A Biblical Point of View on Sharia Law – Kerby Anderson Booklet

Kerby Anderson provides an overview of the dangers inherent in Islam's sharia law, which threatens to invade U.S. cities.

Sharia law is once again in the news. Back in 2010, Sharia (shah-REE-uh) law was in the news because Oklahoma approved a law that would amend the state constitution to prevent the consideration of Sharia law in state courts. However, a federal judge declared the law was unconstitutional.



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This time the focus is on the state of Texas because of a desire by Muslim leaders in Collin County to build a 40-acre EPIC City project. The East Plano Islamic Center and the developers have received lots of attention and at least five investigations from state officials. The project would include a new mosque, more than 1,000 single and multi-family homes,

a Muslim faith-based school, senior housing, an outreach center, commercial developments, sports facilities, and a community college.

Governor Greg Abbott posted on X that “The proposed EPIC compound in Collin Co. has serious legal issues. A dozen state agencies are investigating it, the Attorney General will look into it, and legislators are considering laws to restrict it, as well as laws to prevent foreign adversaries from buying land in Texas.”

On one side are the developers and a Texas representative (Salman Bhojani, who is the first Muslim elected official in Texas history) who say this is a violation of religious freedom and evidence of anti-Muslim hysteria. On the other side are Collin County residents, including a retired police lieutenant (Douglas Deaton, who testified that an Islamic enclave is already operational and has been for almost 12 years).

It is worth taking a moment to understand what Sharia law is. This is important no matter what happens in this Texas community or in others with increasing Muslim communities. American law isn’t going to be challenged by Sharia law, but we can discuss what has been happening in the Middle East and some European countries as a cautionary tale.

What is Sharia Law?

A foundational practice of Islam is the implementation of sharia into the legal structure. Sharia is a system of divine law, belief, or practice that is based upon Muslim legal interpretation. It applies to economics, politics, and society.

Sometimes the world has been able to see how extreme the interpretation of sharia can be. Muslims have been put to death when they have been accused of adultery or

homosexuality. They have been put to death for leaving the religion of Islam. And these are not isolated examples.

Christians are persecuted in Muslim countries. Each year, the organization Open Doors publishes its World Watch List that identifies where Christians are persecuted. Over the last few years, nine of the top ten countries that practice extreme persecution of Christians are Muslim countries.

Treating Jews and Christians differently under sharia law is justified in the Qur'an. For example, the Qur'an talks about "people of the book." 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 jizya with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued."

Muhammad made a distinction between infidels, who were pagans and polytheists, and the "people of the book," who had received revelations from the prophets (Moses, Jesus). The latter group is protected in one sense because they have received these revelations. But they are also guilty because (according to Islam) they have distorted these teachings and rejected the teaching of Muhammad. Although this status was originally given only to the "people of the book," it was later extended to other religions (Sikhs, Zoroastrians, etc.).

Because of their guilt, Islamic teaching stipulates that Jews and Christians may live in a Muslim country, but not as equals to other Muslims. Usually this means that they may not participate in the government. They may practice their religion, but with many restrictions. For example, they were not allowed to have any external manifestations of worship (procession with the cross, ringing bells).

These restrictions are another part of the verse that requires the *dhimmis* [historical non-Muslim subjects living in an

Islamic state] must “feel themselves subdued.” In the past this has meant: (1) that they could not prevent a fellow Christian from converting to Islam, (2) that they could not erect a cross on their church building, and (3) that they must dress in a certain way that would identify them as Jews or Christians.

Finally, they must pay the *jizya*, which is the poll tax required from every dhimmi. In earlier times, this was a major source of income for the Muslim government from dhimmi who paid both the personal tax and the land tax.

The Qur’an teaches (Sura 2:256) that “there is no compulsion in religion.” But is that really so? It 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 or second-class status would follow. They would be inferiors in the Muslim social order and pay the jizya as required in Sura 9:29. If they pay it, they may live, but if they refuse to pay it, warfare will ensue.

Sharia Law and Apostates

It is difficult for a Muslim to leave the faith of Islam. A Muslim is considered part of a larger community of Muslim believers.

When a Muslim decides to leave the faith, there are repercussions in the family and community.

The family is embarrassed and will even lose respect within the Muslim community. The mosque feels it has failed in its duty and lost a member to ignorance and idolatry.

The Qur’an teaches that an apostate Muslim faces the wrath of Allah (Sura 47:25-28). Sharia law in many countries treats

apostasy as the unforgivable sin and therefore punishable by death.

Many Muslim countries have laws against apostasy. Islam teaches that once you are a Muslim, you are always a Muslim. Leaving the Muslim faith can have harsh consequences, including death.

Sharia Law and Women

There is great confusion about the status of women within Islam. 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 restricts a woman's testimony in court. Her testimony is worth half as much as that of a man (Sura 2:282).

The Qur'an teaches that a son's inheritance should be twice that of a daughter's: "Allah thus directs you as regards your children's inheritance; to the male, a portion equal to that of two females" (Sura 4:11).

Islam sanctions polygamy (with up to four wives) as well as sex- with slave women: "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" (Sura 4:3).

Wives are subject to their husbands. If wives are disloyal or disobedient, the Qur'an sets forth their punishment. The husband is first to admonish them, then not sleep with them,

and third to beat them lightly. Essentially, wives are subject to the control of their husbands (Sura 2:223; 4:34). The veiling and seclusion of women has been part of the Muslim culture since the beginnings of Islam. In the Qur'an, Muhammad commands his wives and daughters to draw veils around them. This has been applied to all Muslim women. The veil would allow them to be recognized but not molested (Sura 33:59).

The Qur'an 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 fathers" (Sura 24:31).

In some Muslim countries, women cannot drive, nor can they leave their home without being accompanied by a male family member. Human rights groups report that women in Saudi Arabia who
are not accompanied by a man who is either their husband or a close relative, can be arrested for prostitution or other moral offenses.

Sharia Law and the Constitution

Sharia law is very different in many respects from the laws established through the U.S. Constitution and the laws established through English common law. To prevent sharia law from being implemented in America, a number of state legislatures have bans on sharia law. Voters in other states have approved a ban that has been struck down by a federal appeals court.

Although opponents argue that these sharia law bans are unnecessary, various studies have found
significant cases of sharia law being allowed in U.S. courts. One report with the title, "Shariah Law and the American State Courts" found significant cases of sharia law in U.S. courts

just from their small sample of appellate published cases. When they looked at state courts, they found additional cases in the trial courts and more in the appellate courts. A few judges are making decisions deferring to sharia law even when those decisions conflict with the U.S. Constitution and the various state constitutions.

How should we respond to the increased use of sharia law in America? One simple way to explain your concern to legislators, family, friends, and neighbors is to remember the numbers 1-8-14. These three numbers stand for the three amendments to the U.S. Constitution that contradict the use of sharia law.

The First Amendment says that there should be no establishment of religion. Sharia law is based on one religion's interpretation of rights. The First Amendment prohibits the establishment of any national religion (including Islam).

The Eighth Amendment prohibits "cruel and unusual punishment." Most Americans would consider the penalties handed down under sharia law to be cruel and unusual.

The Fourteenth Amendment guarantees each citizen equal protection under the Constitution. Sharia law does not treat men and women equally, nor does it treat Muslims and non-Muslims equally. This also violates the Constitution.

It is easy to see why we don't need sharia law in America.

Additional Resources

Kerby Anderson, *A Biblical Point of View on Islam*, Point of View Ministries, 2020.

Kerby Anderson, *Understanding Islam and Terrorism*, Cambridge, OH: Christian House Publishers, 2017.

Joel Rosenberg, *Inside the Revolution*, Carol Stream, IL:

Tyndale House, 2009.

Robert Spencer, *Islam Unveiled*, Washington: San Francisco, Encounter, 2002.

Open Doors, World Watch List 2025, www.opendoors.org/en-us/persecution/countries/

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A Biblical Point of View on Islam

Kerby Anderson provides a basic understanding of Islam with suggestions for how Christ-followers can share their faith with Muslims.

The second largest religion in the world, and one of the fastest growing religions, is the religion of Islam. Although we hear so much about it in the news, many Christians don't know much about Islam and don't know how to share the gospel with a Muslim. Whole books have been written on these subjects, but here is a short summary with recommended books so you can learn more.

Islam is a monotheistic religion based upon the holy book, the Qur'an, which its followers believe was sent by God through the angel Gabriel to the prophet Muhammad. Additional teachings are also recorded in the *Hadith*.

The Five Pillars of Islam

Although the beliefs of Muslims vary, all believe in what are called the “Five Pillars of Islam.” These provide a summary of the practices of this religion.

1. *Shahadah*: The first pillar is recitation of the creed: “There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the prophet of Allah.” This statement is the foundation for all other beliefs in Islam. It is what makes someone a Muslim. Those who convert to Islam are to recite the creed. It is generally believed that you must recite this creed in the presence of two witnesses in order to formally convert to Islam.

2. *Salat*: The second pillar is the daily practice of prayer. Muslim prayer may be done individually or in community, but the prayers are required five times each day (dawn and sunrise, noon and mid-afternoon, mid-afternoon to sunset, sunset to twilight, and from twilight to dawn).

In Muslim and Western countries where there is a mosque, a prayer leader climbs to the top of the minaret in the mosque and calls the believers to prayer. He chants in Arabic, “God is great. There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah. Come to prayer. Come to prayer. Come to success in this life and the hereafter.”

3. *Zakat*: The third pillar is almsgiving, which is mandated giving to the poor and needy within society. The Qur’an requires that each Muslim give 2.5 percent of their income to the poor or to the spread of Islam. The collected funds are used for building and supporting mosques, for printing the Qur’an, and for the advancement of Islam.

4. *Sawm*: The fourth pillar of Islam is the fast during the ninth lunar month of the Muslim calendar. This is significant in the Muslim calendar for two reasons.

First, this is the time when Muhammad is said to have received

the first of his revelations from God. Second, it is also the time when he and his followers made their historic trek from Mecca to Medina.

During this month, Muslims in good health are required to abstain from all food, drink, smoking, and sexual intercourse during daylight hours. This month-long fast promotes the Muslim's self-discipline, dependence on Allah, and compassion for the needy.

5.*Hajj*: The fifth pillar is a pilgrimage to Mecca that occurs during the last month of the Muslim year. Every able-bodied Muslim is to make a pilgrimage to Mecca once during his life. Pilgrims travel to Mecca, which is the holiest city in Islam and the birthplace of Muhammad. Only Muslims may enter Mecca. The focal point of Mecca is the Ka'bah which is an ancient stone building (thirty feet wide and forty feet long). A black stone (believed to be a meteorite) is set in the corner. The Ka'bah existed before the time of Muhammad. He taught that their worship had been corrupted and removed the idols from the Ka'bah and instituted Muslim worship of Allah in its place.

Major Divisions of Islam

Islam is not a monolithic system. Though all Muslims draw their inspiration from Muhammad and the teachings in the Qur'an, there are many identifiable groups and movements within Islam.

The most significant division is between Sunni and Shi'a Islam. The Sunnis comprise about eighty to ninety percent of all Muslims. They draw their name from the fact that they look both to the Qur'an and to the "Sunna" in establishing proper Muslim conduct. The Sunna is the recorded behavior or example of Muhammad and of the early Muslim community. There are many subdivisions among the Sunnis, but they all identify themselves as Sunni.

Sunnis currently control the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. They adhere to the five pillars of Islam and take a strong stand on the successor to Muhammad. This leader will be the caliph who will govern Islam and provide theological direction to all Muslims, including the interpretation of sharia law. These caliphs have ruled continuously until the Ottoman Empire fell.

The other major group of Muslims is the Shi'ites. They compose about ten percent of all Muslims. They reside mainly in southern Iraq and in Iran. The word Shi'ite means "partisan," and refers to the fact that Shi'ites are "partisans of Ali." Ali was the son-in-law and cousin of Muhammad and one of the early caliphs. The Shi'ites believe that the leader of Islam should be a descendant of Ali, whom they believe possesses a special divine anointing for this task.

A third group of Muslims are the Sufis. They seek a mystical experience of God, rather than a merely intellectual knowledge of Him. Sufi Muslims are the mystics in Islam. They believe that the soul can rise to Allah during prayer and other spiritual exercises. Although they also read the Qur'an, they read it in a different way than other Muslims. They believe that it is an allegory of our soul's union with Allah.

Muslim Beliefs

When you are witnessing to a Muslim, it is important to remember that their beliefs about God, Jesus, and the Bible are very different from a Christian's view. They may have many misconceptions, and you may have certain misconceptions about what they believe. It is therefore important to ask questions about what they believe and help them understand what the Bible actually teaches. Here are a few basic theological beliefs.

It has often been fashionable to hear people say 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.

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.” 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*. 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. Islam teaches that Allah is distant, transcendent, and unknowable. 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. By contrast, Christianity teaches the fatherhood of God. Jesus taught in the Lord’s Prayer that we may address God as “our Father in heaven” (Matthew 6:9). Christians can have a personal relationship with God through Christ.

Muslims also have a different view of Jesus. The Qur’an refers to Jesus as “the Messiah” or “the Christ.” But Muslims reject the idea that God could have a Son. By contrast, the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. God is heard from heaven declaring, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 17:5). Also, believers are called children of God: “See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God” (1 John 3:1).

Witnessing to Muslims

Muslims usually believe that the Bible has errors in it. You

should be prepared to answer such objections. But you can even begin with what is taught about Jesus in the Qur'an. They accept that He is the Messiah and the Christ. And they honor him as one of the greatest prophets. In Sura 3:42-55, the Qur'an also teaches that:

(1) Mary was chosen by God,
(2) Jesus was born of a virgin,
(3) Jesus is the Messiah,
(4) Jesus has power over death, and
(5) Jesus knows the way to heaven.

The Qur'an also teaches that a proper Muslim must read the Old and New Testaments, known as the Before Books (Sura 4:136). And it teaches that those who observe the teaching of the Torah and the Gospels may go to heaven (Sura 5:6566). Many Muslims feel this gives them permission to read the Bible. You can give them a Bible and suggest they read the gospel of John.

When you witness to Muslims, be sure you talk about the love of God. Most Muslims believe that Allah is distant and unknowable. Christianity offers them the possibility of knowing God personally. This is attractive to Muslims.

A seminary conducted a survey of six hundred former Muslims who had become Christians. One of the most significant factors involved in the conversions of these former Muslims was the emphasis on the love of God and the intimacy that believers can have with God as their heavenly Father. This was an important factor in drawing these former Muslims to Christ, so make sure you talk about the love of God.

