



Investigating and Criticizing Secularism from Quran's viewpoint

Reyhane Varzande

M.A. Islamic theology, Hazavi Higher Education Institution of Fatemeh Masoumeh (S) Hormozgan Level three, Iran.

Abstract: *Secularism in the general sense is the separation of religion from the world and, in particular, the separation of religion from politics and secularization, is a process in which religious thought and religious institutions lose their significance. Various factors, such as religious, historical, social, theoretical and epistemic causes, are involved in the formation of secularism. Among the fundamentals and infrastructures of secularism thought is humanism, rationalism, and liberalism, or extreme libertarianism. Given the fact that secularism emphasizes the separation of religion and politics, we should evaluate the linkage of religion and politics with the view of Islam, so that we can criticize secularism. In the definition of religion, religion must provide the perfect program for the growth and perfection of mankind and the happiness of the world and the hereafter. Politics from the point of view of Islam is government, to achieve the highest spiritual and material goals. The irreconcilability of the relationship between religion and politics is based on both firm internal religious beliefs and external religious doctrines. The vision of Qur'an and the Sunni narratives to the issue of government and politics indicates that there is a serious concern to this issue that there are political, social, economic and legal rulings such as jihad and defense of the limits and sanctities, judgments and arbitration, and so on. It is necessary to link religion with worldly affairs. A secular group, with the view that constant religion is not compatible with variable politics, or the religion of the hereafter and the politics of the world is the religion of the divine universal mercy, they want to separate religion from politics. In Islam, the relationship between the world and the hereafter is explained in such a way that worldly life is the constructive agent of the eternal life. Given the fact that in the religious government, the infallible Imam is at the head of power, it is impossible to use religion as a tool, and in the age of absenteeism and rule, the Faqih, controlling instruments in the Islamic system prevents the instrumental use of religion.*

Keywords: *Secularism, Religion and Politics, Religious Government.*

INTRODUCTION

The term "secular" means worldly, temporally and materially in contrast to spiritual or otherworldly (Aryan Pour Kashani; 2009, 1220). The Latin word "Secularism" has a variety of meanings in the western culture such as worldly-minded, worldly and belief in originality of worldly issues (Aryan Pour Kashani; 2009, 1220), opposition to religious law (Mohajeri, 1997, 769), temporal (Shakerin, 2005, 14) and showing devotion to traditional and worldly principles (Ja'fari, 2009, 235).

Secularism does not deny religion, God and the hereafter, but willing to avoid religious interferences in human lives. It tries to reduce the extent of religious domain (Parsa, 1996, 53) without discussing its presence or absence. There are several meanings for the term secularism by virtue of its historical course, such as desire to exclude religion from social activities or civic affairs, atheism, anticlericalism, banishment of religious symbols from the public sphere, politics neutrality towards religion, separate of church and politics from religion, that all of them represent different aspects of using the term (Gelairi, 2005, 88).

Secularism focuses on separation of religion from politics. Regarding the thought, religion is considered as an individual issue, which aims to establish a relation between human being and God and to remove obstacles in this regard. Thus, religion takes no role and has no right in interference. In fact, it concentrates on politics without religion.

The west world introduced secularism against Christianity. Clearly, according to the holy book (Bible) and the earlier references of Christianity, secularism lacks principles and doctrine of the political system. However, making alteration to the holy book, by common consent, is acceptable. On the other hand, the function of clergies and authorities of church, their doctrinarism and indifference to develop secularism should be noticed.

Secularism was first introduced in European languages in the 1648 Westphalian treaty; under its provision all lands under the control of the church must be enjoyed sovereignty of secular political powers (Elyade, 1995, 124).

Max Weber, for the first time, introduced the term “secularism” in the sociology. Moreover, its first application dates back to the late 3rd century to describe those clergies who preferred living alone for religious reasons; they were not only authorities of the churches but also lived like ordinary people (Yazdani Moghadam, 2010).

The main criticism of the thought is that is it possible to compare socio-political Quranic verses and traditions of fourteen immaculate ones about secularism with the Bible and making judgment on Islam quite similar to Christian? Carrying out an investigation into Islamic references reveals their false claims.

