RELATIONS WITH NON-MUSLIMS

Association, Disassociation, Kindness, Justice, and Compassion

Al-Wala’ wa al-Bara’...wa al-Birr...wa al-Qist...wa al-Rahmah

An Introductory Examination of the Islamic Textual Evidence for Peaceful Interfaith Relations

DA’WAH INSTITUTE OF NIGERIA
ISLAMIC EDUCATION TRUST
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INTRODUCTION

The issues treated in this book are the outcome of a number of surveys conducted by the Da’wah Institute of Nigeria (DIN), in different parts of the world including Australia, South-East Asia, the Middle East, Europe, America and of course, Africa. These surveys were meant to identify some of the most common arguments that are raised by Muslims against having friendly relations with people of other faiths. The surveys also tried to find out some of the common faith-based bridge-burning narratives used by some Muslims (including violent extremists) to justify hostility and prejudice against non-Muslims. This book therefore analyzes the teachings of Islam regarding relations with the peaceful and friendly non-Muslim majority. The expected response with justice and compassion by Muslims to hostile, belligerent or aggressive non-Muslims is treated in more detail in the book “Jihad and the Spread of Islam” which is published by the Da’wah Institute of Nigeria.

In the contemporary world, living in any isolation is impossible; and while some Muslims in Muslim majority societies have had very little interaction with people of other faiths, interactions between people of all faiths and nationalities are increasingly commonplace, whether through work, travel, the internet, or otherwise. Trade and services now transcend national boundaries while societies are becoming progressively multicultural and multi-religious. This makes many, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, question the expectations of Islam regarding the relationship of Muslims with their non-Muslim relatives, neighbours and colleagues. Unfortunately, some Muslims who currently live in societies far more isolated from positive interfaith relations than those at the time of the Prophet ﷺ have reached conclusions about Islamic teachings regarding relationship with non-Muslims that are far removed from actual practice of the earliest Muslims and from the Islamic ideals of fairness, justice and compassion. The past experience of many Muslim societies in the hands of the Crusaders who ravaged Muslims lands killing thousands of innocent men, women and children, and who destroyed properties, libraries and mosques has made many apprehensive of relations with the West and Christians. The more recent history of colonialism, economic exploitation, cultural imperialism, political subjugation and interference, and the support of dictators across the Muslim world has also not helped trust and peace building with the Christian world.
The supposition of some people is that Islam is inherently against any form of friendliness with those who do not ascribe to the faith. In fact, many assume that Islam prescribes the normative relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims to be one of hostility and intolerance. This position is commonly pedaled by Islamophobes and antagonists of Islam for the purposes of ridiculing the faith, eroding Muslim pride in their religion and undermining positive interfaith relations.

Unfortunately, there are also some Muslims who hold onto opinions and scholarly positions often borne out of hostile and mistrustful interfaith experiences and contexts. Some other opinions have been areas of debate and controversy among classical Muslim scholars from the earliest times. Some of these positions, as argued by some classical and contemporary scholars are easily and justifiably seen today as unfair, prejudiced, or oppressive; and contrary to the spirit and practice of Islam as taught in the Qur’an and modelled by the Prophet ﷺ and his rightly guided companions.

According to the great medieval jurist Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah,

“The foundation of the Shari’ah is wisdom and the safeguarding of people’s welfare in this life and the next. In its entirety it is about justice, mercy, wisdom, and good. Every rule which replaces justice with injustice, mercy with its opposite, the common good with mischief, and wisdom with folly, is a ruling that does not belong to the shari’ah, even though it might have been claimed to be according to some interpretation...”

The methodology and approach of the DIN to issues when dealing with diverse and sometimes conflicting opinions held by scholars of Islamic jurisprudence has tried to be influenced by these principles of Shari’ah elucidated by Ibn Qayyim above. The approach has therefore tried as much as possible to fully respect the Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence (Usul al-fiqh) and the Higher Intents of Islamic Law (maqasid) in its methodology of selecting what it believes to be the most credible and appropriate scholarly opinion to contemporary realities. And in this, we pray that Allah guides us aright and forgives us for our shortcomings.

Peace is indispensable to sustainable societal development, and the two primary objectives of Islamic teachings are the accruing of benefit (jalb al-masalih) and the prevention or removal of harm (dar’ al-mafasid) from the society. In this context,

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1 Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, I’lam al-Muwaqqi’in, vol.1, p.333
peaceful and amicable relations between Muslims and other religious groups are essential not just for the advancement of Muslim societies and humanity in general, but for facilitating better interfaith communication and understanding. For Muslims, this enlightenment-conducive relationship should however not compromise Islamic values and security.

It is our hope and prayer that this book would help contemporary Muslims realize a more appropriate, realistic and balanced perspective of Islam to interfaith relations. It is also our prayer that this material would equip Muslim activists and those interested in interfaith bridge-building and engagement with better arguments for confronting those Muslims who would otherwise want to undermine interfaith relations.
SECTION 1: CONCEPT OF AL-WALA’ AND AL-BARA’

This section gives the definitions of the terms al-wala’ and al-bar’a, as well as the various forms of both.

Introduction to Al-Wala’ (loyalty) and Al-Bara’ (dissociation)

1. What is the meaning of Al-Wala’ (loyalty) and Al-Bara’ (dissociation)?

Al-Wala’ literally means loyalty, love, support, help and follow; while al-Bara’ means to despise, desert and keep innocent of.

The terms “al-Hub fi Allah (loving for Allah sake) and al-Bughd fi Allah (hating for Allah sake)” and “al-Muwalat (loyalty) wa al-Mu’adat (enmity)” are sometimes used instead of al-Wala’ wa al-Bara’.

Ibn Abbas was reported to have said: "Whoever loves for the sake of Allah, and hates for the sake of Allah, and whoever seals a friendship for His sake, or declares an enmity for His sake, will receive, because of this, the protection of Allah. No one may taste true faith except by this, even if his prayers and fasts are many”.²

Basically, the concept refers to liking and desiring what Allah likes and disliking or forsaking what Allah dislikes.

The concept of al-Wala’:

The technical meaning of al-Wala’ is to totally agree with the sayings, deeds and beliefs which please Allah and the persons whom He likes³. It is to love what Allah loves and to be loyal to what Allah approves of. The concept of al-Wala’ therefore does not contradict or go against justice (qist), kindness (birr), mercy (rahmah) and excellence (ihsan) towards others irrespective of religious affiliation.

The concept of al-Bara’:

Al-Bara’ is to disavow, dislike and disagree with everything that Allah hates and condemns. The concept of al-Bara’ however does not imply injustice, cruelty or any other unethical or inhumane behaviours which is not acceptable even towards an enemy of Allah or something that Allah hates. It also does not imply that Muslims cannot forgive their enemies and those who do wrong to them from among non-Muslims, as can be seen from the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ towards his enemies and the enemies of Allah.

Interfaith relations are not defined by only (loyalty) wala’ and (disassociation) bara’, but also by Birr (kindness), Qist (justice) and Ihsan (goodness). Allah says: “As for such (of the unbelievers) as do not fight against you on account of (your) faith, and neither drive you forth from your homelands, God does not forbid you to show them kindness and to behave towards them with full equity: for verily, God loves those who act equitably. God only forbids you to turn in friendship towards such as fight against you because of (your) faith, and drive you forth from your homelands, or aid (others) in driving you forth: and as for those (from among you) who turn toward them in friendship, it is they, they who are truly wrongdoers!” (Q60: 8-9)

Ibn al-Jawzi says, “This verse permits association with those who have not declared war against the Muslims and allows kindness towards them, even though they may not be allies.”

In his Tafsir (commentary) on Q.60:8, Imam Al-Qurtubi said:

“The majority of commentators have agreed that this verse has not been abrogated. They cited the story reported by Al-Bukhari and Muslim about Asmā’ bint Abubakr when she asked the Prophet (ﷺ) if she could receive and be kind to her Non-Muslim mother who visited her in Madina and the Prophet (ﷺ) said ‘Yes’. It was said that this verse was revealed in this specific incident. Al-Mawardi and Abu Dawood reported that Amir ibn Abdullah ibn Al-Zubair narrated that his father told him that, before accepting Islam, Abubakr divorced his wife Qatila, the mother of Asmā’. When the truce was held between the Prophet and the pagans of the Quraish, the mother visited her daughter in Madina and brought her a pair of earrings and other gifts. Asmā’

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4 www.kalamullah.com, for further reading see: Muhammad Sa’id al-Qahtani, al-Wala’ wa al-Bara’ Fi al-Islam.
was reluctant to accept the gifts before asking the Prophet. In answer to her question, Allah revealed this verse [i.e. Q.60:8].”

Similarly, Allah encourages Justice (‘adl and qist) – even to an enemy. He says: “O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, wisdom for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relations…” – (Q4:135)

Also, Allah encourages forgiveness and returning evil with good. He says: “Repel by (means of) what is best, (their) evils. We are most knowing of what you describe” (Q23:96)

Following this Qur’anic injunction, forgiveness was exemplified by Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in many difficult situations such as forgiveness of war crimes by the Quraish after the conquest of Mecca;⁷ and the forgiveness of the people of Ta’if when he went there to preach the message of Islam but instead of appreciating him, they stoned him.⁸ He also overlooked the ill behaviour of Jews (i.e. Banu-Qainuqa and Banu Nadhir) in Madinah, before he expelled them after their betrayal.⁹

More textual evidences showing what the concept of ‘al-Bara’ is not:

- A young Jewish boy used to serve the Prophet ﷺ and he became sick. So the Prophet ﷺ went to visit him. He sat near his head and asked him to embrace Islam. The boy looked at his father, who was sitting there; the latter told him to obey Abul-Qasim and the boy embraced Islam. The Prophet ﷺ came out saying: "Praises be to Allah Who saved the boy from the Hell-fire."¹⁰ . Similarly, Al-Musaiyab said: When Abu Talib was on his deathbed, the Prophet visited him.¹¹ This shows the permissibility of visiting sick non-Muslims.

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⁷ Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari* vol.3, p. 345


During the peace treaty period of Hudaibiyah, the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ gave Abu Sufyan (the leader of the pagans of Makkah then) the very generous sum of 500 dinars (of gold) with which to assist the poor of Makkah during their brief period of severe food shortage.12 This financial aid to the Makkans was made despite their belief in idols, their past persecution and murder of Muslims, warfare and other inhuman atrocities and crimes against the Muslims of Makkah and Medina, and the fact that these same Makkans were responsible for the murder of a number of close companions and even relatives of the Prophet ﷺ himself.

Narrrated Asma' bint Abu Bakr: My mother came to me during the lifetime of Allah's Messenger ﷺ and she was a pagan. I said to Allah's Apostle (seeking his verdict), "My mother has come to me and she desires to receive a reward from me, shall I keep good relations with her?" The Prophet ﷺ said, "Yes, keep good relation with her."13

Allah says in Qur'an 28:56, “Verily, you cannot guide aright everyone whom you love (man ahbabta), but it is Allah who guides whom He wills, and He is fully aware of all those who receive guidance.”

Major Qur’anic commentators cite the context of the revelation of this verse as being related to the Prophet’s pagan uncle Abu Talib14 who supported him and whom he loved dearly but could not convince to become a Muslim, as evident in the narration below:

Narrated Said bin Al-Musaiyab from his father: When the time of the death of Abu Talib approached, Allah's Apostle ﷺ went to him and found Abu Jahl bin Hisham and 'Abdullah bin Abi Umaiya bin Al-Mughira by his side. Allah's Apostle ﷺ said to Abu Talib, "O uncle! Say: None has the right to be worshipped but Allah,

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13 Al-Tabarani, Al-Mu’jam al-Kabir, vol.24, p.78; Al-bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, hadith nos. (2620, 5979 & 2477); Muslim, Sahih Muslim, hadith no. (2372); Ahmad bn Hambal, Musnad al-Imam Ahmad, edited, Shu’ail al-Arnaut and others, 2nd Ed. Mu’assasat al-Risalah, Beirut, 1999, Hadith no (26915); Abu Bakr Abd al-Razzaq bn Hammam al-Sa’ani, Musannaf Abd al-Razzaq, edited, Habib al-Rahman al-A’zami, 2nd Ed., Al-Maktab al-Islami, Beirut, 1403 AH, hadith no (9932).
a sentence with which I shall be a witness (i.e. argue) for you before Allah. Abu Jahl and 'Abdullah bin Abi Umaiya said, "O Abu Talib! Are you going to denounce the religion of Abdul Muttalib?" Allah's Apostle ﷺ kept on inviting Abu Talib to say it (i.e. 'None has the right to be worshipped but Allah') while they (Abu Jahl and Abdullah) kept on repeating their statement till Abu Talib said as his last statement that he was on the religion of Abdul Muttalib and refused to say, 'None has the right to be worshipped but Allah.' (Then Allah's Apostle said, "I will keep on asking Allah's forgiveness for you unless I am forbidden (by Allah) to do so." So Allah revealed (the verse) concerning him (i.e. It is not fitting for the Prophet and those who believe that they should invoke (Allah) for forgiveness for pagans even though they be of kin, after it has become clear to them that they are companions of the fire (9.113).)"

The verse (28:56) is therefore a clear indication of the fact that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ loved a polytheist who refused to accept Islam. This is proof that non-Muslims are among those whom Muslims may love and hold close relationships with.

- Allah says: “And the food of those who were given the scripture is permissible for you, and your food is permissible for them” (Quran 5:5)

Narrated Anas bin Malik: A Jewess brought a poisoned (cooked) sheep for the Prophet ﷺ who ate from it. She was brought to the Prophet and he was asked, "Shall we kill her?" He said, "No." I continued to see the effect of the poison on the palate of the mouth of Allah's Apostle ﷺ.

- Abdullah bin Uraiqit, a Meccan non-Muslim was trusted by the Prophet ﷺ and Abubakar – to lead them to Medina during their hijra (migration), even though there was a price of 100 camels on the Prophet dead or alive.

- Muqawqis, the ruler of Egypt sent a rich present of a thousand measures of gold, twenty robes of fine cloth, a mule, and two Coptic Christian ladies who were held

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17 Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, Volume 3, Book 47, hadith no. (786)
in great respect in Egypt to the Prophetﷺ. And the Prophetﷺ accepted the presents

- Narrated `Abdullah bin `Umar: `Umar bin Al-Khattab saw a silken dress (cloak) being sold at the gate of the Mosque and said, "O Allah's Messengerﷺ! Would that you buy it and wear it on Fridays and when the delegates come to you!" Allah's Messengerﷺ said, "This is worn by the one who will have no share in the Hereafter." Later on some silk dresses were brought and Allah's Messengerﷺ sent one of them to `Umar. `Umar said, "How do you give me this to wear while you said what you said about the dress of 'Utarid?" Allah's Messengerﷺ said, "I have not given it to you to wear." So, `Umar gave it to a pagan brother of his in Mecca.²⁰

- Narrated `Aisha: The Prophetﷺ bought some foodstuff from a Jew on credit for a limited period and mortgaged his armor for it.²¹

- Aisha reported: She asked the Prophetﷺ, “Have you encountered a day harder than the battle of Uhud?” The Prophetﷺ said, “Your tribes have troubled very much, and the worst was the day of Aqaba when I presented myself to Ibn Abd Yalail ibn Abd Kulal and he did not respond to what I intended. I departed, overwhelmed with excessive sorrow, and I could not relax until I found myself at a tree where I lifted my head towards the sky to see a cloud shading me. I looked up and saw Gabriel in it. He called me saying: Allah has heard your people’s saying to you and how they have replied, and Allah has sent the Angel of the Mountains to you that you may order him to do whatever you wish to these people. The Angel of the Mountains greeted me and he said: O Muhammad, order what you wish, and if you like, I will let the mountains fall on them.” The Prophetﷺ said, “No, rather I hope that Allah will bring from their

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²⁰ Al-Tabarani, Al-Mu’jam al-Kabir, hadith no. (3497)
²¹ Muslim, Sahih Muslim, hadith no. (5522); Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, hadith no. (2612)
descendants people who will worship Allah alone without associating partners with him.”

- The *Sahifah* of Medina was charted by the Prophet ﷺ for peaceful coexistence and mutual respect of rights between Muslims and Jews as citizens.

### Types of *Al-Wala’* (Loyalty) and *Al-Bara’* (Dissociation)

2. What are the Prohibited and Permissible forms of *Al-Wala’* and *Al-Bara’*?

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Some forms of Al-wala’ could be prohibited, for example, helping non-Muslims in any way that could be unjustly harmful to Muslims. It could also be permissible as in when it comes in the form of kindness to those who are not hostile among them. For example, marrying kitabiyyah wives (from the “People of the Book”), eating their foods, greeting them, giving them gift, etc.\(^{24}\) The case of Asma’ bint Abu bakr and her mother as cited earlier on is a good example of acceptable al-wala’, so also is the prophet’s relationship with his uncle and the Muslim emigrants with the Christian Negus of Habashah (Abyssinia).

Also, marrying a kitabiya and the ensuing love between the Muslim husband and the non-Muslim wife which leads to mawaddah (love), rahmah (mercy), sakinah (tranquillity), hubb (love), trust, etc. and does not contradict the concept of al-Wala’ in Islam. This in in spite of the fact that there is even an emphasis on greater love (mawaddah) of Christians for Muslims (Q5:82).

\(^{24}\) See Abd al-Aziz bin Ris al-Ris, al-Burhan al-Munir, p.52.
This section focuses on the identity of the people of earlier revelation and their continued existence.

### Identity of Ahl al-Kitab (People of Earlier Revelation)

3. Who are the Ahl al-Kitab referred to in the Qur’an and Hadith? How are they recognized, and do they include communities other than Jews and Christians?

According to the Qur’an (13:7), God has sent prophets and messengers to all communities of mankind before sending the last of his prophets – Muhammad ﷺ. These prophets were “submitters to the will and guidance of God” (referred to as “Muslims” in the Qur’an (22:78) and in Arabic)⁵. Those who follow previous prophets instead of the prophet of the time are referred to as “Ahl al-Kitab” - meaning a “People of Scripture (or Book)” or “People of an Earlier Revelation”. This was the honorary name given to followers of previous prophets in the Qur’an and Sunnah, instead of referring to them as Mushrikun, meaning pagans or polytheists. In the Qur’an, they are either referred to as Jews (Yehud)⁷, Christians (Nasara)⁸ or Ahl al-Kitab⁹ (People of an Earlier Scripture).

Because the Qur’an clearly identifies Jews and Christians as Ahl al-Kitab who were followers of Prophet Moses and Jesus respectively (peace be upon them both), the majority of Muslim scholars have identified these 2 communities as being the only groups that are certainly Ahl al-Kitab¹⁰.

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²⁷ Quran 2:113,120. 5:18, 51, 64, 82. 9:30.
²⁸ Quran 2:113,120. 9:30
²⁹ Quran: 2:105,109. 3:64,65,69,71,72,75.
³⁰ *Al-Mawsu‘at al-Fiqhiya*, Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, Kuwait, vol.7 p.140
Other scholars however (such as Abu Hanifa,31 Imam Shafi’i32 and Ibn Hazm33) understood the term Ahl al-Kitab more literally as any people (ahl) with a scripture (kitab) before Muhammad ﷺ. They regarded any religious group (Ahl) that claimed to be in possession of a divine scripture (kitab) and whose prophet existed before the Last Prophet Muhammad as also being among the Ahl al-Kitab. They therefore regarded Zoroastrians (Majus),34 Sabians35 (Sabi’un) and others as being among them.

Existence of Ahl al-Kitab Today (People of Earlier Revelation)

4. Do the “People of the Book” (Ahl al-Kitab) exist today? Can modern day Jews and Christians be regarded as “People of the Book” in spite of their belief in the Trinity, the Crucifixion of Jesus, the corruption of their scriptures, etc.? If they are not the same communities referred to as Ahl al-Kitab in the Qur’an and Sunnah, then it implies that the so-called Jews and Christians of today are to be regarded as polytheists (mushrikun) and Muslims are not allowed to eat the animals they slaughter nor are they allowed to marry their women. Any such marriages are null and void!

According to the majority of Muslim scholars the Jews and Christians of today are still members of the religious community described or referred to in the Qur’an as Ahl al-Kitab36, and should be honoured as such. Some Muslims argue that the Ahl-al-Kitab (“People of the Book”, or “People of Earlier Revelation” before Prophet Muhammad ﷺ) are no longer in existence. They say the present-day Christians and Jews - unlike

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31 Al-Mawsu’at al-Fiqhiya, Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, Kuwait, vol.7 p.140
34 Al-Mawsu’at al-Fiqhiya, Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, Kuwait, vol.7 p.140
35 Al-Mawsu’at al-Fiqhiya, Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, Kuwait, vol.7 p.140
those of the time of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ - are not the same as those described in the Qur’an and Hadith as Ahl-al-Kitab, because (among other reasons), they have corrupted the teachings of their scriptures and therefore their scriptures are no longer authentic.

However, the Qur’an speaks of the Christians at the time of the Prophet ﷺ as having believed in the Trinity (Qur’an 4:171, 5:73) the divine Sonship of Jesus (Qur’an 9:30) 37, the crucifixion of Jesus (Qur’an 4:157) 38 and the belief that he and his mother (Mary) were divine or to be worshipped (Qur’an 5:116) 39 etc. The Qur’an also states that some of the Arab Jews believed that Uzair was a son of God (Qur’an 9:30) 40, and that some of the Ahl al-Kitab corrupted their scriptures (Qur’an 2:79) 41. These beliefs are therefore not new or recent teachings of Judaism or Christianity. In spite of all these, the Qur’an and the Prophet (on whom be peace) still considered those Christians and Jews as Ahl-al-Kitab (People of Earlier Revelations) and permitted conditional intermarriage and eating of what they slaughter, etc. (Qur’an 22:17; 5:5).

To believe that there are no more Ahl-al-Kitab existing today would also indirectly imply an abrogation or even irrelevance (for all present and practical purposes) of all references in the Qur’an or Hadith to Ahl-al-Kitab (Qur’an 3:64; 5:82; 22:17 etc.). In fact, among the hadith literature on the Signs of the Last Day are some that indicate the continued presence of Jews and Christians 42. All the major classical literature of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) that discuss issues related to the Ahl al-Kitab – such as

42 Muslim Sahih Muslim, Darul Jeel, Beirut, vol.8, p.188, hadith no. (7523); Musnad Ahmad, vol. 15, p.233, hadith no. (9398).
eating their food\textsuperscript{43}, marriage to them\textsuperscript{44}, etc. - have assumed their continued existence to this day.

The Jews and Christians of today therefore, are still members of the religious community described in the Qur’an as \textit{Ahl al-Kitab}, and should be honoured as such.

Addressing Non-Muslims with Insulting Terms – Kafir!

5. Many Christians regard the terms Kafir (in Arabic), Arne (in Hausa), kirdi (in Kanuri), etc. as insulting. If Islam is interested in peaceful coexistence, should they be called by these terms or names which they hate and find insulting?

There are several words used in the Qur’an and Hadith to describe actions and beliefs that Allah regards as wrong, misguided, blameworthy and unbecoming of anyone. These terms and those actions and attitudes associated with them, help guide us in knowing what to avoid in life and why. These terms are taught to us as descriptive of certain behaviours we should avoid, and not as names we should use when addressing people who may in reality be misguided wrongdoers. These words and phrases, include \textit{munafiq} (hypocrite), \textit{fasiq} (wrong-doer), \textit{dhalim} (unjust), \textit{jahiliy} (ignoramus), \textit{najas} (impure, dirty or immoral), \textit{kafir} (ingrate, disbeliever), \textit{Ashab al-Nar} (“People of the Fire”) etc.

In a particular context or usage, a word or term (such as Kafir) may take on a purely descriptive meaning, referring to anyone who rejects or does not accept Islam. In this sense, every non-Muslim is a Kafir. In another sense however, the same word may be


viewed or perceived as derogatory, insulting, or condemnatory and also as being regarded or categorized together with Atheists or Pagans.

While it may be true that a person (whether Muslim or non-Muslim) is actually guilty of fisq, nifaq, shirk, kufr, etc., it is not proper to call people by names such Fasiq, Munafiq, Mushrik, Kafir, etc., respectively, especially if these names are offensive or insulting to them. Similarly, just because it is true that a person is actually an illegitimate child, it is not proper to address such a person as a bastard or any other similarly offensive name.

