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Interrelations and Dialogue among Monotheistic Religions in the Multicultural Age

多文化共生時代における一神教間の相互作用と対話

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Boundary between Believers and non-Believers in Lands of Infidelity: Theological Basis for Interfaith Dialogue in Maturidism

Yohei Matsuyama

1. Introduction

The issue of how "others" are perceived is one of the important questions to be addressed when having dialogue with people of different religions. In Islam, "others" are canonically classified and recognized under different norms depending on the situation. In Islamic jurisprudence, for example, "others" or non-Muslims are classified into (1) the "People of the Book" (*ahl al-kitāb*) who possess divine books and (2) other non-Muslims in some circumstances. Meanwhile, in other circumstances, they are classified into (1) the people of *dhimmī*, or non-Muslim citizens of the Land of Islam (*dār al-islām*) who are given the protection of life and property by the Muslim community in return for paying poll tax (*jizyah*) to Muslims, (2) non-Muslims who are permitted to temporarily stay in the Land of Islam (*dār al-islām*), (3) non-Muslims of a territory that has a treaty of nonaggression with Muslims (*dār al-ṣulḥ*), and (4) hostile non-Muslims (*ḥarbī*) in the territory of war (*dār al-ḥarb*).

In this paper, I attempt to shed light on the arguments among Islamic theologians over the distinction between the people to whom the mission of Islam has reached and the people who have not been exposed to the mission, and I consider how the position of the latter has been understood by theologians. In doing so, I aim to present, on a preliminary basis, a view on how the insights gained from the arguments over the people not exposed to the mission of Islam can help us facilitate the exploration of the possibility of interfaith dialogue in non-Muslim regions, or "Lands of Infidelity" (*arḍ al-shirk*).

One of the papers that deal with this issue is "The Border of Salvation: The Salvation of Non-Muslims in Islam", authored by Hassan Ko Nakata.[1] In this paper, Nakata suggests that applying the Ash'ari school's view of the people not exposed to the mission of Islam to contemporary non-Muslims can be an effective means for propagating Islam in non-Muslim regions. The Ash'ari school holds that people not exposed to the mission of Islam are exempt from their responsibility (*taklīf*) and thus they are eligible for unconditional salvation in the afterlife. Accordingly, Nakata concludes that guaranteeing the salvation of ancestors is the key to accelerating the propagation of Islam in non-Muslim regions, which is especially true for countries that have a tradition of ancestral worship, such as Japan.

It is true that this view of the Ash'ari school is highly effective in dealing with the issue of the salvation of

ancestors of non-Muslims, which has been a major obstacle to the widespread propagation of Islam. In the context of interfaith dialogue, which is the focus of this paper, however, I believe that the view of the Maturidi school, which is another Sunni school of theology, has greater possibilities. This paper will explore the possibilities of dialogue between Islam and other religions (especially other monotheistic religions) in non-Muslim regions, based on the Maturidi doctrine regarding those not exposed to the mission of Islam.[2]

To be specific, I will examine basic Islamic theories on the people not exposed to the mission of Islam, focusing on the Maturidi doctrine in Section 2 below, and then I discuss how such a doctrine can obscure the boundary between believers and non-believers in "Lands of Infidelity," especially between Muslims and believers in other monotheistic religions, thus providing a theological basis for interfaith dialogue in Section 3. In so doing, I aim to present, at least in some part, the image of "others" held by Muslims based on the Maturidi doctrine and to draw up a vision for interfaith dialogue in today's world.

2. Status of those not exposed to the mission of Islam

2-1. "People of the Interval" and the view of the Ash'ari school on such

The Qur'an states that God sent prophets to all peoples on Earth to bring His messages (35:24). However, there are exceptional cases where people live during the absence of a prophet—after the demise of the teaching of a prophet and before the arrival of a new prophet. Islamic theologians call them the "People of the Interval" (*ahl al-fatrah*) and have long disputed their responsibility (*taklīf*) and qualification for salvation in the afterlife.

The Ash'ari school maintains that essentially only divine revelation can prove the existence of God and determine whether things are good or evil, or beautiful or ugly, and thus the school denies the responsibility of people to whom the message of revelation has not reached. Accordingly, it is held that the "People of the Interval" have no obligation to believe in God and comply with the law, and all of them are unexceptionally eligible for salvation in the afterlife, irrespective of their faith.[3] One of the well-known sources that support this view is the description of the Qur'an that says "And never would We punish until We sent a messenger" (17:15).

The Ash'ari school even states that no valid faith can be established among people not exposed to the mission of Islam.[4]

2-2. Status of the people not exposed to the mission of Islam in the perspective of the Maturidi school

Unlike the above view of the Ash'ari school, an overwhelming majority of the Maturidi scholars hold that

both the "People of the Interval" who live during the time of the absence of a prophet and people not exposed to the mission of Islam due to geographical reasons are under obligation to believe in the Maker (both of these peoples are to be collectively referred to as the "people not exposed to the mission of Islam" in the rest of this paper).[5] One of the most important Maturidi scholars, Abū al-Muʿīn Maymūn bn Muḥammad al-Nasafī (d. 1115), states as follows.

> If a person with reason to whom divine revelation has not reached is ignorant of his Lord, should he be exempt from his responsibility? In our view, he should not. He is obligated to infer (*yastadill*) that the Maker (*ṣāniʿ*) does exist in this world (*li al-ʿālam*).[6]

As shown above, the Maturidi school holds that even without exposure to the mission of Islam, people are still obligated to reach faith in the Maker on their own, which is a condition for their salvation.

One theory holds that the people not exposed to the mission of Islam are held obligated to believe in the existence of the Maker because of their reason (*ʿaql*). In *The Beginning of Dictation* (*Badʾ al-Amālī*), one of the most well-known theological books of the Maturidi school, the author, Sirāj al-Dīn al-Ūshī (d. 1179/1180), clearly states as follows.

> Man with reason is not permitted to be ignorant of the Creator of Heaven and Earth.[7]

Another widely accepted Maturidi theory holds that "human reason" and the "passing of time to contemplate the reasons behind things" are two factors that obligate people to believe in the Maker. The following passage is a quotation from one of the most important books of the Maturidi theology, *Rhymed Poetry of Nun* (*al-Qaṣīdah al-Nūnīyah*), authored by Khiḍr Bek bn al-Jalāl (d. 1459).

> According to Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 767), no man with reason is permitted to remain ignorant of his Creator after the passing of the time of contemplation (*fikr*).[8]

With this regard, ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn al-Bukhārī (d. 1329/1330) argues that the time given to a man with reason to contemplate about the world is equivalent to the message of revelation given to him by a prophet, which suffices to convince him of the existence of the Maker. He writes:

> On the other hand, if Allah gives him sufficient experience and lets him live long enough to understand the reasons behind things, then he shall not be exempt from his responsibility. This is because being given a long life or sufficient time for contemplation is equivalent to being called by

> a prophet in the sense that both serve to awaken his mind from ignorance, after which he is not exempt from the responsibility.[9]

As sources supporting the view that even without exposure to the mission of Islam, people are still obligated to worship the Maker, theologians refer to the following verses from the Qur'an.[10]

> And when he saw the sun rising, he said, "This is my lord; this is greater." But when it set, he said, "O my people, indeed I am free from what you associate with Allah." (6:78)

> Do they not look into the realm of the heavens and the earth and everything that Allah has created…? (7:185)

> Indeed, the hearing, the sight and the heart - about all those [one] will be questioned. (17:36)

> We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth. But is it not sufficient concerning your Lord that He is, over all things, a Witness? (41:53)

> Then do they not look at the camels - how they are created? And at the sky - how it is raised? And at the mountains - how they are erected? And at the earth - how it is spread out? (88:17-20)

These verses indicate how Prophet Ibrahim, without exposure to any verbal revelation, reached faith in the Maker only by observing events in the world. They also make mention of signs of manifestations of the Maker in the world and human organs with which to recognize such manifestations.

While the Ash'ari school relies on the description of the Qur'an in 17:15 in discussing that the "People of the Interval" are exempt from their responsibility, the Maturidi school interprets the "punishment" mentioned in this verse to mean the extinction of a people (*ihlāk isti'ṣāl*) in this life, not punishment in the hell in the afterlife.[11]

2-3. The difference between "faith in Allah" and "faith in the Maker"

As discussed above, the Maturidi school argues that even without exposure to the mission of Islam, people are obliged to have faith in the "Maker." It should be noted, however, that this faith is slightly different from "faith in Allah" as understood by Islamic theologians.

Generally speaking, Muslims' faith in Allah is faith in the Creator with defined attributes (*ṣifāt*), who is the narrator of the holy Qur'an. On the other hand, while the Maturidi school argues that even if not exposed to the mission of Islam, people are still under obligation to have faith in the "Maker," the school does not define the specific details of the "Maker," just referring to Him as the "Creator of Heaven and Earth" and the "Creator of the World." Of course, the "Maker" has never been called "Allah." This means that the Maturidi school pays no heed to the depth of the faith and the nature of the "Maker."

Books of the Maturidite theology contain only few descriptions about the nature of the "Maker," which can be summarized into the following two points. First, the "Maker" is the one who made (*ṣāni'*) Heaven and Earth. However, the Maturidi school gives no explanation about what it means to "make" (*ṣan'ah*). In the traditional Islamic theology, including the Maturidi school, in-depth discussions have been held on the concepts of "creation" (*khalq*) and "production" (*takwīn*), which constitute part of the attributes of Allah. In this light, it seems likely to me that most of the Maturidi theologians purposefully used the general term "maker" (*ṣāni'*), instead of "creator" (*khāliq*) and "producer" (*mukawwin*), to refer to the object to be worshipped by the people not exposed to the mission of Islam, and intentionally refrained from giving reasons why the object is called the "Maker." Second, the "Maker" is singular, not plural. However, the word "Maker" is not modified with "one" (*aḥad*) or "unique" (*wāḥid*), the words used to indicate the oneness of Allah, and the Maturidi school, again, offers no explanation as to in what manner the "Maker" is recognized as only one.

This means that the faith that the people not exposed to the mission of Islam are supposed to have is not faith in Allah, who possesses defined attributes, but faith in some vaguely understood object that is called by the name "Maker," and full attention should be paid to this fact.

3. Boundary between believers and non-believers in "Lands of Infidelity"

As indicated above, unlike the view of the Ash'ari school that even people not exposed to the mission of Islam are eligible for salvation in the afterlife irrespective of their faith, the Maturidi school holds that for people in the land where Islamic teaching is unknown, salvation is conditional on faith in the Maker.

In other words, the Maturidi school takes a stricter stance on the salvation of the people not exposed to the mission of Islam in the afterlife. Seen from the other side, this stance, at the same time, means that the Maturidi school allows people who are ignorant of Islam to have faith that is not based on Islamic doctrine.

In *The Greatest Wisdom* (*al-Fiqh al-Absaṭ*), a letter that is attributed to Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 767), Abū Muṭī' al-Balkhī (d. 814), a pupil of Abū Ḥanīfah, asks his mater about the faith of ignorant people and the

faith of people who know nothing of Islamic teaching in "Lands of Infidelity."

> Suppose that there is a man in a"Land of Infidelity" who acknowledges Islam comprehensively but has no knowledge about Muslim obligations and laws, and who doesn't accept the holy book (*al-kitāb*) and anything about the Islamic doctrine (*sharā'i'*). Is he a believer if he dies without accepting any conditions of faith (*sharā'i'*), while only acknowledging Allah and the faith?[12]

To this question, Abū Ḥanīfah answers "Yes." Then, Balkhī further asks:

> Then, what if he only acknowledges faith, and dies without any knowledge and practice?[13]

To this question, his mater says:

> He is a believer (*mu'min*).[14]

This view is not unique or particular to *The Greatest Wisdom*. In fact, views similar or relevant to this are often found among the Maturidi theologians. For example, the Maturidi scholars regard comprehensive (*bi al-jumlah*) faith as sufficiently acceptable, even without a detailed (*bi al-tafṣīl*) understanding of teachings. They are also inclined to accept the faith of those who blindly believe in teaching given by someone, even without knowledge about the validity of the teaching (*muqallid*).[15] According to the Hanafi school of law, to which almost all Maturidi theologians are thought to belong, even believers in polytheistic religions are acknowledged as becoming Muslims simply by saying "I believe in Allah."[16] Accordingly, we may say that there is a general tendency among the Maturidi theologians to accept the faith of ignorant people.

