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THE QURAN VS. THE NEW TESTAMENT: CONFLICTING ETHICS

Dave Miller, Ph.D.

[EDITORS' NOTE: The following article is excerpted from Dave Miller's newly released book *The Quran Unveiled*.]

Anyone who has read both the Quran and the New Testament cannot help but be struck by the glaring disparity that exists between the two in their respective treatments of ethical matters. Two such matters are addressed in this article: polygamy and armed conflict. [NOTE: The translations of passages from the Quran in this article are taken from Muslim scholar Mohammed Pickthall's celebrated translation.]

POLYGAMY

Those who have modeled their thinking after New Testament Christianity are, to say the least, a bit surprised, if not shocked and appalled, that Islam countenances polygamy. In fact, this feature of the Quran is a source of embarrassment to Muslim apologists, as evinced by the excuses they offer to soften its glaring presence (e.g., Rahman, 1979, p. 38). But the Christian mind must realize that Muhammad's Islam arose out of Arabia in the sixth and seventh centuries A.D. The Arab culture was well known for the practice of polygamy, in which men were allowed as many wives as they chose. The Quran addressed this social circumstance by placing a limitation on the number of wives a man is permitted. The wording of the pronouncement comes in a surah titled "Women": "And if ye fear that ye will not deal fairly by the orphans, marry of the

women, who seem good to you, two or three or four; and if ye fear that ye cannot do justice (to so many) then one (only) or (the captives) that your right hands possess" (*Surah* 4:3; cf. 4:24-25,129; 23:6; 30:21; 70:30).

To appreciate the full extent of the Quran's endorsement of polygamy, as well as to preserve context, the reader is asked to exercise the necessary patience to read two lengthy passages. The first is a transparent sanction of Muhammad's own polygamous practices:

O Prophet! Lo! We have made lawful unto thee thy wives unto whom thou hast paid their dowries, and those whom thy right hand possesseth of those whom Allah hath given thee as spoils of war, and the daughters of thine uncle on the father's side and the daughters of thine aunts on the father's side, and the daughters of thine uncles on the mother's side and the daughters of thine aunts on the mother's side who emigrated with thee, and a believing woman if she give herself unto the Prophet and the Prophet desire to ask her in marriage—a privilege for thee only, not for the (rest of) believers—We are aware of that which We enjoined upon them concerning their wives and, those whom their right hands possess—that thou mayst be free from blame, for Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. Thou canst defer whom thou wilt of them and receive unto thee whom thou wilt, and whomsoever thou desirest of those whom thou hast set aside (temporarily), it is no sin for thee (to receive her again); that is better; that they may

be comforted and not grieve and may all be pleased with what thou givest them. Allah knoweth what is in your hearts (O men) and Allah is Forgiving, Clement. It is not allowed thee to take (other) women henceforth, nor that thou shouldst change them for other wives even though their beauty pleased thee save those whom thy right hand possesseth. And Allah is Watcher over all things. O ye who believe!.... And when ye ask of them (the wives of the Prophet) anything, ask it of them from behind a curtain. That is purer for your hearts and for their hearts.

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And it is not for you to cause annoyance to the messenger of Allah nor that ye should ever marry his wives after him. Lo! that in Allah's sight would be an enormity (*Surah 33:50-53*, emp. added).

These admonitions bear a remarkable resemblance to Mormon Joseph Smith's own advocacy of plural marriages and the revelation allegedly received from God admonishing his own wife, Emma Smith, to be receptive to his polygamy:

Verily, I say unto you: A commandment I give unto mine handmaid, Emma Smith, your wife, whom I have given unto you, that she stay herself and partake not of that which I commanded you to offer unto her; for I did it, saith the Lord, to prove you all, as I did Abraham, and that I might require an offering at your hand, by covenant and sacrifice. And let mine handmaid, Emma Smith, receive all those that have been given unto my servant Joseph, and who are virtuous and pure before me; and those who are not pure, and have said they were pure shall be destroyed, saith the Lord God. For I am the Lord thy God, and ye shall obey my voice; and I give unto my servant Joseph that he shall be made ruler over many things; for he hath been faithful over a few things, and from henceforth I will strengthen him. And I command mine handmaid, Emma Smith, to abide and cleave unto my servant Joseph, and to none else. But if she will not abide this commandment she shall be destroyed, saith the Lord; for I am the Lord thy God, and will destroy her if she abide not in my

law. But if she will not abide this commandment, then shall my servant Joseph do all things for her, even as he hath said; and I will bless him and multiply him and give unto him an hundredfold in this world, of fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, houses and lands, wives and children, and crowns of eternal lives in the eternal worlds. And again, verily I say, let mine handmaid forgive my servant Joseph his trespasses; and then shall she be forgiven her trespasses, wherein she has trespassed against Me; and I, the Lord thy God, will bless her, and multiply her, and make her heart to rejoice (*Doctrine and Covenants 132: 51-56*).

