

principles would form a Qur'an-based framework in which Muslim scholars can elaborate a detailed theory of justifications for war and just conduct of war in the contemporary period, which takes into account details from the prophetic Sunnah as well as contemporary political and social realities.

Chapter Three

Religious Pluralism and the Qur'an

Mahmoud Ayoub

The plurality and diversity of religions is a reflection of the plurality and diversity of cultures and civilizations. The Qur'anic worldview, with its emphasis on the diversity of human racial and cultural identities and man's innate capacity to know and have faith in God, recognizes the diverse religions of humankind as divinely preordained ways to this ultimate goal. Hence, I will first define pluralism religiously and philosophically. I will then attempt to contextualize it within the history of the civilizations of the Middle East. Finally, I will discuss religious pluralism in the Qur'an.

In its lexical usage, pluralism signifies plurality, as opposed to singularity. Plurality, moreover, implies difference and, hence, diversity. Theologically, the expression religious pluralism, must be distinguished from religious exclusivism on the one hand, and religious inclusivism on the other. Religious pluralism is the recognition of the multiplicity and diversity of religions as a natural or divinely willed phenomenon. Yet if religious pluralism is to serve as a meaningful framework of constructive dialogue among the followers of the various religions, all religions, or at least all theistic religions, must be recognized as legitimate ways to the truth or ultimate reality. All the major religions hold that the truth is one and that it transcends human understanding. Yet, since the goal of all religions is to seek the truth, they must all be ways to that goal, for "...to God do we belong, and to Him we shall return" (2:156).

Among all the scriptures of the theistic religions, the Qur'an is unique in that it sets its worldview within the context of divine oneness and human diversity, including the plurality of religions. Furthermore, it regards religious diversity as one of the signs (*āyāt*) of God, second in importance to the "creation of the heavens and earth."¹⁶ It also presents

its view of religious pluralism in a somewhat progressive manner. The Qur'an lays down four basic principles, which are necessary for the truth-claim of any religion. The first is that a true religion must be enshrined in a divinely revealed scripture or sacred law (Shari'ah). Secondly, it must affirm God's absolute Oneness (*tawhīd*). Thirdly, it must profess active faith in God and the last day. Finally, it should foster righteous living (*ihsān*). On the basis of these four principles, the Qur'an affirms the truth of the faith of Muslims, Jews, Christians and Sabaeans.¹⁷

The plurality of religions and scriptures arises ultimately from the great number of prophets and messengers who followed one another, from Adam to Muhammad, in a great universal procession. We rely on the Qur'anic assertion, "...There is no community (Ummah) but that a warner was sent to it" (35:24).¹⁸ Human history, according to this Qur'anic worldview, is prophetic history. Prophetic history is in reality the history of God's guidance of humankind through the mission of His prophets and messengers. Divine guidance, moreover, is promised to a heedless humanity that must be reminded again and again of its primordial covenant with God.

The Qur'an presents religion as such under two distinct, but also interrelated, dimensions. The first is institutionalized religions, such as Islam, Christianity and Judaism. These are the framework of the laws and rituals of worship, which give their followers their legal and social identity as Jews, Christians and Muslims. All three traditions should ideally constitute what the Qur'an calls, "*millat abīkum Ibrāhīm* (the religion of your father Abraham)," who called all his children Muslims. Institutionalized human religions are the necessary vehicle and framework of the inner dimension, which they represent. The Qur'an calls this inner dimension the *fiṭrah*, or original creation of God of all His human creatures. This divine pure creation is the innate capacity to know God and have faith in Him, with which every human being is born. This means that every child is born pure.

The Qur'an not only acknowledges religious diversity and plurality, it also lays down the principles that should govern inter-religious relations. It calls for respect and protection of all places of worship. God says: "... Had God not repelled some people by means of others, synagogues and churches, mosques and monasteries in which God's name is mentioned, would have been demolished...." (22:40).¹⁹ Neither the Qur'an nor the Prophetic tradition demands of Jews and Christians

that they give up their religious identity and become Muslims unless they freely choose to do so. The basis of this religious freedom in Islam is the categorical Qur’anic assertion: “There is no compulsion in religion...” (2:256). This is a categorical command, not a statement of fact.

The Qur’an and Prophetic tradition only enjoined Muslims as well as the followers of other faiths to engage in meaningful dialogue, cooperation and agreement on basic principles. This is what the Qur’an calls “a just word of common ascent,” between Muslims and the people of the Book to worship no one except God and not take one another as lords beside God (3:64).²⁰ In fact, the legal designation of *ahl al-Kitāb* (people of the Book) has been quite fluid. It came to include more and more communities as Muslims came to know more and more religious traditions.

The challenge is for all of us to have faith in God and compete with one another in righteous works. It follows from this challenge that all people of faith respect one another and that they believe in all of God’s revelations. The Qur’an presents the followers of Islam, Christianity and Judaism not only with a great challenge, but with a great promise as well. The promise is this: “Were the people of the Book to abide by the Torah, the Gospel and that which was sent down to them from their Lord [i.e. the Qur’an], they would be nourished with provisions from above them and from beneath their feet” (5:66).

Chapter Four

Qur’anic Revealed Scripture vs. Judeo-Christian Scripture: A Muslim Perspective of the Universal and Particular in the Scriptures

Khaled Troudi

Muslims believe that the Qur’an, as the universal Guidance, is designated to provide a direct discourse that speaks to all human beings, while the particular one, the previous Judeo-Christian scriptures, has, according to the Islamic tradition, specific spiritual and temporal affairs designated to a specific nation under the leadership of God’s prophet. I examine why Muslims believe the Qur’an to be the