

## Muslims and the People of the Book

What follows are some selections from the Qur'an and from the life of Muhammad that bear on the relationship between Muslims and "the People of the Book" (i.e., Jews and Christians).

### Selections from the Qur'an

The following passages are all taken from *The Koran Interpreted: A Translation* by A. J. Arberry.

"And they say, 'None shall enter Paradise except that they be Jews or Christians.' Such are their fancies. Say: 'Produce your proof, if you speak truly.' Nay, but whosoever submits his will to God, being a good-doer, his wage is with his Lord, and no fear shall be on them, neither shall they sorrow. The Jews say, 'The Christians stand not on anything'; the Christians say, 'The Jews stand not on anything'; yet they recite the Book. So too the ignorant say the like of them. God shall decide between them on the Day of Resurrection touching their differences." (Qur'an 2:111-113)

"Never will the Jews be satisfied with thee, neither the Christians, not till thou followest their religion. Say: 'God's guidance is the true guidance.' If thou followest their caprices, after the knowledge that has come to thee, thou shalt have against God neither protector nor helper. Those to whom We have given the Book and who recite it with true recitation, they believe in it; and whoso disbelieves in it, they shall be the losers." (Qur'an 2:120-121)

"No compulsion is there in religion. Rectitude has become clear from error. So whosoever disbelieves in idols and believes in God, has laid hold of the most firm handle, unbreaking; God is All-hearing, All-knowing." (Qur'an 2:256)

"People of the Book! Why do you dispute concerning Abraham? The Torah was not sent down, neither the Gospel, but after him. What, have you no reason? Ha, you are the ones who dispute on what you know; why then dispute you touching a matter of which you know not anything? God knows, and you know not. No; Abraham in truth was not a Jew, neither a Christian; but he was a Muslim and one pure of faith; certainly he was never of the idolaters. Surely the people standing closest to Abraham are those who followed him, and this Prophet, and those who believe; and God is the Protector of the believers." (Qur'an 3:65-68)

"Say: 'We believe in God, and that which has been sent down on us, and sent down on Abraham and Ishmael, Isaac and Jacob, and the Tribes, and in that which was given to Moses and Jesus, and the Prophets, of their Lord; we make no division between any of them, and to Him we surrender.'" (Qur'an 3:84)

"Yet they are not all alike; some of the People of the Book are a nation upstanding, that recite God's signs in the watches of the night, bowing themselves, believing in God and

in the Last Day, bidding to honour and forbidding dishonour, vying one with the other in good works; those are of the righteous. And whatsoever good you do, you shall not be denied the just reward of it; and God knows the godfearing.” (Qur’an 3:113-115)

“So, for their breaking the compact, and disbelieving in the signs of God, and slaying the Prophets without right, and for their saying, ‘Our hearts are uncircumcised’ -- nay, but God sealed them for their unbelief, so they believe not, except a few -- and for their unbelief, and their uttering against Mary a mighty calumny, and for their saying, ‘We slew the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, the Messenger of God’ -- yet they did not slay him, neither crucified him, only a likeness of that was shown to them. Those who are at variance concerning him surely are in doubt regarding him; they have no knowledge of him, except the following of surmise; and they slew him not of a certainty -- no indeed; God raised him up to Him; God is All-mighty, All-wise. There is not one of the People of the Book but will assuredly believe in him before his death, and on the Resurrection Day he will be a witness against them.” (Qur’an 4:155-159)

“People of the Book, go not beyond the bounds in your religion, and say not as to God but the truth. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only the Messenger of God, and His Word that He committed to Mary, and a Spirit from Him. So believe in God and His Messengers, and say not, ‘Three.’ Refrain; better is it for you. God is only One God. Glory be to Him -- That He should have a son! To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and in the earth; God suffices for a guardian. The Messiah will not disdain to be a servant of God, neither the angels who are near stationed to Him. Whosoever disdains to serve Him, and waxes proud, He will assuredly muster them to Him, all of them.” (Qur’an 4:171-172)

“And We have sent down to thee the Book with the truth, confirming the Book that was before it, and assuring it. So judge between them according to what God has sent down, and do not follow their caprices, to forsake the truth that has come to thee. To every one of you We have appointed a right way and an open road. If God had willed, He would have made you one nation; but that He may try you in what has come to you. So be you forward in good works; unto God shall you return, all together; and He will tell you of that whereon you were at variance.” (Qur’an 5:48)

“O believers, take not Jews and Christians as friends [or “allies”, “protectors”]; they are friends of each other. Whoso of you makes them his friends is one of them. God guides not the people of the evildoers.” (Qur’an 5:51)

