

## The Language of the Quran and the Bible about the Vision of God Almighty

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### Abstract

In the text of the Holy Quran and the Bible, it is emphasized that God is invisible and cannot be seen by the eyes. There is a distinction in that while the Old Testament does not regard God as merely a mental entity, it acknowledges a direct presence of God in speaking to humans through specific verses and signs. The vision represented in the Quran is used to explain the perception of events and the manifestation of human actions on the Day of Judgment, whereas the vision in bodily form regarding seeing God exists in the Two Testaments. The language of the Holy Quran cannot be influenced by the language of the Bible, although there are similarities in some instances. Ultimately, despite the claims of the Bible regarding the invisibility of God, their descriptions often suggest a corporeal image. However, the Quran explicitly denies the embodiment and vision of God Almighty, and instances discussing sight are often interpreted as a denial of sight.

**Keywords:** Quran, Superstitions, Torah, Revelation, Bible, Holy book, Gospel, Christianity, Distortion, Judaism, Interpretation, Intellectual Domain, Language of Religion, Vision.

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## Introduction

The relationship between language and religion is a topic that can be examined in the fields of sociolinguistics, social linguistics, religious studies, philosophy of religion, and discourse analysis (Wiegand, 2004: 351).

Most religious texts have specific rhetorical characteristics; for instance, metaphor is widely used in these texts. In many of these types of texts, metaphoric similarities can be seen between "God" and "King" or "Father," and "Paradise" or "Hell" is described in comparison to phenomena of this world (Sztajer, 2004).

Islam views the Quran as direct revelation, while Judaism and Christianity regard their scriptures as a form of heavenly inspiration. Religions with scriptures usually place great importance on a specific language. Heavenly scriptures are generally not translatable or interpretable into other languages, and religious rituals must also be performed in a specific language (Jakel, 2003: 2, 20–41.)

Descriptions of God by the Quran vastly exceed the understanding of humans at the time of its revelation; it is because without the Quran, humanity would never reach such a profound understanding of recognition; the most accurate descriptions of God are those presented in the Quran, which the scriptures of other religions lack, except to a very minimal extent.

A brief look at the Bible is sufficient to reveal the weakness of the descriptions of God within them, which diminish Him to a level lower than that of the most worthless creatures and involve irrelevant intrusions into His sacred and exalted realm.

The present study evaluates the language of the Quran and the Bible concerning the issue of the Divine Truth vision. It will also address the evidence and respond to questions arising from the foundations of the Divine Truth vision. The most important questions are as follows:

1. What is the intellectual domain of the language of religion, and to what extent can it serve as a force for interpreting the apparent meanings of texts regarding the issue of witnessing the Divine Truth?
2. Has the language of the Quran been influenced by the language of the Bible in expressing the Divine Truth vision?
3. Is the claim of consensus and lack of disagreement between the language of the Quran and the Bible regarding the Divine Truth vision provable?

The issue of witnessing the Divine Truth is referenced in both the Quran and the Bible, having led to varying viewpoints among intellectual currents. Some assert the vision of God, while others reject the witnessing of the Divine Truth. In the Bible, certain features of God are

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mentioned that suggest some similarities between God and humans; some thinkers consider these words and phrases to be metaphorical and figurative. Religious and sacred factors can have significant impacts on transforming languages, creating new words and concepts, determining the social position of a language, and language planning.

For example, the terms "Vision" and "Sight" are used in the language of the Quran. In language, "Vision" has two meanings:

- 1) Seeing with the eye;
- 2) Knowledge and awareness, or inner vision.

Additionally, the word "Sight" sometimes means seeing and at other times means anticipation and hope (Ibn Sidah, 2000 AD/1421 AH: 10, 338; Ibn Manzūr, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 5, 48).

Thus, the witnessing and sight that the Noble Quran allows concerning God and invites seekers and perfected humans to encounter is the witness and vision of the heart. God can be perceived with the soul (not with the physical eye in the realm of nature, nor with the imaginary eye in the realm of examples, nor with the intellect in the realm of conceptual understanding), but in the domain of the heart with direct witnessing. Of course, the degrees of this witnessing vary according to the degrees of the witnesses, and each person will perceive God and His beauty and majesty to the extent of their own existence. Those who are burdened by sin and entangled in veils, though deprived of the witnessing of beauty and the names of Divine beauty, will nonetheless see the majesty, might, and retribution of God, and His names of majesty and might.

What is of greater importance in this discussion and has led to much debate throughout the history of theology are the issues presented in this section. Among these is the assertion that God has neither a body, nor is He visible, nor does He occupy a place or space. Moreover, these three are interdependent; that is, if He is visible, it necessitates having a physical form and location, and if He does not have a location, He certainly cannot be a body and thus cannot be perceived in any way.

