

# INTERCEDE

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## AN APPEAL FOR A REALISTIC VIEW OF ISLAM



ALTHOUGH ORTHODOX ISLAM IDEALIZES PEACE, IT HAS HISTORICALLY BEEN THE PEACE THAT FOLLOWS WHEN NON-ISLAMIC PEOPLES AGREE TO ISLAMIC RULE, ACCEPT EXCLUSION FROM THE POLITICAL PROCESS AND ARE PROHIBITED FROM SPEAKING OF THEIR FAITH TO MUSLIMS.

I have a heartfelt concern that the Muslim clerics and spokespersons whom the American people continue to see and hear on television are able to create a perception of Islam that is not fully accurate. We have been assured that what happened on September 11, 2001, is an aberration and does not represent true Islam. Often *jihad* (struggle or exertion) is discussed as if it were a strange phenomenon and an uncommon term to Muslims. While it is understandable that moderate to liberal Muslims would want to present their best face right now and speak of Islam as a religion of peace, it is important to understand that most of their presentations are veiled so that the full picture is not forthcoming. Thus the American public can easily gain a wrong perception. It is also true that moderate to liberal spokespersons for Islam do not speak for all of the 1.2 billion Muslims in the world, not even for all Muslims in the United States.



Although orthodox Islam idealizes peace, it has historically been the peace that follows when non-Islamic peoples agree to Islamic rule, accept exclusion from the political process and are prohibited from speaking of their faith to Muslims. While Muslim-dominated societies accept converts from other faiths, conversion from Islam is forbidden with persecution or even death awaiting offenders.

Muslim clerics assure the American public: "No true Muslim would engage in this kind of *jihad*. These are simply terrorists...and those who participated in the events of New York and Washington are misguided individuals who have taken verses from the Qur'an out of context and used them to do abhorrent things."

I would agree with most of the previous paragraph. However, while orthodox Muslims would consider the acts of these terrorists to be aberrant interpretations of *jihad*, it needs to be pointed out that the Qur'an and Hadith (traditions) provide the theological basis, along with the his-

# 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, Director  
Center for  
Ministry to Muslims



*Perceptions of Islam:* Since September 11, 2001, I have listened carefully as Muslim clerics attempt to create a perception of Islam that is not fully accurate. The lead article of this issue is intended to help correct some of the misperceptions that have been conveyed.

*Dealing with Questions:* Probably the number one question CMM has received since September has been some form of: "When orthodox Muslims speak of God, is this the God of whom Christians speak?" While the Intercede cannot provide a complete response, we have felt it important to dedicate pages 3 and 6 to this question.

*Rethinking Missions After September 11:* A missionary friend who has served in the Muslim world for more than 25 years used this title in his post September 11 newsletter. Perhaps his most striking statement was: "I personally believe that one outcome of the attacks on America will be a host of Muslims who will look back to September 11 as the day they took their first step away from Islam and into the arms of Jesus." With permission, I'll paraphrase more of his thoughts...and add some of my own.

- *We need to repent* that we have not given adequate numbers of men and monies to reach Muslims with the gospel. Islam encompasses 20 percent of the world's population, but less than 4 percent of evangelical missionaries and monies are directed at reaching Muslims in the 10/40 Window, where most of them live.
- *We need to invest* in missionaries and ministries that reach out to Muslims with the message of the gospel. Our reaping will be in direct proportion to our sowing.
- *We need to pray* for existing Muslim-background-believer churches, which already exist in nearly every Islamic country in the world. These churches are not there by accident, but are the result of the investment

made by dedicated nationals, missionaries and supporting congregations over the past fifty years or more.

