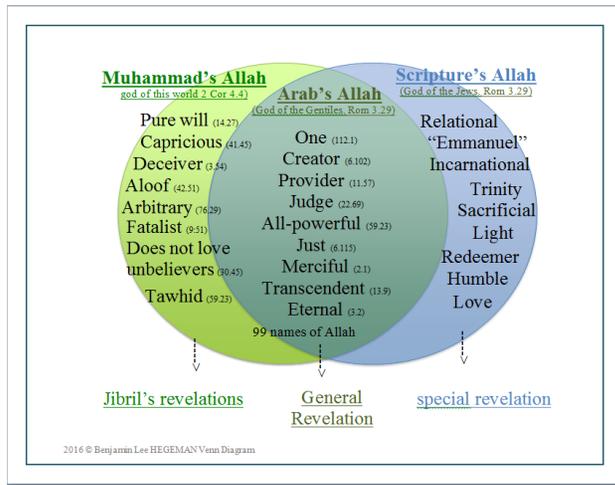
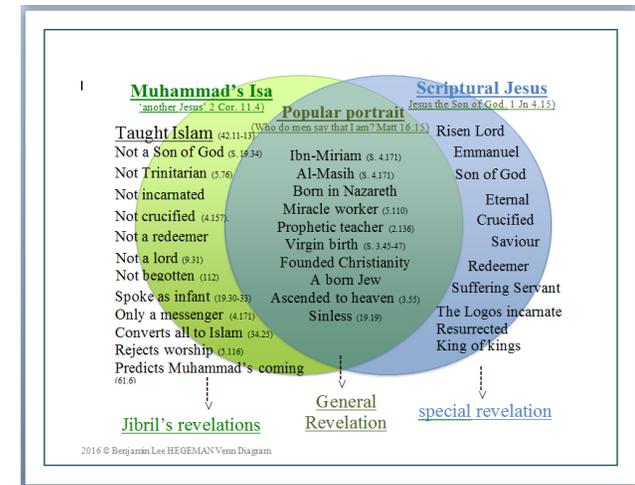


Allah and Isa



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In reading the Qur'an, and the *Sira* by Ibn Ishaq, Christian readers are eventually struck by some fascinating observations:

1. Muhammad clearly had never read the Bible or heard the Bible read to him. He only knew of it, of its popular stories, of its names and common history, of its legal codes, but not its doctrinal content.
2. Muhammad drew largely upon apocryphal sources (called *Isra'iliyya*). Traces of apocryphal and heretical accounts are everywhere in the Qur'an. Muhammad did not know that these were not 'Scripture'.
3. Muhammad believed he was receiving revelations from Allah via the spirit *Jibril*, accounting for much new material foreign to the Bible. However, Muhammad assumed it was the same doctrine as in the original Bible.
4. Muhammad drew richly upon popular religious knowledge among the Arabs of holy men—especially *Ibrahim* and the prophets- and which was known to all the highly religious Arabs.
5. Muhammad was associated with members of the local *hanifiya* movement which was composed of devout believers eager to restore monotheism to the Arabs.

Knowing these sources, we can largely account for a) what Arabs had heard before Muhammad's first revelations, b) what Jibril was adding to Muhammad's theology, and c) what Muhammad never accepted or grasped from the Bible. For this we will use John Venn's 1880 diagram, named after him.

The Venn diagram is equally useful in explaining the relationship of special revelation, general revelation and extra-biblical revelations. Paul in Romans 1 argues that all men are without excuse

“for what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.”

Following Thomas Aquinas, we call this the ‘general revelation’ of God through creation and history. Before Muhammad was born, Arabs spoke of God/Allah -and that for millenniums. These Arabs called their distant creator God ‘Allah’ (the –deity). This I refer to in my chart as ‘The Arab’s Allah’, known by general revelation. Now Paul will also link all men’s knowledge of the Creator God to the Scriptural God in Romans 3:29-30a. He asks:

“Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one---“

“Since God is one”, therefore “the God of the Gentiles” (the most high Creator God known to the entire world) and “the God of the Jews” (Yahweh) are one God. There is no conflict between general revelation and special revelation. However, Satan has many deity-masks (‘the god of this world’ 2 Cor. 4; ‘another god’; Deut. 13.13) - some which even infiltrate Christianity. The Venn diagram helps us to separate these masks, by differentiating a) which information Muhammad never grasped, b) which information he knew by common public knowledge and c) which information was newly coming to him from Jibril. We speak of all Scriptural truths as ‘special revelation’, of commonly discerned truths as ‘general revelation’, and I will call the last category ‘Jibril’s revelation’.

