

RELIGIONS QUEST FOR PEACE: A COMPARISON BETWEEN ISLĀM AND CHRISTIANITY

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Abstract: There had been conflict between the adherents of different religions or faiths longtime ago. In some cases, the adherents of two or more religions managed to live together in peace and harmony but with few grievances, which sometimes may not lead to violence. This paper intends to look into the concept of peace in two major religions, which have many adherents across the globe i.e Islām and Christianity. The paper looks into the meaning and importance of peace in Islām. Following the same trend, it ex-rays the meaning and importance of peace in Christianity. As a means of questing for peace, both religions call for tolerance. That is to say, tolerance is one of the virtues that both religions strongly encouraged. The paper therefore, studies this virtue from both religions perspectives. It concludes that both religions really quest for peace and gives some suggestions for way forward in order for peace and tranquility to prevail in our societies. The research methodology utilized is qualitative method. It is a library-oriented research, where information and data are taken from books, magazines and other literature. Moreover, the sacred books of both religions (the Qur’ān and Bible) are used as primary sources.

Keywords: Christianity, Islām, peace, religion, tolerance and virtue.

INTRODUCTION

For ages, there had been conflicts between the adherents of different faiths or religions. Even within the same religion, there have been

differences and intra-religious conflicts. Sometimes these disagreements lead to Human and property destruction; at times, they are under control and put to check before getting out of hand. It seems as if the conflict is inevitable. However, the major religions of the world, especially the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islām) strongly encourage and propagate inter and intra-religion peace, tranquility and unity.

Based on this brief introduction, the paper intends to explore and compare the ways in which the two most widely professed Abrahamic religions (Islām and Christianity) quest for peace. It looks into the meaning and significance of the concept of peace in both religions. There are many virtues that are common to both religions as means of actualizing the peace. Meanwhile, the paper confines itself to the study of the virtue of tolerance because of its importance in and to both religions. The paper concludes that both Islām and Christianity actually call for peace and harmony within and beyond their societies. It also suggests some means for way forward.

CONCEPT OF PEACE IN ISLĀM

In Islām, peace is an important concept. It is defined as “freedom from war and violence, especially when people live and work together happily without disagreements”.¹ In Arabic language, Peace means “*salām*”. The word “*salām*” in all its derivative

¹ Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary.

forms is recurrently mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān. It appears in 157 times, 79 times as noun, 50 times as adjective and 28 times as verb.²

The name of the religion, Islām is derived from the root *sa-li-ma*, which means to be safe and sound, unimpaired, unobjectionable, blameless, and faultless. It also means to preserve, to be free from injury, protect from harm; to keep the peace, make one's peace; to surrender, capitulate and so on.³ Hence, Islām is the religion of peace, unity and harmony, which means submission to the will of Allāh and obedience to His law. Whoever admits Islām as a religion is called a Muslim. Therefore, a Muslim is a believer, i.e. one who surrenders himself to Allāh. Submission to the will of Allāh gives man peace because his desires and ambitions will no longer haunt him day and night and his failure will never trouble him. The word Islām is also mentioned 50 times in the Qur'ān.⁴

The salutation or greeting formula in Islām is "*al-salām 'alaikum*" means "peace be upon you." It means greeting one with a prayer for his safety, security or freedom from evils of any kind. It is required from every Muslims to greet his brother in faith while it is compulsory to reply at least in the same way if not with better approach. The greetings indicate the spiritual and moral roles of Islamic society. Islām values peace and wants its necessity to be constantly inculcated in the mind of every Muslim. An example of this is through the practice of greeting one another with the word of peace. It is also required of every Muslim to add "*wa rahmat Allāh wa barkātuhū*" meaning "Mercy of Allāh and His blessing." Islām wants his followers to spread on to one another peace, mercy and blessing of Allāh so that they may be able to live in this world and the hereafter in perfect peace and tranquility with mercy and blessing of their creator on them. Qur'ān says:

When you are greeted with a greeting, greet in return with what is better than it or (at least) return it equally. Certainly, Allāh is ever a Careful Account Taker of all things.⁵

