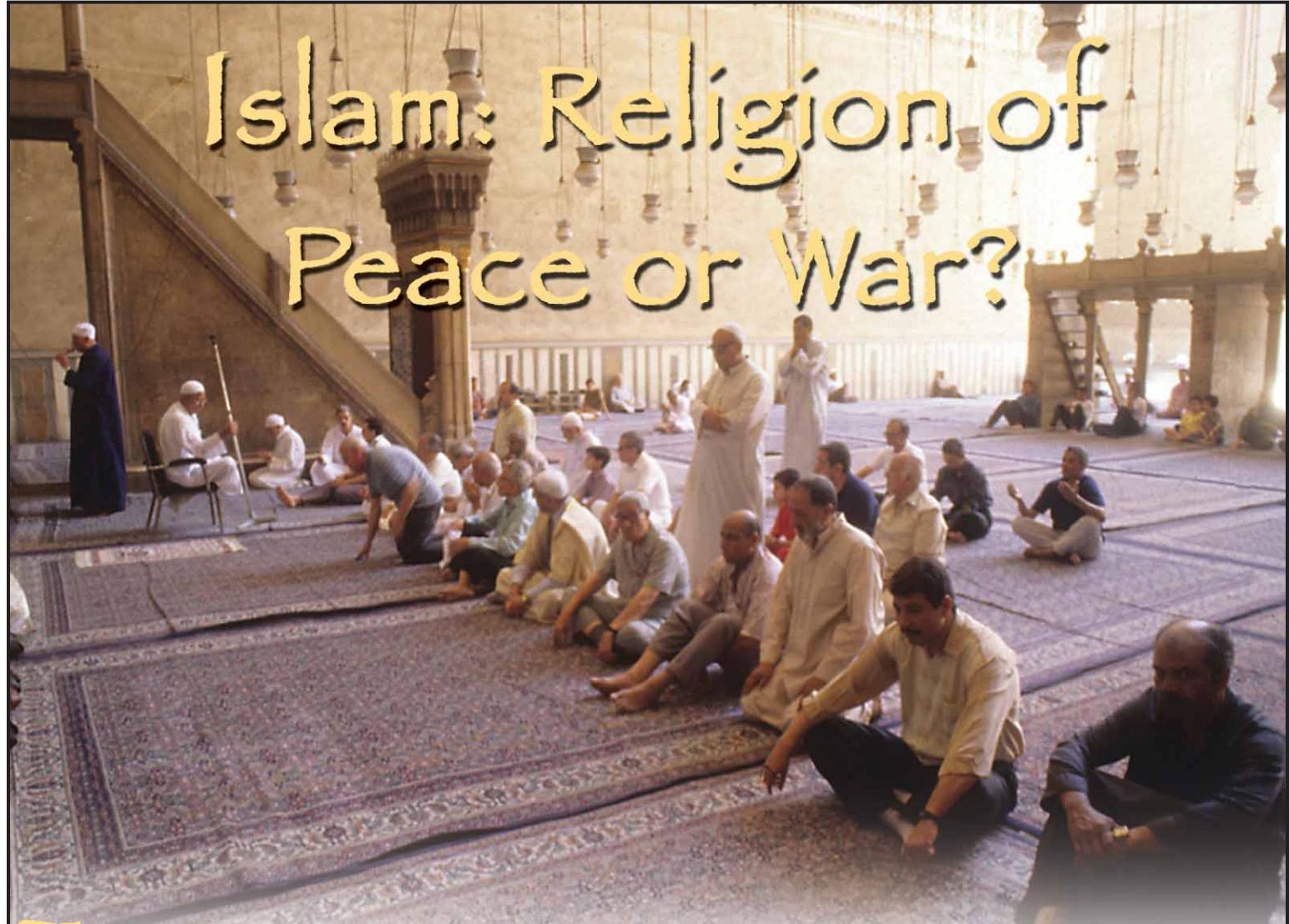


INTERCEDE

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Islam: Religion of Peace or War?



The tragedy of 9-11, the death of over 300 innocent children and adults in a Russian school, the beheading of foreign hostages in Iraq—these are only a few of the recent atrocities that have fueled anger and disgust toward the religion of Islam and its world community of 1.3 billion people. That includes the 5 million Muslims who live right here in the United States. The flurry of verbal attacks and threats made against Americans and Christians (Crusaders) in particular from people who call themselves “martyrs for Allah” only intensifies the animosity against Muslim people.

