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STUDENT REVIEW

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THIS THEY BELIEVE: ISLAM

WRITTEN BY TAYLOR OTTESEN

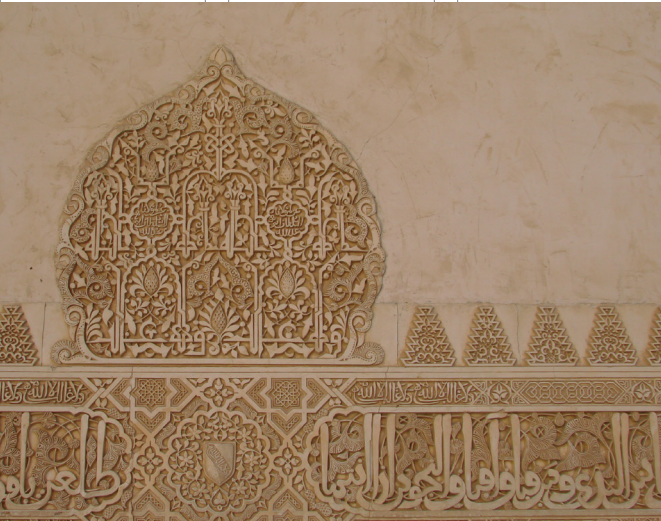


PHOTO CREDIT: DOTTIE BATEMAN

With recent events, the haze surrounding Islam and its devotees has become a major hinderance in people's understanding of the faith. The question is, how much of a hinderance? One of the fastest growing religions in the world, Islam claims almost one-fifth of the world's population with over 1 billion adherents worldwide.

Islam stems from the Arabic root meaning "submission" and it is by this submission to the almighty God (Allah) that we will find this peace.

Islam is traditionally traced back to Arab nations, however, only about 10-20 percent of adherents are actually classified as "Arab" with the large majority of devotees found dotting the earth.

Meanwhile, Mormonism boasts being the fastest-growing Christian faith, and when compared, Mormonism and Islam share a great deal in common.

First, the two share in their very origin a very similar principle-revelation. Outsiders will typically trace Islam's origins back to around the 7th century when the Prophet Mohammed first received divine instruction while most Muslims believe it is the same faith that was practiced by Abraham, Moses, Noah, Jesus and other Biblical prophets.

Similarly, while often classed as a product of Protestant Americanism, Mormons believe their faith also was that which was practiced by the prophets of old.

Muhammad was an a sheep herder who spent a lot of time in thought and meditation. During one of these meditative sessions the angel Gabriel appeared to Muhammad and delivered the same message three times. Later the angel Gabriel appeared to Muhammad again and ushered him into the presence of Allah where he received instruction and revelation. And the parallel keeps going...

Over the next 20-or-so years, Muhammad continued to receive instruction from Gabriel, which was then recited by Muhammad to his disciples who eventually scribed the instruction and compiled it into the Qur'an.

Muslims will emphasize that Muhammad did not write the Qur'an but rather Allah wrote the Qur'an, passed it to Gabriel, who then dictated the messages to Muhammad. Thus, the Qur'an is seen as the literal word of Allah through his

prophet and messenger Mohammad. Faithful Muslims read from the Qur'an daily and recognize its validity solely in the Arabic language. All other translations are simply interpretations or versions of the original.

Members of the LDS faith can certainly appreciate the idea of the calling of a prophet, received revelation recorded as scripture and continuation of the original faith. Even the Islamic equivalent of The Articles of Faith, known as the 5 pillars of Islam, are in accordance with many LDS teachings.

1. THE DECLARATION OF FAITH - This consists of confessing Allah as the god of the devotee and is seen as essential to conversion. This confession brands one as one who follows the will and ways of Allah.

2. PRAYER - Five times a day, faithful Muslims seek to establish a direct link with Allah, a practice that is viewed by many as a commandment. Ceremonial cleanings, headwear, and direction are all important aspects of prayer.

3. ZAKAT - A dominant concept in Islam is the idea that all things belong to God and are gifts to the human race. The donation of 2.5 percent of one's capital to those in need (not necessarily the mosque) purifies the heart of the donator.

