Building Peace from Islamic Background

by

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Abstract

This article attempts to answer the question regarding the possibility of building peace in an Islamic environment which is known for various teachings and practices that are contrary to peace, such as the teaching of *jihād* in the sense of war against infidels. However, it is not difficult to find in Islam materials of teaching by which one may develop concepts about peace and peacebuilding etc., such as that Islam itself means entering into peace and that Islam teaches justice, enjoins people to goodness and prevents from evil. Indeed, peace is not something that just exists or is built once and will continue forever, but something that must be built and maintained continuously.

Key words: entering peace, theology centered on peace, building peace.

Introduction

If an average Muslim is asked about the truth of other faith, the most common answer is negative. Islam is for any Muslim the only true religion as it is stated very clearly, one may say, in the Qur'an, i.e. in chapter 3, verses 19 and 85.[1] Despite the fact that in some passages this scripture states that the message of God brought by the prophet Muhammad is the same as what was brought and taught by another prophets before him, like Abraham, Moses dan Jesus,[2] Muslim almost unanimously refuse to acknowledge the truth of other religions, even those the teaching of which is very close

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[1] The first verse reads: ... إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ [*Surely the (true) religion with Allah is Islam*], and the second: وَمَنْ يَبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِــرِينَ [*And whoever desires a religion other than Islam, it shall not be accepted from him, and in the hereafter he shall be one of the losers*]. Few Muslims argue that the word *islām* here does not denote the meaning of certain religion—with a capital I—, but a generic meaning of surrender to God—with a minuscule i—that may apply to many religions. Although this rendering is based on solid linguistic and rationally accepted arguments, the mainstream of Islamic tradition denies to take it.
[2] Cf. sūra 2: 285.

to its own teaching, i.e. Judaism and Christianity. The reason is that those religions are corrupted, no longer in their state of what they were before at the life time of their founders. Besides, it is believed that the advent of Islam propagates the validity of other religions.

Another reason is that there are passages in the Qur'an that give meaning in accordance with the refusal of making any acknowledgment. In addition, in the course of history conflicts—sometimes bloody ones—happened between Muslims and Jews as early as the first years following the migration of Muhammad to Medina. The conflicts with Christian political authorities followed the spread of Islam not long after the passing away of the Prophet. In the struggles for freedom—against European colonialism that for Muslims was conceived as coming from Christendom—religious sentiments were used as fuel by Muslims waging wars against the Colonial forces conceived as Christians or people of the Crusades.

The question will be then: Is it—theologically—possible to change this refusal to acknowledgement? To answer this question it is imperative to discuss matters concerning the truth in question, the meaning of this acknowledgment and the stake for which the acknowledgment is put. Or, in order that this discussion comes closer to the subtitle of this paper another question can be put like this: In order to formulate an Islamic theology of peace is it a must for a Muslim to acknowledge the others' truth? In the next lines the writer will be trying to answer these questions. Discussion of how to read the Islamic scriptures is imperative since Muslims always feel obliged to base their understanding of religious duties on them, namely the Qur'an and the Hadith (Collection of what is ascribed to the Prophet Muhammad).

Range of Truth

If related to religion, truth often means the validity a religion in its function as guidance for human being in orienting his/her live toward the right goal. This being something beyond the experience to which human sensing cannot reach, it is only God who can describe the way by following of which one will come to the goal. In Islamic teaching the description can be found in the Qur'an and it is usually stated as the safety

in the hereafter from Hell and being forgiven.[3] Thus, the truth here means a kind of assurance that the religion having it will lead the follower to the after worldly life safety. The way is the only way and called that of God.

Islam is believed to be this sole God's way drawn by Him for the whole humankind. This belief is based on two verses of the Quran saying إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ (the only religion for God is Islam) وَمَنْ يَبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ (anyone seeks religion other than Islam will be rejected). This kind of truth is a verbal or total truth meaning that you may take it or leave it and any other religion after the advent of Islam is considered wrong. Therefore it is very difficult and even impossible for a Muslim to acknowledge the truth of other religions.

However, one may challenge this belief saying that the word الْإِسْلَامُ in those two verses can be understood as proper name, i.e. Islam with capital "I" or common noun *islām* meaning self submission. Accordingly, using this latter meaning, those two verses state that self submission to God—no matter the religion is—is the only way leading to safety. This understanding is basically sound as it is based on potential meaning of the above mentioned verses. The problem is that this very word has been being used as the name of the religion that was institutionalized after Muhammad making it is almost impossible for Muslims to use its original generic meaning.

Another meaning of truth is effectuality of a method in realizing "intermediary goal". If the above mentioned meaning is the final or ultimate truth, this kind of truth is like a tactical truth which may lead to that ultimate truth. The way in which human being may arrive at the final end of living a religion contains self working-out concerning belief, comportment control, internal purification, orienting one's thought, improving relations with others etc. The intermediary goal pertains to the goal that a

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[3]There are at least two passages that can be used to change this definition of the right goal of religion of Islam. The first is the verse of the Qur'an saying that there are people who pray, "God, grant us fineness in this world and fineness in the hereafter, and protect us against the torture of Fire," as against those who pray, "God, grant us fineness in this world." Cf. chapter 2/al-Baqarah (She-Cow): 200-201. The other is a saying of the Prophet Muhammad, "Work for your worldly life as if you will live forever and work for your hereafter one as if you are going to die tomorrow."

faithful may reach in his/her worldly life by practicing some teaching of religion, considering that the ultimate goal can only be reached in the hereafter.

This truth related to this intermediary goal means that some methods developed by certain religion in matters concerning self interior exercises may be effective in improving one's spiritual life, no matter his/her faith is. For example, in controlling carnal desires—where all religions share the suggestion of doing it—there are methods developed by different religious traditions, ranging from orienting them to better goal to suppressing them to the extreme. It can be likened with our state being faced to the sourness of a citron: one advice suggests not taking it, another says suppress your sense in such a way that you can no longer feel the sourness, and still another reminds you to use a sweetening that may make a better taste.

A certain method in overcoming carnal desires and passion developed by an other tradition may be found very effective, and it is not difficult for a believer to consider it as true or even take incorporate it his/her own religious tradition. We can find such a case in Islamic mysticism where some methods of yoga were adopted from outside Islamic tradition. For instance, the concept of *latā'if* developed in the Naqshbandi tradition has Hindu origin. In such a case, the important consideration is that the method is proven to be effective in the realisation of the meant end.

