

1. Introduction

Opinions vary as to what Muslims and Christians believe and what kind of people they are. Muslims in the Middle East are being taught that Christians are lewd people, with loose morals and little respect for God and the prophets. They have even changed their holy Book. This view is reinforced through the Western movies and fashion style and the general absence of faith in the public sphere.

Christians, on the other hand, often see images of violence committed in the name of Islam by people who claim to adhere to the Quran in a pure way. Based on the media reports, they conclude that every Muslim is a potential terrorist. Humanists tend to consider both Muslims and Christians blinded by the doctrines of the book they claim to follow and narrow minded in the area of human rights, such as gender ideology and sexual orientation.

The reality is that there are many different expressions among the adherents of both faiths. This begs the question who may be considered true believers. Can anything be said that rises above subjectivity? This article is an attempt to give a balanced and honest answer.

2. Types of Christians

There are many expressions and streams of Christianity, where the members of each group consider themselves a Christian. Some of these are:

a) Liberal Christians

These Christians emphasize the use of reason and empirical evidence in the interpretation of the Bible. They see the Bible as a source of inspiration with many great examples, rather than with binding commandments about what is allowed and forbidden. Liberal Christians distance themselves from the traditional beliefs, such as the Virgin birth, Christ's death for the sins of people, and the resurrection. Jesus is seen as the great example regarding loving one another and humanitarian principles are highly valued.

b) Name Christians

This group considers itself Christian because one was born into a Christian family or was Christened as a baby. In daily life, these people do very little or nothing with the Bible or the church. At specific times, such as Christmas or the birth of a child, or a wedding or funeral, they may follow the rituals they have been raised with, and pass them on to the next generation.

c) Traditional Christians

These are characterized by following all kinds of rules and regulations they have been taught to be the way things ought to be done. They adhere to the traditions they grew up with regarding going to church, praying at meal times, etc. The Bible is seen as a guide for correct conduct, with important values such as honesty and equality.

d) Orthodox Christians

Here, the word orthodox does not refer to the orthodox churches, such as the Greek Orthodox, but to the general sense of 'correct worship' or 'correct creed'.¹ Orthodox believers take the Bible seriously and seek to follow its precepts as literally as possible. This is seen in, for instance, the women covering their heads, the establishing of large families and a strict keeping of the Sunday as a day of rest. The desire to keep the Biblical precepts as literally as possible easily leads to legalism and separation from anyone who does not behave the same way.

e) Evangelical Christians

With this group the emphasis is on having a personal relationship with God through a conscious decision to accept Jesus Christ as personal savior. The Bible is seen as the most authoritative writing on earth, with a focus on the New Testament. The believer lives by the grace of God he has received and not through the keeping of Biblical rules and regulations. A key Bible verse of Evangelical Christians is John 3:16 *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."*²

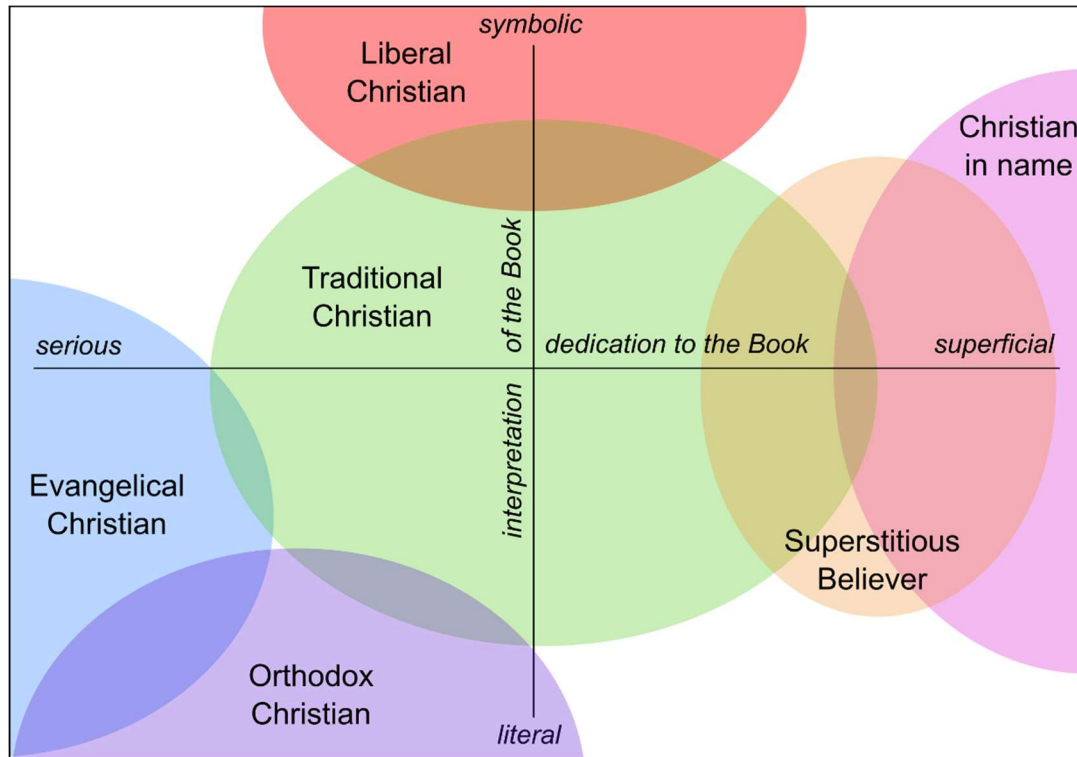
f) Superstitious Christians

In addition to the aforementioned groups, which are clearly visible in the Western world, another group can be distinguished, particularly on the African continent and in South America. Superstitious Christians are characterized by integrating animistic or other non-Biblical practices and rituals into their faith. They apply these in order to have influence on their circumstances and the future. These include the veneration of saints and the wearing of amulets, etc.

g) overview

The existence of all these different groups explains how it is possible for some Christians, for example, to ban gay marriage completely, while others fully accept and bless it in the church.

The following illustration visualizes how the different groups relate to each other on the basis of how they interpret their holy book, the Bible, and how literally they try to apply its teachings. There is a big overlap between the nominal Christians and the superstitious; a big difference is that the superstitious are often very devoted to the religious expressions that cannot be found in the Bible.



3. Types of Muslims

Within Islam, the believers express their faith in various ways as well and the following groups can be distinguished.

a) Mystical Muslims

These Muslims are characterized by their search for the truth about divine love and knowledge through direct personal experience of God.³ Though they strictly adhere to the Islamic duties, such as prayer and fasting, their highest goal is to be united with God. One of the ways to reach this is by ritual dances, which help the soul to be purified and enter into a state of direct communication with God.⁴ The well-known mystic Jalal al-Din Rumi has said,

*"In truth everything and everyone
Is a shadow of the Beloved,
And our seeking is His seeking
And our words are His words...
We search for Him here and there,
while looking right at Him.
Sitting by His side, we ask:
'O Beloved, where is the Beloved?'"⁵*

The most well-known mystical movement in Islam is that of the Sufi.



b) Liberal or progressive Muslims

Some people differentiate between liberal and progressive Muslims. However, they have so much in common that they may be considered one group.

Liberal Muslims approach their faith through independent reasoning (ijtihad), rather than conformity to legal precedent (taqlid), and are thus open to re-interpretation of the Islamic writings. They take the Quran as a book of ethics, rather than a law book that must be strictly obeyed. Also, state and religion must be separated. In practice that means that, for instance, the verse about cutting off the hand of a thief teaches that stealing is wrong and that secular laws regulate the appropriate punishment to protect society, rather than Islamic law.

They emphasize equality, which results in women having the same rights as men. Thus in 2005 a woman led the prayers in a mosque for the first time for a group of male and female believers.⁶ It also means that lesbians and gay, bisexual and transgenders are welcomed as equals.