4. FASTING - This is seen as a time of self-mastery and purification which occurs during the month of Ramadan for a 24-hour period.

5. PILGRIMAGE - For those who are physically and financially able, this pilgrimage to Mecca constitutes one of the greatest honors and obligations found within the Islamic faith, particularly during the month of Ramadan.

So what is different?

The Godhead begins as part of a major split of the religions. Members of the LDS church believe in God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost, referring to these entities as the Godhead. Islam completely rejects this notion, relying solely on Allah. No baptism is necessary, certain bans on meats have been instituted, and no need for continuing revelation are all aspects of Islam that separate these brother faiths.

Like Mormonism, Islam is a culture as much as a religion in many areas of the world. Indeed, governments, schools and societies are run by Islamic traditions, ideals and rules.

While backpacking the Himalayas I saw evidence of this on almost every street corner. Women wearing the burka, evening call to prayer reverberating off the mountains, social greetings lathered in Qur'anic verbiage, and the brotherhood of a common faith.

OREM TO GET A MOSQUE

WRITTEN BY STEPHEN SMOOT

A meeting of local citizens held at Utah Valley University on Oct. 10, confirmed Orem will receive its first mosque.

The new mosque, construction of which is set to begin sometime in the near future, was approved by both the local community of observant Muslims as well as non-Muslim Orem residents, who came together at the UVU meeting to voice their support for the building of a mosque.

The mosque, which was approved last year by the Orem City Planning Committee, will go up at 900 South State St. in Orem. In all, the mosque

will occupy about two acres of land and meet the needs of the roughly 100 Muslims in Orem, both Sunni and Shia, who currently meet in a room in the University Parkway Mall for their religious services.

The closest mosque from Orem is in Salt Lake City.

The purpose of the October meeting this year was to address any concerns by local citizens and further explain the plans for building the mosque.

Professor Masood Amin, a professor of engineering at UVU and a faithful Muslim, expressed his excitement for Orem's first mosque during a panel discussion comprised of a local city planner involved in the project, Professor James Toronto of Brigham Young University, a professor of Arabic and Islamic studies, Professor Amin and Iranian UVU student Reza Taba.

"Having a mosque in Orem is a win-win situation for both Muslims and Mormons in Orem," Amin said. "Muslims will have a mosque more conveniently located for their worship services, and Mormons, especially students at BYU and UVU, will benefit from the cross-cultural exchange that comes with inter-religious cooperation."

Reza Taba, another faithful Muslim on the

panel, agreed.

"A mosque in Orem will not only be a blessing to local Muslims, but will also show to outsiders that Utah Valley is becoming more diverse and welcoming to non-Mormon religions," Taba said. "The stereotype that Mormons are intolerant or close-minded will be challenged with the building of a mosque in Orem."

Besides clarifying aspects of Islam for non-Muslim visitors, Toronto also emphasized the importance of religious pluralism in modern society, drawing parallels between the treatment of Mormonism and Islam as minority religions within the larger context of American society.

Both, he said, have had plenty of religious intolerance directed at them, and therefore

The lurking question still remains: why are there so many similarities between these two faiths, and what does it mean? One must ask the question, “Was Muhammad truly inspired?” God revealed truth in every dispensation since the beginning of time; was Muhammad an effort to reveal that truth?

Only God knows, but observance of the Islamic faith in practice is enough to inspire holy envy. Its uniting of communities in the effort to commune with God is truly inspiring.

The similarities between the LDS faith that so characterizes this valley and our Muslim brothers is intriguing and culturally binding. From the origins of the Islamic faith, to its everyday practices, truly we are more similar than we are different.

