

# **“What About All the Violence and Conquering in the Name of the Christian God?”**

Just read your [answer to email](#) on the Pope's inflammatory remarks about Islam, and I had a question about this statement:

*“Muslims certainly cannot deny that Mohammed admonished Muslims to pick up their swords for Allahs cause (see my essay [Islam and the Sword](#) at Probe.org). They also cannot ignore the fact that Islam conquered both the Persian and Byzantine Empires via warfare.”*

**While both statements are or may in fact be true, one we Christians cannot deny that as much violence and conquering has been done in the name of God. One should be careful about removing the speck from a brother's eye before taking the log out of his own. Actually, I believe Christian war preceded Islamic war.**

I am not discounting the evil done in the name of Christ, and of course there were Christians fighting before there were Muslims since Christianity preceded Islam by six centuries. My point is about their very nature as belief systems. When one compares the actions of Christ with the actions of Mohammed, the lives of the apostles with the lives of Mohammeds companions, and the teaching found in the New Testament with what is taught in the Quran, one finds a distinct difference in the role that violence plays. Even when we compare the early history of the two religions we find that Christianity went through a three hundred year period of persecution while Islam conquered a region stretching from Spain to India, experienced three civil wars, and had three of its first four caliphs assassinated by other Muslims.

There is also the distinction to be made between individuals committing violence and vengeful acts, and the responsibility of governments or kings to uphold justice and protect their people from harm. There has been a 1,400 year conflict going on between the civilization that has constituted Europe after the Roman Empire fell and the Islamic world. For most of that time Europe was on the defensive side of things. Not until the late 17th century did the Islamic threat diminish after their failure to take Vienna and the Ottoman Empire was forced to sign the treaty of Karlowitz in 1699.

One also has to remember that Islam is both a religion and a political system; it does not recognize a separation between church and state. When a western nation acts against a Muslim one it is not Christianity vs. Islam, it is a political entity, democratic or otherwise, deciding to act against a religious/political entity.

All of this to say that while we can point to atrocities done in the name of Christ, they have no support in the New Testament. However, atrocities done in the name of Islam have explicit models in the life of Mohammed and can find justification and support in the Quran.

None of this discussion discounts our obligation as ambassadors for Christ to love and reach out to individual Muslims in humility and with compassion.

Thank you for your thoughtful comments.

Don Closson

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# **“The Pope’s Inflammatory Remarks about Islam”**

**How would you access Pope Benedict XVI remarks in his lecture on Faith, Reason and the University: Memories and Reflections? and Islamic reaction? What was the essence of his lecture that infuriated the Islamic World?**

Thank you for your question regarding the Pope’s comments on Islam and the resulting violent response from the Muslim world.

Not being a Roman Catholic, I do not usually read the Pope’s speeches. However, given the worldwide outrage by Muslims, I thought it important to understand what has caused such an intense reaction to his lecture at the University of Regensburg.

The speech was rather academic and mostly focused on the relationship between faith and reason in the Christian tradition. In it, the Pope gave quotes from the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II to a Persian Muslim during the siege of Constantinople in the late 14th century. The exact quote of the Emperor is “Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached.” The Emperor went on to argue that spreading any religion by the sword is by nature unreasonable.

The irony of the situation we find ourselves in today is amazing. We now have Muslims burning churches, threatening to kill the Pope, and destroy the west, because he implied that Mohammed advocated the use of the sword to spread and protect the Muslim faith. It is equivalent to punching someone in the face because they called you pugilistic.

Muslims certainly cannot deny that Mohammed admonished Muslims

to pick up their swords for Allah's cause (see my essay [Islam and the Sword](#) at Probe.org). They also cannot ignore the fact that Islam conquered both the Persian and Byzantine Empires via warfare. Had it not been for the victory at Tours by Charles Martel, all of Europe would have fallen to the Islamic invaders.

When anyone in the west speaks against violence done in the name of Allah, Muslims are quick to equate the written word with "aggression" against Islam which then justifies all sorts of violent acts in defense of Islam and its Prophet. I can only hope that the media and our politicians will wake up to the double standard that occurs when words or ideas are equated with violent acts.

