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Muhammad and the Religion of Islām

Islām is a major world religion belonging to the Semitic family; it was promulgated by the Prophet Muḥammad in Arabia in the 7th century AD. The Arabic term *islām*, literally “surrender,” illuminates the fundamental religious idea of Islām—that the believer (called a Muslim, from the active participle of *islām*) accepts “surrender to the will of Allāh (Arabic: God).” Allāh is viewed as the sole God—creator, sustainer, and restorer of the world. The will of Allāh, to which man must submit, is made known through the sacred scriptures, the Qur’ān (Koran), which Allāh revealed to his messenger, Muḥammad. In Islām Muḥammad is considered the last of a series of prophets (including Adam, Noah, Jesus, and others), and his message simultaneously consummates and abrogates the “revelations” attributed to earlier prophets.

Retaining its emphasis on an uncompromising monotheism and a strict adherence to certain essential religious practices, the religion taught by Muḥammad to a small group of followers spread rapidly through the Middle East to Africa, Europe, the Indian subcontinent, the Malay Peninsula, and China. Although many sectarian movements have arisen within Islām, all Muslims are bound by a common faith and a sense of belonging to a single community.

This article deals with the founding of Islām by Muḥammad, the fundamental beliefs and practices of the religion, and the connection of religion and society in the Islāmic world. The history of the various peoples who embraced Islām is covered in the article ISLĀMIC WORLD.

This article is divided into the following major sections:

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THE FOUNDATIONS OF ISLĀM

Muhammad: the Prophet and his message

LIFE AND WORKS

Muḥammad (in full, Abū al-Qāsim Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib ibn Hāshim) was born in Mecca c. 570 after the death of his father, ‘Abd Allāh. Muḥammad was at first under the care of his paternal grandfather, ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib. Because the climate of Mecca was considered to be unhealthful, he was given as an infant to a wet nurse from a nomadic tribe and spent some time in the desert. At six he lost his mother, Āminah of the clan of Zuhra, and at eight his grandfather. Though his grandfather had been head of the prestigious Hāshem (Hāshim) clan and was prominent in Mecca politics, he was probably not the leading man in Mecca, as some sources suggest. Muḥammad came under the care of the new head of the clan, his uncle Abū Ṭālib, and is reputed

to have accompanied him on trading journeys to Syria. About 595, on such a journey, he was in charge of the merchandise of a rich woman, Khadijah of the clan of Asad, and so impressed her that she offered marriage. She is said to have been about 40, but she bore Muḥammad at least two sons, who died young, and four daughters, of whom the best known was Fāṭimah, the wife of Muḥammad’s cousin ‘Alī, who is regarded as Muḥammad’s divinely ordained successor by the Shī’ah branch of Islām. Until Khadijah’s death in 619, Muḥammad took no other wife. The marriage was a turning point in Muḥammad’s life. By Arab custom, minors did not inherit, and therefore Muḥammad had no share in the property of his father or grandfather; but by his marriage he obtained sufficient capital to engage in mercantile activity on a scale commensurate with his abilities.

Prophetic call and early religious activity. Muḥammad

Muham-
mad's
vision

appears to have been of a reflective turn of mind and is said to have adopted the habit of occasionally spending nights in a hill cave near Mecca. The poverty and misfortunes of his early life doubtless made him aware of tensions in Meccan society. Mecca, inhabited by the tribe of Quraysh (Koreish), to which the Hāshim clan belonged, was a mercantile centre formed around a sanctuary, the Ka'bah (Kaaba), which assured the safety of those who came to trade at the fairs. In the later 6th century there was extensive trade by camel caravan between the Yemen and the Mediterranean region (Gaza and Damascus), bringing goods from India and Ethiopia to the Mediterranean; and the great merchants of Mecca had obtained monopoly control of this trade. Mecca was thus prosperous, but most of the wealth was in a few hands. Tribal solidarity was breaking up; merchants pursued individual interests and disregarded their traditional duties to the unfortunate. About 610, as he reflected on such matters, Muḥammad had a vision of a majestic being (later identified with the angel Gabriel) and heard a voice saying to him, "You are the Messenger of God." This marked the beginning of his career as messenger (or apostle) of God (*rasūl Allāh*), or Prophet (*nabī*). From this time, at frequent intervals until his death, he received "revelations"—that is, verbal messages that he believed came directly from God. Sometimes these were kept in memory by Muḥammad and his followers, and sometimes they were written down. About 650 they were collected and written in the Qur'ān (or Koran, the sacred scriptures of Islām), in the form that has endured. Muslims believe the Qur'ān is divine revelation, written in the words of God himself.

Muḥammad is said to have been perturbed after the vision and first revelation but to have been reassured by his wife, Khadijah. In his later experiences of receiving messages there was normally no vision. (Occasionally there were physical concomitants, such as perspiring on a cold day, and these gave rise to the suggestion, now agreed to be unwarranted, that he was an epileptic.) Sometimes he heard a noise like a bell but apparently never a voice. The essence of such an experience was that he found a verbal message in his heart—that is, in his conscious mind. With the help of Khadijah's Christian cousin Waraqah, he came to interpret these messages as in general identical with those sent by God through other prophets or messengers to Jews, Christians, and others and to believe that by the first great vision and by the receipt of the messages he was commissioned to communicate them to his fellow citizens and other Arabs. In addition to proclaiming the messages he received, Muḥammad must have offered explanations and expositions of them in his own words, as is evident in the large body of prophetic traditions that the community has preserved.

Soon he gathered some sympathetic friends who accepted his claim to be a prophet and joined him in common worship and prayers. These culminated in an act of prostration in which they touched the ground with their foreheads in acknowledgment of God's majesty—still a cardinal act in Islām worship. In about 613 Muḥammad began preaching publicly, and he and his followers spent their days together in the house of a young man named al-Arqam. It is probable that they sometimes worshipped together in the Ka'bah, a sanctuary of the Arab pagans.

The people of Mecca at the time nominally worshipped many gods, but few believed that man was dependent on supernatural powers. The merchants thought most things could be accomplished by wealth and by human planning. Some men regarded Allāh as a "high god" who stood above lesser deities. (Allāh, the Arabic word for God, is used by Christian Arabs as well as by Muslims.) The earliest passages of the Qur'ān revealed to Muḥammad emphasize the goodness and power of God as seen in nature and in the prosperity of the Meccans and call on the latter to be grateful and to worship "the Lord of the Ka'bah," who is thus identified with God. Gratitude is to be expressed in generosity with one's wealth and avoidance of niggardliness. As a sanction, men are warned that they will appear before God on the Last Day to be judged according to their deeds and assigned to heaven or hell. (The doctrines of the Qur'ān are examined later in this article.)

Pagan
religious
milieu

By proclaiming this message publicly, Muḥammad gained followers—39, it is said—before he entered the house of al-Arqam. The names of 70 followers are known prior to the appearance of opposition to the new religion, and there were probably more. Most were young men under 30 when they joined Muḥammad. They included sons and brothers of the richest men in Mecca, though they might be described as persons excluded from the most lucrative forms of commerce. A handful of Muḥammad's early followers are spoken of as "weak," which merely means that they were not of the tribe of Quraysh and so not effectively protected by any clan. The new religion was eventually called Islām—i.e., "surrender [to the will of God]"—and its adherents were called Muslims—i.e., "those who have surrendered"—though the Qur'ān speaks of them primarily as "the believers."

Opposition at Mecca. Although Muḥammad's preaching was basically religious, there was implicit in it a critique of the conduct and attitudes of the rich merchants of Mecca. Attempts were made to get him to soften his criticism by offering him a fuller share in trade and a marriage alliance with one of the wealthiest families, but he decisively rejected such offers. About 615 more active opposition appeared. Points in the message of the Qur'ān were questioned, such as the assertion that men would be resurrected before the Judgment. Commercial pressure was brought to bear on Muḥammad's supporters, and in some families there was mild persecution of junior members who followed him. It is sometimes suggested that the main reason for opposition was the merchants' fear that the new religion would destroy the recognition of the Ka'bah as a sanctuary, but this is unlikely. Certainly attacks on idols appeared in the Qur'ān, and Islām began to be characterized by the insistence that "there is no god but God" (Allāh), but no attack was made on the Ka'bah, and the idols mentioned had their chief shrines elsewhere.

A leader of the opposition arose in the person of Abū Jahl, a contemporary of Muḥammad, who probably felt that the latter, despite his claim to be "only a warner" (of Judgment to come), was building a position of authority that might one day make him politically supreme in Mecca, because Arabs deeply respected the kind of wisdom or knowledge that Muḥammad clearly had. In about 616 Abū Jahl organized a boycott of the clan of Hāshim by the chief clans of Mecca, allegedly because the clan continued to protect Muḥammad and did not curb his preaching; but, since few of the clan were Muslims, other questions may have been involved. After three years the boycott lost momentum, perhaps because some of the participants found they were harming their own economic interests.

Both Muḥammad's wife, Khadijah, and his uncle Abū Ṭālib died in about 619, and another uncle, Abū Lahab, succeeded as head of the clan of Hāshim. He was closer to the richest merchants, and at their instigation he withdrew the protection of the clan from Muḥammad. This meant that Muḥammad could easily be attacked and therefore could no longer propagate his religion in Mecca. He left for the neighbouring town of at-Ṭā'if, but the inhabitants were insufficiently prepared to receive his message, and he failed to find support. Having secured the protection of the head of another clan, he returned to Mecca. In 620 Muḥammad began negotiations with clans in Medina, leading to his emigration, or *hijrah*, there in 622.

It is difficult to assess the nature and extent of the persecution of the Muslims in Mecca. There was little physical violence, and that almost always within the family. Muḥammad suffered from minor annoyances, such as having filth deposited outside his door. The persecution is said to have led to the emigration of some of the Muslims to Ethiopia about 615, but they may have been seeking opportunities for trade or military support for Muḥammad. Some remained until 628, long after Muḥammad was established in Medina. Whatever the nature of the persecution, the Muslims were very bitter about it.

The emigration from Mecca to Medina. In the summer of 621, 12 men from Medina, visiting Mecca for the annual pilgrimage to the Ka'bah (still a pagan shrine), secretly professed themselves Muslims to Muḥammad and went back to make propaganda for him at Medina. At

Commer-
cial pres-
sure, boy-
cott, and
persecution

the pilgrimage in June 622 a representative party of 75 persons from Medina, including two women, not merely professed Islām but also took an oath to defend Muḥammad as they would their own kin. These are known as the two Pledges of al-Aqaba. Muḥammad now encouraged his faithful Meccan followers to make their way to Medina in small groups, and about 70 emigrated thus. The Meccans are said to have plotted to kill Muḥammad before he could leave. With his chief lieutenant he slipped away unperceived, used unfrequented paths, and reached Medina safely on September 24, 622. This is the celebrated *hijrah* (Latin *Hegira*), which may be rendered "emigration," though the basic meaning is the severing of kinship ties. It is the traditional starting point of Islāmic history. The Islāmic Era (AH or Anno Hegirae) begins on the first day of the Arabic year in which the *hijrah* took place—July 16, 622, in the Western calendar.

