



231294 - Are Judaism and Christianity really heavenly religions?

the question

Some people say that Christianity and Judaism are heavenly religions. Are they really all heavenly?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Calling Judaism and Christianity heavenly religions is subject to further discussion:

Firstly:

If what is meant by the phrase “heavenly religions” is the origin of these religions and of these systems of law that were sent down to Musa and `Isa (peace be upon them), and what the Torah and Gospel that were sent down contained of guidance and light, then undoubtedly in that regard they are heavenly religions, and Islam came to complete and supersede these religions and abrogate them, as the Holy Quran came down to confirm the divine books that had preceded it.

Allah, may He be Glorified and Exalted, says:

{Indeed, We sent down the Torah, in which was guidance and light. The prophets who submitted [to Allah] judged by it for the Jews, as did the rabbis and scholars by that with which they were entrusted of the Scripture of Allah, and they were witnesses thereto} [Al-Ma'idah 5:44].

Then He, may He be Glorified, says:

{ And We sent, following in their footsteps, Jesus, the son of Mary, confirming that which came before him in the Torah; and We gave him the Gospel, in which was guidance and light and confirming that which preceded it of the Torah as guidance and instruction for the righteous...

... And We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], the Book in truth, confirming that which



preceded it of the Scripture and superseding it} [Al-Ma'idah 5:46-48].

Therefore they are heavenly books that originally came down from Allah, may He be Glorified, confirming one another in what they agreed on, and the system of law of the Quran abrogates the systems of law that came before it.

Secondly:

But if what is meant by the phrase “heavenly religions” is what the Jews and Christians follow today of deviant beliefs, altered books and distorted and abrogated systems of law, then this phrase is false and cannot be right, because the distortions to which these two religions have been subjected caused a disconnect between their current state and heaven, and they are no longer heavenly at all. Rather they – in their current state – are earthly religions that were invented by their rabbis and monks, in which they ascribe imperfection and flaws to Allah, may He be glorified and Exalted, ascribe partners to Him or describe Him in terms of Trinity, make accusations against the Prophets and are heedless about the Last Day and the reckoning.

Thus we know that using the phrase “heavenly religions” when speaking about Judaism and Christianity after the sending of Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) is permissible and there is nothing wrong with it, on the grounds that this description refers to these religions in their original form as they were revealed and the message of Tawhid with which they were sent, even though they were distorted and altered after that. So there is no reason to reject this appellation completely, and it is not permissible to hasten to accuse those Muslims who use it.

Hence we find a number of scholars who use this phrase when discussing these religions. They use the phrases “heavenly religions” or “heavenly books” on the basis of the first meaning, which is that they were heavenly when they were originally revealed, even though they have been distorted and abrogated later on.

One of those who we found using this appellation is Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah (d. 728 AH – may Allah have mercy on him), in a discussion of some important issues, during which he used the word “heavenly” in reference to these messages, then explained that the religion that is pleasing



to Allah, may He be Glorified and Exalted, is Islam. Ibn Taymiyah said:

As for the heavenly books that were revealed to other prophets (blessings and peace of Allah be upon them), they testify that Allah will not accept anything from anyone except monotheism, which is Islam in general terms: worship of Allah alone with no partner or associate, and belief in His Books, His Messengers and the Last Day, as Allah, may He be Exalted, says:

{Indeed, those who believed and those who were Jews or Christians or Sabeans [before Prophet Muhammad] - those [among them] who believed in Allah and the Last Day and did righteousness - will have their reward with their Lord, and no fear will there be concerning them, nor will they grieve} [Al-Baqarah 2:62].

This is what Allah has told us about the earlier Prophets and their nations. Nuh said:

{And if you turn away [from my advice] then no payment have I asked of you. My reward is only from Allah, and I have been commanded to be of the Muslims} [Yunus 10:72]

And He says concerning Ibrahim:

{And who would be averse to the religion of Abraham except one who makes a fool of himself. And We had chosen him in this world, and indeed he, in the Hereafter, will be among the righteous

When his Lord said to him, "Submit", he said "I have submitted [in Islam] to the Lord of the worlds."

And Abraham instructed his sons [to do the same] and [so did] Jacob, [saying], "O my sons, indeed Allah has chosen for you this religion, so do not die except while you are Muslims}[Al-Baqarah 2:130-132].

And Musa said:

{O my people, if you have believed in Allah , then rely upon Him, if you should be Muslims} [Yunus 10:84].



End quote from *Majmu` al-Fatawa* (35/188).

Then after him came his student Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 751 AH – may Allah have mercy on him), who said: The heavenly books clearly stated that it is obligatory to obey and follow [Prophet Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)], for he is the truthful one who was told the truth, who did not speak of his own accord; rather it was divine inspiration.

End quote from *I`lam al-Muwaqqi`in*, 1/5.

Then came Sa`d ad-Din at-Taftazani (d. 743) in *Sharh al-Maqasid*, in which he said: How about the heavenly books and prophetic hadiths which indicate in innumerable locations evidence which confirms that?

