

“Islamic History Says Abraham Spoke Arabic”

Islamic history shows that prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) spoke Arabic. What would you say to that sir? Not or possible? Or not sure?

I would be surprised if Islamic history seriously says such a thing. I would carefully check your sources and make sure the source you are relying on is a reputable, scholarly source.

At any rate, I do not think it possible that Abraham spoke Arabic. Arabic appears to go back only about as far as the 4th century A.D. or so. See, for example:

1) <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/Arabic?o=100074>

2) <http://www.arabic-language.org/arabic/history.asp>.

Since Abraham lived about 2000 B.C., this would be about 2,400 years before the earliest known examples of written Arabic. I don't think it likely that a 2,400 year gap can be bridged in this case. And, of course, biblically speaking, there is no evidence at all for such an assertion.

Shalom in Christ,
Michael Gleghorn

“Arabic: a Semitic language that developed out of the language of the Arabians of the time of Muhammad, now spoken in countries of the Middle East and North Africa.”

The above is from one of the links you posted. This is false—Arabic was used before prophet Muhammad.

Yes; I would agree that the language dates to before the time of Muhammad. But as I said, the evidence seems to point to the 4th century A.D. (before Muhammad, but long after Abraham, who

lived around 2000 B.C.).

Shalom in Christ,
Michael Gleghorn

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“You’ve Got Islam Wrong”

Dear Rick Rood,

I stumbled upon your [“What is Islam”](#) web page and read it thoroughly. I would like to know how you got that information because it is inaccurate. I would just like to point them out to you so that you may correct them.

“He called on the many factions of the Arab peoples to unite under the worship of Allah, the chief god of the Arab pantheon of deities.”

Correction: Allah is not the chief god of the Arabs pantheon of dieties. Allah means “God” in Arabic. You are confusing the reader by associating Allah with other Arab deities as for example Zeus is the chief god in the Romans.

“At this point we should discuss the current status of Islam. In doing so, it’s important to realize that Islam is not a monolithic system. “

Correction: Islam is a pure montheistic religion. The message of Islam is that “There is no God, but God.” How is it not? Please elaborate.

“The Koran mentions numerous names of Allah, and these names

are found frequently on the lips of devout Muslims who believe them to have a nearly magical power."

Correction: Muslims do not believe that Allah's names hold magical powers. There are 99 names which is mentioned in the Quran (not Koran), for example: The Most Merciful, The Protector, The Creator, The All-Knowing, The Loving. These names identify the characteristics of God.

"Though Muhammed himself said that he was a sinner, nonetheless there are many Muslims throughout the world who appear to come close to worshipping him."

Correction: Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) always recognized that he was a human being. He was a human, and he made mistakes just like the other prophets who are human beings. It is very judgmental for you to add that Muslims appear to come close worshipping him when that is not the case at all. Muslims only worship God, and only God.

"Those who conclude that Islam is a fatalistic religion have good reason for doing so."

Why is that?

"But it also contains many elements of prescribed activity that are of pagan origin."

What kinds? For example?

"A sixth pillar, that of jihad, is often added. (The term means 'exertion' or 'struggle' in behalf of God.) Jihad is the means by which those who are outside the household of Islam are brought into its fold. Jihad may be by persuasion, or it may be by force or 'holy war.' The fact that any Muslim who dies in a holy war is assured his place in paradise provides strong incentive for participation!"

You got the part right about how the Jihad means “struggle,” but you got the rest of it completely false. It is a struggle to attain nearness to God, by struggling to overcome your bad desires, & to stick to Islam under difficult circumstances, such as when facing persecution and other problems.

There are MANY other mistakes that you have written about Islam. Not to mention that it sounds very bigoted. Please fix your mistakes. Thanks!

Thanks for your letter. Rick Rood is no longer with Probe Ministries. However, I’m afraid that you may have misunderstood certain aspects of Rick’s article. Please allow me to try to briefly clarify.

“He called on the many factions of the Arab peoples to unite under the worship of Allah, the chief god of the Arab pantheon of deities.”

Correction: Allah is not the chief god of the Arabs pantheon of deities. Allah means “God” in Arabic. You are confusing the reader by associating Allah with other Arab deities as for example Zeus is the chief god in the Romans.

1. Any good history of the Arab peoples that documents the religious climate immediately preceding the time of Muhammad will confirm that there was indeed a pantheon of deities. Muhammad instituted monotheism in place of a prior Arabic polytheism.

“At this point we should discuss the current status of Islam. In doing so, it’s important to realize that Islam is not a monolithic system. “

Correction: Islam is a pure monothestic religion. The message of Islam is that “There is no God, but God.” How is it not? Please elaborate.

2. Mr. Rood uses the term “monolithic” – not “monotheistic.” I believe that you simply misread him at this point. Islam is certainly monotheistic. He documents what he means by it not being monolithic in his article. [Note: Dictionary.com provides this meaning for *monolithic*: “characterized by massiveness, total uniformity, rigidity, invulnerability, etc.”]

“The Koran mentions numerous names of Allah, and these names are found frequently on the lips of devout Muslims who believe them to have a nearly magical power.”

Correction: Muslims do not believe that Allah’s names hold magical powers. There are 99 names which is mentioned in the Quran (not Koran), for example: The Most Merciful, The Protector, The Creator, The All-Knowing, The Loving. These names identify the characteristics of God.