Isra’iliyya was the popular apocryphal texts (Jewish, Christian or heretical) and which was orally shared in the oriental public square. This I associate with ‘general revelation’. Muhammad heard of this in his travels and from Medinan Jews. Muhammad utterly failed to grasp anything of the Scriptural nature of Christ (special revelation) and was blinded by Jibril’s alternate version of Allah, of Isa and of the prophets. Jibril taught Muhammad ‘another Jesus’ (as per 2 Cor. 11.4).

Please look at the diagrams below. Like most of you, I avoid speaking of ‘Muhammad’s Allah’ with my Muslim friends but concentrate on the general revelation of ‘the Arabs’ Allah’ as I steer immediately to the True Allah of Scripture. In the same way, I also begin my conversations of Jesus/Isa using the middle ‘popular portrait’ of Isa in the Qur’an -all the while avoiding Muhammad’s ‘other Jesus’ and steering, rather, directly to the Scriptural Jesus. Most of us do this.

I do not use this Venn diagram with Muslims. It is meant for in-house reflections. It helps me recall what I should avoid and in which direction to take each conversation with my Muslim friends. It helps me see which traces of truth I can still find in the Qur'an (Dudley Woodberry calls this 'reflective revelation'.) and how to use them to point to the only full truth in Christ and in Scripture.

Children born into Muslim homes invariably begin by seeing God/Allah through general revelation. They see Allah by the divine attributes in the middle. Only when they become indoctrinated by learning of 'Muhammad's Allah' through Jibril's revelations, do they change their view. When Muslims convert, some will say they always worshipped the same God. That means they were never really indoctrinated and they moved from general revelation of Allah to special revelation of the true 'Allah' of Scripture. Those who say they were worshipping a false God testify that they were indoctrinated in the past and have now left the false god of 'Muhammad's Allah'. The Venn diagram helps us understand both testimonies.

Concerning the 99 names for Allah, most –but not all- belong to the middle section. These are known to Muhammad and Muslims by general revelation. Below are the two charts on Allah and Isa. A third chart on 'Islam' will appear after adding further references.

Benjamin Lee Hegeman

Muhammad's Allah

god of this world 2 Cor 4.4)

Pure will (14.27)
Capricious (41.45)
Deceiver (3.54)
Aloof (42.51)
Arbitrary (76.29)
Fatalist (9:51)
Does not love
unbelievers (30.45)
Tawhid (59.23)

Arabs' Allah

(God of the Gentiles. Rom 3.29)

One (112.1)
Creator (6.102)
Provider (11.57)
Judge (22.69)
All-powerful (59.23)
Just (6.115)
Merciful (2.1)
Transcendent (13.9)
Eternal (3.2)

Scripture's Allah

(God of the Jews. Rom 3.29)

Relational
"Emmanuel"
Incarnational
Trinity
Sacrificial
Light
Redeemer
Humble
Love

99 names of Allah

Jibril's revelations

General
Revelation

Special revelation

Muhammad's Isa

'another Jesus' 2 Cor. 11.4)

Taught Islam (42.11-13)

Not a Son of God (S. 19.34)

Not Trinitarian (5.76)

Not incarnated

Not crucified (4.157)

Not a redeemer

Not a lord (9.31)

Not begotten (112)

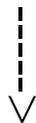
Spoke as infant (19.30-33)

Only a messenger (4.171)

Converts all to Islam (34.25)

Rejects worship (5.116)

Predicts Muhammad's coming
(61.6)



Jibril's revelations

Popular portrait

(Who do men say that I am? Matt 16.15)

Ibn-Miriam (S. 4.171)

Al-Masih (S. 4.171)

Born in Nazareth

Miracle worker (5.110)

Prophetic teacher (2.136)

Virgin birth (S. 3.45-47)

Founded Christianity

A born Jew

Ascended to heaven (3.55)

Sinless (19.19)



General
Revelation

Scriptural Jesus

Jesus the Son of God. 1 Jn 4.15)

Risen Lord

Emmanuel

Son of God

Eternal

Crucified

Saviour

Redeemer

Suffering Servant

The Logos incarnate

Resurrected

King of kings



Special revelation

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