One would fully expect uninspired men to manifest the same *modus operandi* and concern for the same issues—especially as they reflect upon their own human desires (i.e., lusts) and preferences.

The second Quranic passage that acquaints the reader with the extent to which polygamy is not only permitted or tolerated, but also **advocated and encouraged**, is one titled “Banning.” The *Hadith* offer three traditions that provide the background details that help to make sense of the surah. The one generally preferred by Muslim commentators speaks of Hafsa finding the Prophet in her room with Mariyah—the Coptic girl given to Muhammad by the ruler of Egypt, who became the mother of his only son, Ibrahim—on a day that, according to his customary rotation among his wives, was assigned to A'ishah. The distress that Hafsa man-

ifested was so disturbing to the Prophet that he vowed with an oath that he would have no more to do with Mariyah, and requested that Hafsa say nothing to A'ishah. But Hafsa, who was not nearly as distressed as she made out, with devilish glee, promptly informed A'ishah, bragging about how easily she had achieved the ejection of Mariyah—an accomplishment that pleased the other wives as well (see Pickthall, n.d., pp. 404-405; Lings, 1983, pp. 276-279). With these background details in mind, the reader is invited to read the surah that was elicited by the situation:

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. O Prophet! Why bannest thou that which Allah hath made lawful for thee, seeking to please thy wives? And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. Allah hath made lawful for you (Muslims) absolution from your oaths (of such a kind), and Allah is your Protector. He is the Knower, the Wise. When the Prophet confided a fact unto one of his wives and when she afterward divulged it and Allah apprised him thereof, he made known (to her) part thereof and passed over part. And when he told it her she said: Who hath told thee? He said: The Knower, the Aware hath told me. If ye twain turn unto Allah repentant, (ye have cause to do so) for your hearts desired (the ban); and if ye aid one another against him (Muhammad) then lo! Allah, even He, is his protecting Friend, and Gabriel and the righteous among the believers; and furthermore the angels are his helpers. It may happen that his Lord, if he divorce you, will give him in your stead wives better than you, submissive (to Allah), believing, pious, penitent, inclined to fasting, widows and maids. O ye who believe! Ward off from yourselves and your families a Fire whereof the fuel is men and stones, over which are set angels strong, severe, who resist not Allah in that which He commandeth them, but do that which they are commanded. (Then it will be said): O ye who disbelieve! Make no excuses for yourselves this day. Ye are only being paid for what ye used to do. O ye who believe! Turn unto Allah in sincere repentance! It may be that your Lord will remit from you your evil deeds and bring you into Gardens underneath which rivers flow, on the day when Allah will not abase the Prophet and those who believe with him. Their light will run before them and on their right hands: they will say: Our Lord! Perfect our light for us, and forgive us! Lo! Thou art Able to do all things. O Prophet! Strive against the disbelievers and the hypocrites, and be stern with them. Hell will be their

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Artist's conception of Muhammad.

home, a hapless journey's end. Allah citeth an example for those who disbelieve: the wife of Noah and the wife of Lot, who were under two of our righteous slaves yet betrayed them so that they (the husbands) availed them naught against Allah and it was said (unto them): Enter the Fire along with those who enter. And Allah citeth an example for those who believe: the wife of Pharaoh when she said: My Lord! Build for me a home with thee in the Garden, and deliver me from Pharaoh and his work, and deliver me from evildoing folk; And Mary, daughter of 'Imran, whose body was chaste, therefore We breathed therein something of Our Spirit. And she put faith in the words of her Lord and His Scriptures, and was of the obedient (*Surah* 66).

Observe that the surah is complete with threats of the fire of hell, as well as the allusion to the wives of Noah and Lot as examples of disobedient wives who went to hell. Can there be any doubt that the Quran approves of and encourages polygamy?

Setting aside the issue of why Muhammad was exempt from the limitation of four wives (*Surah* 33:50), the divine origin of the Quran is discredited on the basis of its stance on polygamy. In the first place, for all practical purposes the Quran authorizes a man to have as many wives as he chooses, since its teaching on divorce contradicts its teaching on marriage. Unlike the New Testament, which confines permission to divorce on the sole ground of sexual unfaithfulness (Matthew 19:9), the Quran authorizes divorce for any reason (e.g., *Surah* 2:226-232,241; 33:4,49; 58:2-4;

65:1-7). If a man can divorce his wife for any reason, then the limitation that confines a man to four wives is effectively meaningless—merely restricting a man to four legal wives **at a time**. Theoretically, in his lifetime, a man could have an **unlimited** number of wives—all with the approval of God!

