Same Essence, Different Forms: The Qur'anic-Mystical View of Allameh Ṭabaṭabaʾi about the Unity of Religions and the Principles of Inter-Religious Dialogue

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Abstract

Seyyed Mohammad Hossein Ṭabaṭabaʾi (1281-1360 A.H./ 1904-1981 A.D.) is a contemporary Shiite commentator and mystic whose mystical approach could be clearly seen in his inclusive interpretation of the plurality of religions. Ṭabaṭabaʾi believes that *the Qur'an* seeks to unify religions and defines common criteria such as faith in God and righteous deeds for salvation. Ṭabaṭabaʾi's interpretation of the plurality of religions, based on *the Qur'an* and mysticism, is that religions have a single essence that exists in all of them in different degrees. This single essence consists of believing in the truth, surrendering to the truth, and acting upon the truth, which will lead to salvation in the hereafter. One of the most important principles of dialogue is recognizing the "other", respecting them, and acknowledging their benefit from the truth. Ṭabaṭabaʾi's interpretation of the unity of religions can provide these foundations and, based on them, help the followers of religions sit at the table and provide a suitable platform for interacting with one another, understanding each other and their coexistence.

Keywords: Mysticism, Ṭabaṭabaʾi, Unity of Religions, Inclusivism, Dialogue.

Introduction

Seyyed Mohammad Hossein Tabatabai (1902-1981), a great Qur'an commentator, philosopher, jurist, and mystic, is known as one of the most influential thinkers of the last century in Iran. Dozens of scientific works on philosophical, mystical, Quranic, and jurisprudential subjects and the training of many students, an important number of whom have been prominent scientific and sometimes scientific-political men of Iran in the last few decades, are the result of his scientific and research life (Ṭabaṭabaʾi, 1975, pp. 21-25; Anonymous, n.d). Among his religious-scientific works, the very famous *Tafsir al-Mizan* in twenty volumes is a great work, which is famous not only in Iran, but also in the Islamic world, and is highly regarded and reviewed by scholars and scientists (Ṭabaṭabaʾi, 1975, p. 210; Anonymous, n.d).

Literature Review

In the present study, the author has tried to explain Ṭabaṭabaʾi's confrontation with religions in terms of truth and salvation, relying on his *Quran's interpretation*, which is an important and comprehensive work on various religious, moral, and social issues. And to show that his confrontation with religions can have an important contribution in helping the very vital issue of the contemporary world, i.e., the dialogue of religions. For this purpose, first, the author has collected and analyzed his point of view on the interpretation of religion and the plurality of religions, and then the topic of salvation, under the related verses that are scattered in different volumes of his *Quran's Interpretation*. Then, after explaining the meaning and importance of dialogue, the author pointed out some of its most important principles and criteria in the contemporary

world. In the final step, the author expressed the results of Ṭabaṭabaʾi's perspective in creating a space for dialogue between Islam and other religions.

It should be noted that several studies exist in the field of the present study: First, the book *Gohar-e Adyan-e Elahi az Manzar-e ll aæe h Ṭabaaḏaʾi* (Ṭabaṭabaʾi-Sotoudeh, 2016), which, while explaining the truth of divine religion and the true religion, as well as the relationship of religions with it, has analyzed and examined Allameh Ṭabaṭabaʾi's approach to religious pluralism, truthfulness, and salvation. Additionally, several other studies have explored the same topic in the form of articles. Among them are these three articles: "Tashkiki Exclusivism: Allameh Ṭabaṭabaʾi's View in Al-Mizan on Religious Pluralism" (Pourhassan & Pasha'i, 2016), "A Comparative Study of the Foundations of Religious Pluralism in *the Quran* from the Perspective of Allameh Ṭabaṭabaʾi and Professor Motahhari" (Hosseini, 2003), and "The Truthfulness of Religions and the Issue of Salvation from the Perspective of Allameh Ṭabaṭabaʾi" (Ṭabaṭabaʾi-Sotoudeh, 2016). The focus of that book and these three articles is on explaining Allameh's views on religious pluralism, the true religion, the hierarchical benefit of religions from the true religion, and inclusivism in salvation.

