Jesus in the Qur’an - Muslims Receive a False View

Dr. Zukeran clearly lays out the differences between a biblical view of Jesus and the view brought forth in the Qur’a’n. He makes a strong case that the biblical reports are supported by historical fact while the Muslim writings were created to strengthen their case. Looking at the birth, the life and the death of Christ he highlights the distinct differences and the case for a Christian view over an Islamic view.

The Debate

Islam and Christianity both recognize Jesus as a significant historical figure. However, they teach contrary doctrines regarding the nature and person of Jesus Christ. Christians have taught from the beginning that Jesus is the divine Son of God. This was not a doctrine invented centuries after the life of Christ as some allege, but was taught from the beginning by Christ Himself and the church. There is strong evidence that the New Testament was written in the first century, and there are numerous verses proclaiming the deity of Christ (Matt. 1:23; Mark 2:1-12; John 1:1). Old Testament prophecies regarding the nature of the Messiah proclaimed that He would be human as well as divine (Isaiah 7:14; 9:6). Even non-Christian Roman historical works, such as the writings of Pliny the Younger (AD 112) and Celsus (AD 177), acknowledge that the Christians worshipped Christ as God.

Muslims reject the biblical teaching that Christ is the divine Son of God. Islam builds upon the teachings of the Qur’an, which is considered perfect and without error. The Qur’an teaches that Jesus was a significant prophet but not the divine Son of God. Muslims reject the doctrine of the Trinity, and, therefore, worshipping Jesus as God is considered shirk, or blasphemy (Sura 5:72).

Islam teaches that Jesus Himself never claimed to be the Son of God. Sura 9:30 states, “The Jews call Ezra a son of God, and the Christians call Christ the son of God. That is a saying from their mouth; (in this) they but imitate what the unbelievers of old used to say. God’s curse be upon them: how they are deluded away from the truth!” The assertion that God stands against those who believe in the deity of Christ is in contradiction with the Bible. Sura 5:116-117 states:

And behold! God will say [i.e. on the Day of Judgment]: “Oh Jesus, the son of Mary! Didst thou say unto men, worship me and my mother as gods in derogation of God?” He will say: “Glory to Thee! Never could I say what I had no right (to say). Had I said such a thing, You would indeed have known it. You know what is in my heart, though I know not what is in Yours. For You know in full all that is hidden. Never did I say to them anything except what You commanded me to say: ‘Worship God, my Lord and your Lord.’ And I was a witness over them while I lived among them. When You took me up, You were the Watcher over them, and You are a witness to all things.”

Chapter five of the Qur’an asserts that Christianity taught the worship of Mary as a god. From this passage and others, many Muslims have incorrectly concluded that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity is the Father, the Son, and Mary. In fact, the New Testament never taught the worship of Mary. Instead it clearly taught that one must worship the Lord God alone (Matt. 4:10). The biblical doctrine of the Trinity never included Mary. The chapter further states that Jesus Himself clearly
denied claiming to be the Son of God and would not accept the worship of others. In contrast, the Bible teaches that Jesus claimed to be the divine Son of God and received worship (Jn. 8; Matt. 14:33; 28:17). Sura 5:75 states:

Christ, the son of Mary, was no more than a messenger; many were the messengers that passed away before him. His mother was a woman of truth. They had both to eat their (daily) food. See how God makes His signs clear to them; yet see in what ways they are deluded away from the truth!

The Qur’an emphatically teaches that Jesus was a prophet and not the divine Son of God. Those who believe Jesus is divine are “deluded.”

The Apostle John, writing in AD 90, states in chapter one of his gospel, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” The Apostle Paul, writing his letter to the Colossians in AD 60, states in chapter 2:9, “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.”

It is apparent that Christianity and Islam teach contrary views of Christ and, therefore, cannot both be true at the same time. In this article I will investigate what the Qur’an teaches regarding the life of Christ and compare it with the Gospels. Since they teach contrary views, I will examine to see whether the Bible or the Qur’an has the greater weight of evidence to support its teachings on the nature of Christ.

Infancy Narratives of Christ in the Qur’an

What does the Qur’an teach regarding the childhood years of Christ? Not only do the Bible and the Qur’an teach contrary views regarding the nature of Christ, they also record contrary accounts of His early life. The Bible teaches that Jesus was born in Bethlehem during the time of Caesar Augustus and the reign of King Herod over Bethlehem. Jesus was born in a stable because there were no rooms available for Mary and Joseph. On the eve of His birth, shepherds, who were told of his birth by angels, visited him. Later, wise men from the East came and worshipped the child. Herod, threatened by the announcement of a newborn king, sought to kill the child. Joseph fled from Herod, traveled to Egypt, and, after Herod’s death, returned to Nazareth where Jesus grew up. The Gospels rely on eyewitness accounts for their source of information.

The Qur’an includes stories regarding the birth and childhood of Christ, but it relies on very questionable sources that are not eyewitness accounts. First, the Qur’an teaches that Jesus was born in the desert under a palm tree. Sura 19 teaches that Mary, feeling the pangs of childbirth, seized the trunk of a palm tree and desired at that moment to die. However, the baby Jesus speaks to her from beneath saying, “Grieve not; for your Lord has provided a rivulet beneath you. And shake towards yourself the trunk of the palm tree: it will let fall fresh ripe dates upon you. So eat drink and cool [your] eye” (Sura 19: 24-25).

This story parallels an account from the apocryphal Gospel of Pseudo Matthew, which is dated to the early seventh century AD (between AD 600 and 625).{1} New Testament scholar Dan Wallace dates this Gospel even later to the eighth to ninth century AD.{2} Wallace’s date would push back the date of the Qur’an to several generations after Muhammad. In chapter 20 of this apocryphal work, Joseph and Mary are fleeing to Egypt and come to rest under a tall palm tree. Mary longs to eat the fruit of a palm tree and Joseph states their need for water. It is then the infant Jesus speaks to the palm
Then the child Jesus, with a joyful countenance, reposing in the bosom of His mother, said to the palm: “O tree, bend thy branches, and refresh my mother with thy fruit.” And immediately at these words the palm bent its top down to the very feet of the blessed Mary; and they gathered from it fruit, with which they were all refreshed. And after they had gathered all its fruit, it remained bent down, waiting the order to rise from Him who had commanded it to stoop. Then Jesus said to it: “Raise thyself, O palm tree, and be strong, and be the companion of my trees, which are in the paradise of my Father; and open from thy roots a vein of water which has been hid in the earth, and let the waters flow, so that we may be satisfied from thee.” And it rose up immediately, and at its root there began to come forth a spring of water exceedingly clear and cool and sparkling. And when they saw the spring of water, they rejoiced with great joy, and were satisfied, themselves and all their cattle and their beasts. Wherefore they gave thanks to God.

Historians and textual scholars such as F. F. Bruce have concluded that Muhammad incorporated this story from the apocryphal Gospel of Pseudo Matthew.\(^3\)

Another infant narrative from the Qur’an teaches that not long after Jesus’ birth, Mary presents the infant to her people, several of whom question her regarding the baby. In her defense she points to the infant, which confuses the people since the child is only an infant. Then to everyone’s surprise, the newborn Jesus speaks saying:

> I am indeed a servant of Allah, He has given me revelation and made me a Prophet; And He has made me blessed wheresoever I be, and He has enjoined on me prayer and charity as long as I live. [He] has made me kind to my mother, and not overbearing or miserable; So peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day that I shall be raised up to life [again]. Such was (Prophet) Jesus, the son of Mary. A saying of truth, concerning what they doubt (Sura 19:30-33).

This account teaches that shortly after his birth, Jesus spoke, proclaiming His calling as the prophet of Allah, and defending the innocence of His mother Mary. The source of this story is another pseudo-gospel, the Arabic Gospel of the Infancy of the Savior.\(^4\) According to Wallace, this apocryphal work was written in the fifth or sixth century AD.\(^5\) This work states:

> We have found it recorded in the book of Josephus the Chief Priest, who was in the time of Christ (and men say that he was Caiaphas), that this man said that Jesus spake when He was in the cradle, and said to Mary His Mother, “Verily I am Jesus, the Son of God, the Word which thou hast borne, according as the angel Gabriel gave thee the good news; and My Father hath sent Me for the salvation of the world.”

Here we see the parallels between the Qur’an and this apocryphal work. This work specifically mentions the infant Jesus speaking from his cradle, declaring His calling from God.

A third account in the Qur’an records Jesus making birds out of clay and then bringing them to life. Sura 3:49 states:
I have come to you with a sign from your Lord, in that I make for you out of clay, the figure of a bird, and breathe into it and it becomes a bird by Allah’s leave: And I heal those born blind, and the lepers, and I quicken the dead by Allah’s leave; and I declare to you what you eat and what you store in your houses. Surely therein is a Sign for you, if you did believe.

This story of Christ breathing life into clay birds has no parallel in the Gospels. Instead, this story comes from another apocryphal work, The Infancy Gospel of Thomas. Historical evidence indicates this Gospel was not written by Thomas; moreover, it was not even written in the lifetime of the apostles. The earliest manuscript of this Gospel dates from the sixth century AD., but most scholars date this work in the late second century. New Testament scholar Wilhelm Schneemelcher writes that the author was most likely not Jewish but a Gentile Christian. He asserts the fact that “the author was of gentile Christian origin may be assumed with certainty, since his work betrays no knowledge of things Jewish.”

Another account of Jesus in this Infancy Gospel reveals a capricious child who inflicts painful revenge several times on those who cross him in a manner he does not like. Fred Lapham states, “[M]any of the stories in the earlier part of the work are morally offensive and indefensible, showing the growing Jesus to be cruel, callous, and vindictive, and exercising power without regard for the consequences.” This account portrays a young Jesus contrary to that in the Gospels. A vengeful and bad-tempered Jesus would be contrary to the description given in Luke which states that he was “filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon Him” (Lk. 2:40). Also, a child of the character portrayed in the Infancy Gospel of Thomas would not likely be described as growing in “wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Lk. 2:52).

There are several concerns regarding the accounts of Christ in the Qur’an. First, the infancy accounts of Christ contradict the Gospels. The Qur’an teaches that Jesus was born in the desert under a palm tree while the New Testament Gospels teach that Jesus was born in the city of Bethlehem in a stable (Lk. 2:7). The infancy narratives in the Qur’an teach that Jesus performed miracles in his infancy and childhood. However, John 2:11 states that Jesus’ first miracle was performed in Cana of Galilee at the beginning of His ministry. Since the Qur’an and the Bible present contrary accounts of the life of Christ, both cannot be true at the same time.

What Does the Historical Evidence Support?

The historical evidence strongly confirms the New Testament Gospel accounts. First of all, two of these authors—Matthew and John—were eyewitnesses. Meanwhile, Mark and Luke derived their facts from the apostles themselves. There are numerous facts that support this to be the case. The internal evidence, archaeology, manuscript evidence, quotes from the early Church Fathers, and ancient non-Christian historical works affirm the first century date and historical accuracy of the gospels.

Muhammad wrote the Qur’an nearly six centuries after the life of Christ. Unlike the Gospel writers who relied on eyewitness sources, Islam’s defense is that the angel Gabriel revealed the information to Muhammad. However, the parallels to Gnostic apocryphal works reveal that Muhammad’s sources came from a mixture of Christian fables and Gnostic works that were prevalent in Arabia at that time.

Muhammad no doubt had interaction with Christians. There were several Christian communities in Arabia, and he would have also met Christian traders traveling in caravans along the trade routes. Also his first wife, Khadija, had a cousin named Waraqa who was a Christian. These Christian
and Gnostic “Christian” sources told Muhammad stories from the New Testament and also the fables and apocryphal stories spreading at that time. Since Muhammad was illiterate, he was not able to read and research these sources for himself; instead he relied on second or third hand accounts told to him. As he retold the stories, some of the details were changed due to an incorrect telling, a lapse in memory, or a desire for them to better fit his belief system.

In creating the Qur’an, Muhammad does recount some biblical stories, but he also relies on apocryphal sources written centuries after the eyewitnesses. These works present a Gnostic refashioning of Christ and have shown to be unhistorical in nature. Since they were not derived from apostolic sources and presented a false view of Christ, they were never considered part of inspired Scripture. The evidence strongly favors the New Testament Gospel accounts over the Qur’an. Since the Qur’an presents stories contrary to the Gospels, its historical accuracy and inspiration comes into question. Also, if Muhammad recorded false stories regarding the infant life of Christ, one must also question his understanding of the nature of Christ as well.

In citing apocryphal works as unreliable, one may fairly question whether the Bible quotes apocryphal works. Indeed, there are occasions where the Bible does quote from uninspired sources. One of the most questioned are Jude’s references to the Assumption of Moses (Jude 9) and the Book of Enoch (Jude 14-15). However, these two references do not present a theological or historical problem since they do not present any teaching contrary to biblical revelation. So, although Jude does quote uninspired sources, there is no reason to reject the inspiration of Jude. Although the Assumption of Moses and the Book of Enoch are apocryphal works, Jude is referencing portions that are true and consistent with other areas of the Bible. Therefore, this does not affect either the doctrine of inspiration or the integrity of Jude’s book.

In contrast, the birth and infancy account of Christ in the Qur’an is problematic since it both contradicts the New Testament Gospels and presents a contrary view regarding the nature of Christ. Therefore, unlike Jude, it is inconsistent with the New Testament, and we must decide whether it is the Qur’an or the Gospels that are in error.

**The Life of Christ**

The Qur’an speaks on five aspects of Christ’s life. The Qur’an teaches that Jesus was a prophet of God but rejects the deity of Christ. However, it does affirm that Christ lived a remarkable life. The Qur’an affirms the virgin birth of Christ (Sura 3:42-47; 19:16-21). The Qur’an affirms the prophetic call of Christ. It also affirms that Christ performed many miracles. The Qur’an affirms that Christ was sinless (Sura 19:16-21). However, it rejects the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ and instead teaches that Christ did not suffer physical death but God raised Him up to heaven (Sura 4:158).

What is significant to realize is that, comparing Jesus to Muhammad in the Qur’an, Jesus performs greater works than Muhammad. First, according to the Qur’an, Christ is born of a virgin while there is nothing miraculous regarding the birth of Muhammad. Second, the Qur’an teaches that Christ accomplished many miracles, but Muhammad does not perform any in the Qur’an. The Qur’an teaches that true prophets of God are confirmed by miracles. It teaches that previous prophets Moses and Jesus were confirmed as prophets by their miracles (Sura 7:106-8; 116-119; 5:113). However, when the people ask Muhammad to do so, he refuses, stating that the Jews witnessed miracles from the prophets but remained in unbelief (Sura 28:47-51; 17:90-95). If, according to the Qur’an, God confirmed His prophets through miracles, a question remains as to why He would not confirm Muhammad with the same “seal” of the prophets. This certainly was within God’s ability to accomplish.
Contemporary Muslim author Isma'il Al-Faruqi claims that “Muslims do not claim any miracles for Muhammad. In their view, what proves Muhammad’s prophethood is the sublime beauty and greatness of the revelation itself, the Holy Qur’an, not any inexplicable breaches of natural law which confound human reason.”{11} Muslim scholar Abdullah Yusuf Ali admitted that Muhammad did not perform any miracle “in the sense of a reversing of Nature.”{12}

Muslim apologists point to the miracle accounts of Muhammad in the Hadith, a record of the sayings of Muhammad. However, the Qur’an is the inspired book of God, and the Hadith does not carry the authority of the Qur’an. The Hadith was written nearly one to two centuries after the life of Muhammad. Since this follows the pattern historians such as A.N. Sherwin-White have identified of miracle accounts that appear two generations after the lifetime of the eyewitnesses, the alleged miracle accounts in the Hadith stand in question. Moreover, the Hadith accounts seem to also go against the spirit of Muhammad in the Qur’an who repeatedly refused to perform miracles (3:181–84; 4:153; 6:8–9). It is also significant to note that many Muslim scholars such as Sahih Bukhari, who is considered to be the most reliable collector of the sayings in the Hadith, believed the vast majority of the miracle stories to be false.{13}

When pressed to defend the miracles of Muhammad, some point to Muhammad’s night journey in Sura 19 in which he claims to have been transported to Jerusalem and then ascended to heaven on the back of a mule (Sura 17:1). There is no reason to take this passage as referring to a literal trip to heaven as even many Muslim scholars do not take it as such. The noted translator of the Qur’an, Abdullah Yusuf Ali, comments on this passage, noting that “it opens with the mystic Vision of the Ascension of the Holy Prophet; he is transported from the Sacred Mosque (of Mecca) to the Farthest Mosque (of Jerusalem) at night and shown some of the Signs of God.”{14} Even according to one of the earliest Islamic traditions, Muhammad’s wife A’isha reported that “the apostle’s body remained where it was but God removed his spirit by night.”{15} Further, even if this were to be understood as a miracle claim, there is no evidence presented to test its authenticity. Since it lacks testability, it has no apologetic value.{16}

Another miracle is the prophecy of victory at the Battle of Badr (Sura 3:123; 8:17). However, it is a stretch to call this a supernatural miracle. It is common that generals will predict victory over an enemy army to inspire his troops. Also, Muhammad did not prophesy his defeat at the Battle of Uhud a year later.