- *We need to speak out* regarding our evangelism priorities. Our people need to hear our leadership say loud and clear that bringing Muslims to Christ at least shares the #1 spot on our list of evangelism priorities.
- *We need to affirm* the power of the gospel and the Holy Spirit to break through the strongholds of Islamic darkness. Negative confession never brings positive results.
- *We need to learn* to pray through the spiritual defenses that Muslim peoples erect against the gospel.
- *We need to commit* ourselves to a protracted engagement with the Holy Spirit for the souls of more than 1 billion Muslim men, women and children around the world.
- *We need to be "wise as serpents and harmless as doves."* The days when we could afford to be ignorant about Islam are over. Start today to learn what Islam teaches. Ask your pastor to help you link up with CMM. Host a seminar on Islam in your local church. Begin praying for the Muslims in your community and circle of acquaintances. Earn the right to share with them the story of what God is doing in your heart and life.
- *We need to love Muslims.* We can do this by engaging in a new kind of friendship that will speak to Muslims of Christ's love. Muslims are loved by God in the same way that He loves all people. Like all humans, Muslims are created in the image of God. Like all humans, Muslims sin and fall short of God's glory. Like all humans, God loved them so much that He sent His son, so that those who believe in Jesus will have eternal life. ☪

# When orthodox Muslims speak of God, is this the God of whom Christians speak?

The following is by no means an exhaustive treatment of the above subject; it is intended to be a limited but concise response to a question that is being asked by many of our readers.

1. **HISTORICAL FACTOR:** First, many of the Arab tribes are descendants of Ishmael, the son of Abraham from Hagar. Others are descendants from Keturah, Abraham's second wife. The rest are from the line of Joktan from Shem, the line of Aram, and the line of Lud. In spite of the presence of idol worship down through the centuries, the main religious traditions of all of these tribes stem from a monotheistic belief in a Supreme Being.

Second, the mention of the word Allah, reflecting belief in Him as the one Supreme Being, was present and well known among the Arabs before Muhammad's birth, or at least before his mission. This is reflected in several poems, including the famous seven known as the *Mualaqat*. These pre-Islamic poems introduce monotheistic theology in which Allah is presented as the sustainer, giver, provider of immortality, the center of religion, the unique one upon whom the whole universe depends and as the omniscient, inscrutable and omnipotent Deity.

Geisler and Abdul Saleeb, in *Answering Islam*, state, "One thing we can be sure about from historical records is that the Arabs of pre-Islamic days, despite all their idolatry, knew of and acknowledged Allah's existence as the supreme God." The fact that Muhammad's own father bore the

name Abd-Allah, slave of God, would indicate that a diety was known by that name prior to Islam.

Third, references to the *Kaaba*, the center of the annual pilgrimage in Mecca, add further historical evidence of the pre-Islamic belief in Allah. The *Kaaba* was called "the House of Allah" (the House of "God," not "the gods") long before the birth of Islam. The definite article, *Al*, ("the" in English) in Allah demonstrates that, though people then had 360 to 365 representations of lesser deities, the pre-Islamic Arabs did not forget the monotheistic God. In fact, they did not see Allah as one of many deities but as supreme God who was higher than any of their other deities. The presence of other deities besides Allah was later condemned by the Qur'an, calling such believers *mushrikun*, those who believe other deities share divinity with Allah.

Not only were these deities recognized as secondary to Allah, but they were seen as mediators to Allah. *Surah* 39:3 indicates that pre-Islamic Arabs considered these deities as intercessors through whom they hoped to reach the true God with their prayer requests. Muhammad wanted to abolish not only the idea of a sharer with Allah but the idea of a mediator to Allah as well. He saw the concept of a mediator as an attack on Allah's sovereignty, since it would mean that Allah is dependent on a source outside of himself. Speaking to the Arabs, who had

not become Muslims then, *Surah* 10:3 declares, "Verily your Lord is God, who hath created the heavens and the earth in six days, then ascended his throne, to take on himself the government of all things. There is no intercessor but by his permission. This is God your Lord; therefore serve him. Will ye not consider?" (*The Koran*, George Sale).

Kenneth Cragg, in *The Call of the Minaret*, notes, "There can be no doubt then that the prophet's contemporaries knew of a Supreme Being, but he did not dominate their minds. Rather they thought more directly and frequently of the lesser gods."

