

## **Christianity V. Islam: A Study in Non-Validity of Mutually Inflammatory Thinking.**

Recently I received an article by a friend titled, "Islam: At War with Christianity?". The writing was very incisive but very much geared towards encouraging a fearful militant, almost apocalyptic mind set towards Islam. I wondered what the author's point was to all of what she had to say. Is there a political agenda, a warning for some sort of action? If so, is this going to ultimately result in solving the issue, of bringing peoples of the world together in mutual understanding and agreement; that we are, indeed, only one humanity living on and sharing the resources of a single Earth; or is this, yet again, just another example of "attacking a perceived threat"; of literal fundamentalist fanatics on one side (Christianity) fearful of what literal fundamentalist fanatics" on another side (Islam) perceive themselves to be to each other? Indeed, each side sees the other as "evil"; both call the other "infidels". Both sides look up and post singular verses of Scripture crafted and edited supporting their own claims and agendas. Both sides continually seek to find differences between themselves; promoting division, misunderstanding, fear and hate. Why?

Throughout history, many religions have taken over each other in the name of their "one and only God. Christianity has a long and bloody history of terror, torture and subjugation; longer even than the Islamic faith. Historically, residents of whole villages were burned alive, native peoples in "discovered claimed" lands were plundered in the name of God while the church did its utmost to destroy and erase from history any object or writing deemed as "heretical or "heathen".

Present day Islam, at least in the neighborhood surrounding Israel, perpetuates a "Palestinian right" to overthrow the Jewish nation of Israel seen as "illegal Jewish occupation of historically Arab land". Yet, those seen as Arabic Palestinians are actually recent immigrants from Syria, Lebanon and Egypt; They have no culture or religion that identifies them as "Palestinian". These people, now confined to the Gaza Strip, are being used as pawns by the Arab nations creating a political motive to drive the Jews from Israel. The deep ancient bond of Judaism to their history and land is ignored and thrown aside. Arabic children are brought up hating Jews and made to believe it is a holy dictum by Allah that the Jews must be eradicated. In contrast, Jews, since the time of Hadrian some 1800 years ago, were called Palestinians. They lived in Palestine", or Philistia, as Israel was then renamed.

The Arabic Palestinians, as we know them, as popularized through the world media today, did not exist as a political force until well after 1948 when Yasser Arafat adopted the title "Palestinian" for his own radical revolutionary (PLO) movement. Israel now was, once again, called "Israel". The whole meaning of the designation "Palestinian" became radically changed. Instead of its original Jewish origins it became a skillfully hyped myth

claiming Jews as invaders of (their own) Palestine! Jewish history was adopted as Arab history. Jews were seen as imposters and infidels.

Meanwhile, the Al-Aqsa Mosque, considered the third holiest spot in Islam, sits atop the ruins of the holiest place in Judaism; the very site where Solomon's Temple stood. Jesus preached in the temple, as it was rebuilt by Herod the Great and later destroyed in 70 AD. Thus, Christians see the area as "holy" and claim it also. Jews, Christians and Muslims all want to own this "Dome of the Rock".

Do these attitudes and actions reflect the spiritual meaning and intent of what Mohammad and Jesus were attempting to convey in their respective missions? Is this small sampling of mankind at war against himself indicative of "submission to the Will of an All-Merciful God; or beneficial fruits from the Tree of the Holy Spirit of Truth? Is this supported in either the Bible or the Qur'an? Why this conflagration between Faiths? Why this business of Islam out to ultimately take over and convert the world; much as earlier Christians frequently did for millennium over those perceived as "wicked", "lost", or "godless"?

The heart of this present issue is not whether or not there is intent of certain Islamic groups to initiate a step by step world domination "take over" over increasingly higher levels of policy, justice and government infiltration. This action in itself may or may not be happening. The point is, if it is not actually happening now, the stage is set for this genre of act/ reactive proactive activity to be manifested and encouraged, from any number and levels of social exchange mechanisms, at any time.

Current international and interfaith relations provides a volatile foundation from which social unrest, mistrust and lack of mutual respect can flourish. This problem laden, parochial centered situation is fundamental, deep seated and critical. Indeed, the crucial elemental root cause basic to this thinking and resultant action is nothing less than an all pervasive paradigm of trained ingrained thought afflicting humanity at large.

Putting down a singular uprising or legislating a future international boycott or law is but applying a "band aid" approach. A particular symptom may be temporarily covered up but the underlying cause remains very active. Future wars and rumors of wars, unrest and outrage remain inevitable. The world scene of "dominating", "damned" and "defeated", playing star roles on the stage of human affairs, will continue to play out. It is obvious, for the cure to be effective we must get to the core of the matter... In other words, the very either/or, parochial plagued, nationalist, news laden, subjective race ridden, policy pitched divisive defining world outlook of humanity must be overcome.

Exclusivity and self righteousness, along with a heavy dose of selfish short-term greed and profit motivated action seem to lay at the bottom of much domination and conflict around the world. Holding up the Bible while categorically denying the Qur'an, or other books of faith as false and satanic, or vice versa, is not conducive to good positive public relations on either side. Each side feeds on their own rumor based biased judgmental

misunderstandings of the other. Both sides use their respective scriptures (edited to suit their needs) as an excuse to see "nonbelievers" as "heathens and infidels deserving of punishment and/or eradication", or requiring some obligatory change strategy unto the "right way" to be granted eternal salvation.

This thinking pervades many levels of society, from the workplace, home and even your TV set. Politicians, clergy, administrators and the media, along with authors producers and editors on both sides; even traditional anthropologists and ethnologists; end up looking with an eye to finding differences between world religions, mythos, symbol and allegory. The all pervasive drumbeat, "Our way is the only right way, and our mission is the only pathway to success and salvation"; be it political, religious or philosophical; is emphasized by the common man to the exclusion of all else. As for applying this to national religious militarism, the next step of "ultra security" or "ultra righteous" fanaticism leading to war and takeovers (holy, political or otherwise) allowing brutal treatment and enslavement for the "righteously vanquished under God's Decree" then could well become justified.

The following study focuses on a microcosm of sorts, giving a specific account, displaying a component of the much larger multileveled deep seated divisive corporate competitive us/them social system defining mankind as a whole. It is hoped this study may bring one to realize that much of what we socially perceive; from boundaries of nation, race, religion, politics, status, inherited habitual concepts etc: are not visible in the natural world of being; but dwell only in the hearts of men.

Here then, is a section taken from a magazine article (given to me by a friend) nicely illustrating a part of what is repeatedly going on in the world. It deals with, and contributes too, the divisive fear tactics of present interfaith politics and stand-up-man-ship. As should be made evident in the writing, the almost universal practice of presenting to the reader, as evidence, only a small part of a larger more complete scriptural picture, while craftily cutting out the rest, will be explored. This type of reporting, supporting a specific political agenda, is assuredly a prime cause leading to misunderstanding. In this way, mistrust and superstitious fear are enkindled, and if left unchecked and further fanned, this misinformation becomes a foundationless basis for further wars and conflict. We all want peace and desire love. We all dream our descendents will inherit a more benevolent world. Why this destructive oriented conflict?

