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**Prophethood as a Historical Necessity: Between The Islamic Traditionalism and The Eastern Neoplatonism
(final draft)**

Introduction

“A need of humanity in the necessary religious law (*shari'ah*) is above their need in every other thing; it cannot be compared even with their need in a medical science. You will find that majority of world inhabitants, despite some civilized cities, live without a doctor. As for the inhabitants of deserts, non-Muslims and all Adam's offspring in general, they do not need a doctor. But they are healthier and have more powerful nature than those who depend on a doctor... A huge part of the medical science principles came from the ordinary habits, every-day conditions and experiences. But religious laws founded on the knowledge of events are related to God's satisfaction and His anger. It comes from the voluntary actions of the God-servants. The [religious law] is founded on pure revelation (*al-wahi al-mahdh*).”¹

These words of Ibn al-Qayim al-Jawziyyah, a great Islamic thinker and apologist of the fourteenth century, demonstrate the position of Prophethood in Islamic religious and philosophical mind. Some modern scholars of Islam like Sayeed Hussain Nasr even call it “Philosophy of Prophethood”, taking in consideration the mere fact of general evaluation of prophecy (as a Qur'anic Dei Verbum) among the Medieval Islamic Philosophical Schools². The phenomenon of *nubuwwah* (“Prophethood”) was a huge source of development of the well-known social and political theories like Abu Nasr al-Farabi's (873 – 950) the “virtuous city”, created in the stream of Islamic Neoplatonism and then borrowed and interpreted in completely new ways by ibn Sina (980 – 1037), ibn Bajjah (d. 1138) and ibn Rushd (1126 – 1198). On the other hand, traditional Islamic theory of Prophethood was a strong basis for political ideas and principles of social regulations, developed in Islamic society by different Sunni and Shia' groups since the first civil war in 657. It is a well-known fact that probably in all Islamic political ideas the priority was reserved for some leader, be it simple *imam* from the Muhammad's family (in Shia' political theory) or philosophical *rais* engaged in the installation of justice and right order in society

¹ *Al-Majmu' al-Qayim fi d-dawwah wa t-turabiyyah wa 'amal al-qulub* / Ed. Mansur Muhammad Muqarrin. – Ar-Riyadh: Dar at-Taybah, 1426 [h.]. – Vol. 2. – P. 583.

² Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. *Islamic Philosophy from its Origin to The Present*. – New York: State Univeristy of New York Press, 2006. – 380 p.

(“virtuous city” of philosophers), since a God-given religion (*din*) has been regarded as “a root” (*asl*) of the royal authority³.

All of these teachings dealt with reflections on Prophethood and its historical context. But how was this necessity of *nubuwwah* itself formulated inside the Islamic Philosophy? How may one understand the terms *wujub* (“ontological necessity”) and *dharurah* (“logical necessity”) in their relation to Prophethood? To understand this means to explore the main principles of other social and political doctrines derived from the common roots of Neoplatonism and Traditionalism. One of the main objectives of this article of our present article is to research how different traditions of Islamic rationality are connected and to define the nature of the mentioned “necessity”. For analysis, we have chosen polemics between ‘Abd ar-Rahman ibn Khaldun (1332 – 1406) and unnamed “philosophers”⁴ whose ideas seems to be connected with Abu ‘Ali ibn Sina (980 – 1037) and Nasir ad-Din Tusi’s (1201 – 1274) works⁵.

Let us examine the meaning of *nubuwwah*. Traditional Arabic lexicography derivates the word *nubuwwah* (“prophethood”), used firstly in Qur’an, from the one root (n – b – a), but with two different meanings. First etymology speaks about *nubuwwah* in its connection with the verb *naba*, which is a synonym of *khbara* – “to inform” (i.e. *nabi* – “prophet” – is a person who speaks about something new or unknown to others). The second meaning is “to rise” (similar to the verb *rafa*). It means that *nabi* is a person who was “raised” above the others and marked by some high position.

The differences in explanations mentioned above were not reduced to simple polemics between grammarians or exegetes. Different meanings allowed different interpretations of Prophethood, accepted in early Islamic theology, often for some political reasons. For instance, some of *muta’zili* scholars regarded the second meaning, while those close to followers of al-Ash’ari (d. 935) chose the first meaning. This discussion was associated with the problem of prophet’s “preparation” to revelation, i.e. whether Prophethood is a simple act of God’s mercy (to somebody) or a hard way of spiritual development that depends on a man himself.⁶ “*Mu’tazilah* saw *an-nubuwwah*... as a retribution for the action, when they stated that it was a special position which belongs to the messenger for a special action”⁷.

In relation to this, in his doxography *Maqalat al-Islamiyyin*, Al-Ash’aree personally wrote that, according to the view of *mu’tazili* ‘Abbad bin Sulaiman, “prophethood is a retribution for the action of prophets”⁸. Despite its doctrinal roots, such position was quite similar to that of Islamic Peripatetism and Neoplatonism, *falsafah*. Besides, it is well-known that al-Farabi and his followers associated

³ Classical account of such ideas could be found in Miskawayh (n. 937 – 1037) “Improvement of the morals”: Ibn Miskawayh. *Tahzib al-Akhlaq wa Tathir al-‘Araq* / Ed. ibn al-Khatib. – [W. p.]: Maktabah ath-Thaqafah ad-Diniyyah, 1961. – P. 155.

⁴ Ibn Khaldun. *Muqaddimah*. – Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 2001. – P. 54-57.

⁵ See mainly ibn Sina’s *al-Isharat wa t-Tanbihat* along with Nasir at-Tusi comments (*sharh*) on it: Ibn Sina. *Kitab al-Isharat wa t-Tanbihat. Ma’a Sharh Nasir ad-Din at-Tusi* / Ed. Sulaiman Dunya. – Cairo: Dar al-Ma’rif bi-Misr. [N. d.]. – Vol. 4. – P. 60 – 69.

⁶ Mabruk, ‘Ali. *An-Nubuwwah: min ‘ilm al-aqa’eed ila falsafah at-tarikh*. – Beirut: Dar at-Tanwir, 1993. – P. 15-19.

⁷ Ibid. – P. 19.