Research theoretical foundations

Concepts of secularism

Definition and types of secularism

The term “secular” is derived from “Seculum”, a Latin word, meaning an age or period of time; thus being secular indicates belonging to the current age. If secularism is defined as setting human being affairs without recourse to God and afterlife, it comes to conclusion that separation of religion and politics is its mere aspect not its whole general concept; but it would be better to say that it claims to separate economy, management, law and all other aspects of human life from religion but politics is given due weight in secularism because separation of religion and politics is tantamount to separation of all other human life issues from the religion per se. The concise exhaustive definition of secularism is that, removing, inattention to or devalue religion is different aspects of human life such as politic, government, metaphysics, rationality, morality and so forth. Secularism has undergone radical changes over the centuries concerning objectivity and mental notions in its application; thus making a detailed investigation into it, in the first place, it requires carrying out a concise study about its courses. However, it must be noted that unlike its current meaning, the earlier meaning of “secularism” was not rationality and devaluating the religion (Javadi, 2010).

Accordingly, studying its changes over the years is really necessary to understand its literal meaning. The author reaches the conclusion that, secularism has taken the following course through history:

Worldly affairs

The term “secular” was meant worldly or temporal before Renaissance and was popular among people. Afterwards, it was used by churches for those priests working in non-religious fields called secular priests. Thus, the church itself used the term to call priests who were exempting or dismissed from working at church (Javadi, 2010).

Secularization process

Secularism was first introduced in European languages in the 1648 Westphalian treaty; under its provision all lands under the control of the church must be enjoyed sovereignty of secular political powers (Elyade, 1995, 124).

Sociologists use the phrase to indicate a whole series of courses through which religious articles lose their control over social, political, spatial, resources, facilities and people; so practical procedures and worldly objectives have been replaced by otherworldly destinations or metaphysics (Elyade, 1995, 124).

Secularism is a form of ideology has its roots in the natural behavior not inspiration or metaphysics. In 1846, George, H, Jay, Hull Yuk, for the first time, introduced the philosophical system in England (Sha'bani Sarouei, 7).

Mircea Eliade, a well-known historian, defined secularism in his book entitled "culture and religion": a process through which social affairs and social entities began to gradually recede, act separately and finally religion lose its worthiness and importance in the society (Eliade, 1995, 125).

In fact, decline in religion and symbols of religion in the society and context of human life, culture, education, the arts, government, management and politics is a process called secularism in the sociology (Rahim Pour Azghadi, 1998, 196). Secularism is an external phenomenon, realizing in the context of the world and society, and has many literal equivalences such as conventionalizing, non-religious, nonspiritual, dishonesty and desacralization (Rahim Pour Azghadi, 1998, 196).

Independence of education

The education system was organized in the medieval time either by the church or under its control (Javadi, 2010). But, as time went by, on the one hand, with the advent of scientists such as Rene Descartes, Thomas Hobbes, Pierre-Simon Laplace, and on the other hand because of educating some of the sciences such as mathematics and biology, capability of churches became narrow in teaching religious issues, so other sciences were called secular or non-religious.

Separation of religion and politics

Secularism, separation of religion and politics, has become common since 9th century because of increasing disputes and struggle between the government and church. Separation of religion and politics is specific to secularism and in the general sense, it is the separation of religion from the politics. Secularism is a strong ideology based on separation of religion and politics, forming a government and legislation in this system according to human wants (Rabbani Golpaigani, 1996, 113).

Preventing religion from interference in social affairs

Nowadays, secularism mainly implies preventing religion from interference in social affairs. Separation of religion from the society is limited to private life, so loses its social entity and attains an internal feature.

Secularism is generally divided into two groups, including violent and mild.

- A. The former has an irreligious approach, and generally aims to devaluate religion in all aspects of the human life.
- B. The latter, but, is content to narrow down the religion to individual life and satisfy private demands (Kamran, 2003, 27).

