

"Do Christians and Muslims worship the same God?" J. Dudley Woodberry

- 1) Discuss the four common points Woodberry identifies as descriptions of God: the one to whom we refer; how unity is expressed; the common themes of mercy; and the description of the power of God.
- 2) Woodberry also discusses the difference in the ways God is described in the Bible and in the Qur'an. What is the most beautiful name of God for you? (A resource to use in relation to this question is the children's book by Rabbi Sandy Eisenberg Sasso, *In God's Name*, Jewish Lights Publishing.)
- 3) Where do you see your own views represented in this article? What would you like to add?
- 4) What are some of the commonalities and differences expressed in the viewpoints of the three authors of the articles in this series?

"Do Christians and Muslims worship the same God?" S. Wesley Ariarajah

- 1) Ariarajah says that: "most Christians, despite their lip service to monotheism, in fact are unconscious polytheists. They allow for other gods to listen to the prayers of their neighbors. They draw boundaries for 'their' God and decide where and when their God is allowed to listen, act and bring about wholeness." How would you respond to this statement. In what ways does your practice of the Christian faith reflect monotheistic and/or polytheistic understandings?
- 2) Ariarajah writes that in Asian tradition, there are four ways to answer a Question: yes, no, I don't know and silence. He adds a fifth response—yes and no. **Yes**, Christians and Muslims worship the same God. Yet, because we have different visions of God, our religious traditions are different. **No**, Christians and Muslims do not worship the same God. Because we come to God through the experience and teaching of differing faith traditions, we bring different images of God. What else would you add in response?
- 3) Ariarajah says that "Happily no one has a monopoly on God." What do we most need to learn from each other as we engage in interfaith dialogue? (Ariarajah adds that the answer we give to this question "says something about who we are and who our God is.)

"Do Christians and Muslims worship the same God?" Umar F. Abd-Allah

- 1) Discuss responses to Abd-Allah's question: "Can we undertake our query as an academic exercise and set aside its political context within the charged ambience of our times?"
- 2) When you think about your faith tradition. What shadows does it cast?
- 3) The author suggests that "unity in diversity is a lofty goal and requires candor about what separates as well as what joins us." When you think about

the topic of this series, what are the major things that separate us and unite us as Christians and Muslims?

4) The author discusses levels of dialogue, and distinguishes between the empirical level and the existential level when he says, "The clear-cut lines so essential to unified doctrine and distinctive creeds blur, and the world of faith becomes a kaleidoscope." If you were to enter a dialogue with a Muslim, what would be important for you to share with this person about the Christian faith from both an empirical and an existential level?

Muslim quiz answers

Islam comes from the Arabic word for peace, which is very close to the Hebrew word *shalom*.

The name of the religion means "giving your life to God in a peaceful way."

Islam calls God *Allah*.

The Muslim holy book is called the *Qur'an* and is the teaching that God gave Muhammad through the angel Gabriel.

There are five main ways that Muslims give their lives to Allah. These are considered to be the five pillars of Islam:

- five-times-a-day prayer—bowing down to face Mecca
- almsgiving—giving to the poor
- fasting during the daytime in the month of Ramadan
- saying the *shahadah*, a profession of faith in One God and the Prophet Muhammad—"There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God."
- travel to the holy city of Mecca at least once in a lifetime

The most important sentence in all of Islam is called the *shahadah*:
"There is no god but god, and Muhammad is the messenger of God."

Muslims fast for the month of Ramadan, which is the ninth month of the Muslim moon-time calendar.

Muslims number about a billion people in the world today. About
5 million Muslims live in the United States.