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(part 1 of 4): Islam and Christianity



I did not become Muslim overnight. In fact, at first, learning about Islam came quite unexpectedly on my part. I had simply become acquainted with some Muslims and questioned them wanting to understand something of their beliefs. I was surprised to discover many similarities between the teachings of Islam and Christianity. I came to understand that I could not judge Islam merely from the actions of some “Muslims” I had seen and heard about. To learn something of the real teachings of Islam, I was going to have to throw away my prejudices and begin to learn about it open-mindedly. Unfortunately, I found a great deal of misunderstanding between the Christian and Muslim communities partly due to biased media coverage on both sides and by Muslim and Christian individuals who are not living by the standards of good conduct taught in both these great faiths. Just as the teachings of Christianity are not always apparent from observing the actions of the “typical American Christian,” I realized that to understand Islam I was going to have to look beyond the actions of some Muslim individuals to get to the truth. I was encouraged by a new friendship with a sincere, amicable Muslim woman. As I have always enjoyed reading, I went in search of some good books about Islam.

What surprised me most, initially, was that the Muslims already had some knowledge of the teachings of Christianity because Muslims, too, love and believe in Jesus Christ, peace be upon him. I learned that the word “Islam” literally means peace through submission to God by belief in His Oneness and by obedience to Him. Thus, Islam claimed to be the same religion preached by all the earlier prophets, in whom Muslims must also believe. These prophets include Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, John the Baptist, and Jesus (peace be upon them all), among others. The Quran says:

“And We (God) did not send any Messenger before you but we inspired him (saying): There is no god but God. None has

**the right to be worshipped but I (God). So worship me.”
(Quran 21:25)**

Islam encourages marriage as a means of sexual chastity and a means of comfort and happiness in life. A marriage is considered a contract between a man and a woman with each of the parties having rights and responsibilities. Upon marriage, a Muslim woman loses neither her family name nor control of her own property. In fact, I discovered that Islam is not oppressive to women, as I had previously thought. I learned that for centuries Muslim women have had rights that most Western women have only obtained in recent years.

I also learned that the followers of Islam worship God in ways strikingly similar to the worship described in the Bible. The Muslim prays daily reciting these words from the Holy Quran:

“In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful; Praise be to God, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds; Most Gracious, Most Merciful; Master of the Day of Judgement; Thee (alone) do we worship and Thine aid we seek; show us the straight way, the way of those on whom thou has bestowed Thy Grace, those whose portion is not wrath and who go not astray.” (Quran 1:1-7)

Christians are kindly referred to in the Holy Quran as the People of Scripture or “People of the Book” and are addressed directly.

“Say: O people of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but God; That we associate no partners with Him; That we erect not from among ourselves lords and patrons other than God.” (Quran 3:64)

Christians and Jews are also told that their own scriptures will guide them to the truth of the Quran and Mohammed’s prophethood (2:146, 5:41-47, 7:157). Obviously, I was going to have to take this “challenge” and see if my Bible could really vouch for the divine origin of Islam.

Evidence of the unity and oneness of God as taught in Islam is found throughout the Bible. In Deuteronomy (32:39) [It] says, **“There is no god beside Me,”** and in Isaiah (43:10), **“Before Me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after Me.”** In Exodus (8:10), **“No one is like the Lord our God,”** and in Jeremiah (10:6-7), **“There is none like unto Thee, O Lord.”**

Other verses stating the same can be found in Deuteronomy (4:35, 4:39, 6:4), Isaiah (45:5, 45:21-22, 46:9), II Samuel (7:22), I Kings (8:60), I Chronicles (17:20), Psalms (86:8, 89:6, 113:5), Hosea (13:4), and Zechariah (14:9). When asked, **“Which commandment is the first of all?”** Jesus answered, **“Hear, O**

Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is One.” (Mark 12:28-29) Even after the ministry of Jesus, Jesus’ apostles understood this oneness of God. Evidence of this is found throughout the epistles. **“God is One” (Romans 3:30); “There is no God but One” (I Corinthians 8:4); “One God” (Ephesians 4:6, I Corinthians 8:6, I Timothy 2:5);** and Paul writes to James (2:19), **“You believe that God is One: you do well.”**

It is over the nature of Jesus (peace be upon him) that Islam and Christianity really differ. I could agree with the Muslim on basically every other issue, as I found Islam to be both simple and rational. That Jesus was the divine Son of God and part of the Trinity is the essential belief of most Christians. That Jesus was not divine but rather an honored prophet of God is the essential belief of every Muslim. I knew that I had to prove to myself (in order to remain a Christian) that the Bible unequivocally affirms the trinity (i.e. that God is One yet made of three equal and distinct parts), one of part of the trinity being Jesus, the Son. Yet, when I earnestly searched, I could find no real base for the trinity in the Bible. I could not find proof that Jesus or any of the prophets who came before him (peace be upon them all) taught trinity. They all preached monotheism. And how could it be that all of the prophets were ignorant of the very basic nature of God and misguided of the true religion? This could never be! Further investigation showed that the word “trinity” itself is found nowhere in the Bible. The verse that for years seemed to give it some justification has been expunged from the Revised Standard Version and other versions of the Bible because it is not found in any old texts of the New Testament (i.e. it was added to the Bible much later). This is the verse found at I John (5:7) in the King James Version: **“The Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one.”**

According to Christian sources, “Various Trinitarian concepts exist. But generally the Trinity teaching is that in the Godhead there are three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; yet, together they are but one God. The doctrine says that the three are coequal, almighty, and uncreated, having existed eternally in the Godhead.” (Watchtower) This is the fundamental doctrine of most churches. Because there is no rational or logical way to explain the trinity teaching that three can be separate yet equal one ($1 + 1 + 1 = 1$)! Most churches say this doctrine is a “mystery,” cannot be proved, and must be accepted merely on faith. But I began to question how or why I should accept such a doctrine on faith when it is not explicitly taught in the Bible. If it was not a Biblical teaching, then whose teaching was it? It seems that the trinity concept evolved as an explanation of the supposed divinity of Jesus. So I decided to look further for Bible proofs of Jesus’ divinity.

(part 2 of 4): Jesus in Christianity

I looked at some of the “proofs” put forward to claim divinity for Jesus (peace be upon him). Some claim that the miracles he performed prove his divinity, but close examination shows that the miracles performed by Jesus (peace be upon him) were also performed by others. (Walking on water - Exodus (14:22); raising the dead - I Kings (17:22), II Kings (4:34, 13:21); healing the blind and lepers - II Kings (5:14, 6:17, 6:20); multiplying food - II Kings (4:1-7, 4:43-44); casting out devils - Mathew (12:27), Mark (9:38), Luke (11:19)) It is clear that the apostles knew these miracles were achieved only by the power of God.

“Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs which God did through him in your midst.” (Acts 2:22)

And those healed understood this also and glorified and praised God (Mathew 15:31, Luke 13:13, 17:15 and Acts 4:21). Jesus himself supplicates to God before raising Lazarus from the dead begging God to make this a sign for the people **“that they may believe Thou (God) hast sent me.” (John 11:42)** Jesus (peace be upon him) tells his followers that if they had faith they could do as he does (Mathew 21:18-22), that others will be able to do **“greater works than these”** (John 14:12) and warns that even **“false christs and false prophets will arise and show great sign and wonders.” (Mathew 24:24)**

It was also necessary to reflect on why, in Christianity, Jesus (peace be upon him) must be divine. Why must there be the deification of any man? Mainstream Christianity teaches that Jesus must be divine if his death is to be sufficient for the redemption of all men’s sins. So, I had to ask, did God die then? No, was the answer I heard. Only the man Jesus died. Why then is not the death of any man sufficient? Christianity teaches that all men are imperfect because they inherit sin from their father Adam, but Jesus was free of this stain of sin because he had no father. The deeper I looked into these arguments, the more they crumbled away beneath me.