2. **ETYMOLOGICAL FACTOR:** Etymology is the study of the origin of words. Allah is simply the Arabic word for God, made up of the Arabic definite article, *al*, (the) and the Arabic word for deity, *ilah*. The definite article placed before *ilah* specifies *the god* (there is no capital letter in Arabic) as opposed to *a god*. Thus, the Arabic word for God, Allah, is similar to the Hebrew form, *Eloah*, (singular of *Elohim* as in Psalm 114:7), and to the Aramaic form, *Elah*, (Daniel 2:45). The etymological evidence for the word Allah points to a kinship to other Semitic languages that used similar constructs for reference to the Supreme Being of the universe.

3. **TERMINOLOGY FACTOR:** The Christian Arabic Bible uses the term Allah for God. For Christian

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# AN APPEAL FOR A REALISTIC VIEW OF ISLAM

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torical precedent, which encourages Muslims to engage in acts of physical *jihad*, or to engage in a *just cause* for God. In fairness to the Islamic concept of *jihad*, it should be pointed out that most Muslims subscribe to the *greater jihad*, which is an inner spiritual struggle to control one's desires and please God.

A second category of *jihad* is the *lesser jihad*. Theoretically, a Muslim would only engage in the extreme version of a *lesser jihad* if it became necessary to take up arms in defense of the community of Islam. Such action would constitute a just cause of God and require a legal *fatwa* (ruling) from a recognized body of religious scholars.

In light of the tragic events of last September, I cannot ignore my responsibility to provide the following comments in order to correct some of the misperceptions that have been conveyed.

1. Any Islamic cleric or theologian is very familiar with the concept of *jihad* (struggle), which may finally result in "holy war."
2. This teaching has its roots in the belief of the universality of Islam. Islam ought to embrace the whole universe (*Qur'an*, chapters 25:1; 38:87-88; 68:52; 81:27 61:11).
3. The Muslim theological worldview divides the world into two realms: *Dar al-Islam* (House of Islam/peace) and *Dar al-Harb* (House of War). The House of Islam/peace has a Muslim ruler and Islamic law is practiced. The world is a battleground on which believers and unbelievers, the friends of God and the enemies of God or followers of Satan, wage war: "The believers fight in the way of God, and the unbelievers fight in the idol's way. Fight you therefore against the



friends of Satan" (Surah 4:76). The mission of the Islamic community is to spread the rule or abode of Islam globally, much as Muhammad and his followers expanded Islamic rule through preaching, diplomacy and warfare, and to "defend" it.

Followers of *shariah* (Islamic law) believe that it is a Muslim's duty to wage war against polytheists, apostates, the "People of the Book" (Christians and Jews) who refuse Muslim rule and all those who attack Muslim territory. To die in battle is the highest form of witness to God and one's faith. The Arabic word for martyr (*shahid*)

comes from the same root as the Muslim profession of faith (*shahada*), and the reward for martyrdom is paradise.

While no one knows the exact number of Muslims who ascribe to strict *shariah* law, we do know the numbers are significantly large and that the *shariah* law mentality pervades much of the Muslim world. The solidarity of the House of Islam is such that those who are more moderate or liberal are nevertheless part of the worldwide family. In other words, all Muslims are Muslims first and adherents to a particu-

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lar expression of Islam afterwards. Though overt acts of violence may be deplored, the concept that the state should guarantee the faith and the faith in turn legitimize the state is well understood. Hence, an outside attack upon an Islamic state is an attack upon Islam itself.

In the Muslim worldview, if the House of Islam has been encroached upon, whether through the Crusades, colonialism, the illegitimate occupation of Islam's third most holy site in Jerusalem, the Afghan/Soviet war or the Gulf War, etc., there is legitimate reason to "defend" the House of Islam and take back what is rightfully theirs. The recent acts of *jihad* are but a product of a worldview that is religious at its core.

