

Approaching the Muslim World with True Parents' Thought

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There were 1.8 billion Muslims in the world as of 2015 -- roughly 24 percent of the global population -- according to a Pew Research Center estimate. While Islam is currently the world's secondlargest religion (after Christianity), it is the fastest growing major religion. This may scare some people but as Unificationists, we should take this fact very seriously. True Mother proclaims that she will fulfill her mission before she goes to the spiritual world. That mission is to give the blessing to all the people of the world. Islam comprises roughly a quarter of the world's population and is growing every day. Therefore, it is essential that we, as the filial children of our True Parents, find a way to reach the Muslim world.

My husband and I have been working in the Middle East since 1996 and have found that most Muslims are very tolerant and open-minded. They have a deep love for God and believe that religion should play an important role in people's lives. They follow God's word and traditions and are deeply conservative. Because of this, they have little respect for the Western world, which has lost its religious values and is becoming more secular every day. They become deeply disturbed when they see how Western values are influencing their young people. Because of the lack of values in the West, some Muslims see the West as the enemy that is promoting a sinful lifestyle and should be stopped. Most people like to maintain this image of Islam.

But the reality is that the Muslim world is more open to Unificationists' values and principles than is the Western world. They have a great deal in common with the world of Unificationists. They are desperate to preserve their families and family values. They honor purity and marriage. They understand the value of a relationship with God and religious tradition as a cornerstone for the community and society. Sharing our values and principles with the Muslim world is not difficult on a personal level, but because of political and religious control, we have to be sensitive and adjust our approach to meet the current situation of Islamic nations.

A foundation for outreach

Some Unificationists have done great work to explain the Divine Principle from an Islamic perspective. In 1980, when the missionaries were in the field, HSA-UWC USA made a study guide to help those in Muslim nations. The title was *An Introduction to the Principle -- an Islamic Perspective*. This study guide covered the Principle and used quotations from the Quran to support the text rather than quotations from the Bible. In 1993, Thomas Cromwell wrote a book entitled *Essentials of the Unification Principle*, which attempted to explain the Principle in a way acceptable to the Muslim world. This book did not use scriptural quotations, but it did add some chapters that pertained to the Prophet Mohammed (Peace Be Upon Him) and the providential history of Islam. Both these texts were written by a Unificationist from a Christian background, so although they were well researched, there are limitations to their understanding.

Other work has been done by Abdulmoumin Ibrahim Ahmed, who wrote *United Visions: Islamic Perspective*, which is a study of the Divine Principle from an Islamic perspective using quotations from the Quran to explain our principles and their application. This is in Arabic and English and has proven to be very helpful in teaching people in the Arab world. In addition, Abdou Gaye did his UTS thesis on the topic of giving the blessing to the Muslim world, which is a very helpful tool for us to spread the blessing. Both Unificationists are from a Muslim background, which gives them more qualification to write such texts. Together with this material, we need to make a comprehensive education system that we can use to share the Divine Principle with the Muslim world.

Concerning the task of approaching Muslims with the Divine Principle, the first thing I would like to say is that it is important to understand the Muslim world, the religion and the culture before we start to share our ideology. This is important especially if we are not from a Muslim background. We may easily misrepresent our True Parents if we approach this task from a Judeo-Christian perspective, which non-Muslims tend to do. We must understand the Islamic religion, culture, values and lifestyle in order to be qualified to share our principles with the Islamic world.

In reality, the only way we can truly embrace the Muslim world is through a heart of service, piety, sincerity and love. This is the heart of a true Abel. Historically the Muslim world is in the position of Cain and they have suffered greatly from abuse and misuse in wars over land and power. Our approach must be one of humility. We have so much to learn from them, and we have so many resources to share with them. This must be the foundation of our work. They must see us as an elder brother that is protecting and nurturing them to be prosperous and successful.



Another important point to consider is that in some interpretations of Islam, to convert to another religion is forbidden. A number of countries expressly have made apostasy a capital offense. However, only a small number of cases have applied capital punishment. Mostly, modern Muslims do not hold this belief because the Quran does not clearly support it. Although this law is currently unenforced, the family, relatives and community of a Muslim converting to another religion would completely ostracize him or her.

Because of this cultural pressure, it is important that when we do outreach in the Muslim world, we do not do so as a religion. We cannot use religious terms such as "reverend" or "church." Working through the Family Federation for World Peace, Universal Peace Federation, Women's Federation for World Peace or Youth and Students for Peace is essential when working in the Islamic world. Any of these associations works well. We are not converting people to our understanding, but we are sharing with them how to live a good life, how to apply principles from God in their lives and how to become true believers. They must not feel we are trying to change them but are only trying to enhance their own faith and helping them to fulfill their own desire to live with God and become godly people.

Our goal in doing outreach in the Middle East, and we believe it should be a common point in all places, is to connect the people to our True Parents and eventually to support them to become true parents themselves. Of course, they need to learn and apply Divine Principle, which is the way to become true parents and receive the blessing. In teaching Divine Principle, we need to revise our current format, because it was written for a Christian audience. We need to make it acceptable to a Muslim audience. In order to make the proper adjustments, it is necessary to know which parts of the Divine Principle are acceptable to the Muslim world and what concepts are not acceptable, of which we should be aware.

