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The Coop Report...

Islam and Christianity...things you should know...

Congress and the majority of America, it seems, doesn't understand the importance of Bush's stand on the war against terrorism and keeping it in on the other side of the world as long as possible. While the hatred against America and its interests throughout the globe continue to mount, no one seems to understand the dynamics of the relationship between America's spiritual and moral decay and the radical Islamists whose goal is to destroy us.

As I have said in previous editions of *The Coop Report*, a half century's worth of misinterpretation of our 1st Amendment regarding the intended relationship between our government and our Christian heritage, along with a citizen's right to "free speech" have continued to erode the spiritual and moral fabric of America. The resultant permissiveness of our society is seen around the world as an icon of America's character. From Super Bowl half-time shows that have included "clothing malfunctions" to Hollywood's focus on sex and violence, Islamic fundamentalists consider America to be the "Great Satan," and *the* target of a religious and political institution that advocates world dominion.

Perhaps for a brief moment, immediately after 911, Americans felt a certain level of discomfort with Muslims….with the Islamic message they follow. Unfortunately, only a few have taken the time to understand our new adversary. Congress has not been one of these few…they just cannot seem to make the connection between Islam and terrorism. Their references to Islam are watered down to meet their political aims and/or to avoid confrontation with members of this religious *and* political institution rather than ensure the health and welfare of America. In my opinion, the term, "radical Islam," is an oxymoron. Islam, as a religion is unique in two aspects: 1) Islam is the only religion in the world that is both a religious and political organization (there is no firewall between the practice of Islam and those who administer the very laws of the land… they are one and the same); 2) Secondly, it is the only religion that condones violence as a means to "convert" members of other faiths.

With all the discussion about terrorism these days, I thought you might like to know what Islam really *is* and what it *is not.* Unlike Congress and most of our Washington bureaucrats and politicians, I am not going to be politically correct in this discussion.

(Before I go any further, you should know that although I have studied this subject for some time and have presented the subject to various church groups, I do not claim to be an authority on the subject…just very well read and informed.)

I have concluded that a good way to present the nature of Islam is by its comparison to Christianity. After all, many of you reading this are Christians and those who are not can weigh the discernible differences between the two and draw your own conclusions. This will be brief without detailed references. I have further detailed documentation, including references from both the Holy Scriptures (Holy Bible) and the Quran, along with a complete bibliography of my sources. Aside from the Holy Bible, the Quran, and its accompanying *hadith* (a collection of the sayings and "doctrine" of Muhammad), the majority of my sources concerning Islam come from former Muslims, the majority of which have since converted to Christianity. These former Muslims include a former Professor of Islamic History at Al-Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt and two former Sunni Muslims who are now professors at two prominent seminaries.

Often we hear that the God of the Holy Scriptures (i.e., the "Holy Bible") and "Allah" (the god referenced in the Quran are one and the same. This is simply not true. Yahweh, the God of the Christian Bible is a holy and righteous God who pursues mankind out of His love for us with a consistent *standard* of righteousness. That is, God does not change the baseline from which He judges the actions of mankind. "Allah," the God of Islam is a god who does what pleases Allah…a god who expects to be loved, before he is expected "to care" for each individual. Allah is free to change His standards of judgment, according to the desires of Allah. A short history of the political and religious organization of Islam follows.

Brief History of Muhammad

Muhammad was born during the middle of the 6th century AD in Mecca and reared by his grandfather from the time he was six years old. As a young man, he married a wealthy woman and led a caravan route to Syria. After his wife of 15 years died, he eventually had numerous other wives and concubines, the youngest of

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which was nine when the marriage was consummated.

Around 610 AD, Muhammad said the angel Gabriel began to dictate to him the word of "Allah" that had been recorded on tablets in Paradise (Heaven) since the beginning of time. He claimed to have received this revelation over a period of 22 years. During this time of receiving the word of Allah, he sometimes had convulsions and frothed at the mouth. Afterwards, he even announced to his wives and others that he felt he was demon-possessed. He claimed to communicate with the dead and even recorded, as coming from the angel Gabriel, the "Satanic Verses." The subject of these verses was made famous by a publication of the same title by Salman Rushdie in 1988. (The price on his head continues to pose a threat to his life today. Additionally, the U.K. just incurred the wrath of al-Zawahri who threatened to retaliate against Britain for granting a knighthood to Mr. Rushdie.) Muhammad's followers were shocked that these words, which condoned idol worship, came from Gabriel, so Muhammad recanted them, blaming Satan for the misstep.

