

SECOND EDITION

AN
ANTHOLOGY
OF
LIVING
RELIGIONS

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ISLAM

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In the sixth century CE, another great spiritual messenger appeared: the Prophet Muhammad. Although illiterate, he said he received revelations from an angel of God, and recited them in language so beautiful that to this day people weep when they hear it. Many of the revelations concern the absolute oneness of the deity, who has many names according to his attributes (such as the Merciful, the All-Knowing) but who is generally referred to with love and awe by the name of Allah. The most important virtue is submission to the will of Allah. This is one derivation of the word "Islam," which also means "peace."

The Prophet Muhammad is not considered divine, for in Islam worship is to be directed only toward Allah. Nevertheless, his life is considered a beautiful model for humanity, and his sayings and doings have been lovingly recorded. Muslims consider him the last in a series of great prophets of monotheism, beginning with Abraham and the other Jewish patriarchs, and including Jesus. They thus tend to regard Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as a single evolving tradition which was renewed, corrected of historical distortions, and sealed by the Prophet Muhammad.

After early opposition in **Mecca** and subsequent migration to Medina in 622 CE (1 AH),¹ the Prophet Muhammad became a strong political leader, returned triumphantly to Mecca, and made it a great center of monotheistic worship—which it remains to this day. Pilgrimage to Mecca's holy sites at least once in one's life is incumbent upon all Muslims, even though today they are spread around the world, forming the second largest and fastest-growing of all world religions. They are expected to regard all humanity as a single family, without racial distinctions, and to share the Prophet's message in a non-coercive way with non-Muslims so that they, too, may embark upon the straight path that leads to heavenly bliss, rather than the path of non-believers, which leads to hellish torments.

After Muhammad's death, conflicts over leadership divided Muslims into major groups. The Sunni (at present about 80 percent of all Muslims) elect their caliph leaders. The Shi'a (adj. Shi'ite) recognize not elected Sunni caliphs, but a series of

12 hereditary Imams (leaders, guides) following Muhammad. The **Sufis** form a third, overlapping group which pursues esoteric, contemplative prayer, meditation, and dance (the "Whirling Dervish" Mevlevi Order).

Non-Muslims commonly think of Islam as an attempt to create Muslim-dominated societies ruled by Muslim law, a desire which has spawned passionate revolutionary movements in many parts of the world. However, Islam has also given birth to great mystics and great intellectuals over the centuries, and its rich spirituality continues to coexist today with more politicized versions of the faith.

The Prophet Muhammad

The Prophet Muhammad was born in 570 CE into an Arabic culture of clans who lived by farming, herding, and camel caravan trade between Asia and the Mediterranean, carrying valuables such as silks, cinnamon, and pepper. Their religions were polytheistic and nature-oriented; their ethics were tribally centered, the societies largely patriarchal. Prophecy was often practiced, involving trance visions and behavioral guidelines. Contact with nearby Jews and Christians was commonplace, and their religions were known to Muhammad's society. Many traditions of the actions and words of the Prophet, outside the Qur'an, were collected in **Hadith** (reports of the Prophet's actions). Two of the most important Hadith concerning the faith tell of the Prophet's first revelations around 610 CE, and his **Night Journey** to the seventh heaven. They are from *Sahih Muslim*, chapters 74 and 75.

The Beginning of Muhammad's Revelation

from *Sahih Muslim*

'**A'isha**, the wife of the Apostle of Allah (may peace be upon him), reported: The first (form) with which was started the revelation to the Messenger of Allah was the true vision in sleep. And he did not see any vision but it came like the bright gleam of dawn. Thenceforth solitude became dear to him and he used to seclude himself in the cave of Hira', where he would engage in *tahannuth* (and that is a worship for a number of nights) before returning to his family and getting provisions again for this purpose. He would then return to **Khadija** and take provisions for a like period, till Truth came upon him while he was in the cave of Hira'. There came to him the angel and said: Recite, to which he replied: I am not lettered. He took hold of me [the Apostle said] and pressed me, till I was hard pressed; thereafter he let me off and said: Recite. I said: I am not lettered. He then again took hold of me and pressed me for the second time till I was hard pressed and then let me off and said: Recite, to which I replied: I am not lettered. He took hold of me and pressed me for the third time, till I was hard pressed and then let me go and said: Recite in the name of your Lord Who created, created man from a clot of blood. Recite. And your most bountiful Lord is He Who taught the use of

1 The Muslim (AH) calendar is based on lunar years starting from the **Hijrah** (migration to Medina). Compared to the solar calendar used for calculating Common Era (CE) dates, which are based on the approximate birth year of Jesus, there are 11 days fewer in a lunar calendar, so the difference between CE dates and AH dates is continually changing.

Hadith

"Hadith," as we have seen, means "report" on the actions and words of the Prophet, outside the Qur'an, as told by his companions. Hadith range from grand revelations from Allah to descriptions of the Prophet's life, rules of war, marriage, mosque conduct, and personal behavior. Like all religious guidelines, they reflect their cultural environment. They are the second basis, after the Qur'an, for Islamic law, or **Shari'ah**. They contain references to their sources and seek to establish an authoritative chain (**isnah**) of transmission. Reporting on one Hadith on Jihad, Abdullah Suhrawardy (1882–1935) wrote in *The Sayings of Muhammad*: "The most excellent Jihad is that for the conquest of self." Traditionally, the most authoritative and famous Hadith collections are the *Sahih* ("the Authentic") of *Muhammad Ibn Ismail al-Bukhari* (d. 870 CE, called "Bukhari") and the *Sahih of Abu-I-Husayn Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj* (d. 875 CE, called "Muslim"). The following are from *Sahih Muslim* (volumes and pages or websites given).

Allah's Mercy

Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) said: When Allah created the creation He put down in his Book, which is with Him upon the Throne: Verily, My mercy predominates My wrath. (Arabic 4939)

SOURCE: *Sahih Muslim*
<<http://hadith.al-islam.com/Bayan/Display.asp?lang=eng&ID=1571>>

Allah is a Light

It is narrated on the authority of Abu Dharr: I asked the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him): Did you see thy Lord? He said: He is a Light: how could I see Him? (I:341)

Abu Musa reported: The Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him): was standing among us and he told us five things: He said: Verily, the Exalted and Mighty God does not sleep, and it does not befit him. He lowers the scale and lifts it: The deeds of the day are taken up to Him before the deeds of the night. His veil is the light. In the Hadith narrated by Abu Akr (instead of the word "light") it is fire. If he withdraws it (the veil) the splendour of His countenance would consume His creation so far as His sight reaches: (I:343)

Seeking Consent for Marriage

Abu Huraira (Allah be pleased with him) reported Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) as having said: A woman without a husband (or divorced or a widow) must not be married until she is consulted, and a virgin must not be married until her permission is sought. They asked the Prophet of Allah (may peace be upon him): How her (virgin's) consent can be solicited? He (the Holy Prophet) said: That she keeps silent. (II:714)

Fighting of Women Side by Side with Men

It has been narrated on the authority of Anas that, on the Day of Hunain, Umm Sulaim took out a dagger she had in her possession. Abu Talha saw her and said: Messenger of Allah, this is Umm Sulaim. She is holding a dagger. The Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) asked (her): What for are you holding this dagger? She said: I took it up so that I may tear open the belly of a polytheist who comes near me. The Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) began to smile (at these words). She said: Messenger of Allah, kill all those people—other than us—whom thou hast declared to be free (on the day of the Conquest of Mecca). (They embraced Islam because) they were defeated at your hands (and as such their Islam is not dependable). The Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) said: Umm Sulaim, God is sufficient (against the mischief of the polytheists) and He will be kind to us (so you need not carry this dagger).

It has been narrated on the authority of Anas b. Malik who said that the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) allowed Umm Sulaim and some other women of the Ansar to accompany him when he went to war; they would give water (to the soldiers) and would treat the wounded. (III:1001)

Prohibition of Killing Women and Children in War

It is narrated on the authority of 'Abdullah that a woman was found killed in one of the battles fought by the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him). He disapproved of the killing of woman and children.

It is narrated by Ibn 'Umar that a woman was found killed in one of these battles; so the Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) forbade the killing of women and children. (IV:946)

Compel not your Slave-girls to Prostitution

Jabir reported that 'Abdullah b. Ubayy b. Salul used to say to his slave-girl: Go and fetch something for us by committing prostitution. It was in this connection that Allah, the Exalted and Glorious, revealed this verse: "And compel not your slave-girls to prostitution when they desire to keep chaste in order to seek the frail goods of their world's life, and whoever compels them, then surely after their compulsion Allah is Forgiving, Merciful" (xxiv:33).