Was Jesus (peace be upon him) not born of a woman? Did Mary not descend from Adam and Eve, who both sinned before their Lord? To believe in the concept of an original sin, which is passed down from generation to generation, is to believe that Adam and Eve sinned and were never completely forgiven. How can a just and loving God hold me accountable for iniquities I never committed? How can a compassionate and merciful God hold me responsible for aggressions that I had no power to prevent or suppress?

I did not find that Jesus (peace be upon him) or any of the prophets who preceded him in the Bible taught this concept of original sin. Jesus (peace be upon him) taught the pure nature of the child.

“Let the children come to me...for to such belongs the kingdom of God.” (Mark 10:14)

God's ways are just.

“If a man is righteous and does what is lawful and right...he is righteous, he shall surely live...If he begets a son who...has done all these abominable things; he (the son) shall surely die...the son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father for the iniquity of the son.” (Ezekiel 18:5-20)

“Every one shall die for his own sin.” (Jeremiah 31:30)

Why should the statements of God **“visiting iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation”** found in Exodus (20:5) and Deuteronomy (5:9) be taken literally when there are plenty of other verses that contradict them, such as

“The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor the children be put to death for the fathers; every man shall be put to death for his own sin.” (Deuteronomy 24:16)

It was very interesting for me to learn that in Islam, the blame of tempting Adam is not placed on Eve. Islam teaches that both Adam and Eve were misled by Satan and sinned. Then, they cried:

“Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves. If you forgive us not and bestow not upon us Your Mercy, we shall certainly be among the losers.” (Quran 7:23)

“And their Lord pardoned them.” (Quran 2:37)[1]

God tells the Muslim:

“No person earns any sin except against himself and no bearer of burdens shall bear the burden of another.” (Quran 6:164)

In the New Testament epistles, however, a new doctrine takes form, the doctrine that Jesus (peace be upon him) gave himself up as a physical “offering and sacrifice to God” (Ephesians 5:2), that it is not merely God's Mercy but rather **“the blood of Jesus...(that) cleanses us from all sin” (I John 1:7)**. And that **“without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.” (Hebrews 9:22)** I cannot reconcile myself to this doctrine for several reasons, mainly because this doctrine of blood atonement is pagan in nature and cannot coincide with a God who is both Almighty (i.e., able to forgive whomever He wills) and All-Loving. Jesus (peace be upon him) spoke of himself as “the bread of life” in a parable where he compares himself to the manna sent down from heaven to Moses, saying, **“He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood...will live forever.”** But Jesus (peace be upon him) goes on to explain that he is not talking of the physical body. **“The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life.” (John 6:48-63)** I began to feel that perhaps Muslims were correct in saying that

modern Christianity is a religion about Jesus and Islam is the true religion of Jesus.

The doctrine of blood atonement was the gospel of Paul (II Timothy 2:8), a gospel about which he says, **“I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came (to me) through a revelation.”** (Galatians 1:12) Paul never met Jesus (peace be upon him) nor did he study under Jesus’ disciples. He says,

“I did not confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him 15 days. But I saw none of the other apostles except James...and I was still not known by sight to the churches of Christ in Judea. Then after 14 years I went up again to Jerusalem.” (Galatians 1:16-2:1)

The more I read about the early church from Bible scholars, the more troubling this became to me. Paul went out to preach his gospel of Jesus (peace be upon him) among the Gentiles. He attracted increasing numbers of followers and his own apostles. Paul’s preaching was not the same as the preaching of the Jewish Christians, the original followers and disciples of Jesus (peace be upon him), and this was causing great division in the early church. The people were saying “I belong to Paul.” or “I belong to Apollos.” or “I belong to Cephas.” (I Corinthians 1:12) Paul eventually separated with the disciples Cephas, Barnabas and the followers of James, the brother of Jesus, accusing them of being **“not straightforward about the truth”** and having **“acted insincerely.”** (Galatians 2:13-14) Paul reprimands the Corinthians for listening to the other gospels of Jesus (peace be upon him) (II Corinthians 11:4), and says of himself **“I think that I am not in the least inferior to these superlative apostles.”** (II Corinthians 11:5)

