

A MESSAGE OF FRIENDSHIP: MUSLIMS AND LATTER-DAY SAINTS

by David Stewart

Latter-day Saints recognize Muslims as brothers and sisters, children of our Heavenly Father, with whom we can find much common ground. LDS Prophet and Apostle Gordon B. Hinckley stated: “we value our Muslim neighbors across the world.” Latter-day Saints respect the strong family values and moral accomplishments of Muslims as well as Islamic contributions to science, literature, history, philosophy, medicine, and the arts. While there are many differences between Muslims and Latter-day Saints in doctrine and practice, we acknowledge these differences with respect rather than criticism. Latter-day Saints extend a hand of friendship to Muslims everywhere.

MUHAMMAD AND REVELATION

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints believe that Muhammad was an inspired teacher raised up by God to teach His word. The Book of Mormon teaches: “For behold, the Lord doth grant unto all nations, of their own nation and tongue, to teach his word, yea, in wisdom, all that he seeth fit that they should have; therefore, we see that the Lord doth counsel in wisdom, according to that which is just and true.”¹ In a letter written on February 15, 1978, the First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints declared:

Based upon ancient and modern revelation, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints gladly teaches and declares the Christian doctrine that all men and women are brothers and sisters, not only by blood relationship from common mortal progenitors but also as literal spirit children of an Eternal Father. The great religious leaders of the world such as Muhammad, Confucius, and the Reformers...received a portion of God’s light. Moral truths were given to them by God to enlighten whole nations and to bring a higher level of understanding to individuals... Consistent with these truths, we be-

lieve that God has given and will give to all peoples sufficient knowledge to help them on their way to eternal salvation, either in this life or in the life to come... Our message therefore is one of special love and concern for the eternal welfare of all men and women, regardless of religious belief, race, or nationality, knowing that we are truly brothers and sisters because we are sons and daughters of the same Eternal Father.²

LDS Apostle George Q. Cannon stated:

“I believe myself that Mahomed, whom the Christians deride and call a false prophet and stigmatize with a great many epithets—I believe that he was a man raised up by the Almighty, and inspired to a certain extent by Him to effect the reforms which he did in his land, and in the nations surrounding. He attacked idolatry, and restored the great and crowning idea that there is but one God. He taught that idea to his people, and reclaimed them from polytheism and from the heathenish practices into which they had fallen. I believe many men were inspired who lived after him and before him, who, nevertheless, did not have the Holy Priesthood, but were led by the Spirit of God to strive for a better condition of affairs and to live a purer and higher life than those by whom they were surrounded were living. But while this was the case, it was the Spirit of God that did it.”³

Latter-day Saints accept all truth, wherever it may be found, as part of our religion—whether in the Quran or in other good books.



God

Latter-day Saints and Muslims believe that God is just, merciful, all-knowing and all-powerful. Latter-day Saints recognize the terms *God* and

Allah to refer to the same being in different languages. The Quran teaches: "Allah is He Who created seven Firmaments and of the earth a similar number. Through the midst of them (all) descends His Command: that ye may know that Allah has power over all things, and that Allah comprehends all things in (His) Knowledge."⁴ The Book of Mormon teaches: "Believe in God; believe that he is, and that he created all things, both in heaven and in earth; believe that he has all wisdom, and all power, both in heaven and in earth; believe that man doth not comprehend all the things which the Lord can comprehend."⁵

CHRIST AND MUHAMMAD

The Quran teaches that Jesus (Isa) was a great teacher and prophet sent by God. Latter-day Saints worship Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Savior of the world. The Quran testifies that Allah sent Isa to teach truth: "And in their footsteps We sent Jesus the son of Mary, confirming the Law that had come before him: We sent him the Gospel: therein was guidance and light, and confirmation of the Law that had come before him: a guidance and an admonition to those who fear Allah."⁶

The Quran teaches that Jesus should be revered: "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.'"⁷ It testifies of the many miracles performed by Jesus. Quran 3:47-51 states:

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! And Allah will teach him the Book and Wisdom, the Law and the Gospel, And (appoint him) an apostle 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 ye store in your houses. Surely therein is a Sign for you if ye did believe; (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. It is Allah Who is my Lord and your Lord; then worship Him. This is a Way that is straight."

