

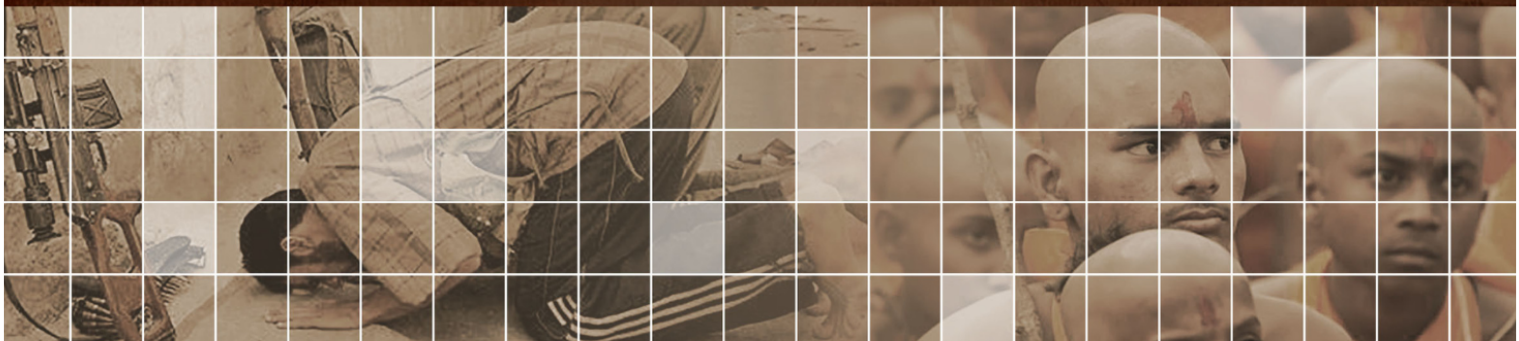


WORLD RELIGIONS

DENOMINATIONS



WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?



The God Who Is There

The Religious Impulse

- We were made by God

God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:27)

- We were made to know God

They knew God ... (Romans 1:21)

- We were made to worship God

Although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. (Romans 1:21-23)

The Development of Man's Religions¹

Is It Psychological?

What is the origin of man's religion? Why does every culture in the world worship some divine being? Anthropologists and historians have studied this question, and presently there are three primary theories: the subjective theory, the evolutionary theory, and the theory of original monotheism.

The subjective theory teaches that religion originates with man. Humans have a psychological need for a transcendent being that provides meaning and hope to their existence in this vast impersonal universe. Adherents of this view believe that this religious makeup exists below our conscious awareness. Cultures have various views of reality according to their experience, but the awareness and desire for religion is a universal phenomenon. They therefore conclude that this disposition lies in our subconscious. In other words, our beliefs about a transcendent being are not the result of external realities or interactions with such a being. Rather, these beliefs derive from our psyches.

These feelings are expressed in more concrete terms through symbols and attitudes, not through a set of defined belief systems. As a culture progresses, these symbols and attitudes are developed into a set of beliefs and practices.

Several proponents were important in promoting this theory. Friedrich Schleiermacher believed that religion began with a feeling of dependence. This led to a need for an object to depend on which resulted in the idea of God. Ludwig Feuerbach taught that the concept of God is really a picture of an idealized person. Sigmund Freud believed that God derived from the basic human need for a father image. The idealized father figure becomes our image of God.²

¹ From Patrick Zukeran, Probe Ministries

² See Winfried Corduan, *Neighboring Faiths*, (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 22-23.

The subjective theory may teach us about human nature, but it does not adequately explain the origin of religion or where this universal desire to know and understand God comes from. Dr. Winfried Corduan writes, "I may carry in my subconscious mind an abstract representation of God, but I cannot on that basis conclude that there is no independently existing, objective being that is God. God may have created me with that idea so that I can relate to God."³ Every effect has a cause. What is the cause of this powerful desire for a relationship with God? If we are the products of a divine creator, that would explain this universal drive in all mankind to know Him because He placed this desire within us.

The Bible provides answers to the questions the subjective theory cannot answer. Genesis 1 states that we are created in the image of God. Therefore, we were created in the image of God with the intent to have a relationship with Him. Romans 1:20 states that all men have ingrained in their hearts a knowledge of God. Chapter 2 states that our conscience testifies that a moral law giver exists. The desire for God is a basic part of human nature.

Darwinian Theory of Religion

The second theory regarding the origin of religion is the evolutionary approach. This is the most popular view that is taught or implied in the study of religion. Proponents of this theory believe, as in the subjective theory, that religion originates with man. Religion is the result of an evolutionary process in human culture.

In the most primitive period of a culture, *the most basic form of religion begins with an innate feeling that a spiritual force exists*. This force is impersonal and pervades all of creation. It is called mana, derived from the name given to it by the inhabitants of Melanesia. Mana may be concentrated more intensely in some areas and objects more than others. A magnificent tree, or unique rock, or a certain animal may contain a higher concentration of mana.

The goal is to manipulate this force so that one may attain a desired outcome. Objects such as sticks or dolls, called fetishes, may contain the force and be used or worshipped.

The next stage is *animism*. At this stage, the force is visualized as personal spirits. Animism teaches that a spirit or spiritual force lies behind every event, and many objects of the physical world carry some spiritual significance.

There are two categories of spirits: nature spirits and ancestor spirits. Nature spirits have a human form and inhabit natural objects such as plants, rocks, or lakes. Ancestral spirits are the spirits of the ancestors. Both categories of spirits are limited in knowledge, power, and presence. One must maintain a favorable relationship with the spirits or else suffer their wrath.

The next stage is *polytheism*. Cultures progress from belief in finite spirits to the worship of gods. From polytheism a culture evolves to henotheism, which is belief in many gods but worship directed to only one of them. The final stage is *monotheism*, the worship of one God.

³ Ibid., 24.

There are several problems with this theory. The first is that these stages of development have never actually been observed. There is no record of a culture moving in sequence from the mana stage to the monotheistic stage as described in the evolutionary model. With mana and animism, evolutionary proponents expect that cultures in these stages would be free of the notion of any gods. However, this is not the case. Animistic cultures have gods, and most have a belief in a supreme being. Finally, there is evidence that indicates religions actually develop in the opposite direction from the evolutionary model.

