

Questions
MUSLIMS ASK



GLOBAL INITIATIVE
REACHING MUSLIM PEOPLES

Questions Muslims Ask

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Introduction

For centuries, Muslims and Christians have stood on separate hills and shouted across the valley at each other, never daring to come together closely enough to truly examine each other's beliefs and answer each other's questions—never truly listening to each other's heartbeat. It is a futile exercise to point the finger of blame at events of the past, or even to those of the present. The fact is, there is a wall—a deep gulf that must be bridged by love and understanding.

In spite of setbacks like 9/11, there are some positive signs of change during these early years of the 21st century. In some areas Christians and Muslims are not only becoming interested in the differences of each other's belief systems, but they are also becoming interested in each other as individuals—individuals who are equally created by God. This is good and needs to be encouraged at every possible level.

In dialoguing with Christians, many misunderstandings about Muslims have been brought to the surface. Many Christians are afraid of getting too close to Muslims; some even believe Muslims are all terrorists or, somehow, evil people. In general, however, Muslims are very God-conscious people.

Conversely, in dialoguing with Muslims, the same fear and suspicions are found. Muslims are asking some fundamental questions that need to be answered.

One area of the ministry of Global Initiative is Muslim Awareness Seminars in nations throughout the world. The basic purpose of these sessions is to impact pastors and laity with the great need of praying for and trying to understand Muslims—coming to the realization that we must first reach out to them in love.

This booklet was prepared to address some of the misunderstandings between Christians and Muslims, giving answers to each one. To thoroughly examine the subjects and the complex problems would have taken several volumes. This small booklet briefly addresses several of the basic questions Muslims ask. What is really needed is for Christians and Muslims to sincerely and prayerfully sit down together to discuss these vital areas of disagreement and misunderstanding.

The Global Initiative team commends this booklet to the reader and we pray that it will continue to be a catalyst for accomplishing that goal. We pray that Christians and Muslims who are sincerely asking these questions will not only come to a better understanding of each other, but that we will, together, come to a deeper understanding of God and His plan for humankind.



Has the Bible Been Corrupted?

God's Holy Word is very important. Muslims and Christians both believe throughout the ages God has given instructions to man concerning how he should live and how to find a way to heaven.

Christians believe that God spoke through His Holy Spirit to men, and they wrote as the Holy Spirit breathed upon them (2 Peter 1:19-21). The apostle Paul said, "*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness*" (2 Timothy 3:16). We then see that the Bible itself explains that the Scriptures were given by God to holy men who were submissive to the Holy Spirit, holy men who wrote as God's Spirit "breathed" upon them.

On the other hand, Muhammad said that the *Qur'an* was given to him by the angel Gabriel and that it was given exactly as it is recorded in the "Mother of books which is on the throne of God." Muslims say that the *Qur'an* (which means recitation) is the final revelation of God to man and supersedes all previous revelation. Christians say the Holy Bible, which was given centuries before the *Qur'an*, is the complete Word of God and is the rule of faith and practice for all men. The Holy Book itself says it is the final revelation of God to man (Revelation 22:18,19).

It is interesting to know that Muhammad firmly believed in the authenticity of the Bible as it existed in his day. There are many verses in the *Qur'an* which demonstrate his confidence in the Holy Books that came before him. Here are only two: 1) *“Say people of the book! Ye have no ground to stand upon unless you stand fast by the law, the gospel and all the revelation that has come to you from your Lord”* (Sura 5:71); and, 2) *“Before Thee, also, the apostles we sent were but men, to whom we granted inspiration. If ye realize this not, ask of those who possess the message”* (Sura 21:7).

Dr. Akbar Haqq, in his book *Sharing Your Faith With a Muslim*, says, “In view of the clear teaching of the *Qur'an* about the authenticity of the Bible and its freedom from corruption, it is no wonder that not only the earliest doctors of Islam but also many other Muslim scholars after them have refused to entertain a belief contrary to that. Their position is further strengthened by a crucial verse in the *Qur'an*: *‘The words of the Lord are perfect in truth and justice; there is none who can change His words’* (Sura 6:115). Again, we read, *‘No change can there be in the Words of God. This is indeed the supreme felicity’* (Sura 10:64).” Christians can say “Amen” to that. (Parenthetically, please note that the author’s use of the *Qur'an* does not mean followers of Christ accept it as authoritative for themselves. However, as Muslims consider it authoritative, they should accept the testimony of the *Qur'an* as it relates to the authenticity of the Bible or of Jesus Christ.)

With this in mind, a Christian should ask his Muslim friend: If Muhammad believed in the authenticity of the Bible and if Muslim scholars did not question it, then when was the Bible corrupted? Manuscripts of both the Old and New Testaments, dating back to several hundred years before Muhammad, were placed in museums and are intact today.

These original manuscripts give credence to the content of the Holy Scriptures. The Christian might want to phrase his question in this manner: When was the Holy Bible corrupted? Was it before or after Muhammad lived?

If the Muslim replies “before,” he is in a dilemma because then he accuses Muhammad of being a false teacher because, as has already been noted, the *Qur’an*, which Muslims say is the very Word of God, clearly refers to the Holy Scriptures as God’s Word and was to be obeyed and followed. If, on the other hand, the Muslim says “after,” he also is in a great dilemma because the Bible had already been written in many languages and distributed widely in the world.

The Christian could then ask another series of valid questions. Who changed it? When was it changed? How could this possibly happen? What did it say before it was changed? Does history record such an historic event, as it would certainly be if all the leaders of the Christian and Jewish communities worldwide were to come together to rewrite the Holy Scriptures? Christians love their Scriptures and would never, at any time, agree to any attempt at changing them. In fact, the Bible itself promises the severest penalty against anyone who attempts to change them. The Jews love their Old Testament Books of the Law and would never collaborate with Christians or anyone in an attempt to change these Scriptures.

Archeological Discoveries

It is interesting to note that in recent years, archeological discoveries have unearthed ancient manuscripts dating back more than 2,000 years. These manuscripts include portions

of every book in the Old Testament, with the exception of the book of Esther. The entire book of Isaiah was uncovered. All of these ancient manuscripts show no major changes from the Bible we have today.

But the most convincing answer to the question of the changing of God's Word must come from God Himself. We read that God said, *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away"* (Matthew 24:35). Thus the sincere question concerning who corrupted the Bible must be answered with God's own words, *"My words will never pass away."* God's Word is eternal and He would never permit His Holy Word to be changed. How very important it is that we read and obey His Holy Scriptures and accept them as His pure Word, *"which can save you"* (James 1:21). *"And how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus"* (2 Timothy 3:15).

What About Different Translations?

The original Old Testament was mostly written in Hebrew with some portions in Aramaic. The New Testament was written in Greek. Many manuscripts of the Holy Bible still exist in these languages. As the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ spread into many countries, the Bible was translated into the languages of these countries. Some Muslims may be confused by the various translations of the Holy Bible and an explanation is in order. For example, in English, there is the King James Version that dates back to 1611 A.D. and is still widely used today. However, since then, as the language of the people has changed, revised versions have been printed to make the Holy Bible more readable. Since these translations are made from the original documents, there is no difference in meaning.

The Christian would also answer by saying that there are many versions of the *Qur'an* that have been translated by different scholars, such as Dawood, Yusuf Ali, Arberry and Pickthall. These versions differ in many aspects. Though each translation is different, each seeks to be true to the original meaning.



Why Do Christians Worship Three Gods?

To better understand why this question is asked repeatedly, Christians should understand some history of the beginnings of Islam. By the seventh century the Christian Church, especially in Arabia, had drifted far from doctrinal purity and spiritual vitality. Among pagans, there was a great deal of polytheism (worship of more than one god) and this incensed Muhammad. The strongest thrust of his message was that man must worship one true God. To a Muslim, even suggesting that God can be divided or to say someone can be equal with God is to commit *shirk*, which is the worst possible sin—blasphemy.

Some of the so-called “Christians” Muhammad knew practiced Maryolatry. This may have led to the mistaken belief that Christians believed Mary to be a part of the Trinity. The *Qur’an* always speaks of Jesus as the son of Mary. In Sura 4:171 we read, “*Oh people of the book, ... Christ Jesus the son of Mary was an apostle of God and His word...*” Muslims, Christians, and Jews state in their creed that they worship the one true God—the Creator, Ruler and Judge of the universe, who revealed himself to Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and other prophets. The unity of God is fundamental, yet Muslims and Jews feel that Christians have compromised this belief through the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

Christians need to understand the sincerity and force of the feeling Muslims have concerning this. There are many differences in belief systems among Muslims around the world, but the belief and practice of the declaration that “God is One” is a daily ritual worldwide. For 13 centuries, this emphasis has not lessened.

In answering Muslims, one must understand that Islam presents itself as a practical and reasoned religion. This is part of the problem. To understand the Trinity through human reasoning is a futile exercise. An infinite God cannot be understood by finite people. Muslims freely admit that God is beyond human reasoning; God is transcendent and unfathomable. As one Muslim stated, “Allah cannot be comprehended. He comprehends us. We are His slaves who only have the privilege to worship Him in fear.”

When discussing the question of the Trinity with a Muslim, you might ask, “Do you agree that God is all powerful and is so great that if He wished He could reveal himself to man in a hundred different ways?” Muslims usually answer in the affirmative. Then say, “Please, my friend, though it is a mystery, let us accept by faith that God who is one is also ‘three in one’.” Faith in His Word is the key.

In her book entitled *In the Family of Abraham*, Anne Cooper wrote, “The ability of human beings to reason logically is a very precious gift. It is one of the major factors that distinguishes us from animals. At the same time the ability has parameters and this must be recognized. Man cannot fully explain himself; he cannot explain the mystery of his own tripartite nature, how his body, mind, and spirit react together to make an integrated whole. How then can he dare to presume to dissect the nature of the great power so infinitely above and beyond him? We must reject any attempt to prove religious mysteries by reason” (page 86).

The Holy Bible says, *“Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?”* (Romans 11:33,34).

“Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great: He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory” (1 Timothy 3:16).

In the first chapter, we established that the Bible is the unchangeable Word of God. Therefore, we need to look very carefully at what it says in order to answer this important question.

Jesus Christ Himself said that the first commandment is: *“The Lord our God, the Lord is one”* (Mark 12:29). To be a follower of Jesus Christ is to believe in the unity of God.

God, speaking through His prophet Isaiah, said, *“I am the Lord, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God”* (Isaiah 45:5). Every follower of Jesus Christ must believe in the unity of God or he is not a true follower. The very thought that God had a physical relationship with Mary and produced a son is absolutely repugnant to Christians.

On the other hand, followers of Jesus Christ have come to know God as: 1) a loving heavenly Father who loves humankind; 2) a redeeming Savior who shows the way to God; and 3) a quickening Spirit who gives comfort, guidance and power in this life.

To better answer the question *“Why do Christians worship three gods?”* we should try to understand who God

is. Both Muslims and Christians agree that no man has seen God. It would be amusing, if it were not so tragic, to listen to people who cannot put God in a test tube and analyze Him declare there is no God, or that “God is dead.” What foolishness! The Bible says, “*The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God’*” (Psalm 53:1). But the real quest of life is to come to know and understand God’s nature—what God is really like—and then find the way to know Him personally and intimately.

The prophet Isaiah was one of many prophets who spoke of the coming of Jesus and what this would mean in helping humankind understand who God is. The prophet Isaiah said, “*Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel*” (Isaiah 7:14). The meaning of that name, Immanuel, is “God with us,” or “God revealed to us.”

So we ask, “Who is God?” We would have to say He is unknowable, unreachable, incomprehensible apart from Jesus Christ who was sent to the world as Immanuel, God revealed to man. This explains Jesus’ answer to His disciples when they asked Him how to find the way to God (remember, that is the ultimate question of humankind): “*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me*” (John 14:6). The follower of Jesus would answer the question “What is God really like?” by saying that a person cannot really know God except he first knows Immanuel. It is Immanuel who introduces people to a heavenly Father whose greatest attribute is LOVE. It is Immanuel who demonstrates this unfathomable love. Only Immanuel is without sin. No other man ever lived who did not sin; all have sinned. This Immanuel has power over all sickness, even over death. No man in the history of the world had this power. This Immanuel has power to forgive sins. No man

has ever dared to even say he had power to forgive sins. So through Immanuel we have a trustworthy testimony of who God is.

This then brings us to another question.



Who Really is Jesus Christ?

Both the *Qur'an* and the Holy Bible speak of the miraculous birth of Jesus. The prophet Isaiah prophesied 700 years before His birth that He would be born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14).

Sura 3:47 and Luke 1:34,35 both give accounts of the angel who appeared to Mary to tell her of the miraculous birth.

The prophet Isaiah continued to speak of His wonderful life: *“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this”* (Isaiah 9:6,7). Both the *Qur'an* and the Holy Bible speak of His sinless life, His power to heal the sick and raise the dead.

Perhaps the two greatest differences between Muslims and Christians are in their understanding of who Jesus Christ was and what His great work on earth was. First, He was “Immanuel,” God with us; and second, His great work was to

provide a way of salvation. He was crucified on a cross and arose from the grave on the third day.

Concerning the first question, both the *Qur'an* and the Holy Bible speak of Jesus as being the Word of God. We read in Sura 4:171, "*Christ Jesus the son of Mary was an apostle of God [Allah] and His Word which He bestowed on Mary and a spirit proceeding from Him;*" and in Sura 3:45, "*Behold the angels said, 'Oh Mary! Allah giveth thee glad tidings of a Word from Him: his name will be Christ Jesus.'*"

In the Holy Bible we read, "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning*" (John 1:1,2). Thus both in the *Qur'an* and the Holy Bible, Jesus is seen as the Word of God.

To really understand who Jesus is, one should study the first 10 chapters of the Holy Book of Hebrews in the New Testament. The first two verses of Hebrews chapter one succinctly introduce us to God as revealed in Jesus Christ, "*In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe*" (Hebrews 1:1,2).

We have now briefly examined who God is and found that He is unknowable, unreachable and incomprehensible apart from Jesus Christ who is "Immanuel," a name that means God revealed to us. We have also introduced who Jesus is. Now, before we leave the subject of the Trinity, we need to try to understand who is the Third Person or the Third Revelation of God to man.



Who Is the Holy Spirit?

We must again ask “Who can understand the mysteries of God, and how or why should He reveal himself as the Holy Spirit?” To try to understand, we can only go again to God’s Word, which is eternal.

When Jesus told His disciples that His life on earth would soon be ended and that He would return to heaven, His disciples were very troubled. We read in the Holy Book, “*Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me*” (John 14:1). John also says, “*And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever*” (John 14:16).

Think for a moment how Jesus described the person God would send and what His work would be. First of all, the Greek word used for this description is *Parakletos*, which means Comforter, Counselor or Helper. In John 14:16 we read, “*to be with you forever.*” Only the Holy Spirit of God could stay with us forever, for though man must die God’s Spirit is eternal. Again, we read, “*The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you*” (John 14:17). It is not possible that this “paraclete,” who Jesus prophesied would come, could have been a man, for the world can know a person but it cannot know the Spirit of

God. Again we read, “*The Holy Spirit [the paraclete] will dwell in you.*” Surely, we can see that Jesus was not prophesying about the coming of a man, rather He was announcing the coming of the blessed Holy Spirit of the Godhead. Some Muslims have brought confusion by inserting the Greek word *Paraklutos*, meaning “praised one,” for *Parakletos*. *Paraklutos* is sometimes used as another name for Muhammad. However, it is not found in the original Greek manuscripts of the Holy Scriptures.



Is There Really a Triune God?

God is one and only one, but He eternally exists in Trinity. This is a mystery. But to those who will, by faith, accept God in His great revelation to man, the Holy Bible declares that the mystery becomes a reality. In concluding this weighty matter of the Godhead, note the following quotations of Richard Starch and Christopher Gornold-Smith.

According to Richard Starch:

“There is and can be only one God—of this, all Christians are absolutely certain, just as much as Muslims. Nor can any other being be in any way compared to Him, for He is infinite and eternal while all else is finite and created. Least of all can human beings be compared to Him, as He is utterly just, loving, merciful and good, while men, even the saints and prophets, are sinners. Why then have Christians maintained that Jesus Christ is divine, and so also the Holy Spirit of God? There must have been very strong reasons for them to do something so strange.

“Let us begin with the Holy Spirit, as it may be easier to understand Christian beliefs about Him. The Bible speaks of the Spirit as a personal reality and a power (as indeed does the Qur’an); what is more, a personal reality and a power that God can and does send to

inspire His prophets and His people. But He is the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of God cannot be a distinct being created by God, like a human spirit or an angel. The spirit of a man is not something separate from the man, which he might make or unmake; it is part of that man's very being, yet not the whole of it. So also with the Spirit of God. He must be truly divine, and not a created being. Nor can He be a second God, for there cannot be any such thing. He must be in some way a part or aspect or attribute of the one God—truly God, yet not exhausting the whole meaning of the name 'God.'

“Consider then what the Bible tells us about Jesus. In His own time many people recognized Him as a prophet, and He accepted the name. If that had been all, there would be no problem. But it was not all. He did not speak of revelations granted to Him, as other prophets did; He spoke as if He himself were the revealer or even that which was revealed. He did not only warn of judgment to come, as other prophets did; He said that He himself would be the judge. Most important of all, He said that He had come to do something that was not the work of any prophet; He had come to give His life as a ransom for many, to be lifted up on the Cross to draw all men to himself. The apostle Peter described this in words taken from the prophecies of the Old Testament: Jesus, he said, was the bearer of our sins (1 Peter 2:24).

“But these are things which only God can do. A prophet can reveal what God says to him; he can speak in the name of God, as God's apostle and representative; but he cannot speak as if he himself had authority. Jesus did. A prophet can warn people of

judgment to come; but only God can actually judge, for only He understands the inner hearts of people. And no created being could ransom sinful men for God, or bear their sins; God would never punish the innocent, nor would it do the guilty any good if He did. But if God himself took the weight of our rebellion and bore the pain of our sinfulness, that really could make the difference.

“There are (a Christian writer once said) three great barriers between God and the human race. One is the barrier of nature: God alone is God, and we are mere humans. The second is the barrier of sin: God is good, and we are not. The third is the barrier of death: God is eternal, and we are mortals. There is no way any of us could cross or break down any of those barriers. But God, who is Almighty, could and did. He broke down the first barrier by taking our human nature upon himself; He broke down the second by bearing our sin; and He broke down the third when Jesus rose from the dead.

“Yet Jesus was not the whole of God; indeed, He spoke of and to God. Therefore, as with the Holy Spirit, we seem driven to speak in terms of a part or aspect or attribute of God; not as a lesser being, not as a second god, but truly part of the One God.

“What sort of language should we use to refer to Him? Jesus himself habitually spoke of God as His Father, and hence it has been very common to use the phrase ‘God the Son’ or ‘The Son of God.’ This had one serious disadvantage; it might suggest to pagans something like one of their legends, in which a ‘god’ comes to earth and has a child, by a human woman.

Such an idea seems equally blasphemous to Jews, Christians and Muslims. There is in fact only one place in the Gospels where Jesus' 'Sonship' is connected in any way with His birth, Luke 1:35, which is simply indicating the truth that Jesus' birth was by the direct will of God, that He was born of a virgin, without any human father. Elsewhere it is made clear that He always had been 'the Son,' from all eternity, one aspect of the one eternal God.

"The other key term that the New Testament uses is 'The Word of God'—one especially used by the apostle John. (It is interesting that this expression is also used to describe Jesus in the Qur'an.) A human 'word' is something distinct from the people who use it; for one thing, any number of people may use the same word. But God's Word is different; it is the expression of His will, and cannot be distinguished from Him except as an aspect or attribute of His; it is as truly divine as His Spirit. And since Jesus came not only to save us but to reveal the truth about God, to show God's loving will in His life as well as His words, 'The Word of God' seemed particularly appropriate as a way to refer to Him; for it is through words that we are able to tell one another the truth.

"Christians have therefore felt obliged to recognize that within the eternal unity of God there are three different aspects, the Father, the Son or Word, and the Holy Spirit. Each is fully divine, but none is, by itself, exhausting what is meant by the word 'God.' Although in English these Three have traditionally been called 'persons,' this is not meant to suggest three different people; the word was actually taken over from Latin, in which it can often mean something

more like ‘character,’ or even ‘mask,’ a notion quite close to what was meant earlier by the use of the word ‘aspect.’ There is no question in any way of denying the Oneness of God; it is simply a matter of doing justice to what He himself has revealed about himself in the word of His prophets and apostles and in the work of His Word and His Spirit.”

Christopher Gornold-Smith writes concerning the Trinity:
“Muslims need to know that the Christian belief in the Trinity has been misunderstood. Christians do not believe in three Gods. So what do they believe?”

“First of all, Christians recognize the greatness and essential mystery of the Divine Being of God.

“Saint Basil, one of the great leaders of the Early Christian Church, said it is easier to measure the entire ocean in a little cup than to grasp the greatness of God in the human mind. We can say things about God that we know to be true, for God himself has revealed them. But if we could fully understand the Nature and Being of God, we would have to be as great as God himself or He would have to be as small as we are. And both of these notions would be at once impossible and blasphemous.

“Second, Christians recognize the unique authority of Jesus Christ.

“The Injil (John 1:1-14) describes Jesus as the living Word of God. It is interesting to note that Muslims too believe that Jesus is the ‘Word from Him.’ As I write, my thoughts, which are part of me, are expressed and embodied in words. As you read my words you

understand the way I think. My words are part of me. Remember, God's Word is perfect. There is no imperfection in God. If Jesus is the living Word of God, which we agree He is, then He is the perfect expression of God. His teachings are perfect; His life is perfect; His character is perfect. This gives Him unique authority. We agree that God alone is perfect. Yet we have seen that Jesus is also perfect.

"It goes one step further. I said my words are part of me. If Jesus is God's Living Word, then Jesus is, in some mysterious sense, part with God. In what sense we shall see later.

"In the New Testament there is an important statement about this; 'In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his Being, sustaining all things by his powerful word' (Hebrews 1:1-3).

"These verses describe Jesus Christ in His relationship to God. Three expressions are used: Son, radiance and representation.

"When Christians describe Jesus as the Son of God they do NOT mean that God had any kind of sexual relationship with Mary and thus begat Jesus as His Son! That would be as blasphemous as it would be abhorrent. Jesus himself said, 'God is a Spirit' (John 4:24). In Hebrews 3:1-3 it is clear the word Son does not refer to a physical relationship, for these verses

describe the Son as existing before the material universe.

“There is a clue to the meaning in the next key word: radiance. He is the ‘radiance of God’s glory.’ What radiance is to a source of light, Jesus Christ is to God. It is through the radiance that enters your eye you can see a source of light. You cannot see the source without the radiance, but without the source the radiance would not be. There is no source without radiance; no radiance without source.

“The third word is representation. Keep in mind the language of the original is Greek. The Greek word here is charakter, which we translate as representation. It refers to the impression made by a seal on wax or clay. In ancient times, for any document to carry authority it had to be sealed. The charakter gave it the mark of authenticity, so it carried all the power of the one to whom the seal belonged. Reading such a document is the same as personally meeting with the author. Because the charakter was formed directly from the seal, the two were identical in form. To see the stamped impression, the charakter, was to see the seal itself. Of course, without the owner’s seal there would be no stamp to reveal it.

“The terms radiance, representation (charakter) and Word convey relationship, but they do not convey personal, conscious existence. The closest term we have in human language is Son. A son could not exist without a father; a son may be expected to look like his father; a son may know the mind of his father; a son can officially represent his father and communicate his wishes; and a son is also a living, conscious

person. Is it surprising that Jesus Christ referred to God as Father? Jesus said, 'He who has seen me has seen the Father' (John 14:9), and 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me' (John 14:6).

"Third, Christians believe in the Holy Spirit.

"In the Gospel (Injil) we read that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God himself. Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit not as an angel (not even the archangel Gabriel) nor as another prophet, but as One like himself in nature and as God.

"Jesus said, 'I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—The Spirit of truth' (John 14:16). The Greek word translated another is allos. The word means another of the same kind. Jesus was saying that just as He and the Father were One in Nature, so the Holy Spirit is also of the same Divine Nature.

"What is the difference between a man and a man's spirit? What is the difference between God and the Spirit of God? In the Holy Scriptures the terms Holy Spirit and Spirit of God are used interchangeably. The Holy Spirit is God. In the first two verses of the Bible (the first two verses of the Taurat) we read, 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,' and 'the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters' (Genesis 1:1,2).

"Jesus was not describing another prophet. He said, 'The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he [already] lives with you' (John 14:17).

“Jesus made it very clear that the Holy Spirit was not merely an influence or force from God; the Holy Spirit is God. The Holy Spirit teaches us (John 14:26), testifies about Jesus (John 15:26), reminds us of what Jesus said (John 14:26), guides us into truth (John 16:13), and convicts the world of guilt in regard to sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8). The Holy Spirit has personal, conscious and divine existence.

“How can all this be brought together?

“It is beyond the capacity of man to fully comprehend God in His infinite greatness. Man himself, even within his small being, is complex and difficult to understand. Saint Augustine described man as a complex of body, soul and spirit—three, yet one. Is my body, relating to the physical world, really me? Of course it is. Is my soul, relating to the mental world, really me? Yes. Is my spirit, which responds to God, really me? Yes. Then am I three men or one? One.

“How much more is the complexity of God beyond man’s reach! Yet God has revealed himself. In this profound complexity of God’s Being there is three-ness. Why not two-ness or four-ness? Simply because it is so. What emerges from a close study of Scripture is that God is One, yet within that unity there is a three-ness of Being. Thus comes the expression Tri-unity, or Trinity. This also means there is within God—in His self-sufficient, eternal relationship—an eternal dynamic.

“When Christians speak of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, they do not mean there are three gods. Neither do they mean that these are just three modes

in which God has revealed himself. No, it goes beyond that. God eternally exists in Tri-unity. The Son, the living Word of God, came to us in human form when Jesus was born, but within the Godhead He had always been. God was not silent before Jesus (the Word of God) came into the world. And God's eternal Holy Spirit has always been moving. He is the Lord and giver of life.

“Certainly there is mystery in this Tri-unity, mystery far greater than that of man's own being. But this is what we should expect of God. He remains above and beyond us in His essential Being, yet He has revealed himself to us in Jesus Christ, the Word of God.”



Why Do Christians Insist on the Crucifixion?

Muslims have great difficulty with the Crucifixion. They raise some sincere questions that deal with the subject of sin and why Jesus needed to die as an atonement for sin. If the reader studies the first 10 chapters of the Holy Book of Hebrews, he will receive a better understanding concerning this most important subject.

The Islamic doctrine of sin is much different than that of Christianity. Muslims say that while Adam and Eve made a mistake in disobedience, their mistake, or sin, was confessed and forgiven. Muslims say that sin is not a part of man's nature, and though man continues to make mistakes, these can be forgiven by striving toward self-righteousness through a series of good works, which will bring the favor of God on judgment day.

The Holy Bible admonishes people to do good works, but it clearly teaches that good works can never deal with the most basic problem facing people—sin.

The prophet David wrote, *“Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me”* (Psalm 51:5). The apostle Paul said, *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23).

Isaiah asks the question, “*How then can we be saved?*” He says, “*All our righteous acts are like filthy rags... and like the wind our sins sweep us away*” (Isaiah 64:5,6).

God’s Holy Word gives us the answer, “*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 Savior*” (Titus 3:5,6).

Since the beginning of time, our gracious and merciful God has provided a way to have our sins covered and forgiven. In obedience, Abraham took his son to offer as a sacrifice, but our merciful God provided a ram for the offering.

The question is: Why was it necessary to kill an animal and offer it as a sacrifice? Again, we see all through the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament that humankind was commanded to offer blood sacrifices as a covering for sin. But in the Holy Book of Hebrews we see that on the Cross, Jesus Christ became the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all humankind. From that moment forward, people can be free from the guilt of sin by accepting His atoning work and believing on His name.

Just the mention of the words “Cross” and “Crucifixion” brings deep emotion to the follower of Jesus Christ. Christians are amazed that He was willing to suffer and die so that people could be forgiven and have freedom from the guilt and penalty of sin. This is a very sacred and powerful force among Christians.

Some Muslims say that Judas or someone else was substituted by the Roman soldiers, that Jesus did not go to the Cross. If that had happened, why did not Judas or the person substituted scream out that a mistake had been made?

How could anyone other than Jesus pray, in the midst of excruciating pain, that God would forgive His persecutors? How could such merciful and compassionate sentiments be heard from the lips of a passer-by who had been substituted? How could Mary, the mother of Jesus, not see such a fraud as she stood at the foot of the Cross and recognized Jesus and heard His voice speaking lovingly to her? If it were someone else on the Cross, Mary would have exposed it.

There are three things concerning this subject that Muslims should carefully consider.

First, they should consider that the prophets foretold the Crucifixion. As the prophet Isaiah said, *“Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken”* (Isaiah 53:4-8).

The prophet David said, *“You lay me in the dust of death. Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing”* (Psalm 22:15-18).

Second, consider that secular history confirms the Crucifixion. Cornelius Tacitus was the greatest historian of the Roman Empire. He wrote, “The name Christian is derived from Christ, who was executed under the government of the procurator Pilate.”

Josephus wrote in his Antiquitatis Iudaice, volume 18, 111:3: *“Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was the Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal among us, had condemned him to the Cross, those who loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day as the divine prophets had foretold these and 10,000 other wonderful things concerning him.”*

Third, consider the preponderance of scriptures that record the Crucifixion. The entire theme of the Holy New Testament deals with the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The apostle Paul wrote, *“For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also”* (1 Corinthians 15:3-8).

Yes, the Holy Scriptures confirm that He was crucified

and arose from the dead. There are in existence about 5,000 manuscripts of the New Testament in whole or in part which testify that Jesus was crucified.

We should encourage our Muslim friends to carefully study why Jesus needed to die. We suggest you read again the first 10 chapters of Hebrews to understand why the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ are so important.



What About the Unholy Lifestyle of Christians?

Without doubt, the unholy lifestyle of some has caused much confusion. It certainly has caused a great deal of pain for the true follower of Jesus Christ.

Part of the problem arises as many people call themselves “Christians” because they occasionally attend church, but have never had a transformation in their lives. They have never allowed Jesus Christ to forgive their sins and make them a new person (see 2 Corinthians 5:17). Therefore they keep on sinning and doing detestable things even though they call themselves Christians. This is a great shame and causes many Muslims to question Christianity. This also is an embarrassment to those who are true followers of Jesus Christ.

However, it should be pointed out that all people of all religious persuasions are under the bondage of sin. There are some who, under the cloak of religion, seem to be pious and righteous. The Pharisees were like that. Jesus said that while on the outside they looked good, on the inside they were full of hypocrisy and wickedness (Matthew 23:27,28).

To become a follower of Jesus Christ is a personal matter. It is not a decision of a community or nation. There is no such thing as a “Christian nation.” There are individuals

inside every nation who have made personal commitments to Christ. These are the true Christians or “followers.”

Global Initiative encourages our Muslim friends to study the lifestyle and spirit of those who are committed followers of Christ. God said we are to be holy and live righteously among humankind.

In conclusion, we appeal to our Christian and Muslim friends to listen to each other. Yes, dare to come close and truly examine each other’s beliefs. Answer each other’s questions in a spirit of love and understanding.