

THE CULT OF ISLAM



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Introduction

Every once in a while I get asked why I have classified Islam a cult rather than a world religion. Isn't that a bit harsh? After all, Islam had its own unique beginning, with Muhammad receiving a distinct revelation from God that is consistent with what one might assume is God's message, didn't he? And what about all the peace-loving Muslims that adhere to Islam's teachings of tolerance and loving one's neighbors? Are you saying that they're all cultists as well? Do you really think that by labeling them as such is an effective method of evangelism?

When dealing with various religious entities and those who subscribe to them, emotions often get in the way of clearly thinking through the issues. No one likes to be thought that they've been duped into following a cult leader or that they're propagating cult propaganda. What must be kept in mind, therefore, is that no malicious intent is intended by classifying Islam a cult than is classifying Mormonism or Scientology as cults. What is intended is clarity; clarity based on the data; clarity based on definitions; clarity based on the truth. And given Islam's leadership, doctrine, and activities since Muhammad brought Islam into existence, it is not a world religion in the sense of say, Hinduism, but is a religious cult with various contributors, mainly from the "Christian" camp. The following article will explain more fully why.

Definition of a Cult

Often when thinking of a cult, images of some wily character hidden away in some darkened room with a band of sycophantic followers sacrificing a human being on a raised altar comes to mind. Sexual perversion, the taking of illicit drugs, and chants to the devil are also parts of the false imagery concocted by the uninformed, as they suppose that as long as they unwilling to participate with *those* people, then they are safe. Such imagery could not be further from the truth when dealing with what a cult actually is. While there are those who do participate in the darker side of cultism, they are in the extreme minority. Their aim is not necessarily to recruit, but to repulse. The majority of cults, though, aim to do just the opposite: to recruit, rather than repulse. And what better way to recruit the unsuspecting than to imitate that which is holy, good, pure, wholesome and true by acting holy, good, pure, wholesome and true outwardly, and yet be the exact opposite once all the façade is stripped away?

The Apostle Paul gives us a clear example of just how those in the cults go about their business in his second letter to the Corinthian church; a church which had all kinds of moral and spiritual problems that Paul addressed several times in the series of letters that he wrote to it. In Chapter 11 he deals with the “super apostles” who were busy at both defaming him, while leading the Corinthians astray via their boasting and outward appeal. To the Corinthians he would write,

But what I am doing, I will continue to do, that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting. For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their deeds (2 Cor. 11:12-15).

Several observations are worth noting which are characteristic of the cults, which are employed in their *modus operandi*:

- First, cults and cultists frequently attack the credibility of God’s servants. In this particular instance, a group of either Jewish legalists or Gnostic superlatives had made it their objective to discredit or demean Paul’s apostleship. They scoffed at his diminutive stature and oratory deficiency (10:10 cf. 1:8; 7:5), and then proceeded to prop themselves up as the hallmarks of God’s apostles and workers.
- Second, they assume that they are sent from God, and work diligently at fulfilling that assumption. In fact, they assume the title “apostle,” which is a very special term for only a few possessing the qualities and attributes of someone sent by God to accomplish a specific mission.¹ Yet, as Paul points out, their apostleship is as deceitful (Gr. *doloi*, meaning “treacherous” or “dishonest”) as their works.
- Third, they disguised themselves. The English word “disguise” is translated from the Greek word *megaschematizo* (lit. “great scheme”), which is translated elsewhere as “apply” in a figurative sense (1 Cor. 4:6) or to “transform” from one state to another (Phil. 3:21). In other words, the cultist or “false apostle” or “worker” intentionally

¹ Karl Rengstorf wrote, “In the NT *ἀπόστολος* never means the act of sending, or figuratively the object of sending. It always denotes a man who is sent, and sent with full authority.” An apostle, in other words, was the “commissioned representative of a congregation” whose primary responsibility was to be a “bearer of the NT message.” Conversely, a “false apostle” (*pseudapostolos*), as in 2 Cor. 11:13, was understood by the Apostle Paul as someone who “pretends” to be sent by Jesus, yet they are “unauthorised by him. The lack of authorization is seen in the fact that they are not wholly and exclusively committed to Christ or God; they seek their own ends instead of offering unselfish service. Not knowing that it is of the essence of the apostolate of Jesus that the one commissioned by Him should be lowly and suffer, they acquire the air of *ὑπερλίαν ἀποστόλων* (11:5, 11) [“super apostle”], an expression which even linguistically brings out the impossible nature of such apostles, since an *ἀπόστολος/ἡγῆσθαι* of Jesus already has a position which is quite incomparable. In both expressions Paul had in view his Judaistic opponents who either disputed his apostleship or set about to drive him from his churches by their own claims, though they had not any inner right to pass sentence on him.” Gerhard Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964): 1: 421, 445.

morphs into something that is outwardly grand and glorious, but is inwardly dark and deceitful. He is what Jesus would call a wolf in sheep's clothing (Matt. 7:15).

- Fourth, they boast great swelling words.² They may preach or teach about God or Jesus (v. 4), but their theology is skewed; for they preach not only “another Jesus,” “a different spirit,” and “a different gospel,” in reality they want the attention! Their religion is all about them, not God, and they want to be recognized for their spiritual prowess by having others laud them.
- Fifth, their director is none other than Satan, the master of disguises. He dresses himself up as an angel of light and appeals to those blinded by his superficial brilliance. Those duped by him and his emissaries react just the opposite of what Paul would have them, for one should not be in wonderment (Gr. *thauma*) or amazement over him and them, because in reality they are operating on the basis of deceit. Their boasts are all a part of the ruse, the disguise, and no one should be awestruck by them.

From the foregoing we have a good idea how a cult operates then. It starts with a rejection of God, His message, and His messenger, all of which are typically done under the guise of discovering some grand nugget of truth by the cult itself. From there the cult assumes the role as God's exclusive messenger. In fact, no one can either know God, nor be saved apart from cult membership or intervention. Since the cult mindset is based upon a lie, the cult must appeal to outward appearance to make up for the inconsistencies in its beliefs and story. Great edifices are often built to emotionally impress those the cult targets as potential new members. It is common for it to espouse a “milk before meat” philosophy, as well, meaning that only the most ungodly, irrational, and unbiblical beliefs are reserved for the most thoroughly involved and committed members, with the newest recruits left observing the façade. The façade, though, appeals to the senses, which are encouraged to be used as harbingers of the truth. If it feels right, then it must be true, wholesome, and pure, is the overall general approach that is employed. Then the cult is known for its claims of exclusivity. It is a cult versus the world mentality, whereby the only safe place to be is in the cult, even though it may feign approval toward other cults as a ploy to avert criticism. At no time, though, will the cult genuinely affirm the fundamental claims of the biblical Jesus, historic Christianity, or spiritually regenerate Christians, since they are the ones the cult is imitating and is with at odds. Finally, the motivating factor to the preceding is none other than the devil himself. Not only does Satan hate God, but he hates anything which might honor or glorify God. Since Satan cannot wage his war against God directly, he does so indirectly by wreaking havoc through deception, and more particularly through false religious expression, which is manifested in innumerable venues (e.g., churches, education, politics, etc.). Clearly cults and cultism abounds in the world today and is the product of the master deceiver

² See Daniel 11:36 and Revelation 13:5-6 as examples of those who have preceded and will follow those involved in the cults with their bragging and bravado, all of which is done in the spirit of anti-Christ and war against God.

himself. Therefore, it becomes incumbent upon any sensible human being to be aware of his schemes (2:11).

