

# "People of The Book" & The Muslims

## The Natural Alliance Between Christianity, Judaism and Islam

H A R U N   Y A H Y A

Islam is a religion of peace, love and tolerance. Today, however, some circles have been presenting a false image of Islam, as if there were conflict between Islam and the adherents of the two other monotheistic religions. Yet Islam's view of Jews and Christians, who are named "the People of the Book" in the Koran, is very friendly and tolerant.

This attitude towards the People of the Book developed during the years of the birth of Islam. At that time, Muslims were a minority, struggling to protect their faith and suffering oppression and torture from the pagans of the city of Mecca. Due to this persecution, some Muslims decided to flee Mecca and shelter in a safe country with a just ruler. The Prophet Muhammad told them to take refuge with King Negus, the Christian king of Ethiopia. The Muslims who followed this advice found a very fair administration that embraced them with love and respect when they went to Ethiopia. King Negus refused the demands of the pagan messengers who asked him to surrender the Muslims to them, and announced that Muslims could live freely in his country.

Such attitudes of Christian people that are based on the concepts of compassion, mercy, modesty and justice, constitute a fact that God has pointed out in the Koran. A verse of the Koran states:

**... You will find the people most affectionate to those who believe are those who say, 'We are Christians.' That is because some of them are priests and monks and because they are not arrogant. (Surat al-Ma'ida, 82)**

## THE COMMON BELIEFS AND VALUES OF THE PEOPLE OF THE BOOK WITH MUSLIMS

Christian and Muslim belief have many aspects in common. Judaism too shares many beliefs with Islam. All true adherents of these three great religions:

- believe that God has created the entire universe out of nothing and that He dominates all that exists with His omnipotence.
- believe that God has created man and living things in a miraculous way and that man possesses a soul granted him by God.
- believe that besides Jesus, Moses or Muhammad, God sent many prophets such as Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Joseph throughout history, and they love all these prophets.
- believe in resurrection, Heaven and Hell and angels, and that God has created our lives with a certain destiny.

The beliefs of the People of the Book are in harmony with Muslims, not only in terms of faith-related issues, but also of moral values. Today, in a world where such immoralities as adultery, homosexuality, drug addiction and a model of egoism and self-seeking cruelty have grown widespread, the People of the Book and Muslims share the same virtues: Honor, chastity, humility, self-sacrifice, honesty, compassion, mercy and unconditional love...

## ACCORDING TO THE KORAN, MUSLIMS, JEWS AND CHRISTIANS SHOULD LIVE IN FRIENDSHIP

It is evident there are ample grounds for an alliance between the "People of the Book" and Muslims. This is also very evident in the Koran. In the relevant verses of the Koran, there is a significant difference between the People of the Book and the idolaters. This is especially emphasized in the area of social life. For example, it is said concerning the idolaters: **"(they) are unclean, so after this year they should not come near the Masjid al-Haram (Kaaba)." (Surat at-Tawba: 28)** Idolaters are people who obey no divine law, have no moral precepts and

who are capable of committing every kind of degrading and perverse action without hesitation.

But while they basically rely on God's revelation, the People of the Book have moral precepts and know what is lawful and what is not. For this reason, if one of the People of the Book cooks some food, it is lawful for Muslims to eat it. In the same way, permission has been given for a Muslim man to marry a woman from among the People of the Book. On this subject God commands:

**Today all good things have been made lawful for you. And the food of those given the Book is also lawful for you and your food is lawful for them. So are chaste women from among the believers and chaste women of those given the Book before you, once you have given them their dowries in marriage, not in fornication or taking them as lovers. But as for anyone who disbelieve, his actions will come to nothing and in the hereafter he will be among the losers. (Surat al-Mai'da: 5)**

These commands show that bonds of kinship may be established as a result of the marriage of a Muslim with a woman from the People of the Book, and that those on each side of the union can accept an invitation to a meal. These are the fundamentals that will ensure the establishment of **equitable human relationships and a happy communal life**. Since the Koran enjoins this equitable and tolerant attitude, it is unthinkable that a Muslim could take an opposing view.

