

# Islam

## History, Doctrine, and Practice

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Islam, also known as Mohammedism or Moslem is the youngest of man's greatest universal religions. It comprises 1/5 of the world's population and over 700 million members. They are concentrated in an irregular belt of land about 9,000 miles long. It includes:

All of Northern Africa, the Arab states of the Middle East and the Arabian Peninsula; Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran; part of the Russian Caucasus, Turkestan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kashmir, the Malay Peninsula and the East Indies. Southeastern Europe, India, China and the Philippines also have large Moslem populations.<sup>1</sup>

The Islam religion did not evolve slowly from obscure and legendary origins but came into being in the full light of history and spread with hurricane speed. It took only a few years to overwhelm the entire Middle East and within the first century it had spread from Gibraltar to the Himalayas. The basic belief of Islam is the veneration of a single, all powerful God. The name "Islam" indicates this fact as it means: submission to the will of God. Moslem is from the same root and means: one who submits. Belief in and submission to God whom they call "Allah," has given the Moslem dignity and confidence which have rendered them impervious to both adversity and apostasy. Each true Moslem lives face to face with God at all times. To the true believer, religion and life, faith and politics are inseparable. In the broadest sense Islam is a brotherhood of men transcending the barriers of race and nation, united in an organized effort to execute God's will. Those who are Moslems are convinced that the utterances of Mohammed as preserved in the Koran and other less sacred writings represent the final and absolute expression of the will of God.

Islam embraces all departments of life, it is a kind of totalitarian system with control over all the varied domains of human activity. This is a unique feature. Political, social and religious' elements are inseparable. It has no ordained priesthood, no clerical hierarchy and no mystic sacraments. It is a lay religion, a practical one with no complicated theology and no unattainable ideals. As such it has special appeal to the societies that are still on a low cultural level and makes progress where Christianity fails.<sup>2</sup>

The teachings of Mohammed spread rapidly. The general situation in Arabia at the time of Mohammed has much to do with the initial success and spread of Islam. Arabia had become a refuge for all sorts of religious fugitives. The people were superstitious. Many believed nothing at all, although the city of Mecca boasted over 300 idols.

The gods had become gradually more nebulous through the destructive influence exercised for about 400 years by Jewish and Christian ideas upon Arabian heathenism.<sup>3</sup>

Many of the inhabitants of Arabia were Jews and it is true that Mohammed was indebted in part to Judaism both for his doctrine and narratives. There Christians among the Arabs also as was evidenced by the

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<sup>1</sup> *Compton's Pictured Encyclopedia*, Vol. 7, 1965, page 137.

<sup>2</sup> *Encyclopedia Americana*, Vol. 15, page 412.

<sup>3</sup> S. M. Zwemer, *Islam—A Challenge to Faith*, page 15.

Christians from Arabia at the Council of Nicaea. Thus it was possible for Mohammed to have become acquainted with both Judaism and Christianity. It is said of Islam:

Mohammedism is not an invention but a concoction. There is nothing novel about it, except the genius of Mohammed in mixing old ingredient into a new panacea for human ills and forcing it down by means of a sword. The situation in Arabia was ready for a man who could take advantage of the social, political and religious atmosphere and that man was Mohammed.<sup>4</sup>

There were numerous tribes and clans bound together by no political tie but only by a traditional sentiment of unity. They were suppressed by many different rulers. They were ready for a political leader to break their yokes and restore their old-time independence. So when Mohammed came to manhood, the hour was ripe for a political leader able to unite the Arabs against the non-Arabs.

Mecca was the birthplace of the man who became the spiritual leader of millions of people. Mecca was an important trade center. It was the transfer point on the prosperous trade route between India and Syria. Mecca was also important as a religious center. Pagan Arab tribes made annual pilgrimages to Mecca which had been the center of pagan worship for hundreds of years. The main point of interest was KAABA, a temple. The story goes that when Adam and Eve fell from Paradise, Adam landed on a mountain in Ceylon and Eve fell at Judah, on the western coast of Arabia. After 100 years of wandering they met near Mecca and here Allah constructed for them a tabernacle on the site of the present Kaaba. In this temple was the famous black stone, once whiter than snow but since turned black by kisses of pilgrims.