Note: The article used as an example here is written by a Christian but, the same practices shown are readily performed, as originated, on both sides. Neither side, wrapped up in their habitual roles, wants to come to mutual understanding and agreement; the only aim seems to be to "Win and subjugate one over the other. The ramifications of such goal oriented practices, as done on all sides displayed towards any issue, are only too obvious. First the article:

### **Islam vs. Christianity?**

" The Qur'an asserts that Muhammad came as an "apostle" to the "People of the Book" (primarily Jews and Christians). Most professing Jews and Christians, however, rejected Muhammad's new religion (Surah 5:19-32). Considering some of the key differences

between Muslim teaching and the Biblical account, this is not surprising. For example, the Qur'an asserts that [1] it was through the angel Gabriel, not through the Holy Spirit, that Jesus Christ was conceived in Mary's womb (Surah 19:19-21).

Islam teaches that [2] Christians blaspheme when they proclaim, "Christ is the Son of God" (Surah 5:72). As is written in Surah 112, and as was described on the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem around 691-692 AD Islam says, "Praise be to God, who begets no son and has no partner. ..He does not beget, He is not begotten, and He has no peer." The Qur'an also teaches that [3] Jesus did not endure crucifixion; instead, someone else supposedly took his place (Surah 4:157).

More than 90 verses in the Qur'an [4] counsel war against the "unbelievers"-(e.g. Surahs 4:101; 5:51; 9:29, and prescribe execution, or crucifixion, or the cutting off of hands and feet from opposite sides, or exile for those who wage war against Muhammad and Allah (Surah 5:33). Interestingly, although the Qur'an asserts that [5] Allah has the power to bring every person to salvation, he apparently chooses not to. Rather, his desire is, "I will fill hell with demons and men together" (Surah 32:13). Hell is Islam is an ever-burning fire in which the damned will spend eternity (Surah 5:36-37).

How does the Allah in Islam compare to the God of the Bible? The [6] God of the Bible is constant and does not change (Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8), unlike Allah who, according to the Qur'an, changes his revealed truths as he likes (Surah2:106). The God of the Bible loved the world so much that he [7] offered his only begotten Son, so that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16) His intent was not to condemn the world, but that through his Son, the world might be saved."

By: Wyatt Ciesielka "watch and Warn" Islam: At War with Christianity? Islam vs. Christianity September-October 2011 P26-27

Let us look in-depth into these claims expounding such fundamental differences between what is found in the Bible and the Qur'an. I would venture to say that parallel visions of cruelty and harsh Law are to be found in the Bible as well as the Qur'an. Also, God begetting a son, or, seeming discrepancies as to the fundamental nature of God can be resolved. All we need to do is look and find; to seek out the elemental truths of inner intent and meaning; not only the literal outward physical symbol for itself.

Note: Sometimes, branching off leads encountered while looking at questions based on Wyatt Ciesielka's article will be explored. Because of this, you will find the full Ten Commandments as seen in both the Bible and the Qur'an, comparative punishments for theft and adultery prescribed in the Bible and Qur'an etc.

### **The Angel Gabriel; His Role and Reality:**

#### **[1]**

First the statement by Wyatt Ciesielka, "the Qur'an asserts that it was through the angel Gabriel, not through the Holy Spirit, that Jesus Christ was conceived in Mary's womb (Surah 19:19-21).

My copy of the Qur'an does not seem to agree with the above statement. Indeed, The Qur'an and both Gospels telling of Jesus' birth would seem to be in agreement. I see no real point of difference.

*" Then We sent to her Our [God's] angel , and he appeared before her as a man in all respects. She said," I seek refuge from you to (Allah) Most Gracious:(come not near) if you fear Allah." He said," Nay, I am only a messenger from your Lord, to announce to you the gift of a holy son." She said," How shall I have a son, seeing that no man has touched me, and I am not unchaste?" He said," So it will be: your Lord says," That is easy for Me: and We wish to appoint him as a Sign to men and a Mercy from Us': it is a matter so decreed." (Surah 19;17-21 Maryam tr:Abdullah Yusuf Ali)*

In this Surah, the angel makes it clear he is not the one to conceive the son but is only a messenger. The Lord says, " That is easy for me," not the angel.

In two respective Gospels, Gabriel announces the birth to each parent. Both Gospels make it clear Mary was made pregnant by the Holy Spirit. Compare these stories with the writing in the Qur'an.

" How will this be," Mary asked the angel," since I am a virgin?" The angel answered," The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God."

Matthew also make it clear Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit. *" An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph (Mary's betrothed) in a dream and said," Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 1: 20)*

*"...The angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.*

*And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS." (Luke 1:26-32 KJB)*

As for the claim by many, " The Angel Gabriel is not a true representative of God," I give you the following Bible passages.

*" While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel and making my request to the Lord my God for his holy hill - while I was still in prayer, Gabriel, the man I had seen in the earlier vision [Da 8], came to me in swift flight about the time of the evening sacrifice. He instructed me and said to me,' Daniel, I have now*

*come to give you insight and understanding. As soon as you began to pray an answer was given, which I have come to tell you, for which you are highly esteemed."* (Daniel 9:20-23 NIV)

*" For the Lord himself will come down from heaven , with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. "*  
(Thessalonians 4:16-18)

A Baha'i reference states: "The angel Gabriel is the Holy Ghost, the intermediary between God and Muhammad; in Christianity it is symbolized by a dove; in the Bahá'í Dispensation, the spirit of God within Bahá'u'lláh is personified by a Maiden." (Marzieh Gail, Six Lessons on Islam, p. 18)

According to the traditions of Shí'ah Islam, the Holy Spirit personified as the Angel Gabriel descended upon her and addressed certain words to her. These were dictated to Ali, her husband, and were revealed to bring consolation to her soul in her bereavement. She died soon after the passing of her illustrious Father, the Prophet of Islam. (Adib Taherzadeh, The Revelation of Baha'u'llah v 1, p. 71)

### **Trinity or Blasphemy?**

[2]

Wyatt Ciesielka states: "Islam teaches that Christians blaspheme when they proclaim, 'Christ is the Son of God' (Surah 5:72). As is written in Surah 112."

A major point of contention and misunderstanding between Islam and Christianity is the Church doctrine of Jesus "begotten" as a literal physical son of God. Jesus is also seen as a personal part of a triune deity figure of "three in one".

Let us look at Surah 5:72 in context (Verses 70 - 77) and see what the Qur'an itself says.

