Framework for Inter Faith Dialogue in Al-Sharī'a Al-Islāmiyyah الشريعة الإسلامية

Part II

By:

Dr. Muhammad Zia-Ul-Haq •

Iv- Freedom of Choice in Faith

The Muslim is obliged by his faith to present Islam to the non-Believer. But this obligation is to be performed with the condition of 'no compulsion in choice of faith.' No compulsion is the guarantee of the freedom to convince as well as to be convinced, of the truth. It implies that the covenanter non-Muslim is to make up his own mind regarding the merit or demerit of what is presented to him. The Qura'an forbids in unequivocal terms any tempering whatever with the process. Repeatedly, God warned His Prophet not to press the matter once he had made his presentation, absolving him of all responsibility for the decision for or against, or indecision, of his audience. Above all: [There shall be no coercion in religion. The truth is now manifesting; and so is falsehood. Whoever rejects evil and believes in God has attached him to the most solid bonds.][1]

• Chairman/Associate professor Department of Islamic Law Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad.

1- Al- Qura'an 2:256.

Qura'an Text:

﴿ لاَ إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّيْنِ قَد تَّبَيَّنَ الرُّشْد مِنَ الْغَيِّ فَمَنْ يَّكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوْتِ وَيُؤْمِنْ بِاللّه فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىَ لاَ انْفِصَامَ لَهَا وَاللّهُ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴾

Allah asked the Prophet:[Call them unto the path of your lord through wise argument and fair preaching; and argue them(the non-believers)with arguments yet more fair, yet more becoming.][1]

Qura'an text:

﴿ ادْعُ إِلِى سَبِيْلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيْلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِيْنَ (125) ﴾

In an other verse this further clarified as: [We have revealed to you the Qur'an that you may convey it to the people. It is the truth. Whoever accepts it does so to his own credit. Whoever rejects it does so to his discredit. You are not responsible for their decisions ...(in case people reject the revelation). Say, I am only a Warner to warn you.][2]

Qura'an text:

﴿ إِنَّآ أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ لِلنَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ فَمَنِ اهْتَدَى فَلِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا وَمَآ أَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِوَكِيْلٍ (41) ﴾

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[1]- Al- Qura'an 16:125.

[2]- Al- Qur'an 39:41;10:108;27:92;6:104;34:50.

﴿ قُلْ يَآ أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَآءَكُمُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّكُمْ فَمَنِ اهْتَدَى فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِيْ لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا وَمَآ أَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِوَكِيْلٍ (108) ﴾

﴿ وَأَنْ أَتْلُوَ الْقُرْآنَ فَمَنِ اهْتَدَى فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِيْ لِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَقُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُنْذِرِيْنَ (92) ﴾

﴿ قَدْ جَآءَكُمْ بَصَآئِرُ مِنْ رَّبِّكُمْ فَمَنْ أَبْصَرَ فَلِنَفْسِهِ وَمَنْ عَمِيَ فَعَلَيْهَا وَمَآ أَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِحَفِيْظٍ (104) ﴾

﴿ قُلْ إِنْ ضَلَلْتُ فَإِنَّمَآ أَضِلُّ عَلَى نَفْسِيْ وَإِنِ اهْتَدَيْتُ فَبِمَا يُوْحِي إِلَيَّ رَبِّيْ إِنَّهُ سَمِيْعٌ قَرِيْبٌ (50) ﴾

Like the presentation of any theory, the presentation of Islam to the non-believer can be with all evidence but it can do no more than lay it down. To the over Zealous enthusiast who takes men's rejection too much to heart, or who is tempted to go beyond presentation of the truth, the Qur'an warned:[Had your Lord willed it, all the people of the earth would be believers(But He did not).Would you then compel the people to believe. O Men, the truth has come to you from your Lord. Whoever wills may be guided by it; whoever does not will, may not.][1]

Qura'an text:

﴿ وَلَوْ شَآءَ رَبُّكَ لَآمَنَ مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كُلُّهُمْ جَمِيْعاً أَفَأَنْتَ تُكْرِهُ النَّاسَ حَتَّى يَكُوْنُواْ مُؤْمِنِيْنَ (99) وَمَا كَانَ لِنَفْسٍ أَنْ

[1] Al- Qur'ān 10:99,108.

