An Analysis of the Foundations for Christian-Muslim Relations in the Light of Selected Urdu Quranic Exegetes of Surah al-Māidah

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Abstract
Christian-Muslim relationships can have significant implications in several different areas, including personal relationships and social dynamics. Christian-Muslim relationships can take many forms, from friendships to marriages and peace accords, political ties to business ties. Several prominent Urdu Quranic exegetes such as Mawlānā Maududi, Mufti Muhammad Shafi, Mawlānā Daryābādi, Mawlānā Kailani, Mawlānā Ghulām Rasool Saeedi, Mawlānā Haqqani and Mawlānā Islahi have written about Christian-Muslim relationships and provided insights while interpreting Surah al-Māidah. The paper discusses Surah al-Māidah providing guidelines for Recognition of Commonality, Respectful Engagement, Mutual understanding, Food Sharing, Justice and Equity, Protection of Places of Worship, Avoidance of Hostility, and freedom of religion. By adhering to these principles, individuals from both Christian and Muslim communities can develop deeper understanding, respect, and cooperation, contributing to harmonious and mutually beneficial relationships for peaceful coexistence. The research method used in this paper is analytical.

Keywords: *Christian-Muslim relationship, Urdu commentators, Peaceful coexistence, Mutual understanding*

Introduction

The Qur'ān, the Holy scripture of Islām emphasizes the importance of peaceful and respectful relationships between Muslims and people of other faiths, including Christians being *ahl al- Kitāb* (People of the Book). Several passages encourage Muslims to engage in respectful dialogue with Christians and to emphasize the common ground between the two faiths. More specifically, the Holy Qur'ān indicates that Christians who are sincere in their faith and who live a humble and devout life, deserve respect and love from Muslims.

Status of *Ahl al-Kitāb* for the Christians

The term, *Ahl al-Kitāb* is a frequently used term in the Holy Quran, Sunnah and Islamic literature consequently. This term applies to the followers of two religions i.e., Judaism and Christianity. The Holy Quran states:

"اَنۡ تَقُوۡلُوۡۤا اِنَّمَاۤ اُنۡزِلَ الۡكِتٰبُ عَلٰى طَآئِفَتَيۡنِ مِنۡ قَبۡلِنَا وَاِنۡ كُنَّا عَنۡ دِرَاسَتِهِمۡ لَغٰفِلِيۡنَۙ[1]

"Lest you (pagan Arabs) should say: "The Book was sent down only to two sects before us (the Jews and the Christians), and for our part, we were in fact unaware of what they studied".

As per Islamic literature, non-Muslims are of two kinds; *Ahl al-Kitāb* and *Ghair Ahl al-Kitāb.* The title of *Ahl al-Kitāb* goes to the Jews and Christians being possessors of formerly revealed books, whereas all other non-Muslims are entitled *Ghair Ahl al-Kitāb. Ahl al-Kitāb* enjoy an exclusive status in comparison to *Ghair Ahl al-Kitāb*. [2]

So, the Christians are considered *Ahl al-Kitāb* according to Islamic teachings. The Prophet Muhammad gave many privileges to *Ahl al-Kitāb* that are not to be extended to heathens. *Ahl al-Kitāb* are granted freedom of worship; thus, during the early Muslim conquests, Jews and Christians were not forced to convert to Islam and had only to pay a special tax (*jizya*) for their exemption from military service. Muslim authorities are responsible for the protection and well-being of *Ahl al-Kitāb*, for, according to a saying of the Prophet, "He who wrongs a Jew or a Christian will have myself [the Prophet] as his indicter on the Day of Judgment." After Muhammad's death, his successors sent strict instructions to their generals and provincial governors not to interfere with *Ahl al-Kitāb* in their worship and to treat them with full respect. Muslim men are permitted to marry women from *Ahl al-*

[1] Al-Qurān 6:156.

[2] Abu Muhammad Muaffiq al-Din Ibn Qudamah al-Maqdisi, al-Mughni (Egypt: Maktabah al-Qahirah, 1968 AD) 9/212.