Medina was different from Mecca. It was an oasis in which date palms flourished and cereals could be grown. Agriculture had been developed by several Jewish clans, who had settled among the original Arabs, and they still had the best lands. Later Arab immigrants belonging to the tribes of al-Aws and al-Khazraj, however, were in a stronger position. The effective units among the Arabs were eight or more clans, but nearly all of these had become involved in serious feuds. Much blood had been shed in a battle in about 618, and peace was not fully restored. In inviting Muḥammad to Medina, many of the Arabs there probably hoped that he would act as an arbiter among the opposing parties. Their contact with the Jews may have prepared them for a messianic religious leader, who would deliver them from oppression and establish a kingdom in which justice prevailed.

A document has been preserved known as the Constitution of Medina. In its present form it is a combination of at least two earlier documents and is probably later than 627, but its main provisions are almost certainly those originally agreed upon between Muḥammad and the Muslims of Medina. In form the document creates a confederation on traditional Arab lines among nine groups—eight Arab clans and the emigrants from Mecca. Muḥammad is given no special position of authority, except that the preamble speaks of the agreement as made between "Muḥammad the prophet" and the Muslims now resident in Medina, and it is stated that serious disputes are to be referred to him. The Jewish groups had refused to acknowledge Muḥammad as prophet and in the document appear in a secondary character as attached to various Arab clans. For at least five years, Muḥammad had no direct authority over members of other clans, but, in the closing years of his life, the prestige of his military successes gave him almost autocratic power. The revelations he received at Medina frequently contained legal rules for the community of Muslims, but they dealt with political questions only rarely.

The first five years at Medina. The first 18 months at Medina were spent in settling down. Muḥammad was given a piece of land and had a house built, which eventually held apartments grouped around a central courtyard for each of his wives. The Muslims often joined Muḥammad at prayers in his home, which, after his death, became the mosque of Medina. The emigrants (*muhājirūn*, the men from Mecca) were at first guests of brother Muslims in Medina, but Muḥammad cannot have contemplated this situation continuing indefinitely. A few emigrants carried on trade in the local market run by a Jewish clan. Others, with the approval of Muḥammad, set out in normal Arab fashion on *razzias* (*ghazawāt*, "raids") in the hope of intercepting Meccan caravans passing near Medina on their way to Syria. Muḥammad himself led three such *razzias* in 623. They all failed, probably because traitors betrayed the Muslim movements to the enemy. At last, in January 624, a small band of men was sent eastward with sealed orders telling them to proceed to Nakhlah, near Mecca, and attack a caravan from Yemen. This they did successfully, and in doing so they violated pagan ideas of sanctity—thereby making the Meccans aware of the seriousness of the threat from Muḥammad.

About the same time there was a change in Muḥam-

mad's general policy in important respects. One aspect was the "break with Jews"; instead of making concessions to the Jews in the hope of gaining recognition of his prophethood, he asserted the specifically Arabian character of the Islāmic religion. Hitherto the Muslims had faced Jerusalem in prayer, but a revelation now bade them face Mecca. Perhaps because of this change some Muslims of Medina were readier to support Muḥammad. In March 624 he was able to lead about 315 men on a *razzia* to attack a wealthy Meccan caravan returning from Syria. The caravan, led by Abū Sufyān, the head of the Umayyah clan, eluded the Muslims by devious routes and forced marches. Abū Jahl, the head of the Makhzūm clan, however, leading a supporting force of perhaps 800 men, wanted to teach Muḥammad a lesson and did not withdraw. On March 15, 624, near a place called Badr, the two forces found themselves in a situation, perhaps contrived by Muḥammad, from which neither could withdraw without disgrace. In the ensuing battle at least 45 Meccans were killed, including Abū Jahl and other leading men, and nearly 70 taken prisoner, while only 14 Muslims died. To Muḥammad this appeared to be a divine vindication of his prophethood, and he and all the Muslims were greatly elated.

In the flush of victory some persons in Medina who had satirized Muḥammad in verse were assassinated, perhaps with his connivance. He also made a minor disturbance an excuse for expelling the Jewish clan, which ran the market. This weakened his most serious opponent there, the "hypocrite" (*munāfiq*), or nominal Muslim, 'Abd Al-lāh ibn Ubayy, who was allied with the local Jews. The remaining waverers among the Arabs probably became Muslims about this time. Thus the victory of Badr greatly strengthened Muḥammad. At the same time he was using marriage relationships to bring greater cohesion to the emigrants. Of his daughters, Fāṭimah was married to 'Alī (later fourth caliph, or leader of the Islāmic community) and Umm Kulthūm to 'Uthmān (third caliph). He himself was already married to 'Ā'ishah, daughter of Abū Bakr (first caliph), and was now espoused also to Ḥafṣah, daughter of 'Umar (second caliph), whose previous husband was one of the Muslims killed at Badr.

In the same year Muḥammad led larger Muslim forces on *razzias* against hostile nomadic tribes and had some success. Presumably, he realized that the Meccans were bound to try to avenge their defeat. Indeed, Abū Sufyān was energetically mobilizing Meccan power. On March 21, 625, he entered the oasis of Medina with 3,000 men. One of the features of Medina was a large number of small forts that were impregnable to Arab weapons and tactics. Muḥammad would have preferred the Muslims to retire to these; but those whose cereal crops were being laid waste persuaded him to go out to fight. By a night march with 1,000 men, he reached the hill of Uḥud on the further side of the Meccan camp. On the morning of March 23 the Meccan infantry attacked and was repulsed with considerable loss. As the Muslims pursued, the Meccan cavalry launched a flank attack after the archers guarding the Muslim left had abandoned their position. The Muslims were thrown into confusion. Some made for a fort and were cut down, but Muḥammad and the bulk of his force managed to gain the lower slopes of Uḥud, where they were safe from the cavalry. The Meccans, because of their losses, were unable to press home their advantages and without delay set out for home, while Muḥammad the next day made a show of pursuing. The battle produced neither a clear victor nor loser. In Badr and Uḥud together, the Meccans had killed about as many men as they had lost; but they had boasted that they would make the Muslims pay several times over, and they had not shown the degree of superiority appropriate to their leading position in Arabia. Muḥammad, though he had lost above 70 men, realized that this was a military reverse, not a defeat; but the confidence of the Muslims and perhaps his own had been struck a serious blow. If the victory of Badr was a sign of God's support, did Uḥud indicate that he had abandoned the Muslims? Muḥammad's faith soon overcame any momentary doubts, and he was gradually able to restore the confidence of his followers.

The Battle of Badr and its consequences

The Battle of Uḥud

The Constitution of Medina

For two years after Uhud, both sides prepared for a decisive encounter. In the razzias Muḥammad led or sanctioned, he seems to have aimed at extending his own alliances and at preventing others from joining the Meccans. In at least two cases a small party of Muslims was tricked or ambushed, and most of their lives were lost. And another Jewish clan was expelled from Medina. At length, in April 627 Abū Sufyān led a great confederacy of 10,000 men against Medina. On this occasion Muḥammad had ordered the crops to be harvested and a trench to be dug to defend the main part of the oasis from the Meccan cavalry. For a fortnight the confederates besieged the Muslims. Attempts to cross the trench failed, and fodder for the horses was scarce, while Muḥammad's agents among the attackers fomented potential dissensions. Then, after a night of wind and rain the great army melted away. The Meccans had exerted their utmost might and had failed to dislodge Muḥammad, whose position was now greatly strengthened.

For more than two years now there had been opposition to Muḥammad in Medina, chiefly from 'Abd Allāh ibn Ubayy and other so-called hypocrites (*munāfiqin*) who had abandoned Muḥammad at Uhud and who together had fostered disaffection. Shortly before the siege Muḥammad had a showdown with 'Abd Allāh ibn Ubayy, who had joined in spreading slanders about Muḥammad's wife 'Ā'ishah. This confrontation revealed that 'Abd Allāh had little support in Medina, and he became reconciled to Muḥammad. After the siege of Medina, Muḥammad attacked the Jewish clan of Qurayzah, which had probably been intriguing against him. When they surrendered, the men were all executed and the women and children sold as slaves.

The winning of the Meccans. Muḥammad's farsightedness as a statesman is manifest in the policies he next adopted. He might have proceeded to crush the Meccans, and he indeed put economic pressure on them; but his main aim was to gain their willing adherence to Islām. He had already realized that, insofar as the Arabs became Muslims, it would be necessary to direct outward the energies expended on razzias against one another. There could be no question of Muslims raiding Muslims. It is noteworthy that his largest razzias, apart from the expeditions against the Meccans, were along the route to Syria followed by the Arab armies after his death (see ISLAMIC WORLD). He doubtless realized that the administrative skill of the Meccan merchants would be required for any expansion of his embryonic state.

In a dream Muḥammad saw himself performing the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, and in March 628 he set out to do so, driving sacrificial animals; but he was disappointed because no more than 1,600 men would accompany him. The Meccans were determined to prevent the Muslims from entering their town, so Muḥammad halted at al-Ḥudaybiyah, on the edge of the sacred territory of Mecca. After some critical days the Meccans made a treaty with Muḥammad. Hostilities were to cease, and the Muslims were to be allowed to make the pilgrimage to Mecca in 629. The orderly withdrawal showed how completely Muḥammad controlled his followers. Partly to reward this orderly conduct, Muḥammad two months later led the same force against the Jewish oasis of Khaybar, north of Medina. After a siege it submitted, but the Jews were allowed to remain on condition of sending half of the date harvest to Medina. Thus throughout 628 and 629 Muḥammad's power was growing, since success led more men to become Muslims, for the religious attraction of Islām was apparently supplemented by material motives.

Meanwhile Mecca was in decline. Several leading men had emigrated to Medina and become Muslims. New leaders had taken over from Abū Sufyān but had accomplished little, although the treaty with Muḥammad had removed his pressure on their caravans. Shortly after the treaty, Muḥammad had married Umm Ḥabibah, a daughter of Abū Sufyān and a widow whose Muslim husband had died in Ethiopia. This led to an understanding with Abū Sufyān, who began to work for the peaceful surrender of Mecca. It was probably when he was in Mecca for the pilgrimage in March 629 that Muḥammad became

reconciled with another uncle, al-'Abbās, and married his uncle's sister-in-law Maymūnah.

An attack by Meccan allies in about November 629 upon allies of Muḥammad led to the latter's denunciation of the treaty of al-Ḥudaybiyah. After secret preparations he marched on Mecca in January 630 with 10,000 men. Abū Sufyān and other leading Meccans went out to meet him and formally submitted, and Muḥammad promised a general amnesty. When he entered Mecca there was virtually no resistance. Two Muslims and 28 of the enemy were killed. A score of persons were specifically excluded from the amnesty, but some were later pardoned. Thus Muḥammad, who had left Mecca as a persecuted prophet, not merely entered it again in triumph but also gained the allegiance of most of the Meccans. Though he did not insist on their becoming Muslims, many soon did so.