However, the present study, in addition to explaining Allameh's views on the aforementioned topics, has used them as a basis for the topic of interreligious dialogue. Moreover, Allameh's views on the truth of religion and religious pluralism provide a very suitable ground for respecting religions, mutual understanding, and interreligious dialogue. For this reason, another part of this study is dedicated to the necessity of dialogue and its principles. These two parts make the present research distinct and new compared to the aforementioned works.

Preliminarily, it should also be added that Allameh's views on the truth of religion, the true religion, and the issue of salvation are entirely related to the topic of interreligious dialogue and provide a strong religious foundation for it. To elaborate, as will be explained in detail later in this study, Allameh considers salvation to be dependent on belief in the true religion and the truth of religion. Additionally, from Allameh's perspective, all divine prophets throughout history have invited people to the same singular truth, and each of the religions presented by the prophets has been a unique manifestation of that same truth. This singular truth has appeared in different forms throughout various historical eras in a progressive manner. Consequently, religions benefit from that truth to varying degrees, and followers of religions, to the extent that they have not neglected seeking a more complete religion, are eligible for salvation. Therefore, from this perspective, religions are respected because they encompass that singular truth, and the commonalities among religions connect them. Most followers of religions, except for those who are negligent, are eligible for salvation. Thus, it seems that this perspective provides a real foundation for respecting and recognizing religions, and consequently, for interreligious dialogue.

Two Islams

The revelation revealed to Prophet Muhammad became the beginning of the emergence of a religion among the great religions of the world, which in history is called the religion of *Islam*. In general usage, the word Islam always refers to the religion of the followers of the Prophet Muhammad, and the word *Muslim*, literally from the root of Islam, is a general name for any believer in Islam (Inalcik, 1997, v. 4/171). So "Islam" in general usage refers to a religion and a faith that emerged based on the revelation to the Prophet Muhammad and now has hundreds of millions of followers all over the world and is one of the largest religions in the world in terms of the number of followers. This name has been used in various Islamic and non-Islamic sources and texts from the early days of Islam until now only to refer to the religion and faith of Muslims to distinguish it from other religions and their followers, and for this reason, it is a special name and does not include non-revelation and non-Islamic faith. Nevertheless, this is a meaning of Islam that the author calls *specific Islam* in this study.

The word Islam has another meaning and usage, which was first used by the Islamic revelation itself, *the Qur'an*. In several verses, *the Quran* has used the word *Islam* or its derivatives, such as *Muslim*, *Muslimun*, *aslamta*, and *aslamtum* with the same meaning. This meaning is *pure submission to God's will*; For example: 3:19: "The Religion before Allah is Islam (submission to His Will)". This verse emphatically introduces *religion* as *Islam* and Islam as *submission to God*. In another verse, he also emphasizes that God will never accept a religion other than *Islam*, that is, other than submission to God, from anyone: 3:85. Ṭabaṭabaʾi in *al-Mizan*, his famous commentary on *the Qur'an*, mentions this very important point in this connection: In the tradition of *the Qur'an*, *Islam* is used in this sense, not in the sense of specific historical Islam (Ṭabaṭabaʾi, 1997, v. 3/320). In his interpretation of *the Qur'an*, Ṭabaṭabaʾi has provided extensive explanations about this meaning of Islam, which the author calls *general Islam*, in different volumes under various verses that somehow refer to this Islam, which can be found in these five Axis explained:

1. Religion is *one* with God and there is no difference in it, God has not ordered His servants except to follow this *one religion*, and He has not explained any other religion in the books that He revealed to His prophets. The name of this religion in *the Qur'an*, *Islam*, means submission to the truth in terms of belief and action, which means that man submits to the will of God in divine teachings and law. Although there are quantitative and qualitative differences in the Shariʿah of the Prophets, these differences are not of conflict and contradiction, but of imperfection and perfection. Each of the religions has different levels of one truth, and the common point of all of them is to submit to God and obey Him in what He has asked from His servants through the words of the prophets (Ṭabaṭabaʾi, 1997, v. 13/139). It is necessary to explain that the word Islam itself comes from the root of Silm and means surrendering to something (Inalcik, 1997, v. 4/171).