Some proponents of the possibility of witnessing God have claimed against this argument that there is no evidence that seeing with the eye is exclusively for physical bodies! What prevents non-material entities from being seen with the eye, especially if the vision of the eye were to change and operate on a higher level than at present? The fallacy of this statement is clear because seeing with the eye is a material act, and this material process necessarily pertains to material matters. It is unreasonable to expect a person to comprehend the immaterial using material tools (Makarem Shirazi, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 4, 244).

## 1. Background

Articles and research have been written in this area, as well as various theses and papers aimed at clarifying the meaning of the Divine names in Western philosophy, such as the following:

- Mohammad Hadi Ma'rifat, "The Language of the Quran," Thought of the Seminary, No. 10 and 11.
- Subḥani, Ja'far, "Ruyatullah fi Daw' al-Kitab wal Sunnah wal 'Aql."
- Sayyid Abul Qasim Khu'i, (1974 AD/1394 AH). "al-Bayan fi Tafsir al-Quran."
- Mohammad Baqir Malaki Mianeji, (1957 AD/1377 AH). "A look at Quranic sciences."
- Sztajer, S. (2004), "How Is Religious Discourse Possible? The Constitutive Role of Metaphors in Religious Discourse." *Metaphorik*, 4: 49-54.
- Wiegand H. E. (2004), "Sociolinguistics: An International Handbook of the Science of Language and Society." Vol. 1. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Mohammad Javad Enayati Rad. "Linguistics of Religion in the Perspective of al-Mizan." *Quranic Researches*. No. 9 and 10, pp. 48-49.
- Mohammad Legenhausen, "Roundtable on the Language of Religion." *Knowledge*. No. 19, p. 15.

Despite various studies on the witnessing of the Divine Truth, no linguistic research has been conducted regarding the language of the Quran and the Bible on this matter. This writing holds an innovative aspect, merging two significant topics.

## 2. The Intellectual Sphere of the Language of Religion

In the intellectual domain, the focus is on the concepts present in the text. This means analyzing the overall message of the work, the semantic connections used in the writing, and the thoughts and ideas of the author. In this stage, the text is examined in terms of intellectual characteristics, temperament, beliefs, inclinations, worldview, and other cognitive aspects, such as the objective or subjective nature of God and whether God is personal or impersonal.

One of the central issues in the intellectual sphere of the language of religion is: What exactly is the referent and criterion of God? Is God a personal or impersonal reality? Is God an objective or subjective truth? Another issue is the predicates in religious propositions, such as "God came," "God saw," and "God has been seen." Do these predicates carry the same meaning as those in ordinary propositions? Is the concept of coming, seeing, and being seen the same as it is for humans?

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Another major discussion is the meaningfulness of religious language. Do religious propositions have meaning, and what is the criterion for that? Other important issues in the language of religion include whether the words used in religion are symbols, signs for other matters, or if they are used in the same way as words in everyday language.

Fideism is an important theory in resolving the conflict between science and religion. Although it is a theory regarding religious propositions, it can also be applicable to science. In Western philosophy, two of the most prominent philosophers and theologians of this century, Søren Kierkegaard (Anderson, 2006 AD/1385 SH) and Ludwig Wittgenstein (Glock, 2008), were the most extreme defenders of Fideism. In this concise writing, we will present Wittgenstein's ideas.

Fideism apparently derives from the root "Fides," meaning faith, and is a term for a theory that states: Faith is an independent realm, and in understanding religious and faith statements and accepting and believing in them, there is no need to go beyond the realm of faith and religious belief.

For centuries, scholars have sought rational validation of religious statements. Proponents of this theory argue that such validation is neither necessary nor feasible; they claim that no external criterion can assess an inner realm, and the life of faith is itself a matter of internal concerns. Thus, Kierkegaard believed that religion is irrational, meaning that it should not be tested by rational standards. Wittgenstein came to a similar conclusion, although their views differed.

Another topic related to this discussion, which has significantly influenced Wittgenstein's ideas, is the concept of language games. In the early twentieth century, most analytical philosophers and logicians believed that language (a collection of concepts in the mind) represents reality and may or may not correspond to it; however, in any case, mental concepts depict the world of reality. Wittgenstein refers to this mental operation as the theory of representation, considering the mind as mirrors reflecting reality. However, Wittgenstein completely abandons this view in the first part of the *Philosophical Investigations* (Wittgenstein, 1968) stating, "One of the most mistaken views about language is this theory of representation. Essentially, we do not represent reality; rather, language performs an action similar to a game. The philosopher should leave things as they are and observe how people speak; our job is not to determine what the most appropriate statement is. The philosopher's work is merely to distinguish between utterances—one being scientific and the other religious." (Larijani, 1998: 20)

Following the revelation of the inconsistency between the language of religion and the language of science, one proposed solution to resolve this inconsistency was to differentiate between the two. In this solution, the claim was made that each of these fields describes a part of the realities of the world, but religious propositions do not describe realities; instead, they are used to convey moral messages and invite people to live a faithful life. From this perspective, the language of religion is not meant to express objective realities; instead, like myths and ancient stories, it serves as a symbolic language to encourage people toward good actions and to steer them away from inappropriate behaviors.