Don Closson

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## **"My Boyfriend is Muslim"**

My best friend/boyfriend is Muslim. I have been brought up in a very Christian oriented family and have faith through Jesus Christ. My friend, has been attending church with me and at first was receptive to Christianity as he was overwhelmed with the amount of love in the church. He is very educated and does a lot of reading. He has read several books about Christianity many of them pointing out flaws in the religion. And at the same time is searching to find out if Islam is right. As of now he is content that Islam is right due to its proofs through sciences. Are there any books that go through Koran or talk about who Muhammed really was that will help him to find the Lord? Also, what are good Christian books that I can point

**him to that would give him EVIDENCE – in Christianity.**

First of all, let me encourage you that NOTHING you do or say will be as effective as your prayers on your boyfriend's behalf. That's where the real power is, OK?

Secondly, check out the website "Answering Islam," [www.answering-islam.org](http://www.answering-islam.org) . . . They really understand the different worldviews.

Third, I can't recommend strongly enough Lee Strobel's excellent books *The Case for Faith* and *The Case for Christ*. Mr. Strobel was a hardened atheist journalist who talked to a number of intelligent, articulate Christians who were able to "give an answer for the hope that is within," and he came to faith. Wonderful, wonderful books, but be sure to read them first so you can talk intelligently with your boyfriend.

Fourth, I say this as a Titus 2 woman (where God instructs the older women to teach the younger)—DON'T MARRY HIM! Scripture is very strong about believers not marrying unbelievers. I send this with a prayer that you will guard your heart and your sexual purity so that you do not find yourself so soul-connected to him that you feel you have to marry him to make things right. It's entirely possible that God wants to use you to draw your boyfriend to Himself, but don't cross over any lines that would compromise your obedience to God's best as revealed in His word, OK? (I say this as a mom who just saw my son marry a wonderful Christian girl who was worth waiting for and fighting the temptation to settle for less than God's best.)

So glad you wrote!!

Blessings,

Sue Bohlin

Probe Ministries

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# Islam and Christianity: Common Misconceptions Reveal Their Stark Differences

*Muslims and Christians often misunderstand what the other actually believes about God and salvation. Don Closson attempts to clear up some of these misconceptions.*



*This article is also available in [Spanish](#).*

In a recent meeting of evangelical leaders, anti-Islamic comments made by Christians in the Western media were denounced as “dangerous” and “unhelpful.” Ted Haggard, President of the National Association of Evangelicals stated that “Since we are in a global community, no doubt about it, we must temper our speech and we must communicate primarily through actions.”<sup>{1}</sup> Another prominent president of a Christian relief agency added that “It’s very dangerous to build more barriers when we’re supposed to be following [the] one who pulled the barriers down,” an obvious reference to the sacrificial death of Christ. They also concluded that it was “naïve” to merely dialogue “with Muslims in a way that minimized theological and political differences.”<sup>{2}</sup>

So what kind of exchange of ideas is helpful between Christians and Muslims? We might start by beginning to clear up some of the common misconceptions that each hold about the other. This has become more important recently due to heightened religious passions since 9/11 and the war in Iraq. Muslims, both here in America and abroad, are highly suspicious of America’s intentions in the world and some Americans see every Muslim as a potential terrorist who

threatens our freedom and democracy. There are obviously reasons behind both of these perceptions. America does tend to favor Israel over its Arab neighbors, and Muslims have committed atrocities against civilians around the world, but this only means that we must work harder at communicating clearly with Muslims when we have opportunity. The over one billion Muslims in the world constitute a large part of the mission field given to us by the Lord's Great Commission. We cannot turn away from them simply because of the difficulties we face.

That said, we need to realize that both Muslims and Christians hold to ideas about the other that are either completely wrong or merely too broadly applied. Some of these misconceptions are cultural issues and some are theological. Culturally, there are significant differences in how Islam and Christianity relate to society and government. Gender roles are also a source of confusion. Theologically, there is much to clarify regarding the respective roles of Jesus and Muhammad in each religious tradition. There is also misunderstanding regarding the origins and transmission of the sacred texts, the Koran and the Bible. Although the religions share commonalities—one God, the reality of a spiritual dimension, a universal moral order, and a final judgment—Islam and Christianity differ significantly in the details and in the most crucial issue of how one is justified before God.