For these reasons the evolutionary and subjective theories do not provide an adequate explanation for the origin of religion. Does history or even the Bible provide us with a better answer?

Original Monotheism

The third model for the origin of religion is original monotheism. This theory teaches that religion originates with God disclosing Himself to man. The first form religion takes is monotheism, and it deviates from there. Dr. Winfried Corduan identifies nine characteristics of man's first form of religion.

- God is a personal God.
- He is referred to with masculine grammar and qualities.
- God is believed to live in the sky.
- He has great knowledge and power.
- He created the world.
- God is the author of standards of good and evil.
- Human beings are God's creatures and are expected to live by his standards.
- Human beings have become alienated from God by disobeying his standards.
- Lastly, God has provided a method of overcoming the alienation. Originally this involved sacrificing animals on an altar of uncut stone.⁴

Studies of world cultures have revealed that each one has a vestige of monotheistic beliefs which are described by Dr. Corduan's nine qualifications. Cultures that are very primitive provide some of the strongest proof of original monotheism.

Anthropologists Dr. Wilhelm Schmidt, author of the 4000 page treatise, *The Origin and Growth of Religion*, and, more recently, Don Richardson, author of *Eternity in Their Hearts*, documented this fact in the hundreds of cultures they studied. They discovered that the religion of some of the most ancient cultures were monotheistic and practiced little or no form of animism or magic. In almost every culture around the world, the religion of a particular culture began with a concept of a masculine, creator God who lives in the heavens. He provided a moral law by which the people would enter into a relationship with him. This relationship was broken when the people were disobedient, and as the relationship deteriorated, the people distanced themselves from the creator and their knowledge of him faded. As the civilization moved further away, they began to worship other lesser gods. In their search to survive in a world filled with spiritual forces, they desired power to manipulate the forces, and thus there was an increase in the use of magic.

⁴ Ibid., 33.

This theory fits very well with what is revealed in Scripture. Genesis teaches us that God created man and that man lived according to his knowledge of God and His laws. However, from Adam's first act of disobedience, mankind continued his sinful path away from God. Paul summarizes this history in Romans 1. The theory of original monotheism is the most consistent with Scripture and appears to have strong historical support.

Examples of Original Monotheism

Here are just a few examples. *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* states that the Chinese culture before Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, 2600 years before Christ, worshipped Shang Ti. They understood Him to be the creator and law-giver. They believed that He was never to be represented by an idol. When the Zhou Dynasty controlled China during the years 1066-770 B.C., the worship of Shang Ti was replaced by the worship of heaven itself, and eventually three other religions were spawned in China.

In a region north of Calcutta, India, there lived the Santal people. They were found worshipping elements of nature. However, before these practices developed, they worshipped Thakur Jiu, the genuine God who created all things. Although they knew Thakur Jiu was the true God, the tribe forsook worshipping Him and began entering into spiritism and the worship of lesser gods who ruled over some aspect of creation.

In Ethiopia, the Gedeo people number in the millions and live in different tribes. These people sacrifice to evil spirits out of fear. However, behind this practice is an older belief in Magano, the one omnipotent creator.

The Incas in South America also have this same belief. Alfred Metraux, author of *History of the Incas*, discovered the Inca's originally worshipped Viracocha, the Lord, the omnipotent creator of all things. Worship of Inti, the Sun God, and other gods are only recent departures from this monotheistic belief.

These examples follow Paul's description in Romans 1 where he states that men departed from worship of the creator to the worship of the creation.

If original monotheism is true, it should impact our strategy for missions.⁵ In fact, this theory has had a tremendous impact on evangelistic strategies throughout the world.

Original Monotheism and the Missionary Revolution

Don Richardson's book, *Eternity in Their Hearts*, illustrates how this theory shaped the missionary effort in China and Korea. In ancient China, the Lord of the Heavens was referred to as Shang Ti. In Korea, he was referred to as Hananim.

Over the centuries, the Chinese departed from the worship of Shang Ti and adopted the beliefs of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism that taught the worship of ancestors and the Buddha.

⁵ Don Richardson, *Eternity in Their Hearts* (Ventura: Calif.: Regal Books, 1984), 33-71.

However, even after two thousand years, the Chinese still mentioned the name of Shang Ti.

The first Christian missionaries to China arrived in the eighth century A.D. In the years that followed, instead of capitalizing on the residual monotheistic witness already in the land, missionaries imposed a completely foreign name to the God of the heavens. They emphasized that the God of the Bible is foreign and completely distinct from any God the Chinese had ever heard of before. As Don Richardson writes, "Those who took this position completely misunderstood the real situation.⁶ Roman Catholic missionaries adopted new terms like Tien Ju, Master of Heaven or Tien Laoye for God in the Chinese language.

When Protestant missionaries arrived, they debated as to whether they should use Shang Ti or another term for the Almighty. Some argued that there should be a new name for a new thing. Those who chose to use Shang Ti did not take advantage of the full meaning behind the term. As a result, Protestant missionaries did not have as great an impact in China as they were to have in Korea.

In 1884, Protestant missionaries entered Korea. After studying the culture, they believed that Hananim was the residual witness of God. As these missionaries began to preach utilizing this remnant witness, their message was enthusiastically received. Instead of introducing a foreign God from the west, they were reintroducing the natives to the Lord of their ancestors whom they were interested to know. The Catholic missionaries who had been in Korea for decades were still employing designations for God from Chinese phrases like Tien Ju. As a result, the Korean people responded to the message from the Protestant missionaries and Christianity spread throughout the country at an explosive rate.

Paul writes in Acts 14, "In the past he (God) let all nations go their own way. Yet he has not left himself without testimony." (vv. 16-17) The fact that all cultures have this remnant witness has had--and should continue to have--an impact on the missionary movement all over the world.

⁶ Ibid., 67.

Jesus and the Religion of Tolerance

In our culture it is common to minimize and even ignore differences between competing points of view. In the name of ‘tolerance’ and ‘respect’, contradictory assertions are said to be equally valid, even when those claims strike at the very heart of a religious belief. For instance, there are significant discrepancies between Islam and Christianity at several crucial points:

Is Jesus God?