Understanding the language of religion as symbolic may provide a basis for accepting the theory of multiple interpretations within the realm of religion. This means that anyone can consider any term in religion as a symbol of a certain truth. According to the arguments supporting the necessity of revelation and heavenly religion, one of the goals of the heavenly scriptures is to provide enlightening answers to fundamental questions about crucial issues, such as the origin of existence. Now, if it is assumed that the language of these texts does not accurately convey these truths, the goals of religion become unattainable, and religion, in fact, will be rendered ineffective.

### 3. The Impact of Religious Language in Interpretation of Apparent Meanings

The term "*Ta'wil*" (Interpretation) in Islamic sciences is a shared term and is used in Quranic studies, exegesis (Tafsir), principles of jurisprudence (*Uṣūl al-Fiqh*), and theology (*Kalam*). Although interpretation has a general linguistic meaning that encompasses referencing anything back to its original, in theology, it has a more specific meaning and is primarily used concerning words (Shaker, 1997 AD/1376 SH: 29).

*Jurjani* defined interpretation as follows: "In its essence, interpretation means "To return" and in religious context, it refers to turning a word from its apparent meaning to a probable meaning, provided that the probable meaning is in accordance with the Book and the Sunna. For example, in the noble verse, "*Yukhrijul Ḥayya minal Mayyit*," if it means as bringing a bird out of an egg, it would be exegesis, but if it is understood as bringing a believer out of a disbeliever or a scholar out of an ignorant person, then it would be interpretation." (Jurjani, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 22)

*Ibn Athir* also notes that its lexical meaning is "To refer back," and in technical terms, it is defined as returning a word and speech from its

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apparent meaning to a meaning that is weaker than the apparent meaning (Ṭurayḥi, 1955 AD/1375 AH: 5, 312).

*Ibn Athir* states in the definition of interpretation: "It means the transferring the apparent meaning of a word from its original sense to a meaning that requires evidence, such that if there were no evidence, the apparent meaning of the word would not be abandoned." (Ibn Athir, 1947 AD/1367 AH: 1, 80)

The Andalusian philosopher *Ibn Rushd* considered extracting a term from its literal meaning to its metaphorical meaning as interpretation (Ibn Rushd, 1972: 32).

*Ṭurayḥi* believes that the interpretive meaning is the hidden meaning of a term, different from its apparent meaning. In reference to the narration of Imam Ali (AS), where he says, "No verse has descended upon me without teaching me its interpretation," (al-Ḥarrani, 1962 AD/1382 AH: 196) he writes that the interpretation of verses is the same as the deeper meaning (*Batn*) of the verses (Ṭurayḥi, 1955 AD/1375 AH: 5, 312).

Some contemporary researchers have stated four meanings for this term: Reference, conclusion, interpretation, and clarification, which were the intended meanings during the time of the revelation of the Quran and the issuance of narrations, and this term by *Uṣūlis* is commonly used to refer to meanings that contradict the apparent (Shaker, 1997 AD/1376 SH: 15).

Prominent Quranic scholars consider the essence of interpretation to fall under the category of the meanings of words, specifically concerning ambiguous verses. They argue that it does not apply to all verses of the Quran. Two primary theories regarding this concept are:

**A) *Ibn Taymiyyah's* Theory (Identical Instance):** According to *Ibn Taymiyyah*, interpretation is not a type of the denotation of words, but rather an external matter upon which speech is based. In other words, interpretation is a reality that the words and meanings refer to (Ibn Taymiyyah, n.d.: 23).

**B) *Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabaṭabai's* Theory:** He holds that the purpose of interpretation is not the meanings of words, with the distinction that the intended meaning is not simply the instance of those meanings. Instead, interpretation refers to the essence of anything from which it originates and to which it returns. The *Ta'wil* of a dream is its interpretation, the *Ta'wil* of a commandment is its legislative purport, and the *Ta'wil* of an action is its benefit and goal. This is because a rational person does not do anything without seeking a benefit or pursuing a goal. The *Ta'wil* of an event is the cause that played a role in

its occurrence (Ṭabaṭaba'i, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 3, 23, 25, 47, 49; 8, 135 and 13, 349).

