

Unity and Diversity Under Islam: A 21st Century Sufi Master's Perspective

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Abstract : This paper addresses a long-standing theological conflict within the "Abrahamic religions" by presenting the views of the 21st century Sufi master Haji Galip Hasan Kuşçuoğlu (1919-2013). The orthodox theological viewpoints share a confessional salvation concept in which only the followers of their prophet will be redeemed and rewarded while the rest of the world will be banished to hell. The conveyed commandments, shari'ahs have been regarded as separate religions each claiming none will enter Paradise except those of their own faith. In contrast to this orthodox hierarchal conception, an interconfessional universalism manifests itself within the works of various Sufi masters such as Yunus Emre and Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi (13th century) and more recently the founder of Galibi Order Haji Galip H. Kuşçuoğlu who supports a peaceful coexistence and respect for multiplicity under the religion of Allah. Bringing evidence from a number of ayahs in the Qur'an (e.g. 2:62, 111-112, 131-133, 136, 285; 3:113-114; 4:123-125, 5:43-44, 47-48, 51, 66-69, 112), Kuşçuoğlu argues that whoever submits themselves to Allah, meaning the One and Indivisible who has no partners (112:1) is called a Muslim. There are no Abrahamic "religions" but Abraham's "religion" which is Islam, literally translating to total devotion to Allah. Starting from the very first prophet, Adam, all the prophets sent upon the earth as mentors to humanity revealed that there is no god but Allah and thus in the proper meaning of the word, they were Muslims. When it comes to those who follow the shariah of Moses, Jesus or Muhammed are called Judaic Muslims, Christian Muslims and Muhammadian Muslims respectively and as such they are brothers and sisters, which is why Islam cannot be a property of Muhammadian Muslims only. Kuşçuoğlu underscores the ayahs which show that the Qur'an does not abrogate other scriptures but completes them and Allah does not banish the People of the Book to hell but gives good tidings to the believers who do good (17:9). He points out a number of intellectuals such as Goethe and Prof. Dr. Süleyman Ateş (1933-) who understood the true meaning of Islam. Goethe states that if Islam means devotion to Allah then "In Islam, we live and die all." Kuşçuoğlu underscores the fatal consequences of this terminological misinterpretation throughout the history and emphasizes the significance of the unity of religion for the believers of Allah. His perspective provides a significant contribution to the religious conflict resolution and provides a solid basis for sustainable dialogue among the people belonging to different confessions.

Keywords : interfaith dialogue, Islam, religious conflict resolution, Sufism

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