Preferring a monotheist religion (which was against the culture of his time), he was persecuted by many in Mecca. After claiming a few years later to have been transported into Heaven and around the city of Jerusalem, some of the people of Mecca attempted to assassinate him. He escaped, fleeing to Medina where he established a relationship with a community of other monotheist people who had a Jewish background. After living with these people for a short while, they began to realize that many of Muhammad's beliefs were in conflict with their Judean beliefs and were ostracized from their community.

Unable to make a living for themselves, Muhammad's band of followers, feeling justified in the name of "Allah, began to pull off raids on caravans in order to survive. Muhammad encouraged his followers to wage war against the polytheistic culture of his time by promising heavenly rewards for fighting for "Allah's" cause. This reasoning began the cry for *jihad* among the ranks of Muhammad's followers (i.e., the Muslims).

Authenticity of the Manuscripts

Holy Scriptures: Using exhaustive manuscript testing methods, literary thousands of documents and/or document fragments collaborate the accuracy and authenticity of the transcription of the Holy Scriptures throughout the ages.

Quran: No manuscript test ever employed. Many historians believe evidence supports a claim that Muhammad and many of his followers were illiterate and they were only able to memorize the dictations that came, supposedly, from the angel Gabriel. Only one manuscript, assembled from many pieces of parchment, stone, bones, etc. from various sources (followers of Muhammad) who recorded some of Muhammad's recitations (recanted supposedly from the Angel Gabriel over a period of 22 years) were used to create the Quran some 14 – 18 years after his death. Actually, some 24 copies were originally constructed in this fashion, but Muhammad's secretary choose one version over the others as the "official" copy only because it was written in Muhammad's own dialect. The others were summarily burned without a comparative examination.

Content of the Holy Scriptures and the Quran

Holy Scriptures: The Old Testament documents God's creation of the heavens and the earth and all that is within it, including mankind. It also documents the history of mankind beginning with his creation; the population of the world; mankind's establishment of nations; the constant struggle and failure of man to live according to God's instruction; God's constant, persistent love, and patience God towards mankind; God's jealousy towards mankind when they ignored His love; and the omnipotent power and abundant grace of God to discipline His people (to restore them to a right relationship with Him) and the exercise of His righteous judgment in punishing His enemies.

Quran: The Quran, consisting of 144 surahs (i.e., chapters) is about two-thirds the size of the New Testament and is provided as an instruction book from Allah for Islam's followers. As the Quran's contents were "dictated" to Muhammad, their content (as eventually recorded) paralleled Muhammad's religious pilgrimage. Beginning peacefully, his life took on a more violent nature after his monotheistic religion continued to be rejected and both he and the opponents of his religion resorted to violence.

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Islam teaches that the Holy Scriptures, over time have been corrupted (i.e., made unreliable as the Word of God), thus justifying Allah's reason for communicating the message contained in the Quran. Although there is some limited accounting of the history of mankind (through the eyes of Muhammad) found in the Quran, its ability to also establish an historical accounting of Allah's personal involvement (i.e., relationship) with mankind is non-existent. The only relationship described, implied, or inferred in the Quran is that of a master/slave. Allah holds all of the "marbles." Allah does what Allah wants to do as described in the Quran's version of the end times…when Allah will weigh the good and bad things recorded for every man, woman, and child, to determine which outweighs the other in order *to assist* in his decision on where to send them (i.e., either heaven or hell). Allah is unknowable...there is no historical accounting of Allah's desire to have a relationship with mankind.

Discrepancies in the Holy Scriptures/Quran

Holy Scriptures: Critics of the Bible often claim that it contains many discrepancies or contradictions. If thoroughly studied, however, discrepancies and contradictions of the scriptures cannot be collaborated. From my experience, claims of inconsistencies in the Bible have not involved its theology, but rather its historical accounting of events, people, dates, and so forth. Scholarly investigation into these claims leads me to conclude that the scriptures are indeed, inerrant.

Quran: The content of the Quran, according to the Quran and the hadith, were dictated verbatim to Muhammad from inscriptions in heaven that were authored by Allah. Hence, the Quran is an exact copy of the very words of Allah. However, there are so many obvious discrepancies and inconsistencies in the Quran that Muslim scholars have had to create a way to overcome their confusion. To do this, they came up with the principle of *naskh* which is used to explain that these difficulties were simply the result of the dictation of the message from Allah taking place over a period of 22 years. The principle says that if one instruction is found to be in conflict with another, the instruction that came later overrides the former.

With this in mind, Muhammad's early practice of a "peaceful" religion that later transitioned to the violence of jihad, can easily be related to his personal struggles.

