

## **The background of Islam, its Founder, its Rise and its Spread**

### **1. Opening Remarks**

Since Islam first began, 1400 years ago, it has been a direct challenge to the faith of Christianity. Wars have been fought between the two religions, from the time Muslims surged out of Arabia and attacked Christians in the Middle East and across N. Africa, conquering even up into Spain, all within eighty years after the death of Muhammad. Almost five centuries later, the Christian lands of Asia Minor, today called Turkey, faced defeat at the hands of Muslim armies, and appealed for help to the Catholic pope at Rome, who answered with the counter-attacks known as the Christian Crusades.

Historically, the Christian response to Islam has been either to fight the Muslims, or to just ignore them. Rarely, throughout all the years Islam has existed, has there been any real effort by the Christian Church to reach out to them with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Today, in the twenty first century, Islam is the second largest religion in the world, counting over 1.3 – 1.5 billion followers, roughly one in every five people alive. It is also the fastest growing of all the major religions of the world. As the shocking wake-up call of Sept 11<sup>th</sup> clearly revealed, worldwide Islam today is in a state of activist revival, and fundamentalist Muslims openly seek the domination of the world by Islam.

In Europe, the population of Muslims is rapidly growing through both immigration and the large birth rate that Muslim families often have. While this explosive growth is happening, the native populations of countries like England, France, Italy, Spain, and Germany are being drastically reduced, because of falling and even negative birth rates. If present trends continue, then within decades - at least by the end of this century, Europe will finally become a majority Muslim continent. This is not even considering the possible entry of Turkey into the European Union, with its large Muslim population.

This rising tide of Muslims throughout Europe can be seen as either a threat by a Christianity in decline, or, it can be seen by believers as a God-given opportunity to reach Muslims with the gospel of Jesus Christ, in lands where there is still the religious liberty to proclaim Christ, and where Muslim converts can still freely attend and belong to churches.

Most Muslims have not rejected Christianity because they've heard and understood the gospel. The truth is, most have never really heard the gospel for even the first time. In most Muslim lands, Christian evangelism is illegal, and the penalty of converting from Islam to Christ is very serious, even death. Local Christians living in Muslim lands themselves often prevent Muslims from being evangelized, because of their own fear of persecution that can follow.

When Muslims come to Europe, to the "Christian" West as they see it, what they see of Christianity is the idolatry of processions of traditional Christians carrying the statues through the streets on festival days, coupled with the materialism and the hedonism of Europe's' modern culture, and they think this is Christianity. Sadly, most Muslims, even here in

Europe, have not really yet heard the good news of Christ's salvation. The question still is, will they ever hear it?

The church needs to wake itself up and get mobilized. We have great opportunities now to preach the gospel to Muslims, and this is God's time to reach them. "Today is the day of salvation", the Bible says. The purpose of this seminar is to help you as a Christian to better understand Islam, so that you may be able to share Christ with a Muslim.

The seminar is presented in three main parts, section one dealing with the history of Islam, section two covering what Muslims believe, and section three, discussing how to minister to Muslims. My prayer and hope is that you will be challenged to become a part of God's mighty plan of reaching Muslims for Christ.

## **2. The History of Islam**

Muhammad ibn Abdullah, the founder and prophet of Islam, was born in 570 AD in the town of Mecca, in what is Saudi Arabia today. Islam, today the world's second largest religion, did not develop in a vacuum, but arose from many factors of the time, most of all because of the unique genius of Muhammad.

### **Historical Background**

Mecca, was a growing crossroads on the caravan route going north from Yemen to Syria. Powerful kingdoms had existed in the Yemen from as far back as 1200 BC. In the time of King Solomon, the queen of Sheba ruled over such an empire in the Yemen.

The Yemenis were very important in the economy of the ancient world. They had control over the production of the highly valued spices of frankincense and myrrh, and had figured out how to use the monsoon winds to travel between Arabia and India, from where they brought back spices and condiments. From nearby Ethiopia, they also imported ivory and other items. These and other precious goods were then taken by camel caravan up the coast of Arabia, to be traded in Egypt and the lands of Mesopotamia, - from where they were shipped around the Mediterranean.

The Persian kingdom of the Sassanians with its state religion of Zoroastrianism was founded in 226 AD. The ancient rivalry between Persia and Greece (remember Alexander the Great), was soon to continue with the heirs of the Greeks, the Roman empire. Around 300 AD this Persian Empire was at war with Rome. Shortly afterwards, the Roman emperor Constantine professed Christianity, and he eventually made Christianity the official religion of the Eastern Roman empire, which later became known as the Byzantine Empire.

So the struggle between Rome and Persia became religious, as well as political, especially as Rome began to officially support the proselytizing of lands under Roman control or adjoining Roman colonies. Missionaries were sent to the outlying areas of Egypt and Ethiopia. From there missionary activity went into the areas of the Yemen, and both Jewish and Christian footholds and centers were established before the arrival of Islam.

The Jewish presence in Arabia largely came after the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD. The Roman general Titus had conquered Jerusalem then, sacked the city, destroyed

the Temple, and expelled the remaining Jews from the land. Some Jews moved down to Arabia and resettled there, and even became influential.

In 523 AD, a king of the Yemen converted to Judaism and later massacred a number of Christians living in a Christian center in the Yemen. The survivors of this massacre appealed to the Roman Byzantine emperor for vengeance, and he arranged for the Christian Abyssinians (or Ethiopians) to invade, bringing the Yemen under the control and influence of Christians. Fifty years later, around the time of Muhammad's birth, the Zoroastrian Persians invaded and conquered the Yemen, controlling it until it finally became Muslim at the end of Muhammad's life.

This back and forth conquering and re-conquering occurred in the north of Arabia, too, where the two great empires and their Arabic client states fought against each other. Much like in the cold war period of the last century, when the Soviet Union and America fought each other by proxy, through client states like North and South Korea, and North and South Vietnam, the two superpowers of that time also used client states in the Middle East and Arabia.

In the century preceding Islam, the two great powers were occupied with each other, often at war, wearing each other down, so that in central Arabia a power vacuum existed that permitted the rise of Islam to power. Mecca at the time of Muhammad was far enough away to be outside of the center of conflict between the two powers, and so it had the ability to grow in power and influence, yet it was close enough to still be effected by the ferment of challenging religious ideas as a result of the thrusts by the superpowers into the region.

The Arab Quraysh tribe, which began to control Mecca around 500 AD, had established Mecca as an important commercial and religious center. Caravans traveling along the north-south route brought trade and wealth to the city, and prosperity was growing. Along with the caravan trade, the pre-Muslim Arabs of Mecca also had a religious sanctuary called the Kaaba which brought Arabs from all over central Arabia on pilgrimage.