Jabir reported that 'Abdullah b. Ubayy b. Salul had two slave-girls: one was called Musaika and the other one was called Umama and he compelled them to prostitution (for which 'Abdullah b. Ubayy b. Salul compelled them). They made a complaint about this to Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) and it was upon this that this verse was revealed: "And compel not your slave-girls to prostitute" up to the words: "Allah is Forgiving, Merciful" (IV:1555)

Removal of the Idols from the Vicinity of the Ka'ba

It has been narrated by Ibn 'Abdullah who said: The Holy Prophet (may peace be upon him) entered Mecca. There were three hundred and sixty idols around the Ka'ba. He began to thrust them with the stick that was in his hand saying: "Truth has come and falsehood has vanished. Lo! falsehood was destined to vanish" (xvii:8). Truth has arrived, and falsehood can neither create anything from the beginning nor can it restore to life. (III:978)

The Merits of Jesus Christ (Peace Be Upon Him)

Abu Huraira reported Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) as saying: I am most akin to the son of Mary among the whole of mankind and the Prophets are of different mothers, but of one religion, and no Prophet was raised between me and him (Jesus Christ). (IV:1260)

It is Forbidden to Commit Oppression

Abu Dharr reported Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) as saying that Allah, the Exalted and Glorious, said: My servants, I have made oppression unlawful for Me and unlawful for you, so do not commit oppression against one another. (IV:1365)

source: *Sahih Muslim*, trans. 'Abdul Hamid Siddiqi, Lahore, Pakistan: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1973-5, vol. 1, p. 113, to vol. 4, p. 1555



Shari'ah

Muslim law is called Shari'ah ("the path leading to the watering place"). Since the Qur'an could not be a guide for all future developments, the Hadith were collected to help prescribe behavior. But even more guidelines were needed. The third source of sacred authority in Islam is Shari'ah, or the law, elaborated by unforeseen situations. It is based upon the Qur'an and Hadith and interpreted by judges (*qadl*) using practical reasoning as well. Fundamental to Shari'ah are the Five Pillars of Islam: (1) Pronouncing the confession of faith, (2) Performing *saalat* prayers, (3) Fasting during the month of Ramadan, (4) *Zakat*, or charity, and (5) Hajj, or spiritual pilgrimage to Mecca. There are five types of law: (1) obligatory, (2) meritorious, (3) indifferent, (4) reprehensible, and (5) forbidden. Shari'ah includes dietary prohibitions (such as pork and alcohol) and guidelines for dress (no sexually provocative clothing); it also commands further legal rights for women (divorce, owning property, making a will). In medieval times, when tribal loyalty and customs were uppermost, Shari'ah began to restrict destructive practices such as infanticide, drunkenness, and gambling.

On Pictures and Images

Iconoclasm, which prohibits images of divinity, is an example of Shari'ah. To emphasize the ineffable transcendence of Allah, and in reaction against the numerous images of divinities in the polytheistic world, and in agreement with the Jewish prohibition against portraying divinity, Muhammad banned all human and animal images. Consequently most Muslim art incorporates only calligraphy or plant life, as in the Taj Mahal in India. But not all Muslim cultures were strict about this rule. Persian (now Iranian) art illustrates Muhammad's Night Journey, for example. This Shi'a Hadith records an account of the Prophet's rejection of imagery. Rafi' b. Ishaq, who was the freedman of Shifa', reported: I and 'Abd Allah b. 'Abi Talhah went together to Abu Sa'id Khudri to see him in his illness. Abu Sa'id said: The Apostle of Allah (may peace be upon him) told me that angels did not enter a house where there were pictures and images.

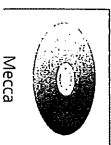
source: Malik, *Muwatta Imam Malik*, trans. with notes by Muhammad Rahimuddin, Lahore, Pakistan: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1980, p. 409

Hajj: Asceticism and Social Leveling

by Maulana Muhammad Ali

Hajj, the fifth pillar of Islam's primary prescriptions, is centered on the revered Ka'ba, which is traditionally considered to date from the time of Abraham and his son Ishmael. Under the guidance of the Qur'an, the pilgrimage became a means of ascetic practice and social equality. This explanation was provided by the founder of the Pakistan-based missionary society Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam.

Islam discourages asceticism in all its aspects. . . . Yet Islam lays the greatest stress upon the spiritual development of man [sic], and in its four main institutions—prayer, *zakat* [charity], fasting, and hajj—introduces workable ascetic formulae into the daily life of man—an asceticism which is quite in keeping with the secular side of life. The five daily prayers require the sacrifice of a small part of his time and, without in any way interfering with his everyday life, enable him to realize the Divine that is within him. The institution of *zakat* demands the giving up of a small portion of his wealth without interfering with his right to property. Fasting requires the giving up of food and drink but not in such a manner as to make him unfit for carrying on his regular work or business. It is only in hajj that asceticism assumes a marked form, for the pilgrim is required not only to give up his regular work for a number of days for the sake of the journey of Makkah [Mecca], but he must, in addition, give up many other amenities of life, and live, more or less, the life of an ascetic. The hajj is, however, a function which generally comes only once in a lifetime, and, therefore, while leading a man through the highest spiritual experience, it does not interfere in any appreciable degree with the regular course of his life. . . .



No other institution in the world has the wonderful influence of the hajj in leveling all distinctions of race, colour and rank. Not only do people of all races and all countries meet together before the Holy House of God as His servants, as members of one Divine family, but they are clad in one dress—in two white sheets—and there remains nothing to distinguish the high from the low. There is a vast concourse of human beings, all clad in one dress, all moving in one way, all having but one word to speak, *labbaik* *Allah-umma labbaik*, meaning "here are we, O Allah! Here are we in Thy Presence." It is hajj alone that brings into the domain of practicality what would otherwise seem impossible, namely, that all people, to whatever class or country they belong, should speak one language and wear one dress. Thus is every Muslim made to pass once in his life through that narrow gate of equality which leads to broad brotherhood. All men are equal in birth and death; they come into life and pass out of it in the same way, but hajj is the only occasion on which they are taught how to live alike, how to act alike and how to feel alike.

SOURCE: Maulana Muhammad Ali, *The Religion of Islam*, 6th ed. Delhi: Mottial Banarsidass, 1994, pp. 386-7

How to Perform Salaat

Salaat (the second Pillar) is ritual worship of the community at a mosque, especially on Friday noon, but also five times daily. Worshipers wash ritually, then bow repeatedly facing the direction of Mecca (*qibla*), which is marked in a mosque by a niche (*mihrab*). A leader (*imam*) leads prayers, all spoken in Arabic; a prayer rug (*sajjada*) defines the sacred space for bowing. This is the first portion:

Before *Salaat*:

Body, clothes and place of prayer must be clean.

Perform *wudu*⁹ if needed.

Traditionally, women cover their hair.

Face the *Qibla*, the direction of Mecca.

Stand erect, head down, hands at sides, feet evenly spaced.

Recite *Iqama* (private call to prayer):

Allahu Akbar (4×)

Ashhadu an la ilaha illa-Lah (2×)

Ash Hadu anna Muhammadar rasulullah (2×)

Hayya' alas Salaah (2×)

Hayya' ala Falaah (2×)

[*Fajr* only: *A-Salaatu Khayrun Mina-Naum* (2×)]

Qad qaamitis Salaah (2×)

Allahu Akbar (2×)

Laa ilaaha illa-Lah

God is the most great.

I bear witness that there are no gods but God.

I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of God.

Come to prayer.

Come to felicity.

[Prayer is better than sleep.]

Our prayers are now ready. Our prayers are now ready.

God is the most great.

There is no deity save God.

Express intent to perform *Salaat* (*niyyat*):

I intend to offer the _____ *rakat*¹⁰ of the _____ prayer, and face the *Qibla* for the sake of Allah and Allah alone.

(For example: "I intend to offer the 4 *rakats* of the *Isha* prayer and face the *Qibla* for the sake of Allah and Allah alone.")

Salaat

Niyat: Stand in respect and attention; put the world behind you.

Bring hands to ears, palms forward, thumbs behind earlobes.

Allahu Akbar/God is the most great.

Qiyam: Place right hand over left, men below navel, women at chest level; look at the ground in front of you.

Opening Supplication (optional):

Subhaanaka alahumma wa bismillik

wa taabaraka smuka wa ta'alaad jadduka

wa laa ilaaha ghairuk

Glory to You, O Allah, and Yours is the praise.

And blessed is Your Name, and exalted is Your Majesty.

And there is no deity to be worshipped but You.

A'wudhu billaahi mirash shaitaan ar-Rajiem

I seek refuge in Allah from Satan, the accursed....