Islām encourages greeting one another with *salām*. It is recorded that Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) elaborates the order of salutation and recommends

that the rider should first greet the pedestrian while the pedestrian should first salute the seated one. A younger person should first salute an elderly one. Likewise, a small group should first greet a larger group. He also emphasizes that the salutation triggers love. Ibn Khathīr quoted Abū Dāwud in his tafsīr that Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) says:

By He in Whose Hand is my soul! You will not enter Paradise until you believe, and you will not believe until you love each other. Should I direct you to an action that would direct you to love each other spread the *salām* among yourselves.⁶

In order for peace to prevail in the society, Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) lays example of how to respond to whomever deliberately turns the greeting of peace to curse. The Prophet (s.a.w) urges not to reply or react with violence or vulgar word. It was reported that some Jews came to the prophet (s.a.w) and said to him *as-sam-u 'alaikum* which means "death be upon you" and the prophet replied "*wa 'alaikum*," "let it be upon you too". Al Hādith records:

'A'isha (r.a) reported that some Jews came to Allāh's Apostle (may peace be upon him) and they said: Abu'l-Qāsim (the Kunya of the Holy Prophet), *as-Sam-u-'Alaikum*, whereupon he (the Holy Prophet) said: *Wa 'Alaikum*. 'A'isha reported: In response to these words of theirs, I said: But let there be death upon you and disgrace also, whereupon Allāh's Messenger (may peace be upon him) said: 'A'isha, do not use harsh words. She said: Did you hear what they said? Thereupon he (the Holy Prophet) said: Did I not respond to them when they said that; I said to them: *Wa 'alaikum* (let it be upon you).⁷

As a way of having peace in society, Islām regards home as sanctuary of privacy. It forbids intruder from breaking in, spying or bugging others' house. Therefore, no person should enter another person's home without permission and salute the owner of the house with the word of peace. The Holy Qur'ān says:

O you who believe! Enter not houses other than your own, until you have asked permission and greeted those in them, that is better for you, in order that you may remember.⁸

--- But when you enter the houses, greet one another with a greeting from Allāh (i.e. say: *As-Salāmu 'Alaikum* - peace be upon you), blessed and good.⁹

² Hassan Hanafi, *Islām in the Modern World* (Cairo: Dar Kebaa Bookshop, 2000), 2:232.

³ Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, (Beirut: Librairie Du Liban, 1974), 424-7. Also, E.W Lane, *Arabic -English Lexicon* (Cambridge: The Islamic Text Society, 1984), 1: 1412-6.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Al-Qur'ān, Sūrah An-Nisa (4) :86.

⁶ Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*. Abridged by Shaykh Safiur-Rahman Al-Mubarakpuri (Riyadh : Darussalam, 2000), 2:535.

⁷ *Sahīh Muslim*, Book 26: Hadīth 5386.

⁸ Al-Qur'ān, Sūrah Al-Nūr (24):27.

⁹ Ibid, Sūrah Al-Nūr (24):61.

Allāh (s.w) in his majesty speaks with the prophets and salutes them with *Salām*, greeting of peace. He says that He sends on the earth messengers of peace to propagate the peace. Qur'ān says:

Salāmun (peace and salutation) be upon Nūh (Noah) among the *'ālamīn* (Nations) i.e mankind, jinns and all that exists!"

Salāmun (peace and salutation) be upon Ibrahīm (Abraham)!"

Salāmun (peace and salutation) be upon Mūsa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron)!"

Salāmun (peace and salutation) be upon Ilyasin (Elias)!"

And peace be on the Messengers! ¹⁰

Dār al-salām (home of peace) is a name of one of the houses, which Almighty Allāh promises whoever surrendered to Him. In the home of peace, neither vain discourse nor frivolities will be heard. Neither violence, nor chaos will be felt or seen; everything there will be in peace and harmony. Allāh says:

For them will be the home of peace (Paradise) with their Lord. And He will be their Wāli (Helper and Protector) because of what they used to do.

