

Two Reasons I Could Never Be a Muslim

A Sermon Preached at Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church
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Text, to be read earlier: Either Matthew 21:33-45, Mark 12:1-12, or Luke 20:9-19

". . . [Christians] know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true; in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols." - 1 John 5:20-21

Inasmuch as the title of my sermon was advertised yesterday in the Sun-Sentinel it is possible that some Muslims may have decided to attend this service to hear what I will say about Islam. If any Muslims are present I would first express my appreciation to you for coming tonight and I want you to know that this church loves you and that you are welcome. Second, I assure you that no one here has any rancor toward you personally as individuals. Rather, speaking for myself, it is because I care very deeply not only for the members of this church but also for the Muslim world that I am preaching on this topic. Third, I would respectfully urge you to examine the Qur'an and Christian theology and history to see if what I will say is true. But please, I beg you to listen carefully, thoughtfully, and attentively to me. And to all here who profess to be Christians, and I presume that is most of you, I would say to you as well that just because you claim to be Christians is no guarantee in itself that you are a genuine Christian with your sins forgiven or that you are on your way to heaven. So you as well should listen carefully, thoughtfully, and attentively to what I will say.

For some time now, particularly since September 11, 2001, I have been studying the Qur'an, Islam's "holy book," which is composed of 114 "suras" or chapters. Muslims regard the Qur'an as the infallible Word of God. Now while I am not a recognized authority on the religion of Islam I believe that I can, in spite of the Qur'an's wearisome jumbles, endless repetitions, long-winded entanglements, and confused ferment of ideas, read it with sufficient comprehension to understand it in the main. And I certainly know something about what Christianity has historically and classically taught regarding Christian doctrine. And it is apparent to me from my reading of the Qur'an that it is laced with distortions concerning Christianity's doctrinal teachings. Admittedly, there are many ambiguities in Qur'anic teaching, about the meaning of which even Islamic scholars dispute, and these ambiguities may account for some of these distortions. But, in my opinion, any objective observer who knows the facts must still conclude that Muhammad, the Qur'an's author, was at best ill-informed about Christianity's core teachings and thus did not write infallibly when he wrote what he did about classic Christianity's belief system.

In this sermon I do not intend to address the many historical inaccuracies in the Qur'an¹. Nor will I address Muhammad's teaching that the husband may beat his disobedient wife (Sura 4, "Women," verse 34), or his belief that he was to "make war on the unbeliever. . . , and deal sternly with them" (Sura 66, "Prohibition," verse 9; see also Sura 8, "Spoils of War," verses 13-17; Sura 9 (that is virtually a declaration of war against unbelievers), "Repentance," verse 14)², or his fixation on the eternal fire awaiting the Jew and the Christian and the sensual paradise of gardens, feasting, and sexual pleasure that awaits the Muslim. Rather, I will restrict my remarks only to Muhammad's misrepresentation to his followers concerning what Christians believe about God as Trinity, his misrepresentation of Christ's place in redemptive/revelational history as penultimate with his own alleged prophetic role being ultimate, his denials of Christ's deity, his crucifixion and resurrection, and his denial that God requires for forgiveness Jesus' atoning sacrifice for sin. Let's look in some detail at each of these Qur'anic teachings.



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The Qur'an's Teaching on God as Trinity

I want to begin here by noting that Christianity had already enjoyed a six-hundred-year-long theological history and had already developed a carefully-thought-through theology of God by the time Muhammad (b. about A.D. 570), the author of the Qur'an, began to write his alleged "revelations from Allah" around A.D. 610. Through the efforts of the first four ecumenical councils (Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon) the early church fathers, listening carefully to Scripture, had worked out the church's doctrine of God as Trinity and its doctrine of the two-natured incarnate Christ. These doctrines, sometimes expressed in philosophico-theological language, were understandably sometimes quite technical and difficult for an average person to comprehend. In the course of developing its theology over these centuries the church also found it necessary to distance itself from the unscriptural views of the second-century Logos-Christologies, third-century forms of modalism, fourth-century Arianism and Apollinarianism, and fifth-century Nestorianism and Eutychianism - all views that basically had in common the denial in one way or another of the incarnation of God the Son as true man. These unscriptural heresies, however, did not die when they were rejected but rather continued to spread throughout some regions of the Middle East, and it was these heresies, especially Arianism, that spread into Arabia and to Mecca where Muhammad was born.

