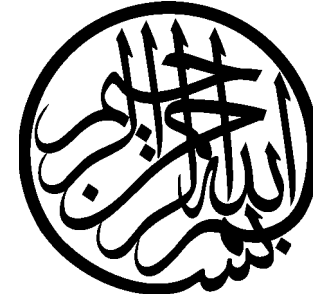
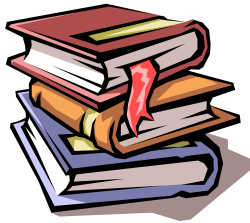


Islâmic Perspective
on the
**Interfaith
Movement**



نَحْمَدُهُ وَنُصَلِّي عَلَى رَسُولِهِ الْكَرِيمِ

In light of events that have taken place and are taking place around the world, a need has been felt to address the issue of interfaith activities from the standpoint of a Muslim. This booklet contains three articles written on this topic. The first was written after the events of September 2001, the other two were authored in previous years.

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Rajab 1422 / October 2001

The Problem with Interfaith

Nadeem Abdul Hamid

And they indeed strove hard to beguile you (Muhammad, ﷺ) away from that wherewith We have inspired thee, that thou shouldst invent other than it against Us; and then would they have accepted thee as a friend.
(Qur'ân 17:73)

Therefore obey not thou the rejecters; Who would have had thee compromise, that they may compromise. (68:8-9)

Most people nowadays believe that the world is round. It is not that everyone has personally investigated and experimented to find out whether this is true or not. It is a generally held belief based upon reports of famous scientists, stories of world adventurers, pictures from outer space, and it is not a fact that seems contrary to logic or reason. Now, suppose such a person (say, yourself, the reader) meets someone who sincerely believes the earth is flat. The two of you will argue with each other, trying as hard as possible to make the other person “see” the truth. Neither of you can accept that both beliefs are simultaneously possible, because clearly one negates the other.

Consider a more vivid scenario. You are walking along a path with a blind person. You come to a sign which says, “Danger: Cliff ahead. Proceed no further.” You can read the sign and you can even see that the path ahead seems to end suddenly with a sharp drop. However, your blind companion refuses to believe you. He insists that there is no danger here and that you should continue walking together with him. Clearly, you are neither going to continue walking with him, nor are you going to let him proceed. You will do your utmost to make him understand that continuing ahead will be a fatal mistake for both of you and you are not prepared to let him go any farther.

The topic of this article, according to the title, is not about the world being round. It is related, however, not only to that but also to walking down dangerous paths with a blind friend. From the viewpoint of a sincere Muslim, the “interfaith” movement is exactly the latter in a very literal sense. The interfaith movement is not a centralized campaign per se, nor is it something that has started within the last century. Interfaith activities usually consist of forums, panels, or prayer meetings in which

Jewish, Christian, Hindu, and, unfortunately nowadays, “Muslim” leaders and activists of other beliefs come together to join in unified worship services and talk about working hand in hand for the betterment of society. On the surface this seems like a laudable cause and indeed, many times those who refuse to participate in such gatherings are looked down upon as intolerant, uncompromising, and fundamentalist. We will, *inshâ Allâh*, discuss more on this point later, but now let us consider the validity of such participation from an Islâmic point of view.

Islâm is not a joke. The central beliefs of Islâm are not some vague set of wishy-washy principles. They detail the realities of this world as well as the world hereafter. A Muslim believes in the oneness of Allâh and His attributes as He Himself has revealed them. A Muslim believes in the messages of all the prophets, but Islâm also demands belief in the finality of the prophethood and message of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and its abrogation and overriding of all previous messages. Like the one who insists the earth is round, Muslims wholeheartedly affirm the beliefs of Islâm without necessarily having witnessed the subjects of those beliefs. Nor is this set of beliefs any less logically consistent than that of the earth being round. Furthermore, the entire life of a Muslim – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 12 months a year – is shaped by this creed. Islâm is not a “religion” to be practiced in private, or only on a weekly “holy day.” A Muslim firmly believes that success and salvation in the next world, which is the true Life, depends solely on serving Allâh exclusively in this life.

