

Islam

Basic Aspects

As it sees itself
As others see it
As it is

A Teachers' Textbook

By
Gerhard Nehls
and
Walter Eric

Resource Material
with Documentation of Original sources

Islam

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Gerhard Nehls and Walter Eric

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Introduction

Welcome! This Textbook is part of a **set of five Teacher-Trainer Manuals** that are linked with a **Student Handbook** (REACH OUT). The set includes:

Vol. 1	Islamicism (green)	Islam – Basic Aspects
Vol. 2	Apologetics (blue)	Christian – Islamic Controversy
Vol. 3	Pragmatics (orange)	Tactical – Practical Approach
Vol. 4	Didactics (red)	Training of Trainers Materials
Vol. 5	Presentation File	Display Materials for Teachers

Please keep in mind:

These notes depict primarily the view of original Islam as seen from its sources. Much of this is not known to the Muslim “man in the street”. So please use this information with wisdom and in a Christ-like spirit.

Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be babes, but in your thinking be mature.

1Cor 14:20 (ASV)

THIS IS A TEACHER’S TEXTBOOK – NOT A DO-IT-YOURSELF MANUAL!

A textbook is not to be read as another book. Its content has to be well worked through to be fully understood.

It supplies the trainer with comprehensive, yet basic information. He has to scrutinize this information and select his specific teaching materials. This should be adjusted to the students, the situation in which they are likely to work and the type of Muslims they are likely to meet. Anyone who like to read about this in more detail should contact us for our various teaching books, videos and CDs.

Some repetitions have been unavoidable. These are done for emphasis, or because they relate to different subjects as well. But these notes are not designed to stand on its own. You will learn a lot from Muslims as you seek to share the Gospel in a meaningful way. It is so important to know how Islam views Christians and

Christianity. We need to understand the Muslim's world view, their perception of religion and some cultural aspects, for these factors determine decisively our communication. There are practical forms of how to present the Gospel, the good news, to this specific group of people.

These notes, however, do not supply quick answers, nor do they promise instant results. Love and patience are always needed, and more so in Muslim evangelism.

Which translations of Bible and Qur'an did we use?

All quotations from the **Bible**, unless otherwise specified, are from the NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION, 1984, by the International Bible Society.

All quotations from the **Qur'an**, unless otherwise marked, are from the translation by Abdullah Yussuf Ali, New Revised Edition, Amana Corporation, Brentwood, Maryland, U.S.A., 1989. This is one of the most acceptable translations to Muslims.

For practical reasons we have not included any Arabic texts in this edition.

Your instructors,

Gerhard Nehls and Walter Eric

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1 Facing Reality

Although the West only focused on Islam in fairly recent times, it has been a religion and a world power for over 1300 years. It had its times of glory and of decay and recession. It hardly featured in Western history books, and only found attention rather recently in the media.

This has changed dramatically in the last few decades. And what brought about this change? Global migration, the resurgence of Islam, the variously interpreted acts of violence in the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians and those directed particularly at Christians in Indonesia, Pakistan, Nigeria, the Philippines and other places undoubtedly contributed. The attacks, first on US embassies and installations and then on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, drove home the point to the West that Islam is a force to be reckoned with. Islam is indeed in the news and two burning questions are in the air: “What is Islam?” and “What is it up to?”

The West with its humanistic worldview has grappled with the issue of understanding Islam. It is fundamentally different from the still-prevailing Animism, Hinduism or Buddhism. It views itself to be an Abrahamic religion in line with Judaism and Christianity. It does, in fact, claim that Abraham, Moses and all the other actors of the Old Testament as well as Jesus and his disciples were actually all Muslims. Today’s Judaism and Christianity are assumed by Muslims to be perversions of their original and Islam sees itself as being called to correct and cure the ailments of the Western world. This, according to Islam, can only be done by enforcing the order of Allah, the Shariah, i.e. the Islamic Law, on this decadent part of the world. The purpose of the Law is to cause all mankind to bow itself in submission to Allah, the One and Only God.

Christianity was, and even today is equally out of focus regarding Islam. In the past the Crusades and other belligerent actions such as Colonialism were just about the only message the Muslim world received from Christianity.

In order to acquaint Muslims with the biblical Jesus and his message, we will have to make an endeavour to understand the Muslim mind-set, and in order to be able to do that, we will have to come to terms with Islam.

This compilation, with its biblical assessments, wants to do that. We will, consequently, take a look at the founder and prophet of Islam, the Books it believes in, the teachings it derived from that, and its present worldview and self assessment.

These notes are a collection of resource materials rather than a book to read. They are meant to provide the necessary information and a teaching pattern for preparing Christians to share the Gospel with Muslims in a meaningful way.

Recommended Literature for Chapter 1

- The Church in Africa encounters the Challenge of Islam, *Nairobi: LCA, 1996, revised and enlarged 2002.*
- The Church in Africa takes note of the Islamic Agenda, *Nairobi: LCA, 1996.*
- Battle for the Hearts, Episode 1, Can Muslims be reached with the Gospel. *TWR & LCA, 2001.*

2 The Prophet and his World

2.1 Arabia Before Islam

2.1.1 The people of Arabia

Due to the vast Arabian Peninsula being largely desert country, it was always thinly populated. The people who lived there (1400 years ago) were

- Pagans who worshipped idols.
- Some Jewish clans who had settled there after they were expelled from Israel after AD 70.
- Some Arabs who had converted to the Jewish faith.
- Christians - mainly Orthodox, most of these lived in the Northern Region of Arabia, which today is named Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Israel and Lebanon. But there was also quite a strong church in the South.

We also are told of some 'Hanifs' living there. Six are mentioned by name in the biography of Muhammad recorded by Ibn Ishaq. (More about the Hanifs in "The Books of Islam - Qur'anic Concepts borrowed from the Hanifs [Hanifites]"). These were apparently men who rejected idol worship and claimed to believe in 'the God of Abraham'. We are aware that Abraham's son Ishmael became the forefather of the Arabs. We have very strong reasons to assume, however, that the Arabs of the 6th Century AD had lost all knowledge



of the God of Abraham (God = Allah in Arabic). This knowledge is likely to have been transmitted to the Arabs by their Jewish and Christian contemporaries.

2.1.2 Life in Arabia

Life in Arabia was largely nomadic. Bedouin tribes moved from place to place to find grazing for their camels, cattle, horses and goats. But in the towns, particularly in Mecca and Medina, the inhabitants were largely traders and craftsmen. Mecca appears to have been a link between Africa (Ethiopia) and the Middle East extending to India, China and Europe.

2.1.3 The available Scriptures

Judging from biblical stories that are reflected upon in the Qur'an, it seems that many of the contemporary Christians used apocryphal Scriptures. These are legendary tales about Jesus that were not included into the New Testament because they were not 'apostolic', i.e. not written by the inspired apostles. The Jews of Arabia are likely to have lived largely by the Talmud (a rabbinical commentary on the Old Testament) instead of the Old Testament in their day-to-day practice of religion.

2.1.4 The Religion of the Pagans

In a number of places the pagans had built so-called Ka'bas. These were cube-like temples built of stones. The pagans believed that their deities (gods) lived in these shrines. The most prominent of these was placed in Mecca and later became the center of Islamic worship. Deities and idols were sources of power for the pagans. Through them they sought protection and guidance as well as refuge from all kinds of calamity.

2.1.5 Deities of the Pagans

It is generally believed that in pre-Islamic Mecca some 360 deities were worshipped. This is based on a biography of Muhammad recorded by Waqqidi, who was born 120 years after Muhammad's death. Earlier biographies and reports make no mention of that number. The 'Kitab al-Asnam' ('The Book of Idols') by ibn al-Kalbi mentions only 27 by name, and these were not all from Mecca.

It is interesting to know that, according to the Qur'an and early Islamic source materials, we only know of three sculptured idols, called 'sanam'. All other deities were assumed to live in unshaped stones, which, in turn, were built into a Ka'ba. In contrast to the idols, these stones were named 'watham'. The best-known idol was Hubal, the other two were Isaf and Na'ilah. These two were believed to have been lovers, who committed fornication in the Ka'ba and as a result were turned into

stone. They were placed on two little hills near the Ka’ba (Safa and Marwa), while Hubal was actually accommodated in the Ka’ba of Mecca (Siratu’l Nabi, p. 97); it was probably the only image there. Before and during the time of Muhammad the Quraish (inhabitants of Mecca) called Hubal ‘the Lord of this House’ (Ka’ba) and the Qur’an calls on them to “adore the Lord of this House” (Surah 106:3). Although this is interpreted differently today, Muhammad called him the ‘Lord of this City’ (i.e. Mecca) and was commanded to serve him (Surah 27:91). This is indeed a cause for much concern.

The Appendix gives fuller information about Hubal and the occult practices the grandfather and father of Muhammad performed before him (see Appendix 14.4 ‘Hubal - the Suspect’).

2.2 Muhammad - The Prophet Of Islam

2.2.1 Islamic Terms and their meaning

When looking into Islam we cannot avoid using some Arabic terms. We will learn them as we proceed. But there are three words, which are fundamental:

Muhammad (and Ahmad)	=	The Praised One
Islam	=	Submission (to Allah)
Muslim	=	Someone who submits to Allah

Most Arabic words can be related to a root word, which consists of three letters. Original Arabic script does not show vowels, only consonants. To demonstrate this, we write the vowels of key words in small letters and the consonants in capitals.

The root letters for the following words are the same:

S L M	Islam	Muslim	Peace
Root letters	iSLaM	muSLiM	SaLaam

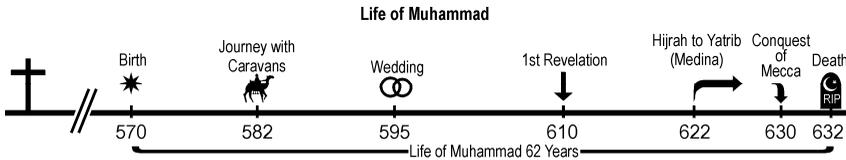
2.3 Muhammad’s Childhood and Youth

Muhammad was the son of Abdullah and Amina. He was born in AD 570 in Mecca. His father died before his birth; his mother when he was just 6. After that he was brought up by his grandfather, Abdu’l Muttalib, and after his death by his

The Prophet and his World

uncle Abu Talib. He was a prominent member of the clan of Hashim, which was part of the Quraish tribe of which Abdu'l Muttalib was the chief.

Muhammad is reported to have been a quiet, amiable and pleasant boy, but already in his childhood he had some occult exposure.



Being part of a merchant family, Muhammad, accompanying trading caravans, travelled widely already as a young man. At the age of 25 he got married to Khadijah, in whose employ he was. She was 15 years his senior and had been widowed twice before. The marriage was seemingly a happy one, and 2 boys and 4 girls were born to them. Khadijah died after 25 years of marriage.

On his travels to Northern Arabia Muhammad must have met Jews and Christians, and surely became acquainted with a number of biblical stories, which were related to him (Surahs 14 and 15). A story tells us that a Christian Monk by the name of Bahira recognized him as a prophet, an experience which might have influenced his entire life ('Siratu'l Nabi', translated by A. Guillaume, p. 24).

Waraqah ibn Naufal, a cousin of Muhammad's wife Khadijah, was a Christian in Mecca. He is supposed to have translated "the Gospel from Hebrew into Arabic" (Dictionary of Islam by T.P. Hughes, al-Bukhari Vol. 1, 3 and 'Siratu'l Nabi' by ibn Ishaq vss. 143-145). We may well assume that he too must have given information about the Bible to Muhammad.

2.3.1 How Muhammad Received Revelation

After times of seclusion in a cave of Mt. Hira near Mecca, where he went to meditate, he had his first revelation in a cave of this mountain, when he was about 40 years old (AD 610):



Narrated Aisha, the wife of the Prophet: The commencement (of the Divine Inspiration) to Allah's Apostle was in the form of true dreams in his sleep, for he never had a dream but it turned out to be true and clear as the bright daylight. Then he began to like seclusion, so he used to go in seclusion in the cave of Hira

where he used to worship Allah continuously for many nights before going back to his family to take the necessary provision (of food) for the stay. He would come back to (his wife) Khadija again to take his provision (of food) likewise, till one day he received the Guidance while he was in the cave of

Hira. An Angel came to him and asked him to read. Allah's Apostle replied, "I do not know how to read." The Prophet added, "Then the Angel held me (forcibly) and pressed me so hard that I felt distressed. Then he released me and again asked me to read, and I replied, 'I do not know how to read.' Thereupon he held me again and pressed me for the second time till I felt distressed. He then released me and asked me to read, but again I replied. 'I do not know how to read.' Thereupon he held me for the third time and pressed me till I got distressed, and then he released me and said, 'Read, in the Name of your Lord Who has created (all that exists), has created man out of a clot, Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous. Who has taught (the writing) by the pen, has taught man that which he knew not. *Surah 96:1-5*



Then Allah's Apostle returned with that experience; and the muscles between his neck and shoulders were trembling till he came upon Khadija (his wife) and said, "Cover me!" They covered him, and when the state of fear was over, he said to Khadija, "O Khadija! What is wrong with me? I was afraid that something bad might happen to me." Then he told her the story. Khadija said, "Nay! But receive the good tidings! By Allah, Allah will never disgrace you, for by Allah, you keep good relations with your kith and kin, speak the truth, help the poor and the destitute, entertain your guests generously and assist those who are stricken with calamities." Khadija then took him to Waraqa bin Naufil, the son of Khadija's paternal uncle. Waraqa had been converted to Christianity in the Pre-Islamic Period and used to write Arabic and write of the Gospel in Arabic as much as Allah wished him to write. He was an old man and had lost his eyesight. Khadija said (to Waraqa), "O my cousin! Listen to what your nephew is going to say." Waraqa said, "O my nephew! What have you seen?" The Prophet then described whatever he had seen. Waraqa said, "This is the same Angel (Gabriel) who was sent to Moses. I wish I were young.

al-Bukhari Vol. 6, p. 450, No 478

We may question whether the above was a revelation. However, since the Qur'an strongly contradicts the Bible, we may well assume that this was an inspiration, though it did not come from the same source as the Bible. The oldest and thus most reliable biographer of Muhammad, ibn Ishaq, reports:



When it was the night on which God honoured him with his mission and showed mercy on His servants thereby, Gabriel brought him the command of God. 'He came to me', said the apostle of God, 'while I was asleep, with a coverlet of brocade whereon was some writing, and said, 'Read!

'Siratu'l Nabi' (vs. 152)

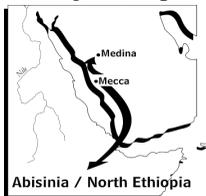
Muhammad's first revelations bitterly attacked polytheism (= belief in many gods) and idolatry. Surahs (=chapters) on judgment and condemnation were received - and proclaimed. The earlier revelations, which were received in Mecca, were written in a superior style to those received later in Medina. Most Meccan Surahs appear (in the original Arabic) in beautiful poetry. However, the majority of the Meccans rejected Muhammad; maybe their own religion presented them with a goodly income from nomadic pagans who came to Mecca during the annual festivities at the Ka'ba, the religious shrine. The Meccans themselves were seemingly not very devoted to their religion.

Muhammad's Curriculum Vitae	
AD	Event
570	Birth of Muhammad
576	Death of his mother; after that he was raised by his grandfather and later by his uncle
595	Marriage to Khadija, a wealthy widow
610	First revelation at Mount Hira; Surah 96:1-5
620	Death of Khadija and his influential uncle Abu Talib; leads to increasing pressure
622	Flight to Yathrib (=Medina); start of the Islamic Calendar
630	Conquest of Mecca; Arabian peninsula surrenders to Islam
632	Death of Muhammad

Muhammad convinced some Meccans who became his first converts in spite of his painful rejection and ridicule. It speaks for Muhammad's initial sincerity that his first convert was his wife.

2.3.2 The Abyssinian Exile of the Early Muslims

Pressure and persecution of the first Muslim believers in Mecca led to the forming of a group of 80 Muslims who migrated and sought exile in Abyssinia (Ethiopia). The Negus (Emperor) there granted them permission to stay, assuming they were a Christian sect. 33 of them returned when they heard that the Meccans had accepted Islam.



This had happened when Muhammad had compromised his monotheistic stance by introducing three Arabic deities from whom 'intercession was to be hoped for'. That move made Islam more acceptable to the Arab Meccans and the hostilities toward Muhammad ceased temporarily - until part

of the ‘Satanic verse’ as it is now named, was retracted and the antagonism towards Muhammad grew even stronger than before.

2.3.3 The Islamic Concept of Prophethood

The word ‘Prophet’ in Arabic can have two sources:

- *Rasul*: (pl. Rusul) meaning a messenger who by revelation received a Book, someone with a special mission [Surah 7:158; 48:8-9]. Islam acknowledges 315 rusul.
- *Nabi*: (pl. Ambiya) is someone who received direct inspiration (wahi). Islam speaks of as many as 124.000 ambiya, most of these are not mentioned by name.

Muhammad is called both Rasul and Nabi in Surah 33:40.

Proof of Prophethood	
Islamic	Biblical
Alleged illiteracy	Predictions must come true Message must not contradict earlier revelations
Attributed prophecies	
Alleged miracles	
Alleged biblical prophecies	

2.3.4 Alleged “Proofs” of Muhammad’s Prophethood



These are the Signs of Allah [i.e. ayas or verses of the Qur’an]: We rehearse them to thee in truth: verily thou art one of the Apostles.

Surah 2:252

Allah assures the people that the signs which qualify Muhammad as a prophet (aya) are the verses (= aya) of the Qur’an!

The Jews of Medina, whose support Muhammad coveted, questioned his prophethood. Muhammad’s response to that was twofold: defence (“I am only a Warner”) and threat (severe punishment):



And the Unbelievers say: ‘Why is not a Sign sent down to him from his Lord?’ But thou art truly a warner, and to every people a guide.

Surah 13:7

When there comes to them a Sign (from Allah), they say: ‘We shall not believe until we receive one (exactly) like those received by Allah’s apostles’. Allah knoweth best

where (and how) to carry out his mission. Soon will the wicked be overtaken by humiliation before Allah, and a severe punishment for all their plots.

Surah 6:124

To support Muhammad's claim to prophethood, Muslims claim:

1. Muhammad was illiterate - how could he produce a Book like the Qur'an?
2. Muhammad prophesied events - so he must be a prophet
3. Muhammad performed miracles to prove his claims
4. Muhammad's coming was prophesied in the Bible

We investigate these claims:

2.3.4.1 Muhammad's Alleged Illiteracy

Muslims believe that Muhammad was illiterate. This is not meant to degrade him. On the contrary! Muslims reason: 'How can an illiterate man compose a book like the Qur'an?' By this they like to emphasize that the authorship of the Qur'an rests with Allah. The assumption of his illiteracy is based on a Qur'anic text:



Those who follow the Apostle, the unlettered Prophet ['an-nabiyyal-ummi' = 'the Prophet of ignorance'], Whom they find mentioned in their own (Scriptures); in the law and the Gospel; for he commands them what is just and forbids them what is evil; he allows them as lawful what is good.

Surah 7:157

If we want to understand what the word for 'unlettered' really means, we have to investigate the Arabic text where it reads: 'an-nabiyyal-ummi'. 'Nabi' clearly means prophet; 'Ummi' is best explained by another verse:



It is He Who has sent amongst the Unlettered ['ummi'] an apostle from among themselves, to rehearse to them His Signs, to sanctify them, and to instruct them in Scripture and Wisdom.

Surah 62:2

Who are the 'unlettered' in this text? The comment makes it quite clear:



The Unlettered: as applied to a people, it refers to the Arabs, in comparison with the People of the Book, who had a longer tradition of learning.

Qur'an, by Yusuf Ali, Fn. 5451, commentary

The Arabic word used for Muhammad is ‘ummiyyun’, clearly the same as in Surah 7:157. The word ‘ummi’ meant people who did not have the Scriptures, as the Jews and Christians did. They were ‘un-scriptured’, so to speak. So the text says really no more than that Muhammad was the prophet to those who had no Book, no revelation, i.e. the Arabs.

People who had not accepted Islam (which was about to get a ‘Book’) as yet, were consequently called ‘people of ignorance’. ‘The time of ignorance’ in Muslim usage is clearly referring to the time before Muhammad. He pointed to himself as the prophet to the ‘people of ignorance’, rather than referring to himself as being ignorant or illiterate. Besides, it is difficult to imagine that a merchant of his stature would be illiterate, particularly when we consider that his nephew Ali, with whom he had close association in his youth, was highly literate.

That Muhammad was able to write may be deduced from the following Tradition (Hadith):



The Prophet, may Allah bless him, fell ill on Thursday. Thereupon he, i.e. Ibn ‘Abbas began to weep and say: Woe be to this Thursday! What a Thursday! The illness of the Prophet, may Allah bless him, became severe; he said: Bring an ink-pot and something to write on. I shall have a document written and you will never be misguided.

Ibn Sa’d’s biography, Vol. 2, p. 302

We are grateful to the translators of this text for rectifying in the footnote what the literal reading is: “I shall write for you...” A last passage may corroborate what has already been said:



When the Prophet intended to perform ‘Umrah’ in the month of Dhul-Qada, the people of Mecca did not let him enter Mecca till he settled the matter with them by promising to stay in it for three days only. When the document of treaty was written, the following was mentioned: “These are the terms on which Muhammad, Allah’s Apostle agreed (to make peace).” They said, “We will not agree to this, for if we believed that you are Allah’s Apostle we would not prevent you, but you are Muhammad bin ‘Abdullah.” The Prophet said, “I am Allah’s Apostle and also Muhammad bin ‘Abdullah.” Then he said to ‘Ali, „Rub off (the words) ‘Allah’s Apostle’, but ‘Ali said, ‘No, by Allah, I will never rub off your name.” So, Allah’s Apostle took the document and wrote, „This is what Muhammad bin ‘Abdullah has agreed upon: No arms will be brought into Mecca except in their cases, and nobody from the people of Mecca will be allowed to go with him (i.e. the Prophet) even if he wished to follow him and he (the Prophet) will not prevent any of his companions from staying in Mecca if the latter wants to stay.

al-Bukhari Vol. 3, p. 536, No 863

2.3.4.2 Prophecies Attributed To Muhammad

A commentary in the Hadith makes a vital statement:



The greatest thing in miracles is a prophecy i.e. a forecast of future events. This is not a political forecast but a forecast of future secrets derived from Divine Knowledge. Prophecy is greatest for the following reasons. It can be historically proved but a miracle cannot. Prophecy manifests God's fore-knowledge, while a miracle God's power. As knowledge is greater than power, so prophecy is greater than a miracle. *Mishkat Vol. 4, p. 396 - Commentary*

Apart from pronouncements that certain battles would be won by the Muslims, only one political forecast by Muhammad has been recorded:



The Roman (Byzantine) Empire has been defeated - in a land close by; but they (even) after (this) defeat of theirs, will soon be victorious - within a few years. With Allah is the decision, in the past and in the future; on that day shall the believers rejoice. *Surah 30:1-4*

This passage refers to the defeat of the Byzantines in Syria by the Persians under Khusran Parvis (AD 615-616, this was several years before the Hijrah). The predicted defeat of the Persians should take place 'soon' - exactly translated, 'in a small number of years'. At this prediction, Abu Bakr challenged Ubai-ibn-Khalaf to bet with him that this prediction would be fulfilled within three years. Muhammad corrected him, by stating that the 'small number' would be between three and nine years (Al-Baizawi). Muslims tell us that the Byzantines overcame their enemies within seven years. However, the fact is that the Byzantines defeated Persia in AD 628 (Al-Baizawi commentary). That was twelve years after the prediction of Muhammad. This passage does not qualify as a prophecy. Firstly it was a predictable political prognosis and it was not fulfilled in the predicted time frame, but it should also be added that in any event the time between prophecy and fulfilment was far too short to make this a prophecy in the biblical sense. Biblical prophecies, like that of the coming of Christ, were given 500-1000 years before they were fulfilled!

The other 'prophecies' refer to Muhammad's victories and those relating to the Qur'an itself. It is nearly impossible to establish whether these prophecies were indeed said before their fulfilment. Besides - they were either also predictable, or

simply war-propaganda. In the same sense Churchill might well be called a prophet too, for he predicted that the Allies would win the Second World War.

By biblical standards, we find it impossible to conclude that Muhammad was a prophet of God. The Bible asks a pertinent question in this regard:



How may we know the Word which the Lord has not spoken? When a prophet speaks in the Name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word which the Lord has not spoken, the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him. *Deut 18:21-22*

Set forth your case, says the Lord, bring your proofs, says the King of Jacob. Let them bring them and tell us what is to happen. Tell us the former things, what they are that we may consider them, that we may know their outcome, or declare us the things to come. Tell us what is to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods. *Is 41:21-23*

Read also: Is 44:7,26; Is 48:3,5; Deut 13:1-4; Jer 28:9; Ps 105:17-19; Amos 3:7 and Zech 4:9.

2.3.4.3 Alleged Miracles Done By Muhammad

Please Note: Most Muslims believe that Muhammad performed miracles, although the Qur'an denies that. On the other hand, the Hadith reports a number of miracles.



They say: 'We shall not believe in thee, until thou cause a spring to gush forth for us from the earth. Or (until) thou have a garden of date trees and vines, and cause rivers to gush forth in their midst, carrying abundant water. Or thou cause the sky to fall in pieces, as thou sayest (will happen) against us, or thou bring Allah and the angels before (us) face to face. Or thou have a house adorned with gold, or thou mount a ladder right into the skies. No, we shall not even believe in thy mounting until thou send down to us a book that we could read'. Say: 'Glory to my Lord! Am I aught but a man - an apostle?'

Surah 17:90-93

In more understandable English it would say: "Am I more than a man, a messenger?"



And we refrain from sending the sign, only because the men of former generations treated them as false: We sent the She-camel; to the Thamud to open their eyes, but they treated her wrongfully; We only sent the signs by way of terror (and warning from evil). *Surah 17:59*

They say: ‘Why is not a sign sent down to him from his Lord?’ Say: ‘Allah hath certainly power to send down a sign: But most of them understand not’.

Surah 6:37

Those without knowledge say: ‘Why speaketh not Allah unto us? Or why cometh not unto us a sign?’ So said the people before them words of similar import. Their hearts are alike. We have indeed made clear the signs unto any people who hold firmly to Faith (in their hearts). Verily, we have sent thee in truth as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner. *Surah 2:118-119*

According to that, the only ‘sign’ (‘sign’ in Arabic is ‘aya’, also used as a name for verses in the Qur’an) Muhammad had been given were the verses of the Qur’an.

The AHadith have a different perception and report many a miracle:



The Prophet was looking while riding upon his mule like one eagerly longing to kill them. He said: This was when the blood boiled in veins. Thereafter he took some pebbles and threw them at the faces of the infidels and then said: Be routed, by the Lord of Muhammad.

Mishkat Vol. 4, p. 411 quoting from Sahih Muslim, Hadith 4385

This was supposed to have decided the battle in Muhammad’s favour. But there are other rather strange miracles reported to have happened:



Anas reported: A man wrote to the Prophet and he turned an apostate from Islam and joined the infidels. The Prophet said: Verily the earth will not accept him. Abu Talhah informed me that he had come to the land wherein he died. He found him thrown outside. He said: What is the matter with him? They said: They buried him several times but the earth did not accept him.

Mishkat Vol. 4, p. 419-420

He said: And who is to attest what you say? He said: This tree. The Apostle of Allah then called it while he was by the side of a valley, and so it came tearing the ground till it stood in his presence. He wanted it to recite three attestations. So it attested thrice as he had said and then it returned to its root.

Mishkat Vol. 4, p. 447

There is no water with us to make therewith ablution and to drink except what is in your jug. Then the Prophet placed his hand unto the jug and water began to gush forth between his fingers like springs. Thereupon we took drink and

made ablution. Jabar was asked: How many were you? He said: Had we been one hundred thousands, it would have surely sufficed us. We were fifteen hundreds. *Mishkat Vol. 4, p. 407*



Bara'a-b-A'jeb reported: We were 1400 on the Day of Hudaibiyyah with the Apostle of Allah, and in Hudaibiyyah was a well. We exhausted it and left not a drop therein. It reached the Prophet who came to it, sat down on its edge and then called for a pot of water. He made ablution and then gurgled and invoked.

Thereafter he poured it therein and said: Leave it for an hour. Then they allowed satisfaction to themselves and to their riding animals by water till they departed. *Mishkat Vol. 4, p. 408*

This hadith has been transmitted on the authority of Abdullah b.Masud (who said): We were along with Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) at Mina that moon was split up into two. One of its parts was behind the mountain and the other one was on this side of the mountain. Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) said to us: Bear witness to this.

Sahih Muslim Vol. 4, p. 1467, No 6725

The last passage, even more than the others, shows the latent desire of the people to have some supernatural proof for their faith. We are told that "at Mina the moon was split up into (sic) two". This links up with Surah 54. It is called "The Moon", and begins: "The hour (of judgement) is nigh, and the moon is cleft asunder ..." The context shows this was meant to be a sign, which the people rejected.

Have we ever seen a half-moon in the night sky? Of course we have. We did not assume then, that the other half 'was behind the mountain'. It could well have been, mind you. According to another writer, 'the mountain covered one of its parts' (Hadith 6726).

Eager Muslims try to substantiate this story by telling us that when one of the first men stepped on the moon, he heard the 'Shahada' being recited: "There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet." He also is supposed to have discovered the crack in the moon, which remained after the splitting of the moon. How far can human imagination go?!

To the Christian reader many of these reports sound very much like the legendary stories of the New Testament Apocrypha. These are well meaning 'reports', often very fanciful in character. They lack just one thing: authenticity. The Apocrypha dates mainly from the second century AD, something like 70-170 years after the death of Jesus. The Hadith were compiled approximately 250-300 years after the

Hijra. This being the case, we have to take both the Apocrypha and the Hadith with a pinch of salt.

2.3.4.4 Alleged Prophecies About Muhammad In The Bible

The Qur'an definitely suggests that Muhammad was foretold in the Bible:



And remember, Jesus, the son of Mary, said: 'O children of Israel! I am the apostle of Allah (sent) to you confirming the Law (which came) before me, and giving glad tidings of an Apostle to come after me, whose name shall be Ahmad. *Surah 61:6*

Those who follow the Apostle, the unlettered Prophet whom they find mentioned in their own (Scriptures) - in the Law and the Gospel; for he commands them what is just and forbids them what is evil; he allows them as lawful what is good.

Surah 7:157

These verses must have prompted many a Muslim to search the Gospels for such prophecies. In John 14:16 they came across the "Comforter" (Paracletos). Some learned Muslim concluded that it should read 'Periclytos', which should be translated 'the praised one', the very meaning of the words Ahmad and Muhammad. Based on this assumption many Muslims believe that Muhammad is this Comforter and that he is subsequently foretold in the Bible.

Further, Muslims interpret a text in Deuteronomy (18:18-19) as a reference to Muhammad. In this passage God says to Moses:



I will raise up for them a man like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I commanded him. If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account.

Deut 18:18-19

All Christians unite in the interpretation that this text speaks of Jesus, and that is confirmed in the New Testament. Muslims, however, reason that since the Ishmaelites are the brothers of the Jews, that prophecy must refer to Muhammad.

(We will not consider this argument any further here, but rather refer to Volume 2 of this set ('The Islamic-Christian Controversy'), and the chapter "Is Muhammad mentioned in the Bible?" where this argument will be dealt with in more detail.)

2.3.4.5 Prophethood as defined in the Bible

While we respect Muhammad for his statesmanship and bravery, and commend him for his stand against paganism and his care for his people, especially widows and orphans, Christians cannot accept him as a biblical prophet! There are three reasons for that:

1. Muhammad did not have the divine credentials as required by Scripture (see next page).
2. We have to strongly suspect that his message came from occult sources.
3. His personal life style, particularly with regard to his excessive involvement with the opposite sex, his moral ethics regarding women and his enemies, and his granting himself special privileges, which were supposedly revealed to him and came to be incorporated into the Qur'an as God's word, is inappropriate and inconsistent with that of a prophet of God.

When we evaluate Muhammad's life, we need to do it in the light of Scripture:



Lord, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may be on your holy hill? He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart and has no slander on his tongue, who does his neighbour no wrong and casts no slur on his fellow man, who despises a vile man but honours those who fear the Lord, who keeps his oath even when it hurts. *Ps 15:1-4*

2.3.4.6 The Biblical Mark of a Prophet

In the Bible we find a number of passages that outline who and what a prophet of God is:



Let him declare and lay out before me what has happened since I established my ancient people, and what is yet to come - yes, let him foretell what will come. Do not tremble, do not be afraid. Did I not proclaim this and foretell it long ago? You are my witnesses.

I am the Lord..., who foils the signs of false prophets..., who carries out the words of his servants and fulfil the predictions of his messengers.

Is 44:7-8, 24-26

'Present your case', says the Lord. 'Set forth your arguments', says Jacob's King. Bring in (your idols) to tell us what is going to happen. ...declare to us

the things to come, tell us what the future holds so that we may know that you are gods... But you are less than nothing and your works are utterly worthless; he who chooses you is detestable. *Is 41:21-24*

The prophet who prophesies ... will be recognized as one truly sent by God only if his prediction comes true. *Jer 18:9*

I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him.

You may say to yourselves: ‘How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the Lord?’ If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him.

Deut 18:18, 21-22

Hundreds of biblical prophecies were fulfilled in great detail in Jesus Christ and the Jewish nation. That fact alone guarantees that He is the One to trust. In contrast to that Muhammad can lay no claim to divinely ordained prophethood.

We refer again to Volume 2 of this set (‘The Islamic-Christian Controversy’). The chapter “Evidences which support the divine origin of the Bible” points to a number of prophetic Scriptures in the Old Testament concerning Jesus and their fulfilment in the New Testament

2.3.5 Muhammad - Allah’s Warner for Arabia

Muhammad at first understood himself to be a Warner for Arabia in the line of the biblical prophets. He was, no doubt, assuming to bring the same message (as the Bible) to the Arabs in Arabic.



Thus have We sent by inspiration to thee an Arabic Qur’an; that thou mayest warn the Mother of Cities [i.e. Mecca] and all around her. *Surah 42:7*

And before this, was the Book of Moses as a guide and a mercy; and this Book confirms (it) in the Arabic tongue; to admonish the unjust, and as Glad Tidings to those who do right. *Surah 46:12*

We have made it a Qur’an in Arabic, that ye may be able to understand (and learn wisdom). *Surah 43:3*

We sent not an apostle except (to teach) in the language of his (own) people, in order to make (things) clear to them. *Surah 14:4*

Verily, We have sent thee in truth as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner.

Surah 2:119

Only later in time this message was advanced within the Qur'an.



We have not sent thee but as a universal (Messenger) to men, giving them glad tidings, and warning them (against sin), but most men understand not. *Surah 34:28*

Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but (he is) the Apostle of Allah, and the Seal of the Prophets; and Allah has full knowledge of all things.

Surah 33:40

2.3.6 The Miraj, the Mysterious Night Journey to Heaven

Two years after the death of Khadijah, in the twelfth year of his 'calling', Muhammad is reported to have gone on a mysterious night journey (Miraj).

Islamic sources state that this happened 'in the spirit'. His body remained behind. Gabriel supposedly provided a mount (animal to ride on) by the name of Buraq, described to be like a white mule or donkey with a human face. It took Muhammad 'for a ride' from the 'mosque in Mecca' to 'the farthest mosque' (= 'al-Aqsa' in Jerusalem). From there he is said to have ascended to the heavens on a ladder of light. The 'farthest mosque', was, however, not yet built at that time. Yusuf Ali in his commentary 2168 to the Qur'an says: "The Farthest Mosque must refer to the site of the Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem on the hill of Moriah, at or near which stands the Dome of the Rock, called also the Mosque of Hadhrat 'Umar. This and the Mosque known as the Farthest Mosque (Masjid-ul-Aqsa) were completed by the Amir 'Abd-ul-Malik in AH 68." That is in AD 712, 50 odd years after Muhammad's demise. Alternatively, maybe the Jewish temple was referred to, but that had been completely destroyed 550 years prior to that.



Islam believes in the existence of seven heavens. In the first heaven Muhammad supposedly met Adam; in the second, John the Baptist and Jesus; in the third, Joseph; in the fourth, Enoch; in the fifth, Aaron; in the sixth, Moses; and in the

seventh, Abraham (who welcomed him as “good son and good prophet”). There Muhammad was commissioned by Allah to introduce fifty daily prayers for all believers. On the journey back, Moses, in the sixth heaven, encouraged Muhammad to query that quota and request a smaller one. Ten daily prayers were deducted. Again Moses encouraged Muhammad to go back and ask for still fewer prayers. This process was repeated until five daily prayers were left. This Muhammad did not dare query. (According to “Siratu’l Nabi” vs. 270-271).

2.3.7 The Satanic Verses

A strange incident deserves to be recorded. A verse [‘aya’ = sign] was revealed, which contradicted in principle practically all previous ones and by that constituted an outright compromise to Muhammad’s previous monotheistic conviction:



‘Have you seen (considered, thought of) al-Lat and al-Uzza and another, the third [goddess] Manat?’ Verily they are the most exalted females [maiden], [arab.’gharaniq’] and their intercession is to be hoped for.

Surah 53:19-20

These were the very words the infidels, the polytheists, were chanting when walking around the Ka’ba in worship of their deities! When hearing about this verse, the heathen began to turn to Islam. News of this, and the end of persecution, reached Ethiopia, and the refugees there began to return. Tradition reports that the angel Gabriel (who is viewed to be the Holy Spirit), who is supposed to have conveyed the message of Allah to Muhammad, came to him saying: “What have you done, Muhammad? You have read to these people something I did not bring you from Allah and you have said what He did not say to you!” Consequently the second part of this verse was abrogated (omitted). It is now called the “Satanic verse” and came into the limelight through the book ‘The Satanic Verses’ by Salman Rushdie.

Muslim apologists (at-Tabari) try to explain this incident by claiming that Muhammad’s overriding concern for the spiritual welfare for the people prompted him to listen to the whispering of Satan rather than Allah (Premises and Principles of Muslim Evangelism, pp. 24-25).



We must add a word of warning regarding Rushdie's book. Any Christian who has had the opportunity to study the book will be quickly convinced of its blasphemous, cynical and ungodly character. It is certainly not a book any committed Christian would want to identify with. It rather seems to be a personal vendetta by the author against his Islamic heritage.

When the part of this verse was withdrawn, Muhammad faced renewed pressure from the pagans, which confirmed his resolution to leave Mecca.

2.3.8 The Hijra - the Flight from Mecca to Medina

After the death of his well-respected wife Khadijah and his uncle and protector Abu Talib, who died in or around AD 620, pressure on Muhammad and the Muslims in Mecca further increased. Soon afterwards, at the annual Hajj, a secret delegation of Muslim believers from Yathrib (a town appr. 350 km north of Mecca) invited him to settle in their town and to become their leader in order to arbitrate between the various factions living in that town. In exchange they offered their allegiance and promised to protect him.

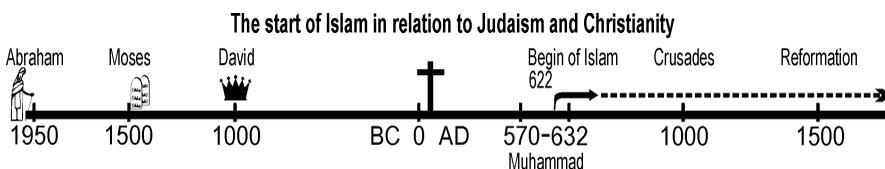
With this plan in place, he encouraged his followers (between 100-200) to emigrate to Yathrib (later known as Medina). Muhammad and his close companion Abu Bakr left last under cover of night. This flight or emigration (Arab. hijra) happened in AD 622. This date became the beginning of the Islamic calendar. Islamic references to dates normally refer to their own calendar and add the letters AH = 'After the Hijrah', as compared with the Christian calendar AD = Anno Domini (in the year of the Lord).

2.3.9 Muhammad in Mecca versus Muhammad in Medina

One can hardly fail to see a tragic metamorphosis (change) in the life of Muhammad at that time. To assess the actual cause for this will always be a matter of speculation, for there must have been several contributing factors. We can observe, however, how a man who was a devoted believer in his calling, who had submitted to rejection and ridicule and who was the husband of one wife, changed into a man of exceptional authority, who instilled fear in his enemies, expanded his power by force and became a conqueror. He also exchanged his monogamy for an

extravagant harem and showed behaviour trends that defy Christian ethics. What was happening? Was this caused by grief for his departed wife? Or was it simply the new situation of power that he now assumed?

It has been suggested (by Dr. Peter Cotterell) that Muhammad, when he came to Medina, had expected the three influential Jewish clans to side with him and to accept him as a biblical prophet. They did not. On the contrary, they must have attempted to correct the many false perceptions Muhammad had about the Old Testament and its content, which had become part of his teaching and which were propagated as divine revelation, later forming the Qur'an.



Muhammad must have faced a crucial choice. He could either submit to the testimony of the Scriptures he had so often proclaimed to be the Word of God, and admit to have drawn from a wrong well - or insist on having received his revelation from God, and to declare the Jews to be falsifiers of Scripture. As is well known, he opted for the second alternative with a tragic result.

2.3.10 Muhammad and the Jews of Medina

Arriving in Medina, Muhammad and his companions had been economically dependent on the Muslims in that city. This source proved to be insufficient. As we already observed, he must have hoped that the Jewish community would accept him as a prophet in the biblical succession. Consequently he participated in Jewish religious feasts. We have this report about it:



A few months after his arrival in Medina, Muhammad saw the Jews keeping the great Fast of the Atonement; and he readily adopted it for his own people...

Ashor, or the 'Fast of the Tenth', is the tenth day of the seventh month (Lev 23:27). It was a day of affliction and atonement; but popular tradition at Medina assigned to it another origin. 'When Muhammad asked the Jews what was the origin of the fast, they said that it was in memory of the delivery of Moses out of the hands of Pharaoh, and the destruction of the tyrant in the Red Sea: 'We

have a greater right in Moses than they', said Muhammad; so he fasted like the Jews, and commanded his people to fast also.

At the annual pilgrimage of Mecca victims (slaughter animals) have from time immemorial been slain at the close of the ceremonies in the vale of Mina. For the first year at Medina the occasion passed unnoticed. But, Jewish rites being still in favour, Muhammad kept the great Day of Atonement with its sacrifice of victims in its stead; and had he continued on a friendly footing with the Jews, he would, no doubt, have maintained the practice. In the following year, however, it was in keeping with his altered relations to abandon altogether the Jewish ritual of sacrifice, and to substitute for it another somewhat similar in character, but grounded on the ceremonies of the Ka'ba and held it simultaneously with them. It was after having waged war against one of the Jewish tribes settled in the suburbs of Medina, and having expatriated them from the country, that Muhammad resolved upon the change. Accordingly at the moment while the votaries of the Ka'ba were engaged in the closing ceremonies of the pilgrimage at Mina, Muhammad, preceded by Bilal carrying the Abyssinian staff, and followed by the people, went forth to the place of prayer without the city. After a service resembling that of the breaking of the Fast, two fatted sucking kids, with budding horns, were placed before him. Seizing a knife, he sacrificed the first, saying: 'O Lord! I offer this for my people, those that bear testimony to thy Unity and to my Mission'. Then he called for the other, and, slaying it likewise, said: 'O Lord! This is for Muhammad and for the family of Muhammad'. Of the latter kind both he and his family partook, and that which was over he gave to the poor. The double sacrifice seems in its main feature to have been founded on the practice of the Jewish high-priest at the Day of the Atonement, when he sacrificed first for his own sins, and then for the people. The ceremony was repeated by Muhammad every year when present at Medina, and it is still observed throughout the Muslim world at the time when the sacrificial rite is being performed at Mina which closes the Greater Pilgrimage.

The Life of Muhammad, by W. Muir, pp. 191, 194, 195

This accounts for the fact that the Jewish Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) bears certain parallels with the Muslim Eid-u'l Adha, at which sacrifices are being slaughtered, although the biblical meaning and purpose have been lost, as we can see from the Qur'an:



".. their [the Muslims] place of sacrifice is near the ancient House [i.e. the Ka'ba] ...the sacrificial camels We [i.e. Allah] made for you as among the symbols from Allah ... It is not their meat nor their blood, that reaches Allah; it is your piety that reaches Him..."

Surah 22:33-37

Compare what the Bible says:



Where I see the blood, I will pass over you!

Ex 12:13

The Life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it for you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement for ones life.

Lev 17:11

Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

Heb 9:22

The reason the Jews did not accept Muhammad as their prophet is reflected in the Qur'an:



They say: 'Why is not a Sign sent down to him from his Lord?'
Say: 'Allah hath certainly Power to send down a Sign: but most of them understand not'.

Surah 6:37

They [i.e. the Jews] say: 'We shall not believe in thee, until thou cause a spring to gush forth for us from the earth or (until) thou ... cause rivers to gush forth in their midst, carrying abundant water ... or thou have a house adorned with gold, or thou mount a ladder right into the skies' ... Say: 'Glory to my Lord! Am I aught but a man - an apostle?'

Surah 17:90-93

We can easily detect the reasons for this. They might well have reasoned:

Muhammad's nicknames in Mecca¹

Muhammad was given all kinds of 'nicknames' by the people of Mecca that show us how they perceived him and his strange, new message.

<i>Madjnun</i>	one possessed (Surah 37:35; 44:13; 52:29; 68:2; 81:22) - one who behaved unnaturally when he received his revelations
<i>Sahir</i>	magician (Surah 10:2; 15:16; 38:3) - one dealing with witchcraft in influencing people
<i>Mashur</i>	bewitched, (Surah 17:50; 25:9; 44:13; 81:25) - one controlled by evil spirits and demons, acting as their medium
<i>Kahin</i>	fortune-teller / soothsayer, (Surah 52:29; 69:42) - one receiving inspiration by the jinn, revealing secrets to man
<i>Sha'ir</i>	Poet, (Surah 37:35; 52:30; 69:43) - one inspired with enchanting words in enticing rythms by certain jinn

¹ *The Occult in Islam* by Abd al-Masih.

‘Unless you have divine credentials, we cannot accept you as a prophet from God! Moses caused water to gush forth (out of the rock), Solomon lived in a house adorned with gold and Jacob had a dream about the ladder reaching to heaven.

We would do better to base our assessment of a prophet on Deut 18:21-22 and many similar texts, as we have already seen and will see later. The Jews also challenged Muhammad, saying:



‘Allah took our promise not to believe in an apostle unless he showed us a sacrifice consumed by fire (from heaven)’,

Surah 9:5

In response Allah told him to reply: ‘There came to you Apostles before me, with clear Signs and even with what ye ask for: why then did ye slay them, if ye speak the truth?’ Then if they reject thee, so were rejected Apostles before thee, who came with clear Signs, Books of dark prophecies, and the Book of Enlightenment’.

Surah 3:183-184

These verses obviously point to Elijah on Mt. Carmel. Muhammad’s apology is striking. In clear text this says: “Yes, there were Apostles who performed miracles, yet the Jews did not listen to them. Therefore God ceased to perform miracles.”

2.3.11 Persecution of the Jews

An unequivocal threat to the Jews (the clans [arab. ‘Banu’] Quraiza, Nadir and Qainuqa) is evident in the following tradition:



It has been narrated on the authority of Abu Huraira who said: We were (sitting) in the mosque when the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) came to us and said: (Let us) go to the Jews. We went out with him until we came to them. The Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) stood up and called out to them (saying): O ye assembly of Jews, accept Islam (and) you will be safe. They said: Abu'l-Qasim, you have communicated (God’s Message to us). The Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) said: I want this (i.e. you should admit that God’s Message has been communicated to you), accept Islam and you would be safe. They said: Abu'l-Qasim, you have communicated (Allah’s Message). The Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) said: I want this ... He said to them (the same words) the third time (and on getting the same reply) he added: You should know that the earth belongs to Allah and His Apostle, and I wish that I should expel you from this land. Those of you who

have any property with them should sell it, otherwise they should know that the earth belongs to Allah and His Apostle (and they may have to go away leaving everything behind).

It is surely understandable from a biblical viewpoint that the Jews intended not to compromise their position. This, however, produced severe consequences for them.



It has been narrated on the authority of Ibn Umar that the Jews of Banu Nadir and Banu Quraiza fought against the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) who expelled Banu Nadir, and allowed Quraiza to stay on, and granted favour to them until they too fought against him. Then he killed their men and distributed their women, children and properties among the Muslims, except that some of them had turned to the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him²) who granted them security. They embraced Islam. The Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) turned out all the Jews of Medina, Banu Qainuqa (the tribe of Abdullah b. Salam) and the Jews of Banu Haritha and every other Jew who was in Medina.

Sahih Muslim Vol. 3, pp. 963-965, No 4363-4364 and 4366

Then the apostle divided the property, wives, and children of B. Qurayza among the Muslims. The apostle had chosen one of their women for himself, Rayhana d. Amr b. Khunafa, one of the women of B. Amr b. Qurayza, and she remained with him until she died, in his power. The apostle had proposed to marry her and put the veil on her, but she said: 'Nay, leave me in your power, for that will be easier for me and for you'. So he left her.

Siratu'l Nabi vss. 690, 691 and 693

Then God revealed the verse: 'It is not befitting for a prophet that he should take prisoners until the force of the disbelievers has been crushed ...' to the end of the verse: 'so eat ye the spoils of war, (it is) lawful and pure. So Allah made booty lawful for them.

Sahih Muslim Vol. 3, p. 962, No 4360

Practically all Jews of Arabia were either killed or chased from their homes and towns. The common accusation that the Banu Qurayza were rewarded for treason is patently untrue. The Muslims tried to win the Jews for their cause, but the Qurayza remained neutral. This was their crime!

² In some Islamic publications PBUH = peace be upon him

2.3.12 Muhammad's Assessment of the Christians

Initially Muhammad had a high regard for Christians.



Strongest among men in enmity to the Believers wilt thou find the Jews and Pagans; and nearest among them in love to the Believers wilt thou find those who say, 'We are Christians': Because amongst these are men devoted to learning and men who have renounced the world, and they are not arrogant.

Surah 5:82

However, when most of them did not respond by converting to Islam, he changed his mind about them. Shortly before his death he even cursed them. Both Jews and Christians were only acceptable to Muhammad once they had acknowledged him as prophet.



Never will the Jews or the Christians be satisfied with thee unless thou follow their form of religion. Say: 'The guidance of Allah - that is the (only) guidance'. Wert thou to follow their desires after the knowledge which hath reached thee, then wouldst thou find neither protector nor Helper against Allah.

Surah 2:120

O ye who believe! Take not the Jews and the Christians for your friends and protectors; they are but friends and protectors to each other. And he amongst you that turns to them (for friendship) is of them. Verily Allah guideth not a people unjust.

Surah 5:54

Let not the Believers take for friends or helpers Unbelievers rather than Believers; if any do that, in nothing will there be help from Allah: except by way of precaution, that ye may Guard yourselves from them. But Allah cautions you (to remember) Himself; for the final goal is to Allah.

Surah 3:28

The Jews call Uzair [Ezra?] a son of Allah, and the Christians call Christ the son of Allah. That is a saying from their mouths; (in this) they but imitate what the unbelievers of old used to say. Allah's curse be on them! How they are deluded away from the Truth!

Surah 9:30

2.3.13 Muhammad goes to War

After having settled in Medina, a Charter was written to regulate life between the various differing interest groups in the town. Soon it became evident that the emigrant Muslims in Medina had to find a livelihood. This caused Muhammad to undertake "expeditions." He sent groups of his warriors to raid Meccan trading caravans in order to find booty. Against the rule not to fight in the 'holy months', a

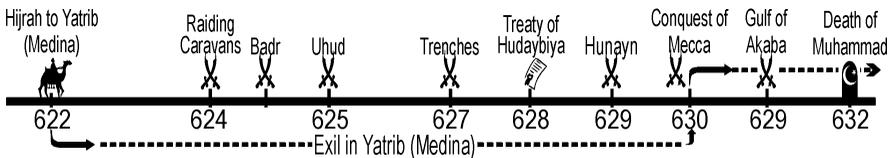
contingent of troops raided a trading caravan. This caused havoc in his own camp because a Meccan had been killed in the month in which bloodshed was forbidden. Promptly a ‘revelation’ came:



They ask thee concerning fighting in the prohibited month. Say: ‘Fighting therein is a grave (offence): but graver is it in the sight of Allah to prevent access to the path of Allah to deny Him; to prevent access to the Sacred Mosque, and drive out its members’. Tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter. *Surah 2:217*

When a large Meccan caravan was reported to be passing Badr in the South-West of Medina on its way from Palestine to Mecca, the Meccans anticipated an attack and obtained supporting forces from the city. They intercepted the Muslim attackers, which led to the Battle of Badr (2 years after the Hijrah³) With only 300 men, but in a superior strategic position, Muhammad defeated the close to 1 000 Meccans. This victory gained him a tremendous status and swelled his army rapidly.

Important Battles in the Life of Muhammad



This was followed by several other battles besides a number of smaller skirmishes. Well known are the Battle of Uhud near Medina, which Muhammad lost and where he was wounded in the fighting. The Battle of the Ditch (Trench) took place close to the city when the Meccans came to deal a final blow to Muhammad. They had brought all their allies along, but Muhammad had trenches dug at strategic places around Medina to prevent the enemy cavalry from using its advantages. Subsequently the Meccans withdrew after a couple of skirmishes - never to recover from this loss of face. In the year 9AH⁴ Muhammad conquered Mecca with 10 000 soldiers who never needed to raise the sword. The power to resist had gone.

2.3.13.1 The Incentive to fight Holy Wars

Muslims emphatically insist that the Jihad, or Holy War, was, and should be, a means of defence or an act of correcting oppression and injustice. This is underlined in the explanatory notes of a collection of Islamic traditions:

³ Hijrah = flight from Mecca to Medina (Yathrib) in AD 622

⁴ AH = after the Hijrah



Thus Jihad in Islam is not an act of violence directed indiscriminately against the non-Muslims; it is the name given to an all-round struggle which a Muslim should launch against evil in whatever form or shape it appears. Qital fi sabilillah (fighting in the way of Allah) is only one aspect of Jihad. Even this qital in Islam is not an act of mad brutality. It has its material and moral functions, i.e. self-preservation and the preservation of the moral order in the world.

Sahih Muslim Vol. 3, p. 938, commentary

... the sword has not been used recklessly by the Muslims; it has been wielded purely with humane feelings in the wider interest of humanity.

Sahih Muslim Vol. 3, p. 941, commentary

Let us investigate how this claim is supported in other Islamic source materials and by the actual facts of history:



Jihad is one of the chief meritorious acts in the eyes of Islam and it is the best source of earnings but it shall be undertaken with the intention of self-defence as said above.

Mishkat Vol. 2, p. 340, commentary

This is the best method of earning both spiritual and temporal. If victory is won, there is enormous booty and conquest of a country which cannot be equalled to any other source of earning. If there is defeat or death, there is ever-lasting Paradise and a great spiritual benefit. This sort of Jihad is conditional upon pure motive i.e. for establishing the kingdom of Allah on earth.

Mishkat Vol. 2, p. 253, commentary



But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the pagans wherever ye find them and seize them, beleaguer them and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war).

Therefore, when ye meet the unbelievers (in fight), smite at their necks; at length, when ye have thoroughly subdued them, bind a bond firmly (on them); thereafter (is the time for) either generosity or ransom: until the war lays down its burdens. Thus (are ye commanded): but if it has been Allah's will he could certainly have exacted retribution from them (himself). But (He lets you fight) in order to test you.

Surah 47:4

Fight those who believe not in Allah, nor the Last Day. Nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and His Apostle, nor acknowledge the Religion of Truth (even if they are) of the People of the Book until they pay the Jizya⁵ with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued.

Surah 9:29

⁵ Jizya = poll-tax

And fight them on until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevails justice and faith in Allah altogether and everywhere. *Surah 8:39*

All of the above texts are contradicted by:



Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from error. *Surah 2:256*

Say: O ye that reject Faith! I worship not that which ye worship. Nor will ye worship that which I worship. And I will not worship that which ye have been wont to worship. Nor will ye worship that which I worship. To you be your Way, and to me mine. *Surah 109:1-6*

We learn with regard to the Jihad, that:



Abu Hurairah reported that the Messenger of Allah said: To whichever village you go and settle therein, there is your share therein, and whichever village disobeys Allah and His Messenger, its one-fifth is for Allah and His Messenger, and the remainder is for you. *Mishkat Vol. 2, p. 412, No 150*

We find it difficult to interpret this as 'swords being wielded purely with humane feelings in the interest of humanity'.

This income (booty), no doubt, was at the expense of someone else's livelihood. Let us look at Muslim warfare in practice.

What are the choices of the defeated?



1. The acceptance of Islam, in which case the conquered became enfranchised citizens of the Muslim state.

2. The payment of poll-tax (Jizya) by which People of the Book, i.e. Jews and Christians obtained 'protection', becoming 'Zimmis', i.e. second grade citizens.