In the second place, Jesus declared in no uncertain terms: "Whoever divorces his wife, **except for sexual immorality**, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery" (Matthew 19:9, emp. added). Jesus gave one, and only one, reason for divorce in God's sight. In fact, even the Old Testament affirmed that God "hates divorce" (Malachi 2:16). The teaching of the Bible on divorce is a higher, stricter, nobler standard than the one advocated by the Quran. The two books, in fact, **contradict each other** on this point.

In the third place, why does the Quran stipulate the number "four"? Why not three or five wives? The number four would appear to be an arbitrary number with no significance—at least, none is given. Though the passage in question indicates the criterion of a man's ability to do justice to those he marries, there is no reason to specify the number four, since men would vary a great deal in the number of women that they would have the ability to manage fairly.

The answer may be seen in the influence of the contemporaneous Jewish population of Arabia. Sixth-century Arabia was a tribal-oriented society that relied heavily on oral communication in social interactions. Muhammad would have been the recipient of considerable information conveyed orally by his Jewish, and even Christian, contemporaries. Many tales, fables, and rabbinical traditions undoubtedly circulated among the Jewish tribes of Arabia. The Jews themselves likely were lacking in much book-learning, having been separated from the mainstream of Jewish thought and intellectual development in their migration to the Arabian peninsula. The evidence demonstrates that the author of the Quran borrowed extensively from Jewish and other sources. The ancient Talmudic record (*Arbah Turim, Ev. Hazaer*, 1) stated: "A man may marry many wives, for Rabba saith it is lawful to do so, if he can provide for them. Nevertheless, the wise men have given good advice, that a man should **not marry more than four wives**" (as quoted in Rodwell, 1950, p. 411, emp. added; Tisdall, 1905, pp. 129-130). The similarity with the wording of the Quran is too striking to be coincidental. It can

be argued quite convincingly that the magic number of four was drawn from currently circulating Jewish teaching.

In the fourth place, the polygamy countenanced by the Quran on Earth will be extended into the heavenly realm (*Surah* 13:23; 36:55; 40:8; 43:70). Of course, this viewpoint was explicitly contradicted by Jesus Christ (Matthew 22:30).

Islam and the Quran have a great many features that the Christian mind (i.e., one guided by the New Testament) finds ethically objectionable. Polygamy is simply one among many such ethical "difficulties." The Bible and the Quran are in significant conflict on this subject.

ARMED CONFLICT, VIOLENCE, WAR, AND BLOODSHED

One would expect an uninspired book to contradict itself or speak ambiguously on various subjects, at times appearing both to endorse and condemn a practice. So it is with physical violence in the Quran. However, despite the occasional puzzling remark that may seem to imply the reverse, the Quran is replete with explicit and implicit sanction and promotion of armed conflict, violence, and bloodshed by Muslims. For example, within months of the Hijrah (the flight to Medina), Muhammad claimed to receive a revelation that clarified the issue:

Now when ye **meet in battle** those who disbelieve, then it is **smiting of the necks** until, when ye have routed them, then making fast of bonds; and afterward either grace or ransom till the **war** lay down its burdens. That (is the ordinance). And if Allah willed He could have punished them (without you) but (thus it is ordained) that He may try some of you by means of others. And **those who are slain** in the way of Allah, He rendereth not their actions vain (*Surah* 47:4, emp. added).

Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you, but begin not hostilities. Lo! Allah loveth not aggressors. And **slay them wherever ye find them**, and drive them out of the places whence they drove you out, for **persecution is worse than slaughter**. And fight not with them at the Inviolable Place of Worship until they first attack you there, but if they attack you (there) **then slay them**. Such is the reward of disbelievers. But if they desist, then lo! Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. And **fight them** until persecution is no more, and religion is for Allah. But if they desist, then let there be no hostility except against wrongdoers. The forbidden

month for the forbidden month, and forbidden things in **retaliation**. And **one who attacketh you, attack him in like manner as he attacked you**. Observe your duty to Allah, and know that Allah is with those who ward off (evil) (*Surah 2:190-194*, emp. added).

Warfare is ordained for you, though it is hateful unto you; but it may happen that ye hate a thing which is good for you, and it may happen that ye love a thing which is bad for you. Allah knoweth, ye know not. They question thee (O Muhammad) with regard to warfare in the sacred month. Say: Warfare therein is a great (transgression), but to turn (men) from the way of Allah, and to disbelieve in Him and in the Inviolable Place of Worship, and to expel his people thence, is a greater with Allah; for **persecution is worse than killing**. And they will not cease from fighting against you till they have made you renegades from your religion, if they can (*Surah 2:216-217*, emp. added).

