

Jews Helping Muslims, and Just A Few Questions (Part I)

by Hugh Fitzgerald



One of the ways to avoid thinking about the ideology of Islam – what its texts contain, how those texts explain the attitudes toward non-Muslims, and the behavior of Muslims over the past 1400 years – is to focus on the Feelgood. By Feelgood I mean those heartwarming stories in which non-Muslims and Muslims feel each other's pain, help each other out, come to each other's rescue, express solidarity and fellow-feeling, give the world an inspiring example of why-can't-we-all-get-along-we're-all-brothers-under the-skin-we-have-to-stand-togetherness against the naysayers, the right-wingers, the preachers of hate, the Islamophobes who want to keep us apart rather than bring us together. For if the bigots and the backbiters and the bannons were to prevail, and manage to divide non-Muslim from Muslim, then "the terrorists will have won." It's a crazed variant on Christian Bomfoggery – Brotherhood Of Man, Fatherhood Of God. It's sentimentalism on stilts. And it's now part of the atmosphere.

In Victoria, Texas, a mosque burned down on January 28. By

January 31, just three days later, one million dollars in donations had poured in:

*Days after fire destroyed the Victoria Islamic Center in Victoria, Texas, donations to rebuild the mosque have passed \$1 million. And that's only one part of the support local Muslims have received: **Four churches and a synagogue say Muslims are welcome to hold services in their buildings.***

[here](#) (and which can handily be cut-and-pasted into every Internet discussion of the matter).

The Qur'an depicts the Jews as inveterately evil and bent on destroying the wellbeing of the Muslims. They are the strongest of all people in enmity toward the Muslims (5:82); as fabricating things and falsely ascribing them to Allah (2:79; 3:75, 3:181); claiming that Allah's power is limited (5:64); loving to listen to lies (5:41); disobeying Allah and never observing his commands (5:13); disputing and quarreling (2:247); hiding the truth and misleading people (3:78); staging rebellion against the prophets and rejecting their guidance (2:55); being hypocritical (2:14, 2:44); giving preference to their own interests over the teachings of Muhammad (2:87); wishing evil for people and trying to mislead them (2:109); feeling pain when others are happy or fortunate (3:120); being arrogant about their being Allah's beloved people (5:18); devouring people's wealth by subterfuge (4:161); slandering the true religion and being cursed by Allah (4:46); killing the prophets (2:61); being merciless and heartless (2:74); never keeping their promises or fulfilling their words (2:100); being unrestrained in committing sins (5:79); being cowardly (59:13-14); being miserly (4:53); being transformed into apes and pigs for breaking the Sabbath (2:63-65; 5:59-60; 7:166); and more.

The classic Qur'anic commentators do not mitigate the Qur'an's words against Jews, but only add fuel to the fire.

Ibn Kathir explained Qur'an 2:61 ("They were covered with humiliation and misery; they drew on themselves the wrath of Allah") this way: "This Ayah [verse] indicates that the Children of Israel were plagued with humiliation, and that this will continue, meaning that it will never cease. They will continue to suffer humiliation at the hands of all who interact with them, along with the disgrace that they feel inwardly." Another Middle Ages commentator of lingering influence, Abdallah ibn Umar al-Baidawi, explains the same verse this way: "The Jews are mostly humiliated and wretched either of their own accord, or out of coercion of the fear of having their jizya [punitive tax] doubled.

And there are similar, though not quite as numerous or as vehement, verses in the Qur'an against Christians.

During the many months it will take to rebuild the mosque in Victoria, one wonders what Muslim prayers will be said, what Muslim sermons delivered, in the synagogue or in the churches where Muslims will be holding their services. Will those grateful Muslims still curse the Infidels seventeen times a day in their prayers? If they do so (and those prayers don't change), will they begin to have any doubts as to whether they should be cursing the kuffar at all? Will any Muslims dare to discuss this among themselves, any Muslims begin to think that just possibly what they learn in the Qur'an and Hadith about Infidels, and especially about Jews, does not correspond to reality?

And does Robert Loeb, or do any of his coreligionists in Victoria, Texas have any idea of what is written in the Qur'an and Hadith about Jews? Would they be interested in finding out what is contained in those texts? If they now were to discover what is written about Jews, would they deem it improper or unhelpful or undiplomatic ever to raise the matter with the Muslims who had been offered the use of, and likely are using, the synagogue? Why shouldn't they feel free to discuss this?

Why shouldn't there be an uninhibited discussion about these matters, among all these new friends who presumably can talk straight, without benefit of embarrassed circumlocution on one side or taqiyya on the other? Why shouldn't Jews and Christians who have offered help also want to find out exactly what their new, grateful Muslim friends are taught about Jews and Christians, and what they claim to believe as compared to what they are taught to believe? Why should the local Muslims, the recipients of genuine and spontaneous kindnesses from the Kuffar, be reluctant to enlighten them? Or if the local Muslims do try to mislead about what the Qur'an and Hadith say about Jews, what should the Jews of Victoria, Texas make of that? Anything? Nothing?

Omar Rachid, who attended the Victoria mosque, and is in charge of fundraising for its repair, is full of gratitude:

“Our hearts are filled with gratitude for the tremendous support we’ve received,” wrote campaign organizer [of the fund-raising] Omar Rachid, who attends the mosque. “The outpouring of love, kind words, hugs, helping hands and the financial contributions are examples of the true American Spirit and Humanity at its best with donations coming in from all over the world.”

This sounds sincere. Omar Rachid is effusively grateful, as of right now. But one would also like to learn a bit more, to ask him what he thinks, at this point, of what is written in the Qur'an about Jews and Christians. Would he attempt to convince Infidels that all those Qur'anic quotes about Jews (see above) are limited in time and space, that is, to a particular context, and have no relevance to what Muslims believe today? Does he believe that himself? Is he willing to concede that those quotes are valid for all time, and that they are not to be “contextualized”?

If he is unwilling to recognize what is so lethal about those

quotes, should we still judge his gratitude to be sincere? Might he admit that the Islamic texts do not correspond to what his personal experience of Jews and Christians has been, and that he has had a change of mind and heart, and hopes to convince other Muslims to undergo the same? Was he surprised at how Christians and Jews so quickly offered their houses of worship to local Muslims, and offered, as well, all those “outpourings of love, kind words, hugs, helping hands” and financial contributions?

And one final question: does he know of, can he even conceive of, anywhere in the world, Muslims offering Christians and Jews the use of their mosques in case of need? If so, it would be good to hear about it, and not just from Omar Rachid. But even if we believe that Omar Rachid is sincerely grateful, and sincere in his belief that “contextualization” of Qur’anic verses is permissible, we must not make the mistake of thinking that this – his – understanding of the Qur’an is held by many others. For almost all Muslims, and certainly for all the clerics and Qur’anic commentators, what is in the Qur’an means today just what it meant 1,400 years ago, and with as much ferocity in Victoria, Texas now as it did in Arabia then. And while effusions of gratitude can eventually subside, the words of the Qur’an remain fixed in amber. ***Verba volant, scripta manent.***