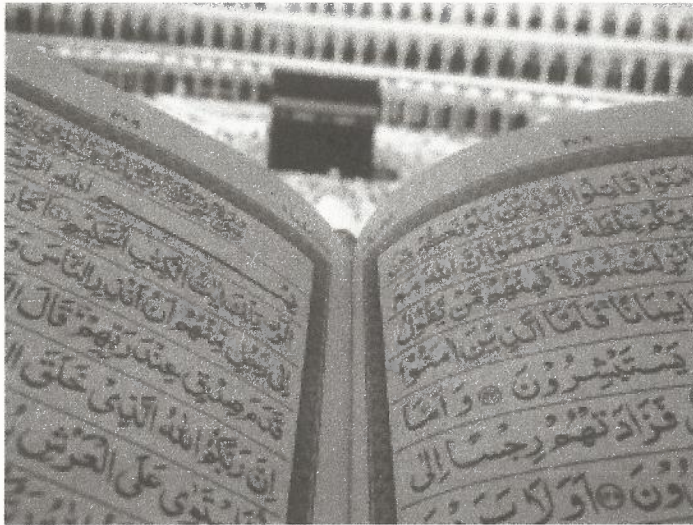


Don't Take Jews and Christians as Friends?

Posted By [Dr. Stephen M. Kirby](#) On May 11, 2015 @ 12:25 am In [Daily Mailer,FrontPage](#) | [3 Comments](#)



[1]Some claim that Chapter 5, Verse 51 of the Koran prohibits Muslims from being friends with Jews and Christians. Others claim that there are various ways of interpreting this verse, and that this verse is only advising Muslims not to take Jews and Christians as, for example, legal or spiritual advisers. Because the Koran is considered the timeless Word of Allah to be followed by Muslims, let's see which claim is supported by Islamic doctrine.

The Koran

Since most Muslims do not speak Arabic, the Koran has been translated into numerous languages to help Muslims learn about their faith. Since it is

blasphemy to provide an incorrect translation of the meaning of a Koran verse, there is a tremendous burden on the shoulders of the translator to make sure the translation accurately reflects the Arabic verse. With this in mind, let's look at how 5:51 has been translated into English by Muslim scholars in five different modern translations of the Koran:

O you who believe! Take not the Jews and the Christians as Auliya' (friends, protectors, helpers), they are but Auliya' of each other. And if any amongst you takes them as Auliya', then surely, he is one of them. Verily, Allah guides not those people who are the Zalimun (polytheists and wrongdoers and unjust).

Interpretation of the Meanings of The Noble Qur'an, trans. Khan and Al-Hilali (2007)

O ye who believe! Take not the Jews and the Christians for friends. They are friends one to another. He among you who taketh them for friends is (one) of them. Lo! Allah guideth not wrongdoing folk.

The Meaning of the Glorious Koran, trans. Marmaduke Pickthall (1930; rpt. 1992)

You who believe! do [sic] not take the Jews and Christians as your friends; they are the friends of one another. Any of you who takes [sic] them as friends is one of them. Allah does not guide wrongdoing people.

The Noble Qur'an: A New Rendering of its Meaning in English, trans. Abdalhaqq and Aisha Bewley (2011)

O ye who believe! take [sic] not the Jews and the Christians for your friends and protectors: They are but friends and protectors to each other. And he amongst you that turns to them (for friendship) is of them. Verily Allah guideth not a people unjust.

The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an, trans. Abdullah Yusuf Ali (2010)

For some years the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) has been distributing a particular translation of the Koran at no charge. This translation was done by Muhammad Asad, and here is how he translated 5:51:

O YOU who have attained to faith! Do not take the Jews and the Christians for your allies: they are but allies of one another – and whoever of you allies himself with them becomes, verily, one of them; behold, God does not guide such evildoers.

The Message of the Qur'an, trans. Muhammad Asad (2003)

In Footnote 72 for this verse, Asad explained that "allies" meant "friendship":

According to most of the commentators (e.g. Tabari), this means that each of these two communities extends genuine friendship only to its own adherents – i.e., the Jews to the Jews, and the Christians to the Christians – and cannot, therefore, be expected to be really friendly towards the followers of the Qur'an.

The Koran Commentaries (Tafsirs)

Asad referred to *commentators* who have provided an explanation for this verse. Asad is referring to authoritative Islamic scholars who have written commentaries (*tafsirs*) on the Koran that Muslims have used for centuries to understand the meaning of each verse. So let's see how some of those authoritative scholars have explained 5:51.

In a section titled *The Prohibition of Taking the Jews, Christians and Enemies of Islam as Friends*, Ibn Kathir explained this verse by pointing out that,

Allah forbids His believing servants from having Jews and Christians as friends, because they are the enemies of Islam and its people, may Allah curse them. Allah then states that they are friends of each other and He gives a warning threat to those who do this, And if any among you befriends them, then surely he is one of them.

Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Vol. 3, p. 204

The *Tafsir Al-Jalalayn* (p. 256) explained that this verse meant Muslims were not to join Jews and Christians "in mutual friendship and love," or "in their unbelief."

The *Tafsir Ibn 'Abbas* (p. 143) stated that Muslims who take Jews and Christians as friends are "not included in Allah's protection and safety."

One might point out that these three *tafsirs* were written centuries ago, and then make the claim that the understanding of this verse has surely been "modernized." So let's look at two, more recent *tafsirs*.

The *Tafsir as-Sa'di* was written in the early 20th century. Here is how 5:51 is explained:

Allah, while describing to His believing servants the ignorant condition and unethical demeanor of the Jews and the Christians, orders them to not maintain alliance with them. This is because the Christians and the Jews aid one another and are united in their opposition of others. You should not make them your allies; rather, they are your enemies and they care not the least concerning your loss; they will leave no stone unturned to misguide you. Only a person who is like them will make alliance with them.

Tafsir as-Sa'di, Vol. 1, p. 512

The *Tafsir Ahsanul-Bayan* was first published on 1995; here is how this *tafsir* explained 5:51:

The verse forbids Muslims to keep intimate relations with them and take them as protectors and helpers, because they are the enemies of Allah, the Muslims, and Islam. It should be noted that those who take them as protectors and helpers will be considered among them.

Tafsir Ahsanul-Bayan, Vol. 1, p. 616

So here we have five authoritative *tafsirs* joining together in explaining that 5:51 prohibits

Muslims from being friends with Jews and Christians; and in the context of this verse, three of these *tafsirs* (including the two most modern) specifically refer to Jews and Christians as the *enemies* of Islam.

Additional Evidence

The idea that Muslims should not take Jews and Christians as friends is reinforced in the following verses of the Koran:

Chapter 5, Verse 82

Verily, you will find the strongest among men in enmity to the believers (Muslims) the Jews...

Chapter 9, Verse 29

Fight against those who believe not in Allah, nor in the Last Day, nor forbid that which has been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger (Muhammad), and those who acknowledge not the religion of truth (i.e. Islam) among the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians), until they pay the Jizyah with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued.

Chapter 98, Verse 6

Verily, those who disbelieve (in the religion of Islam, the Qu'ran and Prophet Muhammad) from among the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) and Al-Mushrikun, will abide in the fire of Hell. They are the worst of creatures.

These ill-feelings towards Jews and Christians were repeated in teachings of Muhammad, e.g.:

Abu Huraira reported that Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) had said: Do not greet the Jews and the Christians before they greet you and when you meet any one of them on the roads force him to go to the narrowest part of it.

Sahih Muslim, No. 2167

Narrated Abu Hurairah: Allah's Messenger said, "The Hour will not be established until you fight against the Jews, and the stone behind which a Jew will be hiding will say, 'O Muslim! There is a Jew hiding behind me, so kill him.'"

Sahih Al-Bukhari, No. 2926

Muhammad even said that Jews and Christians would take the place of Muslims in Hell:

Abu Burda reported on the authority of his father that Allah's Apostle (may peace be upon him) said: No Muslim would die but Allah would admit instead of him a Jew or a Christian in Hell-Fire.

Sahih Muslim, No. 2767R1

And on his death bed Muhammad had this to say regarding Jews and Christians:

It has been narrated by 'Umar b. Al-Khattab that he heard the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) saying: I will expel the Jews and Christians from the Arabian Peninsula and will not leave any but Muslims.

Sahih Muslim, No. 1767

Conclusion

In 5:51 Allah commands Muslims not to be friends with Jews and Christians. This understanding is supported by five modern translations of the Koran; the message of additional verses of the Koran; five authoritative *tafsirs*, written at different times between circa 900-1995 AD; and the teachings of Muhammad.

But what about Muslims who appear to be friends with Jews and Christians in defiance of Allah's timeless command? There are a number of explanations:

1. In reality they might be following another command of Allah: Chapter 3, Verse 28 of the Koran allows Muslims to pretend to be friends with non-Muslims if those Muslims live in a non-Muslim society and fear for their safety.
2. They might just decide they can actively deny certain verses in the Koran. But Muhammad had a warning about this:

It was narrated from Ibn 'Abbas that the Messenger of Allah said: "Whoever denies a Verse of the Qur'an, it is permissible to strike his neck (i.e. execute him)..."

Sunan Ibn Majah, No. 2539

3. They might just use their own personal opinion in re-interpreting the commands of Allah. But Muhammad had a warning about this too:

Muhammad bin Jarir reported that Ibn 'Abbas said that the Prophet said, 'Whoever explains the Qur'an with his opinion or with what he has no knowledge of, then let him assume his seat in the Fire.'

Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Vol. 1, pp. 32-33

4. Or they might just simply decide to passively ignore this timeless command from Allah.

Keep in mind that denying or ignoring a doctrine does not mean that doctrine is no longer valid. 5:51 is a valid part of Islamic doctrine and has been so since the 7th century. And anytime a wayward Muslim wants to, he can return to that doctrine.

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