

Christmas, Jesus & Islam



Towards Better Interfaith Relations

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Introduction

In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful

Nowadays, our Christian brothers and sisters, relatives, neighbors, and friends are celebrating Christmas. We wish them all happy holidays and guidance.

On this occasion, we launch this e-book to show how Muslims should be kind, respectful, and friendly toward people of other faiths. Being Muslim does not mean having nothing to do with one's non-Muslim family, neighbors, colleagues, or friends. Muslims are allowed to wish non-Muslims happy holidays.

In this book you can learn about:

- The Islamic ruling on celebrating Christmas and sharing non-Muslims' festive occasions;
- The Islamic view of Jesus and of his role as prophet and messenger;



- Islamic teachings on honoring and believing in all of Allah's prophets and messengers;
- Relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims.

We ask Allah Almighty to accept this humble effort, to give all people a chance to get acquainted with beautiful religion of Islam and to grant guidance to all seekers of the truth.

OnIslam Shari`ah Team

Chapter One

OK to Celebrate Christmas?





Can Muslims Celebrate Christmas?

Q Scholars of Islam, *as-salamu `alaykum wa rahmatu Allah.*

During the Christmas season, Christians all over the country illuminate their houses with lights, put up Christmas trees, and exchange gifts. TV is full of jingle bells and all the stores are decorated for Christmas. All this is very tempting to small children; children love putting up lights and decorating for holidays.

Some Muslim families also put up Christmas trees and lights to keep their children happy. They argue that Christmas is, after all, Prophet Jesus' birthday and there is no harm in celebrating Christmas as long as children are happy.

When our children started talking a few years back they started asking why we do not put up lights and trees during Christmas. I explained to them that we are Muslims



and we don't celebrate Christmas; we celebrate `Eids. To keep our children happy and to get them excited about `Eid, we started putting up lights (green and white) around the house and decorating inside the house during Ramadan until after `Eidul-Fitr and during `Eidul-Adha. We exchange gifts with our Muslims friends on both `Eids.

Alhamdulillah, our children now wait for `Eid, not for Christmas. What is the Islamic position on these issues? Can we celebrate Christmas? Is it OK to put up lights during Ramadan and `Eid?

Consultants: Dr. Muzammil Siddiqi, Sheikh Ahmad Kutty

A *Wa `alaykum as-salamu wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh.*

In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

All praise and thanks are due to Allah, and peace and blessings be upon His Messenger.



In response to the question you posed, **Dr. Muzammil H. Siddiqi**, former President of the Islamic Society of North America, states:

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said, **"Every people have their `Eid..."**

Some celebrations are of a religious nature, and some others are social and cultural. Some celebrations are based on beliefs and practices that are contrary to Islamic teachings, and some celebrations are not of that nature.

Some people claim that Christmas is now a secular holiday and it is very much an American national holiday rather than a religious holiday. But it is wrong to assume that because this holiday is national, it has ceased to be Christian. It is true that this holiday is very popular and it is extremely commercialized; nevertheless it is basically a religious holiday. Its very name and all its symbolism is Christian through and through.



Christians celebrate at Christmas what they believe to be the "day of the birth of God's Son" or what they call "God Incarnate". Thus it is not only a celebration of another religion, it is also a celebration that is based on a belief that is totally against the teachings of Islam. From the Islamic point of view, the belief in the "Son of God" or "God in the flesh" is a blasphemy and *kufr* (denial of God's Oneness). By participation in Christmas, it is possible that slowly one may lose his or her consciousness of this basic point of difference. Muslims must be very careful in this matter.

The greatest danger is for our next generation, who may slowly lose their Islamic faith in *tawhid* and may start believing in Jesus as "more than a prophet and servant of Allah". The argument that "Christmas is, after all, Prophet Jesus' birthday and so there is no harm in celebrating Christmas" is neither logical nor Islamic. Why should Muslims celebrate Jesus'



birthday? Why not the birthdays of the other 24 prophets and messengers who are mentioned in the Qur'an by name?

For us, Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) is the final Prophet and Messenger of Allah, not Jesus. Christians believe that Jesus was the last one and they say that:

"after God spoke through many prophets ... in these last days he spoke to us through his son whom he made to inherit every thing" (New Testament, Hebrews 1:1).

Thus they celebrate his coming, but for us Muslims, Prophet Muhammad was the last Prophet and Allah appointed him for all people and for all times to come.

I do agree that our little children are deeply affected with the festivities and glitter of this



holiday. We should try to take them to some Islamic camps and conferences at this time and give them some other alternate programs and activities. But Muslim families should not have Christmas trees in their homes, nor should they put up lights inside or outside their homes at this time.

We should tell our children that we are Muslims and this is not our holiday. This is the holiday of our Christian neighbors and friends.

I am pleased to know that you celebrate Ramadan and `Eids with lights and decoration of your home and exchange gifts with your children. This is very thoughtful, indeed. It is good to decorate our homes and masjids during Ramadan and for `Eids. It is mentioned in one of the Hadiths that even the heaven is especially decorated during the month of Ramadan. Allah



Almighty closes the gates of Hell and opens the gates of Paradise during the month of Ramadan.

We Muslims should give special attention to our own Islamic holidays. In this way our children will be attracted to our own celebrations rather than looking at others.

Unfortunately, there are some Muslims who do not pay any attention to Ramadan and `Eids. Some of them do not even come to `Eid prayers and even if they come, they do not take their day off from work. Thus their children have no idea about Islamic holidays or they think that Islam is a religion without any festivals and celebrations.”

Explaining the reasons why Muslims do not celebrate and believe in Christmas, **Sheikh Ahmad Kutty**, a senior lecturer and Islamic scholar at the Islamic Institute of Toronto, Ontario, Canada, states:



Christmas was a pagan custom which was adopted into Christianity; it has nothing to do with reverence and love of Jesus, the mighty Messenger of Allah that we Muslims hold in the highest regard and respect. If Jesus were to come today, whether or not he would identify himself with those who celebrate Christmas is a question one should ask seriously.