Allah makes it categorically clear in the Qur’an that the Pharaoh (of the time of Prophet Musa) was a dhalim and kafir, and that prophet Musa was one of the greatest and most respected messengers of Allah (among the Uwl al-‘Azm). Yet, Musa was instructed when addressing Pharaoh to speak nicely, politely and softly to him, with the optimism that he may listen and take guidance, in spite of all his atrocities, arrogance and disbelief.

Therefore, even if a person is as confirmed in his Kufr by Allah Himself as Pharaoh was, he still deserves courtesy from a person of faith. How then can anyone who does not have the standing of Prophet Musa, justify their qualification to speak rudely or insultingly at anyone who is not even as bad as Pharaoh in their Kufr?

Allah says in the Qur’an, “ Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful exhortation. (Q.16:125) ”

“ Do not argue with the People of the Book, except in a most kindly manner” (Q.29:46)

Someone once said to the Prophet , “Pray to Allah against the idol-worshippers and curse them!” The Prophet replied, “I have not been sent as the invoker of curses; I have only been sent as a mercy.” “Do you know what is better than charity and fasting and prayer? It is keeping peace and good relations between people, as quarrels and bad feelings destroy mankind”. The Prophet also said, “A believer should not taunt, curse, abuse or talk indecently”.

While the term kufr may be used to describe any wrong or unacceptable belief or ideology - such as the Trinity (Q5:17) or Sonship of Jesus (Q5:73) etc. - the Qur’an and

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45 Qur’an 7:103, 8:54, 85:18, 8:52
46 Muslim, Sahih Muslim, hadith no. (1192) in Alim 6.0
47 Al-Tirmidhi, Sunan al-Tirmidhi, hadith no. (2509)
48 Tirmidhi, hadith no. (544) in Alim 6.0
Sunnah does not use the term Kafir to refer to, call or address Christians or Jews (Ahl al-Kitab) or even Zoroastrians. These religious communities were addressed by the Qur’an and the Prophet ﷺ by the names they called themselves – Jews (yahud), Christians (Nasara), Zoroastrian (Majus), etc. More frequently however, they were referred to and addressed in the Qur’an and Hadith by the honourable term “Ahl al-Kitab” (People of the Book) in recognition of their association with earlier divine revealed scriptures (or Books) and genuine prophets of Allah such as Musa and Isa (peace be upon them).

In more than 12 places, the Qur’an instructs the Prophet ﷺ and Muslims when addressing Jews and/or Christians, by the words: “Say! O People of the Book (Ahl al-Kitab)…” Allah Himself addresses them with the phrase “O People of the Book!…” In many other verses, they are referred to as “Those who have been given Scriptures (before you)…” These are besides the numerous instances where they are referred to as Yahud (Jews) or Nasara (Christians). In fact in the Qur’an, Allah describes term “Nasara” (Christians) as a term that they use to describe themselves – “Those who call themselves Christians” (Q.5:82) and “And from among those who said, ‘we are Nasara’ (Christians)” (Q.5:14).

Another concern is the fact that in many modern contexts and cultures, the terms kafir, kirdi (in Kanuri), or Arne (in Hausa), etc. are viewed as nothing but derogatory and insulting terms for addressing others, including non-Muslims. Unfortunately, some Muslims also deliberately use these terms with the intent to insult. Within such a context, it would wrong and improper for a Muslim to use such terms to offend or insult others, especially when there are alternative, completely valid and even more appropriate names for describing the religious identities of non-Muslims.

The Prophet ﷺ said, “Actions are judged by their intentions”⁴⁹. Based on this and other similar statements in the Qur’an and Sunnah, Muslims jurists have derived a legal maxim (Qa’idah al-Fiqhiyyah) which states that “Matters will be judged by the purposes they fulfil” (Al-umuru bi-maqasidiha). They also conclude that “liability is decided on the basis of intention and meaning and not on the basis of words and forms” or that “greater consideration is paid to intent and not to words”.⁵⁰ In other

⁴⁹ Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, hadith no. 1; Sunan Abu Dawud, hadith no. (2203); Al-Mu’jam al-Awsat, hadith no. (40); Al-Sunan al-Sugra, hadith no. (2)
words, what is meant matters more than what words are used. If a word like Kafir (or any other) is therefore used in a particular context with the intent to insult, abuse or denigrate another person, then it is wrong islamically.

Besides the immorality of insults and abuse, there is also the concern for consequences and for reciprocation with insults and inappropriate language in response. The Qur’an and Sunnah have in fact consistently prohibited Muslims from hurting or insulting others through harsh words and derogatory nicknames that would make others insult Muslims in return.

Allah instructs in the Qur’an, “Do not call each other by offensive nicknames” (Qur’an 49:11). Even though idols represent some of the greatest forms of sin against Allah - shirk (polytheism) – the Qur’an categorically prohibits Muslims from insulting these and those other than Allah who polytheists worship as they may also respond with insults against Allah51.

Regarding the concern for reciprocation, the Prophetﷺ gave an example how a person would indirectly be abusing his or her own parents. He said, “Among the major sins, is for a person to abuse his parents”. A Companion said, ‘How would a man abuse (his patents). The Prophetﷺ said, “(It would be) by him abusing someone, who will then abuse his patents”52.

Abu Hurayra (RA) reported that the Messenger of Godﷺ said, “He who believes in God and the Last Day, let him abstain from harming his neighbour; he who believes in God and the Last Day, let him honour his guest; and he who believes in God and the Last Day, let him say that which is good, or remain silent”53.

Abū Hurayra (RA) reported that the Messenger of Godﷺ said, “The Muslim is he from whose tongue and hand all people are safe…”54.

Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal narrated in his Musnad from ‘Abd Allāh bin ‘Amr bin al-‘Ās (RA) who reported that a man said, ‘O Messenger of Godﷺ! What [person’s] Islam is best?’ The Prophetﷺ replied, “The one from whose tongue and hand all people are safe”55.

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51 Qur’an 6:108
52 Imam al-Bukhari, Adab al-Mufrad, hadith no. (27)
53 Al-Bukhari, hadith no. (5672); Muslim, hadith no. (74)
54 Al-Nasa’i, hadith no. (4996); Ahmad, hadith no.(7086)
55 Ahmad bin Hanbal, Musnad Ahmad, hadith no.(7086)
Imam al-Tabarānī has also narrated from ‘Abd Allāh bin ‘Amr who said that, “A man asked the Prophet ﷺ, ‘O Messenger of God! Whose Islam is best?’ The Prophet ﷺ replied, ‘The one from whose tongue and hand all people are safe’”\(^{56}\).

Abdullah bin Umar narrated that a man asked the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, “What kind (or part) of Islam is best?” – The Prophet replied, “That you serve food and give the salutations of peace to the one – the person - whom you know, and the one whom you don’t know”\(^{57}\).

The Prophet ﷺ said, “Make things easy (for people) and do not make things difficult (for them). Cheer people up and do not drive them away”\(^{58}\). In another version, the Prophet ﷺ said, “Make things easy (for people) and do not make things difficult (for them). Make people comfortable (or relaxed) and do not drive them away”\(^{59}\).

\(^{56}\) Al-Tabarani, al-Mu’jam al-Kabir, hadith no. (1451)
\(^{57}\) Al-Bukhari, hadith no. (12); Muslim, hadith no. (63)
\(^{58}\) Al-Bukhari, Sahih Bukhari, hadith no. (69).
\(^{59}\) Al-Bukhari, Sahih Bukhari, hadith no. (6125); Muslim, Sahih Muslim, hadith no. (4626); Ahmad, Musnad Ahmad, hadith no. (12333).
SECTION 3: INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS BETWEEN MUSLIMS AND NON-MUSLIMS

This section expounds the expected interpersonal relationship between Muslims and non-hostile people of other faiths.

Ideals in Interfaith Relations: Hostility or Harmony?

6. What is the ideal and normative relationship that Islam prescribes between Muslims and non-Muslims? Is it one of hostility or peace and harmony?

The ideal and normative relationship that Islam prescribes between Muslims and non-Muslims is made explicitly clear in the Qur’an and exemplified in the life of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. It is not that of war and hostility as opined by some, rather it is peace, justice, security and promotion of goodness (maslaha) and maqasid of Shariah – and whatever will lead to these. Allah says in the Holy Qur’an: “As for such (of the unbelievers) as do not fight against you on account of (your) faith, and neither drive you forth from your homelands, God does not forbid you to show them kindness and to behave towards them with full equity: for verily, God loves those who act equitably. God only forbids you to turn in friendship towards such as fight against you because of (your) faith, and drive you forth from your homelands, or aid (others) in driving you forth: and as for those (from among you) who turn toward them in friendship, it is they, they who are truly wrongdoers!” (Q60: 8-9)

A number of verses and prophetic traditions make us realize that the normative relationship that Islam prescribes between Muslims and non-Muslims is peaceful coexistence and not war or hostility. In other words, conflict or fighting is the exception and not the rule. Below are some of those texts:

- “And if they (your enemy) incline to peace, incline you do also to it, and trust in Allah” (Q8:61)
- “But if they cease (fighting), Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful” (Q2:192)
- “…but if they cease, let there be no hostility except to those who practice oppression” (Q2:193)
• “Fight in the cause of God those who fight you, but do not commit aggression, for God loves not the aggressor” (Q2:190)

• The Prophet says: “Do not wish to meet the enemy, and ask Allah for safety; but when you face the enemy, be patient, and remember that Paradise is under the shade of swords.”

  60 This hadith shows that peace and safety is what Islam desires as a norm and not tribulation and enmity.

All the teachings of Islam related to seeking peace, arbitration, forgiveness, charity, social justice, and the objectives of Shari’ah (Maqasid al-Shari’ah) etc. are all directed towards greater peace in society.

Even where fighting is permissible in Islam, it is only against aggression that cannot be forgiven. And in this case, fighting is permissible only as a lesser evil where there is no alternative route to peace with justice.

The fact that Islam would tolerate a Muslim man initiating and having a relationship as close and intimate as that of marriage with a Christian or Jewish woman, in spite of the difference in faith, points to the extent of expression of love and kindness that a Muslim is allowed to offer some non-Muslims. 61 It is also proof that Islam does allow genuine friendship with non-Muslims, for marriage is a relationship that the Qur’an characterizes as one of “tranquility” and “mutual love and mercy” (Q.30:21) – qualities that also characterize the closest of friends. As with all relationships, and irrespective of the person’s faith, such a marriage should not be allowed to undermine Islamic ideals.

The Qur’an explains the difference between polytheists (Mushrikun) and People of the scripture (ahl al-Kitab) and makes the relationship between the latter and Muslims more intimate by permitting the eating of their slaughtered animal and marriage to their women. The relationship between the early Muslims and all non-Muslim

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60 Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari hadith no. (6810)
61 This level of respect and, indeed, love is not morally permissible to initiate in some other religions. (See legal studies on Christianity and Judaism, for example, where any form of interfaith marriage is prohibited, whether male or female. This prohibition is derived by Christian and Jewish scholars in view of II Corinthians 6:14-15, I Corinthians 7:39, Exodus 34:12-16, Deuteronomy 7:1-4, Ezra 10:2-3, Nehemiah 13:25-27, etc. in the Bible. In Christianity, however, an already existing interfaith marriage is tolerated if one of the partners accepts Christianity and the other does not (I Corinthians 7:12-14)). Contemporary canons of Catholicism and guidelines for pastoral practice in Protestant churches, however, accommodate the fact that interfaith marriages are legitimate in common law. See: http://www.religioustolerance.org/ifm_bibl.htm, 2005, for more information about Biblical teachings on interfaith marriages.
communities – pagans, Zoroastrians, Jews and Christians etc., was peaceful until they broke their peace-treaty with the Muslims. Islam emphasizes the rights of non-Muslims living in Islamic state as citizens or protected people (ahl al-Dhimmah) which includes their rights to life, work, practice their religion etc.

Other things which Islam permits and/or encourages which serve as signs of normative peaceful relations between Muslims and non-Muslims (people of the book in particular) include: greetings, eating food of one another, exchanging gifts and visits, charity, encouraging forgiveness and patience, goodness to neighbours, trade, establishing peace treaties for mutual safety and security, etc. The prophet ﷺ said: “Whoever truly believe in Allah and in the Day of Judgment should honour his neighbour.”

Friendliness with People of Other Faiths

7. Is a Muslim permitted to be friendly with people of other religions, and have more intimate relationships with the ‘people of the book’? How close or friendly can a Muslim get with non-Muslims? Won’t a Muslim be negatively influenced by a non-Muslim friend?

The Qur’an 60:8-9 summarized Islam’s position on relations with people of other faiths: “As for such (of the unbelievers) as do not fight against you on account of (your) faith, and neither drive you forth from your homelands, God does not forbid you to show them kindness (birr) and to behave towards them with full equity: for verily, God loves those who act equitably. God only forbids you to turn in friendship towards such as fight against you because of (your) faith, and drive you forth from your homelands,

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62 Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, hadith no. (5673)
or aid (others) in driving you forth: and as for those (from among you) who turn toward them in friendship, it is they, they who are truly wrongdoers!"

There are other verses of the Qur’an that forbid Muslims from befriending the type of hostile non-Muslims that are discussed in the second part of the verse above (Qur’an 60:9). This of course does not exclude the possibility of forgiveness (Qur’an 16:126) and returning harm done with goodness (Qur’an 41:34, 23:96, 28:54) which is better for a Muslim to do.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is the best role model for Muslims (Qur’an 33:21)! The Qur’an (28:56) refers to his having “loved” his kind uncle Abu Talib even though he was a Pagan (mushrik). The Prophet trusted the Christian King (the Negus) of Abyssinia with the lives of the first group of Muslims (Muhajirun). 63 He also trusted Abdullah bin Uraiqit (who was a Pagan) to guide him and Abubakr through the desert to Medina 64 when the other Meccans wanted to kill him.

Marriage is a very intimate and loving relationship (Qur’an 30:21). The fact that the Qur’an (5:5) will permit a Muslim to marry a Jewish or Christian lady, suggests the level of friendship and companionship that Islam permits a Muslim to have with a non-Muslim in spite of the difference in their faiths. The Prophet ﷺ gave and received gifts from non-Muslims; he visited them and vice-versa. Only such relationships that compromise Islamic values are prohibited in Islam.

The kindness 65 and fair, peaceful relationship spoken of in Qur’an 60:8-9 (cited earlier) applies to all peace-loving non-Muslims, whether they are of monotheistic, polytheistic, or non-religious persuasions. Regarding the general treatment of non-monotheists, such as the Zoroastrians (Majus), the Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said, "Treat them as you treat the People of the Book". 66 The majority of scholars state that

65 The Qur'anic term birr, translated here as “kindness”, encompasses all forms of sincere goodness, equity, charity, integrity, compassion, love, devotion, and righteousness. See Q:2:177, and Hammudah Abdulati, Islam in Focus World Assembly of Muslim Youths, Riyadh, 1994, p.25
Zoroastrians are polytheists\textsuperscript{67} and thus that this precedent - "Treat them as you treat the People of the Book" - also applies to people of other creeds besides the People of the Book.\textsuperscript{68} Hence, the statement of the Prophet ﷺ is interpreted to mean that non-Jews and non-Christians may be treated with the rights, kindness and friendliness accorded to Jews and Christians ("People of the Book").

Though, for moral, ethical and spiritual reasons, marriage to polytheists and eating of their slaughtered meat is not permissible to Muslims\textsuperscript{69}; kindness and justice are to be extended to them. Disgracing or reviling others’ beliefs and deities is forbidden in Islam, as Allah says in the Qur’an, “Do not revile those whom others invoke instead of God, lest they in retaliation revile Allah out of ignorance” (Q.6:108). The Prophet ﷺ exemplified this in his response when it was said to him, “Pray to Allah against the polytheists and curse them!” The Messenger ﷺ replied, “I have not been sent as the invoker of curses; I have only been sent as a mercy.”\textsuperscript{70} In another hadith, he is also reported to have said, “I have been sent to join ties of relationship”\textsuperscript{71}; and when Aisha wanted to retort to some Jews who had insulted the Prophet ﷺ, he said to her, “O Aisha, be gentle and beware of being harsh and of saying evil things.”\textsuperscript{72}

Interaction implies the possibility of influence. This influence could be positive or negative, as influence is rarely neutral. It is important for Muslims to recognize the influence that others around them have. Abu Musa al-Ash’ari narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said:

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Qaradawi’s The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam, Chapter 2, Section: “The Meat of Zoroastrians and Others Like Them” p.332, n.41.
This does not detract from the prohibition of eating the meat slaughtered by polytheists (Q.2:173, 5:3, 6:121) and the prohibition of marriage to their women, mentioned in the Qur’an (60:10; 2:221; 5:5), as these rulings are still applicable: “Do not marry mushrik women until they become believers; a believing slave woman is better than a free mushrik woman even though she pleases you. Likewise, do not marry (your girls to) mushrik men until they become believers; a believing slave man is better than a free mushrik man even though he pleases you…” (Q.2:221).
\textsuperscript{69} See Q.60:10 and 2:221
\textsuperscript{70} Muslim, Sahih Muslim, hadith no. (1192) in Alim 6.0
\textsuperscript{71} Muslim, Sahih Muslim, hadith no. (410) in Alim 6.0
\textsuperscript{72} Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, vol.8, hadith no. (410) in Alim 6.0
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The example of a good (pious) companion and an evil one is that of a person carrying musk and another blowing a pair of bellows. The one who is carrying musk will either give you some perfume as a present, or you will buy some from him, or you will get a good smell from him, but the one who is blowing a pair of bellows will either burn your clothes or you will get a bad smell from him.73

There are different types of Muslims and non-Muslims. Some are trustworthy and upright, while others are corrupt and hypocritical. The Qur’an acknowledges that non-Muslims are not all alike (Qur’an 3:113, 3:75) some are reliable while others are not. The same is true about all religious and irreligious communities.

If a Muslim realizes that his or her interaction with a particular person, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, is having a negative influence, then the following advice of the Prophet becomes applicable:

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\text{It is better to be alone than in bad company; and it is better still to be in good company than to be alone. It is better to speak to a seeker of knowledge than to remain silent; but silence is better than idle words.}^74
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In addition, Abu Musa Al-Ash’Ari narrated that the Prophet (pbuh) said: “the example of a good pious companion and an evil one is that of a person carrying perfume and another blowing a pair of bellows. The one who is carrying perfume will either give you some perfume as a gift or you buy some from him, or you will get a good smell from him, but the one who is blowing a pair of bellows will either burn your cloth or you will get a bad smell from him”75

A Muslim should always remember that every non-Muslim is a potential Muslim, just as every weak Muslim is potentially a good one (mu’min), by Allah’s Grace. A Muslim should therefore ensure, as much as he can, that his life and relationships serve as a testament to his faith. Moreover, he should take the initiative to have a positive influence on those around him. The following passages from the Qur’an and Hadith illustrate the manner and disposition enjoined on Muslims to have such positive influence:

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73 Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, vol.7, hadith no. (442); also found in vol.3, hadith no. (314), in Alim 6.0
74 Sahih Muslim, hadith no. (97)
75 Sahih al-Bukhari, hadith no. (2101); Sahih Muslim, hadith no. (6860)
Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful exhortation... And if you have to respond to an attack, respond only to the extent of the attack leveled against you; but to bear yourselves with patience is indeed far better for (you, since God is with) those who are patient in adversity. (Qur’an 16:125-126)

Do not speak to the people with your face turned away, nor walk proudly on earth; for Allah does not love any arrogant boaster. (Qur’an 31:18)

Do you know what is better than charity and fasting and prayer? It is keeping peace and good relations between people, as quarrels and bad feelings destroy mankind.76

Do not be people without minds of your own, saying that if others treat you well you will treat them well and that if they do wrong you will do wrong; but accustom yourselves to do good if people do good and not to do wrong if they do evil.77

A believer should not taunt, curse, abuse or talk indecently78

If someone abuses you, and reproaches you for what he knows about you, then do not reproach him for what you know about him, so that you may have the reward thereof and the sin thereof is against him.79

Allah will not give mercy to anyone, except those who give mercy to other creatures.80

These passages and many others assume that a Muslim would sometimes interact with those who are unpleasant towards him or who oppose his beliefs. Therefore, the passages provide guidance from Allah’s wisdom for such interaction. Though Muslims should be cautious of negative influences within the society, fear of this should not prevent them from relating with others in a productive manner in order to exert a positive and beneficial influence, inspired by their faith, in whatever way possible.

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76 Al-Tirmidhi, Sunan al-Tirmidhi, hadith no. (2509)
77 Tirmidhi, hadith no. (1325) in Alim 6.0
78 Tirmidhi, hadith no. (544) in Alim 6.0
79 Abu Dawood, hadith no. (1889) in Alim 6.0
80 Narrated by Abdullah b. Amr; Abu Dawood, Tirmidhi
8. Can we trust non-Muslims?

The Qur’an and Sunnah make it clear that not all non-Muslims are bad people, just as not all Muslims are good people. There are honest and trustworthy people, along with hypocrites (munafiqun), and wrongdoers (fasiqun), etc. among all religious and irreligious communities. A few verses will suffice to demonstrate this point:

“(But) they are not all alike: among the followers of earlier revelation, there are upright people…” (Q. 3:113)

“Among the followers of earlier revelation are some who, if entrusted with a hoard of gold, will (readily) pay it back; others, who, if entrusted with a single silver coin, will not repay it unless you constantly stand over them demanding it.” (Q. 3:75)

“And there are people who say, ‘We do believe in God and the Last Day,’ while they do not (really) believe. They would deceive God and those who have attained to faith – they deceive none but themselves, and perceive it not.” (Q. 2:8–9)

In other words, a person is not judged as bad and untrustworthy just because he is a non-Muslim, nor is he automatically good and trustworthy just because he calls himself a Muslim. There should be reasonable trust and good expectations of everyone, as Allah reminds us, “If you judge between mankind, judge with justice” (Q.4:58) and “Do not let hatred of any people cause you to swerve from justice. Be just: this is nearest to being God-conscious” (Q.5:8).

Seeking help from non-Muslims was also done at the time of the Prophet ☪ and is thus permissible provided it does not endanger or compromise Islamic values and principles. For example, non-Muslims may be consulted and assigned positions of trust in technical matters at private or governmental level, such as in the fields of Medicine, Transport (e.g. pilots of air carriers), Agriculture, Industry, Military equipment, etc. In such areas, however, it is also encouraged that Muslims should collectively strive to attain some autonomy and independent strength vis-à-vis their status in comparison
to non-Muslim states, in pursuit of greater social equity and effective political and economic inter-dependence in the world.

