

CONFRONTING ISLAM: EXAMINING THE QUR'AN

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Should we avoid exposing the errors in the Qur'an to spare the feelings of our Moslem friends?

An article appeared in July, 1997 edition of The Christian Chronicle under the title, "The Islamic World." The author, managing editor Glover Shipp, suggested that "Churches of Christ are at the amateur level in communication with and converting Muslims..."

Citing Wesley Jones, who is reputed to have a better insight into this matter than most of us, brother Shipp lists some principles which he feels will help us in reaching out to the Moslem community. Some of these suggestions are useful, but one of them is puzzling.

"Know the Qur'an, but don't attack it. As there are slanderous opinions circulated about the Bible, so there are about the Qur'an. Intellectual honesty forbids that we repeat these. And obviously, attacking the Muslim Holy Book itself closes minds" (p.17).

A RESPONSE:

We believe that several things need to be said in response to this statement. First, there are common-sense guidelines in the New Testament that will enable the devout Christian to know how to approach potential converts of any religion within a variety of international backgrounds. Granted those who have lived among certain peoples may have some keener insights into the cultural peculiarities of a country. These matters, however, are not the paramount aspect of seeking the lost. In the first century there was simply a compassionate proclamation of the pure gospel, brought to bear upon honest hearts; this produced an explosive growth of the kingdom of Christ.

Second, no lover of souls possessing "intellectual honesty," has any desire whatever to misrepresent the teachings of the Moslem Qur'an, by appealing to unfounded "slanderous opinions" regarding Islam's "sacred" book. Nothing is ever gained by misrepresenting an opponent, or in exhibiting a mean-spirited attitude. However, it would have been helpful if the author had cited a few examples of this unscrupulous methodology so that such tactics might be avoided. Third, the suggestion that we should adopt a "hands off" policy with reference to Islam's "holy" book is strange indeed. How could one possibly hope to convert those of the Islamic persuasion without demonstrating the fact that the Qur'an is not a sacred work?

The word "attack" is very loaded, of course, but the bottom line is this. If Moslems claim that the Qur'an is a divine production, and yet it is not, then this book represents a perversion of truth. No Moslem will ever be led to the Lord until he renounces this fraudulent document and acknowledges the Bible as his solitary source of divine guidance. The fact of the matter is, there is great value in showing that the Qur'an is not supported by the sort of evidence that would be characteristic of an inspired production.

Moslems sincerely believe that the Qur'an is a divine book. It is styled "The Holy Qur'an." This volume consists of 114 sections called Suras, each of which is divided into verses. Each Sura (except 9) begins with: "In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful."

It is alleged that the Qur'an was revealed to Mohammed verbatim by the angel Gabriel over a period of 23 years (but compiled after his death). One passage asserts: "Praise be to God, Who hath sent to His Servant [Mohammed] the Book [the Qur'an], and hath allowed Therein no Crookedness" (18:1).

IS THE QUR'AN FROM GOD?

Inasmuch as the Qur'an declares itself to be a revelation from God, we have every right to examine this claim. If the book does not meet the standard that one has a right to expect from a document that claims to be from Heaven, it must be rejected as false, and its weaknesses should be exposed.

Geisler and Saleeb review eight lines of argument that are employed to demonstrate that the Qur'an is sacred. These may be summarized as follows:

1. The Qur'an's unique literary style is such that it could have been authored only by God (10:37; 17:88).
2. Since Mohammed was an "unlettered Prophet," he could not have produced the book himself (7:157).
3. The claim is made that the Qur'an is the only book that has been preserved in its "exact original form" (Haneef, 19).
4. The Qur'an is believed to contain prophecies that demonstrate its inspiration.
5. Its alleged unity, or lack of "discrepancy" (4:82), is supposed to argue for its divine origin.
6. The Qur'an is allegedly marked by a scientific accuracy and foreknowledge that can be explained only in terms of inspiration.
7. Supposedly the Qur'an is characterized by a mathematical precision based upon the number nineteen.
8. It is argued that the Qur'an has changed lives, thus it must be sacred (pp. 181-203).

When these arguments are critically examined they simply do not establish the case. For example: The Qur'an does not have a profound literary style. It is characterized by numerous grammatical aberrations. Moreover, as McClintock and Strong observed, "It is exceedingly incoherent and sententious, the book evidently being without any logical order of thought either as a whole or in its parts" (V.151).

The so-called "prophecies" are merely vague political speculations that do not even begin to rival biblical prophecy — either in precision or in chronological proximity to the events they supposedly depict (cf. 30:2-4). Scientific accuracy can hardly be claimed when the Qur'an suggests that the human fetus results from "sperm" that changes into "a clot of congealed blood," which then becomes bones, later to be covered with flesh (23:14).

The Qur'an is morally flawed in numerous respects. For example, those who oppose Mohammed should be subjected to "execution [i.e., decapitation], or crucifixion, or the cutting off of hand and feet from opposite sides..." (5:36). Women are treated shamefully in the Moslem religion. If a woman is guilty of "ill-conduct," she may be admonished, deprived of sex, or beaten — in moderation (4:34).

CONCLUSION

How could one deal with Islam without exposing the errors of the Qur'an? Surely our brethren who advise: "don't attack [the Qur'an]," have not carefully considered this matter. We must be kind, but we cannot ignore error.

SOURCES

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