Kitāb even if the latter choose to remain in their religion. Muslim women, however, are not allowed to marry Christians or Jews unless they convert to Islam.[3]

Social and Political Ties with Christians in the light of Surah al-Māidah

Studying Surah al-Māidah can provide valuable insights for improving Christian-Muslim relationships. This Surah contains teachings that emphasize respect, tolerance, and common values between the two faiths. For example, it mentions the idea of "People of the Book," not a single time but several times, approximately eight times in Surah al-Māidah only, recognizing Christians and Jews as fellow recipients of divine scripture. Ayahs 5,15,19,65,68 and 77 are a few examples from this Surah, Same Surah also praises the *Torah* and *Injil* by considering both as *Huda* (source of guidance) & *Noor* (the light) in Ayahs 44 & 46 respectively.

This Surah also promotes ethical conduct, justice, marriage, and the sharing of food to protect the rights of Christians and other non-Muslims. For instance, Ayahs 5 & 8 clearly notify respectively:

ٱلْيَوْمَ أُحِلَّ لَكُمُ ٱلطَّيِّبَٰتُ ۖ وَطَعَامُ ٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُوا۟ ٱلْكِتَٰبَ حِلٌّ لَّكُمْ وَطَعَامُكُمْ حِلٌّ لَّهُمْ ۖ وَٱلْمُحْصَنَٰتُ مِنَ ٱلْمُؤْمِنَٰتِ وَٱلْمُحْصَنَٰتُ مِنَ ٱلَّذِينَ أُوتُوا۟ ٱلْكِتَٰبَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ إِذَآ ءَاتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ مُحْصِنِينَ غَيْرَ مُسَٰفِحِينَ وَلَا مُتَّخِذِىٓ أَخْدَانٍ ۗ وَمَن يَكْفُرْ بِٱلْإِيمَٰنِ فَقَدْ حَبِطَ عَمَلُهُۥ وَهُوَ فِى ٱلْءَاخِرَةِ مِنَ ٱلْخَٰسِرِينَ ۔[4]

"Today all good, pure foods have been made lawful for you. Similarly, the food of the People of the Book[1] is permissible for you and yours is permissible for them. And ˹permissible for you in marriage˺ are chaste believing women as well as chaste women of those given the Scripture before you—as long as you pay them their dowries in wedlock, neither fornicating nor taking them as mistresses. And whoever rejects the faith, all their good deeds will be void ˹in this life˺ and in the Hereafter they will be among the losers."

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ كُونُوا۟ قَوَّٰمِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَآءَ بِٱلْقِسْطِ ۖ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَـَٔانُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰٓ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا۟ ۚ ٱعْدِلُوا۟ هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ ۖ وَٱتَّقُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ خَبِيرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ۔[5]

[3]Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Ahl al-Kitāb." Encyclopedia Britannica, retrieved on: June 2, 2016, from: https://www.britannica.com/topic/Ahl-al-Kitab.

[4] Al-Qurān 5:5.

[5] Al-Qurān 5:8.

"O believers! Stand firm for Allah and bear true testimony. Do not let the hatred of a people lead you to injustice. Be just! That is closer to righteousness. And be mindful of Allah. Surely Allah is All-Aware of what you do".

By understanding these teachings, individuals from both communities can engage in meaningful conversations, build bridges of understanding, and work together on shared goals. This can contribute to better interfaith relations, dispel misunderstandings, and promote peaceful coexistence. Several prominent Quranic Urdu commentators from the subcontinent, have written about Christian-Muslim relationships and provided insights while interpreting Surah al-Māidah. These commentators have shared their interpretations of the Qur'ānic teachings that can guide Christians and Muslims in fostering better relationships based on mutual understanding, respect, and cooperation. It's recommended to explore their works for a more comprehensive understanding of the subject.