In this light, I think that it is logical to a certain degree to conclude as follows. In the doctrine of the Maturidi school, it is inappropriate to try to understand the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims in "Lands of Infidelity" where Islamic doctrines and practices are not known, within the "us and them" framework based on a strict sense of otherness, or in other words, within the framework of Muslims loyal to Islam, which is a positive religion in a narrow sense, and non-Muslims. Especially, the Maturidi school holds that people who worship only the Maker in "Lands of Infidelity" are recognized as "believers" (*mu'min*) even if they do not belong to Islam as a positive religion. In "Lands of Infidelity" outside the world of Islam, accordingly, it is theologically valid to conclude that people who have departed from polytheism and atheism and who have recognized the existence of the Maker of the world through the work of reason are members of a religious community, as they share a common faith in the Maker.[17]

The above view is not a mere desk theory, but it has been verified by a number of historical facts. For example, Wilferd Madelung argues that the doctrine of the Maturidi school played an important role in convincing Turkish nomadic tribes into accepting Islam before the rise of the Seljuq Empire.[18] While scholars of Samarkand who constituted the foundation of the Maturidi school should be credited with spreading Islam among the Turkish nomadic tribes, it is also true that the religious theories held by the Maturidi school, like the one shown in *The Greatest Wisdom*, helped accelerate the process of propagating Islam among these nomadic tribes who were not interested in learning complicated Islamic teachings and laws in the first place.

Still, it remains arguable whether Japan and Western countries fall under the category of "Lands of Infidelity" as discussed in this paper. In today's non-Muslim countries, on the other hand, it is undeniable that general people who lack the ability to access Islamic scriptures and other texts have difficulties in having a correct understanding of various aspects of Islam, against the backdrop of the recent revitalization and liberalization of the religious market and diversification of religious discourses. This fact deserves to be further underscored, given the absence of any unified religious authority among the Sunni Muslims who make up the majority of Muslims, which makes it impossible for us to identify "orthodox" Islamic views.

4. Conclusion

Unlike the Ash'ari school, which holds that people not exposed to the mission of Islam lack the ability to undertake a responsibility and thus are unconditionally eligible for salvation, the majority of the Maturidi scholars argue that all humans who have the ability to reason are under obligation to infer the existence of the Maker by the work of reason, and thus people who do not believe in the existence of the Maker by reason are not eligible for salvation, whether with or without exposure to Islam.

Consequently, we can say that the door to salvation in the afterlife is narrower in the Maturidi doctrine than the Ash'ari's. Paradoxically, however, the Maturidi doctrine can be interpreted to mean that in "Lands of Infidelity" where Islamic teachings are not known, those who believe in the Maker (*ṣāni'*) in a general sense are taken as genuine believers from the Islamic point of view. According to the Maturidi school, in other words, people in "Lands of Infidelity" are considered "believers" only if they worship the Maker, even if they have no faith in the Islamic doctrine or perform no obligations under Islamic law. In "Lands of Infidelity," therefore, it makes no sense to distinguish between narrowly defined Muslims who embrace Islam, a positive religion in a narrow sense, and non-Muslims. Rather, distinction should be made between monotheistic believers who worship the Maker and polytheistic believers in "Lands of Infidelity," and in this case, the former are recognized as "genuine believers" irrespective of their faith. In this sense, the boundary between Muslims and non-Muslims is blurred in "Lands of Infidelity."

In "Lands of Infidelity," which are outside the world of Islam, therefore, it is theologically justified to recognize as "genuine believers" an entire group of people who believe in specific religious doctrines inferable from the Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, including those who share the faith in the Maker of the world, as well as narrowly defined Muslims who believe in Islam as a positive religion.

In having dialogue with people of other religions, the venue of the dialogue and the understanding of their theological status and position are essential to the success of the dialogue. I believe that the tradition of the Maturidi school discussed in this paper provides Muslims with a theological basis that will help them facilitate interfaith dialogue in "Lands of Infidelity," especially, dialogue and exchange between Muslims and other monotheistic believers.[19]

Note:

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1 Hassan Ko Nakata. 2006. "The Border of Salvation: The Salvation of Non-Muslims in Islam," *Journal of the Interdisciplinary Study of Monotheistic Religions* vol. 2. pp. 58-73

2 The Maturidi school and the Ash'ari school are two major Sunni schools of theology. Some classify Sunni schools of theology into three major schools—Maturidi, Ash'ari, and Atharīyah. cf., al-Sayyid Muḥammad bn Muḥammad al-Zabīdī. 1994. *Itḥāf al-Sādah al-Mutaqqīn*. editor unknown. 9 vols. Beirut: Mua'ssasah al-Tārīkh al-'Arabī. vol. 2. p. 6; Muḥammad bn Aḥmad al-Saffārīnī. 1982[2]. *Lawāmi' al-Anwār al-Bahīyah wa Sawāṭi' al-Asrār al-Atharīyah*. editor unknown. 2 vols. Damascus: Mu'assasah al-Khāfiqīn. vol. 1. p. 73. The understanding that the Ash'ari school and the Maturidi school are two major Sunni schools of theology dates to the very beginning of the history of research on Islam. cf., Ignoz Goldziher. 1925. *Vorlesungen über den Islam*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter's Universitätsbuchhandlung. p. 117.

3 cf., Ḥusām al-Dīn al-Ikhsīkatī. 1999. *al-Muntakhab*. In *al-Mudhhab fī Uṣūl al-Madhhab 'alā al-Muntakhab*. 2 vols. Walī al-Dīn Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Farfūr. Damascus: Dār al-Farfūr. vol. 2. pp. 379-380. Of course, the Ash'ari school also uses reasonable dialectical arguments originating from Greek philosophy, as well as revelatory sources, in proving the existence of the only Creator. However, this does not lead us to the conclusion that anyone can prove the existence of the Creator in such a manner and that anyone is under obligation to believe in His existence.

4 cf., Kamāl al-Dīn bn al-Humām. 2002. *al-Musāyarah fī al-'Aqā'id al-Munjiyah fī al-Ākhirah*. ed. by Maḥmūd 'Umar al-Dimyāṭī. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah. p. 165.

5 cf., 'Abd al-Raḥīm bn 'Alī Shaykh Zādeh. 1899/1900. *Kitāb Naẓm al-Farā'id wa Jam' al-Fawā'id fī Bayān al-Masā'il allatī Waqa'a fī-hā al-Ikhtilāf bayn al-Māturīdīyah wa al-Ash'arīyah*. editor unknown. Egypt: al-Maṭba'ah al-Adabīyah. pp. 35-37. Traditionally, the Maturidi school does not distinguish between the "People of the Interval" who live in a period of absence of the mission of Islam and people who have not been exposed to the mission due to geographical reasons. Instead, the school in many cases deals with both of them equally or takes interest only in the latter. cf., 'Uthmān al-Kulaysī al-'Uryānī. 2003. *Khayr al-Qalā'id Sharḥ Jawāhir al-'Aqā'id*. ed. by Aḥmad Farīd al-Mazīdī. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah. p. 204; al-Mullā 'Alī al-Qārī. 1998. *Minaḥ al-Rawḍ al-Azhar fī Sharḥ al-Fiqh al-Akbar*. ed. by Wahbī Sulaymān Ghāwjī. Beirut: Dār al-Bashā'ir al-Islāmīyah. p. 292; Abū al-Barakāt al-Nasafī. 2012. *Sharḥ al-'Umdah fī 'Aqīdah Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*. ed. by 'Abdullāh Muḥammad 'Abdullāh Ismā'īl. Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Azharīyah li al-Turāth. p. 368; Nūr al-Dīn 'Alī al-Qārī. 2011[2]. *Ḍaw' al-Ma'ālī 'alā Manẓūmah Bad' al-Amālī*. ed. by 'Abd al-Salām bn 'Abd al-Hādī Shannār. Damascus: Dār al-Bairūtī. p. 145 One of the few Maturidi scholars who argue that human reason cannot be the basis for obligating people to believe in the existence of the Maker is Abū al-Yusr Muḥammad al-Bazdawī (d.1099). cf., Abū al-Yusr Muḥammad al-Bazdawī. 2003. *Uṣūl al-Dīn*. ed. by Hans Peter Lins. Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Azharīyah li al-Turāth. pp. 214-217. Aḥmad bn Mūsā Shams al-Dīn al-Khayyālī, (d. 1470?)

classifies the people not exposed to the mission of Islam into three groups—those who have consciously chosen to have religious faith, those who have consciously chosen not to do so, and those who have chosen otherwise, and holds that people other than those who have chosen not to have religious faith will be saved. ’Abd al-Naṣīr Nātūr Aḥmad al-Malībārī al-Hindī. 2008. *Sharḥ al-‘Allāmah al-Khayyālī ‘alā al-Nūnīyah li al-Mawlā Khiḍr Bn Jalāl al-Dīn fī ‘Ilm al-Kalām: Dirāsah wa Taḥqīq*. Cairo: Maktabah Wahbah. p. 367. In commentaries on the Qur’an, titled *Lights of the Qur’an and Mysteries of Wisdom* (*Anwār al-Qur’ān wa Asrār al-Furqān*), the author, Alī al-Qārī (d. 1605), seems to lean toward the Ash‘ari view, which is incompatible with the view shown in *Commentary on the Supreme Wisdom* (*Sharḥ al-Fiqh al-Akbar*) mentioned above. al-Mullā ‘Alī al-Qārī. 2013. *Tafsīr al-Mullā ‘Alī al-Qārī*. 5 vols. ed. by Nājī al-Suwayd. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyah. vol. 3. p. 127. Theologians of the Hanafi scholars in Bukhara agree with the Ash‘ari school’s view that people not exposed to the mission of Islam are not obligated to have faith, as indicated by Nakata (Nakata. *op*. *cit*, p.65). However, the theologians of the Bukhara school, because of their belief in the non-createdness of religious faith, call those who regard faith as a created thing “infidels” , and they prohibit attendance to religious services held by these infidels. For this view, Bukhara scholars are dismissed as an ignorant group by major Maturidi scholars. cf., Ibn al-Humām. *al-Musāyarah*. pp. 313-314; Kamāl al-Dīn Bn Abī Sharīf. 2002. *al-Musāmarah*. ed. by Maḥmūd ‘Umar al-Dimyāṭī. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyah. pp. 313-314; al-Bazdawī. *Uṣūl al-Dīn*. pp. 158-159. For this reason, I think that we should not easily leap to the conclusion that the view of the Bukhara school constitutes part of the theory held by the Maturidi school.

6 Abū al-Mu‘īn al-Nasafī. 2000. *Baḥr al-Kalām*. ed. by Walī al-Dīn Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Farfūr. Damascus: Maktabah Dār al-Farfūr. p. 82. The Mutazili school, too, holds that even without exposure to the mission of Islam, people are still under obligation to have faith in the Maker. In the view of the Maturidi school, however, God is the entity (*mūjib*) that imposes such an obligation, and human reason serves as an agent between God and people, while the Mutazili school maintains that the obligation is directly given by reason itself. cf., Nūr al-Dīn al-Ṣābūnī. 1969. *Kitāb al-Bidāyah min al-Kifāyah fī al-Hidāyah fī Uṣūl al-Dīn*. ed. by Fathalla Kholeif. Egypt: Dār al-Ma‘ārif. p. 150.

7 Sirāj al-Dīn ‘Alī bn ‘Uthmān al-Ūshī. 2010. *Bad’ al-Amālī*. In *Jāmi‘ al-La’ālī Sharḥ Bad’ al-Amālī fī ‘Ilm al-‘Aqā’id*. Muḥammad Aḥmad Kan‘ān. Beirut: Dār al-Bashā’ir al-Islāmīyah. p. 301.

