Dīn* integrates a political dimension, emphasizing that authority, sovereignty, and ultimate rule belong exclusively to Allah. No king or ruler can claim absolute sovereignty within the framework of Islam. Unlike the reduction of religion to rituals and ceremonies, Islam encompasses obedience to Allah in economic, social, and political realms. Notably, Mircea Eliade, a prominent scholar of religion, explored the distinction between the secular and the sacred. However, the Qur'ān challenges such dualistic paradigms, rejecting the separation of these domains and presenting a unified vision of human life that integrates all aspects under the sovereignty of Allah.

The second basic theme relates to Ibadah, a term translated as worship. The Qur'ān defines the essence of religion as *'ibādah* (worship) of God, which the Creator desires from His servants. As stated in 51:56, "I created jinn and mankind only to worship Me." Worship involves humility and servility before God, contrasting with rebellion symbolized by *al-Tāghūt* and *al-Shayṭān*. True worship stems from understanding God's mercy, power, and wisdom, leading to complete submission in love and fear. The Qur'ān employs terms like *khushū'*, *ikhlās*, *taqwā*, and *tawakkul* to express this state of inner devotion and outward submission, encompassing remembrance, gratitude, and trust in God as integral aspects of worship.[20]

The Qur'ānic concept of *'ibādah* encompasses a multifaceted understanding of servitude, submission, and worship, representing the essence of Islamic faith and practice. The term *'ibādah*, derived from the Arabic root word *'abd* (meaning slave), signifies the recognition of Allah as the supreme authority and the total submission of one's will to Him. This submission is not limited to rituals like prayer or sacrifice but extends to all aspects of life, demanding a comprehensive alignment with divine guidance. The Qur'ān stresses that *'ibādah* includes both physical acts of worship and a deeper, spiritual devotion that governs one's thoughts, actions, and relationships.[21] One of the primary aspects of *'ibādah* is the idea of bondage or servitude to Allah alone, which rejects all forms of dependence on false powers or authorities. This includes not only the rejection of idols or physical deities but also the refusal to submit to human rulers, priests, rabbis, or ancestral practices that contradict divine commands. The Qur'ān frequently highlights the importance of exclusive *'ibādah* to Allah, warning against submitting to any authority or power that rivals Allah's sovereignty. Verses such as 5:60, 16:36, and 39:17

emphasize the dangers of misplaced allegiance to false powers, urging believers to reserve their 'ibādah solely for Allah. The concept of 'ibādah as servitude also implies a rejection of oppressive systems and forces, aligning oneself with Allah's sovereignty instead.

Another central component of 'ibādah in the Qur'ān is submission to Allah's will and commands. This submission involves a willingness to follow divine guidance above all else, especially in cases where it might conflict with personal desires, societal norms, or the authority of others. In verses like 40:60 and 12:40, the Qur'ān stresses that true believers must submit entirely to Allah's commands, acknowledging His exclusive power and authority. This submission also requires a rejection of reliance on human leaders or systems that falsely claim to possess divine authority. The Qur'ān emphasizes that those who submit to such false authorities are engaging in 'ibādah to them, rather than Allah, as seen in verses such as 36:60-61, which highlight the consequences of submitting to Satan's influence.[22]

Furthermore, 'ibādah includes acts of worship, such as prayer, fasting, charity, and pilgrimage, which are central to Islamic practice. These acts are not merely rituals but are expressions of a deeper spiritual connection with Allah. The Qur'ān underscores that worship must be directed exclusively to Allah, rejecting the practice of invoking intermediaries like saints, angels, or jinn. Verses like 5:76 and 35:13-14 emphasize that any act of worship directed toward entities other than Allah is considered a deviation from true 'ibādah. The Qur'ān warns against practices such as invoking jinn for protection or asking saints to intercede on one's behalf, stating that such actions are forms of shirk (polytheism) and violate the principle of exclusive servitude to Allah. The Qur'ānic vision of 'ibādah is comprehensive, encompassing not only acts of ritual worship but also the ethical and social dimensions of life. The Qur'ān calls for a life dedicated to Allah in all its facets, from personal conduct to social interactions. This includes upholding justice, kindness, and integrity in dealings with others, as well as fulfilling responsibilities towards family, community, and society. The Qur'ān repeatedly stresses that 'ibādah must be aligned with moral and ethical conduct, as exemplified in verses like 20:14 and 6:102, which connect 'ibādah to the broader call for a righteous life in accordance with divine law.[23]