God strengthened Jesus by the Holy Spirit and gave Jesus power to perform miracles, heal the sick, raise the dead. The Quran states:

"Then will Allah say: 'O Jesus the son of Mary! Recount My favour to thee and to thy mother. Behold! I strengthened thee with the holy spirit, so that thou didst speak to the people in childhood and in maturity. Behold! I taught thee the Book and Wisdom, the Law and the Gospel and behold! thou makest out of clay, as it were, the figure of a bird, by My leave, and thou breathest into it and it becometh a bird by My leave, and thou healest those born blind, and the lepers, by My leave. And behold! thou bringest forth the dead by My leave. And behold! I did restrain the Children of Israel from (violence to) thee when thou didst show them the clear Signs..."⁸

Muhammad never claimed to have performed any miracles. The Quran further states of Jesus:

He said: "I am indeed a servant of Allah: He hath given me revelation and made me a prophet; And He hath made me blessed where-soever I be, and hath enjoined on me Prayer and Charity as long as I live; (He) hath made me kind to my mother, and not overbearing or miserable; So peace is on me the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day that I shall be raised up to life (again)!" Such (was) Jesus the son of Mary: (it is) a statement of truth, about which they (vainly) dispute.⁹

The Quran teaches that Jesus was taken up to heaven, where he dwells with God: "Allah raised him up unto Himself; and Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise."¹⁰ Muhammad's grave is in Medina today. In contrast, Muhammad was told to seek forgiveness of his sins: "Know, therefore, that there is no god but Allah, and ask forgiveness for thy fault, and for the men and women who believe."¹¹ Muhammad never claimed to be sinless.

FAITH, WORKS, AND JUDGMENT

God will return to judge the world "When the earth is pounded to powder, And thy Lord cometh, and His angels, rank upon rank."¹² The Book of Mormon teaches that all men will one day "stand before God to be judged according to the deeds which have been done in the mortal body."¹³ Latter-day Saints strive to "endure to the end" to be found worthy, through Christ's grace, to return to God.¹⁴

Both Muhammad and Christ taught that even after doing good works, the grace of God is still necessary.

The Quran teaches: “If Allah were to punish men for their wrong-doing, He would not leave, on the (earth), a single living creature: but He gives them respite for a stated Term: When their Term expires, they would not be able to delay (the punishment) for a single hour, just as they would not be able to anticipate it (for a single hour).”¹⁵ It continues:

One Day every soul will come up struggling for itself, and every soul will be recompensed (fully) for all its actions, and none will be unjustly dealt with. But verily thy Lord, to those who do wrong in ignorance, but who thereafter repent and make amends, thy Lord, after all this, is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.¹⁶

The Bible teaches that “God is a merciful God.”¹⁷ The Book of Mormon prophet Nephi writes: “it is by grace we are saved, after all we can do.”¹⁸

The Quran and the Book of Mormon teach that God looks upon our actions and our intentions. The Quran states:

Have you considered him who calls the judgment a lie? That is the one who treats the orphan with harshness, And does not urge (others) to feed the poor. So woe to the praying ones, Who are unmindful of their prayers, Who do (good) to be seen, And withhold the necessities of life.¹⁹

The Book of Mormon teaches:

For behold, if a man being evil giveth a gift, he doeth it grudgingly; wherefore it is counted unto him the same as if he had retained the gift; wherefore he is counted evil before God. And likewise also is it counted evil unto a man, if he shall pray and not with real intent of heart; yea, and it profiteth him nothing, for God receiveth none such.²⁰

The Quran, Bible, and Book of Mormon all warn against placing our hearts on riches. The Quran teaches that God’s chastisement comes “because they love this world’s life more than the hereafter, and because Allah does not guide the unbelieving people.”²¹ The Bible teaches:

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.²²

The Quran teaches: “Who can be better in religion than one who submits his whole self to Allah, does good, and follows the way of Abraham the true in Faith? For Allah did take Abraham for a friend.”²³ Jesus taught, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”²⁴