8 Ibn al-Jalāl Khiḍr Bek. 2003. *al-Qaṣīdah al-Nūnīyah*. In *Khayr al-Qalā’id Sharḥ Jawāhir al-‘Aqā’id*. ‘Uthmān al-Kulaynī al-‘Uryānī. ed. by Aḥmad Farīd al-Mazīdī. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyah. p. 203. For the obligation to accrue, it is said that one has to live long enough to have sufficient “experience,” time to “contemplate,” and “gain an understanding of the reasons behind things.” cf., Fakhr al-Islām al-Bazdawī. 1997. *Uṣūl al-Bazdawī*. In *Kashf al-Asrār ‘an Uṣūl Fakhr al-Islām al-Bazdawī*. ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz bn Aḥmad al-Bukhārī. ed. by ‘Abdullāh Maḥmūd Muḥammad ‘Umar. 4 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyah. vol. 4. pp. 330-331.

9 cf., ‘Alā’ al-Dīn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz bn Aḥmad al-Bukhārī. 1997. *Kashf al-Asrār ‘an Uṣūl Fakhr al-Islām al-Bazdawī*. ed. by ‘Abdullāh Maḥmūd Muḥammad ‘Umar. 4 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyah. p. 331.

10 cf., al-Nasafī. *Baḥr al-Kalām*. p. 82; al-Ṣābūnī. *Kitāb al-Bidāyah*. p. 150; Abū al-Yusr al-Bazdawī. *Uṣūl al-Dīn*. p. 215.

11 cf., Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī. 2005. *Ta’wīlāt Ahl al-Sunnah*. ed. by Majdī Bāsallūm. 10 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyah. vol. 7. p. 20.

12 Abū Ḥanīfah al-Nu‘mān bn Thābit. 2001. *al-Fiqh al-Absaṭ*. In Abū Ḥanīfah. *al-‘Ālim wa al-Muta‘allim – al-Fiqh al-Absaṭ - al-Fiqh al-Akbar – Risālah Abī Ḥanīfah – al-Waṣīyah*. ed. by Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī. Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Azharīyah li al-Turāth. p. 43. In this paper I won’t go into the details about whether *The Great Wisdom* was authored by Abū Ḥanīfah or not. More important for the purpose of this paper is the fact that *The Great Wisdom* has been accepted as one of the authoritative sources that give us insights into the principles embraced by Abū Ḥanīfah, and it has long been quoted and annotated. cf., Abū al-Layth al-Samarqandī. 1995. *Sharḥ al-Fiqh al-Absaṭ*. In *The Islamic Concept of Belief in the 4th/10th Century*. Hans Daiber. Tokyo: Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa. p. 32; Kamāl al-Dīn al-Bayāḍī Zādeh. 2007. *Ishārāt al-Marām min ‘Ibārāt al-Imām Abī Ḥanīfah al-Nu‘mān*. ed. by Aḥmad Farīd al-Mazīdī. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyah.

13 Abū Ḥanīfah. *al-Fiqh al-Absaṭ*. p. 43.

14 Abū Ḥanīfah. *al-Fiqh al-Absaṭ*. p. 43.

15 Abū al-Mu‘īn Maymūn bn Muḥammad al-Nasafī. 2003. *Tabṣirah al-Adillah*. ed. by Hüseyn ATAY. 2 vols. Ankara: Ri’āsah al-Shu’ūn al-Dīnīyah li al-Jumhūrīyah al-Turkīyah. pp. 38-61; Abū al-Thanā’ al-Lāmishī. 1995. *Kitāb al-Tamhīd li Qawā‘id al-Tawḥīd*. ed. by ‘Abd al-Majīd Turkī. Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī. pp. 135-144; al-Bazdawī. *Uṣūl al-Dīn*. pp. 154-155. Comprehensive faith means acknowledging the authenticity of Islam in its entirety without knowledge about its specific, detailed teachings. Having faith in the Prophet Muhammad without knowing his personal history and background and believing in the validity of the prohibition of drinking alcohol without knowing what alcohol is can be categorized as comprehensive faith.

16 ‘Abdullāh bn Maḥmūd bn Mawdūd al-Mawṣilī. 1998. *al-Ikhtiyār li Ta‘līl al-Mukhtār*. ed. by ‘Alī ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Abū al-Khayr and Muḥammad Wahbī Sulaymān. 5 vols. Beirut; Damascus: Dār al-Khayr. vol. 4. p. 424.

17 It should be noted, however, that this does not mean that the Maturidi school favorably accepts the situation where people not exposed to the mission of Islam, or the “People of the Interval,” do not believe in any religious teachings other than the existence of the Maker and do not become Muslims in a strict sense. Yet, these people are considered to be exempt from the responsibility to perform the obligation to believe in the Islamic teachings, other than the existence of the Maker, that can be inferred by human reason, or to follow the order of God concerning norms of conduct, until the basis for each such conduct is established (*qiyām al-ḥujjah*). cf., al-‘Uryānī. *Khayr al-Qalā’id*. p. 204.

18 Wilferd Madelung. 1971. “The Spread of Māturīdism and the Turks.” In *Actas do IV Congresso de Estudos Arabes e*

Islâmicos, *Coimbra-Lisboa 1968*. pp. 109-168. Leiden: Brill. (Reprinted in Madelung, Wilferd. 1985. *Religious Schools and Sects in Medieval Islam*. London: Variorum Reprints) pp. 122-123.

[19] This theological theory accepts religious faith that includes elements incompatible with narrowly defined Islam, and in this sense, it may be recognized as a kind of religious inclusivism in Islam, or the Islamic version of the "anonymous Christian," a concept advocated by Karl Rahner (d. 1984).

Freedom of Religion in Christianity and Islam: The importance of Dialogue and a Possibility of Agreement

Kazunori Hamamoto

1. Introduction

In a secular understanding of human rights, freedom of religion is considered to be the most fundamental right of humans. However, this right has not been always favorably accepted by religious organizations.1 Even within the Christian community, which embraces freedom of religion today, not all the denominations were willing to support this right when it was incorporated into the U.S. and French laws in the late 18th century. Especially, the Roman Catholic Church was fiercely opposed to freedom of religion. It was after World War II that a drastic change occurred in this situation.

On the other hand, Islam is said to have been more tolerant of other religions, compared to Christianity in the Middle ages, but the fact is that Islam has enjoined the death penalty on Muslim apostates. Even today, this penalty is regarded as just by a large number of Muslims. Among Muslim countries, Saudi Arabia and Iran are especially well known for their opposition to the Western understanding of freedom of religion. Saudi Arabia abstained from voting on the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, mainly because Article 18 of the declaration explicitly guarantees the freedom to change religions or beliefs.2 Iran, on the other hand, during the discussion on the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief,3 expressed their view that Muslims are not permitted to convert to another religion, and if they do, they are to be condemned to death. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia and Iran declared, during the discussion on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which guarantees freedom of religion for children under 18 in Article 14, that they would not be bound by any regulations incompatible with the Sharī‘ah, and many other Islamic countries followed them or expressed reservations on Article 144. These Muslim countries have been raising objections to international human rights law developed under the auspices of the United Nations, and striving to establish their own human rights norms based on the Sharī‘ah. The most significant product of these efforts is the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam, which was adopted in 1990 by the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the present Organization of Islamic Cooperation. The Cairo Declaration obligates the member states to provide education on Islam in Article 9. Though this provision does not constitute an unconditional denial of freedom of religion, it can restrict such freedom to a considerable extent depending on how this provision is implemented. Also, Article 24 and Article 25 of the Cairo Declaration establish the Sharī‘ah as the supreme

law, which means that these provisions could be used by Muslim governments as a pretext for human rights violations through arbitrarily interpreting the Sharī'ah.

Whether right or wrong, the call of the Muslim countries to respect cultural diversity[5] has resulted in a denial of the universality of international human rights law, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This does not necessarily mean, however, that it is impossible to foster a common understanding of human rights across different cultures around the world. I say this because we can still try, through dialogue, to find common values shared among different cultures and to expand an overlapping consensus, while giving heed to the criticism that to regard the Western concept of human rights as universal is an act of cultural imperialism and recognizing the difficulty in reaching a worldwide agreement on all human rights issues. Thinkers making their ways in this direction give special importance to the power of religions. When the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted, it was generally believed that religions would play less important roles in society with the progress of secularization, but that has proved not to be the case. Therefore, promoting dialogue with various religious bodies is essential in establishing universal human rights norms.[6] By dialogue, I mean not only dialogue between secular and religious sectors but also inter-religious dialogue.

This paper discusses dialogue between Christianity and Islam on the issue of religious freedom.[7] For two reasons, Muslim countries are displeased with the concept of religious freedom enshrined in international human rights law. One is the incompatibility between international human rights law and the traditional understanding of the Sharī'ah, in which the death penalty is imposed for the apostasy of Muslims. The other is that international human rights law is descended from the Enlightenment and grounded on relativism. In this paper, I will first address the latter issue, demonstrating that in this regard Islam and Christianity have more in common than generally believed. While the idea of religious liberty is often said to have originated in Christianity, the fact is that many Christian denominations had long been skeptical of the secular freedom of religion until they made a turnaround after World War II. I believe that this fact and the reason for the turnaround are worthy of Muslims' attention. I will then proceed to the other issue, showing that different views on this issue are appearing within Islam.

I. Antipathy toward Relativism

1. Islam

Abdulaziz Sachedina discusses the problem of relativism brought about by the secularity of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, saying as follows:

> However, in pursuit of universal morality to support human rights across traditions, the drafters pursued

> thorough-going secularism and kept the language of the Declaration free from any religious idiom. Most strikingly, they severed God from nature and reason. Paradoxically, while the search for universality through secularization of human rights norms also paved the way for pluralistic sources of morality, it also led to their inevitably relativity.[8]

Although the idea of religious liberty is relativistic in the sense that anyone is free to believe or not to believe in any religion, this idea does not relativize the very notion that everyone has freedom of religion. Seen from an Islamic viewpoint, however, that is a contradiction stemming from the denial of God. A. Ezzati points it out as follows:

> One of the major problems of the UDHR is that it promotes ethical absolutism (absolute human rights) on the basis of philosophical relativism and hence contradictions in its concepts and philosophy. Relativism is a convenient approach to accommodate various ethical and cultural values but does not produce absolute values.[9]

As seen in Sachedina's words quoted above, "pluralism" (*al-ta'addudiyyah*) is often referred to as a concept related to "relativism." The term "pluralism" was originally used with "exclusivism" and "inclusivism" in Christian theology when discussing relation between Christianity and other religions. Today there are a number of Muslim thinkers who like to use this term in interfaith dialogue. In Christian theology it is questioned whether pluralism leads to relativism or not, and Islam is facing the same question.

Apart from its lexical meaning, the term "pluralism" is mainly used in two contexts in Islam. First, this term is used in the context that refers to the idea of there being multiple paths to God, as in Christian theology. Such an idea has its grounds in the Qur'ānic verses that state that God sent messengers to every nation,[10] which means that Islam only acknowledges religions that God revealed through His messengers as true ones. Accordingly, pluralism in this sense should be distinguished from thorough-going relativism.

Second, the term "pluralism" is used in the context of discussing coexistence in this world, blaming political discrimination based on religious difference. Pluralism in this sense has nothing to do with the question of whether religions other than Islam are true or not; in my view, many thinkers who embrace this pluralism take an inclusivist position concerning salvation of non-Muslims.[11] However, even from the exclusivist standpoint, which completely denies the authenticity of other religions, there is no contradiction in adopting pluralism in the political sphere and thus accepting freedom of religion in this world. I will come back to this issue later, as it is closely related to the issue of apostasy.