*70: " We took the Covenant of the children of Israel and sent them Messengers. Every time there came to them a Messenger with what they themselves did not desire - some of these they called imposters, and some of these they go so far as to slay.*

*71: They thought there would be no trial or punishment; so they became blind and deaf; yet Allah, in mercy, turned to them; yet again, many of them became blind and deaf. But Allah sees well what they do.*

*72: They do blaspheme who say: " God is Christ the son of Mary." But Christ said, " O children of Israel! worship God, my Lord and your Lord." Whoever joins other gods with Allah, Allah will forbid him the Garden, and the Fire will be his abode. There will for the wrong-doers be no one to help.*

73: *They do blaspheme who say: God is one of three in a Trinity: for there is no god except one God (Allah). If they do not desist from their word of blasphemy, verily a grievous penalty will befall blasphemers among them.*

74: *Why do they not turn to Allah, and seek His forgiveness? For Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful!*

75: *Christ the son of Mary was no more than a Messenger; many were the Messengers that passed away before him. His mother was a woman of truth. They had both to eat their daily food. See how Allah makes His Signs clear to them; yet see in what ways they are deluded away from the truth!*

76: *Say: " Will you worship, besides Allah, something which has no power either to harm or benefit you? But Allah - He it is that hears and knows all things. "*

77: *Say: " O People of the Book! exceed not in your religion the bounds of what is proper, trespassing beyond the truth, nor follow the vain desires of people who went wrong in times gone by - who misled many, and strayed themselves from the even Way. " (Surah 5:70-77: The Table Spread)*

*" And Behold! Allah will say: " O Jesus the son of Mary! Did you say to men, ' Worship me and my mother as gods in derogation of Allah? " He will say: Glory to you: Never could I say what I had no right to say. Had I said such a thing, You would indeed have known it. You know what is in my heart, though I do not know what is in yours. For you know in full all that is hidden. " (Surah 5:116 'The Table Spread')*

*" In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Say: He is Allah, the One and Only; Allah, the Eternal, Absolute; He begets not, nor is He begotten; And there is none like unto Him. " (Surah 112 'Purity of Faith')*

Church proponents often are quick to dismiss any teaching that does not, at face value, agree with what is preached from a pulpit. Let us turn to the Bible itself and see how Jesus describes his "Christ" reality. What is the reality of the 'Son of God' and the Trinity? Guidelines for this search will stipulate that only 1st person narratives of Jesus himself will be used. Writings of apostles and followers will be put aside as personal opinion. The New Testament stories show that Jesus often had a hard time making his disciples understand the true meaning of his symbolic lessons and parables. Hence, it is evident, these authors were not inerrant in understanding. (see Mark 4:13) *"Then Jesus said to them, " Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable?"*

### **The Son of God; Described in the Bible:**

Let us look and see if we can glean a bit of the mystery of the reality of Jesus, the anointed of Christ. What is meant by "the Son of God"?

*"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee." ( Mark 1:1 -2 KJB*

*"The Jews were amazed and asked,' How did this man get such learning without having studied? Jesus answered,' My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me. If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own. He who speaks on his own does so to gain honor for himself, but he who works for the honor of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him." (John: 7:15-18 NIV)*

*" Then Jesus cried out,' When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me, When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me. "... There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day. For I did not speak of my own accord , but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. I know that His command leads to eternal life, So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say." (John: 12: 44-45 and 48-50 NIV)*

*" I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life." ( John:5:24 NIV)*

*" All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." (Luke 10:22 NIV)*

*[Jesus said], " I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to other towns also, because that is why I was sent." (Luke:4:43 NIV)*

*James and John ask Jesus a favor: " Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory. Jesus said,' You don't know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with? " we can" they answered. Jesus said to them," You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared." ( Mark 11: 37-40 NIV)*

Is Jesus a Messenger, a great Teacher, a lamp wherein shines the Light of the world; the Enlightenment of the Christ Spirit; the Flame of the Holy Ghost?

### **Parables and symbolism convey inner truths:**

Jesus often used parables as a construct of words to illustrate concepts beyond the meaning of mere words to describe. Below, Jesus is talking to his disciples after telling the "Parable of the Sower" (Mark 4).

*" When Jesus was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. He told them,' The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables so that they may be ever seeing but*

*never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven. Then Jesus said to them, 'Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable?'" (Mark 4: 10-13 NIV)*

Later in the Gospel of Mark, beginning in verse 30, Jesus says, " *What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground. Yet, when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade. With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.*" (Mark 30-33 NIV)

Indeed, how can subjects beyond the realms of human limited material based language be contained within the meaning of words? How would you describe "snow" to a Polynesian or the concept of "land ownership" within a Native American Tradition value system; where all is owned by the Great Spirit?

### **Of a man and the Word:**

Once again, a glimpse of the fundamental relationship between Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ within him, and the Father in Heaven is seen.

*" Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. "Abba Father", he said, " everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet, not what I will but what you will."* (Mark 14:35-36 NIV)

Jesus, in understandable human weakness and anguish, is pleading for deliverance. He also makes it clear, " All things are possible for you" - God. Of course, that means, all things are not possible for Jesus. Jesus is certainly not, as quoted from a children's song at a local church Sunday School, "the creator of the universe".

Submission to the Will of God is what Islam is truly all about. To be submissive is to be Muslim. The very word "Islam" means "submission to the will of God". Jesus was a perfect Muslim! Of course, for the masses, it is so easy for the perceived will of God to become embedded in doctrine and practices of churches, synagogues and mosques. Then these habitual actions and faith preaching becomes hypocritical.

Jesus laments the killing of the prophets sent before him. This passage is voiced just after Jesus has forcefully described the teachers of the law, the Pharisees, as hypocrites: " *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often have I longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.*" ( Matthew 23:37-39 NIV)

### **The Spirit of Christ Came Down from Heaven:**

Much of the Christ reality and trinity is seen in the following: *" Then Jesus declared, ' I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty, But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. (38) For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him that sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall loose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life. and I will raise him up at the last day.'*

*At this the Jews began to grumble about him because he said, ' I am the bread that came down from heaven.' (42) They said, ' is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ' I came down from heaven'?*

*(44) Jesus answered, ' No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.(45) It is written in the Prophets: They will all be taught by God. Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. (46)No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life.*

*I am the bread of life. Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. (51) I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I give for the life of the world." (John 6:35-51 NIV)*

THE TRINITY A Baha'i Viewpoint:

Question. -- What is the meaning of the Trinity, of the Three Persons in One?

Answer. -- "The Divine Reality, which is purified and sanctified from the understanding of human beings and which can never be imagined by the people of wisdom and of intelligence, is exempt from all conception. That Lordly Reality admits of no division; for division and multiplicity are properties of creatures which are contingent existences, and not accidents which happen to the self-existent.

The Divine Reality is sanctified from singleness, then how much more from plurality. The descent of that Lordly Reality into conditions and degrees would be equivalent to imperfection and contrary to perfection, and is, therefore, absolutely impossible. It perpetually has been, and is, in the exaltation of holiness and sanctity. All that is mentioned of the Manifestations and Dawning-places of God signifies the divine reflection, and not a descent into the conditions of existence.

God is pure perfection, and creatures are but imperfections. For God to descend into the conditions of existence would be the greatest of imperfections; on the contrary, His manifestation, His appearance, His rising are like the reflection of the sun in a clear, pure, polished mirror. All the creatures are evident signs of God, like the earthly beings upon all of which the rays of the sun shine. But upon the plains, the mountains, the trees and fruits, only a portion of the light shines, through which they become visible, and are

reared, and attain to the object of their existence, while the Perfect Man [1] is in the condition of a clear mirror in which the Sun of Reality becomes visible and manifest with all its qualities and perfections. So the Reality of Christ was a clear and polished mirror of the greatest purity and fineness. The Sun of Reality, the Essence of Divinity, reflected itself in this mirror and manifested its light and heat in it; but from the exaltation of its holiness, and the heaven of its sanctity, the Sun did not descend to dwell and abide in the mirror. No, it continues to subsist in its exaltation and sublimity, while appearing and becoming manifest in the mirror in beauty and perfection.

