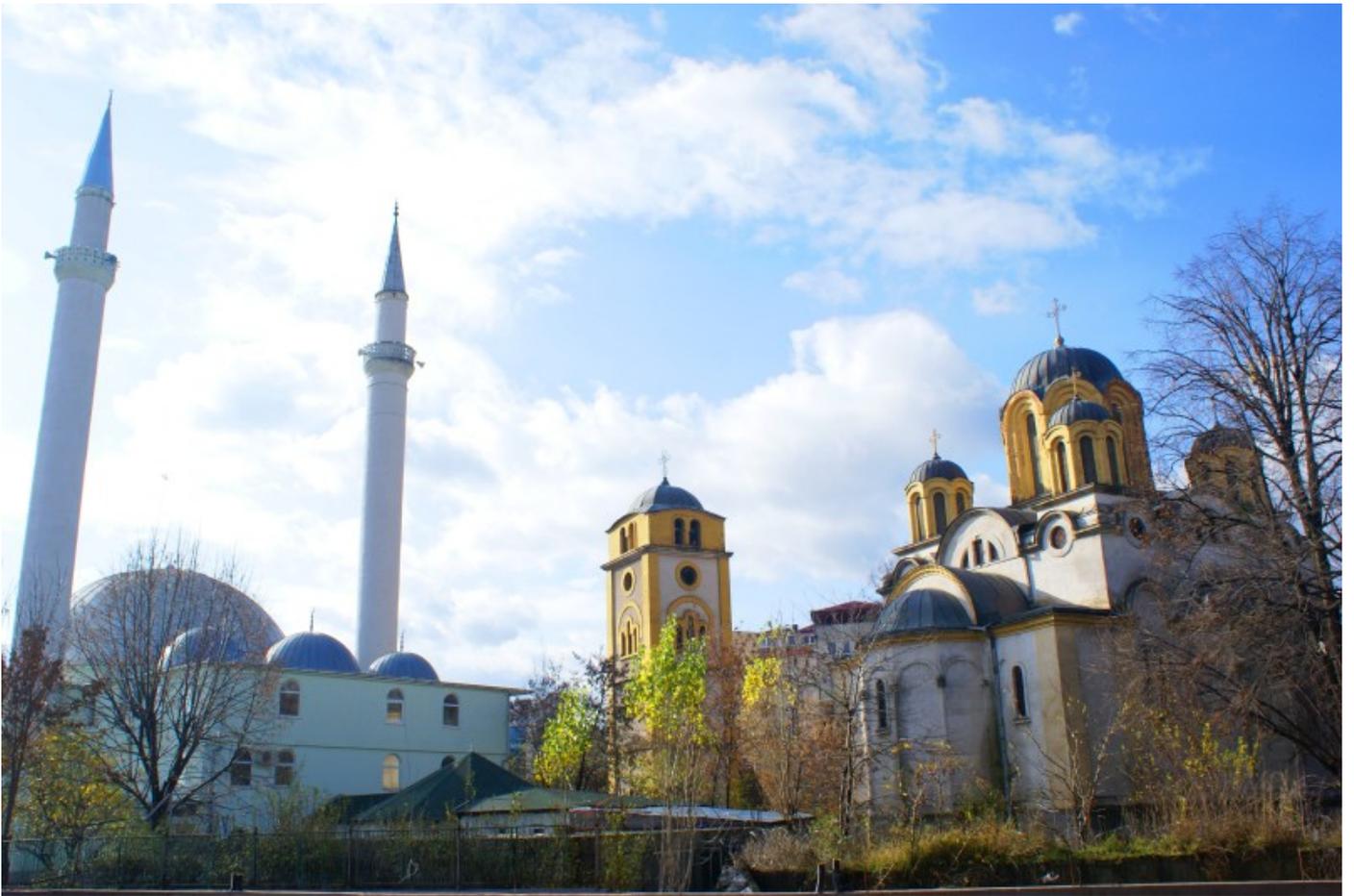


Two Faiths – One God



By The late Grand Mufti of Syria [Shaykh Ahmad Kufaro](#)

