

*A Paper for Post-Modern Religion*

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Reflections on ISLAM

ISLAM is the proper name of the religion incorrectly called in the past by some westerners as Mohammedanism. Its adherents are named Muslims, meaning in Arabic, "One who surrenders herself or himself to God".

In its origins the religion was based on the revelations uttered by the prophet, Muhammad, who was born in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, around the year 540 Common Era and died in 632.

Like many of the Arabs, Muhammad had come to believe that al-Lah, the High God of the ancient Arabian pantheon, whose name simply meant "the God," was identical to the God worshipped by the Jews and the Christians. He believed that only a prophet of this God could solve the problems of his people, but he never thought that he was going to be that prophet.

Muhammad wrote his revelations in the book of the Quran (Eng Koran), which became for them the word of al-Lah (God). The Quran teaches that all religious people have a duty to work for a just and equal society where the poor and vulnerable are treated decently. The early moral message of the Quran is simple: it is wrong to lay up wealth and to build a private fortune, and good to share the wealth of society fairly by giving a regular proportion of ones wealth to the poor.

Like the Hebrew prophets, Muhammad preached an ethic that we might call

socialist as a consequence of his worship of the one God. There were no obligatory doctrines about God; indeed, the Quran is highly suspicious of theological speculation, dismissing it as self-indulgent guesswork about things nobody can possibly know or prove. The Christian doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity are blasphemous notions to the Muslims. Instead, as in Judaism, God was experienced as a moral imperative.

In Islam, worship is an active part of daily life. Five obligatory daily prayers (Salaah) at dawn, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset and evening are to be performed at home, workplace, outdoors or in a mosque (Muslim place of worship). A required weekly Friday noon congregational prayer is held at the mosque with a sermon given.

Fasting occurs once a year during Ramadan, the ninth month of the lunar Islamic calendar. Islamic daily fasting requires complete abstention from eating, drinking, intimate sexual contacts and smoking from the break of dawn until sunset. The fast is broken at sunset.

Charity giving is a part of Islamic worship and service.

ISLAM, cont'd

coarse garments made of wool  
favoured by Muhammad.

Besides contributing 2.5% of ones net savings for the year to the Annual Charity, they are expected, if at all possible, to make a Pilgrimage to the Holy City of Makkah once in a lifetime.

Muslims belong to one of the two main schools of Islam, the Sunni school or the Shia' school. More than 90% of Muslims belong to the Sunni school. The Shia' school is fundamentalist in nature, believes in the necessity for a spiritual leader and strong authoritative powers.

Each local Muslim community, Sunni or Shia', has one or more religious leaders who have formal Islamic education or self-learned Islamic knowledge. These leaders are often referred to as Imam.

The Muslim faith believes humankind is not created in vain. One is held accountable for ones faith, actions and the blessings which God gives in this life. God implements this accountability on the Day of Judgement. Those with a good record will be generously rewarded, showered with God's mercy and warmly welcomed to God's Heaven. Those with a bad record will be fairly punished and cast into Hell. The real nature of Heaven and Hell are known to God only, but God describes them in familiar human terms in the Quran. The time of the Day of Judgement is known to God and God alone.

A sect of Islam are the Sufi who are mystics. The term Sufi was based on a word meaning wise, pure and "woolly." The latter because of the robes of wool that were the traditional clothing of early Sufis and ascetics preferred to wear the