تُؤْمِنَ إِلاَّ بِإِذْنِ اللّهِ وَيَجْعَلُ الرِّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ لاَ يَعْقِلُوْنَ (100) قُلِ انْظُرُواْ مَاذَا فِيْ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ وَمَا تُغْنِي الآيَاتُ وَالنُّذُرُ عَنْ قَوْمٍ لاَّ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ (101) فَهَلْ يَنْتَظِرُوْنَ إِلاَّ مِثْلَ أَيَّامِ الَّذِيْنَ خَلَوْاْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ قُلْ فَانْتَظِرُواْ إِنِّيْ مَعَكُمْ مِّنَ الْمُنْتَظِرِيْنَ (102) ثُمَّ نُنَجِّيْ رُسُلَنَا وَالَّذِيْنَ آمَنُواْ كَذَلِكَ حَقّاً عَلَيْنَا نُنْجِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ (103) قُلْ يَآ أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِيْ شَكٍّ مِّنْ دِيْنِيْ فَلاَ أَعْبُدُ الَّذِيْنَ تَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّهِ وَلَكِنْ أَعْبُدُ اللّهَ الَّذِيْ يَتَوَفَّاكُمْ وَأُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ (104) وَأَنْ أَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّيْنِ حَنِيْفاً وَلاَ تَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ (105) وَلاَ تَدْعُ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّهِ مَا لاَ يَنْفَعُكَ وَلاَ يَضُرُّكَ فَإِنْ فَعَلْتَ فَإِنَّكَ إِذاً مِّنَ الظَّالِمِيْنَ (106) وَإِنْ يَّمْسَسْكَ اللّهُ بِضُرٍّ فَلاَ كَاشِفَ لَهُ إِلاَّ هُوَ وَإِنْ يُّرِدْكَ بِخَيْرٍ فَلاَ رَآدَّ لِفَضْلِه يُصِيْبُ بِه مَن يَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِه وَهُوَ الْغَفُوْرُ الرَّحِيْمُ (107) قُلْ يَآ أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَآءَكُمُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّكُمْ فَمَنِ اهْتَدَى فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِيْ لِنَفْسِه وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا وَمَآ أَنَاْ عَلَيْكُمْ بِوَكِيْلٍ (108) ﴾

The freedom of choice in Islam is basic ingredient of conversion because conversion by force, coercion and interference is null and void to the subject, and a prosecutable crime for the da'iyah,[1]

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[1]- Ismail Raji al-Faruqi, 'Rights of non-Muslims under Islam', op.cit.,p.291.

Muhammad Asad during the explaining dīn says: "The term dīn denotes both the contents of and compliance with a morally binding law; consequently, it signifies 'religions in the widest sense of this term, extending over all that pertains to its doctrinal contents and their practical implications as well as to man's attitude towards the object of his worship, thus comprising also the concept of faith "religious law' or moral law. Depends on the context in which this term is used. On the strength of above categorical prohibition of coercion (*ikrāh)* in any thing that pertains to faith or religion, all Islamic Jurists (fuqaha فقهاء) without any exception, hold that forcible conversion is under all circumstances null and void, and that any attempt at coercing a non-believer to accept the faith of Islam is grievous sin: a verdict which disposes of the widespread fallacy that Islam places before the unbelievers the alternative of "conversion or sword".'[1]

The earlier commentators of the Qur'an provide the perceived historical circumstances in which the verse 'No compulsion'[2]

Qur'an text:

﴿ لاَ إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّيْنِ قَد تَّبَيَّنَ الرُّشْد مِنَ الْغَيِّ فَمَنْ يَّكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوْتِ وَيُؤْمِنْ بِاللّه فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىَ لاَ انْفِصَامَ لَهَا وَاللّهُ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ (256)﴾

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[1]- Muhammad Asad, The Message of the Qur'ān (translation and explanation) (Gibralter:Dar al-Andalus,1980,1984),p.57-58,n.249.

[2]- Qur'an: 2:256.

Was revealed. They relate the verse to a custom said to have been common among Arab women of Madina in the pre-Islamic period. Women whose children tended to die in infancy, or who bore only one child (*miqlāt*)[1] used to vow that if a child is born to them and survives, they would make him a Jew and let him live among the Jews in order to ensure his long life. When Islam came into being, consequently, some of these children lived with the Jews. During the expulsion of Jews form Medina, the Ansār attempted to prevent the expulsion of their offspring. They argued that in the Jāhiliyya they had caused their children to adopt Judaism because they thought that this religion was better than their heirs: now that Allah has honoured them with Islam, they wanted to force their sons to embrace the new faith, so that they be permitted to stay in Medina with their biological parents. When they communicated their intentions to the Prophet Muhammad, he did not respond at first: then the verse in question was revealed, giving a clear, and negative, response to the request. Therefore, when the Banū Nadīr were expelled from Medina by the Prophet, these sons of the Ansār were given the choice to embrace Islam and stay, or to retain their adopted Jewish faith and leave the city with other Jews. No compulsion was practiced against those who chose the latter alternative. A similar tradition is related about Ansārī children who were suckled by the women of Banū Qurayza.[2]

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[1]- For an expaination of this term, see Ibn Manzoor, Lisān al-Arab,s.v. miqlāt,p.2/72-73.

[2]-Tibirī, Jāmi al –bayān,p.3/14-16; Abu Ubaid, al-Qāsim sim b. Sallām al-Harawī *Kitāb al-nāsikh wa al-mansūkh* (Ed.)

