

Question:

I was recently asked by a Muslim woman about the validity/permissibility and advisability of her son marrying a Mormon woman. In looking into this, I have since learned of at least two separate cases of other American Muslim men who had married Mormon women.

In my research, however, the information I've been able to find on this subject has been quite scant. One US-based Muslim scholar was asked about this matter and said, "Mormons are not Christians and therefore such a marriage would not be valid." However, two answers provided by the Assembly of Muslim Jurists of America (AMJA) include the statements that Mormons, "are amongst the people of the scriptures. They attribute themselves to Christianity in general, and this is enough for us to treat them as (Ahlul-Kitab)," and that they are, "amongst the people of the book as they attribute themselves to Christianity in general."

These AMJA responses can be found here:

- <https://www.amjaonline.org/fatwa/en/83051/are-mormons-people-of-the-book-ahl-kitaab>
- <https://www.amjaonline.org/fatwa/en/82904/are-mormons-people-of-the-book-ahl-kitaab>

Other responses to similar queries include those from Darul Iftaa Birmingham, Mufti Ebrahim Desai, and Mufti Siraj Desai:

- <https://daruliftabirmingham.co.uk/home/are-mormons-considered-to-be-ahlul-kitab/>
- https://askimam.org/public/question_detail/1874
- <https://islamqa.org/hanafi/askmufti/44629/mormons/>

However, none of these responses appear to provide a definitive or fully satisfactory ruling on the matter of i) whether or not Mormons could be considered Ahl al-Kitab and ii) attendant rulings that arise from this (e.g., marriage, their slaughtered meat).

Therefore, could you kindly clarify:

1. Are Mormons to be considered Ahl al-Kitab?

2. If so, what is the ruling on a Muslim man marrying a Mormon woman?

Answer:

Wa‘alaykum al-Salām wa Raḥmat Allah wa Barakātu-h.

In the name of Allah, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful.

Preliminaries

Islam is the final religion revealed to Mankind and therefore it is universal and applicable for all. Concomitantly, Islam does not claim to be a “new” religion—in fact, Islam traces its beginnings to the very advent of the Human race, Prophet Ādam himself (upon him *salām*). In demonstration of both its rightful origin and persisting role as the true religion of humanity, Islam acknowledges any statement or act of truth still maintained by previous civilizations. For example, marriage is a universal value shared by all civilizations. As such, Islam does not abolish the institution of marriage from a given society altogether. Rather, Islam – after acknowledging the truth of an institution—corrects any diversion from the *fiṭrah* (human nature) as established through the knowledge Allah revealed to Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and as manifest during the time of Prophet Ādam within the ultimate *context* of Jannah. Therefore, Islam prohibits intra-sex unions, for example, as that contravenes the *fiṭrah* established through the aforementioned methodology.

In this way, Islam does not condemn everything the non-Muslim confesses. Rather, Islam desires to show the non-Muslim where he is wrong so that, ultimately, by accepting Islam—with its creedal, legal, and ethical framework, he secures salvation and becomes compatible with the culture of *Jannah*. If a non-Muslim does not accept Islam, he will be treated with the good courtesy afforded to a neighbor in *this life*; salvation and Jannah—the origin and climax of the human context—is reserved exclusively, by Divine Decree, for the one who accepts Islam.¹

Thus, Islam allows certain social interactions with non-Muslims that are shared by all civilizations and are “non-devotional” in nature—Islam allows Muslims to consume the slaughter of certain non-Muslims (provided all the necessary conditions of slaughter are fulfilled) and to marry certain

non-Muslim women. In terms of worship, Islam—in most absolute terms—prohibits participation in religious rites of other religions, as “religion” directly relates to the afterlife. In other words, Muslims may engage with certain non-Muslims in regard to non-devotional affairs in this life, but not those that relate strictly to the afterlife.

It is necessary to know that even in regard to such “non-devotional” affairs—slaughter and marriage—the non-Muslim must adhere to a religion that is deemed—through the sources of Islamic law, the Qur’ān and Sunnah—to be a religion that can be traced back to a Prophet and a heavenly book: thus, the term “Ahl al-Kitāb.”¹ In order to be classified as “Ahl al-Kitāb”, a group must confess belief in a Prophet and Divine Book.ⁱⁱ In this way, there exists at least *some* semblance of a shared frame of reference that would allow these forms of social interaction to function satisfactorily.