Now if we say that we have seen the Sun in two mirrors -- one the Christ and one the Holy Spirit -- that is to say, that we have seen three Suns, one in heaven and the two others on the earth, we speak truly. And if we say that there is one Sun, and it is pure singleness, and has no partner and equal, we again speak truly.

The epitome of the discourse is that the Reality of Christ was a clear mirror, and the Sun of Reality -- that is to say, the Essence of Oneness, with its infinite perfections and attributes -- became visible in the mirror. The meaning is not that the Sun, which is the Essence of the Divinity, became divided and multiplied -- for the Sun is one -- but it appeared in the mirror. This is why Christ said, "The Father is in the Son," meaning that the Sun is visible and manifest in this mirror.

The Holy Spirit is the Bounty of God which becomes visible and evident in the Reality of Christ. The Sonship station is the heart of Christ, and the Holy Spirit is the station of the spirit of Christ. Hence it has become certain and proved that the Essence of Divinity is absolutely unique and has no equal, no likeness, no equivalent.

This is the signification of the Three Persons of the Trinity. If it were otherwise, the foundations of the Religion of God would rest upon an illogical proposition which the mind could never conceive, and how can the mind be forced to believe a thing which it cannot conceive? A thing cannot be grasped by the intelligence except when it is clothed in an intelligible form; otherwise, it is but an effort of the imagination." (Abdu'l-Baha, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 113-115)

### **Jesus, the Christ Spirit of Truth and the Crucifixion:**

[3] Wyatt Ciesielka mentions: "The Qur'an also teaches that Jesus did not endure crucifixion; instead, someone else supposedly took his place (Surah 4:157)."

" Again, this Surah needs to be carefully looked at in light of other scripture; especially Biblical texts describing Jesus (the Christ) as descending down from heaven and being taken up to heaven. First, here is the Surah in question along with 158 that brings more meaning to 157. There is little to support the idea "Someone supposedly took his place". It appeared to the Jews they had crucified Jesus the son of Mary, but, the Qur'an also seems to say, " they surely did not kill Christ", the Messenger of Allah (God). Arguments as to the reality of the Christ arise but the doubts and questions are put to rest when it is said, " *Allah raised him up unto Himself.*"

*" That they said (in boast), " We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah" - but they did not kill him, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no certain knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they did not kill him. Nay, Allah raised him up unto Himself; and Allah is exalted in Power Wise." ( Surah 4: 157-158)*

This Surah again forces us to deal with the question: What is the nature or essential reality of the Christ? Is the Christ, the Son of God, simply a physical human being, or was Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Mary, Anointed with a reality of the Word; that Word described by the apostle John, *" In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning."* (John 1:1 NIV)

Hints of the spiritual dimension of the Christ Word abiding within Jesus are seen throughout the Bible. *" For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me." " For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life."* (John 6: 38, 40) Note that Jesus separates the Word of the Son from his own will. Jesus' body of flesh is of little importance, rather, the "Son of God" is what this is all about. Jesus of Nazareth, being a physical man, was crucified but the Son of God, the Christ Spirit of Truth was not. It is impossible to execute or crucify the Spirit of Truth, the Word or the Son of God. It is true, the Surah, as translated in the Qu'ran, may seem a little ambiguous but, this is also a case where the writings from other Scriptures, such as the Bible and Baha'i quotes, can be used together to find common agreement and meaning.

### **Symbolism of the Bread and Wine:**

Question. -- The Christ said: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die." (John 6:51) What is the meaning of this utterance?

Answer. -- This bread signifies the heavenly food and divine perfections. So, "If any man eateth of this bread" means if any man acquires heavenly bounty, receives the divine light, or partakes of Christ's perfections, he thereby gains everlasting life. The blood also signifies the spirit of life and the divine perfections, the lordly splendor and eternal bounty. For all the members of the body gain vital substance from the circulation of the blood.

In the Gospel of St. John, chapter 6, verse 26, it is written: "Ye seek Me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled."

It is evident that the bread of which the disciples ate and were filled was the heavenly bounty; for in verse 33 of the same chapter it is said: "For the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." It is clear that the body of Christ did not descend from heaven, but it came from the womb of Mary; and that which descended from the heaven of God was the spirit of Christ. As the Jews thought that Christ spoke of His body, they made objections, for it is said in the 42nd verse of the same chapter: "And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?"

Reflect how clear it is that what Christ meant by the heavenly bread was His spirit, His bounties, His perfections and His teachings; for it is said in the 63rd verse: "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing."

Therefore, it is evident that the spirit of Christ is a heavenly grace which descends from heaven; whosoever receives light from that spirit in abundance -- that is to say, the heavenly teachings -- finds everlasting life. That is why it is said in the 35th verse: "And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst."

Notice that "coming to Him" He expresses as eating, and "belief in Him" as drinking. Then it is evident and established that the celestial food is the divine bounties, the spiritual splendors, the heavenly teachings, the universal meaning of Christ. To eat is to draw near to Him, and to drink is to believe in Him. For Christ had an elemental body and a celestial form. The elemental body was crucified, but the heavenly form is living and eternal, and the cause of everlasting life; the first was the human nature, and the second is the divine nature. It is thought by some that the Eucharist is the reality of Christ, and that the Divinity and the Holy Spirit descend into and exist in it. Now when once the Eucharist is taken, after a few moments it is simply disintegrated and entirely transformed. Therefore, how can such a thought be conceived? God forbid! certainly it is an absolute fantasy.

To conclude: through the manifestation of Christ, the divine teachings, which are an eternal bounty, were spread abroad, the light of guidance shone forth, and the spirit of life was conferred on man. Whoever found guidance became living; whoever remained lost was seized by enduring death. This bread which came down from heaven was the divine body of Christ, His spiritual elements, which the disciples ate, and through which they gained eternal life. (Abdu'l-Baha, Some Answered Questions, p. 97-98)

[5] Wyatt Ciesielka writes: "Allah has the power to bring every person to salvation, he apparently chooses not to. Rather, his desire is, " I will fill hell with demons and men together" (Surah 32:13). Hell in Islam is an ever-burning fire in which the damned will spend eternity (Surah 5:36-37)."

Two very similar complimentary verses; one from the Bible followed by Surah 5:35-37 from the Qur'an are offered. Truly, it almost seems the Qur'an continues where the Bible left off. Mark introduces and tells the story while the Qur'an goes into more detail of the principles involved needed to achieve everlasting faith and detachment from the world through submission to God.