Thus, a Muslim, like the person in our scenario above who believes the world is round, cannot accept the beliefs of a Jew or Christian on an equal footing as his or her own. A Muslim cannot participate in an interfaith worship service because we believe quite simply that all methods of worship other than those taught by the Prophet (ﷺ) are wrong. In fact, participating in such gatherings is dangerous for a person’s *imân* (faith) because they involve clear-cut aspects of *shirk*. We cannot condone a panel where various individuals of other faiths stand up along with the “Muslims” and read from their corrupted and/or fabricated scriptures with the implication that their beliefs are as valid as ours. Beyond just religious groups, some Muslims across the country have lately been “standing united for peace” with such abominable and despicable groups as lesbian and gay organizations. In any other realm of life, we would never participate or cooperate in a forum in which we know that the information the other participants are presenting is wrong and dangerous for them and for ourselves. Thus, an attitude of “your

religion is fine, my religion is fine, we will all live happily ever after” has no place in the creed and beliefs of Islâm.

A Trap

As mentioned earlier, the “interfaith” idea is nothing new. That there are several verses of Qur’ân related directly to this issue bears witness to this fact. We know that when the message of Islâm started to spread, the disbelievers of Makkah tried many approaches to try and dissuade the Prophet (ﷺ) from delivering his message. One of their approaches was exactly the interfaith approach. Initially, the chiefs of the Quraysh (equivalent to the presidents and governors of our time) came to him and told him that if he wished money they would give him such a treasure that he would be the richest man in Arabia; if he wished women, they would allow him to select for himself the most beautiful girls he liked and they would be his; if it was leadership and position he was seeking, they would give him the highest rank in their nation with ultimate veto power over all decisions; nay, if he wanted to be the king and emperor, they would accept him as such – the only thing they asked was that he simply stop speaking against their gods and methods of worship. Imagine this scene! Imagine the desperation of the people to offer him such things! And what was the unswerving reply of our noble Prophet (ﷺ), the best of Allâh’s creation? It was the timeless words:

“If they put the sun in my right hand, and the moon in my left hand, I will never give up this mission until Allâh gives me success or I die in the process.” [*Hayâtus-Sahâbah: Bayhaqi*]

In fact, the non-Muslims went further than that. They said, in essence, let us do interfaith: “For one day we will worship as you worship, O Muhammad (ﷺ) and for one day you worship as we worship.” When this was not accepted, they went so far as to say, “For one entire year, we will worship as you worship. For one day only we ask that you worship as we do and we ask that otherwise you stop speaking against our gods and methods of worship.” It was upon this event that *Surah Kâfirûn* (109) was revealed. Hadrat Ibn ‘Abbâs (رضى الله عنه), one of the greatest commentators of Qur’ân among the *Sahâbah*, mentions that the second set of verses quoted at the beginning of this article also refer to the same issue [*Ma’ariful Qur’ân*], namely that the disbelievers were more than willing to compromise on their antagonism against Islâm if the Prophet (ﷺ) would let up on his antagonism against their religions. Allâh warned him, and warns us likewise, to beware of this trap.

(Incidentally, following the approaches described above, the non-Muslims of the time embarked on a systematic campaign against Islâm that is uncannily similar to the campaign which America, Israel, and their allies are waging against Muslims today, and the Tâlibân in particular. The campaign of the Quraysh consisted of nothing less than harassment, torture, armed attacks, boycotts (*i.e.* imposing sanctions), seizing of the land and property of believers (*i.e.* freezing their assets), and a barrage of propaganda, so effective that people would actually put cotton in their ears out of fear of being “bewitched” by the Muslims reciting Qur’ân! May Allâh open our eyes to history and strengthen our *imân* in these present times.)

Tolerance

Those who speak against participation in interfaith activities are inevitably labeled as intolerant fundamentalists by the non-Muslim propaganda machine. In truth, however, there is a large difference between tolerance and interfaith. Islâm is the embodiment of tolerance. Out of the many verses of the Qur’ân in this regard, we will suffice here with mentioning two:

There is no compulsion in religion... (2:256)

Allâh forbids you not those who warred not against you on account of religion, and drove you not out from your homes, that ye should show them kindness and deal justly with them. Lo! Allâh loves the just dealers.
(60:8)

There is nothing wrong with working together with non-Muslims towards peace or other noble causes, as long as the underlying principles and practices of such enterprises are based solely upon the teachings of Islâm. In addition, whereas Muslims will not condone, support, or cooperate in un-Islâmic beliefs and activities, they absolutely do not stand in the way of anyone else who wishes to practice such. The history of Islâm is so replete with instances of this fact that there is hardly any need to describe them here. One only has to look at the centuries of Islâmic rule in India and Spain to see that never did the Muslims suppress any another religion under their rule.