Two Faiths One God

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful
The mission of all God's Prophets and Messengers, peace be upon them, was based on an essential cornerstone and well-grounded pillar, which is their mission to guide human beings to the existence of the Creator of the universe. Therefore, all humans must believe in and worship God in order to be happy in this world and lead a righteous life. God's Messengers emphasized the fraternity of human creatures whom God created (Adam and Eve were their parents), the criterion of excellence being piety, righteousness, and virtuous deeds. The Qur'an says:



O Humankind! We have created you from a single pair of a male and a female, and have made you into nations and tribes, so that you may know and cherish one another (not that you may despise each other). Verily, the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things). Surah al Hujurat (The Inner Chambers), 49:13

As a result of belief in God and the fraternity of all human beings, we must necessarily live a life of love, agreement, cooperation, and peace. All God's legislation were revealed to emphasize this. The Prophets of God at various times showed us that God's religion is always the same, that they are intimate brothers with no enmity or conflict, that the aim of their message is one, that He Who raised them is One, and that the fundamentals of their religions are one – void of any contradiction or contrast.

In order to fix this fact in our minds and hearts from one generation to the next, strenuous efforts and close collaboration must take place on the part of the global thinkers of all revealed religions. This is the doctrine that I have been striving to propagate and preach for the last thirty-five years among all sincere believers. I am motivated by this doctrine because it is the key to the welfare of human beings in their efforts to live peacefully without malice or hatred, and also because many verses in the Qur'an and the Gospel testify and prove that no revealed religions disagree in their doctrinal origins and human objectives. The Qur'an says:

He has ordained for you the same religion that He enjoined on Noah, which we have sent by inspiration to you, and which We enjoined on Abraham and Moses and Jesus, saying, 'Establish the Faith and do not be divided in it. Surah al Shura (Consultation), 42:13

This text is a clear testimony that God's religion is the same at all times and with all Prophets, and that God orders His prophets and their peoples to unite and agree and not be different and separate. In the Qur'an there are many examples of this, such as:

We have sent you Inspiration to know Our Will, as We sent it to Noah and the Messengers after him. We sent Inspiration to Abraham, and Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob (Yakub) and the Tribes, to Jesus, Job (Ayub), Jonah (Yunus), Aaron (Harun), and Solomon, and to David, We gave the Psalms. Surah al Nisaa (The Women), 4:163

God gave the same Revelation in both substance and quality so that all Prophets draw from one main spring or source. Moreover, it is evident that the Qur'an orders the Muslims to believe in all God's Prophets and to obey their commandments:

Say (O Muslims): We believe in Allah and what is revealed to us and in what was revealed to Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob and the Tribes, and hat Moses and Jesus received, and what the other Prophets received from their Lord. We make no distinctions among any of them. Surah al Baqara (The Cow), 2:136

Anyone who reads the Qur'an will see that its long Surahs or chapters ennoble and dignify Jesus and his mother, the Virgin Mary. The Qur'an also mentions and clarifies Jesus Christ's miracles, and it tells of miracles not found in the Gospel itself, such as creating birds of clay into which he breathed and gave life with God's assistance. Another miracle of Jesus is speaking to people from the cradle.

In the Qur'an there are two other long Surahs pertaining to Christ. The first is Mary and the second is The Imran Family, the family of Jesus Christ. In these two Surahs we are told of Mary's giving birth to Jesus after her angelic conception through the Holy Spirit:

Behold! The angels said, O Mary! Allah has chosen you and made you pure, and has preferred you above (all) the women of creation. O, Mary! Allah gives you glad tidings of a Word from Him. His name will be the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary. He will speak to mankind in his cradle and in the prime of manhood, and he is of the righteous. The Family of 'Imran, 3:42 and 45-46

[Note: 'Imran is the name of the father of Moses and of the maternal grandfather of Mary, both of the same line.] The Qur'an addresses the Muslims clearly indicating Jesus Christ's high rank with God:

The Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, was a Messenger of Allah, and His Word which He bestowed on Mary, and a spirit proceeding from Him. Surah al Nisaa (The Women), 4:171