*" As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. " Good teacher" he asked, " What must I do to inherit eternal life?" " Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good - except God alone. You know the Commandments: Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor you father and mother." " Teacher" he declared, " all these I have kept since I was a boy." Jesus looked at him and loved him. " One thing you lack," he said, " Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have*

*treasure in heaven. Then come follow me." At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.*

*Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!" The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God." The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God." Peter said to him, "We have left everything to follow you!" "I tell you the truth," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age, and in the age to come, eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first." (Mark 10:17-31 NIV)*

*"O you who believe! do your duty to Allah, seek the means of approach to Him, and strive with might and main in His cause: that you may prosper.*

*) As to those who reject faith, - if they had everything on earth, and twice repeated, to give as ransom for the penalty of the Day of Judgment, it would never be accepted of them. Theirs would be a grievous Penalty. Their wish will be to get out of the fire, but never will they get out therefrom: their Penalty will be one that endures." (Surah 5:35-37)*

*(12) "If only you could see when the guilty ones will bend low their heads before their Lord saying, 'Our Lord! We have seen and we have heard; now send us back to the world: we will work righteousness for we do indeed now believe,*

*(13) If We had so willed, We could certainly have brought every soul its true guidance. but the Word from Me will come true. I will fill hell with jinns and men all together.'*

*(14) Then you taste - for you forget the Meeting of this Day of yours, and We too will forget you - you taste the penalty of eternity for your evil deeds!" (Surah 32:12-14)*

The above is a prime example of how Scripture is edited and used for one's own purpose. Instead of taking the verse (13) and using it to claim, in a rather negative fashion, "Allah has the power to bring every person to salvation, he apparently chooses not to." Would it not be more conducive to understanding if verse (13) is studied more in context and, at the same time, the meaning of the passage is given a chance to be understood within a larger framework; much as Christians study and pray for aid in understanding their Bible? What about the necessity of Man being given free will? Belief and obedience has little meaning if it results from automatic automated robotic thoughtless action. Certainly, God could have created a race of robots to praise and worship Him. But he wants man, through his God-given free will, himself to recognize and follow the Path to Enlightenment. This then, becomes, by design, a long-term evolutionary growth process. Many will fail to see the Light. But, God desires free action, free choice and free will. We

were created in His image to know and worship Him; not in the image of a computer program!

The vision of eternal hell fire is often spoken of in the Qur'an and is seen in the Bible also.

*" At that time [of the end] Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people - everyone whose name is found written in the Book - will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake; some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt." ( Daniel 12:1-2)*

*" This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matthew 13:49-50)*

*" He will reply, ' I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." (Matthew 25:45-46)*

*" For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit. The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him." (John 3: 34 -36)*

*" It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where the worm does not die and the fire is not quenched." (Mark 9:48)*

*" A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice, ' If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand, he too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name." (Revelations 14: 9-11)*

**[4]** Wyatt Ciesielka continues her dissertation: "counsel war against the "unbelievers"- (e.g. Surahs 4:101; 5:51; 9:29, and prescribe execution, or crucifixion, or the cutting off of hands and feet from opposite sides, or exile for those who wage war against Muhammad and Allah (Surah 5:33))."

Let's check out these Surahs and see what is said.

*" When you travel through the earth, there is no blame on you if you shorten your prayers, for fear the unbelievers may attack you: for the unbelievers are open enemies to you." (Surah 4:101)*

*" O you who believe! take not the Jews and the Christians for your friends and protectors: they are but friends and protectors to each other. And he amongst you who turns to them (for friendship) is of them. Verily Allah guides not a people unjust." (Surah 5:51)*

*" Fight those who do not believe in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which has been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the Religion of Truth, (even if they are) of the People of the Book, until they pay the Jizya with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued.*

*The Jews call Uzair a son of Allah, and the Christians call Christ the Son of Allah. That is a saying from their mouth; in this they but imitate what the Unbelievers of old used to say. Allah's curse be on them: how they are deluded away from the Truth!*

*They take their priests and their anchorites to be their lords in derogation of Allah, and (they take as their Lord) Christ the son of Mary; yet they were commanded to worship but one God (Allah): there is no god but He. Praise and glory to Him: Far is He from having the partners they associate with Him." (Surah 9:29-31)*

Indeed, Muhammad makes a point. When Jesus is asked which is the most important Commandment he replies, *" Hear O Israel, the Lord your God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength,. The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these." (Mark 12: 29-31)*

*"The punishment for those who wage war against Allah and His Messengers, and strive with might and main for mischief through the land is: execution, or crucifixion, or the cutting off of hands and feet from opposite sides, or exile from the land: that is their disgrace in this world, and a heavy punishment is theirs in the Hereafter." (Surah 5:33)*

This is in itself an accurate quote by the author. But she fails to recognize the following Surah, *" Except for those who repent before they fall into your power: in that case, know that Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful." (Surah 5: 34)*

As harsh as Islamic Law may seem, Judeo-Christian history, from Old Testament times to the present, is fraught with harsh treatment and atrocities committed in "service" to God. The Bible itself has no shortage of laws and punishments certainly no more severe than found in the Qur'an; including stoning to death as a penalty for breaking what may seem, in this day, rather trivial laws.

*" Anyone who blasphemes the name of the Lord must be put to death. The entire assembly must stone him. Whether an alien or native born, when he blasphemes the Name, he must be put to death." (Leviticus 24:16)*

*" If a man is found sleeping with another man's wife, both the man who slept with her and the woman must die. You must purge the evil from Israel.*

*If a man happens to meet in a town a virgin pledged to be married and he sleeps with her, you shall take both of them to the gate of that town and stone them to death - the girl*

*because she was in a town and did not scream for help, and the man because he violated another man's wife. You must purge the evil from among you." ( Deuteronomy 22: 22-24)*

*" If a man or woman living among you in one of the towns the Lord gives you is found doing evil in the eyes of the Lord your God in violation of his covenant, and contrary to my command has worshipped other gods, bowing down to them or to the sun or the moon or the stars of the sky, and this has been brought to your attention, then you must investigate it thoroughly. If it is true and it has been proved that this detestable thing has been done in Israel, take the man or woman who has done this evil deed to your city gate and stone that person to death." (Deuteronomy 17:2-5)*

*" If your very own brother, or your son or daughter, or the wife you love, or your closest friend secretly entices you, saying, ' Let us go and worship other gods (gods that neither you nor your fathers have known, gods of the peoples around you, whether near or far, from one end of the land to the other)' do not yield to him or listen to him. Show him no pity. Do not spare him or shield him. You must certainly put him to death. Your hand must be the first in putting him to death, and then the hands of the people. Stone him to death..." (Deuteronomy 13:6-10)*

*" If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who does not obey his father and mother and will not listen to them when they discipline him, his father and mother shall take hold of him and bring him to the elders at the gate of his town. They shall say to the elders, ' This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey us. He is a profligate and a drunkard.' Then, all the men in his town shall stone him to death. You must purge the evil from among you. All Israel will hear of it and be afraid." (Deuteronomy 21:18-21)*

*" While the Israelites were in the desert, a man was found gathering wood on the Sabbath Day. Those who found him gathering wood brought him to Moses and Aaron and the whole assembly, and they kept him in custody, because it was not clear what should be done to him. Then the Lord said to Moses, ' The man must die. The whole assembly must stone him outside the camp. So the assembly took him outside the camp and stoned him to death, as the Lord commanded Moses." (Numbers 15:32-36)*

It is commonly accepted hearsay that stoning as a death penalty is also found in the Qur'an. In fact, some Christians may even use this to argue against Islam proclaiming that, " Stoning is a barbaric act"! Yet, this act is obviously Biblical! Let us compare a couple passages from the Qur'an regarding the death penalty with what has been quoted above from Biblical Scripture.