3. Death by the sword to those who would neither accept Islam nor pay the poll-tax. *Dictionary of Islam, by T. P. Hughes, p. 243*



The Jews were allowed to stay at Khaibar on condition that they would pay half the produce of their lands to the Holy Prophet and in addition Jizya tax. *Mishkat Vol. 2, p. 455, Fn. 1112*

After the battle of Badr, the verse dealing with the booties was first revealed. The verse introduced the rule for the first time that the spoils of war would be the property of the soldiers who actually take part in the battle. Previously it went either to the coffers of the victorious king or commander even though he

did not join in the actual fight. That is one of the reasons why the soldiers of Islam fought tooth and nail. They would get Paradise in case of death in a holy war, and booties in case of conquest, Jihad is therefore the best source of all acquisitions.

Mishkat Vol. 2, p. 406, commentary

Booty included women:



In the actual war-field in the midst of hostilities, according to some jurists, some concessions were sometimes given to soldiers for recreation. Captive virgin girls in war were once made lawful for the soldiers for copulation.

Mishkat Vol. 2, p. 440, commentary

Abdullah (b. Masud) reported: We were on an expedition with Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) and we had no women with us. We said: Should we not have ourselves castrated? He (the Holy Prophet) forbade us to do so. He then granted us permission that we should contract temporary marriage for a stipulated period giving her a garment, and Abdullah then recited this verse: 'Those who believe do not make unlawful the good things which Allah has made lawful for you, and do not transgress. Allah does not like transgressors.'

Sahih Muslim Vol. 2, p. 705, No 3243

2.3.13.2 Temporary Marriage

This practice is called 'mut'ah'. It was allowed for the gratification of the soldiers of Islam, but is still practiced among Shiá Muslims and was indeed recommended, even for school children, by the 'Ayatollah Khomeini'.



Ibn Juraij reported: Ata reported that Jabir b. Abdullah came to perform Umrah⁶, and we came to his abode, and the people asked him about different things, and then they made a mention of temporary marriage, whereupon he said: Yes, we had been benefiting ourselves by this temporary marriage during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet (may peace be upon him) and during the time of Abu Bakr and Umar.

Jabir b. Abdullah reported: We contracted temporary marriage giving a handful of dates or flour as a dower during the lifetime of Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) and during the time of Abu Bakr until Umar forbade it in the case of Amr b. Hurith.

⁶ Umrah = the small or lesser pilgrimage, i.e. not during the prescribed time



Sabra Juhanni reported: Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) permitted temporary marriage for us. So I and another person went out and saw a woman of Banu Amir, who was like a young long-necked she-camel. We presented ourselves to her (for contracting temporary marriage), whereupon she said: What dower would you give me? I said: My cloak. And my companions also said: My cloak. And the cloak of my companion was superior to my cloak, but I was younger than he. So when she looked at the cloak of my companion she liked it, and when she cast a glance at me I looked more attractive to her. She then said: Well, you and your cloak are sufficient for me. I remained with her for three nights, and then Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) said he who has any such woman with whom he had contracted temporary marriage, he should let her off. *Sahih Muslim Vol. 2, p. 706, No 3252*

In the light of what we read there is little wonder that a poem ascribed to Ali ibn Abi Talib, reads:



Our flowers are the sword and the dagger;
Narcissus and myrtle are nought.
Our drink is the blood of our foeman;
Our goblet his skull, when we've fought.

The claim that Muslims acted only in defence is simply untrue. What were the Muslims defending in Spain, France, India, Persia or at the very gates of Vienna?

Objective observers will conclude: interest in material gain and political power were shown to be more important than the making of converts. One can hardly help feeling that the Holy War was a pretext to make booty and receive continuing taxes.

This interest no doubt gave enormous political and military momentum to the cause of Islam. Each warrior had a right to the belongings of the man he had slain or captured, and could sell for ransom any prisoner he had made. Women and children were also treated as booty. A Muslim saw no moral irregularity in taking married women prisoners as concubines, as long as they were not pregnant.

2.3.13.3 The Opposing Concept of Jesus



You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth'. But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. You have heard that it was said: 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy. But I tell you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

Matt 5:38-44

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. *Matt 5:9*

2.3.14 Muhammad's Attitude Towards His Enemies

Justice and compassion are the two components that create a civil society. We are aware that at the time of Muhammad there was no Geneva Convention regulating international relations and the treatment of prisoners. But there have always been ethics. The example of Jesus set the stage for Christian morality. A chivalry influenced by that could already be observed in the early medieval time. We are sad to observe that the relationships Muhammad had with his opponents was all too often governed by pragmatics or, worse, by hatred. When studying the biographic materials of Muhammad's life, we find that he ordered at least 27 assassinations.

The Murder Of Marvan's Daughter



When the apostle heard what she had said he said, 'Who will rid me of Marwan's daughter? Umayr B. Adiy al-Khatmi who was with him heard him, and that very night he went to her house and killed her. In the morning he came to the apostle and told him what he had done and he said, 'You have helped God and His apostle, O Umayr!' When he asked if he would have to bear any evil consequences the apostle said, 'Two goats won't butt their heads about her', so Umayr went back to his people.

Siratu'l Nabi, vs. 996

The Murder Of Ka'b Ibn Ashraf

Muhammad had called for a volunteer to carry out the assassination of one of his personal enemies. Muhammad b. Maslama offered his services with these words:



'O Apostle of Allah, we shall have to tell lies'. He answered, 'Say what you like, for you are free in the matter.'

Siratu'l Nabi, vs. 151



It has been narrated on the authority of Jabir that the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) said: Who will kill Ka'b b. Ashraf? He has maligned Allah, the Exalted, and His Messenger, Muhammad b. Maslama said: Messenger of Allah, do you wish that I should kill him? He said: Yes. He said: Permit me to talk (to him in the way I deem fit). He said: Talk (as you like). So Muhammad b. Maslama came to Ka'b and talked to him, referred to the old friendship between them and said: This man (i.e. the Holy Prophet) has made up his mind to collect charity (from us) and this has put us to a great hardship. When he heard this, Ka'b said: By God, you will be put to more trouble by him. Muhammad b. Maslama said: No doubt, now we have become his followers and we do not like to forsake him until we see what turn his affairs will take. I want that you should give me a loan. He said: What will you mortgage? He said: What do you want? He said: Pledge me your women. He said: You are the most handsome of the Arabs; should we pledge our women to you? He said: pledge me your children. He said: the son of one of us may abuse us saying that he was pledged for two wasqs of dates, but we can pledge you (our) weapons. He said: All right. Then Muhammad b. Maslama promised that he would come to him with Hartih, Abu Abs b. Jabr and Abbad b. Bishr. So they came and called upon him at night. He came down to them. Sufyan says that all the narrators except 'Amr have stated that his wife said: I hear a voice which sounds like the voice of murder. He said: it is only Muhammad b. Maslama and his foster-brother, Abu Na'ila. When a gentleman is called at night, even if to be pierced with a spear, he should respond to the call. Muhammad said to his companions: As he comes down, I will extend my hands towards his head and when I hold him fast, you should do your job. So when he came down and he was holding his cloak under his arm, they said to him: We sense from you a very fine smell. He said: Yes, I have with me a mistress who is the most scented of the women of Arabia. He said: Allow me to smell (the scent on your head). He said: Yes, you may smell. So he caught it and smelt. Then he said: Allow me to do so (once again). He then held his head fast and said to his companions: do your job. And they killed him.

Sahih Muslim Vol. 3, pp. 990-991, No 4436

The Siratu'l Nabi continues the same story:



They walked on farther ... Ka'b suspected no evil. Then he cried, 'Smite the enemy of Allah!' So they smote him, and their swords clashed over him with no effect. Muhammad b. Maslama said, 'I remembered my dagger when I saw that our swords were useless, and I seized it. Meanwhile the enemy of God had made such a noise that every fort around us was showing a light. I thrust it into the lower part of his body, then I bore down upon it until I reached his genitals, and

the enemy of Allah fell to the ground. Al-Harith had been hurt, being wounded either in his head or in his foot, one of our swords having struck him.

We carried him and brought him to the apostle at the end of the night. We saluted him as he stood praying, and he came out to us, and we told him that we had killed Allah's enemy. He spat upon our comrade's wounds, and both he and we returned to our families. Our attack upon Allah's enemy cast terror among the Jews, and there was no Jew in Medina who did not fear for his life. The apostle said, 'Kill any Jew that falls into your power'.

Siratu'l Nabi, vs. 552-554

The Murder Of Sallam



When Aus had killed Ka'b for his enmity towards the apostle, Khazraj used these words and asked themselves what man was as hostile to the apostle as Ka'b? And then they remembered Sallam, who was in Khaybar and asked and obtained the apostle's permission to kill him.

Five men of B. Salima of Khazraj went to him: 'Abdullah b. Atik; Mas'ud b. Sinan; Abdullah b. Unays; Abu Qatada al-Harith b. Rib'i; and Khuza'i b. Aswad, an ally from Aslam. As they left, the apostle appointed Abdullah b. Atik as their leader, and he forbade them to kill women or children. When they got to Khaybar they went to Sallam's house by night, having locked every door in the settlement on the inhabitants. Now he was in an upper chamber of his to which a ladder led up. They mounted this until they came to the door and asked to be allowed to come in. His wife came out and asked who they were and they told her that they were Arabs in search of supplies. She told them that their man was here and that they could come in. When we entered we bolted the door of the room on her and ourselves fearing lest something should come between us and him. His wife shrieked and warned him of us, so we ran at him with our swords as he was on his bed. The only thing that guided us in the darkness of the night was his whiteness like an Egyptian blanket. When his wife shrieked one of our number would lift his sword against her; then he would remember the apostle's ban on killing women and withdraw his hand; but for that we would have made an end of her that night. When we had smitten him with our swords Abdullah B.Unays bore down with his sword into his belly until it went right through him, as he was saying Qatni, qatni, i.e. it's enough.

We went out. Now Abdullah b. Atik had poor sight, and fell from the ladder and sprained his arm severely, so we carried him until we brought him to one of their water channels and went into it. The people lit lamps and went in search of us in all directions until, despairing of finding us, they returned to their master and gathered round him as he was dying. We asked each other how we could know that the enemy of God was dead, and one of us volunteered to go and see; so off he went and mingled with the people. He said, 'I found his

wife and some Jews gathered round him. She had a lamp in her hand and was peering into his face and saying to them 'By God, I certainly heard the voice of Abdullah B. Atik. Then I decided I must be wrong and thought, 'How can Ibn Atik be in this country? 'Then she turned towards him, looking into his face, and said, 'By the God of the Jews, he is dead!' Never have I heard sweeter words than those.

Then he came to us and told us the news, and we picked up our companion and took him to the apostle and told him that we had killed Allah's enemy. We disputed before him as to who had killed him, each of us laying claim to the deed. The apostle demanded to see our swords and when he looked at them he said, 'It is the sword of Abdullah b. Unays that killed him; I can see traces of food on it'.

Siratu'l Nabi, vs. 714-715

The Murder Of Abu Rafi



Allah's Apostle sent some men from the Ansar to (kill) Abu Rafi, the Jew, and appointed 'Abdullah bin Atik as their leader. Abu Rafi used to hurt Allah's Apostle and help his enemies against him.

The story then tells how this was done:



...I ... hit him with the sword, and because of my perplexity, I could not kill him. He cried loudly, and I came out of the house and waited for a while, and then went to him again and said, 'What is this voice, O Abu Rafi?' He said, 'Woe to your mother! A man in my house has hit me with a sword!' I again hit him severely but I did not kill him. Then I drove the point of the sword into his belly (and pressed it through) till it touched his back, and I realised that I have killed him. Then I opened the doors one by one till I reached the staircase, and thinking that I had reached the ground, I stepped out and fell down and got my leg broken in a moonlit night. I tied my leg with a turban and proceeded on till I sat at the gate, and said, 'I will not go out tonight till I know that I have killed him.' So, when (early in the morning) the cock crowed, the announcer of the casualty stood on the wall saying, 'I announce the death of Abu Rafi, the merchant of Hijaz. Thereupon I went to my companions and said, 'Let us save ourselves, for Allah has killed Abu Rafi'. So I (along with my companions proceeded and) went to the Prophet and described the whole story to him." He said, 'Stretch out your (broken) leg.' I stretched it out and he rubbed it and it became all right as if I had never had any ailment whatsoever.

al-Bukhari Vol. 5, pp. 251-253, No 371

The Slaughter Of Ocba



On tomorrow, the prisoners were brought up before him. As he scrutinized each, his eye fell fiercely on Nadhr, son of Harish. 'There was death in that glance', whispered Nadhr, trembling to a bystander. 'Not so', replied the other, 'it is but thine own imagination'. The unfortunate prisoner thought otherwise and besought Musab to intercede for him. Musab reminded him that he had denied the faith and persecuted Believers. Ah, said Nadhr, had the Coreish be made the prisoners. They would never have met the death! 'Even were it so' Mohammad scornfully replied 'I am not as thou and Islam hath rent all bounds asunder. Micda, the captor, fearing lest the prisoner, and with him the chance of a rich ransom, was about to slip from his hands, cried out, 'The prisoner is mine'. But at this moment the command to strike off his head was interposed by Mohammad, who has been watching what passed. 'And, O Lord' he added, 'do thou of thy bounty grant unto Micdad a better prey than this'. Nadhr was forthwith beheaded by Ali.

Two days afterwards, about half-way to Medina, Ocba, another prisoner, was ordered out for execution. He ventured to expostulate and demand why he should be treated more rigorously than the other captives. 'Because of thy enmity to Allah and to His Prophet', replied Mohammad. 'And my little girl' cried Ocba, in the bitterness of his soul, 'who will take care of her?' 'Hell-fire!' exclaimed the heartless conqueror, and on the instant his victim was hewn to the ground.

Dictionary of Islam, by T. P. Hughes, p. 380

While this may reflect the methods of secret agents in their political hit-squad intrigue and faction hatred, we deem it not fitting for a man of God to act like this - particularly so after Jesus Christ has opened our understanding to a new set of ethics. While Church history has a lot to say about all kinds of enmity, intrigue and even murder, this cannot be traced back to the teaching or example of Jesus Christ. What a contrast we find in Muhammad, who said:



'Kill any Jew that falls into your power'. Thereupon Muhayyisa b. Mas'lud leapt upon Ibn Sunayna, a Jewish merchant with whom they had social and business relations, and killed him. Huwayyisa was not a Muslim at the time though he was the elder brother. When Muhayyisa killed him Huwalyyisa began to beat him, saying: 'You enemy of Allah, did you kill him when much of the fat on your belly comes from his wealth?' Muhayyisa answered, 'Had the one who ordered me to kill him ordered me to kill you I would have cut your head off'.

Siratu'l Nabi, vs. 554

2.3.15 The Wives and Concubines of Muhammad

To properly and justly assess the life and action of Muhammad and his rules, we have to realize that Muhammad lived \pm 600 years after Christ Jesus revealed God's plans and purposes for our lives. A comparison with the Old Testament, in which polygamy⁷ was tolerated by God, is therefore not justified. It may be added that adultery and divorce were not overlooked even under the OT dispensation.

A Muslim man may legally marry up to four wives (excluding concubines).



Marry women of your choice, two, or three, or four. But if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one, or (a captive) that your right hands possess, that will be more suitable, to prevent you from doing injustice.

Muhammad had lived 25 years in marriage with his first wife Khadija. After her death, which roughly coincided with the Hijra to Medina, he married no less than 12 wives in short succession. Perhaps all, except Aisha, were widows or divorcees. (See list in the appendix).

Strangely this led to an increase of Muhammad's status. In our modern world he is rather viewed as a man of compassion who salvaged these poor women from an unprotected way of life by supplying their daily needs. A suggestion that personal interests, particularly sexual gratification, were a motive is bluntly refused by just about all Muslims. We do not want to dispute his social concern in some cases, but should consider the other side as well:

We would like to state again that all our information on early Islam is derived from Islamic sources.

Muhammad's Affair With Mary, The Copt



Mary (the Copt) was a Christian slave given to Muhammad 7 AH (AD 628) by the Governor of Egypt, Elmokaukas. Her sister, Shereena⁸, was also given at the same time. Muhammad became intimate with Mary and she bore him Ebrahim, who died in 10 AH. Intimacy took place in the home and bed of his wife

⁷ polygamy = 'custom of having more than one wife at the same time' (Oxford Advanced Dictionary)

⁸ In Surah 4:23 we read: 'Forbidden to you are...two sisters in wedlock at one and the same time.'

Hafsah (daughter of Umar) who was absent at that moment and on the day which was either her or Aisha's (daughter of Abu Bakr) turn. When Hafsah found this out and questioned him he promised (on oath) not to touch Mary again if she would keep this a secret, and promised that Umar and Abu Bakr should be his successors. Hafsah, however, did not keep quiet and told Aisha about this event. As a result Muhammad had no dealings with any of his wives for a full month, living with Mary alone.⁹

At this appropriate time Muhammad was given a suitable "revelation":



O Prophet! Why holdest thou to be forbidden that which, Allah has made lawful to thee? Thou seekest to please thy consorts. But Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. Allah has already ordained for you (O men) the dissolution of your oaths (in some cases)[*these inserts are not part of the text!*] and Allah is your Protector, and He is full of knowledge and wisdom. When the Prophet disclosed a matter in confidence to one of his consorts, and she then divulged it (to another), and Allah made it known to him, he confirmed part thereof and repudiated a part ... It may be, if he divorced you (all) that Allah will give him in exchange consorts better than you - who submit (their wills), who believe, who are devout, who turn to Allah in repentance, who worship (in humility), who travel (for faith) and fast - previously married or virgins. *Surah 66:1-3, 5*

Al-Baizawi, (Commentary Vol.2, pp. 340-341), the Qur'an commentator, gives an explanation of this passage:



It is related that Mohammed was alone in company with Mary in Aisha's or Hafsah's turn. Hafsah became aware of that and therefore scolded him about it. He declared he had taken an oath, but admitted his unlawful behaviour, therefore these verses descended.

Mizanu'l Haqq, p. 330;

(The Mishkat names Zainab instead of Hafsah); Mishkat 2, p. 680-681)

We ought to be aware that many a Muslim may take grave offence at the above recorded event. To illustrate this, an extract from the book "Nameose Rasool" by Hafiz Muhammad Sawar Qureshi is added:



In Defence of the Honor of Muhammad: Peace and blessing of Allah be on him

One day in April 1978, I was studying Maudoodi's famous commentary on the Qur'an, Tafhimul Qur'an, Volume 4. I had to

⁹ "Der Koran" translated by Ludwig Ullmann, p. 456, Fn. 2, Authors own translation. The complete story is found in the Rauzatu'r Safa, Vol. 2, p. 188.

look up something concerning the wives of the Prophet. Suddenly I read this about Mary the Copt (may Allah be pleased with her): '(The Prophet of God) took Mary Qabtia, who had been sent by the Maqauqus (ruler of Egypt) especially for himself. The first three mentioned he freed and married but with Mary he had intercourse on the basis of his having her in his power. It is not proven about her that he freed her and married her'.¹⁰

Such was the effect of this reading on my mind and soul that, without exaggeration, for three straight days I could no longer believe even in the prophethood and messengership of Muhammad (may peace and blessings of Allah be on him). Again and again I said to my friends: See and check. Has Maudoodi actually written that about Mary the Copt which I have understood? At my insistence, my friends again and again read the relevant passage and said to me: Surely these writings mean what you have understood it to mean.

I cannot explain fully what was the condition of my mind at that time. Strange doubts and fears of a nature that would put me outside the limits of Islam arose in my mind about the mission of the leader and seal of the prophet. I was so disturbed because the ugly act which Maudoodi was attributing to the messenger of God was so hideous that even a sinful person like myself could not have committed it or thought of committing it. How could a great messenger of God, walking on the path of Truth, have done such a thing? Whatever else such a person might be, he certainly would not be the messenger of God. Consider what would happen when this extremely misleading commentary would be translated into the English language and other international languages and would reach the nations of the world! What opinion would they form of the best men, Muhammad, (peace and blessings of Allah be on him) after reading Maudoodi's commentary when they (especially the Europeans) are already very much prejudiced against the Prophet owing to other misleading and distorted versions of Islam which have reached them! Alas, would there be such a true believer who, out of sheer love of the truthful Prophet, make sure that this misleading commentary would not be able to do the harm it is capable of doing? Perhaps such a believer could use my book 'Namoose Rasool' (The Honor of the Prophet's Household) to prove to the non-Muslim peoples that the ugly tradition of slavery and concubining (sic) was not invented by the Messenger of God.

Some people may object to the weakness of my faith; however it is not a question of the weakness of my faith but of the credibility of my appropriate witnessing. We know from the Qur'an that it is correct to assume that faith can increase and also become weaker on the basis of reason and reliable evidence. My faith is based on the truthfulness and justice of the holy Qur'an and the highest moral and ethical example of the messenger of God referred to

¹⁰ Tafhimul Qur'an, Vol. 4, commentary on Surah al-Ahzab, verse 50, note number 88, pages 113-114.

in the Qur'an as 'the pattern of excellence'. Hence imagine my mental condition when the greatest scholar and thinker of Islam in these times comes forward as a witness and testifies that whatever the enemies of Islam had been saying in their malice and hate about the messenger was partially, if not entirely true. The stories that the Prophet was a lustful person and used women as concubines (O Allah forgive us) and that Muslims could take men as slaves, even without war, and take women from decent households and use them as concubines and 'keeps' without benefit of marriage, was being given the seal of authenticity by a scholar of Islam.

It is clear that Mary the Copt was not taken prisoner in a war. And according to Maudoodi, the messenger of Islam took her as his concubine without any fault of hers and entirely according to the tradition of the unbelievers. This would go even against what the generality of Islamic scholars say and agree upon, that Islam did put an end to slavery that was rampant among the unbelievers and the associates, and that whatever slavery Islam did 'permit', had to do only with the prisoner of war. Even if this viewpoint is true, how would it be proper to justify the enslavement of Mary the Copt by the great moral messenger? Was she being treated as a prisoner of war? Or had she been taken and enslaved merely on the basis of the established tradition of slavery among the associates and unbelievers?

Thus when we get this witness from the greatest scholar of Islam in our time, that 'in fact' the messenger of Islam had not even been forced by the conditions of war but had merely, according to unislamic culture then prevalent, taken Mary as a slave girl, and that too without marriage, and forced her entry into his household, then who would conscientiously believe in the messengership of such a person? Surely this was a deed which went against the very Qur'an which the messenger had been sent to teach and publicize. It is of course true that some other Muslim commentators and historians have also written that Mary was the slave girl of the Prophet. This took the meaning in my mind that originally she was a slave girl but the Messenger of God must have married her. This did not leave a bad impression. But the words Maudoodi used, that it had not been proven that the Prophet ever married her, were shattering. Such misleading words I had not come across from a scholar of Islam

Al-Balaag, Johannesburg, Nov./Dec. issue, 1988

The sad fact is that Mary the Copt was a concubine of Muhammad. The conclusion that 'what must not be cannot be' is as false as the supposition that Islam put an end to slavery.

We can clearly see that the longing for purity in many a Muslim is indeed an aspect, which makes the Gospel of Jesus very appealing - provided it is known to them.

Muhammad's Affair With Zainab

Muhammad took the wife of his adopted son Zaid:

Muhammad beheld her after he had wedded her to him (Zaid), and she fell into his soul: therefore he said, 'Praise to God who turneth hearts upside down'

And Zainab heard the ascription of praise, and mentioned it to Zaid. He was quick to understand that, and there occurred to his soul an aversion from her society. Therefore he came to the Prophet and said, 'I desire to put away my consort' (Muhammad) said, 'What is the matter with thee? Has anything made thee doubtful of her?' (Zaid) said, 'No, by God, I have seen nothing (done) by her but what is good; but truly her dignity is too exalted for me'.

Accordingly he said to him, 'Keep thy wife to thyself' ... 'Therefore when Zaid satisfied a requirement from her', i.e. a need; since he wearied of her, and he divorced her, and her time was completed ... 'We wedded her to thee': ... the meaning is that He commanded him to wed her, or He made her his (Muhammad's) wife without the interposition of a marriage-contract. And what confirms it (this explanation) is that she used to say to the rest of the Prophet's wives, 'Verily God acted the part of a relative in my being given in marriage, and, as for you, your relatives gave you in marriage'. And it is said that Zaid was the go-between in her betrothal, and that was a great trial, and an evident witness to the strength of his faith.

Mizanu'l Haqq, pp. 331-332 quotes Commentary of Al Baizawi, Vol. 2, p. 129

Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) said to Zaid to make a mention to her about him. Zaid went on until he came to her and she was fermenting her flour. He (Zaid) said: As I saw her I felt in my heart an idea of her greatness so much so that I could not see towards her (simply for the fact) that Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) had made a mention of her. So I turned my back towards her, and I turned upon my heels and said: Zainab, Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) has sent (me) with a message to you. She said: I do not do anything until I consult the will of my Lord. So she stood at her place of worship and the (verses of) the Qur'an (pertaining to her marriage) were revealed, and Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) came to her without permission.

Sahih Muslim Vol. 2, pp. 724-725, No 3330

And this is the "revelation" which was then given:



It is not fitting for a Believer, man or woman, when a matter has been decided by Allah and His Apostle, to have any option about their decision. If anyone disobeys Allah and His Apostle, he is indeed on a clearly wrong path.

Behold! Though didst say to one who had received the grace of Allah and thy favour: 'Retain thou (in wedlock) thy wife, and fear Allah'. But thou didst hide in thy heart that which Allah was about to make manifest: thou didst fear the people, but it is more fitting that thou shouldst fear Allah. Then when Zaid had dissolved (his marriage) with her, with the necessary (formality), we joined her in marriage to thee; in order that (in future) there may be no difficulty to the Believers in (the matter of) marriage with the wives of their adopted sons, when the latter have dissolved with the necessary (formality = Their marriage) with them: and Allah's command must be fulfilled.

There can be no difficulty to the Prophet in what Allah has indicated to him as a duty. *Surah 33:36-38*

Muhammad's Marriage To Aisha



Aisha¹¹ (Allah be pleased with her) reported that Allah's Apostle (may peace be upon him) married her when she was seven years old, and she was taken to his house as a bride when she was nine, and her dolls were with her; and when he (the Holy Prophet) died she was eighteen years old.

Sahih Muslim Vol. 2, p. 716, No 3311

We remember that a Muslim may not marry more than one wife unless he treats them all alike. This is humanly speaking impossible. One cannot love several wives equally. This also applies to Muhammad, as we already realized. The Traditions report scenes of jealousy. Aisha said:



I used to look down upon those ladies who had given themselves to Allah's Apostle and I used to say, "Can a lady give herself (to a man)?" But when Allah revealed: "You (O Muhammad) can postpone (the turn of) whom you will of them (your wives), and you may receive any of them whom you will; and there is no blame on you if you invite one whose turn you have set aside (temporarily)," (33.51) I said (to the Prophet), "I feel that your Lord hastens in fulfilling your wishes and desires." *al-Bukhari Vol. 6, p. 295, No 311*

'Aisha said, "Allah's Apostle used to take the permission of that wife with whom he was supposed to stay overnight if he wanted to go to one other than her, after this Verse was revealed:

'You (O Muhammad) can postpone (the turn of) whom you will of them (your wives) and you may receive any (of them) whom you will; and there is no blame on you if you invite one whose turn you have set aside (temporarily).'

¹¹ Aisha, also Ayesha

(33.51) 'I asked 'Aisha, 'What did you use to say (in this case)? *She said, 'I used to say to him, 'If I could deny you the permission (to go to your other wives) I would not allow your favour to be bestowed on any other person'.*

al-Bukhari Vol. 6, pp. 295-296, No 312

The full text that is referred to above is:



O Prophet! We have made lawful to thee thy wives to whom thou hast paid their dowers; and those whom thy right hand possess out of the prisoners of war whom Allah has assigned to thee; and daughters of thy paternal uncles and aunts, and daughters of thy maternal uncles and aunts, who migrated (from Mecca) with thee; and any believing woman who dedicates her soul to the Prophet if the Prophet wishes to wed her - this only for thee, and not for the Believers (at large). We know what We have appointed for them as to their wives and the captives whom their right hands possess; - in order that there should be no difficulty for thee. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

Thou mayest defer (the turn of) any of them that thou pleasest, and thou mayest receive any thou pleasest; and there is no blame on thee if thou invite one whose (turn) thou hadst set aside.

Surah 33:50-51

All these recorded events make it difficult to accept that Muhammad's marriages were primarily acts of compassion as Islam maintains:



Narrated Qatada: Anas bin Malik said: 'The Prophet used to visit all his wives in a round, during the day and night and they were eleven in number'. I asked Anas: 'Had the Prophet the strength for it?' Anas replied, 'We used to say that the Prophet was given the strength of thirty (men)'. And Sa'id said on the authority of Qatada that Anas had told him about nine wives only (not eleven).

al-Bukhari Vol. 1, p. 165, No 268



Ubayd Allah Ibn Musa ... said: The Apostle of Allah, may Allah bless him, said: Gabriel brought a kettle from which I ate and I was given the power of sexual intercourse equal to forty men

Ibn Sa'd Vol. 1, pp. 438-439

Conclusion

We are reminded of the words of Jesus:



Have you not read, he replied, that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female’, and said, ‘for this reason will a man leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one.

Therefore what God has joined together, let no man separate... Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.

Matt 19:4-9

He who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery.

Luke 16:18

For an extensive treatment of the status of women in Islam see Chapter 11.

2.3.16 Personal Advantages - Muhammad’s great Temptation

When we look at the ‘revelations’ of the Qur’an and the Hadith¹², we cannot fail to see that a number of passages, which are deemed to be divine revelations, pragmatically promote personal advantages for Muhammad. These boosted his power and influence as much as his privileges concerning the opposite sex. Again we are tempted to compare with Christ, of whom it is said:



Each of you should look not only to your own interest, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death - even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven as on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Phil 2:4-11

¹² Hadith = collection of early Islamic traditions recorded between 250 - 300 years after Muhammad

Muslims are to assume that both the Qur'an and the sayings and actions of Muhammad, were divinely inspired. That gives the Prophet of Islam absolute authority. We will have to take note that all these sources originate in ONE person, Muhammad. To fortify his position we read in the Qur'an:



'Say (O Muhammad) (to the people): If you love Allah, follow me and Allah will love you and forgive you your sins: for Allah is Forgiving, a Dispenser of Mercy'

Surah 3:31

Ye have indeed in the Apostle of Allah a beautiful pattern of (conduct) for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Final Day, and who engages much in the praise of Allah.

Surah 33:21

Abu Hurairah reported that he heard Allah's Apostle saying, 'We are the last but will be the foremost to enter Paradise.' The Prophet added, 'He who obeys me, obeys Allah, and he who disobeys me, disobeys Allah.

al-Bukhari Vol. 4, pp. 128-129, No 204 and Vol. 9, p. 284, No 384

All my followers will enter Paradise except those who refuse." They said, "O Allah's Apostle! Who will refuse?" He said, "Whoever obeys me will enter Paradise, and whoever disobeys me is the one who refuses (to enter it).

al-Bukhari Vol. 4, p. 284, No 384 (al-Bukhari Vol. 4, pp. 284-285, No 385 and Mishkat Vol. 1, p. 159, No 97)

Based on this premise Muhammad became, already in his lifetime, the sole and absolute foundation and authority of all that concerns Islam. He is, by that token, the mediator between man and Allah. Therefore, even his very un-christlike behaviour in many ways is viewed by Muslims to be a God-granted privilege.



All the utterances and deeds of the Holy Prophet (may peace be upon him) are thus divinely inspired, and in them alone can one find the true meaning and the real significance of the Will of Allah ... It is indeed a boundless favour of Allah to humanity that, along with His message, He also sent to us His Messenger to elaborate

and elucidate it, and then transmute it into practical reality under His direct guidance:

'And We have sent unto thee the Admonition that thou mayest expound unto mankind that which hath been revealed towards them'. (Surah 16:44)

As a final dispenser of the Message of Allah, the Prophet alone is best fitted and, therefore, divinely authorized to determine the meanings of the Holy Qur'an, to unfold before humanity the deep wisdom contained in it, and then, on the basis of his wisdom, to purify the souls of the people and elevate them to the highest pinnacle of morality and God-consciousness:...

It is by following Muhammad (may peace be upon him) that we can achieve the cherished goal of winning Allah's favour.

The question arises: Did the Holy Prophet (may peace be upon him) utter not a word besides what was revealed to him by the Lord in the form of the Qur'an? The answer obviously is: No. He did also explain the contents of the Divine revelations. He gave practical demonstration of their significance by leading his life according to them, and was thus instrumental in moulding the lives of his Companions after his own pattern of life. He did all this, of course, under Divine inspiration.

Sahih Muslim Vol. 1, pp. 1-2, Commentary

The practical outworking of this is reflected in the Qur'an:



O ye who believe! Enter not the Prophet's houses until leave [= permission] is given you - for a meal, (and then) not (so early as) to wait for its preparation: but when ye are invited, enter. And when ye have taken your meal, disperse, without seeking familiar talk. Such (behaviour) annoys the Prophet: he is ashamed to dismiss you, but Allah is not ashamed (to tell you) the truth. And when ye ask (his ladies) for anything ye want, ask them from before a screen: that makes for greater purity for your hearts and for theirs.

Nor is it right for you that ye should annoy Allah's Apostle, or that ye should marry his widows after him at any time.

Those who annoy Allah and His Apostle - Allah has cursed them in this world and in the Hereafter, and has prepared for them a humiliating Punishment.

It is not fitting for a Believer, man or woman, when a matter has been decided by Allah and His Apostle, to have any option about their decision. If anyone disobeys Allah and His Apostle, he is indeed on a clearly wrong Path.

We have made lawful to thee any believing woman who dedicates her soul to the Prophet if the Prophet wishes to wed her - this only for thee, and not for the Believers (at large). We know what We have appointed for them as to their wives and the captives whom their right hands possess - in order that there should be no difficulty for thee. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. Thou mayest defer (the turn of) any of them that thou pleasest, and thou mayest receive any thou pleasest: and there is no blame on thee if thou invite one whose (turn) thou hast set aside.

Surah 33:53, 57, 36, 50-51

2.3.17 The Final Episode of the Life of Muhammad

The life of Muhammad can be divided into three distinct parts:

1. Childhood, youth, early married life, up to his calling (AD 570-609)
2. Prophethood and witness during the time in Mecca (AD 610-622)
3. Life in Medina until his death (AD 623-633)

Even if we question his divine calling, we find the life style in the first two sections of his life quite acceptable. His humility and seeming sincerity, his marriage with Khadijah, his concern for widows and orphans, and his devotion to Allah, all leave a favourable impression.

However, the last part of his life seems to be in stark contrast to the time before the 'Hijrah'. Although loved by his immediate followers, he became a dictator who knew how to eliminate any resistance to his demands. The 'Ridda', the rebellion and apostasy of many after Muhammad's death, strongly supports the fact that he was not just followed voluntarily. The man of peace became a man of war. The man devoted to one wife became a polygamist. The man, who humbly endured persecution, became a persecutor.

When scrutinizing the part of the Qur'an, which was 'received' before the 'Hijrah' in Mecca, we find much of the message psalm-like and beautiful in diction and style (though with repeated references to occult practices). The part added in Medina lacks these qualities. It is rather like a string of commands and rules, often threats, lacking the poetic charm.

Not only religion but also lust for booty (see 'Jihad') motivated his army, which increased during this time from 100 to 10 000! Towards the end of Muhammad's life he acclaimed his religion to have been 'perfected'. His power and authority were no more questioned.

In the 6th year after the Hijrah, Muhammad and his followers attempted to go to hostile Mecca to perform a pilgrimage. The Meccans, probably fearing a hidden agenda, rejected this. However, they entered into a treaty with the Muslims to allow them in the following year. The Meccans and the Muslims together drafted the famous 'Treaty of al-Hudaibiyah'. Consequently, in the 7th year after the Hijrah, an Umrah (circumambulation) was performed. This relaxed the existing tension between the Meccans and the Muslims.

The following years were filled with diplomatic activities. Letters demanding submission to Allah were sent to rulers far and wide, including the Emperor of Byzanz. The acceptance of the Ka'ba and the Hajj into Islam was also lessening the tension with the Meccan adherents of the pagan religion. Even the leading figure among the pagan Meccans, abu Sufyan, one of Muhammad's fathers-in-law, negotiated with him about the possible take-over of Mecca by the Muslims. Subsequently, abu Sufyan took over a leading role in the expanding Islamic Empire.

Then, in the 9th year AH, Muhammad approached Mecca with an army of 10 000. The gates opened and Mecca was taken. Islam stayed there from that time on (January, AD 630).

Two months later Muhammad performed what has been named his "Farewell Pilgrimage". In his famous speech during that occasion he said:

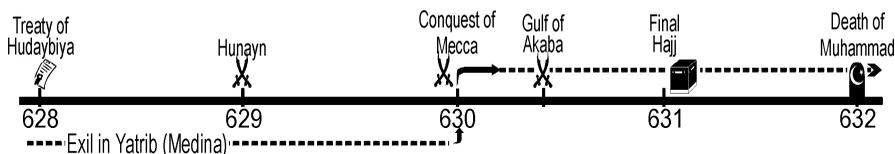


I leave with you two things; as long as you hold fast by them both, you will never be misguided - the Book of Allah and Sunnah (i.e. the model, life style, example) of His Messenger.

al-Bukhari, Vol. 2, vs. 3-4; Vol. 9, p. 284; Mishkat 1, p. 159

Around the same time the Jewish settlement of Khaibar was unexpectedly attacked and taken. One of the Jewish widows served Muhammad a poisoned, cooked kid goat. Her treachery was noticed, but somewhat late, for Muhammad suffered from the consequences of this poisoning until he died.

The final years of Muhammad's life



In AD 632 Muhammad died quite unexpectedly in Aisha's arms after a short, but severe sickness. It has been suggested that it could have resulted from the poison swallowed at Khaibar. Only one daughter, Fatima, survived him. His son Ibrahim, born by his concubine Mary, the Copt, had died shortly before him at the tender age of fifteen months. Muhammad was well loved and respected by his friends and followers. It seems that they, as he, were convinced of his calling as a Messenger of Allah.

2.3.18 An Evaluation

Anyone who chooses to follow and obey a leader will have to weigh the pros and cons before making a decision about the consequences. The possible risks involved must be considered. When truth and eternal life are part of such an allegiance, it is incumbent to be all the more circumspect. When we are told to follow in the footsteps and live according to the guidance of a “spiritual leader”, our confidence must not rest on emotions, but first and foremost on observed behaviour.

That includes a scrutiny of the quality of the life of such a leader. One should not turn a deaf ear to negative reports, provided they are substantiated. One should also be careful not explain away visible flaws. But most of all one must have a reliable standard by which to measure right and wrong, good and evil. As Christians we use the standard that is found in Jesus Christ. Our concept of what is moral and what not, is determined by Scripture.

In the light of what has been presented above - even if the presentation were to be considered somewhat biased and unfair and the positive side of Muhammad not stressed enough - we find it very hard, indeed impossible - to accept Muhammad as what he claims to be, namely the final prophet of God.

Recommended Literature for Chapter 2

- The Life of Muhammad, *Sir William Muir, AMS Press, New York, 1923, 550 pages. (probably the fairest and best biographical study available; a classic)*
- The Life of Muhammad (Siratu'l Nabi), *Ibn Ishaq, Oxford University Press 1978, 800 pages. (a biography collated and written by a man born about 50 years after the death of Muhammad)*
- The Life of Muhammad, *Ibn Hisham, Vol.1 + 2, Light of Life, 1997, 217 pages. (as above, but revised and expanded by Abd al-Masih)*
- Muhammad at Mecca, *W. Montgomery Watt, Oxford University Press 1953, 190 pages.*
- Muhammad at Medina, *W. Montgomery Watt, Oxford University Press 1956, 415 pages.*
- Christians ask Muslims, *Gerhard Nehls, LCA 1992, 140 pages. (deals in detail with the collection of the Qur'an, its sources and the tradition in connection*

with Muhammad's life and evaluates some basic teachings in Islam, such as Predestination, the Role of Women and the Sunnah principle. (pp. 66-88, 108-123)

- The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment, *Richard Bell, Frank Cass & Co, 1968, 220 pages.*
- Christianity Among Arabs in Pre-Islamic Times, *J. Spencer Trimmingham, Librairie du Liban, 1990, 340 pages.*
- Holy War in Islam, *Abd Al-Masih, Light of Life, 71 pages.*
- Ishmael, my Brother, *compiled by Anne Cooper, MARC, Evangelical Missionary Alliance, 1993, pp. 98-112.*
- Muhammad, The Prophet of Islam, *John Gilchrist, MERCSA, 1994, 142 pages. (endeavours to evaluate Muhammad objectively with the purpose of getting as close to the original as possible. In addition to a biographical record there are chapters analysing his personality, his prophetic experience and his image in popular Islam.)*
- Textbook of Islam Vol 1+2, *M.A. Quraishy, 1989, The Islamic Foundation, Kenya. (this widely accepted Islamic textbook presents Islam in a rather idealistic manner. Students are taught about early Islam, teachings and practices, Islamic theology and philosophy and some famous Muslims. Even though we may not accept everything presented here we recommend it to discover the Muslim perception about their religion. (Textbook I, pp. 1-82)*
- The Great Deception, How Muhammad tried to win the Christians for Islam, *Abd Al-Masih, Light of Life, 1995, 179 pages. (this exegesis of Surah 3:33-66 documents Muhammad's encounter with a Christian delegation and how he argued to win them for Islam without compromising his authority. Muslim attitudes towards Christians are still affected by this approach)*
- *Handout: A Comparison between Muhammad and Jesus, LCA.*

3 History-makers Shaping Nations

3.1 The Khalifs (Khalifahs)

The early history of Islam after the death of Muhammad is one of successful wars and victories on the one hand, but hatred, dissension, jealousy, intrigue and deceit on the other. After the demise of Muhammad, the inner circle of the ‘Sahaba’, his closest associates, were unprepared for this new situation. A successor was needed to avoid the collapse of the new religious theocracy, which as yet had no Scripture, law or other formulated constitution. Since Muhammad was viewed to be unique in his office as a Messenger of Allah, a ‘Khalif’, a successor, would have to fill another position. It was to be a ‘Commander of the Faithful’. There were three possible successors: Ali, who was a nephew of Muhammad and his son-in-law, being the only blood relative, was one option, and Abu Bakr and Umar, the closest companions of Muhammad, who were also his fathers-in-law, were the others.

Ali seems to have coveted this office, but after some internal manipulation Abu Bakr (10-12 AH; AD 632-634) was appointed first Khalif, but he died after only two years of reign. He was predictably succeeded by Umar (12-22 AH; AD 634-644), who was assassinated by an Iraqi slave while at prayer in the mosque. He was probably the most gifted and respected of the early Khalifs, and under his leadership the Arab Empire grew vastly. Uthman (22-34 AH; AD 644-656) took over the leadership from Umar in the face of much internal opposition. By trying to unify the disparate components of the Empire, which was made up of independence-loving Arabs, he fell into disfavour, particularly for his revision of the Qur’an (see chapter ‘The Revision of the Qur’an) and was assassinated in a gruesome fashion. He was not even allowed to be buried in the Muslim cemetery. His wife, with some of his friends, buried him by night in the Jewish cemetery without the ritual washings, amidst the curses of Muslims, who pelted

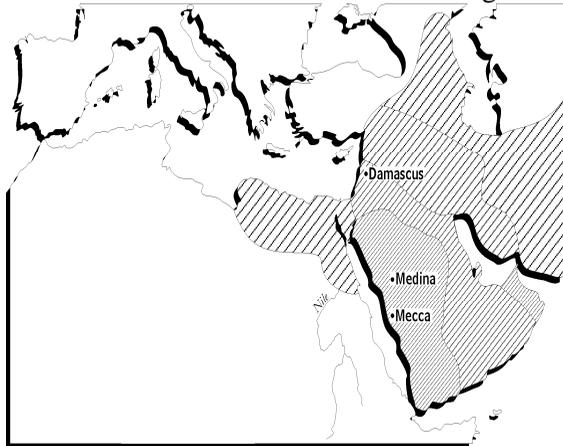
Muhammad’s successors

Abu Bakr	AD 632 – 634
Umar	AD 634 – 644
Uthman	AD 644 – 656
Ali	AD 656 – 661

stones at them. Khalif Ali was the last of the so-called 'four rightly guided' Khalifs.

Soon after the news of Muhammad's death had made the rounds, a falling away from Islam began. It is called the 'Ridda'. Several other 'prophets' contested Islam and its new leaders. It was one of the first tasks of the Khalifs to regain control.

Then two men, Talha and al-Zubair, with the support of Aisha, rebelled against Ali. The resulting 'Battle of the Camel' saw 10 000 Muslims slaughtered. Ali and his troops won, but soon faced another contender, Mu'awiya, the Governor of Syria, who accused him, as did Aisha, of complicity in the assassination of Uthman. Another battle resulted again in tremendous loss of life and ended without a decisive victory. Mu'awiya and Ali agreed to appoint arbiters and to abide by their suggested solution. This strongly undermined the authority of Ali, who eventually was assassinated by one of his disillusioned followers.



3.1.1 The Early Expansion of Islam

The Byzantine Empire was defeated by the Muslim army at the Battle of Yarmuk in AD 636, Jerusalem was taken in AD 638, the Persian Empire was defeated at Nihavand in AD 641, and in Alexandria (North Africa) in AD 640-641. All this happened within 9 years of the death of Muhammad.

Superior military techniques, the use of horses and camels, the incentive of booty, and finally the superior motivation and enthusiasm of an up-coming Arab nation, made the victories over decadent systems of ailing nations inevitable.

In the beginning Islam was considered to be a kind of Jewish-Christian sect. The Copts of North Africa regarded the Muslims as liberators from the yoke of Byzantine, and they aided the Muslims in waging their war.

Under the early Khalifs, Mecca and Medina were the most important centers. Under Mu'awiya, the founder of the so-called Ummayyad Dynasty, the center of the Islamic Empire was shifted from Medina to Damascus. Soon this expanded as far as India, the Southern states of the former Soviet Union and as far as the Chinese border, Spain and even Southern France. At the Battle of Tours and Poitiers (AD 732) the Franks under the leadership of Charles Martel turned the tide and the Muslim forces had to withdraw to behind the Pyrenees, a mountain range separating France from Spain.

Freedom of religion' was granted to Jews and Christians by the Muslim conquerors, but conversions from Christianity and Judaism to Islam were allowed and encouraged. Conversions from Islam to Christianity, however, were subject to the death penalty. A Muslim who testified to his faith in Christ as saviour would at once become guilty of apostasy ('irtidad'), the unforgivable sin in Islam, and would thus be liable to the death penalty. This law for apostates is still in force, although it is not really practiced in

Islamic Dynasties			
Name	Era	Capital	Significance
Ummayyad	660 – 750	Damascus	'Golden Age' era
Abbasid	750 – 1258	Baghdad	Crusades interlude
Ottoman	1300 – 1918	Istanbul	Decline of power

most Islamic countries today. In the conquered territories the Arabic language usually became the official medium of communication. Only Turkey and Persia resisted this policy of Arabisation successfully.

The significance of Persia turning to Islam was that a mature culture, which could well be considered superior to contemporary European culture and science, was incorporated into Islam. Under Islam, during the Middle Ages, philosophy (a revival of Greek philosophy), the sciences, particularly medicine, mathematics and astronomy, all reached great heights. Names like al-Kindi, al-Arabi, Avicenna (Ibn-Sina) and Averroes (ibn-Rashid) earned fame far beyond their Muslim homelands. The Arabs became in

more than one way the mentors of Europe in its “Dark Ages.” Muslims understood how to preserve and revive the cultural heritage of subject nations and successfully synthesized a new Islamic culture.

During this dispensation, some 3 200 churches were destroyed or converted into mosques in the Middle East. The population, initially 90% Christian, eventually became largely Muslim. It seems that social and economic advantages were the main incentives for their conversion. Biased by tradition as we are, it is perhaps difficult for us to accept that conversions from Christianity to Islam did not generally happen by physical force. The Coptic, Syrian and Orthodox churches were allowed to practice their religion, but were forbidden to conduct any missionary activities among Muslims.

3.2 The Dynasties

3.2.1 The Umayyad Dynasty

After the death of Ali, Al-Hassan, the older son of Ali, became Khalif (41 AH). Since his lifestyle was beyond his means, he sold his Khalifat to Mu’awiya under the condition that it would be returned to him after Mu’awiya’s death. It has been recorded that Hassan went through 100 divorces, in spite of the fact that he entertained a Harem. Mu’awiya accepted the condition, but appointed his son Yazid as his successor, who had Hassan poisoned by the hand of one of his wives. The condition was that Yazid would marry her in exchange, which he however refused to do.

To correct this act of treason, Ali’s second son, Hussein, was appointed counter-Khalif by the Iraqis, but then killed by Yazid’s troops at Kerbela (about 100km south of Baghdad).

This caused a split in Islam. Those who sided with Ali and his sons, whom they declared the only legitimate Khalifs, because of their blood-relationship to Muhammad, are now known as the Shi’ah (= ‘followers’) Muslims. The much bigger group of Muslims (today about 80%) are known as Sunni (= ‘followers of the Sunnah¹³) Muslims.

¹³ Sunnat or Sunnah = copying of the lifestyle of Muhammad

The assassination of Hussein is still remembered annually in a Memorial Day among the Shi'ah Muslims. The Shi'ah venerate twelve Khalifs, beginning with Ali and ending with a Mohammed, or 'Imam al-Mahdi'. According to Shi'ah belief, he still lives (since AD 873) in obscurity to reappear in the last days as the Mahdi, foretold by Muhammad to come before judgement day.

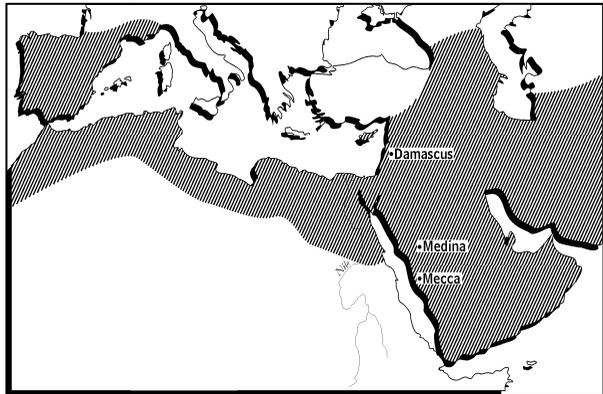
By now a hereditary Khalifat had been established. The Ummayyad Dynasty ruled the Islamic Empire from Damascus for 90 years to AD 749, when all the Ummayyad family were murdered, excepting Abd-ar-Rahman, who fled to Spain and founded an independent Ummayyad Dynasty there.

By AD 711 Islam had spread all over North Africa and Spain, and in 717-718 it began to overrun France.

Already at this early stage there was a decrease in piety. Luxurious palaces were built, and it is said of the Khalifs Yazid I and II, that they were 'passionate friends of sport, music and lady singers'. A general spiritual and moral decline had begun.

3.2.2 The Abbaside Dynasty

The Abbaside Dynasty succeeded the Ummayyad Dynasty, and lasted from 750 to 1258. Abdul Abbas, a descendant of an uncle of Muhammad, became Khalif in Kufa after the last Ummayyad Khalif, Marwan, had been defeated.



Under the Abbaside rule, the dominance of the Quraish (the tribe of Muhammad) was terminated. Baghdad became the new capital of Islam. The Khalifs, and later the Sultans, were autocratic rulers. Baghdad, initially a small village, was built by forced labour into a great city, with palaces,

mosques and impressive government buildings. The Persian tradition of court ceremony was adopted. After his death, Abdul Abbas was succeeded by his brother, and he, in turn, by his sons, al-Mahdi and al-Hadi, and thereafter by the famous Harun-al-Rashid (AD 786). Under these rulers the greatest heights of power, economy and culture were experienced. Then a decline set in, which eventually led to the total destruction of this empire under Dhingis Khan in the 13th century.

The Sunni Saljuk Turks from central Asia were a threat to the Abbaside Empire and were rapidly gaining power and control over Persia, Iraq, Syria, and Palestine. As early as the years 1071 - 1076 Seljuk Turks had conquered Armenia, Byzantium and the whole of Asia Minor, where their descendants still live.

The Crusades

In 1009 al-Hakim, who was a Fatimid Khalif of Egypt, ordered many churches to be destroyed, among them the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, which was then under his rule. Christians in general and pilgrims in particular, including Jews, were molested and subjected to humiliating treatment.

This triggered the first Crusade in 1095. By 1097, some 50,000 men, mostly Franks and Normans, assembled at Constantinople and from there marched through Asia Minor - now called Turkey - to the 'Holy Land'. The Crusades continued, sometimes more, sometimes less extensively, for a period just short of 200 years.

When the 'Saracens', the Muslims, committed the atrocities against Christian pilgrims, Pope Urban II proclaimed the first Crusade in 1095. Great riches were promised to those who would survive, and plenary absolution, a direct pass to heaven, should they die, was the incentive to go on a Crusade. This does not sound unlike the promises made to Muslim suicide bombers these days, but it was not backed by biblical promises.

After first conquering Antioch, the Crusaders pressed on to conquer Jerusalem, which was accomplished in 1099. As customary in those times, unbelievable atrocities were committed. When a town called Ma'arrat Nu'man was conquered, over 100,000 people were killed and the town

burnt to the ground. Jerusalem fared little better. 65,000 - 70,000 were slaughtered at the al-Aqsa mosque.



Heaps of heads and hands and feet were to be seen throughout the streets and squares of the City.

Agiles p. 259 according to 'History of the Arabs' by P. K. Hitti

Not much Islamic territory was conquered though. The knights were satisfied to secure the 'holy places' and fortified places along the Mediterranean coast for their defence. In real terms the Crusaders were hardly more than a nuisance to the Muslims.

The Crusades

Sequence	Duration	Significance
1.	1096 – 1099	Pope Urban II
2.	1147 – 1149	Pope Eugene III
3.	1189 – 1191	Pope Gregory VIII (Saladin)
4.	1202 – 1204	Pope Innocent III (Constantinople)
5.	1228 – 1229	Kaiser Frederic II
6.	1248 – 1254/70	King Louis IX
7.	1291	Fall of Acre

It needs to be said that the Muslims at that time devoted more efforts to peacetime activities than to war, even establishing friendly relations between Muslims and the Crusaders during the 200 years of their presence.

At that time a young Kurdish man who had advanced to leadership in Egypt, helped overthrow the Fatimid dynasty. He became a powerful leader who united under his rule Egypt and the Northern Arab lands. His name was Salah-al-Din, better known as Saladin. He reconquered Jerusalem and many of the coastal fortifications from the Crusaders (1187 - 1189), and proved to be a man of stature. This sparked off another Crusade, which was led by Frederick Barbarossa, who drowned en route in 1190.

After the death of Saladin the country was divided among his mediocre leaders, who lost Jerusalem again (1229), but jealousy and dissention among the Crusaders eroded their strength and unity. In 1244 Jerusalem fell again to the Muslims, this time for good. The deathblow to the Crusaders was given by al-Malik al-Zahir Baybars, a Mamluke (also a Turkish people group) who previously had stopped the Mongols from conquering the Middle East. He destroyed the venerated Church of Nativity in Nazareth. Caesarea capitulated under the condition that its 2,000 knights would be spared. Despite the Muslims' promise, they were all executed. When Antioch fell to the Muslims, 16,000 Christians were slaughtered and 100,000 are recorded as being sold as slaves.

A senseless venture, costing hundreds of thousands of lives, and inflicting untold misery to millions, all in the name of religion, and under the symbol of the cross, had ended. Had these lives been invested in evangelizing the Muslims, the world would look different today.

We know of only one or two men, who seem to have chosen a different course: Francis of Assisi and, somewhat later, Raymond Lull (1232 – 1315). We are told that during the Crusades, Francis crossed the enemy lines and was led on his request to the Sultan of Cairo, al-Kamil, a nephew of Saladin. Francis witnessed to him about Christ for a considerable time, and apparently the Sultan listened well to the Gospel, without embracing it, however. Al-Kamil then offered Francis a large amount of money to aid his efforts, which he declined before returning to the Crusaders.

The Crusades not only failed, but also left a legacy of bitter enmity between Muslims and Christians, still felt today. This era is a very sensitive chapter in the relationship between Muslims and Christians.

Obviously, the Crusades were and are variously interpreted. Present-day Christians feel deeply about them and condemn them as completely against the spirit of Christ, and surely not without reason. However, one has to consider the contemporary worldview and situation and the initial provocation in order to form a balanced opinion¹⁴.

¹⁴ See "Islam In Conflict" by Peter Riddell & Peter Cotterell, 2003, pp. 95-102, for more details

3.2.3 Medieval Islamic Expansion

At the beginning of the Crusades the 'House of Islam' had expanded to the East beyond the Indus River deep into India, and North into Central Asia, particularly east of the Caspian Sea. In the West, it was established all along North Africa and in Spain. Asia Minor had been the most recent acquisition of the Muslims.

All these areas were gained by armed conquest. Many were traditionally 'Christian' countries, e.g. Spain, North Africa, Asia Minor and Northern and Southern Arabia.