2. General Islam has been the religion of all prophets throughout history; among these prophets was Prophet Abraham, who *Quran* says in the description of his religion, that Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but he followed the religion of Hanif and Islam (Al Emran/67). Islam here also means the principle of submission to God and submission to His Lordship, not in the sense of historical Islam (Ṭabaṭabaʾi, 1997, v. 3/291). Ṭabaṭabaʾi also points to this point under verse 5:44 that Islam, which *the Qur'an* described all the prophets as in this verse, consists of submitting to God, which is the essence of religion before God. This point indicates that religion is one with God and it is nothing but submitting to Him, worshiping Him, and obeying the heavenly

laws and laws revealed by Him (Ṭabaṭabaʾi, 1997, v. 5/350). In fact, all religions and laws are one in terms of truth, but different in terms of form and appearance in different nations. Different forms have emerged according to the talent, perfection, and historical conditions of those nations. Therefore, religions contain this true religion in different degrees.

This interpretation of the plurality of religions can be called *gradation pluralism*, and some have called it legislative-gradation exclusivism (Pourhassan & Pashaʾi, 2016, p. 79). The difference in the appearance and forms of religions, which is caused by the laws and not by the truth and the essence of religion, is one of the factors of the difference and plurality of religions. So, Religions have a unique essence and substance, although they are plural in form and appearance. Religion in the general sense implies a single meaning and is not multiple, and it is these laws that are multiple and different. The religion also multiplies in terms of laws.

A further explanation is that Tabatabai believes that differences in religion are accidental and not original and inherent. At first, religion was one, but later two factors caused differences and diversity in the religion and different religions emerged: The first factor is innate nature (=fiṭra) and related to human affairs. Because man is a civil being by innate nature, his life, due to his various needs, cannot be organized away from the community, and his life and perfection are realized in the shadow of the community and the cooperation of its people, so this leads to differences. In order to resolve these disputes, which are rooted in the creation and human innate nature, God sent the prophets to resolve the disputes through the laws of Sharia and to prevent disruption in the human social system (Ṭabaṭabaʾi, 1997, v. 2/124, 125, 128, 133-135). Laws also enjoyed diversity and plurality according to the time conditions and talent and perfection of humans.

The second factor for the difference in religions has been some religious scholars. This group of religious scholars were the scholars who did injustice and transgressed (= Baghy) with worldly goals and thus caused differences (Ṭabaṭabaʾi, 1997, v. 2/129; Ṭabaṭabaʾi, 1997, v. 10/30). Baghy means demanding something that is not a person's right and includes all kinds of oppression and aggression and illegitimate supremacy over people (Ṭabaṭabaʾi, 1997, v. 8/86). These scholars caused differences by concealing the truth, misinterpreting and distorting the reality. All these are oppression and violation of other human beings (Ṭabaṭabaʾi-Sotoudeh, 2017, p. 130).

3. General Islam or *Taslim religion* is the basis of all religions and all prophets are its founders. Therefore, each of the religions such as Judaism and Christianity are sub-branches of that origin (Ṭabaṭabaʾi, 1997, v. 3/290-291). The religion of the prophet Muhammad is also general Islam and he is also a Muslim like Abraham, so *the Qur'an* addresses him to protest against those who oppose him with enmity, saying that I and my followers have submitted ourselves to God (Al Emran/20) and Religion is the same submission, and in the matter of religion, there is no higher authority than religion itself (Ṭabaṭabaʾi, 1997, v. 3/141).

