

PASSIVE ENDORSEMENT CWMF says, "NO"

On Sunday 22 May 2011 an invited guest speaker known for his Calvinistic position delivered a presentation on ***Perfect Love Casts out the fear of Islam*** to the morning congregation at ***Christian Witness Ministries Fellowship***, Brisbane. The speaker used John 4:7-21(NIV) as his text after having expressed his strong recommendation for the book, ***Encountering the World of Islam***, by Keith E. Swartley ¹ as providing a biblical approach to the question of Islam.

The presentation introduced heresy to the congregation including but not limited to inferences that the Allah of the Qur'an (the god of Islam) and the God of the Bible are one and the same, and that the Jesus of the Qur'an is the same as the Jesus of the Bible. As support for this assertion, the speaker made reference to verses of the Qur'an and Bible. He stated, "If you know the Qur'an as well as your Bible you should know that Surah 3:55 says something about Jesus being raised from the dead".² He went on to refer to Surah 19:33, 34 before making the statement that Christians "start a debate on matters that do not matter the slightest little bit – What you believe about God may not be the same as what I understand about God – it is not what you and I understand about God it is the Word of God that matters."³

The incident raised a controversy that strikes at the very heart of ***CWM's*** existence and could not be allowed to go unchallenged. As Philip Powell, founder of CWM and pastor of CWM Fellowship, was overseas at the time, the elders of Christian Witness Ministries Fellowship made a statement to the congregation, whilst Frank Turvey and B. Michael Bigg have written the following summary, analysis and rebuttal. This issue could well be one of the most significant issues of our time in the apostatising of the Church.⁴

Though the speaker did reference the Qur'an, it is a pity this speaker did not spend more time in the Qur'an, as he suggested he had, as he would have found that the Qur'an teaches, among other things:

❖ **Christians have forgotten part of the divine revelations they received:**

"From those, too, who call themselves Christians, We did take a covenant, but they forgot a good part of the message that was sent them: so we estranged them, with enmity and hatred between the one and the other, to the day of judgment. And soon will Allah show them what it is they have done." – Qur'an 5:14

❖ **Jesus is not the Son of God:**

"O People of the Scripture! Do not exaggerate in your religion nor utter aught concerning Allah save the truth. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only a messenger of Allah, and His word which He conveyed unto Mary, and a spirit from Him. So believe in Allah and His messengers, and say not "Three" - Cease! (it is) better for you! - Allah is only One Allah. Far is it removed from His Transcendent Majesty that He should have a son.

¹ ***Encountering the World of Islam*** (EWI), by Keith E. Swartly, is the prescribed text for the course of the same name conducted by *Pioneers* (a missionary organisation started in 1976 by Ted Fletcher) and *Perspectives Study Program* (which is a ministry of the U.S. Center for World Mission). And though this book and course may be informative for the mission field, it does not mean that its content should be the basis of Christian doctrine – ***BMB***

² Concerning Surah 3:55 see the appendix.

³ Concerning Surah 19:33-34 see the appendix.

⁴ cf. *American Churches To Embrace Chrislam on June 26, 2011*, <http://www.nowtheendbegins.com/blog/?p=5441>.

His is all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. And Allah is sufficient as Defender." – Qur'an 4:171

"It is not befitting to (the majesty of) Allah that He should beget a son. Glory be to Him! When He determines a matter, He only says to it, 'Be,' and it is." – Qur'an 19:35

❖ **Those who believe that Jesus is God's Son are accursed:**

"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! " – Qur'an 9:30

❖ **Jesus was not crucified:**

"And because of their saying: We slew the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, Allah's messenger - they slew him not nor crucified him, but it appeared so unto them; and lo! those who disagree concerning it are in doubt thereof; they have no knowledge thereof save pursuit of a conjecture; they slew him not for certain." – Qur'an 4:157

The speaker made it clear on more than one occasion that anyone who entered into debate over the difference between the two positions was entering "scholasticism back into the middle ages". He indicated anyone taking this position had "lost the plot". He took the position that if you wanted to reach the Muslims with the Gospel you had "to look beyond all of that including their funny clothes" and not allow fear to be the driver and not reach out to them. He challenged the listeners "so what does a Muslim believe – to start Muslim has 99 names for God and his prayer beads Every one of those 99 names of God are in the scripture ... our Word of God."