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam teach that God confirms His messengers through miracles. The Old Testament prophets, Jesus, and the apostles have the testimony of miracles but this is lacking in the testimony of Muhammad. The miracle testimony of Christ affirms that He was more than a prophet.

The Resurrection

The Qur’an rejects the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ because Muslims believe that Allah would not allow His prophet to die such a shameful kind of death. The Qur’an teaches that Jesus did not die on the cross. Sura 4:157-159 states:

That they said (in boast), ‘We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Apostle of God’;—But they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they killed him not:— Nay, God raised him up unto Himself; and God is exalted in power, wise;—And there is none of the people of the Book but must believe in him before his death; And on the Day of Judgment He will be a
Muslims believe that Jesus did not die on the cross but escaped death and was taken up to heaven. The phrase “God raised him up unto Himself” is understood to teach that Jesus was taken up alive to heaven, never experiencing death. Based on the phrase, “it was made to appear to them,” orthodox Muslims have traditionally interpreted this to mean that God made someone else look like Jesus, and this person was crucified instead of Christ. There are various views regarding the identity of this substitute. Candidates include Judas, Simon of Cyrene, or a teen age boy.

The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus predicted His death and resurrection (Matt. 26:2; Mk. 10:33; 14:8; Jn. 2:19). The Bible records the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of Christ, which is central to the preaching of the apostles and to Christianity. The Qur’an and the Gospels cannot be true at the same time since they present contradictory accounts. One must examine the historical evidence and determine which account the evidence supports.

There is strong evidence to support the historicity of the Gospels and the fact that they were written by first century eyewitnesses or their close associates. We also have thousands of ancient manuscripts dated as early as the beginning of the second century, confirming that the Gospels have been accurately preserved. There are also several non-Christian Roman and Jewish historical works that affirm both the death of Christ and that Christians believed He had risen from the dead. These include the writings of Tacitus, Thallus, Lucian, Josephus, and the Jewish Talmud. Finally, the preaching of the death and resurrection of Christ began just days after His death on the cross, and has been continuously preached since then for over two thousand years. This account was proclaimed from the beginning, not generations after the resurrection.

The Qur’an’s account is not built on historical evidence but rather a commitment to Muslim theology. There is little historical evidence to support the Qur’an in its denial of the crucifixion and resurrection and its assertion that someone else took Jesus’ place on the cross. To support their view, Muslims often appeal to the “Lost Gospels.” These are the Gnostic Gospels such as the Gospel of Judas and others. However, these have proven to be non-apostolic works, written centuries after the life of the apostles. They are not regarded as historically accurate and were written by Gnostics attempting to refashion Jesus in their image.

The death and resurrection of Christ is one of the most reliably recorded events in ancient history. The historical evidence strongly favors the Gospel account. Therefore, the Qur’an would be in error, and its inspiration must, therefore, be questioned.

Conclusion

As we have studied, the Qur’an and the Bible present contrary views on the nature and life of Christ. The Qur’an rejects the deity of Christ and the death and resurrection of Christ. The Qur’an presents stories regarding the infancy of Christ that are contrary to the New Testament and rely on Gnostic apocryphal works as its source. The Qur’an rejects major doctrines and events recorded in the Bible. Since the historical evidence upholds the Gospels, the perfection and inspiration of the Qur’an is in question since its teachings contradict major doctrines and events taught in the New Testament.

That being said, from a survey of the Qur’an, one should realize that even in the Qur’an, Jesus is greater than Muhammad. First, Jesus’ titles in the Qur’an are greater. Despite rejecting the deity of Christ, the Qur’an gives Jesus several honorary titles. He is given the titles of Messiah, the Word of God, the Spirit of God (Sura 4:169-71), the Speech of Truth (Sura 19:34-35), a Sign unto Men, and

witness against them.
Mercy from God (Sura 19:21). Although these titles may refer to deity in Christian theology, Muslims do not equate these titles in the same way.

Second, Jesus’ miracles in the Qur’an are greater, for the Qur’an affirms several miraculous aspects of Christ’s life. The Qur’an affirms the virgin birth of Christ (Sura 19:16-21; 3:37-45). The Qur’an also affirms that Christ performed miracles (Sura 3:37-45; 43: 63-65). The Qur’an also affirms the prophethood of Christ (19:29-31). The Qur’an also affirms that Christ did not die but was raised up to heaven by God (4:158; 19:33). In contrast, according to the Qur’an, there is very little, if anything, supernatural regarding the life of Muhammad.

Even in the Qur’an, Jesus lived a life that is much more extraordinary than Muhammad. Since this is evident in the Qur’an, it would be wise for all Muslims to study the life of Jesus in the Bible. Not only is the Bible an accurate historical record, but it is a text that Muhammad encouraged Muslims to study (Sura 10:94; 2:136; 4:163; 5:56; 5:68; 35:31). Muhammad believed the Bible in the sixth century AD was accurate. We have many ancient New Testaments that predate the sixth century. Examples include the Chester Beatty Papyri (AD 250), Codex Vaticanus (AD 325 – 350), Codex Sinaiticus (AD 340), Codex Alexandrinus (AD 450), the Latin Vulgate (fourth century AD), and Syriac New Testament (AD 508). From these we can be assured that we have accurate copies of the New Testament that predate the sixth century.

I encourage all Muslims, therefore, to read the New Testament and learn what it says about Jesus Christ. One will soon discover that He was more than a prophet; He was indeed the unique Son Of God.

Notes

Oprah’s Spirituality: Exploring ‘A New Earth’ - A Christian Critique

Steve Cable looks at the teaching of Eckhart Tolle and Oprah Winfrey and finds it far removed from a Christian worldview. From a biblical perspective, their teaching is in line with that addressed by Paul in Colossians where he points to false teachers who are “taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind.”

Over 2,000,000 people from 139 countries have participated with Oprah Winfrey and Eckhart Tolle in a live Web-based seminar covering each chapter of Tolle’s book entitled, A New Earth: Awakening to Your Life’s Purpose. Why is this book so popular? Will it lead you deeper in your walk with Christ? Or is it counterfeit spirituality promoting a false view of God? In this article, we will address these questions as we embark on an exploration of Tolle’s “new earth.”

The underlying premise is that all material things (from planets to pebbles to flowers to animals) result from a universal, immaterial life force expressing itself in material form. Humans are a part of that expression. However, we have evolved to the point where we have the potential to become Aware of our oneness with the universal life force. The purpose of all mankind is to become aware that their Being is an expression of the One Life Force.

However, the vast majority of people are unconscious and unaware of the source of their being. Every human being has an illusory self image or ego which is completely conditioned by the past, always wanting and never satisfied. We also have an individual and collective accumulation of old emotional pain Tolle calls the “pain-body.” Our ego and our pain-body are actively trying to keep us away from true awareness. When we identify ourselves with our ego, our thoughts about the past and future, our wants and our hurts, we cannot experience our true Beingness.

In Tolle’s view, this lack of awareness of our true essence and false identification with our egos has the world and the human race on the brink of extinction. Fortunately, the universal life force is manipulating this crisis to create an opportunity for many people to move from an unconscious state to consciousness. In order to become conscious, we must recognize that we are not our thoughts and/or egos. We must learn to accept and be present in the Now, because the past and the future...
exist only as thoughts. When most people are operating from their true essence rather than their egos, we will have drastic social and physical upheavals on this earth resulting in a whole new world order—that is, “a new earth.”

If you are thinking this sounds a lot more like Eastern mysticism than a deeper walk with Christ, you are on the right track. So why is this message so popular even among many regular church attendees?

**Why Is *A New Earth* a Significant Issue?**

Since *A New Earth* is clearly incompatible with Biblical Christianity, why is it being read and recommended by many people who profess to be Christian?

First, the pervasive influence of post-modern tolerance continues to undermine commitment to the truth of the gospel even in evangelical circles. We are constantly assailed with the message that it is hateful and intolerant to believe that Christianity is true and other religions fall short. According to this viewpoint, the loving Christian will accept the validity of all religious traditions encouraging us to partake from the smorgasbord of spiritual guidance available from other religions. Thus many people forsake Paul’s warning in Colossians to not be taken captive by the traditions of men rather than the truth of Christ and thereby open themselves up to false teaching. An immature Christian may say to themselves, “*A New Earth* offers a way to greater personal peace and an escape from unhappiness so why not find a way to glue it onto my Christian tradition.” Tolle and Oprah cleverly encourage them by saying, “How ‘spiritual’ you are has nothing to do with what you believe, but everything to do with your state of consciousness.”

Second, *A New Earth* contains nuggets of truth about the nature of the body, soul and spirit and some practical ideas which may often prove helpful in dealing with anxiety, anger and other issues people face. Tolle is correct in pointing out that our individual and collective selfish egos introduce a lot of pain and suffering into this world. In addition, we may be filled with anxiety and discontent with our circumstances because our thoughts are preoccupied with past hurts and future hopes/fears. He encourages us to realize that we are not our thoughts or past pains. If we will affirm our intrinsic spiritual value and observe our ego at work, we can reduce anxiety and be able to accept our present circumstances. In some ways this is analogous to the instruction in Colossians to set our minds on the things of Christ not on the things of this earth because our real life is in Christ not in this earth. It also reminds us of Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians where he tells us that through the Holy Spirit we can “take every thought captive in obedience to Christ.” So you can see how thinking this way could be helpful. Unfortunately, this is taught as a part of a broader teaching that will leave non-Christians separated from God and misguided Christians not fulfilling their God-given purpose on this earth.

The third reason for its unwitting acceptance among some Christians is that quotes from Jesus and others in the Bible are sprinkled throughout the book in an attempt to show this philosophy is consistent with “true Christianity.” Like so many false teachers, he attempts to make Jesus support his worldview by removing the teaching of Jesus from the clear message of the gospel.

Fourth, and probably most importantly, Tolle found a powerful proponent in Oprah Winfrey whose endorsement catapulted his first book, *The Power of Now*, onto the *NY Times* Best Seller list. Now, Oprah is enthusiastically promoting *A New Earth* through her web seminar, calling it the most exciting thing she has ever done. Oprah is an evangelist for smorgasbord spirituality. During the first web seminar for *A New Earth*, she was asked how she could reconcile it with her Christian upbringing. Oprah explained that she began to get out of the box of Biblical doctrine in her late twenties when her pastor was preaching on the characteristics of God. When he said that “The Lord
“And you know, it’s been a journey to get to the place where I understand, that what I believe is that Jesus came to show us Christ consciousness. That Jesus came to show us the way of the heart and that what Jesus was saying was to show us the higher consciousness that were all talking about here. Jesus came to say, ‘Look I’m going to live in the body, in the human body and I’m going to show you how it’s done.’ These are some principles and some laws that you can use to live by to know that way. And when I started to recognize that, that Jesus didn’t come in my belief, even as a Christian, I don’t believe that Jesus came to start Christianity…. Well, I am a Christian who believes that there are certainly many more paths to God other than Christianity.”{6}

Worldview Comparison

Let’s continue our exploration of Tolle’s new earth by considering some of the fundamental worldview questions. How does the worldview of *A New Earth* line up with a Biblical worldview? (see Appendix B)

God and the Universe

Let’s first look at the origin of the universe and the nature of God.

According to Tolle, the material universe is a temporary manifestation of the universal spiritual consciousness. This One Life is impersonal and pervasive, investing itself in all matter not just living things. He states it thus, “Each thing has Beingness, is a temporary form that has its origin within the formless one Life, the source of all things, all bodies, all forms.”{7} And “Like all life-forms, they are, of course, temporary manifestations of the underlying one Life, one Consciousness”{8} Consequently, the being the Bible calls God is really an expression of this impersonal life force. Since everything is of God and is God, all material things must ultimately return to formless, unidentifiable union with the spiritual life force.

This view of God as an impersonal life force living in all things is directly counter to the Biblical revelation of God. According to the Bible, God is the creator of the universe not a part of the universe. God is an identifiable, personal being characterized by holiness, love, grace and compassion. The creator of this universe is a thinking being as God shares through Isaiah, “for as the heavens are higher than the earth...so are my thoughts higher than your thoughts.”{9} Paul reminds us, “For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.”{10} God is a communicator, choosing to reveal Himself to us through the attributes of creation, through the Scriptures and through Jesus Christ.

Nature of Man

What about the nature and purpose of mankind? According to Tolle, humans are an evolved material manifestation of the spiritual life force. Humans have evolved to the point where we are capable of being overtly conscious of our Beingness; of our oneness with the One Life force. However, our material manifestation includes the ego (a false sense of identification with our thoughts) and our individual and collective pain bodies which fight our attempts to be conscious of our real identity in the life force. We need to realize that we are not really a unique individual, but rather a material expression on the One Life force. Our purpose for existence is to bring a consciousness of the
underlying one Life into this world. He states, “The ultimate purpose of human existence, which is to say, your purpose, is to bring that power into this world.”{11} However, the ultimate end for each human is to return our life energy back into the impersonal life force.

In contrast, the Bible teaches humans were intentionally created by God in His image. We are created with a body, soul and spirit. Our earthly bodies are temporary, but our soul and spirit are immortal. We are, in fact, individuals responsible for our actions with different eternal destinies determined by our relationship with God.

Sin and Evil

In *A New Earth*, the concepts of sin and evil are severely distorted. According to Tolle, original sin is the collective dysfunction which prevents people from recognizing the point of human existence. He suggests that this barrier to true Awareness is built into our DNA. He states, “The collective pain-body is probably encoded within every human’s DNA, although we haven’t discovered it there yet.”{12} In other words, the collective hurts and perceived inadequacies of our parents and previous generations are not only passed on through our interactions with a fallen world, but are actually encoded into our DNA. This, of course, would require our thoughts to be able to modify our DNA so that these experiences are passed on to future generations.

However, since we are not our bodies or our thoughts, we are not responsible for our sins. As he states, “There is only one perpetrator of evil on the planet: human unconsciousness…. People are not responsible for what they do when possessed by the pain-body.”{13} In fact, we cannot really distinguish good from evil since they all arise from the same life force. As Tolle puts it, “The deeper interconnectedness of all things and events implies that the mental labels of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ are ultimately illusory. They always imply a limited perspective and so are true only relatively and temporarily.”{14}

In contrast, the Bible teaches that we are all sinners and apart from faith in Christ the result will be eternal separation from God.{15}

Salvation

In Tolle’s worldview, humans are not born spiritually dead, but rather spiritually unconscious. Our real self cannot be separated from God because our real self is a part of God. He states, “You do not become good by trying to be good, but by finding the goodness that is already within you, and allowing the goodness to emerge. But it can only emerge if something fundamental changes in your state of consciousness.”{16} We become a new alive person, not through faith in the atoning death and empowering resurrection of Jesus, but rather through a process of becoming aware of our real self which has been masked by our ego. However, when our body dies, we cease to exist as an individual merging back into the universal life force. Tolle states, “the recognition of the impermanence of all forms awakens you to the dimension of the formless within yourself, that which is beyond death. Jesus called it ‘eternal life.’”{17} So, regardless of what we do or believe during our earthly existence we all have the same ultimate destiny.

