



Religion of Peace?: Why Christianity Is and Islam Isn't

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Christianity or Islam: which is the real "religion of peace"?

Almost any liberal pundit will tell you that there's a religion bent on destroying our Constitution, stripping us of our liberties, and imposing religious rule on the U.S. And that religion is . . . Christianity! About Islam, however, the Left is silent--except to claim a moral equivalence between the two: if Islam has terrorists today, that's nothing compared to the Crusades, inquisitions, and religious wars in Christianity's past.

But is this true? Are conservative Christians really more of a threat to free societies than Islamic jihadists? Is the Bible really "just as violent" as the Qur'an? Is Christianity's history really as bloodstained as Islam's? In *Religion of Peace? Why Christianity Is and Islam Isn't*, New York Times bestselling author Robert Spencer not only refutes such charges, but also explains why Americans and Europeans must regain an appreciation of our Christian heritage if we ever hope to defeat Islamic supremacism. In this eye opening work, Spencer reveals:

* The fundamental differences between Islamic and Christian teachings about warfare against other religions: "Love your enemies" vs. "Be ruthless to the unbelievers"

* The myth of Western immorality and Islamic puritanism and why the Islamic world is less moral than the West

* Why the Islamic world has never developed the distinction between religious and secular law that is inherent in Christianity

* Why Christianity has always embraced reason--and Islam has always rejected it

* Why the most determined enemies of Western civilization may not be the jihadists at all, but the leftists who fear their churchgoing neighbors more than Islamic terrorists

* Why Jews, Christians, and peoples of other faiths (or no faith) are equally at risk from militant Islam

Spencer writes not to proselytize, but to state a fact: Christianity is a true "religion of peace," and on it Western civilization stands. If we are not to perish under Islam's religion of the sword--with its more than 100 million active jihadists seeking to impose sharia law--we had better defend our own civilization.

Religion of Peace?: Why Christianity Is and Islam Isn't Details

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Cliff says

This book has some very good criticisms of Islam and good comparisons to why such things are not necessarily equal with all religions. It also has some criticisms that are obviously shallow and unfair. I wish it didn't have some of those mixed in, because it allows critics to attack about 1/10ths of the points they make and ignore the more substantive and difficult 9/10ths of the problem.

I also wish they had a few more voices for Islamic reform, which are out there, although the author is right that those voices are not very powerful in the Islamic world right now.

Anyhow, I'd give it 3 1/2 if I could.

Gerald says

I always thought that the radical militant Islamists were on the fringe of Islam. They really are not from the facts of the 3 holy writings of Islam.

The more peaceful passages in the Qur'an are in the beginning. It gets more militant as it goes on. Further, the later material is interpreted by mainstream Qur'an scholars and religious as superseding the former. Therefore, Muslims, according to the ones in the know, are to invite non-Muslims to Islam. If they do, there is peace. If not, they are to (1) put them in dhimmitude or (2) fight them to the death or submission. This is in contrast to Jesus who says to love your enemy and pray for them, not fight them into the Way.

Foxglove says

Ignores the history of Christian anti-semitism (downplays the Crusades, the Inquisition) and the wiping out of indigenous cultures under the guise of missions to present Christianity as more moral than Islam. In other words, if Muslims do right, it's downplayed, if they do wrong, it's shouted from the rooftops. Calls exposing the history of Sex abuse in the Catholic church "anti-Christian"

Sakjames says

This book is not about faith and religion. It's about politics. It's main message is actually for republican vs democrat in USA, not about Islam vs Christianity in the world. He knew that most of the republicans are devout christians, so by writing this book he could promote his political agenda. What he doesnt know that even we, conservative Christians who vote for republicans are intelligent and devout enough not to be provoked of his hateful speech. Me and a muslim colleague could share the same values about how much we against liberalism, big government, communism and terrorism, without attacking each other belief. This book convinced me that the author has exactly the same belief with an extremist moslem terrorist : They both believe that quran prominent message is all about violence and hatred to non believers. And they will use

that wrong belief to justify all of their political movement, make this world 'a better place' by spreading terror and hatred.

Randy says

Excellent book that provides a good insight into the background of Islam and compares the current events occurring in the Islamic/atheistic world view versus the Christian world view. I recommend it for all the read, regardless of the difficult realities it will present to them about the problems we are and will continue to face with the Islamic faith unless and until there is a radical attempt to reform it and reject any interpretation of its revered texts as justifying violence or insistence on only an Islamic religion existing on earth.

Alexandra says

Robert Spencer knows his stuff about Islam.

Lucy says

Protip: If you're going to write a book about how Christianity is a peaceful religion, you shouldn't put a picture of a Crusader holding a sword on the cover.

Richard says

I had a little bit of trouble getting through this one, because I get angry at what people don't just don't see or understand. Anyone who really wants to understand current world events needs to understand Islam, the Crusades and Christianity. Then you will understand that none are blameless, but Islam has no forgiveness without conversion. Islam is spread by force, their soldiers are their missionaries, ultimately, it's convert or die (with a chance to first live as a sub-class person with hardly any rights or protections). Christianity, on the other hand, (when practiced properly) is based on free will and love for one's neighbor. I am convinced that Islam is the "great and abominable church". I highly recommend this book to anyone who has enough critical thinking ability to want to see the world as it really is, and not just how the media wants us to.