3. Your third point is well-taken, provided we are speaking of theologically educated Muslims. However, many Muslims hold to what some scholars call “folk Islam.” This sort of Islam, often influenced by [animism](#), does often regard these names as having magical power. Similar aberrant beliefs can be found in Judaism, Christianity, and most other world religions. And sometimes Sufi mysticism can tend in this direction as well.

“Though Muhammed himself said that he was a sinner, nonetheless there are many Muslims throughout the world who appear to come close to worshiping him.”

Correction: Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) always recognized that he was a human being. He was a human, and he made mistakes just like the other prophets who are human beings. It is very judgmental for you to add that Muslims appear to come close worshipping him when that is not the case at all. Muslims only worship God, and only God.

4. Again, your point is well-taken, provided we are speaking

of theologically educated Muslims. However, as I mentioned above, some Muslims would come awfully close to worshiping Muhammad, just as some Roman Catholics come awfully close to worshiping the virgin Mary. I'm not saying this is what orthodox Islam teaches, it's simply what sometimes happens in practice.

"Those who conclude that Islam is a fatalistic religion have good reason for doing so."

Why is that?

5. Do you not believe that all things are dictated by the sovereign will of Allah? Does anything happen that is not willed by God? If you reject this doctrine, I think you would be taking a minority view within Islam.

"But it also contains many elements of prescribed activity that are of pagan origin."

What kinds? For example?

6. Casting stones at a stone pillar representing Satan. This was done by Arab pagans prior to the time of Muhammad.

"A sixth pillar, that of jihad, is often added. (The term means 'exertion' or 'struggle' in behalf of God.) Jihad is the means by which those who are outside the household of Islam are brought into its fold. Jihad may be by persuasion, or it may be by force or 'holy war.' The fact that any Muslim who dies in a holy war is assured his place in paradise provides strong incentive for participation!"

You got the part right about how the Jihad means "struggle," but you got the rest of it completely false. It is a struggle to attain nearness to God, by struggling to overcome your bad desires, & to stick to Islam under difficult circumstances, such as when facing persecution and other problems.

7. As for Jihad, it has historically been understood by most Muslims (and still is today) as Holy War. It can be interpreted, as you say, to mean striving in the cause of Allah to live a pure and righteous life. But many passages in the Quran resist this interpretation (e.g. Suras 4:74-75; 9:5, 14, 29; 47:4; 61:4; etc.).

The New Encyclopedia of Islam (Altamira Press, rev. ed. 2001) documents many of these points.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn

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“Christianity Is Getting Creamed by Islam Apologetics!”

Lately I've been looking up things on Islam and Christianity, and it seems like Christianity is getting creamed by Islam apologetics. I mean, there are websites which show amazing scientific accuracies in the Qur'an, like the origin of the universe. They even attack the accuracy of the Bible and talk about the "contradictions." I beg you to please help me. I mean, they do make a lot of good cases for Islam. Why shouldn't I believe Islam is the true faith?

Scientific accuracy does not necessarily prove a book is divinely inspired. It simply shows it has some accurate facts. There are numerous books that are scientifically accurate but we would not view them as inspired. The Bible also has

numerous scientific accuracies. I have read many of the alleged contradictions in the Bible. Most passages cited are out of context, misinterpreted, or the science of textual criticism is misunderstood. The Bible is inspired in its original documents, not the copies. We have accurate copies but the few discrepancies we have do not affect any major doctrines. This is different from the Qur'an which claims to be perfect, the copy we have now, they claim, is a perfect reflection of what is in heaven.

What is interesting is that there are several errors in the Qur'an. Here are a few scientific errors: Sura 86:5-7 states that sperm comes from a man's chest. Sura 23:14 says man was created from a blood clot.

There are also several historical errors. Sura 20:85-95 states the Samaritans tricked Moses and the Israelites during the Exodus. The Samaritans did not exist till about 1000 years later. One big error is that Islam denies the death and resurrection of Jesus which is one of the best documented events in ancient history. On what basis do they deny this? We have too much evidence for this event. These errors put the inspiration of the Qur'an in question.

For more information please read my articles: [Jesus in the Qur'an](#), [The Historical Reliability of the Gospels](#), and [The Resurrection: Fact or Fiction?](#).

Patrick Zukeran

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“What About All the Violence and Conquering in the Name of the Christian God?”

Just read your [answer to email](#) on the Pope's inflammatory remarks about Islam, and I had a question about this statement:

“Muslims certainly cannot deny that Mohammed admonished Muslims to pick up their swords for Allahs cause (see my essay [Islam and the Sword](#) at Probe.org). They also cannot ignore the fact that Islam conquered both the Persian and Byzantine Empires via warfare.”

While both statements are or may in fact be true, one we Christians cannot deny that as much violence and conquering has been done in the name of God. One should be careful about removing the speck from a brother's eye before taking the log out of his own. Actually, I believe Christian war preceded Islamic war.

I am not discounting the evil done in the name of Christ, and of course there were Christians fighting before there were Muslims since Christianity preceded Islam by six centuries. My point is about their very nature as belief systems. When one compares the actions of Christ with the actions of Mohammed, the lives of the apostles with the lives of Mohammeds companions, and the teaching found in the New Testament with what is taught in the Quran, one finds a distinct difference in the role that violence plays. Even when we compare the early history of the two religions we find that Christianity went through a three hundred year period of persecution while Islam conquered a region stretching from Spain to India, experienced three civil wars, and had three of its first four caliphs assassinated by other Muslims.

