# “Is Islam a Religion of Peace or of Violence?”

**I’m hearing people (like the president) say that Islam is actually a religion of peace. Others are warning us that the terrorists who attacked the U.S. on 9/11 represent the true Islam of anger and violence. Which is it? And why would they want to attack us anyway?**

To get a better grasp on this apparent contradiction I had a very enlightening conversation with a missionary to Muslims for many years who also has a Ph.D. in Islamics. He provided perspective I have never heard:

We have to back up to 610 A.D. and look at the big picture of Muhammad and the Qur’an.

Muhammad was frustrated at the heathen polytheism of the Arabian culture, and wanted people to return to the one true God, the God of the Bible. In fact, he called Jews and Christians “the people of the Book.” In the beginning, he said he was preaching the same message, just in a different language. And if people had doubts about what he was saying, they should check with the people of the Book.

The Qur’an, which is a compilation of the teachings of Muhammad after his death, is not in chronological order. When Islamic scholars rearrange the chapters, or suras, into chronological order, they are comprised of the Mecca (early, middle and late) suras, the city where Muhammad started out, and the Medina suras, where he ended up. Something very important happened in between those two sections. As Muhammad rose in prominence and influence, accumulating followers, some of them wanted to verify that he was actually a prophet of God. He said, “Go check with the Jewish tribes.” So they did. . . and the Jews said, “No, Muhammad is not a prophet of God.”

This made him very angry, and it changed the way he thought about Jews. The anti-semitism of Islam began here. The hostility, violence, controlling nature, and forceful missionary zeal of Islam ("accept Islam or suffer") developed in Muhammad's later teachings.

So there are two very different aspects to Islam. Earlier suras are more about peace. Later suras are more about violence. In addition, where Muslims are in the minority (such as North America and Europe), they tend to follow the earlier Mecca suras. Where they are in the majority (such as the middle East, Afghanistan, Pakistan, etc.), they tend to follow the later Medina suras.

Add to this the fact that in the culture of Islam, people learn differently. We are taught to think critically, to analyze and compare and contrast literature. Muslims are taught NOT to think critically, only to memorize the Qur'an and parrot back what they are taught about Islam. So it is not surprising to learn that some Muslims say that Islam is a religion of peace, since that is their perception and experience, and other Muslims say that Islam is a religion of conquering and judgment, since that is their perception and experience.

The Qur'an contradicts itself from the early Mecca suras to the Medina suras. This is different from the progressive revelation we find in the Bible, where God reveals more and more information as history unfolds, and He reveals what had earlier been mysteries. This makes sense in view of the fact that the Qur'an is a human invention and the Bible is divinely inspired.

I also asked the missionary why Osama bin Laden wanted to attack us. He suggested three reasons:

- A personal grudge against the U.S. for pressuring Sudan and Saudi Arabia (bin Laden's home country) to kick him out.

• A resentment of America that he shares with many Muslims for exporting our immoral standards and examples to the world through TV, movies and music. They object to the way sexual immorality and impurity, women's provocative dress, pornography, drug and alcohol abuse, and homosexuality are presented as normal, desirable lifestyles. (And I have to say this is a completely legitimate complaint, although their way of showing frustration and displeasure is completely unacceptable!)

• The whole Palestinian-Israeli land fight. In the Arab mindset, the sons of Ishmael (Abraham's son) had the rights to the promised land, and they held it for thousands of years. Then when Israel (sons of Isaac, Abraham's other son) came and took it away from them, that was heinously unfair, but the U.S. backed and supported Israel. What looks like righting a wrong to Israel is "wronging a right" to the Palestinians. This is an impossible situation that cannot be solved until the Lord Jesus returns and HE makes all things right.

One final comment which Pat asked me to be sure and stress: it is just as illogical to judge all Muslims as terrorists as it is for the rest of the world to condemn all American Christians as Timothy McVeighs.

This is a very complex situation and won't be solved easily or quickly. It shows the importance of worldview and the truth that ideas have consequences.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

# “Christ Was Around Before Satan?”

**In your essay on angels it states that Christ created the angels, wouldn’t that mean that Christ would have to have been around before Satan? It states somewhere in the bible (can’t remember at the moment where exactly) that he is a “fallen angel.” Your statement confuses me at this point—please, if you can, explain. And I apologize if this shows naivete on my part, but like I said, it’s just a question.**

Yes, that’s exactly right. Jesus Christ has existed eternally, in loving fellowship with the Father and the Holy Spirit; He was not created, He has always existed. He didn’t come to earth until 2000 years ago when He took on human flesh and became fully human as well as remaining fully God, but He DID exist before there was anything else. He created the universe, the earth, and the angels (John 1:3, Col. 1:16). He watched Satan choose to rebel and become a fallen angel, and He agreed to come to earth to redeem us and pay the penalty for our sin by dying on a cross for us, and then coming back to life three days later. Then, forty days after that, He went back to heaven, which is where He came from in the first place.

Does this help?