The question now becomes, how does Islam fit in with this description of a cult? The answer is not that difficult to arrive at, if one merely looks at the evidence of how Islam was initiated and developed. For not only were there Judeo-Christian influences prevalent in Muhammad's life when the angel Gabriel allegedly commanded that he "submit!" but what followed by way of his tainted theology, the injurious Jesus, and sensual salvation are consistent with cultic ideology that is second to none in terms of what is found in cults like Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, or the Church of Scientology. Interestingly enough, one does not have to turn to "anti-Islamic" sources to see the evidence; all one has to do is note what both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars and writers have written about the beloved prophet and his religion to conclude that Islam is cultic in nature and not a distinct world religion at all.

Religious Influences

There is absolutely nothing novel or unique about Islam. In fact, it is very much like Judaism and Christianity, as well as several pagan religions, except with a twist. The reason for this is that while Muhammad was living in Arabia in the sixth and seventh centuries A.D., there were many Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, Monophysites, Nestorians, Donatists, Docetic Gnostics, Neo-Platonists, Arians, *et al*, already residing in his area, some of which heavily impacted his theology. Unfortunately for him, and the world, he picked and chose a handful of themes that would become Islam, but did so with a perverse understanding of those themes. Those ideas would later translate into a long history of oppression, subjugation, and murder being perpetrated in the name of the "religion of peace." More will be said on the main ideas shortly.

Several authors have observed the religious influences upon Muhammad during his day. Each concluded that Islam is a product of its environment, including the social, religious, and economic conditions in which it arose. A small sampling is provided here to demonstrate the influences that led to the appropriation of ideas as Muhammad gradually established his particular cult.

One of the Meccan inquirers, Warakah, son of Naufal, cousin of Khadijah, is likely to have had much to do with the beginnings of Islam. He is credited with having translated a Gospel, or part of one, into Arabic: it was probably the Gospel of the Nativity, and was afterwards useful to the Prophet... Whether the study of the Book was regarded by the

Meccans as equivalent to the adoption of the Christian religion we know not; but most likely it was.³

The Christian Empire of Byzantium had made Abyssinia, the modern Ethiopia, a client state when it had converted to an heretical form of Christianity known as Monophysitism, which held that Christ had only one, divine nature.⁴

At the beginning of the seventh century, the Arabs of central Arabia were surrounded by deviant forms of Christianity...⁵

When he arrived at Busrah, he came into contact with Syrian Christianity and talked to the monks and priests, some of whom were Nestorians. Perhaps those very priests or some others discussed with him the religion of Jesus which had by then divided itself into several sects and parties.⁶

The inhabitants of those two towns [Mecca and Yathreb], particularly Yathreb, had been influenced by the beliefs of Jews and Christians. The word Allah, meaning The God, was in use among them. They considered themselves to be descendants of Abraham, and were more or less acquainted with the legends of the Children of Israel and stories of the Old Testament.⁷

³ David S. Margoliouth, *Mohammed and the Rise of Islam* (New York: Cosimo, 2010), 42. Warakah was the cousin of Muhammad's wife, Khadijah, who was also a "Christian" that helped to persuade Muhammad of his prophetic calling, even though at the time Muhammad thought that he had been possessed by a *jinn*, or a demon.

⁴ Karen Armstrong, *Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet* (London: Phoenix, 1991), 55. According to Harold O. J. Brown, "The fundamental impulse of monophysitism is the insistence that the unity of the divine and the human in Christ is fulfilled in the physical life of Christ and produces a *single nature*. The theory states that the Word becomes flesh, but it works itself out in the human flesh becoming divine." *Heresies* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 184. Although at no time did Muhammad or Islam advocate that Jesus was ever divine, it has adhered to a "liberal" form of monophysitism which sees Jesus as a special sort of individual, a "prophet," yet lacking divine attributes.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 57. González argued that because of the presence of the various Christian factions in Syria, Egypt, and Asia (particularly monophysitism and Nestorianism), that the way was opened for the successful expansion of Islam. Justo González, *History of Christian Thought*, 3 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, [1971]), 2:105.

Nestorianism is somewhat of an enigma, given that Nestorius himself seemed to hold to orthodox teaching about Jesus possessing two natures in one person, but because of an imprudent and provocative expression he made, he tended to inflame the Orthodox to the degree where he was condemned as a heretic. The main issue revolved around his acceptance of the Virgin Mary's capability of being able to carry and bear God (Gr. *theotokos*) without also bearing man (Gr. *anthropotokos*). He chose a more benign and less-committed route of expression, that Mary bore Christ (Gr. *christotokos*), and hence the controversy involving him began. Given the Muslim rejection of Jesus as God, including the rejection of God having a Son, one can see how Nestorianism may have affected his theology when he began to expound upon the persons of God and Jesus (e.g. Sura 4:171). See J. N. D. Kelly's *Early Christian Doctrines* (New York: Harper, 1978), 310-317, for a very good summary of the Nestorian controversy.

⁶ Husein Haykal, translated by Isma'īl Rājī al-Fārūqī, *The Life of Muhammad* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 1976), 61.

⁷ Ali Dashti, *23 Years: A Study of the Prophetic Career of Mohammad* (Costa Mesa: Mazda, 1994), 35.

From the point of view of cultural history it is of little account that Muhammad's teaching was not the original creation of his genius which made him the prophet of his people, but that all his doctrines are taken from Judaism and Christianity. Their originality lies in the fact that these teachings were for the first time placed in contrast to the Arabic ways of life by Muhammad's persistent energy.⁸

The signs and symbols of the Koran are those of its environment. Otherwise people would not have listened to its message. Islam adopted the ethics, legal concepts and religious rituals of ancient Arabia and drew on the religious paradigms of Judaism and Christianity...As a young man Muhammad had become acquainted with Christianity on his trade journeys along the spice route, and after the emigration he met the Jews of Medina. In the course of his religious and political experience he himself came to see his religion as the legitimate continuation of earlier monotheism. But far more important than the paradigms he had inherited was the pragmatic impact of the new message which was revealed through him.⁹

Islamic societies were built upon the framework of an already established and ancient Middle Eastern civilization. From the pre-Islamic Middle East, Islamic societies inherited a pattern of institutions which would shape their destiny until the modern age. These institutions included small communities based upon family, lineage, clientage, and ethnic ties, agricultural and urban societies, market economies, monotheistic religions, and bureaucratic empires. The civilization of Islam, though born in Mecca, also had its progenitors in Palestine, Babylon, and Persepolis.¹⁰

Like Judaism and Christianity, Islam originated in the Middle East. It was not a totally new monotheistic religion that sprang up in isolation. Belief in one God, monotheism, had been flourishing for many centuries. Knowledge of Judaism, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism had been brought to Mecca in Arabia by foreign caravan trade as well as through the travels and contacts of Meccan traders throughout the Middle East. Moreover, Christian, Zoroastrian, and Jewish tribes lived in Arabia.¹¹

From the foregoing it is quite easy to ascertain the non-originality of Islam, as well as the fact that it is not a distinct world religion as one would find in Hinduism, Judaism, or Christianity. It is, instead, a parasitic caricature of several different religions which some have assumed is novel, mostly likely due to misinformation, disinformation, or outright neglect of actually taking a look

⁸ Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2008), 21.

