

# Triologue among the Abrahamic Faiths

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**W**e are undoubtedly living in the age of dialogue. Dialogue, in the sense of conversations between persons or groups is, of course, nothing new, but dialogue in the sense of Martin Buber's "I-Thou" encounter is something relatively novel. Subsequent to the Second World War there has been much ecumenical dialogue between Jews and Christians and among Christians themselves. Since the 1970s, Jewish-Christian dialogue has been expanded in some places to include Muslims and has popularly come to be known as "trialogue". It is my good fortune that I was invited to be part of the first major triologue of about 20 Jewish, Christian and Muslim scholars which was initiated by the Kennedy Institute of Ethics in Washington DC in the late 1970s and continued until the mid-1980s.

Another triologue, which began in the 1980s and continued for a number of years, was that of Jewish and Christian women, with myself as its sole Muslim member. This triologue was sponsored by the American Jewish Committee and Church Women United in New York. Another long-lasting triologue of which I became a part was sponsored by the National Conference of Christians and Jews. This triologue, which consisted of about 30 scholars, continued until 1994. In addition to these long-term dialogues I

have had the privilege of participating in many interreligious conferences bringing together adherents of the three Abrahamic faiths—Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

What I state in this paper thus comes from more than two decades of intensive and extensive involvement in a variety of dialogues in many countries. It is very difficult for me to express in words what I have learned and gained from these experiences. Suffice it to say that they have not only enriched but transformed my life, and that through them I found a community of faith which has been a source of great strength and support to me in more ways than I can enumerate. As I share my reflections on the problems and possibilities of triologue among the Abrahamic faiths, I want to express my deep gratitude to all those partners in dialogue—Jews, Christians and Muslims—who helped me to know and to grow. It is because of them that interreligious dialogue became for me not something I do for academic credit or social pleasure, but a life-commitment.

## **Muslim Hesitancy**

Central as triologue has been to my life for more than two decades I do not regard either organising a triologue or participating in one as an easy enterprise. Anyone who has ever

tried to organise a dialogue or triologue involving Muslims knows how difficult it is to find Muslims who are able and willing to engage in such encounters. There are a number of reasons why Muslims are reluctant to participate in a dialogue with non-Muslims. Some Muslims see it as a plot to draw Muslims in and drain them of emotional and spiritual resources through the illusion of an idealism that does not go beyond words. Others see it as a threat to their Muslim identity. Yet others see it or pretend to see it as unnecessary: they feel that there is really nothing to talk about. Islam is a simple and clear faith and you can either take it or leave it.

I, as a Muslim, am acutely and painfully aware of the negative consequences that follow from the unwillingness of Muslims to represent Islam or to let a non-Muslim speak for Islam. My personal commitment to interreligious dialogue arises from my sense of responsibility as a Muslim to share my perception of Islam with those who stand outside my tradition. Like other Muslims, I am indignant about the caricatures of Islam that have been popularised in the West since the confrontation between Muslims and the world of Christendom during the early centuries of Islam. However, since attention focused on the so-called Islamic revival through the impact of events such as the Arab oil embargo of 1973, the Iranian Revolution, the resistance by Afghan Mujahideen to Soviet occupation and intervention, and other momentous events such as the Salman Rushdie crisis, there seems to be an awareness among more thoughtful Westerners that the West has read Islam too simplistically and superficially, and that trying to understand the enigmatic world of Islam through categories alien to its deeper ethos may ultimately prove to be fruitless.

While the point that the Western world has not understood Islam aright (and seems now to

be paying for this failure in perception) needs to be made, it also needs to be said that Muslims themselves have generally neither undertaken the critical self-study which is a prerequisite for self-understanding, nor interpreted their religion for other people. A partial explanation of this attitude may be found in the claim of Arnold Toynbee in his book *An Historian's Approach to Religion* (1956) that all three religions of revelation which spring from a common historical root—Judaism, Christianity and Islam—not only have a tendency towards exclusivism and intolerance, but also to ascribe to themselves an ultimate validity. Muslims, who consider themselves to be the recipients of God's final revelation, have taken the truth of Islam to be self-evident. They have expressed little interest in having an open-ended philosophical and theological dialogue with people of other faiths, except perhaps in places where they have formed a minority component in a pluralistic environment. Also, the fact that until colonial times it was relatively easy for Muslims to assume the superiority of Islam to all other religions is, at least in part, responsible for their unwillingness to probe deeply into the nature and implications of their Islamic identity.

