

Comments on the Book *The Faith Club*

January 3, 2015

The Faith Club was written in 2006 and is the actual story of three women (a Muslim, a Christian, and a Jew) searching for “understanding” among the three faiths. I was advised of this book at a function in October 2014 and was informed that one could learn a lot about Islam from the Muslim woman in this book. So I obtained a copy of the book and focused on the sections presenting the comments and thoughts of Ranya, the Muslim woman.

My conclusion is that after reading this book you will have learned a lot about Ranya’s personal version of Islam, but very little about the Islam found in the Koran and the teachings of Muhammad.

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Comments:

1. By her own words, Ranya is not a religious woman. From being a young girl to the current day, Ranya did not, and does not, practice many aspects of Islam, and did not, and does not, attend a mosque (pp. 4, 82, and 84). She learned about Islam through customs and traditions of her family (pp. 22-23), and she had not thought much about the religious identity of her children (p. 91).
2. She thinks she can provide her own personal interpretation of what she knows about Islam (although this idea of personal interpretation goes directly against the teachings of her prophet Muhammad); for example, Ranya wrote:

You can pretty much read it [the Koran] and have your own personal understanding and relationship with God. p. 92

We have lived in New York for ten years, yet never been affiliated with a mosque. It is difficult to find a mosque whose imam and congregation have a similar understanding of Islam to mine and my family’s. p. 82

Comment: This is an indication of how her personal approach to Islam does not comport with the Islam of Muhammad.

3. On p. 4 she stated:

[After 9/11] On street corners, people joked about Muslim martyrs “racing to heaven to meet their brown-eyed virgins,” a supposed reference to the Quran, but something I had never heard before.

Comment: She is correct. This is not mentioned in the Koran. However, the promise of 72 virgins for the Muslim martyr is found in one of the authoritative *hadith* collections: *Jami' At-Tirmidhi*, Vol. 3, No. 1663, p. 410.

A *hadith* is a report about the examples, ways, and teachings of Muhammad believed to have come from those who were with him and observed and heard them. They are second only to the Koran in importance to Islam. And the Koran cannot be understood without relying on the *hadiths*. Ranya is apparently not familiar with one of the two sources of Islamic doctrine.

4. Chapter Four focuses on the Crucifixion of Jesus.

Comment: I was surprised there was no mention in this chapter of what Islam teaches about the Crucifixion. 4:157-158 of the Koran specifically states that Jesus was not crucified, but Allah just made it appear that way. The explanation is that Allah made one of Jesus' disciples to look like Jesus, then Allah took Jesus bodily into Heaven, and that disciple was crucified in his place. The other disciples knew that Jesus had not been crucified, but nevertheless they went out and preached Christianity. Muslims who know their religion look at a crucifix or a painting of the crucifixion and see an imposter hanging on the cross. No Crucifixion means no Resurrection. So Islam teaches that Christianity is a religion based on a fraud and propagated in the beginning by those who knew it was a fraud.

5. No Compulsion in Islam. On p. 92 Ranya makes the following statement:

...there is “no compulsion in religion” (10:100)...

Comment: I am surprised she referred to 10:100 of the Koran. Here is that verse:

It is not for any person to believe, except by the Leave of Allah, and He will put the wrath on those who are heedless.

A 20th century Koran commentary explained the meaning of this verse:

The meaning of this verse is that those who do not reflect over the revelations and signs of Allah, they remain in a state of disbelief and, therefore, deserve divine punishment.

Tafsir Ahsanul-Bayan, Vol. 2, p. 497

It is interesting that this verse undermines the claim Ranya made in No. 6 below.

In terms of the “no compulsion in Islam” claim, I devote Chapter 7 to that issue in my book *Letting Islam Be Islam: Separating Truth From Myth*; I show that, based on Islamic doctrine and early history, Islam is largely based on compulsion.

6. On p. 91 Ranya states:

...there is not an Islamic belief that people must convert to Islam in order to be saved by God.

Comment: Actually there are many verses in the Koran in which Allah says that non-Muslims will be condemned (e.g. 3:28, 3:85, 4:47, 9:30, 9:33, 60:13, and 98:6).

7. On p. 109 Ranya states:

Nowhere in the Quran does it say kill and you shall be rewarded.

Comment: She is incorrect because 9:111 specifically promises Paradise to anyone who kills and dies while fighting in the Cause of Allah (*jihad*).

8. On p. 109 Ranya brings up the claim that the inner personal struggle is the *Greater Jihad*, while the idea of a holy war is the *Lesser Jihad*.

Comment: This claim is often heard from Muslims in the West, but it is actually based on weak, if not fabricated information. I address this in Chapter 12 of my latest book, *Islam According to Muhammad, Not Your Neighbor*.

9. On p. 109 Ranya states:

But this “jihad against the infidels” demonstrated in the recent horrific terrorist attacks is not only crazy, but a terribly faulty reading of Islam. By Islam’s definition, Christians and Jews are “people of the book” and therefore not infidels.

Comment: In reality, there are many verses in the Koran commanding Muslims to fight the infidels. The classic verse is 9:5, referred to as the “Verse of the Sword” by Muslim scholars. This verse commands Muslims to fight non-Muslims until those non-Muslims are killed or convert to Islam.

An exception can be made with regard to Christians and Jews. 9:29 commands Muslims to fight Christians and Jews until those Christians and Jews agree to pay the *jizyah*, with willing submission and feeling subdued. The *jizyah* is a tax imposed on non-Muslims living under a Muslim government. However, if the *jizyah* is not paid, the Christians and Jews have only two options: death or conversion to Islam.

10. On pp. 111-112 Ranya raises the question: *Is Islam contrary to the American way of life?*

Comment: As part of a series of brochures I wrote about Islam, I have four in particular that look at Islam and American values. The core doctrines of Islam are contrary to the American way of life. These brochures, and others, can be found on the “Brochures” page at *IslamSeries.org*.

11. Ranya drinks wine, and on p. 113 she states: *But the Quran doesn't forbid drinking.*

Comment: She is incorrect because 5:90-91 specifically prohibits Muslims from drinking intoxicants.