A number of liberal Muslims have united in the international organization *Muslims for Progressive Values*, which stands for 10 clear principles.⁷ Another organization is the Free Muslims Coalition.⁸



c) Islamists

This is a group of reformists who want to return to the roots of Islam at the time of its founder. Their aim is to establish Sharia law and a worldwide Islamic Khalifa. Since they seek to obey the teachings of Muhammad as literal as possible, they are labeled extremists by both Muslims and non-Muslims. The Islamist, on the other hand, see the others as apostates – unfaithful to their prophet – who must be treated according what is written in the Qur'an and the ways of Muhammad and his successors. The purest expression of the orthodox teachings of Islam has been displayed by the Islamic State.



d) Conservative Muslims

A significant group holds to the traditional values of their faith as expressed in the early schools of Islam and having been practiced for many centuries. They seek to obey the precepts of Islam literally, but, in contrast with the Islamists, don't enforce them on others. In the West, conservative Muslims may outwardly adopt some modern views of life, but on the inside dream of a traditional Islamic society.

e) Modern Muslims

Another group seeks to find a middle way between the liberals and Islamists. Thus a large number of Muslims in the West seek to express the traditional teachings of their faith within the culture they're part of. The attempts to reconcile Western values with Islamic doctrines have been coined Islamic Modernism.⁹ An important example of this movement is the country of Turkey, which adopted Western law as a nation.

Well-known reformist Tareq Ramadan has said, *"The opposition between western and non-western societies should be dissolved into a "European and American Islamic culture", which would allow Muslims to live in the west without any sense of contradiction."*¹⁰

Muslim artists pave the way in the areas of arts, music and fashion. For instance, Muslims are to mention the name of Allah. The graffiti illustration shows a modern way to remind them.



Also, Muslim women are to cover their body parts. Fashion makers are finding creative ways to integrate the traditional Islamic value into modern Western style clothing.

The music style of the Islamic convert Cat Stevens is very popular among young people. He has written many beautiful songs about Allah with warm music that connects with the emotional world of the second and third generation Muslims in the West.

The following are two couplets from the song *God is the Light*.

*How great the beauty of the Earth and the creatures
Who dwell on her.
How great then, how great the Creator?
As it's mountains pierce the clouds
High about the lives of men
Weeping rivers for thousands of years.*

*But how many hearts are closed
To the wonders of this sight?
Like birds on a cage, asleep with closed wings.
But as work stops with the call to prayer
And the birds recite, here too are signs
God is the Light, God is the Light. ¹¹*

Some Muslims even dare to make jokes about themselves. For instance, the Arabic-Danish comedian Omar Marzouk once said, *"People who equate Muslims with terrorists should be happy that Muslims don't drink. Drunken terrorists would be even worse."*¹²

f) Superstitious Muslims

This group is characterized by customs that are not clearly found in the Qur'an and therefore deemed as unlawful by orthodox Muslims. These include divination and the wearing of amulets to protect against evil spirits, but also magic spells, fertility rites, astrology and visiting the shrines of Muslims saints. These pre-Islamic pagan practices, known as folk Islam, often have an Islamic touch. For example, in order to cure a disease, a Qur'anic verse may be written on a slate and then rinsed and the water collected and drunk by the sick person. These customs stem from the desire to have some influence on the circumstances of one's life, in the context of orthodox Islam, which teaches that Allah has predestined everything.¹³

g) Converted Muslims

Most adherents of the Islamic faith are so by birth. Some are converted to Islam from a non-Muslim family. They often do this in order to be able to marry a Muslim man or woman. Some become Muslim out of conviction. Often, these people have a Christian background, who struggled with the doctrines about Jesus as the son of God and about the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Islamic teachings offer them logical answers to their questions and also provide clear rules of conduct in answer to the immorality in the West. Yousef Islam (Cat Stevens) has said, *"I found a religion that blended scientific reason with spiritual reality in a unifying faith far removed from the headlines of violence, destruction and terrorism."*¹⁴ Finally, there are those who are coerced into Islam through persecution by Muslims in Islamic nations.

h) Cultural or Secular Muslims

Many Muslims, both outside and inside the Islamic world, base their Muslim identity on nationality and rituals, rather than religious convictions. They make little or no effort to keep the five tenets of Islam and don't visit the mosque. Their interest is in having a good life here on earth, rather than in performing religious duties in order to avoid punishment in the hereafter. They are Muslim simply because they were born in a Muslim family. When they get older, they may become afraid of death and change into devout believers.

i) Atheist Muslims

A unique category is formed by those who have nothing with Islam as a religion and, in fact, even deny the existence of God. They call themselves Muslim simply because they were born into a Muslim family. If they would publicly deny being a Muslim, they would risk being persecuted or even killed for apostasy by the Muslim community.

A movie star was once asked which religion he belonged to. He answered, *"To the best religion in the world, Islam!"* When asked whether he believed in the existence of God, he said, *"No! Surely not! Such a faith is right for old people before they die and for small children. but we belong to a generation that acts!"*¹⁵

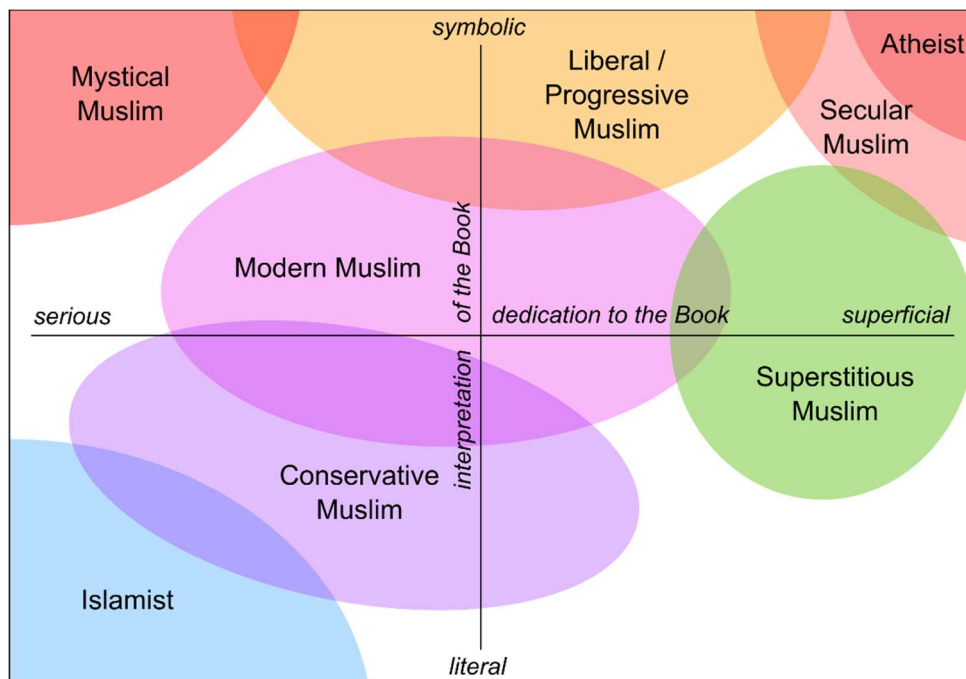
j) Ex-Muslims

Ex-Muslims are not Muslims anymore and so shouldn't really be mentioned here. The problem is, however, that others still label them as such. Arzu Toker, one of the co-founders of the *Central Council of former Muslims* in Germany once said, *"The government keeps saying that there are 3.5 million Muslims in this country, and they're including me when they say that. I don't want to be on that list, but have no way of saying 'no.'"*¹⁶

Many ex-Muslims exert great efforts to eliminate the influence of Islamists. For instance, the Institute for the Secularisation of Islamic Society promotes "freedom of expression, freedom of thought and belief, freedom of intellectual and scientific inquiry, freedom of conscience and religion—including the freedom to change one's religion or belief—and freedom from religion: the freedom not to believe in any deity."¹⁷

All these groups (except the last one) consider themselves Muslims, even though they express their faith in very different ways. This makes it hard, if not impossible, to speak about Islam in general terms. It explains why there is so much confusion about what the Islamic faith really is. Various groups claim that they are the only ones who correctly interpret and adhere to the teachings of the Qur'an and the traditions of the prophet.

In the following illustration, all these groups are presented according to the way they interpret the Qur'an and how committed they are to obey the teachings of Islam.



Two groups of Muslims are not represented in the illustration. The ex-Muslims don't fit as they are not Muslims, while the converts form a mixed group, which doesn't fit into one particular place. Those who are converted for the purpose of getting married, belong to the secular, while those who follow Islam out of conviction fit on the left, as they take the book serious. Some of them are attracted to the mystics, while others turn into Islamists. Finally, there are those who adopt the lifestyle of the modern Muslims.

