

Religious Pluralism in Iran's Islamic Tradition

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Pluralistic thought emerged in the Islamic tradition a long time ago, and it re-emerged in Iran in the post-revolution period (1979 onward). Indeed, the Qur'an disagrees with the exclusivist doctrine. Compare these two verses from the Qur'an:

And they say: "None shall enter paradise unless he be a Jew or a Christian,"
Those are their (vain) desires. Say: "Produce your proof if you are truthful."
(2:111)

Those who believe (in the Qur'an), those who follow the Jewish (Scripture) and the Sabians and the Christians—any who believe in Allah and the Last day, and work righteousness—on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. (5:69)

In addition, religious pluralism is also documented in Iranian literature, particularly in Rumi's works. Rumi is perhaps the best example of an Islamic pluralist thinker. I shall show that Rumi was strongly influenced by Qur'anic teachings.

Conflicts and Religious Exclusivism

According to the current world census, the distribution of the world's religions is as follows: 33 percent Christian (including Catholic, Protestant, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican, Evangelical, and Jehovah's Witness), 21 percent Muslim (Shiite, Sunni, etc.), 16 percent nonreligious (including agnostic, atheist, and secular humanist), 14 percent Hindu, 6 percent Chinese traditional, 6 percent Buddhist, 6 percent Primal-indigenous (including African, Traditional/ Diaspora), and 6 percent other (Judaism, Sikhism, etc.).^[1] The subject of the relationship between world religions is extremely important, even more so today than in the past. For centuries many wars between nations have involved religion, not as their primary

cause, but as a validating and intensifying factor. In many places around the world, people, including children, are killed in conflicts that are both validated and emotionally intensified by religions whose adherents believe their faith is the one and only true faith. Catholic theologian Hans Küng says: “There will be no peace among the peoples of this world without peace among the world religions.”^[2]

With respect to the fact of religious diversity, the crucial questions are: Which of the many religions offers salvation? Which expresses best the truth of the absolute? And in general, how should a believer respond to the enormous diversity of religions? There are several possible responses to awareness of religious diversity; the chief approaches are exclusivism, pluralism, and inclusivism. An inclusivist holds that salvation is universally available in some degree in all religions, but her or his own religion is the final and highest manifestation of this universal awareness.

Exclusivism is best illustrated by the Christian varieties of this position. Some Christian theologians argue that, according to Church doctrine, Jesus Christ is the only savior and that salvation is found only in communion with him. Advocates of exclusivism hold that there is a sharp division between “general” and “special” revelation. By general revelation they mean God makes himself generally known through creation; but after the Fall, by virtue of corruption, guilt, sin and fear, humans misuse the general revelation in order to keep God within their control and need a special revelation that is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The church’s responsibility is to carry this message of salvation throughout the world until Christ re-establishes his kingdom. Accordingly, only those who hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and explicitly trust in him can be saved. Similar arguments can be found in some Jewish and Islamic communities.

As an example, Alvin Plantinga, a Calvinist defender of exclusivism, considers religious pluralism to be self-defeating for Christians. He offers the following rationale for why Christianity is exclusive:

I believe both 1) the world was created by God, almighty, all-knowing and a perfectly good personal being (the sort of being who holds beliefs, has aims and intentions, and can act to accomplish these aims); 2) Human beings require salvation, and God has provided a unique way of salvation [my italic] through the incarnation, life, sacrificial death, and resurrection of his divine son.^[3]

Many pluralists, such as John Hick, Joseph Runzo and Cantwell Smith, claim that the exclusivist cannot know for certain that his view is true, thus the exclusivist position is irrational or unjustifiable. The notion of justification used in this context traces back to Descartes and Locke: one is within one's intellectual rights, having violated no intellectual or cognitive duties or obligations in the formation and sustenance of the belief. The objectors contend that the exclusivist violates the common epistemological obligations by arbitrarily choosing to believe both claims in the quotation above.

With respect to Plantinga's position, for example, the opponent of exclusivism would ask why we should not consider the possibility that those who reject claims 1 and 2 have some good reasons for their beliefs. Why should we exclude from the very beginning, for instance, that there is some evidence supporting the rejection of the second claim? It is not clear how Plantinga knows that those who reject claim 2 fail to have sufficient or even any evidence for their beliefs. There is no indication that he has investigated other traditions of faith and explored what evidence is presented for the rejection of claim 2. If Plantinga confesses that "it is not easy to look into the breast of another," how does he know that another's beliefs are false?