Muḥammad spent 15 to 20 days in Mecca settling various matters of administration. Idols were destroyed in the Ka'bah and in some small shrines in the neighbourhood. To relieve the poorest among his followers, he demanded loans from some of the wealthy Meccans. When he marched east to meet a new threat, 2,000 Meccans went with him.

The closing years: the unification of Arabia. Ever since the *hijrah*, Muḥammad had been forming alliances with nomadic tribes. At first these were probably nonaggression pacts, but, when he was strong enough to offer protection, he made it a condition of alliance that the tribe should become Muslim. While in Mecca Muḥammad had word of a large concentration of hostile nomads, and he set out to confront them. A battle took place at Ḥunayn in which part of Muḥammad's army was put to flight, but he himself and some older Muslims stood firm. The enemy was finally routed, and their dependents and possessions were all captured. They were allowed to ransom wives and children, but their livestock was divided as booty.

Muḥammad was now militarily the strongest man in Arabia. Most tribes sent deputations to Medina seeking alliance. It is difficult to say how much of Arabia joined his alliance, for the inner politics of each tribe were complex, and in some cases the deputation might represent only a small section. Muḥammad benefitted from the defeat of the Persian Empire by the Byzantine (Christian) Empire (627–628), for, in the Yemen and in places on the Persian Gulf, minorities that had relied on Persian support against Byzantium now turned to Muḥammad instead.

March to the Syrian border. The greatest of all of Muḥammad's razzias occurred at the end of 630, when he took 30,000 men on a month's journey to the Syrian border. In this campaign he pioneered the invasion of Syria and made agreements that became models for treaty arrangements with captured peoples. Some of the tribes near Syria were Christian and adhered to the Byzantines; chiefly as a result of this, Muḥammad's earlier friendship for the Christians, notably those of Ethiopia, changed to hostility. Before his death, armed opposition to him appeared in one or two parts of Arabia, but the Islāmic state was strong enough to deal with this. Thus he left most of Arabia united and poised for expansion into Syria and Iraq.

Muḥammad personally led the pilgrimage to Mecca, in March 632, in a form according with Islāmic belief. Although he had been in poor health for some time, no arrangement had been made for the succession. Thus his death at Medina in June 632 provoked a major crisis among his followers. The dispute over the leadership of the Muslim community eventually resulted in the most important schism in the history of Islām. (This development is discussed later in this article; see below *Theology and sectarianism*.)

CHARACTER AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Although greatly maligned by medieval European scholars—whose opinions still retain some influence—Muḥammad came to be viewed more objectively in the 19th century. Some of the evidence against him, such as his connivance at assassinations and his approval of the execution of the men of a Jewish clan, are historical matters that cannot be denied.

The siege
of Medina

The
victorious
entrance
into Mecca

The
Treaty of
al-Ḥuday-
biyah

By his contemporaries, however, Muḥammad was admired for his courage, resoluteness, and impartiality, and for a firmness that was tempered by generosity. He won men's hearts by his personal charm. He was gentle, especially with children. Though he was sometimes silent in thought, for the most part he was engaged in purposeful activity. He walked vigorously and spoke rapidly. He became for later Muslims an exemplar of virtuous character, and stories presented him as realizing the Islāmic ideal of human life.

Muḥammad's chief significance is as founder of a state and of a religion. In his lifetime he created a federation of Arab tribes, which, in less than 20 years after his death, defeated the Byzantine and Persian empires, occupied a vast territory from Libya to Persia, and then developed into the Arab, or Islāmic, Empire. He made the religion of Islām the basis of Arab unity. Islāmic doctrine maintains that God is the founder of the religion, not Muḥammad, but the latter played an obviously important part in fostering the nascent religion. His concern with ultimate questions, his mystical outlook, and his moral seriousness were important adjuncts to the preaching of the Qur'ānic message. (W.M.W./Ed.)

THE LEGACY OF MUḤAMMAD

From the very beginning of Islām, Muḥammad had inculcated a sense of brotherhood and a bond of faith among his followers, both of which helped to develop among them a feeling of close relationship that was accentuated by their experiences of persecution as a nascent community in Mecca. The conspicuous socioeconomic content of Islāmic religious practices cemented this bond of faith. In AD 622, when the Prophet fled to Medina, his preaching was soon accepted, and the community-state of Islām emerged. During this early period, Islām acquired its characteristic ethos as a religion uniting in itself both the spiritual and temporal aspects of life and seeking to regulate not only the individual's relationship to God (through his conscience) but human relationships in a social setting as well. Thus, there is not only an Islāmic religious institution but also an Islāmic law, state, and other institutions governing society. Not until the 20th century were the religious (private) and the secular (public) distinguished by some Muslim thinkers and separated formally, as in Turkey.

This dual religious and social character of Islām, expressing itself in one way as a religious community commissioned by God to bring its own value system to the world through the *jihād* ("holy war" or "holy struggle"), explains the astonishing success of the early generations of Muslims. Within a century after the Prophet's death in AD 632, they had brought a large part of the globe—from Spain across Central Asia to India—under a new Arab Muslim empire.

The period of Islāmic conquests and empire building marks the first phase of the expansion of Islām as a religion. Islām's essential egalitarianism within the community of the faithful and its official discrimination against the followers of other religions won rapid converts. Jews and Christians were assigned a special status as communities possessing scriptures and called the "people of the Book" (*ahl al-kitāb*) and, therefore, were allowed religious autonomy. They were, however, required to pay a per capita tax called *jizyah*, as opposed to pagans, who were required to either accept Islām or die. The same status of the "people of the Book" was later extended to Zoroastrians and Hindus, but many "people of the Book" joined Islām in order to escape the disability of the *jizyah*. A much more massive expansion of Islām after the 12th century was inaugurated by the Sūfis (Muslim mystics), who were mainly responsible for the spread of Islām in India, Central Asia, Turkey, and sub-Saharan Africa (see below).

Besides the *jihād* and Sūfi missionary activity, another factor in the spread of Islām was the far-ranging influence of Muslim traders, who not only introduced Islām quite early to the Indian east coast and South India but who proved as well to be the main catalytic agents (besides the Sūfis) in converting people to Islām in Indonesia, Malaya, and China. Islām was introduced to Indonesia in the 14th

century, hardly having time to consolidate itself there politically before coming under Dutch colonial domination.

The vast variety of races and cultures embraced by Islām (estimated to total from 600,000,000 to 700,000,000 persons worldwide) has produced important internal differences. All segments of Muslim society, however, are bound by a common faith and a sense of belonging to a single community. With the loss of political power during the period of Western colonialism in the 19th and 20th centuries, the concept of the Islāmic community (*ummah*), instead of weakening, became stronger. The faith of Islām helped various Muslim peoples in their struggle to gain political freedom in the mid-20th century and the unity of Islām contributed to later political solidarity.

Sources of Islāmic doctrinal and social views

Islāmic doctrine, law, and thinking in general are based upon four sources, or fundamental principles (*uṣūl*): (1) the Qur'ān, (2) the *sunnah* ("traditions"), (3) *ijmā'* ("consensus"), and (4) *ijtihād* ("individual thought").

The Qur'ān (literally, Reading, or Recitation) is regarded as the Word, or Speech, of God delivered to Muḥammad by the angel Gabriel. Divided into 114 *sūrahs* (chapters) of unequal length, it is the fundamental source of Islāmic teaching. The *sūrahs* revealed at Mecca during the earliest part of Muḥammad's career are concerned with ethical and spiritual teachings and the Day of Judgment. The *sūrahs* revealed at Medina at a later period in the career of the Prophet are concerned with social legislation and the politico-moral principles for constituting and ordering the community. *Sunnah* ("a well-trodden path") was used by pre-Islāmic Arabs to denote their tribal or common law; in Islām it came to mean the example of the Prophet; i.e., his words and deeds as recorded in compilations known as Ḥadīth.

Ḥadīth (a Report, or collection of sayings attributed to the Prophet) provide the written documentation of the Prophet's word and deeds. Six of these collections, compiled in the 3rd century AH (9th century AD) came to be regarded as especially authoritative by the largest group in Islām, the Sunnah. Another large group, the Shi'ah, has its own Ḥadīth.

The doctrine of *ijmā'*, or consensus, was introduced in the 2nd century AH (8th century AD) in order to standardize legal theory and practice and to overcome individual and regional differences of opinion. Though conceived as a "consensus of scholars," in actual practice *ijmā'* was a more fundamental operative factor. From the 3rd century AH *ijmā'* has amounted to a principle of rigidity in thinking; points on which consensus was reached in practice were considered closed and further substantial questioning of them prohibited. Accepted interpretations of the Qur'ān and the actual content of the *sunnah* (i.e., Ḥadīth and theology) all rest finally on the *ijmā'*.

Ijtihād, meaning "to endeavour" or "to exert effort," was required to find the legal or doctrinal solution to a new problem. In the early period of Islām, because *ijtihād* took the form of individual opinion (*ra'y*), there was a wealth of conflicting and chaotic opinions. In the 2nd century AH *ijtihād* was replaced by *qiyās* (reasoning by strict analogy), a formal procedure of deduction based on the texts of the Qur'ān and the Ḥadīth. The transformation of *ijmā'* into a conservative mechanism and the acceptance of a definitive body of Ḥadīth virtually closed the "gate of *ijtihād*." Nevertheless, certain outstanding Muslim thinkers (e.g., al-Ghazālī, died AD 1111) continued to claim the right of new *ijtihād* for themselves, and reformers of the 18th and 19th centuries, because of modern influences, have caused this principle to once more receive wider acceptance.

The Qur'ān and Ḥadīth are treated in the following sections. The significance of *ijmā'* and *ijtihād* are discussed below in the contexts of Islāmic theology, philosophy, and law. (F.R./Ed.)

Islāmic scripture: the Qur'ān

The Qur'ān (Arabic: Reading or Recitation; often spelled Koran), the holy book of Islām, is regarded by believers

Ḥadīth, or collection of the Prophet's sayings

Relationship to other religions

as the true word of God as revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad. In its written form it is accepted as the earthly reproduction of an uncreated and eternal heavenly original, according to the general view referred to in the Qur'an itself as "the well-preserved tablet" (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūz*; Qur'an 75:22). The word *qur'ān* is derived from the verb *qara'a* "to read," "to recite," but there is probably also some connection with Syriac *qeryānā*, "reading," used for the scriptural lessons in the Syrian Church. In the Qur'an itself the word is not used with reference to the book as a whole but only as a term for separate revelations or for the divine revelation in general. The Qur'an is held in high esteem as the ultimate authority in all matters legal and religious and is generally regarded as infallible in all respects. Its Arabic language is thought to be unsurpassed in purity and beauty and to represent the highest ideal of style. To imitate the style of the Qur'an is a sacrilege.