Type of Relationship between God and Mankind

Holy Scriptures: Man is born with a sinful nature, due to Adam's original sin in the Garden of Eden. However, God is personable. He loves us before we love Him. He desires a one-on-on relationship with us. He alone is Holy (wholly righteous, consistent in His love for us as a father loves his son, constant in His desire for all to love Him and be obedient to Him as a son loves his father; constant in His desire that we willingly live in obedience to Him. God, came to earth, incarnate in human flesh (the Son of God, Jesus Christ): Luke 19:19 -- [10]For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost." John 3:16. [16]"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. See also the *Parable of the lost Sheep* (Matthew 18:10-14).

Quran: Man is born *without* a sinful nature. Allah is impersonal, unknowable. There is no real "love" relationship between Allah and mankind. Muslims try to please Allah to gain his "love" so they can try to enter paradise when they die. In other words, there is no prevenient grace drawing people to Allah as God goes before mankind, out of His love for us. Allah does not seek sinners to be reconciled to him. Allah awaits people to come to him …to "love" him before he considers "blessing" them. Surah 2:190 "For Allah loves not transgressors." Surah 3:57 "For Allah loves not those who do wrong." Muslims are taught that Jesus was not God (only a prophet) and that He never claimed to be God.

Core Beliefs Regarding the Spread of Christianity/Islam

Holy Scriptures: The use of peaceful methods to take the message to all nations…making disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Quran: The use of violent methods, if necessary, to "convert" all people to Islam. The followers of Islam are not called to "witness" or evangelize" the rest of the world. Muslims do not seek to convert people of other religions. Rather, it is out to impose Islam on all peoples throughout the world. Either you accept Islam or

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you are an unbeliever and Allah does not like unbelievers. *Jihad* is fighting anybody who stands in the way of spreading Islam or fighting anyone who refused to enter into Islam.

How People Get to Heaven

Holy Scriptures: People who believe that Christ is the Son of God; that He died for your sins; that He arose from the dead and confess and are repentant for their sins will receive eternal life in Heaven. Unlike Allah, God, through Jesus' crucifixion and death on the cross, the sins of the believer are completely eradicated from the records previously kept. Jesus paid the ransom for our transgressions…past, present, and future.

Quran: "Then as for him whose balance (of good deeds) will be heavy, he will live a pleasant life (in Paradise). But as for him whose balance (of good deeds) will be light, he will have his home in *Hawiyah* (pit, i.e., hell). *Surah 101:6-9* It is important to mention that Muhammad has been quoted as saying that although he was the last prophet of "Allah," he could not be certain he would be allowed into Paradise.

What to do with Those who do Not Accept Christianity/Islam

Holy Scriptures: Christ came to save the world and actively tries to bring mankind to Him. Only those who ultimately do not believe in Him will be condemned at the last day. Christ came into the world to bring the light of the true Word of God that all may have life and have it abundantly.
Quran: "Those that reject Islam must be killed. If they turn back (from Islam), take (hold of) them and kill them wherever you find them…" *Surah 4:89*

What Muslims are taught about Christianity

Too much to list here, but some of the basics are: 1) The Holy Scriptures have been corrupted by man and therefore have lost their authenticity (as being from God). The Quran was dictated to Muhammed as the "final" word from Allah, therefore it supersedes the Holy Scriptures (read Revelation 22:18-19). 2) Jesus was just a prophet, not God incarnate. Allah did not procreate (have sex) to produce a son as this would be blasphemy. 3) Jesus was not crucified…Allah does not allow his prophets to be harmed; either someone else was crucified in His place or Jesus did not actually die. 4) Muslims have lots of problems with the Trinity. They believe Christians worship three gods (God, Jesus, and Mary), thus they think Christians are polytheists.

Type of Religion

Christianity: Agape, faith-based, peaceful religion that "convicts" its converts of the authenticity of Jesus Christ as the Messiah, without force, without coercion, through the previenent grace endowed by the Holy Spirit. Evangelism is the only prescribed technique for winning souls over to Christ.

Islam: The name "Islam" itself means "to submit." Islam is political, institutional in nature…believes man's laws and civil governments are meaningless; a religion of works, unless they die in jihad. Muslims believe they go to the grave when they die, to await judgment at resurrection day. Allah makes the final decision on this, they never can be assured of getting into "Paradise."

Sin and Forgiveness

Christianity: Foundational to the Christian religion is the belief, based on scripture that the original sin of Adam in the Garden of Eden resulted in all of mankind being born *in* sin…that mankind's very nature is sinful from birth. "Sin" is anything mankind does or even "thinks" if it is in direct contrast with the *holiness* of God. The "holiness" of God is manifested by God's faithful, consistent, unwavering, unchanging righteousness used to judge both individuals and nations. God's standards for us never change. God is the same today as He was when He first created us and all that is in the universe. God is willing to forgive our sins, if we accept Jesus Christ as His Son and our Savior; confirm our belief that He was God incarnate and died for our sins; and confess and repent of our sins.