This stone is really a number of fragments united by dark cement and held together by a silver band. The whole is oval and about seven inches in diameter.<sup>5</sup>

To this day, each Moslem turns toward the Kaaba for prayer regularly. At Mohamed's birth the city of Mecca supposedly was the home of 360 idols, one for each day of the lunar year.

It was in this city of Mecca that Mohammed was born about the year 570. His father died before his birth which made for a very disturbed and uncertain childhood. His father had not been wealthy although he belonged to the Koreish family which was quite rich. Shortly after his birth according to custom, his mother sent him into the desert to be nursed by a Bedouin mother. His own mother died when he was six and then he was given into the care of his grandfather who died two years later. His uncle took over after this and reared him to manhood. Much of his early life is traditional and it is difficult to establish facts. It is said that Mohammed had various jobs, tending sheep and buying and selling goods in Mecca. It is generally held that at 12 Mohammed was taken to Syria for a visit where he first came into contact with Christianity. He made many caravan journeys. They gave him ample opportunity to observe current religious practices. Those who observed him as a child say this was true:

He was known as an example of honesty and integrity. People never found in him a fault. They called him the Truthful, the Trustworthy. He did not live as an isolated person. On the contrary, he associated with the people steadily. He practiced trade, traveled and accompanied people from all walks of life, but he was never affected by their low desires or worldly ambitions. He lived in a pagan society, dominated by idol-worship, but he never subscribed to their ideals, nor did he join them in their faith. He lived in that world as a world by himself. He was respected by his enemies and admired by his friends and no prophet in the history received as much as Mohammed did of spontaneous obedience from his companions.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid. page 24.

<sup>5</sup> R. V. C. Bodley, *The Messenger*, page 11.

<sup>6</sup> I. M. J. Chirri, *Inquiries About Islam*, page 26.

At the age of 25, Mohammed entered the service of a wealthy widow, Khadija, who had much insight into the habits, beliefs and thoughts of surrounding nations. Later Khadija proposed to marry Mohammed and this he did, which gave him prestige and position in Mecca. With her wealth at his disposal, he was able to take life easy and had plenty of leisure time to think. His disposition was deeply religious. He had developed a distaste for the idolatry of the Bedouin and at the same time acquired a growing respect for Jewish and Christian monotheism. He seems to have been impressed by a monk on one of his journeys who denounced idolatry.

At first it was so strange, so different from what he had been brought up to believe. This was something alive, real, leading to a future.<sup>7</sup>

Mohammed spent much time meditating and retreated to the nearby hills and caves to be alone. In the year 610, he had an experience which changed his life. Mohammed was spending a night in a cave and was asleep when an angel appeared.

He came to me with a coverlet of brocade whereon was some writing and said, "read!" I said, "What shall I read?" He pressed me with tightly that I thought it was death; then he let me go and said; "Read!" ... He said "Read in the name of thy Lord, who created, who created man of blood coagulated. Read. The Lord is the most beneficial who taught by the pen, taught that which they knew not unto me." Mohammed was filled with fear but then heard a voice: "O Mohammed thou art the apostle of God and I am Gabriel."<sup>8</sup>

After the vision, Mohammed went home and doubted what he had seen. His wife went to her cousin, Waraka and he said it was of God. This impressed Mohammed greatly. That night, after another vision, he went to Waraka also and he added: "I swear by him whose hands, Waraka's life is, God has chosen thee to be the Prophet of his people. The great Nomos, the confidant of Allah, has come to thee. They will call thee liar, they will persecute thee, they will banish thee, they will fight against thee. Oh, that I could live to those days, I would fight for thee. Mohammed still doubted and thought it just a dream. So he went to Mt. Hira again and climbed to the top. Being convinced that he had made a fool of himself, he then saw Gabriel who said: "I am Gabriel and thou art Mohammed, the Messenger of Allah." Then Mohammed was in a trance. He could not move and he perhaps would have died, had not his wife sent a man to look for him. So Khadija had saved Islam.<sup>9</sup>

Mohammed's wife became one of his first converts. He worked cautiously at first and did no public preaching for three years. He knew where the dangers lay and sought to avoid them. During the first four years of his mission, he gathered no more than 40 converts.

But he was encouraged by Gabriel to continue. First he invited the people to gather outside Mecca. Many, came. He told them: I have been commanded by God to warn you, my kinsmen, that there is no benefit for you now and forever, unless you acknowledge that there is none worthy of worship but the one and only God.<sup>10</sup>

The reaction was poor but he continued and declared war on idolatry. His former friends made fun of him. The merchants heckled him and threatened his life because of the denunciation of the idols that attracted

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<sup>7</sup> R. V. C. Bodley, *ibid.*, page 32.