If we are celebrating the great teachings of Jesus or other prophets, we must do so everyday. To do so means to practice love, mercy, justice and compassion and to be actively engaged in doing the will of God.

Allah Almighty knows best.



Congratulating Non-Muslims on Their Festive Occasions

Q Dear scholars, as-salamu `alaykum. Would you please shed light on the ruling of congratulating non-Muslims on their festive occasions. Please explain this issue in detail, such as congratulating them for their different festivities including national ones as well as exchanging gifts. Jazakum Allah khayran.

Consultant: The European Council for Fatwa and Research

A *Wa `alaykum As-Salamu wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh.*
In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.



All praise and thanks are due to Allah, and peace and blessings be upon His Messenger.

In response to this question, the **European Council for Fatwa and Research** issued the following fatwa:

There can be no doubt as to the importance and the sensitivity of this issue, especially to Muslims residing in the West. The Council has received numerous questions and queries from those who live in these countries and interact with the non-Muslims.

Indeed, between the Muslims and the non-Muslims are strong and integral links stipulated and deemed necessary by the means and manner of life itself, such as neighborly relations, friendship at work or study. In fact, a Muslim may actually feel indebted toward a non-Muslim in particular circumstances, such as toward a hardworking and selfless supervisor or lecturer, a



sincere and skillful doctor, and others. A famous Arab said that one is enslaved by others' favors.

Thus, what is the position of the Muslim to such people who are non-Muslims, who do not actually hold any animosity towards Muslims, do not fight them due to their religion, and did not actively seek to expel Muslims from their homes and lands?

The Holy Qur'an stipulates regulations as to how relationships between Muslim and non-Muslim are to be governed and carried out in *Surat Al-Mumtahinah*, which was essentially revealed to address the pagan polytheists. Allah Almighty says:

{Allah does not forbid you to deal kindly and justly with those who fought not against you on account of religion and did not drive you out of your homes. Verily, Allah loves those who deal with equity.



It is only as regards those who fought against you on account of religion, and have driven you out of your homes, and helped to drive you out, that Allah forbids you to befriend them. And whosoever will befriend them, then such are the wrong-doers.} (Al-Mumtahinah 60: 8-9)

Thus the verse stipulates that there is a clear difference between those who fight Muslims and treat them as enemies, and those who interact and deal with Muslims in peace. We are commanded to treat the latter well and in a just and beautiful manner, not merely give them what is duly theirs by right and to take from them what is duly ours. Indeed, the command is to treat them beyond that and to deal with them in beautiful and ideal ways.

As for the other group — to whom the verse clearly forbids any allegiance or support offered



in their favor — they are those who chose to become enemies of Islam and Muslims and worked actively to expel them from their homes and lands for no reason other than that they proclaim that Allah Almighty is their Lord, as did the Quraysh and the infidels of Makkah to the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) and his Companions.

Al-Bukhari and Muslim both reported on the authority of Asma' bint Abi Bakr (may Allah be pleased with her), that she came to Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) and said:

"O Messenger of Allah! My mother, who is *amushrik* (a polytheist), has come to visit me and she desires to be close to me and to give me gifts. Shall I greet her and treat her well?"



The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) stated: **“Greet your mother and treat her well.”**

This, while the woman was a *mushrik*, and the Qur'an clearly states that the People of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) are far closer to Islam and Muslims than *mushriks*. Indeed, the Qur'an gives allowance to eat from the food of the People of the Scripture and to marry them. Allah Almighty says:

{...The food of the People of the Scripture is lawful to you and yours is lawful to them, lawful to you in marriage are chaste women from the believers and chaste women from those who were given the scripture before your time...} (Al-Ma'idah 5: 5)

Also, if marriage is permissible with them, then it goes without saying that marriage implicitly and



necessarily decrees love and closeness. Allah Almighty states:

{And amongst His signs is this, that He created for you wives from among yourselves, that you may find repose in them, and He has put between you affection and mercy...} (Ar-Rum 30: 21)

Indeed, how can a man despise his wife, who is ultimately his partner in life, his spouse, the mother of his children? Almighty Allah says: **{...they are body cover for you and you are the same for them...} (Al-Baqarah 2: 187)**

Moreover, an important consequence and result of marriage is the coming together of two families to form blood bonds and relationships, a natural human form of relating to one another. Allah says:



{And it is He Who has created man from water, and has appointed for him kindred by blood, and kindred by marriage...} (Al-Furqan 25: 54)

Also, there are the feelings and affections of maternity, and the clearly stipulated and emphasized rights of a mother upon her children in Islam. One asks in this context: is it an acceptable act according to these stipulations that one does not greet or congratulate his or her non-Muslim mother on a day of festivity that she celebrates? What about relatives from the mother's side, such as grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins? All those have rights upon a Muslim... Allah states: **{Verily, Allah enjoins justice and good conduct and giving to kith and kin...}** (An-Nahl 16: 90)

Thus, if maternity and blood relation rights are obligatory upon a Muslim, in a way that



exemplifies the beautiful manners of Islam and Muslims, it is also obligatory upon a Muslim to pay the due rights that work towards showing Muslims as people of beautiful character. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) advised Abu Dharr (may Allah be pleased with him) saying:

“Be aware of Allah wherever you are, and follow up a sin that you have committed with a good deed, so that sin may be erased, and treat people with beautiful manners.” (Reported by Ahmad, At-Tirmidhi, Ad-Darmi, and Al-Hakim)

As is evident, the emphasis is upon treating **people, not only Muslims**, with beautiful manners.

