

The Criterion for Individual and Social Religiosity Based on Quranic Culture and Islamic Traditions

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 <https://doi.org/10.22034/jksl.2025.542028.1501>

Introduction

Every genuinely religious person is concerned with measuring themselves against the criteria that religious sources set forth for believers and with regulating their personal and social conduct accordingly. At the same time, individuals and groups frequently claim to be religious even though the characteristics prescribed by religion are scarcely evident in their conduct. These criteria must therefore first be understood correctly, after which individuals should seek to bring their words and actions into conformity with them.

A brief survey shows that numerous Quranic verses and Islamic traditions address this issue and describe the characteristics of religious individuals. Several writers have also sought to collect the criteria and indicators presented under various headings in the Quran and the traditions of the infallible Imams.

Materials and Methods

Using a descriptive-analytical method, this study draws on Quranic verses, Quran-based exegeses, and Islamic traditions to explain the true meaning of a religious person and identify that person's characteristics. A review of the relevant literature indicates that the principle, foundation, and primary criterion of religiosity has either been neglected or has not been examined with sufficient care and precision. The study argues that, after affirming divine unity and accepting prophethood, the essential pillar of religiosity is the acceptance of the guardianship of God's divinely appointed authority and the infallible Imams. Only when this foundation is present does divine testing acquire meaning; without it, one does not possess the qualification required to enter the sphere of divine testing and advance in rank. Other criteria mentioned in the Quran and Islamic traditions consequently occupy a position subsequent to this primary criterion. The article examines this criterion and its place in the religiosity of individuals and society.



Results and Findings

1. Governance of the World through Divine Laws and Principles

Numerous verses refer to the existence of divine laws in the world and to the governance of creation according to these principles. The Quran explicitly states that these laws are neither altered nor changed (Al-Fath 48:23; Al-Ahzab 33:62; Al-Isra 17:77).

2. Trial and Affliction as an Inviolable Divine Law

Both the Quran and the traditions of the infallible Imams repeatedly identify trial and affliction as an inevitable divine law in human life (Al-Ankabut 29:2; Al-Ahzab 33:11; Al-Anfal 8:28; Al-Imran 3:186; Al-Anbiya 21:35; Al-Kahf 18:7).

3. Levels and Stages of Divine Testing

Divine tests have successive stages and degrees. Entry into each stage depends on successfully passing the preceding ones; unless an earlier stage has been completed, advancement to the next is not possible.

4. Acceptance of the Imamate as a Prerequisite for Entering the Sphere of Divine Testing

The minimum level that a person must attain before entering the sphere of divine testing consists of belief in divine unity, followed by acceptance of prophethood and the guardianship of God's messengers, and thereafter acceptance of the imamate and guardianship of the infallible Imams.

5. The Necessity of Accepting the Guardianship of the Infallible Imams in Islamic Traditions

Imam al-Sadiq states: 'God, Blessed and Exalted, said: I shall surely punish every community that follows an imam who is not appointed by God, even if that community is righteous and pious in its deeds; and I shall surely pardon every community that follows an imam appointed by God, even if that community is sinful in its deeds' (al-Majlisi, 1403 AH, vol. 65, p. 105). Another tradition states: 'If a man were to stand in prayer throughout the night, fast throughout the day, give away all his wealth in charity, and perform the pilgrimage throughout his life, but did not recognize the guardianship of God's divinely appointed authority, follow him, and perform all his deeds under his guidance, God would owe him no reward, nor would he be among the people of faith' (al-Majlisi, 1403 AH, vol. 23, p. 294; al-Bahrani, 1995, vol. 2, p. 133).

6. The Rationale and Underlying Necessity of Accepting the Guardianship of God's Appointed Authority

The hereafter is the spiritual and suprasensible aspect of this world. For an action to acquire a good spiritual aspect and ascend to the highest realm, it must be performed with attention to God and for the sake of drawing near to Him. If a person does not believe in the hereafter and does not direct their attention toward God, the action will have no spiritual aspect and will not ascend to the highest realm. An action's spiritual aspect is its higher dimension, whereas

its material aspect is its lower dimension. Unless intention, conviction, and faith impart light and purity to an action, it cannot reach the higher spiritual realm. Only an action endowed with spirit can ascend thereto. The spirit of an action is therefore its otherworldly and spiritual benefit.

7. The Criterion of Social Religiosity

What has been stated concerning individual religiosity also applies within the social sphere. In other words, the criterion for assessing a society's religiosity and Islamic character is its acceptance of the guardianship of God's divinely appointed authority.

Conclusion

Although the Quran and Islamic traditions present various criteria of religiosity, which have also been discussed in previous writings and studies, these criteria do not all occupy the same level. A central oversight has been the assumption that all criteria mentioned in religious sources are equal. In fact, some are constitutive pillars, whereas others, though obligatory, are not constitutive. Without the former, religiosity has no meaning at all.

Accordingly, the assessment of individual and social religiosity must begin with the primary criteria, and only after their presence has been established should the remaining criteria be considered. On the basis of the Quranic verses and traditions examined in this study, the primary criteria are belief and faith in God and His unity, faith in all divine prophets, and faith in all the infallible Imams.

The first two criteria have already received sufficient attention; this study therefore does not reiterate them. Because the third has been comparatively neglected, it constitutes the article's principal subject, and its various dimensions have been explained in light of Quranic verses and Islamic traditions. The discussion shows that, where the primary criteria—acceptance of the guardianship of God, His messengers, and the infallible Imams—are present, the absence of some secondary criteria does not negate the religiosity of an individual or society. Conversely, in the absence of these primary criteria, the presence of other qualities and mere adherence to other religious teachings do not make a society religious. The guardianship of the infallible Imams, as a continuation of the guardianship of God and His prophets, must first be accepted; only thereafter do the remaining criteria acquire meaning within the sphere of religiosity.

Keywords

religiosity; Islamic culture; divine testing; guardianship.

Ethical Considerations

Compliance with research ethics. The authors observed the ethical principles in conducting and publishing this scholarly research, and this is confirmed by all of them.

Conflict of interest



The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Funding statement

The authors declare that no funds, grants, or other support were received during the preparation of this manuscript.

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How to cite:

Ebrahimi, Bagher; Aghili, Sayed Ahmad & Tabatabaei, Seyed Mostafa. (2026). The Criterion for Individual and Social Religiosity Based on Quranic Culture and Islamic Traditions. Quran, Culture And Civilization, 7 (3), 73-90. <https://doi.org/10.22034/jksl.2025.542028.1501>