Gina says

The book discusses the two religions: Christianity and Islam. A very timely topic given the state of affairs with the NY ground zero mosque debate and Iran's nuclear weapons. Very insightful. There was a lot of research done into Christianity and Islam and it's presented in this book very well. I appreciate the information and I now have a better and broader view.

Mel says

pg. 203 Roger Scruton quote, "70 percent of the world's refugees are Muslims fleeing from places where their religion is the official doctrine. Moreover, these refugees are all fleeing to the West, recognizing no other place as able to grant the opportunities, freedoms, and personal safety that they despair of finding at home."

He continues, "equally odd, however, is the fact that, having arrived in the West, many of the Muslim refugees begin to conceive a hatred of the society by which they find themselves surrounded, and aspire to take revenge against it for some fault so heinous that they can conceive of nothing less than final destruction as the fitting punishment." (footnote included in book)

pg. 205 several sections of the UN 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights were fought; article 16- men and women have equal rights in marriage; article 18- freedom of conscience, and article 19- freedom of expression. Sheikh al-Munajjid declared Muslims and non-Muslims should not enjoy equality of rights before the law. "These so-called rights and freedoms which they call for all people to enjoy regardless of religion make the monotheist and the polytheist equally entitled to these rights and freedoms, so the slave of Allah and the slave of the Shaytan are placed on the same level, and every worshipper of rocks, idols, or people is given the complete right and freedom to enjoy his kufr and the Hereafter." (footnote inc. in book)

I find this argument fascinating since they worship a man named Muhammad, and a rock called the Kaaba, and Satan they call Allah.

Women are third class citizens; Muslim slaves are second class. They claim to follow Allah's laws, but a lot of their laws are created by man, the burqa and hijab for example. They enforce this, because they blame the female for being naked without the covering and the cats that eat of the meat cannot be blamed. pg. 193

Is Islam a religion of peace? Of course not. pg. 178 We cannot assume, in the teeth of the centuries of evidence, that Islam will suddenly change its character and become compatible with democratic society as we understand it in the West. Such a transformation might be remotely possible, but only if Muslims explicitly reject sharia and the Islamic view of the state. So far they have not done so in any significant numbers.

The book is a wealth of information for anyone who doesn't know much about Islam or has believed the lies fed to the American people since 9/11. Listen to the imams themselves when they are talking to their own people.

pg. 177 CAIR's board chairman, Omar Ahmad, in 1998 "Islam isn't in America to be equal to any other faith, but to become dominant. The Qur'an should be the highest authority in America, and Islam the only accepted religion on earth." He now denies ever saying this, but at the time it was printed no one challenged it.

CAIR spokesman Ibrahim Hooper told the Minneapolis Star-Tribune something very similar in 1993: "I wouldn't want to create the impression that I wouldn't like the government of the United States to be Islamic sometime in the future." (footnote incl in book)

pg. 148 The choices for unbelievers are thus either conversion, subjugation as inferiors with the obligation of paying the tax, (jizya) and submitting to inferior status under the rule of Islamic law, or war. "Peaceful coexistence as equals in a pluralistic society" is not an option. (Islamic hadith)

Robert Spencer gives the historical background for those that try to argue Hitler or Timothy McVeigh were Christian, as well as the facts of the crusades.

The one issue I had with this book was the use of Christianity being used when Catholicism was being

discussed. Also, for anyone thinking the Judeo-Christians are to be feared more than Islam, just remember, Christians do not have jihad. It's easier to criticize a religion knowing they won't hang you, burn you, or chop your head off for having a differing viewpoint.

I do recommend this book, because looking at the state of the world, people need to get educated in facts.

Brittaney says

I felt like I learned a lot from this book. It definitely was leaning toward Islam not being a peaceful religion, as shown in the title. However, I think that it was fairly balanced in also illustrating Christians who have acted not in peace.

Node says

Robert Spencer deconstructs the myth that Christianity itself is an anti-scientific, anti-rationality, and anti-freedom religion that seeks to impose dominion in the state inseparable from the church. In reality, Spencer states that while Christianity in the past used its text for atrocities, it never held weight because it went against the teaching of Jesus and eventually the Bible left the realm of strict literalism.

In contrast, Islam is intrinsically violent and is an anti-scientific, anti-rationality, and anti-freedom religion. In regards of Western ideas of human rights, Islam is entirely incompatible. When its text explicitly denounce the freedom of conscience, subjection and call for violence against non-Muslims, and draconian punishments that refuse to evolve, the incompatibility becomes apparent.

Spencer argues that our modern tradition stem from our Judeo-Christian tradition and those tradition that have allowed men to be free, have created the most innovative and greatest civilization on the planet. And our tradition because of that, is worth defending.

