

1. *Belief in Allah and His unity*

This is the first and most important article in Islam. The most important elements of this declaration are: 1) Allah is not united with other deities, and no others are consubstantial with or equal to Him in any way; 2) He has no partners (that is, wives) and no son, and He has no need of a son. The Koran, as we shall see, considers the idea of God's having a son to be an offense against His transcendent majesty; and 3) His nature cannot be comprehended, and He does not reveal it—except to insist that He does not and cannot have a Son.¹²

2. *Belief in Allah's prophets*

The Koran mentions twenty-five prophets by name, eighteen of whom are mentioned in the Old Testament. Three others—Zechariah, John the Baptist, and Jesus Christ—appear in the New Testament, and the other four are found in Arabian sources. The Koran states that all of these prophets were given revelations identical to those found in the Koran.

The Koran also places Muhammad firmly within the line of Jewish biblical prophets, even though Muhammad was not a Jew (Sura 3:84). Muhammad claimed to be from the line of Ishmael, thus establishing a connection between himself and Abraham. It has been common to the present day for Islam and Arabs to be identified with Ishmael, although not all Arabs claim that they are from the line of Ishmael. A Catholic would point out, however, that aside from a few sketchy accounts of non-biblical prophets, there is no trace in the Koran of a prophetic line outside the biblical one. Still, Muslims believe that Allah has also sent prophets for all nations of the earth (see Sura 16:36).¹³ They believe that the differences we see today between Judaism, Christianity,

Jews - Christians received God's word first
others not

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and Islam exist because Jews and Christians were not faithful to Allah's true message.

3. *Belief in Allah's revelations*

Muslims must believe in the revelations that were given to these prophets who were sent to every nation. But there is no content to this belief beyond believing in the Koran. Muslims believe not only that the names of most of the prophets sent around the world have vanished from memory, but also that their "books" have all perished. Outside of the pure and perfect Koran, only the Bible survives, but Muslims believe (as we shall discuss in a later question) that today's Bible contains only corrupted versions of the original revelations.

4. *Belief in Allah's angels*

It may seem strange that a religion as stridently monotheistic as Islam would include belief in angels as part of its core beliefs. There are many reasons why this is so—notably the Koran's mysterious and fascinating teachings about the angel Gabriel, whom Muslims believe delivered Allah's revelation of the Koran to Muhammad.¹⁴

Muslims agree with Christians and Jews that angels, like humans, are creatures of Allah (see Sura 35:1). No one can win favor in Allah's sight who rejects the angels: "Whoever is an enemy to Allah and His angels and messengers, to Gabriel and Michael, Lo! Allah is their enemy to those who reject Faith" (Sura 2:98).¹⁵

5. *Belief in Fate*

The absence of a firm belief in causality (that is, that all realities and occurrences have a discernable cause or origin in something else) in Islam is a reflection of the pre-Islamic concept of fate or destiny, *Qadar*. This concept is evident

throughout the Koran. In the Koran, everyone's destiny or fate is in the hands of Allah: "Say: 'Nothing shall ever happen to us except what Allah has ordained for us. He is our *Maula* (Lord, Helper, and Protector)'. And in Allah let the believers put their trust" (Sura 9:51; see also Sura 64:11).

Allah's providential care is absolute, even for spiritual good and ill. One Hadith (that is, Tradition of Muhammad) has Adam besting Moses, who is scolding him for his sin, by appealing to the fact that Allah controls everything that happens: "Allah's Apostle said, 'Adam and Moses argued with each other. Moses said to Adam. "You are Adam whose misdeed expelled you from Paradise." Adam said to him, "You are Moses whom Allah selected as His Messenger and as the one to whom He spoke directly; yet you blame me for a thing which had already been written in my fate before my creation?"' Allah's Apostle said twice, 'So, Adam overpowered Moses.'"¹⁶ The Hadith (plural: *Ahadith*) is second in authority only to the Koran for most Muslims.

Catholic theology would contend that the concept of fate is extremely damaging to true religious faith. If all things are arbitrarily determined by God, then human free will is crippled, and human responsibility therefore becomes nonexistent. From a Catholic perspective, deterministic fate is contrary to the God of the Bible, a God who desires that we freely love Him and freely choose His will for our lives. God's providential care of the world He created always respects human freedom; He never forces us to do anything. We are *not* puppets on the string of a divine puppet master; we are, rather, free sons and daughters of a loving God.

6. *Belief in Judgment Day*

The Day of Judgment looms large especially in the apocalyptic early suras of the Koran, which contain arresting po-

etic warnings of the divine wrath to come (see Sura 82:1-19).

The Koran is also quite explicit in describing the joys awaiting believers and the horrors in store for unbelievers after the dreadful Day. It presents both joys and horrors in completely physical terms: Heaven, as we shall see in question 70, is full of the pleasures of the flesh, while Hell is a horrific torture chamber (see Sura 4:56).

As we have seen, people enter Heaven or Hell solely according to the will of Allah. However, the Koran also quite often presents Heaven as the reward of faith and good deeds: "But those who have faith and work righteousness, they are companions of the Garden: Therein shall they abide [forever]" (Sura 2:82; see also Sura 2:257).

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. Why Jesus will return, and not Muhammad, is not clearly explained in Muhammad's Tradition. This is likely another example of Christian theology acting as the source of Muhammad's esoteric doctrine.

In Catholic belief, Christ's Second Coming in glory is necessarily linked to His first coming in the Incarnation: it is the necessary conclusion of His saving mission. Jesus returns at the end of time to judge all mankind and so bring the history of salvation to a close.

18. What are the Six Articles of the Islamic faith?

Throughout its history, Islam has seen much less dogmatic elaboration than has Christianity, but it is not altogether free of such concerns. There is not wide latitude in what Muslims may believe, and although there is a multiplicity of sects (such as Sunni and Shi'ite) within Islam, there is broad unanimity about the central elements of the faith and how it must be practiced.

The Six Articles of Faith are mandatory for anyone who calls himself a Muslim. They are: →