If you would like to learn more information about Islam, its beliefs and practices, you can visit the Khadeeja Islamic Center at:

1019 West Parkway Avenue
Salt Lake City, UT 84119
801-972-6555

There is a Muslim Prayer room in room 3241 of the Wilkinson Student Center. ■

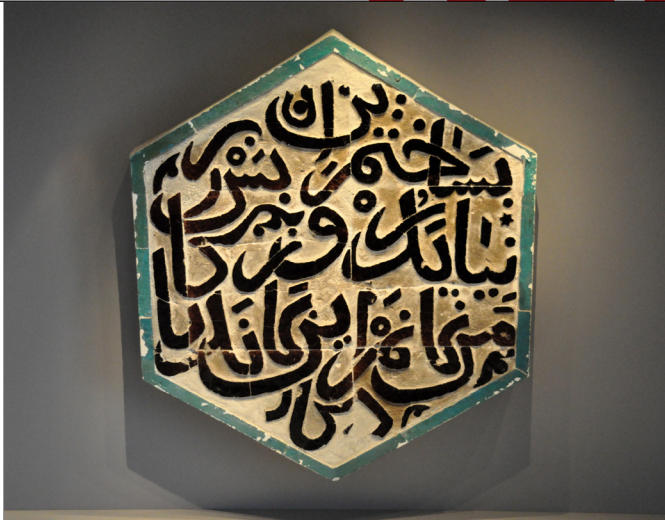


PHOTO CREDIT: CARIB B.



PHOTO CREDIT: DOCTOR YURI

We hear a lot of powerful one liners in our Mormon society—things like “just cast all your troubles onto the Lord” or “the strength of the atonement will allow you to make a change in your life.”

It’s easy to feel cynical toward such comments because you don’t really know what they mean. I know I’ve struggled with this. How does

one cast one’s troubles upon Jesus? To an objective and dangerously analytical mind like mine I find my logic hitting a dead end everything I try to reason through the elusive idea of “casting my troubles on God” or even “feeling the prompting of the spirit”.

But we hear this stuff all the time: “Just let grace work in your life” to say nothing of “You will receive blessings if you...”

So I kneeled down one evening (during a particularly difficult period of life) and I thought “I’m going to attempt to cast my burdens onto the Lord tonight.” So I said “God, I am having a really hard time in my life; I believe in Jesus and now I want to lean on him.”

I probably used four or so one-liners that I have heard since I was a 2-year-old hoping one of them would connect with my situation. My mind kept battling me. “WHAT DOES IT MEAN?” I heard my intellect shaking its head at my heart. And then it hit me. It really hit me. I realized that these emotional one-liners are the best thing we have come up with to describe the supernal reality to connecting with God.

What does connecting with God mean? Well I can’t tell you because I only know what it means for me. Futile words can only attempted to capture what should not be put to words at all—the transcendental reality of God and Christ. We use generic language like “feel the Spirit” or “lean on the Lord” because those images help us quantify such a personal and subtly sublime experience; yet in the end, these experiences are deeply personal and thus cannot be adequately conveyed (not even with aid of tears or powerful words in testimony meeting).

So next time I hear a talk with one of those nebulous catch phrases I won’t let my mental warriors attack it. Instead I will remember what God feels like to me and assume that everyone has a personal way of feeling that same thing—personal and indescribable. Because, in the end, we don’t all have to know God in the same way even if we use the same words to describe it. ■

THIS I BELIEVE

WRITTEN BY
JOHNNY HARRIS

encouraged Mormons to sympathize with their Muslim neighbors.

“The position of Muslims in Orem today is a microcosm for all religious minorities,” Toronto said. “Mormons especially should sympathize with modern Muslims, given Mormonism’s history as a religious minority in American culture.”

Although support for the new mosque from non-Muslim citizens of Orem has been overwhelming, a few citizens, according to the panel, expressed their concern over the plans for a mosque at the initial meeting last year. Concerns ranged from zoning and construction complications to fears of increased traffic on State Street. One or two citizens also felt uncomfortable with a mosque on personal

religious grounds, but their opposition to the mosque has been the minority opinion.

Both ProfessorshhhhGH Amin and Taba expressed their thanks to the many non-Muslims, especially students and professors of Arabic and Islamic Studies at BYU, for their support of the construction of the mosque.

“Nothing,” Amin said, “can replace the importance of personal interaction between members of different religions when it comes to fostering understanding and tolerance.” ■