In the wake of growing anti-Islamic sentiment, Muslim leaders here in America have tried to convince the public that Islam is a religion of peace. They have indicated that acts of terror come from the misguided religious fanatics who represent the “fringe elements” of the Islamic community and do not reflect the true

teachings of Islam. Here are some statements from the Islamic Society of North America that speak of a peaceful Islam:

The Qur'an reminds us there is no compulsion in religion. No overt or covert force should be used to bring people to Islam.

Islam envisions a peaceful world. ...Islam asserts each person's basic freedom and equality.

Not only does the Qur'an speak of human brotherhood, but it also teaches more than tolerance; it teaches acceptance.

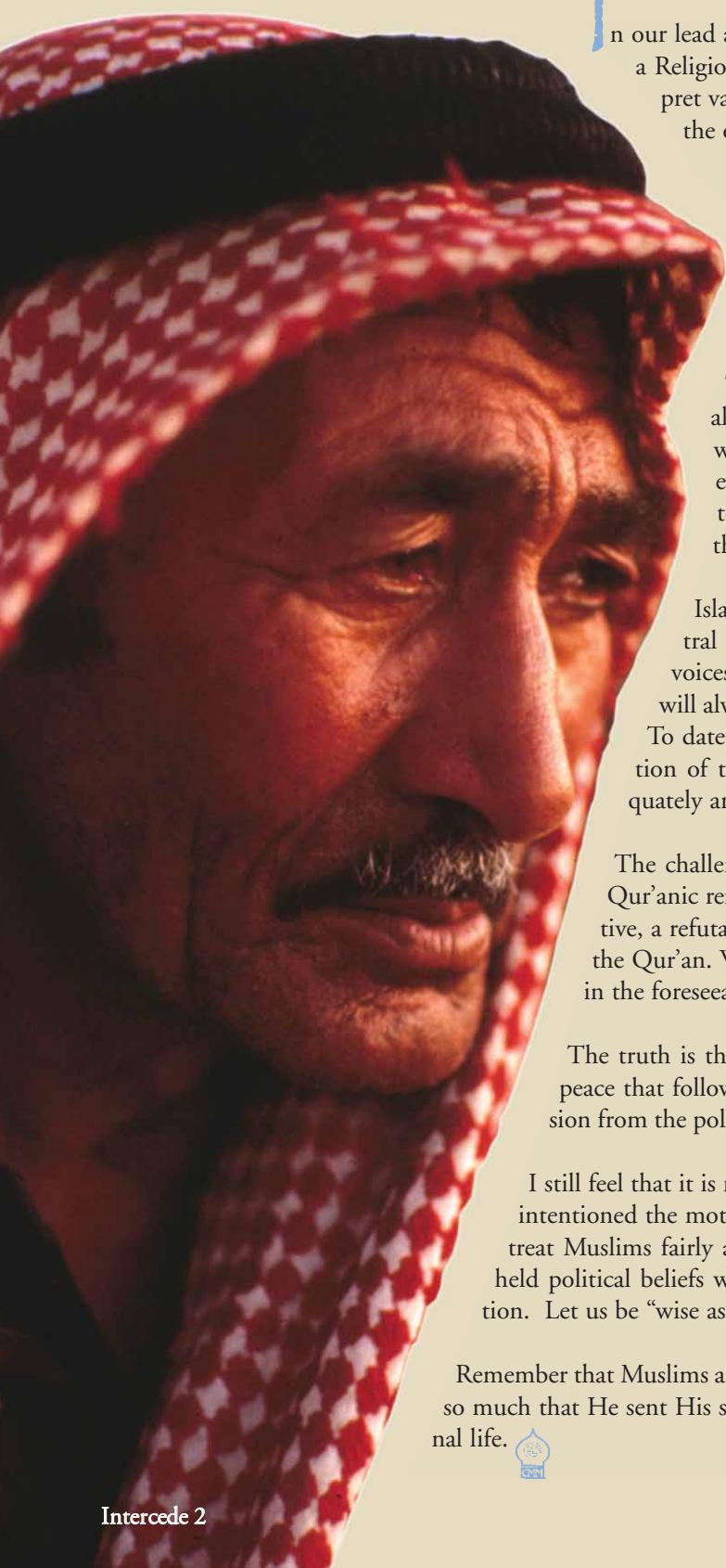
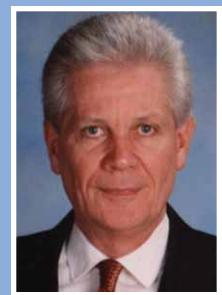
In contrast to such statements made by Muslims who project Islam as a religion of peace, tolerance and brotherhood, statements by other Muslims carry a different message. The following statements, which speak of war and extermination, come from the fundamentalists of the Salafi Group and Al-Qaida:



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



In our lead article our author addresses the question “Islam: A Religion of Peace or a Religion of War?” He describes some of the differences in how Muslims interpret various Qur’anic texts referring to peace on the one hand and violence on the other.

