

"There is no god but God and Muhammad is the messenger of God."

When said with heartfelt intention before two official witnesses, this testimony initiates a person into the Islamic community.



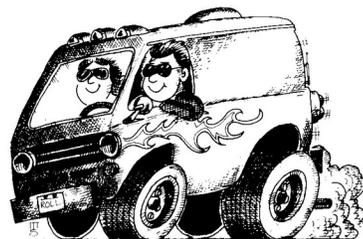
b. Salat (shul-LAHT, prayers)

Five times each day, Muslims pray in Arabic. Salat consists mainly of verses from the Qur'an, praises to God, and requests for guidance. Adherents bow toward the Kaabah in Mecca when praying.

c. Sawm (SOO-uhm, fasting) During the month of Ramadan, thanksgiving is expressed, discipline shown, and communal solidarity and reconciliation affirmed. Practitioners abstain from food and drink from dawn to sunset.

d. Zakat (SA-kat, almsgiving) The faithful demonstrate tangible worship by giving a kind of loan to God of from two to ten percent of one's income, payable at year's end. Charitable causes receive support in more spontaneous manners, as needs arise.

e. Hajj (al-HAHJ, pilgrimage) At least once in a lifetime, preferably during the twelfth month of the calendar, a Muslim takes a trip to Mecca. No one goes on Hajj without first ensuring that family members are provided for in their absence.



2. Basic Beliefs Essential Muslim beliefs cluster around the following headings.

a. God The Qur'an narrates: "God is One, the eternal God. He begot none, nor was he begotten. None is equal to Him." (Sura 112 [Sura 'SOO ruh,' being a chapter of the Qur'an].)

The "uncomplicated absoluteness of God" found in the Qur'an sets Islam apart from rival belief systems.

Life is a unified whole under the one God. No sacred/secular division occurs. Humankind is created in the image of God with His imprint upon the very substance of their souls.

b. Angels An active belief in angels permeates the Islamic world and life view. Jibril (jib-REEL, Gabriel), who delivered the Qur'an, is the most important angel. Other invisible beings jinns, who possess extraordinary powers, are capable of either good or evil.

c. Revealed Books

Moses, David, Jesus, and Muhammad all transmitted literally the respective books dictated to them--the Torah, Psalms, Gospel, and Qur'an. While all are authoritative, the Qur'an--due to its accuracy of text, breadth of scope, and manner of transmission--in practice is Islam's primary book.



d. Qur'an The Qur'an, the text from on high, is the word of God. "The literature and fine arts of all Muslim people spring from this fountainhead [the Qur'an]...No man seeking to live in the same world as Islam can afford to regard lightly, or to judge ignorantly, the book that is called The [Qur'an]. (Arberry, The Holy Qur'an as quoted in Cragg, Readings in the Qur'an, p. 51.)

Everything about the Qur'an is sacred--its sounds, words, letters, even parchment, and paper. Verses of the Qur'an are the first sounds a new child hears and the last a dying person listens to.

The art of chanting the Qur'an, the supreme sacred act of Islam, can move a Muslim to tears.

To capture the full beauty of the Qur'an, one must hear it recited in its original Arabic. Protestant scholar Kenneth Cragg writes:



"Translations do not convey the emotion, the fervor, the mystery the Qur'an holds in the original."

Reading the Book in the quiet of the study, perusing it with the eye, silences the force of the text which properly belongs with the ear and the soul... (Readings in the Qur'an, p. 31.)

The Qur'an is a prophetic discourse, not written chronologically, meant to be consumed rather than subjected to scientific examination. Its style is of the powerful, expansive imagery of Middle East culture. Obedience is its final goal.

"...like a pearl for which the diver must plunge to break the shell which both ensures and conceals the treasure...the Qur'an...yields itself only to those who rightly understand." (Cragg., pp. 14, 16.)

Each of the 114 Suras begins, "In the name of God, compassionate, all merciful." The total text, divided into thirty parts, allows for daily readings/recitations of one part for each day of the lunar month.