Returning to our second scenario described in our initial introduction, consider how insistent you would be if you were the person escorting the blind man. Knowing that the path he is following will undoubtedly lead

to his destruction, how painful would it be to see him continue along despite all our pleas that he stop and follow us. This is our exact attitude and feeling towards those who cannot or will not accept the path of Islâm. The pity and sorrow we should be feeling in the depths of our hearts for such people (rather than participating in interfaith activities where “everyone’s faith is fine”), was exemplified by the second *khalîfah*, Hadrat ‘Umar Fârûq (رضى الله عنه). It is related that once he passed by the dwelling place of a monk. When the monk was informed that the *Amîr-ul-Mu’minîn* was going by, he came out of his hermitage. The signs of great toil and hardship due to the monastic style of life and worship were very evident on the body of the man. Upon seeing him, Hadrat ‘Umar’s (رضى الله عنه) tears began to flow down his cheeks. When the people asked him why he was crying over a Christian, he replied, “I do so feeling pity over his condition, since the Qur’ân says regarding such people (*i.e.* who endure such hardships but do not accept Islâm):

*On that Day (i.e. the Day of Judgment), some faces will be downcast;
(having) labored hard and weary, they will enter the Burning Fire...
(88:2-4)*

[This narration is found in *Bayhaqi* and other collections as quoted by *Hayâtus-Sahâbah* and *Ma’âriful Qur’ân*.]

It is not for the Muslims to join happily with such people in what they are doing. Rather, it is our duty to warn them the best we can, and deliver our message that will save them from the brink of destruction on the Day of Reckoning. May Allâh give us the wisdom and ability to do so.

The Current Situation: Problem and Solution

In the light of the terrible and tragic events that have occurred recently, it is a hard thing to resist participation in “interfaith” and “unity” events being promoted all over the country. More than ever, we are looked down upon with suspicion and even hatred for not doing so. Muslims need to be clear about and make clear to others our stand on this issue. The tests and trials for Muslims are coming from all directions. On the one hand, we have nothing to do with terrorism. On the other hand, we have nothing to do with America’s proclaimed “~~Crusade~~ War on Terrorism.” We will never stand with the oppression and terrorism being practiced by the Western allies against our poor Muslim brothers and sisters in Afghanistan, Chechnya, Kashmir, Iraq, Palestine, the Philippines, and other areas over the world, including within the United States of America itself:

Those who have been driven from their homes unjustly only because they said: “Our Lord is Allâh”... (22:40)

One of the most important facets of the Islâmîc creed is belief in the *Qadr* (Decree and Foreknowledge) of Allâh. That is, more than 50,000 years ago, Allâh had already written that the events of recent weeks would take place. These events happened only with His will and permission. And furthermore, these events were brought about for one reason and one reason only:

(Allâh, in Whose hands is all Sovereignty, is the One) Who has created life and death that He may test you, which of you is best in conduct; and He is the Mighty, the Forgiving. (67:2)

Disasters and calamities do not happen so that we who call ourselves Muslims scramble to try and make our religion subservient to the American political and power machine, neither to mix our beliefs into the secular melting pot of interfaith. Allâh has sent these as a test for us. The solution for this test is very simple: we must establish Islâm wholeheartedly in our lives. Those Muslims especially who are living in the West need to start practicing the religion, not compromising it. When we start dressing like the Prophet (ﷺ) and his companions and followers: when we start wearing our *topis* or *kufîs* (caps), ‘*amâmahs* (turbans), *hijâbs* and beards; when we start reforming how we obtain and spend our income, how we deal with ourselves and other people, what we feed our families, what we teach our children; in short, when we start acting as Muslims and give up chasing the lures of *Shaytân*: then, not only will our condition be improved, but our example will be a beacon and guiding light for those who have not yet accepted Islâm. And Allâh knows best.