According to some intellectuals, secularism is provided in three levels (Sha'bani Sarouei, 8):

- Individual secularism: in this level one is able to make rational decisions and renews placement of religion in his/her behaviors and interactions.
- Collective secularism: in this case, secularism and death of religion are both occurred in the social realm at worst, and at best it will results in distinguish between religious and traditional sectors.
- Inter-religion secularism: here, religion turns into an individual issue existing in all levels of inter-religion considerations which normally pays no attention to external consideration.

The reasons behinds formation of secularism in the west

Christian creed is among the most well-known causes for the advent of secularism in the western culture. The current Bible has no rule to describe main strategies of politics and social plans, so objectors to the holy book found some drawbacks to misunderstanding of priests and people immediately accepted as realized them. Accordingly, it provided a context for admission of secularism (Javadi, 2010). Unlike Islam, the New Testament lacks exhaustive rules proportion to administration of human being's social life. It directs the western society, willy-nilly, towards secularism (Madih, 2009, 11).

Despite claim to be a unitarian, justification for belief in an independent Holy Trinity, that is to say, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, seems one of the main issues the Christian creed suffers (Shakerin, 2005, 35).

Existence of such a contradictory principle in one of the fundamental religious believes encouraged Christian intellectuals to put more efforts into prepare much justification but none of them were succeeded and finally, priests declared intellect is not allowed to interference in the issues.

There are several reasons behind influence of superstitions, contradictions and mental inspirations on the holy book, i.e, the New Testament was written many years after death of Jesus Christ and existing differences between the Gospels.

For example, in spite of the fact that the Jesus dead 2000 years ago, no one can still represent a clearly understandable interpretation of the Trinity and its stories; thus, after Renaissance, some proposed the theory of irrational religious beliefs because of its very unreasonable falsified content; and it gradually turned into the fundamentals of secularism (Javadi, 2010).

Inaccessibility to inspirational passages led to appearance of mistaken believes and prevalence of superstitious traditions and finally the irrational religious believes aroused opposition between religion and intellect (Izadi, 1996, 40). The religion correction movement is among the most well-known proceedings to form secularism. According to Luther, worldly and spiritually governances are apart from each other, and those who dominate the society enjoy the God power, so God exerts its power by means of politicians. Thereafter, some intellectuals such as John Calvin, a French theologian, Huldrych Zwingli, a pastor, and Martin Luther, a Professor, revived the movement. The present research is not organized to study their thoughts (Izadi, 1996, 40).

Regarding historical events, Christian suffered from moral, political and economic aberration, and it fulfilled a significant function to decline popularity of religion and religious government in amongst people, especially intellectuals and liberals. Eventually, church position had been weekend by public riots and separation of religion and politics was occurred (Rabbani Golpayegani, 1998).

Invalidity of some Christian teachings, e.g, the invalidity of geocentric theory, existence of some irrationalism in the Gospels such as Trinity and human beings' intrinsic blame; and the advent of modern thoughts in the Christian creed, i.e, the sensational and empirical philosophy, where upon the best ways of recognizing the world are sensational observation and practical trial; all provided a good context to diminish validity of Christian teachings and devaluate religious instructions in order to develop secularism.

The fundamentals of Secularism and its criticism

Humanism is one of the well-documented theoretical substructures of secularism. It is the sprite of the modern western culture and has several different meanings. The term is literally translates as "anthropocentrism", "humanism", "human gentility" and so forth (Shakerin, 2005, 50).

The Renaissance saw a progressive decline in acceptance of the religious world by virtue of humanism, anyway, as it required world-oriented religion spirituality was devaluated and religion was introduced as a thing with worldly consequences. In fact, humanism is the reason behind the advent of several ideologies which were in accord with philosophers' thoughts not the fact (Taherzade, 2009, 48).

Rationalism is another ingredient of secularism. It is literally translates as intellectual-orientation, that is, acceptance of intellect as the final reference (Shakerin, 2005, 52). Practically, to understand the world and attain human evolution wisdom is necessary but insufficient. Human intellect is unable to comprehend the fact without recourse to independent criteria.

Intellect correlates strongly with religion in Islam. "Wisdom is human being's internal religion and religion is his external intellect", Imam Ali said (Karman, 2003, 275).