The Prophet employed Abdullah ibn Uraiqit, a polytheist, to be his guide on his “Hijra” (i.e. “flight; migration”) from Makkah to Madinah. Aisha narrated that:

The Prophet and Abubakr employed a man from the Bani Al-Dil and the tribe of Bani ‘Abd bin ‘Adi as a guide. He was an expert guide and he broke the oath contract which he had to abide by with the tribe of Al-‘Asi bin Wail, and he was on the religion of Quraysh pagans. The Prophet and Abubakr had confidence in him and gave him their riding camels and told him to bring them to the Cave of Thaur after three days. So, he brought them their two riding camels after three days and both of them (The Prophet and Abubakr) set out accompanied by ‘Amir bin Fuhaira and the Dili guide who guided them below Makkah along the road leading to the sea-shore.81

A person’s state of unbelief, therefore, does not necessarily mean that he is untrustworthy. The Prophet’s life was at stake yet this particular polytheist was trustworthy, and the Prophet trusted him. Other trusted non-Muslims included Abu Talib, the Prophet’s beloved uncle, who gave the Prophet security in Makkah, and Mut’im bin ‘Adi, who was one of the leaders of Makkah that sympathized and helped the Prophet especially during the years of the Boycott by the Makkans.82 It is also a well-known historical fact that the Prophet trusted the Christian Ethiopian King, Negus, with the lives of the first group of Muslim refugees escaping persecution from the polytheists of Makkah.83

The author of the renowned work, Fiqh us-Sunnah, Sayyid Sabiq, states:

In his book, Al-Adab ash-Shari’ah, Ibn Muflih writes that Sheikh Taqiuddin Ibn Taymiyyah said: ‘A credible Jew or Christian who has medical expertise may treat a sick Muslim. Such a person may, likewise, be entrusted with funds or other financial transactions, for Allah, the Exalted, says: “Among the People of the Book are some who, if entrusted with a hoard of gold, will (readily) pay it back; others, who, if entrusted with a single silver coin, will not repay it unless

81 Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari, vol.3, hadith no. (464), in Alim 6.0
you constantly stand over them demanding it” (Qur’an 3:75)’. We find in a sound hadith that the Prophet, peace be upon him, hired a polytheist as a guide at the time of his migration to Madinah, so he entrusted him with his life and money. The people of the tribe of Khuza‘ah, who were both Muslims and Non-Muslims, acted as scouts for the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him. It is also reported that the Prophet, peace be upon him, ordered Muslims to seek treatment from Al-Harith ibn Kildah, who was a disbeliever. But when a Muslim physician with the expertise is available, one should seek his or her treatment and not turn to anyone else. The same applies when one has to entrust a person with funds or deal with him in business. If a Muslim has to confide in or turn to someone from the people of the Book for medical treatment, he may do so. It is not prohibited to befriend Jews and Christians. And when the Muslim has an opportunity to talk to them, he should address them in ways that are polite and sincere. Indeed, Allah, the Exalted, says: “And do not argue with the people of the Book, except in ways that are best.” (Qur’an 29:46) In a hadith on the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah, Abu Al-Khattab tells us that, ‘the Prophet, peace be upon him, sent a man of the Khuza‘ah tribe to gather intelligence, and the Prophet, peace be upon him, accepted his report despite the fact that he was a disbeliever.’ This proves, according to Abu Al-Khattab, that it is quite permissible to take the advice of a non-believing physician for diagnosis and treatment, provided he is not suspected and his fidelity is not doubtful.84

Even as late in the sequence of revelation as the Farewell Hajj, the Prophet asked Al-Harith ibn Kildah, a non-Muslim physician, to treat the illness of Sa’d ibn Abi Waqqas.85 Trustworthiness, therefore, is an essential factor to consider when seeking the assistance of a non-Muslim, or anyone else for that matter.

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84 Sayyid Sabiq, *Fiqh us-Sunnah*, vol.4, hadith no. (6A) in *Alim 6.0*
9. Should non-Muslims be allowed into a mosque?

People of various faiths, including Jews, Christians and Pagans, entered into the great mosque of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in Medina during his lifetime and after that.86 This is the second most sacred mosque for Muslims87. Most of the Prophet’s meetings with numerous non-Muslims in Medina were held in the Mosque during the last years of his life88. Reports also indicate that he received some pagans of Banu Thaqif from Taif in his Mosque in 9A.H.89 Al-Mubarakfuri, author of the acclaimed biography of the Prophet ﷺ, the Sealed Nectar (2002), writes that their “tent was erected in the corner of the mosque so that they could listen to the Qur’an and see the people in prayer.”90 Another well-known case was where up to 60 Christians from Najran met with the Prophet ﷺ in his mosque in Medina in the year 10AH.91 They were there for 3 days. During their stay in the mosque, they discussed various issues with him. They ate, relaxed, and even slept in the Mosque.92 The same authorities also narrated that they were even allowed by the Prophet ﷺ to say their own (Christian) prayers in his Mosque.93 This shows the extent of respect the Prophet ﷺ had for the right of these Christians to practice their faith.

87 Al-Qushairi, Muslim bin Hajaj Abul Husain, Sahih Muslim, Darul Jeel, Beirut, vol.4, p.125, hadith no. (3445); Ibn Hibban, Muhammad bin Hibban bin Ahmad, Sahih Ibn Hibban Edited Shuaib al-Arnaut, Mu’assasat al-Risalah, Beirut, 1993, hadith no. (1625)
88 Sahih Bukhari hadith no. (1116); Sahih Muslim hadith no. (2469); Abu Dawud hadith no. (880); Tirmidhi hadith no. (3851); An-Nasa’i hadith no. (2849); Ibn Majah hadith no. (1394); Musnad Ahmad hadith no. (4606); Musannaf ibn Abu Shaibah hadith no. (207); Source: Al-Maktabah al-Shamilah 3.13
93 In the opinion of al-Albani (in his footnotes to Muhammad Al-Ghazali’s Fiqh-U-Seerah: Understanding the Life of Prophet Muhammad, International Islamic Federation of Student Organisations, Riyadh, 1995), the
Furthermore, the hadith collection of Imam Bukhari has records of non-Muslim prisoners of war, such as Thumama bin Uthal who were held in the mosque.\textsuperscript{94} Imam al-Shafi’i writes in \textit{al-Umm}, “If a polytheist could sleep in a mosque, then definitely a Muslim can,” and in \textit{al-Mukhtasar} states, “There is no harm in a polytheist staying in any mosque except in the Inviolable Mosque (of Makkah).”\textsuperscript{95}

Some Muslims unfortunately quote Q.9:17-18 as evidence for the prohibition of non-Muslims entering mosques. The verses read:

\begin{quote}
It does not befit those who ascribe divinity to any other than Allah, to maintain the mosques of Allah... The mosques of Allah shall be visited and maintained by only he who believes in Allah and the Last Day, and who is steadfast in his prayers...
\end{quote}

M. Asad (1980) notes that prohibiting non-Muslims from entering all mosques based on this verse is not tenable:

... In view of the fact that in 9A.H. – that is, after the revelation of this Surah – the Prophet himself lodged a deputation of the pagan Banu Thaqif in the mosque of Medina (Razi). Thus, the above verse expresses no more than the moral incongruity of the unbelievers’ “visiting or tending God’s houses of worship.”\textsuperscript{96}

Ibn Kathir notes that what is prohibited for non-Muslims to enter is [only] the \textit{Masjid al-Haram} (the Inviolable Mosque in Makkah).\textsuperscript{97} Thus, majority of Muslim scholars are of the opinion that non-Muslims are not allowed to visit the sacred mosque in Mecca based on an interpretation of Qur’an 9:28.\textsuperscript{98} However, many non-Muslim visitors and tourists visit many great mosques across the world in Egypt, Turkey, Oman, Bahrain, 

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\textsuperscript{94} E.g. \textit{Sahih al-Bukhari}, vol.5, hadith no. (658) in \textit{Alim 6.0} on “Thumama ibn Uthal”.

\textsuperscript{95} Quoted in Sayyid Sabiq, \textit{Fiqh us-Sunnah}, vol.2, no.73a in \textit{Alim 6.0}

\textsuperscript{96} Muhammad Asad, \textit{The Message of the Qur’an}, Dar al-Andalus, Gibraltar, 1980, p.258, n.27. This incongruity of one who does not believe in worshipping Allah maintaining the place where Allah is worshipped is also mentioned by Abu Ja’far. (See \textit{Tafsir al-Qurtubi}, Dar Ilya at-Turath al-Arab, Beirut, 1985, vol. 8, p.89).

\textsuperscript{97} \textit{Tafsir Ibn Kathir (Abridged)}, Darussalam Publishers, Riyadh, vol.4, p.388

and Malaysia, etc. Some Muslims (and Mosque Tour Guides) utilize this rare opportunity to educate the visitor about Islam and clarify common misconceptions they might have about the religion.

Visitation and Hospitality towards People of Other Faiths

10. Can we visit and host non-Muslims?

Visiting non-Muslims is not only permissible but an encouraged act of da’wah and relationship-building. Imam Bukhari, for instance, records that Anas said, “A Jewish boy used to serve the Prophetﷺ. Once he fell ill and the Prophetﷺ visited him and said to him, ‘Embrace Islam.’ So he did.”100 Sa’id ibn al-Musayyab narrated that the Prophetﷺ also visited his uncle Abu Talib when he was ill.101 This latter narration was recorded by Imam Bukhari under a chapter entitled, “‘Iyadatul-Mushrik” (i.e. “Visiting polytheists who are unwell”).

Muslims are also permitted to accept invitations from non-Muslims if it does not cause any harm to anyone, just as the Prophet demonstratedﷺ. For instance, Anas ibn Malik narrated that:

Allah’s Messengerﷺ had a neighbor who was Persian [a Zoroastrian], and he was an expert in the preparation of soup. He prepared (soup) for Allah’s Messengerﷺ and then came to him to invite him (to that feast). He said, “Here is Aisha (and you should also invite her to the meal).” He said, “No,” then Allah’s Messenger also said, “No (then I cannot join the feast).” He (the Persian) returned to invite him, and Allah’s Messenger said, “She (Aisha) is also here.” He said, “No” whereupon Allah’s Messenger also said, “No” (and declined his

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101 Sahih al-Bukhari, vol.7, hadith no. (561); Sayyid Sabiq, Fiqh us-Sunnah, vol.4, no.5 in Alim 6.0
offered). He (the Persian) returned another time to invite him and Allah’s Messenger again said, “She is also here.” He (the Persian) said, “Yes” on the third occasion. Then he accepted his invitation, and both of them set out and went to his house.102

Finally, Muslims are allowed to host non-Muslims in their homes. A frequently cited example is the report of Asmā’, the daughter of Abubakr, who said, “My mother came to me and she is a polytheist. I said, ‘O Messenger of Allah, if my mother came to me and she is willing, do I establish a link with her?’ He said, ‘Yes, establish a link with your mother.’”103

Giving and Receiving Gifts

11. Can we exchange gifts with non-Muslims?

It is a time-honoured tradition of Muslims to give gifts, irrespective of the religion of the recipient; and numerous hadith narrations abound to this effect. For example, Mujahid narrated that Abdullah ibn Amr ibn al-‘As slaughtered a sheep and said, “Have you presented a gift from it to my neighbour, the Jew, for I heard the Apostle of Allah say, ‘Jibril kept on commending the neighbour to me such that I thought he would make him an heir’?”104 Umm Salamah also narrated that the Prophet told her, “I have sent al-Najashi [the Abyssinian king] a robe and some milk.”105

True friendly relations entail reciprocal exchanges of presents. Accordingly, receiving gifts from non-Muslims is also permissible to a Muslim. Salim Al-Bahasawy notes a well-known case from the lifetime of the Prophet:

102 Sahih Muslim, hadith no. (958) in Alim 6.0
103 Sayyid Sabiq, Fiqh us-Sunnah, vol.3, no.103a, in Alim 6.0
104 Abu Dawood, hadith no. (2446) in Alim 6.0
When Salman Al-Farisy first came to Al-Madinah, he was not yet a Muslim. He knew that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was dignified and would not accept charity. He entered upon the Prophet (peace be upon him) and said, “I respect your dignity and I present a gift to you, not a Sadaqah (charity).” The Prophet (peace be upon him) extended his hand and ate, and so did the Companions. Al-Hafiz Al-Iraqi commented on this saying, “This hadith shows the lawfulness of accepting gifts from a polytheist as Salman had not embraced Islam at that time.”

Moreover, it is reported that the Prophetﷺ gave and accepted gifts from non-Muslim leaders and kings.

### Giving Charity (sadaqah)

**12. Can we give charity (sadaqah) to non-Muslims?**

A Muslim is free and even encouraged to give his wealth to any one he so wishes, particularly his needy and blood relatives without regard to faith. The Messenger of Allah said, “Whoever believes in Allah and in the Hereafter should take care of his neighbour,” and “Jibril continued to remind me of the neighbour’s rights till I thought he would tell me that the neighbor inherits from his neighbour.”

When the Prophetﷺ first migrated to Madinah, and was concerned about the meagre resources available to assist those in poverty, he instructed his Companions to give charity only to those who accepted Islam. In correction of this Prophetic instruction, Allah revealed the verse:

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108 *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol.8, hadith no. (29) in Alim 6.0

109 *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol.8, hadith no. (27); See also hadith no. (28) in Alim 6.0

It is not for thee (O Prophet) to make people follow the right path, since it is God alone who guides whom He wills; and whatever good you may spend on others is for your own good provided you spend only out of a longing for God’s guidance. For whatever good you may spend will be repaid unto you in full and you will not be wronged. (Q.2:272)

According to several traditions reported by al-Nasa’i, Abu Dawood and others, the Prophet then explicitly enjoined Muslims to give charity to all who needed it, irrespective of faith. Muhammad Asad notes that, “there is full agreement among all commentators that the above verse... lays down an injunction binding upon all Muslims.” In fact, Imam al-Razi derives from this verse the conclusion that withholding charity must never become a means of attracting unbelievers to Islam, for faith, in order to be valid, must be based on conviction and free choice.

Ibn Kathir states on the issue of one’s charity possibly being used for un-Islamic purposes (if one gives to a non-Muslim):

‘Ata Al-Khurasani said that the āyah [“verse”] means, “You give away charity for the sake of Allah. Therefore, you will not be asked about the deeds [or wickedness] of those who receive it.” (Ibn Abi Hatim, 3:115). This is a sound meaning... [The giver] will not be asked if the charity unintentionally reached righteous, evil, deserving or undeserving persons, for he will be rewarded for his good intention. The proof to this statement is the āyah, “And whatever you spend in good, it will be repaid to you in full, and you shall not be wronged.”

Sayyid Sabiq writes:

One can give sadaqa to the dhimmi and the (non-Muslim) soldier, and one is rewarded for that. Allah praised a group of people (for this) when He said, “And they feed, for His love, the indigent, the orphan, and the captive” [Q. 76:8]. The captive is a [non-Muslim] soldier ...

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115 A Non-Muslim subject of an Islamic state who is protected by a covenant
116 Sayyid Sabiq, Fiqh us-Sunnah, vol.3, no.103a in Alim 6.0
The Prophet’s example was one of regular charity towards Muslims and non-Muslims. The works of Seerah (History of the Prophet) record that during the peace treaty of Hudaibiyyah, the Prophet ﷺ gave 500 dinars as financial assistance to Abu Sufyan (the leader of Makkah) for the poor of the predominantly idol-worshipping Makkans during their period of severe food shortage.\(^\text{117}\) This gesture demonstrates the fact that Islam encourages the consolidation of peaceful relationships with non-Muslims.

In addition to Q.2:272, Allah praises those who, “...give food, despite their love for it, to the poor and orphans and captives” (Q.76:8). Ibn Abi Shaybah observes that, “Captives in Muslim society were obviously unbelievers, as reported by al-Hasan and others.”\(^\text{118}\)

Asad (1980) elaborates:

> The term asār denotes anyone who is a “captive” either literally (e.g., a prisoner) or figuratively, i.e., a captive of circumstances which render him helpless; thus, the Prophet said, “Thy debtor is thy captive; be, therefore, truly kind to thy captive” (Zamakhshari, Razi, et. al.). The injunction of kindness towards all who are in need of help – and therefore “captive” in one sense or another – applies to believers and non-believers alike (Tabari, Zamakhshari).\(^\text{119}\)

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**Charity with Zakat al-fitr**

### 13. Can we give zakat al-fitr to non-Muslims?

Sayyid Sabiq, in his compendium, *Fiqh us-Sunnah*, describes *Zakat al-Fitr* in the following words:

> *Zakat al-Fitr* was made obligatory in the month of Sha’bān in the second year of the Hijra. Its purpose is to purify one who fasts from any indecent act or speech and to help the poor and needy. This view is based upon the hadith reported


\(^\text{119}\) See M. Asad, *The Message of the Qur’an*, Dar al-Andalus, Gibraltar, 1980, p.61, n.11
by Abu Dawood, Ibn Majah, and al-Daraqutni from Ibn Abbas. The Messenger of Allah, upon whom be peace, enjoined Zakat al-Fitr on the one who fasts, to shield one’s self from any indecent act or speech and for the purpose of providing food for the needy. It is accepted as Zakah for the person who pays it before the ‘Eid Salah, and it is sadaqa for the one who pays it after the Salah.\(^{120}\)

Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi explains:

**Zakat al-Fitr**, expiation (*kaffara*) and vows are like voluntary charity as far as giving to People of the Pledge is concerned. Abu Hanifa, Muhammad, and some other jurists permit paying these charities to People of the Pledge on the grounds that texts about these charities are general, such as the āyāt [verses], “If you make your sadaqa public, that is good. But if you conceal it and give it to the poor, that is better for you, and We will erase some of your bad actions from you” (2:271), and “The expiation in that case is to feed ten poor people with the average amount you feed your family” (5:92), and “And anyone who is unable to do that must feed sixty poor people” (58:4).

These āyāt make no distinction between poor believers and unbelievers, which is an expression of the generally required good treatment of the People of the Pledge. Obviously these scholars believe it is undoubtedly better to give to the Muslim poor since it helps a person who obeys Allah. Abu Hanifa established the condition that an unbeliever must not be fighting against Muslims in order to be given Zakat al-Fitr (*Al-Bada’i*, vol.2, p.49). Lastly, Abu Ubayd and Ibn Abi Shayba report that some followers [of the Companions of the Prophet] gave monks Zakat al-Fitr (*Al-Amwal*, pp.613-614 and *Musannaf* Ibn Abi Shayba, vol.4, p. 39).\(^{121}\)

\(^{120}\) Sayyid Sabiq, *Fiqh us-Sunnah*, vol.3, no.87a, under the title “The Purpose of Zakat al-Fitr”, in Alim 6.0

On Giving Zakat

14. Can we give zakat to non-Muslims?

The Qur’an states, “Alms are for the poor and needy, and those who are in charge thereof (to administer it), and those whose hearts are being reconciled, and for those who are in bondage, and those who are in debt, and in the cause of Allah, (and for) the wayfarer. This is an ordinance from Allah, and Allah is All-Knowing, Wise” (Q.9:60). This verse is the basis for the establishment of Zakat in Islam.

Muslim scholars unanimously agree that Zakat cannot be paid to non-Muslims that fight Muslims.122 This is because financial help to enemies could be used against Islam in one way or another. This ijmā’ (consensus) is based on the verse:

“God only forbids you to turn in friendship towards such as fight against you because of (your) faith, and drive you forth from your homelands, or aid (others) in driving you forth…” (Q.60:9)

However, non-aggressive and non-hostile non-Muslims are included in at least one of the categories of the recipients of Zakat. While prescribing laws for the distribution of Zakat, the Qur’an includes among the recipients those “whose hearts are being reconciled” (in Arabic, “mu’allafat qulubuhum”). The following hadith indicates how this category was treated by the Prophetﷺ.

Sa’id ibn al-Musayyab narrated that Safwan ibn Umayyah said, “By Allah, when the Prophet gave to me, he was the person I hated most. He continued to give to me until he became the person I loved the most.”123

Qatadah said,

“Those who hearts are being reconciled were often pagan bedouins whom the Prophetﷺ used to reconcile through giving Zakat in order to bring them to faith.”124

From these and other accounts, “those whose hearts are being reconciled” include “persons who have recently become Muslims or who need to strengthen their commitment to this faith, and individuals whose evil can be forestalled or who can benefit and defend Muslims.”

Some jurists are of the view that this clause is inoperative after the time of the Prophet ﷺ. Their views are based on a precedent of ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab who cancelled the payment of Zakat towards some recipients of this category. Some other prominent scholars of the past and present, however, are of the view that this injunction is operative even today. Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi mentions that scholars that view the applicability of the verse as permanent include al-Zuhri, Abu Ja’far al-Baqir, Qadi Ibn al-‘Arabi, al-Khattabi, Ibn Qudama, one group of Malikis, and the followers of the Hanbali, Zaydi and Ja’fari Schools of Thought.

Ibn Qudama expounds:

Allah mentions reconciliation of hearts among the categories of Zakat-spending and the Prophet ﷺ used to give generously for reconciliation, as stated in famous reports. He continued to do this until he died. It is unacceptable to abandon the Book of Allah and the tradition of the Messenger ﷺ except by authentic annulment from Allah or His Messenger, and annulment is not confirmed by mere possibility. Moreover, such annulment could only take place during the life of the Prophet ﷺ, because the texts required for annulment ceased to be revealed upon his death. A text in the Qur’an can only be annulled by another text in the Qur’an itself; and there is no such text. By what virtue is one asked to abandon Qur’an and Sunnah and revert to mere human opinion or the statements of a Companion? Scholars do not consider a statement of a Companion strong enough to stand in opposition to analogy, so how could such an opinion stand against the Qur’an and Sunnah? Al-Zuhri also says, “I know of nothing that annuls the category of those whose hearts are being reconciled.” Lastly, Umar’s action does not contradict the Qur’an or Sunnah since, when Muslims do not need

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those individuals who were paid in the past, they may choose to cease such payment, and if the need arises in the future to pay the same individuals or others, that can be done. In reality, this principle applies to all categories. A category may not exist at a certain time, but that does not mean it is eliminated because it may exist at some later time.  

It must be noted here that the share of those belonging to this category is not on account of their inability to meet their material needs but for “reconciliation” of their hearts.

The majority of Muslim scholars believe that, with the exception of “those whose hearts are being reconciled”, Zakat should not be given to any non-Muslim. This majority view is founded on the hadith narrated by Mu’adh, that the Prophet instructed him, “Allah prescribed Zakat on their wealth to be taken from the rich among them and rendered to the poor among them,” in which the word “them” is interpreted to refer to Muslims. This hadith is agreed upon as authentic.

However, in the view of other scholars, this hadith does not clearly exclude the non-Muslim poor since it may simply mean that Zakat should be collected and distributed in the same area. This hadith is often

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130 Ibn Qudama, Al-Mughni, vol.2, p.666; cited in Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Fiqh al-Zakat. Trans. from Arabic by Dr. Monzer Kahf, Dar al-Taqwa, London, 1999, p.385-386 In other words, “Umar did not annul payment to ‘individuals whose hearts are being reconciled’ nor was there an ijma on such annulment. He simply judged that there were none entitled in that category at that point in time. The statement of al-Hasan and al-Sha’bi that ‘today there are no individuals who are being reconciled’ is understood similarly as a fact of the age in which they lived. Abrogation of a ruling enacted by Allah can only be made by Allah through Revelation to His Messenger and can, therefore, only take place during the time of the Message. Abrogation is dictated only when two authentic texts of Qur’an or Sunna contradict one another and we know that one of them came after the other chronologically. In the case in hand there is only one text which determines this category as a recipient of Zakat. There is no text contradicting the Qur’anic verse” (Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Fiqh al-Zakat. Trans. from Arabic by Dr. Monzer Kahf, Dar al-Taqwa, London, 1999, p.383, emphasis added).

