2690 - Issues on Islamic ‘Aqidah

the question

Hello, my name is XXXX and I was taking a look at your web page. I am interested in it because I am in a Religious Studies class and I am interested in learning more. I just wanted to know your response to this,

if I am correct in saying this...

In Islam heaven is thought of as paradise of wine, women and song. It is achieved by living a life in which, ironically, one abstains from the things with which he or she will be rewarded in paradise. In addition to this abstention, one must follow the five Pillars of Islam.

It seems to me that the Islamic faith is a do-it-yourself proposition.

Follow this "way of life", they say, and you will gain favor with God and eventually achieve salvation. There is NO assurance. I would hate to live like that. I realize that Muslims do not believe in "original sin", but regardless of whether or not a man is born sinful or not, would you not agree that every man/woman is sinful? How does one pay for his/her sin?

I understand repentance. I agree with that...but it seems as though one can NEVER do enough to win favor with God. That is why He sent his Son to die for us. All of our sins past, present and future.

There is no possibility of assurance in the Islamic faith. I think that would be an awful way to live knowing that I was never gonna make it...not knowing of my salvation until the "day of judgement" whether or not I have done enough "goodworks" or prayed enough...etc.

I have asked a couple of Muslims in my class whether or not they were for sure if they were going to "paradise" or "heaven" when they died. I have not yet had one reply in the affirmative. Rather, they referred to the imperfection of their lives as being a barrier to this realization. THERE IS NO

ASSURANCE IN ISLAM, BECAUSE THERE IS NO ATONEMENT, AND SALVATION DEPENDS WHOLLY ON THE INDIVIDUAL'S GAINING ENOUGH "MERIT"

Also, if I wanted to become a Muslim, I couldn't. If Muslims think that they are the "chosen people" then why aren't they spreading their faith.

Do you just have to be lucky enough to be born Muslim? If a person wants to become a Christian they can. ANYONE can become a Christian in a matter of seconds. All they have to do is confess that Jesus Christ is who He said He was and repent and believe...that is all a lot easier said than done. But basically that is it. I wasn't born Christian...or raised Christians assert that Jesus Christ is the only way to God because

Scripture says, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12) Jesus Christ said himself

"I am the way the truth and the life, NO ONE comes to the Father except through me..."

He didn't say, I am one way or a way or one truth etc....THE WAY!!!

I and the Father are ONE! Jn 5:18

I just don't understand how anyone could be blind to these facts. Unless they are never told. Which was me.

I would just like a little feedback

Summary of answer

According to the Islamic ‘aqidah:
• The pleasures of Paradise are not merely physical in nature, they also include the joy of feeling safe and secure, and of being content with God and being close to Him.
• Salvation can only be attained through fulfilling commands, not just by avoiding things that are forbidden.

• If every person has a guarantee of Paradise, this would be utterly disastrous, because then everyone would commit all kinds of forbidden acts, feeling safe because of this guarantee.
• Islam also guarantees the disbeliever who ignores the commands of Allah that he will definitely enter Hell.
• The individual bears the responsibility for his own sin; no one else should bear this burden for him, nor should he bear the burden for anyone else.
• The key to Islam is no more than two simple phrases: Ash-hadu an la ilaha ill-Allah wa anna Muhammadan Rasul-Allah.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

We appreciate your question concerning the ideas that you have about Islam, and we hope to discuss what you have written and correct some of your ideas, so as to arrive at a firm conviction of the truth of the matter.

Are the pleasures of Paradise merely physical?

What you have mentioned about the Islamic belief about Paradise, and the enjoyment of wine , women and song therein, falls wide of the mark. The pleasures of Paradise are not merely physical in nature, they also include the joy of feeling safe and secure, and of being content with God and being close to Him.

The greatest joy of all in Paradise will be seeing God , may He be glorified and exalted. When the people of Paradise see the Holy Face of God, they will forget all other kinds of pleasures that they have enjoyed. There is in Paradise everything that will delight the heart and eye; no dirty or evil talk is heard there, nor sinful speech.

No person knows what is kept hidden for them of joy as a reward for what they used to do. [al-Sajdah 32:17 interpretation of the meaning].

What I am trying to say is that the delights of Paradise are not limited to the kind you refer to in your question. They are far greater than that.

Will the entrance to Paradise only be granted to those who heed certain prohibitions?

You mention the idea that entrance to Paradise will only be granted to those who heed certain prohibitions, which they will enjoy in Paradise in the Hereafter as a reward for avoiding it in this life.

This generalization is not correct at all. Islam is a religion which commands action, not just abstinence. Salvation can only be attained through fulfilling commands, not just by avoiding things that are forbidden.