3.2.4 The Ottoman Empire

Emir Osman I founded the Ottoman Empire in 1301. After the massacre of the last Abbaside Khalif and all his relatives, Turks from near the Caspian Sea began to build a new Islamic Empire on the ruins of the declining Byzantine Empire. The new Sultans assumed the Khalifat and eventually controlled almost the whole of North Africa, the Near East and the Balkans. India was overrun and the Mogul Empire founded there. Also a peaceful penetration of the East Indies (Indonesia and Malaysia) and the Southern part of the Philippines took place, bringing Islam to these countries.

In 1453 Constantinople, formerly Byzantium (now Istanbul), fell to the Muslims. In 1529 the Turks (Muslims) besieged Vienna, the very gateway to central Europe. The military power rested on the strong armies of the autocratic Sultans. The core of these consisted of the Janissaries (every fifth Christian boy child had to be given to the Islamic state to be trained as fanatical Muslim soldiers), and 20 000 Russian and African slaves. ("DTV Atlas Zur Weltgeschichte", p. 209)

Heavy taxes supplied the necessary finance for such an army. Nevertheless, decline set in as a result of corruption, revolts and schisms (Persia and the Balkan states regained their independence; Egypt fell under Napoleons domination etc.). The Ottoman Empire disintegrated at the end of World War I, in which the Ottoman Empire fought as an ally to Germany and the Austria-Hungarian Empire.

3.2.4.1 The Colonial Era

In the Middle Ages the sciences and arts flourished in Muslim countries, especially in Spain. However with the advent of the Turk invasion from Central Asia, there was a marked deterioration of civilization. The 'Christian' West overtook the Islamic East in the scientific fields and Muslim lands became increasingly irrelevant, also politically.

The Colonial era in the Middle East began with the expansion of the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire. At its height (1550), it ruled practically the whole of North Africa excluding Marocco and Algeria, the Western part of the Arabian Peninsula including Mecca and Medina, the whole of Palestine and what is now Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, the western part of Iran and, of course, Turkey. In addition it included the Balkans. Parts of Russia, including Crimea, were annexed.

Early in the 19th Century Napoleon conquered Egypt and briefly controlled it. This proved to be a blessing in disguise, for it led to the opening of Egypt to contact with the West, and marked the introduction of printing to the Arab world. It also marked the beginning of the modern education system there. Parallel to Egypt, the Lebanese part of the Ottoman Empire opened its borders to Western influence, since the majority of the population was Maronite-Catholic.

British, French, Dutch and Portuguese and to a lesser degree also German colonial efforts brought the Middle East, India, which then included Pakistan and Bangladesh, South-East Asia and Africa, under their respective control. At the end of World War I (1918), the Ottoman Empire broke up to form new countries, which were established under the League of Nations.

Colonialism proved to be a humiliating experience, which created resentment and left a bitter taste with these now independent states. Foreign rule always affects a nation's pride, particularly when the rulers belong to a different faith. Colonialism was no invention by the European powers, though. Muslims were colonialists long before them. One will hardly ever hear or read comments on the Ottoman (Turkish) imperialism, which lasted some 400 years until 1918. The colonization of Muslims by 'Christians' was quite an affront to the self-worth of these peoples and consequently

effected an aversion toward the religion of the foreign rulers, something that is still evident today. Many interpreted this as an indication of the superiority of Christianity over Islam.

3.2.5 Islam In The Modern Age

The independence of the Middle Eastern countries roughly coincided with the discovery of oil in some of these. The resulting wealth led to very considerable economic power and influence. It is understandable that this, almost immediately, led to a re-awakening of religious consciousness. Muslims now experience the removal of the domination of foreign powers with their foreign religion as a victory. In addition, the new wealth, and with that status, is seen as a confirmation of Allah's presence and superiority after all. Eventually this led to the Iranian revolution and the resurgence of the Islam of today. However this new wealth proves to be a mixed blessing. Islamic communities are experiencing the influx of Western technology, Western morals and values which are being imported into their countries. TV and the Internet open up formerly closed countries. Islam's response to the impact of modernity will be a crucial issue in its future. The fundamentalists' struggle and militancy are quite obviously, at least partially, a negative response and directed at the Western system of thought, which by many is perceived to be Christian.

3.2.5.1 The History Of Islam In Africa

We cannot close our eyes to the fact that the impact of Islam is no longer restricted to the Arab-speaking countries north of the Sahara, but its weight is also greatly felt in the 47 countries of West-, Central-, East- and Southern Africa. To be more precise: there are more Muslims living in the sub-Saharan region (about 180 Million in 2002) than in the traditional Islamic states of North-Africa (about 130 Million). How and when did this happen? Has the prophet from the desert won the hearts of Black Africans as much as the people of the Arab-speaking world?

Since its earliest days (even before AD 622) Muslim believers have made Africa their home. The first 150 followers of Muhammad came as refugees who were welcomed by the ruler of Abyssinia (Ethiopia).

“Islam reached Africa through two gateways, from East and the North. From both directions the carriers of Islam navigated across vast empty spaces, the waters of the Indian Ocean, and the desert sands of the Sahara.” (Levtzion and Pouwels: 1)

Conquest by force was by no means the only method of building a power base on the vast African continent. Other factors that contributed considerably to the spread of Islam were trading enterprises, including the infamous slave raiding in Eastern and Central Africa, and forced and free migration to and from the Arabian Peninsula, the Indian subcontinent and the Far East (Malays to the Cape of Good Hope in the late 17th century). Conversion to Islam also came about through the influence of powerful Sufi leaders (especially in West Africa), or the persuasion of African chiefs and kings to embrace the new religion and thus transforming their states into an Islamic community.

Trimingham points out seven major Islamic Culture Areas in Africa that were established over the Centuries: Egypt, the Maghrib (Western wing of North Africa), Western, Central, Eastern (Sudan, Ethiopia) Africa, the Horn of Africa (Somalia) and Swahili (East African Coast ruled from Zanzibar island). In all of these areas Islam played the dominating role or represented significant minorities, influencing the progress of the people in these areas.

The spread of Islam was, however, not accomplished by a steadily growing impact, but rather in periodic waves, at times perhaps rather bursts, setting free the explosive energy of an ‘Islamic volcano’.

Islam has vowed to make Africa the first Islamic continent and few would dare to keep their eyes closed to the undeniable advances made by Muslims to accomplish that goal. Christians in every country need to come to terms with the Islamic challenge and determine for themselves what answers and provision God has given them to share the risen Jesus Christ with the followers of Islam. If census figures are to be trusted, Ghana seems to set an example, where the Muslim population decreased by 25% during the last decade.

3.3 The Changing Face Of Islam

3.3.1 The Socio-Economic Leap

The economic systems of all Muslim nations are presently undergoing changes both in form and content. Even in countries like Saudi Arabia, this socio-economic leap is visibly experienced. The process of secularization and the material prosperity, which resulted from the oil revenue, are a powerful influence. Secular education, technological advancement, urbanization with the resulting loss of identity, modernization as well as vocational success and wealth mould the minds and lives of many Muslim people everywhere. It can hardly be predicted where this will lead. Fear of the Islam of tomorrow causes religious leaders to struggle with the issue of a Muslim identity, particularly in countries where Muslims are exposed to a Western value system.

Western goods including luxury items are invading the markets and are advertised in TV commercials. Material prosperity promises not only comfort, but also means success, and success means power and self-confidence. The pull of all this is very strong for any group and also for Muslims.

Of interest is the footnote to a Hadith about ‘the present English-educated Muslims’:



Muslims are now following the Christians and Jews step by step in dress, manners, eating, talking and in every particulars. The influence of these two nations (sic) have caught the imagination of the upper-class Muslims so much so that even Arabia, the cradle of Islam, could not but be a prey to these tendencies.

Mishkat Vol. 1, p. 170, Fn. 106

Forces of change are present all over the world. Islam grapples with the impact of changes on its religious structure and its practice. Christianity had to face ‘modernity’, which challenged the Bible as Scripture, questioned the historicity of the Bible and its sources, and was able to convince many nominal Christians that faith in the truth of Scripture is an outmoded belief. Islam is facing these forces now.

3.3.2 Modernity

So far Islam has vehemently and relatively successfully resisted the forces of modernity and its attempt to secularize religion. It did not permit text-critical work on the Qur'an or the Hadith. Unlike the biblical texts, the Islamic scriptures will be doomed by a text-critical analysis. But with the essential opening of the Islamic markets and society to the Western world with its information explosion, Muslims will not escape the exposure of their scripture's multiple deficiencies. Fear of that process may delay, but cannot stop a critical assessment of Islam even from among their own members.

3.3.3 Fundamentalism

The strongest resistance against progress comes from the orthodox and 'fundamentalist' lobbies. To stress the maintenance of traditional forms is one attempt to ward off 'outside' influences. Any innovation (bid'aa) or change will be seen as a threat to the established rule of the Shariah. Will orthodox Islam with the majority of rural Muslims who are part of the traditional hierarchy and structure be able to maintain the status quo?

Unwillingness to succumb to a world that is constantly changing will yield one of two reactions. The West is viewed by many Muslims as utterly corrupt and by that the greatest moral opponent to Islam. Its advances must be stopped at any cost. Many Muslims have been persuaded to fight what seems to them to be threatening progress, if considered necessary by force. A multitude of Islamic Jihad groupings do that. They are called 'fundamentalists' or 'Islamists'.

3.3.4 Liberal Muslims

Many Muslims begin to rebel at least inwardly against demands of the Shariah to conform to its often medieval concepts. Others, like many in Iran and Afghanistan, are so shocked about a repressive expression of their faith, that they reject allegiance to such a backward religion altogether. Many a Muslim in recent decades has encountered tremendous confusion and bitter disappointments with his religious institutions, and their leaders.

3.3.5 The Other Option

With such disappointments, fears and confusion in their hearts and minds a number of Muslims have independently begun to search for the meaning and purpose of life. Actually several factors need to be considered as one reflects on what causes Muslims to turn from Islam to Christ (see ‘Called from Islam to Christ’, by Jean-Marie Gaudeul) Dr Gaudeul investigated hundreds of conversions from Islam to the Christian faith. He grouped these under five headings:

- *Those who feel drawn by Jesus’ personality*
- *Those looking for inner certainty*
- *Those who discover a community of believers in Christian churches*
- *Those who seek forgiveness and are drawn to the central message of the Gospel*
- *Those who hunger for a personal experience of God in prayer*

Dr. Malek adds his own observation: “Muslims themselves are looking at things in new ways. People who once clung to long-lasting traditions now have different attitudes...The face of Islam is indeed changing. Christians need to understand what is happening and what positive benefits it can have for Christian witness.” (‘Islam – Introduction and Approach’, by ICI)

3.4 The Sects within Islam

Anyone studying the history of Islam will soon become disillusioned about the much-acclaimed unity within Islam. As we have seen earlier it did not take long before Muslims took up arms against each other, slaughtering their opponents in the name of Allah. In one such battle (the Battle of Siffin), hard-pressed Muslim soldiers on the one side decided to stick pages of the Qur'an to the points of their swords hoping to overcome their opposing brothers. It actually worked, for who would dare to fight against ‘the very word of Allah’! Today we find many groupings, and even within the members of individual mosques we may find strong controversies and each other opposing factions.

It is noteworthy that already Muhammad seems to have anticipated the break-up of his followers into sects. A Hadith states:



If the people of Isra'il were fragmented into seventy-two sects my Ummah will be fragmented into seventy-three sects. All of them will be in Hell Fire except one sect. They (the Companions) said: Allah's Messenger, which is that? Whereupon he said: It is one to which I and my companions belong.

Tirmizi, Hadith 171



The number has, however, far exceeded the Prophet's predictions, for the sects of Islam even exceed in number and variety those of the Christian religion. In order to fulfil the prophecies of Muhammad, the Ghyasu'l-Lughat divides the 73 into six groups of twelve sects (= 72) and adds a number 73, the 'najiya' (those being saved), i.e. the Sunnis.

Dictionary of Islam, pp. 567-569

Many attempts have been made to list these 72 sects with very different results. None but the latest, however, mentions the Ahmediyas, the Babists and Bahais. Admittedly most of these sects have relatively minor theological differences, but so too have most of the Christian denominations. A brief look into some of these sects will suffice.

3.4.1 The Sunnis

This Arabic word means: "One of the Path", those who follow the Sunnah. These are Muslims who acknowledge the first four Khalifs to have been rightful successors of Muhammad. They accept the Sihahu's Sittah, or six authentic AHadith, and belong to one of the four schools of jurisprudence (Abu Hanifa, ash-Shafi'i, Malik or Ahmad-ibn-Hanbal). They represent the overwhelming majority of the Muslim population, around 80%. Yet, as it was in the beginnings of Islam, so today we find at times bitter enmity between the 'fundamentalists' and the moderates even among the 'fundamentalists' themselves. A look at the Palestinian and wider Middle Eastern situation and Afghanistan alone demonstrates this vividly. Even within a congregation of a mosque we can find bitter disputing. Although this may not be all that unusual in a church congregation, the verbal abuse in a mosque can well exceed our imagination.

The spiritual centers of the Sunni are the al-Azar university in Cairo and the University of Medina.

3.4.2 The Shi'ah

Meaning: "Followers", i.e. of Ali

They believe in the hereditary succession of Khalifs. Consequently, they believe Ali, the nephew and son-in-law of Muhammad to have been the first rightful Khalif, and his sons (one of whom was assassinated, and the other abdicated the throne) should have succeeded him. They base this claim on Surah 2:124: "He said: 'I will make thee an Imam to the Nations'. He pleaded: 'And also (Imams) from my offspring'!"

Many of their own AHadith are quoted by the Shi'ah to support their case. According to tradition, the twelfth in the hereditary line, Imam-al-Mahdi (a kind of Messiah), is still alive and hiding to appear before judgment.

The Shi'as have again split up into many splinter groups. The Ismailis play a dominant role in East Africa. They are decidedly less fanatical than the Iranian Shi'ah Muslims, and more devoted to philanthropic work. Their spiritual leader is the Agha Khan who has become a well-respected international figure.

The center of Shiite activity is in Iran where the 'Ayatollah' (lit. 'sign of Allah') Khomeini established a new base for a Shiite Islamic missionary thrust which is felt in almost every corner of Africa today. Even in a small place like Lamu, known as 'the Mecca of East Africa' Iranian Shiite influence and finance has gained control over one of the oldest and largest mosques on the island; a power struggle that is quite typical for many parts of Africa today.

3.4.3 The Mutazilah

The name means 'Separatists'. This was a very powerful theological lobby dating back to the very early period of Islam, but is an extinct sect. It was founded in AD 732. The Mutazilah rejected all eternal attributes to Allah, and regarded the Qur'an as created and not eternally pre-existing, as the orthodox do. In contrast to traditional Islam, they also rejected the Islamic doctrine of predestination.

They correctly reasoned: "In that case God must be the author of evil!"

Consequently, they believed in the free will of man, and that a believer, when he commits a grievous sin and dies without repentance, is lost.

The Mutazilah maintained that His righteousness would limit the omnipotence of God and therefore restrain himself to act within his own ethical norms. Their opponents heavily criticized this point.

After approximately 100 years of sometimes severe persecution, the Mutazilah movement was suppressed.

3.4.4 The Wahhabi

Abd'ul Wahhabi was born AD 1691 and advanced to be a diligent scholar of Islam in Mecca, Basra and Baghdad. He became a reformer within Islam who rejected all occult practices like the acceptance of omens, all auguries (divination by omens), the worship at 'sacred' shrines and tombs, the smoking of intoxicating drugs, as well as the fine clothing of the wealthy. His aim was to revert Islam to its original form. Although he had a devoted following, the rulers opposed him. Asylum was granted to him by Muhammed-ibn-Sa'ud, an influential chief in Arabia. Wahhabi was determined in the pursuance of his aims, and let the sword do what could not be accomplished by eloquence. Sa'ud married Wahhabi's daughter, and their son, Abd-ul-Aziz, led the Wahhabi army to victory over Arabia. However, he was murdered while praying, and his son, also named Sa'ud, continued to lead the Wahhabi movement to prominence, threatening the whole Turkish Empire. His aim was the conversion of the whole world to Islam. The battle cry of the Wahhabi was "Kill and strangle all infidels, who add companions to Allah". This, no doubt, included Jesus.

In the early 19th Century Mecca the Wahhabi in undertook a forceful reform. Whips were used to drive the people to the mosques to attend the five daily prayers. But Sa'ud's son was taken prisoner by the Turks and executed in Istanbul. Even so, the Wahhabi influence is still strong, not only in Arabia and Northern India, but even worldwide.

3.4.5 The Ahmadiyya

The Ahmadiyya are a sectarian group founded by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1865-1908 in the Punjab, then India), who claimed to have been called as

a prophet. The Ahmadiyyas differ from the teachings of traditional Islam, in that they do not believe in miracles. While the Qur'an denies the Crucifixion of Jesus, Mirza Ahmad said, that Christ was actually on the cross, but was taken down unconscious, but alive, nursed to full health and then migrated to Srinagar in Kashmir, where he died in old age. His supposed grave there is on display. Ahmad claimed to be the expected Mahdi or Messiah, "the one expected by all nations in whom the return of Christ is symbolized." His followers call him Khalifa. They are very missionary-minded, have a more intellectual approach than their Sunni counterparts and make extensive use of literature. Consequently they have pursued the translation of the Qur'an into various African languages even before the Sunnis ever permitted such translations. In an attempt to make Islam palatable to modern man, they appear to be open minded and offer socialism as an Islamic tenet, 'an economic principle already practiced for 1 300 years'. Monogamy is also advocated. Ahmadiyyas are totally rejected by the rest of the Muslim world as sectarians and not considered to be part of Islam.

3.4.6 The Bahai

This movement was founded by Mirza Hussein-ali-Nuri (1817-1892). He came from Persia and called himself the "Shrine of God." In his book "Kitab-al-akdas" he even attains the title "a Radiation from God." Claiming his teaching to be universal, he promoted mutual love and good works to introduce a universal language and religion. He proclaimed himself to be the returning Christ, the reincarnation of Krishna, the fifth Buddha and the embodiment of Hussein, the son of Ali. He died after twenty-eight years of imprisonment. ("Der Islam" by Kellerhals, pp. 119+120). Bahai is an accommodating, universalistic and strongly occult sect with a relatively small following. Obviously, Islam does not recognize it as part of its religion.

3.4.7 The Tabligh Movement

This is a recent addition to the Sufi movement and has gained worldwide significance. It calls itself the 'jamiyah tabligh'. It originates from and is well established in India, but developed several beachheads on the African

continent. The meaning of 'tabligh' is 'propaganda, particularly of the religious sort' (B. Jones) or the 'endeavour for the revival and regeneration of faith' (S. Nadwi). The founder Maulana Mohammad Ilyas (1885-1944) claimed to present "a living force in almost every country where Muslims live, thus attracting millions of souls to its revolutionary program for total rejection of all accretions and innovations; inculcating a living awareness of God for leading a simple, unostentatious and truly Islamic way of life." (Nadwi)

A summary of the life-story of its founder and his ideals will throw some light on the characteristics of this movement. Mohammad Ilyas was born as the third son into a very religious family of Maulanas ('learned man', Muslim doctor of law) and spent much of his childhood with his father at the Sufi holy shrine of Nizam-ud-din in Delhi, India. Moreover his mother is highly praised to have been a woman of great learning who not only had committed the whole of the Qur'an to memory, but reportedly made it her custom to recite the Qur'an forty times during the month of Ramadaan. Apart from that practice during Ramadaan her daily routine of worship is said to have included repeating 'dhikr' (a kind of 'mantra') (such as "Allahu-akbar" or "Bismillah ar-rahman, ar-rahim") over 17,500 times daily! The boy's childhood was soon occupied with memorizing the Qur'an for himself and to follow the example and instructions of several Sufi mentors in India until he moved back to Nizamuddin to become Maulana in his own right. His first mission was to a low-class farming community at the outskirts of Delhi where at great personal cost he initiated hundreds of religious schools for this partly Hindu, partly Islamic community. But it was not before he returned from his second pilgrimage to Mecca at age 40 that he called upon others to support him in extensive tabligh tours preaching and propagating the basic tenets of Islam, like kalima (creed) and namaaz (ritual prayer). Muslim believers who responded to the call immediately were drawn into Jama'ats (congregations) who in turn were urged to set out on tabligh efforts to other towns and villages. This tabligh ideal became the all-consuming purpose of his life, often knocking at the doors of mosques until he received a favourable response to his appeal. He was always prepared to give himself fully to his cause, no matter the cost. "I believe it would be the worst kind of sin if I showed concern for my well-being", he once resumed. And even under great physical suffering

during the last months of his life his motto was: “Apart from the pain of tabligh all is well with me”. He died at the age of 59 in July 1944 repeating time and again the words of a prayer he had taught so many during his life: “Oh Allah! Thy forgiveness is more extensive than mine iniquities and I have better hope in Thy mercy than in my deeds.” Here he reckoned with a Gospel, which Islam does not offer. One can only pray and wish that many a Christian would show such zeal in response to what Christ has done for us!

Today the tabligh movement reportedly brings together hundreds of thousand of volunteers (tablighis) from all corners of the world for mass conventions in Pakistan, which has become the heartland of the movement. Tabligh missionaries are recruited during rallies in mosques. They are challenged to commit themselves for extended periods of tabligh work in other countries. Many zealous adherents readily volunteer to give their time and resources as the writer (WE) has personally witnessed during an all-night campaign in a mosque in Cape Town, South Africa.

Tabligh teaching consists of a myriad of moral appeals. Thousands of fantastic stories about their religious heroes (the two major text-books ‘Faza’il-e-a’maal’ comprise some 2000 pages of such material) are to remind today’s Muslims of an idealized early Islam. It is therefore not surprising that many modern Muslims reject what they consider a backward and primitive propaganda, which misrepresents true Islam.

3.4.8 Sufism

This is the mystical expression of Islam. Its various groups may be pantheistic, ascetic (Fakir from Fakr = poor) and/or monastic. They all seem to have a strong hinduistic element in their teaching and practice and seem to have an affinity to the New Age perception, which they obviously preceded. Small groups of disciples form themselves around a Shaikh (guru), their spiritual leader. Motivated by fear of judgment, they seek to mortify their bodies, purify their hearts, and show a desire for secluded contemplation. Sufis try to flee from the ‘bad world’ into a union with God by way of exercises that lead to ‘experiences’, followed by direct contact and communication with Allah.

The components of Sufism are renunciation (‘holiness’ by personal effort) and ecstasy. The aim is the ‘experience’ of ‘annihilation of self in god.’

This 'experience' is partly promoted by religious techniques, such as rhythmic dancing, chanting and music (the dervishes). As Hindus use a 'mantra' - a kind of religious, secret word, which is to be repeated thousands of times - Sufis use 'dhikr' (pronounced 'zikr'), which has the same function: to induce ecstasy. Their aim is to 'see the inner light'.

Not unlike developments in the Church (Augustine, Master Eckehardt, Thomas a Kempis and others) pious Muslim believers were so appalled by the worldliness and pomp of (the Umayyad) Khalifs that they sought peace of soul in a life of seclusion. These early Islamic mystics lived as hermits a life of poverty and renunciation.

The desire for religious experiences often was and is a reaction to cold orthodoxy and legalism within Islam. The highly regarded Qur'anic scholar and philosopher, al-Ghazzali (AD 1056-1111), helped to make the Sufi movement acceptable within traditional Islam.

The name Sufism may come from the word 'suf', which was a coarse woolen cloak the Sufis wore, or perhaps from 'safu', which means purity, or perhaps from the Greek word 'sofia', meaning wisdom, or 'sufa', an Arabic tribe serving in the mosque in Mecca. In essence, Sufism always existed. We see obvious parallels to Buddhism, Hinduism, the medieval mystics of Europe, and even in the existentialism and certain 'charismatic' movements of our time.

Sufism demands complete submission to a 'guide.' Somewhat illogically even to their own perceptions, it claims that there is no difference between good and evil, all is unity, and unity is God. The 'guide' determines the will of his followers, who consequently have no responsibility of their own. The body is seen to be the cage of the soul, so a devoted Sufi longs to die. His journey begins as a searcher and then advances to a traveler. The following stages are service, love, seclusion, knowledge, ecstasy and truth, union with God and then extinction. The perfect man is one who has lost his identity. Some monastic orders in Sufism live in community of property, including their women. Others live with all types of vices, deeming the body, which is defiled, as 'only a miserable robe of humanity, which encircles the pure soul.'

Understandably many Muslims are rather negative about the influence of Sufism on the course of Islam. Dr. Isma'il al Faruqi comments:



Mysticism succeeded in reorientating the Muslims away from life, from the world, from reason and common sense, and delivered them to introspective meditation. Mysticism dulled the Muslim sense of realism and drew Muslims away from society, from their businesses, even from their families. Instead of pursuing the will of God as law, Sufism taught the Muslim to run after the dream of union with God in gnosis, or 'mystical experience'.

Islam, by Isma'il R. Al Faruqi, Argus Communications, Illinois

Having looked at the framework, we should, however, also take note of intense sincerity and devotion by many a Sufi. An instance of history may illustrate this best: Rabi'a was a Sufi mystic. She seems to be the only recognized female Sufi saint. A slave girl from Basra (died in Jerusalem AD 801), she so impressed her master by the sincerity of her ascetic mode of life that he freed her to devote her days completely to the love of God. She used to pray: "O my Lord, if I worship You from fear of hell, burn me in hell. And if I worship You from hope of paradise, exclude me from it. But if I worship You for Your own sake, then withhold not from me Your Eternal Beauty." We cannot, but admire such devotion.

Many of the early Sufis were men of remarkable wisdom, extraordinary contentment, humility and humour. Some examples may illustrate this:

A Sufi teacher was once offered by one of his followers a bag containing five hundred gold coins. "Have you any more money than this?" asked the Sufi. – "Yes, I have." – "Do you desire more?" – "Yes, I do." – "Then you must keep it, for you are more in need than I; for I have nothing and desire nothing. You have a great deal and still want more."

On a more humourous side, Hasan of Basra was once asked: "What is Islam, and who are the Muslims?" to which he simply replied: "Islam is in the books, and Muslims are in the tomb."

Yet while some Sufis were men of great learning and wisdom others were just seeking to enter a state of ecstasy aiming for the ultimate stage of extinction or 'annihilation of self in god.' The recorded prayer of a man by the name of Bayzid is typical for this mystical desire: "O God, how long will there be 'I' and 'Thou' between me and you. Take this away, that my 'I' may become 'Thou', and 'I' be nothing." He scandalized the orthodox by exclaiming while in a state of ecstasy: "Glory to me! How great is my

majesty! Verily I am God, there is no god except me, so worship me” (compare with Surah 21:25). That is pure Pantheism, of course, and not at all in line with Islam.

It is therefore not surprising, that when Mansur al-Hallaj (died 922) claimed: “I am the truth”, the orthodox Ulama were so outraged that he was first imprisoned for 10 years, then crucified, and then dismembered alive.

In Africa Sufism has found its way from both the Indian subcontinent into Southern and Eastern Africa, and via North Africa into West African communities. Particularly in West Africa, a strong network of Sufi brotherhoods (marabouts) has left a mark upon the political, communal and religious face in the francophone countries.

Features among Sufis from the many brotherhoods were visions of the Muhammad and at times of the founder of a particular ‘tariqa’ (as a Sufi brotherhood is called), and at other times a supposedly direct revelation from Muhammad.

In closing it must be mentioned that Sufis, being less orthodox, seem to be more open to the Gospel than most other Muslims.

3.4.9 Folk Islam

Without any question what is termed ‘Folk Islam’ is the most popular expression of religion in Islam. It would be wrong to call it a sect, for it operates within, and is sanctioned by official Islam.

What is ‘Folk Islam’? It is a syncretism of Islam with the ‘natural religion’ of the people who originally turned to Islam. The basic religious elements and practices of the pagan people were integrated with the new religion of Islam. The forms of Islam and the practice of the Five Pillars may well be observed everywhere, but in reality, belief in the spirit-world and practices related to it, determine the actual faith and dependence. Ancestor veneration and dependence, use of spells, charms and amulets and the like, and dependence on Shamans, constitute the real religious life. Islam is far more accommodating in this field than biblical Christianity could ever be. For a pagan to become a Muslim, he really only needs no more than a confession of faith in the existence of one God, and then say the shahada, “There is no god except Allah, and Muhammad is his messenger.”

The Occult Aspect of Folk Islam

All pagan religions have an occult background. Spirit involvement and ancestor worship - which amounts to much the same - is the dominating factor in all tribal religion. Shamans (witchdoctors) claim to be in contact with the spirit world in order to pacify or even manipulate spirits by their magic influence. Spells, charms and amulets are used for protection against negative forces from the spirit world. In order to assist a person seeking freedom from bondage or sickness, Shamans will resort to the finding of more potent charms or spells than those who caused their dilemma. Subsequently the adherents to 'natural religions' are doomed to live under constant fear of the spirit world and live in total dependency of the Shamans.

Not counting a few exceptions like the Wahhabi, Islam has little reservation toward the occult. It is either tolerated, accommodated or islamised. By that they open wide the door to more spiritual bondage.

Islamic Shamans

All over Africa and Asia Shaikhs, Marabouts, Hajjis, Pirs, Walis, Imams or whatever their title may be, act as Shamans. They use charms and amulets and cast spells, just like the pagans, but do it in the name of Allah (the practice of 'Mubahala' is outlined in the Qur'an in Surah 3:61). Shaikhs who are considered powerful (!) are often consulted even after they have died; especially so among the so-called 'grave worshippers.'

May a few Hadith and their comments help us realize the occult practice even commended by Muhammad himself:



Aisha reported that when any of the members of the household fell ill Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) used to blow over him by reciting Mu'awwidhatan, (the last two Surahs in the Qur'an) and when he suffered from illness of which he died I used to blow over him and rubbed his body with his hand for his hand had greater power than my hand.

Sahih Muslim, Hadith 5432

Surahs 113 and 114 represent a kind of incantation for refuge from witchcraft, from "the evil blowers upon knots" and "the evil sneaking whisperer."

The footnote (2578) explains:



That some words have the healing power is a fact which has been substantiated by evidence. This is the reason why incantation (the practice of curing diseases and removing the evil effect of magic) is almost universal. The mere fact that this process is supersensory does not prove it to be a superstition.

There are so many facts for which no causative relationship can be traced in the realm of physical world, but still they are facts. Same is the case with incantation. Islam has, however, purged incantation from all evil practices. It has forbidden the recitation of words and phrases which run counter to the spirit of Islam and has exhorted its followers to recite the name of Allah and some other verses of the Holy Qur'an, e.g. Surah al-Fatiha and Mu'awwidhatan for the purpose of incantation.

To a Christian who has experience with the occult, this simply constitutes "white" magic, i.e. the practice of witchcraft in the name of God instead of the devil. It is still witchcraft, though.



Aisha reported that when any person fell ill with a disease or he had any ailment or he had any injury, the Apostle of Allah (may peace be upon him) placed his forefinger upon the ground and then lifted it by reciting the name of Allah (and said): The dust of our ground with the saliva of any one of us would serve as a means whereby our illness would be cured with the sanction of Allah.

Sahih Muslim, Hadith 5444

A footnote (2579) explains:



According to some scholars, it refers to the sacred dust of Medina on which had fallen the saliva of the pious Muslims.

We will be careful not to compare the happening of John 9:1-7 with the above. There is a clear line of difference!



Aisha reported that Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) commanded the use of incantation for curing the influence of an evil eye.

Sahih Muslim, Hadith 5445

Incantation has a particular meaning: “Ritual recitation of magical words or sounds, a magic spell.” (Collin's Dictionary)

Those who practice such, claim, like all spiritists, to be able to differentiate between good and evil spirits or jinns. The Bible condemns such practices altogether:



Let no one be found among you who ... practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the Lord.

Deut. 18:10-12

Shaikhs, or any other person, may be ‘blessed’ with ‘karamat’, i.e. the gift of power or miracle. After their demise their graves become centers of pilgrimage and the visitors offer prayers and gifts, asking for intercession or assistance.

Leaders within folk Islam in many countries are the Walis (= protector, friend, benefactor). According to traditions (the Qur'an does not promote this) there are always a number of Walis operating on earth. Others replace those that die. One tradition discloses their number to be 4 000.

Walis may be somewhat likened to ‘saints’. They claim to have the power to bind and to loosen, to heal, speak a variety of languages, read thoughts, practice telepathy and telekinesis (= psychic transportation of certain objects), make rain and have psychic powers. Anyone even faintly acquainted with demonology, will at once realize the source thereof: Satan and his demons.

The author (GN) has at various occasions met Muslims, who were afflicted by demons and who invariably were aware of the source thereof. Most Muslims seem to be strongly intimidated and fearful of such powers and what they may do.

It is indeed good to know that, as Christians, we serve the King of kings and Lord of lords and have been delegated authority over all these powers. (Luke 10:19!)

From Islamic source material we know that “Muhammad sanctioned the use of spells and incantations as long as the words used were only those of the names of Allah, or of the good angels, and of the good genii (spirits).”

According to a Hadith Muhammad said: “There is nothing wrong with using spells so long as you associate nothing with Allah” (Dictionary of Islam, quoting Mishkat 21, c.i.). Since we have to assume that Muhammad had an occult background, we need not wonder, how it got a foothold in Islam. “The Dictionary of Islam” also quotes from the book ‘Jawahiru’l-Khamsah’ by Shaikh Abu’l-Muwayyid of Gujerat, India:



In order to explain this occult science, we shall consider it under the following divisions:

1. The qualifications necessary for the ‘amil, or the person who practices it.
2. The tables required by the teacher and their uses. (These include Zodiac etc.)

The methods employed for commanding the presence of the genii (= spirits).

When anyone enters upon the study of the science, he must begin by paying the utmost attention to cleanliness. No dog, or cat, or any stranger, is allowed to enter his dwelling place, and he must purify his house by burning wood-aloes, pastilos, and other sweet-scented perfumes. He must take the utmost care that his body is in no way defiled, and he must bathe and perform the legal ablution constantly. A most important preparation for the exercise of the art is a forty-days fast (chilla), when he must sleep on a mat spread on the ground, sleep as little as possible, and not enter into general conversation.

Previous to reciting any of the names or attributes of God for the establishment of friendship or enmity on behalf of any person, it is necessary to ascertain the initials of his or her name in the Arabic alphabet, which letters are considered by exorcists to be connected with the twelve signs of the Zodiac, the seven planets, and the four elements.

The exorcist must first ascertain if the elements, the signs of the Zodiac, and the planets are amiably or inimitably disposed to each other in the cases of these two individuals, and also if there is a combination expressed in the ism or name of God connected with their initial letters.

If the exorcist wishes to command the presence of genii on behalf of a certain person, it is generally supposed to be effected in the following manner. He must, first of all, shut himself up in a room and fast for forty days. He should besmear the chamber with red ochre, and, having purified himself, should sit on a small carpet, and proceed to call the genius or demon. He must, however, first find out what special genii are required to effect his purpose.

The exorcist should then, in order to call in the help of the genii, recite the following formula, not fewer than 24 800 times:

Ya Danushu! for the sake of the Eternal One!

Ya Hushu! for the sake of the Guide!

Ya Rabushu! for the sake of the Lord!

Ya Qayupushu! for the sake of Allah!

Ya Majbushu! for the sake of the King!

The exorcist will perform this recital with his face turned towards the house of the object he wishes to affect, and burn the perfumes indicated according to the table for the letters of Bahram's name.

All this is blatant witchcraft - and is done in the name of Allah! We can easily see that Islam has by no means the uniformity it tries to propagate. It may well be that many orthodox Muslims will totally distance themselves from above practices and declare it unislamic. We are well advised not to assume that all Muslims are alike. Islam has many forms.

Recommended Literature for Chapter 3

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- The Islamic Da'wah: How to Carry it to Christians, *Al Islam, June 1983.*
- Islam: Introduction and Approach, *ICI course by Sobhi Malek, Irving, Texas, 1992.*
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- The People of the Mosque, *L. Bevan Jones, ISPCK, Delhi, 1998 (1st iss. 1932)*
- Sufi Brotherhoods in Africa, *Knut S. Vikor, in A History of Islam in Africa, 2001.*
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4 Books that Matter to Muslims

We all know that the ‘Holy Book’ of Islam is the Qur’an. Lesser known is the fact that the Traditions about Muhammad, the so-called AHadith, in real terms play a more important role in the daily life of a Muslim than the Qur’an. We investigate both.

4.1 The Qur’an

4.1.1 An Introduction

The Qur’an is “The Book” of the Muslim believers. It is considered to have been existent in the highest (7th) heaven, but was from time to time brought down to the third heaven from where the Angel Gabriel took it piece by piece to reveal it on earth, first to the biblical prophets and then to Muhammad, the “illiterate” prophet (see *The Prophet And His World*). He recited it and by that shared it with the people around him. Many of his companions could quote large passages of the Qur’an from memory. There is and has been a heated theological debate on whether the heavenly existence of the Qur’an has been created, or is eternal and by that token uncreated. Yet today there is almost unanimous consent about its eternal origin.

4.1.2 The Meaning of the Word “Qur’an”

The word ‘Qur’an’ is derived from the word ‘kara’a’, meaning to ‘recite’ or ‘read’. The whole Qur’an is considered by every Muslim as being ‘nazil’ (i.e. sent down) and given by ‘wahy’ (i.e. inspiration).

4.1.3 Chapter Divisions of the Qur’an

The Qur’an was divided into 114 Surahs (chapters), which were given over a period of twenty-three years. A verse is called ‘aya’, meaning ‘sign’. The numbering of verses is not uniform in the various versions of the Qur’an (particularly in Surah 5). We use the numbering introduced by Yusuf Ali. In addition the Qur’an is subdivided into 30 parts, each of these is to be read on one day during the fasting month Ramadaan. Unfortunately, the

Surahs have not been collated in chronological order. Apart from Surah 1, which is in the form of a prayer and enjoys particular popularity, they are roughly ordered according to length, the second Surah being the longest, the 114th the shortest. A chronological reconstruction can essentially only be a coarse attempt, since the longer Surahs have been pieced together, possibly over years.

4.1.4 A Chronological List of the Surahs

We have already noted that the Qur'an was given over a period of 23 years, part of it in Mecca and the other part in Medina. Here is

Mecca	Surahs from the first period:	96, 74, 111, 106, 108, 104, 107, 102, 105, 92, 90, 94, 93, 97, 86, 91, 80, 68, 87, 95, 103, 85, 73, 101, 99, 82, 81, 53, 84, 100, 79, 77, 78, 88, 89, 75, 83, 69, 51, 52, 56, 70, 55, 112, 109, 113, 114, 1
	Surahs from the middle period:	54, 37, 71, 76, 44, 50, 20, 26, 15, 19, 38, 36, 43, 72, 67, 23, 21, 25, 17, 27, 18
	Surahs from the latter period:	32, 41, 45, 16, 30, 11, 14, 12, 40, 28, 39, 29, 31, 42, 10, 34, 35, 7, 46, 6, 13
Medina	Surahs from the Medinan period:	2, 98, 64, 62, 8, 47, 3, 61, 57, 4, 65, 59, 33, 63, 24, 58, 22, 48, 66, 60, 110, 49, 9, 5

Other scholars have produced similar lists, with slightly varying results, e.g. Jalalu'd-din Sayuti, J. M. Rodwell and Sir W. Muir.

4.1.5 Important Criteria Concerning the Qur'an

Regarding the Old Testament

Although we must assume that Muhammad never read the Bible or even parts thereof, we find in the Qur'an many and extensive reflections on biblical stories. These, however, differ widely, not only in form but also in

content, from the biblical text. Many of the Old Testament stories in the Qur'an can be traced back to the Jewish Talmud, which often adds fanciful deviations from the sober record of the Bible. Although Muhammad reflects on many historical accounts, such as the lives of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses and others, we find these virtually devoid of the spiritual message of the Bible.

Regarding Muhammad's authority

On numerous occasions the message of the Qur'an is interrupted with promises of bliss for those who obey Allah and his Messenger, and fearful condemnation of those who do not "fear Allah and obey his Messenger." Part of the Qur'an is taken up with the defence of the Prophethood of Muhammad and his polemics against those who rejected him as a prophet. We find several Qur'anic passages, in which the arguments of the 'unbelievers' concerning Muhammad's prophethood are quoted, e.g. "He has forged it!" (Surah 10:38) or "It is a man that teaches him" (Surah 16:103). In many places we find interwoven 'revelations' that secure his own position and influence and justify his actions.

The Effect of the Recitation and Chanting of the Qur'an in Arabic

Non-Muslims may not be aware that the recitation of the Qur'an in the Arabic language has a definite effect on the mind of the Muslims. They do seem to get an emotional elation from such recitation, although, in the majority of cases, they do not understand the content since they do not speak Arabic.

The Literary Quality of the Qur'an

Its literary quality was and is a constant argument by Muslims in their effort to 'prove' the divine origin of the Qur'an. That is why Muhammad repeatedly challenged his contemporaries: "Present some other book of equal beauty" (Surah 2:23 and 17:88). Several scholars have very successfully done that, however with no response from the Muslim world. (e.g. 'The True Furqan', Omega 2001, P.O. Box 293627, Sacramento, CA 95829, USA).

Compared with other pieces of contemporary Arabic literature, the Qur'an is not necessarily considered the best, but in the Arabic original, at least parts of it reflect a beautiful literary style. However, philologists certify that its grammar is quite imperfect and that a number of foreign words, which suggest foreign thought, were introduced to it.

The style of the Qur'an is another matter. We find neither a chronological sequence nor any topical order in it. It is hardly more than a collection of myths interspersed with warnings and threats.

The Alleged Superiority of the Qur'an

Another alleged reason for the 'superiority' of the Qur'an is the order in which it was revealed in relation to the other 'Holy Books', for it is seen as the final one in a series of revelations. Muslims will reason that of the 'revealed books' the Qur'an is the only one which is fully preserved and by that the only reliable 'Book'. All the 'former Books' are considered to be corrupted. The Qur'an mentions the following Scriptures:



1. Taurat (Torah)
2. Zabur (Psalms)
3. 'That given to (all) prophets by their Lord' (Surah 2:136) (we assume this to mean the rest of the OT)
4. Injil (the Gospel = New Testament), and last and finally
5. Qur'an

The Qur'an is named the 'Mother of Books' (Surah 43:3) and it is called glorious, because it is preserved on an eternal tablet in heaven (Surah 85:22).

Muslims cannot accept a critique of the Qur'an

Muslims may accept a critique of their behaviour, their teachers, even their religious practices, traditions, and many other things. But they will absolutely not tolerate any form of critique of the Qur'an and their Prophet, whether by historians, scientists, orientalists or theologians. The Muslim believes the Qur'an to be the absolute identical copy of the eternal heavenly book; even so far as the punctuation, titles and divisions are concerned.

Regarding the assessment of Scripture Muslims have taken up a very improper position: While totally refusing to recognise the need to subject the Qur'an and the AHadith to scholarly scrutiny and evaluation, they quote Western critics of the Bible to declare our Scripture to be corrupt.

4.1.6 An Introduction to the Qur'an as given in the Mishkat¹⁵



The Holy Qur'an is the guide of the Muslims. It is the complete code of their every day life - economic, political, religious, social and moral. It is a revelation from the Almighty with the exact words as are now found embodied therein. The Qur'an lays down: 'And certainly it is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds in plain Arabic language. The Faithful Spirit has come down with it upon your hearts that you may be one of the warners' - Surah 26:192-195. The verses of the Qur'an were uttered by the Holy Prophet to whose heart they were revealed by God through the Archangel Gabriel. The Qur'an is not the Hadith, because the former was revealed to the Prophet with words, while the Hadith was revealed to him in ideas. The Qur'an was revealed not at a time but piecemeal in the course of the Prophet's apostolic career covering over twenty three years, thirteen years at Mecca and ten years at Medina. The first verse (97Q)[should be Surah 96] was revealed in the Cave Hira at Mecca in Lailatul Kadr (Blessed Night) which is one of the last ten nights of Ramzan, and in the pure dialect of the Quraish which is chaste written Arabic. The Qur'an was arranged into chapters by the Prophet himself. It contains 114 chapters, each chapter containing some sections called Ruku and each Ruku containing some verses. There are 30 parts, 114 chapters, 6616 verses, 77943 words and 338606 letters in the Holy Book. 86 chapters were revealed at Mecca, while 28 chapters covering nearly one third of the Book were revealed at Medina. The Meccan chapters are generally short and the Medinan long. For convenience of reading, the Qur'an has been divided in to 30 equal parts with seven manzils for reading the whole Qur'an in at least seven days.

Mishkat Vol. 3, p. 663, commentary

The Qur'an – Revelation, but by whom?

Before we look at the source material of the Qur'an, we will have to consider seriously the following options:

¹⁵ The Mishkat is a selection of the most trustworthy Islamic traditions (Hadith)

1. Muhammad was a prophet in the biblical succession. (In that case the Qur'an would not contradict the Bible.)
2. Muhammad had hallucinations (illusions) caused by psychic or occult influences.
3. Muhammad was a liar (which we must rule out, as we have convincing evidence that he had revelations).
4. Muhammad had revelations, but not from the same source as the Bible, i.e. not from Yahweh Elohim.

We may safely exclude possibilities 1 and 3. So we have to consider the other two. There are reports, which strongly suggest an occult background:



Al-Harith ibn Hisham asked the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, 'How does the revelation come to you?' and the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, 'Sometimes it comes to me like the ringing of a bell, and that is the hardest for me, and when it leaves me I remember what it has said. And sometimes the angel appears to me in the likeness of a man and talks to me and I remember what he says.

Malik's Muwatta 15, No 4.7

Aisha added, 'I saw it coming down on him on an intensely cold day, and when it had left him his forehead was dripping with sweat.

Malik's Muwatta 15, No 4.7

Obadah-b-Swamet reported that when a revelation came unto the prophet, he used to become greatly perturbed and his face became changed.

Mishkat, 4, p. 359



Muslim [a tradition collector] relates the following Tradition: 'Whenever Inspiration was sent down upon him, the Prophet grew troubled thereat, and his countenance changed'.

Ibn Ishaq says that, before the Revelation first began to descend upon him, Muhammad's friends feared that he was suffering from the evil eyes: and that, when it came upon him, almost the same illness attacked him again. What this particular malady was we can perhaps infer from the statements of the Traditionalists. Ali Halabi, in his Turkish work entitled 'Insanu'l Uyun', informs us that many people declared that Aminah, Muhammad's mother, used a spell in order to recover him from the influence of the evil eye. On the authority of Amr ibn Sharhabil it is stated that Muhammad said to Khadijah,

'When I was alone I heard a cry: O Muhammad, O Muhammad'. In tradition it is stated that he said, 'I fear lest I should become a magician, lest one should proclaim me a follower of the Jinn'; and again: 'I fear lest there should be madness' (or demonic possession) in me'. After an accession of sh4ering and shutting his eyes, there used to come over him what resembled a swoon, his face [mouth?] would foam, and he would roar like a young camel. Abu Hurairah says: 'As for the Apostle of God, when inspiration descended on him, no one could raise his glance to him until the inspiration came to an end'. In Tradition it is stated that 'He was troubled thereat, and his face foamed, and he closed his eyes, and perchance roared like the roaring of the young camel'. Umar ibnu'l Khattab says: 'When inspiration descended on the Apostle of God, there used to be heard near his face as it were the buzzing of bees'.

Somewhat similarly we read in the Turkish work, *Mira'at i Kainat*: 'When inspiration came with a message of threatening and warning, it descended with a terrible sound like that of a bell ... On the authority of Abu Hurairah, too, it is related that, when inspiration descended on the Apostle, they used to bathe his sacred head with henna, because of the headache that used to come on'.

In the Turkish *Insanu'l Uyun* of 'Alt Halabi we read: Zaid ibn Thabit relates: 'When inspiration descended on the Prophet, he became very heavy. Once his leg fell upon mine, and, by God, there is no such heavy leg as was that of the Apostle of God'. Sometimes a revelation would come to him when he was on his camel. Then it shuddered as if it would collapse, and it usually knelt down ... As often as the Prophet received inspiration, it seemed as if his soul were being taken from him, for he had always a kind of swoon and looked like one intoxicated.

Mizanu'l Haqq – Balance of Truth, C.G. Pfander D.D., pp. 345-346, freely quoted

This is confirmed elsewhere. Someone had asked Muhammad a question about the Umrah (minor pilgrimage):



A man came to the Prophet (peace be upon him) ... He said: Apostle of Allah, what do you command me to do while performing my Umrah. In the meantime, Allah, the Exalted, sent a revelation to the Prophet (peace be upon him). When he (the Prophet) came to himself gradually, he asked: Where is the man

who asked about Umrah? (When the man came) he (the Prophet) said: Wash the perfume which is on you, ... take off the tunic, then do in your Umrah as you do in your hajj.

Abu-Dawood 10, No 1815

It is clear that Muhammad at that time was in a trance. This is precisely the condition in which religious performances in Animistic, Hindu and

Buddhist traditions are done. Before his first revelation, Muhammad already suffered under eerie, occult experiences. It says that



...he saw prophetic dreams and heard unseen voices and calls. Before he received the first revelation, he took himself in complete seclusion to the Mount of Light and there applied himself in ardent divine service which consisted only of deep meditation.

Mishkat Vol. 4, p. 354 - Commentary

What appears indeed very strange to us is the mode by which the source of revelation was determined:



Ismail b. Abu Hakim, a freedman of the family of al-Zubayr, told me on Khadija's authority that she said to the apostle of god, 'O son of my uncle, are you able to tell me about your visitant, when he comes to you?' He replied that he could, and she asked him to tell her when he came. So when Gabriel came to him;, as he was wont, the apostle said to Khadija, 'This is Gabriel who has just come to me'. 'Get up, O son of my uncle', she said, 'and sit by me left thigh'. The apostle did so, and she said, 'Can you see him?' 'Yes', he said. She said, 'Then run round and sit on my right thigh'. He did so , and she said, 'Can you see him?' when he said that he could she asked him to move and sit in her lap. When he had done this she again asked if he could see him, and when he said yes, she disclosed her form and cast aside her veil while the apostle was sitting in her lap. Then she said, 'Can you see him?' And he replied, 'No'. She said, 'O son of my uncle, rejoice and be of good heart, by God he is an angel and not a satan'.

I told Abdullah b. Hasan this story and he said, 'I heard my mother Fatima, daughter of Husayn, talking about this tradition from Khadija, but as I heard it she made the apostle of God come inside her shift¹⁶.

Equally strange to us is the triviality of some of Muhammad's revelations:



Aisha reported that Sauda (Allah be pleased with her) went out (in the fields) in order to answer the call of nature even after the time when veil had been prescribed for women. She had been a bulky lady, significant in height amongst the women, and she could not conceal herself from him who had known her. Umar B. Khattab saw her and said: Sauda, by Allah, you cannot conceal from us. Therefore, be careful when you go out. She (Aisha) said: She turned back. Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) was at that time in my house having his evening meal and there was a bone in his hand. She (Sauda) came

¹⁶ Shift = loose piece of clothing or underwear

and said: Allah's Messenger, I went out and Umar said to me so and so. She (Aisha) reported: There came the revelation to him and then it was over; the bone was then in his hand and he had not thrown it and he said: 'Permission has been granted to you that you may go out for your needs'.

Sahih Muslim Vol. 3, p. 1186, No 5395

Narrated Aisha, Ummul Mu'minin: "The Apostle of Allah (peace be upon him) was using the tooth-stick, when two men, one older than the other, were with him. A revelation came to him about the merit of using the tooth-stick. He was asked to show proper respect and give it to the elder of the two.

Abu-Dawood Vol. 1, No 50

If we look at all these AHadith, a picture begins to form. Anyone acquainted with the occult has become aware of the phenomena that one expects at a séance. Besides his occult experiences in childhood, daydreams, the hearing of voices and calls, nightly meditations, excessive perspiration during trance, and subsequent exhaustion and swoon-like conditions - even the ringing of bells - are not uncommon. The condition that looked like intoxication is equally revealing. Anyone being in a trance has that look. (On a number of occasions the author [GN] witnessed this personally).

Another telling phenomenon is a reported suicidal inclination. It occurred when there was a silence after the first revelations.



And revelation broke off. Bukhari added: 'Until the Prophet felt grief about what has reached us, such a grief that he went out several mornings in that mood, so that he might destroy himself from the midst of the hills. Whenever he ascended on the summit of a hill in order to cast himself down therefrom.

al-Bukhari, Hadith, 9.111, also Mishkat Vol. 4, p. 358

With this occult background, we are not surprised at the aversion Muhammad had to the Cross:



The Prophet was of a highly strung and nervous temperament. So afraid was he of darkness, that, on entering a room at night, he would not sit down till a lamp had been lighted for him; and Al-Wakidi adds that he had such a repugnance to the form of the cross that he broke everything brought into the house with the figure upon it. *The Life of Mohammed, by William Muir, p. 200*



The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: There is no prophet between me and him, that is, Jesus (peace be upon him). He will descent (to the earth). ... He will fight the people for the cause of Islam. He will break the cross, kill swine, and abolish 'jizyah'. Allah will perish all religions except Islam. He will destroy the Antichrist and will live on the earth for forty years and then he will die. The Muslims will pray over him.

Abu-Dawood 37, No 4310 (al-Bukhari Vol. 3, pp.233-234, No 425 and Sahih Muslim Vol. 1, p. 92, No 287)

The footnote 289 (in Sahih Muslim) explains:



Cross is a symbol of Christianity. Jesus will break this symbol after the advent of Muhammad. Islam is the din [religion] of Allah and so no other religion is acceptable to Him.

4.1.7 The Collection of the Qur' an

The Mishkat tells us in a commentary:



The Collection Of The Qur'an In A Book. No complete written copy of the Qur'an existed at the time of the Holy Prophet. It was not also possible as it was revealed during a course of 23 years. So during his time, it was kept in tablets, on parchment, papers, leaves and skins. After the holy demise, it was for the first time that the question of its collection in a book form was raised by Hazrat Omar before the first Caliph Abu Bakr. At first, the aged Caliph was not willing to do what the Prophet had not done. Afterwards he thought the propriety of collection and undertook the onerous task. The copy thus prepared by Abu Bakr was with Omar's daughter Hafsah (Prophet's wife) after his death. The public had then no written copies. *Mishkat Vol. 3, p. 664, commentary*

Zaid bin Thabit reported:



Abu Bakr sent for me owing to the large number of casualties in the battle of Al-Yamama, while 'Umar was sitting with him. Abu Bakr said (to me), (Umar has come to me and said, 'A great number of Qaris [pl. of Qurra, people who had memorised the Qur'an] of the Holy Qur'an were killed on the day of the battle of Al-Yamama, and I am afraid that the casualties among the Qaris of the Qur'an may increase on other battlefields whereby a large part of the Qur'an may be lost. Therefore I consider it advisable that you (Abu Bakr) should have the Qur'an collected.' I said, 'How dare I do something which Allah's Apostle did not do?' Umar said, By Allah, it is something beneficial.' Umar kept on pressing

me for that till Allah opened my chest for that for which He had opened the chest of Umar and I had in that matter, the same opinion as Umar had.' Abu Bakr then said to me (Zaid), "You are a wise young man and we do not have any suspicion about you, and you used to write the Divine Inspiration for Allah's Apostle. So you should search for the fragmentary scripts of the Qur'an and collect it (in one Book)." Zaid further said: By Allah, if Abu Bakr had ordered me to shift a mountain among the mountains from one place to another it would not have been heavier for me than this ordering me to collect the Qur'an. Then I said (to Umar and Abu Bakr), "How can you do something which Allah's Apostle did not do?" Abu Bakr said, "By Allah, it is something beneficial." Zaid added: So he (Abu Bakr) kept on pressing me for that until Allah opened my chest for that for which He had opened the chests of Abu Bakr and Umar, and I had in that matter, the same opinion as theirs.

So I started compiling the Qur'an by collecting it from the leafless stalks of the date-palm tree and from the pieces of leather and hides and from the stones, and from the chests of men (who had memorized the Qur'an). I found the last verses of Sirat-at-Tauba: (Verily there has come unto you an Apostle (Muhammad) from amongst yourselves... (9.128-129) from Khuzaima or Abi Khuzaima and I added to it the rest of the Sura. The manuscripts of the Qur'an remained with Abu Bakr till Allah took him unto Him. Then it remained with Umar till Allah took him unto Him, and then with Hafsa bint Umar.

al-Bukhari Vol. 9, pp. 228-230, No 301 (al-Bukhari Vol. 6, p. 162-164, No 201)

It is very doubtful that this Codex¹⁷, kept by Hafsa, ever played a role in the lives of the Muslims at that time. Other codices were more widely used.

The Mishkat continues:



So Osman, during his Caliphate, ordered Za'd-bin-Saber, Abdullah-bin-Zubair, Sa'd-bin-alA's and Abdur Rahman to examine independent sources [of the Qur'an] and to test the veracity of Hafsa's copy. Thus they prepared some copies which he distributed throughout the then Muslim world. These copies were exactly similar [sic] to the copy of Hafsa and that text is now extant throughout the Muslim world. The purity of the Qur'an has thus been kept intact and it is now what it was 14 hundred years ago.

Mishkat Vol. 3, p. 664, commentary

¹⁷ Codex = manuscript in book form

As we shall see, the above report is not correct - or it is, to say the least, a very romantic interpretation of the historic situation.