This view devalues the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. If Tolle’s view is true, Jesus’ death was unnecessary and His resurrection was an illusion. The Bible clearly states that “the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”{18}

Jesus Christ and Christianity

For Tolle, Jesus was an enlightened human. He joined Buddha and a few others in trying to
communicate this concept to people and societies who were not ready to receive it. Jesus was no
more God than any other human, but he was aware that he was a part of the One Life Force which
He identified as God.

With this view of Jesus, Tolle clearly rejects the central gospel message: faith in Jesus’ atoning death
on the cross and victorious resurrection is the only way to move from death into spiritual life.

**Truth and Religion**

According to Tolle, truth cannot be found in thought, doctrines or narratives which are perceived
through our egos. He states, “Every ego confuses opinions and viewpoints with facts. It cannot tell
the difference between an event and its reaction to that event. Only through awareness—not through
thinking—can you differentiate between fact and opinion…. Only through awareness can you see the
totality of the situation or person instead of adopting one limited perspective.”\(^{19}\) Thus, the only
real Truth with a capital T is in my being. “The Truth is inseparable from who you are. Yes, you are
the Truth. If you look for it elsewhere, you will be deceived every time. The very Being that you are
is Truth.”\(^{20}\) He even claims that this is what Jesus was really trying to tell us when He said, “I am
the Way, the Truth and the Life, no one comes to the Father except through me.”

Tolle writes:

“All religions are equally false and equally true, depending on how you use them. If you believe
only your religion is the Truth, you are using it in the service of the ego.”\(^{21}\) And, “Many
religious people claim to be in sole possession of the truth in an unconscious attempt to protect
their identity. Unless you believe exactly as they do, you are wrong in their eyes, and they may
feel justified in killing you for that.”\(^{22}\)

Like many people, Tolle confuses our inability to fully understand the truth with the lack of truth. As
R.C. Sproul said, “Real truth is reality as seen from God’s perspective.” Real truth can only be
revealed by God and is not about our need for identity or a need to create enemies. Truth is central
to the Christian faith. Jesus told Pilate, “For this I was born and for this reason I came into the
world, to testify to the truth.”\(^{23}\) As Christians, we are motivated to share the truth God has
revealed because of His love for us and His “desire for all men to be saved and to come to the
knowledge of the truth.”\(^{24}\)

**The Bible**

In addressing the Bible, Tolle attempts to play both sides of the street. Although he does not directly
state it, he clearly does not believe that the Bible is an accurate revelation of the character of God
and the nature of the universe. His worldview is totally contrary to the Bible in most areas, so he
clearly does not consider it an authoritative source. But, knowing that much of his audience has a
Christian background, he quotes the Bible over 25 times in this book. In most instances, he takes the
verse out of context and misinterprets it to align with his viewpoint. One example is when he claims
that Jesus said, “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life” in order to teach us that we are the Truth.
Ignoring the fact that Jesus went on to say, “no one comes to the Father but through me.”\(^{25}\) Jesus
said that if we lived according to His words we would “know the truth”\(^{26}\), not “be the truth.”

**Conclusion**

*A New Earth* is not so new after all. It is another presentation of Eastern mysticism with a focus on
separating your identity from your ego. Although the mind exercises promoted in the book may
provide some temporary help with issues such as anxiety and anger, the overall worldview is directly
counter to the gospel of Jesus Christ. By denying the existence of a personal transcendent God, by denying individual responsibility for my sin, by denying an eternal soul, and the need for the redeeming death and resurrection of Jesus, Tolle’s spiritual teaching will result in eternal separation from God for non-Christians and fruitlessness for Christians taken captive by this unbiblical worldview.

Appendix A: Oprah Winfrey on reconciling *A New Earth* with her Christian background:

“I’ve reconciled it because I was able to open my mind about the absolute indescribable hugeness of that which we call “God.” I took God out of the box because I grew up in the Baptist church and there were, you know, rules and, you know, belief systems indoctrined. And I happened to be sitting in church in my late 20’s...And this great minister was preaching about how great God was and how omniscient and omnipresent, and God is everything. And then he said, and the lord thy god is a jealous god. And I was, you know, caught up in the rapture of that moment until he said “jealous.” And something struck me. I was thinking God is all, God is omnipresent, God is—and God’s also jealous? God is jealous of me? And something about that didn’t feel right in my spirit because I believe that god is love and that god is in all things. And so that’s when the search for something more than doctrine started to stir within me.

“And I love this quote that Eckhart has, this is one of my favorite quotes in chapter one where he says, “Man made god in his own image, the eternal, the infinite, and unnamable was reduced to a mental idol that you had to believe in and worship as my god or our god.”

“And you know, it’s been a journey to get to the place where I understand, that what I believe is that Jesus came to show us Christ consciousness. That Jesus came to show us the way of the heart and that what Jesus was saying that to show us the higher consciousness that we’re all talking about here. Jesus came to say, “Look I’m going to live in the body, in the human body and I’m going to show you how it’s done.” These are some principles and some laws that you can use to live by to know that way. And when I started to recognize that, that Jesus didn’t come in my belief, even as a Christian, I don’t believe that Jesus came to start Christianity. So that was also very helpful to me.

“Well, I am a Christian who believes that there are certainly many more paths to God other than Christianity.”

Appendix B: Comparing A New Earth with Other Worldviews

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Ethics | God-centered | Counter ego | Culturally centered
History | Linear | Predestined by the one life force | Culturally defined
Culture | God-ordained / man steward | Unconscious vs. conscious | Language-centered

Notes

2. Colossians 2:8
3. Ibid., 18
5. 2 Corinthians 10:5
7. Tolle., 37
8. Ibid., 4
9. Isaiah 55:9
10. 1 Cor 2:11-12 NASV
11. Tolle., 78
12. Ibid., 143
13. Ibid., 163
14. Ibid., 196
15. Romans 3:23, 6:23
16. Tolle., 13
17. Ibid., 81
18. Romans 6:23
19. Tolle., 69
20. Ibid., 71
21. Ibid., 70
22. Ibid., 17
23. John 18:37
24. I Tim 2:3
25. John 14:6
26. John 8:31-32

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Can Western-style Education Transform the Middle East?

Dear Probe reader,

A highlight of my recent tour of Jordan—a land teeming with biblical history—was visiting King’s Academy. Jordan’s new prep school emphasizes critical thinking over rote learning, teaching students not what to think but how to think. Could it become a model to train a new generation of
Middle Eastern leaders to shake hands with each other and the West?

As you analyze your world through biblical lenses, it’s important to be aware of significant global developments. King’s Academy has garnered considerable attention among US and international media:

“Rather revolutionary” (TIME)

“What could be more important in the Middle East than educating open-minded future leaders?” (The Sunday Times [London] op-ed)

“Bringing the best of western education to the Middle East.” (NPR)

“There is a crisis in Arab education. This school [is] about the future—trying to pull an education system into the 21st Century—to build bridges between clashing cultures.” (CBS-TV News)

Biblical worldview, of course, promotes careful, critical thinking. Many westerners are unaware of how lack of critical thinking permeates Middle Eastern education and, hence, influences international relations. This piece aims to expand readers’ geopolitical understanding. And, alas, too many western readers lack critical thinking themselves, so this uses current news to help focus attention on that biblical value, a crucial one if we are to communicate cross culturally.

As are most of my shorter articles on the Probe Ministries website, this is an op-ed written for secular newspapers. I’m honored that you might read it and hope you find it useful.

Warm regards,

Rusty Wright

If you only learn to repeat what you’ve been taught—and not to think for yourself—you may be ill prepared to vote.

That’s the lesson the Jerusalem-born librarian conveyed as we sat in her office in a brand new boarding school near Madaba, Jordan. When Afaf Kazimi moved to Jordan many years ago and could vote for the first time, she simply cast her ballot on another’s recommendation without knowing much about the candidate. I voted for the wrong person, she concluded in hindsight.

Much of her early school education had involved rote memorization—learning facts for tests, as is common in the Middle East—and had lacked training in critical thinking, skills she developed later. Now she’s excited to be part of a new experiment that blends Western analytical emphases with traditional Arab culture, helping students avoid the educational path she and others had to take.

Arab Preppies

Jordan’s King’s Academy opened in 2007 with goals of helping students from many nations and different religious backgrounds learn not what to think but how to think. Patterned after Deerfield Academy in Massachusetts, King Abdullah’s alma mater, King’s looks much like a New England prep school. Think Dead Poets Society or The Emperors Club, coed and transplanted to a desert oasis.
Students wear preppie blue blazers and ties, khaki trousers. Many live in dormitories, with faculty house parents. They have service responsibilities in the dining hall and community.

Sports aim to cultivate teamwork and discipline. An honor code is being developed. Course offerings involve the humanities, social sciences and hard sciences and include studies in Islam, Christianity, world religions, communication, rhetoric and ethics. Financial aid aims for socioeconomic diversity. Courses are taught in English and Arabic.

King Abdullah’s Deerfield experience was formative in his young life. It developed lasting relationships. He’s a friend of the West. Jordan has led efforts to renounce religious extremism and help religions coexist peacefully. King’s Academy hopes its multinational faculty will train future leaders for the Middle East and beyond.

**Critical Thinking**

Since I attended Choate, Deerfield’s peer (and, my classmates would want me to emphasize, chief rival), I’m especially interested in this Jordanian experiment. I’m grateful that I learned early to think critically and to ask lots of questions. King’s appears eager to cultivate inquisitive minds.

A poster of William Shakespeare hung in the King’s library along with promotion for J.R.R. Tolkien and the *International Herald Tribune*. Broad reading—especially of writers with whom you disagree—can facilitate learning and enhance communication. Intelligent people are always ready to learn, affirms an ancient proverb. Their ears are open for knowledge (Proverbs 18:15 NLT). How much better to get wisdom than gold, and good judgment than silver! claims another (Proverbs 16:16 NLT).

Logical, analytical thinking is, of course, crucial for healthy societies. Sloppy logic can be amusing or devastating: All fish swim. I swim. Therefore, I am a fish. Somewhat similar illogic appears in numerous aberrations: Muslim extremists threaten Western society. Omar is a Muslim. So Omar is a threat to me. Or, American foreign policy undermines my country. You’re an American. Thus, you’re my enemy. Shallow thinkers can turn illogic into dogma and breed fanaticism.

Of course, no school will produce perfect students. George W. Bush’s critics might sometimes wonder if his Andover education taught him to think clearly. And if Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had attended Andover, would he and Bush get along? Well, maybe. But please, don’t expect miracles.

King Abdullah’s promising educational venture deserves close scrutiny. Could it become a model to train a new generation of Middle Eastern leaders to shake hands with each other and the West?

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**Islam in the Modern World: A Christian Perspective**

*Islam is a global threat unlike anything ever seen before in the history of the world. Its frighteningly*
different paradigm of conquest and disrespect for any non-Muslim people and cultures needs to be grasped in order to deal with it. When contrasted with the biblical worldview of Christianity, Islam presents a radically different view of God and mankind. Kerby Anderson highlights some of the radical differences between the Christianity of the Bible and the Islam of the Koran.

**Islam and the Clash of Civilizations**

Islam is a seventh century religion. For a moment, think about that statement. I doubt anyone would consider Christianity a first century religion. You might acknowledge that it began in the first century, but you wouldn’t probably describe it as a religion of the first century because the timeless principles of the gospel have adapted to the times in which they are communicated.

In many ways, Islam has remained stuck in the century in which it developed. One of the great questions of the twenty-first century is whether it will adapt to the modern era. Certainly many Muslims have done so, but radical Muslims have not.

Perhaps the leading scholar on Islam in this country is the emeritus professor from Princeton University, Bernard Lewis. This is what he had to say about Islam and the modern world:

Islam has brought comfort and peace of mind to countless millions of men and women. It has given dignity and meaning to drab and impoverished lives. It has taught people of different races to live in brotherhood and people of different creeds to live side by side in reasonable tolerance. It inspired a great civilization in which others besides Muslims lived creative and useful lives and which, by its achievement, enriched the whole world. But Islam, like other religions, has also known periods when it inspired in some of its followers a mood of hatred and violence. It is our misfortune that part, though by no means all or even most, of the Muslim world is now going through such a period, and that much, though again not all, of that hatred is directed against us.\(^1\)

This certainly does not mean that all Muslims want to engage in jihad warfare against America and the West. But it does mean that there is a growing clash of civilizations.\(^2\)

Bernard Lewis continues:

In the classical Islamic view, to which many Muslims are beginning to return, the world and all mankind are divided into two: the House of Islam, where the Muslim law and faith prevail, and the rest, known as the House of Unbelief or the House of War, which it is the duty of Muslims ultimately to bring to Islam.

It should by now be clear that we are facing a mood and a movement far transcending the level of issues and policies and the governments that pursue them. This is no less than a clash of civilizations—the perhaps irrational but surely historic reaction of an ancient rival against our Judeo-Christian heritage, our secular present, and the worldwide expansion of both. It is crucially important that we on our side should not be provoked into an equally historic but also equally irrational reaction against the rival.\(^3\)

This is the challenge for the twenty-first century. Will Islam adapt to the modern world, or will there continue to be a clash of civilizations?

**Muslim Intelligentsia**

Not everyone accepts the clash of civilizations analysis. William Tucker, writing in the *American*
Spectator, believes that the actual conflict results from what he calls the Muslim Intelligentsia. He says “that we are not facing a clash of civilizations so much as a conflict with an educated segment of a civilization that produces some very weird, sexually disoriented men. Poverty has nothing to do with it. It is stunning to meet the al Qaeda roster—one highly accomplished scholar after another with advanced degrees in chemistry, biology, medicine, engineering, a large percentage of them educated in the United States.”

This analysis is contrary to the many statements that have been made in the past that poverty breeds terrorism. While it is certainly true that many recruits for jihad come from impoverished situations, it is also true that the leadership comes from those who are well-educated and highly accomplished.

William Tucker believes that those who wish to engage in jihad warfare against the U.S. and the West bear a striking resemblance to the student revolutionaries during the 1960s on American universities. He calls them “overprivileged children” who he believes need to prove themselves (and their manhood) in the world. He also believes that “this is confounded by a polygamous society where fathers are often distant from their sons and where men and women barely encounter each other as young adults.”

Tucker says that our current conflict with Islam is not a war against a whole civilization. He points out that the jihad warriors are despised as much in their own countries as they are in the West. “Egyptians are sick to death of the Muslim Brotherhood and its casual slaughter. The war between Fundamentalists and secular authorities in Algeria cost 100,000 lives.”

He concludes that we are effectively at war with a Muslim intelligentsia. These are essentially “the same people who brought us the horrors of the French Revolution and 20th century Communism. With their obsession for moral purity and their rational hatred that goes beyond all irrationality, these warrior-intellectuals are wreaking the same havoc in the Middle East as they did in Jacobin France and Mao Tse-tung’s China.”

Certainly we are facing a clash of civilizations between Islam and the West. But it is helpful to understand Tucker’s analysis. In any war it is important to know who you are fighting and what their motives might be. This understanding is one more important piece of the puzzle in the war on terrorism.

**Extent of the Radical Muslim Threat**

What is the extent of the threat from radical Muslims? This is hard to guess, but there are some commentators who have tried to provide a reasonable estimate. Dennis Prager provides an overview of the extent of the threat:

Anyone else sees the contemporary reality—the genocidal Islamic regime in Sudan; the widespread Muslim theological and emotional support for the killing of a Muslim who converts to another religion; the absence of freedom in Muslim-majority countries; the widespread support for Palestinians who randomly murder Israelis; the primitive state in which women are kept in many Muslim countries; the celebration of death; the honor killings of daughters, and so much else that is terrible in significant parts of the Muslim world—knows that civilized humanity has a new evil to fight.