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) also strongly advised us to deal with non-Muslims in a mild and gentle manner, not using stern and



terrorizing methods. It was reported that when a group of Jews approached the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) and greeted him with twisted pronunciation, and thus uttered “Assam`alaykum, O Muhammad!” (meaning “death and destruction come upon you”) instead of “as-salamu `alaykum”, `A'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) heard them and responded by saying, ‘assamu`alaykum too and the curse and wrath of Allah!” The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) rebuked `A'ishah for what she had said. He told her, **“O `A'ishah! Allah loves gentleness in all matters.”**

She asked him, “Did you not hear what they said?” He replied, **“I did, and I responded by saying, ‘And upon you,’”** (i.e., death.) (Reported by Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Indeed, the permissibility of congratulating non-Muslims on their festive days becomes more of



an obligation if they offer their greetings on Islamic festive occasions, as we are commanded to return good treatment with similar treatment, and to return the greeting with a better one or at least with the same greeting. Allah Almighty says:

{When you are greeted with a greeting, greet in return with what is better than it, or (at least) return it equally...}
(An-Nisa' 4: 86)

A Muslim must never be less charitable or pleasant or of lesser manners than any other, as the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) stated in the hadith: **“The most perfect believers in terms of their *iman* are those who possess the most beautiful manners.”** (Reported by Ahmad, At-Tirmidhi, Ad-Darmi, and Abu Dawud), and he (peace and blessings be upon him) also stated: **“Verily I have been sent (by Allah) to only**



perfect the most noble of manners.” (Reported by Ahmad, Al-Bukhari in *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad* and Al-Bazzar in *KashfulAstar*)

The significance of this increases dramatically if we are interested in inviting them to Islam and making them like Muslims, which is an obligation upon us all, as this cannot be achieved by treating them roughly, sternly and violently, but rather by beautiful manners and sublime ethics. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) dealt with the polytheists of Quraysh in the most beautiful of ways and manners throughout his life in Makkah despite their animosity, persecution, oppression and extreme insult of him (peace and blessings be upon him) and his Companions. This was epitomized by the fact that due to the incredible trust they had in him, they deposited their wealth and possessions with him. When the Prophet fled Makkah to Madinah, he left behind `Ali (may Allah be pleased with him), whom he



commanded to return the deposits and trusts that were with him (peace and blessings be upon him).

Thus, there is nothing to prevent a Muslim or an Islamic center from congratulating non-Muslims, either verbally or by sending a card that contains no symbols or icons of religious implications that may contradict Islamic faith and principles, such as a cross, for the concept of the crucifixion is totally outlawed and denied by Islam. Allah states in the Holy Qur'an: **{...but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but the resemblance of Jesus was put over another man...}** (An-Nisa' 4: 156)

There is also no objection to accepting gifts and presents from them, and to return their gifts in kind, on condition that these gifts are not unlawful in themselves, such as being alcohol or pork. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) accepted the gift of the King of Egypt and



several others (See: At-Tahawi's *Sharh Mushkil Al-Athar*).

We also wish to mention that some jurists, such as Ibn Taymiyah and his student, the great scholar Ibn-ul-Qayyim, adopted stringent measures and restricted the permissibility of this issue and the participation of Muslims in the celebrations of non-Muslims.

We adopt this same stance, advising Muslims not to celebrate the festivities of non-Muslims, whether *mushriks* or People of the Scripture, as we find some ignorant Muslims celebrating Christmas as they would normally celebrate `Eid Al-Fitr and Al-Adha, and maybe even more so. This is unlawful, as we Muslims have our unique festivities.

But we see no objection to congratulating others on their festivities if there is some relationship or fellowship link that deems positive social



interaction and beautiful exchange a must according to our sublime and noble Islamic Shari`ah.

As for patriotic or national celebrations and festivities, such as Independence Day, Union Day, Mother's Day, Childhood Day and the such, there is no objection whatsoever to a Muslim congratulating others in those regards, and indeed to participate therein as a citizen of those lands, while observing Islamic manners and controls in all matters.

Allah Almighty knows best.

Excerpted, with some modifications, from:

<http://www.ecfr.org>



Celebrating Christmas with Non-Muslim Family

Q *As-Salam `alaykum. I am new Muslim and I am living with my Christian family in a non-Muslim society. My family is celebrating Christmas and I want to ask if it is wrong for me to attend their celebration.*

Consultant: Sheikh Ahmad Kutty, Dr. Jamal Badawi

A **In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.**

All praise and thanks are due to Allah, and peace and blessings be upon His Messenger.

Responding to the question, **Dr. Jamal Badawi**, Member of the European Council for Fatwa and Research and the Fiqh Council of North America, states the following,



Participating in the non-religious aspect of Christmas such as family reunion dinner or visitation is OK. Attempts should be made to avoid situations where alcoholic drinks are served on the same table. Kindness to parents and family without compromising one's beliefs is an Islamic duty.

During socialization and whenever appropriate, one may share one's thoughts [on religion] with them, preferably in answer to their questions or comments without being too argumentative.

Moreover, **Sheikh Ahmad Kutty**, a senior lecturer and Islamic scholar at the Islamic Institute of Toronto, Ontario, Canada, adds,

You are allowed to partake of their feasts and celebrations so long as you stay away from their specifically religious rituals, and so long as you are clear in your mind that Christmas has nothing



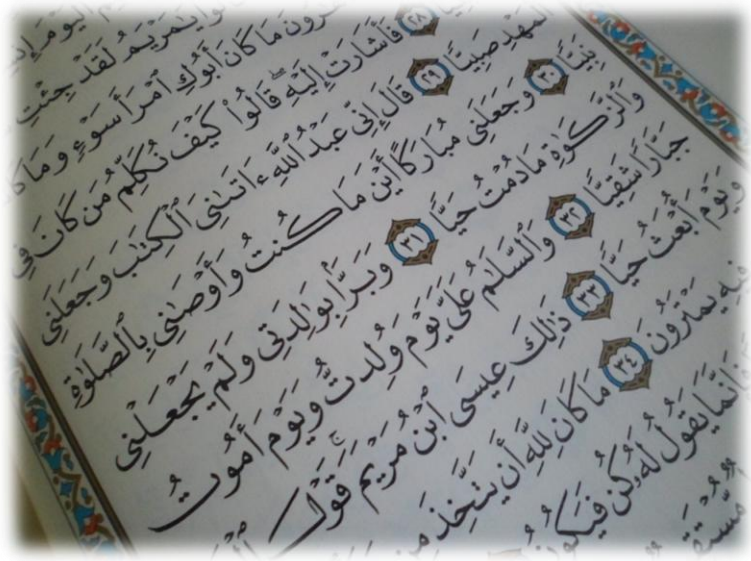
to do with the original teaching of Jesus (peace and blessings be upon him).