Another factor was eternal security. A Muslim never really knows whether he or she will be saved due to their good works on earth. The Bible teaches that we can know that we have eternal life (1 John 5:13). We are saved by grace through faith, not by works (Ephesians 2:8-9). The bad news is that

the works Muslims do will not enable them to enter into heaven. The good news is that God gave his Son so that they would not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

Additional Resources

Kerby Anderson. *Understanding Islam and Terrorism: A Biblical Point of View*. Christian Publishing House, 2017.

Ergun Caner and Emir Caner, *Unveiling Islam*. Kregel, 2002.

Norman Geisler. *Answering Islam: The Crescent in Light of the Cross*. Baker, 2002.

Nabeel Qureshi. *Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus*. Zondervan, 2016.

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The Causes of War

Meic Pearse's book The Gods of War *gives great insight into the charge that religion is the cause of most war. History shows this is not true: the cause of most war is the sinful human heart, even when religion is invoked as a reason.*

The Accusation

Sam Harris, the popular author and atheist, says that "for everyone with eyes to see, there can be no doubt that religious faith remains a perpetual source of human

conflict."{1} Writing for the Freedom from Religion Foundation, fellow atheist Richard Dawkins adds, "Only the willfully blind could fail to implicate the divisive force of religion in most, if not all, of the violent enmities in the world today."{2} Speaking more bluntly, one British government official has said, "theocrats, religious leaders or fanatics citing holy texts . . . constitutes the greatest threat to world peace today."{3}



War is the ultimate act of intolerance, and since intolerance is seen as the only unforgivable sin in our postmodern times, it's not surprising that those hostile to religion would charge people holding religious convictions with the guilt for causing war.

This view is held by many others, not just despisers of religion. A 2006 opinion poll taken in Great Britain found that 82% of adults "see religion as a cause of division and tension between people. Only 16% disagree."{4}

To be honest, religion has been, and remains, a source of conflict in the world; but to what degree? Is it the only source of war, as its critics argue? Is it even the primary source? And if we agree that religion is a source of war, how do we define what qualifies as a religion? This leads to another question. Are all religions equally responsible for war or are some more prone to instigate conflict than others? Once these issues are decided, we are still left with one of the most difficult questions: How does a religious person, especially a Christian, respond to the question of war?

When confronted with the accusation that religion, and more importantly, Christianity, has been the central cause of war down through history, most Christians respond by ceding the point. We will argue that the issue is far too complex to merely blame war on religious strife. A more nuanced response is needed. Religion is sometimes the direct cause of war, but

other times it plays a more ambiguous role. It can also be argued, as Karl Marx did, that religion can actually restrain the warring instinct.

In his provocative new book, *The Gods of War*, Meic Pearse argues that modern atheists greatly overstate their case regarding religion as a cause for war, and that all religions are not equal when it comes to the tendency to resort to violence. He believes that the greatest source for conflict in the world today is the universalizing tendencies of modern secular nations that are pressing their materialism and moral relativism on more traditional cultures.

The Connection Between Religion and War

When someone suggests a simple answer to something as complex as war, it probably is *too* simple. History is usually more complicated than we would like it to be.

How then should Christians respond when someone claims religion is the cause of all wars? First, we must admit that religion can be and sometimes is the cause of war. Although it can be difficult to separate political, cultural, and religious motivations, there have been instances when men went off to war specifically because they believed that God wanted them to. That being said, in the last one hundred years the modern era with its secular ideologies has generated death and destruction on a scale never seen before in history. Not during the Crusades, the Inquisition, nor even during the Thirty Years War in Europe.

The total warfare of the twentieth century combined powerful advances in war-making technologies with highly structured societies to devastating effect. WWI cost close to eight and a half million lives. The more geographically limited Russian Civil War that followed the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 resulted in nine million deaths. WWII cost sixty million

deaths, as well as the destruction of whole cities by fire bombing and nuclear devices.

Both Nazi fascism and communism rejected the Christian belief that humanity holds a unique role in creation and replaced it with the necessity of conflict and strife. By the end of the nineteenth century, Darwin's ideas regarding natural selection and survival of the fittest had begun to affect philosophy, the social sciences, and even theology. Darwin had left us with a brutal universe devoid of meaning. The communist and fascist worldviews were both firmly grounded in Darwin's universe.

Hitler's obsession with violence is well known, but the communists were just as vocal about their attachment to it. Russian revolution leader Leon Trotsky wrote, "We must put an end once and for all to the papist-Quaker babble about the sanctity of human life." Lenin argued that the socialist state was to be "a system of organized violence against the bourgeoisie" or middle class. While critics of the Russian Tsar and his ties with the Orthodox Russian Church could point to examples of oppression and cruelty, one historian has noted that when the communists had come to power "more prisoners were shot at just one soviet camp in a single year than had been executed by the tsars during the entire nineteenth century."{5}

So, religion is not the primary cause of warfare and cruelty, at least not during the last one hundred years. But what about wars fought in the more distant past; surely most of them were religiously motivated. Not really.

Meic Pearce argues that "most wars, even before the rise of twentieth century's secularist creeds, owed little or nothing to religious causation."{6} Considering the great empires of antiquity, Pearce writes that "neither the Persians nor the Greeks nor the Romans fought either to protect or to advance

the worship of their gods."{7} Far more ordinary motives were involved like the desire for booty, the extension of the empire, glory in battle, and the desire to create buffer zones with their enemies. Each of these empires had their gods which would be called upon for aid in battle, but the primary cause of these military endeavors was not the advancement of religious beliefs.

Invasions by the Goths, Huns, Franks, and others against the Roman Empire, attacks by the Vikings in the North and the Mongols in Asia were motivated by material gain as well and not religious belief. The fourteenth century conquests of Timur Leng (or Tamerlane) in the Middle East and India resulted in the deaths of millions. He was a Muslim, but he conquered Muslim and pagan alike. At one point he had seventy thousand Muslims beheaded in Baghdad so that towers could be built with their skulls.{8}

More recently, the Hundred Years War between the French and English, the American Revolution, and the Napoleonic Wars were secular conflicts. Religious beliefs might have been used to wrap the conflicts with a Christian veneer, but promoting the cause of Christ was not at the heart of the conflicts.

Pearce argues that down through the millennia, humanity has gone to war for two main reasons: greed expressed by the competition for limited resources, and the need for security from other predatory cultures. The use of religion as a legitimating device for conflict has become a recent trend as it became less likely that a single individual could take a country to war without the broad support of the population.

It can be argued that religion was, without ambiguity, at the center of armed conflict during two periods in history. The first was during the birth and expansion of Islam which resulted in an ongoing struggle with Christianity, including the Crusades during the Middle Ages. The second was the result of the Reformation in Europe and was fought between Protestant

and Catholic states. Even here, political motivations were part of the blend of causes that resulted in armed conflict.

Islam and Christianity

Do all religions have the same propensity to cause war? The two world religions with the largest followings are Christianity and Islam. While it is true that people have used both belief systems to justify armed conflict, are they equally likely to cause war? Do their founder's teachings, their holy books, and examples from the earliest believers encourage their followers to do violence against others?

Although Christianity has been used to justify forced conversions and violence against unbelievers, the connection between what Christianity actually teaches and these acts of violence has been ambiguous at best and often contradictory. Nowhere in the New Testament are Christians told to use violence to further the Kingdom of God. Our model is Christ who is the perfect picture of humility and servant leadership, the one who came to lay down his life for others. Meic Pearce writes, "For the first three centuries of its history, Christianity was spread exclusively by persuasion and was persecuted for its pains, initially by the Jews but later, from 63, by the Romans."{9} It wasn't until Christianity became the de facto state religion of the Roman Empire around AD 400 that others were persecuted in the name of Christ.

The history of Islam is quite different. Warfare and conflict are found at its very beginning and is embodied in Muhammad's actions and words. Islam was initially spread through military conquest and maintained by threat of violence. As one pair of scholars puts it, there can be no doubt that "Islam was cradled in violence, and that Muhammad himself, through the twenty-six or twenty-seven raids in which he personally participated, came to serve for some Muslims as a role model for violence."{10}

Much evidence can be corralled to make this point. Muhammad himself spoke of the necessity of warfare on behalf of Allah. He said to his followers, “I was ordered to fight all men until they say, ‘There is no God but Allah.'”{11} Prior to conquering Mecca, he supported his small band of believers by raiding caravans and sharing the booty. Soon after Muhammad’s death, a war broke out over the future of the religion. Three civil wars were fought between Muslims during the first fifty years of the religion’s history, and three of the four leaders of Islam after Muhammad were assassinated by other Muslims. The Quran and Hadith, the two most important writings in Islam, make explicit the expectation that all Muslim men will fight to defend the faith. Perhaps the most telling aspect of Islamic belief is that there is no separation between religious and political authority in the Islamic world. A threat to one is considered a threat to the other and almost guarantees religiously motivated warfare.

Pacifism or Just Wars?

Although most Christians advocate either pacifism or a “just war” view when it comes to warfare and violence, Pearse argues that there are difficulties with both. Pacifism works at a personal level, but “there cannot be a pacifist state, merely a state that depends on others possessed of more force or of the willingness to use it.”{12} Some pacifists argue that humans are basically good and that violence stems from misunderstandings or social injustice. This is hardly a traditional Christian teaching. Pearse argues that “a repudiation of force in all circumstances . . . is an abandonment of victims—real people—to their fate.”{13}

Just war theory as advocated by Augustine in the early fifth century teaches that war is moral if it is fought for a just cause and carried out in a just fashion. A just cause bars wars of aggression or revenge, and is fought only as a last resort. It also must have a reasonable chance of success and

be fought under the direction of a ruler in an attitude of love for the enemy. It seeks to reestablish peace, not total destruction of the vanquished, and to insure that noncombatants are not targeted.

However, even WWII, what many believe to be our most justified use of force, failed to measure up to this standard. Massive air raids against civilian populations by the Allies were just one of many violations that disallow its qualification as a just war. As Pearse argues, "war has an appalling dynamic of its own: it drags down the participants . . . into ever more savage actions."{14}

How then are Christians to think about war and violence? Let's consider two examples. In the face of much violent opposition in his battle for social justice, Martin Luther King said, "be ye assured that we will wear you down by our capacity to suffer. . . . We shall so appeal to your heart and conscience that we shall win *you* in the process."{15} Reform was achieved, although at the cost of his life, and many hearts and minds have been changed.

However, another martyr, German minister Dietrich Bonhoeffer, rejected pacifism and chose to participate in an attempt on the life of Adolf Hitler, mainly because he despaired that an appeal to the hearts and minds of the Nazis would be effective.

Neither King nor Bonhoeffer were killed specifically for their faith. They were killed for defending the weak from slaughter, as Pearse puts it. Perhaps Pearse is correct when he argues, "If Christians can . . . legitimately fight . . . , then that fighting clearly cannot be for the faith. It can only be for secular causes . . . faith in Christ is something for which we can only die—not kill. . . . To fight under the delusion that one is thereby promoting Christianity is to lose sight of what Christianity is."{16}

Notes

1. Meic Pearse, The Gods of War (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 16.
2. Ibid., 15.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., 14.
5. Ibid., 31.
6. Ibid., 53.
7. Ibid., 54.
8. Ibid., 55.
9. Ibid., 134.
10. Ibid., 58.
11. Ibid., 59.
12. Ibid., 173.
13. Ibid., 175.
14. Ibid., 173.
15. Ibid., 180.
16. Ibid.

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"How Do You Respond to These Claims of Islam Apologists?"

How would you respond to these common claims that Muslims make with the intention of trying to show that Islam is true, i.e., the one true religion:

1) "Islam is not a religion in the common and distorted sense, for it does not confine its scope to one's private life. It is a complete way of life and is present in every field of human existence. Islam provides guidance for all aspects of life –

individual and social, material and moral, economic and political, legal and cultural, and national and international."

2) "Islam is named after the action of submitting to God's command and will and not a person. Other religions are often named after a person or people. For instance, Christianity is named after Christ, Judaism is named after the tribe of Juda, and Buddhism is named after Buddha. Islam is not named after Muhammad because Islam existed before him."

3)"Islam in its clear and direct way of expressing truth has a tremendous amount of appeal for any seeker of knowledge. It is the solution for all the problems of life. It is a guide toward a better and complete life glorifying in all its phases God, the Almighty Creator and the Merciful Nourisher."

4) "Islam is the most rational religion. It gives clear code of life."

5) "Islam is the first and the final religion of mankind."

6) "Islam is the shortest and broadest road that leads to God."

Thanks for writing. You ask a great question. This is a subject we as an organization want every Christian to be able to answer. It's also one that's so important every person needs to wrestle with this question.

What is the one true religion?

Is it Islam? Is it Christianity? Judaism? Buddhism? Atheism? Hinduism?

For the record I believe Christianity is the one true religion. But that's not your question. So I will focus on responding to your claims.

Whatever you do, “Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.” (Romans 14:5)

First I will respond to each issue one at a time. At the end I will respond in general and share some helpful tips.

1) “Islam is not a religion in the common and distorted sense, for it does not confine its scope to one’s private life. It is a complete way of life and is present in every field of human existence. Islam provides guidance for all aspects of life – individual and social, material and moral, economic and political, legal and cultural, and national and international.”

When people compare worldviews, they need to do a little philosophy first. Before they get going, they need to determine the parameters for the analysis. For example, how will the one true religion be determined? There are any number of ways this question can be answered. And the way in which that question is answered correspondingly affects the conclusion.

To exemplify my point here I will take an absurd set of parameters. One could begin by setting the parameters that the one true religion will be determined by the worldview that allows for a world with maximal quantities of ice cream.

Then whichever worldview allows for maximal quantities of delicious frozen dessert is determined to be the one true religion, or worldview.

As much as I assume you enjoy eating copious amounts of ice cream as I do, these parameters are intentionally absurd. Still my point is illustrated. Before a conclusion can be drawn comparing two worldviews, there needs to be an independent set of parameters that will determine which one is in fact true.

The statement that Islam has answers for every aspect of life

and human experience, not just the individual's inner experience, is a good starting point.

I agree with this assessment. Islam does have answers for every aspect of life; Islam is a worldview. However, it is not unique because it is a worldview. There are other perspectives/religions that make the same claim as well.

So in that sense I would respond by saying, Islam is not the obvious choice for the one true religion based sheerly on the fact that it is a worldview because of the presence of other competing and contradictory worldviews making the same claim, Christianity among them.

2) "Islam is named after the action of submitting to God's commands and will and not a person. Other religions are often named after a person or people. For instance, Christianity is named after Christ, Judaism is named after the tribe of Juda, and Buddhism is named after Buddha. Islam is not named after Muhammad because Islam existed before him."