These ideas, or more precisely, this belief that Muslims are ordered to embrace about Jesus Christ and Christianity, made their hearts open to receive all of Christ's teachings and facilitated convergence and cooperation between Muslims and Christians, under the good care of the Qur'an and the Messenger of Islam and all the believers. The Qur'an shows very clearly that Christians are the closest to Muslims on account of the good morals and virtues that they share with them. It says:

“You will find that the nearest among men in affection for the believers are those who say, Verily! We are Christians because there are among them men devoted; to learning and men who have renounced the world and because they are not given to arrogance. When they listen to what has been revealed to the messenger; you see their eyes overflow with tears for they recognize the truth. They pray, Our Lord, we believe. Inscribe us as among the witnesses. Allah has rewarded them for their prayer with Gardens underneath which rivers flow, wherein they abide forever. This is the reward of the good.” Surah al Ma’ida (The Banquet Table), 5:82-83 & 85

As a result of this positive attitude of Islam toward Christianity and the Gospel, many ancient Christians were stimulated to express their belief and recognition of Muhammad and his religion. Some of them even granted the Muslims moral and financial aid to solidify and propagate Islam, such as the Emperor of Ethiopia (Abyssinia) in the 7th century A.C., who asked the oppressed Muslims who migrated to his country to recite some verses from the Qur’an concerning Christ and his faith. He, as well as his monks, wept and declared their recognition that Muhammad was a Prophet. He said, “The teachings of Christ and Muhammad flow out from one source.” That emperor did not give up Christianity when he said this, for Islam does not require Christians to ignore the commandments and teachings of Jesus Christ. The Qur’an addresses Christians as follows:

Let the people of the Gospel judge by what Allah has revealed therein. Surah al Mai’da (The Banquet Table), 5:47

And: We bestowed on him (Jesus) the Gospel wherein is guidance and light. Surah al Ma’ida (The Banquet Table), 5:46

Prophet Muhammad has said:

I am the closest of all people to Jesus, son of Mary.”

He also said,

Prophets are brethren from one father, from different mothers, but with one religion.

He further said,

You Muslims shall conquer Egypt. When this happens, be kind to its Christian people.

The fourth Caliph, ‘Ali, and the great leaders of Islam used to say to their contemporary Christians,

We do not prevent you from believing in Christianity; indeed we beseech you to obey it.

Such examples are countless. Is it not the utmost degree of solidarity, love, affection, and collaboration when Muhammad made his private mosque a place of worship for his Christian guests in Medina?

One should not be surprised to learn that, when Damascus was the capital of their great Islamic nation, the Muslims made of their great Omayyad Mosque a joint temple of worship for Muslims and Christians who entered it through one gate. They divided the mosque into two parts and used to say their prayers in each others’ presence.

All this was the inevitable outcome of understanding the great closeness and respect between these two great revealed religions in ancient times. They agreed on purpose and goals and had no conflict in their essence and origin. It is well-known, in this respect, that ‘Umar, the second caliph, when in Jerusalem, refused to say his prayers in the Holy Sepulcher out of concern that the Muslims might turn that church, or part of it, into an Islamic mosque. Thus, he observed its sanctity.

Muhammad commanded Muslims to be kind to Jews and Christians, the followers of the two other revealed religions. He said:

Whoever causes mischief to a Christian or a Jew shall be my enemy on do d he shall pay for it.

He also said:

“Be good to Coptic Christians.”

When the son of the Muslim governor of Egypt beat a Christian on his head after a quarrel, the latter went over to ‘Umar in Medina asking for justice. ‘Umar summoned the governor and his son and after hearing their cases, he gave the Christian a whip to beat his opponent in the presence of the great men of the state. After the Christian took revenge for himself from the son of the governor of Egypt, ‘Umar asked the Christian to beat the Governor himself, ‘Amr. “I have received justice,” the Christians said. ‘Amr then asked: Why beat me oh Prince of the Faithful? ‘Umar replied: It was because of your position as a governor what caused your son to commit the wrong.” ‘Umar then said his famous words: “Why do you enslave people, yet their mothers delivered them free?”