First the penalty in the Qur'an for Adultery is very different than seen in the Bible (see Deut: 22:22 and 17:2 above) *" The woman and the man guilty of adultery or fornication - flog each of them with a hundred stripes: Let not compassion move you in their case, in a manner prescribed by Allah, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day: and let a party of the Believers witness their punishment. Let no man guilty of adultery or fornication marry any but a woman similarly guilty, or an Unbeliever: nor let any but such a man or an Unbeliever marry such a woman: to the Believers such a thing is forbidden." (Surah 24:2-3 The Light)*

Surprise! There is no mention of stoning to death in the Qur'an. It is considered an inhumane torture. Yet, victims are stoned to death under modern extremist Shariah Law in spite of the fact Stoning is not condoned in the Qur'an. This barbarous act has nothing to do with Islam. It has about as much in common with Islam as the European Inquisitions had with the teachings of Jesus!

In a conversation with my Jewish friend, I mentioned Stoning not being a part of the penalty options in the Qur'an at all; that one hundred lashes was applied for adultery instead of the, far more brutal and final, stoning to death so often seen in Old Testament Scripture. She replied, " You just don't get the full message. You are seeing only what you want to see and understanding only what you want to understand." I replied, " I see it as it is told. I will not try to make excuses by covering up barbaric Stoning practices with a mantle of mystical spirituality. If the Old Testament is an accurate representation of Law and Justice, as applied by the ancient Israelites, it paints a stern picture of a very ruthless time in Judeo-Christian history. I simply see it as it was reported; no excuses; no cover-ups."

It seems we all do search for and see what we want to see. Some, because of social upbringing and falling victim to certain propaganda, find satisfying excuses to dominate; even if it calls for extremist actions of terrorism, war and plunder. They get caught up in a strengthening feedback vortex of violence begetting violence; finding pride and gratification serving a specific political cause or country; promoting a plan for campaigning, hence, feeding the propaganda machine; personally converting others to follow their "path to victory". And, " Woe be to those who stand in the way or are seen as a threat. Banishment, imprisonment or death will serve our righteous cause by keeping them at bay."

Continued reading in the Qur'an reveals that allegations must have four supporting witnesses, as compared to two or three in the Bible (Deut: 17:6) Charges against a spouse can be carried out if the allegation is supported by four Oaths of truthfulness unto God followed by a fifth Oath invoking the curse of God if they are lying.

*" And those who launch a charge against chaste women, and produce not four witnesses to support their allegations - flog them with eighty stripes; and reject their evidence ever after; for such men are wicked transgressors. (5) Unless they repent thereafter and mend their conduct; for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (6) And for those who launch a charge against their spouses, and have (in support) no evidence but their own - their solitary evidence (can be received) if they bear witness four times (with an oath) by Allah that they are solemnly telling the truth; (7) and the fifth (oath) (should be) that they solemnly invoke the curse of Allah on themselves if they tell a lie. (8) But it would avert the punishment from the wife, if she bears witness four times (with an oath) by Allah, that (her husband) is telling a lie; And the fifth (oath) should be that she solemnly invokes the wrath of Allah on herself if (her accuser) is telling the truth. (10) If it were not for Allah's grace and mercy on you, and that Allah is Oft-Returning, full of wisdom - (you would be ruined indeed)." (Surah 24: 4-10) )*

Note the repeated lines extolling the merciful forgiveness of Allah (God) (see verses 5 and 10 above). It seems many who see the Qur'an and Allah as a fearful unforgiving God, who is radically different than the Christian God as portrayed in the Bible, are seeing Allah through the faulty vision of Western media and church based bias. It is true that, in the present state of world affairs, much hatred and dissension is propagated by radicals in the name of Islam. But, would it be fair to judge Christianity based on the historical actions of extremists and fanatics who twist the truth in the Bible toward their own ends? Is it fair to judge the merits of Jesus based on the many heinous acts afflicted upon humanity by his followers; who follow by name only? Let us in all decency, give Islam the same sincere careful thoughtful look, from an open heart of forgiveness and respect, as expected by Christians when outsiders are investigating the Christian Faith.

But it becomes difficult for many in the West and Middle East to embrace, or even tolerate, Islam. The constant fighting to wipe out Israel, a nation established by the UN after WWII, the keeping of the misplaced Palestinians refugees, who formerly lived in Israel, in a perpetual ghetto; not allowing Palestinians born in Egypt and Syria to obtain Citizen's papers, while showing many more instances of fanatical intolerance towards those not of their own highly politicized revolutionary "holy war" subjugating motivated organizations.

. By the way, another Middle East country, the Islamic Republic of Iran, to this day, has never recognized the legal existence of Israel. In addition, Iran, the birthplace of the Baha'i Faith, has historically persecuted and outlawed its Baha'i members; legally denying their existence. Considered as apostates of Islam, Baha'is have no legal rights. They are denied citizenship. Finding employment or even educating their own children is very difficult. Some are tortured and/or imprisoned simply for being a prominent Baha'i. Many leave for the West hoping to find new lives for themselves: Yes, it does make you think of the Christian past and their treatment of Africans and American Indians. Again, why are such ungodly deeds done in the name of God...or Allah?

### **The Ten Commandments Side By Side:**

" And God spoke all these words;

'I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

**1:** You shall have no other gods before Me. (Exodus)

" And your God (Allah) is One God. There is no God but He, Most Gracious, Most Merciful." (2:163 Qur'an)

**2:** You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

" Do not join in worship others with Allah: for false worship is indeed the highest wrongdoing." (31:13 Qur'an)

**3:** You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

" And make not Allah's name an excuse in your oaths against doing good, or acting rightly, or making peace between persons; for Allah is One Who hears and knows all things." (2:224-225 Qur'an)

**4:** Remember the Sabbath Day keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them. but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath Day and made it holy.

" (124) The Sabbath was only made strict for those who disagreed as to its observance; but Allah will judge between them on the Day of Judgment as to their differences. Invite all to the Way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for your Lord knows best, who have strayed from His Path, and who receives guidance." (62) " O you who believe! When the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday (the Day of Assembly), hasten earnestly to the Remembrance of Allah, and leave off business and traffic: That is best for you if you but knew." (16:124-125 and 62:9 Qur'an)

**5:** Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God has given you.

" Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honor. And, out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility, and say: ' My Lord! bestow on them Your Mercy even as they cherished me in childhood.' Your Lord knows best what is in your hearts: if you do deeds of righteousness, verily He is Most Forgiving to those who turn to Him again and again in true repentance." (17:23-25 Qur'an)

**6:** You shall not commit murder.

"Nor take life - which Allah has made sacred - except for just cause." (17:33 Qur'an)

**7:** You shall not commit adultery.

" Nor come near to adultery: for it is a shameful deed and an evil, opening the road to other evils." (17:32 Qur'an)

**8:** You shall not steal.

*" (38) As to the thief, male or female, cut off his or her hands: a punishment by way of example, from Allah, for their crime: and Allah is exalted in power. (39) ,But if the thief repent after his crime, and mend his conduct, Allah turns to him in forgiveness; for Allah is forgiving, Most Merciful. (40) Don't you know that to Allah (alone) belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth? He punishes whom He pleases, and He forgives whom He pleases: and Allah has power over all things." ( 5:38-40 Qur'an)*

If only verse (38) above is read by itself the punishment for theft seems harsh indeed! But (39) mentions repentance as an option. Verse (40) lays out the spiritual magnitude the act of theft represents. A thief, in a sense, is acting against God's Dominion and what has been ordained by the All-Wise.