There is also the distinction to be made between individuals committing violence and vengeful acts, and the responsibility of governments or kings to uphold justice and protect their people from harm. There has been a 1,400 year conflict going on between the civilization that has constituted Europe after the Roman Empire fell and the Islamic world. For most of that time Europe was on the defensive side of things. Not until the late 17th century did the Islamic threat diminish after their failure to take Vienna and the Ottoman Empire was forced to sign the treaty of Karlowitz in 1699.

One also has to remember that Islam is both a religion and a political system; it does not recognize a separation between church and state. When a western nation acts against a Muslim one it is not Christianity vs. Islam, it is a political entity, democratic or otherwise, deciding to act against a religious/political entity.

All of this to say that while we can point to atrocities done in the name of Christ, they have no support in the New Testament. However, atrocities done in the name of Islam have explicit models in the life of Mohammed and can find justification and support in the Quran.

None of this discussion discounts our obligation as ambassadors for Christ to love and reach out to individual Muslims in humility and with compassion.

Thank you for your thoughtful comments.

Don Closson

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“The Pope’s Inflammatory Remarks about Islam”

How would you access Pope Benedict XVI remarks in his lecture on Faith, Reason and the University: Memories and Reflections? and Islamic reaction? What was the essence of his lecture that infuriated the Islamic World?

Thank you for your question regarding the Pope’s comments on Islam and the resulting violent response from the Muslim world.

Not being a Roman Catholic, I do not usually read the Pope’s speeches. However, given the worldwide outrage by Muslims, I thought it important to understand what has caused such an intense reaction to his lecture at the University of Regensburg.

The speech was rather academic and mostly focused on the relationship between faith and reason in the Christian tradition. In it, the Pope gave quotes from the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II to a Persian Muslim during the siege of Constantinople in the late 14th century. The exact quote of the Emperor is “Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached.” The Emperor went on to argue that spreading any religion by the sword is by nature unreasonable.

The irony of the situation we find ourselves in today is amazing. We now have Muslims burning churches, threatening to kill the Pope, and destroy the west, because he implied that Mohammed advocated the use of the sword to spread and protect the Muslim faith. It is equivalent to punching someone in the face because they called you pugilistic.

Muslims certainly cannot deny that Mohammed admonished Muslims

to pick up their swords for Allah's cause (see my essay [Islam and the Sword](#) at Probe.org). They also cannot ignore the fact that Islam conquered both the Persian and Byzantine Empires via warfare. Had it not been for the victory at Tours by Charles Martel, all of Europe would have fallen to the Islamic invaders.

When anyone in the west speaks against violence done in the name of Allah, Muslims are quick to equate the written word with "aggression" against Islam which then justifies all sorts of violent acts in defense of Islam and its Prophet. I can only hope that the media and our politicians will wake up to the double standard that occurs when words or ideas are equated with violent acts.

Don Closson

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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.

“Mohammed and David Both Had Multiple Wives”

Hi Pat,

I bought your [“Evidence and Answers” CD series](#) on Islam and listened to the first one today. I must say that it was very informative and enjoyable. In that particular broadcast, you contrasted Islam with Christianity by pointing out that Mohammed had eleven wives. However, the Bible records that King David, described as a man after God’s own heart, also had numerous wives and concubines. Doesn’t that nullify your argument with Mohammed somewhat?

Great question. First, God’s intent was for men to have one wife so David was out of God’s will there, and the Bible shows He did not have a good home life. David was a man after God’s heart but he was not sinless, he only was deeply committed to God. In Islam a qualification for a prophet is that he is sinless after his call. Muhammad is believed to be sinless; that is why this is a key point. David is not believed to be sinless but sincere; Muhammad is supposed to be sinless. The Koran limits men to four wives but Muhammad took several more. Also, Muhammad’s youngest and most favorite wife Aisha was nine years old when they consummated their marriage. David did not marry a child but married women. Finally, Muhammad took his son-in-law’s wife as one of his wives as well. So the character of Muhammad does not point to a sinless prophet.

Pat Zukeran

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“Print the Truth About Islam!”

I read your article [A Short Look at Six World Religions](#). Why are you lying to people about Islam? The prophet Muhammad himself is quoted to have said to his followers that even he would not enter paradise without the mercy of Allah, and the prophets were all free of any kind of sin. The word is composed of the Arabic words “Al” meaning “the” and “ilah” meaning “God.” The word “Allah” means “the God,” “the Creator,” the only one worthy of worship. Who can help you except for the one who created the heavens and the earth? Who can hurt you except for the one who created the heavens and the earth? When Jesus, whom we love as one of our prophets known to us and Isa bin Maryam, Jesus the son of Mary was on the earth, drinking God’s water and breathing God’s air, who could have stopped God had He decided to destroy the earth including Jesus? Don’t mix the creation and the Creator. Even the Christians cannot deny the singular power of Allah when they claim that He came in the form of Jesus (May Allah protect us from worshipping any figure of creation) Allah is one in control of everything. That belief may seem logical, but it is not a product of anybody’s mind because the mind cannot create a reality that already exists. The identity of God for the creation is that of the creator. How can Allah be seen as distant when according to Islam, He is closer to you than your own jugular vein? Allah is said to have 70 times the love for His creation that a mother has for her child.