131 An example of this occurring after the time of Caliph Umar was recorded by Ibn Sa’d, vol.8, p.260, 272, who wrote that “Umar ibn Abdul Aziz ordered during his caliphate that non-Muslim subjects, taken prisoner by an enemy, should as much be ransomed and liberated on government expenses as any Muslim subjects”. (Cited in Sa’id Ramadan, Islamic Law: Its Scope and Equity, Macmillan, London, 1961, p.133.)


quoted to support the policy of non-transportation of Zakat from one land to another.\footnote{134}

Indeed, the manner in which the narrator, Mu‘adh, implemented the Prophet’s instruction indicates that he interpreted the word “them” to mean everyone in the region (and not just the Muslims). Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi notes, “Mu‘adh implemented this instruction by dividing Yemen into regions in such a way that Zakat was collected and distributed within each region autonomously. He wrote letters to the effect that Zakat be distributed within the same clan from which it was collected.”\footnote{135}

In spite of this, it is reported that ‘Umar interpreted the word “masakin” in the verse (Qur’an 9:60): “Alms are for the poor and the needy (masakin)...” as non-Muslims.\footnote{136} Ibn Abi Shayba also cites ‘Umar’s comment that the verse includes People of the Pledge (“Ahl al-‘Ahd”)\footnote{137} who are chronically ill.\footnote{138} Al-Tabari reports that ‘Ikrimah understood the word “needy” to refer to the poor among the People of the Book.\footnote{139} Other scholars who allowed the paying of Zakat to non-Muslims include Ibn Sirin and Al-Zuhri.\footnote{140} Zafar, a student of Abu Hanifa, also sanctioned it for People of the Pledge.\footnote{141}

There are some reports which suggest that the needy among non-Muslims were helped from the collective Zakat funds during the early days of Islam.\footnote{142} It is recorded that ‘Umar even ordered the payment of a monthly allowance from the treasury to a

\footnote{136} Abu Yusuf, \textit{Kitab al-Kharaj}, Cairo, 1382 A.H., p.144
\footnote{137} The “People of the Pledge” are “the People of the Book, and all who like them live within Muslim society, pledges their sincerity to the state and obeying its laws” (Yusuf al-Qaradawi, \textit{Fiqh al-Zakat}. Trans. from Arabic by Dr. Monzer Kahf, Dar al-Taqwa, London, 1999, p.448)
\footnote{140} \textit{Al-Majmu’}, vol.6, p.228; cited in Yusuf al-Qaradawi, \textit{Fiqh al-Zakat}. Trans. from Arabic by Dr. Monzer Kahf, Dar al-Taqwa, London, 1999, p.450
\footnote{142} Abu ‘Ubaydah, \textit{Kitab al-’Amwal}, Cairo, 1353 A.H., pp.611-612
Jew when he saw him begging from door to door, on the grounds that he was covered by the categories of Q.9:60.\textsuperscript{143}

In addition, some past and present day scholars still also hold the view that the poor and destitute (and not just “those whose hearts are to be reconciled”) among non-Muslims may be helped out of the Zakat funds.\textsuperscript{144}

### Relating with Non-Muslim Parents and Relatives

15. How should we relate with our non-Muslim parents and relatives?

Both the Qur’an and hadith mention the obligations of being considerate and loyal to the ties of kinship, irrespective of the religious background of one’s kinsmen. Allah states in the Qur’an: “Be mindful of your duty to Allah in whose name you appeal to one another, and of your obligations in respect of ties of kinship” (Q.4:2). This message is emphasized by the Prophet\textsuperscript{ﷺ} in the following narration: “Anas related that the Prophet said, ‘He who desires that his provision be expanded and that his days be lengthened should join ties of kinship.’”\textsuperscript{145}

This duty is sustained despite prevailing tensions between family members. Abdullah ibn Amr, for instance, relates that the Holy Prophet\textsuperscript{ﷺ} said, “One who reciprocates in doing good is not the one who upholds the ties of kinship. It is the one who upholds them when the other party severs them”\textsuperscript{146}

Asmā’, the daughter of Abubakr, reports, “My mother came to me and she is a polytheist. I said, ‘O Messenger of Allah, upon whom be peace, if my mother came to me and she is willing, do I establish a link with her?’ He said, ‘Yes, establish a link with your mother.’”\textsuperscript{147} Another version of this tradition states that Asmā’ said, “my mother

\textsuperscript{143} Abu Yusuf, Al-Kharaj (n.d.), p.126

\textsuperscript{144} See more detailed discussion on this by Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Fiqh al-Zakat. Trans. from Arabic by Dr. Monzer Kahf, Dar al-Taqwa, London, 1999, pp.447-452

\textsuperscript{145} Bukhari and Muslim, cited in Imam an-Nawawi, Riyadh us-Saliheen, no.321, under section “On Benevolence towards Parents and Strengthening the Ties of Kinship.” Transl. from Arabic by Muhammad Zafrulla Khan, Curzon Press, London, 1974, p.74

\textsuperscript{146} Bukhari, cited in Imam an-Nawawi, Riyadh us-Saliheen, op. cit., hadith no. (324), p.75

\textsuperscript{147} Sayyid Sabiq, Fiqh-us-Sunnah, vol.3, no.103a in Alim 6.0
has come to see me and she is hoping for something from me. Should I gratify her?’ He said, ‘Yes, be benevolent towards your mother.’”148

Similarly, Abu Dharr relates that the Prophet ﷺ said, “You will soon conquer the land of Egypt. Then treat its people kindly, for there are ties of treaty and kinship with them.”149 When Qur’an 26:215 was revealed, Abu Hurairah relates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ summoned the Quraysh and said to them, “O Bani Abd Shams, O Bani Ka’ab ibn Lu’ayy safeguard yourselves against the Fire; O Bani Murrah ibn Ka’ab, safeguard yourselves against the Fire; O Bani Abd Manaf, safeguard yourselves against the Fire, O Bani Hashim, safeguard yourselves against the Fire; O Bani Abdul Muttalib, safeguard yourselves against the Fire; O Fatimah, safeguard thyself against the Fire, for I can avail you nothing against Allah. I have ties of kinship with you, and these I shall continue to honour.”150

Interfaith Inheritance

16. Can a non-Muslim inherit from a Muslim relative, spouse, or friend, and vice-versa?

There are two means or circumstances through which a person can inherit from another. The first is if there is a will (referred to as wasiyyah) left by the deceased that states who will inherit from them. The second is where there is no will left behind (referred to as mirath).151

The general consensus (ijma’) among Muslim scholars is that if there is a will (wasiyyah) left behind by the deceased, then a non-Muslim can inherit from a Muslim, and vice-versa, as this is not prohibited by any credible text of the Qur’an or Sunnah.152

148 Imam an-Nawawi, Riyadh us-Saliheen, op. cit., hadith no. (327), p.75
149 *Muslim*, in Imam an-Nawawi, Riyadh us-Saliheen, op. cit., hadith no. (330), p.75-76
150 *Muslim*, cited in Imam an-Nawawi, Riyadh us-Saliheen, op. cit., hadith no. (331), p.76
151 Da’wah Institute of Nigeria, Principles of Justice and Equity in the Islamic law of Inheritance, Islamic Education Trust, Minna, 2013, p.1, (Unpublished)
In fact, the Prophet’s wife, Safiyyah bequeathed a third of her property to her Jewish brother through a will (wasiyyah) she had left behind in his favour.153 Where there is no will left behind, the majority of scholars hold that there cannot be any interfaith inheritance in favour of the Muslim or the Non-Muslim. This is based on their interpretation of some hadith where the Prophetﷺ is reported to have said that there is no interfaith inheritance between Muslims and non-Muslims.154 There is however a difference of opinion among the scholars based on differences that existed on this topic among the Companions and those who followed them, and based on the different interpretations of the hadith in question. Some view the hadith as being in the context of prohibiting interfaith inheritance with specifically hostile or warring (haribi) non-Muslims as opposed to peaceful citizens (dhimmi).155

Interfaith Marriages in Islamic Law

17. What are the provisions and guidelines laid down by Islam on Muslim men and women marrying people of other faiths?

The Qur’anic verse permitting interfaith marriage states,

“This day are (all) things good and pure made lawful unto you. The food of the People of the Book is lawful unto you and yours is lawful unto them. (Lawful unto you in marriage) are (not only) chaste women who are believers but chaste women among the People of the Book revealed before your time when you give them their due dowers and desire chastity not lewdness nor secret intrigues. If anyone rejects

154 Al-Bukhari, Sahih al-Bukhari. vol.17, p.94. hadith no. (6764); Muslim, Sahih Muslim, vol.5, p.59, hadith no. (4225); al-Nawawi, Sharh Muslim, Dar Ihya al-turath al-’Arabi, Beirut, 1392, Vol.11, p.52.
faith fruitless is his work and in the Hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost (all spiritual good).” (Qur’an 5:5)

This verse explicitly establishes the permissibility of a Muslim man initiating and having a relationship as close and intimate as that of marriage with a Christian or Jewish woman in spite of the difference in faith. This is understood to point to the extent of expression of love and kindness that a Muslim can offer someone of a different faith. It is also proof that Islam does allow genuine friendship with non-Muslims, for marriage is a close relationship that the Qur’an characterizes as one of “tranquility” and “mutual love and mercy” (Q.30:21) – qualities that also characterize the closest of friends. From all this, many scholars of Islam, recognized that difference in faith was not a justifiable bases for withholding love, affection, respect, compassion, intimacy, friendship and cooperation.

As with all relationships, and irrespective of the person’s faith, Muslim scholars also maintain that such a marriage should not be allowed to undermine Islamic ideals.

While certain interfaith marriages are regarded as permissible in Islamic law, others are for various reasons considered as either discouraged (makruh) or prohibited (haram). Also, Muslims jurists have sometimes differed in their interpretations of and conclusions on the position of Islamic law regarding some of these marriages and for the wisdom behind these.

Restrictions in Interfaith Marriages in Islamic Law

As explained above, and from various pieces of evidence scattered throughout the Qur’ans and hadith, Islam is definitely interested in promoting better interfaith relations, and therefore goes as far as permitting some forms of interfaith marriage – especially that between a Muslim man and a chaste woman from the Ahl al-Kitab (“People of Earlier Revelations” - i.e. primarily Jews and Christians).156

The general consensus (ijma’) of Muslim scholars based on their interpretation of the relevant verses of the Qur’an, the Sunnah and practice of the Companions of Prophet

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Muhammad 
, is that Islamic law prohibits (as *haram*) a Muslim man or woman from initiating a marriage with a pagan or atheist (*mushrikun/kuffar*). They also regard as prohibited (*haram*) the initiation of a marriage between a Muslim woman and any non-Muslim man including Jews and Christians (Qur’an 60:10, 2:221).

However, a few contemporary scholars have regarded the marriage of a Muslim woman with Christian and Jewish men as tolerable or only discouraged (*makruh*), but not explicitly prohibited (*haram*) by the categorical or definitive texts of the Qur’an and Hadith. This however is contrary to the conclusions of all known scholars of the past on this issue.

The general consensus (*ijma’*) of Muslim scholars regard as permissible (*halal*), the initiation of the marriage of a Muslim man to a Jewish or Christian woman based on the clear text of Qur’an 5:5 cited earlier (and also Qur’an 33:55, 2:221). Other scholars however differ regarding such marriages based on the social context of the intending couple.

Muslim jurists also differ on the fate of the marriage of a woman who is already married to a non-Muslim (of any faith) and who subsequently embraces Islam. While the majority regard her embracing Islam as a basis for divorce, other notable scholars do not. They point out that such marriages where one spouse (such as the wife) embraces Islam while the husband remains a non-Muslim were common in the early days of Islam and were as a rule not treated as broken by the Prophet Muhammad or his Companions. These scholars therefore regard such marriages as intact and not affected by one spouse embracing Islam without the other, even if the non-Muslim spouse is a Jew, Christian or Pagan, etc.

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Reasons for Restrictions
The Qur’an does not give clear reasons for some of these prohibitions. Various reasons however have been given by Muslim scholars to explain the wisdom behind the prohibition of especially a Muslim woman marrying a non-Muslim. A non-Muslim husband for example may not be legally obliged to provide for and take care of his wife as Islamic law would require from a Muslim husband (Qur’an 4:4, 4:24, 4:25, 2:229, 4:20). In case of a dispute, it would be viewed as unfair that such a non-Muslim husband be held accountable to an Islamic court if he defaults or does not give her the rights Islam gives her. Also, some religions do not give women a right to divorce even if the marriage has degenerated into an abusive or exploitative relationship.

Islamic teachings place great emphasis on the importance of enhancing and preserving family ties, especially as the family is the first environment for the nurturing of children. In fact, one of the major objectives of Islamic law (maqasid al-Shari’ah) is the preservation and enhancement of the family. Experience and research has suggested that interfaith marriages generally have a much higher rate of marital breakdown and divorce compared to marriages between couples of the same faith. It is estimated that inter-faith marriages have about 50% higher divorce rates than intra-faith marriages. In many societies today divorce rates are already nearing 50%. Inter-faith marriages would therefore have nearly 75% divorce rates. They also argue that women are often the more vulnerable to abuse in broken marriages. Scholars also point out that most other faiths either prohibit or discourage interfaith marriages, and that it would be unacceptably risky for a Muslim woman to be married to a man whose community rejects or in some degree objects to their son being married to a Muslim woman. Many religions including Christianity do not allow their followers to be “yoked in marriage with an unbeliever” (I Corinthians 7:10-16). Any Christian man who fully believes in their scripture, and decides to get married to a Muslim woman is not respecting their own religious tradition. Why then should a Muslim woman agree to get married to him?

Other sociological reasons are also given depending on the context of the particular jurist. A Muslim woman may face difficulties if her non-Muslim husband brings alcohol or pork into the house, or does not allow her to enjoy her freedom to practice Islam to her satisfaction.

While it is an article of faith for a Muslim to respect the great prophets such as Moses and Jesus (peace be upon them), many Jews and Christians have no such respect for prophet Muhammad ﷺ who some of them criticize as being an imposter and false prophet. There is also the fear that especially in more patriarchal societies, the husband may have a greater negative influence on the Islamic upbringing of his children, and that the children of a Muslim woman may be brought up belonging to another faith or no faith at all, which is probably why most religions either prohibit or at least discourage interfaith marriages. ¹⁶¹

Most of these reasons would of course apply to any interfaith marriage – even that between a Muslim man and say a Christian lady. Consequently, some jurists especially from the Maliki School of Law (madhab) are of the opinion that all inter-faith marriages should be prohibited due to the potential harm to the Islamic family institution especially in Muslim minority contexts. Ultimately however, the strongest basis for any authoritative prohibition in Islamic law for any form of marriage would be the clear text of the Qur’an and narrated traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

**Handling the Qur’an by non-Muslims**

**18. Can non-Muslims be allowed to touch or handle the Qur’an?**

Most people of other faiths who want to read or study the Qur’an are more interested in getting a copy of a translation of the Qur’an since most of them do not understand Arabic. Because the translation of the Qur’an is actually a human interpretation of the Qur’an in another language, scholars generally distinguish the Qur’an in its original language from a translation. While they debate over giving the original Qur’an to non-

Muslims, they are generally agreed on the permissibility of giving them a translation, even if there is some Arabic text beside it.\textsuperscript{162}

Some non-Muslims however, understand Arabic and would want to read the Word of God for themselves. The Qur’an is the pure Word of God, His last and final revelation to mankind. It is therefore a scripture containing a sacred and divine message that must be respected and kept pure. Muslims are even encouraged to perform ablution before they hold a copy of the Qur’an.\textsuperscript{163} Consequently, (and among other reasons), some Muslim scholars are of the opinion that if a Muslim has to purify himself, then it follows that non-Muslims who do not purify themselves through ablution (\textit{wudu}) or ritual bath (\textit{ghusl}) should not touch the noble Qur’an.

Other scholars however emphasize the fact that the Prophet’s divine message - the Qur’an - was meant as a source of guidance for all mankind, and not only Muslims (See Qur’an 34:28, 25:1). The hadith and verses of the Qur’an on this subject have various interpretations given to them by scholars, and can be understood to support differing conclusions. However, the fact that the Prophet ﷺ sent letters to non-Muslim leaders containing portions of the Qur’an has led scholars such as Ibn Hazm to conclude that whatever interpretation is given to the different verses of the Qur’an and hadith on this matter, it should not prohibit giving copies of the Qur’an to non-Muslims since the Prophet had himself done so.\textsuperscript{164} These scholars are also of the opinion that the word “Qur’an” is used (both in the Qur’an and Hadith) to refer to either the whole book or any portion of it.\textsuperscript{165} And Allah knows best.\textsuperscript{166}

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Imitating People of Other Faiths

19. Why do Muslim scholars prohibit the imitation of non-Muslims? What kind of “imitation” is it that Islam prohibits? Does it include imitation in dressing, language, technology, medicine, etc.?

The Prophet is reported to have said, “He is not one of us who imitates a people other than us. Do not imitate the Jews and Christians.” (Tirmidhi) According to another version, “Whoever imitates a people is one of them.” Some Muslims have unfortunately grossly misinterpreted these hadiths as prohibiting every form of imitation. They forget that the Prophet and his companions also imitated and adopted various strategies and aspects of non-Muslim cultures (‘urf) that were acceptable to Islam.

A general and fundamental rule in the principles of Islamic jurisprudence (usul al-fiqh) is that anything that belongs to the category of social transactions (mu’amalat) as opposed to prescribed religious worship (ibadah) or creed (aqidah), is governed by the general rule that is “everything is permissible except what is prohibited” by clear and explicit textual evidence from the Qur’an or authentic sunnah, or if it contradicts definite objectives (maqasid) of Shari’ah. In other words, whatever is not prohibited by clear evidence is in fact permissible. What is prohibited for a Muslim to imitate in others is whatever contradicts the teachings of Islam, or what is regarded as a distinctive religious worship (ibadah), creed (aqidah) or symbol of religious identity.

A Muslim is therefore prohibited from using religious dressing, or grooming, or anything else that identifies him or her as being a non-Muslim. If however such imitation is purely in areas of mu’amalat such as science and technology, commerce,

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169 e.g. Sahih al-Bukhari, vol.8, no.156; Al-Muwatta, vol.49, no.22 in Alim 6.0.
170 This well-known principle of Usul al-Fiqh in Arabic is called “Al-‘asl fil ashya’i al-ibahah” (“the legal premise of everything is permissibility”). See Yusuf al-Qaradawi’s brief discussion of this principle in The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam, Al-Birr Foundation, London, 2003), p.3-7.
171 Da’wah Institute of Nigeria, What is Islamic Culture?: An introduction to the relationship between Islam and Cultural Diversity, 2009, p.3
language, culture, education, agriculture, security, medicine, etc., there is no prohibition in this.\textsuperscript{173} If it is beneficial and promotes the objectives (\textit{maqasid}) of Islam, then such imitation is actually respected and encouraged irrespective of which culture (\textit{‘urf}) it emanates from, whether native or foreign, Muslim or non-Muslim.\textsuperscript{174} And Allah knows best.\textsuperscript{175}

\section*{Saying Salams (Greetings of Peace) to Non-Muslims}

\textbf{20. Can a Muslim greet non-Muslims with “Assalamu alaykum” (meaning “peace be with you”) or reply with the greeting of peace (“wa ‘alaykum salam”)?}

Muslim scholars have differed in their responses to this question based on whether they consider the context of the hadith concerned as restricting the meanings of these hadith or not.\textsuperscript{176} According to Imam Awza’i: "\textit{If you say salaam (to the non-Muslims), then surely (some) pious people did the same, and if you don’t, indeed, (some) pious people did not either.}"\textsuperscript{177} While most scholars have concluded that responding to the

greetings of peace is compulsory, they differed on the initiating of such greetings and on their wordings.\textsuperscript{178}

**Regarding initiating greetings to anyone**, the Qur’an (24:27) says: “O you who believe, do not enter houses other than yours without first announcing your presence and invoking peace (saying salaam) upon the folk thereof. That is better for you, that you may be heedful”. See also Qur’an 25:63, 43:88-89, 28:55, etc. Likewise, in a hadith narrated in Sahih Bukhari and Muslim, the Prophet (Peace be upon him) was once asked: “What aspect of Islam is among the best?” He replied “Giving food (to the needy) and saying salaam to whom you know and whom you know not”.\textsuperscript{179} In another hadith from Bukhari and Muslim, the Prophet (Peace be upon him) also said: “Spread the greeting of peace.”\textsuperscript{180} These texts appear to be general in their meaning and not restricted to greetings with Muslims only.

Some scholars have quoted certain hadith\textsuperscript{181} to say that a Muslim may not initiate the greetings of peace (salam) to non-Muslims. This hadith was narrated on a specific occasion where the Prophet was ordering the Muslims to attack the Ahl al-Kitab (Jews) of Banu Qurayzah who had treacherously broken their treaty with the Muslims and tried to collaborate with the pagan enemies to wipe out the Muslims in Medina.\textsuperscript{182} The Prophet is reported to have said in the fuller version of the hadith narrated by Ahmad and Tabarani: “We are going forth in the morning against a group of Jews, so do not initiate the greeting of ‘Peace’ with them”.\textsuperscript{183} The context of the hadith was apparently specific to a hostile group of Jews and not to all non-Muslims. It was reported that Abu Umamah Al-Bahily used to say “salaam” (greetings) to whoever he passed by, Muslim or non-Muslim, and used to say, "It is a greeting for the people of our religion, and an assurance of security to our non-Muslim citizens, and a Name among the Names of Allah we spread among ourselves”.\textsuperscript{184} The great Companion of the Prophet, Abdullah

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\textsuperscript{181} Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, Dar al-Jail, Beirut, Vol.7, p.5.


\textsuperscript{184} Ibn Abdul-Barr, *al-Tamhid*, vol. 17,p.92, al-Maktabah al-Shamilah, version 3.13
bin Mas’ud once said the greetings of salaam to a non-Muslim. When asked: “Are we not warned against initiating salaam with them?” He replied: “It is a right of companionship”.  

Regarding responding to greetings, the general teaching of the Qur’an (4:86) is that “...when you are greeted with a greeting, greet (in return) with one which is better than it or (at least) return it (in like manner). Indeed, Allah is ever taking account of all things”. In other words Muslims must always try and respond to the greetings of others with something better. Commenting on this verse, Ibn Kathir reported Al-Hasan Al-Basri as saying: “Initiating the salaam is voluntary, but replying to the greeting of salaam is compulsory”. There are however some hadith in Bukhari and Muslims that show that some of the Jews insulted Muslims by saying “As-saamu alaikum” which actually means “death be upon you”. In a hadith narrated by Abdullahi bin ‘Umar, Allah’s Messenger said: “When the Jews greet you, they usually say, ‘As-Saamu alaikum’ (Death be on you), so you should say (in reply to them), ‘wa’alaikum (And on you too).” This is the context of why the Prophet said Muslims should reply what may sound like the greetings of peace, with “and on you too” as a way of ending the insult. Ibn Mas’ud (May Allah be pleased with him) said: “Even if Pharaoh (Fir’aun) said good words to me, I would respond to him with similar (good words).”  

The late Saudi Sheikh, Abdul-Aziz bin Baaz is also reported to have said: “If a non-Muslim greets us, we respond in the same manner that he/she greets us with. So if one (of the non-Muslims) says: ‘As Salaamu ‘Alaikum’ clearly when greeting us, we respond by saying ‘Alaikum as Salaam’,...”  

As greetings belong to the category of social transactions (mu’amalat) and not prescribed worship (ibadah), the general rule is that “everything in greeting is permissible except what is prohibited” by clear and explicit textual evidence of the Qur’an or Sunnah, or if it contradicts definite objectives of Shari’ah. 

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188 Ibn AbdulBarr, At-Tamheed vol.17, p.91 in Maktabah Shamila 1st Edition; see also Tafsir Ibn Katheer under Qur’an 4:86  
189 www.madeenah.com - Fatawa nur ‘ala ad Darb on 16/10/07.  
190 Da’wah Institute of Nigeria, Salam to Non-Muslims, Islamic Education Trust, Minna, Nigeria, p.17
In Qur’an 60:8 we are reminded: “Allah does not forbid you in respect of those who do not fight you because of your religion and do not expel you from your homes – from being righteous and dealing justly towards them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly”.

21. Is a Muslim allowed to eat the food of the “People of the Book” such as Jews and Christians, including what they prepare for occasions such as Christmas or Easter?

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and his Companions ate food including meat prepared by Jews and Christians. Muslims have not been prohibited from eating non-meat foods that are prepared by non-Muslims such as fruits, vegetables, and other plant products. Islam has also not prohibited the consumption of fish, milk, eggs and other similar dairy products that might have been prepared by non-Muslims.

What has been prohibited is the consumption of animals that are sacrificed as offerings to idols, or “dedicated to any other than Allah” (Qur’an 6:121). The Qur’an (2:173, 16:115) also prohibit Muslims from consuming unclean things such as the flesh of carrion, blood, the flesh of swine (i.e. pig meat). Muslims are also forbidden from eating any animal that has been killed in cruel ways, such as by being beaten to death, by being strangled, or by being made to fall from a height, etc. (Qur’an 5:3).

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192 Muhammad At-Tahir Ibn `Ashur, At-Tahrir Wat-Tanwir, vol. 4, p. 22.
193 Muhammad At-Tahir Ibn ‘Ashur, At-Tahrir Wat-Tanwir, vol. 4, p. 22.
195 Qur’an 5:3.
Most contemporary scholars in this field have also approved of more humane and less painful method of slaughtering animals that involves stunning or electrocution.196

Allah says, “This day (all) the good things are allowed to you; and the food of those who have been given the Book is lawful for you and your food is lawful for them; and the chaste from among the believing women and the chaste from among those who have been given the Book before you (are lawfull for you); when you have given them their dowries, taking (them) in marriage, not fornicating nor taking them for paramours in secret; and whoever denies faith, his work is indeed of no account, and in the hereafter he shall be one of the losers. (Qur’an 5:5)”

The fact that the verse above permits a Muslim to marry a chaste woman from among the People of the Book, such as Jews and Christians, implies that Muslim and non-Muslims families are going to live and dine with each other. The same verse also states that Muslims are allowed to eat the food (or animals killed) by the People of the Book.