According to an other tradition, the verse was revealed in connection with a certain Ansārī called Hasayn (or Abū al- Hasayn) whose two sons were converted to Christianity by Byzantine merchants who came to sell their[1] goods in Medina. Their father asked the Prophet to pursue them and bring them back to Islam. On this occasion these verses revealed. It is also reported that the verses revealed when an Ansārī man became frustrated after the failure of his attempt to force his black slave to embrace Islam.[2] Umer b. Khattāb is reported to have interpreted and implemented in a similar manner. He offered to his mamlūk (or mawlā) Wasaq al-Rūmī to become his assistant in the management of Muslims affairs after embracing Islam. He refused to embrace Islam and Umer left him alone, invoking these verses of Qur'an. Similar was his reaction when an old Christian woman refused to convert to Islam at his behest.[3] Tunisian scholar, Ibn Āshūr maintains that Jihād with the purpose of conversion was enjoined only in the earliest period of Islam. This type of Jihād is reflected in the tradition in which the Prophet said that he had been commanded to fight the people until they pronounce the Shahāda.In contradiction to the traditional commentaries,

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J.Burton .E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Trust (Cambridge: St. Edmundsbury Press, 1987), p.96-99;Bayhaqī,Sunan, p.9/186;Ibn al-Arabī,Ahkām alQur'an,p.1/233;Ibn al-Jawzī,Zād al-masīr,p.1/305;Qurtabī,al-Jāmi li Ahkam al-Qur'an,p.3/256.

[1]-Tibirī, Jāmi al –bayān,p.3/15.

[2]-Tibrisī,Majma al-Bayān,p.2/305.

[3]-Ibn Zanjawayhi, Kitāb al- amwāl, p.1/145.

which consider this verse abrogated, he maintains that this Qur'anic verse revealed late. It was revealed in his view, after the conquest of Mecca, after the subjugation of the Arabian Peninsula by the Muslims, after its purification from polytheism and after the massive conversion of its inhabitants to Islam. Consequently it is not abrogated. On the contrary it is itself abrogating Qur'anic verses and Prophetic traditions according to which Jihad was designed to bring about conversion. Since this revelation has changed the purpose of Jihad, its aim is now to expend the rule of Islam and induce the infidels to accept its dominion by the contracts of *dhimma*. He feels that the new situation is reflected in verse no. 9:29, where the unbelievers are required to submit and pay Jizya, but not to embrace Islam. Ibn Āshūr also maintains, again in contradiction to the majority of the opinions, that Qur'an 9:29 abrogated Qur'an 9:73 which does not mention the payment of jizya and could be understood as enjoining jihad for the purpose of conversion.[1]A similar view is expressed by al-Qāsmī who reaches the conclusion the 'sword of jihad', which is legitimate in Islam, is not used to force people to embrace the (Islam) religion, but to protect the Da'wah and to ensure obedience to the just rule and government of Islam.[2]

In explanation of this verse, Hasan al-Basrī says, 'The people of the Book are not to be coerced in to

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[1]-Ibn Āshūr,Tafsīr al-Tahrīr, p.3/26.

[2]-al-Qāsmī, Jamāl al-Dīn , Mahsin al-ta'wil, (Cairo: Dār Ihyā al-Kutub al-arabiyya,1957)p.3/665.

Islam.'[1]In the light of this verse it can be say that As for the dhimmīs, they are not to be forced to embrace Islam if they agree to pay the Jizya or the Kharāj. If they choose to ignore the truth of Islam after it made clear to them, God will take care of their punishment in the hereafter, but no religion coercion is practiced against them on earth.[2] Many Muslim jurists have rejected the validity of forcible conversion to Islam. According to Abū Hanīfa, al-Shāfī and Ibn Qudāmah, if some one acts in contravention of this principle and illegitimately forces a dhimmī or a musta'min to embrace Islam, the latter's conversion is not valid unless he remained a Muslim voluntarily after the coercive force ceased. This opinion has practical significance: if a person was forcibly converted to Islam and later reverted to his former religion, he is not considered an apostate and may not be killed. Imam Muhammad bin al-Hassan Al-Shaybāni, on the other hand, maintains that such a person is "outwardly"(fi al-zāhir) considered a Muslim and ought to be killed if he reneges on Islam.[3] However, Ibn al-Arabī derives that the verse only forbids forcing people to believe in falsehood; to force them to believe in the truth is a legitimate part of religion.[4]

Islamic tradition of no coercion in faith is essence of interfaith dialogue. Any attempt of conversion through dialogue will lead it to disaster. Participants of dialogue

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[1]-Sa 'id b. Mansūr ,Sunan,p.3/961.

[2]-Tibirī, Jāmi al –bayān,p.3/16; Ibn al-Arabī, Ahkām al-Qur'an ,p.1/233;Ibn al-Jawzī, Zād al-asīr,p.1/305

[3]- Ibn Qudāmah, al- Mughanī ,p.8/144.