I am a white American and I am pleading to you out of brotherly love for you and the people you reach to get your facts straight and print the truth about Islam. Allah loves the believers who when they do wrong, they turn to Him in

repentance, yet we all know that Allah does not like lying. The Word Islam means "submission." The way of all the prophets was submission to God. Noah (Nuh) preached submission to Allah, Moses (Musa) preached submission to Allah, and Jesus (Isa) preached submission to Allah and all other of the 124,000 or more prophets between Adam and Muhammad came with submission to Allah. To become Muslim, we say "La ilaha il lala Muhammad ur-rasululah mean that "There is none worthy of worship except Allah and Muhammad is his final messenger." Please come to Islam.

I think perhaps as a white American, you are infusing your understanding of Islam with concepts about the biblical God. In effect, you are borrowing aspects of the God of the Bible and applying them to Allah. Noah, Moses and Jesus did not preach submission to Allah; they preached about a RELATIONSHIP with Yahweh, who is not the same as Allah.

I am not lying to anyone about Islam. I think perhaps you are mistaken about both what I said and the nature of the one true God, whose name is "I AM," and Who has also revealed Himself to be the loving Daddy (Abba) who is full of grace and truth. There is no grace in Allah. There is only the legalism of submission without personal intimacy.

You pleaded with me to come to Islam. I plead with you, please come to a PERSON—Jesus. He IS true Christianity.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

Answering E-mail

Some examples of Probe's e-mail correspondence, covering questions about on which day Jesus died, the Nephilim, and is Jesus God's final messenger. It concludes with some flames from non-fans of our articles.

Three Days in the Tomb

One aspect of our ministry at Probe is answering questions sent via e-mail. In this article I'm going to address a few questions people have asked.

The first question I'll address has to do with the day of Jesus' death. Someone wrote and asked, "Was Jesus crucified on Thursday or Friday? How do we account for the three days [in the tomb]?"

It will be quite impossible to deal adequately with this question in such limited space. But let's see what we can do.[\[1\]](#)

The Friday view of the crucifixion has been held the longest in the church. John 19:31 says that Jesus' body was taken down from the cross on "the day of preparation" to avoid having it there on the Sabbath. If this refers to the weekly Sabbath, then the day of preparation—and hence, that of Jesus' death—was on Friday. Luke 23:54-56 says the women witnessed his burial on the day of preparation, and then went home and rested on the Sabbath. On the first day of the week, Sunday, they found the tomb empty (Luke 24:1ff).

Jesus' reference to Jonah poses the greatest problem for this understanding. In Matthew 12:40 we read, "As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Because of this verse, some have held a second view of the crucifixion, that Jesus was crucified on Wednesday. He

then arose on Saturday afternoon, and first appeared to his disciples on Sunday.^{2} This allows a full three days and nights in the tomb. But Sunday has from the beginning been regarded as the day Jesus rose from the dead, and this would be the fourth day from Wednesday rather than the third. In addition, it's been established that the Jews counted any part of a day as a whole day, so a full seventy-two hours in the tomb isn't required (cf. Gen. 42:17,18; I Kings 20:29, II Chron. 10:5,12; Esther 4:16, 5:1). "After three days" and "on the third day" are equivalent as Matthew 27:63-64 shows clearly.^{3}

A third view is that Jesus died on Thursday and rose on Sunday, which allows for three nights and part of three days in the tomb. Thus, the Last Supper was on Wednesday evening, and Jesus – the Passover Lamb–was crucified on Thursday. Friday was the first day of Unleavened Bread, a day of no work, and so is thought to be "the Sabbath of the Passover."^{4} So Jesus was buried on Thursday to avoid profaning this "Sabbath."

In response, New Testament scholar Harold Hoehner notes that there is no precedent for thinking of Friday as a special Sabbath. "The day of preparation for the Passover" in John 19:31 needn't refer to the day before Passover; it could refer to Passover itself.^{5} John 19:31,42, which speaks of the day of preparation and the Sabbath, seems naturally to refer to Friday and Saturday.^{6} In this writer's view, then, the Friday view still seems to be the correct one.

The Nephilim

Who were the Nephilim in Genesis chapter 6? That is a question raised fairly often. The Nephilim are mentioned in Genesis 6 and again in Numbers 13. The passage in Genesis 6 is especially intriguing because of its account of the "sons of God" going in to the "daughters of men." Someone wrote to ask whether the Nephilim "were simply human or the off-spring of

angels (demons) mating with human women.”

Let’s begin with the passage itself. Genesis 6: 1-4 reads:

When men began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose. Then the LORD said, “My Spirit will not contend with man forever, for he is mortal; his days will be a hundred and twenty years.” The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown.

In considering the identity of the Nephilim, one must also answer two other questions: the identity of the “sons of God” and the “daughters of men,” and the significance of the passage relative to that which precedes it and that which follows (its context). “In most cases,” says John Sailhamer, “the interpretations [of this passage] have arisen out of the viewpoint that these verses introduce the story of the Flood.”[\[7\]](#) Some commentators, however, think otherwise.