The Scriptures teach that Jesus is God. For instance, the Bible says:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:1, 14)

The Koran does not allow for the Christian doctrine of the Trinity and thus the divinity of Jesus:

Say not ‘Three’ – Cease! (it is) better for you! – Allah is only One God. (Surah 4:171)

They truly disbelieve who say: Lo! Allah is the third of three; when there is no God save the One God. If they desist not from so saying a painful doom will fall on those of them who disbelieve. (Surah 5:73)

They indeed have disbelieved who say: Lo! Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary. (Surah 5:17)

They surely disbelieve who say: Lo! Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary. The messiah (himself) said: O Children of Israel, worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. Lo! Whoso ascribeth partners unto Allah, for him Allah hath forbidden Paradise. His abode is the Fire. (Surah 5:72)

The Messiah, son of Mary, was no other than a messenger, messengers (the like of whom) had passed away before him. And his mother was a saintly woman. And they both used to eat (earthly) food. (Surah 5:75)

Did Jesus die for our sins?

The Bible predicts in the Old Testament, and records in the New Testament, the crucifixion of Jesus for our sins:

Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. (Isaiah 53:4-6, 12)

...Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. (Matthew 16:21)

Because the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. (John 19:31-34)

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:6-8)

The Koran, however, denies that Jesus was crucified:

...because of their saying: We slew the Messiah Jesus Son of Mary, Allah's messenger – They slew him nor crucified, but it appeared so unto them; ...they slew him not for certain, But Allah took him up unto Himself. Allah was ever Mighty, Wise. (Surah 4:156-158)

Does It Really Matter?

Along with Allah, another “god” has arisen to lay claim to our allegiance. This other “god” is not a divine being with a prophet who has revealed him in a holy book. Rather, this “god” is an American cultural phenomenon. As one commentator has said:

Though you and I have never chiseled a god out of stone, we all face the strong temptation of remaking our idea of God to conform to our image. Freud argued that the hopes and dreams of humans resemble the alleged characteristics of “God” so closely that people simply transfer their hopes and wishes to an imaginary being. Karl Marx agreed that man makes religion; religion does not make man. Man has “found only his reflection in the fantastic reality of heaven, where he sought a supernatural being.”

In her book A History of God, Karen Armstrong argues that God is indeed a product of humankind's creative imagination. God, she says, may well be our most interesting idea...In fact, she thinks each generation has to create its own imaginative conception of God.

...Our highly specialized, consumer-oriented society has redefined God so that He no longer stands in judgment of our culture but rather endorses it. According to the book, The Day America Told the Truth, the word “God” to most Americans is “a distant and pale reflection of the God of their forefathers...This is not the ‘jealous God’ of the Old Testament but...a general sense of good and happiness in the world.” And someone has said that heaven for modern man looks like the biggest shopping mall one can imagine. We have a god who desires our pleasure, who is wholly committed to our happiness...and who lets us make up our own ten commandments.

For such a kinder, gentler god to flourish, we have had to bow before another god who is undisturbed by the moral/spiritual/religious diversity in our culture. This god's name is tolerance. Officially, sin does not exist in our society, but if there were one sin left it would be a belief in objective truth, a belief that some things are still right or wrong; a belief that discrimination still has value if defined as being discriminating in what we believe, the way we behave, and what we defend.

“To live and let live” has now been enshrined as the one non-negotiable absolute of society. Only what is often defined as intolerance is utterly intolerable...

[Although tolerance can be defined in legitimate ways],⁷ the tolerance of which I speak...is an uncritical tolerance that avoids vigorous debate in the quest for truth. This new tolerance...will castigate anyone who believes in absolutes or claims to have found some truth. This tolerance, someone has said, includes every point of view except those points of view that do not include every point of view (!).

...We have moved from the conviction that everyone has a right to his own opinions to the notion that every opinion is equally right! We have moved from genuine pluralism, the idea that the religions of the world can peacefully co-exist, to syncretism, the idea that the beliefs of various religions can be mindlessly combined.

If you were on a talk show and said, “I believe in Christ,” you would be applauded; but if you were to say “Christ is the Savior for everyone,” boos would echo throughout the crowd.⁸

Is Religious Truth Absolute?

While some deny the existence of any absolute truth, others admit that there are absolutes, but only in the areas of science and mathematics. Religious truth is, according to this view, simply a “leap of [blind] faith”. However, the attempt to restrict absolute truth to the realm of science is self-defeating for the statement “all truth is restricted to science” is itself unscientific and therefore is false according to its own standard!

Lest one doubt whether such a view of truth is widely held, he need but visit virtually any college campus and interview the students and faculty. There he will find views such as those espoused by the well-known English philosopher David Hume. Hume said:

The Christian religion not only was at first attended with miracles, but even to this day cannot be believed by any reasonable person without one.

If we take in our hand any volume: of divinity or school of metaphysics, for instance, let us ask, Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number? No. Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence? No. Commit it to the flames; for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion.

⁷ Erwin Lutzer, *Christ Among Other Gods*, p. 29. Lutzer mentions two legitimate uses of *tolerance*: 1) *Legal tolerance* – the right for everyone to believe in whatever faith (or none at all) he wishes. 2) *Social tolerance* – a commitment to respecting all men even if we vigorously disagree with their religion and ideas.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 27-30.

One Christian apologist examines Hume’s statement as follows:

*The problem with this statement is that the test itself does not pass the test. Hume’s grand statement is neither scientific or mathematical. If, in order to be meaningful, a statement must be either mathematically sustained or scientifically verifiable, then David Hume’s statement itself is meaningless. It is a philosophical solvent that dissolves itself. The emperor has no clothes, while boasting the finest threads.*⁹

“Lunatic, Liar, or Lord”

The lofty claims of Christ simply cannot be harmonized with any other religion, including Islam. Because He claimed to be God, respecting Him as a wonderful prophet, teacher, and moral example is not enough. Christ requires exclusive allegiance and obedience:

“I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.” At this the Jews exclaimed, “Now we know that you are demon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that if anyone keeps your word, he will never taste death. Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?...[Jesus answered,] “Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.” “You are not yet fifty years old,” the Jews said to him, “and you have seen Abraham!” “I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!” At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds. (John 8:51-59)

He who is not with me is against me. (Luke 11:23)

I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6)

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11)

Passages such as these caused Christian apologist C.S. Lewis to remark that Christ is either a lunatic, a liar, or the Lord. If he was not Lord, we cannot even say He was a good man, for He would have been a liar. The best one could say is that He was delusional. The only other option is that He was telling the truth and therefore – He is Lord!