[4]- Ibn al-Arabī, op.cit.,p.1/233-134.

must show their commitment that their participation in it is not for the purpose of conversion or proselytization. Any success of dialogue will totally depend on its adherence with the principle of liberty of choice in faith.

V- Tolerance and Respect

Islam is a word, which is derived from the root words silm and salamah. It means surrendering, guiding to peace and contentment, and establishing security and accord.[1]Islam is a religion of security, safety, and peace. These principles permeate the lives of Muslims. When Muslims stand to pray, they cut their connection with this world, turning to Lord in faith and obedience, and standing at attention in His presence. Completing the prayer, as if they were returning back to life, they greet those on their right and left by wishing peace: "Remain safe and in peace". With a wish for safety and security, peace and contentment, they return to ordinary world once again. Greeting and wishing safety and security for others is considered one of the most beneficial acts in Islam. When asked which act in Islam is the most Beneficial, the Prophet (Peace be upon him) replied. (Feeding others and greeting those you know and those you do not know.)[2]

In the most period of Islamic history, Muslims wielded political power and were in the position to accord (or deny) tolerance to others. In an interesting episode, it is however significant to point out that the earliest manner in which religious intolerance manifested itself in Islamic history was the religious persecution endured by

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[1]- Ibn Manzoor, op.cit.,Salama

[2]- Abū Dāwūd, *Al-Sunnan,* Kitab al-Adab, Hadīth No. 142.

Muslims in Mecca before the *hijra*. In a certain sense, the twelve years between 610 and 622 in Islam can be compared to the first three centuries of the Christian history. Though the suffering of these early Muslims for their faith lasted only for a short period of time and gained only limited importance in the Islamic ethos, an analysis of the question of religious tolerance in Islam cannot be compare without some reference to this nascent period of Islamic history.[1] It is however observed that the non-Muslim communities living under Islamic rule experience for less expulsion and persecution than Jews, or deviant Christians, living under medieval Christendom.[2]

After the establishment of strong state, Muslims were use to accepted and protect Jewish subject, allowing them to worship freely in their synagogues and to judge themselves by their own laws. When the Jews of Europe suffered Christian persecution, it was often to Muslim countries that they fled for safety.[3]

Muslims are a faith-based community: believing and belonging to the community (ummah) go hand in hand. Its earthly objective is to establish a cohesive, human and just social order. It aims to create a society where the individual and the society are under an obligation to

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[1]-Friedmann Yohanan, Tolerance and Coercion in Islam, Interfaith Relations in Muslim Tradition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,2003), p.87.

[2]-See B.Lews, The Jews of Islam, p. 12;Adam Mitz, al-Hadhāra al-Islāmiyyah (Cambridge Beirut: Dār al-Kītāb al-Arabī,1968)p.1/75-86.

[3]-Minou Reeves, Muhammad in Europe, (UK:Garnet Publishing Limited, 2000),p.34.

enjoin good and forbid evil.[1] Differences of belief are seen in Islamic belief as part of God's plan. The abolition of such differences is not the purpose of the Islam nor is the Prophet Muhammad was sent for that purpose. Al-Qur'an also emphasizes that such difference do not suggest that their origin is different, rather it is emphasizes that human beings have a common spirituality and morality [2] The differences on the bases of religions are infect diversities of human choice because God has given them the freedom of choose: [If it had been your Lord's will, they would all have believed –all who are on earth Will you then compel people against their wills to believe.][3]

Muslims have enough theological resources to redefine their position in the contemporary world. A society based on inter religious dependence, tolerance and respect can be built so that those involved, Muslims or otherwise, can feel to engage and participate fully in the society that they are living in.[4]

On the bases of recognition of religious diversity in Islam, Muslims scholars suggest tolerance and dialogue as alternatives of clash and conflicts. Tolerance in the opinion of Muhammad Fethullah Gülen is a term that is some times used synonymous to mercy, generosity or

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[1]- See Ibid, 3:104,110;9:71.

[2]- Ibid, 7:172,91:7-10.

[3]- Ibid, 10:99.

[4]- Ataullah Siddiqui, 'Believing and Belonging in a Pluralistic Society--- Exploring Resources in Islamic Traditions', David A.Hait (Edi.) Multi faith Briton (London: O Books, 2002),p.23-25.

forbearance. This is most essential element of moral system; it is a very important source of spiritual discipline and a celestial virtue of perfect people.[1]The Prophet ,upon him be peace and blessings, defined a true Muslim as one who harms no one with his her words and actions, and who is the most trustworthy representative of universal peace.[2] Al-Qur'an always accepts forgiveness and tolerance as basic principle, so much so that the servants of 'All-Merciful' are introduced in the following manner:[And the servants of (God) the All-Merciful are those who move on the earth humility and when the ignorant address them they say Peace.][3] [When they meet hollow words or unseemly behavior, they pass them by with dignity'.][4] [And when they hear vain talk, they turn away there from and say: "To us our deeds and to you yours'.][5]

