Abstract
The confrontation with difference is an especially large challenge when it comes to religion and religious beliefs. Because religion is integral to so many, it becomes a sticking point in negotiations, conversations, and policy development. Even for those without particularly strong religious convictions, religion must be considered in their interactions with those who do. It is precisely that interaction that I seek to further understand. Engaging in dialogue with those of different faiths or value systems brings to the surface myriad difficulties, chief among which is the challenge of simply coming together to begin the conversation. The most appealing approach to that challenge is often to find some sort of common ground on which everyone can agree, a foundation upon which relationships can be built. That common ground, however, can be just as harmful to the end-goal of dialogue as not having dialogue in the first place. Common ground approaches focus on similarities, ignoring or discounting the differences which both make us who we are and make conversations difficult to have. In ignoring differences, participants are forced to relegate salient aspects of their beliefs to a private (unseen) arena, where they may wither away, dulled from disuse, eventually no longer relevant as an identifier. The foremost question I seek to answer, then, is the following: How can religious identity be maintained in light of such approaches to dialogue?
Manchester is an example of practical success in interfaith dialogue. 10 September 2008. I was recently asked to set down my thoughts on interfaith dialogue and how it should be conducted, if at all. Having done so, I thought it might be worth sharing with a wider audience. My own e The rationale behind the interfaith forum is that global religious communities make a substantial contribution to global agendas with both practical and ethical insights. Their contributions should not be disregarded only because of their religious affiliation. Towards A More Comprehensive Interfaith Dialogue. Ewelina U. Ochab Contributor. Opinions expressed by Forbes Contributors are their own.