The Revision of the Qur'an Under Uthman

A little later, when contention arose between believers caused by differing recitations of the Qur'an (in the salat prayer), Uthman ordered the text to be edited "according to the dialect of the Quraish." This was done and it is now called the Uthmani text. It remained the standard text to this day.

Al-Bukhari fills in some detail:



Narrated Anas bin Malik:

Hudhaifa bin Al-Yaman came to Uthman at the time when the people of Sham and the people of Iraq were waging war to conquer Arminya and Adharbijan. Hudhaifa was afraid of their (the people of Sham and Iraq) differences in the recitation of the Qur'an, so he said to Uthman, "O chief of the Believers! Save this nation before they differ about the Book (Qur'an) as Jews and the Christians did before." So Uthman sent a message to Hafsa saying, "Send us the manuscripts of the Qur'an so that we may compile the Qur'anic materials in perfect copies and return the manuscripts to you." Hafsa sent it to Uthman. Uthman then ordered Zaid bin Thabit, 'Abdullah bin AzZubair, Said bin Al-As and 'Abdur-Rahman bin Harith bin Hisham to rewrite the manuscripts in perfect copies. Uthman said to the three Quraishi men, "In case you disagree with Zaid bin Thabit on any point in the Qur'an, then write it in the dialect of Quraish, as the Qur'an was revealed in their tongue." They did so, and when they had written many copies, Uthman returned the original manuscripts to Hafsa. Uthman sent to every Muslim province one copy of what they had copied, and ordered that all the other Qur'anic materials, whether written in fragmentary manuscripts or whole copies, be burnt. Said bin Thabit added, 'A Verse from Surat Ahzab was missed by me when we copied the Qur'an and I used to hear Allah's Apostle reciting it. So we searched for it and found it with Khuzaima bin Thabit Al-Ansari. (That Verse was): 'Among the Believers are men who have been true in their covenant with Allah'. (33.23)

al-Bukhari Vol. 6, pp. 478-479, No 510

Unfortunately this report is not explicit enough to mention the number of variant readings in other copies of the Qur'an existent before the revision under Uthman. Fortunately, much of that detail has been recorded by ibn Abi-Dawud Dawud (AD 824-897) in his 'Kitab al-Masahif' ('Book of Documents'). It is not available in English, but the content became the basis of the book 'Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur'an' by Arthur Jeffrey. It lists on over 350

pages the acknowledged different readings of Qur'anic manuscripts before its editing. These deviations had been extracted, compiled and preserved by ibn Abi Dawud. When Uthman destroyed the evidence of the r4al texts, the original, which was in Hasfa's care, was saved at that time, but did not escape destruction a little later.



That the material in the Codex of Hafsa was considerably different from that in the Uthmanic text is evident from the anxiety of Marwan to destroy it. The story tells of how when Marwan was Governor of Medina he sent to Hafsa demanding her Codex that he might destroy it, but she refused to give it up.

When she died Marwan assisted at her funeral and at its conclusion sent and with much insistence demanded the Codex from Abdallah b.Umar, Hafsa's brother. Abdallah finally sent it to him and he had it destroyed, fearing, he said, that if it got abroad the variety of readings that Uthman desired to suppress would recommence.

Materials for the History of Text of the Qur'an, by A. Jeffrey



It is often reasoned by Muslims that the differences had to do with different 'readings', or better reciting. They had nothing to do with different meanings, but rather different 'dialects'. The prescribed form was the recitation in the dialect of the Quraish, the tribe of Muhammad, and that had not been observed.

Of course, we are aware of different dialects. Classical Arabic is pronounced quite differently by people of Morocco, Egypt or Syria. But the written language is alike. The same applies to English. Noticeable spoken differences occur between American, Australians, English, Scottish or Irish. But with few exceptions they write the same.

In the case of the revision of the Qur'an, it was the different written texts that were scrutinized, revised and then destroyed - not the dialects.

Muslims claim: "The Qur'an has never been Changed"

This is contradicted by the undeniable fact that we have detailed knowledge of 15 Major Codices (= plural of codex) and 13 Minor Codices that differ somewhat in length and content from the text of the Uthmani version. ('Materials of the History of the Text of the Qur'an' by A. Jeffrey)

The most prominent four of these are:

- The Codex of **Zaid ibn Thabit** (Medina)

- The Codex of **Abdullah ibn Masud** (Kufa)
- The Codex of **Ubai ibn Ka'b** (Syria)
- The Codex of **Abu Musa** (Basra)

In ibn Abi-Dawud's 'Kitab al-Masahif' we read:



Ibn Mas'ud is reported to have said: 'The Prophet taught me to recite seventy Surahs which I had mastered before Zaid had even become a Muslim'. Or again: 'Am I to be debarred from copying the mushafs¹⁸ and the job given to a man who was an infidel in his father's reins when I first became a Muslim?'

Abdullah is supposed to have enjoined his followers: 'Lay up your Qur'an! How can you order me to recite the readings of Zaid, when I recited from the very mouth of the Prophet some seventy Surahs? 'Am I', asks Abdullah, 'to abandon what I acquired from the very lips of the Prophet?'

Masahif, by Ibn abi Dawood, pp. 12, 14



Like ancient Hebrew, the original Arabic writings contained no vowels. The diacritical marks indicate where vowels were introduced later. This compounds the problem, for without diacritical marks¹⁹ a word could read active or passive and many consonants could not be distinguished without the diacritical dots which were added afterwards, when and by whom we do not know.

Collection of the Qur'an, by John Burton

The Qur'an Was Revealed in 'Seven Forms'

While the Qur'an consists of one text, the Hadith tell us of seven distinguishable text revelations:



Narrated 'Umar bin Al-Khattab: I heard Hisham bin Hakim bin Hizam reading the chapter Distinction (25Q) other than (different from) what I read [= recited] it and what the Apostle of Allah read [= recited] it over to me. I was about to hasten (attack) on him, but then I gave him time till he finished. Then I tied him with his cloth and came with him to the Apostle of Allah. I said: O Apostle of Allah! I heard him reading [= recite] the chapter 'Distinction' other than what you read

¹⁸ Mushaf = original manuscript

¹⁹ Diacritical marks = 'relating to signs placed above or below a character or letter to indicate that it has a different phonetic value, is stressed, or for some other reason' ('The Collins Dictionary')

[= recited] over to me. The Apostle of Allah said: Let him read [= recite]. Then he read as I had heard him read [= recite].

The Prophet said: Thus it has been revealed. Then he asked me: Read. I read [= recite]. He said: Thus it has been revealed: This Qur'an has been revealed upon seven modes of reading [= reciting]. So read [= recite] what appears easy therefrom."
al-Bukhari Vol. 3, p. 355, No 601

Ubayy ibn Ka'b reported: I was in the mosque when a man entered, and prayed and recited (the Qur'an) in a style to which I objected. Then another man entered (the mosque) and recited in a style different from that of his companion. When we had finished the prayer, we all went to Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) and I said to him: This man recited in a style to which I objected, and the other entered and recited in a style different from that of his companion. The Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) asked them to recite, so they recited and the Apostle of Allah (may peace be upon him) expressed approval of their affairs (their modes of recitation), and there occurred in my mind a sort of denial which did not occur even during the Days of Ignorance. When the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) saw how I was affected (by a wrong idea), he struck my chest, whereupon I broke into sweating and felt as though I were looking at Allah with fear. He (the Holy Prophet) said to me: Ubayy, a message was sent to me to recite the Qur'an in one dialect, and I replied: Make (things) easy for my people. It was conveyed to me for the second time that it should be recited in two dialects. I again replied to him: Make affairs easy for my people. It was again conveyed to me for the third time to recite in seven dialects. And (I was further told): You have got a seeking for every reply that I sent you, which you should seek from Me. I said: O Allah! Forgive my people, forgive my people and I have deferred the third one for the day on which the entire creation will turn to me, including even Ibrahim (peace be upon him) (for intercession).

Sahih Muslim Vol. 2, p. 390, No 1787

What were these seven forms, or 'dialects' ('ahruf')? Did they just represent different pronunciations? Or did they carry different meanings? Why fuss over a dialect, when the meaning is clear? Muslim scholars are divided over this issue. There is simply no information on what these 'ahruf' actually were. The early Qur'an commentator and historian at-Tabari (born 224 AH) believed all but one of these forms were burnt by Uthman²⁰. Both the

²⁰ 'A 'Perfect' Qur'an', p. 28, by Bro. Mark,
<http://www.callnetuk.com/home/apperfectQur'an>

differing codices and differing forms bear witness that the Qur'an is not the unchanged book Muslims would like it to be.²¹

4.1.8 Additions and Omissions in the Qur'an

Passages Added to the Qur'an

Besides the parallel texts and the seven different forms of the Qur'an there is also evidence of interpolations (additions) and omissions in the now existing text of the Qur'an.



A curious story is told about 'Abd-Allah ibn-Abi-Sarh. While Mohammed was dictating to him the passage beginning with Surah 23:12, he was carried away by wonder at this description of the creation of man; and, when Mohammed paused after the words 'another creature', exclaimed: 'Blessed be God, the best of creators'. Mohammed accepted this as the continuation of the revelation and told him to write it down.

This aroused doubt, however, in ibn-Abi-Sarh, and later he gave up Islam and returned to Mecca; at the conquest of Mecca he was one of those prescribed [to be killed], but was pardoned on the intercession of Uthman.

Introduction to the Qur'an, by R.Bell, p. 37 - quoted from al-Baidawi's and Zamaksharis's commentaries.



The canonical traditionists report that Surah 4:95 was dictated by the prophet to his amanuensis (= scribe or secretary) Zayd thus: 'Those believers, who sit at home, are not equal to those who fight in the way of God with their goods and their persons'. A blind man was present and heard the words. He immediately interjected that were he as other men, he would certainly fight; whereupon the prophet interposed the words: 'except those who suffer from a grave impediment' which stand in the text today.

Islam, by A. Guillaume, p. 191; see also al-Bukhari, Hadith 6.118

All these facts are, of course, little, if at all, known to Muslims. What is the point of making them aware of these problems? Certainly not to undermine their faith and trust in God! But it is helpful for any person to be aware of possible cracks in the foundation of their lives, particularly when these affect their eternal destiny. Because there are no adjustments possible after

²¹ For a fuller response to these claims refer to Evaluation of the Qur'an later in this chapter.

death, compassion, kindness and love dictate that we should point to a questionable foundation of the faith of our human fellow travellers, while it is still possible. But let us take note:



Unless it hurts us more to say this to a Muslim than it will hurt him to hear and perceive it, we have the wrong attitude toward him!

Passages Omitted in the Qur'an

The Hadith (tradition) collector Muslim gives us the following information in one of the traditions:



We used to recite a Surah which resembled in length and severity (Surah) Bara'at. I have, however, forgotten it with the exception of this which I remember out of it: 'If there were two valleys full of riches, for the son of Adam, he would long for a third valley, and nothing would fill the stomach of the son of Adam but dust'. And we used to recite a Surah which resembled one of the Surahs of Musabbhat, and I have forgotten it, but remember (this much) out of it: 'O people who believe, why do you say that which you do not practise' (61:2) and 'that is recorded in your necks as a witness (against you) and you would be asked about it on the Day of Resurrection (17:13).

Sahih Muslim Vol. 2, p. 501, No 2286

The Footnote explains:



The words of this Surah have been abrogated in the Qur'an; its meaning has, however, been preserved in other verses of the Qur'an, e.g. in Surah 17:100: 'If you possess the treasures of the mercy of my Lord, you would then withhold (them) from fear of spending (it away). And man is ever niggardly.

Sahih Muslim Vol. 2, p. 501, Fn. 1416

Abdullah b. Abbas reported that Umar b. Khattab sat on the pulpit of Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) and said: Verily Allah sent Muhammad (may peace be upon him) with truth and He sent down the Book upon him, and the verse of stoning was included in what was sent down to him. We recited it, retaining it in our memory and understood it. Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) awarded the punishment of stoning to death (to the married adulterer and adulteress) and, after him, we also awarded the punishment of stoning. I am afraid that, with the lapse of time, the people (may forget it) and may say: We do not find the punishment of stoning in the Book of Allah, and thus go astray by abandoning this duty prescribed by Allah. Stoning is a duty

laid down in Allah's Book for married men and women who commit adultery when proof is established, or if there is pregnancy, or a confession.

Sahih Muslim Vol. 3, p. 912, No 4194

A commentary tries to explain this:



Here is an example of an abrogation of Qur'anic verses in which the words are abrogated whereas the ordinance has been conserved for all time to come in the Shariah through the words of the Holy Prophet (may peace be upon him) such as his judgments in such cases of adultery. This also shows how closely the Qur'an and the Sunnah are interlinked.

Sahih Muslim Vol. 3, p. 912, Fn. 2155

These verses are not in the Qur'an. The commentator explains this to be due to abrogation.



Narrated Ibn Abbas: ... "Allah sent Muhammad with the Truth and revealed the Holy Book to him, and among what Allah revealed, was the Verse of the Rajam (the stoning of married person (male & female) who commits illegal sexual intercourse, and we did recite this Verse and understood and memorized it. Allah's Apostle did carry out the punishment of stoning and so did we after him.

I am afraid that after a long time has passed, somebody will say, 'By Allah, we do not find the Verse of the Rajam in Allah's Book,' and thus they will go astray by leaving an obligation which Allah has revealed

al-Bukhari Vol. 8, No 817, pp. 539-540

There is a tradition from Aisha, the prophet's wife, that a certain chapter, which now consists of 73 verses, once contained no less than 200, and that when Uthman compiled the Qur'an the missing verses could not be found. One of them was called the Verse of Stoning, and is said to have contained the order to stone a man or woman who had committed adultery ... This verse is said to have been part of the original Qur'an. Many early authorities say so, and what is very significant is, that the first Caliphs punished adulterers by stoning. This is still penalty prescribed [sic] in Muslim law books, whereas the Qur'an (Surah 24:2) prescribed a hundred stripes.

Islam, by A. Guillaume, p. 191

There is the ... verse (53:19f.) 'Have you considered al-Lat and al-Uzza and Manat the third other?' Which was once followed by the words: 'Verily they are the exalted maidens [Gharaniq, also translated 'cranes'] and their intercession

is to be hoped for' ['is approved' in another version]. The earliest authority on the life of Muhammad [i.e. Ibn Ishaq] asserts that these words were uttered by Muhammad at the instigation of Satan.

Islam, p. 189 and "New Light in the Life of Mohammed", by A. Guillaume, p. 38

The Qur'an has made a slight alteration and a significant omission to the first text: instead of saying 'By al-Lat, etc., it reads, 'Have you considered al-Lat' etc. and **the sentence about the exalted maidens is dropped altogether**. Subsequently Gabriel came to the prophet and denied that he had revealed the word to him.

The polytheists of Mecca were delighted about this, for these words were those of the chant of the Quraish as they processed around the Ka'ba.

References in the Siratu'l Nabi, as revised by Ibn Hisham, vs. 239. Tabari, pp. 1192 ff., al Suhayli, p. 229, according to A. Guillaume (our emphasis).

Other Inconsistencies in the Qur'an

From quite a number, we would like to sketch some contradicting statements within the Qur'an:

Some Prophets excel above others



Those apostles we endowed with gifts, some above others. To one of them Allah spoke, others He raised to degrees (of honour).

Surah 2:253

Allah did choose Adam and Noah, the family of Abraham, and the family of Imran above all people.

Surah 3:33

BUT: Prophets are without distinction between them



Say ye: 'We believe in Allah, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus and that given to (all) prophets from their Lord: WE make no difference between one and another of them...

Surah 2:136

The Apostle believeth in what hath been revealed to him from his Lord, as do the men of faith. Each one (of them) believeth in Allah, His angels, His books, and His messenger. We make no distinction (they say between one and another of His apostles). And they say, 'We hear, and we obey: (We seek) thy forgiveness, our Lord, and to Thee is the end of all journeys'. *Surah 2:285*

Say: 'We believe in Allah, and in what has been revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes. And in (the Books) given to Moses, Jesus, and the prophets, from their Lord: We make no distinction between one and another among them. *Surah 3:84*

Judgment will be according to deeds



The balance that day will be true (to a nicety). Those whose scale (of good) will be heavy, will prosper: Those whose scale will be light, will find their souls in perdition, for that they wrongfully treated our Signs. *Surah 7:8-9*

BUT: Forgiveness will be given to whom Allah wills



Of the men He hath created: He forgiveth whom He pleaseth, and He punishes whom He pleaseth. *Surah 5:20*

Heavens and earth were created in six days



He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six days - and his Throne was over the waters - that He might try you, which of you is best in conduct. *Surah 11:7*

Verily your Lord is Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth in six Days, and is firmly established on the Throne (of authority).

Surah 10:3

BUT: Heavens and earth were created in eight days



Say: Is it that ye deny Him Who created the earth in two days? And do ye join equals with Him? He is the Lord of (all) the worlds.

He set on the (earth), mountains standing firm, high above it, and bestowed blessings on the earth, and measured therein all things to give them nourishment in due proportion, in four days, in accordance with (the needs of) those who seek (sustenance).

Moreover He comprehended in His design the sky, and it had been (as smoke): He said to it and to the earth: 'Come ye together, willingly or unwillingly'. They said: 'We do come (together) in willing obedience.

So he completed them as seven firmaments in two days and he assigned to each heaven its duty and command. *Surah 41:9-12*

4.1.9 The Problem of Abrogation

Based on the Qur'an, Islam has developed the doctrine of abrogation. This affected an unidentified number of verses to be removed (the so-called Mansukh-Verses) and then replaced (by the so-called Nasikh-Verses) during the lifetime of Muhammad. The Qur'an teaches that



None of our revelations do we abrogate or cause to be forgotten. But we substitute something better or similar. Knowest thou not that Allah hath power over all things? *Surah 2:106*

When we substitute one revelation for another - and Allah knows best what he reveals (in stages) - they say, 'Thou art but a forger'. But most of them understand not. *Surah 16:101*

Allah does, in fact, threaten to withdraw all revelation!



If it were Our Will, we could take away that which we have sent thee by inspiration: then wouldst thou find none to plead thy affair in that matter as against Us.

Surah 17:86

Allah is considered to be the absolute sovereign ruler over all and everything. Of course, God would not be God, if He did not have this power. However, in the Bible God has restricted Himself in accordance with His nature and character. God is good and will not be evil. He Himself by His Nature and character, His goodness excludes capricious action (see "Predestination"). Thus the relationship between Allah and a Muslim is not like the one described in the Bible, in which God reveals Himself as our compassionate Father. The Islamic version rather declares that Allah is the ruler and the believer his slave. This is corroborated by the concept of ta-abudi, a statement, which disallows search and questioning, but rather demands unquestionable submission. This is why Islamic theology cannot allow any critical research in its books. They are ta-abudi. In such kind of submission fear silences every attempt to search for objective established Truth. Therefore most Muslims do not even remotely consider the possibility of questioning the Qur'an and its validity.

We should take note, however, of a striking challenge to such a concept:



Do they not consider the Qur'an (with care)? Had it been from other than Allah, they would surely have found therein much discrepancy. *Surah 4:82*

We do consider! The first 'discrepancy' we notice is, that verses were taken out and replaced by others within a very brief time span of, at the most, 23 years.

Muslim scholars try to explain this by suggesting that it is 'progressive revelation', like in the Bible, in which Yahweh revealed some of His thoughts to Noah, Abraham and others. Then He sent the Law to Israel through Moses (500 years later). When Christ came He introduced the New Covenant of Grace. This, however, did not happen over a period of 23, but rather 1500 years, and was dictated by the historical and spiritual development of the people of God.

In addition, the Qur'an produces another problem by declaring the very opposite, namely that



No change can there be in the Words of Allah. *Surah 10:64*

There is none that can alter the Words (and decrees) of Allah.

Surah 6:34

We note that it says:

"We substitute" (i.e. exchange) in Surahs 2:106 and 16:101, and

"No change" in Surahs 10:64 and 6:34.

We do know of changes, however:



Jalalu'd-Din as-Sayuti (born 1445 in Cairo), a very well accepted Islamic theologian and commentator, said that the number of abrogated verses has been variously estimated to range from 5 to 500.

In his commentary 'Itqan' he furnished a list of 20 verses, which are acknowledged by all commentators to be abrogated.

Dictionary of Islam, p. 520

Let us mention a few abrogations here:

Issue	Before	After
The Qib'la (prayer direction)	To Jerusalem	to Mecca (Surah 2:142-145)
The Division of Inheritance left by parents or other relatives	had to be equal (a share and a share which has to be determined) (Surah 4:7)	Males must get double the share of females. (Surah 4:11)
The Fast of Ramadaan	fasting during Ramadaan may be replaced by feeding a poor man (Surah 2:184)	The Fast of Ramadaan (Surah 2:185)
The Night of Prayer	reciting the Qur'an during the whole night	Ought to be more or less half the time of the night or as long as it is easy (Surah 73:2-4 and vs. 20)
The Treatment of Adulteresses	life imprisonment (Surah 4:15) At first it was apparently stoning to death. This despite the leniency prescribed for homosexuals (Surah 4:16) after repenting.	Flogging with 100 strokes (Surah 24:2)
Provision for Widows	One year's maintenance	One third of inheritance
The Retaliation in Cases of Crime, particularly murder	to be confined to people of equal rank (slave for slave; free for free etc.)(Surah 2:178)	Retaliation is allowed against a murderer only. (Surah 5:48 and 17:33)
The Jihad or Holy War	forbidden in the sacred months (Surah 9:5)	Allowed, even encouraged (Surah 9, 36)



The much discussed 'verses of the sword': '... fight and slay the pagans wherever ye find them and seize them, beleaguer them and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war)'. (Surah 9:5), and '... when you meet the unbeliever (in fight) cut off their necks ...' (Surah 47:5), are said to have cancelled no less than 124 verses which enjoined toleration and patience.

Islam, by A. Guillaume

4.1.10 Claims for the Uniqueness of the Qur'an: Produce a Surah like it!

The following evaluation of the Qur'an and its challenge to prove it to be true, is found as a commentary in the Mishkat:



The Qur'an is a miracle and a Universal Book. The Qur'an is the greatest wonder among the wonders of the world. It repeatedly challenged the people of the world to bring a chapter like it but they failed and the challenge remains unanswered up to this day.

The Qur'an declares: And if you are in doubt as to that which We have revealed to Our servant, then produce a chapter like it and call on your helper besides Allah if you are truthful - Surah 2:23. Say: If men and Jinn should combine together to bring the like of this Qur'an, they cannot bring the like of it, though some of them help others. And certainly We have made distinct for men every kind of description but the majority of men do not consent but denying - Surah 17:89. As the Qur'an was revealed, no credit is given therefore to the Prophet, but the fact remains that this book is second to none in the world according to the unanimous decision of the learned men in points of diction, style, rhetoric, thoughts and soundness of laws and regulations to shape the destinies of mankind. It is an epitome in itself. It is a universal book like the vast page of Nature. Worlds of nature are subject to laws. Nature is mute and does not explain the reason of such laws, while the Qur'an explains them and says that there is one God who is regulating the government of this universe with these laws with an object in view. The Qur'an is a perfect code of human life. It is a Divine Light that dissipates darkness from all around. Man-made lights are insufficient to remove the all-pervading darkness and hence man-made laws are insufficient as a panacea for all problems of the world. By the divine Light of the Qur'an, all darkness is removed from the soil of the mind just as by the sun all darkness of the universe is removed. It is therefore a solution of the world problems both temporal and spiritual, and is thus a Universal Book for the guidance of mankind.

Mishkat Vol. 3, pp. 664-665, commentary



Or do they say, 'He forged it'? Say: 'Bring then a Surah like unto it, and call (to your aid) anyone you can, besides Allah, if it be ye speak the truth!'

Surah 10:38

And if ye are in doubt as to what we have revealed from time to time to Our servant, then produce a Surah like thereunto: and call your witnesses or helpers (if there are any) besides Allah, if your (doubts) are true. But if ye cannot - and of a surety ye cannot - then fear the fire whose fuel is men and stones - which is prepared for those who reject Faith.

Surah 2:23-24

Say: If the whole of mankind and Jinns were to gather together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they backed up each other with help and support. And We have explained to man, in this Qur'an, every kind of similitude: yet the greater part of men refuse (to receive it) except with ingratitude!
Surah 17:88-89

This Qur'an is not such as can be produced by other than Allah. *Surah 10:37*

We accept the challenge!

In an ad hoc fashion, we made a quick effort to 'produce' some 'Surahs'. Anyone can add to that. We have taken just five portions of Christian writing and mixed them with six Surahs (or portions thereof) and six Scriptures from the Bible for comparison.

You, the reader, be the judge. We invite you to make your own honest assessment of the literary quality, and separately of the truth and devotional value of each of the passages quoted. After your judgement find out who the writers were. Authors are shown at the end.

- | |
|--|
| <p>1. Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
 That I practice love where I am hated, That I forgive where I am offended,
 That I heal where there is strife, That I speak truth where there is error,
 That I bring faith where doubt oppresses, That I rouse hope where despair
 torments,
 That I kindle your light where darkness reigns, That I bring joy where
 sadness is dwelling.
 Lord, let me not seek to be comforted, But that I may comfort others also;
 Not seek to be understood, But understand others also;
 Not seek to be loved, But to love others also;
 For he that gives shall receive, He that forgets himself shall find,
 He that forgives shall be forgiven, He that dies shall awake to eternal life.</p> |
| <p>2. To the Thamud people (we send) Salih, one of their own brethren:
 He said: 'O my people! Worship Allah; ye have no other god but Him. Now
 hath come unto you a clear (sign) from your Lord! This she-camel of Allah is
 a sign unto you. So leave her to graze in Allah's earth, and let her come to
 no harm, or ye shall be seized with a grievous punishment. And remember
 how He made you inheritors after the Ad people and gave you habitations in
 the land: ye build for yourselves palaces and castles in (open) plains, and
 carve out homes in the mountains; so bring to remembrance the benefits (ye
 have received) from Allah, and refrain from evil and mischief on the earth.</p> |
| <p>3. He is no fool that gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.</p> |

4. Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?

I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me...and I lay down my life for the sheep ... No-one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish.

5. If Allah so will, He could make you all one people: but He leaves straying (should read: 'leads astray') whom he pleases, and He guides whom He pleases: but ye shall certainly be called to account for all your actions.

6. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the for ever.

7. Grant me, Almighty God that I may circumspectly explore your will for my life, that I may truly know it and completely fulfill it.

Arrange my life that it may bring honour to You and salvation to me. Add to this, O Lord, a free heart, a strong heart, a vigilant heart, an unchangeable heart.

Make me modest without presumption, serious without sadness, truthful without deceit, brave without fear, active without being thoughtless.

Let my way reach its purpose safely. Let me set my hope on You forever, You the loving God of my life.

8. Perish the hands of the Father of Flame! Perish he! No profit to him from all his wealth, and all his gains! Burnt soon will he be in a fire of blazing flame! His wife shall carry the (cracking) wood - as fuel! A twisted rope of palm-leaf fibre round her (own) neck!

9. It is not important what people think or say to us, but what we are before God. - It is not important what we do, but how we do it. - It is not important that we escape suffering, but that suffering fulfils its purpose. - It is not important when we die, but that we are ready to meet God!

10. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

- | |
|---|
| 11. Fight those who believe not in God nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and His Apostle, nor acknowledge the Religion of Truth (even if they are) of the people of the Book, until they pay the Jizya5 with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued. |
| 12. God our Saviour... wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. |
| 13. O ye that reject Faith! I worship not that which ye worship. Nor will ye worship which I worship. And I will not worship that which ye have been wont to worship, nor will ye worship that which I worship. To you be your Way, and to me mine. |
| 14. You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave - just as the Son of Man (Jesus) did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. |
| 15. By the Sun and his (glorious) splendour; by the Moon as she follows him; by the Day as it shows up (the Sun's) glory; by the Night as it conceals it; by the firmament and its (wonderful) structure; by the Earth and its (wide) expanse; by the Soul and the proportion and order given to it; and its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right. (should read as in older translations (according to the Mishkat): '... and breathed into it (i.e. the soul) wickedness and piety'.). Truly he succeeds that purifies it. And he fails that corrupts it! |
| 16. God, Who needs nothing, loves into existence wholly superfluous creatures in order that He may love and perfect them. |
| 17. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, 'Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?' They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.' But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, 'If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.' Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?' 'No one, sir,' she said. Then neither do I condemn you,' Jesus declared. 'Go now and leave your life of sin. |

Sources:

1. Francis of Assissi 1182-1226 AD	2. Surah 7:73-74	3. Jim Elliot – “Martyr for the Gospel in the Amazon Jungle”, 1956
4. Luke 15:3-4, John 10:14, 18, 28	5. Surah 16:93	6. Psalm 23
7. Thomas Aquinas 1224-1274	8. Surah 111:1-5	9. Eva von Thiele-Winkler
10. 1 Corinthians 13:4-7	11. Surah 9:29	12. 1 Timothy 2:4
13. Surah 109:1-6	14. Matthew 20:25-28	15. Surah 91:1-10
16. C.S. Lewis (‘The Four Loves’)	17. John 8:3-11	

The Qur’an is claimed to be the Final Revelation and to Abrogate all Former Ones

According to present day Islam the Qur’an is now replacing all former revelations. They got lost or were corrupted, it is said. All ‘former revelations’, including the Bible, are assumed to have formerly been synonymous with the message of the Qur’an. The Word of God exists eternally, and is uncreated in heaven. All Scriptures were replicas thereof. But only the Arabic Qur’an is viewed to be a true replica of this now. This is the Islamic response to the dilemma that ‘the former Scriptures’ carry very differing messages as compared with the Qur’an.

4.1.11 The Sources Of The Qur’an

Islam builds its faith and practice on the assumption that the Qur’an is a revelation from God (it is considered ‘nazil’, i.e. come down from heaven). Every religion with such a claim must be prepared to provide evidence supporting its ‘nazil’ character.

The very word revelation suggests that something hitherto unknown and/or inaccessible to the human mind, is now, by supernatural means, made accessible. In the case of the Qur’an, a substantial part can be shown to have been existing knowledge that was accessible to Muhammad.

We are aware of a very substantial number of Bible stories which are contained in the Qur'an. They often differ greatly from their biblical originals. We shall find these to be Talmudic, Apocryphal or heretical stories, which, in addition, can be proven to be historically and/or biblically untrue. Jews and Christians criticized Muhammad for this. In return he attacked them by claiming that they perverted their Book.



There is among them a section who distort the Book with their tongues; (as they read) you would think it is a part of the Book but it is no part of the Book; and they say 'That is from Allah' but it is not from Allah: it is they who tell a lie against Allah and (well) they know it!
Surah 3:78



Commendably, Muhammad differentiated between the 'Book' (i.e. the Bible) and what the Jews 'knowingly distorted with their tongues'. This does not even faintly suggest in any way that the Qur'an claims the Scripture to have been changed. We have no choice but to conclude that the Qur'an is to a large extent an inaccurate conglomerate of often ill-perceived religious stories, which circulated in Arabia at the time of Muhammad.

The Jewish Talmud

Concepts taken from the Pagan Arabian Past

Allah

Allah is the Arabic word for God, which the local pagans, as also the Jews and Christians, used. This name was no innovation of Muhammad, as can be deduced from the names of some of his contemporaries. His father's name was Abd-allah (slave of Allah), and his uncle was called Obeid-allah. Besides, the infidels of Mecca never objected to Muhammad's reference to Allah, for this was a kind of chief deity among the others.

The Ka'ba

The Ka'ba (today also called the 'Holy Masjid') was already described as a shrine of worship by Deodorus Siculus in 60 BC. It was used for idol

worship and occult practices long before the time of Muhammad, who then linked it to Abraham and Ishmael, even Adam, to give it credence.

The Hajj

The pilgrimage to the Ka'ba was also practiced long before Muhammad's time. Like today, it included circumambulating the Ka'ba, the kissing of the Black Stone, visits to the hills of Safa and Marwa including the run between the two hills, and also the throwing of stones against a stone pillar, symbolizing Iblis (the devil), in Wadi Mina. Also the slaughtering of sacrifices at Mina was a heathen practice. Muhammad attributed a new history and meaning to this pagan cult.

The Ritual Prayers

The now extinct tribe of the Sabaeans²², who lived in the Arabian Peninsular, observed seven daily prayers at appointed times. Muhammad selected five of these for his followers, including their names and gave it legitimacy by claiming that this was ordained by God, while on his nightly journey to heaven ('miraj'). The Sabaeans also prayed for the dead, a custom that has been adopted by Islam.

Fasting During Ramadaan

The Sabaeans fasted thirty days every year and celebrated the Eid-festival at the end as the breaking of the fast. The fast was prolonged by one day, should the new moon not be clearly visible on Eid. This practice was also incorporated into the new religion of Islam. In the Mishna Berkhoth (Jewish Talmud) it is said that fasting should begin and stop at the time when one can begin to distinguish between a white and black cotton-thread. This custom has also been incorporated into Islamic traditions.

We cannot accept that these imitations are purely coincidental. We hold that they were known to Muhammad, and that he incorporated them into the Qur'an, while others were incorporated into the Hadith. The assumption that the Ka'ba, the Hajj, the Fast and the Prayer regulations date back to Abraham and Ishmael, who introduced them to Arabia, cannot possibly be established. It is unbiblical and highly unlikely to have survived

²² See Bible, Job 1:15

2 500 years of verbal transmission in a pagan society, when no acceptable source provides any evidence for this.

Qur'anic Concepts taken from the Jewish Talmud

In the Arabian Peninsula a number of Jewish communities had settled in the diaspora following the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. These seem to have largely been guided by legends (Haggada etc.) and Talmudic writings, rather than the Torah. Many Jews at the time believed that the Talmud had been added to the 'preserved tablets' (i.e. the Ten Commandments, which were kept in the Ark of the Covenant and were believed to be replicas of the heavenly books). Muhammad edited these sources, and not the Bible, into the Qur'an.

Satan's Refusal to worship Adam	This report from Surah 2:34 can be traced to the Talmud ("Islam" by A. Guillaume, p. 62).
Cain and Abel	The way the story of Cain and Abel is related in Surah 5:30-35 shows quite clearly that this is copied from the Targum of Jonathan-ben-Uzziah, the Targum of Jerusalem and Pirke Rabbi Eleazar.
Abraham	Whatever Muhammad knew about Abraham is not from the Bible, but from Jewish legends, the source being the Midrash Rabbah (Surahs 2:260; 6:74-84; 19:42-50; 21:52-72; 26:70-82; 29:16+17; 37:83-89; 43:26-30; 60:4).
The Visit of the Queen of Sheba	This is fancifully described in Surah 27:17 ff. Like the other stories, it does not reflect the Bible at all. We can determine the source, however, which evidently is the 2 nd Targum of the Book of Esther (paraphrased translation), although Muhammad reports this as to be from the Bible.
Harut and Marut	These two angels are mentioned in Surah 2:102. Harut and Marut were idols worshipped in Armenia. Their existence was inspired by Marut, the Hindu god of the wind. We find this story related in the Talmud (Midrash Yalzut, Chapt. 44).
Seven Heavens and Seven Hells	The reports of these in Surahs 15:44 and 17:44 have their source in the Jewish tradition called Hagigah and Zuhal.

Qur'anic Concepts taken from the Apocrypha

The Apocrypha is a collection of legends and stories about Jesus, mainly from the second Century, which were not accepted as Scripture by the early Church, because they could not be linked to the Apostles, and consequently lacked authenticity. Christian sectarians that had accommodated the Apocrypha and their teaching must have found their way to the Arabian Peninsula. Muhammad had obviously heard these fables, believing they were part of the Gospel. Also one of Muhammad's concubines, Mary, the Copt, could have related these stories to him, as well as Waraqa ibn Naufal, a cousin of Muhammad's first wife Khadijah, who is called a Christian in the Hadith. It is undeniable that these legends rather than the authentic Bible found their way into the Qur'an.

Jesus

Jesus' name in the Arabic Qur'an is Isa. In Surah 19:16-31 it is related that He was born under palm trees. This story can be traced back to the 'History of Nativity', an apocryphal writing. When, according to the Qur'an, Mary's family rebuked her for having a child outside a marriage bond, the newborn Jesus speaks out of the cradle in defence of his mother. The source of this legend is the so-called 'Gospel of Infancy'. (Both sources are not biblical, but are apocryphal).

In Surahs 3:49 and 5:113 it is related that as a child Jesus formed a bird out of clay. By breathing on it, he made it come alive so that it flew away. This story comes from the so-called 'Gospel of Thomas' (Apocrypha). In Surah 4:156 it is related that Jesus was neither killed nor crucified. The source is a Docetic or Gnostic heresy, promoted by Basilides, an early Christian heretic of the second century.

The Hadith speaks of the return of Jesus in a way that is foreign to the Bible. At his return to earth, he will supposedly live forty years, marry and have children, then die and be buried next to Muhammad in Medina.

The Trinity

Christians are surprised to discover in Surahs 5:116 and 5:75+76 that the Trinity comprises of God, Mary and Jesus. This thought is foreign to Christians and the Bible, but no doubt finds its origin in the veneration of

Mary as ‘The Mother of God’, something still practiced in the Catholic and Orthodox communities.

The Virgin Mary

Christians read with astonishment in Surah 19:28+29 that Mary, the Mother of Jesus, was a sister of Aaron. Learned men of Islam, who are aware that Miriam, the sister of Aaron, and Miriam or Mary, the mother of Jesus, are separated by a gap of 1 500 years, try to explain that Mary, the mother of Jesus, also had a brother who was also named Aaron. Since Mary is also called the daughter of Imran (Surah 66:12), the Amram of Exodus 6:20, we have to dismiss this attempt to cover up a historic blunder in the Qur’an. Amram was indeed the father of Aaron, Moses and Miriam. To top it all, Jalalu’d Deen had stated that Mary’s mother was Hannah, as mentioned in 1.Sam.1. If that would be correct, she would have lived about 1 000 years before her ‘daughter’.

‘The Gospel of James’, another apocryphal book, was the source of the report that the girl Mary lived in the Temple, receiving food from angels, and that Joseph was chosen to be her husband by miraculous rods, as the Qur’an reports (Surah 3:35+36.42-47).

Miraj

This describes the ascension of Muhammad to the Seventh Heaven during a miraculous nightly journey from Mecca to Jerusalem on a horse-like beast, called Buraq. This story is related to us in Surah 17. More detail is furnished by al-Bukhari (4.429, 4.462, 6.240, 7.482, 7.508, 8.583, 8.610) and Tirmizi (1445, 5920). We can trace this story back to a fictitious book called the ‘Testament of Abraham’, which was written in Egypt (200 BC) and then translated into Greek and Arabic.

The Cave of the Seven Sleepers

It is not difficult to detect the striking resemblance of this story from Surah 18:9-26 to a book called the ‘Story of Martyrs’ by Gregory of Tours. It is a legendary tale of Christians under persecution who fell asleep in a cave for 200 years. The Qur’an prolongs this to 309 years.

All this is a hopeless mix-up of historical events. Why should we, in the light of this, believe the Qur'an to be true and the Bible to be corrupted? All the evidences point to the opposite.

Qur'anic Concepts taken from Eastern Sources

Paradise

The description of Paradise in Surahs 55:56 and 56:35+36, which speak of "wide-eyed Houris with eyes like pearls, a recompense for what they laboured", has interesting parallels in the Zoroastrian religion of Persia, where their name is not Houris, but Paaris.

Balances

For some strange reason, people of the Western World entertain the unbiblical idea of a set of balances, which God will operate on the Day of Judgement to weigh our good and bad deeds against each other, to determine whether we qualify for heaven or hell. In stark contrast to this the Bible teaches explicitly and repeatedly that justification is by faith, and not by good deeds, although these will be the outflow of their faith.

Although the balance and judgement concept is found in the Qur'an in Surahs 101:5+6 and 42:7, we discover that the original source is the 'Testament of Abraham'. 'The Book of the Dead', also from Egypt, refers to judgement by Osiris, an Egyptian deity, and here the same concept of judgement by balances is used.

The Sirat

This is a bridge that supposedly leads over an abyss with hell below on the way to Paradise, and which only the good people will be able to cross. This concept was well known in Persia, and is called Chinavad (the connecting link) in the Zoroastrian book 'Dinkart'.

Qur'anic Concepts borrowed from the Hanifs (Hanifites)

Hanifs are supposed to have been followers of the true religion of Abraham, men who rejected the polytheistic worship prevalent in pre-Islamic Mecca. In contrast to the pagans they believed in one God, the

‘God of Abraham’. While the Qur’an makes no direct mention of these men, and only one or two AHadith refer to them, the biography of Muhammad by Ibn Ishaq gives some detail. Four men are mentioned by name. We must assume that their knowledge about the one God of Abraham did not have its source in oral transmission from the time of Abraham, but rather from their contact with the Jews who lived in their neighbourhood.

The Hanifs, the Qur’an and the Hadith, had a common belief. All three rejected idol worship and the burying of infant girls, which was an Arabian practice. They accepted the ‘unity of God’, whatever that is supposed to mean, believed in Paradise and hell, and call Allah ‘Lord Most Merciful and Compassionate’. It is most probable that Muhammad, when he withdrew to the cave of Hira, met Zaid-ibn-Amr, one of them. The Meccans too rejected him. It was for the statement ‘I worship the God of Abraham’. He had been expelled from Mecca and lived on Mount Hira. In pre-Islamic Arabia the word Hanif meant ‘unclean’ or ‘apostate’, because Hanifs had abandoned their former religion. Muhammad gave this word a positive connotation. It now means ‘one that is inclined to God’, or is simply taken to mean ‘orthodox’. By implication Abraham was a Hanif (Surahs 4:125; 3:95 and 6:161). The Meccans were strongly admonished by Muhammad:



Verily my Lord hath guided me to a way that is straight, a religion of right the path (trod) by Abraham the true in faith and he (certainly) joined not gods with Allah. *Surah 6:161*

It is sad to realize that today’s Muslims do not follow the faith of Abraham. Had they turned to the Taurat for their knowledge about him, history would have taken another course.

It is revealing to consider the lives and fate of the four Hanifs as told in the “Siratu’l Nabi” by ibn Ishaq, the earliest biographer of Muhammad:



One day when the Quraysh had assembled on a feast day to venerate and circumambulate the idol to which they offered sacrifices, this being a feast which they held annually, four men drew apart secretly and agreed to keep their counsel in the bonds of friendship. They were Waraqa b.Naufal, Ubaydullah b.Jahsh, whose mother was Umayma d.’Abdu’l Muttalib, Uthman

b.al-Huwayrith and Zayd b.'Amr. They were of the opinion that their people had corrupted the religion of their father Abraham, and that the stone they went round was of no account; it could neither hear, nor see, nor hurt, nor help. 'Find for yourselves a religion', they said, 'for by God you have none'. So they went their several ways in the lands, seeking the Hanifiya, the religion of Abraham.

Waraqah attached himself to Christianity and studied its Scriptures until he had thoroughly mastered them. 'Ubaydullah went on searching until Islam came; then he migrated with the Muslims to Abyssinia taking with him his wife who was a Muslim, Umm Habiba. When he arrived there he adopted Christianity, parted from Islam, and died a Christian in Abyssinia. After his death the apostle married his widow Umm Habiba. Uthman b.al-Huwayrith went to the Byzantine emperor and became a Christian. He was given high office there. Zayd b.'Amr stayed as he was: he accepted neither Judaism nor Christianity. He abandoned the religion of his people and abstained from idols, animals that had died, blood, and things offered to idols. He forbade the killing of infant daughters, saying that he worshipped the God of Abraham, and he publicly rebuked his people for their practices.

Hisham b.'Urwa from his father on the authority of his mother Asma d.Abu Bakr said that she saw Zayd as a very old man leaning his back on the Ka'ba and saying: 'O Quraysh, By Him in whose hand is the soul of Zayd, not one of you follows the religion of Abraham but I'. Then he said: 'O God, if I know how you wished to be worshipped I would so worship you; but I do not know'. Then he prostrated himself on the palms of his hands.

Siratu'l Rasul, by Ibn Ishay, pp. 98-100: 'Four Men Who Broke With Polytheism'

Most significant is perhaps a statement of Ubaid Ubaydullah b.Jahsh:



While living there [i.e. Ethiopia], he converted to Christianity and died a Christian. After his conversion, he said to his companions who had migrated with him to Abyssinia, 'We have clearly come to know the truth, but you still search for it and have not yet seen anything '.

With these words he employed an expression that is used when a young dog opens its eyes for the first time, seeing nothing clearly. *Siratu'l Nabi*

4.1.12 An Evaluation

Can one reasonably assume that the many similarities between the Qur'an on the one hand, and the Apocrypha, Talmudic, Persian and other writings are purely coincidental? The odd one may well be. Knowing that there was

contact between Muhammad and Jews and sectarian Christians, who used the stories which reappeared in the Qur'an, we have little choice but to assume that the Qur'an was authored by Muhammad. The dissimilarities between the Bible text and its fanciful and incorrect appearance in the Qur'an cannot be explained other than that Muhammad's knowledge of the Bible was at best scanty and poor, and that he was misled into believing that the legendary tales he heard were actually biblical.

We also remember Salman, the Persian, who is mentioned in the Siratu'l Nabi and indirectly in the Qur'an. He was suspected by the contemporary Arabs of being someone who taught Muhammad (Surah 16:102,103).

(Much of the above information has been gleaned from "*The Sources of Islam*" by W. St.Clair-Tisdall.)

4.2 The Hadith

4.2.1 Introduction and Definition

The aHadith (pl. of Hadith) are a collection of traditions about Muhammad's life. The purpose is twofold:

- to interpret the meaning of the Qur'an rightly (called Tafsir).
- to be able to imitate the life style of Muhammad. Such imitation is considered to be highly meritorious. This is called Sunnah (= 'path', 'way', 'manner of life').

"Since only a few people are sure of the morality of their actions, it has always been considered a 'good' way to do what most people do. To copy the one who was Allah's chosen Prophet, who must have been well-pleasing to Allah, is surely to follow the best example." (*Jens Christensen*)

In the Hadith the Muslim seeks guidance for his life-style. According to Islam, good deeds and right action earn eternal life in Paradise, and these are obtained by 'al-hidaya', 'right guidance'. Since Muslims consider Muhammad's life and everyday walk and talk to have been inspired, copying what he did, seems to Muslim believers the safest way to please Allah. In real terms the religious life of Muslims centers more on the Hadith than on the Qur'an:



Some of us met to exchange Hadith reports. One fellow said: 'Enough of this! Refer to the Book of Allah'. Imran b. Husain said: 'You are a fool! Do you find in the Book of Allah the prayers explained in detail? Or the Fast? The Qur'an refers to them in general terms only. It is the Sunnah which supplies the detailed explanation'.
L'tibar, by al Hamda

Although the aHadith were collected and written down much later (about 250-300 years), the imitation of Muhammad's life was encouraged by him from the beginning:



Yahya related to me from Malik that he heard that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, 'I have left two matters with you. As long as you hold to them, you will not go the wrong way. They are the Book of Allah and the Sunna of His Prophet.'
Al-Muwatta, 46.3

Narrated Abu Huraira that he heard Allah's Apostle saying, ... "He who obeys me, obeys Allah, and he who disobeys me, disobeys Allah.

al-Bukhari Vol. 4, p. 128-129, No 204

In practical terms it looks somewhat like this:



Narrated by Zaid bin Aslam from his father who said: Umar bin Al-Khattab addressed the Corner (Black Stone) saying, 'By Allah! I know that you are a stone and can neither benefit nor harm. Had I not seen the Prophet touching (and kissing) you, I would never have touched (and kissed) you.' Then he kissed it.

al-Bukhari Vol. 2, p. 394-395, No 675

Abdullah ibn-Umar was seen riding his camel in a circle at a certain place. When questioned about the purpose of this exercise, he said: „That I know not, only I have seen the Prophet do so here.”

Ahmad-ibn-Hanbal would not eat watermelon, because although he knew the Prophet ate them, he did not know whether he ate them with or without the rind, or whether he broke, bit or cut them. Even so, his action was not Sunnah, for Muhammad did eat watermelons!

4.2.2 The Contents of the Hadith

These cover just about every aspect of life:

The Qur'an and its revelation and collection, faith, knowledge, ablution (ritual washings), prayers, funerals, charity, the pilgrimage, fasting, business of all kinds, slavery, testaments, the 'holy war', prophets, particularly the virtues of Muhammad, marriage, divorce, food and eating, medicines, sacrifices, dress and manners, pre-destination, oaths, inheritance, punishment, treatment of apostates from Islam, dreams, cleanliness and eternal judgment, but also trivial things such as sneezing, yawning, the trimming of a beard, the use of perfume, the cleaning of the teeth and nose and the use of a toilet.

Other aHadith deal with dietary prescriptions, hygiene, perfume and an insight into paradise:



Ibn 'Abbas reported Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) as saying: 'When any one of you eats food he should not wipe his hand until he has licked it or got it licked by someone else'. Jabir reported that Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) commanded the licking of fingers and the dish, saying: 'You do not know in what portion the blessing lies'.

Ibn 'Abbas reported Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) as saying: 'When any one of you eats food he should not wipe his hand until he has licked it or got it licked by someone else'.

Sahih Muslim Vol. 3, p. 1119-1120, No 5037-5038

Umm Sulaym reported that 'Allah's Apostle (peace be upon him) visited her house and (took rest) and she spread a piece of cloth for him and he had a siesta on it. And he sweated profusely and she collected his sweat and put it in a perfume and in bottles. Allah's Apostle (peace be upon him) said: Umm Sulaym, what is this? She said: It is your sweat, which I put in my perfume.

Sahih Muslim Vol. 4, p. 1248, No 5763

Jabir reported: 'I heard Allah's Apostle (peace be upon him) as saying that the inmates of paradise would eat and drink but would neither spit, nor pass water, nor void excrement, nor suffer catarrh. It was said: Then, what would happen with food? Thereupon he said: They would belch and sweat (and it would be over with their food), and their sweat would be that of musk and they would glorify and praise Allah as easily as you breathe.

Sahih Muslim Vol. 4, p. 1479-1480, No 6798

On a more serious level, all that Muslims should and should not do is laid down. Some selected aHadith may convey to us the spirit of the legalism involved.



Narrated Abu Talha: The Prophet said, 'Angels do not enter a house in which there is a dog or there are pictures.'

al-Bukhari Vol. 7, p. 540, No 833

Narrated Aisha: 'I purchased a cushion with pictures on it. The Prophet (came and) stood at the door but did not enter. I said (to him), 'I repent to Allah for what (the guilt) I have done.' He said, 'What is this cushion?' I said, 'It is for you to sit on and recline on.' He said, 'The makers of these pictures will be punished on the Day of Resurrection.'

al-Bukhari Vol. 7, p. 543, No840

"Narrated Aisha: 'the Prophet entered upon me while there was a curtain having pictures (of animals) in the house. His face got red with anger, and then he got hold of the curtain and tore it into pieces. The Prophet said, 'Such people as paint these pictures will receive the severest punishment on the Day of Resurrection.'

al-Bukhari Vol. 8, p. 83-84, No 130

These aHadith are responsible for Muslim homes being decorated almost exclusively with pictures of the Ka'ba or Qur'an verses in calligraphic (ornamental) writing. All other motifs are 'haraam', that is forbidden. Ironically we see Muslims use a camera and watching TV!



Buraida reported on the authority of his father that 'Allah's Apostle (peace be upon him) said: He who played chess is like one who dyed his hand with the flesh and blood of swine.'

Sahih Muslim Vol. 4, p. 1222, No 5612

Jabir b. 'Abdullah reported Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) as saying: None of you should lie on his back and place one of his feet upon the other.

Sahih Muslim Vol. 3, p. 1155, No 5238

Narrated Asma: A woman asked the Prophet saying, 'Oh Allah's Apostle! My daughter got measles and her hair fell out. Now that I got her married, may I let her use false hair?' He said (to her), 'Allah has cursed the lady who lengthens hair artificially and the one who gets her hair lengthened artificially.'

al-Bukhari Vol. 7, pp. 536-537. No 824

Yahya related to me from Malik that Humayd ibn Qays al-Makki said, 'A man came to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, with the two sons of Jafar ibn Abi Talib. He said to their nursemaid, 'Why do I see them so thin?' Their nursemaid said, 'Messenger of Allah, the evil eye goes quickly to them. Nothing stops us from asking someone to make talismans (using ayats of Qur'an) for them, except that we do not know what of that would agree with you.' The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, 'Make talismans for them. Had anything been able to precede the decree, the evil eye would precede it. *Malik's Muwatta 50, No 2.3*

Abd Huraira reported Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) as saying: 'Let there be the curse of Allah upon the thief who steals an egg and his hand is cut off, and steals a rope and his hand is cut off.

Sahih Muslim Vol. 3, p. 908, No 4185

Some aHadith will cause us to smile. We obviously have to take them with a 'pinch of salt':



Ibn Umar reported Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) as saying: that a non-Muslim eats in seven intestines whereas a Muslim eats in one intestine.

Sahih Muslim Vol 3, p. 1137, No 5113

Abu Hurairah reported that the Messenger of Allah said: 'When a fly falls in [sic] the utensil of some one of you, immerge [sic] it, because there is disease in one of its wings and cure in another, and also because it first throws its wing wherein there is disease. So immerge [sic] it entirely.

Mishkat Vol. 2, p. 152, No 109

Another Hadith records:



Narrated Abu Huraira: The Prophet said, 'Allah loves sneezing but dislikes yawning; so if anyone of you sneezes and then praises Allah, every Muslim who hears him (praising Allah) has to say 'Tashmit' to him. But as regards yawning, it is from Satan, so if one of you yawns, he should try his best to stop it, for when anyone of you yawns, Satan laughs at him

al-Bukhari Vol. 8, pp. 158-159, No 245

The commentator of the Mishkat explains:



Yawning is the result of sloth and sluggishness and has therefore been termed coming from the devil, and sneezing is the result of sound brain and sound health and is therefore termed as coming from an angel. Whenever a man yawns, he should cover his mouth with cloth or hands, as something injurious may enter there.

Mishkat Vol. 1, p. 589, commentary

The Hadith collector Muslim in another footnote throws more light on this topic:



Sneezing was spoken of as good as it makes the brain clear, and yawning was spoken of as coming from the devil as it comes out as a result of sloth and idleness.

Mishkat Vol. 1, p. 590, Fn. 497

The son of Abu Sa'id al-Khudri reported on the authority of his father that Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) said: 'When one of you yawns, he should try to restrain it with the help of his hand since it is the Satan that enters therein.

Sahih Muslim Vol. 4, p. 1540, No 7131

4.2.3 The Collection and Trustworthiness of the Hadith

As soon as Muhammad had died, questions regarding the fulfilment of the demand to live according to the Sunnah, arose. And from that time the Traditions were used to find the respective answers. It became an oral tradition, which was handed down from generation to generation for 250 years and more.

One can hardly expect distortions or inaccuracies to be avoided. And that happened. In addition, theologians who needed backing for certain interpretations of their own, supported what they wanted to propagate, with aHadith of their own making.

Sober scrutiny will cast doubt on the reliability of many a Hadith. The mode of collection, selection and collation by the recognized Hadith collectors adds to the dilemma. To give an example: Abu Da'ud, one of them, accepted only 4 800 traditions out of a mass of 500 000. Although he must have been very critical in his assessment and selection, he states that

he has written down only “those which seem to be authentic and those which are nearly so.” (Ibn-Khalikan, Vol. 1, p. 159)

Of 40 000 Hadith transmitters, who had been instrumental in handing down Traditions, al-Bukhari acknowledges only 2 000 as reliable authorities. From 600 000 aHadith that he had gathered, he selected a mere 7 200, of which about half are duplicates of others. Each selection was done according to the judgement of only the one individual collector. Al-Bukhari selected 1.2% of the available material well over 200 years after the recorded events supposedly took place. By comparison we would today have to think of the reconstruction of happenings that had been orally transmitted from the time of George Washington and the American War of Independence, or the composer Frederick Haendel.

Strangely, the chief method for establishing the trustworthiness a Hadith, is the identification of the ‘chain of transmitters’ (arab. ‘isnad’). This is supposed to detect any unreliable Tradition. A typical ‘isnad’ looks somewhat like this: “Abu Hurairah reported on the authority of Zaid ibn Sabet who told Nu’man ibn Amr who heard it from Safwan ibn Solaim that: ...”

The actual Hadith content (arab. matn) then follows such a chain of reference.

A grading into degrees of reliability was introduced. A Hadisu’s-Sahih is a ‘genuine tradition’, handed down by truly pious persons, distinguished for their integrity. Then we find the Hadisu’s-Za’if, which is a ‘weak tradition’. Another school divides them into ‘exhorted traditions’, ‘restricted traditions’ and ‘intersected traditions’. Yet another one divides the Hadith into ‘undoubted tradition’, ‘well-known tradition’, ‘rare tradition’, ‘poor tradition’ and a ‘single saying’. All this after having been extensively sifted by the collectors!