It belongs to this category that most of religions lead people to good deeds. Buddhism, for instance, teaches its adherents to release the self from attachment to sensuous desires and cravings for both material and immaterial things, Christianity teaches love, Hinduism teaches self-control (*damana*), compassion and merciful (*daya*), and give gifts (*dana*), etc. What must be said then about those who do bad deeds for sake of religion? In these recent years Islam has been being accused of having taught its followers to launch some actions of violence and terrorism. Likewise this religion has been being portrayed as against the family planning, seeing that there are some passages in the Tradition literature of the Prophet Muhammad that endorse having many children. One of them is the one reading, "Make marriage and have many children, for I will be competing other people (in quantity of the followers) with you,

even with miscarried fetus."[4] We can find as well the teaching of excessive sacrifice in some tribal religions. Can we consider such things as proofs of the un-tenability of religion?

Yes, in the first glance, but as we go deeper into the teaching of the religion we may find that such religiously based bad deeds are deviation of the main teaching of the religion. This is the case of the tradition of great religions. At least there are always ways to show the existence of teaching in the same tradition that is not in accordance with the one used to support the bad deeds and closer to common good shared by other religions. Besides, there are always dynamics in the religious tradition by which some religiously based bad actions may be corrected by internal energy.

Going back to the criteria by which truth—the above mentioned total truth—is recognized, the most common in Islam is the use of compliance to God's statement, i.e. what is clearly stated in the Qur'an, as the primary criterion. The reason is that we are in front of something unperceivable by our own perceiving capacity (*gayb*), and therefore it is only God's word that we can count on.[5] The compliance to rational argument is recognized only as long as it is not in discordance with the clearly statement of the Qur'an.

The truth may be based on rational argument, but this matters only in what belongs to the domain of intellectual operation, while religion belongs more to the domain of belief. Any movement in history basing its position on the use of reason could manage to get reception from Islamic communities. Rational argumentation could only attract some elites from whom the common religious expressions are sometimes very difficult to find. The Mu'tazilite, Muslim philosophers and scientists who were the backbone of rational movement in Islamic history got even severe measurements from the advocates of orthodoxy and some risked their lives.

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[4]Cf. al-Baihaqī, *Ma'rifa al-Sunan wa-l-Āthār*, vol. XI:207 and 'Abd al-Razzāq al-San'ānī, *al-Musannaf*, vol. VI: 173.

[5]This stand is actually that of the Sunnite or the mainstream of Islamic school. For the Mu'tazilite, those who advocate liberal thinking, it is only the rational basis that we count on in matters of principles of religion.

Nevertheless, here the truth of other religions can be acknowledged, provided that they comply with logical rules. Rational arguments transcend the boundaries of religious claims and therefore we can acknowledge any concept based on rigorous rational basis, no matter the religious tradition from which the concept comes is. The problem then is that in a matter of faith logics is not so significant. Faith that comes from beyond human realm, a faithful may argue, must not be put under the supervision of reason made operative by human being. However, there is no guarantee for the coming-down of the faith from extra human realm (*al-ghaib*, the non-present, in Qur'anic expression).

As for the partial truth related to "intermediary goal", the sole criterion is the effectiveness of the concerned method in realizing the intended goal. With this criterion in mind, it is not so difficult for a Muslim to acknowledge the truth of certain method proven to be effective. One possible hindrance for such an acknowledgment is the worry that it will damage the purity of one's faith.

Acknowledging other's truth

Acknowledgment means to agree to say yes to the relation of a quality/qualities to something. Accordingly when I acknowledge someone's truth, it means that I agree to say that he/she has truth. When I acknowledge the truth of someone's religion, it means that I agree to say that his/her religion is true.

Is it possible that a Muslim say yes to other religion's truth? Referring to the above mentioned verbal truth, the answer is always negative. Nevertheless one may find within the Qur'an the possibility to form another opinion. For example, there two verses in this scripture declaring that (1) those who believe , (2) the Jews, (3) the Christians dan the Sabians will have no fright nor sorrow in the hereafter.[6] In Islamic

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[6]Cf. these verses that read: إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالنَّصَارَى وَالصَّابِئِينَ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ [*Surely those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the f Christians, and the Sabians, whoever believes in Allah and the Last day and does good, they shall have their reward from their Lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve* (2:62)] and إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالصَّابِئُونَ وَالنَّصَارَى مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَا [*Surely those who believe and those who are Jews and the Sabians and the* خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

history one can find instances where Muslims regarded other religions than Islam as ways leading to God. Take for example Muhy al-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī (560/1165-638/1165) who stated there is no difference between *heavenly* and *earthly* religions, since all worshiped the same Sole God manifesting His self in their images and in the forms of all religions. The real end of servant worship to his God is to realize the unity his reality with His, and, accordingly, it is wrong to confine his God in one manifestation.[7] This Islamic thinker even called Judaism as the way of Moses (*tarīqa mūsawīya*) and Christianity that of Jesus (*tarīqa 'īsawīya*), while Islam that of Muhammad (*tarīqa muhammadīya*).

With this refusal in mind, we may develop at least three attitudes by which Muslims may live peacefully with peoples of other faith. First, to leave the judgment of the faith to the owner, without any ado whether or not it is true for the others. A short statement*, lakum dīnukum wa-liya dīn,* concludes a very short chapter in the Qur'an (109/al-Kāfirūn, the infidels or the refuters), meaning "Keep your own religion and I will keep mine". This chapter orders the prophet Muhammad to tell the infidels that he will never worship their object of worship like they will never worship his. In this situation, the most appropriate attitude for both sides will be keeping their own religious positions. Then, they may build mutual understanding and work together in social matters and other instances.

It is true that the Qur'an reprimands, in many places, some elements of religious practices found in Arabia in the time of its revelation, such as Christian trinity and human worship. Nevertheless, it does mean that Muslims should not live side by side with the adherence of the religion the element of which is criticized, but it is to say that in the encounters of people of different religious backgrounds question about religious practices may arise and let into judgment of whether they are true. The argument of this judgment will be based rasional argument or common ground where

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Christians whoever believes in Allah and the last day and does good -- they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve (5:69)].

[7]Cf. Note of A. E. Affifi in *Dā`ira al-ma'ārif al-islāmīya*, Arabic translation of *EI* by Muhammad Thābit al-Fandī, et al., I: 233, and Abd al-Qādir Mahmūd, *al-Falsafa al-Sūīya fī al-Islām* (np.: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, nd.), 516.

all can meet each other. This attitude is concluded from the fact that the Qur'an criticized religious practices of the people of the book on the basis of that they deviated from what was taught by the prophets. If we put the case into the present situation, we may say that interfaith dialogue should not confine to matters outside the faith. It can be addressing matters of faith as long as it is done with wisdom (*bi-l-hikma*) and the best way (*bi-llatī hiya ahsan*); a dialogue seeking mutual understanding and ways of living together side-by side.

