

WILL THE ISLAMIC RELIGION SUPPLANT CHRISTIANITY?

by *The Orlando Truth*

Islam glories in the simplicity of its doctrine and demands. The faith of the Muslim can be understood by the least educated person, and the religion offers a promise of eternal happiness in a paradise appealing to the senses. Muslims criticize Christianity for a number of reasons, but chief among them is that Christianity is too complex to be true.

“Islam.” To some, the word itself is frightening; to others, mysterious. Whether Islam evokes fear or intrigue, the Western world cannot afford to ignore this enigmatic religion. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the current war in Iraq, and the ongoing crisis between Palestinians and Jews plaguing the Holy Land have put Islam in the news now more than ever. Nevertheless, most Catholics know little about this formidable faith—an ignorance that could have profound consequences for the future.

Islam is one of the fastest growing religions in the world, numbering more than a billion people on earth. It is the dominant faith in over 50 countries stretching from Africa through Europe and the Middle East to Indonesia. Huge numbers of recent immigrants have given Islam the foothold in Europe that its Muslim warriors from the Middle East could never gain for it over the centuries. In England, France, Germany, and the Netherlands, Muslims are becoming a political and religious force that cannot be ignored. Worldwide trends indicate that by 2050, Muslims will comprise 30% of the world’s population, with Christians making up only 25%. The main reason for this is liberal immigration laws and population growth. Muslims are simply having more children than both Christian and non-Christian Westerners, foremost because they do not abort their children.

The Origin of Islam

Muslims contend that God’s revelation to man has proceeded through four great stages from Judaism to Christianity to its **ultimate fulfillment in the religion of Islam:**

1. Through Abraham, God first revealed the truth of monotheism (that there is only one God) to the Jewish people.
2. Then through Moses, God revealed the Ten Commandments.
3. Then through Jesus Christ, God revealed the Golden Rule, namely that we are to love our neighbors as ourselves.
4. Finally through Muhammad, God revealed the answer to the sole remaining question: **“How should we love our neighbor?”** Muslims believe that Abraham, Moses, and Jesus were authentic prophets. Each nailed down specific planks in the platform of the God-directed life. Yet a final prophet was required to answer that key question and he was Muhammad. Because God answered that most important question through him by embodying the beautiful sentiments of Jesus into definite laws, Muslims insist that Muhammad is the most revered of all prophets and truly deserves the title, “Seal of the Prophets.”

Muhammad was a merchant with a caravan trade, who was born 570 A.D. at the city of Mecca in what is now Saudi Arabia. His father died before he was born and he was orphaned at the age of six when his mother died. He had little, if any, education. At age 25, he married a wealthy widow, some 15 years older, who bore him 7 children, but all his 3 sons died in infancy.

After the death of his first wife, he had at least 10 more wives, and 2 concubines, but his dream of having a son was never fulfilled.

At age 40, Muhammad claimed that the Angel Gabriel appeared to him while he slept. From that moment, the “Night of Destiny”, Muhammad claimed that he had regular revelations, which were later to be assembled in the Koran, the Muslims’ Holy Book. Because of the hostility of Meccans to his teaching, at age 52 he fled from Mecca to Medina, where his preaching was so successful that Medina became known as the “City of the Prophet.” Muhammad was a political and military leader as well as a preacher of the word; he led 32 raids and fought 3 major wars, eventually returning victoriously to Mecca. Muhammad died at age 62 in 632 A.D.

Islam is Best Understood as a Heresy of Christianity

In the early 600’s A.D., as Muhammad arrived on the scene, Catholicism had actively spread throughout the European landscape. Italy, Spain, and the lands that would become France had been substantially Christianized. It was just at this moment, a moment of apparently expanding and permanent Catholicism, that there fell an unexpected blow of overwhelming magnitude and force. Islam arose quite suddenly. It came out of the desert of the Middle East and overwhelmed half the European civilization. Within a hundred years, a main part of the Roman world had fallen under the power of this new and strange force from the desert. It has kept up the battle against Christendom actively for over a thousand years, and the story is by no means over. The power of Islam may at any moment re-arise.

