

Islam and Its Role in Global Inter Religious Dependence

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Abstract: Islam is actually a religion of peace, tolerance and universal brotherhood; it is embodiment of the code of life which Allah (SWT) the Creator and the Lord of the universe has revealed for the guidance of mankind. It is a unique religion in that it has related itself to most of the religions of the world (with particular reference to Judaism and Christianity), it does not deny truth to other religions, but says that later followers adulterated that truth by their own inventions, and that was a reason why Allah (SWT) sent Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) to purify Allah's religion. In fact, down the history, Islam's relation to other religions has been ideational. i.e linking the worldview of Islam, its view of Allah (SWT), of reality, of man of the world and history to the other religions. It is also practical. i.e. providing a modus vivendi for Muslims and adherent of other religions to live and work together, but each group according to the values and precepts of its own faith. Thus, this humble article will apply historical and *Qur'anic* approaches (with reference to Ismail Raji al-Faruqi) to demonstrate homogenous nature of Islam and its tolerance toward other religions, especially, the respect that Islam gives to both Christianity and Judaism.

Keywords: Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Prophet Muhammad and Other religions.

Introduction

Islam is one of Abrahamic faiths which does not deny truth to other religions but says clearly that later followers changed or interpolated that truth by their own inventions and that was why Allah (SWT) sent Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) to purify Allah's religion. Each religion manifests some aspects of the same truth, but the emphasis may differ according to the need of man of that period or age or race. It is important to note that Islam is also the religion of all creations and as it is the most comprehensive manifestation of that truth, it provides a complete way and a perfect equilibrium.

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The second fact about the relation of Islam with other religions is the chronology stated in the *Qur'an*. Islam is in the line of all religions whose prophets belonged to the family of Abraham (with particular reference to Judaism and Christianity). The Judaic tradition that started with Abraham's son Ishaq (Isaac) came to an end with Jesus who was the last prophet in that family tree. Muhammad (SAAS) was the descendant of the other son of Ibrahim (Abraham), Isma'il (Ishmael). Prophet in other lines among the descendants of Adam have been hinted at but, not referred to except Nuh (Noah) as examples in the *Qur'an*. But, as the *Qur'an* clearly states that there is no a single human habitation on the face of this earth where a Prophet has not emerged and where Allah (SWT) has not sent His messenger to guide people, a Muslim can not deny truth to religions not belonging to this tradition. All that he can point out is the adulteration of that truth, the mixing up of the word of Allah (SWT) and the word of man, its non-preservation in its original form. Based on this fact, this article will attempt to evaluate the stand of Islam and its vis-à-vis relation toward other religions especially, Judaism and Christianity.

The Ideational Relation of Islam with Global Religions

Ideational Relation of Islam with Judaism and Christianity

In fact, it is very crucial to remember at this juncture, that Islam as the seal of revealed religions had strongly recognized the existence of the previous revealed religions, with particular reference to Judaism and Christianity. According to al-Faruqi, Islam accords to these two religions special status. First, each of them is the religion of Allah. Their founders on earth, Abraham Moses, David, Jesus are the prophet of Allah.¹ This implies that all messengers of Allah are chosen by Allah to convey His message to their respective people. This follows that their revelations the Torah, the Psalms, the Gospel and the *Qur'an* are from Allah (SWT). Therefore, to believe in these prophets, in the revelations they have brought, is integral to the very faith of Islam. To disbelieve in them- nay, to discriminate between them- is apostasy. This fact is clear in the holy *Qur'an* when Allah (SWT) instructed Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) to call people of the book mainly Christians and Jews to the table of dialogue in order to share the common goal of monotheism.

Say, O people of the Scripture, comes to an agreement between us and you: that we shall worship none but Allah, and that we shall ascribe no partner unto Him, and that none of us shall take others for lords besides Allah. And

¹ Al-Faruqi, (1998) *Islam and Other Faiths*, The Islamic Foundation and IIIT, USA, p. 73.

if they turn away, then say: Bear witness that we are they who have surrendered unto Him.²

As a matter of fact, one may wonder why dialogue? Is there dialogue in the *Qur'an*? The answer of this question will require deep evaluation of the word dialogue in the holy *Qur'an*.

In fact, the closest word for dialogue in the *Qur'an* is Yuhawir (*Qur'an*, 18: 34, 18: 37, 58: 1), which denotes a conversation between two individuals or groups of people. For instance:

His companion asked him during an argument (Yuhawiru [argument, conversation]): Do you deny Him Who created you...³

Hence, the following verses of *Qur'an* do encourage Muslims to engage with non-Muslims, (especially Jews and Christians) in interreligious dialogue.