In the word of the Qur'an, "*And not alike are the good and the evil. Repel (evil) with what is best, when lo! he between whom and you was enmity would be as if he were a warm friend.*"[8]

The second attitude is to take other's faith as mirror in which one can see his/her own devotional life. This attitude may strengthen and enhance one's own faith in front of many different choices available. Human beings share many things related to spiritual experience and inner life. Therefore, each can draw lessons from what others feel, develop in spiritual strength, hold at time of despair and hopeless etc. As for the fear of contamination—for those who do not recognize religions other than their own as true—this attitude may be build on awareness that they will not take anything from other religion(s), save to have a medium by which they can delve into some pits of their own religious tradition that have been so far covered by other choices of religious practices.

The third attitude is to be so humble not to monopolize the truth, saying like "I believe in the truth of my faith but I do not know if others' faith wrong". It is true that there are many instances where two faiths are in contradictory position and accordingly if you take the one, you have to throw the other. However, sometimes we find many different faiths go to the same goal and the difference is only in matter of giving emphasis on one certain aspect in the one and on another aspect in the other.

The existence of people holding fast their faith other than ours, who often show as good comportment as—or even better than—what we find in our own community,

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[8]In Arabic: وَلَا تَسْـتَوِي الْحَسَـنَةُ وَلَا السَّـيِّئَةُ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَـنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدَاوَةٌ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ

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can be taken as reminder that one has to be careful not to claim that one's own way is not the only way to arrive at the truth. God reveals the truth through the Qur'an, it is true, but we have to remember that he reveals His truth through different modes of revelation. The deviation stated in the Qur'an regard some religious practices of the people of the book *ahl al-kitāb* may not mean, in fact, that the people related to them should do the same thing forever. The gate is always open for everyone to enter the way of God and this last is not only that of drawn by Islam. It is possible that peoples of those communities in another time and place the book develop concepts reprimanded by the Qur'an such as trinity and human worship, and arrive at meanings different from those found in Arabia at the lifetime of Muhammad. Or, the meaning of the concepts that the Qur'an "has in mind" is not the same as what is meant by those peoples, and then dialogue may disclose the difference.

Besides, the Qur'an states as well that those peoples of the book are not all the same. There are among them individuals who read God's "signs" at night prostrating themselves to Him. They believe in God dan the Hereafter, enjoin what is universally accepted, forbid the abominable, and strive with one another in hastening to good deeds.[9] This statement indicates at least that truth is not confined in one single community and or religion but is with anyone who has certain qualities and fulfils certain "ethical" requirements. However, we should not deny the fact that there are many pages in the Qur'an dealing with people as if they are an entity having a single attitude, like the Jews (*al-yahūd*) and the Christians (*al-nasārā*) or even the people of the Book (*ahl al-kitāb*). It is also a fact as well that group-based judgment—which is unfair in most of the time—cannot be avoided, but the Qur'an tries to amend it by reminding the possibility of the existence of good individuals in a group judged as bad and vice versa.

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[9]Cf. this verse saying: لَيْسُوا سَوَاءً مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ أُمَّةٌ قَائِمَةٌ يَتْلُونَ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ آنَاءَ اللَّيْلِ وَهُمْ يَسْجُدُونَ. يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَأُولَئِكَ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ. [*They are not all alike; of the followers of the Book there is an upright party; they recite Allah's communications in the nighttime and they adore (Him). They believe in Allah and the last day, and they enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong and they strive with one another in hastening to good deeds, and those are among the good*].

It seems to me that the Qur'an considers the truth when it is referred to religion as one and carried out by many prophets. Accordingly, the prophet Muhammad came as *musaddiq*,[10] one who says yes to what is in the Torah and the Evangel, and he sometimes criticized practices of religious people of his time that did not comply with what was written in the Scriptures. However, it is also stated in the Qur'an that every community has its own rules and method of worship (*shir'a* and *minhāj*).[11] Here we may not confine the truth only the religious traditions mentioned in the Qur'an, i.e. the Abrahamic ones: Jewish and Christian or probably Sabian, since it sates as well that for every community God sent a messenger or reminder,[12] and that some of the messengers were told by God to Muhammad, while others were not.[13]

To conclude this section, it can be said that although Muslims may not acknowledge the truth of other religion *in toto*, they may live with people of other religions with a kind of accepting the existence of adherents other religions within certain borders: First, to keep faith out of judgment, leaving anyone free to believe or not to believe and work in accordance with his/her belief. Second, to say this first attitude does not mean that each side has to forget the differences, but to be aware that there are many things in the belief of the other side that he/she cannot agree. Third, anyhow each side can accept the other as a friend with another faith. Faith is only an instance in life which is very important, and therefore may not ruin other ties that bound many people of different religious convictions together.

The reality of peace

Like many other vital conditions of our live, peace is often realized when it is gone. We often miss something very important in our life at a time we lost it and—in the opposite—we do not pay any attention to it when it is always with us. Peace is very important since it is a prerequisite of development; without it, none of us can develop

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[10]Cf. the Qur'an, chapter 3/Al 'Imrān: 81.
[11]Cf. the Qur'an, chapter 5/al-Mā'ida: 48 that reads لِكُلٍّ جَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَمِنْهَاجًا.
[12]Cf. the Qur'an, chapter 10/Yūnus: 47; 35/Fātir: 24.
[13]Cf. the Qur'an, chapter 40/Ghāfir: 70.

our human potentialities in a proper way and with dignity. In a state of chaos and war we can only develop our nature of animal being to which strength, slyness, cowardice, treachery and trickery belong, while sincerity, solidarity, frankness, trust, commitment and piety have no place.

We have to maintain a condition where everyone feels safe and free to live his/her own life, and if there have to be any limit and restriction, they should be made on the basis of agreement between every member of the community. This condition is not a grant but we have so strive for it and at a time we manage to realize it we have to maintain it, since the temptation to break it is always there, latent in the very existence of human being.

Theoretically speaking, it is true that in a world ruled by democracy, the folk have the sovereignty, but we cannot deny the fact that political leaders—with mandate given to them to rule—sometimes are the real possessor of the authority to rule. In other word, it is almost up to them to bring the fate of their country to the bright or dark future. The power that is in their hand can and usually does make them the most prominent actors on the stage of their country's history. It is not a fault that their grip the power, but history tells us that power tends to multiply itself for its own sake and those who are in power are always tempted to maintain it for themselves and sometimes ready to sacrifice everything in doing so.

Other prominent actors are people of business who are in general seek only material profit in their main activities. Here, too, one cannot say that economic profit seeking business is wrong and that every business actor is corrupt. However, the tendency to collect material benefit is at times so great that many of business actors neglect human values and solidarity.

Development pertains so far to physical and material aspect of human life. Its targets, success measure and main yardstick are usually material and quantitative ones. Thus, the result is the depravity of human beings from their roots and they become farther away from happiness. Solidarity, togetherness, comfort, warmness of friendship and happiness become difficult to find at time of developmental success.

