

Appendix I

Comparison of Islam and Christianity

In order to help my dear readers even further, I have included an excerpt from another source that might help you to better understand the comparison of our Christian Bible and Islamic Quran. The source and credit goes to “The Way of Righteousness”. They also have one hundred lessons online concerning the Bible, for those who wish to learn more about God and His “TRUTH”.

THE WAY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS PRESENTS:

Muslims are My Friends

With so much media attention given to radical, violent Muslim groups, we need to remind ourselves that most Muslims are friendly, hospitable, peace-loving people. They are our neighbors and our friends. In general, I feel more comfortable speaking with Muslims than I do with secularized Americans. Unlike so many in the West, most Muslims fear God, sense His impending judgment, and are willing to talk about God and the Prophets. For those unfamiliar with a Muslim's basic beliefs and practices, the following observations may be helpful.

Islam, Muslims and Allah

Islam is the religion of Muslims. The Arabic word Islam means submission (to Allah). Muslim (or Moslem) means one who

submits. Allah is the Arabic word for God. Islam's fundamental concept of God is that God is one. God is great, indescribable, almighty, and compassionate – especially to Muslims. Everything that happens in the world has been predetermined by God. Muslims believe that God has revealed His will, but not Himself, to humankind. Muslims view their relationship to God as a master-slave relationship, with no possibility of a more intimate father-son relationship.

Five Pillars

The roughly one billion Muslims around the world find themselves in widely differing socio-economic-cultural circumstances – ranging from the wealthy oil sheiks of the Persian Gulf to the rural farmers of West Africa. While local culture and perspectives affect Muslim beliefs considerably, all Muslims assent to Islam's "Five Pillars." Most Muslims believe that they must fulfill these five duties to atone for their sins and merit a place in paradise.

The Five Pillars of Islam are:

The Witness (Shahada): La illaha illa Allah, wa Mohammed Rasul Allah. "There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the Prophet of God."

Ritual Prayers (Salat): Five times daily at hours specified, in the Arabic language, facing toward Mecca, preceded by a ceremonial washing of face, hands and feet.

Alms (Zakat): Sharing 2.5% of one's wealth with those in need.

Annual Fast (Saum): An obligatory, dawn-to-dusk, month-long fast which takes place during Ramadan, the ninth month on the Islamic lunar calendar.

Pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj): Required of all able-bodied Muslims who can afford it, at least once in a lifetime.

The Prophets and the Qur'an

Most Muslims profess belief in the Prophets of the Bible. The Qur'an names more than twenty Bible Prophets, including Abraham (Ibrahim), Moses (Musa), David (Dawud), John the Baptist (Yahya) and Jesus the Messiah (Isa al Masih). Muslims consider Muhammad (born in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, in 570 A.D. and buried in Medina in 632 A.D.) to be the last and greatest Prophet.

Muslims maintain that God revealed His will through four holy books: the Torah ("Taurat") of Moses, the Psalms ("Zabur") of David, the Gospel ("Injil") of Jesus, and the Qur'an (also spelled Koran) of Muhammad. Many Muslims assert that the Qur'anic revelation annuls the earlier revelations, but this assertion has no clear support from the Qur'an. They believe that Muhammad (who never learned to read or write) received the Qur'anic verses over many years from the angel Gabriel in a desert cave near Mecca. Muhammad recited the verses to his followers who wrote them down. Years after Muhammad's death, these verses were collected into a single book known as the Qur'an – which means "recitation."

The Qur'an has 114 chapters (suras) and is about two-thirds the length of the New Testament. Muslims venerate the Qur'an and are profoundly affected by its Arabic language and poetic style. Though most Muslims have never read the entire Qur'an, it is their point of reference for every area of life: religion, family, health, ethics, economics and politics. Like the Bible, the Qur'an affirms the reality of God and Satan, angels and evil spirits, a coming day of resurrection and judgment, a hell to shun and a paradise to gain. But the similarity ends there. The Qur'an's descriptions and definitions of these realities differ greatly from those recorded by the Prophets of the Bible.