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

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# “You Have Many Inaccuracies

# in Your Article on Islam”

**Dear Rick Rood,**

**I stumbled upon your “What is Islam” article and read it thoroughly. I would like to know how you got that information because it is inaccurate. I would just like to point them out to you so that you may correct them.**

> *“He called on the many factions of the Arab peoples to unite under the worship of Allah, the chief god of the Arab pantheon of deities.”*

**Correction: Allah is not the chief god of the Arabs pantheon of dieties. Allah means “God” in Arabic. You are confusing the reader by associating Allah with other Arab deities as for example Zeus is the chief god in the Romans.**

> *“At this point we should discuss the current status of Islam. In doing so, it’s important to realize that Islam is not a monolithic system.”*

**Correction: Islam is a pure monotheistic religion. The message of Islam is that ‘There is no God, but God.” How is it not? Please elaborate.**

> *“The Koran mentions numerous names of Allah, and these names are found frequently on the lips of devout Muslims who believe them to have a nearly magical power.”*

**Correction: Muslims do not believe that Allah’s names hold magical powers. There are 99 names which is mentioned in the Quran (not Koran), for example: The Most Merciful, The Protector, The Creator, The All-Knowing, The Loving. These**

**names identify the characteristics of God.**

> *"Though Muhammed himself said that he was a sinner, nonetheless there are many Muslims throughout the world who appear to come close to worshiping him."*

**Correction: Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) always recognized that he was a human being. He was a human, and he made mistakes just like the other prophets who are human beings. It is very judgmental for you to add that Muslims appear to come close worshipping him when that is not the case at all. Muslims only worship God, and only God.**

> *"Those who conclude that Islam is a fatalistic religion have good reason for doing so."*

**Why is that?**

> *"But it also contains many elements of prescribed activity that are of pagan origin."*

**What kinds? For example?**

> *"A sixth pillar, that of jihad, is often added. (The term means "exertion" or "struggle" in behalf of God.) Jihad is the means by which those who are outside the household of Islam are brought into its fold. Jihad may be by persuasion, or it may be by force or "holy war." The fact that any Muslim who dies in a holy war is assured his place in paradise provides strong incentive for participation!"*

**You got the part right about how the Jihad means "struggle," but you got the rest of it completely false. It is a struggle to attain nearness to God, by struggling to overcome your bad desires, and to stick to Islam under difficult circumstances, such as when facing persecution and other problems.**

**There are MANY other mistakes that you have written about Islam. Not to mention that it sounds very bigoted. Please fix your mistakes. Thanks!**

Thanks for your letter. Rick Rood is no longer with Probe Ministries. However, I'm afraid that you may have misunderstood certain aspects of Rick's article. Please allow me to try to briefly clarify.

> *"He called on the many factions of the Arab peoples to unite under the worship of Allah, the chief god of the Arab pantheon of deities." Correction: Allah is not the chief god of the Arabs pantheon of dieties. Allah means "God" in Arabic. You are confusing the reader by associating Allah with other Arab deities as for example Zeus is the chief god in the Romans.*

Any good history of the Arab peoples that documents the religious climate immediately preceding the time of Muhammad will confirm that there was indeed a pantheon of deities. Muhammad instituted monotheism in place of a prior Arabic polytheism.

*"At this point we should discuss the current status of Islam. In doing so, it's important to realize that Islam is not a monolithic system. " Correction: Islam is a pure monthestic religion. The message of Islam is that 'There is no God, but God." How is it not? Please elaborate.*

Mr. Rood uses the term "monolithic" – not "monotheistic." I believe that you simply misread him at this point. Islam is certainly monotheistic. He documents what he means by it not being monolithic in his article.

> *"The Koran mentions numerous names of Allah, and these names are found frequently on the lips of devout Muslims who believe them to have a nearly magical power." Correction: Muslims do not believe that Allah's names hold magical*

> *powers. There are 99 names which is mentioned in the Quran (not Koran), for example: The Most Merciful, The Protector, The Creator, The All-Knowing, The Loving. These names identify the characteristics of God.*

Your third point is well-taken, provided we are speaking of theologically educated Muslims. However, many Muslims hold to what some scholars call "folk Islam". This sort of Islam, often influenced by animism, does often regard these names as having magical power. Similar aberrant beliefs can be found in Judaism, Christianity, and most other world religions. Finally, sometimes Sufi mysticism can tend in this direction as well.

> *"Though Muhammed himself said that he was a sinner, nonetheless there are many Muslims throughout the world who appear to come close to worshiping him." Correction: Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) always recognized that he was a human being. He was a human, and he made mistakes just like the other prophets who are human beings. It is very judgmental for you to add that Muslims appear to come close worshipping him when that is not the case at all. Muslims only worship God, and only God.*

Again, your point is well-taken, provided we are speaking of theologically educated Muslims. However, as I mentioned above, some Muslims would come awfully close to worshiping Muhammad, just as some Roman Catholics come awfully close to worshiping the virgin Mary, even though church doctrine does not include Mary worship. I'm not saying this is what orthodox Islam teaches, it's simply what sometimes happens in practice.