As the Suras begin with the longest to the shortest, and the latter ones are more event/subject descriptive, new readers are advised to begin at the back and work their way forward.

e. Prophet-Messengers



The biblical figures, plus some unknown Arabian messengers, are seen as ambassadors (rusul--prophets with a specific mission who bring the word) of God. Muhammad (muh-HAHM-mad), the last of the prophets, is the only one who proclaims a universal message. Abraham and Moses are the greatest of the Prophet-Messengers. The phrase "peace be upon them" is often written after their names. Muhammad, though not divine, receives highest respect. The phrase "prayer and peace be upon him" is often said or written after Muhammad's name.

f. Last Things Bodily resurrection, judgment, paradise, and hell are the climax of history. Hell is not eternal for the believer, as Muhammad will intercede for those possessing even an atom of faith. Millennial leaders (Mahdi, MAH-dee) will defeat enemies of religion at the end of history, establishing peace and justice upon the earth.

g. Divine Decree

This belief that everything is decided by God and in some sense comes from Him, articulates a major source of personal contentment and sustainment, especially in times of difficulty.

Drawing from Sura 37:96 ("*...God who created you and all that you have made...*") this decree elaborates the all-powerful nature of God.

h. Jihad (ji-HAD) Sometimes seen as a sixth foundational element of Islam, Western media stereotypes it as "holy war."



A more accurate portrayal sees jihad as an exertion or struggle in achieving the ways of God. It (jihad) describes an attentiveness against distractions from God, exertion to do His will within ourselves, and reestablishing order in Islamic society and the world at large.

Lesser jihad describes just war--taking up arms (guns, swords, bombs, and tanks) in both offensive and defensive postures. Greater jihad is the struggle against inward passions but also includes work to overcome underdevelopment, counteract propaganda, or offer cultural resistance to secularization influences.

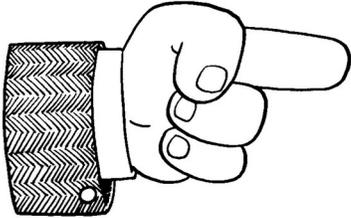
3. Common Misunderstandings

a. Diversity Islam is not monolithic--practiced the same in all countries. Each society must be examined for itself.

b. Jihad Only rarely in Islamic history has jihad meant conversion by the sword.

c. Terrorism Western media reports often leads us to assume that all devout Muslims favor terrorism. This is definitely not the case.

After discussing misperceptions and negative treatments of Arab and Muslim peoples, editors of the HarperCollins Dictionary of Religion present the challenge...



"There is a need for more nuanced understanding of the increasing amount of information, much of it still inaccurate, about Islam.

Speaking and writing responsibly about Islam is a task facing students and teachers, reporters in the print and broadcast media, government officials..."
(HarperCollins Dictionary of Religion, pp. 498, 500.)

Vocabulary List: Foundational Beliefs

Abraham and Moses The greatest of the Prophet-Messengers.
The phrase "peace be upon them" is often written after their names.

Coptic Orthodox Located in Egypt and parts of Ethiopia, Coptic practitioners believe their founder to be St. Mark the Evangelist, first bishop of Alexandria.

Divine Decree Belief that everything is decided by God and in some sense comes from Him.

Greater jihad The struggle against inward passions but also includes work to overcome underdevelopment, counteract propaganda, or offering cultural resistance to secularization influences.

Hajj (al-HAHJ--Pilgrimage) At least once in a lifetime, preferably during the 12th month of the calendar, a Muslim takes a trip to Mecca. No one goes on Hajj without first ensuring that family members are provided for in their absence.

Jibril (jib-REEL), (Gabriel) Most important angel in Islam. Delivered the Qur'an.

Jihad (ji-HAD) Sometimes seen as a sixth foundational element of Islam, Western media stereotypes it as *holy war*. A more accurate portrayal sees jihad as an exertion or struggle in achieving the ways of God. It (jihad) describes an attentiveness against distractions from God, exertion to do His will within ourselves, and reestablishing order in Islamic society and the world at large.

Jinns Invisible beings who possess extraordinary powers, being capable of either good or evil

Lesser jihad Describes just war--taking up arms in offensive and defensive postures

Mahdi (MAH-dee) Millennial leaders who will defeat enemies of Islamic religion at the end of history, establishing peace and justice upon the earth.