### **The Need for Triologue**

For many reasons, then, Muslims are rather new, and sometimes hesitant, entrants in the field of ecumenical dialogue. There are, however, at least three reasons why it is vitally important for Muslims to participate in such dialogue. The first relates to Islam's contemporary situation. To quote Wilfred Cantwell Smith:

Islam is today living through that crucial creative moment in which the heritage of its past is being transformed into the herald

of its future. Outsiders may study, analyse, interpret the process; Muslims themselves not only may but must participate in it. For both outsiders and Muslims the most important, most interesting chapter in Islamic history is the one that is today in process of being enacted.<sup>1</sup>

The second reason relates to the issue of peacemaking. The three Abrahamic faiths are an important element in numerous conflicts in the world today. In order that the resources of these faith-traditions may be used constructively as a basis for conflict-resolution rather than destructively it is necessary to have a tripartite "I-Thou" encounter so that the mistrust and fear generated by ignorance or prejudice are dispelled. In my opinion, bilateral dialogues such as those between Jews and Christians, or Christians and Marxists, although historically significant, no longer provide the best framework for the kind of dialogue needed at the start of the new millennium.

Some people assume that dialogue between two parties is easier than dialogue between three parties. I do not believe that this assumption is necessarily valid. On the basis of my lived experience I consider triologue to be in some respects easier than dialogue, the third party often serving as a kind of neutral (or non-aligned) entity able to monitor or moderate the discussion between the two others. The mere presence of a third party adds an entirely new dimension to the process. It not only lends the encounter a broader base but also makes it more real given the actualities of the world. To exclude Abraham's youngest offspring—Islam, comprising more than a billion human beings—

from a discussion of what forms the core of the Abrahamic faiths is surely not a minor omission. I hope that the situation will change; perhaps it is already changing since more and more people are becoming interested in the concept of triologue.

The third reason is that there are many areas of concern to modern humanity where Islamic insights may prove of vital interest and significance. To give two examples: in recent years much work has been done by theologians analysing women-related issues in the context of Jewish and Christian scriptures. On the basis of my similar work in the context of the Qur'an, I believe that Islam has some new ideas to offer here which might be of great benefit to women in the other two traditions. Another area in which the Islamic perspective can be very useful is in any discussion of what is sometimes described as "the new socialism" of Latin America and other Third World countries, relating to the search for an alternative to traditional capitalism and traditional socialism.

Having pointed out why I think Muslims should be included in Jewish-Christian and other dialogues, I would like to speak briefly about the Islamic basis for interreligious dialogue. Before one can talk of what is "Islamic", one must obviously first define what "Islam" is. A good deal of confusion exists regarding the term "Islam" in the mind of an "average" Muslim. To such a Muslim, "Islam" consists of the Qur'an (the Book of Revelation), the *sunnah* and *hadith* (the practice and the oral traditions of the Prophet), the *madahib* (the schools of law or the science of Islamic jurisprudence) and the *shari'a* (the divinely ordained code of human conduct). If all of these so-called sources of Islam formed

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1. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Islam in Modern History* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 3.

one homogeneous body of knowledge one could perhaps use the word “Islamic” to cover them all. This, however, is not the case. Not only are there numerous problems of inconsistency between the *hadith* literature and the schools of law, for instance, but it also does not seem possible, in my opinion, for the content of all the different sources of Islam to be reducible to one single, coherent body of knowledge. In order to avoid confusion, therefore, when I speak of Islamic theory I confine the term “Islamic” to what is contained in the Qur’an, the revelation upon which Islam is founded. Here I would like to make a brief point about the Qur’an and what it means to Muslims.

It is not realised fully even by many scholars of Islam that to Muslims, the Qur’an is “the Mother of All Books” and entirely non-human in nature. There are other books of revelation which are held to be sacred by the adherents of different faiths, but in most cases there is also a human element to be found in these books since their author or authors, although believed to be divinely inspired, are yet acknowledged to be human. This is not how Muslims perceive the Qur’an. For them, the Qur’an is the actual Word of God transmitted by the Archangel Gabriel, the angel of prophecy, to Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, who transmitted it to the first Muslims without any change or error. Nothing is more offensive to Muslims than the statement “Muhammad says in the Qur’an”, which appears like a refrain in many books on Islam by non-Muslim writers. In my judgement, the kind of authority which the Qur’an has over the lives of Muslims must be understood before there can be any meaningful discussion of Islam.

