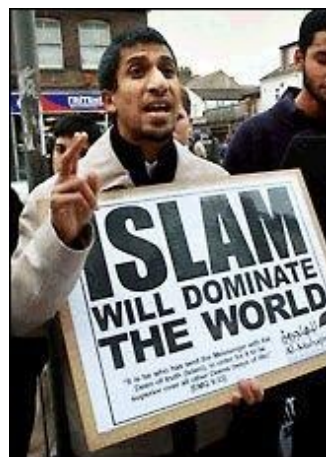
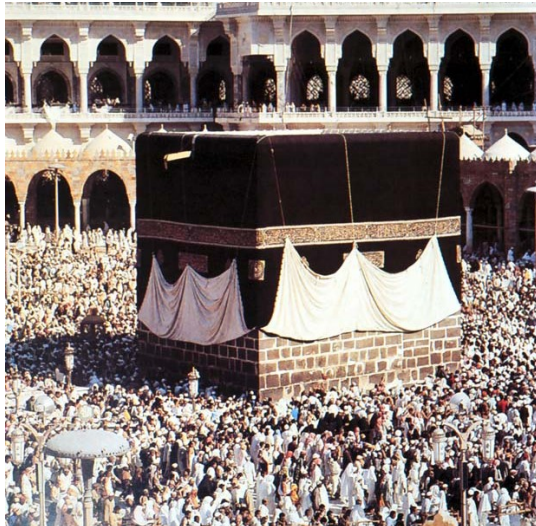


Islam and Christianity: an overview

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise...He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 2 Peter 3:9



by Ross Wakeley



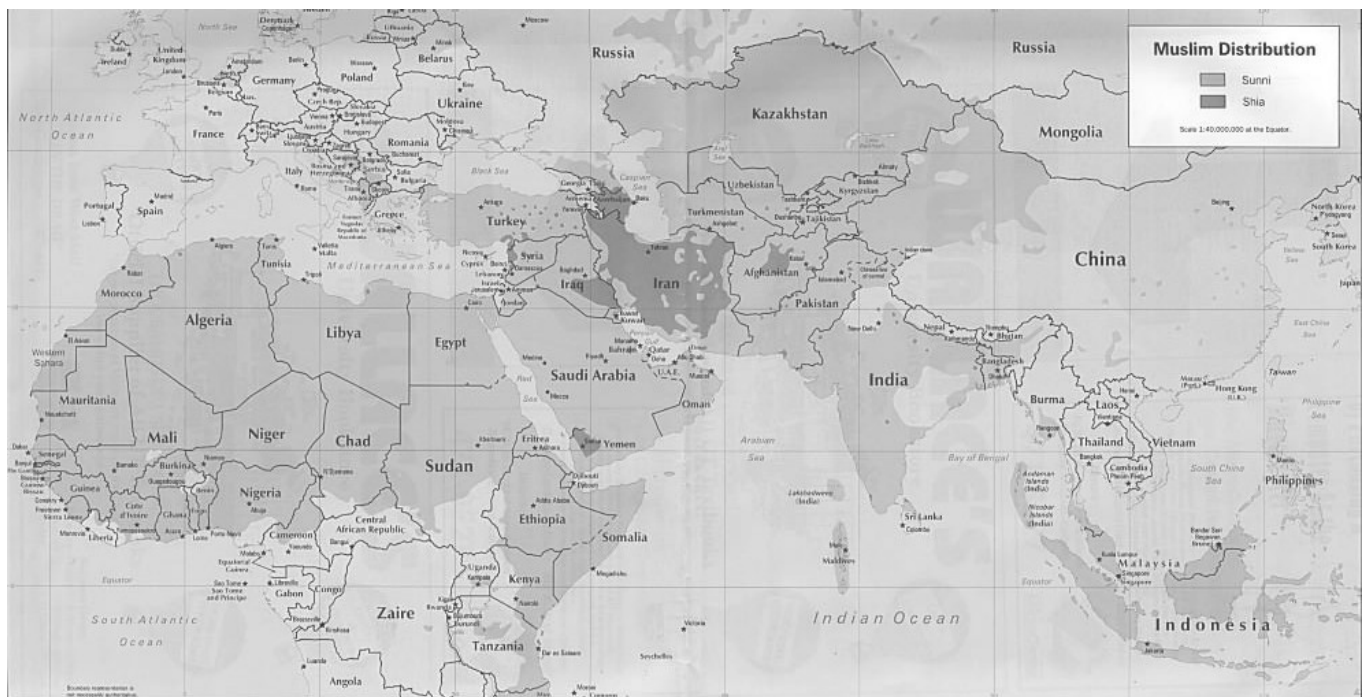
Islam: an overview by Ross Wakeley

Introduction and History:

Islam is a major world religion, with more than 1.3 billion followers living in 165 countries. At the start of 1900, Muslims were 12% of the world population, by 1970, the figure was 15.3% and by 2000 it was 19.6%. During the same period, Christianity has stayed at around 33% of world population, with some researchers saying it has

declined to 28%. The five largest Muslim nations are Indonesia (180 million), Pakistan (125 million), Bangladesh (109 million), India (84 million) and Iran (66 million). Further on down the list, 12th through 15th in size are Sudan and Afghanistan (22 million), Iraq (20 million) and Saudi Arabia (19 million). In Australia, at the 1996 Census, 203,000 (1.12%) registered as Muslims, while by 2001, the number had grown to 281,578 (1.5%).