Consummation of natural resources and destruction of environment become conspicuous in almost every square of earth face, as result of human greedy of ephemeral material benefit.

Taking balance in using natural resources and involving as many actors as possible in making any decision concerning development are imperative if we want to stop the suicide process of human race through accumulation of power and consummation of natural resources.

In promoting peace, we find also minimal participation of the community, whereas those who are in duty of making and maintaining it make only a minimum progress in calling for participation of the community. Isn't it now high time for people of faith to come forward suggesting what may be better for the life of human race and the environment where they live? In saying this, I do not mean that the political leaders, the people of economy and those who are in charge of maintaining peace are not people of faith; but that sometimes they are so absorbed in their world of occupation that they need reminder from others.

To keep silent of what is done by those in power and what is offered by those whose primary aim is profit taking is wrong. The condition, shape and orientation of our living together and our history belong to all of us. We are in a game, big-big game where each of us should take a role while making rules, remaking it from time to time, and keeping watch of the play. If any of us tries to monopolize the game, it is all right; but other should then try to return the play into its balance. A basic rule is that we should not destroy the stage and ruin the game. Otherwise, we will extinct.

Now, an important question is what is the role of religion in this game, especially in the part or peace and development. Many will say that religion comes out as problem for peace and hindrance for development. Religious conflicts, religion colored acts of terrorism, the difficulties faced by propagators of family planning from religious communities etc. seem to justify that allegation. In short, religions and peoples of religion seem to play marginal role in the game of life, especially the modern one.

It is true that religions nowadays have no executive power to realize their desires and ideals. However, they still have strong influence in the hearts of the people through suggestion, call, resolution etc. Nevertheless, their influence on modern people seems to be deteriorating for the existence of many irrelevant and naïve things in the praxis of religious people.

Active involvement in the process of development and building peace is one solution for the problem of marginal position of religion in modern life. Realizing that religions have no executive power, to take the position of reminder is a good option. Let me quote from the Qur'an

The Believers should not all go ought to fight. From each group of them there should be a contingent going in order that those who remain behind devote themselves to studies in religion, and admonish the people when they return to them, that thus they (may learn) to guard themselves (against evil). (Chapter 9/the Repentance: 122).

In our time this verse can be understood as suggesting that not every body should take part in politics, trades and any other business with great temptation of destructing one's self—although noble motive and end may lay behind them. There should be people who stay aloof of such occupation and take as they duty to think thoroughly about the philosophy of life and to remind the whole community of perils and destruction that may be caused by human activities. Their main concern is how to avoid difficulties and dangers made—involuntarily perhaps—by human beings.

The duty of being reminder is actually a heavy burden, since the target is not only to pass message to whole community, but to end unfair treatment, self destructing, conflict, denigration, irresponsibility and any other inhumane act; and to promote peace, justice, solidarity, responsibility etc. Meanwhile we see that people of different religions often fight each other, resulting not only in weakness of scattered power but also loosing of trust. How can you promote peace if you yourselves cause chaos almost every day? People will never believe you.

Thus, there is only one option for us, people of different religions—if we want to end unfairness, irresponsibility, destruction etc. It is to work together. We have to

forget the enmity that the bigger part of it has been passed down through generations, and look at the future of human race and the world they live. It is our responsibility as people of faith to make our earth pleasant to live in.

It is true that religious peoples—I am sad to say—are sometimes very easy to be provoked, especially when the sacredness of their religions was disturbed. However, some examples of cooperation between people of different faith prove the power of religion in solving human problems. We have to multiply these examples in our work, especially of you the youth religious leaders, as responsibility of our faith. Only then, we can say that faith is mercy for human race and the world in which they live.

How to build an Islamic theology of peace

One of the most important problems headed by Muslims nowadays in taking the appropriate attitude towards the changing situation is how to read properly the Qur'an and to draw imperatives from it, seeing the significant of the scriptural text in Islamic thinking tradition. As a matter fact, there are passages in the Qur'an and the Tradition of the prophet Muhammad bearing clear order or allusion for Muslims to use violence in their relationship with the infidels, the idolaters and the hypocrites. On the other hands there are passages speaking clearly of making peace, forgiving, making friends etc. To take only passages supporting peace while leaving aside other ones that give the opposite position is not acceptable, though many activists do it.

In the course of Islamic history, a long debate on theological problems happened between the advocates of free thought, the Mu'tazilites, and those who gripped more the Tradition, the Asharites. In fact, both groups had the same attitude towards the way in which they understood the Qur'an, i.e. that reader had the right to give meaning to the text. They differed in the fact that the Mu'tazilites gave to reason such a strong authority that even the position of the Qur'an as argument had to be built on rational argument. One of their prominent writers, Abd al-Jabbār, stated that the Qur'an as God's speech cannot be used as argument for his existence before it is proved that it came from a God who never lies. The content of the information, he said

further, can never be a proof for the existence of the source and for its truthfulness, because if the latter two points must be proved by the former, while the former cannot be regarded true save that the latter two points have been proved, there will be a vicious circle: each becomes a ground for the other. So, the Qur'ān can be used as proof only it comes from the wise who does not choose to lie and order bad actions. Thus, it must be known first that God does not choose bad action, in order that the Qur'ān can be used as indication of what it indicates. This means that it cannot be used as indication for the existence of God and His wisdom. [14]

The Asharites took the opposite way, making Tradition understood in its literal meaning as signs (*dalīl*) in understanding the passages of the Qur'an. They did not care if some passages—being understood by their literal meaning—contradicted one another or could not comply with logics. Besides, they held fast the principle of God's authority in understanding any passage concerning His relation to human being. Thus God could do whatever His will goes towards human being, no matter his/her deed was. As for the Mu'tazilites, who held the principle of His justice, God had to put the believers into Paradise for their good deeds and the infidels into Hell for their bad deeds.

Isn't it then high time for Muslims to use a new hermeneutics taking basic values as starting point instead of clinging to the apparent meaning of the text? Take for example the value of freedom to believe or not to believe and that nobody may compel anybody to adhere any religion; that in practicing religion one should develop the ability to overcome carnal desires; that a believer should call others to follow God's way and should not cut off relation with those of different faith; and that no one may shoulder other's sin. It is not easy to find passages of the Qur'an that support such values and likewise rational arguments. Taking such principles as a guidance, passages ordering war against the infidels, for instance, may not be understood as ordering war for the sake conversion. What is meant by *alladzīna kafarū* rendered in English as infidels is than those who conducted bad things that were destructive for the society

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[14] `Abd al-Jabbār, *Mutashābih al-Qur'ān, e*d. `Adnān M. Zarzūr (Cairo: Dār al-Turāth, 1969), p. 2.

making them deserve of being destroyed. The use of this word in the passages is only by objective of orienting the reader to a group that was known by the deeds and not the necessarily by the faith or disbelief. It also possible that when the Qur'an uses the expression *alladzīna kafarū* who are meant are not those who disbelieve, but those who fail too receive the truth coming with sufficient proof.