## **Jesus and Muhammad**

Let's look at some common misconceptions that people have about Islam and Christianity, beginning with how people often confuse the roles that Jesus and Muhammad play in their respective traditions.

Christians often make the mistake of equating the place that Muhammad has in Islam with the role played by Jesus in Christianity. Although Muslims believe that Muhammad is the final prophet from Allah, most do not teach that he was

sinless. On the other hand, Muslims see Muhammad's life and example as near to perfection as one can get. One Muslim scholar has noted, "Know that the key to happiness is to follow the sunna [Muhammad's actions] and to imitate the Messenger of God in all his coming and going, his movement and rest, in his way of eating, his attitude, his sleep and his talk..."<sup>{3}</sup> Every action of Muhammad is considered a model for believers. Some Muslims even avoid eating food that Muhammad disdained. At the same time, Muslims are offended at the term "Mohammedanism" sometimes used as a reference to Islam. It is not Muhammad's religion; he is only a messenger of Allah. Muslims believe that Muhammad's messages revived and reformed religious truth that had been lost.

Even so, any disparaging words aimed at Muhammad will be taken very seriously by a Muslim. As William Cantrell Smith once said, "Muslims will allow attacks on Allah: there are atheists and atheistic publications, and rationalistic societies; but to disparage Muhammad will provoke from even the most 'liberal' sections of the community a fanaticism of blazing vehemence."<sup>{4}</sup>

Muslims accuse Christians of elevating Jesus in an inappropriate manner. They argue that Jesus was just a prophet to the Jews, and that he heralded the coming of Muhammad as the seal of the prophets. The problem with this view is that it doesn't fit the earliest historical data we have regarding the life and teachings of Christ. There is considerable manuscript evidence for the authenticity and early date of the New Testament. In these early manuscripts, Jesus claims to have the powers and authority that only God could possess. These teachings and events were recorded by eyewitnesses or by second generation Christians like Luke who was a close companion to Paul.

What is missing is an early text that affirms what Muslims claim about Jesus. Muslims argue that the New Testament has been corrupted and that texts supporting the idea that Jesus



is the Son of God were a later addition. But again, the burden of proof for this accusation is one the Muslim apologist must bear. However, they do not provide any evidence for when or where the early manuscripts became corrupted. Muslims argue that the New Testament depiction of Christ and of his death and resurrection cannot be correct because the Koran teaches otherwise. Although Christians affirm the importance and authority of revelation, true revelation will be confirmed by history.

## **The Bible and the Koran**

There is an inherent problem when we consider the nature and content of the Bible and the Koran. Both traditions claim that their book is the result of divine revelation, and both maintain that their books have been preserved through the centuries with a high degree of accuracy. For instance, when touring a local Islamic center, I was told by the guide that the modern Koran contains the exact words given by Muhammad to his followers with absolutely no mistakes. Christians maintain that the Bible we possess is 99% accurate and has benefited from over 100 years of textual criticism and the possession of thousands of early manuscripts. The problem is that the Koran and the Bible make contradictory truth claims about the life and ministry of Jesus Christ and what God expects from those who love and follow Him.

The Islamic view of the Bible is complicated by the fact that the Koran tells Muslims to accept both the Hebrew Scriptures and the "*Injil*," or the gospel of Jesus, and even calls the "Book," or Bible, the "word of God" in Sura 6:114-115.[\[5\]](#) On the other hand, Muslim apologists argue that both the Old and New Testaments have been corrupted and contain little if any truth about God and His people. They contend that a lost gospel of Jesus has been replaced with Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

This view contains a number of problems. The Koran calls the

Bible the word of God, and acknowledges that it is a revelation from God. It also teaches that Jesus was a prophet and that his teaching has authority. Finally, when the Koran was given by Muhammad it supported the New Testament of Muhammad's time by telling Muslims to go to Christians, who had been reading the Bible, to affirm Muhammad's message.[\[6\]](#) If this is so, we can assume that Muhammad believed that the Bible available in the seventh century was accurate. The Bible we use today is virtually unchanged from the Bible in the seventh century. In fact, it is probably more faithful to the earliest manuscript evidence. If the Bible of Muhammad's time was accurate, why isn't today's copy? Again, Muslims must do more than just claim that errors have occurred in the Bible, they must be able to show us when and where the errors occurred.