⁹ Ravi Zacharias, *Jesus Among Other Gods* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 2000), p. 63.

Islam

Recent events have thrust the religion of Islam into the forefront of Americans' curiosity. Many have, for the first time, been introduced to Islamic beliefs and customs. Terms like *Koran*, *mosque*, *jihad*, *fatwah*, *Ramadan*, *imam*, and names such as *Allah* and *Mohammad* have become commonplace in coffee table and water cooler discussions. Interest in Islam is at an all time high in America, as evidenced by the numerous books and articles that are being written and devoured by Western readers.

The immediate cause of such interest is the actions of a group of terrorists who, in the name of Islam, carried out horrific acts against innocent people. Many Americans wonder whether there is something inherent in Islam that tolerates or worse, sanctions, such atrocities.¹⁰ Christians wonder how Islam relates to Christianity. From where and through whom did Islam originate? Since Islam conflicts with Christianity regarding significant doctrines (see pages 7-8), who's right? How can we know? To answer these questions requires that we know something of the history of Islam.¹¹

The Career of Mohammed

William Corduan describes the religious scene in Mohammed's birthplace as follows:

Mohammed was born in 570 a.d. in the vicinity of Mecca (in what is now Saudi Arabia). The religion of the time was a mixture of polytheism and animism. Mecca was a center of this religion and the focal point of pilgrims visiting its many idols and shrines. The first thing that greeted a pilgrim entering Mecca was a statue of God's (Allah's) three sensuous-appearing daughters (al-Lat, al-Manat and al-Uzza). A highlight of any visit to Mecca was a cube-shaped shrine (called the ka'aba, which means "cube") dedicated to the main god of this shrine, Hubal. Built into the side of the ka'aba was a meteorite that was considered holy because it had fallen from heaven. There were many other temples and holy sites, including the sacred well, Zamzam. Religious pilgrimages made Mecca a prosperous city.¹²

Mohammed was orphaned at age six and was raised by his uncle. Having received little education Mohammed subsisted as a camel driver. He eventually came into the employ of wealthy widow, Khadija, to whom he was later married.

Mohammed's prophetic career began in 610 a.d. while he was meditating in a cave located just outside of Mecca. The angel Gabriel spoke to him and said, "Recite" (from which the name Koran, meaning 'recite' or 'read' is taken):

Read in the name of your Lord Who created man from a clot of blood. (Surah 96:1-2)

Converts to Mohammed's teaching were slow in coming at first. Khadija believed Mohammed immediately, but others were skeptical at best. Many people were hostile or derisive.

¹⁰ See Appendix A for a look at what the Koran teaches about the use of force against unbelievers.

¹¹ Much of what follows is taken from M. Cherif Bassiouni, *Introduction to Islam* (Full text located at www.mideasti.org/library/islam/introislam.htm) and Winfried Corduan, *Islam: A Christian Introduction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998).

¹² Corduan, p. 3.

Mohammed's revelatory experiences continued, as they would throughout his life, not on a regular basis but from time to time. Eventually Mohammed gained a small group of followers, and after about ten years the group had become fairly sizable, numbering in the thousands.

Mohammed's followers referred to their belief as Islam, which means "submission to God." They came to be identified as Muslims, "those who submit to God." Eventually Mohammed's group of followers grew so large that the city fathers in Mecca found their presence undesirable. After all, nothing ruins the business of idol worship like the incessant claim that there is only one God.

Persecution escalated until in 622 a.d. Mohammed and a group of his followers fled Mecca for Medina. This flight from Mecca is called the Hijira (meaning "flight") and it is used as the beginning of the Islamic calendar, for at this point an independent Muslim community was born.

Mohammed and his followers were well received in Medina and, in fact, Mohammed was put in charge of the town with the responsibility of resolving certain disputes. He made a special pact with the Jewish community in Medina, recognizing that Jews were not expected to become Muslims. Unfortunately, the relationship broke down when some Jews attempted to assassinate Mohammed, and he ordered the execution of hundreds of Jews.¹³

Throughout this time Islam continued to grow in numbers and influence. Many Arabian tribes swore allegiance to Mohammed, adopting his religion and his leadership. Eventually he and his army became strong enough to capture Mecca. Mohammed removed all idols from the city and cleansed the ka'aba of all statues in a special ceremony. However, he retained Mecca as the center for pilgrimage and maintained some of the external sites, such as the ka'aba and the well Zamzam, as holy places. By the time Mohammed died in 632 a.d., he was the religious and political head of much of the Arabian peninsula.

Islam after Mohammed

An understanding of the events that occurred right after Mohammed's death is crucial to an understanding of the contemporary Muslim world. The question of who would succeed Mohammed was and is one of great controversy. The search for a caliph (successor) was on. Because Mohammed had no surviving son, one choice was his son-in-law, Ali. However, Ali did not enjoy the confidence of many people. Therefore, a general consensus (*sunna*) was established that Abu Bakr, Mohammed's father-in-law, would be the caliph. Ali's supporters were disgruntled, and at that moment the seeds of a dissenting party were sown. The Arabic word for this splinter group was *shi'a*, and thus we have the origins of the *Sunnis* (the majority) and the *shi'a* (the minority).

Islam continued to expand over the next several decades, reaching as far as Spain by 732 a.d. Eventually, the longest-running Islamic dynasty came into being by way of the Ottoman Empire, which at one time included all of the Middle East, Egypt, and Europe up to the gates of Vienna. The Ottoman Empire finally collapsed in 1917.

¹³ Ibid., p. 4.