The superstitious Muslims may be very committed to their beliefs, but follow the Islamic teachings superficially and have therefore been placed on the right.

There is no clear division between the different groups. Modern Muslims who take the Qur'an literally on many points overlap with the conservatives, while those who look more for principles are like the liberals.

The only ones who seem to stand out are the Islamists, as they openly include the use of violence in name of Islam, based on the literal application of the Qur'an and Hadith.

Although modern Muslims and others decide to become Islamists, they are then part of a unique group from which the other Muslims distance themselves.

4. The true believers

With so many types of Christians and Muslims, is it possible to distinguish the true believers? Neither Christianity, nor Islam has one religious leader representing all adherents. Therefore, the words of the Pope or Ayatollah Khomeini cannot be taken as normative.

Various groups claim to interpret their holy book in the correct way and consider others less dedicated or even unbelievers. As can be seen in the previous illustrations, it makes a big difference whether the texts are taken literally or interpreted more symbolically. In order to define which believers are living their faith as intended originally, we will consider the following two questions:

- a) What are the key teachings of the spiritual leaders through whom Christianity and Islam have come into being?
- b) How did their followers apply these teaching in the first decades after their death?

- a) Key teachings

- i. Teachings of Jesus Christ

The core of Jesus' teachings can be found in a long speech he held on a mountain, specifically addressing his disciples, in the presence of a large crowd. This speech became known as the Sermon on the Mount. In it, Jesus mentioned important Jewish laws and then explained how God wants people to live. He said for instance, *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."*¹⁸

The True Believers – Toward a better understanding of Muslims and Christians



The two most important commandments for the Jews were: *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind,"*¹⁹ and *"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*²⁰ Jesus quoted these and added that your enemies are also your neighbor. Regarding loving God above all else, He taught, *"Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it."*²¹

Jesus spoke about two invisible spiritual kingdoms: the kingdom of darkness ruled by Satan and the kingdom of God. He taught that every person is by nature part of the first one and that one enters the second one through repentance²² and faith in him as son of God.²³ Jesus called this entering a spiritual birth.²⁴ He emphasized that one receives eternal life through faith in him, not on the basis of good works.²⁵

Shortly before his crucifixion, Jesus had a special time with his followers and said, *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another."*²⁶ He explained, *"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends,"*²⁷ indicating that the highest expression of love is giving your life for others. Jesus himself gave the ultimate example by giving his life on the cross for the whole human race.

Three days after his death on the cross, Jesus became alive and appeared several times to the eleven remaining disciples and also to a number of others. Forty days after his resurrection and just before his ascension into heaven, he commissioned his followers with the words, *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*²⁸

In summary, the key teaching of Jesus is: love one another. That includes loving your enemies and giving your life for your fellow believers. Jesus affirmed the commandment given to the Jews to love God above all else, by repenting and becoming part of His kingdom. The great commission of Jesus is to make all people followers of him.

ii. Teachings of Muhammad

The overall message of Muhammad to the world was that there is only one God and that all mankind must surrender or submit to His will. The latter has led to the name of the religion, as the Arabic word *Islam* means 'submission'.²⁹

*"Allah witnesses that there is no deity except Him, and [so do] the angels and those of knowledge - [that He is] maintaining [creation] in justice. There is no deity except Him, the Exalted in Might, the Wise."*³⁰

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"Yes [on the contrary], whoever submits his face in Islam to Allah while being a doer of good will have his reward with his Lord. And no fear will there be concerning them, nor will they grieve."³¹

A summary of this submission and the good works can be found in Surah 9:71, which says, *"The believing men and believing women are allies of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and establish prayer and give zakah and obey Allah and His Messenger. Those - Allah will have mercy upon them. Indeed, Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise."*

Based on this verse and others, the five pillars of Islam have been established. Besides the five daily ritual prayers and giving of alms mentioned here, they are the fasting during the month of Ramadan, the pilgrimage to Mecca and the creed. Through the words "there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet" the latter emphasized that there is only one God.

The good and bad deeds of every Muslim are weighed on the Day of Judgment. Those whose good deeds outweigh the bad are rewarded with a life full of pleasures, while those who lack in good works, will end up in a hot fire.³²

It is impossible to know beforehand whether one's good deeds will outweigh the bad, but there are certain good deeds which give some assurance. The believer who has been persecuted (evicted from his home) or who has been killed in the fight for Allah, receives a great reward.³³ The highest reward, assurance of removal of the bad deeds and entrance into paradise, is promised to those who offer up their lives for the cause of Allah.³⁴

Finally, Muhammad taught his followers to do what he was told to do: proclaim the message of submission to God. This is stated in Surah 3:20, *"So if they argue with you, say, 'I have submitted myself to Allah [in Islam], and [so have] those who follow me.' And say to those who were given the Scripture and [to] the unlearned, 'Have you submitted yourselves?' And if they submit [in Islam], they are rightly guided; but if they turn away - then upon you is only the [duty of] notification. And Allah is Seeing of [His] servants."*³⁵

iii. Islam and Christianity compared

At first glance the teachings of both prophets are very similar. Both called on the people to honor God above all else and that the highest goal is to offer up their lives to Him. Both of them also commanded their followers to spread the teachings of God which they had received through their prophets.

However, the way in which the believers are to offer up their lives and spread the teachings is quite different. The Christian is commanded to love his enemy and to not take up any weapons. Even when Jesus was arrested by the Jewish leaders, he told one of his followers who grabbed a weapon, *"Put your sword into its sheath."* Jesus even healed the enemy who had been wounded.³⁶

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In Islam, the struggle in the faith is called "jihad."³⁷ During the life of Muhammad, a progression in four stages can be observed:

- 1) The Meccan period: no revenge
- 2) Medina at the beginning: defensive fighting permitted
- 3) Middle period of Medina: defensive fighting obliged
- 4) After the conquest of Mecca: offensive fighting commanded, killing the unbelievers and humiliating the Jews and Christians

In many Quran verses, the believer is encouraged to conquer the enemy through use of violence.³⁸ The most well-known jihad verse is Surah 9:5, from the fourth period, which says, "*And when the sacred months have passed, then kill the polytheists wherever you find them and capture them and besiege them and sit in wait for them at every place of ambush. But if they should repent, establish prayer, and give zakah, let them [go] on their way. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.*"

The polytheists, i.e. the unbelievers, are to be killed. The only ones allowed to live are those who repent and pray and give alms. In other words, those who become Muslims.³⁹ This is confirmed in the Hadith, the recorded sayings of Muhammad, such as the trustworthy Muslim Saheeh: "It has been narrated on the authority of Abdullah b. 'Umar that the Messenger of Allah said: I have been commanded to fight against people till they testify that there is no god but Allah, that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah, and they establish prayer, and pay Zakat and if they do it, their blood and property are guaranteed protection on my behalf except when justified by law, and their affairs rest with Allah."⁴⁰

Muslims differ greatly in the meaning and application of jihad. Many, especially in the West, believe that the jihad verses were for a specific time and place. Islamic scholars emphasize that the verses are for defence and not for attacks. They say that verses like Surah 9:5 are taken out of context, because the Quran forbids the killing of innocent people.⁴¹ They point out that if Muhammad had lived today, he would have peacefully called on the people to convert to Islam, like in the days of Mecca. They often quote Surah 2:256: "*There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion.*"

On the other hand, there are those who take the jihad verses literally. They believe God commands them to use every means possible in order to submit the world to Islam. For instance, Surah 8:60 speaks about the use of means of war. "And prepare against them whatever you are able of power and of steeds of war by which you may terrify the enemy of Allah and your enemy and others besides them whom you do not know [but] whom Allah knows. And whatever you spend in the cause of Allah will be fully repaid to you, and you will not be wronged."