In reading the Qur'an one should take into account the situational-historical contents of the text, i.e. the most appropriate meaning of the text at the time of its production—or in Islamic tradition related to the Qur'an, its revelation—or the general situation of Arabia in the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad. This kind of reading may raise a theological question of the position of the Qur'an as God's eternal word. If the Qur'an is really God's eternal speech, one may argue, it may not be constrained in a place and time; in contrast, it has to have only one meaning that is functioning forever. However, the eternal word has been enveloped in the Arabic of the seven century. Language is not eternal, but always changing and developing following the change and development of its users. It is only natural that the Qur'anic text has to be understood within the framework of lingual tradition of the seven century Arabia seeing that the eternal meaning has been conveyed in that temporal language.

That does not mean there are no passages in the Qur'an that talk about universal values loose of place and time. Most of such passages are easy to known such as those stating that there should be no compulsion in religion and that human being should not follow the call of carnal desire. We can recognize easily passages related to contemporary events of the Prophet. The problem arises about expression that may be taken as universal order for the believers and at the same time may be understood as only operative in the life time of the Prophet, for him and his companions.

The need for a theology centred on peacebuilding

It is common to portray Islam as a religion demanding its adherence to use violence more than to build peace. The notion of *jihād* or waging war against others considered disbelievers is there in most books representing Islamic teaching. The use

of violence can be found here and there practiced by Muslims even in their domestic affairs. The reality of anti-peace is such that anyone to gave another side—that of peaceful theology of Islam—risks being accused of bad Muslim by his co-religionists. I quote below an observation of a writer on such a bad situation:

Now, obviously, there are Muslims who do not consider acts of terrorism or violence, or the supremacist attempts to impose Islamic law over non-Muslims, part of their Islamic piety. And certainly I applaud them and wish there were more of them insofar as they're sincere. They are, however, universally worldwide on the defensive today. They are represented as the bad Muslims by their fellow Muslims who are pointing to the texts of the Qur'an and the teachings of Muhammad. And so the Muslims who we could look to with hopes of reform, the Muslims who we would look to in hopes of their being our allies, they are the ones who are considered to be the bad Muslims generally in the Islamic community. Now it must also be further stated, unfortunately, that there is no theological system in Islam, there is no sect, there is no group within Islam that has formulated a comeback, a construction of Islamic theology based on the Qur'an that makes a case to reject violence and supremacism and the subjugation of unbelievers. It doesn't exist. There are many individuals who are working against it, but there is no group that we can point to and say "Ah, they're the ones we need to work with!" In other words, they have not formulated any kind of convincing comeback. The texts are not on their side.

Then:

Now, mainstream Islamic theologians and the preponderance of Islamic theological tradition teaches that if there is a disagreement between two passages in the Qur'an, then one of the chief ways to see which one takes precedence in our own day is, which one came later chronologically in Muhammad's career. Unfortunately for us, the violence comes later, and thus is considered under the principles of al-nasikhwal-mansukh (or abrogation) to cancel out the peaceful passages. Or the peaceful passages only apply when Muslims are a small group, as the Meccan Muslims were in the first stage of Muhammad's career. So in other words, when they're a small

group, when they're powerless, then they teach tolerance and nonviolence. But later, gaining in power and numbers, the other parts begin to kick in, and the violence and the supremacism apply.[15]

Meanwhile, the Qur'an, like other scriptures, contains passages that have more than one meaning and the Muslims who read it also have differences by which they may understand it differently. Therefore, a long-standing understanding should not be taken as the sole true understanding. Any understanding is always one of many possible understandings and its endurance does not mean the right to close the use of one or more of others. The problem then is that many Muslims believe that the teaching of Islam that they get from their teachers is the only teaching of Islam and is sacral without any possibility of being questioned or revised. The only thing left for Muslims now is to observe is as religious obligation.

The long history of using violence in the practice of Islam has made it strange for some people to think about the essential Islamic teaching of love, humbleness and preference of forgiving to retaliation. Likewise, the fact that many Muslims find themselves in a miserable condition leads them to see the only solving more in using the language of violence than in that of tenderness and the ability to control themselves. The problem is, then, how to open the possibility of revising some of teachings that Muslims feel do not fit modern exigencies, without the risk of losing their essence.

However, before going more into the discussion of this problem, a word should be given to the term of theology. This very term sometimes misleads Muslims to the notion of *'ilm al-kalām*, *'ilm al-tawḥīd* or *'ilm usūl al-dīn*, a branch of Islamic science dealing with principles of Islamic faith. Its subject matter consists of the Pillars of Faith,[16] while its approach is scholastic. This notion of theology in Islam differs somehow from its meaning in Christian and the West tradition of human formulation

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[15] Robert Spencer, Not Peace but a Sword; The Great Chasm Between Christianity and Islam (San Diego: Catholic Answers Press), 2013. The quoted passages are from the epilogue of the book, "Is the Only Good Muslim a Bad Muslim? The Kreeft/Spencer Debate". Italic mine.

[16] Namely the Six Pillars of Faith consisting of: (1) belief in Allah, (2) belief in His angels, (3) belief in His Books, (4) belief in His Messengers, (5) belief in the Hereafter, and (6) belief His Decree and Decision (the predestination).

of what is believed as God's guidance or revelation. This formulation comprises all aspects of religion that in Islam is divided into *'ilm al-kalām* (discussion of belief) or *'aqīda* (principles of belief), *fiqh* (laws, rules), *akhlāq* (ethics) and *taṣawwuf* (mysticism). The term theology is used in this paper as sensible formulation or understanding of what is believed as God's guidance. It will not comprise all aspects of Islam, but only its basic teaching of the mission of human being in this life as understood by the writer.

Islam: going into peace?

The Arabic word *islām* of which the religion that Muhammad founded gets its name, comes from the root of SLM pertaining to submission and peace.[17] However, the use of this word and the verb stemming from it (*aslama*, *yuslimu*) as well the actor (*muslim*, *muslimūn*) does not give the meaning of going into peace, but of submission. We find the use of *al-silm* (which may pertain to peace making) once, but only with the meaning of observing religious obligation. Therefore, Muslim exegetes give the meaning of submission as well to this word. To change it to the meaning of peace— like what is done by many supporters of peaceful movement—will break the context of the verse wherein this word is found.[18]

The word *al-salm* is used many times in the Qur'an, meaning reconciliation of conflicting sides, as in the verse that reads:

وَإِنْ جَنَحُوا لِلسَّلْمِ فَاجْنَحْ لَهَا وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ. (الأنفال: 61)

When they (your enemies) tend to resolution, tend to it and lean on God the Hearer and the Knower. Sura 8/al-Anfāl: 6.[19]

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[17] The word *al-islām* is used in many passages in the Qur'an: sura 3/Āl 'Imrān: 19 and 85, 5/al-Mā'ida: 3, 9/al-Tauba: 74, 39/al-Zumar: 22, 49/al-Ḥujurāt: 17 and 61/al-Ṣaff: 7 giving the meaning of obedience and submission, as is clear from the context.