It is impossible to exaggerate the influence of the Qur’an on the Muslim worldview. When asked to see “Islam in action,” a Pakistani government official responded “Read the Qur’an.” The Qur’an is the highest authority in Islam, believed by Muslims to have been dictated by Allah and given to the Prophet Muhammad by the angel Gabriel.

The Islamic scholar Seyyed Nasr explains: “The Qur’an constitutes the alpha and omega of the Islamic religion in the sense that all that is Islamic, whether it be its laws, its thought, its spiritual and ethical teachings and even its artistic manifestations, have their roots in the explicit or implicit teachings of the Sacred Text.” Around the globe, all sects of Islam teach the Qur’an as the perfect word of Allah, valid for all peoples and all times.

Islam’s violent elements are rooted in a particular interpretation of its central Qur’anic texts, many of which have been noted. I would hope that the voices of moderation will ultimately silence the militants, although militants will always make the case that they are standing for the true expression of faith. To date, moderate Muslims have not established a viable alternative interpretation of the relevant “violent” verses of the Qur’an; at least they have not adequately articulated them to the Muslim “umma”—or faith community.

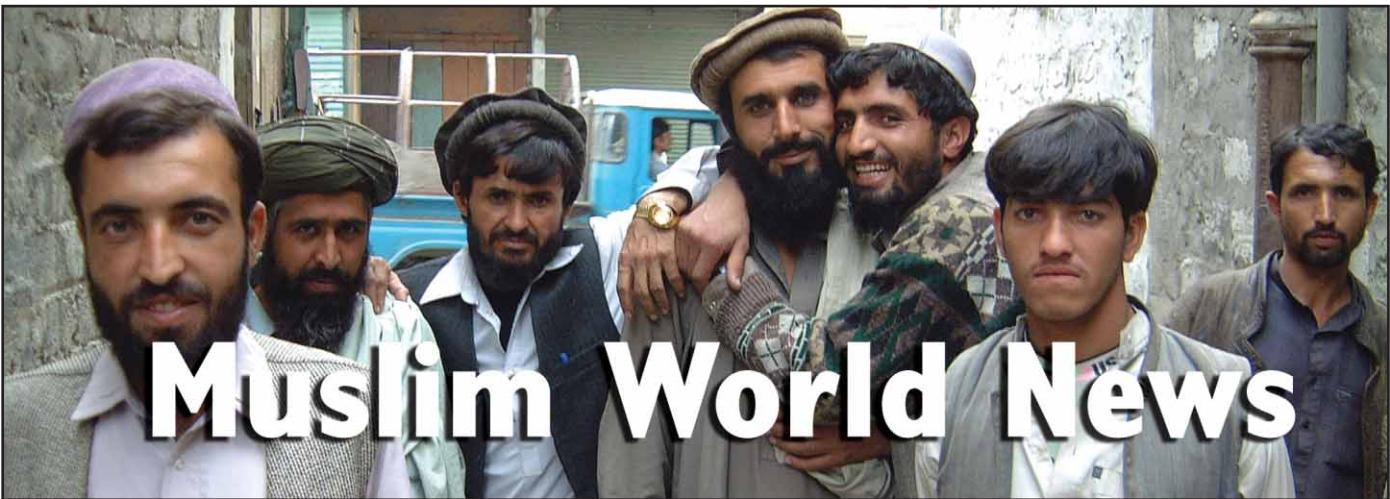
The challenge that confronts the moderate Muslim community is to formulate a Qur’anic refutation of the terrorists’ own justifications for their actions. To be effective, a refutation would have to be an Islamic argument, based on a clear exegesis of the Qur’an. While such an argument may be possible, it is not probable, at least not in the foreseeable future.

The truth is that although orthodox Islam idealizes peace, it has historically been the peace that follows when non-Islamic peoples agree to Islamic rule, accept virtual exclusion from the political process and are prohibited from speaking of their faith to Muslims.

