

In February 2011 Christianity Today issued an article entitled "Muslims and the Son of God". On May 7, 2011 World Magazine issued a similar article entitled "Inside Out" by Emily Belz. The idea of the articles states that some evangelists who work among Moslems are finding that the Biblical term, "Son of God" is offensive to the Moslems. The articles cited Sura Al Tawba 9:30 as the basis for this claim. They are calling for a new Bible translation that will remove the term "Son of God" or the word, "Son" and replace it with the term, "The Beloved Son Who Comes [or originates] From God" or "The Messiah Who Came From God". They believe that this Bible will be more appealing to the Moslems.

There are several things that I noticed about both articles:

1. Both articles refer to non-Arabic missionaries who say that they are working among Moslems and claim huge numbers of converts.
2. The only person from the Arab countries mentioned is George Housney whom Christianity Today claims is associated with several Biblical translations. Christianity Today failed to clarify that the translations George Housney was involved in were paraphrased translations.
3. There is no mention of Arabic Bible scholars and men who are truly leading Moslems to Christ such as Former Coptic Priest, Father Zachariah who is shaking the Moslem world with his daily television program that appears all over the Moslem world, and Rachid, a Moroccan, Dr. Labib Michael, a scholar on Islam and the author of many books on Islam and Dr. Winston Mazakis who wrote an outstanding commentary on the Gospel of John aimed at Moslem

The idea that Christ is the beloved son who came from God is acceptable as an explanation for the term "son of God" and should be used as a footnote or commentary on the bottom rather than to play with or inaccurately change the scriptures. As a matter of fact a footnote with more detailed explanations of what Christians mean by the Son of God would be appropriate and acceptable to everyone, as Dr. Winston Mazakis who wrote a commentary on the Gospel of John did.

The issue here is not whether we should or should not use the term "son of God". The issue is whether or not doctrine is important. I personally believe that doctrine should be the foundation of evangelism and that evangelism without teaching the Word of God will lead to spiritual chaos and a church that cannot discern right from wrong.

Reports of conversion of Moslems are vastly misleading and controversial. In 2006 a Christian organization reported 150 Moslems in Sidon, Southern Lebanon were converted to Christianity through their efforts. The churches in that area have not heard of such conversions. The report was not true.

There are a large number of Moslems coming to Christ but not through these organizations.

Thousands of Moslems are coming to Christ all over the Middle East and the Arab world. They are coming through the efforts of Arabic ministers who truly know the Qur-an and the Bible.

I also believe that trying to yield to the Moslems on any doctrinal or Biblical issue will

only weaken the Christian faith in the eyes of the Moslem. It will embolden the Moslem and give him further proof to think that he was right all along and that Christians were correcting the errors in their Bible.

Those who are involved in paraphrased versions of the Bible seem to lack the understanding of the importance of accurate Bible translations. Paraphrased Bibles do convey the perspective of the translators and are not accurate and reliable documents.

The Christianity Today article states that the Moslems were more receptive to the idea that Christ is the beloved son. Moslems claim that Bible translations carry the perspective of the translator. This is true of paraphrased Bibles.

A few years ago a group of Christians went to Turkey. They visited the mosques and apologized for what the Crusaders have done to Jerusalem and the Middle East. Later these Christians reported successes and said that God opened doors before them and that the Imams invited them to their mosques to speak. Someone in the West will say, "Praise the Lord that the Moslems are opened to hear the gospel!" The reality is that by apologizing these men proved to the Turkish Moslems that the Christians are murderers and that Islam is a peaceful religion victimized by the Crusaders. Most probably these Christians did not know that the Moslem Turks who occupied Jerusalem and were intercepting and killing the European pilgrims were the cause for sending the Crusaders.

Likewise, Moslems will cheer those who say the Bible is wrong and the translators were wrong to say that Jesus is the Son of God.

What Does Sura Al Tawba 9:30 Mean?

Another issue presented in the Christianity Today article is regarding Sura Al Tawba 9:30. This is what the article says: "In fact [Sura Al Tawba 9:30] says God curses anyone who would utter the ridiculous blasphemy that Jesus could be Ibnullah [son of God]. Not only do Muslims disagree with Christians about the identity and nature of Jesus, they also incur a curse for even mentioning the phrase "son of God". "

This statement is misleading because it does not tell the whole truth. Al Tawba 9:30 states the following: "The Jews call Uzayr a son of God, and the Christians call Christ the son of God. That is a saying from their mouth; [in this] they but imitate what the unbelievers of old used to say. Allah's curse be on them; how they are deluded away from the truth."

A shallow look at the verse makes one think that God is cursing those who claim that Jesus is the Son of God. In reality the Koran is responding to the Mariamite cult that existed in the days of Muhammad and not to the teachings of the Christians that exist in our present day. This verse shows that the Koran does not understand what the Christians mean by the term "Son of God." In addition to this verse, there are other Qur-
anic verses that reveal what the Moslem means when they refer to the term "son of God". The Mariamite cult that existed in the days of the Prophet Muhammad taught that God had sexual intercourse with Mary and begot a son. Christians disagree with this teaching. We do not believe that God got married. The term "son of God" refers to the eternity and the source of Christ. Jesus is not the product of sexual intercourse.