Based on a number of hadiths and opinions of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ, Muslim scholars have however disagreed on a number of details regarding eating an animal killed by non-Muslims.197 They disagreed for example on whether non-Muslims should comply with the Islamic rules of slaughtering animals in a more merciful way – such as with a sharp knife to the neck, etc. – instead of other more painful methods, and on whether Allah’s name must be mentioned (as recommended by Qur’an 6:121) when they slaughter their animals, and on whether it is permissible to eat an animal slaughtered for their festivals such Christmas.198 Some regarded these as all permissible199 while others did not.200 The Companion, Ali bin Abu Talib said: “If you hear a Jew or Christian mentioning other than Allah (on their animal) do not eat it. If

you did not hear them mentioning other than Allah on it, eat it because Allah has permitted their animal for us and He knows what they utter”.  

Based on this and other evidences, many respected Muslim scholars are of the opinion that a Muslim is not required to inquire into how an animal was slaughtered nor what was mentioned or not mentioned when it was being slaughtered.  

The great scholar Sufyan Al-Thawri was reported to have said “If you see a man doing something over which there is difference of opinion among scholars, and which you believe to be forbidden, you should not forbid him from doing it”. 

Even if a Muslim is personally not comfortable with the opinion of a certain scholar or School of Thought, and does not want to eat the food of a particular non-Muslim for one reason or another, this should not be done in such a disrespectful way as to hurt the good positive relations between Muslims and peaceful non-Muslims. 

Allah says in Qur’an 60:8-9, “Allah does not forbid you in respect of those who do not fight you because of your religion and do not expel you from your homes – from being good and dealing justly towards them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly”. 

And Allah knows best.

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204 Q29:46 and Q41:34  
Using Utensils of People of Other Faiths

22. The Qur’an permits Muslims to eat the food of the “People of the Book”. Why then do some Muslim scholars prohibit the use of eating utensils that have been used by non-Muslims? It is because the non-Muslims are impure?

All Muslim scholars agree based on the Qur’an and sunnah on permissibility of eating food of Ahl al-Kitab provided the food in itself is not impure or unlawful in Islam, such as carrion, blood, pork, wine, etc.\(^{206}\)

However, in a hadith, Abu Tha’labah al-Khushani narrated that he said to Allah’s Messenger ﷺ, “We come from a locality populated by the People of the Scripture (who were Christians); can we eat from their dishes? The Prophet ﷺ replied, ‘do not eat from them, unless you do not find anything else to eat with. In that case, wash these (utensils) and eat from them’”.\(^{207}\) In another version of the above hadith, the reason is given why the Prophet forbade some of the Companions from using the utensils of the Ahl al-kitab of a particular locality. The version reads: “…and they (the Christians of that area) used to cook pork and drink wine”.\(^{208}\)

This means that, the Ahl al-Kitab referred to in the Hadith concerned were Christians who used to cook pork and drink wine using their utensils\(^{209}\). This is the reason for the prohibition of using such utensils. If Muslims did not find other cleaner utensils to use, then they would wash these as taught by the Prophet.

The fact that the Prophet and his Companions ate from plates used by non-Muslims which were clean, implies that the concern with the utensils is primarily that of cleanliness. In fact, when the Prophet and his Companions ate from such plates, there is no record of him asking for a different plate or requiring that the plate be washed again by Muslims before use.


\(^{207}\) Bukhari and Muslim


While this hadith has been understood by some to either discourage or prohibit the use of the utensils of non-Muslims, Ahmad bin Hanbal holds that such dishes are lawful to use even if it is known that they were formerly tainted by impurity.\textsuperscript{210}

This conclusion is also arrived at from a hadith where Allah’s Messenger \( 	ext{ﷺ} \) had a neighbour who was Persian (a Zoroastrian/Magian), and he was an expert in the preparation of soup (\textit{maraq}). He prepared the soup for Allah’s Messenger \( 	ext{ﷺ} \) and then came to him to invite him (to that feast). The Prophet \( 	ext{ﷺ} \) said, “Here is Aisha (and you should also invite her to the meal).” The Persian said, “No!” (implying that she was not invited), then Allah’s Messenger also said, “No! (then I cannot join the feast).” He (the Persian) returned another time to invite him, and Allah’s Messenger said, “She (Aisha) is also here.” He said, “No!” whereupon Allah’s Messenger also said, “No” (and declined his offer). He (the Persian) returned once more to invite him, and Allah’s Messenger again said, “She is also here.” He (the Persian) said, “Yes” on the third occasion. Then he accepted his invitation, and both of them set out and went to his house.\textsuperscript{211}

It is narrated from Jabir who said, “We used to go on military expedition with Allah’s Messenger, and acquire the dishes and drinking vessels of the pagans. We would use these and did not consider doing so to be objectionable.” \textsuperscript{212}

In addition, there is verdict (fatwa) by the Standing Committee of Academic Research and Issuing of Fatwah (Saudi Arabia) which says: “...You are allowed to eat from what your Christian friend gives you, either in his house or anywhere else if you know that the food itself is not \textit{Haram} (prohibited) or if you are ignorant of its lawfulness. This is because the norm in that it is permissibility until proven otherwise. The fact that the giver (of the food) is a Christian does not make it \textit{Haram} because Allah permits food of Ahl al-	extit{kitab} for us”.\textsuperscript{213}

\textsuperscript{210} For further readings see Ibn Qudama, \textit{Al-Mughni fi Fiqh al-Imam Ahmad}, Dar al-Fikr, Beirut, 1405, vol.1, p.97; Mansur bin Yunus bin Idris al-Bahuti, \textit{Al-Rawdh al-Murbi’ Sharh Zaad al-Mustaqa’i}, Riyadh, 1390, vol.1, p.31; \url{http://en.islamtoday.net/artshow-381-3281.htm} (accessed 09/06/1017)

\textsuperscript{211} \textit{Sahih Muslim}, hadith no. (958) in Alim 6.0

\textsuperscript{212} \textit{Musnad Ahmad}, Sunan Abu Dawud, Al-Bazzar, Al-Baihaqi

\textsuperscript{213} Standing committee of Academic Research and Issuing Fatwah, by Ahmad bn Abdur-Razzaq Ad-Darwaish. Verdict no. (3262).
The hadith about the Persian host of the Prophet, and this fatwa assume that eating the food of a non-Muslim Christian (or Jew) in his house would naturally require the use of their own utensils, as the Muslims is not expected to be moving around with theirs!

Muslims Entering Churches

23. Are Muslims allowed into a church for a wedding, funeral or simple curiosity?

The Companions of the Prophet such as Ali bin Abi Talib, Mu’awiyah bin Abu Sufyan, and others entered churches when they were invited to visit and for meals. The great Hanbali scholar Ibn Qudamah, in his book Al-Mughni thoroughly discusses the various positions of scholars on this topic, and regards it permissible to enter even if there are statues in it as did some of the Companions of the Prophetﷺ. Ibn Qudamah, Al-Mughni, 10/596; Ibn Abi ‘Asim, Al-Sunnah, Maktaba al-Islam, Beirut, 1400AH vol.2 p.468, hadith no. 968

Islam does not prohibit a Muslim from entering such places of worship for any positive or beneficial reason. There is no prohibition in Muslims attending weddings, or witnessing funerals in Churches. Muslims are however not allowed to pray in ways that contradict those prescribed by the Qur’an and Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad.

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214 Ibn Qudamah, Al-Mughni, 10/596; Ibn Abi ‘Asim, Al-Sunnah, Maktaba al-Islam, Beirut, 1400AH vol.2 p.468, hadith no. 968
215 Ibid.
216 Ibid.
218 Ibid.
SECTION 4: SOCIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH NON-MUSLIMS

This section focuses on the relationship of Muslims with non-Muslim governments, institutions and alliances.

Rights of non-Muslim Citizens

24. Do non-Muslim citizens have guarantee of their rights and protection in an Islamic territory?

The Prophet \(\text{ﷺ} \) commanded that non-Muslim citizens of an Islamic State are to be protected against internal oppression and external aggression. A non-Muslim citizen of an Islamic state is called a “Dhimmi” (i.e., protected person).\(^{219}\) Historian Jane Smith writes, “Christians and Jews, along with Magians, Samaritans, Sabians, and later Zoroastrians and others, were treated as minorities under the protection of Islam (dhimmis).”\(^{220}\)

Numerous hadiths enunciate the importance of upholding the rights of a dhimmi. On separate occasions, the Prophet \(\text{ﷺ} \) is reported to have said, “Whoever hurts a dhimmi, hurts me, and he who hurts me angers Allah”\(^{221}\), “Whoever hurts a dhimmi, I am his adversary, and I shall be an adversary to him on the Day of Resurrection”\(^{222}\), “On the Day of Resurrection, I shall dispute with anyone who oppresses a person from among the People of the Covenant, or infringes on his right, or burdens him beyond his strength, or takes something from him against his

\(^{219}\) Jews and Christians were the earliest dhimmis, though the status was one that the Prophet also later afforded to Zoroastrians and then Sabians. (Murad Wilfried Hofmann, Protection of Religious Minorities in Islam, Leicester, UK: The Islamic Foundation, 1998.) As the Muslim sultanates and empires grew to lands of other faiths, a dhimmi evolved to being virtually any non-Muslim who agreed to live under a Muslim government. This is all too evident in the fact that the Caliph Umar’s assassination was perpetrated by Abu Lulu’ah, the Zoroastrian, who was a dhimmi! (Sa’id Ramadan, Islamic Law: Its Scope and Equity,: Macmillan, London, 1961, p.121).


\(^{221}\) Al-Tabarani

\(^{222}\) Al-Khatib
will”\textsuperscript{223}, and “Anyone who kills a person from among the people with whom there is a treaty (mu’ahid)\textsuperscript{224} will not smell the fragrance of Paradise, even though its fragrance extends to a walking distance of forty years.”\textsuperscript{225}

It is required for the State to uphold that “\textit{they enjoy the same rights we enjoy.}”\textsuperscript{226}

For example, Khalid ibn al-Walid, in his famous “Covenant of Peace” with the people of Hirah, wrote:

I have stipulated that if any one of them becomes unfit to work on account of old age or for some other reason, or if anyone who was formerly rich becomes so poor that his co-religionists have to support him, then all such persons will be exempt from paying the \textit{jizya}\textsuperscript{227} and they, together with their dependents, will get a pension from the Islamic Treasury as long as they choose to reside in the Islamic state.\textsuperscript{228}

Historian Jane Smith (1999) describes the early Islamic state’s practice of \textit{dhimmi} rights as follows:

The specifics of the requirements for Christians who enjoyed \textit{dhimmi} status were spelled out in what has come to be referred to as ‘the covenant of Umar,’ which exists in several versions and most likely was attributed to rather than designed by the second caliph, Umar ibn al-Khattab (r. 634-44). The covenant stipulated prohibition of the building of new churches or repair of those in towns inhabited by Muslims, although in some cases when financing was available Christians did construct new places of worship... \textit{Dhimmis} were allowed to keep their own communal laws, although they could apply to a Muslim judge if they wished.... Christians occupied high positions in the caliphal

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{223} Abu Dawood
\textsuperscript{225} Sahih al-Bukhari, vol.9, no.49, in Alim 6.0
\textsuperscript{227} Military exemption tax paid by able-bodied, male, non-clergy, non-Muslim subjects of an Islamic state, in lieu of having to join the army. Exemptions to women, children, elderly, monks, and those who join the Muslim army are evidence that the tax is not a fine for disbelief as some have postulated (Sa’id Ramadan, \textit{Islamic Law: Its Scope and Equity}, Macmillan, London, 1961, p.123.)
\end{quote}
courts as physicians, engineers, architects, and translators, and sometimes they were treated as having virtually equal rights with Muslims. Muslim writers and poets sometimes gave great tributes to Christians in their literature.²²⁹

It is true that Muslim administrations, however, have at times imposed some inequitable conditions and restrictions upon dhimmi communities. Smith states that this may be explained by the fact that after the lifetime of the early caliphs, the:

...dhimmi status seems to have been a changing one, in that laws were made and either broken or forgotten... never free from the whims of individual rulers who might choose to enforce strict regulations, or from the caprice of mobs expressing their passions in prejudicial and harmful ways [as may be observed even today in the policies of non-Muslim dominated nations towards their minorities]. In general, the first Arab Muslim dynasty, that of the Umayyads, was fairly flexible in terms of its Christian citizens, but in Islam’s second century the laws became more stringent. Under the reign of the caliph al-Mutawakkil (r. 847-61), laws against dhimmis were most severe, sometimes resulting in persecution of Christians as well as of Mu'tazilis, Shiites, and others [Muslim sects] considered opponents of the state. Through the Middle Ages there was a hardening of attitudes against dhimmis, due more to political than to religious reasons, especially after the period of the Crusades.²³⁰

Despite these changing attitudes of rulers and the Muslim masses, knowledge of the implicit rights of dhimmis in an Islamic state compelled other Muslims to campaign for justice. Examples of this include the fervent protest of the public, led by Muslim jurists, against the Caliph Walid ibn Yazid when he exiled non-Muslim citizens of Cyprus to Syria²³¹; and the reprimand sent by Imam al-Awza’i to the Governor of Lebanon who exiled some non-Muslim civilians that lived in the same areas as some armed rebels.

The following extract from the letter that he wrote to him speaks for itself: “Dhimmis of the hill-tracts of Lebanon have been exiled and you know the fact. Amongst them are men who had not taken part in the revolt. I fail to understand why common people

²³⁰ Ibid., pp.308-309
should be punished for the sins of particular individuals and be deprived of their homes and properties. The Qur’anic injunction is quite clear that ultimately everybody will have to account for his own actions and nobody shall be held responsible for anybody else’s actions. This is an eternal and universal injunction, and the best advice therefore, that I can give to you is to remind you of one of the directives of God’s Prophet that he himself will stand up as plaintiff against all such Muslims who are unkind to those non-Muslims who have entered into an agreement with them, and tax them beyond endurance.”

Muslims as Minorities

25. Do Muslim minorities living within Non-Muslim states need to honour any terms of residence?

When deriving laws, traditional scholars of the Muslim world substantially accommodated local customs and practices in societies that newly embraced Islam. Such scholars as Abu Hamid al-Ghazali emphasized the universality and flexibility of Shari’ah and the role of public interest (maslaha) in the revision of rulings (fatawa) that were previously deduced only on the basis of analogy with an explicit scriptural ruling.

This flexibility permit rulings specifically for Muslim minorities in a non-Muslim state, in order to foster a positive relationship between Muslims, the state, and fellow citizens. A Muslim living anywhere in the world belongs to the Ummah (community of

232 Ibid.
234 Ibid.
believers), and provided he or she is granted the right to his/her identity and practice of Islam, it is permissible for a Muslim to reside, study or work in a non-Muslim land.\(^{236}\)

However, in order to be granted entry, he must agree to abide by certain conditions, whether for visa or migration purposes. A Muslim who is born in a non-Muslim land is usually given automatic citizenship and is naturally bound by same agreements, since all believers are characterized as those “who are faithful to their trusts and to their pledges” (Q.23:8). Once a Muslim chooses to remain a citizen or resident (rather than migrate to another land), he is required to acknowledge the nation’s legislation and conduct himself within the scope of the law. Upon acceptance of these conditions of residence, a Muslim is bound by them, as stipulated by the Islamic rule “al-muslimoon ‘inda shurootihim” (i.e. “Muslims are bound by their conditions”).\(^{237}\) This obligation on Muslim minorities in non-Muslim lands illustrates Islam’s endorsement of peaceful interfaith co-existence.

Moreover, a Muslim should not just be dutiful to his host country but actively contribute towards improving it. This is because Muslims are enjoined to be “the best nation ever raised for mankind” (Q.3:110). ‘Ikrimah explained this verse, saying, “In the past, people were not secure in other people’s lands, but as Muslims, people of any colour feel secure among you...”\(^{238}\), while Abu al-Su’ud elaborates that, “You are the best community for people, which clearly means helpful to other people.”\(^{239}\) Al-Khatib also says, “A feature of the Muslim nation is that it should not keep any beneficial advantage to itself but should share its benefit with other human societies.”\(^{240}\) These explanations accord with the Prophet’s statement, “The best among you is the best towards people,”\(^{241}\) and the example of Prophet Yusuf (peace be upon him), who was a foreigner residing in Egypt, and even offered his services at the level of government (Q.12:54-55).

\(^{236}\) Ibn Hajr cites the view of al-Mawardi that if a Muslim is able to practice Islam openly in a non-Muslim land, then that land becomes Dar al-Islam (the Abode of Islam) by virtue of his settling there, and living there is preferable to moving away from it as other people may be attracted to Islam merely by their interaction with him (Fath al-Bari, vol.7, no.230).

\(^{237}\) Tariq Ramadan, To Be a European Muslim, The Islamic Foundation, Leicester, UK, 1999, p.173


\(^{239}\) Irshad al-‘Aql al-Salim ila Mazaya al-Qur’an al-‘Azim, vol.2, p.70; cited in Taha Jabir al-Alwani, Towards a Fiqh for Minorities, op. cit., p.28

\(^{240}\) Abd al-Karim al-Khatib, Al-Tafsir al-Qur’an, vol.4, p.548; cited in Taha Jabir al-Alwani, op. cit., p.28

\(^{241}\) Sunan Baihaqi
Shaykh Abdullah ibn Bayyah, a highly distinguished Maliki scholar serving on many international fiqh councils and one of the contemporary world’s leading authorities in Usul al-Fiqh (Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence), explains the obligations of Muslims in non-Muslim lands in the following remarks:

...the relationship between Muslims living in this land and the dominant authorities in this land is a relationship of peace and contractual agreement – of a treaty. This is a relationship of dialogue and a relationship of giving and taking... It is absolutely essential that you respect the laws of the land that you are living in... We have to maintain those things that are particular to us as a community, but we also have to recognize that there are other things that are not particular to us but rather general to the human condition that we can partake in.²⁴²

Examples of this friendly yet faith-retaining integration may be found throughout the history of Muslim minority groups in non-Muslim lands. Muslims in China, for instance, are celebrated for successfully constructing an indigenous Muslim identity within the country and making significant contributions to their homeland.²⁴³

26. Are Muslims allowed to destroy churches and other non-Muslim places of worship?

The Qur'an says, “Let there be no compulsion in religion. Truth stands clear from error” (Qur’an 2:256). Also, “Say: ‘The truth has now come from your Sustainer. Let then he who wills, believe in it, and let he who wills, reject it’” (Qur’an 18:29).

Islam respects the rights of people of other faiths to practice their own religious beliefs (Qur’an 5:48-49). Jews and Christians for example are respected as People of Scripture (Ahl al-Kitab), and their right to their places of worship must be respected. The Qur’an prohibits in the same verse, anyone from destroying monasteries, churches, synagogues or mosques. Qur’an 22:39-40 says, “Permission is given to those who fight because they have been oppressed... For had it not been for God’s repelling some men by means of others, (all) monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, wherein the name of God is often mentioned, would certainly have been destroyed...” Based on this verse of the Qur’an, great scholars such as Ibn Hazm hold that Muslims are even required to fight if necessary, to defend these non-Muslim places of worship from being destroyed.\(^\text{244}\)

And Allah knows best.\(^\text{245}\)


Sanctity of Every Human Life

26. Does Islam recognize the sanctity of the life of non-Muslims?

Every human being has a special place in Allah’s creation irrespective of what faith or belief an individual chooses to profess. Not only are all humans children of Adam to whom Allah commanded the Angels to bow (Q.2:34), but each human has a spirit Allah breathed into him or her.

Allah says “…and then He forms him in accordance with what he is meant to be, and breathes into him of His spirit” (Q.32:7-9). Thus, every human is a spiritual being living in a physical or earthly body. Each and every human is born in the way of the fitrah (pure, natural disposition) of surrender to God’s will (Islam). It is the family that brings different individuals up as belonging to one religious group or the other. 246

Every human is a spiritual being whose life is sacred; thus, harming or taking it unjustly is a great sin and crime that is punishable by death, irrespective of the murdered person’s faith (Q.2:178). The gravity of this crime is highlighted in the narration of Abdullah ibn Amr that the Prophetﷺ said, “Whoever killed a mu’ahid shall not smell the fragrance of Paradise though its fragrance can be smelt at a distance of forty years.” 247

Imam Malik said, “What is done in our community is that a Muslim is not killed for [killing] a kafir [one who denies the truth] 248 unless the Muslim kills him wrongfully.

246 See Sahih al-Bukhari, vol.6, hadith no.298 in Alim 6.0; Muwatta, vol.16, hadith no.53 in Alim 6.0; and Sahih al-Bukhari, vol.2, hadith nos.440 & 441 in Alim 6.0 respectively.
247 Sahih al-Bukhari, vol.9, hadith no.49 in Alim 6.0
248 Misunderstanding on this issue has been generated by incorrect interpretation of some hadith, such as the following: Abu Juhaifa narrated, “I asked Ali, ‘Do you have anything of divine literature besides what is in the Qur’an?’” (or, as Uyaina once said, “Apart from what the people have?”) “Ali said, ‘By him who made the grain split and created the soul, we have nothing except what is in the Qur’an and the ability of understanding Allah’s Book which He may endow a man with and what is written in this sheet of paper.’ I asked, ‘What is on this paper?’ He replied, ‘The legal regulations of Diya (compensation for death) and the releasing of captives and the judgment that no Muslim should be killed in qisas for killing a kafir’” (Sahih al-Bukhari, vol.9, hadith no. 50 in Alim 6.0). Ramadan (1961) observes about a similar hadith:

...there is another recorded hadith which gave rise to controversy. It reads as follows: “A Muslim should not be killed for (murdering) an infidel. Nor should a holder of a covenant be killed so long as he holds his covenant.” (Al-Maraghi, Al-Tashri’ al-Islami li-Ghayri’l-Muslimin, p.82). Jurists accept the authenticity of this hadith, but they opine differently over its implication. Some of them, like Malik and Al-Shafi’i, take it as implying a restriction of the general principle of retaliation. Others, like Abu Hanifah, interpret it within the general implication of Qur’anic and other Prophetic texts, Abu Hanifah
Then he is killed for it... The *diya* [blood money/compensation] of the Jew, Christians and Magians in their injuries is [also] according to the *diya* of the Muslims in their injuries..."\(^{249}\)

Allah also says “…if anyone slays a human being – unless it be (in punishment) for murder or for spreading corruption on earth – it shall be as though he had slain all mankind; whereas, if anyone saves a life, it shall be as though he had saved the lives of all mankind. …” (Q.5:32)

Islam therefore enjoins believers to respect the life (and death) of every human being irrespective of religion, by virtue of everyone’s possession of a soul and spirit from Allah. This is demonstrated in the report that the Prophetﷺ stood up out of respect for a Jewish corpse being carried by for burial. When he was asked why, he replied, “*Was he not a soul?*”\(^{250}\) Similarly, when the Prophet’s pagan uncle, Abu Talib died, he ordered the Companion Ali (Abu Talib’s son) to bury him.\(^{251}\) It is also reported that the mother of Al-Harith ibn Abu Rabi’ah died as a Christian and he followed her funeral accompanied by a group of Companions.\(^{252}\)

states that the wording of the hadith, using ‘infidel’ (*kafir*) in the first portion and ‘holder of a covenant’ (*duh-’ahdin*) in the second, implies two different categories. Thus, ‘infidel’, according to Abu Hanifah, should mean the belligerent non-Muslim and the hadith should thereby imply that neither a Muslim nor a *dhimmi* is to be executed for killing a belligerent non-Muslim. The reasonableness of such an interpretation can well be appreciated if we recall that in the early days of Islam there were only two active camps: the subjects of the Islamic State (Muslims and non-Muslims) and their hostile neighbors... (Sa’id Ramadan, *Islamic Law: Its Scope and Equity*, Macmillan, London, 1961), p.146.