Other critics of exclusivism have claimed that accepting any exclusivist belief is not only an arbitrary epistemic but also indefensible on moral grounds. In fact, there seem to be good reasons for moral reproach, since holding an exclusivist belief suggests egoism and arrogance. Plantinga outlines the charge: "there is a sort of self-serving arbitrariness, an arrogance or egoism, in accepting such propositions as 1 or 2; one who accepts them is guilty of some serious moral fault or flaw."^[4] The moral charge is that this preference is not morally neutral. It has implications within the moral dimension that make it susceptible to moral reproach.

Plantinga holds that it is hard to find an argument to show that he is correct and they are incorrect. Furthermore, he holds that their beliefs have the same internally available epistemic markers, the same phenomenology, and perhaps the same degree of doxastic evidence. Nonetheless, he maintains that the believer still must think that "the other person has made a mistake, or has a blind spot, or hasn't been wholly attentive, or hasn't received some grace she has or is blinded by ambition or pride or mother love or something else; she must think that she has access to a source of warranted belief the other lacks."^[5]

Plantinga holds to the logic that “if she believes 1 or 2, then she must also think that those who believe something incompatible with them are mistaken and believe what is false.”^[6] He also holds that “she must see herself as privileged with respect to those others.”^[7] He holds that there is no reasonable alternative for the Christian believer here with respect to a proposition like 1 or 2.

The crucial question is, however, whether the believer is at all in the position to recognize the incompatibility of other faiths with the Christian faith. If it is not possible to fathom precisely how to interpret the claims of another religion, it is difficult to judge whether there are any genuine incompatibilities between apparently conflicting claims in different religions and what kind of incompatibility is involved: contradictoriness, contrariety, and impossibility. To judge that two claims of different religions are incompatible, one would need to show that they are contradictory or contrary under any or at least under some interpretation.

Plantinga contended that there is publically accessible evidence in support of Christian belief; there is also publically accessible evidence in support of non-Christian beliefs. Therefore, publically accessible evidence is not the case; we need sufficient evidence to show the incompatibility of faiths if we want to judge the falsity of their faith claims. In other words, we need sufficient evidence to show that other beliefs are false. It seems that neither party can conclusively demonstrate the superiority of its position.

Reductive and Non-reductive Pluralism

The Kantian response to religious diversity is the view that all religious claims are on a par with respect to truth, because all teach the same thing or make the same claim. Kant distinguishes between pure religious faith, which is “a plain rational faith which can be convincingly communicated to everyone,”^[8] and historical faith, which is intimately linked with particular historical forms. The essential content of the former, of pure religious faith, is the understanding of all moral duties as given by God. Kant held that this content (the claim that all moral duties are given by God) is present in all particular religions. Therefore, Kant maintained that the fundamental religious claim, the “plain rational faith,” is always and everywhere the same. This fundamental religious claim is discoverable and justifiable by reason alone, unaided by revelation, scripture, and the like. The Kantian strategy has two essential parts: one is the reduction of all religious claims to a single fundamental claim, and

second is the view that the claims of all actual religious communities bear approximately the same relation to this fundamental claim. “They are all concerned with salvation/ liberation/ enlightenment/fulfillment ...”^[9]

Kant’s position is one version of pluralism, the view that maintains that the major world religions relate to the Ultimate Reality in different ways. There is no public evidence that any one religion is unique or superior to others and thus has closer access to Ultimate Reality. Pluralist theologians thus hold that Christianity is simply “one paradigm of the divine-human relationship among many others,” and “arguments for the absoluteness, superiority or uniqueness of Christianity become difficult if not impossible.”^[10]

John Hick, a contemporary advocate of a broadly Kantian strategy on religious diversity holds that there are indeed genuine differences and (at least apparent) incompatibilities among the claims of different religious communities. He divides these differences into three categories: incompatibilities with respect to historical matters, quasi-historical or trans-historical matters, and the ways of conceiving and experiencing religious beliefs. Hick holds that these incompatibilities are not important in religious terms. They do not make an important difference to what religion is really all about, which is “the transformation of human existence from self-centeredness to Reality-centeredness.”^[11]