[18] Namely, sura 2/al-Baqara: 208. Cf. the exegesis of Ibn Kathīr and al-Qurṭubī, for example, that have the inclination to take the meaning of Islam (observing Islamic duties) for the word *al-silm*.

[19] Cf. Surat 4/al-Nisā': 90-91, 16/al-Naḥl: 28 and 87, and 47/Muḥammad: 35.

Another word derived from the same root is *al-salām* that means the utterance of peace and then becomes the essence of Islamic greeting, *al-salām ‘alaikum* (may peace be upon you). An example of the Qur’anic use of it is:

يَاأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَتَبَيَّنُوا وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَنْ أَلْقَى إِلَيْكُمُ السَّلَامَ لَسْتَ مُؤْمِنًا تَبْتَغُونَ عَرَضَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا فَعِنْدَ اللَّهِ مَغَانِمُ كَثِيرَةٌ كَذَلِكَ كُنْتُمْ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَمَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمْ فَتَبَيَّنُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا. (النساء: 94)

O you who believe! when you go abroad in the cause of Allah, investigate carefully, and say not to anyone who offers you a salutation: "You are not a believer!" coveting the perishable goods of this life. With Allah are profits and spoils abundant. Even thus were you yourselves before, till Allah conferred on you His favors. Therefore, carefully investigate. For Allah is well aware of all that you do. 4/al-Nisā’: 94[20]

This reminder concerns the utterance of peace that was uttered by a group of people to a unit of Muslim troop considering the first as enemies. This troop thought that the utterance of peace was only a lie camouflaging their real attitude and therefore did not stop fighting them. The Qur’an condemned the attitude of this troop as wrong. It is of Islamic teaching spirit that one has to prefer peace to fighting.

In the Qur’an, God is called *al-Salām* as well, which may give the meaning of the Peace or the Source of Peace.[21] This word is actually problematic since it may give the meaning of safety, too, by which one may commit violence to anyone whom he/she considers as enemy, while worshiping God the Savior.

The Qur’an uses also the word *ṣulḥ* by the meaning of resettlement, reconciliation of members of a family or a community after being in conflict. Take for example the verse that reads:

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[20] Cf. 5/al-Mā’ida: 16, 6/al-An‘ām: 127, 10/Yūnus: 25, 19/Maryam: 33 and 20/Ṭāhā: 47.

[21] Cf. 59/al-Ḥashr: 23. Jacques Berque in his *Le Coran; essai de traduction*, renders this name with *le Dispensateur de salut* (the Dispenser of safety); Régis Blachère, *Le Coran; traduction nouvelle*, gives *le Pacificateur* (the Pacificator), arguing that the meaning of *le Salut* (the Salvation) was not known at the time of Muhammad and that the meaning *le Salutaire* (the Savior) dated from later exegetes; while M. M. Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur’an*, translates it with Peace.

وَإِنِ امْرَأَةٌ خَافَتْ مِنْ بَعْلِهَا نُشُوزًا أَوْ إِعْرَاضًا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا أَنْ يُصْلِحَا بَيْنَهُمَا صُلْحًا وَالصُّلْحُ خَيْرٌ وَأُحْضِرَتِ الْأَنْفُسُ الشُّحَّ وَإِنْ تُحْسِنُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا. (النساء: 128)

If a wife fears cruelty or desertion on her husband's part, there is no blame on them if they arrange an amicable settlement between themselves; and such settlement is best; even though men's souls are swayed by greed. However, if you do good things and practice self-restraint, Allah is well-acquainted with all that you do. Sura 4/al-Nisā': 128.[22]

Thus, the very word *al-islām* may give the meaning of going into peace or peacefulness, but the Qur'an uses it in the meaning of submission to God. This does not mean at all that this primary source of Islam pays no attention to peace-making and peaceful inter-human relationship. It uses other terms, i.e. *al-salm*, *al-salām* and *al-ṣulḥ*, to promote peace and peaceful relations. To be a Muslim is to surrender one's self to God who wants human beings to live in peaceful surrounding.

The Essence of Islam

The essence of the Prophet Muhammad's call, as can be found in the earlier revealed verses of the-Qur'an is to follow God's way in contrast to the way of Satan. The God's way manifest conspicuously in the ability to overcome passion stimuli that appear in the form of selfishness, arrogance, stinginess, show-off etc. and to orient them to valuable deeds. To release human being from the shackle of earthly life—i.e. a life steered by carnal desires—and from selfishness is among the primary goal of Islamic call.[23] Therefore, a win or success in life is often mentioned in the Qur'an as for those who manage to control themselves from the temptation of desires. It states, for example, that those who are released from their stinginess are the winners[24] and that to forgive is better than to retaliate.[25]

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[22] Cf. Suras 2/al-Baqara: 160, 3/Al 'Imrān: 89, 4/al-Nisā': 146, 8/al-Anfāl: 1, 16/al-Naḥl: 119, 24/al-Nūr: 5, and 49/al-Ḥujurāt: 9 and 10.

[23] Cf. sura 7/al-A'rāf: 175-176.

[24] Cf. sura 59/al-Ḥashr: 9 and 64/al-Taghābun: 16.

[25] Cf. sura 43/Shūrā: 40.

It is true that this scripture mentions many times the belief in Allah and the Hereafter as basis for successful life. Nevertheless, the belief must be realized in the form of self-control and concern to the well being of others that in many places of the Qur'an are called good deeds and virtues (al-ṣāliḥāt). The most conspicuous appearance of one's faith is that in the relationship with others he or she does not do any harm to them.[26] The observance of religious rituals will have no meaning or even is considered a blasphemy if it is not accompanied with concern and giving help to the needy. Islam gives strong emphasis to the sensitivity to the possible existence of people who are treated unfairly. When sending one of his companions to Yemen, the Prophet Muhammad commanded the envoy to be aware of the prayer of anyone who was treated wrongly since there is no barrier between it and God at all, meaning that God will always hear the prayer.[27]

Imām al-Bukhārī reported a saying of the Prophet Muḥammad pbuh. as follows:

انْصُرْ أَخَاكَ ظَالِمًا أَوْ مَظْلُومًا. قَالُوا: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، هَذَا نَنْصُرُهُ مَظْلُومًا. فَكَيْفَ نَنْصُرُهُ ظَالِمًا؟ قَالَ: تَأْخُذُ فَوْقَ يَدَيْهِ. رواه البخاري

The Prophet once said, "Help your brother when either treating or being treated wrongly." The Companions then asked, "We understand why we should help him when being treated wrongly, but how should we help him when treating wrongly?" He responded, "Hold his hand."