FORM

In length the Qur'an is approximately comparable with the New Testament. For purposes of recitation during the holy month of Ramaḍān it is divided into 30 "portions" (*juz'*, plural *ajzā'*), one for each day of the month. Its main division, however, is into 114 chapters, called *sūrah*s, of very unequal length. With the exception of the first *sūrah*, the so-called *fātiḥah* ("opening" of the book), which is a short prayer, the *sūrah*s are arranged roughly according to length, *sūrah* 2 being the longest and the last two or three the shortest. Because the longest *sūrah*s generally derive from the latter part of Muḥammad's activity, the consequence of this arrangement is that the oldest *sūrah*s are generally to be found toward the end of the book and the youngest generally appear at its beginning.

In the accepted version of the Qur'an now in use, each *sūrah* has a heading containing the following elements: (1) a title, which is usually derived from some conspicuous word in the *sūrah*, such as "The Cow," "The Bee," "The Poets," but is usually not an indication of the contents of the whole chapter; (2) the *basmalah*; i.e., the formula-prayer "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate"; (3) an indication of whether the *sūrah* was revealed at Mecca or at Medina and of the number of its verses; and finally (4) in some cases one or more *fawātiḥ*, or detached letters (e.g., *tā' sīn, tā' sīn mīm*), or *alif lām mīm*, the meaning of which has not been satisfactorily explained, though it is thought that they might stand for abbreviated words, indicate certain collections of *sūrah*s, or have an esoteric significance.

The verses in the Qur'an are called *āyah* (plural *āyāt*, literally "signs") and vary considerably in length. The shortest verses generally occur in the earliest *sūrah*s, in which the style of Muḥammad's revelation comes very close to the rhymed prose (*saḥ*) used by the *kāhins*, or soothsayers, of his time. As the verses get progressively longer and more circumstantial, the rhymes come farther and farther apart. There is also a change of linguistic style: the earlier *sūrah*s are characterized by short sentences, vivid expressions, and poetic force; and the later ones become more and more detailed, complicated and, at times, rather prosaic in outlook and language. As a result, it is sometimes difficult to decide whether or not a rhyme is intended to indicate the end of a verse; and consequently, there are variations in the numbering of verses (e.g., between the European editions long used by Western scholars and the official Egyptian edition that has now replaced them in most scholarly works).

The Qur'an generally appears as the speech of God, who mostly speaks in the first person plural ("we"). When the prophet Muḥammad is speaking to his compatriots, his words are introduced by the command, "Say," thus emphasizing that he is speaking on divine injunction only. At times the form is also dramatic, bringing in objections by Muḥammad's opponents and answering them by counter-arguments. Narrative passages are mostly brief. Stories of prophets and biblical persons are often alluded to as though they are known to the audience. The stress is not on the narrative but on its didactic uses.

On closer analysis very few of the *sūrah*s turn out to be uniform in style or content. The longest text dealing with

one subject is *sūrah* 12, which tells the story of Joseph, differing from the biblical account in a great many details, most of which seem to outside historians to have been drawn from Jewish sources. Otherwise the longer *sūrah*s are composed of several brief sections dealing with a variety of topics. Thus the Qur'an does not give the appearance of a planned, organized, or systematic treatise, an impression that is further heightened by the fact that certain favourite phrases such as "but God is forgiving, compassionate," "God is knowing, wise," "most of them know nothing" often have little or no apparent connection with the immediate context. In fact, some skeptics claim that these additions served only to produce a needed rhyme.

It is often emphasized that Muḥammad brought to his people "an Arabic Qur'an"; i.e., a book or set of recitations in the Arabs' own language comparable to those of Judaism and Christianity. Also the vocabulary of the Qur'an is overwhelmingly of Arabic origin, but there are, nevertheless, borrowed words, mostly from Hebrew and Syriac, bearing witness to Muḥammad's debt to Judaism and Christianity. These loan words are primarily technical terms such as *injil*, "gospel" (Greek *evangelion*); *taurāt*, "the law, or Torah" of Judaism; *Iblis*, "the Devil" (Greek *diabolos*); or translations or adaptations of theological terms such as *āmana*, "to believe" (Hebrew or Aramaic); *ṣalāt*, "prayer" (probably Syriac). Such explanations are usually regarded with suspicion by Muslims, since orthodox doctrine holds that the language of the Qur'an is the purest Arabic. (H.R./Ed.)

DOCTRINES OF THE QUR'ĀN

God. The doctrine about God in the Qur'an is rigorously monotheistic: God is one and unique; he has no partner and no equal. Trinitarianism, the Christian belief that God is three persons in one substance, is vigorously repudiated. Muslims believe that there are no intermediaries between God and the creation that he brought into being by his sheer command: "Be." Although his presence is believed to be everywhere, he does not inhere in anything. He is the sole Creator and sustainer of the universe, wherein every creature bears witness to his unity and lordship. But he is also just and merciful: his justice ensures order in his creation, in which nothing is believed to be out of place, and his mercy is unbounded and encompasses everything. His creating and ordering the universe is viewed as the act of prime mercy for which all things sing his glories. The God of the Qur'an, described as majestic and sovereign, is also a personal God; he is viewed as being nearer to man than man's jugular vein, and, whenever a person in need or distress calls him, he responds. Above all, he is the God of guidance and shows everything, particularly man, the right way, "the straight path."

This picture of God—wherein the attributes of power, justice, and mercy interpenetrate—is related to the Judeo-Christian tradition, whence it is derived with certain modifications, and also to the concepts of pagan Arabia, to which it provided an effective answer. The pagan Arabs believed in a blind and inexorable fate over which man had no control. For this powerful but insensible fate the Qur'an substituted a powerful but provident and merciful God. The Qur'an carried through its uncompromising monotheism by rejecting all forms of idolatry and eliminating all gods and divinities that the Arabs worshipped in their sanctuaries (*harams*), the most prominent of which was Ka'bah sanctuary in Mecca itself.

The universe. In order to prove the unity of God, the Qur'an lays frequent stress on the design and order in the universe. There are no gaps or dislocations in nature. Order is explained by the fact that every created thing is endowed with a definite and defined nature whereby it falls into a pattern. This nature, though it allows every created thing to function in a whole, sets limits; and this idea of the limitedness of everything is one of the most fixed points in both the cosmology and theology of the Qur'an. The universe is viewed, therefore, as autonomous, in the sense that everything has its own inherent laws of behaviour, but not as autocratic, because the patterns of behaviour have been endowed by God and are strictly limited. "Everything has been created by us according to

Heterogeneous style

The God of the Qur'an

a measure." Though every creature is thus limited and "measured out" and hence depends upon God, God alone, who reigns unchallenged in the heavens and the earth, is unlimited, independent, and self-sufficient.

Man. According to the Qur'an, God created two apparently parallel species of creatures, man and *jinn*, the one from clay and the other from fire. About the *jinn*, however, the Qur'an says little, although it is implied that the *jinn* are endowed with reason and responsibility but are more prone to evil than man. It is with man that the Qur'an, which describes itself as a guide for the human race, is centrally concerned. The Judeo-Christian story of the Fall of Adam (the first man) is accepted, but the Qur'an states that God forgave Adam his act of disobedience, which is not viewed in the Qur'an (in contradistinction to its understanding in the Christian doctrine) as original sin.

In the story of man's creation, angels, who protested to God against the creation of man, who "would sow mischief on earth," lost in a competition of knowledge against Adam. The Qur'an, therefore, declares man to be the noblest of all creation, the created being who bore the trust (of responsibility) that the rest of the creation refused to accept. The Qur'an thus reiterates that all nature has been made subservient to man: nothing in all creation has been made without a purpose, and man himself has not been created "in sport," his purpose being service and obedience to God's will.

Despite this lofty station, however, the Qur'an describes human nature as frail and faltering. Whereas everything in the universe has a limited nature, and every creature recognizes its limitation and insufficiency, man is viewed as rebellious and full of pride, arrogating to himself the attributes of self-sufficiency. Pride, thus, is viewed as the cardinal sin of man, because by not recognizing in himself his essential creaturely limitations he becomes guilty of ascribing to himself partnership with God (*shirk*: associating a creature with the Creator) and of violating the unity of God. True faith (*īmān*), thus, consists of belief in the immaculate Divine Unity and Islām in one's submission to the Divine Will.

Satan, sin, and repentance. In order to communicate the truth of the Divine Unity, God has sent messengers or prophets to men, whose weakness of nature makes them ever prone to forget or even willfully reject the Divine Unity under the promptings of Satan. According to the Qur'anic teaching, the being who became Satan (*Shayṭān* or *Iblīs*) had previously occupied a high station but fell from divine grace by his act of disobedience in refusing to honour Adam when he, along with other angels, was ordered to do so. Since then, his work has been to beguile man into error and sin. Satan is, therefore, the contemporary of man, and Satan's own act of disobedience is construed by the Qur'an as the sin of pride. Satan's machinations will cease only on the Last Day.

Judging from the accounts of the Qur'an, the record of man's accepting the prophets' messages has been rather dismal. The whole universe is replete with signs of God; the human soul itself is viewed as a witness of the unity and grace of God. The messengers of God have, throughout history, been calling man back to God. Yet very few men have accepted the truth; most of them have rejected it and become disbelievers (*kāfir*, plural *kuffār*: literally "ungrateful"—i.e., to God), and when man becomes so obdurate, his heart is sealed by God. Nevertheless, it is always possible for a sinner to repent (*tawbah*) and redeem himself by a genuine conversion to the truth. There is no point of no return, and God is always willing and ready to pardon. Genuine repentance has the effect of removing all sins and restoring a person to the state of sinlessness with which he started his life.

Prophecy. Prophets are men specially elected by God to be his messengers. Prophethood is indivisible, and the Qur'an requires recognition of all prophets as such without discrimination. Yet they are not all equal, some of them being particularly outstanding in qualities of steadfastness and patience under trial. Abraham, Noah, Moses, and Jesus were such great prophets. As vindication of the truth of their mission, God often vests them with miracles: Abraham was saved from fire, Noah from the deluge, and

Moses from the Pharaoh. Not only was Jesus born from the Virgin Mary, but God also saved him from crucifixion at the hands of the Jews. The conviction that God's messengers are ultimately vindicated and saved is an integral part of the Qur'anic doctrine.

All prophets are human and never part of divinity: they are simply recipients of revelation from God. God never speaks directly to a human: he either sends an angel messenger to him or makes him hear a voice or inspires him. Muḥammad is accepted as the last prophet in this series and its greatest member, for in him all the messages of earlier prophets were consummated. He had no miracles except the Qur'an, the like of which no human can produce. (Soon after the Prophet's death, however, a plethora of miracles was attributed to him by Muslims.) The angel Gabriel brought the Qur'an down to the Prophet's "heart." Gabriel is represented by the Qur'an as a spirit, but the Prophet could sometimes see and hear him. According to early traditions, the Prophet's revelations occurred in a state of trance when his normal consciousness was in abeyance. This state was accompanied by heavy sweating. The Qur'an itself makes it clear that the revelations brought with them a sense of extraordinary weight: "If we were to send this Qur'an down on a mountain, you would see it split asunder out of fear of God."

