



LIVING ALONGSIDE NON-MUSLIMS IN THE WEST

With 56 Million Muslims in Europe, a further 10 million in the Americas, there is an unprecedented level of interaction between people of all faiths. So how does a Muslim conduct himself?

“How many people there are who entered into Islām because of the behaviour and manners of the Muslims, their truthfulness and their being true in their dealings”

-Salaḥī Scholar, Ibn ‘Uthaymīn

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KINDNESS IN DEALING WITH PEOPLE AND GREETING NON-MUSLIMS

The Prophet (ﷺ) and his Companions after him would show kindness and generosity towards the non-Muslims from amongst the Jews, Christians and pagans as a means of softening their hearts to Islām. This was not from the aspect of accommodating their polytheism, disbelief, sin and opposition to Islām; rather, it was for the purpose of inviting to Islām, its beauty and justice. This is from the ways of calling people to accepting the beauty of Islām. How many a non-Muslim has accepted Islām merely on the basis of the good conduct they have seen in a Muslim! So this affair cannot be underestimated at all. ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr (رضي الله عنه) mentioned that he slaughtered a goat or sheep and then said to his servant: “Did you send some to our Jewish neighbour? Indeed I heard the Messenger (ﷺ) say: “Jibrīl did not cease to exhort me concerning the neighbour until I began to think he would inherit from me!”¹ Abū Mūsá (رضي الله عنه) wrote to a non-Muslim and greeted him with salutations of salām in his letter. So it was said to Abū Mūsá, “You greet him whilst he is a non-Muslim?!” He replied, “He wrote to me, and he greeted me, so I greeted him in return.”²

Shaykh al-Albānī³ (رحمته الله) stated that it is permitted to begin a greeting with other than the salām such as saying: “How are you this morning?” or, “How are you this evening?” or, “How are you?” and so on. This type of initiating is permitted. ‘Alqamah (رحمته الله) said: “‘Abdullāh ibn Mas‘ūd greeted the non-Muslims by waving.”⁴ If a non-Muslim says to a Muslim, “Al-salāmu ‘alaykum (peace be upon you),” then one responds with what is the same as it, which is: “Wa ‘alaykum al-salām (and peace be upon you).” And this position is supported by the saying of Ibn ‘Abbās (رضي الله عنه) who said: “Respond to the greeting of salām upon the Jew, the Christian, or the Magian. That is because Allāh has said: “And when you are greeted with a greeting, greet in return with one better than it or at least return it in a like manner.”⁵ And what supports this further is that which has been narrated from Sa‘īd ibn Jubayr (رحمته الله) from Ibn ‘Abbās (رضي الله عنه) who said: “If the Pharaoh himself was to say to me: “May Allāh bless you.” I would respond: “And you too!”⁶ Furthermore, Allāh (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) stated: “Allāh does not forbid you to deal justly and kindly with those who did not fight against you on account of religion and did not drive you out of your homes. Verily, Allāh loves those who deal with equity.” So this verse is clear in commanding good treatment of the unbelievers from amongst fellow countrymen - those who are at peace with the believers, and they do not harm

the believers and they deal with them justly. And there is no doubt that if one of them greets with clear words saying, “Al-salāmu ‘alaykum (peace be upon you)” then one should respond with the same.

Shaykh ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Bāz (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) stated regarding the treatment of non-Muslim neighbours: “One should be good to his neighbour, not harm him, give him charity if he is poor, give him gifts and advise him in that which is in his benefit because all of this will give him a desire for Islām and be a cause of him entering it. And that is due to the fact that the neighbour has rights in Islām. The Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: “Jibrīl did not cease to exhort me concerning the neighbour until I began to think he would inherit from me!” This narration is agreed upon in authenticity. So if the neighbour is an unbeliever, he still has the rights of a neighbour, and if he is an unbeliever, a neighbour and a relative then he has two rights: the rights of a neighbour and the rights of a relative. And it is legislated to give charity to a neighbour who is an unbeliever, or even if he is not a neighbour. The sister-in-law of the Prophet Muḥammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ), Asmā’ bint Abī Bakr (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا) was visited by her mother in Madīnah during the treaty of Ḥudaybiyah. She was a staunch pagan and she wanted help. So Asmā’ (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا) sought permission from the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) as to whether she should keep ties with her mother, so he responded: “Yes, keep ties with her.” As for Zakāh, one is allowed to give Zakāh to an unbeliever so as to draw their hearts to Islām. **And as for participating [or congratulating] them on their festivals and celebrations, then a Muslim is not permitted to do that.**⁷