First, who are these “sons” and “daughters”? One view holds that the “sons” were kings and the “daughters” were lower class women who made up the harems of such kings.[\[8\]](#) The “sons” were guilty of polygamy in taking more than one wife from among the “daughters of men.” This was at least part of the reason God brought judgment. This view has real possibilities, for it provides a bridge between the genealogies of Cain and Seth in chapters 4 and 5, and it serves as an explanation of the judgment to follow. A weakness of this view is that “while both within the OT and in other Near Eastern texts individual kings were called God’s son, there is no evidence that groups of kings were so styled.”[\[9\]](#)

Another view is that these “sons of God” were angels or demons who united with human women, and so corrupted the race that

God had to bring judgment. It seems highly unlikely that this is the correct interpretation. First, Jesus said that angels don't marry, and in Genesis 6:2 the word for "married" means just that, and not fornication. If good angels don't marry, why would God grant sexual powers to demons? Second, if demons were taking advantage of human women, why was mankind judged? The Interpreter's Bible Commentary offers this view, but relegates the story to myth. If we aren't prepared to think of Genesis as being mythological, we need to look for another option.

A third view is that the "sons of God" were descendents of godly Seth, while the "daughters of men" were descendents of ungodly Cain. Although "sons of God" is used in the Old Testament to refer to angels (see Job 1:6, 2:1 in the NASB), godly men are also called "sons" as in Psalm 73:15 and Hosea 1:10.

This view provides a bridge between chapters 4-5 and chapter 6. Chapter 4 lists some offspring of Cain, chapter 5 those of Seth, and chapter 6 brings them together. According to this view, says commentator Victor Hamilton, "The sin is a forbidden union, a yoking of what God intended to keep apart, the intermarriage of believer with unbeliever."[\[10\]](#)

Jesus said in Matt. 24:38, "For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark." Seth's godly descendents had shifted their focus from God to the things of the flesh and were simply carrying on with their lives, but not in accordance with God's will. That the primary focus of God's wrath is against the union, rather than the offspring of it, is the fact that God's displeasure is announced after mentioning the marriage unions but before mentioning the offspring.

So, then, who were the Nephilim? The Holman Bible Dictionary says the word "probably derived from the root 'to fall' and

meaning either 'the fallen ones' or else 'ones who fall [violently] upon others.'" [{11}](#) Hamilton translates it "those who were made to fall, those who were cast down." If this is correct, then the Nephilim are certainly not to be identified with the "heroes of old, men of renown" in verse 4. [{12}](#) Old Testament commentators Keil and Delitzsch believe Martin Luther had it correct when he said these men were tyrants. "They were called Nephilim," they say, "because they fell upon the people and oppressed them." [{13}](#)

Were they the offspring of the "sons of God" and "daughters of men"? Apparently not, for the verse says they "were on the earth in those days—and also afterward"; in other words, they were contemporaries of the "sons" and "daughters."

It's hard to be dogmatic about the interpretation of Genesis 6:1-4. But my vote goes with this last view.

Is Jesus the Final Messenger from God?

The next question has to do with Jesus as the final "messenger" from God. A letter e-mailed to us reads in part: I assume you believe the Old Testament to be part of the inspired word of God, and therefore believe Moses, and Abraham before him, were part of this "progress of revelation." Were there others, perhaps Krishna, Zoroaster, or Buddha, who spread God's instructions to others at different places and times?

The writer continues:

Is it possible that God has sent other messengers since Jesus, to accommodate His instructions, perhaps Muhammad (as Muslims believe) or Baha'ullah (as Baha'is believe)? If you do not believe these two men were messengers from God, do you believe we are due for another messenger, so God can accommodate his instructions to the moral and spiritual standards of the people of our time? In general, how can we

determine which messengers are part of God's progressive revelation and which are not?

According to Scripture, Jesus was the full revelation of God to us (Heb. 1:1-2). Not only did he teach us about God, but also His work of securing our redemption was the culmination of God's plan. He was the focus of God's message. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament point to Him. As two sorrowful disciples of Jesus made their way home after His death, He appeared to them, and "beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, [Jesus] explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures" (Luke 24:27). The New Testament clearly is focused on Jesus as well. If Jesus was the focus of God's message, anyone who legitimately spoke for God after Jesus was simply clarifying and expanding on His message.

In another e-mail, the same writer said: "I am struck by the great similarities of the world's religions. It seems to me that certain central themes run through them all . . . for example, Love for God and your fellow man." In response, I quoted Steve Turner's tongue-in-cheek declaration of religious pluralists: "We believe that all religions are basically the same . . . They all believe in love and goodness. They only differ on matters of creation, sin, heaven, hell, God, and salvation."[{14}](#)

Those are some major differences, aren't they? So all religions believe in God. Which God? There are polytheists, Trinitarian theists, oneness theists, pantheists, panentheists, . . . Which view of God is true? What about salvation? Are we to become one with the cosmos, or find forgiveness through faith in Jesus alone? Are we to discover our own essential divinity, or recognize that we are finite, contingent beings who were made to serve the one true God who is "Wholly Other"? According to Jesus, there is only one God and only one way to Him.

It's clear, then, that no other "messenger" such as Krishna or

Buddha, who doesn't preach Jesus and salvation through him alone, could be from God.

Flames

Along with e-mails asking questions and occasionally giving us pats on the back, there are those that take issue with something we've said.