Taking the Qur’an, then, to be the central document on which normative Islam is founded, I would like to speak about Islam’s

attitude to Jews and Christians as understood through a study of Qur’anic statements and symbols. I would like particularly to focus on three symbols: Abraham, Jerusalem and the Ka’ba (the cube-shaped shrine housing the Black Stone in the Sacred Mosque in Mecca).

### Abraham

The symbol of Abraham as the father of the three Abrahamic faiths has been much emphasised in interreligious dialogue among Jews, Christians and Muslims. He was a symbol of unity referred to by the Egyptian President Anwar Sadat during his historic visit to Jerusalem. It is important to understand how special Abraham is to Muslims. Not only is he the prophet most often mentioned in the Qur’an after Muhammad, but he is also regarded in a significant way as being the first “Muslim”. The Qur’an repeatedly describes Abraham as *hanif*, or one who turns away from all that is not-God to submit to God’s law and order. The Islamic tradition sees Abraham as a unifying figure whom all three Abrahamic traditions can look back to and claim as their own.

The prominence given to Abraham by the Qur’an and by the Islamic tradition is evident throughout the most significant as well as the most spectacular social ritual of the Muslim world: the *hajj*, or pilgrimage to Mecca. The Qur’an portrays Abraham and his son Ishmael as the builders of the Ka’ba and states that God had commanded Abraham to proclaim the first pilgrimage (Sura 22:26–9). During the *hajj* all pilgrims pray at the Station (*Maqam*) of Abraham. Then there is commemoration and ritual enactment of the frantic search for water by Abraham’s servant Hagar to quench their son Ishmael’s thirst as she ran seven times between the hills of Safa and Marwah. The appearance of the Well of Zam Zam, to whose

waters medicinal powers are attributed, is associated with the infant Ishmael beating the earth with his legs. The stoning of the devil and the sacrifice ceremony at the end of the *hajj* are also associated with Abraham.

According to the Qu'ran, Abraham was one of God's chosen ones, blest both in this world and the hereafter: "And who turns away from the religion of Abraham but such as debase their souls with folly? Him we chose and rendered pure in this world, and he will be in the hereafter in the ranks of the righteous" (Sura 2:130).

The Qu'ran refers to Abraham as the friend of God: "Who can be better in religion than one who submits his whole self to God, does good, and follows the way of Abraham the *hanif*? For God did take Abraham for a friend" (Sura 4:125).

Sura 37: 83–4 points out that Abraham approached God with a heart and mind in total accord with the will of the creator and that God recognised and rewarded the faith of Abraham.

In his poetry, Muhammad Iqbal, modern Islam's most outstanding poet-philosopher, frequently pictures Abraham as an iconoclast breaking the idols of his pagan father Azar. To Iqbal it is necessary to negate all that is not-God (signified by the "la" in the "la ilaha illa Allah" [there is no god but God] of the Islamic *shahada*, or confession of faith) before God's existence can be affirmed.

Iqbal's motif captures the spirit of the Qur'anic epithet *hanif*, which refers not only to a belief in the one God but also to a complete refusal to associate anything or anyone with God. Abraham is *hanif* precisely because he upheld the oneness and allness of God in the face of all opposition and obstacles: "They say: 'Become Jews or Christians if ye would be guided.' Say thou: 'Nay! [I would rather] the religion of

Abraham the *hanif*. And he joined not gods with God'" (Sura 2:135).

It is evident that the prominence given to Abraham by the Islamic tradition is grounded in the very revelation upon which Islam is founded. But although the Qu'ran stresses that Abraham was "neither a Jew nor a Christian" (and is thus a symbol of unity rather than division), it also repeats with force and clarity that Islam is a confirmation and a continuation of the message given by God to all the prophets before Muhammad:

It is he who sent down to thee [step by step], in truth, the Book, confirming what went before it. And he sent down the Law [of Moses] and the Gospel [of Jesus] before this, as a guide to humankind, and he sent down the criterion of judgement between right and wrong. (Sura 3:3)

### Direction of Prayer

In view of the linkage between Islam and the Hebrew prophets, it is hardly surprising that the early Muslims prayed facing Jerusalem, the "holy" city revered by both Jews and Christians. The *hijra* (migration) of the Prophet and the Muslims from Mecca to Medina occurred in 622 CE. A Qur'anic revelation later decreed that the direction of prayer (*qibla*) be changed from Jerusalem to Mecca. A number of non-Muslims writers explain this change by saying it was due to the growing tension between the Jews and Muhammad, or that it was motivated by a desire to break away from the religious tie with the Jewish and Christian heritage and establish a national state. These explanations offend Muslims mainly because the underlying implication is that the Qur'an is not the word of God but the work of Muhammad, who at different times issued statements

designed to meet various political needs or expediencies. From an Islamic standpoint any suggestion that Muhammad manipulated the revelation in any way is tantamount to casting doubt upon the authenticity of the Islamic religious tradition in toto.