The rejection of false authorities is a recurring theme in the Qur'ānic understanding of 'ibādah. The Qur'ān condemns the practice of elevating religious scholars, priests, or any other figures to the status of divinity, as seen in verse 9:31, where Jews and Christians are criticized for taking their religious leaders as gods in place of Allah. The 'ibādah of such leaders is described as a form of spiritual slavery, which diminishes the believer's relationship with Allah. Instead, the Qur'ān calls for exclusive devotion to Allah, urging believers to avoid any form of polytheism or association with false deities. Additionally, the Qur'ān teaches that true 'ibādah is not merely about ritualistic practices but about a

profound, heartfelt submission to Allah's will. This includes not only external acts of worship but also internal devotion, which manifests as a deep sense of gratitude, humility, and reliance on Allah. *'ibādah* becomes a total way of life, where every action, whether personal, social, or political, is governed by the principles of submission to Allah. This holistic understanding of *'ibādah* calls for believers to integrate their faith into every aspect of their lives, creating a harmonious relationship between spiritual devotion and worldly actions.[24]

Ultimately, *'ibādah* in Islam is not confined to personal purification (*tazkīyah*) or spiritual refinement (*tazkīyah*). The Qur'ān commands a broader understanding of Ibadah, which includes personal, social, and global responsibilities. A person is not only tasked with elevating themselves spiritually but also with the duty to protect and guide their family from the torment of Hellfire. This responsibility extends beyond the individual, encompassing the well-being of Allah's creation and His servants.

Da'wah is a central concept in Islam, referring to the act of inviting others to the core Islamic message of tawhid, the Oneness, Uniqueness, Transcendence, and Ultimacy of the Creator, Allah (*subhanahu wa ta'ala*). It is not just about calling others to the faith, but also about embodying and spreading the teachings of Islam through words, actions, and the examples set by the life of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). In essence, *Da'wah* is an invitation to study and follow the life of Allah's final messenger as a model for humanity. It is a call to understand and reflect upon the Islamic worldview, which emphasizes monotheism, righteousness, and submission to the will of the Creator. The Qur'ān presents every Muslim, whether male or female, as a *dā'īyah* (female) or *dā'ī* (male), a person who is entrusted with the responsibility to invite others to Islam. The concept is deeply embedded in the Qur'ānic teachings, where believers are urged to actively participate in the dissemination of the Islamic message. In addition to the term *da'wah*, the Qur'an also uses related words such as *inḍhār*, meaning to caution or warn, *tadhkīr*, which refers to reminding others, and *iblāgh*, which means to communicate. Each of these terms adds a layer of meaning to the practice of *Da'wah*, underscoring the importance of sharing the message in various forms, whether by warning, reminding, or simply communicating.

Da'wah is not limited to Islam alone. Many of the world's religions engage in some form of dissemination of their beliefs, whether it be through preaching, teaching, or propagating their doctrines.[25] Like other religious traditions, Islam encourages its followers to share the teachings of their faith with others. However, what sets *Da'wah* apart is its emphasis on doing so with wisdom, patience, and integrity, ensuring that the message is conveyed in a way that respects the dignity and freedom of others. The aim is not only to spread knowledge of the faith but also to inspire others to adopt a way of life that aligns with the ultimate truth as revealed by Allah. The third concept, *Da'wah*, simply means to invite or call others towards the core Islamic message of *Tawḥīd*, the

oneness, uniqueness, transcendence, and ultimacy of the Creator, Allah. It is also an invitation to study and follow the life of Allah's final messenger as a role model for humanity. Every Muslim, male and female, is envisioned by the Qur'ān as a *Da'iyah,* one who invites others to Islam. The Qur'ān also uses other terms related to Da'wah, such as *inzār* (to caution or warn), *tazkīr* (reminding) or *iblāgh* (to communicate) are also part of this concept. The word *Da'wah* encompasses all these aspects, with very few exceptions. All world religions aim to share, if not preach, their teachings, making the concept of *Da'wah* crucial to understand. The Qur'ān states:

" يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِن رَّبِّكَ ۖ وَإِن لَّمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسَالَتَهُ "- 26

> "O Messenger! Communicate (disseminate) what has been revealed to you from your *Rabb*, for if you fail to do that, you have not fulfilled the task of His messenger-ship".

After the Prophet, this responsibility is passed on to every believer, male and female. The Qur'ān states:

وَلْتَكُن مِّنكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنكَرِ ۚ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ-27

> And that there might grow out of you a community [of people] who invite unto all that is good and enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong: and it is they, they who shall attain to a happy state.

This verse indicates that both individual and collective obligations are intertwined. It is Allah who commands every believer to watch and propagate what is good and stop from what is wrong. Qur'an, implying the fact that a person should exhort those in his surroundings to what is *ma'rūf* (good) according to human nature and intellect and forbid them from what is *munkar* (evil) according to it:

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ ۚ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنكَرِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَيُطِيعُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ سَيَرْحَمُهُمُ اللَّهُ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ-28

> AND [as for] the believers, both men and women they are close unto one another: they [all] enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong, and are constant in prayer, and render the purifying dues, and pay heed unto God and His Apostle. It is they upon whom God will bestow His grace: verily, God is almighty, wise!

