

The Conversations Begin

This book contains conversations with people who reached out to WhyIslam.org for dialogue and received me as their correspondent. WhyIslam conversations typically begin when a person visits the WhyIslam website and submits a "One to One Email Correspondence" form. From this form, the Correspondence Manager assigns the visitor to one of the WhyIslam volunteers. If the visitor is assigned to me, the questions or comments are delivered to my email, and then I would initiate the first email to reach out and respond to the visitor's questions. The conversation would then flow from there, just like a print letter correspondence. New questions, topics, and ideas were shared and discussed as they came up.

The book is organized by person and time sequence. Often, conversations overlapped between people, but for ease of reading, I collected conversations with one person and put them in chronological order, from first to last.

With some conversation partners, there was a break in conversation that is restarted later. These conversations are marked with "Part 2" or "Part 3" to indicate it is a continuation of a prior established conversation. Other times, at the end of the conversation, there is no further follow up.

The conversations in this book are real. They are faithful transcripts of email correspondence that I have had with WhyIslam.org visitors over the years. To protect the privacy of our visitors, the names and identifying details have been changed. For those who restarted the conversation at a later time, their name is preserved to show continuity in conversation partners. When initiating a new conversation, I always send a standard opening email. That email is reproduced here for reference.

Standard Email Introduction

Email #01 –From: Ahmed Rashed

In the Name of God, the Most-Gracious, the Ever-Merciful:

Thank you for taking the time to contact us and learn about Islam straight from the source. We practice and promote a balanced view of Islam -- the “middle way” that the Qur’an calls Muslims to follow: a path of moderation that is free of *extremism*.

Before we begin, let me introduce myself. My name is Ahmed Rashed. I am a volunteer for WhyIslam.org. I was born in Egypt but raised in America. I am married with two little children. I work as a test software engineer, but my life passion is teaching others about Islam.

Now I'm going to give you a brief description of what Islam is all about: Islam is not a new religion. Rather, it is the same truth that God revealed through all His prophets to every people. For over a fifth of the world's population, Islam is both a religion and a complete way of life. Muslims are taught to be truthful, to be just, to help the needy, to honor their parents, and to maintain good relations with neighbors and relatives.

The Qur’an tells Muslims to say: **“We believe in God and what was revealed to us, and what was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the Tribes, and what was given to Moses and Jesus and to the Prophets from their Lord. We do not separate between them, and to Him we submit.”** (3:84)

This is how Islam sees itself in relation to all other religions. The Message revealed to Muhammad is considered God’s religion for humanity in its final form. Muslims view Muhammad as the final successor to Jesus, Moses, Abraham, and all the previous prophets. Muslims view the Qur’an as the final Testament from God to humanity. Just as God sent revelation to Moses and Jesus (peace be upon them), Muslims believe God sent revelation to Muhammad (peace be upon him) to confirm, correct, and complete all previous Scriptures.

The Qur'an says that God sent prophets to every community in history. These prophets were men of high moral character chosen by God to teach their people about their duty to God and to their fellow man. The Qur'an teaches that this duty was always "submission and devotion to God" and to treat all God's creation with equality and compassion.

"Islam" is simply the Arabic word for this duty of "submission and devotion" to God.

"Muslim" is the Arabic word for "one who submits" to God and obeys Him.

The Qur'an says that whenever a people broke away from God's teachings, God would send another prophet to bring them back to His Path. This is how Muslims understand the many prophets sent to the Children of Israel and the many religions in the world today.

Prophet Muhammad, like all the prophets before him, called people to believe in and worship One God, to believe in His Angels, to believe in His Prophets, to believe in His Revelations, to believe in the Day of Judgment, and to believe in Divine Decree and Destiny.

Prophet Muhammad, like all the prophets before him, called people to bear witness that there is no god but God and that he was God's Messenger, to pray regularly, to give charity regularly, and to fast as a form of self-purification. Prophet Muhammad, like Prophet Abraham before him, called people to make the pilgrimage to the Holy Sanctuary in Mecca, where the first house of worship dedicated to God Almighty was built.

This is just a general overview, so please reply with any questions you may have. I look forward to your response, and I hope to continue the discussion.

May peace be with you,
Ahmed Rashed

**CONVERSATION
WITH
DUSTIN**

Email #02 – From: Dustin

Sent: Sunday, September 13, 2009 6:11am

To: Ahmed Rashed

Hey! Thanks for getting in touch with me. I have actually signed up for a lot of Islamic sites and never heard anything, from anyone. So, really, thank you so much. Yes, I would love to start the One-to-One Email Correspondence, as soon as possible. Just show me where to start and what to do.

Thanks again,

Dustin

Email #03 –From: Ahmed Rashed

Sent: Sunday, September 13, 2009 2:54pm

To: Dustin

Hey Dustin,

As I mentioned before, we give a brief overview of the beliefs and practice of Islam. Then we go into more details based on the questions you ask from the first email. We keep going deeper and more detailed with each email exchange until you feel satisfied that you've learned enough about Islam.

Beliefs: We are known as one of the three great Abrahamic faiths. Like Judaism and Christianity, our religion was founded by a descendant of Abraham. We believe in Moses and Jesus (peace be upon them) and the original Torah and Gospel as revealed to the Prophets. We believe in the Ten Commandments.

We believe in God, His angels, His scriptures and prophets, the Day of Judgment and heaven and hell, and in God's Wise Decree and Measure, and Man's free will. These are the basic articles of Islamic Faith. Anybody who denies any one of these is no longer considered a Muslim.

Some people think we have a different God because we use the Arabic language name for God, "Allah." Whether we are Christians, Jews or Muslims, we all pray to the same God. We believe God sent a messenger to every nation with the same message: Believe in one God and be good to each other.

We are taught that Islam is just the final brick in the house that God has built through his other prophets.

One becomes a Muslim by declaring there is only one God (thus, no one should play God) and Mohammed is his messenger.

Duties: A Muslim is required to pray 5 times a day, pay charity every year to help the needy, fast during the month of Ramadan, and make the pilgrimage to Mecca if we are able.

This is a very brief overview. After you read this, reply with any questions you have and we can move forward from there.

May peace be with you,
Ahmed

Email #04 – From: Dustin
Sent: Sunday, September 13, 2009 11:46pm
To: Ahmed Rashed

Okay, I don't know really what to start on first. But, I would, like to learn about the Qur'an, and if it can be proven to truly be from God. The reason I'm starting there, is because of all the research on the "bible", I have done over the years. It's left me disappointed. I don't believe the bible to be the word of God anymore. But, it's whatever you would like to teach me first.