> *"Those who conclude that Islam is a fatalistic religion have good reason for doing so." Why is that?*

Do you not believe that all things are dictated by the

sovereign will of Allah? Does anything happen that is not willed by God? If you reject this doctrine, I think you would be taking a minority view within Islam.

> *"But it also contains many elements of prescribed activity that are of pagan origin." What kinds? For example?*

Casting stones at a stone pillar representing Satan. This was done by Arab pagans prior to the time of Muhammad.

> *"A sixth pillar, that of jihad, is often added. (The term means "exertion" or "struggle" in behalf of God.) Jihad is the means by which those who are outside the household of Islam are brought into its fold. Jihad may be by persuasion, or it may be by force or "holy war." The fact that any Muslim who dies in a holy war is assured his place in paradise provides strong incentive for participation!" You got the part right about how the Jihad means "struggle," but you got the rest of it completely false. It is a struggle to attain nearness to God, by struggling to overcome your bad desires, and to stick to Islam under difficult circumstances, such as when facing persecution and other problems.*

As for Jihad, it has historically been understood by most Muslims (and still is today) as Holy War. It can be interpreted, as you say, to mean striving in the cause of Allah to live a pure and righteous life. But many passages in the Quran resist this interpretation (e.g. Suras 4:74-75; 9:5, 14, 29; 47:4; 61:4; etc.).

*The New Encyclopedia of Islam* (Altamira Press, rev. ed. 2001) documents many of these points.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn

# “Your Comments About Mormonism Are Nonsense”

**I have read your statements in your article A Short Look at Six World Religions. I happen to be Mormon and have heard this nonsense before:**

**“Mormonism is not Christian because it denies some of the essential doctrines of Christianity, including the deity of Christ, salvation by grace, and the bodily resurrection of Christ. Furthermore, Mormon doctrine contradicts the Christian teaching that there is only one God, and it undermines the authority and reliability of the Bible”**

**1. We never have denied the deity of Christ. Christ is Jehovah, the great I am. This is within our doctrine.**

**2. We are saved by grace. No doubt about it. It’s part of our doctrine.**

**3. We have always taught that Jesus took his body the third day the same as it is recorded in the Bible. I don’t know where you received your info on that, but we never have denied the resurrection of Christ. In fact when serving my mission it was common for other Christian groups to say that Christ is only a spirit. We had to teach them that Christ in reality took his body the third day.**

**4. We believe that there is one Godhead. We believe in one Elohim.**

**5. “We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly, we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.” Joseph Smith.**

**Christ taught that we should not judge. It seems to me that many so called "Christians" judge other Christians who don't believe as they do. Let the Lord do the judging.**

Thank you for responding to my article. I don't know if you will be able to receive what I have to say, since the Mormon use of Biblical terms seems to differ from what the rest of us mean by it, but I will attempt to respond to your argument.

> *1. We never have denied the deity of Christ. Christ is Jehovah, the great I am. This is within our doctrine.*

When orthodox Christians say "deity of Christ," we mean that He is one with the Father. There is one God of the Bible, although He exists as three persons, and Jesus is—and has always been—as fully God as the Father. As I understand it, Mormon doctrine is that Jesus was a created being, which would put Him on a different—inferior—level to the eternally-existing Father. So the Father existed before Jesus did, which would make Him (Jesus) less than the eternally-existing Creator of the Universe. Which the Bible proclaims that He is:

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." (Revelation 1:8)

"In Him [Jesus] all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form" (Colossians 2:9).

Of Jesus it was announced: "These are the words of Him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again" (Revelation 2:8); the same claim made by God Almighty: "This is what the LORD says—Israel's King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God" (Isaiah 44:6). Also, compare Revelation 22:13 with Isaiah 48:12.

Also as I understand it, Mormon doctrine is that Jesus is Jehovah, and the Father is Elohim, and they are different

Gods. But in the Old Testament, these are two names for the same, one, God.

James Talmage, one of the Mormon authorities, states: "This [the Trinity] cannot rationally be construed to mean that the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are one in substance and person" (*A Study of the Articles of Faith*, p.40).

James Talmage states: "Jesus Christ was Jehovah…Jesus Christ, who is the Jehovah of the Old Testament. In all of scripture, where God is mentioned and where he has appeared, it was Jehovah…The Father has never dealt with man directly and personally since the fall" (*Doctrines of Salvation*, vol.1, p.11,27).

Joseph F. Smith stated, "Among the spirit children of Elohim, the first-born was and is Jehovah, or Jesus Christ, to whom all others are juniors" (*Gospel Doctrine*, p.70).

In contrast, the Bible uses the names Elohim and Jehovah interchangeably for the one true God. The English form "Jehovah" was developed from four consonants (YHWH) from which we get the word "Yahweh," translated "LORD." The words "Yahweh" and "Elohim" are used together hundreds of times, as in: 'LORD our God', 'LORD my God', 'LORD his God', 'LORD your God'. For example: "The Lord [Jehovah] our God [Elohim] is one Lord [Jehovah]" (Deuteronomy 6:4). See also Genesis 2:4-22; Deuteronomy 4:1; Judges 5:3; 1 Samuel 2:30; Isaiah 44:6.