⁸ Al-Ash’ari. *Maqalat al-Islamiyyin wa Ikhtilaf al-Musallin* / Ed. Muhammad Muhee d-Din ‘Abd al-Hameed. – Al-Qahirah: Maktaba an-Nahdah al-Misriyyah, 1369/1950. – Vol. 2. – P. 122.

Prophethood with the “power of mind” (*al-qawwa al-mutahayliyyah*) that is in contact with the “Active Intellect” (*al-aql al-fa'al*), an apodictic analogy of religious angel Jibril⁹. Every prophet, obliged by “high nature”, should have a “preparation” to the revelation from the Active Intellect. This is a precondition of happiness for every human being¹⁰, according to al-Farabi’s teaching. However, one of the most interesting researches of Prophethood from the political and social side was carried out by the “Second Teacher” and his followers.

“Virtuous city” of Islamic Neoplatonism: Social role of the Prophethood

In his “Book of Religion” (*Kitab al-Millah*) Abu Nasr al-Farabi clearly describes the functions of a prophet (who is an *imam*, king and philosopher at the same time), since the existence of the “first leader” (*ar-ra'is al-awwal*) is essential for social development¹¹. Also, it should be noted that al-Farabi was the first thinker of Islamic world who introduced and formulated the so-called “theory of social convention”, partly inherited from the views of Plato. According to Al-Farabi, every human needs another to satisfy his/her needs, which is the first prerequisite for the collective unity (*al-ijtima'*)¹². In this context, platonic “virtuous city” (*al-madinah al-fadilah*) should have “a virtuous religion” (*al-millah al-fadhilah*) that will provide inhabitants with justice and right order. As we have stated in our previous explorations, al-Farabi evaluated religion along with philosophy as a basis for moral life, despite his giving obvious priority to philosophy at the level of epistemology¹³. “The first ruler” for the city is like God to His creation, states al-Farabi¹⁴.

Since every human being needs other to achieve happiness, everyone should know what happiness is. If to think of “real happiness”, it is well-known that such knowledge comes from apodictic (*burhani*) philosophy. However, ‘*amma* – “masses” – need religious symbols and pictures because of limits in their minds¹⁵. So, human society needs somebody for their improvement in earthly being as well as for happiness in the future world. Even talking about virtuous city we may assume, that its “virtue” is impossible without *wadhi an-namus*¹⁶, “Installer of the Law”, be he “secular” (as old Greek rulers like Solon) or religious (like Moses, Jesus or Muhammad – since al-Farabi uses in his “Kitab al-Millah” ordinary Islamic term *shari'ah*). We may note that despite wider meaning of the term *namus*, some contemporaries of al-Farabi used it in religious sense. Abu Hayyan at-Tawhidi (923/931 – 1023), for instance, writes in his “Borrowings” (*Muqabbasat*) about “God’s *namus*”, i.e. synonym of *shari'ah*¹⁷. Ibn as-Sid al-Batalyawsi (1052 – 1127),

⁹ Walzer, Richard. *Greek into Arabic: Essays on Islamic Philosophy*. – Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962. – P. 206-220.

¹⁰ Al-Farabi, Abu Nasr. *Kitab as-Siyasah al-Madaniyyah*. – Beirut: Dar wa Maktabah al-Hilal, [W. d.]. – P. 77-84; Al-Farabi, Abu Nasr. *Ara ahl al-madinah al-fadhilah*. – Beirut: Dar al-Mashriq, 1995. – P. 109-111.

¹¹ Al-Farabi. *Kitab al-Millah / Kitab al-Millah wa nusus ukhra*. Ed. Muhsin Mahdi. – Beirut: Dar al-Mashriq, 1991. – P. 41-66. See also our annotated Ukrainian translation along with introductory study: Аль-Фарабі, Абу Наср. *Книга релігії*. Переклад з арабської та коментарі М. Якубовича // Українське релігієзнавство. – № 47. – 2008. – С. 236-252.

¹² *Ara ahl al-madinah al-fadilah*. – P. 112-115.

¹³ Аль-Фарабі, Абу Наср. *Книга релігії*. – С. 236-239.

¹⁴ *Kitab al-Millah*. – P. 65-66.

¹⁵ Al-Farabi, Abu Nasr. *Kitab al-Huruf*. – Beirut: Dar al-Mashriq, 1990. – P. 131-134..

¹⁶ *Namus* is seems to be derived from the Greek word νομος.

¹⁷ At-Tawhidi, Abu Hayyan. *Muqabbasat*. – Al-Kuwait: Dar Sa'ad Sabbah, 1992. – P. 142-143.

probably influenced by al-Farabi theory of divination, regards *nawwamis* as religious laws, given by the Active Intellect to what he calls “prophetic souls”¹⁸. Anyway, goals of “virtuous religion” and “virtuous philosophy” for al-Fabari were the same, so religious and secular law could both exist and be necessary at the same time.

Al-Farabi’s philosophy influenced probably all streams of Islamic Neoplatonism. One of the most notable teachings connected with his social and political ideas has found its deep interpretation in “Epistles” (*Rasa’il*) written by “Brethren of Purity” (*ikhwan as-safa*). This mystical religious and philosophical society – mainly connected with Isma’ilism – was active in Syria and Iraq in the middle of the tenth century¹⁹. Along with other encyclopedic knowledge, filled with mystical elements of Neoplatonism, Pythagoreism and Gnosticism, “Brethren of Purity” inherited social and political teachings partly from Al-Farabi²⁰. According to it, every society may exist (as “unity”) only through the way of cooperation between its members. This is the way of prophets and old philosophers²¹. “Brethen of Purity” defined Prophethood as a kind of necessary “spiritual leadership” (*ar-riyasaḥ al-ruhaniyyah*) society needs for its prosperity. Their evaluation of Prophethood could be well-explained by the next quotation from “*Rasa’il*”:

“Know – my brother! – that no knowledge, no action, no craft, no management, no policy human has is higher by its ranking and position, greater for retribution in the next world, more similar to the action of angels and nearest to God and His pleasure, than installation of God-given laws (*ash-shara’iyah al-ilahiyyah*)”²².