Thanks again,
Dustin

Email #05 –From: Ahmed Rashed
Sent: Monday, September 14, 2009 6:17am
To: Dustin

No problem, Dustin. Actually, the Qur'an is a very good place to start because it is the main source of guidance and wisdom and law in Islam. It is the bedrock of Islam. Please forgive the length of this email; my wish is to give you a thorough and deep look at the Final Testament from God to humanity, the Qur'an.

What is the Qur'an

The Qur'an is the primary source of every Muslim's faith and practice. Its basic theme is the relationship between God and His creatures. At the same time, it provides guidelines and detailed teachings for a just society, proper human conduct, and an equitable economic system.

The compilation and preservation of the Qur'an

Muslims believe the Qur'an is the literal word of God. Muslims believe it was revealed to His Prophet Muhammad through the Angel Gabriel. It was memorized by Muhammad who then dictated it to his Companions. They, in turn, memorized it, wrote it down, and reviewed it with the Prophet Muhammad during his lifetime. Moreover, the Prophet Muhammad reviewed the Qur'an with the Angel Gabriel once each year. In the last year of his life, the Prophet reviewed the Qur'an with the Angel Gabriel twice.

From the time the Qur'an was revealed, until this day, there has always been a huge number of Muslims who have memorized all of the Qur'an, letter by letter. By the time the Prophet died, there were over **100 Companions** who had the entire Qur'an memorized; some of them as young as 14. Not one letter of the Qur'an has been changed over the centuries. It is the **ONLY** scripture in the world that can truthfully claim to be the same today as it was originally. It is the **ONLY** scripture in the world that is regularly memorized by its followers (even by non-Arabic speakers).

The Qur'an's preservation

Below is an excerpt which shows how even non-Muslims scholars (some of whom are virulently anti-Islam) admit that the Qur'an we have today is the Qur'an that Muhammad taught his Companions. **Note:** the word **Ahadith** means **Oral Traditions** in Arabic and the word **mushaf** means **Codex** in Arabic.

...many orientalist themselves have admitted like Gibb that "It seems reasonably well established that no material changes were introduced and that the original form of Mohammed's discourses were preserved with scrupulous precision" [36]. John Burton, at the end of his

substantial work on the Qur'an's compilation, says with reference to criticisms made of different readings narrated in Ahadith that "No major differences of doctrines can be constructed on the basis of the parallel readings based on the Uthmanic consonantal outline, yet ascribed to mushafs other than his. All the rival readings unquestionably represent one and the same text. They are substantially agreed in what they transmit..." [37]. He further states that the Qur'an as we have it today is "the text which has come down to us in the form in which it was organized and approved by the Prophet.... What we have today in our hands is the mushaf of Muhammad." [38]. Kenneth Cragg describes the transmission of the Qur'an from the time of revelation to today as occurring in "an unbroken living sequence of devotion" [39]. Schwally concurs that "As far as the various pieces of revelation are concerned, we may be confident that their text has been generally transmitted exactly as it was found in the Prophet's legacy" [40].

[36] H.A.R. Gibb, *Mohammedanism*, London: Oxford University Press, 1969, p.50

[37] John Burton, *The Collection of the Qur'an*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977, p. 171

[38] John Burton, *The Collection of the Qur'an*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977, p.239-40

[39] Kenneth Cragg, *The Mind of the Qur'an*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973, p.26

[40] Schwally, *Geschichte des Qorans*, Leipzig: Dieterich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1909-38, Vol.2, p.120

The full article is here (warning, very long):

<http://www.ilaam.net/Articles/AuthenticQur'an.html>

Why a person would believe in the Qur'an

There are several reasons; I'll mention only three.

FIRST: As mentioned above, the Qur'an has not changed since the time of Muhammad, not even the language and pronunciation. Even non-Muslims admit this point, and those same non-Muslims admit that the Bible has certainly changed (in language, substance, and meaning) since the time of Jesus.

SECOND: The Qur'an teaches that the previous scriptures, especially the Torah of Moses and the Evangel of Jesus, foretold the coming of Muhammad. Even though the Bible we have now is not 100% what was revealed to these two Prophets, there are still remnants of these predictions of Muhammad. Check the following link (chapter 1 section 3): <http://www.islam-guide.com/frm-ch1-3.htm>

THIRD: The Qur'an itself is a miracle whose only explanation is Divine Authorship. Every prophet came with a miracle to prove his credentials. Muhammad's primary miracle was the Qur'an. Why? Because unlike the raising of the dead or the parting of the sea, this miracle lives on long after the prophet is gone.

The Qur'an challenges its reader: how could an **illiterate** man living in an **ignorant** society come up with a discourse of such wisdom and eloquence? How could an **illiterate** man living in an **isolated** society come up with a discourse that refers to past nations, future events, and the natural world around us **without making a single error whatsoever**? The following link is a review of the miraculous nature of the Qur'an by Dr. Gary Miller, an atheist turned Christian turned Minister turned Muslim: <http://www.islam101.com/science/GaryMiller.html>

Conclusion: So I've tried my best to give you a description of the Qur'an and its credentials. The links provided are to deepen your knowledge, and I strongly recommend you read them. Each link is a gem worth uncovering.

Anything good that came from this email is from God Almighty, and anything bad is only from my own shortcomings. Please feel free to ask any more questions, Dustin. I look forward to continuing our discussion. May God accept our efforts.

May peace be with you,
Ahmed

Email #06 –From: Dustin
Sent: Thursday, September 17, 2009 11:21am
To: Ahmed Rashed

Assalam-o-Alaikum

Now that was a good study! I am convinced that I won't be disappointed this time. Thank you for all that information. I am though, truly convinced that the Qur'an is the word of Allah. My wife and I like to see for ourselves if things will stand our little investigation, and the Qur'an did exactly that.

I do have a few questions though. 1. I have a friend on MySpace who lives in CA, USA. He was good enough to send me some of books on Islam. I was wondering, since I am new to Islam, what could I do in return for him. I did offer to repay his money for sending me the books. But I would like to send him a gift. Could you recommend something?

2. I know to read the Qur'an through as much as possible. But, as for studying, there is a book called "What Islam is All About" that he sent me. Should I start studying that book first?

3. Does Allah draw you to him? What I mean by that. For a long time now, people – not really knowing – had given me movies with Islamic things in them. I would get books that would mention something about Islam. A plate that I later discovered had Islamic writings on it. I bought the movie "ALI" and discovered that one of my favorite boxers was Muslim. And at last, by typing in the wrong address, I found a talk by "Yusuf" on YouTube and have been hooked ever since. I had never heard of Islam before all of this. Does Allah draw people like that?

4. I saw somewhere that Saudi Arabia is racist, and that this is why Malcolm X was disillusioned when he went on the pilgrimage (Hajj). Could you comment?