> *2. We are saved by grace. No doubt about it. It's part of our doctrine.*

The Bible's definition of grace is undeserved, unearned favor. It's a gift from God with no strings attached and no way to earn it. Apparently the Mormon definition of grace is very different, including man's efforts:

The LDS Third Article of Faith states: "We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, *by*

*obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel*" (*Pearl of Great Price: Articles of Faith*). (emphasis mine)

Joseph Fielding Smith explains what that last phrase means: "that which man merits through his own acts through life and by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel" (*Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 1, p.134).

James Talmage explains: "…redemption from personal sins can only be obtained through obedience to the requirement of the Gospel, and a life of good works" (James Talmage, in *A Study of the Articles of Faith*).

In the Bible 'salvation' means deliverance from the consequence (eternal separation from God) of our sin. As I understand it, Mormon leaders have redefined the word "salvation" to have a two-fold meaning: a) forgiveness of sins and b) universal resurrection:

"There will be a General Salvation for all in the sense in which that term is generally used, but salvation, meaning resurrection, is not exaltation" (Stephen L. Richards, *Contributions of Joseph Smith*, LDS tract, p.5).

"All men are saved by grace alone without any act on their part, meaning they are resurrected" (Bruce McConkie, *What Mormons Think of Christ*", LDS tract, p.28).

> *3. We have always taught that Jesus took his body the third day the same as it is recorded in the Bible. I don't know where you received your info on that, but we never have denied the resurrection of Christ. In fact when serving my mission it was common for other Christian groups to say that Christ is only a spirit. We had to teach them that Christ in reality took his body the third day.*

Upon doing further research, I was able to ascertain that I was wrong in saying that Mormon doctrine denies the bodily resurrection of Christ. I apologize and I have removed that

part of my article.

> *4. We believe that there is one Godhead. We believe in one Elohim.*

Orthodox Christianity teaches that there is one God. Period. The Godhead consists of one God in three persons, not three Gods. Not a plurality of Gods.

Bruce McConkie states: "Three separate personages—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—comprise the Godhead. As each of these persons is a God, it is evident from this standpoint alone, that a plurality of Gods exists. To us, *these three are the only Gods we worship*" (*Mormon Doctrine*, p.576-7). (emphasis mine)

> *5. "We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly, we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God." Joseph Smith.*

How do you know when the Bible has been translated correctly? There are thousands of manuscripts in existence that allow us to check the reliability of the Biblical documents. The Bible was written in human language, which we can easily check because of the existence of so much collateral literature in the same language, unlike the Book of Mormon, supposedly written on golden plates in angelic language. Where is the fallibility test for that book?

> *Christ taught that we should not judge. It seems to me that many so called "Christians" judge other Christians who don't believe as they do. Let the Lord do the judging.*

In the very same chapter as the "Judge not" verse, the Lord also says, "Beware of false prophets." How else will we distinguish between true and false except by judging the words and behavior of what men say? Of course, we cannot judge another's heart, which explains His command not to judge; but in order to be discerning about truth and deception, we MUST judge their fruit by comparing it to the only absolute we

have, the Bible.

The Bible's standard for a prophet is 100% accuracy. By that standard, Joseph Smith is a false prophet. If he were a true prophet,

- Jesus would have returned in 1891 (*Documentary History of the Church* (DHC) 2:182)
- The Civil War would have poured out upon all nations (D&C 87:1-3), the wicked of Smith's generation would have been "swept from off the face of the land" (DHC 1:315)
- A temple would have been built in Independence Missouri by the generation living in 1832 (D&C 84:4,5)

I'm sorry, but the differences between Mormonism and orthodox Christianity are not "nonsense." They are significant, and need to be explored.

Respectfully,

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

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# "Do You Have Anything on Scientology?"

**Would you have anything on Scientology?**

To put it bluntly, Scientology is a cult, and one designed to fleece the flock at that.

Watchman Fellowship (www.watchman.org) has a lot of excellent

information on Scientology, but let me give you an overview of the problems with this self-proclaimed "church" from Watchman Fellowship's profile on Scientology (http://www.watchman.org/profile/sientpro.htm):

*Problems with the Founder*

Scientology was founded by L. Ron Hubbard after a career as a science fiction writer in the 1930s. His book *Dianetics* came out in 1950 and the religion of Scientology was established by 1953. Scientology publications have made grandiose claims about Hubbard such as earning a degree in nuclear physics and a doctorate, becoming a WWII hero who miraculously cured himself of nearly fatal combat wounds, and discovering the secret to curing various diseases—all of which have been shown to be false.

