

Shirk: the Unforgiveable Sin of Christianity

There is an unforgiveable sin in Islam that pertains in particular to Christians: *Shirk*, meaning polytheism, worshipping others along with Allah, or, in particular, saying there is a Son of God.

In the following verse of the Koran, Allah provides a list of things he has prohibited, beginning with *Shirk*:

Chapter 6, Verse 151

Say (O Muhammad): " Come, I will recite what your Lord has prohibited you from: Join not anything in worship with him...This He has commanded you that you may understand."

Our modern *Tafsir Ahsanul-Bayan* explained this verse:

That is, Allah has commanded you not to join others with Him in worship because it is the greatest sin, a sin which is unpardonable. Allah has banned Paradise for those who commit the sin of shirk and Hell is their inevitable lot. This warning is repeated often in the Qur'an, and hadeeths. But, despite all these warnings, people are often lured away by the devil to this very sin.

Tafsir Ahsanul-Bayan, Vol. 2, p. 119

So Christians have been *lured* to Christianity by the devil.

The Koran also states that *Shirk* is the one sin that Allah will not forgive:

Chapter 4, Verse 48

Verily, Allah forgives not that partners should be set up with him (in worship), but He forgives except that (anything else) to whom He wills; and whoever sets up partners with Allah in worship, he has indeed invented a tremendous sin.

The modern *Tafsir Ahsanul-Bayan* reiterated:

As for shirk (ascribing partners to Allah), Allah will never forgive that, because He has prohibited Paradise for those who commit shirk, the unforgivable sin.

Tafsir Ahsanul-Bayan, Vol. 1, p. 463

And this was repeated in another verse:

Chapter 4, Verse 116

Verily, Allah forgives not (the sin of) setting up partners (in worship) with Him, but He forgives whom He wills, sins other than that, and whoever sets up partners in worship with Allah, has indeed strayed far away.

Ibn Kathir said this verse meant that anyone who set up partners in worship with Allah

will have taken other than the true path, deviated from guidance and

righteousness, destroyed himself in this life and the Hereafter, and lost contentment in this life and the Hereafter.

Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Vol. 2, p. 583

Allah curses Christians and calls them liars because they believe Jesus is the Son of God:

Chapter 9, Verse 30

And the Jews say: 'Uzair (Ezra) is the son of Allah, and the Christians say: Messiah is the son of Allah. That is their saying with their mouths, resembling the saying of those who disbelieved aforetime. Allah's curse be on them, how they are deluded away from the truth!

The Koran specifically states that those engaging in *Shirk* will have terror cast into their hearts and they will go to Hell:

Chapter 3, Verse 151

We shall cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve, because they joined others in worship with Allah, for which He had sent no authority; their abode will be the Fire and how evil is the abode of the Zalimun (polytheists and wrongdoers).

This was repeated in another verse:

Chapter 5, Verse 72

Surely, they have disbelieved who say: "Allah is the Messiah [‘Isa (Jesus)], son

of Maryam (Mary). "... Verily, whosoever sets up partners (in worship) with Allah, then Allah has forbidden Paradise to him, and the Fire will be his abode...

And there are additional verses in the Koran condemning *Shirk* and those who engage in it, e.g., 2:22, 2:116, 16:86, 18:4-5, 18:102, 19:37, 19:88-95, 23:117, 27:59-60, 31:13, and 39:64-65.

Muhammad also reported that *Shirk* was unforgivable:

Imam Ahmad recorded that Abu Dharr said that the Messenger of Allah said, Allah said, "O My servant! As long as you worship and beg Me, I will forgive you, no matter your shortcomings. O My servant! If you meet Me with the earth's fill of sin, yet you do not associate any partners with Me, I will meet you with its fill of forgiveness."

Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Vol. 2, p. 482

Muhammad said that *Shirk* was the first of the "great destructive sins":

Narrated Abu Hurairah: The Prophet said, "Avoid seven great destructive sins." They (the people) asked, "O Allah's Messenger! What are they?" He said, (they are): (1) To join partners in worship with Allah...

Sahih Al-Bukhari, No. 6857

And Muhammad said that those engaging in *Shirk* would go to Hell:

Narrated 'Abdullah: The Prophet said one statement and I said another. The Prophet said "Whoever dies while still invoking anything other than Allah as a rival to Allah, will enter Hell (Fire)." And I said, "Whoever dies without invoking anything as a rival to Allah, will enter Paradise."

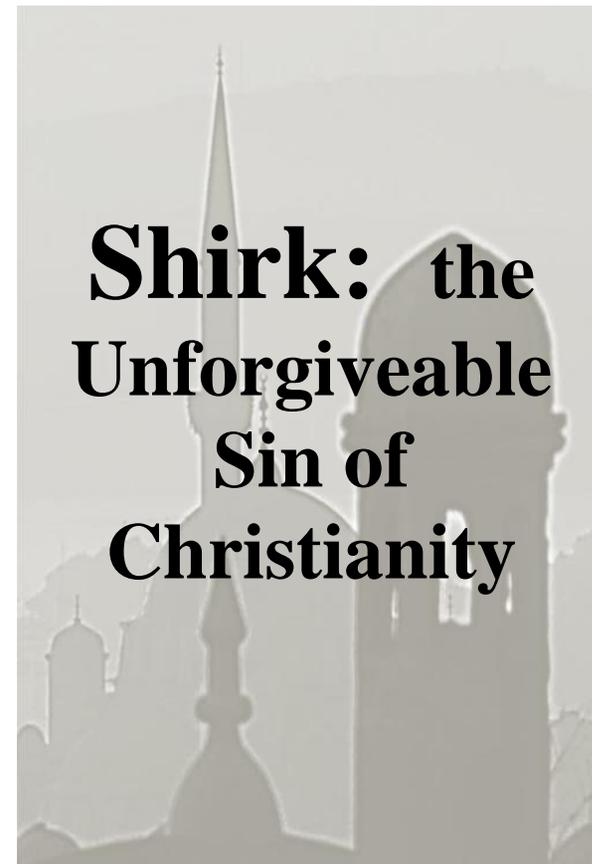
Sahih Al-Bukhari, No. 4497

Therefore, Christians, by definition, commit the one unforgiveable sin in Islam that condemns them to the Fires of Hell.

What kind of "interfaith dialogue" can Muslims have with Christians when Islam teaches that the followers of Christianity are condemned to Hell? What kind of "interfaith dialogue" can take place when Islam is viewed as the true religion and Christianity is viewed as a lie? From the Muslim perspective, what does Christianity have to contribute in such a dialogue?

But this is just one aspect of the challenge facing the idea of "interfaith dialogues" between Muslims, Christians, and Jews. For additional aspects of this challenge, see the brochures *What the Koran says about Jews and Christians*, *What Muhammad said about Jews and Christians*, and *Don't Take Jews and Christians as Friends?*.

Dr. Kirby is the author of six books on Islam. His latest book is *Islamic Doctrine versus the U.S. Constitution: The Dilemma for Muslim Public Officials*. His books are available on Amazon.com.



Part of a series on Islam

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