2. The Roman Catholic Church

Such antipathy toward relativism descended from the Enlightenment as is discussed above was also felt by Catholic Popes after the French Revolution. For example, Pius IX denied the proposition that "every man is free to embrace and profess that religion which, guided by the light of reason, he shall consider true" in *Syllabus Errorum*, which he issued in 1864.[12]

It is during the Second Vatican Council starting in 1962 that the Catholic Church made a turnaround and accepted freedom of religion. While its attitude toward human rights in general began to change during World War II, it took some more time before freedom of religion was accepted by the Catholic Church.[13] However, its acceptance of religious freedom did not mean that the Church accepted relativism. In fact, *Dignitatis Humanae*, one of the declarations issued during this Council, clearly states as follows.

> First, the council professes its belief that God Himself has made known to mankind the way in which men are to serve Him, and thus be saved in Christ and come to blessedness. We believe that this one true religion subsists in the Catholic and Apostolic Church.

Nostra Aetate, another declaration issued during the Council, notes the willingness of the Catholic Church to accept some truths and sacredness present in other religions. It is therefore understood as showing that the Catholic Church has adopted inclusivism at least in part,[14] but, in reality, the supremacy of the Catholic Church is maintained. Benedict XVI, in his 2005 Christmas message, mentioned freedom of religion in commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council. He distinguished between freedom of religion as a canonization of relativism and that as a need that derives from human coexistence, and flatly rejected the former idea.[15] Hence, it would be wrong to say that the Catholic Church entirely changed its attitude toward religious freedom in the Second Vatican Council. A notable change that the council caused in the attitude of the Catholic Church is rather that the Church came to separately discuss the worldly issues, about which secular human rights thoughts are concerned, and the issues relating to religious truth and salvation. We can put it this way. From the perspective of secular human rights thoughts, there is no relation between the question of religion liberty and the question of whether a certain religion is right or not. From a religious viewpoint, however, these two questions are correlative, and thus freedom of religion cannot be fully accepted without consciously separating them.

3. Protestant Denominations

The relation of religious freedom with Protestant denominations is more complicated and harder to explain than that with the Catholic Church. German jurist Georg Jellinek argues that the religious principles of

Puritans, with religious liberty at the core, affected the constitutions of several states of North America, which eventually gave rise to individual rights.[16] If he is right, Protestant denominations should be credited with establishing freedom of religion, which means that there is no reason for Christians to reject freedom of religion or to mind if it is associated with the Enlightenment. Basically following Jellinek, Ernst Troeltsch, however, points out that there were various Puritans. According to him, Rhode Island, where Roger Williams founded a Baptist church, and Pennsylvania, which was settled by the Quakers, were the only American states where freedom of religion was guaranteed, whereas, in the states dominated by Calvinists, freedom of religion was dismissed as an idea that could lead to atheism.[17]

Some scholars argue that Protestant denominations, until recently, were unwilling to respect freedom of religion as a universal human right. For example, Nicholas Wolterstorff reveals the fact that Protestant theological books written in the 20th century often deny or undervalue human rights, partly because of the long-prevailing notion that human rights are an unwelcomed invention made by political philosophers who embrace individualism fostered by the Enlightenment, an anti-Christian movement.[18] Similarly, Wolfgang Huber and others point out that the majority of those involved with churches in Germany before World War II were critical of human rights thoughts, and, given this, it is quite surprising that the idea of human rights was accepted among Protestant denominations so rapidly after the war.[19]

In addition, Louis Henkin, an expert on international law, notes that while minor Christian denominations are eager to secure their own religious freedom, they are not so interested in other denominations' rights nor do they like their own followers being converted to other denominations. Therefore, he says, no essential and continuous cooperative relationship has ever been built between religious organizations and human rights movements even in the United States, where all denominations are minorities.[20] This means that freedom of religion is a double-edged sword for Protestant denominations in the sense that this right is indispensable to relativize existing denominations and start a new one, but, at the same time, has the potential to threaten their own one after it has established itself.

After World War II, Protestant denominations became increasingly conscious of the importance of human rights out of deep regret over various human rights violations during the war, and this trend was further accelerated by the ecumenical movement.[21] Today, despite the disappointment that Henkin and other human rights advocates are feeling about religious organizations, many Protestant theologians uphold individual liberty of religion on the grounds of human dignity deriving from the fact that human beings are created in the image of God. As in the case of the Catholic Church, these Protestant theologians have not turned to espousal of religious freedom because they agreed to relativism but for the sake of human coexistence. Among today's Protestants, there are evangelical Christians who are critical of the ecumenical

movement, on one hand, and liberal Christians seeking to expand this movement beyond the boundaries of Christianity, on the other hand. While some of those who are promoting inter-religious dialogue embrace pluralism, they are fully aware of the tense relationship between pluralism and relativism.[22]

As is discussed above, Christianity has approved freedom of religion for the sake of peaceful coexistence with those who have different thoughts and beliefs, while sharing antipathy toward relativism with Islam. Freedom of religion includes freedom of changing religions. Then, the focus is on how Islam will address the issue of apostasy.

II. Diversification in Understanding of the *Sharī'ah* concerning Apostasy

In pre-modern times, Muslim apostates were condemned to death under Islamic law. Islamic legal scholars held a common consensus on this issue, though there were some minor differences in opinions among legal schools over such issues as: whether the death penalty should be applied also to female Muslims; whether the sinner should be given time to repent; whether born Muslims should be distinguished from converted Muslims; whether the death penalty should be seen as a punishment for sin or as the killing of an enemy in war. It seems inconsistent for Islam to show a high degree of tolerance to non-Muslims on the one hand and condemn Muslim apostates to death on the other, but in the understanding of Islam, a betrayal of the faith after joining Islam is incomparably worse than mere impiety.[23]

Since modern times, however, an increasing number of scholars have raised objection to this understanding[24] on the grounds that the Qur'ān, despite its repeated references to apostasy, makes no specific mention of punishment for apostasy, and even explicitly prohibits the act of coercing anyone into the Islamic faith in many of its verses.[25]

The traditional scholarly view on punishment for apostasy is based on the words of Prophet Muhammad (*ḥadīth*), who said "Kill anyone who changes his religion," and that the blood of a Muslim cannot be shed except in three cases: Apostasy, murder, or adultery by a married person. However, these words apparently seem to be contradictory to the teaching of the Qur'ān, which prohibits forcing the Islamic faith on anyone. To make up for this discrepancy, some legal scholars in the Middle Ages argued that the Qur'ānic verses that prohibit forcing faith were abrogated by the verses that order Muslims to fight against non-Muslims, while others maintained that although apostasy itself did not constitute reason for punishment, apostates could be regarded as enemies fighting against the Muslim community. The latter view was adopted by the Ḥanafīs and the Shī'īs, which do not kill female Muslim apostates because the Islamic wartime law orders them not to do so.[26]

In addition to the principle of the prohibition of forcing others to embrace Islam, some modern scholars focused on another principle—the principle of distinguishing between non-Muslims hostile to Islam and those on friendly terms with Islam, which is repeatedly mentioned in the Qur'ān.[27] In line with these principles, scholars restricted the scope of the application of the *ḥadīth* and concluded that only apostates hostile to the Muslim community could deserve to be condemned to death.[28] In other words, they distinguished between political apostasy and religious apostasy, and maintained that while the former had to be executed, the latter should be subjected to divine judgment.

This new interpretation became prevalent against the backdrop of: Firstly, the accelerated introduction of Western culture since modern times and the general raising of human rights awareness in international society in postwar days; secondly, the contribution of Rashīd Riḍā (d. 1935), an influential Islamic scholar who advocated this interpretation in the early 20th century; and, thirdly, the availability of the divine sources that support the new interpretation. Rashīd Riḍā used the term "freedom of religion (*ḥurriyyat al-dīn*)" in his writing, though the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" was not yet in existence in his days, which implies that he was influenced by Western thought.[29] However, no matter how strong the external influence was, or how powerful the advocates for this new interpretation were in the Islamic world, this interpretation could not have been so widely accepted by Muslims if both the Qur'ān and the *ḥadīth* had unanimously ordered Muslims to kill apostates. Also, the principle of the prohibition of forcing others to embrace Islam not only relates to the issue of apostasy but also constitutes the basis supporting pluralism as a political thought.[30] Freedom of religion cannot be guaranteed to the fullest extent without forbidding discrimination against other religions. Accordingly, pluralism in this sense bears special importance in the discussion on the issue of freedom of religion. In this connection, we should also consider how to understand *jizyah* or the poll tax levied on non-Muslims only.[31] Advocates for pluralism state that *jizyah* is imposed in place of *zakāh*—alms—and *jihād*—military service—which are religious obligations placed on Muslims only. These advocates are seeking, in their respective ways, to ensure that non-Muslims will not take on more burden than Muslims, and some of them even propose that *jizyah* and *zakāh* should be combined together into the latter.[32]

Thus, an increasing number of Muslims now believe that condemning apostates to death is based on an incorrect interpretation of the *Sharī'ah*. Yet many Muslims are still supportive of the death penalty for apostasy as is instructed in the *ḥadīth*, and even Yūsf al-Qaraḍawī, who is somewhat inclined to the new interpretation, proposes introducing discretionary punishment (punishment not specified in the *Sharī'ah*).[33] We might say that such a strict attitude of Muslims toward apostasy is rooted in their long-held tradition, but Mahmoud Ayoub is of a rather different view. According to Ayoub, although the *Sharī'ah* enjoins capital punishment on apostates, apostasy used to be merely a theoretical issue in the medieval Islamic

world, and, in reality, only a very limited number of apostates were executed. Ayoub also denies the assumption that such harsh punishment made Muslims hesitant to convert to other religions. Perhaps only few Muslims were interested in conversion, and thus there was no need to take stern action to prevent conversion. However, Ayoub says, the onset of Western colonialism gave momentum to Christian missionary activities, which eventually turned apostasy into a political issue.[34] Supposing Ayoub is right, if Western countries take the initiative in establishing international human rights law and blame Islam for its attitude toward apostasy, it will only drive Muslims more antagonistic to the West. Article 10 of the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam restricts missionary activities for Muslims, which indicates that Muslims are highly alert to Christian missionaries because of their propagation activities during the colonial period, in which Christians used any possible means, whether fair or foul, to attain their purpose. If Christians and Muslims are to reach an agreement on freedom of religion, including freedom of changing religions, therefore, it will be necessary for each side to rethink how their own freedom of propagation and religious expression should be limited.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have discussed the importance of dialogue between Christianity and Islam to address two concerns held by Muslim countries over the principle of freedom of religion enshrined in international human rights law and considered the possibility of agreement between them. As for the first concern, although the Catholic Church and Protestant denominations share antipathy toward relativism with Islam, they turned, out of remorse for human rights violations during World War II, to distinguishing between purely secular and afterlife issues and accepting freedom of religion to ensure peaceful coexistence of people with different thoughts and beliefs.

With regard to the second concern, Islamic jurists in pre-modern times essentially agreed on imposing the death penalty on Muslim apostates, but since the modern age, an increasing number of scholars have raised objection to the traditional understanding of the *Sharī'ah*, in light of the two principles that are repeatedly mentioned in the Qur'ān: the principle of the prohibition of forcing others to embrace Islam and the principle of distinguishing between non-Muslims hostile to Islam and those on friendly terms with Islam. According to this new understanding, Muslim apostates, as long as they have no evil political intention, should not be sentenced to death but be judged by God alone.

If this new understanding is widely accepted within the community of Islam, then an agreement can be reached between Christianity and Islam on freedom of religion, including freedom of changing religions, for peaceful coexistence of humanity. To achieve this agreement, it is necessary to dispel the distrust in Christian missionaries that prevailed among Muslims during the colonial days. This process to agreement

should be started by opening dialogue between Christianity and Islam to foster mutual respect, leaving aside their doubts about the authenticity of other religions and the possibility of salvation in them, and to discuss their respective means of propagation and forms of religious expression.

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[1] Louis Henkin, "Religion, Religions, and Human Rights," *Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol.26, no.2, Georgetown University, Fall 1998, pp.231-232.

[2] Johannes Morsink, *The Declaration of Human Rights: Origins, Drafting and Intent*, Philadelphia, 1999, p.24.