Now a careful reading of the Qur'an will disclose that Muhammad did not have a clear grasp of what classic orthodox Christianity was teaching about the Trinity in the seventh century A.D. He was hearing views that had been rejected by the learned fathers of the church such as Athanasius, Cyril of Alexandria, and Augustine. Accordingly, his consistent representation of the Trinity suggests that he conceived of the Trinity along the lines of a crude tritheism, a heresy that Christianity had consistently repudiated. In Sura 4, "Women," verse 171, the Koran declares: "The Messiah, Jesus the son of Mary, was no more than God's apostle. . . . So believe in God [Allah] and his apostles and do not say: 'Three.' Forbear, and it shall be better for you. God is but one God. God forbid that he should have a son!" In Sura 5, "The Table," verse 73, Muhammad teaches: "Unbelievers are those who say: 'God [Allah] is one of three.' There is but one God." Apparently Muhammad believed that in order for God to have a son he would have had to have a consort (Sura 6, "Cattle," verse 101), but since God "has taken no consort" he has "not begotten any children" (Sura 72, "The Jinn," verse 3). Then in Sura 5, verse 116, he teaches that Christians believe that God's "threeness" is composed of Allah, Jesus, whom he believed ill-informed Christians had wrongly deified, and his mother Mary³. Now whatever sub-scriptural oddities some church fathers may have espoused over the early centuries of the church about God as Trinity, I can declare categorically that not one of them ever taught that God's "threeness" included the mother of Jesus,⁴ and also that no ecumenical council ever endorsed such a notion. This is an error of massive proportions on Muhammad's part, shows his ignorance of Christian teaching, and evidences that the Qur'an contains error respecting this major doctrine in the belief system of one of its major religious contenders. It may be, if he had even heard of the teaching, that Muhammad thought that the church's confession of Mary as theotokos ("God-bearer") implied that she was deity. But this term was not intended to say that there was something divine about Mary; it was intended only to safeguard Jesus' full deity.

In sum, the church has historically declared that within the unity of the one living and true God eternally exist three persons, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory (see the church creeds here). Perhaps this definition will not satisfy Muslims but at least it takes seriously the teaching of the infallible teaching of Holy Scripture and does not misrepresent to the world what classic Christianity has taught about the Christian God, which cannot be said for the Qur'an's misrepresentation of the doctrine of the Trinity.

The Qur'an's Teaching on Jesus' Secondary Place (Along With the Other Prophets) in Revelational History with Muhammad Himself Occupying the Primary Place

It is Islamic orthodoxy today to teach, on the one hand, that Jesus, while he was Israel's Messiah, was only one of many national prophets to Israel and that God never intended the Christianity of Jesus to become a universal religion. On the other hand, Islamic orthodoxy today teaches that Muhammad was

the only prophet sent by God to the entire world and that it is Islam alone that God intended to become a universal religion. But if one studies the Qur'an itself he will discover a different story for it seems to teach the very opposite. It represents itself as a book written in Arabic for those who spoke Arabic (Sura 41, "Revelations Well Expounded," verse 3, and Sura 42, "Counsel," verse 7) and that it was intended primarily for Mecca and its environs (Sura 6, "Cattle," verse 93, and Sura 42, "Counsel," verse 7). Arthur J. Arberry surely appears to be right on target when he observes that the Islam of the Qur'an is fundamentally an Arabic religion, reflecting and intended for the seventh-century culture of Arabia⁵. On the other hand, the Qur'an emphatically states in Sura 3:3 and Sura 6:92 that God revealed the Mosaic Torah and the Christian Gospel for the light and guidance of all mankind.

