

Islām

The F.A.Q's

Answering the Issues

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Introduction

Islām is...

- the voluntary submission of one's will to the Will of God.
- a complete code covering every aspect of life.
- derived from a word which means 'peace'.
- the Faith of over a fifth of the world's population from all races.
- the final revealed guidance from the Creator of mankind.
- based upon five pillars or essential duties:
 - 1) The declaration of Faith that "there is no god but Allāh and Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh." This is the *Shahādah*.
 - 2) Establishing *Ṣalāh*, the five daily prayers.
 - 3) Giving *Zakāh*, 2.5% of one's annual savings to the poor.
 - 4) Fasting in the days of the month of Ramaḍān, called *Ṣawm*.
 - 5) Pilgrimage to Makkah, *Ḥajj*, at the correct time by those who can afford the journey physically and financially once in a lifetime.

Muslims believe...

- that there is only one God, Allāh, who has no son or partner.
- that Muḥammad ﷺ is the final messenger and prophet of Allāh.
- in all of the past messengers and prophets sent by God, including Adam, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, and Jesus, peace be upon them all, all calling to the worship of Allāh alone.
- that the Qur'ān is Allāh's final, perfectly preserved, revealed message of guidance to mankind.
- that books of guidance were revealed to Prophets Moses, David, and Jesus, namely: the *Tawrah*, the *Zabūr*, and the *Injil*, but the original message they contained was distorted over time by men.
- in the angels, who carry out Allāh's order and never disobey Him.
- in the Day of Judgement when mankind will be assembled before their Lord to account for their worldly lives.
- that everything that befalls one, whether good or bad, does so with the knowledge and permission of Allāh.

Jihād

The word Jihād is one which often provokes a strong reaction in the minds of non-Muslims because it has been so misrepresented and misunderstood. The word does not mean ‘holy war’, as war is not considered holy in Islām but sometimes a necessary measure. War was conceded to by God after the believers had suffered a great deal of persecution, torture, and death, and all other options for putting an end to oppression by unjust regimes had been exhausted. The Qur’ān says:

“Permission (to fight) is given to those upon whom war is made because they have been oppressed, and most surely is Allāh well able to assist them;

Those who have been expelled from their homes without any justification, except that they say, ‘Our Lord is Allāh.’ And had it not been for Allāh’s repelling some men by means of others, monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, wherein the name of Allāh is mentioned much, would assuredly have been pulled down; and surely Allāh will help him who helps His cause. Lo! Allāh is Strong, Mighty.” (22:39-40)

Also demonstrating that war is not glorified in Islām but regarded as a regrettable necessity, the Prophet of Allāh ﷺ is reported to have said, “Do not wish to meet the enemy (in battle); ask Allāh for (His) clemency. But if you do meet them, be patient and steadfast...” (*al-Bukhāri, Muslim*).

Jihād in actual fact means “to struggle”, “to exert oneself”, “to strive”. It is a noble ideal that everyone who has ever had to work hard and strive in the face of obstacles and hardships to achieve something valuable can relate to. In Islām, it is the struggle that one makes for the highest of all objectives: attaining the pleasure of God, thus *Jihād fī sabilillāh*, or

striving in the way of Allāh. The Prophet ﷺ has said, “The Mujāhid is he who struggles with himself for the obedience of God” (Aḥmad, Ibn Hibbān). So Jihād relates first and foremost to the struggle one has to make continually against base desires and lower instincts and the effort needed to be able to give preference to reason and goodness. The struggle continues from this level, which is the most intimate and personal, and therefore the most on-going and difficult level, through to every level, whether social, economical, political, or global, in order to uphold the truth and justice and resist oppression and evil of every type. And when injustice and oppression takes place on a large scale unchecked, this also entails warfare as a necessity.

“And fight in the way of Allāh with those who fight with you, but do not begin hostilities. Lo! Allāh loves not aggressors.

And slay them (those who have attacked and persecuted you) wherever you catch them, and turn them out from where they have turned you out, for tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter. But do not fight them at the Sacred Mosque unless they (first) fight you there; but if they fight you, slay them. Such is the reward of those who suppress faith.

But if they cease, then lo! Allāh is Forgiving, Merciful. And fight them until persecution is no more, and there prevail justice and faith in Allāh; but if they cease, then let there be no hostility except to those who practise oppression.” (2:190-193)

The verses above make it very clear that war is only to be waged against those who are aggressors – it may not be initiated. Believers are warned that if they begin hostilities then they will become just as bad as the enemy, for “Allāh loves not aggressors”. And twice are Muslims told that if the enemy ceases and puts down its arms then, too, are they forbidden to continue war, for as “Allāh is Forgiving, Merciful”, so must Believers also show forgiveness and mercy, and they must now “let there be no hostility except to those who (still) practice oppression”.

Every nation and community has the concept of war in the interests of preserving its own security if it is threatened either directly or indirectly, and Islām has the same right. The Qur'ān and Ḥadīth (recorded traditions of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ), however, are explicit about not only *when* war is permissible but also *how* it is to be conducted, pre-dating the Geneva Conventions on war, prisoners-of-war and human rights by about 1300 hundred years.

The Prophet ﷺ used to instruct his commanding chiefs when sending them off for battle saying: “Go forth in the name of Allāh and with the help of Allāh and upon the creed of the Messenger of Allāh. Do not kill any elderly person, or any child, or anyone small, or any woman, or those in convents. Do not be treacherous. Do not mutilate. Do not embezzle wealth. Make peace and do good; truly, Allāh loves those who do good.” (*Sunan al-Bayhaqī al-Kubrā*)

After the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ, his successors would give similar instructions. Abū Bakr saw off the army to Syria with the words: “Do not betray or be treacherous or vindictive. Do not mutilate. Do not kill the children, the aged or women. Do not cut or burn palm trees or fruitful trees. Do not slay a sheep, a cow or camel except for your food. And you will come across people who have confined themselves to worship in monasteries, leave them alone to what they have devoted themselves for.” (ibid.)