Badr ad-Din al-`Ayni al-Hanafi (d. 855 AH) said in his book: *Nukhab al-Afkar* (7/41): As for the disbeliever who believes in one of the false religions or one of the heavenly books...

Abus-Su`ud (d. 982 AH) said in *Irshad al-`Aql as-Salim* (6/118): The phrase {And for every nation} [Yunus 10:47] is the beginning of a new sentence, which is meant to deter the contemporaries of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), namely the followers of the heavenly religions, from disputing with him (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him).

After him came al-Alusi (d. 1270 AH), in *Ruh al-Ma`ani* (8/76); al-Qasimi (d. 1332 AH) in *Islah al-Masajid* (p. 137); Muhammad Anwar Shah al-Kashmiri (d. 1353) in *Al-`Urf ash-Shadhi* (1/415) and in *Fayd al-Bari* (2/246); and Muhammad Rashid Rida (d. 1354 AH) in *Al-Wahy al-Muhammadi* (p. 55) and *Tafsir al-Manar* (1/278).

This phrase was also used by Shaykh Ibn Baz (d. 1420 AH – may Allah have mercy on him), as in *Majmu` Fatawa Ibn Baz* (1/309), where he said: What is strange is that those people [meaning some of the Arab nationalists] vehemently oppose Islam and fiercely fight the ummah, yet they show gentleness towards other religions, both heavenly and earthly.

He (may Allah have mercy on him) also said:



The reader should understand that the heavenly religions were subjected to distortion and change to an extent that only Allah, may He be Glorified, knows, except for the religion of Islam.

End quote from *Majmu` Fatawa Ibn Baz* (2/183).

Shaykh Ibn `Uthaymin (d. 1421 AH – may Allah have mercy on him) was asked the following question:

Is it permissible to use the phrase “heavenly religions”, noting that this phrase may indicate that there are also earthly religions? Does using this phrase come under the heading of innovation, because there is no report to suggest that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) used it?

He (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Yes, we may say “heavenly religions”, because there are earthly religions, because religion is a path to which a person adheres by way of showing devotion to his Lord, whether that is a religion prescribed by Allah, may He be Glorified and Exalted, or is a manmade religion. It is well known that there are people who adhere to invalid religions, believing as part of their religion that they should prostrate to cows or to idols, and so on, when Allah, may He be Exalted has not prescribed that in any Book that He sent or on the lips of any Messenger whom He sent. Based on that, this religion that they follow is not a religion that was ordained by Allah, so it is not a heavenly religion.

As for the heavenly religions, they are the religions that were ordained by Allah, may He be Glorified and Exalted, because they came down from heaven, but what the questioner and others should note is that all heavenly religions are abrogated by the religion of Islam, and now they are not something to which people should adhere by way of showing devotion to Allah, may He be Glorified and Exalted, because the One Who ordained it as a religion is the One Who has abrogated it with the religion of Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). Just as the Christians affirm that the religion of the Messiah abrogated many things that were part of the religion of Musa (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him), and that the followers of Musa (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) must now follow `Isa, by the same token we say that



Islam obliges the Christians to follow it, and obliges all nations to follow the religion of Islam, because what matters is following the religion ordained by Allah that came later. Allah, may He be Exalted, tells us that `Isa said to his people:

{ O children of Israel, indeed I am the messenger of Allah to you confirming what came before me of the Torah and bringing good tidings of a messenger to come after me, whose name is Ahmad } [As-Saff 61:6].

This glad tidings from `Isa of the coming of Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) indicates that the Children of Israel, Christians, Jews and others are obliged to follow him, because if the message brought by Muhammad (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) did not include them and they would not benefit from this message by following it, then there would be no point in giving them the glad tidings of his coming.

The point is that I say to the questioner and others that even if we use the phrase “heavenly religions”, it does not mean that we are affirming that they are still valid. Rather we say that they are abrogated by only one religion, which is the religion of Islam, and that the true religion with which Allah, may He be Exalted is pleased that His slaves should follow, is the religion of Islam alone. Allah, may He be exalted, says:

{and [I] have approved for you Islam as religion} [Al-Ma'idah 5:3]

{And whoever desires other than Islam as religion - never will it be accepted from him} [Al `Imran 3:85].

And Allah is the Source of strength.

[It was asked:] O Shaykh, based on that, is it permissible for us to speak of heavenly religions?

He (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

It is permissible for us to speak of heavenly religions, but not on the basis that they are valid now. Using this phrase is permissible, but if it is understood from it that these religions are still valid and



are pleasing to Allah, then it is not permissible to use this phrase, unless it is accompanied by an explanation, such as saying that what is meant by calling them heavenly is that they are something that Allah, may He be Exalted, sent down to the Messengers, but apart from Islam, they have been abrogated by Islam.

[It was asked:] O Shaykh, but these earthly religions are false?

He (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

Even though the heavenly religions were true and valid at their own time, now they have been abrogated by Islam.

End quote from *Fatawa Nur `ala ad-Darb* by al-`Uthaymin (4/2).

And Allah knows best.