[3] Ann Elizabeth Mayer, *Islam and Human Rights: Tradition and Politics*, Boulder, CO, 2013, p.171.

[4] *Ibid*.

[5] In this connection, it is often argued that Muslim countries accepted cultural relativism, but Islam denies absolute relativism, as discussed later in this paper.

[6] Louis Henkin, *op. cit*., pp.238-239; Gerrie ter Haar, "Rats, Cockroaches, and People like Us: Views of Humanity and Human Rights," (ed.) Joseph Runzo et al., *Human Rights and Responsibilities in the World Religions*, Oxford, 2003, pp.79-82.

[7] As far as Christianity is concerned, this paper focuses on the Roman Catholic Church and Protestant denominations. Like them, the Orthodox Churches also attach high value to human dignity and thus share something in common with human rights thoughts, but they tend to emphasize their differences from the individualism of human rights thoughts more strongly than Christian organizations in Western Europe. Christos Yannaras, "Human Rights and the Orthodox Church," *The Orthodox Churches in a Pluralistic World: An Ecumenical Conversion*, WCC Publications, Geneva, 2004, pp.85-89. According to Paul Valliere, the Russian Orthodox Church sought freedom of religion during the Soviet period except for its last years, but after regaining its position as a de-facto state religion, this church got nervous over propagation activities by other religions. Paul Valliere, "Russian Orthodoxy and Human Rights," (ed.) Irene Bloom et al., *Religious Diversity and Human Rights*, New York, 1996, pp. 285-306.

[8] Abdulaziz Sachedina, *Islam and the Challenge of Human Rights*, Oxford, 2009, p.10.

[9] A. Ezzati, *Islam and Natural Law*, London, 2002, p.196.

[10] Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity*, San Francisco, 2002, pp.53-54. While this book quotes the Qur'ān 4:163-165 alone, 10:47, which says "Messengers were sent to every nation" also bears importance as a basis that supports the pluralistic nature of Islamic teaching.

[11] For example, see Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Diversity and Pluralism: A Qur'ānic Perspective," *Islam and Civilisational Renewal*, vol.1, no.1, IAIS Malaysia, October 2009, pp.34-35.

[12] To show similar remarks by other Popes, *Post Tam Diuturnas*, an encyclical issued by Pius VII in 1814, says "For when the liberty of all 'religions' is indiscriminately asserted, by this very fact, truth is confounded with error and the holy and

immaculate Spouse of Christ, the Church, outside of which there can be no salvation, is set on par with the sects of heretics and with Judaic perfidy itself." *Libertas Praestantissimum*, an encyclical issued by Leo XIII in 1888, says "Justice therefore forbids, and reason itself forbids, the State to be godless; or to adopt a line of action that would end in godlessness-namely, to treat the various religions (as they call them) alike, and to bestow upon them promiscuously equal rights and privileges." However, there is a view that Leo XIII accepted freedom of religion, though not very positively. To support this view, Kiyomi Yamauchi quotes the following passage from another encyclical of Leo XIII, *Immortale Dei*: "The Church, indeed, deems it unlawful to place various forms of divine worship on the same footing as the true religion, but does not, on that account, condemn those rulers who, for the sake of securing some great good or of hindering some great evil, allow patiently custom or usage to be a kind of sanction for each kind of religion having its place in the State." Kiyomi Yamauchi, *Shinkyo no Jiyu—Daini Vatican Kokaigi 'Shinkyo no Jiyu ni kansuru Sengen' Kaisetsu* (*Freedom of Religion—Commentaries on the 'Declaration on the Freedom of Religion' of the Second Vatican Council*), San Pauro, 2005, p. 48

[13] J. Bryan Hehir, "The Modern Catholic Church and Human Rights: The Impact of the Second Vatican Council," (ed.) John Witte, Jr. and Frank S. Alexander, *Christianity and Human Rights: An Introduction*, Cambridge, 2010, p.119. While it had already made clear that nobody can be forced into faith, the Catholic Church for the first time admitted the right to practice a religion of one's own choice both privately and publicly in *Pacem in Terris*, an encyclical issued by John XXIII in 1963. *Ibid*., p. 122.

[14] A. E. McGrath, (tr.) Masami Kojiro, *Kirisutokyo-shingaku Nyumon* (*Christian Theology: An Introduction*), Kyobunkwan, 2002, p. 744.

[15] http://www.cbcj.catholic.jp/jpn/feature/benedict_xvi/bene_message81.htm. Even if this message reflects Benedict XVI's understanding of the Council, it can be said safely that the Second Vatican Council stands against relativism. It should be noted, however, that as reasons for accepting freedom of religion, *Dignitatis Humanae* mentions that human dignity should be respected and that coercion is alien to pursuit of the truth as well as that freedom is needed for all humanity to coexist peacefully.

[16] Ernst Troeltsch, (tr.) B. A. Gerrish, *Protestantism and Progress: The Significance of Protestantism for the Rise of the Modern World*, Philadelphia, 1986, p.66.

[17] *Ibid*., p.67.

[18] Nicholas P. Wolterstorff, "Modern Protestant Development in Human Rights," (ed.) John Witte, Jr. and Frank S. Alexander, *op. cit*., p.155.

[19] W. Huber and H. Tödt, (tr.) Sachio Kawashima, *Jinken no Shiso—Hogakuteki, Tetsugakuteki, Shingakuteki Kosatsu* (*Human Rights Thoughts—Legal, Philosophical, and Theological Considerations*), Shinkyo Publishing, 1980, pp. 61–63.

[20]. Louis Henkin, *op. cit*., pp.232, 235, 237.

[21] W. Huber and H. Tödt, (tr.) Sachio Kawashima, *op. cit*., pp. 73–74

[22] S.J. Samartha, "The Holy Spirit and People of Other Faiths," *The Ecumenical Review* vol. 42, nos. 3-4, World Council of Churches, July-October 1990, p.253; S. Mark Heim (ed.), *Grounds for Understandings: Ecumenical Resources for Responses*

to Religious Pluralism, Grand Rapids, MI, 1998, pp. 49, 137, 221.

[23] Taha Jabir al-Alwani, (tr.) Nancy Roberts, *Apostasy in Islam: A Historical and Scriptural Analysis*, London, 1432/2011, pp.100-114.

[24] Still, scholars who embrace the new interpretation remain a minority. Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Speaking in God's Name: Islamic Law, Authority and Women*, Oxford, 2001, p.164.

[25] For example, see the Qur'ān, 2:256, 10:99, and 18:29.

[26] Mahmoud Ayoub, "Religious Freedom and the Law of Apostasy in Islam," *Islamochristiana*, vol.20, Roma, 1994, pp.87, 89.

[27] For example, see the Qur'ān, 2:190, 4:90, 9:4-7, and 60:8.

[28] Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *al-Manār*, vol.23, 1340/1922, pp. 187-191.

[29] *Ibid*.

[30] Abdulaziz Sachedina, *op. cit*., p.196.

[31] See the Qur'ān, 9:29.

[32] Yūsf Qaraḍāwī, *Fiqh al-Zakāh: Dirāsah Muqāranah li-Aḥkām-hā wa-Falsafat-hā fī Ḍaw' al-Qur'ān wa-al-Sunnah*, 2vols. (Beirut, Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1397/1977), vol.1, pp.98-99.

[33]. http://www.qaradawi.net/library/53/2503.html.

[34] Mahmoud Ayoub, *op. cit*., pp.90-91.

Martin Buber's understanding of Nationality: Relationship Between People and Land in Modern Jewish Thought[1]

Kotaro Hiraoka

1. Introduction

First, I would like to expose the questions in my presentation: How did Martin Buber (1878-1965) understand the terms people ("עם"), the land ("הארץ"), and their relationship which are the main issues of nationality? What is the nature of his understanding?

Buber lived in the Germany ruled by the Nazis, and left it in 1938. He faced the problem of the modern nation state, and criticized the opinion of political Zionism which was common in Palestine in those days, i.e. the Jewish nation-state. Six years after Buber immigrated to Palestine, he published *Between People and its Land* (*BPL*)[2]. *BPL* is actually a small book but, in my opinion is the crystal of Buber's thoughts which he submitted as an alternative to the nation-state concept. It provided a foundation for many Jews who sought a more cultural or spiritual Zionism. It contains Buber's interpretation of Jewish texts including the Bible, the Talmud, the *Kuzari*, the *Zohar*, the texts of Judah Loew ben Bezalel[3] and Rabbi Nahman of Bratsllav, and also the texts of proto-Zionists and Zionists such as, Moses Hess, Leo Pinsker, Theodore Herzl, Ahad-Ha'am, Rav Kook and Ahron David Gordon. Throughout the book, I found references to the concept of holiness,[4] and I came to the conclusion that this concept was the answer to the question about people, land and the relation between them which Buber proposed.[5] The concept of holiness showed Buber the way of providing an alternative to political Zionism. Hereafter, I focus on Buber's discussion of the Bible (ancient times), the *Kuzari* (medieval times), Judah Loew ben Bezalel (modern times), and Rav Kook (contemporary period) and I reflect on the concept of holiness according to them.

2. Holiness in the Bible

In the introduction to the book, Buber compares the nationalism of other peoples named after a race or an ethnic group, with Zionism, which is named after a place called Zion. Zionism is named after Jerusalem and not after the Jews. After making this point, Buber refers to holiness as follows:

> This was inevitable, for, in contrast to the national concepts of other peoples, the one described by this name was no new invention, not the product of the social and political changes manifested by the French Revolution, but merely a continuation, the re-statement of an age-old religious and popular reality adapted to the universal form of the national movements of the nineteenth century. This reality was the holy matrimony of a 'holy' people with a 'holy' land, the local point of which was the name of Zion. (Buber 1997: xvii – xviii)[6]

Buber does not consider that the idea of Zion is a modern thing, created in Europe, but regards it as ancient thing - that religion and people correspond. People and land receive the adjective 'holy' and the relationship between them is called 'holy matrimony'. In the following paragraph, Buber indicates that holiness, as understood by modern biblical scholars, is misunderstood:

> It has been one of the disastrous errors of modern Biblical criticism to attribute this category of the holy, as applied in the Scriptures to the people and the land, to the sacerdotalism of a later age for which the claims of public worship were all-important. On the contrary, it appertains rather to the *primitive* conception of the Holy as we find it in tribes living close to nature, who think of the two main supports of national life, man and earth, as endowed with sacred powers. (Buber 1997: xviii)

According to Buber's understanding, it was an error that modern Bible study assigned the category of the holiness, relevant to the people and land in the Bible, to the thinking of the priests. In other words, Buber considered the origin of holiness as a primitive concept as can be found in tribes living close to nature and not as found in groups of priests having institutionalized rituals. An important point is that although Buber changed the term from holy (קדוש) to sacred (סקראלי), he accepts that primitive tribes had this concept. In the following text, Buber points out that this holiness was originally developed by the tribes of Israel.

> In the tribes which united to form 'Israel' this concept became transformed in a special way: holiness is no longer a sign of power, a magic fluid that can dwell in places and regions as well as in people and groups of people, but a quality bestowed on this particular people and this particular land because God 'elects' both in order to lead His chosen people into His chosen land and to join them to each other. It is His election that sanctifies the chosen people as His immediate attendance and the land as His royal throne and which makes them dependent on each other. This is more a political, a theopolitical than a strictly religious concept of holiness: the outward form of worship is merely a concentrated expression of the sovereignty of God. (Buber 1997: p. xviii)

Buber emphasizes the difference in general between many tribes and the Israel tribes here. According to him, when God himself chooses and connects the land directly to the people, he gives them holiness. The election and the connection between the land and the people by God, is not cultic but political or theopolitical.[7] It seems that holiness played a role like an adhesive in connecting people and the land. Buber's opinion that people and the land are connected by holiness from God is not a mere religious theory but much more. According to the understanding of political Zionism, rejected by Buber, the government mechanism of a nation-state connects the land to the people. It can be considered that Buber's opinion is the admonition from a viewpoint of the Bible to the Jews of Palestine who searched for the nation-state mechanism in which the land is unified with the people.