Allâh has promised such of you as believe and do good works that He will surely make them to succeed in the earth even as He caused those who were before them to succeed; and that He will surely establish for them their religion which He has approved for them; and will give them, in exchange, safety after their fear. They will serve Me. They will ascribe nothing as partner unto Me. And those who disbelieve henceforth, they are the corrupt miscreants. (24:55)

May Allâh bless us with firm *imân*, unwavering *yaqîn*, and bounteous reward in this world and the hereafter. *Âmeen*.

Islâm and the “Interfaith” Movement

(Author unknown)

One of the most dangerous ideological threats to Islâm is the growing “Muslim-Christian-Jew” dialogue or the “Interfaith” movement. One of the dangers arising from this movement is the tendency of Muslims to become apologetic towards, or neglect altogether, essential Islâmîc teachings which may prove offensive to Jews or Christians. Another danger is the tendency to argue with the Jews and Christians exclusively from the Bible, neglecting the fact that Allâh *Ta’âla* has decisively refuted these groups and established His proofs against them in the Qur’ân. As Muslims we know that Rasûlullâh (ﷺ) once rebuked ‘Umar (رضي الله عنه) for his referring to the Bible to make a point. However, the greatest danger of this movement is that it is part of a conscious strategy to erode the *‘Izzah* (honor, dignity, and superiority) of the Muslims, placing them on the same level as the Jews and Christians; leading the Muslims to accept the un-Islâmîc political concepts of equality, liberty, and fraternity.

Hence, the Muslim is led to support the ideological basis for the establishment of the secular nation-state, and by extension, reject three of the pillars of the Islâmîc State - *Al-‘Izzah, Al-Jizya, Adh-Dhimmah*. This makes the masses of Muslims less likely to support the reestablishment of the Islâmîc State in its pristine purity. This process of a theological stand leading to political consequences is aptly demonstrated in the following quote from Warith Deen Muhammad, leader of the American Muslim Mission, an avid supporter of interfaith dialogue, in his book *As the Light Shines from the East*:

“There is a pure blood that is shared by Jews, Christians and Muslims; I’m talking about a pure spiritual blood and religious blood that we share. So these Christian principles that I’m paying tribute to today are also Muslim principles, and I’m telling you, *we’re not only religious groups, we’re members of one American community. We have an obligation to protect the good interest of all American people.*” (Italics ours.)

This statement is an illustration of one of the undesirable outcomes of the interfaith dialogue, namely, extending an alleged spiritual brotherhood to the realm of political action.

In refuting this developing movement, we must emphasize the proper Islâmîc stand against this aspect of Christian and Jewish missionary activity (interfaith dialogue); activity which the noted Muslim writer Maryam Jameelah identifies as having the following four objectives:

1. The expansion of Western political, military, economic and cultural influence.
2. The total westernization of the Muslim countries.
3. The loss of the political, economic and cultural independence of all Muslim territories.
4. The utter annihilation of Islâm and the Islâmîc way of life from the world.

Muslims should be clear that Muslims, Jews and Christians are not a unified, equal spiritual community. Allâh *Ta’âla* clearly tells humanity that the only religion acceptable to Him is Islâm. We read in the Qur’ân:

Verily, the religion with Allâh is al-Islâm. (Al-Qur’ân 3:19)

As the remainder of this verse and the subsequent verse makes clear, this statement is made to distinguish the Muslims from the Jews and Christians (*Ahl Kitâb*). This distinction is further emphasized later in the same chapter where Allâh states:

If anyone desires a religion other than Islâm it will never be accepted from him; and in the Hereafter, he will be amongst the great losers. (3:85)

This explicit statement is further qualified by the *hadîth* of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ): “Any Jew or Christian who heard about me and did not believe in me and what was revealed to me of the Holy Qur’ân and my traditions (*Sunnah*), his ultimate destination will be the Hellfire.”

