Interreligious Dialogue from the Perspective of Islamic Sacred Texts (Necessity, Methods, Policies)

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Abstract

The issue of interreligious dialogue has been seriously examined within Islamic theology since the dawn of Islam. Islamic religious texts have elucidated the rationale, methods, policies, and related topics concerning this dialogue. This research seeks to explore the viewpoint of Islamic sacred texts on the subject of interreligious dialogue. It presents its discussions across six key areas: the necessity of interreligious dialogue, its historical background, the methods and policies of interreligious dialogue, and its topics and implementation, all based on data from Islamic sacred texts. Furthermore, the paper examines Islam's policies regarding the acceptance of religious diversity, respect for religious freedoms, and the creation of an environment for constructive dialogue among religions. The aim of this article is to clarify the position of

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interreligious dialogue in Islam and to offer strategies for international interactions founded on religious and human principles. Ultimately, the findings of the article demonstrate that interreligious dialogue in Islam can play a significant role in reducing tensions and promoting global peace. This research was conducted through a review of data from Islamic sacred texts, utilizing a library-based methodology.

Keywords

Interreligious Dialogue, Sacred Texts, Coexistence, Religions.

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Introduction

In today's world, interreligious dialogue is not just a desirable action but an undeniable necessity for the global community. In the past, due to the lack of communication facilities, people were more dependent on tribal communities and their local living environments, having limited contact with other parts of the world. However, today, one of the prominent features of the world is the intermingling of people within this vast global city. Increased migration and advancements in communication technologies demonstrate the essential need for interaction and dialogue among human beings.

Since the majority of the world's population comprises followers of religions, particularly Islam and Christianity, interreligious dialogue has become a more popular phenomenon in the global community than ever before. These dialogues are evident even among the highest religious leaders of Islam and Christianity, such as the meeting of Pope Benedict XVI with Ayatollah Sistani in Iraq and Ahmad al-Tayeb, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Egypt. At lower levels, these dialogues also take place in academic forums.

In this research, we intend to examine the directives of Islamic sacred texts regarding the necessity, methods, and policies of dialogue and interaction with other religions. We will also determine the characteristics of an ideal dialogue from an Islamic perspective. This research holds particular importance because it not only demonstrates that the principle of dialogue and interaction with other religions is affirmed by Islamic sacred texts but also cautions us against extremism and negligence in dialogues. It elucidates the characteristics of a standard and purposeful dialogue from the viewpoint of the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) and his Ahl al-Bayt (A.S.).

This study aims to re-examine the practice (seerah) of the

Prophet of Islam and the Ahl al-Bayt (A.S.) concerning interaction with non-Muslims. It will review the methods and policies governing interreligious dialogue, and even the discussable topics, from the perspective of Islamic sacred texts. This examination will focus exclusively on the teachings of the Quran and the traditions (hadiths) transmitted from the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) and the twelve revered Imams in the Shia school of thought. The main question is: Does the tradition of interreligious dialogue have roots in Islamic sacred texts? And what methods, policies, and topics do these texts suggest for this dialogue?

1. Why Interreligious Dialogue is Necessary from the Perspective of Islamic Sacred Texts

Why should religions engage in dialogue and interaction with one another? Based on interpretations of Islamic sacred texts, interreligious dialogue is a necessity and a fundamental need for human society. The most significant reasons leading to this conclusion include the following:

The Quran directly commands coexistence and the avoidance of division among followers of different religions. This principle is articulated in Surah Ash-Shura, where it states:

«شَرَعَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الدِّينِ ما وَصَّي بِهِ نُوحاً وَ الَّذي أَوْحَيْنا إِلَيْكَ وَ ما وَصَّيْنا بِهِ إِبْراهيمَ وَ مُوسي وَ عيسي أَنْ أَقيمُوا الدِّينَ وَ لا تَتَفَرَّقُوا فيه»؛

"He has ordained for you of religion what He enjoined upon Noah and that which We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], and what We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus - to establish the religion and not be divided therein." (Ash-Shura, 13).

In this verse, God explicitly emphasizes the necessity of interaction, tolerance, and the avoidance of division and conflict

among the followers of various prophets, especially between the followers of Moses and Jesus, and the followers of Islam. Therefore, interreligious interaction is a direct command from God to humanity in the Quran.

The global community, especially the modern world, is grappling with unprecedented problems and crises. These are issues that affect all of humanity, regardless of whether they are Muslims or Christians. They are problems that require everyone to collaborate for their resolution, as no single group, country, or region of the world can solve them alone. For instance, if half the people on Earth decide to combat terrorism or global warming, but the other half do not cooperate, these shared problems will naturally remain unresolved. The neglect of a portion of the population concerning these issues inevitably impacts the rest of the world. Addressing these problems demands a collective global determination and action. Therefore, we are compelled to engage in dialogue with each other for a better life and to solidify the global community's resolve to solve common problems. In truth, the global community is like a ship: if it is damaged, everyone will drown. Imam Ali (A.S.) said:

«ما تَشاوَرَ قَومٌ ، إلاَّ هُدُّوا إلى رُشدِهِم»؛

> it means: "No people ever consulted together but that they found the right path (to solve their problems)." (Ibn Shu'bah al-Harrani, 1984, p. 233).

When there are shared problems in the world, dialogue allows us to learn from each other's experiences. Muslims might have more experience dealing with religious extremism and can share these insights with Christians. Similarly, Christians might have more experience responding to questions from Satanic cults or anti-God movements. Through this dialogue and interaction, Christians and

Muslims can leverage each other's experiences. When we engage in dialogue, we can benefit from one another's experiences and find better solutions for our common problems. Imam Ali (A.S.) said: "الْمُسْتَشِيرُ، مُتَحَصِّنٌ مِنَ السَّقَطِ" it means: "He who consults is safeguarded from falling into errors." (Laythi Wasiti, 1997, p. 46)

On the one hand, we know that the very raison d'être of religions is belief in God, the promotion of ethics and spirituality, and the pursuit of a wholesome life. These can be summarized as the core teachings of the prophets. These are issues that the divine prophets were tasked with elucidating, and their importance has been repeatedly emphasized in the sacred texts of religions. The Noble Prophet of Islam (PBUH) said: بُعِثْتُ بِمَكَارِمِ الْأَخْلَاقِ وَ مَحَاسِنِهَا it means: "I have been sent by God to promote noble moral traits and virtues." (Tusi, 1994, p. 596) This highlights the immense importance and validity of these topics in the divine plan. Unfortunately, today, human societies pay less attention to these issues, and we witness rampant immorality, disregard for human rights, a lack of spiritual focus, and environmental exploitation in human society. If, in religious dialogues, we emphasize the matters stressed in the sacred texts of all religions, we will naturally contribute to strengthening the divine plan for humanity and continuing the path of the prophets.