It is stated in many passages of the Qur'an that God does not like wrongdoers and never show them the right way.[28] It is clear from such a statement that Islam suggests its adherents to support justice and to avoid wrongdoing in inter-human relations. Since injustice is a primary cause for the absence of peace, to erase it is a very decisive step in the long struggle for peace.

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[26] The Prophet Muhammad said, "Never goes into Paradise anyone whose neighbor is not safe from his disturbance," in his saying narrated by Muslim and Ahmad.

[27] A Prophet Muhammad Tradition narrated by al-Bukhārī, Muslim and al-Turmudhī.

[28] Cf. sura 3/Al 'Imrān: 57, 87 and 140, 5/al-Mā'ida: 51 etc.

Mission of the chosen people

In the teaching of the Qur'an, human being is God's vicegerent given the trust of choosing and deciding whatever way of life he/she wants to follow. This trust or God's confidence—or *amānah*[29]—to give the freedom of act to human being is actually very risky since the entailing power of it may be use either for goodness or badness. By this trust and power human being may become anti God, destroy the environment, do injustice etc. It was this possibility of making bad deeds—worded with making destruction and shedding blood—that the angels foresaw when they asked why God was willing to make a vicegerent on earth, i.e. Adam. God then said that there was something in His knowledge that the angels did not know.[30] This thing must be a great one the value of which weighs down the possibility of making destruction. Can it then not be deduced that God wants human being to prevent destruction and bloodshed as the main end of its creation with the capacity of choosing what is good from the possibility of doing the contrary? The angels—in the Qur'anic narration of the story of Fall—did not realize that capacity since they knew only obedience in those who were created obedient and disobedience in those who were created disobedient. The real mission of human being in the teaching of the Qur'an is to choose to live the life in which morality overcomes carnal desires and emotion.[31]

This scripture states as well that human being is only created to do *'ibāda* to no other than God. Many Muslims, however, understand this statement as an order to do the religious rituals, God worship in its narrow sense. *'Abada-ya'budu-'ibāda* in Arabic pertains to worship and to serve and therefore that understanding is not without good basis at all. However, to give such great weight to God worship while neglecting the other function of serving God does not fit the spirit of this religion that emphasizes moral responsibility.[32] In many verses of the Qur'an God worship is contrasted to

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[29] Sura 33/al-Aḥzāb: 72.

[30] Cf. the Qur'anic story of Fall in which is narrated the conversation of God and the angels in sura 2/al-Baqara: 30-39.

[31] Cf. sura 7/al-Aʿrāf: 175-176.

[32] Cf. sura 107/al-Māʿūn that rebukes those who do not give help to the needy while observing rituals as blasphemous.

human worship. To refuse human worship—and paying homage only to God instead—means refusing human exploitation by human being and, in the contrary, putting forward dignity and responsibility. By worshiping God only—in the broader sense of the word, i.e. living on His way—, human being becomes a free nature, but its freedom is not without limit since there is God in front of Whom he or she has to account for whatever he or she does.

Then, regarding their position in the society, Muslims are obliged to be witness of justice, even on him/herself, the parents and the relatives as is stated in the following verse:

يَاأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ عَلَى أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَوِ الْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ إِنْ يَكُنْ غَنِيًّا أَوْ فَقِيرًا فَاللَّهُ أَوْلَى بِهِمَا فَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا الْهَوَى أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا وَإِنْ تَلْوُوا أَوْ تُعْرِضُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا. من سورة 4\النساء: 135.

O you who believe! stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor: for Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest ye swerve, and if you distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well acquainted with all that you do. Sura 4/al-Nisā': 135.

This collective duty of being witness for justice is given in relation of the position of Muslims as chosen people as is stated in another verse saying:

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا... الآية. من سورة 2\البقرة: 143.

Thus have We made of you the chosen people (or *justly balanced people*), *that you might be witnesses over the nations, and the Messenger a witness over yourselves;...* Surat 2/al-Baqarah: 143.

To know the meaning of being witness of Muslims with regard to other people as is stated in this verse, we should compare it to the function of the Prophet Muhammad whose mission is to become witness with regard to his followers. He did not watch only what they did, but guided them, protected them, oriented them to the best way and do whatever good for their life. He wanted the best for them and was

very much concerned of their suffering.[33] Therefore, any Muslim should want the best for others, show the best orientation of life that may bring happiness to his/her fellow human beings; remind them when they make bad deeds and support them when they do the good ones. He/she should be active in knowing what is happening in the community where he/she lives and take needed action for the best of the community. Since any human being—however strong his/her faith is—can never be immune to fault, a Muslim should take the humbleness to receive other's reminder from wherever it may come.

The obligation to be witness for all people cannot be done unless one has good relationship with them. The word that was translated in the last verse with "chosen" is *wasath* that means literally "in the middle." The best position for you to have good relationship with people is when you are in the middle of them and the witnessing can be done the best if there is peace between you and them.

War as expression of faith

Can war be an expression of faith? When the Qur'an obliges fighting, it states that it is not something that the believers like. Nevertheless, it is obliged to do fighting for there is something nobler than forgiving and forbearance.[34] Muslims do not like fighting and Islam does not suggest them to fight in a normal situation. It is only allowed to fight when there is no other way to defend life from the aggression of others. Fighting is only the last resort when talk, negotiation and other options to make peace fail and the threat of death is there. In such a situation, fighting is not only suggested but also obliged. To let the self in danger is wrong in the spirit of Qur'anic teaching, as is alluded by the following verse:

وَمَا لَكُمْ لَا تُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَاءِ وَالْوِلْدَانِ الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا مِنْ هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ الظَّالِمِ أَهْلُهَا وَاجْعَل لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ وَلِيًّا وَاجْعَل لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ نَصِيرًا. (4/النساء: 75)

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[33] Cf. for example, sura 9/al-Tauba: 128.

[34] Cf. 2/al-Baqara: 216.

And why should you not fight in the cause of Allah and of those who, being weak, are ill-treated (and oppressed)? Men, women, and children, whose cry is "Our Lord! rescue us from this town, whose people are oppressors; and raise for us from thee one who will protect; and raise for us from thee one who will help!." Sura 4/al-Nisā': 75.