Muhammad was informed that **warfare was prescribed for him!** Though he may have hated warfare, it was actually good for him, and what he loved, i.e., non-warfare, was actually bad for him! And though under normal circumstances, fighting is not appropriate during sacred months, killing was warranted against those who sought to prevent Muslims from practicing their religion. **Killing is better than being persecuted!** A similar injunction states: **“Sanction is given unto those who fight** because they have been wronged; and Allah is indeed Able to give them victory” (*Surah 22:39*, emp. added). In fact, **“Allah loveth those who battle** for His cause in ranks, as if they were a solid structure” (*Surah 61:4*, emp. added).

In a surah titled “Repentance” that issues stern measures to be taken against idolaters, the requirement to engage in carnal warfare is apparent:

Freedom from obligation (is proclaimed) from Allah and His messenger toward those of the idolaters with whom ye made a treaty: Travel freely in the land four months, and know that ye cannot escape Allah and that Allah will confound the disbelievers (in His guidance). And a proclamation from Allah and His messenger to all men on the day of the Greater Pilgrimage that Allah is free from obligation to the idolaters, and (so is) His messenger. So, if ye repent, it will be better for you; but if ye are averse, then know that ye cannot escape Allah. Give tidings (O Muhammad) of a painful doom to those who disbelieve. Excepting those of the idolaters with whom ye (Mus-

lims) have a treaty, and who have since abated nothing of your right nor have supported anyone against you. (As for these), fulfill their treaty to them till their term. Lo! Allah loveth those who keep their duty (unto Him). Then, when the sacred months have passed, **slay the idolaters wherever ye find them**, and take them (captive), and besiege them, and prepare for them each ambush. But if they repent and establish worship and pay the poor-due, then leave their way free. Lo! Allah is Forgiving, Merciful (*Surah 9:1-5*, emp. added).

The ancient Muslim histories elaborate on the occasion of these admonitions: “[T]he idolaters were given four months’ respite to come and go as they pleased in safety, but after that God and His Messenger would be free from any obligation towards them. War was declared upon them, and they were to be slain or taken captive wherever they were found” (Lings, 1983, p. 323).

Later in the same surah, **“Fight against** such of those who have been given the Scripture as believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, and forbid not that which Allah hath forbidden by His messenger, and follow not the religion of truth, until they pay the tribute readily, **being brought low**” (*Surah 9:29*, emp. added). “Those who have been given the Scripture” is a reference to Jews and Christians. The surah advocates coercion against Jews and Christians in order to physically force them to pay the *jizyah*—a special religious tax imposed on religious minorities (see Nasr, 2002, p. 166). Pickthall explains the historical setting of this Quranic utterance: “It signified the end of idolatry in Arabia. The Christian Byzantine Empire had begun to move against the growing Muslim power, and this surah contains mention of a greater war to come, and instructions with regard to it” (p. 145). Indeed, the final verse of *Surah 2* calls upon Allah to give Muslims “victory over the disbelieving folk” (vs. 286), rendered by Rodwell: “give us victory therefore over the infidel nations.” That this stance by the Quran was to be expected is evident from the formulation of the Second Pledge of Aqabah, in which the men pledged their loyalty and their commitment to protecting Muhammad from all opponents. This pledge included duties of war, and was taken only by the males. Consequently, the First Aqabah pact, which contained no mention of war, became known as the “pledge of the women” (Lings, p. 112).

Additional allusions to warfare in the Quran are seen in the surah, “The Spoils,” dated in the second year of the Hijrah (A.D. 623), within a month after the Battle of Badr:

And **fight them** until persecution is no more, and religion is all for Allah.... If thou comest on them in the war, deal with them so as to **strike fear** in those who are behind them.... And let not those who disbelieve suppose that they can outstrip (Allah’s purpose). Lo! **they cannot escape**. Make ready for them all thou canst of **(armed) force and of horses** tethered, that thereby ye may dismay the enemy of Allah and your enemy, and others beside them whom ye know not.... O Prophet! **Exhort the believers to fight**. If there be of you twenty stedfast they shall overcome two hundred, and if there be of you a hundred stedfast they shall overcome a thousand of those who disbelieve, because they (the disbelievers) are a folk without intelligence.... It is not for any Prophet to have captives **until he hath made slaughter in the land**. Ye desire the lure of this world and Allah desireth (for you) the Hereafter, and Allah is Mighty, Wise. Had it not been for an ordinance of Allah which had gone before, an awful doom had come upon you on account of what ye took. Now enjoy what ye have won, as lawful and good, and keep your duty to Allah. Lo! Allah is Forgiving, Merciful (*Surah 8:39,57,59-60,65,67-69*, emp. added; cf. 33:26).

Muslim scholar Pickthall readily concedes the context of these verses:

vv. 67-69 were revealed when the Prophet had decided to spare the lives of the prisoners taken at Badr and hold them to ransom, against the wish of Omar, who would have executed them for their past crimes. The Prophet took the verses as a reproof, and they are generally understood to mean that no quarter ought to have been given in that first battle (p. 144).