The Quran and the Book of Mormon both teach the importance of obeying God’s laws. The Quran teaches, “Then, he whose balance (of good deeds) will be (found) heavy, Will be in a life of good pleasure and satisfaction. But he whose balance (of good deeds) will be (found) light, Will have his home in a (bottomless) Pit.”²⁵ The Quran states that “those who believe in Allah and work righteousness, He will admit to Gardens beneath which Rivers flow, to dwell therein for ever: Allah has indeed granted for them a most excellent Provision.”²⁶ The Book of Mormon teaches:

And moreover, I would desire that ye should consider on the blessed and happy state of those that keep the commandments of God. For behold, they are blessed in all things, both temporal and spiritual; and if they hold out faithful to the end they are received into heaven, that thereby they may dwell with God in a state of never-ending happiness.²⁷

THE PILLARS OF ISLAM

Similarities can be found between the “Five Pillars of Islam” and LDS beliefs. Latter-day Saints and Muslims believe that there is one God, and that we must have no other gods before Him. Second, Muslims pray five times daily toward the holy city of Mecca. Latter-day Saints pray daily, personally and with their families, a minimum of five times daily—before all meals, when rising in the morning, and when retiring in the evening. We also believe that we should always have a prayer in our hearts. Third, Muslims participate in almsgiving, or giving one-fortieth of one’s income to the poor. Latter-day Saints believe in the law of tithing and return one-tenth of all of our increase to the Lord. Fourth, Latter-day Saints and Muslims both believe that fasting can bring us closer to God. While Muslims fast from food and drink from sunrise to sunset from morning to evening throughout the entire month of Ramadan, Latter-day Saints believe in fasting for twenty-four hour periods once a month, or more frequently if the occasion warrants. Finally, Muslims strive to perform a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in one’s lifetime. The travels of the early Latter-day Saint pioneers are in many ways comparable to those of devout Muslims. The sacrifices

made by many LDS families to attend the temple at least once in a lifetime, and much more frequently, if opportunities allow, are in many ways similar to the sacrifices made by Muslim pilgrims to Mecca.

THE CHRISTIAN APOSTASY

Muslims and Latter-day Saints both recognize that after the coming of Jesus, divisions and apostasy arose in the Christian church. The Quran teaches:

Those apostles We endowed with gifts, some above others: To one of them Allah spoke; others He raised to degrees (of honour); to Jesus the son of Mary We gave clear (Signs), and strengthened him with the holy spirit. If Allah had so willed, succeeding generations would not have fought among each other, after clear (Signs) had come to them, but they (chose) to wrangle, some believing and others rejecting. If Allah had so willed, they would not have fought each other; but Allah Fulfilleth His plan.²⁸

Latter-day Saints recognize the departure of many Christians from the teachings of the Apostles and the loss of divine authority in the Church, as well as the restoration of God's church through the prophet Joseph Smith.

Latter-day Saints and Muslims acknowledge that writings in the Bible, while inspired and truthful, underwent some changes as they passed through the hands of careless scribes and translators and conniving priests. Latter-day Saints and Muslims also recognize that many doctrines of non-LDS Christianity come not from the Bible, but from various creeds and non-apostolic works of the so-called "early church fathers," as well as from pagan Greek and Roman traditions. Latter-day Saints do not accept the non-biblical creeds widely regarded by other Christian faiths.

THE DIVINE LIGHT AND REVELATION

Latter-day Saints receive guidance through ongoing revelation from living prophets and apostles today. While Jews accept the holy writings constituting the Old Testament and sectarian Christians claim to accept both the Old and New Testaments, Muslims claim to accept the Old and the New Testament and the Quran. In each case, a certain amount of revelation is accepted,

but no more. Each group draws a line cutting themselves off from ongoing, contemporary revelation. This diverges from the Lord's pattern of constant, ongoing revelation to His people throughout all of recorded scripture. Latter-day Saints differ from Jews, Sectarial Christians, and Muslims in that we accept not only the Lord's ancient words in the Bible and the Book of Mormon, but we accept the words and instruction that the Lord continues to give through living prophets and apostles in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In the Book of Mormon, the Lord states: "because that I have spoken one word ye need not suppose that I cannot speak another; for my work is not yet finished."²⁹

God is eternal and unchanging, and He loves his children as much today as in the time of Abraham or Muhammad. He revealed to Abraham and Muhammad many particulars relating to even seemingly small aspects of daily life. Yet we face challenges today that did not exist at the time of Abraham or Muhammad. Would God withhold counsel from us today in great matters, when he taught Abraham and Muhammad even in small ones? God in his wisdom has provided living prophets on earth today, in whom the divine light dwells, to provide us with direction. God also provides a way in which all those who live worthily and receive authorized ordinances can receive within themselves the divine light.