Thanks again,

Dustin

Email #07 – From: Ahmed Rashed
Sent: Friday, September 18, 2009 6:57am
To: Dustin

Wa alaikumumu salaam. I am glad to read such a positive response from you. Let's get right to your questions:

1. The best gift is a prayer for the one you care about. Personally, if it were me, I would pass on the information you learned about Islam to those around you. Knowing that the information I gave to you was being passed on to others would be the greatest gift I could ever receive.

2. That book is an excellent introduction and reference book on Islam. It has many excerpts from the Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet. Also, it gives you references to the Qur'an for each topic it covers. That way, you can read the book and have an English Qur'an next to you to see the source of whatever point is being discussed.

3. Yes, definitely. There is an African-American brother here who is now the Imam of a masjid. He said he started getting interested in Islam when he saw the Qur'an in a dream. Another saw Jesus in a dream telling him to be Muslim. Here is a link to a few conversion stories:

<http://islamicweb.com/begin/newMuslims/>

4. I am not sure where you got this idea. First of all, Islam has always been color-blind and egalitarian. As for Malcolm X, here is what he told Alex Haley in his autobiography:

"Never have I witnessed such sincere hospitality and such overwhelming spirit of true brotherhood as is practiced by people of all colors and races here in this Ancient Holy Land, the home of Abraham and all the other Prophets of Holy scriptures. For the past week I have been truly speechless and spellbound by the graciousness I see displayed all around me by people of all colors. I have been blessed to visit the Holy City of Mecca ... There were tens of thousands of pilgrims, from all over the world. They were of all colors, from blue eyed blonds to black skinned Africans. But we were all practicing in the same ritual, displaying a spirit of unity and brotherhood that my experiences in America had led

me to believe never could exist between the white and the non-white.

America needs to understand Islam, because this is the one religion that erases from its society the race problem. Throughout my travels in the Muslim world, I have met, talked to, even eaten with people who in America would have been considered white, but the white attitude had been removed from their minds by the religion of Islam. I have never before seen such sincere and true brotherhood, practiced by all colors together, irrespective of their color.

You may be shocked by these words coming from me. But on this pilgrimage, what I have seen and experienced has forced me to rearrange much of the thought patterns previously held, and to toss aside some of my previous conclusions. Despite my firm convictions, I have always been a man who tries to face facts, and to accept the reality of life as new experience and new knowledge unfolds. I have always kept an open mind, a flexibility that must go hand in hand with every form of the intelligent search for truth.

I could see from this, that perhaps if white Americans could accept the Oneness of God, then perhaps, too, they could accept in reality the oneness of man and cease to measure, and hinder, and harm others in terms of their differences in color."

May peace be with you,
Ahmed

Email #08 – From: Dustin
Sent: Tuesday, September 22, 2009 1:51pm
To: Ahmed Rashed

Assalam-o-Alaikum

Thank you for your reply and helping with the questions I had, especially the one about Malcolm. I have always loved the teachings of Malcolm X. It was just a video I saw, trying to twist Malcolm's words. Could give me a chapter outline of the Qur'an?

I want to know where to go and what to read in certain situations. For example, like the first chapter is about how we should praise him, that kind of thing. I have looked online, but I didn't find anything.

QUESTIONS:

1. Did the prophet Jesus (Pbuh) die on the cross like the churches teach?

2. What exactly do I say and do while I am praying to Allah? I mean are there ways that I should place my hands? Are there words that need to be said?

3. Is there another book that I should have as a companion along with the Qur'an?

Well, there are my questions for today!

No really, thank you for taking time out to do these studies with me. You have been a lot of help. I look forward to your answers.

Thanks again,
Dustin

Email #09 – From: Ahmed Rashed
Sent: Tuesday, September 22, 2009 2:51pm
To: Dustin

Assalaamu alaikum,

You are quite welcome, Dustin; I am at your service. A chapter outline of the Qur'an is not really feasible. That is because each chapter touches on many subjects, and many subjects are given a slightly different presentation in each chapter that they appear. This is because the Qur'an is a conversation between the Lord and His creation; so this conversation spans many topics in each chapter and in each chapter, the Lord reminds and reiterates certain themes or stories which are useful to His creatures. It is meant to be read from front to back many times during a person's life. It is also meant that a man can open the book anywhere in the middle and start a spiritual conversation with his Creator.

However, there is a decent topic index here:

<http://www.islamicity.com/mosque/TOPICI.HTM>

You can also find a decent hyperlinked translation of the Qur'an here:

<http://www.islamicity.com/mosque/Surai.htm>

Now for your questions:

1. The Qur'an describes it this way: **For they rejected Faith; for they uttered against Mary a grave false charge; For they said, "We killed the Christ, Jesus the son of Mary, the Messenger of Allah." But they killed him not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them. And those who differ therein are full of doubts, with no knowledge, but only conjecture to follow, for of a surety they killed him not.**

Nay, Allah raised him up unto Himself; and Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise; And there is none of the People of the Book but must believe in him before his death; and on the Day of Judgment he will be a witness against them. (4:156-159)

2. It is preferable to have a Muslim teach you in person.

3. "Should" have? No. The Qur'an is sufficient for everyday needs. Other books and learning are really only needed for those who want to derive Islamic Law or who want commentary on obscure Arabic references. Sometimes it is good to have an annotated Qur'an that explains the occasions of each chapter's revelations. This will give you the specific context of the verses, but the general meanings are still accessible without commentary. Let me know if you have any other questions.

May peace be with you,
Ahmed



With Dialogue Comes Understanding

**CONVERSATION
WITH
ROBBY**

Email #02 – From: Robby
Sent: Thursday, October 18, 2009 11:01am
To: Ahmed Rashed

Thanks for the intro. Could you go in depth about the beliefs and rituals of Islam?

Thank you,
Robby

Email #03 – From: Ahmed Rashed
Sent: Monday, October 19, 2009 2:46pm
To: Robby

We will start our discussion with the basic articles of faith. They are:

1. Belief in God
2. Belief in His Angels
3. Belief in His Revelations
4. Belief in His Prophets
5. Belief in the Day of Judgment
6. Belief in Divine Predestination

We will discuss them one at a time, answering all questions about the first before we move on to the next.

The Basic Islamic Beliefs

1) Belief in God:

Muslims believe in one, unique, incomparable God, Who has neither son nor partner, and that none has the right to be worshipped but Him alone. He is the true God, and every other deity is false. He has the most magnificent names and sublime perfect attributes. No one shares His divinity, or His attributes. In the Qur'an, God describes Himself: **Say, "He is God, the One. God, the Absolute. He begets not, nor was He begotten, and there is none like Him. (112:1-4)**

No one has the right to be invoked, supplicated, prayed to, or shown any act of worship, but God alone.