These narrations clearly undermine a basic tenet of the interfaith movement, namely that Judaism and Christianity are on equal footing with Islâm. This fallacy is further eroded by Allâh *Ta’âla*’s describing basic tenets of Christianity as *Kufr* (disbelief). He says in His exalted Book:

Verily, those who say that Allâh is the third partner in a trinity have rejected Faith: There is but One God. (5:73)

Here the Trinitarian belief is described as *Kufr*, or rejection of faith. Likewise, Allâh *Ta'âla* condemns the central Christian belief in the divinity of Jesus. He says in this regard:

Verily, those who say Allâh is Christ, the Son of Mary, have rejected Faith. Christ himself said, "Oh Children of Israel, worship Allâh, my Lord and your Lord." Whoever joins partners with Allâh verily, Allâh has made it forbidden for him to enter Paradise, and his abode will be the Hellfire. Indeed, the wrongdoers will have no one to help them.
(5:72)

In this verse, Allâh *Ta'âla* not only rejects the divinity of Jesus (عيسى), but He also rejects the faith of anyone who holds Jesus (عيسى) as being divine. Furthermore, he forbids their entrance into Paradise!

As for the Jews, their implicit denial of accountability in the Hereafter, a factor leading directly to their excessive materialism, is considered blasphemous to any Muslim. This is in addition to their changing Allâh's scripture, rejecting His prophets, and the other charges which Allâh *Ta'âla* has condemned them for in the Qur'ân.

As mentioned above, the interfaith movement has had dire political consequences. It is these consequences which distinguish the current Muslim-Christian-Jewish dialogue from the scholarly debates common at the various centers of learning existing when the Islâmic polity was at the peak of its power. These debates, initiated by Muslim scholars, were aimed at demonstrating the superiority of Islâm. The current interfaith dialogue has as its primary objective the neutralization of the Muslim's political consciousness.

To understand this better, let us first reflect on what might be behind Jews and Christians desiring a dialogue with Muslims, by pondering the following saying of Allâh *Ta'âla*:

Never will the Jews or the Christians be satisfied with you until you follow their way. (2:120)

In the twentieth century, their way has been epitomized by the secular nation-state, with its ideological pillars: Equality, liberty and fraternity. In essence, all of the citizens of the secular state are equal (citizens or nationals) before the law with full and equal rights and liberties (in theory). As we will show, this is an un-Islâmic concept. If through the

interfaith movement a spiritual equality can be achieved between the "Children of Abraham", then political equality would be a mere formality. Such a development would undermine the very basis of the Islâmic State. To reiterate, such an equality has no basis in Islâmic teaching. Consider what Allâh says in *Sûrah Tawbah*:

Fight those who believe not in Allâh nor the Last Day, nor hold as forbidden that which has been forbidden by Allâh and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the religion of Truth, (even if they are) from the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) until they pay the Jizya with willing submission, and feel themselves humbled (subordinate to the Muslims).
(9:29)

This subordinating of the *Ahl Dhimmah* is an Islâmic political reality which is totally ignored by the adherents of the interfaith movement, even by the Muslims among them. Just as the *âyât* (verses) which we quoted earlier describe the spiritual inferiority of *Ahl Kitaab*, the above *âyah* describes their social and cultural inferiority. These are crucial Islâmic concepts which no Muslim can afford to ignore. The following message from Khalifah 'Umar ibn al-Khattab (*radiyallahu 'anhu*) shows how seriously the early Muslims took these matters. Listen to his words:

"Do not exchange correspondence with the *Dhimmis* (Jews and Christians living under a contract of protection in Muslim lands) in case friendship should grow between you and them. Do not call them by their formal names. They must be kept in their place, but not wronged. Command their women not to tighten their waistbands, and not to let their forelocks hang over their faces. Also they should be made to stand in the marketplace so that they can be distinguished from Muslim women. If they refuse, they had better embrace Islâm, willingly, or unwillingly."

This passage, from the pen of our beloved *Khalifah* 'Umar ibn al-Khattâb (*رضي الله عنه*), will strike many of us as strange, because we have been so far removed from the reality of Islâmic political dominance. However, this is the reality, whether we like it or not. Islâm is meant to dominate. Allâh *Ta'âla* says:

It is He who has sent His Messenger with Guidance and the religion of Truth, that it may dominate over all other religions, even though the idolaters may hate it. (61:9)

Furthermore, Allâh *Ta'âla* informs humanity that dignity, honor, and superiority are for this *Ummah*. He says:

Dignity, honor, and superiority (al-'Izzah) is for Allâh, His Messenger, and the Believers. However, the hypocrites know it not. (63:8)