For “Brethren of Purity” the religious law was “a spiritual inborn nature (*jublah*), generated from particular soul of the human body with the help of rational power which resulted – by God’s permission – from the universal soul”²³. Such a person, supposes “Brethen of Purity”, should posses twelve peculiarities²⁴. One may found this account, which is even similar in some words, in al-Farabi’s “Virtuous City”²⁵. Despite such parallels, *Ikhwan as-Safa* developed their own original theory of the religions genesis. According to their views, a religious law will have success only when there are some prerequisites firstly existing in people. In general, “Brethren of Purity” enumerated four preconditions of religious success:

- 1) Existence of clear intellect that judges between the best and the worst and could play a role of a moral imperative;
- 2) A good example of prophet for words, actions and other kinds of behavior;
- 3) Existence of the “testament” (*wasiyyah*) left by the Prophet to study it (sacred text);

¹⁸ According to his theory of human as an “ideal circle” (*ad-da’irah al-wahmiyyah*), al-Batalawsi gives to the “prohetic soul” highest priority over the “philosophical soul”. See: al-Batalyawsi, ibn as-Sid. *Al-Hada’iq fi l-Matalib al-’Aliyyah al-Falsafiyah al-’Awwisah* / Ed. ‘Abd al-Karim Yafi, Muhammad Ridhwan ad-Dayah. – Dimashq: Dar al-Fikr, 1408/1988. – P. 50-56.

¹⁹ Mas’umi, Fu’ad. *Ikhwan as-Safa. Falsafata-hum wa ghayata-hum*. – Beirut: Dar al-Mada, 1998. – P. 64.

²⁰ It is interesting to mention that expression *Ikhwan as-Safa wa Hallan al-Wafa’* was used in Al-Farabi “Great prayer”. See: *Du’a l-’Azim li-Abi Nasr al-Farabi // Kitab al-Millah wa nusūs uhra*. – P. 89.

²¹ *Rasa’il Ikhwan as-Safa wa Halan al-Wafa’*. – Kalkuttah: Matba’ Nakhba al-Akhbar, 1306 [h.]. – Vol. 4. – P. 183.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid. – Vol. 4. – P. 184.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ *Ara ahl Al-Madinah al-Fadhilah*. – P. 122-124.

4) A religious leader who keeps a God-given law, despite the fact that the intellectual elite (*al-uqala' al-akhyar*) does not need such regulation having a reason and power inside any *imam*.²⁶

Similar ideas could be found in the works of Abu 'Ali ibn Sina (980 – 1037), one of the most famous Eastern philosophers. Using simple logical constructions, accepted by all Eastern peripatetics and neoplatonists, ibn Sina argues that existence of a person with qualities of a prophet necessitates (*wajib* – on the ontological level) his rulership over the society. His arguments are very clear:

Society exists only with mutual cooperation.

Mutual cooperation is possible only when mutual activity (*mu'ammalah*)²⁷ exists.

Mutual activity needs a stable tradition (*sunnah*) and justice.

Therefore, person who will set such tradition and justice is needed²⁸.

In *Kitab Al-Isharat wa t-Tanbihat* ibn Sina clearly assumes that a stable tradition and justice are result from a religious law. “Since the existence of mutual activity and justice between people is necessary, it is kept by law. A lawgiver (*shari'*) transforms it into a duty because of his right to be obeyed. It is a result of peculiar signs, which prove the genesis from his God”²⁹. In “Book of Safety” ibn Sina states that “... the existence of prophet (*nabi*) is necessary. With necessity (*wajib*) he should be a human, and with necessity he should have a feature (*khususiyah*) other people do not have”³⁰. So, ibn Sina appeals to Prophethood as the only possible way of social development and high-level mutual cooperation.

Some other points of social life were emphasized by Abu l-Waleed Muhammad ibn Rushd (1126 – 1198). His political theory was connected with rational philosophy in the deepest way since he describes social development without mention of prophecy and religion³¹. However, in his idea, called by Latin Averroists as “theory of the two-fold truth”, ibn Rushd clearly states that “philosophical wisdom (*hikmah*) is a friend and half sister of law”³². In one of his works, ibn Rushd prefers to speak about Prophethood in terms of its logical and ontological possibility (*imkan*)³³. This possibility, according to his interpretation, should be declared using the Qur'anic evidence along with two principles (*usul*) revealed below.

The first is as follows. Knowledge about the existence of prophets depends on the acceptance of widespread narrations (*mutawatirah*) about miracles of God's

²⁶ *Rasa'il*. – Vol. 4. – P. 188-189.

²⁷ This term is well-known in Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) where it means all kind of actions between people (from bride to bagrain).

²⁸ See. Ibn Sina. *Kitab an-Najah*. – Beirut: Dar al-Afaq al-Jadidah, 1982. – P. 339; *Al-Isharat wa t-Tanbihat*. – Vol. 4. – P. 60-69.

²⁹ *Al-Isharat wa t-Tanbihat*. – Vol. 4. – P. 61.

³⁰ *Kitab an-Najah*. – P. 339.

³¹ See his description of human needs in: Ibn Rushd. *Ad-Daruri fi s-Siyasah. Mukhtasar Kitab as-Siyasah li-Aflatun / Naqla-hu 'an 'ibriyyah ila l-'arabiyyah* Dr. Ahmad Shahlan. – Beirut: Markaz dirasat al-wahda al-'arabiyyah, 1998. – P. 74-76.

³² *Ibn Rushd. Fasl al-Maqal fi taqir ma bayna ash-sharia' wa l-hikmah min al-ittisal*. – Beirut: Markaz dirasat al-wahda al-'arabiyyah, 1997. – P. 125.

³³ Ibn Rushd. *Al-Kashf 'an manahij al-addilah fi 'aqeed al-millah / Ed. Muhammad 'Abid al-Jabree*. - Beirut: Markaz dirasat al-wahda al-'arabiyyah, 1998. – P. 173-186.

messengers and other deeds. This knowledge could be compared with the certainty of existence of famous philosophers like Aristotle and Plato.

The second principle is associated with the religious law itself. Since its existence is known as a prophetic action, its agent must be regarded as a prophet³⁴.