Islam has gone further than this in protecting other revealed religions. It has implanted emotional love. We recall that the Muslims grieved when the Persian idolaters defeated the Byzantine Christians. Gabriel descended, consoled the Muslims, and brought good tidings that the Christians would be victorious in less than nine years. This was forecast with divine certainty in the Qur’anic Surah, Rum.

Alif. Lam. Mim. Defeated has been the Roman Empire in the lands close-by; yet it is they who, notwithstanding their defeat, shall be victorious within a few years. With Allah rests all power of decision in the past and in the future. And on that day the believers shall rejoice in Allah’s help. He helps whomever He wills since He alone is almighty, a dispenser of grace. Surah al-Rum (The Roman-Byzantine Empire), 30:1-5

The prophecy came true and the Muslims were delighted. Islam, by its teachings and principles, has been able to turn millions of non-believers into believers in God, in Jesus Christ, and in all prophets and revealed testaments. The Qur’an has made of Muslims and Christians affectionate members of one family who live in happiness and cooperation. Why don’t we see this again in our time among ourselves, especially when atheism has shrouded most parts of the world with its dark shadows and injustice and is seeking to swallow the remainder?

It is high time we called aloud for a meeting between Muslim and Christian religious leaders and thinkers to promote affinity between the souls of all followers of revealed religions, and spiritual familiarity, and the familial unity of all humankind by adopting this maxim: Cooperation in common points and tolerance concerning trifles of difference.

In this world of trouble and disorder, there is no need for separation or discord. Why don’t we meet and come to a mutual understanding since both of our religions require kindness, charity, piety, and virtue? Christianity teaches,

Love God your Lord with all your heart and mind and love your fellow man as you love yourself!

Muhammad says,

None of you will be a true believer unless he loves for his fellow humans what he loves for himself.

Jesus says,

The merciful will be in Paradise by virtue of their mercy.

Muhammad says,

The Merciful Allah will be compassionate to those who show mercy. Be merciful to those on earth in order to receive mercy from Him in heaven.

Jesus says,

“Give to whoever begs from you and do not turn away whoever wants to borrow from you.

Muhammad says,

All creatures are Allah's dependents. The most favored to Him is he who is most beneficial to them.

Even the theological doctrine of God, the Creator, the Matchless, the Partnerless Lord, is clearly illustrated in the Bible and in the Qur'an. In the Gospel of John, Jesus says,

And this is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

In Matthew, we read,

To the Lord, your God, kneel, and Him alone worship.

God addressed Muhammad in the Qur'an saying:

Say, He is Allah, the One! and Know that there is no god but Allah.

When Jesus was asked about doomsday, he said,

None knows when that day and that hour comes.

The same was told to Muhammad in the Holy Qur'an:

They ask you of the (destined) Hour when it will come to pass. Say, Knowledge of that is with my Lord only. Surah al A'raf (The Heights), 7:187

Countless texts in the Qur'an and the Bible suggest that the two religions agree on the worship of the Almighty and Only Creator. It is taken for granted that there should be trifling differences in interpretation. This occurs even among the followers of one religion, which ought not to prevent compromise and accord of hearts and spiritual affiliation for the benefit of peace, faith, and humanity, the likeness of which is a bouquet of many-colored flowers that dazzles and fascinates when arranged in good proportion.

The data affirming the closeness of our two religions in origins and aims have led many scholars and theologians Muslims as well as Christians, to preach cooperation and to urge careful study and dialogue between Islam and Christianity for the sake of faith and the welfare of humanity and peace. This standpoint led the great Christian poet, Hamil Damous, to exclaim:

By God, all religions are merely windows through which worshipers see God. Mankind would not discriminate between Muhammad and Jesus if they understood the essence of their religion. I feel the presence of Jesus in the Qur'an, and in the Bible, I sense the spirit of Muhammad.

The Arab poet-laureate Ahmad Shawqi warned:

The diversity of religions must not lead to separation or hostility among human creatures nor among their books and prophets. All faiths are the store of utmost wisdom because their essence is the love and fear of God as well as tolerance.

