

الإسلام: الدين الذي لا يمكن أن تستغني عنه



ISLAM

THE RELEGION YOU CAN NO LONGER IGNORE

by
Syed Iqbal Zaheer



A Brief Introduction To

ISLAM

(Book - 1)

by

Syed Iqbal Zaheer

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In the name of Allah, the Kind the Beneficent

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INTRODUCTION

The need for a publication that can introduce Islam briefly, and at the same time give an overview of this religion has long been felt. This is an effort to meet with the need. However, this is far easily said than done, because Islam is not simply a set of creeds, customs and rituals, but a complete way of life that guides man in every field of thought and action and prepares him for a swift transition to the Hereafter. Accordingly, it neither neglects the needs, hopes and aspirations of this earthly existence, nor does it abandon man to the mundane world with a soul yearning for peace and tranquility. Therefore, to present Islam in a brief form, even if it be an overview, is just out of question. I endeavor to do it in three volumes, and this is the first of the series.

This volume tries to answer the very basic questions that one unexposed to Islam would like to ask. Such answers had to be, of necessity, very brief. The reader is advised, therefore, to consult other works, some of which are listed at the end of this book. He may also contact one of the Islamic centers, also listed at the end, for further guidance.

Syed Iqbal Zaheer

God's Right

Mu'adh ibn Jabal (ra) reports: "Once I happened to be the pillion rider on a camel behind the Prophet, (on whom be peace and blessings of God). He said 'O Mu'adh ibn Jabal!' I responded: 'Here I am, O Messenger of God. Blessed be thou.' The Prophet continued (to ride) for a while (without speaking) and then said: 'O Mu'adh ibn Jabal!' I said: 'Here I am, O Messenger of Allah. Blessed be thou.'

(But) he continued (to ride) for some time before speaking. Then he said: 'O Mu'adh ibn Jabal!' I repeated: 'Here I am, O Messenger of God. Blessed be thou.' He said: 'Do you know what is God's right upon the people?' I said: 'God and His Messenger know best.' He said: 'Verily, it is His right upon the people that they worship Him (Alone) and associate not aught with Him.'

Then he continued (to ride) for some more time before saying: 'O Mu'adh ibn Jabal!' I said: 'Here I am O Messenger of God. Blessed be thou.' He said: 'Do you know what is the right of people upon their Lord, if they do that?' I said: 'God and His Messenger know best.' He said: 'It is their right upon Him that He shouldn't punish them.'"

PREFACE

Man cannot live peacefully in this world without knowing who he is. Who has created him and sent him to this life? What is his role in it? How can he fulfil that role to the best of his ability? And what is there for him after this life?

These basic questions cannot be answered by the human intellect alone - man needs Divine guidance for finding the right answers to such basic questions.

Such Divine guidance has been implanted in the inner nature of man, has been taught to Adam and Eve (pbut) at the moment of their creation, has been revealed through a long chain of messengers from Allah, and, has been finally integrated in the message of Muhammad (pbuh), the seal of prophethood.

This Divine guidance was invariably called "Islam" which is a word derived from two Arabic roots: "*Salam*" which means "peace" and "*Tasleem*" which means "submission." Consequently, Islam means peaceful submission to the will of Allah and His complete obedience. Hence, the long chain of messengers from Adam to Muhammad (pbuh) were all Muslims and their message was invariably Islam. That list includes (among many others): Adam, Enoch, Noah, Hude, Saleh, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lute, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron,

Dhulkifl, David, Solomon, Job, Ilyas, El-Yasha', Jonah, Zachariah, John, Jesus Christ and Muhammad (pbut). And any human being at any place or time who would receive someone claiming to be a messenger from Allah, (someone with ample evidence to support his claim), and accepts his message is a Muslim.

Hence Islam is not just a religion. It is *the* religion, and the only religion acceptable to Allah (swt). This is not a claim by Muslims, but a Divine statement in the Glorious Qur'an that was revealed from above seven heavens more than 14 centuries ago.

The four basic foundations of Islam are: Faith (creed), Acts of Worship, Moral Code and a Code for Transactions with others. These four basic areas are beyond the capacity of man to tailor, and hence all human efforts in these directions have failed miserably, and have led people astray.

It follows from the discussion above that man cannot live peacefully and successfully without religion, and religion cannot be man-made, but has to be absolutely Divine, without the slightest human alteration. If such facts are accepted, it follows that the only criteria that can be used for discrimination between the true religion and a false one would be the authenticity of the revelation that was sent down with the religion. The only revealed book in the hands of man today that has

been kept intact in exactly the same language and exactly the same words in which it was revealed is the Glorious Qur'an; all the previous revelations were either totally lost or suffered endless human modifications that made them useless for human guidance.

Consequently, the only solution to human problems that are piling up today is Islam, as integrated in the final message of Muhammad (pbuh) which is the only Divine guidance in the hands of man today. Hence, my heart-felt welcome of this book *"Islam: The Religion You Can No Longer Ignore"* by brother Syed Iqbal Zaheer, which has been written in a very concise, but very clear form. I pray to the Almighty Allah to make it a source of guidance to many fellow human beings and to reward the author amply for his appreciated effort.

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In the name of Allah, the Kind, the Compassionate

I ALLAH

Who is Allah?

Allah is the proper noun in Arabic applied to the Only True God Who exists necessarily, by Himself, encompassing all the excellent Divine Attributes of perfection.

Allah is One and Unique; He has no partner, no equal. He does not beget, nor was He begotten. He does not inhere in anything, nothing inheres in Him. He is the sole Creator and Sustainer of all that exists. He is the One God, besides whom there is no other god. And there is none worthy of worship save Him.

He has no wife, no son, and no father. He has no form or no material substance. He does not sleep nor does He take rest. He is the First, with no beginning, and the Last, with no end. He is the All-Knowing who knows what passes through a man's heart. He is the Omnipotent who has the free will that is not restrained by any power. When He desires a thing to be, He says, "Be," and it is. He is also the Beneficent, the

Kind and the Merciful whose love for man is seventy times greater than that of a mother for her child.

And the God of Islam is neither remote nor abstract. He is the Real Lord of the universe whose love swells the heart and intoxicates the soul. Those who seek Him do not have to depend on the vicarious conviction of a priest, or the arguments in the books, to assure them that He exists. They can feel His existence in themselves, as well as in both the animate and inanimate objects around them.

And this is not the prerogative of the "spiritualists." Any layman, who follows His guidance and seeks His Presence, will find Him close to himself.

This is the reason why people of all sorts - intellectuals, scientists, priests, as well as people from all walks of life - enter into the fold of Islam every day. In Islam they find a God who responds to their call.