But what did Muhammad teach about his relation to Jesus? Did he not see himself as superior to Jesus? Well, it is true that, according to Sura 61, "Battle Array" or "Ranks," verse 6, Muhammad does state that Jesus taught that "an apostle...will come after me whose name is Ahmad [Muhammad]." Of course, Jesus taught no such thing. He taught that God the Holy Spirit whom he called the Comforter (parakletos, John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7-8, 13-14), whom he would send from the Father, would come after him. And he taught that the Spirit/Comforter when he came would glorify him, Jesus the Christ. Apparently, Muhammad confused the Greek word parakletos with the Greek word periklytos, meaning "famed, praised" (he could not read, you know) for which the Arabic would be Ahmad (or Muhammad), and accordingly he taught that Jesus taught that he, Muhammad, was to be the last and "seal" of God's prophets.

The Gospels, however, make it clear that Jesus taught that revelational history reached its climax and finality in him (see Heb 1:1-2) and that his chosen apostles completed God's revelatory activity (2 Tim 3:16-17). For instance, in his parable of the wicked farmers, found in Matthew 21:33-45, Mark 12:1-12, and Luke 20:9-19, Jesus tells the story of a landowner who leased his vineyard to some farmers and then went into another country. When the time arrived for him to receive his rental fee in the form of the fruit of the vineyard he sent servant after servant to his tenants, only to have each one of them beaten or stoned or killed. Last of all he sent his son - Luke says his "beloved son"; Mark says "yet one [other], a beloved son" - saying: "They will respect my son." But when the tenants saw the landowner's son, they said: "This is the heir; come, let's kill him and take his inheritance." This they did, throwing his body out of the vineyard. When the landowner came, he destroyed the tenants and leased his vineyard to others. The interpretative intentions of the parable, as Don Carson notes,⁶ are obvious on the face of it: the landowner is God the Father, the vineyard the nation of Israel (Isa 5:7); the farmers the nation's leaders, the servants the prophets of the theocracy (Matt 23:37a); and the son is Jesus himself.

The central teaching of the parable is obvious - as indeed it was to its original audience (Matt 21:45): after having sent his servants the prophets repeatedly in Old Testament times to the nation of Israel and its leaders to call the nation back to him from its sin and unbelief, only to have them rebuffed, persecuted, and often killed, God, the Owner of Israel, had in sending Jesus moved beyond merely sending another servant. Listen once again to the pertinent verses in this connection:

Matthew 21:37: "Then last of all he sent his son."

Mark 12:6: ". . .still having one son, his beloved, he also sent him to them last."

In Jesus God had finally (Matt 21:37: hysteron; Mark 12:6: eschaton) sent his own beloved Son, that is, his "one and only" Son, who was to be similarly rejected. The finality of his ministry Jesus makes clear from his teaching that the farmers' rejection of him, unlike the rejections of those before him, was to entail, neither a continuance of dealing with the recalcitrant nation on God's part nor a mere change of politico-religious administration. Rather, to reject him, he taught, would eventuate in "the complete overthrow of the theocracy, and the rearing from the foundation up of a new structure in which the Son would receive full vindication and supreme honor"⁷ (Matt 21:42-43; Mark 12:9; Luke 20:16). The Son's exalted status in the revelational economy of God is apparent from the finality of the messianic investiture that he owns. From Matthew's "finally" - Mark says "he had yet one other" and also "finally" - it is clear that Jesus represents himself as the last, the final ambassador, after whose sending none higher can come and

nothing more can be done. The Lord of the vineyard has no further resources; as God's Son the Son of God is the highest messenger of God conceivable. The author of Hebrews echoes exactly this sentiment when he declares:

God who spoke at many times and in many ways in times past to the fathers by the prophets has in these last days spoken to us by his Son whom he has appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds. . .[and] if the word spoken [then] proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which. . .[was] spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those [apostles] who heard him. (Heb 1:1-2; 2:2-3)

Clearly Hebrews teaches here the finality of God's work in Jesus Christ. In fact, Jesus' teaching as well as the uniform teaching of the entire New Testament clearly fly in the face of Muhammad's claim that Jesus taught that "an apostle" named Ahmad (a variation of Muhammad) would come after him. Jesus' teaching also places Muhammad in hopeless conflict with himself, for when he declares, as he does here and elsewhere, that Jesus was a true prophet, it would mean by implication that when Jesus taught what he did in this parable about his own finality Muhammad negates his own claim to being the last and greatest prophet.