Before Muhammad's time, the Quraysh had made covenant agreements with the Bedouins and other Arabs, that a three month period would be set aside each year for pilgrimage to the Kaaba, when no inter-fighting or raiding would be allowed. Caravan raiding had always been a very popular and time honored way for an Arab to gain wealth, and blood feuds were an ancient tradition, so it was important for stability and growth that Mecca promoted this peaceful period for the pilgrimage. Arabs came from all over to Mecca during the holy months to perform the religious rituals of the pilgrimage, and to trade, - and popular fairs were conducted where poetry contests were held. It was a time of cultural fermentation and renaissance.

## **Religious influences**

### **Pagan gods**

The religion of the Arabs was largely one of idolatry. Many different gods were worshiped, with towns and places often being host to one or more idols. The Kaaba in Mecca is said to have contained over 300 idols, with one of the main gods being Allah. Allah was considered by some Arabs to be the chief god. He had three daughters who were also goddesses, and,

like the saints of the Catholic Church, they were seen to have the power of intercession with Allah.

While polytheistic, the religion of the Arabs was also very much “this-worldly”, with the gods being used by the worshippers to manipulate situations and bring about desired results. The Arabs also believed in different kinds of spirits, such as the jinn (from where we get our word genie), spirit beings who, it was believed, could dwell in various objects and places and who often needed to be appeased.

#### **The Jews of Arabia:**

As mentioned before, there were Jews living in Arabia, as well as some Judaized Arab tribes who were monotheistic, and they had an influence on religious thinking in certain places, such as Medina. The Jewish Talmud and Mishna, the rabbinical commentaries and stories explaining Jewish law, circulated among them.

There don't seem to have been very many Jews in Mecca at the time of Muhammad.

#### **The Christians of Arabia:**

While there were Christians in Arabia, the state of Christianity that existed was a very deficient one. The Bible had not yet been translated into Arabic, and so Christians in Arabia put their faith more in the apocryphal stories of religious fantasy that were often circulating. Most Christian towns or centers had their own patron saints, and the Christians tended to worship Mary and the different saints. In central Arabia, where Mecca was, there were only some scattered Christians living.

### **3. Muhammad Ibn Abdallah – the founder of Islam**

#### **His Youth:**

Into this setting, Muhammad ibn Abdullah was born in Mecca in 570 AD, born into the respected Hashim clan of the Quraysh. Muhammad became an orphan by the time he was six, and was raised by his uncle Abu Talib after the death of his grandfather, when he was eight. This uncle, Abu Talib, was the head of the Hashim clan, and a trader who went to Syria on business trips. By the age of twelve, Muhammad had already started going with his uncle to Syria on such trips, and he learned how to be a caravan trader. As an orphan, Muhammad had no legal rights of inheritance and so was considered to be a poor man.

#### **His Transformation:**

As he grew older he became responsible for taking goods by caravan to Syria. When he was twenty five years old, Muhammad was in charge of the merchandise of a wealthy forty year old widow named Khadija. He so impressed her by the way he carried out his duties, that she asked him to marry her, and he agreed. They married, and Khadija bore Muhammad two sons, who died young, and four daughters, the best known being Fatimah. This marriage was a turning point in Muhammad's life, making him wealthy enough to do as he pleased.

Being of a reflective nature, Muhammad began spending nights sometimes in the caves in the hills a few miles outside Mecca, to engage in solitary spiritual searching. This was not an uncommon practice among certain religious minded Arabs then.

#### **His Calling:**

In the year 610 AD, when Muhammad was forty years old, he was alone in a cave one night, when he saw a large being appear before him, who pressed against him forcefully, saying “Iqraa” Recite! (or repeat)”. Muhammad fearfully replied, “I am unlearned” The being

pressed him again and said the same words, and Muhammad also replied as before. Again the being pressed him for the third time, saying "Recite!". Muhammad finally understood he was being told to repeat what the being was going to tell him. The being then said "Recite: In the name of the Lord Who created man from a clot of blood. Recite: Your Lord is Most Generous. He teaches by the pen, teaches man what he knew not." [Sura Al-Alaq 96:1-5]

At first Muhammad was deeply troubled by the vision. There were certain people known as soothsayers who would go into demon possessed trances, and he was afraid he was becoming one of them. He even thought of committing suicide, but his wife encouraged and comforted him. She took him to a cousin of hers named **Waraqah Ben Nawfal**, a Christian by religion, who told Muhammad that this being he had seen was actually the angel Gabriel, and Waraqah also gave him encouragement. Muhammad eventually came to believe that the message given to him, and those that followed later, were identical with those sent by God through other prophets before to the Jews and Christians.

From this time on, at varying intervals until his death twenty two years later, Muhammad continued receiving "revelations", verbal messages that he believed came directly from God, sometimes accompanied with visions of the being he identified as Gabriel, although more often they would later come as just a voice he heard in his heart. When these messages came, sometimes he would hear a noise like a bell, and his face would change color, and he would also break out into profuse sweating, even in the cold of winter.

### **The Preacher/The Warner:**

Muhammad believed the messages he was receiving were the direct words of God and that he was only reciting them. Sometimes these messages were kept in memory by Muhammad and his followers, and sometimes they were written down. It seems that only after the death of Muhammad did the Quran begin to be written down as a whole. Most Muslims believe that Muhammad was illiterate, although this is not clear, and they believe it was a great miracle for him to bring forth the Quran.

The earliest messages revealed to Muhammad emphasized the goodness and power of God as seen in nature and in the prosperity of the Meccans, - and the messages called on the Meccans to be grateful and to worship "the Lord of the Kaaba," who was thus identified with Allah. Gratitude towards God was to be expressed in generosity with one's wealth. Men were warned that they will be resurrected and appear before God on the Last Day to be judged according to their deeds, and will then go to either heaven or hell. **Muhammad said he wasn't telling his hearers anything new, but was the original religion which they had left to follow their own traditions.**

The first three years, Muhammad shared his experiences only with friends, and soon he had gathered some who accepted his claim to be a prophet and who joined him in common worship and prayers, which involved bending and bowing before God in prostration.

About the year 613 AD, Muhammad began preaching publicly, and he and his followers spent their days together in the house of a young man named al-Arqam. They probably also worshipped together in the Kaaba.

### **Persecution on the small handful of Muhammad's Followers:**

By proclaiming his message publicly, Muhammad began gaining more followers. The names of seventy followers are known prior to the rise of opposition to the new religion, and there were probably more. Most were young men under thirty when they joined Muhammad.

Muhammad's preaching clearly criticized the conduct and attitudes of the rich merchants of Mecca. Attempts were made at first to get him to soften his criticism, by offering him a greater share in trade and a marriage alliance with one of the wealthiest families, but he refused these offers.