Moreover, not every luxury in Paradise will consist of something that was forbidden in this world and is now being given as a reward. Some of the delights of Paradise will be things that were allowed in this world, such as marriage, good fruits like pomegranate and figs, etc., drinks like milk and honey, and so on. All of these are permitted in this world, and will be delights to be enjoyed in Paradise.

The bad qualities of things that are forbidden in this world will not be present in their heavenly forms. For example, the wine of Paradise, as Allah tells us, causes neither ghoul (any kind of hurt, abdominal pain, headache, sin, etc.) nor intoxication (see al-Saffat 37:47). It does not rob a person of his mental faculties, or cause headaches and stomachaches. It is quite different from its earthly counterpart.

The point I am making is that the delights of Paradise do not consist only of allowing things that were forbidden in this world. It is also worth pointing out that there are cases where abstention from prohibited things will not be rewarded by being given their equivalent in the Hereafter, whether those prohibited things are food, drinks, deeds or words. Poison, for example, will not be given as a luxury in Paradise, although it is forbidden in this world.

The same applies to sodomy, incest and other things which will not be allowed in the Hereafter although they are forbidden in this world. This matter is quite clear, praise be to Allah.

Does every person have a guarantee of Paradise?

The idea of being guaranteed Paradise, and that a person's life will be as horrible and unbearable as you describe if he has no such guarantee, is a misconception which itself leads to the results you mention.

If you were to say that every person has a guarantee of Paradise , this would be utterly disastrous, because then everyone would commit all kinds of forbidden acts, feeling safe because of this guarantee.

Many of the crimes committed by Jews and Christians have been done on the basis of this guarantee, with documents of forgiveness from their priests. Allah has told us about such people (interpretation of the meaning):

"And they say, None shall enter Paradise unless he be a Jew or a Christian. Say, Produce your proof if you are truthful." [Al-Baqarah 2:111]

For us Muslims, Paradise is not the matter of our own desires or the desires of anyone else, as Allah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"It will not be in accordance with your desires (Muslims), nor those of the People of the Scripture (Jews and Christians); whoever works evil will have the recompense thereof, and he will not find any protector or helper besides Allah." [Al-Nisa 4:123]

Islamic view regarding a guarantee of one's destiny

There follows a brief summary of the Islamic view regarding a guarantee of one's destiny.

- Islam offers a guarantee to every sincere Muslim who obeys Allah and remains in this state of devotion until he dies, that he will definitely enter Paradise. Allah says in the Quran

(interpretation of the meanings):

“But those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, We shall admit them to the Gardens under which rivers flow (i.e., in Paradise), to dwell therein forever. Allah's promise is the truth, and whose words can be truer than those of Allah? (Of course, none).” [Al-Nisa 4:122]

“Allah has promised those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, that for them there is forgiveness and a great reward (i.e., Paradise).” [Al-Maidah 5:9]

“(They will enter) ‘Adn (Eden) Paradise (everlasting Gardens), which the Most Beneficent (Allah) has promised to His servants in the unseen: verily, His promise must come to pass.” [Maryam 19:61]

“Say: Is that (torment) better, or the Paradise of Eternity promised to the muttaqin (pious and righteous persons)? It will be theirs as a reward and final destination.” [Al-Furqan 25:15]

“But those who fear Allah and keep their duty to their Lord (Allah), for them are built lofty rooms, one above another, under which rivers flow (i.e., Paradise). (This is) the Promise of Allah, and Allah does not fail in (His) promise.” [Al-Zumar 39:20]

- Islam also guarantees the disbeliever who ignores the commands of Allah that he will definitely enter Hell. Allah says (interpretation of the meanings):

“Allah has promised the hypocrites, men and women, and the disbelievers, the Fire of Hell, therein shall they abide. It will suffice them. Allah has cursed them and for them is the lasting torment.” [Al-Tawbah 9:68]

“But those who disbelieve, for them will be the Fire of Hell. Neither will it have a complete killing effect on them so that they die, nor shall its torment be lightened for them. Thus do We requite every disbeliever!” [Fatir 35:36]

Allah will say to the disbelievers on the Day of Judgement (interpretation of the meaning):

“This is Hell which you were promised! Burn therein this Day, for that you used to disbelieve!” [Ya-

Sin 36:63-64]

Allah will not go back on His promise to either the believers or the disbelievers. He describes how both of them will be at the end of the Day of Judgement (interpretation of the meaning):

“And the dwellers of Paradise will call out to the dwellers of the Fire (saying): We have indeed found true what our Lord had promised us; have you also found true, what your Lord promised (warnings, etc.)? They shall say, Yes. Then a crier will proclaim between them: The Curse of Allah is on the zalimin (polytheists and wrongdoers, etc.).” [Al-A’raf 7:44]

Everyone who believes and does righteous deeds, and dies in this state, will definitely enter Paradise. Everyone who disbelieves and does evil deeds, and dies in this state, will definitely enter Hell.