One of the key themes of Surah al-Māidah is the importance of justice, fairness, and mutual respect in all human relationships and even the liberty of practising religion as Ayah 48 states:

وَ أَنزَلۡنَآ إِلَيۡكَ ٱلۡكِتَٰبَ بِٱلۡحَقِّ مُصَدِّقٗا لِّمَا بَيۡنَ يَدَيۡهِ مِنَ ٱلۡكِتَٰبِ وَمُهَيۡمِنًا عَلَيۡهِۖ فَٱحۡكُم بَيۡنَهُم بِمَآ أَنزَلَ ٱللَّهُۖ وَلَا تَتَّبِعۡ أَهۡوَآءَهُمۡ عَمَّا جَآءَكَ مِنَ ٱلۡحَقِّۚ لِكُلّٖ جَعَلۡنَا مِنكُمۡ شِرۡعَةٗ وَمِنۡهَاجٗاۚ وَلَوۡ شَآءَ ٱللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمۡ أُمَّةٗ وَٰحِدَةٗ وَلَٰكِن لِّيَبۡلُوَكُمۡ فِي مَآ ءَاتَىٰكُمۡۖ فَٱسۡتَبِقُواْ ٱلۡخَيۡرَٰتِۚ إِلَى ٱللَّهِ مَرۡجِعُكُمۡ جَمِيعٗا فَيُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمۡ فِيهِ تَخۡتَلِفُونَ۔[6]

"For every community, we have appointed a law and a way of life. Had Allah willed, He could have made you a single community, but He wanted to test you regarding what has come to you. So, compete with each other in doing good. Every one of you will return to Allah, and He will inform you regarding the things about which you differed."

This Ayah emphasizes the importance of respecting the diversity of different communities and recognizing that God has appointed different laws and ways of life for different people.

Foundations for Christian-Muslim Relations in the Light of Selected Urdu Quranic Exegetes

Now we shall seek to understand the commentary of two passages of Surah al-Māidah through the lens of renowned Urdu commentators from the Indian Subcontinent. The selected interpreters and selected passages are Passages: 5: 51 and 5:82-83:

[6] Al-Qurān 5:48.

Passage one:

Quran was forbidden to establish friendship with Jews and Christians, clearly asking and urging believers not to make them their "Wali (ولی)"-

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْيَهُوْدَ وَ النَّصٰرٰۤى اَوْلِيَآءَ بَعْضُهُمْ اَوْلِيَآءُ بَعْضٍ وَ مَنْ يَّتَوَلَّهُمْ مِّنْكُمْ فَاِنَّهٗ مِنْهُمْ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ۔[7]

"You who believe, do not take the Jews and Christians as allies: they are allies only to each other. Anyone who takes them as an ally becomes one of them- God does not guide such wrongdoers-"

This Ayah seemingly contradicts Ayahs 82-83 comes later in the same chapter; it is essential now to learn if this prohibition of friendship with the people of the book is absolute, permanent, and unconditional or if there are specific conditions where the commandment shall be applied, it is also essential, if this commandment is endless and total and absolute then several questions emerge on the strategy of the Holy Prophet P.B.U.H himself during the life in Makkah and Madinah, let us first seek help from the commentaries of selected interpreters to know the mode of contradiction.

Mufti Shafi on Ayah 51:

Mufti Shafi's view in that regard revolves around the term "*Tark-e-Muwalat*," a deep tie and friendship that leads toward leniency and laziness about Muslim faith as a whole community of Muslims or as a member of the Muslim community, so he negates the kind of relations which may harm the Muslim's common interest as he interprets:

> "Muslims can deal with non-Muslims in the spirit of tolerance, sympathy, goodwill, equity, justice, favour, and kindness, almost everything within that line of conduct. They should do that, for they have been taught to do that. But what is not permitted is the kind of fast friendship and indiscriminating intimacy that may warp the distinctive hallmarks of Islam. This is the issue known as the ` *Tark al-Muwalat*' to refrain from deep (friendship) in Islamic terminology."[8]

[7] Al-Qurān 5:51.

[8] Mufti Muḥammad Shafi: *Ma'ārif al-Qur'ān* (Karachi, Adārat al-Ma'ārif, 2009).3/170.

Interestingly, Mufti Shafi narrates the background of this verse's revelation while quoting *Ibn Jarir*; there is no mention of Christians anywhere. Rather than polytheists of Makkah and Jews who were propagating against Islam, it seems that the prohibition of friendship with Christians here is just as extra care and caution, not absolute and permanent.