So in making himself the "Seal of the Prophets," that is, the last and the greatest of the prophets, as he does in Sura 33, "Confederate Tribes," verse 40, Muhammad misrepresented Christ's teaching regarding what he taught about his unique and final place in God's revelational program and thereby made himself again a false prophet.

The Qur'an's Teaching about Jesus' Deity

The Qur'an, it is true, affirms that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah and a true prophet of God, that he was virgin-born and performed many miracles. Therefore, Muslims believe, because the Qur'an teaches these very true and proper things about Jesus, that Christians should be laudatory of them and look upon them accordingly as friendly to Christianity. Of course, the Qur'an also teaches in Sura 5, "The Table," verses 17 and 72, that it is unbelievers who say that Jesus is God. And in verse 116 the Qur'an teaches that Jesus denied that he thought he was deity:

Then God says: "Jesus, son of Mary, did you ever say to mankind: 'Worship me...as god beside God?'" "Glory be to you," he answers, "I could never have claimed what I have no right to. If I had ever said so, you would have surely known it." (See also Sura 5:75)

Now think with me for a moment. Suppose one nation's ambassador goes to another nation, presents his credentials to its leaders, and these leaders says in response to him: "We like you very much; you are a very nice person, you are kind, you are gentile, and your speeches are very edifying. But we simply cannot receive you in the role in which you claim to have come." Would anyone say that that those leaders had really accepted that ambassador? Similarly, unless one accepts Jesus for who he claims to be and the role in which he claims to have come, he has not really accepted Jesus at all! Jesus is not flattered by all the kisses that unregenerate men may throw at him if at the same time they deny as false his claims to deity and his saviorhood. This is the state in which our Muslim friends actually find themselves with their short list of accolades about Jesus. They have really not accepted him regardless of the true things they say about him.

Now Jesus' self-awareness is a subject that I have given a considerable amount of my professional life assessing. I have written a book specifically about it (see my Jesus, Divine Messiah: The Biblical Witness). And I will state categorically that, based upon the teaching of the four Gospels, Jesus did in fact believe that he was God the Son incarnate, the second person of the Godhead, and that he taught others to believe so as well.

For example, look again with me at the parable of the wicked farmers. Its high Christology - reflecting Jesus' own self-understanding of his deity - finds expression in two details in the story:⁸

- A. By virtue of his sonship here, Jesus claims to possess a higher dignity and a closer relation to God than the highest and closest official status that all the prophets of the Old Testament theocracy possessed. This is underscored not only by his title "Son" but also by the highly suggestive word "beloved" that he attaches to the title "Son," employing both words of himself over against the unqualified word "servants" that he uses to describe all those who went before him.
- B. The former point - that Jesus represents himself as God's beloved Son and heir over against all who went before him who were only servants - cannot be made to answer merely to a "messianic" or functional sonship, that is, a sonship that was granted him as a result of his messianic investiture, as some critical scholars would urge. This is apparent from the following two facts:

First, Jesus represents himself in the parable as God's Son even before his mission.

Second, he represents himself as God's "beloved Son" whether sent or not! That is to say, his being sent reflects his investiture of messiahship, but his investitured messiahship was brought about precisely by the necessity for God to send one who was the highest and dearest that the lord of the vineyard could delegate. Jesus' sonship, therefore, existed prior to his messianic mission and was not the result of his messianic mission. And because he represents himself, the landowner's beloved son, as also the "heir" in all three synoptic accounts of the parable, this means that his sonship is the underlying ground of his messiahship.⁹

It is impossible, then, to avoid the strong suggestion on Jesus' part in this parable of his eternal pre-existence with the Father as the latter's "beloved Son." Here his divine station in association with his Father prior to his messianic mission in space-time history is confirmed. Thus the "beloved Son" in Jesus' parable - a self-portrait one may say with ample justification - is clearly divine.

To say the very least, then, Muhammad once again misrepresented Jesus' teaching and once again misrepresented historic Christian teaching when he denied Jesus' deity, apparently having come unwittingly under the influence of the heretical Arian teaching that had spread into Arabia. He was apparently unaware that the church had condemned Arianism at the First Ecumenical Council at Nicaea in A.D. 325.