[Repetitions of bowing and more prayers ... conclusion:]

Look over right shoulder (toward the angel recording your good deeds), then the left (toward the angel recording your wrongful deeds); say each time:

As Salamun 'alaikum wa rahmatullah

Peace and blessings of God be upon you.

Say personal prayers with hands cupped and palms up at chest level.

Wipe face with palms.

If praying in a group, stand and greet each other individually,

saying: "May God receive our prayers."

SOURCE: <<http://www.sufism.org/society/salaat/salaat.html>>

9 *Wudu*—ritual ablution.

10 *Rakat*—one cycle of bowing and praying.

Reason and revelation

The Qur'an serves as the basis of the Muslim's search for truth that guides the actions of believers. Thus the theological debates that developed are concerned with establishing with certainty the moral and ethical responsibility of the individual in relation to Allah.

The rationalist Mu'tazilah school (ninth century CE) emphasized the capacity, when aided by reason, to act in accordance with God's unity and justice. In response the more spiritual Ash'arites (tenth century CE), in asserting the omnipotence of Allah, attempted to shift the focus back to the Qur'an as the starting point of all ethical knowledge. The incorporation and translation of inspiring Greek ideas into Muslim ideals by subsequent philosophers refined Muslim philosophy. Logic, reason's tool, became instrumental in developing the moral and ethical system of Islamic law.

Rationalism by Ibn Sina (Avicenna)

Ibn Sina (980–1037 CE), the Persian philosopher, followed others such as al-Kindi (b. 800 CE?) and al-Razi (d. 926 CE). But it was the theories of logic, metaphysics, and politics of al-Farabi (d. 950 CE) that set the foundations for Ibn Sina's causal scheme. In Ibn Sina's Neoplatonist system, God's self-knowledge evokes a First Intelligence, then successive intelligences. Of these, the Active Intelligence produces all theoretical knowledge where logic, as well as the rational consideration of self-evident intuitive concepts, provides demonstrations of God's existence. Only prophets receive these principles directly, and they speak symbolically in their imaginative faculty so that believers can easily understand them.

Here, like al-Farabi, Ibn Sina holds that religion is the imitation of philosophy. But Ibn Sina's philosophical interpretations of his belief in the oneness of God and the prophethood of Muhammad were considered unacceptable by al-Ghazali, his foremost critic.

That person upon whom the First Intelligence gazes, so that he or she becomes refined, cultivated, subtle, beautiful, brave, and perfect in intellect, becomes a prophet. The First Intelligence becomes for this person as our intellect (is for us). And intellect for him or her is on the level of our soul. Just as the soul that grasps a truth from the intellect is learned, the intellect that grasps from the First Intelligence is a prophet.

But this state varies. Either it occurs in sleep, since in wakefulness the preoccupations of the senses and the multitude of activities become a hindrance; or it occurs in wakefulness, since in sleep the imaginative faculty predominates; or in each it is full and true. The motion and repose of this person is pure in legislative function. It never admits abrogation or distortion. This person is free of worldly distractions and secular controls and is devoted to the affairs of the Necessary Existent. The First Intelligence nourishes his or her soul from itself. This nourishing is called sanctification. As the Qur'an states, "We have supported him with the Holy Spirit." (The

First Intelligence) reveals itself to this person so that through (its) good auspices he or she comprehends. When he or she fully understands the universal,¹¹ he or she attains knowledge of the included particulars,¹² since this person does not need time or delay (to understand matters). Thus (Muhammad) said, "My Lord instructed me; and how well was my instruction; and I instructed 'Ali, and I instructed him well." Similarly (the Qur'an) said, "And We taught him knowledge from Us."... That which becomes clear from this summons is religion. And the law of that religion is religious creed. The acceptance of all this is faith. The name of that which prophets receive is revelation. When it is united with a human, and the Holy Spirit opens his or her way to itself and becomes governor of that disposition, it makes (that person) lofty in aspiration, and slight in greed, rancorous, without envy. Whatever this person does is through that Holy Power. Just as is (found) in the (prophetic) tradition, "I ask of you a faith that my heart touches."

Thus the Holy Spirit is the noblest of all souls, for all (other) souls are subordinate to the Universal Intelligence. The Holy Spirit, however, is that which is the intermediary between the Necessary Existent and the First Intelligence. The faith of that Power is the prophet, who is the messenger and bearer of the Holy Emanation. That Power is the fruit of proximity to the First Intelligence....

Faith consists of two parts: real and metaphorical, the husk and the core. Prophets have real faith, the core, for they bear the core and the truth. Ordinary people bear the husk, the form. Their faith is sensible, not intelligible. With the aid of the (intellectual) faculty, (the prophet) draws down the Holy Spirit. As he said, "I feel the breath of the Merciful from the Yemen." This Holy Spirit is a divine faculty. It is not a body, nor a substance, nor an accident. It is the pure divine Command: "Indeed, His is the Command and the Creation." The intent of (the word Command) is not (physical) speech and expression. People who do not consider this appropriate and consider the Holy Spirit to be a result of the Command do so because they do not know the reality of Command. There is no nobility greater than a soul joined to the divine Command.... The Qur'an says, "A day in which the Spirit and the angels arise in a row."¹³

When these preliminaries are known, it should (also) be known that reason comprehends truth through itself, while prophethood comprehends truths through Holy Support. Just as speech is not reason, reason is not summons, and summons is not prophethood. Recollection,¹³ stands between speech and reason, and apostleship between prophethood and summons.

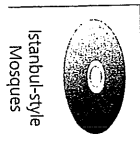
11 Universals—global principles, such as truth, justice, faith, or parenthood, e.g., Plato's ideas and Jung's archetypes.

12 Particulars—specific, individual, existing things or phenomena, instances of universals, such as an act of justice or a parent.

13 Recollection—a Platonic concept: the eternal soul's recalling universals known in Heaven.

Hence, whatever rational concepts that the intellect wishes to convey to the senses, it does so by means of recollection. (The latter then) formulates it in sensible sounds and unites (it) with speech, so that hearing apprehends.

source: Peter Heath, *Allegory and Philosophy in Avicenna (Ibn Sina)*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992, pp. 118-19



Istanbul-style
Mosques

Mysticism by al-Ghazali

Al-Ghazali (1058-1111) was an Ash'ari theologian, jurist, and mystic who criticized the rationalism of al-Farabi and Ibn Sina. Following a spiritual crisis, al-Ghazali concluded that systematic reasoning could not yield the insights of mysticism. In his treatise "The Incoherence of the Philosophers" (1095), he attacks philosophical theories that oppose religious principles. His metaphysics was "occasionalistic" and was clearly irreconcilable with the uniformly rational, causal order of Ibn Sina, which took power away from God and did not permit miracles. However, al-Ghazali believed that logic was not tied to any metaphysical system, and was thus a neutral tool that could be used in expounding ethical rules of conduct. His criticism of Ibn Sina had two effects: first, in clarifying Ibn Sina's study of logic, he popularized it; second, he thus made Greek modes of thinking more accessible.

When I had finished with these sciences, I next turned with set purpose to the method of mysticism (or Sufism). I knew that the complete mystic 'way' includes both intellectual belief and practical activity: the latter consists in getting rid of the obstacles in the self and in stripping off its base characteristics and vicious morals, so that the heart may attain to freedom from what is not God and to constant recollection of Him. . . .

I apprehended clearly that the mystics were men [sic] who had real experiences, not men of words, and that I had already progressed as far as was possible by way of intellectual apprehension. What remained for me was not to be attained by oral instruction and study but only by immediate experience and by walking in the mystic way. . . .

Next I considered the circumstances of my life, and realized that I was caught in a veritable thicket of attachments. I also considered my activities, of which the best was my teaching and lecturing, and realized that in them I was dealing with sciences that were unimportant and contributed nothing to the attainment of eternal life.

After that I examined my motive in my work of teaching, and realized that it was not a pure desire for the things of God, but that the impulse moving me was the desire for an influential position and public recognition. I saw for certain that I was on the brink of a crumbling bank of sand and in imminent danger of hell-fire unless I set about to mend my ways. . . .

For nearly six months beginning with Rajab¹⁴ 488 AH [July 1095 CE], I

¹⁴ Rajab—the month during which Muhammad ascended to Heaven.

was continuously tossed about between the attractions of worldly desires and the impulses towards eternal life. In that month the matter ceased to be one of choice and became one of compulsion. God caused my tongue to dry up so that I was prevented from lecturing. One particular day I would make an effort to lecture in order to gratify the hearts of my following, but my tongue would not utter a single word nor could I accomplish anything at all.