Mawlana Mawdudi on Ayah 51:

While Mawlānā Mawdudi's primary focus is on the role of hypocrites who were plotting against Muslims at that time, and honestly, the reader cannot find any practical example of Christian-Muslim fight or plot against each other in the days these verses revealed, so this was maybe a just precautionary step to not take any such friend outside Muslims since Muslims were actively involved in wars throughout Prophet's Madinah life:

> "Although Islam had become a formidable force owing to its followers' daring, courage, and sacrifices, the forces opposed to it were also tremendously powerful. To an objective observer, it must have seemed that either party had an equal chance of success. So, the hypocrites, apparently an integral part of the Muslim body politic, sought to maintain good relations with the Jews and the Christians as well. They expected refuge and protection from the Jews in case Islam was defeated. Moreover, the Jews and Christians held the greatest economic power in Arabia as the banking system and the greenest and most fertile regions were in their possession. For these reasons, the hypocrites were keen to maintain good relations with them: they thought that to regard the conflict between Islam and unbelief as crucially important, and to sever their relations with all those currently in conflict with Islam, would be too great a risk for both politically and economically."[9]

Mawlana Daryabadi on Ayah 51:

On the other hand, Mawlānā Daryabadi's point is that the Christians have been included in the non-friendship with the Jews in this place just because the Muslim community has been warned about the unity of Jews and Christians. Then he cites an example from the last century AD in support of his position. It is known that if the Muslims themselves go ahead and make

[9] Syed Abu al-A'lā Mawdudi: *Tafhim al-Qur'ān* (Lahore, Idārah Tarjumān al-Qur'ān, 91st edition, 2021) 1/480.

an agreement with the Christians or establish an individual relationship, and if it does not pose any threat to Islam, then friendship is permissible:

> "This means that a Jew is a friend of another Jew, a Christian is a friend of another Christian, but it is also widespread between a Jew and a Christian; at least the two are united against Islam."[10]

So, it seems with the lens of Mawlānā Majid that the prohibition of friendship is not absolute but subject to the fear of their alliance with Jews.

Mawlana Kailani on Ayah 51:

While interpreting this verse, Mawlānā Kailani also focuses on condemning the behaviour of hypocrites who were plotting against Islam with the help of Jews and Christians. Still, again, there is no mention of any war between Christians and Muslims in the background of the revelation of this verse nor mentioned by Kalani as well; unlike this, he supports outward appearances, tolerance, and kindness but negates the idea of deep friendship:

> "There were hypocrites who had a sincere friendship with Jews and Christians who were Muslims, but their sympathies were with Jews and Christians, and infidels, and their sympathies increased after the battle of Uhud."[11]

Mawlana Islahi on Ayah 51:

Mawlānā Islahi's stance is not different from Mawlānā Abdul Majid's as both consider the fear of the alliance of Jews and Christians against Islam:

> "They see Islam and Muslims as a common threat to themselves, and many are friends and helpers to deal with this threat."[12]

Again, this is a mere perception and assumption that both may pose a threat, but he is also unable to quote an example of a fight between Christians and Muslims when these verses are revealed.

In summary, this passage is just an example to show that there is a contextual and relative contradiction. Still, when we check the background of revelation and go through the interpretations, it becomes clear that there

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[10] Mawlānā Abdul Majid Daryabadi: *Tafseer-e-Quran*, known as *Tafseer-e-Majidi* (Karachi: Majlis Nashriāt Qur'ān, 1998) 1/929.

[11] Mawlānā 'Abd-al-Raḥmān Kailani: *Taiseer-al-Quran* (Lahore: Dār-al-Salām, 1432 AH) 1/545.

[12] Mawlānā Amin Ahsan Islahi, *Tadabbur-e-Quran* (Lahore: Faran Foundation, 2018) 2/546.

is another way of understanding since there are several ways to remove the contradiction, sometimes through *tafsīr bil-maʾthūr* (tradition-based exegesis), which is *Tradition-based analysis* emphasizes interpretation of the Qur'an using the Qur'an itself, a Hadith of the Prophet, or the opinions of the earliest Muslims (the Companions of the Prophet, or the successors), as well as restricting the scope for independent reasoning in the understanding and interpretation of Qur'anic text. And sometimes, through *tafsīr bil-raʾy* (reason-based exegesis), which is *reason-based exegesis* relies not only on the Qur'an, Hadith, and the earliest Muslims but also on the views of later scholars, linguistic analysis investigation of the effect of different uses of language on meaning. The symbolic reading of certain types of verses, in addition to that, other models of interpretations may be adopted to remove the contradictions among different verses, like the Sufi model, Akbari, and Ismaili models, and more importantly, to understand any subject of the Qur'an, it is necessary to look at all the verses related to it in one place by looking their respective backgrounds of revelation by adopting the whole messenger approach which means whenever two commandments in the Qur'an collide with each other. The action of the Holy Prophet P.B.U.H and his Companions R.A will be seen in it as there are several parallels for mercy, love, kindness, and compassion available in the life of the Prophet and his companions.