What Does Allah Want of Us?

Since Allah is One and Unique, endowed with the qualities of perfection that no one shares with Him, and since He is the sole Creator, Sustainer and Nour-

isher of all that exists, He demands that man should worship Him alone, not associate anyone with Him, and obey Him by following the guidance he has received from Him through His Prophets.

It may be pointed out at this juncture that by nature man is a follower and a worshipper. If he is not devoted to Allah, he will devote himself to others: deities, saints, thinkers, philosophers, or national heroes: following them in thought and action. And they, being human like himself (or worse - in the case of deities), will lead him nowhere. In fact, they need guidance themselves, although they are too proud to admit it. Aren't they who have brought the world to this pass? The Qur'an asks: *"Say, 'Of your partners (that you associate with Allah), is there anyone who can guide to Truth?' Tell them, 'It is Allah who guides to Truth. Is He then who can guide to Truth more worthy of following than he who cannot guide until he himself is guided?' So what's wrong with you? How do you judge?"* (Ch.10, verse 35).

II PROPHETS

Who Are The Prophets?

Prophets are Allah's chosen men sent from time to time with revealed messages that contain guidance for man. There have been a series of Prophets throughout history. The series started with Adam and ended with Muhammad. Nuh (Noah), Ibrahim (Abraham), Musa (Moses), and 'Isa (Jesus, the son of Mary) were a few prominent ones among them, Allah's peace and blessing be upon them all. These Prophets were humans. They ate and slept, had wives and children (except Jesus, who will marry at his second coming) and earned their living with their hands. They were neither gods, demigods, sons of God, angels, nor were they endowed with any Divine quality. They were absolutely human except that Allah chose to address them through the medium of angels.

Muhammad, the Seal of Prophethood

Muhammad was the final Prophet sent by God. Born in Makkah 570 years after his predecessor 'Isa (Jesus), he was up until the age of 40 indistinguishable from

any other man except that his extreme honesty had earned him the appellation "the Trustworthy." The Encyclopaedia Britannica says about him: "...a mass of detail in the early sources shows that he was an honest and upright man who had gained the respect and loyalty of others who were like-wise honest and upright men." (Vol. 12, p. 609) He was unlettered.

At forty he was addressed by Allah, through the angel Jibril (Gabriel), and commissioned to preach His Oneness and warn the people against the worship of false gods. What he preached can be summed up in the words of one of his followers who, along with some others, fled to Abyssinia when his people began to persecute them for embracing Islam. After their flight the Makkan heathens sent an emissary to Abyssinia to persuade the King to return these refugees to them. When Negus the King, asked the Muslims to explain their presence in his country, one of them, Ja'far b. Abi Talib, a cousin of the Prophet, spoke in the following manner:

"O King, we were an uncivilised people, worshipping idols, eating carrion, committing abominations, breaking natural ties, treating guests badly, and our strong devouring the weak. Thus we were until God sent us an apostle whose lineage, truth, trustworthi-

ness, and clemency we know. He summoned us to acknowledge God's unity and to worship Him and to renounce the stones and images, which we and our fathers formerly worshipped. He commanded us to speak the truth, be faithful to our engagements, mindful of the ties of kinship and kind hospitality, and to refrain from crimes and bloodshed. He forbade us to commit abominations and to speak lies, and to devour the property of orphans, to vilify chaste women. He commanded us to worship God alone and not to associate anything with Him, and he gave us orders about prayer, almsgiving, and fasting (enumerating the commands of Islam). We confessed his truth and believed in him, and we followed him in what he had brought from God, and we worshipped God alone without associating aught with Him. We treated as forbidden what he forbade, and as lawful what he declared lawful. Thereupon our people attacked us, treated us harshly and seduced us from our faith to try to make us go back to the worship of idols instead of the worship of God, and to regard as lawful the evil deeds we once committed. So when they got the better of us, treated us unjustly and circumscribed our lives, and came between us and our religion, we came to your country, having chosen you above all others. Here we have been happy in your protection, and we hope that we

shall not be treated unjustly while we are with you, O King." (The Life of Muhammad, P., 151 - 152, Tr., Alfred Guillaume).

Initially the Prophet was able to win some followers. But the new religion did not serve the interests of the classes that held power and influence. It anguished them deeply to see that their religion and the entire system of hegemony they had built for themselves around it, was being questioned. They had no doubt that if allowed to flourish, Islam would destroy their privileges and bring them down to the level of the commoners. This was unacceptable to them. Therefore, they began to oppose Islam and persecute the Muslims. The weak among them, the slaves and those in the lower strata of the society, became easy targets. They were abused, beaten up, and tortured with such vengeance that ultimately the Prophet had to allow them to migrate to other places such as Abyssinia and later Madinah. Finally, with hopes of the Makkan heathens ever accepting his call receding to zero, he was himself ordered by Allah to move to Madinah whose people had shown interest in Islam and had invited him there, promising to protect him. But as soon as he stepped on the soil of Madinah, the surrounding Jews began to conspire with the Makkans to destroy him and his call. This led to the outbreak

of hostilities between the two: the Muslims on the one side, and the rest of the Arabs spearheaded by their most powerful and leading tribe, the Quraysh, on the other. The battles that ensued saw the Muslims emerge victorious sometimes, while at others it was their enemies who triumphed. Finally a peace deal was struck in the sixth year after migration. This allowed free and easy intermixing of Muslims with the non-Muslims giving the latter free access to the message of Islam. During the two years that followed more people had succumbed to the call of Islam than they had in the past nineteen years since its birth. But a short while later, the peace treaty was breached by the Makkans. The Prophet marched on them with ten thousand followers and Makkah was subdued without resistance. The rest of the Arabs, waiting for the outcome of the struggle between the Prophet and the pagan leaders, began to embrace Islam in hundreds and thousands. The Prophet died two years later.

Muhammad's Personality

The personality of Prophet Muhammad, on whom peace be, is one of the most fascinating in history. No reformer has been tested with harsher conditions than he. Appearing in Arabia when it was passing through its darkest period, he was given a people that were

considered the lowest of the low in those times. They were held in such low esteem that the neighbouring Romans and Persians, who thought them incorrigible, did not wish to expand their rule over them. Also, the Prophet did not enjoy the help and support of his own people. On the contrary, they opposed him tooth and nail. Nor did he have the nobility on his side. In fact, one of the complaints of the prominent chieftains was that the Prophet was all the time surrounded by, what they considered as, lowly people whose company they detested. Finally, he was opposed even by the Jews and Christians, to whom a Messenger from God was not a new phenomenon. Yet, overcoming the universal opposition to his mission, he was able to transform the unruly desert-dwellers into the most civilised and dynamic people any age has produced. Shortly after him the Muslims defeated the centuries-old Roman and Persian empires, and subduing the best part of the then known world, established their own rule, religion, culture, and language that have lasted to this day. No man has achieved this in history. No doubt, his own charming and very powerful personality played a very important role in this transformation. It deserves, therefore, closer examination.