One general kind of criticism is that we don't know what we're talking about. Here's an excerpt from an e-mail to Dr. Ray Bohlin:

I was highly disturbed by the content of this page. Your delusions and misinterpretation of facts is highly disconcerting. . . . This page is ripe with Christian propaganda and follows a thoroughly unscholarly approach in developing its argument. I only hope that millions of innocent people are not blinded by your lies, and that scientific research will continue to restore the truth that has been so corrupted by the archaic concept that is Christianity.

Wow! That's rather harsh. But notice that there are no specific issues mentioned. Here is Ray's response in part:

I . . . noticed that your message was loaded with accusations but no substance or specifics. If you really think we are so full of errors and lies, a few examples might allow us the opportunity to correct them.

The critic wrote back to say he would substantiate his accusations but never did.

Others of us have been accused of not knowing what we're talking about. One writer thought Pat Zukeran's assessment of Buddhism reflected a lack of direct experience with Buddhists. Pat replied,

I come from an island that is 80% Buddhist. My entire family clan has held to Buddhist teachings for hundreds of years. My parents and cousins remain in the Buddhist faith. I grew up under the teachings of the Buddhist temples near my house. I have been a member of the Young Buddhist Association. Therefore, I have many Buddhist friends including my own family members.

That should be enough experience, shouldn't it?

Occasionally we receive e-mails that almost fry our monitors—"flaming," I think it's called. Don Closson received this one:

I read your article about Bishop Spong, and while I don't always agree with him, I'm not an idiot like you who doesn't understand one word of the bishop's writings. You should try living in the 21st century sometime. What an idiot.

This isn't going to look good on Don's resume.

If things aren't looking good for Don, though, what about poor Ray? One writer said, "Hey I read your commentary on apes, 'hominids', and humans and thought it [stinks]." Well, he didn't say "stinks," but I think it would be improper to use his actual word. "Surely you can find something better to do than knock God's evolutionary plan back into the dark ages," he continues. "LOL. Crack me up. . . what a buffoon! You crack me up!"

But wait! It gets worse. Here's an e-mail that begins, "You are a sad man." Another says plainly, "You're sick." One says, "I think that you are a moron." Whoa! What kind of crew do we have here at Probe, anyway?

One final e-mail ought to be noted. Someone was upset about one of our articles on evolution and creation, and concluded his message with this:

All your pseudo-religion promotes is hate and intolerance, preaching your holyier [sic] than thou attitude. So with great contempt I say, if your god is real, may you burn in hell, you evil Christian dinosaur.

Let's see. We preach "hate and intolerance," and the writer consigns us to a long stay in hell?

At Probe we take input seriously . . . when it's presented in a reasonable manner. Maybe a variation of the Golden Rule should be a guide: "Speak unto others as you would have them speak unto you." Do you have a complaint? State it clearly, give specific examples, and keep the tone as amiable as possible. And one of our sick, holier than thou, unscholarly, idiotic buffoons will answer . . . once we figure out what we're talking about.

Notes

1. I have drawn extensively from chapter four of Harold Hoehner's *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), pp. 65-74, for this discussion.
2. W. Graham Scroggie, *A Guide to the Gospels* (London, 1948), 569-577; cited in Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects*, 66-67.
3. Also, there are more occasions in the Gospels where Jesus is said to rise on the third day than after the third day (Matt. 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; 27:64; Luke 9:22; 18:33; 24:7, 21, 46; Acts 10:40; I Cor. 15:4).
4. Hoehner, 68.
5. New Testament scholar Leon Morris notes that there is no evidence that the phrase indicates the day before the Passover; all clear references to the "day of preparation" refer to Friday. See Hoehner, 70.
6. Hoehner, 71.
7. John Sailhamer, "Genesis," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 75.
8. Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 263.
9. Hamilton, 264.

10. Ibid.
11. *Holman Bible Dictionary*, "Nephilim."
12. Hamilton, 270.
13. C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsche, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. 1: The Pentateuch. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), 137.
14. Steve Turner, *Nice and Nasty* (Marshall and Scott, 1980).

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See also the entire [Probe Answers Our E-Mail](#) section of our website

Islam and Christianity: Common Misconceptions Reveal Their Stark Differences

Muslims and Christians often misunderstand what the other actually believes about God and salvation. Don Closson attempts to clear up some of these misconceptions.



This article is also available in [Spanish](#).

In a recent meeting of evangelical leaders, anti-Islamic comments made by Christians in the Western media were denounced as “dangerous” and “unhelpful.” Ted Haggard, President of the National Association of Evangelicals stated

that "Since we are in a global community, no doubt about it, we must temper our speech and we must communicate primarily through actions." [{1}](#) Another prominent president of a Christian relief agency added that "It's very dangerous to build more barriers when we're supposed to be following [the] one who pulled the barriers down," an obvious reference to the sacrificial death of Christ. They also concluded that it was "naïve" to merely dialogue "with Muslims in a way that minimized theological and political differences." [{2}](#)

So what kind of exchange of ideas is helpful between Christians and Muslims? We might start by beginning to clear up some of the common misconceptions that each hold about the other. This has become more important recently due to heightened religious passions since 9/11 and the war in Iraq. Muslims, both here in America and abroad, are highly suspicious of America's intentions in the world and some Americans see every Muslim as a potential terrorist who threatens our freedom and democracy. There are obviously reasons behind both of these perceptions. America does tend to favor Israel over its Arab neighbors, and Muslims have committed atrocities against civilians around the world, but this only means that we must work harder at communicating clearly with Muslims when we have opportunity. The over one billion Muslims in the world constitute a large part of the mission field given to us by the Lord's Great Commission. We cannot turn away from them simply because of the difficulties we face.