What then was its nature and the essential cause of its sudden and, as it were, miraculous success over so many thousands of miles of territory and so many millions of human beings? As the distinguished English Catholic historian, Hilaire Belloc, has perceptively observed in his book (*The Great Heresies*), **Islam is best understood as a heresy of Christianity**. It began as a heresy, not as a new religion. Its springboard, Muhammad, was not a man of Catholic birth and doctrine. He sprang from pagans. However, that which he taught was in the main Catholic doctrine oversimplified. He preached a whole group of ideas which were based on the teachings of the Catholic Church and distinguished his ideas from earlier paganism, including:

- The unity and omnipotence of God
- The world of good angels and evil spirits, with a chief evil spirit, Satan
- The immortality of the soul, and its responsibility for actions in this life
- Doctrine of judgment after death with its punishment or reward
- The Mother of Jesus, Mary, was ever for him the first of womankind

But the central point where this new heresy struck home with a mortal blow against Catholic tradition was a **complete denial of the Incarnation**. Muslims believe that **Jesus was not divine and not God**. Nor do they believe that He was crucified; some even believing that Judas was crucified in His place. Yet in Islam, Jesus is considered a great prophet, born of a virgin through the power of Allah. However, He remains a solely human one. Nevertheless Jesus is so revered that it is He, not Muhammad, Who is expected to return to the earth on Judgment Day at the end of the world.

- In addition, the Holy Trinity was eliminated altogether: No Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; no three persons in one God; God was sheer unity. As a result:
- Jesus, not being divine, did not establish a Church.
- Since there was no Church, no special priesthood was required.
- The entire sacramental structure was eliminated, also negating the need for priests to administer any Sacraments.
- The Mass and the Eucharist, with its Real Presence, were eliminated.
- The Sacrament of Marriage disappeared, making divorce as easy as possible.

Catholic doctrine was true, Muhammad seemed to say, but it had become encumbered by false accretions. He thought that it had become complicated by needless man-made additions, including the idea that its founder was divine, and the growth of a needless caste of priests who batted on a late, imagined system of Sacraments which they alone could administer. In other words, Muhammad founded his heresy on simplification. He never developed a detailed theology. He was content to accept all that appealed to him in the Catholic faith and to reject all that seemed too complicated or mysterious to be true. However, since all heresies draw their strength from some true doctrine, Islam drew its strength from the Catholic doctrines it retained: the equality of all men before God, resulting in its paramount claims of social and economic justice.

The Five Pillars of Islam

If a Muslim were asked to summarize the way his religion counsels man to live, he might answer: Islam teaches man to walk in the “straight path.” The phrase comes from the opening chapter of the Koran itself, which is recited by every Muslim five times each day. What is the straight path? The straight path is one that is direct and explicit. Compared with other religions, Islam spells out the way of life it proposes; it pinpoints it, nailing it down through specific injunctions. The consequence is a definiteness about this religion that gives it a flavor all its own. A Muslim knows where he stands. He knows who he is and who God is. He knows what his obligations are and if he transgresses these he knows what to do about it. Islam has clarity, an order, a precision, which is in sharp contrast to the shifting, relative, uncertain quality of much of modern life. Muslims explicitly claim this precision as one of Islam’s strengths.

What then is the content of this straight path that spells out man’s duties? In Islam there are five pillars or principles that regulate the life of Muslims in their relationship with God. If the Islamic faith is seen in terms of a great building, then these rules are the pillars, which hold it up. Every Muslim knows he must observe his obligations to God or risk the pillars crumbling, undermining the foundations of the religion.

