

Allah and God – Different.

Erich Musick

English 3, 10th Hour

Mr. Leitner

April 11, 2002

Erich Musick

Mr. Leitner

English 3C, 10th hour

April 11, 2002

Allah and God – Different.

Pakistan, 1986. Zahid was a Muslim priest who had been brought up to hate and kill those with conflicting beliefs, especially Christians. He often persecuted Christians in town, feeling that by doing so, he would please Allah (the Muslim god). One day when Zahid was persecuting Christians, someone dropped a Bible. Rather than disposing of it, as he normally would have, Zahid hung onto it because he felt compelled to read it and expose its errors. In short, Zahid converted to Christianity and shared the Bible's teachings with everyone. As a result, he was considered a traitor. Zahid began to experience much of the persecution he had carried out against many Christians. For two years he was imprisoned, beaten, tortured, and eventually sentenced to be hung to death (DcTalk 53-54).

The sort of persecution Zahid dealt out and later experienced himself occurs daily in various places of the world. In the days following September 11, though, most people were quick to hide differences between the Christian God and Allah. Muslims and non-Muslims alike explained that Muslims are good people and worship the same god Christians worship. Due to the politically correct mindset of today, most people accept this statement without questioning it. They fail to recognize the many differences between the Christian God and Allah. The question must be asked, though, if Allah and the Christian God are the same – if Christians and Muslims worship the same god – why

do many Muslims hate Christians with such a passion; why do they kill Christians? By comparing the characters of Allah and the Christian God, it can be seen they are actually quite different (Speight 108).

Although much obvious evidence of the hatred many Muslims feel toward Christians exists, many people do not know of this enmity. They take a look at some basic traits of Allah and of the Christian God and think they are the same. Take, for example, the common trait of a monotheistic god who is creator, sustainer, and ruler of the world. Allah, like the Christian God, is seen as the most powerful being in the world; no one even comes close to comparing to him. Similarly, no one can share power with him. Both beings also play a role in creation – they not only created the world and everything in it, but also constantly hold it together. Many people look at these similarities and, as a result, think the two beings are same. By looking at each in greater detail, though, the differences quickly become obvious. (al-Araby 44; Haneef 13-14, 15).

Although both Allah and the Christian God are seen as monotheistic by their followers, Muslims see the definition of a monotheistic deity a little bit differently. Or, looking at it another way, Muslims do not understand the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. In Christianity, God is seen as one, but at the same time as having three distinct “persons” – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Matthew 28:19 says, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” A singular “name” is applied to the three persons. Because this concept is impossible to grasp in its entirety, Muslims tend to see Christians as pluralistic (worshippers of three gods) when, in fact, they are worshiping one. To Muslims, the concept of a triune God does not fit in with the oneness of Allah. The Koran (also known

as the Qu’ran), the holy book of Islam, backs the oneness of Allah in Surah 5:73 – “Unbelievers are those that say: ‘God is one of three.’ There is but one God. If they do not desist from so saying, those of them that disbelieve shall be sternly punished” (Shamoun 15-16; Williams 32).

To confuse the matter, Islam has its own view of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Jesus is seen as nothing more than a prophet who did not actually die on the Cross, as the Bible says He did. Likewise, the Jesus of the Koran is not begotten of the Father, as the Bible says He is. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit of the Koran is no more than the angel Gabriel. One author explains that Islam’s lack of belief in the Trinity “separates Allah from ever possibly being the same God Christians worship” (Williams 32, Shamoun 15-16).

Although both Allah and the Christian God are perceived as having complete control over everything, the way this control is exercised is quite different. The Christian God is holy. As James 1:13 explains, He cannot sin (do wrong) or cause people to sin. He never puts anyone in a position where they have to sin to endure a situation. He created the Universe as a perfect, lovely place, and He “saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). On the contrary, Allah is the creator of both good **and evil**. Instead of giving people a way out of sinning, as the Christian God does, Allah **never** provides a way out of sinning. In addition, Allah is shown deceiving people on many occasions as well as guiding them in the wrong direction. Furthermore, he is described as a schemer. Surah 8:30 says, “They schemed – but God also schemed. God is most profound in His machinations.” (Note the term “God” is used here to refer to Allah. The topic of the names of Allah and the Christian God will be discussed later.) How can someone Holy defile himself so far as to do evil (Shamoun 1-3)?