4. Since the course of human movement throughout history has been toward perfection in general and gradually according to different talents and conditions, in accordance with this course of perfection, general Islam has also had an evolutionary process. This point explains the plurality and difference of laws and religions throughout history. From this point of view, Islam, in the sense of the religion of surrender, while being united in its essence, has been pluralistic in its historical course and has become more perfect in proportion to the perfection of man. Therefore, the religion of submission, which appeared before Judaism in simpler sharia, gradually became more complete in the following ages and appeared in newer forms such as Judaism, later Christianity, and finally Islam (Ṭabaṭabaʾi, 1997, v. 3/290-292). Ṭabaṭabaʾi explains the verse: 3:6 that according to the religion of submission, *the Qur'an* has invited Jews and Christians to interact and accompany each other on the basis of commonalities, including monotheism (Ṭabaṭabaʾi, 1997, v. 3/284-286).

Citing two verses: 19:3 and 42:13, Ṭabaṭabaʾi has provided another explanation in explaining the plurality of laws and religions. He says that this plurality and difference is due to "concise and detail" (= Ijmal wa Tafṣil) (Ṭabaṭabaʾi, 1997, v. 7/256). From this standpoint, the origin is the religion of submission, the less detailed aspect of religion is with God, and each of the religions and laws, according to the historical and evolutionary circumstances of man and according to his development, are the detailed manifestations of that origin. Therefore, the early Sharia is simpler and less detailed than the later Sharia. This means that all religions are manifestations of the religion of submission.

5. The religion of surrender is the *religion of truth*, that is, both its origin and its end are truth and it guides man to the truth. Surrender to God is also its essence. Citing two verses from *the Qur'an*: 30:30 and 3:19, Ṭabaṭabaʾi explains that Islam, in the sense of the religion of truth, is rooted in creation and reality. In other words, Islam consists of the laws or traditions that God has established in creation, and the creation conforms to them. All creation is subject to these divine laws and traditions. The fixed divine innate nature of man (=Fitra), as a part of the same creation and formation, calls him to the same way, and that is to submit to the will of God, which originates from the tradition of divine formation and conforms to it. The Prophet Muhammad also invited people to this religion of truth (Ṭabaṭabaʾi, 1997, v. 9/248-249). Tabatabai's anthropology is also compatible with the explanation of the religion of truth based on the verse of innate nature in *the Qur'an*: 30:30. Therefore, first of all, he considers a human being to have a unique and divine innate nature that leads him to happiness. Secondly, due to having innate nature, he has gifts in his soul and body that make it possible for him to reach ultimate happiness. Thirdly, human life must be in harmony with the requirements of innate nature in order to achieve happiness, and this harmony is one of the essentials of the religion of truth (Ṭabaṭabaʾi, 1997, v. 3/183-185).

The Issue of Salvation from the Point of View of Ṭabaṭabaʾi

We know that there have been many religions since ancient times. A large number of them are alive in the contemporary era and some of them have the most followers. Usually, they consider themselves exclusively righteous and limit salvation to their followers. Some of them, although they are exclusivist in their self-righteousness, do not make salvation exclusive to their followers, and they consider the followers of some other religions to be the people of final and hereafter salvation, and they accept a kind of pluralism in the matter of salvation; Salvation-oriented pluralism, not right-oriented (**Regarding pluralism, exclusivism, and inclusivism in religions, see:** Peterson et al., 2013, pp. 319-337). There is a verse in *the*

Qur'an that raises the issue of the salvation of the followers of some religions in terms: "Those who believe (in *the Qur'an*), and those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Christians and the Sabians, any who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve" (Bagharah/62). Ṭabaṭabaʾi has introduced the criteria of salvation by citing the same verse: true faith in God, righteous deeds, and faith in the Hereafter. He adds that these three criteria form the servant of God. The happiness of human beings and their dignity before God is the result of true worship of Him, which is mentioned in many verses of *the Qur'an* (Ṭabaṭabaʾi, 1997, v. 1/61-62). In the above verse, followers of religions such as Judaism, Christianity, and Sabianism are mentioned, who will be saved subject to the three mentioned criteria. Therefore, it seems that the totality of faith and action forms the religion of submission, which is the truth present in all religions. In fact, it is the religion of submission that is the criterion of salvation, and on this basis, Ṭabaṭabaʾi has an *inclusivist view* on the issue of *salvation*. General Islam or the religion of submission is the basis for accepting the plurality of religions by Ṭabaṭabaʾi. On the one hand, due to the presence of this type of Islam in divine religions, all of them have the same truth to some degree and are not completely false. On the other hand, the followers of those religions, due to their religion being based on the same truth and based on the criteria mentioned above, are the people of salvation.