⁹ Gerhard Endress, trans. Carole Hillenbrand, *Islam: An Historical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 24.

¹⁰ Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 3.

¹¹ John L. Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam* (New York: Oxford, 2002), 7.

at history and doctrine. Muslim imams, Christian anti-intellectuals, and numerous ungodly sources, whether academic or journalistic, have perpetuated the illusion that Islam is an independent religion, and hence have not aided the understanding of those who want to know or understand the bases upon which Islam is built. Yet, the fact is, Islam is quite dependent upon others for its doctrines and beliefs, even though in each instance those doctrines and beliefs have been both borrowed, and subsequently perverted, or are extended perversions of previous heresies and beliefs which Muhammad managed to propagate. Let us take a look at three essential doctrines of Islam that Muhammad borrowed and then perverted—all of which the cults have in common when propagating their falsehoods—starting with God, then Jesus, and finally salvation.

Tainted Theology

“Like Jews and Christians, Muslims are monotheists. They believe in one God, the creator, sustainer, ruler, and judge of the universe.”¹² That is a common claim among both the biblically naïve and Islamic proponents, but it is only partially true. Granted, Muslims do believe in one God, who created, sustains, rules, and will judge the universe. Yet, the falsehood comes in the form of assuming that Allah, literally “the God” or “God,” of Islam is the entity that the Jewish or Christian communities subscribe to due to his singularity. In other words, Muslim writers, like John Esposito, falsely assume that because Jews, Christians, and Muslims all believe in one God, then they must also all believe in the same God. What he fails to take into account are the statements from both Jewish and Christian sources which contradict the notions of Islam over who God is. The God of the Bible is not the god of the Qur’an, regardless of the singularity. To miss that reality is to be deceived or to engage in deception.

According to the *Reliance of the Traveller: A Classic Manual of Islamic Sacred Law*, God is

...one in being without partner, unique without peer, ultimate without opposite, alone without equal. He is one, preeternal, beginninglessly uncreate, everlastingly abiding, unceasingly existent, eternally limitless, the ever self-subsisting through whom all else subsists, ever enduring, without end. He is, was, and ever will be possessed of all attributes of majesty, unannihilated by dissolution or separation through the passage of eons or terminus of interims. He is the First and Last, the Outward and Inward, and He has knowledge of everything.¹³

It is conceded at this point that both Jewish and Christian theologies teach that God shares in all of the aforementioned attributes. Nevertheless, such statements are like those already mentioned

¹² Ibid., 4.

¹³ Ahmad ibn Naqib al-Misri, *Reliance of the Traveller: A Classic Manual of Islamic Sacred Law*, edited and translated by Nuh Ha Mim Keller (Beltsville, Md.: Amana, 1994), 817.

above, which those in the cults boast similar beliefs shared by those who are orthodox, but upon further examination, the similarities are not realities. In fact, they are totally contrary to the image which is being projected. God cannot be unique, ultimate, preeternal, etc., given subsequent Islamic statements which contradict those concepts. It is all a matter of definition, and is common in cultism, the definitions are either vague, misleading, or missing. For instance, the Muslim writers of the *Reliance of the Traveler* go on to say about God,

He does not resemble anything that exists, nor anything that exists resemble Him. There is nothing whatsoever like unto Him, nor is He like unto anything...He does not indwell in anything, nor anything indwell in Him...The existence of His entity is known by human reason....¹⁴

First of all, it is not true that *nothing* exists which resembles God, given that mankind was created in God's image (Gen. 1:26-27),¹⁵ and that Jesus Christ "is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation¹⁶ of His nature" (Heb. 1:3). Moreover, "The heavens are telling the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the works of His hands" (Ps. 19:1; Rom. 1:20). Therefore, from the preceding it would appear that not only is the Islamic notion that "nothing exists which resembles God" patently untrue, that just the opposite is the case. *Everything* in existence, in one form or another resembles God, mainly because God's glory is the ultimate goal for their existence. This in no way implies that Jesus is a creature, as will be discussed later on, but that in the plan and purpose of God, even Jesus' incarnation was to glorify God. Again, depending on how a term is defined, and the depth and cogency of the definition, will determine whether or not two people, groups, or religions are speaking with similar understanding. And in this case with the person of God, the Muslim or non-Muslim who propagates that Allah, Yahweh, and Jesus are the same God does so erroneously.

Second, God does indwell His people, via His Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:11). Since the Holy Spirit is as much God, as God Himself (Acts 5:4; 2 Cor. 3:17), then when Holy Spirit takes up residence in the believer upon regeneration (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19), then the regenerate is indwelt by none other than God.¹⁷ In fact, it is the identifying quality of a Godly relationship between God and the

¹⁴ Ibid., 817-18.

¹⁵ When the Westminster Shorter Catechism asks, "How did God create man?" the response was, "God created man, male and female, after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, with dominion over the creatures." According to Grudem, "*The fact that man is in the image of God means that man is like God and represents God*" [emphasis his], and after dispelling the notion of many who have tried too hard to make more of the Hebrew words *tselem* and *demût* (trans. "image" and "likeness") than is actually necessary, he goes on to explain that as one peruses the pages of Scripture one discovers a fuller meaning of those terms through moral, spiritual, mental, relational, physical, and dignity aspects that all humans share with God. Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Leicester: InterVarsity, 1994), 439-50.

¹⁶ The Greek word translated "representation" is also the same word that we get the English word "character." Jesus Christ is the "precise reproduction" of God's character, although distinct as a person.

¹⁷ Geisler argues, "Certain acts are associated only with God; both God the Father and the Son are said to perform these acts, and so is the Holy Spirit. These include the act of creation (Gen. 1:2; Job 33:4; Ps. 104:30); the acts of redemption (Isa. 63:10-11; Eph. 4:30; 1 Cor. 12:13); the performance of miracles by His own power (Gal. 3:2-5; Heb. 2:4); and the bestowal of supernatural gifts (Acts 2:4; 1 Cor. 12:4-11)." Moreover, he adds that the Holy

redeemed to be indwelt by His Spirit, without which a person does not belong to God (Rom. 8:9; Jn. 3:6; Jude 19). As Leon Morris affirms, “The presence of the Spirit in believers is not an interesting extra to be seen in a few unusual people (as in the case of the ‘pneumatic’ men of some ancient religions). It is the normal and necessary feature of being a Christian at all.”¹⁸