It seems as if ibn Rushd talks not just about “the necessity of *nubuwwah*”, but tries to prove reality of its factual existence and other attributes associated with it; his main purpose is to explain possibility and trustworthiness of Prophethood as it is.

Prophecy and Prophethood in a discourse of Islamic Traditionalism

Belief in Messengers was one of the main principles of the early Islamic tradition. Since revelation (*wahi*) was the main source of religion (*din*), traditional Islamic thought declared the unity of religion given through prophets from Adam to Muhammad when differences in peculiar religious laws – *shara'iah*³⁵.

“God the Almighty created the creation for its knowledge of Him. And He ordered them to worship Him. No happiness is possible in this and future world without knowledge of God – The Omnipotent and Glorious is He! – and worshipping to Him alone without ascribing any partners. For this reason God sent messengers and gave Scriptures”³⁶.

But if the prophets’ *din* is the same, what is the reason to send the next prophet since the religious law of the first is exist? Abi Muzaffar as-Sama’ani (1034 – 1095), a prominent jurist of Shafi’i school, expresses the following opinion. “The interests of God’s slaves could be the same or different. It is possible for one thing to be an object of interest during the time of the first and not the second prophet, and it is possible to be an object of interest in the second time beside the first. And it is possible for it to be an object of interest in both the first and the second time”³⁷. Among other reasons of the second religious law existence, as-Sama’ani notes these statements, despite the basic prolegomena (“God the Almighty knows better when to set up His message”)³⁸:

- 1) Religious laws are similar in some rules and differ in others;
- 2) The first prophet could be sent to one people, when the second could be sent to other;
- 3) Study of the first religious law is possible only using the second;
- 4) First religious law is being corrupted by dangerous innovation that could be prevented only by the second law.

³⁴ Ibid. – P. 179-180.

³⁵ See, for instance, classical account of the Prophethood in one of the ibn Rajib’s epistels: *Muqaddiamh tashtamala ‘ala an jamia’ ar-rusul kana dina-hum al-islam //* Majmu’ Rasa’il al-Hafiz ibn Rajab al-Hanbali. Ed. Abu Mus’ab al-Halwane. – Al-Qahirah: Dar al-Faruq al-Khadithiyyah, 1424/2003. – Vol. 2. – P. 553 – 570.

³⁶ Ibid. – P. 555.

³⁷ As-Sama’ani, al-Imam Abi Muzaffar. *Qawwat’ al-Adillah fi Usul al-Fiqh /* Ed. Dr. ‘Abd Allah al-Hakamee. – Ar-Riyadh: Maktabah ar-Tawbah, 1418/1998. – Vol. 2. – P. 208.

³⁸ Ibid. – P. 207-208.

These rules of changes, as one can see, could be compared well with ideas of Al-Farabi³⁹, who obviously used classical patterns of Islamic views on religious life in his neoplatonistic theories.

Despite the fact that general importance of Prophethood was similar in Islamic Neoplatonism and Traditionalism, the followers of the latter tried to drive out some Hellenistic teachings from the doctrinal theory of prophecy. Ahmad ibn Taymiyah (1263 – 1328), one of the most prominent traditionalistic thinkers, criticized “philosophers” (*falasifah*) for their attempt to explain the pure priority of *nubuwwah* in the terms of practice (*‘amal*) without relation to the knowledge (*‘ilm*)⁴⁰. Ibn Taymiyah expressed this thought as follows: “They suppose that al-Hidhr⁴¹ was cleverer than Moses, and that ‘Ali, Aaron and al-Hidhr were philosophers who knew rational realities better than Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, but [the prophets] were more perfect in the practical power. For this reason they set up practical religious laws”⁴². Ibn Taymiyah tried to defend traditionalistic theory against Greek-originated terms and concepts like *namus* (νομος) that can be found in the works of al-Farabi and other philosophers.

“They praise Muhammad – peace be upon him – and say: “There was no *namus* in the world better than his *namus*”. Many of them give priority to him without taking into account the philosopher, but some of them give priority to the philosopher despite [the prophet]. They are confused by the deeds of the prophets, and their words concerning prophets are very unclear. Nothing from this was delivered from Aristotle and his followers, so they mention words of Plato in his “Laws” and others. It is associated with setting up the *nawwamis*⁴³ that is derived from Greeks and others in comparison to the genus (*jins*) of prophets mentioned by God in Qur’an... But *nawwamis* they mention includes a kind of politeism (*shirk*). Any of God’s prophets were obliged to keep to it... This genus of setting up the *nawwamis* is connected with faithless kings, their ministers, clever people, scholars and slaves”⁴⁴.

These words of ibn Taymiyah need few conclusions. Firstly, a great traditionalistic thinker separates between the “secular” (because of its genesis from the people like kings) *namus* and God-given *shari’a*, while the Eastern followers of Plato tried to unify it. Secondly, ibn Taymiyah disagrees with the reduction of Prophethood to the level of social practice. It should be noted now that since al-Farabi’s conception of “virtuous city” the activity of the prophet became a “civil science” (*‘ilm al-madani*), a kind of “practical philosophy” (*al-faslafah al-‘amaliyyah*). Despite the

³⁹ See. Kitab al-Millah. – P. 48-50.

⁴⁰ As we stated in other work, all streams of Islamic philosophy accepted “knowledge – action” dichotomy in their views. That is, a mutual dependence of thought and action as a kind of harmony between the “external” (*zahir*) and “internal” (*batin*). See: Якубович М. *Співвідношення «знання – дія» у філософській думці ісламського світу // Філософські пошуки. Сучасні аспекти співвідношення філософії і науки. Випуск XXVII. – Львів-Одеса: Cogito-Центр Європи, 2008. – С. 330-340. One of the medieval masterpieces, dedicated exclusively to this topic, is a *Iqtidha’ al-‘ilm al-‘amal* by ibn al-Khateeb al-Bagdadi (Ed. Muhammad Nasir ad-Din al-Albani. – Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islami. 1404/1984. – 183 p.).*

⁴¹ Probably ibn Taymiyah means there some shia’ views, where ‘Ali as a *imam-natiq* has a very high position.