Similarly, the Christian God's perfection differs greatly from Allah's perfection. Matthew 5:48 explains God's perfection by saying, "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." This perfection shines through in two major areas – God keeps His oaths and promises, and He provides the world with a historically, grammatically and scientifically accurate Bible. In both of these areas, Allah fails quite badly. The Christian God, when making an oath or promise, cannot swear by anything lesser than himself because He is above all other things, as is seen in Hebrews 6:13, which says, "For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself." Allah, on the other hand, makes oaths by things much lower than himself. He swears on the Koran in Surahs 36:2 and 38:1; on Creation – the sky and the stars – in Surahs 86:1, 53:1, 92:1-3; on the pen in Surah 68:1; and on a city in Surah 90:1; among many other instances. If Allah swears by a multitude of things, but the Christian God only swears by Himself, how can they be the same (Shamoun 14-15)?

Not only is Allah's imperfection revealed by the weakness of his oaths, but also by the many historical, grammatical, and scientific errors in the Koran, the so-called **words of Allah**. The Christian God's Word, on the other hand does not have these errors. No archeological discovery has contradicted the Bible's teachings. Even those who do **not** consider themselves Christians and who do **not** believe the Bible is the inspired word of God have confirmed this. The Koran, though, contains all sorts of historical and archeological errors. In Surah 17:1, Allah leads Mohammad to a mosque that was not built until quite a few years later. Surah 4:157 quotes Jews as referring to Jesus as the Messiah. This does not fit the Bible's account of the event, which says the Jews did not believe Jesus was the Messiah. Surahs 5:116, 5:75, and 5:17 make the assumption

Christians believe Mary was divine and therefore attempt to disprove this idea few Christians accept as true (Shamoun 5-11).

The list of errors in the Koran gets even longer when grammar is taken into account. The Koran claims to be pure Arabic, containing no words from other languages because it supposedly existed long before other languages came into being, and yet it uses words from other languages. Furthermore, over 100 grammatical errors can be found in the Koran, including failure to have gender-agreement, failure to use singular/plural words properly, and failure to use impersonal words properly. The Bible, on the other hand, retains its readability while using proper grammar. Which deity is really perfect – Allah, who swears by things lower than himself and who cannot seem to get some basic historical, grammatical, and archaeological things correct, or, the Christian God, who is perfect in all these areas (Shamoun 12-14)?

Because of the clash between the Christian God's holiness and perfection and mankind's imperfection, people are separated from Him. He sees mankind's sin and grieves over it (Genesis 6:5-7, Isaiah 52:13). Allah, on the other hand, is not deeply affected by the world's sin. As was stated, Allah is the author of evil; he has no reason to grieve over sin. In fact, according to the Koran, some sinful activities here on earth are a part of heaven. For example, extramarital sex is one activity to which many Muslims look forward in Heaven (Surahs 2:25, 4:57, 56:35-38, and others). The Heaven Jesus says He has gone to prepare for Christians is perfect and does not contain these "carnal pleasures." Since being with the Christian God is wonderful beyond belief, worldly things are not needed there ("Reality and Truth of Muslim World" 1; Shamoun 11).

The Christian God grieves over mankind's sin because He loves people, as John 3:16, one of the most popular Bible passages explains when it says, "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." Notice how God loves **the world**, not just those people obedient to Him. The Christian God bases His actions, such as sending His only begotten Son to Earth, on His love for mankind. In contrast, Allah only loves those obedient to him. In Surah 3:32, the Koran explains, "God [Allah] is compassionate towards His servants." Note the phrase "towards His servants." Even when Allah's love is described in the Koran, though, it depicts goodness and mercy rather than actual love. While the Christian God loves **all** people, Allah only loves (or, is merciful toward) **his** people ("Reality and Truth of Muslim World" 1; Jomier 92, 94).