Liberalism is another essential ingredients of secularism, is literally translates as freedom, liberation, deliverance, etc. (Ensaf Pour, 2010, 996).

Christian churches weekend and limited people's legal freedom by means of interference in social systems and it was declared that religion is the main reason behind the limitations and people are obliged to obey (Javadi, 2010).

While showing a total disregard for internal freedom, salvation of belongings and self-worship of concupiscence, liberalism claims extreme freedom and attends to completely restricts it to external deliverances and denying obligations. One of the most advantages of Islam is that in spite of respecting human freedom, it never disregards for human worth. Islam neither gives up freedom by means of justice and egalitarianism, like Marxism and Communisms, nor sacrifices justice and values for freedom (Shakerin, 2005, 56).

on reasons for correlation between religion and politics from Islamic point of view

Clearly, there is a crucial long-standing link between religion and politics in Islam (Shakerin, 2005m, 92). Unlike Christian creed, Islamic passages focus on the inherent relationship. Some believe that, terms such as “property”, “mandate” and “guardian”, in Quran, imply on governance of God in the otherworld (division of heaven and hell). The inference is false because governance of God is continued even when this world is finished, that is to say, those who accept and obey the divine rules go to heaven but those who reject are convinced of atheism, cruelty and injustice and have merit of going to the hell (Shakerin, 2005, 124). Thus, a theocratic politics not only administrates honorable human life in this world but also sees otherworldly affairs (Shakerin, 2005, 125).

O you who have believe, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you.
(Nesa-59-4)

The government is given a due weight in the verse above.

Beheshti interpreted it as follow:

According to the verse, unrighteous governors are not allowed to enjoy sovereignty over people, and human beings are not obliged to obey whoever unless Allah and his Messengers; so during the absence of Imam, people need to obey those directly or indirectly determined by people to come in to power according to Islamic standards. According to Quran, imamate and leadership are both a form of divine liable. Righteous people are merely elected on the basis of meritocracy by God.

Moreover, according to the verse above, God addressed Ibrahim, you come into power to become Imam of my servants, and when Ibrahim asked Imamate for his sons, God said, my covenant does not include the wrongdoers (Ibid).

And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed-then it is those who are the disbelievers (Maede, 44-5).

With regard to the verse above, establishment of divine rules in the world are requirements of faith and justice, so denying the issue is not in accord with faith, justice and pietism.

The seemingly unshakable conviction to form an Islamic worlds’ government by the promised Mahdi, the last prophet, is the main reason why Islam rejects separation of politics and religion.

Quran announced formation of such a government; the following verses are notable examples:

21- Al-Anbiya-105: and we have already written in the book of (Psalms) after the (previous) mention that the land (paradise) is inherited by my righteous servants.

28-Al-Ghessas-5-6: and we wanted to confer favor upon those who were opposed in the land and make them leaders and make them inheritors. And establish them in the land.

The following is a remarkable example where Quran specifies prophets’ mission is to establish justice.

57-Al-Hadid-27: we sent aforetime our apostles with clear signs and sent down with them the Book and Balance (of right and wrong), that men may stand forth in justice.

Clearly, establish justice in the social communities depends upon setting a fair lawful system.

16-An-Nahl-36: and certainly we have raised in every nation a messenger. For them to become servants to Allah and avoid Tagut (human and jinn satans).

According to the verse above, all prophets were sent to invite nations to Tawhid, theism, and fight against Tagut (arrogant despot). Since, no corrective plan works where theism is weak and arrogant despots govern human lives and their thoughts (Shakerin, 2005, 76).

Shiite has several narrations about government and politics, the following are some notable examples:

Imam Reza said, clearly, there was no divine religion, divine traditions were died, infidels distorted the divine law and there was a great deal of uncertainty about Islam if God did not elect a respected, confident, honest politicians.

Abu al-Hamze al-Samali narrated, Imam al-Baqir said, five pillars of Islam are prayer, Zakat, Islamic tax, Hajj, fast and guardian, among which Muslims are just invited to obey the guardian (Rei Shahri, 2000, 247).

