

3:64

Say: "O People of the Book! come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, Lords and patrons other than Allah." If then they turn back, say ye: "Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims (bowing to Allah's Will).

According to Tafsir Ibn Abbas,

After this, Allah invited them to accept Allah's divine Oneness, saying: (Say: O People of the Scripture. Come to an agreement) the agreement is: there is no god except Allah (between us and you: that we shall worship none but Allah) we shall declare Allah as the only One God, (and that we shall ascribe no partners unto Him) from among created beings, (and that none of us shall take others for lords beside Allah) that none of us shall obey another person in that which involves a transgression against Allah. (And if they turn away) and refuse to accept Allah's divine Oneness, (then say: Bear witness) know (that we are they who have surrendered (unto Him)) and acknowledge His divine Oneness and worship Him

References:

[1] Abbas Ibn Abdullah. (2007). (p. 62).

<https://www.altafsir.com/Books/IbnAbbas.pdf>

2:4 And who believe in what has been revealed to you, and what was revealed before you

Surah al Baqarah Verse 4 (Quran 2:4):

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ وَبِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ ﴿٤﴾

And who believe in what has been revealed to you, [O Muhammad],

and what was revealed before you, and of the Hereafter they are certain [in faith].

The following excerpt is taken from "Dawat ul Quran" surah 2 note #9:

"That is: those people are above all the group, national, regional, geographical and racial prejudices. They do not discriminate among the Books revealed by God, so that one book is acceptable and the other is not. They accept all the Divine Books as true, whether they might have been revealed to their own prophet or to the prophets of other communities. But those who do not believe in the guidance from Allah, or those who accept the Book which was revealed to the prophet of their own community or race only will not be able to seek guidance from the Quran.

Jews had accepted Torah, the Book which was revealed to prophet Moosa (Moses) as the Divine Book, but they refused to accept as divine books the Bible, which was revealed to Prophet Issa (Jesus) and the Quran which was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Similarly, Christians had recognized Torah and the Bible as the Revealed Books, but did not recognize Quran as one. The Quran teaches its followers to rise above all prejudices and believe in the Torah, Injeel (Bible) and the Quran and in all other Books revealed to other prophets as Divine Books."

3:23 Muslims are allowed to follow earlier scripts except for what is abrogated by Islam

Hast thou not turned Thy vision to those who have been given a portion of the Book?

They are invited to the Book of Allah, to settle their dispute, but a party of them Turn back and decline (The arbitration).

Asad writes,

“Lit., “decide between them” – the reference being to the Torah.” (pg. 96)

According to the Study Quran,

“Al-Qurtubi notes that Muslims can read and act according to the Torah, except for whatever is known to be abrogated by the Quran or hadith, and that they are obligated to act in accord with the religious laws of previous prophets (an observation he repeats in his treatment of 5:43) unless these laws are abrogated by Islam. However, for al-Qurtubi this would have been conditional upon the text being authentic, and although the Prophet would have known what was authentic, we cannot do likewise.

Although tempered by questions of abrogation (naskh; see 2:106) and distortion (tarif; see 2:75), this verse and 5:43 can be seen to suggest, together with the Prophet’s actions, the continuing religious validity and spiritual efficacy of previous scriptures for the followers of those religions.”

Who are ‘People of the Book’?
The following is taken from “Ahl al Kitab in the Quran

An Analysis of Selected Classical and Modern Exegesis” by Jarot Wahyudi pg. 26-37:

The basic question of who the People of the Book are, is a subject that has been debated by Muslim scholars throughout Islamic history. Some scholars state that People of the Book are Jews and Christians as recipients of earlier revealed books, the Torah and the Gospel; while others prefer to extend ahl al-kitab to include the Sibiün and the Majüs as well. A clue suggesting the inclusion of the Sabeans as ahl al kitab can be found in surat al-Hajj (22): 17, where people are divided into the following six groups: those who believe, those who follow the Jewish faith, the Sabeans, the Christians, the Magians (al-Majus), and those who adhere to polytheism. Some commentators have interpreted al-Majus simply

to be another reference to those who adhere to polytheism. But this is an obvious error, considering that the two expressions are separated by the words *wa-ladhIna*, which shows that Magians are clearly distinct from the polytheists. The phrasing also suggests that, when God examines the various forms of faith on the Day of Judgment, they will be on an equal footing with the previously mentioned groups.