While remaining steadfast to your beliefs about Jesus, you are allowed to join them in their feasts in order to reciprocate kindness with kindness. By doing so, you may even be helping them remove their misconceptions about Islam being a fanatical religion. So go ahead and participate in their feasts, and let them know the true image of Islam.

Allah Almighty knows best.

Chapter Two

Jesus in Muslim Eyes





Status of Jesus in Islam

By Dr. Muzammil Siddiqi

Almighty Allah says:

{Say ye: we believe in Allah, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to (all) Prophets from their Lord: we make no difference between one and another of them: and we surrender to Allah (in Islam).} (Al-Baqarah 2: 136)

{Behold! the angels said: ‘O Mary! Allah giveth Thee glad tidings of a Word from Him: his name will be Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, held in honor in this world and the Hereafter and in (the company of) those nearest to Allah.} (Aal `Imran 3: 45)



We believe in all the Prophets and Messengers of Allah. We respect and honor all of them without any discrimination. We believe that all Prophets preached the message of *tawhid* (monotheism) and all of them invited human beings to worship Allah alone and live a righteous life. Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) was not the only Prophet of God, but he was the last and final Prophet of God. Prophet Muhammad is not the founder of Islam; all Prophets were Muslims and they followed the way of Islam.

It may be a surprise to many people in America that we Muslims also believe in Jesus. Although we do not celebrate Christmas, but we do respect and honor the person in whose name this festival is observed. We believe that Jesus was one of the great Prophets of God. In the Qur'an he is called 'Isa. He is also known as al-Masih (the Christ) and Ibn Maryam (Son of Mary). He is a highly respected religious figure. Every Muslim honors him, respects him and loves him. His mother is also highly respected, loved and honored. There are



hundreds of thousands of Muslim men all over the world who feel proud and blessed to have the name `Isa; as there are thousands of Muslim women who feel honored and blessed to be called Maryam.

Unlike the Gospels or the New Testament in general, the subject matter of the Qur'an is not Jesus. The Qur'an speaks in detail about God, God's will for human beings and about many of God's Prophets and Messengers. Yet, all the basic facts about Jesus' life are mentioned in the Qur'an.

The Qur'an says in several places that Mary was a pious virgin who devoted her life in prayer and divine service. The angel of God one day visited her and gave her the good news of the birth of a blessed child. This was a miraculous birth as Mary was not a married woman.

The virgin birth is clearly mentioned in the Qur'an and no recognized Muslim authority has ever disputed this claim. However, Muslim and Christian interpretations differ on the meaning of virgin birth. For Christians it was



the sign of incarnation, the coming to earth of the Son of God. For Muslims it was a special miracle. For every Prophet a particular miracle was given according to the needs and challenges of his time. Since Jesus' contemporaries used to deny the existence of spirit, they were shown the presence and the power of divine spirit by this unique birth. Jesus also performed many other miracles, such as raising of the dead to life, healing the blind and lepers, speaking about the hidden things. All these miracles show that material is not the only thing; there is something beyond the material that must be recognized. Jesus reminds us about the power of Divine Spirit. The Qur'an emphasizes that Jesus performed all his miracles only by the permission of God.

The message of Jesus was basically the same as the message of other prophets of God. He was sent to invite people to the worship of One God, to do the righteous deeds and be kind and loving to others. He reminded his people to pay attention not only to the letter of the laws but also to the spirit of the laws.



The Qur'an says that Jesus was mistreated, denied and rejected by his people just as other prophets were also mistreated. Some of his contemporaries opposed him and tried to crucify him. It is also reported in the Christian Bible that Jesus prayed to God to save him from his enemies and remove the "cup of death" from him. (**"If thou art willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done."** Mark 14:36 and Luke 22:42)

God accepted Jesus' prayer and saved him from crucifixion or death on the cross. He was lifted up to heaven (An-Nisaa': 157-158).

Jesus is yet to fulfill his Messianic role. Muslims believe that Jesus will come back to earth before the end of time and will restore peace and order, struggle against the Anti-Christ (Dajjal) or demonic forces, and bring victory for truth and righteousness. The true followers of Jesus will prevail over those who deny him, misrepresent him and reject him.



Muslims and Christians differ in their Theology (views about God) and their Christology (views about Christ), but there should be better understanding and better relations among them.

Based on a *Khutbah* delivered at the Islamic Society of Orange County (California, USA) on Shawwal 15, 1423/December 20, 2002. Taken, with slight modifications, from www.pakistanlink.com



Jesus in the Qur'an

By Idris Tawfiq

Christian artists down through the centuries have shown Jesus surrounded by fluffy clouds or angels. Around his head a golden halo of light shines, while little children and lambs are always at his feet.

On the cross, this artistic Jesus is shown suffering terrible agonies on behalf of others, asking always that his enemies be forgiven. The "gentle Jesus, meek and mild" of the Christian hymn books, the blue-eyed Jesus with curly flowing hair, is the Jesus that sits in the popular imagination.

Maybe it is because Islam has always discouraged depictions of human beings in art that Christianity has managed to win the publicity prize for its portrayal of Jesus (peace and blessings be upon him).



In addition to art, the Christian Church chose four of the many Gospels that were written to describe the life of Jesus. Saint Luke's is perhaps the most beautiful, being a Gospel of prayer, of the poor, and of women. The way in which Luke crafts his words makes Jesus so appealing.

Islam, on the other hand, has no artists to elevate Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) to the rank of a deity. It has no Gospel writers and no Paul to use their words to make Muhammad anything more than human. The Qur'an was revealed to a man who could neither read nor write. He simply recounted what was said as it was told to him.