From the host of Tradition-collections (some 1465!), Muslim scholars have selected six, which, according to their judgment, were authentic. These are now called the ‘correct books’ (Sihahu’s Sittah) and are named after their collectors:

1. al-Bukhari	(256 AH) = AD 871
2. Muslim	(261 AH) = AD 876
3. at-Tirmizi	(279 AH) = AD 894
4. Abu-Da'ud	(275 AH) = AD 889
5. Abu-Abdi'r-Rahman	(303 AH) = AD 916
6. Abu Abdi'llah Muhammad	(273 AH) = AD 886

In addition we also have to mention the Mishkat (or more exactly, the 'Mishkatu'l-Masabih'):



...being a collection of most authentic sayings and doings of the Prophet Muhammad selected from the most reliable collections of Hadith literature...

The whole of the theological and judicial system and its practical application is, apart from the Qur'an, based on these books.

4.2.4 Islamic Teaching on Obedience to the Traditions

The commentary of the 'Mishkat' teaches Muslims:



The traditions of the Holy Prophet have got paramount importance side by side with the Qur'an in the formation of a religious life of a human being for the attainment of perfection. Indeed the Qur'an minus Hadis remains unintelligible in many cases in the work-a-day life of a man. It is the very injunction of the Qur'an to follow the Prophet in all his deeds and sayings. Therefore, if the Qur'an is believed, there is no other alternative, but to believe in the Hadis of the Prophet. Some of the verses that have been revealed in this connection are as follows: *'Say, if you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you (Surah 3:30).*

Most certainly it is the word of an honoured Apostle, the possessor of strength, having an honourable place with the Lord of the Throne - one to be obeyed, and faithful in trust...

'And whatever the Apostle giveth you, accept; and whatever he forbiddeth you, keep back, and be careful of your duty to Allah'. (*Surah 59:7*)...

And it behoves not a believing man and a believing woman that they should have any choice (in their matter) when Allah and His Apostle have decided a

matter; whoso disobeys Allah and His Apostle, he surely strays off a manifest straying. (*Surah 33:36*)...

Jaber reported that the Messenger of Allah said on the Farewell Pilgrimage: 'And I have left among you a thing which if you adhere to, you will never be misguided after me - the Book of Allah and what you get from me by questions.' (1:118) *This refers to Hadis...*

'Whoso obeys me shall enter Paradise and whoso disobeys me, has indeed rejected truth. (1:97) Once a copy of the Torah was seen in the hand of a companion. The prophet got enraged and said: By One in whose hand there is my life, had Moses come to you and you would have followed him and left me, you would have certainly gone astray from the right path. Had Moses been alive and would have reached my prophethood, he would have certainly followed me.' (1:20w)...

Jalalud-din Sayuti says: 'If one seeks the Qur'an he shall seek 'Sunnah' because it is the commentary of the Qur'an and its explanation. Darimi reported that Hasan said: Gabriel revealed 'Sunnah' to the Holy Prophet as He revealed the Qur'an to him. He says also that 'Sunnah' is a judge upon the Qur'an and not the Qur'an upon Sunnah. Hedayah says: Hadis is a hidden revelation and that which differs from Hadis to the extent of a hair shall be given up.

From the above verses, traditions and sayings of theologians, it is now beyond question that all Muslims to whatever ages and climes do they belong, must necessarily follow the Hadis of the Holy Prophet.

Mishkat Vol. 1, p. 3-5, introduction

The commentator of the Hadith of Sahih Muslim exhorts:



We have been told in clear terms that the Holy Prophet (may peace be upon him) neither said anything nor did anything of his own accord; whatever he said and whatever he did emanated from the Lord:

'He does not speak of his own desire'

Surah 53:8

'Say, I follow only that which is revealed to me from my Lord' (*Surah 7:203*).

All the utterances and deeds of the Holy Prophet (may peace be upon him) are thus divinely inspired, and in them alone can one find the true meaning and the real significance of the Will of Allah.

Mere transmission of the Book of Allah to the people faithfully and sincerely does not exhaust the Prophet's duties. On him also lies the responsibility of

explaining the real purpose of the Qur'anic teachings and then giving them a visible shape so that mankind may see, along with the injunctions of Allah, the process of their transformation into reality and the outward forms in which they are to be crystallised.

Words alone, however powerful and however pointed, cannot be fully comprehended unless these conjure before our minds definite forms and shapes. Similarly, precepts, however valuable, can be best understood only when these are supported by living examples.

It is indeed a boundless favour of Allah to humanity that, along with His message, He also sent to us His Messenger to elaborate and elucidate it, and then transmute it into practical reality under his direct guidance.

And We have sent unto thee the Admonition that thou mayest expound unto mankind that which hath been revealed towards them.

As a final dispenser of the Message of Allah, the Prophet alone is best fitted and, therefore, divinely authorized to determine the meanings of the Holy Qur'an, to unfold before humanity the deep wisdom contained in it...

The Prophet is no doubt human, but his leadership is divinely inspired and none can be called a Muslim who does not accept this basic doctrine of the Holy Qur'an.

Say (O Muhammad): If you love Allah, follow me and Allah will love you and forgive you your sins; for Allah is Forgiving, a Dispenser of Mercy (Surah 3:31).

It is by following Muhammad (may peace be upon him) that we can achieve the cherished goal of winning Allah's favour...

Some of the misguided people suggest that the commands of the Holy Prophet (may peace be upon him) were valid only during his lifetime, and that now when he is no more amongst us, we need follow only the injunctions of the Holy Qur'an and treat the Hadith as an account of the past which has some allusions to the life of the Holy Prophet (may peace be upon him), having no practical value as a code of life. These so-called pseudo-reformers [sic] little realise that a denial of the eternal validity of the Sunnah amounts to a denial of the Holy Qur'an's claim that the prophethood of Muhammad (may peace be upon him) is not time-bound; it is universal and the Prophet's words and deeds are the timeless expressions of the Will of Allah.

Say: O mankind! Surely I am the Messenger of Allah to you all, of him Whose is the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth. There is no god but He: so believe in Allah and His Messenger, the ummi Prophet, who believes in Allah and His words, and follow him so that you may be guided aright (Surah 7:158).

Muhammad (may peace be upon him) is the Messenger of Allah for the whole of mankind; no new prophet is to be raised after him. His prophethood is thus both universal and eternal. It is, therefore, an integral part of one's faith in the prophethood of Muhammad (may peace be upon him) that his words and deeds should always be taken as one of the two most reliable sources of right guidance...

The study of the records of the AHadith and the life-history of those who maintained them proves beyond any shadow of doubt that the preservation of the Hadith was not an after-thought, conceived long after the death of the Holy Prophet (may peace be upon him). It started right during his lifetime and was continued immediately after him with full earnestness and religious fervour, because it had to serve eternally as the fountain-head of right guidance.

Sahih Muslim, Vol. 1, p. 1-4, introduction

4.2.5 A Christian Evaluation Of The Hadith

The system of thought in Islam has at all times focused on what a Muslim must do. Performance is seen to be the key to redemption. Submission and the gaining of merit are the focal point of its religion.

Instead, the focus should be on God. Who is He? What is He like? How can we relate to Him? Will He be satisfied with man's effort to score a little better, or by submissiveness, which is expressed in a thousand forms? A relationship of love is reciprocal. It rests on the devotion of our hearts and not a slavish submission.

We cannot fail to discover how the strict observance of the Traditions puts a Muslim into a legalistic straightjacket of "Do's" and "Don'ts". Questions of what is 'halaal' (= permitted), and what is 'haraam' (= forbidden) direct the everyday life of a Muslim.

Christians are no longer under the law. The following passages will remind us that Christ has 'set us free' (Galatians 5:1).

Jesus said:



Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart and these make a man 'unclean'. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder,

adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man 'unclean', but eating with unwashed hands does not make him 'unclean'.
Matt 15:17-20

See to it that no-one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principle of this world rather than on Christ ... Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink or with regard to a religious festival, a new moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ....

Since you died with Christ to the basic principles of this world, why, as though you still belonged to it, do you submit to its rules: 'Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch?' These are all destined to perish with use, because they are based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.
Col 2:8, 16-23

... gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshipper. They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings - external regulations applying until the time of the new order. When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.
Heb 9:8-12

Recommended Literature for Chapter 4

- An Introduction to Qur'anic Studies, The true Guidance 4, *Light of Life*, 1994, 155 pages.
- Introduction to the Qur'an, *Bell and M. Watt, Edinburgh Un4. Press* 1970, 250 pages.
- The Teaching of the Qur'an, *H.U.W. Stanton, Biblo & Tannen, N.Y.* 1969, 130 pages.
- Christians ask Muslims, *Gerhard Nehls, LCA* 1992, pp. 89-102, 124-132. (a critical investigation of the claims of Islam regarding its Books, faith and practices)
- Ishmael, my Brother, *Anne Cooper, MARC, Evangelical Missionary Alliance*, 1993, pp. 77-97.

- Jam' Al-Qur'an, The Codification of the Qur'an Text, *John Gilchrist, MERCSA, 1989, 154 pages.* (proves that there were several phases in the compilation of the standardised form of the Qur'an by surveying the earliest records. This detailed study rejects the claim that the Qur'an is of divine origin)
- The Qur'an - the Scripture of Islam, *John Gilchrist, MERCSA, 1995, 147 pages* (the structure and teaching of the Qur'an, its impact on modern Muslims, but also the Qur'an's origin and collection are dealt with respectfully but not without putting forward some pertinent questions)
- The Collection of the Qur'an, *John Burton, Cambridge University Press 1977, 270 pages.* (a scholarly investigation in the composition of the Qur'an)
- The Sources of Islam, *W. St. Clair-Tisdall, transl. And abridged by Sir W. Muir, Edinburgh: Light of Life, 1900*
- Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur'an, *Arthur Jeffrey, Brill, Leiden 1937, 360 pages.* (a compilation of the variant readings of the early Qur'an collections from the 'Kitab al-Masahif' by ibn Abi Dawud)
- A 'Perfect' Qur'an, *Brother Mark, aperfectQur'an_bookqueries@iname.com, 400 pages.* (a critical assessment of the claim that the Qur'an was never changed)
- The Qur'an and its Exegesis, *Helmut Gatje, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1971, 300 pages.* (a concise application of Islamic Theology)
- Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law, *Ignaz Goldziher, Princeton Univ. Press 1981, 300 pages.* (a study of the development of Islam and its theology and law)
- Do's and Do Not's in Islam, *Abdur Rehman Shad, Yaj Publishers, Bombay 1992, 300 pages.* (a compilation of aHadith for the Muslim reader to outline his religious duties)
- Battle for the Hearts, Episode 3, The Qur'an – The book of Islam. *TWR & LCA, 2001.*
- Battle for the Hearts, Episode 4:1, The Hadith – The traditions of Islam. *TWR & LCA, 2001.*
- *Handout: Comparison between the Qur'an and the Bible*

5 Allah – His Nature and Essence

The Word “God” has Many Meanings

Let us be aware of the word God. It is a ‘multi-cultural’ name, used for a great number of deities (gods) or concepts. Buddha of the Far East, Vishnu, Krishna, Shiva, and thousands of others in India, not to mention the many deities in Africa, South America and Australia, are all called gods. Are they all the same? Of course not!

Recognizing the True God

We recognize a person by his or her features. Our friends know us by our looks and our voice, and we recognize them the same way. We may well say we all have a head with two ears, a nose, a mouth and hair etc. We all have a body with two arms and hands, two legs and feet, and inside us blood, flowing in veins, a heart, lungs, a stomach, intestines etc. etc. So we are all the same. Are we really? Can we distinguish one from another? Of course we can, and we do.

We cannot recognize Yahweh or Allah in the same, physical manner. We can recognize them only by what they reveal of themselves. Both claim to be the Creator of the world. Both claim to be almighty, all knowing, and present everywhere. Both have given mankind rules of behaviour, and both claim to be the Judge at the ‘Last Day’. Both speak of themselves as being merciful and forgiving. Both mention in their revelations Adam and Noah, Abraham and Moses, David and Jesus and many others. So far the similarities go.

But we can easily detect existential differences. These may be subtle, but are important indeed and need to be formulated and recognized; not to be difficult or sow dissention; not to create unnecessary boundaries or to create enmity; but to avoid deception.

5.1 The Nature and Essence of God in Islam and the Bible

Islam assumes that Allah is the biblical Yahweh Elohim, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Muhammad thought so, and the Qur'an expresses that in no uncertain terms:



Dispute ye not with the People of the Book [Jews and Christians], except with means better (than mere disputation), unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong (and injury); But say: 'We believe in the Revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you; our Allah and your Allah is One; and it is to Him we bow (in Islam)'. *Surah 29:46*

Say ye: 'We believe in Allah, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that given to Moses and Jesus and that given to (all) prophets from their Lord; We make no difference between one and another of them; and we bow to Allah (in Islam)'. *Surah 2:136*

We can read similarly in Surahs 3:2-3; 4:136; 5:47, 71; 10:17, 94; 6:92; 4:47; 21:7! These statements are supposed to be believed and accepted by every Muslim. But this is generally not done.

5.1.1 Had the Knowledge of God been Kept Alive in Arabia since Hagar and Ishmael?

Muslims are made to believe that knowledge of God (Allah) was transmitted within their Arab society and culture of old by word of mouth, from the time of Hagar and Ishmael to Muhammad (2000 BC - AD 610). It was suppressed for a time by idol worship prior to the coming of Muhammad, but was upheld by the Hanifs, the people who kept on believing in the God of Abraham. This assumption cannot be substantiated and is a highly unlikely proposition. We will rather have to assume that the knowledge of Abraham and the rest of the biblical characters was transmitted to both the Hanifs and Muhammad, and by that to the Muslim world, through the Jews and Christians in Arabia.

5.1.2 The historical roots of the word ‘Allah’

Throughout the Middle East, from Turkey via Mesopotamia to Egypt, by the Sabaeans, Sumerians, Assyrians, Babylonians and Canaanites, a moon-god was worshipped. His wife was the sun and their daughters were the stars. This is reflected in Scripture (Deut 4:19, 2 Ki 3:5, Jer 8:2); for even the Israelites were tempted to worship them.

In the middle of the last Century (1950) archaeologists G. Caton Thompson, Carlton S. Coon, Wendell Phillips, the famous W.F. Albright and Richard Bower were at work at Qataban, Timna, Marib, the former capital of Sheba, and other places. They found thousands of inscriptions on walls and rocks in Northern Arabia, as well as reliefs and pictures of the three daughters of the moon-god al-Lat, al-Uzza and Manat with the Crescent Moon above them. The name of the moon-god was Sin, but his title was al-Ilah, i.e. ‘the god’. (This information is supplied by Dr. Robert Morey). So ‘al-Ilah’, later transformed to ‘Allah’, became the common name for God, also among the Christians and Jews in Arabia. Muhammad most likely drew his concept of God largely from these.

5.1.3 Who is Allah?

Allah, as understood in Islam, is ‘taweed’, absolute singular. He has no partners! (Surah 6:22-24.136-137.163). He also has no son! (Surahs 2:116; 6:100; 19:85; 23:91; 112:1-4). His attributes emphasise that he is merciful, gracious and all-forgiving. That again is flatly contradicted by the Islamic doctrine of Predestination (Surah 5:20; see also chapter ‘Predestination’). He is understood to be distant from man, although the Qur’an also says: “We [i.e. Allah] are nearer to him [i.e. man] than his jugular vein” (Surah 50:16).

Muslims interpret this to mean the closeness to Allah. In a sense this is true. But why speak of jugular vein and not that he is nearer than ones skin, or hair, or perhaps heart, or a friend? The context suggests that this closeness inspires a threat rather than comfort. A jugular vein is cut to kill!



1. Allah was known and worshipped by pagans long before Muhammad's time as a chief deity, somewhat representative of his 'daughters' or minor deities. Through the teaching of Muhammad he became a somewhat misunderstood or misrepresented form of the God of Abraham, and was given a somewhat biblical appearance.

2. The description of Yahweh Elohim (in the Bible) and Allah (in the Qur'an) vary strongly in much of the finer detail. However, both are viewed to be the creator, almighty etc., and the judge of mankind on the Last Day.

3. Muhammad - the only witness to the Qur'an, and by that also of Islam - does not biblically qualify for prophethood, particularly since his message differs fundamentally from biblical Scripture, which was revealed to many prophets over a period of 1400 years. There is also no other acceptable, evidenced reason by which Muhammad should be classified as a messenger from God among the biblical writers whom he contradicts. (Read: 'The Islamic-Christian Controversy').

4. There is no convincing evidence for the divine origin of the Qur'an.

5. Arab Christians use the name Allah for the God of the Bible, because it is the Arab word for God. In the Arabic Bibles the Word Elohim or Theos (= God) is always translated as Allah. This goes far back in history!

It follows that:



If the revelation, nature and expression of Allah in the Qur'an, does not coincide with those of the Bible, the Qur'anic Allah cannot be Yahweh Elohim, the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Israel, the father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In fairness to both, Muslims and Christians, we would like to present three assessments or presentations on the topic "Who is Allah." First a theological investigation followed by statements of two of the foremost theologians of Islam, Al-Ghazzali and Al-Barqawi.

In the Dictionay of Islam (by T.P. Hughes) we read:



Allah is supposed to be derived from ilah, a deity or god with the addition of the definite article al-Al-ilah, "the God" - or, according to some authorities, it is from lah, i.e. Al-lah, "the secret one". But Abu Hanifah says that just as the essence of God is unchangeable, so is His name, and that Allah has ever been the name of the Eternal Being.

Allah may be an Arabic rendering of the Hebrew El, and the unused root Ul, “to be strong”, or from Eloah, the singular form of Elohim... Another word very frequently used for the Almighty in the Qur’an is Rabb, which is generally translated in English versions of the Qur’an, “Lord”. It seems to stand in the relative position of the Jehovah of the Old Testament and the kyrios of the New Testament. The word is understood by Muslims to mean “the sustainer”, but it is probably derived from the Hebrew rabbah, “a stronghold”, or from its root rab, which, according to Gesenius, means “a multitude”, or anything of size or importance...

A belief in the existence of God, His Unity, His Absolute Power, and in the other essential attributes of an Eternal and Almighty Being, is the most important part of the Muslim religion, and is supposed to be expressed in the two clauses of the well-known formula: There is no deity but Allah.

The first clause, ‘There is no deity’ is known as the Nafi, or that which is rejected, and the second clause, ‘but Allah’, as the Isbat, or that which is established, the terms Nafi wa-Isbat being applied to the first two clauses of the Muslim’s Kalimah, or creed.

The teaching of Muhammad in his Qur’an as to the nature of God forms such an important consideration in an exposition of Islam, that no apology is needed...

The following verses are arranged in chronological order according to Jalalu’d-din as-Sayuti’s list: [- for full and lengthy quotations from that book on the subject.] *(Surah 112:1-4 [one of the earliest chapters of the Qur’an])*

Say, He is God, One (God) God the Eternal, Absolute. He begetteth not, nor is He begotten. And there is none equal unto Him.

Dictionary of Islam, by T. P. Hughes, pp. 141-144



They say, ‘(Allah) Most Gracious hath begotten a son!’ Indeed ye have put forth a thing most monstrous. At it the skies are ready to burst, the earth to split asunder, and the mountains to fall down in utter ruin. That they should invoke a son for (Allah) Most Gracious. For it is not consonant with the majesty of (Allah) Most Gracious that he should beget a son. Not one of the beings in the heavens and the earth but most come to (Allah) Most Gracious as a servant. He does take an account of them (all) and hath numbered them (all) exactly. And every one of them will come to Him singly on the Day of Judgement. On those who believe and work deeds of righteousness, will (Allah) Most Gracious bestow love. *Surah 19:88-96*

And your Allah is One Allah. There is no God but He, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of the night and the day; in the sailing of the ships through the

ocean for the profit of mankind; in the rain which Allah sends down from the skies, and the life which He gives therewith to an earth that is dead; in the beasts of all kinds that he scatters through the earth; in the change of the winds, and the clouds which they trail like their slaves between the sky and the earth; (Here) indeed are signs for a people that are wise. Yet there are men who take (for worship) others besides Allah as equal (with Allah). They love them as they should love Allah.

Surah 2:163-165

Allah! There is no god but He - the Living. The Self-subsisting, Eternal. No slumber can seize Him nor sleep. His are all things in the heavens and on earth. Who is there [sic. should read 'there who'] can intercede in his presence except as he permitteth? He knoweth what (appeareth to His creatures as) Before or After or Behind them. Nor shall they compass aught of his knowledge except as he willeth. His throne doth extend over the heavens and the earth, and he feeleth no fatigue in guarding and preserving them for he is the Most High, the Supreme (in glory).

Surah 2:255

Say: 'O Allah! Lord of Power (and Rule), Thou givest Power to whom Thou pleasest, and Thou strippest off Power from whom Thou pleasest.' Thou enduest with honour whom thou pleasest, and Thou bringest low whom Thou pleasest; in Thy hand is all Good. Verily, over all things Thou hast power.

Thou causeth the Night to gain on the Day, and Thou causeth the Day to gain on the Night; Thou bringest the Living out of the Dead, and Thou bringest the Dead out of the Living; and Thou givest sustenance to whom Thou pleasest without measure.

Surah 3:26+27

Dictionary of Islam, by T. P. Hughes, pp. 141-144

Let us follow this up with extracts written by two well-known and generally accepted Islamic theologians of old. For the sake of brevity we have selected the passages that are in contrast to a biblical understanding.

Al-Ghazzali (1058-1111) in his book 'al-Maqsadu'l-asna' describes the attributes of Allah, namely His power, His knowledge, His will, His word, and His works:



(His word) He does speak, command, forbid, promise, and threaten by an eternal, ancient word, subsisting in His essence. Neither is it like to the word of the creatures, nor does it consist in a voice arising from the commotion of the air and the collision of bodies, nor letters which are separated by the joining together of the lips or the motion of the tongue. The Qur'an, the Law, the Gospel, and the Psalter, are books sent down by Him to His apostles, and the Qur'an, indeed, is read with tongues, written in books, and kept in hearts.

(His works) He, praised be His name, exists after such a manner that nothing besides Him has any being but what is produced by His operation, and flows from His justice after the best, most excellent, most perfect, and most just model. He is, moreover, wise in His works, and just in His decrees. But His justice is not to be compared with the justice of men. For a man may be supposed to act unjustly by invading the possession of another; but no injustice can be conceived by God, inasmuch as there is nothing that belongs to any other besides Himself, so that wrong is not imputable to Him as meddling with things not appertaining to Him. All things, Himself only excepted, genii (spirits), men, the devil, angels, heaven, earth, animals, plants, substance, accident, intelligible, sensible, were all created originally by Him. He created them by His power out of mere pr4ation (necessity), and brought them into light, when as yet they were nothing at all, but He alone existing from eternity, neither was there any other with Him. Now He created all things in the beginning for the manifestation of His power, and His will, and the confirmation of His word, which was true from all eternity. Not that He stood in need of them, nor wanted them; but He manifestly declared His glory in creating and producing, and commanding, without being under any obligation, nor out of necessity. Loving kindness, the showing of favour and grace, and beneficence, belong to Him; whereas it is in His power to pour forth upon men a variety of torments, and afflict them with various kinds of sorrows and diseases, which, if He were to do, His justice could not be arraigned, nor would he be chargeable with injustice.

Yet he rewards those that worship Him for their obedience on account of his promise and beneficence, not of their merit nor of necessity, since there is nothing which He can be tied to perform; nor can any injustice be supposed in Him, nor can He be under any obligation to any person whatsoever. That His creatures however, should be bound to serve Him, arises from His having declared by the tongues of the prophets that it was due to Him from them. The worship of Him is not simply the dictate of the understanding, but He sent messengers to carry to men His commands, and promises, and threats, whose veracity He proved by manifest miracles, whereby men are obliged to give credit to them in those things that they relate.

Al-Maqsadu'l-asna, by Al-Ghazzali

Imam al-Barqavi was a celebrated Qur'an commentator and Tradition collector (died 1132). He wrote in his "Haft sifat":



God Most High is alone to be adored. He has neither associate nor equal. He is free from the imperfections of humanity. He is neither begotten nor does He beget. He is invisible. He is without figure, colour or parts. His existence has neither beginning nor end. He is immutable. If He so wills, He can annihilate the world in a moment of time and, if it seems good to Him, recreate it in an instant. Nothing is difficult to Him, whether it be

the creation of a fly or that of the seven heavens. He receives neither profit nor loss from whatever may happen. If all the Infidels became believers and all the irreligious pious, He would gain no advantage. On the other hand, if all Believers became infidels, He would suffer no loss...

He can do what he wills, and whatever He wills comes to pass. He is not obliged to act. Everything, good or evil, in this world exists by His will. He wills the faith of the believers and the piety of the religious. If He were to change His will there would be neither a true believer nor a pious man. He willeth also the unbelief of the unbeliever and the irreligion of the wicked and, without that will, there would neither be unbelief nor irreligion. All we do we do by His will; what He willeth not does not come to pass. If one should ask why God does not will that all men should believe, we answer: 'We have no right to enquire about what God wills and does. He is perfectly free to will and to do what he pleases'. In creating unbelievers, in willing that they should remain in that state; in making serpents, scorpions and pigs; in willing, in short, all that is evil, God has wise ends in view which it is not necessary that we should know.

Dictionary of Islam, by T. P. Hughes, pp. 146-147

5.1.4 The Essence of Allah

Allah Is The All-Powerful

He is the creator of all, as we already noted. "All things...genii (= spirits), men, the devil, angels, heaven, earth, animals, plants, substance, accident, intelligible, sensible, were all created originally by Him. Everything, good or evil, in this world exists by His will. He is perfectly free to will and to do what he pleases, in creating unbelievers, in willing that they should remain in that state. He wills also the unbelief of the unbeliever and the irreligion of the wicked. He is perfectly free to will and to do what he pleases."

That must be the reason, why we find a prayer of Muhammad in the Qur'an, which reads:



Say: I seek refuge with the Lord of the dawn, from the mischief of created thing
Surah 113:1-2

While Christians emphasize God's foremost attribute in the Bible, which is love, Muslims emphasize Allah's foremost attribute, and that is power.

Whether it is in prayer, in the call to prayer from the minaret, or in political gatherings, we hear “Allah-u-aqbar!” - Allah is the greatest.

Allah Is One

The so-called ‘unity of Allah’, ‘tawhid’, is possibly the most fundamental theme in Islamic theology. A condensed concept of this is found in the “Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam”:



Tawhid, means literally ‘making one’ or ‘asserting oneness’ (Lane, p. 2927). In consequence, it is applied theologically to the oneness (wahdaniya, tawahhud) of Allah in all its meanings. The word does not occur in the Kur’an ... But unity is far from being a simple idea; it may be internal or external; it may mean that there is no other god except Allah, who has no partner (sharik); it may mean that Allah is a Oneness in himself; it may mean that he is the only being with real or absolute existence (al-hakk), all other beings having merely a contingent existence; it may even be developed into a pantheistic assertion that Allah is All. Again, knowledge of this unity may be reached by the methods of systematic theology (‘ilm) or by religious experience (ma’rifa, mushahada); and the latter, again, may be pure contemplation or philosophical speculation.

H. A. R. Gibb and J. H. Kramers, p. 586

Whatever ‘unity’ in essence means, the chief purpose is obviously to exclude any other deity - and Jesus, as he is portrayed in the Bible, is one of them, according to Islam.

Allah Is Altogether Different

He is ‘mukhalifa’. Any description or attribute that one can apply to man cannot be used for Allah.

Allah Is Distant

He is ‘tanzih’, i.e. far removed from man and lives detached in his glory.

5.1.5 Yahweh Elohim

Over against the Islamic view of God we have the biblical one. Yahweh (= Lord) revealed Himself as Elohim (= plural form of God), implying His triune essence: God the Creator and Father, God the Son and Restorer or Redeemer, and the Spirit of God, the guide for His people (Isa 63:8-10).

Yahweh is holy. Because holiness and unholiness cannot be harmonised nor can they exist alongside each other, He wants and expects us to be holy as well (Heb 12:14). Therefore, Yahweh revealed His righteous standards to man.

These are foundational and conditional to our relationship with Him. But man - every man - fell short of this standard, either by choice or being compelled by his 'fallen nature' (Rom 1:18-32; 2:12-16; 7:10-24).

This caused the separation of man from God, which is all too obvious when we observe mankind with its thoughts and deeds. Unfortunately, man cannot do anything to remedy that! However, in His love and compassion, God, right from the beginning, made a plan to reconcile and rescue man from this dilemma (Ge 3:1-15, 21; 2Co 5:19).

May we try to illustrate in simple terms what the mind cannot really fathom. Being holy and righteous, God utterly condemns sin. Every sin! Condemnation will be followed by the execution of the judgement. Because of His love and mercy, however, the holy Judge took our sin on Himself, and He was executed in our stead. "In Christ" God was the "Lamb of God, who carries away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). In this way Yahweh's holiness and righteousness were met in that sin was punished. And Yahweh's love and mercy were satisfied: He rescued and purified us by placing our sin on Jesus, who carried our punishment, so that we may have peace with Him and live with Him forever. This is the great theme of the Bible!

On the cross the holiness and righteousness of God and His love met. Now every sinner has the chance to find forgiveness and reconciliation with God. The only condition is to trust in what God has revealed and done. That is what biblical faith actually implies.

5.1.6 Islam's Reaction To The Triune God

Yahweh revealed Himself as the One, but triune God. What does that imply? That Christians worship three gods, as many Muslims seem to assume? Certainly not! From the very first verse in the Bible and throughout the 'Old Testament', God calls Himself 'Elohim', that is exactly

translated ‘Gods’. Yet, God is a unity, God is one (Deut 6:4-5; see also Eph 4:5-6): “The Lord our God, the Lord is one!” Very revealing is the way this text is rendered in the original Hebrew: “Yahweh eluhenu Yahweh echad”, which verbally translated means: “The Lord, our Gods, the Lord is one (or a unity)”.

Some time later (Isa 63:7-10) God explained this mystery. This text speaks of “the kindness of the Lord”, who “became their Yeshua (i.e. Saviour).” When Jesus lived here on earth, his Hebrew name was actually ‘Yeshua haMashiach’, in English ‘Jesus the Messiah’. The text goes on to tell us that the people “rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit”, that is God’s Holy Spirit. So the name Elohim is rather an explanation of God’s essence than a statement of polytheism.

So one ‘facet’ of this triune God is the Lord Jesus Christ, also called the Son of God, and another is the Holy Spirit. We state this without apology! This is how God revealed Himself in Scripture. This is strongly contradicted by the Qur’an:



They do blaspheme who say: ‘Allah is Christ the son of Mary’. But said Christ: ‘O Children of Israel! Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord’. Whoever joins other gods with Allah, Allah will forbid him the garden, and the fire will be his abode. There will for the wrong-doers be no one to help.

They blaspheme who say: Allah is one of three in a trinity; for there is no god except One Allah...

Christ the son of Mary was no more than an apostle; many were the apostles that passed away before him. His mother was a woman of truth, they had both to eat their (daily) food. *Surah 5:75-78*

This spells out the perception Muhammad had of the Trinity: God + Mother Mary + Christ, the son. The response is also notable: “They (i.e. Mary and Christ) had both to eat their (daily) food”. Since one cannot assume that God has any physical needs, it was clear to Muhammad that the two could not have been divine.



O people of the book! Commit no excesses in your religion: nor say of Allah aught but truth. Christ Jesus the son of Mary was (no more than) an apostle of Allah. And His Word, which he bestowed on Mary, and a spirit proceeding from Him: so believe in Allah and

His apostles. Say not 'Trinity': desist. It will be better for you: For Allah is One Allah. Glory be to Him; (For exalted is He) above having a son. To Him belong all things in the heavens and on earth. And enough is Allah as a Disposer of affairs.

Surah 4:171

It is not befitting to (the majesty of) Allah that He should beget a son. Glory be to Him! When He determines a matter, He only says to it, 'Be', and it is.

Surah 19:35

The Jews call 'Uzair a son of Allah, and the Christians call Christ the Son of Allah. That is a saying from their mouths; (In this) they but imitate what the Unbelievers of old used to say. Allah's curse be on them: how they are deluded away from the Truth!

Surah 9:30

There appears to be no way to reconcile the Biblical and the Qur'anic view of God.

5.1.7 The Mercy and Grace of God

The Mercy And Grace Of Allah In Islam

Every Surah (chapter) in the Qur'an (except Surah 9, which seems to have been part of Surah 8 before), begins with the 'Bismillah': "In the name of Allah, most gracious and most merciful." Ibn-Hazm, another theologian, observes:



While the Qur'an uses the name Allah, which means 'the most merciful of those who show mercy', this cannot mean that he is merciful in the way we understand the word, for Allah is evidently not merciful. He tortures his children with all manner of sicknesses, warfare and sorrow. What then does the Qur'an mean? Simply that 'merciful' is one of Allah's names. A name that is not in any way descriptive of Allah or man to throw light on his nature. We must use it because the Qur'an uses it, but not pretend to understand what is meant by it.

The word originally used in the Qur'an must have had a different meaning in that day, which we cannot really understand today. Nevertheless, we must continue to use the word, because we cannot change the words of the Qur'an.

The words 'mercy' and 'grace' have, no doubt, a meaning different to the Bible. According to the Qur'an, this means a host of things. Beginning with Paradise (Surah 3:107), the Knowledge of Allah (Surah 18:65), the Qur'an (Surahs 7:204; 17:82; 10:57), the Books of Moses (Surah 11:17), the biblical Apostles

(Surah 12:11), livelihood in this world (Surah 43:32; 35:3), not to drown (Surah 36:43-44), ships sailing on the sea (Surah 30:46; 42:32), the cycle of seasons (Surah 30:48-50), hearing, sight, intelligence, affection, homes, garments and even armour (Surah 16:78-81), women for the men (Surah 30:22), marriage (Surah 25:54), purity of heart (Surah 14:21), comfort and ease (Surah 18:16), domestic animals (Surahs 16:5-13; 42:29; 36:71-73), night and day (Surahs 28:73; 25:47), rain, wind and clouds (Surahs 25:48; 42:28; 2:164; 31:31), averted penalty (Surah 6:16), honour (Surah 19:50), guidance through darkness on land and sea (Surah 27:63) are all called mercy or grace and are obtained by regular prayer (salat) and charity (Surah 14:56). It is granted to those who do good (Surah 7:50), because of righteousness (Surah 21:75, 86), and is ordained for all Christians (Surah 57:27). Allah's revelation is mercy, but admission to Allah's mercy is granted only to whom he wills (Surah 48:25). Mercy is a treasure (Surah 18:82) and prevents the sky from falling onto the earth (Surah 2:65). In Surah 55 we find a condensation of some of these.

The Mercy And Grace Of God In The Bible

Grace, according to the Bible, is God's unmerited favour to man. Because all men have trespassed against God's Law, which constitutes His will for us, grace is God's means to effect reconciliation with Him.

In addition we know what in theological language is termed 'common grace'. This more or less coincides with the Qur'anic list. But foremost and in addition, God offers His 'saving grace'. While common grace is God's provision for our livelihood, saving grace is concerned with the rescue from the consequences of sin. It constitutes God's offer to forgive and pardon us.



'I will frown on you no longer, for I am merciful,' declares the LORD, 'I will not be angry forever. Only acknowledge your guilt—you have rebelled against the LORD your God, you have scattered your favors to foreign gods under every spreading tree, and have not obeyed me,' declares the LORD. 'Return, faithless people,' declares the LORD, 'for I am your husband.

Jer 3:12-14

The offer is mercy and grace. Man's positive response leads to forgiveness and restoration. In His saving grace God demonstrates his love, mercy and compassion. Jesus had to suffer and die to effect this salvation.



As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world ... , gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions-it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-not by works, so that no one can boast.

Eph 2:1-9

I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me-just as the Father knows me and I know the Father-and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice.

John 10:14-16

I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.

John 10:25-28

Salvation by grace is the unique offer of God in the Bible to all people who seek forgiveness and want to live a life under the care of God.

5.1.8 The Love of God

Allah's Love In Islam

Allah is considered to be altogether other than man ('mukhalafa') and holy ('qudzi'). Whatever can be said of man can never apply to Allah. He has no needs whatever. Al-Ghazzali illustrates it:



Love is to sense a need of the beloved, and since Allah cannot be said to have a need or an experience of a need, it is therefore impossible that Allah should love. *Compare John 3:16 with this*

Allah is demonstrated as the sovereign who is above all and does what he pleases. He is totally detached and unrestricted, as we already saw in the previous chapter.

It would be unjust, however, to say that ‘love of Allah’ does not feature in the Qur’an. Here is a list of all instances of Allah’s love that appear in the Qur’an. First we look at the negative:

Allah does NOT love

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● transgressors (Surah 2:190) ● mischief and those who do it (Surahs 2:205; 28:77) ● ungrateful and wicked creatures (Surah 2:276) ● the treacherous (Surah 8:58) ● wasters (Surahs 6:141; 7:31; 5:87 [those who live in excess, extravagant!]) ● those who trespass beyond bounds (Surah 7:55) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● those who do wrong (Surahs 3:140; 42:40) ● arrogant boasters (Surahs 31:18; 57:23) ● those who exult [in riches] (Surah 28:76) ● those who reject faith (Surah 30:45) ● any traitors (Surah 22:38) ● those given to perfidy and crime [cheating] (Surah 4:107)
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Allah loves

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● those who do good (Surahs 2:195; 3:134; 5:93) ● those who turn to him constantly and keep themselves pure and clean (Surahs 2:222; 9:108) ● those who believe and work deeds of righteousness (Surah 19:96) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● those who love him (Surahs 3:31; 5:54) ● those who fight in his cause in battle (Surah 61:4) ● the just (Surahs 49:9; 60:8; 5:42) ● the righteous (Surah 9:4,7) ● those who are kind (Surah 5:13)
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This is the full list except for two passages:



He is oft-forgiving, full of loving-kindness. *Surah 85:14*
 My lord is indeed full of mercy and loving-kindness.

Surah 11:90

The quoted texts describe the beneficiaries of Allah’s loving-kindness:

The pure, kind, just and righteous believers, those who do good, love Allah and (if need be) fight for him in battle, and who do no mischief or exult in riches or cheat, are not transgressors (of God's law) or trespassers, live not extravagantly in excess and waste, are not ungrateful or wicked, are not arrogant or vainglorious or boasters, neither traitors and do no wrong. Who of us qualifies?

The love of Allah is conditional, quite unlike the love of Yahweh and Jesus Christ.

The Love Of God In The Bible



This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us... We love, because He first loved us.”

1John 4:10, 19

If asked which is the most prominent characteristic of God's nature, most Christians would reply without hesitation love. A few passages from the Word of God will demonstrate this convincingly:



I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness.

Jer 31:3

He said: 'Surely they are my people, sons who will not be false to me'; and so he became their Saviour. In all their distress he too was distressed, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and mercy he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them.

Isa. 63:8-9

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

John 3:16-17

Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.

John 13:1

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my

Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no-one than this that he lay down his life for his friends.

John 15:9-12

God's Son loves us and gave himself for us.

Gal 2:2

Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions - it is by grace you have been saved.

Eph 2:4-5

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners Christ died for us.

Rom 5:6-8

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: 'For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.' No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Rom 8:35-39

The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Gal 2:20

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!

1John 3:1

God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

1John 4:8-10, 16

We love because he first loved us.

1John 4:19

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father - to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

Rev 1:5-6

It is surely significant that the word 'love' or related words are mentioned more than 250 times alone in the New Testament (which is about 25% longer than the Qur'an), whereas only 23 times in the Qur'an?

5.1.9 God's Power

Allah's Power In Islam

Allah's power is absolute, over all. It is not necessarily restrained by his norms of righteousness.

A comparison of God with a good shepherd (as in Ps 23, Lk 15:4-5 or John 10:14) or, more personally, with a bridegroom or husband (Isa 62:5, Jer 2:2 and 3:1.14), as the Bible does, is missing in the Qur'an. Indeed it might be viewed as blasphemous.

The Muslim understands himself to be a slave under his Master, which is not an unreasonable position for the created over against the Creator. Allah is depicted as an authoritarian ruler. He did not reveal himself, but his laws. He provides man with his guidance and demands his commands to be carried out. However, all, even obedience to his Law, is predetermined by his will:



If We [i.e. Allah] had so willed, we could certainly have brought every soul its true guidance; but the word from me will come true, 'I will fill hell with Jinns and men all together.

Surah 32:13

Had Allah willed He could have made you (all) one nation, but He sendeth whom He will astray and guideth whom He will, and ye will indeed be asked of what ye used to do.

Surah 16:93 (Pickthall)

Allah leads astray those whom He pleases, and guides whom He pleases. He is the Mighty, the Wise.

Surah 14:4

Of the men He hath created: He forgiveth whom He pleaseth and He punishes whom He pleaseth.

Surah 5:20

Read also Surahs 37:96; 76:29-30; 4:88; 16:36; 6:149; 7:158. This is strongly supported by the Hadith.

Yahweh's Power in the Bible

It would be incorrect to state that the Bible does not mention the sovereignty and power of God:



God is exalted in His power!

Job 36:22

He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds. He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name. Great is our Lord and mighty power; his understanding has no limit.

Ps 147:3-5

No-one is like you, O Lord; you are great, and your name is mighty in power. Who should not revere you, O King of the nations? This is your due. Among all the wise men of the nations and in all their kingdoms, there is no one like you.

Jer 10:6-7

Tell them this: 'These gods, who did not make the heavens and the earth, will perish from the earth and from under the heavens'. But God made the earth by his power; he founded the world by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens by his understanding.

Jer 10:11-12

Come and see what God has done, how awesome his works in man's behalf! He turned the sea into dry land, they passed through the waters on foot - come, let us rejoice in him. He rules for ever by his power, his eyes watch the nations - let not the rebellious rise up against him.

Ps 66:5-7

Yahweh uses His power to benefit us:



His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

2Pet 1:3-4

For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

2Tim 1:7

I, the Lord, do not change!

Mal 3:6



There is neither arbitrary action nor change in Yahweh. Neither He nor His Word will change. He has committed Himself to it - so we can fully trust it.



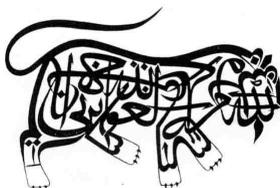
Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

James 1:17

Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath. God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.

Heb 6:17-19

In addition it must be said that Yahweh is not the author of evil or sin, neither does He will it. He temporarily tolerates it and uses sorrow or distress as means to call people to faith and by that to Himself. Only those who die without having accepted the offered pardon of God are lost and will be in hell. It was their own choice!



You are not a God who takes pleasure in evil. With you the wicked cannot dwell. The arrogant cannot stand in your presence; you hate all who do wrong. You destroy those who tell lies; bloodthirsty and deceitful men the Lord abhors.

Ps 5:4-6

5.1.10 The 99 Most Excellent Names of Allah



The most beautiful [or excellent] names belong to Allah, so call on Him by them.

Surah 7:180

According to a Hadith Muhammad said: “Allah has ninety-nine Names, one-hundred less one; and he who memorized them all by heart will enter Paradise.” To count something means to know it by heart. (Narrated by Abu Huraira) (Sahih Al-Bukhari, Hadith 9.489, see also 3.894 and Tirmizi, Hadith 2285)

Based on this, many Muslims recite these names (often using a ‘Tasbeeh’, a kind of rosary with 100 beads, one bigger one, stands for the name Allah, and the others for the 99 names or attributes).

These are the names of Allah as mentioned in the Qur'an (x times):

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1. The Merciful(169 | 17. The Provider
(who provides all
sustenance) (1) | 32. The Clement
(Forbearing One) (12) |
| 2. The Com-
passionate (114) | 18. The Opener (who
opens all things
and overcomes
everything) (2) | 33. The Grand One (8) |
| 3. The King (6) | 19. The Omniscient
(the Knower)
(158) | 34. The Most Forgiving
One (91) |
| 4. The Most Holy
One (2) | 20. The Restrainer
(who takes hold
and draws
together) | 35. The Grateful One
(expressing
thankfulness in rich
rewards) (4) |
| 5. The Peace (the
Sound One) (1) | 21. The Spreader | 36. The Exalted (Most
High One) (6) |
| 6. The Faithful One
(giving safety and
security) (1) | 22. The Abaser (for
unbelievers) | 37. The Great One |
| 7. The Protector (and
guardian) | 23. The Exalter (for
believers) | 38. The Powerful Guardian
(the preserver) (1) |
| 8. The Unique and
Mighty One (89) | 24. The One who
exalts and raises
to honour | 39. The Strengtheners (who
provides his creation
all their needs) (1) |
| 9. The Super Strong
One (who compels
his creatures to
obey) (1) | 25. The Destroyer
(who humbles) | 40. The Reckoner (4) |
| 10. The Supreme or
Proud One (1) | 26. The All-Hearing
One (46) | 41. The Majestic (Sublime
One) (2) |
| 11. The Creator (8) | 27. The All-Seeing
One (44) | 42. The Pure and
Generous One (3) |
| 12. The Maker
(Originator of all
creation) (2) | 28. The Ruler or
Arbiter | 43. The Watcher of All (5) |
| 13. The Fashioner (1) | 29. The Just or
Righteous One | 44. The Approver (who
responds to every
need) (1) |
| 14. The Forgiving One
(5) | 30. The Subtle One | 45. The Comprehensive
One (with unlimited
capacity) (9) |
| 15. The Dominant
(Irresistible
Conqueror) (6) | 31. The Aware One
(45) | 46. The Wise One (95) |
| 16. The Bestower
(giving freely and
richly) (3) | | 47. The One Who shows
Sympathy (2) |
| | | 48. The Most Glorious One
(2) |

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 49. The Raiser (who sends the dead to life) | 67. The Eternal (1) | controls all possessions) (2) |
| 50. The Witness (who is omniscient) (21) | 68. The Mighty and Powerful One (who does as he pleases) (44) | 84. The Lord of all Majesty and Honour (2) |
| 51. The Right and the Truth (who is justice and the reality) (8) | 69. The Prevailing One (4) | 85. The Equitable One (who hands out justice) |
| 52. The Advocate (and faithful trustee) (13) | 70. The One who brings forward | 86. The Collector (who combines everything to accomplish his purpose) (2) |
| 53. The Strong (11) | 71. The Deferrer (who keeps all at a distance from him) | 87. The Rich One (who is independent and needs nothing) (18) |
| 54. The Firm (and Reliable One) (1) | 72. The First (1) | 88. The Enricher |
| 55. The Friendly Protector (21) | 73. The Last (1) | 89. The Giver |
| 56. The Praise-worthy One (17) | 74. The Outwardly Manifest and Evident One (2) | 90. The Withholder |
| 57. The Counter (who keeps exact statistics) | 75. The Inward (Hidden One) (2) | 91. The Distresser (who is responsible for evil) |
| 58. The Beginner (originator) | 76. The Governor | 92. The Profiter (who is responsible for good) |
| 59. The Restorer (12) | 77. The Exalted (1) | 93. The Light (5) |
| 60. The Quickener | 78. The Righteous Benefactor (Dutiful One) (1) | 94. The Guide (and leader) (10) |
| 61. The Killer | 79. The One who causes and receives (10) | 95. The Incomparable Magnificent One (2) |
| 62. The Living one | 80. The Avenger | 96. The Enduring One |
| 63. The Subsisting One (who stands firm in himself) | 81. The Pardoner (5) | 97. The Inheritor |
| 64. The Finder (who has no needs) | 82. The Kind and Indulgent One (10) | 98. The Director (who gives judicious guidance) (1) |
| 65. The One Glorified | 83. The Ruler of the Kingdom (who | 99. The Patient One |
| 66. The One and only | | 100. [only the Camel knows☺] |

5.1.11 An Evaluation

The contradicting statements of the Qur'an over against the Bible regarding the essence, character and nature of Allah / Yahweh, and the contradicting teachings of the two books on the Trinity, Jesus, the Messiah, and salvation, are really irreconcilable. In the final analysis we have to conclude, that although a lot of parallels exist, the center-piece of the Old and New Testaments, the 'Gospel', which is God's way to redeem sinners by way of sacrifice, is missing in the Qur'an. According to the Bible there is no forgiveness, no atonement and no reconciliation without a sacrifice. Islam rejects and ignores this. Consequently, Islam denies the only way back to Yahweh - the Lord Jesus Christ and His atoning death. It is therefore impossible to assume that Allah and Yahweh are just different names for the same God.

We must conclude that Islam's portrayal of the nature and character of God is similar enough to make it seem identical to the Biblical portrayal of Yahweh, yet in essence they are so dissimilar as to make them irreconcilably different.

Recommended Literature for Chapter 5

- The Balance of Truth - Mizanu'l Haqq, C.G. Pfander, 1910
- The Moslem Doctrine of God, S. Zwemer, American Tract Society 1905, 120 pages.

(as a missionary and scholar of Islam Zwemer demonstrates clearly that the Allah of Islam is the complete opposite of the God of the Bible, the Father of Jesus Christ. Although written long time ago it has its relevance because of the unchanged Muslim concept of God.)

- Who is Allah in Islam?, Abd Al-Masih, Light of Life, 108 pages.

(this evaluation contrasts the Muslim concept of God with the Biblical view point. It is very helpful to show the difference between the God of the Bible and the Qur'an)

- Battle for the Hearts, Episode 5:II:1, Belief in God. TWR & LCA, 2001.

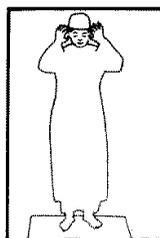
6 Faith And Practice Belong Together

No one can be a Muslim without a specified Faith, called 'Iman', and adhering to certain Practices, called 'Deen'. Since the practice is more in the foreground, we begin with this.

6.1 Deen: The Practice of Islam

The basic essentials in 'The Practice of Islam' are summed up in the five pillars of faith. They are:

1. The **Confession** of Faith (*Shaháda*), i.e. the recitation of the 'Kalima' (= word): "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger (apostle) of Allah."



2. The Ritual **Prayers** (*Salat*) [in arab. the 't' at the end is not pronounced]. The prescribed five daily liturgical prayers at prescribed times and in the prescribed manner, must be observed. Within this daily routine a prescribed prayer must be recited seventeen times altogether (twice in the morning prayer; four times at the noon prayer, four times in the afternoon prayer; three times in the evening prayer and four times during the night prayer). This is called by many Persian and Indian Muslims 'namaz'. The wording of this prayer is found in the appendix.

3. The Giving of **Alms** (*Zakat*) [again the 't' is not pronounced]. This 'poor tax' is a religious duty and should not be less than 2.5% of the income above ones basic needs.



4. Keeping the **Fast** during the month of Ramadaan (*Sawm*) is a duty for all, except the sick, travelers, pregnant women, nursing mothers and children. The fast is to last from the rising of the sun until sunset.

5. **Pilgrimage** to Mecca (*Hajj*) is required at least once in a lifetime during the month of Zu'l-Hijjah, if the means allows this. There is also a minor pilgrimage (Umrah), which may be performed at all other times. We

ought to realize that very considerable cost is involved in a pilgrimage, quite apart from the travel fare.

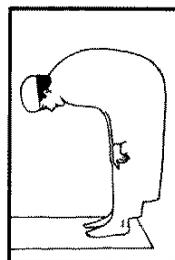
Let us take a closer look at these pillars.

6.1.1 Confession Of Faith

“There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger (apostle) of Allah.”

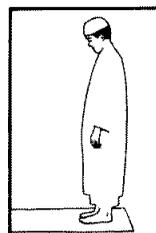
It represents the fundamental essence of Islam. It is a Muslim’s confession of faith and must also be confessed to non-Muslims.

The first part of this statement is recited to confess that there is no God worthy of worship and obedience other than the one and only living God.



The second part affirms that Muhammad is the final and last prophet and messenger of Allah. It is believed that his teachings are given for all mankind and for all time. All former prophets have been appointed for one nation and for a specific time only. Their teaching is, therefore, no longer valid. Muhammad replaced them with the Qur’an. Muslims believe that, although the prophets preached the same message, it got lost or was perverted. Besides, only Muhammad’s words and actions are considered to be necessary for the interpretation of the Qur’an (tafsir), and these are preserved correctly to this day.

The confession of the creed is the entrance to Islam. By virtue of reciting it by faith, in Arabic, a person becomes a Muslim. Therefore some Muslims try to make a learner of Arabic, or a Christian who knows some Arabic, recite it. “This is a solemn affirmation, declaration, pledge or a formal agreement that is legally binding to a Muslim who claims to be a member of the Islamic Brotherhood.” (= ‘ummah’) (TBI, p. 63)



From early childhood a Muslim will confess the unity of Allah and the finality of the Prophethood of Muhammad. With these statements he is

practically immunized against all religious influences from outside Islam. Every Muslim has to believe in the creed, otherwise he is not regarded a Muslim (= submitted to God). Therefore, a Muslim who is suspected of having become a Christian is likely to be asked to recite the Shahada or, as it is also called, Kalima.

It must be added here, that a Muslim is free to deny his faith, if that should endanger him/her, as Surah 16:106 teaches: “Any one who, after accepting faith in Allah, utters unbelief, except under compulsion,...on them is wrath from Allah and theirs will be a dreadful chastisement.” This is a strange thinking to any Christian. We know that a great number of Christians had to die a horrible death after confessing their faith, which could have been averted by a denial of their faith in Christ.



This teaching about concealment is called ‘taqiya’ and is quite freely used in the Shi’a Muslim world, though by no means exclusively so, and not just under compulsion. Over the years ‘taqiya’ has become a brand name for any concealment including lies, particularly towards non-Muslims.

Yet it is considered to be obligatory for a Muslim to confess and propagate his faith. This is called ‘dawah’. Actually ‘dawah’ means invocation, ‘to call on’. “The Dictionary of Islam” by T.P. Hughes explains that the historical form of this invocation or calling is directed towards spirits and is by that token an occult practice and involves the use of spells. One is only allowed to call on ‘good angels’ or ‘jinns’, however. (see Folk Islam). Today’s Muslims understand the term to mean the call on non-Muslims to accept Islam, and that is the current meaning of ‘dawah’. From the beginning of the ‘Islamic Revolution’ ‘dawah’ movements have mushroomed. All over the world great numbers of Muslim missionaries propagate Islam, more often than not by attacking the Christian faith.



As Christians we observe: Although the Bible (and the history of the early church) provide us with several formulations of a creed (Nicean Creed, Phil

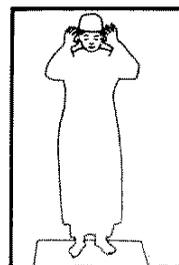
2:5-11, 1Tim 2:5-6 etc), we do not consider someone to be a Christian just because he recites any of these.

6.1.2 Prayer

The Salat is not a practice of praying, as Christians would understand it. It is compulsory and highly regulated. We maintain that communing with God essentially excludes both compulsion and regulation, as it is based on devotion and love, which should neither be enforced nor formalized.

The names and the time for the performance of these daily prayers are fixed. They are

- fajr (between dawn and sunrise) (with 2 ruku²³),
- zuhr (between midday and mid-afternoon) (with 4 ruku'),
- asr (between mid-afternoon and sunset) (with 4 ruku'),
- maghrib (just after sunset) (with 3 ruku'),
- isha' (between nightfall and daybreak) (with 4 ruku'),



These prayers are not normally performed in a mosque, except for the Friday noon prayer.

Before any prayer a ritual washing has to be performed (ghusl, wudu). The prayer is directed via the qibla (indicated by a niche in every mosque) to the Ka'ba in Mecca. The words of the prayer to be recited (see Appendix) are accompanied by meticulously prescribed actions. This includes bowing down (ruku', singul. rak'ah) and prostrations (sujud). Depending on the time of the day, a certain number of ruku' and sujud have to be performed, each accompanied with the recital of the prayer. So in all the prayer will have to be recited 17 times every day. For these prayers exact instructions are issued to prescribe the positioning of the body, the hands and feet at every stage. A prayer, which is performed amiss, is said not to be acceptable to Allah.



²³ ruku' = body movements, eg prostrations

It is truly remarkable to find Muslims who have a callused skin on their forehead, which resulted from their touching the floor in prayer.

The Islamic ritual prayers are mentioned, but not described in the Qur'an (Surahs 11:114, 17:78, 2:238), only in the Hadith. Muhammad said: "Between a man and apostasy (the act of turning away from one's religion) there is only the giving up of as-Salat." (TBI, p. 65) So, every Muslim who gives up prayer is considered an unbeliever.

Through the practice of Salat Islam is supposed to provide spiritual guidance to Muslims. It is an act of worship and meant to provide disciplinary practice, spiritual nourishment and true motivation (TBI, p. 64). The performance of the salat is naturally viewed as merit before God, as also the Qur'an suggests.



Muslims say that the prayers

- strengthen the belief in Allah and create the willingness to submit to him
- help to focus on good elements in life
- are a means of cleanliness, purity and punctuality
- bring up good qualities (patience, hope, confidence, gratitude, good manners)
- prove the unity of the Islamic brotherhood

The call to prayer, called 'azan', announces the time for prayer. Formerly, this was chanted by the Muezzin from the Minaret (tower) of a mosque but nowadays this is done through loudspeakers. In predominantly 'Christian' areas, the five prayer-calls are equally a testimony to Islam.

The caller faces the 'qiblah' (direction to Mecca) and raises both hands to his ears, shouting: "Allah-u-akbar."