Various intellectual schools have engaged in interpretation in different ways. Essentially, the emergence of the *Khawarij* was based on the interpretation of the verse "Indeed, the judgment is for none but Allah" (al-Yūsuf: 40) during the event of the Battle of *Ṣiffīn*.

The Mu'tazila, an important theological group, is known for their interpretation practices. Many Mu'tazilites went to extremes in *Ta'wil*, leading them to deny certain concepts such as the punishment of the grave, the scale (*Mizan*), the path (*Ṣiraṭ*), and the ascension (*Mi'raj*) (Mir Wali Aldi, 1943 AD/1362 AH: 1, 287; Subḥani, 2000 AD/1421 AH: 2, 37; Shirazi, 1946 AD/1366 AH: 163).

The Ismailis, similar to the Mu'tazilites, also tended to extremism and were labeled as "*Baṭīnis*." (Shaker, 1997 AD/1376 SH: 259)

The Ahl al-Hadith and *Hanbalis* opposed interpretation and leaned towards a literal interpretation, unlike the Mu'tazilites. For instance, *Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal* only permitted interpretation in three cases (ibid: 150). The Ash'aris claimed to have found a middle ground (ibid: 164), but gradually, the rational elements within Ash'ari theology and the growth of rationalism in Islamic society led to a renewed interest in interpretation among the Ash'aris. Ash'ari theologians such as Ghazali and Fakhr Razi turned towards interpretation, similar to the Mu'tazilite theologians.

*Shahristani* describes the method of the Salaf regarding the affirmative attributes (news-based attributes) of God, emphasizing that these attributes should be affirmed without interpretation. He contends that regarding the affirmation of these attributes for God, they were referred to as "*Ṣafayiah*." This is in contrast to the Mu'tazila, who denied these attributes and was labeled as "Mu'tattila." He further adds that some have resorted to the term interpretation for these attributes in a way that allows for interpretative possibilities.

However, others opposed this interpretation, asserting that according to certain rational principles, God is not like any of His creatures, and that we do not know the meanings of these attributes and terms used for God. Moreover, we are not obligated to understand and interpret them, but rather simply to believe that God has no equal, counterpart, or partner. Among those in this group were *Malik ibn Anas*, *Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal*, *Sufyan Thūri*, and *Dawūd ibn Ali Iṣfahani*. *Malik ibn Anas*, in interpreting the verse "*Istawa 'alal 'Arsh*" (a-A'raf: 54), stated: "*al-Istiwa' Ma'lūmun wal Kayfiyyati Majhūlah wal Imanu bihi Wajibun wal Su'alu 'anhu Bid'ah*." Some later scholars, opposing the method of the Salaf, went even further, asserting that it is obligatory to accept these



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terms in their apparent meanings. Therefore, they fell into comparison (*Tashbih*) (Shahristani, 1944 AD/1364 AH: 1, 105). This group opposed interpretation for two reasons: One, considering the prohibition against interpretation as mentioned in the Quran, and second, because of the uncertainty of the meaning in interpretation. They argue that the intended meaning of God Almighty might not actually be that interpretative meaning. In fact, the opponents of interpretation acted cautiously (Shia Research, 2016 AD/1395 SH: 27-42).

Some researchers have categorized the methods and types of interpretation into two general styles: Symbolic style and metaphorical style. The symbolic style is a method of interpretation that relates to the logical meaning of the term, not its implicative or entailment meaning. *Šūfi* extremists, *Baṭīnis*, and certain mystics and philosophers utilize this method. The metaphorical style, on the other hand, is a method of interpretation that relates logically to the words, meaning that the interpretative meaning is the metaphorical meaning of the words. This method is applied in jurisprudence, principles, theology, and exegesis (Shaker, 1997 AD/1376 SH: 61).

"Ta'wil" is a reading of the text that concludes with the understanding or creation of meanings. According to research by Ralph Manheim (Manheim, 1959: 210, 20), Schleiermacher has stated the following in this regard:

An interpreter can find pathways to possible meanings from the surface of the text, as well as from grammatical, syntactical, and linguistic features, and also through metaphors and the rules of meaning and expression of the texts. This interpretation is linguistic and grammatical. The next step involves careful attention to the historical context of the texts. By considering the mindset of the author and the initial commentators, and through comparative analysis with the historical knowledge of his time, the interpreter can assess different meanings and speculate on which might be more accurate and precise. This process is referred to as "Technical Interpretation." These two methods of interpretation, which complement each other, enable us to approach a considerably accurate understanding of the text's intended meaning.

