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THE INFORMED BELIEVER

Our BELIEFS must be large enough to include all of the FACTS; OPEN enough to be TESTED; and, FLEXIBLE enough to CHANGE.

"Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed." (Archibald MacLeish)

Giving Divine Credit Where it is Due

By Jim Myers

*Comments &
Questions*

*(1) What
would happen
if reporters
only used the
words "man"
or "woman"
in their stories
instead of the
actual names
of the people?*

Did you hear the one about the Priest, Preacher and Imam? No, I am not talking about a joke. I am referring to the numerous interfaith news stories in which Jewish, Christian and Muslim leaders discuss "God." Since news stories report that all three repeatedly use the word "God" in their discussions, if one didn't know better, he or she would think the all were referring to the same God. Informed Believers know that they are not referring to the same God, and it really makes a difference.

Since Christians, Jews and Muslims are all monotheistic religions it makes sense that "God" would be a much used word. A fact that reporters all seem to miss is that the God of each of the monotheistic religions has a name and it is linked to specific salvation claims and belief requirements. The primary name of the God of Christianity is either Jesus or the Trinity. YHVH or Yahweh is the name of the God of Rabbinic Judaism, but they use euphemisms such as G-d, HaShem, etc. Allah is the name of the Muslim God. Muslim literature states that Allah is a word that simply means "God," but this doesn't appear to be the case. Below is a recent news story.

*(2) What do
you think
about
Catholics
using the word
"Allah?"*

A very interesting situation took place a few months ago in Malaysia regarding the way a Roman Catholic organization used the word "Allah." A Catholic weekly newspaper in Malaysia has been told to drop the use of the word "Allah" in its Malay language section if it wants to renew its publishing permit, a senior government official said Friday.

The Herald, the organ of Malaysia's Catholic Church, has translated the word God as "Allah" but it is erroneous because Allah refers to the Muslim God, said Che Din Yusoff, a senior official at the Internal Security Ministry's publications control unit. "Christians cannot use the word Allah. It is only applicable to Muslims. Allah is only for the Muslim god. This is a design to confuse the Muslim people," Che Din told The Associated Press. . .

*(3) Notice the
other three
words that
Christians
may not use.*

Che Din said Christians don't use the word Allah when they worship in English, so they shouldn't use it in the Malay language too. There are four Malay words that must not be used by other religions, he said: "Allah" for God, "solat" for prayers, "kaabah" for the place of Muslim worship in Mecca and "baitula" the house of Allah.

(4) Can you have religious freedom when the constitution states that every citizen is a Muslim?

Malaysia's 27 million people are Muslim. Large ethnic Chinese and Indian minorities are Christians, Buddhists, Hindus and followers of other smaller faiths. At first glance it appears that the constitution guarantees religious freedom, but Islam is the official religion and the constitution states that all Malays are Muslim. Minorities frequently complain about this and feel that they are being discriminated against.

The fact that the three monotheistic religions do not worship the same God becomes clear when we replace the generic "God" with a name. For example, lets replace the word "God" with "Allah" in the Apostles Creed:

"I believe in Allah, the Father Almighty, Creator of Heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, Allah's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary. . ."

I bet that would not only wake up a few Catholics, but it would get the attention of a few Muslims too. Muslims would agree that Allah is the "Almighty Creator," but the part about Allah having a son wouldn't fly. A foundational Muslim belief is:

Allah is the only deity. Allah has no children, no parents nor any equal. The deity of Islam is known by the name "Allah" and more than 99 other venerated names, such as "the Merciful," "the Gracious," "the All-Powerful," etc.

(5) The mutually exclusive claims attached to the names of the deities would either make it impossible for them to be the same or all of the claims to be true.

When it comes to Jesus, Muslims teach that "Jesus was a very elect and highly esteemed messenger of Allah. No Muslim is a Muslim if he does not believe this." Of course, members of Rabbinic Judaism would agree with the Muslims that their God has no son, but many would also state that "Jesus was a false prophet." The rabbis would not go along with Mohammed being the final prophet or the Koran being the word of God. Neither would Christians. Muslims would disagree with the Jewish claims about Isaac, while Jews would have the same problem with Ishmael. Of course, Christians would argue that "there is no name other than Jesus that one may be saved."

The belief systems that are linked to the names of each group's God place very different requirements upon followers. They each provide very different answers for questions concerning life after death, religious rituals, the meaning and purpose of life, how to relate to outsiders, identifying the true authorized spokesmen of God, etc. The belief systems of Christians, Jews and Muslims create very different realities, which their adherents use to view their world and make daily decisions.

(6) Contact the media and ask them to replace the generic "God" with the actual name of the deity.

If reporters would use Jesus, Yahweh and Allah, instead of the generic term "God" in their news stories it would paint very different pictures in readers' minds. It would clearly identify who should be credited with actions such as inquisitions, suicide bombings, synagogue burnings, church burnings, heresy trials, beheadings, etc. Of course, it would also identify the religious institutions and leaders behind those acts.

Until reporters decide to retire the generic "God" it will be up to you insert the correct name. This will raise the awareness of how the belief systems linked to each God is affecting our world. The right God will be credited for the good and evil acts of his followers. This will also allow us to see past the generic smokescreen that obscures the actions of those who claim to be the "authorized" spokesmen of those gods. **BHC**

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