5- Unfortunately, the current lack of sufficient attention to faith in God, spirituality, ethics, human rights, the elimination of violence, and environmental protection has caused significant harm to human society. We must redirect the global community's focus back to these critical issues. To draw humanity's attention to some of these problems and to inspire collective global resolve, we must leverage all possible resources. One immensely powerful resource for mobilizing this global determination is the assistance of religious leaders. When leaders of various faiths come together and emphasize the importance

of these matters, it will naturally draw the attention of their followers and strengthen their collective resolve. Through this approach, we can lay the foundation for a more successful and ethical religious society, encouraging believers to become better individuals for their communities and for humanity as a whole. Religious leaders play an influential role within their communities, and fostering unified global determination would be impossible without their cooperation and emphasis. If the recommendations of religious leaders align with solving global problems, the world community will be reformed. Conversely, if some religious leaders offer misguided advice to their followers, the reform of the global community will not be possible. The Noble Prophet of Islam (PBUH) said:

«صِنْفانِ مِنْ أُمَّتى إِذا صَلُحا صَلُحَتْ أُمَّتى وَ إِذا فَسَدا، فَسَدَتْ أُمَّتى، قيلَيا رَسولَ اللهِ وَ مَنْ هُم؟ قالَ: اَلْـفُقَهاءُ وَ الأَمَراءُ»؛

"Two groups of my community, if they are righteous, my community becomes righteous, and if they become corrupt, my community becomes corrupt." It was asked, "O Messenger of God, who are these two groups?" He replied, "The scholars/ulama and the rulers." (Ibn Shu'bah al-Harrani, 1984, p. 50).

By reviewing history, we can point to specific instances where the mistakes of religious leaders have led to the spread of violence in society, and conversely, where the correct emphasis by religious leaders has helped control violence and extremism.

6- Unfortunately, extremist religious movements within both Islam and Christianity benefit from conflict and tension between religions. When there's a lack of sufficient understanding of each other, these movements can easily spread suspicions and misconceptions. Imam Ali (A.S.) said: "People are enemies of what they are ignorant of." The more ignorant Muslims and Christians are

of each other, the more distant and hostile they feel, allowing extremist groups to further ignite the fires of animosity and division among followers of different faiths. When religions lack sufficient knowledge of one another, misconceptions replace true understanding, and extremists exploit this ambiguous environment to propagate false accusations against other religions, which can be readily accepted. Sadly, due to the incorrect behaviors of some extremist groups and intense media propaganda, erroneous judgments and misperceptions about other religions have formed in the minds of people worldwide. Muslims hold mistaken ideas about Christians, and Christians hold mistaken ideas about Muslims. For instance, Philip W. Sutton and Stephen Vertigans argue that the image of Islam in the West has been portrayed as a "religion of the sword," an image accompanied by stereotypes of "war, aggression, fundamentalism, and terrorism." According to statistical studies conducted by LifeWay Research, affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention, two out of three Protestant pastors in America consider Islam to be a "dangerous" religion. Although this negative image is directly related to the violent actions of extremist takfiri groups like ISIS and Al-Qaeda, it presents a distorted view of Islam. Similarly, an accurate image of Christianity has not formed in the minds of Muslims, and there are also misconceptions in this regard. To prevent this dark atmosphere, we must engage in dialogue with each other to gain a better understanding.

7- One of the dangers threatening our world is the increasing risk of a third world war. Given the existence of weapons of mass destruction and armaments developed with artificial intelligence, such a a war could pose an existential threat to humankind. Warmongers are heavily counting on the support of religious followers for their instigations. It is therefore a grave responsibility for religious leaders

to manage the warmongering spirit among their followers through enlightenment and peace-seeking. They must prevent their adherents from falling prey to extremist, warmongering ideologies, all while protecting their followers' security and repelling aggressive enemies. In Islamic culture, there's been a conscious effort to emphasize a spirit of peace-seeking among Muslims wherever possible. God says in the Quran: «وَالصُّـلْحُ خَيْـرٌ» "Peace is better." (An-Nisa, 128) And it also says: «يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ادْخُلُوا فِـي السِّـلْمِ كَافَّةً وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُـوَاتِ الشَّـيْطَانِ» "O you who have believed, enter into Islam (peace) completely and do not follow the footsteps of Satan." (Al-Baqarah, 208). Additionally, in a passage from Sahifa Sajjadiyya, we read: «وَوَفِّقْنَا.. أَنْ نُسَالِمَ مَـنْ عَادَائَـا اللَّهُـمَّ وَ» "O God, grant us success... to make peace with those who have shown enmity towards us." (Ali ibn al-Husayn, 1997, p. 188). Imam Hussain (A.S.), in his efforts to enlighten his followers regarding warfare, said: أَلَا إِنَّ الْحَـرْبَ شَرُّهَا ذَرِيعٌ وَ طَعْمَهَا فَظِيعٌ وَ هِيَ جُرَعٌ مُتَحَسَّاةٌ ... وَ» مَنْ عَاجَلَهَا قَبْلَ أَوَانِ فُرْصَـتِهَا وَ اسْتِبْصَـارِ سَـعْيِهِ فِيهَـا فَذَاكَ قَمِـنٌ أَلَّا يَنْفَعَ قَوْمَـهُ وَ أَنْ يُهْلِكَ نَفْسَـهُ it means: "Indeed, war is a swift evil with a bitter taste and harsh, stinging sips.... Whoever rushes into it before the opportune moment and without insightful effort deserves to harm his people and destroy himself." (Nasr ibn Muzahim, 1984, p. 115). This necessitates that as long as an enemy has not intended our destruction and aggression, and we are not compelled to defend ourselves, we should avoid entering into war and prevent its flames from igniting. Here, the duty of religions to engage in more dialogue, achieve better mutual understanding, and encourage peace in the world becomes paramount. Interreligious dialogue can foster a spirit of peace-seeking within society. Moreover, since dialogue requires interaction and exchange, we naturally gain a deeper understanding of each other. This interaction helps to eliminate false xenophobia, which is one of the primary drivers of war.

8- Religions influence and are influenced by one another, and

many of their teachings share significant similarities. To better comprehend our own religious doctrines, having knowledge of other religions allows us to gain a deeper understanding. The Quran utilizes this approach, as it states: (كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيامُ كَما كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذينَ مِن قَبلِكُم) "O you who have believed, fasting is decreed upon you as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous." (Al-Baqarah, 183). In the Quran, God utilizes comparative analysis between Islamic teachings and those of other religions in an effort to instill a shared belief. Therefore, we too can benefit from this method to better understand Islamic teachings and solidify them among Muslims. The Gospel is also considered, in a way, a complement to the Torah. Jesus said: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them." (Matthew 5:17-19). Jesus, in a sense, completed the Law of Moses. Similarly, Islam considers itself a confirmation of the Torah and the Gospel. God says in the Quran: وَأَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمُهَيْمِنًا عَلَيْهِ And We have sent down to you, [O Muhammad], the Book (the Quran) in truth, confirming that which preceded it of the Scripture and as a guardian over it." (Al-Ma'idah, 48). Therefore, to better understand our own religion, we need sufficient knowledge of other faiths. For this reason, religious leaders and scholars are not exempt from the need for a precise understanding of other religions. And in Surah Ash-Shura, God emphasizes that some of the very commands given to the Prophet of Islam were also previously enjoined upon Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. This resemblance between Islam and religions with divine origins indicates the convergence of religions and their common source. Interreligious dialogue can provide us with a better understanding of other faiths, which can even be beneficial and effective in better understanding our own religion.