God alone is the Almighty, the Creator, the Sovereign, and the Sustainer of everything in the whole universe. He manages all

affairs. He stands in need of none of His creatures, and all His creatures depend on Him for all that they need. He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing, and the All-Knowing. In a perfect manner, His knowledge encompasses all things, the open and the secret, and the public and the private. He knows what has happened, what will happen, and how it will happen. No affair occurs in the whole world except by His will. Whatever He wills is, and whatever He does not will is not and will never be. His will is above the will of all the creatures. He has power over all things, and He is able to do everything. He is the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, and the Most Beneficent. In one of the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, we are told that *God is more merciful to His creatures than a mother to her child*. God is far removed from injustice and tyranny. He is All-Wise in all of His actions and decrees. If someone wants something from God, he or she can ask God directly without asking anyone else to intercede with God for him or her.

Islam teaches that God is not Jesus, and Jesus is not God. The Qur'an says: **Indeed, they have disbelieved who have said, "God is the Messiah, son of Mary." The Messiah said, "Children of Israel, worship God, my Lord and your Lord. Whoever associates partners in worship with God, then God has forbidden Paradise for him, and his home is the Fire. For the wrongdoers, there will be no helpers. (5:72)**

Indeed, they disbelieve who say, "God is the third of three," when there is no god but one God. If they desist not from what they say, truly, a painful punishment will befall the disbelievers among them. Would they not rather repent to God and ask His forgiveness? For God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. The Messiah, son of Mary, was no more than a messenger. (5:73-75)

Islam rejects that God rested on the seventh day of the creation, that He wrestled with one of His angels, that He is an envious plotter against mankind, or that He is incarnate in any human being. Islam also rejects the attribution of any human form to God. All of these are considered blasphemous. God is the

Exalted. He is far removed from every imperfection. He never becomes weary. He does not become drowsy nor does he sleep.

The Arabic word Allah means God (the one and only true God who created the whole universe). This word Allah is a name for God, which is used by Arabic speakers, both Arab Muslims and Arab Christians. This word cannot be used to designate anything other than the one true God. The Arabic word Allah occurs in the Qur'an about 2700 times. In Aramaic, a language related closely to Arabic and the language that Jesus habitually spoke, God is also referred to as Allah.

Read and ponder this selection, then reply with any and all questions that come to mind. I apologize for the length, but this is the single most important belief in Islam.

May peace be with you,
Ahmed

Email #04 - From: Robby
Sent: Tuesday, October 20, 2009 11:21am
To: Ahmed Rashed

Can you tell me about sex and marriage please?
Thank you.

Email #05 - From: Ahmed Rashed
Sent: Wednesday, October 21, 2009 10:16am
To: Robby

That's a big jump from beliefs and worship :)

I assume you understood belief in God. Belief in the angels, the prophets, the revealed scriptures, the Day of Judgment, and Divine Decree are the other articles of faith. I will continue sending these to you, God-willing, so we can be assured you have all accurate information.

After that, we should talk about the pillars of worship: Testifying that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is His messenger, praying 5 times a day, fasting during month of Ramada, making the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in your

life, and giving charity if you possess more than 85 grams of gold (or their equivalent in local currency and liquid assets) for a full lunar year.

After that, we can start talking about lifestyle! Usually, we talk about 5 topics in this section: Rules for speech and behavior, rules for earning and spending, rules for love and marriage, rules for eating and drinking, and finally rules for games and leisure.

Since you have asked directly, I will explain the Islamic etiquettes of love, sex, and marriage. God says in the Qur'an "**And do no approach adultery; it is immoral and an evil way.**" (17:32) From this, we understand that not only is sex outside of marriage a sin, but even coming near to this act is itself a sin. For this reason, the Prophet instructed his community to be very careful around the opposite sex. Flirting, joking, patting, hugging, kissing, and close friendship is not considered appropriate between a man and a woman unless the two in question are related or married to each other.

A man and woman are allowed to interact with each other in a business, educational, political, or medical situation, but all these interaction **must** be with professional detachment and propriety. That means that personal space is not transgressed and personal conversation is not held.

Most of what goes on in the Western world regarding the mixing and socializing between men and women is considered sinful or at best un-Islamic. Islam defines fidelity and chastity as not just **sexual** exclusivity, but also **physical** exclusivity and **emotional** exclusivity. Most people in the West have evolved the opinion that as long as a man only has sex with his wife, he may get physical and emotional with other women.

Islam takes the comprehensive and pragmatic view that emotions and physicality often lead to intimacy and sexuality, therefore, Islam commands its followers to follow the purer route and keep themselves fully chaste for their spouses only.

May peace be with you,
Ahmed

Email #06 – From: Robby
Sent: Thursday, October 22, 2009 11:01am
To: Ahmed Rashed

Thanks. How old do you have to be to get married?
Thank you,
Robby

Email #07 – From: Ahmed Rashed
Sent: Friday, October 23, 2009 11:49am
To: Robby

There is no age limit for marriage in Islam. Muslims are encouraged to marry young to avoid the temptation of adultery and sexual frustration. The only hard and fast minimum requirements for a valid marriage are that both bride and groom must have physically matured. This means the girl must have demonstrated menstruation and the boy must have demonstrated ejaculation. This is the absolute minimum.

However, in addition, the groom **must** be able to feed, clothe, shelter, and maintain his wife, so this usually means that man doesn't marry until after graduating high school or college. Also, the bride usually requires the consent of her guardians, so this usually means that she doesn't marry until after high school, although I know of people in the Middle East (mainly farmers and country folk) who marry their girls as young as 13 or 14. If the woman has married before, or she is a convert, consent of the family is strongly recommended but not required.

Let me know if there are any other questions you have.
May peace be with you,
Ahmed

CONVERSATION WITH BARBARA

Email #02 –From: Barbara
Sent: Wednesday, March 23, 2010 6:19am
To: Ahmed Rashed

I've been asking you idiots since last year for a Koran, and have not received anything. I did some research on your so called peaceful religion and discovered it is all a dictatorship and nothing else. I, for one, do not want to be associated with something as archaic and outdated as Islam. I am a Baha'i and I'm staying where I'm at. At least in the Baha'i faith, we believe that women are equal in the eyes of God. You people treat your women like trash. They have to wear rags on their heads and over their faces, how pathetic you people really are. So, forget sending me the Koran, you can use it when you run out of toilet paper. Another thing, you people want to go out and kill non-believers. It only proves how demented and mentally sick you jerks really are. This is the United States of America and it will NEVER be an Islamic country.