From the Watchman web page cited above:

> Biographers have also uncovered Hubbard's involvement with the occult, which probably influenced his writings. Hubbard claimed to have had a near-death experience where he learned everything that ever puzzled the mind of man. The notorious Satanist, Aleister Crowley, was Hubbard's mentor and he lived with Crowley protege John Parsons, engaging in sex magic at their black magic mansion hospice (*Los Angeles Times*, 24 June 1990, p. A1). Despite the inconsistencies in his history, Hubbard would become one of the wealthiest and most well known leaders of a religious movement in only a few years. As of 1986 over eight million copies of his book *Dianetics* had been sold (Ibid., p. 299). Scientology's methodology and beliefs have led them into a long history of criminal and civil actions and convictions. Both the U.S. Federal and Canadian courts have found top Scientology officials, and the church, guilty of charges such as burglarizing, wiretapping, and conspiracy against government agencies (*Time*, 6 May 1991, p. 50).

**Problems with Doctrine**

Note the science-fiction terms that Hubbard coined to explain his new "religion." Mankind, at his core, is a *Thetan*. The Thetan is that part of each individual which is immortal and which has become contaminated or debased by the influences of *MEST* (matter, energy, space, time). These contaminating influences have created *engrams*. Engrams are mental recordings of past moments of pain and unconsciousness that need to be cleared out so people can return to their original immortal, god-like, powerful state.

Scientology provides expensive "spiritual counseling" in the form of *Auditing*, where the engrams are cleared out of peoples minds through the use of an *E-meter* (like a lie detector). How many auditing sessions it takes to reach the goal of *Clear* depends, frankly, on how much money one has, up to hundreds of thousands of dollars. Of course, no one successfully reaches this higher state of being because that would put an end to the flow of money.

Scientology claims to be compatible with all other religions. It doesn't have to be practiced in place of any other faith system. It attempts to combine eastern religions and biblical wisdom with western philosophies. Scientology claims not to contradict other religions, but this is not true. Hubbard attacked Christianity as an 'implant' and said Christ was fiction. (*A Piece of Blue Sky*, p. 383).

Scientology has had a rocky history with the U.S. government's financial institutions. Tax difficulties, fraud, and embezzlement have been constant sources for friction between the government and the leadership of the "church."

In addition to some of the obvious problems with Scientology, there are many apparent dangers. Despite calling itself a church (obviously for the tax benefits), it seems to be disinterested in the concept of God while preoccupied with the

doctrine of Man. Since men are inherently good in this worldview, the Christian view of sin is treated with contempt. Men do not need salvation through Jesus Christ; they only need to be cleared of their painful memories through the expensive Auditing process.

Watchman Fellowship recommends these resources (most of which are now available on the Web; links are provided):

1) *Scientology: Cult of the Stars*. Various articles on Scientology written by Watchman Fellowship staff and previously published in the Expositor. Includes information on lawsuits filed against Watchman by Scientology, various doctrinal papers and Scientology President's claim to be a practicing Mormon. 23 pages.

2) *A Piece of Blue Sky*, Jon Atack. This book was written by a former Scientologist who is one of the premiere experts on the subject. It traces the history and sordid details of the organization. Interesting quote from the book: "It was 1950, in the early, heady days of Dianetics, soon after L. Ron Hubbard opened the doors of his first organization to the clamoring crowd. Up until then, Hubbard was known only to readers of pulp fiction, but now he had an instant best-seller with a book that promised to solve every problem of the human mind, and the cash was pouring in. Hubbard found it easy to create schemes to part his new following from their money. One of the first tasks was to arrange "grades" of membership, offering supposedly greater rewards, at increasingly higher prices. Over thirty years later. an associate wryly remembered Hubbard turning to him and confiding, no doubt with a smile, "Let's sell these people a piece of blue sky." 428 pages, Hardback.

3) *L. Ron Hubbard: Messiah or Madman?* Brent Corydon. Written by a former high ranking member with the help of L. Ron Hubbard, Jr. (the founder's son), this book exposes the "corruption and mind-control" of Scientology. 402 pages.

4) *Understanding Scientology*, Margery Wakefield and Bob Penny. Ex-Scientologists, now Christian, give detailed understanding of the inner workings, beliefs and front organizations of Scientology. 167 pages.

5) *The Road to Xenu* and *Social Control in Scientology*. An autobiographical account revealing the methodology and unethical induction techniques in novel form. 169 pages.

Hope this helps.

Kris Samons and Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

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# "You Don't Really Understand Buddhism"

**I read your article on Buddhism. Interesting.**

**I am always glad to see one of a specific faith take the time to look into the historical and mythical backgrounds of another faith. It is heartening that men and women of learning still lend their efforts to religion.**

**I have no specific faith, so I am not "countering" your arguments. However, you say that Buddhism and Christianity "…are so different, they cannot both be right at the same time, nor can the two be blended together. "**

**Truly? Or can they not be tied together on dogma? Dogma, the rules of law which "make" a religion what it is, that is, what is distinct and different from another, are often the chains which bind its followers to religious stagnation.**

**I have studied many religious faiths. Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Shinto, and a smattering of Judaism. Dogmas differ, the underlying quest for peace and self-knowledge are not.**

**You say, "When witnessing to a Buddhist, ask him this: 'Do you have tangible proof of what occurs after death?'"**

**I will ask you a question, as in a way I am witnessing you: "If Buddha and Jesus had met, would they not have been the best and longest of friends?"**

**Religion has become another camp within which we hide. Go make a Buddhist friend. You might be greatly surprised what you will find there. Someone who looks much like you.**

Thank you for your reply. I enjoy interacting with those who are honestly seeking to discover spiritual truths for their lives.