Osama Bin Laden’s extremist strain of Islam originated from the ranks of the majority Sunni faction. Bin Laden’s background is rooted in Wahhabism, a reform movement from within Sunni Islam.

*The Beliefs of Islam*¹⁴

Islam is primarily a religion of practices, not beliefs. That does not mean that it is possible to have Islam without certain beliefs or that beliefs are irrelevant. It means that the central question is whether or not a person submits to Allah. Nevertheless, six core beliefs have been identified as essential:

The Oneness of God

The Koranic conception of Allah is strictly Unitarian, since God is seen as one, and one only. Mohammed considered the very notion of the “fatherhood” of Allah, which he associated with a sexual procreation of a son, as highly blasphemous. One verse in the Koran suggests he may have thought the Trinity consisted of God the Father, Jesus the Son, and Mary the Mother:

And behold! Allah will say: "O Jesus the son of Mary! Didst thou say unto men, worship me and my mother as gods in derogation of Allah.?" ... (Surah 5:116)

Angels and Spirits

Muslims believe in the existence of other spirit beings that are inferior to Allah. Mohammed received the revelations of the Koran through the angel Gabriel. Islam recognizes other archangels and a large host of angels. There are also many evil spirits (the jinn) that are led by the devil.

Prophets

According to Islam, from time to time God has disclosed his will to the world through prophets. All the prophets preach the same basic message of submission to the one God and an impending judgment. The Koran provides no definitive list of prophets. Most of the twenty-five prophets mentioned in the Koran (for example, in 3:33, 34, 4:163, 6:83-86) are biblical figures, including Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Jesus.

Books

Many of the prophets left books for their people. Jews and Christians have their holy books, just as Muslims have the Koran. These groups are known as “people of the book,” and Mohammed allowed them privileges and protections not available to pagans. Upon paying a tax, they were supposed to be allowed to practice their religion and lead an unencumbered life.

¹⁴ *What is Islam?* Council of Islamic Organizations of Michigan, n.d. Also, Corduan, pp. 93-98.

Judgment

The Koran's teaching on judgment is relatively plain and sobering (see 20:102-127; 18:101-104; 23:105-115). On the appointed day, the trumpet will sound and a general resurrection will occur. The living and the dead will appear before God, and everyone will be confronted with the deeds done in life. The basis of judgment is sincere submission to Allah's will.

The Decree of God

Allah is sovereign; all that Allah wills comes to pass. Whatever Allah does not will does not happen. All that has happened must have been willed by Allah.

The Practices of Islam¹⁵

Islam is based upon five "pillars" which are universal in scope:

Confession (shahada) – Testifying that there is but one God, and Mohammed is His Prophet. This is the fundamental confession of Islam: "There is no God but God, and Mohammed is the apostle of God." All that is necessary to become a Muslim is to repeat the shahada and mean it. This act does not guarantee salvation, but it is the first step on the road to salvation.

Prayer (salat) – Each Muslim is supposed to perform the required ritual prayers five times a day: 1) at sunrise 2) at noon 3) in midafternoon, 4) at sunset and, 5) one hour after sunset.

Fasting (sawm) – Mohammed received his first revelations during the month of Ramadan. In commemoration of this event, Muslims are required to fast during daylight throughout the month. No form of refreshment, not even a sip of water, may be taken throughout the day.

Almsgiving/Charity (Zakat) – The Koran commands all believers to practice regular charity (2:43) but it does not specify formal procedures. In the *sharia* (Islamic law) this commandment has been explained as a formal obligation of standardized annual giving to the poor.

Pilgrimage (Hajj) – A visit to Mecca once in a Muslim's lifetime if at all possible.

¹⁵ Ibid.

The Crescent Versus the Cross

Critiquing the Koran

Both Islam and Christianity have writings to which they appeal as final authorities. The Koran is the holy book of Islam and is believed by Muslims to be the word of Allah (God) as revealed to Mohammed. The Bible is the holy book of Christianity. Are these books consistent in what they teach? If not, how can one determine which is right? This section will contrast the claims of Islam and Christianity regarding authority.

The Bible offers a test for the authenticity of a prophet:

I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account. But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death."

You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?" If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him. (Deuteronomy 18:18-21)

The Christian Scriptures offer numerous prophecies (approximately 300) regarding the coming and career of Jesus the Messiah. Although the Koran offers no predictions, it does make some claims that can be objectively evaluated:

1. The Koran confirms the teaching of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures.
2. The Koran makes clearer the teaching of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures.
3. Muhammad is foretold in the Jewish and Christian Scriptures.

Does the Koran Confirm the Bible?

The Koran says:

*O ye People of the Book! Believe in what We have (now) revealed, **confirming** what was (already) with you. (Surah 4:47)*

However at many important points the Koran contradicts the teaching of the Bible and so does not confirm it at all. Here are a few brief examples:

- The Death of Jesus

In the Bible Jesus clearly taught that He would die and be raised from the dead:

From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. (Matthew 16:21)

Jesus also said that His death and resurrection was what the prophets before Him had foretold:

He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (Luke 24:45-47)

Jesus also explained the meaning of His death:

*Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave-- just as the Son of Man (Jesus) did not come to be served, but to serve, and to **give his life** as a ransom for many. (Matthew 20:26-28)*

However, when the Koran teaches about the death of Jesus on the cross it says that He never really died:

*We (the Jews) slew the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, the Messenger of God" - yet **they did not slay him**, neither crucified him, only a likeness of that was shown to them. ... and **they slew him not of certainty** - no indeed; God raised him up to Him; God is All-mighty, All-wise. (Surah 4:156-157)*

Jesus taught that His death on the cross was to pay for our sins and that it was part of God's work that He came to perform. However, in the Koran, Jesus' death on the cross is no death at all. Thus the Koran does not confirm the Bible at this most important point.

- The Account of Noah

The Koran also incorrectly retells many of the Biblical accounts. Here are just two brief examples. The Bible clearly teaches that all of Noah's sons came into the ark with him.