Unlike the alleged superiority of the Jews, Aryans or other racists, the superiority of the Muslims is conferred by Allâh, because the Muslims have agreed to uphold the Standard of Islâm. This honor is extended to all human beings who accept to choose belief, regardless of their racial or ethnic background. Allâh proclaims in *Sûrah Âli 'Imrân*:

You (Muslims) are the best of communities raised up for mankind (because) you enjoin the right, forbid the wrong, and you believe in Allâh. (3:110)

This honor has been conferred upon the Muslims, not the Christians, nor the Jews. Contrary to this distinction which has been conferred upon the Muslims, in the very first *sûrah* (chapter) of the Qur'ân (*al-Fâtihah*), the Jews are referred to as *Maghdûb 'Alayhim* (those who have earned the wrath of Allâh), and the Christians are referred to as *Ad-Dâlleen* (those who have gone astray). It is crucial that Muslims understand this and shun any attempts to bring Islâm down to the level of Judaism or Christianity.

The above discourse is not intended to make Muslims bitter or antagonistic towards those Jews or Christians who are not actively opposing or combating Islâm. Allâh *Ta'âla* admonishes the believers in *Sûrah Mumtahanah*:

Allâh forbids you not, concerning those who fight you not in your religion, nor drive you out of your homes, that you deal with them kindly and justly; verily Allâh loves those who are just. (60:8)

This verse establishes that our treatment of non-transgressing unbelievers should be kind and just. However, Muslims should be cautious when considering this verse. Concerning the *Ahl Kitâb*, kind and just treatment does not imply absolute equality with the Muslims. These non-transgressing elements from among the unbelievers are the people of *Da'wah*, or those who are to be invited to Islâm in the best possible ways. Allâh clearly states:

Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful, convincing arguments; and argue with them in ways that are best. Your Lord knows who has strayed from His Path, and He knows those who are guided aright. (16:125)

Again, the power and beauty of this verse should not lead the Muslim to disregard the Islâmîc methodology, nor to abstract the process of *Da'wah* from the comprehensive Islâmîc scheme. *Da'wah* is the first of three steps in dealing with the unbelievers, including *Ahl Kitâb*. After the *Da'wah* (call) comes the *Jizya* (protective contract and tax), and then if these two are refused, *Ghazwa* (war). Advocates of interfaith dialogue, including the Muslims among them, welcome the first step (*Da'wah*), but are averse towards the latter two. However, this is part of the Islâmîc methodology.

This orientation is beautifully illustrated in the text of the letter which Rasûlullâh (ﷺ) sent to Hiraql, the leader of the Romans (Christians): “In the Name of Allâh, the Beneficent, the Merciful. From Muhammad the Messenger of Allâh, to Hiraql, the Emperor of the Romans. Peace be upon him who follows the guidance. After this I extend to you the invitation to accept Islâm. Embrace Islâm and you will be safe (from being fought against by the Muslims). Allâh will give you a double reward. However, if you turn away, upon you will be the sin of your subjects, (whom you misguide). ‘Say: O People of the Scripture. Come to a common word between us and you: that we shall worship none but Allâh, that we shall ascribe no partners unto Him, and that none of us shall take others for lords beside Allâh.’ And if they turn away, then say: Bear witness that we are Muslims.’ (3:64)”

This *ayah* is often separated from the larger *hadîth* as part of an effort to justify interfaith dialogue. This is done through misunderstanding of the term *kalimatîn sawâ'in* (a common word). This is the word of *Tawhid* (Allâh's Oneness) which all of the Prophets taught. The Jews and Christians, who have deviated from this word in its purity, are being invited back to it; it isn't something which they continue to share with the Muslims. This is made clear in the remaining part of the verse where Allâh explains in detail what this common word is, namely: To worship Allâh alone; to join nothing as a partner along with Allâh; and not to take other human beings as lords other than Allâh. This very invitation emphasizes Allâh's displeasure with the Jews and Christians! In it, the Christians are being invited away from their worship of Jesus and/or his mother (عليهما السلام), and both the Jews and Christians are being invited

away from their worship of their religious authorities, who declare for them what is lawful or unlawful without consideration for the revelation of Allâh. This latter point is further emphasized in *Sûrah Tawbah*:

They (the Jews and Christians) take their priests and rabbis as lords besides Allâh, and likewise Christ the Son of Mary; Yet they were only ordered to worship one true god, there is no deity except Him. High is He above the partners they associate with Him. (9:31)

If this is the case, how has the *Da'wah* of the one true Faith become an interfaith trialogue? Furthermore, how can the above-quoted verse be used to rationalize such a trialogue?