God sends the Holy Spirit to help us to identify truth. The Quran teaches: "Say, the Holy Spirit has brought the revelation from thy Lord in Truth, in order to strengthen those who believe, and as a Guide and Glad Tidings to Muslims."³⁰ God promises that if we study, pray, and ask God sincerely, the power of the Holy Ghost can help us to know that the Book of Mormon is true.³¹

DIVINE AUTHORITY

The Quran teaches: "Those who dispute about the signs of Allah without any authority bestowed on them,- there is nothing in their breasts but (the quest of) greatness, which they shall never attain to: seek refuge, then, in Allah. It is He Who hears and sees (all things)."³² The Bible teaches that ministers of God must be called and ordained by authorized leaders with divine authority: "And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron."³³ The divine authority held in ancient times by apostles and prophets was restored in modern times through the prophet Joseph Smith.

THE BOOK OF MORMON

Like the Prophet Muhammad, Book of Mormon prophets like Alma and Moroni lived in times when many people held false beliefs and denied the one true God. The people of God were often persecuted and faced many hardships. God empowered chosen prophets to call people to repentance and teach divine truths. These truths are recorded in the Book of Mormon.

PRACTICAL RELIGION

For Muslims and Latter-day Saints, religion is not simply a philosophy, but a way of life. Latter-day Saints believe that gospel principles must govern daily conduct. The fruits of faith in the lives of Latter-day Saints are easily identified. Latter-day Saints and Muslims share in common a strong focus on the family. The family is recognized as the fundamental unit of society and as ordained by God. In contrast to the lackadaisical attitudes of many of the non-LDS Christian world towards morality and divorce, chastity, fidelity in marriage, and familial responsibility are highly valued by Latter-day Saints and observant Muslims alike. Latter-day Saints are commanded by the Lord to “bring up children in light and truth.”³⁴ U.S. research shows that active Latter-day Saint youth are far less likely to be involved in immoral conduct than their non-LDS peers.³⁵ Latter-day Saints, like observant Muslims, do not drink alcohol. Latter-day Saints observe a strict law of health that includes a healthy diet and abstinence from tobacco products. One medical research study found that observant Latter-day Saints had a life expectancy eight to eleven years longer than the U.S. average.³⁶ Latter-day Saints also receive many other blessings as they strive to obey God’s laws. As LDS Prophet and Apostle David O. McKay stated, “the purpose of the gospel is...to make bad men good and good men better, and to change human nature.”

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints extend an invitation to all people to learn of God, of His son Jesus Christ, and of His restored gospel, so that others may also share in the blessings of the gospel in this life and in the next.

FURTHER READING

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NOTES

1. Alma 29:8.
2. *Apocryphal Writings and the Latter-day Saints*, edited by C. Wilfred Griggs (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, 1986), 29.
3. George Q. Cannon, “Difference Between the Saints and Others,” *Journal of Discourses*, reported by John Irvine 2 September 1883, Vol. 18 (London: Latter-Day Saint’s Book Depot, 1884), 371.
4. Quran 65:12, Yusuf Ali edition unless indicated otherwise.
5. Mosiah 4:9.
6. Quran 5:46.
7. Quran 3:45.
8. Quran 5:110.
9. Quran 19:30-34.
10. Quran 4:158.
11. Quran 47:19, see also 40:55.
12. Quran 89:21–22.
13. Alma 5:15.
14. 1 Nephi 31:15.
15. Quran 16:61.
16. Quran 16:111, 119.
17. Deuteronomy 4:31.
18. 2 Nephi 25:23.
19. Quran 107:1–7, Shakir edition.
20. Moroni 7:8–9.
21. Quran 16:107, Shakir edition.
22. Matthew 6:19–21.
23. Quran 4:125.
24. Matthew 22:37–40.
25. Quran 101:6–9.
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29. 2 Nephi 29:9.

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 33. Hebrews 5:4.
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