If one looks at the question of the change in *qibla* from the point of view of a Muslim who accepts that the directive came not from Muhammad but from God, how is one to understand the reason for and meaning of this change? An examination of the relevant Qur'anic passage is all important and provides many significant insights:

The fools among the people will say: "What hath turned them from the *qibla* to which they were used?" Say: "To God belong both East and West: he guideth whom he will to a way that is straight"...We appointed the *qibla* to which thou wast used only to test those who followed the apostle from those who would turn on their heels [from the faith]...We see the turning of thy face [for guidance] to the heavens: now shall we turn thee to a *qibla* that shall please thee. Turn then thy face in the direction of the Sacred Mosque; wherever ye are, turn your faces in that direction. (Sura 2:142-4)

One meaning of *qibla* is the direction in which Muslims turn their faces when they pray, and in this sense the Qur'anic passage above decrees a change in *qibla*: the Muslims are commanded to turn towards the Sacred Mosque in Mecca when they pray. But *qibla* also represents the focal point of the aspirations and ideals of the Islamic community and in this sense there was no change in *qibla*, since the house of God (the Sacred Mosque) built by Abraham who founded the *din* (religion) of Islam was, from the first, the

intended centre and unifying symbol of the Muslim *umma* (community).

An idea that finds frequent expression in the Qur'an is that God will test the faith of all who profess to believe in him. It is significant that according to the Qur'an, God designated the Ka'ba at Mecca as the *qibla* in order to "test those who followed the Apostle". The Qur'an recognises that this "change" would cause all except those guided by God to turn their backs on the Islamic faith even though the appointment of the *qibla* at the Ka'ba is a "favour" done to the Muslims by God since that was the "*qibla* to which thou wast used".

The question arises: why should the change in the direction of prayer be so momentous and why should it be regarded as a test of faith? It is hardly likely that Jerusalem was so important to the early Muslims that making the *qibla* to be the Ka'ba (which had been sacred to the Arabs since antiquity) would bring about a serious moral dilemma. Nor does it seem likely that the problem of the coexistence of Muslims and Jews in Medina would have been much affected, either positively or negatively, by the change of *qibla*. In my judgement, what the Qur'anic passage about the *qibla* is pointing at is that the Muslims' *umma* has come, both historically and spiritually, to the end of one phase of development and is about to enter a new one, and that in order to enter the new phase an act of faith, of accepting the will of God, is required, and this is where the test lies. (It is also of interest to observe here that at the time when the Ka'ba at Mecca was appointed the *qibla*, it was in the possession of the pagan Quraysh tribe, which was determined to wipe out Islam. It took an act of faith to believe that the Ka'ba would be purged of its profanities and delivered into the hands of the Muslims to be resanctified by them.)

From the beginning, Islam had been proud of its Abrahamic heritage and the early Muslims had turned their faces towards Jerusalem as they prayed in order to affirm their linkage with the People of the Book (Jews and Christians), just as the early Christians had insisted upon their connection with Israel. However, with the establishment of the first Islamic society in Medina came the time and necessity to stress not only the link of Islam with Abraham and Jerusalem, but the link of Abraham to all humanity. Jerusalem, the *qibla* of the People of the Book, had become associated with the exclusivism characteristic of Jews and Christians. The Jews regarded themselves as the “Chosen People” and the Christians also made special claims to salvation through their belief in Jesus Christ. By turning the attention of the Muslim *umma* from Jerusalem to Mecca, the Qu’ran was, in fact, bringing about a profound change in perspective. The conflict underlying the need for this change was not the localised antagonism between the Muslims and the Jews in Medina, as is frequently suggested by non-Muslim writers, but a much wider opposition between the principles of exclusivism and universalism.

