

Islam & Calvinism

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Keep in mind when reading this section that I realize there is a danger in cherry picking certain quotes from the Qur'an and John Calvin and drawing a comparison. I could have picked quotes about love and peace from both just as well. The comparison is meant to be read in context with what I have already written in [The Golden Rule](#), [John Calvin: The Unchanged](#), and [Radical vs. Magisterial Reformation](#). The point here is to examine the written words and more importantly the actual deeds of Muhammad and John Calvin and examine how they dealt with their adversaries and dissenters. "To what point?" you ask. For one thing, to show that while we are quick to condemn one, we tend to gloss over or dismiss the other. For another, to demonstrate that by their written words and their deeds that these were power hungry men who used brutal means to grow and maintain that power. In the case of John Calvin, the comparison is just one of many examples of why we should not base doctrine on his teachings. As the saying goes, "actions speak louder than words." John Calvin did not spread the Gospel in the manner that Jesus and His disciples taught. If a person's salvation is predestined then the extreme methods by both John Calvin and Muhammad were unnecessary, God certainly did not need their help. John Calvin's methods were akin to Muhammed's, by fear and intimidation, "by the sword," and this is why looking at Islam and Calvinism is indeed a fair comparison.

Norman Geisler, [Answering Islam: The Crescent in Light of the Cross](#) 2nd Edition is an excellent book. The first third gives an explanation of the fundamental beliefs of Islam, from a Muslim point of view. In the second third takes the authors respond to basic Muslim beliefs of God, Muhammad and the Qur'an. The last third examines the evidence for the Christian counterclaim.

Beyond gaining a better understanding of Islam it is astounding to me how many of the verses from the Qur'an and how many of arguments Muslim theologians and commentaries use sound identical to those used by Calvinists to rationalize the doctrine of predestination. My guess is that if you removed the flowery language and substituted certain words such as *Allah* in many of the quotes from the Qur'an or Muslim commentaries with the word *God* that the statements would be indistinguishable from statements on doctrine from not just the Reformers of John Calvin's day but also indistinguishable from those in modern Reformed Theology like John Piper, R.C. Sproul and others.

Following are a few excerpts from the book. Page numbers denote where in the book the quote is found. The quotes in brackets and in blue were added by me to compare similar Islamic ideas with those from Calvinism/Reformed Theology and/or commentary by me.

p. 28

“So God is the One Who leads astray, as well as the One Who guides. He is the One Who brings damage, as also does Satan. He is described also by terms like the Bringer-down, the Compeller, or Tyrant, the Haughty—all of which, when used of men, have an evil sense. In the Unity of the single will, however, these descriptions co-exist with those that relate to mercy, compassion, and glory.”

Kenneth Cragg, *The Call of the Minaret* (New York: Oxford University press, 1964), 41-42

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["Now since the arrangement of all things is in the hand of God...He arranges... that individuals are born, who are doomed from the womb to certain death, and are to glorify him by their destruction..." John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III:xxiii, 4]

["I believe that nothing happens apart from divine determination and decree. We shall never be able to escape from the doctrine of divine predestination - the doctrine that God has foreordained certain people unto eternal life". Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)]

p. 30

Orthodox Islam teaches the absolute predestination of both good and evil, that all our thoughts, words and deeds, whether good or evil, were foreseen, foreordained, determined and decreed from all eternity, and that everything that happens takes place according to what has been written for it. There was much discussion among early Muslim theologians as to free will and predestination, but the free-will parties (al-qadariyya) were ultimately defeated. – Arthur Jeffrey, *Islam: Muhammad and His Religion*, 1958. 147-48

["...by his eternal providence they were before their birth doomed to eternal destruction." John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III:xxi,7.]

["But if all whom the Lord predestined to death are naturally liable to sentence of death, of what injustice, pray, do they complain...because by his eternal providence they were before their birth doomed to perpetual destruction... what will they be able to mutter against their defense?" John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III:xxiii,3]

Say, Nothing will ever befall us save what Allah has written for us. (Qur'an 9:51)

["Even the fall of Adam, and through him the fall of the race, was not by chance or accident, but was so ordained in the secret councils of God." Lorraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* p. 234]

[All things that happen in all the world at any time and in all history—whether inorganic matter, vegetation, animal, man or angels (both good and evil ones-- come to pass because God ordained them, Even sin- the fall of the devil from heaven, the fall of Adam, and every evil thought, word, and deed in all of history." Edwin Palmer, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, 1999]

["God fore-ordains everything which comes to pass....God initiates all things, regulates all things...." Arthur W. Pink, *The Sovereignty of God* (Baker Book House, 1984), 240]

He whom Allah guides is he who is rightly guided, but whom he leads astray, those are the losers... They have hearts with which they do not comprehend, they have eyes with which they do not see, they have ears with which they do not hear...(Qur'an:178-79)

["...by his eternal providence they were before their birth doomed to eternal destruction" John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III:xxi,7]

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["It is even biblical to say that God has foreordained sin." Edwin Palmer, *The Five Points of Calvinism*]

["...God desired for man to fall into sin... God created sin..." R.C. Sproul, Jr., *Almighty Over All*, 1999]

p. 31

From the Hadith (Islamic tradition) Muhammad was asked the question, "Abu Bakr asserts that Allah decrees good but does not decree evil, but Umar says that He decrees both alike."