As mentioned above, before one draws a conclusion, set the parameters for comparison. Is the one true religion going to be determined by the one whose name is NOT taken after its founder? If so, then Islam is in contention for the title, though not the only contender. The claim is also true of Hinduism, Atheism, Nones, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

Perhaps the claim is made that Islam's not being named for its founder evidences its eternal nature. Okay, that's a better argument for Islam being the one true religion. However, the biggest problem with this statement is the massive non-sequitur. It does not follow that Islam has always existed because it is not named for its founder. Those two claims are certainly consistent with each other. They do not contradict each other. However, the evidence fails to justify the conclusion.

3) "Islam in its clear and direct way of expressing truth has

a tremendous amount of appeal for any seeker of knowledge. It is the solution for all the problems of life. It is a guide toward a better and complete life glorifying in all its phases God, the Almighty Creator and the Merciful Nourisher."

This is the first claim that comes close to the point I've made twice already. It begins setting forth criteria by which any worldview could be compared. Here the claim under examination is that Islam is the one true religion because it provides knowledge to those who seek. It provides solutions to life problems. It is a guide to a better and complete life.

This is a great start. The next step would be to define the terms concretely. What is knowledge? Solutions to which of life's problems? What is the good life?

4) "Islam is the most rational religion. It gives clear code of life."

Again, this is another step closer to defining parameters to compare competing worldviews. The claim here is that Islam is the most logical. This one would be difficult to argue just because of the sheer nature of things about life and this world to which we just don't have rational answers. The one arguing this point would have a monumental task ahead of him of cataloguing what's logical, what is not, and then comparing one system against the other. Again, logic would need to be defined as well.

5) "Islam is the first and the final religion of mankind."

This one is difficult to take seriously. First, scholars of religion do not date Islam as the oldest religion. Second, neither is it the final religion historically. Many other religions have formed since the 8th century. Consider Secular atheism, Baha'i, Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, or even Falun Gong. Their very existence calls into question the veracity of this claim.

Perhaps then the claim is a spiritual one, not historical. That is to say, it is not the final as in the last religion ever formed-rather it is the last one created that man will ever need. It is sufficient to connect the global brotherhood of humanity with God.

That could perhaps be the case logically. But here again the claim is asserted without justification.

6) "Islam is the shortest and broadest road that leads to God."

Again, are those the parameters for determining the one true religion? If so, then a discussion could ensue to both evaluate each worldview according to its length to get to God, and its broadness. I would not choose these parameters myself, but one could do so if he wished.

In conclusion, these six statements may perhaps encourage someone who is already Muslim, that their belief is the one true religion-providing further evidence of its internal consistency.

However, the above six claims seem to miss a fundamental distinction important when discussing and determining which worldview among many is the one true worldview, or religion. This is the distinction between knowing and showing.

It is one thing to know a claim to be true. It is yet a different task to show that it is true.

When I teach worldviews as a lecture I conclude with four tests that can be administered to any given worldview and used as a measure to compare how each competing worldview holds up. These test for **correspondence, coherency, consistency,** and **comprehensiveness**.

The **correspondence** test asks how well does this worldview correspond with what I perceive of the world? How directly

does it correspond with reality?

Islam's teaching God created the world makes sense to me. This explains beautifully why there is something rather than nothing. However, Islam does not provide a satisfying answer to man's greatest need.

Islam and Christianity agree that man is divided from God, separated. Both religions desire reunion with God. Islam teaches this is possible through submission. The Arabic word for Islam can also be translated "submission."

Christianity teaches that submission to God is impossible to do perfectly. Both Muslims and Christians would agree. Mankind is in a broken, fallen, sinful, imperfect state. Islam's answer to man's problem is essentially, try hard and hope God is merciful because sometimes He isn't. In that way Allah appears to me capricious.

Islam doesn't correspond to reality in a really important way. It provides no satisfying answer for what to do with Man's sin. It provides no means to reconcile imperfect men to a perfect, holy, and sovereign God.

Only the gospel provides that. This is why the gospel is such good news. This is why the gospel is so important.

The second worldview analysis test is **coherency**. This test evaluates a worldview's logic. This test asks whether it is rational or reasonable. Does it pass the sniff test? Or does it seem patently off?

Islam doesn't fare well with this test when we examine its treatment of women. The Qur'an states that Allah is merciful. But if wives are disrespectful to their husband, according to Surah 4 husbands are allowed to withhold sex from them. The Qur'an even commands husbands to beat them.

In Saudi Arabia women could not drive for nearly two decades.

They allowed it legally just a few years ago in 2019. Islam's track record with women is not coherent. How can one gender have so much more value than another if both are human creations under Allah? How can a husband be allowed to beat his wife-the one he's devoted his life to loving and protecting?

A third test for **consistency**, asks how consistent the tenets of this worldview are with themselves. Does this worldview contain contradictory teachings or beliefs?

Surah 109:6 regarding how to relate to disbelievers, "Unto you your religion, and unto me my religion." The Qur'an states many times that Allah is peaceful, merciful, and forgiving. How then can He justify the systematic killing of disbelievers as ordained in Jihad (surah 2:216)? Islam has a massive consistency problem. Is it a religion of peace or of the sword? The fact that an objective outside observer cannot tell is a serious consistency problem.

Lastly the **comprehensive** test asks the question, How well does this worldview explain everything altogether? It takes into consideration how well it answered the above three questions, and other important considerations.

For my final analysis I would bring in outside evidence. The evidence for the reliability of the Bible is absolutely unrivaled by any other book from antiquity, Qur'an included. The miracles recorded in the New Testament authenticate the authority of Jesus's teaching. The fulfillments of prophecy recorded in Scripture are incredible.

Muhammad's record of bringing peace to the Saudi peninsula in the 7th century is a sad tale of power, bloodshed, politics, and let's face it, hatred. When all the evidence is considered, Islam has problems with the worldview tests. Christianity raises difficult questions, but has really good, historically grounded, spiritually satisfying answers to all

of them.

You might check out this excellent article on our website about worldviews. [probe.org/worldviews/]

You might also check out an excellent historical study, on our website, comparing the lives of Jesus and Muhammad. [probe.org/the-lives-of-muhammad-and-jesus/]

I hope this helps.

Paul Rutherford

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The Just War Tradition in the Present Crisis

Is it ever right to go to war? Dr. Lawrence Terlizzese provides understanding of just war tradition from a biblical perspective.

Searching for Answers

Recent events have prompted Christians to ask moral questions concerning the legitimacy of war. How far should we go in punishing evil? Can torture ever be justified? On what basis are these actions premised? These problems remain especially acute for those who claim the Christian faith. Fortunately, we are not the first generation to face these questions. The use of force and violence has always troubled the Christian conscience. Jesus Christ gave his life freely without

resisting. But does Christ's nonviolent approach deny government the prerogative to maintain order and establish peace through some measure of force? All government action operates on the premise of force. To deny all force, to be a dedicated pacifist, leads no less to a condition of anarchy than if one were a religious fascist. Extremes have the tendency to meet. In the past, Christians attempted to negotiate through the extremes and seek a limited and prescribed use of force in what has been called the Just War Tradition.



The Just War Tradition finds its source in several streams of Western thought: biblical teaching, law, theology, philosophy, military strategy, and common sense. Just War thinking integrates this wide variety of thought through providing Christians with a general orientation on the issues of war and peace. This tradition transcends denominational barriers and attempts to supply workable answers and solutions to very difficult moral problems. Just War has its origins in Greco-Roman thinking as well as Christian theology: Augustine, Aquinas, and Calvin have all contributed to its development.{1}

Just War thinking does not provide sure-fire ways of fighting guilt-free wars, or offer blanket acceptance of government action. It often condemns acts of war as well as condones. Just War presents critical criteria malleable enough to address a wide assortment of circumstances. It does not give easy answers to difficult questions; instead, it provides a broad moral consensus concerning problems of justifying and controlling war. It presents a living tradition that furnishes a stock of wisdom consisting of doctrines, theories, and philosophies. Mechanical application in following Just War teachings cannot replace critical thinking, genius, and moral

circumspection in ever changing circumstances. Just War attempts to approximate justice in the temporal realm in order to achieve a temporal but lasting peace. It does not make pretensions in claiming infinite or absolute justice, which remain ephemeral and unattainable goals. Only God provides infinite justice and judgment in eternity through his own means. "'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord" (Deut. 32:35; Heb. 10:30).

The Clash of Civilizations

To apply Just War criteria we must first have a reasonable assessment of current circumstances. The Cold War era witnessed a bipolar world consisting of two colossal opponents. The end of the Cold War has brought the demise of strict ideological battles and has propelled the advent of cultural divisions in a multi-polar world. Present and future conflicts exist across cultural lines. The "Clash of Civilizations" paradigm replaces the old model of East vs. West.{2} People are more inclined to identify with their religious and ethnic heritage than the old ideology. The West has emerged as the global leader, leaving the rest of the world to struggle either to free itself from the West or to catch it economically and technologically. The triumph of the West—or modernized, secular, and materialist society—has created a backlash in Islamic Fundamentalism.

Fundamentalism does not represent ancient living traditions but a modern recreation of ancient beliefs with a particular emphasis on political conquest. Fundamentalists do not hesitate to enter into battle or holy war (jihad) with the enemies of God at a political and military level. The tragic events of 9/11 and the continual struggle against terrorism traces back to the hostility Islamic fundamentalists feel towards the triumph of the West. They perceive Western global hegemony [ed. note: leadership or predominant influence] as a threat and challenge to their religious beliefs and

traditions, as most Christian fundamentalists and evangelicals feel threatened by the invincible advance of modern secular society. The error of fundamentalism lies in thinking it can recreate the past and enforce those beliefs and conditions on the modern world. Coercion remains at the heart of fundamentalist practice, constituting a threat potentially worse than modern secular society.

This cultural divide causes Christians to reconsider the basis of warfare premised on the responsibilities of the state to defend civil society against the encroachments of religious extremism that fights in the name of God and for a holy cause or crusade.

This may sound strange at first to theological ears, but an absolute principle of Just War states that Christians never fight for "God and Country," but only for "Country." There is only a secular and civil but necessary task to be accomplished in war, never a higher mandate to inaugurate God's kingdom. In this sense Just War thinking attempts to secularize war by which it hopes to limit its horrendous effects.

Holy War or Just War

An essential distinction divides Just War from holy war. Just War does not claim to fight in the name of God or even for eternal causes. It strictly concerns temporal and political reasons. Roland Bainton sums up this position: "War is more humane when God is left out of it."{3} This does not embrace atheism but a Christian recognition concerning the value, place, and responsibilities of government. The state is not God or absolute, but plays a vital role in maintaining order and peace (Matt. 22:21). The Epistles repeat this sentiment (Rom.13; 1 Peter 2: 13-17; 1 Tim.2; Titus 3:1). Government does not act as the organ or defender through which God establishes his kingdom (John 18: 36).

Government does not have the authority to enforce God's will on unwilling subjects except within a prescribed and restricted civil realm that maintains the minimum civil order for the purpose of peace. Government protects the good and punishes the evil. Government serves strictly temporal purposes "in order that we may lead a tranquil and quite life in all godliness and dignity" (2 Tim. 2:2). God establishes civil authorities for humanity's sake, not his own. Therefore, holy war that claims to fight in the name of God and for eternal truths constitutes demonic corruption of divinely sanctioned civil authority.

The following distinctions separate holy war and Just War beliefs. Holy war fights for divine causes in Crusades and Jihads to punish infidels and heretics and promote a particular faith; Just War fights for political causes to defend liberty and religious freedom. Holy war fights by divine command issuing from clerics and religious leaders; Just War fights through moral sanction. Holy war employs a heavenly mandate, Just War a state mandate. Holy war is unlimited or total; anything goes, and the enemy must be eradicated in genocide or brought to submission. The Holy War slogan is "kill 'em all and let God sort them out!" Holy war accepts one group's claim to absolute justice and goodness, which causes them to regard the other as absolutely evil. Just War practices limited war; it seeks to achieve limited temporal objectives and uses only necessary force to accomplish its task. Just War rejects genocide as a legitimate goal. Holy war fights out of unconditional obedience to faith. Just War fights out of obedience to the state, which is never incontestable. Holy war fights offensive wars of conquest; Just War fights defensive wars, generally responding to provocation. Holy war battles for God to enforce belief and compel submission. Just War defends humanity in protecting civil society, which despite its transitory and mundane role in the eternal scheme of things plays an essential part in preserving humanity from barbarism and allows for everything

else in history to exist.

Why Go to War?

Just War thinking uses two major categories to measure the legitimacy of war. The first is called *jus ad bellum* [Latin for "justice to war"]: the proper recourse to war or judging the reasons for war. This category asks questions to be answered before going to war. It has three major criteria: just authority, just cause, and just intent.

Just authority serves as the presupposition for the rest of the criteria. It requires that only recognized state authorities use force to punish evil (Rom. 13:4; 1 Pet. 2). Just War thinking does not validate individual actions against opponents, which would be terrorism, nor does it allow for paramilitary groups to take matters in their own hands. Just authority requires a formal declaration. War must be declared by a legitimate governmental authority. In the USA, Congress holds the right of formal declaration, but the President executes the war. Congressional authorization in the last sixty years has substituted for formal declaration.

Just cause is the most difficult standard to determine in a pluralistic society. Whose justice do we serve? Just War asserts the notion of comparative or limited justice. No one party has claim to absolute justice; there exists either more or less just cause on each side. Therefore, Just War thinking maintains the right to dissent. Those who believe a war immoral must not be compelled against their wills to participate. Just War thinking recognizes individual conscientious objection.

Just cause breaks down to four other considerations. First, it requires that the state *perform all its duties*. Its first duty requires self-defense and defense of the innocent. A second duty entails recovery of lost land or property, and the third

is to punish criminals and evil doers.

Second, just cause requires *proportionality*. This means that the positive results of war must outweigh its probable destructive effects. The force applied should not create greater evil than that resisted.

Third, one judges the *probability of success*. It asks, is the war winnable? Some expectation of reasonable success should exist before engaging in war. Open-ended campaigns are suspect. Clear objectives and goals must be outlined from the beginning. Warfare in the latter twentieth century abandoned objectives in favor of police action and attrition, which leads to interminable warfare.

Fourth, *last resort* means all alternative measures for resolving conflict must be exhausted before using force. However, preemptive strikes are justified if the current climate suggests an imminent attack or invasion. Last resort does not have to wait for the opponent to draw "first blood."

Just intent judges the motives and ends of war. It asks, why go to war? and, what is the end result? Motives must originate from love or at least some minimum concern for others with the end result of peace. This rules out all revenge. The goals of war aim at establishing peace and reconciliation.

The Means of War

The proper conduct in war or judging the means of war is *jus in bello* [Latin for "justice in war"], the second category used to measure conflict. It has two primary standards: proportionality and discrimination.