One of the great guiding principles of Islam is that the believer should tread a path between fear and hope. He should not take it for granted that he will enter Paradise, because this will make him complacent, and he does not know in what state he will die. Nor should he assume that he is going to Hell, because this is despairing of the mercy of Allah, which is forbidden.

So the believer does righteous deeds, and hopes that Allah will reward him for them, and he avoids evil deeds out of fear of the punishment of Allah. If he commits a sin, he repents in order to gain forgiveness and protect himself from the punishment of Hell.

Allah forgives all sins and accepts the repentance of those who repent. If a believer fears that the good deeds he has sent on before him are not enough, as you suggest, then he will increase his efforts, in fear and hope.

No matter how many righteous deeds he has sent on before him, he cannot rely on them and take them for granted, or else he will be doomed. He keeps striving and hoping for reward, and at the same time he fears lest his deeds be contaminated with any element of showing off, self-admiration, or anything that will lead to them being rejected by Allah. Allah describes the believers (interpretation of the meaning):

“Those who give that (their charity) which they give (and also do other good deeds) with their hearts full of fear (whether their alms and charity, etc.) have been accepted or not), because they are sure to return to their Lord (for reckoning).” [Al-Muminun 23:60]

So the believer keeps on striving, fearing and hoping, until he meets his Lord, believing in Tawhid (Divine Unity) and doing righteous deeds, and earns the pleasure of his Lord and Paradise. If you think about the matter, you will realize that these are the right motives for action, and that righteousness cannot be achieved in this life in any other way.

Islamic view on original sin

As regards what you say about original sin, this matter needs to be approached from several angles.

- Firstly: The Islamic belief concerning human sin is: the individual bears the responsibility for his own sin ; no one else should bear this burden for him, nor should he bear the burden for anyone else. Allah says (interpretation of the meaning): “And no bearer of burdens shall bear another’s burden.” [Fatir 35:18]

This refutes the idea of original sin. If the father commits a sin, what fault is that of his children and grandchildren? Why should they bear the burden of a sin that someone else committed?

The Christian belief that the descendants should bear the sin of their father is the essence of injustice. How can any sane person say that the sin should be carried down the centuries by all of humanity, or that the children, grandchildren and subsequent descendants should be tainted because of their father’s sin?

- Secondly, making mistakes is a part of human nature. Our Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, “Every son of Adam is bound to commit sins.” (Reported by al-Tirmidhi, 2423), but Allah has not left man unable to do anything about the mistakes that he makes. He gives man the opportunity to repent, and so the hadith (words of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) quoted above concludes: and the best of those

> who commit sins are those who repent. The mercy of Allah is clear in the teachings of Islam, as Allah calls His servants (interpretation of the meaning): “Say, O My servants who have transgressed against themselves (by committing evil deeds and sins)! Despair not of the Mercy of Allah, verily Allah forgives all sins. Truly, He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.” [Al-Zumar 39:53]

This is human nature, and this is the solution to the problem of sin. But to make this human nature, which is bound to make mistakes, a barrier between the servant and his Lord which will prevent him from ever earning the pleasure of God, and to say that the only way to reach God is through His sending His (so-called) son down to earth to be humiliated and crucified while his father looks on, so that mankind could be forgiven, is an extremely odd idea. Just describing it sounds so unlikely that there is no longer any need to refute it in detail.

Once, when discussing this issue with a Christian, I said, If you say that God sent down His son to be crucified to atone for the sins of the people alive at his time and afterwards, what about those who had come before and died as sinners before the time of Christ, and had no opportunity to know about him and believe in the Crucifixion so that their sins might be forgiven? All he could say was: No doubt our priests have an answer to that! Even if they do have an answer, it is bound to be concocted. There is no real answer.

If you really examine the Christian teaching on human sin with an open mind, you will see that they say that God sacrificed His only son to atone for the sins of mankind, and that this son was a god. If it was true that he was a god who was beaten, insulted and crucified, and died, then this doctrine contains elements of blasphemy because it accuses God of weakness and helplessness. Is God really incapable of forgiving the sins of all His servants with just one word? If He is Able to do all things (and the Christians do not dispute this fact), then why would He need to sacrifice His son in order to achieve the same thing? (Glorified and exalted be He far above what the wrongdoers say about Him!)

“He is the Originator of the heavens and the earth. How can He have children when He has no wife? He created all things and He is the All-Knower of everything.” [Al-An’am 6:101 interpretation

of the meaning]

An ordinary man would not accept anyone harming his child; he would come to his defence, and would never hand him over to an enemy who would insult him, let alone leave him to face the worst kind of death. If this is the attitude of a mere created being, what then of the Creator?