So the Quran indicates that at the Battle of Badr, no captives should have been taken. The enemy should have been completely slaughtered, with no quarter given. This very fate awaited the Jewish Bani Qurayzah, when some 700 men were beheaded by the Muslims with Muhammad’s approval (Lings, p. 232). Likewise, members of a clan of the Bani Nadir were executed in Khaybar for concealing their treasure rather than forfeiting it to the Muslims (Lings, p. 267).

Another surah describes how allowances respecting the daily prayers were to be made for Muhammad’s Muslim warriors when engaged in military action:

And when ye go forth in the land, it is no sin for you to curtail (your) worship if ye fear that those who disbelieve may attack you. In truth the disbelievers are an open enemy to you. And when thou (O Muhammad) art among them and arranges (their) worship for them, let only a party of them stand with thee (to worship) and **let them take their arms**. Then when they have performed their prostrations let them fall to the rear and let another party come that hath not worshipped and let them worship with thee, and **let them take their precaution and their arms**. Those who disbelieve long for you to neglect your arms and your baggage that they may attack you once for all. It is no sin for you to lay aside your arms, if rain impedeth you or ye are sick. But take your precaution. Lo! Allah prepareth for the disbelievers shameful punishment. When ye have performed the act of worship, remember Allah, standing, sitting and reclining. And when ye are in safety, observe proper worship. Worship at fixed hours hath been enjoined on the believers. **Relent not in pursuit of the enemy** (*Surah* 4:101-104, emp. added; cf. 73:20).

These verses show that the Quran implicitly endorses armed conflict and war to advance Islam.

Muslim historical sources themselves report the background details of those armed conflicts that have characterized Islam from its inception—including Muhammad’s own warring tendencies involving personal participation in and endorsement of military campaigns (cf. Lings, pp. 86, 111). Muslim scholar Pickthall’s own summary of Muhammad’s war record is an eye-opener: “The number of the campaigns which he led in person during the last ten years of his life is twenty-seven, in nine of which there was hard fighting. The number of the expeditions which he planned and sent out under other leaders is thirty-eight” (n.d., p. xxvi).

What a contrast with Jesus—Who never once took up the sword or encouraged anyone else to do so! The one time that one of His close followers took it upon himself to do so, the disciple was soundly reprimanded and ordered to put the sword away, with the added warning: “all who take the sword will perish by the sword” (Matthew 26:52). Indeed, when Pilate quizzed Jesus regarding His intentions, He responded: “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, **My servants would fight**, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here” (John 18:36, emp. added)—the very opposite of the Aqabah pact. And

whereas the Quran boldly declares, “**And one who attacks you, attack him in like manner as he attacked you**” (*Surah* 2:194; cf. 22:60), Jesus counters, “But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also” and “love your enemies” (Matthew 5:39,44). The New Testament record presents a far higher, more noble and godly ethic on the matter of violence and armed conflict. In fact, the following verses demonstrate how irrevocably deep the chasm is between the Quran and the New Testament on this point:

[L]ove your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? (Matthew 5:44-46).

But I say to you who hear: **Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you**. To him who strikes you on the one cheek, **offer the other also**. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back. And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. **But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return**; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful (Luke 6:27-36, emp. added).

What an amazing contrast! The New Testament says to love, bless, do good to, and pray for those who persecute you. The Quran says “persecution is worse than killing” (*Surah* 2:217)—i.e., it is better to kill your persecutors than to endure their persecutions!

The standard Muslim attempt to justify the Quran’s endorsement of violence is that such violence was undertaken in self-defense (e.g., *Surah* 42:41). Consider the following Muslim explanation:

At the time when this surah (*Surah* 2—DM) was revealed at Al-Madinah, the Prophet’s own tribe, the pagan Qureysh at Mecca, were preparing to attack the Muslims in their place of refuge. Cruel persecution was the lot of Muslims who had stayed in Meccan territory or who journeyed thither, and Muslims were being prevented from performing the pilgrimage. The possible necessity of fighting had been foreseen in the terms of the oath, taken at Al-Aqabah by the Muslims of Yathrib before the Flight, to defend the Prophet as they would their own wives and children, and **the first commandment to fight** was revealed to the Prophet before his flight from Mecca; but there was no actual fighting by the Muslims until the battle of Badr. Many of them were reluctant, having before been subject to a rule of strict non-violence. It was with difficulty that they could **accept the idea of fighting even in self-defence** [sic].... (Pickthall, p. 33, emp. added).