The Qur'an's Teaching about Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection

In his story of the wicked farmers Jesus prophetically taught that the nation's leaders would kill him, the Son, and in his application of his story to his original auditors he taught that he would be raised from death to glory and that the destiny of all mankind would turn on their relation to him (Matt 21:42; Mark 12:10-11; Luke 20:17-18). And two of the best-attested facts of history are his crucifixion and resurrection. But what says Muhammad about the teaching of this man whom he describes elsewhere as a "true prophet"?

Well, in Sura 4, "Women," verse 157, Muhammad denies that Jesus was crucified. He writes: "[The Jews] did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, but they thought they did." According to Muslim tradition the Jews crucified a man who resembled Jesus, perhaps even Judas. Jesus himself was taken unharmed directly to heaven (see Sura 3, "The Imrans," verse 55, and Sura 4, "Women," verses 156-58)¹⁰. This means as well, of course, that Islam denies Jesus' resurrection from the dead. With these denials Muhammad removes from Christianity's core teaching Jesus' cross and resurrection that are central to his substitutionary atonement. In Sura 5, "The Table," verse 103, Muhammad teaches that Allah does not demand sacrifices (see also Sura 6, "Cattle," verse 164), which means by implication, in opposition to

New Testament teaching that apart from the shedding of Christ's blood there is no forgiveness of sin (Heb 9:22), that he did not demand Jesus' sacrificial death either. What God demands of mankind, according to Muhammad, is absolute submission or resignation to his will. The very word "Islam" means "submission," you know, and "Muslim" means "one who submits" to the will of Allah. But this leaves mankind in a hopeless condition, for mankind is unspeakably sinful with the corporate guilt of original sin (which Muslims deny¹¹), incapable of such submission, unable to save itself, and bears genuine guilt before God. Because of its corruption and inability to please God, mankind deserves punishment, for its sin is not only real evil, morally wrong, the violation of God's law, and therefore, undesirable, odious, ugly, disgusting, filthy, and ought not to be; it is also the contradiction of God's perfection, cannot but meet with his disapproval and wrath, and damnable in the strongest sense of the word because it so dreadfully dishonors God. God must react with holy indignation. He cannot do otherwise. And here we come face to face, as John Murray declares,

. . .with a divine 'cannot' that bespeaks not divine weakness but everlasting strength, not reproach but inestimable glory. He cannot deny himself. To be complacent towards that which is the contradiction of his own holiness would be a denial of himself. So that wrath against sin is the correlate of his holiness. And this is just saying that the justice of God demands that sin receive its retribution. The question is not at all: How can God, being what he is, send men to hell? The question is, How can God, being what he is, save them from hell?¹²

My beloved, if people are not corrupt as the Bible teaches, they have no need of the saving benefits of the cross. If people are not sinners incapable of saving themselves as the Bible teaches, they have no need of a Savior. But when by God's enabling grace they begin to understand how sinful and helpless they really are, when by God's enabling grace they begin to see themselves as God sees them - sinful and corrupt, incapable of saving themselves, and guilty before him - they will flee to the cross and begin to glory in it and will turn away from any religion that would do away with the atoning work and sacrificial death of Jesus. I know all too well - not well enough, I'm quite sure - that I am a sinner of the darkest hue and need a gracious Savior who by his death paid the price for sin and forgives sinners, something that Islam cannot and does not offer me.

In light of the above data it should be evident to all - even to Muslims - that Islam, even if it could be shown beyond dispute that it is the religion of peace that some people today are saying it is, is still, theologically speaking, an enemy of biblical Christianity, misrepresenting and/or rejecting as it does the cardinal doctrines of our most holy faith.