The Koran suffers from textual questions as well. Between Muhammad's death and the compilation of the Koran, some of what Muhammad had recited as revelation had already been lost due to the death of companions who had memorized specific passages.[\[7\]](#) Later, when multiple versions of the Koran caused controversy among Muslims, the Caliph Uthman ordered Zaid bin Thabit to collect all the copies in use, create a standard version and destroy the rest.

We have reasonably good copies of both the original Bible and the Uthmanic version of the Koran. However, both documents cannot represent revelation from God because the messages they contain cannot be reconciled.

## **Human Nature, Gender, and Salvation**

Islam and Christianity view the human predicament differently. According to Islam, when Adam sinned he asked for forgiveness and it was granted by Allah. A Muslim author writes, "...Islam teaches that people are born innocent and remain so until each makes him or herself guilty by a guilty deed. Islam does not believe in 'original sin'; and its scripture interprets Adam's

disobedience as his own personal misdeed—a misdeed for which he repented and which God forgave.”<sup>{8}</sup> In fact, it is common among Muslims to see human failings as the result of forgetfulness or as merely making mistakes. People are frail, imperfect, constantly forgetful of God, and even intrinsically weak, but they do not have a sin nature. As a result, salvation is won by diligently observing the religious rituals prescribed by the five pillars of Islam, reciting the confession or Shahada, prayer, fasting, divine tax, and the pilgrimage to Mecca.

The Bible teaches that Adam’s sin has affected all humanity. Romans 5:12 reads, “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned. . . .” Paul later adds that, “Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.” We are made righteous not by doing good works but by faith in the substitutionary death of Christ on our behalf. Jesus bore our penalty for sin; he literally stood in our place and took our punishment.

Not only do Muslims and Christians have different views on human nature and salvation, but they also have dissimilar perceptions about gender. Although both religions teach that men and women have equal status before God, in reality the experience of women differs greatly under the two systems. The Christian doctrine of the Trinity, which Islam rejects, helps Christians to understand how women can be equal to men and yet accept a submissive role in the family. The incarnate Jesus took on the submissive role of a Son and yet he was still fully God. There is no similar doctrine in Islam that teaches role differentiation between men and women and yet encourages gender equality before God. Islam places men over women in a

way that Christianity does not. Islam allows for polygamy, and while men can marry non-Muslims, women cannot. Muslim men can divorce with a simple proclamation, women cannot. And although women have inheritance rights, they are always inferior to a man's. Finally, Muslim women do not enjoy equal legal rights, and Muslim men are instructed to strike their wives if they are disloyal.

## Religion and the State

How do the two traditions view the role of religion in society?

Christians in the West often view Islam through the lens of Western tolerance. In America especially, we are used to the separation of church and state, and assume that people everywhere enjoy such freedom. Many Muslims neither experience such separation nor see it as a good thing. For those who take the Koran seriously, Islam and Islamic law regulate all of life. The history of Islam supports the idea that the state should be involved in both the spread of Islam and the enforcement of religious duties by individual Muslims in Islamic societies.

Beginning with Muhammad, who was both a religious and political leader, down through the Caliphs and Islamic Empires, there has been little separation between religious and political law enforcement. Today in Saudi Arabia, the Committee for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice (*mutawwa'in*, in Arabic) patrol public places in order to enforce religious laws, particularly the dress and habits of women in public.

In fact, the ultimate goal of many Muslims is what might be called a worldwide Islamic peace enforced by Islamic law. When Muslims talk of Islam being a religion of peace, it is often understood that this peace will occur only when Islam rules the world with Islamic law applied universally. As Syrian born

Harvard professor Bassam Tibi has written, "...the quest of converting the entire world to Islam is an immutable fixture of the Muslim worldview. Only if this task is accomplished, if the world has become a 'Dar al-Islam [house of Islam],' will it also be a 'Dar al-Salam,' or a house of peace."[\[9\]](#)

Unfortunately, Christianity has at times had similar views regarding the use of government to enforce religious laws. Between the fourth century and the Reformation, the Christian practice of religious tolerance was spotty at best. But the growth of the separation of church and state in the West, which greatly enhanced religious tolerance, has led to another misconception. Muslims often assume that everyone in the West is a Christian. When they see the sexual immorality, drug use, and decline of the family in Western nations, they assume that this is what Christianity endorses. Christians need to be careful to separate themselves from the culture in which they live and help Muslims to see that our secular governments and society have mostly rejected Christian virtues. It is also helpful to communicate to Muslims that becoming a Christian is more than believing certain things to be true regarding Jesus and the Bible. It is about becoming a new creature in Christ through the indwelling and power of the Holy Spirit. It is about trusting in the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross.

