

Don't Take Jews and Christians as Friends?

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 there is no doctrinal conflict if Muslims become friends with Jews and Christians. Since the Koran is considered the unchangeable Word of Allah to be followed by Muslims, this subject is worth examining.

Let's look at how 5:51 has been translated in various Korans. Here is the translation of the entire verse from *The Noble Qur'an*, published by Darussalam publishers in Saudi Arabia:

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).

Here are two other translations of the first part of that verse:

O ye who believe! Take not the Jews and the Christians for friends. They are friends one to another.

The Meaning of the Glorious Koran,
trans. Marmaduke Pickthall



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.

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

Ali explained the verse in this manner:

That is, look not to them for help and comfort. They are more likely to combine against you than to help you.

The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an, p. 61

For some years the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) has been distributing a particular translation of the Koran for free. 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...

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

Here is how Asad explained this verse:

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 Message of the Qur'an, n. 72, p.
179

Koran Commentaries

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.

The *Tafsir 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.

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."

But They're Outdated!

Someone may point out that the above *tafsirs* were written centuries ago, and then claim that the interpretation of 5:51 has surely been "modernized." So let's look at two modern *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... they are your enemies...

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

The *Tafsir Ahsanul-Bayan* was first published in 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.

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

The Enemies of Islam

So here we have five authoritative *tafsirs*, written at different times between circa 900-1995 AD, joining together in explaining that 5:51 prohibits Muslims from being friends with Jews and Christians. And in explaining this verse, three of these *tafsirs* (including the two written in the 20th century) specifically refer to Jews and Christians as the enemies of Islam.

In the context of Islamic doctrine, it is plain to see that Muslims are prohibited from being friends with non-Muslims, especially Jews and Christians. And even though a particular Muslim might not appear to adhere to this doctrine at the moment, it is still valid Islamic

doctrine and has been so for 1400 years. And anytime a Muslim wants to, he can return to that doctrine.

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...

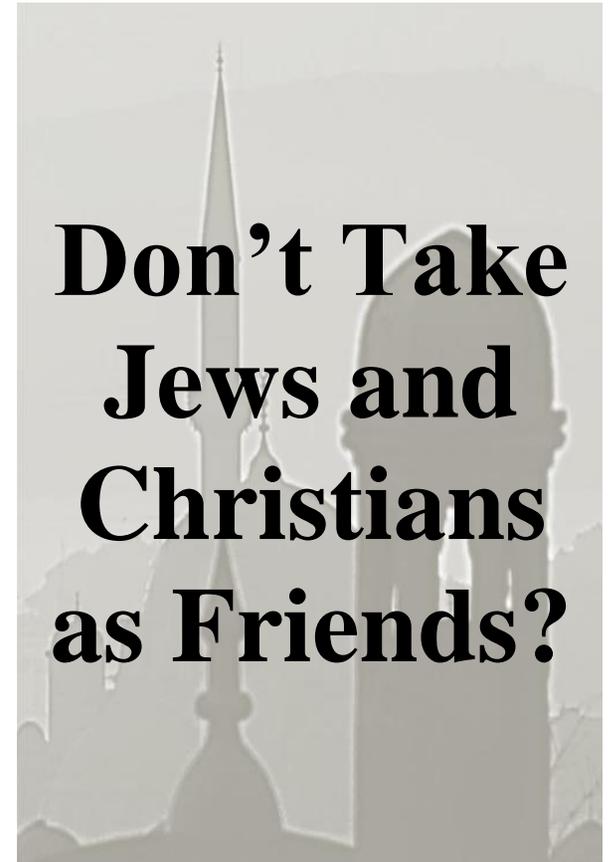
Chapter 98, Verse 6

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.

But What about Muslims who have Jews and Christians as Friends?

This question is answered in the brochure *Islam Teaches Personal Deception?*

Dr. Kirby is the author of five books on Islam. His latest book is *The Lure of Fantasy Islam: Exposing the Myths and Myth Makers*. His books are available on Amazon.com.



Part of a series on Islam

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