Skylar Burris says

"The liberal West is much more comfortable attacking itself and condemning the Christians and conservatives in its midst than breaking the multiculturalist taboo and admitting that Western civilization might be better than Islamic civilization." I don't think this book is going to do much to change that, despite its effort at setting the record straight and overturning some anti-Christian propaganda.

The book was a bit repetitive at times and could have been written in a more engaging manner. It makes some necessary and salient points, but I do have one criticism. Spencer does something I see done often in books aimed at critiquing Islam: he tries to have it both ways--he claims to want Muslims to reform Islam, but when certain Muslims claim that the Koran and "true Islam" offer no support for violence and oppression, he says they are obfuscating and ignoring the obvious (i.e. violent verses, traditional teachings, actions done in the name of Islam, etc.). Well, that may indeed be true, but how are religions liberalized except by interpreting the immoral actions of their practitioners as being contrary to the scriptures and "real teachings" of the religion? Religions, as a whole, aren't changed by asking their practitioners to chuck their scriptures or regard them as false. Religions are changed by trying to convince their practitioners that their scriptures say things other than what they are currently (or traditionally) thought to say.

Perhaps it's not true that Islam offers no support for violence or oppression, but if you WANT Islam to become a religion that offers no support for violence or oppression, you have to allow Muslims to reinterpret the Koran (and the religion) accordingly. I understand the difficulty of the situation: it is annoying if not outright dangerous that there is a denial of the existence of a problem with radicalism within Islam. Nevertheless, Islam is not going to cease to exist as a religion, and most people aren't going to be persuaded to change by being told that their religion is false and inherently inclined to provide support for bad things. For example, you would be more likely to get an 18th century Christian to oppose slavery by showing him all the Bible verses that imply the immorality of such an institution, and by quoting all Christian thinkers who have opposed slavery, than by telling him, "Christianity supports slavery. Christian scriptures support slavery. If you say they don't, you're just ignoring the fact that Christianity is an inherently slave-supporting religion and that lots of Christians own slaves. Your scriptures and religious tradition support an evil thing."

I'm sympathetic to the authors of these kind of books. The self-flagellation of the West has grown tiresome. It would be nice if we could allow ourselves to be as proud of our cultural heritage as so many Muslims seem to be of theirs. The insistence that there is no difference, TODAY, between the danger posed by radical Islam and that posed by fundamentalist Christianity has also grown tiresome. So I'm sympathetic. But if I force myself to think practically here, I'm not sure that simply pointing out what is wrong with a religion, without emphasizing what is right, is going to lead to any kind of lasting, overall change. I know myself as a Christian how easy it is to become hardened and entrenched, often in assumptions you would otherwise be willing to question and explore spiritually, simply because you feel your religion itself is being attacked and you find yourself in an instinctive position of defense.

Of course, this book isn't for Muslims. It's for secular, liberal Westerners, and I suppose, given the audience, compiling the long list of negatives is done in the hope of getting them to stop pretending that Pat Robertson is as great a threat to liberty as Osama Bin Laden. Of course, that's not the audience that will actually be reading this book, so what we have, in the end, is a great deal of preaching to the choir. Oh well. The choir likes a sermon now and then.

The best part of this book, and a theme I wished he had developed more, was his argument about why it is morally essential that societies allow much freedom (and consequently tolerate much decadence). This, which he touches on only toward the end of the book, I think would be a much better line of argument to take—i.e., argue that the separation of church and state is the only thing that really makes Muslim (or any religious) virtues possible. "The secular West, with all its irreligion and debauchery, provides the only authentic framework for genuine virtue. Without the freedom to choose evil, choosing good is not a virtue. It's nothing more than submitting to coercion."

But can this idea of separation of church and state ever be translated to Islam? One hopes, but Spencer reminds me that the very idea of separation of church and state is itself a radical Christian teaching: "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, but render unto God the things that are God's." Christ's teachings were teachings for the individual, and not for society as a whole, because there is a "higher good than the purity of the community. And that higher good is in the development of genuine virtue in the individual, by means of choices."

There's a lot to chew on here. Some of his arguments are weak; some are strong. In the end, I think most of the points he makes have been better argued, one by one, by others, but he puts it all in one place.

♥ Ibrahim ♥ says

I was always a pious Muslim, preaching Islam, appealing to the pietistic devotion that was handed to me through it. For a good measure, I joined the Muslim Brotherhood. I would never have thought I would renounce Islam. Everything felt so normal. In trying to refute the Bible and make fun of it, putting my dirty feet on it as an act of disparagement of a supposedly distorted book, I came to see Islam for what it really is and fell in love with Christ. If you read the ninth chapter in the Quran verse 29 you see the real spirit of Islam: fascism. If you read 4: 34, you see a religion that commands its males to beat up women. Give me one reason why I should have stayed in Islam! I never miss that religion! Good riddance!

Don Peterson says

Some would call it hate speech, but Robert Spencer dares to tell the truth about Islam, particularly its roots and traditions that most western writers either don't know, or would like to pretend didn't exist.