Learning some of the history of Christianity in the early centuries was startling and eye opening for me. There was no early consensus of essential doctrine. Endless theories were argued to define the nature of Jesus (peace be upon him), proposing everything from an exclusively human Jesus to an exclusively divine Jesus to every possible combination in between. The religion was building up around the personality of Jesus (peace be upon him) and without a “book” for guidance, more and more attributes were added to Jesus’ reputation. The influence of the existing pagan societies on this new faith was profound, especially from the sun worship cults of Rome, Persia, Greece, Babylon and Egypt. The Roman Emperor was considered to be the manifestation of the Sun God on earth. Eventually, the church adopted the Roman Sun-day as the Christian Sabbath. December 25th, the traditional birthday of the Sun God became the birthday of Jesus. The symbol of the cross became the banner of Christianity. The cross had long been a symbol of redemption among the pagans and the “cross of light” was the emblem of the Sun God, too. The doctrine of the Christian trinity developed at this time. Holy trinities are found in many of the

cults of the time among the Babylonians, Hindus, Romans, Persians, Egyptians and Chaldeans. At the end of the second century, the word “trinity” begins to appear in Christian writings. The trinity as approved by the council of churches in 431 AD included Mary, the mother of Jesus, but she was later replaced with the Holy Spirit because some theologians were having trouble with the concept of “mother of God.”

Another subject which was of great interest to me was the Islamic claim that the Bible itself predicted the coming of the Prophet Mohammed, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him:

“...the Prophet who can neither read nor write (i.e. Mohammed) whom they find written with them in the Torah and the Gospel...” (Quran 7:157)

Footnotes:

[\[1\]](#) **“Then Adam received from his Lord Words (of inspiration). And his Lord pardoned him. Verily, He is the One Who forgives, the Most Merciful.” (Quran 2:37)**

(part 3 of 4): The Christian Bible

Finally, in my investigation, it also became clear that I should be asking myself about the history and reliability of the Bible. I began to look at not only the message of the Bible, but also ask myself, “What is the Bible?” Most Christians will answer that “the Bible is the Word of God.” Naturally, I needed to justify my faith in this scripture being “the Word of God.” To show that the Bible is the “Word of God”, it is necessary to show that the words of God were dictated to man to be penned by human hands and that the book known today as the Bible is a conglomeration of these words of God. I found that many Christians, including me, believed that the Bible is the “Word of God” because it has been traditionally accepted as such. So I had to ask, “When did that tradition begin?” The Bible itself says, “but test everything; hold fast what is good.” (I Thess. 5:21) Jesus himself warns against following the man-made rather than the God-given when he quotes from the prophet Isaiah “(God says:) In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrine the precepts of men.” (Mathew 15:9)

I begin by examining the men whose hands penned these “Words of God.” In many cases, authorship of the books of the Bible is not definitively known. I am especially referring to all the books of the Old Testament and some of the books of the New Testament including the Gospels, Hebrews, the letters of John, and Revelations. When authorship is unknown or doubtful, it becomes impossible to judge the integrity of either author or book as being of divine revelation. Most

scholars believe that all of the Old Testament had to be rewritten after King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon conquered and burnt down Jerusalem.