And once the battle was over and done with, Islām displayed the most humane treatment of prisoners-of-war ever witnessed yet in history. Unprecedented by previous legal systems, and long before the Geneva Convention, Islām set the rule that the captive is sheltered by his captivity and the wounded by his injury. They were to be treated with kindness and good-will. The Qur'ān spoke of how the believers were to behave:

*“They give food out of love for Him to the needy, the orphan,
and the captive,*

*(Saying): We only feed you for the sake of Allāh. We wish for neither
reward from you, nor thanks.” (76:8-9)*

Abū `Azīz ibn `Umayr was among those taken captive at the Battle of Badr by the Muslims. He recounts his experience: “I was among the prisoners on the day of Badr, and the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ had said, ‘Accept my counsel to treat the captives well.’ I was made over to a group of the Anṣār. Now, whenever they would come to eat their lunch or supper, they would eat dates themselves and give me bread because of the counsel of the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ to them” (aṭ-Ṭabarāni in aṣ-Ṣaghīr and al-Kabīr). Bread was considered a greater delicacy in the desert than dates.

Thumāmah ibn Uthāl was another non-Muslim prisoner. He was kept tied to a pillar in the Prophet’s mosque for a few days, before the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ set him free without a ransom. He was so impressed by the treatment he had received and by the devoted worship he had seen in the Mosque while held captive there that as soon as he was freed, he went away, bathed, and came back to the Prophet ﷺ to declare to him his faith in him. He then said, “Muḥammad, by Allāh, there was no face in the world that I had hated more than your face, but it has become the most beloved of faces to me now. By Allāh, there was no religion in the world that I had hated more than your religion, but it has become the most beloved of religions to me now. By Allāh, there was no town in the world that I had hated more than your town, but it has become the most beloved of towns to me now.” (*al-Bukhārī, Muslim*)

This is the noble act that Jihād represents in Islām, even when used in the military sense.

Islām: Spread By The Sword?

Islām never fought nations but fought only despotic authorities. Islāmic war was one of liberation and not of compulsion. Islām granted liberated people the freedom to decide their religion. Indeed, the Qur’ān was the first to denounce the whole notion of forced religion, insisting that when given the opportunity to be seen in its own light, truth would always be its own strongest selling point. Allāh says:

“There is no compulsion in religion – truth stands distinct from error...” (2:256)

It was to ensure true freedom, so that people could be in a real position to appreciate the truth of Islām for themselves, that Muslims fought those who would suppress the greatest right of every human being: having access to the truth from their Lord. But as that truth has to be recognised by the individual and accepted willingly in order to become his or her faith, no true faith could condone the use of force to ‘convert’ people against their will. In Islāmic law, anyone who complained being forced to become Muslim would be allowed to safely remain on their former religion as their conversion would be deemed invalid. So, Islām itself makes the whole concept of spreading by the sword impossible!

Noted Historian, De Lacy O’Leary, has this to say about Islām being spread by the sword: “History makes it clear, however, that the legend of fanatical Muslims sweeping through the world and forcing Islām at the point of the sword upon conquered races is one of the most fantastically absurd myths that historians have ever repeated.” (*Islām At The Crossroads*, London, 1923)

What makes this myth all the more amazing is that it has been propounded by those whose own religious history is so stained by blood. “Muslims point to the long centuries during which in India,

Spain, and the Near East, Christians, Jews, and Hindus lived quietly and in freedom under Muslim rule. Even under the worst caliphs, Christians and Jews held positions of influence and in general retained their religious freedom. The Christians, not Muslims, we are reminded, expelled the Jews in the fifteenth century from Spain where they had lived in freedom while the Muslims were in power. To press this example: Spain and Anatolia changed hands at about the same time – Christians expelled the Moors from Spain while Muslims conquered what is now Turkey. Every Muslim was driven from Spain, or put to the sword, or forced to convert, whereas the seat of the Eastern Orthodox Church remains in Istanbul to this day. Indeed, if comparisons are the issue, Muslims consider Christianity's record to be the darker of the two. Who was it, they ask, who preached the Crusades in the name of the Prince of Peace [Jesus]? Who instituted the inquisition, invented the rack and the stake as instruments of religion, and plunged Europe into its devastating wars of religion?" (Huston Smith, *The Religions of Man*, 1983)

Eight hundred years of Islāmic rule in Spain later, Christians and Jews still flourished when Spain changed hands. A thousand years of Muslim rule in India later, and India's population is still eighty percent non-Muslim. There are some 14 million Coptic Christian Arabs in the world today, that is, Christians since countless generations. If it had been the sword that was responsible for taking Islām from Indonesia to Senegal, and from Mozambique to the northern-most reaches of Russia, it would hardly have spared millions of Christian Arabs on its own soil! And speaking of Indonesia, the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, no Muslim army was ever dispatched there in history, or to Malaysia, or to the East Coast of Africa, the continent with the largest percentage of Muslims in the world.

It is interesting to mention that when Muslims fought the Romans in Egypt, the Egyptian Copts sided with and helped Muslims against the

Romans who were Christians like them. This was because Christian Egypt was suffering religious oppression by the Christian Romans to compel them to adopt their religious beliefs. One of the earliest actions of the Muslims in Egypt was the assurance of religious freedom and the reinstatement of Benjamin as Bishop of Alexandria after years of hiding from the Romans in the western desert.

But religious freedom was only one aspect of what Islām gave. Whether Arab or non-Arab, Muslim or non-Muslim, Islām built up what humanity aspires to be, a fellowship in equality and fraternity. The story is well known of the running contest held in Egypt and won by an Egyptian to the dismay of an Arab competitor who was the son of `Amr ibn al-`Āṣ, governor of Egypt. The Arab hit the boy saying, "How dare you outrun me, the son of nobility!" When news of this reached `Umar, the caliph, he summoned the governor, his son, and the Egyptian lad all the way to Madinah, and ordered the Egyptian to retaliate by hitting `Amr's son, saying: "Hit him back. Hit the son of nobility." Addressing `Amr, he uttered these famous words: "O `Amr, since when did you make slaves out of a people whose mothers had given birth to them free?"