Also: "Allāh calls to the home of peace (i.e. Paradise, by accepting Allāh's religion of Islamic Monotheism and by doing righteous good deeds and abstaining from polytheism and evil deeds) and guides whom He wills to a Straight Path"¹¹

Yusuf Ali comments on the latter verse that Allāh is always calling to the Home of Peace, which has a greater pleasure than this material life, which has no fear, no disappointment and no sorrow. The greeting in the home of peace is "peace be upon you". Almighty Allāh in His majesty will greet them with greetings of peace, as a reward for their patience, peaceful attitudes, obedience and submission during their earthly life. The angels will welcome the righteous into Paradise also with peace. The Holy Qur'ān says:

Their way of request therein will be *Subhanaka Allahumma* (Glory to You, O Allāh!) and *Salām* (peace, safe from each and every evil) will be their greetings therein (Paradise)! and the close of their request will be: *Al-Hamdu Lillahi Rabbil-'Ālamīn* [All the praises and thanks are to Allāh, the Lord of *'Ālamīn* (mankind, jinns and all that exists)].¹²

¹⁰ Ibid, Sūrah As-Safāt (37) :79,109,120,130,and 181 respectively.

¹¹ Ibid, Sūrah Al-An'ām (6):127 and Sūrah Yūnus (10):25. Respectively.

¹² Ibid, Sūrah Al-Yūnus (10):10.

Their greeting on the Day they shall meet Him will be *salām*: peace (i.e. the angels will say to them: *Salāmun 'Alaikum*)!" And He has prepared for them a generous reward (i.e. Paradise).¹³

And those who kept their duty to their Lord will be led to Paradise in groups, till, when they reach it, and its gates will be opened (before their arrival for their reception) and its keepers will say: *Salāmun 'Alaikum* (peace be upon you)! You have done well, so enter here to abide therein.¹⁴

The second pillar of Islām requires Muslims to pray five times daily, congregationally or individually. These prayers (*Salawāt*) are concluded with the phrase "*As-salām 'Alaikum*", peace be upon you. As such, every Muslim will utter this word at least 10 times daily, i.e. twice in each obligatory prayer. The concept of peace in Islām is a comprehensive. It is related to time, nature and cosmos. Al-Qur'ān says: "Peace! This until the rise of morn!"¹⁵ Sincerely speaking, peace is needed in the dark more than in the light; likewise, at night more than in the day, when it is dark at night the sense of insecurity increases and there will be great demand for security i.e. peace. There is no peace in a situation without safety and security.

CONCEPT OF PEACE IN CHRISTIANITY

As we have analyzed the concept of peace in Islām above, the concept is also very important in Christianity. Jesus himself practiced and preached the concept of peace. In Biblical tradition, the word for peace is "*Shalom*". According to Mark Robert., the word has "a much richer and fuller significance than English word 'peace'". He says that the idea of peace is a times limited to the absence of war, whereas, *Shalom* included many things, "it is the notions of wholeness, completeness, soundness and prosperity".¹⁶ Jurgen Moltmann sees *Shalom* as "the sanctification of all life which God has created, in all its relationships." He says, "it is blessed life in communion with the life-given God, with other humans and other creatures: peace with God, peace among humans, peace with nature."¹⁷

¹³ Al-Qur'ān, Sūrah Al-Ahzāb(33):44.

¹⁴ Al-Qur'ān, Sūrah az-zumar (39):73

¹⁵ Al-Qur'ān, Sūrah Al-Qadr (97):5..

¹⁶ Mark D,Robert, *Seeking the Peace of Christ:Christianity and Peacemaker*. Pg 3. www.markdoberts.com/htmlfiles/resources/peaceofchrist.htm. Accessed on 4/6/2008.

¹⁷ Jurgen Moltmann, "Political Theology and the Ethics of Peace" in *Theology Politics and Peace*, Edited by Theodore Runyon.(New York: Orbis Books,1989),38.

There are two definitions of peace in peace studies. One is negative while other is positive. The former definition describes “peace as the absence of war”, that is, absence of violence. This means when two opposing side come together to have treaty then the peace is achieved. The latter definition portrays peace as “a state of social justice, with the democratic settlement of conflicts and conciliation in a lasting development of all”.¹⁸ Moltmann scrutinizes both definitions and comments that Christianity concept of peace mingles both definitions but empowers the positive definition by stressing on justice.¹⁹ This shows that peace is inseparable from justice and righteousness.