- **The first pillar “SHAHADAH” is Islam’s creed or confession of faith.** The creed of Islam wastes no words. Unlike the Catholic’s comprehensive and complex Nicene Creed, it is brief, simple, and explicit. It consists of a single sentence: **“There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is His Prophet.”** The Islamic God is gender free, neither male nor female, unlike the Christian God Who is addressed in male terms of Father and Son, and is solely one unlike the three persons of the Christian Holy Trinity. Moreover, this confession of faith toppled the innumerable idols that pagans had worshipped since the dawn of history.
- **The second pillar “SALAT” is prayer** in which the Koran adjures the faithful to be constant. Utmost importance is given to the frequency of prayer. It was Muhammad himself who decreed that prayers should be said five times every day: upon rising, at noon, in mid-afternoon, after sunset, and upon retiring. This gives every Muslim a guaranteed time of tranquility to reflect on the faith. When a Muslim bows down facing Mecca where the famous Kaaba Stone is located, he does so in the knowledge that millions are doing just the same around the globe and this thought is supremely comforting. Under normal conditions, the five-time daily prayer pattern should be maintained, but that schedule is not absolutely binding. In Islam, although no day of the week is as sharply set apart from others as is the Sabbath for the Jews or Sunday for the Christians, Friday most nearly approximates a holy day. On Friday, Muslims come closest to a formal service of worship when they gather in their mosques for noon prayers and a collective recital of the Koran. Otherwise, the exact answer to where Muslims

should pray is anywhere. Since every corner of Allah's universe is equally pure, the faithful are encouraged to spread their prayer rug, on which they prostrate themselves, wherever they find themselves at the appointed hour.

- **The third pillar “ZAKAT” is charity or alms giving.** Muhammad, himself an orphan, had a strong desire to help the poor. All Muslims of middle and upper means are required to give two and one-half percent (i.e. one fortieth) of their net wealth, not merely income, to the needy. This compares loosely with the ten percent of income tithes of Jews and Christians that are only biblically suggested. This is no charitable whim by the Muslims, but a humanitarian tax. It is intended to lift the burden of the less fortunate. It is a principle twentieth-century democracy has reached in its concept of the welfare state. Muhammad instituted it in the seventh century by prescribing a graduated tax on the haves to relieve the circumstances of the have-nots. Zakat is not a source for pride or personal glorification by the donor, because it is mandated rather than being a noble choice. Since it is understood that those to whom alms are given are thereby helping the giver to salvation, the recipients feel no sense of debt to the giver. On the contrary, it is assumed to be the giver's duty and responsibility to give and he should consider himself lucky that he has someone to give to. This almsgiving provides the poor with sustenance and minimizes jealousy and envy. Muhammad felt that Zakat contributed greatly toward a just and balanced society.
- **The fourth pillar “SAWM” is a month long daytime fast.** This fast takes place during Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, which commemorates both Muhammad's initial commission as a prophet and, twelve years later, his historic journey from Mecca to Medina. To celebrate these two great occasions, Muslims fast completely from sunup to sundown each day during this holy month. The fast develops self-control, devotion to God, and identity with the destitute. It is a timely reminder that the poor feel these same pangs of hunger every day of the year, not just during a select few. No food, tobacco, or drink may be consumed during the daylight hours; no smoking or sexual pleasures may be enjoyed either. So, many Muslims thus eat two meals a day during Ramadan, one before sunrise and one shortly after sunset.
- **The fifth pillar “HAJJ” is a pilgrimage to Mecca.** This pilgrimage is a life-long ambition for Muslims who are urged to make it at least once in their lifetimes. The trip is an essential part in the Muslims' gaining salvation. It involves a set of ceremonies and rituals, many of which center around the Shrine known as the Kaaba (Cube), so called because it is a striking black box of a building. The tradition of the Muslims is that Adam, expelled from Paradise, came to this site in Mecca to build the original Kaaba temple in praise of God, which was eventually destroyed by the floodwaters during the time of Noah. Abraham later returned here to rebuild the Kaaba on the site of Adam's original monument. Muslims consider it to be the House of Allah on earth. It is a bare room with stone walls, and can accommodate about 50 people. It contains a sacred stone, which Allah is said to have thrown down from heaven. This stone is reputed to have been the heavenly symbol of man's soul and was luminously white. The stone was eventually blackened by man's sins. This pilgrimage brings together people from various countries demonstrating that they have in common a loyalty that transcends the loyalties of the separate kingdoms of the world. Upon reaching Mecca, pilgrims remove their usual clothes, which tend to carry clear indications of their social status, and don two simple sheet-like garments. Everyone, as he nears Islam's earthly focus, wears the same thing. All distinctions of rank and hierarchy are removed. Prince and pauper stand before God in their undivided humanity.