In a short article such as this, many details cannot be included. I simply feel a responsibility to shed light on a perception problem. My motive has nothing to do with attacking or denigrating Islam, especially orthodox Islam. On the contrary, the approach we promote at CMM is that of loving, understanding, praying for and reaching out to Muslims with an adequate witness of Jesus Christ.

I believe American Muslims have the right to practice their faith in this free society. I also believe the American public, and particularly our constituency, deserves full and correct information in order to make informed and just conclusions, particularly about the tragedies of September 11.

Western countries, with their traditions of separation of church and state, seem unaware that the predominant Muslim worldview is one in which religion and state are com-

bined. This is the reason most non-Muslim Westerners are unable to comprehend the feelings of many traditionalist Muslims that an attack on any part of the House of Islam is an attack upon the religion of Islam.

My appeal would be that the understandable and laudable desire to treat Muslims fairly and without bias should not obscure the long tradition of passionately-held political beliefs within Islam. It is simply not right and not wise to create a fictionalized Islam, however well-intentioned the motive.

During October a group of 148 North American missionaries to Muslims met and adopted the following statement. Except for some slight nuance of wording, I fully agree with this statement:

### What Christians Should Know About Islam

*As a coalition of concerned Christians who work among Muslims, we feel the responsibility to respond in a way that communicates God's love without compromising the truth. Our love for Muslims is not complete unless we share the truth with them. To claim that there is no connection between violence and Islam is to deny history, Islamic law and the teachings of the Qur'an. As Christians we believe that God loves sinners though He hates their sins. We, too, must distinguish between Muslims as people and Islam as a religion. During these difficult days, let us reach out to our Muslim neighbors and friends with the love of Christ. The recent attack on America is a wakeup call for the Church. Christians must wake up to this opportunity to demonstrate the love of Christ toward Muslims who need to hear the message of hope and salvation through Jesus Christ, the only Savior of the world.*



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# When orthodox Muslims speak of God, is this the God of whom Christians speak?

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Arabic speakers, Allah is the term for the triune God of the universe, the Supreme Being and Creator of heaven, earth and man.

4. **IDENTITY/REFERENT FACTOR:** In his mind, when an orthodox Muslim uses the word Allah, he is identifying the God of the universe or the Supreme Being. He is not referring to an idol, a moon god or an evil spirit. Allah is equivalent to the English use of God, the Spanish use of *Dios*, the French use of *Dieu*, etc.

5. **EXPERIENTIAL FACTOR:** Most Muslim converts have little difficulty making the transition from the previous worship of their Supreme Being to the God of Christianity. Their adjustment comes from embracing the deity of Christ and His position in the Godhead. The problem for most converting Muslims is not a matter of identifying a "new" God, but a matter of understanding who Jesus and the Holy Spirit are.

6. **SCRIPTURAL FACTOR:** The Scriptures make it clear that there is only one God. However, it is not enough to believe in one God. James 2:19 says, "You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder." Jesus himself confirmed the oneness of God by saying in Mark 12:29: "The most important one [commandment]...is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the

Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'"

It is Jesus alone who can bring about an understanding of the nature and character of God. He said, "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3).


7. **CONCEPT/NATURE FACTOR:** In answering the question, "When orthodox Muslims speak of God, is this the God of whom Christians speak?" in general terms, we both identify God as the Supreme Ruler of the universe; etymologically, we have evidence of similarities, and terminologically, we both speak of God as the one Supreme Being.

Since we both believe there is only one God, it would appear that we are speaking of the same God. However, it is extremely critical at this point to understand that when we think and speak about the *nature* of God, we have strongly divergent views. In this respect, we speak of a different God.

Orthodox Muslims conceive of God as being entirely transcendent (far-removed or distant from man) and unknowable. He is a God of absolute unity and is predominantly a God of power. Though Muslims place strong

emphasis on the merciful and compassionate nature of God, they see Him as unrestrained and capable of capricious acts as well.