Email #03 –From: Ahmed Rashed
Sent: Wednesday, March 24, 2010 8:11am
To: Barbara

In the Name of God, the Most-Gracious, the Ever-Merciful:

It is clear that you are very angry with us, but I pray we can come to an amicable understanding, God-willing. To proceed with your comments:

I've been asking you idiots since last year for a Koran, and have not received anything.

For some reason, your request did not register in our system, so please forgive us for not sending you a Qur'an in a timely manner.

I did some research on your so called peaceful religion and discovered it is all a dictatorship and nothing else.

Dictatorship is totally against Islamic teachings. There is a lot of propaganda and misinformation on the web. It is for this reason we launched this humble correspondence service.

The Qur'an orders the Prophet to consult with his followers: **So pardon them and implore God to forgive them. Take counsel with them in the conduct of affairs; and when you are resolved, put your trust in God. Verily God loves those who trust in Him. (3:159)**

The Qur'an also praises the community that runs its affairs with consultation: **Better and lasting is that which God has for those who believe and put their trust in Him; who avoid gross sins and lewdness; who when angered are ready to forgive; who obey their Lord, attend to their prayers, and conduct their affairs by mutual consultation; who give charity out of that which We have given them; and who when oppressed seek to redress their wrongs. (42:36-39)**

In addition, here are a few example of what *non-Muslim* scholars and intellectuals have to say about Islam and the Prophet:

"No other society has such a record of success in uniting in an equality of status, of opportunity and endeavour so many and so varied races of mankind. The great Muslim communities of Africa, India and Indonesia, perhaps also the small community in Japan, show that Islam has still the power to reconcile apparently irreconcilable elements of race and tradition. If ever the opposition of the great societies of the East and west is to be replaced by cooperation, the mediation of Islam is an indispensable condition." (H.A.R. Gibb, *WHITHER ISLAM*, p. 379)

"The extinction of race consciousness as between Muslims is one of the outstanding achievements of Islam and in the contemporary world there is, as it happens, a crying need for the propagation of this Islamic virtue..." (A.J. Toynbee, *CIVILIZATION ON TRIAL*, New York, p. 205)

"Sense of justice is one of the most wonderful ideals of Islam, because as I read in the Qur'an I find those dynamic principles of life, not mystic but practical ethics for the daily conduct of life suited to the whole world." --Lectures on "The Ideals of Islam;" see *SPEECHES AND WRITINGS OF SAROJINI NAIDU*, Madras, 1918, p. 167.

"The doctrine of brotherhood of Islam extends to all human beings, no matter what color, race or creed. Islam is the only religion which has been able to realize this doctrine in practice. Muslims wherever on the world they are will recognize each other as brothers."

Mr. R. L. Mellema, Holland, Anthropologist, Writer and Scholar.

You can read more quotes at this link:
<http://www.islamicity.com/Mosque/aboutislam.htm>

I, for one, do not want to be associated with something as archaic and outdated as Islam.

On the contrary, Islam is the *only* religion on the face of the Earth that is still relevant as it was originally revealed. The teachings of the Qur'an about theology, economics, ethics, and science are still true and valid as they were 14 centuries ago.

"The essential and definite element of my conversion to Islam was the Qur'an. I began to study it before my conversion with the critical spirit of a Western intellectual. There are certain verses of this book, the Qur'an, revealed more than thirteen centuries ago, which teach exactly the same notions as the most modern scientific researchers do. This definitely converted me." Ali Selman Benoist, France, Doctor of Medicine.

"I have read the Sacred Scriptures of every religion; nowhere have I found what I encountered in Islam: perfection. The Holy Qur'an, compared to any other scripture I have read, is like the Sun compared to that of a match. I firmly believe that anybody who reads the Word of Allah with a mind that is not completely closed to Truth, will become a Muslim." Saifuddin Dirk Walter Mosig, U. S.A.

I am a Baha'i and I'm staying where I'm at.

You are free to do so. Our purpose is not to seek converts. Our purpose is simply to provide accurate information on our faith. There is a lot of anti-Islam propaganda and misinformation in the media. We set up this website to set the record straight; nothing more, nothing less.

At least in the Baha`i faith, we believe that women are equal in the eyes of God.

Women are equal to men in the eyes of God. The Qur'an says: **The believers who do good works, whether men or women, shall enter Paradise. They shall not suffer the least injustice. (4:123-124)**

The Prophet said: *"Women are the twin halves of men."*

You people treat your women like trash.

The Prophet and his companions treated their women like queens. The Prophet commanded his followers: *"The best of you is he who is kindest to his wives."*

A'isha (wife of the Prophet) said, "The Prophet was always at the service of his household. He would mend his own clothes and cobble his own shoes."

Muslims who mistreat their women do not reflect the teachings of Islam and the Prophet.

They have to wear rags on their heads and over their faces, how pathetic you people really are.

To Muslim women who practice hijab, it represents an act of obedience to God. It also represents a step towards freedom, i.e. freedom from being judged by their looks rather than their intellect.

Both men and women are required to dress and conduct themselves in a manner that befits their dignity and is not the cause of temptation for others. Hair is considered part of a woman's physical attractiveness. Therefore, covering of hair for the woman is considered essential to modesty of her attire, even in the Bible. This is the reason that nuns and orthodox Jewish women also cover their hair.

In a society where women's beauty has been made a commodity, and where women often end up associating their self-worth with their looks, the hijab and its concomitant de-emphasis of physical beauty can be tremendously liberating. Muslim

women wear the hijab out of obedience to God, while recognizing the immense wisdom behind His commandment.

Another thing, you people want to go out and kill non-believers. It only proves how demented and mentally sick you jerks really are.

This is just propaganda and misinformation. The word Jihad comes from the root word '**ja-ha-da**' which means 'struggle.' At the individual level, jihad primarily refers to the inner struggle of being a person of virtue and submission to God in all aspects of life. It does not mean "holy war."

The Qur'an says:

There is no compulsion in religion. (2:256)

Had your Lord willed, everyone on earth would have believed. Will you compel people to become believers? (10:99)

And say, "The truth is from your Lord. Whoever wills—let him believe. And whoever wills—let him disbelieve." (18:29)

Again, I apologize for the lengthy email, but I wanted to be sure each of your issues was addressed in a complete manner. Please reply back at your earliest convenience so we may continue the discussion, for it is only through dialogue that we can attain understanding.

May peace be with you,
Ahmed Rashed

**CONVERSATION
WITH
JESSICA**

Email #02 – From: Jessica
Sent: Monday, March 22, 2010 11:35pm
To: Ahmed Rashed

I really resent your slogans in the university depicting that Jesus was Islamic. No, Jesus was a Jew. I also resent you trying to recruit martyrs perhaps you need European looking young men to carry out your Jihad. I resent that you even mention Jihad on your website. You are the enemy living among us. You are exploiting the freedoms that we value to ultimately take it away from us. I will do everything in my power to make sure that no daughter or granddaughter of mine will have to cover themselves. God made nothing imperfect.