Let's move on from history to the present times. According to global religion growth rates based on the *World Almanac and Book of Facts, 1935*, and the *Readers' Digest Almanac and Yearbook 1983*, Islām has increased in the world over this period by an enormous 235%, compared to an increase of only 47% for Christianity, making it the fastest-growing religion in the world. And this is by no means only in the 'Third World' countries: Hillary Clinton was quoted by the *Los Angeles Times* on May 31, 1996, as saying, "Islām is the fastest-growing religion in America, a guide and pillar of stability for many of our people." Nor was this state of affairs put to an end by the atrocities of September 11, 2001. The *New York Times* ran an article in October 22, 2001, under the headline, "Islām Attracts Converts by the Thousands,

Drawn Before and After Attacks.” In fact, according to the Council for American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), some 34,000 Americans converted to Islām following the events of September 11, the highest rate reached in the U.S. since Islām’s arrival there! (*Al-Ayyam*, London, November 12, 2001)

Now we have to ask ourselves: which sword is it that continues to bring so many people into the fold of Islām globally? Who is forcing anyone to become Muslim in the West? Muslims are not even engaged in active preaching in any noticeable degree! The simple fact is, as Islām continues to gain prominence particularly through the media machine, even if it’s mostly infamously, more and more people are pushed into wanting to find out about this religion that’s always in the headlines. And for more and more of these people, what begins as curiosity turns into conviction as the truth of Islām unfolds before their eyes. It’s this which leads to the rapid spread of the religion from its earliest days, and has continued unabated up till today, not some imaginary sword.

Terrorism

Terrorism is another emotive word used all-too-often with relation to Islām. Generally used to mean, “The unlawful use or threatened use of force or violence by a person or an organized group against people or property with the intention of intimidating or coercing societies or governments, often for ideological or political reasons” (*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, Fourth Edition). Its definition can be quite conveniently made to fit any group of people who fall from favour. Margaret Thatcher, for example, famously called Nelson Mandela a terrorist, yet today he is respected as a statesman who fought an honourable battle against the evil of apartheid. At the same time, Britain, the USA, and Israel are considered the greatest examples of democratic states, yet so much of their history (and,

indeed, present) are made up of “the unlawful use of force” against other people for their own “ideological or political reasons”. So the difference between a freedom-fighter and a terrorist often depends on which side of the fence you care to stand at.

What this means is before we begin to link any group of people with terrorism, we need to look at who is doing the defining for us, as well as those who are being defined as terrorists.

Does the religion of Islām preach or even condone terrorism? A look at the main sources of Islām shows that it does not. Under the section entitled ‘Jihād’ and ‘Islām: Spread by the Sword?’ references have already been made to the Qur’ān and Ḥadīth as well as Islāmic history reflecting this. But what about the actions of many Muslims today, do they not fall under the definition of terrorism? Nelson Mandela once said that the nature of the resistance is determined by the oppressors. Clearly, there are actions which are allegedly carried out by people claiming to be working in the name of Islām which Islām itself condemns. But there are other actions carried out by people in what was once their own homeland against usurpers, and International law accepts that people living under illegal military occupation are entitled to fight against the occupiers with whatever means they have at their disposal. How can it be fair that they should be classed terrorists for doing just that, only because they happen to be the underdogs, and the occupiers are friends of the powers that be?

Coming back to Islām, this verse should settle the question of Islām and terrorism:

“And fight in the way of Allāh with those who fight with you, but do not begin hostilities. Lo! Allāh loves not aggressors.” (2:190)

Polygyny

Polygyny, or the right for a man to have more than one wife at a time, is an issue that many people hold against Islām, as if it was Islām that had introduced this practice to the world. (The more commonly-used word, polygamy, means the practice of either spouse having more the one partner, something which neither Islām nor any of the main world religions condones.) In actual fact, the Qur'ān is the only religious book on the face of this earth which not only limited the number of wives a man may have at a time to only four, but also expressly states *"only one if you cannot do justice"* (4:3). None of the other religious scriptures, whether the Talmud, the Bible, the Vedas, the Ramayan, the Mahabharat, the Geeta or anything else places any restriction on the number of wives one may have at all or advocates monogyny (having only one wife at a time) anywhere. It was only in much later years that the clergy of some religions decided people should only have one wife, not the religions themselves.

The Old Testament of Christians and Jews tells us that Abraham had three wives, while Solomon had hundreds. Nowhere in either the Old or New Testaments did God make any remark on this practice, much less prohibit it.

Prof. John Esposito says, "Although it is found in many religious and cultural traditions, polygamy (or more precisely, polygyny) is most often identified with Islām in the minds of Westerners. In fact, the Qur'ān and Islāmic Law sought to control and regulate the number of spouses rather than give free license." (*Islām: The Staright Path*, Oxford University, 1988)

The Qur'ān's injunction on polygyny therefore is the most compassionate of all religions to women, stipulating that if the husband cannot maintain justice in the treatment of his wives he is to

have no more than one wife, and even when he can, not allowing anymore than four wives. And after imposing these restrictions on men, the verse ends with the words, *“that is more fit that you should not do injustice,”* (4:3) – that is, to women. The Qur’ān was the only religious work to speak for the woman centuries before she had her own voice in society. But would it not have been better to prohibit polygyny altogether?