I still feel that it is not right or wise to create a fictionalized “peaceful” Islam, however well-intentioned the motive. 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—political beliefs deeply embedded in Qur’anic interpretation. Let us be “wise as serpents and harmless as doves.”

Remember that Muslims are loved by God in the same way that He loves all people. He loved them so much that He sent His son, so that those who believe in Him as Lord and Savior will have eternal life.





Muslim World News

Azerbaijan



Eighteen-month-old Luka Eyvazov is being refused a birth certificate. Despite repeated attempts by his parents, who are Baptists, the civil registration officials in his village have refused to issue a birth certificate, not wishing to register children with Christian names. Without a birth certificate, Luka will not be able to go to school, get treatment in a hospital, or travel abroad. Pray God will protect Luka as he grows up in a hostile environment. Pray Luka's parents will remain faithful in their insistence that their son have an official Christian name. Pray the Lord will change the minds of the village officials.—*Voice of the Martyrs*

Eritrea



Following the arrest of three Christian leaders last November, Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) called for the international community to continue putting pressure on the Eritrean government to operate in accordance with international human rights standards. In their statement, CSW reported that Eritrean security forces have raided dozens of homes and arrested hundreds of Christians, including young children, simply for having a Bible or attending a Christian meeting. Reportedly, there are 400 Christians in prison, many having served more than two years.—*Voice of the Martyrs*

Iran



Iranian authorities moved Christian prisoner Hamid Pourmand to a military prison, deepening fears for the safety of the Protestant pastor jailed last September. A former Muslim, Pourmand converted to Christianity 25 years ago and was serving as lay pastor of a congregation in Bandar-i Bushehr when arrested. Married with two children, Pourmand is a colonel in the Iranian army. In recent months, government officials have denounced "foreign religions," which they accuse of threatening Iran's national security. In Iran's Islamic courts, a Muslim convicted of apostasy is subject to the death penalty, and several ex-Muslims who converted to Christianity have been covertly assassinated or executed by court order under the guise of spying for foreign countries.—*Compass*

Iraq



Written threats, kidnappings, bombings and murder by Muslim extremists are driving thousands of Iraq's minority Christian population out of their ancestral homeland, fleeing for safety to neighboring Jordan and Syria. An Orthodox bishop in Syria warns that if the emigration continues, there could be no more Christians in Iraq within 10 years. But one Iraqi church leader said he believes the Christian community would go underground to avoid such a possibility. Iraqi Christian refugees interviewed in Amman and

Damascus admit that recent church bombings last August and September helped to spark the exodus. Individual attacks carried out against them by instigators of the local rising tide of Islamic fundamentalism were also a factor. They said they are specifically targeted because of their Christian faith and are viewed as collaborators with U.S. forces because "they share the same religion." Militants also try to kidnap them because they believe Christians have Western connections and access to more money than other Iraqis. Although Iraq's 2,000-year-old Christian community had expressed hope that a change in government would usher in a new era of religious freedom, they now believe that the very existence of the church in Iraq is under threat.—*Compass*

Malaysia



Azrina Jailani, who adopted the name Lina Joy after becoming a Christian in 1998, has appealed a second time to change her religion. Lina Joy first applied for official permission in 2001. However, the judge ruled, "As a Malay, the plaintiff exists under the tenets of Islam until her death." Lina Joy appealed the decision on the grounds that it contravened Malaysia's constitutional guarantee of religious freedom. A final announcement on the ruling was expected in December, according to the Malaysian news agency Bernama.—*Compass*

Islam: Religion of War

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The conflict in the world today is a conflict between belief and unbelief.

Every Muslim must know that defending Islam and the Muslims in this war is an obligation incumbent upon him, with his soul, his money, and his tongue. ...The Islamic state will not arise through means of slogans, demonstrations, parties, and elections, but through blood, body parts, and [sacrifice of] lives.

Our number one enemy is the Jews and the Christians, and we must free ourselves to invest all our efforts until we annihilate them.

And may Allah lengthen our days to allow us to infuriate the enemies of Allah, kill them, and strike them by the sword until they either join the religion of Allah or we kill every last one of them.

With such blood-curdling statements, how can our Muslim friends expect us to believe that Islam is a religion of peace, especially when such statements are made by Muslims who claim to base their actions on the teachings of the Qur'an and the example (*sunnah*) of their prophet? Are there two Islams—an "Islam of peace" and an "Islam of war?"