Most Qur'anic exegetes commenting on surat al-Ma'idah (5):6 identify the People of the Book as those with whom Muslims could consume food or from among whom Muslims could choose a bride. Muslims' opinions regarding this verse's depiction of the People of the Book may be divided into three main approaches. Imâm al-Shafi', for example, states that the verse denotes only the descendants of Israelite Jews and Christians, because Moses and Jesus were sent only to their own nations and not to others. This argument is supported by the use of the term *min qablikum* ("those who received Scripture before you") to denote those nations whose women could be taken in marriage by Muslims. Al-Shafi's opinion, however, differs from that of Imam Abü Hanifah as well as that of the majority of Islamic jurists who say that whoever believes in a prophet or a Book revealed by God is included among the People of the Book, and not just Jews and Christians. It follows then that a group of people who believe only in the *Suhuf* of Ibrahim, or the *Zabur* revealed to Dawûd, may logically be regarded as People of the Book.

A third view is put forward by a minority of classical Muslim scholars who insist that any community which one supposes to possess scripture can be regarded as People of the Book – for example the *Majüs*. This third argument is, according to al-Mawdudi, expanded by some modern Muslim scholars, to the point where the adherents of Buddhism and Hinduism can be regarded as People of the Book. Ibn Kathir informs us that Abu Thawr Ibrahim b. Khiilid ai-Kalbi (d.860), the loyal follower of Shiifi' and Atunad

b. Ijfanbal, states that the meat slaughtered by the Majüs may lawfully be consumed and that Muslims are permitted to marry their women.

The most detailed treatment of this matter is found in Rashid Rida's *Tafsir al-Manar*. According to Muhammad Quraish Shihab, Rida was asked by a Javanese (Indonesian) Muslim what the law was concerning marriage to the pagan women of China, as well as the permissibility of eating the meat of animals slaughtered by Chinese butchers. To answer these questions, Rida examined many transmissions (*riwayat*) on the authority of the Prophet's Companions and those who followed, the rules of Islamic jurisprudence, the linguistic construction of the Qur'anic verses and the previous opinions of Muslim scholars. He came to the conclusion that Muslim men are not allowed to marry women who are unbelievers, as stated in surat al-Baqarah (2):221. Nevertheless, he explains, the Majus, Sabians and the Indian idolaters, Chinese and others like them, may be regarded as People of the Book. Rashid Rida further explains that *ahl al kitab* is not a term limited to Jews and Christians, but includes *Sabi'iin* and Majus, Hindus, Buddhists and Confucianists. He argues that the Qur'an mentions the *Sabi'iin* and Majus, but not the Brahmans (Hindus), Buddhists and Confucians, because the former were known to the Arabs of Iraq and of Bahrayn. The latter were far from Arab lands. The Arabs themselves had not yet traveled to India, Japan or China. In the interest of avoiding a strange statement (*ighrab*), this verse does not mention those religions of which the Arabs were not yet aware. Historically, the Muslims levied a poll-tax on the *ahl al-kitabi* including the Majus of Bahrayn, Hajar and Persia, as stated in the hadith collection of Bukhari and Muslim. Imam Ahmad, al-Bukhari, Abü Dawüd, and al Tirmidhi inform us that the Prophet collected *jizyah* from the Majus of Hajar. This is affirmed in a hadith related by 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Auf (in the presence of 'Umar) and recorded by both Malik and al-Shafi:" testify that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: (treat them as People of the Book). However,

there is a debate among the muuhaddithiîn on the validity of this hadith; some stating that its transmission (sanad) was discontinuous which is why some muuhaddithiîn do not consider the Majus as ahl kitab. However, Rida argues that this interpretation is weak, since the popular association of the term ahl al-kitab with Jews and Christians has its origins in their traditional proximity to Arabs. It cannot be assumed, therefore, that there exist no other ahl al-kitab in the world. Indeed, there is every reason to assume that others do exist, as Islamic teachings tell us that God sends His messengers to every community to deliver both glad tidings and unhappy news, and to reveal at the same time (scripture and just teachings) that they may do what is right.