Allow me to address some of your challenges. You stated, "Go make a Buddhist friend. You might greatly be surprised what you will find there. Someone who looks much like you." The Lotus Sutra states, "Whatever words are uttered should be chosen with care. The words we speak should always be words of sympathy and wisdom." The Bible states in the book of Proverbs, "The one who answers before listening—that is his folly and his shame." Let us therefore not have many words of false presumptions pass between us. I come from an island that is 80% Buddhist. My entire family clan has held to Buddhist teachings for hundreds of years. My parents and cousins remain in the Buddhist faith. I grew up under the teachings of the Buddhist temples near my house. I have been a member of the Young Buddhist Association. Therefore, I have many Buddhist friends including my own family members. I realize they look a lot like me, thank you very much. I am not driven to argue with them, only to share with them the greatest truth given by God to mankind.

I am not sure what Buddhist tradition you are familiar with. You are correct that Christianity and Buddhism differ on dogma. What exactly you mean and how you are using the term dogma I am not sure. If you look at the two theologies, they both cannot be right at the same time since they are contradictory on the very basics. Most schools of Theraveda Buddhism teach there is no God. Christianity is based totally on a relationship with God. According to Aristotle's law of non-contradiction, two opposites cannot be true in a relationship with one another at the same time. You cannot have a God and not have a God and say both are true. That is absurd. So the theologies go much farther than terms and definitions. In Mahayana Buddhism, there are hundreds of Buddha incarnations. The ultimate reality is impersonal, non-feeling, and non-being. In Christianity, the ultimate is a personal being. Once again applying Aristotle's law of non-contradiction, the two in a relationship cannot be true at the same time.

Yes, both religions claim peace as a product. However, even in this they are very different. In Buddhism peace is the ultimate goal. It comes as the result of eliminating all desires. In Christianity, peace is one of the fruits but not the ultimate goal. The Christian's goal is a relationship with the God of the universe who loves and cares for his creation and He has reached out to us to make this possible. The Buddhist quest for peace is self-focused. One attains peace through meditation, good works, and pure knowledge. In Buddhism we are driven to discipline ourselves to think correctly, behave correctly, etc… with the ultimate goal to rid ourselves of all desires. Although Buddhism teaches to not harm others and do good, salvation is found by the individual as he focuses on himself and one's attaining enlightenment and elimination of all desire. In Christianity, one focuses on Jesus Christ, being filled and empowered by His Spirit. Yes, we do work of self discipline, and becoming a godly person, but it comes as a result of a personal relationship with God

and a desire to honor God. Christianity never seeks to eliminate all desire, the ultimate goal in Buddhism; Christianity seeks to build within each believer, pure desires that honor God. So even in our understanding of peace we differ in the definition and the quest for peace in significant ways.

Thank you for your response. I look forward to hearing from you.

Patrick Zukeran
Probe Ministries

**See Also Probe Answers Our E-mail:**

- I Would Become A Christian Except that It's Based on Lies and Deception
- I Want to Know More About Buddhism, but Your Christianity is Garbage

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# "Is It OK for a Christian to Train in Martial Arts?"

**I want to ask a question about a Christian's involvement with martial arts and how it relates to a Christian who has a career in law enforcement.**

**Christians are warned not to be involved with martial arts because they lead people into conversion of eastern religions. But many who train as police or as a security guard etc. may find it handy or essential and may have to train in martial**

**arts whether they want to or not.**

**What should a Christian do who may be in this situation?**

Thanks so much for your question. Interestingly, Pat Zukeran,one of my colleagues here at Probe trains in martial arts! He has written an article on this topic entitled Martial Arts. We discussed this question together and came to a similar conclusion.

In our opinion, a distinction should be made between the physical training and exercise required in martial arts and the philosophical and religious ideas which may sometimes be associated with such training.

Paul does warn believers in Colossians 2:8, "See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. Thus, one must be wary of some of the eastern philosophical and religious concepts which might be promoted in the martial arts. It is not wrong to know and understand these concepts, but you do not want to be taken captive and led away from Christ by them."

On the other hand, the sort of physical training required in the martial arts is doubtless a very good thing. It not only leads to such benefits as a stronger body, greater flexibility, faster reflexes, and greater dexterity, it also leads to increased confidence in one's ability to handle potentially dangerous situations. And all of these benefits can be of enormous value to those involved in law enforcement and security work. Indeed, such training may help save lives—not only of those who receive it, but also of those they are attempting to apprehend.