Email #03 – From: Ahmed Rashed
Sent: Monday, March 22, 2010 1:42am
To: Jessica

In the Name of God, the Most-Gracious, the Ever-Merciful:

I pray this email finds you in the best of health and faith, God-willing. My name is Ahmed Rashed. I am a volunteer for the WhyIslam Outreach Team, and I hope to start a dialogue with you to address the concerns you mentioned in the comments above.

To proceed with your comments:

1. *I really resent your slogans in the university depicting that Jesus was Islamic. No, Jesus was a Jew.*

He was both. Muslims believe Jesus (God's peace and blessings be upon him) was a noble Prophet and one of God's Great Messengers. Muslims agree that he was a Jew, for he was from the line David from the Children of Israel.

The Qur'an quotes Jesus (God's peace and blessings be upon him) as saying: **I am a Servant of God. He has given me the Book and made me a Prophet. He made me blessed wherever I go, and he has charged me with prayer and charity so long as I live. He has made me kind to my mother and not insolent nor miserable. So peace be upon me the day I was born and the day I die and the day I am raised to life. (19:30-33)**

The word "islam" is simply the Arabic word for "loving submission/obedience to God." The word "muslim" is simply the Arabic word for he who lovingly obeys and submits to God. Do not get confused by the language. All Prophets dedicated their whole lives to following God's Word and preaching it to their people out of love and obedience to God. In whatever language they spoke, they were all "loving devotees of God." Therefore, in the language of Arabic, they were all "muslims."

The Qur'an says: **He has ordained for you the Faith which He enjoined on Noah and which We have revealed to you, and which we enjoined on Abraham, Moses, and Jesus: "Observe this Faith and be not divided therein." Qur'an (42:13)**

2. I resent you trying to recruit martyrs perhaps you need European looking young men to carry out your Jihad.

We are not trying to recruit martyrs. Our purpose is simply to provide accurate information on our faith. There is a lot of anti-Islam propaganda and misinformation in the media. We set up this website to set the record straight; nothing more, nothing less.

3. I resent that you even mention Jihad on your website.

We mention Jihad on our website because it is the most misunderstood concept in our faith. Jihad on the battlefield, in the Islamic perspective, is the last resort, and is subject to stringent conditions outlined by the Prophet: no harming non-combatants, no demolishing buildings, no cutting down crops, and no killing of prisoners. Those are the Islamic rules of engagement.

The Qur'an says: **Permission is given to those who are fought against, and God is Able to give them victory. Those who were unjustly evicted from their homes, merely for saying, "Our Lord is God." Were it not that God repels people by means of others: monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques—where the name of God is remembered—would have been destroyed. God supports whoever supports Him. God is Strong and Mighty. (22:39-40)**

Moreover, the Qur'an says: **And why would you not fight in the cause of God, and the helpless men, and women, and children, cry out, "Our Lord, deliver us from this town whose people are oppressive, and appoint for us from Your Presence a Protector, and appoint for us from Your Presence a Victor."** (4:75)

Thus the conditions of physical Jihad are clearly defined in the Qur'an. Regardless of how legitimate a cause may be, Islam does **not** condone the killing of innocent people.

4. You are the enemy living among us. You are exploiting the freedoms that we value to ultimately take it away from us.

How can Islam take away freedom when its whole purpose is to free mankind from physical and spiritual slavery?

Islam calls people to Guidance: **So where are you going? Verily this is but a reminder to all; to those of you who wish to be upright. Qur'an (81:26-28)**

Islam calls people to Righteousness: **Verily God commands justice and excellence and giving to kith and kin, and He forbids indecency and wickedness and oppression. He admonishes you, that ye may take heed. Qur'an (16:90)**

Islam calls people to Mercy: *"What actions are best? To gladden the heart of a human being, to feed the hungry, to help the afflicted, to lighten the sorrow of the sorrowful, and to remove the wrongs of the injured."* -Prophet Muhammad

Islam calls people to Compassion: *"All creatures are God's family, and those dearest to God are the ones who treat His creatures kindly."* -Prophet Muhammad

Islam calls people to accept Diversity: **And among His Signs are the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the diversity of your languages and your colors: verily in that are Signs for those with knowledge. Qur'an (30:22)**

Islam calls people to Peace: *"Shall I not inform you of a better act than fasting, charity, and prayers? Making peace between one another; for enmity and malice tear up virtue by the roots."* -Prophet Muhammad

Islam calls people to Equality:

"Women are the twin halves of men."

"All mankind is from Adam and Eve... a white man is no better than black man, and a black man is no better than a white man; except by piety and good deeds." -Prophet Muhammad

These are the **REAL** teachings of Islam.



5. I will do everything in my power to make sure that no daughter or granddaughter of mine will have to cover themselves.

To Muslim women who practice hijab, it represents an act of obedience to God. It also represents a step towards freedom, i.e. freedom from being judged by their looks rather than their intellect.

Both men and women are required to dress and conduct themselves in a manner that befits their dignity and is not the cause of temptation for others. Hair is considered part of a woman's physical attractiveness. Therefore, covering of hair for the woman is considered essential to modesty of her attire, even in the Bible. This is the reason that nuns and orthodox Jewish women also cover their hair.

In a society where women's beauty has been made a commodity, and where women often end up associating their self-worth with their looks, the hijab and its concomitant de-emphasis of physical beauty can be tremendously liberating. Muslim women wear the hijab out of obedience to God, while recognizing the immense wisdom behind His commandment.

6. God made nothing imperfect.

You have spoken truth. The Qur'an says: **Such is the handiwork of God, the One who perfected everything; and He is well aware of what you do. Qur'an (27:88)**

Islam is not a new religion. Rather, it is the same truth that God revealed through all His prophets to every people. For over a fifth of the world's population, Islam is both a religion and a

complete way of life. Muslims follow a religion of peace, mercy, and forgiveness, and the majority have nothing to do with the extremely grave events which have come to be associated with their faith.

May peace be with you,
Ahmed Rashed

Email #04 – From: Jessica
Sent: Wednesday, March 24, 2010 9:39pm
To: Ahmed Rashed

Thank you; I appreciate the dialogue.

1. If you believe we are all united in religion, why do your clerics condemn Judaism and our European & North American Christian traditions?