Christianity preaches peace with God and with fellow human beings. To have peace with God, one has to believe and has faith in Him through Jesus Christ. The Bible says: “Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope might be in God”.²⁰ When one believes in God he or she will be away from sins, he will be clean then he or she will be in a state of peace, his or her mind will be settled and has confidence in God. Since between Sinner and God, there is a state of enmity, hostility and antagonism; then sinner is enemy of God; the state of war is in-between them until the sinner reconcile with his or her God by repentance. The reconciliation will come through Jesus. Indeed Jesus has worked out peace treaty with God through his blood. The Bible says:

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our lord Jesus Christ.²¹

Also Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from the wrath through him.

For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.²²

In this connection, we must bear it in mind that Old Testament has predicted and called him (Jesus) the prince of Peace. The scripture says:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace²³

Jesus promises whoever believes in him and in God that will have inner peace. His mind/heart should not

be troubled. Moreover, that this kind of peace is far more wonderful than the human mind can comprehend. Christ pledges unique kind of peace that is different from worldly peace (absence of violent), it is the peace that calms or settles the troubled and fearful hearts and never depends on outward circumstances. The Bible speaks:

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give on to you: not as the worldly giveth, give I unto you, let not your hearth be troubled, neither it be afraid.²⁴

Furthermore, whoever has peace with God and attained inner peace will and must try to have peace with other fellow human being. Jesus Christ made peace and united both Jews and Gentile in position and privileges. He abolished race and national class differences were vanished, at the foot of the cross all are equal. Racial and religious enmity was things of past. The scripture says:

He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us.²⁵

Also: Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful²⁶

It is very important for Christian to seek for peace with his fellow. Divine peace should reign. Christians should make sure that he or she is in peace with the members of the family. They should seek peace among the friends, in the place of work, but not only to those who are having close relationship or working in the same department but should let the habit of seeking for peace be in their mind anytime and anyplace.

It should be known that God created this world to be abode of peace but human sin tore the peace cloth into pieces, violent, as well as aggression here and there. Yet, God still love his creatures and still want peace to prevail as the Bible reads:-

Moreover, I will make a covenant of peace with them: it shall be an everlasting covenants with them, and I will place them, and multiply them and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for everyone. My tabernacle also will be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people.²⁷

Furthermore, the scripture says: To: everyone in Rome, loved by God and called to be holy. May

¹⁸ Ibid, 39

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Holy Bible, 1 Peter 1:21.

²¹ Ibid, Romans 5:1.

²² Ibid, Romans 5:9-10.

²³ Ibid, Isaiah 9:6.

²⁴ Ibid, John 14:27

²⁵ Ibid, Ephesians 2:14.

²⁶ Ibid, Colossians 3:15

²⁷ Ibid, Ezekiel 26-7.

grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, be yours!²⁸

The word grace in above quotation can be defined as “a quality of moving in a smooth, relaxed and attractive way”.²⁹ The word means, “favour”, it is regularly used in the New Testament with the meaning of benignity or benevolence; felicity or a prosperous state of affairs. The word grace and peace are often used together as indicated in footnote no. 27. This means that the grace and peace of God must go together. The more grace one possess the more peace he or she will enjoy; the more peace one has the more grace he or she will enjoy. This is an indication that a group or society cannot prosper or move forward without peace. In other words, the whole world cannot enjoy grace if there is no peace.

In Christianity as it is in Islām, personal home is sacred and there should be proper etiquette in entering the house, which belongs to other person. It is required to salute the inhabitant of it (the worthy occupant) with the word “peace”. The greeting will put calmness in the mind of the resident and serves as gateway to further developments. However, if the dweller is unworthy “let your peace return to you”. The scripture says:

As you enter the house, greet it. If the house is worthy, let your peace come on it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you³⁰.