Apart from the fact that the claim that Muhammad’s advocacy of fighting was justifiable on the ground of self-defense is contrary to the historical facts (since the wars waged by Muhammad and the territorial expansion of Islam achieved by his subsequent followers cannot **all** be dismissed as defensive), this explanation fails to come to grips with the propriety of shedding of blood and inflicting violence—**regardless of the reason**. Muslim scholar Seyyed Nasr seems unconscious of the inherent self-contradiction apparent in his own remark:

The spread of Islam occurred in waves. In less than a century after the establishment of the first Islamic society in Medina by the Prophet, **Arab armies had conquered** a land stretching from the Indus River to France and brought with them Islam, which, contrary to popular Western conceptions, **was not, however, forced on the people by the sword** (2003, p. 17, emp. added).

In other words, Muslim armies physically conquered—by military force and bloodshed—various nations, forcing the population to submit to Muslim **rule**, but did not require them to become Muslims! One suspects that, at the time, the technical distinction escaped the citizens of those conquered countries, even as it surely does the reader.

The Quran appears to have been somewhat influenced by the law of Moses in this regard. For example, the Quran states: “If ye punish, then punish with the like of that wherewith ye were afflicted” (*Surah*

16:126). Similarly, “O ye who believe! Retaliation is prescribed for you in the matter of the murdered; the freeman for the freeman, and the slave for the slave, and the female for the female.... And there is life for you in retaliation, O men of understanding, that ye may ward off (evil)” (*Surah* 2:178-179). One is reminded of the *lex talionis* [literally “law as (or of) retaliation”] of the law of Moses. However, whereas the Quran appears to enjoin retaliation, the *lex talionis* were not intended to promote retaliation. Enjoining retaliation would be in direct conflict with the nature of God. God is never vindictive. The New Testament law does not differ with the Old Testament in the areas of proper values, ethics, mercy, and justice. The “eye for an eye” injunctions of the Old Testament were designed to be **prohibitive** in their thrust, i.e., they humanely **limited and restricted** legal punishment to a degree in keeping with the crime. That is, they prevented dispensers of justice from punishing too harshly or too much. They were intended to inculcate into Israelite society the principle of confining retribution to appropriate parameters.

The fact that the author of the Quran failed to grasp this feature of God’s laws is evident in various Quranic injunctions: “As for the thief, both male and female, **cut off their hands**. It is the reward of their own deeds, an exemplary punishment from Allah. Allah is Mighty, Wise” (*Surah* 5:38, emp. added).

The adulterer and the adulteress, scourge ye each one of them (with) **a hundred stripes**. And let not pity for the twain

withhold you from obedience to Allah, if ye believe in Allah and the Last Day. And let a party of believers witness their punishment.... And those who accuse honourable women but bring not **four witnesses, scourge them (with) eighty stripes** and never (afterward) accept their testimony—They indeed are evildoers (*Surah* 24:2,4, emp. added).

These latter verses conflict with Mosaic injunction on two significant points. First, on the one hand, it **doubles** the more reasonable and appropriate forty stripes (Deuteronomy 25:3)—a number that the Jews were so concerned not to exceed that they counted thirty-nine and stopped to allow for accidental miscount (2 Corinthians 11:24). On the other hand, this eighty increases to one hundred for adultery. Second, the requirement of four witnesses is an unreasonable number. The two or three witnesses of the Bible (Deuteronomy 17:6; 19:15; Matthew 18:16; 2 Corinthians 13:1; 1 Timothy 5:19) strikes a logical medium between the precariousness of only a single witness on the one hand, and the excessive and unlikely availability of the four witnesses required by the Quran.

It is true that the God of the Bible enjoined violent, armed conflict for the Israelites in the Old Testament. He did so in order to eliminate the morally corrupt Canaanite civilizations that lived in Palestine prior to the Israelite occupation of the land (Deuteronomy 9:4; 18:9-12; Leviticus 18:24-25,27-28). There simply was no viable solution to their condition except extermination. Their moral depravity was “full” (Genesis 15:16). They had slumped to such

an immoral, depraved state, with no hope of recovery, that their existence on this Earth had to be ended—just like in Noah’s day when God waited while Noah preached for years but was unable to turn the world’s population from its wickedness (Genesis 6:3,5-7; 1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 3:5-9).

Additionally, since the nation of Israel was also a civil entity in its own right, the government was also charged with implementing civil retribution upon lawbreakers. However, with the arrival of New Testament Christianity—an international religion intended for all persons without regard to ethnicity or nationality—God has assigned to **civil government** (not the church or the individual) the responsibility of regulating secular behavior. God’s people who live posterior to the cross of Christ (i.e., Christians) are not charged by God with the responsibility of inflicting physical punishment on the evildoer. Rather, civil government is charged with the responsibility of maintaining order and punishing lawbreakers (Romans 13:1-7; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13-14). Observe Paul’s explanation of this dichotomy:

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, **an avenger to execute wrath** on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience’ sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God’s ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor (Romans 13:1-7, emp. added).