Proportionality maintains that the employed necessary force not outweigh its objectives. It measures the means according to the ends and condemns all overkill. One should not use a bomb where a bullet will do.

Discrimination basically means non-combatant immunity. A "combatant" is anyone who by reasonable standard is actively engaged in an attempt to destroy you. POW's, civilians, chaplains, medics, and children are all non-combatants and therefore exempt from targeting. Buildings such as hospitals, museums, places of worship and landmarks share the same status. However, those previously thought to be non-combatants may forfeit immunity if they participate in fighting. If a place of worship becomes a stash for weapons and a safe-house for opponents, it loses its non-combatant status.

A proper understanding of discrimination does not mean that non-combatants may never be killed, but only that they are never intentionally targeted. The tragic reality of every war is that non-combatants will be killed. Discrimination attempts to minimize these incidents so they become the exception rather than the rule.

Killing innocent lives in war may be justified under the principle of *double effect*. This rule allows for the death of non-combatants if they were unintended and accidental. Their deaths equal the collateral effects of just intent. Double effect states that each action has more than one effect, even though only one effect was intentional, the other accidental. Self-defense therefore intends to save one's life or that of another but has the accidental effect of the death of the third party.

The double effect principle is the most controversial aspect of the Just War criteria and will be subject to abuse. Therefore, it must adhere to its own criteria. Certain conditions apply before invoking double effect. First, the act should be good. It should qualify as a legitimate act of war. Second, a good effect must be intended. Third, the evil effect cannot act as an end in itself, and must be minimized with risk to the acting party. Lastly, the good effect always outweighs the evil effect.

Given the ferocity of war, it is understandable that many will scoff at the notion of Just War. However, Just War thinking accepts war and force as part of the human condition (Matt. 24:6) and hopes to arrive at the goal of peace through realistic yet morally appropriate methods. It does not promote war but seeks to mitigate its dreadful effects. Just War thinking morally informs Western culture to limit its acts of war and not to exploit its full technological capability, which could only result in genocide and total war.

Notes

1. The following books are helpful sources on Just War thinking: Robert G. Clouse, ed. War: Four Christian Views (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1991); Paul Ramsey, War and the Christian Conscience: How Shall the Modern War be Conducted Justly? (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1961); Lawrence J. Terlizzese, "The Just War Tradition and Nuclear Weapons in the Post Cold War Era" (Master's Thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1994).

2. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

3. Roland H. Bainton, *Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace: A Historical Survey and Critical Evaluation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960), 49.

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The Lives of Muhammad and

Jesus

Dr. Pat Zukeran explores the radical differences between Muhammad and Jesus, and the implications of following their examples and teachings.

Muhammad and Jesus are the founders of the two largest religions in the world and two of the most influential people in the history of the world. Both men serve not only as founders but also the ideal models whose lives are to be emulated by all their followers. What kind of lives did they live? What example did they leave behind, and how is their example impacting our world today?



This work will examine the lives of both men. In my research I have relied on what is considered by Muslims to be some of the most authoritative historical sources on the life of Muhammad. The first source is the Qur'an, the inspired text of Islam. Second is the Hadith, a record of the many sayings and the life events of Muhammad. The most recognized collection is by Ismail Sahih Bukhari, written in 870. Third is the first and most authoritative biography of Muhammad, written by Ibn Ishaq nearly 150 years after Muhammad's death.

In examining the life of Jesus, I relied primarily on the New Testament. The four Gospels are biographies of His life. Matthew, Mark, and Luke were written prior to AD 70, and John was written in AD 95. The letters of the New Testament written by His disciples also serve as a historical source. Most were written prior to AD 70 while some, like 1 Corinthians, were written as early as AD 55.

Muslims believe that Muhammad is the perfect example to follow in all aspects of life. The Qur'an states that in Muhammad, "Ye have indeed in the Apostle of God a beautiful pattern and excellent model of conduct" (Surah 33:21). It also states that

Muhammad demonstrates “an excellent standard of character” (Surah 68:4).

The Qur’an also emphasizes that obedience to Muhammad’s teachings is equivalent to obeying Allah, as evidenced when Surah 4:80 states that “he who obeys the Apostle, obeys Allah.” Moreover, Surah 4:115 also reflects how highly Muslims revere Muhammad as it explains the fate of one who disobeys: “If anyone contends with the Apostle even after guidance has been plainly conveyed to him, and follows a path other than that becoming to men of faith, we shall leave him in the path he has chosen, and land him in Hell—what an evil refuge.”

Muslims are called to imitate Muhammad in all aspects of their lives, even in their daily activities. Islamic scholar John Esposito writes, “Muslims look to Muhammad’s example for guidance in all aspects of life: how to treat friends as well as enemies, what to eat and drink, how to make love and war. . . . His impact on Muslim life cannot be overestimated, since he served as both religious and political head of Medina: prophet of God, ruler, military commander, chief judge, lawgiver. . . . Traditions of the Prophet provide guidance for personal hygiene, dress, eating, marriage, treatment of wives, diplomacy, and warfare.”{1}

Christians are not called to copy Christ in all aspects of their lives as Muslims do Muhammad. Rather, Christians are called to reflect the character, mindset, and attitude of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1, Philippians. 2:5, 1 Peter 2:21). Christ focused on the inner transformation of the heart and mind of the individual which would result in righteous living (Matthew 5:8, 6:21, 15:8, 18).

When making decisions in their lives, Muslims will ask, “What would Muhammad do?” while Christians ask, “What would Jesus do?” Since these two men serve as models of perfect conduct for their followers to imitate, it is important to learn what kind of lives they lived. This work will present a brief

overview and highlight key events in the lives of each person as we explore that which can be learned from their examples.

The Call of Muhammad and Jesus

Muhammad and Jesus lived remarkable yet radically different lives. Muhammad was born in AD 570. His family was part of the Quraysh tribe, which oversaw the Mecca temple where the deities of Arabia were worshipped. His father died when he was very young, and his mother died when he was six. He was raised by his grandfather and later by his uncle. At the age of twenty-five, he married Khadija, his employer, who was fifteen years his elder.

At the age of forty, Muhammad received his first visitation from the angel Gabriel. According to Ibn Ishaq, the giving and receiving of the revelation was quite violent in nature. Gabriel came to Muhammad and ordered him to read his message. Being illiterate, Muhammad asked Gabriel, "What shall I read?" It is then Gabriel pressed Muhammad so hard that Muhammad thought he was going to die. This was repeated three times until Muhammad read the following message from Gabriel: "Read in the name of thy Lord who created, who created man of blood coagulated. Read! Thy Lord is the most beneficent, who taught by the pen, taught that which they knew not unto men." After this the angel Gabriel departed.{2}

Muhammad was terrified by this incident. Bukhari records that Muhammad returned home trembling and sought to hide under a blanket. His first thought was that he had come under demonic influence.{3} In fact, he was so troubled that he became suicidal. Ishaq records that since Muhammad did not want anyone in his tribe to discover that he was possessed, he resolved to go to the top of a mountain and commit suicide.{4} However, his wife and her cousin Waraqa, an Ebionite Christian, encouraged him that he was not possessed but rather a prophet of God.{5} Through their encouragement, he came to believe that he had received a divine message from Allah.

Prior to his encounter with Gabriel and throughout his life, Muhammad struggled with demonic possession. Ishaq records an incident during Muhammad's childhood when his foster parents, al-Harith and Halima, were raising him. One day while behind the tents, two men clothed in white threw Muhammad to the ground, opened up his belly, and searched through it. His foster father felt the boy might have suffered a stroke. Halima, his foster mother who had nursed Muhammad, believed a demon had possessed him.{6}

Another account of Muhammad's struggle with demon possession occurred a few years after his prophetic calling when Muhammad believed he received a revelation allowing Muslims to worship the three gods of the Quraysh. However, he later admitted that Satan possessed him when he uttered those verses.{7} Allah eventually forgave Muhammad but gave him a stern warning recorded in Surah 17:73-75. Also another time after his prophetic calling Muhammad fell under the spell of a Jewish magician named Labid for one year.{8}

In contrast, biblical prophets and apostles clearly understood their visions were from God rather than Satan or demons. Although some were frightened by their vision of God or the angels before them, they were not violently handled. Instead they were given an assuring introductions such as "Do not be afraid" (Luke 1:13, 28-30, 2:10, Isa. 6:6-7, Revelation 1:17). Jesus' birth was miraculous, and He understood His mission from His childhood (Luke 2:41-52). Throughout His life, Jesus clearly distinguished between God's message and Satan's. During His temptation in the desert, He did not struggle with possession but instead defeated Satan's attacks using the word of God. Throughout His ministry, Jesus demonstrated authority over the demonic realm, and the demons were terrified of Him (Matthew 8:16, Luke 8:26-39). Through His death and resurrection, Jesus defeated Satan and the demonic hosts. Paul states that Jesus "disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in Him" (Colossians

2:15).

The contrast is readily apparent. One man struggled from demonic presence in his life; the other conquered the devil.

The Warrior and the Rabbi

At the beginning of their mission, both Muhammad and Jesus began preaching in their home territory, and both were persecuted for their message. However, the two responded very differently to their opposition. Muhammad resorted to the use of force while Jesus pursued the path of peace.

Muhammad began preaching in Mecca. During his thirteen years preaching in Mecca he preached a message of tolerance towards other religions as he sought to win the favor of the people. It is at this time that several passages teaching tolerance of the Jews and Christians were recorded (Surah 2:62, 5:69, and 22:17). However, as the persecution grew, he fled to Medina in 622. This event is one of the most important events in Islam known as the *Hijira*. In Medina he gained a following and became the leader of the city. It is in Medina as his power grew that his message transformed to one of intolerance of unbelievers. Moreover, he began to encourage the use of military force. Earlier Suras of tolerance were abrogated by the new revelations exhorting Muslims to Jihad against unbelievers.

To sustain his growing army and impress the Quraysh in Mecca of his growing power, he raided commercial caravans on their way to Mecca. He received revelations endorsing his raids to attack unbelievers and seize their valuables (Surah 8:38-45 & 60-65, 22:39-40, 2:244, 4:95-97). Bukhari records that on his first raid at Al-Abwa, Muhammad was asked if it was permissible to attack at night since doing so would endanger the lives of the women and children traveling with the caravans. Muhammad replied, “They (women and children) are from them (the opposition).” In other words, he permitted the

killing or capture of women and children during the raids.{9} The booty collected from the raids was distributed among his men.

These raids incited the Meccans to war against Muhammad. Four major battles were fought between Muhammad and the Quraysh armies of Mecca. In 624 the two armies met at Badr where Muhammad defeated the armies of Mecca. This victory instilled confidence in Muhammad of his calling. He believed Allah fought for him to bring about victory (Surah 3:123-125, 8:9, 12-13).

A year later the Meccan army returned and engaged Muhammad's army at Uhud, a mountain near Mecca. This time Muhammad was defeated, and his army retreated to Medina. Muhammad was bloodied in the battle and he vowed revenge on his enemies.{10}

In the spring of 627, the Jews of Medina plotted with the army of Mecca against Muhammad. Hearing of this plot, Muhammad dug a trench around the city of Medina. The Meccan army laid siege to the city but were unable to capture the city and returned to Mecca. After the retreat of the Meccan army, Muhammad sought to deal with the Jews of Medina who had plotted against him. Ibn Ishaq records that Muhammad "went out to the market of Medina and dug trenches in it. Then he sent for them and struck off their heads in those trenches as they were brought to him in batches." Ishaq records that the estimates of those killed were six to seven hundred; others estimate the numbers to be as high as eight to nine hundred.{11}

After the Seige of Medina, a peace treaty was signed between the two armies. However, the treaty was soon violated, and in 630 Muhammad gathered an army of ten thousand and marched on the city of Mecca. Seeing their hopeless situation, the Meccans surrendered to Muhammad. Muhammad ordered his men to enter the city and fight only those who resisted. He also had a list of those who were to be killed even if they sought

refuge in the Ka'bah Temple. Most on the list were those considered apostates.{12} Muhammad rode his camel to the Ka'bah and cleared the temple of all its idols and burned them. Along with these major conflicts were other raids and battles as Muhammad spread his religion. Ibn Ishaq records that in all Muhammad participated in twenty-seven battles, personally fighting in nine of them.{13}

Islam spread throughout the Middle East through the sword. Muhammad sent messengers throughout Arabia and neighboring countries, ordering them to convert to Islam or suffer the consequences. Those who did not submit to his rule were attacked and forced to pay a tax called a Jizya to Muhammad. In Surah 9, Muhammad gave instructions to his men on dealing with unbelievers:

> Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which has been forbidden by Allah and His Apostle, nor acknowledge the religion of Truth, (even if they are) of the People of the Book, until they pay the Jizya with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued (Surah 9:29).

In this passage, unbelievers are given three options: to convert to Islam, to pay the tax, or to prepare for battle. Today, fundamentalist Muslims who seek to follow the example of Muhammad and follow the literal teachings of the Qur'an view *jihad* (holy war) as a military conflict for the cause of Islam. These believe that jihad will be waged worldwide against all unbelievers until the world comes under the rule of the House of Islam.

In contrast to Muhammad, Jesus preached, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44). In His famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus praised those who make peace by teaching, "Blessed are the peace makers for they shall be called the sons of God" (Matthew 5:9). During His earthly ministry, Christ never engaged in military conflict. Instead,

He spread His message through preaching, teaching and accomplishing miracles. His mission culminated in His death on the cross for the sins of mankind and His resurrection from the dead.

Christ's disciples followed the example of Christ. Christianity was spread through the preaching of gospel message. Christ's disciples did not die on the battlefield as mighty warriors but were instead martyred for proclaiming the name of Christ. Today, Christianity is spread through the preaching, teaching, and humanitarian aid in the name of Christ. One leader was a man of the sword; one was a man of peace.

Facing Their Critics

Both Muhammad and Jesus faced sharp criticism for their message and lifestyle. However, the two men dealt very differently with their critics. There were times Muhammad forgave his critics, but there were also many times he exacted revenge on those who criticized him. Jesus, on the other hand, responded in love to those who were critical of Him.

Ibn Ishaq records several of Muhammad's dealings with those who criticized him. On one occasion, a Jewish Poet named Ka'b bin Al-Ashraf composed a poem that was critical of Muslim women. Muhammad asked, "Who will rid me of Ibnu'l-Ashraf?" A young man named Muhammad Maslama volunteered to kill the poet. Maslama's plan, which Muhammad endorsed, was to deceive the poet and lure him into a trap. After luring Ka'b into meeting, Maslama and his companions stabbed him to death and presented his dead body to Muhammad who then praised the men.{14} After the assassination of Ka'b, Muhammad ordered his men to "kill any Jew that falls into your Power."{15} The first victim of that decree was Ibn Sunayna, a Jewish merchant.