III REVELATIONS

What Is Revelation?

Divine revelations are messages of God to mankind sent down through Prophets. Revelations give a detailed description of the qualities and attributes of God in whom man is required to believe and whom he is required to serve and worship. In addition, Divine revelations also contain the code of life on which depends people's well-being in this life and salvation in the Hereafter. Some of the existing revealed Books are the Torah (the *Pentateuch*, or the first five Books of the Old Testament) which was revealed to Musa (Moses), *Zabur* (Psalms) revealed to Da'ud (David), *Injil* (the New Testament) revealed to 'Isa (Jesus), and finally, *the Qur'an*, revealed to Muhammad, (peace be upon him and on all Prophets).

What Occasioned A New Revelation?

The Qur'an tells us that its revelation was occasioned by the corruption's that previous messages of God suffered at the hands of their followers. The Torah for instance has been re-written entirely from memory

after it was lost for a long period. It contains stories of Prophets getting drunk (Genesis, 9:20), others having sexual intercourse with none other than their own daughters (Gen., 20:30-38), and yet others worshipping idols (1 Kings, 11:1-8). Even the concept of the One Universal God had been replaced by that of Yahweh, the national God of the Jews. Max I. Dimont the well known Jewish scholar writes in his famous work "*Jews, God and History*": "The final fusion of the five books of Moses, called the Pentateuch, (the Old Testament) occurred around 450 B.C. - in other words, eight to sixteen hundred years after some of the events narrated in them took place." This time lag obviously led to many errors and interpolations creeping into the text, which led to innovations in religious practices, warranting the raise of a new Prophet with a new revelation.

It was Jesus Christ, peace be upon him, who was sent to reform Judaism, reinstall the rule of Divine Law as stated in the Torah, and sweep away all innovations introduced after Moses. But he was rejected by the majority who tried to get him crucified. But Allah Most High raised him to the heavens alive. He departed saying: "*Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart,*

I will send him unto you." (John, 16:7). He was of course referring to Muhammad, may Allah's peace and blessings be upon him.

The message revealed to Jesus was also distorted by his followers. This happened primarily because the message revealed to him did not survive in its original form. What are known as the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John (the New Testament) are not the writings either of Christ, or of Christ's Apostles. They are works of later and obscure authors and the earliest of them was probably committed to writing at least half a century after Jesus Christ, if not later. Even the originals of these Gospels have not survived. The oldest manuscript (which dates around 135 years after Jesus) is in ancient Greek, which was not the language of either Christ or his Apostles. Therefore, it cannot be said about any portion of the Gospels with certainty that it is the word of God.

The following is a statement from "*The Jerome Biblical Commentary*," a voluminous work which has been prepared by leading Catholic and Protestant scholars: "The term "divine inspiration of Scripture" denotes the special influence of God upon the human writers of the Bible, an influence of such a nature that God is said to be the author of the biblical books" (p., 500).

This is to say that they admit that these are not the actual words of God but only written under the divine guidance. The same work states further: "Although God is the author of Sacred Scripture, it is also true that human beings made their own genuine contribution to the production of the sacred books - a point firmly stated by (Pope) Pius XII in *Divino Afflante Spiritu*" (p., 503).

Thus, the loss of the original revelation, and the fact that Jesus Christ was worshipped in place of the One God, necessitated a fresh revelation. It was sent down about 600 years after Jesus and is in our hands today in the form of the Qur'an. As against the previously revealed books, the Qur'an has been preserved in its original form. A well known Arabist, Arthur J. Arberry, writes in the foreword to his work "The Koran Interpreted": "Apart from certain orthographical modifications of the originally somewhat primitive method of writing, intended to render unambiguous and easy the task of reading and recitation, the Koran as printed in the twentieth century is identical with the Koran as authorised by Uthman more than 1, 400 years ago."

Uthman (ra), it may be noted, was the third caliph after Muhammad, peace be upon him, who got copies

of the original compilation circulated widely in the world of Islam.

IV THE QUR'AN

What Is The Qur'an?

The Qur'an is the final Revelation of God to man. It was revealed to the final Prophet, Muhammad, on whom be peace. Its main topics are: the Existence of God, the Unity of His Being; His Qualities and Attributes, episodes from the lives of the Prophets that were sent to various nations with the special emphasis on the account of the struggle between them and those who rejected them, the ultimate outcome of the rejection of God's message; the principles of a good and virtuous life; the frame-work of rules and regulations for organising personal, family, and community life, the return to God, the setting up of the Scale and the judgement of each man's faith and deeds on the Day of Resurrection and Reckoning followed by entry into everlasting Heaven or Hell. The Qur'an also mentions in passing some historical truths, scientific facts, makes observations on natural phenomena and prophesizes certain events.

Here are some examples of Qur'anic revelations. The first chapter says:

"In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

All praise be to Allah, the Lord of Worlds.

The Compassionate, the Merciful.

Lord of the Day of Judgement.

Thee alone do we worship, and Thy help alone do we seek,

Guide us to the straight path.

The path of those Thou has favoured.

Not of those that earned Thy anger, nor of those that lost the Way."

One of the shortest chapter of the Qur'an says:

"In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

"(I swear) By the Time.

Verify Man is in peril.

Save those who believed and did good deeds. (And save) those

That enjoined the Truth and enjoined perseverance." (Chapter: 103)

The following piece is the first part of a chapter entitled "The Sun":

"In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

*"By the sun and its morning brightness
and by the moon when she follows it,
and by the day when it displays it
and by the night when it enshrouds it!
By the heaven and Him who built it
and by the earth and by Him who extended it!
By the soul, and Him who perfected it
and inspired it (with conscience of) what is wrong for it and
(what is) right!
Prosperous is he who purifies it,
and failed is he who seduces it."*

The Challenge of the Qur'an.

Many questions can be raised about the Qur'an. What is the proof that it is the revelation of God? Maybe Muhammad made it up himself. Also, if the previous revelations have been tampered, what is the proof that the Qur'an has been preserved as it was revealed?

The answer to the first question is a counter-question. Is there another example in history of an unlettered man producing a literary masterpiece? Its great relig-

ious merit apart, the Qur'an has been acknowledged as an unparalleled piece of Arabic literature. How could Muhammad, who received no education, who could not even read and write, and who produced nothing till the age of 40, suddenly come up with an all-time masterpiece, and at one stroke?