This phenomenon at the same time was accompanied by an unshakable conviction that the message was from God, and the Qur'an describes itself as the transcript of a heavenly "Mother Book" written on a "Preserved Tablet." The conviction was of such an intensity that the Qur'an categorically denies that it is from any earthly source, for in that case it would be liable to "manifold doubts and oscillations."

Eschatology. In Islāmic doctrine, on the Last Day, when the world will come to an end, the dead will be resurrected and a judgment will be pronounced on every person in accordance with his deeds. Although the Qur'an in the main speaks of a personal judgment, there are several verses that speak of the resurrection of distinct communities that will be judged according to "their own book." In conformity with this, the Qur'an also speaks in several passages of the "death of communities," each one of which has a definite term of life. The actual evaluation, however, will be for every individual, whatever the terms of reference of his performance. In order to prove that the resurrection will occur, the Qur'an uses a moral and a physical argument. Because not all requital is meted out in this life, a final judgment is necessary to bring it to completion. Physically, God, who is all-powerful, has the ability to destroy and bring back to life all creatures, who are limited and are, therefore, subject to God's limitless power.

According to strict Qur'anic doctrine, there is no intercession, although God himself, in his mercy, may forgive certain sinners. Those condemned will burn in hellfire, and those who are saved will enjoy the abiding pleasures of paradise. Hell and heaven are both spiritual and physical. Besides suffering in physical fire, the damned will also experience fire "in their hearts"; similarly, the blessed, besides physical enjoyment, will experience the greatest happiness of divine pleasure. Quite early, however, Islāmic tradition developed the notion of intercession, probably in answer to the Christian doctrine of redemption.

Social service. Because the purpose of the existence of man, as of every other creature, is submission to the Divine Will, God's role in relation to man is that of the commander. Whereas the rest of nature obeys God automatically, man alone possesses the choice to obey or disobey. With the deep-seated belief in Satan's existence, man's fundamental role becomes one of moral struggle, which constitutes the essence of human endeavour. Recognition of the unity of God does not simply rest in the intellect but entails consequences in terms of the moral struggle, which consists primarily in freeing oneself of narrowness of mind and smallness of heart. One must go out of oneself and expend one's best possessions for the sake of others.

The doctrine of social service, in terms of alleviating suffering and helping the needy, constitutes an integral

Muḥammad as the last prophet

Pride, the cardinal sin

God in the role of commander

part of the Islāmic teaching. Praying to God and other religious acts are deemed to be a pure facade in the absence of active welfare service to the needy. In regard to this matter, the Qur'anic criticisms of human nature become very sharp: "Man is by nature timid; when evil befalls him, he panics, but when good things come to him he prevents them from reaching others." It is Satan who whispers into man's ears that by spending for others he will become poor. God, on the contrary, promises prosperity in exchange for such expenditure, which constitutes a credit with God and grows much more than the money people invest in usury. Hoarding of wealth without recognizing the rights of the poor is threatened with the direst punishment in the hereafter and is declared to be one of the main causes of the decay of societies in this world. The practice of usury is forbidden.

The concept of a community of the faithful

With this socioeconomic doctrine cementing the bond of faith, the idea of a closely knit community of the faithful who are declared to be "brothers unto each other" emerges. Muslims are described as "the middle community bearing witness on mankind," "the best community produced for mankind," whose function it is "to enjoin good and forbid evil" (Qur'an). Cooperation and "good advice" within the community are emphasized, and a person who deliberately tries to harm the interests of the community is to be given exemplary punishment. Opponents from within the community are to be fought and reduced with armed force, if issues cannot be settled by persuasion and arbitration.

Because the mission of the community is to "enjoin good and forbid evil" so that "there is no mischief and corruption" on earth, the doctrine of *jihād*, in view of the constitution of the community as the power base, is the logical outcome. For the early community it was a basic religious concept. *Jihād*, or holy war, means an active struggle using armed force whenever necessary. The object of *jihād* is not the conversion of individuals to Islām but rather the gaining of political control over the collective affairs of societies to run them in accordance with the principles of Islām. Individual conversions occur as a by-product of this process when the power structure passes into the hands of the Muslim community. In fact, according to strict Muslim doctrine, conversions "by force" are forbidden, because after the revelation of the Qur'an "good and evil have become distinct," so that one may follow whichever one may prefer (Qur'an), and it is also strictly prohibited to wage wars for the sake of acquiring worldly glory, power, and rule. With the establishment of the Muslim empire, however, the doctrine of the *jihād* was modified by the leaders of the community. Their main concern had become the consolidation of the empire and its administration, and thus they interpreted the teaching in a defensive rather than in an expansive sense. The Khārijite sect (see below *Theology and sectarianism*) which held that "decision belongs to God alone," insisted on continuous and relentless *jihād*, but its followers were virtually destroyed during the internecine wars in the 8th century.

Qur'an and *jihād*

Besides a measure of economic justice and the creation of a strong community ideal, the Prophet Muḥammad effected a general reform of the Arab society, in particular protecting its weaker segments—the poor, the orphans, women, and slaves. Slavery was not legally abolished, but emancipation of slaves was religiously encouraged as an act of merit. Slaves were given legal rights, including the right of acquiring their freedom against payment, in installments, of a sum agreed upon by the slave and his master out of his earnings. A slave woman who bore a child by her master became automatically free after her master's death. The infanticide of girls that was practiced among certain tribes—out of fear of poverty or a sense of shame—was forbidden.

Distinction and privileges based on tribal rank or race were repudiated in the Qur'an and in the celebrated "Farewell Pilgrimage Address" of the Prophet shortly before his death. All men are therein declared to be "equal children of Adam," and the only distinction recognized in the sight of God is to be based on piety and good acts. The age-old Arab institution of intertribal revenge (called *tha'r*)—whereby it was not necessarily the killer who was exe-

cuted but a person equal in rank to the slain person—was abolished. The pre-Islāmic ethical ideal of manliness was modified and replaced by a more humane ideal of moral virtue and piety.

(F.R./Ed.)

ORIGINS AND COMPILATION OF THE QUR'AN

Muslim tradition. According to Muslim tradition the Qur'an was revealed to Muḥammad in separate pieces over some 20 years. On such occasions, Muḥammad, it is said, was in a kind of trance or ecstasy, during which the revelations were brought to him by the angel Gabriel. On his return to normal consciousness he recited the words of revelation to those present. There are many traditions about the occasions on which a certain *sūrah* or part of a *sūrah* was revealed. Thus the revelation of the Qur'an is connected with events in the life of the Prophet. Even the traditional recension (version) of the Qur'an itself classifies the *sūrahs* as Meccan or Medinan.

Revelation of the Qur'an to the Prophet

Obviously, many people learned the words of the revelation by heart, but there are also traditions that, at the time of their revelation, Muḥammad had them written down on "pieces of paper, stones, palm-leaves, shoulder-blades, ribs, and bits of leather," i.e., whatever writing-material there was at hand. It is believed that the Prophet indicated to the scribes the context in which a certain passage should be placed.

After the Prophet's death, and especially after the battle of Yamamah (633), in which a great number of those who knew the Qur'an by heart had fallen, fear arose that the knowledge of the Qur'an might disappear. So it was decided to collect the revelations from all available written sources and, as Muslim tradition has it, "from the hearts [i.e., memories] of people." A companion of the Prophet, Zayd ibn Thābit, is said to have copied on sheets whatever he could find and to have handed it over to the caliph 'Umar. After 'Umar's death the collection was left in the care of his daughter Hafṣah. Other copies of the Qur'an appear to have been written later, and different versions were used in different parts of the Muslim empire. So that there would be no doubt about the correct reading of the Qur'an, the caliph 'Uthmān (644–656) is reported to have commissioned Zayd ibn Thābit and some other learned men to revise the Qur'an using the "sheets" of Hafṣah, comparing them with whatever material was at hand, and consulting those who knew the Qur'an by heart. It was decided that in case of doubt about the pronunciation, the dialect of Quraysh, the Prophet's tribe, was to be given preference. Thus an authoritative text of the Qur'an (now known as the *uthmānic recension*) was established.

Establishment of an authoritative text

These traditions may have been reworked and changed to some extent to suit certain dogmatic theories concerning the Qur'an, but in the main they reflect historical truth. It is obvious that the description of the method of revelation has been somewhat simplified. The Qur'an itself states (42:50–52) that God spoke to Muḥammad "by suggestion, or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger to suggest what he pleases." The first term (Arabic *wahy*) denotes a "suggestion" or "inspiration" of the kind that is well known by many poets; the Qur'an also uses a term meaning "it was sent down." The second term seems to suggest some kind of imaginative locution without any accompanying vision. Only the third expression alludes to an angel but without mentioning the name of Gabriel.

Views of those outside Islām. The chronology of the *sūrahs* is a much debated problem. The existing traditions concerning the occasions for the revelation of certain passages cannot always be controlled and may or may not be reliable. European scholars have applied the criteria of style and contents to establish the relative order of the *sūrahs* or parts of *sūrahs*. From the time when Theodor Nöldeke published his *History of the Qur'an* (1860), it has been common to arrange the *sūrahs* in four groups, deriving from three subsequent periods at Mecca and from Medina. The above exposition of the content of the Qur'an roughly follows this arrangement.

In the Muslim view, Muḥammad received every word of the Qur'an directly from God. The Qur'an describes, and indignantly rejects, accusations that the Prophet had

Question
of
influence
of oral
traditions
on text

reproduced things that he had drawn from other sources. Western scholars who have analyzed the contents of the various revelations have shown that much of the narrative material concerning biblical persons and events differs from the biblical account and seems to have come from later Christian and, above all, from Jewish sources (e.g., Midrash). Other motifs, such as the idea of the impending judgment and the descriptions of paradise agree with standard topics in the missionary preaching of the contemporary Syriac church fathers. The dependence need not, however, be of a literary kind, but might be due to influence from oral traditions.

It would appear that learning the words of the revelation by heart was the normal way of preserving them, and that only on special occasions were the words written down immediately. The existence of various early collections of Qur'ānic material seems to be a warranted fact, although their nature and contents cannot be determined. Some of the *sūrah*s beginning with separate letters (*al-fawātih*)—certain consonant combinations detached from the main text (mentioned above under the heading *Form*)—occur together in the present Qur'ān and in the order of decreasing length in such a way as to suggest that they once formed separate collections. The establishment of a vulgate recension (a standard version) was not sufficient to secure the uniform and correct reading of the Qur'ān in all details. The Arabic script was incomplete; several consonants were easy to confuse, and there was no way of indicating the vowels to differentiate the variety of possible meanings inherent in a particular combination of consonants. To assure the correct recitation, therefore, it was necessary to know the text more or less by heart. In this way, differing variant readings arose, warranted by this or that "reader" of the Qur'ān.

The recorded variations, however, turned out to be remarkably few, and though no complete listing of the textual variants exists, it can safely be said that the textual tradition of the Qur'ān is much firmer and more uniform than that of the New Testament. The Arabic script was gradually improved. Diacritical signs were introduced to distinguish the letters that were similar in form, and long vowels were indicated by the letters *alif* (for *ā*), *wāw* (for *ū*), and *yā* (for *ī*). It is known that this vowel system was still disputed at the beginning of the 9th century. The special vowel signs placed above or beneath the letters were added in a different colour and did not count as part of the text itself.