O God, you know whatever we did was in order to restore your signs and reveal prosperity in the lands to provide human being with security and welfare and activate forbidden law, Imam Ali said.

People need a leader, whom may be a righteous or cruel, Imam Ali said (Sharif al-Razi, 2000, sermon 40).

According to Imam Ali, every government needs leadership, but during absence of a righteous leader an unrighteous comes to power (Rabbani Golpayegani, 2000, 48). Ahmad bin Hanbal narrated, the Prophet said, people seek to recourse with a fragmented society, when it is disintegrated (Shakerin, 2005, 94).

Since human being cannot live alone and needs to strengthen cooperation with others, so a legislator, someone who comes to power by God, is obliged to make social laws, Abu Ali Sina said (Rabbani Golpayegani, 2000, 49).

With regard to numerous Islamic political objectives available in traditions and Quran it seems easy to find a link between religion and politics. It would be better to say, a religious government performs Islamic laws and accordingly in such a government religion is in a close accord with politic; but there is no association between them in a non-religious government because it is not obliged to fulfill religious laws and eventually religion is totally damaged because its laws are disregarded. By and large, most Islamic laws are performed providing a religious government comes to power (Mir, 2001, 91).

In conclusion, Islam not only sees individual and religious affairs, but also includes social and political aspects of the human life. It has a variety of advices and comments on different issues, including politics and government. Thus, it would be better to say Islam is a form of politic religion (Motahhari, 1985, 31).

5. Special inferences concerning Islam

Mahdi Bazargan affirms separation of religion and politics and severely refrained from consult with people; "prophecy and governing are wholly different and have their roots in two irreconcilable different issues" (Bazargan, 1998).

There is no doubt that Tawhid, oneness of God, and Ma'ad, resurrection, are among the most well-known ingredients of prophets' mission and also given due weight in the holy Quran.

Despite the fact that government is the center of Islam's attention in order to establish justice and fulfill divine law in the human societies, there seems no conflict between religion and politics and they are in accord with each other (Rabbani Golpayegani, 2010, 56-57). Although prophets are obliged to address worldly affairs, making a better life for human being is a sine qua non and essential for cognition of God.

When discussing about religious government, philosophers often seek recourse to the inference that association between religion and politics leads to misuse of arrogant, that is, religion is used as a tool to develop their power; so to analyze it two aspects need to be discussed. Regarding its universality, religion is able to satisfy all worldly and otherworldly human needs, in fact God make human beings a divine gift of universality of religion according to his exhaustive tradition and theology.

Imam Reza said, whatever is advised by religion looks after human being interests and whatever is prohibited by religion has both physical and mental damages (Shakerin, 2005, 91).

In answer to the aforementioned inference, that is to say, instrumental use of religion, it must be noted that responsibility of politic for those affairs, called religious dogmas, will assist to find its way in human being's favor; since in a religious government governors are obliged to perform their duties according to the law religious standards will restrict their authority (Javadi Amoli, 2002, 344).

So, regarding Shiite political convection, a religious government is a system whose leader is Imam and during his absence deputy, whom has a close resemblance to Imam, excises leadership over the society; thus he is not only must be able to fulfill overall management but also needs to have piety, justice, and inference capability about divine law proportion to society requirements (Shakerin, 2005, 97).

Conclusion

Secularism is an ideology seeking to reduce the role of religion and devalue its function; in other words, eliminate religion from human being's political and social life. This thought was proposed by those who were unfamiliar with the fundamentals and sources of Islam; therefore, the secularism-orientated approach was created against Christian due to lack of governmental and political rules. The ideology, separation of religion and politics, is affirmed if there was no direct reference to political issues in Islamic sources; but there are several references to it in Islamic Hadith and traditions. Seculars try to keep separate religion from politics with recourse to the inference that the otherworldly religion is not in accord with worldly policy. However, from Imam Khomeini's viewpoint, the world is the main field of religious mission. Religion is generally aimed to direct human being efforts.