The Bible contains a similar penalty for a very different action. " If two men are fighting and the wife of one of them comes to rescue her husband from his assailant, and she reaches out and seizes him by his private parts, you shall cut off her hand. Show her no mercy." (Deuteronomy 25:11-12 NIV)

Cutting off hands, feet and gouging out of eyes is also used in the Bible as a means of emphasizing the seriousness of sin, of turning away from the Will of God.

*" And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands and to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell." (Mark:9 42-47) Also see (Matthew:5:29-30)*

By contrast, the penalty for theft as stated in the Bible within (Leviticus 6:1-7) calls for restitution," (5)...*"He must make restitution in full, add a fifth of the value to it and give it all to the owner on the day he presents his guilt offering...in this way the priest will make atonement for him before the Lord, and he will be forgiven for any of these things he did that made him guilty."*

Remember, these are social laws. forgiveness recognized among the people allows one to resume their life in full. In addition, social laws, and especially the severity of the penalty, reflects the conditions of the time and place they are applied.

More on application of fairness and justice in business dealings is seen below. Of course, truthfulness and lying are an integral part of all dealings.

*" Give full measure when you measure, and weigh with a balance that is straight: that is the most fitting and the most advantageous in the final determination." (17:35 Qur'an)*

And in the Bible:

*" Do not have two differing weights in your bag - one heavy, one light. Do not have two differing measures in your house - one large, one small. You must have accurate and honest weights and measures, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you. For the Lord your God detests anyone who does these things, anyone who deals dishonestly." (Deuteronomy 25:13-15 NIV)*

**9:** You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

*" And cover not Truth with falsehood, nor conceal the truth when you know what it is." (2:42 Qur'an)*

*" O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor: for Allah can protect you. Follow not the lusts of your hearts, lest you swerve, and if you distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well-acquainted with all that you do." (4:135 Qur'an)*

*" O you who believe! stand out firmly for Allah, as witness to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to Piety; and fear Allah. For Allah is well-acquainted with all that you do." (5:8 Qur'an)*

**10:** You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or his maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor'." (Exodus 20:1-17 NIV Ten Commandments)

*" Nor strain your eyes in longing for the things We [God] have given for enjoyment to parties of them, the splendor of the life of this world, through which We test them: but the provision of your Lord is better and more enduring." (20:131 Qur'an)*

### **Deception by David in the Bible:**

Here is a good example of deception and, what modern era people would consider as, cruel and inhumane treatment as found in the Bible. The figure of David in Old Testament history is well remembered as the youthful hero who killed the mighty warrior Goliath with a simple shepherd's slingshot. Less known to the general public is the fact that King Saul became jealous of David's resulting popularity. Saul attempted to kill David on several occasions. David eventually was forced to flee Israel and went on to live with the Philistines where he was well received as a "prize warrior defecting from the enemy". Seldom related though is the continuing story of brutal deception played out by David in order to win admiration and honor from the Philistines themselves. David claimed to be raiding and bringing back spoils from villages in Israel but, actually, he was attacking and killing everyone in, what scholars believe might be, neighboring Philistine villages to impress his superiors. David felt he had to kill all the citizens to prevent news leaking out by witnesses as to what he was actually doing. I give you the Biblical account.

*" David lived in Philistine territory a year and four months. Now David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites, the Girzites, and the Amalekites. [towns neighboring Philistia: see NIV Bible study guide] Whenever David attacked an area, he did not leave a man or woman alive, but took sheep and cattle, donkeys and camels, and clothes. Then he returned to Achish [the ruler or King of Gath]. When Achish asked, ' Where did you go raiding today?' David would say, ' Against the Negev of Judah' or' Against the Negev of Jerahmeel 'or' Against the Negev of the Kenites'. He did not leave a man or woman alive to be brought to Gath, for he thought, ' they might inform on us and say, ' This is what David did.' And such was his practice as long as he lived in Philistine territory. Achish trusted David and said to himself, ' He has become so odious to his people, the Israelites, that he will be my servant forever." (1st Samuel 27:7-12 NIV)*

### **Both the Bible and Qur'an portray God as a warrior:**

Many Christians traditionally condemn Islam and the Qur'an as a harsh faith where war and warriors are an anathema to a loving God, Christian belief and what is taught in the Bible. Here are a few selected verses (out of many others available) that may make you think again about this matter.

*" The Lord is a warrior; the Lord is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his army he has hurled into the sea. The best of Pharaoh's officers are drowned in the Red Sea. The deep waters have covered them; they sank to the depths like a stone.*

*Your right hand, O Lord, was majestic in power. Your right hand, O Lord, shattered the enemy. In the greatness of Your Majesty you threw down those who opposed you.*

*You unleashed your burning anger; it consumed them like stubble. By the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up. The surging waters stood firm like a wall; the deep waters congealed in the heart of the sea.*

*The enemy boasted, ' I will pursue, I will overtake them'. They sank like lead in the mighty waters,*

*Who among the gods is like you, O Lord? Who is like you - majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders." (Exodus 15:3-11 NIV)*

*" Who is that coming from Edom, from Bozrah, with his garments stained crimson? Who is this robed in splendor striding forward in the greatness of strength? "It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save.' Why are your garments red, like those of one treading the winepress? ' I have trodden the winepress alone; from the nations no one was with me. I trampled them in my anger and trod them down in my wrath; their blood spattered my garments, and I stained all my clothing. For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and the year of my redemption has come.*

*I looked, but there was no one to help. I was appalled that no one gave support; so my own arm worked salvation for me, and my own wrath sustained me. I trampled the nations in my anger; in my wrath I made them drunk and poured their blood on the ground'." (Isaiah 63:1-6 NIV)*

*" And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down - that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.*

*Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say, ' Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.*

*Therefore rejoice, you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury because he knows that his time is short."* (Revelations 12:7-12 NIV)

*" I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire and on his head are many crowns, He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God.*

*The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horse and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron scepter. He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS."* ( Revelations 19:11-16 NIV)

Suffice it to say, there is some gruesome warrior-like stuff in the Bible too; at least in so far as glorifying strength in battle is concerned. Yet, maybe these verses are illustrating and glorifying the Almighty God in a way the ancients could understand. Well, if this is true in the Bible, why not in the Qur'an also? Or must they be seen differently simply because one is mentioned in the Qur'an and the other is told in the Bible?

### **God is Eternal and Unchanging:**

[6] Wyatt Ciesielka states: "The God of the Bible is constant and does not change (Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8), unlike Allah who, according to the Qur'an, changes his revealed truths as he likes (Surah2:106)."

Here is (Surah 2:106 'The Heifer') "*None of our Revelations do we abrogate or cause to be forgotten, but We substitute something better or similar; don't you know that Allah has power over all things?"*

I ask: does this contradict in any way what is seen in the Bible when Jesus updates or restates the Laws of Moses? phrases such as, " Do not think I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them." ", You have heard it said to the people long ago...but I tell you..." You have heard that it was said...but

I tell you..." " It has been said...but I tell you..." starting in (Matthew 5:17); Is not Jesus substituting "something better or similar"?