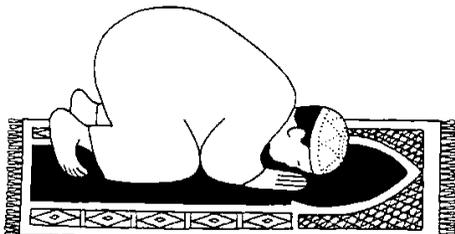
On hearing the azan, a Muslim's heart is filled with the splendour of the call and the glory of Allah. Both the crier and the hearer of azan should make a private petition to God to give all the honour to Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.1) on the Day of Judgement and to allow him to intercede on their behalf for their sins. *TBI, p. 79*

The Du'a Prayer

Besides the prescribed 'salat' prayers, Muslims may also practice the 'du'a' prayer. It is meant to be supplication, but also an opportunity to bring their personal requests before Allah.

As Christians we observe: Many Christians will be tempted to assume that Muslims pray to God in much the same way as we do. But this is not correct.

Any honest Muslims (along with many converts from Islam) will have to admit that the constant recitation of a prescribed prayer formula and rite, often performed in a language foreign to them, does not meet the lofty ideals of Islam. Let us remember that a Muslim who begins to perform salat at the age of 10 will have prayed this formula about 350.000 times by the time he is 65! Consequently, the 'salat' prayer often is little more than the observance of a religious duty.



6.1.3 Giving ('Zakat')

This legally fixed charity is to be paid annually by a Muslim towards the support of the poor and other categories of deserving persons according to the Islamic Law. (TBI, p. 105)

Every Muslim who does not want to pay this contribution is warned severely in Surah 9, a chapter originally referring to the Jihad but today used as a general statement:



Those who hoard gold and silver and spend it not in the Way of Allah: announce unto them a most grievous penalty ... On the Day when it (Wealth) will be heated in the fire of Hell and with it will be branded with their foreheads, their flanks and their backs... 'This is the (treasure) which you hoarded for yourselves: taste ye, then, the treasures ye stored up! *Surah 9:34-35*

O ye who believe! Spend out of (the bounties) We have provided for you, before the Day comes when no bargaining (will avail), nor friendship, nor intercession. *Surah 2:254*

6.1.4 Fasting

A good Muslim will fast during the month of Ramadaan (9th month of the Islamic lunar calendar). During these 30 days a Muslim will refrain from eating, drinking, smoking, sexual activity and any pleasures from the rising of the sun to its going down. This fasting is obligatory for every Muslim. Not even the saliva should be swallowed. Yet, in reality many Muslims spend more money on food during the month of Ramadaan than in any other.

In this month the whole of the Qur'an is to be recited (this is why in many Qur'an editions the text is divided into 30 sections).

6.1.5 Pilgrimage

A pilgrimage to the 'bait'allah', the 'house of Allah', the Ka'ba, once in a lifetime is an obligation Muslims have to follow, if they have the means to do so. This has to be performed at a certain time in the year, the month of 'Zu'l-Hijjah (the Islamic calendar is about ten days shorter than ours, causing the times of pilgrimages, feasts etc. to shift from year to year). A visit to the holy place at another time is called 'Umrah' or minor pilgrimage, which is not considered a sub-stitute for the Hajj, but a merit to add to it.

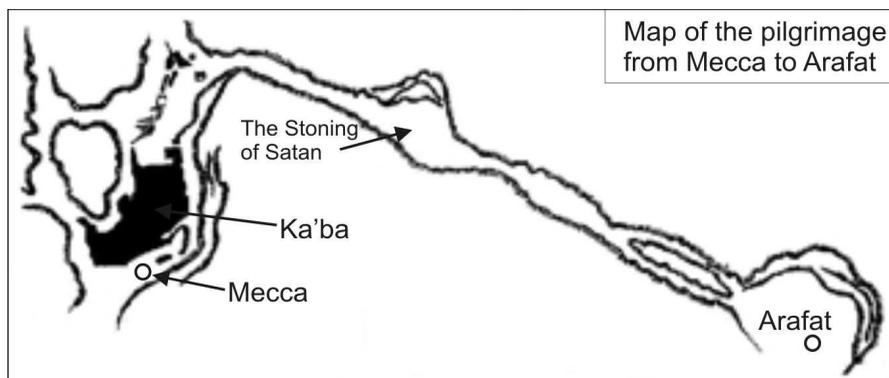


Flag of Saudi Arabia

Ironically, practically all religious rites performed in Islam are of pre-Islamic, and by that token, heathen origin. When in his later years Muhammad tried to persuade the Meccans to turn to Islam, he compromised parts of his earlier convictions. Consequently, all mention of the Hajj in the Qur'an was done in Medina. Some scholars even believe that they are additions to the Qur'an done during the Abbaside rule.

When a pilgrim arrives at the 'holy city', it is incumbent upon him to change his normal clothes for the ihram, a white garment which is worn specially for this purpose. The pilgrimage rites include a walk to the Zamzam well, which, according to Islamic legend, provided water to save

Ishmael and Hagar from death. Muslims will not only want to drink from it but often take jerry-cans full of 'holy water' with them, as popular belief attributes to it a cure for all kinds of sickness. Then the pilgrim will walk seven times around the Ka'ba, kissing a black stone set in silver at one of its corners. After this the pilgrim must run seven times between the two hills Safa and Marwa (a remnant of pagan days, when on each hill stood an idol. Today all is under roof). On the eighth day he proceeds to Mina, a valley near Mecca, to meditate and pray. On the ninth day he progresses to mount Arafat (where Adam is said to have been seeking God's mercy). At this time up to two million pilgrims will 'stand before Allah' in prayer and listen to a sermon on the site where Muhammad preached his famous farewell sermon before his death. Back at Mina the following day, the pilgrims gather pebbles and cast them at a stone pillar, which symbolizes the devil. Here also the men have their head shaven (and women cut off a symbolic lock of their hair).



At the end, Eid ul-Adha' the Great Feast, is celebrated with the slaughter of sacrifices (see also 'The Feasts of Islam' and 'Sacrifices'). Concluding the Hajj, the pilgrim may want to visit Medina, but this is not an obligation. By popular belief the hajj will cause purity of heart by forgiveness of sins. The heavens are believed to be open directly above the Ka'ba and prayers there will go unhindered to Allah who will certainly answer them. A hajji (= one who has completed the 'hajj') will have a raised status in his society.

As Christians we observe: The rites and beliefs performed during the hajj are purely pagan. They are based on the perception that forgiveness and

salvation can be merited. This is in total contradiction of the biblical view. As Christians, whose eternal home is in heaven, their entire earthly life constitutes a pilgrimage. (Ps 39:19; 1Pet 2:11; Heb 11:13; 13:14)

6.2 Iman - The Faith of Islam

A Muslim is obliged to believe in the Articles of Faith as they appear in the Qur'an:



It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces towards East or West; but it is righteousness - to believe in Allah, and the Last Day, and the Angels, and the Books and the Messengers; to spend of your substance, out of love for him; for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for those who ask, and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer, and practise regular charity.

Surah 2:177

6.2.1 Allah

A Muslim must believe in the existence of Allah, who is one. His qualities, nature and essence (see chapter 5) are depicted in his '99 Most Beautiful Names' (see appendix).

6.2.2 His Angels

Muslims are strong believers in angels. These include 4 archangels (Gabriel is named) and an indefinite number of ordinary angels. They also believe in jinns, which are spirits, some good and some bad (see chapter 3, Folk Islam).

6.2.3 All revealed Books

According to Islam scriptures were revealed to Adam, Seth, Enoch, Abraham and many others. These are considered lost. The Scriptures referred to as being in existence are

- The Torah (Taurat)
- The Psalms (Zabur)
- The Gospel (Injil)
- The Qur'an

It is indeed noteworthy that according to the above doctrine every Muslim is obliged to believe in the Bible. Unfortunately this is not done (see Textbook 2: 'The Christian-Islamic Controversy').

6.2.4 All the Prophets

Muslims believe that 124 000 prophets lived in times past among all nations. Most are, of course, not named. Prophets are called 'Nabi'²⁴ or 'Rasul'²⁵. A Rasul is one who was given a book by an angel, a Nabi one who received inspiration. Prophets that are named are: Adam (Adam), Idris (Enoch), Nuh (Noah), Hud (?), Sahli (Methuselah), Ibrahim (Abraham), Ismail (Ishmael), Ishaq (Isaac), Yaqub (Jacob), Yusuf (Joseph), Lut (Lot), Musa (Moses), Harun (Aaron), Shu'aib (Jethro?), Da'ud (David), Sulaiman (Solomon), Ilyas (Elijah), Alyasa (Elisha), Ayub (Job), Yunus (Jnah), Uzair (Ezra), Luqman (?), Zu'l-Kiff (Isaiah? or Alexander the Great), Zakariya (Zacharias, father of the Baptist), Yahya (John the Baptist) and Isa (Jesus). Eighteen of these are mentioned in Surah 6:83-86.

In addition there are 315 'special messengers'. Nine of these are entitled Ulu'l-Azm (= Possessors of Constancy); namely Noah, Abraham, David, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad.

Again noteworthy is the request by Islam that every Muslim is under obligation to believe in all the biblical prophets - including Jesus! Here again we find that Islam found ways to utterly discourage Muslims from taking this serious.

6.2.5 The Last Day / Predestination

This is the Day of Judgment when all men are to be judged according to their deeds or according to the predetermination of Allah, and admitted to Paradise or Hell.

²⁴ pl. 'Ambija'

²⁵ pl. 'Rusul'

6.3 Predestination in Islam

Others have added ‘Predestination’ to these five articles of faith. It is, in fact, essential for a Muslim to believe in predestination. In Arabic the words ‘qadar’ or ‘taqdir’ (same root) are translated as ‘predestination’. They should better be translated as pre-decree. In a Commentary of Islamic tradition (Hadith) we have this definition:



Taqdir means in the popular sense pre-destination, fate or destiny. It means literally to make manifest of the measure of a thing or simply to determine a measure. Another word which comes in this connection is Qaza meaning pre-decree or pre-decision.
Mishkat Vol. 3, p. 93, commentary



Nothing will happen to us except what Allah has decreed for us.

Surah 9:51

He is the Irresistible (watching) from above over His worshippers, and He sets guardians over you. At length, when death approaches one of you, our angels take his soul and they never fail in their duty.
Surah 6:61

When we assume that Allah is irresistible, the possibility of choice is not granted to man. The implication of this doctrine is best described in the Hadith:



Sahl b.Sa'd reported it from Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) that a person (that) performs deeds like the deeds of the people of Paradise ... would be amongst the dwellers of Hell. And a person (that) acts apparently like the people of Hell, but (in fact) he would be among the dwellers of Paradise.

There was argument between Adam and Moses. Moses said to Adam: You are our father. You did us harm and caused us to get out of Paradise. Adam said to him: You are Moses. Allah selected you (for direct conversation with you) and wrote with His own Hand the Book (Torah) for you. Despite this you blame me for an act which Allah had ordained for me forty years before He created me. Allah's Apostle (may peace be upon him) said: This is how Adam came the better of Moses.
Sahih Muslim 4, pp. 1395-1396, No 6408-6409

Abu Huraira reported Allah's Apostle (may peace be upon him) as saying: Verily Allah has fixed the very portion of adultery which a man will indulge in, and which he of necessity must commit.

Sahih Muslim 4, p. 1397, No 6421

The ‘interpretation’ of this in the footnote is somewhat strange:



Most of the persons have committed grave error in the proper understanding of this hadith. They argue that if one has of necessity to commit adultery, then why an extremely severe punishment has been prescribed by Islam for his offense? This argument exposes the lack of understanding on their part. The simple and straight meaning of this hadith is that just as each person is created as a separate entity having distinct qualities - physical, intellectual - of his own, in spite of his being a member of the human race, in the same way each person is endowed with a sexual lust of a certain measure, according to which he has his sexual yearnings from which he cannot find an escape.

Sahih Muslim 4, p. 1398, Fn. 2900, commentary



Abu Hurairah reported that the Apostle of Allah said: Verily Allah pre-ordained for the son of Adam his share of fornication. That will overtake him without doubt.

Mishkat Vol. 3, p. 103, No 6

Should one not differentiate between adultery and natural sexual yearning? Predestination is clearly established in the Qur’an and the Hadith. Over the years Muslim theologians have argued about the mutually exclusive doctrines of freedom of choice and pre-decree. The Mutazilah argued strongly for the necessity for freedom of choice, if an accountability for transgression is envisaged, but...



... better far than all argument, the orthodox say, is the testimony of the Book. ‘All things have we created under a fixed decree’ (Surah 54:49). ‘When God created you and that ye make’ (Surah 37:94). ‘Some of them there were whom God guided and there were others decreed to err. (Surah 16:38)

Dictionary of Islam, p. 473

6.3.1 Predestination in the Qur’an

These passages are quoted from an older Qur’an translation. More recent translators have expediently ‘interpreted’ these problematic verses. Please compare.

The modern ‘translation’ by Yusuf Ali camouflages the meaning:



Verily, all things have we created in proportion and measure.

Surah 54:49

But Allah has created you and your handiwork!

Surah 37:96

Of the people were some whom Allah guided, and some on whom error became inevitably (established).

Surah 16:36

More about the dispute can be read in a commentary in the 'Mishkat':



Much intellectual blood has been spent over the question of pre-destination... The strong Muslim solidarity which the Prophet had once so laboriously cemented has been greatly weakened on account of bitter controversies over this question. This is because there are apparent conflicting views on the subject in the Qur'an and Hadis. On the one hand, the scriptures uphold the doctrine of freedom of will and the consequent responsibility for actions, and on the other they emphasize that it is only God who guides and misguides as He pleases and that the fate of man and everything was pre-determined before their creation. Among the former Muslims, there were two extreme schools of thought - the Zabariyas and the Qadriyas. The former school holds that God is the Creator of man's deeds whether good or bad and that man is entirely powerless and without responsibility in the matter. They contend that man has got no power to go beyond his destiny or decree of God before his creation. They cite the following Qur'anic verses in their support - 'And whomsoever Allah guides, there is none that can misguide him' (Surah 39:36). 'And if Allah afflict [sic] you with harm, then there is none to remove it but He and if He intends good to you, there is none to repel His grace" (Surah 10:107). And "with Him are the measures of the unseen - none knows them but He, and He knows what is in the land and in the sea, and there falls not a leaf but He knows it, nor a grain in the darkness of the earth, nor anything green or dry but it is all in a clear book" (Surah 6:59). "No evil befalls on the earth, nor on your own souls but it is in a book before We bring it into existence. (Surah 57:22)

The Qadriyas and later on the Mutazilas hold that man has got absolute freedom of will and the consequence [sic] responsibility of [sic] actions, and that if the former view is accepted, the rewards for virtuous acts and punishments for sins cannot at all be explained. They cite the following verse in support of their case. And whatever affliction befalls on you, it is on account of what your hands have wrought. (Surah 42:32)

The two views as above noted are diametrically opposite to each other, and none could find out a satisfactory solution of [sic] the problem. We have

therefore no other alternative but to believe in predestination as well as in freedom of will with consequence of actions. Let us, however, try to harmonise the apparent conflict to some extent leaving the rest to God... This complexity of human character leads us to absolute faith both in predestination and human freedom of will. The next point is that the right view according to the majority of the Muslim jurists to our opinion is the mean [middle] between the two extreme views. In other words, man is neither absolutely compelled, nor absolutely free.

Mishkat Vol. 3, p. 93-95, commentary

We consider this to be a very strange ‘solution’. The following verses of the Qur’an imply that man is responsible and will be punished or rewarded according to his deeds:



We shall set up scales of justice for the Day of Judgement, so that not a soul will be dealt with unjustly in the least.

Surah 21:47

The balance that day will be true (to the nicety). Those whose scale (of good) will be heavy, will prosper. Those whose scale will be light, will find their souls in perdition, for that they wrongfully treated our signs.

Surah 7:8+9

Just about every Muslim expects to be judged by his deeds (performance as a Muslim), as detrimental as that may be.

The other message of the Qur’an is, that the will of man is absolutely subjected to Allah’s will.



Allah doth blot out or confirm what He pleaseth. *Surah 13:39*

This is an admonition: whosoever will, let him take a (straight) path to his Lord. But ye will not, except as Allah wills; for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.

Surah 76:29-30

He intimated to it [i.e. the soul] by inspiration its deviating from truth and its piety.

Mishkat Vol. 3, p. 104, No 6

By the soul and the proportion and order given to it; and its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right (as incorrectly translated by Yusuf Ali).

Allah may or may not guide and leads astray. He forgives or refuses to forgive as he pleases.



If We had so willed, we could certainly have brought every soul its true guidance. But the word from me will come true, 'I will fill Hell with Jinns and men all together. *Surah 32:13*

Allah sendeth whom He will astray, and guideth whom He will. He is the Mighty, the Wise. *Surah 14:4 – (Pickthall)*

He forgiveth whom He pleaseth, and He punisheth whom He pleaseth.

Surah 5:18

Whom Allah misleads cannot be guided by anyone.



Seek ye to guide him whom Allah hath sent astray? He whom Allah sendeth astray, for him thou (O Muhammad) canst not find a road. *Surah 4:88 – (Pickthall)*

As to those who rejected faith, it is the same to them whether thou warn them or do not warn them; they will not believe. Allah hath set a seal on their hearts and on their hearing and on their eyes is a veil; great is the penalty they (incur).

Surah 2:6-7

Allah could have made all mankind one people (ummah), but he leads astray - and the misled must bear the consequences.



Had Allah willed He could have made you (all) one nation, but He sendeth whom He will astray and guideth whom He will, and ye will indeed be asked of what ye used to do.

Surah 16:93 – (Pickthall)

If Allah so willed He could make you all one people: but He leaves straying whom He pleases and He guides whom He pleases: but ye shall certainly be called to account for all your actions. *Surah 16:93*

If thy Lord had so willed, He could have made mankind one people; but they will not cease to dispute. Except those on whom thy Lord hath bestowed His Mercy. And for this did He create them: and the Word of thy Lord shall be fulfilled: 'I will fill Hell with jinns and men together.

Surah 11:118-119

Allah decrees error - though he could have guided all rightly.



For We assuredly sent amongst every People an apostle (with the command), 'Serve Allah and eschew Evil'. Of the people were some whom Allah guided, and some on whom error became inevitably (established). So travel through the earth, and see what was the end of those who denied (the truth).

Surah 16:36

The reason given for the misguidance of people



Allah guideth not such as He leaves astray, and there is none to help them.

Surah 16:37

Say: 'With Allah is the argument that reaches home: if it had been his will, he could indeed have guided you all.

Surah 6:149

Whom Allah doth guide - he is one the right path; whom He rejects from His guidance - such are the persons who perish.

Many are the Jinns and men we have made for Hell; they have hearts wherewith they understand not, eyes wherewith they see not and ears wherewith they hear not. They are like cattle - nay more misguided.

Surah 7:178-179

Another translation says:



He whom Allah leadeth, he indeed is led aright, while he whom Allah sendeth astray - they indeed are losers.

Already have We urged unto hell many of the Jinns and humankind, having hearts wherewith they understand not, and having eyes wherewith they see not, and having ears wherewith they hear not. These are as the cattle - nay, but they are worse! These are the neglectful.

Surah 7:178-179 – (Pickthall)

Al-Barqawi says:



Not only can he do anything, he actually is the only one who does anything. When a man writes, it is Allah who has created in his mind the will to write. Allah at the same time gives the power to write, then brings about the motion of the hand and the pen and the appearance upon paper. All other things are passive, Allah alone is active.

6.3.2 Predestination As Taught In The Hadith

People are created for paradise or hell



Umar ibn al-Khattab said: Muslim ibn Yasar al-Juhani said: When Umar ibn al-Khattab was asked about the verse 'When your Lord took their offspring from the backs of the children of Adam' - al-Qa'nabi recited the verse--he said: I heard the Apostle of Allah (peace be upon him) say when he was questioned about it: Allah created Adam, then passed His right hand over his back, and brought forth from it his offspring, saying: I have these for Paradise and these will do the deeds of those who go to Paradise. He then passed His hand over his back and brought forth from it his offspring, saying: I have created these for Hell, and they will do the deeds of those who go to Hell. A man asked: What is the good of doing anything, Apostle of Allah? The Apostle of Allah (peace be upon him) said: When Allah creates a servant for Paradise, He employs him in doing the deeds of those who will go to Paradise, so that his final action before death is one of the deeds of those who go to Paradise, for which He will bring him into Paradise. But when He creates a servant for Hell, He employs him in doing the deeds of those who will go to Hell, so that his final action before death is one of the deeds of those who go to Hell, for which He will bring him into Hell.

Sunan of Abu-Dawood, 4686

This is confirmed elsewhere:



Abu Darda's reported that the Holy Prophet said: Allah created Adam when He created him. Then he stroke his right shoulder and took out a white race as if they were seeds, and He stroke his left shoulder and took out a black race as if they were coals. Then He said to those who were in his right side: Towards Paradise and I don't care. He said to those who were on his left shoulder: Towards Hell and I don't care.

Mishkat Vol. 3, p. 117-118, No. 454

This is confirmed by al-Bukhari:



Narrated 'Abdullah Allah's Apostle, the truthful and truly-inspired, said, 'Each one of you collected in the womb of his mother for forty days, and then turns into a clot of an equal period (of forty days)... and then Allah sends an angel and orders him to write four things, i.e., his provision, his age, and whether he will be of the wretched or the blessed (in the Hereafter).

Then the soul is breathed into him. And by Allah, a person among you (or a man) may do deeds of the people of the Fire till there is only a cubit or an arm-breadth distance between him and the Fire, but then that writing (which Allah has ordered the angel to write) precedes, and he does the deeds of the people

of Paradise and enters it; and a man may do the deeds of the people of Paradise till there is only a cubit or two between him and Paradise, and then that writing preceeds and he does the deeds of the people of the Fire and enters it.
Al-Bukhari Vol. 8, p 387, No. 593

The will of man and his actions are fixed



Verily the Almighty and Glorious Allah finished five things for every man of His creation: his fixed term, his action, his resting place, his movement and his provision.

Mishkat Vol. 3, p. 117, No. 452

Pre-decree is not the result of good or bad deeds



Abu-al-Aswad reported that Imran-b-Husain asked him: What is your view what the people do today in the world, and strive for, is it something decreed for them or preordained for them or will their fate in the Hereafter be determined by the fact that their Prophets brought them teaching which they did not act upon? I said: Of course, it is something which is predetermined for them and preordained for them. He (further) said: Then, would it not be an injustice (to punish them)? I felt greatly disturbed because of that, and said: Everything is created by Allah and lies in His Power. He would not be questioned as to what He does, but they would be questioned. Thereupon he said to me: May Allah have mercy upon you, I did not mean to ask you but foretesting your intelligence. Two men of the tribe of Muzaynah came to Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) and said: Allah's Messenger, what is your opinion that which the people do in the world and strive for, is something decreed for them; something preordained for them? And will their fate in the Hereafter be determined by the fact that their Prophets brought them teachings which they did not act upon and thus they because deserving of punishment?

Thereupon, he said: Of course, it happens as it is decreed by Destiny and preordained for them, and this view is confirmed by this verse of the Book of Allah, the Exalted and Glorious: „Consider the soul and Him Who made it perfect, then breathed into it its sin and its piety. (91:8)

Sahih Muslim, Vol. 6, pp. 1394-1395, No. 6406

It is impossible for man to change against pre-decree



The Holy Prophet said: When you hear about a mountain that it has shifted itself from its place, believe it, but when you hear about a man, that he has changed his nature don't believe it as it will return to what it was created upon.

Mishkat Vol. 3, p. 121, 45

We are tempted to quote from the Bible:



If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!
2 Co 5:17

There is no assurance of forgiveness or of eternal destiny



I heard the Messenger of Allah say - Verily the Almighty and Glorious Allah caught one hold with His right hand and another with another hand, and said: This is for this, and this is for this, and I don't care. I don't know in which of the two holds I am.

Mishkat Vol. 3, p. 118, No 455

Narrated by Anas ibn Malik: Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) used to say quite frequently: O Turner of the heart, keep me steadfast in your religion. I said: Allah's Apostle, we do affirm faith in you and in that which you have been sent with. (Despite this) you entertain fear about us. Whereupon he said: Yes. Verily the hearts are between two Fingers from the Fingers of Allah and He turns them as He likes.
Al-Tirmidhi, 102

Say: Nothing shall ever befall upon to us except what Allah has ordained for us[sic].Mujahid said 'Bifatanin, Bimudillin': You cannot make anyone go astray except that whom Allah has written for to go to Hell [sic].

Al-Bukhari, Vol 8, p. 402, No. 615

Never could we have found guidance, were it not that Allah had guided us'.

'If only Allah had guided me, I should indeed have been among the pious.

Al-Bukhari, Vol 8, p. 403, No. 616

Yahweh has committed himself to His Word. This cannot be said of Allah. He can only be seen as capricious and arbitrary. He is the absolute sovereign. He acts as he wills.

Recommended Literature for Chapter 6

- *Battle for the Hearts, Episode 5, Faith and Practice in Islam.TWR & LCA, 2001.*

7 Man, Sin and the Law of God

7.1 The Nature Of Man

7.1.1 Introduction

A law is there to define righteousness and transgression. An assessment of the nature and character of man is, consequently, bound to the law. If a law had been designed to accommodate the weakness of man, it would not be just and consequently not the Law of God. On the other hand, if God gives us His Law in accordance with His own holy standard, man will be shown to be hopelessly inadequate. In that case man is entirely depending on God's mercy and pardon. This is exactly the situation that is outlined in the Bible.

Islam, in contrast, assumes that man is capable of keeping the Law of God. Man is expected to strain himself to keep the Law in order to qualify for Paradise. Let us look at the two assessments of man, the one in the Bible and the other in Islam.

A fair selection of relevant extracts from both books will show best the similarities and differences in their teachings.

7.1.2 Man's Position Before God According To The Bible

Man is God-created:



God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.' So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Ge 1:26+27

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning - the sixth day.

Ge 1:31

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man: 'You are free to eat

from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.

Ge 2:15-17

Adam abused the choice God gave him, which resulted in his mortality:



... cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.

Ge 3:17-19

God has placed man over all creation - and gave him the responsibility for it:



What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? ...

You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.

Ps 8:4, 6-8

Man's sinful nature grieves God:



The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become and that every inclination of thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.

Ge 6:5+6

The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

Jer 17:9+10

Jesus shows where the real problem lies:



For from within, out of men's heart come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean'.

Mk 7:21-23

Because man's heart is evil, God's judgement is devastating:



We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written: 'There is no-one righteous, not even one; there is no-one who understands, no-one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become

worthless; there is no-one who does good, not even one. Their thoughts are open graves, their tongues practise deceit. The poison of vipers is on their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood, ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know. There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Rom 3:9-18

Despite man's fallen nature God did not abandon him. On the contrary:



The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, [is] slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished.

Ex 34:6; Ps 103:8-14

The Lord appeared to us in the past saying: `I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness.

Jer 31:3

God's love found a way for man to return to Him:



You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this:

While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!

Rom 5:6-9

God loves man. He wants him to repent and accept God's gift of love:



And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints [i.e. believers], to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge - that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Eph 3:17-19

He gave us even more than forgiveness and love: He gave us His divine nature!



His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

2 Pet 1:3+4

Those who turn to Jesus Christ are spiritually born of God and become His children:



To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. *John 1:12+13*

I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

John 10:10

7.1.3 Man's Position Before God According To The Qur'an

Allah created man:



He Who has made everything which He has created Most Good: He began the creation of man with (nothing more than) clay.

And made his progeny from a quintessence of the nature of a fluid despised.

But He fashioned him in due proportion, and breathed into him something of His spirit. And He gave you (the faculties of) hearing and sight and feeling (and understanding): Little thanks do ye give! *Surah 32:7-9*

[Allah] created man, out of a (mere) clot of congealed blood.

(See also S. 6:2; 23:12-14; 75:36-39; 95:4-5)

Surah 96:2

The purpose of the creation of man and his nature:



I have only created Jinns and men, that they may serve Me.

Surah 51:56

Verily We have created man into toil and struggle.

Surah 90:4

Allah doth wish to lighten your (difficulties): For man was created weak (in flesh).

Surah 4:28

It was We Who created man, and We know what dark suggestions his soul makes to him: for We are nearer to him than (his) jugular vein. *Surah 50:16*

Truly man was created very impatient: Fretful when evil touches him; And niggardly when good reaches him. *Surah 70:19-21*

Man is (ever) niggardly! *Surah 17:100*

Most ungrateful is man! *Surah 17:67*

That which is on earth we have made but as a glittering show for the earth, in order that We may test them - as to which of them are best in conduct.

Surah 18:7

Verily, man is given up to injustice and ingratitude. *Surah 14:34*

Yet when We bestow our favours on man, he turns away and becomes remote on his side (instead of coming to Us), and when evil seizes him he gives himself up to despair! *Surah 17:83*

Truly man is to his Lord ungrateful. And to that (fact) he bears witness (by his deeds). And violent is he in his love of wealth. *Surah 100:6-8*

Allah punishes and rewards man:



(With the result) that Allah has to punish the Hypocrites, men and women, and the Unbelievers, men and women, and Allah turns in Mercy to the Believers, men and women: for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. *Surah 33:73*

They ask thee to hasten on the evil in preference to the good: Yet have come to pass before them (many) exemplary punishments! But verily thy Lord is full of forgiveness for mankind for their wrong-doings; and verily thy Lord is (also) strict in punishment. *Surah 13:6*

To sum up, we find

- the mode of creation from clay: S. 6:22; 32:7; from a clot of blood: S. 96:2; from sperm: S. 23:12-13; 80:18-19)
- the purpose of creation for man to serve Allah: S. 51:56; to toil and struggle: S. 90:4; a glittering show: S. 18:7)
- the character of man man was created weak: S. 4:28; with dark suggestions in his soul: S. 50:16; impatient: S. 70:19; fretful towards evil:

S.[P10]. 70:20; niggardly: S. 70:21; 17:100; ungrateful: S. 100:68; given up to injustice and ingratitude: S. 14:34; violent in love and wealth: S. 100:8).

Muslims and Christians agree that

- Man is a creation of God
- Man is weak, a sinner; poor in character

Note: in the Bible this happened as a result of the fall; in the Qur’an by creation

- There is a moral responsibility and accountability.

Yet Muslims and Christians discover a different purpose and calling for man in their respective books:

Bible	Islam
<p>Yahweh initially created and then selected and called a people for Himself. At first individuals, then the people of Israel, and, in the NT, all those who choose to truly follow Him, accept the offer of the crucified Saviour Jesus Christ as Lord and respond to His love. Yahweh did not create the devil, evil or sin. These result from the choice He gave to angels and later men - a choice that is foundational to enable us to truly love God.</p> <p>The standard of Yahweh is perfection and purity of heart. Because of His purity He cannot have communion with sinful man. Therefore Yahweh offers man what he has not: His own righteous-ness and love and forgiveness and holiness. Because Yahweh is love, He wants no one to perish. However, He respects the choice of man, who may want to obey and serve Him. Heaven is for those who accepted God’s pardon, and is life in His Presence for evermore.</p>	<p>Allah rules the universe and demands submission from all people on earth. Where-ever possible, the will of Allah is to be enforced. It is formulated in the Shariah, the law, which prescribes the way of life with all required actions for all people. The aim is to fortify and spread the rule of Allah every-where.</p> <p>Allah is great and sovereign. Therefore he forgives whom he pleases. “If all sinners become saints he would gain no advantage and if all pious became infidels he would suffer no loss.” He is the author of everything, including sin, and wills sin in some and piety in others. He forgives by just willing to do so, and not by the removing of sin at his expense (sacrifice). Paradise is the reward for right action or the result of Allah’s (arbitrary) forgiveness. Paradise is the fulfilment of human desires.</p>

7.2 The Perception Of Sin

7.2.1 An Assessment Of Sin In The Bible

The origin of sin:



The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame. Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God really say, 'you must not eat from any tree in the garden'? The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but

God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die'. 'You will not surely die', the serpent said to the woman. 'For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil'. When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realised they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves. *Ge 2:25 - 3:7*

God made mankind upright, but men have gone in search of many schemes.

Ecc 7:29

Jesus said about Satan: 'He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies'.

John 8:44

The definition of sin:



Where there is no law there is no transgression. *Rom 4:15*

Before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. *Rom 5:13*

Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.

1John 3:4

All wrongdoing is sin...

1 John 5:17

Everything that does not come from faith is sin.

Rom 14:23

Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.

James 4:17

The Lord said to Moses, 'Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy. *Lev 19:2*

Man has a depraved nature



We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin... what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.

Rom 7:14+15

The means of forgiveness

When we look at the OT and NT doctrine of forgiveness and salvation, we find the only means to be a sacrifice, the substitutional sin bearer. The shed blood of the sacrifice on the altar alone secured forgiveness of sin (Lev 17:10, Heb 9:22). Animal sacrifices in the OT were, however, only a shadow of the 'Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world' (John 1:29). This is forcefully expressed in the Scripture, which says:



The Law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness...Now he [i.e. Christ] has appeared once for all...to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgement, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people. *Heb 9:22.26-27*

Man can by no means save himself in any way, but is dependent on the pardon of God, which is through Christ. According to the Bible righteousness is imputed, it is a gift of God by grace, not a human quality:



What does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness'. Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.

Rom 4:3-5, see also James 2:23

God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. *2 Cor 5:19*

Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. *Rom 10:3*

Sin is missing the aim God has for our lives and us! It is an expression of the will of man in contrast to the will of God. It is subsequently an attitude towards God and not just the violation of laws, although this is the yardstick to assess sin. The tempter and prompter is always Satan, but we have been given the choice to resist Satan's attempts and are responsible for all our actions. A temptation from Satan to seduce a person becomes at the same time a test by God of man's faithfulness, loyalty and commitment to Him.

7.2.2 An Assessment Of Sin In Islam

A definition of sin



Islam does not assume that man is a compulsive sinner. To justify such belief, sin is considered to be relative and classified according to severity. Only severe sins are considered offensive to God.

Observances of ... duties is called virtue, and the negligence or breach thereof is called sin. Virtue and sin result from lawful and unlawful things.

In every act there is sin and virtue.

Any breach of the fundamental duties of which the performance is Farz (compulsory) and Wajeb (obligatory) is called a great sin. Any breach of other minor duties is called a minor sin. Breach of any duty which the Holy Prophet used to do constantly without any break is a great sin. Constant repetition of a minor sin makes it a major one.

(All emphases in quotations from Islamic sources are ours.)

Mishkat Vol. 3, pp. 121, 123, 127, Commentary

Consequently, Islamic theologians divide sins into Gunahii-`kabirah' and Gunahii-`saghirah', great and little sins. Since Muslims are divided into four schools of law, there is no uniformity regarding the exact number of `kabirah' sins. The 'Mishkat' lists 53 (Vol. 3, p.128). However, one may consider the following seventeen as those agreed upon:

1. Kufr [unbelief, spiritual] or infidelity;
2. Perpetual commitment of `small' sins
3. Despairing of Allah's mercy
4. Considering oneself safe from the wrath of God
5. False witness
6. Falsely charging a Muslim with adultery;
7. Taking a false oath;
8. Magic [although this

is very commonly done by many Muslims - and in agreement with Islam]; 9. Drinking wine; 10. Appropriation of the property of orphans; 11. Usury; 12. Adultery; 13. Unnatural crime; 14. Theft; 15. Murder; 16. Fleeing in battle before the face of an infidel enemy; 17. Disobedience to parents

Dictionary of Islam, by T.P. Hughes, p. 594

Several terms are used to distinguish between varying degrees of sins:



- 'khati'a': is considered stumbling, missing the aim, committing an error; a sin committed on purpose (see Surah 17:31)
- 'zanb': ('dhanb') is a sin, a crime (compare Surah 24:14, 81:9), also expressing 'faults' of Mohammed (Surah 47:19 and 48:2)
- 'ithm': is anything forbidden in the law, a heavy sin
- 'shirk': is adding a partner to Allah, polytheism

Encyclopaedia of Islam, p. 250

The word 'dhanb' (pronounce 'zanb') today is interpreted to mean a fault, a kind of wrong doing without necessarily going against any of God's commandments. It is, likewise, a 'horizontal' sin, not a 'vertical' one. In the Arabic-English Lexicon, by E.W. Lane, however, 'dhanb' is 'sin, a crime, a fault, a transgression or an act of disobedience'. However, since this word is used in the Qur'an against Muhammad, its meaning has been modified by Muslims to mean 'shortcoming, results from inattention, incapacity, imperfection'.



'Light sins' may be repaired by good works, 'severer sins' require 'istighfar', i.e. seeking forgiveness of Allah and 'shirk', the severest of sins, requires 'taubah', i.e. repentance.

Encyclopaedia of Islam, p. 250

The Qur'an says:



Say: 'O my Servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the mercy of Allah; for Allah forgives all sins [dhanb]; for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

Surah 39:53

This view is, of course, contradicted by other passages:



He forgiveth whom He pleaseth, and punisheth whom He pleaseth. For Allah hath power over all things.

Surah 2:284 (see also Surah 3:129)

What the Qur'an teaches about sin:



Those who avoid great sins and shameful deeds, only (falling into) small faults [ithm], verily thy Lord is ample in forgiveness.

Surah 53:32

Nay, those who seek gain in Evil, and are girt round by their sins [khati'a], they are Companions of the fire: Therein shall they abide (for ever).

Surah 2:81

Kill not your children for fear of want: We shall provide sustenance for them as well as for you: Verily the killing of them is a great sin [khati'a].

Surah 17:31

Allah forgiveth not that partners should be set up [shirk] with Him; but He forgiveth anything else, to whom He pleaseth.

Surah 4:48

Those who go on increasing in unbelief - Allah will not forgive them nor guide them on the Way.

Surah 4:137

Those who ... reject Allah, and hinder (men) from the Path of Allah, then die rejecting Allah - Allah will not forgive them.

Surah 47:34

O Our people, hearken to the one who invites (you) to Allah, and believe in him: He will forgive you your faults [dhanb], and deliver you from a penalty grievous.

Surah 46:31

The Qur'anic perception of the origin of sin:



Say: 'Nothing will happen to us except what Allah has decreed for us: He is our Protector'. And on Allah let the Believers put their trust.

Surah 9:51

He said: Worship ye that which ye have (yourself) carved?

But God created you and your handiwork.

Surah 37:95-96

Another verse must be added here, but we will use an older translation, since the most accepted translation by Yusuf Ali is obscure:



By the Soul, and the proportion and order given to it, and its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right.

Surah 91:7-8

(or, as it should more accurately read):



He (Allah) intimated to it by inspiration its deviating from truth and its piety.

Mishkat Vol. 3, p.104, No 7

One might object to the above texts, which show that man is absolutely predetermined to do what Allah has decreed without a choice of his own, but that is what the Qur'an says:



This is an admonition: Whosoever will, let him take a (straight) path to his Lord. But ye will not, except as Allah wills; for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom. He will admit to his mercy whom He will; but the wrong-doers - for them he prepared a grievous penalty.

Surah 76:29-31

It is assumed (in the above passage) that Allah has a purpose in barring people from 'a (straight) path'. But by that he denies man a choice of action. Consequently, man cannot be culpable (blameworthy) and does not deserve deserve 'a grievous penalty'. May we recall the words of al-Barqawi (p. XX):



He receives neither profit nor loss from what ever may happen. If all the Infidels became believers and all the irreligious pious, He would gain no advantage. On the other hand, if all believers became infidels, He would suffer no loss. He can do what He wills, and whatever He wills comes to pass, He is not obliged to act. Everything good or evil, in this world exists by His will ... He willeth also the unbelief of the unbelievers and the irreligion of the wicked and, without that will, there would neither be unbelief nor irreligion. All we do we do by His will: what He willeth not does not come to pass ... He is perfectly free to will and to do what He pleases. In creating unbelievers, in willing that they should remain in that state ...

This fully underlines that Allah is ‘tansih’, i.e. far removed. We can clearly detect that the biblical and Qur’anic concepts of sin are in stark contrast to each other.

The means of forgiveness



He rewards those who do ... good with what is best. Those who avoid great sins and shameful deeds, only (falling into) small faults, verily thy Lord is ample in forgiveness.

Surah 53:31-32

O ye who believe! Fear Allah, and (always) say a word directed to the Right: That He may make your conduct whole and sound and forgive you your sins: He that obeys Allah and His Apostle has already attained the highest achievement.

Surah 33:70-71

For those who reject Allah is a terrible penalty: but for those who believe and work righteous deeds, is forgiveness, and a magnificent reward.

Surah 35:7

O ye who believe! If ye fear Allah, He will grant you a criterion (to judge between right and wrong). Remove from you (all) evil (that may afflict) you, and forgive you: For Allah is the Lord of grace unbounded.

Surah 8:29

If two men among you are guilty of lewdness, punish them both. If they repent and amend, leave them alone; for Allah is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful.

Allah accepts the repentance of those who do evil in ignorance and repent soon afterwards; to them will Allah turn in mercy. For Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.

Surah 4:16-17

And whoever repents does good has truly turned to Allah with an (acceptable) conversion.

Surah 25:71

Their apostles said: ‘Is there a doubt about Allah, the Creator of the heaven and the earth? It is He Who invites you, in order that He may forgive you your sins

Surah 14:10

Say to the Unbelievers. If (now) they desist (from unbelief), their past would be forgiven them.

Surah 8:38

All this, of course, is again in contrast to the doctrine of predestination in Islam.

7.2.3 What the Hadith teaches about sin



Narrated by Abdullah ibn Masud: A man said, 'O Allah's Apostle! Which sin is the biggest in Allah's Sight?' The Prophet said, 'To set up rivals unto Allah though He Alone created you.' That man said, 'What is next?' The Prophet said, 'To kill your son lest he should share your food with you! The man said, 'What is next?'

The Prophet said, 'To commit illegal sexual intercourse with the wife of your neighbour.' Then Allah revealed in confirmation of that: 'And those who invoke not with Allah any other god, nor kill such life as Allah has made sacred except for just cause, nor commit illegal sexual intercourse and whoever does this shall receive the punishment...(25.68)

Al-Bukhari Vol. 9, pp. 468-469, No 623

Narrated Abdullah bin Amr: The Prophet said, 'The biggest sins are: To join others [i.e. to join partners to Allah] in worship with Allah; to be undutiful to one's parents; to kill somebody unlawfully; and to take an oath Al-Ghamus.

Al-Bukhari Vol. 8, p. 434, No. 667

Narrated by Abu Huraira: 'The Prophet said, Avoid the seven great destructive sins.' They (the people) asked, 'O Allah's Apostle! What are they?' He said, 'To join partners in worship with Allah; to practice sorcery; to kill the life which Allah has forbidden except for a just cause (according to Islamic law); to eat up usury (Riba), to eat up the property of an orphan; to give one's back to the enemy and fleeing from the battlefield at the time of fighting and to accuse chaste women who never even think of anything touching chastity and are good believers.

Sahih Al-Bukhari Vol. 8, pp. 560-561, No. 840

Narrated by Abu Huraira: 'The Prophet said, Allah has accepted my invocation to forgive what whispers in the hearts of my followers [what their breasts prompt towards evils], unless they put it to action or utter it. (Hadith No. 657, Vol. 8)

Sahih Al-Bukhari Vol. 3, p. 424, No. 705

Mu'az reported that the Apostle of Allah instructed me with ten counsels. He said: Set up nothing with Allah ... nor be disobedient to your parents ... nor give up the compulsory prayers ... nor drink wine ... beware of flight from holy war ... and spend for your family out of your means ...

Mishkat Vol. 3, pp. 138-139, No. 460

Safwan-b-Assai reported ... Set up nothing with Allah, nor steal, nor commit adultery, nor kill a soul ... nor take an innocent man to a man of power that he may put him to death, nor practice sorcery, nor devour interest nor cast blasphemy on a chaste woman, nor turn back for flight ...

Mishkat Vol. 3, p.136, No. 20

A mild view of sin combined with the expectation of generous forgiveness and mercy does away with a need for salvation and a Saviour. Adherence to Islam and performing its rules is deemed sufficient.

7.2.4 Repentance, Forgiveness, Pardon For Sin

The word repentance, ‘tauba’, we find around 50 times in the Qur’an. It was well defined by an-Nawawi who wrote in his ‘Commentary on Muslim’ (Vol. 2, p.354): “It is the turning of the heart from sin.” Some typical passages will help us understand:



O ye who believe! Turn to Allah with sincere repentance: in the hope that your Lord will remove from you your ills and admit you to Gardens beneath which Rivers flow the Day that Allah will not permit to be humiliated the Prophet and those who believe with him. Their Light will run forward before them and by their right

hands while they say ‘Our Lord! Perfect our Light for us and grant us forgiveness; for Thou hast power over all things.’ *Surah 66:8*

Allah accepts the repentance of those who do evil in ignorance and repent soon afterwards; to them will Allah turn in mercy; for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom. Of no effect is the repentance of those who continue to do evil.

Surah 4:17-18

Turn ye to your Lord (in repentance) and bow to His (Will) before the Penalty comes on you: after that ye shall not be helped. *Surah 39:54*

Know they not that Allah doth accept repentance from His votaries and receives their gifts of charity and that Allah is verily He the Oft-Returning Most-Merciful? *Surah 9:104*

Those who reject faith after they accepted it and then go on adding to their defiance of faith never will their repentance be accepted; for they are those who have (of set purpose) gone astray. *Surah 3:90*

Many of these verses are right, beautiful and challenging. Only, we do have to see them in the context that all man does, is pre-determined. Besides, “It is the blood that makes atonement” (Lev 17:11), and that is no issue in Islam.

The above passages are, of course, contradicted by the verses on predestination:



This is an admonition: Whosoever will let him take a (straight) path to his Lord.

But ye will not, except as Allah wills. For Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom. *Surah 76:29-30*

If We had so willed, We could certainly have brought every soul its true guidance: But the Word from Me will come true: ‘I will fill hell with jinns and men all together. *Surah 32:13*

Had Allah willed He could have made you (all) one nation, but He sendeth whom He will astray and guideth whom He will, and ye will indeed be asked of what ye used to do. *Surah 16:93 (Pickthall)*

He forgiveth whom He pleaseth, and He punisheth whom He pleaseth.

Surah 5:20

Whom Allah doth guide - He is on the right path. Whom He rejects from His guidance - such are the persons who perish. Many are the jinns and men We have made for hell. *Surah 7:178-179*

7.2.5 An Evaluation

We perceive from all this that Islam coaches people to repentance, but offers a forgiveness without atonement, and reconciliation without the shed blood of a sacrifice. By Scriptural standards Islam therefore offers no salvation, or worse, misguides people to trust a teaching that is not based on God’s fundamental requirement: “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin”, and that it is the blood of Christ which alone cleanses or purifies us from all sin (Heb 9:22 and 1 John 1:7). Islam thereby contradicts what God has said in His Word! Islam is by that “another Gospel” (Gal 1:6-9) (Greek ‘heteros’ = another of a different kind).

When we investigate the Islamic understanding of the Law and try to relate to it the concept of sin, we inevitably have to look at the biblical and Islamic teaching about man, his nature and purpose.

7.3 The Law of God

7.3.1 The Bible

The Bible rightly states: “where there is no law, there is no transgression” (Rom 4:15), and “we would not have known what sin was, except through the law.” (Rom 7:7)

A law regulates the life of a society by determining what is right and what is wrong. It does not necessarily ‘make good people’. However, if there is a functioning law-enforcement, the transgressors of the law will be taken to task and punished for their anti-social behaviour. Punishment is therefore a deterrent.

Sin is trespassing of the Law (1 John 3:4). The Law exists to define what trespass, what sin is. In addition the Bible sets a divine moral standard by saying: “Everything that does not come from faith is sin” (Rom 14:23). This implies that anything we think or do without the consideration of God is intrinsically wrong. But the Bible also addresses the real problem: “Love is the fulfillment of the Law” (Rom 13:10). Man’s lack of love, devotion and concern for God became and is the prime cause of sin. (See also 1 John 3:4, Ps 51; Rom 2) When Jesus was asked about the most important part of the Law, he answered:



Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.

Mt 22:37-39

7.3.2 Islam

Islam places the emphasis of its faith on the law. The law determines how to accumulate merit, considered to be the key to Paradise. Muslims, like the Pharisees, try to earn heaven.

This view is based on the fundamental error that assumes that sin can be compensated by ‘good deeds’. Of course, our lives should be full of these, but we should equally know that this is no more than our duty to do (Lk 17:10).

The very assumption that one is able to compensate for sin is based on a misconception of the Holiness of God and the awfulness of sin. Seen in this light, observance of the Law as a means to obtain salvation is the very antithesis to the Gospel. Thus commendable good deeds done by Muslims become the very barrier that keeps them out of heaven, “for it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast”! (Eph 2:8-9)



God’s Holiness And His Righteousness Are Deeply Offended By Our Sin. It Either Displays Rebellion Against Or Indifference Towards Him.

The Bible teaches that Satan is the author of sin, whereas according to Islam Allah is the author of everything - including sin. With this background knowledge in mind, we have a look at the Shariah, the Law of Islam.

Recommended Literature for Chapter 7

- Premises and Principles of Muslim Evangelism, *Gerhard Nehls, Nairobi: LCA, 1991, pp. 5-62.*

8 The Shariah

Shariah is the common law of Islam, meaning ‘the way’ or ‘road in the religion of Islam’. It is established for ‘al-Hidaya’, the right guidance for Muslims, both for the worship of Allah and for the duties of life. It is in fact the religious evaluation and regulation of all affairs of life. The ‘Science of Law’ is called ‘Fikh’. The term ‘ash-Shariah’ actually only occurs a couple of times in the Qur’an.



To each among you We prescribed a Law and an Open Way. If Allah has so willed, he would have made you a single people, but (his plan is) to test you in what he hath given you; so strive as in a race in all virtues. The goal of you all is to Allah. It is he that will show you the truth of the matters in which ye dispute.

Surah 5:48

Then We put thee on the (right) Way of Religion: so follow thou that (way), and follow not the desires of those who know not.

Surah 45:18

It is certainly interesting to note that Allah says he could have made us all a single people, but made us different (i.e. Muslims, Christians and Jews), so that we all should strive like in a race for the best virtues! The anticipated goal for this is to demonstrate the truth about which we dispute! We find no word of condemnation of the Law of Moses or any other Scripture which came before (the Qur’an), neither of the Christians. Indeed it states that Allah willed different religions to bring out the Truth!



In the practical reality Muslims, more so than the Jews, are required by an endless list of “do’s” and “don’ts”²⁶ to submit to strict regulations in every aspect of life. The world consists of what is ‘permitted’ (lawful = ‘halaal’) and what is ‘forbidden’ (unlawful = ‘haraam’).

²⁶ See for example the book “Do’s and Do Not’s in Islam” by A. Rehman Shad

A striking phenomenon needs to be mentioned here: “Allah’s law is not to be penetrated by intelligence, it is ta’abbudi, i.e. man has to accept it without criticism, with its apparent inconsistencies and its incomprehensible decrees, as wisdom into which it is impossible to inquire. One must not look in it for causes, in our sense, nor for principles; it is based on the will of Allah, which is bound by no principles.” (Dictionary of Islam, by H.A.R. Gibbs & J.H. Kramers, p. 525) This concept is practiced by the whole of Islam. Muslims are to submit to it, and not to check its truth and trustworthiness. This is probably the single most tragic bondage in Islam. It excludes any critical analysis and comparison with the Christian faith, the very thing the Qur’an promotes:



To thee We sent the Scripture in truth, confirming the scripture that came before it, and guarding it in safety; so judge between them by what Allah hath revealed....
Surah 5:48

Muslims are to judge between the scripture revealed to Muhammad and the scriptures that came before it! We do well to remind our Muslim friends to earnestly consider what the Qur’an teaches in this respect, and to persuade them to think for themselves and to critically analyze the reasons and evidences for their faith and ours. The claim that the biblical Scripture has been corrupted is contradicted by the very verse, which is quoted above.

The Formulation Of The Shariah

While Islamic justice has been practiced from the beginning on the premise established by Muhammad (i.e. the Qur’an and the aHadith), the formulation of the the concept and content of the Shariah was not systematically approached until 150 - 200 years after the death of Muhammad, when the originators of the four Law Schools compiled their respective versions.

8.1 The Structure Of The Shariah

Perhaps it needs to be said that the Shariah is not a Book of Law. It is the gleaning of passages from the Qur'an and Hadith which are viewed to regulate or determine the daily life of every Muslim. The jurists composed from these books a code of justice by determining what is right and what is wrong, and how this Shariah should be enforced.

‘Ash-Shar’ or ‘the Law’, is divided into five sections:

Itiqadat	=	belief
Adab	=	moralties
Ibadat	=	devotions
Mu'amalat	=	transactions
Uqubat	=	punishment

‘Itiqadat’, embraces all that is contained in the six articles of the Muslim faith, namely, belief in:



- God
- His Angels
- His Books
- His Prophets
- The Day of Judgment
- The Decrees of God (Predestination)

‘Adab’, embraces the consideration of all those ‘moral excellences’ which are enjoined in the Qur'an and the Hadith as:

Sincerity, confidence in God, humility, resignation, keeping down one’s expectations, renunciation of the world, giving good counsel and advice, contentment, liberality, love of God and man, patience.

‘Ibadat’ includes all acts of devotion to God, such as are included in the Five Pillars of Practice:



- 'Shaháda', the recitation of the Creed
- 'Salat', the ritual prayer
- 'Zakat', the legal alms giving
- 'Sawm', the fasting
- 'Hajj', the pilgrimage to Mecca

It is also to regulate such religious duties as 'Jihad' or warfare for the propagation of the religion of Islam.

'**Mu'amalat**' includes such duties as are required between man and man. This covers the various sections of civil jurisprudence such as trade and business, theft, marriage, divorce, dower, partnership, claims, etc.

'**Uqubat**' denotes the punishment instituted in the Qur'an and Traditions. These are: retaliation, punishment for theft (by cutting off a hand), punishment for fornication and adultery (by stoning for a married person and one hundred lashes for an unmarried person), punishment of eighty lashes for slander, punishment by death for apostasy, and punishment with eighty lashes for wine drinking etc. Islamic law strongly builds its case on what is 'lawful' ('halaal') and 'unlawful' ('haraam'). That which is lawful is graded into **five classes**:



- 'Farz', that which is proved beyond all doubt to be taught by the Qur'an or in a tradition of undoubted authority. The denial or disobedience of such is considered positive infidelity.
- 'Wajib', that which is obligatory, but of which there is some doubt whether or not it was practiced in the Qur'an or in a tradition of undoubted authority.
- 'Sunnah', that which was practiced by Muhammad.
- 'Mustahabb', that which Muhammad and his companions sometimes did and sometimes omitted.
- 'Mubah', that which is desirable, but which may be omitted without fear of sin. (*Dictionary of Islam, by Hughes, p. 285-286*)

8.1.1 The Origin And Fountain Of All Islamic Law

The origin and fountain of all Islamic law is the Qur’an and the Hadith. No Muslim school of theology ever neglected them. They are binding upon Sunnis and Shi’ah. The only difference between the Sunni and Shi’áh is that they use different collections of Traditions.

In addition to the Qur’an, and the Hadith, Islamic Law has introduced two further concepts:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ijma 	If a case cannot be deduced from the Qur’an or Hadith, the consensus (= ‘ijma’) of the jurists may be, and often is, applied.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qiyas 	This is ‘an analogical extension of a recognized text to include another situation which would legitimately be held to be covered by the principle (‘illa) which that text enunciated’ (= stated clearly)

An illustration may help us understand this: The Qur’an makes the drinking of wine unlawful (‘haraam’). In that case, may a Muslim drink beer? The Khadis (jurists) would reason that >1. because it causes intoxication wine is forbidden, >2. beer is not mentioned in the Qur’an or Hadith, >3. beer also intoxicates, therefore: >4. beer is also forbidden.

Sunnis are divided into 4 Law Schools. These are based on the teachings of

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abu-Hanifa born 80 AH in Kufah 	today practiced in Central Asia, India and somewhat in Egypt
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Malik born 96 AH in Medina 	today practiced in West Africa and North Africa, excepting Egypt
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ash-Shafi’i born 150 AH in Gaza 	today practiced in South Arabia, East Africa, Malaysia, Egypt and Central Asia)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ibn-Hanbal born 164 AH in Baghdad 	today practiced in parts of the Arabian peninsula

These different schools of jurisprudence of Sunnis do not differ in fundamentals of religious belief, but in the interpretation and application of the Law.

The study of the Shariah takes a number of years and is part of the study of Theology. Consequently, the Khadi, i.e. the judge in an Islamic society is at the same time the Mullah or the Shaikh, who enjoys much respect.

The Islamic law has not, as the West, given way to the permissive doctrine of secular humanism, which has plunged much of it into a morass of lawlessness and moral decay. These decidedly anti-Christian forces are, very unfortunately, construed to be the result of a failed Christianity. It has to be said, however, that unlike in Islam, the West exercises no pressure on unbelievers to act as though they were believers, which leads to hypocrisy.

In conclusion we can sum up that Christians and Muslims stand on different premises with regard to their concept of justice, particularly divine justice.



A Muslim Lives ‘Under The Law’,

A Christian ‘Under Grace’

By that token a Muslim views himself as ‘Abdullah’, a slave of Allah. A Christian sees himself as a child of God, once strayed, but now reconciled to the Father and loved by Him.