⁴² Ibn Taymiyah. *Kitab ar-Radd ‘ala l-mantyqiyyin*. Ed. Sheikh ‘Abd as-Samad Sharf ad-Din, Mahmud Bilal Minyar. – Beirut: Mu’asasah ar-Riyat, 1426/2005. – P. 226.

⁴³ Pl. from *namus*.

⁴⁴ Ibn Taymiyah. *Kitab ar-Radd ‘ala l-mantyqiyyin*. – P. 486.

obvious criticism, ibn Taymiyah himself believed in a theory of social convention, as it has been developed by the followers of *falsafah*. “The sons of Adam need a religion that will unify them since nobody is self-sufficient from the other”, he writes in “Principle of Love”⁴⁵. Every religion (*din*) for ibn Taymiyah, not depending on the level of its truthfulness, plays a role of mutual commitment (*ta’ahhud*) and mutual agreement (*ta’aqqud*). Thus *din*, useful for every member of society, is right (*haqq*) when harmful religion is obviously wrong (*batil*)⁴⁶. In his “Principle of Love”⁴⁷ ibn Taymiyah writes about *din* in general, without its association with *nubuwwah*. He declares love (*mahabbah*) and will (*iradah*) as a “root” (*asl*) of every religion be this religion good or bad”⁴⁸. Keeping in mind that the inner logic of Islamic doctrinal thought (as well as of philosophical “rationalism”) includes sense-making dichotomy of the “root” (*asl*) and “branch” (*fara’*)⁴⁹, religion should be regarded not simply as a “kind” of love and will, but as their active “psychological” result.

Despite these generalizations in the question of religion, the most important issue in ibn Taymiyah’s discussions of *din* was the creed based on prophethood and monotheism, accepted by traditionalists as the only true form of religious life. As a high-educated doxographer and polemist, ibn Taymiyah distinguishes four types of explanations, proposed by different Islamic sects⁵⁰.

The first is that of *jahmis* and *ash’aris*, based on the recognition of the *nubuwwah* as a pure consequence of God’s will for which every action is possible. In accordance with this position, *nubuwwah* is independent from any kind of causes. It is a will of God.

Second view, according to ibn Taymiyah, is borrowed from *mu’tazilah*⁵¹ and some shiah. It is stated in their thought, that Prophethood is a retribution for the previous action. Good deeds belong to the Prophet, giving him a right to receive Prophethood as retribution”⁵². Such view is based on the principles of God’s justice, one of the main *mu’tazili* beliefs.

A third opinion that is under ibn Taymiyah’s critique is ascribed to the “philosophers” (*muttafalasifah*). They explain Prophethood as a kind of “emanation” (*fayadh*), that depends on the inner “rational power” of person who tries to possess the highest knowledge. Ibn Taymiyah called this interpretation of prophecy as “the farthest from the words given by messengers”⁵³.

Ibn Taymiyah himself states the fourth opinion, derived from “all forerunners of community and majority of explorers”⁵⁴. God has chosen a messenger from angels and from humans, and God knows better when to set up His message. A prophet is

⁴⁵ Ibn Taymiyah. *Qa’iddah fi l-Mahabba* / Ed. Muhammad Rashad Salim. – Al-Qahirah: Maktabah at-Turath al-Islamee, [W. d.]. – P. 35.

⁴⁶ Ibid. – P. 36.

⁴⁷ A title of this book may be translated as “Premise of Love” also.

⁴⁸ *Qa’iddah fi l-Mahabbah*. – P. 32.

⁴⁹ As it has been proved by the Russian scholar Andrey Smirnov. See, for instance: Смирнов А. В. Логика смысла. Теория и ее приложение к анализу классической арабской философии и культуры. – М.: Языки славянской культуры, 2001. – 504 с.

⁵⁰ Ibn Taymiyah. *Minhaj as-Sunnah an-Nabawwiyah* / Ed. Muhammad Rashad Saleem. [W. p.], 1406/1986. – Vol. 2. – P. 413-420. In this context, ibn Taymiyah’s discussion of Prophethood was dedicated to the issue of prophets infallibility (*’asmah*).

⁵¹ Ibn Taymiyah talks about *qadariyyah* creed, where the freedom of human will was accepted.

⁵² *Minhaj as-Sunnah an-Nabawwiyah*. – Vol. 2. – P. 415.

⁵³ Ibid. – P. 416.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

marked by some properties other people do not possess. These attributes exist in his reason and religion, since a prophet is prepared to his mission. Prophethood, writes ibn Taymiyah, is a result of God's mercy, as it has been stated in the Qur'an:

“And they said, “Why was not this Qur'an sent down to some great man from the two cities”. Is it they who dispense the mercy of *your* Lord? It is We who have dispensed among them their livelihood in the present life, and raised some of them among the others in rank” (Qur'an, 43:30-32)⁵⁵.

Also ibn Taymiyah quotes some other verses with similar sense (Qur'an, 2:105, 6:84, 87). He concludes, that “prophets are the best creatures, according to the general approach of Muslims”⁵⁶.

The Necessity of Prophethood in ibn Khaldun “Muqaddimah”. Polemics with philosophers and attempt of its reconstruction

Several guide-lines of Islamic Neoplatonism as well as traditionalism found their impressive impact in the new project of entirely social philosophy, developed by ‘Abd ar-Rahman ibn Khaldun (1332 – 1406). This new pattern of re-thinking the traditional society showed all power of the Eastern kingships. Differing from his forerunners (political genius of Abu l-Hasan al-Mawardi (972 – 1058), spiritual path of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1058 – 1111)), ibn Khaldun gave full priority in society to the kingship (*mulk*) as a necessary kind of impediment (*wazi'*) that keeps person from the hostility (*'udwan*) of others. Since this hostility is a natural phenomenon of the human society (*al-ijtima' al-bashari*), some philosophers think that *mulk* also exists among the animals⁵⁷. The author of “Prolegomena” expresses his disagreement with these thoughts: “Existence of this⁵⁸ among non-humans is a result of inborn nature and guidance, but not the thought or politics”⁵⁹. One may conclude from these statements that human kingship (the only possible way of *mulk* existence) is a result of reasoning and pure intention of the mind, not the simple “inborn” intuition. We may assume, that “humanity” (*insaniyyah* – in anthropological, not ethical sense) for ibn Khaldun has its criteria in thinking (*fikra*) and number of causes it may list⁶⁰. Does religion plays any role in these stages of social development?