Before addressing this question directly, we need to look at the root cause for the disturbances we see in the worldwide community of Islam. From the Qur'an, Muslims believe that the true religion of God, which was passed down through Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus, was perfected in the teaching and example of their prophet, Muhammad. Since Islam embodies the principle that peace can only come by submission to God's will, Muslims see Islam as the only hope for ultimate world peace. "God's will is revealed through God's law," says the fundamentalist Muslim (one who takes the Qur'an literally), "so the only way people can properly manage the affairs of the world is by administering the law of God (the *shariah*) as revealed in Islam."

To Muslims, Jews are apostates who rejected the prophet of Islam and lost their special status with God because of their idolatry centuries earlier. Christians are also viewed as apostates, because of their association with idolatry (namely, the statues of the virgin Mary and the Christ-child) and because of their submission to human law instead of divine law. Fundamentalist Muslims view secular democracy as an evil system that defies the "will of God" by prioritizing the "will of the people."

In light of their perceived God-given responsibility to rule over the world, Muslims see Islam as the only solution to global unrest and human injustice. Muslims believe it is God's plan to bring about world peace by establishing an Islamic state worldwide with Islam prevailing over all other religions. Most Muslims are content to see Islam disseminated through non-violent means such as biological expansion and dialogue. They believe Christianity will lose its influence, and through their good works and godly lifestyle, they will attract non-Muslims to Islam. Muslims recognize they need to portray Islam as a religion of peace and establish friendly relations with non-Muslims. They substantiate their position with the following Qur'anic teachings:

Invite (all) to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious, for thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His path, and who receive guidance (16:125).

Let there be no compulsion in religion. Truth stands out clear from error. Whoever rejects evil and believes in Allah hath grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold that never breaks (2:256).

It may be that Allah will grant love (and friendship) between you and those whom ye (now) hold as enemies. ...Allah forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for (your) faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them (60:7-8).

Those who believe (in the Qur'an), and those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Christians and the Sabians; any who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord...(2:62).

In contrast, other Muslims feel obligated to take a pro-active stance. They too envision an Islamic state worldwide. However, they believe that it is their duty to actively engage in eliminating all the obstacles that prevent an Islamic state from materializing, even if it calls for violent action. The main obstacles include materialism, immorality, militarism, Christian propagation and secular democracy. These are viewed as subtle acts of aggression against Islam with the United States the main perpetrator. Since the religion associated with the United States is Christianity, Christian America is viewed as enemy #1.

Just as pacifist Muslims have found Qur'anic verses to support their view, militant Muslims have done the same. Here

of Peace or War?

om page one

are some common Qur'anic injunctions used by militant Muslims to justify their actions against those who refuse to follow the teachings of Islam:

They but wish that ye should reject faith, as they do, and thus be on the same footing (as they). So take not friends from their ranks until they flee in the way of Allah (from what is forbidden). But if they turn renegades, seize them and slay them wherever ye find them, and (in any case) take no friends or helpers from their ranks (4:89).

Let not the unbelievers think that they can get the better (of the godly); they will never frustrate (them). Against them make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror into (the hearts of) the enemies of Allah and your enemies, and others besides, whom ye may not know, but whom Allah doth know. Whatever ye shall spend in the cause of Allah shall be repaid unto you, and ye shall not be treated unjustly (8:59-60).

But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the pagans wherever ye find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war). But if they repent, and establish regular prayers and practice regular charity, then open the way for them, for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful (9:5).

Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the Religion of Truth, (even if they are) of the People of the Book [Jews and Christians], until they pay the *jizya* [tax] with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued (9:29).

These verses clearly encourage physical violence against anyone who refuses to submit to Islam and its prophet. These opposing views—one for tolerance and the other for intolerance—contradict each other. Therefore, how do Muslims reconcile these viewpoints, when verses supporting both views come from the same Islamic holy book, the Qur'an?

Muslims who prefer the more peaceful approach to Islamic expansion argue that the verses which permit physical aggression must be taken in their historical context. In other words, for establishing the newly-formed community of Islam in the 7th century, it was necessary to carry out drastic measures against enemy forces that stood in the way. But now that Islam is a firmly-established religion throughout the world, these Muslims see no further need for physical aggression unless they are attacked. There are no longer expanding empires ruled by tyrants. Therefore the verses

that promote fighting are no longer relevant. They applied only to the prevailing circumstances during their prophet's lifetime. On the basis of historical context and contemporary irrelevance, many Muslims simply bypass these verses.