Hick holds that the differences in belief between traditions are best seen as “different ways of conceiving and experiencing the one ultimate divine Reality.”^[12] Hick describes “Reality” or the “Real” in terms of the following functions:

The Real is thus not experienced as it is itself, but is postulated to satisfy a) the basic faith that human religious experience is not purely projection but is at the same time a response to a transcendent reality or realities, and b) the observation that Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, etc., which are communal responses to these different gods and absolutes, seem to be more or less equally effective contexts for human transformation from self-centeredness, with all the evils and miseries that flow from this, to a re-entering in the Transcendent as experienced within one’s own tradition.^[13]

He also remarks that “It seems to me more realistic to conclude that the divine grace shines directly on us all—Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and others alike.”^[14] It seems that Hick endorses Kant’s distinction between phenomena (the world as it is

experienced) and noumena (the world as it is in itself) and maintains that we perceive religion as it is experienced. Hick's notion of religion, then, is that religion is experienced through our interpretive experience, that is, religion is not merely experience as it is influenced by the lenses of human cognition but also it is influenced by the social environment. In *Faith and Knowledge*, he says:

The ordinary believer does not, however, report an awareness of God as existing in isolation from all other objects of experience. His consciousness of the divine does not involve a cessation of his consciousness of a material and social environment.^[15]

One of the basic principles of Hick's pluralistic hypothesis is that the universe is religiously ambiguous. He remarked, "The universe, as presently accessible to us, is capable of being interpreted intellectually and experientially in both religious and naturalistic ways."^[16] With respect to this point, religious perspectives are equally responses to the same reality. For him the Real is perfectly undifferentiated.

In fact, Hick's pluralism is a sort of reductive pluralism. That is to say, Hick maintains that the apparent differences among the world's faiths do not make them irreconcilable, so the apparently different faiths are correct. He reduces the conditions of correct belief to the common factor in all the world's religions. According to reductive religious pluralism, there is no reason to prefer one religion to another. However, Muhammad Legenhausen has argued that in the Qur'an we have a pluralist position that tries to explain contradictions better than Hick does, in the form of a non-reductionist pluralism:

One of the major problems faced by any form of pluralism, including the form of pluralism accepted in the Quran, according to which various religions were sent by Allah to His messengers in different times and places, is what to make of the apparent contradictions among the creeds of the different religions. ... Various means to resolve the contradictions are suggested in the Qur'an itself. There is the claim that adulteration of the original revelations has taken place, both purposefully and to forget (see 2:75, 3:78, 5:41). It is also claimed that what was revealed to the different prophets was the same, so that contradictions among creeds must be due to content apart from what was revealed (see 2:136, 3:84, 4:150, 42:13-14). Religious differences are generally explained in the Qur'an as having arisen from sin, from pride in the partial truth each of the

different groups has possessed, and from envy (see: 3:18, 23:53, 30:32, 42:14).”^[17]

Consequently, reductive pluralism is incompatible with Islam. There is no doubt that Hick is perfectly well aware of the inconsistency.

In Islam there is the firm belief that Muhammad was “the seal of the prophets” and that through the Qur’an God has revealed to mankind the true religion, taking up into itself and fulfilling all previous revelations. Thus, whilst a Muslim should give friendly recognition to those within the other Abrahamic faiths and may even, in some interpretations, extend the Qur’anic concept of the People of the Book to include those who encounter the divine through the Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian and Taoist as well as Jewish and Christian Scriptures, yet he or she will retain a strong sense of the unique status of the Qur’anic revelation. Here is God’s final, decisive and commanding word which all must heed and obey. And such a conviction, again, does not naturally encourage a full and unqualified acceptance of religious pluralism.^[18]

Epistemic Pluralism as a Mechanism of Religious Pluralism

The fundamental principle of religious pluralism with respect to truth is epistemic pluralism. Epistemic pluralism is the precondition for any other sort of pluralism, that is, cultural, political, social, and religious pluralism. Epistemic pluralism is the view that the perceptions of truth differ across time and cultures. It is also the view that human cognition is dynamic, changeable, and diverse because human knowledge of science and philosophy in general is continuously developing, engendering continuous change in the way we experience the world. Sometimes the change takes place only at the level of the presuppositions that enter our interpretations of a text, not in the text itself. Since we have no absolute knowledge of religion, as we have no access to the noumena of religion, we cannot contend that only our religion or our interpretation of religion is true and others are false. This would also seem to be suggested by the fact that there are various interpretations of and confessional divisions within the main world religions. Various interpretations indicate that scriptural texts of religions can be understood at various levels of experience and connected to different spaces of experience.

