

Islam's Acceptance of Judaism and Christianity

H A R U N Y A H Y A

We are living in an era in which the world is desperately in need of peace, friendship, and solidarity. The tensions and conflicts that so defined the twentieth century continue in this new century, and innocent people all around the world continue to suffer from them.

Despite the urgent need for solidarity and cooperation, certain circles are inciting conflict, particularly conflict between the world's two greatest and deep-rooted civilizations. This issue needs to be scrutinized, as the war of civilizations that they envisage would have disastrous consequences for humanity. One of the best ways of preventing such a disaster is to strengthen the dialogue and cooperation between these civilizations. This is not a hard task, as there are no fundamental differences between Islam and the Judeo-Christian western world. To the contrary, there is much common ground between them. Considering the current situation and the nature of the world's problems, these shared values will make the cooperation necessary for solving them possible.

Today, ideological struggles continue to divide the world. However, Muslims are not at one pole and Jews and Christians are not at the opposing pole. In fact, one pole represents people who believe in God's existence and unity, and the other pole represents the unbelievers, who believe in such anti-religious ideologies as materialism and Darwinism. There is only one way to defeat the alliance of the various groups of unbelievers on an ideological level: eradicate the negative and destructive influences of anti-religious materialism and further the cause of a society dominated by morality, happiness, tranquility, security, and prosperity. This will be done by forming an alliance of all conscientious people, namely, sincere Christians, along with religious Jews and Muslims, who will come together and unite in this common cause.

There have been conflicts and disputes between members of these three religions in the past, but those were the result of the erroneous reasoning and evil motives of certain states, nations, and individuals who pursued their own economic and political gain instead of the central beliefs of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. One of the common aims of these divinely revealed religions is to ensure the happiness, security, peace, and tranquility of all people by opposing conflict.

Therefore, this dialogue and alliance will be based on the sincere believers' quest for justice, peace, and support for all people. The resulting dialogue will not be restricted to meetings and conferences, but will cement an alliance between people who advocate common values, fight for the same cause, and seek permanent solutions to common problems.

Muslims, Christians, and Jews have common principles of faith, worship, and moral values and face common dangers. Thus, the People of the Book (Christians and Jews) are called on to unite with Muslims as fellow believers opposed to atheism, anti-religiosity, and social as well as moral degeneration. All Jews, Christians, and Muslims who are sincere, conscientious, tolerant, helpful, conciliatory, reasonable, virtuous, peaceful, and fair to recognize that we believe in the same God and strive to live and extend the reach of God's morality, should spread this virtue around the world.

We Muslims love and respect Prophets Moses (pbuh) and Jesus (pbuh), know that they are loved and dear people in God's presence, and believe in all His Prophets. Furthermore, we respect Jewish and Christian beliefs, values, and traditions, for God commands us to invite the People of the Book to "unite on a common premise":

Say: "O People of the Book! Come to a proposition that is the same for us and you-that we should worship none but God, not associate any partners with Him, and not take one another as lords besides God." If they turn away, say: "Bear witness that we are Muslims." (Qur'an, 3:64)

Muslims are people who believe in the Qur'an revealed to Prophet Muhammad (may God bless him and grant him peace) as well as in the earlier divinely revealed books: the Pages of Abraham (pbuh), the Torah revealed to Moses (pbuh), the Book of Psalms revealed to David (pbuh), and the Bible revealed to Jesus (pbuh). However, over time these books were tampered with and therefore contain both accurate (e.g., belief in God, virtue, the Day of Judgment, and the rejection of idolatry), and inaccurate information. Some of the verses read:

He has sent down the Book to you with truth, confirming what was there before it. And He sent down the Torah and the Gospel. (Qur'an, 3:3-4)

We sent down the Torah containing guidance and light, and the Prophets who had submitted themselves gave judgment by it for the Jews?as did their scholars and their rabbis?by what they had been allowed to preserve of God's Book, to which they were witnesses. (Qur'an, 5:44)

God states that the People of the Book are believers as thus:

They are not all the same. There is a community among the People of the Book who are upright. They recite God's Signs throughout the night, and they prostrate. They believe in God and the Last Day, enjoin the right and forbid the wrong, and compete in doing good. They are among the righteous. You will not be denied the reward for any good thing you do. God knows those who guard against evil. (Qur'an, 3:113-15)

Among the People of the Book are some who believe in God and in what has been sent down to you and what was sent down to them, and who are humble before God. They do not sell God's Signs for a paltry price. Such people will have their reward with their Lord. And God is swift at reckoning. (Qur'an, 3:199)

Therefore, a Muslim's attitude toward the People of the Book reflects the probable existence of genuinely faithful people among them. Only God knows the hearts of people, and He reveals that some Jews and Christians have earned His good pleasure.

God reveals that He has created a way and a method for all nations. Throughout history, He has sent Prophets to people to inform them of His laws, commands, and prohibitions. Essentially, all Prophets have invited their nations to believe in and worship God and to abide by the limits He has established for humanity. In other words, all true religions in their original state are based on the principles of not associating others with Him and of working to win His good pleasure, compassion, and Paradise. All nations are expected to follow God's will without fail and to do good deeds in order to earn His reward:

We have appointed a law and a practice for every one of you. Had God willed, He would have made you a single community, but He wanted to test you regarding what has come to you. So, compete with each other in doing good. Every one of you will return to God, and He will inform you regarding the things about which you differed. (Qur'an, 5:48)