In a normal situation where there are options to make the life better and no threat of life, to forgive is far better than to retaliate. It is not blamable in the teaching of the Qur'an to return bad action of others with the same bad action, but not to exceed. However, it suggests to make peace and to forgive the wrongdoer. This suggestion does not mean that Muslims should leave anyone to do wrongdoing, but that the target of reaction towards bad deed is the deed itself and not the doer. We must forgive the doer but have to stop the bad deed.

When the prophet Muhammad was forced to choose between two options of fighting and making peace treaty at the event of Hudaibiah,[35] he chose the latter although his companions urged him not to take the treaty that they thought would give more benefit to the enemy. The spirit of this decision of the Prophet is that peace is always greater than any other material benefit.

In a word, fighting in Islam is never an order that has to be carried on every time, but it is more like an emergency exit that can be used with tight rules and at the last resort. In a normal situation, where there exist other options, it is prohibited at all.

How Peace Should be Built

Faith in the concept of the Qur'an has to be realized in the form of care to other human being, as is clear in its reprimand to anyone who does not give help to needy people. Such a human being is called belier of religion, although he or she may observe ritual obligations, and what he or she deserves is only misery and hell.[36] To be able to do social obligations like giving help to the needy we need peaceful situation. The

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[35] Cf., for example, W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, reprint edition, 1969), 182-188.

[36] Cf. sura 107/al-Māʿūn: 1-7.

da'wa (call to the way of God), as an important means for Muslims to do their mission of witnessing the justice in inter human relationship, can only be carried on when there is peace. War and insecurity that usually it entails will only block ears and hearts from hearing.

We cannot deny the fact that peace cannot be maintained forever. Sometimes we have to struggle hard for peace and we know that to establish peace we need partners and supporters as much as possible. The peace that we need and are longing for is impossible at times there are people who do not want it. The problem is, then, what and how to do with that kind of people, especially when they are aggressive to us?

First, we need to establish a living together that may protect the humanity and ourselves. Solidarity, care and concern to others who want peace—things that do not exist in the theological awareness of many believers—has to be developed and built strong. Then, we need to build justice in inter human relationship and treatment and to bridge a dialogue with those who do not seem to want peace. It is not impossible that they do actually mean peace by doing what appears to be anti peace. In addition, readiness to share with others should be shown in religious attitude. Truth claim will never help reducing conflict and it is only by appreciating the truth that others may have that we can call them to sit on the table of dialogue.

From the very beginning, the Islamic call rebukes the accumulation of wealth for self-interest and reminds that the capability of releasing one's self from the tie of stinginess is a requisite for success in the life of a believer.[37] Most of the orders to do good deeds and to avoid bad ones do not require the being Muslim of anyone who may be object of those deeds. Giving help to the needy is suggested by Islam without any order to know if the needy is Muslim or not. Likewise, it is obliged to avoid injustice and wrongdoing, no matter if the object of the act is an infidel, let alone if a believer. It is here that we may understand the saying of the Prophet Muhammad that he was only sent as mercy to all humankind.[38]

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[37] Cf. sura 59/al-Ḥashr: 7 and 9, 64/al-Taghābun: 16 and 104/al-Humaza: 1-4.
[38] Cf. sura 21/al-Anbiyā': 1.

When it is not enough for talk, call and reminder to stop aggression, what should be done? Here we need state as the only authority to use power for the benefit of all citizens. The state, the rules of which are made by the agreement of all citizens, should become their representative to protect the public sphere where everyone may live as citizen with dignity, without any feeling of threat. Religion may participate in the process of making any decision and monitoring state's work, but not to take any action in the name anything in the public sphere in which only state has the authority for the purpose of protecting any citizen.

It is true that it is not easy for anyone taught so far by religious authorities that there is no concept of separation between religious and worldly spheres in Islamic teaching (*al-Islām dīn wa daulah*). Nevertheless, it should be remembered that the delegation of ruling authority to state does not mean transgression of Islamic concept of the unity in Islamic life at all. The concept has been so far understood from the side of Islam as the religion of the winners to whom belong all authorities, included the authority to rule. There, Islam is the only rule and Muslims are the only rulers, making non-Muslim citizens protected people (*ahl al-dhimma*) with no right to rule or to lead. In the present situation where Islam is no longer the sole source of authority and the state is established to protect all the citizens of different faiths the concept of unity has to be changed, not in the essence but in the form of application.

Conclusion

To conclude I say once again that to establish peace we need self-confidence and readiness to share with others. Sometimes, when you feel insecure about your safety you may not believe that others will do no harm to you. The feeling of being threatened may make you misunderstand however gesture others may launch and translate it with threat or even offence. Theology, as a human understanding of God's message, is very much influenced by psychological condition of the theologian and/or those he or she represents. Therefore, we have to do our best together to have people

of religion gain their confidence and feeling of secure if we really want peace to be the center of theology.

In a world where people of different faiths and cultures live together the readiness to share the space is only natural. The awareness of public sphere in which all may work and express the feeling or belief they have peacefully should be developed. In order that every individual and every group have enough room, each has to respect other's right to have the same. This means that each must make a limit to his/her own freedom and need. The failure to do this will cause collision and conflict and theology may be used to fuel war.

Theology may support either peace or war and therefore there should be wisdom in choosing options of understanding available for the theologians in order to get the most appropriate to the dignified life for all members of the community. It is sure that peace is closer to that kind of life than enmity and violence. To be successful in promoting peace, we will have to promote justice be it in the distribution of wealth or in the chance to develop individual's potentialities and to express one's belief etc. Without justice and fair treatment in the relations between human beings, the temptation of using violence is always there and those who feel of being treated unfairly or marginalized in decision making process may take it using theology their basis for doing so.

The change of situations usually requires that of theological attitudes that are no more than the product of certain situations where the past generation lived. Theology is always human-made formulation of faith in connection to life problems faced by adherence of religion. However, it is always difficult to change theological formulation, since it is usually regarded as divine guidelines containing the only truth. To change it—many believe—means to undermine God's authority. Therefore, sometime we have to take an indirect way to get the change done. Speaking of Islam, matters needed for making theological change are available in the sources of teaching and in the human capability of observing and making conclusion, and in the long history of religious thought.

In spite the fact that the theological attitude of average Muslim towards others' truth is refutation, it cannot be concluded that Muslims will have no theology of peace in relation with people of different faiths. Living in peace with others does not require acknowledgment of their truth. One may live with others peacefully each believing in his/her truth while developing a common ground on which all may stand, leaving faith as something private.

As for the "partial truth", there are less difficulties that hamper the acknowledgment. Some concepts of spiritual life, ways of developing internal capacity to overcome carnal desires, etc. that are very much developed in Buddhist tradition, are taken by some Muslims which means their acknowledgment that those concepts and ways are true, or—to be precise—effective. However, there are other Muslims who refuse to take anything—in religious matters—from any other tradition, like those who refuse the Sufi way on the basis that this way originates from non-Islamic tradition.

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