2. Historical Course of Interreligious Dialogue during the Time of the Prophet (PBUH) and the Ahl al-Bayt (A.S.)

From the very beginning of Islam, the promotion of dialogue and interaction with other religions was a highly significant issue. These dialogues took place with two distinct approaches. In the religious tradition of the Prophet and the Infallibles (Ma'sumeen), there are numerous references to the texts of previous prophets, including the Torah and the Gospel. Many ethical recommendations from the Prophet (PBUH) and the Ahl al-Bayt (A.S.) are conveyed by quoting earlier prophets like Moses and Jesus. For instance, in hadith texts, there are references to passages from Jesus's Sermon on the Mount, which is an ethical text. Jesus (A.S.) said: « طُوبى لِلمُصلِحينَ بَينَ النّاسِ ، أُولئِكَ هُمُ المُقَرَّبونَ يَومَ القِيامَةِ » "Blessed are those who reconcile among people; those are the closest (to God) on the Day of Resurrection." (Ibn Shu'bah al-Harrani, 1984, p. 501).

The statement by Jesus (A.S.), "Blessed are those who reconcile among people; those are the closest (to God) on the Day of Resurrection," shares a resemblance with Matthew 5:9: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."

The Prophet of Islam and the infallible Imams have narrated hundreds of ethical and mystical teachings from previous prophets, many of which are not found in currently existing sacred texts. These instances indicate that Islamic religious tradition doesn't just recommend verses and narrations from the Prophet and the Ahl al-Bayt; rather, transmitting ethical and mystical content from previous prophets is itself a religious tradition.

The Holy Quran dedicates hundreds of verses to recounting the lifestyles of past prophets, and these prophets are mentioned numerous times. For example: Adam: 25 times, Idris: 2 times, Noah: 43 times,

Hud: 7 times, Salih: 9 times, Lot: 27 times, Abraham: 68 times, Ishmael: 12 times, Isaac: 17 times, Joseph: 27 times, Job: 4 times, Jonah: 4 times, Shu'ayb: 11 times, Moses: 136 times, Aaron: 20 times, David: 16 times, Solomon: 17 times, Elias: 2 times, Elisha: 2 times, Dhu al-Kifl: 2 times, Uzair: 1 time, Zechariah: 7 times, John (Yahya): 5 times ,Jesus: 33 times, Jacob: 16 times, Mary: 70 times, 32 of which are direct references.This demonstrates the significant emphasis the Holy Quran places on revisiting the lives of previous prophets. As we know, understanding other religions paves the way for interreligious dialogue. The fact that the Quran contains hundreds of verses about previous religions indicates the Quran's role in facilitating interreligious dialogue.

While Islamic tradition heavily emphasizes interaction based on commonalities, dialogue on points of disagreement has not been neglected. The second common style of academic dialogue, focusing on contentious issues, was highly prevalent in early Islam. These discussions were freely conducted even at the highest levels within the Islamic government. For example, it is narrated that over 20 prominent Christian figures engaged in scholarly dialogue with the Prophet six years before the Hijra (migration to Medina) (Ibn Hisham, n.d., vol. 1, p. 391). The most significant of these dialogues was with the Christians of Najran, when over 60 Christian priests and bishops arrived in Medina and engaged in an extensive discussion with the Prophet of Islam (Ibn Hisham, n.d., vol. 1, p. 575).

Furthermore, the Prophet of Islam engaged in numerous correspondences with the leaders of Christian nations. This included letters to: Najashi, the ruler of Abyssinia (Ethiopia) (Ibn al-Athir, 1965, vol. 2, p. 213). Heraclius (Heraclius), the Byzantine Emperor, and Dughātir, the Bishop of Constantinople (Ibn al-Athir, 1965, vol. 2, p. 211). Muqawqis, the ruler of Alexandria (Ibn al-Athir, 1965, vol. 2, p. 210). He also sent letters

to several other Christian leaders and received responses and gifts from many of them.

After the passing of the Prophet of Islam, numerous dialogues took place between the leaders of the Islamic community. For instance, it's narrated that representatives from Roman lands, led by a Christian guide, arrived in Medina and engaged in a scholarly dialogue with Imam Ali (A.S.) (Tabarsi, 1983, vol. 1, p. 205). Historical sources also provide evidence of dialogues between: Imam Hasan (A.S.) (Tabarsi, 1983, vol. 1, p. 267), Imam Baqir (A.S.) (Kulayni, 1987, vol. 8, p. 122), Imam Kadhim (A.S.) (Ibn Shahr Ashub, 1959, vol. 4, p. 311) with Christians. One of the most significant dialogues was the scholarly discussion held by Imam Reza (A.S.) with leaders of several religions at the court of Ma'mun al-Abbasi (Ibn Babawayh, 1958, vol. 1, p. 154). Additionally, hadith sources recount dialogues between: Imam Hadi (A.S.), the tenth Imam, and a Christian scribe (Qummi, n.d., vol. 1, p. 278), Imam Askari (A.S.), the eleventh Imam, and a Christian physician (Kulayni, 1987, vol. 1, p. 512). It's noteworthy that this style of scholarly dialogue, particularly on points of disagreement, was predominantly common among Muslim elites and the elites of other faiths.

3. Methods of Interreligious Dialogue from the Perspective of Islamic Sacred Texts

If we want to engage in dialogue, we must adhere to the principles and methods of interreligious dialogue. Naturally, not every discussion between followers of two religions can be called "interreligious dialogue." Many discussions can lead to ill-manners, accusations, and insults, which are strongly forbidden in the Quran and Hadith. God in the Quran condemns those who engage in debate without proper methodology, stating: "And among the people is he who disputes concerning Allah without knowledge or guidance or an enlightening

Book." (Al-Hajj, 8). Therefore, from Islam's perspective, not only the principle of dialogue is important, but also its methodology. Some of the most crucial methods emphasized by Islam in interreligious dialogue include:

3.1. Conversation with Wisdom and Admonition

God says in another verse: «ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ» "Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good counsel." (An-Nahl, 125). Dialogue approved by Islam must be based on two principles: admonition and wisdom. Admonition is rooted in goodwill, and naturally, interfaith dialogues should be based on goodwill. Furthermore, dialogue must be founded on wisdom and rationality. Therefore, only dialogues based on wisdom, rationality, and good admonition are approved.