Passage 2:

General Instructions about Christians' Place and Space (5:82-83)

لَتَجِدَنَّ اَشَدَّ النَّاسِ عَدَاوَةً لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا الْيَهُوْدَ وَ الَّذِيْنَ اَشْرَكُوْا١ۚ وَ لَتَجِدَنَّ اَقْرَبَهُمْ مَّوَدَّةً لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْۤا اِنَّا نَصٰرٰى١ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ مِنْهُمْ قِسِّيْسِيْنَ وَ رُهْبَانًا وَّ اَنَّهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ۔ وَإِذَا سَمِعُواْ مَآ أُنزِلَ إِلَى ٱلرَّسُولِ تَرَىٰٓ أَعْيُنَهُمْ تَفِيضُ مِنَ ٱلدَّمْعِ مِمَّا عَرَفُواْ مِنَ ٱلْحَقِّ ۖ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَآ ءَامَنَّا فَٱكْتُبْنَا مَعَ ٱلشَّٰهِدِينَ۔[13]

"You [Prophet] are sure to find that the most hostile to the believers are the Jews and those who associate other deities with God; you are sure to find that the closest in affection towards the believers are those who say, 'We are Christians,' for there are among them people devoted to learning and ascetics. These people are not given to arrogance, When they listen to what has been revealed to the Messenger, you see their eyes overflowing with

[13] Al- Qur'an 5:82-83.

tears for recognizing the truth. They say, "Our Lord! We believe, so count us among the witnesses"[14]

These Ayahs of Surah al-Māidah have an essential place in the relations of the Muslims with the People of the Book (Jews and Christians) and other infidels, especially with the polytheists. In these verses, on the one hand, Jews and polytheists have been declared as the Muslims' unique enemies; on the other hand, the Christians have been announced as the closest to the Muslims. In the same way, the word مَوَدَّةً (love) is also noteworthy. At this point, the Christians have been accepted as a whole. Let us see how our chosen commentators interpret these verses:

Mawlana Saeedi on Ayahs 82 & 83:

Mawlānā Ghulām Rasool Saeedi, in his commentary on Ayahs 82-83 of Surah al- Māidah, writes with the reference of Tabri (d. 310AH) & Jawzi (d. 597AH), that these verses are particular for *Njāshi* and his courtiers, and all the Christians in his delegation have seen these attributes. They are not for ordinary Christians, and they cite as evidence the narrations in which not only the arrival of the delegation of *Njāshi* is mentioned but also their appearance and look are mentioned, of which the narration of *Hazrat Umm-e-Salma* is particularly noteworthy which has been quoted in Migration to Abyssinia.

Imam Abd al-Rahman bin Ali bin Muhammad al-Jawzi, who died in 597 AH, writes:

> "Hazrat Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) narrates that the Companions of the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) came to Najashi and recited the Holy Qur'an, and his scholars and monks heard the Qur'an, and tears began to flow from their eyes because of the recognition of the truth and Saeed. Ibn Jubayr said that Najashi sent thirty of his best companions to the Messenger of Allah. He recited the Holy Qur'an in front of them. He was filled with compassion and started to cry. They said, "By God, we know him and he became a Muslim. He went and informed Najashi and he also became a Muslim. Then Allah Almighty said this." The verse was revealed."[15]

[14]Al- Qur'an 5:82.

[15] Mawlānā Ghulām Rasool Saeedi, *Tibyan al-Qur'ān.* (Lahore: Fareed Book Stall, 2005) 3/273.