The crucial function of religion is to assist human being attain beatitude by virtue of other ways. So, it affirms that there is a direct relationship between this world and other world. Regarding universality of religion, it must be noted that there is a close link between worldly and otherworldly affairs in Islam. Thus, there is no doubt that politics and government have a special plan. By making reference to sociopolitical traditions, prophets' life, objectives of mission, and government's political rules it seems there is there is a direct relationship between Islamic policy and Islamic religion. Although seculars give many reasons for their thought, with regard to rational and traditional facts, there inferences are subjected to criticism.

References

1. Aryan Pour Kashani, Manouchehr (2009); the English-persian collegiate dictionary, 8th edition, vol.2, electronic publishing and Jahan Rayane e-mail information base.
2. Bazargan, Mehdi (1998); the other world and God are objectives of prophet's mission; 1st edition, Rasa publishing Ltd, pp.82-83.
3. Ensaf Pour, Gholam Reza (2000); Persian dictionary, 5th edition, p.996, Zavvar
4. Gelayeri, Ali (2005); secularism or modern divagation, Dolate Andishe quarterly journal, Islamic research center of IRIB, No.49.
5. Izadi, Ali Naghi (1996); secularism or religion. 1st edition, Mashhour publishing
6. Ja'fari, Mohammad Taqi (2008); philosophy of religion, research center of Islamic culture and thought, 2nd edition.
7. Javadi Amoli, Abdullah (2002); Velayat-e-faqih (religious jurisprudent, justice, province), Mohammad Mehrabi, Qom, Asra, 3rd edition.
8. Javadi, Mohammad Saleh (2010); a criticism on secularism from Quran's point of view, for more information visit www.rastekhoon.net.
9. Kamran, Hassan (2003); a criticism on pluralism of religions. Culture and education research center, Qom, p.27.
10. Madih, Mohammad Reza (2009); quarterly journal of Nour-e-Andishe, the mobilization of clergies and theologians, No.14, summer, Misaq.
11. Mir, Iraj (2001); relationship between religion and politics: a review on interpretations of Imam Mohammad Ghazali and Tousi on the link between religion and politics, 1st edition, Nei publishing.
12. Mircea Eliade (1995); religion and culture, board of translators under supervision of Baha eddin Farshai, Islamic culture and education ministry, No.49, 1st edition.
13. Mohajeri, A, A; dictionary of communications and press. 4th edition, spring 1997, Mojde publishing.
14. Mohammadi Rey Shahri, Mohammad (2000); Mizan al-Hekmat translated by Sheikhi, Hamid Reza. Dar al-Hadith research center, 2nd edition, vol.1, Qom.
15. Motahhari, Morteza (1998); imamate and leadership, 3rd edition, Sadra press, Tehran.
16. Parsa, Hamid (1996); the fundamentals of education and social aspect of secularism, Andisheye Moaser institution, 3rd edition, No. 1.

17. Rabbani Golpayegani, Ali (1996); an introduction to modern word, 1st edition, Qom, Hajar.
18. Rabbani Golpayegani, Ali (1998); religion and government. Research center of Islamic thought and culture, 1st edition, summer.
19. Rabbani Golpayegani, Ali (2000); the guardian government from Imam Ali's viewpoint. Islamic word Magazine, Imam Sadegh research and education institute, 9th edition (36).
20. Rahim Pour Azghadi, Hassan; a failure in specifying concept and fundamentals of secularism (criticism of secularism), Andishe Moa'ser institution, 3rd edition.
21. Sha'bani Sarouei, Ramezan; regognition of secularism in Iran. Quarterly journal of Nour-e-Andish, No.17, p.7, Misaq.
22. Shakerin, Hamid Reza (2005); Secularism, 3rd edition, vol.1, club of youth thoughts publishing, Tehran.
23. Sharif al-Razi, Mohammad Ibn Husein (2000); Nahj al-balaqa translated by Dashti, Mohammad, Qom.
24. Taher Zade, Asghar (2009); reasons for insecurity in the western civilization, Lob al-Mizan, 2nd edition, 2009.
25. Yazdani Moghaddam, Ahmad Reza (2010); considerations in secularism and secular, Mosalas analytical weekly journal, No.50, Aban 1389 (October 2010).