3.2. Good Dialogue

In the Quran, God commands us to speak to people with kind words: «وَ قُولُوا لِلنَّاسِ حُسْناً» ''And speak to people (non-believers) kindly'' (Al-Baqarah, 83). Imam Baqir (peace be upon him) said: «نَزَلَتْ فِي أَهْلِ الذِّمَّة» «It was revealed concerning the People of the Book/Covenant (Ahl al-Dhimma)» (Qummi, 1984, vol. 2, p. 320). This noble verse was revealed concerning the manner of interaction with non-Muslims. Not only should we speak to non-Muslims kindly, but even more, we should engage in dialogue in the best possible manner. God says in the Quran: «وَ لا تُجادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتابِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ» And do not dispute with the People of the Book except in the best manner» (Al-Ankabut, 46). Some dialogues are good, and some are even better. In this verse, God commands that your dialogues with non-Muslims should be conducted in the best possible manner (ahsan). This means we should engage in dialogue with other religions using the best methods. The best

dialogue is one based on logic, mutual respect, ethics, kindness, and tolerance.

3.3. Avoidance of Contention

In Islam, contention and strife (jidal and setizeh-jooyi) are fundamentally considered major sins. In a hadith (narration) from the Noble Prophet (PBUH), we read: « لَايَسْتَكْمِلُ عَبْدٌ حَقِيقَةَ الأيمانَ حَتّى يَدَعَ الْمِراء » «وَ اِنْ كـانَ مُحِقّـاً» "A servant does not perfect the reality of faith until he abandons argumentation (mira'), even if he is in the right." (Shahid Thani, 1989, p. 171). Amir al-Mu'minin (peace be upon him) also says in this regard: «سَبَبُ الشَّـحْناءِ كَثْـرَهُ الْمِـراءِ» Excessive argumentation (jadal) and disputation (mira') lead to malice and resentment» (Laythi Wasiti, 1997, p. 281). Therefore, dialogue that leads to contention and strife is not approved in Islam. Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him) says: « الْمِـراءُ دَاءٌ رَدِيٌّ وَ لَيْسَ لِلْإِنْسانِ خَصْلَةٌ شَرٌّ مِنْهُ وَ هُوَ خُلُقُ إِبْلِيسَ وَ نِسْبَتُهُ فَلَا (يُمَـارِي فِـي أَيِّ حَـالٍ كَـانَ إِلَّا مَنْ كَانَ جَاهِلًا بِنَفْسِهِ وَ بِغَيْرِهِ مَحْرُوماً مِنْ حَقَـائِقِ الـدِّينِ "Disputation (mira') is a terrible ailment. No trait is worse for a person than it. It is the characteristic of Iblis (Satan) and those affiliated with him. No one engages in disputation in any situation except one who is ignorant of their own position and that of others, and is deprived of the realities of religion" (Majlisi, 1983, vol. 2, p. 134). He also said: «الْمُؤْمِنُ يُدَارِي وَ لَا يُمَارِي » "The believer manages (people/situations) with tact and does not dispute" (Daylami, 1988, p. 303).

3.4. Respect for Sanctities

Muslims do not have the right to slander or violate the dignity of a non-Muslim. The Holy Quran prohibits believers from reviling non-Muslims and states: «وَلا تَسُبُّوا الَّذينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَسُبُّوا اللَّهَ عَدْواً بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ» "And do not insult those they invoke other than Allah, lest they insult Allah in enmity without knowledge" (Al-An'am, 108). Allamah Tabataba'i,

in his Tafsir al-Mizan, states the following regarding this verse: This verse highlights one of the religious etiquettes, by observing which the sanctity of the religious community is preserved and protected from insult, abuse, or ridicule (Tabataba'i, n.d., vol. 7, p. 314). Imam Sadiq stated that: "It is not «لَا يَنْبَغِي وَ لَا يَصْلُحُ لِلْمُسْلِمِ أَنْ يَقْذِفَ يَهُودِياً وَ لَا نَصْرَانِيّاً وَ لَا مَجُوسِيّاً» fitting and not permissible for a Muslim to slander a Jew, nor a Christian, nor a Zoroastrian" (Ibn Hayyun, 1965, vol. 2, p. 460). It has also been narrated that when Imam Ali (peace be upon him) heard one of his companions cursing the enemies during the Battle of Siffin, he said to him: «إِنِّي أَكْرَهُ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَكُونُوا سَبَّابِينَ وَ لَكِنَّكُمْ لَوْ وَصَفْتُمْ أَعْمَـالَهُمْ وَ ذَكَـرْتُمْ حَـالَهُمْ كَانَ أَصْوَبَ فِي الْقَوْلِ وَ أَبْلَغَ فِي الْعُـذْرِ وَ قُلْـتُمْ مَكَـانَ سَبِّكُمْ إِيَّـاهُمْ اللَّهُـمَّ احْقِـنْ دِمَاءَنَا وَ دِمَاءَهُمْ وَ أَصْلِحْ ذَاتَ بَيْنِنَا وَ بَيْنِهِمْ وَ اهْـدِهِمْ مِـنْ ضَـلَالَتِهِمْ حَتَّى يَعْـرِفَ الْحَـقَّ مَـنْ جَهِلَـهُ وَ يَرْعَوِيَ عَنِ الْغَيِّ وَ الْعُدْوَانِ مَنْ لَهِـجَ بِـه » I dislike that you be revilers. Instead, if you were to describe their actions and recount their circumstances, it would be closer to the truth and more excusable. It would have been better, instead of cursing them, for you to say: 'O Allah! Preserve our blood and theirs, reconcile between us and them, and guide them from misguidance to the straight path, so that those who are ignorant may recognize the truth, and those who contend with the truth may regret their actions and return to the truth.'" (Nahj al-Balaghah: Khutbah, 206).

5-It's recommended that discussions with non-Muslims be conducted with tolerance. A Christian man once approached the second Caliph and asked him a question. The second Caliph became angry and did not respond. At this point, Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said to him: «لَا تَغْضَب يا حَفص حَتَّى لا يَقولَ إنَّك قَـد عَجَـزتَ» "O Abu Hafs, do not be angry, lest people say you became enraged because of your inability to answer" (Ibn Shadadhan al-Qummi, 1984, p. 150). Amir al-Mu'minin said that: «مَـنْ غَاظَـكَ بِقُـبْح السَّـفَهِ عَلَيْـكَ فَغِظْـهُ بِحُسْـنِ الْحِلْـمِ مِنْـهُ» "Whoever angers you with their ugly foolishness, then enrage them with your beautiful forbearance towards them" (Laythi Wasiti, 1997, p. 460).

