

FANTASY ISLAM (KAFIR EDITION): LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICE OF MINNESOTA, PART II

Who is "reforming" who?

March 10, 2016 Dr. Stephen M. Kirby



[See Part I Here (<http://www.frontpagemag.com/fpm/262027/fantasy-islam-kafir-edition-lutheran-social-dr-stephen-m-kirby>)]

Fantasy Islam (Kafir Edition): A game in which an audience of non-Muslims wish with all their hearts that Islam was a "Religion of Peace," and a Kafir (non-Muslim) strives to fulfill that wish by presenting a version of Islam that has little foundation in Islamic Doctrine.

In 2015 the Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota produced a 61 page booklet titled *My Neighbor is Muslim, Exploring the Muslim Faith* (<http://lirs.org/myneighborismuslim/>). The purpose of the booklet was to enable Lutherans to learn about Islam in order to better understand their "new neighbors" who were arriving as refugees. The booklet includes discussion questions after each chapter.

In my first article (<http://www.frontpagemag.com/fpm/262027/fantasy-islam-kafir-edition-lutheran-social-dr-stephen-m-kirby>) about this booklet, I looked at the interesting background of the imam who endorsed the booklet. The focus of this article is on how

the booklet presents Islam.

Statements Supported by Vague Terms

There was only one footnote in this booklet; it was on p. 48 and simply pointed out other names for the *jihadist* group ISIS. Throughout the booklet assertions about Islam and Islamic Doctrine were made, with only the occasional use of vague terms such as “mainstream Islamic tradition,” “most Muslims,” or “many scholars” to support these assertions. The booklet does have a suggested reading list of ten books by modern authors, but there is no indication where among those ten books one could go for further reading about any particular statement made about Islam.

Islam’s Jesus – the Rest of the Story

The booklet has a chapter titled “What Does the Qur’an Say about Jesus?” This chapter pointed out similarities and differences “between the Qur’an’s presentation of Jesus and traditional Christian understandings of Jesus.” There were three differences the booklet found worth of considering: 1) Jesus Is Not the Son of God; 2) Jesus Is Not a Savior; and 3) Jesus Was Not Crucified. On p. 17 we find that these differences are not “insurmountable”:

While the differences between the Muslim and Christian Jesus are significant, they are not insurmountable hurdles for interfaith dialogue. The reverence and respect Muslims have for Jesus is considerable. If Christians can develop an appreciation for the prominent role that Jesus has in Islam, they may discover Jesus is more of an opportunity than an obstacle for developing interfaith relationships with their Muslim sisters and brothers.

But to really understand “the prominent role that Jesus has in Islam,” we must turn to the teachings of Muhammad (the *hadiths*). Here is what Muhammad said would happen when Jesus returned to earth:

He [Jesus] will descend...He will break the cross, kill the pig, and banish the Jizyah and will call the people to Islam. During his time, Allah will destroy all religions except Islam...[i]

And, according to Muhammad, Jesus would also be judging mankind by the laws of the Koran:

Narrated Abu Hurairah: Allah's Messenger said, "How will you be when the son of Maryam (Mary) [Isa (Jesus)] descends amongst you, and he will judge people by the law of the Qur'an and not by the law of the Gospel." [ii]

So Islam teaches that Jesus will return to earth to destroy Christianity, call the people to

Islam, and judge mankind by the Koran. In terms of “interfaith dialogue,” these three issues should be priorities for discussion. But the Islamic message of these three issues raises interesting questions about the “opportunity” they create for “interfaith relationships” between Muslims and those who are to be destroyed by Islam’s Jesus.

No Compulsion Under Islam

On p. 24 we find:

The first point to note is that the general policy in Islamic empires in premodern history was not to force Jews and Christians to convert. The source of this policy is the Qur’an.

Let there be no compulsion in religion. Surely, Truth stands out clearly from error. Whoever rejects evil and believes in God has held the most trustworthy handhold that never breaks. And God is All-Hearing, All-Knowing (Q. 2:256).

...Islam’s primary emphasis when it comes to conversion is that one must accept Islam through free will.

2:256 of the Koran is used as the basis for claiming that there is no compulsion under Islam for the conversion of non-Muslims. However, this claim ignores the Doctrine of Abrogation, which is fundamental to understanding Islam. Here is a summary of that Doctrine:

The verses of the Koran are “revelations” Muhammad received from 610 AD until his death in 632 AD. While in Mecca, the religion of Islam was just starting and it was generally not well received. Perhaps as a result of this, the verses of the Koran “revealed” in Mecca were generally more peaceful and accommodating toward non-Muslims than the verses later “revealed” in Medina. The verses from Medina had a general tendency to be more belligerent and intolerant, and more inclined to make sharp differentiations between Muslims (believers) and non-Muslims (disbelievers).