For peace to dominate in this world, Christianity encourages everyone to work towards peacemaking activities. It is inferred from scripture that peace always includes right-relationship, just treatment, fairness, be peace-lover and peacemaker. Peacemaker may be somebody who tries to make peace, or mediate between two parts and it also may be any one of the parts who wants to put an end to the misunderstanding between him/her and other party. Engaging in a peace making or being a peacemaker is a good virtue and a blessing. Holy Bible says:

Blessed are the peacemakers: For they shall be called the children of God.³¹

Comment on the verse goes:- They (Peacemakers) are the ones who are themselves at peace with God and live in peace with all men (Rom5:1) they are called “the” peacemakers for these are not social

reformers, but rather the ones reformed by the regenerating power of the gospel. They are peacemaker because they themselves are in peace with God. They have entered into the peace of Christ and thus are able ambassadors of God’s message of peace to a troubled world. Hence, they shall be called the children of God. These only shall be called the son of God! Throughout the beatitudes, Jesus clearly underscores that only those who have the life-changing qualities herein described are citizens of His kingdom.³²

TOLERANCE IN ISLĀM

Tolerance is one of the virtues that Islām strongly persuades Muslims to practice, in order to establish or enhance peaceful interaction among the Muslims, or to foster co- existence between the Muslims and non-Muslims. Tolerance is defined as “the willingness to accept or tolerate somebody or something, especially opinions or behaviour that you may not agree with, or people who are not like you.”³³ If there is room for tolerance in a community or a society, conflict has no place to stay. The present globalized world desires real tolerance and positive co-existence than it was needed before; simply because similarities and commonalities as well as diversities and differences increase daily between the cultures and civilizations because of the information and technological revolutions.

Islām encourages its followers to cling to tolerance and to tolerate other nations, religions, cultures, civilizations. All are co-responsible for the up-right and preservation of this world. Allāh says that He is one who produced people from the earth and settled them there.³⁴

Islām does not only promote tolerance as one of the conditions or a way of achieving peace in human society in general but also encourages good behaviour and respect for others. It was reported that Qutaylah bint ‘Uza, mother of Asmā’ bint Abi Bakr came to visit her daughter and brought some gifts for her, while she was still an idolatress. Asmā’ refused to accept her mother’s gifts and even denied her to enter into her house. She later came to Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w), told him the scenario and asked, “Should I treat her with good relations?” The Prophet answered, “Yes, keep relation with your mother.”³⁵

²⁸ Ibid, Romans 1:7. see also, 1Corinthians 1:3, 2 Corinthians 1:2, Ephesians 1:2, Galatians 1:3, Philippians 1:2, Colossians 1:2, 1 Thessalonians 1:1, 2 Thessalonians 1:2, 1 Timothy 1:2, 2 Timothy 1:2, and Titus 1:4,

²⁹ *Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*

³⁰ *Holy Bible*, Matthew 10:12-13.

³¹ Ibid, Matthew 5:9.

³² Jerry Falwell, Executive Editor. *Liberty Bible Commentary*, Executive Editor (Virginia: The Old-Time Gospel Hour) 2:19.

³³ *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*.

³⁴ Al-Qur’ān, Surah Al-Hūd (11) :61.

³⁵ Ibn Kathīr, 9:596

He then ordered her to accept the gifts and grant her mother entrance into her house.³⁶ Al-Qur'ān says:

Allāh forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for (your) faith, nor drive you out of your homes from dealing kindly and justly with them: for Allah loveth those who are just.³⁷

It is Allāh's wisdom that there should be diversities in religion, language, race, culture, civilization and so on, but these variations should not serve or stand as evidences or reasons for violence, aggression or hostility. Rather, they should be viewed as reasons for establishment of tolerance. It is apparent from the Qur'ān that among the wisdoms of the diversities are to know one another, to learn from one another, to help one another and so on and so forth. Al-Qur'ān says: And if your Lord had so willed, He could surely have made mankind one Ummah [nation or community (following one religion only i.e. Islām)], but they will not cease to disagree³⁸

Also: O Mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honourable of you with Allāh is that (believer) who has At-Taḳwa [i.e. one of the Muttaḳun (pious - see V.2:2)]. Verily, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware³⁹