About 615 AD, more active opposition appeared. Points in his message were questioned, such as that men would be resurrected before the Judgment. Commercial pressure was also brought to bear on Muhammad's supporters, and there was a mild persecution of Muhammad and those who followed him. In one incident, as Muhammad was prostrating himself in prayer, someone threw a camel fetus on his back. He kept on praying, but afterwards stood up and cursed the man who did it. Muhammad didn't seem to believe very much in forgiving one's enemies.

After opposition started, the Quranic messages of warnings of the judgment to come became more frequent. Stories of previous Messengers or prophets were recounted, in order to convince the audience of the certainty of the punishment to come. Perhaps, because the opposition to Muhammad also included a call to return to the traditional religion of Mecca and its idol-worship, the messages Muhammad received now began to include an increasingly strong attack on idols, and an insistence on belief in Allah alone.

Muhammad's life was protected by his clan, even though many of them also disliked his preaching, because they were honor bound to protect him as a member. Although there was no central government, the Bedouin rules governing blood feuds and fear of retaliation helped to keep society in check. Under those rules, only the head of his own clan could punish him, and Muhammad's guardian, his uncle Abu Talib, was the head of the clan.

A leader of the opposition arose whose name is Abu Jahl, who felt Muhammad was just trying to build himself a position of political authority. About 616 AD, Abu Jahl organized a boycott of the clan of Hashim by the other clans in Mecca, because the Hashims continued to protect Muhammad and wouldn't stop his preaching. After three years, though, the boycott lost its momentum, and was dropped.

### **Death of Muhammad's Wife and Uncle**

Shortly after this, in the period of 619-620 AD, Muhammad's wife, Khadijah, and his uncle, Abu Talib, both died. Another uncle, Abu Lahab, became head of the Hashim clan. He was closer to the richest merchants, and at their instigation he withdrew the clan's protection from Muhammad. This meant that Muhammad could easily be attacked and he could no longer safely preach his religion in Mecca. Muhammad left for a neighboring town, but he was also rejected there. He then made arrangements with another clan in Mecca for temporary protection and returned to Mecca.

### **Migration to Medina – the Start of the Islamic Calendar:**

About 250 miles (400 kilometers) north of Mecca was a town called Yathrib. Yathrib was an oasis, founded by Jews who had settled there and cultivated it. Three large Jewish tribes

living there had the best lands, but eight other Arab tribes had emigrated there and were now in a more politically dominant position. The two largest Arab tribes had had serious quarrels since 618 AD, and a number in both tribes had been killed in blood feuds. Typically, a blood feud would go on and on for generations, unless an outside arbiter could be found and agreed upon by both parties, to settle their differences and arrange compensation between them. The two tribes were looking for such an arbiter when some of them came to Mecca in 620 AD for the annual pilgrimage and heard Muhammad.

In 621 AD a small group from Yathrib at the pilgrimage decided to become followers of Muhammad and to make propaganda for him when they returned home. The next year, seventy-five more pilgrims from Yathrib came and made a further pledge to Muhammad. Muhammad was invited to come to Yathrib to rule as an arbitrator between the two warring tribes. **Part of their acceptance of Muhammad and his message, was no doubt due to the influence of the Jews at Yathrib, with their faith in one God only and their hope of a Messianic ruler to come.**

Muhammad, facing increasing opposition in Mecca, agreed to come to Yathrib with his followers, and he began encouraging his followers to start making their way to Yathrib. The Quraysh of Mecca soon became aware something was going on and they began to worry that if Muhammad left, he could become a greater threat to them later on. They sought to catch him before he could leave, but Muhammad managed to escape together with Abu Bakr, one of his closest followers and lieutenants. Taking unused paths and hiding in caves along the way, they made their way safely to Yathrib. The date of their exodus, July 16, 622 AD has become known as the Hijra, and is now the starting date for the Muslim calendar. Muhammad changed the name of Yathrib to Medina, which in Arabic means “the city”.

### **Night of Ascent:**

When he was getting ready to flee to Medina, Muhammad had a dream or vision of himself going one night from Mecca to Jerusalem (called the Night of Ascent). Widely held tradition among Muslims, says that he rode on the back of a magical horse with the face of an angel, and when he arrived at the temple in Jerusalem, he ascended from there, passing through the seven heavens, until he came within two bow lengths of God. Before his journey, Muhammad’s chest was said to have been opened up by the angel Gabriel, and his heart had been purified of all unbelief and sin. **As he passed through the seven heavens, Muhammad met different prophets like Adam, Abraham, Jesus, and Moses, who confirmed Muhammad as the greatest of all prophets.** When he was in the presence of God, Muhammad was told to order the believers to pray fifty times a day. On his way back down, Moses met him and urged Muhammad to go back up and seek a lesser amount. Muhammad went back and was granted forty times a day. On the way back down again, Moses urged him anew to seek a further reduction. This went on again and again, until finally Muhammad was granted five daily prayers for the believers. When Moses urged him again to ask for another reduction, Muhammad told him that he was embarrassed to keep on asking. In this way, supposedly, the five daily prayers became an established custom for Muslims.

After arriving in Medina with his followers, the first eighteen months were spent by the Muslims in settling down. Muhammad was given a piece of land, and he had a house built, which eventually held apartments grouped around a central courtyard for each of his later wives.

### **Preaching to the Jews in Medina**

During this period Muhammad sought to win the support of the Jews. Muhammad had a revelation saying there is no compulsion in religion (in other words, faith can't be forced on anyone). This was abrogated, or cancelled out, by later revelations.

### **A look at the Doctrine of Abrogation (more in section 2)**

The idea of abrogation is an important one in Islam. This doctrine says that whenever Allah changes his mind, and gives a verse or command contrary to what he has said before, then what was said before is cancelled out. In this way, for example, Muslims in an early Quranic verse were permitted to drink wine, but when a later verse came which forbid it, the earlier verse was no longer valid, even though it was still kept in the Quran.

Finally, after eighteen months, Muhammad's attitude towards the Jews began to change, and there occurred what has been called "the break with Jews". **He had hoped the Jews would accept him as a prophet, and he claimed that their own scriptures foretold his coming, but the Jews rejected this, mainly because he was not Jewish and because he clearly didn't know the Jewish Scriptures.** Now Muhammad began charging the Jews with hiding references to him in the Old Testament and he stopped trying to make concessions to them to gain their acceptance. Up until then, for example, the Muslims had been told to pray facing Jerusalem, like the Jews did, and the Muslims also fasted during the Jewish days of repentance before the Day of Atonement. But now Muhammad had new revelations changing the direction of prayer towards the Kaaba in Mecca. He also instituted Ramadan, the religious month of fasting for Muslims, to take the place of the fast around the Day of Atonement. He also instituted the Id or Feast holiday commemorating Abrahams supposed sacrifice of Ishmael. These kinds of changes helped many Arabs to be more positively disposed to Islam. Muhammad claimed he was really preaching the pure and original religion which the Jews and Christians had corrupted.