The Jesus whom God tells about in the Qur'an is quite different from the Gospel Jesus, although there are some similarities. Especially at Christmas time, when the depictions of Prophet Jesus are at their most florid, we need to remind people who Jesus really was. In the Qur'an we read what means,



{He [Jesus] said: "I am indeed a servant of God. He has given me the Scripture and made me a prophet; He has made me blessed wheresoever I be; and He has enjoined on me prayer and charity as long as I live. He has made me kind to my mother, and not overbearing or miserable. So peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day that I shall be raised up to life (again)!" Such was Jesus the son of Mary. It is a statement of truth, about which they (vainly) dispute. It is not befitting to (the majesty of) God that He should beget a son. Glory be to Him! When He determines a matter, He only says to it, "Be," and it is} (Maryam 19:30-35).

In other words, according to Islam, Jesus was a prophet of God. He belonged to a long line of prophets, calling people throughout history to the worship of One God.



These include such names as Abraham, Moses, David, and Solomon (peace be upon them all) and, like them, he is revered and honored by all Muslims. Whenever they mention the name of Jesus, Muslims will always say, "Peace and blessings be upon him."

Like the accounts in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, the Qur'an shows that Jesus' birth was miraculous:

{Behold! the angels said, "Oh Mary! God gives you glad tidings of a Word from Him. His name will be Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, held in honor in this world and the Hereafter, and in (the company of) those nearest to God. He shall speak to the people in childhood and in maturity. He shall be (in the company) of the righteous... And God will teach him the Book and Wisdom, the Torah and the Gospel."} (Aal `Imran 3:45-48)



Not only did Jesus have a miraculous birth, but the Qur'an also tells us that he was born of a virgin mother and that he spoke in the cradle, that he performed miracles, and that he did not die on the cross, nor was he raised back to life after three days.

God sent messengers down through the ages to bring men and women back to Him. It is part of our human nature, isn't it, that we constantly forget, and need to be called back to the straight path?

Different messengers were sent with different gifts, as they needed to speak to their own people in a way that would attract them and help them to understand. It was the special gift of Prophet Jesus that he could perform miracles:

{I have come to you with a sign from your Lord: I make for you out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird, and breathe into it and it becomes a bird by God's leave. And I heal the blind, and the lepers,



**and I raise the dead by God's leave.} (Aal
`Imran 3:49)**

Being able to perform miracles, though, didn't make him equal to God. Everything he did was by God's leave, to teach the people of Israel about God Himself. Even these miracles, though, were not enough to convince them.

It is the belief of Islam regarding Jesus that we should never confuse the message with the messenger. His message was to speak about God and to show the power of God in this world and the next, but the message didn't make him equal to God. His miracles were his way of conveying the message.

In fact, the Qur'an is quite clear about this:

{Christ, the son of Mary, was no more than a messenger; many were the messengers that passed away before him. His mother was a woman of truth. They had both to eat their (daily) food. See



**how God makes His signs clear to them;
yet see in what ways they are deluded
away from the truth!} (Al-Ma'idah 5:75)**

Jesus and his mother both had to eat food. They were human beings, like you and I. Jesus was given the loftiest of tasks in being called to speak God's message to the world, but he remained just that: a man who ate food.

Out of an exaggerated love for Jesus, many of his earliest followers, encouraged by the writings of Saint Paul, began to see Prophet Jesus as something more than human, a god.

They confused the beautiful message he brought with the One who sent it. They saw his gift of curing the sick, as indicating that he was more than just a man.

The Qur'an is quite clear about that, Jesus was a great prophet, but he was no more than that. He did not die on the cross, nor was he raised to life after three days, but he was a man. One of the greatest men, yes. A man



with very special gifts, yes. A man whom they revere as a great prophet, yes, but not a god. There is no God but Allah.

In summary of all this, the Qur'an tells us what God will say to Jesus on the Last Day, when He Almighty calls all people to Himself:

{And behold! God will say [on the Day of Judgment]: "Oh Jesus, the son of Mary! Did you say unto men, worship me and my mother as gods in besides Allah?" He will say: "Glory to Thee! Never could I say what I had no right (to say). Had I said such a thing, You would indeed have known it. You know what is in my heart, though I know not what is in Yours. For You know in full all that is hidden. Never did I say to them anything except what You commanded me to say: 'Worship God, my Lord and your Lord.' And I was a



witness over them while I lived among them. When You took me up, You were the Watcher over them, and You are a witness to all things."} (Al-Ma'idah 5:116-117)



Does the Qur'an Speak about Jesus' Marriage?

Q *As-salamu `alykum. I read the news that a previously unknown scrap of ancient papyrus written in ancient Egyptian Coptic includes the words "Jesus said to them, my wife,"- has recently discovered, which likely to renew a fierce debate in the Christian world over whether Jesus was married. Does the Qur'an speak about Jesus' marriage?*

Consultant: Dr. Wael Shihab



A Wa `alaykum as-salamu wa rahmatullahi wa barakatuh.

In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

All praise and thanks are due to Allah, and peace and blessings be upon His Messenger.

Responding to your question, **Dr. Wael Shihab**, PhD in Islamic Studies, Al-Azhar University, and the Head of the Shari`ah Dept. of Onislam.net website, stated,

Thank you for your question.

For Muslims, Jesus (peace and blessings be upon him) is a Prophet of Allah and belief in his prophethood is an essential condition of sound faith. Allah Almighty says:

{Say you: we believe in Allah, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus, and that given to (all) Prophets from



their Lord: we make no difference between one and another of them: and we surrender to Allah (in Islam).} (Al-Baqarah 2: 136)

{The Messenger [of Allah] believes in what has been revealed to him from his Lord, as do the Believers: each one of them believes in Allah, His angels, His Books and His Messengers. [They say:] 'We make no distinction between one and another of His Messengers.' And they say: 'We hear and obey [We seek] Your forgiveness, our Lord, and to You is the end of all Journeys.'} (Al-Baqarah 2: 285)

We, Muslims, believe in Jesus (peace and blessings be upon him) as a Prophet of Allah. He, like all Prophets, called for belief in the One God, good morals, and submission to the will of Allah.