Polygyny has been permitted with these strict regulations in Islām for certain unescapable reasons. It is a fact that the population of women in the world outnumbers that of men: in the USA alone there are some 7.8 million more women than men. It is also a fact that women generally outlive men all over the world. Whether it’s through warfare, the risks involved in long, strenuous journeys, or exposure to the elements and multiple hazards while earning a livelihood, there are, and have always been, more widows in the world than widowers. Without any concession for polygyny, hundreds of thousands of women in the world, many with young children, are denied their need for a husband, a breadwinner, and a companion to share the load.

Couple that with the fact that the very biological and psychological build-up of men and women is consistent with polygyny. While a woman has been designed to be able to conceive only once every ten months or so, a man can impregnate a woman every time he embraces her. And psychologically, while a man’s primary need is for respect and to be needed, a woman’s primary need is to be cherished and protected. Put all of these things together in a society which cannot accept polygyny and what you get is extra-marital affairs. As Annie Besant put it:

“You can find others stating that the religion (of Islām) is evil, because it sanctions a limited polygamy. But you do not hear as a rule... that monogamy with a blended mass of prostitution [is] a hypocrisy and

more degrading than a limited polygamy... it must be remembered that the law of Islām in relation to women was until lately, when parts of it have been imitated in England, the most just law, as far as women are concerned, to be found in the world... Those things are forgotten while people are hypnotized by the words monogamy and polygamy and do not look at what lies behind it in the West - the frightful degradation of women who are thrown into the streets when their first protectors, weary of them, no longer give them any assistance... I often think that woman is more free in Islām than in Christianity. Woman is more protected by Islām than by the faith which preaches monogamy." (Annie Besant, *The Life and Teachings of Muḥammad*, Madras 1932)

It is indeed sad that the West, in rejecting polygyny as degrading, has subjected countless women to either the humility of being mistresses who have no acknowledgement and no rights, or the deprivation of being without a companion and a lover.

The Prophet & Polygyny

When many people hear that the Prophet of Islām had a number of wives, they take offence to it. Most people choose to overlook the fact that many of the Biblical prophets also had more than one wife. They conclude without much thought that he must have been a sensuous man. However, a quick historical review of his marriages proves otherwise.

When he was twenty-five years old he married for the first time. His wife, Khadijah, a widow, was fifteen years his senior. She remained the only wife the Prophet had as long as she lived, which was the next twenty-five years. Only after her death did the Prophet marry other women. If it had been physical pleasure that the Prophet was after, he did not have to wait until he was over fifty to start marrying more wives. He lived in a society in which it was quite acceptable to have many

wives. Yet the Prophet remained devoted to his only wife, and one who was years older than him at that, for a quarter of a century. So why did he remarry?

Unprejudiced scholars have agreed regarding the Prophet's marriages, like John L. Esposito, that "as was customary for Arab chiefs, many were political marriages to cement alliances. Others were marriages to the widows of his companions who had fallen in combat and were in need of protection." (John L. Esposito, *Islām: The Straight Path*)

We conclude with the words of another Western scholar, this one an English lady:

"But do you mean to tell me that the man who in the full flush of youthful vigour, a young man of four and twenty (24), married a woman much his senior, and remained faithful to her for six and twenty years (26), [then] at fifty years of age when the passions are dying married for lust and sexual passion? Not thus are men's lives to be judged. And you look at the women whom he married, you will find that by every one of them an alliance was made for his people, or something was gained for his followers, or the woman was in sore need of protection." (Annie Besant, *The Life and Teachings of Mohammad*, Madras, 1932)

Allāh: An Arab God?

A misconception that many people have about Islām is that its deity, Allāh, is some 'god of the Arabs', very different to the universal God of other faiths. Allāh is not the name of the god of the Arabs or Muslims. Allāh is the same God, the One and Only, to whom all true divine traditions called. This can be seen from the simple fact that the word Allāh is made up of the components *al*, the definite article in Arabic meaning *the*, and *ilāh* which means *God* or a *greater being that is the*

object of worship. Allāh, then, is *the* God, in contrast to the false forms and images that people's minds have qualified for worship, the Creator of all things and their Maintainer, and so the only One who warrants their complete adoration and worship. The word Allāh is so exclusive to the One, True God that it has no plural, no gender, and no diminutive, unlike *god* with *gods*, *goddess* and *godling*. Allāh transcends all the limitations which are from the nature of created beings. Allāh – that is, *the* God – simply stands for the completeness of all that God is.

*“Say: He, Allāh, is One,
Allāh, the Eternally Besought (of all),
He begets not nor is He begotten,
And there is none comparable to Him.”
(112:1-4)*

It becomes clear from this that the idea propagated by some missionaries that Allāh is the name of a moon god and that Muḥammad destroyed all idols and instated Allāh, his family idol, in their place is a baseless fallacy. To begin with, this is not supported by a shred of evidence that can be taken seriously. Secondly, if this were the case, why would Muḥammad then come up with a religion that was vehemently opposed to all idols? And thirdly, the Qur’ān makes it very clear who Allāh is: there is nothing regional or ‘Arab’ about Him, as the translation of the above Chapter of the Qur’ān shows. Allāh speaks repeatedly of the Israelites and the prophets He sent to them, as well as other tribes and nations of the past. What interest would a ‘local god’ have with such diverse and far-flung people? And to really drive the nail into the coffin of this ridiculous contention, how could Allāh be the moon god when He Himself orders:

“And of His signs are the night and the day and the sun and the moon. Do not prostrate to the sun or the moon, but prostrate to

*Allāh Who created them, if it is indeed Him that you worship.”
(41:37)*

The Ka`bah, the Black Stone & Idol Worship

Some people, seeing that Muslims turn to the Ka`bah when they pray and go a number of times around it as part of the pilgrimage and kiss its corner stone, the Black Stone, conclude that Muslims worship the Ka`bah, and so ask, If Islām is against idol worship, why do Muslims worship the Ka`bah?