At the time of Muhammad, the weapons were mostly swords.⁴² A modern interpretation of weapons is tanks, airplanes and missiles.⁴³ On the website *Islam Question and Answer*, the

writer says, "Hence it is prescribed to fight in a manner that will strike terror into the heart of the enemy." ⁴⁴

Who of these groups is right about their interpretation? A look at how the first followers of both prophets applied their respective teachings may give clarity. They knew best how their teachers had meant the words.

b) The first followers

i. The followers of Jesus and the first Christians in the Middle East

After Jesus ascended into heaven, his followers withdrew to pray. After ten days they had a supernatural experience, which caused them to boldly talk in public about Jesus as redeemer. The Jewish leaders opposed that and imprisoned some and killed a follower named Stephen. While being stoned, he asked God to forgive his murderers. ⁴⁵

The Christians in Jerusalem and surrounding villages, all of them Jews, were pressured to deny their faith, but they didn't give in. Instead of defending themselves violently, they relied on God's supernatural protection and spread out to new regions, telling the people that Jesus Christ is the Saviour. The believers met together on a daily basis and shared their material possessions with each other so that no-one was in need. Thus they expressed their love for each other. ⁴⁶

A Jewish man named Paul of Tarsus was one of the key persons spreading the Christian faith. Initially he persecuted the believers and tried to put them in prison. After a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, he changed radically and went from place to place, calling both Jews and non-Jews to repent and follow Jesus. During his travels he encountered heavy opposition and was imprisoned several times. He wrote, "Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure." ⁴⁷

In his teachings, Paul often used illustrations from the army. He spoke about waging war and taking up shield and sword. This was never in a literal way but always metaphorically. For instance, he called the Word of God a sword for fighting the spiritual forces, as the believer struggles not against people but against the invisible powers of the kingdom of darkness. ⁴⁸ Jesus had referred to this kingdom as well.

During the first three centuries, the followers of Christ were often persecuted and martyred. In spite of this, Christianity steadily grew and spread across the continents. God confirmed the words of the believers through signs and wonders and He enabled them through His Holy Spirit to obey the teachings of Jesus and to love their neighbor and even their enemy.

ii. The followers of Muhammad and the first Muslims in the Arabian Peninsula

After the death of Muhammed, his faithful companion Abu Bakr became the spiritual leader or Caliph. His first challenge was the response of the Arabs to Muhammad's death. Many left Islam and three people even proclaimed that they themselves were a prophet.⁴⁹ Basically, only the people of Medina and Mecca remained faithful to the Islamic teachings. The following Hadith informs us about Abu Bakr's response.

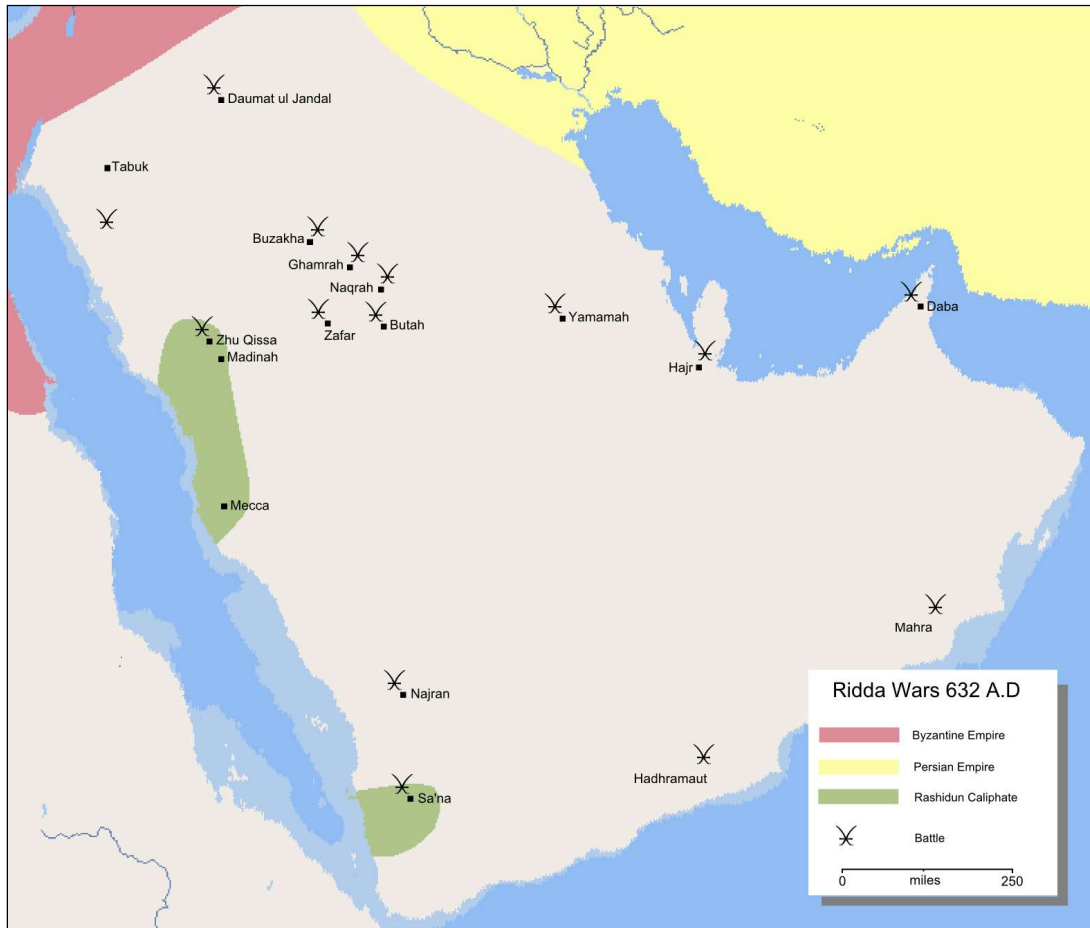
Narrated / Authority Of: Abu Huraira

"When Allah's Apostle died and Abu Bakr became the caliph some Arabs renegade (reverted to disbelief) (Abu Bakr decided to declare war against them), 'Umar, said to Abu Bakr, "How can you fight with these people although Allah's Apostle said, 'I have been ordered (by Allah) to fight the people till they say: "None has the right to be worshipped but Allah, and whoever said it then he will save his life and property from me except on trespassing the law (rights and conditions for which he will be punished justly), and his accounts will be with Allah.' " Abu Bakr said, "By Allah! I will fight those who differentiate between the prayer and the Zakat as Zakat is the compulsory right to be taken from the property (according to Allah's orders) By Allah! If they refuse to pay me even a she-kid which they used to pay at the time of Allah's Apostle. I would fight with them for withholding it" Then 'Umar said, "By Allah, it was nothing, but Allah opened Abu Bakr's chest towards the decision (to fight) and I came to know that his decision was right."

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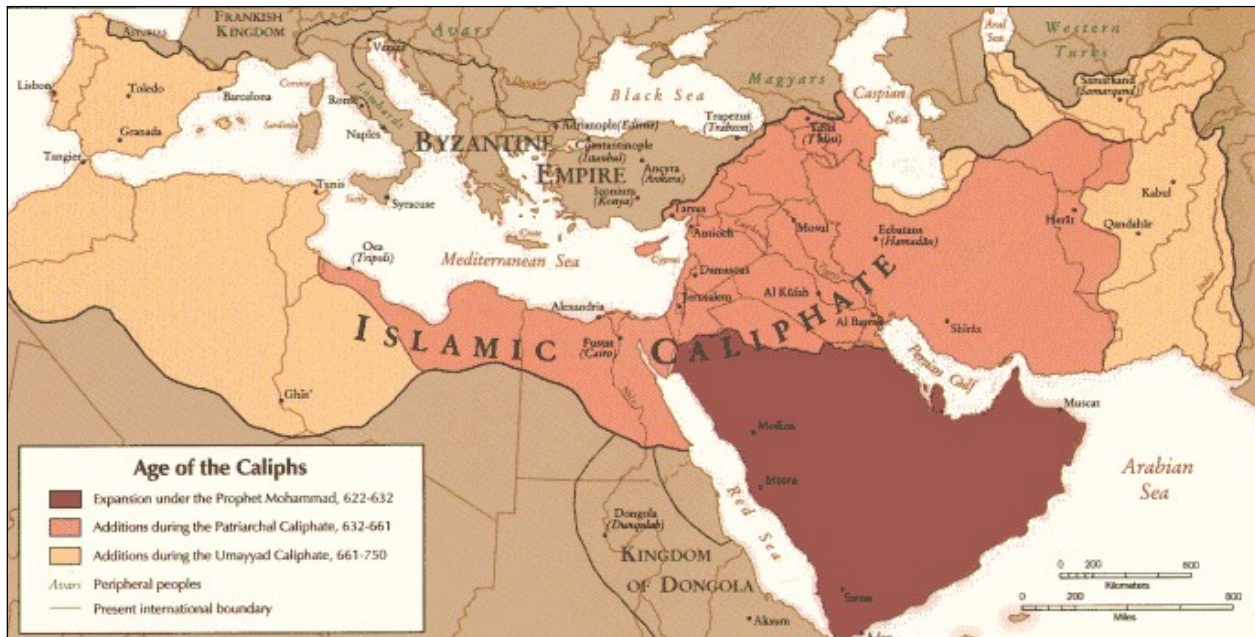
According to this Hadith, Muhammad had been ordered to fight the unbelievers, until they have converted to Islam. Abu Bakr went beyond this and stated he would also fight Muslims who do not adhere fully to Islam by not paying the Zakat. Omar confirms that Allah caused Abu Bakr to make this decision.