Muhammad replied: "The decree necessarily determines all that is good and all that is sweet and all that is bitter, and that is my decision between you." Then he slapped Abu Bakr on the shoulder, and said: O Abu Bakr, if Allah Most High had not willed that there would be disobedience, He would not have created the devil." --Arthur Jeffrey, *Islam: Muhammad and His Religion* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc. 1958, 149-50

"He willeth also the unbelief of the unbeliever and the irreligion of the wicked and, without that there would be neither unbelief nor irreligion. All we do we do by His will: what He willeth not does not come to pass. If one should ask why God does not will that all men should believe, we answer, :We have no right to enquire about what God wills or does. He is perfectly free to will and do what He pleases." Al-Ghazali, one of the most respected Muslim Theologians of all times according to Geisler. Source: Abdiyah Akbar Abdul-Haqq, *Sharing your Faith with a Muslim* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship Inc., 1980), 152

["Those, therefore, whom God passes by he reprobates, and that for no other cause but because he is pleased to exclude them from the inheritance which he predestines to his children..." John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III:xxiii,1]

p. 140

On VOLUNTARISM Geisler writes: "...Furthermore, there is a serious moral problem with Islamic voluntarism, For if God is Will, without any real essence, then he does not do things because they are right; rather because he does them. In short, God is arbitrary about what is right and wrong. He does not have to do good. For example, God does not have to be merciful; he could be mean if he wanted to be. He does not have to be loving to all; he could hate, if he chose to do so. Indeed in the very next verse after it says "God will love you...God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful" (3:31), we read that God loveth not those Who reject Faith" (v. 32). Further, Allah said in 25:51, "Had it been Our Will, We could have sent A warner to every centre Of Population." But he did not, which smacks of arbitrariness. * In other words, love and mercy are not of the essence of God."

"* Compare by contrast the God of the Bible who loves all (John 3:16), convicts all of sin (John 16:7), and desires all be saved (2 Pet. 3:9), giving them all necessary light (Rom. 1:19-20; 2:12-15) and accepting any who come to him (Acts 10:35; Heb. 11:6)."

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[Calvin said, "...God works in the hearts of men to incline their wills just as He will, whether to good for His mercy's sake or to evil according to their merits... Whatever things are done wrongly and unjustly by man, these very things are the right and just works of God."]

[This is the very same logic I continually hear from Calvinists when they attempt to explain or justify that God causes certain people to sin, or reject Him altogether. They will tell you "if God causes (wills) it, it is not good or bad by definition, it is His good pleasure to do what He pleases." When a Calvinist pastor friend used this same line of reasoning I replied, "In that case you would jump up and down for joy if a Satan worshipper, raped, tortured, mutilated, and then slowly killed your teenage daughter, right?" He claimed I was being ridiculous and over dramatic to which I replied, "But these things do happen in real life. So which is it? Would you be joyful over what was predestined to happen?" No answer.]

p. 146 EXTREME DETERMINISM

...orthodox Islam teaches the absolute predestination of both good and evil, that all of our thoughts, words, and deeds, whether deeds, whether good or evil, were foreseen, foreordained, determined and decreed from all eternity, and that everything that happens takes place according to what has been written for it, This is because God "*is the Irresistible*" (Qur'an 6:18).

"Nature, whether animate or inanimate, is subject to His command and all that comes into existence—a summer flower or a murderer's deed, a newborn child or a sinner's disbelief – is from Him and of Him." In fact, if "God so willed, there need have been no creation, there need have been no idolatry, there need have been no Hell, there need have been no escape from Hell." – Kenneth Cragg, *The Call of the Minaret*, 44-45

"there is no doubt that the Qur'an does make frequent statements to the effect that God leads aright whom He will and leads astray whom He will, or that God has 'sealed up' some people's heart to truth, etc." –Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an*, 1980. 15

[God "saves whom he wills of his mere good pleasure" John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III:xxi, 1.]