“Say: ‘People of the Book, you do not stand on anything, until you perform the Torah and the Gospel, and what was sent down to you from your Lord.’ And what has been sent down to thee from thy Lord will surely increase many of them in insolence and unbelief; so grieve not for the people of the unbelievers. Surely they that believe, and those of Jewry, and the Sabaeans, and those Christians, whosoever believes in God and the Last Day, and works righteousness -- no fear shall be on them, neither shall they sorrow.” (Qur’an 5:68-69)

“Thou wilt surely find the most hostile of men to the believers are the Jews and the idolaters; and thou wilt surely find the nearest of them in love to the believers are those who say ‘We are Christians’; that, because some of them are priests and monks, and they wax not proud; and when they hear what has been sent down to the Messenger, thou seest their eyes overflow with tears because of the truth they recognize. They say, ‘Our Lord, we believe; so do Thou write us down among the witnesses. Why should we not believe in God and the truth that has come to us, and be eager that our Lord should admit us with the righteous people?’ And God rewards them for what they say with gardens underneath which rivers flow, therein dwelling forever; that is the recompense of the good-doers.” (Qur’an 5:82-85)

“The Jews say, ‘Ezra is the Son of God’; the Christians say, ‘The Messiah is the Son of God.’ That is the utterance of their mouths, conforming with the unbelievers before them. God assail them! How they are perverted! They have taken their rabbis and their monks as lords apart from God, and the Messiah, Mary’s son -- and they were commanded to serve but One God; there is no god but He; glory be to Him, above that they associate -- desiring to extinguish with their mouths God’s light; and God refuses but to perfect His light, though the unbelievers be averse. It is He who has sent His Messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth, that He may uplift it above every religion, though the unbelievers be averse. O believers, many of the rabbis and monks indeed consume the goods of the people in vanity and bar from God’s way. Those who treasure up gold and silver, and do not expend them in the way of God -- give them the good tidings of a painful chastisement, the day they shall be heated in the fire of Gehenna and therewith their foreheads and their sides and their backs shall be branded: ‘This is the thing you have treasured up for yourselves; therefore taste you now what you were treasuring!’” (Qur’an 9:30-35)

“Every nation has its Messenger; then, when their Messenger comes, justly the issue is decided between them, and they are not wronged.” (Qur’an 10:47)

“And We have sent no Messenger save with the tongue of his people, that he might make all clear to them; then God leads astray whomsoever He will, and He guides whomsoever He will; and He is the All-mighty, the All-wise.” (Qur’an 14:4)

“Leave is given to those who fight because they were wronged -- surely God is able to help them -- who were expelled from their habitations without right, except that they say ‘Our Lord is God.’ Had God not driven back the people, some by the means of others, there had been destroyed cloisters and churches, oratories and mosques, wherein God’s Name is much mentioned. Assuredly God will help him who helps Him -- surely God is All-strong, All-mighty -- who, if We establish them in the land, perform the prayer, and pay the alms, and bid to honour, and forbid dishonour; and unto God belongs the issue of all affairs.” (Qur’an 22:39-41)

“Recite what has been revealed to thee of the Book, and perform the prayer; prayer forbids indecency and dishonour. God’s remembrance is greater; and God knows the things you work. Dispute not with the People of the Book save in the fairer manner,

except for those of them that do wrong; and say, ‘We believe in what has been sent down to us, and what has been sent down to you; our God and your God is One, and to Him we have surrendered.’” (Qur’an 29:45-46)

“O mankind, We have created you male and female, and appointed you races and tribes, that you may know one another. Surely the noblest among you in the sight of God is the most godfearing of you. God is All-knowing, All-aware.” (Qur’an 49:13)

### **Selections from the Life of Muhammad**

The following chapters are excerpted from *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* by Martin Lings:

Chapters 1, 10, 26, 27, 38, 39, 46, 60, and 61.

These chapters cover a wide chronological range:

Chapter 1 points back to the time of Abraham.

Chapter 10 tells a story from Muhammad’s childhood.

Chapters 26 and 27 are from the early history of the Islamic community, when Muslims were suffering persecution in Mecca.

Chapters 38 and 39 speak to the pivotal moment in Islamic history when Muhammad and his community fled persecution in Mecca and relocated to Yathrib (Medina), where they were welcomed by the Arab tribes of Aws and Khazraj.

Chapters 46, 60, and 61 date from a long period of warfare in which the Muslims in Yathrib were embattled by the Arabs of Mecca (the Quraysh) and their allies. This period also exposed tensions between the Muslim community and the Jewish tribes in and around Yathrib (the Bani Qaynuqah and the Bani Qurayzah).