Because of mankind's separation from the Christian God due to the inborn sinful nature in humans (which came about from Adam's and Eve's disobedience) and because of God's love for mankind, He has provided a way for people to be saved. As was mentioned, the Christian God sent His only begotten Son to Earth. The reason? To die for the sins of mankind. People who believe in God and trust Jesus as the Savior for their sins can be assured a place in Heaven. According to the Koran, though, people are not born with a sinful nature and any bad things they do can be made right by doing good. Because Allah decides at will who is forgiven and who is not, people cannot have an assurance of being forgiven. Only if a person dies in a Jihad (holy war), can he be sure of a place in Heaven (Shamoun 17; al-Araby 59).

The Christian God has made His plan of salvation available to mankind through His Son. Jesus came to earth and paid the penalty for the world's sin by taking it upon

Himself when He died on the cross. Therefore, people do not have to suffer the consequences of their sin – eternal separation from God in Hell – but can enjoy eternal life with God in Heaven forever. Allah, on the other hand, never sent anyone to pay the penalty for the world's sin. Since a **holy** Allah and **unholy** people must be separate, the only way people can be forgiven by Allah is if he lowers himself to the level of mankind. In essence, he loses his holiness when he forgives someone – he takes upon himself the sin of those he forgives (“Reality and Truth of Muslim World” 1).

Because no mediator exists between Allah and Muslims, as Jesus is the arbitrator between God and Christians, the relationship between Allah and Muslims is very different from the relationship the Christian God has with His children. Because of the washing away of people's sins by Jesus death, Christians can have a personal relationship with God, as the first humans (Adam and Eve) had before they sinned. The relationship between God and Christians is portrayed in the Bible many different ways, including as a father-child relationship (Deuteronomy 1:31), and as a shepherd caring for His flock (Isaiah 40:11). Jesus' life is the perfect example of the type of life Christians are supposed to live. They are given the Holy Spirit to continuously guide them in the way they should go (Zehavi 146; “Reality and Truth of Muslim World” 1; Neusner 125).

This is not the case at all with Muslims. Even Muslim scholars agree Allah cannot be known in this personal way at all. In fact, Allah cloaks his attributes from humans. The relationship between Muslims and Allah can be compared to a relationship between a master and an obedient worker. Those hard workers are rewarded for their obedience and diligence, but the closeness of the Christian's relationship with their God is absolutely non-existent. Muslims feel they are worthless in comparison to Allah and feel

like slaves to him. They are to strive with all their might to worship Allah alone. Allah does not give Muslims anyone like the Holy Spirit to guide them in the way they should go – they are on their own (“Reality and Truth of Muslim World” 1; Jomier 90-91; Haneef 16).

Part of the reason Christians can be assured of their salvation is because their God is unchanging, as Malachi 3:6 explains – “For I, the LORD, do not change.” Because the Christian God is patient and often will do something different if **people** change, some people think **He** changes. A classic example is Jonah. God told Jonah to tell the people of Nineveh He would destroy them in 40 days. Because the people repented of their sins, God withheld the punishment. He did not change His mind; He simply based His actions on the people’s obedience and love for Him. This “promise” and other similar “promises” are conditional. When the Christian God promises to destroy a people, He does so under the condition they continue in their ways. If the **people** change, God often acts in a different way. He is not actually changing His mind because He cannot (Shamoun 4-5).

Allah, on the other hand, is not only inconsistent but also is indecisive. Several examples of instances in which Allah is unable to make up his mind exist. He often says one thing and then says another at a later time. He explains this indecisiveness as an attempt to clarify or enhance a previous statement he made. If he were perfect, would he not have known the first time what the people needed to comprehend a statement and have explained it thoroughly the first time? When he reveals things, why does he need to change them at a later time? If Allah changes his mind about certain commands, how can people be sure he will not change his mind about other things he has promised, such as

what will be in Heaven? And how can an **indecisive, inconsistent** being – Allah – also be the **perfectly consistent** and **decisive** Christian God (Shamoun 4-5)?