He argues that just as previous generations had to fight the Nazis and the communists, so this generation has to confront militant Islam. But he also notes something is dramatically different
about the present Muslim threat. He says:

Far fewer people believed in Nazism or in communism than believe in Islam generally or in authoritarian Islam specifically. There are one billion Muslims in the world. If just 10 percent believe in the Islam of Hamas, the Taliban, the Sudanese regime, Saudi Arabia, Wahhabism, bin Laden, Islamic Jihad, the Finley Park Mosque in London or Hizbollah—and it is inconceivable that only one of 10 Muslims supports any of these groups’ ideologies—that means a true believing enemy of at least 100 million people.\(^7\)

This very large number of people poses a threat that is unprecedented. Never has civilization has to confront such large numbers of those would wish to destroy civilization.

So what is the threat in the United States? Columnist Douglas MacKinnon has some chilling statistics. While he recognizes that most Muslims in the U.S. are peace-loving, he begins to break down the percentages. He says:

[If we accept the estimate that there are 6 million Muslim-Americans in our country, and 99% of them are law abiding citizens who are loyal to our nation, then that means that there may be—may be—1% who might put a twisted version of Islamic extremism before the wellbeing of their fellow Americans. When you stop to think that 1% of 6 million is 60,000 individuals, that then seems like a very intimidating one percent. Let’s go to the good side of extreme and say that 99.9 percent of all Muslim-Americans would never turn on their own government. That would still leave a questionable 1/10th one percent—or 6,000 potential terrorist sympathizers.\(^8\)]

You can see that even the most conservative estimate of possible jihad warriors in this country results in a scary scenario for the future.

**Women in Islam**

One of the areas where Islam has had difficulty in adapting to the modern world has been in its treatment of women. While some Muslim leaders actually claim that Islam actually liberates women, contemporary examples prove otherwise. Women who lived under Taliban rule in Afghanistan or who live under Sharia law in many Muslim countries today do not enjoy equal rights.

While it is true that many Muslims do respect and honor women, it is not true that those ideas can be found in the Qur’an. Here are just a few passages that illustrate the way women are to be treated. According to the Qur’an, women are considered inferior to men: “Men have authority over women because God has made the one superior to the other” (Sura 4:34). The Qur’an also restricts a woman’s testimony in court. According to Sura 2:282, her testimony is worth half as much as that of a man.

Polygamy is sanctioned in Islam, and practiced in many Muslim countries. Sura 4:3 says, “If we fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry women of your choice, two or three or four; but if we fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with them, then only one, or a captive that your hand possess, that will be more suitable, to prevent you from doing injustice.”

Women in many Muslim countries cover their faces. The justification for that can be found in the Qur’an that teaches that women must “lower their gaze and guard their modesty: that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what must ordinarily appear thereof: that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their
Women in many Muslim countries cannot leave their house alone. Again, this is part of Islamic law. It states that a "husband may forbid his wife to leave the home."\(^9\) It also places other requirements. For example, "a woman may not leave the city without her husband or a member of her unmarriageable kin accompanying her, unless the journey is obligatory, like the hajj. It is unlawful for her to travel otherwise, and unlawful for her husband to allow her to."\(^{10}\)

Not only was this practiced in Afghanistan under the Taliban, it is found in countries like Saudi Arabia. In that country, women cannot drive nor can they leave their home without being accompanied by a male family member. Amnesty International reports that women in Saudi Arabia "who walk unaccompanied, or are in the company of a man who is neither their husband nor close relative, are at risk of arrest on suspicion of prostitution” or other moral offenses.\(^{11}\)

**Church and State in Islam**

Islam and the West differ on many fundamental issues, but one of the most significant is whether the institutions of church and state should be separated. Hundreds of years of Western tradition have demonstrated the wisdom of keeping these institutions separated and the danger that ensues when the ecclesiastical and civil institutions are melded into one.

Bernard Lewis explains that no such separation exists in Islam:

> In [the Islamic] world, religion embraces far more than it does in the Christian or post-Christian world. We are accustomed to talking of church and state and a whole series of pairs of words that go with them—lay and ecclesiastical, secular and religious, spiritual and temporal, and so on. These pairs of words simply do not exist in classical Islamic terminology because the dichotomy that these words express is unknown.\(^{12}\)

Since the words (and the concepts) do not exist in Islam, it becomes difficult to see how to form democracies in the Muslim world. Essential to the functioning of these governments is a belief in the separation of powers. This would not only include a horizontal separation of powers (executive, legislative, and judicial), but a religious separations of powers (ecclesiastical and civil).

Chuck Colson says that “Islam is a theocratic belief system. It believes in not just a state church, but a church state. And so, it doesn’t advance like Christianity does. These are radically different views of reality.”\(^{13}\)

This leads to another fundamental difference between Islam and Christianity. As we have discussed in previous articles,\(^{14}\) Islam historically has advanced by force or compulsion. Chuck Colson puts it this way: “Christianity advances by love, it advances by winning people over, it advances by the grace of God; radical Islam advances by force.”\(^{15}\)

Even within Muslim countries, Islam advances by compulsion. But it is important to point out that the Qur’an (2:256) says “there is no compulsion in religion.” But that really depends upon your definition of compulsion.

A closer look at Islamic law demonstrates a veiled threat that many believe is tantamount to compulsion. For example, Muhammad instructed his followers to invite non-Muslims to accept Islam before waging war against them. If they refused, warfare would follow or second class status. They would be inferiors in the Muslim social order and pay a special tax. This tax (known as the jizya) is required in Sura 9:29. If they pay it, they may live, but if they refuse to pay it, warfare will ensue.
While those of us in the West would consider this compulsion, the traditional Muslim interpretation of this would be that this would fit into the category of “no compulsion.”

Notes

3. Lewis, “The Roots of Muslim Rage.”
5. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
9. “Umdat al-Salik, (manual of Islamic law), m 10.4
10. Ibid., m 10.3

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The False Teaching of “The Secret” - A Christian Evaluation

*Kerby Anderson examines The Secret and The Law of Attraction from a biblical perspective and finds it teaches a dangerous mixture of half truths and outright lies.*

**Rhonda Byrne and The Secret**

The book is called *The Secret*, but it didn’t remain a secret for very long. Already the book has sold more than three million copies, and there are nearly two million DVDs of the teaching. There seems to be no end to the public’s interest in this message presented by Rhonda Byrne.

Some call *The Secret* a transformative message. Others see it as a popular combination of marketing that parallels the success of *The DaVinci Code* with the message found in Eastern religions and philosophies throughout the centuries. Whatever it is, it has exploded in our culture ever since
Rhonda Byrne’s first appearance on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*.

*The Secret* has been promoted as “a feature length, historic and factually based account of an age old secret” which is said to be four thousand years in the making and “known to only a fortunate few.” The DVD and the book reveal “this great knowledge to the world.” Supposedly it is the secret to wealth, the secret to health, the secret to love, relationships, happiness, and eternal youth.

The basic premise of *The Secret* was borne from the troubles that affected Rhonda Byrne. She is a television producer and mother in her fifties. A number of years ago she “hit a rocky patch in her business and personal lives.” {1} Her father died suddenly and her relationships with her family and work colleagues were in turmoil. It was at that moment of despair when she “wept and wept and wept” that she discovered a long-neglected book entitled *The Science of Getting Rich.* {2}

In the book she discovered how to let your thoughts and feelings give you everything that you desire. She then dedicated herself to sharing these principles with the world in the form of *The Secret*.

Many have called it marketing genius. After all, all of us want to be in on a secret. So why wouldn’t we all want to know the secret to life? That is what Rhonda Byrne promised in her DVD. “Torchlights flicker on the 90-minute DVD and the soundtrack throbs portentously before it gets down to giving you the secret for getting your hands on that new BMW.” {3}

Its success shouldn’t be too surprising. After all, many self-help authors have become celebrities and quite financially successful by addressing American’s desperate need for happiness and significance.

Several show up as contributors to *The Secret*. For example, Wayne Dyer has written nearly thirty books on the subject of self-help. His 1976 book, *Your Erroneous Zones*, has sold over thirty million copies. Jack Canfield is best known for his *Chicken Soup for the Soul* book series. There are currently over 115 titles and 100 million copies in print.

**The Law of Attraction**

Rhonda Byrne’s book and DVD on *The Secret* supposedly bring together “the oral traditions, in literature, in religions and philosophies throughout the centuries.” {4} These pieces are brought together to produce this life-transforming message.

While it is passed off as new and exciting, there are many other teachers who preceded *The Secret* with a similar message. Charles Fillmore, who founded the Unity School of Christianity, talked about “The Twelve Powers of Man,” arguing that the causes of all things are “essentially mental.” Norman Vincent Peale is best known for his *The Power of Positive Thinking*. Deepak Chopra talks about “The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success.” Motivational speaker Tony Robbins believes “it’s our decisions, not the conditions of our lives, that determine our destiny.” {5}

Rhonda Byrne not only relies on people she calls the guardians of *The Secret*, but also upon a documentary released a number of years ago called *What the Bleep Do We Know?* The film makes all sorts of metaphysical claims based upon their particular interpretation of quantum physics.

According to Rhonda Byrne, the key element of *The Secret* is what is called “The Law of Attraction.” {6} You can summarize the law with three words: “Thoughts become things.” In other words, if you think hard enough about something, it will take place. Think good thoughts, and you will reap good things. Think bad thoughts, and bad things will happen to you. You create your own circumstances, and you can change those circumstances with your thoughts.

A central teaching of “The Law of Attraction” is that nothing can come into your experience unless
you summon it through persistent thoughts. Thus, everything that surrounds you right now (both good and bad) has been attracted to you. As you focus on what you want, you are changing the vibration of atoms of that thing so that they begin to vibrate to you. Ultimately, you determine the frequency or vibration so that you can best acquire wealth, health, and fulfillment.

Do you want something? Then you need to focus on it. In one segment in the DVD, a kid who wants a red BMX bicycle cuts out a picture of it from a catalog. He concentrates on it and even obsesses about it. He is rewarded with a bike.

Do you want to lose weight? Do the same thing. Rhonda Byrne talked about the weight she gained after her pregnancies. But once she applied “The Law of Attraction,” she realized her error: “Food is not responsible for putting on weight. It is your thought that food is responsible for putting on weight that actually has food put on weight.”

Do you want to get healthy? Visualize health. One woman in the DVD claims to have cured her breast cancer in three months without chemotherapy or radiation. She claims she did this by visualizing herself well and watching funny movies on television.

The Seductive Message

The incredible popularity of The Secret illustrates the spiritual hunger in our culture. But while people are hungry for spirituality, they are not willing to attend church to be fed spiritually. Instead they go to the bookstore and buy this book or DVD along with other books dealing with spirituality.

A buyer for West Hollywood’s popular metaphysical bookstore, The Bodhi Tree, said that DVD of The Secret had “become the biggest selling item in the 30-year history of our store.” Why has it become so successful? Here is what a writer for Time magazine concluded:

Mixing the ancient conspiracy hoodoo of The DaVinci Code with the psychic science of 2004’s cult hit What the Bleep Do We Know?, it interweaves computer graphics, historical recreations and interviews with “experts” into a study of “intention-manifestation” – the philosophy that contends our emotions and thoughts can actually influence real-world events. In other words: if you really, truly believe you can beat the lottery and visualize scratching off a winning ticket, you can do exactly that.

The appeal of The Secret is understandable. People want to be wealthy and healthy. But this false philosophy leads to death and destruction. In Colossians 2:8, Paul warns Christians: “See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of the world rather than on Christ.”

There are countless examples that demonstrate that “The Law of Attraction” does not work. If you don’t think so, try this simple experiment. Visualize that you have a million dollars in your checking account. Think lots of positive thoughts about all the money you assume is in your checking account. Then go to the bank and write a really big check. The cashier might even have positive thoughts about your account. But then you will come face-to-face with reality. The bank’s computers don’t have positive thoughts about your checking account, nor do they have negative thoughts about your checking account. They are just doing the math. Despite all the positive feelings you can muster, your check will bounce.

Even those who accept the metaphysical basis of The Secret are concerned with its seductive message that appeals to our materialism. After all, practitioners are using this supposed ancient
wisdom to acquire material goods. One of the “experts” in the film says: “*The Secret* is like having the universe as your catalog.”{9}

Many wonder if acquiring more possessions is what *The Secret* should be all about. “The get-rich-quick parts really bothered me,” says the buyer at the Bodhi Tree. “It’s my hope that people won’t use creative visualization to obtain wealth for themselves, but in more positive, altruistic ways.”{10}

**Spiritually Dangerous**

We have already shown that the premise of *The Secret* is false. You cannot alter reality simply with your thoughts. “The Law of Attraction” can essentially be summarized with three words: “Thoughts become things.” That is not true.

But the teachings of *The Secret* are not only false; they are spiritually dangerous.

Rhonda Byrne makes this observation in her book: “So whatever way you look at it, the result is still the same. We are One. We are all connected, and we are all part of the One Energy Field, or the One Supreme Mind, or the One Consciousness, or the One Creative Source. Call it whatever you want, but we are all One.”{11}

Essentially she is teaching that we can become gods. We are God in a physical body. We are the creative source and the have the cosmic power to manipulate the universe according to our own desires. We are creating our own reality and thus can manipulate that reality to our own ends.{12}

Contrast that with the temptation in the Garden of Eden where Satan tells Eve “you will be like God” (Genesis 3:5). Why is *The Secret* so popular? Because we are tempted to be “like God.”

It is one of the enemy’s oldest tricks in The Book. Satan knows that we are vulnerable to this desire to be “like God.” Satan tempted Eve in the Garden with this tactic, and he is tempting millions today with the same tactic.

John warned us of the temptations in the world: “Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world” (1 John 2:15-16).

We must choose that which we love and worship. Are we going to love the world and all that is in the world? Or are we going to love God? We must choose what we will love and which view of reality we will accept.

We are admonished “to bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). The principles in *The Secret* are not biblical principles but pagan, worldly principles that have been around since the beginning.

*The Secret* calls upon us to use our thoughts for our own selfish desires. Paul, however, tells us in Romans 12:1-2 that we are to present our bodies as a sacrifice to the Lord. We are to be selfless, not selfish.

(For more information on the spiritual dangers of *The Secret*, see Russ Wise’s in-depth analysis, which uncovers the occultic connection with several contributors to the project.)
The Secret and Science

To prove “The Law of Attraction,” the foundational principle in The Secret, Rhonda Byrne’s DVD presents physicists who imply that the latest scientific discoveries validate this metaphysical principle. One of the “experts” in the film is Fred Alan Wolf who apparently talked about the relationship between quantum mechanics and consciousness. Evidently, most of this wound up on the cutting room floor.\(^\text{13}\)

The other “expert” on the film is John Hagelin, who is affiliated with Maharishi University. Both Wolf and Hagelin distanced themselves from the ideas in the DVD and acknowledged that “The Law of Attraction” does not seem to work in reality the way it is described in The Secret.

Some of the ideas in The Secret can also be found in the film, What the Bleep Do We Know? The documentary combines interviews along with a fictional narrative to bring together thoughts about the possible connection between quantum physics and spirituality. The interviews and computer graphics imply that the latest scientific discoveries (in neuroscience, psychology, physics, etc.) suggest that we can manipulate the universe with our mind.

The film even sets forth the principle that the universe is actually constructed from thought or mental images rather than some substance. It goes on to suggest that “empty space” is anything but empty. And it teaches that our beliefs about who we are and what is reality are influenced by our own thoughts and mental perspective.

The film may be interesting fiction and metaphysics; it is very poor psychology and physics. Scientists have rejected the ideas in the film as nothing more than pseudoscience with no relation to reality.