Additionally, God not only indwells His people, but is one with His Son (Jn. 10:30). Jesus said, “He who has seen Me has seen the Father...Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me” (Jn. 14:10-11). Although some groups, like the Mormons, only see John’s statement as being “one in purpose,” it is clear from the context that John has something much more ontological in mind. Barrett interprets the oneness between God the Father and Jesus as “a oneness of love and obedience even while it is a oneness of essence,”¹⁹ while asserting that “The Father abiding in the Son does his works; the Son rests from, and to, eternity in the Father’s being.”²⁰ “The [oneness] statement,” claims Köstenberger, “echoes the fundamental confession of Judaism: ‘Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one’ (Deut. 6:4). Later, he asserts, “Though not an affirmation of complete identity, clearly this statement has more in view than a mere oneness of will between Jesus and the Father.”²¹ As for Jesus’ unity with the Father, “John’s presentation clearly implies *ontological* unity (unity of being); but the emphasis lies on *functional* unity, that is, the way in which God is revealed in Jesus’ words and works.”²² Carson, speaking on the oneness of God and Jesus, not only sees Jesus’ functionally accomplishing the Father’s will, but that “in this context, is so transparently a *divine* will, a *divine* task (*viz.* the saving and preserving of men and women for the kingdom) that although the categories are *formally* functional some deeper union is presupposed.”²³ As for Jesus being in the Father, Carson concurs with Schnackenburg that linguistically the expression argues for a “complete unity between Jesus and the Father,” without obliterating the distinctions between them, thereby ensuring that Jesus reveals God to us.²⁴

Third, while humans must use their reasoning faculties—which are a part of being created in God’s image—to know God, it is not possible for anyone to know Allah by such means, or any other means for that matter, given the total transcendence of Allah from his creation. This is perhaps the most fatal flaw in Islamic theology: the inability of any creature to know God personally. Muslims often assert that one can know Allah through his attributes or the ninety-

Spirit possesses the attributes of deity as well, including life (Rom. 8:2), truth (John 16:13), holiness (Eph. 4:30), eternity (Heb. 9:14), omnipresence (Ps. 139:7), and omniscience (1 Cor. 2:11). Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, 4 vols. (Minneapolis: Bethany, [2003]), 2:286, 675.

¹⁸ Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 308.

¹⁹ C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1978), 382.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 460.

²¹ Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 312.

²² *Ibid.*, 431.

²³ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester: Apollos, 1991), 395

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 494.

nine names ascribed to him, yet because he is allegedly so far above and beyond creation, there is no one who can knowledgeably approach him. Muslims essentially espouse an agnostic view of God, whereby they frequently use God language, but without any significant content. It is like “knowing” about George Washington as the First President of the United States by appealing to his name and nothing else. It becomes merely impersonal data. And what Muslims “know” about Allah is exactly the same: impersonal data.

As was seen above, though, the God of the Bible not only communed with His people, Israel, by leading and guiding them, but actually by indwelling Christians through His Spirit. God, therefore, is quite up close and personal, even though He is a transcendent being in the sense of being distinct from His creation. Such personal knowledge of God, however, is not restricted to those whom God called His own. During Moses and Aaron’s encounter with the Egyptian Pharaoh (Ramses II?) and his obstinacy to allow the people of Israel go and serve the LORD, Pharaoh finally discovered just who the LORD was when the first born of all of Egypt were slain as punishment for his obstinacy (Ex. 12:29-31). Another example may be seen when the prophet Elijah confronted the priests of Baal on Mount Carmel. They were given an up close and personal understanding of just who God was, as opposed to the idol they were following. When finally after Elijah had mocked all the machinations they were engaging in to arouse the attention of their “god” he called down fire upon an altar he had erected and it consumed not only its contents, but the contents of priest’s altar as well. While the people declared, “The LORD, He is God; the LORD, He is God,” the priests were taken away and slain (1 Kgs. 18:39). A final example of God’s personal display to the heathen is seen in Nebuchadnezzar’s humbling experience whereby he dreams a dream that God’s man, Daniel, can only interpret. After revealing what the dream meant Nebuchadnezzar becomes as a beast of the field. Yet, at the end of his trial he acknowledges who God is as “the Most High,” who is sovereign in all that He does and is to be praised accordingly.

Clearly, the god of Islam is not the God of the Jews or Christians, which is to say, it is not the God of the Bible either. While there are similarities that Jews and Christians can accept, those similarities are easily discounted in light of the absolute dissimilarities. Islam’s “god” was taken from pagan sources and then blended with heretical teachings that were floating about Muhammad’s geographical area when he was alive and then after he brutally garnered control, he served that god up to the pagans as the only option of belief. Such a tainted theology, however, not only affected the Muslim concept of God, but also the Muslim concept of Jesus, of which we now turn our attention.

Injurious Jesus

Islam’s tainted theology naturally extends to its injurious view of Jesus. Injurious in this context simply means corrupt, insulting, evil, libelous, slanderous, or just plain wrong. Muslims have historically taught and preached that Jesus was not only just a man, but that he was a prophet

who was subordinate to the person of Muhammad. To do this they not only have tried to discredit the Bible, but then they turn around and use the Bible to try and discredit Jesus. In the end one has a picture of Jesus that was not the Son of God, he was not deity, and he did not give his life a ransom for sin, meaning that he was never resurrected, since he never went to the cross. What Muslims do is what all cultists do by first attacking God's Word ("Has God said?" Gen. 3:1)—which is really an indirect attack upon God Himself—and then when all else fails, attack the person of Jesus. Therefore, since the attack is about as unique as Islam itself, the rebuttal is not all that difficult when we turn to the Bible to see what it has to say. But first, a look at Muslim sources is in order to understand where the Muslim is coming from in defense of his counterfeit Jesus.

Several Suras (chapters) in the Qur'an may be alluded to by Muslims to try and scandalize Jesus' position as the Son of God. Sura 3:59 tells us, "Verily, the likeness of Isa (Jesus) before Allah is the likeness of Adam. He created him from dust, then (He) said to him: "Be!"—and he was."²⁵ Sura 19:35 reads, "It befits not (the Majesty of) Allah that He should beget a son [this refers to the slander of Christians against Allah, by saying that Isa (Jesus) is the son of Allah]. Glorified (and Exalted) is He (above all that they associate with Him). When He decrees a thing, He only says to it: "Be!" and it is."²⁶ Muslim author, Suzanne Haneef, commits the straw man fallacy that so many do, by attributing non-Christian beliefs to Christian understanding, and then sets forth to destroy the structure that she built. She writes in rebuttal of Jesus' Sonship by stating:

If Jesus were indeed God's son, he would be a sharer in the Godhead and of divine nature himself, and in that case God would have simultaneously begotten, been begotten, been born, lived as a human being and died. Such a notion does not merit any comment. It has much more in common with pagan mythologies, in which gods fathered semi-divine children by human women than with a true religion coming from God and based on the reality of the relationship between the Creator and the created. Hence the claim that Jesus is God's son cannot be, by its very nature, other than a false one because it contradicts the very nature and attributes of the Creator Himself, bringing Him down to the level of the beings He has created.²⁷

Jesus, the Son of God

Without re-doing a previous work on the subject,²⁸ the Bible makes it quite clear that not only did Jesus believe himself to be the Son of God, but so did God the Father, Jesus' apostles, and

²⁵ *Interpretation of the Meanings of The Noble Qur'an In the English Language* (Riyadh: Under-Secretariat for Publications and Research Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Endowments, Da'wah and Guidance, n.d.).

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Suzanne Haneef, *What Everyone Should Know About Islam and Muslims* (Library of Islam, 1996), 200.