INTERPRETATIONS

The "readers" (*qurrā*, singular *qārī*) were the specialists of the text of the Qur'ān. They were at the same time philologists, and it was to a great extent from their dealings with the language of the Qur'ān that the science of Arabic grammar grew. Two schools developed, one at Basra (in present-day Iraq), which was especially interested in systematizing and ordering the material to set up the rules governing the language, and a rival one at Kūfa (also in Iraq), which took more interest in the exceptional. It was theorized that several variant readings could be accepted only if they were based on the 'Uthmānic recension (version). It was also important that a reading be based on the authority of some renowned reader.

There was also theological speculation as to the true nature of the Qur'ān. In the discussions initiated by the Mu'tazilites (Seceders; literally, "those who stand apart"; a group that sought to introduce philosophical principles from Greek rationalism into Islāmic thought) the question of the eternity of the Qur'ān (i.e., of its heavenly prototype) was one of the main points. The Mu'tazilites, who wanted to avoid everything that might compromise or encroach upon the oneness of God, denied the doctrine that the Qur'ān was uncreated and eternal, because this would mean that something else besides the God of eternity would exist eternally and thus create an eternal and irreconcilable "dualism." Consequently they asserted that the Qur'ān was created by God. This doctrine, however, was rejected by orthodox adherents of Islām. In popular belief, the reverence for the Qur'ān is often directed toward the visible, physical book or parts of it. Oaths are

taken on it, and passages are sometimes copied out of it to be used for magical or superstitious purposes.

In these and other doctrinal disputes the parties sought support for their opinions in the sayings of the Qur'ān, since it was considered as the ultimate authority in all legal and religious questions. The correct interpretation of the Qur'ān became the object of a special branch of learning, the so-called *tafsir*, or Qur'ānic exegesis. All kinds of resources were utilized in order to elucidate the meaning of a Qur'ānic passage. Traditions concerning the circumstances surrounding the revelation of certain passages or containing interpretative utterances of the Prophet that had been transmitted orally were recorded and collected, together with other traditions deriving from and concerning the Prophet (Hadīth). At times, in order to provide authority for a certain theory, traditions were simply invented. Any interpretation of a Qur'ānic passage that could not be supported by Hadīth was originally rejected. The results of the study of grammar and lexicography were also utilized; examples from contemporary poetry were often quoted in order to elucidate the grammatical structure or the lexical meaning of a passage. Thus, work on the Qur'ān, whose ultimate goal was the correct understanding and application of its teachings, went hand in hand with the development of Arabic grammar and lexicography.

Two works are especially renowned in the field of *tafsir*, namely the commentary of aṭ-Ṭabarī (839–923), a huge encyclopaedic collection that sums up everything that had been done so far in the field, and the *Kashshāf* of Zamakhsharī (1075–1143), which has gained almost canonical reputation, though its author was a Mu'tazilite and began his work with the words, "Praise be to God who created the Qur'ān." A handy commentary of Baydāwī (d. c. 1280), which is often quoted as authoritative, is merely an abridged revision of the latter work.

The theological schools of medieval Islām all sought to support their doctrines with the aid of Qur'ānic exegesis, and each of them produced their own commentaries. There are also examples of allegorical interpretation (*ta'wīl*) especially in Sūfī (Islāmic mystical) literature, in which the doctrines of mysticism are found to be hidden behind the literal sense of the Qur'ānic word.

Qur'ānic exegesis gained new significance with the appearance of modernism toward the end of the 19th century. The modernists, who sought to revive Islām from its degradation and to reconcile it with what they found valuable in Western scientific traditions, set up the principle of returning to the pure and uncorrupted Islām of the "ancestors." As a consequence, the interpretation of the oldest and original source of Islām was regarded as imperative, and attempts were made to establish the principles necessary for a correct understanding of the Qur'ān. Traditional exegesis was accused of having introduced Israelite legends and false traditions that had nothing to do with the original teachings of the Prophet. On the other hand, the authority of the Qur'ān was never called in question.

Muḥammad 'Abduh, the founder of modernism in Egypt, for several years published exegetical lectures in the journal *al-Manār*; and they were later published in book form by his Syrian disciple Rashīd Riḍā. In them he accepts the Qur'ān as the literally inspired word of God, in which there can be nothing false or antiquated, and tries to show that the results of modern science and many modern views are already present in the Qur'ān. This is often achieved by twisted interpretations, reading modern ideas into the words of the Qur'ān. For instance, the *jinn* (genii) of *sūrah* 2:176 that cause disease are interpreted as "microbes," and the words in 2:250, "How often a little company has overcome a numerous company; and God is with those who endure," is taken to refer to ideas reminiscent of Darwin's theory of the struggle for life and the survival of the fittest. Allegorical interpretation is also used when it can serve the purpose of the author. Other modernistic interpreters of the Qur'ān have continued along the same lines. The Qur'ān is, however, left untouched by criticism; as the infallible word of God it cannot have been influenced by the circumstances under which it was revealed, it can contain no mistake, and it cannot be superseded by any new discovery.

Qur'ānic
exegesis

Modern
commentaries

Later developments, however, have brought some new ideas to the fore. In an Urdu commentary on the Qur'ān, which has in part been made available in English, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (1888–1958), an Indian Muslim scholar (minister of education of the Republic of India at the time of his death), developed some new principles for the interpretation of the Qur'ān. He argues that it is necessary to interpret the Qur'ān against the background of its environment; therefore it is necessary to study the cultures and the languages of ancient Arabia and other Semitic peoples. Study of the historical circumstances in which the Qur'ān came into being is said to facilitate the understanding of what it meant to those who received the revelation.

Scholars have no doubt, however, that there are new developments in the field of Qur'ānic exegesis. D. Rahbar, in his study *The God of Justice* (1960), argues that in order to elucidate a passage in the Qur'ān one should quote traditional exegesis and medieval dogmatics and, above all, use other Qur'ānic passages for comparison, letting one passage throw light on another. Though such ideas are looked upon with suspicion by orthodox Muslims and are fervently rejected by most Muslim leaders, they may indicate the inception of a more historical view of the Qur'ān, one that tries to distinguish between central religious ideas and those outward things that are dependent on the historical environment.

TRANSLATIONS

The Qur'ān was revealed to Muḥammad as "an Arabic book" or an Arabic reading (*qur'ān*), to provide the Arabs with a holy book in their own language, comparable with the Scriptures of Judaism and Christianity. As has been noted, the language of the Qur'ān is regarded as surpassing everything that can be written in Arabic. The Qur'ān itself is a miracle and cannot be imitated by man.

As a consequence of this, it is regarded as unfitting to translate the Qur'ān. In countries in which other languages are spoken, the Qur'ān is still recited in Arabic. There exist Muslim translations of the Qur'ān; e.g., into Turkish, Urdu, and English (the latter during the Ahmadiyah movement founded in 1889 by Mirza Ghulam Aḥmad in the Punjab region of India), but on principle these are regarded as paraphrases, not as translations that can be used for ritual purposes.

The Qur'ān was first printed in Arabic at Rome by Pagninus Brixienis (1530), but the edition was never circulated. A. Hinckelmann published an Arabic text at Hamburg in 1694. Since then several European editions have appeared; one of the best was that of G. Flügel (1834), the first critical edition, often reprinted. It is from this edition that Western scholars have usually quoted the Qur'ān. Several editions are today printed in Muslim countries, and an official Egyptian edition is gaining more and more ground among Western scholars.

The first Latin translation was made in 1143 at the request of an abbot of the monastery of Cluny and was published at Basle in 1543 by Theodor Bibliander and afterward rendered into Italian, German, and Dutch. The first French translation was by A. du Ryer (1647); it was translated into English by Alexander Ross (1649–88). G. Sale's English translation first appeared in 1734 and has passed through many new editions. It has become something of a classic and can still be useful in many respects. A translation by J.M. Rodwell, with the *sūrah*s arranged in chronological order, appeared in 1861. E.H. Palmer's translation was published in *Sacred Books of the East* in 1880. Bell's translation "with a critical rearrangement of the *sūrah*s" (1937–39) tries to analyze the *sūrah*s into their smallest units and show how these were joined together to form the present Qur'ān. (See *Bibliography* for contemporary English translations.)

The Qur'ān has also been translated into most other European languages. Special mention should be made of R. Blachère's French translation (1949–50) because of its rather detailed notes, and of R. Paret's German rendering (1962), which is very accurate and makes extensive use of parallel passages within the Qur'ān itself, but is rather dry in its style. (H.R./Ed.)

Ḥadīth, traditions of the Prophet

Ḥadīth is the record of the traditions or sayings of the Prophet Muḥammad, revered and received as a major source of religious law and moral guidance, second only to the authority of the Qur'ān, or scripture of Islām. It might be defined as the biography of Muḥammad perpetuated by the long memory of his community for their exemplification and obedience. The development of Ḥadīth is a vital element during the first three centuries of Islāmic history, and its study provides a broad index to the mind and ethos of Islām.

NATURE AND ORIGINS

The term Ḥadīth derives from the Arabic root *ḥdh*, meaning "to happen," and so, "to tell a happening," "to report," "to have, or give, as news," or "to speak of." It means tradition seen as narrative and record. From it comes *sunnah* (literally, a "well-trodden path," i.e., taken as precedent and authority or directive), to which the faithful conform in submission to the sanction that Ḥadīth possesses and that legalists, on that ground, can enjoin. Tradition in Islām is thus both content and constraint, Ḥadīth as the biographical ground of law and *sunnah* as the system of obligation derived from it. In and through Ḥadīth, Muḥammad may be said to have shaped and determined from the grave the behaviour patterns of the household of Islām by the posthumous leadership his personality exercised. There were, broadly, two factors operating to this end. One was the unique status of Muḥammad in the genesis of Islām; the other was the rapid geographical expansion of the new faith in the first two centuries of its history into various areas of cultural confrontation. Ḥadīth cannot be rightly assessed unless the measure of these two elements and their interaction is properly taken.

The experience of Muslims in the conquered territories of west and middle Asia and of North Africa was related to their earlier tradition. Islāmic tradition was firmly grounded in the sense of Muḥammad's personal destiny as the Prophet—the instrument of the Qur'ān and the apostle of God. The clue to tradition as an institution in Islām may be seen in the recital of the *Shahādah* or "witness" ("There is no god but God; Muḥammad is the prophet of God"), with its twin items as inseparable convictions—God and the messenger. Islāmic tradition follows from the primary phenomenon of the Qur'ān, received personally by Muḥammad and thus inextricably bound up with his person and the agency of his vocation. Acknowledgment of the Qur'ān as scripture by the Islāmic community was inseparable from acknowledgment of Muḥammad as its appointed recipient. In that calling, he had neither fellow nor partner, for God, according to the Qur'ān, spoke only to Muḥammad. When Muḥammad died, therefore, in AD 632, the gap thus created in the emotions and the mental universe of Muslims was shatteringly wide. It was also permanent. Death had also terminated the revelation embodied in the Qur'ān. By the same stroke scriptural mediation had ended, as well as prophetic presence.