Secondly, when reading the Bible, one encounters many errors and contradictions. [For some examples see verses: John 1:29 and Mathew 11:3; Mathew 21:2-7 and Mark 11:2-7; Mathew 27:28 and Mark 15:17; Mathew 27:55, Luke 23:49 and John 19:25; Mark 15:32 and Luke 23:39-43; Acts 9:7 and Acts 22:9; Mathew 10:2-5 and Luke 6:13-16; John 20:9 and Luke 24:6-7; Mark 2:25-26 and I Sam 21: 1-6; John 3:13 and II Kings 2:11-12 and Heb 11:5; John 5:31 and John 8:14; Mathew 27:5 and Acts 1:18; Mathew 1:2-16 and Luke 3:23-38; II Sam 24:1 and I Chron 21:1; I Kings 7:26 and II Chron 4:5, for 100% plagiarism see II Kings 19 and Isaiah 37.] Can the “Words” of God contain error? Certainly not! A true revelation from God is free from all error. Errors can only indicate manipulations made by man. In the Bible one also finds God’s prophets degraded by acts of idolatry, incest, murder, adultery, etc. [II Samuel 11:2-27, Isaiah 20:2-3, Genesis 19:30-38, I Kings 11, Judges 16:1, Genesis 32:25-30, Ezekiel 4] Is it possible that God chose such weak individuals for such holy missions? Is it not more likely that God chose men of outstanding character to deliver His messages?

Thirdly, since many Christians claim that their faith is based on the supposed words of Jesus himself, peace be upon him (p.b.u.h), it is important to note that the synoptic Gospels were not written by eyewitnesses to the events they describe, They portray “a second generation view of Jesus Christ” (Christian Bible commentary). There also exists no record of Jesus’ sayings (p.b.u.h) in their original language, the language Jesus (p.b.u.h) spoke.

Fourthly, about the New Testament Epistles, I had to wonder, what makes one man’s biography of another man or one pastor’s letters to his congregations the “Words of God”? One might answer that they wrote being filled with inspiration from the Holy Spirit, but we read in the New Testament that many of the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit and then preached. Does that also make all of the words they preached “Words of God”? When a pastor today is filled with the Holy Spirit and writes letters to his congregation, should his letters also be considered the “Word of God”?

The more I learned about the Bible, the more I knew that I could not rely on it to be the unadulterated Word of God. Yet, Islam itself indirectly claimed that what has been changed in the Bible is less than what has not been changed. The Quran discredits the “People of the Book”, the Jews and Christians for not following their scriptures and for changing the meanings of their scriptures. It became reasonable and appropriate to ask if Muslim scripture was any better. I examined the Holy Quran just as I examined the Bible.

(part 4 of 4): Conversion from Christianity to Islam

Really, I am indebted to all those who have asked me why I am today Muslim because writing this reply encouraged me to reread the Bible (after all these years) and clarified for me again in my own mind the many arguments I initially encountered and the reasons why I did eventually embrace Islam. Reading the Bible today, as a Muslim, I am surprised by what I find in it. I am certain that I had read every verse in the Bible as a Christian, yet how can it be that I never heard its whole message?

I had been a “born-again” Christian. One tearful and exhilarating night I felt that the Holy Spirit had awakened me. I was saved and baptized and thereafter, for years, attended church services several times each week. I wanted to increase my faith. I had so many questions, but once one goes beyond that salvation experience where does one find the answers? Every sect and denomination teaches something different. Which one was right? I heard many different teachings; most sounded good to me, but when I asked where in the Bible I could find those teachings I rarely received sufficient answers.

From relatives, friends and neighbors I came to know something about a number of different Christian groups. I also knew some Jews and Atheists. Through friends, I eventually became drawn to the Catholic Church. Its reputation as the “oldest” and “original” church appealed to me along with the teachings (perhaps unorthodox) of some priests that God is to everyone something different (or, in other words, God is to you whatever you want Him to be). They told me that I could be Catholic without having to believe everything coming out of Rome.

The Catholics were not having the salvation experiences that I had witnessed among the Born-again Christians. Yet, they were having apparent “miracles” of their own. A group had traveled to Yugoslavia where several youth were having periodic visions of the Virgin Mary. During the trip, the ordinary metal links in the rosary beads of one pious woman from our church had turned to pure gold, and a Protestant newscaster traveling with them to cover the story had witnessed a statue of the Virgin Mary shed tears.