One translation () renders the boldface type in the above quote “an agent of wrath to bring punishment.” But this assignment of judicial and penal retribution to the government is a contrast in Paul’s discussion with what he wrote in the three verses prior to this quotation:

Beloved, **do not avenge yourselves**, but rather **give place to wrath**; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. Therefore “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is

SPEAKING SCHEDULES

Dr. Brad Harrub

July 10-13	Brentwood, TN	(615) 373-4353
July 15-17	Vallejo, CA	(707) 643-5824
July 24-25	Lake Tahoe, NV	(916) 989-4885

Dr. Dave Miller

July 13	Columbiana, AL	(205) 669-4339
July 16-17	Cross Plains, TN	(615) 654-2440
July 24-28	Pulaski, TN	(931) 363-2777

Kyle Butt

July 4-8	Henderson, TN	(334) 201-4362
July 13	Hope Hull, AL	(334) 281-6020

Eric Lyons

July 10-12	Bandera, TX	(281) 342-7209
July 22-24	Senatobia, MS	(662) 562-6331

thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Romans 12:19-21, emp. added).

Notice that the very responsibility that is **enjoined** on the government, i.e., "an avenger to execute wrath" by use of the sword in 13:4, is **strictly forbidden** to the individual Christian in 12:19, i.e., "do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath." To "give place to wrath" means to allow God's wrath to show itself in His own appointed way that, according to the next few verses, is by means of the civil government.

True Christianity (i.e., that which is based strictly on the New Testament) dictates peace and non-retaliatory promotion of itself. The "absolute imperative" (Rahman, 1979, p. 22) of Islam is the **submission/conversion** of the whole world. In stark contrast, the absolute imperative of New Testament Christianity is the **evangelism** of the whole world, i.e., the **dissemination** of the message of salvation—whether people embrace it or not (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47). Absolutely no coercion is admissible from the Christian (i.e., New Testament) viewpoint. The Crusades, the Spanish Inquisition, and all other violent activities undertaken in the name of Christ and Christianity have been in complete conflict with the teaching of the New Testament. The perpetrators acted without the authority and sanction of Christ.

Islam seeks to bring the entire world into submission to Allah and the Quran—even using *jihad*, coercion, and force; Christianity seeks to go into all the world and to announce the "good news" that God loves every individual, that Jesus Christ died for the sins of everyone, and that He offers salvation, forgiveness, and reconciliation. **But**, each person has free choice to accept or reject without any retaliation by Christians against those who choose to reject. Jesus taught His disciples, when faced with opposition and resistance, simply to walk away: "And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet" (Matthew 10:14). In fact, on one occasion when a Samaritan village was particularly non-receptive, some of Jesus' disciples wished to command fire to come down from heaven to consume them! But Jesus rebuked them and said, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them." And they went to another village" (Luke 9:55). Muhammad and the Quran stand in diametrical opposition to Jesus and the New Testament.

If the majority of Muslims were violent, that would not prove that Islam is a religion of violence. The vast majority of those who claim to be "Christian" are practicing a corrupted form of the Christian Faith. So the validity of any religion is determined ultimately not by the imperfect, inaccurate practice of the religion by even a majority of its adherents, but by the official authority or standard upon which it is based, i.e., its Scriptures. The present discussion in the world regarding whether or not *jihad* includes physical force in the advancement of Islam is ultimately irrelevant (cf. Nasr, 2002, pp. 256-266). The Quran unquestionably endorses violence, war, and armed conflict. No wonder a substantial number of Muslims manifest a maniacal, reckless abandon in their willingness to die by sacrificing their lives in order to kill as many "infidels" (especially Israelis and Americans) as possible. They have read the following:

Now when ye meet in battle those who disbelieve, then it is smiting of the necks.... And **those who are slain in the way of Allah**, He rendereth not their actions vain. He will guide them and improve their state, and **bring them into unto the Garden** [Paradise—DM] which He hath made known to them (*Surah* 47:4-6, emp. added).

O ye who believe! Be not as those who disbelieved and said of their brethren who went abroad in the land or were **fighting in the field** If they had been (here) with us they would not have died or been killed.... And what **though ye be slain in Allah's way** or die therein? Surely pardon from Allah and mercy are better than all that they amass. What **though ye be slain** or die, when unto Allah ye are gathered?.... So those who...**fought and were slain**, verily **I shall remit their evil deeds** from them and verily I shall **bring them into Gardens** underneath which rivers flow—a reward from Allah (*Surah* 3:156-158, 195, emp. added).