Christians believe God is predominantly a God of love. Thus, His acts are not capricious because acting capriciously would violate His character. Though He is the one God, He exists in three persons. In addition, God is immanent (near to us)—first through Jesus the Word of God who descended in the flesh, and secondly, through the Holy Spirit of God who is now present with redeemed man. Therefore, even though we may seem to speak of the same Supreme Being as the orthodox Muslim, when we pray, clearly the God whom we conceptualize, according to the biblical revelation we have received, is far different than the God conceptualized by the orthodox Muslim.

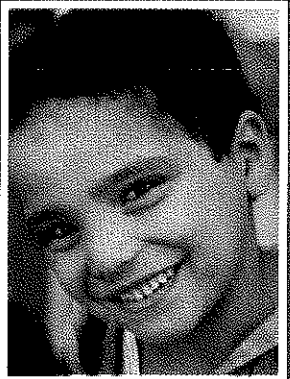
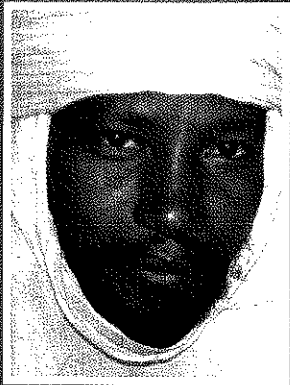
Perhaps the question we should be asking is: "How can Muslims come to know the God revealed by Jesus and develop a full understanding of His wonderful love?" Answering that question, and acting on the answer, should be our greatest concern. 

#### Sources:

1. Cragg, Kenneth. *The Call of the Minaret*.
2. Geisler, Norman and Saleeb, Abdul. *Answering Islam*.
3. Smith, Robertson. *The Religion of the Semites: the Fundamental Institutions*.
4. Tisdall, St. Clair. *The Sources of Islam*.

# Jumaa Prayer Fellowship...

Praying for Muslims  
Around the World!



*Friday, March 1, 2002. Please pray*

*...that the Holy Spirit will draw Muslim seekers to Christian radio and television programs. The potential is great for radio stations like ELWA in Liberia that broadcasts in 9 languages to listeners in the north who live under uncertain conditions. Pray there will be adequate follow-up for inquirers.*

*...that this generation of young people in Iran who have not embraced Islam will hear the gospel and respond to the truth. The challenge has never been greater.*

*...for protection for the Church and its members in Pakistan. They have been subjected to so much because of the situation in Afghanistan. Pray that God will overrule, protect His children in Pakistan and bring many Muslims to salvation.*

*Friday, March 8, 2002. Please pray*

*...for the CMM team member who will be teaching "Islam and Cross-cultural Communications" in Kyrgyzstan from March 11 to April 6. Pray that the students will apply the teaching they receive for effective ministry.*

*...for the churches in Bethlehem, Beit Jala and Nazareth who have been adversely affected by the continuing economic collapse resulting from the Israeli blockade of the West Bank and Gaza. Pray for a lasting and just peace settlement.*

*...for the ministry and protective care of believers in Gaza. May they find the right opportunities to show the people of Gaza the truth of the gospel.*

*Friday, March 15, 2002. Please pray*

*...for an American family that has a Muslim head of house. He lets his family attend church, but he recently became a practicing Muslim. Pray the Lord will reach his heart with the truth of the gospel.*

*...for a ministry team in Lebanon which consists of members from 6 countries. Pray that despite their diversity, they will meld together in love and unity for the task of sharing the gospel with neighbors and friends in the community they serve. Pray for open hearts among Muslims.*

*...that the seeds planted in the hearts of Muslim children through Bible clubs and evangelistic parties in Michigan will take root and grow and that they will gain favor with the parents.*

*Friday, March 22, 2002. Please pray*

*...that the family members of Muslim converts will be drawn to Christ by the changed lives of their family members. Pray that the Lord will give them great wisdom as they seek to share the gospel.*

*...that the many gospel internet websites will be used by God to bring the gospel to searching Muslims.*

*...that CMM team members who are participating in Spring missions conventions will inspire and encourage the churches to become more fully involved in outreach to Muslims.*