### **The birth of the Ummah:**

In Medina the concept of ummah (or the community, or brotherhood) of Muslim believers became clearer. Before then, Muslims had just been general monotheists, but now they became a separate community, **different from Jews and Christians**. The identity developed more sharply of a special community that was submitted to Allah and to his prophet Muhammad. The strong Arabic character of Islam was established.

The immigrants from Mecca to Medina had been guests of their brother Muslims in Medina. By the second year of their stay in Medina, the Muslim community's finances were running low. Up until that point, Muhammad had tried through peaceful means to appeal to the Meccans, but without any success. Muhammad then had a new revelation that commanded the Muslims to attack and raid the caravans going to and from Mecca, with the justification being that they were pagans. This also happened to be a very typical way for Arab Bedouins to gain wealth and riches whenever in financial difficulties.

### **His Raids to rob Caravans:**

Muhammad himself led three of these raids in 623 AD. They all failed, probably because traitors betrayed the Muslim movements to the enemy. At last, in January of 624 AD, a small band of Muslims successfully attacked a caravan coming up from Yemen during the "holy months", when Meccan treaties guaranteed there would be no attacks upon pilgrims. In doing this the Muslims had shockingly violated the cultural ideas of sanctity. Even worse was the way in which it was done. The Muslims had shaved their heads and pretended to be pilgrims, and then treacherously fallen upon the lightly armed pilgrims.

Muhammad received a revelation justifying the attack, saying that although it was wrong for the Muslims to have broken the sanctity of the holy months, a far greater wrong had been done to the Muslims by the Meccans refusal to allow the Muslims to go on pilgrimage to Mecca.

**The Battle of Badr (similar to the Battle of Jericho biblically speaking):**

In March of 624, Muhammad led a raid on a caravan coming from Syria to Mecca. A battle was fought at a place called Badr, between the Muslims and the caravan's supporting force of 800 men who came up from Mecca. Although the Muslims numbered only 350 men, they had laid a trap for the Meccan army and held the superior ground. In the battle that followed, the Muslims decisively defeated the Meccans, killing many of their prominent men while losing only a few of their own. The Muslims claimed this victory as a great vindication of their cause, and as proof that Allah was with them. The captured booty was divided among the warriors, with Muhammad keeping one fifth. This victory greatly strengthened Muhammad's position and encouraged others to convert to Islam. The remaining waverers among the Arabs of Medina probably became Muslims about this time. Muhammad was beginning to see that the sword brought more converts than the tongue.

The Jews of Medina were not very happy about the Muslim victory. Some Jews wrote rhymes against Muhammad. With Muhammad's connivance, his followers murdered different individuals, one being a woman, and Muhammad said nothing against it. Muhammad encouraged his followers to enact revenge on anyone who mocked him or opposed him, and he told his followers they could use deceit and lies to do so if necessary.

Realizing that the Jews were his enemies, Muhammad now became determined to get rid of them. He accused one Jewish tribe that controlled the market in Medina, the Banu Qaynuqa, of breaking a treaty with him over a minor incident and said they must now accept Islam. They refused and so Muhammad attacked them, defeating them in fifteen days. After they surrendered, he drove them out of their homes and confiscated their property. That year, 624 AD, Muhammad also led Muslim forces on raids against other hostile Arab tribes with some success.

**The marriage of many wives:**

Around this time, Muhammad was using marriage relationships to bring greater cohesion to the Muslim emigrants. After the death of his wife Khadija in 619 AD, after 25 years of marriage, Muhammad started taking other wives. **Muhammad's favorite wife was Aisha, the daughter of his close friend Abu Bakr**, who was to become the leader of the Muslims after Muhammad's death. When Muhammad married Aisha, he was fifty years old, while she was only six. The marriage was consummated three years later, when she was nine years old. Muhammad also married Hafsa, the daughter of Umar (who would later become Islam's second ruler).

The Quran told Muslims they could have up to four wives, but Muhammad was allowed as many as he wanted. By the end of his life, Muhammad had at least twelve wives, plus two concubines, one being Mary, a Coptic Christian slave girl. Several sons were born to his wives, but every male died in infancy. The closest male relative Muhammad had was his nephew Ali, whom he married to his daughter Fatimah. Ali later became the fourth leader of Islam. Another of Muhammad's daughters, Umm Kulthum, was given to Uthman (who was later to become Islam's third ruler).

### **The formation of the Quran:**

**The earliest Quranic messages, which Muhammad had received in Mecca, had their emphasis on calling men to moral and religious obedience of Allah, in light of the coming Judgment Day. The messages which Muhammad received later while in Medina, talked more about the rules for the Muslim community, and covered subjects like sexuality, marriage, divorce, and inheritance. The messages also consoled the Muslims in their difficulties with the Meccans, and also frequently contained defenses of Muhammad's personal life.**

Stories were now included in the Quran about Biblical figures familiar to the Jews and Christians, but that were often changed from what the Bible told, **and were remarkably similar to stories and traditions from the Jewish Midrash and the Christian apocryphal writings that were in circulation.**

### **The battle of Uhud:**

In March of 625 AD, the Meccans came to attack Muhammad in Medina with three thousand men. They almost defeated the Muslims in a battle at the nearby hill of Uhud, on the outskirts of Medina. Muhammad himself was wounded in the battle. But the Meccans quit the fight and left before gaining a complete victory, and so the Muslims were able to recover.

For the Muslims, this defeat was a great shock. If the battle at Badr meant that God was with them, then what did this mean? Muhammad received a new revelation saying the defeat was the fault of the Muslims for not obeying his orders, and that it was a trial meant to test their faith in Allah.

For the next two years the Meccans and the Muslims prepared to fight each other again. Muhammad fought against other hostile tribes in raids meant to keep them from making treaties with Mecca. He also attacked another Jewish tribe in Medina called Banu Nadir, which had helped some of his enemies. The Jews were defeated and ordered to leave their homes and possessions, which became booty for Muhammad and the Muslims.

### **The Battle of the Ditches:**

Then, two years after the battle of Uhud, in the year 627 AD, the Meccan Quraysh came against Muhammad again with a larger force of ten thousand men. Warned of their coming in advance, the Muslims dug a ditch around vulnerable places in Medina, and the Meccan cavalry could not break through, even after two weeks of trying. The Meccans finally gave up and returned home, and never again tried to attack Muhammad.

### **The extermination of the Jewish Clans:**

After the siege of Medina, Muhammad had a revelation that the Muslims should attack another large Jewish tribe in Medina called the Banu Qurayzah. They had not been hostile to the Muslims, but they also had not helped them in their fight when the Meccans had laid siege to Medina. So the Muslims attacked the Banu Qurayzah and they surrendered. All the women and children were taken captive as slaves and concubines, and their property was confiscated. The men, numbering between six hundred to a thousand, were brought the next day by groups into the center of town, hands bound behind their backs, where the Muslims with Muhammad's approval beheaded them. This incident has been something difficult for later Muslims to justify.