²⁸ Paul Derengowski, "Jesus Christ: A Response to Islamic Opposition to His Sonship," at http://capro.info/Cults/Islam/Jesus%20Deity/JesusChrist_A_Response_to_Islamic_Opposition_to_His_Sonship.html

the Post-Apostolic Church. In Mark's Gospel we read the following, none of which Jesus denied when spoken of him. "And it came about in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; and a voice came out of the heavens: 'Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well-pleased'" (Mk. 1:9-11; Matt. 3:13-17; Lk. 3:21-22). Paul the apostle, shortly after his encounter with Jesus and subsequent conversion is reported to have "immediately" begun to "proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, 'He is the Son of God'" (Acts. 9:20). Peter recounted Jesus' baptismal experience and reported in his letter "to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours," (2 Pet. 1:1), meaning that he accepted the account as true and also believed that Jesus was God's Son. As far as Early Church testimony is concerned, Irenaeus, Polycarp, Ignatius, Athenagoras, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, etc., all subscribed to Jesus's sonship.

As Erickson points out, "Jesus specifically applied to himself expressions that conveyed his self-understanding. One of these is 'Son of God.'"²⁹ He goes on to note that the Jews understood exactly what Jesus meant when he made the claim, which is why they became inflamed to point of wanting to kill him. According to John's testimony, "For this cause therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God" (Jn. 5:18). The Jews in Jesus' day were making the same erroneous mistake concerning Jesus' identity as the Muslims are making today, mainly because they did not truly know him (Jn. 1:10). But as Erickson concludes, "From all the foregoing, it seems difficult, except on the basis of a certain type of critical presupposition, to escape the conclusion that Jesus understood himself as equal with the Father and as possessing the right to do things that only God has the right to do."³⁰ Part of that understanding had to do with his filial relationship with the Father as His Son.

Jesus as God

Since Jesus was the Son of God, then he was also deity, or God, as well. The two accolades go hand-in-hand, particularly as it refers to the person of Jesus. But to the Muslim who has already rejected Jesus' sonship based on some rather shaky presuppositions not found in Scripture, such an identity as Jesus being God is rejected. According to Sura 5:75 "The Messiah [Isa (Jesus)], son of Maryam (Mary), was not more than a Messenger; many were the Messengers that passed away before him. His mother [Maryam (Mary)] was a *Siddiqah* [i.e. she believed in the Words of Allah and His Books. They both used to eat food (as any other human being, while Allah does not eat). Look how We make the *Ayat* (proofs, evidences, verses, lessons, signs, revelations, etc.) clear to them; yet look how they are deluded away (from the truth).]" Sura 47:8 warns, "But those who disbelieve (in the Oneness of Allah—Islamic Monotheism), for them is

²⁹ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 704.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

destruction, and (Allah) will make their deeds vain.” In a pamphlet published by the Islamic Education Foundation we read, “Without a doubt, you have often heard the claim that Jesus is God, the second person in the ‘Holy Trinity.’ However, the very Bible which is used as a basis for knowledge about Jesus and as the basis for doctrine within Christianity clearly belies this claim.”³¹ Really? The Bible says nothing about Jesus’ deity, much less the Trinity? Let’s take a look.

Statements about Jesus’ deity may be found in nearly every New Testament book. In Matthew Jesus is Immanuel (Matt. 1:23), “which translated means, ‘God with us.’” In Mark Jesus asks a man “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone” (Mk. 10:18). Some have falsely interpreted Jesus as denying that he was God during this exchange, but the context clearly shows that Jesus meant just the opposite and was trying to get the man to whom he was talking to realize it. In Luke 5:21, Jesus forgives sin, which only God can do, and then rebuts the faulty rationale of the scribes and Pharisees by demonstrating that Jesus not only had the authority to forgive sin, but to enable the lame to walk as well. In John’s Gospel we have the ever clear annunciation that “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (Jn. 1:1). Luke writes to the church in the Acts of the Apostles to “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:28). Since Jesus was the only one to shed his blood for the church, then Jesus is who Luke has in mind. The Apostle Paul is credited with writing at least thirteen letters, therefore only three examples will suffice to demonstrate that he thought that Jesus was God. In Romans 9:5 Jesus is the “blessed God,”³² in Colossians 2:9 “the fullness of deity dwells in him in bodily form,” and in Titus 2:13 he is “our great God and Saviour.” The writer to the Hebrews—possibly Paul—tells his readership that Jesus is “the exact representation” of God’s nature (1:3) and then goes on to proclaim him as God outright in verse 8. In the Book of James, he calls Jesus “Lord” (2:1); an ascription which also applies to God as the Father (3:9). The Apostle Peter, like Paul, calls Jesus “our God and Savior” (2 Pet. 2:1) and John calls Jesus “the true God” (1 Jn. 5:20), equates the Father with the Son (2 Jn. 3, 9), and then reveals that the Alpha and Omega applies to both Almighty God and Jesus (Rev. 1:8 cf. v. 17; 22:13-16). Finally, Jude tells us that it is the “Lord” Jesus who keeps the unruly angels in “eternal bonds under darkness” (Jude 5-6), which is something only God can do. The only NT book, therefore, which lacks a statement involving Jesus’ deity is 3 John, and that is mostly only because of its brevity. Hence, the Muslim statement that the Bible belies Jesus’ deity is patently false. The Bible, particularly the NT, witnesses to the deity of Jesus in quite explicit terms, and only those turning a blind eye to its witness would falsely promote another Jesus to the contrary.

³¹ Islamic Education Foundation. *Is Jesus Really God?* Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

³² This is often mistranslated in many biblical versions due to the misidentification of the Greek word εὐλογητός (*eulogetes*), which is actually an adjective which magnifies “God,” and not a verb. Hence the verse should read, “who are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, *blessed God* forever, amen.”

As for the Trinity, that is outside the scope of this paper, so it will not be dealt with in depth. Nevertheless, the Bible clearly reveals that God exists in a triune relationship in the Godhead, starting with a faint allusion to that existence in Genesis 1:26. More explicit examples are found in the NT, starting with Mark 1:9-10; John 3:8, 13, 16; Acts 4:24-26; Romans 1:1-4; 8:1-7; 2 Cor. 1:21-22; 13:14; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:3-14; 2:18, 20, 22; 1 Thessalonians 1:3-5; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; Titus 3:5-6; Hebrews 9:14; 10:29-31; 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Peter 1:17, 21; 1 John 4:2; 5:6-9; Revelation 22:16-18. Further examples could be provided, but the Trinity, like so many Christians doctrines found the Bible, will not be ascertained by those unable or unwilling to follow the evidence. Hardcore Muslims, like any hardcore cultist, is unable to see the Trinitarian evidence, because his spiritually blinded mind (2 Cor. 4:4) is already made up before the evidence is ever presented. Conversely, those whose minds are not already preconditioned, and have been prepared by God for reception, can easily see God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit working together in a harmonious relationship, thereby discounting the notion that the Bible belies their Trinitarian existence.