This explanation is corroborated in *Tafsir al-Qurtubi*, which states, “Thawri and the scholars of Kufa said that a master may be killed for a slave, and a Muslim may be killed for a *dhimmi*. They derived their evidence from the words of Allah ‘*O you who believe, just retribution is ordained for you in cases of murder...*’ (Q.2:178) which they said has general applicability, and also the words of Allah, ‘*We ordained for them a soul for a soul...*’ (Q.5:45).” Al-Qurtubi agrees with this conclusion, stating that the hadith has specific (rather than general) application. He explains that a *dhimmi* is equal to a Muslim in sacredness, which is evident in the laws of just retribution, particularly since both of them (Muslim and *dhimmi*) belong to *Dar al-Islam*. Furthermore, in practice, a Muslim’s hand may be cut for stealing the property of a *dhimmi*. This also indicates that the wealth of a *dhimmi* is equal to the wealth of a Muslim. Likewise, his blood, which is even more sacred than his wealth, should be protected (*Qurtubi*, vol.2 (Issue 6), Beirut: Dar Ihya at-Turath al-Arab, 1985, p.246). Qurtubi continues to state that the majority of *ulama* believe that a Muslim cannot be killed for a *kafir* out of *Dar al-Islam* (i.e. belligerent to Muslims). This is consistent with Ramadan’s explanation above. (See *Tafsir al-Qurtubi*, op cit., Issue 7).

\(^{249}\) *Al-Muwatta*, vol.43, hadith no. (8b) in *Alim 6.0*, emphasis added.

\(^{250}\) *Sahih al-Bukhari*, vol.2, hadith no. (399), in *Alim 6.0*


27. A number of Qur'anic verses prohibit supporting and strengthening non-Muslims against Muslims. Commerce and buying goods from non-Muslims is regarded by some as a part of allegiance (wala') towards them and a means of strengthening them. Is it permissible to do business with non-Muslims?

The Qur'an and Sunnah do not prohibit a Muslim from giving financial support to peaceful and non-hostile non-Muslims. Consequently, a Muslim man married to a Christian or Jewish wife is expected to support her and his family; is allowed to write a will (wasiyyah) in favour of any non-Muslim; give and receive gifts; be charitable; develop political and military alliances of mutual support and security; etc. The Prophet ﷺ is reported to have given 500 dinars (pieces of gold) to Abu Sufyan the pagan leader of Mecca to assist the poor of Mecca during their period of famine. The Muslim state is also expected to defend and protect its non-Muslims (dhimmi) citizens and assist them where and when necessary. The Qur'an 60:8-9 makes it clear that it is only hostile non-Muslims that Muslim should not turn to in support and friendship – “those who have fought you or driven you from your homes, or supported other in doing so.” (Qur'an 60:9)

There is also no explicit or implicit prohibition of doing business or trade with non-Muslims based on the Qur'an or Sunnah. Nor was there such a policy put in place by the Rightly Guided companions of the Prophet after his demise. On the contrary, the Prophet ﷺ is reliably reported to have bought food from a Jew in Medina. Most farmers in Medina were Jews with whom Muslims and others did business. Clothes imported into Medina at the time of the Prophet were mainly from Yemen, the people of which were predominantly Christians at the time. Muslims also had trade caravans to and from Syria, Abyssinia and may other places that were predominantly non-Muslim.

Al-Bahnasawy also cites evidence from the life of the Prophet and the Sahaba, as well as the views of some classical scholars, on the permissibility of visiting non-Muslims, preparing their dead for burial and following their funerals, visiting their graves, comforting, greeting them, etc, and the guidelines for these (Al-Bahnasawy, pp.56-69)
There is therefore no justifiable bases from Islamic teachings to conclude that trade and mutually beneficial transactions with people of other faith is prohibited for Muslims.

The principles regulating trade and commerce are governed by “public benefit” (maslahah), and it is up to the leadership of any society to decide upon whether or not a particular transaction should be permitted or prohibited, even with a hostile enemy – which could be a lesser evil!

Interfaith Engagement in Social Work

28. Can Muslims cooperate with non-Muslims in organized work towards social progress and justice? Is it permissible for Muslims to work with non-Muslim organisations who are involved in any positive work for the common good?

During the “Pre-Islamic (Jahiliyyah) Period” in Makkah and within the legal and administrative system of the “Jahiliyyah society” of Makkah the Prophetﷺ joined a group known as the Hilf al-Fudul. This was a group of upright individuals in Makkah who took it upon themselves to protect the rights of any victim of oppression in Makkah. Even after Islam was well-established, the Prophetﷺ recounted his involvement with the Hilf al-Fudul, and according to Talha ibn Abdullah, he said that “if he was to be invited again to join such a group now in the time of Islam, he would respond and join them”.253 According to Ibn Hisham, “They (members of Hilf al-Fudul) promised and pledged that they would not find any oppressed person among their

253 Sunan Al-Kubra, hadith no. (12114); Al-Dala’il fi Gharib al-Hadith, 243
people or among anyone else who entered Makkah except that they would support him. They would stand against whoever oppressed him until the rights of the oppressed were returned.”

The Prophet ﷺ was reported by Ibn Abbas to have said, “Every pact (or treaty) from the Time of Ignorance (Jahiliyyah) is not increased by Islam except in strength and affirmation.”

Scholars have concluded from this that Muslims, even where they do not control the government or laws of the land, are expected to enjoin right and forbid wrong (as instructed by the Qur’an 3:104) to the best of their abilities (Qur’an 64:16) within the existing societal restrictions. Allah says Muslims should “Cooperate in righteousness and piety, and do not cooperate in sin and aggression” (Qur’an 5:2).

Muslims must always have those amongst them who defend the legal rights of others irrespective of their faith. This is a “collective social obligation” (fard kifayah) required of Muslims. They should protect and assist victims of abuse and injustice even in societies where Islamic law has no jurisdiction. This has been done successfully through advocacy and activism, using the existing legal system to make or support reforms, in many countries such as South Africa and America.

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254 Ibn Hisham, Sirat an-Nabawiyyah, 1/123; Al-Dala’il fi Gharib al-Hadith, 243
255 Musnad Ahmad, 2904
29. Some Muslims regard the registration of teachers, professionals, schools and organisations with the government as a sign of allegiance to an unislamic institution (or a “kufr system”) and regard it as prohibited. They also regard as prohibited, the registration for and owning of a National ID card, International Passport, voter’s registration card, etc. Is it permissible for Muslims to register anything with the government and possess such documentation?

The purpose and nature or content of a registration will determine its permissibility. If it is oppressive and harmful (mafsadah), and in opposition to the principles of Islamic teachings, then it is prohibited. If however its benefits are greater than any harm and it is in the “public interest” (maslahah) then it would be permissible, irrespective of the faith of those concerned.

Documents such as passports, certificates, Identity Cards, birth, marriage and death certificates, Certificates of Occupancy, driving licenses, etc. all try to prevent fraud and ensure greater security.

The benefits of registration of organisations or individual professionals such as teachers, doctors, engineers, lawyers, pharmacists, etc. is to ensure that minimum professional standards are ensured and that unqualified individuals do not put members of the public at risk. It also allows oversight by the relevant authorities to ensure that quality control and the ethics of the professions are maintained, and that there is periodic upgrading of standards of goods or services. Registered individuals or organisations also benefit from recognition, availability of relevant information, networking opportunities, training, appointments, grants, scholarships, etc.

In the traditional Islamic system of education, there was/is an ijazah, which is a certification of proficiency that a teacher gave to competent students upon completion of a particular level of study. This is similar to certification given by educational institutions such as universities, secondary schools, etc. Issues related to registration, certification or ijazah, and the titles for various standards of competence belong to the

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general category of “worldly” or “transactional affairs” (mu’āmalat) which Islamic Law regards as permissible in the absence of any evidence justifying a prohibition.  

Even if registration of individual professionals or organisations was understood to be a form of alliance or allegiance (wala) with an unislamic (or kufr) government, such an act cannot be regarded as prohibited since there is ample evidence in the Qur’an and Sunnah that the Prophet and his Companions formed numerous alliances with various pagan, Jewish and Christian communities or governments.

For example, the Qur’an refers to treaties that the Prophet had with various pagan tribes in Q9:6-7 and 4:90. Other well-known treaties with pagans included the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah with the Meccans, the treaty with the Jews of Medina documented in the Sahifah of Medina, that with the Christians of Najran.

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30. The United Nations (UN) is regarded by some Muslims as an evil (Taghut) “alliance of disbelieving nations”. Would it follow that any nation that chooses to be a member of the UN is also to be regarded as Taghut and a Kufr state? This conclusion is believed to be supported by Quran 5:51. 

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لََ تَتَّخِذُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالنَّصَارَى أَوْلِيَاءَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءَ بَعْضٍ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنَّهُ مِنْهُمْ إِنَّ اللََّّ اللََّّ يَهْيِا الْوَوْ َ الََّالِيِينَ 

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“O you who have believed, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies. They are [in fact] allies of one another. And whoever is an ally to them among you - then indeed, he is [one] of them. Indeed, Allah guides not the wrongdoing people.” Are Muslim Countries allowed to be members of the UN?

Even if the United Nations (and ECOWAS, EU, NATO, ASEAN, etc.) was understood as an alliance of disbelieving nations, this alone would not be a sufficient basis in Islamic Law for prohibiting having treaties with them. This is because of the numerous pieces of evidence in the Qur’an and Sunnah that the Prophet and his Companions formed many treaties and alliances with various pagan, Jewish and Christian communities or nations.

The Qur’an for example refers to treaties that the Prophet had with various pagan tribes in Q9:6-7 and 4:90. The Islamic jurisprudential fields related to Ahkam Ahl Al-dhimmah (Regulations concerning non-Muslim citizens or Protected People) and the rules governing relations with Dar al-Sulh or Dar al-‘Ahd (“Abode of Treaty”), Dar al-Harb (“Abode of War”), etc. are all testimony to the existence and permissibility of local and international treaties and alliances with non-Muslims for greater political, social, economic peace and security. Some well-known treaties with pagans included the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah with the Meccans, the treaty with the Jews of Medina documented in the Sahifah of Medina, that with the Christians of Najran from Southern Arabia.

Sheikh Ibn Uthaimeen was informed that some people are saying that to be a member of the United Nations (UN) implies “judging with other than Allah’s revelation” (which is forbidden). He was asked whether this was correct. He responded by saying, “This is
not correct. Each country rules or judges by their own system. Muslims judge with Qur’an and Sunnah, while others judge with their own laws. The UN does not compel anyone to judge with laws other than their own. Membership in the UN is nothing but treaties that occurs between Muslims and non-Muslims.”

Interfaith Cooperation in Defence and Security Services

31. Can Muslims cooperate with non-Muslims in defence and security services against aggressive or belligerent Muslims or non-Muslims?

It is permissible to fight non-Muslims if they are aggressors.

Allah says in the Qur’an, “Fight (qātilū, in Arabic) in the cause of God those who fight (yuqātilū) you, but do not commit aggression, for God loves not the aggressor”. (Q.2:190);

“And kill them wherever you find them, and turn them out from where they have turned you out. And Al-Fitnah is worse than killing. And fight not with them at al-Masjid al-Haram (the sanctuary at Makkah), unless they (first) fight you there. But if they attack you, then kill them. Such is the recompense of the disbelievers, but if they cease, then Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. And fight them until there is no fitnah (oppression) and religion is for Allah, but if they cease, let there be no hostility except to those who practice oppression”. (Q2:191-193);

“But if they violate their pledges after having concluded a treaty, and revile your religion, then fight against the leaders of disbelief who, behold, mean nothing by their pledges, so that they might desist. Will you not fight against people who have violated their pledges, conspired to expel the Prophet, and

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were the first to attack you? Do you hold them in awe? Nay, it is Allah who you ought to stand in awe of, if you truly are believers. (Q.9:12-13)

All battles at the time of Prophet ﷺ and his companions were against oppression, aggression and hostility.259

However, it is not permissible to fight non-Muslims if they are not aggressors and non-combatants. Allah says in the Qur’an, “Allah does not forbid you to deal justly and kindly 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.” (Qur’an 60:8);

“And fight them until there is no fitnah (oppression) and religion is for Allah, but if they cease, let there be no hostility except to those who practice oppression”. (Qur’an 2:193);

“...and if anyone of the Mushrikun (polytheist) seeks your protection then grant him protection, so that he may hear the Word of Allah, and then escort him to where he can be secure, that is because they are men who know not”. (Qur’an 9:6)

The Prophet ﷺ is reported to have instructed his Companions to, “Leave the Abyssinians alone, as long as they leave you alone, and do not engage the Turks, as long as they do not engage you.”260

There is in addition, the prohibition by the Prophet ﷺ of killing during warfare those non-Muslims who were non-combatants, such as women, children, etc. For example, he said, “Never kill women, children, and the old weakened with age”261, “Do not kill hermits”262, “Do not slay the old and decrepit nor...”263, and “Leave them (monks) and that to which they devote themselves.”264 To this list, scholars add other non-combatants such as the

260 Abu Dawood, No.3748; An-Nasa’i, No.3125; authenticated by Al-Albani in Sahih Jaami’ al-Sagheer, no.3384. The hadith is also cited in Ibn Rushd’s Bidayat al-Mujtahid, vol.1, p. 456
261 Related by Malik
262 Ahmad bn Hanbal, Musnad Ahmad, Muassasah al-Risalah, Beirut, 1420 A.H, vol.4, p.461
263 Related by Abu Dawood
264 Related by Malik
blind, chronically ill, the insane, peasants, serfs, etc. Others who can be safely included are those with peace treaties (mu’ahid and dhimmis), Emissaries and Diplomats, etc.

All these prove that it is not permissible for Muslims to fight non-Muslims unless they are aggressors and combatants.

In another vein, it is also permissible for Muslims to fight other belligerent Muslims if these are aggressors.

Allah says in (Qur’an 49:9) “And if two parties or groups among the believers fall to fighting, then make peace between them both, but if one of them rebels against the other, then fight you (all) against the one that which rebels till it complies with the Command of Allah; then if it complies, then make reconciliation between them justly, and be equitable. Verily! Allah loves those who are equitable”.

In addition, all criminal punishments on Muslim individuals or groups – such as murder, theft, robbery (hirabah), adultery, etc. - are punished in Islamic law because of the wrongs they commit even though they are Muslims.

However, it is not permissible to fight Muslims if they are not aggressors. Allah says in the Qur’an, “and whoever kills a believer intentionally, his recompense is Hell to abide therein, and the Wrath and the Curse of Allah are upon him, and a great punishment is prepared for him.” (Q4:93).

From all the above points therefore, it is permissible to fight against an aggressor irrespective of his or her religious affiliation, and it is not permissible to fight a non-aggressor irrespective of his or her religion.

Muslims must stand for justice against anyone and everyone irrespective of their relationship with them – whether Muslims or otherwise. (Q.5:8; 4:135).

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265 For more references and discussion, see Ibn Rushd’s *Bidayat al-Mujtahid wa Nihayat al-Muqtasid* (The Distinguished Jurist’s Primer), vol.1, 1994, pp.458-460
266 Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, hadith no. 3166
268 Qur’an 4:93-94; 5:45.
269 Qur’an 5:38
270 Qur’an 5:33
271 Qur’an 24:2
272 See also, Qur’an 49:9-10)
“O you who have attained to faith! Be ever steadfast in your devotion to God, bearing witness to the truth in all equity; and never let hatred of anyone lead you into the sin of deviating from justice. Be just; this is closest to being God-conscious. And remain conscious of God; verily, God is aware of all that you do.” (Qur’an 5:8)

“O you who have attained to faith! Be ever steadfast in upholding equity, bearing witness to the truth for the sake of God, even though it be against your own selves, or your parents and kinsfolk. Whether the person concerned be rich or poor, God’s claim takes precedence over (the claims of) either of them. Do not, then, follow your own desires, lest you swerve from justice; for if you distort (the truth), behold, God is indeed aware of all that you do!” (Qur’an 4:135).

The means and ends of fighting should always respect Allah’s guidance – *fi sabiillah*- and in His Cause of justice. There should also be no justification for abandoning proportionality and justice during conflict, as the Qur’an forbids that a person should hurt others more than they were hurt.

Allah says in the Qur’an, “And if you have to respond to an attack, respond only to the extent of the attack levelled against you; but to bear yourselves with patience is indeed far better for you, (since God is with) those who are patient in adversity.” (16:126)

Muslims are also permitted to form alliances with non-Muslims for their mutual safety and security. Many such treaties were entered into during the life of the Prophet and his Companions with Pagans, Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians (*Majus*), etc. It is permissible for a Muslim to fight to defend a community of non-Muslims with whom they have a treaty of mutual safety and security. This security was part of the contract for Ahl al-Dhimmah (Protected non-Muslim citizens) and was observed by the Prophet ﷺ.

During the early period of the Prophet ﷺ in Medina, there was a document or agreement that was signed between the various Muslim and Jewish clans and

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273 See also, Qur’an 28:15-19

274 See for example, Qur’an 4:90; 9:6-7; 9:4, etc.
communities there. This document was referred to as the Sahifah (document) and it was the “constitution” of Medina. The 24th Clause of the document states that “The Jews will contribute to the cost of war as long as they are fighting alongside the believers”. The 37th Clause of the Sahifah states that, “The Jews must bear their expenses and the Muslims their expenses. Each must help the other against anyone who attacks the people of this document. They must seek mutual advice and consultation, and righteousness is a protection against sinfulness”.  

According to Ibn Hazm (995-1063 CE), a classical jurist of Islam, “If we are attacked by an enemy nation who is targeting the People of the Covenant (non-Muslim citizens) living among us, it is our duty to come fully armed and ready to die in battle for them, to protect those people who are protected by the covenant of God and His Messenger. Doing any less and surrendering them (to an enemy) will be blameworthy neglect of a sacred promise.”  

Non-Muslims who have treaties with Muslims are allowed to cooperate and if necessary to fight alongside Muslims for their mutual safety and security. Jubair bin Nufair reported that the Messenger of Allah said: “You will make a peace-treaty with the Romans and together you will invade an enemy beyond Rome. You will be victorious and take much booty.” Some members of the pagan tribe of Banu Khuza’a acted as spies or military scouts for the Prophet ﷺ. Military service with Muslims was a reason for exemption of non-Muslims citizens from paying the Jizya (poll tax or tribute) to the Islamic government.  

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278 Sayyid Sabiq, Fiqh us-Sunnah, vol.4, hadith no. (6A) in Alim 6.0  

It is up to the State to decide which non-Muslims can be trusted with such sensitive tasks. Allah says in the Qur’an, “Among the People of the Book are some who, if entrusted with a hoard of gold, will (readily) pay it back; others, who, if entrusted with a single silver coin, will not repay it unless you constantly stand over them demanding it” (Qur’an 3:75).

Muslims are therefore not prohibited from cooperating with non-Muslims in fighting injustice and aggression. Muslims are also not prohibited from collaborating with or joining non-Muslim security personnel or armed forces (and vice-versa) if the target of fighting is just and against aggression, and if it means do not contradict Shari’ah teachings.

If however, the purpose of fighting others is against justice and contrary to the objectives (maqasid) of Shari’ah and maslahah (public interest), then it is prohibited for a Muslim to cooperate with any security services or armed forces whether these are led by Muslims or non-Muslims.

“O you who have attained to faith! Be ever steadfast in upholding equity, bearing witness to the truth for the sake of God, even though it be against your own selves, or your parents and kinsfolk. Whether the person concerned be rich or poor, God’s claim takes precedence over (the claims of) either of them. Do not, then, follow your own desires, lest you swerve from justice; for if you distort (the truth), behold, God is indeed aware of all that you do!” (Qur’an 4:135)
This section gives a detailed analysis of various verses of the Qur’an and hadiths of the Prophet ﷺ relating to interfaith relations and jihad which have been misunderstood and taken out of context.

**Brotherhood and Love with People of Other Faiths**

32. Do the Qur’anic terms for close relationships exclude non-Muslims in their scope?

The Qur’an uses different terms to express a degree of close or positive association between people. These include the terms: *hubb*, *akh*, and *mawaddah* in the following verses:

- **Hubb** – “love” (as in Q.28:56) – “Verily, you cannot guide aright everyone whom you love (man ahbabta), but it is Allah who guides whom He wills, and He is fully aware of all those who receive guidance.” This verse was revealed in relation to the Prophet’s uncle, Abu Talib, who supported him and whom he loved dearly but could not convince to become a Muslim. The verse is a clear indication of the fact that non-Muslims may be among those whom we love and hold even our closest relationships with.\(^{280}\)

- **Mawaddah** – “love, friendly relations” (as in Q.60:7) – “Perhaps Allah will make friendly relations between you and those whom you hold as enemies. And Allah has power over all things, and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.” This verse refers to Allah’s ability to place love (or at least warm sentiment) between oneself and one’s enemies, which may include non-Muslims, as understood from the context of verses 8 and 9 of the same chapter which refer to kindness to non-Muslims who do not fight against Muslims. Q.30:21 also speaks of love between husbands and wives, while Q.5:82 mentions Christians as being nearest in love to the believers.

c. *Akh* – “brother”. The Qur’an refers to Prophets and the people they deliver their message to as brethren. For example, “...the brethren of Lut...” (Q.50:12-14). The term “*their brother*” is also mentioned with respect to Nuh (Q.26:106), Hud (Q.26:124, 7:65, 11:50, 46:21), Salih (Q.26:142, 27:46, 7:73, 11:61), and Shu’aib (Q.26:176, 7:85, 11:84, 29:36). Yusuf Ali makes the following comment on the use of the word “*brethren*”:

Note that Lot’s people are the people to whom he is sent on a mission. He was not one of their own brethren, as was Salih or Shu’aib. But he looked upon his people as his brethren, as a man of God always does.281

In other words, non-Muslims also belong to the brotherhood of humanity. The relationship term “*brother*” may thus be addressed to them, and not just to fellow Muslim believers.

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Building Alliances with People of Other Faiths

33. The Quran verse 5:51 is understood by some Muslims to imply that it is not permissible for Muslims to become friends, companions or have alliances with Jews, Christians and other non-Muslims. What is the correct interpretation of this verse?

The verse in question reads: 

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لََ تَتَّخِذُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالنَّصَارَى أَوْلِيَاءَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءَ بَعْضٍ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنَّهُ مِنْهُمْ إِنَّ اللَََّّ لََ يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ (سورة المائدة)

“O you who have believed, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies. They are [in fact] allies of one another. And whoever is an ally to them among you - then indeed, he is [one] of them. Indeed, Allah guides not the wrongdoing people.” (5:51)

The term "Awliya" in this verse is related to that of Q4:139 which states that, “As for those who take the deniers of truth for their allies (awliyā’) in preference to the believers – do they hope to be honoured by them, when behold, all honour belongs to God (alone).” Ibn Kathir states that the verse rebukes believers who seek eminence in the eyes of disbelievers, while all power and authority belong to Allah. Al-Qurtubi states that those referred to in the verse are hypocrites (munafiqun) who were apparently among the Madinan believers but who were associating with disbelieving opponents and revealing Muslims’ secrets to them. Thus, they connive with others against Islam in order to win recognition and favour. This, he says, is evidence that rebelling against the people of tawheed (pure Islamic monotheism) is a sign of hypocrisy. He also states that it is said that the verse was revealed concerning a hypocrite called Abu Lubabah. However, Sa’di said it was revealed concerning the event of Uhud, when the Muslims were afraid to the extent that some of them decided to take the Christians and Jews as confidants. Another narration said it was revealed in the case of Abdullah ibn Ubayy ibn Salool, who was afraid of being involved in a calamity and thus took protection among the Jews. Al-Qurtubi states that in doing so, Abdullah ibn Ubayy was considered by Allah to be among them, since they had wilfully disobeyed Allah and His Prophet and yet he inclined towards them.

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283 Tafsir al-Qurtubi, in Maktab Taalib al-Ilm, op. cit.
284 Ibid.
Believers, in Q5:51 above, are warned that Jews and Christians, as communities, should not be sought after as guardians wielding authority over them, as they have their own interests to protect and would not be committed to protecting the interests of Islam. Al-Qurtubi states that “those addressed in this verse are hypocrites who were apparently among the Madinan believers but who were associating with disbelieving opponents and revealing Muslims' secrets to them.”  

