

MAHMUD AZ-ZAMAKHSHARIY'S PERSPECTIVE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGION AND KNOWLEDGE

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Annotation: *In this article, the views of Az-Zamakhshariy on the complementary nature of religion and knowledge, the search for truth and understanding of Allah through knowledge, the benefits of knowledge, and the issues of religion and piety are discussed.*

Key words: *Islam, theology, religion, philosophy, tafsir, piety, dignity, humanity, spirituality, wisdom, honor.*

Mahmud Az-Zamakhshari was one of the great scholars who made significant contributions to the development of Islamic philosophy, tafsir, linguistics, and theology. His epistemological views hold an important place in the history of philosophy, particularly in the development of Islamic philosophy. Zamakhshari believed that religion and knowledge complement each other, with religion serving to elevate the spirit of humans and knowledge helping to develop the intellect and reasoning. In his interpretation of the Quran, he placed great emphasis on knowledge and reflection, promoting the idea of understanding divine truths through human intellect.

According to Mahmud Az-Zamakhshari, a scholar must internalize the principles of religion through knowledge. "I swear by your life, those who have reached the highest level of progress and perfection on earth are the people who practice the obligatory and recommended acts. These people are undoubtedly the scholars who walk the true path. Others are like foam on the surface of the water. They are called narrators of tales. They are referred to as ink-slingers and book colleagues" [1]. The essence of this statement by the scholar is that truly knowledgeable individuals are those who carry out the obligatory acts of Allah with full sincerity and apply the practices of the Prophet in their lifestyles, all while approaching them with intellect. Those who merely follow blindly are compared to foam on the surface of the water. Az-Zamakhshari also praised the scholars, wrote: "Follow the virtuous deeds of your kings, and seek guidance from the people of virtue in your way of life" [2]. The scholar, through his words, called on those who strive for the advancement of knowledge to seek the help of the virtuous in solving any of life's problems. According to Az-Zamakhshari, acquiring knowledge, relying on contemplation, and benefiting from the company of knowledgeable individuals is a good virtue, while ignorance is a harmful vice that leads to destruction. Az-Zamakhshari

divided knowledge into two types, emphasizing their great importance for humanity and the immense benefit they bring. He stated, “Knowledge is of two kinds: the knowledge that elevates one’s status and the knowledge that brings practical benefits. The knowledge that elevates one’s status is the jurisprudence in religion, while the knowledge that brings practical benefits is the science of medicine” [3]. In another of his works, Az-Zamakhshari gave such an assessment of knowledge, wisdom, religion, and piety: “When religion and knowledge raise a person’s value and dignity, poverty and orphanhood cannot lower their honor and respect. Similarly, if a person loses their value due to ignorance and vile qualities, wealth or noble lineage cannot restore their reputation” [1]. Az-Zamakhshari, while explaining that knowledge is superior to wealth, material possessions, and lineage, emphasized that it is through knowledge that one can attain honor and status that cannot be achieved through these means. He pointed out that individuals who are pious and knowledgeable will always be respected and valued by society, regardless of their social or economic status. According to Az-Zamakhshari, the position of those who possess knowledge and wisdom is always high, unaffected by their poverty, orphanhood, or any physical shortcomings. He further noted that ignorant and vile individuals, no matter how wealthy or noble they may be, cannot restore the honor and respect they have lost.

Az-Zamakhshari, referencing the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), “Allah adorned the heavens with three things – the sun, the moon, and the stars – and the earth with scholars, farmers, soldiers, and just kings” [2], highlighted the supreme importance and value of knowledge. Based on this hadith, Az-Zamakhshari described the beauty of the earth as being adorned by scholars and intellectuals, while the beauty of the sky and heavens is likened to the stars. He expressed, “The beauty of the earth lies in scholars, just as the beauty of the sky and heavens lies in the stars” [4]. Az-Zamakhshariy described people’s relationship with knowledge in the following way: “Either be knowledgeable, or rely on those who possess knowledge, or at least listen to and absorb knowledge. However, do not remain ignorant, for you will face ruin and destruction” [5]. Az-Zamakhshariy criticized the disdain or dismissal of knowledge, urging people to face any difficulties encountered in the pursuit of knowledge with steadfast patience and perseverance. He emphasized that individuals should either follow knowledge-based guidelines or, at the very least, avoid causing any harm – whether material or spiritual – to the knowledge itself or to scholars. In this context, it is worth mentioning the words of Prophet Muhammad’s uncle, Ibn Abbas, who said, “I struggled and faced some humiliation in seeking knowledge, but once I achieved my goal, I became honored and revered” [6].

According to Zamakhshariy, for the followers of Ahl al-Sunnah, the greatest reward and the highest prize in Paradise is attaining the pleasure of Allah. Even the smallest part

of Allah's pleasure is greater than the grandest rewards in Paradise. Apart from this great reward, the most significant blessing Allah grants to His servant is His satisfaction with them. Zamakhshariy used hyperbolic language in his descriptions of Paradise, with the primary purpose being to encourage a longing for Paradise and to prompt obedience. He emphasized that the word "Firdaws" refers to the highest part of Paradise, symbolizing the gardens between the heavens, and also represents a grand garden filled with various fruits. Allah has described Firdaws as being made from two types of bricks – one of gold and the other of silver – interspersed with mortar made of ambergris.

Zamakhshariy opposed the claim made by some Mu'tazilites that the pleasures of Paradise are limited. In his view, the most significant characteristic of Paradise is that both Paradise itself and its pleasures are infinite. He argued that in the Qur'anic verse where it is stated that the inhabitants of Paradise will be provided with an abundance of fruits, the phrase "mo'l-ko'l" (abundant) indicates that the blessings in Paradise are limitless and continuously available. This means that the enjoyment and rewards in Paradise are not confined or finite but are eternal and ever-lasting.

In conclusion, Az-Zamakhshariy analyzed religion and knowledge in harmony and argued that scholars must internalize religious principles through knowledge. He emphasized that the true quality of a scholar lies in flawlessly fulfilling Allah's commandments and applying the Prophet's traditions in their lifestyle with wisdom. In Zamakhshariy's views, acquiring knowledge, relying on reflection, and benefiting from the conversations of learned individuals are considered virtuous traits. The thinker divided knowledge into two types: compulsory and essential, noting that both types are extremely important and provide significant benefits to humanity. Az-Zamakhshariy also emphasized that pious and religious individuals will always be respected and honored by society, and the status of knowledgeable individuals remains high, regardless of their poverty, orphanhood, or physical imperfections.

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