<sup>8</sup> I. M. J. Chirri, *ibid.*, page 15.

<sup>9</sup> R. V. C. Bodley, *ibid.*, pages, 59-61.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pages 70-71.

pilgrim trade. Others opposed him simply because he was not of the wealthy class. The threats became more intense so that Mohammed's followers no longer felt safe in Mecca. Meanwhile, Khadija had died. But Mohammed acquired two new wives within a year of her death. One was Jewish and one Christian so he must have heard Bible stories (He had many more wives in later years.) In 622, Mohammed felt it necessary to go to Medina, 220 miles to the north where many of his followers had found refuge. This flight, known as Hegira took place in 622 and marks year one of the Mohammed era. Moslem years are counted A.H. or after the Hegira.

Mohammed and his followers were received with open arms in Medina. The city had been torn by strife with two Arab and three Jewish tribes. The Jews had been waiting for the Messiah. When one of the prophets heard Mohammed speak, he was convinced that he was the prophet of whom the Jews had spoken. So they joined themselves to him, convinced that this man could put an end to their century long dissensions. This of course gave Mohammed a solid footing and a place to live. Had Medina not decided to adopt Islam and accept the holy outcasts from Mecca, the religion of Mohammed might have died in its cradle. As has been aptly said: "The flight to Medina changed not only the scene but the actor and the drama. Mohammed to this point was a religious leader who preached the unity of Allah and warned of the Day of Judgment. But now in Medina he became a legislator and a military leader.

The first evidence of the new Mohammed is evident in the second year after Mohammed and many new believers had arrived in Medina. There was a lack of water and so it was decided to raid the caravans from Mecca. This produced the armed conflict known as the Battle of Badr. Though greatly outnumbered, 1000 to 300, the followers of Mohammed won and acquired much rich booty. Mohammed looked on it as a miracle. He filled his fighters with a zeal and determination to win, assuring them that if they were killed in battle, they would enter paradise and so in effect would lose nothing. If they remained alive they would get earthly treasures. Battles continued and Mohammed established loyalty to Islam. In 630, Mohammed captured Mecca and destroyed the idols but kept the black stone. Ever since, Mecca has been the holy city to which millions of Muslims bow at the prayer hour.

Mohammed's intention no doubt was that Jews and Christians would accept his new religion. Their failure to do this and the battles that resulted changed his attitude. He became hostile toward Jews and Christians and spent his remaining years bringing them under his control. Many times Mohammed came close to losing his life and his army was almost wiped out but in the end Mohammed was always victorious. As a result of the fighting the followers of Mohammed became united and when Mohammed became sick and died in 632, the Muslims did not slowly disintegrate. Rather they continued with only minor internal problems. Under some very able military leaders, they extended their powers.

Much of their success was due to drought, stricken poverty of Arabia, also because of the great number of military leaders and their ability to fight in the desert, their continued appeal due to the nature of the appeal; it was simple, lucid and affirmative. It was more than a formal religion, it was an all-persuasive way of life, guiding thought and action to a degree without parallel in the Western world.<sup>11</sup>

By 636, Damascus and the Byzantine empire was defeated so that all of Syria and Palestine with the exception of Caesarea and Jerusalem were in Moslem hands. In 637, Jerusalem was also conquered. In 639 Egypt was conquered and this opened the way for conquest of all northern Africa. In 641, Babylon surrendered and by 644, most of the Persian Empire was under Islam control. Thus within 10 years after Mohammed's death, the empire had extended from the borders of India to Northern Africa and within a century included more territory than the Roman Empire at the zenith of its power. From Arabia there were simultaneous thrusts against Persia on the east and Syria on the West. In each direction the vigorous Moslem armies met foes who were all but exhausted from their struggle with each other since the Byzantine and Persian empires had long been in conflict.

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<sup>11</sup> Henry Luce, Ed. "The World of Islam" page 101.

Those who were subjected were given the privilege of keeping their old religion if they would pay certain taxes, were disarmed and deprived of certain civil liberties and privileges enjoyed by those who accepted Islam; others imposed other regulations—forced them to wear yellow sashes or other distinguishing marks; they were not allowed to ride horses or white asses; they could not enter certain areas or use public baths frequented by Moslems and often suffered economic prejudice.