Muslims do *not* worship the Ka`bah. It is merely the Qiblah, or direction for prayers, appointed by Allāh so that believers the world over face the same focal point when worshipping Him. In fact, before the Ka`bah was assigned as the Qiblah, Muslims were facing another Qiblah: the ‘Furthest Mosque’ of Jerusalem. Allāh says:

“We see the turning of thy face (for guidance) to the heavens: now shall We turn thee to a Qiblah that shall please thee. Turn then thy face in the direction of the Sacred Mosque, and you (O Muslims), wherever ye are, turn your faces in towards it.” (2:144)

The Ka`bah was the first house built for worship of the One, True God. Abraham and his son, Ishmael, peace be upon them, constructed it under the direction of God. The Black Stone was brought from Heaven to serve as a corner stone. It was thus fixed in one corner. Muslims kiss it because the Prophet of Allāh ﷺ did so when he made pilgrimage out of reverence to a symbol appointed by Allāh. `Umar, one of the closest companions of the Prophet ﷺ, once kissed the Black Stone and then said, “I know well that you are but a stone and can neither benefit nor harm. Had it not been for seeing the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ kiss you, I would never have kissed you.” (*al-Bukhāri, Muslim*)

The act of fixing a stone to mark a place of worship is as old as history. In the Bible, we are told that Jacob, on whom be peace, had fixed a stone at a place where he saw a vision. He poured oil on it and called it 'Bethel' meaning 'house of God' (see Genesis 28:18). He did this again upon God's instruction (see Genesis 35:1, 14, 15). No-one should gather from this that Jacob was being instructed by God to worship the stone.

Circumambulating (or going round) the Ka`bah during the pilgrimage to Makkah symbolises the centrality of God to a Muslim's life. We know now that the whole of creation is in fact always in a state of circumambulation: whether at the micro level, with the electrons that go round the nucleus of an atom, or at the Mega level with the Moon orbiting the Earth, and the Earth and the other planets in turn orbiting the Sun. People also live their lives going around something or other – whatever it is that they have made the focus of their lives. A Muslim lives his or her life devoted to God, and this is what is physically expressed when he or she joins the whole of creation by also going into circumambulation and going around the point assigned by God for that purpose. The Ka`bah, by the way, is located physically at the very centre of the earth's spread of land. See it for yourself on any accurate globe!

The Qur`ān: Copied From The Bible?

Because many things in the Qur`ān seem to correlate to accounts in the Bible, some people assume that Muḥammad ﷺ simply copied from the Bible. A deeper look, however, reveals that this could not have been so.

Take for example the story of the flood that occurred in the days of prophet Noah, peace be upon him. This event is narrated in both the Bible and the Qur`ān. One important difference between the two

accounts is that whereas the Bible describes the flood as a worldwide flood (see Genesis ch.7), the Qur'ān mentions it as a local flood affecting the people of Noah. It says:

“We sent Noah (of old) unto his people, and he said: O my people! Serve Allāh. You have no other god save Him. Lo! I fear for you the retribution of an awful day..

But they rejected him, and We delivered him, and those with him, in the Ark: but We overwhelmed in the flood those who rejected Our signs. They were indeed a blind people!” (7:59,64)

Today it is acknowledged that no record exists of a worldwide flood occurring at the time specified by the Bible. The closest thing there is evidence of is something discovered by Sir Charles Leonard Wooley. In 1929 he discovered remains from a great flood which occurred around 4000 B.C. The discovery at a place called Ur made headline news in the US and Britain. But was this a worldwide flood? After describing the extent of the flood, author Werner Keller tells us: “Looking at the map we should call it a ‘local occurrence’... obviously not of sufficient magnitude for the Biblical Flood... A flood of the unimaginable extent described in the Bible still remains ‘archeologically not demonstrated’.” (Werner Keller, *The Bible as History*, 1980) How did the author of the Qur'ān avoid this mistake unless the author was God Himself?

Another example of the not-so-similar similarities between the Qur'ān and the Bible is the story of the Pharaoh. Both the Bible and the Qur'ān tell us of God's overthrowing Pharaoh and his army, but the Qur'ān goes on to make a startling point which the Bible has absolutely no record of: that God says to Pharaoh as he was drowning, *“This day will We preserve you in your body that you become a sign for those after you”* (10:92). Until the last couple of hundred years, it was completely unknown to the world that the ancient Egyptians mummified their

dead, and the whereabouts of the bodies of the Pharaohs was not discovered until the late Nineteenth century. The mummified body of Merneptah, son of Ramesses II and Pharaoh of the Exodus was found by Loret in 1898 at Thebes in the Kings' Valley (see *The Bible, the Qur'ān, and Science* by Dr. Maurice Bucaille). So the body of the Pharaoh of the Exodus was in fact rescued, as the Qur'ān had said. If the Qur'ān were merely a copy of the Bible, it could never have contained accurate information that the Bible, its 'source', had no knowledge of!

Homosexuality

Some actions are universally and historically considered to be morally wrong. These include paedophilia (sex with non-pubescent children) and incest. Until very recently, they also included homosexuality. Up until 1970 the British psychiatric establishment broadly classified homosexuality as a 'mental disorder'. In 1973 the Nomenclature Committee of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), the official reference book for diagnosing mental disorders in America and throughout much of the world, voted for the elimination of 'homosexuality' from its list of mental illnesses. Was this because of evidence showing that it isn't an illness? No, it was because of pressure from homosexual activists groups.

Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 prohibited local authorities from intentionally promoting homosexuality or publishing material with that intention, and from promoting the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality. This section was repealed in 2003. Again, this was due to the pressure created by homosexual lobbies. But, just because a certain group of people were able to make enough noise to influence medical and political decisions, does that change the nature of a thing? With the right

amount of pressure, can we expect to see the same kind of acceptance of paedophilia and incest in future? Islām's stance is what's wrong is always wrong, regardless of how much those who are involved in such a thing may wish it to gain acceptance.