Mufaddal, one of Imam Sadiq's companions, saw Ibn Abi al-Awja sitting near the Prophet's grave (peace be upon him and his family) denying the existence of God. Mufaddal became angry and addressed him furiously. Ibn Abi al-Awja said to him, "Why do you speak this way? If you are a companion of Ja'far ibn Muhammad (Imam Sadiq), he does not speak to us like this, nor does he debate us with arguments like yours. He has heard our words before you, but he has never used foul language with us in conversation, nor has he said anything insulting other than responding to our points. He listens to our words with complete forbearance and composure, and asks us to present whatever evidence we have for our beliefs. Only after we have finished speaking does he begin to speak" (Majlisi, 1983, vol. 3, pp. 57-58). Based on Islamic sacred texts, when engaging in dialogue with non-Muslims, we must do so with wisdom and logic, and in a good, or rather, the best possible manner. This dialogue must be free from contentiousness, insult, anger, and rage.

4. Policies of Interfaith Dialogue from the Perspective of Islamic Sacred Texts

To conduct a standard dialogue, one must observe its policies and do's and don'ts. In Islamic sacred texts, instructions have been given regarding interaction with non-Muslims that can reveal the perspective of the Quran, the Prophet of Islam, and the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) concerning interaction with non-Muslims. The most important of these policies are:

4.1. Respectful Interaction

God has honored and dignified humanity. The Quran emphasizes this, stating: «وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ» "And We have certainly honored the children of Adam" (Al-Isra, 70). This verse makes no

distinction based on the religion, race, or creed of humans. God has bestowed dignity upon "Bani Adam," which includes all people, whether Muslim or non-Muslim. Furthermore, Islamic religious texts advise that if one interacts with non-Muslims, they must treat them with respect. The Prophet of Islam stated: «يَا عَلِيُّ أَكْرِم الْجَارَ وَ لَوْ كَانَ كَافِراً» … "O Ali! Honor your neighbor, even if they are an infidel."… (Shu'ayri, n.d., p. 84). It is narrated that one day, the Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him) was sitting with his companions. At that moment, a group of Jews was passing by, carrying a coffin towards the cemetery. When they came in front of the Prophet (PBUH), he stood up, and his companions also stood. After they had passed, the companions said to the Prophet, "O Messenger of God, he was a Jew (why did you show respect to a Jew)?" The Prophet of Islam replied, "أليست نفساً؟" (Was he not a human being?) (Majlisi, 1983, vol. 78, p. 273).

4.2. Tolerance and Forgiveness

One of the ethical commands in interacting with followers of other religions is tolerance, forbearance, and forgiveness. God in the Quran has commanded: «خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجَاهِلِينَ» "Show forgiveness, enjoin what is good, and turn away from the ignorant" (Al-A'raf, 199). Mu'ammar ibn Khallad came to Imam Reza (peace be upon him) and asked, "I am a Muslim, but my parents follow another religion. How should I behave with them?" The Imam replied: « فَدَارِهِمَا "Then treat them kindly, «فَإِنَّ رَسُـولَ اللَّهِ ص قَـالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بَعَثَنِي بِالرَّحْمَـةِ لَا بِـالْعُقُوقِ for indeed the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: 'Verily, Allah sent me with mercy, not with disobedience [to parents]'" (Kulayni, 1987, vol. 2, p. 159). When we interact in a multicultural society with people who don't share our thoughts or beliefs, we might be subjected to their envy, insults, humiliation, or injustice. In such situations, our duty is to forgive and forget. God states in the Quran: « وَدَّ كَثِيرٌ مِنْ أَهْـلِ

"Many of the الْكِتَابِ لَوْ يَرُدُّونَكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ إيمانِكُمْ...حسـدا... فَـاعْفُوا وَ اصْـفَحُوا » People of the Scripture wish they could turn you back to disbelief after your belief, out of envy... So pardon and overlook" (Al-Baqarah, 109). The Prophet's and Imams' approach to interacting with people of different faiths was also along these lines. For instance, a Christian man said to Imam Baqir (AS): «تـو بَقَـرى» " "You are a cow". He (Imam Baqir, peace be upon him) said: "I am Baqir (the splitter of knowledge)." The Christian man said: "You are the son of the cook!" He replied: "Cooking was her profession." The man said: "You are the son of the black, foul-mouthed Ethiopian woman!" He replied: "If you speak the truth, may God forgive her, and if you lie, may God forgive you" (Ibn Shahr Ashub, 1959, vol. 4, p. 207).

4.3. Affection/Love

The most important teaching in Islam is love, and fundamentally, if we want to summarize the entire religion from an Islamic perspective in one word, that word is love. Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him) asked his disciples: «هَل الـدّين إلاَّ الحُـبّ» "Is religion anything but love?" (Barqi, 1992, vol. 1, p. 263). Imam Baqir (AS) said: « هُـو الـدِّينُ » الحُـبُّ، والحُـبُّ هُـو الـدِّينُ » "Religion is love, and love is religion" (Barqi, 1992, vol. 1, p. 263). Therefore, Muslims are advised to extend their umbrella of kindness equally over all people and interact with others, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, with gentleness and love. One of the most crucial commands in this regard comes from Imam Ali's letter to Malik al-Ashtar, where he stated: « وَ أَشْعِرْ قَلْبَكَ الرَّحْمَةَ لِلرَّعِيَّةِ وَ الْمَحَبَّةَ لَهُـمْ وَ اللُّطْفَ بِهِمْ وَ لَا تَكُونَنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ سَبُعاً ضَارِياً تَغْتَنِمُ أَكْلَهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ صِنْفَانِ إِمَّا أَخٌّ لَـكَ فِـي الـدِّينِ وَ إِمَّا نَظِيـرٌ لَـكَ فِـي الْخَلْـقِ » "Instill in your heart mercy for your subjects, and love and gentleness for them. Do not be like a ravenous beast preying on them, for they are of two types: either a brother to you in religion, or a peer to you in creation" (Nahj al-Balaghah: Letter, 53). Imam Ali also

commands Malik al-Ashtar never to miss an opportunity to show kindness to those of different faiths, stating: « وَ لَا تَحْقِرَنَ لُطْفاً تَعَاهَدْتَهُمْ بِـهِ وَ إِنْ قَـل » "And never belittle any act of kindness you show them, even if it is small" (Nahj al-Balaghah: Letter, 53).