Though the spread of Christianity in Apostolic time was one of the great marvels of history, the outreach of Islam in its first century was far greater. It took all of Arabia first, then the Bible lands from India to Egypt. Then it engulfed Northern Africa and finally Spain. Europe was all but conquered in this great expansion of the new virile faith that swept all before it in the first century of its expansion.<sup>12</sup>

The expansion into Europe was stopped by the Franks at the battle of Tours in 732. This preserved Christianity in Europe.

In the conquered lands, Islam had come to dominate the culture of all the peoples except for a few tribes by the year 1000. It also set a pattern in almost every sphere of life. From 1280 to 1480, it extended into Central Asia, Afghanistan and further parts of India. It spread across to the great populations on the islands of the East Indies. In 1453, Constantinople fell to the Turks and this checked the advance of Islam. Since 1400 Islam has spread throughout most of Africa. It began through the influence of slave traders and other representatives of commerce. In recent times the spread of the faith has not been so strongly carried on through missionary methods, but the Islamic religion and culture have been imposed upon such great masses of mankind and over so wide a portion of the globe that the natural increase of population adds millions each year to the followers of Islam. In recent times, there has been no official successor to Mohammed. An intensive nationalism has acted like an acid to eat away political unity and many of the religious sanctions. A flood of western influence has poured in to engulf the Islamic world and these countries stand now at the threshold of a dramatic new era.

## DOCTRINE

As an introduction to the second portion of the essay, I present a summary of Mohammed's credentials as outlined by one author.

1. He is part of both world and religious histories. His message was an important factor in changing the history of the world and no historian doubts his existence and his role in the world events.
2. He is the only prophet who witnessed with his eyes the growth of his religion until it was adopted by a whole nation during his lifetime.
3. He is the universal prophet who was sent, not to a particular nation, such as the Arabs or the Hebrews, but to all mankind.
4. His message clearly opposed all sorts of racial discrimination. Removal of all social barriers is an essential part of his message. White, black, red, and yellow are equal.
5. He founded and established, during his lifetime, a powerful state, based on high ideals.
6. He defeated all his opponents and no party was able to defeat him.
7. He is the prophet who declared the religious freedom when he was powerful enough to deprive many people of such a freedom.
8. He is the only prophet who declared himself as the final prophet whose death concludes the long history of prophethood.
9. He is the only prophet who introduced to the world a book that does not contain any human word.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> J. Wilson, *Introduction: Islam*, page 17.

<sup>13</sup> I. M. J. Chirri, *ibid.*, page 105.

The doctrine of Mohammed developed gradually. There are various aspects of Mohammed's teaching which are taken from both Judaism and Christianity. The majority of his teachings are his own. He claimed biblical support for his authority by pointing to Deuteronomy 18:18-19. "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass that whosoever will not hearken unto my word which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him." Mohammed interpreted the passage this way:

1. The promised prophets will be from the brethren of the Israelites. The Israelites are related only to the Arabs: Israelites are the descendants of Isaac and the Arabs are the descendants of Ishmael, the brother of Isaac.
2. The prophet will be like Moses. No prophet after Moses was sent with new rules and dispensations. Jesus followed the dispensations of Moses and did not introduce new religious laws.
3. The prophet will not speak of his own, but the very words of God will be put in his mouth. Only the Koran are the very direct words of God, Mohammed was only God's mouthpiece. The Bible at best is a dialogue between God and man.<sup>14</sup>

In studying Mohammed's doctrine we look first at the Koran. Every word of this sacred book of Islam passed through the lips of Mohammed over a 22 year period. It has 114 chapters which were received at various times while Mohammed was in kind of a trance. Portions were originally written on bleached camel bones, stones, palm leaves and other material. Some was remembered and recited by his closest friends. According to Mohammed the angel Gabriel dictated the Koran to him and he merely repeated it word by word. A most mechanical type of inspiration to be sure.

