

Does the Muslim have the right to read the Bible?

Would you agree that we should reject neither Christianity nor Islam based on the words and actions of bad Christians and bad Muslims, those who do not know or do not follow the true teachings of Christianity and Islam? It would be fairer to examine the life and teachings of Jesus or the life and teachings of Muhammad in order to decide whether or not each one of them was sent by God.

THE RELIGION OF OUR FATHERS

Too many people never question the beliefs they have inherited from their parents: they are Christians because their parents were Christians, or they are Muslims because their parents were Muslims. And yet, both Christians and Muslims ask Pagans to reject their idols, their false gods, in spite of the fact that these Pagans inherited them from their parents. If we ask others to examine the religion in which they were born, shouldn't each of us examine the religion into which he or she was born to determine whether or not it is the true one? And shouldn't we take the trouble to go to the source before evaluating the religion of others?

It is always best to avoid basing our conclusions on hearsay. A believer in Christ named Fouad Masri was speaking to his Muslim friend, Kamal. Fouad asked him:

“Kamal, have you read the Injeel?” He scoffed, ‘No, it’s been changed.’ Fouad countered, ‘Well, if you haven’t read it, how do you know it’s been changed?’ He replied, ‘Well, my dad told me it was.’ Fouad asked him, ‘Did your dad read the Injeel?’ ‘No,’ Kamal responded. ‘So how does he know it’s been changed?’ his friend urged. ‘Well,’ said Kamal, ‘Grandpa told him it was.’ Fouad couldn’t help but ask, ‘Did Grandpa read the Injeel?’ And of course, Kamal replied that his grandfather hadn’t read the Injeel.” (*Connecting With Muslims*).

Misinformation is passed on in this way from generation to generation, without anyone verifying what he is told. Isn't this dangerous? In spite of the love and respect we have for our parents, we recognize that, like all men, they can be ignorant of certain truths. And so we discover and take advantage of new ways to treat various diseases, to raise crops, to travel from one place to another, to communicate with those who live far away, or to do many other things. Keeping

an open mind does not mean we are being disrespectful to our parents or our heritage. By doing so, we may be able to bring a blessing to both ourselves and our families.

Two hundred years ago, the pagan people living on certain islands in the Pacific Ocean were torn by war and violence. One day two men who were traveling by canoe were taken off course by a great storm and ended up far from their destination. After many days they landed on an island called Rarotonga. The chief of the island asked them for news of the island from which they had come. The two men began to explain that great changes were taking place on their home island: all the people were burning their idols. They had all begun worshipping the God of Heaven and Earth instead of their old gods. The chief was astounded. He asked them, “Just what has this ‘God of Heaven and Earth’ given you to cause you to abandon the gods of your fathers?” The travelers answered very simply, “Peace. This God has given us peace.” At this, the chief of Rarotonga ordered his people to pray to the God of Heaven and Earth so that He might send a messenger to them, as well, so that they could worship this God and have peace. In spite of the fact that his ancestors had not known this God, the chief recognized that he and his people needed Him very badly.

IS THE BIBLE FORBIDDEN TO MUSLIMS?

Muslims sometimes have the mistaken idea that it is forbidden for them to read or to own a copy of the Bible. If one of their children acquires a Bible, they may beat the child and take away the Bible. If one of their friends is discovered reading a Bible, they treat him as if he is guilty of something terrible or shameful.

They forget that according to one of the Hadith, “The prophet said, Tell the stories of bani-Israel, for it is not a sin to do so.” More importantly, nowhere does the Qur'an itself forbid the reading of the Bible. To the contrary:

The Qur'an says in Surah 2 – *Al-Baqarah*, aya 136, “Say, ‘We believe in God and what was revealed to us; and what was revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants, and what was given to Moses and Jesus and what was given to the [other] prophets by their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them.’ It is to Him that we surrender ourselves.” Instead of forbidding the scriptures of the

Jews and the Christians, this verse clearly says that the Muslim must grant them the same respect that he gives to the Qur'an. All of these writings would be from the same source and would deserve the same esteem.

The Qur'an says in Surah 4:136 – *An-Nisa*, “Believers, believe in God and His Messenger and in the Scripture He sent down to His Messenger, as well as what He sent down before. He who denies God, His angels, His Scriptures, His messengers and the Last Day has surely gone far astray.” It is inconceivable that a faithful Muslim would treat the Bible with contempt, when, according to his own Qur'an, it came down from Allah Himself and all believers are to accept it.

Other passages in the Qur'an speak in the same way:

“Believers, argue only in the best way with the People of the Book, [but contend not at all] with such of them as are unjust. Say, ‘We believe in what has been revealed to us, and what has been revealed to you; our God and your God are one; and to Him we submit.’” (Surah 29:46 – *Al-Ankabut*)

Allah says to Muhammad in Surah 2:4,5 – *Al-Baqarah*:

“Those who believe in the revelation sent down to you and in what was sent before you, and firmly believe in the life to come—they are the people who are rightly following their Lord and it is they who shall be successful.”

And again:

“Say, ‘People of the Book! Do you resent us only because we believe in God and in what has been revealed to us and to others before, and because most of you are disobedient?’” (Surah 5:59 – *Al-Ma'idah*)

How can one claim to believe in what was given by God to Moses and to Jesus, and say at the same time that it is forbidden to read what was revealed them? How can one say, as some claim, that the Qur'an replaces the Bible and makes it useless and unimportant, when the Qur'an itself recommends many times to read both the Qur'an AND the Bible?

Muslims sometimes ask Christians, “Why do you not accept our prophet and our holy book, whereas we

recognize not only Muhammad, but also Jesus, Moses and all the prophets of God, as well as what God revealed to them?” The Christian wonders in just what sense the Muslim claims to believe in Jesus, Moses and the other prophets when he refuses to read these revelations, nor does he recognize the right of others to read them.