Dilthey expresses this concept in reverse, stating: "Interpretations are always limited by historical horizons; nevertheless, there exists such understanding that allows for an interpretative comprehension of them, which is made possible through human linguistic experiences." (Malick, 1969: 87)

Heidegger addresses this point in the following way: "All interpretations are based on a prior perspective, which is to say the

systematic methods of linguistic and literary analysis that clarify the background or prior perspective of the scope and range of understanding." (Hersch, 1967: 208)

Gadamer, who was a student of Heidegger in the early 1920s during his first lectures at the universities of Freiburg and Marburg, introduces the significant work "Truth and Method," where he writes: "Hermeneutics represents the way all human experiences are interconnected in the world; for every experience must inevitably be understood. In this understanding (the interpretive act or experience), the role of human language is paramount. Language is not hidden behind experiences; rather, it forms the fundamental structure of each experience. No practical wisdom (Phronesis), according to Aristotle, can be found that escapes the nature of language. If we pay attention to the language-based nature of understanding, we first recognize the importance of Heidegger's interpretations, which equate understanding with interpretation. Linguistic interpretation is the shape of any kind of interpretation; even in music, immediate, unmediated, and non-semantic interpretations are rooted in our prior linguistic experiences. Without language, we not only fail to advance any experience but also lose the ability to place experiences within a communicative framework. Language is the foundation of any act of understanding. Language is the fundamental aspect of our existence in the world and expresses the finiteness of human beings." (Luhmann, 1960: 708)

#### **4. The Language of the Quran in Relation to the Languages of the Bible**

Religion and spirituality are among the human phenomena that have the greatest dependence on language. Prayer, expression of religious beliefs, and the promotion of faith all require language. On the other hand, different sects within a religion have their own specific discourses (Wiegand, 2004: 352). Since religious and spiritual experiences are generally not "Real" experiences (related to the physical world), language plays an important role in embodying and framing these experiences; in fact, language is the only medium through which these experiences relate to reality.

Some individuals, influenced by the Western interpretations of the religious texts of Christianity and Judaism, attempt to compare the Quran with these texts despite the fundamental differences between the Quran and the scriptures of the Bible. To prevent intellectual deviations and misinterpretations of the Quran, it is necessary to correctly understand the language of the Quran from various aspects. Various theories have been proposed regarding the language of religion in general and the

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language of the Quran in particular. In this discussion, we will briefly examine three theories that stand out as particularly significant:

### 4.1. Ordinary Language

According to this perspective, "The language of the Quran is the same as the language of understanding and communication commonly used by rational individuals, and God has chosen no other means or language to convey His message to the people." (Khu'i, 1980 AD/1401 AH: 281) In other words, "The sacred legislator has not invented a special method or new way in his teachings and proclamations but has acted in accordance with rational methods." (Maleki Miyanjie, 1998 AD/1377 SH: 25) Others have written in this context: "In the Holy Quran, there are numerous verses that imply the Quran is a simple book meant for the common people; therefore, like all ordinary and conventional discussions, its apparent meaning should be intended and comprehensible to all." (Najmi et al., 2008 AD/1387 SH: 291) Sometimes, "Ordinary Language" is used in a broader sense that includes metaphorical, symbolic, and allegorical language, referring to the conversations that are common among all rational individuals (the language of the rational).

The language of rational individuals encompasses metaphor, allegory, symbolism, and simile. In this case, the language of the Quran can largely be considered ordinary. However, sometimes "Ordinary language" refers to the direct use of words in their literal meaning, without any metaphor, simile, allegory, or implication. In this case, it is a specific term that needs to be defined initially. If this is the case, the language of the Quran cannot be regarded as purely ordinary (Mişbah, n.d.: 16). Some consider this theory to be applicable only within the realm of Sharia (verses of commandments).

### 4.2. Symbolic Language

According to this theory, the statements found in sacred religious texts, including the Quran, are not in ordinary language nor in a direct and explicit form, but rather in a coded and allusive language. Therefore, what is understood from the apparent phrases is not the intended meaning, but this apparent code refers to truths that can only be expressed in indirect (symbolic) language. According to this theory, the apparent implications of divine verses are not the intended meanings. This perspective has manifested itself in mystical interpretations and sometimes in the framework of new theological approaches to analyzing language and revelation.

One point that should not be overlooked in this context is that one cannot claim an ayah (verse) is symbolic without reason, nor can every expression be seen as a code or symbol for any meaning or truth; rather,

a correspondence must exist between them (Rajabi, 1997 AD/1376 SH: 47).