Jesus and the Crucifixion

A final argument which Muslims offer to discount the uniqueness of Jesus' person and mission is that which claims that Jesus never died on the cross, and hence was never resurrected either. To them God would never allow such a thing, and that when it came time for Jesus to die, God mysteriously substituted a look-alike for Jesus, while God swept Jesus away into heaven for his own protection. Sura 4:157-58 claims that,

And because of their saying (in boast), "We killed Messiah Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary), the Messenger of Allah,"—but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but it appeared so to them [the resemblance of Isa (Jesus) was put over another man (and they killed that man)], and those who differ therein are full of doubts. They have no (certain) knowledge, they follow nothing but conjecture. For surely, they killed him not [i.e. Isa (Jesus), son of Maryam (Mary)]:

But Allah raised him [Isa (Jesus)] up (with his body and soul) to Himself (and he is in the heavens). And Allah is Ever All-Powerful, All-Wise.

"Muslims believe that Jesus was not crucified," writes I. A. Ibrahim. "It was the plan of Jesus' enemies to crucify him, but God saved him and raised him up to Him. And the likeness of Jesus was put over another man. Jesus' enemies took this man and crucified him, thinking that he was Jesus."³³ Yet, this Muslim misconception, like all the others dealing with the person of Jesus is both biblically erroneous and patently offensive. For if Jesus did not die in the manner which the

³³ I. A. Ibrahim, *A Brief Illustrated Guide to Understanding Islam* (Houston: Darussalam, 1996), 58.

Bible reports that he did, then God is a liar and Christians are without hope, since it is Jesus' death and resurrection that is the foundation of the Christian faith, not Jesus' life, as important as that was.

God would have been lying by misleading the authors of inspired Scripture to record that Jesus had died on the cross, if in fact that event had not occurred. Yet all four Gospels record not only Jesus' death, but the kangaroo court that he endured which led up to it. Later on, the Apostle Paul was confronted by the risen Jesus as a part of his conversion experience and would pen what some believe is part of a liturgical statement that began within a couple of years of Jesus' death, which emphasized the necessity of his death along with his resurrection. Paul wrote, "For I delivered to you as of first importance *what I also received*, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve" (1 Cor. 15:3-5) [emphasis added]. Paul's statement is thought to have been circulating to within two or three years of the crucifixion event, which would discount it as a mere legend developed over a long period of time. So, one not only witnesses what God would have the church and the world accept was the destiny of His Son, but Jesus' apostles and church would continue to report and preserve the same information in inspired form.

Some Muslim apologists, like some other cult apologists, often make claims that the Bible has somehow been corrupted by nefarious scribes and exegetes, or that God wanted to deceive the Jews and Romans into believing they were putting Jesus to death, but such claims are specious at best. The Bible as we know it is fully authoritative and dependable in its declarations, and there are no textual critical issues which should lead anyone with an unprejudiced mind to think otherwise. The Bible "makes good on its claims."³⁴ Jesus died on the cross, according to the Scriptures (Mt. 27:40; Jn. 19:19, 25; 1 Cor. 1:17-18; Gal. 6:14; Eph. 2:16; Heb. 12:2; 1 Pet. 2:24*), and was then resurrected by God (Acts 13:33; 1 Cor. 15:55; Eph. 1:20; 1 Thess. 1:10), the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:11), and Jesus himself (Jn. 10:17-18)³⁵ for the redemption of mankind. Anything other than this reality makes the Christian faith null and void, which is probably why those in Islam continue to go after this central tenet of Christianity. For to undermine the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus is to undermine everything Christianity has to offer by way of hope in overcoming sin and God's judgment. Moreover, by undermining the crux of Christianity, which is the resurrection, the onus is placed back on the sinner to try and work out an alternative arrangement with God for his own individual salvation. Obviously God's grace is no longer a part of the equation apart from the resurrection, so the sinner must then work out his own salvation, which is, we will now see, wholly contrary to human ability to accomplish on one's own.

³⁴ John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Word of God* (Philipsburg: P&R, 2010), 174.

³⁵ The resurrection of Jesus employs a Trinitarian effort on all members of the Godhead.

Sensual Salvation

Although Islamic sources do not speak extensively on the subject of salvation proper, what they do have to say about it is typical of all cults who know nothing about the grace of God, and then place the burden of attaining salvation or paradise squarely on the shoulders of the sinner by having him perform certain legalistic works of righteousness. Those failing to attain salvation end up spending time in Hell, even though there are certain circumstances which may mitigate one's stay there as well. Above all, assurance of salvation is essentially absent in Islam, with the exception of one act which has become a hallmark of modern-day terrorism, and something that most Muslims wish to distance themselves from, even though such an act was participated in and condoned on the part of none other than Muhammad himself. More will be said on that shortly.

Meriting Salvation

In terms of earning one's way to Heaven or Paradise via one's good deeds, or the exact opposite of Hell via one's bad deeds, the Qur'an has much to say. Sura 2:81-82 states, "Yes! Whosoever earns evil and his sin has surrounded him, they are dwellers of the Fire (i.e. Hell); they will dwell therein forever. 82. And those who believe (in the Oneness of Allāh—Islamic Monotheism) and do righteous good deeds, they are dwellers of Paradise, they will dwell therein forever." Sura 23:102-103 reiterates the works-based salvific structure by asserting, "Then, those whose Scales (of good deeds) are heavy, these! they are the successful. 103. And those whose Scales (of good deeds) are light, they are those who lose their own selves, in Hell will they abide." According to Esposito, "Muslims do believe in heaven and hell, in eternal reward or punishment depending on whether human beings follow the will of God and act with justice and mercy toward others during their lifetime... God will judge each person by the standards brought by the person's community's prophets and scripture, using the record of each person's actions throughout his or her life that are recorded in the Book of Deeds."³⁶ Abdullah Yūsuf 'Alī helps to clarify what good and evil deeds mean to a Muslim by adding, "Good and evil deeds will be weighed against each other. If the good deeds prevail, the soul will attain falāh, i.e. prosperity, well-being, bliss or salvation; if the contrary, there will be the misery and anguish of Hell."³⁷

³⁶ Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam*, 28.

³⁷ Abdullah Yūsuf 'Alī, *The Meaning of The Holy Qur'an* (Beltsville, MD: Amana, 1997), 861, f.n. 2942.

It is interesting that both the Qur'an and Ali mention scales and the deeds (both good and bad) being weighed upon them, for such verbiage is reminiscent of what one would find in Zoroastrianism. According to Mary Boyce, who was an expert and professor at the University of London on the subject of Zoroastrianism, Zoroaster taught that upon dying the deceased would have his deeds weighed on scale. Depending on which way the scale tipped during judgment would also depend on whether or not the deceased would enter paradise or fall in the depths of hell.

Here Mithra presides over the tribunal, flanked by Sraosha and by Rashnu, who holds the scales of justice. In these are weighed the soul's thoughts, words and deeds, the good on one side, the bad on the other. If the good are heavier, the soul is judged worthy of Paradise; and it is led by a beautiful maiden, the

A major problem with a works-based system of salvation, like that found in Islam, is that no one ever knows if one has done enough to merit Heaven or Paradise while one is alive. The adherent's eternal welfare hangs in the balance until after one has died. There is no eternal security by merely doing enough "good works," because no one knows how much enough is. In fact, the only way one can know if one has eternal salvation in Islam, is if one is willing to become a martyr in a Jihadist act of terrorism against the *kafir* or unbelievers. Aside from that misguided idea, the Muslim is left agnostically wondering about the afterlife as he is left agnostically wondering about Allah.