As a consequence of this meeting of love and affection among the followers of both religions and among their leaders, scholars, men and women of letters, and the devotees of the Qur'an, here in the Orient, in the cradle of Islam, have greeted the devotees of the Gospel, and the followers of Jesus have blessed the followers of Muhammad. The spiritual branches of the tree of Abraham have met in their essence and in their core, wherein the fundamentals are one and the prophets are brothers from one father, of one religion but various mothers.

Isn't it incumbent upon us, therefore, we the believers of all revealed religions, to meet and cooperate as our prophets did in their teachings and commandments? Must not all leaders of religions rise in a

spiritual revolution to reject fanaticism and stagnation, and to preach affection, fraternity, and peaceful living? Is it not necessary to do our best to build a new world of spiritual enlightenment for humanity in order to progress toward genuine well-being and happiness?

The politicians and diplomats of this century established the United Nations and the Security Council, after the failure of the League of Nations. They hold everlasting conferences and councils on disarmament, and on banning nuclear and strategic weapons, which, if used only once without restraint, might not leave a living creature on this earth. But has the world gained the long-awaited peace? Do human beings live in peace? Has misery been abolished? Is there no more hunger? Are there no more wars? Have inventors stopped producing destructive weapons?

Can't the theologians and leaders of religion immensely contribute to the enlightenment of people of various countries and religions by asserting and emphasizing that God and His Prophets command nothing but familial unity, peace, and affection among all members of the human race, and that malice and hostility are denounced by the Prophets?

If humanity does not receive deliverance through the people of profound integrity and faith working to know, respect, and cooperate with each other, the situation will be terrible and God will rebuke us in the world Hereafter for every shortcoming, fanaticism, and discord that may increase agony, bloodshed, and devastation.

We, the faithful, are badly in need of a divinely inspired spiritual organization to help us collaborate in bringing peace to a world that needs cooperation and brotherhood. We pursue modern science and technology with great effort and diligence, but we still find the weak and the powerful, the oppressed and the oppressor, the usurped and the usurper. All the modern accomplishments in geology, in outer space, in the depths of the oceans, in polar expeditions, and in the oil and metal industries, have not been able to cure mankind of malice and ill-will.

Remedies are available, but the illness is pernicious. It calls for cures and operations by heart-and-soul, and for physicians who have excellent prescriptions to rid humanity of wretchedness and ruin.

We are not enemies of the atheists. We are their fellow beings. We call them to present their arguments and seek the truth. We call them to the path of safety and friendship. We mean to be sincere advisers to them, and this can be achieved by cooperation among the faithful thinkers of the revealed religions and other schools of thought.

The call of the contemporary politician for peace has proved to be fruitless. So, let us try the call of the modern rational faith. Let the followers of the three religions collaborate. Muhammad says, "Man is the brother of man whether he likes it or not." Christ says, "Love your fellow man as you love yourself."

And Moses preached the same thing. Even the Soviet Communists, though professing the non-existence of God and that life is materialistic, have held scores of religious conferences for the sake of peace. What has the free world of the West do? How many religious conferences have been held here? Very few.

Despite the shortcomings of both Muslim and Christian clergy and negative indications from their respective political leaders, I am hopeful and optimistic that the Christian must one day embrace the Muslim and the Gospel must come to an understanding with the Qur'an. Here in the Orient, they have long been living peacefully with each other. And they will meet once more, with God's leave, in our present day all over the world. Thus, a new spirit will be imparted to the world with the fragrance of love, familial unity, and peace, and will obtain God's reward and pleasure in the Hereafter.

This optimism of mine is not sentimental or emotional. It is impelled by what many Christian and non-Christian thinkers have declared in some religious conferences in various parts of the world. Before relating to you their recommendations, I would like to impart to you what the wise Bernard Shaw wrote:

"I have always held the religion of Muhammad in high esteem for its overflowing vivacity. But owing to some ignorance or hateful fanaticism it was portrayed to be the opponent of Christianity and Christ. After I had studied the life of Muhammad as being a great man, I found out that he was far from being Christ's adversary. He is indeed a savior of mankind like his brother Christ."