The general gist of these verses is that when those who have been favored with true servant hood to God encounter meaningless and ugly words or behavior they say nothing unbecoming, but rather pass by in a dignified manner. In short: 'Everyone acts according to his own disposition'[6] and thus displays his or her own character. The character of heroes of tolerance is gentleness, consideration, and tolerance. Holy Prophet (the pride of the humanity, peace and blessing be upon him) is example for Muslims in dealing with issues related to

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[1]- Gülen, Towards Global Civilization of Love & Tolerance, p. 33-34.
[2]- Al-Bukhari, Book 2,Hadith No.9.
[3]- Al-Quran 25:63.
[4]- Ibid. 25:72.
[5]- Ibid. 28:55.
[6]- Ibid. 17:84.

interfaith tolerance and respect. This ideal personality lives in an orbit of forgiveness and forbearance. He even behaved such a manner toward Abū Sufyan, who left no stone untouched in enmity of the Muslims throughout his lifetime. During the conquest of Makka, even though Abū Sufyan still was not sure about his conversion to Islam, The Messenger said :(Those who take refuge in Abū Sufyan's house are safe, just as those who take refuge in the Kaaba are safe). Thus, in respect of providing refuge and safety, Abu Sufyan's house was mentioned alongside Ka'ba. [1]After narrating this event Gülen observes 'In my humble opinion, such tolerance was more valuable than if tones of gold have been given to Abū Sufyan, a man in his seventies, in whom egoism and chieftainship had become ingrained.'[2]

Forgiveness and tolerance have been given great importance in the messages of all the prophets particularly in the message of Prophet Muhammad. In addition to being commanded to take tolerance and to use dialogue as his bases while performing his duties, the prophet was directed to those aspects in which he had things in common with the People of the Book (Jews and Christians)

[Say: "O people of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you: that We worship none but God; that we speculate no partner with him; that we take not some from among ourselves for Lords other than God'.][3]

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[1]-Muslim, Al Jamiya al-Sahi , Kitab al-Jihad wal Siyer, Bab fateh Makkah, Hadith No.1780,p.3/1407.

[2]- Gülen, op.cit.,p.34.

[3]- Al-Quran 3: 64.

Qura'an Text:

﴿قُلْ يَآ أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَآءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلاَّ نَعْبُدَ إِلاَّ اللّهَ وَلاَ نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئاً وَّلاَ يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضاً أَرْبَاباً مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّهِ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُوْلُوْا اشْهَدُوْا بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُوْنَ﴾

Tolerance and genuine interfaith dialogue are not simply pleasant ideals that will be fulfilled in some future paradise, but is some thing at the core of what it is to be done by the Muslim in the here and now.[1] Turkish Scholar Muhammad Fethullah Gülen evaluates reasons of awkwardness and says:' In countries rife with corruption, intolerance and mercilessness such things as freedom of thought, polite criticism, and the exchange of ideas according to norms of equity and fair debate is absent; It would be meaningless to talk of the results of logic and inspiration.'[2] He asked the Muslims to look into the message of Al-Qur'an and Sunnah where tolerance and mercy are inbuilt human values. Allah almighty commanded to the hearts filled with belief and love to behave forgiveness and tolerance, even to those who do not believe in the after life:[Tell those who believe to forgive those who do not look forward to the days of God: It is for Him to recompense each people according to what they have earned.][3]

Qura'an Text:

﴿قُل لِّلَّذِيْنَ أَمَنُوْا يَغْفِرُوْا لِلَّذِيْنَ لا يَرْجُوْنَ أَيَّامَ اللّهِ لِيَجْزِيَ قَوْماً بِما كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ﴾

1- Ali Ünal and Alphonse Williams,op.cit.,p.193-194.
2- Gülen, op.cit.,p.35.
3- Al-Quran 45:14.

Those who consider themselves addressed by these verses, all devotees of love who dream of becoming true servants of God merely because they are human beings, those who have declared their faith and thereby becomes Muslims and performed the mandated religious duties, must behave with tolerance and forbearance and expect nothing from other people.[1]Gülen feels that dialogue, tolerance and openness are demonstrated in the all embracing nature or universality of Islam. He mentions verse which states [peace is good].[2]

Qura'an Text:

﴿ وَّالصُّلْحُ خَيْرٌ ﴾

The verse does not necessitate its being particular to certain event, meaning and framework. The rule is general. He questions? Does not the root of noun "Islam" express soundness, surrender, peace, safety, and trust? Then it is not possible for us to be true Muslims without fully representing and establishing these characteristics. In addition to this underlying the meaning of this sacred name is an essence that incorporates embracing all and approaching everything with love.

Milko Youroukov proposes tolerance as solution to the problem of extreme fundamentalism. For the adherence of interfaith dialogue, in his words, tolerance should become a basic criterion to judge attitudes toward one an other and toward others respective religions.[3]

On the other hand, Muhammad Tālbī feels that the problem of fundamentalism could be over come by

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[1]-Gülen, Towards a Global Civilization of Love and Tolerance , p.69-70.