Another poet killed by Muhammad was a man named Abu Afak, who was nearly one hundred years old. He had written poems mocking

Muhammad. Muhammad asked, “Who will deal with this rascal for me?” A young man named Salim bin Umayr volunteered and killed the old man while he was sleeping.{16} A female poet named Asma bint Marwan was infuriated by the murder of Afak and wrote verses condemning Muhammad’s men. Hearing of her criticism, Muhammad asked, “Who will rid me of Marwan’s daughter?” Umar bin Adiy al-Khatami volunteered and killed her and her unborn child that night. Umar was worried that he had committed a sin, but Muhammad reassured him saying, “Two goats won’t butt their heads about her.”{17} On another occasion Ishaq records that Muhammad killed two girls who wrote satirical songs about him.{18}

Muslims today take seriously any criticism against Muhammad. Many respond peacefully to the criticism but many responses are much harsher. A death *fatwa* (religious ruling) was declared against Salman Rushdie, author of the fictional novel *The Satanic Verses*. Moreover, in early 2006, riots, many of which were violent, broke out worldwide over Danish cartoons depicting Muhammad. Many who reacted violently believed they responded in a manner exemplifying Muhammad’s example.

In contrast to Muhammad, Christ never exacted revenge on those who criticized Him. Christ taught, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:43-48)

This does not mean Christ passively ignored those who opposed His teachings. Christ often sharply rebuked those who spoke out against Him (Matthew 12:22-32), or He pointed out their error (Matthew 7:37-50, 9:10-12, 12:9-14), or He allowed his character to speak for itself (Luke 19:1-10). When Jesus was beaten and mocked, He was silent and in the end prayed for the forgiveness of His enemies. Like Muhammad, Christ had the power to take revenge. Before He was taken away by the mob to stand an illegal trial He told Peter that He could call

“twelve legions of angels” to destroy His enemies at hand. However, Christ chose to forgive and even love those who hated Him.

One leader chose the sword of vengeance while the other taught us to overcome evil with good.

Treatment of Women

Muhammad’s view of women is reflected in his personal relationships and his teachings revealed in the Qur’an and Hadith. Muhammad remained loyal to his first wife Kadhija and did not take any other wives until after her death. They had been married for 25 years. Islamic historians record that Muhammad married eleven to thirteen wives. The Qur’an allows a man to marry up to four wives (Surah 4:3); however, Muhammad received a special revelation from Allah that he may have more (Surah 33:50). Muhammad’s marriages have been a source of criticism of his moral character. However, Muslim historians state that Muhammad’s marriages were not immoral but instead followed the normal practices of the culture. Many of his marriages were to solidify political alliances and to provide and protect the widows of his men who had fallen in battle.{19} Here is a brief overview of the circumstances regarding the marriages to some of his more prominent wives.

After the death of Kadhija, Muhammad chose a young girl named Aisha, who was Muhammad’s favorite wife. He married her when she was seven and consummated the marriage when she was nine.{20} At the time, Muhammad was in his fifties. Aisha was the daughter of Abu Bakr, one of Muhammad’s first and loyal followers who eventually became the first Caliph (spiritual leader) after the death of Muhammad. In his final moments, Muhammad died in the arms of Aisha.

One of his most controversial marriages was to Zaynab bint Jahsh, the wife of his adopted son Zayd bin Haritha. Zayd was unhappy in the marriage and knowing of Muhammad’s interest in

his wife, sought to divorce her. Initially Muhammad discouraged Zayd (Surah 33:37). However, the marriage worsened, and they divorced. Soon after Muhammad married Zaynab. Arabs considered this marriage equal to incest and criticized Muhammad. However, he received a revelation justifying his action (Surah 33:37).

Ibn Ishaq records the story of another wife Safiya. Safiya was the wife of Kinana al-Rabi, the leader of Jews living at the Khaybar oasis. Muhammad attacked this settlement. Ishaq records, "We met the workers of Khaybar coming out in the morning with their spades and baskets."{21} Muhammad and his men killed 93 men during the raid. Muhammad then sought to obtain the riches in the city. Muhammad ordered his men to torture Kinana so that he would reveal the location of hidden treasure. Ishaq writes that Muhammad ordered his men to "'Torture him until you extract what he has,' so he kindled a fire with flint and steel on his chest until he was nearly dead. Then the apostle delivered him to Muhammad b. Maslama and he struck off his head, in revenge for his brother Mahmud."{22} After Kinana's death Muhammad took his wife Safiya and married her.{23}

Muhammad's relationships with his wives were often a source of sorrow and struggle for him. On one occasion, Muhammad threatened to divorce his wives because one of them disclosed a secret to one of his consorts. This caused some of his wives to join together against him. Muhammad then received a revelation rebuking them, saying Allah and Gabriel would back him up. Allah would allow him to divorce them and Allah would provide "consorts better than you."{24} On another occasion, Muhammad's wives continued to irritate him by asking for money. In exasperation, he gave them the choice of divorcing him and seeking worldly pleasure or remaining with him.{25}

Muhammad's teachings regarding women give us insight into his attitude that he did not view women as equals to men. First, it appears that Muhammad viewed women as less intelligent than

men. In Surah 2:282, Muhammad taught that the testimony of a woman is worth half that of a man. Moreover, the Hadith also echoes Muhammad's belief in the "deficiency" or inferiority of women's intelligence. Bukhari gives this account:

> Once Allah's Apostle went out to Musalla (to offer prayer) of Id-al-Adha or Al-Fitr prayer. Then he passed by a woman and said, "O woman! Give alms, as I have seen that the majority of dwellers of Hell-fire were you (women). . . . I have not seen anyone more deficient in intelligence and religion than you. A cautious sensible man could be led astray by some of you." The women asked, "O Allah's Apostle! What is deficient in our intelligence and religion?" He said, "Is not the evidence of two women equal to the witness of one man?" They replied in the affirmative. He said, "This is the deficiency in her intelligence."{26}

Also, the *Hadith* further reinforces this teaching the inadequacy of a woman's intellect as follows:

> The Prophet said, "Isn't the witness of a woman equal to half of that of a man?" The women said, "Yes." He said, "This is because of the deficiency of a woman's mind."{27}

These passages teach that women are considered to have a "deficiency" of the mind, which leads us to conclude that they are inferior to men. Second, Muhammad appears to teach that women have less value than men. This is evidenced in passages such as Surah 4:11 which states that a son's inheritance is to be twice that of a daughter's. Also, men are allowed up to four wives, and sex with slave girls is also allowed (Surah 4:3). Third, Muhammad's teachings lead one to conclude that women are less spiritual than men. One reason is that women are not able to pray during their menstrual cycles: "'Isn't it true that a woman can neither pray nor fast during her menses?' The women replied in the affirmative. He said, 'This is the deficiency in her religion.'"{28} Moreover, women are spiritually deficient to men because, although prayers are an

important part of Islam, a man's prayers will be canceled if a woman walks in front of a man while he is praying. Aisha wrote the following:

> The things which annul the prayers were mentioned before me. They said, "Prayer is annulled by a dog, a donkey and a woman (if they pass in front of the praying people)." I said, "You have made us (i.e. women) dogs." I saw the Prophet praying while I used to lie in my bed between him and the Qibla [Ed. note: the direction that should be faced for prayer]. Whenever I was in need of something, I would slip away for I disliked to face him."{29}

Finally, Muhammad's teachings reveal that wives were to live in subjection to their husbands or face physical and spiritual discipline. Muhammad taught, "Your wives are as a tilth [Ed. note: a measure of the quality of soil] for you; so approach your tilth when or how you will" (Surah 2:223). Chapter four of the Qur'an taught men to "beat [their wives] (lightly)" if their wives were guilty of "disloyalty," "ill conduct," or "refusing to share their beds" (Surah 4:34). There may also be spiritual consequences for a woman's lack of subservience as the Hadith states that "If a husband calls his wife to his bed (i.e. to have sexual relation), and she refuses and causes him to sleep in anger, the angels will curse her till morning."{30}

Moreover, the spiritual consequences of wives who were not subservient to their husbands is seen in a passage which records when Muhammad looked into the bowels of hell and stated that the majority in hell were women who, although they believed in God, were there because they were ungrateful to their husbands.{31}

Thus, based on these passages, not only is a woman's physical well-being dependent on her husband, but her eternal destiny is also connected to her subjection to her husband.

From these passages we can conclude that Muhammad did not view women as equals to men. They had a “deficiency” of the mind; thus, their testimony was only worth half that of a man’s. They were less valuable; thus, sons received a double portion of inheritance than daughters, and men could have multiple wives or sexual partners. They were less spiritual because of their inability to pray during menses and the fact that they would cancel out the prayers of a man simply by walking in front of him. Finally, the physical and spiritual well-being of a woman was not within her own power, but instead was dependent upon her submission to her husband.

In contrast, Jesus never married; however, He valued women, and several were a very important part of his ministry. Several traveled with Jesus and ministered to Him and His disciples (Luke 8:1-3). Jesus often praised women for their example of love and faith in the Lord (Mark 5:21-34, Luke 7:36-50, 21:1-4). In Luke 7:36-50, Jesus praised a sinful woman as being a person of greater faith than the men who were present! Jesus spent time with and taught women (Luke 10:38-42). The women were at the cross, and in His dying moments Jesus made sure His mother was taken care of (John 19:25-27). The women were also the first ones entrusted with the message of His resurrection. Jesus’ treatment of women showed that He viewed women as important and equal in value to men.

Jesus’ disciples reflected the attitude of Christ in their teachings. Peter exhorted husbands to honor their wives and treat them as co-heirs of eternal life (1 Peter 3:7). Paul stated in Galatians 3:28, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Paul also exhorted husbands to “love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her” (Ephesians 5:25.)

Muhammad and Jesus were considerably different in the way they treated and valued women. Muhammad’s relationship with his

wives and consorts and his teachings reflect his attitude toward women. Today, in nations where Islamic law is enforced, women struggle for equal rights. In contrast, Jesus valued women, and the teachings of the New Testament have been the foundation for improving the status of women throughout the world.

Muhammad, Jews, and Christians

Jews believe that God presented special revelation to them through the prophets and the Old Testament. When writing the book of Deuteronomy, Moses prophesied that God would raise up another prophet similar to himself who would speak God's words and bring deliverance to the nation. Deuteronomy 18: 15 and 18 state, "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen— . . . I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him."

Christians believe that this prophet of whom Moses and the other prophets wrote is Jesus Christ. Jesus is the predicted Messiah who fulfills the prophecies of the Old Testament. Muslims believe that the prophet Moses spoke of was Muhammad and that there are New Testament prophecies such as John 14:16 that predict the coming of Muhammad. Islam claims that God's revelation began with the Jews, was built upon by the Christians, and culminates with Islam. Since Muslims believe there is a connection between the three, it is important to explore the relationship of Muhammad to the Jews and the Christians.

Early in his preaching, Muhammad appealed to the Jews and Christians, hoping to win their acceptance. He believed that he was a prophet in the lines of the Old and New Testament prophets and apostles. Various Surahs were written during this period, teaching tolerance of Christians and Jews (Surah 2:62, 5:69, 22:17). In harmony with Jewish teachings, Muhammad

taught that pork was forbidden, and he taught followers to pray facing Jerusalem.{32} Muhammad even challenged the Jews and Christians to look in their writings for confirmation of his teachings (Surah 10:92).

However, the Jews and Christians rejected his message, and he became hostile towards them. He received revelation denouncing the Christians and Jews for rejecting his message (Surah 5:12-16). In Surah 3:110 he calls the Jews and Christians ("People of the Book") "perverted transgressors." Coming to the realization the Jews would not acknowledge his prophetic call, Muhammad ordered Muslims to turn from Jerusalem and face Mecca when praying (Surah 2:143-150). Muhammad chastised Jews and Christians for distorting previous revelation and called them to return to the true teachings of scripture (Surah 5:14-16).

After winning control over Mecca and Arabia, Muhammad received a revelation to fight against the Jews and Christians until they accepted paying taxes and living as second-class citizens (Surah 9:29). Muhammad taught that Jews and Christians rejected his message due to their perversion and rebellion to the truth. Therefore, Muhammad announced that the Jews and Christians were accursed (Surah 5:12-16).

According to Bukhari, Muhammad's final moments were spent in the arms of his youngest wife Aisha. His final words were, "May Allah curse the Jews and Christians, for they built the places of worship at the graves of the prophets."{33} Islamic eschatology teaches that Jesus will return, break crosses, slaughter the Christians and the Jews, and establish Islam as the true religion.{34}

Muhammad's example influences the attitude that Muslims display towards Jews and Christians. Throughout Islamic history, Muslims have had conflict with the Jews and Christians. Non-Muslims in Islamic countries continue to face discrimination and, in many cases, persecution.

What was the relationship of Christ to the Jews? The apostle John writes of Jesus that “He came to His own, and his own people did not receive him” (John 1:11). Jesus came to save His people but was rejected by them. However, He never stopped reaching out to them in love and, in the end, cried over the city of Jerusalem, knowing the judgment that was coming upon them (Matthew 23:37). Paul reflects the heart of Christ saying, “For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh” (Romans 9:3). Jesus and His disciples gave their lives for the lost, including the Jewish nation that rejected their message.

Christians continue to follow the example of Christ and preach the Gospel message to the Jews and non-Christians throughout the world. There have been times when Christians were guilty of the misuse of force; however, Christians can refer to the teachings of the New Testament and the example of Christ and the disciples to show clearly such use of force to spread Christianity is contrary to Christ’s example and teaching. Muhammad cursed the Jews and Christians while Christ gave His life to save both Jews and non-Jews who were lost.

Conclusion

This article focused on the lives of Muhammad and Jesus. Both serve as the founders and exemplary models of their religion. We have seen that they lived radically different lives. Their examples influenced their early followers and continue to influence followers today.

Both men lived remarkable yet radically different lives. Muhammad’s call reflects the struggle he had with the demonic forces while Christ conquered Satan, sin, and death. Muhammad was a warrior and chose the way of the sword while Christ was a rabbi who gave His life to rescue mankind from sin and death. Muhammad exacted revenge on his critics while Christ reached out to the lost, even those who rejected Him.

Muhammad's treatment and teaching on women stand in stark contrast to Christ. It is apparent that the lives and teachings of both men were significantly different.

It is important that we understand the lives they lived and realize the implications of their teachings and examples for our present situation. I encourage every person to examine the lives of both men and consider the implications of following their examples. Following the path of Muhammad leads one down the road of the sword. Following in the footsteps of Christ will lead one to righteousness and eternal life.