Both the Qur'an and the Bible tell of a Time of the End in very similar ways.

From the Bible:

*" Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, " Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.*

*He who was seated on the throne said, " I am making everything new!" Then he said, " Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." He said to me, " It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all of this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars - their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death." (Revelation:21:1-8 NIV)*

The Qur'an:

*" One day the earth will be changed to a different earth, and so will be the heavens, and men will be marshaled forth, before Allah, the One, the Irresistible. And you will see the sinners of that day bound together in fetters; Their garments of liquid pitch, and their faces covered with Fire; That Allah may requite each soul according to its deserts; and verily Allah is swift in calling to account. Here is a Message for mankind: let them take warning therefrom, and let them know that He is no other than One God: let men of understanding take heed." (14:48-52) Qur'an)*

*" Then, when one blast is sounded on the Trumpet, and the earth is moved, and its mountains, and they are crushed to powder at one stroke; On that Day shall the Great Event come to pass; And the sky will be rent asunder, for it will that Day be flimsy; And the angels will be on its sides, and eight will, that Day, bear the Throne of your Lord above them.*

*That Day you shall be brought to Judgment; not an act of yours that you hide will be hidden. Then he that will be given his Record in his right hand will say, " Ah here! you read my Record! I did really understand that my Account would one Day reach me!"*

*And he will be in a life of Bliss, In a Garden on high. The Fruits thereof will hang in bunches low and near. You eat and you drink with full satisfaction; because of the good that you sent before you, in the days that are gone.*

*And he that will be given his Record on his left hand, "Ah! would that my record had not been given to me! And that I had never realized how my account stood! Ah! would that death had made an end of me! Of no profit to me has been my wealth! My power has perished from me!"*

*The stern command will say, " You seize him, and you bind him, and you burn him in the Blazing Fire." (69:13-31 Qur'an)*

Yet, the big overwhelming question remains: How can this seeming unstoppable tide of interfaith rancor, as illustrated in the quoted writing near the beginning of this article, be over ridden? Many Christians claim to desire, and thus look forward to a "deliverance"; of being "raptured" off this world. A great war of Good verses Evil; as ordained and Willed by God; an "Armageddon". In other words, embedded in the Christian psyche is a hope for the "Time of the End", a desire for Jesus to literally triumph over and destroy all other creeds and faiths, even including Christian sects seen as "cults" within their own ranks can be seen as "liable to have fallen from grace".

Fundamentalist Christians visiting Jerusalem and gazing at the Al-Aqsa Mosque sitting on the Dome of the Rock, the very place where, traditionally, the ancient Holy Jewish Temple stood; see this third holiest place in Islam as fundamentally "unbiblical ". Christians believe the Mosque must be destroyed before the Jewish Temple can be rebuilt. Only then, can the prophecy of End Times, Rapture and Armageddon be fulfilled. They see no room for the Mosque. In their minds, it should not be there at all! Joy would be felt deep in their hearts if lightning, a stray missile, earthquake or other act of God would obliterate the Mosque!

Conversely, Fundamentalist Muslims believe Allah (God) wants everyone to convert to Islam. Stories abound, (see: Wyatt Ciesielka "watch and Warn" Islam: At War with Christianity? Islam vs. Christianity September-October 2011 P26-27) wrought with fear and foreboding when dealing with Islamic desire for world dominion. Radical Islam truly believes a holy Jihad must be fought against the "Evil West". Only when ungodly deeds and corruption are caste out can we all be purified and made clean.

The banner of a mutually righteous "triumphalism" is held high by both parties. Both sides march onward, believing their cause to be nothing less than the cause of God Himself. Those who may want reconciliation and peace are silenced by those proclaiming, " God's will must be served. The infidels must be crushed!"

Might Armageddon be a self fulfilling prophecy; a direct result of intolerance brought from the respective faiths of Islam and Christianity themselves?

Note: Now my Christian friends tell me, " You are becoming confused and led astray by looking at writings and studying other scriptures outside the bible. You are involving yourself with satanic counterfeits. Only Jesus can save you."

Let us pray.

PS:

If scripture is studied with different objectives in mind; that is, looking for common messages and truths, looking for connections and consistencies; perhaps there is an answer.

Mohammad claims receiving a revelatory Word from God, much as Jesus did. Both Messengers call themselves "messengers; that," these words are not my own but come from the Father who sent me; that I say only what the Father tells me to say and have no authority of my own." (see John:7:16, 12:49,14:24 and John:5:30; and Acts 2:22 Bible). Their reality is not what you see, but of the unseen. (see 69:38-52 Qur'an) below.

*" So I do call to witness what you see and what you do not see, That this is verily the word of an honored Messenger; It is not the word of a poet; little it is you believe! Nor is it the word of a soothsayer: Little admonition it is you receive.*

*This is a Message sent down from the Lord of the Worlds. And if the Messenger were to invent any saying in Our name, We should certainly seize him by his right hand, And We should certainly then cut off the artery of his heart: Nor could any of you withhold him from Our wrath.*

*But verily this is a Message for the God-fearing. And We certainly know that there are those amongst you those who reject it. But truly Revelation is a cause of sorrow for the unbelievers.*

*But verily it is Truth assured certainty. So glorify the name of your Lord Most High. "*  
(69:38-52 Qur'an)

One major obstacle preventing mutual acceptance is that Christians and Muslims cling to their own faiths as representing the final Word of God on earth. yet, both tell of a future coming Messiah; a Spirit of Truth, an Honorable Messenger who will usher in a new world order.

The Qur'an:

*" When the sun with its gracious light is folded up; When the stars fall, losing their luster; When the mountains vanish like a mirage;...When the Scrolls are laid open; When the Word on High is unveiled; When the Blazing Fire is kindled to fierce heat; And when the Garden is brought near; Then shall each soul know what it has put forward.*

*So verily I call to witness the Planets - that recede, go straight, or hide: And the Night as it dissipates; And the Dawn as it breathes away the darkness;*

*Verily this is the word of a most honorable messenger. Endued with Power, with rank before the Lord of the Throne, with authority there, and faithful to his trust. And your Companion is not one possessed; And without doubt he saw him in the clear horizon, Neither does he withhold begrudgingly a knowledge of the Unseen. Nor is it the word of an evil spirit accursed. Then whither do you go?*

*Verily this is no less than a Message to all the worlds: (With profit) to whoever among you wills to go straight: But you shall not will except as Allah Wills - the Cherisher of the Worlds." (81:1-3, 10-29 Qur'an)*

The Bible:

*"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you unto all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you. In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me." (John 16:12-16 NIV)*

Passages such as these in the Bible and Qur'an make it clear that the Message or Light of Truth as extolled by both Jesus and Muhammad is an ongoing reality. Wisdom does not end with either Jesus or Mohammad; it continues onward leading us onward.

So who or what is this "Most Honorable Messenger" or "Spirit of Truth" that is promised by Mohammad and Jesus respectively?

How does this promised future event relate to the popular Christian notion of complete destruction, rapture or "Time of the End"?

I leave you with this thought from the Lord's Prayer

**"Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven.  
For Thine is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory Forever Amen."**