Furthermore, argues Rida, this interpretation is analogous to the usage of the word 'ulamii: a term which signifies people who have a specialized knowledge (in religion) exceeding that of the common Muslim people, but which does not preclude the possibility that knowledge can also be acquired by others.

Rida's contention is legitimized by Ibn Taymiyyah who held that the Prophet granted the Majus the status of ahl- kitab after which he signed a peace treaty with the people of Bahrayn where some Majus lived. Ibn Taymiyyah added that all the caliphs and Muslim scholars were unanimous in their agreement on this matter. Rashad Salim commented on Ibn Taymiyyah's statement that in *al-Muwatta'* (1:278, in the part on zakat, jizyah of the People of the Book, and Majus), hadith number 41, related by Ibn Shihab, stated: 'News came to me that the Prophet took jizyah from the Majus of Bahrayn, and 'Umar took jizyah from the Majus of Persia, and 'Uthman b. 'A.flan took jizyah from the Berbers.' It is further recorded in Hadith number 42 that 'Umar b. ai-Kha.t.tab in discussing the Majus said, "I don't know what I should do for them." 'Abd al-Rahman b. 'Auf answered, "I testify that the Prophet said: Treat them as ahl kitaab. It is also told in Bukhâri's Sahih 4:96, in the part on jizyah and muwaddah to the ahl harb, that 'Umar did not

take jizyah from the Majus, but then 'Abd al-Rahman b., Auf testified that the Prophet had taken it from the Majus of Hajar. In the same passage, from 'Amr b. 'Auf al-Ansari comes the tradition that the Prophet sent Abū 'Ubaydah to Bayan to collect the jizyah. 'Ali b. Abu Talib is also reported as having referred to the Majus as ahl al-kitab.

From the above passage, it is clear that the term ahl al-kitab included Jews, Christians, Majus and Sabiun, and could even be extended, as Rida proposed, to Confucians, Hindus and Buddhists. In the contemporary world, Muslims are exposed to all of these faiths and it is, therefore, incumbent upon scholars to anticipate this phenomenon and accordingly, reformulate their injunctions on the basis of the Qur'an. I believe that Qur'anic injunctions will retain their relevance throughout the ages, as long as Muslims are courageous enough to reinterpret every Qur'anic concept contextually, including that of the ahl kitab in a practical and appropriate manner, as will be examined in the next chapter.

Certain verses of the Qur'an clearly confirm the status of older monotheistic religions and command the faithful not to discriminate against them, as they also have been promised God's grace and mercy. But other verses state an opposite sentiment, making it difficult to reconcile their content with the principle of tolerance. The contradiction is glaring that some commentators have, by way of explanation, invoked the Qur'anic concept of abrogation to conclude that one group of verses must necessarily abrogate the other as the following examples:

Surat al-Baqarah (2):62.

Those who believe (in the Qur'an) and those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Christians and the Sabians, any who believe in God and the Last Day, and work righteousness shall have their reward with their Lord: on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.

surat Ali 'Imran (3):85.

If anyone desires a religion other than Islam (submission to God), never will it be accepted of him; and in the Hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost (all spiritual good).

surat al-Maidah (5):72.

Those who believe (in the Qur'an), those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Sabians and the Christians, any who believe in God and the Last Day, and work righteousness, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.

surat al-hajj (22): 17.