*...for a just and wise solution to ongoing religious conflict throughout northern Nigeria. Pray that God will cause the northern states to realize the inherent difficulties of establishing *sharia* law.*

*Friday, March 29, 2002. Please pray*

*...for the CMM team member who is teaching a course at Trinity Bible College the next two weeks. Pray he will have good interaction and response from the participants as they seek to become equipped to reach out to Muslims.*

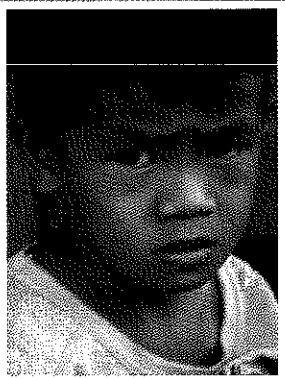
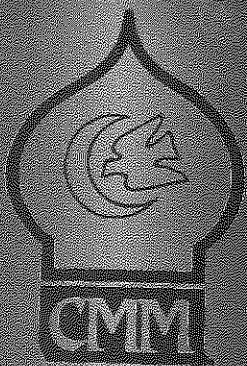
*...that the Barnabas Fund petition, being presented to the United Nations Human Rights Commission in April, will be well received and will bring about the desired changes in Muslim countries.*

*...for peace in Macedonia. Ethnic Albanian rebels continue to threaten hundreds of families.*

*Urges, 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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Friday, April 5, 2002. Please pray

...for the 8-week Institute of Islamic Studies which begins next week at Asia Pacific Theological Seminary in Baguio, Philippines. Pray for safety in travel for all the participants, and that they will be greatly impacted through the interaction with others involved in ministry among Muslims.

...for more workers at every level of outreach. Because of the added awareness created by the events of September 11, every ministry involved with Muslim outreach is hard pressed for adequate workers to meet growing demands. Pray that God will provide in each situation.

...for the Christian minority in Egypt. Though subjected to persecution before, the tide seems to be rising again and in some rural areas Christians are threatened into praying for protection.

...for Christians who are being persecuted in Ethiopia. Pray that God will strengthen, protect and provide for them.

Friday, April 12, 2002. Please pray

...for a miracle of protection for Christians in the Maluku of Indonesia. Thousands are in danger of being exterminated. Pray God will use all types of leaders to stop the terrorists' violence.

...for the widespread distribution of Bibles. The Bible League estimates that 200 million Christians worldwide do not have a Bible, and that at least 2 billion would eagerly receive and read one if given the opportunity.

...for Christians in Iraq who have been denied food in ration distribution and told to ask America for food instead. Pray the Lord will give His Iraqi children peace, protection and provision.

...for protection of Christian workers in Muslim countries as anti-western sentiment continues to rise.

Friday, April 19, 2002. Please pray

...that Noor ul Haq magazines that are being prayerfully placed in offices in Brazil where Muslims wait will be the spark to ignite a flame of desire for the truth of Jesus Christ.

...for a Uygur believer in China who has led 15 family members to Jesus even though they threatened to kill him when he became a Christian 7 years ago. Pray that this family will be used to bless other Uygur Turks in their area.

...for Christian-Muslims relations in the United States that have sometimes become volatile and tense since 9/11. Pray that the Lord's presence and intervention will saturate dialogues and debates.

...for more than 60 Muslim-background believers who were baptized last year in one locale in a limited-access country. Ask God to protect and care for them.

Friday, April 26, 2002. Please pray

...for relief for the 800 million hungry people, especially for relief needed in Afghanistan and Tajikistan, which is seeing one of the worst famines in decades. We cannot hope to reach them spiritually until we have met their physical needs.

...that we as Christians would have discernment as to where we should focus our relief efforts when we are continually being faced with so many overwhelming disasters.

...for Adam House, a shelter for refugee claimants in Toronto. It is still in the preliminary stages as intense spiritual opposition continues to prevent it from happening. Pray that God will open the right doors so it can move forward.

...that Islamic religious leaders will have encounters with the Lord like Saul had and be confronted with the truth of the gospel.