### Islamic Universalism

Anyone who has read the Qur’an without bias is aware that Islam is truly universal in its ideals. In this context it is interesting to note that while the Old Testament frequently talks of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the Qur’an never does. It describes Islam as the *din* of Abraham and the prophets but does not describe God as the God of Abraham or the God of Muhammad. In the opening chapter of the Qur’an, God is described as “Rabb al-‘Alamin”, the God of all the universes and

peoples. The Qur’an testifies that the message it contains is universal: “Blessed is he who sent down the criterion (Qur’an) to his servant, that it may be an admonition to all creatures” (Sura 25:1). “Verily this is no less than a message to [all] the worlds...” (Sura 81:27).

The non-exclusive spirit of Islam also comes through the oft-repeated teaching of the Qur’an in verses such as the following:

Those who believe [in the Qur’an] and those who follow the Jewish [scriptures], and the Christians and the Sabaeans, and those who believe in God and the last day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. (Sura 2:62)

To Muslims, Abraham is an embodiment of the universalism implicit in Islam and it is the Abrahamic spirit that enables Muslims to become “witnesses for humankind”:

And strive in his cause as ye ought to strive. He has chosen you, and has imposed no difficulties on you in religion; it is the cult of your father Abraham. It is he [God] who named you Muslims, both before and in this [revelation], that the Apostle may be a witness for you, and ye be witnesses for humankind. (Sura 22:78)

It is important to note that the Qur’anic verses referring to the Ka’ba (which Abraham built) relate it to all humanity and not to any specific group of people: “The first House [of worship] appointed for humanity was that at Bakka [Mecca], full of blessings and of guidance for all kinds of beings” (Sura 3:96). In my judgement, on the basis of such verses, there is a clear case for making Mecca an open city. It is hard to see how the government

of Saudi Arabia can deny non-Muslims access to Mecca in view of the unambiguous Qur'anic statements asserting that the Ka'ba is a sanctuary for all humankind.

At this point let me pause for an instant and note that what I have said so far pertains to Islamic ideals or norms as projected by the Qur'an. But a faith-tradition is not only what its theory is, but also what its practice is. Although the Qur'an reiterates with great clarity and emphasis that Islam is a confirmation of previous scriptures, that it continues and completes the message given to Jews and Christians, that God is the God of all people and not of Muslims alone, many Muslims in practice have adopted the same kind of exclusivism for which they have criticised Jews and Christians. While they accept that all the prophets and scriptures were sent by God and endorse the same *din*, many Muslims do not understand how valid Judaism or Christianity are in view of the doctrine of *naskh* (abrogation) whereby the later revelation supersedes the earlier revelations.

Most Muslims would seem to believe that although Judaism and Christianity are "true" religions "in essence", they have been changed and corrupted in the course of history and can in no way be considered superior or equal to Islam. In actuality, therefore, many Muslims feel as triumphalistic about their religious tradition being the final one as do many Jews and Christians, and believe that they have the right to be recognised as God's special envoys to a "fallen" humankind. If I were asked the question, "How have Muslims viewed Jews and Christians in human, as well as in theological terms?" my answer would be that Muslims have mixed feelings about the *Ahl al-Kitab* (People of the Book). Jews and Christians are to be preferred to the *kafirun*, who do not

believe in God, but they are still to be regarded as people who have misunderstood and misrepresented God's eternal message.

### **Attitudes towards Jews**

In some ways Muslims feel closer to Jews than to Christians because Islam and Judaism have similar legal and ethical frameworks and there are many other similarities between the two religious traditions, ranging from dietary to social habits. But in some ways, Muslims regard Jews as being more suspect, morally and religiously, than Christians. In my opinion, the negative attitude of Muslims towards Jews derives mainly from two sources. The first relates to how Muslims have read the Qur'anic passages referring to Jews and Christians. Most Muslims would agree that the Qur'an, while denying the Christian belief that Jesus is the Son of God, nevertheless commends Christians for their gentleness, compassion and humility. But Muslims would argue that the Qur'an is very critical of Jews for being callous, calculating, hard-hearted, arrogant, hypocritical and disobedient to God. In general, Muslims have believed that according to Qur'anic teachings, Jews were chosen for God's special favours but due to their constant falling away from his will, were rejected by him. The "brutal love-affair" between God and Israel is finally over.