For it is Christ who claimed to be the divine Son of God, and He is the only one who confirmed His claims through His sinless, miraculous life, death, and resurrection from the dead. Even the Qur'an affirms the miraculous birth, sinless life, and miracles of Christ. Even the Qur'an teaches that He did not die but was raised to heaven. So even in the Qur'an, Jesus performs greater works than Muhammad. I encourage all Muslims to study the life of Jesus in the Bible. Muhammad even encouraged Muslims to study the Bible (Surah 10:94, 2:136, 4:163, 5:56, 5:68, 35:31). I believe once you study the life of Christ you will inevitably realize this was indeed was more than a prophet, He was the Son of God, the author of eternal life.{35} (For more, please read my article "Jesus in the Qur'an").

Notes

1. John Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, (New York: Oxford Press, 1988), 13-14.
2. Ibn Ishaq, *The Life of Muhammad*, trans. A. Guillaume (Karachi, Pakistan: Oxford University Press, 1955), 106.
3. Hadith, ed. Sahih Bukhari, vol. 1, bk. 1, no. 3. This translation can be found online at the Univ. of Southern California's Center for Muslim-Jewish Engagement at http://tinyurl.com/p2ujny.
4. Ishaq, 106.

5. Ibid., 107.
6 . Ibid., 71-72.
7. Ibid., 165-66; Qur'an 22:52, 53:19-23.
8. Ibid., 240. Guillaume's footnote states Muhammad was under the spell for one year.
9. Bukhari, vol. 4, bk. 52, no. 256.
10. Ishaq, 382.
11. Ibid., 464.
12. Ibid., 550.
13. Ibid., 659-60.
14. Ibid., 367-68.
15. Ibid., 369.
16. Ibid., 675.
17. Ibid., 675-76.
18. Ibid., 551.
19. Esposito, 19-20.
20. Bukhari, vol. 5, bk. 58, no. 234, and vol. 7, bk. 62, no. 65.
21. Ishaq, 511.
22. Ibid., 515.
23. Ibid., 511.
24. Surah 66:1-5 and Bukhari, vol. 6, bk. 60, Verse 274.
25. Surah 33:28-29 and Bukhari, vol. 6, bk. 60, Verse 309.
26. Bukhari, Vol. 1, Bk. 6, No. 301, narrated by Abu Said Al-Khudri.
27. Bukhari, Vol. 3, Bk. 48, No. 826, narrated by Abu Said Al-Khudri.
28. Bukhari, Vol. 1, Bk. 6, No. 30, narrated by Abu Said Al-Khudri.
29. Bukhari, Vol. 1, Bk. 9, no. 490, narrated by 'Aisha.
30. Bukhari, Vol. 4, Bk. 54, No.460.
31. See note 26.
32. Bukhari, vol. 6, bk. 60, no. 13.
33. Bukhari, vol. 1, bk. 8, no. 427.
34. F. E. Peters, *A Reader on Classical Islam* (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 390.
35. For more please read my article, "Jesus in the Qur'an,"

Probe, 2008, probe.org/jesus-in-the-quran/.

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Islam and Terrorism

Kerby Anderson provides various perspectives on the link between Islam and terrorism, including how Americans and Christians can think about its encroachment on our culture.

Clash of Civilizations



In this article we will be looking at Islam and terrorism. Before we look at the rise of Muslim terrorism in our world, we need to understand the worldview conflict between Islam and western values. The Muslim religion is a seventh-century religion. Think about that statement for a moment. Most people would not consider Christianity a first century religion. While it began in the first century, it has taken the timeless message of the Bible and communicated it in contemporary ways.

In many ways, Islam is still stuck in the century in which it developed. One of the great questions is whether it will adapt to the modern world. The rise of Muslim terrorism and the desire to implement sharia law illustrate this clash of civilizations.

In the summer of 1993, Samuel Huntington published an article entitled "The Clash of Civilizations?" in the journal *Foreign Affairs*.{1} Three years later Samuel Huntington published a book using a similar title: *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. It became a bestseller, once again stirring controversy. It seems worthy to revisit his comments

and predictions because they have turned out to be remarkably accurate.

His thesis was fairly simple. World history will be marked by conflicts between three principal groups: western universalism, Muslim militancy, and Chinese assertion.

Huntington says that in the post-Cold War world, "Global politics has become multipolar and multicivilizational."{2} During most of human history, major civilizations were separated from one another and contact was intermittent or nonexistent. Then for over 400 years, the nation states of the West (Britain, France, Spain, Austria, Prussia, Germany, and the United States) constituted a multipolar international system that interacted, competed, and fought wars with each other. During that same period of time, these nations also expanded, conquered, and colonized nearly every other civilization.

During the Cold War, global politics became bipolar, and the world was divided into three parts. Western democracies led by the United States engaged in ideological, political, economic, and even military competition with communist countries led by the Soviet Union. Much of this conflict occurred in the Third World outside these two camps and was composed mostly of nonaligned nations.

Huntington argued that in the post-Cold War world, the principal actors are still the nation states, but they are influenced by more than just power and wealth. Other factors like cultural preferences, commonalities, and differences are also influential. The most important groupings are not the three blocs of the Cold War, but rather the major world civilizations. Most significant in discussion in this article is the conflict between the Western world and Muslim militancy.

Other Perspectives on Radical Islam

In the previous section, we talked about the thesis by Samuel Huntington that this is a clash of civilizations.

Bernard Lewis sees this conflict as a phase that Islam is currently experiencing in which many Muslim leaders are attempting to resist the influences of the modern world (and in particular the Western world) on their communities and countries. 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.{3}

This 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.

William Tucker believes that the actual conflict results from what he calls the Muslim intelligensia. 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."{4}

His 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.

Tucker therefore 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."{5}

Threat from Radical Islam

It is hard to estimate the extent of the threat of radical Islam, 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 newevil to fight.{6}

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 who wish to destroy civilization poses a threat that is unprecedented. Never has civilization had to confront such large numbers of those would wish to destroy civilization.

So, what is the threat in the United States? Let's take one number and one percentage for an estimate. There are about 4 million Muslim-Americans in the U.S., and we are often told that nearly all are law-abiding citizens. So let's assume that percentage is even as high as 99 percent. That still leaves one percent who believe in jihad and could pose a threat to America. Multiply one percent by 4 million and you get a number of 40,000 individuals that Homeland Security needs to try to monitor. Even if you use a percentage of one-tenth of one percent, you still get about 4,000 potential terrorists in America.

That is why it is important to understand the potential threat we face from radical Islam.

Islamic Tipping Point

When the Muslim population increases in a country, there are certain social changes that have been documented. Peter Hammond deals with this in his book, *Slavery, Terrorism, & Islam*. Most people have never read the book, but many have seen an email on one of the most quoted parts of the book.{8}

He argued that when the Muslim population is under five percent, the primary activity is proselytizing, usually from ethnic minorities and the disaffected. By the time the Muslim population reaches five percent or more, it begins to exert its influence and start pushing for Sharia law.

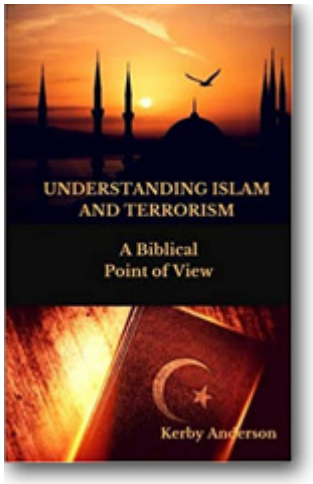
Peter Hammond sees a significant change when a Muslim population reaches ten percent (found in many European countries). At that point, he says you begin to see increased levels of violence and lawlessness. You also begin to hear statements of identity and the filing of various grievances.

At twenty to thirty percent, there are examples of hair-trigger rioting and jihad militias. In some countries, you even have church bombings. By forty percent to fifty percent, nations like Bosnia and Lebanon experience widespread massacres and ongoing militia warfare. When at least half the population is Muslim, you begin to see the country persecute infidels and apostates and Sharia law is implemented over all of its citizens.

After eighty percent, you see countries like Iran, Syria, and Nigeria engage in persecution and intimidation as a daily part of life. Sometimes state-run genocide develops in an attempt to purge the country of all infidels. The final goal is “Dar-es-Salaam” (the Islamic House of Peace).

Peter Hammond would probably be the first to say that these are generalizations and there are certainly exceptions to the rule. But the general trends have been validated through

history. When the Muslim population is small, it leaders focus on winning converts and working to gain sympathy for Sharia law. But then their numbers increase, the radical Muslims leaders takeover and the Islamic domination begins.



In this article we have been looking at the challenge of Islam when it comes to jihad and terrorist activity. I document all of this in my new book, *Understanding Islam and Terrorism*. The book not only deals with the threat of terrorism but also takes time to explain the theology behind Islam with helpful suggestions on how to witness to your Muslim friends. You can find more information about my book on the Probe Ministries website.

Sharia Law and Radical Islam

A foundational practice of Islam is the implementation of Sharia into the legal structure. Sharia is a system of divine law, belief, or practice that is based upon Muslim legal interpretation. It applies to economics, politics, and society.

Sometimes the world has been able to see how extreme the interpretation of Sharia can be. Muslims have been put to death when they have been accused of adultery or homosexuality. They have been put to death for leaving the religion of Islam. And these are not isolated examples.

Sharia law is very different in many respects from the laws established through the U.S. Constitution and the laws established through English Common law. In an attempt to prevent Sharia law from being implemented in America, a number of state legislatures have such bans on Sharia law. Voters in other states have approved a ban that has been struck down by a federal appeals court.

Although opponents argue that these Sharia law bans are unnecessary, various studies have found significant cases of Sharia law being allowed in U.S. courts. One report with the title, "Sharia Law and the American State Courts"{9} found 50 significant cases of Sharia law in U.S. courts just from their small sample of appellate published cases. When they looked at state courts, they found an additional 15 cases in the trial courts and 12 more in the appellate courts. Judges are making decisions deferring to Sharia law even when those decisions conflict with the U.S. Constitution and the various state constitutions.

How should we respond to the increased use of Sharia law in America? One simple way to explain your concern to legislators, family, friends, and neighbors is to remember the numbers 1-8-14. These three numbers stand for the three amendments to the U.S. Constitution that prevent the use of Sharia law.

The First Amendment says that there should be no establishment of religion. Sharia law is based on one religion's interpretation of rights. The First Amendment prohibits the establishment of any national religion (including Islam).

The Eighth Amendment prohibits "cruel and unusual punishment." Most Americans would consider the penalties handed down under Sharia law to be cruel and unusual.

The Fourteenth Amendment guarantees each citizen equal protection under the Constitution. Sharia law does not treat men and women equally, nor does it treat Muslims and non-Muslims equally. This also violates the Constitution.

These are just a few ways to argue against Sharia law. As Christians, we need discernment to understand the religion of Islam, and boldness to address the topic of radical Islam with biblical convictions.

Notes

1. Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1993, 22-49.
2. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 21.
3. Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," *Atlantic Monthly*, September 1990, www.theatlantic.com/doc/prem/199009/muslim-rage. Accessed 7/8/2018.
4. William Tucker, "Overprivileged Children," *American Spectator*, 12 Sept. 2006, spectator.org/46473_overprivileged-children/. Accessed 7/8/2018.
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7. Peter Hammond, *Slavery, Terrorism, & Islam: The Historical Roots and Contemporary Threat* (San Jose, CA: Frontline, 1982), 151.
8. Shariah Law and the American State Courts, Center for Security Policy, 5 January 2015. www.centerforsecuritypolicy.org/2015/01/05/shariah-in-american-courts-the-expanding-incursion-of-islamic-law-in-the-u-s-legal-system/. Accessed 7/8/2018.

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Politically Incorrect Guide

to Islam and Terrorism

Although the war on terror has become a household subject since September 11, 2001, we still hear many politically correct phrases. Do Muslims and Christians worship the same God? Is Islam a religion of peace? What is the true meaning of *jihad*? Kerby Anderson offers an honest, biblically-based discussion of Islam and terrorism.

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- "You Mislead People About Jesus and Allah"
- "Why Do You Believe the Bible is Inspired and the Quran is Not?"
- "Print the Truth About Islam!"

Why Radical Muslims Hate You – Responding to Islamic Attitudes

Rusty Wright looks at the historical roots of Muslim hatred of American and the West. He points out that there are cultural, political, religious and psychological factors combining to create the current attitudes among Muslim people. Understanding the roots behind the feelings of some Muslims toward the West may help us in reaching out to our Muslim co-workers and neighbors.

Historical Roots of Hatred

Do you remember how you felt on September 11, 2001? You likely saw images of jets crashing into buildings, people jumping from skyscrapers, the towers collapsing. What feelings did you experience? Confusion? Anger? Depression? TV showed some Palestinians celebrating. One Hamas publication wrote, "Allah has answered our prayers."{1} In London, one Muslim group circulated stickers praising the "magnificent 19," the hijackers.{2}

Chances are, you are a target of this hatred. If you are a Westerner, an American, a non-Muslim, or a Muslim of a different stripe than they, then some radical Muslims hate you. Why? The answer is complex and involves history, culture, politics, religion, and psychology.

Of course, many – some would say most – Muslims are peace

loving and deplore terrorism. Islam is quite diverse.{3} Extremist Muslims do not represent all Muslims any more than white supremacists represent all Christians. Not all "radical" Muslims are violent or hateful. But understanding extremist Muslim hatred is essential to interpreting our post-9/11 world. This article examines that hatred and offers a biblical response.

In his October 2001 video, Osama bin Ladin mentioned the "humiliation and disgrace" tormenting Islam for "more than eighty years." Princeton Near Eastern scholar Bernard Lewis notes that the reference likely puzzled many Westerners. Many Muslims – for whom Islamic history carries divine significance – understood. Bin Ladin referred to the 1918 defeat of the once- mighty Ottoman Empire and to British and French partitioning of Ottoman territory. Secular Turks soon also abolished the caliphate, or succession of rulers of all Sunni Islam. Desecration of this symbol of Muslim unity has pained many Muslims ever since.{4}

For centuries, the Islamic world had displayed military, economic and scientific superiority. But European development eventually overtook Islam.{5} Today, United States ties with Israel and involvement in Saudi Arabia have kindled ire.

Bin Ladin calls on Muslims to "obey God's command to kill the Americans and plunder their possessions . . . to kill Americans and their allies, both civil and military . . . ."{6} He and his sympathizers want to eliminate Western influence and restore their version of Islam to the world.{7}

Socio-cultural Roots of Hatred

History is behind some of the radical Muslim hatred of the West. But so are cultural differences. Would you believe that dancing in an American church helped fuel Muslim anger today?

In 1948, Sayyid Qutb visited the United States for Egypt's

Ministry of Education. His stay left him shocked with what he perceived as moral degeneracy and sexual promiscuity.

