



Islam

An Outline of Prothero's *God is Not One*,
Chapter One: The Way of Submission



Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem where Muhammad was taken up to heaven for an encounter with God

- Muslims in Jerusalem:
 - 637 CE: Muslims took Jerusalem from the Christians
 - Late 7th century: Dome of the Rock built on old Temple Mount, Jerusalem
 - 1099: Christian Crusaders took Jerusalem back and held until...
 - 1187: Saladin and Muslims took it from the Christians
 - 1917: British captured Jerusalem for Christianity
 - 1948: Founding of the state of Israel

General Information

- Islam means "Submission" (also surrender)
- Mosque means Place of prostration
- 610 CE, Muhammad encountered the angel Gabriel in a cave on Mount Hira near Mecca where he often went to pray and meditate
- The angel commanded him to "recite," probably because he was illiterate
- Revelations took place between 610 and 632, shortly before his death,

- but the Muslim calendar begins on 622 CE when their first community was formed in Medina
- Islam was at the pinnacle of its power in 16th century with three great dynasties:
 - Ottoman spread out in Middle East from its center in Istanbul
 - Safavid controlled Persia (Iran)
 - Mughal controlled India
- Global dominance of Islam ended with rise of British Empire and destruction of the Ottoman Empire in 1918
- Muslims believe (and Stoics agree) that every human being is born with an inclination toward the good and God
- Muslims believe (and Catholics agree) that the path to paradise requires faith AND good works
- Muslims emphasize practice over doctrine (orthopraxy over orthodoxy)

5 Pillars of Practice

- The pillars are architectural with 4 corner pillars and one central pillar
- 4 Corner pillars are: prayer, charity, fasting, & pilgrimage
- Central pillar is the Muslim creed, the Shahadah: "I testify that there is no god but God, and Muhammad is the messenger of God."
- The Shahadah is repeated 5 X a day with the daily prayers

Prayer

- Prayer, one of the 5 pillars of Islam, is performed 5 X a day, prostrating with head aligned with the direction of Mecca
- prayer is in Arabic and follows the same memorized form in use since the beginning of Islam
- Islam is a "recited" religion spread by speech and sound in Arabic, "God's language" spoken to Muhammad
- the prayers are spoken aloud

Jihad

- literally means "struggle"
- 2 kinds of struggle: spiritual (internal) and military (external)
 - Spiritual struggle against pride and self-sufficiency
 - Military struggle against the enemies of Islam
- War is mentioned in the Quran repeatedly: "fight, slay, expel (e.g., Quran 2:190-91 and 2:216)
- BUT, there are also passages against suicide and against killing women, children, or civilians in jihad

Allah

- Arabic for God. Hard monotheism. No trinity as in Christianity (soft monotheism)
- Allah cannot incarnate in a human body as Jesus did
- Allah is totally transcendent and beyond human comprehension and description
- Beyond gender, neither male nor female with 99 names that are of both male and female gender attributes
- *Shirk* means idolatry:
 - any practice or belief that disagrees with Islam's hard monotheism
 - can include pursuing money and power above God

Muhammad

- Accomplishments of Muhammad are rated above Jesus historically because
 - Jesus was a great religious teacher, but Paul was the founder of Christianity
 - Muhammad did the work of Jesus and Paul combined, and
- Muhammad was a political and military leader even as he had a family with 9 wives and ruled over a vast empire
- he is only person to achieve both spiritual and secular success
- At Muhammad's death in 632 CE, the Muslim community split because he didn't name a successor

Quran

- Quran means "recitation," and it's still recited more than it is read (due to the fact that only 20% of Muslims read Arabic)
- Biblical translations and authorities have many differences, but the Quran in Arabic is the ONLY perfect, untranslatable, and unaltered "word of God."
- Quran is only valid in Arabic and EVERY word is directly from Allah.
- Muslims adopt neither the Torah of Moses nor the gospel of Jesus because they have been corrupted and untrustworthy
- BUT, Muhammad's recitations were not actually written down until long after he was dead (also true of the words of Jesus)
- Quran is doctrinal and legal—almost no narrative or storytelling (unlike the Torah and New Testament)
- Judaism emphasizes law; Christianity emphasizes spirituality. The Quran combines the two
- More than ALL great religions, Islam emphasizes life after death. Hundreds of verses describe the beauty of paradise and the horrors of hell
- Frequent warnings about the torments of hell for any who will not SUBMIT to Allah and who insist on doing evil
- As in Judaism there is no *original* sin found in the Quran. Thus there is no