Zakzūk articulates that knowing one another is the first step towards cooperation in any fields of human endeavours. He says, to achieve the goal or target, which is peace, there must be understanding, exchange of thoughts and feelings. Language is a tool, which people use to transport their ideas and feelings; therefore, understanding through the language is a way of reaching one another and a medium to exchange thoughts, which leads to exchange of benefits among societies.⁴⁰

Furthermore, tolerance can be interpreted as acceptance of religious diversity. There is no compulsion, no force in religion.⁴¹ Their religion is theirs our religion is ours.⁴² Muslims are not encouraged to force others to accept Islām, it is even forbidden. If Allāh wants everybody on earth to be Muslims, it takes Him no time to do so, He only needs to say be (*kun*) and everybody will be (*fayakun*). Allāh says "And had your Lord willed,

those on earth would have believed, all of them together. So, will you (O Muhammad) then compel mankind, until they become believers."⁴³ Yusuf Ali in his comment on this verse says that if it had been Allāh's plan or will not to grant the limited will that He has granted to man, He (Allāh) could have made all humankind the same. All would have believed in one religion, one faith (Islām) but if that had been so, it would not have reflected any importance on them. He continues, saying that, Man has been gifted with different kind of faculties and capacities to make use of, and bring himself into peace with Allāh's will. However, having faith is a moral achievement and denying it is a sin. Men of Faith should be patient and tolerate others, they should be aware of forcing others to comply with their faith or religion by any means whether by physical compulsion, social pressure, or "inducement held out by wealth or position".⁴⁴

Moreover, Alhabshi and Othman opine that compulsion is not compatible with religion due to many reasons. First, religion depends upon faith and will, both would have no value if religion is induced by compulsion. Second, there is no ambiguity in the true and error, Allāh in His own mercy had made everything clear, therefore, there should not be any doubt in any person's good will as to the fundamental of faith. Third, Allāh's mercy and protection are immense and continuous; His plan is always leading human being from darkest of darkness to the clearest of light.⁴⁵

Tolerance as an essential condition for peaceful co-existence also can be shown by giving room to dialogue. Dialogue is much needed in the present time at individual and group levels, as well as at local, national and international levels. Islām encourages dialogue with other religions and culture and even promotes it in a very fantastic way. It urges to preach Islām with wisdom. Our preaching can come through dialogue and by supporting our arguments with strong and solid evidences, illustrations from what is known to unknown so that they can comprehend unknown from what they knew. Our argument should not be acrimonious but courteous. Almighty Allāh says in the holy Qur'ān:

³⁶ Ibid, 597.

³⁷ Al-Qur'ān, Sūrah Al-Mumtahanah (60) :8.

³⁸ Ibid, Sūrah Hūd (11) :118.

³⁹ Ibid, Sūrah Al-Hujrat (49):13.

⁴⁰ Muhammad Hamdi Zakzūk, Al-Tasahmuh fil-Islām in *Al-Tashamuh fi al-fikr al-Islamiy*, ed. Jahfar Abd salam (Cairo, Al-markaz al-'ilmi lltibaa' wal - computer 2005):13.

⁴¹ Al-Qur'ān, Sūrah Al-Baqarah(2):256.

⁴² Ibid, Sūrah Al-Kafirūn (109):6

⁴³ Ibid, Sūrah Yūnus (10):99

⁴⁴ Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'ān, Text, Translation and Commentary* (Maryland: Amana Corporation, 1989), 505.

⁴⁵ Syed Othman Alhabshi and Faisal Haji Othman, "Principle of Tolerance in Islām and the Historical practices" in *Islam and Tolerance*, ed. Syed Othman Alhabshi and Nik Mustapha Nik Hassan. (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (IKIM),1996), 51.