Say, O people of the Scripture, come to an agreement between us and you: that we shall worship none but Allah, and that we shall ascribe no partner unto Him, and that none of us shall take others for lords besides Allah. And if they turn away, then say: Bear witness that we are they who have surrendered unto Him.⁴

Furthermore, *Qur'an* stated that:

Say, 'O followers of the bible! You have no valid ground for your beliefs unless you truly observe the Torah and the Gospel, and all that has been bestowed from on high upon you by your sustainer.⁵

Indeed, *Qur'an* also orders Muslims to be polite to the followers of the said religion, on the ground that:

There is no compulsion in religion.⁶

Lastly, with regard to interreligious dialogue, Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) said:

Souls are like recruited troops. Those who get to know one another will develop mutual understanding, and those who are strangers to each other are

² Qur'an, 3: 64.

³ Qur'an, 18: 37.

⁴ Qur'an, 3: 64.

⁵ Qur'an, 6: 68.

⁶ Qur'an, 2: 256.

more likely to dispute “In another Hadith narrated by Bukhari, Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) as the last of the Prophets, used to say with all sense of Humility: My example and that of Prophets before me, is that of a man who built and completed a beautiful house, except for a single brick in a corner. People went round and admired it but said, should not that brick put in? I am that brick and I am the seal of the Prophets.⁷

The above verses and Hadith indicate that Islam has a special regard and respect toward other religions and their adherents, with particular reference to Christianity and Judaism that based on true monotheism. Though some may wonder about the link between the above Hadiths and interfaith dialogue! The fact remains that, the first Hadith indicates that, whenever the dialogue occurs among various religious group for the sake of mutual beneficial relationship, that dialogue is likely to produce a very fruitful result. Likewise, the link of second Hadith to interfaith dialogue is that, the Prophet Muhammad (the seal of all Prophets of Allah) and other Prophets especially Isa (Jesus) and Musa (Moses) call for monotheism and unity of Allah (al-tawhid). Moreover, Islam is the seal of all religions.

In short, Islam has given to both Christianity and Judaism the maximum respect that can never be given to another religion, it regards them as its own, and it has also recognized their Prophets, their scriptures and teachings as far as true monotheism is concerned. Moreover, theologically speaking, Islam declared its lord and lord of Jews and Christians as One and same.

Our Lord and your Lord is indeed Allah, the One and Only Allah.⁸

It follows from this that, in Islam there is no superiority complex, and there is no difference between white and black, yellow and red, every human being either Muslim, Christian, Jew or adherents of other religions, are products of Adam and Eve, who evolved from Clay. This homogeneity is highly supported by *Qur'an* when Allah (SWT) said:

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 Allah is that (believer) who has At-Taqwa Verily, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware.⁹

⁷ A'li Abdul Hamid Balatji, *Authentic Sayings of Prophet Muhammad (SAAS)*, (Damascus: Darul Khair, 1991).

⁸ Qur'an, 29: 46; Qur'an, 42: 15.

⁹ Qur'an, 49: 13.

Hence, if differences or disputes persist, Islam considered that to be of no result. Rather, such differences in the view of Islam is substantial, they can be tackle amicably through good knowledge, goodwill and wisdom.

Ideational Relation of Islam with Other Religions

Concerning Islam's beautiful relation with other faiths, al-Faruqi observed the following:

Islam has related itself, equally to all other religions, whether recognized, historical or otherwise. Indeed, even religionists- whether their color - Islam has related itself to them in constructive manner. Its purpose being to rehabilitate them as integral members of society.¹⁰

In fact, Islam respects all religions as long as the correct monotheism and unity of Allah (SWT) is concerned. It is only religion that did not base its tenets on cast system or social hierarchy, its teaching strongly depends on equality of all mankind. It follows from this that there is neither superiority nor inferiority complex in Islam, nor papacy or Brahmanism can be found in its tenets. Islam rather declares equality of all human beings of all descents, races and colors regardless of their religious diversities.

This unique principle had been inherited by Islam from its sacred book of *Qur'an* and which emphatically demonstrated equality among descendants of Adam. The above Ayah from surah Hujurat, 43: 13 is a proof of principle of this equality of all mankind in Islam. Above all, this relation of Islam with other religions proved its humanism.

In short, it is easy to say that, Islam is homogenous religion, it does not deny truth to other religions either revealed or non-revealed. However, it just asserts that the later followers adulterated that truth by their own inventions which cause the emergence of Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) to purify Allah's religion. Each religion manifests some aspects of the same truth but the emphasis may differ according to the need of man in space and time.

Hence, there is no doubt that Islam is religion of all creations of Allah (SWT) and that is the most comprehensive manifestation of that truth and it provides a complete way of life. This fact perhaps is in line with observation of al-Faruqi who argues that Islam regards every mankind as adherent of Ur Religion (Din al-fitrah).¹¹ where every man

¹⁰ Ismail R. al-Faruqi, (1998) *Islam and other Faiths*, The Islamic Foundation and IIIT. U. S. A. p. 81.