#### 4.3. Composite Language (Transrational)

According to the proponents of this theory, one cannot attribute a specific language to the Quran, nor restrict it to any one type; rather, it is shaped according to the themes and types of propositions, as well as the objectives that the recipient of the revelation intended with the descent of the verses. Additionally, it aligns with the overarching worldview found in the Quran, thus defining the identity and structure of its language. Accordingly, the style of expression and the meaningful construction of Quranic concepts and content are a blend of various methods and a composite of multiple languages.

Some thinkers have stated regarding this matter: "The theories that consider the language of religion to be a mix of various styles are strong theories; meaning, if we consider the language of religion to be absolutely ordinary, with no symbolic aspect, or conversely, if we say that all religious concepts are symbolic and that there are no real or ordinary concepts, neither of these two views is correct; rather, a certain elaboration should be made." (Miṣbah, n.d.: 16) In other words, "We cannot issue a general directive within the realm of the language of religion and say that all religious matters have a specific or ordinary language; rather, the language of religion is a mixture of all of these (languages), and religion utilizes various languages." (Legenhausen: 15)

It can be seen in the words and statements of some scholars that they say: the language of religion is a special and unique language. However, it should be noted that the perception of Western scholars is not the same as that of some Muslim thinkers on this matter; for instance, in the West, some influenced by Wittgenstein's philosophy hold the belief that the language of religion is a special language and differs from philosophical and scientific language and the like (Journal of Marifat: 19, 15).

Regarding the problems that religious texts, especially the Bible, face-such as the conflict between the content of the Bible and the achievements of science and philosophy-they are compelled to say: Religious texts have a specific language. However, what some Muslim researchers intend is something different. They want to express that the common methods among those involved in conversation and the usual rhetorical tools are inadequate and ineffective for assessing the language of religion and the language of the Quran; for example, it has been written: "The Quran, in its clear and comprehensive expressions, employs a method distinct from the typical methods used by humans in conversations." (Ma'rifat: 1, 54) Sometimes, their intention is that the language of the Quran does not fully align with any of the other

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languages; for instance, it is not merely a scientific or symbolic language, but has a special structure. Therefore, the uniqueness of the language of the Quran should not be regarded as an independent theory separate from the third theory.

### **5. The Language of Religion in Describing the Vision of the Exalted God**

The topic of the language of religion, as one of the branches of the philosophy of religion in the contemporary century, holds a special place in Western philosophy. Generally, religious philosophers adopt two viewpoints regarding the analysis of religious language:

1) A viewpoint that considers religious statements as merely reflecting values, actions, and the expression of feelings of the believers (non-cognitive); this includes theories such as Tillich's "Symbolic Language," Santayana's "Poetic" theory, Brice Whit's "Pragmatism," Cassirer's "Mythical" theory, and Wittgenstein's "Language games."

2) A viewpoint that sees religious statements as referring to reality and describing facts (Cognitive); for example, the theories of Islamic thinkers, Aquinas's "Analogy" theory, John Hick's "Post-mortem Verifiability" theory, and Basil Mitchell's theories of "Falsifiability and Meaningfulness." Ultimately, the language of religion does not have a specific function alone; rather, it is a combination of multiple languages (Salari Rad, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 111).

In the twentieth century, philosophers seriously considered the nature of religious language and presented various theories about it. The discussion of "Language of Religion" revolves around religious statements. The religious statement that can be addressed in writing is: What language do we use to describe God, or in what language do we speak about God?

#### **5.1. God's Description in the Quran**

- Al-Ḥashr/22-24: He is Allah, other than whom there is no deity, Knower of the unseen and the witnessed. He is the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful. He is Allah, other than whom there is no deity, the Sovereign, the Pure, the Perfection, the Grantor of Security, the Overseer, and the Exalted in Might, the Compeller, and the Superior. Exalted is Allah above whatever they associate with Him. He is Allah, the Creator, the Producer, the Fashioner; to Him belong the best names. Whatever is in the heavens and earth is exalting Him. And He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.

- Al-Tawḥid/1-4: Say, "He is Allah, [who is] One. Allah, the Eternal Refuge. He neither begets nor is born. Nor is there to Him any equivalent.

- Al-Ra'd/9: [He is] Knower of the unseen and the witnessed, the Grand, the Exalted.
- Al-Shūra/11-12: [He is] Creator of the heavens and the earth. He has made for you from yourselves, mates, and among the cattle, mates; He multiplies you thereby. There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the Hearing, the Seeing. To Him belong the keys of the heavens and the earth. He extends provision for whom He wills and restricts [it]. Indeed He is, of all things, Knowing.
- Al-Baqarah/255: Allah - there is no deity except Him, the Ever-Living, the Self-Sustaining. Neither drowsiness overtakes Him nor sleep. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. Who is it that can intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows what is [presently] before them and what will be after them, and they encompass not a thing of His knowledge except for what He wills. His Kursi extends over the heavens and the earth, and their preservation tires Him not. And He is the Most High, the Most Great.