3. Holiness in The Book of Kuzari

The Book of Kuzari was written by Judah Halevi (1075 – 1141） in 1139. In those days, Islam and Christianity considered that Judaism was inferior and it was for this reason that Judah Halevi wrote a book to defend Judaism. The outline of the book is as follows: an angel appeared in the dream of the king of the Kuzari and said to him ”Your way of thinking is indeed pleasing to the Creator, but not your way of acting”. According to the religion of the Kuzari, the king made a sacrifice from the heart, but the angel continued to appear frequently in his dreams telling him that his actions were not pleasing to God. The king asked which actions would be appreciated by God; he conversed with representatives of philosophy, Christianity, and Islam but did not obtain a satisfactory answer. A Jewish sage who eventually came forth succeeded in persuading the king.

In relation to Shekhina which means the presence of God, Buber refers to holiness in the *Kuzari*. Firstly however, we must check the description of holiness which Buber introduces from the *Kuzari*:

> The King requests the Rabbi to recite to him some of the wise men’s utterances on the high standing of Palestine. But instead of quoting some of the many things that have been said in praise of the land, its holiness and manifold blessings, he merely quotes certain sayings about the importance of living in the land. (Buber 1997: p.66)

Here, priority is given to the argument which promotes residing in the land over the argument on the holiness of the land. At the end of the *Kuzari*, the Jewish sage who asserted the importance of residing in the land, parts from the king, and goes to Jerusalem. In this scene, the king regrets the separation with the sage, and tries to stop him as follows:

> What could he want there now that the Shekhina was no longer in the land? After all, it was possible to participate in the nearness of God in any place in the world by purity of intent. (Buber 1997: p.68)

The angle’s message to the king was ‘Your way of thinking is indeed pleasing to the Creator, but not your way of acting’. Because priority was not given to an act, the king continued criticizing the partners of his dialogues. At the end of the book, the king makes a remark which gives priority to an intention (approaching God) over an act (living in the land). The Jewish sage explains some main points to the king. The second point is “as the land of Israel is of all lands the one hallowed to God, religious actions can only reach perfection there and certain commandments can only be fulfilled there” (p.69). Buber points out that consciousness of holiness is within this second point as follows:

> The presupposition from which this second principle and the one following proceed is that the holiness of the land has not been diminished by all the changes and chances of history. (Buber 1997: p.69)

On examining the last part of the *Kuzari*, I see there are not any topics like 'Holiness as a premise' and 'the holiness of the land has not been diminished'. The topic that I found is: 'Only in there, an intention serves as holy for God' [וְרק בּוֹ תִּהְיֶה הַכַּוָּנָה קֹדֶשׁ לָאֱלוֹהַּ].[8] Buber does not include all the arguments on holiness in the book of *Kuzari*, but emphasizes and interprets the points which are important to himself. Thus, from his interpretation of the *Kuzari* as well, I can understand the point that holiness of the land was especially important to Buber.

4. Holiness in Maharal from Prague

I now move on to the chapter on Maharal from Prague (Judah Loew Ben Bezalel, 1525 – 1609).[9] After Buber introduced Maharal's opinion that people have an importance in the relation to the state (Buber 1997: pp.78 – 79), he refers to holiness as follows:

> Certainly, the essential thing about Israel for him was not what it had in common with other nations, but what distinguished it from them as a species of its own, its 'holiness'. … But this uniqueness of Israel's was built up on the basic quality which it shared with all other peoples, that of being a nation, and which conferred on it the right and privileges of a nation. (Buber 1997: p.80)

Buber notes here that Maharal made holiness the foundation of the people of Israel and he introduces the view that holiness separates the people of Israel from other peoples. Holiness is based on the character of 'becoming people' and is common to all peoples. Moreover, when Maharal considers the people and the relation of the land of Israel, Buber points out Maharal's use of the natural order as follows:

> He teaches that to every person belongs the place which conforms to his nature, and to every people likewise; hence the Holy Land has been given to the holy nation. (Buber 1997: p.82)

Here, Buber shows that the individual human receives the place to which he is suited by the natural order of things; according to him, this same natural order works also for the nation which consists of individual human beings. Buber explains that Maharal placed importance on the land rather than on the people as follows:

> But of the two the land is the first and its influence is prior. The high level of the patriarchs was reached through their connection with the land. 'If the land has not existed,' says R. Liva, 'the patriarchs would not have attained the supreme heights of holiness and thus it was the land that made them great'. In the patriarchs the essence of the land is shown forth in human form. The land

> belongs to the forefathers to whom it was promised, but the forefathers also belong to the land. Therefore Israel possesses the land only if and so long as it is like forefathers: if it falls away from them and their standards, it no longer has any hold on the land. (Buber 1997: p.87)

In Judaism, the term "ancestors" with a definite article (ה) generally designates Abraham, Isasc, and Jacob. In the Book of Genesis of the Hebrew Bible in which the ancestors appear, the root of holy (ק.ד.ש) appears only as the name of a place (e.g. Genesis 14:17, 20:1, 38:21) except in the part where God made the 7th day holy [ויברך אלהים את-יום השביעי ויקדש אתו] (Genesis 2:3). The viewpoint which relates holiness to ancestors is not from the view point of the Hebrew Bible itself but from Maharal's interpretation. Buber admits that the ancestors were of great value according to Maharal's interpretation, and thinks that this was given in relationship to the land. Buber makes the ancestors' virtue a condition for the people of Israel to be on the land. The nature of Buber's interpretation is the point that the problem of holiness is connected to the ancestors' virtue and he expects similar virtue and holiness from modern people.

5. Holiness in the Writings of Rabbi Kook ("Rav Kook")

Buber also focuses on holiness as understood by Rav Kook, who was born in Griva (located in Latvia today). Rav Kook immigrated to Palestine in 1904 and served as the first chief rabbi of the Ashkenazi Jews. He is considered a typical modern religious Zionist. Although Buber's thought can also be understood as religious Zionism, it does not include the practice of Jewish law, unlike the orthodox Rav Kook. When focusing on the practice of Jewish law as primary in Judaism, it seems that the abyss which lies between the two people is quite deep. In spite of that, there is a reference to the holiness of Rav Kook in *BPL*, in other words, it tells us that Buber's concept of holiness was a comprehensive one.

Buber claims first that there are three steps in the argument concerning acquisition of the land of Israel. He then positions Rav Kook within the framework of the three steps. According to Buber, the 1st step is an understanding that these people cannot regain their real existence if not in this land. The 2nd step is an understanding that the people can only function freely in mind/spirit [רוח] and create his own work, in this land. In the 3rd step, in order to inherit holiness again, the people need the land. If there is only the 1st step, it will be a narrow-minded political viewpoint (Moses Hess and Ahron David Gordon); if there is only the 2nd step of the understanding, it will be a narrow-minded intellectual viewpoint (Ahad-Ha'am); if there is only the 3rd step of the understanding, it will be a narrow-minded religious viewpoint. Buber presupposed that Rav Kook was the most comprehensive person to have grasped this 3rd step deeply, and also to have had relations with the other two steps and therefore evaluated him additionally as follows:

> He, in whose person, as in that of no contemporary, the holy substance of Israel has been incorporated, acknowledged the claims of holiness in the national movement to a greater extent

than anyone else in the Zionist thought of our time, without making it the object of a constricting religious requirement. (Buber 1997: p.148)

Buber who adhered intensively to the theme of holiness, considered that the essence of holiness was shown most prominently in the character of Rav Kook. It seems that the contents which Buber means by the expression "national movement" הלאומית [התנועה] here are not narrow-minded nationalism, because another adjective 'nationalistic' [לאומנית] which has negative connotation, is used in *BPL.*[10] So Buber's understanding of nationalism is not a monolith.

Buber subtitles the chapter treating Rav Kook as "The Renewal of Holiness (*On Rav Kook*)" [חדוש הקדושה (על הרב קוק)]. In the part following the evaluation of Rav Kook mentioned above, Buber explains the semantic content of a renewal of holiness.

> He related it organically to the postulates of the independent existence of the nation and free spiritual creativity. Furthermore, he connected it with the postulate of the Zionist idea apparently furthest removed from it, that of the return to nature, of a new synthesis of nature and spirit. Fundamentally he is not concerned so much with the continuation of an existing holiness as with a true renewal. (Buber 1997: p.148)

Rav Kook connected holiness to people's freedom, its spiritual activity, and also revolution with nature. Buber understood this revolution as the renewal of holiness. According to Buber, Rav Kook thought that people could grasp holiness as a reality only by letting the mystery pass. And this holiness does not take the position in which it does not look back upon the profane, but rather goes towards the profane. Buber explains that holiness does not hover over the profane, but wants to absorb the profane inside and quotes the following sentences from Rav Kook: "The mysteries always teach us to combine the holy with the profane" (p.149). According to Buber's understanding, the serious separation between these two is not the position of holiness but of the profane.

6. Conclusion

In this presentation, we see Buber's understanding of holiness from the Bible to the contemporary period. Buber made demands on the Jew who wants to dwell in the land for the holiness.

The foundation of Buber's humanistic nationalism is thus not the Jewish people, but a place, Jerusalem, Zion. And the foundation of his Zionism is thus not nationalism at all, but holiness. Buber therefore insists that Zionism is different from all other nationalisms, since it is rooted in holiness.

[1] This paper is reprinted from *International Symposium "Theocracy" and "nation" in Jewish Thought: Past and Present* (Kyoto, Center for Interdisciplinary Study of the Monotheistic Doshisha University Religions, 2014), pp.44-52.

[2] The title *Between People and Its Land*, is my translation from the original Hebrew version of the book. Martin Buber, *Between People and Its Land* (Jerusalem, Schocken Publishing House, 1944: in Hebrew). The German title is *Israel und Palästine – Zur Geschichte einer Idee* (1950). The title of the English translation, which was published in 1952, is *Israel and Palestine – The History of an Idea*, republished as *On Zion* (1973).

[3] Stanley Goldman translated his name as the High Rabbi Liva.

[4] The concept of holiness in Hasidism was also a point of argument with Gershom Scholem (1897-1982) who was the leading scholar of Jewish mysticism. Scholem rejected Buber's interpretation that "hallowing of the everyday" was the essence of Hasidism; Maurice Friedman, *Encounter on the Narrow Ridge: A Life of Martin Buber*, (New York: Paragon House, 1991), 395.

[5] There are also chapters which do not treat holiness (e.g. Ahron David Gordon), but these chapters still treat the relationship between people and land like the other chapters.

[6] Martin Buber, *On Zion – The History of an Idea*, (tr. Stanley Goldman; New York: Syracuse University Press, 1997).

[7] Buber considered direct government of God in his book *Kingship of God*, trans. Richard Scheimann (New Jersey London, Humanities Press International, 1990). Kotaro Hiraoka, 'The Bible and Political Philosophy in Modern Jewish Thought –Martin Buber's Theocracy and Its Reception in an Israeli Context' *Journal of the Interdisciplinary Study of Monotheistic Religions 6 (JISMOR)*, (Kyoto, Center for Interdisciplinary Study of Monotheistic Religions, Doshisha University, 2010), pp. 53-66.

[8] Yehuda Halevi, Yehuda Even Shumuel (tr.), *The Kosari of Yehuda Halevi* (Tel-Aviv, Dvir Publishing House, 1994: in Hebrew).

[9] Maharal was a rabbi, Talmudist, moralist and mathematician. From 1573 to 1584 he was in Prague. He was also chief rabbi in Prague in his later life,"Judah Loew (Liwa, Loeb) Ben Bezalel" *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, *Volume 10*, (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House Jerusalem, 1972) p.375.

[10] " אבל יחד עם זה ובמרץ לא פחות מזה הוא [משה הס] דוחה גם כל תכנית לאומנית של תקומת ארץ-ישראל יהודית בחינת מדינה ככל המדינות, הוא דוחה כל תכנית כזו, הכופרת בתפקיד העל-לאומי של האומה היהודית, כתכנית אי-משיחית, נגד-משיחית.", Martin Buber, *Bein 'am le-artso* (Jerusalem, Schocken Publishing House, 1944: in Hebrew), p.120.