This verse was not understood by the Prophet ﷺ or his Companions (or the early scholars) to nullify or abrogate the permissibility of harmonious interfaith relations with non-hostile people of other faiths based on the explicit statements in Q60:8-9. The verse also did not abrogate the permissibility of interfaith marriage and intimacy of a Muslim man to a Jewish or Christian woman (Q5:5), eating of their food, good neighbourliness, and exchanging gifts, etc. It was not understood to abrogate the permissibility of treaties, the establishment of Darul Sulh/'Ahd (“Abode of Treaties”), of sending and receiving foreign missions and ambassadors; of having dialogue; of collaborating to the protections of the weak, as the Prophet ﷺ had done (in the Hilf al-Fudul); of the protection due to non-Muslim citizens (Ahl al-dhimmah); of establishing business relations, trade and partnerships; and of exchanging knowledge and learning opportunities.

When the Gazan the leader of Tatar captured some Muslims and Christians as slaves from Damascus, Ibn Taimiyyah tried to convince the Tatar to release all Muslims and Christians, justifying that those Christians were living under the protection of Muslims.

In a nutshell, the term "awliya" in the verse means helpers or protectors of Jew and Christians in preference to and against the believers. It therefore does not prohibit friendliness and peace-building with them.

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The Qur’an verse 11:113 is used by some Muslims to prohibit working with and in non-Islamic governments as this is seen as “inclining towards those who do wrong”. It is also used to justify not praying or relating with Muslims who do such. What is the correct interpretation of this verse?

The verse in question is وَلَا تَرْكُنُوا إِلَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَّلُوا فَتَمَسَّكُمُ النَّارُ وَمَا لَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ أَوْلِيَاءَ ثُمَّ لََ تُنْصَرُونَ (سورة هود)

“And do not incline toward those who do wrong, lest you be touched by the Fire, and you would not have other than Allah any protectors; then you would not be helped.”

The context of the verse makes the meaning of this verse clearer. The immediate verse before it reads, “So remain on a right course as you have been commanded, [you] and those who have turned back with you [to Allah], and do not transgress. Indeed, He is Seeing of what you do.” Then the next verse reads, “And do not incline toward those who do wrong, lest you be touched by the Fire, and you would not have other than Allah any protectors; then you would not be helped.”

According to Ibn Kathir, in the first verse (Qur’an 11:112), Allah is commanding His Messenger and the believers to stand firm, because that will help them become victorious over their enemies. And Allah prohibits going to extremes even if it is against polytheists (mushrikun)

The verses therefore are of general import and implication. They are prohibiting Muslims from collaborating with or inclining towards oppressors, or being pleased with “those who do wrong” irrespective of whether these are individuals or groups. The verses concerned are not directed to any particular Muslim or non-Muslim government, but would apply to any group or government that is oppressive and doing wrong.

The verse does not imply a prohibition of collaboration or alliance with non-Muslims in enjoining right and forbidding wrong, or in any other area of mutual benefit. Hence the Prophet and the Companions enacted treaties and alliances with various people of other faiths as seen in the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah, the Hilf al-Fudul, etc. These alliances and collaboration were in spite of the fact that there were other things that the non-
Muslims involved were doing that Islam would object to, such as their idol worship, burying of their daughters alive, dealing in usury (riba), consuming alcohol, gambling, etc.

Some of the Companions and their successors worked under or related with some tyrants, oppressive governors and rulers in early Islamic history – such as Hajjaj Bin Yusuf, and some rules of the Banu Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties. They however did not support these rulers in any of their wrong doing and oppression.

On the authority of Hudhayfah bin Yaman, the Prophet ﷺ said, “…There will be leaders who will not be led by my guidance, and who will not adopt my ways. There will also be among them (future leaders of Muslims), men who will have the hearts of devils and the bodies of humans”. I asked (the Prophet), what should I do, O Messenger of Allah, if I happen to live in those times? He replied, “You should listen to the leader (Amir), and carry out his orders, even if your back is flogged and your wealth is snatched, you should listen and obey”.\(^{287}\)

In this context, the Prophet ﷺ advised Muslims under such oppressive rulers to obey them when and where they are right even if they are tyrants, but not to support them in wrong-doing and injustice. The Prophet ﷺ said, “There is no submission in matters involving God’s disobedience or displeasure. Submission is obligatory only in what is good (and reasonable).”\(^{288}\)

\(^{287}\) Sahih Muslim, Darul Jeel, Buirut, vol.6, p.20, hadith no. (4890)

\(^{288}\) Musnad Ahmad, hadith no. (724); Sahih Muslim, hadith no. (4871), Sunan al-Nasa’i, hadith no. (4205); Sahih Ibn Hibban, hadith no. (4564).
Obedience to Non-Muslim Leadership

35. In Qur’an 6:121, Allah says, “...if you obey them, you would indeed be pagans (mushrikun)”. Some Muslims interpret this verse to mean that any Muslim who follows or obeys any non-Muslim is no longer a Muslim, and is to be regarded as a pagan (Mushrik) or disbeliever (Kafir). What is the correct interpretation of this verse?

The portion of the Qur’an in question is ...

وَإِنْ أَطَعْتُمُوهُمْ إِنَّكُمْ لَمُشْرِكُونَ (سورة الأنعام)...

“...if you were to obey them, you would indeed be pagans (mushrikun)”.

Firstly, the verse relied upon has been quoted without regard to its own context. This is because the verse is related to one who abandons Allah’s ruling regarding the animal which is to be consumed, and then legalizes that which the pagans legalize. Below is the complete verse with a short commentary by Ibn Kathir:

Allah says: “And do not eat of that upon which the name of Allah has not been mentioned, for indeed, it is grave disobedience. And indeed do the devils inspire their allies (among men) to dispute with you. And if you were to obey them, indeed, you would be pagans” (Q6:121)

Ibn Kathir comments on the phrase: “and if you were to obey them....” And says: ‘and you consume carrion, leaving Allah’s command to other person’s statement as a matter of preference, then you have become pagans (mushrikun). This is similar to Allah’s saying: “They have taken their scholars and monks as lords besides Allah...” (Q9:31)²⁸⁹

There is nothing wrong in obeying or following the instructions of a pagan or any other non-Muslim in itself. It only becomes prohibited if what he or she calls you to is Shirk or goes contrary to the Shari’ah of Islam. It was reported that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ hired a pagan, Abdullah bin Uraiqit al-Laithi, and followed his instruction during his migration to Madinah.²⁹⁰ This is a form of obedience.

²⁹⁰Mubarakfuri, al-Rahiq al-Makhtum, p.129
Obeying the expert advice in the field of medicine, pharmacy, and nursing is highly encouraged in Islam. Allah says: “...Ask those who know if you know not” (Q16:43)

Muslims in Abyssinia sought the protection and accepted the leadership of the Christian king (Najashi) there even before he embraced Islam.

During the Treaty of Hudaibiyah, the Muslims who remained in Mecca under its pagan leadership were expected to respect its leadership in ways that did not contradict Shari’ah or the treaty.²⁹¹

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**Purity of People of Other Faiths**

36. The Qur’an (9: 28) describes polytheists (Mushrikum) as impure (najas). What is the correct interpretation of this verse? Is it understood by Muslims scholars to mean that non-Muslims are physically impure for a Muslim to even touch?

The verse in question reads, “O you who have attained to faith! Those who ascribe divinity to aught besides God (mushrikun) are nothing but impure (najas), and so they shall not approach the Secure House of Worship from this year onwards...” (Qur’an 9:28)

Some conclude from this verse that since non-Muslims are “impure”, Muslims cannot touch non-Muslims, let alone show them affection or allow them into mosques, etc. However,

The term ‘najas’ occurs in the Qur’an only in this one instance, and carries an exclusively spiritual meaning (see Manar X, 322 ff.). To this day, the Bedouin of Central and Eastern Arabia – who, contrary to the modern town-dwellers, have

preserved the purity of the Arabic idiom to a high degree – describe a person [even a Muslim] who is immoral, faithless or wicked as najas.\footnote{Muhammad Asad, \textit{The Message of the Qur’an}, Dar al-Andalus, Gibraltar, 1980, p.261, n.37}


Associating with People of Other Faiths

37. The Qur’an verse 3:100 - 101 is understood by some to mean that Muslims should disassociate themselves from all non-Muslims and not relate with them. What is the correct interpretation of this verse?

The verse in question reads:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنْ تُطِيعُوا فَرِيقًا مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ يَرُدُّوكُمْ بَعْدَ إِيمَانِكُمْ كَافِرِينَ (وَكَيْفَ تَكْفُرُونَ وَأَنْتُمْ تُتْلَى عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتُ اللَّهِ وَفِيكُمْ رَسُولُهُ وَمَنْ يَعْتَصِمْ بِالْهَيْدَرِ فَقَدْ هُدِيَ إِلَى سَبِيلٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ)

“O you who have believed, if you obey a party of those who were given the Scripture, they would turn you back, after your belief, [to being] unbelievers. And how could you disbelieve while to you are being recited the verses of Allah and among you is His Messenger? And whoever holds firmly to Allah has [indeed] been guided to a straight path.”

The verse under consideration should not be interpreted outside its own context or the context of the whole Qur’an and Sunnah, while disregarding the rules of interpretation (tafsir) of religious texts that help prevent or clarify any confusions. This is especially when some Companions of the Prophet have actually commented on this particular verse.

According to Qur’anic commentators (Mufassirun) such as Al-Baghawi298, Al-Tabari299 and Ibn Ashur300, the circumstance during which the verse was revealed (sabab al-nuzul) was a case in Medina where a particular Jewish resident by name Shas bin Qays, was envious of the growing authority and respect that the Prophet Muhammad was receiving in Medina. He earlier on played a more prominent role in the leadership of Medina. As Islam united the major Arab tribes of ‘Aws and Khazraj and brought an end to their mutual rivalry and infighting, the Jewish community became less significant as the Muslims became a larger united block. In an attempt to sow discord between the old rivals, Shas bin Qays and his followers tried to incite a hatred among the Muslims.

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299 Muhammad Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, Jami’ al-Bayan, Mu’assasat al-Risalah, Beirut, 1420, vol.6, p.59
by reminding the ‘Aws and Khazraj for their respective past losses and why they should actually see each other as enemies and not brother in faith.

The verse in question was revealed in this context, and the Prophet intervened while asking the ‘Aws and Khazraj Muslims, “O Muslims! Will you be responding to the call to the Pre-Islamic Days of Ignorance (jahiliyyah), while I am amongst you, and after Allah has honoured you with Islam and united you?” After which they dropped their weapons and hugged each other in brotherhood.

This verse therefore teaches that Muslims should not obey or follow people who will cause or contribute to disunity and conflict among them. And that they should not obey or answer any call to tribalism, racism, or other forms of unacceptable Pre-Islamic (Jahiliyyah) ethics. According to Abubakr Jabir Al-Jaza’iri, an important lesson to be derived from this verse is that “Muslims should be cautious of taking advice from Jewish or Christian leaders in what may lead them into disbelief”.

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It is clear from the actual context of the verse and the understanding scholars, that it was not understood to imply that Muslims should disassociate themselves from all people of other faiths. As is clear from various other references in the Qur’an, the Sunnah and the actions of the Companions of the Prophet ﷺ, this verse was not taken to teach hostility or disassociation from peaceful non-Muslims or from engaging with them for the common good. It did not prohibit political ties and treaties, commerce, marriage, visiting, exchanging gifts, cooperating is doing good, mutual assistance and da’wah, etc.

Other Commonly Misinterpreted Verses of the Qur’an

38. What are the other most commonly misinterpreted verses of the Qur’an associated with interfaith relations?

Many misinterpreted verses of the Qur’an make use of the term “wali” which means protector, guardian, willing subordinate, responsible manager, master, superior, or favoured servant or companion; confidante. The term often implies one party being superior in rank and authority to another. 

Muhammad Asad notes:

It should also be borne in mind that the term wali has several shades of meaning: “ally”, “friend”, “helper”, “protector”, “guardian”, etc. The choice of the particular term – and sometimes a combination of two terms is always dependent on the context.

Let us examine some examples of misinterpreted verses one by one:

a. Qur’an 3:28: “Let not the believers take those who deny the truth for their allies (awliyā’) in preference to the believers – since he who does this cuts himself from God in everything – unless you fear from them something that is to be feared (to protect yourselves against them in this way)...”

This injunction is logical from any religion’s point of view. In cases where the interests of the “deniers of truth” clash with the interests of the faithful, it would be hypocritical for any believer to ally himself with a denier of truth in preference to fellow believers.

Verses such as this one imply that a hierarchical relationship (where deniers of truth have authority over believers) should not be sought after. This understanding is consistent with a number of other verses which encourage guardianship and protection between believers, and discourage Muslims from taking protection from non-Muslims who subordinate them, in preference to other Muslims who have their interests at heart.

Imam al-Tabari explains that:

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302 Al-Mawrid, Dar El-Ilm Lilimalayin, Beirut, Lebanon, 1996, p.1248
303 M. Asad, The Message of the Qur’an, Dar al-Andalus, Gibraltar, 1980, p.155
Whoever is loyal to Jews and Christians against believers is one of them... No one can be loyal to others unless he is part of them and is content with that. If he is content with their beliefs and their religion, he becomes an enemy and hates whatever disagrees with the [beliefs of those he has supported], and will be judged according to the same judgments that are applied to these people.304

Ibn Kathir’s comments that what is meant in Q.3:28 is that Allah forbids his servants from taking a party of disbelievers as “awliyā'” and extending love to them at the expense of believers, and that this corroborates Allah’s words in Q.60:1:

“...take not my enemies and yours as awliyā’, offering them your love even though they have rejected the truth that has come to you and driven out the Messenger and yourselves simply because you believe in Allah, your Sustainer...”305

It also relates to Q.8:73 which states, “Those who deny the truth are awliyā’ of one another. Unless you do likewise, there will be tumult and oppression on earth.”306 Yusuf Ali elaborates that the message of this verse is that the good should consort with the good just as the evil consort with each other; otherwise the world will give way to aggression and chaos.307 Hence, the verse is not condemning general friendliness to non-Muslims. Rather, it condemns favoritism and preference for disbelievers, particularly those who have recently persecuted or are presently persecuting Muslims. Moreover, not taking disbelievers as “awliyā’” does not mean one cannot bring them close, as demonstrated by the relationships of the Prophet and the expressions of positive relations in the Qur’an as mentioned above. Hence, the degree of “al-walā’” (i.e. guardianship, protection, alliance, etc.) mentioned in this verse does not generally prohibit a friendly relationship with non-Muslims.

305 This explanation may be found in the *Tafsir of Ibn Kathir*, in *Maktab Taalib al-Ilm CD-ROM*, Ariss Computers Inc., Beirut, Lebanon, 2002.
b. Qur’an 4:139: “As for those who take the deniers of truth for their allies (awliyā’) in preference to the believers – do they hope to be honored by them, when behold, all honor belongs to God (alone).”

This verse is similar in meaning to the preceding one, and also does not negate general friendly relations. Here, believers are discouraged from seeking an alliance which may make them subordinate to disbelievers in order to be accepted. Muhammad Asad (1980) writes:

The term ‘allies’ (awliyā’, sing. wali) does not indicate in this context, merely political alliances, but more than anything else a ‘moral alliance’ with the deniers of truth in preference to the way of life of the believers, in the hope of being ‘honored’ or accepted as equal, by the former. Since an imitation of the way of life of confirmed unbelievers must obviously conflict with the moral principles demanded by true faith, it unavoidably leads to a gradual abandonment of those principles.308

Ibn Kathir states that the verse rebukes believers who seek eminence in the eyes of disbelievers, while all power and authority belong to Allah.309 Al-Qurtubi states that those referred to in the verse are hypocrites (munafiqun) who connive with others against Islam in order to win recognition and favor. This, he says, is evidence that rebelling against the people of tawheed (pure Islamic monotheism) is a sign of hypocrisy.310

d. Qur’an 2:120: “Never will the Jews or the Christians be satisfied with you unless you follow their form of religion. Say: ‘The Guidance of Allah – that is the only Guidance.’ Were you to follow their desires after the knowledge which has reached you, then would you find neither protector nor helper against Allah.”

This verse is closely related to the verses mentioned earlier which make the realistic observation that disbelievers are not suited to safeguard Muslims’ interests because they have their own interests to protect, and Muslims should not hope to attain their favour as opposed to the favour of Allah.

This point is expressed in another verse, particularly regarding antagonist non-Muslims:

308 M. Asad, The Message of the Qur’an, Dar al-Andalus, Gibraltar, 1980, p.131
310 Tafsir al-Qurtubi, in Maktab Taalib al-Ilm, op. cit.
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 signs, if you possess understanding. Lo! You love them, but they do not love you... (Q.3:118-119)

Ibn Kathir comments that Qatadah narrated that Q.2:120 was revealed in the specific context of the Prophet’s discussions with some People of the Book. Allah was assuring the Prophet ﷺ that he should not be stirred by their disputation for their hearts, having already been satisfied with disbelief, would never find any explanation by the Prophet ﷺ satisfactory, while he should know that he is upon true guidance.  

Ibn Kathir also said that the verse contains a strong warning for Muslims to avoid following the (religious) paths of Jews and Christians after what they (i.e. Muslims) have learned of the truth from the Qur’an and example of the Prophet ﷺ. The Qur’an declares itself as the final and most preserved revelation, and a correction of the errors of belief and practice of those claiming allegiance to earlier revelations – hence, the warning to desist from reverting to error.

One may infer from these explanations that the verse refers to Jews and Christians as a group, and their religious paths, rather than the attitudes and sincerity of individuals among them who may be favourably disposed towards Islam and Muslims. Furthermore, it is common knowledge that many individuals from among non-Muslim communities embrace Islam wholeheartedly, and thus do become satisfied with it. Others remain non-Muslims but bear no ill will towards Islam or Muslims, and may even, like the Prophet’s uncle Abu Talib, come to its defence for the sake of justice or filial duty. We may therefore safely conclude that though Q.2:120 and Q.3:118-119 apply to particular communities, they do not necessarily apply to every one of its members.

e. Qur’an 5:57: “O you who have attained to faith! Do not take for yourselves allies/protectors (awliyā’) such as mock at your faith and make a jest of it – be they...
from among those who have been vouchsafed revelation before your time, or (from among) those who deny the truth..."

The type of disbelievers referred to in the verse above is made clearer through an examination of the verses that follow:

And when you proclaim the call to prayer, they take it (but) as a mockery and fun, that is because they are a people who understand not. Say, ‘O people of the Scripture, do you criticize us for no other reason than that we believe in Allah, and in that which has been sent down to us and in that which has been sent down before..." (Q.5:58-59)

As it has been made abundantly clear in Q.60:7-9 (and implied in Q5:57 above), as well as the numerous sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, this prohibition of a ‘moral alliance’ with non-Muslims who mock Islam does not constitute an injunction against normal friendly relations with those of them that interact with Muslims respectfully or peacefully; nor is it an injunction against accepting assistance from non-Muslims whose sincerity is not in doubt.314

God only forbids you to turn in friendship towards (an tawallawhum) such as fight against you because of (your) faith, and drive you forth from your homelands, or aid (others) in driving you forth: and as for those (from among you) who turn toward them in friendship, it is they, they who are truly wrongdoers! (Q.60:9)

It may be inferred from this that Muslims may “tawalla” (i.e. “turn to”) those non-Muslims that do not fight against or support those who fight against Muslims on account of their faith.

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314 Such as some of the Prophet’s uncles and non-Muslim political allies – see relevant section on “Trusting Non-Muslims” above. Sheikh Muhammad Rashid Rida also writes, “Forbidden in the issue of showing loyalty is when Muslims show loyalty to Jews and Christians and make alliances with them to support them against other Muslims or to convene with them against other Muslims. But making alliances with non-Muslims in ways that will benefit the believers or preventing harm from them is a matter of discretion which the majority of scholars have permitted.” (Tafsir al-Manar, vol.16, pp.81-82; quoted in Salim Al-Bahnasawy, Non-Muslims in the Shari’ah of Islam, Dar an-Nashr lil-Jami’at, Egypt, 2004, p.52
39. What is the interpretation of the hadith: “I have disassociated myself with any Muslim who stays in the mix of pagans”? Does it mean that working in a non-Muslim government (like the Nigerian government), going to juma’ah prayers with civil servants, and commencing the fasting with them is act of Kufr, because the person is not disassociating himself from them?

The hadith under consideration should not be interpreted outside its own context or the context of the whole Qur’an and Sunnah, while disregarding the rules of interpretation (tafsir) of religious texts that help prevent or clarify any confusions. This is especially when some Companions of the Prophet ﷺ have actually commented on this particular hadith.

The circumstance during which this hadith was narrated (sabab al-wurud) makes it clear that it was referring to some Muslims who were living among a particular pagan community (of Khath’am) who were at war with the Prophet ﷺ. The Prophet ﷺ was making it clear that he was not going to be responsible for the fate of Muslims who decided to remain among them. In the actual context of the hadith, some Muslims living among the warring pagans actually got killed during the fighting and the Prophet decided at the end of it, to pay half the value of the “blood wit” (diyyah) to their families, instead of the usual full amount, because it was partly their fault for remaining within that community. It is in this context that he is quoted to have said that he disassociates himself from the responsibility of paying the blood money (diyyah) of any Muslims who decides to live among such pagans.315

According to Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, this hadith is applicable to someone who has no freedom to practice his religions in a non-Muslim society.316

This hadith was not understood to mean that Muslims could not live with peaceful people of other faiths or vice-versa. There were many Muslims who lived as minorities at the time of the Prophet ﷺ and thereafter in Mecca, Abyssinia and elsewhere. Many of those who embraced Islam but who came from outside Medina were asked to

316 Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, Fath al-Bari, Dar al-Fikr, Beirut, vol.6, p.39
return to their communities to share the message of Islam with their people.\textsuperscript{317} Many of the companions of the Prophet \textcyr{N} left Medina and went to places where Muslims were minorities or even absent in order to spread Islam. Others throughout Islamic history went far and wide for business, political alliances, exploration and facilitated the spread of Islam.

\textsuperscript{317} Sahih al-Bukhari, hadith no. (6008); Sahih Muslim, hadiths no. (674) and (1,865).
40. Some people say that the involvement of Muslims in various forms of war, aggression, and terrorism shows that the concept of Jihad and Islam, by its nature, undermines peaceful co-existence between Muslims and non-Muslims, especially in multi-religious societies.

Historically, all communities – Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, Nationalist, Liberal, Communist, as well as others – have had lapses in following the valued ideals of their religions or philosophies. As with any other religion or way of life, therefore, Islam should not be judged by those of its followers who disobey or are ignorant of its teachings. Rather, it should be judged by the actual teachings of its scriptures. It is therefore more reasonable to assess Islam by the teachings of the Qur’an and the sayings and deeds (Sunnah) of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

The Qur’an teaches: “Let there be no compulsion in religion” (Q.2:256), and “Invite (all) to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching” (Q.16:125). Islam, therefore, does not teach aggression, “for God does not love the aggressors” (Q.2:190).

Jihad in Islam
Firstly, let us understand the meaning of the Arabic word “Jihad” in the Islamic context. “Jihad” (from the verb “jahada”) on its own simply means “to struggle”, “to exert effort” or “exert oneself”, “to toil” or “to strive”. Jihad in Islam refers to the unceasing effort that an individual must make towards self-improvement and self-purification. It also refers to the duty of Muslims, both at the individual and collective level, to struggle against all forms of evil, corruption, injustice, tyranny and oppression – whether this injustice is committed against Muslims or Non-Muslims, and whether by Muslims or Non-Muslims. In this context, jihad may include peaceful struggle or, if necessary, armed struggle.
41. Is fighting or combative jihad against non-Muslims or against aggression, irrespective of faith?