After this, Muhammad saw himself in a dream performing the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, and in March of 628 AD he set out to do so with fifteen hundred followers, lightly armed and driving sacrificial animals before them. The Meccans were determined not to let the Muslims enter their town, and so Muhammad halted at a place on the edge of the territory of Mecca and the two sides negotiated. After some days the Meccans finally made a treaty with Muhammad. By agreement, neither side would attack each other for ten years, and the Muslims would be permitted to make the pilgrimage to Mecca the following year of 629.

The orderly withdrawal of the Muslims showed the Meccans how completely Muhammad controlled his followers. The Quran proclaimed the treaty a great victory, although many Muslims at the time were dissatisfied with the treaty conditions.

Partly to reward his followers' orderly conduct, two months later Muhammad led the same force against the Jewish fortress of Khaybar, north of Medina. After a siege, it finally submitted, and the Jews were allowed to remain on condition of giving up half their income from the date harvest to Medina. A captive Jewish woman cooked Muhammad a lamb which was poisoned. Muhammad survived the attempt, but the effect of the poison sickened him and finally led to his death a couple of years later.

Throughout the years of 628 and 629 AD, Muhammad's power was growing, and his success led more men to become Muslims, for the religious attraction of Islam was greatly supplemented by the appeal of material gain from the spoils of war.

In 629 AD, as was agreed in his treaty with Mecca, Muhammad came with his armies to Mecca to do pilgrimage at the Kaaba. The Meccan forces withdrew to positions outside the town. Muhammad and his followers entered Mecca and they behaved themselves, thus winning over some of the Quraysh who had been against him.

### **The Conquest of Mecca:**

Later in 629 AD, when some allies of Muhammad were attacked by allies of Mecca, Muhammad repudiated the treaty he had made with Mecca, even though the Meccans sought to restore it. Muhammad secretly raised an army of ten thousand men, and in 630 AD he came with his forces to attack Mecca. When the Meccans saw the campfires of the Muslim army outside the town, they realized it was hopeless to resist and they formally submitted to Muhammad. Muhammad promised a general amnesty, and when he entered Mecca, there was virtually no resistance.

After taking Mecca, Muhammad became militarily the strongest man in Arabia. Many tribes had made alliances with him, and as he became more powerful, he made it a condition that they become Muslim. Muhammad also benefited from the final defeat of the Persian Empire by the Roman Byzantines in 628 AD, for in the Yemen and other places along the Persian Gulf, minorities that once relied on Persian support against the Byzantines now turned to Muhammad.

At the end of 630 AD, Muhammad led the greatest of his raids, with thirty thousand men, on a month's journey up to the Syrian border. In this campaign he pioneered the invasion of Syria and the future expansion of Islam, though the campaign itself was eventless.

**In 631 AD Muhammad had new revelations that abrogated the past revelation about not using force in conversion. Surah 9:5 says "But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the pagans wherever ye find them, and seize them, beleaguer them,**

**and lie in wait for them in every strategem of war; but if they repent and establish regular prayers and practice regular charity, then open the way for them: for Allah is Oft-Forgiving Most Merciful.”**

Also Sura 9:29 “Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and His apostle, nor acknowledge the religion of truth (even if they are) of the People of the Book, until they pay the Jizya tax with willing submission and feel themselves subdued.”

#### **The Dihmis (Zumah in Arabic):**

It became the custom after this that conquered Christians and Jews, or any other “People of the Book” would have to pay a large annual tax called jizya if they wouldn’t convert to Islam. Polytheistic pagans, on the other hand, had only the option to convert or be killed.

#### **Muhammad’s Death**

In 632 Muhammad performed the pilgrimage to the Kaabah, and officially incorporated its rituals into Islam. In a final sermon before his death, **Muhammad is said to have ordained the basic rituals which became known as the five pillars of Islam**, and declared that, after him would come no other prophet. He then returned to Medina, and shortly afterwards became sick and died with his head lying on the lap of his favorite wife, Aisha. A mosque was built over the site and today is a popular site of pilgrimage for Muslims.

Before his death, Muhammad had not selected a successor, but when he was sick he chose his friend and follower Abu Bakr to lead the Muslims in prayer in his place. After his death, a small committee chose Abu Bakr to be the new leader of the Muslims, although a number wanted Muhammad’s nephew Ali instead.

#### **4. The Spread of Islam**

By the time of his death Muhammad was in control of practically all of Arabia. In less than 20 years after his death, Muslims had defeated the Middle Eastern parts of the Byzantine and former Persian empires, and occupied a vast territory from Libya to Persia. Within a century after his death, Muslims had brought a large part of the globe--from Spain across Central Asia over to India--under a new Arab Muslim empire.

There have been differing opinions of Muhammad, even by long term Christian missionaries to Muslims. Some say that he was demon possessed. Others say he was a genuine seeker for truth, who became misled because he never knew what the gospel really was. Some Christian scholars felt he was a genuine religious reformer who ended up being swayed by the influence of political power. Others looked at his ability to come up with a revelation to justify his own life whenever it was convenient, and consider him just a shrewd manipulator.

For example, when Muhammad had six wives already, he wanted the beautiful Zainab, who was married to Muhammad’s adopted son Zaid. Muhammad already had more than the four wives permitted to other Muslims and, in Arab culture, to marry an adopted son’s wife was considered like incest. But Muhammad had a revelation that Allah wanted Muhammad to have her, and so Zaid dutifully divorced her to let Muhammad take her as his seventh wife.

In many ways the life of Muhammad is a quandary for Christians, both to understand how he could have such an influence over so many lives, and also to understand how we should relate to Muslims. It’s difficult for us to see how anyone could think of comparing the life

and character of Muhammad to Jesus Christ and end up considering Muhammad to be greater.

**But it is important for us to know his life in order to understand Muslim mentality.** For one thing, we can see that Muhammad never was acquainted with the true gospel of Christ. He never saw true Christianity lived out before him. The central Muslim anti-Christian arguments and doctrines he formulated, based on his understanding of what Christians believed, were sadly very far from the Bible's teachings, and were based on the sorry state of Christianity that existed in Arabia then. The normal Muslim today has for the most part still not had the chance to become acquainted with the gospel. As the Muslim looks at the idolatry and paganism of traditional Christianity in Europe, he feels that he has the truth on his side.

An important thing to keep in mind, also, is that for Muslims, Muhammad is the ideal man, considered to be almost perfect, like Christ is for the Christian. Although we may see many things that are reprehensible in the life of Muhammad, it doesn't help us to attack him when talking with a Muslim, anymore than we would appreciate hearing someone trying to tell us that Jesus was wicked.

