



Islam

“No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also” (I John 2:23).

The front cover of an issue of Christianity Today last year asks the question, “Is the God of Muhammad the Father of Jesus?” It’s another way of asking “Do Muslims have the true God?” or “Do Christians and Muslims worship the same God?”

More and more Christians are inclined to answer the question, “Yes.” Though Christians and Muslims may worship God in different ways, and they may assign differing degrees of importance to Jesus, many believe that the God of Christianity and the God of Islam is essentially the same.

As far back as 1985 Pope John Paul II told a group of Muslim youth in Morocco, “We believe in the same God, the only God, the God who creates worlds and brings its creatures to perfection” (The Standard Bearer, Oct. 15, 1985).

Since the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001 strained Christian-Muslim relations, more and more Christians have been rushing to affirm that both religions worship the same God.

An article in the Dallas Morning News in May quotes a local Methodist pastor saying of Muslims, “We worship the same God.” Elsewhere, a stir over the issue was caused by a May 1 National Day of Prayer celebration on the steps of the City Hall in Muncie, Indiana. The evangelical minister who has organized the event for the past decade refused to share the microphone with Muslims, Jews, and Unitarians who also wanted a chance to pray with the crowd. A letter to the editor of the Muncie Star Press opined, “God is God, whether he/she is called God, Allah, the Great Spirit, Jehovah, or Fred.”

Our former sister synod, the LC-MS, is embroiled in a controversy over similar issues regarding participation in a prayer service just weeks after the terrorist attacks in New York. The synod has formally approved Atlantic District President David Benke’s participation in the service of prayer with members of various world religions. Says Dr. Benke, “The Muslim God is also the one true God (there is only ONE TRUE GOD, right?) but worshiped in an inadequate way.”

The direction of popular thinking on this issue is clear to see. The question is: Can this popular thinking be harmonized with what God says about himself in the Scriptures?



Since the Bible does describe a type of “natural knowledge of god” written into the consciences of people, and observable in creation, some conclude that religions that recognize morals and the created world to be the work of a god must be worshipping the true God.

However, man’s innate sense of right and wrong, and the power and beauty of creation, are not God himself. They may point to his existence, and tell us something about him, and even lead people to look for a god or attempt to worship a god. However, they fall short of introducing us to him personally. It’s a little like coming upon the scene of a robbery. The broken back door, the disheveled state of the house, and the missing possessions may give us evidence that a robber exists. But by themselves they fall short of telling us explicitly who the robber is. We certainly couldn’t claim to know the identity of the true thief just because we are aware of his work. In fact, any attempt to make an arrest on nothing more than evidence that a robber exists would almost certainly lead us to pick the wrong man. We need to “catch him in the act.”

This is exactly where Islam fails to recognize God. The true God gave us more than mere evidence of himself. He revealed himself to us directly when he clothed himself in human flesh and introduced himself to us as Jesus of Nazareth. He let us “catch him in the act” of being God: demonstrating his mercy to the masses, giving his life for our sins, rising from the dead to promise us life.

Islam does not know this God. “Christ Jesus the Son of Mary was no more than an apostle of God” (Quran 4:171). “They surely disbelieve who say: Lo! Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary” (Quran 5:72).

According to such statements, Islam reveals that it is looking for a god with an entirely different description from the God we know to be Jesus Christ.

And without Jesus, they don’t have his Father, either, according to the words of 1 John 2:23. “No one who denies the Son has the Father...” Again, Jesus insists in John 5:22-23, “The Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.”

Does that mean we should persecute Muslims, vilify them, or treat them badly? Of course not! God wants us to love them, as he wants us to love all people. But loving people is not the same thing as telling them what they want to hear. First and foremost, loving people moves us to lead them to know who God is.

It appears that we have an important introduction to make to our Muslim friends!

In Christ, Pastor Vieths