There is evidence galore to prove that neither Muhammad nor any other human could have authored this Book. Before discussing any of it, let us look into the Qur'an itself to find out how it clears these doubts.

We find that the Qur'an repeatedly asserts that it is no man's writing but a direct revelation of God. It also tells us that Allah Himself has undertaken to preserve it in its original form. To further its claim it challenges its readers that if they are in any doubt about its Divine origin, then they may produce another writing equal to it in merit. The logic behind this challenge should be obvious. If this Book is not God's revelation but a product of human mind, then, what is possible for one man is possible for another. If the challenge cannot be answered by one set of people it can be answered by another set of people. If it is not answered in one age, it will be answered in another. And the challenge is simply to produce three verses, or a single chapter of equal merit. But if it could not

be done in 14 hundred years - and it has not been done - then it must be admitted that it is of Divine origin. The challenge of course remains open to this day.

Nonetheless, other than the challenge, which we cannot ignore, we present some other reasons to demonstrate why Qur'an could not have been written by Muhammad, or, by any other human.

PREDICTIONS OF THE QUR'AN

About Arabs and Islam

During its revelation, which took 23 years to complete, the Qur'an made several predictions of the ultimate destruction of those who opposed its message. When revealed, the predictions sounded a wishful thinking as the response to the Prophet's message had been far from encouraging. During the first 20 of the 23 years of his Apostolic mission he could win very few people to his side. However, one prediction was so clear and specific that it can be given no other explanation except Divine.

In the sixth year after migration from Makkah to Madinah, the Prophet set out with about seven hundred followers for Makkah with the intention to perform the lesser pilgrimage known in Arabic as 'Umrah. He was stopped by the Quraysh outside Makkah at a place called Hudaibiyah and refused entry to the holy city. This was against all prevalent rules. Nevertheless the Prophet applied for peace. It was accepted. But the conditions set by the Quraysh were so humiliating that some senior Companions expressed their strong displeasure. One of the conditions was that the Muslims would return from where they came without performing the pilgrimage. For that they would have to come the next year.

But truly speaking the Muslims had no choice. They were too weak against the pagan Arabs. During those days the Prophet saw in a dream that he would enter Makkah triumphantly and also received revelation confirming his vision. It said: "Truly has Allah fulfilled the vision He showed to His Messenger. You shall surely enter the Holy Mosque, with Allah's Will, in security, (some of you) shaving your heads, (others) cutting (their hair) short, not fearing (anyone)" [The Qur'an - 48: 27]. The prophecy, however, seemed impossible of fulfilment. The Prophet then had with him seven hundred men and perhaps twice as many

able bodied men at Madinah. As against this the Christians of Najran alone were capable of raising an army of a hundred thousand soldiers at short notice. And the Christians were not the most numerous people in Arabia, nor were they the most powerful. A single tribe, the Banu Hawazin, devoid of the help of Quraysh, was able to raise 22,000 people against the Prophet two years later. The Makkans themselves had casually collected an army of 20,000 to raid Madinah an year earlier. Had the Makkans, Jews and other tribes wanted, they could have jointly raised an army of a quarter million against the Muslims, although, just 10,000 would have been sufficient to wipe Madinah off the map. With such an imbalance of power, what chance did the ageing Prophet, then 59, have of entering Makkah triumphant? But, true to the prediction, it did happen. In just two years Makkah was subdued without resistance. No human could have foreseen this turn of events.

About The Romans

The above was a prophecy in the Qur'an concerning an event in Arabia. But Arabia was a remote corner of the then known world, known to the outsiders for its hungry, ferocious, untamed desert-dwellers. The civilised world was divided into two major powers.

Both vast, powerful, and several centuries old: the Roman and the Persian. The Romans (known by the later historians as the Byzantine) ruled over some parts of Europe, the whole of Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and North Africa. The Persian Empire had its roots in Persia. The two super powers of the time had long been warring with each other in an effort to expand territories. Lately, the Persians were particularly successful under the greatest of their emperors Chosroes II who had begun his campaigns against the Romans early in the seventh century of the Christian era (Muhammad was then about 30 years old and not yet a Prophet). Chosroes tore through the Roman defences and within 30 years reduced the illustrious empire to shambles having wrested away the best part of Syria, Palestine, Egypt and all the areas below the Capital of the empire, Constantinople (today's Istanbul).

Twelve of the thirty years of victory-filled campaigns of Chosroes were conducted during the reign of the Roman emperor Heraclius, who, being more a man of the pleasantries of the palace than the battlefields, watched with complete helplessness the destruction of his empire. The greatest blow came when the Persians wrested from his hands Jerusalem and carried away the relics of the holy city to Persia, including the "Holy Cross," on which Christ was supposed to

have been crucified. It was at this juncture that the Prophet, then in his 4th or 5th year of Apostleship, received the following astonishing prediction: "*Alif. Lām. Mīm. The Romans have been defeated, in (the land) lowest on earth. But after (this) defeat of theirs they will soon be victorious. Within a few years. With Allah is the decision, in the past and in the future. On that day shall the faithful rejoice*" (Ch. *Al-Rum*: 1-4).

Referring to this prediction the famous English historian Edward Gibbon (1737-1794) wrote the following lines in the great historical work of the eighteenth century, "*The Decline And Fall Of The Roman Empire*" (vol. 5 P., 79, London, 1911):

"At the time when the prediction is said to have been delivered, no prophecy could be more distant from its accomplishment, since the first twelve years of Heraclius announced the approaching dissolution of the empire."

But then something happened. Heraclius changed. Assuming the role of a hero, and borrowing all the gold that the churches could lend him, he set sail quietly into the Mediterranean Sea with a small band of soldiers. He landed at the shores of Syria and

defeated the Persian army sent to intercept him. He marched on carrying in the process his victorious armies as far as the royal cities of Casbin and Ispahan, which had never been approached by a Roman emperor before. There he faced the largest ever-Persian army, so fearful that his bravest veterans were left speechless with awe. Although he knew nothing of the prophecy of the Qur'an, Heraclius addressed his commanders in prophetic words: "Be not terrified by the multitude of your foes. With the aid of Heaven, one Roman may triumph over a thousand barbarians." The victory was his. The decisive battle was at Ninevah. And a little later he recovered the "Holy Cross." In seven years Heraclius had liberated all the provinces that had been lost in thirty years. The prediction of the Qur'an had come true. And astonishingly again, Heraclius went back to the same old life of pleasure and ease, forcing Gibbon to state:

"Of the characters conspicuous in history, that of Heraclius is one of the most extraordinary and inconsistent. In the "first and last years" of a long reign, the emperor appears to be the slave of sloth, of pleasure, and of superstition, the careless and impotent spectator of public calamities."