Some chapters are short and fiery warnings of doom, proclaiming a day of judgment and demanding the worship of one. Others discuss the Biblical prophets and the lessons of their lives, still others lay down detailed regulations concerning the family, property and justice. All are phrased in a hypnotic Arabic that helped convince the Koran's original hearers—the Arab tribesmen who prided themselves on eloquence, as much as courage—that this was no human speech but the Word of God itself.<sup>15</sup>

The Koran follows no logical sequence. After Mohammed's death the various 16 parts were gathered and the Koran was completed but not without dissension.<sup>16</sup> The chapters are called *sura* and in most Allah is the speaker. The first *sura* is in the form of a prayer and is comparable to one of the most beautiful psalms. Much of the Koran is a sort of rhymed cadence that resembles poetry. With its excellent Arabic, it has no doubt influenced the Arab language more than the King James Version of the Bible has influenced English. It is considered the one great miracle of Mohammed and he challenged his adversaries to produce anything like it. To the Western reader, the translated text is jumbled and repetitious and much of it can't be understood at all. It contains many legendary traditions paralleling those of the Bible and pagan Arabs. There are verses which contradict or cancel each other and verse 100 of the second *sura* says: "Whatever verse we abrogate or cause to be forgotten, we bring a better or its like." Even to the Moslem, much is unintelligible except through a commentary. It is held in high esteem by millions of Moslems. Next to the Bible it is the most esteemed and most powerful religious book in the world.

Now to outline some of the basic doctrines of Islam.

1. **ALLAH** This is the name by which they know God. Mohammed established the truth that God is one. He

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., page 141 ff.

<sup>15</sup> D. Stewart, *Early Islam*, page 11.

<sup>16</sup> The dissensions which arose after Mohammed's death are evident today with 150 sects in Islam, Mohammed predicted 73.

rejected completely any idea of a Trinity. For him, Allah was a benevolent deity. Every *sura* in the Koran mentions this as it begins: "In the name of Allah, the merciful, the compassionate." Most do not think of God as a God of love. 'His power and sovereign transcendence over all creation are so emphasized in Islam that they don't think of calling him a God of love. The holiness and righteousness of God are not emphasized as the basis of all his acts as they are in the Old Testament. God is just and therefore does not impose on any soul to do what is beyond its ability. He does not hold a person responsible for the sins of his father or fore-father because that is not under his control. Allah is known as the "Lord of the Worlds" or "Ruler of the Universe" and as the "Lord of the Day of Judgment." The power and immutability of Allah make him the author of all things, whether they seem to us good or bad and this doctrine is often expressed in the Koran. There is a list of 99 beautiful names for Allah that are known to the Moslems. It is said that the camel knows the 100<sup>th</sup> name and this is what gives him so much dignity. The common Islam rosary has 99 beads or 3 sets of 33, each one representing one of the beautiful names Allah. There is no commandment against irreverent use of the name of God and the name Allah is extremely common in all kinds of combinations and under many circumstances. However, there are a total of 38 commandments. Some of them are:

1. To deny any of the prophets who are recognized by the Koran such as Jesus, Moses, Abraham, and Noah. The denial of the revelation of any of the recognized prophets is a denial of Islam.
2. To kill a human being premeditatively.
3. To cheat in measuring or weighing in selling or purchasing.
4. To scandalize people, especially women.
5. To spy on others for no purpose of protecting your nation or yourself.
6. To eat pork or any swine products.
7. To eat meat of an animal that dies by itself or the meat of an animal on which the name of other than God is invoked when it is slain.
8. To neglect the duty of pilgrimage to Mecca which has to be done once in a lifetime by every person who is physically and financially able to make it.<sup>17</sup>

2. **ANGELS** A hierarchy of angels who are reasoning beings and were created of light are part of Islam doctrine. The leading example of angels is Gabriel, who revealed the Koran to Mohammed. Israfil is the angel who will sound the trumpet on the day of Judgment and Azrafil is the angel of death. Each person has two recording angels to write down his good and evil deeds. And then there are two fearsome angels named Munkar and Xakir who are to examine everyone in the grave after death. It is believed that Satan was put out of the Garden of Eden when Allah commanded him to do obeisance to Adam and he failed to comply. The Moslem also believes in spirits called *jinu* which were created from fire. They may be beneficial, but are fully evil and may cause all sorts of trouble. In the English version of Arabian Nights and other translated works, they are known as *genii*.