¹¹ Lift up your face toward the religion. Like a *hanif*. That is the natural religion with which Allah has endowed all men at their creation. No exception or change befalls Allah's (SWT) creation (Qur'an, 30: 30).

is innately born with what God has implanted in human nature, namely the recognition of His transcendence, unity, holiness and ultimate goodness which is prior to any tradition. Thus, the role of Islam in inter-religious dependence and its ideational relation with other religions indicates Islam's humanism, and there is no religion preserved the shrines of another in its own based, and indeed enable them to prosper in its midst, throughout the history of man except Islam.

Having explored the ideational relation of Islam with vis-a-vis Judaism and Christianity and its conducive relation with other religions, we ought to examine the practical relation of Islam with other faiths. I.e., what is modus operandi of Islam with other religions? and how did Islam amicably deal with meta religion down the history?.

The Practical Relation of Islam with Global Religions

Historically speaking, it is undeniable fact that Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) as indigene of Makkah experienced calamity, hardship, prosecution and hostility during his thirteen years period of Islamic dawah in his home town of Makkah. The polytheist unbelievers of Makkah had attempted various means to terminate monotheistic religion conveyed by Muhammad (SAAS) and his followers, whom they regarded as menace and threat not only to their religion, but also to their respected idols and leadership that recognized by various tribes in Makkah and its outskirt.¹² As such, the messenger of Allah (SWT) and his followers were tortured, beaten, prosecuted and brutally punished. Consequently, the Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) realized that his lovely city of Makkah is no longer conducive place to achieve his da'wah mission, nor suitable place to reside in, he decided to migrate with his loyal followers to *Yathrib*, where they were warmly welcomed by various religious dwellers of the city (*Yathrib*). With his arrival, a new era dawned. Conscious of this fact, the Muslim dated their new era from this year of the migration commonly called (the Hijrah) and which began on June 16th, A.C. 622. Indeed, the da'wah mission of Prophet (SAAS) that was rejected by *Makkan* Polytheists in *Makkan*, was eventually achieved in *Yathrib* within the period of ten years. This decade was marked by successful practical relation of Islam with other religious communities such as Jews, Christians, and adherents of other religions.

¹² Daniel, W. (2009) A New Introduction to Islam, John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., Publication, London.

The practical Relation of Islam with Judaism and Christianity

Having achieved the building of Mosque and establishing fraternity and brotherhood between migrants and the dwellers of *Madinah* (*Muhajirin* and *Ansar*), the Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) worked out and proclaimed the constitution of the first Islamic state. This event according to Faruqi was of capital importance for the relation of Islam to the other religions, and of non-Muslims to Muslims of all times and places.¹³

The Jewish *Ummah*

Alongside this *Ummah* of Muslims stands another *Ummah* of the Jews. Their old tribalist loyalties to the Arab *Aws* and *Khazraj* tribes said Faruqi, were to be supplanted by the bond of Judaism.¹⁴ Instead of their citizenship being a function of their clientship to this or that Arab tribe, it was hence to be a function of their Jewishness. Perhaps, this is what we called autonomous state nowadays, where certain race or tribe are given freedom of self-rule under the federal government that recognized their existence, culture, belief, norm and value. Indeed, this status of Jews in the newly founded state of *Madinah*, demonstrated the tolerance of Islam and its admiration of pluralism and peaceful coexistence. As such, the life of Jews was structured around Jewish institution and governed by Tanakh, or Torah. All this was possible because of one Islamic principle on which it all rested, namely, the recognition of the Torah as revelation of God. This fact is clearly proven by *Qur'an* when Allah (SWT) said:

Verily, We did send down the Taurat (Torah) [to Musa (Moses)], therein was guidance and light, by which the Prophets, who submitted themselves to Allah's Will, judged the Jews. And the rabbis and the priests too judged the Jews by the Taurat (Torah) after those Prophets for to them was entrusted the protection of Allah's Book, and they were witnesses thereto. Therefore, fear not men but fear Me (O Jews) and sell not My Verses for a miserable price. And whosoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed, such are the Kafirun (i.e. disbelievers - of a lesser degree as they do not act on Allah's Laws).¹⁵

¹³ Al Faruqi, *Islam and other Faiths*, p. 85.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 88.

¹⁵ *Qur'an*, Al- Maidah (The Table Spread with Food) 5: 44.