The Qur'an generally refers to some Prophets' marriages in the verse: **{And certainly We sent messengers before you and gave them wives and children.}** (Ar-Ra'd 13: 38)



However, this verse doesn't constitute a specific proof of Jesus' marriage. So, the Qur'an is silent regarding the issue of Jesus' marriage. The *Sunnah*, likewise, does not speak about Jesus' marriage before he was lifted up to heaven (An-Nisaa' 4: 157-158).

May Allah accept your and our good deeds.

Allah Almighty knows best.

Chapter Three

Amicable Relations





Domains of Muslim-Christian Cooperation

Q *As-salamu alaykum. Could you please guide me to the domains of Muslim-Christian cooperation and the efforts that should be done from both sides to enhance such cooperation?*

Consultant: Dr. Yusuf Al-Qaradawi

A *Wa`alaykum As-Salaamu Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.*
In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

All praise and thanks are due to Allah, and peace and blessings be upon His Messenger.



Addressing the issue of Muslim-Christian cooperation and ways of enhancing it, the well-known Muslim scholar, **Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi**, states the following:

There are many common fields that we can work together to widen and to enhance.



Focus on Common Factors:

This refers to the focus on common factors between us and people of other divine revelations. This is why Allah says:

{ And argue not with the People of the Scripture unless it be in (a way) that is better, save with such of them as do wrong; and say: We believe in that which hath been revealed unto us and revealed unto you; our God and your God is One, and unto Him we surrender.} (Al-`Ankabut 29: 46)



As we come together through dialogue we need to remember the points on which we have common ground, not those on which we differ.

There are Muslim extremists who claim that there are no common grounds between us and Christians and Jews, but this is a wrong perception of the Islamic viewpoint. Otherwise, why would Allah allow us to marry Christians and Jews? Why were the early Muslims sad when the Persians defeated the Romans—the former were magus (worshippers of fire) while the latter were Christians?

Later on Allah revealed in the Qur'an a verse that gave the Muslims glad tiding that the Romans would gain victory in the near future and that victory would be a source of happiness for them {**Within ten years. Allah's is the command in the former case and in the latter and in that day believers will rejoice. In Allah's help to victory.**



He helpeth to victory whom He will. He is the Mighty, the Merciful.} (Ar-Room 30: 2-4)

This shows that Christians and Jews, despite being non-believers of Prophet Muhammad's message to humanity, are yet closer to Muslims than others who are idol worshippers.



Cooperation to Oppose Atheism and Promiscuity:

We can stand together to confront the enemies of religious faith and those who call for atheism, promiscuity, materialism, abortion, homosexuality, same-sex marriages, bloodshed, misappropriation of others' property, and enhancing materialistic trends in man at the expense of his spiritual elevation.

We all need to stand together as one forum against those who want to ruin humankind by



their calls and action and to reduce it from humanity to animalistic levels. Allah Almighty says:

{Hast thou seen him who chooseth for his god his own lust? Wouldst thou then be guardian over him? Or deemest thou that most of them hear or understand? They are but as the cattle, nay, but they are farther astray!} (Al-Furqan 25: 43-33)

And we witnessed Al-Azhar and the World Muslim League come together with the Vatican to stand as one front during the conference on Population, held in Cairo, in 1994 and in the Women's Conference in Beijing 1995 to oppose the non-religious sentiments, and the attempt of breaking the family ties, destabilizing the natural instincts that Allah Almighty has created to guide human beings to the straight path.



Advocating Just Causes and Standing by Weak Nations:

We have to come together to advocate just causes and to stand by oppressed citizens who have their rights taken away from them, such as the Palestinians, Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Kashmir as well as the blacks who are the victim of discrimination in the US and elsewhere.

Islam is against oppression and stands by those oppressed people regardless of color or religion. A committed Muslim usually stands Full Square behind truth, justice, good and freedom. When it comes to facing injustice, a Muslim is required to face it courageously.

Spreading the Spirit of Tolerance not Fanaticism



This should include spreading spirit of tolerance, kindness and mercy when dealing with people from other religions not the spirit of fanaticism, cruelty and violence. Addressing the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) Allah Almighty says: **{We sent thee not save as a mercy for the peoples.}** (Al-Aniyaa' 21: 107)

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) is reported to have said: **“I have been sent as a guiding mercy.”**

Referring to the Children of Israel (Banu-Israel) in the Qur'an, Allah Almighty says: **{Then, even after that, your hearts were hardened and became as rocks, or worse than rocks...}** (Al-Baqarah 2: 47)

While addressing his wife `Aishah, may Allah be pleased with her, the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) says, **“Allah loves kindness and gentle approach in all cases.”**



Relations Between Muslims and Non-Muslims

By Dr. Sa'id Isma'il Seeni

Islam has not left any aspect of life without its required guidelines. For each aspect, it sets a basic rule, which is in harmony with the basic rules of the other aspects, to indicate in the end, that there is only one Creator and one perfect Legislator. The basic rule usually functions as an axis around which the secondary rules and exceptions revolve. The relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims is no exception.

The basic rule for relations between Muslims and non-Muslims is based on a few verses. The first can be translated as,

{We have not sent you (O Muhammad) except as a mercy for the worlds} (Al-Anbiya' 21:107).



This verse clearly assures that Islam is a mercy for all accountable beings, both humans and the Jinn. Islam is a mercy because it guides Muslims to felicity and happiness in both this world and in the hereafter. But is Islam a mercy for only those who choose it as their faith or should Muslims force people to accept it? Here, the second verse comes to assure that

{There is no compulsion in religion. The truth stands out clear from error.} (Al-Baqarah 2:256).

Other verses that make up the basic rule specifically define the kind of relationship that should take place between Muslims and non-Muslims. The Qur'an says as follows:

{Allah does not forbid you respecting those who have not made war against you on account of (your) religion, and have not driven you forth from your homes, that you show them kindness and deal with them justly; surely Allah loves the doers of justice.