Imām al-Qurtubī (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) stated: “It is obligatory upon a person that his speech towards the people is gentle. Allāh said to Mūsá and Hārūn: “And speak to him with gentle speech that perhaps he may be reminded or fear [Allāh]” (Qur’ān, 20:44).

Al-Jāmī li-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān (2/16).

In July 2000, Shaykh Muhammad ibn Ṣāliḥ al-‘Uthaymīn (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) stated in a tremendous piece of advice directed to the Muslims living in the United Kingdom: “I invite you to have respect for those people who have the right that they should be respected from those amongst you and with whom there is an agreement. The land which you are living in is such that there is an agreement between you and them (i.e. you are at peace with them and not at war with them). If this were not the case they would have killed you or expelled you. So preserve this agreement and do not prove treacherous to it, since treachery is a sign of the hypocrites, and it is not from the way of the

believers. And know that it is authentically reported from the Prophet (ﷺ) that he said, ‘Whoever kills one who is under an agreement of protection will not smell the fragrance of Paradise.’ Do not be deceived by the foolish who say: ‘Those people are non-Muslims, so their wealth is lawful for us to misappropriate.’ By Allāh! This is a lie. A lie about Allāh’s Religion, and a lie in Islamic societies. So we may not say that it is lawful to be treacherous towards the people whom we have an agreement with. O my brothers! O youth! O Muslims! Be truthful in your buying and selling, and renting, and leasing, and in all mutual transactions. Truthfulness is from the characteristics of the believers. Allāh (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) has commanded: ‘O you who believe, fear and keep your duty to Allāh and be with the truthful.’ And the Prophet (ﷺ) encouraged with truthfulness and said, ‘Adhere to truthfulness because truthfulness leads to piety, and piety leads to Paradise, and a person will continue to be truthful, and strive to be truthful until he will be written down with Allāh as a truthful person.’ And he warned against falsehood, and said, ‘Beware of falsehood, because falsehood leads to wickedness, and wickedness leads to the Fire. And a person will continue lying and striving to lie until he is written down with Allāh as a great liar.’ O my brother Muslims! O youth! Be true in your sayings with your brothers, and with those non-Muslims whom you live along with so that you will be inviters to the religion of Islām by your actions. **How many people there are who entered into Islām because of the behaviour and manners of the Muslims, their truthfulness and their being true in their dealings.**”⁸ This fine etiquette and justice was from the conduct of the Prophet (ﷺ) towards the unbelievers. He would call them with wisdom and gentleness that was recognised and borne witness to by the unbelievers. When Heraclius, the Christian Emperor of the Romans, asked Abū Sufyān, a vociferous opponent of the Muslims at that time, *“What does Muḥammad command you with?”* Abū Sufyān responded: *“To worship Allāh alone and not to worship anything else along with Him, and to abandon what our fathers say [in worshipping other than Allāh]. And he orders with the prayer, charity, chastity and joining the family ties.”* Upon hearing the honest words of Abū Sufyān, Heraclius said the following: *“If what you have said is true, he will very soon occupy this place underneath my feet, and I knew that a Prophet was going to appear, but I did not know that he would be from you. If I could reach him, I would go immediately to meet him, and if I were with him, I would certainly wash his feet.”*⁹

TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE GREETINGS OF THE UNBELIEVERS EVEN IF THEY BE TYRANTS

Abū Sinān (رَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ) d. AH 132) said: “I said to Sa‘īd ibn Jubayr (d. AH 95): ‘A Magian Fire-worshipper has inclined towards me, and he

‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Amr (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا) mentioned that he slaughtered a goat or sheep and then said to his servant: “Did you send some to our Jewish neighbour? Indeed I heard the Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) say: “Jibrīl did not cease to exhort me concerning the neighbour until I began to think he would inherit from me!”