2. Why does your Islamic faith continue to enlist European or North American born young men of Islamic faith to return to countries such as Somalia that their very own parents escaped? I will point out that some of the teenage or young men missing from the United States that ended up in Somalia were recruited by the very Mosques that they attended. There are many examples of this. The martyrs of 911 were living and schooled in the United States; there have been such examples in Europe and more recently the CIA killings.

3. Qur'an (22:39-40) and Qur'an (4:75) – I feel this is very self-explanatory that the Qur'an teaches violence and intolerance.

4. Does this include freedom of girl children to be educated? Does this include the freedom of women to be vindicated instead of tried and sentenced in Islamic courts as the victims of rape or violence perpetrated on them by men who are not tried? Does this include the freedom of women to make their own choices without family or tribal retribution? Do the boys who are used by your Islamic followers in Afghanistan (and this has been documented practice) be free from the abuses of men, as a local tradition because they can't take the liberties they would want with women?

Did Jesus not say: whoever harms a child or takes away his innocence it is better for him that he ties a stone upon himself and throws himself in the sea, rather than face the wrath that awaits him? I also think this applies to every culture who would harm a child whether Islamic, Christian or otherwise. Yet, it is not a cultural practice for us as it is in some Islamic countries. I would ask why you are living the same now as you did 2000 years ago. There is no progress. Even in Europe 1500 years ago the society was more advanced than your stone-age culture. There is wisdom in progression.

5. Actually the study of theology suggests that women of Jewish and Christian faith covered their head so as not to tempt angels to fall from Heaven. Is it not accurate to say that Islamic women cover themselves to protect themselves from the eyes of the unclean, which seems to be a factor in your society?

6. Then why would you cover it? Their hair, their eyes, their beauty – why would you cut it off?? Why would Islamic cultures practice female circumcision (which is entirely different and for very different reasons than male circumcising practiced in the Jewish faith or other cultures)?

Email #05 – From: Ahmed Rashed
Sent: Saturday, March 27, 2010 2:18am
To: Jessica

In the Name of God, the Most-Gracious, the Ever-Merciful:

One of God's gifts to humanity is the gift of speech. It is by dialogue that we can come to greater understanding. For this reason, I am happy that you responded. Please excuse the length of this email; I wanted to be sure I answered all your questions completely.

1. First of all, there are no clerics in Islam. Each Muslim calls on God and answers to God individually with no intermediary. I think the "clerics" you refer to are the "scholars" of Islam: people who have taken the time and effort to study the

Qur'an and the teachings of the Prophet and who are looked up to by virtue of their knowledge.

Secondly, regarding "condemning," Muslims believe that the Last Prophet (Muhammad) and the Last Testament (the Qur'an) were sent to **confirm**, **correct**, and **complete** the Message of all previous prophets and scriptures. It is written in the Qur'an that God sent prophets to each nation in history. In other words, God made a covenant with every people in every time. This covenant was "Islam" which means surrender and obedience to God, and a person who surrenders his will to God and obeys His commandments is called a "Muslim."

So the **original** followers of Abraham are considered Muslims by virtue of their obedience to God and the keeping of their Covenant with Him. And the **original** followers of Moses are considered Muslims by virtue of their obedience to God and the keeping of their Covenant with Him. And the **original** followers of Jesus are considered Muslims by virtue of their obedience to God and the keeping of their Covenant with Him. By the time of Muhammad (peace be upon him), there were few, if any, who were still upon the **original and pure** teachings of *any* prophet. So God send Muhammad as the Final Messenger with the Final Revelation to guide the Arabs in particular and all of mankind in general to the correct path to their Lord and Creator.

So what this all means is that when an Islamic scholar "condemns" Judaism or Christianity, he is condemning the *changes* each previous community made to the original covenant revealed to them. He is NOT condemning the original teachings of Abraham, Moses, David, and Jesus (peace be upon them), because the teachings of Muhammad (peace be upon him) are ONE with the teachings of all the other prophets.

2. Once again, you mistakenly assume that there is some Pope-like figure for the Muslims. There is not. If one group of Muslims recruits people for some evil intention, it does not mean that Islam prescribes or even condones such an action. There are good Muslims and there are bad Muslims. The definition of good

Muslim and bad Muslim is what is in the Qur'an and the Sayings of the Prophet. If a Muslim does an act that the Qur'an or the Prophet say is bad, then that act is bad, and that Muslim is acting against the teachings of Islam. For example, if someone recruits Christians from the church so they can go bomb an abortion clinic, it is not right to say "your Christian faith enlists young men to carry out these acts." These acts are clearly against the teachings of Christianity. Likewise, all the acts that you mentioned are against the teachings of Islam. **Every major mainstream Islamic organization around the world has been condemning these kinds of acts since 9/11.** The problem, as I said in the previous email, is that the sheer volume of media propaganda and misinformation against Islam drowns out the mainstream Muslim voice.

3. I honestly cannot fathom how you could ever come to such an obviously wrong conclusion. The verses I cited are about standing up to tyranny and helping the oppressed, the weak, and the persecuted to defend themselves against aggression. It is saying that God has entrusted those who believe in Him to fight for justice in this world. Is this not the same thing that Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, Benjamin Franklin, and the other founders of the USA say in so many letters and speeches?

The Qur'an teaches that it is the obligation and responsibility of God's followers to defend the lives, homes, and faith of anyone suffering persecution. How is that "violence" and "intolerance"? It is actually the Islamic understanding of armed struggle and the justification for it that led Thomas Aquinas (a famous medieval Christian philosopher) to come up with his famous concept of "Just War."

Islam teaches that men of conscience must be ready and willing to fight against injustice and persecution. It does NOT teach violence against civilians or wanton destruction of property. Those Muslims who do so are violating the teachings of the Qur'an and the Prophet.

4. Of course girls can and should get an education. The Prophet said, *"Seeking knowledge is an obligation on every Muslim, male and female."* So what you see is that Muslims are doing something that is against the teachings of Islam.

As for cases of rape against women, during the time of the Prophet, punishment was inflicted on the rapist on the solitary evidence of the woman who was raped by him. Wa'il ibn Hujr reports of an incident when a woman was raped. Later, when some people came by, she identified and accused the man of raping her. They seized him and brought him to God's Messenger, who said to the woman, *"Go away, for Allâh has forgiven you,"* but of the man who had raped her, he said, *"Stone him to death."* (Recorded by Tirmidhi and Abu Dawud)

During the time when Umar (a companion of the Prophet) was the ruler, a woman accused his son Abu Shahmah of raping her. She brought the infant borne of this incident with her to the mosque and publicly spoke about what had happened. Umar asked his son who acknowledged committing the crime and was duly punished right there and then (execution). There was no punishment given to the woman. (Recorded by Rauf)

So once again, this is a case of Muslims being ignorant or negligent of the teachings of Islam

As for women choosing their own husbands, the Prophet said, *"A matron should not be given in marriage except after consulting her; and a virgin should not be given in marriage except after her permission."*

As for cases of rape against boys, their case is the same as those who rape girls or women. Rape is a capital crime according to the teachings of Islam.