## **5. Growth of the Islamic Empire under the Caliphates**

With the death of Muhammad, the future of Islam was suddenly uncertain. Muhammad had been the prophetic leader of the Muslims, but he had chosen no successor. The immediate question was, who would now lead the Muslims? Would there be another leader with a prophetic gift like Muhammad's to give them guidance?

### **First Caliph – Abu Bakr:**

Some said that Muhammad had chosen his nephew Ali on his trip back to Medina from the pilgrimage to Mecca, but others denied it. The Muslims of Medina and Mecca both wanted to choose a new leader from among their own members. To forestall the rising divisions, a small committee of representatives from Mecca and Medina quickly chose Abu Bakr, the father of Muhammad's wife Aisha, because Muhammad had chosen him to lead prayers in his place before he died.

Abu Bakr took for himself the title of caliph, or deputy, to the Prophet. He and the next three leaders who ruled after him were later known as the rightly-guided caliphs. They were all from the Arab tribe of Quraysh and were tied by blood or marriage to Muhammad, and they ruled from Medina over the early Islamic empire.

As Muhammad had expanded his power in Arabia, many of the Arab tribes had confederated with him out of self-interest, and become Muslims as Muhammad had required of them. But now with Muhammad gone, they felt no need to continue being Muslims and wanted to repudiate the agreements they had made. These widespread defections threatened to tear apart the young Muslim community.

The caliph Abu Bakr then declared that if anyone left Islam, it was an act of apostasy punishable by death. He said once someone became a Muslim, and thus a servant of God by joining Muhammad; he was never free to stop being a Muslim. In addition, Abu Bakr said no one could be a real Muslim unless he was submitted to the one who was chosen to be leader of all Muslims. He also declared that Muhammad was the last prophet of God, based on a verse in the Quran calling Muhammad the Seal of the Prophets.

Under Abu Bakr's rule the apostasy of rebelling tribes in Arabia was vigorously suppressed, and the beginnings of outward conquest began.

Now that all Arabs had become Muslim brothers, they weren't supposed to raid one another anymore, and the resources of Arabia alone could not support a new Muslim state. To finance his state and to give encouragement to Muslims through material success not to withdraw from the community, Abu Bakr encouraged raids and conquests into the non-Muslim areas north of Arabia, into the areas of modern day Syria and Iraq.

During his reign, the Quran also began to be written down. After one major battle against those trying to leave Islam, many of the Muslims who knew the Quran by memory were killed, and Abu Bakr gave orders for the messages of the Quran to be collected and written down before they could be lost to memory.

Abu Bakr ruled for two years and then died, in 634 AD. Before he died, he nominated his own successor, Umar.

### **Second Caliph – Umar:**

Umar ruled from 634-644 AD. He continued Abu Bakr's policy of organizing and channeling the Muslim conquests outward. Umar also laid the administrative base of the empire, creating the offices of judges and establishing fixed taxes. He made arrangements for the disposition of the booty from the conquests, which was the main source of income for the growing empire.

Under Umar, Islam became a world power. The final conquest of Damascus came in 636. By 640, Roman control in Syria was over; by 641, the Muslims controlled all the territory west of the Zagros mountains in Iran. During the years 642 to 646 Egypt was taken, and soon thereafter began the raids into the Maghreb, the lands west of Egypt. Shortly thereafter, in the east, Iran fell. Conversion of the conquered peoples to Islam came usually by the sword, or slowly afterwards because of the oppression non-Muslims faced under humiliating laws and taxes the Muslim conquerors imposed on those who wouldn't convert.

As Islam developed, its basic forms and practices became more crystallized. The five pillars of Islam and the sunnah, or guiding example, of Muhammad's life became established for Muslims as the way for them to show their Islam. Special Friday prayers with a sermon afterwards became an established institution.

Umar was assassinated by a Persian Christian slave in the year 644 AD.

### **Third Caliph - Uthman:**

After Umar's assassination, Uthman, who was married to two of Muhammad's daughters, became the next caliph, and he ruled from 644-656. He was a weak compromise candidate chosen by committee, when stronger opposing parties, like Ali, had been cancelled out.

As the Islamic Empire continued expanding, Uthman tried to strengthen the central control over it. He belonged to the Ummayyad clan of Mecca, and he began to place his own clan and family into positions of power and authority throughout the empire. There was much resentment against this cronyism, as most of the wealth coming in from the conquests went to his own family.

Uthman also established the official version of the Quran, and ordered all copies of the Quran which differed from his to be destroyed. These things stirred up various rebellions by Muslims against his rule, and in one such rebellion he was murdered.

#### **Fourth Caliph - Ali:**

Ali was chosen to be the next Caliph and he ruled from 656 – 661 AD. He was the nephew of Muhammad, married to his daughter Fatimah, and was the closest male heir that Muhammad had.

He acquired a corrupt state of affairs from Uthman, which he tried to rectify along the line of Muslim ideals, but he ended up just alienating the powerful Quraysh of Mecca who had grown rich on the Muslim conquests.

A three-way contest for control began, between Ali, Aisha the daughter of Abu Bakr, and Mu'awiya, of the Ummayyads, the clan of the murdered caliph Uthman. Ostensibly the conflict focused on whether Uthman had been assassinated justly, and whether Ali was involved, since he hadn't punished the murderers, and whether Uthman's death should be avenged. Mu'awiya as a kinsman of Uthman's had the duty of revenge. There were various armed rebellions against Ali, and he was assassinated in a mosque after one rebellion he put down.

This was the first of the four fitnahs in Islam (fitnah means strife or rebellion). These fitnahs were later historically viewed as major trials that tested the strength and unity of Islam in its early years.

This first fitnah, from 656-661 AD, was the struggle in Ali's reign between Ali, Aisha, & Mu'awiya.

#### **Fifth Caliph - Muawiya:**

After Ali's death, Mu'awiya, the Ummayyid opponent of Ali, gained control and became the next caliph. He had been the leader of the Muslim military in Damascus, and he transferred the capital of the Islamic empire from Medina to Damascus. This began the Ummayyid dynasty of caliphs, who ruled over Islam from Damascus between 661-750 AD.

The second fitnah ran through the reigns of Mu'awiya and his son Yazid, from 661-683, and continued along the same lines as the first fitnah, with the struggle now being between Ali's descendants and Mu'awiya's over who would lead Islam. When Ali died, his two sons, Husayn and Hasan, eventually agreed to obey Mu'awiya as their leader. But when Mu'awiya died and his dissolute son Yazid became caliph, Husayn led a rebellion, and in Karbala, Iraq, Husayn and his men were defeated and he was butchered. For the Shiite Muslims, who felt the line of Ali was the only legitimate one for a leader, the death of Husayn was a great tragedy, and every year Shiites commemorate his death on the festival of Ashura, cutting themselves with knives and whips in an emotional frenzy.