[2]- Al-Quran 4:128.

[3]- Milko Youroukov, op.cit.p.64.

willingness to listen to others and certain amount of openness, respect, and humility. He associates tolerance with the medieval mentality; at that time it represents a certain degree of progress. He quotes that Roberts's dictionary defines it as the fact of not for bidding or requiring, although it would be possible to do so. Therefore, he thinks, tolerance is not a right .It is an act of pure indulgence by some one in a dominating position .It implies inferiorities and condemnation. We tolerate error, although we are entitled to prohibit it on the name of truth. What is tolerated is perceived as evil that cannot be extirpated except at the price of greater evil. To tolerate this evil is to put up with it temporarily and unwillingly, as an act pass charity with a certain condescension dictated by a benevolent superiority. Respect, instead, is a right and presupposes the complete and absolute equality of the partners. He concludes that only respect can guarantee the dignity of all. In respect there is neither inferior nor superior .In tolerance there is the one who tolerated, at a higher level, and the one who is tolerated, at a lower level, while this disparity is eliminated in respect.[1]

Importance of tolerance or respect as suggested by Muhammad al-Tālbī as an alternative of tolerance is essential elements for conduct of interfaith dialogue. Those who hate each other can never entered in meaningful dialogue. Respect of those who are not agreeing with us is main ethic which guides the conduct of participants of interfaith activities. Tolerance in the meaning of respect for others can teach us how to

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[1]- Mohammed Talbi, 'Possibilities and Conditions for a Better Understanding' op,cit.,Vol. 25, 1988 p.180.

disagree in an agreeable manner. Muslims were tolerant throughout the history and they were successful in convening the message of Islam in peaceful manners to the world. This was reason of spread of Islam. Cotemporary Muslims should also learn this from their history so that they can provide a chance to the contemporary human being to understand what Islam is al about.

Vi-Rules to Regulate the Conduct of Interfaith Dialogue

On the bases of legitimacy of religious diversity in Islam, freedom of choice of faith and respect and tolerance for the others interfaith dialogue can start. These are crucial as well as essential elements without which no interfaith dialogue can possible. Any framework of interfaith dialogue must have these essential elements which have been clearly inbuilt in the rulings of al-Sharī'a al-Islāmiyyah. These are foundations of interfaith relations in Islam and other participants of interfaith dialogue can also benefit from these. Along with these fundamental of frame work of interfaith dialogue some other important principles of conduct of interfaith dialogue are also very important to facilitate the participants of interfaith dialogue. These principles are not extensively derived from al-Sharī'a but at the same time are not contradictory to it. Some of these principles are as under:

1- Sincere Preparedness and freedom of expression
Tālbī states clearly that dialogue should not be looked upon as 'art of compromise'. He demands in it sincerity and freedom of expression, with out

hostility. He fears that the lack of equal partners in dialogue and unequal preparedness could be dangerous for success of dialogue. He suggests that our hopes should not anchor themselves on convergence of our faith and the colloquia that we organize, but rather we should have faith in the creator.[1]He feels that the problem of historical risks can be approached through our respective historical traditions. He argues: today we live in a situation where Dhimmi no longer exist .It should become imperative and absolutely in dispensable to shelve this notion in the cupboard of history. This, he contends, is possible from an Islamic point of view.[2]Monika Konrad Hellwig suggests that any genuine dialogue depends on the willingness of some scholars and religious representatives to achieve a psychological distance from historical and practical stumbling blocks, by willingness to consider not the achievements of the other parties but the aims and desires intrinsic in the religious position of each. She observes, habitually each group evaluates its own position by its ideals and the position of the others by their performance. From this nothing but further prejudice and failure of understanding can arise.[3] Internal dialogue before participation in interfaith dialogue could provide sound opportunity

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[1]-Mohammed Talbi, 'Islamo -Christian Encounter Today: Some Principles', MECC Perspective, No.4/5(July-August 1985) p.9.

[2]- Ibid., p. 10.

[3]-Monika Konrad Hellwig, 'Bases and Boundaries for Interfaith Dialogue: A Christian viewpoint', Journal of Ecumenical Studies, vol. 14, (1977), p. 426-7

of preparedness. This kind of internal dialogue can be used for making appropriate strategy and the participants can enrich their arguments. She feels that only those who can critically undergo an internal dialogue are seriously ready for dialogue with others.[1]

2- **Ascending from Temptation of Proselytization**

Whoever believes in a truth, also has the tendency to communicate it. Something, which is quite normal but Tālbī, warns that it should not be a 'mission' conceived of as one- way traffic. He detects the same tendency amongst Muslims too. This, he argues, creates difficulties where one partner in dialogue accuses the other of using less than honourable means'. He suggests that holding 'some colloquia with the purpose of defining the deontology respectful of the freedom of the other respectful of God and respectful of human rights' is essential.[2] The core of dialogue, Nasr suggests, 'is that if you want to talk to an other person and get meaningful result, you must see what he is, right now, in himself, not what you would like him to be in order for you to talk to him'.[3]

3- **Loyalty with faith**

The participants of dialogue are representatives of their community. Their participation can be fruitful

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[1] -Editorial note of *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* , Vol. 12, (1975), p.408.