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THE MORAL PROBLEM WITH ISLAMIC DETERMINISM

Geisler wrote, "While many Muslims wish to preserve human responsibility, they can only succeed in doing so by modifying what the Qur'an actually says. Consider the very words of the Qur'an: "Say: 'Nothing will happen to us Except what God has decreed for us' (9:51); "Whom God doth guide, -- He is on the right path: Whom He rejects from His guidance, -- Such are the persons who perish." (7:178-179)..."

["God preordained, for his own glory and the display of His attributes of mercy and justice, a part of the human race, without any merit of their own, to eternal salvation, and another part, in just punishment of their sin, to eternal damnation". John Calvin (1509-1564)]

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"What is more, the Qur'an frankly admits that God could have saved all, but did not desire to do so! "If We had so willed, We could have certainly have brought Every soul its true guidance: But the Word from Me Will come true, 'I will fill Hell with jinn And men all together'" (32:13). It is extremely difficult to understand how, holding such a view, one can consistently maintain any kind of human responsibility." Al-Ghazali, Muslim Theologian. Cited by Abdul-Hagg, 152, from Hughe's *Dictionary of Islam*, 147

p. 148

"He [God] willeth also the unbelief of the unbeliever and the irreligion of the wicked and, without that will, there would be neither unbelief nor irreligion. All we do is by His Will: what He willeth nor does not come to pass.... We have no right to enquire about what God wills or does. He is perfectly free to will and do what He pleases."

[If you've ever had a discussion with a Calvinist this sounds familiar, doesn't it?]

p. 149

"Not only can he (God) do anything, He is actually the only One Who does anything. When a man writes, it is Allah who has created in his mind the will to write. Allah at the same time gives power to write, then brings about the motion of the hand and the pen and the appearance on the paper. All other things are passive, Allah alone is active." – Gerhard Nehls, *Christians Ask Muslims*, 1987. 21

["No, he has foreordained everything 'after the counsel of his will': the moving of a finger, the beating of a heart, the laughter of a girl, the mistake of a typist -- even sin." Calvinist Edwin Palmer, *The Five Points of Calvinist*]

Muslim creedal statements:

- God Most High is the Creator of all actions of His creatures whether of unbelief or belief, of obedience or of rebellion: all of them are by the Will of God and His sentence and His conclusion and His decreeing. Cragg, *The Call of the Minaret*, 60-61
- God's one possible quality is His power to create good or evil at any time He wishes, i.e. His decree... Both good things and evil things are the results of God's decree. It is the duty of every Muslim to believe this... It is he who causes harm and good. Rather the good works of some and the evil of others are signs that God wishes to punish some and to reward others... if God wishes to draw someone close to Himself, then He will give him the grace which will make that person do good works. If He wishes to reject someone and put that person to shame then He will create sin in him. God creates all things, good and evil. God creates people as well as their actions: He created you as well as what you do. (Qur'an 37:94)

A few quotes from the Qur'an that could have very well come from Reformed Theology:

Qur'an 3:145 *No person can ever die except by the permission of Allah, the term being fixed as by writing.*

Qur'an 48:14 *To Allah belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth: He forgives whom He wills, and He punishes whom He pleases.*

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Qur'an 64:11 *No calamity occurs, no affliction comes, except by the decision and preordainment of Allah.*

Surah 16:53 *And whatever favor is (bestowed) on you it is from Allah; then when evil afflicts you, to Him do you cry for aid.*

Surah 57:22-23 *No evil befalls on the earth nor in your own souls, but it is in a book before We bring it into existence; surely that is easy to Allah: So that you may not grieve for what has escaped you, nor be exultant at what He has given you; and Allah does not love any arrogant boaster*

Bukhari:V6B60N473 *Every created soul has his place written for him either in Paradise or in the Hell Fire. His happy or miserable fate is predetermined for him.*

Bukhari:V6B60N473 *While we were in a funeral procession, Allah's Apostle said, 'Every created soul has his place written for him either in Paradise or in Hell. They have a happy or miserable fate predestined for them.' A man said, 'Apostle! Shall we depend upon what is written and give up doing deeds? For whoever is destined to be fortunate, will join the fortunate and whoever is destined to be miserable will go to Hell.'*

Bukhari:V7B71N665 *The Prophet said, 'No contagious disease is conveyed without Allah's permission.'*

Ishaq:395 *No soul can die but by Allah's permission in a term that is written.*

Tabari I:202 *There are people who consider predestination untrue. Then they consider the Qur'an untrue.... People merely carry out what is a foregone conclusion, decided by predestination and written down by the Pen.*