As caliph, Mu'awiya further developed the administration of the Islamic empire, fashioning it in imitation of the opulent Byzantine and Persian empires which the Muslims had conquered. He depended heavily on non-Arab administrative personnel, and also made the leadership hereditary through his own family rather than through Muhammad's line. Future Muslims have looked down upon him, the Sunni majority for his turning away from the pattern of leadership by making the rule hereditary and not chosen by committee, and the Shiites, for his not being from Muhammad's family.

### **Ummayid Dynasty:**

During the Ummayid dynasty the basic rules of life for Muslims became further crystallized. It was during the Ummayid dynasty that the hadith, or stories about what Muhammad said and did, began to be collected. As Muslims watched the growing corruption of Islam and its leaders, there was a desire by many to view Muhammad as the perfect example for a Muslim to follow, and many stories and anecdotes about him circulated, which later became, along with the Quran, one of the main sources for Islamic law and guidance. These stories were supposed to be based on what someone actually heard or saw Muhammad say and do. But many were made up well after Muhammad's time, often to just make a point. Many imaginary happenings and miracles were also attributed to Muhammad.

As Muslims came into greater contact with the rest of the world, they came into contact with Christians who knew the Bible, and when it became obvious that the Bible disagreed with the Quran, Muslims developed the argument in reaction of saying that the Bible had been corrupted.

### **Abassids Dynasty and the Split between Sunis and Shites:**

At the end of the Ummayid period, in 750 AD, the third fitnah began, which resulted in a new and final dynasty of caliphs called the Abassids. Ever since the start of the Ummayid dynasty, a number of concerned and self-conscious Muslims had begun to raise serious questions about the proper Muslim life and how poorly the Ummayids exemplified it. The question was, again, who is the right one to rule the Muslims. Was it someone who was of Muhammad's tribe, or of his own male descendants only? Was it the one best qualified by a devout Muslim life, or should Muslims just accepted as God's will whoever took over? The Ummayid dynasty was seen as corrupt and immoral by a growing number of Muslims, who questioned their right to power. The Ummayids were accused of bid'ah, new actions for which there were no legitimate Islamic precedents. The first four caliphs were viewed as being legitimate leaders, while the Ummayids were seen as illegitimate by their actions. The first four caliphs possessed special learning and knowledge, it was believed, but under the Umayyids the caliphate had been reduced to a military and administrative office devoid of any true spiritual legitimacy.

In 750 AD, a movement from Iran called the Abbasids led a rebellion of different groups seeking change, which finally defeated the Ummayids. Some of those taking part in the rebellion were of the party that wanted to install one of Ali's descendants as leader, and were called the Shia, or "party" of Ali. They were led to believe that their cause would be favored once the Abassids succeeded. But after becoming victorious, the Abbasid leader wanted to keep all the Muslims together in one community, and he made compromises with those who disagreed with the Shia position. **The Shia minority** refused to accept the compromise and withdrew, while the majority group, called people of the Sunna, or Sunni, accepted the Abbasids. Thus the division between the two major sections of Islam, the Sunnis and Shiites, became established. In areas of doctrine and faith, the two groups later developed very distinctly from one another. The Shiites began to see themselves as a party of opposition to the majority.

When the Abbasids came to power, they put to death all the members of the Ummayid family, except one, Abd ar-Rahman, who escaped and later ruled his own Muslim state in Spain, with his capital at Cordoba.

The Abbasids founded the city of Baghdad in Iraq and made it their new capital. Though they had started their dynasty in rejection of the Umayyids for ruling Islam illegitimately, the Abbasids continued in the same fashion, becoming even more bureaucratic, more opulent and worldly. Unconverted Jews and Christians could be influential at court, and the same decline was seen that brought the fall of the earlier dynasty. However, to help justify their leadership of Islam, the Abbasids fostered the study of Islamic law, which developed into the Sharia, the religious law that governs a Muslim. According to Sharia, a ruler was bound to follow Islamic law as much as an ordinary Muslim, and this, in the end, helped to undermine the absolute authority of the caliphate.

#### **Fourth Fitnah**

The fourth fitnah occurred 200 years after Muhammad's death, during the reign of the Abbasid ruler, al-Mamun, who ruled from 813-833 AD.

In the same way that the early Christian church struggled with controversies over whether Christ was both fully human and fully divine, early Muslims had their own controversies. Part of this likely came about as a result of greater interaction with Christians and Jews, who taught that God is righteous in all His ways.

For Muslims, the controversy centered on whether the Quran had been created or was eternal. Free thinkers among the Muslims, called Mutazilites, reasoned that the Quran had to have been created, because otherwise it would deny the absolute unity of God. They especially sought to avoid a literal interpretation of the Quran, which discouraged free will and produced many embarrassing inconsistencies. For example, the Quran says God has predestined men to heaven or hell, but the free thinkers believed that God must save the righteous, as well as punish the unrighteous.

By arguing that the Quran was created in time, the free thinkers could justify interpreting verses metaphorically and allow for changing interpretations as circumstances changed. By implication also, the hadith, or stories about Muhammad's actions, were less authoritative, as Muhammad's example was then good for his times, but not necessarily for all times. The Caliph al-Mamun agreed with the free thinkers and harshly persecuted those who disagreed with him.

The majority of Muslims, however, strongly disagreed with the free thinkers, and felt that viewing the Quran as created would invalidate its absolute authority, and they argued for an eternal Quran. **They said the Quran was somehow a part of God.** They also didn't believe that God had to save the righteous or had to punish the unrighteous, he was free to do anything he wanted. They also emphasized the importance of Muhammad's example to the true understanding of the Quran.

This Sunni or majority belief prevailed, with the orthodox belief being established that the Quran forever existed as an eternal book in heaven, Umm Kitab, or Mother of the Book, and the earthly Quran given to Muhammad considered to be a manifestation of the heavenly one – which is an interesting parallel to the living Word of God, Jesus Christ, who became flesh and dwelt among us. For orthodox Sunnis, Muhammad's life, as revealed in the hadith was also recognized as the highest example for Muslims to follow. After much popular discontent, the caliph's successor finally backed down and stopped the persecution, ceding to the will of the majority, which greatly weakened the authority of the caliphate.

After this, there were numerous rebellions, and by 870 AD the empire had become fragmented, with alternate Muslim states and even alternate caliphates being established, for example, in Spain and Egypt.

