

# ISLAM

## AN INTRODUCTION

The question often asked is what is Islam is it Religion or Politics.

It is suggested that from its very beginnings it is a Political and Social system with overt Religious practices

Adherents are termed Muslims and can also be referred to as Moslems.

The term Mohammedism or Mohammedans is offensive to Believers, because to them, it implies that they worship Mohammed, in the same way that Christians worship Christ, which they do not, they venerate him as the Prophet of Islam, the direct and last Apostle of God

Islam is mono-deistic in that they worship one God, in theological language, alone and entire in himself

The article of Faith which, has to be made by a Moslem is;

There is but one God, Allah and Mohammed is His Apostle or Prophet, this is the declaration that distinguishes the true Muslim. It should be the first thing he hears after birth and the last words he should utter at death

Islam is the second most numerous Religious System after Christianity and its numbers are still increasing. Judaism is older than Christianity, and they are both older than Islam.

It is suggested that there can never be an accommodation between Christianity and Islam, because Islam by its very nature considers all non-Muslims to be Infidels which, it is necessary to convert to Islam by any means. To live with Islam it is necessary to have a very clear view of their objective, which is that they must for their eternal salvation, by any means labour to achieve this conversion. Hence the principle

of Jihad which is primarily religious warfare not political warfare but can involve political warfare in the furtherance of the religious conversion

First, some dates, to put Islam into a time line.

570. The birth of Muhammad some say the Founder of Islam.

Islam says he was the Messenger of God, who was the Founder of Islam

610 Muhammad's initial Revelations in Mecca

613 The Prophet as he is now called starts public preaching against the Pagans in Mecca, which gets him into trouble in Mecca, the centre of the Pagan cult and very lucrative it was.

622 The Hegira or Flight of Muhammad from Mecca to Medina, this is the most important date for Islam, because it is Year 1 of the Islamic Calendar.

632 The death of Muhammad. Now the trouble starts, which has split Islam ever since, the split into Sunni and Sh'ite. Why, the Sh'ite thought that their man Ali, the son in law of Muhammad, who had married Fatima the daughter of Muhammad, should have been Caliph in succession to him. Those surrounding Muhammad for want of a better term the inner circle led by his secretary decreed that succession should be by means of election by the Faithful, an election was held and one of them, ABU BAKR was elected as Caliph not Prophet, and from that day to this Sunni and Sh'ite are bitter enemies., and will never be reconciled. Wherever they are they will not live in amity as one will attempt to obtain supremacy over the other by fair means or foul.

652 saw the first authoritative text of the Koran. Note twenty years after the Prophets death.

Who was Muhammad, There are no extant portraits of Mohammed. The religion forbids the making of such, the reason, given by Mohammed, was that it could lead to idolatry, and could take the mind of a believer at worship, away from, the worship of the one true God.

Muhammed was born in Mecca in humble circumstances, though of an old Arab family of the merchant class, the Quraysh. His own community was pagan, Gods often being represented by stones. One of their most important places for pilgrimage was the Sanctuary of the Kaba in Mecca, in which was the Black Stone, now incorporated into the Shrine in Mecca, the veneration of which is one of the high points of the Haji or Pilgrimage of modern Islam.

About AD 595 when he was about 25 he married a wealthy widow, KHADIJA for whom he had been working as a trader for some years, she was about fifteen years older than him, it was this employment that makes the theory that he was illiterate seem unlikely. They had two sons, who both died in infancy and four daughters one of whom married Ali a cousin of Mohammed, this is the man that the Shite to this day say should have been Mohammed's successor as Caliph. KHADIJA died after about twenty five years of marriage.

A body of mythology grew up about Mohammed and his alleged ability to perform miracles, such as "splitting the moon". It was claimed that he had a special mark on his body and that his father had a light in the middle of his forehead. It was claimed that Mohammed was purified by an angel, coming to him, and taking his heart out for cleaning. He was a visionary and a mystic and believed that God possessed him during his Proclamations. He saw himself as a person warning of the perils and of the punishments that awaited man if he did not heed the commandments of God, as expounded by Mohammed.

From the time of going to Medina he entered upon a war-like career making converts by force if persuasion did not work. He claimed that he was not trying to eliminate Christianity or Judaism but that he was ordained by God, through revelation, to correct the abuses which had crept into them.

What does Islam believe and on what is it founded. Islam is, and very strictly so, mono-theistic, the Christian Trinity is offensive to Islam because it speaks of different aspects of God who to Islam is sole and entire, and to believe anything else is blasphemy, a sin without forgiveness worthy of eternal damnation and an offence under Shari'ah Law, liable to a Sentence of Death

The central tenet of Islam is; God is Great and Mohammed is his Prophet that is Mohammed is the last of the line of God's Prophets and revelation of God's Word and Law ended with him, to believe or expound anything else is blasphemy, a sin without forgiveness and so, worthy of eternal damnation and an offence under Shari'ah Law liable to a Sentence of Death

Conversion to any other religion is apostasy a sin without forgiveness and worthy of eternal damnation, an offence under Shari'ah Law so liable to a Sentence of Death

Islam and Christianity therefore, differ greatly in their concept of God and the means God used to reveal himself to the World and the nature of that revelation.