On June 26th, 632, the very month of Muhammad's death, Abu Bakr sent the army to Tabouk to bring the apostates back to Islam. Many tribes resisted fiercely but Abu Bakr's army won and returned to Medina with many captives and riches, both war booty and taxes (Zakat). After that, Abu Bakr sent the army on eleven expeditions to various regions of the Arabian Peninsula to return the people to Islam.⁵¹ From Yemen and Oman to Syria, the Arabs surrendered again to Islam. The only ones not forced to convert were the Zoroastrians, Christians and Jews. They were put under various laws and restrictions, such as payment of the special Jizya taxes and they were forbidden to hold any government position.



Locations where Abu Bakr's army subdued the Arabs to Islam ⁵²

After these successes, Abu Bakr focused on spreading Islam in Syria and Iraq. He did this by sending out the army. His most successful army commander was Khaled Ibn al-Waleed, nicknamed 'the Sword of Allah'. ⁵³ The following passage sheds light on his military strategy. "Khalid was afraid that a couple of soldiers might try fleeing, which would have a devastating effect on the morals of his army. To avoid such a situation Khalid ordered that Muslim women be armed too and wait in the rear. They were given orders to kill anyone who might attempt to flee from the battle, something which is considered treachery and a major sin in Islam." ⁵⁴ At the end of his life, Khaled asked a friend why he had never died as a martyr in the battle. "Why not?" "You must understand, O Khalid," the friend explained, "that when the Messenger of Allah, on whom be the blessings of Allah and peace, named you Sword of Allah, he predetermined that you would not fall in battle. If you had been killed by an unbeliever it would have meant that Allah's sword had been broken by an enemy of Allah; and that could never be." ⁵⁵ The successors of Abu Bakr followed in his steps and continued sending their armies to the west, north and east. Already in 661, at the beginning of the Umayyad Caliphate, Islam had spread to today's Tunisia, Turkey and Iran. The Omayyads sent their armies even farther, partly to bring the world under Islamic rule ⁵⁶ and partly to finance the running of the Caliphate from the booty and taxes. ⁵⁷



Early Spread of Islam⁵⁸

iii. Comparison of the teachings of the leaders and the behaviour of their followers

Jesus taught his followers about the invisible kingdom of God and commanded them to love each other and their enemies. The first believers shared everything with each other and never reverted to violence, even when they were attacked or imprisoned. Stephen prayed the very same prayer as Jesus did for those who killed him. The believers went into the world to call the people to repentance, just as Jesus had commanded. In other words, the first believers literally did what Jesus had taught them.

Muhammad taught his followers to bring the world in submission to Islam. In the Meccan period he himself did that through preaching, while after his flight to Medina, he also went out to fight the non-Muslims. Abu Bakr and his successors followed Muhammad's example and even went beyond that by using violence to make Muslims obey the Islamic precepts. The early spread of Islam happened through the sending out of armies. If people surrendered voluntarily to Islam they were not fought. Those who didn't, were attacked by the Muslims and were given the choice to either convert or to be killed (with the exception of the three aforementioned groups who were given the option to pay the extra jizya taxes). This means that the first followers of Muhammad applied his teachings literally.

c) The true believers today

Based on the above we can conclude that the true believers are those who are dedicated to their Book and apply its teachings literally.

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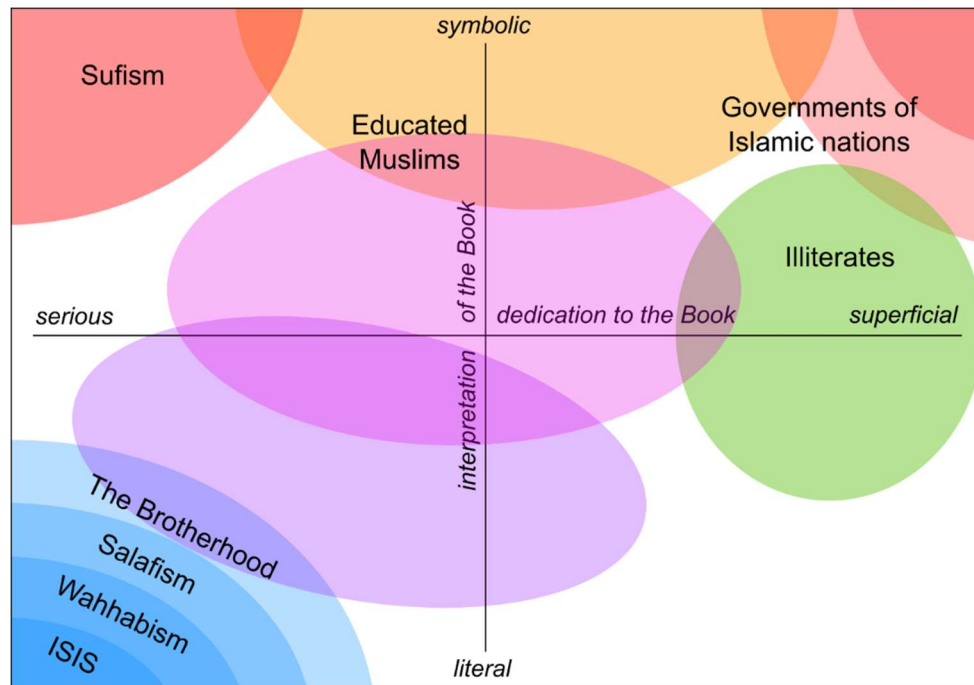
God loves Ishmael

Within Christianity, the evangelicals and orthodox are the most dedicated and interpret the Bible most literally. The heart of Jesus' teaching is not about following all kinds of rules and regulations but about believing in Him and loving God and one's neighbour. As the Orthodox emphasize obedience of various laws, in essence they do not follow the teachings of Jesus. One may conclude that the Evangelicals are the true believers.

Because one believes and loves from the heart, they are found within every kind of Christian group or denomination.

Several well-known examples are Mother Theresa, Martin Luther King and Desmond Tutu. There are also countless unknown believers in nations as North-Korea, China, Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Somalia and Nigeria, who give up their lives and love their enemies. It is remarkable that most persecution of Christians happens at the hands of Muslims.⁵⁹

Within Islam, the Islamists are the true believers. Several groups can be distinguished, with some interpreting the Quran even more literal than others. In the following illustration the names of several groups and organisations are given.



The highest religious leader of Saudi Arabia and the leader of Islamic State studied together at the Al-Azhar University in Cairo. In response to the atrocities performed in the name of Islam by I.S., he said, "Al Baghdadi does nothing more and nothing less than that which is recorded in the Quran and Hadith."⁶⁰ In his article called *What is the Islamic State?*, Graeme Wood writes, "The reality is that the Islamic State is Islamic. Very Islamic. Yes, it has attracted psychopaths and adventure seekers, drawn largely from the disaffected populations of the Middle East and Europe. But the religion preached by its most ardent followers derives from coherent and even learned interpretations of Islam."⁶¹

5. Conclusion

Coming back to the stereotypes in the introduction, we see the following:

The true Christians are those who keep to the Biblical values as much as possible, motivated by love. They desire to live a sexually pure life and use their time and money to serve their neighbour. They are not represented by any particular institute or denomination.

Some of those who call themselves Christians, affirm the image many Muslims have about Christianity. They follow Jesus' example in some areas only. Perhaps they go to church on Sunday, but they consider sex before marriage and same sex marriage okay if it happens out of love.

The true Muslims actively share their faith with others and do not shrink from violence in order to bring the world under submission to Islam. That doesn't make every Muslim a terrorist. By far, the majority is less serious about their faith or they seek to follow Muhammad's example from the Meccan period. They interpret the Quran in a way that fits modern values, such as the universal human rights.