It was as if Heraclius had woken up from his sloth only to fulfil the prophecy of the Qur'an.

Miracles of Scientific Nature

The Qur'an is a Book of guidance and not a treatise on science. But it does make passing references to scientific and natural phenomena. How do these statements sound, after a thousand and four hundred years? They should seem outdated. But that's not the case.

Embryology: A Muslim scholar, Sheikh Abdul Majeed Zindani, says he gathered together those verses of the Qur'an that speak of the process of human conception, development and birth, put them in order, and showed the collection to a world-known Professor of embryology, seeking his opinion. The scientist told him that if Sheikh Zindani wrote an article on embryology, basing it entirely on the material he had on hand, no one would believe that it is from a book 14 centuries old!

Barriers in the Sea: In several places the Qur'an states that Allah has placed a barrier between the seas. For instance: *"He has set free the two seas so that they might meet; yet between them is a barrier which they may not transgress"* (ch. 55, verses 19&20). Similar statements appear in verse 61 of Chapter 27. Now verses of this kind had remained enigmatic until the very modern times when it was discovered that when a strait separates two seas, as the Red sea is separated from the Indian Ocean by the Strait of Bab Al-Mandab, the two seas are distinctly separated from each other so that both the physical and chemical properties of the two waters, as well as the maritime life in both the seas is distinctly different from the other. The strait acts as a wall clearly separating the two into different maritime worlds.

Some scholars who have studied the Qur'an and compared its statements on scientific matters with those in other revealed literatures, such as Dr. Maurice Bucaille who is a French surgeon, have reached interesting conclusions concerning the Divine origin of the holy Qur'an and the interpolations of the previous revelations. Dr. Bucaille has published the findings of his studies in a book called: *"The Bible, the Qur'an, and Science"* (*"La Bible, le Coran et le Science"* first

published in French in May 1976). He states his conclusions in the following words:

"What initially strikes the reader confronted for the first time with a text of this kind is the sheer abundance of subjects discussed: the Creation, astronomy, the explanation of certain matters concerning the earth, the animal and vegetable kingdoms, human reproduction, etc. Whereas monumental errors are to be found in the Bible, I could not find a single error in the Qur'an. I had to stop and ask myself: if a man was the author of the Qur'an, how could he have written facts in the seventh century A.D. that today are shown to be in keeping with modern scientific knowledge" (p., 120, English edition, American Trust Publication, 1979).

Here is further evidence from another authority in science. This is from Keith L. Moore, Professor of Anatomy and Associate Dean, Basic Sciences, University of Toronto, Canada. He writes in his book: "*The Developing Human*" (Saunders, 1982):

"It is cited in the Koran...that human beings are produced from a mixture of secretion from the male and the female. Several references are made to the creation of a human being from a sperm-drop and it

is also suggested that the resulting organism settles in the woman like a seed, six days after its beginning." (The Human blastocyst begins to implant about six days after fertilisation). The Koran, (and the Prophet's sayings) also state that the sperm drop develops into a "clot of congealed blood" (an implanted blastocyst or a spontaneously aborted conceptus would resemble a blood clot). Reference is also made to the leech-like appearance of the embryo..."

These are just a few of the instances from the Qur'an which demonstrate that we will encounter very serious problems in explaining the contents of the Qur'an if we assume that Muhammad is its author.

V ISLAM

What is Islam?

In this simplest term: "Islam is submission with love to the Will of Allah." It can also be defined as the sum of those truths to which God's Messengers have invited mankind since times immemorial. In practical terms and in the words of an ancient scholar, Imam Shatibi: "Islam is the system by which a man is persuaded to submit to Allah, in that area of his existence in which he enjoys free will, just as he is already submitted in the area in which he has no choice but to live by his instincts." The word Islam also signifies peace. And so it can also be defined as a system of life and a code of practice that puts man at peace with Allah and with His creation. Prophet Muhammad, on whom be peace has defined "the Muslim as one from whose hands and tongue other Muslims are at peace." Let us now look at some of the practical aspects of Islam.

The Pillars of Islam

Apart from being a faith, Islam is also a system of life, following which the individual and the community are required to organise their lives. Therefore, there are many things in Islam that are obligatory: those without which neither the faith is complete, nor the responsibility of being a Muslim can be shouldered. Of these obligations, five are of utmost importance. They are traditionally known as the five pillars of Islam, i.e., those on and around which the edifice of Islam is built. They are 1. Faith, 2. *Salah* (the five daily Prayers), 3. *Zakah* (or the welfare due), 4. Fasts and, 5. *Hajj*.

Faith: It is the declaration, (shahadah in Arabic) that "There is no god save Allah (the One God), and (that) Muhammad is His Messenger."

Salah (Prayers): Every believer in Islam is required to pray five times every day: before dawn, at noon, mid-afternoon, sunset, and at nightfall. Although it is obligatory for men to offer the Prayers in the mosque in congregation, the Prayers can be offered anywhere.

Zakah (The Welfare-due): *Zakah* is the welfare-due offered in the way of Allah to secure His pleasure and

to purify one's wealth and soul. There are two kinds of *zakah*: the voluntary and the obligatory. The voluntary *zakah* (known as *sadaqah* in Arabic) should be practised by a Muslim as frequently as possible, and although its literal meaning is charity, it can also include anything that can be done to promote general happiness. Prophet Muhammad, on whom be peace, has said: "Your smile in the face of your brother is *sadaqah*; your (efforts to) promote virtue and stamp out the evil is *sadaqah*; to guide a man who has lost his way is *sadaqah*; to help a man who has lost his sight is *sadaqah*, to remove the stones, thorns, and bones from the path of the people is *sadaqah*, and the emptying of your pail into another man's pail (at the well) is *sadaqah*."

The obligatory *zakah* is due once every year from everyone who holds about 80 grams of gold, silver of equal price, or equal amount of money in possession for a year and above. The calculation and spending of the *zakah*-sums are the individual's responsibility. The amount due is two and a half percent of the gold, silver or cash in possession.

Fasts: One month, every year, during the month of Ramadhan, a Muslim is required to fast from dawn to

dusk, abstaining from food, drinks, smoke, sexual intercourse and all immoral acts and utterances.