Allah is the *name* of the god of Islam. In fact, Allah was the *name* of the chief god among the numerous idols in the Ka'aba in Mecca, which represented the deities of the Arab tribes in Mecca and its surrounding areas, and deities of travellers passing through in trade-caravans. Allah was the god of the local Quraish, Muhammad's tribe, before Islam was invented. Muhammad smashed the idols but kept the black foundation stone of the Ka'aba which is still kissed today by Muslims. Muhammad also kept the *name* Allah for the god of Islam (its sign was the crescent moon) in order to appeal to his own tribe.

Allah has definite characteristics: he is not a father, has no son, is not a triune being but a single entity who destroys rather than saves sinners, has compassion on only the righteous (but hasn't all men sinned??), does not deal in grace but only rewards good deeds, has no way to redeem the lost sinners, etc. **Allah is not the God of the Bible.**

The biblical God is called Yahweh (or Jehovah⁵) nearly 9,000 times. Yet Allah is not called by that name even once in the Qur'an. Why not, if Allah is the same God? God is also referred to as Elohim more than 2,500 times in the Bible, but again that word never appears for Allah in the Qur'an.

Today a Muslim is one who submits to the god Allah. To a Muslim the God of the Bible who is described as triune is offensive and pagan, reminding them of what Mohammed destroyed. This is recorded in their Qur'an. The Islamic understanding of the trinity is of 3 separate gods and not a single, unified one.

⁵ Jehovah is a mispronunciation introduced by non-Jewish scholars who did not realize that the vowel pointers (marks/characters) in the Name of God (YHWH) were for Adonai (lord) and were a prompt for Jewish persons to say Adonai rather than the name of God – which many regarded as too holy to be uttered.

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They are unbelievers who say God is a third of three. No God is there but one God. – Qur'an 5:72

While Muslims affirm Jesus' virgin conception, they deny He had any pre-existence that would imply He is God. To call a prophet God is the ultimate in blasphemy to them. The God of the Bible identifies himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Jacob's name is later changed to the name Israel, being the father of the 12 tribes of Israel. The God of the Bible calls Jerusalem the city of David and that the Messiah would descend from his lineage. The Bible does not mention Mecca or Medina but Jerusalem – 800 times. Yet Jerusalem is not mentioned in the Qur'an, which Muslim would claim as their own.

If the speaker was impressed by the writings of his reference book then it is uncertain that he understands the Biblical position and doctrine of the Trinity. An overview of this book on the *Word Bookstore* website indicates that one can "investigate Islam through this positive and hopeful 600-page book. Encountering the World of Islam explores the Muslim world and God's plan for Muslims. Read from a collection of writings about the life of Muhammad, the history of Islamic civilization, Islamic beliefs, Muslims today, and the everyday lives of Muslims from Morocco to Indonesia. Gain insight into diverse Muslim cultures and worldviews as well as Christian outreach toward Muslims, our response to Islam, and prayer for the Muslim world. Writings from more than 80 different practitioners will introduce you to the multi-faceted world of Islam. This book is used as the textbook for the Encountering the World of Islam course."

The approach by this speaker is similar to that taken by a number of American Presbyterian churches where recently,

... the Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church in Houston along with Christian communities in Atlanta, Seattle, and Detroit will initiate a series of sermons that have been designed to produce an ecumenical reconciliation between Christianity and Islam. In addition to the sermons, the Sunday school lessons will centre on the inspired teachings of the Prophet Mohammad, and Qur'ans will be placed in the pews next to the Bibles...