Thus, my own view (and the view of my colleague) is this. There is nothing wrong with a Christian learning martial arts, especially for purposes of self-defense and increased

effectiveness in law enforcement. As long as one is careful to separate the non-Christian philosophical and religious ideas from the actual physical training—rejecting the false ideas, but embracing the benefits of the physical training—there does not seem to be any harm in a Christian learning martial arts.

I hope this helps and I wish you all the best,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

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# "I Have Some Questions About Women in the Church"

**Dear Sue,**

**I have read your answer to email "Should Women Be Pastors?" and have a few questions for you.**

- **Do you believe a woman can teach a man under any circumstances?**
- **Do you believe women can be preachers?**
- **Do you believe women can be elders?**
- **Do you believe women can be deacons?**
- **Are there any limitations for women in scripture?**
- **Do you belong to any church (congregation)?**

Hello _____,

> *1. Do you believe a woman can teach a man under any circumstances?*

If a pastor or the spiritual leaders of a congregation ask a woman to come in under their authority and address a topic on

their behalf, and if she maintains an attitude of submission and humility in the process mindful of the restrictions of 1 Tim. 2:12 (“But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man”), I think a case can be made for it. Also, if a woman is teaching women and a man wants to come in and listen, I think that’s fine since the scriptures do not prohibit a man from learning from a woman. The problem, as I understand it, is for a woman to be in a position of spiritual authority over men.

I like how the Council for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood puts this: “The teaching inappropriate for a woman is the teaching of men in settings or ways that dishonor the calling of men to bear the primary responsibility for teaching and leadership. This primary responsibility is to be carried by the pastors or elders.” (www.cbmw.org/Questions-and-Answers)

*2. Do you believe women can be preachers?*

Absolutely—to other women. The Women of Faith conferences are a good example of that.

*3. Do you believe women can be elders?*

No. 1 Tim. 3:2 states the requirement of elders being the husband of one wife. It is limited to men. The biblical pattern of spiritual leadership and authority in the church is of male leadership.

*4. Do you believe women can be deacons?*

Yes, but this is not a hill I’m willing to die on. Romans 16:1 commends Phoebe as a servant of God, which can also be translated “deacon.” It also seems to me that 1 Tim. 3:8-13, which describes the qualifications for deacon, can and does include women.

Even if they're not called deacons, a lot of women serve the Lord through serving the church. This is how much of the work gets done, and since we are all called to service in one way or another, the needs of God's people are met. People hung up on titles are focusing on the wrong thing; if we're focused on loving and serving Jesus, it doesn't matter if someone else puts a label on it. Personally, I believe a lot of women will receive the reward of "Well done, good and faithful servant" from the Lord regardless of whether they were ever called deacons or not.

*5. Are there any limitations for women in scripture?*

1 Timothy 2:11-15
restricts women from teaching or exercising authority over men.

1 Corinthians 14:34-36
says that women are to be silent in the churches in a spirit of submission. My understanding is that this protects the orderliness of the worship and teaching times from the disruptions of inquisitive and verbal women. It also helps us to maintain an attitude of submission to the Lord and to the church leadership. However, 1 Cor. 11:5 permits women to pray and prophesy, so TOTAL silence is not what the above passage is prescribing. This call to silence is about not dishonoring the role of men as leaders of the congregation.

1 Corinthians 11:2-16
teaches male headship in the marriage relationship and male leadership in the church.

*6. Do you belong to any church (congregation)?*

Yes, I'm a member of Watermark Community Church in Dallas, Texas.

Sue Bohlin

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**See Also *Probe Answers Our E-Mail:***
• Should Women Be Pastors?
• So Are All Women Pastors Deceived and Going to Hell?
• Your Position Against Women Pastors Is Outdated

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# "Is It a Sin For a Christian to be a Soldier in the Military?"

**Is it a sin for a Christian to be a soldier (i.e. someone training to be on the frontlines to kill) in the military?**

**I have been reading some arguments on both sides of this coin, and both have some weight to them. The main argument from the peaceful side of this coin is that Jesus said "those who live by the sword, will die by the sword" and that first century christians did not serve in the military, except for a few, but they weren't in war at that time. The other side of the coin seperates personal responsibility from state responsibility and says that if you are serving in the military and kill, God holds the head of the state responsible. It also uses the Old Testament wars in many of its arguments.**

**It seems to me that there is power in not fighting, and that the Bible teaches that we should love our enemies, and not kill others just because a government tells you too. However,**

**it would seem in such an evil world that if we didn't stand up and fight for the protection of others, all Christians would be oppressed. It just keeps flipping back and forth.**

Thank you for your question about Christians serving in the military. Probably the three best known books dealing with this subject are:

- *Robert Clouse, ed., War: Four Christian Views (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1981).*
- *Arthur Holmes, ed., War and Christian Ethics (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1975).*
- *Keith Payne and Karl Payne, A Just Defense (Portland: Multnomah, 1987).*

I could go into the details of the various positions, but I think these books (especially the InterVarsity book) provide a good overview of the arguments on each side.

