

Good News

'...And give good news to those who do good (to others)' – Holy Quran 22:37

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Save Our 'Cloisters, Synagogues, Churches, and Mosques' From Being Destroyed! – Holy Quran

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Religion arouses very strong emotions in people, and people are willing to sacrifice their lives for the sake of religion. Unfortunately, they are also quick to kill and persecute people who hold beliefs different to theirs. Changing or stopping this second type of behaviour is difficult, in that divine sanction is claimed for the most heinous acts. The underlying basis for this atrocious behaviour is the belief of people that only their religion and its founder are from God, and other religions and their founders are false. So it almost becomes a duty for them to oppress and eliminate faiths other than their own. Islam has done a great favour to humanity in that it has removed all these differences by

declaring in the Holy Quran that all religions, their founders and scriptures are from God, and that they preach essentially the same message, i.e. to worship and obey the **'One true God'**, and to do good to humanity.

The Holy Quran therefore encourages all people of faith especially Muslims to protect all places of worship:

And if God had not allowed one group of people to repel another, then there would have been pulled down **cloisters and synagogues and churches and mosques, in which God's name is much remembered** - (22:39, 40)

This verse not only advocates broad tolerance of all faiths but actually permits fighting the forces of 'religious intolerance' bent on the destruction of all different places of worship where God's name is much remembered. This commandment which is unique to the Holy Quran is so important in this age of speedy electronic communications much abused

by hate mongers that incite violence. On the other hand the same technology has provided the means to highlight more so than ever before that our world contains a variety of different cultures, races, religions, and ideologies that cannot simply be wished away or ignored but rather require harmonious co-existence.

However, in a rigid, authoritarian society the right of the ‘other’ to practice their diversity and differences openly and freely is often undermined. Therefore it is of vital importance that all right minded people relentlessly teach and demonstrate that ‘tolerance’ is a moral imperative – a form of ‘humanity’ itself. A person who can tolerate the ‘other’ is able to see the **‘One Common Source’** where the various differences and diversities as found in the world, flow from. This is what the prophets and mystics term, **‘The One God’** of the entire universe and humankind.

In Islam differences are divinely ordained - meant to generate a passion to outperform the ‘other’ in virtuous deeds. Accordingly, we soon witness how a sympathetic feeling of ‘Divine - Inter- Connectedness’ in a pluralistic society develops. The Holy Quran makes this very clear:

For every one of you We appointed a law and a way. **And if Allah had pleased, He would have made you a single people, but that He**

might try you in what He gave you. So vie with one another in virtuous deeds. To Allah will all return, so He will inform you of that wherein you differed. – 5:48

Prof. Henry Francis B. Espiritu commenting on this verses in an article he wrote in 2018 entitled *Tolerance and Spirituality: Debunking the Islamophobic View of an ‘Intolerant Islam’* says:

This verse clearly pointed out that if God so willed it, He can create a single community out of varied groups of people. Nevertheless, God planned that humankind be varied in its popular expressions. God’s endowment of a pluralistic world is His grace to humanity. Our differences provide the venues for the existential celebration of life and of living; variety and diversity being the potent antidote to our humdrum existence.

Each community has its own unique way of life, its own customs and traditions, its own laws. Nevertheless, no matter how diverse these ways of life are, it should be understood in the light of the Almighty’s life affirming purpose in allowing such diversities—a flourishing humanity. It is therefore clear that

although God can produce a uniformed world of totalities by imposing a single law for all communities, yet He prefers to create pluralistic communities so that humankind will learn the values of tolerance, harmony, and fraternity.

Another aim of God in creating varied communities (according to the Holy Quran) is to test human beings in the conduct of virtuous deeds. He tests the various societies if they can live amicably and cordially with each other despite their differences. The divergence in each society's ways of life should not be a cause of disharmony and differences; instead, societal divergences should prod each community to vie with one another in the performance of virtuous conduct.

The Holy Quran insists that the best way of putting an end to religious, cultural, and ideological conflicts is to tolerate differences with openness and good faith. Each religious community should do righteous deeds according to their tenets; leaving to God the judgment as to which community is the best. The final section of the passage states: 'To Allah will all return, so

He will inform you of that wherein you differed.' The verse is thus very precise in stating that it should be left to God (and to God alone) in deciding the truth of the matters that people dispute. It is not for humans to pontificate which view is true and which is wrong. Vain and fruitless arguments as to which religious, ethical, and ideological point of view is right or wrong will only lead to communal fracas and infringement of societal concord. Likewise, **the verse firmly admonishes human beings to contend with one another in good deeds by using their own respective laws as bases of their righteous conduct.**

'Humanity' before 'Theology'

In another verse the Holy Quran teaches that righteousness transcends ritualistic 'theological' ceremonialism:

It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards East or West; but righteous is the one who believes in Allah and the Last Day, and the angels, and the Book, and the prophets, and gives away wealth out of love for Him, to the near of kin, and the orphans, and the needy, and the wayfarer, and to those who ask, and to set the slaves

free; and keeps up prayer, and pays the poor-rate [i.e., charity]: and the performers of their promise when they make a promise, and the patient in distress and affliction and in the time of conflict [adversities]. These are they who are truthful; and these are they who keep their duty. – 2:177

Espiritu refers to a commentary of this verse by the great master of Islamic mysticism, Muhaiyuddin Ibn Arabi (1164-1240 AD), from his Sufi treatise, *Bezels of Wisdom (Fusus al-Hikam)*. He says ‘He (ibn Arabi) provides a very universal and inclusive interpretation of the above passage. For him the passage encourages religious pluralism and tolerance by going beyond the ritualistic demands of different ceremonial expressions of worship and focusing instead on the importance of “humane” character, namely compassion towards others and persevering faith in the midst of trials and difficulties. For him, more than the outward manifestations of piety, the crucial intention of the Holy Quran is for the Muslim community to produce proper human beings who are sensitive to the needs of others. The Holy Quran endeavors to create compassionate and —humane persons who act with benevolence and equanimity to everybody with no regard whatsoever to racial,

cultural, religious, or ideological differences.’

In the end it is one’s good deeds and not religious affiliations that are the criteria by which man will be judged by Almighty Allah. The Holy Quran affirms:

So he who does an atom’s weight of good will see it. And he who does an atom’s weight of evil will see it. – 99:7, 8



We strongly condemn all acts of aggression and terror including all violations of basic human rights specifically those carried out in the name of Religion or State!

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