The concept of Chrislam, now embraced by such preachers as Rick Warren and Robert Schuller, appears to have emerged from a program on the meaning of "love your neighbor" at Grace Fellowship Church in Atlanta, Georgia. "In 2001, like most Americans, we were pretty awakened to the true Islamic presence in the world and in the United States," says Jon Stallsmith, the outreach minister at Grace Fellowship. "Jesus says we should love our neighbors. We can't do that without having a relationship with them."⁶

Stallsmith maintains that a rapprochement between Muslims and Christians can be achieved by the fact that Jesus is mentioned twenty-five times in the Qur'an.⁷

The Berean Call website referenced the June 26 initiative⁸ called "Faith Shared: Uniting in Prayer and Understanding," noting that it was co-sponsored by the *Interfaith Alliance* and *Human Rights First*. Leaders of the two Washington-based groups said the event hopes to demonstrate respect for Islam in the wake of Qur'an burnings in recent months.

⁶ It must be noted, though, that Jesus made statements in regards to loving thy neighbour (Matt 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27) and He also made statements regarding loving your enemy (Matt 5:43-44; Luke 6:27-35). Enemies and neighbours are two completely different groups – yet this distinction is being ignored. And Jesus' answer, in Luke 10:36, does not make an unqualified equivalency between neighbour and enemy.

⁷ *Chrislam Starts to Spread in America*. <http://www.nowtheendbegins.com/blog/?p=1366>.

⁸ Adelle Banks, "Pulpit pals: Christians, Jews, Muslims plan shared worship," Religion News Service, 17 May 2011.

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"More than 50 churches in 26 states already have committed to the initiative, including the Washington National Cathedral.

Tad Stahnke, director of policy and programs for Human Rights First [said] "that Americans do respect religious differences and reject religious bigotry and the demonization of Islam or any other religion'."

While this speaker's desire to reach out to the Muslims is not in question, his approach must be questioned. What sort of foundation is one building with a Muslim if you commence with deception by "looking beyond" to find common ground. If you agree the God of the Bible is the same as Allah then the ground you are standing on is shifting sand. You would have no answer to the question from your Muslim friend, "Why don't you join us?"

The real issue was what happened in the CWMF congregation as this speaker delivered his rubbish and twisted thinking. A number of persons became concerned and agitated as the presentation continued and the heresies increased. Eventually several of them sought out two elders and requested a meeting with them at the back of the auditorium during the meeting. Of those expressing their concern it was agreed that at the end of this presentation a statement had to be made in respect of the position held by the eldership of CWMF. It was further determined that there would not be an opportunity for the speaker to debate his position as the impact on the young and new Christians would not be profitable. The men entered into prayer and one elder was selected to bring the meeting to an end as quickly as possible.

It was obvious that a number of other mature Christians in the congregation were not supportive of the position presented by the speaker and asked questions and made statements at the conclusion of the presentation making it more difficult to bring it to an end. The speaker was thanked for attending, a statement made in grace and meekness yet positive that the speaker's position was not that of the CWMF.

Discussions with the speaker at the end of the meeting resolved nothing. The speaker stated that the elders held a different view to him on such matters of importance in reaching out to Muslims. He did not see heresy in promulgating that the Allah of the Qur'an and the God of the Bible are the same.

But what about the role of the elders? Were they correct in their action? See Titus 1:5-16.

On the return of Philip Powell from his overseas trip arrangements have been put in place for this speaker to meet with Daniel Scott for the opportunity to discuss the position held by the speaker. Let us pray that this meeting actually goes ahead and that the speaker obtains a deeper understanding on this subject and changes his mind.

WHAT ABOUT CHRISLAM?

By B. Michael Bigg

Chrislam is a syncretistic or blended religion which merges elements of Christianity and Islam. There are two different forms of Chrislam:

- One started in the 1980s in Nigeria by Tela Tella, and called Ifeoluwa,
- The other in 1999 by a Muslim, Prophet (Dr.) Samson Saka, who after he went on a Hajj to Mecca, says, "The Lord told me, 'Make peace between Christian and Muslim.'"

Chrislam's ideologies are being formally developed, in the United States, by the **Islamic-Christian National Dialogue Committee**, the proponents of which include Rick Warren and Robert Schuller. But despite what some may see as such high profile endorsement,⁹ is Chrislam a valid thing, let alone a good thing?

Are Christianity and Islam compatible?