[2]-Mohammed Talbi, 'Islamo -Christian Encounter Today: Some Principles' op.cit.,p.9.

[3]- The Muslim World ,Vol.LXXVII , No. 2(April 1987),p.122.

only if they represent mainstream of their religion. In case of doubt in their loyalty with their religious tradition, their contribution will be fake and fruitless. Jewish scholarZalman M. Schachter observes that there is a myth, begotten by the market place and parliament, that the individuals involved in the dialogue will have power given to them to change the thinking of the faithful of their own community. He stresses that his community has given him no such power. He acknowledges 'If I go too far out, I will be repudiated by my own community.' Therefore he warns those dialoguers who cross the limits prescribed by their communities.[1]

4-Search of Points of Agreement

The dialogue can be started on firm grounds, which should be agreed upon by the participants. This basic common ground is what both sides take for granted: the myth, or what we might call the rule of the game.[2] Scholars are continuing trying to find common grounds on which dialogue could be initiated. For example the life of Jesus is controversial issue between Muslims and Christians but both are agreed that he was the son of virgin Marry. The matter of crucified is point of disagreement. Hossein Nasr suggested that this kind of issues could be settled down with the use of traditional epistemology. In his view, this may

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[1]-Zalman M. Schachter, 'Bases and Boundaries of Jewish Christian, and Moslem Dialogue,' Journal of Ecumenical Studies, vol. 14,1977,p.408.

[2]- Editorial note of Journal of Ecumenical Studies, Vol. 12, 1975 p.407-408.

provide a solution. 'One could say' he remarks, 'that such a major cosmic event as the end of the earthly life of Christ could in fact be 'seen' and 'known' in more than one way, and that it is God's will that Christianity should be given to 'see' that in one way and Islam in an other.'[1]

The filling of gap between secularism and Islam is also requirement of the age. Mohamed Tālbī after discussing separation of law and theology in Christianity and its unity in shape of al-Sharī'a in Islam, has tried to bridge the gap between Islam and secularism. He suggests 'If dialogue has to any meaning and if we are really to profit by our differences instead of passively and negatively enduring their consequences, Islam must realise that there is an in eradicable Caesar-side to every person that is indispensable for the creative dynamics of history, while the West must realize that Caesar is also a human being and that, as such, he is in the final analysis subordinate to God ,the true Ruler of everything that exists(Malik al-mulk)[2]

Qura'an Text:

﴿ مَالِكَ الْمُلْكِ ﴾

Who is the source of all being and all power'.[3]

Universal truth could be an other point of agreement. Nasr argues that truth comes before peace

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[1]- Hossein Nasr , 'Comments on a Few Theological Issues in Islamic Christian Dialogue', in YZ Haddad and W. Haddad,(eds.,),Christian Muslim Encounter (Gainsville: University Press of Florida, 1995),p.464.

[2]- Qur'an: 3:26

[3]-Mohammed Talbi, 'Possibilities & Conditions',op.,cit.,p.165.

and peace follows from the truth. [1]Refereeing to the saying of Hans Küng 'There will be no peace among the people of this world without peace among the world religions'.[2] Nasr appreciate that Küng has 'taken a step toward the understanding of Islam,' a step further than various Christian theologians, both Catholics and Protestants, before him. Yet he finds that theological problems remain the same. Dialogue has not yet crossed the boundaries in more than goodwill or good gesture. The theological issues-the Prophet, revelation, God and his mercy, history, Christology –remain under the constraint of 'polite diplomacy'. He contends that even today, 'with all the platitude, diplomatic declarations, and even humanitarian gestures towards Islam, and even in the Vatican declarations of 1962, the Prophet of Islam is always left aside'.[3]He emphasizes that the relation of the Prophet to Quran is central. Describing the various views with in Islam, he finds that the fact that 'the Quran as the word of God be regarded at the same time as the word of the human Prophet.' Nasr describes, one cannot overlook the beliefs of a billion Muslims concerning the nature of the Quran and its relation to the Prophet'. Furthermore,' non-Islamic western analysis based on the separation between the Quran and its traditional commentaries over the centuries is not going to help dialogue with Muslims,

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[1]- Hossein S. Nasr, ' A Muslim's Reflection on Hans Kung's , Studies in Comparative Religion,Vol.LXXVII,No.2 (April 1987),p.149.

[2]-Hans Küng , 'Christianity and the world religions', Paths of dialogue with Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism (London: William Collins Sons & Co Ltd,1987),p. 443.