On visits to my aunt and uncle I attended with them their Pentecostal church. There I witnessed my relatives and their fellow worshippers “speaking in tongues.” They were literally, physically “overcome by the Holy Spirit” preaching and crying out in some unintelligible language, in a voice not their own. For them it was a very personal, life-changing experience. I admired their high moral standards.

I had also heard about some new-age groups who were having “out of the body” experiences, “transcending” their physical bodies to become one with “God” (if they believed in God) or “Light” or “Peace.” Several new books about experiences in transcendentalism made this subject popular conversation.

About this time, I became acquainted with some Muslims for the first time in my life. I heard from them stories about miraculous victories the ill-armed Afghan freedom fighters were having over the might of their Soviet oppressors. The stories coming out of Afghanistan were incredible and supernatural. I did not know if I could believe all of it, but I did know it was true that with minimal loss of life on their side, the Afghans were pushing the Soviet army off their territory to establish a “Muslim” country.

I was questioning all of this. How can people of different and conflicting faiths all be receiving these signs? Can God be telling each one of them that they are following the right path?

Today, as a Muslim I do not have to live in doubt or confusion. I know that the powers of both good and evil are able to perform “supernatural” wonders. (The Bible says so, too - Mathew 24:24) Experiences with good and bad spirits, demons, demoniacs, etc. (by the Muslim all called “jinn”) are real. The Jinn are another type of creation with free will like man. Islam teaches that Satan is one of the jinn, not a fallen angel as claimed by Christians. (According to Islam, Angels do not have the free will to disobey God.) Some Christians deny the existence of jinn though they are repeatedly mentioned in the Bible. (Mathew 4:24, 7:22, 8:28-33, 11:18, 12:28, 17:18; Mark 1:34; I Timothy 4:1; James 2:19; Revelations 18:2) Their “powers” are real, and they have been described to us in the Quran as able to even “whisper” into our hearts. (Quran 114:1-6) But God has created our souls in the best possible fashion inspiring them with knowledge of Him and of good and evil. God has also endowed us with intellect as the confirmation of faith, and true faith is at peace with both our innate nature and our intellect.

By the grace of God (exalted be He), Islam had conquered my heart and my mind. Once I recognized the fundamental errors of my former path and recognized the absolute truth of Islam, I knew that I needed to make major changes in my life. To make my faith acceptable to God, I knew that I had to live it. I had to allow the convictions of my heart to rule the actions of my body. I could no longer deny that my life, my health and everything else I had came to me only by the grace of God. I also could no longer allow myself to associate anything or anyone with God in his divinity. With my special Muslim friend, I also went to the local mosque (Muslim house of worship) to make a verbal and public confession of my conviction that there is only one God, Allah, and none worthy of worship except Him and that Mohammed is His servant and Messenger (peace be upon him.).

Ironically, my choice of Islamic dress - the thing that immediately tells other Americans that I am “different” - should not seem strange at all to Christians. The New Testament teaches that Christian:

“Women should adorn themselves modestly and sensibly in seemly apparel not with...costly attire.” (I Timothy 2:9)

It also instructs them to cover their hair.

“Any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled dishonors her head. It is the same as if her head were shaven. For if a woman will not veil herself, then she should cut off her hair, but if it is disgraceful for a woman to be shorn or shaven, then let her wear a veil.” (I Corinthians 11:5-6)

There was a tradition of veiling among Jewish women, as well.

As a convert to Islam, rather than finding it to be oppressive, I have found the hijab itself to be liberating. I feel a much greater sense of respect leaving my house in hijab than I did in my pre-Islamic dress. The hijab frees women from the confines of non-Islamic society where her “worth” is primarily determined by her physical appearance. Of course, there are other reasons why I continue to put my faith in Islam. The more I learn about both Islam and other faiths, the more certain I am that I have made the correct decision to follow Islam. I pray that God will bestow His Mercy on me, forgive me my faults, increase me in faith, and keep me from temptation. I encourage you to read the Quran and seek the truth for yourself.