

# People of the Book are One Another's Trusted Friends

H A R U N   Y A H Y A

Islam is the religion of peace, love and tolerance. However, nowadays certain circles are trying to give Islamic morality the wrong image. The religion of Islam commands people to create an "abode of peace and well-being" on the face of the Earth, but those circles try to show the opposite of this as if there was a conflict between followers of other religions and Muslims. However, the view Islamic morality takes of Jews and Christians known in the Qur'an as the "People of the Book" is extremely just and merciful. God makes this known in the Qur'an as follows:

**God does not forbid you from being good to those who have not fought you in the religion or driven you from your homes, or from being just towards them. God loves those who are just. (Qur'an, 60:8)**

**Only argue with the People of the Book in the kindest way - except in the case of those of them who do wrong - saying, "We believe in what has been sent down to us and what was sent down to you. Our God and your God are one and we submit to Him." (Qur'an, 29:46)**

The Qur'an states that there are those among the People of the Book who are sincere in their belief:

**Among the People of the Book there 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)**

**... 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, and 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, 3:113-115)**

**Those who believe and those who are Jews and the Sabaeans and the Christians, all who believe in God and the Last Day and act rightly will feel no fear and will know no sorrow. (Qur'an, 5:69)**

In the books of truth sent by God as guidance to His people, a community model is described that is based on love, peace, tolerance and justice. For example, in the Qur'an God tells that the Torah brought down to the Jews is a guidance for people:

**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)**

The arguments and conflicts between Jews, Christians and Muslims based on historical problems, prejudices, misunderstandings and misapprehensions should be put to an end once and for all. Followers of all three religions should live in mutual understanding and tolerance. What is important is to bring up points in common rather than differences, to be helpful rather than troublesome, constructive rather than destructive, cooperative rather than obstructive, integral rather than separate, and to cause unity rather than segregation. In the Qur'an God makes known as follows this responsibility of the believers:

**Those who do not believe are the friends and protectors of one another. If you do not act in this way there will be turmoil in the land and great corruption. (Qur'an, 8:73)**

God has ordered the believers to be the peacemakers and protectors of peace on Earth. He has condemned those who disturb peace on Earth, declare war without just cause (such as defense or salvation from oppression), disrupters, and killers of innocent people. Our Lord has ordered believers to create a world where all people can live in peace and it is one of the important responsibilities to ensure peace and security for mankind.

At the root of wars, conflicts and all forms of corruption is man's distancing from the true religious moral values.

Sometimes the perverse interpretations of certain individuals allegedly in the name of religion can influence people who have insufficient knowledge of the true religious ethic. And this may cause them to commit acts that are totally inappropriate in terms of religious ethic. The solidarity of the believers gains importance in the face of people who believe in the necessity of solving disagreements and problems by violent means, those who persecute people with oppressive and despotic implementations.

Every Christian, Muslim or Jewish believer is obliged to do his utmost to strive to this end. It is right for those Muslims, Jews and Christians who believe in one God, who try to gain His approval, who have surrendered to Him, whose hearts are bound to Him, who praise Him, and who essentially defend the same values, to act in partnership. Sincere believers should unite in order to live according to the moral values of religion, prevent the disasters caused by irreligion, struggle intellectually against atheism and materialism.

Prejudices arising from ignorance or the provocations of those who are against the religious moral values should be banished. Jews, Christians and Muslims should try to cooperate to spread the high moral values on Earth. This cooperation should be built on the founding principles of love, respect, tolerance, understanding, harmony and cooperation. It is necessary to consider the immediate need for action, and to keep far away from elements that can lead to conflict, argument and dissidence. In the Qur'an the Muslims' call to the People of the Book for unity is made known as follows:

**Say: "People of the Book! Come to a proposition which is the same for us and you - that we should worship none but God and not associate any partners with Him and not take one another as lords besides God." (Qur'an, 3:64)**