The Bible's and Koran's explanations of how people know about the Christian God and Allah revolve around the ability or lack thereof of one to have a personal relationship with each. Since Allah is not knowable, the methods of knowing **about** him are quite basic and primitive. People can know **about** Allah from nature, as well as from revelations, such as the Koran, which was revealed to the prophet Mohammed. Also, if people rid themselves of evil, they can envision Allah (Neusner 85-96).

Christians, on the other hand, can have not only an intellectual knowledge of their God, but also a knowledge on a more personal level, which goes along in accordance with the ability to have a personal relationship with Him. Everyone has an inborn knowledge of God, even those who are not Christians, as Romans 1:20 explains when it says, "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so they are without excuse." The Christian God also calls people, as can be seen in the Biblical accounts of Samuel, Saul (Paul), and others. He does not just leave people to find Him on their own, but the Holy Spirit works in people's lives so they see their need for Him. This is the only way people can realize and act on the fact God exists. Because of Jesus' human nature, people are able to relate to Him, which also aids them in knowing about Him (Neusner 112-119).

Because both the Bible and the Koran use the word "God," some confusion arises regarding the names of the Christian God and of Allah. Christians who speak Arabic use the term "Allah" to refer to the Christian God. The word "Allah" has its roots in early

Jewish languages and comes from terms that were used to describe powerful beings. Muslims consider “Allah” not only the **title** of their god (as the Arabic Christians use it), but also the actual **name** of their god. In the Bible, though, the term Jehovah or Yahweh is used to **name** the Christian God. If Allah and the Christian God were the same, their names would be the same (Shamoun 17-18).

By looking at the many differences between Allah and the Christian God, specifically their greatly contrasting characters, it can be seen that, although a few basic traits are the same, the more important, core traits are unlike. Even though all of these differences are important and play a part in exposing the fact the Christian God and Allah are incongruent, the discrepancies revolving around Jesus are what are truly important. He was more than a mere man. As God, He gave people a model to follow in living their lives – an example of how to live not only by what He taught, but also in the way He lived His life. Jesus was perfect; He never did anything wrong. He lived out what He taught. Because of His death on the cross, people can have the Holy Spirit in them, which allows them to lead holy lives that are acceptable to God’s standards. There is **none** like this triune God, not even Allah. (al-Araby 55).

Works Cited

- al-Araby, Abdullah. Islam Unveiled. 8th ed. Los Angeles: The Pen vs. The Sword, 2001.
- DcTalk and The Voice of the Martyrs. Jesus Freaks. Tulsa: Albury Publishing, 1999.
- Haneef, Suzanne. What Everyone Should Know About Islam and Muslims. 14th ed.
Chicago: Kazi Publications, Inc., 1996.
- Jomier, Jacques. How to Understand Islam. Trans. John Bowden. New York: The
Crossroad Publishing Company, 1991.
- The Koran. Trans. N.J. Dawood. 1956. London: Clays Ltd, St Ives plc, 1995.
- Neusner, Jacob. God. Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1997.
- New American Standard Bible. Trans. The Lockman Foundation. La Habra: The
Lockman Foundation, 1994.
- Shamoun, Sam. "Is Allah the God of the Bible?" Answering-Islam. Online. Answering-
Islam.org. 9 March 2002.
- Speight, R. Marston. God is One. 4th ed. New York: Friendship Press, 1991.
- "The Reality and Truth of the Muslim World – Islam." Underground Hope. 18 Dec 2001:
1-2.
- Williams, John Arden, ed. Islam. New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1962.
- Zehavi, A.M., ed. Handbook of the World's Religions. New York: Franklin Watts, Inc.,
1973.