This impediment in my speech produced grief in my heart, and at the same time my power to digest and assimilate food and drink was impaired; I could hardly swallow or digest a single mouthful of food. My powers became so weakened that the doctors gave up all hope of successful treatment. "This trouble arises from the heart," they said, "and from there it has spread through the constitution: the only method of treatment is that the anxiety which has come over the heart should be allayed."

Thereupon, perceiving my impotence and having altogether lost my power of choice, I sought refuge with God most high as one who is driven to Him, because he is without further resources of his own. He answered me, He who "answers him who is driven (to Him by affliction) when he calls upon Him" (Qur'an 27:63). He made it easy for my heart to turn away from position and wealth, from children and friends.

In due course I entered Damascus, and there I remained for nearly two years with no other occupation than the cultivation of retirement and solitude, together with religious and ascetic exercises, as I busied myself purifying my soul, improving my character and cleansing my heart for the constant recollection of God most high, as I had learnt from my study of mysticism. I used to go into retreat for a period in the mosque of Damascus, going up the minaret of the mosque for the whole day and shutting myself in so as to be alone.

At length I made my way from Damascus to the Holy House (that is, Jerusalem). There I used to enter into the precinct of the Rock every day and shut myself in.

Next there arose in me a prompting to fulfil the duty of the Pilgrimage, gain the blessings of Mecca and Medina, and perform the visitation of the Messenger of God most high (may peace be upon him).

I continued at this stage for the space of ten years, and during these periods of solitude there were revealed to me things innumerable and unfathomable. This much I shall say about that in order that others may be helped: I learnt with certainty that it is above all the mystics who walk on the road of God; their life is the best life, their method the soundest method, their character the purest character; indeed, were the intellect of the intellectuals and the learning of the learned and the scholarship of the scholars, who are versed in the profundities of revealed truth, brought

together in the attempt to improve the life and character of the mystics, they would find no way of doing so: for to the mystics all movement and all rest, whether external or internal, brings illumination from the light of the lamp of prophetic revelation; and behind the light of prophetic revelation there is no other light on the face of the earth from which illumination may be received.

SOURCE: W. Montgomery Watt, *The Faith and Practice of Al-Ghazali*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1953, pp. 54-61

Two Truths by Ibn Rushd (Averroes)

Ibn Rushd (1126-98), physician, philosopher, and judge, came from a stimulating philosophical movement in Spain, which also included Ibn Bajjah (Avenpace, d. 1138) and Ibn Tufayl (d. 1185). Ibn Rushd's commentaries on Aristotle greatly influenced medieval Latin philosophy. His famous reply to al-Ghazali ("The Incoherence of the Incoherence", c. 1180) is a legal, theological, and philosophical defense of an Aristotelian causal view; it contests al-Ghazali's Ash'ari conception of divine causality as well as Ibn Sina's Neoplatonism. The West hailed Ibn Rushd as the originator of the theory of "two truths," where the higher truth was located in revelation. Rational truth was for philosophers, and religious truth for the masses. In Spain, Ibn Rushd was followed by Ibn 'Arabi.

Now since this religion is true and summons to the study which leads to knowledge of the Truth, we the Muslim community know definitely that demonstrative study does not lead to [conclusions] conflicting with what Scripture has given us: for truth does not oppose truth but accords with it and bears witness to it.

This being so, whenever demonstrative study leads to any manner of knowledge about any being, that being is inevitably either unmentioned or mentioned in Scripture. If it is unmentioned there is no contradiction, and it is in the same case as an act whose category is unmentioned, so that the lawyer has to infer it by reasoning from Scripture. If Scripture speaks about it, the apparent meaning of the words inevitably either accords or conflicts with the conclusions of demonstration about it. If this [apparent meaning] accords there is no argument. If it conflicts there is a call for allegorical interpretation of it. The meaning of "allegorical interpretation" is: extension of the significance of an expression from real to metaphorical significance, without forsaking therein the standard metaphorical practices of Arabic, such as calling a thing by the name of something resembling it or a cause or consequence or accompaniment of it, or other things such as are enumerated in accounts of the kinds of metaphorical speech.

SOURCE: "Philosophy Contains Nothing Opposed to Islam," in Averroes, *On the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy*, trans. George F. Hourani. London: Luzac and Co., 1967, p. 50
<<http://www.muslimphilosophy.com/ifa/htm>>

Sufi mysticism

Muslims who seek direct mystical experiences of Allah are known as Sufis. Initially Sufis lived simply, wore a coarse woolen garment, and practiced asceticism. Today many Muslims are associated with variations of Sufism, some emphasizing its uniquely Muslim quality, some its universalism. Techniques such as *dhikr* (prayer), *sama* (music), or dance (the "Whirling Dervishes") are customs used to induce trance states and thus refine spiritual awareness of Allah.

One notable Sufi, Ibn 'Arabi, perceived that in the world there is actually nothing but God, transcendent yet manifested on earth. Two other great Sufis, quoted below, were Rabi'a and Rumi. The Sufi Order of the West, founded in London in 1910 by Hazrat Inayat Khan (1882-1927; see chapter 13), furthered the universal theme of Sufism, seeking the unity of religions and relevance to the modern world.

The Rarest Treasure by Rabi'a

Rabi'a al-Adawiyya (713-801 CE) was born into a poor family and sold into slavery, but later freed. She devoted herself to a life of prayer, poverty, and seclusion. Her asceticism and pure love of God banished hatred and inspired many Sufis thereafter. She believed that one should not love out of desire for paradise or fear of hell, but for love of God alone.

"Doorkeeper of the Heart"

Your hope in my heart is the rarest treasure
Your Name on my tongue is the sweetest word
My choicest hours

Are the hours I spend with You—

O God, I can't live in this world
Without remembering You—

How can I endure the next world
Without seeing Your face?

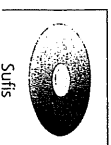
I am a stranger in Your country
And lonely among Your worshippers:
This is the substance of my complaint.

"Dream Fable"

I saw myself in a wide green garden, more beautiful than I could begin to understand. In this garden was a young girl. I said to her,

"How wonderful this place is!"

"Would you like to see a place even more wonderful than this?" she asked. "Oh yes," I answered. Then taking me by the hand, she led me on until we came to a magnificent palace, like nothing that was ever seen by human eyes. The young girl knocked on the door, and someone opened it.



Immediately both of us were flooded with light. God alone knows the inner meaning of the maidens we saw living there. Each one carried in her hand a serving-tray filled with light. The young girl asked the maidens where they were going, and they answered her, "We are looking for someone who was drowned in the sea, and so became a martyr. She never slept at night, not one wink! We are going to rub funeral spices on her body."

"Then rub some on my friend here," the young girl said.

"Once upon a time," said the maidens, "part of this spice and the fragrance of it clung to her body—but then she shied away."
Quickly the young girl let go of my hand, turned, and said to me:

"Your prayers are your light;

Your devotion is your strength;

Sleep is the enemy of both.

Your life is the only opportunity that life can give you.

If you ignore it, if you waste it,

You will only turn to dust."

Then the young girl disappeared.

In love, nothing exists between breast and Breast.

Speech is born out of longing,

True description from the real taste.

The one who tastes, knows;

The one who explains, lies.

How can you describe the true form of Something

In whose presence you are blotted out?

And in whose being you still exist?

And who lives as a sign for your journey?

source: *Rabi'a*, trans. Charles Upton. Brattleboro, VT: Threshold Books, 1988

The Sound of Love by Rumi

Jalal ad-Din al-Rumi (1207–73) was one of the greatest of Muslim mystics. Living in Persia and Turkey, he founded the order of the Mevlevi—the "Whirling Dervishes"—known for their spinning, ecstatic dances. His belief in reincarnation, his universalism, and his Platonic influence went beyond Islamic orthodoxy, but have been neglected in view of his strong influence otherwise.

With every breath the sound
of love surrounds us,

and we are bound for the depths
of space, without sightseeing.

We've been in orbit before
and know the angels there.

Let's go there again, Master.



for that is our land.
Yet we are beyond all that
and something more than angels.
Out beyond duality,

we have a home, and it is Glory.

That pure substance is

different from this dusty world.

What kind of place is this?

We once came down, soon we'll return.

A new happiness befriends us

as we work at offering our lives.

Muhammad, an ornament to the world,

is our caravan's chosen guide.

The sweetness we breathe on the wind

is from the scent of his hair,

and the radiance of this thought

is from the light of his day.

His face once split the moon in two—

she couldn't endure the sight of him.

Yet how lucky she was,

she who humbly received him.

Look into our hearts and see

the splitting moon in each breath.

Having seen that vision,

how can you still dream?