Other Muslims, who represent the minority position, argue that these verses are relevant and binding on the basis of a religious theory called the "theory of abrogation," which derives from the following Qur'anic verse:

None of Our revelations do We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, but We substitute something better or similar; knowest thou not that Allah hath power over all things (2:106)?

According to the general interpretation of this verse, sometimes God chose to send revelations to replace or cancel previous revelations because of changing circumstances. This theory helps to explain apparent contradictions, but requires a knowledge of the chronological order of Qur'anic verses. This is not so obvious since the chapters and verses of the Qur'an are not in chronological order. For example, the verse which most Islamic scholars regard as the first words revealed to their prophet is not verse 1 of chapter 1; instead, it is verse 1 of chapter 96, which is nearly at the end of the Qur'an. With a few exceptions, these Muslim scholars have a good idea which verses chronologically followed others. Because most verses advocating aggression were revealed after the verses advocating tolerance, some Muslims argue that all the verses supporting tolerance have been canceled and are no longer binding. Thus, the verses on intolerance prevail and take precedence.

Because of these contrasting views, Islam will always be a divided camp. There will always be an Islam of peace and an Islam of war. There will always be Muslims who prefer tolerance to intolerance, and co-existence to extermination. It is important to know that despite the loud voice of radical Islam that rages today, significant numbers of Muslims are peace-loving. They do not want to identify with the extremes of radical Islam. They want to live in harmony with their neighbors and enjoy the good things in life common to all humankind. Some of these Muslims are so frustrated that they have become disillusioned with Islam and are ready for a change. If only we could recognize them, approach them and offer them an alternative. If only we could lead them to something greater than a "religion of peace." If only we could lead them to Him who is the *Prince of Peace!*





Libya

Population: 6.5 million **Religions:** Muslims 96.5%, Christian 3%
Language: Arabic **Peoples:** Tripolitanian Arab 30%, Cyrenaican Arab 25%,
Sanusi Bedouin 9%, Egyptian Arab 7.7%

Libya is a North African country located on the Mediterranean Sea. Over 90% of the land area is covered by the Sahara desert. Colonel Muammar al-Qadhafi, who overthrew Libya's monarchy in 1969, has kept Libya internationally isolated for decades with repeated instances of state-sponsored terrorism.

Qadhafi has recently begun an attempt to reconstruct Libya's international image. In December of 2003, Libya announced abandonment of its programs to develop weapons of mass destruction. About a year later, it agreed to compensate families of victims of the 1989 bombing of a French passenger aircraft over the Sahara. Then two months later in March of 2004, British prime minister Tony Blair visited—the first visit of its kind since 1943. In August of last year, Libya agreed to pay \$35 million to compensate victims of the bombing of a Berlin nightclub in 1986. And later last year, Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi visited Qaddafi for talks on how to tackle the illegal mass migration of people from North Africa.

Sunni Islam is Libya's state religion, but secularizing influences are strong. No Christian witness to Libyan citizens is allowed. The entire population remains unreached.



Unreached People Group... Sanusi Bedouin

Location: Saharan Desert **Population:** 715,000
Religion: Muslim 99.9% **Language:** Barqi (Mashriqi)

The Sanusi are a unique group of Bedouin. They have been influenced by both the traditional nomadic lifestyle of the Bedouin and the religious teachings of a prophet known as Sayyid Muhammad ibn' Ali as-Sanusi. This particular Muslim influence has molded them into one of the more gentle Bedouin tribes.

The material culture of the Bedouin is limited. Their tents are their main possessions, and animals are very important for their nomadic lifestyle. Camels are their main means of transportation, while sheep and goats are bought and sold. To endure the extreme heat of the desert, the Bedouin wear loose-fitting, lightweight, light-colored clothing.

Pray
that...

...God will raise up faithful intercessors who will stand in the gap for the Bedouin.
...the spirit of Islam that has kept the Bedouin Arabs bound for many generations will be broken.
...their traditional Muslim culture will soften, creating open doors for the gospel to be preached.