## **MONASTERIES, CHURCHES AND SYNAGOGUES SHOULD BE RESPECTED**

Another important fact we learn from the Koran is that Muslims must respect Jewish and Christian places of worship. In the Koran, the places of worship of the People of the Book, i.e. monasteries, churches and synagogues, are mentioned as places of worship protected by God.

**...if God had not driven some people back by means of others, monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques, where God's name is mentioned much, would have been pulled down and destroyed. God will certainly help those who help Him - God is All-Strong, Almighty. (Surat al-Hajj: 40 )**

This verse shows all Muslims the importance of respecting and protecting the sanctuaries of Christians and Jews.

Indeed, in the Koran God commands Muslims not to harbor any enmity towards any people. In many verses, friendship is recommended, even with idolaters. God even refers to the idolaters at war with Muslims in this way: **"If any of the idolaters ask you for protection, give them protection until they have heard the words of God. Then convey them to a place where they are safe."** (Surat at-Tawba: 6)

Jews and Christians, however, are much closer to Muslims than idolaters. Each of these religions has its book, that is, they are subject to a revelation sent down by God. They know what is right and what is wrong, what is lawful and what is unlawful. They know they will give an account to God, and they love and revere His prophets. This shows that Muslims and the people of the book can live easily together and cooperate.

## **THE COMMON ENEMIES OF THE FAITH**

Another important fact that draws Christianity, Judaism and Islam together is the atheist philosophies that are so influential in our time.

Among the best-known and most harmful philosophies of our age can be cited **materialism, communism, fascism, anarchism, racism and secular humanism**. Many people who believed in the fake diagnoses, deceptive descriptions and explanations of these ideas on the universe, society and man, have lost their faith or doubted it. What is more, these ideologies have dragged people, societies and nations into great crises, conflicts and wars. Their share of the blame for the pain and troubles that humanity suffers today is immense.

While they deny God and creation, all the above-mentioned ideologies are based on a common framework, a so-called scientific basis; Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. Darwinism constitutes the basis of atheist philosophies. This theory claims that living beings have evolved as a result of coincidences and by means of a struggle for life. Therefore, Darwinism sends this deceptive message to people:

"You are not responsible to anyone, you owe your life to coincidences, you need to struggle, and if necessary to oppress others to succeed. This world is one of conflict and self-interest".

This evil morality advises people to be egoistical, self-seeking, cruel and oppressive. It destroys such virtues as mercy, compassion, self-sacrifice and humility, the moral values of the three great monotheistic religions.

This being the case, it is necessary for the people of the Book and Muslims to cooperate, since they believe in God and accept the morality that He teaches. The followers of these three religions should expose to the world the fallacy of Darwinism, which has no scientific basis, but which is trying to be preserved for the sake of materialist philosophy. They should cooperatively carry out an intellectual struggle against all other deceptive ideas that serve atheism. Once this is realized, the world will, in a very short time, embrace peace, tranquility and justice.

## **CONCLUSION: "LET US RALLY TO A COMMON FORMULA"**

At a time when anti-religious, atheist and materialist ideologies surround the world, similarities among theistic religions should be emphasized, and cooperation should be established for common aims.

Concerning the People of the Book, God gives Muslims a command in the Koran; to rally to a common formula:

**O People of the Book! Let us rally to a common formula to be binding on both us and you: That we worship none but God; that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, Lords and patrons other than God. (Surat Al 'Imran, 64)**

This is indeed our call to Christians and Jews: As people who believe in God and follow His revelations, let us rally to a common formula - "faith". Let's love God, Who is our Creator and Lord, and follow His commands. And let us pray God to lead us to an even straighter path.

When Muslims, Christians and Jews rally to a common formula this way;

When they understand that they are friends not enemies,

When they see that the real enemy is atheism and paganism,

then the world will become a very different place.

The fighting that has raged for ages, enmities, fears - and terrorist attacks - will come to an end, and a new civilization based on love, respect and peace will be established upon this "common formula".