Therefore, for the following two reasons I could never become a Muslim. First, the Qur'an misrepresents classic, fundamental Christian doctrine, and to misrepresent the belief system of one's religious opposition as one makes the case for one's own belief system is, in my opinion, ignorance at best and moral obliquity at worst. Islam misleads its followers when it propagates by its Qur'anic teaching its errors concerning Christianity doctrine. This evinces (1) that Muhammad, Islam's "prophet," was at best ignorant of Christian teaching, (2) that his teachings about Christianity are generally false, and (3) that Islamic teaching, filled with such error based on the Qur'an, is hence an untrustworthy religion. Therefore, I could never become a Muslim because I could never overlook or forget the fact that my religion's so-called "holy book" propagates serious errors about Christianity's belief system and is therefore not infallible. The Qur'an itself acknowledges that if it contains any errors anywhere it did not come from God (Sura 4, "Women," verse 82). By its own standard, then, its errors about Christian doctrine mean that it is not a revelation from God in spite of Muslim claims to the contrary.

Second, I could never be a Muslim because of Islam's inability to address my (and mankind's) real spiritual need. If biblical Christianity is anything it is a redemptive religion. If Islam is anything it is not a redemptive religion but rather a religion of legalism or works-salvation. Islam demands of people absolute submission to Allah but it can achieve only a semblance of that required submission by legalistically legislating the lives of Muslims and threatening sanctions for disobedience. So in the end Islam teaches me (and mankind generally) that one must attempt to achieve heaven by one's good works (Sura 4, "Women," verse 124, et al.), which "plan of salvation" of course negates the substitutionary work of

Christ's obedient life and penal death on behalf of his people, hoping that these good works will outweigh one's bad works someday on the scales of justice of the Judge of all the earth. He who finds anything attractive in the Islamic way of salvation simply does not realize his own sinfulness and the wretched inadequacies of Islam in addressing redemptively that sinfulness. Islam leaves the world, including the Muslim world, unsaved. This is the reason my heart grows heavy and breaks with sorrow when people like Cassius Clay and John Walker Lindh convert to Islam and when I learn that Islam has determined that the black prison population in the United States is fruitful soil for converts.

I should note in passing that Islam's doctrinal hostility to biblical Christianity does not bother the Roman Catholic Church, for Rome declared in its 1994 Catechism of the Catholic Church (para. 841) that Muslims are included within God's plan of salvation because they "acknowledge the Creator,...profess to hold the faith of Abraham [they do not actually hold to his faith, of course], and together with [Christians]...adore the one merciful God [Muslims and Christians do not "adore" the same "one merciful God"]." Peter Kreeft, a well-known Roman Catholic scholar, in his book, *Ecumenical Jihad* (published by Ignatius Press, 1996), describes an out-of-body experience that he claims he had during which he as a Catholic met Muhammad in heaven.¹³ Never mind that Islam's Allah is neither the triune Yahweh of the Old Testament nor the triune God of the New Testament; never mind that Muslims think our Trinity is made up of God, a human Jesus, and Mary his mother, the last two of whom we blasphemously worship along with God; never mind that they deny that Jesus Christ is the divine Son of God and that he died on a cross a sacrificial death for his people's sin and rose again for their justification; never mind that Muslims believe that Christians are idolaters because we worship Christ who they contend was simply a human Messiah and a human prophet; never mind that they see no need for Christ's substitutionary atonement or for that matter any real substitutionary atonement at all. According to Rome's teaching, in spite of their unbelief, Muslims are still salvifically related to the People of God and may go to heaven as Muslims, all of which shows how serious is Roman Catholicism's pernicious departure from the biblical faith.

But according to Holy Scripture Jesus declared that he alone is the way to the Father and that no one comes to the Father except through him (John 14:6). Peter declared: "Salvation is in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Paul taught that there is only one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus (1 Tim 2:6). John taught that he who has the Son has life and he who does not have the Son of God does not have life (1 John 5:12). And they all taught that one, if he would be saved, must repent of his sin of looking to his own works for salvation and must place his trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ. So I would join with their united witness and plead with you all to flee now in faith to Jesus and trust him for salvation, and to keep forever to him who is the true God and eternal life.

And he who, by God's doing (1 Cor 1:30), comes to know Christ savingly will discover that only in him alone dwells all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col 2:3), that only in him alone dwells the whole fullness of deity bodily (Col 2:9), that only in Christ does he have a divine Savior who loved him and gave himself sacrificially in death for him, paying thereby the penalty for his many sins against God, and that only in Christ can one have eternal life.

