



**Islam**

**Comparative Theology**

- **Introduction**
- **Views On God**
- **Man and the Universe**
- **Salvation and the Afterlife**
- **Morals**
- **Worship**
- **Conclusion**

# Introduction

- **Islam is a monotheistic religion based on revelations received by the Prophet Muhammad from Archangel Gabriel in the 7th century A.D., which were later recorded in the Qur'an, Islam's sacred text. Much of Muhammad's zeal was in reaction to the polytheism and lawlessness of the existing Arab culture.**
- **Most scholars believe that, in his travels, Muhammad developed his concepts of monotheism from several sources, including Nestorian monks (who deny that the Incarnate Christ was both human and divine at birth. They contend that Jesus was born as a man who was later indwelt with divinity).**

# Introduction

- In addition, it is believed he was exposed to a great deal of teaching from Jews who exposed him to the Talmud. The word Islam is the Arabic word for surrender and refers to the peace that comes from surrender to God. Within a century Islam had conquered an area greater than the Roman Empire at its height. Today Islam is almost the sole religion of all Arab countries and has major communities in Africa as well.
- The Qur'an, for the most part a series of short teachings (three- quarters dictated by Muhammad, the other quarter by his disciples who remembered his oral teachings after he died), is intensely revered by Muslims as the final word of God, the culmination of what was only begun in the Bible.

# Introduction

- **In addition to the Qur'an, Muhammad had sayings called Sunnah ("path"). The collection of these sayings are the Hadith and form the basis for traditions which were handed down orally for generations after Muhammad's death until finally transcribed.**
- **The Hadith is to the Qur'an what the Talmud is to the Hebrew Bible. Another body of teaching in Islam comes from the Shariah; legal interpretations of the Qur'an and the Hadith. Shariah, meaning law, lays down the strict moral conduct expected from Muslims.**

- **Also expected from Muslims is the practice of Five Pillars of Islam: faith, prayer, fasting, pilgrimage and alms.**
- **There are three main branches of Islam. Sunni Muslims are the largest denomination. Shia Islam is the second largest denomination of the Islamic Faith,, making up 10-20% of Muslims worldwide.**



# Introduction

- **Shias adhere to the teachings of Islamic prophet Muhammad but differ from Sunni in following the religious guidance of his family, whom they consider to be infallible.**
- **Unlike Sunnis, Shias believe Ali ibn Abi Talib (Muhammad's cousin and husband of Fatimah) was the true successor to Muhammad and reject the legitimacy of the first three caliphs of Islamic history.**

- **Shi'ites believe that religious leaders should also be political rulers, whereas the majority of Muslims, the Sunnites, believe in a separation of the two realms. Sufis form the mystical branch of Islam, teaching an arduous path of self-denial culminating in union with God.**



- **The single most important belief in Islam, and arguably the central theme of Islam, is that there is one God. Allah means "the God"--indicating the radical monotheism of Islam.**
- **"We shall not serve anyone but God, and we shall associate none with Him" (Qur'an 3.64). Any division of God is rejected, including the Christian doctrines of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ.**

# Views On God

- **Muslims believe that God is the all-powerful Creator of a perfect, ordered universe. He is transcendent and not a part of his creation, and is most often referred to in terms and with names that emphasize his majesty and superiority.**
- **Among the 99 Beautiful Names of God (Asma al-Husna) in the Qur'an are: the Creator, the Fashioner, the Life-Giver, the Provider, the Opener, the Bestower, the Prevailer, the Reckoner, the Recorder, the King of Kingship and the Lord of the Worlds.**

- **Conspicuously absent is the name Father. Muslims find it difficult to divorce the concept of father from the physical realm. To them, it is blasphemous to call Allah your father. To do so is the same as saying that your mother and Allah had sexual intercourse to produce you!**
- **Although the God of Islam has revealed his will through the prophets, his actual nature remains ultimately unknowable.**

# Views On God

- **The majesty and might of Allah is often portrayed in the Qur'an, and it is emphasized that his purposes are always serious.**
- **Justice is Allah's most important feature for Muslims. Allah is also merciful and compassionate, but that mercy is shown mainly in his sending messengers who proclaim the truth of man's responsibility to live according to Allah's dictates.**
- **In essence, He acts impersonally and is deficient in such attributes as love and grace.**

# Man and the Universe

- **Muslims see the universe as created by the deliberate act of a personal, omnipresent God. The universe is not considered an illusion in any way and is basically good, being given for the benefit of man.**
- **Muhammad did not produce miracles but simply proclaimed the message of Allah. Thus the presence of God in the world is seen not through supernatural signs but through the wonderful order of nature and the one great miracle, the Qur'an.**
- **Muslims generally do not expect miraculous deliverance from suffering in this life but believe that good deeds will be rewarded in the next life.**

# Man and the Universe

- **According to the Qur'an, Allah "created man from a clot of blood" at the same time he created the jinn (demons) from fire.**
- **Humans are the greatest of all creatures, created with free will for the purpose of obeying and serving God. The Qur'an includes a version of the biblical story of the fall of Adam (Qur'an 7), but it does not conclude from it the doctrine of sin leading to death and a corrupted nature as is understood in Christianity.**



# Man and the Universe

- **In the Qur'anic version of the story, Adam and Eve begged God's forgiveness (7:23) and he punished them with a mortal life on earth but added, "from it [earth] you will be taken out at last" (7:25).**
- **Since Allah forgave the sins of the first pair, Muslims believe, all are born in Al-Fitra, a natural state of submission to Allah. True repentance from sin returns a person to this original sinless state.**



# Man and the Universe

- **According to Muslim theology, mankind's chief failing is pride and rebellion. In their pride, humans attempt to partner themselves with God and thereby damage the unity of God. Thus pride is Islam's cardinal sin. The cardinal virtue, then, is surrender, or islam.**