Maimonides and Kalām:
Focusing on His Critical Attitude toward Christian Theology

Aiko Kanda

1. Introduction

Moses Maimonides (Moshe ben Maimon, aka Rambam: 1135–1204)[1] was one of the greatest medieval Jewish philosophers. He was active as a rabbi, leader of the Jewish community, physician, and also active as a scholar, while proving his outstanding competence in various practical fields. Perhaps, these personal qualities enabled him to author inspiring works, which provide in-depth exploration of theological, philosophical, and medical themes, along with significant insights into human nature. Maimonides' most important philosophical work, *The Guide of the Perplexed* (*Dalālat al-'ā'irīn* in Arabic, *Moreh nebukhim* in Hebrew, and *Dux neutrorum* in Latin) is written in Judeo-Arabic,[2] which indicates that Maimonides lived in the age of Islamic rule.

Maimonides was born into a family of rabbis in Cordoba, Al-Andalus, the southern part of Spain. In those days, the Christian Church in Europe was engaged in a power struggle, which also involved the Iberian Peninsula and threw Jews into a difficult situation amid the battles between Muslims and Christians during the Reconquista. This period also saw the rising and falling of Islamic dynasties in the Mediterranean region. Maimonides served Islamic rulers as a court physician and thus became well versed in Islamic theology and thoughts. At the same time, he was thought to be familiar with Christian theology as well, considering that he lived in the old city of Cairo, Fustat, in Egypt, which was home to a large population of Christians. In his letters and works, Maimonides indicated that Islamic theological and ideological conflicts played a certain part in the rising and falling of the Islamic dynasties, and that Christian apologetic theology was behind these conflicts. In this paper, I will examine this issue in detail.

2. What is *kalām*?

The Arabic word "*kalām*," which means "theology," comes from the Arabic translation of the Greek word, "λόγος" which means language, speech, and reason. While "*mutakallim*," the derivative word of "*kalām*," originally meant "debater," this word gradually came to take on a more specific meaning, referring to a dialectical theologian or an apologetic scholar who uses discussion to champion a certain religious doctrine. This means that the word "*mutakallim*" refers to any scholar who embraces apologetic arguments, whether Islamic, Jewish, or Christian. The discussion of these scholars is characterized by methodology rather than by content. According to Sarah Stroumsa, the characteristics of their discussion are: first, the structure of discussion, which starts from universal topics (e.g., epistemology, creation of the

world, the oneness of God) then moves to specific topics (e.g., prophecy, eschatology, and life after death); and second, the style of discussion, which was held in a dialogical manner.[3] Scholars who adopted this methodology in their discussions were called the "*mutakallimūn*," and probably for this reason, Saadia Gaon (882–942), a Jewish thinker of the 10th century, was labeled as a "*mutakallim*" by Maimonides.

It is generally held that Islamic *kalām* stems from the Mu'tazillite school of theology of the 8th century, and blossomed from the 9th to the 10th centuries especially in Basra and Baghdad. In the 10th century, the Ash'ari school of theology was established, which is the mainstream theology of today's Sunni Islam. Both of these two schools rely on rational speculation by means of reason and the tradition based on the Qur'an as sources of their thoughts. On the other hand, the Ash'arites emphasize the absolute power of God, while the Mu'tazillites place greater importance on human reason and avoid the attitude tend to be inclined toward excessive determinism, which can be seen as the main difference between these two schools.

The Mu'tazillite school is said to have been at the core of Jewish thought, partly because the abovementioned Jewish thinker, Saadia, was heavily influenced by this school. However, Maimonides, in his writings, addresses and discusses these two schools collectively as an issue of Islamic *kalām*, instead of precisely distinguishing between the doctrines and principles of these schools.[4]

3. Historical background[5]

In this section, let me briefly outline the major historical events that occurred around Maimonides' life time. In Europe, the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Pope excommunicated each other, which resulted in the division of the Christian Church into Greek-Orthodox in the East and Catholicism in the West in 1054. Then, the investiture controversy arose between the Pope and the Holy Roman Emperor (1076–1122), in which Pope Gregory VII affirmed the primacy of papal authority. Against the backdrop of the expansion of papal authority, Pope Urbanus II launched the First Crusade (1096–1099) for the nominal and official purpose of recapturing the sacred city of Jerusalem. These events swept across the world of the Christian Church in Europe, which also affected the Iberia Peninsula and added momentum to the Reconquista (718–1492). Thus, Jews, sandwiched between Christian and Muslim communities, were thrown into the upheavals of society and eventually exposed to persecution.

The Almoravid Empire that emerged in 1040 (1040–1147, capital: Marrakech) invaded Al-Andalus in the southern part of Spain and expanded its territory to Zaragoza at the height of its power. The Almoravid Empire, which embraced the Maliki school of jurisprudence, was overthrown by the Almohad Empire (1130–1269) founded by Ibn Tumart, a Berber who revealed himself as Mahdi (savior) and led a puritanical reform movement. The Almohad Empire occupied Marrakech in 1147, and, after destroying the Almoravid Empire, placed the entire Al-Andalus region under its rule by 1157. Considering that the Almohads called themselves the "People of Tawheed (oneness of God)", it is easily inferable that

they could not be tolerant toward other religions. Thus, Jews were subjected to hideous persecution during the reign of the Almohad Empire. Maimonides could not escape but live his entire life in such a period when Christians and Muslims interacted with each other in an intricate manner.[6]

4. The view of Maimonides seen in *The Epistle to Yemen*[7]

4.1 Background to the writing

The Epistle to Yemen (*Iggeret Teman*) is a letter written by Maimonides, who served as the head of a Jewish community in Cairo, and sent to the Jewish community in Yemen in 1172, upon the request of Jacob ben Nethanael, dean of a Talmudical academy. In those days, Shia Muslims revolted against Saladin and gained control over Yemen, and forced Jews to convert to Islam. At the same time within the Jewish community in Yemen, a Messianic movement was started by a man who claimed to be the Messiah, which increased confusion within the community. It is under such circumstances that Maimonides, as a rabbi, wrote *The Epistle to Yemen* to encourage his fellow Jews who were facing a crisis that threatened the survival of their community. I consider this epistle provides important insights in helping us to understand the complicated situations that faced Jews in those days.

While legend holds that Jews settled in Yemen before the destruction of the First Temple (586 BC), records dating to the 3rd century and later indicate that Jews established a community in Yemen after their exile following the destruction of the Second Temple (70 CE). Before being conquered by Muslims, Yemen was divided into five kingdoms, including the Kingdom of Himyar. While the king of Himyar converted to Judaism in 384, this kingdom was collapsed by Christians of Ethiopia in 525. Then, Yemen was invaded by the Sasanian Empire in 570 and then by Muslims in 629, and eventually placed under Islamic rule. There might have been some Jews who converted to Islam, but it is likely that many of them maintained their belief in Judaism and kept in close contact with the Jewish community in Babylonia.

The Jewish community in Yemen played an important role in the Islamic world from the 11th to 13th centuries when Aden prospered as an international trading port, and the community had a close relationship with the Jewish community in Egypt during the reign of the Ayyubid dynasty (1169–1250) and Maimonides was the one in the Jewish community of Egypt. The movement of faith in the coming of the Messiah had already prevailed before that period, which indicates the possibility of Jews and Muslims being mutually influenced ideologically. At the end of the 9th century when the Zaidi sect of Shia Islam, which did not believe in the idea of the Occultation of the Imam, rose to power, the ruler took the Jewish faith in the coming of the Messiah as a revolt of Jews against their Islamic reign, and eventually took action to coerce Jews into converting to Islam.[8]

4.2 The introduction and beginning of the text of *The Epistle to Yemen*

In the introduction of *The Epistle to Yemen*, which is written in Hebrew, Maimonides first

expresses his respect to Nethanael, to whom the letter is addressed. The introduction also indicates how Maimonides felt relieved when he finally settled in Fustat in Egypt, after leaving his hometown, Cordoba, and travelling from Al-Andalus to North Africa in exile.

The text that follows the introduction is written in Judeo-Arabic, which starts with a summary of the difficult situation of the Jewish community in Yemen mentioned in Nethanael's letter. He states:

> What you mention concerning the affair of this insurgent in Yemen who decreed forced apostasy on Israel by forcing those in all the places he had conquered to apostatize, as the Berbers had done in the Maghrib—this news has disheartened us and shocked all of our communities, and rightly so. This is an evil tiding; *both ears of everyone who hears about it will tingle* [1 Sam 3:11; 2 Kings 21:12]. Our hearts languish and our minds are confused, our strength falters because of these great troubles that have come upon us, the forced apostasy at the two ends of the worlds, East and West, so that Israel was in the midst, *some on this side, and some on that* [Josh 8:22]. And concerning this kind of trying and alarming time the prophet said, interceding for us and praying for us: *I said, O Lord God, refrain! How will Jacob survive? He is so small* [Amos 7:5].[9]

Concerning the text "as the Berbers had done in the Maghrib," Maimonides probably meant the forced apostasy that he himself experienced during his stay in Fez. It seems quite likely that Maimonides, too, was forced to live a Muslim life and wear discriminatory clothing, as well as witness the destruction of synagogues.[10]

Though the Abbasid Empire (749–1258) placed Yemen under its rule, revolts against the empire occurred repeatedly in Yemen, which is located a great distance from Baghdad, the capital of the empire. Most of Yemenites were followers of either the Ismaili sect of Shia Islam, to which the Fatimid Empire adhered, or the Zaidi sect of Shia Islam that denies the idea of the Occultation of the Imam. Therefore, Yemenite Muslims were opposed to the reign of the Abbasid Empire that embraced Sunni Islam. In 1150, ʻAlī ibn al-Mahdī stood in open rebellion against the Abbasid Empire and called on people to repent their sins and live an ascetic life, which eventually developed into a Mahdi (savior) movement. The leadership of this movement was taken over by his son, ʻAbd al-Nabī ibn Alī ibn al-Mahdī, whom, presumably, Maimonides refers to as "this insurgent in Yemen" in *The Epistle to Yemen*.[11] The forced apostasy caused panic among Jews in Yemen, and word about the persecution suffered by Yemenite Jews threw the Jewish community in Egypt into confusion and despair. In this light, I may say that the prayer of Amos that Maimonides quoted in the letter was also his own prayer.

4.3 The first half of the main text of *The Epistle to Yemen*

In the first half of the main text, Maimonides discusses the persecution of the Jews from a

historical view point, as follows.

> Ever since then every king, or tyrant, or opponent, or violent conqueror has made it his aim and foremost concern to destroy our Law and abrogate our religion by violence and force of arms, like Amalek, Sisera, Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, Titus, Hadrian, and others of their sort. This is one of the two classes that strive to overcome the divine will. The second class comprises the cleverest and most learned of the nations, such as the Syrians, Persians, and Greeks. They too wish to destroy and abrogate the Law by means of arguments they conjure up and by means of disputation that they compose. They seek to abrogate the Law and to erase its effects by means of their compositions, just as the conquerors seek to do it by their swords.[12]

Maimonides enumerates oppressive rulers who persecuted the Israelites throughout history and argues that, unlike past persecutions that used the force of arms, the current Islamic Empire persecutes Jews by use of speech. In Chapter 29, Part 2 of *The Guide of the Perplexed* (hereinafter referred to as "*The Guide*"), Maimonides states that the books of prophecy foretold that God would put an end to the violent persecutions of the Jews by tyrannies whose names are mentioned in the above quotation, i.e., Sennacherib of the Neo-Assyrian Empire (c.911 BC–612 BC) and Nebuchadnezzar of the Neo-Babylonian Empire (626 BC–539 BC).[13] Special attention should be paid to his reference to Syrians, Persians, and Greeks in the above quotation. Though he mentions in the same chapter of *The Guide* that the fall of the Achaemenid Empire of Persia (c.525 BC–330 BC) is foretold in the Book of Haggai (2:6-7), it cannot be the Achaemenid Persians that Maimonides had in mind when mentioning Persians in the above quotation. Considering that in *The Epistle to Yemen*, Maimonides discusses oppressive rules in the context of the rising and falling of Islamic empires, it seems likely that one of the Persians that Maimonides had in mind is Al-Ghazali of the Ash'ari school of theology, who helped formulate the Sunni doctrine.

