world would now be a very different place: all non-Muslims would be second class citizens or dead; anyone who criticised the Prophet or the Quran would die; women would be illiterate, covered from head to foot and exist mainly for men's pleasure; all homosexuals would be dead.

Sadly, few people who have called themselves Christians throughout the last 2000 years have been true followers of Jesus Christ; otherwise the world would now be a very different place - it would be a paradise on earth: wars would cease; armies would be small if any; police forces would have little more than traffic duties; far fewer doctors and nurses would be needed; famines would no longer occur; the kingdom of God would have come on earth.

Further reading:

The Bible
The Quran
The Internet
Many, probably hundreds of, websites compare these two religions.
Most websites, both Christian and Muslim, will agree with the facts I have stated. However their interpretations may be very different.

This and other writings available from

www.GrowthInGod.org.uk

or

www.growthingod.org.uk/christianity-and-islam.htm

Violence in

Christianity and Islam

-

Differences

between

Jesus and Muhammad

Let me repeat the words of Jesus: "The thief comes only to steal and to kill and to destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance".

Remember that Muhammad's life is held up as an example for all Muslims to follow.

Conclusion

Many people, especially Muslims, say that Christianity and Islam are equally violent. They base this on the history of Christianity - the crusades, the inquisition and the religious wars of Europe; and on the many violent passages found in the Old Testament. The big error in this argument is that all this violence is totally contrary to the New Testament and above all contrary to the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Jesus gave no instructions to his followers to fight, torture or kill their enemies or unbelievers. His simple command was "Love your enemies".

Violence in the history and current practice of Islam is totally in agreement with the Quran and with the life of Muhammad. The Muslim conquest of North Africa, the Middle East and large parts of Asia was simply a continuation of Muhammad's life's work. The killing of vast numbers of "unbelievers" was just carrying out the instructions he gave in the Quran.

Is Islam a religion of peace? Our four witnesses – Islam's modern manifestations, its history, its sacred book and its founder – all give the same answer. A clear and resounding **NO!**

Muhammad's closest followers are not the large numbers of peace-loving, law-abiding citizens we now meet daily in our countries. Rather they are (or were) to be found in the Islamic State (rightly so-called).

Is Christianity a religion of peace? Parts of its history, especially the Crusades and the Inquisition, have been horrifically violent; but these have been in complete contradiction to the New Testament scriptures and its founder Jesus Christ.

Let me repeat and clarify my opening statements:

Happily, few people who have called themselves Muslims throughout the last 1400 years have been true followers of Muhammad; otherwise the

He totally fulfilled these words. In the short three years of his ministry, He healed large numbers of sick people; he set many people free from the power of evil spirits; he fed multitudes of hungry people; He even brought dead people back to life.

After his death and resurrection he expected his followers to continue and do even more than he did. He said to them: "Truly, truly, I tell you, anyone who believes in Me, the works that I do he will also do; and greater works than these will he do; because I am going to the Father" (John 14:12).

Many of his followers from that day to this have fulfilled his words. Have they done greater works than Jesus? I explain this in another writing.

All this is the exact opposite of the violence, bloodshed and death that have played such big parts in the history of both Christianity and Islam.

Muhammad

The life of Muhammad is a total contrast with the life of Jesus. It was filled with violence. Here I will consider 3 aspects.

Caravan raids: Muhammad and his followers were forced to flee from Mecca when the people of Mecca rejected his teachings. They moved to Medina from where they supported themselves by conducting raids on trade caravans. Sometimes caravan drivers were killed.

Expeditions and battles: the website Expeditions of Muhammad lists 100 expeditions and battles which Muhammad ordered or took part in. He first conquered Mecca and then went on to conquer most of the Arabian Peninsula before he died.

Slaughter of Jews: Muhammad and his men besieged a Jewish tribe named Banu Qurayza for 25 days. When they eventually surrendered he ordered the execution of at least 600 of them and took the women and children as slaves.

Murder: the website Killings Ordered or Supported by Muhammad records 43 different people or groups of people whose executions Muhammad ordered. Many of these executions were simply for insulting or laughing at him. Other reasons included adultery, apostasy or being a Jew.

Muslim websites agree that Muhammad did all these things, but of course they find reasons to justify them.

Introduction

Sadly, few people who have called themselves Christians throughout the last 2000 years have been true followers of Jesus Christ; otherwise the world would now be a very different place.

Happily, few people who have called themselves Muslims (Mohammedans or Moslems) throughout the last 1400 years have been true followers of Muhammad; otherwise the world would now be a very different place.

In this article I will explain why.

