

Greetings church,

We're moving on to part 5, chapter 9 in The Search for Truth About Islam: A Christian Pastor Separates Fact from Fiction by Ben Daniel.

I want to re-iterate that the author is not writing an academic thesis nor is he writing a persuasive essay or argumentative paper attempting to win someone over to his cause. He is writing about a personal journey he has been on and inviting us into that journey. That is to say that this book is *very* readable and I strongly encourage everyone to not just read my reflections on each chapter but to **read the book for themselves** and to put your thoughts, questions, and reflections into conversation with mine.

The author titles part 5 “The American Cult of Fear”. Before chapter 9 starts he takes the opportunity to offer a basic introduction to the 5 pillars of Islam. Think of it this way; the non-negotiables for Christianity, the pillars upon which our own faith stands are: 1) God is One Triune Godhead, one God, Three persons; 2) Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One prophesied by our Jewish forebears; 3) Jesus is fully God and fully human; and 4) the Bible is the unique and authoritative witness to the Triune God. The pillars of the Christian faith sound a lot like the Apostle’s Creed which, I might point out, actually makes no mention of the Bible. The 5 pillars of Islam are very similar though not exactly alike. “1)There is no God but God, and Muhammed is the messenger of God ... 2)ritual prayer ... five times a day ... 3)charity. Muslims are required each year to give 2.5 percent of their net worth to those in need ... 4)*Ramadan*, fasting from sunset to sunrise, daily, for a month ... 5)*the hajj*, or the pilgrimage to Mecca.”¹ I can’t imagine any of us taking exception to any of these except the first pillar in which I would be willing to acknowledge Muhammed as *a* prophet but not *the* prophet. And I certainly give more weight to Muhammed than I do to Joseph Smith. Further, I fully intend to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem someday before I die, akin to the *hajj*, and I think it would be a great idea for any Christian who is able to do so.

Chapter 9 goes on to explain why the author titles this fifth part “The American Cult of Fear”. Documentaries about radical Islam, that do not tell the whole truth, have been produced, published, and aired here in the United States. These kinds of films have perpetuated a false stereotype of the entire Islamic religion. He compares it to the similar production of documentaries about radical evangelicalism. As so many people get their ideas of the entire Islamic faith from documentaries about radical, jihadist Islam, so too do so many people get their ideas of the entire Christian faith from documentaries about radical evangelicals brainwashing 5 and 6 year old children preparing them to be “warriors for Jesus”. Uneven documentaries that tell half truths sicken people and heighten fears. Daniel’s basic premise is “whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12). If you want people to give you the benefit of the doubt that you are not one of the radical “crazy” Christians that are depicted in documentaries, then give our Muslim brothers and sisters the same benefit of the doubt that they are not one of the radical “crazy” jihadists. In other words, don’t succumb to fear mongering because people are fear mongering about Christians too. Let us all lead with love.

In Christ’s Service,
Pastor Eddie

¹ Daniel, Ben. The Search for Truth About Islam: A Christian Pastor Separates Fact from Fiction. Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, KY; 2013. pp.162-164