This is the account of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God. Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. ... The LORD then said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and your whole family, because I have found you righteous in this generation. ... And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives entered the ark to escape the waters of the flood. (Genesis 6:9-10, 7:1, 7:7)

However, in the Koran, one of Noah's sons **did not** come into the ark:

And Noah called to his son, who was standing apart (from the ark), "Embark with us, my son, and be thou not with the unbelievers!" He said, "I will take refuge in a mountain, that shall defend me from the water." ... And the waves came between them and he was drowned. (Surah 11:42-43)

Thus the story of Noah in the Koran does not confirm the Bible's teaching.

- The Plagues of Egypt

The Bible records in great detail the plagues that God sent upon Egypt. This can be found in Exodus 7-11. A summary of the plagues is as follows:

- River turned to blood. Exodus 7:14-24
- Frogs 8:1-15
- Gnats 8:16-19
- Flies 8:20-32
- Death of livestock. 9:1-7
- Boils 9:8-12
- Hail 9:13-35
- Locusts 10:1-20
- Darkness 10:21-29
- Death of the firstborn 11:1-10

In the Koran we are told that one of the plagues was a flood:

*So we let loose upon them the **flood** and the locusts, the lice and the frogs, the blood, distinct signs; but they waxed proud and were a sinful people.*
(Surah 7:130. 133)

Does The Koran Make Clearer The Teaching of the Bible?

*This Koran is not such as can be produced by other than Allah; on the contrary it is a confirmation of (revelations) that went before it, and a **fuller explanation** of the Book.*
(Surah 10:37).

*Verily this Koran **doth (does) explain** to the Children of Israel most of the matters in which they disagree.* (Surah 27:76).

- The Death of Jesus

In the Bible the death of Jesus on the cross is very clearly explained. Both Jesus and His disciples taught that Jesus' death was to pay for our sins so that we could be saved from the judgment of God.

*The Son of Man (Jesus) did not come to be served, but to serve, and to **give his life** as a ransom for many.* (Matthew 20:28)

For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. (1 Peter 3:18)

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles (nations) through Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:13-14)

He (Jesus) is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 2:2)

The above quotes show that the Bible explains the death of Jesus very clearly. But when the Koran is read it does not make clearer the Bible's teaching, instead it actually confuses this teaching. It does this by teaching that Jesus never died on the cross:

We (the Jews) slew the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, the Messenger of God" - yet they did not slay him, neither crucified him, only a likeness of that was shown to them. ... and they slew him not of certainty - no indeed; God raised him up to Him; God is All-mighty, All-wise. (Surah 4:156-157)

- Abraham's sacrifice

The Bible teaches very clearly that Abraham was commanded to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice to God:

*Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, **Isaac**, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about." Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son **Isaac**. ... When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son **Isaac** and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." (Genesis 22:1-12)*

The rest of the Bible also teaches clearly that Isaac was the son that Abraham offered in sacrifice:

By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered Isaac as a sacrifice. He who had received the promises was about to sacrifice his one and only son. (Hebrews 11:17)

Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? (James 2:21)

The account of Abraham's sacrifice is also told in the Koran. However the account is not very clear. In particular the identity of the son is not explicitly stated.

We gave him (Abraham) news of a gentle son. And when he reached the age when he could work with him, his father said to him: "My son, I dreamt that I was sacrificing you. Tell me what you think." He replied, "Father, do as you are bidden. God willing you shall find me steadfast." And when they had both submitted to God, and Abraham had laid down his son prostrate upon his face, We called out to him saying: "Abraham, you have fulfilled your vision." (Surah 37:99-104)

Since the identity of Abraham's son is not mentioned, this has led to all types of confusion for the Muslim community. Al-Tabari is one of Islam's greatest historians of the Koran. He freely admits that the early Muslim theologians were not sure which son Abraham offered, some thought it was Isaac, others that it was Ishmael. In fact Al-Tabari even says that there are reliable hadiths (reports) from Mohammad, some of which say it was Isaac and others which say it was Ishmael:

*The earliest sages of our Prophet's nation disagree about which of Abraham's two sons it was that he was commanded to sacrifice. Some say it was Isaac, while others say it was Ishmael. Both views are supported by statements related on the authority of the Messenger of God. If both groups of statements were equally sound, then - since they both came from the Prophet - only the Koran could serve as proof that the account naming Isaac is clearly the more truthful of the two. (Al-Tabari, *The History of al-Tabari*, Vol. II, p. 82, Prophets and Patriarchs [trans. William M. Brenner], State University of New York Press, Albany 1987)*

This confusion comes to a climax with the Muslim festival of Eid-ul-Adha. This festival occurs during the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. At this festival an animal is sacrificed to remember the time when Abraham offered, not Isaac, but his son Ishmael. The Bible clearly teaches that the son Abraham offered was Isaac. The Koran does not say who the son was, but the result of the Koran's unclear teaching is that Muslims reject the clear teaching of the Bible and instead think that the son was Ishmael.

- Son of God

In the Bible there is a lot of teaching about the "Son of God". This teaching is quite clear. The Koran also has much to say about the "Son of God", however it does not confirm or make clearer the Bible's teaching, instead it misunderstands and actually confuses what the Bible clearly taught.

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" ... Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ (Messiah), the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:13-16)

Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." "Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. (Matthew 26:62-64)

Now does the Koran make clearer the Bible's teaching about the "Son of God"? The answer is "no." In fact, the Koran misunderstands and confuses this teaching from the Bible. Throughout the Koran it denies that Jesus is the Son of God yet mistakenly still calls him the Messiah.

The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was no more than God's apostle and his Word which He cast to Mary. (Surah 4:171).

...the Christians say, "The Messiah is the Son of God." That is the utterance of their mouths, conforming with the unbelievers before them. God assail them! How they are perverted. (Surah 9:30)

They say: "God has begotten a son" God forbid! (Surah 10:68)

Is Muhammad Foretold in the Bible?

Those who follow the Messenger (Mohammed), the Prophet who can neither read nor write, whom they will find described in the Torah and the Gospel (which are) with them. (Surah 7:157).

