

# 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.

continued on page 2