Invite (mankind, O Muhammad) to the Way of your Lord (i.e. Islam) with wisdom (i.e. with the Divine Inspiration and the Qur'ān) and fair preaching, and argue with them in a way that is better. Truly, your Lord knows best who has gone astray from His Path, and He is the Best Aware of those who are guided.⁴⁶

Through engagement in dialogues with wisdom, strong reasons and perfect illustrations without emotions, there can be developments. Common ground between the religions can be identified. In other words, we can get to know more about one another through dialogue and from there we can realize our commonalities as well as our differences. Al-Qur'ān says: Say (O Muhammad): "O people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians): Come to a word that is just between us and you, that we worship none but Allāh, and that we associate no partners with Him, and that none of us shall take others as lords besides Allāh. Then, if they turn away, say: "Bear witness that we are Muslims."⁴⁷

Meanwhile, Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) himself was a tolerant person whom his deeds are emulated by his companions and to be emulated by Muslims of the latter days. When he migrated to Medina, he encouraged tolerance, co-existence and solidarity among people of Medina, which composed of Jews, Muslims, Christians and others. The constitution drawn granted freedom of religion to non-Muslims, justice and equality for all. He attended people of book's banquets, gazed their occasions, visited their patients and so on.

Abubakr, the first caliph, emulated the Prophet and reaffirmed the tolerance and concessions that Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) bestowed on the Christians of Najran. Their churches and houses were not demolished or razed. Their priest were not molested likewise their followers were not persecuted because of their faith.⁴⁸ He instructed Khālīd bin Walīd, the commander of the army, when he was dispatched for war to observe tolerance and respect others religions by preserving their churches and palaces and to allow them to practice or display cross on their festivals.⁴⁹

Umar Ibn Khatāb also laid great example of tolerance towards the non-Muslims. When the Jerusalem was conquered by Muslims, Umar went there and entered a church. When it was the time to pray, he went out

of the church and observed his prayer nearby. He was then asked for the reason of his action, to which he replied that, if he had observed his prayer inside the church, it might be evidence for Muslims later on to convert churches into mosques. He also allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem in 638 C.E. after the Romans expelled them, sacked the city, and totally banned by the Christians who succeeded the Romans as imperial power.⁵⁰

In the same vein, when Salāhuddīn al-Ayūbi regained Jerusalem from the Christians crusaders (who then expelled and massacred the Jews) in 1187 C.E. granted both Christian and Jews their churches and synagogues and guaranteed them of protection over those properties. In Spain, Muslim ruled for eight centuries before it declined, during that time all the religious adherents were living in peace, tranquility and harmony, Muslims leaders did not discriminate or oppress the non-Muslims, rather, they showed them tolerance that were thought by Islām.⁵¹ Even though, if it appears that conflict persists, violence is unavoidable, and war is imminent. Islām urges the Muslims to struggle hard seeking for any possible means to allow peace to triumph.

TOLERANCE IN CHRISTIANITY

As Islām calls for tolerance, Christianity also preaches tolerance in order for peace to reign in this world, everyone should invest in the habit of forgiveness, non-retaliation and non-violent resistant, and try to make peace with all cost. Bible says:

You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles.⁵²

The principle of retaliation is common among the law of ancient people and in Judaism in particular, but when Jesus Christ came; he systematically rejected the previous law of an eye for an eye. He persuaded his follower not to insist on their right under the *Lex Talionis*. On many occasions, the offended person may react excessively and his action may cause further enmity among the individuals. However, the second verse does not deny a person from defending his family or his country but discourages personal

⁴⁶ Al-Qur'ān, Sūrah Al-Nahl (16):125.

⁴⁷ Ibid, Sūrah Āl-Imrān (3):64

⁴⁸ Afzal Iqbal, *Diplomacy in early Islam*. (Lahore: Institute of Islamic Culture, 1988):182-3.

⁴⁹ Ahmad Abd Imubdi Ahmad Al-Najmi. Simahat al-islami fi l janib alijtimah' Islām in *Al-Tashamuh fi al-fikr al-islamiy*, ed.Jahfar Abd salam (Cairo: Al-markaz al-'ilmi lltibaa' wal -computer 2005), 42.

⁵⁰ Chandra Muzaffar, "Tolerance in The Malaysian Political Scene" in *Islam and Tolerance*, edi. Syed Othman Alhabashi and Nik Mustapah Nik Hassan.(Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (IKIM),1996),139.

⁵¹ Ibid, 141.