Recommended Literature for Chapter 8

- Battle for the Hearts, Episode 4:4, The Sharia. *TWR & LCA, 2001.*

9 Islamic Ideas about Salvation

In the Bible we find well-defined teaching about salvation. It is the way whereby a person may obtain forgiveness and be reconciled to God (2 Co 5:18, 19). Every person with a fair knowledge of God's Word and not confused by certain church dogmas, is able to judge in what position he/she stands before God: forgiven or not forgiven, saved or lost. In contrast to that no Muslim may justifiably conclude that his/her sins are forgiven, that he/she is saved from the consequences of sin, and has by that token peace with God and the assurance of eternal life in heaven.

Islam presents actually three 'ways of salvation', if one may call them by this name, but these conflict with each other:

Salvation Is Achieved By Right Action



The balance that day will be true (to a nicety). Those whose scale (of good) will be heavy, will prosper. Those whose scale will be light, will find their souls in perdition, for that they wrongfully treated our signs. *Surah 7:8-9*

Salvation Is Obtained Through God's Mercy And Forgiveness



Say: If ye do love Allah, follow me: Allah will love you, and forgive you your sins. For Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. *Surah 3:31*

Salvation Comes By Pre-Decree



Say: Why then doth He punish you for your sins? Nay, ye are but men - of the men He hath created. He forgiveth whom He pleaseth, and He punishes whom He pleaseth. And to Allah belongeth the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and all that is between. *Surah 5:18*

He leaves straying whom He pleases and guides whom He pleases: but ye shall certainly be called to account for all your actions. *Surah 16:93*

It is only martyrs in a 'holy war', who have a Qur'anic assurance to be forgiven and to go to Paradise.

The word 'salvation', which is najat in Arabic, only appears once in the Qur'an: It lets a believing subject of Pharaoh say:



O, my people! How (strange) it is for me to call you to salvation while ye call me to the fire [i.e. hell].

Surah 40:41

Yusuf Ali translates the word 'fauz' with 'salvation':



Allah will say: 'This is a day on which the truthful will profit from their truth. Theirs are Gardens, with rivers flowing beneath, - their eternal home: Allah well-pleased with them, and they with Allah. That is the mighty triumph (the fulfillment of all desires).

Surah 5:119

The footnote in the Qur'an explains:



Fauz = felicity, happiness, achievement, salvation, the attainment or fulfilment of desires. What a beautiful definition of salvation or the end of life! - That we should win God's good pleasure and that we should reach the stage at which His good pleasure is all-in-all to us.

In an additional note (app. XII, p. 1469) we read:



This, then, is the Muslim idea of salvation. It consists, not in being saved from the consequences of our sins by the suffering or the merits of others, nor in Nirvana, or annihilation or absorption - but in the achievement, the attainment of all desires, the felicity in excelsis.

This is our idea of salvation: the negative avoidance of all the consequences of evil, and the positive attainment of all - and more than all - that our hearts could possibly desire. For God's bounty outstrips anything that our eyes have seen, or our ears have heard of, or our imagination can conceive.

To any person who knows the Bible, this is an atrocious blasphemy and a total misjudgement of God, man and sin!

We conclude: Muslims have



- A False Concept of God
- A False Concept of Man
- A False Concept of Sin

Because of the misunderstood holiness and righteousness of God, sin is misjudged. This leads to the wrong understanding that man is able to compensate for his sin or that God will eliminate it because of man's sincerity, which ultimately is also his own effort.



**Consequently
a Muslim sees no need
for atonement, justification and reconciliation or,
for that matter, grace.**

Recommended Literature for Chapter 9

- Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law, *Ignaz Goldziher, Princeton Un4. Press 1981.*
- Islam in the Modern World, *Norman Anderson, Apollos 1990.*
- Ishmael, my Brother, *compiled by Anne Cooper, MARC, Evangelical Missionary Alliance, 1993, pp. 113-140.*
- Sin and Atonement in Islam and Christianity, *Iskander Jadeed, Light of Life, 57 pages. (compares the subject in the light of Qur'an and Bible. The study leads to the realization of the necessity of redemption for the forgiveness of sin by the atoning death of Jesus Christ on the cross.)*
- Textbook of Islam, Vol. 2, *M.A. Quraishy, 1989, The Islamic Foundation, P.O. Box 30611, Nairobi, Kenya.*
- The Prayer of the Lost, *Abd Al-Masih, Light of Life 1993, 120 pages. (compares the opening Surah Al-Fatiha with the Lord's Prayer and thus demonstrates the differences in prayer between Islam and the Christian faith. The different spirit portrayed in these prayers alerts us to recognize the true nature of Islam.)*
- Battle for the Hearts, *Episode 1:5, Islam / Christianity: The differences. TWR & LCA, 2001.*
- *Handout: Comparison of some teachings of Islam and Christianity, LCA.*

10 Speculations about Future Life

Eschatology is the teaching on ‘the last things’, generally meaning the understanding of the Time of the End, the Resurrection, Last Judgment, Heaven and Hell, and concerns itself at the same time with questions regarding death and life after death.

Although identical words for these events are used as in the Christian context, the content is rather different.

10.1 Death and the Punishment in the Grave

To find out what a Muslim has to expect after death, we look at some aHadith taken from the popular book “What happens after Death?” by Hazrat Maulana Ahmed Saeed Dehlwi and other Traditions. We must remember that the Hadith provides the explanation for the Qur’an and is therefore an absolute authority to Muslims.

What Is The Punishment Like?



The dead man will continue to feel the pangs of death so long as he is in the grave. For the believers, this pain is more than all other pains but for the non-believers it is very light as his trouble will come as everlasting punishment after death. (Abu Naim)

What Happens After Death? Vol. 1, p. 52

Hazrat Umar asked Hazrat Ka’ab to narrate the conditions of death. He told that a tree of thorns was thrust in his stomach and every thorn of it was entangled with a vein and in that state a very powerful man was pulling out that tree with all his force and with [sic] thorns all the veins were coming out. (Ibn Abi Shaiba, Ibn Abiddumya) *What Happens After Death? Vol 1, p. 54-55*

Hazrat Ata Bin Yasaar has quoted the Holy Prophet to have stated that the grip of the Angel of Death is harder than thousand strikes of a sword. The believer, who dies, feels pain in every vein separately. At the time of death, Satan, the enemy of Allah, is very near to the dying man. (Masnad Haaris)

What Happens After Death? Vol 1, p. 55

At that time the eyes are taken out, the veins are snatched away, the backbone is crushed and the whole physical frame is put to agonies which no human language can express. If there is a wound in the body, the whole body

suffers endless pain. Imagine the condition of the body when the entire bodily limbs [sic] will be snatched away one by one. This is the turning hour of a man from one stage to another, from a life of flesh to a life of spirit.

Mishkat Vol. 4, p. 83 - Commentary



Narrated by AbuHurayrah: Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) said: When the dead body (of a Muslim) is buried in the grave there appear before him two Angels, both having black faces and blue eyes. One is called Munkar and the other is called Nakir and they say: Say what you have to say about this person

and he will say: He is the servant of Allah and His Messenger. I bear testimony to the fact that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is His Messenger and they both will say: We already knew that you would say this. Then his grave will be expanded to the extent of 4900 square cubic feet and it will be illuminated, then it will be said to him: Go to sleep and he will say: I intend to go to my family in order to inform them and they would say: Go to sleep like the sleep of a newly wedded bride whom no one awakens but one who is dearest to her amongst his family members. Only Allah would resurrect him from his resting place. If he (the dead) were a hypocrite he will say: I heard people making a statement (pertaining to the oneness of Allah and the apostlehood of Muhammad) and I said the same but I do not know. And they would say: We already knew that you would say this and the earth will be told to press him and it will press him till his ribs are clasped together and he will not be relieved of the torment till Allah resurrects him from his resting-place.

Al-Tirmidhi, 130



A virtuous man will live in a semi-conscious state of happiness in his grave as if he is in dream in the midst of the sweet company of a beautiful girl. When he will be awake, he will exclaim: O woe to us! Who has raised us from our sleeping place? The sinner will also live likewise in the midst of huge snakes, tigers and lions as

if he is in dream. He will continue to have such punishment in proportion to his evil deeds.

Mishkat Vol. 3, p. 79 Commentary

How Long Is The Suffering To Last?



What does grave mean? Grave means the period from the time of death up to the Resurrection Day when judgment will take place.

Mishkat Vol. 3, p. 78 Commentary

Hazrat Ibn Abbas said that the Holy Prophet said that while ordering to take out the soul of the sinful believers Allah asks the Angel of Death to give him the glad tiding of Paradise, although on account of sin, they will be given

punishment of fire for a certain period. It means that the followers of Muhammad would certainly get Paradise although after completing their term of punishment for the sins. *What Happens After Death? Vol. 1, p. 92*

Contrary to that the Bible clearly states:



Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.

Heb 9:27

While punishment in the grave is temporary, i.e. until the resurrection and final judgement, hell is eternal.



If We had willed, We could certainly have brought every soul its true guidance. But the Word from Me will come true: 'I will fill Hell with Jinns and men all together. Taste ye then - for ye forgot the Meeting of this Day of yours, and We too will forget you - taste ye the penalty of Eternity for your (evil) deeds!

Surah 32:13-14

The Sinners will be in the punishment of Hell, to dwell therein (for age). Nowise will the (punishment) be lightened for them, and in despair will they be there overwhelmed. Nowise shall We be unjust to them: But it is they who have been unjust themselves. They will cry: 'O Malik!²⁷ Would that thy Lord put an end to us!' He will say: 'Nay, but ye shall abide!

Surah 43:74-77

Those who are wretched shall be in the Fire: there will be for them therein (nothing but) the heaving of sighs and sobs. They will dwell therein for all the time that the heavens and the earth endure, except as thy Lord willeth: for thy Lord is the (sure) Accomplisher of what he planneth. *Surah 11:106-107*

Their wish will be to get out of the fire, but never will they get out therefrom. Their penalty will be one that endures. *Surah 5:37*

In total contrast to that Muslims are encouraged to believe that while they will have to go to hell for a period of time to suffer for the sins, which they have committed while on earth, they may well expect to enter Paradise thereafter. This raises some questions:

1. If hell is forever - how do they hope to come out?

²⁷ Malik = keeper of hell

2. Where does forgiveness come in?

3. Why should Allah let those people out of hell into Paradise who sinned against better knowledge (i.e. the believers), while leaving the ignorant for eternal punishment?

10.1.1 Which Sins Will Be Punished?

There is, of course, a great variety of sins for which people will be punished. We will mention only the somewhat unusual. Punishment will be meted out for...

...urinating wrongly:



Hazrat Ibn Umar retired for night halt to a house which belonged to an aged woman. There was a grave at shorter distance from the house. During the night he heard a voice from the grave, shouting: 'Urine that urine - water container that water container.'

When he inquired of the woman about the grave she said that it belonged to her husband who was suffering from tribulation of the grave for two reasons - first he did not take care in urinating and secondly he pointed to an empty water container when a very thirsty man asked for water to quench his thirst. As a result the man did not find water therein and died of the thirst.

What Happens After Death? Vol. 1, p. 190

Sheikh Ibn Hajar Makki narrates that the Traditions mentioning carelessness in urinating causing tribulation of the grave are a proof that carelessness in urinating is a grave sin (Kubair) and so also fault finding and back biting. (Kitabe Zawajir)

What Happens After Death? Vol. 1, p. 195

...considering the prescribed prayers (Salat) a burden and for neglecting the prescribed almsgiving:



It is narrated by Abu Huaira that during the Night of Miraj the Holy Prophet passed by a group whose heads were being crushed with the stones, they were those who performed salat like unburdening a load from their heads or treated the salat as a burden. Then there was a group which had covered their sexparts with a piece of rag only and was grazing hot stones and cactus, they did not pay Zakat and Sadaqat.

What Happens After Death? Vol. 1, p. 203

The snake says: 'I have been appointed over you by my Lord in order to bite you till sunrise for having missed your morning prayers, and I am appointed to bite you till afternoon for missing the noon prayer, and then I am to bite you till sunset for having missed the afternoon prayers; and I am to bite you till night-prayer's time for missing the evening prayers and missing the night prayers. I am appointed to bite you continuously till morning. When the snake bites him but once the corpse sinks into the earth to the depth measuring the length of seventy hands. And in the same manner he will continue to suffer this torment till Doomsday.

What Happens After Death? Vol. 2, p. 141

...those, whose actions differ from their words, who try to hear and see illegitimate things, who refused to suckle their babies, and who broke the fast (Sawm) before the time:



According to Hazrat Abu Imama the Holy Prophet Sal'am described a dream to his Companions... He found women and men whose mouth corners were ripped, they were those whose actions were different from their words. Going onward certain women and men were seen in whose ears and eyes nails were thrust, they were those who always tried to hear and see the illegitimate things. The certain [sic] women were hanging upside down and there [sic] breasts were bitten by snakes, they were those who refused to suckle their babies. A little ahead, many men and women were found hanging upside down and licking mud, they were those fast observers who broke their fasts before the appointed time.

What Happens After Death? Vol. 1, p. 204

...those who were liars:



In the fourth grave the dead was seen burning in the fire and the Angels of Tribulation were thrashing him which had made him cry loudly. In the same manner it was said that the dead used to take false oaths and was a liar.

What Happens After Death? Vol. 1, p. 210

...and those who played chess:



In the fifth grave the dead was being beaten with the pillars of fire and he was crying very loudly. It was said about him in the same manner that he was an amateur player of chess etc. although such things are prohibited by the Apostle of Allah.

What Happens After Death? Vol. 1, p. 210

Is all this not desperately sad? It is indeed! Muhammad expressed it too:



It is said by Hazrat Burra that he accompanied the Holy Prophet Sal'am in a funeral and the latter wept near a grave so excessively that the soil was moistened and upon their inquiry he told the Companions to be prepared for the grave which was so terrifying. (Ibn Maja) *What Happens After Death? Vol. 1, p. 169*



1. We can see that Muslims have more than enough reason to fear the terrors of death, the grave, judgment and punishment.

2. This is one of the intimidating factors, which hold every Muslim terrorized and mesmerized, since he fears more than anything else the punishment, which he is taught to expect when leaving Islam.

3. Until the point of death, even to the Resurrection and Last Judgment, a Muslim has no knowledge of his destiny. Consequently he has no assurance of forgiveness, although the Qur'an makes much of it. Islam offers no salvation in the way the Bible does. By that Islam is basically a religion of fear. Intimidation faces those who consider leaving Islam to become Christians.

Fear of such prospects make it evidently quite desirable for Muslims to seek martyrdom. The fear of death in Islam and the glory which awaits those who die as believers in Christ - having been forgiven, having peace with God and having been reconciled to God, offers such enormous contrasts, that a Christian should take every opportunity to share this with his Muslim friend.

10.2 The Time Of The End

The Mahdi will come followed by Jesus, who will kill the Antichrist: Towards the End of Time a descendant of Muhammad will appear as the Mahdi (pronounced Machadi). He will move from Medina to Mecca and be the last Imam to teach and guide all faithful Muslims. He is not mentioned in the Qur'an, scarcely in the Hadith, and not at all by the best-accepted Hadith collectors (al-Bukhari and Muslim). In the Mishkat we read:



Abdullah b-Masud reported that the Prophet said: the world shall not pass away till a man of my house rules over the Arabs. His name will be similar to my name"... Umme Salamah reported: I heard the Prophet of Allah say: The Mahdi will appear from my stock, from the descendants of Fatima.

Mishkat Vol. 4, p. 44-45, Nr. 74-75

Narrated by Abu Sa'id al-Khudri: The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: The Mahdi will be of my stock, and will have a broad forehead a prominent nose. He will fill the earth with equity and justice as it was filled with oppression and tyranny, and he will rule for seven years. *Sunan of Abu-Dawood, 4272*

Shiah Muslims believe the Mahdi has already come in the person of the 12th Khalif Muhammad Abu'l-Qasim, who is believed to be hiding (in a deep well) until the end of time.

Al-Dajjal is the Islamic version of the Anti-Christ:



It appears from many traditions ... that Dajjal was living or at least born at the time of the Holy Prophet. He will not die till he will be killed by Jesus. In the mean time, he has been kept in strong iron chains. The Holy Prophet has given his physical description. He will be squint of right eye, floating of the left eye, curly and coarse haired, having biting teeth, big and fat so much so that there will be a distance of 70 cubits between his two eyes. His father will be long statured with long nose like a beak, and his mother will be fat and long of two hands. *Mishkat Vol. 4, p. 51 – Commentary*

Jesus will defeat Al-Dajjal:



When Dajjal, representing the embodiment of evils, will let flow his poisonous teachings attended with general oppression and sham miracles, Jesus will come down from heaven placing his two palms upon the wings of angels and descend in [sic] the white minaret to the east of Damascus. He will pray behind Imam Mahdi thereby showing that he will establish the Shariah of the Holy Prophet of Arabia. He will destroy the Cross which represents the crucifixion of Jesus Christ because it is a gross misrepresentation. He will establish the kingdom of god on earth in which there will remain no mutual hatred, jealousy, enmity and rancour. The world will be filled up for a time with the melodious names of Allah. He will be nearly of square size, red, extremely beautiful, having hanging hairs. He will take wife and issues²⁸ will be born to him. He will search for Dajjal and find him out at Lud, a town in Syria and he will kill him there with his own hand. Thereafter almost all including the Jews and the Christians will accept Islam thus proving the truth of the Qur'anic verse: 'He it is who sent his Apostle with guidance and true religion in order that He may cause it to prevail over all other religions'. During his Khalifat, two mighty tribes known as Gog and Magog will appear from the hilly countries between Turkisthan and Transoxania and will devastate the land carrying pillage and

²⁸ issue = means 'children'

murders. Through the invocation of Jesus, they will be destroyed. Then there will be heavy shower of rain which will enrich the world with foodstuffs and vegetables. Thereafter a pleasant wind will carry all the believers to death leaving the unbelievers to suffer. After this Jesus will die and he will be buried at the Prophet's sepulchre just by the side.

Mishkat 4, p. 80 – Commentary

Jesus will destroy all crosses:



Narrated by Abu Huraira: Allah's Apostle said, 'By Him in Whose Hands my soul is, surely (Jesus,) the son of Mary will soon descend amongst you and will judge mankind justly (as a Just Ruler); he will break the Cross and kill the pigs and there will be no Jizya (i.e. taxation taken from non-Muslims). Money will be in abundance so that nobody will accept it, and a single prostration to Allah (in prayer) will be better than the whole world and whatever is in it.' Abu Huraira added 'If you wish, you can recite (this verse of the Holy Book): And there is none Of the people of the Scriptures (Jews and Christians) But must believe in him (i.e Jesus as an Apostle of Allah and a human being) Before his death. And on the Day of Judgment He will be a witness against them'. (4.159) (See Fateh Al Bari, Page 302, Vol 7)

Al-Bukhari Vol 4, pp. 436-437, Nr. 657

Jesus will marry, have children, die and be buried next to Muhammad:



Abdullah-b-Amr reported that the Messenger of Allah said: Jesus, son of Mary, will come down to the world. He will marry and there will be his issue, and he will live for forty-five years and then die. He will be buried with me in my grave. Then I and Jesus, son of Mary, will stand up in one grave between Abu Bakr and Omar. (Ibnul Jaozi) *Mishkat 4, p. 82, Nr. 642*

The king of Kings and the lord of Lords

Only with this background knowledge can we understand the following Hadith:



Narrated by Abu Huraira: Allah's Apostle said, 'The most awful name in Allah's sight on the Day of Resurrection, will be (that of) a man calling himself Malik Al-Amlak (the king of kings)'.

Al-Bukhari Vol. 8, p. 144, Nr. 224

The Resurrection Day



The resurrection is spoken of under various names, the most important of which is given below: the day of Resurrection, occurring seventy times in the Qur'an, the day of requital, the next world, occurring over one hundred times, the day of trial, occurring five times, The Hour [occurring forty times in the Qur'an] does not properly apply to the Day of Resurrection as it is the hour of Destruction (Doomsday), while the Resurrection is the hour of Construction. With the first blowing of the Trumpet, the Hour of Destruction will come to pass, and then after a lapse of forty years in Barzakh the Resurrection will take place...

Then it shall be blown again, when lo, they shall stand up awaiting. And the earth shall shine with the light of its Lord and the book shall be laid down and the prophets and the witnesses shall be brought up (Surah 39:69). And the whole earth shall be in His grip on the Resurrection Day and the heavens will be rolled up in His right hand (Surah 39:67). And the Trumpet shall be blown when lo, from their graves they shall hasten on to their Lord. They shall say: O woe to us! Who has raised us from our sleeping-place ... There shall be nought but a single cry when lo they shall be all brought before Us (Surah 36:51). The day on which the Trumpet shall be blown, so that you shall all come forth in hosts and the heavens shall be opened, so that it shall be all openings (Surah 78:19). The earth will be red-white plane without trees, plants, mountains and rivers. The sun will shine just above the head from a little distance. The people will rise up naked, barefooted and uncircumcised. There will be no place for concealment and no shade except the shade of the Throne of the Almighty, which the righteous only shall enjoy. There will be no sin or bloodshed or evil-doing as everybody will be engaged in the thoughts of salvation. The Qur'an says: For every man out of them there will be an affair on it that day which will keep him engaged (Surah 80:37). The first to rise from his grave will be the Prophet Muhammad and then the other prophets and pious men will follow him.

Mishkat Vol. 4, p. 94-95 - Commentary

Much intellectual blood is being spent on the question whether man will rise with body or without body. The old theory of dogmatic religion upholds the doctrine of only physical resurrection, while the new school of thought inclines to adopt only the spiritual resurrection. We cannot definitely answer either of the two questions as our vision of comprehension does not extend so far. The Qur'an and Hadith give us some clue by upholding the doctrine of spiritual resurrection combined with a physique made out of the good and evil deeds of a man.

Mishkat Vol. 4, p. 97 - Commentary

Meqdad reported: I heard the Apostle of Allah say: The sun will be brought near creation on the Resurrection Day so much so that it will be from them like the distance of a mile. People will remain in perspiration in proportion to their deeds. Of them, there will be one who will remain up to his heels, and of them will be one who will remain up to his joints, of them will be one who will remain up to his knees, of them will be those whom perspiration will drown a drowning; and the Messenger of Allah pointed out to his mouth with his hand.

Mishkat Vol. 4, p. 102, Commentary

Aisha reported: I heard the Messenger of Allah say in one of his prayers: O Allah! Take easy account of me. I asked: O Prophet of Allah! What is easy account? He replied: To look to his record (of deeds) and to forgive him. O Aisha! He whose account will be strictly taken on that day will be destroyed. (Ahmad)

Mishkat Vol. 4, p. 106

The Day of Judgment



There will be none left who will not be asked these four things - his age, in what way he spent it; his actions, with what object he did them; his body, how he had worn it out; and his wealth, wherefrom he acquired it and how he spent it. All these questions will be put to him in presence of all the creatures from the beginning of the world up to its end.

Mishkat Vol. 4, p.109, Commentary

The Book of Deeds



Then the Book of Deeds will be placed in his hands, such a book as had omitted nothing, small or great from being written. The Qur'an says: And the Book shall be placed, then you will see the guilty fearing from what is in it, and will say: Ah! Woe to us! What a book is this? It has not omitted any great one but numbers them all [sic]. And they shall find what they done, and your Lord does not deal unjustly with any man (Surah 18:49). We made everyman's actions to cling to his neck, and will We bring forth to him on the Resurrection Day a book which he will find wide open (Surah 17:13). Whoever has done an atom's weight of good shall see it, and whoever has done an atom's weight of evil shall see it (Surah 99:7). The Almighty Allah will then ask: Read thy book, thy own soul is a reckoner against thee this day (Surah 17:14). The virtuous will receive it by the right hand and the sinner by the left and the unbelievers by the back (Surah 69:19).

Mishkat Vol. 4, p. 109, Commentary

Sinners are chained



For the sinners in general, the Lord will pass order to the angels: Lay hold on him, then put a chain on him, then thrust him into a chain the length of which is seventy cubits (Surah 69:30). At this time, the heavens and earth will weep for him at his disaster.

Mishkat Vol. 4, pp. 110-111, Commentary

The balance decides in case of doubt



After those that will enter Paradise without account and those that will enter the Fire, there will remain a class of too numerous people who mixed good with evil and thus committed both virtues and sins. The virtues and sins of only these people will be weighed in the Balance. The Qur'an says: We will not set up a balance for them [unbelievers] on the Day of Resurrection (Surah 18:105). The first class will be the people who spent their nights by standing in prayer and whom neither the commodities of this world, nor its riches could have derted from the remembrance of Allah (Surah 24:37). The second class will be the polytheists and unbelievers - those that set up partnership with God and disbelieved the Prophet and the simple articles of religion. The trial at the Balance will be very severe and there will be none left who will not be overwhelmed with fear, bewilderment and crushing anxiety.

Mishkat Vol. 4, p. 110, Commentary

Salvation is effected when good deeds outweigh bad ones



If his virtues outweigh, the man will be fortunate and will enter Paradise; if his sins outweigh, the man will be unfortunate and enter Hell. It is to this fact that the Qur'an says: Then as for one whose measure of good deeds is heavy, he shall have a pleasant life, and as one whose measure is light, his abode shall be the abyss. And what will make you know what it is? A burning fire (Surah 101:6).

Mishkat Vol. 4, p. 110, Commentary

Observing the Law causes spirituality



And as for those whose balances are heavy, these are successful, and as for those whose balances are light, these are they who caused damage to their souls (Surah 23:102). Thus spiritual deterioration is caused by the neglect of the Balance of Shariah injunctions and prohibitions. Again the Qur'an says: We sent our apostles with clear arguments, and sent down with them the Book and the Balance that men may conduct themselves with equity. (Surah 57:25).

Mishkat Vol. 4, p. 111, Commentary

Resurrection Day is a day of recompense

At that time, Allah will proclaim: Today every soul will be recompensed for what he did. There's no oppression today. And thus the verse will come out to be true. And don't think that Allah is heedless of what the oppressors do (Surah 14:42). He whose rights were infringed will get the virtue of the wrongdoer to the extent of the injury done, and if the virtues fall short of compensation, the sins of the wronged will fall on the wrong-doer. Thus the wrong-doer will be bereft of virtues and become empty handed when virtues will be urgently required. He will be truly poor...

After the measurement is over, the people will be driven towards the Great Path which runs over a bridge extended over the back of the Hell-fire. The bridge is sharper than knife and thinner than hair. There will be the fire of which the flames will be rising high just below the bridge and there will be thorny plants raising their heads above in the fire. Only those who were steadfast to the straight path of Islam will be able to cross it safe by virtue of their good deeds, and those who went astray and made their backs heavy will slip down unto Hell at the first step they will take on the Path. The Path will be enveloped in darkness and only those that will have light of good deeds will be able to pass it, some in the twinkling of an eye, some like the passing of air, some galloping, some walking, some crawling and falling down. This will occur according to the light of good deeds...

The Holy Prophet will be the first to cross the Path with his pious followers. None would speak except one whom the Beneficent God permits (Surah 78:38). Nothing but pious deeds will be true friends at the great crisis.

Mishkat Vol. 4, pp. 112-113, Commentary



Narrated by Aisha: Allah's Apostle said, '(On the Day of Resurrection) anyone whose account will be taken will be ruined (i.e. go to Hell).' I said, 'O Allah's Apostle! May Allah make me be sacrificed for you. Doesn't Allah say: Then as for him who will be given his record in his right hand, he surely will receive an easy

reckoning?’(84.7-8) He replied, ‘That is only the presentation of the accounts; but he whose record is questioned, will be ruined’.

Al-Bukhari Vol. 6, p. 435, No. 463 (see also Vol. 8, p. 357, No. 545)



In the Bible we find that the motive for action is primarily consideration. The resulting sin is only an outflow from the world of thought. Nothing unclean shall ever enter God’s presence (Eph 5:5). Therefore no one can ever hope to enter God’s presence - except he/she has obtained forgiveness and pardon.

- We question whether those who perform prescribed religious rituals and practice in the right manner and at the right time are by that token virtuous.
- We question whether a relatively ‘small’ amount of sin (less than 50%) will make man’s condition compatible with God’s holiness. To enter heaven, absolute holiness and purity are a necessity.

An illustration may help a Muslim to understand this:

- When is a sausage not halaal?
- When it is made of pork? - If only 49% or less of it is pork? - Or if only its skin is taken from a pig?

The obvious answer is: none of these sausages are halaal. All are haraam²⁹! The same can be applied to man. When is a man not acceptable to God?

- When he is a mass murderer?
- When he is an occasional adulterer?
- When he occasionally has evil thoughts?

We all know the answer. We must realize again that a law cannot save. It only shows what is wrong or right. Fear of punishment may improve behaviour, but it cannot change a person’s attitude, character and relationship to God.

²⁹ haraam = forbidden

10.3 Paradise

The Paradise replaces the biblical concept of Heaven in Islam. What is it like?



Narrated Abu Huraira: Allah's Apostle said, 'Allah said, 'I have prepared for my pious worshipers such things as no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard of, and nobody has ever thought of.' 'Abu Huraira added: If you wish you can read: 'No soul knows what is kept hidden (in reserve) for them of joy as reward for what they used to do. (Surah 32:17)

Al-Bukhari Vol. 6, p. 288, Nr. 302

Let us compare this with the Bible, from which this text seems to originate:



No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.

1 Cor 2:9 - quoting Isai 64:4



Paradise in the Qur'an is occupied by those for whom it is a reward for good deeds and those whom Allah has predestined for Paradise.

A dramatically different understanding of Heaven and Paradise (al-Jannah) and Hell (al-Jahannam) is apparent in the Bible as compared with Islam. W. H. T. Gairdner observes in his book *The Reproach of Islam*:



On earth His name is ever on their [i.e. the Muslim's] lips, yet in Paradise itself, it is not He who is the object of their hearts delight. *The Reproach of Islam, by W. H. T. Gairdner*

Let us read what the Qur'an has to say about Hell and Paradise:



When the Event inevitable cometh to pass, then will no (soul) entertain falsehood concerning its coming. (Many) will it bring low, (many) will it exalt; when the earth shall be shaken to its depths, and the mountains shall be crumbled to atoms, becoming dust scattered abroad. And ye shall be sorted out into three classes.

Then (there will be) the companions of the Right Hand; what will be the companions of the Right Hand? And the companions of the Left Hand; what will be the companions of the Left Hand? And those foremost (in faith) will be foremost (in the Hereafter). These will be those nearest to Allah; in Gardens of bliss. A number of people from those of old, and a few from those of later

times. (They will be) on thrones encrusted (with gold and precious stones). Reclining on them, facing each other. Round about them will (serve) youths³⁰ of perpetual (freshness), with goblets (shining) beakers, and cups filled out of clear-flowing fountains³¹. No after-ache will they receive therefrom, nor will they suffer intoxication³². And with fruits, and that they may select; and the flesh of fowls, any that they may desire. And (there will be) companions³³ with beautiful, big and lustrous eyes -like unto pearls well-guarded. A reward for the deeds of their past (life). No frivolity will they hear therein, nor any taint of ill -only the saying, 'Peace! Peace!' The companions of the Right Hand; what will be the companions of the Right Hand?(They will be) among Lote-trees without thorns, among Tall trees with flowers (or fruits) piled one above another -in shade long-extended, by water flowing constantly. And the fruit in abundance, whose season is not limited, nor (supply) forbidden. And on thrones (of dignity) raised high³⁴, We have created (their companions) of special creation³⁵, and made them virgin-pure (and undefiled) -Beloved (by nature) equal in age -for the companions of the Right Hand. A (goodly) number from those of old³⁶, and a (goodly) number from those of later times.

Surah 56:1-40

The preceding Surah (55:47-76) gives a similar description, which we might better read in a translation more comprehensible:



For those who feared the presence of their Lord, two gardens are designated ... decorated with trees having spreading branches ... in both are murmuring streams, in both are two kinds of fruit ... They shall rest on cushions of silk embroidered with gold ... and the fruits of both gardens shall be close to hand ... in both gardens are black-eyed virgins with cast down eyes whom neither man nor jinns have touched. They are beautiful like rubies and pearls ... Should the reward for good works be other than good? ... Besides the two gardens are two more gardens prepared ... shaded by dark green ... In these are two wells which always yield water ... In both gardens is fruit: dates and pomegranates ... also most glorious and most beautiful maidens ... with big black eyes, kept in tents for you ... never touched by men or jinns ... there you rest on green cushions and glorious carpets.

Surah 55:47-76

³⁰ youth = young men!

³¹ Lit. 'with flowing wine'

³² Lit. 'it will not cause headache or dim the mind'

³³ Lit. 'virgins'

³⁴ Lit. 'they will live with Houris resting on raised cushions'

³⁵ Lit. 'women created in a special way'

³⁶ From before the time of Muhammad

10.4 Hell

In equally descriptive words hell is vividly portrayed:



The companions of the Left Hand; what will be the companions of the Left Hand? (They will be) in the midst of a fierce blast of fire and in boiling water; and in the shades of black smoke. Nothing (will there be) to refresh, nor to please...

All will certainly be gathered together for the meeting appointed for a Day well-known. Then will ye truly O ye that go wrong, and treat (truth) as falsehood! Ye will surely taste of the Tree of Zaqqum³⁷. Then will ye fill your insides therewith, and drink boiling water on top of it. Indeed ye shall drink like diseased camels raging with thirst! Such will be their entertainment on the Day of Requittal!

Surah 56:41-44.50-56

Has the story reached thee of the overwhelming (event)? Some faces, that Day, will be humiliated, labouring (hard), weary; the while they enter the blazing Fire; the while they are given to drink of a boiling hot spring. No food will there be for them but a bitter Dhari, which will neither nourish nor satisfy hunger ... But if any turn away and reject Allah, Allah will punish him with a mighty punishment. For to Us will be their return; then it will be for us to call them to account.

Surah 88:1-7.23-26

The aHadith illustrate this even further. All this is, no doubt, a very strong tool to frighten Muslims to do what Islam prescribes - but also to resist even looking at the exceedingly more attractive alternative: faith in Christ.



In the Qur'an hell is the reward for evil deeds.

In the Bible it is the abode of all who denied or rejected God's pardon.

Recommended Literature for Chapter 10

- Battle for the Hearts, Episode 5:II:4, Belief in the Last Day – day of judgment. *TWR & LCA, 2001.*

³⁷ Zaqqum denotes the 'tree of disbelief'

11 The Status of Women in Islam

Muslims boast that Muhammad considerably improved the position of women compared to the pre-Islamic times. Unfortunately there is little objective evidence to support such claims, as we rely almost exclusively on Islamic sources.

Muslim apologists keep reminding us about the equality of men and women before Allah, based mainly on the “creation Surahs”:



He created man and woman from a single soul (person) and made his mate of like nature in order that he might dwell with her (in love).
Surah 4: 1 and 7: 189

And the believers, men and women, are protecting friends to one another, they enjoin the right and forbid the wrong. And they establish worship...
Surah 9: 71 (Pickthall)

Women are also seen as having an equal status before Allah, in their performance of religious duties, in their obligation to follow the five pillars, and in the reward for it.



Whoso doeth that which is right, whether male or female, and has faith, verily to him we will give a new life and life that is good and pure and we will bestow on such their reward according to the best of their actions...
Surah 16: 97

Although these verses don't show any legal superiority in respect of rights, duties or gender hierarchy, we are aware that there are numerous verses giving clear hierarchical status for men above women in family and society.

11.1 The Position of Women in Society

The following verses are not only distressing to non-Muslim women. Many Muslim women even feel uncomfortable, when these verses are recited or pointed out to them.



And women shall have rights similar to the rights against them, according to what is equitable; but men have a degree (of advantage) over them. *Surah 2: 228*

Ibn Kathir in his commentary elaborates: "...men are above (or superior to) women and a man is better and more perfect than a woman...!"

In other words, Allah has made one superior over the other which gives men the right and power to control and discipline their wives where to go, what to do, with whom to associate and so on.

Women are also considered inferior in legal matters because two female witnesses make up for one male witness to testify in court, or at any other legal function or transaction.



And get two witnesses out of your own men, and if there are not two men, then a man and two women, such as you choose for witnesses. So that if one of them errs, the other can remind her.

Surah 2: 282

The Law of Inheritance further determines that a male offspring gets double the inheritance of a female. (Surah 4: 11)

But the Qur'an is not the only source of authority in regard to the status of women. The Traditions (Hadiths) influence a Muslim's daily life even more, and abound in negative and humiliating statements more than the Qur'an does: "Those who entrust their affairs to a woman will never know prosperity!"

Muhammad said: "After me I have not left any affliction more harmful to men than women." (Al-Bukhari, Vol.1, p.688)

Another Hadith claims "that a man is never alone with a woman where the devil is not the third among them."

Muhammad himself laid the foundation that men may look down on women for different reasons. As he once left the mosque after prayer he is told to have met some women, whom he challenged on their intelligence and on their religion:



After Muhammad came out from the place of prayer, he saw a few women and told them: 'O women give alms, as I have seen that the majority of the dwellers of hellfire were you (women).' Why is this so, Messenger of God?' He replied: 'You curse frequently and are ungrateful to your husbands. I have not seen anyone more deficient in intelligence and religion than you.' The women asked: 'What is deficient in our intelligence and religion, Messenger of God?' He answered: 'Is not the evidence of two women equal to the witness of one man?' They replied in the affirmative. He said: 'This is the deficiency in your intelligence. Isn't it true that a woman can neither pray nor fast during her menses?' The women replied in the affirmative. 'This is the deficiency in your religion'. *Al-Bukhari, Hadith 6; Muslim Iman 13; Abu-Daud, Sunna 15*

Because of their limited intelligence and their biological and physical make-up women are restricted in exercising their religion fully. For these reasons they are not permitted to hold an office as a judge, an imam or religious leader.

As we have seen the Qur'an supports the common portray of women as potentially dangerous to men, and the majority of the 300 verses in the Qur'an that deal with legal issues in regard to women are mostly in the form of restrictions: what they can and cannot do, what they are to avoid, how to divorce them, how little they should inherit.

11.2 The Role of Women in the Family

Muslim theologians are trying to convince others that the differences between men and women rest solely with the God-given roles as husband and wife, which are fundamentally different.

While the wife is to find fulfilment in looking after the house, her children and husband, it is the husband who is responsible for the affairs outside the house. He is duty-bound to care for the wife and family financially.



Men are protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in (the husband's) absence what Allah would have them guard.

As to those women on whose part you fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (next) refuse to share their beds, (and last) beat them (lightly). But

if they return to obedience, seek not against them means (of annoyance); for Allah is Most High, Great (above all). *Surah 4: 34*

Since the husband had to pay the dowry to his wife, brings in the money to live and survive, he is entitled to make any decision about her and the family. He will usually decide where to live, what profession to take, how much room the wife and other females in the house should have, whether the wife can take an outside job and what kind of education his children should receive. As the woman takes care of the household and the children she has to be aware of her husband's expectations: "The woman is the ruler of the house of her husband and she is answerable for the conducts of all the affairs."

Muslims emphatically defend the different roles of husband and wife, which are not able to be exchanged or equalised, because God has distinctly ordained them differently in society and before the law. This is not to be regarded as oppression of the woman, this is her God given place and role. However, in the Middle East, we can surely not overlook a grave hierarchal structure which brings serious restrictions to women and is far from serving to her benefit.

Despite of these disadvantages a woman gets her honour from having children, especially from having sons. Her relationship to her children is usually stronger than to her husband, and her children love and respect her greatly. Especially elderly women are well respected in society, and are honoured as the guardians of traditions, religion and proper behaviour. A widely known Islamic tradition reinforces this by reminding Muslims that "paradise lies at the feet of a mother!"

11.2.1 The Islamic Pattern of Honour and Shame

An important dynamic in Muslim family life and society as a whole is the concept of "honour and shame". The women are the carrier of the honour of the family, and women are responsible not to offend any male member of society.

Honour can easily be lost by women, but it can never be regained by women! Honour can only be restored by the men of the family, therefore women are watched closely. To maintain honour means to behave

according to the role assigned to you. Any contact between men and women may only happen between close relatives, or husbands and wives. Whenever a woman oversteps these boundaries, she comes immediately under suspicion for immoral behaviour. It is up to the man of the house to control the women of his household, and to publicly reinstate the honour by punishing the guilty. This will not be done in secret. The public needs to see that the man is still in control, and at times he may enforce this through very drastic measures.

In the company of men, a woman is expected to turn down her eyes as prescribed in the Qur'an (Surah 24:31) She is expected to show feelings of shame, to hold herself back and cover herself. A popular saying amplifies: "The most valuable jewellery of a woman is her feeling of shame and the best expression of her feeling of shame is the lowering of her eyes."

This pattern of honour and shame places the man as ruler and the wife as the obeying servant, who cannot overstep her role or boundaries.

11.2.2 Dress Code and Veiling

The way girls dress is not just a matter of custom or modesty, it has much to do with the religious practices. It affects a woman's performance of the ritual prayer, her visit to the mosque and other functions. Outside the family girls and women have to be veiled, so as not to be a temptation to men. Islam claims that the veil gives honour and dignity to Muslim women by protecting them, and helping them to guard their chastity. Muhammad reportedly received various revelations that his wives and other female believers should cover themselves as they leave their houses.



Oh Prophet! Tell your wives and daughters, and the believing women, that they should cast their outer garments over their bodies (when abroad): that is most convenient, that they should be known (as such) and not molested... *Surah 33: 59*

Believing women should guard their modesty, should not display their beauty and their ornaments, except what must appear. They should draw their veils over their bosom and not display their beauty, except to their husbands, their fathers... *Surah 24: 31*

Muslim theologians have derived from these verses the necessity to cover the whole body in a way that only the face and hands are exposed.

However, it depends on the traditions and the determination of the Islamic culture of each country how strictly various communities apply this. The Afghan Taliban rulers demonstrated it in one of the most extreme and cruel forms enforcing almost complete seclusion of women in all aspects of public life.

While in the Western world even the head covering is already considered an instrument of oppression restricting women in their personal freedom, in many Muslim countries it is rather seen as a sign of an upright, moral life style, and as protection from the lustrous eye and from forbidden body contact.

As Christians we note: The problem of unclean thoughts and adulterous desires cannot simply be solved by complete covering of women, barring them from access to public places, or by enforcing stricter gender separation. Jesus deliberately talked with women, accepting their hospitality encouraging them to be messengers of the resurrection news, and in this way He showed the New Testament church that a co-operative friendly social relationship between men and women is not only possible, but honours and exemplifies the perfect design of our creator.

11.3 Marriage

Marriage is of utmost importance in Islam. It is regarded as God's purpose for mankind to be married. Therefore a man is expected to get married to fulfil his God-given role in society.

- Surah 24: 32 encourages: "Marry the spouseless among you".
- The aHadith affirm that even a spiritual component is attached to it: "If a servant of God gets married, he is fulfilling half of his religion."

Thus to get married is praiseworthy and honourable. Allah gives credit to marriage: "The best among you are those who are good to their wives and kind to their people."

A companion of Muhammad, Ibn Masud, valued marriage so high that he exclaimed: "Even if I had only 10 days left to live, I would still get married to not appear before God unmarried."

In most Muslim societies marriages are usually arranged by the parents; both parties are concerned about the right match thus keeping their wealth together, nor lowering their status. Romantic love between two people is not at all a pre-requisite for starting a marriage. In a good relationship love might grow after some time, but is not a necessity or guarantee for a life-long marriage.

Surah 30: 21 puts it plainly: “He created for you mates from among yourselves that you might find rest and joy in them and has put (ordained) love and mercy between their hearts.” In Islam there is no command for the husband to love his wife unconditionally (Eph. 5: 25). The biblical principle of, “leaving (father and mother) and cleaving (to his wife)” is a foreign concept to a Muslim.

Marriage is rather seen as a contract that entitles the husband to discipline his wife, if she does not obey or fulfil his desire:



As to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (next) refuse to share their beds, (and last) beat them (lightly). But if they turn to obedience, seek not against them means (of annoyance); for Allah is Most High, Great (above you all).
Surah 4: 34

Rather shocking is the plain expression allegedly based on divine revelation: “Your wives are as a tilth (field) unto you, so approach your tilth when and how you will.” (Surah 2:223)

A Hadith elevates a man’s sexual needs as so urgent, that it would rather have food to get burnt in the oven, than for a man to burn in waiting for his wife to satisfy his desire. If she refuses, the angels in heaven will turn against her. The prophet of Allah said: “When a man calls his wife to satisfy his desire, let her come to him though she is occupied with the oven...” (Mishkat al-Masabih, Hadith 61, Duties of husband and wife)

There are many more traditions, which show the duties of a wife in giving pleasure and obedience to her husband: “Abu Hurairah reported that the Messenger of Allah was asked: Who among women is the best? He replied: She who gives pleasure to him (husband) when he looks, obeys him when he bids, and who does not oppose him regarding herself and her riches fearing his displeasure.”(Mishkat Vol. 1, p.212)



Abu Hurairah reported that the Messenger of Allah said: If I were to order anybody to make prostration to anybody I would have ordered a woman to prostrate before her husband.

Mishkat 1, p. 210

Some Hadith reveal that Muhammad saw women as “a toy”, which the husband can play with or put aside as he likes, while another Hadith calls a woman “a crooked rib”, which breaks when one tries to straighten it, or will always bother him if it remains in its crookedness. (Do’s and Do Not’s in Islam: p. 82)

11.4 Divorce

Although the Qur’an allows divorce, Muhammad called it “the most detestable of permitted things!” (Surah 2: 226- 240) Tradition says: “What Allah hates most among what is allowed is a divorce.”

In practise, however, it is easy for the husband to get a divorce. And he may divorce his wife without any misbehaviour on her part, or without giving any cause or reason. All that it takes is to utter the divorce formula three times, either officially “I divorce you”, or something similar as “I desert you”, “You are free”; and no matter if it is said for fun or in a drunken state, under compulsion or free, it is as binding as a deliberate utterance, on condition that the man is sane and an adult.



The “Dictionary of Islam” expounds: The following are causes for divorce, but generally required to be ratified by a decree from the ‘Khadi’, the ‘judge’.

1. Jubb. That is, when the husband has been by any cause deprived of his organ of generation. This condition is called majzub. In this case the wife can obtain instant divorce if the defect occurred before marriage. Cases of evident madness and leprosy are treated in the same way. Divorce can be obtained at once.

2. Unnah or ‘impotence’... In cases of impotence in either husband or wife, a year of probation can be granted by the judge.

3. Inequality of race or tribe. A woman cannot be compelled to marry a man who belongs to an inferior tribe; in case of such a marriage, the elders of the superior tribe can demand a divorce; but if the divorce is not demanded, the marriage contract remains.

4. Insufficient dowry. If the stipulated dowry is not given when demanded, divorce takes place.
5. Refusal of Islam. If one of the parties embrace (sic) Islam, the judge must offer it to the other three distinct times, and if he or she refuse (sic) to embrace the faith, divorce takes place.
6. La'n, or "imprecation." That is, when a husband charges his wife with adultery, the charge is investigated, but if there is no proof, and the man swears his wife is guilty, and the wife swears she is innocent, a divorce must be decreed.
7. Ila, or "vow". When a husband makes a vow not to have carnal intercourse with his wife for no less than four months, and keeps the vow inviolate, an irreversible divorce takes place...
8. Apostasy from Islam. The author of the Raddu'l Mukhtar (Vol. 2, p.649) says: 'When a man or woman apostatises from Islam, then an immediate dissolution of the marriage takes place, whether the apostasy be of the man or of the woman, without a decree from the Khadi.

Dictionary of Islam, pp. 87-88

A woman may also ask for a divorce, if the husband fails to support her financially over a period of time, or is neglecting her in her sexual rights. But again a tradition cautions: "If the wife asks the husband for a divorce without a strong reason the odour of paradise will be forbidden to her..." (Mishkat Al-Masabith Vol. 1, p.696)

What are the possibilities for remarrying a wife he has divorced previously? If the husband says the "talaq" (divorce-phrase) only once or twice, the divorce can be reversed and he can take his wife back within a period of three months. But if he has uttered the 'talaq' three times, the man can only take his wife back after she has been married to another man and has been given a divorce by him also.



If a husband divorces his wife (irrevocably) he cannot after that remarry her until after she has married another husband and he has divorced her. In that case there is no blame on either of them, if they reunite...
Surah 2: 230

It is argued that this regulation was introduced by Muhammad to protect women, so that a man should not allow a sudden gust of temper or anger to induce him to take hasty action.

In order to avoid divorces the Qur'an suggests to call on the two parties to appoint arbiters, and if the couple wants reconciliation God will help them to succeed in their marriage afterwards. (Surah 4: 35)

Whenever a divorce becomes final, it is usually the woman's fault. It is expected of her that she keeps the family together, that she obeys her husband, and does not annoy or anger him through aggressive behaviour, disputes or unnecessary demands.

After the divorce a man has no duty to care for his previous wife financially, only for his children. In general, children are considered to belong to the father according to Islamic law, while the mother usually receives the right to care for the kids in their early years and maybe visit them later on.

However, if the woman is still pregnant from her divorced husband he has to care for her till the baby is weaned. A strange proposition is given in the Qur'an, which is intended to show some fairness towards women in the process of being divorced:



Let the women live (in iddat) in the same style as ye live, according to your means. Annoy them not, so as to restrict them. And if they carry (life in their womb) then spend (your substance on them until they deliver their burden. And if they suckle your (offspring), give them their recompense; and take mutual counsel together, according to what is just and reasonable. And if ye find yourselves in difficulties, let another woman suckle (the child) on the (father's) behalf.

Surah 65: 6

We note:

There is no promise of a lifelong faithfulness and commitment to marriage given during an Islamic wedding celebration, in fact the bride is not even present during the wedding ceremony at the mosque. The marriage contract stipulates clear regulations for the day of divorce through the dower, which is given to the wife on the wedding day. Thus the Islamic marriage is more like a civil contract between two families, which helps towards a functional lifestyle and to regulate financial matters.

One wonders to what extent this is moulded after the concept of God in Islam. He is not a God who keeps his promise, in fact, he can change his word at any time, nor does he have to stay faithful and true to himself.

In contrast as Christians we are assured that God never breaks his covenant with men and is forever faithful, trustworthy and unchanging. Christian marriages according to the Bible are divinely ordained as a relationship with one partner for a lifetime in faithfulness and the giving of oneself. For Christian couples missing support, sickness, or sexual failure cannot be claimed as a reason for divorce, on the contrary, exactly in these situations a Christian marriage should prove itself true to its promise in coming alongside the partner in good and difficult days.

11.4.1 Polygamy – not an option for women!

Muslims in general are allowed to have up to four wives, which is said to have placed a restriction to the pre-Islamic way of living, yet contrasts with Muhammad's example, who married well over 10 wives. For his followers, however, Muhammad cautioned in Surah 4: 3:



If ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry women of your choice, two or three, or four. But if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one, or (a captive) that your right hands possess, that will be more suitable, to prevent you from doing unjustly.

So, theoretically, a man who marries more than one wife is expected to treat all his wives equally, and to provide them with the same share of food, clothes, housing, time and sexual favours. In reality even Muhammad was not capable to meet that ideal, so modern Muslims increasingly take the stand that Islam actually promotes monogamy. Many Muslims have personally observed frictions due to favouritism, jealousy among women and rivalry among the different lots of children, and added economical burdens in their own upbringing in polygamous households. So they rather opt for monogamous marriages themselves.

In some Muslim countries, like Pakistan and Marocco, monogamy is the official practice, except for cases where the wife is barren, or suffers from mental and chronic illness. Only with a special permission of the first wife may the husband take another one.

But some theologians, like Abdur Rahman, oppose these views:



These countries which have prohibited polygamy by law have gone against the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet. If polygamy were not allowed, the Prophet would have stopped people practising it in his lifetime. There is no single Hadith that suggests that polygamy is forbidden.

(Women in Sharia, A. Rahman)

What is Abdur Rahman's point here? He insists that a Muslim does not need any justification to practice polygamy, since Muhammad himself was the leading example in promoting polygamy as an established tradition within Islam. What more does a Muslim need!

Others who argue in favour of polygamy often point to the physiological and sexual needs of men as more compelling than those of women, especially at an advanced age. In addition infertility, chronic illness or long menstruation periods are given as reasons that could hinder healthy relationships. (see Surah 2:222)

In order to guard men from the sin of adultery and to protect women in immoral societies, the Qur'an proposes polygamy (Surah 36: 6 and 70: 29-31). Of course, Muslim women grow up and marry with the prospect, that the husband may likely take another wife, they still feel the pain of rejection when it finally happens. Exceptions may be with older women in nomad societies, who encourage their husbands to take a young wife to do their work.

We note:

Christians, and even the Western countries where deteriorating moral standards are prevalent, emphatically reject polygamy, because it denies exclusive, devoted love.

Love between a man and a woman ought to be exclusive; otherwise it is degraded in essence to mere sexual fulfilment. No woman who loves her husband and wishes to be fully loved in return can tolerate a partner. One may lose sight of this fact in a polygamous society, but even Aisha, the favourite wife of Muhammad, confessed of having been jealous. How much more would the others have been!

But there is one further aspect: Monogamy gives recognition, status and value to a woman. It is silly to argue that a polygamous society makes prostitution unnecessary. What about sexual fulfilment for the woman, who has to share her husband with other wives? And what about the men who surely have to go without wives, because someone else has more than one?

The fact that there is a numeric superiority of girls over boys is too insignificant to justify the legalisation of polygamy.

We can also not accept the argument that during the “Holy Wars“, when many men were killed, polygamy was a justifiable provision for the widows. According to notes in (Sahih Muslim, 3, p. 491) in all the 82 hostilities during the lifetime of Muhammad, only 259 Muslims lost their lives. When Muhammad moved to Mecca with 10 000 men, how many of them would have had a chance of marrying even one widow? Just 2%!

11.5 Religious Life and Future Hope

The tragic consequence is that the wife cannot decide on her social life with whom to associate, where to go, and how to please her husband best. Her obedience towards her husband is not optional, for her eternal destiny depends on it. Again we listen to the Hadith:



Whosoever female dies while her husband is pleased with her, will enter Paradise. *Mishkat al Masabih – Hadith 11.60*

“Fire has been created for the senseless, the women, except for the one who obeyed her husband.”

Muhammad warned one woman saying to her: “Watch how you treat your husband for he is your paradise and your hell.” (Kanz-el-Umma Vol. 22 –868)

According to tradition Aisha challenged her husband after hearing some of the above Hadith asking what hope women have to enter paradise. Muhammad’s response came rather prompt through another ‘revelation’ (Surah 16: 97).



For Muslim men and women, for believing men and women ... who are patient and constant, for, men and women who humble themselves, for men and women who give in charity, ... who fast ... who guard their chastity and engage much in Allah’s praise –

For them has Allah prepared forgiveness and great reward.

Surah 33: 35

In Islamic practise and piety, women are in a great disadvantage, and the Hadith is rather explicit in denying equality to women, or granting them “to be co-heirs with men” in the life to come. They are not only victims of abuse in this life, but even in life after death: “Of a thousand women one will be in paradise, the rest will be in the fire.” (Al-Bukhari, 7, p. 74)

We note:

In Islam each woman must live her faith pre-dominantly in her private realm, and she is not encouraged by Allah to influence her environment and society spiritually or intellectually in partnership with her husband. Couples do not enter into a spiritual covenant and have no shared task in mosque or society as a spiritual unity. Because of this, there is also no common future hope to spend eternity in the closeness and presence of God together.

11.5.1 The Impact of Folk Islam on the Life of Women

Because God is so distant, and the hope for eternity so blurred, many women turn to charms and “holy men” to find help in times of need. Among women Folk Islam, and seeking power through witch doctors, shamans or “Muslim sheiks” is even more prevalent than among men. Wearing amulets for protection, drinking “holy water” (either from ‘ink-water’ of Qur’an verses or from ‘hajj-water’ brought along from the Zamzam well in Mecca) and passing these charms on to new born babies is a very common practise. Many are seeking protection from these powers for their family, and from the “Evil Eye³⁸”. Every woman wants a happy marriage, a faithful husband and healthy children; and more than anything else, sons. No wonder that many women pay large sums of money to Imams for special prayers, go to “holy men” for cures, or resort to “powerful love potions” in putting a few drops of their urine in their husband’s morning tea to make him remember and stay faithful to her throughout the day! Women fear the jealousy and envy of their neighbour,

³⁸ Evil eye = putting a curse on someone by way of a jealous look

friend and sometimes even relative. They seek protection in their good works, in their prayers, and in their giving. So the question is:

Has Muhammad really improved the position of women in Islam?