Hajj (Pilgrimage): *Hajj* is obligatory once in a lifetime, on every adult Muslim, male or female, who can afford to travel to Makkah. The rites include wearing the garb of a pilgrim, circumambulating the Ka'bah (a cubicle structure, empty from inside) seven times, walking seven times between Safa and Marwah [mounts between which Hajar, the wife of Ibrahim (peace be on her), ran in search of water], tarrying in the wide plain of 'Arafat, spending a night in Muzdalifah while returning to the Mina valley, tarrying in this valley for three days and nights during which an animal is to be offered in sacrifice. It is here that those spots are to be stoned, where Ibrahim, (peace be upon him), threw stones at Satan for trying to tempt him away from sacrificing his son, as ordered by Allah as a test. The pilgrim shaves his head (woman take off only an inch) to complete the rites of *Hajj*.

Summary

To sum up: The *shahadah* sets right a man's relationship with Allah. It also creates the minimum condition for salvation in the Hereafter, since he who associated others with God will never enter Paradise.

However, in this earthly life a line has to be drawn between the believer and the unbeliever: the minimum without which one forfeits the right to be called a Muslim. That minimum is *salah* and *zakah*: one is the right of God, and the other the right of man. One strengthens his soul and the other creates proper social conditions for such strengthening. The fourth pillar of Islam, fasts, helps the Muslim regain his natural self: by abstaining from the essentials of life, he is freed from his own self and learns that he can survive on very little. He also realizes that for that bare minimum he need not compromise himself. On the other hand it also cleanses his self through abstinence from all that is vile and wicked in word and deed, thus purifying his mind and soul.

Hajj takes him off for a while to a new multi-racial, multi-national society where man is just man, with no identity, a humble unit in the sea of humanity, sharing the same dress, the same food, the same comforts and discomforts, and learning that even if the colours, languages and facial and bodily features are different, the ummah, or the nation of Islam, is one entity. He also learns, through direct observation of a large number of people, that he is not alone in his devotion to Allah, that there are millions of all colour and hue who, living under more difficult conditions are yet

more devoted to Allah than him. This teaches him humility.

The Rest of Islam

We have stated earlier that Islam is also a code of practice that guides a Muslim in all affairs of his life. This code of practice is also known by the term *Shari'ah* (the way, or the Law). The *Shari'ah* is divided into two categories: the *'ibadāt* or the system of worship, and the *mu'āmaḫāt* or the worldly dealings. What we have discussed under the five pillars of Islam are the *'ibadāt*. We shall now present the other aspects of the *Shari'ah* very briefly. But first, in order to get some idea of the spirit of the *Shari'ah* the following will be useful.

Knowledge and Learning

Seeking knowledge should be the first priority in a believer's life. It is on knowledge that the character, depth, and purity of action depends. "A man in the path of knowledge treads on the wings of the angels," Prophet Muhammad has said. And knowledge is defined as that piece of information that leads to a better

understanding of the Will of God, and the demand of the *Shari'ah* upon an individual at any given time.

Cleanliness and Purity

Cleanliness is part of faith. A believer is required to take a bath at least once a week, as also after every sexual intercourse. Women are additionally required to take a bath at the end of the menstrual cycle. A prerequisite of the five daily Prayers is ablution. Ablution is a state of purity achieved by washing the exposed parts of the body like the mouth, nose, face, hands and feet.

Clothes and one's surroundings should also be kept clean. The Prophet has instructed that even the backyard of a house should be kept clean. However, it is not merely physical cleanliness that is required. A believer is required to be pure in thoughts and intentions also. The Prophet once addressed a young lad in the following words: "Son! If you can achieve it, that you pass your morning and your evening in a state that you bear no grudge against anybody in your heart, - (go ahead and) do it, for that is my way (*Sunnah*). And he who followed my way will be with me in Paradise."

Mu'āmafāt (Dealings)

Family is of prime importance in Islam. It is considered as the first social unit on the health of which depends the health of the society. A harmonious social order is created by the existence of families at peace with each other, whose individual members are at peace with each other.

A man is recommended, therefore, to return to his home as soon as possible once the work outside is over. That applies to journeys also, during which it is preferable that his wife accompanies him. He is expected to love her, overlook her weakness, as she must his, and both create a peaceful home for the children. The Prophet has said that Allah loves the man who puts in a morsel (such as a piece of cake) in his wife's mouth with his very hand.

The mother is at the highest rung of the ladder of rights. A man was carrying his aged mother on his shoulders around the Ka'bah. He turned to the Prophet and asked if he had fulfilled his duty to his mother. He was told: "Not in the least. Not even if you are born again and spend the whole of your life in her service." The Prophet told a man complaining about his earnings taken away by his father: "You and your earnings

belong to him." People related by blood come next in rights starting with the closest such as brothers and sisters. To spend one's charity on them, if they be needy, will earn double the reward. A *hadith* (tradition of the Prophet) says the he who wished that his material share of this life be increased and his life lengthened, may treat his relatives well.

Neighbours have their rights. "It is not right of a man that he should fill his stomach while his neighbour sleeps hungry," said the Prophet. He also recommended the housewife that she add a little more gravy to the dish in order to be able to send the neighbour a part of it. And, in another tradition he is reported to have said that Archangel Jibril spoke "to me so often of the rights of the neighbour that I thought he would include him in the inheritance."

The minimum right of the general public is to let them be in peace from one's evils. And the best way of doing them good is to guide them to the path of Allah. Socialising is also recommended. Says a *hadith*: "He who mixes with the masses and bears their company in patience, is better than he who distances himself away from them."

It must be remembered, however, that Islam does not rely on a few moral exhortations alone. Individuals, society and state, everyone's rights have been clearly and minutely delineated and guaranteed by the Law. This we shall discuss in later books of this series, Allah willing.

Jihad

Islam is an ideal and yet a practical and pragmatic religion. Wherever established, whether in a home or in a nation, it creates the conditions of peace as well as an atmosphere of healthy growth and development. But the world we live in is far from being ideal. It neither encourages virtue nor suppresses the evil. Also, at the individual level, it is neither easy to rise from bed an hour and a half before dawn for morning Prayers, nor to give away cheerfully two and a half percent of one's savings every year in charity. Surely, Islam will not be established, neither within oneself nor outside without a struggle. In the Islamic terminology this struggle is known by the much feared, but little understood word jihad. The struggle to establish Islam starts with one's own self, and spreads thereon to the outside world, where every rightful means, except force, may be employed to establish the ways approved by Allah. A Qur'anic

verse clearly sets the rule. It says: "*There is no compulsion in religion.*"

But what happens when forces opposed to change, opposed to non-conformation, opposed to submission to Allah take up arms against the faith and the faithful? What will happen if the believers in truth show timidity? We all know the answer. No! However much we may dislike the idea of losing a limb, an eye, or the whole self, force will have to be met with force. Without that, virtue will never gain an upper hand. God's revelation tells us: "*Fighting has been prescribed for you, although it is much disgusting to you. But it is possible that you dislike a thing, and it may be good for you. And it is possible that you may like a thing and it may be bad for you. Allah knows. And you know not.*" (2:216)

However, let there be no confusion. What is this fighting for? To force people to fall down on their knees before Allah? Not at all. Allah does not accept deeds performed under duress. The trial of man consists in determining if he will succumb to his base desires, or he will use his free will to follow the guidance given to him. Force goes against the whole scheme. Therefore, force is to be used only to remove those who, to safeguard their own interests, keep a

hold on the masses, and prevent the message of Islam from reaching them; whereas it is the right of the people that they should be allowed free access to Allah's message.