A Kind of Hell

Those who fail in their quest to produce enough good deeds to merit entrance in Paradise end up spending time in Hell, although there are conflicting accounts, depending on whether one is a "true monotheist" (i.e. Muslim) or not, how long that stay is. According to the Qur'an, "those who disbelieve, and die while they are disbelievers, it is they on whom is the Curse of Allāh and of the angels and of mankind, combined. They will abide therein (under the curse in Hell), their punishment will neither be lightened, nor will they be reprieved" (Sura 2:161-62). This particular warning and indictment is reserved for the non-Muslim who has rejected the message of Islam. The person has never been a Muslim and therefore upon death will be sent to Hell without relief. Later on in the same Sura the message of eternal condemnation is reiterated: "Allāh is the *Walī* (Protector or Guardian) of those who believe. He brings them out from darkness into light. But as for those who disbelieve, their *Auliyā* (supporters and helpers) are *Tāghūt* (false deities and false leaders), they bring them out from light into darkness. Those are the dwellers of the Fire, and they will abide therein forever" (2:257).

When one turns to Hell and the Muslim, the conditions and qualifications for entrance and exiting are different. For while the Muslim's works will still be weighed, with those failing to

personification of its own conscience ('daena') across the broad bridge and up on high. If the scales sink on the bad side, the bridge contracts to the width of a blade-edge, and a horrid hag, meeting the soul as it tries to cross, seizes it in her arms and plunges with it down to hell, 'the dwelling-place of Worst Purpose,' where the wicked endure a 'long age of misery, of darkness, ill food and the crying of woe.' Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London: Routledge, 2001), 27.

Is it possible that Muhammad borrowed from Zoroaster when developing his ideas of heaven and hell? It not only seems possible, but highly probable.

In terms of crossing a bridge—also known as the *The Chinvat* or "Bridge of the Requiter" (see R.C. Zaehner, *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism* (New York: Phoenix, 1961), 36) in Zoroastrianism—Islam teaches that the deceased must do the same thing after having his deeds weighed. "It is obligatory to believe in the bridge over hell (*sirat*), a bridge spanning the breadth of hell, sharper than a sword and finer than a hair, which unbelievers' feet shall slip from by Allah's decree and plunge them into hell, and the feet of believers shall be made fast upon by Allah's generosity, and from thence they shall be conducted to the Final Abode." *Reliance of the Traveler*, 823.

produce more good works than bad ending up in Hell, his stay is not eternal; it is only temporal. The condition which differentiates him from the non-believer is his monotheistic view of God. Since he believes that Allah is it, and there is no one else, then despite all his other bad or evil deeds, after a period of time spent in what amounts to Islamic purgatory, he is released. Ahmad ibn Naqib al-Misri makes this clear by arguing, “The Koranic verses concerning this [i.e. *shirk*] are very numerous, it being absolutely certain that whoever ascribes associates to Allah and dies in such a state is one of hell’s inhabitants, just as whoever believes in Allah and dies as a believer is one of the inhabitants of paradise, *even if he should be punished first*” [emphasis added].³⁸ Also, “It is obligatory to hold that true believers in the oneness of Allah will be taken out of hell after having paid for their sins, through the generosity of Allah Mighty and Majestic. No one who is a true monotheist will abide in the fire forever.”³⁹ Therefore, depending on whether or not one is a Muslim will also depend on whether or not one’s stay in Hell is eternal or temporal.

The Bible, though, makes no such concessions. Hell was originally created for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41), and those who manage to enter its confines remain there until the final Great White Throne judgment, whereby they are remanded in the Lake of Fire for eternity (Rev. 20:11-15). Moreover, if monotheistic belief was a qualification which allowed the wicked to flee hell, then the devil and his demonic coterie would never enter in the first place. For according to James, Jesus’ half-brother, the demons believe that there is one God, and shudder (James 2:19). Satan, in other words, and those angels who chose to follow him in his rebellious quest for self-glory, would never stand eternally condemned for his wickedness, mainly because he is a monotheist! Yet, we know, once again, that the final lot of Satan is the Lake of Fire, along with the beast, false prophet, and all the demons, where “they will be tormented day and night forever and ever” (Rev. 20:10). Therefore, whether one is a monotheist, henotheist, polytheist, or atheist is irrelevant in terms of whether one will spend eternity in Heaven or Hell. Whether one has been spiritually regenerated is what is relevant; it is the very thing that Islam knows nothing about, nor teaches. Therefore, not only is its understanding of Hell incorrect, so are its prescriptions to avoid entering it.

Assurance Through Jihad

Jihad itself is a frequently misunderstood concept, not only by those among the Muslim community, but by the outside world as well. What the average person does know about it often comes from images seen on television, and that only after an act has already been perpetrated whereby carnage, death, and destruction are the results. Missing is the underlying theology and philosophy behind jihad which is part of a cultic system which has failed to understand the nature of man, as well as the person and expectations of God. Jihad, which means “struggle” or “Holy War,” has two aspects to it: personal and universal. The personal side of jihad, or the “greater jihad,” deals with the struggle to overcome human nature and the temptations which

³⁸ *Reliance of the Traveller*, 653.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 824.

stem from it. Because Islam rejects the reality of original sin and has left the Muslim to fend for himself in his quest to attain Paradise on his own, as well as an agnostic concept of God and zero assurance that his efforts will merit him entrance into Paradise, the Islamist can be easily swayed to take desperate measures to not only overcome his struggle with himself, but with the world as well. All it takes is a revelation, which has been conveniently provided, to cause him to act. All he must do is exercise his “free will” by dying a martyr’s death and he is instantly ushered into Paradise.⁴⁰ As Muslim author Cyril Glassé expresses, “Those who die in a genuine *jihād* – and the laws determining this are complex – are considered to be martyrs (*shuhadā*), who, as such, have special merit, and enter paradise directly.”⁴¹ Interestingly, Glassé goes on to say, “A genuine *jihād*, as opposed to merely political warfare, has rarely been invoked since Islam’s struggle for survival against the Meccans.”⁴² What makes his comments interesting is that if they are true, then many Muslims who have managed to blow themselves up with bomb-belts and through other malicious means, and taken innumerable innocent lives with them in the process, under the guise of waging “holy war” against the infidels, have done so in vain! Nevertheless, dying a so-called martyr’s death through jihad remains the only assurance for the Muslim to enter paradise.

Godly Assurance of Salvation

When one turns to the Bible, though, one is not confronted with all the confusion, contradiction, and convolutedness one sees in the Islamic message of salvation. “Salvation belongs to the LORD,” the Psalmist tells us (Ps. 3:8), and he bestows it upon whom He chooses (2 Thess. 2:13). When a sinner is redeemed by God, it is purely by an act of His grace, and not of works, lest the sinner take it upon himself to boast about all the wonderful things he thinks he has done to merit it. It is why the Apostle Paul would write, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast” (Eph. 2:8-9), because there were people then, perhaps Christians, who were thinking that by acting a certain way that that somehow would count towards their redemption. Such is not the case at all! Good deeds prior to salvation only mitigate one’s judgment in hell; they contribute absolutely nothing towards one’s salvation. Good deeds after regeneration, though, are the

⁴⁰ Please note that entrance into Paradise is not the same thing as entering into the presence of Allah, which is not possible.