Now the question is whether, according to Ṭabaṭabaʾi, those who did not follow the religion of Haq and the religion of submission or the religion and Sharia of their age, are absolutely deprived of salvation. His answer, which is based on his interpretation of *the Qur'an*, is that these people are also saved, under certain conditions. In the explanation of his opinion, it can be said that God will not make someone suffer destruction and misery until he has informed him about his duties and about the true religion. This awareness-raising is done in two ways: one is *formative guidance* and the other is *legislative guidance*. Formative guidance is achieved through the innate nature that God has placed in a person, and according to it, a person tends to the right and avoids falsehood, as a result of this inner guidance, people find the ability to distinguish good and perfection from evil and falsehood. The second guidance is the legislative guidance that is realized through the sending of prophets. Now, if the legislative guidance does not reach the members of the society due to the existence of obstacles, or the truth is not expressed correctly and clearly to some people, God will not make such people suffer destruction and misery and will benefit them from His grace in the hereafter because such people before God have an excuse (Pourhassan & Pasha'i, 2015, pp. 82-84). Thus, Ṭabaṭabaʾi is inclusivist in the matter of saving the followers of other religions.

The view of Karl Rahner (1904–1984), one of the most prominent Catholic theologians of the 20th century, is also a form of inclusivism in salvation. However, Rahner's basis differs from Allameh's, but his view is similar to Allameh's in terms of its inclusiveness regarding salvation. Rahner believes that, in addition to His general grace and mercy toward His creations and servants, God also bestows His special grace upon humans. Every human, regardless of their religion, receives this grace, which prevents them from denying God and leads them to faith. Humans become recipients of this divine grace through performing good moral deeds (Rahner, 1974, p. 274). Rahner has referred to such individuals, who are not formally Christians, as "anonymous Christians" (Marvinam, 2020, p. 20; Najafi & Mohammadi, 2014, pp. 126–128). It is clear that such an approach to religions contributes to the approximation between religions and interreligious dialogue. Nevertheless, Allameh Ṭabaṭabaʾi's view has the advantage over Rahner's in that it considers other religions besides Islam as also benefiting from the truth in varying degrees.

Finally, the approach of Allameh to the issue of salvation can provide a real platform for dialogue between religions, which is a great necessity today. According to the explanations above, this inclusivism accepts a kind of religious pluralism, and this, in turn, opens the way for an authentic dialogue with other religions.

What is Dialogue?

Dialogue between the followers of different religions, who in many cases have differences of opinion and sometimes conflicting views and approaches and claim their own truth and the invalidity of others, is always one of the best ways to avoid hostility and violence, interaction and communication, and a source of peace and tranquility, and as a result, it will help to provide a peaceful life, reduce the suffering of people and make people live better.

Dialogue is so important at this time that Leonard Swidler (1929), a great thinker of dialogue, considers and calls the current age the age of dialogue on a global scale (Swidler, 1996, pp. 13-14). He talks about a fundamental change in human history that he has lived in for a thousand years: the change from monologue to dialogue; A change in human consciousness, from the beginning of human history to today, is so fresh that it should be considered a revolution that turns everything upside down (Swidler, 1996, pp. 1-2). Even if this statement is exaggerated, it still does not reduce the importance and necessity of a dialogue-oriented approach in our time. Swidler rightly says that consciously rejecting dialogue is fundamentally irresponsible or, in Judeo-Christian-Islamic terms, a great sin. He introduces dialogue at the global level not as a possibility, but as a necessity to the extent that he says: "The human species is ultimately faced with two choices: dialogue or death" (Swidler, 1996, p. 16).