I might also mention that Tommy Nelson (the pastor of Denton Bible Church in Denton, TX) has put together a 90-minute video on the subject of Christians in the military. It is simply called "God and the Military: Is It Right to Bear Arms?" You can contact him at www.dentonbible.org. Thanks for writing.

Kerby Anderson

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# "I Struggle with Doubts"

**Hello there – I have a question that I hope you can help me with. I am 38 years old and I have recently lost my second parent to cancer – and I am going through a time where I guess**

**you could say I am re-evaluating my belief system. I was raised in the Presbyterian Church and currently attend _____ here in Houston. What I struggle with is occasional doubts lately and I find it really scary. I believe in God without question but I have trouble sometimes comprehending the resurrection and life after death……I want to believe and have a stronger faith that's for sure!! The thing that bothers me is someone told me that doubts were blasphemy and that by having doubts you are calling God a liar and that I might not have ever truly been saved. Needless to say that has petrified me, however others have mentioned that doubts are normal…… I went through confirmation with the Presbyterian Church when I was 12 and hope that I am saved. I would really appreciate your thoughts on this!!!! You honor me by sharing your heart with me. Thank you.**

Let me cast my vote with those who have assured you that doubts are normal. God understands that as puny-minded humans who are trying to relate to a God we cannot see, touch, or hear, we're going to face areas we don't understand! Often, what we experience is confusion, but some people label it doubt.

I think doubt is more in-your-face unbelief. "I know You're there, God, but I question Your goodness to me so I'm going to do things my own way and pretend like You're not there." The way that Satan encouraged Eve to doubt God's goodness in the garden of Eden.

There is a difference between being overcome by doubts and struggling with comprehending really huge mysteries like the resurrection. God understands, especially at a time like this when you're grieving. (I am so very, very sorry, to hear about your parents' deaths. This is my first Mother's Day without my mother, who died a few months ago. It's hard, isn't it?)

Since you have internet access, you can get some very interesting information about the resurrection and life after

death that will help strengthen and establish your faith in those areas. You can start reading at the Probe Ministries site (www.probe.org) and look in the "Apologetics: Reasons to Believe" section. Leadership University (Leaderu.com) also has some dynamite articles.

Concerning the statement that doubts are blasphemy. Well, no, they're not the same thing. People like you who are concerned that it is, are never guilty of it! Blasphemy is hard-hearted insult against God. I'm sorry that someone has burdened you with the false guilt of "calling God a liar." Now that would be pretty blasphemous, but simply experiencing some questions is usually an issue of not being sure of something. And that's a far cry from saying "God, You're a blankety-blank liar."

Truly saved people have doubts all the time. That's the first step to wrestling with individual issues of faith, and studying them to come out with a stronger faith on the other end. God isn't threatened by our doubts and questions. When we go to Him in simple faith, asking Him to help us understand truth and help us see things as they really are, He truly does answer. It may take a while, but He takes those requests seriously.

You said you were confirmed when you were 12 and you hope that you are saved. I am so glad you put it so bluntly, because I am delighted to be able to give you some very clear direction on this!

Quick question: what were you confirmed IN? Were you confirmed that yes, indeed, you were a Presbyterian, the way we confirm flight reservations? Or were you confirmed in your faith because at some point before that, as you were growing up, you made a deliberate choice to put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ?

He told Nicodemus that we must be born again. Just like when we were born the first time, that's a specific event at a

specific point in time. In order to pass over from death to life, there must be a specific point at which we choose God over our own way, where we realize that Jesus died on the cross for our sins and we receive His gift of forgiveness and eternal life by saying “thank You!”

So my question to you is, was there a specific point at which you were born again? Being baptized as an infant doesn’t do it, because that’s not a decision that a disciple makes; it’s more of a statement of our parents’ intent to raise us in the ways of God. It’s possible to go along, learning the catechism questions and having a lot of religious head knowledge ABOUT God, without ever embracing Him as our personal Lord and Savior. Have you done that?

If you have, YOU ARE SAVED FOREVER. If you haven’t, then you aren’t saved but you can be as soon as you choose to. I know several people who just weren’t sure of a specific time and place when they chose to put their trust in Christ, so they chose right then and there and said to God, “God, I am a sinner and I need you. Thank You for sending Jesus to die on the cross in my place, and then raising Him from the dead three days later. I believe Jesus is Your Son, and I trust Him to save me from my sins and take me to heaven when I die.” Then they KNEW they had trusted Christ and had passed over from death to life.

1 John 5:11-13 says,

11 And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.
12 He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.
13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

I love the part in verse 13 that says, “you may KNOW that you have eternal life.” When someone showed that to me not long

after I trusted Christ as a college sophomore, that was the point at which I knew for sure that I was saved—because the Bible said I could know! That was very cool for me, since I was raised just hoping that everything would be okay when I died but I couldn’t ever know. Now I KNOW!!!

Let me know what you think about all this, OK?

The Lord bless you and keep you.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries