



INTERCEDE

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Muslim Theological Objections to Christianity

By Paul Parks

Wherever you meet Muslims and have the opportunity to discuss your faith, their first objection is often to the truthfulness of God's Word. They have been taught that the book we claim is God's Word is, in fact, not His Word, but a book that no longer contains God's truth. They believe it has been changed, perhaps by our forefathers, so it is no longer trustworthy. They have been told not to read it because it will lead them astray. Nowhere in the Quran is an understanding of how the Bible came to be, what it really is, or that its central theme is Christ. Even if the first objection from your Muslim friend deals with Jesus and what He did or said, in reality, the attack is being directed toward the written Word.

Nowhere in the Quran does it say the Bible has been changed or is untrustworthy. In fact, it says the opposite. What it does contend is that some of the Jews who dealt with early Muslims misquoted Scripture to give it a different meaning. It is important to remember that the Quran nowhere states that anyone has ever changed the text of the

Bible itself. This accusation of a changed biblical text was made by Muslims after Muhammad's death when they finally received the Bible in the Arabic language and were able to compare specific stories and doctrines. Only then were they compelled to make the accusation that the Bible had been altered by both Christians and Jews.

In spite of what the Quran says about Scripture, a Muslim will still believe that in the past, Christians have changed the text. Since Muhammad must be right in what he says or he is not a true prophet, this is the only conclusion they can make. We should remember that Muhammad had no access to the Bible in Arabic, so he depended on oral sources for his understanding of it. Unfortunately, those sources were often informed by sects that were unorthodox in their understanding of the gospel. Note that while we do not believe the Quran is inspired, Muslims do, so we need to be aware of what their book says on this issue.

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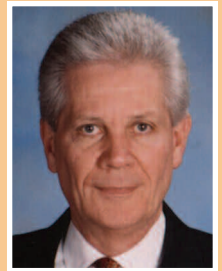




Until All Have Heard

How then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? – Romans 10:14

Jim Bennett
Global Initiative:
Reaching Muslim Peoples



Muslims are predisposed to object to cardinal Christian beliefs. Our lead article is designed to get you to think about the main theological objections you might encounter when trying to share Christ with a Muslim. Usually, Muslims think we want to share “Christianity” with them – and thus pose fairly common objections: the truth of the Bible, the trinity, and the deity, incarnation and atonement of Christ.

The excellent lead article of this issue is not intended to provide in-depth responses; but to begin a discovery process that would equip you for future witnessing opportunities. Obviously, the idea in sharing Christ with a Muslim is not to argue or insist on precise details of doctrine. The first goal is to build a relationship, then share the love of Christ and the need to know Him. However, it is inevitable that somewhere in the process Muslims will want to broach the above topics.

If you would like a concise booklet to help you further prepare for Muslim theological objections, please contact us and we will gladly send you a free copy of *Responding to Muslims*.


Our staff is constantly moving around the world to assist national church networks in equipping church planters and others for the Muslim context. Ten years ago we partnered to open an Institute of Islamic Studies in the

Philippines. Since that initial Institute, we have seen thirteen others come online. Institutes of Islamic Studies are now located in:

- | | | |
|------------------|----------------|---------------|
| 1. Philippines | 6. Holland | 11. Belgium |
| 2. Indonesia (1) | 7. El Salvador | 12. India (1) |
| 3. Indonesia (2) | 8. Malaysia | 13. India (2) |
| 4. Singapore | 9. Ethiopia | 14. Argentina |
| 5. Romania | 10. Nigeria | |

Each of these programs meets annually; some for two weeks and others up to six weeks. The finest practitioners of Muslim evangelism in the world teach in our IIS programs. Thousands have been trained in subjects such as Introduction to Islam, Church Planting in the Muslim Context, Approaches to Islam, Women in Islam, Understanding the Quran and Hadith, Contemporary Issues in Islam, etc.

Many attendees of these IIS programs now serve as church planters in the Muslim world. Thank you for your prayers and financial support for this strategic training ministry.

For information about the ministry of Global Initiative: Reaching Muslim Peoples, I encourage you to visit our ministry website at globalinitiativeinfo.org. Also, please go to JumaaPrayer.org and equip yourself to pray for Muslims. 

INTERCEDE is now available electronically! Readers wishing to access this publication in .pdf format (in addition to receiving our hardcopies) are kindly asked to submit both their name and mailing address, along with their appropriate email address to: contact@globalinitiativeinfo.com, or by calling 417-866-3313.

Muslim World News



Pakistan

Death sentence for blasphemy

For the first time, a woman has been sentenced to death in Pakistan for blasphemy. Part of the Pakistan Penal Code, the law imposes life in prison for defiling the Quran and death for insulting Muhammad.

Asia Bibi, a 37-year-old mother of two, was convicted of committing blasphemy before her fellow workers during a heated discussion about religion in Ittanwali. Bibi spoke of how Jesus had died on the cross for the sins of humanity and asked what Muhammad had done for Muslims.

The women began beating Bibi; a mob reportedly formed and “violently abused” Bibi and her children.

The National Commission on Justice and Peace (NCJP) reports that between 1986 and August 2009, at least 974 people were charged with defiling the Quran or insulting Muhammad. They include 479 Muslims, 340 Ahmadis, 119 Christians, 14 Hindus and 10 from other religions. — *Asia News*

Iran

Culture of martyrdom

The expansion of the culture of martyrdom is the “decision” of General Mohammad-Reza Naghdi, head of the Basij paramilitary group, taken with the Ministry of Education.

The general said he was pursuing the goal adding “values of divine defense of the Iranian nation” into the classrooms and books. The “divine defense” (*defae moghadas*) is a term coined to refer to the 8-year war Iran had with Iraq for most of the 1980s, when tens of thousands of children and young people, used as the first wave of attacks, lost their lives.

Previously, the education minister had spoken of the intention to add “selflessness and martyrdom” as a topic in school books and had mentioned the creation of “ten thousand Quran schools”, termed “autobahns for martyrdom and humanity”.

Naghdi has also expressed the intention of the Basij to have a “more direct involvement” in the publishing of scholastic texts. — *Asia News*

Indonesia

Church forced to close

A church in Banten Province that has been in conflict with Muslim groups for more than two years was compelled to cease meeting in the pastor’s home in a bid to put an end to harassment and threats.

In exchange, officials agreed to process a temporary worship permit that would presumably remove the pretext for Islamic protests against the church, but they refused to accept a deadline for doing so. Pastor Hulu argued at the meeting with officials and Islamic groups that local government officials be given a three-month deadline for granting the temporary worship permit, but the officials insisted on a “flexible” time for issuing it.

Tangerang district authorities had issued a decree on ordering all worship activities to cease at the church. Officials had pressured church leaders to sign a statement that they would stop all worship activities, but they refused. — *Compass*

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The Deity of Christ

Even though Jesus is given amazing titles and honor in the Quran and is mentioned by name ninety-three times, He is not viewed as God. In a faith where the oneness and unity of God are so emphasized, the idea that a man could also be God is unbelievable. In fact, it is considered blasphemy of the worst kind. This is despite the fact that an unbiased reading of the Quran might well make one think Jesus is the hero of the book. He alone performs supernatural healings and miracles and is involved in endtime events. He is given the title of Messiah, one of great respect, but it is not defined in the text. He is called servant of God, seen as an apostle (someone with a message of warning), His word, and a spirit from God. In the Quran, then, we are left with a book that denies the very heart of the gospel, for it makes Jesus just another messenger, just below Muhammad in importance.

No other doctrine of the Church seems to draw more wrath from Muslims than this one. They strongly deny its truth and believe it is an insult to God to suggest He would have partners or associates — they call this *shirk*, the sin of association. Christians are believed guilty of this since they associate Jesus with God. In Islam, Jesus was only a prophet, subordinate to Muhammad who is the seal of all prophets. Let us observe some of the quranic verses that deny this cardinal Christian doctrine.

“In blasphemy indeed are those that say that God is Christ the Son of Mary. Say: Who then hath the least power against Allah, if His Will were to destroy Christ the son of Mary?” (Surah 5:19).

This verse denies the deity of Christ and presents the possibility that if God had wanted to, He could have destroyed Christ. Several other verses take on the word *son* as a purely biological event, denying God could ever have a son.

“They say, Allah has begotten a son. Glory be to Him. Nay, to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth: everything renders worship to Him.” (Surah 2: 116)

“The Christians call Christ the Son of Allah. That is a saying from their mouth; (in this) they but imitate what the Unbelievers of old used to say. Allah’s curse be on them. How they are deluded away from the Truth.” (Surah 9:30)

As these verses show, Muhammad was zealous for the unity of God. God was one, and to have a son or to be a son would diminish His glory and make Him less than God. In spite of this, many things spoken about our Lord could and can be used to point to the fact that He is God. These ideas include the virgin birth, the concept of Jesus’ being both His word and a spirit from Him, a holy son and a sign.

The Incarnation of Christ

As in the previous section on the deity of Christ, we must remember that for Muslims, the supreme doctrine of their religion is the unity of God. A special Arabic term for this concept is *Tawhid Allah*, the Muslim doctrine of the oneness of God. Surah 112 of the Quran expresses the idea in these words: “In the Name of Allah, Most Glorious, Most Merciful. Say: He is Allah, the One and Only; Allah, the Eternal, Absolute; He begets not, nor is He begotten; And there is none like unto Him.”

Muslims love to quote this quranic passage to Christians. They consider it one of the most important verses in their book. Although Muslims are fond of saying God is all powerful and can do whatever He wills simply by speaking, they stop short of saying He could reveal himself by coming to live among people. In their minds, that would confuse the Creator with His creation. In Surah



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19:35, Muhammad reveals more of his misunderstanding by saying, “It is not fitting to (the majesty of) Allah that He should beget a Son. Glory be to Him! When He determines a matter, He only says to it, ‘Be!’ and it is.”

The Atonement of Christ

The possibility of atonement for sins seems not to have entered Muhammad’s thinking. In his system, humanity has received God’s law and must obey it to the letter to have salvation. Islam understands no righteousness before God except what can be earned. On judgment day, each will receive the rewards of his or her deeds. Perhaps because God’s love is weakly portrayed in Islam, the possibility of its motivating God to intervene to rescue human-kind from sin is weak. One verse that states this is Surah 10:54: “Every soul that hath sinned, if it possessed all that is on earth, would fain give it in ransom.” The one verse that talks about ransom in the Quran is in relation to Abraham when he is about to sacrifice his son. After the angel stays his hand from killing his son, we are told in 37:107, “We ransomed him [Abraham’s son] with a momentous sacrifice.”

Interestingly, Yusuf Ali’s commentary note on this quranic verse states clearly that this ransom was initiated not by a human but by God (2001).



The Crucifixion as Historic Reality

Since Muhammad never had the opportunity to read the Bible for himself, he depended on what he learned from local sources and his friends. At that time in history, Arabia was home to several heretical groups, including the Monophysites and Nestorians. They were confused about the nature of Christ and the manner of His death on the cross. Muhammad may also have observed the Christians and Jews arguing about the meaning of Christ’s death and who was responsible for it.

The verses in the Quran that deal with this issue are found in 4:157-159. These verses seem to say Jesus was not crucified, although this denies a well established historic event. The resulting Islamic interpretations range from saying someone else died in Jesus’ place on the cross; Jesus’ image was placed on someone else who actually died; or He was taken off the cross before death and revived. Most Muslims would agree that somehow God rescued Jesus and took Him to heaven so He would not die at the hands of His enemies. To have died such a death would be a great dishonor both to God who is all powerful and to Christ, one of his greatest prophets. To Muslims the phrase that says, “They killed him not” is sufficient, although the Quran may be saying only that the Jews did not execute him. Following are the verses in question:

“They [Jews] said (in boast), We killed Christ Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah; but they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them, and those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no (certain) knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they did not kill him. Nay, Allah raised him up unto Himself; and Allah is Exalted in power, wise, and there is none of the People of the Book but must believe in Him before his death; and on the Day of Judgment He will be a witness against them.” (Surah 4:157-159)

The Muslim View of the Trinity as Blasphemy

Another accusation often directed at Christians is that we worship three gods. This accusation comes from Muhammad’s own misunderstanding of what Christians believe and perhaps from the heresy rampant in Arabia at the time. It may also have come from actually watching Christians bow and pray to an image of the “mother of God.” The following two verses express Muhammad’s opinion on the subject: “They do blaspheme who say, God

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is one of three in a Trinity: for there is no god except One God. If they desist not from their word (of blasphemy), verily a grievous penalty will befall the blasphemers among them.” (Surah 5:75)

“O People of the Book! Commit no excesses in your religion, nor say of Allah anything but the truth. Christ Jesus the son of Mary was (no more than) a Messenger of Allah, and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a Spirit proceeding from Him, so believe in Allah and His Messengers. Say not ‘Trinity.’ Desist. It will be better for you, for Allah is One God. Glory be to Him. (Far Exalted is He) above having a son.” (Surah 4:171)

As a person who believed in the unity of God, Muhammad found the triunity of God difficult. He saw Christians worshipping Mary, Jesus and God as three separate divine entities. The Muslim is in a terrible dilemma when it comes to this subject, for he or she says God is a mathematical unity. However, if this is the case, then what is the Word of God? Most Muslims would say it is eternal. But if God’s Word is eternal and uncreated, then it must be God as well, and you then have two gods.

Stated in another way, if God’s Word is not eternal, then there was a time when God did not speak, and later He began to speak. Therefore God has changed. This is not possible, for God is immutable according to Islam; He does not change. The same considerations apply to the Spirit of God, also referred to in the previous verse (4:171). The question is whether God has always had a spirit or was at one time lifeless. Whether these considerations have entered the minds of ordinary Muslims is unknown, but when it comes to the Trinity, Christians are not the only ones who may have difficulty explaining what they believe.

As a Christian, you need to realize your acceptance of the truth about the Trinity is based on a study of Scripture, which neither early Muslims nor Muhammad had access to. Also realize that in Islam, Muhammad has replaced Jesus in a religion that does not understand mediation in the sense that God made Christ the mediator between God and humanity for salvation. Muhammad is the mediator, but only in that he reveals God’s law to humankind. With the system Muhammad used of obeying God’s law, that was all humanity needed. 

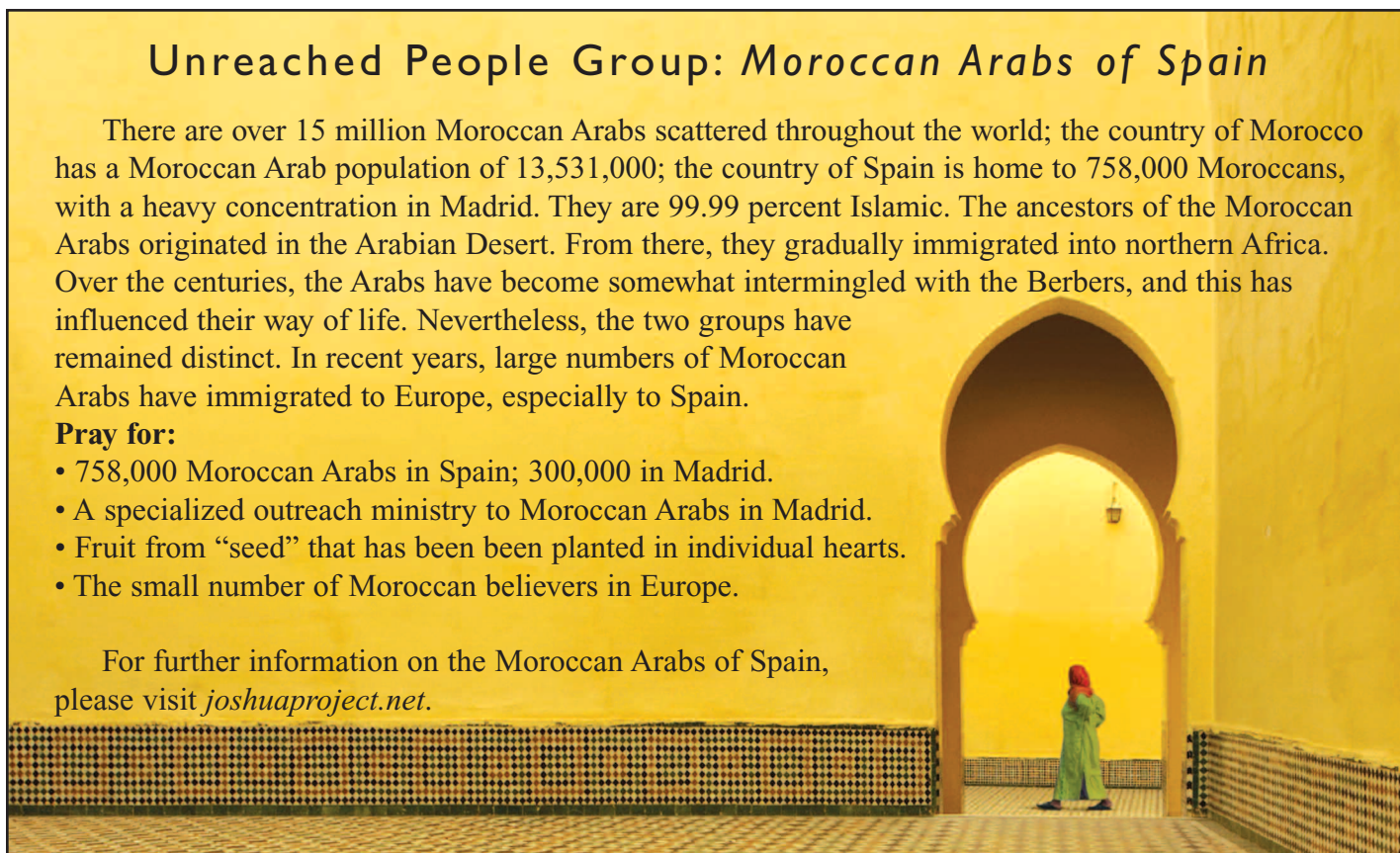
Unreached People Group: Moroccan Arabs of Spain

There are over 15 million Moroccan Arabs scattered throughout the world; the country of Morocco has a Moroccan Arab population of 13,531,000; the country of Spain is home to 758,000 Moroccans, with a heavy concentration in Madrid. They are 99.99 percent Islamic. The ancestors of the Moroccan Arabs originated in the Arabian Desert. From there, they gradually immigrated into northern Africa. Over the centuries, the Arabs have become somewhat intermingled with the Berbers, and this has influenced their way of life. Nevertheless, the two groups have remained distinct. In recent years, large numbers of Moroccan Arabs have immigrated to Europe, especially to Spain.

Pray for:

- 758,000 Moroccan Arabs in Spain; 300,000 in Madrid.
- A specialized outreach ministry to Moroccan Arabs in Madrid.
- Fruit from “seed” that has been planted in individual hearts.
- The small number of Moroccan believers in Europe.

For further information on the Moroccan Arabs of Spain, please visit joshuaproject.net.





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Friday, January 7, 2011. Please pray

...for the 3 million Muslims of Albania needing to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ.

...for the 2 million Muslims of Sri Lanka. Pray they would receive a true witness of Jesus Christ.

...for the Greek Pomak Muslims. They are one of the few indigenous Muslim groups in Europe. They live in the north-east, close to Bulgaria. There is not a single Christian believer known among the Pomaks.

Friday, January 14, 2011. Please pray

...for Muslims in Iraq. Sunnis and Shias continue to grind toward violence. Recently, Sunni radicals murdered seven shias making a religious pilgrimage to the revered city of Karbala. In addition, 30 Shias were wounded in the attack.

...for MBBs (Muslim Background Believers) across the Muslim world. Pray they would receive true shepherding and encouragement from fellow Christians.

...for a calming of the turmoil in Chechnya. In the latest incident, jihadists stormed the Chechen parliament, killing three.

Friday, January 21, 2011. Please pray

...for Christian workers and missionaries in Muslim communities. Pray for spiritual, mental, emotional, and financial support, and for a strengthening of the vision they have been called to.

...against a government crackdown in Syria. Syrian officials have recently shut down eight churches.

...for protection for the Christian community in Iraq. They face genuine threats from Muslim extremists, as seen in October 2010, when over 50 Christians were murdered in a church massacre.

Friday, January 28, 2011. Please pray

...for Egypt's 80 million Muslims. Pray they would receive a witness about the love of Jesus Christ.

...for an Iranian church member missing since the summer of 2010. The Iranian government is refusing to divulge any information. His house church has ceased to meet as a result of the fear and uncertainty.

...for a struggling church in Indonesia. The building has been attacked five times, an elder stabbed, and the pastor beaten. The congregation has been warned to stop services. Pray they will persevere in the name of Jesus Christ.

***I URGE, THEN, FIRST OF ALL THAT REQUESTS, PRAYERS, INTERCESSION AND
THANKSGIVING BE MADE FOR EVERYONE. – 1 TIMOTHY 2:1, NIV***



JUMAA PRAYER FELLOWSHIP

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now on Facebook.
Please join today.*



Friday, February 4, 2011. Please pray

...for 500,000 Jola Muslims living in West Africa (Senegal, Gambia and Guinea Bissau). Pray that God would reach these Jola villages.

...for the 1 million Muslims of Djibouti to have an opportunity to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ.

...for the Kho Muslims of Pakistan. They number approximately 320,000. Pray that God will raise up believers among the Kho.

Friday, February 11, 2011. Please pray

...for Yemen. Pray that Christian radio would penetrate Yemen, where there is little opportunity for Christian witness.

...that through dreams, literature or Christian witness, Muslims would have an opportunity to hear about Jesus Christ.

...for persecuted Christians in Saudi Arabia, only a tiny, unofficial percentage of the population.

Friday, February 18, 2011. Please pray

...for Muslims in the Netherlands. Pray for Christian witness to a growing population.

...for secret believers in isolation throughout the Muslim world. They often risk betrayal or death from their own families and kin. Pray that God would send Christian fellowship and encouragement across their paths, despite the most unlikely of circumstances.

...for Muslims in China. Despite its geographic location, China is home to approximately 25 million Muslims.

Friday, February 25, 2011. Please pray

...for Druze Muslims in Lebanon. Pray that the Druze would receive a true revelation of Jesus Christ.

...for Muslims in Central Asia. In 1991, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan became independent countries following the break-up of the Soviet Union. They are home to 60 million people; most are Muslim.

...for Sufi Muslims in Pakistan. Recently, five Sufis were murdered at a shrine by Sunni radicals.