The message of The Secret also bears no relation to reality. It says, “Food is not responsible for putting on weight. It is your thought that food is responsible for putting on weight that actually has food put on weight.” Science disagrees.

But the message is also dangerous. Karin Klein with the Los Angeles Times recounts the dangerous impact of The Secret on those who follow its prescription: “Therapists tell me they’re starting to see clients who are headed for real trouble, immersing themselves in a dream world in which good things just come.”\(^\text{14}\)

It’s not surprising that The Secret is popular. People are spiritually hungry, and the book and DVD partially feed that hunger. The message is seductive, but as we have also seen it is wrong, and more importantly, it is dangerous. It is one of the enemy’s oldest tricks in The Book. We need to exercise spiritual discernment and realize the false teaching in The Secret.

Notes

3. Adler, Decoding, 53-54.
5. Adler, Decoding, 55.
7. Ibid., 156.
9. Ibid.
The Secret: Creating One’s Reality

The Secret’s “Law of Attraction” is simply recycled Eastern/New Age philosophy in materialistic garb that appeals to our self-indulgent desires. Former Probe staffer Russ Wise examines the teachings of Rhonda Byrne and her stable of “Master Teachers” to show how they contradict with God’s word, and reality.

The Secret has existed throughout the history of mankind. It had been discovered, coveted, suppressed, hidden, lost and recovered. It has been hunted down, stolen, and bought for vast sums of money. Now for the first time in history, The Secret is being revealed to the world . . .

“Fragments of a Great Secret have been found in the oral traditions, in literature, in religions and philosophies throughout the centuries. For the first time, all the pieces of The Secret come together in an incredible revelation that will be life-transforming for all who experience it.” {1}

Knowledge of The Secret will bring the knower great wealth, health, joy and for those who persist, their soul mate: everything you have ever wanted. The Secret reveals the perennial wisdom of the great teachers and avatars of history: the Law of Attraction. According to Rhonda Byrne, author of The Secret, that “secret” (the Law of Attraction) is simply the principle that like attracts like. This Law of Attraction means that when we think positive things or possibly bad things we, as a result, draw those things to ourselves. Another way of putting it is that when we think negatively we will become more negative because we have allowed the negative to be drawn to us.

Rhonda Byrne, a 55 year-old Australian, discovered The Secret during a time of great upheaval in her family. Her father, Roland, died in 2004, her business was near bankruptcy, and her relationships were indeed bankrupt. The stress of life was bearing down on her and she found herself in a place where she was receptive to most anything. That “anything” came in the form of a book given her by her daughter Hailey. The book, The Science of Getting Rich, {2} was the beginning of a transformation that would lead Rhonda down the corridors of fame and wealth.

Rhonda declared that “It lit a fire in me; it was exactly the opposite of the way I thought life worked.” The rekindled fire within her set her on a quest that ultimately led her to devour much of the occultic literature of our day and then to sit at the feet of many of those “teachers” who deliver its message.
Her discovery of these “great truths” led her to employ her production company to produce a film that would bring this much-sought-after “truth” to the world. The result was *The Secret*, now available in multiple languages. As of this writing the DVD (only available online) has sold over 1.1 million copies since its release in March 2006. The book was only written after the film had been widely received around the globe. It was released in November 2006 and has of this date (spring 2007) sold over 1.2 million copies. *The Bodhi Tree*, a well known metaphysical bookshop in West Hollywood, reports that *The Secret* has been “its biggest selling item in the 30-year history of our store.” Not bad results for a first time author!

“If *The Secret* had a plot, it might go something like ‘Tony Robbins uncovers the Judas Gospel and learns to use the Force.’” The film is regularly screened at New Age venues including metaphysical group meetings, Unity Churches, and the homes of believers. *The Secret* was well-received on *Oprah* and it has been touted on *Larry King Live* as well as similar shows. The prominent discussion of *The Secret* in the media has given the film major cultural traction.

A *Time* article by Jeffrey Ressner states the *The Secret* is the mixing of ancient philosophy found in the conspiratorial escapades of *The Da Vinci Code* and the psychic science (read science fiction) of the cult hit *What the Bleep Do We Know?*

According to the author and creator, Rhonda Byrne, *The Secret* is “a philosophy that literally can change your life and help you take control of your destiny!” Now, if true, that would be like winning the lottery. Ms. Byrne continues, “If you follow its philosophy, you can create the life you want . . .” Ms. Byrne asserts that the Law of Attraction is “the most powerful law in the universe,” and that it is working all the time. “What we do is we attract into our lives the things we want, and that is based on what we’re thinking and feeling.” She says that when we engage our feelings it becomes especially potent. Our emotions super-charge the outcomes we desire! She continues, “It is based on this principle that we are actually creating our own circumstances by the very choices we make in life.”

In an interview with Quantumtouch, the interviewer Julie makes a point regarding the global impact of the film. Ms. Byrne responds by saying that *The Secret* is contained in all the ancient wisdom, no matter what philosophy. It is buried within every one. On the surface this statement sounds quite innocent, but her actual meaning goes much deeper. The idea that this “wisdom is buried within everyone” is an indicator that this belief is about our true divine nature.

One of the Master Teachers of *The Secret*, John Demartini, expounds by saying, “We have a magnificent inner calling, vision, mission, power inside us that we are not honoring and harnessing. This movie brings it to the forefront that we can [harness that power].” The premise of this idea is that “we all have a divine essence within us, and we just need to get in touch with it. In other words, as panentheists teach, God is in all of creation, including all human beings, and once a person becomes aware of this, there are no limits to what he can achieve.”

**Master Teachings**

*The Secret* is revealed through some of the most high-profile individuals of our day. They include such notables as Jack Canfield, author of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series of books. Jack is a thirty-year veteran of metaphysics and helps individuals achieve their personal goals by helping them understand the Law of Attraction.

Another teacher is Neale Donald Walsch, known for this book trilogy *Conversations with God*. He, too, is a student of metaphysics and teaches that man is divine. John Gray is best known for his popular book *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*. These teachers speak with one voice.
Their message is brief, yet simple: You create your circumstances; if you live in lack it is your fault; you are an expression of divinity; in fact, you are God. Another of The Secret teachers is Fred Alan Wolf, a physicist. He makes a profound statement on The Secret web site: “You! I want to tell you something. You are God in disguise.”

Of the twenty-four Secret Teachers, perhaps the most troubling is Rev. Michael Bernard Beckwith. He is the pastor of Agape International Spiritual Centre in California. His message is that we are co-creators with God and that our abilities are unlimited. Our potential is divine in nature. Dr. Beckwith is troubling, in my view, because he represents a pseudo-Christianity. He has the greatest ability to be used to deceive those whom God has touched by His Gospel. The Christian who is unable to rightly discern God’s Word will fall prey to such false teaching as found in The Secret.

“Truths” That One Cannot Deny

So what is it that The Secret teaches that would be harmful to the Christian? In her section on acknowledgements Ms. Byrne names names and she lists several that stand out as instructive. One name, in particular, is Charles Fillmore, the founder of Unity School of Christianity{15} along with his wife Myrtle. Unity is a classic New Age belief system that teaches the divinity of man. Eric Butterworth, a former Unity minister, in his book Discover the Power Within You, underscores the New Age premise that Jesus taught the divinity of mankind. Butterworth is of interest because Oprah Winfrey proclaims he is her spiritual mentor.{16}

Perhaps the most revealing of the occult connection between Rhonda Byrne and her stable of Master Teachers is Ester Hicks who channels a non-physical being named Abraham.{17} Hicks is but one thread in the occult pattern that emerges in teachings of The Secret. Hicks’ story is similar to that of Helen Schucman, the channel of A Course in Miracles.{18}

The premise, whatever we think about and thank about, we bring about is central to understanding the Law of Attraction. In Christian circles this concept is known as “name it and claim it,” where the individual simply professes a desire and then claims that God will provide it. This is a Christianized form of an occult “truth.” Ms. Byrne and her Master Teachers are more than willing to use scripture to make their point. They ask us to turn to Matthew 21:22 and Mark 11:24 where Jesus tells His disciples, “Whatever you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.” A common mistake made by those who jump on the metaphysical bandwagon is that they often overlook the whole counsel of scripture. It is instructive that Ms. Byrne did not ask her readers to consider James 4:3 where the writer says, “You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.”

The question the Christian should be asking himself at this point is this: How does one ask correctly? Verse 4 offers us a glimpse of God’s truth. “Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” James then draws our attention to verse 10 where it says, “Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you.” The implication here is not for us to command God to act because of our asking or believing, but to allow Him to exalt us because of our humility. This teaching would not fit very well within the context of Rhonda Byrne’s The Secret.

A central teaching of The Law of Attraction is that nothing can come into your experience unless you summon it through persistent thoughts.{19} Another of the Master Teachers, Dr. Joe Vitale, believes that “Everything that surrounds you right now in your life, including the things you’re complaining about, you’ve attracted.”{20} According to Ms. Byrne, our feelings are our greatest tool to help us create the positive things in our lives. She says, “Your thoughts are the primary cause of everything.” She continues by stating, “Your thoughts determine your frequency, and your feelings tell you immediately what frequency you are on.”{21}
Ms. Byrne says that we are “the most powerful transmission tower in the Universe. In simple terms, all energy vibrates at a frequency. Being energy, you also vibrate at a frequency, and what determines your frequency at any time is whatever you are thinking and feeling. All the things you want are made of energy, and they are vibrating too. Everything is energy.” (22) Another way of stating this “truth” is to say that as you focus on what you want, you are changing the vibration of the atoms of that thing, and you are causing it to vibrate to You. I know this is a mind-blowing concept, but there’s more! Ms. Byrne states that one of the most magnificent teachings of The Secret is that “You are energy, and cannot be created or destroyed. Energy just changes form. And that means You! The true essence of You, the pure energy of You, has always been and always will be. You can never not be.” (23)

“When you are feeling good thoughts, it is communication back from the Universe saying, ‘You are thinking good thoughts.’ Likewise, when you are feeling bad, you are receiving communication back from the Universe saying, ‘You are thinking bad thoughts.’” (24) Our feelings about something turbo-charge our outcome. In other words, we can purposely use our feelings to transmit an even more powerful frequency, by adding feeling to what we are wanting. (25) Michael Bernard Beckwith clarifies this concept by stating, “You can begin right now to feel healthy. You can begin to feel prosperous. You can begin to feel love that’s surrounding you, even if it’s not there. And what will happen is the universe will correspond to the nature of your song. The universe will correspond to the nature of that inner feeling and manifest, because that’s the way you feel.” In other words, don’t allow your perceived reality to convince you otherwise, but step out and create your new reality by simply saying it is so and the Universe (God) will bring it about. Essentially, we are seeking a god to do our bidding as we command.

Marci Shimoff, another of the Master Teachers, makes this observation: “Once you begin to understand and truly master your thoughts and feelings, that’s when you see how you create your own reality. That’s where your freedom is, that’s where all your power is.” (26) The Bible offers a different exhortation to the Christian at this juncture. We read in 2 Corinthians 10:5 that we are to destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. Our purpose is not to use our thought life to enhance ourselves, but to bring our thought lives into obedience and submit ourselves to a holy God. This thought is totally absent from The Secret!

Shimoff adds that we should consider if the Universe is a friendly place for us to hang out. Ms. Byrne says that knowing the Law of Attraction, we would have to say that the Universe is, indeed, a most friendly place where we can create our own reality. The Secret (and New Age thought in general) encourages its adherents to practice affirmation as a way to channel one’s thought life to a place where it will benefit the individual. Ms. Byrne suggests the following affirmation: “This is a magnificent Universe. The Universe is bringing all good things to me. The Universe is conspiring for me in all things. The Universe is supporting me in everything I do. The Universe meets all my needs immediately.” (27)

Lisa Nichols, also a Master Teacher, informs us that the first step to achieving our desires is to ask. “Make a command of the Universe. Let the Universe know what you want. The Universe responds to your thoughts.” (28) It seems that if one were to “command” God (the Universe) to produce all that he desired and wanted, he might prefer a different outcome. In my view, the secret to living the Christian life is to desire the things that God desires for us rather than making a command to fulfill one’s lusts. Dr. Joe Vitale offers this quip: “This is really fun. It’s like having the Universe as your catalogue. It is You placing your order with the Universe. It’s really that easy.” (29)

Nichols continues by stating that the second step in achieving all that we want is to believe. “Believe that it is already yours. Have what I love to call unwavering faith. Believing in the unseen.” In the
moment you ask, and believe and know you already have it in the unseen, the entire Universe shifts to bring it into the seen. In other words, God/The Universe immediately tunes to your frequency and then because of the Law of Attraction, he is obligated to supply all your wants. Vitale makes another head-scratching comment when he states, "The Universe will start to rearrange itself to make it happen for you. You don’t need to know how it’s going to come about. You don’t need to know how the Universe will arrange itself."{30} Just simply believe!

The third step according to Nichols is to receive that which we have commanded. Nichols states that an important part of our receiving is for us to feel wonderful about it. Beckwith comments, “This is a feeling Universe. If you just intellectually believe something, but you have no corresponding feeling underneath that, you don’t necessarily have enough power to manifest what you want in your life. You have to feel it.” I can understand that! I recognize that I have limited power. What power I may have is only that which God allows me through the Holy Spirit to do His good will—not mine. I also recognize that no matter how wonderful I “feel,” my feeling about something is not what is going to make it right in God’s sight. It is only when I apply His will to the matter that I see appropriate results.

The premise that mankind and the impersonal Universe are interconnected is widely taught within occultic, New Age, literature. They teach that all-is-One. Man is an integral part of The Supreme Mind and he is seen as being one with it, to the point that he is the source of the Universe.{31}

The Universe and The Higher Self

The concept of an impersonal energy or force that is the “Universe” is not a new thought. It has been around for a long time and has been recognized in numerous belief systems that do not reflect God’s truth.

Gary Zukav teaches that we should trust the Universe because it is working toward our best and most appropriate end. He adds that if we do trust the Universe it will provide all that we desire: “Let your higher self complete its task.{32} In other words, allow the Universe (God) to complete its work in you as you come to fully realize that your “Higher Self” is the Divine Teacher.

Wayne Dyer helps clarify the role that the Higher Self plays in our understanding of who we truly are. In his text Your Sacred Self, he makes this observation: “When you consult your higher self, you learn that you are a part of the same divine essence that connects all of us to the source of spirit. There is one God, one source with many different manifestations.”{33} Dyer says that we relate to others in “terms of the divineness that is flowing through them, which is a manifestation of the energy supporting the physical world. On the path of the sacred way, you experience that force flowing through you and others.”{34} He declares that we short-circuit the manifestation of our Higher Selves (the divine spirit within) when we practice a toxic lifestyle. A toxic lifestyle would be one that denied man’s personal divinity. Dyer goes on to say, “To allow your highest self to triumph in this conflict between purity and toxicity, you must let go of any idea that at your core you are evil or a sinner.”{35}

To sum it up Ms. Byrne makes this observation: “So whichever way you look at it, the result is still the same. We are One. We are all connected, and we are all part of the One Energy Field, or the One Supreme Mind, or the One Consciousness, or the One Creative Source. Call it whatever you want, but we are all One.”{36} The message of The Secret is plain for all to see: “You are God in a physical body. You are Spirit in the flesh. You are Eternal Life expressing itself as you. You are a cosmic being. You are all power. You are magnificence. You are the creator, and you are creating the creation of You on this planet.”{37}
The Higher Self and Guidance

Rhonda Byrne and her *Secret* Teachers have played their metaphysical hand close to their vest. However, they have allowed their secret teaching to come through on occasion. Ultimately, yielding your life to the Universe and discovering your Higher Self implies that you must at some point submit to its deepest presence.