The Focus on Similarities

Those endorsing Chrislam, and its leaders and teachers, wish to highlight the similarities between Christianity and Islam, such as:

- Abraham as "our" Father,
- Regard for biblical prophets: Moses, David, etc.
- Similarity of stories in the Bible and the Qur'an: e.g. the Flood.
- Jesus born of the virgin Mary
- The names/attributes of God

Though it is legitimate to note these similarities between Islam and Christianity ... are the similarities themselves legitimate?

YES in some cases they are, but not in all:

- Abraham did have more than one son. He had Ishmael (Gen 16), Isaac (Gen 21), and others to Keturah (cf. Gen 25:1). Nevertheless, the promise of redemption was through the freeborn Isaac and not Ishmael. Indeed the entire story and history of God's plan of redemption was through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob/Israel and through the line of Judah. Isaac's son Esau, who was also Jacob's brother, aligned himself through marriage with Ishmael. The descendants of Ishmael and Esau were (and to this day are) enemies of Israel.
- Islam's regard for biblical prophets is based on Muhammad's and the Qur'an's assertion that they are Muslims. Islam claims that because these prophets were truly men of God, they came back to God, i.e. reverted to being Muslims (since according to their teaching Adam was a Muslim); and this (reverting) is what everyone does when they believe the Qur'an's teachings.
- Though there are matching historical events, places and people in the Qur'an, the timeline in the Qur'an places events in the wrong order, compared to the Bible. A prophet of the God of the Bible would not get this wrong (or, for that matter, a person who knew the Bible, and not just heard stories on one's travels, would likewise not get this wrong).

⁹ We at CWM do not endorse Warren or Schuller as sound Christian Leaders. Rather we see them both as heretics.

- Believing Jesus is born of the Virgin Mary does not make two theologies compatible.
- There are similarities in names, attributes and titles given to many ancient gods – many of which match those given to the God of the Bible. Simply because Allah has 99 names, many of which correlate to names/attributes given to God in the Bible, doesn't make Allah the god of the Bible any more than Rome's Cupid (the god of **love**), Clementia (goddess of **mercy**); or the Sumerian "god of heaven" Anu.

But What about the Differences? –

Compare the Greek with the KJV English

Οὕτως γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον, ὥστε τὸν υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ ἔδωκεν, ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν μὴ ἀπόληται ἀλλ' ἔχη ζωὴν αἰώνιον.

*For God **so** loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life **John 3:16**.*

The "so" in "For God so loved the world" in the Greek text of John 3:16 is the word *hōutos*. This is not a word meaning quantity, as if this verse is talking about the amount or degree of God's love; this word means "in this way", "in this manner". This is the crunch! This is the non-negotiable element of Christian doctrine which makes Chrislam a misnomer and contradiction. There can be no such entity as Chrislam because at the heart of their theology Christianity and Islam are opposites.

<u>Bible/Christianity</u>	<u>Qur'an/Islam</u>
God has a Son	God has no son
Trinity: Father, Son, Holy Spirit	Christian Trinity: Father, Mary, Jesus
Jesus died on the Cross	It only appeared that Jesus died on the Cross
Jesus died on our behalf	Someone else (Judas or Simon of Cyrene) took Jesus' place on the cross
Man is inherently evil and even his righteous deeds are as dirty rags	Man can do good deeds to become acceptable to god
Salvation is by Grace alone through Faith in Jesus Christ	Salvation is earned ... your good deeds must outweigh your bad deeds

Conclusion

There are elements within Islam and the Qur'an which can be used as points to instigate conversation or dialogue, but it is not what Christianity and Islam have in common that unites us, as our differences are fundamental differences. Chrislam exists because some people hold to the premise that both the Bible and the Qur'an can be regarded as inspired

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and authoritative. In order to do this, though, they are required to be selective in what they read, and apply a Christianised understanding to the text, rather than the Islamic – they must deliberately ignore the fundamental teachings of Islam.

To say to a Muslim, “We have the same god” in order to initiate dialog allows that Muslim to equally say, “Then why won’t you listen to what his Prophet Muhammad has said and written?” Our similarities don’t unite us, because our differences keep us apart.