The Prophet's death was said to have coincided with the perfection of revelation. But the perfective closure of both the book and the Prophet's life, though in that sense triumphant, was also onerous, particularly in view of the new changing circumstances, both of space and time, in the geographical expansion of Islām. In all the new pressures of historical circumstance, where was direction to be sought? Where, if not from the same source as the scriptural mouthpiece, who by virtue of that consummated status had become the revelatory instrument of the divine word and could therefore be taken as an everlasting index to the divine counsel? The instinct for and the growth of tradition are thus integral elements in the very nature of Islām, Muḥammad, and the Qur'ān. Ongoing history and the extending dispersion of Muslim believers provided the occasion and spur for the compilation of Ḥadīth.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The appeal of the ordered recollection of Muḥammad to the Islāmic mind did not become immediately formalized and sophisticated. On the contrary, there is evidence that

the full development of Hadith was slow and uneven. Time and distance had to play their role before memory became stylized and official.

Literary tradition in pre-Islamic Arabia. The first generation had its own immediacy of Islamic experience, both within the life span of the Prophet and in the first quarter century afterward. It had also the familiar patterns of tribal chronicle in song and saga. Pre-Islamic poetry celebrated the glory of each tribe and their warriors. Such poetry was recited in honour of each tribe's ancestors. The vigour and élan of original Islam took up these postures and baptized them into Muslim lore. The proud history of which Muhammad was the crux was, naturally, the ardent theme, first of chronicle, and then of history writing. Both needed and stimulated the cherishing of tradition. The lawyers, in turn, took their clues from the same source. While the Qur'an was being received, there had been reluctance and misgiving about recording the words and acts of the Prophet, lest they be confused with the uniquely constituted contents of the scripture. Knowledge of Muhammad's disapproval of the practice of recording his words is evidence enough that the practice existed. With the Qur'an complete and canonized, those considerations no longer obtained; and time and necessity turned the instinct for Hadith into a process of gathering momentum.

Developments of the 1st and 2nd centuries AH. Within the first century of the Prophet's death, tradition had come to be a central factor in the development of law and the shape of society. Association by Hadith with Muhammad's name and example became increasingly the ground of authority. The 2nd century brought the further elaboration of this relationship by increasing formalism in its processes. Traditions had to be sustained by an expert "science" of attestation able to satisfy rigorous formal criteria of their connection with the person of Muhammad through his "companions," by an unbroken sequence of "reportage" (see below). This science became so meticulous that it is fair (even if also paradoxical) to suspect that the more complete and formally satisfactory the attestation claimed to be, the more likely it was that the tradition was of late and deliberate origin. The developed requirements of acceptability that the tradition boasted simply did not exist in the early, more haphazard and spontaneous days.

It is clear that many customs and usages native to non-Arab societies prior to their Islamization found their way into Islam in the form of reputed or alleged traditions of Muhammad, though always on the condition of their general compatibility with the Islamic religion. Implicit in this sense in Muhammad's personal example and genius, tradition inferred an elasticity and an embrace large enough to comprehend and anticipate all that Islam in its wide geographical experience was to become.

Qur'anic commentary, as it developed in the wake of these other factors of law and custom, also leaned heavily on traditional material, for the incidents of the Qur'anic narrative and the occasions of revelation could best be understood by what tradition had to say in its reporting of them. Further, since the patterns of Qur'anic commentary were largely hortatory, Hadith was a ready mine of word and story calculated to exemplify and reinforce what exhortation commended. Except in rare and controversial cases (the so-called Hadith Qudsi, or Holy Tradition), these traditional factors in Qur'anic interpretation were only elucidatory, and the substance of tradition could in no way dispute or displace the essential, primary, authority of the Qur'anic text. For the *obiter dicta* (incidental observations) of Muhammad, though sacrosanct, lacked the hallmark of revelation, which belonged solely to the Qur'an. Among earliest developed examples of Hadith are the narratives of the biographer Ibn Ishāq (died AH 150 [AD 767]) and the compilation of laws by Mālik ibn Anas, known as al-Muwatta' (died AH 179 [AD 795]). But they preceded by less than half a century the success of the theory that made tradition indispensable to the valid development of Islamic law.

3rd century AH and subsequent developments. The chief protagonist of the view correlating tradition and law was Muhammad ash-Shāfi'i (died AH 204 [AD 820]) who

claimed for tradition a divine imprint as an extension of the revelation of the Qur'an. It was in line with this conviction that the phrase "the Qur'an and the *sunnah*" became current to describe the fount of authority in Sunnī Islam (the major traditionalist sect). By this mandate and out of the needs and inventiveness of lawyers, the mass of tradition grew apace. When virtually no issues could be argued, still less settled, except by connection with cited acts and opinions of Muhammad, the temptation to require or to imagine or to allege such traditions became irresistible. Supply approximated to demand, and the growth of both made more ingenious and pretentious the science of supporting attribution. The increasing volume and complexity of the material contained in Hadith necessitated larger compilations and more detailed classification. These factors worked together to inspire a critical editorial activity that in the course of the 3rd century generated what have come to be regarded as the six canonical collections of Hadith by Sunni Muslims. The first two of them have acquired a status of great sanctity. Before noting these it is convenient to describe the editorial task and the editorial procedures that constitute the developed science of Hadith criticism.

THE SCIENCE OF HADITH

The study of tradition distinguishes between the substance, or content, known as the "gist" (*matn*) of the matter, and the "leaning" (*isnād*) or chain of corroboration on which it hangs.

Form of Hadith and criteria of authentication. That Muhammad observed, "Seek knowledge, though it be in China" or "Beware of suspicion, for it is the falsest of falsehoods" reveals the *matn* or "the meat of the matter." The formula introducing such a Hadith would speak in the first person: "It was related to me by A, on the authority of B, on the authority of C, on the authority of D, from E (here a companion of Muhammad) that the Prophet said . . ." This chain of names constituted the *isnād* on which the saying or event depended for its authenticity. The major emphases in editing and arguing from tradition always fell on the *isnād*, rather than on a critical attitude to the *matn* itself. The question was not, "Is this the sort of thing Muhammad might credibly be imagined to have said or done?" but "Is the report that he said or did it well supported in respect of witnesses and transmitters?" The first question would have introduced too great a danger of subjective judgment or independence of mind, though it may be suspected that issues were in fact often decided by such critical appraisal in the form of decisions ostensibly relating only to *isnād*. The second question certainly allowed a theoretically objective and reasonably precise pattern of criteria.

If the adjacent names in the chain of transmission overlapped in life, there was certainty that they could have listened to one another. Their travels were also investigated to see if their paths could have really crossed. Biographies could be built up to show that they were honest men and spoke truly. Comparative study could be made of their reputations for veracity as acknowledged by their contemporaries or indicated by their traditions when compared. The frequency of currency through several sources was yet another element in the testing of traditions. Most important of all was the final link with the "companion," who in the first instance had the tradition from his or her contact with the Prophet.

Classifications. In all these ways, and others involving more minutiae, it was possible to establish categories of Hadith quality. Traditions might be sound (*ṣaḥīḥ*), good (*ḥasan*), or weak (*dā'if*). Other terms, such as healthy (*ṣāliḥ*) and infirm (*ṣaqīm*), were also current. Each of the three classifications was liable to subdivisions, depending on refinements of assessment and, later, on their standing with the classic compilers. Distinctions were less rigorously seen if the traditions were cited not for legal definitions but merely for moral purposes. A *dā'if* tradition, for example, might well be salutary for exhortation, even if lawyers were required to exclude or ignore it. Traditions also varied in strength according to whether one or more "companions" could be adduced, whether the *isnād* had

Matn and isnād

Weight of traditions

Relation
to early
Arabic
poetry

Qur'anic
com-
mentary

parallels, whether they were continuous back to Muḥammad (*muttaṣil*), or intermitted (*mawqūf*). The subtleties in these and other questions were part of the active competence that attended the whole science.

The repute and authority of the canonical collections did much to stabilize the situation, but only because their emergence demonstrated that the zest for tradition had overreached itself. By the end of the 3rd century AH it was sorely necessary to solidify Ḥadīth into a stable corpus of material to which no new element could credibly be added and from which extravagances had been purged. The Ḥadīth tradition within the various traditions had by then become a permanent and disciplined element in the authority structure of Islām—the second great source of law and practice, complementary to the Qurʾān and available for analogical handling (*qiyās*) and for consensus (*ijtihād*) as further sources of legislation, arguing from the Qurʾān and the Sunnah as primary. Shīʿah tradition (see below) stands apart from this structure of authority.

THE COMPILATIONS

The most revered of all traditionalists was Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī (AH 194–56 [AD 810–870]), whose *Kitāb al-Jāmiʿ aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ* (*The Book of the Authentic Collection*) has a unique place in the awe and esteem of Muslims as a work of great historical import and deep piety. While a boy he made the pilgrimage to Mecca and gathered traditions in wide travels. According to tradition, he was inspired to his task by a vision of Muḥammad pestered by flies while asleep—flies that he (al-Bukhārī) fanned from the Prophet's face. The flies represented the cloud of spurious traditions darkening the true image, and the fan was its tireless rescuer. Whatever the truth of this narrative, it captures the temper of al-Bukhārī's vocation. His *Ṣaḥīḥ* occupied 16 years of editorial pains and scrutiny. He included 7,397 traditions with full *isnād*. Allowing for repetitions, the net total was 2,762, gathered, it is said, from over 600,000 memorized items. He arranged the whole into 97 books and 3,450 chapters or topics, repeating the traditions that bore on several themes.

Of comparable stature was the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj (AH 202–261 [AD 817–875]), to which the compiler prefaced a discussion of the criteria of Ḥadīth. The material largely confirms his contemporaries, and all such traditions common to these two authorities are known as agreed (*muttafaq*). It became characteristic to give freer rein to prevailing or communal assent in matters of *isnād*.

There are four other classical collections of tradition, all belonging within the 3rd century AH, and interdependent in part. Abū Dāʿūd al-Sijistānī (AH 202–275 [AD 817–889]) produced his *Kitāb as-Sunan* ("Book of traditions"), containing 4,800 traditions relating to matters of jurisprudence (as the term *Sunan* indicates, in contradistinction to a *Jāmiʿ*, or collection embracing all fields). Abū ʿIsā Muḥammad at-Tirmidhī (died AH 279 [AD 892]) edited the *Jāmiʿ aṣ-Ṣaḥīḥ*, adding notes on the distinctive interpretations of the schools of law (*madhāhib*). Abū ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān an-Nasāʾī (AH 216–303 [AD 830–915]) produced another *Kitāb as-Sunan* with special concern for the religious law relating to ritual acts. Abū ʿAbdallāh ibn Mājā (AH 210–273 [AD 824–886]), a pupil of Abū Dāʿūd, compiled another with the same title but tended to a readier tolerance of less than satisfactory traditions. Preferences shifted between these four, and some were slower of recognition than others. Nor did they oust the earlier collection of Mālik ibn Anas, which maintained, if intermittently, its wide appeal. But they formed the increasing reliance of generations of Muslims, within the unique eminence of the master "pair," and formed the sources of later popular editions, intended to conflate material for didactic purposes. One such was the work of Abū Muḥammad al-Baghawī (died AH 516 [AD 1122]) called *Maṣābiḥ as-Sunnah* ("The Lamps of the Sunnah"). Commentaries on all these classical *musannafāt*, or compilations, were many, and important in education and piety.