God

The Qur'an presents God as a single entity. "Say not, 'Three.' Forbear, it will be better for you. God is only one God! Far be it from His glory that He should have a son!" (4:172) {Note: "4:172" means chapter 4 and verse 172 of the Qur'an. However, the verse may be as many as five verses away in different versions of the Qur'an.} This and other Quranic verses (5:116), combined with the Roman Catholic Church's unscriptural practice of praying to Mary, have caused many Muslims to think that Christians believe in three gods—God, Mary and Jesus. This is a tragic misunderstanding of what a true Christian believes. The Bible says: "There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 2:5)

The Bible clearly condemns polytheism and idolatry, and consistently confirms the oneness of God, declaring: "You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve!... The LORD our God, the LORD is one!" (Matthew 4:10; Deuteronomy 6:4,13; Mark 12:29) Oneness, however, does not preclude depth and dimension. The Qur'an reveals God as unknowable and one-dimensional. The Bible reveals God as self-revealing and tri-dimensional – Eternal Father, Eternal Son and Eternal Holy Spirit.

Satan, Sin and Man

The Qur'an teaches that Satan became the Devil (Iblis) when he stubbornly refused to bow down to Adam at God's command. (7:11-18) Adam is said to have been in a heavenly Paradise before he ate the forbidden fruit. After Adam transgressed, God sent him down to earth. The Qur'an views Adam's disobedience as a minor slip rather than a major fall. According to many Quranic scholars,

all Adam had to do to get back into God's favor was to learn and recite certain prayers. (7:18-30; 2:30-40)

While the Bible portrays God as absolutely holy and man as totally depraved, the Qur'an portrays man as weak and misguided. In the Muslim view, man does not need redemption; he only needs some guidance so that he might develop the inherently pure nature with which the Creator has endowed him. If he will be faithful in his prayers, almsgiving and fasting, God is likely to overlook his sins and usher him into Paradise, a garden of sensual delights.

Jesus

Every Muslim professes to believe in Isa (the Quranic name for Jesus). By this they mean that they believe that Jesus is one of 124,000 Prophets that he was sent uniquely to the Jews, that he denied the "Trinity", that he predicted the coming of Muhammad, that he was not the Son of God and that he was not crucified! The Bible calls such a Jesus "another Jesus." (2 Corinthians 11:4)

The Quranic profile of Jesus presents Muslims with a difficult paradox. While certain verses declare that Jesus was "no more than a Prophet" (4:171-173; 5:75; 2:136), others ascribe to him characteristics and titles attributed to God, but never attributed to any other Prophet. For example, the Qur'an affirms that Jesus was born of a virgin, that he was righteous and holy, and that he possessed the power to create life, open the eyes of the blind, cleanse the lepers and raise the dead. (3:45-51; 5:110-112; 19:19) Furthermore, the Qur'an calls him the Messiah (Al Masih), the Word of God (Kalimat Allah) and the Spirit [Soul] of God (Ruh Allah), (4:171,172). These supernatural descriptions and titles have caused many Muslims to seek the truth about who Jesus really is.

One day, a devout Muslim man said to me, "The Qur'an calls Jesus Ruh Allah. If Jesus is the Soul of God, then He must be

God!" This Muslim was beginning to grasp one of the most basic truths of Holy Scripture – not that a man became a god – but that God became a Man in order to reveal Himself to the children of Adam and save them from their sins. Sometime later, at the cost of being cast out by his family, this same Muslim boldly acknowledged Jesus as his Savior and Lord.