- Thirdly, the Christian doctrine of original sin has a negative effect because, as you have mentioned, it does not require any duties of man other than to believe that God sent His son to this earth to be crucified and to die to atone for the sins of mankind.

Thus a person becomes a Christian and is to earn the pleasure of God and be admitted to heaven. Moreover, the Christian believes that everything that happened to the son of God was only to atone for his sins, past present and future, so there is no need to wonder why Christian societies have seen such an increase in murder, rape, robbery, alcoholism and other problems. After all, did not Christ die to atone for their sins, and haven't their sins been wiped out, so why should they stop doing these things?

Tell me, by your Lord, why do you sometimes execute murderers, or put criminals in jail, or punish them in other ways, if you believe that the criminals' sins have all been atoned for and forgiven through the blood of Christ? Is this not a strange contradiction?

Why do Muslims make da`wah?

You ask why, if the Muslims are the chosen people of mankind, they do not spread their religion . The fact of the matter is that sincere Muslims have always sought to do just that. How else could Islam have spread from Makkah to Indonesia, Siberia, North Africa, Bosnia, South Africa and all parts of the world, East and West?

The faults in the behavior of some modern Muslims cannot be blamed on Islam; those faults are the result of going against Islamic teachings. It is not fair to blame the religion for the faults of some of its adherents who have gone against it or gone astray.

Are Muslims not being more just than Christians when they affirm that the sinner is threatened with the punishment of Allah unless he repents, and that for some sins there is a deterrent, a punishment to be carried out in this world as an expiation for the Hereafter, as in the case of the punishments for murder, theft, fornication/adultery, etc.?

Is it difficult to become a Muslim?

What you say about it being so easy to become a Christian, as compared to becoming a Muslim, is clearly mistaken. The key to Islam is no more than two simple phrases: Ash-hadu an la ilaha ill-Allah wa anna Muhammadan Rasul-Allah (I bear witness that there is no god except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah).

With these few words, a person enters Islam in a matter of seconds. There is no need for baptism or priests, or even to go to a certain place such as a mosque or anywhere else.

Compare this with the ridiculous procedures of baptism which the Christians do when they want to admit someone to the Church. Then there is the fact that the Christians venerate the cross on which Jesus was tortured and crucified in great pain as they claim. They take it as a sacred object of blessing and healing, instead of scorning it and hating it as a symbol of oppression and the worst possible way for the son of God to die!

Muslims are closer than others to the truth

Do you not see that the Muslims are closer than others to the truth, because they believe in all the prophets and messengers, respecting them all and recognizing that all of them taught the truth of Divine Unity (Tawhid) and that each of them was appointed by Allah and sent to his people with laws that were appropriate to the time and place?

When the fair-minded Christian sees the followers of Islam believing in Musa (Moses), ‘Isa (Jesus), and Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon them all) and in the original Torah and Gospel, as well as the Quran, and sees his own people denying the Prophethood of Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and rejecting the Quran, wouldn’t his open-mindedness

make him think that the Muslims are most likely to be right?

Did Jesus say ‘No one comes to the Father except through me’?

You say that the Messiah said, No one comes to the Father except through me. We need, first of all, to be sure that these words can truly be attributed to Jesus. Secondly, this is clearly not true. How then could mankind have known God at the times of Nuh (Noah), Hud, Salih, Yunus (Jonah), Shu’ayb (Jethro), Ibrahim (Abraham), Musa (Moses) and other prophets?

If you were to say that during the time of Jesus (upon whom be peace) and up to the time of the Final Prophet, Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) the Children of Israel had no other way to know the religion of Allah except through the way of Jesus, this would be correct.

Does the statement ‘I and the Father are one’ prove Jesus’ divinity?

You quote the Messiah as saying, I and the Father are one . This is clearly not correct. If we examine the matter objectively, without letting our own desires get in the way, it becomes clear that the conjunction and in the phrase I and the Father implies that two separate entities are involved. I is one entity, and the Father is another. If you say, So-and-So and I, it is obvious to any rational person that they are two separate people. The equation 1+1+1=1 makes no sense to any rational person, whether he is a mathematician or not.

Finally, I advise you (and I do not think that you will reject this advice) to think deeply about what you have read, putting aside your background, any preconceived ideas, your own desires and feelings of attachment to your religion or culture, and to seek guidance sincerely from Allah. Allah is Most Generous and will never let any of His servants down. Allah is the One Who guides to the Straight Path, and He is Sufficient for us and is the best disposer of affairs.

And Allah knows best.