3. **PROPHETS** Islam has 124,000 prophets who have supposedly been sent to mankind but no attempt has been made to give the names of all. There are 6 eminent: 1. Adam, the chosen of Allah; 2. Noah, the preacher of Allah; 3. Abraham, the friend of Allah; 4. Moses, the speaker of Allah; 5. Jesus the word of Allah; and 6. Mohammed, the apostle of Allah. The attention is centered on Mohammed who is called "Seal of the Prophets." "Glory of the Ages," "Peace of the World" and 200 other titles and names. Tradition has glorified him so now he appears as one who existed before the world. It is said that he worked all kinds of miracles, was of ideal character and the sinless one (in spite of the fact that in the Koran he prays for the forgiveness of sins.)

4. **DAY OF JUDGMENT** Judgment was a very prominent element in Mohammed's early preaching and it remained a central doctrine to the last. Since Mohammed's death, it has been developed to a greater extent. It is described in this way: There will be a balance in which the evil deeds of each

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<sup>17</sup> I. M. J. Chirri, *ibid.*, Pages 158-165.

will be weighed against those of good and merit. The soul will cross a bridge of enormous length as thin as a hair and so sharp as a sword. Those who are evil will topple off into the fires of hell. Those who are saved will pass across as swiftly as light to the paradise containing the garden of delight. They will be given spiritual as well as physical life on the Day of Judgment.

5. **HELL** The Koran 88:4-7 describes hell in this way: "There the damned shall be scorched by burning fire, made to drink from a boiling fountain. No food shall they have save the fruit of a bitter thorn which doth not nourish or appease their hunger." This passage serves as a basis for elaborate and fantastic schemes of torment. They arranged hell in seven divisions and consigned different evil doers into different divisions, varying in degree of torture.

6. **PARADISE** The Koran 76:12-12 describes paradise: "Those who are there- naught shall know of (hot) sun or bitter cold. Its shades shall close upon them and low shall its fruits hang down. Vessels of silver are brought round for them and goblets like flagons, flagons made of silver whose measure they themselves shall mete. There they are given to drink of a cup whereof the mixture is of ginger from the fount called Salsbil. There go around them boys of everlasting youth whom when thou seest, thou wouldst take for scattered pearls and when thou lookest at this, thou wilt see bliss and high estate. Their raiment will be fine green silk and gold bracelets; they will be adorned and their Lord will give them drink of a pure beverage."

7. **PREDESTINATION** The Moslem believes that everything that happens either good or bad is foreordained by the unchangeable decrees of Allah. They make Allah the author of evil. Some deny the free-will of man entirely. A fatalistic philosophy is all too evident with the worse calamities accepted with no more than a stoic shrug of the shoulders. This has much to do with the static conditions and lack of progress in Moslem lands. In recent times the West has exerted a strong influence on them with radio, oil development, motor cars and air transportation. Were a Moslem to pray to Allah: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" he would be guilty of blasphemy.

8. **TRADITIONS** Traditions play a prominent part in Islam. They are second only to the Koran as a source of Islamic law and life. Supposedly they are a record of what Mohammed did, what he allowed and enjoyed; in other words, an interpretation of the Koran. Perfect tradition according to the Moslem must have a chain of names with Mohammed being the first and the subject must be mentioned by Mohammed and regularly since then. Many traditions were invented to support customs or beliefs. Finally, 1000 were codified but many contradict each other.

9. **JESUS** They believe that he was miraculously born of the Virgin Mary; He spoke while still a babe in the cradle, performed many miracles in his youth; healed the sick and raised the dead when he reached manhood. He was specially commissioned to confirm the Law and reveal the Gospel. They believe that He was saved from crucifixion and taken to heaven and that He is now in one of the inferior stages of celestial bliss; that He will come again at the last day, slay anti-Christ, kill all the swine, break the cross and remove the poll-tax infidels. He will reign as a just King for 45 years, marry, leave children, then die and be buried near Mohammed at Medina. The place of his future grave is already marked out between the graves of two descendants of Mohammed. Jesus also is said to have prophesied the coming of Mohammed. But Jesus is not considered to be God.

10. **SIN** Sin is described as a conscious act of a responsible being against known law. Sins are sins only when declared so by God or by Allah. Something may be contrary to the conscience but not necessarily sin. One is led to assume that Allah himself does not appear bound by any standard of justice. The lax and immoral interpretation by Moslem theologians of the 3, 6, 7, 8, and 9 commandments, as we know them, are very evident. But this is according to the teaching of the Koran. Islam does not burden mankind with original sin. It says that every human being is born pure and free of any sin and will stay so until he (she) commits a sin at the age of adulthood.