The passages normally cited for this prediction in John 14-16 are not prophecies of Mohammed but of the Holy Spirit:

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever— the Spirit of truth. (John 14:16-17)

*But the Counselor, **the Holy Spirit**, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. (John 14:26)*

We have already seen that the Koran contradicts the Bible on some important doctrines like the death of Jesus. The Muslim explanation for these disparities is that the Bible had been corrupted over the years by Jews and Christians. However, this claim is problematic for Muslims because 1) the Koran was written nearly 600 years after the Bible was completed and the manuscript evidence for the accuracy of our present Bible is overwhelming. 2) The Koran itself commends the Bible *as it existed in the seventh century*:

Those who follow the Messenger (Mohammed), the Prophet who can neither read nor write, whom they will find described in the Torah and the Gospel (which are) with them (Surah 7:157).

In addition to contradicting the Bible, the Koran is simply in error in a number of places, as has already been seen. Another example is the Koran mistaking the identity of Mary the mother of Jesus for Miriam the sister of Moses and Aaron:

At length she [Mary] brought the (babe) to her people, carrying him (in her arms). They said: "O Mary! truly an amazing thing hast thou brought! "O sister of Aaron!... (Surah 19:27-28)

Of course, Moses and Aaron lived approximately 1500 years before Mary!

Sin and Salvation

Islam defines sin, and therefore righteousness and salvation, radically different from Biblical Christianity. In Islam, sin is moral weakness but not our nature; we sin but are not sinners. Islam denies the doctrine of ‘original sin’:

The story of the fall in the Koran differs from the Bible regarding personal responsibility...The sin of Adam and Eve were personal sins. They alone are responsible. Humans are not sinful by nature. They are finite and naturally limited, weak, and subject to temptation. However, if they err and commit wrong they can ask forgiveness from their Lord, and their Lord is most Forgiving and Merciful. No one person bears the sin of the other. ¹⁶

In Islam, sin is due to human limitation and weakness, not our nature. All people commit sinful acts. People sin because of their forgetfulness of God. Furthermore, people can, *by their own actions*,¹⁷ free themselves from their bondage to sin. Allah has dealt with sin mercifully by sending the Koran to man. He commands Muslims to continue dealing with sin by calling all people to the path of Allah.

The Christian teaching that the rebellion of Adam and Eve has tragically distorted man, and that sinfulness pervades us individually and collectively, is quite contrary to Islam. Islam teaches that although Adam disobeyed Allah, he repented and was forgiven. People are not born sinners and the doctrine of the sinfulness of every person has no basis in Islam. Therefore, Islam has no place for a doctrine of redemption. This crucial Christian doctrine is not even mentioned in Islam.

Muslims attempt to establish their own righteousness before God by their good works, which they hope will balance out their bad deeds and omissions. By saying extra prayers, observing extra fasts besides Ramadan, repeating the ninety-nine most beautiful names of Allah, giving alms, and doing other good works, a Muslim hopes to receive Allah’s mercy and forgiveness, *but still has no guarantee of it*.¹⁸

Since Islam explains the evil of people and society as coming from our inherent forgetfulness rather than from our active rebellion, it follows that the answer is reminder. The aim of communal allegiance is to discipline and educate people to deal with human frailty. Therefore, “salvation” is largely a communal effort. “The achievement of Islam presupposes and requires the community.”¹⁹

¹⁶ *What is Islam?* pamphlet.

¹⁷ This is in direct conflict with the teaching of the Bible: *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.* (Ephesians 2:8-9)

¹⁸ Contrast this with the teaching of Scripture: [Jesus said] *I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.* (John 5:24)

¹⁹ See Bruce McDowell and Anees Zaka, *Muslims and Christians at the Table* (Philadelphia: P&R Publishing, 1999), pp. 123-132. This observation may provide insight into the need of many Muslims to force conformity – it is simply too difficult to be righteous in a decadent society.

The Bible teaches a quite different view of human nature and, consequently, of righteousness and salvation:

All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags. (Isaiah 64:6)

“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment.” (Matthew 5:21-22)

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” (Matthew 5:27-28)

There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one. (Romans 3:10-12)

Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous. (Romans 5:19-20)

God made him [Christ] who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. (1 Peter 3:18)

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness. David says the same thing when he speaks of the blessedness of the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works: “Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him.” (Romans 4:4-8)

Appendix A: Islam and Terrorism

Islam, like most religions, has various sects that claim to be its authentic representatives. The Taliban (literally, “students of the Koran”) and Osama bin Laden have been influenced by a particular strain of Islam known as Wahhabism. Wahhabism is named for the leader of an 18th century reform movement in Arabia, Muhammad ibn Abd al Wahhab. Corduan comments:

When Wahhab started to preach against various abuses, he received support from the powerful house of ibn Sa’ud (who would much later become the royal household of Saudi Arabia, which is named after them), and together they began to purge Arabia of what they considered to be the various contaminants of Islam...

A Wahhabite state was actually implemented with the accession of the Sa’ud family to the newly united kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Nonsanctioned practices were considered idolatrous and punished by the sword. Among the practices originally forbidden by the Wahhabites (though the restrictions are now somewhat eased in Saudi Arabia) were consumption of tobacco and wine, veneration of saints and playing of music.

The majority of Muslims live under less rigid requirements, thus Wahhabite Islam is not mainstream...²⁰

The immediate cause of America’s actions is Osama bin Laden, head of al-Qaida (“the base” – KB) terrorist network, who is loosely tied to the Wahhabi sect. Bin Laden, a native Saudi banished from Saudi Arabia... [has his] roots in Wahhabism, though he is trying to appeal to other Islamic groups as well.

Therefore, it is a mistake to *automatically* associate the actions of al-Qaida with Islam in general. Nevertheless, it is fair to ask what, if anything, in the Koran lends itself to terror as a legitimate political tool. This will require that we look briefly at a history of the Koran in particular and Islam in general.

The Koran and the Use of Force

The 114 surahs (chapters or parts) of the Koran are not listed in the chronological order in which Mohammad recited them, but are listed in the order of length - from the longest to the shortest. If one places the passages in chronological order, an interesting pattern emerges that corresponds to the circumstances in which Mohammad found himself. The Ka’aba, a rectangular building in the city of Mecca, contained many idols and was the center of worship for the pagan Arabs at the time of Muhammad. Arabs from all over Arabia came to Mecca for an annual pilgrimage to worship those idols.