When in Samaria (John 4) Jesus was asked,

Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship (verse 20).

Jesus replied,

You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews (verse 22).

Jesus did not placate the Samaritan woman with things the Samaritans had in common with Judaism. Though supposedly knowing and (according to their traditions) correctly worshipping the same God as Israel, Jesus pointed out that they were wrong.

Likewise Paul at Athens (Acts 17) did not evangelise by preaching what God had in common with the Roman gods – on the contrary he preached the Unknown God to them ... the God that they did not know, did not understand. The same too for Muslims, we need to tell them of the God they do not know, not the god they think they do know.

In Revelation’s introductory letters Jesus stands before the churches (lamp stands meant to be a light to the world, witnesses for him) aware of their condition. To the Church we are told, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” and in these letters the church is told to **be** faithful, **remain** faithful, **remain** true, **do not** compromise. Some churches in these letters tried, like now, to syncretise Christianity – they were rebuked.

As witnesses for Christ and of Christ, let us not compromise the Gospel (i.e. betray Christ) by talking about similarities. Preach Christ and Him Crucified.

*For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void. **For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing**, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*

1 Corinthians 1:17-18.

*but **we preach Christ crucified**, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness,*

1 Corinthians 1:23.

*For I determined to know nothing among you except **Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.***

1 Corinthians 2:2.

*You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes **Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified?***

Galatians 3:1.

Finally, read 1 John 2:18-25 and understand the seriousness of this discussion. Consider the potential ramifications for those who wish to go down this road!

Appendix

Concerning Surah 3:55

The speaker made the statement, "If you know the Qur'an as well as your Bible you should know that Surah 3:55 says something about Jesus being raised from the dead". However, this surah says,

"And (remember) when Allah said: 'O Isa (Jesus)! I will take you and raise you to Myself and clear you [of the forged statement that Isa (Jesus) is Allah's son] of those who disbelieve, and I will make those who follow you (Monotheists, who worship none but Allah) superior to those who disbelieve [in the Oneness of Allah, or disbelieve in some of His Messengers, e.g. Muhammad, Isa (Jesus), Musa (Moses), etc., or in His Holy Books, e.g. the Taurat (Torah), the Injeel (Gospel, the Qur'an)] till the Day of Resurrection. Then you will return to Me and I will judge between you in the matters in which you used to dispute."

Surah 3:55
The Noble Qur'an
(Bracketed Comments in Original)

What this surah (verse) is saying, according to the Qur'an's own commentary, is that on the Day of Resurrection Jesus will stand up and condemn anyone who says that he (Jesus) was anything more than just a man.

Concerning Surah 19:33-34

The speaker went on to refer to Surah 19:33, 34 before making the statement that Christians "start a debate on matters that do not matter the slightest little bit – What you believe about God may not be the same as what I understand about God – it is not what you and I understand about God it is the Word of God that matters."

However, the context of this surah (from verse 30) is Jesus (as a baby) claiming he is but a prophet of Allah; the verses also notes Jesus' life and death (at the end of his natural life)¹⁰ and his resurrection (on the last day). Verse 35 goes on to says,

"It befits not (the Majesty of) Allah that He should beget a son [this refers to the slander of Christians against Allah, by saying that Isa (Jesus) is the son of Allah]. Glorified (and Exalted is He above all that they associate with Him). When He decrees a thing, He only says to it: 'Be!' – and it is."

Surah 19:35
The Noble Qur'an
(Bracketed Comments in Original)

Surely concern over what these surahs say isn't insignificant! Surely this surah's assertion concerning the "slander of Christians against Allah" is **not** insignificant! Surely it can not be called (as the speaker intimated) "matters that do not matter the slightest little bit"! It is ignorance of what the Qur'an actually says and means, ignorance of the **fundamentals** of Islam's doctrine that allows Christians to believe in the compatibility of Islam with Christianity.

¹⁰ Islamic scholar Abdullah Yusuf Ali, in his volume, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an; Text, Translation and Commentary*, notes, concerning this surah, that, "Christ was not crucified".