Al-Albānī, *al-Irwā*, 891.

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gives me ‘salutations of salām, should I respond to him?’ So he replied: ‘I asked Ibn ‘Abbās (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا) about something similar, so he replied to me saying: ‘Even if the Pharaoh himself said something to me of goodness, I would respond to him in kind!’”

Imām al-Qurtubī (رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ) stated: “It is obligatory upon a person that his speech towards the people is gentle. Allāh said to Mūsá and Hārūn: “And speak to him with gentle speech that perhaps he may be reminded or fear [Allāh]” (Qur’ān, 20:44). **So [today] the one who addresses the people is not better than Mūsá and Hārūn – and the one being addressed is not more evil than the Pharaoh – yet Allāh commanded the two of them to be gentle with him.**”¹¹ So when a person of Sunnah addresses and responds in kind to some greeting of an unbeliever, then that in no way necessitates that he has given allegiance to the religion of the Christians, Jews or pagans or that he has glorified the one he is addressing, or that he has approved of the tyranny that may have been perpetrated.

THE CONDUCT OF THE PROPHET AND HIS COMPANIONS TOWARDS THE JEWS AND OTHER UNBELIEVERS

Ibn Abī Laylá (رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ) said: Qays ibn Sa’d and Sahl ibn Ḥunayf (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا) were both in Qādisiyah when a funeral procession passed by them, so they both stood up. So it was said to them: “Indeed, she is a person of this land, a Jewish woman.” So they said: “A funeral passed by Allāh’s Messenger, so he stood up.” It was said to him: “It’s the funeral of a Jewish woman.” So he

responded: “Is she not a soul?”¹² Anas ibn Mālik (رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ) said: “There was a Jewish youth who would serve Allāh’s Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ). One day he fell sick so the Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) went to visit him. He sat close to the head of the boy and said to him: ‘Embrace Islām.’ So the boy started glancing at his father who was present. His father said: ‘Obey Abū al-Qāsim (i.e. the Messenger).’ So the boy became a Muslim. The Messenger came out and said: ‘All praise is due to Allāh who saved him from the Fire.’”¹³

END

By Abū Khadījah ‘Abd al-Wāḥid 🐦 @AbuKhadeejahSP

1. Al-Albānī, *al-Irwā*, 891.
2. Al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, no. 1101, and it is authentic.
3. See *Silsilat al-Aḥādīth al-Ṣaḥīḥah* 2/318 (abridged).
4. Al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, no. 1104, and it is authentic.
6. Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, no. 107. Ibn Jarīr *al-Tabarī* in *al-Tafsīr*, 10039, and it is authentic.
6. Reported by al-Bukhārī in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*, no. 1113, *Al-Saḥīḥah* 2/329, authentic upon the conditions of Imām Muslim.
7. See *Majmū’ Fatāwā Ibn Bāz*, vol. 6, and www.binbaz.org.sa/mat/290 (slightly abridged).
8. Tele-link with Salafi Publications in Birmingham on 28 July 2000.
9. Reported by al-Bukhārī.
10. See *Mudārāt al-Nās of Ibn Abī Dunyā*, no. 106. *Al-Hadā’iq* of Ibn al-Jawzī, 3/102.
11. *Jāmī li-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān* (2/16).
12. Muslim, no. 2224. Then the next chapter heading states: “Chapter: Abrogation of Standing for Funerals” i.e. Muslims and non-Muslims.
13. Reported by al-Bukhārī.

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874-A Weston Rd. Toronto, ON, Canada, M6N 3R6
📞 (416) 243-5320 🌐 troid.ca ✉ info@troid.ca
📘 fb.com/troidca 🐦 @troidca 📷 @troidca