All traditional societies in the world as well as religions have recognised homosexuality as against human nature. Judaism, Christianity, and Islām all have as part of their religious tradition the account of the Prophet Lot and his people who were the first people to engage in homosexuality, and that they were punished for their sinning and lewdness by God on Earth by utter destruction. While some religions may feel the need to modify their position on homosexuality, again under the pressure of lobby groups, Islām holds that to accept what God has declared as wrong and has punished people for is equivalent to telling God He's wrong and we're right.

If we bear in mind, however, that we are created by God, and whatever we do in this world, it is to God that we must inevitably return, and that He has given us a sense of right and wrong for a reason – that we perform the right and stay clear of the wrong, and that this life is only a test, and tests entail challenges, then homosexuality (like everything else which is wrong and a sin, albeit of appeal to some) can be recognised for what it is and guarded against. In Islām, sin itself is nowhere near as bad as accepting that which earns the wrath of God. Human beings have been created weak and so they will make mistakes, and God's mercy and forgiveness are precisely for those who sincerely repent and seek His forgiveness. But to try to legitimise something which God has forbidden (through Scripture and through our own conscience) is to set oneself up in defiance with the Almighty. That, one does not get away with.

God has created man for woman, and woman for man. Yet even then, a man and woman must first become lawful for each other through the

institution of marriage. For a man and woman to become intimate with each other without marriage would be a sin because they are not lawful for each other. For a man and woman too closely related to be able to marry to become sexually intimate would also be a sin for the same reason. Similarly, for two men or two women to become sexually intimate with each other would also be a sin because they are not – and can never be – lawful for each other. Since we have been created by God and our very bodies are lent, and not given, to us by Him, consenting adults still need God’s consent.

Hijāb

Hijāb literally means ‘to cover’ and is used generally to refer to the covering a Muslim woman adopts out of modesty when in public. However, the concept really applies to both men and women, albeit in the context of the differences that exist between the two. The verse that enjoins Hijāb on women is preceded by a verse that first advises men of their modesty:

“Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty: that will make for greater purity for them. And Allāh is well acquainted with all that they do.” (24:30)

After this, Allāh says:

“And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husband’s fathers, their sons...” (24:31)

The verse is then concluded with a general address to both men and

women:

"...And turn unto Allāh together, O believers, in order that you may succeed." (24:31)

So the Ḥijāb that Muslim women are commanded to observe is only one aspect of a wider context of purity of thought and action for men and women. But why does the woman have to cover up so much more than the man? And why is there so much more emphasis on the woman's Ḥijāb than the man's? The answer, simply put, is for the same reason that women's semi-naked bodies are used to sell everything from mobile phones to cars in the West while men's aren't, and for the same reason that in the 'gender-equality' of the West, the clothing of a woman, even in a professional context, is designed to reveal her body and shape while a man's isn't (ever been served by a male cashier wearing shorts at the bank?). That is, because male dominated societies have a tendency from time immemorial to exploit women and reduce them collectively to objects of lust and sexual gratification, as modern society demonstrates remarkably while it continues to insist on having granted men and women equal roles.

Islām refuses to allow such humiliating degradation of one half of society at the hands (or eyes) of the other, and demands that a woman is not so cheap or low as to be the sex-object of anyone who feels so inclined. Her dignity and honour are sacred and not up for abuse. Ḥijāb, therefore, has nothing to do with the subjugation of woman to man, but rather the liberation of woman from being a plaything for men. However, the reason why the West continually equates the Muslim woman's covering of modesty and dignity with subjugation and ignominy may lie in looking at the concept of the veil in the Christian context:

"Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. Every man

who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonours his head. And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonours her head – it is just as though her head were shaved. If a woman does not cover her head, she should have her hair cut off; and if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut off or shaved off, she should cover her head. A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head.” (I Corinthians 11:3-10)

These words of St. Paul make it clear that the rationale for veiling women according to Christendom is that the veil represents a sign of the authority of the man, who is the image and glory of God, over the woman who was created from and for man. No wonder some elements of the secular West are so repulsed by the concept of the veil! Islām, however, leaves no room for such conclusions to be drawn of its injunction that women veil:

“O Prophet, tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers that they should cast their outer garments over their bodies (when out of doors) so that they should be known (as respectable) and so not molested.” (33:59).

This is the reason for the Hijāb in Islām: that the dignity and honour, as well as the purity, of a woman is precious and so must be protected. By dressing loosely or suggestively, a woman gives off the message that she is sexually available. After all, putting one’s body on display, and bearing out the physical discomfort of stiletto heels and tight, awkward clothes to achieve that, must have some reason behind it. And whatever chic, modern designer labels one may wear in the process, it is still a manifestation of one of the most primitive of animal instincts:

attracting a mate. And what this often leads to is the male responding. Why is it that some of the most developed and technologically advanced countries in the world also have the highest rates of rape, teenage pregnancies, single-parent families, sexually transmitted diseases, broken homes, problem children, and alcohol and drug abuse in the world? Because animal instincts are left to run riot.

The Muslim woman dresses modestly “so that she should be known (as respectable) and so not molested.” In a society of increasing irresponsibility, she pledges her commitment to her Maker to not become a slave of others and their deranged fantasies but to remain pure as God had created her. And she earns by it the true pleasure of her Lord as opposed to the lewd, selfish appreciation of vulgar men, and the inner peace and serenity of knowing her own worth, as opposed to the persistent anxiety and insecurity of those whose worth is measured by other people’s approval. Thus the Islamic veil is not a sign of man’s authority over woman nor is it a sign of woman’s subjection to man. It is a sign of the woman’s liberation from being the slave of manhood at large.

Life After Death

Many people feel that the idea of Life after Death is irrational and absurd, and that anyone that does believe in such a thing does so on the basis of blind belief. However, believing in Life after Death is actually a logical necessity.