Mawlana Haqqani on Ayahs 82 & 83:

On the other hand, the position of Mawlānā Haqqani is similar to that of Saeedi Sahib, and he does not consider it permissible to speak ill of Christians because of their religious affiliation as he writes the following lines:

> "And among the disbelievers will find Christians for soft and compassionate Islam. He further mentions the compassion and purity of these Christians that when they hear the word of God, they begin weeping, knowing the truth, and pray to God to admit them into the company of righteous people. Then Allah mentions the reward of the Hereafter, the promise of Paradise, and the punishment of Hell for those who deny and disbelieve. The majority of commentators agree that the Ayah number 83 is not in favour of ordinary Christians from the beginning to the end but in favour of *Najashi* and his followers. So, when this is the case, it is in their favour to be kind and compassionate towards Islam because all the words are connected. It is also worthwhile that religion is a major component of compassion and gentleness in Christianity. In terms of religious observance, it is not permissible for Christians to speak ill of Muhammadans. In Islam, there is a strong emphasis on believing in Jesus from the heart, respecting the disciples, and affirming the Gospel. Believing in Christ is the rightful salvation for Christians. It is necessary to treat them as brothers. Yes, those who are nominal Christians and are complete atheists or have become hard-hearted while competing with the Muslims as the clergy is hostile and harsh towards the Muslims instead of the love.[16]"

Mufti Shafi on Ayah 83:

In Maʿārif al-Qur'ān, Mufti Shafi'i says under Ayah 83:

> "Most commentators have said that the verses mentioned above have been revealed about the same people. Most commentators agree that although these verses have been revealed about *Njāshi* and his delegation, they are common in words. Hence, its ruling

[16] Mawlānā ʻAbd āl-Haq Ḥaqāni, *Tafseer Fatḥ al-Mannān.* known as *Tafseer-e-Haqqani*, (Lahore: Al-Fayṣal nāshrān, 2009) 4/58.

> is general and inclusive for all Christians who are just and just like the people of Abyssinia. Like, that is, they followed the Gospel before Islam, and became followers of Islam after Islam.[17]"

Mawlana Kailani on Ayahs 82 & 83:

Mawlānā ʻAbd āl Raḥmān Kalani says that there is no doubt that the success of the migration to Abyssinia was due to the kindness and justice of the Christian king of Abyssinia, Njāshi. And verse 83 was revealed a few years after this incident by the king of Abyssinia in honor of the delegation that came to Madinah. However, there is no explanation as to whether these verses were explicitly related to these people or whether they are found in general:

> "God gives three reasons why Christians have less enmity and closer friendship with Muslims. One is that there are scholars in them. Second, there are elders in them, and third, these Christians are not arrogant but humble and down to earth. Now, look at the situation of the Jews against them. They did not refrain from usury and *Ḥarām* and they obtained wealth from every lawful and unlawful means. Then the effect of these denials was that they became fierce, stingy, and arrogant.[18]"

Furthermore, Ayah 83 states that after the retreat of the polytheists in the court of Njāshi and the success of the strategy of the Muslims, Njāshi sent a delegation of 70 people, and they were all new Muslims when they heard the Qur'ān. Then tears came out of his eyes; Kalani notes:

> "Many years after this incident, Njāshi sent a delegation of seventy new Muslim Christians to Medina to serve the Prophet. When these people listened to the Qur'ān, they would be moved with tenderness; tears would flow with many emotions and with their tongues (رَبَّنَا آمَنَّا) -. Start saying This verse describes the condition of these people.[19]"

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[17] Shafi, *Ma'ārif al-Qur'ān,* 3/217.

[18] Kailani, *Taiseer-al-Quran,*1/572.

[19] Ibid, 1/573.

Mawlana Daryabadi on Ayah 83:

In the opinion of Mawlānā ʻAbd āl-Mājid Daryābādi, the meaning of the verse is only Christian. This term applies only to those who consider Jesus to be the prophet and messenger of Allah, and similar people were present in the time of the Holy Prophet. In the admiration of which these verses have been revealed, it is as if the people who are called Christians by Mawlānā Daryābādi are not included in the term of Christians because they believe that Jesus is the son of God and possesses divine attributes; it seems that in Mawlānā Daryābādi's case, the so-called Christians are not included in the Nasaraa term. After all, they consider Jesus to be the son of God and possess the divine attributes:

> "There have been many problems with the verse, and many answers have been given. For example, an answer has been given that only the contemporary Christians of the Messenger of Allah are meant here. This is true in its place, but the basic problem arises only because the word Nasara' in verse has not been paid enough attention, and it has been taken to mean "*Maseehin*." An ancient sect considers Jesus a prophet and not his son. And which Christians today have been counting among the present "atheists" for one and a half thousand years.[20]"

He also criticized the current British and other Western nations who call themselves Christians, but indeed they are not, as he explains:

> "The present Western nations and governments are not even openly acknowledging their Christianity. Even if they call themselves Christians! This semi-atheist, semi-polytheistic nation has nothing to do with ancient "Christianity.[21]"

While interpreting verse no. 83 of the same Surah, only the Christians who were with this delegation refer to it and quote the ancient commentators such as *Kabir, Ibn Kathir, and Qurṭubi* as a reference:

> "Who were the people who confirmed this? The books of Hadith agree that it refers to *Njāshi* of Abyssinia (d. 9 AH) and his courtiers. These people were true Christians. Before the Prophet's migration, when he had made a group of Companions migrate

[20] Daryabadi, *Tafseer-e-Quran*,1/955.

[21] Ibid.

> from Makkah to Abyssinia, on one occasion, Ḥaḍrat Ja'far Ṭyār recited the verses of Surah Maryam at the request of *Njāshi. Njāshi* and the courtiers were impressed and cried.[22]"

Later in the literal study of the verse, quoting *'Allāmah Qurṭubi's* words on the words (اَعۡيُنَهُمۡ)"*a'yunahum*" and (تَفِيۡضُ مِنَ الدَّمۡعِ)"*Tafizu min al-Dam'i*", he writes that to be impressed by hearing the word of truth, to be immortal, is the way of good and humble people and then to speak. The confirmation also quotes from the Gospels:

> " اعينهم تفيض من الدمع" from . Tears flowed frequently. This is the scholars' impression; they do not wail, but their tears begin to flow. This is the condition of the scholars, who do not believe, do not believe, do not believe, or believe *(Qurṭubi)* (verse). Being inspired by the word of truth and becoming immortal and weeping is like the righteous Sunnah. The Torah says: And all the people wept when they heard the word of the law" (Nehemiah 8: 9). One of the points in bringing the word truth is that the prophecy of the last prophet in the language of Christ is also interpreted as "the Spirit of truth" (John 14:17. John 16: 13) [23]"

Mawlana Islahi on Ayahs 82 & 83:

Mawlānā Islahi in his Tafseer under Ayah 82 writes that these attributes belong only to the Christians who were followers of the caliph of Jesus Rashid Shimon, and they were based on pure monotheism. *Njāshi*, etc. all belonged to the same class and not to the followers of Paul who have spread their religion of Christianity through polytheism as he argues:

> "There is evidence here that it does not refer to ordinary Christians who believe in Paul's invention of Christianity, the Trinity, and the Atonement, etc., and is the forerunner of all acts of Islam in Islamophobia. Some followers adhered to the original teachings of Jesus Christ, apart from all the innovations of Paul, and whose remnants brought Islam at his invitation after his

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid.

> revelation. *Njāshi* and others belonged to the same faithful group.[24]"

He goes on to say that modern Christians do not possess the attributes that the Qur'ān mentions here because they are disgusted with the very word that the Qur'ān uses to refer to these attributes. See:

> "The second is that the attribute of this group is stated to be that they have *'Ulamā'* (scholars) and Zāhid (Mystics), and they are not arrogant. This attribute does not apply to modern Christians. The words *'Ulamā'* and 'zihad' are used here in a perfect sense. They are not suitable for the priests of the present ecclesiastical system. Then in their chapter, it is said, "They are not arrogant." I think again and again that this is a reference to the saying of Christ, which is in the Gospels that "Blessed are the poor in heart, in the kingdom of heaven." They are the ones who will enter." How can the present-day Christians, whose condition is such that they despise even their real name and have chosen a new name for themselves instead, be considered an example of this attribute?[25]"

Below 83, Mawlānā Islahi's position is apparent, in which the character of the Christians of that time is beautifully presented, and he writes, referring to the Gospels, the good news of Jesus:

> "This is a picture of how this group welcomed the Qur'ān and the Prophet of the End Times. In this picture, it is clear that the consolation and salvation that Jesus preached in the Gospels and the signs that he gave were some of the things that saved the way to the coming. Seeing that this coming was very dear because all their hopes, both in this world and in the hereafter, were now attached to it. Because everyone preached it, they would be privileged to join his first batch because they had already been declared his witnesses and introducers before the world. Its manifestation was the manifestation of the heavenly kingdom in God's earth which Christ had announced, and in which all the

[24] Iṣlāḥi, *Tadabbur-e- Qur'ān*,2/574.