Furthermore, religious truth emerges for different believers at different levels, in different quantity and quality, depending on the capacities of the believer. God's manifestation is not the same in all believers. Ibn al-Arabi (1162-1240) pointed out that Qur'anic eschatological teachings account for varieties of backgrounds of human beings. He talked about 5,205 degrees of paradise, only twelve of which belong exclusively to Muslims.^[19] Ibn al-Arabi also allowed for followers of different religions to experience religious truths in different ways. Even people with similar cultural backgrounds may experience things with different intellectual abilities, psychological dispositions, and aesthetic sensitivities. Accordingly, Ibn al-Arabi held that people will experience things differently after death, and their experience is influenced by the way in which they live in the present world.

Needless to say, the quality and the levels of religious experience depend upon various backgrounds of believers, that is, parental, educational, social, and psychological, and many others factors; therefore, the reality of religion can be conceived on various levels and in different manners, which is why our religious perceptions and our religious experiences are plural. Thus, the non-reductionist Islamic pluralism cannot be reduced to an Islamic inclusivism.

Despite the fact that there are contradictory statements in different religions concerning the Real, salvation, right and wrong, human nature, and so on, it seems that all of these claims are "true" relative to the worldviews in which each claim is embedded. As Hick explains, relative truths are cognitive responses to the transcendent reality. He says:

This Kantian-type hypothesis addresses the problem of the conflicting truth-claims of the different religions by the proposal that they do not in fact conflict because they are claims about different manifestations of the Real to different human faith communities, each operating with its own conceptuality, spiritual practices, form of life, treasury of myths and stories, and historical memories.^[20]

Therefore, truth and salvation can also be found within other faiths.

Pluralism and Islamic Tradition

Religious pluralism seems to be a modern idea, given that the basic idea of religious

pluralism became popular in the eighteenth century European Enlightenment. But upon closer examination, pluralism has a long history in human thought, especially in the Islamic tradition. It was taught by such thinkers as Rumi and Ibn al-Arabi in the thirteenth century. As Hick remarked, “It is an error, born of ignorance, to think that religious pluralism is a modern Western invention.”^[21] A good source to support this claim is Iranian traditional poetry, particularly the works of Rumi. However, it has to be mentioned that Rumi has been influenced by Qur’anic teachings in this regard, and he maintains there is no real conflict among world religions. The apparent differences come from our points of view:

The difference among creatures comes from the outward, from name (nam); When one penetrates into the inner meaning (mana), there is peace. Oh marrow of existence! It is because of the point of view in question. That there has come into being differences among the Muslim, Zoroastrian and Jew.^[22]

Foroogi Bastami (1824-1895) in one of his poems says that God manifests himself in the form of a hundred thousand manifestations, so we can see him with a hundred thousand views. For Rumi, all divine religions are paths that have the same origin and the same destination; they have only one origin (Masnavi, part 6, 3681-2). Speaking of the religions of the world, Rumi says, “The lamps are different but the Light is the same; it comes from beyond.”^[23]

Similarly, compare again the words of Ibn al-Arabi:

In general, most men have, perforce, an individual concept of their Lord, which they ascribe to Him and in which they seek Him. So long as the Reality is presented to them according to it they recognize Him and affirm him, whereas if presented in another form, they deny Him, flee from Him and treat Him improperly, while at the same time imagining they are acting toward Him fittingly. One who believes [in the ordinary way] believes only in the deity he has created for himself, since a deity in “belief” is a [mental] construction.^[24]

In another passage Ibn al-Arabi quite explicitly formulates a non-exclusivist claim:

Up to today, I was against anyone who had not faith in what I had, but now my heart embraces all forms. ... My religion now is the religion of love, and wherever the caravan of love goes my faith follows it.