4.4. Freedom of Expression

In the Quran, God encourages people to listen to different opinions, stating: « فَبَشِّرْ عِبَـادِ، الَّـذِينَ يَسْـتَمِعُونَ الْقَـوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُـونَ أَحْسَـنَهُ » "So give good tidings to My servants, who listen to speech and follow the best of it" (Az-Zumar, 17-18). When God commands us to listen to different speeches and choose the best among them, then naturally, the opportunity to hear these speeches must be provided. Therefore, in Islam, the freedom of expression for other religions is not restricted; rather, it is respected and even encouraged so that these words can be heard. Furthermore, from an Islamic perspective, followers of every religion can practice their own rituals and beliefs, and no one can prevent them from doing so. It has been narrated from Imam Kadhim (peace be upon him): He said: « قَالَ تَجُوزُ عَلَى أَهْلِ كُلِّ ذَوِي دِينٍ مَا يَسْـتَحِلُّونَ » "It is permissible for the followers of every religion to do what they deem lawful" (Shaykh Hurr al-'Amili, 1989, vol. 26, p. 158). For followers of every religion, what they themselves consider halal (lawful) and permissible is indeed permissible and allowable. Many instances of free dialogue between the leaders of various religions and the Prophet and his household (Ahl al-Bayt) can be seen, which indicate the freedom of religious discourse in early Islam. Even great Islamic figures would encourage others to ask questions in interfaith dialogue sessions. In a meeting Imam Ali had with Jewish leaders, he said:« اسْأَلْ عَمَّا شِـئْتَ يَـا أَخَـا اَلْيَهُـودِ » "Ask whatever you wish, O brother of the Jews..." (Ibn Shadadhan al-Qummi, 2002, p. 121). And in a meeting with a Christian man, he (Imam Ali) said to him: « وَ يَا نَصْـرَانِيُ أَقْـبِـلْ عَلَـيَ وَجْهَـكَ »

«اقْصِدْنِي بِحَاجَتِكَ فَعِنْدِي جَوَابٌ» "O Christian, turn your face towards me and direct your need to me, for I have the answer..." (Daylami, 1992, vol. 2, p. 303). In a story, a group of Jews came to Imam Ali (peace be upon him) and raised criticisms regarding Islam. The Imam responded to their points with calmness and respect (Nahj al-Balaghah: Hikmah, 317).

4.5. Equality

From the perspective of Islamic sacred texts, all human beings are equal, and there is no superiority in the sight of God except through piety. One should not treat non-Muslims in a discriminatory manner when interacting with them. Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: «اَلنَّاسُ سَوَاءٌ كَأَسْنَانِ اَلْمُشْطِ؛» "People are equal like the teeth of a comb" (Ibn Shu'bah al-Harrani, 1984, p. 368). The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) delivered a sermon in the city of Mecca, declaring Islamic equality to all: « يا أَيُّها النائِس أُلا إِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ وَاحِدٌ وَ إِنَّ أُبَاكُم وَاحِدٌ أَلا لا فَضلَ لِعَرَبِيٍّ عَلَى عَجَمِيٍّ وَلا لِعَجَمِيٍّ عَلَى عَرَبِيٍّ وَلا لِأَسْوَدَ عَلَى أَحمَرَ وَلا لِأَحمَرَ عَلَى أَشوَدَ إِلَّا بِالتَّقوَى أَلا هَلْ بَلَغْتُ قَالُوا نَعَمْ قَالَ فَلْيُبَلِّغِ الشَّاهِدُ الْغَائِبِ؛» "O people, indeed your Lord is one, and your father is one. Verily, there is no superiority for an Arab over a non-Arab, nor for a non-Arab over an Arab, nor for a black person over a red (white) person, nor for a red (white) person over a black person, except by piety. Have I conveyed (the message)?"They (the companions) said: "Yes." He said: "Then let the one who is present convey it to the one who is absent" (Qurtubi, n.d., vol. 16, p. 342). At that time, it was customary for public funds to be stored in a central place and then distributed equally among all people at the end of each period. It is narrated that two women, one Arab and the other Jewish, came to Ali (peace be upon him) to receive their share from the public treasury (Bayt al-Mal). The Imam paid an equal share to both women. « يَا أَمِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِنِّي امْرَأَةٌ مِنَ الْعَرَبِ وَ هَذِهِ امْرَأَةٌ مِنَ الْعَجَم فَقَالَ عَلِيٌّ ع: إِنِّي لَا أَجِدُ لِبَنِي إِسْمَاعِيلَ فِي هَذَا الْفَيْءِ فَضْلًا عَلَى بَنِي إِسْحَاق » The Arab woman protested, "O

Commander of the Faithful! I am an Arab woman, and this woman is a non-Arab (foreigner)." Ali (peace be upon him) replied: "Indeed, I find no superiority for the children of Ishmael in this public wealth over the children of Isaac" (Thaqafi, 1990, vol. 1, p. 46).

4.6. Security

During times of war and conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims, if some non-Muslims request dialogue, it is the duty of Muslims to provide them with security for dialogue, despite all restrictions and emergency war conditions. They can freely and without any concern enter Islamic lands to engage in dialogue, hear the message, and return to their own place safely. Allah states in the Quran:«وَإِنْ أَحَدٌ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ اسْتَجَارَكَ فَأَجِرْهُ حَتَّى يَسْمَعَ كَلَامَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ أَبْلِغْهُ مَأْمَنَهُ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ » "And if any one of the polytheists seeks your protection, then grant him protection so that he may hear the word of Allah, and then deliver him to his place of safety. That is because they are a people who do not know." (At-Tawbah, 6).

4.7. Kindness and Benevolence

According to Islamic teachings, a Muslim should show kindness and benevolence towards non-Muslims. Allah states in Surah Al-Mumtahanah: «لَا يَنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِى الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُم مِّن دِيَارِكُمْ أَن تَبَرُّوهُمْ » "Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes - from being righteous toward them." (Al-Mumtahanah, 8). One of the Islamic commands is to provide financial aid to needy non-Muslims. In various narrations, assisting or giving charity to non-Muslims is recommended. The Prophet of Islam (PBUH) said: « يَا عَلِيُّ ... لَا تَرُدَّ السَّائِلَ وَ إِنْ كَانَ كَافِرًا» "O Ali... do not turn away a beggar, even if he is a disbeliever" (Shu'ayri, n.d., p. 84). Abo Nasr said: I presented to Imam

Sadiq (peace be upon him), إِنَّ أَهْلَ السَّوَادِ يَقْتَحِمُونَ عَلَيْنَا وَ فِيهِمُ الْيَهُودُ وَ النَّصَارَى وَ الْمَجُوسُ فَنَتَصَدَّقُ عَلَيْهِمْ فَقَالَ نَعَـمْ "Indeed, the people of Sawad (a region in Iraq) come to us, and among them are Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians. Should we give charity to them?" He replied, "Yes." One of the Islamic injunctions is the payment of Zakat. Muslims are required to spend a portion of their wealth in the way of Allah. One of its expenditures is assisting non-Muslims, who are known in the Quran by the term "Al-Mu'allafati Qulubuhum" (those whose hearts are to be reconciled/inclined towards Islam) (At-Tawbah, 60). This portion of the money should be spent solely on helping non-Muslims, especially those non-Muslims who have misconceptions about Islam. According to the clear statements of jurists, this verse instructs the giving of gifts to non-Muslims, including Christians, Jews, and disbelievers (idolaters) (Tusi, 1967, vol. 1, p. 249). Furthermore, Islamic sources state that if a non-Muslim was unable to work, a stipend would be allocated for them from the public treasury (Bayt al-Mal). It is narrated: An old, blind man was begging. Amir al-Mu'minin (Ali ibn Abi Talib) (peace be upon him) asked, "What is this?" They replied, "O Amir al-Mu'minin, he is a Christian." Amir al-Mu'minin (peace be upon him) then said, "You employed him until he became old and incapacitated, and then you denied him? Spend on him from the public treasury" (Tusi, 1987, vol. 6, p. 293). It is perhaps the first time in history that disability insurance was instituted when Imam Ali (peace be upon him) set a monthly stipend for a disabled Christian. Furthermore, while it's known that everyone in a governing system must pay taxes, the Prophet of Islam exempted monks and priests from paying taxes. In the Prophet's covenant with Christians, it states:

« ولا يُحمَلُ على الرهبانِ والأساقفةِ ولا من يتعبدُ جزيةً ولا غرامةً. وأنـا أحفـظُ ذمـتَهم أينمـا كانوا من برٍ أو بحرٍ في المشـرقِ أو المغربِ والجنـوبِ والشـمال، وهـم فـي ذمَّتـي وميثـاقي وأمانـي من كلِّ مكروه. وكذلك من يتفردُ بالعبادةِ في الجبالِ والمواضـعِ المباركـةِ لا يُلـزِمُهم

"مما يزرعونَـه لا خِـراجٌ ولا عُـشـرٌ »"No jizya (poll tax) or fine shall be imposed on monks and bishops, nor on those who devote themselves to worship. I shall protect their covenant wherever they may be, by land or by sea, in the East or West, North or South. They are under my protection, covenant, and security from all harm. Similarly, those who devote themselves to worship in the mountains and blessed places shall not be obliged to pay any land tax or tithe on what they cultivate" (Ahmadi Mianji, 1998, vol. 3, p. 758).

4.8. Good Conduct Towards Followers of Other Religions

The great religious figures of Islam consistently strived to combat xenophobia and encouraged Muslim society to coexist and interact with followers of other religions. Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him) told one of his students: «يَا إِسْحَاقُ ... إِنْ جَالَسَكَ يَهُودِيٌّ فَأَحْسِنْ مُجَالَسَـتَهُ» "O Ishaq... if a Jew sits with you, then treat him well" (Ibn Babawayh, 1993, vol. 4, p. 404). The Prophet (peace be upon him) had a Jewish neighbor who fell ill, and the Prophet visited him to inquire about his health: "The Prophet (PBUH) visited a Jewish neighbor of his" (Tabarsi, 1992, p. 359). During the time of the Prophet and the Imams, non-Muslims would easily sit with them and discuss the principles of Islam. For example, the Prophet engaged in a debate with a Jew about prophets (Tabarsi, 1983, vol. 1, p. 40). Furthermore, they even commanded hospitality towards non-Muslim guests. The Prophet (peace be upon him) told Imam Ali: "O Ali! Honor the guest, even if he is a disbeliever..." (Shu'ayri, n.d., p. 84). Imam Ali, when addressing a Jewish scholar, referred to him as "O Jewish brother" (yā akhā al-Yahūd) (Ibn Shadadhan al-Qummi, 2002, p. 121).

Based on the Islamic sacred texts, several policies are outlined for interacting with non-Muslims. These interactions must be founded on respect, tolerance and forgiveness, affection, freedom of expression,

equality, security, and kindness and benevolence. Our conduct towards those of other faiths should be based on the principles of coexistence and good social conduct.

5. Dialogue Topics with Other Religions from the Perspective of Islamic Sacred Texts

Now that we are engaging in dialogue with people of other faiths, what topics can be the focus of our discussions? In the Holy Quran, Allah provides a fundamental directive for dialogue with non-Muslims, stating: «قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ» "Say, 'O People of the Scripture, come to a word that is equitable between us and you...'" (Al 'Imran, 64). In this verse, Allah commands the followers of the People of the Scripture – meaning Christians, Jews, and other religions possessing a divine book – to gather and engage in dialogue. This verse is the most pivotal in the Quran on this subject. Allamah Tabataba'i, in his Tafsir al-Mizan, writes in his interpretation of this verse:

> In essence, the invitation is for all of us to agree and unite upon the meaning of a single word. This means acting upon the foundation of that singular word. If Allah, in the Quran, attributes the word to Himself, it is to make us understand that this word is something everyone speaks of and is on everyone's lips. Among us, it is common to say: "People are of one heart and one tongue in this decision," and this implies that they are united in believing, acknowledging, disseminating, and promoting it. Consequently, the meaning of the verse under discussion becomes: "Come, let us all hold fast to this word and join hands in disseminating it and acting upon its requirements" (Tabataba'i, n.d., vol. 3, p. 246).

> This verse not only commands the principle of dialogue but also instructs us on what topics we should discuss. It's natural for

religions to have differences and not be identical in all aspects. However, in this verse, Allah asks us to engage in dialogue over common ground. This is a significant point highlighted in the Quran.

In Surah Al-Ankabut, Allah also states: « وَ لا تُجادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتابِ إِلاَّ بِالَّتى هِىَ أَحْسَنُ ... وَ قُولُوا آمَنَّا بِالَّذى أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْنا وَ أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ وَ إِلهُنا وَ إِلهُكُمْ واحِدٌ وَ نَحْـنُ لَهُ مُسْـلِمُونَ » "And do not dispute with the People of the Scripture except in the best manner... and say, 'We believe in that which has been revealed to us and revealed to you. And our God and your God is one, and we are in submission to Him.'" (Al-'Ankabut, 46).

Given that dialogues should focus on common ground (كلمه سـواء), the question naturally arises: what topics can be considered shared or "common ground"? Humanity, of course, shares thousands of concerns that are equally relevant to Muslims and Christians. Some of the most important topics suitable for dialogue can be categorized as follows:

Given that dialogues should focus on common ground (كلمه سـواء), the question naturally arises: what topics can be considered shared or "common ground"? Humanity, of course, shares thousands of concerns that are equally relevant to Muslims and Christians. Some of the most important topics suitable for dialogue can be categorized as follows:

1. Theological Issues:- Spirituality and its role in human life, Belief in One God and monotheistic principles, Responding to Atheism and arguments for the existence of God, Combating Extremism and promoting moderate religious understanding.

2. Ethical Issues: Family, marriage, and divorce, The rights and duties of family members towards one another, Virtues and Vices (moral excellences and flaws), Lifestyle and ethical

living, Social, Economic, and Political Ethics, Ethics of Knowledge and Education, Controlling Anger, finding joy and peace, Suicide and Abortion (ethical considerations).

3. Human Rights Issues: Children's Rights, Eliminating Discrimination against Women, Minority Rights, Supporting Refugees, Care for the Elderly, Assisting the Poor, Sick, and Disabled, Challenges of Artificial Intelligence, Eradicating Poverty and Hunger, Quality Education and Healthcare, Child Rearing, Right to Health, Justice and Eliminating Discrimination, Rejection of Tyranny, Security, Freedom, and Human Dignity.

4. Issues Related to Violence and Conflict:Combating Drug Abuse, Eliminating Violence, Peace and Reconciliation, Preventing War, Combating Terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction, Prohibition of Unconventional Weapons, International Humanitarian Law (Ethics of War), Prisoners' Rights, Security of Civilians in armed conflicts.