The Six Articles of the Islamic Faith

The basic theological concepts of Islam as outlined in the Koran are at most points identical with those of Judaism and Christianity. However, nothing comes between man and God in Islam. Although there are *imams* or religious leaders, who might somewhat be likened to priests, there is no equivalent to the bishops, archbishops, or Popes that can be found in the Christian Church. In short, there is no hierarchy to clutter Islam.

There are six articles of faith that are mandatory for anyone who calls himself a Muslim:

1. **Belief in Allah and His Unity:** Allah has transcendent majesty. He is not united with other deities, and no others are equal to Him in any way. He has no partners, no wives, and no son. Allah is immaterial and hence invisible. His nature cannot be comprehended in any way and He does not reveal it. Muslims believe Judaism, although given the First Commandment that the Lord thy God is One, departed tragically from this truth, when they reverted to the worship of golden calves and household gods; also when the Scribes and Pharisees approached idolatry in their worship of the Law itself. Similarly, Christians, in Muslims' eyes, compromised their monotheism by deifying Christ, although Islam honors Jesus as a true prophet of God.
2. **Belief in Allah's Prophets:** The Koran mentions 25 prophets by name, mostly from the Old and New Testaments of the Bible, including John the Baptist and Jesus. The Koran states that all of these prophets were given revelations **identical** to those found in the Koran. Muslims also claim that Allah has sent prophets for **all** nations of the earth, but, unfortunately, the differences we see today between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam exist because Jews and Christians were not faithful to Allah's true message.
3. **Belief in Allah's Revelations:** Islam assumes that the Bibles of the Jews and Christians were also authentic revelations from God, which fact entitles those who hold them sacred to be classed with Muslims as "People of the Book." Nevertheless, the Old and New Testaments share two defects from which the Koran is free. Having been revealed at earlier stages in mankind's spiritual development when, as a child, man was incapable of receiving the full truth, Islam believes that the Old and New Testaments are incomplete. Beyond this, the Jewish and Christian Bibles have in the process of transmission become partially corrupted, a fact that explains the discrepancies that occasionally appear between their accounts and parallel ones in the Koran. Exemption from these two limitations makes the Koran the final and infallible revelation of God's will. Its second chapter states the latter point categorically: "There is no doubt in this book."
4. **Belief in Allah's Angels:** Muslims agree with Christians and Jews that angels, like humans, are creatures of Allah. No one can win favor in Allah's sight that rejects the angels. In fact, Muslims emphasize that **every word of their Holy Book, the Koran, was dictated directly to Muhammad** in a series of visits over a 23-year period by the angel Gabriel as the messenger from Allah.
5. **Belief in Fate:** Throughout the Koran, there are repeated statements that everyone's destiny is in the hands of Allah, and that nothing should ever happen to people except what Allah has ordained for them. Allah's providential care is absolute, even for spiritual good and ill. Interestingly, one **Hadith (the Tradition of Muhammad formally interpreting the Koran)** relates a story of Moses chastising Adam for his sin in the Garden of Eden that forced Adam's expulsion from Paradise. Adam quickly rebuts this charge by claiming that he should not be blamed for his actions because Allah controls everything. Therefore his decision was written into his destiny by fate before his creation. Hadiths, such as this, are second in authority only to the Koran for most Muslims. Thus no Muslim will deny that there is in Islam a problem of reconciling man's free will with God's omnipotence. What he does deny is that this lands the Muslim in complete fatalism. In the final analysis, Muslims argue that man is still ultimately responsible for the decisions he makes.
6. **Belief in Judgment Day:** The Koran is quite specific in describing the joys awaiting

believers and the horrors in store for unbelievers, depending on how they fare in this life. Heaven is full of the pleasures of the flesh and abounds in deep rivers of cool, crystal water, lush fruit and vegetation, and beautiful mansions with gracious attendants. Hell is portrayed as a horrific torture chamber with graphic accounts of molten metal, boiling liquids, and eternal fire. Among the signs of Judgment Day, Islamic tradition holds that the greatest of all is the second coming of Jesus Christ. It is He, not Muhammad or anyone else, whom Muslims expect to return to earth in the last days.