Among those who study their religious sources more deeply or who are pressured by Islamists to follow the Quran and Hadith literally, two responses can be seen. There are those who decide to live as a true believer and they radicalize. The others conclude that Islam cannot be from God and start looking for an alternative. Some of them say goodbye to everything related to God. Others begin to study the Bible and become followers of Jesus, often after they have had a personal encounter with the Messiah in a dream or vision, similar to the apostle Paul.

In the light of violence committed in name of faith, the words of Jesus are important. When He was captured and one of his followers drew his sword, He said, "All who take the sword will perish by the sword."⁶² Jesus gave a general law, which was known since the days of Noah.⁶³ The one who sows violence will reap violence. He who sows love will harvest love.

6. But ...

After reading this, you may still wonder about some important issues. Therefore, we look at several familiar questions.

a) How about the Crusades and other violence committed by Christian nations?

There are many examples of violence at the hands of Christians, such as the Crusades and the Inquisition in the past, but also more recently fighting between Catholics and Protestants in Northern-Ireland and also Christians in the American army in the Middle East who pray before they leave the army camp. How can this be reconciled with the teachings of Jesus? Surely that makes Christianity a violent religion?

Let us consider the development of Christianity. In the first three centuries, the followers of Jesus were often persecuted in the Roman Empire. In the fourth century things changed radically. After having a divine vision in 324 AD, the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great decided to grant Christians protection from persecution and, just before he died, he converted to Christianity. In 394 AD the emperor Theodosius made Christianity the official religion, forbidding all other religions. The church gained much influence and eventually had political power. When Christians in the Middle East called for help because they were persecuted by the Muslims, the Church in the West mobilized many believers to fight. They took up weapons to free their fellow believers and to guarantee access to Jerusalem for the pilgrims. This became known as the Crusades.

For many centuries, the power of the Church remained intertwined with the leadership of the Western nations, leading to much sorrow and injustice. Eventually the church even began to persecute true followers of Jesus, such as in the time of the Reformation.

I believe that the main reason for all the violence done in name of Christianity lies in the merging of faith with civil power. By making the Christian faith the only official religion, the church received power to force people to obey.

Whoever is forced or under social pressure to adhere to a certain religion, does so out of self-protection, more than out of conviction. The motivation to follow the teachings of the prophet from one's heart diminishes. The teaching of Jesus – loving God above all and loving your enemies – goes against self-protection. No wonder so much violence has been committed after the fourth century by people who called themselves Christians.

The principle of power and coercing obedience can also be seen within Islam. After his flight from Mecca and growing in power in Medina, Muhammad's teaching changed from peaceful to violent. Where at first the consequences of disobedience were left up to God, he took it more and more upon himself to punish disobedience by killing.

In this context it is remarkable how, at the foundation of the United States, dedicated Christian leaders put together the American Constitution. They carefully drafted laws that limited the influence of both state and church, defining the rights and duties of each, so that neither would

be able to gain supremacy of the other. Although these leaders had political power, they did not usurp authority to act in name of Christianity and avoided a repetition the history after Emperor Constantine.

The wars waged by America and Europe in the Middle East are not in name of Christianity but for political reasons. Governments and soldiers may be motivated by Christian values such as equality and justice. This is different from fighting in order to defend or spread one's faith.

Perhaps you wonder how dedicated Christians can fight in the army. We must distinguish between individual and corporate responsibility. He who is attacked for his faith, is told to bless his enemy. However, where a community is under attack, the government has the duty to protect her citizens. Some Christians consider it a duty to protect innocent citizens in other nations from their totalitarian leaders.

b) How about all the violence mentioned in the Bible?

It can be shocking to read about all the blood spilling between God's people Israel and her neighbouring countries. God even commanded to wipe out complete populations!

Beginning with the last point, this command can be found in numerous places, particularly in the Torah. This, however, was not a general command to bring the whole world through violence under Jewish rule. It was a once-off command regarding seven specific nations only.⁶⁴

Regarding later violence between Israel and the other nations, it is noteworthy that the Jewish judges and kings fought in response to their enemies entering their land. The Jewish kings did not simply try to enlarge their territory by invading other countries. They did deal with enemies who attacked them by giving them a final blow or by subjecting them to servitude. That means the shedding of blood was out of self-defence.

Finally, whatever God commanded the Jews, doesn't automatically apply to the Christians. On the one hand we can learn a lot from God's dealings with the Israelites, on the other hand Israel formed an earthly kingdom whereas Christ taught his followers about the heavenly kingdom.

c) But isn't Islam a religion of peace?

Every single Muslim believes that Islam is a religion of peace. The Quran contains clear passages calling the believers to peaceful living. One often cited by Muslims is Surah 5:32, which says, "Because of that, We decreed upon the Children of Israel that whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption [done] in the land - it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one - it is as if he had saved mankind entirely. And our messengers had certainly come to them with clear proofs. Then indeed many of them, [even] after that, throughout the land, were transgressors.

This verse encourages Muslims to honor life and seek peace.

Ultimate peace comes when the whole world is subjected under Islam. The Islamists believe that God has commanded the use of violence if necessary to reach this goal. Non-Muslims easily conclude that the Islamists are mostly violent. In reality, these dedicated Muslims often begin as reformers of a corrupt society and defend the rights of the weak. Take for example the Muslim Brotherhood, founded by Hassan Al-Banna in 1928 in Egypt. "Initially centred on religious and educational programs, the Muslim Brotherhood was seen as providing much-needed social services." ⁶⁵

Hamas, the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, has the same aim. ⁶⁶ Even today, Hamas is in fact responsible for providing a fair amount of social services for Palestinians largely cut off from many resources. ⁶⁷

As frustrations grew with their more secular governments, these organisations reverted to violence to reach their goals.

Interpretation of the Quran plays a major role. A careful reading of Surah 5:32 shows that this was a command for the Jews. The next verse was directed toward Muhammad's followers and states, "Indeed, the penalty for those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger and strive upon earth [to cause] corruption is none but that they be killed or crucified or that their hands and feet be cut off from opposite sides or that they be exiled from the land. That is for them a disgrace in this world; and for them in the Hereafter is a great punishment." Many Muslims consider the military intervention by Western armies in the Middle East as a war against Allah and His messenger and the toppling of Islamic regimes as causing corruption. The verse permits Muslims to kill and torture their enemy.

Another issue is the way of presenting the Quran. Islam has the theological concept of *taqiyya*, which means 'fear, caution, prudence'. ⁶⁸ Muslims are allowed to hide their faith or even deny it if they are threatened or persecuted.

The basis for this is Surah 3:28, which warns Muslims to befriend unbelievers. In the Hadith it is recorded that Muhammad's companion said, "we smile in the face of some people although our hearts curse them." ⁶⁹

While most Muslims focus on the Quran verses from the Meccan period that call for respect for God and one's neighbour, the Islamists focus on the Medina verses, as they are the last and therefore most important revelations. Based on *taqiyya*, a number of them point publicly to the Meccan verses, while in their hearts they are dedicated to the Medina verses. This explains why a Salafist preacher can say in an interview in English on television that there is no compulsion in Islam and at the same time call the believers in the mosque in Arabic to commit violent attacks against Westerners.

Remarkably, most of the violent conflicts in the world are taking place in Muslim nations. Not only do Muslims fight foreign enemies, they also kill each other. This makes it hard to see Islam as a religion of peace. Besides, a religion that allows or commands violence to reach the end goal is of course less peace-loving than a faith that forbids every form of violence. For more information about the tension between the peaceful verses in the Quran and the violent ones, see the article "Is Islam a religion of peace?" on www.godlovesishmael.com

d) But aren't most Muslims peace-loving?

The Muslims who do not shrink back from using violence in name of Islam, form only a small group (see Islamists in the illustration on page 7). Most Muslims seek to build a happy life and are ashamed of what extremists do in name of Islam.