11. **MARRIAGE** Marriage is a kind of slavery, for the wife becomes the slave of her husband and it is her duty

absolutely to obey him in everything he requires of her except what is contrary to the laws of Islam. Wife-beating is allowed by the Koran and the method and limitations are explained by the laws of religion. Islamic law allows a man four wives and any number of concubines he is able to support.

12. **DEATH** When a person dies, his body is washed, the hands arranged and the corpse enshrouded. Before the head is covered, the relatives say farewell. After the graveside prayers, a catechism is often whispered to the dead: "Who is thy God? Allah. What is thy religion? Islam. Who is its prophet? Mohammed." This prepares him for interrogation by the angels Munkar and Xakir. Should he err, he may be tormented until the Last Judgment. The body is often burned coffinless so it may sit up for the angels. Mourning for notables may last 100 days.

## PRACTICE

In addition to believing the many and varied doctrines outlined in the traditions and Koran, the Islam religion has "five pillars" which are religious duties required of all members. Thus they practice their religion.

1. **A recitation of the Word of Witness** THERE IS NO GOD BUT ALLAH AND MOHAMMED IS THE APOSTLE OF ALLAH. These words are the rallying cry of the faithful. This short slogan is shouted in the call to prayer at certain periods from before until after sunset. It echoes from the mosque and minaret, armies have inscribed it upon their banners, kings use it as a superscription on their coins, it forms an architectural decoration in stone or flashing colored tiles for great buildings today. It is a wall verse in the most humble Moslem homes. It is a creed and establishes the basis of all theology. A person may become a Moslem by the recitation of the creed. It is taught to infants as their first speech, it is recited over and over in the call to prayer, morning, noon or night and on countless other occasions. It is the last word of the dying and is whispered in their ears after the power of speech is gone. This creed has been one of the chief factors in the rapid spread and strength of Islam.

2. **Saying the stated prayer** The Islam does not pray as we are accustomed to praying, but his prayer is a mere mechanical act, vain repetition in an unknown tongue. There are five stated prayers which are required daily of every Moslem. They might better be designated as periods of worship. Worship consists of ejaculations of praise and adoration to Allah. They are preceded by ceremonial ablutions, washing of face, hands, feet with water or sand if no water is available. The worshippers must always face in the direction of Mecca. The prayers may be said anyplace, but have added merit if they are said in a mosque and especially at the Friday service. The five times for prayer are: 1. at dawn, before sunrise; 2. at noon, just after the sun has passed the zenith; 3. afternoon, about mid-afternoon; 4. at sunset; 5. after dark. Today it is the exception rather than the rule to see this fulfilled.

3. **Observing the month of fasting, known as Ramadan** According to the Koran, Mohammed received his first revelations during Ramadan, the ninth month of the Moslem year. Tradition says this occurred on the 27<sup>th</sup> of the month and that it is a time when the gates of Paradise are opened and the gates of hell are shut and the devil is in chains. So Mohammed proclaimed the whole month a time of fasting which was a discipline practiced by Jews and Christians. Observing the month of fasting is considered meritorious at all times. Fasting is required during the day and eating permitted at night. It requires abstinence from drinking water or any other liquid and from smoking. Fasting begins at dawn as soon as a white thread may be told from a black thread held at arm's length and lasts until dark when the one is not distinguished. There is little sleep at night but most sleep during the daytime. It has become a month of night parties and social gatherings. Certainly it is difficult for those who must work all day, prostrations are numerous.

4. **Giving of Legal Alms.** The giving of alms to the poor was practiced and encouraged by the prophet Mohammed and continues as a work of merit. In many cases the voluntary alms create beggars. The legal alms as prescribed by the Islamic code consists of a certain portion of the income, the amount of which is determined by a rather complicated system. For example 1/10 of grain and fruit is required, if the land depends upon rain for moisture; if it is irrigated, 1/20 is required. From all money received 1/40 is prescribed. In the early days, the alms

were collected almost like taxes but in modern times, for the most part, the giving of what is required by religious laws is left to the individual.