Similarly, Islam recognizes Judaism in its pure form as one of revealed religion and contains some truth like its own. This fact was also attested and proclaimed by *Qur'an* when Allah (SWT) said:

Say (O Muhammad): O people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians)! Exceed not the limits in your religion (by believing in something) other than the truth, and do not follow the vain desires of people who went astray in times gone by, and who misled many, and strayed (themselves) from the Right Path.¹⁶

Thus, Islam considers Judaism, its scripture and its Prophet, as its own as far as the same truth is concern, and as long as true monotheism is also concerned. Hence, it is not true that Islam is hegemonous religion, but rather it is homogenous religion.

Musa (Moses) and Judaism in the *Qur'an*

There is no doubt that Islam has special regard and respect toward Judaism and Moses. In Islam, Judaism in its pure form has no contradiction with religion of God, its Prophet Moses is also Prophet of Allah (SWT), as he called his people from the early beginning to the unity of God which undoubtedly similar to the message of Islam. The following are some *Qur'anic* verses that confirm the pure Judaism and Moses:

We [Allah] gave the Book [Torah] to Moses (never doubt that you will meet him) and made it a guide for the Israelites. And when they grew steadfast and firmly believed in Our revelations, We appointed leaders from among them who gave guidance at Our bidding. On the Day of Resurrection your Lord will resolve their differences for them.¹⁷

In another Chapter of *Qur'an*, Allah (SWT) stated that:

We [Allah] gave the Book [Torah] to the Israelites and bestowed on them wisdom and Prophethood. We provided them with wholesome things and exalted them above the nations.¹⁸

Furthermore, *Qur'an* has demonstrated a special honor and favor that Allah (SWT) has bestowed upon Jews (Children of Israel).

¹⁶ Ibid, verse 77.

¹⁷ Qur'an, 32: 23.

¹⁸ Qur'an, 45: 16.

O Children of Israel! call to mind the (special) favour which I bestowed upon you, and fulfil your covenant with Me as I fulfil My Covenant with you, and fear none but Me.¹⁹

O Children of Israel! call to mind the (special) favor which I bestowed upon you, and that I preferred you to all other nations.²⁰

Similarly, in Chapter 5 of the *Qur'an* this special favor has been repeated to prove the tolerance of Islam and its homogeneity toward Judaism. According to this verse:

Bear in mind the words of Moses to his people [the Children of Israel]. He said: Remember, my people, the favor which God has bestowed upon you. He [Allah] has raised up Prophets among you, made you kings, and given you that [the Torah and the Land of Israel] which He has given to no other nation. Enter, my people, the holy land [of Israel] which God has assigned for you. Do not turn back, and thus lose all.²¹

In short, from the above *Qur'anic* quotations, it is obvious how Islam does stand toward Judaism and their Prophet (Moses). As far as Islamic perspective is concerned, there is no doubt that Pure Judaism can not be in contradiction with the message of Islam, nor original Torah is opposing the holy *Qur'an*, on the ground that these revelations and Prophets are all from Allah (SWT).

A. The Christian *Ummah*

With regard to practical relation of Islam with Christian especially, in new established Islamic state of Madinah, historically, it is fortunate that, shortly after the conquest of Makkah by Muslim forces in 8 AH/630 CE, the Christians of *Najran* in Yaman sent a delegation of chieftains to meet the Prophet in Madinah. Their purpose was to clarify their position vis-à-vis the Islamic state, and that of the state vis-à-vis them.²²

In fact, there is no doubt that opening of *Makkah* and its conquest by Muslims was a big blessing. There is a widespread proverb which states that, every disappointment may be a blessing. This proverb was justified in year 6 AH, when the Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) was compelled by unbelievers of Makkah to sign a treaty of *Hudybiyyah*, and that particular treaty was opposed by some *Sahabah* or companions,

¹⁹ Qur'an, 2: 40.

²⁰ Ibid, 2: 47.

²¹ Qur'an, 5: 20.

²² al-Faruqi, Islam and Other Faiths. p. 88.

who perceived it as humiliation to Islam. However, with wisdom and virtue of Prophet, he accepted the treaty and managed to convince furious *Sahabah*. Two years later, it is now clear to his companions that every disappointment is a blessing; because, the treaty paves the way for the opening of *Makkah* which occurred in 8 AH. This fact is stated in *Qur'an*, when Allah (SWT) said:

Indeed Allah shall fulfill the true vision which He showed to His Messenger [i.e. the Prophet saw a dream that he has entered *Makkah* along with his companions, having their (head) hair shaved and cut short] in very truth. Certainly, you shall enter Al-Masjid-al-Haram; if Allah wills, secure, (some) having your heads shaved, and (some) having your head hair cut short, having no fear. He knew what you knew not, and He granted besides that a near victory.²³

Thus, the opening of *Makkah* and its conquest by Muslims was a big blessing and gift by Allah (SWT); because it had made the Islamic state of *Madinah* a power to reckon with in the region. The delegates of Christian were the guests of the Prophet to clarify their position and status in the new state, and the Prophet received them in his house and entertain them in his mosque. He explained Islam to them and called upon them to convert to his faith and cause. Some of them did; and instantly became members of the Muslim *Ummah*. Others did not. They however, chose to remain Christian, and join Islamic state as Christians. Although they were reluctant to convert to Islam, they did not lose their dignity and protégé under the Islamic state. The Prophet constitutes them a Christian *Ummah*, alongside the Jewish and Muslim *Ummah*, within the Islamic State.