⁴¹ Cyril Glassé, *The New Encyclopedia of Islam* (New York: AltaMira, 2002 reprint), 241.

⁴² The late Islamic activist Seyyid Qutb contradicts Glassé’s notion of “genuine *jihad*” involving “political warfare” by arguing that “Islam does not force people to accept its belief, but it wants to provide a free environment in which they will have the choice of beliefs. What it wants is to abolish those oppressive political systems under which people are prevented from expressing their freedom to choose whatever beliefs they want, and after that it gives them complete freedom to decide whether they will accept Islam or not.” Seyyid Qutb, *Milestones* (Damascus: Dar al-Ilm, n.d.), 56. Of course Qutb’s comments come just after telling the reader that jihad “uses physical power...for abolishing the organizations and authorities for the jahili system,” and that for those who refuse to accept Islam’s message, then if the Muslim is in control, then the non-believer will be either subjected to the *jizyah* (i.e. “poll tax”) against his will or die. It is this kind of tyrannical confusion, even among Muslims, that makes the whole idea of jihad less than convincing when speaking in terms of God, truth, or assurance of salvation.

byproduct of God's love to redeem the sinner in the first place, so that the saint would then worship and praise God in a manner worthy of His name. Good works, in other words, were preordained by God long before the saint ever performed them as a part of God's overall plan and purpose of self-glorification (Eph. 2:10). Toward the end of his life Paul would reiterate the same principles by writing, "[God our Savior] saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:5-7). Salvation, therefore, is not about what the sinner does for God, but about what God does for the sinner, thereby making him a saint.

It is because God is solely responsible for the salvation of anyone, that when God spiritually bears the sinner into His kingdom via His Spirit, that the "new creation" (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15) forever belongs to God. The Holy Spirit seals the saint with a promise that he is His (Eph. 1:13). One does not have to worry about whether or not he has done enough to merit God's favor, given that God's favor (i.e. grace) is what moved God to act in behalf of the sinner in the first place to bring about redemption. Therefore, when a person is "born again" (Jn. 3:3, 5), or literally "from above" by God, his whole identity and position changes. The person becomes a child of God with absolutely zero possibility of becoming anything else, regardless of what he does. To state otherwise is to contradict biblical references such as John 10:28 where Jesus emphasizes that those whom the Father gives to him, "no one shall snatch them out of my hand" and 2 Timothy 1:12 where Paul states, "For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day."

Some find such an idea as eternal security objectionable, claiming that a person can lose their salvation based on their bad deeds, or that eternal security can lead to an "I can do anything I want, since I'm going to heaven" attitude. But, those objections are born out of a complete ignorance of Scripture, as well as an ignorance of what salvation is. It is a similar argument the Galatian church raised when the Apostle Paul asked it: "Does He then who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by the hearing with faith?" (Gal. 3:5). For if God cannot redeem based on His sovereign choice, while securing that redemption "until that day," and salvation is ultimately left up to the sinner to decide and settle, then God is less of a being than His creation, since He must kowtow to the whims of the sinner, while possessing the strange audacity to even claim to be God at all! The sinner, in fact, becomes "God," and a poor caricature of one at that, and God becomes his servant, not his Lord.

Since salvation and eternal security are placed squarely on the metaphorical shoulders of God, there is no need to pick up a sword or strap on a bomb and either murder the innocent by beheading them or by blowing them up in a crowded market place. In fact, Jesus made it perfectly clear that those who choose to live by the sword shall die by it as well (Mt. 26:52). Again, such barbarism is a part of the flawed thinking inherent in Islam which assumes that

between a combination of “free will,”⁴³ the absence of original sin, and the vague mandates or revelation of a distant “god,” whom no one can know personally, one can work their way to Heaven. It is a barbarism that has taken shape in various cults down through history, whether in the inquisitorial actions of Roman Catholicism, the Socialistic butchering of atheistic Marxism, or the deluded decision-making of a Jim Jones or a Marshall Applewhite. Cults and cultism are not about confession of personal sin or acknowledging God’s grace to forgive it. They are about seizing power and exercising personal autonomy, even if that translates into death and destruction and imposing the sinner’s will upon God in an effort to wrestle control away from Him. And each time a Muslim assumes that he is securing his place in the afterlife by committing jihadi suicide in some heinous manner, taking other humans with him in his devious act, he is imposing his will upon God’s as his own little god. He is providing the classic definition of an immoral person, who is also an idolater, and in heaven there is no place for him. “For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God” (Eph. 5:5 cf. 1 Cor. 5:11).

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to provide a clear explanation of why Islam is considered a cult, rather than a world religion, even though Islam is a religion—a false one. Not only was a definition provided to explain just what a cult is, several well-respected authorities on Islamic history and doctrinal development were quoted to demonstrate its banality, including the most important authority in Islam, the Qur’an itself. Most importantly, though, three specific doctrinal issues were discussed, all of which are common points of reference when identifying a cult. Islam, in each instance, easily fits the definition.

Of course it is to be expected that there will be those in the Muslim community, and elsewhere, who will probably be incensed by such a categorization, mostly likely because they failed to read the whole article with comprehension. Mean-spirited vitriol and accusations are typically the responses one receives from those in the cults, as well as those involved in politically correct theological liberalism, when they irrationally and unwillingly refuse to deal with the arguments, but instead would rather engage in personal attacks and baseless rebuttals. Some might assert that by simply explaining the decision to label Islam a cult is mean-spirited itself, but that, once again, would be a failure to read the article with comprehension. For mean-spiritedness was not

⁴³ The idea of “free will” is sometimes thought to be a Christian concept, but in reality it comes from the pagan philosophy known as Epicureanism. Many non-Christians and Christians alike, though, by failure to read and study the Bible have been swayed into believing that it is their responsibility or choice to set themselves free, when the Bible makes it clear that all are in bondage to sin before God’s sets them free through spiritual redemption. Hence, Paul’s statement to the Galatian church, which also had been drawn into such fallacious thinking as to combine God’s grace with legalistic works: “If was for freedom that Christ set us free...” (Gal. 5:1), which goes right along with Jesus earlier statement to the Jews, and is often twisted to mean something other than what he intended: “and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” and “If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed” (Jn. 8:32, 36).

the motive, but an open and frank answer to a question to provide clarity, complete with all the necessary references for the truly interested reader to investigate on his own, if he so desires, was the motive. To those unwilling to accept the explanation, may now embark upon the name-calling, abusive accusations, and veiled threats, and fulfill prophecy.

On the other hand, for those who may still have questions about the article or Islam itself, they are more than welcome to submit their queries in writing to: apologetics@capro.info. Please keep in mind, though, that all emails become the property of the Christian Apologetics Project and may be submitted for public viewing. Moreover, emails intended to harass, insult, or waste time, will either be discarded or put on display to show the true “spirit” behind them. Therefore, prudence is encouraged, to go along with inquisitiveness.