When the wave of *Am I not?* struck,

it wrecked the body's ship;

when the ship wrecks once more,

it will be the time of union.

source: William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1983, pp. 36–7

Between the Yea and the Nay by Ibn 'Arabi

Ibn 'Arabi Mubhi al-Din (1165–1240) was born in Spain. As a young man at a party in Seville, he heard a strange voice say: "O Muhammad, it was not for this that you were created." Disturbed, he retreated and had a vision in which he saw Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad. He studied with several spiritual masters, began traveling, and eventually wrote over 700 books, influencing many Sufis. He considered all prophets to be teachers of a primordial religion: "There is no knowledge except that taken from God." He taught a **monism** in which Being is essentially one: "There is nothing in Being but God." Ibn 'Arabi performed the pilgrimage to Mecca in 1202, then settled in Damascus in 1223 until his death. In this passage he tells of his meeting with the great Ibn Rushd.

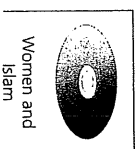
I spent the day in Cordoba at the house of Abu al-Walid Ibn Rushd. He had expressed a desire to meet me in person, since he had heard of certain revelations I had received while in retreat and had shown considerable astonishment concerning them. In consequence my father, who was one of his closest friends, took me with him on the pretext of business, in order to give Ibn Rushd the opportunity of making my acquaintance. I was at the time a beardless youth. As I entered the house, the philosopher rose to greet me with all the signs of friendliness and affection, and embraced me. Then he said to me "Yes," and showed pleasure on seeing that I had understood him. I, on the other hand, being aware of the motive for his pleasure, replied "No." Upon this Ibn Rushd drew back from me, his colour changed and he seemed to doubt what he had thought of me. He then put to me the following question, "What solution have you found as a result of mystical illumination and divine inspiration? Does it coincide with what is arrived at by speculative thought?" I replied, "Yes and no. Between the Yea and the Nay the spirits take their flight beyond matter, and the necks detach themselves from their bodies."

At this Ibn Rushd became pale, and I saw him tremble as he muttered the formula "there is no power save from God." This was because he understood my allusion . . . After that he sought from my father to meet me in order to present what he himself had understood: he wanted to know if it conformed with or was different from what I had. He was one of the great masters of reflection and rational consideration. He thanked God that in his own time he had seen someone who had entered into the retreat ignorant and had come out like this—without study, discussion, investigation or reading.

source: Muhyi al-Din Muhammad ibn 'Ali Ibn al-'Arabi, *Sufis of Andalusia*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971/Northleach, Gloucestershire: Beshara Publications, 1988, p. 23

Living Islam

Islam today is expanding and encountering the impact of technological culture. Often this creates a conflict with Muslim ethics. Three of the outstanding areas of debate are women, ecology, and violence in the name of religion.



Women and
Islam

Rights of Women: Qur'anic Ideals Versus Muslim

Practice by Riffat Hassan

Extensive research is currently being done to determine the legal position of women according to Muslim tradition. There are many sources of the tradition, the most important of which is the Qur'an. It is considered the Word of God, as transmitted to the Prophet Muhammad through the angel Gabriel. Other sources include sayings attributed to the Prophet, decisions of schools of law, and the Sharī'ah, or code of law. Feminist scholar Riffat Hassan, at the University of Louisville, has carefully researched the rights of women granted by the Qur'an but notes that these are not necessarily upheld.

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Muslim men never tire of repeating that Islam has given more rights to women than has any other religion. Certainly if by "Islam" is meant "Qur'anic Islam" the rights that it has given to women are, indeed, impressive. Not only do women partake of all the "General Rights" mentioned in the foregoing pages [rights to life, respect, justice, freedom, knowledge, sustenance, work, privacy, protection from slander and ridicule, development of one's aesthetic sensibilities and enjoyment of God's bounties, leaving one's homeland when there is oppression, and the "good life"], they are also the subject of much particular concern in the Qur'an. Underlying much of the Qur'an's legislation on women-related issues is the recognition that women have been disadvantaged persons in history to whom justice needs to be done by the Muslim Ummah. Unfortunately, however, the cumulative (Jewish, Christian, Hellenistic, Bedouin, and other) biases which existed in the Arab-Islamic culture of the early centuries of Islam infiltrated the Islamic tradition and undermined the intent of the Qur'an to liberate women from the status of chattels or inferior creatures and make them free and equal to men.

A review of Muslim history and culture brings to light many areas in which—Qur'anic teaching notwithstanding—women continued to be subjected to diverse forms of oppression and injustice, often in the name of Islam. While the Qur'an, because of its protective attitude toward all downtrodden and oppressed classes of people, appears to be weighted in many ways in favor of women, many of its women-related teachings have been used in patriarchal Muslim societies against, rather than for, women. Muslim societies, in general, appear to be far more concerned with trying to control women's bodies and sexuality than with their human rights. Many Muslims, when they speak of human rights, either do not speak of women's rights at all,¹⁵ or are mainly concerned with how a woman's chastity may be protected.¹⁶ (They are apparently not worried about protecting men's chastity.) Women are the targets of the most serious violations of human rights which occur in Muslim societies in general. Muslims say with great pride that Islam abolished female infanticide; true, but it must also be mentioned that one of the most common crimes in a number of Muslim countries (e.g., in Pakistan) is the murder of women by their husbands. These so-called "honor-killings" are, in fact, extremely dishonorable and are frequently used to camouflage other kinds of crimes.

Female children are discriminated against from the moment of birth, for it is customary in Muslim societies to regard a son as a gift, and a daughter as a trial, from God. Therefore, the birth of a son is an occasion for celebration while the birth of a daughter calls for commiseration, if not lamentation. Many girls are married when they are still minors, even

15 For example, R. A. Jullundhri, "Human Rights in Islam," in *Understanding Human Rights*, ed. A. D. Falconer, Dublin: Irish School of Economics, 1980.

16 For example, A. A. Maududi, *Human Rights in Islam*, Lahore, Pakistan: Islamic Publications, 1977.

though marriage in Islam is a contract and presupposes that the contracting parties are both consenting adults. Even though so much Qur'anic legislation is aimed at protecting the rights of women in the context of marriage,¹⁷ women cannot claim equality with their husbands. The husband, in fact, is regarded as his wife's gateway to heaven or hell and the arbiter of her final destiny. That such an idea can exist within the framework of Islam—which, in theory, rejects the idea of there being any intermediary between a believer and God—represents both a profound irony and a great tragedy.

Although the Qur'an presents the idea of what we today call a "no-fault" divorce and does not make any adverse judgments about divorce,¹⁸ Muslim societies have made divorce extremely difficult for women, both legally and through social penalties. Although the Qur'an states clearly that the divorced parents of a minor child must decide by mutual consultation how the child is to be raised and that they must not use the child to hurt or exploit each other,¹⁹ in most Muslim societies, women are deprived both of their sons (generally at age 7) and their daughters (generally at age 12). It is difficult to imagine an act of greater cruelty than depriving a mother of her children simply because she is divorced. Although polygamy was intended by the Qur'an to be for the protection of orphans and widows,²⁰ in practice Muslims have made it the Sword of Damocles which keeps women under constant threat. Although the Qur'an gave women the right to receive an inheritance not only on the death of a close relative, but also to receive other bequests or gifts during the lifetime of a benevolent caretaker, Muslim societies have disapproved greatly of the idea of giving wealth to a woman in preference to a man, even when her need or circumstances warrant it. Although the purpose of the Qur'anic legislation dealing with women's dress and conduct²¹ was to make it safe for women to go about their daily business (since they have the right to engage in gainful activity as witnessed by Surah 4: An-Nisa':32 without fear of sexual harassment or molestation), Muslim societies have put many of them behind veils and shrouds and locked doors on the pretext of protecting their chastity, forgetting that according to the Qur'an,²² confinement to their homes was not a normal way of life for chaste women but a punishment for "unchastity."

Woman and man, created equal by God and standing equal in the sight of God, have become very unequal in Muslim societies. The Qur'anic description of man and woman in marriage: "They are your garments/And you are their garments" (Surah 2: Al-Baqarah:187), implies closeness,

17 For instance, see Surah 4: An-Nisa':4, 19; Surah 24: An-Nur:33; Surah 2: Al-Baqarah:187; Surah 9: At-Tawbah:71; Surah 7: Al-A'raf:189; Surah 30: Ar-Rum:21.