This attitude of Prophet toward the Christian shows the tolerance of Islam and its vis-à-vis peaceful coexistence. Indeed, for the greater part of the century the majority of the citizens of the Islamic state were Christians enjoying respect, liberty and a new dignity which they had not enjoyed under either Christian Rome or Byzantium. As such, the criticism of some orientalist or Western writers against Islam and its spreading by sword is a big false, baseless and out of reality. And it is not accurate that Muslims are intolerant throughout the Islamic History.

Esa (Jesus) in the *Qur'an*

Indeed, the *Qur'an*, the last of the Devine Books, revealed by the Creator to the last of the messengers- Muhammad (SAAS), is a source of knowledge about Esa and

²³ Qur'an, 48: 27.

Christianity at large, which is not generally known to most Christians. The *Qur'an* not only leads us toward a better understanding of who Esa was, but also, through that understanding, it increases our respect and love for him. The last Revelation, coming as it does some six hundred years after Jesus's birth, tells what is important for us to know about his life and teachings, and places his role as Prophet in the vast perspective that the Unitarians realized lay behind prophecy itself. Hence, *Qur'an* gives that perspective which no other references (including Torah and Bible) can provide. Here are some *Qur'anic* verses on Christianity and Jesus, which can demonstrate the relation and tolerance of Islam with other religions.

The first mention of Esa is made very early in the *Qur'an*:

And truly We gave to Moses the Books and We caused a train of messengers to follow after him, and We gave to Jesus, son of Mary, clear proofs and we supported him with the pure spirit*.²⁴

The following passage reminds us of the line of messengers, of which Esa was a part.

After mentioning Abraham, it continues:

And We bestowed upon him Ishaque (Isaac) and Ya'qub (Jacob), each of them We guided, and before him, We guided Nuh (Noah), and among his progeny Dawud (David), Sulaiman (Solomon), Ayub (Job), Yusuf (Joseph), Musa (Moses), and Harun (Aaron). Thus do We reward the good-doers. And Zakariya (Zachariya), and Yahya (John) and 'Iesa (Jesus) and Iliyas (Elias), each one of them was of the righteous. And Isma'il (Ishmael) and Al-Yas'a (Elisha), and Yunus (Jonah) and Lout (Lot), and each one of them We preferred above the 'Alamin (mankind and jinns) (of their times).²⁵

And Messengers We have mentioned to you before, and Messengers We have not mentioned to you, and to Musa (Moses) Allah spoke directly.²⁶

In fact, the Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) said that Jesus was one of one hundred and twenty-four thousand Prophets, between whom there is no cause for conflict or argument. Allah (SWT) tells His messenger in one passage of *Qur'an*:

* The pure spirit refers to the Angel Gabriel.

²⁴ Qur'an, 2: 87.

²⁵ Qur'an, 6: 84-86.

²⁶ Qur'an, 4: 164.

Say (O Muhammad): We believe in Allah and in what has been sent down to us, and what was sent down to Ibrahim (Abraham), Isma'il (Ishmael), Ishaque (Isaac), Ya'qub (Jacob) and Al-Asbat [the twelve sons of Ya'qub (Jacob)] and what was given to Musa (Moses), 'Iesa (Jesus) and the Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between one another among them and to Him (Allah) we have submitted (in Islam).²⁷

It follows from this, that all the Prophets are well aware that they have been sent by Allah (SWT) for the same purpose and with the same message:

And (remember) when we took from the Prophets their covenant, and from you (O Muhammad), and from Nuh (Noah), Ibrahim (Abraham), Musa (Moses), and 'Iesa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary). We took from them a strong covenant". That He may ask the truthfult (Allah's Messengers and His Prophets) about their truth (i.e. the conveyance of Allah's Message that which they were charged with). And He has prepared for the disbelievers a painful torment (Hell-fire).²⁸

In Another chapter of the *Qur'an*, it is mentioned that

O (you) Messengers! Eat of the Taiyibat [all kinds of Halal (legal) foods which Allah has made legal (meat of slaughtered eatable animals, milk products, fats, vegetables, fruits, etc.)], and do righteous deeds. Verily! I am Well-Acquainted with what you do. And verily! This religion (of Islamic Monotheism) is one religion, and I am your Lord, so keep your duty to Me.²⁹

In surah Shuara, Allah (SWT) said:

He (Allah) has ordained for you the same religion (Islam) which He ordained for Nuh (Noah), and that which We have inspired in you (O Muhammad), and that which We ordained for Ibrahim (Abraham), Musa (Moses) and 'Iesa (Jesus) saying you should establish religion (i.e. to do what it orders you to do practically), and make no divisions in it (religion) (i.e. various sects in religion).³⁰

Thus, the picture which unfolds is not that of some remarkable man who appeared on earth as an isolated event in an otherwise chaotic world, but of a messenger who, like

²⁷ Qur'an, 3: 84.