Having said that, peaceful Muslims can change. Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a Somalian lady who grew up in a traditional Islamic home, describes in her book *Nomad* how this can happen. She explains that from birth one is taught to submit and not ask any questions. When radical preachers speak about returning to the pure path of jihad and personal virtue as prescribed by Muhammad, they say nothing new. They build upon the many layers of a spiritual structure that has been formed by your parents, the community and the Quran teachers in your youth. Lessons initially concentrate on prayer, social action and fasting; the method of teaching is repetition and memorisation. One is not permitted to ask questions about the Quranic text or sayings of the prophet. Once you are used to accept the teachings of the Quran without any questioning and you have surrendered to the command to obey, your spirit is ready to receive the radical teachings. Islamists in the West put pressure on their fellow Muslims to obey the precepts in the Quran literally.⁷⁰ This is confirmed in an in-depth study by Ednan Aslan.⁷¹ This means that there is the potential among moderate Muslims to apply the violent verses in the Quran.

e) But suicide attackers are not real Muslims, are they?

When a terrorist attack takes place in the West, many Muslims and others cry out that the perpetrators were not real Muslims. Islamists, on the other hand, say that the attackers will receive the highest reward in paradise. Who is right?

The term suicide attacker does not appear in the Quran or Hadith, so one could argue that they are not Muslims. On the other hand, in the days of Muhammad people fought with swords and arrows. The option to take explosives and blow oneself up in a crowd did not exist. What moves Muslims to give up their lives in this way?

The Quran and Hadith contain many verses that speak about the rewards for those who offer up their lives for God. Some examples, given in the section about the teachings of Muhammad, speak about certainty of entering paradise. The context of these verses is usually military expeditions for the defence or the spread of the Islamic faith. Some other examples are:

*"O you who have believed, shall I guide you to a transaction that will save you from a painful punishment? [It is that] you believe in Allah and His Messenger and strive in the cause of Allah with your wealth **and your lives**. That is best for you, if you should know. He will forgive for you your sins and admit you to gardens beneath which rivers flow and pleasant dwellings in gardens of perpetual residence. That is the great attainment."* (bold mine)⁷²

"Indeed, Allah has purchased from the believers their lives and their properties [in exchange] for that they will have Paradise. They fight in the cause of Allah, so they kill and are killed. [It is] a true promise [binding] upon Him in the Torah and the Gospel and the Qur'an. And who is truer to his covenant than Allah? So rejoice in your transaction which you have contracted. And it is that which is the great attainment." ⁷³

The above verse speaks about a contract: the believers sell their lives by getting killed as they kill and in exchange receive access to paradise. According to Surah 3:169-171 they don't need to worry about those remaining behind, because they will not be sad (knowing that the deceased has entered paradise).⁷⁴ It is noteworthy that those who stay behind – those who didn't go out to fight – are called hypocrites and closer to the unbelievers than to the believers.⁷⁵

While many call a suicide fighter a terrorist, the person himself has a completely different perspective. His highest aim is to please Allah and he wants to be sure about entering Paradise. He gains access by dying for the cause of God in the defense or spread of Islam. All the Western nations who intervene militarily or otherwise in the Middle East are seen as enemies of Islam and must be fought. This can happen in the Middle East but also in the enemy territory – Europe and America. From this perspective, suicide fighters are in fact liberators giving their lives for the victory of Islam. They are martyrs dying in the holy war. According to the Quran it is not they, who kill the enemies of Islam, but Allah himself.⁷⁶

In the eyes of these liberators, modern and other Muslims are cowards and even unbelievers.⁷⁷

7. Where do we go from here?

Here I want to address the Christians: in our interaction we can frighten one another by pointing to the negative things in Islam and see Muslims as our enemies. We can also reassure each other by the fact that the vast majority of Muslims do not take their book too literally and are truly seeking a peaceful life. Where is the balance?

Jesus calls us believers to love our neighbor, including our enemy. Love also protects from evil. Differentiating between individual and collective responsibility helps us find the balance. This is beautifully worded in the following quotation.

"The Gospel calls the followers of Jesus to love and embrace their enemies. That doesn't mean that victims of violence and injustice should naively submit to evil. On the contrary, evil must be fought and eliminated, otherwise society becomes impossible to live in."⁷⁸

For more reading, I recommend *Answering Jihad: A Better Way Forward* by Nabeel Qureshi. See also the article www.answeringislam.org/authors/silas/real_islam.html

¹ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orthodoxy

² This and all other verses are taken from the *English Standard Version*, © 2001, 2007, 2011 by Crossway Bibles, accessed in *e-Sword*, version 10.1.0, Rick Myers

³ www.britannica.com/topic/Sufism

⁴ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sama_\(Sufism\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sama_(Sufism))

⁵ <http://www.katinkahesselink.net/sufi/rumi.html>

⁶ <http://www.humanityinaction.org/knowledgebase/131-beyond-infidels-and-fundamentalists-the-progressive-muslim-movement-in-the-united-states>

⁷ <http://www.mpvusa.org/mpv-principles/>

⁸ <http://www.freemuslims.org/issues/>

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_Modernism

¹⁰ www.newstatesman.com/node/160014

¹¹ www.metrolyrics.com/god-is-the-light-lyrics-cat-stevens.html

¹² From the one-man show 'Krig, terror og andre sjove ting,' Omar Marzouk 2005

¹³ The doctrine that everything in our lives has been determined, so that we have no influence on avoiding accidents or on the way we die has developed based on Surahs such as 22:70, "Do you not know that Allah knows what is in the heaven and earth? Indeed, that is in a Record. Indeed that, for Allah, is easy."

¹⁴ <https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/c/catstevens203165.html>

¹⁵ Abd al-Masih, *Not Every Muslim Believes and Thinks the Same!* Grace and Truth, Germany, 2001, p21

¹⁶ religionresearch.org/closer/2007/03/24/globeandmailcom-muslims-find-their-voice-outside-religion/

¹⁷ www.centerforinquiry.net/outreach/ex_muslim_outreach/

¹⁸ Matthew 5:43-45. These verses and all others have been taken from the *English Standard Version*, © 2001, 2007, 2011 by Crossway Bibles, accessed in *e-Sword*, version 10.1.0, Rick Myers

¹⁹ Matthew 22:37. See also Deuteronomy 6:5, 10:12 and 30:6

²⁰ Matthew 22:39. See also Leviticus 19:18

²¹ Mark 8:35

²² See Mark 1:14-15

²³ See John 3:15-18

²⁴ See John 3:3-8

²⁵ John 11:25-26. See also John 3:16, 36; 20:31. The apostle Paul later taught extensively about the relationship between the Laws of Moses and the faith in Jesus the Messiah, especially in his letter to the Romans.

²⁶ John 13:34, see also John 15:12

²⁷ John 15:13

²⁸ Matthew 28:18-20

²⁹ Hans Wehr entry اسلام submission, resignation, reconciliation (to the will of God). *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, Librairie du Liban.

³⁰ Surah 3:18. This Qur'an verse and all others have been taken from The Qur'an interpretation *Saheeh International*, accessed at Tanzil.net. See also Surah 9:129, 47:19

³¹ Surah 2:112. Other verses regarding submission are 3:20, 6:14, 22:34, 72:14

³² Surah 101:6-11 "Then as for one whose scales are heavy [with good deeds], He will be in a pleasant life. But as for one whose scales are light, His refuge will be an abyss. And what can make you know what that is? It is a Fire, intensely hot."

The following explanation has been found at www.islamhelpline.net/node/7908. "Every good and every evil will be assigned a weight by the Lord Most Just on the Day of Judgment, and all of one's deeds, good or evil, which one did in one's life will be placed in that Supreme Scale of Justice in the Presence of their Lord. He whose balance of good deeds is found heavier will, by the Mercy of their Lord, be granted Paradise; and he whose balance of evil is found heavier will face The Unbearable Wrath and Anger and The Punishment of their Lord."

³³ See for instance Surah 3:193-195 'Our Lord, indeed we have heard a caller calling to faith, [saying], 'Believe in your Lord,' and we have believed. Our Lord, so forgive us our sins and remove from us our misdeeds and cause us to die with the righteous. Our Lord, and grant us what You promised us through Your messengers and do not disgrace us on the Day of Resurrection. Indeed, You do not fail in [Your] promise." And their Lord responded to them, "Never will I allow to be lost the work of [any] worker among you, whether male or female; you are of one another. So those who emigrated or were evicted from their homes or were harmed in My cause or fought or were killed - I will surely remove from them their misdeeds, and I will surely admit them to gardens beneath which rivers flow as reward from Allah, and Allah has with Him the best reward." '

Also, Surah 4:74 "So let those fight in the cause of Allah who sell the life of this world for the Hereafter. And he who fights in the cause of Allah and is killed or achieves victory - We will bestow upon him a great reward."

