

Muslims love Jesus too!

Thursday Reflections by Dr. Hamid Slimi

(Dec 24, 2015)

Undoubtedly, every Muslim (Sunni or Shi'a) loves and believes in Jesus ('Essa) (Peace be upon him), the one and only Messiah. Every Muslim believes in his miracles and his virgin birth from Maryam (Peace be upon her). According to the Qur'an, Jesus (Peace be upon him) is the spirit (*Ruh*) and word (*kalimah*) of God Almighty. Muslims strongly believe in his second coming in the latter days to establish and fill the earth with justice and peace after being filled with corruption, injustice and wars. We also believe in his Gospel without specifying which version among those that are canonized or not. We believe he is the promised Messiah and Muslims agree with Christians on that specific point. Muslims believe that Jesus (P) was raised to Heaven after he preached and delivered the revealed divine Gospel (*Injil*) and showed the signs and miracles of God to people but he has not served as a Messiah (ultimate ruler) yet. The main point of contention is only about the substance and nature of Jesus and whether he was divine or human. Muslims believe Jesus was not divine but he was rather created without a father as Adam (Peace be upon him) was. Islam teaches that all the souls come from Allah and then put into the earthly body or container. So, the spiritual component is from Allah and the physical component is from the earth and that is why the father of humans (Peace be upon him) was named Adam, which means in Arabic and Semitic languages earth, dust or soil.

The issue of the nature and substance of Jesus (P) was not new with the advent of Islam but it was an old major debate among Christians themselves till the council of Nicaea in 325 CE when emperor Constantine summoned 318 bishops from across the empire in the town of Nicaea with the intention to find a solution and resolution in regard to the nature and substance of Jesus as well as to finalize the timing of Easter and other important Christian dates. The controversy reached its highest points of dissention among different bishops in 324 so Constantine wanted to find a common ground and to avoid unrest and continuous war of words, which could have developed into major confrontations at that time. This was the first ever-largest gathering of the Church. In simple words, according to the Arians who were named after their leader Arius, Jesus was definitely an amazing leader who was given divine revelation but himself was created by God and not divine while for the followers of Archbishop Alexander of Alexandria Jesus was an everlastingly divine as God the Father. Constantine offered a conciliation to consider Jesus of the same substance as God but without digging too much into the nature of that relationship. A majority of the bishops agreed on the compromise and voted to pass the language into doctrine. Their statement of compromise, which would come to be known as "The Nicene Creed," formed the basis for Christian belief.

Other than this above issue and the details of and around the crucifixion, Christianity and Islam have a lot in common when it comes to prayer and humility, service to God and humanity, goodness to

neighbors, charity and mercy to the poor and needy in society. Christians do a lot of good work around the world helping to relieve suffering and to bring healing and cure to the sick and fresh water to the thirsty.

The Qur'an acknowledged and praised Christians for the quality of love for humanity, humility, serenity and devotion. For instance we read, **"and nearest among them in love to the Believers are those who say: "We are Christians:" because amongst these are men devoted to learning and men who have renounced the world, and they are not arrogant. And when they listen to the revelation received by the Messenger, you would see their eyes overflowing with tears, for they recognize the truth: they pray: "Our Lord! We believe; write us down among the witnesses. "What cause can we have not to believe in Allah and the truth which has come to us, seeing that we long for our Lord to admit us to the company of the righteous?" And for this their prayer hath Allah rewarded them with Gardens with rivers, flowing underneath their eternal Home. Such is the recompense of those who do good. "** (5:82-5)

We should always try to find common grounds with our Christian friends and neighbors and refrain from focusing on controversies and differences like the cousin of the Prophet (P) Ja'afar b. Abi Talib (May Allah be pleased with him) did when he met Negus the Abyssinian Christian emperor. He focused on reading Qur'anic verses about Mary (P) and the virgin birth of Jesus (P) and how Muslims love Jesus and honor him and his mother. He did not delve into the differences but

rather he built bridges with the Christians. Let us build bridges of communication while we respect each other in spite of some dogmatic disagreements. Let us work together as Muslims and Christians for world peace by stopping the conflicts among Muslims and Christians around the world especially in places like Nigeria and Central Africa where lives have been wasted due to political manipulation instigating violent confrontation among them. The Qur'an invites the People of the book (Christian & Jews) and by extension anybody who believes in the God of Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad (Peace be upon all of them).

Say: "O people of the Book! Come to common terms as between us and you: that we worship none but Allah; that we associate no partners with Him; that we erect not from among ourselves Lords and patrons other than Allah..." (3:64)

Share with Christians what the Qur'an says about Jesus and his mother Mary (peace be upon them). You can refer them to the Qur'an especially chapter al-Imran (3) from verses 33 to 64, which starts as follows: **"Behold! The angels said "O Mary! Allah giveth thee glad tidings of a Word from Him: his name will be Christ Jesus, the son of Mary held in honour in this world and the Hereafter and of (the company of) those nearest to Allah. (45) "He shall speak to the people in childhood And in maturity and he shall be (of the company) of the righteous." (46) She said: "O my Lord! how shall I have a son when no man hath touched me?" He said: "Even so: Allah createth what He willeth; when He hath decreed a plan, He**

but saith to it `Be', and it is! (47) "And Allah will teach him the Book and Wisdom, the Torah and the Gospel. (48) "And (appoint him) an Messenger to the Children of Israel, (with this message): I have come to you with a sign from your Lord, in that I make for you out of clay as it were the figure of a bird, and breathe into it, and it becomes a bird by Allah's leave; and I heal those born blind, and the lepers and I quicken the dead by Allah's leave; and I declare to you what ye eat, and what you store in your houses. Surely therein is a Sign for you if ye did believe. (49) "(I have come to you), to attest the Law which was before me, and to make lawful to you part of what was (before) forbidden to you; I have come to you with a Sign from your Lord. So fear Allah and obey me. (50)...