He wrote that even American religion was tainted by materialism and consumerism. Churches marketed their services to the public like merchants and entertainers. Success, big numbers, "fun," and having "a good time" seemed crucial to American churches.{8}

He especially deplored clergy-sanctioned dances at church recreation halls. When the ministers lowered the lights, the dances became hot. Here is Qutb's "PG" description: "The dance is inflamed by the notes of the gramophone . . . the dance-hall becomes a whirl of heels and thighs, arms enfold hips, lips and breasts meet, and the air is full of lust." He cited the famous Kinsey Reports as evidence of American sexual debauchery.{9} Qutb, who was dark skinned, also experienced racism in America.{10}

Back in Egypt, Qutb joined the Muslim Brothers organization.{11} Imprisonment and torture made his writings more militant. Qutb became what Georgetown University religion and international affairs professor John Esposito calls "the architect of radical Islam."{12}

Some Muslim Brotherhood groups, offshoots, and alumni are mainstream and nonviolent. Others have a violent legacy. A militant offshoot,{13} Islamic Jihad, assassinated Egyptian president Anwar Sadat. Esposito notes that a radicalized former Muslim Brother, Abdullah Azzam, significantly influenced Usama bin Ladin.{14} Former CIA Middle East case officer Robert Baer observes that a Kuwaiti Muslim Brother, Khalid Sheikh Muhammad, became a bin Ladin terror chief.{15}

Secularization, consumerism, materialism, the status of women, sexual mores … all concern radical Muslims.{16} Bernard Lewis notes that Sayyid Qutb's denunciation of American moral flaws became incorporated into radical Islamic ideology. For

instance, he says Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini, in calling the U.S. the "Great Satan," was being consistent with the Koranic depiction of Satan not as an "imperialist" or "exploiter" but as a seducer, "the insidious tempter who whispers in the hearts of men."{17}

Historical, social and cultural factors have influenced radical Muslim hatred of the West. Consider now how global politics stirs the mix.

Political Roots of Hatred

Bernard Lewis – who is not without his critics{18} – notes an essential difference between Christianity and Islam regarding government and religion. Jesus of Nazareth, the founder of the Christian faith, said, "Give to Caesar what belongs to him. But everything that belongs to God must be given to God."{19} For much of history, this has been understood as recognizing the existence of two distinct authorities, one spiritual and the other political.{20}

But much of Islam has known no such distinction. Muhammad was both a religious and political leader, the Prophet and the head of state. Under his successors, the caliphs, Islam grew into a huge empire and world religion. Islamic shari'a, or Holy Law, deals with power, authority and political philosophy. Specific applications differ among Islamic nations. In an extreme example of this spiritual/political blend, Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini once said, "Islam is politics or it is nothing."{21}

With this mindset, the Western world and the United States as superpower become to many Muslims the infidel invaders, imperialist bullies who desecrate Islamic states by force. European colonialism, Western imperialism and U. S. policies are frequent Muslim complaints.{22} Many Muslims deplore the U. S. invasion of Iraq. Of course, U. S. concessions to Israel often are seen as collaboration with an enemy of Islam.

One perceived offense to radical Islam that is sometimes overlooked by Westerners is Western complicity with corrupt rulers of Islamic states. These situations are complex. Oft-mentioned offenses include the 1982 government massacre at the Syrian city of Hama to put down a Muslim Brothers uprising. An estimated ten to twenty-five thousand died, attracting little Western attention. In 1992, with Western approval, the Algerian military cancelled democratic elections to prevent the Islamic Salvation Front from winning them and established a brutal regime.{23}

Especially galling to radicals is Western complicity with rulers of Saudi Arabia – Islam's Holy Land – whom they see as warped by greed, graft and moral corruption. One Saudi diplomat noted after 9/11, "What shocks me most is why they hit America and not us."{24}

But they did hit America, and radical views of politics played an important role.

Religious Roots of Hatred

Still other reasons some radical Muslims hate you involve religion.

Wahhabism, a movement much in the news, was founded by an eighteenth century theologian, Muhammad ibn 'Abd al- Wahhab. Wahhab wanted to purify Islam and return it to its authentic ways. He condemned and burned books contradicting his views. Wahhab's followers became fiercely exclusive. Their principal focus was not outsiders but insiders, Muslims whom they felt had practiced a "less-pure" form of Islam. They could be vicious, desecrating holy places and slaughtering Muslims who differed.{25}

Wahhabism's ongoing Saudi links would propel it into international influence. When Saudi forces conquered Arabia in 1925, they controlled Islam's two most holy cities, Mecca and

Medina. When Saudi Arabia became oil-rich, the stage was set. Wahhabism became the "official, state-enforced doctrine of one of the most influential governments in all Islam,"{26} which hosts annual pilgrimages to Mecca involving millions of Muslims from around the world. Saudi oil wealth funded Wahhabi propagation of their views at home and abroad.{27} Wahhabism affected both Usama bin Ladin and the Taliban.{28}

Wahhabism's pervasive influence troubles Princeton's Lewis. Imagine, he says, that the Ku Klux Klan or a similar group took control of Texas and its oil and could widely propagate its version of "Christianity" through heavily endowed schools and colleges.{29} Georgetown's Esposito distinguishes puritanical, politically conservative Wahhabism from radical, militant Wahhabism.{30}

Former CIA agent Robert Baer notes that Wahhabi soldiers fought the Soviets in Afghanistan in the 1980s, with U.S. support. There, Wahhabis linked with radical followers of Sayyid Qutb, an alliance Baer likens to "mixing nitroglycerin in a blender."{31} A new, more militant strain of Wahhabism developed in addition to mainstream Wahabbism, with a new emphasis on taking the fight to outsiders: the infidels and the West.{32}

After al-Qaeda attacked three housing complexes in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in May 2003, the Saudi government began to crack down on terrorists and violent rhetoric in the mosques. Initial results were mixed. U. S. Ambassador Robert Jordan reported, "We have noticed lately in influential mosques the imam has condemned terrorism and preached in favor of tolerance, then closed the sermon with 'O God, please destroy the Jews, the infidels and all who support them.'"{33}

Psychological Roots of Hatred

In addition to the foregoing, there are psychological factors at work in radical Muslim hatred.

Lewis writes, “Almost the entire Muslim world is affected by poverty. . . .”{34} Georgetown’s John Esposito sees “weak economies, illiteracy, and high unemployment”{35} in many Muslim nations. *Relative deprivation* can be psychologically debilitating. If you are poor, some theories argue, and you see others more prosperous, you may feel inferior, trapped or depressed.

Reports from the United Nations and the World Bank note that Arab nations fall far behind the West in “job creation, education, technology, and productivity.”{36} (There are, of course, exceptions.) When global media bring pictures of lavish Western life, frustration burns and some extremists lash out. One Egyptian playwright described these extremists as “pathologically jealous.” He said, “They feel like dwarfs, which is why they search for towers and all those who tower mightily.”{37}

Feelings of rejection play a part. Many Western societies have been slow to accept Muslims. The father of shoe bomber Richard Reid said of his son, “He was born here in Britain, like I was. It was distressing to be told things like ‘Go home, nigger.'”{38}

New York Times foreign affairs columnist Thomas Friedman speaks of a “*poverty of dignity*” affecting even privileged Muslims. Belief in Islam’s superiority contrasted with economic and military disparity in the context of a repressive regime can engender feelings of humiliation, prompting vengeance against the perceived cause.{39}

What is an appropriate biblical response to radical Muslim hatred? A complete answer would take volumes. May I suggest four ideas?

First, *love your enemies*. Jesus of Nazareth taught, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”{40} It is not emotionally easy for me to love Usama bin Ladin or to pray for

him. I have to ask God for strength for that.

Second, *support national defense*. Paul, one of Jesus' early followers, wrote that governments are to "bear the sword" to subjugate evil.{41} The implications are complex and debatable, but the principle of defending against attack is biblical.

Third, if you are not a Muslim, *learn about Islam*.{42} One writer remarked of some of Israeli King David's supporters that they "understood the times."{43} Paul sought to understand cultural and religious views of his day.{44}

And fourth, *befriend some Muslims*, perhaps from your neighborhood or workplace. In humility, learn about their families, their hopes and dreams. If appropriate, discuss your respective faiths. You may be surprised at the similarities. And your kindness may generate warmth toward the spirit that drives your kind behavior and speech.{45}

This article is adapted with permission from Rusty Wright, "Why Radical Muslims Hate You," The Plain Truth, *September/October 2004, 6-9. © Rusty Wright 2004.*

Notes

1. *Al-Riswāla*, issue of September 13, 2001; in Bernard Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror* (New York: The Modern Library, 2003), 156-7.

2. Helen Gibson, "Islam's Other Hot Spots: Britain: No Pause in the Recruiting," *TIME.com*, posted September 7, 2003 at http://www.time.com/time/covers/1101030915/wpakistan.html; from *TIME* magazine issue cover date September 15, 2003.

3. John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), xiii, xx, 225-226, 239.

4. Lewis 2003, op. cit., xv-xviii. Bin Laden is not alone in

his concern. For example, the founding leader of Ansar al-Islam, a fundamentalist militia in northern Iraq with suspected Al-Qaeda ties, sees his work as part of a lengthy Islamic struggle to restore the caliphate. See Neil MacFarquhar, "Islamic Militants Said to Infiltrate Iraq to Battle the U.S. Occupiers," *New York Times* (AOL edition), August 13, 2003.

5. Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong? The Clash Between Islam and Modernity in the Middle East* (New York: Perennial/HarperCollins Publishers, 2002), 6-7 ff., especially 18-63.

6. Lewis 2003, op. cit., xxvii.

7. Lewis 2002, op. cit., 164-5.

8. Lewis 2003, op. cit., 76-79.

9. Sayyid Qutb, *Al-Islwām wa-mushkilwāt al-hadwāra* (n.p., 1967), 80ff; in Lewis 2003, op. cit., 78-79.

10. John L. Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 57.

11. Lewis 2003, op. cit., 79, 76.

12. Esposito 1999, op. cit. 135, and personal interview, November 19, 2003.

13. Esposito 1999, op. cit., 272, also calls it a "splinter group."

14. Esposito, personal interview, November 19, 2003; Esposito 2003, op. cit., 7, 19.

15. Robert Baer, *Sleeping with the Devil: How Washington Sold Our Soul for Saudi Crude* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2003), 91-128, 195 ff.

16. See Lewis 2002, op. cit., 64-81 for historical perspective

on socio-cultural differences between Islam and the West. See Esposito 1999, op. cit., for additional perspective that differs from Lewis' on certain key points. See Thomas A. Friedman, *Longitudes and Attitudes: The World in the Age of Terrorism* (New York: Anchor Books/Random House, 2002/2003), 334, 357, ff., for a contemporary journalist's perspective.

17. Lewis 2003, op. cit., 81. The final quotation in the paragraph to which this note refers, "the insidious tempter…", is from Qur'an CXIV, 4, 5.

18. For example, Esposito 1999, op. cit., 219 ff.

19. Matthew 22:21 NLT.

20. Lewis 2002, op. cit., 97.

21. Lewis 2003, op. cit., 5-8; see also Lewis 2002 op. cit., 96-116, and Esposito 2003, op. cit., 67-68.

22. Esposito 1999, op. cit., 45-73, 222.

23. Lewis 2003, op. cit., 103-112.

24. Baer, op. cit., 166.

25. Lewis 2003, op. cit., 120-124 ff.

26. Ibid., 128.

27. Ibid., 123-128.

28. Esposito 2003, op. cit., 5, 7, 16, 48, 108-109.

29. Ibid., 129.

30. Esposito 2003, op. cit., 49, 111, 115.

31. Baer, op. cit., 89-90. Baer here refers to Wahhabis in Afghanistan mixing with Muslim Brothers. Esposito, personal interview, November 19, 2003, feels it is more precise to say that the Wahhabis there mixed with radical followers of Sayyid

Qutb.

32. David Van Biema, "Wahhabism: Toxic Faith?", *TIME.com*, posted September 7, 2003, at http://www.time.com/time/covers/1101030915/wwahhabism.html; from *TIME* magazine issue cover date September 15, 2003.

33. Lisa Beyer with Scott MacLeod, "Inside the Kingdom," *TIME.com*, posted September 7, 2003, at http://www.time.com/time/magazine/printout/0,8816,483269,00.html; from *TIME* magazine issue cover date September 15, 2003.

34. Lewis 2003, op. cit., 113.

35. Esposito 1999, op. cit., 241.

36. Lewis 2003, op. cit., 114.

37. Friedman, op. cit., 216. Friedman takes the quote from an unidentified issue of *TIME*. 38. Ibid., 354-355. Friedman cites *TIME* of February 25, 2002.

39. Ibid., 242-243; 355 ff. The argument is not that all Muslims live in abject poverty. Many Muslim nations are oil-rich. But oil wealth does not always filter throughout society. Beyond finances, feelings of relative lack of power, influence and respect on the world stage contribute to the poverty of dignity, Friedman holds.

40. Matthew 5:44 NASB.

41. Romans 13:1-4 NASB.

42. For an example of a Christian reflecting on the essentials of Islam, see Rick Rood's, "What is Islam?, http://www.probe.org/probe-answers-e-mail/cults-and-world-religions/what-is-islam.html" and "Probe Answers Our E-mail: Why Do You Lie about Islam?" http://www.probe.org/probe-answers-e-mail/cults-and-world-religions/why-do-you-lie-about-islam.html".

43. 1 Chronicles 12:32 NASB.

44. Acts 17:16-34.

45. Colossians 4:5-6.

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The World of Animism – A Biblical Worldview Perspective

The belief in spirits and their effect on our world appears in just about every culture. Christianity should replace this anti-Christian worldview, but instead many Christians just incorporate it into their own belief system. Dr. Pat Zukeran contrasts these two belief systems.

 *This article is also available in Spanish.*

Worldview of Animism

From Genesis to the present, the biblical worldview has clashed with the worldview of animism. Animism (or folk religion) is a religion that sees a spirit or spiritual force behind every event, and many objects of the physical world carry some spiritual significance.

In most parts of the world, animism blends in with formal religions. Among followers of the major religions lie many animistic beliefs and practices. Animistic beliefs actually dominate the world. Most Taiwanese believe in the Chinese folk religions. Most Hindus and Muslims in Central and Southeast

Asia, and most Buddhists in China and Japan combine their religion with various animistic beliefs and practices. In many parts of the world, Christianity has not displaced the local folk religion but coexists beside it in an uneasy tension.

The animistic worldview contains both the observed or physical world and the unseen or spirit world. There is no sharp distinction between the two realities; what happens in one affects the other. The seen or physical world consists of what we can see, feel, and experience. It includes forces of nature and physical beings. In the seen world the earth plays a prominent role because it is viewed as a living entity and is often worshiped as Mother Earth. Nature is believed to be alive. Hills, caves, mountains, and lakes are often revered as sacred places. Animals may be embodiments of spirits. Many are worshiped as sacred, such as the cow and monkey in India.