Those who believe (in the Qur'an), those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Sabians, Christians, Magians and polytheists, God will judge between them on the Day of Judgement: for God is witness of all things.

Ibn 'Abbas who is joined by the traditional exegetes insists that the first of these verses, surat al-Baqarah (2):62 should be abrogated by the second, surat Al 'Imran (3):85. In his rebuttal of Ibn 'Abbas's theory of abrogation, al-Taban argues that God would not single out some of his creatures to the exclusion of others when rewarding those who had lived in faith and acted rightly. In support of al-Taban's argument, al-Tusi convincingly refutes the possible abrogation of this verse on the simple grounds that God's promise cannot be abrogated. In other words, "once God has promised something, He will not subsequently withdraw His promise. It is thus reasonable to assume that God's promise is not abrogated in this case, and that the believers – the Christians, the Jews, the Sabians, who believe in God and the Last Day and do righteous deeds are redeemed in the Qur'an. Nevertheless, other verses would seem to contradict this conclusion, as will be seen later.

In Tabatabai's commentary on surat al-Ma'idah (5):72, the custodians of the Gate of Bliss will attach no importance to titles,

whether a group be called believers, Jews, Sabeans or Christians. The determining factors are held to be an upright life and belief in God and the Last Day.

Fazlur Rahman, a modern Muslim scholar, critiques the traditional exegesis upon the said verses in the following words:

The vast majority of Muslim commentators exercise themselves fruitlessly to avoid having to admit the obvious meaning: that those—from any section of humankind—who believe in God and the Last Day and do good deeds are saved. They either say that by Jews, Christians, and Sabeans here are meant those who have actually become “Muslims”—which interpretation is clearly belied by the fact that “Muslims” constitute only the first of the four groups of “those who believe or that they were those good Jews, Christians, and Sabeans who lived before the advent of the Prophet Mullammad—which is an even worse tour de force. Even when replying to Jewish and Christian claims that the hereafter was theirs alone, the Qur’an says,

“On the contrary, whosoever surrenders himself to God while he does good deeds as well, he shall find his reward with his Lord, shall have no fear, nor shall he come to grief.”

According to Rahman, the logic behind a recognition of universal goodness, which commands a belief in one God and the Last Day as pre-requisites, necessarily entails that Muslims be ranked as one community among many.

Surat alMaidah (5):51

Appears to yield a final judgment on the problems of a religiously plural world:

To thee We sent the Scripture in truth, confirming the scripture that came before it, and guarding it in safety: so judge between them by what God hath revealed, and follow not their vain desires, diverging from the truth that hath come to thee. To each among you

have We prescribed a Law and an Open Way. If God so willed, He would have made you a single People, but (His plan is) to test you in what He hath given you: So strive as in a 15 race in all virtues. The goal of you all is to God; it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which ye dispute.

The positive value of diverse religions and communities, then, is that they may compete with each other in goodness. Professor Issa J. Boullata remarks that the mere existence of various religious communities in the world points to a religious pluralism intended by God to create competition between them in a race to attain all virtues. It should be noticed that *khayrât* is expressed in a plural form, meaning that there are many types of goodness in the world, including values in religions, for the attainment of which we as human beings must compete with each others in a proper manner. This is, I believe, the *élan vital* of the Qur'anic concept of *ahl al-kitab* in the contemporary world.

(2:62) Salvation is for True Worshippers alone

Those who believe (in the Qur'an), and those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Christians and the Sabians,- any who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.

The following excerpt is taken from "Maariful Quran" surah al baqarah pg. 228-229:

The previous verse spoke of how the Israelites drew upon themselves the wrath of Allah through their habitual insolence and disobedience. Now, this account may lead the listeners, or the Jews themselves, to suppose that, in view of such transgression, their

Taubah (repentance), if they agree to offer it, would not be acceptable to Allah. In order to dispel such a misgiving, the present verse lays down a general principle: no matter how a man has been behaving earlier, so long as he submits himself fully to the commandments of Allah in his beliefs and in his deeds both, he is acceptable to Allah, and will get his reward. It is obvious enough that after the revelation of the Holy Qur'an, which is the last message of Allah, perfect obedience to Allah can only mean accepting Islam and following the Last Prophet Muhammad (S) The verse, in effect, assures everyone that once a man has accepted Islam, all his former transgressions, whether in the matter of beliefs or in that of deeds, will be forgiven, and he will become worthy of receiving the rewards of the other world.