The proof that combative jihad is only directed against aggression is the fact that when the enemy stops fighting Muslims, or inclines to peace, Muslims are required to cease fighting and also incline to peace, and place their trust in Allah (Q.2:192 and 8:61), since “Allah does not love aggressors” (Q.2:190). If combat were directed against a people just because they are Non-Muslims, then Muslims would not stop fighting even if the Non-Muslims concerned stopped, since their stopping does not mean they have become Muslims. Moreover, the Companions demonstrated after the death of the Prophet ﷺ, and the Jurists stipulated in their works, that such fighting is also permitted against Muslims should they perpetrate aggression or injustice against fellow believers.

If two parties among the believers fall into a quarrel, make peace between them; but if one of them transgresses beyond bounds against the other then fight (qātilū) against the one that transgresses until it (the transgressing party) complies with the command of Allah... (Q.49:9)

This is most evident in the early battles against the Khawarij and other militant Muslim factions. Additional evidence that combat is only against injustice and not due to religious difference is the prohibition by the Prophet ﷺ of killing non-Muslims who were non-combatants, such as women, children, etc. For example, he said, “Never kill women, children, and the old weakened with age”318, “Do not kill hermits”319, “Do not slay the old and decrepit nor...”320, and “Leave them (monks) and that to which they devote themselves.”321 To this list, scholars add other non-combatants such as the blind, chronically ill, the insane, peasants, serfs, etc.322 If all these categories of non-Muslims are not to be killed, then fighting any non-Muslim is not because they are non-Muslims, but because they have committed acts of aggression against Muslims.

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318 Related by Malik
319 Related by Dawood ibn Al-Husayn
320 Related by Abu Dawood
321 Related by Malik
322 For more references and discussion, see Ibn Rushd’s Bidayat al-Mujtahid wa Nihayat al-Muqtasid (The Distinguished Jurist’s Primer), vol.1, 1994, pp.458-460
(Fight them) except those who join a people between whom and you there is a treaty, or those who come to you because their hearts restrain them from fighting you or their own people. If Allah had willed, He would have given the unbelievers power over you, and they would have fought you. Therefore, if they withdraw from you and fight you not, and instead send you guarantees of peace, know that Allah has not given you a license (to fight them). (Q.4:90)

Allah also says in the Qur’an 5:48, “If Allah had so willed, He could surely have made you all one single community: but (he willed it otherwise) in order to test you by means of what He has vouchsafed unto you...” and “Let there be no compulsion in religion” (Q.2:256). Fighting other religious communities purely for their difference would thus be counter to Allah’s will.
Abrogation of Verses Prescribing Friendliness

42. Have the verses of the Qur’an prescribing friendliness with people of other faiths been abrogated by the so-called “verse of the sword” (Q9:5)\(^{323}\)?

Some jurists have claimed that the verse “fight in the cause of God, those who fight you, but do not go beyond the limits (to instigate aggression)…” (Q.2:190) as well as other verses such as “Those who believe, and the Jews, the Christians, and the Sabians – any who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and act righteously shall have their reward with their Lord. On them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve” (Q.2:62 and 5:69 – implying that such categories of people need not fear hostilities from Muslims\(^{324}\)) are abrogated (mansūkh) by verses in Chapter 9 of the Qur’an, and that Muslims are now required to engage in a permanent state of warfare against unbelievers until they embrace Islam or agree to pay the jizya.\(^{325}\) The so-called “verse of the sword” says:

Once the Sacred Months are past, (and they refuse to make peace) you may kill the polytheists when you encounter them, punish them, and resist every move they make. If they repent and observe the formal Prayers (Salat) and give the obligatory charity (Zakat), you shall let them go. Allah is The Forgive, Most Merciful. (Qur’an 9:5)

In other words, it is claimed that after the revelation of Chapter 9, and verse 5 in particular, Muslims can never have peaceful relations with any non-Muslim.

Criteria for a verse to abrogate another verse

The criteria for such abrogation include that the abrogating verse must be revealed after the abrogated verse, the two verses must have legal applications, they are mutually irreconcilable, and there is absolute abandonment of the previous ruling (derived from the earlier revealed verse), irrespective of the case. In other words, the abrogated verse is no longer applicable for a ruling on the subject matter. It is

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\(^{323}\) This argument is the primary basis for the extremist view that combat against Non-Muslims is permitted even if they are not combatants or aggressive.

\(^{324}\) Discussion on the subject of the fate of Non-Muslims in the Hereafter is handled in the relevant sections of the manual for the \textit{Train the Trainers Course in Islam and Dialogue} (produced by the Da’wah Institute of Nigeria), under the topic “Do all Non-Muslims go to Hell, and do all Muslims go to Paradise?”

distinguished from a case of takhsis (specification) in that after a takhsis, a prior ruling is not totally invalid, but rather valid for more specific or narrowly defined cases.  

Qadhi, in his source text (cited above), elucidates that claims of abrogation are only a last resort once all attempts to reconcile two opposing texts have been made. The two verses must oppose each other with no possibility of being valid at the same time. "Therefore, if one of the rulings can apply to a specific case, and the other ruling to a different case, this cannot be considered an example of naskh (abrogation)."

No consensus on abrogated verses

There is no consensus among scholars as to how many verses have been abrogated by others in the Qur’an. Abu Ammaar Yasir Qadhi (1999), for instance, tables the number of abrogated verses mentioned by different scholars, ranging from as many as 214 cases mentioned by Ibn Hazm to as few as 5 cases mentioned by Wali Allah al-Dehlawi. Other scholars insist that there are no cases of abrogation in the Qur’an and all such examples are actually reconcilable cases of qualification or specification (takhsis) and that the chain of abrogation is simply a result of the inability of a particular scholar to reconcile two or more seemingly contradictory verses or texts. Scholars who list high numbers of abrogated verses attribute it to the “Verse of the Sword” (9:5) having abrogated the majority of the verses.

Qur’an 2:190 is not abrogated by any subsequent verse

The verse in question reads, “And fight in the way of Allah those who fight against you, but do not transgress the limits, surely Allah does not love those who exceed the limits” (Q.2:190).

The claim of abrogation of Q.2:190 in particular has been rejected by Ibn ‘Abbas, ‘Umar ibn Abdul-Aziz, Mujahid, and others who assert that it is a firm rule (muhkam),

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327 Ibid., p.237
328 Ibid.
329 Ibid., p.251
331 A legal ruling that is firmly established and that cannot be abrogated.
meaning those who Muslims should fight against are those who are in a state of fighting the community.\textsuperscript{332}

Imam al-Tabari also considers the claim of abrogation of Q.2:190\textsuperscript{333} as not supported by any evidence from the Sunnah at the time Q.9:5 was revealed, and that Q.9:5 is in fact complementing (takhsis) not abrogating (nasikh) Q.2:190. Tabari cites the opinion of a group of scholars that says that the forbiddance of killing those that have not waged war against Muslims is still a rule that is permanently valid – and that “\textit{fa la shay’in...}” (there is nothing that abrogates) the ruling of Q.2:190. He mentions that Umar ibn Abdul-Aziz said those upon whom Muslims should not transgress the limits refers to women, children, and those who have not waged war on the Muslim community. This is furthermore the opinion Tabari holds to be the best of all opinions. He cites Ibn Abbas’ explanation of the verse as follows: “it means do not kill women nor children nor old people nor those that meet you with peace and abstain from fighting you, for if you do so, know that you have transgressed beyond the limits.”\textsuperscript{334}

Al-Razi states that Q.5:69 is not abrogated either,\textsuperscript{335} and Abu Muhammad Makki al-Qaysi states that most jurists agreed with this position.\textsuperscript{336}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{332} See Muhammad ibn Ahmad Al-Qurtubi, \textit{Jami’ Ahkam Al-Qur’an}, Matba’ah Dar al Kutub al Masriyyah, Cairo, 1354/1935, vol.2, p.348
\item \textsuperscript{333} “\textit{And fight in the way of Allah those who fight against you, but do not transgress the limits...}” (Q.2:190).
\item \textsuperscript{334} Al-Tabari, tafsir of Q.2:190 from \textit{Maktab al-Taalib al-Ilm}, Ariss Computers Inc., Beirut, 2002)
\item \textsuperscript{335} \textit{Tafsir al-Kabir}, Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, Beirut, 1990), vol.3, p.98
\item \textsuperscript{336} \textit{Al-Idah li-Nasikh al-Qur’an wa Mansukhuh}, Dar al-Manarah, Jeddah, 1986, p.123
\end{itemize}
Understanding the so-called “verse of the sword”

43. The Qur’an verse 9:5 is claimed by some scholars to have abrogated or nullified the teachings of other verses that preach peaceful co-existence with non-hostile people of other faiths. Does this verse teach unprovoked aggression against non-Muslims?

Verses 1-7 of Surah 9 read:

*Freedom from obligation is herein issued from Allah and His Messenger to the polytheists with whom you have entered into a treaty.* (Verse 1)

Therefore, roam the earth freely for four months, and know that you cannot escape from Allah, and that Allah will disgrace the disbelievers. (Verse 2)

A proclamation is herein issued from Allah and His Messenger to all the people on the great day of pilgrimage, that Allah is free from obligations to the polytheists, and so is His Messenger. Thus, if you repent, it would be better for you. But if you turn away, then know that you can never escape from Allah. And give tidings of a painful torment to those who disbelieve. (Verse 3)

*Except those of the polytheists with whom you have a peace treaty and who have not violated it, nor banded together with others against you, you shall fulfill your treaty with them until the end of its term.* Surely, Allah loves the righteous. (Verse 4)

Once the Sacred Months are past, (and they refuse to make peace) you may kill the polytheists when you encounter them, punish them, and resist every move they make. **If they repent** and observe the formal Prayers (Salat) and give the obligatory charity (Zakat), you shall let them go. Allah is The Forgiver, Most Merciful. (Verse 5)

And if any one of the polytheists seeks your protection, then grant him protection, so that he may hear the Word of Allah, and then escort him to where he can be secure. (Verse 6)

*Exempted are those who have signed a peace treaty with you at the Sacred Masjid. If they honour and uphold such a treaty, you shall uphold it as well. Allah loves the righteous.* (Verse 7)
Verse 8 specifies that the polytheists who Muslims are no longer to trust for peace accords are those who show no respect for treaties or peace agreements, while verse 13 elaborates, “Will you not fight people who violated their oaths (repeatedly), plotted to expel the Messenger, and were the first to attack you?”

The context of the verses makes it clear that verse 5 is referring specifically to those pagan Arabs that violated the terms of their peace treaty and who were bent on exterminating the Muslim community (i.e. those other than the ones who are referred to in verse 4). The ending of Verse 5 and the whole of verse 6, also make it very clear that some of those who fought against the Muslims, may repent and themselves become Muslims (“observing the formal prayers and giving the compulsory zakat”, etc.), while some may still remain polytheists but seek protection from Muslims (Verse 6), which must be granted. This is partly what justifies the interpolation –“(and they refuse to make peace)”- in the translation (or interpretation) of the earlier part of Verse 5 above.337

With specific reference to verses 9:12-13, Sheikh Abdul Rahman as-Sa’di explains that the context was when the Quraysh breached their peace treaty by collaborating with Banu Bakr to attack the pagan tribe of Khuza’ah, the Prophet’s allies.338

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44. What are the commonly misinterpreted verses of the Qur’an relating to Jihad?

The following quotes are mentioned by critics as demonstrative of the Qur’an’s inciting violence against non-Muslims who do not convert to Islam: 339

1) “And fight them until there is no fitnah and religion is for Allah.” (Q.2:193)

   This quote does not report the verse in full, which reads, “And fight them (qātilū hum) until there is no fitnah (oppression) and religion is for Allah, but if they cease, let there be no hostility except to those who practice oppression.” (Q.2:193)

   The explanation of Ibn Umar and Ibn Zubair on the meaning of this verse is that aggressors are to be fought until a Muslim is no longer threatened with killing and arrest on account of his faith. 340 The context of Q.2:190-193 makes it clear that those being fought against are those who are aggressive to Muslims. The phrase “religion is for Allah” means until Allah is worshipped without fear of persecution and none is compelled to bow down before another being. It has never been understood to contradict “No compulsion in religion” (Qur’an 2:256)

2) “Strike terror (into the hearts of) the enemies of Allah and your enemies.” (Q.8:60)

   This quote is an example of selective quoting out of context by some critics of Islam. The entire passage reads, “Let not the disbelievers think that they can get the better (of the believers); they will never frustrate (them, with aggression). Against them, make ready your strength to your utmost power, including steeds of war, to strike terror (into the hearts of) the enemies of Allah and your enemies (too), and others besides whom you may not know but whom Allah does know...But if the enemy incline towards peace, do you (also) incline towards peace, and trust in Allah” (Q.8:59-61). Hence, the context explains that the “enemies” being referred to, and whom believers are to strengthen themselves against, are those already aggressive

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339 These quotes are written here as they appear in the works of critics. Note that in some cases, the quote is actually a misquotation of the Qur’an or misrepresents the message in its context. These will be noted as we proceed.

to them in one way or another and who are attempting to frustrate the community, until they incline towards peace.

The verse enjoins sufficient preparation of resources so that enemies will be psychologically deterred from attacking Muslims, through fear of the consequences.\(^{341}\)

3) **“I will instill terror into the hearts of the disbelievers. Smite ye above their necks and smite all their finger-tips off them. It is not you who slew them, it was Allah.” (Q.8:12-17)**

This quote is not only out of context but omits the full contents of the passage (verses 12-17).\(^{342}\)

The full context reads, “(Remember) when your Lord inspired the angels, ‘Verily, I am with you, so keep firm those who have believed. I shall cast terror into the hearts of those who have disbelieved, so strike them over their necks and smite over all their finger-tips.’ This is because they defied and disbelieved Allah and His Messenger. And whoever defies and disobeys Allah and His Messenger, then verily, Allah is severe in punishment. This is the torment, so taste it, and surely for disbelievers is the torment of the Fire (in the Hereafter). O you who believe, when you meet those who disbelieve advancing on a battlefield, do not turn your backs to them. And whoever turns his back to them on such a day – unless it be a stratagem of war or to retreat to a troop (of believers) – he has indeed drawn upon himself wrath from Allah... You killed them not, but Allah caused them to be killed. And it was not you who cast when you did cast but it was Allah who cast, that He might test the believers by a fair trial from Him... This (is the truth), and surely, Allah weakens the deceitful plots of the disbelievers” (Q.8:12-18).

Even if it is interpreted that the angels physically engaged in combat, verses 15-17 make it clear that it took place in the context of the battlefield (with disbelievers who were present for combat).

4) **“Fight them and Allah will punish them by your hands, cover them with shame.” (Q.9:14)**

\(^{341}\) The “terror” being referred to could, for instance, be through letting others know what weapons are being accumulated to strengthen one’s military capacity.

\(^{342}\) The quote only includes portions of verse 12 and 17 and making it seem as if they follow one another.
Again, the context of the verse explains what is meant: “Will you not fight people who violated their oaths, plotted to expel the Messenger, and were the first to attack you? Do you fear them? No, it is Allah who you should more justly fear if you believe. Fight them, and Allah will punish them by your hands, cover them with shame, help you (to victory) over them, heal the hearts of believers.” (Q.9:13-14).

Here, Allah is consoling the fear of the believers who have been persecuted and oppressed on account of their faith for a long time, and encourages them to fight back, knowing that He will aid them to victory and security.

5) “Fight the disbelievers... let them find harshness in you, and know that Allah is with those who fear Him.” (Q.9:123)

This quote conveniently omits the portion of the verse which explains which disbelievers are to be fought against. The entire verse reads, “O you who believe, fight the disbelievers who are surrounding you; let them find harshness (or firmness\textsuperscript{343}) in you, and know that Allah is with those who are God-conscious (have taqwa).”

This verse, similar to the previous one, is meant to give courage to the believers against those who are preparing to attack them, with the reassurance that Allah is with those who are pious.

Fighting, in all such cases, was not on account of non-Islamic faith per se, but on account of the aggression and treachery initiated by certain groups. Muhammad Asad notes that “all Islamic jurists, without any exception hold that forcible conversion is under all circumstances null and void, and that any attempt at coercing a non-believer to accept the faith of Islam is a grievous sin”.\textsuperscript{344}

\textsuperscript{343} “…and let them find you adamant …” i.e. “Uncompromising with regard to ethical principles” (Muhammad Asad’s translation and commentary, p.285, n.163 to Q9:123)

\textsuperscript{344} Muhammad Asad, The Message of the Qur’an, Dar al-Andalus, Gibraltar, 1980, p.58, n.249 to Q.2:256
45. What are the commonly misinterpreted hadiths on the topic of jihad?

The following hadith have also been misinterpreted to suggest that Islam should be spread by force:

1) “I have been ordered to fight the people until they say, ‘There is none worthy of worship but God.’”

The Arabic word in this hadith is not “qatḥ” (“fight” or “kill”) but “qaṭṭal,” which means “to fight back” — a meaning more ambiguous than qatḥ which implies proactivity and taking the first initiative. The word “qaṭṭal” implies reciprocity, and thus may not be used for a scenario where one initiates attack without provocation. This act of fighting with a people may also not contradict the injunctions of the Qur’an on the type of people to be fought, the specific exemptions mentioned in Q.2:193, 9:4-7, 4:90 and others like them (all of which should be read in their contexts), as well as the example of the Prophet ﷺ.

The second aspect of this hadith conveys the sacredness of the declaration of faith in One God, since it is one of the means (and not the only means!) to cease fighting. This understanding has also been demonstrated by the Prophet ﷺ in other hadith where he chastised a believer for killing an enemy in battle after the enemy uttered the declaration of faith on the brink of being defeated.

Like any other hadith or verse of the Qur’an, the hadith under consideration cannot be interpreted outside the context of the whole Qur’an and Sunnah, neglecting other explicit statements in the Qur’an and hadith on this issue, and

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346 Even those who interpret the above hadith as permitting aggression towards polytheists restrict it to only the pagan Arabs who, at the time of the Prophet (ﷺ), were notorious for breaking their treaties and continuously fighting and conspiring against the Muslim community. This is based on the understanding that the fighting enjoined in Q.9:5 was only in respect of aggressive polytheist Arabs, and thus not applicable to non-Arab polytheists, “People of the Book”, Sabians, etc. (See Louay Safi, Peace and the Limits of War: Transcending Classical Conception of Jihad, IIIT, Herndon, USA, 2001, pp.12-15, citing authorities such as Abu Hanifa, al-Shafi‘i, Malik, and Abu Yusuf).

347 Other means to cease fighting include: surrendering or seeking peace (Q8:61, 2:193), seeking Muslim protection (Q.5:6), becoming a citizen and paying the jizyah or military exemption tax (Q9:29), etc.
disregarding the rules of interpretation (tafâsîr) of religious texts. Furthermore, it would be wrong to try and conclude that this hadith (or any other hadith) abrogates any of the verses of the Qur’an on this topic. “There is no compulsion in religion” (Q2:256)

2) “A party of my community shall not cease fighting for truth and it shall be triumphant over its opponents.”

The commentary of the great Hadith Scholar, Imam An-Nawawi on this hadith states, “This party consists of different classes of the faithful, of them being the brave fighters, and the jurists, and the collectors of hadith, and the zuhad (those who abstain from worldly lusts and devote themselves to the service of Allah), and those who command the doing of good and prohibit evil, and a variety of other people who do other good deeds.” This commentary elaborates that the fighting for truth mentioned by the hadith is not restricted to the battlefield but indeed refers to any form of benefit to Islam and humanity.

3) “Paradise is under the shade of swords.”

The hadith in full assists in clarifying its meaning: “Do not wish to meet the enemy, and ask Allah for safety; but when you face the enemy, be patient, and remember that Paradise is under the shade of swords.” This hadith, rather than encouraging warfare, discourages believers from seeking it. However, it reassures them that if it becomes unavoidable and one gets killed by the sword, then Paradise is the reward of a martyr.

The battles fought during the lifetime of the Prophet were in defence of the young Islamic State against the pagan forces of Arabia who tried to destroy it, and the surrounding imperial powers. For twenty years, the fledgling Muslim community had patiently undergone torturous persecution. When the strategy of non-violence was no longer bearable (and the threat of physical extermination became imminent), the early Muslim community was granted the permission to fight to protect themselves and their freedom to maintain an Islamic state.

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348 Abu Dawood
349 Awn al-Ma’bud
350 Sahih al-Bukhari (Abridged), vol.4, no.73
CONCLUSION

Islam has encouraged relations between Muslims and people of other faiths to be one of respect and kindness, as practiced by the Prophet ﷺ throughout his mission. Allah has given Muslims a responsibility to be witnesses unto mankind (shuhada ‘ala al-nas Q.2:143), and the best nation raised for mankind (Q.3:110), through their example of goodness (birr) and God-consciousness (taqwa) (Q.2:177, 189, 44; 3:92; 58:9). In this manner, a Muslim should make his relationship with non-Muslims conducive for better mutual understanding, enlightenment and cooperation, just as he would with a Muslim. However, a Muslim should not allow the desire for building better relations with people of other faiths to undermine his/her relationship with God and Islamic ideals of justice, compassion and commitment to truth. Muslims should safeguard their faith and pursue their own moral and spiritual development, since Allah has warned in Qur’an 5:48-49, that:

“...Unto every one of you have We appointed a (different) law (Shari’ah) and way of life (minhaj). And if God had so willed, He could surely have made you all one single community, but (He willed it otherwise) in order to test you by means of what he has bestowed unto you. Compete, then, with one another in doing good works! Unto God you all must return; and then he will make you truly understand all that on which you differed. Hence, judge between the followers of earlier revelation in accordance with what God has bestowed from on high, and do not follow their errant views; and beware of them lest they tempt you away from any other than that which God has bestowed from on high upon you...” \(^{351}\)

Hence, while Islam respects other people’s right to follow their own faiths, and “there is no compulsion in religion”, Muslims are cautioned to hold strongly to their faith, and not turn away from submission to Allah’s Will and final guidance to mankind as contained in the message of the last Prophet, Muhammad ﷺ.

\(^{351}\) Similar warnings are also given in the Qur’an regarding others, besides Jews and Christians, who would like Muslims to follow their form of religion or moral law. The Qur’an warns faithful Muslims about Muslim hypocrites (Munafiqun) in Qur’an 4:89: “They (Muslim hypocrites) would love to see you deny the Truth even as they have denied it, so that you should be like them.” In Q.109:1-6, Muslims are told regarding those bent on denying His truth (Kafirun) to: “Say: ‘O you who deny the truth! I do not worship that which you worship, and neither do you worship that which I worship. And I will not worship that which you have (ever) worshipped, and neither will you (ever) worship that which I worship. Unto you, your religion, and unto me mine!’”
However, those who insist that Islam forbids showing kindness to peaceful non-Muslims would do well to remember Allah’s explicit words: “As for those (unbelievers) who do not fight against you on account of (your) faith, nor drive you out of your homelands, God does not forbid you to show them kindness and to deal with them with fairness and equity...” (Q.60:8-9).
ABOUT THE BOOK

Who are the Ahl al-Kitab (People of Earlier Scriptures)? Do they still exist today? Should Muslims be friendly with people of other faiths? Should they be welcomed into the mosque? Can Muslims visit churches, etc.? Can Muslims visit, host and dine with people of other faiths? Should Muslims give charity (including zakat) to non-Muslims? What about interfaith marriages and inheritance? What of cooperation in defence and security services?

This book examines the various Islamic textual provisions on various aspects of interfaith relations. It also responds to faith-based arguments used by some Muslims to justify hostility and aggression towards peace-loving non-Muslims. Some of these arguments are used by various extremist groups for “bridge-burning” to undermine interfaith peace-building efforts between Muslims and other religious communities. It thus provides a reference point for Muslim individuals and community leaders, Imams, da’wah activists, students and researchers, mosque committees and Islamic organizations involved or interested in interfaith dialogue and peace-building with people of other faiths.

While scholars (Muslims and others) throughout the ages have maintained diverse views and interpretations of certain religious texts that pertain to interfaith relations, some of these perspectives seem to be more appropriate to their contexts. This book tries to present those opinions held by Muslim scholars and jurists, both past and present, which are probably more appropriate and relevant to our contemporary pluralistic context.

The book thus stresses that mutual understanding and peaceful co-existence are essential for societal advancement, and that these ideals are part of the fundamental objectives and teachings of the Qur’an and the traditions of Prophet Muhammad.