That said, we need to realize that both Muslims and Christians hold to ideas about the other that are either completely wrong or merely too broadly applied. Some of these misconceptions are cultural issues and some are theological. Culturally, there are significant differences in how Islam and Christianity relate to society and government. Gender roles are also a source of confusion. Theologically, there is much to clarify regarding the respective roles of Jesus and

Muhammad in each religious tradition. There is also misunderstanding regarding the origins and transmission of the sacred texts, the Koran and the Bible. Although the religions share commonalities—one God, the reality of a spiritual dimension, a universal moral order, and a final judgment—Islam and Christianity differ significantly in the details and in the most crucial issue of how one is justified before God.

Jesus and Muhammad

Let's look at some common misconceptions that people have about Islam and Christianity, beginning with how people often confuse the roles that Jesus and Muhammad play in their respective traditions.

Christians often make the mistake of equating the place that Muhammad has in Islam with the role played by Jesus in Christianity. Although Muslims believe that Muhammad is the final prophet from Allah, most do not teach that he was sinless. On the other hand, Muslims see Muhammad's life and example as near to perfection as one can get. One Muslim scholar has noted, "Know that the key to happiness is to follow the sunna [Muhammad's actions] and to imitate the Messenger of God in all his coming and going, his movement and rest, in his way of eating, his attitude, his sleep and his talk..."^{3} Every action of Muhammad is considered a model for believers. Some Muslims even avoid eating food that Muhammad disdained. At the same time, Muslims are offended at the term "Mohammedanism" sometimes used as a reference to Islam. It is not Muhammad's religion; he is only a messenger of Allah. Muslims believe that Muhammad's messages revived and reformed religious truth that had been lost.

Even so, any disparaging words aimed at Muhammad will be taken very seriously by a Muslim. As William Cantrell Smith once said, "Muslims will allow attacks on Allah: there are atheists and atheistic publications, and rationalistic societies; but to disparage Muhammad will provoke from even the most

'liberal' sections of the community a fanaticism of blazing vehemence."[\[4\]](#)

Muslims accuse Christians of elevating Jesus in an inappropriate manner. They argue that Jesus was just a prophet to the Jews, and that he heralded the coming of Muhammad as the seal of the prophets. The problem with this view is that it doesn't fit the earliest historical data we have regarding the life and teachings of Christ. There is considerable manuscript evidence for the authenticity and early date of the New Testament. In these early manuscripts, Jesus claims to have the powers and authority that only God could possess. These teachings and events were recorded by eyewitnesses or by second generation Christians like Luke who was a close companion to Paul.

What is missing is an early text that affirms what Muslims claim about Jesus. Muslims argue that the New Testament has been corrupted and that texts supporting the idea that Jesus is the Son of God were a later addition. But again, the burden of proof for this accusation is one the Muslim apologist must bear. However, they do not provide any evidence for when or where the early manuscripts became corrupted. Muslims argue that the New Testament depiction of Christ and of his death and resurrection cannot be correct because the Koran teaches otherwise. Although Christians affirm the importance and authority of revelation, true revelation will be confirmed by history.

The Bible and the Koran

There is an inherent problem when we consider the nature and content of the Bible and the Koran. Both traditions claim that their book is the result of divine revelation, and both maintain that their books have been preserved through the centuries with a high degree of accuracy. For instance, when touring a local Islamic center, I was told by the guide that the modern Koran contains the exact words given by Muhammad to

his followers with absolutely no mistakes. Christians maintain that the Bible we possess is 99% accurate and has benefited from over 100 years of textual criticism and the possession of thousands of early manuscripts. The problem is that the Koran and the Bible make contradictory truth claims about the life and ministry of Jesus Christ and what God expects from those who love and follow Him.

The Islamic view of the Bible is complicated by the fact that the Koran tells Muslims to accept both the Hebrew Scriptures and the "*Injil*," or the gospel of Jesus, and even calls the "Book," or Bible, the "word of God" in Sura 6:114-115.[\[5\]](#) On the other hand, Muslim apologists argue that both the Old and New Testaments have been corrupted and contain little if any truth about God and His people. They contend that a lost gospel of Jesus has been replaced with Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

This view contains a number of problems. The Koran calls the Bible the word of God, and acknowledges that it is a revelation from God. It also teaches that Jesus was a prophet and that his teaching has authority. Finally, when the Koran was given by Muhammad it supported the New Testament of Muhammad's time by telling Muslims to go to Christians, who had been reading the Bible, to affirm Muhammad's message.[\[6\]](#) If this is so, we can assume that Muhammad believed that the Bible available in the seventh century was accurate. The Bible we use today is virtually unchanged from the Bible in the seventh century. In fact, it is probably more faithful to the earliest manuscript evidence. If the Bible of Muhammad's time was accurate, why isn't today's copy? Again, Muslims must do more than just claim that errors have occurred in the Bible, they must be able to show us when and where the errors occurred.