In fact, this non-exclusivist doctrine is rooted in Qur'anic teachings. The Qur'an disagrees with the exclusivist doctrine and says:

And they say: "None shall enter paradise unless he be a Jew or a Christian,"
Those are their (vain) desires. Say: "Produce your proof if you are truthful."
Nay—Whosoever submits his whole self to Allah and is a doer of good—he
will get his reward with his Lord; on such shall be no fear nor shall they grieve.
The Jews say: "The Christians have nothing (to stand) upon"; and the
Christians say: "The Jews have nothing (to stand) upon." Yet they (profess to)
study the (same) book. Similar to their word is what those say who know not;
but Allah will judge between them in their quarrel on the day of judgment.
(2:111-113)

According to the Qur'an, revelation is a universal phenomenon, since "To every people [was sent] a messenger" (10:47). The chief message of all revelations was tawhid (uniqueness); therefore, the basic message of all messengers is the same. However, the details of each message are unique. The Qur'an says:

To each among you have We prescribed a law and an Open way. If Allah had
so willed, He would have made you a single People, but (His plan is) to test you
in what He has given you; so strive as in a race in all virtues. (5:48)

Compare also the many verses that endorse without distinction the long succession of prophets through the ages. In fact, one might argue—and this is what I shall do in the next section—that God himself has sown the seeds of pluralism in the world by sending several messengers to "announce the Real" to humanity.

Pluralistic Principles in the Qur'an

My contention is that religious pluralism is consistent with Islamic teachings. To show the consistency, I list here passages from the Qur'an that contain a commitment to pluralism or are consistent with it.

1. The universality and diversity of God's revelation to humankind. According to various Qur'anic verses, "The God of the Qur'an is not only the God of Muslim people but the God of all humankind." God has sent messengers to every nation in order to

acknowledge that every nation is responsible. “To every people (was sent) a messenger” (10:47).

The chief message of all revelation is *tawhid* (oneness), therefore the basic message of all messengers is the same. However, the details of each message are unique. William Chittick remarks that “The Qur’an never criticizes the prophetic messages as such, but it often condemns misunderstandings or distortions by those who follow the prophets.”^[25]

There is no explicit verse in the Qur’an that declares the abrogation of previously revealed religions. In fact the Qur’an affirms the Torah as divinely revealed scripture that is a source of guidance and light for the believers:

It was We who revealed the law (to Moses): in it was guidance and light. By its standard have been judged the Jews, by the prophets who bowed (as in Islam) to Allah’s will, by the rabbis and the doctors of law; for to them was entrusted the protection of Allah’s Book, and they were you in what He has given you; so strive as in a race in all virtues. The goal of you all is to Allah; it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which you dispute. (5:44)

2. There is no compulsion in religion. According to Islamic teachings people are free to accept religious belief. The Qur’an says:

Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from error: whoever rejects evil and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold that never, breaks. And God hears and knows all things. (2:256)

Say “The truth is from your Lord”: let him who will, believe, and let him who will, reject (it). (18:29)

If it had been the Lord’s will, they would all have believed—all who are on earth! Will you then compel mankind against their will to believe! (10:99)

3. “The religion before God is Islam.” The Qur’an contains the verse: “The religion before Allah is Islam [submission to His will]” (3:19). This seems to articulate an exclusivist position, but some theologians interpret the verse as a form of Islamic pluralism and remark that Islam here indicates the general sense of complete submission to the commands of Allah; thus all of divine religions can be called Islam.

4. The pluralistic requirements for salvation. Those who believe in God and the Last Day and works righteousness will be saved. The Qur'an confirms that reward is promised to Jews and Christians, even promises to the Sabians, who were star-worshippers, provided they believe in Allah and the Last Day and do righteousness:

Those who believe (in the Qur'an), those who follow the Jewish (Scriptures), and the Sabians and the Christian—any who believe in Allah and the last day and work righteousness—on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve (5:69).

There are at least two interpretations of the above verse. Some Muslim exclusivists believe the verse is about non-Muslims during the periods in which those ways were ordained, not about the present day. They argue that if the verse includes present time, it would conflict with another verse that says “and whoever seeks any religion other than Islam never shall it be accepted from him, and in the next world he shall be among the losers” (3:84). However, one may also read the verse as referring to Islam in the general sense of total submission to Allah. Therefore, Jews and Christians, despite differences in their belief, may also reach salvation, providing their belief is through no fault of their own. Even the followers of Hinduism, Buddhism, and other ways may reach paradise, providing their rejection of Islam is due to ignorance of Islam rather than prejudice against Islam.