**5. Pilgrimages** All pious Moslems who are physically fit and can afford it are requested to go to Mecca. During the year, 60-90 thousand go in large numbers from the East Indies, India, Africa and China. Many feel that this is simply a pagan carryover. But it is a useful institution that brings Moslems of all lands together and sends them back with glowing accounts of what they have seen and done. Only Moslems are allowed to enter the sacred places of Islam. Today much of that which was common practice long ago has been forgotten. In many regions, the few educated perform the daily prayers or keep the required month of fasting.

## **ISLAM IN THE UNITED STATES**

Nothing more was available on this subject besides an article prepared by P. F. Bente, Jr. entitled: "Islam in the United States printed in the reports of the Conference of Muslim Mission workers by the Board for World Missions, the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod. I quote freely from this article to show the influence Islam claims to have on the United States.

There are about 100 thousand Moslems in the United States with 25 thousand in the Washington, D. C. area, accounting for less than 1/10 of one per cent of the population—quite a contrast to other parts of the globe. There are mosques in nine cities in the United States; namely, Washington, D.C., New York, Detroit, Toledo, Chicago, Cedar Rapids, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and one other city not identified. There are two in Canada at Montreal and Edmonton. Islam does very little active mission work but merely provides information centers around the world. The Islamic Center in Washington, D.C. is such a center of Islam learning in the United States.

It is stated that Islam and the Moslem people were the torch-bearers of light and learning and the forerunners of our present democratic society on which Islam radiates such bright rays of truth and hope that are incentives to implement the highest principles of ideology ever evolved to mankind. They claim that their understanding of God has led other religions toward unity. The Islamic conception of social security and the necessity of taking unified efforts to fight aggression and all forms of evil wherever they are found, makes Islam the pioneer and forefather of the present United Nations Organizations preceding it by only 1330 years. The idea of implementing universal and eternal peace through creation of mutual understanding between different individuals and nations regardless of creed, color, or race was deeply rooted in the teachings of Mohammed. In other words all benefit from Islam and they should come and join the Muslims and demonstrate their appreciation. Every lover of democracy and freedom is urged to remember that Mohammed was the first to institute and sanctify democracy and freedom.. Every spiritually minded man should remember that Mohammed's mission brought about religious toleration. Every woman who nowadays takes her human freedom for granted and enjoys her human rights should remember Mohammed as the first to institute, sanctify and make effective such dignity and rights. Every scientist and physician who enjoys work in his laboratory or elsewhere should remember Mohammed with appreciation and gratitude for he was the first to liberate the human mind from captivity, imposed upon it for centuries. Moslems also believe that the exercise gained by praying five times a day would-prevent heart attacks. They also believe that the eating of pork is wrong and only more recently appreciated because pork is known to be the cause of serious incurable diseases, even though well cooked and served under sanitary conditions. There are other groups which are often associated with Islam in the United States such as the Black Muslims, Black Nationalists and Blood Brothers. They are not a part of Islam because they have no compulsion of religion, no supremacy of race or color, no prophet after Mohammed and recognition of human dignity. They have an appeal especially to the Negro population.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, I have taken some comments from an article in “Christianity Today.”<sup>18</sup> Islam is more than a Christian heresy. It denies the doctrine of the Trinity, the deity and divine sonship of Christ, the fact and significance of His atoning death, the finality of the Christian revelation and the reliability of the Bible. The teachings of Islam are a defiance of Christ and one can hear St. John saying: I John 2:22: “He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son.”

In meeting the Moslem, we meet opposition which is quite different from that encountered anywhere else. Some of them affirm their faith in the Old Testament prophets and even that the Old Testament Scriptures are originally revealed but they assert that they have been corrupted. Some will accept Jesus as Messiah, as one of the greater prophets and as Virgin-born, but who deny His deity; those who believe that the Jews meant indeed to crucify Him, but assert that God miraculously intervened to save Him from a felon’s death.

It is true that Islams worship Allah as the creator God. But it is obvious that the one God is very differently conceived and described in the two religions. The Christians will recall the words of St. Paul: “Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.” Through the teachings of Mohammed, we find he accepts some truths of Christianity but just as emphatically denies others. He misinterpreted passages of the Old Testament and the author says that if Mohammed had had the chance to read the New Testament, the course of history might have been very different.

The beliefs of Islam are quite contrary to the Scripture. To those who believe in Islam, one can only present the truth of the Scripture and pray for a divine work of grace whereby God himself will shine in Moslem hearts, “to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus.”

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<sup>18</sup> I. N. D. Anderson, “The Christian Message to Islam” pages 8-10.

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