This is an important question, what is dialogue? Is it a method and a tool for each side of the dialogue to try to put their belief and opinion on the chair? In this case, what will the parties gain from the dialogue? Except that they will only be a language to speak and not an ear to hear and learn. In fact, there has been no dialogue here because in this situation, the parties will not be open to learning and new knowledge, and no transformation, dynamism, and creativity will occur. This is the situation in which mankind has lived for a thousand years, it is actually a monologue with the appearance of a dialogue. That is why Swidler introduces dialogue in another way: dialogue is talking with another, that is, with someone who thinks in a different way, and the purpose of dialogue is to learn. He introduces this learning through dialogue as a new learning method; Learning different cultural, philosophical, social, and religious viewpoints and striving for a more complete understanding of the truth of the meaning of things (Swidler, 1996, p. 15; Swidler, 2007, p. 6). If our approach to dialogue is in line with this definition, then we will be open to thinking and learning in a different way and new way, and we will be ears to listen and not just a language to speak. In this

approach, the dialogue parties will actively participate in speaking and listening; A dynamic dialogue will be formed and real communication and interaction will be established. Such a dialogue can resolve misunderstandings, bring minds closer together, reduce conflict and enmity, provide a platform for progress and solving problems and crises, and become the foundation for transforming the world into a better habitat.

Principles and Rules of Dialogue

Authentic dialogue should be based on its own principles and rules in order to achieve the goals of learning and change. The first basis of such dialogue is the belief in plurality. Pluralism is the result of seeing and recognizing the other. According to Swidler, religious pluralism means that all religions are right, the followers of all religions, both divine and non-divine, are saved, and no religion is superior to another religion. Therefore, he believes that one of the clear examples of the paradigm shift from the age of monologue to the age of dialogue is a fundamental change that occurred in the Catholic Church. In his opinion, this change is so important and influential that he refers to it as the Copernican revolution in this church. Swidler believes that this revolution occurred in five ways, one of which was the turn to dialogue. Therefore, Christians have realized that their Jewish or Muslim neighbors can also be saved without becoming Christians. (Swidler, 1996, p. 9)

Another important foundation of true dialogue is that both sides of the dialogue recognize each other and consider themselves *equal*, and if one side of the dialogue considers the other side inferior to itself, a true dialogue will not be achieved. It is clear that learning through dialogue and making changes in human life happened only on the basis of thinking that we consider our dialogue partner on a level that he, like us, can be a carrier of thought, knowledge, and a privileged way that is beneficial for humanity. The mutual respect of each of the parties means recognizing the significance of the other's point of view and being able to reflect and avoid denying it quickly. Such a respectful behavior and approach provides the ground for learning and leads to openness and tolerance, which are among the rules and conditions of genuine dialogue (Swidler, 2014, pp. 48-49).

Swidler has also mentioned several rules for dialogue. One of the most important of them is that in order to gain the trust of the parties to the dialogue, they must sit down to the dialogue with *complete honesty* because each party entered into the dialogue to know the other party and learn from him, and if the other party is not honest, neither trust nor recognition will be achieved. Of course, the necessity of such a principle is that, for example, in the dialogue of religions with complete honesty, the basic and sometimes irreconcilable differences of religions are expressed and even accepted by the dialogue parties. This will make the dialogue serious and effective and build trust. Another important rule of dialogue is that both sides of the dialogue should enter the dialogue with the *aim of learning*, growing, and as a result a change in practice, not just to change the other party and impose their beliefs on him. Also, in the first dialogue, one should start with commonalities and not with differences. This leads to gaining and expanding the trust of the parties (Swidler, 2014, pp. 171-172).

Conclusions

According to what was mentioned above in the expression of Ṭabaṭabaʾi's thought about religions on the one hand and on the other hand regarding the nature, goals, foundations, and rules of dialogue, it seems that Ṭabaṭabaʾi's point of view provides the necessary platform for the realization of genuine dialogue between Islam and other religions.