This can lead to a conflict between the message of a Meccan verse and that of a Medinan verse addressing the same general topic. But how can there be such a conflict if the Koran is the infallible, eternal, “revealed” word of Allah? This was covered in a Medinan verse in the Koran that introduced the concept of “abrogation”:

Chapter 2, Verse 106

Whatever a Verse (revelation) do We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring a better one or similar to it. Know you not that Allah is Able to do all things?

Abrogation means that if there is a conflict between the messages of two “revelations” in the Koran, then the most recent “revelation” is the one to be followed. Both verses remain in the Koran because they are considered the words of Allah; but it is the most recent “revelation” that now carries the doctrinal weight. So let’s take a brief chronological look at this claim of “no compulsion under Islam.”

2:106 was “revealed” around February 624.[iii] 2:256 was “revealed” around August 625. [iv] So as of August 625 Allah had “revealed” that verses of the Koran could be abrogated and no one was to be forced to become a Muslim.

Around March 629, 2:193 was “revealed”[v]:

And fight them until there is no more Fitnah (disbelief and worshipping of others along with Allah) and (all and every kind of) worship is for Allah (Alone). But if they cease, let there be no transgression except against Az-Zalimun (the polytheists and wrongdoers).

The authoritative Muslim scholar al-Qurtubi explained the meaning of this verse:

It is an unqualified command to fight without any precondition of hostilities being initiated by the unbelievers [non-Muslims]...The Prophet said, “I was commanded to fight people until they say, ‘There is no god but Allah.’...If they cease, there should be no enmity towards any but wrongdoers. If they stop and become Muslim or submit by paying jizya...Otherwise they should be fought....The wrongdoers are either those who initiate fighting or those who remain entrenched in disbelief and fitna.[vi]

Chapter 9 of the Koran was “revealed” in 630-631. In that chapter is Verse 5:

Then when the Sacred Months have passed, then kill the Mushrikun [non-Muslims] wherever you find them, and capture them and besiege them, and lie in wait for them in every ambush. But if they repent [by rejecting Shirk (polytheism) and accept Islamic Monotheism] and perform As-Salat (the prayers), and give Zakat (obligatory charity), then leave their way free. Verily, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

So 9:5 commands Muslims to aggressively seek-out and attack non-Muslims, and to kill some, and to capture some. And the only way non-Muslims could save themselves would be to convert to Islam.

Just with these few Koran verses the Doctrine of Abrogation shows us that the idea there is “no compulsion in Islam” has been abrogated by at least two subsequent verses of the Koran. Unfortunately, the booklet *My Neighbor is Muslim* does not address the Doctrine of Abrogation. And by ignoring this doctrine, the booklet was then able to present any

Koran verse as still carrying doctrinal weight.

Conclusion

The purported purpose of this booklet is to provide introductory information about Islam that can be used in group discussions. Space limits for this article enabled us to examine just a few of the issues I found with this booklet. Nevertheless, it is hard to see how a version of Islam that includes significant omissions and broad assertions can possibly contribute to a better understanding of the Islam of Muhammad. However, it will certainly help one better understand the Lutheran Social Service Reformed Islam.

Notes:

[i] Abu Al-Fida' 'Imad Ad-Din Isma'il bin 'Umar bin Kathir Al-Qurashi Al-Busrawi, *Tafsir Ibn Kathir* (Abridged), trans. Jalal Abualrub, et al. (Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Darussalam, 2000), Vol. 3, p. 32.

[ii] Muhammad bin Ismail bin Al-Mughirah Al-Bukhari, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, trans. Muhammad Muhsin Khan (Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Darussalam, 1997), Vol. 4, Book 60, No. 3449, p. 412.

[iii] Abu 'Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Ansari al-Qurtubi, *Tafsir Al-Qurtubi: Classical Commentary of the Holy Qur'an*, Vol. 1, trans. Aisha Bewley (London: Dar Al Taqwa Ltd., 2003), p. 321.

[iv] Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn 'Ali al-Wahidi, *Al-Wahidi's Asbab al-Nuzul*, trans. Mokrane Guezzou (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2008), pp. 36-37.

[v] *Al-Wahidi's Asbab al-Nuzul*, p. 23; and Salahuddin Yusuf, *Tafsir Ahsanul-Bayan*, trans. Mohammad Kamal Myshkat (Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Darussalam, 2010), Vol. 1, pp. 171-172.

[vi] *Tafsir Al-Qurtubi: Classical Commentary of the Holy Qur'an*, Vol. 1, p. 496.

📌 **Tags:** Islam, Jihad, Moderate

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