Allah only forbids you respecting those who made war upon you on account of (your) religion, and drove you forth from your homes and backed up (others) in your expulsion, that you make friends (and ally) with them, and whoever makes friends with them, these are wrong-doers.} (Al-Mumtahanah 60:8-9)

The above verses clearly assure that Muslims should not force others to accept Islam. In addition, Allah Almighty does not forbid Muslims from dealing justly with those who do not fight Islam or oppress Muslims. Indeed, He enjoins Muslims to do favors for them. Obviously, doing favors is more than just dealing justly, because it gives people more than what they deserve.

The above verses affirm that it is only forbidden to have relations with those who show hostility to Muslims. In this context, those who aid the oppressors are not better than the oppressors themselves.



It is important to note that the above verses were revealed after the first verses of the same surah, Al-Mumtahanah, which forbid taking guardians and trustees from among the enemies of Allah, they also encourage Muslims to follow the example of Prophet Ibrahim who boycotted the enemies of Allah. This fact confirms the validity of the ruling given in the above verses and proves that they had not been abrogated. It is also important that the second verse of the surah provides a clear description of the enemies of Allah.

{If they get the better of you, they would treat you as their enemies and stretch forth, their hands and tongues against you with evil, and they desire that you become unbelievers.} (Al-Mumtahanah 60:2)

Verse seven of the same chapter serves as an introduction for verses eight and nine, confirming that the above enmity does not always last forever. Allah says what means,



{It may be that Allah creates (mutual) love between you and the ones of them whom you took as enemies} (Al-Mumtahanah 60:7).

The verse does not stipulate an enemy's conversion as the reason for removing the enmity; actually, enmity may be ended if an enemy takes a supportive or at least a neutral position.

As mentioned above, the ultimate goal of Islam is to establish peace and to bring about happiness for all beings in both this world and the eternal one in the hereafter. In case some people refuse to cooperate in achieving peace and happiness in the hereafter, Muslims should still cooperate with them to maintain peace and happiness in this world. Allah says what means,

{O you people We have created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes that you may know each other. The best among you is the most pious} (Al-Hujurat 49:13).



Islam did not come to break the ties between human beings, to spread hatred and enmity, or to encourage bloodshed. Nor did it come to eliminate the freedom of choice in this life, which is secured by God. Indeed, even Satan was granted the freedom to choose between obeying and disobeying his Lord, he misused this gift and chose to disobey.

The above basic rule is based on the fact that Allah has distinguished humankind and the Jinn with special gifts that made them accountable for their choices in this life, for which they will be rewarded or punished mainly in the hereafter. Among these special gifts are intellectual faculties, divine guidance, and a limited freedom of choice.

A thorough review of the expeditions and battles during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) shows that the Prophet never once initiated hostility. Rather, he only became involved in battles in self-defense and retaliation. In general, the



causes of these battles could be classified under the following categories:

1. Self-defense, such as the battles of Uhud and Al-Khandaq.
2. Retaliation for oppression and continuous hostility. This is true in the case of all major battles, including the battles with the tribe of Quraish such as Badr.
3. Following in the tracks of the enemies who carried out a raid on Madinah, such as the expedition of As-Sawiq and the expedition of Thi Qarad.
4. Surprising enemies who were preparing themselves to attack Muslims, such as the expedition of Bani Al-Mustaliq and the expedition of Dawmat Al-Jandal.
5. Punishing betrayers or traitors, as in the case of Bani An-Nadeer, Bani Quraidhah, and the conquest of Makkah.



So, the basic rule in the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims is that there must be coexistence and peace. This situation must be maintained, even if non-Muslims continue to reject Islam for themselves, as long as they do not react in a hostile way.



Scope of Amicable Dealings with Non-Muslims

By Dr. Yusuf Al-Qaradawi

Islam does not prohibit Muslims from being kind and generous to peoples of other religions, even if they are idolaters and polytheists. However, Islam looks upon the People of the Book, that is, Jews and Christians, with special regard, whether they reside in a Muslim society or outside it.

The Qur'an never addresses the Jews and Christians without saying, **"O People of the Book"** or **"O You who have been given the Book,"** indicating that they were originally people of a revealed religion. For this reason, there exists a relationship of mercy and spiritual kinship between them and the Muslims.

Muslims are required to believe in all the Books revealed by Allah and in all the Prophets sent by Him, otherwise



they are not considered true believers. Allah says in the Qur'an:

{Say: We (Muslims) believe in Allah and in what He has revealed to us, and in what He revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes (of Israel), and in what was given to Moses and Jesus, and in what was given to (all) the prophets by their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and to Him do we submit.} (Al-Baqarah 2: 136)

Consequently, if the People of the Book read the Qur'an, they will find in it praise for their Books¹, Messengers, and Prophets.

In having dialogue with the People of the Book, Muslims should avoid such approaches that may cause bitterness or arouse hostility; Allah says,

¹ Editor's note: The reference here is to the original Books received by the prophets (peace and blessings be upon them all), not the inauthentic versions circulated now.



{And do not dispute with the People of the Book except by (the way) which is best, unless it be with such of them as transgress, and say, 'We believe in what has been sent down to us and sent down to you, and our God and your God is one, and to Him do we submit.')} (Al-`Ankabut 29: 46)

We have already seen how Islam permits eating with the People of the Book, sharing the meat they slaughter, and marrying their women, marriage being a relationship of mutual love and mercy. Almighty Allah says:

{...The food of those who were given the Scripture (before you) is permitted to you and your food is permitted to them. And (lawful to you in marriage are) chaste women from among the Believers and chaste women from among those who were given the Scripture before you....} (Al-Ma'idah 5: 5)



Non-Muslim Citizens of a Muslim State:

The above injunctions include all People of the Book wherever they may be. However, those people who live under the protection of an Islamic government enjoy special privileges. They are referred to as "the Protected People" (*AhlAdh-Dhimma* or *Dhimmis*), meaning that Allah, His Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him), and the community of Muslims have made a covenant with them that they may live in safety and security under the Islamic government.

In modern terminology, *Dhimmis* are "citizens" of the Muslim state. From the earliest period of Islam to the present day, Muslims are in unanimous agreement that *Dhimmis* enjoy the same rights and carry the same responsibilities as Muslims themselves, while being free to practice their own faiths.