We have to conclude that Muhammad simply brought about “human” solutions. His solutions are certainly less than perfect. He did not reinstate the ideal of mutual love and respect as portrayed in the Holy Bible. His reforms never went far enough. And he fell far short of that most beautiful “praise of love” expressed in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7:



Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

Recommended Literature for Chapter 11

- The Laws of Marriage and Divorce in Islam, *Maulana Abul A'ala Maudoodi, Islamic Book Publishers, Safat, Kuwait, 1983.*
- Do's and Do Not's in Islam, *Abdur Rehman Shad, Lahore: Kazi Publications 1983, pp. 63-106.*
- Christians ask Muslims, *Gerhard Nehls, Nairobi: LCA 1992, pp. 103-107.*
- Textbook of Islam, Vol. 2, *M.A. Quraishy, Nairobi: The Islamic Foundation 1989, pp. 187-202.*
- The Position of Women in Islam, *Hamadun Dagher, Villach: Light of Life 1995, 208 pages. (the former Muslim Dagher provides background information on the position of women in Islam from original Islamic sources. Nobody who has read this book will question the hostility of Islam towards women. It also includes detailed information about Muhammad's wives)*
- Battle for the Hearts, Episode 10:2, Why Muslims turn to Christ. *TWR & LCA, 2001.*

12 The Feasts Of Islam

A solar year is made up of roughly 365 days and a quarter. Islam uses a calendar with 12 lunar months. This results in a year approximately 11 days shorter. Consequently the months and the feasts in them move forward by 10-11 days every year. Thus each Muslim month moves around our solar year in about 33 years.

12.1 The Islamic Calendar

(Months in the sequence of the Islamic Lunar Calendar)

1. Muharram	7. Rajab
2. Safar	8. Sh'ban
3. Rab'il'l-Awwal	9. Ramadaan
4. Rab'il'l-Akhir	10. Shawwal
5. Jumada'l-Ula	11. Zu'l-Qu'dah
6. Jumada'l-Ukhra	12. Zu'l-Hijjah

12.2 Some Major Feasts of Islam

Like Christianity, Islam has its appointed feasts. These are:

12.2.1 Ashura

It is the only day of Muharram observed by the Sunni Muslims (Shi'ah celebrate the first 10 days), remembering the day on which it is said God created Adam and Eve, heaven and earth, the tablet of decree, the penalty, life and death.

It is a voluntary day of fasting, observed on the tenth of the month of Muharram. It is related that Muhammad observed it and said it was a day respected by Jews and Christians.

This feast day is particularly celebrated by the Shi'ah Muslims, for it is also the day on which Khalif Hussain was slain (see 'History of Islam').

12.2.2 Maulid

It is the birthday of Muhammad, which is known as Maulidu ‘n-Nabi and is celebrated on the 12th of Rab‘iu’l-Awwal. In certain areas, such as Lamu island on the Kenyan coast, this feast becomes the major event of the year with Qur’an recitation competitions that last for a whole week, drawing participants and spectators from far and wide.

12.2.3 Lailatu’n-Nisf Min Sha’ban (The Night of the Middle of Sha’ban)

Lailatu’n-Nisf Min Sha’ban is also called ‘Lailat al-bara’a’.

On this night, Muhammad said, God registered annually all the actions of mankind that they are to perform during the year; and that all the children of men who are to be born and to die in the year are recorded. The night is often devoted to the memory of the dead.

Muhammad, it is said, enjoined his followers to keep awake the whole night, to repeat one hundred Rak’ah prayers, and to fast the next day, but there is generally great rejoicing instead of a fast.

12.2.4 Ramadaan

Ramadaan may be seen as a festive month of compulsory fasting (Sawm). During this month “nothing must enter the body”, i.e. food, drink (including saliva), smoke (of tobacco), even an injection. Sexual activity is equally forbidden. All this is, however, only between the hours of sunrise and sunset. The Ramadaan fast has a definite pre-Islamic history.

It is believed that fasting during Ramadaan is thirty times better than at any other time. According to tradition, during this month the gates of heaven are open and the gates of hell closed, and the devils are in chains.

Those who observe the fast with pure motives are believed to obtain remission of their sins.

12.2.5 Lailatu'l-Qadr' (The Night of Power)

This mysterious night in the month of Ramadaan is called Lailatu'l-Qadr. The precise date of this night is said to have been known only to the Prophet and a few of the companions. It is usually celebrated on the 27th night of Ramadaan and many Muslims believe that their sins are forgiven during this night. The following is the allusion to it in the Qur'an:



We have indeed revealed this (message) in the Night of Power.

And what will explain to thee what the Night of Power is? The Night of Power is better than a thousand months. Therein come down the angels and the spirit by Allah's permission, on every errand. Peace! ... This until the rise of Morn

Surah 97:1-5

12.2.6 Eidu'l-Fitr (The Minor Feast)

Eidu'l-Fitr is the festival of the breaking of the fast. It commences as soon as the month's fast in Ramadaan is over, i.e. on the first day of the month of Shawwal. It is customary to visit the graves of the departed on this day.



Ibn Abbas reported that he said in the last Ramazan: Take out alms of your fast. The Messenger of Allah made this charity compulsory. One sa'a from dried dates, or barley, or half sa'a from wheat upon every free man or slave, male or female, young or old.

Mishkat 2, p. 58, No. 77

(General information is taken from the "Dictionary of Islam" by T. P. Hughes.)

12.2.7 Idu'l-Adha (The Great Festival)

Idul'l-Adha (Idu'l-Azha) is also called the great festival (In contrast to Idu'l Fitr being the 'minor festival').

It is celebrated on the 10th day of Zu'l-Hijjah, and is observed in all parts of Islam as a day of sacrifice (the 'qorban'). It is founded on an injunction in the Qur'an (Surah 22:32-38).



To every people did We appoint rites (of sacrifice), that they might celebrate the name of Allah over the sustenance He gave them from animals (fit for food). But your God is One God, submit then your wills to Him (in Islam) and give thou the good news to those who humble themselves...

The sacrificial camels we have made for you as among the signs from Allah; in them is (much) good for you; then pronounce the name of Allah over them as they line up (for sacrifice). When they are down on their sides (after slaughter). Eat ye thereof, and feed such as (beg not but) live in contentment and such as beg with due humility; thus have We made animals subject to you, that ye may be grateful.

It is not their meat nor their blood that reaches Allah; it is your piety that reaches Him: He has thus made them subject to you that ye may glorify Allah for His guidance to you. And proclaim the Good News to all who do right.

Surah 22:34.36-37

The two festivals Lailatu 'n-nsif min Sha'ban and Idu'l-Adha are close to each other, and are very likely to have had their origin in the Jewish tradition. The former, also called Lailat al-bara'a, is based on the Jewish New Year, which is followed by the Day of Atonement, 'Yom Kippur', which is closely associated with the offering of sacrifices.

According to the Jewish tradition the world was created on that day. The name 'Lailat al-bara'a' actually means 'the night of creation'. The word (bara'a) is probably derived from the Hebrew word 'beri'a' which means creation. (Extracts from 'Handwoerterbuch des Islam' by Wensinck and Kramer under 'Ramadaan').

12.2.8 Origin and Meaning of Sacrifices in Islam

Sacrifices are offered in many religions. The Arab pagans were no exception. But the institution of the 'qorban' sacrifice in Islam is based on the Bible, even if falsely understood:



A few months after the Hijrah (flight from Mecca to Medina), Muhammad, living in Medina, observed that on the tenth day of the seventh month the Jews kept the great fast of the Atonement. Tradition records that the prophet asked them why they kept this fast. He was informed that it was a memorial of the

deliverance of Moses and the children of Israel from the hands of Pharaoh.

'We have a greater right in Moses than they', said Muhammad. So he fasted with the Jews and commanded his followers to fast too. This was at the period of his mission, when Muhammad was friendly with the Jews of Medina, who occasionally came to hear him preach. The Prophet also occasionally attended the synagogue. Then came the change of Qibla (i.e. the direction in which to pray) from Jerusalem to Mecca, for the Jews were not so ready to change their creed as Muhammad had at first hoped. In the second year of the Hijrah, Muhammad and his followers did not participate in the Jewish fast, for Muhammad now instituted the Idu'l-Adha. The idolatrous Arabs had been in the habit of making an annual pilgrimage to Mecca at this season of the year.

The offering of animals in sacrifice formed a part of the concluding ceremony of that pilgrimage. That portion - the sacrificing of animals - Muhammad adopted in the feast which now, at Medina, he substituted for the Jewish fast.

This was well calculated to attract the attention of the Meccans and to gain the goodwill of the Arabs. Muhammad could not make the pilgrimage to Mecca, for as yet there was a hostile feeling between the inhabitants of the two cities; but on the tenth day of the month Zu'l-Hijjah, at the very time when the Arabs at Mecca were engaged in sacrificing victims, Muhammad went forth from his house at Medina and, assembling his followers, instituted the Idu'l-Adha. Two young kids were brought before him. One he sacrificed and said:

'O Lord! I sacrifice this for my whole people, all those who bear witness to Thy unity and to my mission. O Lord! That is for Muhammad and for the family of Muhammad'. (*Note the similarity to Leviticus 16.*)

There is nothing in the Qur'an to connect this sacrifice with the history of Ishmael, but it is generally held by Muslims to have been instituted in commemoration of Abraham's willingness to offer his son as a sacrifice. And Muslim writers generally maintain that the son was Ishmael and not Isaac, and that the scene took place on Mount Mina near Mecca, and not in the land of Moriah, as is stated in Genesis.

It is a notable fact that whilst Muhammad professed to abrogate the Jewish ritual, and also ignored entirely the doctrine of Atonement as taught in the New Testament, denying even the very fact of our Saviour's crucifixion, he made the 'day of sacrifice' the great festival of his religion.

All the above according to "The Life of Muhammad" by W. Muir

There is a very remarkable Hadith related by Aisha:



Aisha reported that the Apostle of Allah said: The son of Adam does not do anything of the actions of the day of sacrifice which is more pleasing to Allah than the shedding of blood, and he will come on the Resurrection Day with its hairs, horns and hoofs; and the blood certainly falls in a place near Allah before it falls down on the ground. So make yourself purified therewith.

Mishkat Vol. 3, p. 490, No 756

Muhammad had become a witness of the doctrine of the Christian faith that 'without shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin', although he probably did not understand the implication and so this doctrine is rejected by Islam.

The animals sacrificed must be without blemish, and of full age, and it may be either a goat, a sheep, a cow or a camel. (Camels are 'unclean' animals in the Bible [Deut 14:7] and by that not fit for sacrifice).

The expectation which accompanies sacrifices are described by Canon Edward Sell who recorded the following sermon preached on Idu'l-Adha:



If you sacrifice a fat animal it will serve you well, and carry you across the Sirat [i.e. bridge over hell to Paradise]. O Believers, thus said the Prophet, on whom be the mercy and peace of Allah, 'Sacrifice the victim with your own hands, this was the Sunnah of Ibrahim, on whom be peace'...

'O Believers, if ye do so, Allah will pardon the sins of fifty years which are past and of fifty years to come. The reading of the Surahs is equal, as an act of merit, to the reading of all the books Allah has sent by his prophets'.

'May Allah include us amongst those who are accepted by Him, who act according to the Law, whose desire will be granted at the Last Day. To all such there will be no fear on the Day of Resurrection; no sorrow in the examination at the Day of Judgement. The best of all books is the Qur'an. O Believers! May Allah give to us and to you a blessing for ever, by the grace of the Noble Qur'an. May its verses be our guide, and may its wise mention of Allah direct us right. I desire that Allah may pardon all believers, male and female, the Muslimin and Muslimat. O Believers, also seek for pardon. Truly Allah is the Forgiver, the Merciful, the Eternal King, the Compassionate, the Clement. O Believer, the Khutbah [= sermon] is over'...

The Khutbah being ended, the people all return to their homes. The head of the family then takes a sheep, or a cow, or a goat or camel, and turning its head towards Mecca says:

'In the name of the great Allah. Verily, my prayers, my sacrifice, my life, my death, belong to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. He has no partner: that is what I am bidden!...'

And then he slays the animal. The flesh of the animal is then divided into three portions, one third being given to relations, one third to the poor, and the remaining third reserved for the family. Quite apart from its religious ceremonies, the festival is observed as a great time of rejoicing, and the holiday is kept for two or three days in a similar way to that of the minor festival or the 'Idul'l-Fitr. *Dictionary of Islam, T. P. Hughes, p. 194*

It is surely no coincidence that Idu'l Adha falls year after year on the same day (or very close to it) of the Jewish "Yom Kippur", the "Day of Atonement" as prescribed in Leviticus 16.

Recommended Literature for Chapter 12

- Muhammadan Festivals, *G.E. von Grunebaum, Curzon Press, London, 1976.*
- A Call to Witness, *Nairobi: LCA, 1996, 41 pages. (provides the student with brief teaching material, homework and recommended readings for a twelve weeks course on Muslim Evangelism. Supplies the witness with a brief outline and questionnaire on the lifecycle of a Muslim (pp. 25-26 and Appendix)*
- The Christian Witness to the Muslim, *John Gilchrist, Jesus to the Muslims 1988, 412 pages. (gives the author's experience in witnessing to westernized Muslims by presenting principles of evangelism, Gospel concepts and answers to Muslim objections. One such Gospel concept is based on a Muslim feast; pp. 126-145)*

13 Our Final Conclusion

13.1 Three Vital Misconceptions

The Misconception Concerning The Nature Of God

God's judgment at the end of time essentially reflects His nature and character. If He is righteous and holy, He will not overlook sin and choose to live eternally with sinners.

The Misconception Concerning The Nature Of Man

God's final judgment equally reflects His view of sin. We believe that God has a real and deep concern for us individually. He is not untouched by our weaknesses! (Heb 4:15). He is not removed from us, being the absolute Sovereign, but does condescend to us in love.

But man, in his fallen state, lives at enmity with God.



Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.

The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

Rom 8:5-8

You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred towards God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

James 4:4

The sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.

Gal 5:17

The Misconception Concerning The Nature Of Sin

In Islam committing "Shirk" (adding a partner to Allah) and "Kufr" (unbelief) are considered serious sins. All other sins are viewed rather light-

heartedly as mistakes, faults, failures which can and will be rectified by a limited punishment in hell for a season, until they are 'paid for'. By virtue of an offender's faith in Allah, (this is seen as belief in the existence of Allah) Allah is expected to exercise his grace and mercy and save the sinner from eternal doom. This way sin is minimized, it becomes somewhat harmless and man is seen to be able to deal with it. He can 'pay' for it.

According to the Bible, man cannot solve the problem of sin himself, and a broken commandment results in God's eternal rejection, because His holy nature and man's sinfulness just don't match. (Please study 2 Pet 1:4; 1 Pet 1:15; 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 1:4; 2 Pet 3:11; 1 Th 4:3-7; 2 Tim 1:9; Heb 10:10; Col 1:22). The Biblical teaching is clear, and we all know it: Man in his fallen nature cannot help but sin.

While God loves the sinner, He utterly rejects sin. Since sin generates spiritual death (Eph 2:1-3), it utterly and eternally separates the sinner from God. Unless God does something to rescue man, he has no hope. But God, in His love for us, dealt with sin. Christ suffered the punishment for our sins on the cross. He died in our stead as 'the Lamb of God which carries away the sin of the world' (John 1:29). (Read Eph 2:4-9; Isa 53 and 1 Pet 2:24; 3:18).



- **We are not sinners because we sin, but we sin because we are sinners.**
- **Why Should Muslims Not Hear About This?**
- **Why Should Christians Not Tell Them?**

14 Appendix

14.1 Kalima, Salat, Ka`ba and Hubal

14.1.1 The Kalima

This is the prescribed confession of faith:

“La ilaha illa Ilahu: Muhammadun Rasul-u Ilah.”

“There is no deity but Allah: Muhammed is the Apostle of Allah.”

14.1.2 The Salat

The Salat (pronounced Salah) is the daily prayer cycle to be repeated five times every day. The wording of the prayer is prescribed and has to be recited in Arabic. Each Salat consists of Rak’ats (pronounced Rak’ah). These are prostrations are to be done in the direction of the ‘Qibla’, a niche pointing toward the ‘Ka’ba’ in Mecca. Such a niche is found in every mosque. Even the manner of prostration is prescribed in every detail. With each Rak’at the prescribed words of the prayer have to be recited. The number of Rak’ats differs according to the time at which the prayer is to be performed:

Twice in the morning, once at noon, four times in the afternoon, three times in the evening and four times at bedtime. This makes a total of seventeen times a day, over 6 200 times a year, and 100 000 times in sixteen years. We have no idea what psychological effect this has on a person’s life!

Here is the prayer for one Rak’at:



Allah-u-akbar! (Allah is great). Holiness unto Thee, O Allah! And praise be to Thee! Great is Thy name! Great is Thy greatness! There is no deity but Thee! I seek refuge of Allah from the cursed Satan. In the name of Allah, the compassionate, the merciful. Praise be to Allah, Lord of all worlds! The compassionate, the

merciful King of the day of reckoning! Thee only do we worship, and to Thee only do we cry for help. Guide Thou us in the straight path. The path of those to whom Thou hast been gracious. With whom Thou art not angry and who go not astray. Amen.

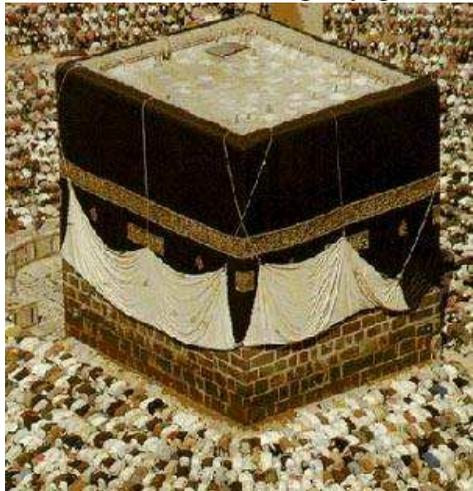
Say: He is Allah alone. Allah the eternal! He begetteth not, and is not begotten, and there is none like unto him!" "I extol the holiness of the Lord, the most High! (3x) Allah is great! (2x) I extol the holiness of the Lord, the most High! (3x) Allah is great! The adoration of the tongue are for Allah, and also the adoration of the body, and alms giving! Peace be on Thee, O Prophet, with the mercy of Allah and His blessing! Peace be upon us and upon Allah's righteous servants! I testify that there is no deity but Allah, and I testify that Mohammed is the servant of Allah, and the messenger of Allah! O Allah have mercy on Muhammad and on his descendants, As thou didst have mercy on Abraham and on his descendants. Thou art to be praised, and Thou art great. O Allah, Bless Muhammad and his descendants as Thou didst bless Abraham and his descendants! Thou are to be praised and Thou art great! O Allah, our Lord, give us the blessings of this life, and also the blessings of life everlasting. Save us from the torments of fire!

Surah 1 and 112

14.1.3 The Ka'ba

According to legends this cube-like building (approx. 14 x 18 m, 12 m high) consisting of stone blocks of varying sizes, was first built by Adam. It was destroyed by the flood and rebuilt by Abraham and Ishmael. The famous Black Stone, fitted into the East corner, was allegedly given to Ishmael by the Angel Gabriel. It was white originally, but turned black because of the sin of the people³⁹.

History knows that the Ka'ba was definitely pre-Islamic and the center of idol worship. The Ka'ba in Mecca was not the only one in Arabia, but probably the most important one. It was destroyed and rebuilt several times; once, in the year AD 608, Muhammad played a role in the rebuilding of it.



³⁹ The idea is that the constant kissing by the pilgrims caused a transfer of their sinfulness to the sacred stone

With Mecca falling into Muslim hands, the idols were destroyed. It is said to have contained 360 idols, but this is historically uncertain. Most of the idols worshipped in Arabia at that time were distributed over a number of places in Arabia. The idols were largely family or clan related deities. Hubal was kept in the Ka'ba, but was destroyed by Muhammad.

An interesting fact is, that at the time of Muhammad, the inside of the Ka'ba was decorated with pictures painted on the walls; "Pictures of the prophets ... and angels and one of Abraham, the friend of God ... and a picture of Jesus, son of Mary with his mother ...". The tradition continues to say that Muhammad went into the Ka'ba and ordered all pictures to be washed down with Zamzam water. He spread his arms protectively over Jesus and Mary, saying: "except these".

The worship in and around the Ka'ba, together with its rituals has, however, not been changed, though it is assumed that the original meaning was restored. The Ka'ba, with its black stone, which is set in silver and venerated by being kissed by the pilgrims, is the direction to which all Muslims pray when prostrating.

The Ka'ba has a door, about 2 meters above the ground near the black stone, which is about 1.4 meters (~five feet) above the ground.

The Ka'ba is covered all over with a black draping ('Kiswah') made of silk and cotton, which is embroidered with golden verses of the Qur'an. It is changed annually.

14.1.4 Hubal - the Suspect

The name Hubal was mentioned before. He was the god of the Ka'ba before the time of Muhammad. According to Islamic tradition this idol was brought from Moab ('Siratu'l Nabi' as translated by A. Guillaume, pp. 50-51) by Amr b. Luhaiy. "Hubal undoubtedly was a newcomer (to Arabia), but his image was used to represent the older al-Liah (the term from which the name Allah emanated), 'the one worshipped', the male supreme god of the Ka'ba" (Arabia before Muhammad, by O'Leary referring to the 'Siratu'l Nabi').

What does the name relate to us? According to the "Encyclopedia of Islam" by Gibb and Kramers, it cannot be explained from the Arabic language.

Pocock ('Specimen Historicae Arabum') suggests that the name might well have been derived from ha-Baal. The original Semitic languages used no written vowels. By that token, there would be no difference in the spelling of Hubal and haBaal (= the Baal). These names would appear in writing as H B L, but they could be read as HUBAL or HABAAL.

As we all know, Baal was a deity, an idol, mentioned in the Bible (Nu 25:3, Hos 9:10, Deut 4:3, Jos 22:17 and Ps 106:28-29). Where was Baal worshipped? In Moab! It was the 'god of fertility'. And Amr ibn Luhaiy is recorded to have brought Hubal from Moab to Arabia.

The name 'Allah' (from 'al-Ilah' - the god or 'al-Liah' = the one worshipped) was well-used in pre-Islamic times. It was rather a title than a name, and it was used for a diversity of deities. Muhammad's grandfather reportedly prayed to Hubal and addressed him as Allah. The deities al-Lat, al-Uzza and Manat were called 'the daughters of Allah' (Surah 53:19). "Allah was viewed, already before Muhammad, as the Lord of the Ka'ba, while, if not surely, but very probably, this sanctuary was devoted to Hubal, whose image was placed inside" (Reste Arabischen Heidentum, p. 221 by J. Wellhausen). "While the rituals performed are still addressed to the respective deities, Allah is seen as the creator, the father and with that the superior Lord. But he is viewed to be too general, neutral and impersonal a Lord." (ibid p. 219)

"It is presupposed by Muhammad and admitted by his opponents, that Allah is the Lord of the Ka'ba. Is perhaps the Allah of Mecca Hubal? In other words, was Hubal called Allah in Mecca as Yahweh was called Elohim in Israel?" (J. Wellhausen, p. 75). This becomes even more likely when we realize that the polytheists of Arabia recognized Allah as creator (Surahs 23:84-89; 29:61), and swore by him (Surah 6:109). "At first Allah was the title used within each individual tribe to address its tribal deity instead of its proper name. All said 'Allah', but each one had its own deity in mind. The expression 'the god' (al-ilah), which became the only usage, became the bridge to the concept of an identical god which all tribes had in common." (J. Wellhausen, p. 218)

On the other hand we have to recognize that there is also a close resemblance of the name 'Allah' to the Hebrew 'Elah' (OT), which in the OT is translated as God (89 times compared with El = 224 times, and

Elohim = 3251 times). It is therefore quite thinkable, that Muhammad interpreted the pagan concept of Allah as a perverted form of the God of Abraham.

More information about Hubal is given in the 'Siratu'l Nabi' of ibn Ishaq (The Life of the Prophet, translated by A. Guillaume), the oldest biography of Muhammad. Ibn Ishaq was born 85 AH and compiled this biography from many sources. This is now lost, but a revision of his book by ibn Hisham has been preserved. It tells us what role Hubal played in Arabia just before Muhammad's coming:



It is alleged, and Allah only knows the truth, that when 'Abdu'l-Muttalib (Muhammad's grandfather) encountered the opposition of Quraysh (the tribe to which he belonged) when he was digging Zamzam (a well in Mecca), he vowed that if he should have ten sons to grow up and protect him, he would sacrifice one of them to Allah at the Ka'ba. Afterwards when he had ten sons who could protect him he gathered them together and told them about his vow and called on them to keep faith with Allah. They agreed to obey him and asked what they were to do. He said that each one of them must get an arrow, write his name on it, and bring it to him; this they did and he took them before Hubal in the middle of the Ka'ba. (The statue of) Hubal stood by a well there. It was that well in which gifts made to the Ka'ba were stored.

Now beside Hubal there were seven arrows, each of them containing some words. One was marked 'bloodwit'. When they disputed about who should pay the bloodwit they cast lots with the seven arrows and the one on whom the lot fell had to pay the money. Another was marked 'yes', and another 'no', and they acted accordingly on the matter on which the oracle had been invoked. Another was marked 'of you'; another mulsaq, another 'not of you'; and the last was marked 'water'. If they wanted to dig for water, they cast lots containing this arrow and wherever it came forth they set to work (water divining). If they wanted to circumcise a body, or make a marriage, or bury a body, or doubted someone's genealogy, they took him to Hubal with a hundred dirhams (Arabian currency) and a slaughter camel and gave them to the man who cast the lots; then after leading the man in front of Hubal they would say, 'Our god (Allah) here stands the stranger about whom we would like to know this and that. Let us know the truth about him'. Then they would say to the man who cast the arrows 'Cast!' and if there came out 'of you' then he was a true member of their tribe; and if there came out 'not of you' then he was an ally; and if there came out mulsaq he had no blood relation to them and was not an ally. Where 'yes' came out in other matter, they acted accordingly; and if the answer was 'no', they deferred the matter for a year until they could bring it up again. They used to conduct their affairs according to the decision of the arrows.

'Abdu'l-Muttalib said to the man with the arrows, 'Cast the lots for my sons with these arrows', (a practice of the Babylonians, see Hes 21:21) and he told him of the vow which he had made. Each man gave him the arrow on which his name was written. Now 'Abdullah (he became the father of Muhammad) was his father's youngest son, he and al-Zubayr and Abu Talib were born to Fatima d.'Amr b.'A'idh b.'Abd b.'Imran b. Makhzum b.Yaqaza b. Murra b. Ka'b b.Lu'ayy b.Ghalib b.Fihr (113). It is alleged that 'Abdullah was 'Abdu'l-Muttalib's favourite son, and his father thought that if the arrow missed him he would be spared. (He was the father of the apostle of Allah). When the man took the arrows to cast lots with them 'Abdu'l-Muttalib stood by Hubal praying to Allah. Then the man cast lots and 'Abdullah's arrow came out. His father led him by the hand and took a large knife; then he brought him up to Isaf and Na'ila (two idols of Quraysh at which they slaughtered their sacrifices) to sacrifice him; but Quraysh came out of their assemblies and asked what he was intending to do. When he said that he was going to sacrifice him, they and his sons said 'By Allah! you shall never sacrifice him until you offer the greatest expiatory sacrifice for him. If you do a thing like this there will be no stopping men from coming to sacrifice their sons, and what will become of the people then?' Then said al-Mughira, b. Abdullah, b. Amr, b. Makhzum, b. Yaqaza, Abdullah's mother being from his tribe, 'By Allah, you shall never sacrifice him until you offer the greatest expiatory sacrifice for him. Though his ransom be all our property we will redeem him'. Quraysh and his sons said that he must not do it, but take him to the Hijaz for there there was a sorcerer who had a familiar spirit, and he must consult her. Then he would have liberty of action. If she told him to sacrifice him, he would be no worse off; and if she gave him a favourable response, he could accept it. So they went off as far as Medina and found that she was in Khaybar, so they allege. So they rode on until they got to her, and when 'Abdu'l-Muttalib acquainted her with the facts she told them to go away until her familiar spirit visited her and she could ask him. When they had left her 'Abdu'l-Muttalib prayed to Allah, and when they visited her the next day she said, 'Word has come to me. How much is the blood money among you?' they told her that it was ten camels, as indeed it was. He told them to go back to their country and take the young man and ten camels. Then cast lots for them and for him; if the lots falls against your man, add more camels, until you lord is satisfied. If the lots falls against the camels then sacrifice them in his stead, for your lord will be satisfied and your client escape death. So they returned to Mecca, and when they had agreed to carry out their instructions, 'Abdu'l-Muttalib was praying to Allah. Then they brought near 'Abdullah and ten camels while 'Abdu'l-Muttalib stood by Hubal praying to Allah. Then they cast lots and the arrow fell against 'Abdullah. They added ten more camels and the lot fell against 'Abdullah, and so they went on adding ten at a time, until there were one hundred camels, when finally the lot fell against them. Quraysh and those who were present said, 'At last your lord is satisfied 'Abdu'l-Muttalib'. 'No, by Allah', he answered (so they say), 'not until I cast lots three times'. This they did and each time the arrow fell against the camels. They were duly

slaughtered and left there and no man was kept back or hindered (from eating them).”

“*Siratu’l Nabi*” by *Ibn Ishaq* (translated by *A. Guillaume and G. Weil* respectively)

Abdu’l-Muttalib was Muhammad’s grandfather, and Abdullah (Abd-allah = servant of Allah) his father. One of Abdu’l-Muttalib’s sons was to be sacrificed to ‘god at the Ka’ba’. The ‘god of the Ka’ba’, was Hubal. For circumcision, marriage, burial etc. people went to Hubal, the ‘Lord of this house’. Magic was used to determine Hubal’s will (casting of arrows). The boy Abdallah was brought to an idol to be sacrificed to ‘him’. Abdu’l-Muttalib consulted a sorcerer who had a familiar spirit (‘demon attending and obeying a witch’; Oxford Dictionary). He gets an answer from the ‘familiar spirit’ through the witch. He is to cast lots before Hubal ‘until your lord is satisfied’.

We sum up:

We do not question that Muhammad was an ardent monotheist. He had all idols, including that of Hubal, destroyed. He allowed only Allah to ‘survive’ and equated him with “I am Who I am, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob”.

Note ! No Muslim will perceive that he believes in an idol or a demon - and he doesn’t! Allah to him is the very opposite of that. Little could be more offensive to a Muslim than the suggestion that Allah is an idol or demon.

Yet what we must try to understand is that Muhammad drastically changed the original pre-Islamic concept of Allah.

We deal here with spiritual matters. Although the Bible says that “we know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one” (1 Cor 8:4), the Word of God also says: “... the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God” (1 Cor 10:19-20). We also read that when people were pagans, “somehow or other they were influenced and led astray to dumb idols” (1 Cor 12:2) and that “all the gods of the nations are idols” (Ps 96:5). It also teaches us that people who do not know God are “slaves to those who by nature are not gods” (Gal 4:8).

We may rightly conclude that idols are man-made and as such utterly impotent. But idols are associated with demons, and demons are powerful indeed. Demons lie and deceive.

If we look at Hubal and his role, we may well have to fear that anyone bowing down to 'the Lord of this House' (i.e. the Ka'ba), could come under his influence, notwithstanding that the worshipper has a totally different perception of the object of his submission in his mind. The Ka'ba was the house of Hubal. Even if this is unbeknown to Muslims, they risk being influenced by a power they do not know of, cannot control, and which keeps them from Salvation.

In the light of all this it is surely significant that we read of Muhammad in the Qur'an:



For me, I have been commanded to serve the Lord of this city,
Him Who has sanctified it and to whom (belong) all things ...

Surah 27:91

More explicitly, in the 3rd or 4th Surah which was revealed, it says:

Let them adore the Lord of this house (the Ka'ba).

Surah 106:3

And that was Hubal at that time!

In conclusion:

- Hubal was the center of worship in the Ka'ba in Mecca.
- He came from Moab where he was a contestant to Yahweh Elohim.
- He was 'the Lord of this city', Mecca, and 'the Lord of this house', the Ka'ba, the one who was called Allah.
- While we must not conclude that Allah is Hubal, we may well consider the spiritual implications when Muslims bow in worship towards the Ka'ba and submit to Allah.

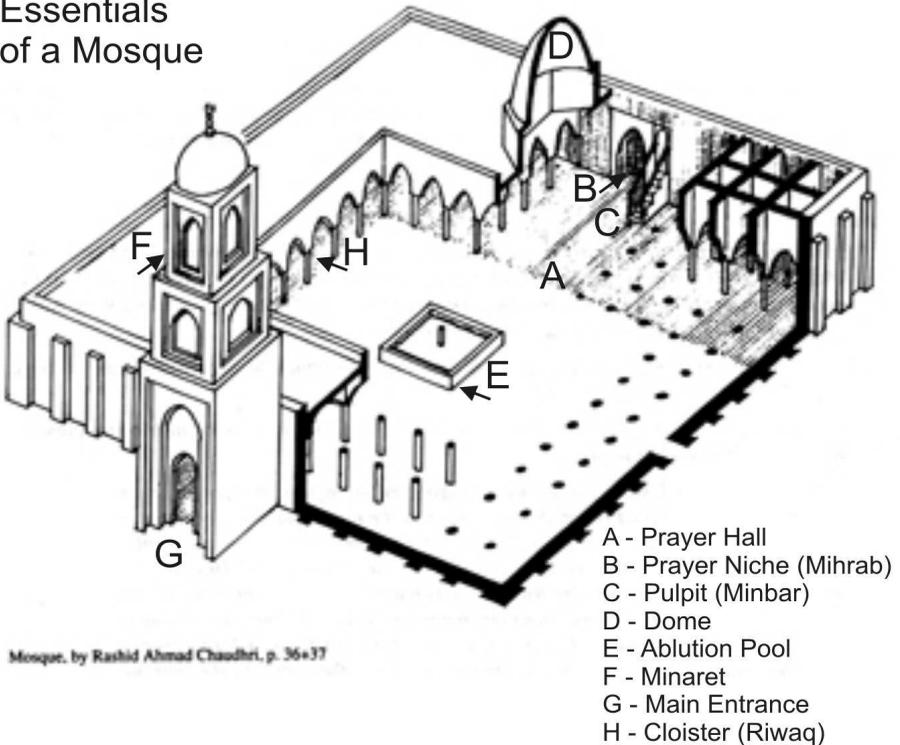
14.2 The Mosque

In the “Textbook of Islam” by Quraishy we read:



It is not ... necessary to have a particularly consecrated place for the holding of divine service. One may say his (sic) prayer wherever he (sic) likes and this will not detract from the efficacy (sic) of the prayer. However, there is a need to have a masjid or a mosque in which Muslims can worship Allah comfortably. The mosque is the undying symbol of Islam. Where there is no adhan (pronounce ‘azan’, i.e. the Call to Prayer from the minaret) or prayers in congregation, there can be no Islamic community. *TBI, p. 67*

Essentials of a Mosque



Islam shows its presence by building Mosques. Part of it is the ‘Madrassa’, the school. Free education, however simple, is frequently offered to attract people.

A former Imam explained: “First we got in contact with the elders in that village and established friendships. Then we helped with food, medicine and the like. We suggested to have a school built and to teach the children of that village. Swahili and its cultural background (and with it Islam) was part of the curriculum. Later some became Muslims and there was automatically a need for a place of worship. That’s how we built a mosque and how we spread Islam.” The mosque is the center of all Muslim activities. The Masjid al-Nabi in Medina serves as an example:



Teachers and missionaries were dispatched from this mosque to those tribes who accepted Islam. A shady place at the north wall was the home of shelterless Companions of the Prophet. Here some of them received regular training in the early Islamic sciences of the Qur’an and Hadith. The Prophet’s mosque was also used for consultation on important political and military matters. ... Deputations coming from outside Madina were put up in the Prophet’s Mosque. For instance, when the Christians of Najran⁴⁰ sent a deputation, the Prophet made arrangements for their stay in the mosque. The Prophet also used to distribute the gifts of war booty among his Companions at the same mosque. It also served as a court of justice, for legal disputes were also settled in it. The Prophet himself used to spend ten days of Ramadhan in l’tikaf (retirement) in his mosque.

TBI, p. 68 f.

Today a mosque may be used for administrative, political, social, educational and religious purposes. Especially in villages this is still the case. Thus it often becomes a place for fundamentalists’ activities.

Women may enter a mosque, provided they do not use perfume (men may use perfume and often do so on Fridays).

⁴⁰ Najran = in todays Yemen

14.3 The 114 Surahs of the Qur'an

1. Al-Fatihah	The Opening
2. Al-Baqarah	The Cow
3. Al-Imran	The Family of Imrân
4. An-Nisa	Women
5. Al-Maidah	The Table Spread
6. Al-Anam	Cattle
7. Al-Araf	The Heights
8. Al-Anfal	Spoils of War
9. At-Tawbah	Repentance
10. Yunus	Jonah
11. Hud	Hûd
12. Yusuf	Joseph
13. Ar-Rad	The Thunder
14. Ibrahim	Abraham
15. Al-Hijr	Al-Hijr
16. An-Nahl	The Bee
17. Al-Izra	The Night Journey
18. Alk-Kahf	The Cave
19. Maryam	Mary
20. Ta Ha	Tâ Hâ
21. Al-Anbiya	The Prophets
22. Al-Hajj	The Pilgrimage
23. Al-Muminun	The Believers

24. An-Nur	Light
25. Al-Furqan	The Criterion
26. Azh-shuraa	The Poets
27. An-Naml	The Ant
28. Al-Qasas	The Story
29. Al-Ankabut	The Spider
30. Ar-Rum	The Romans
31. Luqman	Luqmân
32. As-Saidah	The Prostration
33. Al-Ahzab	The Clans
34. Saba	Saba
35. Al-Malaikah	The Angles
36. Ya Sin	Yâ Sîn
37. As-Saffat	Those Who Set the Ranks
38. Sad	Sad
39. Az-Zumar	The Troops
40. Al-Mumin	The Believer
41. Fussilat	Distinguished
42. Ash-Shura	Counsel
43. Az-Zukhruf	Ornaments of Gold
44. Ad-Dukhan	Smoke
45. Al-Jathiyah	Crouching
46. Al-Ahqaf	The Sand-dunes

47. Muhammad	Muhammad
48. Al-Fath	Victory
49. Al-Hujurat	The Private Apartments
50. Qaf	Qâf
51. Adh-Dhaniyat	The Scatterers
52. At-Tur	The Mount
53. An-Najm	The Stars
54. Al-Qamar	The Moon
55. Ar-Rahman	The Beneficent
56. Al-Waqiah	The Terror
57. Al-Hadid	Iron
58. Al-Mujadalah	The Disputer
59. Al-Hashr	Exile
60. Al-Mumthanah	The Woman Tested
61. As-Saff	The Ranks
62. Al-Jumuah	TCongregation
63. Al-Munafiqun	The Hypocrites
64. At-Taghabun	Mutual Disillusion
65. At-Talaq	Divorce
66. At-Tahrim	Banning
67. Al-Mulk	The Kingdom
68. Al-Qalam	The Pen
69. Al-Haqqah	The Reality

70. Al-Maarif	The Ascending Stairways
71. Nuh	Noah
72. Al-Jinn	The Jinn
73. Al-Muzzammil	The Enshrouded One
74. Al-Muddaththir	The Cloaked One
75. Al-Qiyamah	The Rising of the Dead
76. Ad-Dahr	"Time" / "Man"
77. Al-Murzalat	Emissaries
78. An-Naba	The Tidings
79. An-Naziat	The Pluckers
80. Abas	"He Frowned"
81. At-Takwir	The Darkening
82. Al-Infitar	The Splitting
83. Al-Mutaffifinn	Defrauding
84. Al-Inzhiqaq	The Sundering
85. Al-Buruj	Constellation
86. At-Tariq	Morning Star
87. Al-Ala	The Most High
88. Al-Ghashiyah	The Overwhelming
89. Al-Fajr	The Dawn
90. Al-Balad	The City
91. Ash-Shams	The Sun
92. Al-Layl	The Night
93. Ad-Duha	Morning Hours

94. Al-Inshirah	The Expanding
95. At-Tin	The Fig
96. Al-Alaq	The Blood-clot
97. Al-Qadr	Power
98. Al-Bayyinah	The Clear Proof
99. Az-Zilzal	The Earthquake
100. Al-Adiyat	The Chargers
101. Al-Qariah	The Calamity
102. At-Takathur	Rivalry in Worldly Increase
103. Al-Asr	Afternoon

104. Al-Humazah	The Backbiter
105. Al-Fil	The Elephant
106. Quraish	Quraish
107. Al-Ma'un	Charity
108. Al-Kawthar	Abundance
109. Al-Kafirun	The Unbelievers
110. An-Nasr	Help
111. Tabbat (Lahab)	Perish (The Flame)
112. Al-Ikhlās	Sincere Religion
113. Al-Falaq	Daybreak
114. An-Nas	Men

14.4 The 99 Most Excellent Names of Allah

AL-RAHMAN	The Merciful
AL- RAHIM	The Compassionate
AL-MALI	The King
AL-QUDDU	The Most Holy One
AL-SALAM	The Peace
AL-MUMI	The Faithful
AL-MUHAIMIN	The Protector
AL-AZIZ	The Unique and Mighty One
AL-JABBAR	The Super Strong One
AL-MUTAKABBIR	The Supreme or Proud One
AL-KHALIQ	The Creator
AL-BARI	The Maker
AL-MUSAWWIR	The Fashioner
AL-GHAFFAR	The Forgiving One
AL-QAHHAR	The Dominant
AL-WAHHAB	The Bestower
AL-RAZZAQ	The Provider
AL-FATTAH	The Opener
AL-ALIM	The All-Knowing One
AL-QABID	The Restrainer
AL-BASIT	The Spreader
AL-KHAFID	The Abaser
AL-RAFI	The Exalter
AL-MUIZZ	The One who exalts and raises to honour
AL-MUDHILL	The Destroyer
AL-SAMI	The All-Hearing One
AL-BASHIR	The All-Seeing One
AL-HAKIM	The Ruler or Arbiter
AL-ADL	The Just or Righteous One
AL-LATIF	The Subtle One
AL-KHABIR	The Aware One

AL-HALIM	The Clement
AL-AZIM	The Grand One
AL-GHAFUR	The Mostly Forgiving One
AL-SHAKUR	The Grateful One
AL-ALI	The Exalted
AL-KABIR	The Great One
AL-HAFIZ	The Powerful Guardian
AL-MUQIT	The Strengthened
AL-HASIB	The Reckoner
AL-JALIL	The Majestic
AL-KARIM	The Pure and Generous One
AL-RAQIB	The Watcher of All
AL-MUJIB	The Approver
AL-WASI	The Comprehensive One
AL-HAKIM	The Ultimately Wise
AL-WADUD	The One Who shows Sympathy
AL-MAJID	The Most Glorious One
AL-BA'ITH	The Raiser
AL-SHAHID	The Witness
AL-HAQQ	The Right and the Truth
AL-WAKIL	The Advocate
AL-QAWI	The Strong
AL-MATIN	The Firm
AL-WALI	The Friendly Protector
AL-HAMID	The Praiseworthy One
AL-MUHSI	The Counter
AL-MUBDI	The Beginner
AL-MUID	The Restorer
AL- MUHYI	The Quickener
AL-MUMIT	The Killer
AL-HAYY	The Living
AL-QAIYUM	The Subsisting One
AL-WAJID	The Finder
AL-SAMAD	The One Glorified

AL-WAHID	The One and only
AL-SAMAD	The Eternal
AL-QADIR	The Mighty and Powerful One
AL-MUQTADIR	The Prevailing One
AL-MUQADDIM	The One who brings forward
AL-MUAKHKHIR	The Deferrer
AL-AWWAL	The First
AL-AKHIR	The Last
AL-ZAHIR	The Outwardly Manifest and Evident One
AL-BATIN	The Inward
AL-WALI	The Governor
AL-MUTA'ALI	The Exalted
AL-BARR	The Righteous Benefactor
AL-TAWWAB	The One who causes and receives
AL-MUNTAQIM	The Avenger
AL-AFU	The Pardoner
AL-RAUF	The Kind and Indulgent One
MALIK-AL MALIK	The Ruler of the Kingdom
DHU-AL-JALAL WA AL-IKRAM	The Lord of all Majesty and Honour
AL-MUQSIT	The Equitable One
AL-JAMI	The Collector
AL-GHANI	The Rich One
AL-MUGHNI	The Enricher
AL-MU'ATI	The Giver
AL-MANI	The Withholder
AL-DARR	The Distresser
AL-NAFI	The Profiter
AL-NUR	The Light
AL-HADI	The Guide
AL-BADI	The Incomparable Magnificent
AL-BAQI	The Enduring One
AL-WARITH	The Inheritor
AL-RASHID	The Director
AL-SABUR	The Patient One

14.5 A Brief Dictionary of Islamic Terms

<i>Abu</i>	Father
<i>Ahlu'l-Kitab</i>	The People of the Book - Jews and Christians
<i>Ahl-i-Kitab</i>	The People of the Book - Jews and Christians
<i>Ahmadiyya</i>	Islamic sect
<i>Allah'u-akbar</i>	Allah is great(er)
<i>al-Masih</i>	the Messiah
<i>Alim</i>	a learned person (pl. ulama)
<i>Ansar</i>	friends; (assisted the Muslims in Medina)
<i>ar-Rahman</i>	the merciful; title of Allah
<i>ar-Rahim</i>	the compassionate
<i>Assalaam-Alykum</i>	Lit. 'peace to you' (greeting)
<i>Aya</i>	Lit. 'sign' (used for a verse in the Qur'an)
<i>Azan</i>	call to prayer
<i>Bait'allah</i>	Lit. 'house of God', but used for the Ka'ba
<i>Banu</i>	Tribe
<i>Bilal</i>	the first 'muezzin'
<i>Bint</i>	Daughter
<i>Bismillah</i>	formula that precedes each Surah but one: "In the name of Allah, the compassionate, the merciful"
<i>Da'wah</i>	missionary movement of Islam, an 'invocation', practice of the occult
<i>Deen (Din)</i>	the practices, duties in Islam

<i>Eid</i>	feast day
<i>Fiqh</i>	Islamic dogmatic theology; law
<i>Furqan</i>	that which distinguishes between good and evil; lawful and unlawful; used also as a title for the Qur'an or a Surah
<i>Hadith (Hadis)</i>	collection of traditions on Muhammad's life
<i>Hafiz</i>	person who can memorize the whole Qur'an
<i>Hajj</i>	pilgrimage to Mecca; one of the pillars of faith
<i>Hajji (Hadji)</i>	Muslim who has been to Mecca
<i>Hanif</i>	'one who is inclined' to Islam; incl. Mohammed
<i>Halaal</i>	lawful (food to eat)
<i>Hamduli'llah</i>	praise to Allah
<i>Haqq</i>	Truth
<i>Haram</i>	unclean (food)
<i>Hazrat</i>	title of respect
<i>Hira</i>	mountain near Mecca, in a cave in which Mohammed had his (first) revelation
<i>Hijrah (Hejira)</i>	the "flight" of Muhammad from Mecca to Medina; beginning of the Muslim calendar
<i>Hijaz</i>	the wider territory around Mecca and Medina; sacred area

<i>Houris</i>	beautiful maidens with almond-shaped eyes and fair skinned, who delight the faithful (men) in paradise
<i>Hubal</i>	an idol which was in the Ka'ba before Islam
<i>Iblis</i>	the devil (also 'Shaitan')
<i>Ibn (bin)</i>	Son (of)
<i>Imam</i>	the leader who guides prayers in the mosque
<i>Iman</i>	Faith
<i>Injil</i>	the Gospel
<i>Insha'llah</i>	if Allah wills
<i>Isa</i>	Jesus
<i>Islam</i>	'submission' (to God); name for Muslim religion
<i>Isnad</i>	chain of Hadith transmitters
<i>Israfil and Israil</i>	angels of resurrection and death
<i>Jannah</i>	paradise ('garden')
<i>Jahannam</i>	Hell
<i>Jihaad</i>	Holy War to promote Islam
<i>Jinns</i>	Spirits
<i>Ka'ba</i>	cube-like building at Mecca; was used for worship in pre-Muhammadan times; gives prayer direction
<i>Kafir</i>	Unbeliever
<i>Kafira</i>	head covering of men
<i>Kalima</i>	Islamic creed: 'There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his

	prophet'
<i>Kalimatu'llah</i>	'The Word of God'; Jesus, the Messiah
<i>Khalif (Caliph)</i>	successor of Muhammad
<i>Kitab</i>	book; used for 'holy books', also the Bible
<i>Kitabi</i>	one of the "People of the Book" - Jews and Christians
<i>Khutba</i>	sermon on Fridays
<i>Khatib</i>	Preacher
<i>Kufr</i>	Unbelief
<i>Madrasah</i>	Islamic school
<i>Mahdi</i>	'the guided one'; the returning 'Messiah'
<i>Malak</i>	angel (pl. Malaika)
<i>Malik</i>	'king'; the angel presiding over hell
<i>Mansukh</i>	the abrogated portion of the Qur'an
<i>Marwa and Safa</i>	two little hills in Mecca
<i>Masjid</i>	Mosque
<i>Maulana</i>	teacher of Islam (used mainly in Indian sub-continent)
<i>Mecca</i>	the 'holy city' of Islam; home town of Muh.
<i>Medina</i>	Muhammad's city of exile after the hijra; formerly Yathrib
<i>Mihrab</i>	niche in the mosque marking prayer direction (Qibla)
<i>Mimbar</i>	pulpit in mosque

<i>Minaret</i>	tower of a mosque to call people to prayer
<i>Miraj</i>	a nightly journey 'in the spirit' by Muhammad to the 'seventh heaven'
<i>Mirza</i>	title of respect
<i>Mishkat</i>	a collection of 'most authentic' Sunni traditions; the full name is 'Mishkatu'l Masabi'
<i>Mizan</i>	great balances (scales) to 'weigh' a man's good deeds against the bad
<i>Muazzin</i>	a caller to prayer from the minaret (Muezzin)
<i>Mujahid</i>	warrior in Islam
<i>Mullah</i>	teacher of Islam
<i>Munkar and Nakir</i>	angels who examine the dead in the grave
<i>Murtadd</i>	apostate of Islam
<i>Mushaf</i>	original document of the Qur'an (pl. Masahif)
<i>Mushrik</i>	one who adds a companion to Allah (also Christians)
<i>Muslim (Moslem)</i>	one who submits (to Islam)
<i>Namaz</i>	Salat; an Indian expression
<i>Nabi</i>	a prophet; one who received direct inspiration by means of angels, dreams or 'in the heart'
<i>Nasikh</i>	portion of the Qur'an or Hadith which abrogates a previous one
<i>Nazil</i>	'sent down'; Islamic concept of inspiration

<i>Purda</i>	cloak which covers pious women
<i>Qadar</i>	predetermination
<i>Qadi (Qazi)</i>	Judge
<i>Qibla</i>	direction of prayer
<i>Qismat (Kismet)</i>	acceptance of Allah's sovereign (arbitrary) action
<i>Qur'an</i>	'the reading' or 'reciting'; the holy book of Islam
<i>Qurban</i>	Sacrifice
<i>Rabb</i>	Lord
<i>Rak'at</i>	prescribed prostration in prayer
<i>Ramadaan</i>	9 th month on the Islamic calendar; the month of fasting
<i>Rasul (Rasool)</i>	messenger; apostle; one who brings a book to men
<i>Ruh</i>	spirit
<i>Ruhul'-Quddus</i>	Holy Spirit
<i>Sawm</i>	Fasting
<i>Sabaens</i>	ancient inhabitants of South West Arabia; worshippers of sun and stars
<i>Sahih</i>	tradition collectors from Muhammad's companions
<i>Salaam</i>	Peace
<i>Salat</i>	prayer recited five times daily

<i>Shaikh</i>	teacher of Islam (actually 'old man')
<i>Shaháda</i>	obligatory confession of faith
<i>Shariah (Shariat)</i>	law of Islam
<i>Shi'áh</i>	'division'; Islamic sect insisting that a Khalif must be a physical descendant of Muhammad
<i>Shirk</i>	the sin of adding a partner of Allah
<i>Siratu'l Nabi</i>	'The life of the Prophet'; a biography of Muhammad by Ibn Ishaq, revised and edited by Ibn Hisham
<i>Sufi</i>	a movement of Islamic followers seeking mystical experiences
<i>Sunnah (Sunnah)</i>	'path'; imitating the life of Muhammad in accordance with the Hadith
<i>Sunni</i>	'one of the path'; main group of Muslims

<i>Surah</i>	chapter of the Qur'an
<i>Taqdir</i>	'measurement'; actually predestination or measured out fate
<i>Tasbih</i>	rosary with 99 beads for prayer
<i>Taslim</i>	Benediction
<i>Taurat (Tourat)</i>	the five books of Moses
<i>Tawaf</i>	circumambulation (walking around) the Ka'ba seven times during the Hajj
<i>Ulema</i>	Islamic teachers (singular: Maalim)
<i>Umm</i>	Mother
<i>Umma (Umat)</i>	nation; family; mostly used of religious congregation; the people of Islam
<i>Umrah</i>	minor Hajj
<i>Wudu</i>	Ritual washing before prayer in mosque
<i>Zabur</i>	Psalms

14.6 Who's Who in Islam

The first four Khalifs

<i>Abu-Bakr</i>	Close follower of Muhammad and first Khalif (632-634 AD). He was also Muhammad's father-in-law (through Aisha).
<i>Umar (or Omar)</i>	Second Khalif (634-644 AD). He was assassinated while in prayer.
<i>Uthman (or Osman)</i>	Third Khalif (644-656 AD). He ordered the editing of the Qur'an. Established standard text; other documents were destroyed. He was murdered.
<i>Ali</i>	Fourth Khalif (656-661 AD); nephew and adopted son of Muhammad, who married Fatima. He too was murdered.

Named Wives and Concubines of Muhammad

Name	Marriage – Position	Age
<i>Khadijah</i>	First wife and only companion for 25 years	40
<i>Sa'uda Bint Zama</i>	Widow of as-Sakran b. Amr, an early Muslim	30?
<i>Aisha Bint Abu Bakr</i>	The only non-widow he married	9
<i>Hafsah Bint Umar</i>	Daughter of Umar	18
<i>Zainab Bint Khusaima</i>	Died a few months after marriage to Muhammad	30
<i>Umm Salama</i>	Her husband had died of wounds received at Uhud	29
<i>Zainab Bint Jahsh</i>	Divorced wife of Zayd b. Harithah	38
<i>Juweiriyah</i>	Daughter of a chief; first concubine, later married	20
<i>Rayhana (Jewish)</i>	Concubine?	?
<i>Maryam (Christian)</i>	Concubine?	?
<i>Safia</i>	Captured at Khaibar in 628 and assigned to Muh.	17
<i>Umm Habiba</i>	Widow of Ubaydallah; had been to Abyssinia	35
<i>Maimuna</i>	Sister of the wife of al-Abbas; married in 629, age	27

The four great Teachers of the Law

<i>Hanafi</i>	Born 80 AH in Kufah; influence in Central Asia, India and parts of Egypt
<i>Shafii</i>	Born 96 AH in Medina; influence in West Africa and North Africa (except Egypt)
<i>Hanbali</i>	Born 150 AH in Gaza; influence in South Arabia, East Africa, Malaysia, Egypt and Central Asia)
<i>Malik</i>	Born 164 AH in Baghdad; influence mostly in Arabian peninsula

Other Names

<i>Abdu'llah</i>	father of Muhammad; 'a slave of Allah'
<i>Abdu'l-Muttalib</i>	grandfather of Muhammad; his first guardian
<i>Abdul Cassim</i>	the proper name of Muhammad
<i>Abu Talib</i>	uncle and guardian of Muhammad
<i>Ahmad</i>	'praised one'; same word root as Muhammad. It is claimed that Ahmad was prophesied in the Bible (Surah 61:6).
<i>al-Baizawi</i>	commentator (900 AH)
<i>al-Baqawi</i>	(or al-Baghawi) commentator (515 AH)
<i>al-Bukhari</i>	collector of traditions about Muhammad (810-870 AD)
<i>al-Ghazzali</i>	Islamic teacher (450 AH)
<i>Allah</i>	(from al-illah); apparently the chief deity in pre-Islamic Mecca; later the one god of Islam
<i>al-Tabari</i>	historian and commentator
<i>al-Vaqidi</i>	a later biographer of Muhammad
<i>Amina</i>	mother of Muhammad
<i>Dawood</i>	(or Dawud) David
<i>Fatima</i>	the daughter of Muhammad, who had an offspring through Ali
<i>Halima</i>	nurse of Muhammad

<i>Ibn Ishaq</i>	biographer of Muhammad
<i>Ibn Khaldun</i>	Historian
<i>Ibn Sa'd</i>	biographer of Muhammad
<i>Ibrahim</i>	Abraham
<i>Ibu Hisham</i>	Editor of Ibn Ishaq's biography
<i>Isa</i>	name used in the Qur'an for Jesus
<i>Jalalu'deen</i>	commentator (900 AH)
<i>Jibril</i>	Angel Gabriel
<i>Moosa</i>	(or Musa) Moses
<i>Muhammad</i>	(or Mohammed) the prophet of Islam (= the praised one)
<i>Muslim</i>	one who submits to the will of Allah in Islam, also name of a Hadith compiler
<i>Quraish</i>	Arab tribe from which Muhammad originated and from which all Khalifs were to be chosen
<i>Suleiman</i>	Solomon
<i>Yahya</i>	John the Baptist
<i>Zaid-ibn-Harith</i>	Muhammad's adopted son, whose divorced wife Zainab he later married
<i>Zaid-ibn-Thabit</i>	compiler of the Qur'an (14 AD)

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