



The Role of the 'Hadith of Surat' in the Theory of 'Superiority of Human Being Over Other Creatures'

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Abstract

One of the most famous intellectual foundations of the Sufis and theoretical mysticism is the "hadith of Surat". Islamic mystics have used it as the basis for their claims, including "superiority of human being over other creatures". Being organized by the method of content analysis, this article first aims to examine the hadith documentation to find out if it has been issued by infallible Imams and in the second step, scrutinize its implications for the claim. The research findings indicate that not only the "hadith of Surat" is not authentic and cannot be attributed to an infallible Imam and it has just been appeared in Holy Scriptures of Judaism, Christianity as well as the hadith texts of the Sunnis and Sufis, but also it seems that the hadith cannot prove the claims based on it. Apparantly Sufis has interpreted it in a different ways, so they can consider it as the basis of their arguments. Therefore, although the idea of "superiority of human being over other creatures" could be deduced and obtained from other theological evidences, but the 'Hadith of Surat' cannot be a basis to it; and it is more similar to celebrires in a religious discours that entered to Islamic World from other religions.

Keywords: hadith of Surat, Israelite, mystical interpretations, human superiority, documentary criticism, content criticism.

Introduction

One of the most important documents of mystical seekers is the hadith of "Behold, Allah created man in his image", in such a way that they suppose this hadith as a basis and reason to demonstrate their many claims, including "superiority of human being over other creatures. What is more, Ibn 'Arabi has used this hadith more than 150 times to prove or confirm his mystical claims without mentioning the source of this hadith.

The questions of this article are: whether this hadith is acceptable in terms of its evidence and implication? Assuming acceptance of its evidence and implication, can it prove the supposition of human superiority over other creatures?

Ahl al-Hadith had different opinions about accepting or rejecting this narration. Moreover, some Shi'ite and Sunni scholars, because of its implication to "incarnation" and "likeness of God to man", have considered it as fake and unacceptable. Some who have accepted that this hadith was transmitted from an innocent Imam, either have summarized it in a personal matter and did not consider it to be related to all human beings, or they have interpreted this hadith, rejecting the physicality of God.



This article by the method of content analysis, tries to investigate the documentations of both groups' opinions as well as the sources of previous religions, and to examine its references in the narrative sources of Islam. Finally and accordingly by criticizing its content, optimal opinion will be presented here.

Research Findings

1. In several verses of the Old Testament and the Talmud, as well as in New Testament, the issue of the creation of man in the image of God has been clearly mentioned.
2. According to Christian thought, only man has a divine face, and therefore he alone is "the noblest of creatures".
3. This hadith is also seen in sources attributed to Islamic sects.
 - 3.1. Although the narration of face (Hadith of Surat) is seen many times in the books of Sunnis, but all of them suffer from the weakness of chain of transmission due to the unreliable narrators.
 - 3.2. In mystical books, the hadith of Surat has been used in detail and many times, and in almost all cases, the documents of Sunni books alone have been cited for them.
 - 3.3. In the Shi'a narrative sources, the "hadith of Surat" is also mentioned, but the purpose of mentioning it was mainly to explain the textual problems and also to express its correct meaning.

Conclusion

Although the text and content of "Hadith of Surat" is accepted by the Sunnis and Sufis, but according to the Shi'ite principles, this hadith cannot basically be considered as a proof to the superiority of man over other creatures.

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