Even if the vast majority of Muslims in the world reject violence and refrain from terrorist activity (which would appear to be the case), it is still a fact that the Quran (as well as the example of Muhammad himself) endorses the advancement of Islam through physical force. While Muslim apologist Seyyed Hossein Nasr insists that "the traditional norms based on peace and openness to others" characterize true Islam and the majority of Muslims, in contradistinction, he freely admits that at times Islam "has been forced to take recourse to physical action in the form of defense" (Nasr, 2002, pp. 112, 110). This concession cannot be successfully denied in view of the Quran's own decla-

rations. Hence, the Muslim is forced to maintain the self-contradictory position that, yes, there have been times that Islam has been properly violent and, yes, the Quran does endorse violence, but, no, most Muslims are not violent, and then only in self-defense. As reprehensible and cowardly as Islamic terrorists have shown themselves to be in recent years, an honest reading of the Quran leads one to believe that they, at least, are more consistent with, and true to, their own Scriptures.

CONCLUSION

While the Quran contains some commendable ethical regulations, it simply does not come up to the moral heights of the Bible. It approves various moral and social evils like polygamy, bloodshed, and illicit slavery (e.g., *Surah* 4:3, 25, 36, 92; 5:89; 16:71; 23:6; 24:32-33, 58; 30:28; 33:50-55; 58:3; 70:30; 90:13; cf. Philomont 16). It assigns to women an inferior status—even allowing beatings from husbands:

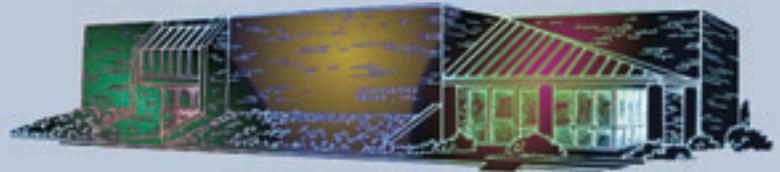
Men are in charge of women, because Allah hath made the one of them to excel the other, and because they spend of their property (for the support of women). So good women are the obedient, guarding in secret that which Allah hath guarded. As for those from whom ye fear rebellion, admonish them and banish them to beds apart, and scourge them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Lo! Allah is ever High Exalted, Great (*Surah* 4:34; cf. 4:11; 2:223, 228, 282; 38:45; 16:58-59; see also Brooks, 1995; Trifkovic, 2002, pp. 153-167).

The conflicting ethics advocated in the Quran are proof of the Quran's human origin.

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NOTE FROM THE EDITORS



ANNOUNCING A NEW BOOK AND DVD SET ON THE QURAN



In last month's "Note from the Editors," we announced the release of A.P.'s latest contribution to the defense of the Christian Faith—*The Anvil Rings* (Volume 2). With this month's issue of *Reason and Revelation*, we are extremely pleased to announce the release of yet another significant book—*The Quran Unveiled*. This volume constitutes A.P.'s first extensive venture into responding to the non-Christian world religions.

With the advent of 9/11, our world, and the way we view it, has been forever altered. As you well know, Islam has not only captured international attention, it is expanding its influence and making extensive encroachments into

American culture. Over 1,200 mosques dot the American landscape—most built within the last two decades. Influential American authorities—from politicians to public school educators—are promulgating the equal acceptance and promotion of Islam in public life.

The fountain head of Islam is the Quran. Indeed, the authenticity of Islam rests on the credibility of the Quran. If the Quran is from God, it must possess the self-authenticating attributes and characteristics of divine inspiration. If it is not from God, though it may possess certain positive, even valuable, qualities, it must be rejected as disqualified to legislate human behavior in an absolute and ultimate sense. The primary purpose of *The Quran Unveiled* is to examine Islam's holy book with a view toward ascertaining whether it is, in fact, of supernatural origin.

The Quran Unveiled represents the culmination of over two years of extensive research and meticulous examination of five separate English translations of the Quran. The result has been the firm realization that the Quran and the Bible stand in stark contradistinction to each other. Many people refuse to consider the beliefs of others, and simply cling to that to which their family and cultural environment exposed them. But in order to grasp the full extent of the chasm that exists between the Bible and the Quran, one should read **both** thoroughly. Muslims should read the Bible, and Christians should read the Quran. Doing so has caused the author to marvel at the disparity between the two.

In the midst of this social scenario, Apologetics Press is surging forward to maintain its cutting edge articulation of New Testament truth to current culture. We suspect that you will agree that *The Quran Unveiled* is an impressive addition to the "A.P. arsenal" in our ongoing defense of the Christian Faith and our warfare against the forces of Satan. In this month's edition of *Resources* (inside *R&R*), you'll find an advertisement with order information regarding how to purchase a copy. Additionally, a DVD set of the Islam seminar conducted by Dave Miller is also available for \$39.95 + shipping. We urge you to take advantage of these tools in your evangelistic efforts to point people to Jesus Christ.

Brad Harrub
 Dave Miller