Divine Principle Part I Chapter One

As we examine the Divine Principle in relation to the Quran, we find that most of the content of Chapter One is compatible. We can find quotations in the Quran to support many aspects of Chapter One. The Principle of Resemblance: "He is God, the Creator, the Maker, the Shaper. To Him belong the Names Most Beautiful. All that is in the heavens and on the earth magnified Him. He is All-mighty, the All-wise." (Quran 59:24) The Principle of Duality: "And We created you in pairs." (Quran 78:8) The Purpose of Creation: We can see in the Quran many quotations that help us explain the purpose of creation, describing the closeness of God and the first blessing; the Quran states, "We indeed created man, and We know what his soul whispers to him, and We are nearer to him than the jugular vein." (Quran 50:15–16) The following quotation helps us to bring in the concept of re-creating the first Adam: "truly the likeness of Jesus, in God's sight, is as Adam's likeness." (Quran 53:59) Family unity is so important in Muslim society and is supported in the scriptures. "Lord, give us joy in our wives and children and make us models for the God-fearing." (Quran 25:74) "Thy Lord has decreed... that you be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in your lifetime, do not say to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honor. And out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility and say, 'My Lord! Bestow on them Thy mercy even as they cherished me in childhood.'" (Quran 17:23) Describing how God created everything for man: "And God has laid the earth for you as a carpet." (Quran 71:18)

The other parts of Chapter One are completely acceptable, although there may not be clear support from the scriptures. Especially, Muslims have a clear belief in the spiritual world and the explanation in Chapter One is enlightening for them.



Points not compatible

One aspect of Chapter One that is not compatible with Islam is the concept of God as our Father and therefore Heavenly Parents. Actually, the Quran speaks against this concept strongly. From *An Introduction to the Principle -- an Islamic Perspective*: "Islam scolds those who believe that God can have literal children: 'What, has your Lord favored you with sons and taken Himself from the angels female? Surely it is a monstrous thing you are saying.'" (Quran 62:42) this attack is against those (such as many pre-Islamic Arabs) who believe that gods or God can literally have children. Muslims consider God to be above this, so that God bore physical children is not possible.

Although these words are in the Quran, some great Muslim leaders, such as the late Grand Mufti of Syria, taught that we are the children of God. Muslim do accept that man was created with the spirit of God, but the point they reject is that we are the physical children of God. Their concept of God is a God of power, might and mercy. If God were to be close to man, it would make him weak and vulnerable, so the Quran tried to distance God and man as much as possible. Nevertheless, they do accept that we were created from God's spirit. "When I have shaped him and breathed my spirit in him." (Quran 38:73)

However, in the Sufi interpretation, God is a very personal being and they relate to Him as a loving God. They also teach a concept called "*fanaa*," which is a process of gradually coming closer to God until becoming completely one with the beloved. In the following quotation we can see that God was so dear; even followers are to love God even more than their own fathers: "...remember God, as you remember your fathers or yet more devoutly."

Chapter Two

The Quran is not written chronologically; it is organized by the lengths of the chapters. Therefore, the whole story of the Fall is not found in the same chapter as it is in the Bible. However, the story in the Quran about the fall of Adam and Eve is very similar to the story we use in the Principle: Allah says, (an interpretation of the meaning) "And O Adam! Dwell you and your wife in Paradise and eat thereof as you both wish, but approach not this tree, otherwise you both will be of the *Zaalimoon* (unjust and wrongdoers)." (Quran 7:19) "Then, *Shaytan* whispered to him, saying, 'O Adam! Shall I lead you to the

Tree of Eternity and to a kingdom that will never waste away?" (Quran 20:120) "So he misled them with deception. Then when they tasted of the tree, that which was hidden from them of their shame (private parts) became manifest to them and they began to stick together the leaves of Paradise over themselves (in order to cover their shame). And their Lord called out to them: 'Did I not forbid you that tree and tell you, Verily Shaytan is an open enemy to you?'"

As you can see, the story contains Adam and Eve, Satan, and the Tree of Eternity, and after they ate the fruit, Adam and Eve covered their lower parts. Using this story, we can also explain the Fall and it is acceptable to a Muslim audience. Additionally, according to the Quran, the fall of the angel was clearly explained. The following verse gives support to explain the process and motivation of the Fall: "And when We said to the angels 'Bow yourselves to Adam,' so they bowed themselves, save *Iblis*; he refused. Then We said, 'Adam surely this is an enemy to thee and thy wife. So let him not expel you both from the Garden, so that thou art unprosperous.'" (Quran 20:115–116)

Adam and Eve confess

Adam and Eve admit their mistake and God sends them out of Paradise and creates enmity between them. They said (straightaway) "Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and do not have mercy on us, we will surely be among those who have lost!" (Quran 7:22)... "Nor do I absolve my own self of blame; the human soul is certainly prone to evil unless my Lord does bestow His mercy." (Quran 12:53)