Every human being has a sense of right and wrong, of good and bad, and of justice and injustice. These in their most basic are so universal that children the world over begin to develop an understanding of them without having to be taught the concepts. Even a young child knows when he/she has done something wrong that is bad. He/she feels guilt and uneasiness. A selfish, unjust person who chooses to

oppress others also knows that being fair is good and being unfair is bad. But because of being intoxicated by power and the pleasures of self-gratification, such a person may not mind inflicting pain and suffering on others. He would, however, surely object if some injustice were done to him or someone that he cared for. His indifference to wrong when inflicted on others is not then because of not being able to appreciate it, but because of being too greedy or infatuated with his own pleasure to care.

The life of this world seems to be full of injustices. More often than not, crooks, murderers, and smart but dishonest people seem to have 'success' – material prosperity and power, while honest men and women suffer the consequences of the wrong actions of bad people and are deprived of the rewards of their labour. What this means is that the life of this world is incomplete. There has to be another life, then, where the wrongs of this one will be made right and its injustices made to face justice. Without this, it would mean that good and evil are equal. Human nature abhors such a suggestion. We know this cannot be true, which is why we differentiate between the good and the bad, even though they be closely related to us, like our own children. We like the one and are displeased with the other. So because good and evil are not equal, and because there must therefore be a difference in the way both are treated and in the outcomes of both, and because this does not always materialise in this life, because of all of these reasons, it follows that this life must be followed by a life where the difference between good and evil does materialise.

“That day will mankind proceed forth in scattered groups to be shown their deeds;

*Then, whoso does an atom’s weight of good will see it,
And whoso does an atom’s weight of evil will see it.” (99:6-8)*

Why should this be irrational when we consider that our own

existence here is miraculous: we did not exist and now we do. From a lifeless non-entity to be now a living, breathing creature, able to see and hear and feel happiness and sorrow – from nothing to a magnificent something, that truly is something amazing! If that was possible, why should it be impossible for life to be restored to us after death, especially when it is for a reason without which our existence here would be meaningless?

“Has man not seen that We created him from a drop of seed?

Yet lo! he becomes an open opponent (of Ours)!

And he strikes out a likeness for Us and forgets his own creation.

He says: Who will give life to these bones once they are rotten?

Say: He will give life to them Who brought them into existence the first time, and He is well-Knowledgeable of every kind of creation!

...Is not He Who created the heavens and the earth able to create the like of them? Yes indeed!

And He is the Magnificent Creator, All-Knowing!

His command, when He intends a thing, is but to say to it:

Be! and it is.

*So glory to Him in Whose hands is the dominion of all things:
and to Him shall you be all brought back.” (77:83)*

Therefore we find all religions teach of an afterlife. The Abrahamic traditions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islām, agree on a final Day of Judgement when all scores will be settled and good and evil will be rewarded justly with Heaven or Paradise as a reward for good, and Hell the punishment for wrong.

If God is Loving, Why Hell?

God is indeed loving, which is why in addition to providing us with everything that we have ever had, and things that we are not even conscious of, He sent throughout time messengers and prophets to

warn people that the life of this world is not an end to itself and our actions are not free of consequences. Even without messengers, He gave us the intellect through which every person can recognise that the vastness we see around us is the work of a Great and Powerful Designer, and He gave us an understanding of right and wrong and a conscience so that when we do wrong, even if we get away with it here, there is a nagging feeling inside that tells us we have done bad. When a person, despite all this, chooses evil over good and persists in it, it is God's justice that He punishes him. If evil were not to be punished then there would remain no difference between good and evil, and this is against the justice of God and the balance of creation.

In Islām, when a person repents after having done wrong, it is known as *tawbah*, which means 'to come back'. Doing evil, then, is actually to move away from God's pleasure and love, and repenting is to step back into His grace. The Messenger of Allāh ﷺ said, "When a slave acknowledges his sin and then turns back to Allāh, Allāh turns back to him" (*al-Bukhārī, Muslim*). Allāh Himself declares in the Qur'ān:

*"Say: O My slaves who have transgressed against their souls!
Despair not of the Mercy of Allāh, surely Allāh forgives all sins.
Lo! He is the Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful."* (39:53)

He, the Most Merciful, promises to forgive all that a slave may have done wrong, as long as he is sincere, sorry, and resolves to not repeat the evil. God is so merciful that many a time He forgives His servant's wrongdoings because of other good actions: "And establish regular prayers at the two ends of the day and at the approaches of the night; verily, good deeds take away evil deeds. That is a reminder for the mindful" (11:114), or because of some amount of suffering that he has faced in this world. This, though, is on the condition that the servant satisfies the most basic condition for receiving God's grace: that he believes.

Anyone who refuses to acknowledge his mistakes and remains adamant on evil (the greatest of which is to deny the One who made him) places himself before God's justice. To choose evil is to choose the consequences of evil. In the ultimate sense, that is Hell.

Repentance with Allāh is only for those who do evil in ignorance then turn (in repentance) to Allāh soon afterwards. To them will Allāh turn in mercy: Allāh is ever Knowing, Wise.

And there is no repentance for those who do evil deeds until death comes to one of them (and then) he says: Now have I repented indeed; nor for those who die rejecting Faith. For such have We prepared a painful punishment. (4:17-18)

Will All Non-Believers Go To Hell?

Of the greatest of sins in the sight of God is *Kufr*. *Kufr* is mostly translated as 'disbelief' and its derivative, *Kafir*, as 'disbeliever' or 'non-believer'. However, the actual root-meaning of *Kufr* is 'to cover'; with regards to belief, therefore, what *Kufr* means is 'to reject Faith'. Rejecting Faith only has any meaning after one has received the truth in a recognisable manner and then turned away from it; one who has not even known a thing cannot reject it. Allāh says:

"Whosoever accepts guidance, accepts guidance only for (the good of) his own soul, and whosoever goes astray, goes astray to his detriment only. No bearer of burdens shall bear the burden of another, and We were never Ones to punish until we had (first) sent a messenger." (17:15)

So those who reject faith and deny are guilty of the ultimate sin which God does not forgive unless they accept faith before they die when it becomes too late. If they do not turn to God, they will go to Hell.