Social Teachings of Islam

Islamic society is controlled by the Koran, the Hadiths (formal traditions interpreting the Koran,) and Sharia Law, which governs communal activity pursuant to the Koran. Major social practices of Islam include:

- **Status of Women:** The treatment of women in Islamic countries is shocking to modern Westerners. Islam views women as innately subordinate to men, because Allah made them that way. Thus women are consistently treated as “second class citizens” in traditional Muslim countries. Husbands, by divine right, have total authority over their wives. Women are only entitled to one-half the inheritance due to a man. In court, it takes two women’s testimony to be equal to that of one man, and then their testimony is only permitted in property transactions. To justify an accusation of rape, a woman must get four witnesses to testify, all men, each of whom must have witnessed the sexual act himself. A Muslim man can have up to four wives, provided that he maintains them equally. Since the admonition of treating all wives impartially is difficult to follow, there are many monogamous unions in Islamic society. However, according to the word of the Koran, a man always has the option to take several wives. Muhammad, in fact, is reputed to have had as many as 14 wives (one as young as 9 years old), because Allah gave him special permission to have more wives than the ordinary Muslim. Observant Muslim women who go outside their houses must be covered in order to show they are believers, guarding their modesty and displaying their beauty only to their husbands. If a Muslim man is unhappy with any of his wives, he is free to divorce them by simply saying, “I divorce you.” If a divorcing couple has children, they ordinarily go to live with their father.
- **Economic Regulations:** The main thrust of Muslim economics is that the wealth of the people be widely shared. Islam does not oppose the profit motive or economic competition. It does not discourage a man from working harder than his neighbor nor object to his being rewarded with a larger income. It simply insists that acquisitiveness and competition be balanced by fair play and compassion. The Poor Due, which provides for the annual distribution of one-fortieth of what one possesses for the poor, is Islam’s basic device for institutionalizing regard for others, but it is supplemented by a number of important measures. The Koran revised the system of primogeniture, which restricted the entire inheritance being paid solely to the eldest son. It insured a more even distribution of an estate by dividing it among all children, daughters as well as sons, though females received a lesser portion. One verse in the Koran prohibits the taking of interest. This verse came to be interpreted to mean that interest should not be charged on loans used for relief of basic human needs but that this restriction did not apply to loans for business purposes. As business loans were intended to bring profit to the borrower, it was felt that the Koran could not have intended that the lender be excluded from this profit. With this interpretation, it is the prevailing view that there is no incompatibility between Islam and capitalism. However, in view of the Koran’s vehement denunciations of usury, it is assumed that Muslims will keep their interest rates on business loans low.

Jihad (The Holy War)

The literal meaning of Jihad is “to struggle, to strive hard, and to fight.” Muslims today, to prove that Jihad refers only to the individual’s interior struggle against sin, often cite only the first two meanings of Jihad. Muslim apologists like to point out that Jihad does not mean “Holy War.” Yet in Islamic history and theology throughout the ages, **Jihad has meant precisely that: Holy War.** In fact, some fundamentalist Islamic sects add **Jihad as the sixth pillar of the faith**, emphasizing that Muslims have a duty to fight against unbelievers.

According to *Inside Islam: A Guide for Catholics*, published by Ascension Press, 2003, there are a great number of truths and half-truths being purveyed about Jihad today, but the Koran is clear. It contains numerous verses that state in no uncertain terms that unless a Muslim takes up arms against the infidels, he is not a true Muslim and has no part in the Paradise promised to Muslims. When the Muslim declares that Islam is a “religion of peace,” he is either ignorant of the Koran or is extending this “peace” only to those within the Muslim community, without telling you that that is the way he means it. In Islam, there is no true concept of peace between the unbeliever and the devout Muslim. If Muslims take the Koran and Hadith seriously, they will fight until everyone on earth is Muslim or at least is under Muslim rule.