There is also support for the possibility of sexual intercourse with a spirit. Here a *jinn* refers to the spirits that stay on earth and disturb humans. Different from angels, they are spiritual beings made from fire. "...therein maidens restraining their glances, untouched before them by any man or jinn." (Quran 60:56)

Fornication is a major sin in most religions and especially in Islam. "... neither fornicate, for whosoever does that shall meet the price of sin... doubled shall be the chastisement for him on the Resurrection Day." (Quran 22:68–69) God's messenger said, "Do you know the thing which most commonly brings people into Paradise? It is fear of God and good character. Do you know what most commonly brings people into hell? It is the two hallow things: the mouth and the private parts." (Hadith of Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah)

The Prophet said, "When a man commits fornication, he is not a believer; when a man steals, he is not a believer; when a man drinks wine, he is not a believer; when he takes plunder on account of which others raise their eyes at him, he is not a believer; and when a man defrauds his neighbor, he is not a believer; so beware, beware!"

Dominion of Satan

There is much evidence of how Satan (Shaytan) is influencing humans and how it is the humans' responsibility to resist the temptation of Satan and follow the word of God. "Said he (Iblis), 'My Lord, for Thy perverting me, I shall deck out all fair to them in the earth, and I shall pervert them...'" (Quran 60:38)

"Satan said, 'I will take of Thy servants a portion marked off: I will mislead them, and I will create in them false desires; I will order them... to deface the fair nature created by God.' Whoever, forsaking God, takes Satan for a friend, has of a surety suffered a loss that is manifest. Satan makes them promises and creates in them false desires; but Satan's promises are nothing but deceptions." (Quran 4:118–200)

Collective sin

When God causes punishment to descend on a people, those righteous ones among them will be smitten by the punishment, but afterward they will be resurrected according to their deeds. (Hadith of Bukhari and Muslim)

Points not compatible

The only problem we have with the Human Fall and Islam is that they don't have a concept of original sin. At the time of the Fall, according to the Quran, God forgave Adam and Eve and the sin they'd committed was not passed down to their descendants. The Quran says that Satan tempts all people according to their lives; if they live an evil life, Satan can influence them; if they live a good life and follow the will of God, Satan has no control over them. There is also no concept of inherited sin in the Quran. The remainder of Part One of the Divine Principle is written for a Christian audience. Some of it, such as Christology, is not relevant to a Muslim audience. Yet, Predestination, Eschatology and Human History (Last Days) is well documented in the Quran. For Muslims, resurrection is a concept having to do with that time. Like the Bible, the Quran speaks of those times in symbols, so a clear interpretation is necessary, which can be given through the view of the Divine Principle. The Mission of Jesus could be discussed effectively because they understand Jesus to be a special prophet; they even call him "Messiah," prepared by God

and understand that the crucifixion was not necessary for salvation. Actually, they strongly believe that Jesus was not crucified.

Divine Principle Part 2

Not all aspects of the Divine Principle can be correlated to the Quran and should not be. The Divine Principle is a new expression of truth for our new age. We should not say "revelation" because of the Muslim belief that the Quran is the last revelation. Having said this, the Quran does say, "And if whatever trees upon the earth were pens and the sea [were ink], replenished thereafter seven [more] seas, the words of Allah would not be exhausted. Indeed, Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise." This shows there is the understanding that all the truth of God has not been revealed yet, since it is limitless; therefore, they can accept the concept of a new expression of truth.

The Quran mentions all of the stories of the Providence of Restoration with little differences and the prophets Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus are all honored in the Quran. In sharing this part of the Principle, it would be important to mention the providential significance of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) and the history of Islam if possible.



The Messiah's Second Coming

Of course, the most important part of the Divine Principle is the announcement of the Second Coming of the Messiah in our True Parents. Islam does have a concept of Messiah, in the sense that they believe that Jesus was a Messiah and will return on the Day of Judgment. When the Messiah comes again, they also believe him to be of a Muslim background. In light of that, we have to approach this in a different way. Introducing someone who has a higher position than the Prophet (PBUH) is ultrasensitive.

In our experience in the Muslim world, we would introduce our True Parents as the King and Queen of Peace. This was very effective, especially through teaching our True Parents' life courses. Through their life courses it is clear that there have been no other people in history that have done as much for peace as our True Parents. We also give an overview of our movement and explain how our True Parents are building the ideal world in this day and age.

We do not ask people to leave their religion; rather we ask them to join our organizations and to help build the ideal world as a true Muslim or a Muslim-Unificationist. We encourage them to develop their own personal relationship with True Parents as their parents and follow True Parents' examples.

Conclusion

We need to proclaim the coming of our True Parents to the entire world, not just the Judeo-Christian world. In this era, the world consists of Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, etc. We cannot ignore this fact. We need to find a way to share this great news with all the people of the world and at the same time remain sensitive to their belief systems and cultures. As we approach Cheon Il Guk, I would like to suggest that we spend more time and resources on creating educational materials with this goal in mind, to make our True Parents' great teachings acceptable to all people of the world.