²⁸ Qur'an, 33: 7-8

²⁹ Qur'an, 23: 51-52.

³⁰ Qur'an, 42: 13.

all the other messengers, was sent for his time and his age, a part of the ordered unfolding of the universe:

In the Chapter 5, verse 46, Allah (SWT) said:

And in their footsteps, We sent 'Iesa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary) , confirming the Taurat (Torah) that had come before him, and We gave him the Injeel (Gospel), in which was guidance and light and confirmation of the Taurat (Torah) that had come before it, a guidance and an admonition for Al-Muttaqun.³¹

And furthermore, a time which Esa was well aware, had limits; a time which was bounded by the time before him, and by the time after him. *Qur'an*, has therefore, narrated that good news of emergence of Prophet Muhammad (SAAS) in surah 61 verse 6:

And (remember) when 'Iesa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), said: O Children of Israel! I am the Messenger of Allah unto you confirming the Taurat [(Torah) which came] before me, and giving glad tidings of a Messenger to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmed. But when he (Ahmed i.e. Muhammad) came to them with clear proofs, they said: This is plain magic.³²

In general, the above verses indicate the strong relation among the Prophets and similarity of their messages which have something to do with monotheism and unity of God. Similarly, they had warn their respective followers of danger of polytheism and associating something with Allah (SWT). Thus, neither Esa nor Musa preached trinity or polytheism.

Above all, Esa's conception and birth are unequivocal recorded by the *Qur'an* in great detail. It would be illuminating to begin with his mother's birth and upbringing, for it helps us to see how she was made ready by Allah (SWT) to be the mother of Esa, and that she was chosen by Him.

Remember when the wife of 'Imran said:

O my Lord! I have vowed to You what (the child that) is in my womb to be dedicated for Your services (free from all worldly work; to serve Your Place of worship), so accept this, from me. Verily, You are the All-Hearer, the All-Knowing. Then when she delivered her [child Maryam (Mary)], she said: O

³¹ Qur'an, 5: 46.

³² Qur'an, 61: 6.

my Lord! I have delivered a female child, - and Allah knew better what she delivered, - And the male is not like the female, and I have named her Maryam (Mary), and I seek refuge with You (Allah) for her and for her offspring from Shaitan (Satan), the outcast. So her Lord (Allah) accepted her with goodly acceptance. He made her grow in a good manner and put her under the care of Zakariya (Zachariya). Every time he entered Al-Mihrab to (visit) her, he found her supplied with sustenance. He said: O Maryam (Mary)! From where have you got this? She said, This is from Allah. Verily, Allah provides sustenance to whom He wills, without limit. At that time Zakariya (Zachariya) invoked his Lord, saying: O my Lord! Grant me from You, a good offspring. You are indeed the All-Hearer of invocation. Then the angels called him, while he was standing in prayer in Al-Mihrab (a praying place or a private room), (saying): Allah gives you glad tidings of Yahya (John), confirming (believing in) the Word from Allah [i.e. the creation of 'Iesa (Jesus), the Word from Allah (Be! - and he was!)], noble, keeping away from sexual relations with women, a Prophet, from among the righteous. He said: O my Lord! How can I have a son when I am very old, and my wife is barren? Allah said: Thus Allah does what He wills. He said: O my Lord! Make a sign for me. Allah said: Your sign is that you shall not speak to mankind for three days except with signals. And remember your Lord much (by praising Him again and again), and glorify (Him) in the afternoon and in the morning.³³

The above Ayahs which emphasize on miraculous birth of Maryam (mother of Esa) indicates omnipotence and power of Allah (SWT). Maryam was accepted by Allah (SWT), and was brought up in a good manner after she was put under the care of Zakariya (Zachary). Through her devotion and righteous upbringing and the prayer from her mother, Mary became the best woman to ever live. Thus, Islam has never underestimated Christianity and Esa, but it rather considered it one of revealed religion as long as true monotheism is concerned, and it views Esa as one of the Prophet of Islam. This indicates complete tolerance of Islam toward other religion.