⁵² Bible, Matthew 5:38-41. also Luke 6:29.

vengeance. In other words, Jesus Christ calls for modification of the law the *Lex Talionis*. He suggests that the law should be softened with mercy, charity and forgiveness all of which can be categorized under tolerance.

To be a peacemaker and not a troublemaker, one should not think too high of him/herself. If one has a complaint or criticism, he/she should try to communicate it with humility. We may make peace with one another by being patience with one another, tolerate one another, forgive one another, seek righteousness and justice, try to be in peace with everyone and respect others opinion.

The Bible says:- With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love. Endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling.⁵³

“Lowliness” in the verse means low or humble in mind, that is, humility. It is suggested that Paul uses the word to mean that one should think him/herself as small. Therefore, one should deal with one another or with differences and problems by longsuffering and forbearing. Christianity strongly encourages forgiving one another so as to live in peace. Related verses say:

Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgive you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bind of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.⁵⁴

Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.⁵⁵

For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins⁵⁶

Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful⁵⁷

Love for one’s neighbour(s) is an extension of the tolerance, which both religions advocate. Jesus Christ unequivocally categorizes it as second only to the love of God. The scripture says:

This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself. All

the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.⁵⁸

Also The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.⁵⁹

Do not hate a fellow Israelite in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in their guilt. Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD⁶⁰.

All in all, Christianity preaches peace, it wants its adherents to be peaceful people. Its primary concerns is with having peace with the creator and then with the fellow human beings. It preaches loving one another, doing good to the neighbours and encourages being peacemakers and not troublemakers as well as establishing that peacemakers are the son of God.

WAY FORWARD

(a) Place of worships and religious institutions has tremendous role to play in disseminating the teaching of peace and tolerance to their respective people. (b) It is recommended that the teaching of peace and tolerance from respective religions should be encouraged to be taught through religious studies at schools at all levels. (c) Some leaders of respective religions do not possess adequate knowledge of their faith, there is need for comprehensive understanding of our respective religion and therefore should emulate the examples laid by the respective religions prophets. (d) The leaders should continue propagating the message and emphasis its practice in all their gatherings. (e) The media has a vital role to play by portraying and broadcasting good example of the practice. (f) There should be room for dialogue, so as to foster mutual respect among the adherents of different religions. (g) Issues relating to religion should not be politicized by not only the religious leaders but also by the public office holders.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

After the introduction, the paper traces the concept of peace in Islām, defines it and gives brief linguistic analysis of the Arabic word *sa-li-ma*, which means peace. It also shows that the name of the religion “Islām” and the greeting formula originated from the same root. It also emphasizes that Islām encourages peace, tranquility, constancy and harmony to be prevailed in the society and that whoever surrendered him/herself to Allāh has made peace with him and

⁵³ Ibid, Ephesians 4:2-4.

⁵⁴ Ibid, Colossians 3:13-5.

⁵⁵ Ibid, Romans 12:17-8.

⁵⁶ Ibid, Matthew 6:14-15.

⁵⁷ Ibid, Luke 6:36.

⁵⁸ Ibid, Matthew 22:38-40.

⁵⁹ Ibid, Mark 12:31

⁶⁰ Ibid, Leviticus 19:17-18.

he/she would be received in the home of peace with the word of peace.

The paper moves on to look into the concept from the Christianity viewpoint and presents the Biblical word “shalom” to be an equivalent of Arabic word “salām” both of which connote peace. The study shows that like Islām, Christianity also calls for peace tranquility and harmony. It then digs out the virtue of tolerance and emphasizes that Islām indisputably urges its adherents to cling to it. The paper sites some instances or examples from the history of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) and his successors. Likewise, it exhibits the virtue of tolerance as one of the important virtues, which Jesus Christ proclaimed.

The study finds out that both Islām and Christianity sacred the concept of peace. Both religions unambiguously preach it to their respective adherents. It is understood from the study that tolerance is one of the virtues that both religions admonish their followers to practice. It is then concluded that practicing the concepts and virtues, which the religions propound, is a gateway to the success and progress in our society. Factually, a society cannot progress in the mist of chaos and disorder but in abundance of peace, harmony and tranquility.

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