Quran: Islam does not believe man is born in sin and their view of "sin" is not the same as ours. "Sins" are those things that the Quran says its followers must not do to avoid demerits that weigh against their good deeds. To Muslims, Adam did sin, but God forgave him and that was the end of that. Islam is a system of works and reasons that there is no need for salvation, that man was created by Allah with all he needs to do is stand by himself and live by the teachings of the Quran (Allah). The Quran has many verses that says that Al-

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lah is "oft forgiving, most merciful," but it also clearly states in other verses that Allah will decide if and when he "forgives."

Prophecies of the Holy Scriptures and the Quran

Holy Scriptures: Hundreds, both in the New and Old Testaments. Within the New Testament alone, 65 prophecies concerning Christ, the Messiah have been fulfilled. Forty-five of Jesus' prophecies have been fulfilled to date and others regarding the end times are in the process of being fulfilled. Prophecies recorded and fulfilled in these testaments focused on individuals, nations (including Israel), cities, the signs of the end times, the events that will occur during the end times, the nature of the great tribulation, the 2nd Coming of Christ, and the establishment of the new Heaven and the new earth, with Jesus ruling Jerusalem for eternity.

Quran: None.

Miracles of the Holy Scriptures and the Quran

Holy Scriptures: Within the Old Testament, 50 miracles are documented that were performed by God, the Father; 2 by Joseph; 15 by Moses and Aaron; three by Joshua; two by Gideon; eight by Samson; two by David; seven by Elijah; 14 by Elisha; and two by Daniel. Within the New Testament, 36 miracles were performed by Jesus Christ; four by Peter; and four by Paul.

Quran: None, aside from Muhammad's claim that he was miraculously transported from the Arabian Desert to Jerusalem where he was anointed as an imam (a Mosque prayer leader), then brought up to the heavens where he met Allah and spoke with the prophets, including Moses and Jesus. The monumental place in Jerusalem from where his flight to heaven took place is the infamous *Dome of the Rock*.

Sanctuaries, Tabernacles, and Mosques

Christian sanctuaries and Jewish Tabernacles are built for the explicit purpose of worshipping and honoring God. Other buildings typically are arranged on the campus of a sanctuary or Tabernacle for the purpose of educating and training their congregations in the ways of God.

During Muhammad's time, Mosques also served as centers of worship and religious training. In addition to this function, however, Mosques also served as meeting places where military plans were drawn and weapons were stored. The same goes today for those Mosques controlled by the fanatical Muslims.

Regarding Abraham

Abraham is claimed by both Christians and Muslims as the first of the patriarchs and father of our heritage. Christians claim their lineage and the birth of the Hebrew nation from *Isaac,* Abraham's only son from his wife, Sarah. However, when compared to the son he bore through Sarah's hand maiden (Hagar), Isaac was his *second* son, his eldest son (albeit from his wife's hand maiden) being *Ishmael.* It is through Ishmael that the follower's of the Quran find their lineage (since he was the eldest son of Abraham). As a result, they lay claim to the promise of God that through Abraham, his descendants would be as numerous as the stars and through God great nations would be born.

According to the Holy Scriptures, Ishmael was blessed by God because he was born of Abraham. However, the scriptures go on to say that he was a "wild donkey of a man." He had twelve sons who, according to Genesis 37:25-28 and 39:1 had "…their hand against every man, and every man's hand against them." This is another prophecy from the Holy Scriptures that has been fulfilled.

Regarding the Crusades

In light of the criticism against the growing violence perpetrated by Muslims throughout the globe, Muslims may challenge the idea that Christianity is a peaceful religion through reference to the crusades of the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries. The Crusades, they may argue, completely displace this idea that Christianity is a peaceful religion. Initiated by Pope Urban II's message in Clermont in 1095 in response to a plea by the Byzantine emperor, Alexius I, armies were sent to reclaim Jerusalem from the Muslims. Successive crusades ultimately turned into a more widespread war which lost whatever humanity remains in wartime. Consequently, Christians can easily be cast into the same mold as those who claimed to be fighting on behalf of Christendom while participating in the Crusades.

The well-documented difference between Christianity

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and Islam, however, regarding this terrible history of mankind is that the behavior of the Crusaders was not in any way supported by the Holy Scriptures. On the other hand, the Quran and the hadith require the serious Muslim to resort to violent action, if necessary, to establish it as the world's religion.

We are together in Christ,

Brian

16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

4 In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: 2 Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. 3 For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. 4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. 5 But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

2 Timothy 3:16-17; 4:1-5 (NIV)