³⁴ See for instance Surah 2:154, 3:157-158 and 47:4-6

³⁵ See for instance also Surah 22:34b

³⁶ John 18:10-11, Luke 22:49-51

³⁷ Hans Wehr entry جهاد *jihad* fight, battle; jihad, holy war (against the infidels, as a religious duty)

³⁸ Some distinguish up to 164 jihad verses in the Quran. See www.answering-islam.org/Quran/Themes/jihad_passages.html

³⁹ This verse is cited by many critics of Islam. Muslims often respond by saying that the verse must be read in its context, because the verses 6 and 7 say, "*And if any one of the polytheists seeks your protection, then grant him protection so that he may hear the words of Allah. Then deliver him to his place of safety. That is because they are a people who do not know. How can there be for the polytheists a treaty in the sight of Allah and with His Messenger, except for those with whom you made a treaty at al-Masjid al-Haram? So as long as they are upright toward you, be upright toward them. Indeed, Allah loves the righteous [who fear Him].*" So they say that an unbeliever who seeks protection with a Muslim should be left alone, even if he doesn't convert. However, verse 5 ends with "*let them [go] on their way.*" So the idea is that an unbeliever should be protected as long as he is with the Muslims and hearing the words of Allah. He is only permitted full freedom after he has become a Muslim. This is confirmed by verse 11, which states that those who repent, establish prayers and give alms, are to be considered brothers.

⁴⁰ *Saheeh Muslim*, Book 001, Number 0033. See also *Saheeh Muslim* Book 001, #0030 and 0032

⁴¹ See for instance Surah 5:32. The question is when someone is innocent. According to fundamentalists, only the ones who keep God's laws mentioned in the Quran are innocent.

⁴² "And he (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: "I have been sent just before the Hour with the sword, so that Allaah will be worshipped alone with no partner or associate." ' Narrated by Ahmad, 4869; classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in *Saheeh al-Jaami'*, 2831. Source: islamqa.info/en/34647

⁴³ "And make ready against them all you can of power, including steeds of war (tanks, planes, missiles, artillery) to threaten the enemy of Allaah and your enemy" [al-Anfaal 8:60] islamqa.info/en/34647

⁴⁴ islamqa.info/en/34647

⁴⁵ See Acts 7:60, comp. Luke 23:34

⁴⁶ See Acts 2:44-46

⁴⁷ 2 Corinthians 11:24-27

⁴⁸ See Ephesians 6:11-18

⁴⁹ Apostasy and rebellion in central Arabia was led by Musaylima, a self-proclaimed prophet, in the fertile region of Yamamah. He was mainly supported by the powerful tribe of Banu Hanifa. At Buzakha in north central Arabia, another self-proclaimed prophet, Tulaiha, a tribal chief of Bani Asad, led the rebellion against Medina aided by the allied tribes of Banu Ghatfan, the Hawazin, and the Tayy. At Najd, Malik ibn Nuweira led the tribes of Banu Tamim against the authority of Medina. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ridda_wars

⁵⁰ Sahih Bukhari Hadith Ch 23. no 483 ahadith.co.uk/chapter.php?page=16&cid=72 Accessed on 9-9-2022

⁵¹ en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ridda_wars

⁵² By Mohammad Adil at the English language Wikipedia, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=16155332>

⁵³ "The Prophet, who was then in Madinah, was talking to his companions when he received the revelation about what was going on in the battle, and he informed them of the death of the three commanders. "Then," he said, "a sword of Allah took hold of the banner and saved the day." Thus, it was that our hero Khalid ibn Al-Waleed was given the title of Sayf-ul-llah. 'The Sword of Allah.' islamichistory.org/khalid-ibn-al-waleed/

⁵⁴ islamichistory.org/khalid-ibn-al-waleed/

⁵⁵ www.askislampedia.com/home/-/wiki/English_wiki/Khalid+Ibn+Al+Waleed/

⁵⁶ Under 'Abd al-Malik (reigned 685–705) the Umayyad caliphate reached its peak. Muslim armies overran most of Spain in the west and invaded Mukrān and Sindh in India, while in Central Asia the Khorāsānian garrisons conquered Bukhara, Samarkand, Khwārezm, Fergana, and Tashkent. islamichistory.org/the-umayyads/

⁵⁷ The empire had to be fueled by constant military expansion to produce new booty and slaves. www.mideastweb.org/Middle-East-Encyclopedia/umayyad.htm

⁵⁸ usiraq.procon.org/view.background-resource.php?resourceID=000955

⁵⁹ Open Doors states, "In seven out of the top 10 World Watch List countries, the primary cause of persecution is Islamic oppression." <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/>
Also, most of the countries on the World Watch List are Muslim nations. <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/world-watch-list/>

⁶⁰ Undersigned heard this quotation from an Arab philosopher who got it from an Arabic news channel

⁶¹ <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/>

⁶² Matthew 26:52

⁶³ Genesis 9:6 "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed"

⁶⁴ see the [Study Land for the Arabs](http://www.godlovesishmael.com) on www.godlovesishmael.com

⁶⁵ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Muslim-Brotherhood>

⁶⁶ See article 21 of the Hamas Covenant: "Mutual social responsibility means extending assistance, financial or moral, to all those who are in need and joining in the execution of some of the work. Members of the Islamic Resistance Movement should consider the interests of the masses as their own personal interests. They must spare no effort in achieving and preserving them." avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp

⁶⁷ 'Hamas is in fact responsible for providing a fair amount of social services for Palestinians largely cut off from many resources' Bron: www.worldpolicy.org/blog/2014/08/08/terrorism-and-charity-defining-hamas

⁶⁸ Hans Wehr, entry تقيية

⁶⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taqiya#Sunni_Islam_view

⁷⁰ Translated from Dutch. Ayaan Hirsi Ali, *Nomade*, Uitgeverij Augustus, Amsterdam, 2010 p167-168

⁷¹ "A major academic study has shown that many jihadists and other radical Islamists have a deep understanding of Islamic theology. The [study](#), published at the beginning of August, comprehensively refutes the claims made by many politicians and other public figures in the West that radical Islam is a perversion of Islam and jihadists have little knowledge of Islamic theology.

The 310-page study, conducted by Ednan Aslan, who is professor of Islamic religious education at the University of Vienna, was based on 29 in-depth interviews with radical Muslims in Austria. Most of those studied **already had a grounding in Islamic belief before they were radicalised**. However, what Professor Aslan terms **"the intensive examination of theological topics"** represented a turning point for many in their radicalisation. Professor Aslan's study also highlighted the central role played by some Islamic theological teachers in radicalisation, stating, "persons with a higher theological knowledge function as authorities and play a central role in the spread of ideology." (bold added) barnabasfund.org/news/Austria-Major-study-shows-Jihadism-based-on-Islamic-theology?audience=GB

⁷² Surah 61:10-12

⁷³ Surah 9:111

⁷⁴ Surah 3:169-171 "And never think of those who have been killed in the cause of Allah as dead. Rather, they are alive with their Lord, receiving provision, Rejoicing in what Allah has bestowed upon them of His bounty, and they receive good tidings about those [to be martyred] after them who have not yet joined them - that there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve. They receive good tidings of favor from Allah and bounty and [of the fact] that Allah does not allow the reward of believers to be lost"

⁷⁵ Surah 3:166-168 "And what struck you on the day the two armies met was by permission of Allah that He might make evident the [true] believers. And that He might make evident those who are hypocrites. For it was said to them, "Come, fight in the way of Allah or [at least] defend." They said, "If we had known [there would be] fighting, we would have followed you." They were nearer to disbelief that day than to faith, saying with their mouths what was not in their hearts. And Allah is most Knowing of what they conceal - Those who said about their brothers while sitting [at home], "If they had obeyed us, they would not have been killed." Say, "Then prevent death from yourselves, if you should be truthful."

⁷⁶ "And you did not kill them, but it was Allah who killed them." Surah 8:17 Saheeh International

⁷⁷ See for instance the aforementioned Surah 3:166-168

⁷⁸ Volf, M., *Exclusion and Embrace, A theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation*, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1996, p63. (taken from a Dutch source and translated back into English, so the quotation may not have the exact same wording as the original).