Both consumption of slaughter and execution of a marriage contract lead to a certain bond—physical and legal respectively—between two entities. In the case of food, the consumed food-stuff—literally—becomes a part of the consumer. Thus, it is necessary for the food being consumed to be free of not only physical impurities (as removed through exsanguination), but, also, spiritual impurities which are removed by taking the name of Allah—and no one else—at the time of slaughter. The “Ahl al-Kitāb” claim the necessary *tawhīd* (although their conception may be incorrect) that is necessary for slaughter.

In the case of marriage, the two parties are so conjoined in union that it is as if the two parties now form a single, independent unit. Thus, the man provides both for himself *and* his family as he provides for *himself*; children are attributed in genealogy to both parents (*thubūt al-nasab*) as being a part (*juz*’) of both spouses; and, certain “in-laws” are treated just as one’s own biological relatives—one does not marry one’s father- or mother-in-law just as they do not marry their own parents, for example. Although there is no physical “conjoining” between the two parties, the couple is legally considered one and the same in regard to a number of rulings. Similar to the issue of the consumption of slaughter, it is necessary for the marriage be free of the spiritual impurity

¹ Bear in mind that “Ahl al-Kitāb” is no honorific – far from it; rather, it is an epithet of sarcasm assigned to a people who—despite claiming to be lettered and knowledgeable of scripture—lost the spirit of religion for its words—at least whatever remains of them.

of *at least* polytheism by ensuring that the woman is of the “Ahl al-Kitāb.” Nikāh, as a contract, creates a bond built upon commitment (*damm*) and longevity (*mudāwamah*). As such, the laws of Islam promote the preservation and continuation of the contract. Even in this world, it is only through a shared belief in *tawhīd* that longevity can be achieved. For other non-devotional contracts, a shared belief in *tawhīd* is not necessary, because a business contract, for example, does not require committed cooperation until death.

Determining “Ahl al-Kitāb”

As mentioned previously, in order to be classified as “Ahl al-Kitāb”, a group or individual must confess belief in a Prophet and Divine Book. Intra-religious recognition—i.e., how *other denominations* view a particular group or individual—does not determine who is and is not to be included in that religion. The position of the Darul Ifta is that religious confession—along with belief in a Prophet and Divine Book—is sufficient for said classification.

Therefore, as Mormons self-identify as Christians—and state that they believe in ‘Īsā (upon him *salām*) and the *Injīl* (although the “Bible” is not the same as the *Injīl*)—they are treated as Christians. Their sectarian differences do not relate to denying the primary tenets of belief in a Prophet and Divine Book—‘Īsā (upon him *salām*) and the *Injīl*—but rather the additional creedal points concerning “Joseph Smith” and the “Book of Mormon.” Although “mainstream” Christian sects debate whether Mormons are to be considered Christian due to issues relating to interpretation of the trinity, scriptural authority, etc., it is a clear and well-established fact in the Qur’ān and Sunnah that “mainstream” Christians do not represent the true followers of ‘Īsā (upon him *salām*) to begin with. As such, the inclusion or lack thereof by the “mainstream” is wholly irrelevant.

Allah says: “And, indeed, **from among them** is a group that twists its tongues with the Book that you may think it is [indeed] of the Book [although] it is not of the Book; they say it is from Allah but it is not from Allah; and, they say against Allah [pure] falsehood despite knowing [very well the truth.]” This *āyah* establishes that those who invent and fabricate revelation—including the Book of Mormon—are considered, nevertheless, to be a “group of them.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Muftī Shafi‘ al-‘Uthmānī (1396 H./1976 C.E.) states in *Ma‘ārif al-Qur’ān*:

...Despite these conditions and attributes [of polytheistic statements, corruption of Divine Books, etc.], the Qur’ān classifies them [i.e., the Jews and Christians] as “Ahl al-Kitāb.” Thus, it becomes known that so long as the Jews and Christians do not abandon Judaism and Christianity **altogether**, they will be included within the “Ahl al-Kitāb” irrespective of how many false points of creed and evil practices they afflict themselves with [*mubtalā hau*].^{iv}

Mufti Shafi‘ then proceeds to cite the following incident from Imām al-Jaṣṣāṣ’s (370 H./980 C.E.) *Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*:

‘Ubādah b. Nusayy transmits from Ghudayf b. al-Ḥārith that a governor of ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb wrote to him: ‘A group of people from the Samaritans read the Tawrāh and observe the Sabbath [but] they do not believe in the resurrection; so, what do you [say about them]?’ Then, ‘Umar wrote to him: ‘They are a group from the Ahl al-Kitāb.’”^v

Imām al-Jaṣṣāṣ says:

The discussion concerning the ruling of the “Sabians” and whether they are “Ahl al-Kitāb” or not has preceded. They are two groups. One of them [resides] in the environs of *Kaskar* and *Baṭā’ih*. They, [based on] what has reached us, are [classified as being a] group of Christians even though they oppose them in many [matters] of their religious practice [*diyānati-him*] because the Christians [consist] of many groups—of them are the Marcionites, Arianites, Maronites—whereas the three groups—Nestorians, Melkites, and the Ya‘qūbiyyah—**absolve** [“yabra’ūn”—**themselves**] **from [the other sects]** and prohibit [sic. interacting with them?]. They attribute themselves to Yaḥyā b. Zakariyyā and Shīth [upon them all *salām*]. They [produce] books they claim are the books of Allah that he revealed to Shīth b. Ādam and Yaḥyā b. Zakariyyā [upon them all *salām*]. The Christians call them Yūḥannāsiyyah. So, Abū Ḥanīfah considers this group to be of the “Ahl al-Kitāb” and he permits the consumption of their slaughter and the marriage of their women.^{vi}

It is clear from the above that intra-religious recognition plays no legal role in classifying either individuals or groups of people. Lastly, Allah says: “...And you will find the closest of them—in terms of empathy [*mawaddah*—to those who believe, those who **say**: ‘We are Christians’...”^{vii}

This *āyah* alludes to the fact that confession may determine one’s religious affiliation (along with the necessary belief in a Prophet and a Divine Book). Therefore, it is not necessary to consider the viewpoint of other Christian sects when determining whether a specific group is “truly” Christian.

That being said, if a group claims to be *Muslim*, they must meet all of the creedal requirements of being Muslim. The Qadiyānī religion is unequivocally distinct from Islam due to the fact that its adherents deny necessary and conclusively established points of creed. True attribution to Islam requires full acceptance of the Islamic Creed, whereas true attribution to another religion only requires nominal confession (along with the acceptance of a Prophet and Divine Book) albeit accompanied with *kufṛ*, self-contradiction, and excommunication by other groups.

In sum, we say that Mormons are considered Christians and, as such, the consumption of their slaughter and marriage with their women is theoretically valid.

Practical Considerations

Notwithstanding the above, the jurists clearly state that such social interactions ought to be reserved for exceptional circumstances.^{viii} For example, if one has to choose between swine and the legitimate slaughter of the “Ahl al-Kitāb”, one must eat the slaughter of the “Ahl al-Kitāb.” Of course, if the slaughter of a Muslim and the slaughter of a “Ahl al-Kitāb” are both available, it is preferred to consume the slaughter of the Muslim as the spiritual value of the Muslim’s slaughter cannot be attained—naturally—through that of a non-Muslim. As Islamic law is the final form of *waḥy*-based law, it accommodates every situation—including, but not limited to, such exceptional circumstances. In simple words: if there is no need to consume their slaughter, one should not. If there is a need to, one may.

In regard to marriage, the jurists explicitly mention that it is disliked to marry a woman of the Ahl al-Kitāb *even* in a predominantly *Muslim* land—much less in a predominantly *non-Muslim* land. As for predominantly non-Muslim lands, they differ only as to whether the *karāḥah* (repugnance) is *tanzīhī* (lighter) or *taḥrīmī* (severe). The *ratio legis* is clear: forming such a close relationship with a non-Muslim—especially in a pre-dominantly non-Muslim environment where Islamic ideals are all but compromised—endangers the *īmān* of not only the man but his children,

grandchildren, and the whole of his posterity until the Final Day— “A man is on the religion of his friend.”^{ix}

Living with a non-Muslim spouse—along with interacting with her family members—would, ultimately, acclimate a man and his children to actions and customs detrimental to their *dīn* in regard to matters as encompassing as worship, clothing, food, familial dealings etc. One should ask himself: would he marry someone who would physically harm him or his child? In the same way, spiritual harm is substantially more consequential because it leads to eternal pain in the next life.

Concomitantly, if a person is unable to find a spouse because they have just converted to Islam or they happen to live in an area where marrying a Muslim woman is not possible—for example—and their chastity is in danger, there could be some concession given—on a case-by-case basis—for marrying a non-Muslim woman, although the ideal would, nevertheless, remain to marry a Muslim, whether born-Muslim or not. In any case, note that toward the end of the *āyah* that discusses marrying non-Muslim women, Allah Himself reveals a very severe warning in caution of the almost inseparable, corollary-like danger: “And whosoever disbelieves in *īmān*, his actions are null and he, in the next life, will be of the losers.”