18 For instance, see Surah 2: Al-Baqarah:231, 241.

19 The reference here is to Surah 2: Al-Baqarah:233.

20 The reference here is to Surah 4: An-Nisa':2-3.

21 For instance, see Surah 24: An-Nur:30-1; Surah 33: Al-Ahzab:59.

22 The reference here is to Surah 4: An-Nisa':15.

mutuality, and equality. However, Muslim culture has reduced many, if not most, women to the position of puppets on a string, to slave-like creatures whose only purpose in life is to cater to the needs and pleasures of men. Not only this, it has also had the audacity and the arrogance to deny women direct access to God. It is one of Islam's cardinal beliefs that each person—man or woman—is responsible and accountable for his or her individual actions. How, then, can the husband become the wife's gateway to heaven or hell? How, then, can he become the arbiter not only of what happens to her in this world but also of her ultimate destiny? Such questions are now being articulated by an increasing number of Muslim women and they are bound to threaten the existing balance of power in the domain of family relationships in most Muslim societies.

However, despite everything that has gone wrong with the lives of countless Muslim women down the ages due to patriarchal Muslim culture, there is hope for the future. There are indications from across the world of Islam that a growing number of Muslims are beginning to reflect seriously upon the teachings of the Qur'an as they become disenchanting with capitalism, communism, and western democracy. As this reflection deepens, it is likely to lead to the realization that the supreme task entrusted to human beings by God, of being God's deputies on earth, can only be accomplished by establishing justice which the Qur'an regards as a prerequisite for authentic peace. Without the elimination of the inequities, inequalities, and injustices that pervade the personal and collective lives of human beings, it is not possible to talk about peace in Qur'anic terms. Here, it is of importance to note that there is more Qur'anic legislation pertaining to the establishment of justice in the context of family relationships than on any other subject. This points to the assumption implicit in much Qur'anic learning, namely, that if human beings can learn to order their homes justly so that the human rights of all within its jurisdiction—children, women, and men—are safeguarded, then they can also order their society and the world at large justly. In other words, the Qur'an regards the home as a microcosm of the Ummah and the world community, and emphasizes the importance of making it "the abode of peace" through just living.

SOURCE: Excerpted from Riffat Hassan, "Are Human Rights Compatible with Islam?" <<http://religiouconsultation.org/hassan2.htm>>

Ecology: A Sacred Science by Seyyed H. Nasr

The ecology crisis will not be solved simply by social engineering, new technologies, or by creating an ethics expanded to include the non-human, argues Seyyed Nasr, who teaches Islamic Studies at Washington University. What is needed is a *scientia sacra*, a sacred science that brings out our suppressed sense of the interconnectedness of all beings. We cannot bestow sacredness on nature, because it is already there. The major world religions have forgotten this, although the indigenous sacred ways of tribal peoples have long remembered it. Religions need also to

respect the varied sacred ways of each other's traditions. Muslims in India, for example, need to respect the Hindu sense of the sacredness of the Ganges River. Awakening to the signature of God in everything will be the foundation of a new ecological ethic.

The Earth is bleeding and the natural environment suffering in an unprecedented manner from the onslaught of man [sic]. The problem is now too evident to deny, and the solutions proposed are many but for the most part insufficient. Earth will not be healed by some kind of social engineering or changes in a technology that cannot but treat the world of nature as pure quantity to be manipulated for human needs whether they be real or imaginary. All such actions are no more than cosmetics with an effect that is of necessity only skin deep.

What is needed is a rediscovery of nature as sacred reality and the rebirth of man as the guardian of the sacred, which implies the death of the image of man and nature that has given birth to modernism and its subsequent developments. It does not mean the "invention of a new man" as some have claimed, but rather the resurfacing of the true man, the pontifical man whose reality we still bear within ourselves. Nor does it mean the invention of a sacred view of nature, as if man could ever invent the sacred, but rather the reformulation of the traditional cosmologies and views of nature held by various religions throughout history. It means most of all taking seriously the religious understanding of the order of nature as knowledge corresponding to a vital aspect of cosmic reality and not only subjective conjectures or historical constructs. There must be a radical restructuring of the intellectual landscape to enable us to take this type of knowledge of nature seriously, which means to accept the findings of modern science only within the confines of the limitations that its philosophical suppositions, epistemologies,²³ and historical development have imposed upon it, while rejecting completely its totalitarian claims as *the* science of the natural order. It means to rediscover a science of nature that deals with the *existence* of natural objects in their relation to Being, with their subtle as well as gross aspects, with their interrelatedness to the rest of the cosmos and to us, with their symbolic significance and with their nexus to higher levels of existence leading to the Divine Origin of all things.

Furthermore, in speaking of the religious view of the order of nature we must now do so in a global context reflecting the global character of the problem at hand. It is necessary to delve into religions as different as the Shamanic and Hindu, Buddhist and Abrahamian, without a relativization that would destroy the sense of the sacred in each tradition. There are perspectives and schools within most religions that have not paid much attention to the domain of nature, as seen especially in Western Christianity, but within every integral tradition there are those schools that have dealt

with the domain of nature both in its spiritual and cosmic reality. It is those schools that must be sought and studied across religious frontiers in a manner so as to preserve the authenticity of each tradition while bringing out the spiritual significance of nature in a universal fashion. . . .

On a more practical level, it is necessary to create respect on behalf of the followers of a particular religion for what is held to be sacred in another religion not only in the domain, say, of sacred art and architecture but also in the world of nature. A Muslim in Benares does not consider the Ganges to be sacred for himself but must accept its sacredness for the Hindus and respect it, as was done for Hindu holy places by traditional Muslims of Benares for centuries and vice versa as far as Muslim holy places were concerned; this mutual respect has continued for the most part and still survives to some extent despite recent communal tragedies. The respect accorded to manmade sites possessing religious significance must also be extended to natural ones despite difficulties that come about when two or three religions claim the same site or land as holy, as we find in Palestine and Israel, or when the economic considerations of a more powerful people confront the belief system of others who consider a particular forest, river, or mountain to be sacred. The despicable record of the modern world in overlooking the claims of others to the sacred not only in an abstract manner but also concretely, such as land, rivers, forests, etc.—as seen in the destruction of much of the habitat of the Native American peoples—has been itself a major cause of the present environmental crisis and cannot any longer act as a model for future dealings among peoples. In evoking the religious understanding of the order of nature, this sense of respect for the religious teachings concerning nature of religions other than our own must be strengthened in the same way that respect for other human beings or houses of worship of other faiths is encouraged, at least by the majority of those concerned with religion and spirituality on a global scale today.

Religions serve as the source of both an ethics involving the environment and a knowledge of the order of nature. They can abet and strengthen one another in both domains if authentic religious teachings are not compromised and diluted in the face of secularism. This is particularly true of Western Christianity, which for so long has tried to identify itself with a civilization that has grown more secular every day. Traditional Christian teachings even in the domain of nature are in fact much closer to those of other religions than to the modern secularist philosophies of the West, as witnessed by questions concerning the sanctity of life and abortion. . . .

Finally, every being in the world of nature not only issues from the Divine Principle or the One, but also reflects Its Wisdom and, to use theistic language, sings the praises of the Lord. The religious understanding of the order of nature, which we can share only on the condition of conforming ourselves to the world of the Spirit, enables us to read the signatures of God upon the face of things and hear their prayers. It thereby re-creates a link between us and the world of nature that involves not only our bodies and

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psyches but also the Spirit within us and our final end. It enables us to see the sacred in nature and therefore to treat it not only with respect but also as part of our greater self. It reminds us how precious is each being created by God and how great a sin to destroy wantonly any creature that by virtue of its existence bears the imprint of the Divine and is witness to the One who is our Origin and End.

source: Seyyed H. Nasr, *Religion and the Order of Nature*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 286-9



Muslim Resurgence in Tatarstan

Islam and the West: So, are Civilisations at War?

Interview with Samuel Huntington

Are we caught in a war against terror, or the "clash of civilizations" predicted in 1993 by Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington? Interviewed here by Michael Steinberger of the *New York Times*, he answers critics who fear that his generalizations fuel conflict.

Is this the clash of civilisations you have been warning about for nearly a decade?

Clearly, Osama bin Laden wants it to be a clash of civilisations between Islam and the West. The first priority for our government is to try to prevent it from becoming one. But there is a danger it could move in that direction. The administration has acted exactly the right way in attempting to rally support among Muslim governments. But there are pressures here in the United States—to attack other terrorist groups and states that support terrorist groups. And that, it seems to me, could broaden it into a clash of civilisations.

Were you surprised the terrorists were all educated, middle-class individuals?

No. The people involved in fundamentalist movements, Islamic or otherwise, are often people with advanced educations. Most of them do not become terrorists. But these are intelligent, ambitious young people who aspire to put their educations to use in a modern economy, and they become frustrated by the lack of opportunity. They are cross-pressured as well by the forces of globalisation and what they regard as Western imperialism and cultural domination. They are attracted to Western culture, but also repelled by it.