Salat (shul-LAHT--prayers) Five times each day, Muslims pray in Arabic. Salat consists mainly of verses from the Qur'an, praises to God, and requests for guidance. Adherents bow toward the Kaabah in Mecca when praying.

Sawm (SOO-uhm--fasting) During the month of Ramadan, thanksgiving is expressed, discipline shown, and communal solidarity and reconciliation affirmed. Practitioners abstain from food and drink from dawn to sunset.

Shahada (sha-HAHD-ah--witnessing) This is the essential creed of Muslim belief. It is repeatedly invoked as part of daily prayer. The shahada states, "There is no god but God and Muhammad is the messenger of God."

Shema (shuh-MAH) The call--"Hear, O Israel, The Lord our God, The Lord is One," which summarizes the most fundamental characteristic of God within Jewish thought.

Sura (SOO-ruh) A chapter of the Qur'an

Torah (TOH-rah) Law. Encompasses the whole of the Jewish scriptures

Zakat (ZA-kat)--almsgiving The faithful demonstrate tangible worship by giving a kind of loan to God of from two to ten percent of one's income, payable at year's end. Charitable causes receive support in more spontaneous manners, as needs arise.

Review Quiz: Foundational Beliefs



Part 1--Matching Place the correct letter in the space provided.

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| 1. _____ Sura | A. The struggle against inward passions but also includes work to overcome underdevelopment, counteract propaganda, or offering |
| 2. _____ Mahdi | resistance to secularization influences. |
| 3. _____ Salat | B. Describes legal war--both offensive and defensive. |
| 4. _____ Hajj | C. According to Islam, the greatest of the Prophet-Messengers. The |
| 5. _____ Lesser jihad | phrase |
| 6. _____ Shema | 7. _____ Coptic Orthodox "peace be upon them" is often written after their names. |
| 7. _____ Jibril (Gabriel) | 8. _____ Greater jihad |
| 8. _____ Abraham and Moses | 9. _____ Torah |
| 9. _____ Shahada | 10. _____ Zakat |
| 10. _____ Torah | 11. _____ Jinn |
| 11. _____ Jinn | 12. _____ Jihad |
| 12. _____ Jihad | 13. _____ Sawm |
| 13. _____ Sawm | 14. _____ Sawm |
| 14. _____ Sawm | 15. _____ Sawm |
| 15. _____ Sawm | 16. _____ Sawm |
| 16. _____ Sawm | 17. _____ Sawm |

17. _____ Divine Decree H. Sometimes seen as a sixth
foundational element of Islam,
Western media stereotypes
it as *holy* war. A more accurate
portrayal sees

it as an exertion or struggle in
achieving the ways of God.

I. Invisible beings who possess
extraordinary powers, being
capable of either good or
evil.

J. Millennial leaders who will defeat
enemies of Islamic religion at
the end of history, establishing
peace and justice upon the earth.

K. Five times each day, Muslims pray in
to Arabic. Salat consists mainly of
verses from the Qur'an, praises
God, and requests for guidance.

L. During the month of Ramadan,
discipline thanksgiving is expressed,
solidarity and shown, and communal
affirmed. reconciliation
Practitioners abstain from food
and drink from dawn to sunset.

M. This is the essential creed of
Muslim belief. It is
repeatedly invoked as part of
daily prayer.

N. The call--"Hear, O Israel, The Lord
which our God, The Lord is One,"
fundamental summarizes the most
within Jewish characteristic of God
thought.

O. A chapter of the Qur'an.

P. Law. Encompasses the whole of the
Jewish scriptures.

Q. The faithful demonstrate tangible
loan to worship by giving a kind of
percent of God of from two to ten
at year's end. one's income, payable



Part 2--Matching Place the correct letter in the blank provided.

- | | |
|------------------|---------------|
| 1. _____ Sawm | A. Gabriel |
| 2. _____ Hajj | B. Witnessing |
| 3. _____ Shahada | C. Almsgiving |
| 4. _____ Salat | D. Fasting |
| 5. _____ Zakat | E. Prayers |
| 6. _____ Jibril | F. Pilgrimage |

Part 3--Multiple Choice Place the letter of the most correct response in the blank provided.



1. _____ Judaism, _____, and Islam are all religions of the Book.
- A. Buddhism
 - B. Hinduism
 - C. Christianity
2. _____ According to the unit, when dealing with foundational beliefs of religion, it is important to realize
- A. the difference between belief and practice.
 - B. how wrong religions other than our own can be.
 - C. that we must fire up our own beliefs and practices.

3. _____ In order to promote harmony and sensitivity to others, what is a good practice to employ?

- A. Fight fire with fire.
- B. Confront, correct and point out wayward errors of thought.
- C. Treat other religions with respect.

4. _____ Alfred Moses, U.S. Ambassador to Romania, includes which of the following in his summary of the Jewish covenant?

- A. Judaism seeks to uplift all humankind through adherence to moral and ethical principles.
- B. Judaism applies to the House of Israel alone.
- C. The concept of covenant is outdated and no longer valid.

5. _____ What best expresses the aspirations of many Jewish people concerning the land of Palestine?

- A. "The whole land of Canaan...I [God] will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you."
- B. America is the new Jerusalem.
- C. The Torah applies only to ancient peoples.

6. _____ In the Middle East, many Arab Christians are of what distinct church persuasion?

- A. Baptist and Methodist
- B. Orthodox, Eastern Rite
- C. Pentecostal

7. _____ Many monophysite church adherents make the sign of the cross with only one finger because

- A. they like the "right on...one way" symbolism.
- B. this sign symbolizes their belief in the one, divine nature of Christ.

8. _____ The Coptic Orthodox church is located primarily in which countries?

- A. Libya and the Sudan
- B. Turkey
- C. Egypt and parts of Ethiopia/Eritrea

9. _____ Coptic Orthodox church members believe their founder to be
- A. King David.
 - B. St. Mark the Evangelist.
 - C. Ramses II.
10. _____ What phrase often follows the written name of Muhammad in Islamic texts?
- A. Praise be upon him.
 - B. The holy, the compassionate.
 - C. Prayer and praise be upon him.
11. _____ According to Islam, the greatest of the prophetic--messengers are
- A. David and Jonathan.
 - B. Abraham and Moses.
 - C. Solomon and John the Baptist.
12. _____ According to Muslims, what best describes the term jihad?
- A. Holy war
 - B. Exertion or struggle in achieving the ways of God
13. _____ Within the Coptic Church local priests
- A. may marry but higher officials are celibate.
 - B. are celibate as well as higher officials.
 - C. may marry as can higher officials.
14. _____ When praying, Muslims bow
- A. towards the dome of the rock in Jerusalem.
 - B. towards the Kaabah in Mecca.
 - C. only when convenient.
15. _____ According to Muslims, Moses, _____, _____ and Muhammad all transmitted the respective books dictated to them--being the Torah, Psalms, Gospels, and Qur'an.
- A. Ezekiel, Maccabees
 - B. David, Jesus
 - C. Abraham, John the Baptist

16. _____ Literature, fine arts, legal and theological matters of all Muslim people spring from

- A. the Qur'an.
- B. the Hadith.
- C. the council of twelve.

17. _____ A 'Sura' is

- A. a chapter of the Qur'an.
- B. a book of sayings attributed to Muhammad.



Part 4--True or False

Place a *T* or an *F* in the blank.

1. _____ Middle East Protestant Christians come primarily from Presbyterian and Anglican mission efforts.
2. _____ Middle East Christian belief and practice is monolithic, with little variety or breadth.
3. _____ The Shahada, "There is no god but God and Muhammad is the messenger of God", is the essential creed of Muslim belief.
4. _____ Muslims who are able, must make the Hajj to Mecca once every five years.
5. _____ The Islamic world view has no room for the angelic presence.
6. _____ To capture the full beauty of the Qur'an, a good English translation is the best source.
7. _____ Translations of the Qur'an convey the emotion, fervor, and mystery possessed by the original Arabic.
8. _____ The Qur'an is written in a chronological, narrative style.

9. _____ According to Islam, Muhammad is the last of the prophets.



"Have a Party"

Sources Used in Unit Three

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Resources for Further Study



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Patrick, Theodore, Traditional Egyptian Christianity: A History of the Coptic Orthodox Church, (Greensboro, NC: Fisher Park Press, 1996).