The Practical Relation of Islam with Other Religions

Ummah of Other Religions

Persia's incursion into Arabia had left behind it some Persian and some Arab converts to the Zoroastrian faith. A large number of these lived in the buffer desert zone

³³ Qur'an, 3: 35-41.

between Persia and Byzantium, and in Shatt al-Arab.³⁴ Notably, among the Persian Zoroastrians in Arabia was Salman al-Farisi, who converted to Islam before the Hijrah and become one of the illustrious companions of the Prophet (SAAS). According to some traditions, it was the Prophet himself (who, in the “Year of Delegations” (8-9/630-631), the year that saw the tribes and regions of Arabia sending delegations to *Madinah* to pledge their fealty to the Islamic state), recognized the Zoroastrians as another *Ummah* within the Islamic state. Very soon afterward, the Islamic state conquered Persia and included all its millions within its citizenry. Those who converted to Islam joined the *Ummah* of Muslims, and the millions of others who chose to remain Zoroastrian were accorded the same privileges and duties accorded by the constitution to the Jews and Christians.³⁵ The Prophet had already extended their application to the Christians eight years after the constitution was enacted. They were extended to apply to the Zoroastrians in 14/636, following the conquest of Persia by the Prophet’s companions, if not sooner by the Prophet himself.

Following the conquest of India by Muhammad bin Qasim in 91/711, the Muslims faced new religions that they had never known before, Buddhism and Hinduism.³⁶ Both religions co-existed in Sind and the Punjab, the regions conquered by Muslims and joined to the Islamic state. Muhammad bin Qasim sought instruction from the caliph in Damascus on how to treat Hindus and Buddhists. They appeared to worship idols, and their doctrines were at the farthest remove from Islam. Their founders were unheard of by Muslims. The caliph called a council of *ulama*’ and asked them to render judgment on the basis of the governor’s report. The judgment was that as long as Hindus and Buddhists did not fight the Islamic state, as long as they paid the *jizyah* or tax due, they must be free to worship their gods as they please, to maintain their temples, and to determine their lives by the precepts of their faith. Thus, the same status as that of the Jews and Christians was accorded to them. Evidently, far from being a national state, the Islamic polity is a world order in which numerous religious communities, national or transnational, co-exist in peace.³⁷ The universal Pax Islamica recognizes the legitimacy of every religious community, and grants it the right to order its life in accordance with its own religious genius. It is superior to the United Nations because, instead of national sovereignty as the principle of membership, it has taken the principle of religious identity. Its constitution is divine

³⁴ al-Faruqi, *Islam and Other Faiths*, p. 89.

³⁵ Historical Atlas of the Religions of the World (1974), The Macmillan Co., p. 3-34.

³⁶ al-Faruqi, *Islam and Other Faiths*, p. 90.

³⁷ Thomas Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam* (1961), Ashraf Publication, Lahore, p. 71.

law, valid for all, and may be invoked in any Muslim court by anyone, be he a simple Muslim or non-Muslim individual or the chief of the largest religious community.

Conclusion

Islamic ideology is not a mere philosophical or a common system but is a revolutionary doctrine which believes in the reformation of the humanity according to the way which it has ordained for the whole humanity. It is a perfect religion and is the completion of the Creator's favor upon man as far as the regulation of his life is concerned, originated from the word of Allah (SWT) which stated that: "This day I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favors upon you and have chosen for you Al-Islam as your religion"

As such, Islam's potential contribution to global inter-religious dependence is very obvious and clear, it has 1400 years of experience in interfaith dialogue between the various ethnics and religious communities, and it demonstrates its full respect to Judaism and Christianity in their pure form, which it considered as part of revealed faiths. It relates its Prophet to their Prophet and its revelation to their revelation as far as same truth is concerned. Indeed, the relation that Islam built with these two revealed religions has been extended to other religions on the basis of common origin in Allah (SWT) and on the ground that the truth can be found in other religions as well. With that attitude of Islam, it managed to create a very friendly atmosphere, religious tolerance, *modus vivendi*, peaceful co-existence and *modus operandi* between the adherents of various faiths and beliefs, moreover, it guarantees their cooperation in the constructing of a global Islamic civilization, where humanism, world affirmation and piety remained dominant. This fact is obvious in the holy *Qur'an* when Allah (SWT) said: "Say, O people of the Scripture, comes to an agreement between us and you: that we shall worship none but Allah (SWT), and that we shall ascribe no partner unto Him, and that none of us shall take others for lords besides Allah (SWT). And if they turn away, then say: Bear witness that we are they who have surrendered unto Him".

Appendix

The following articles are the charter of *Madinah*³⁸ which is known according to some historians and observers as the most excellent and comprehensive constitution in human history:

³⁸ This text is taken from A. Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad- A Translation of Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah*, Oxford University Press, 1955; Pp. 231-233.

In the name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful.