Ihsān

Finally, what is all this struggle about? Is it simply to establish a set of laws and try and live by them as best as you can? What is the relationship between Allah and us? Is it just that He is the Lord so He commands, and we His slaves so we obey? Or is there more to it? There is.

At the beginning of this book we defined Islam as submission to the will of Allah with love. Love of Allah, therefore, is the moving force. It is true that to obey Allah is also an expression of love. But there are fields that can be traversed, horizons that can be reached, stages that can be climbed, until one reaches that stage when he actually sees Allah when he worships Him. This is known as *ihsan*.

The subject of course needs further elaboration, which we shall, Allah willing, attempt in other books of this series.

VI CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

From what has preceded it should be clear that Islam begins with the individual. Its call is to the individual to accept Allah as the only Lord worthy of worship and obedience. Its belief is that without the reformation of the individual, attempts at reforming the human society will end in failure. It will also be seen that its basic philosophy is persuasion. It believes that no lasting change can be brought about through compulsion. However, it does not stop with the individual. It realises that the individual will find it very hard to lead a virtuous life, were not the community and the state to help him in his efforts by creating an atmosphere conducive to it. Accordingly, Islam lays down guidelines for the creation of a state, and defines and delineates its duties and functions. We shall briefly touch upon only one function of the state here: that of maintaining law and order through the prevention of crime and administration of punishment.

It must be understood at the outset that neither all crimes are committed by the mentally deranged, as some modern legal experts believe, nor are all humans evil, and prone to crimes, as Christianity suggests by implication. A great majority of crimes can

be prevented if the community and state will open the ways for free economic activities, and do not hinder peaceful pursuits. Also, they should come to the rescue of the individual if he fails to obtain his basic needs. This precisely is the function of the state, which it has to fulfill before it can assume the authority to enforce punishments. An incident from the Prophet's time will clarify this point.

When there was famine in the provinces a starving Bedouin arrived at Madinah. He entered a farm, plucked corn and began to eat some and pack the rest. The owner of the farm surprised him. He beat him and took away his cloak. The man reported the incident to the Prophet. The Prophet reproached the owner of the farm saying: "You didn't feed him if he was hungry, and didn't teach him if he was ignorant." Then he ordered him to return the man his cloak and give him something for his sustenance.

According to Islam then, the state and the community are responsible for the basic needs of the individual, if the individual fails to obtain them through his own honest efforts. But if the individual resorts to criminal ways, despite the state and community having taken care of him, then Islam comes down heavily upon him. It recommends exemplary punishments so that

a criminal is forced to think many times over before he ventures to commit a crime. Punishments in Islam are not a means of reformation, as they are in secular legal systems, rather deterrents. It is in the light of this that the following must be understood.

Death Penalty

Islam prescribes death penalty for:

- 1) Premeditated murder,
- 2) Adultery,
- 3) Highway robbery &
- 4) Rebellion against an established Islamic government.

However, certain conditions have to be met for the imposition of the maximum punishment. For instance, in case of adultery following conditions must be fulfilled:

- The adulterer should be a married person.
- The crime must have been proven beyond a shadow of doubt and in the absence of confession, four adult men of integrity must bear witness to having seen the very act. (The emphasis on the very act may be noted.)

Anything less, however close to the act, will not be considered enough for imposing the maximum penalty).

- If the accused recants the confession at any time, death penalty will be rescinded for reasons of doubt having entered the case.
- The offender must be a Muslim.
- The offender must be sane.
- The offender must have reached the age of puberty.

It is only when all the above conditions have been satisfactorily met that the maximum penalty may be imposed although the head of the State will have the right to exercise his prerogative of final verdict involving certain kinds of cases that cannot be discussed here.

Amputation of the Hand

The punishment for theft is amputation of the hand from the wrist. However, the following conditions must be fulfilled:

- The property stolen must have been stored in a secure place, requiring force to open.

- The property stolen must reach a certain value (nisab) which will vary according to the financial status of the state.
- Either a confession by the accused or testimony by two righteous males of integrity is required for conviction.
- The article stolen must not be food, fruit, game, grass or forest wood.
- The criminal should not have been in a desperate need or in very straitened circumstances.
- The offender must be an adult.
- The offender must be sane.

VII THE HEREAFTER

Death

According to Islam, this life is transient and a trial. The trial consists in determining if man uses the gift of 'free will' that he enjoys to follow the way shown by the prophets; or does he insist on following his own desires. And, just as any individual has been given a certain time which is the period of trial for him, the human race has also been allotted a period of trial. When corruption will become so rampant that no good will remain on this earth, all life will be destroyed. After some time, every soul that once lived will be resurrected for the evaluation of how he or she used the free will given. In other words, everyone's faith and deeds will be examined. Those who answered the call of the prophets and followed the commandments of God will be rewarded with Paradise, while those who denied will be punished with Hell-fire in which they will abide forever. The Qur'an, as well as the traditions of the Prophet, have extensively dealt with the subject of Resurrection and Reckoning. We shall state some of the high points here.

Resurrection

No one has been given the knowledge of this Day, so that whenever it occurs, it will be a sudden affair. According to the traditions of the Prophet (asws) it will be preceded by signs such as appearance of massive vegetation watered by canals and rivers in the Arab lands, a very disproportionate increase in the female population, rampant moral perversion, crime and violence, the appearance of Dajjal (the Anti-Christ), who will claim to be God, and his destruction at the hands of Jesus Christ who will descend from the heavens.

And then, as people would have forgotten all about these signs - as a long time would elapse between each sign - then, on a sudden, they will hear a terrible noise, like a million trumpets being blown together. That will cause everyone to die. With another blow, people will start emerging from their graves, or wherever their remains will be, even if in the form of atoms.