Muslims must realize that Islâm is under attack. This attack has its military, political, and ideological dimensions. Anything which distorts or dilutes the pure message of Islâm, especially something which originates in the anti-Islâmic camp, has to be viewed as part of the ideological war against Islâm. This is how Muslims should see the contemporary interfaith movement.

Muslims have not initiated this interfaith trialogue. Therefore, we don't know where it is designed to lead us. We do know that every Muslim land which has opened its doors to interfaith dialogue has witnessed a tremendous increase in Christian missionary activity and an uncritical acceptance of friendship with the capitalistic "Christian" nations of the West. We as Muslims should see an instructive lesson in the Jewish-Christian dialogue that was initiated by the Jews in this century. This movement has served only the interest of the Jews, the party that initiated the dialogue. First of all, they have gotten the Vatican to drop the Catholic belief that the Jews were the Christ-killers. Furthermore, they have been able to win the Christian world over to support the cause of Zionism, and to implicitly or explicitly recognize the creation of the Zionist State of Israel. The Jews made these gains because they have been able to determine the methodology and goals of this dialogue. We ask, are Muslims who participate in such dialogues able to do the same?

As Muslims, we know that this movement has been used to drive yet another divisive wedge into the body of the *Ummah*. Before we Muslims can even begin to think of dialoging with our potential enemies, let us sit down and dialogue with each other. Any other way than this will pull us further from the methodology of Islâm, only contributing to our ruin!

Unification of Religions

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While there may be accommodation in Sharî'ah for cooperation between religious groups on common issues, protagonists of the inter-faith movement have now gone a step further. There has been a call for the unification of all religions, building mosques, temples, churches and synagogues in one compound, and even the printing of scriptures such as the Qur'ân and the Bible in one book.

Before giving a verdict on this new 'unified' religion, it is essential to know a few of the standing fundamentals of Islâm:

1. One of the fundamentals of faith in Islâm is that there is no true religion on the earth except Islâm, and that it is the final religion which abrogated all previous religions. Therefore, no other religion remains on earth by which Allâh can be worshipped except Islâm. He says,

And whoever seeks a religion other than Islâm, it will never be accepted of him, and in the Hereafter he will be one of the losers. (3:85)

2. Also of the fundamentals of faith is the belief that the Qur'ân is the last Book that was revealed by the Cherisher of the Worlds. It abrogates all the Books revealed by Allâh before it, and as such no other Book has been left by which Allâh can be worshipped except the Qur'ân. Allâh, The Most High, says,

And We have sent down to you (O Muhammad, ﷺ) the Book (the Qur'ân) in truth, confirming the Scriptures that came before it, and trustworthy in highness and a witness over it (old scriptures). So judge between them by what Allâh has revealed, and follow not their vain desires. (5:48)

3. The Torah and the Bible were abrogated by the Qur'ân, and that they were changed by means of additions or deletions by their followers, as Allâh says,

So because of their breach of their covenant, We cursed them, and made their hearts grow hard. They change the words from their (right) places and have abandoned a good part of the Message that was sent to them.

And you will not cease to discover deceit in them, except a few of them.
(5:13)

Accordingly, even whatever is considered as correct in these Books, has been abrogated by Islâm. The remaining parts are altered. This is proved by the following incident: The Prophet (ﷺ) got angry when he saw ‘Umar ibn al-Khattâb (رضى الله عنه) holding a sheet containing some verses from the Torah and he said to him, “O ‘Umar! Are you in doubt? Have I not brought (the Message) as clear as white? If my brother Mûsa had been alive, he would have followed me.”