Tabari I:306 *The Messenger said, "Allah created Adam and then rubbed Adam's back with his right hand and brought forth his progeny. Then He said, 'I have created these as the inhabitants of Paradise.' Then he rubbed his back with His left hand and said, 'I have created those for the Fire, and they will act as the inhabitants of the Fire.' A man asked, 'O Messenger, how is that?' Muhammad replied, 'When Allah creates a human being for Paradise, He employs him to act as the inhabitants of Paradise, and he will enter Paradise. And when Allah creates a human being for the Fire, He will employ him to act as the inhabitants of the Fire, and will thus make him enter the Fire.'*

Source: www.prophetofdoom.net/Islamic_Quotes_Predestination.Islam

Exceptions in the Qur'an gave Muhammad exemptions to sin and do things the Qur'an says everyone else ought not to do:

- Muhammad broke promises and 'even got a "revelation" to break a long-standing pledge to avoid killing during a sacred month...'”¹

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- Muhammad also had a special “revelation” giving him permission to have more than four wives, he had fifteen.²

Regarding the many examples of Mohammad not being a good moral example pointed out by Geisler & Saleeb ¹ Islamic apologist Muhammad Haykal states that even if “*their claim were true, we would still refute them with the simple argument that the great stand above the law.*”³

The great stand above the law... That is clearly not something taught in the Jewish and Christian scriptures. If we expect one standard for everyone else, including Muhammad, then why do we allow, accept or ignore actions of men like Augustine, John Calvin, John Knox and Martin Luther to name a few who claimed to be Christians, and claimed to be “reforming” Christianity, when in reality they not only introduced various doctrine and traditions that are not scriptural but also did things that Jesus specifically taught that a true follower would not do. These failures if nothing else should prohibit pastors from using them as authoritative in regard to Biblical exegesis. Just because a broken clock is right twice a day doesn’t mean one should buy it and take it home to set other clocks by.

Augustine, Calvin, and Reformed Theology bring no new revelation or clarification of the Scripture that one cannot get by reading the Bible on their own. Because of this I am always perplexed that good preachers put so much stock in the writings of Augustine and ‘reformers’ such as Calvin. What happened to *Sola scriptura*...? Why do we need Augustine and Calvin to explain things to us?

John Calvin said, "*God works in the hearts of men to incline their wills just as He will, whether to good for His mercy's sake or to evil according to their merits... Whatever things are done wrongly and unjustly by man, these very things are the right and just works of God.*"⁴ So like Islam teaches, John Calvin is stating there really is no good or evil, just what ever God wills, which by definition has to be good.

We often hear in Muslim countries of "criminals" being decapitated or having a hand chopped off as punishment. Apparently these reprehensible methods were in vogue in John Calvin's Geneva. Two examples:

On March 7, 1545 two women were burned at the stake presumably for the crime of sorcery/spreading the plague. Calvin interceded apparently only to have them executed sooner rather than later. The Council followed his directive happily and urged the executioner to "be more diligent in cutting off the hands of malefactors."⁵

On June 3, 1555 Perrin is condemned to have the hand of his right arm cut off (the hand with which he grabbed the baton after the civil election.) He and his accomplices were condemned to decapitation, then the heads and Perrin's hand were to be nailed up in public and their bodies cut into four quarters. The brothers Comparet received the sentence of decapitation and their bodies are to be quartered. All who didn't flee were executed. Calvin justified the severity of their sentences.⁶

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One has to wonder if someone has read the words of Jesus and accepted Him as Lord and Savior would that person go around advocating the chopping off of limbs for any reason?

The following is from an article from WorldnetDaily.com:

Crucifixion OK with Mideast politics

Islamic radicals also endorse cutting off hands, whippings

December 30, 2008

The political arm of a radical Islamic group has approved a new law that allows traitors to their government to be crucified, thieves' hands to be chopped off and someone guilty of drinking alcohol to be whipped.

According to a report in the *Jewish World Review*, Hamas, which was elected to government power in Gaza, over Christmas week adopted penalties included in the Shariah criminal code for the Palestinian Authority.

The report said Hamas endorsed "nailing enemies of Islam to crosses" even as it was renewing its jihad by lobbing missiles at day care centers, schools and travelers in line "to travel to Bethlehem for Christmas."

According to the online military news resource *Strategypage*, Hamas "*believes it is better to be feared than loved*" so it instituted the new laws.⁷

The idea from the above article that "*it is better to be feared than loved*" seems to also be in line historically with how John Calvin viewed Christianity and how he ruled Geneva. It's interesting that while we correctly criticize Muslims (the term "radical" in the article is debatable) today for such abhorrent behavior and tactics. It is a shame that all that the Reformed Theology camp can do when similar actions are pointed out in John Calvin's Geneva, and which spread to John Knox's Scotland, is to largely ignore it, or when rarely acknowledged, make excuses and not even admit he and his cohorts had missed the mark by a long shot.

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