This is in addition to many lofty descriptions that are filled in the Quran; while other religious books are largely devoid of them, except for a very meager amount. Now, can that meager amount be the source and origin of this abundant array? Each of these descriptions reflects a truth inherent in His holy essence, which has given rise to these effects and blessings, and great scholars have explained and elaborated on them in their writings.

### 5.2. Describing God in the Bible

This is the story of the beginning of creation, which appears in a distorted form in the "Book of Genesis," where we find the Creator and Exalted God engaged in a hard competition with His creation and in an unsuccessful struggle:

"And the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die." (Genesis: 2, 17)

The Torah considers this word of the Lord to be a lie, through which Adam and Eve were deceived so that they would not become aware of matters like Him and would not compete with Him in governance and dominion over the world. However, the "Satan" told them the truth in this affair: "The serpent said to the woman: You will not certainly die; for God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." (Genesis: 3, 4 and 5)

And when they ate from that tree, it became evident that the serpent had spoken the truth, and the Lord—God forbid—had lied!: "At that

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moment their eyes were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. Then the Lord God walked in the garden in the cool of the day, and He heard the sound of the man and his wife hiding among the trees. He called to the man: Where are you? He answered: I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid. At this, the Lord God realized that the two had eaten from that tree and had become aware of good and evil. He then said: The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.

So the Lord God expelled him from the Garden of Eden and placed cherubim and a flaming sword to guard the way to the tree of life." This is the God of the Torah who fears the competition of His handcrafted creation, devising tricks and schemes to prevent them from this action. He remains unaware, telling a shocking lie that is immediately exposed by His other rival—the Satan—which, God forbid, indicates His impotence and helplessness.

In contrast, the Quran sees the reason for prohibiting the eating of the fruit from the tree as the danger of suffering and hardship in life that awaited them if they ate from the tree; it is an advisory command that was for their own good: "So do not let either of you be expelled from Paradise, or you will suffer." (Ṭaha, 117)

May He not expel you from Paradise, lest you fall into hardship [meaning in the difficulties and tribulations of life, after this current enjoyment and comfort]. And it was the Satan who deceived them and employed a shameful lie:

But Satan whispered to them to make apparent to them that which was concealed from them of their private parts. He said, "Your Lord did not forbid you this tree except that you become angels or become of the immortal. And he swore [by Allah] to them, "Indeed, I am to you from among the sincere advisors. So he made them fall, through deception. And when they tasted of the tree, their private parts became apparent to them, and they began to fasten together over themselves from the leaves of Paradise. And their Lord called to them: Did I not forbid you from that tree and tell you that Satan is to you a clear enemy? (al-A'raf/20-22)

Thus, the one who lied and was exposed was the serpent; as mentioned in the Quran. However, the Torah says the opposite.

Another difference is that according to the Quran, Adam and Eve had garments that covered them before the serpent misled them to uncover their nudity (Referring to al-A'raf/27).

In contrast, the Torah—though it is a fabricated version—assumes they were naked and did not even realize they were naked, and when they ate

from the tree, they became aware of it and sought to cover themselves with leaves from Paradise. It seems that God had created them such that, like animals, they were naked without any sense of shame, and it was the serpent who brought them out of this ignorance.

The third difference is that the Quran honors God, whose mercy encompasses all His servants, even those who have wronged themselves, who should not despair of His mercy. The Quran states: "Indeed, Allah forgives all sins; indeed, He is the Forgiving, the Merciful." (al-Zumar/53) It also declares that Adam has been forgiven, and despite his shortcomings in forgetting God's advice and disobeying it, he was chosen: "Then his Lord chose him and turned to him and guided him." (Ṭaha/122) Furthermore, it promises him that throughout his life and the lives of his descendants on Earth, they will be engaged in ongoing mercy and will ultimately be gathered under it: "So if there comes to you guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance will not go astray, nor will they grieve." (al-Baqarah/38)

All of this means that God's blessings for the inhabitants of the Earth will continue forever; in contrast to what is stated in the Torah, where Adam is subject to the eternal wrath of God, and the Earth will be cursed for Adam, his wife, and their children forever: "Cursed is the ground because of you." (Genesis: 3, 17)

Indeed, the Lord, as described in the Quran, shows forgiveness, kindness, and love towards His servants; but in the description provided by the Torah, He displays animosity, stubbornness, and revenge. So where is that imagined similarity that proves this.