Islam has a different concept of the Fall of Mankind, the relationship between God and Adam and his expulsion from Paradise. Contrary to Genesis where the understanding is of a harsh God, marking the beginning of the Fall and of Original Sin, and the necessity of man to continually to make his peace with God for Salvation.

Islam has a much more compassionate God, who though expelling Adam did not Withdraw His Grace from him and so did not create Original Sin, but leaves man the task, of maintaining, rather than having to re-establish, a relationship with God to re-enter Paradise, the Christian position for the necessity of Baptism for re-generation is to Islam redundant.

The Christian position is that Jesus the Christ and the Holy Spirit are co-equal with God the Father, and are Divine. The Islam position on this can be summed up in the phrase, Allah has no Son, that is Jesus is not Divine, therefore

the Holy Spirit is redundant. In all other aspects other than he was Divine, Islam accepts the Christian Gospels positions on Jesus, they accept the Virgin Birth i.e Mary was born without original sin because to them there was no such thing, they accept that his conception was by Gods intervention, but that he was not incarnate by the holy spirit, therefore he was not co-equal with God, that he was a special prophet, preparatory as were all the prophets, to Muhammad's ultimacy and that with Muhammad, Prophecy came to an end in ultimate revelation..

The elimination of Jesus as Divine has the consequence that the Cross is eliminated as a vehicle of salvation and with it the concept of the Resurrection, an essential part of the Christian understanding of Jesus as God and Saviour.

The Cross is there, but only as an evil wish to crucify Jesus the Prophet not Jesus the Son of God. and parts of Islam hold that the Crucifixion never took place he just disappeared they do not know how or why

There are several strands to the practice of Islam. They might be described as the Political, Social, the Theological and the Religious observances, which are the most overt face of Islam.

These are known the Pillars of Islam

First is Prayer, There are five compulsory periods of prayer dating from about 619 that is while Mohammed was still alive, so that it can safely be said that this was not a later accretion. Each session consists of seven prescribed ritual postures and prayers,

Prayers have to be said at daybreak, noon, mid-afternoon, after sunset and in the early part of the night, each of these sessions should be preceded by a series of ritual ablutions In times of sickness or danger this ritual may be relaxed but not otherwise.

The Koran mentions the Noon prayers on Fridays as the principal congregational prayer of the week because this includes the sermon, which is often of a political rather

than religious nature. The Koran prescribes that all work should cease for this period.

hence this is the time when political demonstrations often take place, after Friday Prayers, the Congregation having been whipped up by the Imam.

Alms Giving, The Koran enjoins this as the outward sign of piety and a means of salvation. This is not to be confused with what has become known as the Mosque Tax which is supposed to be a free-will offering for the upkeep of the Mosque and is collected at Friday prayers

Fasting. The most notable aspect of this is Ramadan, which is supposed to take place for the whole of the ninth month of the Lunar Year, this involves total abstinence from food or drink including water from dawn to sunset. Only the sick, pregnant women travellers and very young children are exempt but adults are expected to make up the days missed at a later date. At other times fasting can be imposed as a penance for various offences

The Hajj or Pilgrimage to the Sacred Mosque in Mecca, where is housed the Ka'aba

The Saudi-Arabians are the Guardians of the Mosque at Mecca and are Sunni of the strictest form, being of the Wahabi sect. This Guardianship causes a certain amount of tension with the Shi'ites who think they should be Guardians.

It is expected that all good Muslims should undertake the Hajj at least once in their lifetime in the expectation of Salvation. It may be undertaken at anytime and its considered that the best time is in the twelve month of the Lunar Year Its one of the early practices, said to have been instituted by the Prophet himself.

Hajj consists of the Pilgrims firstly making themselves ritually clean and in a state of ritual Consecration, this is done on arrival at Mecca, by the ritual ablutions before prayer, shaving the beard for men, the discarding of ordinary clothing for both sexes and putting on two plain cotton sheets, white in colour so as to, in the case of the men leave the face and head

uncovered, the women should keep their heads covered at all times.

From then on its forbidden. to hunt, to cut the hair or nails, for a male to cover his head, and for either sex to use perfume or to have sexual relations.