The Prophet ﷺ instructed us on every issue of life *and* death. In regard to marriage, he ﷺ taught us that a marriage candidate is to be evaluated based upon certain criteria. He ﷺ said: “A woman [or man] is married for four [reasons]: her financial status, her social status, her beauty, and her religion—look for the one of religion, may your hands be dusty.”^x Although one considers many factors in a marriage candidate—which are all, undoubtedly, very important—it is an individual’s religion and religiosity that should be prioritized as it is only one’s *taqwā* that promotes “generosity” in behavior (as opposed to abundance of wealth), accumulates and increases over time (as opposed to beauty) and is recognized eternally by Allah—Allah says: “Indeed, the most honorable among you is the most *muttaqī*” and the Prophet ﷺ said: “Indeed, Allah does not look at your forms and your wealth; however, he looks at your hearts and your deeds.”^{xi}

Islam teaches us to be foresighted because Muslims, by definition, believe in the afterlife. In this way, Islam teaches us that marriage is designed to be such a union of eternal love, commitment,

and loyalty as to outlive not only the unrelenting vicissitudes of life, but the ultimate and total *end of life itself*—many *āyāt* establish the continuation of the union on the Final Day and beyond. When the non-Muslim spouse passes away, she will not be prayed over *or* for, and she will not be buried in a Muslim graveyard. At death, social interactions with deceased non-Muslims no longer continue because they no longer remain suitable recipients for the neighborly courtesy available to them in this life. On the final day, it will be said: “And be separate, [on this] day, [you] criminals!” Thus, in place of “till death does us apart,” Islam expands the meaning of marriage to continue well beyond this life. When considering a potential spouse, one must think of the eventual outcome: “I want to be with this person in Jannah.” Any other approach is, at best, myopic and, at worst, self-inflicted harm—of the highest degree.^{xiii} And Allah knows best.

Shaheer Pathan

Corroborated by,



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Darul Ifta, Darul Qasim




Mufti Hisham Dawood

Darul Ifta, Darul Qasim

ⁱ These preliminary points are taken from various lectures by Shaykh Amin Kholwadia.

ⁱⁱ Kamāl al-Dīn Ibn al-Humām, *Fath al-Qadīr*, 1st ed. (Egypt: Sharikat Maktabat wa Maṭba‘at Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1389/1970), 3:229.

والكتابي من يؤمن بنبي ويقر بكتاب والسامرية من اليهود أما من آمن بزبور داود وصحف إبراهيم وشيث فهم أهل كتاب تحل مناكحتهم عندنا
Ibn ‘Ābidīn, *Hashiyat Ibn ‘Ābidīn*, 2nd ed. (Egypt: Sharikat Maktabat wa Maṭba‘at Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1386/1966), 3:45.

(قوله مؤمنة بنبي) تفسير للكتابية لا تقييد ط (قوله مقرة بكتاب) في النهر عن الزيلعي واعلم أن من اعتقد دينا سماويا وله كتاب منزل كصحف إبراهيم وشيث وزبور داود فهو من أهل الكتاب فتجوز مناكحتهم وأكل ذبائحهم (قوله على المذهب) أي خلافا لما في المستصفى من تقييد الحل بأن لا يعتقدوا ذلك ويوافقه ما في مبسوط شيخ الإسلام يجب أن لا يأكلوا ذبائح أهل الكتاب إذا اعتقدوا أن المسيح إله وأن عزيرا إله ولا يتزوجوا نساءهم قيل وعليه الفتوى ولكن بالنظر إلى الدليل ينبغي أنه يجوز الأكل والتزويج اه قال في البحر وحاصله أن المذهب الإطلاقي لما ذكره شمس الأئمة في المبسوط من أن ذبيحة النصراني حلال مطلقا سواء قال بثالث ثلاثة أو لا لإطلاق الكتاب هنا والدليل ورجحه في فتح القدير بأن القائل بذلك طائفتان من اليهود والنصارى انقضوا لا كلهم مع أن مطلق لفظ الشرك إذا ذكر في لسان الشرع لا ينصرف إلى أهل الكتاب وإن صح لغة في طائفة أو طوائف لما عهد من إرادته به من عبد مع الله تعالى غيره ممن لا يدعي اتباع نبي وكتاب إلى آخر ما ذكره اه

‘Allāmah Shabbīr Aḥmad al-‘Uthmānī, *Tafsīr-i ‘Uthmānī* (Karachi: Maktabat al-Bushrā, 1436/2015), 1:219.

Muftī Shafī‘ al-‘Uthmānī, *Ma‘ārif al-Qur‘ān* (Karachi: Idārat-i al-Ma‘ārif, 1985), 3:47-48.

ⁱⁱⁱ Sūrat Āl ‘Imrān (3):78.

^{iv} See footnote ii.