Mohammad began preaching Islam in 610 A.D. when he was still living in Mecca. His fellow Quraish tribesmen became increasingly angry because of his condemnation of their idolatry. 90 of the 114 surahs originated during the 13 years he continued living in Mecca.

²⁰ However, as the sanctioned version of Islam in a country such as Saudi Arabia it does exert considerable influence. Wahhabism used to be described on the official website of the Saudi government but in recent years has sought to mute its influence: <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/saudi-arabia-adjusts-its-history-diminishing-role-wahhabism>

These surahs contained no instructions about fighting, in spite of the severe persecution, beatings, expulsion from their homes and death threats to which his small band of followers were subjected.

The last 24 surahs are from the time after 622 when Mohammad and his followers migrated to Medina to escape from the persecution in Mecca. There Mohammad was made the political leader of the city and his followers increased significantly. The teaching about Jihad or fighting "in the way of Allah" began to develop in these Medinan surahs.

One commentator has placed the surahs of the Koran into four developmental stages:²¹

- Stage One: In Mecca - No Retaliation:

Surah 73:10, 11 (be patient and bear with those who deny the truth)

And have patience with what they say, and leave them with noble (dignity). And leave me (alone to deal with) those in possession of the good things of life, who (yet) deny the truth, and bear with them for a little while.

Surah 52:45, 47, 48 (leave them alone and wait in patience for the Lord to punish them)

So leave them alone until they encounter that day of theirs, wherein they shall (perforce) swoon (with terror) ... And verily, for those who do wrong, there is another punishment besides this... Now await in patience the command of thy Lord, for verily thou art in our eyes.

Surah 109:1, 2, 6 (Tell unbelievers, "You have your religion and I have mine.")

Say, O ye that reject faith! I worship not that which ye worship... To you be your way, and to me mine.

- Stage Two: First Instruction in Medina - Defensive Fighting Permitted:

Surah 22:39-41 (permission is given to go to war to defend themselves)

To those against whom war is made, permission is given (to fight), because they are wronged, and verily, God is most powerful for their aid. (They are) those who have been expelled from their homes in defiance of right, (for no cause) except that they say, 'Our Lord is God.' Did not God check one set of people by means of another, there would surely have been pulled down monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques, in which the name of God is commemorated in abundant measure. God will certainly aid those who aid His (cause), for verily God is full of strength, exalted in might, (able to enforce His will). (They are) those who, if we establish them in the land, establish regular prayer and give regular charity, enjoin the right and forbid wrong. With God rests the end (and decision) of (all) affairs.

²¹ Richard Bailey, *Jihad: The Teachings of Islam from its Primary Sources* (see www.answering-islam.org/Bailey/jihad.html)

Surah 22:58 (rewards for those who die in jihad)

Those who leave their homes in the cause of God, and are then slain or die, on them will God bestow verily a goodly provision. Truly God is He who bestows the best provision.

- Stage Three: Revised Instruction In Medina - Defensive Fighting Commanded:

Surah 2:109 (forgive and overlook unbelieving Jews and let God take care of them)

Quite a number of the people of the Book [Jews] wish they could turn you back to infidelity after ye have believed, from selfish envy, after the truth hath become manifest unto them. But forgive and overlook, till God accomplish His purpose.

Surah 2:190-194 (Fight defensively against an attack from fellow Arab Meccan opponents until persecution is stopped and Islam is established)

Fight in the cause of God those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for God loveth not transgressors. And slay them wherever ye catch them, and turn them out from where they have turned you out; for tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter; But fight them not at the Sacred Mosque unless they (first) fight you there; but if they fight you, slay them. Such is the reward of those who suppress faith. But if they cease, God is oft-forgiving, most merciful. And fight them on until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in God; but if they cease, let there be no hostility except to those who practice oppression... If then any one transgresses the prohibition against you, transgress ye likewise against him. But fear God, and know that God is with those who restrain themselves.

- Stage Four: After Conquering Mecca – Offensive War Commanded to Kill the Pagans and Humble the Christians and Jews:

Surah 9:29-31 (Fight against Jews and Christians until they are subdued, because God's curse is on them)

Fight those who believe not in God nor the last day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by God and His Apostle, nor acknowledge the religion of truth, (even if they are) of the people of the Book, until they pay the jizya [tax – KB] with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued. The Jews call Uzair [Ezra] a son of God, and the Christians call Christ the Son of God ... God's curse be on them; how they are deluded away from the truth! They take their priests and their anchorites to be their lords in derogation of God, and (they take as their Lord) Christ the son of Mary. Yet they are commanded to worship but One God ...

Surah 9:11, 12, 14, 15 (Pagans who accept Islam become brother Muslims. Fight those who break their agreements. God will punish them by your hands.)

But (even so), if they repent, establish regular prayer, and practice regular charity, they are your brethren in faith ... But if they violate their oaths after their covenant, and taunt you for your faith, fight ye the chiefs of unfaith, for their oaths are nothing to them ... Fight them and God will punish them by your hands, cover them with shame, help you (to victory) over them, heal the breasts of believers, and still the indignation of their hearts. For God will turn (in mercy) to whom He will ...

No Separation of Church and State in Islam

Americans are accustomed to a separation of the secular and the sacred. However, no such distinction exists in Islam:

Because Islam is a holistic religion integrating all aspects of life, it follows that a reform movement predicated on religion necessarily confronts the social, economic, and political realities of the society in which it develops. Muslim societies, however, have emerged from colonialism and neo-colonialism and are seeking to develop free from certain western influences which may corrupt or subvert basic Islamic values. Furthermore in Islam there is no division or distinction between what in the West is called "Church and State". In fact westerners refer to the Islamic form of government as a theocracy. Thus contemporary political-religious groups focus on social, political, and economic aspects of Muslim societies. They oppose the secular state and instead call for the establishment of a "Muslim State".²²

²² M. Cherif Bassiouni, *Introduction to Islam* - .mideasti.org/library/islam/introislam.htm, Chapter IX, Section 5.