Those who had not received a messenger, or, indeed, the message in any recognisable form, are not held accountable for not bringing Faith in its complete form – that is, the complete guidance with which God sent the last of His messengers, Muḥammad ﷺ; while they may be non-believers they are not rejecters of Faith. However, they are still required to acknowledge the most basic truth, the existence of One, All-Powerful God, and to do good and avoid evil, because recognition of both of these are built into a person’s nature and demanded by the intellect. The Qur’ān says:

*By the Soul and Him Who perfected it,
And so inspired it (with conscience of) what is wrong for it
and what is right for it,
He is indeed successful who purifies it,
And he has indeed lost who corrupts it. (91:7-10)*

All Religions Teach People To Be Good, So Why Islām?

While it’s true that all religions basically exhort people to be righteous and shun evil, only Islām can offer complete guidance to practically *live* that, which is why, in all reality, Islām is not just a religion but a complete way of life. Since God has created us and given us all that we have ever had, it is only right that we should serve Him with all that we have. Guidance from God, which is what a religion is supposed to be, should address all of the needs of a human being: the spiritual, physical, social, economical, and political.

Any religion which, to all practical purposes, teaches that it’s good enough to give God a few hours a week and the rest of your life belongs to you can surely not be acceptable to any conscientious person’s mind, let alone to God.

The doctrines should be in harmony with reason, for surely God who gave us the intellect to be able to distinguish between right and wrong and good and bad would not ask us to believe in anything that defies it. The teachings should be universal in essence. As God is One, His plan for the whole of humanity, of all times and all places, must be one and the same. The guidance of the religion must be preserved in its original form, because anything that has been subject to the tampering of man cannot be completely trusted.

While all religions contain some positive teachings, most stray from what must be the core and essence of religion: bringing men and women to live for God, to worship Him and adore Him and serve Him and no-one in opposition to Him. When the focal point of a religion becomes anything but God, whether it is a man, a people, a phenomenon of nature, or anything else, the religion can no longer be considered valid as everything apart the Creator is, like you, a created being, and therefore not worthy of your worship and adoration.

While other religions may also contain good, anything short of perfection should not be enough for a Perfect God. Islām came confirming the remnants of truth still existing in other revealed religions while correcting distortions. It came, therefore, to bring divine guidance to perfection so people could once again live in the light of God's pleasure and so triumph in this world and the next.

Say: We believe in Allāh and that which is revealed unto us and that which was revealed unto Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and that which was vouchsafed to Moses and Jesus and the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and unto Him we have surrendered.

And whosoever seeks as religion other than the Islām (surrender to Allāh) it shall not be accepted from him, and he shall be in the Hereafter among the losers. (3:84-85)

TRANSLITERATION GUIDE

Please take note of the table below as our transliteration method may be different to those adopted by others.

The transliterated symbols are unvarying in pronunciation, e.g. the representation “s” will remain pronounced as “s” and not distort to “z” in any circumstance, e.g. Islām is *not* pronounced Izlām.

While every effort has been made to ensure the transliteration is as close to the Arabic as possible, no alphabet can ever fully represent another.

This is all the more true where recitation of Qur’ānic verses is concerned as this must adhere to the very precise science of Tajwīd. It is therefore imperative that the readers do not consider a transliteration a substitute for learning to read Arabic correctly from a competent teacher.

VOWELS

A / a	SHORT “A” AS IN “AGO”	I / i	SHORT “I” AS IN “SIT”
Ā / ā	LONG “A” AS IN “HAT”	Ī / ī	LONG VOWEL AS IN “SEE”
AY or AI	DIPHTHONG AS IN “PAGE”	AW or AU	DIPHTHONG AS IN “HOME”
‘	ABRUPT START/PAUSE DOES NOT OCCUR IN ENGLISH	U / u	SHORT “U” AS IN “PUT”
		Ū / ū	LONG VOWEL AS IN “FOOD”

CONSONANTS

ب	B	“B” NO “H” ATTACHED	ض	Ḍ	“DH” USING SIDES OF THE TONGUE
ت	T	“T” NO “H” ATTACHED	ط	Ṭ	“T” WITH RAISED TONGUE
ث	TH	“TH” AS IN THIN	ظ	Ẓ	“TH” AS IN THEN, SOUND IS WITH RAISED TONGUE
ح	Ḥ	“H” GUTTURAL SOUND	ع	‘	GUTTURAL SOUND - ACCOMPANIES VOWEL
خ	KH	“KH” VERY GUTTURAL NO TONGUE USAGE	غ	GH	“GH” VERY GUTTURAL NO TONGUE USAGE
د	D	“D” NO “H” ATTACHED	ق	Q	“K” WITH BACK OF TONGUE RAISED
ذ	DH	“TH” AS IN THEN	و	W	“W” READ - NOT SILENT
س	S	“S” ONLY - NOT “Z”	ي	Y	“Y” ONLY - NOT “I”
ش	SH	“SH” AS IN SHIN			
ص	Ṣ	“S” WITH RAISED TONGUE			

Note: Double consonants must be pronounced with emphasis on both letters without pause, e.g. **ALLĀHUMMA** should be read **AL-LĀHUM-MA**.

SYMBOLS

SUBHĀNAHŪ WA TA`ĀLĀ FOR ALLAH “GLORIFIED AND EXALTED IS HE”	ṢALLALLĀHU `ALAYHI WA SALLAM FOR MUHAMMAD “PEACE BE UPON HIM”
RAḌĪYAL-LĀHU `ANHU FOR COMPANIONS “ALLAH BE PLEASED WITH HIM”	`ALAYHIS-SALĀM FOR PROPHETS “PEACE BE UPON THEM”