1. This is a document from Muhammad the Prophet (governing the relations) between the believers and Muslims of *Quraysh* and *Yathrib*, and those who followed them and joined them and labored with them.
2. They are one community (*Ummah*) to the exclusion of all men.
3. The *Quraysh* emigrants according to their present custom shall pay the blood within their number and shall redeem their prisoners with the kindness and justice common among believers.
- 4-8. Banu ‘Auf according to their present custom shall pay the blood they paid in heathenism; every section shall redeem its prisoners with the kindness and justice common among believers. The Banu Sa‘ida, the Banu ‘l-Harith, and Banu Jusham, and Banu al-Najjar likewise.
- 9-11. Banu ‘Amr bin ‘Auf, Banu al-Nabit and Banu al-’Aus likewise.
12. a. Believers shall not leave anyone destitute among them by not paying his redemption money or blood in kindness.
12. b. A believer shall not take as an ally the freedman of another Muslim against him.
13. The God-fearing believers shall be against the rebellious or him who seeks to spread injustice, or sin or animosity, or corruption between believers; the hand of every man shall be against him even if he be a son of one of them.
14. A believer shall not slay a believer for the sake of an unbeliever, nor shall he aid an unbeliever against a believer.
15. God’s protection is one, the least of them may give protection to a stranger on their behalf. Believers are friends one to the other to the exclusion of outsiders.
16. To the Jew who follows us belong help and equality. He shall not be wronged nor shall his enemies be aided.
17. The peace of the believers is indivisible. No separate peace shall be made when believers are fighting in the way of God. Conditions must be fair and equitable to all.
18. In every foray a rider must take another behind him.
19. The believers must avenge the blood of one another shed in the way of God.

20. a. The God-fearing believers enjoy the best and most upright guidance.
20. b. No polytheist shall take the property of person of *Quraysh* under his protection nor shall he intervene against a believer.
21. Whoever is convicted of killing a believer without good reason shall be subject to retaliation unless the next of kin is satisfied (with blood-money), and the believers shall be against him as one man, and they are bound to take action against him.
22. It shall not be lawful to a believer who holds by what is in this document and believes in God and the last day to help an evil-doer or to shelter him. The curse of God and His anger on the day of resurrection will be upon him if he does, and neither repentance nor ransom will be received from him.
23. Whenever you differ about a matter it must be referred to God and to Muhammad.
24. The Jews shall contribute to the cost of war so long as they are fighting alongside the believers.
25. The Jews of the Banu 'Auf are one community with the believers (the Jews have their religion and the Muslims have theirs), their freedmen and their persons except those who behave unjustly and sinfully, for they hurt but themselves and their families.
- 26-35. The same applies to the Jews of the Banu al-Najjar, Banu al-Harith, Banu Saiida, Banu Jusham, Banu al-Aus, Banu *Tha'laba*, and the Jafna, a clan of the *Tha'laba* and the Banu al-*Shutayba*. Loyalty is a protection against treachery. The freed men of *Tha'laba* are as themselves. The close friends of the Jews are as themselves.
36. None of them shall go out to war save the permission of Muhammad, but he shall not be prevented from taking revenge for a wound. He who slays a man without warning slays himself and his household, unless it is one who has wronged him, for God will accept that.
37. The Jews must bear their expenses and the Muslims their expenses. Each must help the other against anyone who attacks the people of this document. They must seek mutual advice and consultation, and loyalty is a protection against treachery. A man is not liable for his ally's misdeeds. The wronged must be helped.
38. The Jews must pay with the believers so long as war lasts.

39. *Yathrib* shall be a sanctuary for the people of this document.
40. A stranger under protection shall be as his host doing no harm and committing no crime.
41. A woman shall only be given protection with the consent of her family.
42. If any dispute or controversy likely to cause trouble should arise it must be referred to God and to Muhammad the apostle of God. God accepts what is nearest to piety and goodness in this document.
43. *Quraysh* and their helpers shall not be given protection.
44. The contracting parties are bound to help one another against any attack on *Yathrib*.
45. a. If they are called to make peace and maintain it they must do so; and if they make a similar demand on the Muslims it must be carried out except in the case of a holy war.
45. b. Every one shall have his portion from the side to which he belongs.
46. The Jews of al-Aus, their freedmen and themselves have the same standing with the people of this document in purely loyalty from the people of this document. Loyalty is a protection against treachery. He who acquires ought to acquire it for himself. God approves of this document.
47. This deed will not protect the unjust and the sinner. The man who goes forth to fight and the man who stays at home in the city are safe unless they have been unjust and sinned. God is the protector of the good and God-fearing man and Muhammad is the apostle of God.

Based on above constitution that established by the Prophet Muhammad (SAAS), it is obvious that Islam is a religion of tolerance and harmony. It is also valid every time and in every space of this globe.

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