Consider that the military history of Islam’s expansion and intended conquest of the world for Allah has been continuous and unrelenting since its founding in the 600’s A.D., as noted below:

- At the time of his death in 632, Muhammad had consolidated virtually all of the armies of Arabia under his control. Within the next 100 years, his followers had conquered all of the surrounding Christian countries, especially expanding through the Mediterranean Sea to Egypt, North Africa, and the European countries of Spain and France. Except for their defeat by Charles Martel in the battle of Tours, France in 732, the entire Western world might now, through conquest and Islamization, be Muslim.
- During the years 1095-1200, Muslim soldiers invaded Syria and Palestine to prevent Christian pilgrimages from Europe to Jerusalem and the Holy Lands. They also tried to establish control over the major Christian Holy Places there, including the True Cross and the Holy Sepulcher, the site of Christ’s Resurrection. As a result, Pope Urban initiated the Crusades, in which Christian armies from Europe tried to take back the Holy Places previously conquered by the Muslims. But the Crusades failed. They never retook Jerusalem and never reestablished the old Christian kingdom.
- In 1453, Muslim armies conquered one of the greatest prizes of all: Constantinople (which they renamed Istanbul), the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire and the second See of Christendom, the home of what was then the grandest Church in the world – the Cathedral of Holy Wisdom, or *Hagia Sophia*.
- Twice the Muslims commenced an assault on Vienna, the capital of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. Finally, the Europeans were able to defeat the Muslims in two historic victories. Initially in 1571, the naval forces of the Holy Roman Empire won a decisive victory at the great Battle of Lepanto, off the coast of Greece in the Mediterranean Sea. Finally the Muslim army besieged Vienna directly, only to be turned back on a day that marks a high point of Muslim expansion in Europe: **September 11, 1683.**
- Osama bin Laden may well have had the anniversary of this Vienna battle date in mind when he planned the **September 11, 2001** attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

Pope Benedict XVI’s Regensburg Speech

On September 12, 2006, Pope Benedict XVI delivered a historic speech at the University of Regensburg, Germany relating to Islam and its penchant for religious violence, in which he raised for thoughtful people everywhere the urgent question about whether any true religion can

condone violence. The Pope cited the dialogue (circa 1391) between a Christian emperor in Ankara, Turkey and an educated Persian on this question for further reflection by all people of good will. Discussing the religion of Islam, the Christian emperor comments to the Persian:

“Show me just what Muhammad brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached.”

The emperor goes on to explain in detail why spreading the faith through violence is something unreasonable. Violence is incompatible with the nature of God and the nature of the soul:

“God is not pleased by blood, and not acting reasonably is contrary to God’s nature. Faith is born of the soul, not the body. Whoever would lead someone to faith needs the ability to speak well and to reason properly, without violence and threats. To convince a reasonable soul, one does not need a strong arm, or weapons of any kind, or any other means of threatening a person with death.”

The decisive statement in this argument against violent conversion is this: not to act in accordance with reason is contrary to God’s nature. For the Christian emperor and for the Christian of all ages, this statement is self-evident. But for Muslim teaching, God is not bound by rationality. **Thus the dramatic and continuing confrontation between Christianity and Islam in our time.**

Question for Bishop Wenski, Diocese of Orlando

Why do you not teach the authentic Roman Catholic Faith contained in the Catechism of our Roman Catholic Church to the members of your Diocese of Orlando with the same truth, clarity, vigor, enthusiasm and zeal as the Muslims? – especially when Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI have called this Catechism “a sure norm for teaching the Faith.” Since most of our bishops do not take seriously their obligation to educate Catholics in their Faith, there is every reason to be concerned that the robust religion of Islam will eventually supplant Christianity.

Editors’ Note: An excellent reference for those who wish to inform themselves in more detail about the specific tenets and practices of Islam is: *INSIDE ISLAM, A Guide for Catholics*, authored by Daniel Ali and Robert Spencer, published by Ascension Press, 2003. This book contains 100 Questions and Answers, as well as a Foreword by Mitch Pacwa, S.J., Moderator of Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN).

Note: The Orlando Truth, who kindly granted us permission to promulgate this well-written article, can be contacted at: PO Box 1208, Tavares, FL 32778-1208