In this way, very important results are derived from the presence of this single essence in religions, although it is associated with different degrees:

1. Other religions cannot be considered completely invalid. The reason for that is clear, as it was said above, all divine religions carry the religion of truth and of submission, even religions that are not in the Abrahamic tradition can carry this right. All major religions in the Abrahamic and non-Abrahamic traditions more or less carry monotheism and benefit from truth and truth to varying degrees. Ṭabaṭabaʾi compares different religions with Islam, in a special sense, and introduces Islam, of course, as superior to other religions, devoid of defects and deviations, and the most perfect version of the divine religion (Ṭabaṭabaʾi, 1997, v. 10/279-282). From this point of view, it is necessary for others to believe in Islam, but this does not mean that the presence of the principle of monotheism and the truth of submission to God's will has been ignored in other religions and they will be considered completely invalid and the way of understanding and interaction with them will be blocked. For this reason, Ṭabaṭabaʾi has introduced some of the Upanishads, the sacred scriptures of most Hindu traditions, as containing monotheism and high and right teachings. At the same time, he criticizes it respectfully (Ṭabaṭabaʾi, 1997, v. 10/279-280). With these explanations, it seems that Ṭabaṭabaʾi accepts a kind of pluralism even regarding the presence of truth in religions, and his exclusivity towards Islam is only due to the presence of complete truth in it. This view has a tolerant view towards other religions and paves the way for respectful dialogue. Dariush Shayegan (Shaygan, 1997), one of the academic personalities in Iran and one of the famous pupils of Ṭabaṭabaʾi, who had a lot of knowledge in Eastern religions, describes the view of his professor, Ṭabaṭabaʾi, on religions: "With him, we had an experience that is probably unique in the Islamic world: comparative research of the world's religions under the guidance of an Iranian mentor and scholar. We studied *Bible* translations, Persian translations of the Upanishads, Buddhist sutras, and the Tao Te Ching. The professor used to interpret the texts with such discovery and intuition that it was as if he had participated in writing these texts himself. He never saw in them a conflict with the spirit of Islamic mysticism, he was as familiar with Indian philosophy as he was with Chinese and Christian worldviews" (Shaygan, 1997, p. 70).

2. Believers in other religions are saved; Ṭabaṭabaʾi's belief in the salvation of the followers of other religions, although with the conditions that were mentioned before, is the result of his intellectual foundations about general Islam and the religion of truth, and those foundations are documented in their place by some verses of *the Qur'an* that were mentioned in the text of the study. Knowing the salvation of the followers of other religions is one of the most important elements that facilitates communication and interaction between the masters of religions and believers of different religions. Therefore, Swidler reminds the importance of believing in the salvation of the followers of other religions in this way that because we Christians found in the age of dialogue that our Jewish or Muslim neighbors can also be saved without converting to Christianity, our communication turns from preaching

Christianity to interaction and dialogue. (Swidler, 2007, p. 9). Ṭabaṭabaʾi has an inclusive view on the issue of salvation, and this view fulfills the conditions of dialogue and interaction. It seems that Ṭabaṭabaʾi's view is a progressive example of expanding the space of dialogue between different religions. Two features in Ṭabaṭabaʾi's theory, as an influential and outstanding scholar of contemporary Shiite Islam, are the reason for the progressive nature of this theory: one is the recognition of the presence of truth in the interior of religions and the other is the salvation of the followers of other religions, albeit in a relative way. If Swidler considers the Christian belief in the possibility of the salvation of Jews and Muslims as the basis of their interaction with Jews and Muslims, it should be said based on Ṭabaṭabaʾi's theory, with the following features:

Respect for other religions becomes necessary;

Division and distance crave closeness and empathy;

Misunderstanding turns into understanding;

Enmity replaces friendship;

Exclusivism gives way to pluralism;

And finally, the possibility of a real dialogue will be provided.

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