Conclusion

I have presented here arguments against the position of religious exclusivism, showing that this position is epistemologically not well-grounded since believers of other religions can make use of precisely the same evidence and arguments to support their beliefs. Using the principle of the parity of reasoning, there is thus no justification for the exclusivist thesis; as long as believers of other religions have precisely the same epistemic warrants, or at least epistemic warrants that have the same evidential strength, one cannot justifiably say that one faith is true and others false. To do so would be irrational.

I have argued in favor of the position of religious pluralism, in particular, those versions of pluralism that also offer a plausible explanation of religious diversity. Once religious pluralism is combined with epistemic pluralism, the phenomenon of religious diversity can be attributed to the diversity of human experience within different social and historical contexts. Since our perception of religion is influenced by an ever changing horizon of

cultural presuppositions and experiential dispositions, there is bound to be a plurality of images of religion that change over time. In addition, religious truth emerges for different believers at different levels; given the differences in capacities for religious experience, we cannot expect that all will receive the same quantity and quality of religious experience at all levels.

I draw attention to the fact that religious pluralism has a long history in Iran's Islamic tradition, particularly in Rumi's works. In fact, as I tried to make plausible, the Qur'an contains a sufficient number of passages in support of a pluralist position. I have listed passages expressing a largely tolerant attitude towards other religions and even nonbelievers.

Finding suitable foundations for the peaceful coexistence of different religions is obviously one of the most pressing tasks of our times. Religious pluralism seems to be the position that is preferable on theoretical and practical grounds. Insofar as religious pluralism—especially if combined with epistemic pluralism—can offer the best explanation for the fact of religious diversity, it may best terminate the conflicts between world religions. Thus as Sohrab Sepehri, a contemporary Iranian poet, says: “we should wash our eyes, we should see things somehow differently in order to make our world beautiful.”

1. 1. See: www.adherents.com.
2. 2. Hans Küng, *Christianity and World Religions* (New York: Doubleday, 1986), 443.
3. 3. Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 438.
4. 4. Platinga, 443.
5. 5. Platinga, 453.
6. 6. Platinga, 444.
7. 7. Platinga, 444.
8. 8. John Hick, *The Second Christianity* (XPRESS, Reprints 1994), 86.
9. 9. Hick, 86-87.
10. 10. Sallie McFague, “An Epilogue: The Christian Paradigm,” in Peter C. Hodgson and Robert H. King, eds., *Christian Theology: An Introduction to its Traditions and Tasks*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 381.
11. 11. John Hick, *The Second Christianity* (XPRESS, Reprints 1994), 95.

12. 12. John Hick, "The Philosophy of World Religions," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 37 (1984), 229.
13. 13. John Hick, "The Epistemical Challenge of Religious Pluralism" (284-85), cited in "A Muslim's Non-Reductive Religious Pluralism," by Muhammad Legenhausen, in *Islam and Global Dialogue*, edited by Roger Boase (London: Ashgate, 1999), 75.
14. 14. John Hick, *Faith and Knowledge* (London: Macmillan, 1996), 82.
15. 15. John Hick, *Faith and Knowledge* (London: Macmillan, 1996), 95.
16. 16. John Hick, *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent* (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1989), 129.
17. 17. Muhammad Legenhausen, *Islam and Religious Pluralism* (London: Al-Hoda, 1999), 140.
18. 18. John Hick, *Problems of Religious Pluralism* (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1989), 48-49.
19. 19. Ibn- al-Arabi, *al-Futuhāt al-Makkiyyah* (Cairo, 1911. Critical edition by O. Yahia [Cairo: al- Hay'at al-Misriyyat al-Amma li'l-Kitab, 1972]), 319.
20. 20. John Hick, "Religious Pluralism," in *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion*, edited by Philip Quinn and Charles Taliaferro (Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 1997), 612-13.
21. 21. John Hick, "Religious Pluralism and Islam," lecture delivered to the Institute for Islamic Culture and Thought, Tehran, February 2005).
22. 22. Rumi, quoted in *Sufi Essays*, by S. H. Nasr (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd, 1972), 123.
23. 23. R. A. Nicholson, trans., *Rumi: Poet and Mystic (1207-1273): Selections from His Writings* (London and Boston: Unwin Ltd. 1964), Masnavi, part 6, 3681-2, page 166
24. 24. Ibn al-Arabi, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, translated by R. W. J. Austin, (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 137.
25. 25. William C. Chittick, *Imaginal Worlds: Ibn al-Arabi and the Problem of Religious Diversity* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994), 125.