The Son of God

The ultimate sin in Islam is "shirk" (Arabic for association). Shirk is the sin of regarding anything or anyone as equal to God. The Qur'an rejects Jesus' title as the Son of God. "They say: 'Allah has begotten a son. God forbid!'" (2:110) "Say: 'If the Lord of Mercy had a son, I would be the first to worship him.'" (43:81; 4:172; 5:72.73) Unfortunately, many Muslims interpret "Son of God" in a carnal sense. They understand the term to mean that God took a wife and had a son by her! In several Way of Righteousness lessons, we explain from the Bible why the Prophets, the angels, and God Himself call Jesus the Son of God. These simple explanations have helped many Muslims so that they no longer say, "Astaghferullah!" ("God forgive you for this blasphemy!") when they hear Jesus being called by His rightful title as 'The Son of God'.

The Bible gives three main reasons why Jesus is called the Son of God. Interestingly, the Qur'an contains verses that appear to affirm all three of these reasons.

1. The Bible calls Jesus the Son of God because He came from God. (Isaiah 7:14; Luke 1:34,35) Similarly, the Qur'an teaches that Jesus came directly from God that He was born of a virgin, that He had no earthly father. (3:47; 19:20) Also, the Qur'an sets Jesus apart from all other Prophets by calling Him the Messiah (the Anointed One). (4:157,171,172) Unlike Adam, who was formed from dust, the Messiah came from heaven.

2. The Bible calls Jesus the Son of God because He is like God. He has God's holy and sinless character and all of God's mighty attributes. Like Father, like Son. (Hebrews 1:1-9; Matthew 17:5) The Qur'an calls Jesus "a holy son." (19:19; 3:46). While the Qur'an speaks of the other Prophets' need of forgiveness (38:24; 48:1), it never attributes a single sin to Jesus. Also, it ascribes to Jesus supernatural powers that God alone possesses. (3:45-51; 5:110-112)

3. The Bible calls Jesus the Son of God because He is One with God. He is the Eternal Word who has always been One with God. (John 1:1-18; Philippians 2:5-11) Similarly, the Qur'an calls Jesus the Word of God and the Soul/Spirit of God (4:171,172). Just as, in some mysterious way, a person is forever one with his words, spirit, and soul – so God and Jesus Christ are eternally One.

The Cross

All the Prophets of the Bible, in one way or another foretold the Messiah's sacrificial death. But the Qur'an says: "They denied the truth and uttered a monstrous falsehood against Mary. They declared: 'We have put to death the Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary, the apostle of Allah.' They did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, but it appeared so to them." (4:157) While Quranic scholars interpret this verse in a variety of ways, most Muslims fervently deny the historical and Scriptural records concerning Jesus' death on the cross. They believe it inappropriate that a great Prophet like Jesus should die such a shameful death. Thus, Muslims dismiss the central message of the Prophets of the Bible – that Jesus the Messiah willingly offered Himself as the final sacrifice to pay the sin-debt of the world "that the Scriptures of the Prophets might be fulfilled." (Matthew 26:56)

The Qur'an omits the Good News of atonement through Jesus' shed blood by which God "might be just and the justifier of the one

who has faith in Jesus." (Romans 3:26) The Muslim sees no need for the sin-bearing death of the sinless Messiah. The Qur'an says, "No soul shall bear another's burden" (6:164; 17:14-16; 39:7). Islam teaches that God excuses sin based on man's repentance and good works. (42:26,31; 39:54,55) The Qur'an bases salvation on what man can do for God. The Bible bases salvation on what God has done for man, saying, "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us..." (Titus 3:4)

Islam's Sacrifice

While Islam denies the Messiah's death on the cross – it faithfully commemorates an Old Testament sacrifice which prefigured the Messiah's sacrificial death. Every year, on the tenth day of the last month of the Islamic calendar, Muslims celebrate the Feast of Sacrifice (Id al-Adha). On this day Muslims around the world slay carefully selected rams (or lambs, male goats, cows or camels) in commemoration of the ram that God provided on the mountain to die in the place of Abraham's son. Tragically however, they overlook the fact that, about two thousand years after God provided the ram for Abraham, God fulfilled the symbolism of Abraham's sacrifice. For on the same mountain (not far from where the Dome of the Rock is located today), Jesus the Messiah willingly shed His righteous blood as God's sufficient and final payment for sin. And three days later God raised Jesus from the dead – the triumphant Savior and Lord of all who believe.