Another aspect that the "Torah" presents is how the Lord mobilized His forces to combat the children of Adam. He scattered their groups and confounded their language, so that they would not congregate, cooperate, or become familiar with one another, and thus would not support each other in social life. Why? Because He-God forbid-feared that humans would gain power and rise up against His interests! In the "Book of Genesis," it states: "Now the whole earth had one language and a common speech. And as people moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar (a land in Iraq, between the Tigris and the Euphrates) and settled there.

They said to one another: Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly. ... And let us build ourselves a city ... And the Lord came down to see the city and the tower that the people were building (Babel). The Lord said: If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not



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understand each other. So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city." (Genesis: 3, 11)

The "Torah" thus announces God's enmity with the children of Adam. The Quran, on the other hand, encourages all nations to unite, coexist, and assist one another in life, while avoiding division, animosity, and conflict: "O! Mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another." (al-Hujurat/13) O! People, We have created you male and female, and made you into nations, and tribes so that you may recognize one another.

"And do not dispute and quarrel, lest you lose heart and your strength departs." (al-Anfal/46)

"And do not dispute and quarrel, lest you become weak and your strength departs." (Ma'rifat, 2009 AD/1388 SH: 32-38)

### **6. Disagreement or Consensus: Different Approaches to the Language of Religion**

The philosophy of linguistic analysis and various approaches to the language of religion have played an effective role in the intellectual and religious developments of the West, particularly in addressing problems and crises within Christianity, including contradictions in the Christian and Jewish scriptures, intra-religious conflicts, and the conflicts between science and religion. However, the application of these approaches to the absolute nature of religions remains incomplete; for several reasons:

Firstly, before discussing the meaningfulness of religious propositions, one must address their documental legitimacy and demonstrate that religious texts are genuinely revealed by Almighty God; this process remains unanswered concerning non-Islamic religious texts. Secondly, discussions of terms in logic, the science of principles, and theological foundations, such as divine wisdom and truth, as well as Quranic teachings and doctrines, indicate the contextual nature of religious propositions; because when a statement is made by a wise person and is issued with the intention of expressing and conveying their meaning, the appearance of the statement indicates and suggests its contextual nature-unless there is a contrary indication. As previously mentioned, every sentence that comprises a conceptual, confirmatory, performative, or serious implication inherently suggests that the speaker's intended meaning aligns with the conventional meaning of the term unless there is a contrary sign. Given that Almighty God has explicitly stated the Quran is in clear Arabic, it must adhere to the laws and rules of Arabic literature, and the speech of Arabs can also be categorized into informative and declarative, with literal and metaphorical implications, as well as synecdoche and metaphorical

language. Of course, the functions of religious propositions are also acceptable; as highlighted in this writing, a separate section is dedicated to the impact of the language of religion on the interpretation of its apparent meanings.

Thirdly, the symbolic theory of the language of religion entails a denial of religion; because symbolic words are changeable and transformable. Instead of using the word "God," one can use other terms such as "Necessary Existent," and ultimately, one could resort to a philosophical system instead of religion, thereby obtaining the same symbol. Furthermore, the symbolic theory lacks the capacity to prove the superiority of one symbolic system over another. (Khosropanah, 2022 AD/1401 SH)

Fourthly, some philosophers of linguistic analysis, such as Anthony Flew, have described empirical propositions as cognitive and referential to reality regarding their falsifiability. However, if someone does not accept the theory of empirical falsifiability, they should doubt the cognitive nature of empirical propositions and may also consider religious propositions to be cognitive.

Fifthly, one could, like John Hick, turn to the researchability and experiential aspects of religious propositions for their meaningfulness, combining the cognitive nature of the language of religion with the experiential aspects of the hereafter.

### **Conclusions**

The Holy Quran and the Bible emphasize the text that God is invisible to the eyes and cannot be seen, with the distinction that in the Old Testament, God is not deemed an abstract being and is accompanied by specific verses and signs for direct communication with humans, such as thunder and lightning. The Quran uses metaphorical and imaginative depictions to explain the understanding of events and the representation of human actions on the Day of Resurrection, while tangible and physical representations concerning the sight of God exist in the Testaments.

The intellectual domain of the language of religion, considering the historical stages of religious thought in the West during the middle Ages, encompassed all aspects of societal life. However, during the Renaissance and following the separation of religion from the domains of the world and the hereafter, the interpretive power of religious texts' appearances gained strength, and the issue of the visibility of God became a source of philosophical discussions and approaches to religion.

As discussed in this paper, the language of the Holy Quran cannot have been influenced by the language of the Testaments, even though

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there are some similarities in certain cases. Ultimately, despite the claims of the Testaments regarding the invisibility of God, their descriptions imply a corporeal aspect. In contrast, the Holy Quran explicitly denies the embodiment and visibility of Almighty God.

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