[25] Ibid.

> servants of God were to be partakers whose hearts were free from the trappings of pride and arrogance and filled with the light of the fear of God. - So, their condition is that when they hear the verses of the Qur'ān and see the rays of truth shining in them for which they have spent long nights of restlessness, their eyes fill with tears of joy. And they cry out: O Lord! We believe in this Book and its Revealer, so write us in the category of those who bear witness to it. "Write in the category of witnesses" acknowledges the ancient covenant to which they were bound by the trust of the previous prophets and the responsibilities entrusted to them. As we have pointed out, that covenant was that when the last prophets came with the book, you should go ahead and testify before the people that these are the things that were foretold in our scriptures. And then believe in it yourself and invite others to believe in it.[26]"

While reflecting on this verse, some people may raise the question of why jihad and fighting against infidels obligatory.

Mufti Muḥammad Shafi'i has answered this question by saying:

> "In the context of this verse, this objection is not valid because the objective of Jihād is to eradicate corruption from the earth. It is a commandment to fight against those who seek to cause deterioration. To fight against such actors is genuinely according to the command of Allāh because they spread corruption in the land, and Allāh does not love those who make mischief in the ground, and Allāh does not love the corrupt. So, The Islamic government must protect the rights of non-Muslims, which proves that the teaching of Jihād and fighting in Islam does not force people to accept the faith. So, the objective of jihad is to remove the corrupt from authority. Therefore, killing these people is getting rid of snakes, scorpions, and other predators. In the same way, Islam strictly forbids the killing of women, children, the elderly, and the disabled on the battlefield of jihad because they are not actively violent. It also prohibits killing those who promise to pay Jizyah and declare themselves bound by the law. It is evident from Islamic practice that it does not force people to accept faith through jihad and fighting, but rather

[26] Ibid.

it seeks to uphold justice and peace by eradicating oppression in the world. When an old Christian woman was invited to Islam by Ḥazrat ‘Umar R.A, she replied,(انا عجوز كبيرة والموت الى قريب) "I am an older woman and death is near." That is, I am on the verge of death. Why should I leave my religion at the last moment? Hearing this, ‘Umar did not compel her to believe but recited the same verse: لَاۤ اِكۡرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ, i.e., there is no compulsion in religion[27]

Impacts

Studying Christian-Muslim relationships can have several positive impacts, for instance:

1. Promoting Understanding: A deeper understanding of each religion's beliefs, practices, and history can dispel stereotypes and misconceptions, fostering a more accurate view of both faiths.

2. Interfaith Dialogue: Knowledge gained from such studies can facilitate open and respectful conversations between Christians and Muslims, creating opportunities for shared learning and cooperation.

3. Conflict Resolution: Insights into historical conflicts and current tensions can aid in finding peaceful solutions and preventing future misunderstandings.

4. Cultural Sensitivity: Understanding the cultural contexts of both religions can help individuals and societies navigate differently.

Conclusion

Studying Christian-Muslim relationships is important for fostering understanding, promoting tolerance, and addressing cultural and religious diversity. It can lead to better interfaith dialogue, reduce misconceptions, and contribute to peaceful coexistence in a globalized world. The significance of Christian-Muslim relationships lies in their potential to promote mutual respect, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence between two of

[27] Shafi, *Ma‘ārif al-Qur’ān*,1/616-617.

the world's largest religions. By studying these relationships, we can address historical tensions, bridge cultural gaps, and contribute to global harmony. Understanding each other's beliefs and practices can lead to meaningful interfaith dialogue and collaboration on shared values and goals.

In the end, the verses from Surah al-Māidah ask to maintain moderate relations with Christians by respecting them as the people of the book, living peacefully with mutual respect and understanding.