5. Environmental Issues: Water Scarcity and over-utilization of natural resources, Environmental Protection and animal welfare, Global Warming, Environmental Pollution, Sustainable Development.

We find numerous instances in the lives of the Prophet (PBUH) and the Imams (A.S.) where they referred to the sayings of past prophets, such as Moses (A.S.) and Jesus (A.S.). They did this to promote principles of faith, ethics, and the foundations of lifestyle, as well as mutual human rights, to advocate for peace and the elimination of violence, and more.

While the Quran heavily emphasizes dialogue centered on common ground, it doesn't neglect academic discussions on points of

disagreement. As mentioned, critical dialogues were very common and conducted freely in the early days of Islam. However, these discussions primarily took place in academic settings and among scholars from both sides.

6. Methods of Interfaith Dialogue in the Contemporary World

In the modern world, communication has taken on new styles and models. Naturally, interfaith dialogues need to adapt to contemporary patterns. Here are some methods that can be considered in today's world:

6.1. Organizing Interfaith Gatherings and Conferences on Common Topics

One of the most common forms of interfaith interaction is the gathering of religious leaders and the holding of interfaith conferences. These types of gatherings have been increasingly frequent in the contemporary era, and continuing this path can lay good groundwork for other interfaith activities. Although the traditional method of such gatherings needs re-evaluation to better utilize their potential, Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said: "Whoever consults with people of intellect, will be illuminated by the lights of intellects" (Tamimi Amidi, 1987, p. 442).

6.2. Developing Articles and Books on Common Topics

The esteemed Prophet of Islam said, "Tie down knowledge with writing" (Ibn Shu'bah al-Harrani, 1984, p. 36). One of the capacities for academic interaction in the field of interfaith dialogue is the development of books or articles on shared topics, with the participation of two or more scholars from different religions. In this approach, scholars from each religion would explain the perspective

of their sacred texts and theologians on a particular subject. Since these books are written with the involvement of multiple scholars from different faiths, followers of each religion can not only see their own faith's viewpoint on the topic but also become familiar with the perspectives of other religions. When such a work is published under the imprint of two or more publishing houses or research centers from different countries, it can be jointly distributed among people of various countries or faiths, fostering a better understanding of other religions for readers. Additionally, specialized interfaith journals can be created and published. These journals could be a collaboration between two or more different religions, published with the cooperation of two or more universities from different faiths. Each issue could be dedicated to a specific topic, with scholars from each religion expressing their faith's viewpoint on that subject. These journals should be jointly published in several countries, with the collaboration of academic societies from different religions, and made available to the general public.

6.3. Establishing Academic Programs in Religious Studies at Universities and Seminaries

If we view interfaith dialogue as a specialized field, we need to train experts in this area. The Prophet of Islam (PBUH) said: "Whoever acts without knowledge, what he corrupts is more than what he rectifies" (Barqi, 1992, vol. 1, p. 198). The field of interfaith dialogue requires elite and capable scholars who can disseminate this knowledge within society. Without acquiring these specializations and skills, entering the realm of interfaith dialogue can even be detrimental. Therefore, we need to establish academic programs in interfaith dialogue. These programs would train a generation of professors and researchers capable of holding chairs in interfaith

dialogue and effectively participating in interfaith academic forums.

6.4. Facilitating Interfaith Religious Travel

One of the challenges hindering successful interfaith dialogues is the lack of direct understanding among religions. Perhaps many Muslim clerics have never directly encountered a Christian or a Jew, and many Christian clerics may have never been present in an Islamic gathering or experienced an Islamic way of life. This lack of direct knowledge allows misconceptions, often promoted by media or other sources, to fill the void of truth. To address this, we must facilitate opportunities for religious leaders to get to know each other. This means enabling Christian scholars to closely observe Islamic societies and participate in them, and similarly, for Muslim scholars to be present in Christian communities, engage in direct and friendly dialogue with Christian leaders, and ask each other questions. In the Quran, Allah highlights one of the benefits of travel as understanding truths, stating: "Have they «أَ فَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِى الْأَرْضِ فَتَكُونَ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ يَعْقِلُونَ بِها أَوْ آذانٌ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهـا» not traveled through the land, so that their hearts (and minds) may thus learn wisdom and their ears may thus learn to hear?" (Al-Hajj, 46). Facilitating short-term interfaith tours for scholars, creating study opportunities, and faculty exchanges, among other initiatives, can lay serious groundwork for productive interfaith interactions.

6.5. Mutual Support in Humanitarian Crises

As Allah commands in the Quran: "Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes - from being righteous toward them" (Al-Mumtahanah, 8). This means that Allah does not prohibit you from being kind and just towards those who do not fight you for your faith or drive you from your homes. Therefore, if Muslims witness a Christian

community in any part of the world facing war and unrest, or afflicted by floods or other natural disasters and in need of help, it is their duty to rush to their aid and deliver the necessary humanitarian services.

6.6. Formation of a Global Interfaith Union

The Quran instructs us to "cooperate in righteousness and piety" (Al-Ma'idah, 2). In our modern world, we've seen many global and regional unions emerge for collaboration and synergy, from the United Nations to countless regional organizations. However, a significant gap remains: the absence of a global interfaith union. This kind of union would unite religious leaders and respected interfaith non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Its purpose would be to play a vital role in addressing global challenges. It could organize interfaith gatherings at various levels to tackle worldwide issues and issue declarations. Such a union could feature specialized sections for women, youth, leaders, artists, and more, holding annual meetings to foster continuous dialogue and cooperation.

Conclusion

Based on the Islamic sacred texts, interfaith dialogue is a long-standing tradition that has been central to the Holy Quran, the Prophet of Islam, and the twelve Shia Imams since Islam's inception. The early leaders of Islam were well aware of the necessity and importance of coexistence, interaction, and understanding of other religions among their followers. They provided numerous directives for engaging with adherents of other faiths, particularly Christianity and Judaism, emphasizing the crucial nature of such interactions. They strived to foster a public culture of tolerance, dialogue, coexistence, and interaction with other religions within Islamic society. Religious teachings encouraged the principle of dialogue, promoting a good and

excellent manner of communication while discouraging hostility and insults towards followers of other religions. This laid the foundation for a healthy dialogue among Muslims. In interacting with non-Muslims, several principles were recommended: respect, tolerance and forgiveness, affection, freedom of expression, equality, security, kindness and benevolence, and good social conduct. Furthermore, the Holy Quran explicitly commands dialogue on shared topics and concerns. These subjects can include belief in One God, theology, ethics, human rights, the elimination of violence, and environmental issues. Given the characteristics of today's world, these dialogues can be conducted through organizing interfaith gatherings and conferences, producing books and articles on common topics, establishing interfaith dialogue programs in academic institutions, facilitating interfaith travel for scholars, supporting non-Muslims in humanitarian crises, and forming a global interfaith union.

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