The ritual consists of going round the Kaaba four times, In the Kaaba is housed the Black Stone of Pagan times, then, Running between the two hillocks of Saffa and Marwa which are close to Mecca. On the ninth day of the pilgrimage walking some twelve miles to Mount Arafat, north east of Mecca. Then walking back to Mina to offer sacrifice of a sheep or for the more wealthy, a camel, after stoning the Pillars representing the Devil, walking back to Mecca. Then Hajj is over and the Pilgrim resume normal life and go home

It can be seen that the Religious practices of Islam are not only spiritually controlling but are also physically controlling, and rigorous as well

Where does all this come from. It's from what might be described as the king-pin of Islam the Qu'ran or Koran It is difficult to classify what kind of a Book this is, part Religious Guidance, part Theology, part Political and Social Doctrine.

It is believed to have been compiled by Abu Bakr, Mohamed's successor as Caliph from the revelations spoken by Muhammad himself and recorded by his Secretary and from the memories of followers who heard and remembered Mohammed's preaching.

Islam considers the Koran to be the last and most complete revelation so not a word of the original text may be altered and this why translations were not permitted until quite recently and such that were made in some places still are considered, blasphemous,

The original Text is in archaic Arabic and in the Madrassa from which the Imams and Scholars come it is learnt by heart by constant recitation this is why a lot of Imams have no other education or theological training, so as to apply the Koran to modern society.

In the Koran Muhamed claimed that divine revelations enshrined therein were 'miraculous signs' of his Apostleship, that the Koran was a transcript of a tablet preserved in Heaven on which was written all that has happened and will happen.

Another Book associated with the Koran, of which little is heard outside the Scholarship Circles of Islam is the Book of Traditions that is the Hadiths or sayings of Muhamed in explanation of the more difficult parts of his teachings, from this we know that Muhamed was subject to ecstatic seizures, he is reported to have said in receiving inspirations he felt as if it was the painful sounding of a bell.

The caveat here for non-Muslims is that the Koran was compiled, as was the Book of Traditions some years after Muhameds death by ABU BAKHR his successor as Caliph.

In Islam there is a conception of Sin different to that of Christianity, where sin is a matter between man and his maker. The only denomination that sets out a collection of sins of different values, other than Islam is the Roman Catholic Church, Islam is different from them, in that where the Catholics hold that there is no sin which cannot be forgiven by God's grace with due repentance and a firm purpose of amendment, Islam does not have the same principle. Sins such as Blasphemy, Apostasy, Polytheism and Idolatry, cannot be forgiven under any circumstances in this world or the next the punishment is death in this world and extinction in the next.

*Apart from these Major sins, there are others, which are unlawful therefore sinful*

Actions absolutely forbidden;	Pork and Alcohol
Actions disproved of	Smoking
Actions obligatory	Prayer, Fasting, Alms Giving
Failure to carry these out is sinful and against Sha'ira Law where Islam prevails	
Actions Recommended	Read the Koran.



Failure to conform to these are considered sins, there are of course many other transgressions in the Koran, such as adultery which though not considered sinful but can attract punishment under the Sh'ira Law and could result in a public flogging or stoning to death especially in the case of women.

As has been said Islam as a religion, exercises both physical and mental control but equally social and political control, such as inheritance law, the position of women both in the home and out of it, the education of children that is, it not only tells its adherents what to believe but how to believe it and how to live their lives via the Koran. It allows man to exercise free will as to whether he will approach God but approach he will and it must be the Islamic way as any other way is wrong.

Probably the most contentious facet of Islam is Jihad, which is the principle of Religious warfare every Muslim should work, to defend the Faith against its enemies, that is all non-believers and to work for the conversion of the world whether the world wants to be converted to Islam or not and the ultimate expression of this conversion is the establishment of the Islamic State controlled by the Koran, the Hadiths and Sha'ira Law under the overall control of the Caliph or the Mullahs perhaps not so markedly different to Calvin's view of the Religious State in Geneva

To Islam, which, ever sect is involved anyone who is not a Muslim is an Infidel and an enemy, who if they persist in that path in life are damned. That's the Fundamentalist view, which it is difficult to deal with and cannot be overcome by argument or diplomacy, all that can be done is to be very aware of what is going on and where it does not affect the security or religions in target place contain it or deal with it by the Law of the Land. If History is to be believed, Islam started Religious and Political warfare long before the Crusades and the establishment of the various Christian Empires and has not yet given the idea up..

Mohammed was chased out of Mecca, by the Pagans, who did not like his views. Such was the obdurate view taken by Mecca that they did not want his view of religion or his Mission, he believed they ought to be converted from their wicked ways and as they resisted peaceful persuasion he eventually converted them for their own good and in the name of God, by the sword and established the centre of Islam and its present Holy Place which incidentally no non-Muslim may enter, in Mecca where it is to this day. Perhaps the good Muslim working for the conversion of the world to Islam whether they wish for it or not could say that he is only following in the steps of the Prophet and doing the work of God.

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July 2012.

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