There were certain factors which brought unity to Muslims - similar practices of worship, the pilgrimage, Ramadan, etc., but the Muslim community as exemplified in the caliphate was never again reestablished. Although different Muslim empires arose whose rulers claimed to be caliphs, none ever ruled over the whole of Islam again. **One main goal of modern Islamic revivalist movements is the re-establishment of the caliphate.**

Even after the decline of the caliphate, though, Islam continued to expand into new areas, and one major factor in its growth was the work of devout Muslim mystics **called Sufis. Sufis brought Islam into areas like India, Central Asia, Turkey, and sub-Saharan Africa.** These missionary mystics utilized poetry and song and idealized Muhammad to the point of worshipping him. They often incorporated into Islam the religious practices and traditions of the people they converted, making Islam more acceptable to the masses, for example, by allowing and encouraging the worship of saints and various folk magic practices. **Arab and Indian Muslim traders were also responsible for another large expansion of Islam from the thirteenth to the seventeenth centuries into places like Indonesia, Malaysia, and China.**

Important mention needs to be made of the Christian crusades, which lasted for nearly two hundred years from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries. At the Council of Clermont in 1095, Pope Urban II responded to an appeal from the Byzantine emperor (the eastern Roman Empire) for help against attacking Muslim Turks. To help restore relations with the Eastern Church, and to take back the holy city of Jerusalem, the First Crusade was launched the following year, and resulted in the conquest of Jerusalem in 1099.

This was a time when the Christian church, under attack for centuries by the Muslim world, became enthused with the Muslim concept of holy war, and in areas like Spain, the Christians fought Muslims for “la reconquista”, the reconquest, of lands that had once been Christian.

The Christian Crusaders in Palestine were finally defeated, but the negative effects of the Crusades can still be seen in the relationships and attitudes towards the Christian world felt by Muslims today. In Muslim Spain, the Muslims were defeated and pushed out of the land they had called Andalusia, after nearly 800 years of rule. **For many Muslims, the loss of Andalusia is still felt as a defeat that must one day be reversed.**

## **6. The Decline of the Islamic Empire:**

Much of the rest of the history of Islam, up until the eighteenth century, is a long account of various Islamic states and empires, rising and falling in power, in the different parts of the Muslim world. **The last Muslim empire claiming caliphate status was the Ottoman empire, which began in the fourteenth century and lasted until March 1924,** when Turkey became a Republic and formally abolished the caliphate. Since then no caliphate has existed, nor has one been claimed.

The corruption and backwardness of the Muslim lands, together with the rising power of Europe after the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth century, brought about the next stage in Islamic history, the colonization and domination of Muslim lands by the West, which lasted up until the end of World War II.

Europe, since the seventeenth century, had been gradually growing more powerful, by the wealth coming in from the new worlds opened up in the age of exploration, by the technological advances of the Industrial Revolution, and also, importantly, **from the influence of the moral ethic of the Protestant Reformation.** By the eighteenth century, the military superiority of the Western powers was clearly evident, even to the Muslim world. Within the caliphate of the Ottoman empire, the response to this was a growing desire to imitate the West, and everything European was seen as best.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as the Europeans expanded their empires around the world, many lands, including Muslim ones, were brought under the control of the European powers. Not all Muslim territories were colonized, but nearly all Muslim lands across the world experienced some kind of dependency, whether psychological, political, technological, cultural, or economic. But the thing was, according to Islam, Muslims were never supposed to be ruled over by non-Muslims. Islam was seen and felt to be in a steep decline.

At the end of World War I, the last Muslim caliphate, the Ottoman empire, was broken up after it sided with Germany, and France and England carved new states out of its former territories, with both powers having zones of influence.

## **7. The Islamic Renaissance and the Rise of Radical Islam:**

In the early part of the twentieth century, the growing popularity of westernization and the decreasing reliance on Islam as a source of public values started to be counterbalanced in different parts of the Islamic world by new restoration movements which called on Muslims to return to Islam. **“Following Islam is the only way back to the glory we once had” was their theme, and has been the theme ever since for revivalist Islam.** The Muslim Brotherhood was founded in 1928 by Hassan al-Banna, an Egyptian schoolteacher who--in the wake of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the abolition of the caliphate-- lamented the failure of the Ummah, or Muslim community. The Brotherhood's response to this failure was to emphasize that Islam encompasses all the affairs of man. The group also emphasizes that Islam is a universal faith and it seeks to spread Islam around the world. **The Muslim Brotherhood became the source and inspiration for many later revivalist movements such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Al Qaeda.**

At the end of World War II, Britain and France, weakened from the great expense and devastation they went through in the war, began to lose control over their empires. There were strong feelings of nationalism everywhere and calls for independence by the colonized lands. Many Muslim lands, along with other colonized territories, finally became independent nations after the war.

The spirit of nationalism, with all citizens being equal, Muslim as well as non-Muslim, brought the forging of new identities as people started to see themselves now as Jordanians, Iraqis, Iranians, etc.. This put stress on how many Muslims identified themselves. A growing number of Muslims, accustomed to looking at the West as being superior, found themselves becoming disenchanted with the spiritual poverty of materialism which they saw the West espousing. Many started to reconsider their historical Islamic roots and values, and Islam began to see resurgence in many places.

The new Muslim nation states have sought to implement the Muslim ethic in various ways. Some like Iraq and Jordan were more secular, while others like Iran and Pakistan adopted

Sharia law, with many others falling somewhere in between. As the revival of Islam has continued, there is a growing call in many Muslim nations for their governments to fully institute Sharia law.

### **The Birth of the Nation of Israel and its Affect on the Islamic Empire:**

An important development affecting modern Muslims occurred in 1948, when Israel became a nation. Israel has become a source of great hostility for the entire Islamic world, with strong Muslim support for the displaced Palestinians who fled during Israel's war of independence. In the Quran (Surah 2:65; 5:60), Jews are said to be apes and pigs, and according to Islam they are the enemies of God. Yet the small land of Israel was able to establish itself right in the middle of larger Muslim lands, and even defeat militarily the combined armies of the Muslim nations that attacked Israel at its creation. Israel's very existence is a source of great shame and anger for Muslims.

Another important development for modern Islam was the discovery of oil in the Middle East around World War II, with the vast amounts of wealth that began to flow into Muslim lands after the war period. **The strictly fundamentalist Wahabi leaders of Saudi Arabia, have been able to lavishly finance projects to build mosques all over the world (specially in Asia and Africa), and to support the spread of Islam by fundamentalist Islamic movements and Muslim evangelism.**

Another important development has been the large migrations of Muslims to Europe and the American continent following World War II and the gradual end of colonialism. The outbreak of tribal wars and the more recent phenomenon of "ethnic cleansing" have displaced millions of people, with a great number of these uprooted immigrants being Muslims, looking for a better life than their homelands have to offer. They have found refuge in the democracies of Australia, Europe, North America, and the United Kingdom. This migration is steady and sizeable, and with Islam's religious prohibitions against birth control and abortion, Muslim families are growing at a rapid rate, while the native populations of these lands are experiencing a steady drop in births, making the eventual takeover of Europe by Muslims a statistical certainty within a century.

Today worldwide Islam today is in a state of growing revival and expansion. The Christian church in Europe and the West can no longer afford to ignore its calling to reach Muslims for Christ.

## **Islam is Christianity Greatest Challenge and Christianity's Greatest Opportunity!**