The map below indicates the spread of Islam: "In over 40 nations, Muslims form the majority of the population. By 2020, it is estimated there will be 1.9 billion Muslims (25%) of the world population. This is one of the most dramatic shifts in global religious adherence the world has ever seen." p.2,3—Stuart Robinson *Mosques and Miracles* 2003



Source: www.islamfortoday.com

Islam is the religion of allegiance to God and his prophet Mohammed, who lived around 570-632 AD and came from a family of traders at Mecca. The religion's book of revelation, written by the prophet, is the Koran. The word Islam derives from the same semitic root as the Hebrew word Shalom, which means peace. Islam means "entering into a condition of peace and security with God, through allegiance or surrender to him". Mohammed is said to have received his revelations over a period of 23 years from the Angel Jibreel, or Gabriel, who was relaying the word of God.

In Muslim eyes, Mohammed completes a succession of prophets, including Abraham, Moses and Jesus, each of whom refined and restated the message of God. The Koran therefore corroborates, updates and expands the Old and New Testaments. It contains 114 chapters, written in vivid, rhyming prose, and was settled in its current form within 30 years of Mohammed's death. Main tenets Central to Islam is the absolute sense that there can only be one God - Allah - and that he is the source of all creation and disposer of all lives and events. Hence, **"there is no God but God and Mohammed is his messenger."**

Introduction and History:

All people should become a single community witnessing to that reality. On the day of judgment, all will rise from the dead and be sent to heaven or hell. The Koran contains many moral exhortations, forming the basis of Islamic (sharia) law. It lays down generosity and fairness and the requirements for daily prayer, alms giving, abstinence during daylight hours in the month of Ramadan and pilgrimage to Mecca.

The **pillars of the Islamic faith**—the fundamental constituents of Muslim life—are:

- ❶ **Shahada**—the recitation of the creed: "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammed is his prophet." It is commonly held that to recite this creed in the presence of two witnesses is to constitute oneself a Muslim—one in submission to God. Of course, the word Islam simply means "submission." This creed is a profession of faith in the uniqueness of Allah and the centrality of Mohammed as his prophet.
- ❷ **Salat**—formal worship or prayer. Sunni Muslims are required to recite specific prayers accompanied by prescribed motions five times daily. (Shi'ites do so only three times a day.) All male Muslims are also encouraged to meet for community prayer (and sermon) each Friday at noon.
- ❸ **Zakat**, the giving of alms for the poor. Born an orphan himself, Muhammed was deeply concerned for the needy. The Koran requires that 2.5% of one's income be given to the poor or to the spread of Islam.
- ❹ **Sawm**, fasting during Ramadan, the holy ninth month of the lunar year (during which Muhammed is said to have received the first of his revelations from God, and during which he and his followers made their historic trek from Mecca to Medina). During this month, Muslims in good health are required to forego all food and liquid during daylight hours. This fast promotes the Muslim's self-discipline, dependence on Allah, and compassion for the needy.
- ❺ **Hajj**, pilgrimage to Mecca, which every Muslim should undertake at least once in their lifetime; the annual hajj takes place during the last 10 days of the 12th lunar month every year. It can be made properly only on a few days during the last month of the Muslim year. The Hajj promotes the ideas of worldwide unity and equality among Muslims. It contains many elements of prescribed activity that are of pagan origin.
- ❻ A sixth pillar, that of **jihad**, is often added. (The term means "exertion" or "struggle" on 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!

Muslims around the world look to these pillars for guidance in shaping their religious practice. In addition to these pillars, there are numerous laws and traditions contained in the Hadith—**literature compiled after the completion of the Qur'an, that reportedly** contains the example and statements of Muhammed on many topics. Because the laws of the Hadith and Koran cover virtually every area of life, Islam has well been referred to as an all-encompassing way of life, as well as a religion.

In 622 AD, Mohammed travelled from Mecca to Medina in the hijrah—this forms the starting point in the Muslim dating system. After the prophet's death his community split into followers of the caliph Abu Bakr and those who supported Mohammed's closest relative, his son-in-law, Ali ibn Abi Talib. This division between Shia (followers of Ali) and Sunni (followers of the custom of the caliph) persist to this day. Both share most of the customs of the religion, Shiites place more emphasis on the guiding role of the imam. About 90% of the world's Muslims are Sunni and about 10% Shia. The divine law by which Muslims should live their lives is called Sharia. It embraces every aspect of life, including family relations, inheritance, taxation, purification and prayer and observes no distinction between secular and religious law.

The Basic Beliefs of Islam:

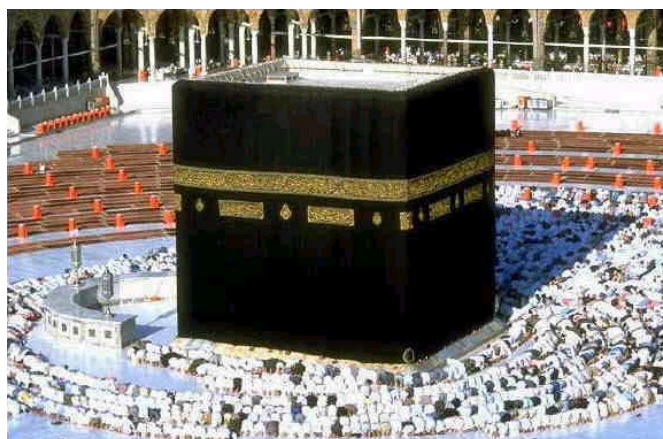
Though the beliefs of Muslims worldwide are about as diverse as those among Christians, there are six basic articles of faith common to nearly all Muslims—

- ❶ There is **no God but Allah**. The pre-Islamic Arabs were polytheists—Allah was one of 359 gods in Mecca at the time of Muhammed, however he succeeded in leading them to devote themselves solely to the chief God of the pantheon whom they called Allah (which simply means God). To worship or attribute deity to any other being is considered *shirk* or blasphemy. 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.
- ❷ **Belief in angels and jinn**—Jinn are spirit beings capable of both good and evil actions and of possessing human beings. Above the jinn in rank are the angels of God. Two of them are believed to accompany every Muslim, one on the right to record his good deeds, and one on the left to record his evil deeds.
- ❸ The third article is **belief in God's holy books**, 104 of which are referred to in the Koran. Chief among these are the Law given to Moses, the Psalms given to David, the Gospel (or Injil) given to Jesus, and the Koran given to Muhammed. Each of these is conceived to have communicated the same basic message of God's will to man.

The Qur'an and the Bible teach that Christ was virgin born, lived a sinless life, performed miracles, ascended to heaven, is the Messiah and the Word of God, and that the Bible was originally given by God. Obvious discrepancies between the Jewish and Christian Scriptures and the Koran (particularly with reference to Jesus and Muhammed) were accounted for by Muhammed in his suggestion that the Bible had been tampered with by Jews and Christians. Islamic theology also teaches that Christ is not God, nor the Son of God; He did not die on a cross and did not rise from the grave. **According to Islam, no one can pay the price for another's sins.**

- ❹ **Belief in God's prophets**, through whom Allah appealed to man to follow his will as revealed in his holy books is the fourth belief. There is no agreement as to how many prophets there have been—some say hundreds of thousands. Among them were Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. All agree that Muhammed was God's final and supreme prophet—the "seal" of the prophets. 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.
- ❺ Next, is belief in the **absolute predestinating will of Allah**—'if Allah wills it'. Some Muslims have modified this doctrine somewhat, however the Koran seems to support the idea that all things (both good and evil) are the direct result of God's will. Those who conclude that Islam is a fatalistic religion have good reason for doing so.
- ❻ The final article of faith is belief in the **resurrection and final judgment**. At the end of history, God will judge the works of all men. Those whose good deeds outweigh their bad deeds will enter into paradise. The rest will be consigned to hell. The paramount feature of Islamic belief, aside from its strong monotheism, is that it is a **religion of human works**. A person's position with regard to Allah is determined by their success in keeping His laws.

Ka 'bah: the cube-like shrine in the courtyard of the Sacred Mosque in Mecca, toward which Muslims face in daily prayer. Mecca is a city in Saudi Arabia, birthplace of Muhammad, Islam's founder.



The goals of Islam:

- The re-creation of the single Muslim nation - with no geographical borders between them, as stated by Allah: "This, your community is a single community and I am your Lord; so worship Me";
- The revival of Islamic brotherhood throughout this nation: "The believers are brothers";
- Freedom from all man-made laws, shackles and restrictions as stated in the Qur'an: "he (Prophet Muhammad) releases them from their heavy burdens and from the shackles that were upon them";
- Islam aims to bring about prosperity to all mankind. One of the leading authorities on Islam today, Imam Muhammad Shirazi, calls upon all Muslims to adhere to the teachings of Islam in all domains in order to regain their former glory and the salvation of mankind. These teachings include:
 - ◆ Peace in every aspect;
 - ◆ Non-violence in all conduct;
 - ◆ Freedom of expression, belief, etc;
 - ◆ Pluralism of political parties; and
 - ◆ Consultative System of Leadership.

Islam believes it is the faith of the universe. Man (given this view), does not differ from the other creatures. Since Allah, is the Creator and the Provider, he has given man the freedom of choice. Islam was the religion of the first couple, Adam and Eve. It was also the religion of messengers of God like Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus. The essence of their message was to believe and obey the One true God and obey his messengers.

One should in fact properly speak of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition, for Islam shares with the other Abrahamic religions their sacred history, the basic ethical teachings contained in the Ten Commandments and above all, belief in the One God. It renews and repeats some of the beliefs of Jews and Christians whose scriptures are mentioned as **divinely revealed books in Islam's own sacred book, the Qur'an.**

Islam is a whole-of-life religion: embracing the political, public, economic, legal and social. **It is not stuck in the vacuum of religious isolation. For Muslims, all of a person's life is a seamless interconnection of religion. In addition, Islam is a religion of conquest—it expands by conquering land. In 1999, one Muslim leader announced: "In the next fifty years we will capture the Western world for Islam. We have the men to do it, we have the money to do it and above all we are already doing it." *Mosques and Miracles*, page 1.**

Source: www.shirazi.org.uk; www.iad.org



Islamic view of Christians:

"Around the world, Muslims have regarded Christians as 'the enemy'. They are considered historic enemies supposedly because of the behaviour and actions of the Crusaders in the Middle Ages. They were considered colonial enemies because of the political expansion of Britain and France into Islamic heartlands in the nineteenth century. They were regarded as neo-colonialist enemies because the West exploited the

oil resources of the Muslim states. They were ethnic enemies when viewed from a position of Arab superiority. They were secular enemies because their governments did not acknowledge *Allah*. **They were considered political enemies because Western 'Christian' nations mostly align with Israel. They were religious enemies because in the eyes of Islam they are infidels, unbelievers according to the Qu'ran and the Prophet Muhammed and therefore suitable only for conquest."** p. 94—Stuart Robinson, *Mosques and Miracles* 2003

Islamic view of Christians:

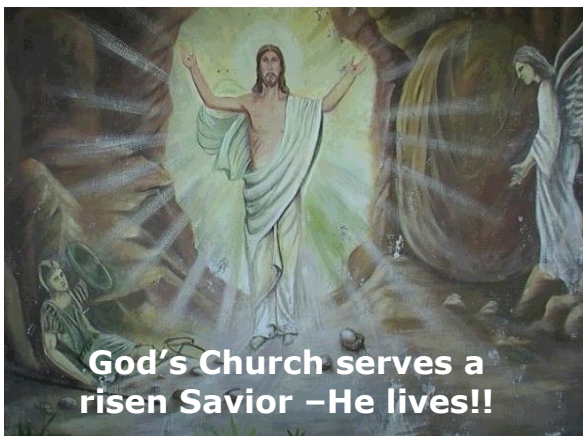
With the threat of having all nations becoming Islamic states and governed by Islamic law (shariah) Christian leaders make the following observations—

- Open Doors, a group monitoring Christian persecution, has noted that of the 25 nations in the world where Christians are most persecuted, 21 are Muslim. For example, in Indonesia, at least 10,000 Christians have been killed by radical Islamic groups in recent years. [Jeff Hammond—*Bless Indonesia Today*, 2002]
- 
- Islam is the only world religion which makes specific statements denying Christian doctrines such as the Trinity and the deity of Jesus Christ. When Christians look at the **Qur'an**, it appears early in the Qur'an that Muslims and Christians can live together peaceably. However, further on, this teaching is reversed. Islamic has a theological concept of abrogation—later statements cancel out former ones.
 - Under the influence of secular humanism in the West, Christianity has been individualised and privatised. To some extent, it has accepted being marginalised by the culture and so has largely abandoned setting a moral and religious agenda for its own society. Muslims have a world view that interlinks religion and lifestyle and so maintains that the corrupt religion at the core of the West—Christianity—is the reason for the corrupt and amoral society we now witness.

Source: p 4,5—Stuart Robinson *Mosques and Miracles* 2003

When Islam conquers a nation or area of property, the process of “Islamisation”

commences. The end result is the complete elimination of cultures and people who remain at variance with Islam. The process may be long. It is always relentless. Concepts such as human rights, democracy, equality of gender, liberty etc. are foreign to Islamic theology. Values of the world's two great missionary religions are diametrically opposed. Christians



God's Church serves a risen Savior –He lives!!

must understand the Muslim mindset and practice, even if it shocks us. Islam will always be Islam. Its practices, principles and outcomes are predetermined by its theology as exemplified by its history.

Christian response to Islam:

An emotional response from Christians to the rising threat could be fear and anxiety.

However, the example of Christians down through two millennia model our focus—look to Jesus and His attitude. They are people who God loves and longs to reach. The apostle Paul teaches us: **God our Saviour, wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people** 1 Timothy 2: 3-6. Peter, another apostle who died at the hands of Roman persecution reminds us—**The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance** 2 Peter 3: 9.

Our attitude must be the same—of anything less we need to repent! We cannot surrender to fear and ignorance. We are called to live as children of the Light and not be intimidated by the enemy. We are ambassadors for the Prince of Peace. The overwhelming evidence is that Jesus is reaching the hearts of Muslim people and breaking down barriers to the gospel, often through dreams and visions or acts of mercy by Christians. At other times it is through speaking out the good news of Jesus through the Spirit's direction and power.

A Biblical response to Islam:

① Belief in one God (Allah)

The Muslim View:

The first and greatest teaching of Islam is proclaimed by the Shahada: "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the apostle of Allah." It is this confession, which, once uttered sincerely, makes one a real Muslim. For a Muslim, Allah is one (Wahid), **and has no partners, no equals. According to the Qur'an, Sura 28;88: "And cry not unto any other god along with Allah. There is no god save Him."** Allah created and maintains the world, and since Allah is one, no one else can share even an atom of His Divine power and authority. Islam makes it clear that Allah has no son, no father, no relative, and no associates. In the Hadiths (literature compiled after the completion of the Qur'an), Muhammad is reported to have related the ninety-nine names of Allah, to express some of His attributes. A number of these are: He is merciful (that he provides man with food, drink, the means of movement, and all the necessities of life), He is all-powerful (omnipotent), He is wise and all-knowing (omniscient), and He is eternal (no beginning and no end).

The Christian Response:

Christians and Muslims worship the God of Abraham. As do Muslims, Christians believe in only one righteous and transcendent creator God. The key verse of the Torah of the Prophet Moses states that: ***The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might*** (Deuteronomy 6:4). God is one and He commands us to love Him totally. Jesus Christ, speaking more than a thousand years after the Prophet Moses says: ***The Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength*** (Mark 12:28-30).

Both the Torah and the Gospel (Injil) agree that God is one. We are commanded to love one God. Only He has the right to command our ultimate loyalty. All other gods which man invents are totally false (Hosea 13:2,3). Perhaps the greatest criticism against Christians by Muslims is the view of the plurality of God, that God is three: "God the Father, Mary the mother, and Jesus the son." This view is as repugnant to Christians as it is to Muslims, and has its origins in a heretical Christian sect (called Choloridians) who had contact with Muhammad during his time in Mecca.

From the Scriptures we find revealed a Divine unity of three Persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, commonly known as the "trinity." It is impossible to express the mystery of God as "triune." In fact, this word is not found within Scripture, but was coined three centuries later by the Church, to express what Scripture spoke of as God comprised of three Persons, who are in complete unity of purpose, action and love, yet cannot be separated as they have different functions.

The Scriptures speak of **God, the Father**, who as the co-Creator, blesses (Ephesians 1:3-4), initiates (John 17:2-9) and sends (John 17:3,18). **God, the Son**, speaks out the creation (John 1:1), and acts physically into history, both during the time of the prophets (Genesis 32:25-30; Exodus 3:2-5; 13:21; 33:9-11; Judges 2:1), and as the Saviour, Jesus Christ (John 1:14). Finally **God, the Holy Spirit**, is resident within the believer, guides, instructs and empowers us (John 14:16-17):

Jesus said, "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me" (John 15:26). In summary: When the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour (Titus 3:4-6).



A Biblical response to Islam:

Jesus referred to this 'Trinity in Unity' when He commanded His apostles to go everywhere and persuade people to become His disciples, and baptize believers, *in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit* (Matthew 28:19). It is important that God as "Father" must not be viewed within a biological context. Christians share with Muslims the prohibition against conceiving of God in the form of an image. God as "Father" refers, rather, to a relationship; a description of the covenant and fellowship relationship between God and man. Christians accept all the 99 names of God which Muslims repeat in praise to God. Even the name Allah is affirmed by Christians as one of the names of God, the same Arabic name which the Prophet Abraham used in Hebrew as "El" or "Elohim."

② Belief in the Prophets

The Muslim View:

Islam makes a distinction between a messenger who is sent with a Divine Scripture to guide and reform mankind, and a prophet who simply carries information or proclaims Allah's news. Though all messengers are prophets, not all prophets are messengers. The number of Allah's prophets is said to be 124,000: the Qur'an mentions only 25. Adam was the first prophet, followed by others, some of whom are: Abraham, Jacob, Ishmael, Isaac, David, Solomon, John the Baptist, Jesus, and also Muhammad, the final and greatest of the prophets or the "Seal of the Prophets." Allah raised up these prophets, among every nation (Sura 16:36), to provide mankind with firm and constructive guidance, so that they could walk the straight path of Allah, live happily in this world, and be prepared for life after death. Their fundamental message (Islam) was identical, reminding mankind of Allah's unity; the reward of a good life; the day of judgment; and the terrible punishment for unbelievers. Their witness was not always received well, and sometimes with total rejection, even in their own communities (Sura 17:94). Allah promised to protect them from serious sins and from bad diseases. As a result, the two beliefs developed: that a prophet could never be killed and the denial by Muslims that Jesus, a prophet, died on the cross.



The Christian Response

Christians believe that God appointed prophets and others to speak to mankind His Word, the story of His redemptive acts in history. God revealed the interpretation of His acts to prophets, who passed it on to mankind by preaching, teaching, and writing. Of the thirty or so prophets who are listed in the Bible, many are well known to Muslims, such as Abraham, Moses, David, and John the Baptist; while others are not, such as Miriam, Nathan, Isaiah, Jonah, Joel, and Daniel all of whom came before Christ. Others, like Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter and Paul, wrote after Christ's departure, and, although not recognized by Muslims, they are, for Christians, believed to be the last of the Biblical prophets.

All of these prophets were descendants of Abraham and Isaac, sent over a period of 2,000 years, chiefly to the people of Israel, whom God had chosen to be His Covenant people that from them the Truth of God might be made known to all the people of the world. They came from different classes of society, some rich, others poor, young and old; some scholars, and others with little education. Not all wrote books (Elijah, John the Baptist), but they all heard God's word, either through angels, by means of visions, by God's voice, or by receiving the message in their minds and hearts. The prophets were not sinless, but were believers who knew their sins were forgiven. To some the power was given to perform miracles, which verified the message. Their message was profound and clear. They defined the character of a righteous God, what He requires of us, warned of His judgment on rejecting Him and His Law, yet, assured us of His forgiveness and blessing if we accept Him.

A Biblical response to Islam:

The prophets' most important message, was that no-one could obey the Law fully, and so deserved death. However, God had promised to take upon Himself the guilt of our sins, by coming as a human being and dying on the cross—taking on Himself the penalty. **Jesus' resurrection proved he was God and would forgive all who trust him.**

In evaluating whether Muhammad was a prophet, a Christian must see Muhammad in light of the total Biblical witness culminating in Jesus the Messiah. The evidence shows the prophet Muhammad did not:

- Fully accept the Old and New Testament Scriptures;
- Point to the central significance of Jesus as redeemer, and
- The life and teachings of Muhammad did not exemplify suffering redemptive love, which is demonstrated by Jesus.



③ Belief in the Holy Books

The Muslim View:

Whenever chaos, confusion, or evil filled human society, Allah sent a message, via his prophets, to reform society. These messages were contained in the Holy Books of Allah, of which 5 are accepted by Muslims today: the Suhuf (Scrolls), revealed to the prophet Ibrahim, and now lost; the Taurut (Torah), revealed to the prophet Musa (Moses); the Zabur (Psalms), revealed to the prophet Daud (David); the Injil (Gospels), revealed to the prophet Isa (Jesus); and the Qur'an (Koran), the Holy Book, or "final message to mankind," revealed to the prophet Muhammad. Each Scripture confirmed the preceding revelation, with the purpose of reforming mankind. According to Muslims, the first three existing revelations (Tawrut, Zabur, and Injil) include teachings which are confined to a particular tribe, community, or nation, and to a specific period. They believe human imperfections have been introduced making the Bible a mixture of history and revelation. As a result, the Qur'an, was sent as the perfection and culmination of all the truth contained in the earlier Scriptures. Though sent in Arabic, it is the Book for all times, for all mankind. It guards the previous revelations by restoring the eternal truth of Allah (Sura 3: 3-4a), and clears up all uncertainties.

The Christian Response:

Christians believe that the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, is the inspired Word of God: ***The holy Scriptures, are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work*** (2 Timothy 3: 15-17). The messages of God were relayed to His chosen people, who spoke or wrote them, using their own language, personalities and thought forms [inspiration, thus, does not mean divine dictation]. The sixty-six books, divide into two sections; the Old Testament and New Testament. The Old Testament, which means old covenant or sacred promise between God and His chosen people, records God's revelation of Himself to the Jewish people and prepares them to receive Himself as the Redeemer Messiah, who would be born as one of them. The Old Testament prophets prophesied His coming hundreds of times, even speaking specifically of when and where His birth would occur, why He would come, how He would die, and that He would rise again; all hundreds of years before the events.

The New Testament (new covenant) is the historical record of God fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah, and establishing the new covenant. It contains the account of the life and teachings of the Messiah (the Gospels), the

A Biblical response to Islam:

creation of the Church (Acts of the Apostles), explanations of Christian beliefs and conduct (Epistles), and a description of the end times, when God's purpose for mankind will be fulfilled (Revelation). Christians accept only the Old and New Testament in the Bible as God's inspired written Word, spanning more than 1,500 years, while declaring that God is at work in history with the intent to redeem and save mankind from death. The Bible has been translated into over 1,600 languages, so that 93% of the world's population can read it in their mother tongue.

④ Belief in Angels

The Muslim View:

Muslims believe that Allah created a host of angels, all of whom are sinless, do not eat or drink, and have no determining sex. Like humans, they will die and be resurrected. Angels have differing ranks, but four who are the mightiest of all, are known as the four archangels. They are:

- Gabriel, Allah's chief messenger, or intermediary, who is referred to as the "Holy Spirit" in the Qur'an;
- Michael;
- Izrail, the Angel of Death; and
- Israfil, who will blow the trumpet on the last day to awake the dead.

When Adam was created, Allah commanded all the angels to bow down to him. All the angels did so, except Iblis (Satan), who refused, saying, "He was made of clay, but I was made of fire, so I am better than he" (Sura 15: 28-33). For his refusal, Allah cursed him and threw him out of paradise. From that time till now Iblis has become man's chief enemy, and is the leader of all the demons and evil jinn, who harass and torment mankind (Sura 15: 34-46). The chief responsibility of the angels is to praise Allah, and to do his will. They do his will by watching over believers, interceding for them and aiding them in their battles (thousands were used at the great battle of Badr). Many Muslims believe that all individuals on earth have two angels who are positioned above each of their shoulders, as 'recording angels'; one to record the good deeds man does, and the other to record his sins. At the time of death, two fierce black angels visit each corpse in the grave and ask him, "Who is thy Lord? What is thy religion?" and "Who is thy Prophet?" Depending on the response, the angels take the souls of the believers, and cause them to either fall into the fiery pit (Gahenna), or they send them across the razor sharp bridge, to paradise.

The Christian Response:

In the Bible there are many references to beings, other than men, who were created by God and were usually referred to as angels. They are God's messengers, and were often sent by God to make His will known to the prophets and to help believers. Angels appeared in human form to Abraham, Moses and others. The names of only two of God's angels are given in the Bible: Michael and Gabriel. The angel Gabriel was the one who informed Mary that she would have a son named Jesus. In addition to the



holy angels who are obedient to God, we are told, in Scripture, that there are other created spiritual beings who were disobedient, who are enemies of God; the chief of whom is called Satan, the Devil, the dragon and serpent (Revelation 12: 3-9). Satan was created good, but because of pride, disobeyed God. As a result, he and the spirits who followed him, were sent from their high and holy position in heaven. They are now doing all they can to destroy God's work on earth (see 1 Peter 5: 8,9).

A Biblical response to Islam:

Satan deceived Eve in the Garden of Eden, and ever since has been trying to turn people away from the living God. He tried to persuade Jesus to disobey His Father at least three times, but failed. Satan has great power, which is not equal to God, and in fact is limited by God. Christians do not need to fear him or his evil spirits who harm so many people, because of Satan's defeat through the historical death on the cross by the redeemer, Jesus Christ: *Jesus took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them,*



triumphing over them by the cross (Colossians 2: 14,15). Because of that historical fact, all believers have the strength, given by Christ, through the Holy Spirit, to resist and repel Satan and all his demons. God will finally cast Satan into the eternal fire, from where he will never bother mankind or God again (see Revelation 20: 1-15).

⑤ Belief in the Day of Judgment

The Muslim View:

For a Muslim, sin is a private matter. The idea that one's sin is binding from one generation to the next does not exist. This is because Satan is the root of all sin; and Allah, who is all-merciful, will forgive those who ask for forgiveness. There is one sin, however, which is unforgivable, that of "shirk," the practice of associating anyone or anything with Allah. So, the sin of Adam and Eve, was not really their fault, as they were tricked by Satan, and they asked for forgiveness. In addition, their sin is not hereditary. Adam, having repented, was made Allah's first messenger on earth. How could Allah entrust such a high office to an evildoer? For the Muslim, salvation is attained not by faith, but by works, in observing the Five Pillars of Islamic practice, as well as avoiding the major and minor sins. Tradition indicates that on the Judgment Day, once the person is buried, the two recording angels appear, and the dead person sits up to undergo an examination. If he says the "Shahada" ("There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the apostle of Allah"), he lies down peacefully and awaits his judgment. If he refuses the "Shahada," he is severely beaten for as long as Allah pleases. Each individual is then put on a scale where his good and bad deeds, taken from their "book of destiny," are weighed. Allah reserves the absolute right to send the individual to wherever he pleases. Paradise, is a perfumed garden of material and sensual delights, surrounded by rivers and flowing fountains, populated with black-eyed virgins, who are there to serve them with all variety of fruits (Suras 47 & 56). Hell (Gahenna) awaits those who fail the above test, a hell which consists of boiling water, gore and fire, a hell of extreme physical pain (Suras 4, 38, & 50).