Altering the words of the Bible is not going to change the minds of the Moslems. On the contrary, it is going to strengthen the Islamic argument regarding the corruption of the Bible and will make the Moslems teach that all along Islam was right and all along the Bible was wrong. The Moslem Imams are going to be teaching that the Christians removed the words "son of God" from the Bible and that they corrected their corrupt Bible.

The Koran teaches that God cannot get married. Here are some of the verses that clarify what Al Tawba 9:30 is implying:

Sura Al An'am [The Cattle] 6:101 says that God that created everything "... how can he have a son when he hath no consort?" The word consort is "Sahibat" in Arabic, which means woman companion or mistress.

Sura Al Nissa [The Woman] 4:171 says "...far exalted is he above having a son. To him belong all things in the heavens and on earth..." This verse says that God does not need a son. He is too exalted to have sex and have a son.

Sura Mary 19:35 says, "It is not befitting to [the majesty of] Allah that he should beget a son. Glory be to him! When he determines a matter, he only says to it, "Be" and it is " Since God can create anything, He will not need to have an affair and give birth to a child. If He chooses to do so, He can say it and create a son.

Sura 21:26 again implies marriage and firstborn "And they say; [God] most gracious has begotten offspring." This verse again implies marriage and having a child.

These verses and other similar ones in the Koran explains Sura Al Tawba 9:30 and any sincere Moslem realizes that the curse here is to those who believe that God got married, had sex, and had a child.

Also in Sura 23:91 "No son did God beget, nor is there any God along with him".

Those who taught in the days of Muhammad that Christ is the Son of God were implying that there is more than one God. Christians do not believe in this.

All this can be explained in footnotes that will clarify the matter without having to alter the scripture. The English Koran contains a myriad of footnotes explaining Qur-anic verses. Likewise, footnotes will be helpful in the Bible to explain apparent difficult verses.

The English Translation of the Qur-an Carries The Perspective of The Translators

Many of the Qur-anic translations to English are designed to fit the Western culture and to cover up verses that may expose some of the Islamic teachings that are very offensive to the Western person. An example of a dishonest translation is found in Sura Al-Zuhkruf 43:81. The Glorious Koran translates this verse as follows:

"Say (O Muhammed); the beneficent one hath no son, I am the first among the worshippers."

This is not an honest and truthful translation. An accurate translation from the Arabic would be as follows:

“Say (O Muhammed); if the most gracious had a son, I would be the first to worship.”

The translator of the Glorious Koran is afraid that if Christians can prove that Christ is the Son of God, Moslems would be obliged to worship Him.

Those who believe the term “son of God” should be removed from the Bible are encouraging such inaccuracies and untruthfulness and would be telling Moslems who are misleading the English speaking world and even their own people that they are on the right path and that Christians are wrong.

I, like Professor Yarbrough mentioned in the Christianity Today article as going to Sudan and winning people to Christ, travel to Sudan annually and even though I do not know the Professor, like him, I have seen many Moslems accept Christ as their Savior. As a matter of fact it is estimated that there are about 4 million converted Moslems in Egypt and 100,000 in Saudi Arabia. There are hundreds of underground churches in North Africa and Arab countries. All these converted Moslems read the Bible and none of them have a problem with the term "son of God". There are many Arabic Bible teachers such as the former Coptic priest, Zachariah and Dr. Labib Michael, Dr. Winston Mazakis and many others who have led many Moslems to the Lord using the Bible that is in our hands. They had no difficulty at any time with regard to the term "son of God". They would disagree with organizations that would condone changing the term.

Use of Son of God in the Middle East

It is important for us in the West to understand that the word "son" in the Middle East does not always imply marriage. In the Middle East we say the son of a country, for example (Ibn Al Baled). This does not mean the country got married and had a son; it simply means that person comes from that country. When a Moslem gets saved the Holy Spirit opens his mind and he will have no difficulty understanding the meaning.

Open Door To Chaos

There are other issues that are problematic to the Moslems such as the Trinity. They say Christians worship three gods. Also they say that Jesus did not die and rise in the third day. Should we alter the verses of the Bible to accommodate the Moslems on all these issues? What about issues by other groups such as the Catholics who do not believe that Jesus is the first-born but rather the only-born child to Mary and has no brothers and sisters, and the Mormons who believe that Jesus and the devil were brothers, and Jehovah Witnesses who believe that Jesus is the first of God's creation and do not believe in the physical resurrection of Jesus and the Church of Christ who

believe in baptismal regeneration and teaches that one must baptize in the name of Jesus, only? Should we remove the word "Father and Holy Ghost" from Matt. 28:19? Should we alter verses to please them?

I Cor. 1:23 "But we preach Christ crucified unto the Jews a stumbling block and unto the Greeks foolishness." I Cor. 1:18 "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness."

Perhaps those who want to alter the Word of God should advise Apostle Paul to tone down his message and change the words of the cross in order to be less offensive to the Jews and be more philosophically appealing to the Greeks.

Once we start changing the words of the Word of God where do we stop? This will only lead to spiritual chaos.

There is a lot of depth in the word "son" which the Moslems and those who read the Arabic Bible will miss because it speaks of the intimate relation and the source of Christ.

One must not forget that in Rev. 22:19 God imposes a curse on anyone who adds or deducts from the Word of God. Therefore, one must be very careful not to alter Biblical verses.

The accuracy of the Bible translation must be put above the issues of the day.

God bless,
Edgar M. Feghaly