- need for a savior like Jesus. Only Allah can redeem us
- Numerous passages urge war on non-Muslims
- And, numerous passages about the social themes of justice and poverty
- "...the Quran twists wrath around compassion so tightly that the former seems to strangle the latter." Allah's wrath upon those who will not submit appears hundreds of times
- Quran appears to be written only for men and husbands, including their right to beat their wives.

Shariah

- Means "right path" and covers rituals, laws, ethics, politics, economics, family, taxes—all aspects of life
- More similar to Judaism's emphasis on laws than Christianity
- Interpretations based upon Quran and Hadith
- HADITH: a secondary scripture describing thousands of accounts of word and deed of Muhammad
- Written in 8th and 9th centuries
- Authenticity of Hadith passages is great source of disagreement between Sunni and Shia
 - Sunnis decentralize Shariah law to the Muslim community, while
 - Shia centralizes that authority in the Imam

Sunni and Shia

- Because Muhammad didn't designate a successor the Muslim community divided into two factions: Sunni and Shia
- SUNNI are 85% of world's Muslim population
 - who follow Muhammad's father-in-law Abu Bakr
 - whose Political authority is in a Caliph and the Imams are only leaders in a particular mosque
- SHIA are 15% of Muslim population
 - who followed Muhammad's son-in-law, Ali
 - and ALL matters reside in the Imam who is both sinless and infallible (e.g., Iran's Imam)

Islamism

- A politicized Islam that took the Jewish and Christian martyr tradition in a radical new direction
- GOAL: to purify Islam from modernity, the Jewish state, and the Great Satan, USA. Thereby creating Islamic states that follow only their version of Islamic laws
- Chief operators: Hamas, Hezbollah, Taliban, al-Qaeda, ISIS
- Saudi Arabia's official theology is Wahhabism, based on teachings of al-

Wahhabi in 18th century, and whose teachings strictly opposed Christians, Jews, Shiites, and Sufism

Progressives

- Opponents of Islamism located mostly in Europe and USA
- GOAL: Pluralism and "to give voice to the voiceless and power to the powerless"
- Believe the struggle for justice lies at the heart of Islamic tradition, including gender equality and human rights for Muslim and non-Muslim
- Believe that "Islam is justice and equality and democracy, and caring for the poor."

Sufism

- "Real Islam has nothing to do with law and everything to do with experience...a heart-and-soul connection between the individual believer and God...rituals and rules take us away from what is really real."
- The 9th century Persian Sufi Bistami said, "The thickest veils between man and Allah are the wise man's wisdom, the worshiper's worship, and the devotion of the devout."
- Muslim theologians emphasize transcendence and distance; Sufi's emphasize God's immanence and nearness.

Two Types of Sufis: Drunk and Sober

- Drunk Sufis are poetry and emotion
- emphasizing mercy and beauty of God and his love and ecstasy
- Sober Sufis are prose and intellect
- aware of God's power and wrath, awe, and fear
- Sufis affirm that all religions are paths to the divine, but they are only clumsy gestures toward what is unspeakable.
- Religion is outer, inessential knowledge, and with inner and essential knowledge all religious distinctions disappear. "Love alone is my religion."
- What the Sufi chooses is not Islam, but Allah, not a future paradise but a presence of the divine here and now; not secondhand report, but firsthand experience.
- The 5 Pillars of Islam is the plastic grocery bag that is very different from the nourishment it carries inside
- Islam is the candle; Sufi mysticism is the flame
- Sufis attempt to express the direct, personal experience of God in music, dance, and poetry