[3]-The Muslim world, vol. lxxvii, No.2 (April 1987) p.96.

simply because the development of various aspects of the traditions throughout the centuries is based upon the Qur'an.[1]

All major religious traditions have a concept of God. They may differ in the His characteristics but they are agreed on His existing. All religious scriptures has witnessed on his presence. This agreement on the existence of God can be a base of dialogue between the followers of different religious traditions. All followers of the religions are believers of God too. They share with each other in feelings and could ready to cooperate with each other in this regard. These feelings can be qualified into a tool for creating more religious tolerance and respect for the followers of other traditions. Therefore, as Alexander Andonov proposed, it is need of time that we should look for ontological common ground on the bases of which we could understand each other and transfer meanings among Christians, Muslims and unbelievers. He further says that I believe this common ground is the ontological subject ness[2] of all living creatures.[3]

Other ground for dialogue, identified by Jay Newman, is trans –cultural values. He advances the hypothesis that 'there are some abstracts, basic trans-cultural values' and that 'almost all known societies are

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[1]- Ibid, p.99.

[2]-Subject ness: The ontological capacity of reality to self create and to advance self – creation.

[3]-Alexander Andonov, 'Islam, Christianity and Unbelievers: ways of Mutuality,'in Plamen Makariev(edi.) Islamic and Christian Cultures: Conflict or Dialogue, Bulgarian Philosophical Studies (U.S.A The Council for research in Values and Philosophy, 2001), p.87.

built upon a foundation of a limited number' of such values. He argues that those basic trans-cultural values 'are essentially ends and people in deferent religious or political or ethnic groups disagree as to what the appropriate means to these ends are.'[1] Newman further reasons that if there were no trans-culture values, than we would be left with radical ethical relativism and an empty concept of civilization. But if there are universal ethical termini, no matter how abstract... than intercultural dialogue on ethical question is possible, and we can learn from people in other societies about ways of more rapidly realizing common ideals.[2] From an ontological perspective, people-just like all living creatures-are, to a certain extent, a self –creating reality in the sense that they are responsible for their own lives. They build their own lives since this is a process *sui generis and* no one can replace them, no matter how skilful s/he is or how much s/he wants to. People, just like all living creatures, must do their own breathing, eating, growing, etc. Needless to say, people are different from animals. They are producers. They have a particular way of life and can invent a new one. This is an ontological fact. Trans-cultural values are arguably easier to identify from the perspective of this philosophical idea. The problem is to what extend a particular religion respect this basic ontological reality of humankind.[3]

Monika Konrad Hellwig (Roman Catholic) suggests that salvation can be another common point of agreement for dialogue. However she thinks that dialogue concerning the meanings of salvation cannot and does

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[1]-Newman,Jay.Foundations of Religious Tolerance University of Toronto Press, 1982),p.68.

[2]- Ibid.,p.69.

[3]- Alexander Andonov, po. cit, p.81-82.

not take place in a vacuum. It assumes the meaning of some common terms and understandings and the need to explain some unique terms.[1]In her opinion, Justice on a grand social scale is also a starting point of dialogue. This common base seems to offer very clear grounds for dialogue among religious traditions on matter of social justice and the relief of large-scale human suffering and deprivation. At least in theory, it offers a basis for meaningful dialogue in matters as thorny and urgent as colonial oppression, racial oppression, and remnants of slave trading, the state of Israel, the plight of the Palestinians, various liberation struggles, societal role restrictions on women, deprivation of civil rights of certain groups, and so forth. [2]

Hellwig Monika feels that the notion of holiness in religious scarred books particularly revealed books like Qur'an and Bible are not too far away from each other. There are few conversations in the universe as deeply satisfying to the heart as the dialogue of the devout. She realises that such dialogue took place mostly among the people of each religion separately. If this profound sharing were to take place between zaddik, saint, and dervish, monk, murid, and Hasid, we would have a model of what one of the highest form of conversation could be. She argues that one's own tradition may lack a cretin way, approach, attitude, or advice that another tradition has deeply fostered. She suggests that in the literature, in retreats and workshops, and by attendance at worship with other, Christian and Jews can learn about *Zikr*, Muslims and Jews can learn from the stately rising and

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[1]-Monika Konrad Hellwig, 'Bases and Boundaries for Interfaith Dialogue: A Christian viewpoint', Journal of Ecumenical Studies, vol. 14, 1977, p. 423.

[2]- Ibid,424.

abating rhythm of the Mass; both Christian and Muslims can learn much from Shabbat for their own holy resting and praying.[1]

Conclusion

Dialogue as 'conversation between the representatives of different communications with the aim of developing greater understanding and finding a basis for greater cooperation' is a dire need of contemporary human societies. The above mentioned frame work obviously are not points at which dialogue might be expected to begin, but neither may they be categorically ruled out as possible areas of dialogue. The self interest and mutual distrust of power groups may pose almost insurmountable obstacles, but the religions for dialogue on these issues exists in the teaching concerning a goal for all history, the ultimate unity of whole human race before God, and the divine demand for social justice that does not exclude poor and powerless.

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[1]- Ibid.p.412.