Let us note, in passing, that nothing is definitely known as to the beliefs and the practices of the Sabeans, and different opinions have been expressed on the subject. (Most probably they used to worship the stars).

One might also ask why the verse mentions the Muslims, for if it is an invitation to Islam, there is no need to extend the invitation

to those who have already accepted Islam. But if we keep in mind the richly concentrated style of the Holy Qur'an, and try to look beyond the literal sense of the words into the implications and suggestions contained in the verse, we would find that the inclusion of the Muslim factor has added a new dimension to the meaning. It is as if a king should, in a similar situation, say that his laws are impartially applicable to all his subjects, and that whosoever obeys them shall receive his reward for obedience irrespective of whether he has earlier been a friend or a foe. Obviously, the friend has always been loyal and obedient, and the warning and the promise have really been addressed to the foe. But the suggestion contained in such a formulation is that the favours of the king do not proceed from any personal attachment to the friends, but depend on the quality of obedience and loyalty, and hence the foes too will become worthy of his favours if they acquire the necessary quality. This is the *raison d'être* of mentioning the Muslims along with the non-Muslims in this verse, which should never be taken to imply that salvation can be attained without accepting Islam.

We had better dispel another misunderstanding which is likely to arise from the wordings of the present verse – and, which is actually being promoted by certain 'modernizers'. The verse mentions only two articles of faith of the Islamic creed – faith in Allah and faith in the Day of Judgment. This should not be taken to mean that in order to attain salvation it is enough to have faith only in Allah and in the Day of Judgment. For, the Holy Quran repeatedly declares that he who does not believe in the prophets, in angels and in the Books of Allah is not a Muslim. Faith in Allah is the first article in the Islamic creed, while faith in the Day of Judgment is the last. By mentioning only these two, the verse intends to say in a succinct manner that it is necessary to have faith in all the articles of the creed, from the first to the last. Moreover, it is through the prophets and the Books of Allah alone that man can acquire any knowledge of the essence and the attributes of Allah and of what is to happen on the Day of Judgment, while the Books of Allah are

revealed to the prophets through an angel. So, it is not possible to have faith in Allah and the Day of Judgment until and unless one has faith in the angels, in the Books of Allah and in the prophets. see also: God is the Lord of All Religions – 7:159 and “Who are ‘People of the Book’? –

2:4 Quran 2:62:

Background on verse 62:

This verse was revealed, in particular, to answer the concern of Salman Al Farsi. He was a Persian who was raised as a Zoroastrian, but who then spent a number of years as a Christian, before finally accepting Islam. He asked the Prophet about the fate of all those righteous Christians with whom he lived and studied before he entered into the Prophet’s fold. The Prophet casually remarked that those people were going to be in Hellfire, (probably on the assumption that anyone less than a pure monotheist was in trouble with God.) Salman describes his inner reaction to the Prophet’s words thusly, “The entire earth became gloomy to me.” But then this verse was revealed from God to correct the Prophet’s incorrect assumption. (Asbab ul-Nuzul)

Those who believe (in Islam) and those who are Jewish, Christian or Sabian, anyone who has faith in God and the Last Day and who does what’s morally right, their reward will be with their Lord, and they’ll have nothing to fear or regret. [62]

7:159: Of the people of Moses there is a section who guide and do justice in the light of truth.

The Qur’an specifically states that there is a section of the Jewish people who are sincere and faithful to the truth of God. This is important to remember when other verses are read that take backsliders and hypocrites to task among them. Also see 2:113

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