Ms. Byrne confides that “To love yourself fully, you must focus on a new dimension of You. You must focus on the presence inside of You. Take a moment and sit still. Focus on feeling the life presence inside you. As you focus on the presence within, it will begin to reveal itself to You. It is a feeling of pure love and bliss, and it is perfection. That presence is the real You.”{38}

Ms. Byrne offers her viewer and reader a sure-fire avenue to connecting with the “Presence” within. She states without reservation that all teachers in her film and in her book use meditation to quiet their minds so they can be in full harmony with the Universe. She says every teacher uses meditation as a daily practice. She then adds that “it wasn’t until I discovered *The Secret* that I realized how powerful meditation can be.”{39}

To hear the Master Teachers of *The Secret* tell it, one would think that discovering one’s Higher Self or inner teacher is the high point of spiritual or self discovery. In her book *The Possible Human*, Jean Huston makes this observation regarding the Presence. Ms. Houston is guiding her students through an exercise and she tells them that

“In the room is a Master Teacher of the skill—this person or being is your Master Teacher, and in the time that follows this teacher will give you deep and potent instructions to help you improve your skill. The Master Teacher may speak in words or not. Teachings may present themselves as feelings. However this being works with you, the learning on your part will be effective and deep. Once you become familiar with your Master Teacher and begin to trust and act on the advice and knowledge that is imparted, you will find it increasingly easy to have access to this kind of deep learning . . .”

Houston fully discloses the true nature of this inner Presence that Ms. Byrne alludes to. Apparently unable to contain her enthusiasm, she further states,

“The Master Teacher is a potent reminder of our inner ‘allies’ and may often provide much more teaching and wisdom than we had intended when we set out on this journey. And the exercise may also lead you to the discovery that the inner realms have their own subtle machinations for guiding you . . . we must also listen to them, for they have urgent messages to send us. If we cooperate with them—that is, with our own deepest knowing—we begin to notice an astounding change in our lives.{40}

If this is confusing, allow me to sum it up this way. When you enter the realm of spiritual discovery through meditative practices or some other psycho-spiritual methodology you will at some point find yourself face to face with a demon masquerading as your inner guide or Master Teacher. It is instructive to note that this inner guide or spirit guide will at some point in time bring you an urgent message from the “other side.” The subtle deception that lies in wait for its innocent prey is not discriminating. It will consume whomever it finds to seduce.
Earlier I mentioned that I believe Michael Bernard Beckwith to be a troubling figure in the unfolding of *The Secret* and its Law of Attraction. Rhonda Byrne became the “Big Get” for many in the world of television and the media. Oprah Winfrey was no different. After Ms. Byrne appeared on Oprah she realized her dreams as her film and book sales went through the roof. After her segment on Oprah, *The Secret* was officially out and the book instantly became *the* bestseller literally overnight.

Michael Bernard Beckwith appeared with Ms. Byrne on Oprah and became an instant celebrity. His second Oprah appearance included the taking of questions from audience members. One of particular note was a lady named Maureen. Her question centered around her being a Christian. Maureen stated that her family puts their faith in God, and that it seemed to her that *The Secret* teaches that we should put our faith in ourselves. “And so,” she said, “I was wondering, is God anywhere in this?”

Here is what Beckwith had to say to Maureen: “The Secret involves the laws of the universe and they, in turn, describe the nature of how God works. [Jesus] said, ‘Pray believing that ye have, that ye may receive.’ That’s *The Secret* in a nutshell. Pray believing and feeling and sensing that you already have it, and then you’re available to receive it.”

The disturbing part of his answer came when he offered this thoughtful conclusion to Maureen’s question: “*The Secret* isn’t about contradicting religion—it supports it. It actually goes underneath the culture and explains to you the sacred laws that these wonderful teachers have brought to us,” he said. According to Beckwith, *The Secret* is about supporting the great spiritual traditions in a more modern form. “It really is just putting Christianity, Judaism, all the great teachings into a current vernacular.”

He smoothed the rippling waters created by her question, and by side-stepping her real concern he offered her a decoy. His implication was that the archaic teachings and mis-interpretations of the Bible can no longer be held as the standard of truth, but this new generation of believers is looking for ways to better connect with spiritual truth.

Sadly, there are a multitude of Maureens in the greater Christian church who may be easily persuaded by the decoys of spiritual heresy. It was interesting to see Oprah turn in her chair and catch Maureen’s eye and declare that she is a Christian, thereby implying that the teachings of *The Secret* as delivered by Beckwith are rock solid Christian principles.\(^{41}\)

The greater “spiritual traditions” referred to by Beckwith are no less than the perennial philosophy and ancient wisdom taught by proponents of New Age thought and organizations like the Rosicrucians and other occult groups. The Rosicrucians teach that members will “achieve a gradual inner awakening, leading to a permanent awareness of the unity of all creation and your personal relationship with the ‘oneness’ of the universe.”\(^{42}\)

**Lost in Commonsenseville!?**

Deception always comes packaged in a veneer of truth. Otherwise it would not be acceptable! *The Secret* is no different. There are several aspects of the teaching that would be good and right to exhibit in one’s life. Here are some examples:

1. **We should be grateful.** Christians should be grateful in all things. The scriptures use the word “contentment.” Philippians 4:11 tells us that we are to be content in whatever state we find ourselves. In regards to the teaching of *The Secret* I found this verse particularly interesting. The
verse begins, “Not that I complain of want . . .” My reading of The Secret reveals just that. My wants and desires must be brought into manifestation because I simply ask. Ms. Byrne makes this observation: “It is impossible to bring more into your life if you are feeling ungrateful about what you have. Why? Because the thoughts and feelings you emit as you feel ungrateful are all negative emotions.” The following verses (4:12-13) in Philippians offer us a glimpse into the meaning of the real secret to life: “I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance, and want. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” In contrast, the teaching of The Secret is that by expressing gratitude we increase our opportunity to receive more.

2. **We should give thanks.** Above all, the Christian should be thankful because of what Jesus did for him on the cross. However, there are those who are less than thankful. Romans 1:20 tells us that we have no excuse of not knowing that God exists because of His creation. Verse 21 says, “Although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools . . .”

Colossians 3:15-17 offers new believers this exhortation:

“And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts . . . And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

Michael Bernard Beckwith says that we are to sing our own song. The scripture seems clear that our song is to glorify God rather than ourselves. Beckwith comments, “You can begin to feel the love that’s surrounding you, even if its not there. And what will happen is the universe will correspond to the nature of your song.” In other words the Universe—God—will comply with the commands in “our song.”

3. **We should give liberally.** It is without question that the Christian should be a generous giver because he has been given so much. 2 Corinthians 9:6-8 offers this truth:

“The point is this: he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work.”

On the other hand, The Secret teaches that “giving is a powerful action to bring more money into your life, because when you are giving you are saying, ‘I have plenty.’” The principle here, for those who follow the teachings of the Law of Attraction, is to be positive in your actions and thereby send the correct frequency or vibration into the Universe so you can get more. In my view, the biblical standard is far more pleasing to a holy God.

4. **We should focus on the good in others.** The Christian is to consider others better than himself and not become jaded. Philippians 2:3 offers this counsel:

Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.
Here once again, *The Secret* or the Law of Attraction is contrary to the teachings of Jesus. Marci Shimoff makes this revealing statement: “But for relationships to really work, we need to focus on what we appreciate about the other person, not what we’re complaining about.” On the surface this admonition sounds really great; however, as we have seen before in the Law of Attraction, the actor’s actions are really all about getting what he wants. Shimoff continues her comment, “When we’re complaining about those things we’re only getting more of those things.” The dynamics of inter-personal relationships do seem to agree with Shimoff’s premise: if we’re less than adorable we’re going to get that reflected back to us by others. I agree that this may likely be the case. But our doing so as a follower of *The Secret* is to multiply our chances at getting what we want rather than looking after the interests of others.

5. **We should praise and bless our enemies.** The scripture clearly teaches that the Christian is to bless others. The Christian who hears this idea from the stable of teachers under Rhonda Byrne will likely believe that *The Secret* is in alignment with God’s Word. But not so fast! According to Lisa Nichols, we are to recognize the beauty in those things around us and then “bless and praise them.” Ms. Byrne offers this understanding of blessing: “Lisa’s wise words, to ‘praise and bless’ the things around you, are worth their weight in gold. When you are blessing or praising you are on the highest frequency of love. In the Bible, the Hebrews used the act of blessing to bring forth health, wealth, and happiness.” In other words, we should confer our blessing so we might gain prosperity! Another head-shaking comment follows the above statement: “Praising and blessing dissolves all negativity, so praise and bless your enemies.” Blessing is an important part of the Christian life. We are blessed to be a blessing. Psalm 128:1 and 4 say, “Blessed is every one who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways! Lo, thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord.” The Psalmist draws our attention to another truth that *The Secret* chooses to ignore. Ms. Byrne’s worldview and that of all likeminded teachers discounts the precept that one should *fear the Lord*. In their view, the “Lord”, the Universe, is not to be feared, but to be commanded to act on their behalf and bring them the riches they desire.

**Finding Our Way in Commonsenseville**

In the Law of Attraction and *The Secret* it is difficult to discern the occultic trappings when our focus is on such commonsense teachings as seen above. However, for the discerning it becomes clear that the perceived “truths” taught as *The Secret* are in reality false teachings for the Christian. They do not line up with God’s Word. They are out of focus and agreement.

*The Secret* is the latest in a series of examples that are used by the enemy of truth to nullify God’s authoritative Word. A previous film that made its way into the minds of many unsuspecting viewers was *What the Bleep!?*, a 2004 film dealing with much of the same material as *The Secret*. There have been numerous books touted by Oprah Winfrey and others who sing the praises of the same worldview.

Romans 12:1-2 offers us God’s truth in light of the emotional feelings encouraged in *The Secret*. Paul exhorts his brothers,

I appeal to you therefore by the mercies of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Note that Paul did not say that we should consult our feelings about the matter, but that our
spiritual worship is to present our bodies as a sacrifice to the Lord. The message of *The Secret* is not selflessness, but selfishness and self indulgence.

The discerning Christian must not only become aware of such cultural shifts as noted above, but he must be well-informed of the underlying falsity of such views—to judge rightly using the scripture as his guiding light. Our adversary is not asleep at the switch. He is looking for those whom he may devour by his cunning deception. The challenge for the Christian is to remain true to the scripture and faithful to the end. Our life’s purpose is to glorify our Father. Jesus clarified this truth by saying, “By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples.”{50} Then Jesus added,

And this is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you sent. I glorified thee on earth, having accomplished the work which thou gave me to do; and now, Father glorify thou me in thy own presence with the glory which I had with thee before the world was made.{51}

We have seen by the above information that the purpose of the Christian life is to glorify God—not one’s self. It is not about garnering the wealth of the world, or to live in perfect health. Our true motivation in all that we do is to honor our Creator and to point others to the mercies and goodness of a loving Father.

Author’s Comment:

This article is dedicated to Maureen who appeared on Oprah 2/16/2007, and the other Maureens who desire to know if the message of *The Secret* is one that they might incorporate into their Christian lives. My prayer is that this article will help them discern God’s truth and then apply it in their lives. Proverbs 4:23

Notes

1. www.thesecret.tv/home-synopsis.html
3. Language translations: German, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Japanese, Chinese.
4. www.time.com/time/arts/article/0,8599,1573136,00.html
6. From the Oprah.com website: “*One Week Later: The Reaction to “The Secret”*… . One week later…the reaction to The Secret! Your emails poured in and Oprah.com went off the charts! The secret to making more money, losing weight, falling in love, landing your dream job…and you want more! The questions, the successes and the lives changed. Stories you have to hear! A follow-up to the show everybody is talking about! Talk about this show.” http://tinyurl.com/39jkxf
7. What the Bleep!?, www.whatthebleep.com/whatthebleep/ The movie is greatly influenced by the teachings of J. Z. Knight (Ramtha). The three producers of the film were involved with The Ramtha School of Enlightenment and Ms. Knight had creative control over the film. In reality the film was nothing more than an infomercial for Ms. Knight and her school. www.ramtha.com/default.asp
8. The Secret comes to Oprah, 2/8/2007, blog.marcaccetta.com/blog/2007/02/the_secret_come.html#more
9. Ibid.
10. www.Quantumtouch.groupee.net
12. This universal arrangement is not pantheism (all is God), but panentheism, (God in all things and beings) a term devised by Karl C. F. Krause (1781-1832) to describe his thought. It is best known for its use by Charles Hartshorne and recently by Matthew Fox. Panentheism says that all is in God, somewhat as if God were the ocean and we were fish. If one considers what is in God’s body to be part of God, then we can say that God is all there is and then some. The universe is God’s body, but God’s awareness or personality is greater than the sum of all the parts of the universe. All the parts have some degree of freedom in co-creating with God. At the start of its momentary career as a subject, an experience is God-as the divine initial aim. As the experience carries on its choosing process, it is a freely aiming reality that is not strictly God, since it departs from God’s purpose to some degree. Yet everything is within God. www.webyte.com/alan/pan.htm


15. See our article on Unity: christianinformation.org/article.asp?artID=46


www.money-health-relationships.com/abraham-hicks.html


20. Ibid., p. 27.

21. Ibid., p. 31.

22. Ibid., p. 156.

23. Ibid., p. 159. See also James Redfield, The Celestine Prophecy, (New York, Warner Books 1993) p. 42. “In other words, the basic stuff of the universe, at its core, is looking like a kind of pure energy that is malleable to human intention and expectation in a way that defies our old mechanistic model of the universe—as though our expectation itself causes our energy to flow out into the world and affect other energy systems.”

24. Ibid., p. 33. Betty Eadie, Embraced by the Light (Placerville, CA, Gold Leaf Press 1992), p. 57-58. Also see our article on Ms. Eadie: tinyurl.com/34kxv8

25. Byrne, p. 35; Redfield, p. 153.


27. Ibid., p. 40.

28. Ibid., p. 47.

29. Ibid., p. 48.

30. Ibid., p. 51.

31. Ibid., p. 160.


34. Ibid., p. 237.

35. Ibid., p. 287.


37. Byrne, p. 164.

38. Ibid., p. 173.

39. Ibid., p. 23. Also see our article on Meditation, christianinformation.org/article.asp?artID=78.
See also Psalm 1:2, Joshua 1:8.

41. See our article on Oprah, christianinformation.org/article.asp?artID=103.
42. AMROC website: “On the Spiritual Level: Achieve a gradual inner awakening, leading to a permanent awareness of the unity of all creation and your personal relationship with the “oneness” of the universe. This leads to an integration of all aspects of your being. From this spiritual foundation, from your connection with the greater whole, everything else flows. The Rosicrucian studies aid you in developing a workable and practical philosophy of life and the inner peace that comes from understanding the nature of the universe and your relationship to it. www.rosicrucian.org/about/mastery/mastery04potential.html
https://www.thesecret.org/mastery/benefit.html
43. Byrne, p. 74, 77.
44. Ibid., p. 35.
45. Ibid., p. 107-108.
46. Ibid., p. 121.
48. Byrne, p. 152.
49. See our article on Oprah: christianinformation.org/article.asp?artID=103.
51. John 17:3-5.


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Edgar Cayce: The Sleeping (False) Prophet

This article is no longer available. Please see Michael Gleghorn’s article “The Worldview of Edgar Cayce” instead.

We apologize for any inconvenience.

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Scientology: Religion of the Stars - A Christian Perspective

Don Closson gives an overview of the Church of Scientology and its founder, L. Ron Hubbard, from a biblical perspective, including analysis of why it is incompatible with Christianity.

Depending on your perspective, Scientology was either discovered or invented by the successful pulp and science fiction writer L. Ron Hubbard. He and his followers claimed to have uncovered deep secrets of the mind and spirit. But while adherents say Hubbard’s discoveries can eradicate
most of what ails humanity, critics argue that Hubbard invented a new religion with the same creative mind that fashioned popular works of science fiction. Hubbard’s critics add that this new religion was formulated to make its founder and close associates very wealthy.