# Man and the Universe

- **Man is endowed with taqwa, a sort of divine spark manifested in his conscience that enables him to perceive the truth and to act on it. Conscience is thus of the greatest value in Islam, much as love is the greatest value to Christians.**

# Man and the Universe

- **But Islam is in no way pantheism. Man may cultivate his taqwa and so live according to the way of Allah, or he may suppress it. Man thus deserves or is undeserving of God's guidance.**

# Salvation and the Afterlife

- **The Qur'an rejects the notion of redemption; salvation depends on a man's actions (good works) and belief (that God is one and Muhammad is his prophet).**
- **However, tauba ("repentance") can quickly turn an evil man toward the virtue that will save him. So Islam does not hold out the possibility of salvation through the work of God but invites man to accept God's guidance.**

# Salvation and the Afterlife

- **Like Christianity, Islam teaches the continued existence of the soul and a transformed physical existence after death.**
- **Muslims believe there will be a day of judgment when all humans will be divided between the eternal destinations of Paradise and Hell.**

# Salvation and the Afterlife

- **The final day of reckoning is described in awesome terms. On that last day every man will account for what he has done, and his eternal existence will be determined on that basis: "Every man's actions have we hung around his neck, and on the last day shall be laid before him a wide-open book" (17.13).**
- **Muslims recognize that different individuals have been given different abilities and various degrees of insight into the truth.**

# Salvation and the Afterlife

- **Each man will be judged according to his situation, and every man who lives according to the truth to the best of his abilities will achieve heaven. However, infidels who are presented with the truth of Islam and reject It will be given no mercy.**
- **The Qur'an has vivid descriptions of both heaven and hell. Heaven is depicted in terms of worldly delights, with lofty mansions, delicious food and drink and virgin companions called houris.**



# Salvation and the Afterlife

- **There are seven heavens. Hell is mentioned frequently in the Qur'an and the Sunnah using a variety of imagery.**
- **It has seven doors leading to a fiery crater of various levels, the lowest of which contains the tree Zaqqum and a cauldron of boiling pitch.**

# Salvation and the Afterlife

- **The level of hell depends on the degree of offenses.**
- **Suffering is both physical and spiritual. Being a Muslim does not keep one out of Hell, but it is not clear whether Muslims remain in Hell forever. Non-Muslims (kafir), however, will be punished eternally.**

- **Islam presents itself as a "straight path" of clear-cut duties and commands. Islam's moral code prohibits drinking, gambling, adultery, fornication, and the taking of interest at an individual level.**
- **The prohibitions are designed to have a social application because those who indulge in any of these prohibited acts would not only be harming themselves, but would harm society also.**

- **Similarly, the moral virtues that Islam enjoins on the believer are not just for individual moral piety, but for the collective social good also.**
- **Muslims depict Muhammad in the Qur'an as a loving person, helping the poor and slow to take revenge.**

- **Nevertheless the belief that only Muslims possess the truth and all else are infidels has led to much violence and evil on the behalf of Allah through the ages.**
- **Although it is said the Qur'an actually worked to elevate the horribly degraded position of women in Arab society, women continue to be regarded more as possible temptations to sin for men than as human beings with their own responsibilities before God.**

- **Muhammad is not worshiped: only God is. Because of strict rules against depictions of human forms in art there is a strong impetus against idolatry or saint-worshiping in Islam.**
- **Allah is extolled in hymns that depict his power and majesty. But even Allah cannot be ultimately leaned on for salvation, because salvation is man's responsibility.**

- **Thus his guidance, in the form of words rather than persons, is emphasized. For that reason the Qur'an is revered as perhaps no other book. It is probably the most memorized book in the world.**



- **Acts of worship in Islam are embodied in the "five pillars": A Muslim must:**
  - **Recite the basic creed, "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is His Prophet"**
  - **Recite prayers in praise of Allah five times daily while facing Mecca**
  - **Give money to the poor**
  - **Fast for one month a year (Ramadan)**
  - **Make a pilgrimage at least once during his lifetime to Mecca, the city where Allah revealed the Qur'an to Muhammad through the angel Gabriel.**

- **The purpose of worship in Islam is to be God conscious. Thus the worship, whether it is prayer, fasting, or charity, is a means to achieve God consciousness so that when one becomes aware of God, in thought and in action, he is in a better position to receive His bounties both in this world and the hereafter.\*\*\***

# Conclusion

- **There are many beliefs in Islam that leave one scratching one's head; most of which relate to our Lord Jesus Christ.**
- **Muslims believe that Jesus was born of a virgin and was a prophet of God albeit of lower rank than Muhammad.**

# Conclusion

- **They acknowledge that Jesus performed many miracles including raising people from the dead (believing that Muhammad did none of these things).**
- **While they do not deny that he was put on a cross, they do not believe that he actually died, rather he ascended alive into heaven.**

- **Yet they also believe that Jesus will return to judge the world. All the while refusing Christ's divinity because Allah is one and this unity precludes a Trinitarian understanding (remember the Nestorian influence).**

- **Because of the stringent belief that Allah is one, it is inconceivable for a Muslim to consider that God would desire to commune—become united with and be known by man.**

# Conclusion

- **Grace has no import in Islamic salvation- it is purely the work of man and in addition to adhering to the 5 pillars of faith, it would behoove one intent on heaven to have his good works outweigh his bad.**



# References

- <http://www.religionfacts.com/islam/index.htm>
- <http://wri.leaderu.com/wri-table2/islam.html>
- Ridenour, Fritz So What's the Difference? p. pp. 73-87
- \*McDowell, Josh Handbook of Today's Religions p. 393
- \*\*\*<http://islam-usa.com/25ques.html#9>