You have written that "Islam has bloody borders". What do you mean by this?

If you look around the borders of the Muslim world, you find a whole series of local conflicts involving Muslims and non-Muslims: Bosnia, Kosovo, the Caucasus, Chechnya, Tajikistan, Kashmir, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, North Africa, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Muslims also fight Muslims, and much more than the people of other civilisations fight each other.

So are you suggesting Islam promotes violence?

I don't think Islam is any more violent than any other religions, and I suspect if you added it all up, more people have been slaughtered by

Christians over the centuries than by Muslims. But the key factor is the demographic factor. Generally speaking, the people who go out and kill other people are males between the ages of 16 and 30.

During the 1960s, 70s and 80s there were high birth rates in the Muslim world, and this has given rise to a huge youth bulge. But the bulge will fade. Muslim birth rates are going down; in fact, they have dropped dramatically in some countries. Islam did spread by the sword originally, but I don't think there is anything inherently violent in Muslim theology.

Islam, like any great religion, can be interpreted in a variety of ways. People like bin Laden can seize on things in the Koran as commands to go out and kill infidels. But the Pope did exactly the same thing when he launched the Crusades.

Should the United States do more to promote democracy and human rights in the Middle East?

It would be desirable but also difficult. In the Islamic world there is a natural tendency to resist the influence of the West, which is understandable given the long history of conflict between Islam and Western civilisation.

Obviously, there are groups in most Muslim societies that are in favour of democracy and human rights, and I think we should support those groups. But we then get into this paradoxical situation: many of the groups arguing against repression in those societies are fundamentalists and anti-American. We saw this in Algeria. Promoting democracy and human rights are very important goals for the United States, but we also have other interests.

President Carter was committed to promoting human rights, and when I served on his National Security Council, we had countless discussions about this. But nobody ever mentioned the idea of trying to promote human rights in Saudi Arabia, and for a very obvious reason.

Apart from our closest allies, no country has lined up more solidly behind the United States than Russia. Is this when Russia turns decisively to the West?

Russia is turning to the West for pragmatic reasons. The Russians feel threatened by Muslim terrorists and see it as in their interest to line up with the West and to gain some credit with the United States in the hope we will reduce our push for NATO expansion into the Baltic states and missile defence. It's a coincidence of interests, but we shouldn't blow it up into a big realignment. But I think they are very worried about the rise of China, and this will turn them to the West.

India and China, two countries you said would be at odds with the United States, have joined in this war on terrorism. Instead of the West versus the rest, could the clash become Islam versus the rest?

Conceivably. You have Muslims fighting Westerners, Orthodox Christians, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists. But there are a billion Muslims in the world, stretching across the Eastern hemisphere from western Africa to eastern Indonesia, and they interact with dozens of different people. So they have more opportunity to clash with others.

The most frequent criticism leveled against you is that you portray entire civilisations as unified blocks.

That is totally false. The major section on Islam in my book is called "Consciousness Without Cohesion", in which I talk about all the divisions in the Islamic world, about Muslim-on-Muslim fighting. Even in the current crisis, they are still divided. You have a billion people, with all these sub-cultures, the tribes. Islam is less unified than any other civilisation. The problem with Islam is the problem Henry Kissinger expressed with regard to Europe: "If I want to call Europe, what number do I call?" If you want to call the Islamic world, what number do you call? If there was a dominant power in the Islamic world, you could deal with them. Now what you see is the different Islamic groups competing with each other.

SOURCE: *The Observer*, October 21, 2001
<<http://observer.guardian.co.uk/islam/story/0,,577982,00.html>>



The United States and Islam

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God in a World of Christians and Muslims

by Martin Forward

In contrast to the "clash of civilizations" scenario proposed by Samuel Huntington, Martin Forward gave the following sermon shortly after 9/11, drawing on his extensive personal experience of both Christianity and Islam. He is now the Executive Director of the Wackerlin Center for Faith and Action at Aurora University. Previously he was the Academic Dean of Wesley House and a member of the Faculty of Divinity at Cambridge University. An ordained British Methodist minister and also an ordained deacon in the Church of South India, he has traveled extensively and has written numerous books and articles on Christianity, Islam, and inter-religious dialogue.

When I think of Islam and Muslims, four people come readily to mind. Mohammed Alam is British, born in Pakistan. We met when I sought a person to teach me Urdu, the Muslim language of North India and Pakistan. His family and mine became fast friends. He once told me of a dream of his. Muslims hope to die with the name of God being whispered in their ear. In his dream, I was there to fulfill that role for him. Alam's a large, humorous, warm man. I love him dearly.

The second person? Over a quarter of a century ago, I lived in India and struggled to learn Arabic from Hayath Khan, prayer-leader at Malakpet, a suburb of the city of Hyderabad, which, in my dreams, is still my city. In appearance, he was many people's idea of a Muslim: white coat and trousers, long white beard, black cap on his head. In our lessons, as he recited words from the Koran, Islam's holy scripture, in a Muslim's view the exact words of God, tears flowed down cheeks and into his beard. I caused him problems. He liked me. He knew that I respected Islam, and loved some Muslims, but that I'd no intention of converting to Islam. So he worried and fretted lest, in the life of the world to come, I should be among the losers

and miss out on paradisaical joys. Like lots of religious people, Hayath Khan had to make a choice about whether God loved the many or the few. His heart told him one thing; bits of his tradition taught him something else. I remember him with much affection.

Sabiba Latif was also a Muslim friend from my Indian days. She was a frail woman, who worried about my health, not hers. She often fed me, and gave me a wonderful recipe for lentil curry and, if she had a sin, it was an overwhelming love for chocolate. In later years, whenever I visited India from England, I had to bring lots of chocolate for her and hope that it wouldn't melt under the glare of the Indian sun and of customs officials. Sabiba was a saintly woman, whom I mourned greatly when she died. May she rest in peace and rise in glory.

Last, but not least, I remember my father. In one sense, he provided me with my love of Islam, since, due to his work, I lived in Aden when I was nine through eleven years old. Aden: that entrancing, barren heap of land at the heel of the Arabian peninsula, where I met Muslims, saw them at prayer, and had my imagination and respect kindled for a faith that gave much to its practitioners and demanded a great deal of them. Years after I began my long acquaintance with the world of Islam, my dear old dad told me that he almost became a Muslim when he fought alongside Arabs in the Second World War, so taken was he with their life and faith.

There are other forms of Islam than that observed, with gratitude and delight, by my father, and those practiced by Mohammed Alam, Hayath Khan and Sabiba Latif. I expect that, on September 11, the pilots of the hijacked planes died thinking that they'd done a religious deed, and with the words "*Allahu akbar*" on their lips, which mean "God is greater", greater, presumably, than, in their judgment, America, the great Satan.

The thing is: all religions are complex realities, offering a variety of choices to believers as they reflect upon them and live by them. Am I, a Christian, compelled to approve the deeds of the Inquisition in the late medieval and early modern eras, which expelled Muslims and Jews from Christian lands, or even tortured or killed them in the name of the prince of peace? Absolutely not: I prefer to make very different choices from my religious past

If I were a Muslim, I would be aware of the fact that Islam was, in its origins, the most successful of religions. After the Prophet Muhammad's death on June 8, 632, the Muslims quickly overthrew the Persian Empire and reduced the Eastern Roman Empire, Byzantium, to a shadow of its former self. Christian and Jewish heartlands fell before Muslim invaders. Jerusalem, Alexandria, North Africa, Spain: all succumbed to the Arab invaders, fueled by their fervent belief in the One God and the last and greatest of his prophets, Muhammad. Exactly one hundred years after the death of Muhammad, in 732, Muslim forces were defeated by the Christian Charles Martel at the battle of Poitiers, in south-western France. It's fascinating to speculate what would have happened had the battle taken a

different turn. Europeans today would likely be Muslims, and history would have taken rather a different course than it has.

For one thousand years, Europeans lived in fear of Muslim conquest. No wonder, then, that Muslims have filled the European imagination with fear. The fall of Constantinople to Muslim Turks in 1453 ended Christian rule in Eastern Europe for almost half a millennium. As late as 1683, Ottoman Muslims laid siege to the gates of Vienna. Such events led to deadly suspicion between Christian and Muslim in the Balkans, which, always liable to be fanned into a conflagration, has engulfed Kosovo and elsewhere, appallingly, in the last decade.

Islam is not, however, entirely or even mostly a violent religion. The largest Muslim-population country in the world is Indonesia. There, most people were converted to Islam by traders from abroad, traders who preferred mysticism to market-forces and bartering to battering. Even when Islam has countenanced and practiced violence, its scholars have, for the most part, emphasized defensive struggle rather than aggressive and offensive wars.