Lamartine, the great French poet exclaimed:

Muhammad was a prophet, a leader, an intellectual conqueror, and propagator of a doctrine that is in agreement with the free conscious mind.

Tolstoy, the famous Russian writer, stated:

Muhammad did not claim to be the only prophet; he affirmed that Moses and Jesus were prophets too. He taught that Jews and Christians should not be compelled to abandon their faiths. One of the advantages of Islam is its goodwill toward Christians, Jews, and their men of religion.

Mahatma Gandhi, the supreme Indian leader, declared:

I shed a stream of tears when I read the life of Muhammad, the great prophet. How can anyone who seeks truth like me not bend his head to this unique person who labored for nothing more than the advantage of humanity?

What I have quoted is scanty when compared with what hundreds of writers and thinkers have said about Muhammad, his personality, and his teachings.

Coming back to the resolutions that the world religious conferences made, the Vatican declared in the clearest terms that Islam is a revealed religion. This is a step forward. The conference of Cordova, in 1977, declared that Muhammad is a prophet and messenger of God. All these expressions of confidence and many others have led me to be hopeful that the future must be replete with goodness, cooperation, and love among the revealed religions because they are branches from the tree of Abraham. When this goal is achieved, humanity will lead an affectionate and peaceful life that will exclude ruin and devastation.

I repeat that Islam agrees that the followers of other religions may continue in their beliefs, for the rudiments of all religions are the same. Excuse me if I say to you that we, the Muslims, have surpassed you in love of your Prophet and in our devotion to Christianity. Our Qur'an has always supported and befriended the Old and the New Testaments. In one of its texts it says:

Say (O Muslims): We believe in Allah and in what is revealed to us and in what; was revealed to Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob and the Tribes, and in what Moses and Jesus received, and in what the other Prophets received from their Lord. Surah al Baqara (The Cow), 2:136

After all this, will the followers of the Torah and the Gospel embrace and love the followers of the Qur'an? Muhammad says to the Muslims,

I am the closest adherent of Jesus and Moses both Here and in the Hereafter.

So let the Christians say also:

We support you, our Muslim friends, for our God, is One and the source of our religions is the same.

We have come to know you through our Qur'an and the teachings of our Prophet; therefore know us. We shook hands with you, embraced you, studied you, and we venerate Jesus Christ and his revealed Gospel and his Virgin Mother; therefore, shake hands with us, embrace us, study us, and reciprocate in the same terms or better.

Our remoteness from each other resembles two brothers who have been lost for several years. One day, one of them wandering in a wasteland catches sight of some distant object and takes it for a beast. He is aiming to kill it when, on approaching closer and closer, he meets his lost brother face to face. They embrace and shed tears of joy at reunion after such a long absence.

We need to come nearer and nearer until we meet and embrace in full understanding. This will soon be accomplished by the cooperative efforts of all sincere and faithful adherents of every religion. There will remain one obstacle only, about which believers will not be concerned. We wonder if we could overcome it!

This is Satan's great anger over our alliance because it will please the Merciful God and cause joy among His Prophets and believers everywhere. Let us conclude with what the Qur'an says about Christians:

You will find that the nearest among men in affection for the Believers are the Christians, because there are among them men devoted to learning and men who have renounced the world, and because they are free from pride. Surah al Ma'ida (The Banquet Table), 5:82

Therefore let all lovers of peace in the East and the West, theologians, and scholars, opinion elites in the media, and honest political leaders, every lover of humanity and every believer in God all come to this discussion and dialogue in the spirit of agreement and cooperation. This summons makes those who hear it responsible to obey it – otherwise, God and their conscience shall reproach them.

May our hope come true. Therefore, let us start working, thinking, discussing, and holding councils. God says in the Holy Qur'an:

And say, 'Act!' Allah will soon behold your actions, and so will His Messenger and the believers. Surah al Tauba (Repentance), 9:105

God will assist us as long as we support His cause. God will give victory to those who strive to make His cause victorious. Peace and God's Mercy and Blessings be always with you all!