

The Operation Reveille Shotar

“Test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out.”

Frequently Asked Questions about Islam

by Bruce Sidebotham

What is the difference between “Muslim” and “Islam”?

“Muslim” is a descriptive adjective like the word “Christian” (a Muslim book), or it can be a noun when referring to a person (a Muslim). “Islam” is the religion and is a noun like the word “Christianity.” “Islam” becomes an adjective by adding “-ic” to become “Islamic.”

What is *Shari’a* ?

Shari’a is Muslim law. It is based on the Qur’an (Muslim scriptures) and the Haddith (extra scriptural writings about Muhammad). Just as the Constitution rules the United States, *Shari’a* rules Muslim countries. Muslim courts interpret *Shari’a* like U.S. courts interpret the Constitution. Each Muslim country has its own unique interpretation of *Shari’a*. For example, in some countries women must cover their faces completely. In others they only need to cover their hair.

What is the difference between Shiite and Sunni Muslims?

The difference between Shiite and Sunni Islam is like the difference between Protestant and Catholic Christianity. Sunni Muslims accept only the Haddith and Qur’an as authoritative for guiding faith and practice much like the Protestant principle reflected in the Reformation slogan “*sola scriptura*.” Shiite Muslims also accept authority of the Ayatollah, as Catholics accept the authority of the Pope.

Is Islam the fastest growing religion?

Actually, for the past one hundred years, atheists and those adhering to ‘no religion’ have grown 45 times faster than Muslims, and 75 times faster than Christians. People with no religion have grown from a minuscule 0.2 percent to over fifteen percent of world population in just one century. Although atheism’s growth has stagnated since Soviet Communism collapsed, secularism has replaced religion as undergirding nearly all of social and political life throughout most of the world.

In the same century, Islam grew from twelve to twenty percent of world population while Christianity remained stagnant at one third. However, strictly comparing Muslim and Christian population growth percentages is misleading.

High birthrate (2.07%) accounts for nearly 97 percent of Muslim growth while Christian birthrate (1.22%) falls below the world average (1.41%). Ten percent of Christian growth comes from conversions. Annual converts to Christianity (2.5 million) outnumber converts to Islam (865,000) three to one. Islam may have the fastest growing population, but Christianity is more successfully penetrating new (usually non-Muslim) populations.



What is *jihad* ?

Well, what is a crusade? Both words have literal and figurative uses. When President Bush slipped, mentioning a crusade on terrorism, he was not talking about evangelistic outreach. Campus Crusade for Christ is not a militant organization. In one sense *jihad* means “struggle,” and in another it means “holy war.” If Christians can use “crusade” in both figurative and literal senses, then we need to allow Muslims the same linguistic latitude.

Do Muslims and Christians worship the same God?

By saying, “They surely disbelieve who say, ‘Lo Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary’ . . . who say, ‘Lo Allah is the third of three’” (Surah 5:72), the Qur’an denies Christ’s deity and God’s trinity. Thus, by not believing the same thing about God, Muslims and Christians do not worship the same God. However, the word “Allah” for God is actually closer in spelling and pronunciation to the generic word “Ellohim” used for God in the Old Testament.

Since neither ancient Arabic nor ancient Hebrew vowels were written, and the consonants in “Allah” and the singular form of “Ellohim” are the same, they are technically the same word. The word “God,” on the other hand, comes from the Germanic tribal and pagan word “Gott” which has no cognate in the Bible’s original languages. English uses an originally pagan term for the God of the Bible. At least Arabic uses a term that appears transliterated from Old Testament Hebrew in its versions of the Old and New Testament.

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Why do fundamentalist Muslims hate America?

Once united into the world's dominant empire, fundamentalist Muslims now feel humiliated by the United States and her allies who export decadence, impose international laws, and sustain Middle Eastern political divisions (including Israel). Observe Muslims practicing their religion, and you will see that public conformity and external appearances rather than internalized beliefs and motives define Muslim identity. Islam does not prosper without socially controlling the community within which it is expressed. The same struggle with secularism which eliminates expressions of religious faith from public life in America (i.e. school prayer and the Ten Commandments) agitates fundamentalists by threatening to make Islam politically irrelevant.



The Sidebotham family knows what it means to conform.

Is Islam a threat to Western civilization?

Although Muslim civilization is the only one to have ever threatened Western civilization's existence, today's risk from Islam is like that from a cornered animal. Suicide bombers are desperate people on desperate missions for desperate causes. Islam cannot return to its former glory because the foundation for its past prosperity has been destroyed.

Islam's once great empire that was the most advanced for its time in virtually every field was made possible through the productivity of overrun Christians. In *The Decline of Eastern Christianity Under Islam* (p. 128), Bat Ye'or writes, "Scribes, secretaries, treasurers, accountants, architects, craftsmen, peasants, doctors, scholars, diplomats, translators, and politicians, the Christians formed the base, the texture, the elite, and the sinews of the Muslim empire. . . . Islamic literature, science, art, philosophy, and jurisprudence were born and developed not in Arabia, within an exclusively Arab and Muslim population, but in the midst of conquered peoples."

Was 9/11 a judgement on American decadence?

God's judgement always demonstrates his mercy and results in lasting change. While 9/11 did awaken many from complacency about spiritual and national values, it has not brought lasting change regarding the sins which were supposed to have been judged.

The attack on America was actually an indirect answer to prayer. When Habakkuk cried to the Lord for deliverance from violence, God answered by raising up the Babylonians (Hab. 1:2-6). Since persecution of Christians in places like Pakistan, Sudan, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Saudi Arabia began rising, millions have been praying for divine intervention. Besides liberating Shelter Now workers accused of evangelizing Afghans, resultant military and economic actions are constraining fanatic groups that have been responsible for much human suffering.

Why did Muslim terrorists attack America?

Following the example set for them by the CIA and Special Forces, after consolidating power in Afghanistan, the Taliban began exporting their fundamentalist revolution by funding and training insurgencies in places like Chechnya, Yemen, the Philippines, and Indonesia. To inspire followers, America needed to be humiliated. To deter interference, America needed to be intimidated. Underestimating American resolve as the Japanese did at Pearl Harbor, the terrorists expected this devastating symbolic blow would drive Americans into isolationism just as America retreated from Vietnam, Lebanon, and Somalia when challenged and disgraced.

What happened to Christianity in the Middle East?

Seventh century Middle Eastern Christianity was divided among Greeks, Syrians, Armenians, Samaritans, and Egyptians and into Monophysite, Nestorian, Jacobite, Melchite, and Orthodox factions the way that North and South America were once divided among warring Indian tribes when Europeans arrived. In the same way that American Indians were either killed, assimilated, or put on reservations by immigrating Europeans, Middle Eastern Christians were killed, enslaved, assimilated, marginalized, and overwhelmed by migrating Arabs (7th to 9th cent.) and Turks (13th to 15th cent.).

Is Islam a religion of violence or peace?

Islam is almost evenly split between secular-leaning moderates and intolerant extremists. Fighting between these groups sheds more blood than war between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Moderates and extremists divide over the same issue separating liberal and fundamentalist Christians. Fundamentalists interpret their scriptures literally. Liberals, however, interpret their scriptures allegorically or symbolically. Just as liberal Christians doubt that Moses really parted the Red Sea and that Jesus really rose from the dead, moderate Muslims don't believe the Qur'an intends what the extremists say that it does. Just as fundamentalists don't believe the liberals are "real" Christians, extremists say the moderates are not "real" Muslims.

Does Islam allow freedom of religion?

Just as modern American courts allow Christians to practice privately without imposing their "values" on secular society, Islam usually allows Christians to worship freely provided they do not disturb Muslims.

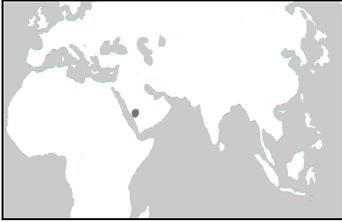
Unfortunately, Muslims are often easily disturbed, as in Saudi Arabia where crosses may not be publicly displayed and in Egypt where ancient churches may not be repaired.

The Qur'an verse saying, "There is no compulsion in religion" (Surah 2:256) supports freedom of religion but does not support freedom of conscience. Unlike Christian children who must still choose a religion for themselves, Muslims are born into Islam much like Americans are born into U.S. citizenship. Leaving Islam is like renouncing one's citizenship. Even most moderate Muslims accept that converts out of Islam may be killed as traitors.



A Brief History of Muslim Civilization

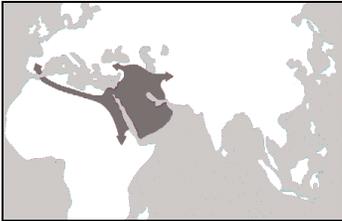
570 - 632, Birth



In 570 Mohammed was born in Mecca, a staging town for Arabian camel caravans. In 610 he began receiving and promoting revelations. In 622 he fled to Medina. This is called the *Hijra*. Muslim years are numbered from this event.

In 630 he returned to Mecca and conquered it. These two "holy" cities, called the *hijjabs*, are forbidden to non-Muslims. When Mohammed died in 632, his teachings had spread throughout Arabia. His followers consolidated his teachings in the Qu'ran and embarked on a holy war, *Jihad*, to spread Islam.

632 - 732, Conquest



For one hundred years Islam spread rapidly by conquest. Political domination was achieved throughout the Middle East, across North Africa, and into Spain. Major centers of cultural Christianity like Antioch, Alexandria, Jerusalem, and Carthage fell.

Rival Byzantine and Persian Empires being racked internally with bloody sectarian feuds gave way rapidly to the new overlords who could arbitrate denominational feuds impartially. Europe's poorly civilized tribes were in their Dark Ages. As centers of Christian faith and learning, only Rome and Constantinople remained.

732 - 1250, Stagnation



Charles Martel, general of the Franks, stopped advancing Muslims in France in 732. Geographical expansion stagnated. Some regions broke away from central rule. Political power migrated from Arabia to Egypt, Bagdad, Persia, and eventually Turkey.

In the East, Mongols spread destruction among Islamicized areas of Central Asia, driving more Turks into Byzantine Asia Minor. From the west, Muslims began battling Crusaders of the ascending Roman Catholic Holy Roman Empire who captured Jerusalem and significant parts of Palestine.

1250 - 1700, Resurgence



Ottoman Turks built the largest empire of their day. Crusader Antioch fell in 1268. The last Crusader stronghold at Acre, Syria fell in 1291. Constantinople fell in 1453, and the Byzantine Empire was destroyed. Islam entered the Balkans, setting the stage for World War One and today's Kosovo and Bosnian crisis. Ottoman conquest of Europe was halted at Vienna in 1683. Traders spread Islam deep into South and Southeast Asia.

Muslim monopoly over the spice trade led Columbus to seek alternate routes in 1492, the same year that Muslim Moors were driven from Spain and Portugal, setting the stage for these and other future rival Western European powers.

1700 - 1979, Decline



Allied with Germany in WWI, the Ottoman Empire officially ended in 1922 after a long decline. Militarily and economically successful western powers now dominate the entire Muslim world, managing political borders and dictating international relations. In 1923, under Ataturk, even Turkey had to give up the ideal of the Islamic state in order to compete with the European powers. Muslims blame the "Christian" West for their disunity, instability, and relative weakness. Wealth from oil, exploding populations, and intense resentment are fueling the missionary and political activity of Muslim fundamentalism. Entrenched feelings of inferiority and desperation are creating unprecedented opportunities for the gospel among a booming and rapidly emigrating population.

1979 - Present, Crisis



Since the Shah of Iran was deposed (1979), fundamentalist Muslims have been struggling (*Jihad*) with some success to reunite "church" and state under Shari'a law. Terrorists are the new crusaders seeking to liberate Muslim "holy lands" from foreign ideas and influence.

From Algeria to the Philippines and from Chechnya to the Sudan, fundamentalist minorities are fighting secular governments and their own moderate brethren. What is Islam's destiny? Will Shari'a come to dominate courts, governments, science and technology, and international relations of the civilized world once again? Will Islam peacefully accommodate secularism and church-state separation as so many politicians claim it has done? Will Islam return us to the stone age, or will it slowly fade away?

FEATURE

New Paradigm for Outreach to Middle Eastern Cultures: Gospel Restores Honor to the Dishonored

by Bruce Sidebotham

In Indonesia, our Muslim housekeeper told us that when she was a little girl she had a friend who used to feel her mother's hair in the morning to see if it was damp. Her friend did this so that she could tell if her mother had been messing around with other men.

According to Islam, sex makes one unclean.

One's prayers will not be heard again until after a complete bath. When asked why her friend's mother would care about ceremonial purity if she were already committing adultery, our helper said no one would consider not bathing after having sex. Such uncleanness was a curse. Everything touched would be cursed. Curiously, adultery did not have the same result. In other words, the consequences of uncleanness were more feared than the results of sin!

Suddenly a lot of things made sense. I had always wondered why even nominal Muslims make such a big thing out of not eating pork and not getting licked by dogs when sins like lusting after women are treated so superficially. Even the 911 terrorists frequented striptease joints.

Under this perspective, the greatest felt need is not salvation from sin but deliverance from defilement. Every element of a devout Muslim's life is ordered by this insecurity; the direction to face when falling asleep, the Arabic words with which to preface a task, speech, or greeting, and even the way to blow one's nose or wipe one's bottom. Because eating pork introduces the worst possible defilement and because one's ceremonial purity outweighs one's moral purity, the pork eater (George W. Bush) is more despicable than the murderer (Osama Bin Laden).

Defilements come in various levels. Each defilement has an appropriately matched ritual for cleansing. Burping and passing gas represents one level of defilement. Touching one's private parts comprises another. Touching semen, urine, feces, or menstrual flow is serious;



Muslims still conduct sacrifices.

serious enough that a woman's prayers will not be heard during her period.

How does the gospel apply under these circumstances? Does the Bible teach about defilement? Does the gospel address defilement as well as sin? Is defilement an integral part of man's sinfulness? Is

shame related to defilement the way guilt is related to sin? Does Christ save us from both? Is the apparent lack of theological attention to this area related to Christianity's weakness in non-Western cultures which are more shame than guilt oriented? In cultures where defilement looms larger than depravity, are our gospel presentations relevant? Do we disciple converts into healthy and life changing maturity or are many still wrestling with unaddressed and misunderstood insecurities?

In Indonesia a friend asked me why Christians insist that Jesus is God and that he was crucified. Instead of trying to convince my friend that all have sinned and that all sin must be punished by death, I noted what he already knew, that all flesh is defiled and from before birth contains the very substances from which we need to be cleansed. I expressed my opinion on the futility of ceremonial rituals for making us clean enough for heaven, because dirt cannot make itself clean any better than darkness can make itself light. I said that

just as a candle drives darkness from a room by entering it, God drives defilement from human flesh by becoming it. In other words, the very thing that Muslims object to most in Christianity, *syirik*--the identification of God with his creation, is the solution to man's most basic problem as perceived by most Muslims.

I should have also shown how the nature of Jesus' miracles -- healing blindness with his spit and leprosy with his touch -- proves that he had to be God. No mere prophet could touch a leper without being contaminated, and while a prophet's grave might be holy his spit remains foul like everyone else's.

I did point out that by embracing death itself Jesus destroyed it. I concluded that our only hope for heaven lay in appropriating Jesus' undefiled life and victory over death for ourselves by faith as is symbolized in baptism and communion.

When Adam and Eve sinned, they felt shame before guilt. Before the fall "The man and his wife were both naked and they felt no shame" (Genesis 2:25). After the fall, "The eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves" (Genesis 3:7). But even with the fig leaves on, they were still naked. "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid" (Genesis 3:10). Interestingly and perhaps symbolically, God himself covered Adam and Eve's nakedness. "The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them" (Genesis 3:21).

This progression is noteworthy. Adam and Eve hid after they sinned because they were afraid. They were afraid because they were naked. Shame over nakedness preceded fear, alienation, and separation. Guilt feelings were curiously avoided with

some profound excuses. "The devil," for Eve, and "the woman," for Adam, "made me do it" (Genesis 3:12-13).

If the immediate consequence of sin was death, ("For when you eat of it you will surely die" Genesis 2:17.), then this "death" must be more than just the end of physical life.

The Old Testament contains many images indicating that defilement



Muslims cover their heads and bare their feet for prayer and worship.

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is integral to depravity. As a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, Aaron and his sons were to wash their hands and feet whenever they entered the tent of meeting or approached the altar, otherwise they would die (Exodus 30:17-21). Blemished or defective animals were

not permitted to be used for sacrifices. Items used for worship had to be anointed or consecrated. Unclean animals could not be eaten, and even circumcision probably had some connection to ceremonial cleanness as the illustration in Colossians 2:11-13 indicates by relating the foreskin with the "sinful nature."

Jesus himself, when he challenged the Pharisees in their use and understanding of cleansing and dietary laws, affirmed that man is unclean (Mark 7:20-23).

The concept of original defilement helps total depravity make sense. "There is no one righteous, not even one" (Romans 3:10) and "all our righteous acts are like filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6), because we are defiled. Sin is not inherited but stems from our being. We are unclean and everything we touch or do, even with good intent, becomes contaminated. The Muslim who understands that the ground is cursed wherever he steps if he has not bathed after having had sex may comprehend how bondage to unrighteousness proceeds from defilement. This may also explain why Muslims seem to strive harder to be clean than they strive to be righteous.

Niels Mulder says, "Shame is the feeling of anxiety about one's presentation, about being criticized or laughed at, for short, a feeling of embarrassment and fear for the eyes, ears, and opinions of others."¹ Gailyn Van Rheenen quotes Jacob A. Loewen saying, "While shame is 'the response to disapproval of one's own peers,' guilt is the 'self-condemnation resulting from the violation of internalized convictions of right and wrong.'"² To these definitions I add that guilt is a feeling and/or a condition occurring when one has broken or not kept a divine or



Muslims bow to Mecca 5 times daily.

human law, while shame is a feeling and/or a condition stemming from a shortcoming in one's state of being either before God or peers. Just as guilt can be real or imagined and felt or not felt, shame can also be objective or subjective and perceived or ignored.

Both Paul (Romans 9:33) and Peter quote Isaiah on the subject. "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame" (1 Peter 2:6). If shame is limited to a subjective feeling in the face of one's peers without any objective condition, then how could this promise be true? What about all the saints and prophets who got ridiculed? If, on the other hand, "shame" in this verse refers to an objective condition, then those who trust in the cornerstone laid in Zion (Jesus) have the objective basis for feeling shame permanently removed, whether they get ridiculed or not.

We talk about how sacrifice for forgiveness of sins is no longer necessary because Christ has provided the ultimate sacrifice, but what are our reasons for setting aside Old Testament dietary and cleansing laws? When Jesus "declared all foods 'clean'" (Mark 7:18-23), he was not setting these laws aside but challenging added traditions by pointing out that the issue of cleanness was in man's basic condition and not in the food. Were these laws intended to highlight man's defiled condition as the sacrifices highlighted man's sin? Have we set aside these laws because Jesus once and for all removes our defilement just like he removes our sin? "The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of

Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God" (Hebrews 9:13-14)!

Can we present the gospel in a way that addresses shame as well as sin. What kind of gospel have we been taking to the Muslim world when we neglect the issue of man's "nakedness?" Jesus not only bore our sins; he bore our shame. As the "author and perfecter of our faith" He "endured the cross, scorning its *shame*" (Hebrews 12:2).

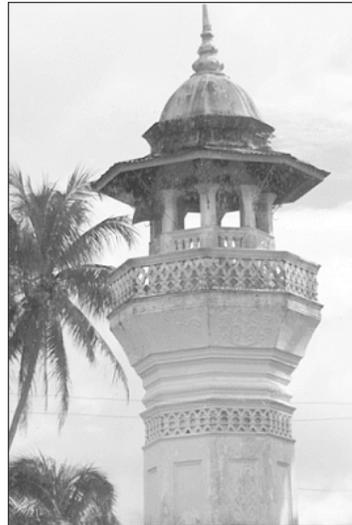
What did it mean for "Him who had no sin to *be sin* for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21)? Did he become depraved, or defiled? Could he have conquered our defilement by assuming it? Christ was not only "pierced for our transgressions" and "crushed for our iniquities;" he "took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows" (Isaiah 53:4-5). The atonement is not just the simple matter of someone taking our punishment, a concept which Muslims find extremely distasteful. God took upon himself our fallen flesh to the point of pain and death so that our nature can be transformed, and we can live forever.

Has something been missing in our gospel preaching so that we don't reach Muslim at their point of deepest insecurity? Does Muslim infatuation with endless cycles of ritual cleansing reveal another human problem as basic as sin? Do we need an approach to evangelism and discipleship that will meet people at this other point of need? Could such an approach revolutionize outreach and church planting in some of the most resistant parts of the world?

ENDNOTES

¹ Niels Mulder, *Individual and Society in Java: a Cultural Analysis*, Gadjah Mada University Press: Yogyakarta, Indonesia. 1989. p. 26.

² Gailyn Van Rheenen, *Communicating Christ in Animistic Contexts*, Baker Book House: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1991. p. 282.



Calls to prayer rip down and dusk.

Misunderstandings Fan Inter-Cultural Hostilities

Would you be distracted listening to a sermon delivered by a man wearing lipstick and eye shadow? Would you be embarrassed at being led in prayer by a man wearing a ball cap? Would your mind wander in worship led by a praise team clad in bikini bathing suits?

A missionary family went to live among a cannibalistic primitive tribe to translate the Bible into their unwritten language. Their first family meal of imported canned food made quite a stir. The villagers quickly grasped that a can with a carrot picture contained carrots and a can with a picture of beans contained beans, but what were they feeding the baby! Surely this form of cannibalism was the most profound of all!

Much Muslim hostility to Christianity is driven by these kinds of cross-cultural issues.

Imagine you are the head of an extended household responsible for the health, welfare, and moral development of not only your own children but also your nieces and nephews. Imagine your child returns from boarding school as a practicing homosexual intent on converting other family members to this new lifestyle. Now you are tasting the pain and fear in a devout Muslim household when a member converts.

Muslims learn from infancy about Christianity. They are taught Christians are idolaters who worship three gods – a father god, a mother god, and a son



Observation (not study) undergirds Muslim opinion.

god. Many perceive that Christians pray to images of these gods. One glance into a cathedral at the statue of a brutally beaten, mostly naked man with blood streaming from pierced hands, feet, side, and scalp confirms the extent of Christian blasphemy.

Muslims also perceive that Christianity undergirds all kinds of moral decadence. Movie posters, TV shows, and Hollywood entertainers provide ample confirmation. In Muslim thinking, people proclaim religious affiliation in their names. That is why Cassius Clay became Mohammed Ali, and Lou Al Cinder became Kareem Abdul Jabar. To this way of thinking, people with names like Madonna and Michael Jackson must be Christians.

Imagine life as a Muslim. Imagine that the only Christians you know are the ones that you have seen on TV. One day when you go into town you hear music, singing, and clapping coming from an

unmarked building. You ask a nearby vendor who informs you that it's the Sunday morning Christian "rock concert."

Later in life someone gives you a gospel tract. It says Jesus died for your sins so that you could go to heaven by just believing in him, no matter how bad you've been or what you've done. Nothing you do can qualify you for entering heaven. You might think to yourself, "No wonder Christians are so decadent. They have no sense of justice or moral responsibility?" Catholic, Pentecostal, and Evangelical Christians have all verbally and non-verbally miscommunicated to the Muslim world.

Ultimately, Muslims do not form opinions of Christianity by studying its tenets but by watching its practices and observing its impact on the people who are born into it. Negative impressions torpedo openness to the doctrines of grace. Usually, only personal relationships with genuine believers who are living righteously according to a Muslim perspective can correct these stereotypes.

God may call you into one of these stereotype destroying relationships.



Many Christians have little or no understanding about Islam. This 75 minute video can prepare you for developing Christ centered relationships with Muslims.

Topics:

- ☉ Perceptions and realities of Islam and its history
- ☉ Islam in America
- ☉ Major doctrines of Islam: God, Man, Sin, Salvation, Revelation – contrasted with Christianity
- ☉ Guidelines for responding to Islam in the light of Christ's Great Commission.

A teacher's manual, handout, and poster are also available.

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A Muslim Mourning

They say he is the savior,
but what is that to me?
I've prayed five times a day
from the tiny age of three.
They say he died for sinners,
but why would he do that?
I pay for mine by fasting,
and they're forgiven by fiat.
It's such a shame.

This Christian thing
destroys God's name.

I visited a church once.
It really disturbed me.

Their highest holy idol,
a man bleeding on a tree.

I passed outside another.

The noise came through the door,

their Sunday rabble rousing
like Madonna I've seen before.
It's such a shame.

This Christian thing
destroys God's name.

And now my oldest daughter,
she reads their "holy" pages,
which say they are the salt and light
of all the Western rages.

So what can I do now?

I love my daughter so.

To keep this from her sisters,
I'll just have to make her go.

It's such a shame.

This Christian thing
destroys my name.

© Bruce Sidebotham

Religion *IS* Relevant in War on Terrorism

condensed from Alex Buchan's Article in the Jan 18, 2002 COMPASS DIRECT

Syndicated columnists, international affairs experts, and talk-show pundits, who studiously ignored religion until September 11th have magically metamorphosed into specialists. They lecture on Islam, quote the Quran, warn about the dangers of theological absolutes, and set new guidelines for managing faith.

Did the attack on America open secular eyes to see and understand religion's role in human life?

Resoundingly no! Religion continues to be misunderstood, misrepresented, and thoroughly marginalized.

Post 9/11 religious experts divide into two camps. One says, "All religions are intrinsically bad and lead to violence." The other says, "All religions are intrinsically good and teach peace." Both views reflect half truths, overlook realities of religious conflict, and ignore religion's significance for meaningful change.

Atheistic commentators in camp one had a field day with September 11th.

Richard Dawkins, the Charles Symonyi Professor of the Public Understanding of Science, wrote in the British *Guardian* newspaper, "No weapon is potentially more dangerous than a mind bent on attaining eternal salvation, whatever the faith."

Columnist Polly Toynbee told us, "A perverted abhorrence of half the human race lies at the maggoty heart of religion."

Matthew Parris of the *London Times* called religions which put another

world before this one "dangerous," implying that only a materialist view of the world could humanize society.

These views cleverly evade "Islamophobia." Since condemning Islam would be politically incorrect, commentators generalize the target and condemn all religions as equally harmful.

For this group, the tragedy on September 11th was caused by religion. The solution is to have less of it!

At least these writers correctly attribute causality to religion. Religion – however distorted – was a factor. If these attackers were mere psychopaths, then their religion is implicated in their psychosis.

Eliminating religion will not stop violent fanatics. Good religion differs from bad religion. History demonstrates positive roles for religion. A letter to the columnist Anatole Kaletsky pointed out, "The Protestant Christian doctrine of church and state has led to the modern concept of toleration."

Politicians and religious leaders in the other camp maintain all religions are essentially peace loving, so fanaticism – not religion – inspired the attacks.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair preached, "Islam is a religion of peace." It cannot be responsible for the eccentric interpretations of a few hate-filled members!

New York Rabbi Boteach told CNN's Faith and Conflict, "The real problem is not religion, but when a religion claims a monopoly of the way to God – that's

what leads to conflict and it has no place in a pluralistic society."

Thomas Friedman of the *New York Times* placed the blame for fanaticism squarely on the lack of democracy.

Most Muslims were indeed appalled, but the terrorists were surely religiously motivated. Religions are not completely peaceful. Even Martin Luther and John Calvin justified force against the enemies of God. Presidents and prime ministers cannot speak authoritatively on the nature of religions.

Both sides fail in analysis and, consequently, with solutions. They overlook the part religion actually plays.

The first group eliminates any role for religion by censoring it from the public arena. The second group, while positive about religion, also destroys its significance. If fanaticism is the only problem and if all religions are equal, then fanaticism must be caused by other things like bad education and material deprivation. Religion becomes irrelevant. It cannot change anything.

Against terrorism that is ironically grounded in religious convictions, better political and economic systems become the main solution and military operations become the main defense. If, however, religion is part of the problem then, then we need to send missionaries as well as militaries.

The events of September 11th have not changed dominant attitudes about religion. If all religions are equally good, or if all religions are equally bad, then what is the relevance of religion?

Music Is Most Persuasive Testimony Medium

from *Global Worship Report* Vol. 1, No. 2 <www.ad2000.org/tracks/worship/wann12.htm>

Music and cultural arts communicate the gospel more powerfully and less confrontationally in many situations.

Don McCurry writes of a profound experience in Pakistan. "There, sitting cross-legged on a small Persian rug behind the desk was my esteemed professor. He strummed an instrument and sang a beautiful Indian raga. When the music subsided Dr. Rahbar said, 'Don, you can say anything you want to a Muslim in poetry or music and he will

receive it; but if you preach it in prose, he may try to kill you.'"

A worker in Central Asia relates this story. "As I was sleeping I began to hear the Michael Card song *Love Crucified Arose*. It's a song about the life and work of Jesus. As I came to my senses I realized this song was not being sung by a native English speaker. I quickly ran outside and found a Kirghiz man. His English was not very good. As we spoke I learnt that five years earlier he was

traveling in a remote area and came upon a vehicle in distress. The driver was a foreigner. After he helped fix the vehicle, the foreigner presented him the Michael Card cassette as a gift. He memorized every song and became a believer."

Christian music CDs and videos make great gifts.

No Christian service person should deploy to an unreached area without some!

Muslim Studies Training Programs in 2002

Dates	Name of Program/Courses	Organization/School	Contact Info	Location
2 - 4 Apr	Naaman Initiative Consultation	Naaman Initiative	1-719-572-5908	Norfolk, VA
30 May - 7 June	Summer Institute on Islam	Arab World Ministry	1-800-447-3566	Philadelphia
May & June	World Mission Center	Southwestern Baptist Th. Sem.	1-817-923-1921	Fort Worth
29 June - 29 July	Summer Training & Outreach Program	CHRISTAR	1-800-755-7955	New York City
July & August	Inst of Muslim Studies (short classes)	Columbia Int'l University	1-800-777-2227	Columbia, SC
June & July	School of World Mission (short classes)	Fuller Theological Seminary	1-800-235-2222	Pasadena, CA
July & August	Sumr Inst of Muslim Stdies (wkly classes)	Ministry to Muslims	1-719-597-0609	Boulder, CO
TBA this Summer	Sahara Challenge (8 wk course, 2 wk trip)	Arab International Ministry	1-888-446-5457	Indianapolis, IN
July	Center for Ministry to Muslims	Assembly of God Theo. Sem.	1-417-866-3313	Springfield, MO

Seminars and Workshops That Will Come to You

Organization	Program	Contact
Ministry to Muslims	Introduction To Islam	1-719-597-0609
Kamil International Missions	Evangelism & Discipleship Training	1-919-875-8778
Zwemer Institute for Muslim Studies	Muslim Awareness Seminars	1-219-452-2245
Arab International Ministry	Middle Eastern Evangelism Training	1-888-446-5457
Operation Reveille	Missions Perspectives on the War on Terrorism	1-719-572-5908

Operation
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Training and equipping military Christians for cross-cultural ministry



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