SECTARIAN VARIATIONS

The tradition of the Shīʿah, a minority branch of Islām, (distinguished from the tradition of the Sunnah majority

by belief in the special role of the Prophet's cousin ʿAlī and his descendants) diverges sharply from a very early date, though the emphasis on the personality of Muḥammad was identical. The Shīʿah broke away from the (to be) dominant Sunnī stream of Islām for deep reasons of politics, emotion, and theology. There was the dispute about caliphal succession and the role of ʿAlī, cousin and son-in-law of Muḥammad and fourth caliph, and bitter cleavage because of the tragic fate of his two sons and especially of Ḥusayn in the massacre of Karbalāʾ, from which there ultimately evolved the theology of vicarious suffering epitomized in Shīʿī devotion and ritual. (Sectarian disputes are treated in detail; see below *Theology and sectarianism*.) All these factors inevitably involved the business of tradition. The schism read the origins according to the divided loyalties, and there was little that was not potentially contentious, apart from obvious matters; e.g., Muḥammad's intentions for ʿAlī and the caliphate. The issues were fought out in rivalry for the mind of the Prophet, the authority of which was the sole agreement in the very disputing of it. The Shīʿah thus rejected the tradition of the Sunnis and developed their own corpus of tradition (though there is evidence that an-Nasāʾī, at least, among the classical compilers, had sympathy with aspects of their cause). They also questioned the Sunni notions of *isnād* and of the community as a locus of authority and evolved their own system of submission to their *imāms* (Shīʿah leaders). This altered the whole role that tradition might play. The major Shīʿī compilations date from the 4th and 5th centuries and allow only traditions emanating from the house of ʿAlī. The first of them is that of Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad al-Qulīnī (died AH 328 [AD 939]), *Kāfi fi ʿIlm ad-Dīn*, which might be translated: "All You Need About the Science of Religious Practice."

SIGNIFICANCE OF ḤADĪTH

Canonical collections of Ḥadīth are, for the non-Muslim, an introduction to a world of faith, of behaviour and authority, a world of almost encyclopaedic inclusiveness. Provisions of law are the primary element, enlarging Qurʾānic legislation. They contain a whole array of moral, social, commercial, and personal matters, as well as the themes of eschatology. All reaches of public and private conduct may be found there, from the disposal of a date stone to the crisis of the deathbed, from the manner of ablution to the duties of forgiveness, from the physical routines of digestion to the description of the day of judgment. There is a Talmudic capacity for detail and scrupulousness in legal and ethical prescriptions and precepts. There are stories of integrity and right action, for example, that of the purchaser of a plot of ground who subsequently unearthed in it a pot of gold, which he brought back to the former owner, protesting that it was not within his bargain. The vendor, likewise, refused to claim it since he had not known the gold was there when he sold his field. An arbitrator solved their dilemma of honesty by proposing the marriage of the son of one with the daughter of the other so that, after alms, the gold might be settled on the couple. Through and in tradition, Islām aligned itself authoritatively with all it found compatible in local usages and brought hospitably and masterfully within its purview the continuity of many cultures. There is wide evidence of the impact of Jewish and Christian elements, notably in the realm of eschatology, in the elaboration of the stark and urgent Qurʾānic doctrine of the last judgment. But always the imprint of Islām is clear. Tradition is at once a mine and a kind of currency, the source and the circulation of the values it makes and preserves. (A.K.C./Ed.)

Fundamental practices and institutions of Islām

THE FIVE PILLARS

During the earliest decades after the death of the Prophet, certain basic features of the religio-social organization of Islām were singled out to serve as anchoring points of the community's life and formulated as the "Pillars of Islām." To these five, the Khawārij sect added a sixth pillar, the *jihād*, which, however, was not accepted by the general community.

Shīʿah and
Sunnah

Basic
beliefs
deriving
from the
shahādah

The shahādah, or profession of faith. The first pillar is the profession of faith: "There is no god but God; Muḥammad is the prophet of God," upon which depends the membership in the community. The profession of faith must be recited at least once in one's lifetime, aloud, correctly, and purposively, with an understanding of its meaning and with an assent from the heart. From this fundamental belief are derived beliefs in (1) angels (particularly Gabriel, the Angel of Revelation), (2) the revealed Books (the Qur'ān and the sacred books of Judeo-Christian revelation described in the Qur'ān), (3) a series of prophets (among whom figures of the Judeo-Christian tradition are particularly eminent—although it is believed that God has sent messengers to every nation), and (4) the Last Day (Day of Judgment).

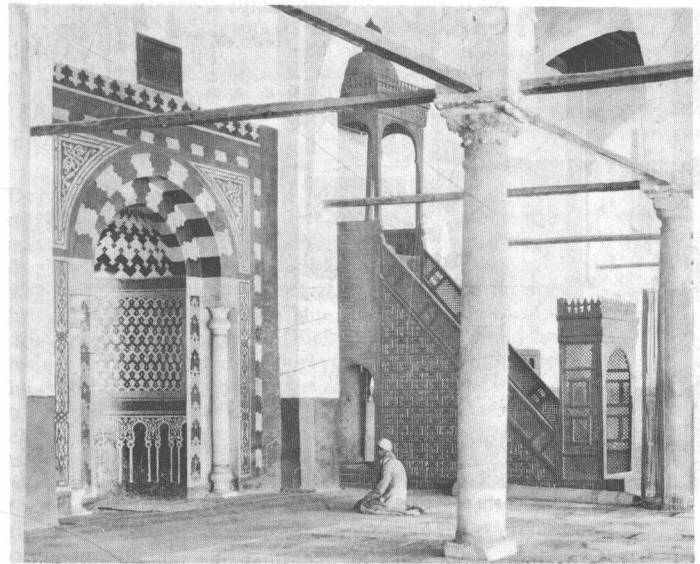
Prayer. The second pillar consists of five daily congregational prayers. These prayers, however, may be offered individually if one is unable to go to the mosque to pray. The first prayer is performed in the morning before sunrise, the second just after noon, the third in the later afternoon, the fourth immediately after sunset, and the fifth before retiring to bed.

Before a prayer, ablutions, including the washing of hands, face, and feet, are performed. The muezzin (one who gives the call for prayer) chants aloud from a raised place (such as a tower) in the mosque. When prayer starts, the *imām*, or leader (of the prayer), stands in the front facing Mecca, and the congregation stands behind him in rows, following him in various postures. Each prayer consists of two to four genuflection units (*rak'ah*); each unit consists of a standing posture (during which verses from the Qur'ān are recited—in certain prayers aloud, in others silently), as well as a genuflection and two prostrations. At every change in posture, "God is great" is recited. Tradition has fixed the materials to be recited in each posture.

Special congregational prayers are offered on Friday instead of the prayer just after noon. The Friday service consists of a sermon (*khutbah*), part of which consists of preaching in the local language and part of recitation of certain formulas in Arabic. In the sermon, the preacher usually recites a verse of the Qur'ān and builds his address on it, which can be of a moral, social, or political content. Friday sermons have usually considerable impact on public opinion regarding sociopolitical questions.

Although not ordained as an obligatory duty, nocturnal prayers (called *tahajjud*) are encouraged, particularly during the latter half of the night. During the month of Ramaḍān (see below *Fasting*), lengthy prayers are offered congregationally before retiring and are called *tarāwīḥ*.

In strict doctrine, the five daily prayers cannot be waived even for the sick, who may pray in bed and, if necessary, lying down. When on a journey, it is recommended that the two afternoon prayers be combined into one and the sunset and late evening prayers into one prayer as well. In



Interior of the Mosque of 'Amr ibn al-'Ās, Cairo, showing the *mihrāb* (prayer niche) and the *minbar* (pulpit).

Lehnert & Landrock

practice, however, much laxity has occurred, particularly in modern times, although Friday prayers are still attended by large numbers.

The zakāt. The third pillar is the obligatory tax called *zakāt* ("purification," indicating that such a payment makes the rest of one's wealth religiously and legally pure). This is the only permanent tax levied by the Qur'ān and is payable annually on food grains, cattle, and cash after one year's possession. The amount varies for different categories. Thus, on grains and fruits it is 10 percent if land is watered by rain, 5 percent if land is watered artificially. On cash and precious metals it is 2½ percent. *Zakāt* is collectable by the state and is to be used primarily for the poor, but the Qur'ān mentions other purposes: ransoming Muslim war captives, redeeming chronic debts of people, tax collectors' fees, *jihād* (and by extension, according to Qur'ān commentators, education and health), and creating facilities for travellers.

After the breakup of Muslim religio-political power, payment of *zakāt* has become a matter of voluntary charity dependent on individual conscience. Some Muslim countries are seeking to reintroduce it, and in several Middle Eastern countries *zakāt* is officially collected, but on a voluntary basis.

Fasting. Fasting during the month of Ramaḍān (ninth month of the Muslim lunar calendar), laid down in the Qur'ān (2:183–185), is the fourth pillar of the faith. Fasting begins at daybreak and ends at sunset, and during the day eating, drinking, and smoking are forbidden. The Qur'ān (2:185) states that it was in the month of Ramaḍān that the Qur'ān was revealed. Another verse of the Qur'ān (97:1) states that it was revealed "on the night of determination," which Muslims generally observe on the night of 26–27 Ramaḍān. For a person who is sick or on a journey, fasting may be postponed until "another equal number of days." Daily feeding of one poor person is also prescribed "for those who can afford it."

The ḥajj. The fifth pillar is the annual pilgrimage (*ḥajj*) to Mecca prescribed for every Muslim once in a lifetime—"provided one can afford it" and provided a person has enough provisions to leave for his family in his absence. The pilgrimage rite begins every year on the 7th and ends on the 10th of the month of Dhū al-Ḥijjah (last month of the Muslim year). When the pilgrim is about six miles (ten kilometres) from the Holy City, he enters upon the state of *iḥrām*: he wears two seamless garments and neither shaves nor cuts his hair or nails until the ceremony ends. The principal activities consist of walking seven times around the Ka'bah, a shrine within the Sacred Mosque; the kissing and touching of the Black Stone (Hajar al-Aswad); and the ascent of and running between Mt. Ṣafā and Mt. Marwah (which are now, however, mere elevations) seven times.

The fast of
Ramaḍān



Muslims at prayer, Kashmir, India.

Brian Brake—Magnum