Maimonides also refers to Syrians and Greeks in Chapter 71, Part 1 of *The Guide*, in which he argues that the doctrines of the Ash'ari school of theology, which is an orthodox Islamic theology, and the Mu'tazillite school of theology, which is based on rational speculation, were founded on books that had been written by Christians, i.e., a Greek, John Philoponus (c.490–570), and a Syrian, Ibn 'Adī (893–974), for the purpose of arguing against philosophers, and that therefore the arguments of the Islamic theologians of these schools are not based on logical demonstrations.[14] The important thing to note is that Maimonides implicitly indicates that ideological antagonism among Muslims was behind the persecution of the Yemenite Jews. Presumably, Maimonides thought that the ideological disagreement among Islamic sects and the ideological dissociation between the ruling class and the common people were fundamental causes of the persecution of the Jews. Perhaps, Maimonides painfully faced the fact that the history of Islamic empires was also the history of conflicts stemming from ideological disagreement, which led the Jews to be

exposed to repeated persecutions.

5. Maimonides' view of Christianity

While it is generally held that Judaism has no systematic theology, Maimonides is credited with having organized the teachings of Judaism for the first time. Originally, Rabbinic Judaism had no organized doctrine, and the absence of an established creed attracted criticism both externally and internally, namely, from another monotheistic religion, Islam, and the Karaite sect of Judaism, which did not accept Rabbinic Judaism. In response to such criticism, certain principles that appeared to be a "Jewish doctrine" gradually took shape, which, reportedly, Maimonides organized into the established creed that is known to us today.

Then, what is the legitimate belief of Judaism? Maimonides enumerates the thirteen principles of Judaism at the end of the tenth chapter of the introduction to Sanhedrin in the Order of Damages in his *Commentary on the Mishna*, known as *Pereq Heleq*. In Chapter 50, Part 1 of *The Guide*, he defines "belief" as follows: "belief (ʿitiqād) is not the notion that is uttered, but the notion that is represented in the soul when it has been averred of it that it is in fact just as it has been represented." And also states: "If you belong to those who are satisfied with expressing in speech the opinions that are correct or that you deem to be correct, without representing them to yourself and believing them, and still less without seeking certain knowledge regarding them, you take a very easy road." If I take a penetrating remark, it means that when one reads the confession of faith during a service at a Christian church by merely uttering the written words without connecting any image in his mind, then his faith is far from what Maimonides defined as belief. Therefore, Maimonides concludes: "For there is no belief except after a representation; belief is the affirmation that what has been represented is outside the mind just as it has been represented in the mind."

That is to say, according to Maimonides, one's belief is to believe in one's image conceived in the mind, and to regard it as valid when representing it in words. Furthermore, he writes: "If, however, someone believes that He is one, but possesses a certain number of essential attributes, he says in his words that He is one, but believes Him in his thought to be many. This resembles what the Christians say: namely, that He is one but also three, and that the three are one."[15] As he states, we cannot conceive the image of one being three and three being one. Therefore, it is quite natural for Maimonides to dismiss the Christian idea of the Trinity as not deserving being called a legitimate belief.[16] Considering that he lived in a district in Fustat that had a large Christian population, he must have been well versed in Christian theology. In this light, the fact that Maimonides thought negatively of Christianity is worthy of special attention.

6. Maimonides' negative view of *kalām*

In Chapter 71, Part 1 of *The Guide*, Maimonides criticizes the negative influence that Islamic theology had on his fellow Jews, as follows.

> As for that scanty bit of argument regarding the notion of the unity of God and regarding what depends on this notion, which you will find in the writings of some Gaonim and in those of the Qaraites, it should be noted that the subject matter of this argument was taken over by them from the Mutakallimūn of Islam and that this bit is very scanty indeed if compared to what Islam has compiled on this subject. Also it has so happened that Islam first began to take this road owing to a certain sect, namely, the Muʿtazila, from whom our coreligionists took over certain things walking upon the road the Muʿtazila had taken. After a certain time another sect arose in Islam, namely, the Ashʿariyya, among whom other opinions arose. You will not find any of these latter opinions among our coreligionists. This was not because they preferred the first opinion to the second, but because it so happened that they had taken over and adopted the first opinion and considered it a matter proven by demonstration.[17]

As discussed in the section 4 above, Maimonides dismisses the arguments of the *mutakallimūn* as quasi proofs and far from logical proofs. In the above quotation, he indicates that the Karaite sect of Judaism that denied Rabbinic Judaism was heavily influenced by Islamic *kalām*. Then, he mentions that the arguments of the *mutakallimūn* go against the methodologies of philosophers that are based on logical demonstrations, and that the *mutakallimūn* adopted the methodology of Christian apologetic theologians, as shown below.

> Know also that all the statements that the men of Islam—both the Muʿtazila and the Ashʿariyya—have made concerning these notions are all of them opinions founded upon premises that are taken over from the books of the Greeks and the Syrians who wished to disagree with the opinions of the philosophers and to reject their statements. The reason for this was that: inasmuch as the Christian community came to include those communities, the Christian preaching being what it is known to be, and inasmuch as the opinions of the philosophers were widely accepted in those communities in which philosophy had first risen, and inasmuch as kings rose who protected religion—the learned of those periods from among the Greeks and the Syrians saw that those preachings are greatly and clearly opposed to the philosophic opinions. Thus there arose among them this science of *kalām*.[18]

Furthermore, Maimonides states that the *mutakallimūn* learned the methodology from Christian apologetic theologians, such as Philoponus and Ibn ʻAdī, to champion the Islamic law and doctrine against philosophical teachings. He expresses his opinion as follows:

> They [mutakallimūn] started to establish premises that would be useful to them with regard to their belief and to refute those opinions that ruined the foundations of their Law. When thereupon the

community of Islam arrived and the books of the philosophers were transmitted to it, then were also transmitted to it those refutations composed against the books of the philosophers. Thus they found the *kalām* of John Philoponus, of Ibn ʿAdī, and of others with regard to these notions, held on to it, and were victorious in their own opinion in a great task that they sought to accomplish.[19]

7. Conclusion

Maimonides remained consistently critical of Christianity. In Chapter 50, Part 1 of *The Guide*, he completely denies the Christian concept of the Trinity by stating, "If, however, someone believes that He is one, but possesses a certain number of essential attributes, he says in his words that He is one, but believes Him in his thought to be many."

Speaking of the concept of the oneness of God in Islamic theology, and of discussion over this concept, the Geonim and the Karaite Jews accepted the opinions of the Mu'tazillites in some respects, which, according to Maimonides, is because they regarded the opinions of Mu'tazillites as having been proven by logical demonstrations. In Chapter 71, Part 1 of *The Guide*, he writes, "all the statements that the men of Islam have made are all of them opinions founded upon premises that are taken over from the books of the Greeks and the Syrians who wished to disagree with the opinions of the philosophers and to reject their statements," thus indicating that Islamic *kalām* originated in Christian apologetic theology.

For my future study, I will continue my research by shedding light on how Maimonides learned and viewed Christian apologetic theology, which influenced Islamic theology, and how his understanding of Christian apologetic theology affected his view on Islam and Christianity.

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[1] Existing works written by Maimonides include: *Treatise on Logic* (*Maqāla fī ṣināʿat al-manṭiq*) written during his days in Al-Andalus; *Essay on the Calendar* (*Maʾamar ha-ʿibbur*) (1157/1158) about the Jewish calendar; *Commentary on the Mishna* (*Pirush ha-mishnayot*) (1161-1168) written after he left Al-Andalus; *The Epistle to Yemen* (*Iggeret Teman*) (1172); *Mishneh Torah* (1168-77); *The Guide of the Perplexed* (*Dalālat al-ḥāʾirīn*) (1185-1191), his representative work; *Treatise on Resurrection* (*Maʾamar tehiyyat ha-metim*) 1191; responsa and letters addressed to Jewish communities in the Mediterranean region; and medical, pharmaceutical, and hygienic writings.

[2] Judeo-Arabic is a language that is based in Arabic and uses the Hebrew alphabet. According to Joshua Blau, Jewish people began to use this language in the 7th century, but works written in this language dating to the 9th century and earlier are non-existent today. (J. Blau. (1988). *Studies in Middle Arabic and its Judaeo-Arabic Variety*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, p. 86.) In *The Guide of the Perplexed*, the text is written in Arabic, while phrases and sentences for which Maimonides seems to have placed special emphasis, such as quotations from the Bible and the Talmud, are written in Hebrew.

[3] Sarah Stroumsa (2003). 'Saadya and Jewish kalam.' in D. H. Frank and O. Leaman eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 71-72.

[4] See Aiko Kanda. 'Maimonides ni okeru Islam Shibenshingakusha no Shingaku Rongi (Theological Discourse of Islamic Mutakallimūn in Maimonides).' *Shukyo Kenkyu*. Vol. 85-4, March 2012, pp. 299–300.

[5] See A. D. Ortiz, trans. Hirotaka Tateishi. (2006). *Spain 3000-nen no Rekishi* (*España: tres milenios de Historia*), Showado; Tetsuyuki Seki, Hirotaka Tateishi, and Jiro Nakatsuka eds. (2008). *Sekai Rekishi Taikei: Spain-shi 1: Kodai ― Kinsei* (*The Outline of the World History: History of Spain from Ancient to Modern Times*). Yamakawa Shuppansha: and W. D. Lomax, trans. Kunio Hayashi (1996). *Reconquista: Chusei Spain no Kokudokaifuku Undo* (*Reconquest And Crusade In Medieval Spain*). Tosui Shobo. It should be noted that Spanish history is interpreted differently by authors with different perspective.

[6] See Aiko Kanda. 'Maimonides no Henreki: Sono Chosaku ni Ataeta Eikyo (Maimonides' Biography - Influences on his Works).' *Isshinkyo Sekai* (*The World of Monothestic Religions*). No. 5, March 2014 (scheduled).

[7] See Aiko Kanda. 'Maimonides *Yemen eno Tegami* Kosatsu (Examining '*Iggeret Teman'* of Maimonides: Overcoming the Crisis of Community Disruption).' *Shukyo Kenkyu*. Vol.86-4, March 2013, pp.44-45.

[8] Y. Tobi. (2007). 'Yemen.' in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*.(2nd ed.). Keter Publishing House. Few records of the history of Yemen exist today. It is required to conduct further research not only on papers written from a Jewish viewpoint, but also on those written from a Muslim viewpoint.
[9] Maimonides, trans. J. L. Kraemer. (2000). 'Epistle to Yemen.' in R. Lerner. ed. *Maimonides' Empire of Light.* Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, pp. 101-102.
[10] J. L. Kraemer. (2008). *Maimonides: The Life and World of One of Civilization's Greatest Minds.* New York: Doubleday Religion, p. 92
[11] *Ibid*., pp. 234-235. Saladin of the Abbasid Empire sent troops to suppress this movement and executed 'Abd al-Nabī in 1176.
[12] Maimonides, *Epistle to Yemen*, p. 103.
[13] Moses Maimonides. trans. S. Pines. (1963). *The Guide of the Perplexed*. Chicago and London: the University of Chicago Press, pp. 337-344.
[14] *Ibid*., pp. 176-178. See also, L. S. B. MacCoull ed. (2011). *Documenting Christianity in Egypt, Sixth to Fourteenth Centuries*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
[15] Maimonides, *the Guide of the Perplexed*, p. 111.
[16] See Aiko Kanda. 'Maimonides no Singaku (Theology of Maimonides).' *Shukyo Kenkyu*. Vol. 87-4, March 2014 (scheduled).
[17] Maimonides, *the Guide of the Perplexed*, pp. 176-177.
[18] *Ibid*., p. 177.
[19] *Ibid*., pp. 177-178.