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) emphasized the duties of Muslims toward *Dhimmis*, threatening anyone who violates them with the wrath



and punishment of Allah. The Prophet is reported to have said: **"He who hurts a *Dhimmi* hurts me, and he who hurts me annoys Allah."** (Reported by At-Tabarani in *Al-Awsat* with good chain of narrators.)

He also says,

"Whoever hurts a *Dhimmi*, I am his adversary, and I shall be an adversary to him on the Day of Resurrection." (Reported by Al-Khatib with authentic chain of narrations.)

"On the Day of Judgment I will dispute with anyone who oppresses a person from among the People of the Covenant, or infringes upon his right, or puts a responsibility on him which is beyond his strength, or takes something from him against his will." (Reported by Abu Dawud)

The successors of the Prophet safeguarded these rights and sanctities of non-Muslim citizens, and the jurists of Islam, in spite of the variation of their opinions regarding



many other matters, are unanimous in emphasizing these rights and sanctities.

The Maliki jurist, Shahab Ad-Deen Al-Qarafi states:

The covenant of protection imposes upon us certain obligations toward *Ahl Adh-Dhimmah*. They are our neighbors, under our shelter and protection upon the guarantee of Allah, His Messenger (peace and blessings be upon him) and the religion of Islam. Whoever violates these obligations against anyone of them, by damaging his reputation, or by doing him some injury, has breached the Covenant of Allah, His Messenger, and his conduct run counters to the teachings of Islam. (*Al-Furuq*, by Al-Qarafi.)

And the Zahiri jurist, Ibn Hazm, says:

If a *Dhimmi* is threatened by an enemy, it is our obligation to fight the enemy with soldiers and weapons. With this, we will be honoring the



Covenant of Allah and His Messenger. To hand him over to the enemy would mean to betrayal to the Covenant of Allah and His Messenger. (*MaratibAl-Ijma'*, by Ibn Hazm)



Concept of Amicable Dealings with Non-Muslims:

Now the question arises: How can we show kindness, affection, and good treatment to non-Muslims since Allah the Almighty prohibits Muslims to take non-believers as patrons, allies, and supporters in such verses as the following:

{O you who believe, do not take the Jews and Christians as friends; they are the friends (only) of each other. And whoever among you turns to them (for friendship) is certainly one of them; indeed, Allah does not guide the people who do wrong. Yet thou seest those in whose hearts is a disease racing toward them...} (Al-Ma'idah 5: 54-55)



The answer to this is that these verses are not unconditional, to be applied to every Jew, Christian, or non-Muslim. Interpreting them in this manner contradicts the injunctions of the Qur'an which enjoin affection and kindness to the good and peace-loving peoples of every religion, as well as the verses which permit marriage to the women of the People of the Book, with all that Allah says concerning marriage- **(...and He has put love and mercy between you...)** (Ar-Rum 30: 21) —and the verse concerning the Christians: **(...And thou wilt find those who say, 'Surely we are Christians.' to be nearest to them (the Muslims) in affection....)** (Al-Ma'idah 5: 85)

The verses that imply breaking ties with People of Book refer to those people who were hostile to Islam and waged war against Muslims. Accordingly, it is not permissible for Muslims to support or assist them—that is, to be their ally—nor to entrust them with secrets at the expense of Islam or Muslim community.



This point is explained in other verses, in which Allah Almighty says:

{They will spare nothing to ruin you; they yearn for what makes you suffer. Hatred has been expressed by their mouths, but what their hearts conceal is still greater. Thus have We made clear to you the revelations (or signs), if you possess understanding. Ah! You love them, but they do not love you....} (Aal `Imran 3: 118-119)

This verse sheds light on the character of such people, who conceal great enmity and hatred against the Muslims in their hearts and whose tongues express some of the effects of such hostility.

Almighty Allah also says:

{Thou wilt not find a people who believe in Allah and the Last Day loving those who oppose Allah and His Messenger, even though they may be



their fathers or their sons or their brothers or their kin...} (Al-Mujadilah 58: 22)

He Almighty also says:

{O you who believe, do not take My enemy and your enemy as friends, offering them affection, even though they have disbelieved in what has come to you of the truth, driving out the Messenger and yourselves because you believe in Allah, your Lord...} (Al-Mumtahinah 60:1)

This verse was revealed in connection with the pagans of Makkah, who declared war against Allah and His Messenger driving the Muslims out of their homes simply because they said, "Our Lord is Allah." With this type of people, friendship and alliance cannot be permitted.

Yet in spite of this, the Qur'an did not dismiss the hope that one day there might be a reconciliation; it did not declare utter disappointment in them but encouraged



the Muslims to kindle the hope of better understanding and improved relationships, for in the same *surah* Allah says:

{It may be that Allah will bring about affection between you and those who are your enemies from among them. And Allah is All-Powerful, and Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.} (Al-Mumtahinah 60: 7)

This Qur'anic statement gives the assurance that this bitter hostility and deep hatred is something that may pass way, as it is also stated in the *hadith*,

"Hate your enemy mildly; he may become your friend one day." (Reported by at-Tirmidhi)

The injunction against befriending enemies of Islam is even more emphatic when they have upper hand over Muslims, crushing hopes and generating fear in the minds of people. In such a situation, only hypocrites and those who are sick at hearts hasten to befriend them,



giving them help today in order to benefit from them tomorrow. Almighty Allah describes this situation as follows:

{Yet thou seest those in whose hearts is a disease racing toward them (the enemies of Islam), saying, 'We are afraid that a change of fortune may befall us.' But it may be that Allah will give (thee) the victory or some decision from Himself, and then they will become regretful for what they thought secretly within themselves.} (Al-Ma'idah 5: 52)

Allah also says:

{Give to the hypocrites the tidings that they will have a grievous punishment. Do those who take the unbelievers as friends instead of the Believers seek honor among them? For indeed all honor belongs to Allah alone.} (An-Nisa' 4: 138-139).