The Christian Response:

According to Scripture, any sin is an offence to a holy God, as it is a rejection of His character. Christians believe, that Satan does tempt us, but we—not Satan—are responsible for our own sins. We have the choice to reject Satan's tempting. Scripture insists that the wages of sin is death, and since we are all guilty, we all deserve death. God, in His mercy, has not left us in that guilt, but has offered forgiveness for those who receive it. He has sent His Son to die in our place, to take upon Himself our guilt. Those who believe in His redeeming death on the cross, and repent of their sins, are saved from eternal separation (John 3: 16,17); while those who reject Him will be eternally condemned. Before His ascension into heaven, Jesus Christ promised to return a second time to judge the world. He warned his followers against false Christs and false prophets (Matthew 24: 11; Mark 13: 22). The whole world will know when He comes again; and that He will come as He was taken up (Acts 1: 11).

A Biblical response to Islam:

When He returns, Jesus will raise all the dead to life (John 5: 28-29), and will separate those who believe from those who reject Him. Those rejecting Christ, will live in eternal punishment, in total isolation from God and no sin is greater than this (1 John 2: 22-23). Those who have truly believed in Christ the redeemer, will not fear Christ the Judge, and will have eternal life (John 5: 22- 24; Acts 17: 30-31). We will go into the presence of God Himself, to live forever with Him in love and in joy: ***Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people ... He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain*** (Revelation 21: 1-7).

⑥ Belief in the Predestination of God (Allah)

The Muslim View:

"Islam," the word, means submission to the will of Allah. A Muslim, is one who submits: the reason for this submission is found in the belief that everything, including good and evil, faith and unbelief, is preordained. As a religion, Islam is a code of political, ceremonial, civil, and criminal law, as well as moral and religious precepts, all promoted in Allah's name, while leaving nothing to the believer's initiative. Muslims believe that Allah is in control of all of history. This belief embraces the doctrine of predestination, an acceptance of destiny, and resignation to fate (*Kismet*). Allah is sovereign. Anything that happens is the will of Allah, and so is attributed to him. This is why the phrase *In sh'allah*, "If Allah wills it," is common in the Muslim world. For some, this idea that Allah has total control over history leads to fatalism and passivity. For others, it sets the mind at liberty from matters over which they have absolutely no control. *Kismet* makes the Muslim fanatically self-sacrificing in war, resigned in defeat, in bereavement and disaster, and inactive in the presence of preventable evil, such as epidemics, because these could be called the "Will of Allah." Allah is not bound by any moral obligation, as this would limit his sovereignty. Allah is also the author of evil. He is under no necessity of his nature, to be right or just or merciful. Allah does not will an act because it is good; rather, it is good because he has willed it.

The Christian Response:

Christians believe God's attributes are found in His holiness, grace and love: ***We know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him*** (1 John 4: 16). God loves those who are good, but He loves those who are sinners—all mankind—even to the point of giving His life for them (Romans 5: 1- 10). Unlike Allah, who is portrayed as a distant God with whom no one can have a personal relationship, the Biblical view of God is one who very much wants a personal relationship with His creation: ***How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!*** (1 John 3: 1, see also John 1: 11-14; 15: 9-15). In the Bible we find God is infinitely righteous and holy (Psalm 77: 13; 99: 9). ***His eyes are too pure to look on evil*** (Habakkuk 1: 13).

God doesn't seek blind obedience from His creation. This is not true love. True love seeks the best for the other at one's own expense—seen in Christ's own sacrificial act on the cross. It is this love which God desires of us, both in our relationship with Him, and with others. The Bible tells us that man was created in God's image (Genesis 2: 27), a view which is in direct contrast to that of the Muslim ideal, of man as slave. Man was never created to be a slave to God, but was meant from the very beginning, to be His son, in perfect relationship with Him. This assumes, however, freedom of choice, in that man can accept to be in relationship with His creator, or reject Him: ***For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him*** (John 3: 16, 17).

A Biblical response to Islam:

Due to God's nature, He cannot create nor tolerate evil. He has not brought about, nor can He tolerate the evilness of man. Sin is of man's own doing. God has made a way by which sin can be forgiven, so that man can, once again, be brought back into relationship with God, as was intended from the beginning, with Adam and Eve. Our fate, therefore, is never predestined. We can, by simply acknowledging Christ as our Lord and Saviour, be assured that we will be once more reunited with God, in heaven, for eternity. If we take these three attributes of the Biblical God: a God of selfless love, in relationship with His creation, unable to create or accept evil, we will find in these three the relationship that He seeks with His creation as well.

Source: www.debate.org.uk/topics/theo/6belief

A Biblical response to the five pillars of Islam:

The foundation of Islam is the five pillars: *Shahada* (the creed), *Salat* (prayer), *Zakat* (almsgiving), *Sawm* (fasting), *Hajj* (pilgrimage). The Christian alternative to the five pillars of Islam from God's Word is—

Shahada—The Creed

A Christian Shahada, or creed, can be found in John 17: 3: *Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.* As the Shahada can be seen as a brief summary of the Islamic faith, this verse is a summary of the gospel, which states that to know God is to know Jesus Christ, whom God sent into this world, as His word to us, through whom He revealed Himself and enabled us to receive the gift of eternal life.

Salat—Prayer

Although there are no set prayers prescribed in the Christian scriptures, Christians are called to prayer (Colossians 4: 2) and to pray continually (1 Thessalonians 5: 17). Jesus himself, by giving examples, has shown us that we should always pray and not give up (Luke 18: 1). He said: *When you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. When you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you* (Matthew 6: 5-6).

