

## Fast 22: Can non-Muslims preach their religions to Muslims? (1)

- It is generally held by Muslim scholars that in a country governed by the laws of Islam, while non-Muslims are entitled to practise their own religions and teach them within their own communities, they should be prohibited from preaching them to Muslims. This view seems to contradict the following principles of the Quran:

“There is no compulsion in religion — the right way is indeed clearly distinct from error.” (2:256)

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ ۗ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ  
مِنَ الْغَيِّ ۗ

“And say: The Truth is from your Lord; so let him who please believe and let him who please disbelieve.” (18:29)

وَقُلِ الْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّكُمْ ۖ فَمَن شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَ  
مَن شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفُرْ ۗ

If the “right way”, the way of Islam, is “clearly distinct from error”, this can obviously only be seen by contrasting the two of them. Therefore, those whom we hold to be in error must be allowed to put forward their beliefs to us freely. Religion does not require acceptance by compulsion because the very way it works is to make the “right way” distinct from the wrong paths and to offer people the choice of accepting it or not. The second verse above gives people freedom to accept or reject the truth of Islam. Therefore, people have the right to study and consider other faiths, which can only happen if followers of those faiths can present their religions.

- Jews and Christians were allowed invite Muslims to their religions:

“And they say: Be Jews or Christians, you will be on the right course. Say: Rather, (we follow) the religion of Abraham, the upright one, and he was not of those who set up partners (with Allah).” (2:135)

وَقَالُوا كُونُوا هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَى تَهْتَدُوا ۗ  
قُلْ بَلْ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا ۗ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ  
الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٣٥﴾

Here Jews and Christians, each in their own way, are inviting Muslims to follow their faiths, and Muslims respond by telling them why they follow Islam.

- It is stated that the opponents of the messengers carry on a disputation with them:

“And We do not send messengers but as givers of good news and warning, **and those who disbelieve contend by means of falsehood** to weaken

وَمَا نُرْسِلُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ إِلَّا مُبَشِّرِينَ وَ  
مُنذِرِينَ ۗ وَيُجَادِلُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِالْبَاطِلِ

thereby the Truth, and they take My messages and the warning for a mockery.” (18:56)

لِيُدْحِضُوا بِهِ الْحَقَّ وَاتَّخِذُوا آيَاتِي وَمَا

أَنْذِرُوا هُزُؤًا ﴿٥٦﴾

“And if they argue with you (O Prophet), say: Allah best knows what you do. Allah will judge between you on the day of Resurrection in that in which you differ.” (22:68–69)

وَإِنْ جَادَلْتُمْ فَقُلْ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

﴿٦٨﴾ اللَّهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فِيمَا

كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾

There is no indication or implication in the Quran that the arguing by the unbelievers is prohibited once Muslims acquire power and rule in the country.

- The Quran gives guidance to Muslims on how to “argue” with others. The first verse below was quoted in another Study as well:

“Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, **and argue with them in the best manner.**” (16:125)

أُدْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ  
الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ

“**And do not argue with the People of the Book except by what is best,** save such of them as act unjustly. But say: We believe in what has been revealed to us and revealed to you, and our God and your God is One, and to Him we submit.” (29:46)

وَلَا تَجَادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ  
أَحْسَنُ ۗ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ وَقَوْلُوا  
أَمَّا بِالَّذِي أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَأُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ وَ  
إِلَهِنَا وَإِلَهُكُمْ وَاحِدٌ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ

﴿٤٦﴾

An argument conducted in the “best” (*aḥsan* احسن) manner is **not** a heated, emotionally-charged argument, **nor** one in which foul-mouthed and sarcastic language is used, **nor** one intended to humiliate the opponent, **nor** does it have the aim of scoring debating points. It is conducted rationally, calmly and politely, with an exchange of views. In holding such an argument, clearly the other side must present its case in response to the Muslim case. And the argument must be heard, or followed by, an audience or readership containing members of both parties. So the non-Muslim representatives in the argument will be preaching their religion to Muslims!

The word for “contending” or “arguing” in the last four verses quoted above is the same: *jādāl* (جادل).

- In view of the above, it is plainly absurd and contrary to the Quran to suggest that non-Muslims are not allowed to preach to Muslims. More on this in the next Study.