Are all religions more or less the same? Many people think so. Christianity and Islam, at first sight, are the two most similar. (I am using these two words in their widest sense, meaning anyone who claims to be Christian and anyone who claims to be Muslim.) Both appear to have similar moral codes. Both aim to dominate the world. People say that both these religions have had periods of violence and they point particularly to the Crusades, which were done in the name of Christ. Everyone of course knows about modern violence done in the name of Muhammad. Christianity and Islam both have vastly more adherents than Hinduism or Buddhism which are their only real rivals. Currently the world has about 2.3 billion Christians and 1.6 billion Muslims (again in the widest sense of those words).

How many of these 2.3 billion Christians are true followers of Jesus? How many of these 1.6 billion Muslims are true followers of Muhammad?

Do these Christians faithfully follow the teachings of the Bible? Do these Muslims faithfully follow the teachings of the Quran?

To answer these questions I will compare four aspects of these two religions:

- Their modern expression
- Their history
- Their sacred books
- Their founders

Modern Expression

The modern expressions of both Christianity and Islam are very diverse.

Hundreds, if not thousands, of denominations claim to be Christian and several of them, such as Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, claim to have a monopoly of the truth.

Islam has many fewer branches. The two main ones are Sunnis who are around 85% and Shias who are about 15%. Others - Sufis, Ahmadis, and Alawites etc – are obviously much smaller.

A small minority of Muslims believe in the use of violence to spread their faith, but this minority is large enough to cause mayhem and destruction worldwide. 1% of 1.6 billion is 160 million! The website The Religion of Peace records an average of 4 or 5 Muslim atrocities every day. These atrocities occur both in Muslim countries and countries that people call Christian.

Christian militias exist in several African countries such as the Central African Republic, Nigeria and Uganda, and in Syria and Iraq. Most of these groups exist to defend themselves against Muslims.

Individuals claiming to be Christian also are responsible for some acts of violence, but to nothing like the same extent as Muslims. (The website Christian Terrorism lists cases of Christian terrorism both historical and contemporary.)

Are violent Muslims and violent Christians true to their religion? We will answer this question in the light of their history, their sacred books and their founders.

History

Much of the history of both these religions is soaked in blood. Everyone has heard of the Crusades, the Inquisition and the Holocaust. Few people in the West know much about the history of Islam.

We must divide the history of Christianity into its earlier and later periods.

Quran (9:73) "O Prophet! strive hard against the unbelievers and the hypocrites and be unyielding to them; and their abode is hell, and evil is the destination."

Quran (9:123) "O you who believe! fight those of the unbelievers who are near to you and let them find in you hardness."

Quran (61:4) "Surely Allah loves those who fight in His cause"

All these verses and many more like them are direct instructions to all Muslims for all time. This contrasts with violent verses in the Old Testament which are specific instructions to the people of Israel in specific times and places.

Muslim teachers, especially those speaking for western audiences, will say that Islam is a religion of peace. Politically correct western politicians will happily echo their words. They will say that the Quran only justifies fighting in self-defence. Some passages of the Quran may say that, but others, like those quoted above, are completely open-ended and go far beyond self-defence.

The Founders

The scriptures of any religion are important for understanding that religion, but even more important are the lives and characters of their founders. Actions speak louder than words. Both Jesus and Muhammad are seen as role models for their followers. Christians should be like Jesus; Muslims should be like Muhammad. Two people more different than Jesus and Muhammad would be hard to find. We could compare many aspects of their lives and characters, but in this writing I will continue to focus on violence. We will look at each in turn.

Jesus

Was there violence in the life of Jesus? Yes! His life on earth came to a violent end. Violence leads to bloodshed and death. This is exactly what happened to Jesus. He was betrayed by his own people to the Romans and crucified.

His own life was the exact opposite. Jesus described his mission with these words: "The thief comes only to steal and to kill and to destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance" (John 10:10).

A full discussion of violence in the Old Testament, and any justification for it, are outside the scope of this article.

The New Testament

In the New Testament Jesus clearly abrogated all violence with these words: "You have heard that it was said, Love your neighbour and hate your enemy. But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt 5:43, 44).

Paul's words to the Ephesians have similar implications: "Put on the full armour of God so that you can stand against the tactics of the Devil. For our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world powers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens" (Eph 6:11,12).

According to Paul, warfare for followers of Jesus is not physical but spiritual. This is not just one isolated text, but is the tenor of the whole New Testament.

We can safely say therefore that all violence apart from pure self-defence is completely contrary to the teachings of the New Testament. It can only be justified from the Old Testament by taking passages out of their context.

The Bible supplies absolutely no justification for the crusades or the inquisition, and even less for the holocaust. Nowhere is there any suggestion that the gospel should be spread by force. Nowhere does the Bible suggest that Jews should be persecuted or forced to convert to Christianity. All such action is totally contrary to the New Testament.