Ibn Khaldun mentions additional arguments of the philosophers.

“[...] They make the establishment of Prophethood possible using the rational argument. In accordance with it, [Prophethood] is a natural feature of humans. They develop this proof to its logical end. It is as follows: human needs a rule with impediment. After it they say: this rule can exist through the law converted to a duty

⁵⁵ Quoted from the English translation by ‘Ali Quli Qarai (London: ICAS Press, 2004). Italics are added by translator.

⁵⁶ *Minhaj as-Sunnah an-Nabawwiyah*. – Vol. 2. – P. 417.

⁵⁷ Ibn Khaldun. *Muqaddimah* / Ed. Khalil Shahadah. – Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 2001. – P. 56.

⁵⁸ I.e. kingship, a royal authority.

⁵⁹ *Muqaddimah*. – P. 56.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* – P. 159-160. As a follower of al-Ash'ari school of thought, ibn Khaldun accepted causality.

by God. It is given by one of the humans and this person should differ from others by some peculiarities in accordance with God's guidance. It is necessary for the recognition of this person by others...⁶¹

The author of "Prolegomena" gives his own argument against the philosophers' "proofs". "People of the Scripture and the followers of the prophets, – he writes, – are small in comparison with polytheists (*majus*). They do not have a Scripture but they are the majority of inhabitants in the world"⁶². Ibn Khaldun supposes that this role, described by philosophers can be played simply by a ruler who obliges others to his law and reaches the level of *wazi*' impediment. Before the next step of research, it should be emphasized, that in "Prolegomena" ibn Khaldun restricted the meaning of religion (*din*) to the prophetic monotheism. One of the best proofs for it is his own words in the description of the Canaries Islands inhabitants: "...Their worship is a prostration in front of the sun on the time of sunrise. They know no religion (*din*) and preaching (*dawwah*) has reached them not"⁶³. It is obvious, that by *din* ibn Khaldun as well as some other Islamic authors means "the religion of Prophethood", i.e. Islam, Judaism and Christianity.

Muhsin Mahdi summarized ibn Khaldun's views as follows: "Ibn Khaldun first and foremost observation on the total scope of the subject-matter of "divine" political science is that it is not natural (*tabi'i*) or necessary (*daruri*), by which he means the same thing and it is fundamentally this: Considering the natural constitution of man as a political animal, we do not find that revelation, divine Laws, and divine governments, and the concern with resurrection and reward and punishment, to be necessary conditions for his survival, for the formation of society, and for the continued existence of both"⁶⁴. In accordance with ibn Khaldun's meaning for religion as a result of "prophethood", we cannot say something definite about the role of religion as it is (any kind of cult or worship). But who were these unnamed "philosophers" criticized in "Prolegomena"? How is it possible to understand exactly the term "necessity" (*wujub*) in relation to Prophethood philosophers speak about? ("...their mistakes in the necessity of prophethoods are clear to you. This [necessity] is not rational but could be known from the religious law as it is stated in the way of forerunners of our community"⁶⁵). Comparing views of ibn Khaldun with these of ibn Sina and al-Farabi, Muhsin Mahdi writes that the main object of his critique is their "divine" political science, converted to some kind of political theology. "From this it appears that ibn Khaldun critique is not directed against philosophy, but against theology; not against philosophers as philosophers, but against philosophers in their role as theologians, dialecticians and rhetoricians", he writes⁶⁶.

Answering to the mentioned questions, we would like to pay attention to the views of a great Islamic thinker and scientist, Nasir ad-Din at-Tusi (1201 – 1258). During his early philosophical and theological studies, ibn Khaldun used at-Tusi works, expressing agreement with his philosophical ideas in general and theory of the

⁶¹ Ibid. – P. 160.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid. – P. 69.

⁶⁴ Mahdi, Muhsin. *Ibn Khaldun // A History of Muslim Philosophy*. – Wiesbaden: Otto Harrasowitz, 1962. – P. 970.

⁶⁵ *Muqaddimah*. – P. 56.

⁶⁶ Mahdi, Muhsin. *Ibn Khaldun*. – P. 972.

Prophethood in particular⁶⁷. Since Nasir ad-Din was a great supporter and commentator of the works of ibn Sina (especially, *al-Isharat wa t-Tanbihat*), his ideas can become an object of later ibn Khaldun's critique too.

In his great commentary to ibn Sina's *al-Isharat*, at-Tusi tries to explain his arguments more widely. He writes about theory of social convention, and sets up "political nature" (*madani*) of human as a first premise for the establishment of Prophethood. Using ibn Sina's argument to prove the necessity of mutual activity (*mu'ammalah*) and justice (*'adl*), he tries to describe it as general rules for society⁶⁸. Second premise, according to Nasir ad-Deen, is a necessity of *shari'a* itself that will provide such justice and other goods. It should be supported by the third premise. That is, the existence of a prophet and his miracles as a sign of truth⁶⁹. According to the view of at-Tusi, philosophers make a following conclusion:

"If people need a Lawgiver, his existence is necessary (*wajib*)"⁷⁰.

This statement of Nasir ad-Deen at-Tusi seems to appeal not merely to the *Isharat*, but also to the mentioned early other works of ibn Sina like "The Book of Safety" where he talks about the "ontological necessity" of Prophet. Differing from the later ibn Khaldun, who used historical basis and even epistemological nominalism⁷¹ against the *universalia* of the philosophers, at-Tusi tried to explore the inner meaning of this "necessity" (in the context of Prophethood in particular). 'Ali bin Muhammad al-Jurjani (1339 – 1414), one of the most prominent Arabic lexicographers who wrote some kind of "philosophical dictionary" (*Kitab at-Ta'rifat* – "Book of Definitions"), included the terms *dharurah* and *wujub* in his work. Since he defines *wujub* using *dharurah*, we need to explore these terms both.