Plants can also contain spirits and some are worshiped. Forests are seen as places where the spirits dwell. Trees like oaks, cedars, and ash are worshiped in Europe. In many parts of the world, there exist numerous subhuman beings that are supposed to live in lakes, forests, and caves. For example, in Europe they include mythical beings like trolls, gnomes, and fairies.

The unseen world of animism begins with the understanding of “mana,” or the life force that permeates the entire universe. This power is impersonal and not worshiped. This sacred power concentrates more heavily in the deities, sacred people, places, or objects. This mana rules over all creation and is not controlled by the gods or man.

Also part of the unseen world is the Supreme God. Following him are a host of lesser gods who dwell in particular regions. Following the gods are the spirits, who often dwell in nature and are confined to a specific area. Then there are the spirits of the ancestors who continue to play a role with the living.

There also exist unseen forces that include supernatural powers like fate, cosmic moral order, the evil eye, magic, and witchcraft. There are also impersonal energy forces in objects that give the objects power. These objects are believed to give a person power to do good or evil.

In the Bible, God transforms the animistic views of Israel into a biblical view. He teaches them that the other gods are not gods at all (Isaiah 43:10). He condemns the use of magic, witchcraft, and divination. He shows that suffering is not the result of the spirits or the gods but His sovereign act of bringing people back to Himself.

Themes in Animism

Do you ever wonder why some Christians worship their ancestors? It derives from the first of several themes within the ancient religion of animism. The first of the themes is a community-centered life. The ancestors, the living, and the unborn are the center of existence. The clan life is the most important entity because an individual has meaning only in the context of a community.

The second theme is the role of the spirit world. Humans live in a world surrounded by supernatural beings and forces, most of which are hostile to humans. The worlds of the seen and the unseen are interconnected. For this reason, people spend their time seeking to appease the gods, the spirits, and the ancestors with offerings or bribes. Extreme care is taken to maintain the harmony between the two worlds. Since all created things are connected, a simple act like eating a fruit from the wrong tree may bring disaster.

Third is the focus on the present. The primary concern is with the here and now. People seek to deal with success and failure, power and knowledge needed to control life.

Fourth is the focus on power. People view themselves as

constantly struggling against spirits, other humans, and supernatural forces. Everything that happens can be explained by powers at war. The goal is to attain power to control the forces around them.

Fifth is pragmatism. Animists are not interested in academic understanding of spiritual and scientific truth but in securing good, meaningful life and protection from evil. The test of a folk religion is, "does it work?" To achieve their goals, most people will turn to several methods that may be contradictory in hopes that one will work. I was once speaking to a Chinese woman who was suffering from lung cancer. Although she attended church and prayed to the Lord for healing, she also visited the Chinese Buddhist temple seeking prayers for healing from the priests. For those in animistic cultures, in times of need people will beseech aid from various religions or gods to find a method that works.

Sixth is transformation and transportation. Things may not be what they appear to be. Spirits can take the form of animals or plants. Shamans in a trance believe they can travel to distant places and bring harm to an enemy. They also believe they can travel to the spirit world, find information, or retrieve lost souls.

Seventh, animism takes a holistic view of life. The obsession with invoking good luck and avoiding bad luck involves every aspect of life—from what you eat, to where you place furniture (such the current feng shui fad), to how you sleep. In Al Hambra, Los Angeles where there is a large population of Chinese, houses with the number "4" in the address do not sell. The number four, pronounced "shee" in Chinese, is the first letter in the word for death, so the number is considered very unlucky.{1}

Eighth is particularism. People are tied to their land. Each community has its own set of gods and spirits. The gods gave the people their land, and that is where the ancestors reside.

In battles, victories and defeats are attributed to the power of the territorial gods.

Finally, fear plays a major role. In a world full of spirits, omens, and spells, life is rarely secure. Many see the world as a hostile and dangerous place filled with spirits and forces antagonistic to people. Seemingly mundane activities such as moving the wrong rock can bring potential disaster. People turn to their ancestors, gods and spirits for protection.

The focus of the Christian life, in contrast, is the relationship believers have with God. God's relationship with mankind is based on grace and love. Since God is gracious, He does not need to be constantly appeased by believers. His laws are clearly revealed to us in the Bible. When we disobey, we may suffer the consequences of our sin or experience His discipline, which is always motivated by His love and intended to bring us to a right relationship with Him. In times of difficulty, we do not fear His wrath but He invites us to draw even closer to Him. 1 John 4:16-18 says, "God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment because in this world we are like Him. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear . . ." Although believers encounter tragedy and suffering, we do not live in fear but in faith, trusting in the character of God.

Gods in Animism

It may surprise you that most animistic religions teach that there exists one Supreme Being. He is often described as omniscient, eternal, beneficent, omnipotent and righteous. He is the creator, the moral lawgiver, punishes those who do evil, and blesses those who do good.

However, this being has distanced himself from man and cannot

be known personally. Legends abound that he was once near but was angered with man and removed himself. He left men to their own devices and used lesser gods and spirits to do His will and serve as His ambassadors.

Therefore, most of the worship goes to the lesser gods and spirits who are in direct contact with humans. Anthropologist Wilhelm Schmidt studied numerous cultures and concluded that man's first religion was monotheism, which then corrupted into polytheism.{2} This would concur with Paul's timeline of man's rejection of God that he lays out in Romans 1.

An example comes from the folk religion of China. Long before Confucianism, Taoism, or Buddhism, the Chinese worshiped Shang Ti, the Lord of heaven. He alone was worshiped until the Zhou dynasty, which began in 1000 B.C. From then on, only the emperor was allowed to pay homage to Shang Ti, and the knowledge of Shang Ti among the common people was lost. The worship-starved Chinese eventually embraced the religions of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism that provided spiritual knowledge and worship.{3} Numerous stories like these abound throughout the world. In Korea, the supreme God is called Hananim. The Gedeo people of Ethiopia call Him Magano. Missionaries use this belief of a high God to point people to the God of the Bible.

Following the Supreme God is a host of lesser gods. These beings mediate between man and the Supreme Being, but must first be paid homage. Gods possess specific powers and are localized to a geographical area. The gods inhabit places such as rivers, mountains, forests, oceans, etc. Some gods exercise power over human affairs (business, marriage, death, etc.) other gods exercise powers over nature (storms, rain, etc.) Among the Hawaiians, Lono is the god of the oceans and controls the clouds and storms. Pele, the fire goddess, dwells in the volcanoes. Many still honor these gods in Hawaii today.

The biblical worldview teaches that a personal, omniscient,

omnipotent, and omnipresent God governs the universe (Colossians 1:16-17). He alone rules creation and there are no other gods besides him (Isaiah 43:10). The God of the Bible is not distant from man, but mankind has distanced ourselves from God. God remains involved in the affairs of this world, constantly pursuing men and women to receive His gift of grace and forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

Spirits and Ancestors

Do you ever wonder if there are spirits in forests or other dark places? Can the dead communicate with the living? Animism holds to a belief that numerous spirits exercise their power over places where they dwell, such as mountains, streams, and rivers. Spirits have never inhabited human bodies, and since they can be either good or evil they must constantly be appeased. For example, the South Sea islanders ask forgiveness of the trees they cut down for canoes so that the spirits of the trees will not harm them.{4}

There also exist legendary half-divine beings. Some are humans who became gods. Some gods are thought to have become human. For example, the pharaoh of Egypt and the emperor of Japan were believed to be descendants of the sun god. Many teach these beings had supernatural birth and did not die, but vanished into the sky. Many are believed to have taught humans valuable skills like making fire, canoes, houses, planting fruits, etc.

Important in animism is the remembrance of the ancestors. Animism teaches that people possess immortal souls. At death the soul is free to wander near the grave, travel the earth, or enter the world of the spirits. The spirits of the ancestors participate in the daily lives of family members. Neglecting to honor them has severe consequences. Souls of the departed who did not live fulfilled lives or died tragic deaths become ghosts. Ghosts search for bodies to inhabit and often bring harm.

At death, one enters the realm of the ancestors who maintain a relationship with the family. Ancestors remain deeply interested in the family they began. They care for, protect, and punish those who seek to do harm.

Ancestors are revered for several reasons. First, as the founders of the family, they remain interested in the care of the family. Second, they have answered the question of what follows death, so they can help the living through dreams, necromancers, and visions. Third, some have accomplished great achievements, which must be celebrated. Fourth, animists believe they protect the family. Fifth, they function as mediators between God and the family.

One’s happiness in the afterlife depends on the care given by one’s descendants. Anyone banished from a family or tribe in essence becomes extinct with no one to remember or care for them.

As Christians, we agree with the animists that there is an immaterial soul that exists beyond the grave. We also place the family as a high priority. One of the Ten Commandments is for children to honor their father and mother. However, no departed souls remain on earth. According to Hebrews 9:27 upon death, one is immediately in heaven or hell. Secondly, the dead do not have contact with the living. In Luke 16, the rich man who was suffering in hell sought a way to communicate with his living family to warn them of their fate. However, he was not able to communicate in any way nor could the living communicate with him. Christians celebrate and honor the memory of our loved ones, but we do not worship them nor seek to appease their spirits. We wait with joy and anticipation in knowing we will be united again in the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Basic Practices in Animism

In animism there are numerous taboos or prohibitions.

Prohibitions are made to preserve the harmony between the spiritual world and physical world. Places or people where the life force is concentrated are protected. Myriads of taboos exist and violation of them can result in cursing of a community and must be atoned for by sacrifices.

Second, there are sacred places. Sacred places of worship exist to commune with the spiritual world. These are places where sacred power is concentrated. In Haiti there is a sacred tree where a pact with the devil was signed over 200 years ago by the animistic witch doctors. These witch doctors were most displeased when Christian pastors recently prayed over the tree and successfully commanded the spirits to leave it.

Third, there are sacred things. A whole host of objects possess power and are potentially dangerous. Stones are often believed to possess sacred power. This is one reason you can easily find crystal jewelry and other semi-precious stones for sale in catalogs and stores. Certain plants and insects are believed to be sacred and taboo. Carved images are believed to possess the spirit of divinities.

Fourth, there are sacred actions. Worship includes sacrifices of animals or plants to the deities. The priests or shamans perform the sacred rites. Omens play an essential role; this is the origin of saying “God bless you” after someone sneezes, to protect the spirits from jumping into the suddenly vulnerable person. Signs in the heavens and certain reptiles or animals encountered in a day (such as a black cat crossing one’s path portending bad luck) may predict one’s future.

Fifth, there are sacred words. There are many oaths, curses, and blessings. The spells of both white and black witchcraft are sacred words. Words are charged with sacred power if uttered by a priest. Such words possess the sacred power, mana.

Sixth, there are sacred persons. Witches use their powers for

good and evil. They can use their powers to protect communities from enemies. They can use their power to communicate with the gods and spirits. In most societies, witchcraft and sorcery are most feared. Witches are believed to travel great distances in short periods, kill at a distance, and master demons. Witches have supernatural powers to inflict harm on others. They can cast spells on others. They can inject foreign bodies into a victim, causing illness. Witches have the ability to communicate with dead spirits. Many societies believe they can transform themselves into animals.

Then there is the shaman or the medicine man. He can cure sicknesses. He directs sacrificial rites and escorts souls to the other world. At times he can leave his body and observe events from a distance. He is born into the family or earns the job by passing tests and rituals. There is also the sacred king. Then there are sub-humans such as trolls and water spirits. Finally there are “little people,” such as leprechauns.

Seventh, there are sacred rituals that must be performed regularly. The head of the family performs some; others require the expertise of the priests.

Eighth, there is the practice of magic and divination. The art of casting spells and communicating with the spirit world are reserved for the priests.

The Christian must be aware when his practices are influenced by animism. Often many feel that saying “amen” or wearing a cross brings protection. Others use sacred stones or believe performing a ritual will bring them fortune. A Christian has direct access to God through Christ and does not need to rely on another person of a sacred office. Also, Christians have all we need in Christ and do not need powers from the spiritual realm. Christ has given us all we need to overcome.

Overcoming Animism

As our study has revealed, fear is the overriding disposition among those in animistic religions. There are several reasons for this. First, one is never really sure if a taboo has been broken and the gods, the spirits, or the ancestors have been angered. Should one of these beings become angered, they may inflict horrific punishments. In Hawaii, there are several frightening stories about the night marchers, the spirits of ancient warriors who march along a sacred path each night. It is believed that some people have been killed because they were in the path of the night marchers.

A second reason for the prevalence of fear is that animism includes some of the most feared practices known to man. Sorcery, magic and voodoo are some of the ancient arts that strike terror in the hearts of people. It is a frightening thing to know that a priest or witch has placed a curse upon you.

Throughout the Bible and even today, believers continually encounter animistic practices and thinking. In times of crisis, many young Christians will pray to God, but also seek help from their animistic religion.

Among Christians, animistic beliefs will be displaced only when Christians transform their minds with God’s word and free themselves from the life of fear in animism. Transformation takes place when Christians understand the Bible explains the true nature of the universe. First, in contrast to the many temperamental gods in animism, the Bible teaches that there is only one God. Isaiah 43:10 states, “‘You are my witnesses,’ declares the Lord, ‘and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me.'” There is no pantheon of gods—only the one true God, and all others are false gods.

Second, in the Bible God forbids the animistic practices of witchcraft, necromancy, magic, and worship of foreign spirits. Deuteronomy 18:10 commands, “Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination, sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who consults the dead.” Those who practice these arts are entertaining spirits who are opposed to God and seek the destruction of all people.

Third, Christians do not need to live in fear of hostile spirit beings and spells. Christ, who loves His people, has triumphed over all. Colossians 2:15 says that He “disarmed the powers and authorities, [making] a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.”

Christ has brought into submission all authorities under His rule. Not only that, nothing enters into our life until it first filters through His loving hand. God’s hand of protection shelters His people. David wrote in the Psalms, “He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress, my God whom I trust'” (Ps. 91:1). When tragedy strikes, Christians understand that its purpose is not to punish believers, but to teach us new things about God and ourselves, refining our character to make us more like Him. Christians can be freed from a life of fear and find joy in a life of faith in Christ.

Notes

1. Paul Hiebert, Daniel Shaw, and Tite Tienou, *Understanding Folk Religion*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Book House, 1999), 157.
2. Norman Anderson. *The World’s Religion*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdman’s Publishing, 1991), 38.
3. Don Richardson, *Eternity in their Hearts*. (Ventura, CA.: Regal Press, 1984), 62-70.
4. Hiebert, 55-56.

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