The Quran

The Quran has more than 100 verses that clearly encourage violence.

The website the Religion of Peace lists more than 30 of these verses and comments on their background and context. I will simply quote a few.

Quran (9:5) "So when the sacred months have passed away, then slay the idolaters wherever you find them, and take them captive and besiege them and lie in wait for them in every ambush, then if they repent and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate, leave their way free to them."

Later History of Christianity

The later history of Christianity includes periods of shocking violence. The worst was the Inquisition. Some say it was responsible for the deaths of 50 million Protestants and Jews. Others put the number only in thousands or tens of thousands. Unsurprisingly, Protestant and Roman Catholic historians differ on the subject.

The Crusades accounted for between 1 and 3 million deaths over a period of 200 years. Their stated purpose was to recapture the "Holy Land" from the "Mohammedans", but large numbers of Jews were slaughtered along the route from Europe to Israel.

Six million Jews and many others died in the Holocaust in nominally Christian Europe; but, unlike the Inquisition and the Crusades, this was not done in the name of Christ.

Some people will point to the spread of Christianity through European empires. England, France, Spain, Portugal and Holland all had overseas empires of varying sizes. All of these of course were conquered by force. Missionaries, both Protestant and Catholic, often followed and spread various versions of the Christian faith to the conquered countries. However, though the conquest was obviously by force, in general the spread of the Christian faith was not. The conquered peoples were free to continue in their own religion.

Protestants and Catholics have fought wars against each other and even burnt each other at the stake.

Was all this violence and conquest in accord with the teachings of the Bible? Did Jesus encourage his followers to do these things to spread his message?

Early History of Christianity

There was plenty of bloodshed in early Christian history. The blood was that of the Christians themselves! Many of the first followers of Jesus sealed their faith with their blood. The New Testament recounts the martyrdoms of Stephen and James. Frequent outbreaks of persecution occurred under different Roman emperors and this continued until Constantine decreed that Christianity should be the religion of the Roman Empire.

No record of Christians killing others exists, even in self-defence, far less in any attempt to spread their faith by force.

Many, if not most, of the early Christians were true followers of Jesus Christ.

History of Islam

Muslim history is soaked in blood from its start.

Muhammad was a military commander who led his followers into battle. By the time of his death he had conquered most of the Arabian Peninsula.

Subsequent centuries saw the conquest of all of the Middle East, North Africa, Spain, Persia and eventually India and further east. Inhabitants of the conquered countries had the choice of (1) conversion to Islam, (2) becoming second class citizens and paying the Jizya tax (but only if they were Christians or Jews), or (3) death.

In these conquered countries, previous religions – Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Paganism and others – were largely or completely wiped out.

Millions of people died during these conquests.

The website Tears of Jihad gives the following figures for deaths through Islam and Jihad:

- Africans: 120 million deaths; 25 million slaves.
- Christians: 60 million deaths.
- Hindus: 80 million deaths.
- Buddhists 10 million.

Another website (Middle East Forum) claims that Muslims killed 600 million people in India over a period of 1200 years.

No historical statistics can be guaranteed as reliable, and of course some Muslims will dispute them; but even if you divide these statistics by a factor of 10 they are still utterly horrific.

Was all this violence and conquest in accord with the teachings of the Quran? Did Muhammad encourage his followers to do these things to spread his message?

Sacred Books

Do either the Bible or the Quran condone or encourage acts of violence?

Is Islam a religion of peace or violence?

Is Christianity a religion of peace or violence?

For Christianity, we must make a clear distinction between the Old and the New Testaments.

The Old Testament

People may be shocked to hear that the Old Testament contains instructions for genocide.

When the Israelites entered the land of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua, they were told to destroy the inhabitants of the land: "When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess, and He drives out many nations before you — the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations more numerous and powerful than you — and when the LORD your God delivers them over to you and you defeat them, you must completely destroy them. Make no treaty with them and show them no mercy" (Deut 7:1).

Later in their history, the prophet Samuel went to King Saul with the message: "Now go and attack the Amalekites and completely destroy everything they have. Do not spare them. Kill men and women, children and infants, oxen and sheep, camels and donkeys" (1 Sam 15:3).

These instructions are horrific to modern ears, but one thing must be made clear: these were specific instructions given to the Israelites at a specific time in their history. The Israelites were instructed to destroy specific tribes - Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites etc and later the Amalekites. These were not general commandments for all people for all time. Neither Jews nor Christians have ever used them as justification for making war against other countries.

The Old Testament clearly prescribes the death penalty for various offences, but always as a judicial act and never as an action by a private individual.