

9607 - How to Distinguish between True Religion and False Religion

the question

What are the attributes of the correct religion?

Summary of answer

This is how to distinguish between the true religion and a false religion:

- 1- The true religion should have come from Allah,
- 2- It should call for the worship of Allah alone,
- 3- It should be in accordance with the principles advocated by the Messengers,
- 4- It should not be self-contradictory,
- 5- It should guarantee to protect people's religious commitment, honour, wealth, lives and children,
- 6- It should be a mercy to mankind,
- 7- It should include guidance regarding the laws of Allah,
- 8- It should advocate the best attitudes and actions,
- 9- It should bring happiness to those who believe, and
- 10- It should point towards the truth and warn against falsehood.

Detailed answer

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Are deviant religions and human traditions true or false?

Every member of a faith tradition believes that his community is following the truth. Every follower of a [religion](#) believes that his religion is the best religion and the straightest way.

Whenever you ask the followers of deviant religions or the followers of man-made traditions about the evidence for their beliefs, they tell you that they found their fathers doing this so they are following in their footsteps, then they tell you stories and reports that have no sound basis and whose texts are not free of faults and discrepancies.

They rely on inherited books of which it is not known who wrote or said them, or in which language they were originally written, or in which land they originated; rather they are a mixture that has been gathered and written in a book that is venerated, then they were passed down from generation to generation with no proper scientific examination of the source of the text or of the text itself.

These unknown books and stories and blind imitation do not provide valid proof with regard to religions and beliefs. Are these deviant religions and human traditions true or false?

It is impossible that they could all be true, because the truth is one; there are not many "truths". And it is impossible that all these deviant religions and human traditions could have come from Allah and all be true. If they are many, and the truth is one, then which of them is the truth? So there have to be guidelines by which we may recognize the true religion and distinguish it from false religions.

If we find that these guidelines apply to a religion, then we will know that it is the truth. If these guidelines or one of them is absent from a religion, then we will know that it is false.

How to distinguish between the true religion and false religions

The guidelines by which we distinguish the true religion from false religions:

- The religion should have come from Allah, revealed through one of the angels to one of [His Messengers](#) , to convey it to His slaves, because the true religion is the religion of Allah, and Allah is the One Who will judge mankind and bring them to account on the Day of Resurrection according to the religion which He revealed to them. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Verily, We have sent the Revelation to you (O Muhammad) as We sent the Revelation to Nuh (Noah) and the Prophets after him; We (also) sent the Revelation to Ibrahim (Abraham), Isma’il (Ishmael), Ishaq (Isac), Ya’qub (Jacob), and Al-Asbat [the offspring of the twelve sons of Ya’qub (Jacob)], ‘Isa (Jesus), Ayyoob (Job), Yunus (Jonah), Harun (aron), and Sulayman (Solomon); and to Dawud (David) We gave the Zabur (Psalms)” [An-Nisa’ 4:163]

And Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And We did not send any Messenger before you (O Muhammad) but We revealed to him (saying): La ilaha illa Ana [none has the right to be worshipped but I (Allah)], so worship Me (Alone and none else)” [Al-Anbiya’ 21:25]

Based on this, any [religion](#) which is introduced by some person who attributes it to himself and not to Allah is undoubtedly a false [religion](#) .

- It should call for the worship of Allah alone, and forbid Shirk (polytheism or the worship of anything other than Allah). It should also forbid the means that lead to that, because promoting Tawhid (belief in the oneness of Allah) is the basis of the call of all the Prophets and Messengers. Every Prophet said to his people:

“Worship Allah! You have no other Ilah (God) but Him” [Al-A’raf 7:73 - interpretation of the meaning]

Based on this, any religion that includes Shirk and joins others in worship with Him, such as a Prophet, angel or Wali (“saint”) is a false religion, even if its followers attribute it to one of the Prophets.

- It should be in accordance with the principles advocated by the Messengers, such as the worship of Allah alone, calling people to His path, and forbidding Shirk, disobedience to parents, unlawful killing and immoral deeds, both hidden and open. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And We did not send any Messenger before you (O Muhammad) but We revealed to him (saying): La ilaha illa Ana [none has the right to be worshipped but I (Allah)], so worship Me

(Alone and none else)” [Al-Anbiya’ 21:25]

“Say (O Muhammad): Come, I will recite what your Lord has prohibited you from: Join not anything in worship with Him; be good and dutiful to your parents; kill not your children because of poverty — We provide sustenance for you and for them. Come not near to Al-Fawahish (shameful sins and illegal sexual intercourse) whether committed openly or secretly; and kill not anyone whom Allah has forbidden, except for a just cause (according to Islamic law). This He has commanded you that you may understand” [Al-An`am 6:151]

“And ask (O Muhammad) those of Our Messengers whom We sent before you: Did We ever appoint alihah (gods) to be worshipped besides the Most Gracious (Allah)?” [Az-Zukhruf 43:45]

· It should not be self-contradictory, so it should not issue one command that is contradicted by another, or forbid something then allow something very similar for no reason, or forbid something or allow it for some but not for others. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Do they not then consider the Quran carefully? Had it been from other than Allah, they would surely, have found therein many a contradiction” [An-Nisa’ 4:82]

· The religion should guarantee to protect people’s religious commitment, honour, wealth, lives and children through the commands, prohibitions and morals that it prescribes, which protect these five holistic principles.