The Koran suffers from textual questions as well. Between Muhammad's death and the compilation of the Koran, some of what Muhammad had recited as revelation had already been lost

due to the death of companions who had memorized specific passages.[\[7\]](#) Later, when multiple versions of the Koran caused controversy among Muslims, the Caliph Uthman ordered Zaid bin Thabit to collect all the copies in use, create a standard version and destroy the rest.

We have reasonably good copies of both the original Bible and the Uthmanic version of the Koran. However, both documents cannot represent revelation from God because the messages they contain cannot be reconciled.

Human Nature, Gender, and Salvation

Islam and Christianity view the human predicament differently. According to Islam, when Adam sinned he asked for forgiveness and it was granted by Allah. A Muslim author writes, “...Islam teaches that people are born innocent and remain so until each makes him or herself guilty by a guilty deed. Islam does not believe in ‘original sin’; and its scripture interprets Adam’s disobedience as his own personal misdeed—a misdeed for which he repented and which God forgave.”[\[8\]](#) In fact, it is common among Muslims to see human failings as the result of forgetfulness or as merely making mistakes. People are frail, imperfect, constantly forgetful of God, and even intrinsically weak, but they do not have a sin nature. As a result, salvation is won by diligently observing the religious rituals prescribed by the five pillars of Islam, reciting the confession or Shahada, prayer, fasting, divine tax, and the pilgrimage to Mecca.

The Bible teaches that Adam’s sin has affected all humanity. Romans 5:12 reads, “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned. . . .” Paul later adds that, “Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many

were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous." We are made righteous not by doing good works but by faith in the substitutionary death of Christ on our behalf. Jesus bore our penalty for sin; he literally stood in our place and took our punishment.

Not only do Muslims and Christians have different views on human nature and salvation, but they also have dissimilar perceptions about gender. Although both religions teach that men and women have equal status before God, in reality the experience of women differs greatly under the two systems. The Christian doctrine of the Trinity, which Islam rejects, helps Christians to understand how women can be equal to men and yet accept a submissive role in the family. The incarnate Jesus took on the submissive role of a Son and yet he was still fully God. There is no similar doctrine in Islam that teaches role differentiation between men and women and yet encourages gender equality before God. Islam places men over women in a way that Christianity does not. Islam allows for polygamy, and while men can marry non-Muslims, women cannot. Muslim men can divorce with a simple proclamation, women cannot. And although women have inheritance rights, they are always inferior to a man's. Finally, Muslim women do not enjoy equal legal rights, and Muslim men are instructed to strike their wives if they are disloyal.

Religion and the State

How do the two traditions view the role of religion in society?

Christians in the West often view Islam through the lens of Western tolerance. In America especially, we are used to the separation of church and state, and assume that people everywhere enjoy such freedom. Many Muslims neither experience such separation nor see it as a good thing. For those who take the Koran seriously, Islam and Islamic law regulate all of life. The history of Islam supports the idea that the state

should be involved in both the spread of Islam and the enforcement of religious duties by individual Muslims in Islamic societies.

Beginning with Muhammad, who was both a religious and political leader, down through the Caliphs and Islamic Empires, there has been little separation between religious and political law enforcement. Today in Saudi Arabia, the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice (*mutawwa'in*, in Arabic) patrol public places in order to enforce religious laws, particularly the dress and habits of women in public.

In fact, the ultimate goal of many Muslims is what might be called a worldwide Islamic peace enforced by Islamic law. When Muslims talk of Islam being a religion of peace, it is often understood that this peace will occur only when Islam rules the world with Islamic law applied universally. As Syrian born Harvard professor Bassam Tibi has written, "...the quest of converting the entire world to Islam is an immutable fixture of the Muslim worldview. Only if this task is accomplished, if the world has become a 'Dar al-Islam [house of Islam],' will it also be a 'Dar al-Salam,' or a house of peace."[\[9\]](#)

Unfortunately, Christianity has at times had similar views regarding the use of government to enforce religious laws. Between the fourth century and the Reformation, the Christian practice of religious tolerance was spotty at best. But the growth of the separation of church and state in the West, which greatly enhanced religious tolerance, has led to another misconception. Muslims often assume that everyone in the West is a Christian. When they see the sexual immorality, drug use, and decline of the family in Western nations, they assume that this is what Christianity endorses. Christians need to be careful to separate themselves from the culture in which they live and help Muslims to see that our secular governments and society have mostly rejected Christian virtues. It is also helpful to communicate to Muslims that becoming a Christian is

more than believing certain things to be true regarding Jesus and the Bible. It is about becoming a new creature in Christ through the indwelling and power of the Holy Spirit. It is about trusting in the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross.

Notes

1. *The New York Times*, May 8, 2003,
<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/05/08/national/08CHRI.html?th>
2. Ibid.
3. Geisler, Norman L., and Abdul Saleeb, *Answering Islam: The Crescent in the Light of the Cross*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), p. 82.
4. Ibid., 80.
5. See also Sura 2:75 and Sura 5:46, 67, 69, 71.
6. Sura 10:94.
7. Ibin Abi Dawud, *Kitab al-Masahif*, p. 23.
8. Geisler and Saleeb, *Answering Islam*, p. 43.
9. Downloaded from NewsMax.com on 5/22/2003 at
tinyurl.com/2tbwo6