JUMAA PRAYER FELLOWSHIP

**PRAYING FOR MUSLIMS
AROUND THE WORLD!**



Friday, March 4, 2005. Please pray

- ...for the massive humanitarian relief programs going on across the Indian Ocean rim following the devastating tsunami.
- ...for the college students who are involved in a prayer pilgrimage in Morocco the next few weeks during their spring break. Pray that they will formulate life-changing decisions during these days.
- ...for those who have been widowed and orphaned by the strife between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria. Pray that people will look for opportunities for forgiveness and rebuilding of relationships to bring an end to the conflict.
- ...for Christians in African nations who see their countries being Islamicized. Ethiopia is believed to have received free oil for three years in return for concessions to Islam. Pray that Christians will be wise in their response to this situation.

Friday, March 11, 2005. Please pray

- ...that the President-elect of Indonesia will not follow through with plans to implement Islamic shariah law.
- ...that the new government in Afghanistan will bring peace and progress in spite of the fanatics and warlords who want to retain power. Pray for believers who are still meeting and listening to broadcasts in secret.
- ...for the many isolated Muslim-background believers. Pray they will be able to access Christian radio and television for spiritual encouragement.

Friday, March 18, 2005. Please pray

- ...for a friendship center in Australia that is ministering to new Australians. Pray this center will be able to make an impact through ESL classes and other events they host.
- ...for the 30,000 Muslim Lintang in Sumatra, Indonesia. There is only one known believer among them. Pray for the production of gospel resources in their language and for other Indonesians to share the gospel sensitively with them.
- ...for the "Rohingyas" who are heavily discriminated against in Myanmar (Burma) resulting in many becoming refugees in other Muslim countries. Pray for more openness in this country and for Burmese Christians to reach them with the gospel.

Friday, March 25, 2005. Please pray

- ...for two young Pakistani children, Joshua and Mariam, who have been kidnapped by their estranged Muslim father. The father abducted them from the court last September. Pray for their safety and return to their Christian mother.
- ...for many Muslim-background believers who face complex pressures to conform to cultural and religious expectations of their non-Christian family and community; they need great wisdom and courage.
- ...for Christians in Egypt who are actively sharing Christ even though it is illegal to evangelize Muslims there. Pray for God's protection and provision of all their needs.

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



JUMAA PRAYER FELLOWSHIP

**PRAYING FOR MUSLIMS
AROUND THE WORLD!**



Friday, April 1, 2005. Please pray

- ...for the CMM-sponsored 8-week Institute of Islamic Studies which begins next week at Asia Pacific Theological Seminary in Baguio, Philippines. Please remember to pray for this request throughout these two months.
- ...for a spiritual awakening of the Alawites of Syria and the removal of a 45-year prohibition of expatriates sharing the gospel.
- ...that hearts of Muslims living in the United Kingdom will be opened to the gospel as they view gospel programs on television and receive gospel literature. The "Jesus film" has been widely distributed.

Friday, April 8, 2005. Please pray

- ...for "Bart," a convert from Islam who is ministering among his own Muslim-majority people in Russia. Pray that he will have many new contacts to share the gospel with, friends who he can pray with and for wisdom and enablement of the Holy Spirit.
- ...for a teacher in Bangladesh who has made a profession of faith in Christ. Pray that his wife will also be brought to the Lord.
- ...for the 10,000 or more British people who have converted to Islam in recent years because of their disillusionment with Western society. Pray they will be confronted with the truth about Islam and find hope in Christ.

Friday, April 15, 2005. Please pray

- ...that President Islam Karimov will recognize Christian churches in Uzbekistan and allow them to officially register.
- ...for the government leaders in Iran who have publicly denounced Christianity as a threat to national security.
- ...that the Turkish military will be receptive to God's guidance as it seeks to safeguard the nation from perils posed by Muslim extremists and Kurdish separatists.

Friday, April 22, 2005. Please pray

- ...that the small house fellowships of women believers in Djibouti will grow strong in the Lord and be able to withstand the persecution, harassment and poverty in their situations.
- ...for a house fellowship recently started by three Turkish believers and some expatriates. Pray the believers will grow in their knowledge and love of the Lord and will be protected as they share the gospel.
- ...for a Bible study group among Turks in Nurnberg, Germany. They recently found a new meeting place in a church where an elder had been praying for many years for an outreach to Turks. Praise God for answered prayer.

Friday, April 29, 2005. Please pray

- ...that through dreams and visions many Muslim Tukolor people in Mauritania will find new life in Christ.
- ...for Christians in Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Iran. These countries have been designated by the United States as perpetrating the most severe religious freedom violations.
- ...that the Saharawi people of Western Sahara and Morocco will embrace the Word of God and worship Him only.