Reckoning and Judgement

The next phase will be that of Reckoning. In this phase people will be given their "Book of Deeds," in which they will find recorded everything that they had said or done in their life on this earth, whether good or

bad, major or minor. Then "Scales" will be set up and the process of weighing each person's good (or approved) deeds against his evil (or disapproved) deeds will begin. Those whose good deeds will outweigh their evil ones will be allowed to proceed to Paradise, while those whose evil deeds will outweigh the good ones will be sent to Hell-fire, where they will stay in proportion to their evil deeds: some for a few days and some for a very long duration - although even a moment in it will be too long.

However, those who had denied Allah and His Messengers, or had ascribed partners or equals unto Him, will not go through this process of Reckoning. They will be straightaway driven to Hell-fire where they will abide forever.

May Allah save you and me from such and end, *Amin*.

Glossary of Terms

Abu: Father (of). Abu al-Qasim would mean father of Qasim.

A.C.: Short form of "After Christ," and used by Muslims in place of..

A.D.: "After Death." Since Jesus Christ, on whom be peace, did not die but was lifted to the Heaven and will be sent down again towards the end of the world.

A.H.: Short form of "After Hijrah," (of the Prophet - saws - to Madinah). Islamic calendar dates from this event.

Ansari (pl., Ansar): The Helpers; those who helped and supported the immigrants to Madinah during the time of the Prophet (asws).

Modern day "Ansaris" are not their descendants.

ASWS: Short form of Arabic "*Alayhi al-Salat Wa al-Salam*" meaning, "On him be peace and blessings (of Allah)."

Barakah: Benediction, blessing, or increase in quantity or improvement in quality of a thing beyond its normal, by the grace of Allah (swt).

Bint: Also Ibnah; daughter (of), normally occurs in the chain of narrators of an early report. For instance Zam'ah bint Suda will mean Zam'ah the daughter of Suda.

Da'wah: Mission, call or preaching of Islam. In its root it means to invite.

Dhikr: Remembrance of Allah (swt).

Diyya: Blood-money payable in case of an accidental murder, or in case of a premeditated murder, if the legal heirs waive away their claim to life for life, accepting monetary compensation.

Fiqh: Verbally understanding or insight. In practice the word applies to the compendium of Islamic laws that regulate every day life of the individual or the affairs of the State.

Hadith: The saying or practice of Prophet Muhammad (saws), a report concerning him, or his approval or disapproval of a report. Also referred to as "a tradition." For instance, "He who guides (another) to a virtuous deed is like him (in rewards) who practices it," is a hadith. Buk-

hari, Muslim, Nasa'i, Tirmidhi, Abu Da'ud, and Ibn Majah are six major compilers of hadith.

Haram: Illegal or the prohibited in Islam.

Hijrah: Migration in the way of Allah, i.e., in the face of religious persecution.

'Ibadah: Primarily worship, but in general any deed that agrees with the requirements of the Shari'ah.

Ibn: Also bin; son (of).

Iman: Arabic for "faith."

Kalimah: Lit. word. But normally the term is used for Shahadah, or the basic creed of Islam, or its expression viz., "I bear witness that there is no god save Allah, and that Muhammad is His Messenger."

Masjid al-Harām: The Grand Mosque at Makkah, so referred because many things, ordinarily lawful (such as hunting), are "haram" or prohibited in its vicinity.

Muhajir (pl., Muhajirun): Immigrant. Applied primarily to those who migrated to Madinah during the time of the Prophet (asws).

Nabiyy: A Prophet of Allah, synonym of "Rasul" with a slight difference in meaning.

Nisab: The minimum amount of wealth over which Zakah is due.

PBUH(T): Short form of "Peace be upon him (them)." Also used for Prophets in place of asws or saws.

R.A: Short form of "*Radia Allah 'Anhu*" meaning, "May Allah be pleased with him."

Normally used for the Companions of the Prophet (saws).

Rasūl: A Messenger of Allah. Also used for the angel who carries revelations to the Prophets.

Sadaqah: Voluntary almsgiving.

Sahabi (pl., Sahaba): A Companion of the Prophet (asws).

Salah: The five daily Prayers.

Salaf (pl., Aslaf): The predecessors or elders in religion, particularly applicable to the three generations after the Prophet,

Sawm: Fasting.

SAWS: Short form of "*Salah 'Alayhi Wa Sallam*" meaning, more or less the same as asws.

Shahādah: The utterance of the basic creed of Islam. See kalimah.

Shari'ah: The way of life as outlined by the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Shirk: The unforgivable sin of associating anyone or anything with Allah (swt). For instance, to believe that anyone has knowledge of the future is "shirk." That someone has been associated with God in His Attribute of the Knower, Who alone knows what is in the Unseen.

Sunnah: The example or practice of the Prophet, on whom be peace. For instance, to give a lift to a passerby is a Sunnah of the Prophet.

SWT: Short form of "*Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala*," meaning,

"Glorified and Exalted (be Allah)." It is used when Allah's name is mentioned to proclaim Him above any weakness that people attribute to Him, or freedom from any partnership ascribed unto Him.

Tawhid: Oneness of Allah in Person and Attributes.

Umm: Mother (of). For instance, Umm Zaynab means the mother of Zaynab.

Zakah: The obligatory welfare-due, which amounts to one-fortieth of the wealth over the Nisab, and is due every twelve lunar months.

Zina: Adultery or illicit sex of a married person, male or female.

Suggested Reading Material

Al-Qur'an, Text, Translation and Commentary, Yousuf Ali

Introduction to Islam, Dr. Hameedullah

Islam, Ed. John Alden Williams

Islam - Basic Principles and Characteristics, A. K. Ahmed.

Islam: Faith and Practice, Manzoor No'mani

Islam in Focus, H. Abdulati

Islam in Theory and Practice, Maryam Jameelah

Islam the Misunderstood Religion, Muhammad Qutb

The Four Pillars of Islam, Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

The Natural Form of Man - Islam, Abdalhaqq Bewley

The Spirit of Islam, Syed Ameer Ali

Towards Understanding Islam, Syed Abul A'la Mawdudi

Understanding Islam and the Muslims, Prepared by The Saudi Embassy in Washington

What is Islam?, Manzoor No'mani

**A Brief Introduction to
ISLAM
(BOOK-1)**

The Work in your hand deals with the single most important issue of your life: that of your relationship with God - Allah in Arabic - the One God who created you, nourishes you and to whom you shall return with death. If you have set right your relationship with Him, then while this life becomes A prelude to it, blessing of an unimaginable kind await you in the Hereafter. On the other hand, if the relationship has not been set right, then, and assuredly, a disaster of stupendous magnitude awaits those who refuse to give their Lord His due: love, thanks, obedience, and worship.

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