Zakat—Almsgiving

Christians believe everything we have is a gift from God and that we should share it with others and give back to God as much as we can. We find the following instruction in the Scripture: *On the first day of every week, each of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income* (1 Corinthians 16: 2). At another place we read: *Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver* (2 Corinthians 9: 7).

Sawm—Fasting

Christians do fast, within the framework of Jesus' teaching: *When you fast, do not look sombre as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you* (Matthew 6: 16-18).

Hajj—Pilgrimage

Some Muslim think Christians go for pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Such a pilgrimage is not part of the Christian faith. Before Jesus came, believers used to go to the house of the Lord, the temple for sacrifices and offerings, however it is no longer necessary, having



been fulfilled in Christ. Christians believe God is everywhere, and can be worshipped anywhere (Isaiah 66: 1-2). Jesus affirmed a right view of worship: *A time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks* (John 4: 21-23).

A Christian Jihad

Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 6: 10-12).

Source: www.itl.org.uk/pillars.htm

Helpful Hints for Sharing about God and the Gospel with Muslims:

- ❶ **Use the Word of God**—Muslims respect the sacred books: the Law of Moses, Psalms, Gospel, and Quran. Let the Word of God speak for itself. The Gospels are the best portions to start with, particularly Matthew and Luke.
- ❷ **Be constantly in prayer**—It is the Holy Spirit who wins people to Christ. Seek His guidance and power as you present the Word (see 1 John 4: 4).
- ❸ **Trust in the greatness of God**—*For nothing is impossible with God (Luke 1:37). "Don't be afraid," Elisha answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." And Elisha prayed, "O LORD, open his eyes so he may see." Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha"* (2 Kings 6: 16,17).
- ❹ **Be a genuine friend**—Saying "hello" isn't enough. If you really care, show it by inviting them to your home, sharing your time and helping with their problems.
- ❺ **Ask thought-provoking questions**—"Do you have the assurance that God will accept you? What does the Quran teach about forgiveness? May I show you what the Bible teaches?" Questions like these show that you have an interest in the important things of life. **Listen attentively**—when you ask a question, courtesy requires that you listen to the answer no matter how long it takes. You'll be surprised at how much you'll learn.
- ❻ **Present your beliefs openly**—State what you believe, clearly and without apology, showing Scripture passages that support those teachings. Place the responsibility for doctrine where it belongs—on the Word of God. **Reason, don't argue**—argument may win a point but lose a hearing. There are some points on which you can argue forever without achieving a thing, except closing a mind against you.
- ❼ **Never denigrate Muhammad or the Quran**—This is as offensive to them as speaking disrespectfully about Christ or the Bible is to us. **Respect their customs and sensitivities**—don't offend by putting your Bible (a holy book) on the floor, or appearing too free with the opposite sex, or refusing hospitality, or making jokes about sacred topics such as fasting, prayer or God.
- ❽ **Persevere**—Recognise the reality of what is *really* occurring and ask God for his direction in praying to see the person released from spiritual strongholds: *The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God* (2 Corinthians 4: 4). Muslims have a lot of rethinking to do when they are confronted with the gospel. Rest assured that the Word of God and the Spirit of God will do their work, in His good time. Stand in the position of authority we have in Jesus (Ephesians 2: 6) knowing that, *Thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ* (1 Corinthians 15: 57).
- ❾ God has opened an amazing ministry via Father Zakaria Boutros. His website is connecting to many Muslims each day in an effective way. [www.fatherzakaria.net]

Summary chart—Differences between Islam and Christianity

Muslims believe ...	Christians believe ...
GOD	
There is no God but Allah—the God and Mohammed is his prophet.	One God is revealed in Scripture as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Within the one "essence" of the Godhead , there are three Persons who are equal and eternally God (see Matthew 3: 13-17, 28: 19; 2 Corinthians 13: 14).
JESUS CHRIST	
Jesus Christ was only a man, a prophet equal to Adam, Noah, Abraham and Moses whom are below Mohammed in importance. Jesus Christ did not die for man's sins, in fact Judas, not Jesus died on the cross.	Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, one with the Father, sinless redeemer of sinful man through His death on our behalf on the cross and his resurrection from the dead (see John 1: 13,14; 1 Pet. 3: 18; Hebrews 4: 15; 1 Cor. 15: 3).
SIN	
Sin is failure to do Allah's will, failure to do one's religious duties as outlined in the Five Pillars of Islam.	Sin is proud, independent rebellion in active or passive form against God (see Romans 1: 18-23, 3: 10, 23).
SALVATION	
Man earns his own salvation and pays for his own sins.	Jesus Christ— God's Son —died for the sins of all people, on the cross, as is recorded in God's inspired Word (see 1 Corinthians 15: 3, 4; Galatians 5: 18-25)

Source: *So What's the Difference* Fritz Ridenour, Regal Books. 1967

See also:

Isaal Masih (<http://www.IsaalMasih.net>) Explains Isa al Masih's (Jesus Christ's) message of peace and salvation to seeking Muslims worldwide

Answering Islam (www.answering-islam.org) A Christian website that makes the case for Christianity as against Islam. Many articles, sorted under 14 topics. A brilliant resource!

World Religions Index (<http://wri.leaderu.com>)

An attractive, simple site with good information for Christian witness to other religions. Sponsored by Campus Crusade for Christ International.

Adherents.com (www.adherents.com)

An eclectic site with many pages of statistics and facts on religion globally.

Video series—David Pawson The Challenge of Islam to Christians, Cutting Edge, 2002

<http://outreach.itl.org.uk> Introduction to Islam for those who wish to share their Christian beliefs with Muslims.

<http://www.safeplace.net/members/mer/> Resources on Islam for Christians