As for your quote of Jesus (pbuh), I do not know if Jesus said this or not, but that is irrelevant to the point. The Prophet loved children. He would laugh with them and give them sweets. He would always show them affection and mercy. Once a man came to him and said, *"I have ten children and have never kissed any of them."* The Prophet cast a look at him and said, *"Whoever is not merciful to others will not be treated mercifully."* You are correct

that every culture values and protects its children. You are wrong that "it is not a cultural practice for us as it is in some Islamic countries." What are the Catholic Church scandals all about? There are bad people in every religion and in every country. We do not blame a culture or country for heinous crimes like this; we blame the individual.

Finally, regarding why we live like we did 2000 years ago, I think you have confused your history. 2000 years ago is the age when Jesus (pbuh) was preaching. 1500 years ago is the age when Muhammad (pbuh) was born. At that time, Europe was in its Dark Ages and Arabia was an insignificant suburb of the Persian and Byzantium empires. Fast-forward to 100 years after the Prophet's death and you have a blossoming civilization that was the leader of the arts, sciences, and technology.

Jared Diamond a world renowned UCLA sociologist and physiologist won the Pulitzer Prize for his book: **Guns, Germs, and Steel** where he wrote: "Medieval Islam was technologically advanced and open to innovation. It achieved far higher literacy rates than in contemporary Europe; it assimilated the legacy of classical Greek civilization to such a degree that many classical books are now known to us only through Arabic copies. It invented windmills, trigonometry, lateen sails and made major advances in metallurgy, mechanical and chemical engineering and irrigation methods. In the middle-ages the flow of technology was overwhelmingly from Islam to Europe rather from Europe to Islam. Only after the 1500's did the net direction of flow begin to reverse." (pg. 253)

You can also check out this link:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_Golden_Age

Islam was the reason for this Enlightenment. It wasn't until Muslims abandoned the teachings of Islam that you see backwardness emerge and take root in Muslim societies as you see today.

5. Regardless of theological interpretations, it is acknowledged by both Catholic and Protestant churches that a woman covering her hair signified modesty, chastity, and piety. This is why almost every picture of Mary, mother of Jesus (peace be upon them) shows her with hair covered.

As for your second comment, no, it is not accurate. Women cover themselves to obey God's guidance to achieve modesty, chastity and piety. The 'protection' you speak of is a side-benefit, not the ultimate reason.

The Qur'an says: **Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and to guard their chastity. That is purer for them. Indeed, God is aware of what they do. And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and guard their chastity; to cover their adornments except what appears thereof; to draw their veils over their chests and to not reveal their beauty except to their husbands and ... (24:30-31)**

The verse goes on to list the people who are allowed to see a Muslim woman's adornments/beauty. The list is basically the woman's male relatives, female friends, and small children.

The first point we see is that men are ordered to lower their gaze, so those "unclean eyes" are sinning against the command of God. The second point is that women are commanded to hide their beauty when around men who are not related or married to her. The hijab is not an emblem of female servitude (that's a Christian concept, see <http://www.bibleviews.com/Veil.html>). In Islam, it is an emblem of modesty and piety before God Almighty. In addition, it is a feminist statement: "my body is not for public consumption; it is only for the man that *I* choose to be my husband to enjoy."

6. You bring up many points here. We addressed the covering of feminine beauty above. Basically, the woman's beauty is **reserved** for the man she *chooses* to take as a husband. This empowers her to be treated as a dignified human being, not a sex object. Sexual attractiveness is for her husband's eyes only.

As for female circumcision, this is a practice that was around in Arabia before the birth of the Prophet. Since the Arabs back then would just remove the tip of the clitoral hood, the male and female circumcisions were really almost identical. Islam came and confirmed that male circumcision is mandatory but stated that female circumcision was merely permissible. Women could either get the operation or not. Islam does not prescribe nor does it condone the mutilation and removal of the female genitals. The Prophet said that a woman as a **right** to sexual satisfaction, so how could Islam allow a practice that infringes that God-given right?

Your questions about women remind me of the story of Yvonne Ridley. She was the journalist captured by the Taliban while reporting undercover in Afghanistan, soon after 9/11.

Held on spying charges, she feared she would be stoned. Instead, she was treated with respect. She promised her captors that, after her release, she would study Islam.

She read the Qur'an looking for an **explanation** of the Taliban's treatment of women, *only to find there wasn't any*. As she saw it: "It's a magna carta for women!" She converted in the summer of 2003 and has found that her new faith has helped put behind her three broken marriages and her drinking problem.

Again, I apologize for the length of the email, but I wanted to be sure each point was addressed as fully as possible.

I look forward to your response.

May peace be with you,

Ahmed

Email #06 – From: Jessica
Sent: Saturday, March 27, 2010 1:34pm
To: Ahmed Rashed

Thank you for your response. Do not apologize that it is too long; I enjoy reading. It would seem that it is Man who corrupts religion for their own reasons of power or to subjugate and not what God teaches. I acknowledge that this has also been true of Catholic and Protestant religions throughout history.

However with all the media controversy on the varying ways that Islam is practiced throughout the world it is hard to understand without the knowledge of the Qur'an that you have passed on. For that I thank you. I like to think of myself as a very accepting person of people who are different and take a live and let live approach until it interferes with what I consider fundamental rights that every human should have; to live in peace, to be treated with honour and respect and for the least of our society to be protected and safe.

I am familiar with the captured reporter that you speak of; Yvonne Ridley. I also understand that there are very good and respectful people in your society and I take no pleasure in the life of fear and uncertainty that the children of Iraq and Afghanistan are enduring under wars that if I don't understand I can't imagine they could. I simply understand from our Canadian perspective that the overthrow of the Taliban was necessary for a stable future, I pray will eventually come for the people of Afghanistan.

Unfortunately in a day in which 100% of all terrorists acts against our society are perpetrated 100% by extremists for whatever reasons we can fathom you have a very difficult job of educating the public.

Email #07 – From: Ahmed Rashed
Sent: Wednesday, March 31, 2010 10:55pm
To: Jessica

In the Name of God, the Most-Gracious, the Ever-Merciful:

I am glad you were able to benefit from our conversation. It takes patience and a willingness to understand to cut through the media sensationalism and dogma. For that, I thank you for asking, and I thank you for listening.

If you ever have any other questions about Islam or Muslims, please feel free to email me again.

May peace be with you,
Ahmed