The details of Hubbard’s life are highly contentious. The Church of Scientology offers a version that is remarkable in every way. According to the Church, Hubbard was studying Shakespeare and Greek philosophy soon after he learned to read. By age six, he had become a blood brother of the Blackfoot Indians and had learned their tribal secrets and legends, an honor that supposedly few white men could claim. The Church of Scientology also maintains that he became the youngest Eagle Scout ever, and by age nineteen had traveled over a quarter of a million miles to China, Japan, Guam, the Philippines, and other countries. By his late teens they claim that he had absorbed the philosophies of the East. These facts are questioned by Hubbard’s critics who have posted their counter-evidence on the Web and in published materials.

The Church claims that Hubbard combined his unique background with personal research that resulted in a manuscript titled “The Original Thesis” which laid the foundation for his book *Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health*, published in 1950. This work sold over 150,000 copies that year alone and continues to sell well today. In 1953, Hubbard founded the first Church of Scientology in Camden, New Jersey, and eventually planted churches around the world. In 1967, he appointed himself Commodore of a small fleet of ships from which he managed his empire while sailing the Mediterranean Sea. He returned to science fiction writing near the end of his life, publishing bestsellers *Battlefield Earth* and the enormous Mission Earth series.

Hubbard taught that the principles in Dianetics could do more for the common man than all the traditional psychological theories and therapies combined. Understandably, the American Psychological Association became alarmed. When challenged, Hubbard and his organization would sue health care professionals and anyone else who questioned their auditing therapy. Those who questioned the movement from the inside were labeled “Suppressive Persons,” and were punished and driven from the Church.

**The Worldview of Scientology: Cosmology**

Scientology claims that its belief system does not conflict with the beliefs of Christianity. However, upon investigation the religion holds fundamental propositions about reality that create an impassible gulf between the two worldviews. If one accepts L. Ron Hubbard’s view of the cosmos, it will impact every other worldview component. Scientology has unique beliefs about the nature of humanity, ethics, what happens at death, the direction of history, and even how we come to know what is true. These beliefs reveal differences that are not just surface issues; they go to the heart of our existence as human beings.

Scientology assures us that it leaves the nature of God or a supreme being undefined so that it is open to people of various faith traditions. However, it does make claims about the origin of the cosmos we live in and how things have gotten the way they are. In fact, these ideas have much in common with Gnosticism. It appears that L. Ron Hubbard, the founder of Scientology, was both aware of this ancient belief system and added original features to it in coming up with a new story of human origins.
Gnosticism competed with the early Christian church and was written about and refuted by church leaders. It combined ideas from Jewish, Christian, and pagan sources, and taught that the material universe is a mistake; in fact, it is evil. Its focus was on enlightened individuals who came to see this physical world for the illusion and mistake that it really is. By discovering secret knowledge, this person would lead others to the truth and eventually help them to transcend the trap of this earthly prison. Hubbard claimed to have been one of these enlightened people and that he had acquired knowledge that no other person has ever possessed, calling himself a “celestial mediator.”

Hubbard used the acronym MEST to represent the material, energy, space, and time of our universe. He argued that MEST is the product or projection of a vast number of spirit creatures called thetans who became bored with a non-material existence and decided to emanate a universe to play in. Over a long period of time, these thetans forgot that this reality, this universe, is a product of their own design, and they began to perceive it as being real.

According to Hubbard, this “agreed upon” reality is not the product of a self-existing creator God who exists outside of the cosmos as the Judeo-Christian worldview teaches, but is instead an illusion and a barrier to overcome in order to advance as an individual. Much like Hinduism and Buddhism, Scientology finds that the reality in which we dwell is part of our problem instead of a gift from a holy God. This belief alone should be enough to keep Christians from trusting in the gospel according to Hubbard.

**The Worldview of Scientology: Human Nature**

Hubbard claimed to have mastered Eastern thinking at an early age, so it is not surprising that his view of human nature borrows from Hindu and Buddhist thought. Much like Vedanta Hinduism, Scientology teaches that the only real component of humanity is an inner spirit being or spiritual spark. According to Hubbard, our minds are just a database of pictures or a conduit for the spirit, and that our bodies, along with the rest of the cosmos, are only imagined and are a hindrance to discovering the truth about our real nature.

Scientology teaches that this inner spirit being is a thetan that is both “good” and “divine.” It is a being of infinite creative potential that projects or creates the universe in partnership with all other thetans. Thetans are immortal creatures who dwell in illusionary physical bodies, but over time have become confused and now believe that their physical bodies are real.

According to Scientologists, thetans who have not benefited from the practices of Scientology are trapped in a reactive state of mind and cannot operate normally. In this state, humans are more like conditioned machines rather than individuals with a free will. Even worse, they have collected negative experiences called engrams as they have migrated again and again into new bodies in a never-ending cycle of reincarnation. Each of these engrams must be tracked down by a trained Church of Scientology auditor and removed before a person can advance to a healthier mental state.

Once freed by the practices of Scientology, the thetan within is promised increased freedom, intelligence and even spiritual powers. This increased capacity is claimed by many who have been “cleared” through auditing. Church publications make no guarantee regarding the results of auditing, but they do say that “auditing techniques work 100 percent of the time if they are applied correctly.”

According to Hubbard, the problems facing humanity are educational rather than moral; a lack of training, not rebellion against a holy God. We are not morally deficient, but instead ignorant of our true nature. Our only “fall” is our belief that we are primarily physical beings rather than spiritual entities.
Scientology offers us a plan for self improvement; through hard work and applying Hubbard’s discoveries, anyone can reach a god-like existence. Through successful auditing, you too can become an OT or Operating Thetan, and wear Scientology’s OT bracelet, a sign that you have reached “total spiritual independence and serenity.”

This is directly in conflict with the message of Christianity which states that our problem is a moral one, and the only solution is accepting the gift of forgiveness provided by Christ’s death on the cross.

Scientology and Knowledge

Hubbard was enthralled by creative people and the creative process. As a successful screen and science fiction writer, he placed the artist at the pinnacle of culture. He wrote that “A culture is only as great as its dreams, and its dreams are dreamed by artists.” His stated desire was to better the entire culture by improving the lives of its most creative thinkers. As a result, the Church of Scientology built Celebrity Centres around the world for the special needs of artists and celebrities. Here, celebrities can go through the necessary process of auditing to clear themselves of negative engrams that is provided by the Church, while in an environment that keeps fans and the paparazzi at a distance. Artists are also highlighted in Scientology’s publications, and celebrity Church members Tom Cruise, Kirstie Alley, and John Travolta are all outspoken proselytizers for the church.

Part of Scientology’s attraction to, and reliance on, artists and celebrities results from Hubbard’s view of reality and the nature of knowledge itself. He believed that reality is the projection of billions of thetans who created it out of boredom. Matter, energy, space, and time have no independent or objective reality; they are dependent on thetan creativity. Hubbard argued that truth itself is so strange that a typical person cannot distinguish between science and science fiction. At one point Hubbard compared being a thetan to the fantasy world in *Alice in Wonderland*. He noted that thetans can “mock up [invent, or make] white rabbits and caterpillars and Mad Hatters,” implying that they would find themselves right at home in Lewis Carroll’s Wonderland.

Only operating thetans can see reality for what it is and Hubbard claimed to have greater insight than everyone else. Since Hubbard was considered to be the most enlightened thetan, anything he declared to be true was to be accepted by his followers without question. He used and nurtured this obedience when the Church came under attack by individuals and the government, especially when someone inside the organization began to question his authority. As noted earlier, those who disagreed with Hubbard were labeled “Suppressive Persons” and marked as fair game to be deprived of property via lawsuits or even to be physically injured by other Scientologists.

Christianity acknowledges and celebrates humanity’s artistic gifts which they believe reflect our being created in the image of God, the ultimate creator and artist. It also affirms the role of reason in the process of investigating the nature of God’s creation. But as the book of Hebrews says, “in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son . . . through whom he made the universe.” Our faith is in this Jesus, not the words of L. Ron Hubbard or the Church of Scientology.

Scientology and the Christian Faith

I recently received an email from someone who was dialoguing with a Scientologist. The Scientologist confidently claimed that Jesus died on the cross because the Jews could not accept his Buddhist teachings. She explained how Jesus had studied in China and become a Buddhist prior to his ministry in Palestine, and that the traditional view of what Jesus taught and why he died was only an opinion. Finally, this follower of L. Ron Hubbard and the Church of Scientology argued that one’s sins can be forgiven only if a person pays to experience the auditing process offered by the church.
and eventually become an OT or Operating Thetan.

Other beliefs held by Scientologists add to the chasm that separates it from biblical Christianity. People who have left Scientology claim that it teaches a “back-story” to the current human condition. But only those who have attained the highest levels within the organization are given access to the information.

Hubbard’s story goes something like this. Seventy five million years ago an evil leader called Xenu decided to eliminate the excess population from a galactic confederacy consisting of twenty-six stars and seventy-six planets. With the help of psychiatrists, he tricked billions of people into submission and exported them to the planet Teegeeack or Earth. The paralyzed victims were stacked around active volcanoes in which hydrogen bombs were placed. According to the story, the bombs were detonated and the disembodied souls or thetans were captured and brainwashed into believing in the existence of a God and the devil. Hubbard blamed the evil Xenu for planting the ideas of Catholicism and the image of crucifixion into the minds of the hapless thetans. This process also deprived the thetans of their own sense of identity, resulting in their clinging to the few physical bodies that remained after the explosions.

As a result, those who have not benefited from Scientology’s auditing process are possessed by a collection of dysfunctional thetans trying to control their every thought and action. Once cleared by Hubbard’s auditing, all the confusion supposedly disappears. There is more to this “history according to L. Ron Hubbard,” but it quickly becomes obvious that Scientology and its founder are teaching another gospel.

Either one can be saved via Hubbard’s auditing process, which promises to give people “total spiritual independence and serenity,” or we are saved by placing our faith in what Jesus Christ did on the cross, but not both. Either we are divine-like beings who can overcome all our moral and mental deficiencies in the Church of Scientology, or we are creatures that were created “good” but are fallen due to rebellion against a holy God. To argue that the two systems are compatible doesn’t make much sense.

Notes


2. Ibid., 93.

3. Ibid., 150.

4. Ibid., 259.


6. Hebrews 1:2

7. What is Scientology?, 150.

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Islam and Political Correctness

All of us are trying to learn more about Islam, but sometimes political correctness has clouded our thinking about Islam. Are Jesus and Muhammad the same? Is Islam a religion of peace? Do Christians and Muslims worship the same God? Kerby Anderson looks at some of these politically correct beliefs.

Muhammad and Islam

Nearly everyone can remember what they were doing on September 11, 2001. That fateful day affected all of us and certainly increased our desire to know more about Islam. In the years following, we have all learned more about the world’s second largest religion. But sometimes, political correctness has clouded clear thinking about Islam.

We hear that “Islam is a religion of peace.” Some even say, “The God of Islam is the same God as the God of the Jews and the Christians.” So what is the truth about these statements about Islam?

I want to look at some of these statements and provide a biblically-based response. We need to know the facts about Islam and this current war on terror.

The first statement we will address is often heard in religion classes on college campuses. That is that “Muhammad is like every other religious founder.” This simply is not the case. For example, nearly every major religion in the world teaches a variation of the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Islam does not have a Golden Rule. Instead, it makes very definite distinctions in the way Muslims are to treat believers and unbelievers. The latter are called infidels and are often treated harshly or killed. This religious perspective is very different from other religions.

For a moment, let’s compare Jesus and Muhammad. Muslims believe that Muhammad is the final prophet from Allah. He is referred to as the “seal of the prophets” (Sura 33:40). But while he is revered as the greatest of the prophets, most do not teach that he was sinless. The Qur’an does not make the claim that he was sinless, and there are passages that teach that Muhammad was a man like us (Sura 18:110) and that Allah told Muhammad that he must repent of his sins (Sura 40:55).

By contrast, Jesus claimed to be God and claimed to have the powers and authority that only God could possess. The New Testament provides eyewitness accounts or records of eyewitness accounts of the claims that Jesus made and the miracles he performed. Moreover, the New Testament teaches that Jesus Christ lived a perfect and sinless life (2 Cor. 5:21).

Muhammad’s every action is to be imitated by Muslims. His life is a model for these believers. Some Muslims even avoid eating food that Muhammad avoided or never was able to eat. In fact, Muhammad is so revered by Muslims that no perceived criticism upon him or even his likeness (e.g., through a cartoon) may be allowed.

Muhammad also taught that Muslims are to fight in the cause of Allah (Sura 4:76) and fight against the unbelievers (Sura 9:123). By contrast, Jesus taught that Christians are to love their enemies (Matt. 5:44) and turn the other cheek (Matt. 5:39).
In conclusion, we can see that the life of Muhammad is different from many of the other founders of religion. Moreover, the life of Muhammad and the life of Jesus Christ are very different.

**Islam: A Religion of Peace?**

One politically correct phrase that is often repeated is that “Islam is a religion of peace.” While it is true that many Muslims are peace-loving, is it also true that Islam is a religion of peace? To answer that question, it is important to understand the meaning of *jihad*.

The word *jihad* is actually the noun of the Arabic verb *jahidi*, which means to “strive hard.” This verse is an example: “O Prophet! Strive hard against the unbelievers and the hypocrites, and be firm against them. Their abode is Hell, and evil refuge indeed” (Sura 9:73).

Although some Muslims understand this striving to be merely intellectual and philosophical, the usual translation of jihad involves a holy war. That has been the traditional interpretation since the time of Muhammad.

Jihad was to be waged on the battlefield. Sura 47:4 says, “When you meet the unbelievers in the battlefield, strike off their heads and, when you have laid them low, bind your captives firmly.” Sura 9:5 says, “Fight and slay the pagans wherever you find them, and seize them, beleager them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem.”

Consider some of these other passages concerning jihad. Faithful Muslims wage jihad against unbelievers: “O ye who believe! Fight the unbelievers who gird you about, and let them find firmness in you; and know that Allah is with those who fear Him” (Sura 9:123).

Muslims are also to wage jihad not only against unbelievers but against those who have strayed from the faith: “Prophet, make war on the unbelievers and the hypocrites and deal rigorously with them. Hell shall be their home: and evil fate” (Sura 9:73).

Another way to understand the term “jihad” is to look at the historical context. After Muhammad’s success in the Battle of Badr, he set forth various principles of warfare. For example, according to Sura 9:29, jihad is a religious duty. He taught in Sura 9:111 that martyrdom in jihad is the highest good and guarantees salvation. Sura 9:5 says that Muslims engaged in jihad should not show tolerance toward unbelievers. And acts of terrorism are justified in Sura 8:12.

While it may be true that there are peaceful Muslims, it is not true that Islam has always been a peaceful religion. The teaching of jihad and the current interpretation by radical Muslims of this concept can easily be seen in the acts of terrorism around the world.

**The Qur’an and the Bible are Both Violent Books**

Whenever verses of the sword from the Qur’an are quoted, you can be sure that someone will quickly point out that the Old Testament calls for violence. But are these two books morally equivalent? Let’s look at some of these passages and see.

The Qur’an calls for jihad against the unbelievers (or infidels). Sura 9:5 says, “Fight and slay the pagans wherever you find them, and seize them, beleager them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem.”

Sura 9:29 says, “Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which
hath been forbidden by Allah and His Prophet, nor acknowledge the religion of Truth, (even if they are) of the People of the Book, until they pay the *jizyah* [per capita tax imposed on non-Muslim adult males] with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued.”

Sura 47:4-7 says, “When you meet unbelievers, smite their necks, then, when you have made wide slaughter among them, tie fast the bonds; then set them free, either by grace or ransom, till the war lays down its loads...And those who are slain in the way of God, He will not send their works astray. He will guide them, and dispose their minds aright, and He will admit them to Paradise, that He has made known to them.”