· The true religion should be a mercy to mankind, freeing them from the wrongs that they do to themselves and to one another, whether those wrongs have to do with violating their rights, giving control of wealth to the few or leaders misleading the masses. Allah says, telling us of the mercy that was contained in the Tawrat which He sent down to Musa (peace be upon him):

“And when the anger of Musa (Moses) was calmed down, he took up the Tablets; and in their inscription was guidance and mercy for those who fear their Lord” [Al-A`raf 7:154 –

interpretation of the meaning]

Allah says, telling us how He sent 'Isa (peace be upon him):

“And (We wish) to appoint him as a sign to mankind and a mercy from Us (Allah).” [Maryam 19:21 – interpretation of the meaning]

And Allah says of Salih (peace be upon him):

“He said: O my people! Tell me, if I have a clear proof from my Lord, and there has come to me a mercy (Prophethood) from Him.” [Hood 11:63 – interpretation of the meaning]

And He says of the Quran:

“And We send down of the Quran that which is a healing and a mercy to those who believe.” [Al-Isra' 17:82 – interpretation of the meaning]

· It should include guidance regarding the laws of Allah and should show people what Allah wants, and should tell them where they came from and where they are going. Allah says of the Tawrat:

“Verily, We did send down the Tawrat (Torah) [to Musa (Moses)], therein was guidance and light.” [Al-Ma'idah 5:44 – interpretation of the meaning]

He says of the Injil:

“and We gave him the Injil (Gospel), in which was guidance and light.” [Al-Ma'idah 5:46 – interpretation of the meaning]

And He says of the Quran:

“It is He Who has sent His Messenger (Muhammad) with guidance and the religion of truth (Islam).” [Al-Tawbah 9:33 – interpretation of the meaning].

The true religion is that which contains guidance concerning the laws of Allah and [brings security and peace of mind](#) , so that all whispers of the Shaytan are driven away and all

questions are answered, and all confusing matters are cleared up.

- It should advocate the best attitudes and actions, such as truthfulness, justice, trustworthiness, modesty, chastity and generosity. And it should forbid bad attitudes and actions, such as disobedience to parents, murder, immoral actions, lying, wrongdoing, oppression, miserliness and promiscuity.

- It should bring happiness to those who believe. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Ta-Ha. We have not sent down the Quran unto you (O Muhammad) to cause you distress.” [Ta-Ha 20:1-2]

It should be in accordance with the sound natural disposition of man (Al-Fitrah):

“Allah’s Fitrah (i.e. Allah’s Islamic Monotheism) with which He has created mankind.” [Al-Rum 30:30 – interpretation of the meaning]

It should also be in accordance with sound reason and common sense, because the [true religion](#) is the laws of Allah, and sound reason is the [creation of Allah](#), and it is impossible that the law of Allah and the creation of Allah would contradict one another.

- It should point towards the truth and warn against falsehood. It should show the way to true guidance and steer people away from misguidance. It should call people to the straight path in which there is no crookedness. Allah tells us that when the jinn heard the Quran, they said to one another:

“O our people! Verily, we have heard a Book (this Quran) sent down after Musa (Moses), confirming what came before it, it guides to the truth and to the Straight Path (i.e. Islam)”

[Al-Ahqaf 46:30 – interpretation of the meaning]

It does not call them to that which would cause them misery. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“Ta-Ha. We have not sent down the Quran unto you (O Muhammad) to cause you distress”

[Ta-Ha 20:1-2]

And it does not enjoin them to do anything that would cause their doom. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And do not kill yourselves (nor kill one another). Surely, Allah is Most Merciful to you.” [An-Nisa’ 4:29]

It does not differentiate between its followers on the grounds of race, colour or tribe. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honourable of you with Allah is that (believer) who has At-Taqwa [i.e. he is one of the pious]. Verily, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware.” [Al-Hujurat 49:13]

The only distinguishing feature for which people may be preferred over others, according to the [true religion](#) , is piety or fear of Allah.

In the light of the guidelines by which we may distinguish between the true religion and false religions, supported by that which is said in the Holy Quran, which indicates that these guidelines apply to all the truthful Messengers who were sent from Allah, we may then discuss different types of religions.

And Allah knows best.