Of course, Muslims fear Christian militarism, too. The crusades are but one example, when violent, oversexed, landless and fanatical soldiers of faith set off to rescue the Christian Holy Land from infidel Muslims, and killed lots of Jews and different sorts of Christians before ever they reached the Middle East and saw a Muslim. That's one sort of Christianity, but let's not go there, for God's sake.

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For the sake of God: not, let me underline, for the sake of religion.

Contrary to much popular opinion, religions, the one or the many, are not God. They are human creations, attempting to map out as best they can, in mortal life, the ways of the immortal God among his creatures. At their best: religions are porous to the divine presence, they provide us with homes within which the human spirit can flourish, and help us grow in holiness. At their worst: well, think of the Aztecs who, for all their remarkable accomplishments, raided other nations for youngsters to kill as human sacrifices. They would hold up the still beating heart of their victim as an offering to God.

The prophet Muhammad made choices from his religious past. He rejected polytheism, the worship of many gods, and, building on the belief in one God that a few Arabs followed, he brought Islam to people. Islam means submitting to the one God and, in submitting, finding peace and meaning. Jesus also made choices from his religious past. He said: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

Muhammad and Jesus made choices from the religion of their day, rejecting some things and accepting others. So, also, like all people, whether we admit it or not, like it or hate it, we have to choose elements from our religious heritage upon which to construct our life. On what basis do we

make our choices? No doubt, personal factors come into play, but I reckon it's best done on the basis of what the majority of the evidence seems to suggest. Remarkably, most religions argue, suggest or just assume that Transcendent reality presses down upon us, beckons us, allures us into hearing and following what he has to say. In other words, God reveals himself to us: not always with the clarity we would like; but I guess that's a deliberate attempt to get us thinking about and engaging with what she desires for our good.

When some Christian tells us that September 11 was God's wake-up call to America, commanding us to get rid of gays, new agers, Muslims, feminists or whomever, I remind myself that it's more important to attempt to hear God's word than the comments of one of his self-appointed spokespersons who, instead of listening to God, project onto him all their unpleasant stuff.

If God speaks through the scriptures of the great religions, as I believe him to do, then I am entranced by Jesus' teaching of the fatherhood of God, who is not some unpleasant, bossy patriarch but a loving parent. I'm mindful that every chapter of the Muslim scripture bar one begins "in the name of God, the merciful one, the source of mercy." Scriptures don't always provide an edifying read. We can find bad temper in most scripture, or the emphatic assertion or casual assumption of a cultural practice that has now passed its sell-by date, or illogical reasoning, or a pile of other irritating or even offensive things.

Scriptures, too, like religion, are liable to be confused by many people with Transcendent reality. I prefer to invoke the Daoist image that it's the foolish man who mistakes the finger pointing to the moon for the moon itself. The finger may be a little crooked and uncertain, but the reality to which it points is sublimely real.

The choices we should make are not eccentric, or self-serving. They are ones that have been sifted by time and found to work. Christians, by and large, know that God is love, even though it's usually best to get them to leave the statement there and not hear all the qualifications they make, which usually betray their pride and prejudice rather than their wisdom. Muslims fundamentally know that God is merciful, even though, again, they often hedge it round with reservations that tell us more about them than about God. Oddly, most people find it easier to deal with an ornery God than a gracious one, but we shouldn't succumb to that ease. Religions are most amazing when they tell us that the one who made the stars is wonderfully kind rather than as crabby as we are.

My father, of blessed memory, nearly became a Muslim. I have never wanted to make that choice but, in a world more closely bound yet more complex than ever before, we need to respectfully learn about the other, not to undermine but to understand. Islam is too important to be left to Muslims, and Christianity too complicated to yield its secrets only to Christians. We can learn from the other, even about ourselves.

We are brought face-to-face with true religion when, just occasionally, we meet a goodly and a godly person, Christian or Muslim or whomever. Then I am reminded of a favorite saying of mine, by William Penn. He was a difficult man, to be sure, hardly saintly, but certainly a wrestler with God. He wrote:

The humble, meek, merciful, just, pious and devout souls are everywhere of one religion, and when death has taken off the mask, they will know one another though the diverse liveries they wear here make them strangers.

source: <<http://www.aucora.edu/cfa/published/muslims.htm>>

GLOSSARY

'Aisha Muhammad's youngest wife, who was the source of many Hadith.

Fatha The first Sura of the Qur'an.

Hadith A traditional report about the Prophet's sayings or actions.

Hajj The holy pilgrimage to Mecca, taken at least once in a lifetime if affordable.

Hijrah (or Hegira) The journey of the Prophet from Mecca to Medina in 622 CE.

Iconoclasm Prohibition of images in art to prevent distortion of Allah's reality, sometimes leading to the destruction of images.

Imam A Muslim prayer leader, and a Shi'ite religious leader.

Isnah Authoritative chain of transmission of a Hadith.

Jihad The Muslim term for struggle, with two meanings: an inner struggle against evil, and an outer struggle for a Muslim social order.

Khadija Muhammad's first wife, who supported him when he received prophecies.

Mecca The holy city of Islam whose Ka'ba is the goal of Hajj pilgrimages.

Monism The philosophy that ultimately only one substance exists underneath the multiplicity of appearances.

Mosque Sacred building for Muslim worship, usually an open-roofed rectangle with towers (minarets) for calling to prayer.

Night Journey Muhammad's visionary journey to Jerusalem and up through seven heavens to Allah to receive revelations.

Salaat Islamic prayer five times a day, and especially ritual worship at mosque on Friday noon.

Shari'ah The divine law, as interpreted by judges, based on Qur'an and Hadith.

Sufi Muslim mystical tradition, some say Islamic only, some say universal.

Sura A chapter in the Qur'an.

Ummah The Muslim community as a whole.

HOLY DAYS

Friday Mosque Worship

10th of Muharram New Year

12th of Rabi'al-Awwal The Prophets' Birthday

27th of Rajab Muhammad's Ascension

Ramadan Month of Fasting

27th of Ramadan Night of Power

1st of Shawwal Breaking of the Fast;

Pilgrimage Season

Dhu al-Qa'da Pilgrimage Season

8th–13th of Dhu al-Hijha Hajj: Pilgrimage to Mecca

HISTORICAL OUTLINE

570 CE—birth of Muhammad

c. 610 CE—revelations of Qur'an begin

622 CE—migration from Mecca to Medina (Hijrah)

c. 630 CE—Muhammad converts southern Arabian tribes

632 CE—death of Muhammad; election of Abu Bakr as first caliph

633 CE—spread of Islam begins, expanding to northern Egypt, Palestine, Iran

650 CE—Canon of the Qur'an set

691 CE—Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem completed

750 CE—Islam spreads to Spain, southern Russia, Afghanistan

750–1258—Islam reaches its peak under Abbasid caliphs: control of Indonesia, India, Middle East, Egypt, Turkey, Balkans, Spain; much cultural development

by 870 CE—Muhammad Ibn Ismail al-Bukhari writes authoritative Hadith (*Sahih Bukhari*)

by 875 CE—Abu-l-Husayn Muslim writes authoritative Hadith (*Sahih Muslim*)

980–1037—Ibn Sina (Avicenna), major rationalist philosopher

1058–1111—Al-Ghazali, leading mystical philosopher

1126–98—Ibn Rushd (Averroes), important philosopher of "two truths"—revelation and reason

1165–1240—Ibn 'Arabi, influential mystical philosopher

1171—Salah-al-Din recaptures Jerusalem from Crusaders

1300–1400s—Christians fight to retake Spain using Inquisition

1453—Turks conquer Constantinople, renaming it Istanbul

1556—Akbar becomes the Muslim Mughal emperor in India

1800–1900s—many Muslim colonies come under European control

1910—Sufi Order of the West founded by Hazrat Inayat Khan

1947—Muslim-majority Pakistan separates from Hindu-majority India

1970s—oil-wealthy Muslim nations start OPEC; Muslim resurgence begins

2001—September 11 attacks in United States

2003—United States and allies invade Iraq

REVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1 Based on the readings, what kind of society did Muhammad encounter?
- 2 What views of women, children, and divorce does the Qur'an teach?
- 3 Describe how three major Islamic philosophers saw the relation between reason and revelation.
- 4 What is Sufism? Describe the thoughts of three major Sufis.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 Why do you think that of all possibilities, "submission" is the major theme of Islam? What various forms does it take?
- 2 Do you think that Islam promotes violence more or less than any other religion?
- 3 How has Islam shaped its place in geography and history, and how has it been shaped by these factors?

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