Firstly, al-Jurjani tries to define the term *adh-dharurah al-mutlaqah* ("the absolute necessity"). In accordance with his idea, this expression signifies the absolute connection (or disconnection) between the subject and predicate ("in every moment of the existence")⁷². The examples are as follows: "Human is a living being with necessity", "There is nothing from human in the stone"⁷³. Under the word *dharurah* as it is, al-Jurjani writes that it is a derivative from *dharar*. That is, "the harm makes impossible the avoidance of it"⁷⁴. So, by *dharurah* we mean some kind of the logical necessity, when some properties, qualities or predicates in general are connected with the pure essence (in language, logic or mind).

Some other definition, according to *Kitab at-Ta'rifat*, signifies the term *wujub*. "It is a logical necessity (*dharurah*) required by the essence itself that came to reality

⁶⁷ Cf. chapter "Prophethood" in ibn Khaldun's "*Core of Muhassal in the principles of jurisprudence*" (Ed. 'Abbas Sulaiman. – Al-Iskandariyyah: Dar al-Ma'rifah al-Jama'iyyah, 1996. – P. 175-182) and Tusi's works *Tajrid al-'Aqa'eed* (Ed. 'Abbas Sulaiman. – Al-Iskandariyyah: Dar al-Ma'rifah al-Jama'iyyah, 1996. – P. 127-133) along with his comments to the *Muhassal of Fakr ad-Din ar-Razi* (Al-Qahirah: Maktabah al-Kulliyah al-Azhariyyah, [W. d.]. – 256 p.). Ibn Khaldun's "Core of Muhassal" has been written during his youth (when he was around 20 years) and views of the author undoubtedly has been changed since that time.

⁶⁸ *Al-Isharat wa t-Tanbihat*. – Vol. 4. – P. 62.

⁶⁹ Ibid. – P. 63.

⁷⁰ Ibid. – P. 65.

⁷¹ See, for example, his polemics against metaphysics and falsafah in general: *Muqaddimah*. – P. 653-655, 707-714.

⁷² Al-Jurjani. *Kitab at-Ta'rifat*. – Beirut: Maktabah Lubnan, 1985. – P. 162.

⁷³ Ibid. – P. 163.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

outside [the mind]”⁷⁵. In the Islamic religious law, *wajib* means an action, obligated with necessity (like the pillars of Islam). For the majority schools of Islamic jurisprudence (excluding *madhhab* of Abu Hanifah) it is a synonym of the term *fardh* (“duty”)⁷⁶. So, *wujub* expresses the idea of the necessary existence of something, since *dharurah* signifies connection without changes. However, these terms could be synonyms in some contexts and play a role of each other. But since it is said that Prophethood is *wajib*, it means that something makes its existence necessary. For instance, when Ibn Sina speaks about God as a *wajib al-wujud* (“Necessary existence”)⁷⁷, it means that Supreme Being exists with necessity generated by His own essence, not the other thing⁷⁸.

Nasir ad-Deen at-Tusi tries to conclude, what exactly makes Prophethood necessary. The first of possible answers, he supposes, is its necessity by itself (*wujub adh-dhati*). He refutes this idea without any additional proof⁷⁹, since it is clear that every existence beyond “necessary-by-itself” (that is, God) may be only “possible-by-itself” (*mumkin al-wujud*)⁸⁰. So, the “Prophethood” is an obligation of something external.

The second answer of at-Tusi is concerned with *mu'tazilah* rationalistic thought. According to this idea, “it is a necessity for God the Almighty”⁸¹. Leaving *mu'tazilah*'s ideas he disagrees without wide comments, Nasir ad-Din explains the possible third meaning. “They may mean by [necessity] that it is a cause for the order that is a concrete good. Since God the Almighty is a basis for every good, necessity of the [Prophethood] existence comes from Him”⁸².

At-Tusi disagrees with this thought too. If social “improvement” (*aslah*) would exist with necessity, mankind would have a well in their inborn nature. Such improvement, he supposes, is better⁸³. It is necessary for the “whole” (*ila l-kulli*), but not for the “part”, since people do not have good in their inborn nature⁸⁴. Actually, Nasir ad-Deen at-Tusi summarizes views of Ibn Sina using argument, similar to the later Ibn Khaldun.

“Know that all that is mentioned by Sheikh⁸⁵ concerning the affairs of religious law and the Prophethood is not things human cannot live without. But without these affairs the state of masses cannot reach its perfect order that may provide improvement in the earthly activity (*ma'ish*) and the hereafter one (*ma'ad*). It is enough for human to live according to some kind of politics (*siyasah*) that will keep their necessary (*dharuri*) society (*ijtima'-hum*)... It can be proved by the fact, that

⁷⁵ Ibid. – P. 270.

⁷⁶ Ibn Halulu. *Adh-Dhiyyau' l-Lami'*. *Sharh jama' al-jawwami fi usul al-fiqh* / Ed. 'Abd al-Kareem an-Namlah. – Ar-Riyadh: Maktabah ar-Rushd, 1420/1999. – Vol. 1. – P. 191.

⁷⁷ See, for instance, *Kitab 'Uyun al-Hikmah* / Ed. 'Abd ar-Rahman al-Badawwi. – Al-Kuwait-Beirouth: Wakalah al-Matbu'at-Dar al-Qalam, 1980. – P. 55.

⁷⁸ *Al-Isharat wa-Tanbihat*. – Vol. 3. – P. 19.

⁷⁹ Ibid. – Vol. 4. – P. 65.

⁸⁰ Ibid. – Vol. 3. – P. 19.

⁸¹ Ibid. – Vol. 4. – P. 65.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid. – Vol. 4. – P. 67.

⁸⁵ I.e. Ibn Sina.

inhabitants of the extremities of civilization (*ma'murah*) live in accordance with necessary politics”⁸⁶.