Through Jesus' voluntary substitutionary sacrifice, God has revealed His great love and mercy to humankind. The Messiah's death and resurrection perfectly fulfilled God's plan of salvation about which the Prophets wrote – thus eliminating the need for continued animal sacrifices. Yet millions persist in sacrificing

animals while ignoring the purpose, meaning and fulfillment of the animal sacrifice.

The Qur'an says...

Many are surprised to learn that the Qur'an commands Muslims to believe the Torah, the Psalms and the Gospel. The Qur'an says: "If you are in doubt concerning what we revealed to you, then question those who read the Scripture that was before you." (10:94) "We sent down the Torah in which there is guidance and light." (5:44) "We have revealed to you as we revealed to Noah and the Prophets after him, and as we revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the tribes; to Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, Solomon and David, to whom we gave the Psalms." (4:163) "We sent forth Jesus, the son of Mary, to follow in the footsteps of the Prophets, confirming the Torah which was before him, and we gave him the Gospel with its guidance and light, confirmatory of the preceding Torah; a guidance and warning to those who fear God. Therefore let the people of the Gospel judge according to what God has sent down therein. Evildoers are those that do not judge according to God's revelations." (5:46) "Those who treat the Book, and the message we have sent through our apostles, as a lie, will know the truth hereafter: when, with chains and collars around their necks, they shall be dragged through scalding water and burned in the fire of hell." (40:71). The Qur'an contains dozens of similar verses.

The Dilemma

Such Quranic verses confront sincere Muslims with a serious dilemma: How can one accept both the Bible and the Qur'an when they clearly contradict each other? Furthermore the Qur'an emphasizes the high risk involved: to treat any of the Writings of the Prophets as a lie is to be "burned in the fire of hell." Many attempt to resolve their dilemma by contending that the original

Bible has been lost or falsified and is no longer reliable. Yet this explanation does not satisfy those who know their Qur'an which says: "The Word of God shall never change. That is the supreme triumph." (10:64) "None can change the decrees of God." (6:34). The Qur'an claims that it was given to confirm and guard the preceding Scriptures. Muslims must ask themselves, "Would the Qur'an confirm a corrupted, unreliable book?"

Some suggest that Christians and Jews falsified the Bible after the time of Muhammad. This argument is disproved by the fact that today's Bibles are based on hundreds of ancient manuscripts which date to a time long before Muhammad. The Bible we are reading today is in harmony with the Bible of Muhammad's time. "Allahu Akbar!" God is great – great enough to preserve His eternal Word for every generation.

The bottom line is that those who read the Bible with a desire to understand it will discover that it defends itself. The best defense is a good offense. "The Word of God which lives and abides forever" presents an awesome offense.

"All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field: the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the Word of the Lord stands forever!" (1 Peter 1:23-25)

The Way of Righteousness

Wolofs say, "Truth is a hot pepper" and "Whoever wants honey must brave the bees." Similarly, the penetrating power of God's Truth and everlasting sweetness of God's way of righteousness makes going after it worth every possible risk – even ostracism, persecution, and physical death.

The Prophet Solomon wrote: "In the way of righteousness is life (a relationship with God), and in its pathway there is no death (separation from God)!" (Proverbs 12:28) Does this claim sound

too good to be true? Friends, with God – nothing is "too good to be true." Allahu Akbar! God is great!

To all who submit to God's way of righteousness, He promises to give freely that which religion can never provide: Salvation from the penalty and power of sin, a credited-righteousness, assurance of sins forgiven, a cleansed conscience, a deep peace, an untouchable joy, a new nature, a personal relationship with God, an eternal home with Him in Paradise, and infinitely more!

To all who have read or heard these one hundred lessons – we commend you to God, the Compassionate, the Merciful, the Righteous – who extends this life-giving and life-transforming promise to all who will claim it:

You will seek Me and find Me,
when you search for Me
with all your heart."
(Jeremiah 29:13)