## Notes

1. *The New York Times*, May 8, 2003, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/05/08/national/08CHRI.html?th>
2. Ibid.
3. Geisler, Norman L., and Abdul Saleeb, *Answering Islam: The Crescent in the Light of the Cross*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), p. 82.
4. Ibid., 80.
5. See also Sura 2:75 and Sura 5:46, 67, 69, 71.
6. Sura 10:94.
7. Ibin Abi Dawud, *Kitab al-Masahif*, p. 23.

8. Geisler and Saleeb, *Answering Islam*, p. 43.  
9. Downloaded from NewsMax.com on 5/22/2003 at  
[tinyurl.com/2tbwo6](http://tinyurl.com/2tbwo6)

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## **“You Mislead People About Jesus and Allah”**

Hi—I’m a Muslim from UK. I visited your site and found you to be a misleading person who is blinded by faith most probably passed down the family. You say that Jesus is god then that means that you don’t believe in one god but you believe in two gods, Jesus and his father (god forgive). And if Jesus was god why were the Romans able to overpower him, how can the god who created everything be overpowered by a few measley people?

I hope you do your research thoroughly in the future and look at and review religion with the same eye you look at yours, and if not look at your own religion with the same critical eye you look at others. Please don’t forget your initial duty is the search for truth not the enforcement of your own religion. Please don’t lie in order to achieve a genuine good purpose or you are opposing your own fundamental beliefs.

Hope allah guides to the correct path. Please search for the truth the real truth.

Thank you for writing. I want to honor you for your deep respect and love for God, which is very evident in what you write. I understand why you want to defend your perspective on God.

However, God has revealed certain things about Himself to us

that Islam does not accept, but that does not mean they are not true. I share your belief in one God, not two Gods. The idea that God could have three persons and still only be one God is so outrageous it HAS to be a divine idea—how could mere mortals think it up?!

Let me try to explain. Do you believe in water, and steam, and ice? I bet you do. They are all comprised of the H<sub>2</sub>O molecule. Do you believe in three different H<sub>2</sub>O's? I bet you don't. You probably believe in one H<sub>2</sub>O molecule that takes three different forms. This isn't a perfect analogy to God, but it's closer than anything else I can imagine.

The Bible teaches that Jesus is God, the Father is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, but they are not each other and they are not three separate Gods. I have no idea how this can be true, but it's what the Bible teaches and it is what Jesus said. Jesus was 100% God, but left heaven to become 100% God AND 100% man at the same time. He wrapped Himself in human flesh and became one of us. The purpose for this was to die for our sins because we cannot possibly overcome the penalty for our sin and make ourselves perfect—and God requires that people be perfect to enter heaven.

The Romans did not overpower Him: He allowed them to take Him because that was the divine plan from before creation. There is a huge difference. Even when He was on the cross, He said that if He wanted, He could call a legion of angels to come take Him off but that wasn't the plan, so He didn't.

I assure you I have done my research. I tell you, most respectfully, that it is Islam that has gotten off the path of truth. Muhammad listened to Christians and to Jews but chose to believe only what he wanted to believe about Jesus and about what the Bible says. The Bible says that Jesus is fully God and fully man, but Islam says that is a lie. Jesus said He would die for our sins and then come back to life in three days—and He did. He is alive today. Where is Muhammad? He is

dead. Jesus is far more than just a prophet; He is actually God.

I pray that God will allow you to see that this is true. Why don't you ask Him? Ask the one true God if it's true that Jesus is God. If you have the courage, I challenge you to read the story of a faithful Muslim who discovered this truth about Jesus: [www.answering-islam.org/Testimonies/athanasios.html](http://www.answering-islam.org/Testimonies/athanasios.html)

God bless you, and lead you into all truth.

Sue Bohlin

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