In the Old Testament, you have a call for military action against specific groups. Deuteronomy 7:1-2 says, “When the Lord your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and stronger than you, and when the Lord your God delivers them before you and you defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them.”

1 Samuel 15:2-3 says, “Thus says the Lord of hosts, I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel, how he set himself against him on the way while he was coming up from Egypt. Now go and strike Amalek and utterly destroy all that he has, and do not spare him; but put to death both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.”

While there are some similarities, notice the difference. In the Old Testament, there was a direct and specific command to fight against a particular group of people. These passages do not apply to you unless you are a Hittite, Girgashite, Amorite, Canaanite, Perizzite, Hivite, Jebusite, or Amalekite. These commands given during the Old Testament theocracy apply only to those people at that time.

However, the passages in the Qur’an apply to all unbelievers at all times. Notice that there is no time limit on these universally binding commands to all Muslims at all times.

No Christian leader is calling for a Holy War against infidels. But many Muslim leaders cite the Qur’an for that very action. Osama bin Laden, for example, quotes many of these verses of the sword just cited within his various *fatwas* [legal pronouncement].

And contrast this with the New Testament which calls for believers to love their enemies (Matt. 5:44) and turn the other cheek (Matt. 5:39). In conclusion, the Bible and the Qur’an are very different in regard in calling to an act of violence.

**Do Christians and Muslims Worship the Same God?**

One politically correct phrase that is often repeated is that “Christians and Muslims worship the same God.” It is understandable that people might say that. Both Islam and Christianity are monotheistic, even though a foundational difference is the Christian belief in the trinity.

Certainly the most foundational doctrine in Islam is monotheism. This doctrine is encapsulated in the creed: “There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the prophet of Allah.” And not only is it a creed, it is a statement of faith that routinely heard from the lips of every faithful Muslim. It the creed by which every Muslim is called to prayer five times a day.

Because of this strong emphasis on monotheism, Muslims reject the idea that God could be more than one person or that God could have a partner. The Qur’an teaches that Allah is one God and the same God for all people. Anyone who does not believe this is guilty of the sin of *shirk*. This is the
quintessential sin in Islam. According to Islam, God cannot have a partner and cannot be joined together in the Godhead with other persons. Muslims therefore reject the Christian idea of the Trinity.

Muslims and Christians also differ in their understanding of the nature and character of God. The God of the Bible is knowable. Jesus came into the world that we might know God (John 17:3).

Islam teaches a very different view of God. Allah is transcendent and distant. He is separate from His creation. He is exalted and far removed from mankind. While we may know His will, we cannot know Him personally. In fact, there is very little written about the character of God. Allah is the creator and sustainer of the creation, but He is also unknowable. No person can ever personally know and have a relationship with Allah. Instead, humans are to be in total submission to the will of Allah.

Moreover, Allah does not personally enter into human history. Instead, he deals with the world through His word (the Qur’an), through His prophets (such as Muhammad), and through angels (such as Gabriel).

If you ask a Muslim to describe Allah, most likely they will recite to you a key passage that lists some of the names of God (Sura 59). The Qur’an requires that God be called by these “beautiful names.” This passage describes him as Most Gracious, Most Merciful, The Sovereign, The Holy One, The Guardian of Faith, The Preserver of Safety, The Exalted in Might, etc.

Finally, a Christian and Muslim perspective on God’s love is also very different. Christians begin with the belief that “God so loved the world” (John 3:16). By contrast, Muslims grow up hearing about all the people Allah does not love. Sura 2:190 says, “For Allah loves not transgressors.” Sura 3:32 says, “Allah loves not the unbelievers.” And Sura 3:57 says, “For Allah loves not the evildoers.”

In conclusion, we can see that Christians and Muslims do not worship the same God.

Are the Bible and Qur’an the Same?

A student in a university religion class may hear that all religions are basically the same. They only differ on minor details. This leads some to argue that the Bible and the Qur’an are compatible teachings. This is not true and is a disservice to both Islam and Christianity.

We should acknowledge the few similarities. Both the Bible and the Qur’an claim to be divine revelation. And both books claim to have been accurately preserved through the centuries.

But it is also true that the Bible and the Qur’an disagree with one another on major issues. The two books make contradictory claims about God, Jesus, salvation, and biblical history. Both claims cannot be true. They both could be false, but they cannot both be true because the accounts contradict each other. Here are just a few examples of these contradictions:

- The Qur’an teaches (Sura 5:116) that Christians worship three gods: the Father, the Mother (Mary) and the Son (Jesus). But the Bible actually teaches that there is one God in three persons (the Trinity).
- Muslims say that Abraham was going to sacrifice Ishmael, while the Bible teaches that Abraham was going to sacrifice Isaac.
- The Qur’an teaches (Sura 4:157) that Jesus was not crucified. The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ was crucified on a cross.
Before we conclude, we should also mention that many of the statements in the Qur’an are also at odds with historical facts that can be verified through historical accounts.

- The Qur’an says (Sura 20:85-97) that the Samaritans tricked the Israelites at the Exodus and were the ones who built the golden calf. For the record, the word Samaritan wasn’t even used until 722 B.C. which is several hundred years after the Exodus.
- The Qur’an also states (Sura 18:89-98) that Alexander the Great was a Muslim who worshiped Allah. Alexander lived from 356 B.C. to 323 B.C. which was hundreds of years before Muhammad proclaimed his revelation which became the religion of Islam.

In conclusion, we can see that the Bible and the Qur’an are not the same and do not have compatible teachings.

Breaching the Barriers of Islam: Sharing Christ with Muslims

Steve Cable writes that Christ-followers can use some intriguing verses in the Koran as a way to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to Muslims.

Barriers to Islamic Evangelism

Even in these tense times, we can be confident that God loves the followers of Islam and desires for them to receive redemption through Jesus Christ. Paul writes in First Timothy, “[God] desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:3). However, many Christians feel like the gulf is too wide and the walls are too high to share the truth with Muslims. Yet, our God is a “rewarder of those who seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6), working in providential ways to make truth known.

In this article, we will discuss one way God is breaching the barriers of Islam. Let’s begin by looking at the very real barriers to Islamic evangelism.

The first decade of the twenty-first century is becoming known for the greatest clash between the Western world and Islam since the Crusades. The recent furor over cartoons showing caricatures of Mohammed is a violent example of the chasm. This radical fanaticism is an extreme expression of the barriers that have existed for centuries as Christians have tried to share their faith with followers of Islam. Around the globe, missionaries have typically seen fewer converts from Islam than from other religions. Let’s consider a few of the bricks from which this barrier is constructed:

- The higher way syndrome—According to Islam, earlier prophets such as Moses and Jesus brought truth from God, but over time their followers corrupted God’s true intent. Mohammed came to correct those perversions. Therefore, the Bible has been corrupted
and is no longer reliable

- The final word—Mohammed is the last of the prophets; there can be no further revelation. Questioning the meaning of the Koran as held by the local Imam is strictly prohibited

- The greater reward—Zeal and strict adherence to the tenets of Islam will result in great rewards in paradise. A zealous Muslim will be proselytizing others, not allowing someone to try to convert him.

These first three bricks share much in common with reasons why it should be hard to convert a devout Christian to another world religion. But Islam adds a fourth brick that is distinctly different:

- The ultimate penalty—As reported by Ibn Warraq, “It is quite clear that under Islamic law, an apostate must be put to death. . . . If [even] a pubescent boy apostatizes, he is imprisoned until he comes of age, when if he persists in rejecting Islam, he must be put to death.”{1} The death penalty for conversion certainly puts a damper on openness to considering the claims of other religions.

These bricks and others build a solid fortress making it difficult for evangelism among Muslims.

**Once More into the Breach**

Even though certain aspects of Islam create a formidable wall for those desiring to share Christ, God has equipped us for “the destruction of fortresses . . . and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God” (2 Cor. 10:4). As David Garrison reports, “More Muslims have come to Christ in the past two decades than at any other time in history.”{2}

Before modern artillery, a high, thick wall was an effective fortress. If the fortress was well supplied or time was a critical factor for the attacking army, a breach had to be created in the wall through artillery or siege works. The first group of troops to enter the breach would take on the brunt of the fortress’s defenses and suffer extremely heavy casualties. During the Napoleonic wars, the British army called the first attackers the Forlorn Hope, offering promotions to any survivors. Shakespeare honored the Forlorn Hope in “King Henry V” as Henry rallied his troops shouting “*once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more, or close the wall up with our English dead!*”{3}

Is it possible that a Forlorn Hope entering a God-given breach in the barriers of Islam could spread the light of the gospel in an Islamic country?

In a South Asian country, Abdul, a teenager, was expelled from his Islamic school for asking too many questions about the Koran. Because of Islamic law, he was held as a captive by his family and condemned to death upon coming of age. Secretly freed by his mother, he fled from his home. A chance encounter with a Christian missionary as he walked a country road dramatically changed his life. The missionary showed such love and concern that Abdul had to touch him to assure himself that this was a man and not an angel. Abdul gave his life to Christ and was baptized. Abdul was one of a handful of converts from Islam witnessed by this missionary over a period of thirty years.
Banished from his home, Abdul spent several years studying and growing in his faith in another part of the country. Led by God to return to his village, Abdul took up residence in the home of a childhood friend as he was still banished by his family. After a few months of studying the Koran and the Bible, his friend was ready to be baptized. When his family learned about it, they rounded up the villagers, took Abdul to the local soccer field and proceeded to beat him. Left for dead, his friend came to his aid and Abdul survived. When Abdul baptized his friend, he prayed “Thank you, God for my friend. Yesterday, I was the only believer in this village. Today there are two. Tomorrow, there can be two hundred if it is your will.”

Within a few years, all 1,800 people in Abdul’s village became Christians including those who left him for dead. These new believers were discipled and more villages were touched. Since that time, over 500,000 Muslim background believers have joined in following Jesus Christ. This unprecedented response also resulted in the murder of Abdul’s friend by Islamic radicals. Their willingness to act as the Forlorn Hope, entering the breach with no regard for their own lives, was a central part of this wonderful awakening.

The Breach in the Barrier

What was the breach in the fortress of Islam allowing the message of Christ to be heard? Remember Abdul used the Koran and the Bible to bring his friend to faith. The breach in the barrier is the Koran itself. According to others working in Abdul’s country, “Good Muslims have been taught from childhood that the Koran is the only true word of God. They may not know the meaning of the Koran’s text, but nonetheless, they believe it is true. When approached with the Bible, Muslims immediately become defensive, but they cannot and will not deny the Koran. Relating to a Muslim from the Koran guarantees a listening ear.”{4}

Many Muslims do not know that the following assertions appear in the Koran:

- If you are in doubt about the truth, ask those who read the Scripture that came before you.{5}
- To be a proper Muslim, one must read the Before Books (the Old and New Testaments).{6}
- Christians are humble and compassionate and know the truth when they hear it.{7}
- Those who observe the teaching of the Torah and the Gospels will go to heaven.{8}
- Mohammed states he is not the greatest prophet, he does not know what will happen to his followers (after death) and he is only a Warner.{9}
- Jesus knows the way to Allah.{10}

The strongest passage to foster a discussion about Jesus is Surah Al-Imran 3:42-55. This passage states:

- Mary was chosen by God,
- Jesus was born of a virgin,
- Jesus is the Messiah,
- Jesus has power over death, and
- Jesus knows the way to heaven.

An honest, open reading raises “Jesus from ‘Prophet’ status closer to ‘Savior’ status.”{11} For example verse 3:45 reads, “O Maryam! Allah gives you the good news . . . that you will be given a son; his name will be Messiah, Isa the son of Maryam.”{12} And 3:49 reads, “[Jesus] will heal the blind and the lepers, and raise the dead to life, by Allah’s leave.”{13} This passage clearly ascribes to Jesus a position and power that Mohammed does not ascribe to himself.
Don’t Misuse the Koran

We rightfully accuse some cults of using proof texts from the Bible to promote distorted religions. Do the verses introduced above relate the overwhelming message of the Koran? Absolutely not. There are other passages which are critical of Christianity and particularly the idea that Jesus is “another God” apart from Allah. Lest we be guilty of “proof-texting,” someone approaching a Muslim with passages from the Koran must be clear on their objective. We should keep in mind four points:

• Be humble. Freely admit that you are not an expert in the Koran. You want to understand how they view these passages.

• Be simple. Do not expound on the doctrine of the Koran or attribute inspiration to its teaching. Simply point out that the Koran seems to encourage Muslims to study our Bible and understand more about Jesus.

• Be sensitive. Don’t think that you are going to use the Koran to lead someone to Christ. You are discussing the Koran to see if they are open to further exploration of Jesus’ teaching.

• Be positive. People who have grown up studying the Koran have used this approach to bring hundreds of thousands of Muslims to faith in Christ over the last decade.

In his book *Camel Training Manual*, Kevin Greeson points out that Paul’s custom when entering a new area was to begin teaching Christ in the synagogue from their Scripture, the Old Testament. In a similar fashion, we can approach a Muslim with the question, “I have discovered an amazing truth in the Koran that gives hope of eternal life in heaven. Would you read this passage with me so that we can talk about it?”

The purpose of this discussion is not to show how much you know about the Koran or how little they may know. In humility, the purpose is to ask them to consider the implications of this passage stating Jesus had authority over death and Jesus knows the way to heaven. They know these statements are true because they are in the Koran. If they are concerned about death and want to know the way to heaven, they may want to learn more about Jesus to follow the Koran’s injunction to obey Jesus.

This teaching about Jesus is especially important in the light of Surah The Chambers 46:9 which reads, “I [Mohammed] am no prodigy among the prophets; nor do I know what will be done with me or with you. I follow only what is revealed to me, and I am no more than a plain Warner.” So, the Koran teaches Mohammed is a warner (calling people to fully obey God) while Jesus is the Messiah (knowing the way to God). A serious Muslim should have a desire to learn about Jesus.

A Person of Peace

Please note that the purpose of discussing the Koran is not to teach someone how to receive God’s free gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. The purpose is to identify people who are open to learning
more about Jesus. People whose hearts are prepared through diligently seeking to know God. In his book *Church Planting Movements*, Kevin Greeson refers to this as “finding a Person of Peace.”

This term refers to Jesus sending seventy of the disciples ahead of Him to witness in every city and place where He was going. Jesus commanded the seventy, “Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house.’ If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you” (Luke 10:5-7). Jesus was telling them to use a non-threatening, culturally appropriate way to determine whether a person is open to learning more about Jesus. An open, interested person is a “person of peace” and you should invest your time in them. If they are not interested, then shake the dust from your feet and move on. It will only antagonize them and their community if you insist on forcing yourself upon them. Once an interest in knowing more about Jesus is confirmed, you set the Koran aside and turn to the Bible (the “Before Book” in Koran terminology) to teach them about Jesus and redemption.

One concern about sharing in this manner is the danger of producing a group of pseudo-believers who add a distorted view of Christ to their religious practice without truly putting their faith in Christ. This danger is why the Koran must be viewed only as the breach getting you into the fortress. The Bible in the power of the Holy Spirit supplies the words that lead to salvation. Discipleship must be strictly based on the Bible.

In addition to the large numbers of conversions in Abdul’s country, the level of commitment by these new believers is encouraging. In 2002, a team from a U.S. mission organization conducted an investigation of the churches resulting from this movement. They found that:

- over 2/3 of the new converts had been active followers of Islam,
- less than 25% were mingling old Islamic beliefs with their new Christian ones, and
- less than 10% of the people know of any Christian returning to Islam.\(^\{15\}\)

When Jesus told his followers to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19-20), He did not add a caveat excluding those hostile cultures with strong barriers to the truth. Instead, He promised to be with us and equip us with divinely powerful weapons to breach those fortresses. Hopefully, you are encouraged to reach out in love to Muslims as God brings them into your life. To learn more, take a look at the *Camel Training Manual* from WIGTake Resources.\(^{16}\)

**Notes**

7. Koran Surah The Table Spread 5:82-83.
13. Ibid.
15. Garrison.

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