So I would respectfully plead with Muslims to repudiate Islam, for it is a false religion that can only do eternal harm to them, even to its most submissive adherents who would martyr themselves in the cause of Allah, and turn in faith to the divine Christ who will save them.

I would also urge the Reformed church to launch a carefully planned all-out effort in the twenty-first century to evangelize the Muslim world by every appropriate means possible. The Christian mass media and Evangelism Explosion International should increase their efforts here. The evangelization of the Muslim world - we are talking about around a billion people here - will be accomplished, of course, only by the grace and power of God and at great cost to and through great dedication and sacrifice on the part of Christian missionaries because they will not be tolerated in Muslim lands. Even to speak a word against Muhammad or the Qur'an in a Muslim country, as I have done in this sermon, is punishable by death. Remember Salmon Rushdie? Moreover, conversion from Islam to Christianity today can result for

Muslims in disinheritance, loss of children, imprisonment, banishment from one's country, and even death because those who leave Islam are looked upon not only as traitors to their faith but also to their country if they live in a predominantly Muslim land. Nevertheless, the biblical Christ is the Muslim's only hope of heaven, and the church must evangelize the Muslim world.

But of course the same is true for all of you here. Christ is your only hope as well. "Little children [and I think I am now old enough to address most of you as such: trust him and], keep yourselves from idols" (1 John 5:21).

¹ For some of the Koran's historical inaccuracies see Gleason L. Archer, Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Third edition; Chicago: Moody, 1994), 549-52. See also St. Clair Tisdall, *The Source of Islam*, translated and abridged by William Muir (Edinburgh: T & T. Clark, n.d.) and Abdal Fadi, *Is the Qur'an Infallible?* (Villach, Austria: Light of Hope, n. d.).

² Al Bukhari, Vol. I:25, asks: "What is the best deed for the Muslim next to believing in Allah and his Apostle?" Answer: "To participate in Jihad in Allah's cause." The reader should compare this "second Muslim concern" with Jesus' declaration that the second commandment, after the first that requires loving God with all one's heart, is to love one's neighbor as one loves himself.

³ Muhammad confuses Mary in Sura 3, "The Family of Imran," verses 35-45, and in Sura 66, "Prohibition," verse 12, with Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron.

⁴ Philip Schaff, *A History of the Christian Church* (Reprint of 1910 edition; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), IV, 186 fn 1, citing Epiphanius, *Adversus Haeresis*, 79, states that a fourth-century heretical sect made up mostly of fanatical women called Collyridians did exist in Arabia that had rendered divine worship to Mary. Perhaps it was the existence of this sect that gave Muhammad the impression that Christians thought Mary was a member of the divine Triad.

⁵ Arthur J. Arberry, *Religion in the Middle East* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 7.

⁶ D. A. Carson, Matthew in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 451.

⁷ Geerhardus Vos, *The Self-Disclosure of Jesus* (Reprint of 1926 edition; Phillipsburg, N. J.: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1978), 162.

⁸ See Geerhardus Vos, *The Self-Disclosure of Jesus*, 161-3.

⁹ Vos, *The Self-Disclosure of Jesus*, 162-63.

¹⁰ See J. M. Rodwell, *Koran* (Everyman's Library; New York: Dunton, 1909), footnote on Sura 3:55.

¹¹ This is the view of Muslim orthodoxy, but the plural form of the verb translated "Get you all down" in Sura 2:36 refers to three or more and thus must include the unborn descendants of Adam and Eve (see also Sura 12:53 in which Joseph is quoted as admitting that his soul "incites to evil," suggesting the corruption of man's inner self). See Samuel Shahid, *The Fallen Nature of Man in Islam and Christianity* (Colorado Springs: al-Nour, 1989).

¹² John Murray, "The Nature of Sin," *Collected Writings of John Murray* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1977), 2, 81-2.

¹³ I am indebted to Robert A. Morey, "An Open Letter to Roman Catholic Apologists," *Journal of Biblical Apologetics*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Summer 2001): 4, for Kreeft's report of his alleged out-of-body experience.