4. Another fundamental of faith in Islâm is that our Prophet and Messenger Muhammad (ﷺ) is the seal of all the prophets and messengers. Allâh says,

Muhammad (ﷺ) is not the father of any man among you, but he is the Messenger of Allâh and the last (end) of the Prophets. And Allâh is All-Aware of everything. (33:40)

As such, no other messenger is left to be followed except Muhammad (ﷺ). If any of Allâh’s Prophets and Messengers had been alive, they too, along with their followers would have followed Muhammad (ﷺ). Allâh says,

And (Remember) when Allâh took the Covenant of the Prophets saying ‘Take whatever I gave you from the Book and Hikmah (wisdom) and afterwards there will come to you a messenger (Muhammad) confirming what is with you. You must then believe in him and help him.’ Allâh said: ‘Do you agree (to it) and will you take up My covenant (which I conclude with you)?’ They said, ‘We agree’. He said, ‘Then bear witness; and I am with you among the witnesses (for this). (3:81)

5. Another fundamental of Islâm is that any Jew or Christian who does not embrace Islâm should be considered and designated as an unbeliever (*kâfir*), and such people will be the people of the Fire in accordance to Allâh’s saying:

Lo! Those who disbelieve, among the people of the Scriptures (Jews and Christians) and among the polytheists, will abide in the fire of Hell.
(98:6)

6. Adulterating the fundamentals of Islâm faith to serve the call for the unification of religions is but a devious call. It aims at mixing the Truth with Falsehood, destroying Islâm, demolishing its foundations and bringing all Muslims to clear apostasy (*riddah*). This can be seen in the sayings of Allâh,

And they will never cease fighting you until they turn you back from your religion (Islâmic Monotheism) if they can. (2:217)

They wish that you reject faith, as they have rejected (Faith), and thus that you will become equal (like one another). (4:89)

The inevitable consequence of such evil calls is the cancellation of differences between Islâm and *Kufr*, Truth and Falsehood, and complete negation of enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong. Another result is the breaking of barriers of alienation between Muslims and unbelievers so that no loyalty nor *jihâd* nor struggle for the sake of elevating Allâh’s Word on Allâh’s earth will take place. Allâh, The Most High, commands:

And fight against the Mushrikun (polytheists, pagans, idolators, disbelievers in the oneness of Allâh) collectively, as they fight against you collectively. But know that Allâh is with the pious. (9:36)

If such a call for unification of religions emanates from a Muslim, it will be considered explicit *riddah* (apostasy) from Islâm. Such a call of “interfaith” annuls the truth of the Qur’ân, denies that the Qur’ân has abrogated all the books that preceded it, and also negates that Islâm has abrogated all previous religions. Based on this, the call for such unification is rejected according to Sharf’ah and is strictly prohibited by all evidences of Islâm in the Qur’ân and the *Sunnah*.

Based on the aforesaid it is not permissible for any Muslim who believes in Allâh as Lord, in Islâm as religion, and Muhammad (ﷺ) as Prophet, to call for this abominable belief, or encourage others to join it. It is prohibited for any Muslim to print the Torah and the Bible even independently so how could it be permissible to print them with the Qur’ân in one book? This is but an adulteration of the Truth with the altered or abrogated books. It is prohibited for any Muslim to respond to the call for building a mosque, a church, and a temple in one complex, as this would imply a confession that there are religions by which Allâh can be worshipped besides Islâm. This would also involve a denial that Islâm

is the purest of all other religions. It would also imply a serious admission that religions are three and that people on earth may adopt whichever they wish of them equally, and that Islâm has not superseded the religions that preceded it. Undoubtedly, approving, believing, or accepting this call is considered *Kufr* (disbelief) and explicit error as it plainly contradicts the Qur'ân. It would also imply an affirmation that the alterations made by the Jews and Christians in their religions are from Allâh. Moreover, it is not permissible to call churches "Allâh's houses" as the Christians do not perform a form of correct worship that is accepted by Allâh, nor is it a kind of worship based on Islâm. Allâh says,

And whoever seeks a religion other than Islâm, it will never be accepted of him, and in the hereafter he will be one of the losers. (3:85)

Calling the *kuffâr* and the People of the Book to Islâm is incumbent upon all Muslims. Sometimes results are not achieved except through kind words and sound arguments. It should, nonetheless, be done in such a way as to not compromise any of the rules of Islâm, while they either become convinced of Islâm and embrace it, or reject it and die after a clear warning is given to them. Allâh says,

Say: 'O People of the Scripture. Come to a common word between us and you: that we shall worship none but Allâh, that we shall ascribe no partners unto Him, and that none of us shall take others for lords beside Allâh.' And if they turn away, then say: 'Bear witness that we are Muslims.' (3:64)



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