There is no doubt that the Qur'an chastises Jews numerous times. But I do not believe that the Qur'anic censure of Jews adds up to a rejection of Jews by God. If the convenantal relationship between God and Jews is no longer operative, why does the Qur'an devote so much time and space to talking to and about "the Children of Israel"? Why does the Qur'an address so many exhortations to "the Children of Israel" if they have been abandoned by God? If God is presently



concerned only with Muslims, why does the Qur'an talk about the relationship between God and "the Children of Israel" not only in the past tense but also in the present tense? The following Qur'anic passage is cited to show that the relationship between God and "the Children of Israel" is a continuing one. The tone is sometimes disapproving, but the intent is positive:

Children of Israel! Call to mind the favour which I bestowed upon you, and fulfil my covenant with me as I fulfil my covenant with you, and fear none but me. And believe in what I reveal, confirming the revelation which is with you, and be not the first to reject faith therein, nor sell my signs for a small price; and fear me, and me alone. And cover not truth with falsehood, nor conceal the truth when ye know [what it is]...Do ye enjoin right conduct on the people and forget [to practise it] yourselves and yet ye study the scriptures? Will ye not understand? (Sura 2:40-4)

The second reason for negative Muslim attitudes towards Jews derives mainly from the way Muslims have interpreted the initial phase of Islamic history, namely the decade following the Prophet's migration in 622 CE from Mecca to Medina, where the first Islamic society was established. During this critical period there was much tension between Muslims and Jews in Medina. This historical fact has coloured the subsequent history of Muslim-Jewish relations very significantly because it has been assumed by many Muslims (as also perhaps by many Jews) that history is normative, that if Jews acted in a hostile way towards Muslims in the first phase of Islamic history they would always do so.

### **United in God**

I believe that it is very important to recognise what the basic sources of our interreligious attitudes and prejudices are. Once we have identified the sources, it is to be hoped we can find a way to deal with the problems deriving from them. History cannot be changed, but our attitude towards history and our interpretation of it may be modified through interreligious dialogue based upon our common conviction that the same God created us all, sustains us all and loves us all. I would like to end by quoting from a statement entitled "In the Name of God", which was issued by members of the triologue at the Kennedy Institute in 1980 and which seems to me to reflect the hope and prayer of all God-loving, peace-loving, justice-loving Jews, Christians and Muslims of today's strife-torn world:

"We are a group of Jewish, Christian and Muslim scholars committed to our respective traditions who have been meeting together for several years. In a joint statement of goals and directions adopted in the spring of 1979, we said: 'We come together not only as scholars, but as men and women of faith whose traditions, Abrahamic in origin, affirm God the creator, who makes moral demands on and offers hope to all people and all nations... We share a common belief that although religion has played a role in the conflicts which plague the world today, in the Middle East and elsewhere, religion has the potential for being a large part of the solution. Hence we share a common hope that the potential for peace lies within the three traditions we represent.

"We find it necessary to speak again because we are profoundly troubled by the deterioration of the state of the world since 1979. While it is easy enough to see that religion has contributed towards creating or aggravating a number of current problems, it

is not easy to see its healing and reconciling power in a world which is more and more divided by hatred and hostility blasphemously proclaimed in the name of God. We are greatly pained by the fact, which has become clear to us in our meeting, that religious ideas and sentiments are being manipulated to distort and sometimes even destroy the fundamental truth of our religious traditions.

“We recognise that in many cases the issues involved in the conflicts between the three Abrahamic communities or peoples are by no means simple, and we understand how each community may come to perceive its own stance as being morally and religiously justified. Nonetheless, we continue to believe that God, who created all human beings, extends his care and compassion to all who believe in him and strive earnestly to act in accordance with his revealed will, and that it cannot be pleasing to God that those who profess to love him do not love each other. God’s command is clear and the issue before us is obedience.

“Surrounded as we are by tensions and

dissensions, we have found in our continuing meetings that we are able to affirm each other as Jews, Christians and Muslims and have therefore not lost sight of the peace imperative which is deeply embedded in the Jewish-Christian-Islamic traditions. At the same time, we believe that in a fundamental way commitment to peace entails commitment to justice, and that without justice there can be no real or lasting peace. Peace and justice are mutually reinforcing and cannot be opposed to each other.

“As Jews, Christians and Muslims we believe that God is the source for all our life and that we must seek to emulate his attributes. Not only do we believe that he is just but that his mercy is overflowing. If we can remember how greatly—both as individuals and as communities—we are in need of the compassion of God, perhaps it would help us to find within ourselves and our traditions the resources for transcending that history of conflicts which makes it so difficult for us to enter into a co-operative and loving relationship with each other and hence with our Creator.”

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