Here at-Tusi uses the term “logical necessity” (*dharurah*) along with “politics” twice. It should be noted, that in some context it may mean something like “natural” and “intuitive”. Ibn Khaldun, for instance, writes that “human society” (*ijtima' al-insani*) is “necessary”, since a human is “political by nature”⁸⁷. Ahmad ibn Taymiyah states in his “Remove the contradiction between the reason and tradition” that believers possess “*dharuri* knowledge about the intentions of the Messenger and his will that cannot be taken from their hearts”⁸⁸. It seems as if both at-Tusi and Ibn Khaldun tried to refute the logics of “prophethood necessity” despite the variety in their goals. The author of “Muqaddimah” tried to prove his theory of natural royal authority based on *'asabiyyah* (feeling of group solidarity), while Nasir ad-Din tried to explore the inner meaning of the term *wujub* in the context of its premises and social consequences. Ibn Khaldun as well as at-Tusi followed the classical doctrine of *ithbat an-nubuwwah* (“establishment the Prophethood”), but it did not allow them to talk about necessity of its existence in every epoch and in every place. The author of “Prolegomena”, in accordance with his “empiric” guide-lines, appealed to the history; at-Tusi tried to reach the most detailed position of logical analysis. Their explications were the same.

Conclusions

Perceiving Prophethood as a historical reality was a guide-line of all Islamic philosophical schools. This organizational principle of social outlook creation has been stated by the medieval eastern authors as a pure basis of God-given history of the mankind. Moreover, the Qur'an – the main source of Islamic belief – reflects world history on the ground of events, which associate its continuing chains with the controversy (or, rarely, acceptance) between the messengers (*rusul*) and their people (*qawm*). These Qur'anic expressions of history are evident since the suras were proclaimed in Mecca⁸⁹. Later, Isma'ili thinkers in their conception of time declared that every cyclic age (*dawr*) depends on the Prophethood of this time and the goals of prophetic message⁹⁰. In traditionalism (as well as Eastern Neoplatonism) the theory of Prophethood was associated with social vistas, as Ayn B. Sajoo writes;

“ [...] in the merging of sacred and secular that became the leitmotif of Muslim civilizational experience, the congruence of external and internal universes of meaning also bridged the moral choices of the individual and the community (*umma*). As al-Tusi, al-Farabi (879-950) and other Muslim thinkers saw it, often in an Aristotelian vein, individual happiness and virtue were premised on a life of

⁸⁶ *Al-Isharat wa-Tanbihat*. – Vol. 4. – P. 68.

⁸⁷ *Muqaddimah*. – P. 54.

⁸⁸ Ibn Taymiyah. *Daru' t-ta'rudh al-'aql wa n-naql* / Ed. Muhammad Rashad Saleem. – [W. p.]: Jama' al-Imam Muhammad bin Sa'ud al-Islamiyyah, 1411/1991. – Vol. 1. – P. 195.

⁸⁹ In the stories of Hud, Salih, Shu'aib and the mission of Moses and Aaron to the Pharaoh; see, for example, Qur'an, suras 71, 79, 85.

⁹⁰ 'Abdan (Ad-Da'i al-Qarmatee). *Kitab Shajarah al-Yaqin* / Ed. 'Arif Tamit. – Beirut: Dar al-Afaq al-Jadeedah, 1402/1982. – P. 11.

association. A reasoned account of the good and why it should be pursued must, then, repose on the quality of interaction of the personal and societal”⁹¹.

Despite the absence of “person” – “society” dichotomy in Medieval Islamic culture, where other terms of identity were represented (like “masses” – “elite”, “guard – adherer” etc)⁹², some Islamic authors really took the inner experience of Prophet as a key-point for justice and law in the mutual cooperation of social community. Reflexion on the revelation as Divine aim for humanity and the code of all kind of social activities (what Islamic law as well as philosophers call *mu’ammalat*) provides an open framework for the recognition of Prophethood as a historical necessity. This “necessity” stemmed not from the pure fact of *nubuwwah* existence in reality (i.e. understanding the Prophet as a Prophet in its Islamic sense), but also from theology, logics, ethics and other fields of religion and philosophy.

Ibn Sina proved his conception of “ontological necessity” from the position of social cooperation; ibn Taymiyah refuses to accept neoplatonistic *namus* as God-given law, but speaks about the historical necessity of religion as it is (*din*), be it wrong or right. From the other side, Nasir ad-Din at-Tusi adopts the “logical necessity” of mutual cooperation in its relation to the politics (*siyasah adh-dharuriyyah*), not to the *nubuwwah* as it is. This position was also formulated by ibn Khaldun, who was opposed to the views of philosophy. Even ibn Rushd, whose goal was reconciliation between the religious law and human wisdom, proved the “rational possibility” of Prophethood without any open generalizations of its necessity. Despite the dogmatic nature of *nubuwwah* in Islamic creed, it has its obvious political branches. Traditionalists tried to reduce all kind of acceptable politics to the pure law of *shari’a*, since the knowledge of God (*ma’rifah Allah*) and His rule was among the main aims of every Divine message. However, every kind of “external necessity” in the question of the Prophethood belongs to the sphere of politics. If the existence of a prophet is a reaction to a social “challenge” (because it is a society that “needs” it), it can be understood in a very deterministic way that was criticized by doctrinal thought. Prophethood depends on God; it is created *for* mankind needs, but not directly *by* mankind needs. A view of *al-mu’tazilah* that God is “obliged” to set His message (by this way He realizes the principle of justice, *’adl*) was inappropriate for both traditionalists and neoplatonists; however, the latter were nearest to the position of *mu’tazalah* because of the philosophic statement about the prophecy as a result of inner rational and spiritual efforts.

To my mind, the issue of “necessity” in its relation to Prophethood opens two main vistas of the Medieval Islamic Philosophy. On the one hand, it is a question of unity/separation between God-given religion and human politics. On the other hand, this politics could be described as “rational” (*’aqli*) or “traditional” (*naqli* or *shara’i*). Prophethood has to be defined as one of the main key-concepts of all Islamic philosophical schools; it opens internal Islamic paradigm of relations between

⁹¹ Sajoo, Aryn B. *Muslim Ethics. Emerging Vistas*. – London: I. B. Tauris Publishers, The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2004. – P. 2.

⁹² These concepts were used mainly in political context. See: ‘Al-Jabree, Muhammad ‘Abid. *Al-Muthaqqifuna fi l-hadharah al-’arabiyyah: mihnah ibn Hanbal wa nakba ibn Rushd*. – Beirut: Markaz dirasat al-wahdah al-’arabiyyah, 2008. – P. 35, 36.

personal and social, politics and history and, finally, revealed truth and human wisdom.