

The great impression Islam has made on foreigners

The Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of our Prophet (saas) are very important guides for believers.

The moral values revealed by our Lord in the Qur'an have attracted the interest of foreigners ever since the time of our Prophet (saas) right up to the present day, and have amazed people from all sections of society capable of honestly and conscientiously evaluating events.



Muslims' Tolerance Inspired Astonishment

One of the most important features of people with faith in Almighty Allah (God) is their tolerance and compassion, a sign of their sincere belief. There is no doubt that this tolerance and love exhibited by Muslims as a requirement of Islamic moral values, has been the most important factor influencing non-Muslims at all times.

The examples observed in Islamic and Turkish history, in which the most just and humane attitude, even with regard to

prisoners of war, compatible with Islamic moral values inspired the same powerful effect in non-Muslims. Independent observers who witnessed the attitude of Muslim Turks towards captives were heavily influenced by what they saw, and often felt the need to set down their thoughts and feelings. For example, Mouradgea D'Ohsson, who served for many years in the Swedish Embassy in Istanbul and whose book *Tableau Général de l'Empire Ottoman* (General Picture of the Ottoman Empire) is regarded as one of the most important descriptions of 18th century Ottoman life, summarized his thoughts in these words: "No nation in the world looks after and treats its prisoners, slaves and even galley slaves better than the Muslim Ottomans."

It needs to be made clear here that the reason for the care and affection the Ottomans showed their prisoners was a consequence of their Islamic moral values. Almighty Allah has commanded Muslims to feed even their captives. This is just one proof of the excellent virtues that compliance with the Qur'an bestows on Muslims:

They (the believers) give food, despite their love for it, to the poor and orphans and captives. (Believers say,) 'We feed you only out of desire for the Face of Allah (God). We do not want any repayment from you or any thanks.' Truly We fear from our Lord a glowering, calamitous Day.' (Surat al-Insan, 8-10)

Writers Who Expresses Their Admiration for Islamic Moral Values

Many writers who saw the toleration and justice in Qur'anic moral values often devoted space to examples of these virtues in their works. One such, the American William G. Wells, made the following comment in order to emphasize the mistaken way in which some circles in his day looked on Muslims:

The Quran teaches peaceful tolerance to the opponents of Islam.

Another foreign author who made wide observations on this subject is Gerard de Nerval, one of the best known figures in French literature. This French author, who was also a traveler and who described his observations to his readers, told them of his experiences during his visit to the Ottoman Empire. To de Nerval, the most surprising thing in Ottoman lands was the way that people from different nations and holding different religious beliefs lived as brothers in the

Ottoman state with its multinational structure. He reported his observations thus: "Istanbul is a strange city. Four nations live there together and do not hate one another. The tolerance and indulgence that Turks, Armenians, Jews and Greeks living in the same place extend towards one another cannot even be seen among peoples living in various provinces or in political parties where we come from."

Gerard de Nerval also witnessed a festival morning during his travels and was amazed at Muslims' tolerance and the warm relations enjoyed by all sections of society, which he described as follows in his writings: "Most of the Europeans living in 'Pera' joined the throng. Because on festival days members of other faiths also join in Muslims' celebrations and share them with them ... Everyone is given food and drink once the sacrificial animal has been killed. In addition, everyone entered whichever house he chose and sat down and was served. All Muslims, rich and poor, offer food to the people coming their homes, no matter what their faith, race or social status..."

There can be no doubt that it is the moral values possessed by Muslims that amaze non-Muslims. The Qur'an, sent down to humanity as a guide by Allah, commands proper moral values. At the basis of these values lie concepts such as love, affection, tolerance, justice and compassion. Islam is the true faith, that manifests the infinite compassion and affection of Allah and that was sent down to offer people lives filled with peace and security. In the verses of the Qur'an, people are called to Islamic moral values as a model in which compassion, affection, tolerance and peace can be enjoyed on Earth. Full compliance with the moral virtues commanded by Allah in the Qur'an will be the only solution that can lead mankind to light and peace in our century.

**Allah calls to the Abode of Peace and He guides whom He wills to a straight path.
(Surah Yunus, 25)**

1. M. d'Ohsson, *Tableau General de l'Empire Ottoman*, vol. 4, Paris, 1791, p. 381.
2. See also, Harun Yahya, *The Elevated Turkish Character*; İsmail Hami Danişmend, *The Historic Turkish Character and Virtues*, İstanbul Kitabevi Publishing, İstanbul, 1982
3. http://www.onmission.com/site/c.cnKHIPNuEoG/b.830045/k.B3A4/A_Christian_response_to_Islam.htm
4. <http://www.mutasyon.net/kultur/kultur/tarih/default14.asp>
5. <http://www.mutasyon.net/kultur/kultur/tarih/default14.asp>

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