^v Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām al-Qur‘ān*, ed. Muḥammad Ṣādiq al-Qumḥāwī (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1405), 3:21.

عبادة بن نسي عن غضيف بن الحارث أن عاملا لعمر بن الخطاب كتب إليه أن ناسا من السامرة يقرؤون التوراة ويسبتون السبت ولا يؤمنون بالبعث فما ترى فكتب إليه عمر إنهم طائفة من أهل الكتاب

^{vi} *Aḥkām al-Qur‘ān*, 4:282-283.

وتقدم الكلام أيضا في حكم الصابئين وهل هم أهل الكتاب أم لا وهم فريقان أحدهما بنواحي كسكر والبطائح وهم فيما بلغنا صنف من النصارى وإن كانوا مخالفين لهم في كثير من ديانتهم لأن النصارى فرق كثيرة منهم المرقونية والآريوسية والمارونية والفرق الثلاث من النسطورية والملكية واليعقوبية يبرءون منهم ويحرمون وهم يتممون إلى يحيى بن زكريا وشيث ويتحلون كتباً يزعمون أنها كتب الله التي أنزلها على شيث بن آدم ويحيى بن زكريا والنصارى تسميهم يوحناسية فهذه الفرقة يجعلها أبو حنيفة رحمه الله من أهل الكتاب ويبيح أكل ذبائحهم ومناكحة نسائهم

^{vii} Sūrat al-Mā‘idah (5):82.

^{viii} *Hashiyat Ibn ‘Ābidīn*, 3:45.

(قوله وإن كره تنزيها) أي سواء كانت ذمية أو حربية فإن صاحب البحر استظهر أن الكراهة في الكتابية الحربية تنزيهية فالذمية أولى اه ح قلت علل ذلك في البحر بأن التحريمية لا بد لها من نهي أو ما في معناه لأنها في رتبة الواجب اه وفيه أن إطلاقهم الكراهة في الحربية يفيد أنها تحريمية والدليل عند المجتهد على أن التعليل يفيد ذلك ففي الفتح ويجوز تزويج الكتابيات والأولى أن لا يفعل ولا يأكل ذبائحهم إلا للضرورة وتكره الكتابية الحربية جماعا لافتتاح باب الفتنة من إمكان

التعلق المستدعي للمقام معها في دار الحرب وتعريض الولد على التخلق بأخلاق أهل الكفر وعلى الرق بأن تسبى وهي حبلى فيولد رقيقاً وإن كان مسلماً اهـ
فقوله والأولى أن لا يفعل يفيد كراهة التنزيه في غير الحرية وما بعده يفيد كراهة التحريم في الحرية تأمل

^{ix} See endnote iv.

Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, “Musnad al-Mukthirīn min al-Ṣaḥābah, Musnad Abī Hurayrah raḍiy Allah ‘An-h,” in *Musnad Aḥmad*, 1st ed. ed. Shu‘ayb al-Arna‘ūṭ and others (Mu‘assasat al-Risālah: 1421/2001), 13:398.

حدثنا عبد الرحمن ومؤمل قال حدثنا زهير بن محمد قال مؤمل الخراساني حدثنا موسى بن وردان عن أبي هريرة قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم المرء على دين خليله فلينظر أحدكم من يخالط وقال مؤمل من يخالل

^x Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allah al-Bukhārī, “Kitāb al-Nikāḥ, Bāb al-Akfā’ fi-l-Dīn,” in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, ed. group of ‘ulamā’ (Būlāq, Egypt: al-Maṭba‘at al-Kubrā al-Amīriyyah, 1311), 7:7.

حدثنا مسدد حدثنا يحيى عن عبيد الله قال حدثني سعيد بن أبي سعيد عن أبيه عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنه عن النبي ﷺ قال تنكح المرأة لأربع لمالها ولحسبها وجمالها ولدينها فاظفر بذات الدين تربت يداك

^{xi} Muslim b. al-Hajjāj al-Qushayrī, “Kitāb al-Birr wa-l-Ṣilah wa-l-Ādāb, Bāb Taḥrīm Zulm al-Muslim...,” in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, ed. Muḥammad Dhahab Effendi and others (Turkiye: Dā‘al-Ṭibā‘ah al-‘Āmirah, 1334), 8:11.

حدثنا عمرو الناقد حدثنا كثير بن هشام حدثنا جعفر بن برقان عن يزيد بن الأصم عن أبي هريرة قال قال رسول الله ﷺ إن الله لا ينظر إلى صوركم وأموالكم ولكن ينظر إلى قلوبكم وأعمالكم

^{xii} This paragraph is based on various points made by Shaykh Amin Kholwadia.