The Qur'ān has also provided a clear strategy for *Da'wah*. It instructs:

ادْعُ إِلَىٰ سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ ۖ وَجَادِلْهُم بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ ۚ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَن ضَلَّ عَن سَبِيلِهِ ۖ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ-29

> CALL THOU (all mankind] unto thy Sustainer's path with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and argue with them in the most kindly manner- for, behold, thy Sustainer knows best as to who strays from His path, and best knows He as to who are the right-guided.

In the above quoted verses, by wisdom (*ḥikmah*) is meant the arguments and kindly exhortation means urging the addressees through sincere reminders. The implication is that whatever is presented should be supported by arguments and presented in the light of knowledge and intellect and one should not be aggressive and forceful in one's presentation. One's tone should reflect sincerity and affection. If the stage reaches that of debate and argument, then this should be done in a most befitting manner. If the opponent becomes hostile and antagonistic, then instead of responding in an even more belligerent manner, a true preacher should always remain polite and civilized. Labeling others as half-Muslim, *mushrik*, or condemning them to *Jahannam* is wrong. Such practices, often rooted in culture, are clearly rejected by the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*. *Da'wah* must be given with *Ṣabar* (patience) and *Istiqāmah* (steadfastness). Preach to people once a week, and if that's not possible, then twice. But if you want to preach more, limit it to three times a week to avoid making people bored or tired of hearing the Qur'ān. Do not interrupt people's conversations, and if they are not interested, remain quiet. Preach only when they are eager to learn. Avoid using rhymed prose or artificial efforts in your invitations. The Prophet's approach was simple and natural, without unnecessary embellishments. *Da'wah* should be delivered in a way that the person can understand and absorb, based on their receptiveness, which one can take not beyond that? And that means you should know the basic psychology of human beings.

The Qur'ān clearly tells us to assess the situation before preaching. You should not drive people away from Islam by overwhelming them with talks about it. This is not about diplomacy or trying to please others, but about following the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*. When you are polite, kind, and compassionate, and when you apply things in their proper context, that is the true meaning of Sabar and *Istiqāmah*.

The debates between Muslim scholars and Christian clergy often resulted into confrontations where the latter are criticized for their perceived lack of knowledge about their own scriptures. Such instances are frequently met with audience reactions like shouting that they had won the debate and defeated their opponents, which may alienate the opposing party rather than engage them meaningfully.[30] This raises a critical question: what is the true purpose of *Da'wah*? The objective of *Da'wah* is not merely to win an argument or debate but to win over individuals by fostering understanding and mutual respect. While debates may elicit applause and reinforce the convictions of a supportive audience, their effectiveness in conveying the Islamic message is limited if they fail to inspire genuine interest or lead to meaningful transformations. The success of *Da'wah* should not be measured by public approval or rhetorical victory but by its

ability to transform hearts and minds. Effective *Da'wah* requires a compassionate and dialogical approach, prioritizing genuine engagement over triumphalist argumentation.

Conclusion

This research article offers a profound exploration of the concept of religion through the lenses of Islamic and Western thought, emphasizing key Islamic terminologies such as *Dīn*, *Ibadah*, and *Da'wah*. The study reveals a stark contrast between the fragmented and often reductionist interpretations of religion in Western philosophy and the holistic, all-encompassing framework presented in Islamic thought. Western philosophers, from Schleiermacher's emotional dependency to Freud's dismissal of religion as illusion, highlight diverse but limited perspectives on religious experience. In contrast, the Qur'ān envisions *Dīn* as a comprehensive way of life, transcending ritualistic or sectarian interpretations to encompass the spiritual, ethical, social, and political dimensions of human existence. *Ibadah*, far from being restricted to acts of ritual worship, embodies total submission to Allah, shaping every facet of personal and communal life. It integrates spiritual devotion with ethical conduct, rejecting the false authorities and oppressive systems that deviate from divine sovereignty. Similarly, *Da'wah* emerges as an ethical and intellectual endeavor, not mere argumentation or coercion. Rooted in wisdom, patience, and sincerity, it seeks to transform hearts and minds through compassionate engagement. The article concludes that understanding Islam through the holistic lens of *Dīn*, *Ibadah*, and *Da'wah* offers Muslims a path to reclaim the comprehensive essence of their faith. By addressing the limitations of fragmented interpretations—whether ritualistic, mystical, or legalistic—the Qur'ānic paradigm provides a robust framework to navigate modern challenges. This approach integrates personal spirituality, societal responsibility, and global outreach into a unified vision of life under Allah's sovereignty. Ultimately, the research calls for Muslims to embody the universal principles of Islam, ensuring its relevance as a dynamic force for individual and collective transformation in the contemporary world.

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